

## Propaganda and the Pictorial

*Manhua yuekan*, 1950–1960

The drawings that first appeared in *Manhua yuekan*, the longest-running and most influential illustrated satire pictorial published during the Mao years of the People's Republic of China, were to American observers no laughing matter. In the words of journalist, intelligence specialist, and anticommunist crusader Edward Hunter, this state-sponsored arts magazine out of “Red China” featured grotesque caricatures of a “lank, rapacious” Douglas MacArthur, belligerent depictions of American military atrocities, and a motley assortment of “gutter language” drawings, including one of President Truman breaking wind into a Voice of America microphone. Such images, Hunter added, represented an insidious, government-orchestrated brainwashing campaign devised to convert Chinese citizens into warmongering “blind fanatics.”

In a way, Hunter was correct. The issues of *Manhua yuekan* he cited were a component of the Resist America, Aid Korea (Kangmei yuanchao) campaign of 1950–53. This political mass movement, orchestrated by the Department of Propaganda, aimed to mobilize popular support for the Korean War by boosting patriotism and enflaming anti-American sentiment, especially in former treaty-port cities like Shanghai, where foreign influence ran deep.<sup>2</sup> The fact that the government committed scarce cultural and financial resources to an illustrated magazine featuring manhua was itself an expression of faith in the power of imagery to shape thought and behavior. The editors of *Manhua yuekan* endorsed this confidence, vowing to “use our pens to strike the invader” in “a victorious war on the front lines of propaganda.”<sup>3</sup> Issue after issue, for the length of the hostilities on the Korean peninsula and beyond, artists both professional and amateur contributed a parade of polarizing cartoons cataloguing the wartime “demonic other”: bumbling US soldiers cowering before courageous Chinese volunteers (see figure 45); warmongering Western capitalists confronted by peace-loving

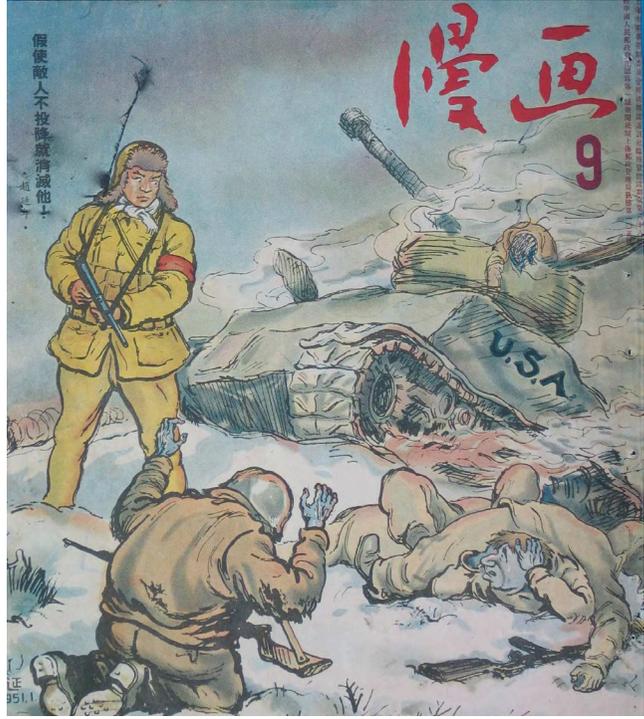


FIGURE 45. Zhao Yannian, "If the Enemy Does Not Surrender, Eliminate Him!" *Manhua yuekan*, no. 9 (February 1, 1951).

Chinese masses; dark, predatory American politicians trembling at the might of the Chinese worker.<sup>4</sup>

Propaganda pictures are rarely subtle, and the Cold War message constructed through the imagery in *Manhua yuekan* is, on the face of it, easy to grasp: denigrate the imperialist West, glorify new socialist China. Moving past these surface messages has, however, proven more difficult. As discussed in the introduction, even decades later, studies of manhua from the 1950s have to various degrees replayed Hunter's vision of mind control, deception, and censorship. Such observations, though one-sided, cannot be written off. During the 1950s, institutions of urban commercial art were displaced or destroyed, the state became the major patron of a bureaucratized arts system, and popular culture was harnessed to the goals of state building.<sup>5</sup> There is no doubt that these events entailed suppression of independent cultural production and the persecution of artists and intellectuals, as well as less dramatic but equally effective processes of accommodation and collaboration.<sup>6</sup>

As for research focused more directly on *Manhua yuekan*, Jennifer Altehenger's invaluable study has mapped the institutional history of the magazine, from its founding in Shanghai as a hastily assembled monthly propaganda publication supporting the Korean War effort to its rerelease in 1953 as a larger format, full-color magazine, its relocation to Beijing in 1955, and its resonances with illustrated satire

magazines published in other socialist-bloc countries, most notably the Soviet Union's *Krokodil*, upon which *Manhua yuekan* was to some extent modeled.<sup>7</sup> Where Altehenger explores in depth the tensions between *Manhua yuekan* artists and the PRC cultural authorities, scholar Gan Xianfeng extracts images from the magazine to construct a broad survey organized around individual artists' representative contributions to the various mass campaigns of the 1950s, from the Land Reform Movement to the Great Leap Forward.<sup>8</sup>

This chapter recognizes both institutional history and the work of specific manhua artists. Its main task, however, is to follow through on my trajectory of imparting a "pictorial turn" to *Manhua yuekan* as a publication that inherited and transformed the legacy of China's manhua magazines. I make no claim to comprehensiveness. With a print run of 164 issues from June 1950 to July 1960, *Manhua yuekan* offers nearly three thousand pages of visual and verbal materials through which to explore a multitude of artistic, social, and political phenomena from the early PRC. Yet we can make sense of the publication as a whole by highlighting its generic continuities with its predecessor, the illustrated city pictorials. To that end, I have divided this chapter into two parts. I begin with the magazine's first incarnation, which was published from 1950 to 1952. At this early, experimental stage, *Manhua yuekan's* editors adapted various imagistic and textual genres to redefine the relationship between the manhua pictorial and urban space. The goal was to transform readers into artistic agents of propagandistic play in the parks, streets, and alleyways of Shanghai. Part two then considers the middle and later years of the magazine to reveal a reemergence of the urban everyday. As we saw in the introduction and chapter 1, Shanghai's manhua pictorials developed in symbiosis with discourses of cosmopolitan consumer lifestyle in the city. During a stretch of relative ideological relaxation during the mid-1950s, *Manhua yuekan* revisited that symbiosis through manhua of everyday satire based on standard fare from pictorials of the past: consumer products, fashion, travel, theater, and Western popular culture. In the case of both periods, from 1950 to 1952 and from 1953 to 1960, I reread *Manhua yuekan* through the lens of the generic history of the Shanghai manhua pictorial. In doing so, we can detect, on the one hand, how the manhua pictorial was mobilized to recruit subjects into performing propaganda for the nation, and on the other hand, how the pictorial form involved readers in a shadow history of the everyday contained, but not wholly subsumed, by the dominant narrative of nation.

#### MANHUA YUEKAN AND THE NEW SOCIALIST CITY, 1950–1952

I would like to begin our examination of the early years of *Manhua yuekan* with page two of the January 1, 1951, issue, which displays an otherwise unremarkable three-panel spread by Han Shangyi (1917–98) (see figure 46). The title—"Shanghai Art Circle's Program of Action for Resisting America, Aiding Korea, and Protecting

FIGURE 46. Han Shangyi, "Shanghai Art Circle's Program of Action for Resisting America, Aiding Korea, and Protecting Home and Country," *Manhua yuekan*, no. 8 (January 1, 1951).



Home and Country”—is strictly informative. It quite plainly tells the reader that he or she is looking at a guide to participating in an ongoing political campaign. To properly join that campaign, according to the first panel’s caption, one must “enhance unity” through “intensified study.” The accompanying image shows an excited crowd mobbing a newspaper to learn about current affairs. Panel two calls for contributions to the war effort. The caption, “Donate ammunition and weaponry to support the front line,” urges the reader to join those who hold high a treasure mound of artillery shells topped by a cannon, all bound for the anti-imperialist conflict in Korea. The most important panel, however, is the third. It stands out for its size, the dynamism of its figures, and the way it is literally “flagged” for attention. The caption, “Carry on the historical fighting spirit, mass produce art, strike down American imperialism,” invokes the tradition, collective work, and current goal of Shanghai’s artistic community. The drawing, meanwhile, depicts a squad of these artists deploying the gigantic pen of propaganda to symbolically destroy American imperialism, here portrayed as a wizened old man hidden behind posters of a Japanese militarist and the Chinese Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek.

The entire multipanel assemblage stands as a made-to-order work that responds to the new regime’s calls for ideological reeducation, sacrifice for the nation, and submission of art to politics. But what, then, do we make of the figure in the center of the bottom panel’s scrum, the young man facing backward, nearly off balance, but smiling as he grips the pen and leans his full weight into spearing the emaciated imperialist, as if taking part in a high-spirited sports event? From today’s point of view, this grinning artist seems incongruous, if not a bit inhumane. But for *Manhua yuekan*’s intended community of readers, the heightened sense of play this figure adds would be nothing unusual. In fact, the feeling of participation, and even recreation, would be expected, precisely because of where Han’s drawing appears: in a manhua magazine.

As we have seen, Shanghai’s manhua pictorials thrived in the media ecology of the modern treaty-port city by guiding readers’ participation in a community

defined by everyday urban modernity, or, in the case of *Resistance Sketch*, the pictorial magazine form was used to initiate the same urban readership, now refugees, into a wartime community dislocated from the coastal treaty ports that had sustained them. By 1950, the situation had changed again. The audience and the artists had returned to the city, but under the new communist regime, urban space was being reimagined as an arena for political mobilization rather than leisure-time consumption. Over the next several years, the art of manhua, and with it the art of the manhua magazine, adapted to the new circumstances.

My examination of these changes begins with a discussion of narrative, image, and desire that detaches analysis of manhua art from the Cold War binaries that have influenced scholarly approaches to early PRC-era manhua across more than half a century. I then look at how, during *Manhua yuekan*'s first two years of publication, the magazine's artists and editors made use of the hybrid, image-text form of the pictorial, specifically by deploying several different verbal and visual genres—the theoretical essay, the panoramic manhua and various serialized columns—to transform the magazine into an apparatus for converting consumerist urban play into a form of socialist urban activity integrated with the political and educational goals of the socialist mass campaign. I sum up part one's argument with a look at a short comic from 1952 that presents itself as a metapicture—a picture of a picture—that speaks at once to the early PRC reimagining of urban space through the pictorial and to the memory of the treaty-port manhua pictorial from twenty-five years before.

### *Rethinking Socialist-Era Manhua*

A first step toward getting past the habits of interpretation that have pervaded scholarship on China's early 1950s manhua is to tease out how the intercourse between image and desire has guided actors on both sides of the ideological fence to enlist this form of art in support of their respective political narratives. On one side, the propagandists and artists of early 1950s China celebrated manhua art as a potent, weapon-like protagonist in the salvation and rise of the Chinese nation. On the other side, scholars of that period's manhua have tended to recruit the Chinese communist manhua into a counter-narrative of anti-liberal, authoritarian oppression. The two sides could not be further apart in political ideology. In terms of the ideology of the image, however, they share the same desire: to imagine an efficacious role for manhua. It is from this common ground—the imagined audience impact of manhua—that we can begin to dislocate Cold War subject positions. To do so, we return to the notion, discussed in the introduction, that pictures are in fact not strong or efficacious but weak “subalterns” in the social field of human visuality; a shift of emphasis leads us away from dwelling on what pictures *do* and toward a dialogic analysis that can reveal what they *want*. Thus, rather than thinking of PRC manhua of the 1950s as expressing revolutionary desire, mobilizing revolutionary activism, or, on the other side of the Cold War divide, demonstrating the evils of an anti-liberal communist regime, we should

consider what these manhua desire, and in fact receive, from their spectators. Specifically, we need to examine how, as powerless agents, manhua seek to acquire power by luring beholders to invest them with desire—in this case, the desire to suture the self to internalized political myths. Put another way, pictures—in this case, manhua—take advantage of a primal, or at least unexamined, human tendency to fetishize images, to attribute to them imagined powers born of a yearning for “pictures to be stronger than they actually are in order to give ourselves a sense of power in opposing, exposing, or praising them.”<sup>9</sup> Thinking about early PRC manhua in this way helps explain conventional ways of viewing and comprehending these images. How, then, can one move beyond those conventions?

The key thing here is to keep in mind that *Manhua yuekan*, despite its new and “revolutionary” look, still belonged to the lineage of Shanghai’s pictorial press, with its crowd-pleasing illustrated magazines whose circulation peaked in the mid-1930s, and whose pages juxtaposed multiple genres of writing and imagery to create an “affectively charged, cross-genre, inter-media presentation” of modern, commercialized, cosmopolitan life.<sup>10</sup> As a subgenre of the popular pictorial, illustrated satire magazines participated in this affective, multigenre, intermediality as well, but with a certain difference. Due to their traffic in “satire, travesty, invective and whimsy,” manhua periodicals represented “a particular type of critical journalism” that, as Barbara Mittler points out, “posed an internally focused critique of society but always within an internationalist, even cosmopolitan framework.”<sup>11</sup> According to Benedict Anderson, the satirical impulse of cartoons in a colonial—or in Shanghai’s case, semicolonial—situation arose from conditions under which artists and audiences “had access to modern types of political communication long before they had access to power,” with cartoons functioning as “a way of creating collective consciences by people without access to bureaucratic or other institutionalized forms of political muscle.”<sup>12</sup> That is to say, like their peer publications in Shanghai’s Republican-era periodicals market, manhua magazines played up the themes of celebrity, cosmopolitan taste, and the modern urban experience. But they also appealed to a community of dissent expressed through antiestablishment political satire. The typical Shanghai manhua magazine was thus steeped in a legacy not only of urban commercialism and Western cosmopolitanism but of independent political critique as well. All three of these qualities were anathema to a socialist revolutionary movement born in the countryside, bent on constructing a unified, party-approved vision of a new nation and deliberately fomenting hostile anti-Americanism.

What all this means is that when they launched *Manhua yuekan* in June 1950, the magazine’s editors had inherited a print genre bound up with precisely the urban mass culture of a bourgeois, decadent “old society” (*jiu shehui*) that the new communist regime aimed to transform or replace. At the same time, however, the multimodal format of the pictorial corresponded well with the Department of Propaganda’s comprehensive, multichannel approach to generating new political consciousness. According to that program, both film and manhua belonged to

the category of “imagistic” (*xingxiang*) propaganda. In practice, however, manhua functioned through several channels. They could be elements of “demonstrative” (*shifan xing*) propaganda when used in exhibitions and posters. Published in pictorials, with captions and accompanied by various forms of theoretical, satirical, and instructional texts, they merged with “written” (*wenzi*) propaganda. Through all these channels—imagistic, demonstrative, and written—manhua had potential to become an integral element of the “active” (*huodongxing*) propaganda of conducting mass campaigns.<sup>13</sup> In other words, where the cross-genre, hybrid nature of pictorials of the past made them virtual, and broadly popular, guides to the lived space of the consumerist city, new pictorials, like *Manhua yuekan*, could function as virtual guides to participation in a new socialist urban imagination by mediating the communist regime’s multichannel propaganda. *Manhua yuekan* fulfilled this potential by merging text and image in a manner aimed at redefining readers’ sense of agency and participation in urban space. Below, I demonstrate how this was done by discussing several elements of the magazine: the theoretical article, the panoramic manhua, and several varieties of serialized columns.

### *Redefining*

An article by Zhu Jinlou (1913–92) in *Manhua yuekan*’s second issue, published in July 1950, provided the theory for adapting manhua to the Chinese communist propaganda regime. Zhu, who had published manhua magazines in the 1930s, had by 1950 been assigned to the Hangzhou State College of Art, which has since been renamed the East China Campus of the Central Academy of Fine Art, where as a professor and administrator he contributed to the new regime’s aggressive reform of art education.<sup>14</sup> In line with that program, his article “Explaining the Term Manhua” (“Shi manhua”) aimed to redefine manhua in a way that “inherits the glorious legacy” of this art form in China while also “taking on the great political duties of the new society.”<sup>15</sup> The dual significance of the character *shi*—meaning both to “set free” and to “explain”—in the essay’s title frames his rhetoric. That is, Zhu releases manhua from recently accrued, negative connotations and then, by selectively citing a variety of dictionaries, explicates what manhua ought to be as an art of the new socialist regime. His goal is to reconstruct manhua as mass political art able to permeate everyday life.

To detach manhua from unwanted elements of its past, Zhu disparages the genre’s historical affiliation with the notions of play (*youxi*) and the comic (*huaji*). Those conceptual linkages, he argues, are a vestige of the era before manhua had “fused with its historical mission,” when it was still influenced by “the diversions, ventilations, and irreverence typical of the outmoded literati as well as the ridiculous banter of petty urbanites’ vulgar, lowbrow taste.”<sup>16</sup> The era Zhu refers to here is precisely the interwar period, when manhua featured prominently in popular press tabloids and pictorials, such as *Shanghai Sketch*.<sup>17</sup> Zhu then turns to a series of Chinese dictionary definitions of manhua to weave a narrative in which

China's manhua art, upon shedding its ties to urban amusement, enlarges its role of "exposing and satirizing" (*baolu he fengci*) while also adopting a new function: "eulogizing and praising" (*gesong he biao yang*). No longer a form of private fun, manhua becomes a public art form, such that in the present day the word "refers to various forms of drawing, applicable to newspapers, murals, posters, handbills, as well as single and serial panels, that most tightly integrate with political work and most rapidly reflect reality, typically doing so through 'super exaggeration' [*chaoyue kuazhang*] and 'metaphorical exaggeration' [*wuyu kuazhang*] by means of simple, clean technique so as to eulogize and praise, educate and inform, satirize and expose."<sup>18</sup>

Zhu concludes his essay by arguing that the decadent conceptual baggage of the character *man* in *manhua* must be replaced with a new set of nativized connotations. Here, as if to locate pure linguistic origins untainted by twentieth-century treaty-port culture, Zhu reaches back thousands of years to claim legitimacy from China's classical canon. Citing texts like the *Book of Han* (*Han shu*), *Tang Poems* (*Tang shi*), *Songs of Chu* (*Chuci*), and *Zhuangzi*, he infuses the word *man* with notions of the "expansive" (*miman*), "pervasive" (*pubian*), "extensive" (*chang*), "grand" (*da*), "lofty" (*gaoyuan*), and "infinitely continuous" (*lianmian wuji*).<sup>19</sup>

The adjectives Zhu attaches to manhua resonate not just with the exalted mission of the Chinese revolution. On a more material level, they also correlate with the spatial and temporal characteristics of the media forms he lists: the propaganda murals, posters, and handbills designed to fill lived space, and the newspapers published in constant daily series. Rather ironically, Zhu excludes from this list the very medium in which his essay appears—the mass-produced pictorial magazine. Why he does so is not clear. The omission, however, fits Zhu's program well, for it distances the "new" manhua from the ideological taint of mass-market manhua pictorials of the recent past and, at the same time, helps disperse manhua into the multichannel image-text ephemera that supported the communist regime's most important technique for reshaping thought and behavior, the mass campaign.

### *Panorama*

*Manhua yuekan* promoted the mass campaign in many ways during its first two years of publication. Some of the most striking depictions of these participatory, educational political activities came in the form of the panoramic manhua. Typically printed on a full page as a special feature of any given issue, panoramic manhua deployed vivid and meticulously detailed documentary-style imagery to invite identification with and participation in the new socialist city.<sup>20</sup> Wide-angle illustration of this sort was not new to Shanghai's manhua pictorials. It had appeared with some frequency in 1930s cartoon pictorials like *Modern Sketch* and was deployed by Zhang Leping in the late 1940s to offer bitterly amusing visions of urban dysfunction.<sup>21</sup> But drawings in this style can be traced further back. In the Chinese tradition, they figured prominently in Shanghai's first major illustrated

periodical, *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, where lithographically reproduced drawings of urban crowds shaped the audience for the pictorial by providing Shanghai's urban residents with images of themselves. One can also, of course, point to the famously elaborate depiction of urban life in the Song dynasty handscroll *Going up the River in Spring* (*Qingming shanghetu*). As for the panoramic images in *Manhua yuekan*, their most salient feature is what Thierry Smolderen identifies as a "swarming effect" of chaotic crowds that "established itself as one of the great graphic constants of the comics aesthetic," from William Hogarth's eighteenth-century engravings on through turn-of-the-century American comic artists such as Winsor McCay and Richard Outcalt. As Smolderen observes, these artists used "the swarming spaces of carnivals, fairs, and amusement parks to invite readers to immerse themselves in their comics," to offer "a reassuring guided tour in a labyrinthine space that resonates with virtual trajectories."<sup>22</sup>

Zhu Jinlou worked with words to pry the notion of consumerist urban play away from the term *manhua*. The creators of panoramic manhua, meanwhile, adapted the tried-and-true comics aesthetic of teeming figures to lure readers into images that revised Shanghai's spatial and architectural associations with commercial and colonial modernity. Perhaps the finest example of the early socialist panoramic manhua, drawn by Zhang Leping, appeared in the same issue as Zhu's essay. Zhang's full-page illustration documented the *Exhibition Commemorating the First Anniversary of Shanghai's Liberation* (*Shanghai jiefang yizhounian jinian zhanlanhui*), which was held in Fuxing Park, formerly French Park, and, according to the caption, was attended by more than a million people over twenty days in May and June of 1950 (see figure 47).<sup>23</sup>

Likely sketched from the roof of an adjacent building, Zhang's panorama invites the viewer into the experience of mass spectatorship. By foregrounding hundreds of human figures lined up to buy tickets, Zhang evokes in the viewer a desire to merge with fellow urbanites as they pass through the exhibition's main gate (see figure 48). The reward for entry is immediately visible within the park, where throngs of revelers engage in a carnivalesque array of educational diversions, from a live tank demonstration and a battle reenactment to displays of captured weaponry, galleries of war heroes, and statistical charts of production achievements. Adding to the holiday atmosphere is a waterside tea garden, where attendees can rest their legs, enjoy the late spring weather, and if the urge strikes them, row out to and "liberate" a small island labeled "Taiwan" (see figure 49).

Zhang's excited, engrossed crowds and exacting reproduction of the cityscape lend documentary realism to the socialist transformation of one of Shanghai's most famous colonial-era sites of outdoor leisure. The November 1, 1950, issue of *Manhua yuekan*, as if anticipating the approach of winter, featured a panoramic vision of an interior urban space: the newly opened Shanghai Workers' Culture Palace (Shanghai gongren wenhuagong), converted from a Republican-era landmark, the Far Eastern Hotel (Dongfang fandan) (see figure 50). This collectively



FIGURE 47. Zhang Leping, “Panorama to Celebrate the Exhibition Commemorating the First Anniversary of Shanghai’s Liberation,” *Manhua yuekan*, no. 2 (July 1, 1950).

created manhua shares compositional features with Zhang’s work in its attention to realistic architectural detail, focus on crowds of human figures in excited queues, and depiction of a modular array of edifying amusements. Also like Zhang’s panorama, the caption stresses the volume of visitors, “over ten thousand worker comrades a day,” and the variety of available activities, which include a theater on the ground floor, a concert hall, gymnasium, and Go parlor on the second floor, and a history exhibit, reading room, and art studio on the third, to name a few (see figure 51). That the Culture Palace was formerly a hotel is not insignificant. As historian Frederic Wakeman Jr. has observed, hotel rooms during the Republican era were “the central feature of urban life in Shanghai,” “homes away from home’ for secret lusts and chimerical desires, arenas for vice at once both private and impersonal.”<sup>24</sup> Zhang Leping’s 1937 manhua “Grand Hotel” (“Dafandian”) (see figure 52) corroborates this pre-1949 imagination of the Shanghai hotel with a dizzying spectacle of prostitution, armed robbery, extortion, opium smoking, and other social depravities.<sup>25</sup> In stark contrast to Zhang’s image, the Culture Palace’s converted guest rooms, lobbies, and restaurants host an assortment of options for



FIGURE 48. Detail of Zhang Leping's "Panorama" showing the exhibition entrance.

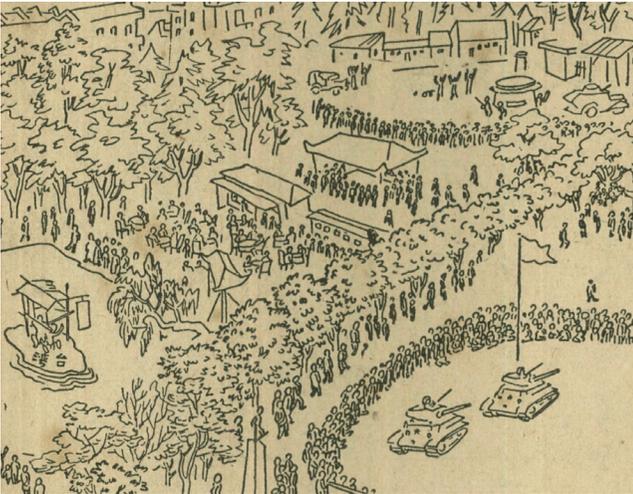


FIGURE 49. Detail of Zhang Leping's "Panorama" showing the tank demonstration, battle reenactment, and tea garden.

orderly, wholesome, educational, socialist play, offering readers of *Manhua yuekan* a thoroughly revised vision of modern urban life.

#### *Mass Spectatorship, Mass Authorship*

For all their virtuosic detail, panoramic manhua of the city were a short-lived feature of *Manhua yuekan*, appearing with frequency only during its first year of publication. As the magazine entered its second year, editorial strategy still focused on the satire pictorial's integration with urban space, but shifted emphasis away from the professionally produced printed image as a means of virtual participation and toward the mass creation of amateur manhua able to populate the actual space of the city. Mi Gu (1918–86), a veteran of the communist base area Yan'an and one of *Manhua yuekan's* chief editors, encouraged this shift in his report, "The Manhua Movement in Shanghai during the Past Two Years" ("Liang nian lai de Shanghai





FIGURE 52. Zhang Leping, “Grand Hotel,” *Poke (Puck)*, no. 1 (March 1, 1937).

the awakened masses of today.” Today’s readers, he continues, “not only hope to enlighten and educate themselves through manhua, but to enlighten and educate the masses as well, and are thus ready and willing to copy and enlarge their favorite manhua to post along the street and in shop windows, or hold high in rallies.”<sup>27</sup>

By recommending a reorientation away from panoramic manhua and toward simple, direct, easily reproduced agitational art, Mi Gu promoted a move from individual to mass spectatorship. In the case of manhua, mass spectatorship in streets, shop windows, and rallies entailed mass authorship of an extensive, repetitive public art. Mass authorship, in turn, required a community of like-minded artists. Standardized models for this kind of propaganda street art were already circulating in 1951, widely disseminated through a series of pamphlets of “ratified” poster and manhua art called Propaganda Poster Reference Materials (PPRM; *Xuanchuanhua cankao ziliao*).<sup>28</sup>

The PPRM models were chosen to be easily reproduced at the local level by members of arts clubs in factories, businesses, schools, and military units. The amateur artists in these groups would, in coordination with the regime’s frequent mass campaigns, create enlarged copies of these approved, professionally drawn images. Those enlargements could be displayed on placards, walls, and shop windows during street demonstrations or exhibited on the premises of factories, schools, and residential alleyways in the form of wall newspapers, blackboard newspapers, and posters. This grassroots reproduction and dissemination of ratified imagery was one strategy in the new regime’s nationwide effort to unify the population and enhance its legitimacy, or in the alarmist words of Edward Hunter, it represented “a new and daring adventure by the Communist propagandists in the field of political indoctrination.”<sup>29</sup>

*Manhua yuekan* also facilitated the spread of this imagery by making timely propaganda manhua available to its readership each month. Indeed, some of the images included in PPRM pamphlets had originally appeared in *Manhua*

*yuekan*. But unlike PPRM, *Manhua yuekan* was a hybrid, image-text periodical that combined imagery with various genres of written serial content so as to create a community of politically active amateur artists. For example, *Manhua yuekan* sponsored and published transcripts of two in-house symposia held to gather feedback from “the masses,” in this case local Shanghai workers and students.<sup>30</sup> Also, in the wake of Mi Gu’s editorial, the magazine began to print a series of field reports sent in from arts groups (*meishuzu*) in middle schools, universities, shops, factories, and the military. By December 1951, such contributions were being gathered in a column, Manhua Correspondence (Manhua tongxun), which was soon expanded into a full-page spread featuring up to four separate reports from amateurs in the field. The July 1952 installment of Manhua Correspondence specifically affirmed the presence of this community of contributors. In a text box at the top of the column, the magazine’s editors responded directly to readers, assuring them that the staff of *Manhua yuekan* was “thoroughly convinced that the weapon of manhua has truly exerted its influence in every quarter, from factories to farms, the army, and schools,” and stressing how “these young literary and arts workers” should serve as a model “for creating art in the midst of practical life and struggle.”<sup>31</sup>

*Manhua yuekan* further reinforced this real-life documentation of art-based activism by converting one of its existing columns, Shen Tongheng’s Manhua Classroom (Manhua jiangtang), into a variation on a mainstay literary genre of the pictorial: illustrated serial fiction. The series, titled “How Does One Learn Manhua?” (“Zenmeyang xue manhua?”), began in the June 1951 issue, alongside Mi Gu’s editorial. Across the next eleven numbers of *Manhua yuekan*, it narrated the early career of young Shanghai factory worker and budding manhua artist Zhao Guisheng as he develops his artistic talent through the comradely mentorship of the slightly older but much more seasoned propaganda arts worker Li Ming. Under Li’s good-natured but firm guidance, Zhao gradually learns correct political cultivation and artistic technique, the latter covering basic skills such as sketching from life, figure drawing, shading, perspective, and, ultimately, how to prepare a work of manhua for submission to a newspaper or magazine (see figure 53). In the penultimate installment, Zhao’s hard work is rewarded when, at the height of the Three-Anti and Five-Anti campaigns, the members of his factory’s new Manhua Group (Manhua xiaozu) elect him as their head. The last installment concludes with Zhao and the group members preparing to submit a set of their original drawings for publication in *Manhua yuekan*.

#### *Picturing the Pictorial*

By the time the serial narrative of Zhao Guisheng entered its middle installments in the early months of 1952, images of such newly minted, dedicated, young manhua artists began to appear in *Manhua yuekan*. In short comic contributed by two middle school students, “Promote Copying of Art Work, Enhance Alleyway Wall Newspaper Propaganda” (“Tuiguang meishu zuopin linmo gongzuo, jiaqiang



FIGURE 53. Detail of an installment of Shen Tongheng’s “How Does One Learn Manhua?” *Manhua yuekan*, no. 21 (February 1, 1952).



FIGURE 54. “Promote Copying of Art Work, Enhance Alleyway Wall Newspaper Propaganda,” *Manhua yuekan*, no. 21 (February 1, 1952), created by Yucai Middle School students Jin Zhiqiang and Chen Shengzheng.

linong qiangbao xuanchuan”), we find the figure of the young male amateur featured as an organizer, artist, and agitator in a middle school student arts group (see figure 54). The first panel shows him standing resolutely in front of his enthusiastic and determined classmates. He is dressed in the militaristic garb of a cadre suit, and in his right hand he holds a newly drafted “Economization Plan” stating that he pledges to “replace posters with reproduced manhua” and “save color paints by

using only ink.” Panel two shows him carrying out the plan by using a grid to copy and enlarge a manhua originally published on the front page of a newspaper. In the final panel, we see the finished product: issue number seven of a serialized wall pictorial promoting an anticorruption campaign. Displayed in a local Shanghai alleyway, the homemade manhua serial entertains and educates a crowd of local urbanites.

Metapictures are pictures about pictures that reflect on their own constitution, “the place where pictures reveal and ‘know’ themselves, where they reflect on the intersections of visibility, language, and similitude, where they engage in speculation and theorizing on their own nature and history.”<sup>32</sup> This particular comic recommends itself as a metapicture of manhua adapted to the practice of reimagining urban space in the early PRC. Most plainly, its three panels picture the process of making pictures. This is not, however, simply an image of an artist at his easel but a micro-narrative dramatizing, and actively promoting, the creation of publicly posted, illustrated propaganda broadsheets. As a story set in the milieu of the new China’s emergent everyday life, this particular manhua plays out in miniature the regime’s program of converting the consumerist urban entertainment of the past into the socialist urban activism of the mass campaign. But in the same moment, the focus of collective spectatorship in the third and final panel, the handmade neighborhood wall pictorial, refers implicitly to the mass-produced print pictorial hosting the comic. This “picturing of the pictorial” discloses the dependence of the “new” socialist pictorial on the “old” consumerist version of the same, suggesting that the latter made the former possible by providing the early Mao-period propaganda effort with a ready-made, though ideologically suspect, media apparatus. Once we make that connection, we can begin to see how the image of the young artist-activist of 1952 finds a counterpart in the figure of the young man-about-town pictured in *Shanghai Sketch* over twenty years before (see figure 10). On the surface, the contrast appears absolute. One is a soldier of socialist art, dressed in monochrome military-style clothing and intent on the day’s political program; the other is a flashy treaty-port dandy, immersed in the latest wave of leisure-time consumption. Yet each projects an image of empowerment and prestige within an urban community, and in both cases, the image is constructed through the visual technology of the pictorial magazine. The resonances between these two young men, as well as between the publications that hosted them, guide us to recognize illustrated magazines as complex media objects articulated to history, to their audiences, and to themselves.

EVERYDAY SATIRE IN THE SHADOW OF NEW CHINA:  
MANHUA YUEKAN, 1953–1960

During its first several years, *Manhua yuekan* experimented with the pictorial form to recruit readers into the master narrative of the “new” China.<sup>33</sup> Critics like Zhu

Jinlou called for manhua to engage China's "historical mission" by casting off the tainted frivolity of treaty-port era entertainment in favor of an art of mobilization that permeated citizens' lived space. Panoramic manhua modeled that space on a grand scale, with special attention to reimagining the urban milieu of Shanghai. Serialized columns taught readers how to transform themselves into makers of visual propaganda to post in their neighborhoods, workplaces, and schools. All of this was woven in and among a grotesque, sensational, but increasingly standardized array of anti-Western imagery designed to demonize ideological opponents, with special vehemence reserved for the United States.

The editors of *Manhua yuekan* continued their experiments into the mid-1950s, amid the shifting winds of politics and art in the early PRC. By 1953, the major early mass campaigns, especially those linked to the Korean War and land reform, tailed off as the country moved away from a war footing. With an eye toward systematic national reconstruction, China's leadership selectively relaxed controls on expression to encourage artists and intellectuals to contribute to the new, forward-looking, First Five-Year Plan.<sup>34</sup> Three years later, after several reversals, the party-sanctioned liberalization of culture culminated in the Hundred Flowers Campaign, a broad call for independent intellectual work begun in 1956 as a way to further stimulate advances in the sciences and the arts. The campaign gradually developed over a period of about twelve months before arousing an outburst of antiparty criticism in the Rectification Campaign of May and June 1957. The Communist Party's response to that criticism, the infamous Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957–58, persecuted hundreds of thousands of writers, artists, and other intellectuals on the grounds of harboring antiparty sentiment.<sup>35</sup> Intellectual life in China did not recover for over three decades.

Such is the story, in broad outline, of cultural and intellectual life in 1950s China, and, in broad outline, the same story applies to manhua. As discussed in the previous chapter, the artists and editors of *Manhua yuekan* worked within the often ambiguous ideological guidelines instituted by the new party-state. As policy on the arts began to relax in 1953, *Manhua yuekan* pushed cautiously into the newly opened space of expression.<sup>36</sup> When the gates opened wider during the Hundred Flowers Campaign, some manhua artists joined the call to "bloom and contend" by more boldly diversifying their experiments in humor and satire. At the climax of the Hundred Flowers Campaign in the spring of 1957, "contending" gained the upper hand as artists directly challenged the dogma of party authority by creating works that struck back against bureaucratic interference in their artistic pursuits. Then, like so many of their colleagues in other domains of culture, they paid the price for defying the system. Some of the more outspoken contributors to *Manhua yuekan*, such as Liao Bingxiong and Shen Tongheng, were singled out and purged in 1957 for satirical manhua that went too far in mocking official authority. The editors of *Manhua yuekan*, meanwhile, published abject self-criticisms in the hope of deflecting the spearpoint of political retribution. After a surge of manhua

and other satirical content joining the counterattack against supposed Rightists, those artists not banned from creating manhua studiously avoided the hazards of internal critique. As recalled by the artists themselves, the crackdown of 1957 permanently crippled China's art of graphic satire.<sup>37</sup>

This chapter could follow through on the story outlined above, thus appealing to the dark attraction of narrating manhua's "death" as a casualty or even martyr of official repression. To be sure, some manhua artists did resist party authority, many were exiled from their profession, and the art of manhua was diminished for decades to come. But there is also a compelling reason *not* to follow such a narrative line, mainly that it equates manhua with explicitly political cartoons, and the consequent emphasis on individual resistance versus official repression oversimplifies what was in fact happening in the domain of manhua writ large—that is, in the print genre of the manhua pictorial, in this case *Manhua yuekan*. As we have seen in *Manhua yuekan*'s predecessors of the 1920s and 1930s, the political cartoon is just one of many elements that manhua pictorials have used to engage and entertain readers. The 1950s may have been a uniquely political time, but to comprehend the nuances of those politics we need to continue to explore how *Manhua yuekan* inherited and adjusted the legacy of the magazine miscellany to speak to audiences of the mid-1950s.

It is easy to fixate on the politics of party-sanctioned messaging when leafing through issues of *Manhua yuekan* from the 1950s. The magazine's front and back cover illustrations and its first several pages were typically dominated by patently propagandistic images created to propel industrial and agricultural modernization, advance international socialist solidarity, unify China's ethnic minorities, and attack various enemies, from capitalist-sponsored imperialists abroad to various types of counterrevolutionaries and Rightists at home.<sup>38</sup> Yet looking past such mainstream political fare, one finds that through the mid-1950s, *Manhua yuekan*'s artists and editors seasoned their issues with a range of material that revived the illustrated entertainment magazines of the past. One finds entire pages of manhua that speak to readers' daily experience, depicting topics such as consumer products, school life, family life, fashion, travel, courtship, theater, and urban living. One also discovers that *Manhua yuekan*, like its predecessors decades before, informed readers of foreign lifestyles and entertainment, and not just the lifestyles of socialist "brother" nations. During the peak of the Hundred Flowers period, the magazine amused its fans with up-to-date information on Western, and especially American, popular culture, doing so with a flair for the sensational. Looking more closely, one even discovers the work of artists and writers who had been deeply involved with manhua pictorials during the 1930s but then vanished from the scene after 1949. Their return further revived the tone and style of the treaty-port era entertainment magazine.

The reemergence of these elements of the Shanghai urban pictorial in *Manhua yuekan* during the mid-1950s was not a simple repetition of history. The terms of

engagement had changed with the change of regime. To cite the language of a 1955 statement by the magazine's editors, this meant that if the material published in *Manhua yuekan* did not "praise" (*gesong*) the positive achievements of building New China, then it had to function as a "keen-edged weapon" (*ruili de wuqi*) of either "internal" (*dui nei*) or "external" (*dui wai*) satire. Internal satire, which could also be called domestic satire, exposed and criticized various forms of "backwards ideology" (*luohou sixiang*), understood as thought and behavior that harmed, resisted, or obstructed "socialist construction" (*shehuizhuyi jianshe*) and "socialist transformation" (*shehuizhuyi gaizao*), or that simply failed to keep pace with the moral standards befitting an ideal, modern socialist citizen in New China.<sup>39</sup> External satire, meanwhile, generated the image of a foreign "other," primarily in the shape of unjust, warmongering, morally degenerate, and culturally decadent Western nations, epitomized by the United States. Both varieties of satire, however, could communicate multiple messages. On the domestic front, satirical critique of familiar, everyday situations gave manhua artists a chance to reproduce the fine-grained detail of daily life. Their drawings infused mundane activities such as eating, studying, sleeping, shopping, traveling, and dressing with comic and often sensational effect, thus transforming their readers' everyday experiences into print-worthy events. External satire, meanwhile, opened a window onto Western popular culture via negative examples of capitalist countries. Representations of Western nations, and the United States in particular, highlighted social, cultural, and moral degeneracy meant to outrage socialist sensibilities and polarize political and national identities. But at another level of perception, the negative depictions of American society—in illustrated jokes, reports on Hollywood, portraits of celebrities, and more—allowed *Manhua yuekan*, like its predecessors of the 1920s and 1930s, to bring foreign, cosmopolitan lifestyles into the lives of Chinese readers.

Why does all this matter? It matters because the attention *Manhua yuekan* gave to such social ephemera, both local and international, revived an alternative vision of history. As we saw in chapter 1, illustrated serials of the 1920s like *China Camera News* and *Shanghai Sketch* enabled readers to imagine and enact modernity as a form of temporality that accounted for the present, a time and space where "the lived reality of the everyday by the masses was different from the nation and its narrative telling people how to fulfil its requirements for national subjectivity and citizenship."<sup>40</sup> *Manhua yuekan's* art of constructive satirical critique served the regime's desire to reform and reeducate the citizenry of New China and thus integrate them into the national narrative of forward motion in time, taking them from the dark past of oppression and weakness and into a bright future of socialist modernity. Yet *Manhua yuekan's* heterogeneity as a magazine, as well as its seriality, also gave readers ongoing representations of a phenomenal present, at home and abroad, which they could use to construct narratives of their own from the fragments of everyday lived experience delivered issue after issue on the pages of New China's leading illustrated satire magazine.

## NATION TIME AND SHODDY COMMODITIES

As an arts magazine that served a propaganda regime, *Manhua yuekan* promoted a narrative that allowed citizens to envision themselves emerging from the dark “feudal” past and into the bright present of Chinese socialism. One common approach to graphically representing the newness of the New China was through two-panel drawings that contrasted the present, usually pictured in the top panel, with the past, drawn directly below. Such a simple vertical hierarchy constructed a story of movement up from the “depths” of history and into a higher, more exalted future. This “before and after” scheme could also accommodate all kinds of subject matter, from education and women’s equality to land reform and hydroelectric projects, to name just a few. A typical example, drawn by Su Guang (Li Cunsong, 1918–99), entitled “Holiday Scenes” (“Jieri jingxiang”) appeared on the cover of the January 20, 1955, Spring Festival issue (see figure 55). The upper panel, labeled “now,” shows a queue of warmly dressed city folk happily laden with commodities—food, drink, cloth, yarn, flowers, thermos bottles, toys—streaming toward the reader from the doors of a modern state-run department store. The lower panel, tinted dim gray and labeled “then,” reverses the scene. It shows a line of poverty-stricken people—young and old, intellectuals and laborers—trudging through a snowstorm into the dark entryway of an old-style pawnshop to exchange for cash the last of their clothes, bedding, and cooking utensils.

Contrastive drawings like “Holiday Scenes” gave *Manhua yuekan*’s readers an unambiguous vision of how the good life promised by the new nation superseded the gloom and suffering of the past. Reinforcing that message of collective deliverance, the human figures in both the upper and lower frames represent a spectrum of social types, creating a part-to-whole, synecdochic portrayal of an entire population carried into prosperity by the Chinese Communist Party’s agency over the nation’s destiny. On the level of layout, “Holiday Scenes” also demonstrates how the editors of *Manhua yuekan* foregrounded mainstream ideological messages by placing them in the most visible sections of the magazine, in this case as cover art. By the time “Holiday Scenes” appeared in early 1955, however, *Manhua yuekan*’s readers knew very well that they could find much more down-to-earth representations of their everyday lives once they looked inside, in the form of a gradually diversifying internal satire of daily life.

In fact, readers of *Manhua yuekan* began to see the first samples of everyday satire almost two years before “Holiday Scenes” was published, with the appearance of comic art that amplified and even sensationalized the experience of the everyday by critiquing the very same domestic commodities carried by Su Guang’s happy shoppers. This manhua subgenre, which we can call consumer satire, was on the face of it a form of socially constructive internal satire in that it took manufacturers to task for foisting substandard goods on the masses. But such drawings also entertained readers with comical mishaps close to home. *Manhua yuekan*’s first stab at consumer satire, “The People Don’t Need Inferior Quality Products”



FIGURE 55. Su Guang (Li Cunsong), "Holiday Scenes," *Manhua yuekan*, no. 50 (January 20, 1955).

("Renmin bu xuyao pinzhi dilie de chanpin"), drawn by Yue Xiaoying (1921–85), documents the dismay of consumers beset by flimsy rubber-soled shoes, leaky fountain pens, bristle-shedding toothbrushes, and exploding thermoses (see figure 56). Clever, rhyming ditties heighten the humorous effect of men, women, and children

## 人民不需要品質低劣的產品

樂小英 徐甫堡



### 膠鞋

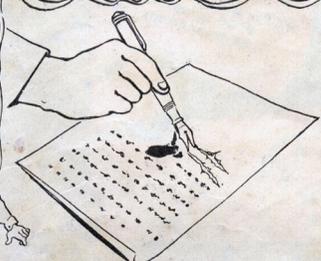
皮鞋、球鞋、漆鞋，承襲足下垂愛，  
 可惜相處不久，馬上就要分開，  
 破裂未免太快，實在無法挽回。

目前某些膠鞋廠的產品質量很壞，不論是回力牌、雙錢牌、月亮牌、雙工牌、好字牌，也不論是跑鞋、球鞋或是高統靴子，很多存在着同樣的毛病——不是鞋底折斷，就是鞋面裂開和纏綿。某海軍司令部的沈志同志和解放軍戰士孟軍同志，他們買了上海合衆膠廠製造的月亮牌球鞋，穿了不到一星期，鞋底與鞋跟就脫離了。福州吉甯山麗珍皮鞋廠的那文興和許澤剛同志買了大中華膠廠出品的高統靴，祇穿了一、二個星期鞋面就裂開了，而且連補都不好，因為補了這回，那回又破了。

### 鋼筆

鋼筆真巧妙，  
會哭又會笑，  
笑的裂開嘴，  
哭的淚直掉。

鋼筆的品質問題，也很嚴重，筆尖粗糙、吐銹、開花和漏水等現象相當普遍，已發現的有金星、新民、文雷、金馬和華華等幾種牌子的鋼筆。華東建築工程局徐慶恩同志買了一枝金馬鋼筆，沒有用幾天筆尖就開了花。





### 牙刷

有一部份平一毛也不拔，  
刷牙粗製濫造，做出來的牙刷原來是空話，  
用了一用就脫毛，用了幾次就會全部脫掉。讀者對金剛牙刷，  
除非你沒牙。品質上的缺點提出了不少意見。




### 熱水瓶

開水灌下會爆炸，  
炸聲很響很大，  
這種水瓶真怪，  
人人看見害怕。

有些廠家製造的熱水瓶品質太差，有的不耐熱，有的灌入開水後不久就會爆炸。中央第一機械工業部設計總局第二分局買了五打華廠製造的竹壳熱水瓶，使用後即爆炸了廿四只。張明張四中學買了所謂「精製」的竹壳鳳凰牌熱水瓶，開水灌了不到兩小時，十二只中一連炸碎了三只，三天內共炸碎六只。

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FIGURE 56. Yue Xiaoying and Xu Fubao, "The People Don't Need Inferior Quality Products," *Manhua yuekan*, no. 31 (June 15, 1953).

at the mercy of inferior, and even hazardous, products. Longer prose captions, meanwhile, contribute a factual, journalistic tone that specifies real-life victims and malefactors. On the topic of vacuum flasks, for instance, the authors report,

“The quality of thermoses from some manufacturers is just awful. Some can’t resist heat, others explode when you pour in hot water. The Second Branch Bureau of the Central No. 1 Machine Industry Department’s General Administration for Design bought five dozen bamboo-clad thermoses made by the Huayi Factory, twenty-four of which exploded upon use. Chongming West Middle School bought twelve so-called ‘premium’ bamboo-clad Phoenix brand thermoses. Three burst less than two hours after being filled with boiled water, and after three days a total of six had exploded.”

Two months later, the same artist treated readers to a similar critique of commodities with another full-page spread, this time of substandard fabrics that bleed, rip, and shrink (see figure 57). The individual drawings depict mundane scenes of daily life: washing fabric in a wooden tub, a couple making a bed, and a husband trying on a new t-shirt just purchased by his wife. Again, each illustration comes with a witty rhymed verse that enhances the light, comic feel of the spread as a whole. One poem reads:

Your new-bought t-shirt’s not too tight,  
 Put it on and it fits just right.  
 But wash it only once and then  
 You may never get it on again.  
 Squeeze inside and you’ll be stuck.  
 Such a load of rotten luck!

The concluding panel envisions victory for consumers by showing women in multicolored blouses dancing with joy at the opportunity to buy green and orange floral-patterned fabric. The accompanying verse caption reads almost like advertising copy: “Quality high and colors bright, / Well-made cloth is a lovely sight, / And wearing it is true delight.”

Such happy endings were, however, the exception rather than the rule. Over the next several years, manhua that exposed defective products increasingly favored pure comic effect over documentary realism. Deformed looking-glasses became funhouse mirrors. Nails pierced hammers. Accordions leaked air. Drum skins split. Air rifles and fountain pens bent like pretzels. Wet socks dripped blue dye. Consumer satire manhua peaked in the summer of 1956, at the start of the Hundred Flowers period, when *Manhua yuekan* published a spread targeting faulty screwdrivers, warped wardrobes, and swimsuits whose colors bled when immersed in water. Most striking for its extravagant visual parody is the panel at the top of the page: a mock ad for “Family Toothpaste” that boasts the time-saving convenience of a tube that simultaneously extrudes toothpaste for each member of a family of four (see figure 58).

Consumer satire along these lines was a minor subgenre in *Manhua yuekan*. Its development from 1953 to 1956, however, demonstrates a broader trend through the mid-1950s toward a satirical style that blended politically acceptable, socially constructive messages with comic, and even sensational, representations of the



FIGURE 57. Yue Xiaoying and Qiu Chengde, "The People Can Only Be Satisfied by Improved Product Quality," *Manhua yuekan*, no. 33 (August 15, 1953).

quotidian. Before moving on, it bears mentioning that satire of this kind should not be viewed as subtle but deliberate attempts to subvert the socialist system. As Maria Galikowski has shown, by the early 1950s, a party-controlled monopoly



FIGURE 58. “Convenient, Time-Saving Family Toothpaste,” *Manhua banyuekan*, no. 70 (August 8, 1956).

on artistic expression was being exercised by organizational structures, from the Department of Propaganda to the Ministry of Culture, and from there to the Artists’ Association, whose branches and subbranches reached down to the provincial and county levels. If artists wanted to publish or exhibit their art, they had to work in and through that monopoly, whose chief purpose was to disseminate political messages designed to contribute to the advancement of socialism in the new nation.<sup>41</sup> As a result, comic illustrations inspired by everyday life had to express some sort of instrumentalized, constructive state-sanctioned message, or they would not be published. Art served the state, to be sure, but artists were granted a measure of creative latitude to develop their own individual styles by experimenting with composition, character, and situation, all of which potentially gave readers enhanced space for interpretation. Even though we cannot directly fathom how readers of the time interpreted any given work, the proliferating images of daily life in *Manhua yuekan* reveal a mode of spectating beholden to official ideological standards but inspired as well by the pre-1949 legacy of manhua’s relationship with readers’ experience of the everyday.

Artists and editors of the time were aware of such double vision. A chief editor of *Manhua yuekan* and a leading authority on manhua, Hua Junwu (1915–2010), touched on this artistic inheritance in July 1956 when he wrote, “Putting ugly ideology on display for audiences requires that manhua artists constantly observe life and society; the artist able to observe closely, to carefully analyze things and events, is the one who can move readers.” In the same essay, Hua makes clear his disapproval of “comic” (*huaji*) effects. But he also cites with guarded approval the observational powers behind Feng Zikai’s “lively” (*shengdong*) sketches of years past and the keen scrutiny of “petty urbanite life” informing Ye Qianyu’s *Mister Wang*, the very comic strip that, as discussed in chapter 1, pioneered the representation of everyday urban life to readers of the illustrated weekly *Shanghai Sketch* in the late 1920s.<sup>42</sup> Another commentator, writing under the pen name Qu Mo, invokes the past more boldly. In a commentary on the 1956 *National Manhua Exhibition* (*Quanguo manhua zhanlan*), held in Beijing, Qu compares the rich variety

of styles and forms published several decades before with the creative poverty of current manhua. To remedy the situation, he invites individual artists to “invent their own unique styles.” Qu acknowledges the primacy of political satire, but he also recommends opening up to a wider variety of illustration, as seen in the leading manhua magazines of the 1930s, in which readers could appreciate the lyricism of Feng Zikai and the serial comics of Ye Qianyu alongside the decorative, folk-influenced illustrations of Zhang Guangyu and the distinctive life sketches created at the time by Lu Zhixiang and Cai Ruohong (1910–2002), two artists influenced by George Grosz’s (1893–1959) early Dadaist caricatures.<sup>43</sup>

*Liu Xiaoqing and the Art of the Everyday*

As Qu Mo asserts, the manhua printed and exhibited during the 1950s did indeed suffer from a dearth of stylistic variety. Doing creative work under a regime that called for culture by and for the masses encouraged clear messaging over aesthetic innovation. With the mid-1950s thaw, however, individual artists began to develop their own signature styles. Among these was a little-known contributor who helped define the look and feel of *Manhua yuekan*’s daily life sketches, Liu Xiaoqing (1916–88). Liu drew his figures in a smart, idiosyncratic manner and set them in situations from school life, leisure pursuits, and consumer activities that resonated with the experience of a city-bred audience. His earliest contributions appeared alongside the faulty-product sketches of 1953, often generously laid out on a half to full page and typically located near the end of the magazine, set off from the formulaic satire of international events or mass campaigns reserved for the immediately visible cover art and front pages. Liu was far from the only artist to take on this lighter, humorous satire of the everyday; as we will see, he was just one among a number of contributors, which would eventually include Shanghai veterans of 1920s and 1930s, who joined this trend, especially as the Hundred Flowers period peaked. A brief survey of Liu’s work from the mid-1950s demonstrates the range of subject matter and situations given a comic turn through internal satire of the everyday.

Young people figured prominently in nearly all of Liu’s drawings, owing perhaps to his daily contact with youth at his job as a middle school instructor of art.<sup>44</sup> His earliest contributions gently critiqued ill-behaved students but also brought something new to the magazine by presenting readers with spontaneous, unguarded moments set in everyday spaces of student life. Liu’s first piece to appear in *Manhua yuekan*, a nearly full-page comic published in August 1953 and titled “Little Wang’s Homework” (“Xiao Wang de gongke”), documents a day in the life of a procrastinating schoolboy. Its nine sequential panels show the tousle-headed Little Wang reading a novel at night in his dormitory, waking up late for class, slumped over his desk during a lecture, joining a pickup basketball game, lured by a classmate to watch a film, and, in the final panel, back in his dormitory room, too exhausted to do his homework.<sup>45</sup> In December of the same year, Liu

explored everyday school life further with “Personal versus Public Property” (“Ziji de caiwu he gonggong de caiwu”), which satirized the practice of treating one’s personal items—books, sports equipment, bedding, and clothes—with special care while neglecting school property (see figure 59). Here again, Liu depicts recognizable characters engaged in mundane acts: tearing pages from an illustrated magazine in the library, lending a ball to classmates, tying shoelaces next to a school building, fetching hot water from the boiler, and dressing for a folk dance performance. These vignettes stand out in *Manhua yuekan* precisely because they are so commonplace. One could say that they mark an attempt to infiltrate everyday life with socialist morality; but at the same time, sketches like these generated heightened consciousness of a middle-class, urbanized lifestyle while also venturing into the realm of comic entertainment. In that sense, one can also say that the tradition of the pictorial had begun to infiltrate, or shadow, the socialist propaganda regime.

Liu’s repertoire of internal satire did not stop in the school yard but extended into the spaces of homelife and beyond with child-themed manhua. On the face of it, his 1955 three-panel set “‘Good Intentions’ of Parents” (“Fumu de ‘haoyi’”) criticizes misguided child-rearing (see figure 60). We see a father encouraging his son to use his fists against a name-calling playmate, a mother promising her daughter new shoes if she scores well on exams, and another mother doing her son’s homework so he can go to bed early. The message is didactic, aimed at adults responsible for properly rearing the next generation of citizens. But even more so than Liu’s manhua of school life, these sketches transported readers to the intimate zones of daily existence. In these depictions of domestic space, the satirical message may occupy the foreground, but viewers can also identify with the material details of a middle-class homelife in the background, from the design of armchairs and end tables to the patterning of blouses and ottomans, and even the gendered styles of footwear worn by adults and children. By 1956, much like the defective-product manhua, Liu’s child-oriented manhua had shifted to a more comic mode. In May of that year, *Manhua yuekan* published Liu’s first full-color drawing, “‘Heroes’ of the Playground” (“Leyuan zhong de ‘Yingxiongmen’”) (see figure 61). “Heroes” is a reworking (*gaihua*) of a submission by an amateur artist, a common practice in *Manhua yuekan*, but it retains Liu’s signature style of lending a distinct individuality to each figure’s clothing, facial features, and hair, as well as for its attention to everyday situations. The drawing stands out most, however, for its heightened level of humorous exaggeration. Whereas the situations in “Good Intentions” fall within the realm of plausibility, the callous buffoonery of the middle-aged men in “Heroes” pushes internal satire into the absurd.

The subject matter of “Heroes” also demonstrates how during the mid-1950s *Manhua yuekan* hearkened back to pre-1949 manhua magazines by offering readers more and more representations of urban leisure time pursuits. Liu Xiaoping’s drawings in this vein often focused on the experience of urban consumption. The three

# 自己的財物和公共的財物

劉小青



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FIGURE 59. Liu Xiaoqing, "Personal versus Public Property," *Manhua yuekan*, no. 37 (December 15, 1953).



FIGURE 60. Liu Xiaoqing, “‘Good Intentions’ of Parents,” *Manhua yuekan*, no. 54 (May 20, 1955).

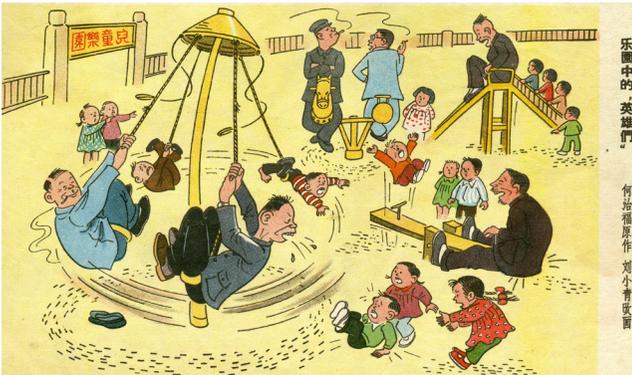


FIGURE 61. Liu Xiaoqing, “‘Heroes’ of the Playground,” *Manhua banyuekan*, no. 66 (May 18, 1956).

panels he contributed to a full-page spread called “At the Shop Counter” (“Zai gui-tai pang”) (see figure 62) are a typical example. From top to bottom on the left side of the page, we see a male customer harassing a female store clerk in the cosmetics department, claiming that he is enjoying the smell of her perfume; a customer who has come up one short in corralling ten strangers to comply with the shop’s rule that face masks are only sold by the dozen; and finally, a matronly woman being ignored by male shop clerks, who are fixated on assisting a fashionably dressed woman shopper. Restaurants were another favored setting for Liu’s satires of everyday urban life. His “The Full Customers Know Not the Impatience of the Hungry” (“Baoke bu zhi eke ji”), published in August 1956, fills the foreground with smartly dressed young couples absorbed in conversation, while in the background a throng of middle-aged patrons glare, “forced to wait a long time by customers who linger after eating to engage in lover’s prattle,” as the caption explains (see figure 63).



FIGURE 62. Full-page spread “At the Shop Counter,” including three *manhua* by Liu Xiaoqing on the left. *Manhua banyuekan*, no. 77 (November 23, 1956).

The Stage and the City

Liu Xiaoqing’s *manhua* can appear inconsequential when viewed against the mainstream of overtly political *manhua* that attacked Western powers or, as was increasingly the case through the Hundred Flowers period, challenged party authority



FIGURE 63. Liu Xiaoqing, “The Full Customers Know Not the Impatience of the Hungry,” *Manhua banyuekan*, no. 71 (August 23, 1956).

by satirizing hidebound bureaucrats and the politically blinkered cultural policies they enforced. Scattered within the miscellaneous contents of the *Manhua yuekan* and set alongside such overtly political fare, Liu’s manhua escape notice because their construction of everyday urban life hides in the “shadow” of the dominant stories of global rivalry and ideological repression that has shaped historical memory of the first decades of the communist regime. But once attuned to history in a minor mode, we can grasp the extent to which the everyday satire in *Manhua yuekan* revived the miscellany of social ephemera found in Shanghai’s illustrated serials of the past. As we saw with *China Camera News* and *Shanghai Sketch*, these publications guided and defined the look of urban fashion. Liu Xiaoqing, an artist from a younger generation, does this indirectly in his sketches of everyday activities. But so does the senior authoritative voice of manhua, Hua Junwu, when he satirizes the drab homogeneity of the Chinese tunic suit, or “Mao suit,” compared to the showy colors of flowers, goldfish, peacocks, or the distinctive attire of foreigners and China’s ethnic minority peoples (see figure 64). In chapter 1, we saw how *Shanghai Sketch* catered to the armchair traveler with photo-essays and illustrations of travel and tourism. *Manhua yuekan* appealed to the vicarious tourist as well, with manhua depicting socially constructive but extravagant examples of unbecoming behavior at famous sites, such as Ye Qianyu’s portrayal of graffitiists in Suzhou (see figure 65). Even the theme of courtship, constant fodder for humor in the 1920s and 1930s, saw a return with manhua like Wei Qimei’s (1923–2009) fanciful imagination of a public park regulated to ensure privacy for young couples on Sundays (see figure 66).

The dispersal of such manhua within and among *Manhua yuekan*’s mainstream political messages serves as camouflage of sorts. No single work stands out as a bold or subversive statement on the political status quo. None challenge the political establishment head-on. It is only in aggregate, viewed in irregular, serial repetition



FIGURE 64. Hua Junwu, “Mismatch,” *Manhua banyuekan*, no. 64 (March 18, 1956).



FIGURE 65. Ye Qianyu, “Jiangnan Landscapes,” *Manhua banyuekan*, no. 83 (February 23, 1957).

across multiple issues, that they acquire significance as an alternative vision of lived experience. Two categories of manhua that express such a vision with particular clarity are works on theatergoing and city life. The appeal of the former comes from the ability of manhua to figuratively stage readers’ own experiences of entertainment in a heightened form. Illustrations of city life do much the same, but they include the city itself as an actor in the ongoing drama of everyday life.

As discussed in the introduction, Shanghai’s popular press developed in symbiosis with the city’s popular entertainment industry, which offered traditional opera, modern stage plays, film, and more. From 1950 to 1952, however, the only stages that appeared in *Manhua yuekan* were those of explicitly political theater, such as land-reform struggle sessions or award ceremonies for model workers. By around 1955, the same time that other subgenres of everyday satire started to proliferate, works featuring the urban theatergoing experience began to show up

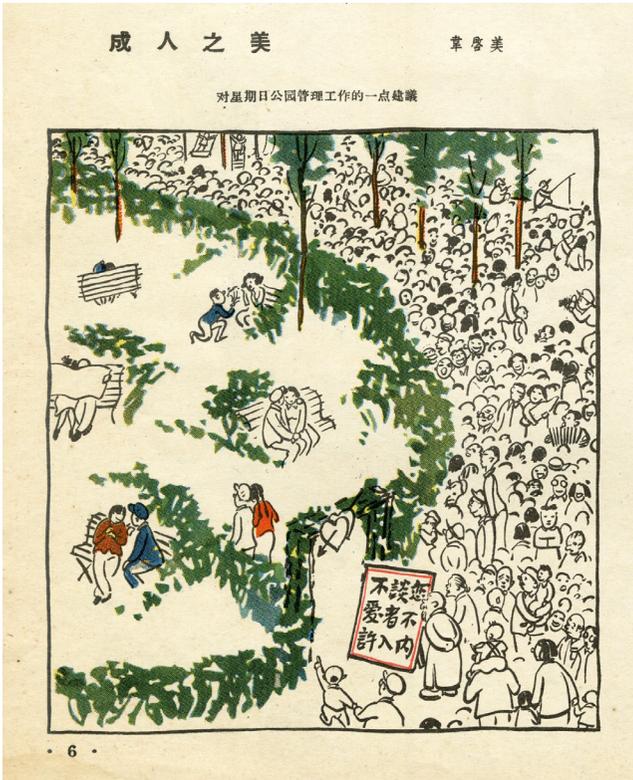
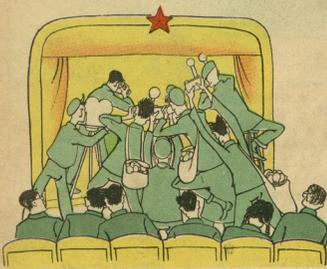


FIGURE 66. Wei Qimei, "Helping Wishes Come True," *Manhua banyuekan*, no. 81 (January 23, 1957). The sign reads "Couples Only, Others Keep Out."

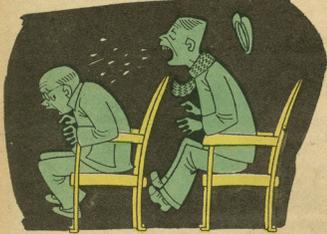
as well. Like other examples of everyday satire, theater-related manhua could be read on several levels. On the face of it, they served as a form of socialist education (*shehuizhuyi jiaoyu*) designed to expose and correct human and institutional shortcomings in the new society. But they also reflected educated urban readers' leisure-time experience of popular entertainment and even communicated if not a certain connoisseurship then at least a shared demand among a cultured audience for a viewing experience that met a certain basic standard of quality.

Key to understanding theater manhua of this time is the way artists drew them to speak to authentic audience experience. We can see how this was done by looking at a set of three drawings on a single page from an April 1957 issue of *Manhua yuekan* (see figure 67). The manhua at the top left and the one at the bottom offer an audience-level perspective on the nuisance of overzealous photographers mobbing the front rows and of cadres abusing their privilege to view the show from on stage. The manhua at center left, Liu Xiaoqing's "Menace from the Rear" ("Hou gu zhi you"), drops down into the seats to depict one of the hazards of being in close quarters with hygienically backward theatergoers. Similar manhua sympathized with patrons having to deal with obscuring clouds of cigarette smoke, disruption

**精彩的一幕** 董菱英



**后顧之憂** 刘小普



**“整理”“改編”“創作” (小相聲)**

何 迅

——獻給剝削別人勞動果實的懶匠們。

出場人物：  
甲——叫什麼名字都容易引起某些人的誤會，那么就姑名之曰“何迅”吧。  
乙——姓名不詳，是甲的相識。  
(甲乙二人相繼登場向觀眾鞠躬致意。)

甲：(把醒木一拍，朗誦詩句)春眠不覺早，處處鳥鳴，夜來風雨大，花落豈不少。  
乙：(邊那邊搖頭)您念錯啦！  
甲：怎麼錯啦？  
乙：這首詩應該是：春眠不覺曉，處處聞啼鳥，夜來風雨聲，花落知多少。  
甲：您念這首詩是誰作的？  
乙：這誰不知道啊，唐詩，孟浩然作的。  
甲：哦。  
乙：您念的那首呢？  
甲：我念那首啊，(又念)春眠不覺早，處處鳥鳴，夜來風雨大，花落豈不少。  
乙：對，這是誰作的啊？  
甲：這是孟浩然原作，何迅整理的。  
乙：(愜)啊！有這麼整理的嗎！  
甲：(秘密地)整理這麼一放，就加柳絮，還能落稿費十塊四毛五呢！  
乙：你大聲說不就聽見嗎？  
甲：大聲說不就聽見嗎？(又拍醒木朗誦)花落豈不少，春眠不覺早，夜來風雨大，處處鳥鳴。  
乙：(向觀眾)跟回了一下，還是那几句。  
甲：(向甲)這是誰作的啊？  
甲：(又念)花落豈不少，春眠不覺早，夜來風雨大，處處鳥鳴。  
乙：對，這是誰作的？

甲：(面呈得意的微笑)孟浩然原作，何迅改編。  
乙：(愜)！有這麼改編的嗎？  
甲：(秘密地)改編這麼一首，拿去柳絮，還能落稿費十塊四毛五呢！  
乙：你大聲說不就聽見嗎？  
甲：大聲說不就聽見嗎？(又拍醒木，朗誦)真不夜來少，覺不處處早，花落大鳥鳴，春眠風雨鳥。  
乙：(向觀眾)這是什麼亂七八糟的，(向甲)我說這也是孟浩然……？  
甲：(得意忘形，又念)真不夜來少，覺不處處早，花落大鳥鳴，春眠風雨鳥。  
乙：別念了，早听清楚了。我問你，這也甚孟浩然……？  
甲：不，這回孟浩然沒事兒，何迅創作。  
乙：這……這……(搖頭)這……這叫創作！  
甲：(秘密地)創作這一首詩，削去柳絮……跟不咱們合股去！  
乙：(沒听清)大聲說兒。  
甲：(秘密地)能押十六塊錢。  
乙：(聲音稍大)能押十六塊錢。  
甲：(大聲地)十六塊！  
乙：別聽啊。  
甲：不聽？我不確定哪個雜誌的編輯部“倒黴”呢！  
(二人鞠躬退場)

**新群英會**

薛羽

周瑜：啊！仁兄，你來看，滿營將士可雄壯否？  
蔣干：賢弟，我全不相識啊！  
(某幹部依然“聯袂”在台上增戲)



FIGURE 67. Examples of manhua on the theme of theatergoing. *Manhua banyuekan*, no. 86 (April 8, 1957).

by boisterous tea and snack vendors, cascades of fruit peelings dropping onto their heads from the balcony above, or rodents scampering across a cinema stage below a public service slide announcing “Everyone take action to exterminate rats” (see figure 68).<sup>46</sup>

Conspicuously missing from manhua of stage entertainment is any sign of the cult of celebrity that had featured so centrally in pictorial magazines through the



FIGURE 68. Wan Nian (redrawn by Li Cunsong), “Real-Item Propaganda,” *Manhua banyuekan*, no. 83 (February 23, 1957). The caption on the left reads “Some movie theaters are crawling with rats.”

first half of the twentieth century. But we don’t see any idealization of the classic communist worker-peasant-soldier triad either. Instead, these manhua evince an identification with their audience. They do so by representing the experience of urban theatergoing in an amplified but recognizable form, such that readers become protagonists in a real-life comedy of errors. Indeed, theater-related manhua suggest how nearly all manhua of everyday satire encourage primarily urban readers to see themselves as actors in their own ongoing drama of daily life and to weave their own mundane stories of consumption, study, homelife, and leisure into a shared pattern of everyday existence linked to, but distinct from, the nation’s grand narrative of becoming.

Perhaps not surprisingly, given the reliance of this shadow history on Shanghai’s illustrated city magazines, the city itself also became an actor in the performance of the everyday. In the mid-1950s, however, the city was represented quite differently from the idealized panoramic manhua of the early 1950s. Those grand vistas of crowded patriotic rallies and elaborate culture palaces were designed to remake the city, and Shanghai in particular, into a vast arena of revolutionary participation and socialist reeducation. Pictures of the city in manhua of the mid-1950s amused readers with dysfunctional details of urban existence, presenting them with immediate and familiar snippets of everyday living rather than large-scale, depersonalized arenas of collective activity. One of the more outstanding examples is Ye Miao’s (1910–?) “Battered and Broken” (“Tiwu wanfu”) from May 1957, a cutaway view of a high-rise built during the treaty-port era (see figure 69). The subtitle, “Drawn for Certain Lovely Buildings of Shanghai,” implies a sympathy with the city’s architectural heritage in the aftermath of the haphazard socialist-era repurposing of older buildings as offices, apartments, and recreational facilities. The human figures, meanwhile, are demoted to the function of props, and their individual pursuits of work, play, and domestic chores contribute to the decline of the composition’s main character, named above the entryway as “Beautiful Building” (“Meili dalou”).

One of the most elaborate examples of the distinctly urban comic sketch was a two-page, multiartist collection of manhua published in September 1956 called “Scenes of Inconvenience” (“Fangbian fa men”), which pointed out daily-life

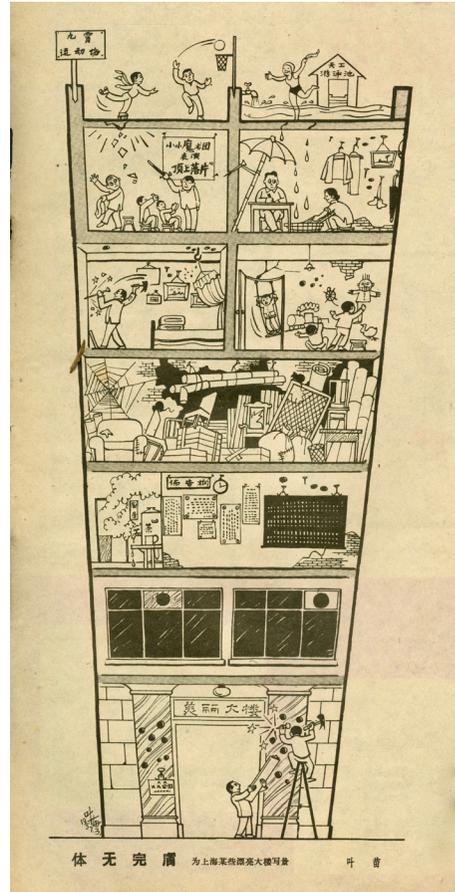


FIGURE 69. Ye Miao, “Battered and Broken,” *Manhua banyuekan*, no. 88 (May 8, 1957).

headaches in the capital, Beijing (see figure 70). The six different contributors each strike a slightly different register of the comic. To satirize overcrowded public transportation, Yu Ren relies on broad exaggeration for his depiction of a sardine tin on wheels, packed with distressed riders. Wen Bing (Jiang Wenbing, b. 1936) adopts a more realistic approach in his deeply shadowed manhua of a dozen or so people all attempting to hail one late-night pedicab. Somewhere between the absurdist and the realist is Jin Shui’s gag drawing of barbershop patrons whose beards have grown long while waiting their turn for a trim. Most remarkable among the six featured works, however, is a pantomime comic by Lu Shaofei. A member of the 1920s Manhua Society, key contributor to *Shanghai Sketch*, and editor of the landmark illustrated satire magazine *Modern Sketch* in the mid-1930s, Lu gave up creating manhua after 1949, according to most accounts.<sup>47</sup> Drawn in his signature style, fluent and spare, his six panels follow a hapless traveler, newly arrived by train in Beijing, who spends the late afternoon and evening searching

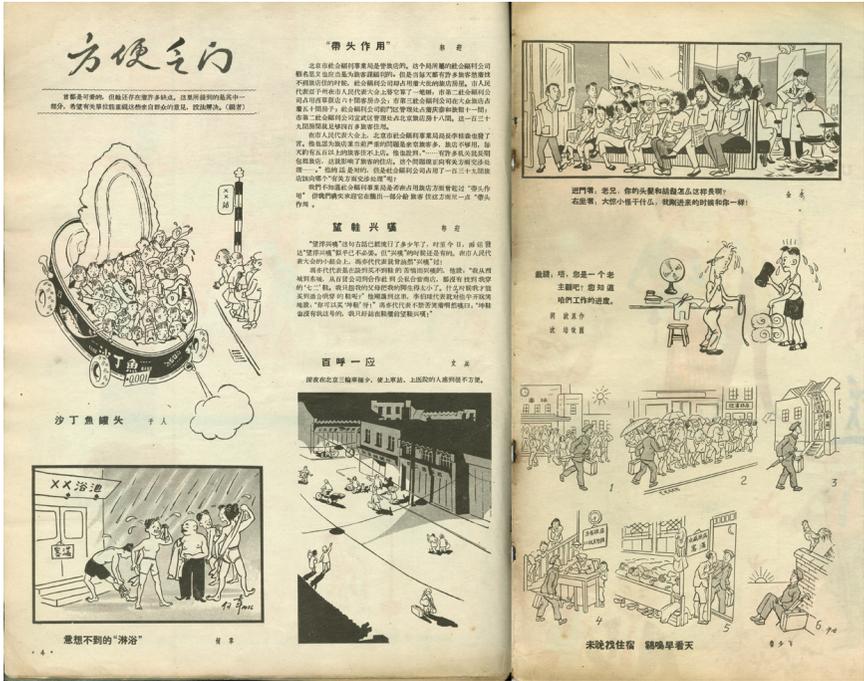


FIGURE 70. "Scenes of Inconvenience," *Manhua banyuekan*, no. 73 (September 23, 1956).

fruitlessly for lodging at a series of hotels and flophouses before spending the night in the street, where he eventually shares a view of the sunrise with a noisy rooster.

*External Satire and Western Lifestyles*

Through their official function of internal satire, the manhua of everyday life revived the practice of representing readers' lifestyles, much as treaty-port pictorials had been doing since the late nineteenth century. The other master category, external satire, allowed space for the magazine to introduce readers to global, cosmopolitan lifestyles, much as *Shanghai Sketch* and many other pictorials had done in the decades before 1949. *Manhua yuekan* did frequently publish upbeat, illustrated reports on Eastern Bloc culture, often focusing on artistic and cultural exchange with socialist countries such as the Soviet Union, Poland, East Germany, and Romania.<sup>48</sup> But during the mid-1950s in particular, readers of the magazine could also keep abreast of the popular culture of China's number one ideological enemy, the United States. The representations of American life were, of course, invariably negative. Yet they also satisfied one of the oldest conventions of the popular illustrated serial, that of providing readers with sensationalistic news stories from around the world. And, just as the manhua of everyday life explored the minutiae of domestic urban experience within the approved bounds



FIGURE 71. “Customer: Waiter, this dish is wet! Waiter: That is your soup, sir.” An American joke entitled “Soup,” translated by Huang Jiayin and illustrated by Zhao Yannian, *Manhua banyuekan*, no. 85 (March 23, 1957).

of socialist education, the various illustrated writings on American lifestyles maligned the bourgeois-capitalist West while treating readers to a remarkable level of detail on current US popular culture.

These backhanded representations of America climaxed during the Hundred Flowers period, from the second half of 1956 through the first half of 1957, in tandem with the flourishing of manhua of everyday life. Spanning that period—and, as we will see, even exceeding it—was a column of illustrated American jokes called American Follies (Meiguo yangxiang) that ran from July 1956 to October 1957.<sup>49</sup> Like Lu Shaofei, Huang Jiayin (1913–61), the column’s translator, had returned to illustrated satire after a lengthy interregnum. A graduate of Shanghai’s elite, Anglican-founded St. John’s University, Huang had regularly contributed humorous essays and minimalist pantomime manhua to the preeminent manhua pictorial of the 1930s, *Modern Sketch*.<sup>50</sup> His main pursuit at that time, however, was editing the journal *West Wind Monthly* (*Xifeng yuekan*) and other serials devoted to introducing Euro-American life and society to Chinese readers.<sup>51</sup>

The twenty-three installments of Follies gave Huang the opportunity to revisit his role as cultural mediator during the pre-1949 years. By editorial necessity, the jokes he curated were intended to evoke a sense of cultural and social superiority in *Manhua yuekan*’s readers by highlighting the evils of capitalist society, from social ills such as election fraud and unemployment to the clever mischief undertaken by a rogue’s gallery of unscrupulous characters: shirking soldiers, miserly millionaires, predatory lawyers, gold-digging women, and smart-mouthed waiters (see figure 71). Pirating American humor, however, had side effects. The situations and stereotypes condensed in these brief, humorous sketches delivered small but steady doses of Americana. In effect, they functioned as “artefacts . . . saturated in graphic representations of American life and culture,” providing “a vision of America that was knowable.”<sup>52</sup> Quite unlike the political caricatures found on

the covers of *Manhua yuekan*, which flattened the image of the United States into formulaic types through demonization and ridicule, Huang's American jokes added a distinctively American voice to the magazine's increasingly diverse forms of humor.

Aside from jokes, snippets from American film culture were another perennial feature of the treaty-port pictorial that kept *Manhua yuekan*'s readers abreast of Western popular culture. The first article related to Hollywood cinema, "News from Hollywood" ("Haolaiwu xinwen"), appeared in October 1956. Then, from January to April 1957, the magazine ran a column called Hollywood Diary (Haolaiwu riji), a roundup of sensationalistic news items excerpted from the American popular press.<sup>53</sup> Like American Follies, "News from Hollywood" and Hollywood Diary put a negative spin on Western society and entertainment, and they typically included closing comments disparaging American corruption, decadence, and hypocrisy. Readers who peered between the lines, however, could glean a rich variety of up-to-date, tabloid-style information on current films and celebrities. One item in "News from Hollywood," for instance, gave readers an inside look at American horror films with a piece about Universal Studios makeup artist Bud Westmore's (1918–73) creation of a space alien:

Here's how Bud designed the main character in a film about Martians: "Big head, big forehead, and big eyes that can bulge out and sink back in. In place of a nose it has a retractable tentacle, and inside the transparent brain float colorful ribbons." But that wasn't malformed enough for the creature, so: "Bud cut off its mouth and chin, making it a lot more terrifying." Bud predicts this film will create hysteria in film-goers. Now, readers may ask, isn't someone who goes to such lengths as Bud Westmore a horrifying monster himself?<sup>54</sup>

The author of the column Hollywood Diary, Huang Gang (1917–93), used a similar breezily skeptical tone to amuse readers with the latest factoids from American entertainment culture. In the first installment of the column, published on January 23, 1957, Huang comments sardonically on a theater in North Carolina that filled its seats by promising those who purchased tickets a kiss from female staff, reports on how the young actor Andy Griffith smashed chairs to prepare for an emotional film scene, and lists the going rates for performing various stunts, from \$35 for a fistfight to \$500 for flipping a convertible.<sup>55</sup>

*Manhua yuekan*'s ventures into Western popular culture did not stop with waiter jokes and cinema tidbits. During the Hundred Flowers period, the magazine also published exposés of Western television as well as excerpts and commentary on *Life* magazine articles covering topics such as "The American Woman."<sup>56</sup> In March 1957, the editors produced a special issue on the "Inside Story of the 'Free World'" ("Ziyou shijie' neimu zhuanhao"). Print runs at this time were peaking at just below 104,000 copies per issue, over five times the volume compared to when the magazine was rereleased in March 1953.<sup>57</sup> The number of individual readers would have been much higher, given that subscribers included schools,

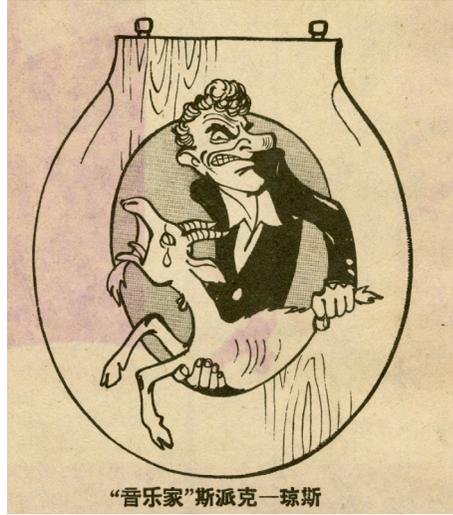


FIGURE 72. Caricature of the American musical satirist Spike Jones with his latrinophone, from Ke Ming's "Giants of American Culture Today," *Manhua banyuekan*, no. 88 (May 8, 1957).

libraries, culture centers, and work units. It is thus possible that over one million people encountered items like Ke Ming's (1923–2014) "Giants of American Culture Today" ("Dangdai Meiguo wenhua juzi"), which features cameos of five personalities extracted from American media: the publisher of a get-rich magazine, George Orrick; wiretapping expert Russell Mason; rock and roll (*yaobai wu*) singer Elvis Presley; the painting chimpanzee Betsy; and musical satirist Spike Jones (see figure 72).<sup>58</sup> The caption below Spike Jones's wolfish caricature is typical for how it blends sensationalism with the political program of vilifying Western decadence: "Spike Jones has made epochal 'innovations' in musical performance. He has twisted a goat's tail to make the animal bleat, played a toilet seat, banged on a washboard, and imitated the sound of hiccups. Spike Jones's 'fine work' has won accolades from US officialdom, and his music has been performed for the military, who particularly enjoy his 'latrinophone'—a toilet seat with strings."<sup>59</sup>

How might typical readers of *Manhua yuekan* have responded to something like this? The scoffing dismissal of American culture would come across strongly enough. Readers would also surely note Ke Ming's dry irony, and register its difference in tone from the strident pitch of other anti-American propaganda of the time. Not least, but easily overlooked, is that in 1950s China, toilet seats were an exotic appurtenance of modern life, found only in upscale Western-style homes and hotels dating from the Republican era, and thus rarely if ever encountered by the average reader. Indeed, without the illustration, most readers would probably be in the dark as to what a "flush toilet ring" (*choushui matong quan*) looked like or how it functioned. In that sense, the everyday detail of a latrine seat is, in its unique way, another example of how the external satire of *Manhua yuekan* played to both sides of the ideological fence by lampooning the decadent West even as it

communicated foreign, cosmopolitan lifestyles through the ephemera of foreign, and especially American, popular culture.

*A Hundred Flowers History of Manhua*

The discussion above has traced two modes of historical experience that played out on the pages of *Manhua yuekan* during the mid-1950s: the grand narrative of national construction, a top-down product of state ideology insisting on a progressive, linear movement into the future; and the shadow history of the everyday, a bottom-up legacy of the urban print entertainment grounded in the ongoing, contingent experience of the present experienced both locally and in the realm of global popular culture. The shadow history flourished within the heterogeneity of the manhua pictorial alongside, and at times even complementing, the brightly lit discourses of state propaganda. For readers of today, however, that mode of perception has, so to speak, been overshadowed by a story of resistance and repression, of writers and artists who challenged, and were crushed by, the party apparatus. By shifting focus away from that more familiar story, I do not deny the brute realities of the party-state's power over the creation of art or the fate of artists. Instead, my purpose is to direct attention to how the longstanding conventions of the manhua pictorial—its ironies, ambiguities, trivialities, double meanings, knowing asides, cosmopolitan attitude, and above all, its closely cultivated, entertainingly amplified representation of readers' experience of the everyday—enabled manhua artists to subtly insert an alternative “spectacle of the present” within the officially sanctioned, grand spectacle of national becoming.

One may ask if the artists and editors of *Manhua yuekan* were aware of this double discourse. The answer would have to be both no and yes. No, the notion of the everyday was never articulated as a discrete concept or approach standing in opposition to the dominant ideology of the time. For that very reason, manhua of the everyday functioned below the radar of official controls of the time—in stark contrast with manhua that followed the party's call for loyal, constructive critique—but were then singled out for criticism during the Anti-Rightist Campaign. But on the other hand, yes, these artists did see themselves as the creators and custodians of a distinct cultural practice, one that took the material form of the manhua pictorial, the print genre whose versatility and heterogeneity allowed for interleaved representations of multiple temporalities and modernities.

In fact, in the first four months of 1957, at the height of the Hundred Flowers period, another history appeared in the magazine: that of manhua itself. Written by Huang Miaozi, one more artist who came of age during the 1930s, the series of seven illustrated essays reflects on fifty years of manhua art and artists, from pictures satirizing the Qing dynasty Manchu rulers before the 1911 Republican Revolution and anti-warlord imagery of the early Republican years to anti-imperialist manhua from the May Fourth period and anti-Japanese propaganda of the War of Resistance against Japan. Huang's tone is reportorial and sympathetic. He

spotlights, and identifies with, the artists who developed manhua, such as Ma Xingchi, an ally of “the young intellectuals of the May Fourth Era who stood on the front lines of revolution”; Ye Qianyu, who “graphically and vividly” reflected “the most authentic scenes of contemporary social life”; and Huang Wennong, a founding member of the Manhua Society, whose “scorching pen certainly inspired the patriotic passion of multitudes.”<sup>60</sup> Huang also describes approvingly the magazines that hosted manhua, like *Shanghai Sketch* and its many descendants in the mid-1930s “golden age”: *Modern Sketch*, *Modern Puck* (*Manhua jie*, 1936), *Oriental Puck*, and more.

As required by the ideological conventions of the time, Huang frames his story in terms of manhua’s contribution to the Chinese nation’s struggle to free itself from the forces of feudalism and imperialism. But like the many double-edged works printed in *Manhua yuekan*, the piece does more than toe the party line. Set in and among the surge of reinvented comic forms by artists young and old, his history implies a link between the creative efforts of the present and the manhua of the past, in effect asserting the lineage of an independent practice of popular art born and bred in Shanghai, the treaty-port entrepôt of global cultures. Huang says as much when he remarks on how the artists of that time “planted the seeds for the manhua we know today.”<sup>61</sup>

## CONCLUSION

As soon as the Anti-Rightist Campaign began in July 1957, the editors of *Manhua yuekan* followed up on Huang Miaozi’s history with a pair of politically orthodox pieces on manhua of the 1940s. The first, called “Memories of Victory” (“Shengli de huiyi”), reprinted manhua of the People’s Army from the wartime communist base areas. The second, “Viewing the Old Society through Old Manhua” (“Cong jiu manhua kan jiu Zhongguo”), offered an array of manhua from the late 1940s protesting the miseries and injustices of Chinese society during the Civil War years, just before the founding of the PRC in 1949.<sup>62</sup> Both accounts aimed to stifle the independent narrative line Huang had initiated.

This “rectification” of Huang Miaozi’s history squares with the prevailing view that the anti-Rightist crackdown stopped manhua in its tracks. But once again, that conclusion stands only if one thinks of manhua in the conventional sense of political cartoons, or even more narrowly as cartoons designed to express dissent against the communist bureaucratic machine. It is true that such works were almost completely banished from *Manhua yuekan* and public discourse in general from July 1957 onward. But the loss of that one subgenre did not spell the end of manhua if, as I have argued, we widen the scope of manhua to include the full range of materials that comprise the Chinese pictorial satire magazine’s modern tradition of multigeneric heterogeneity.



FIGURE 73. An installment of Zhang Leping's *Annals of Father and Son* comic strip. The strip's title is "Attraction," and the bulletin board is labeled "Sino-Soviet Friendship Gallery." *Manhua banyuekan*, no. 124 (November 8, 1958).

Indeed, when reading *Manhua yuekan* beyond the Anti-Rightist Campaign, one finds more continuity than rupture. The illustrated joke column American Follies carried on unchanged into October 1957, with new installments by Huang Jiayin posted in the very same issues as blistering anti-Rightist assaults on Shen Tongheng and other artists. The regular feature Hollywood Diary vanished after May 1957, but sensationalist oddities on the outrages of American bourgeois culture persisted. The October 8, 1957, issue, for example, featured an illustrated report on two Yale students who launched a counterattack on the popular "I Like Elvis" buttons by handing out "I Like Ludwig [Beethoven]" buttons. A little over a year later, *Manhua yuekan* included a report on the 1958 horror film *Macabre*, whose promotional materials guaranteed \$1,000 to anyone who died of fright while watching the film.<sup>63</sup> Liu Xiaoqing's distinctively styled manhua of everyday satire remained unaffected in the immediate aftermath of the anti-Rightist clampdown, and in January 1958 the magazine even added a lighthearted serialized comic strip by Zhang Leping, *Annals of Father and Son* (*Fuzi chunqiu*) (see figure 73). The anti-Rightist scare also left largely untouched the apolitical jokes and gag manhua published in a regular column simply entitled Humor (Youmo).<sup>64</sup> *Manhua yuekan* continued to function as a visually rich arts magazine as well, and it still included the trademark styles of veteran manhua artists from the Republican era. For instance, Zhang Guangyu, who remained on the editorial committee of the magazine through its final issues in 1960, applied his fluency with surrealism, folk forms, and decorative modernism to cover art that ranged from a fantastical satire of Eisenhower to ornate depictions of the sunrise of socialism (see figure 74).

That said, as *Manhua yuekan* carried on into 1959 and 1960, it entered a phase of decline. The demise of internal political satire was certainly part of the problem. More broadly, however, the magazine lost touch with everyday spectacles and cosmopolitan sensibilities. No longer did it structure and affirm the



FIGURE 74. Zhang Guangyu, “The Sun of Socialism Rises in the East,” cover of *Manhua banyuekan*, no. 129 (January 23, 1959).

micro-occurrences of readers’ daily lives, leaving no pathways for a meaningful imagination of an interpretive community separate from the time and space of the grand, collective national narrative. Reading issues of *Manhua yuekan* published during this period, one can see and feel the periodical growing pale as the life-blood of the cosmopolitan pictorial entertainment magazine drained away.

Detailing this death by a thousand cuts would be a grim business. The situation was surely exacerbated by the departure of many leading manhua artists to factories and farms to be reeducated by laboring alongside workers and peasants, and by the sheer physical hardship of sustaining creative output through the desperate food shortages wrought by the combination of natural disasters and bureaucratic mismanagement that plagued the Great Leap Forward. Keeping our eyes as ever on the pages of the magazine itself, we can at least outline how its representations of time and space drifted away from the practices of manhua magazines of the past and from the lived experience of readers.

In terms of time, as we have seen in *Shanghai Sketch*, *Resistance Sketch*, and *Manhua yuekan*, representations of everyday life flowed with the natural rhythms

of the seasons. As serial publications and city magazines, these periodicals replicated and guided the cyclic changes in the familiar material ephemera of life in a modern urban environment. For all their ideological differences, both *Shanghai Sketch* and *Manhua yuekan* featured sketches of short sleeves, watermelons, and trips to the seaside in their summer issues. And when readers of manhua pictorials put on their winter scarves and overcoats, so too did the figures pictured in the magazines, no matter whether they were heading to see a new film in Shanghai's French Concession in December 1929, fleeing up the Yangtze River to wartime Wuhan in November 1937, or emerging from a state-run department store laden with food and fabric in January 1955. These publications, whether pre- or post-1949, also recognized the official cycles of national holidays and commemorations. In *Manhua yuekan*, this manufactured temporality of nation, often linked to political campaigns, loomed especially large but, as described above, struck a certain balance with the temporality of the everyday. By the middle of 1959, however, that equilibrium was lost. The content of *Manhua yuekan* became correlated ever more with, on the one hand, dystopian visions clocked to the latest global depredations of capitalism and imperialism and, on the other, utopian imagery perpetually celebrating the Great Leap Forward's mountains of wheat, house-sized pumpkins, and gargantuan ears of corn.

Representations of lived space changed just as dramatically. As we have seen, *Manhua yuekan* of the mid-1950s revisited Republican-era spaces of everyday consumption with a parade of sketches structured around comically mundane mishaps involving defective products, shopping, dining, theatergoing, recreation, courtship, and travel. From 1958 on, the Great Leap Forward's call to celebrate collective production wiped out manhua that spoke to the petty absurdities of daily life situations. During this last stage of *Manhua yuekan*'s ten-year run, everyone is smiling and nothing goes wrong, unless you are a Western imperialist, in which case all ventures end in humiliation and misery. Discussion, debate, and analysis regarding manhua also fled the pages of the magazine, creating a general sense of apathy and resignation.

However formulaic and uninspired, *Manhua yuekan* continued to supply readers with a *mélange* of styles and conventions in the tradition of the magazine miscellany. This persistence of sheer pictorial variety means that no single work can fully speak to the magazine's downward spiral. We can get some sense of this terminal dysfunction, however, by examining a simple manhua by Gu Pu (1923–?) entitled "Two Hearts in Accord" ("Xinxin xiangyin") from early February 1960 (see figure 75). The bottom half of the frame sets the scene with a combination of tried and true cartoon clichés beholden to the legacy of modern comic art: a park bench, the silhouette of a young man and woman, and a voyeur's point of view. Above the man's cap and the woman's stylishly coiffed hair floats a cloud-like speech bubble. Here, where one would look to find the gag phrase that completes the sketch, we find instead a visual commonplace of the socialist period—a



FIGURE 75. Gu Pu, “Two Hearts in Accord,” *Manhua banyuekan*, no. 154 (February 8, 1960).

production-chart arrow, here labeled “Leap Forward”—shooting skyward through a pair of Valentine hearts.

Gu Pu’s attempt at humor, coming as it does during the final months of *Manhua yuekan*’s existence, is an example of unintended irony that speaks to the dilemma manhua faced in China’s new socialist regime. For in compelling imagery from the shadows to adopt the rhetoric of state propaganda, he pictures in miniature the gap between the history of the present, located in the fugitive assignments of the everyday, and the history of the nation-state, envisioned as the grand arrow of progress thrusting into the sky.