

# Introduction

## *Manhua, Magazines, Modernity*

I first encountered manhua during the mid-1990s, in a converted bomb shelter that housed the China Bookstore's Old Periodicals Department. Located underneath Beijing's Xidan neighborhood, just west of Tiananmen Square, the place was a latter-day catacomb filled with dusty stacks of old journals and newspapers piled high on tables, shelves, and the cement floor. Customers were free to rummage through the yellowed, sometimes badly tattered or worm-eaten goods, salvaged from defunct libraries or perhaps purchased by the bale from the children of Beijing's old-generation intelligentsia. On one visit, a magazine cover caught my eye. Against a white background stood a pigeon-toed figure with a rotund, igloo-shaped body. His name was Niubizi, or Ox-Nose (see figure 1). From his perfectly round head sprouted four thin, wavy strands of hair, one of them tethered to a tiny kite. Four arms held high a brush pen, a golf club, a string of Buddhist rosary beads, and a Peking opera horsewhip. *The Ox-Head* (*Niutou manhua*) was the magazine's name, and it had been published in Shanghai in May 1937. As I leafed gently through the dry, flaking pages, my eyes met caricatures of Stalin giving snappy answers to Roosevelt, the Chinese American actress Anna May Wong chatting with Greta Garbo, and Hitler carrying Mussolini and Hirohito on his back. I saw a drawing of a young couple in a park, captioned in English, "Miss, Give Me Kiss!" The center pages opened to a color spread of a gargantuan female nude supine in a park and crawling with Lilliputian men enjoying the spring "scenery." I bought the magazine.<sup>1</sup>

Thinking back, it seems fitting that my relationship with manhua, usually called cartoons or comics in English, started with a magazine, because this book is about both. Why both? Cartoons are cartoons, and magazines are magazines; what is to be gained by combining the two? My reply is that many hours spent marveling at, puzzling over, and gradually deciphering these polymorphic pictures



FIGURE 1. Front cover of *The Ox-Head* (*Niutou manhua*), no. 1 (May 1937), designed by Huang Yao. © Huang Yao Foundation.

has convinced me that the two are inseparable. Manhua emerged and flourished in dynamic relation to the popular pictorial magazines, or *huabao*, that hosted them. They were part of the era's print media ecology, just as today's Internet memes are creatures of digital social media. In that sense, understanding manhua apart from magazines would be like analyzing an artifact apart from the archaeological matrix in which it was found. It can be done, but much is lost.

Beyond manhua and magazines, there is a third term. Just as manhua cannot be divorced from the pictorial, the pictorial belongs to the urban experience of modernity. Manhua, magazines, and modernity. These are the three key concepts I explore in the closest historical detail I can muster. Manhua's peak years of invention and innovation centered in Shanghai in the mid-1930s, a time when Shanghai's burgeoning market for print entertainment climaxed and this cosmopolitan but troubled metropolis reached the height of notoriety as the "Paris of the

East.” The city during this period spawned dozens, if not hundreds, of pictorial magazines, publications that were integral to the imagination of the city as an icon of the modern. The magazines themselves have proven to be rich sources of historical information. Yet the connections between and among the art of manhua, the publications they appeared in, and the city that spawned both have received little more than passing attention. This neglect has skewed, and even impoverished, our understanding of China’s contribution to the global phenomenon of cartoon art. To my mind, this misrecognition is, in part, a problem of definition. The issue is not, however, one of defining manhua more rigorously. On the contrary, it calls for making the word *less* defined and thereby opening manhua up to larger historical phenomena of modernity, especially as mediated by and through the pictorial magazine. This book is an attempt to breach the conceptual walls dividing manhua, magazines, and the modern city.

I hope to make the logic of sending manhua back into the pages of pictorials seem self-evident. Linking manhua to magazines, however, departs from the usual ways of thinking and talking about the Chinese “cartoon.” In this chapter, I will make an argument for prying manhua away from these conventions and propose a different vision. I open by retelling the well-known story of the word manhua’s introduction to the modern Chinese lexicon in 1925, attached to the work of artist and author Feng Zikai (1898–1975). Here, I make several points. The first is that the word *manhua*, a loan from Japanese, acquired currency in very specific circumstances best understood with reference to the market in illustrated serials in Shanghai at the time. I also suggest how the varied subject matter of manhua in the years that followed corresponded to the heterogeneity of the popular pictorials that hosted them.

Next, I review current scholarly approaches to understanding manhua. I aim for three things. First, I show how the narrative impulse to construct a story of “the Chinese cartoon” has made manhua out to be something more coherent and more motivated than is, in my view, warranted. Second, I examine these motivations. That is, I suggest how the making of these narratives about manhua has been driven by ideological agendas grounded in assumptions about the power of visual imagery. Third, I propose my alternative: the pictorial turn. I construct a theoretical foundation for reading manhua in dynamically mediated relation to the pictorial magazine. My emphasis is on what W. J. T. Mitchell has called “picturing theory,” an approach that recognizes that “no theory of media can rise above media themselves.” Media theory, in that sense, has to be vernacular—“embedded in media practices”—meaning that the “relation to media is one of mutual and reciprocal constitution: we create them, and they create us.”<sup>2</sup> Of course, for any theory that claims to be vernacular, seeing is believing. I follow up, then, by analyzing a 1912 satirical drawing called “The Real Shanghai” (“Shanghai zhenxiang”), whose mixed messages demonstrate the theoretical points I want to make. That done, I preview the book’s chapters, each of which attempts,

case-by-case, to picture manhua's symbiosis with pictorial magazines and with the modern urban experience from the mid-1920s on through the 1950s.

#### INTRODUCING MANHUA

As I have already mentioned, *manhua* is a loan word from the Japanese. It is a Chinese cognate of *manga* that began to gain currency around 1925 when used to refer to lyrical monochrome paintings by the artist and writer Feng Zikai.<sup>3</sup> One might think, then, that China's manhua art, like the word itself, came from Japan, and there is certainly something to be said for the Sino-Japanese connection. Feng's understated style was influenced by contemporary Japanese art, which the artist was exposed to during a sojourn in Tokyo. But he also took inspiration from certain Chinese artists, whose work gave him the confidence and direction to develop his own distinctive neotraditionalist style of ink painting. Indirectly, but just as important, Feng's style was also shaped by his personal dissatisfaction with the mimetic realism found in the Western-style art then being introduced to both Japan and China.<sup>4</sup> It would be an oversimplification, then, to assert some sort of unidirectional foreign influence shaping China's manhua based simply on the borrowing of that word from the Japanese. Much more important is where, how, and why the word *manhua* became attached to Feng's work. For that, we need to turn to a magazine.

Feng's paintings made their debut, under the name "Zikai manhua," as an editorial stratagem in the Shanghai-based *Literary Weekly* (*Wenxue zhoubao*) (see figure 2).<sup>5</sup> The journal's editor, a progressively minded young intellectual named Zheng Zhenduo (1898–1958), was desperate to make his highbrow, Europeanized, and rather straitlaced journal competitive with a rising tide of popular illustrated tabloids, known disparagingly as "mandarin duck and butterfly" magazines for their fascination with tales of romance. In the view of Zheng and his cohort of literary elites, the butterfly journals were no less than ideological poison. Their sheer popularity, combined with what were seen as culturally retrograde messages, threatened to overwhelm Zheng's project of reforming Chinese readers through serious-minded, and often highly Europeanized, writing. As Geremie Barmé puts it, "When launching his new *Literary Weekly*, Zheng Zhenduo wanted to employ Feng Zikai's paintings and graphic design as a way of competing with the beguiling images used by what he regarded as the opposition; Zikai's clean and simple, even austere, paintings, which added a contemporary resonance to elements of the former elite culture, were in striking contrast to the neotraditional sentimental eroticism of the Butterfly School."<sup>6</sup>

Zheng Zhenduo, in other words, deployed Feng Zikai's art to distinguish his journal on Shanghai newsstands from the crass commercialism of competitors, whose contributors he at one point described as "literary whores" (*wenchang*) for how they pandered to the lowest common denominator of mass taste.<sup>7</sup> Taking the higher ground, however, meant adopting the methods of the "enemy," that is,



FIGURE 2. Feng Zikai's painting "Several People Remembering the Past at the Riverside Pavilion" ("Jiren xiangyi zai jianglou") as reproduced in the October 4, 1925, issue of the journal *Literary Weekly* (*Wenxue zhoubao*).

adorning his text-heavy literary journal with pictures. Feng's fresh, engaging, and easily reproduced black-on-white panels served Zheng's purpose well. By lightening the pages of the *Literary Weekly* with poetic vignettes of everyday life, he gave readers something of the look of a popular illustrated magazine but kept at arm's length what he and his colleagues perceived as the cruder middle- and even low-brow tastes associated with those publications.

The coinage *manhua* complemented this effect. As a foreign borrowing, *manhua* was readily available for linguistic repurposing. In the context of the Shanghai print culture of the mid-1920s, adopting the word *manhua* from the Japanese helped carve out a sphere of visual representation distinct from the kinds of illustration already populating the entertainment serials that the *Literary Weekly* had to contend with. Such drawings were associated with a set of overlapping terms that reflected their content, such as *fengcihua* (satirical drawings) *shishihua* (current affairs drawings), *xiehua* (humorous drawings), and *huajihua* (comic drawings), to name a few.<sup>8</sup> The etymology of the word *manhua* helped as well. The first character in the bisyllabic compound, *man* 漫, evokes a sense of the casual, the wide-ranging, the leisurely, the unstudied, and the impromptu. That cluster

of connotations fits with the longstanding elite ideal of scholar-amateur painting, described by art historian James Cahill as “part of a larger complex of interdependent ideas and attitudes, all aimed at dematerializing the art, removing from it all taint of vulgarity, commercialism, functionalism, philistine response.”<sup>9</sup>

Vulgarity, commercialism, functionalism, and philistine response actually describe rather well the popular illustrated serials that the *Literature Weekly* competed against. What did they look like? Generalization is hazardous, as dozens of illustrated magazines marketed to different readerships circulated in Shanghai in the mid-1920s. In fact, the year 1925, when Feng Zikai’s manhua first appeared in print, has been described as the start of a “high tide” (*gaochao*) of popular serials coming out of the treaty-port city’s newspaper row.<sup>10</sup> For our purposes, the most important publication riding that tide was a two-page broadsheet, whose run overlapped with the *Literary Weekly*, called *China Camera News* (*Sanri huabao*, 1925–27). In one respect, *China Camera News* was a typical illustrated tabloid of its time. As one of an estimated thirty copycats of the successful *Pictorial Shanghai* (*Shanghai huabao*, 1925–33), its look and style were in step with the fast company it kept on the city’s overheated print market.<sup>11</sup> The main reason to focus on *China Camera News*, however, is that it was staffed by artists who, as we will see later in this book, would gain recognition as initiators of a brand of manhua very different from Feng’s signature low-key style.

Even a cursory glance at a full page from *China Camera News* reveals why these serials were often called “miscellanies” and why the literary elite denounced them (see figure 3). The layout is carefully balanced around a dozen pictures, mostly captioned line drawings and half-tone photographs, with about the same number of short typeset articles. The images show us, for example, a young starlet lying on a leopard-skin rug, political cartoons on foreign and domestic affairs, a carefully posed female nude, a landscape painting and a landscape photograph, a portrait of an opera actress sandwiched between calligraphic encomia written by a politically connected fan, and a pair of still shots from a new film featuring a child star.<sup>12</sup> The typeset portion of the page covers a range of local urban ephemera, including a report on a celebrity gala at the Palais Café (Anlegong) ballroom, a mildly salacious anecdote about a woman physical education instructor, a humorous tidbit from the set of a film directed by dramatist Hong Shen (1894–1955), a droll editorial commentary on supposed prostitution among movie actresses, and a number of doggerel-style poems, in the genre of cleverly worded “bamboo twig ballads” (*zhuzhici*), on current events.

The materials reproduced in the texts and images—current events, humor, fine art, politics, borderline pornography, and on the front page of this and other issues, copious advertisements—are topical, ephemeral, and heterogeneous. Though confounding to the present-day reader standing far in time and space from the social milieu of 1920s Shanghai, the repetitive presentation of these scattered surfaces of modern life, every three days in the case of *China Camera News*, helped readers



FIGURE 3. The back page of the August 5, 1925, issue of the two-sided broadsheet tabloid *China Camera News*.

of the time make sense of their urban experience. As Gerry Beegan writes in his study of London’s early city pictorials, “The illustrated periodical’s unique power . . . was that of visual and textual repetition. On a regular basis it was able to reproduce, reduplicate, reiterate, and recirculate apparently slight fragments of knowledge, which, through their accumulation became very significant. Like the dots of the screen these multiple shallow fragments provided a comprehensible picture of modernity.”<sup>13</sup> There was, in other words, a method to the miscellany. For urban dwellers desiring to “navigate the fleeting, anonymous encounters of economic and social life,” the diffuse, superficial, recurrent, but continuously updated knowledge supplied by illustrated tabloids like *China Camera News* “created a body of timely knowledge and also an awareness that this knowledge was shared.”<sup>14</sup> These publications, then, purveyed a heterogenic, panoramic vision of modernity and community tied intimately to a practice of everyday life in the city.

Fast forward a decade after *China Camera News* to 1935, and we arrive at the height of popularity for China’s pictorial satire magazines. By this time, manhua had come into its own as a dizzying variety of humorous and satirical imagery—line drawings, paintings, photomontage, and so on—that saturated news and entertainment periodicals. We get a glimpse of the heterogeneity of subject matter by reading a call for submissions printed in the December 1935 issue of the period’s premier manhua magazine, *Modern Sketch* (*Shidai manhua*, 1934–37).

Contributors were invited to send in the following varieties of work: “(1) current affairs manhua; (2) world and international manhua; (3) manhua of manners; (4) reportage manhua; (5) finance manhua; (6) manhua of social life; (7) historical costume manhua; (8) caricature; (9) fantasy manhua; (10) travel manhua (including on-site special correspondence); (11) family manhua; (12) youth manhua; (13) school life manhua; (14) sports manhua; (15) fashion manhua; (16) stage and screen manhua; (17) children’s freestyle manhua; (18) long-running serial manhua.”<sup>15</sup>

The practical utility of such a listing is certainly questionable, as by item eight or nine it becomes obvious that one can submit manhua on pretty much any subject at all. What makes the list significant, however, is the thread that holds these categories together. Readers of the time would easily recognize each item as a bread-and-butter topic of Shanghai’s pictorials. And indeed, we just saw many of these subjects (current affairs, sports, fashion, stage and screen, etc.) featured on a single page of *China Camera News*. There is no need to stop at pictures, either. It is sometimes forgotten that China’s illustrated satire magazines, like their counterparts elsewhere in the world, included written material as well. This same call for submissions from the editors of *Modern Sketch* also lays out sixteen categories of writing, or *manwen*. These range from newsy tidbits and breezy opinion pieces to celebrity and political gossip, science and inventions, translated satire and humor, jokes and gags, modern life, and scripts for humorous and satirical skits.

These two listings, one for pictures, the other for words, gesture toward an interdependence of image and text in these magazines. They also caution against discussing one without considering the other, for it was the opportunistic, all-inclusive blend of pictures and writing that gave pictorials their broad, timely, topical appeal, and it was the ability of manhua to insinuate themselves into such a blend that led to their success. It is this protean quality that asks us to *undefine* manhua by returning them to the active, hybrid media environment from whence they came.

#### NARRATING MANHUA

Quite understandably, existing studies typically begin from the assumption that manhua are a stable and readily categorizable thing, a genre of popular art that can stand on its own alongside other pictorial genres, like national-style painting (*guohua*), oil painting (*youhua*), animation (*donghua*), or wood engraving (*banhua*). Manhua thus become a more or less fixed discursive object that can be isolated, analyzed, and, most importantly, made the subject of narratives that would tell us where manhua came from, who created them, where they appeared, how they evolved, and the role they played in larger historical stories, most prominently the master narratives of modern Chinese history.

A ready example of this tendency is the narrative of historical origins that studies of manhua often feel obliged to tell. By selecting items that seem to resonate with

a current definition of the “cartoon”—for example, simplification, exaggeration, humor, and satirical intent—this approach produces a story of distinctly Chinese manhua beginning eight thousand years ago with patterns on Neolithic Banpo pottery and continuing up through the dynasties, as seen on pieces of sculpture, on stone carvings, and in various genres of painting.<sup>16</sup> Tales like this satisfy a desire for deep beginnings, usually inflected with dreams of national cultural identity, that provide a foundation for raising manhua to the level of a discrete, researchable category of pictorial art with a long and distinguished pedigree. The weakness of this approach lies in how coherence depends on historical anachronism. As I have just shown in the discussion of the word manhua’s introduction to Chinese print culture, the meanings of that word were constructed and reconstructed at specific moments for specific purposes. Using a modern-day generic definition of manhua to filter the past through millennia, then, is more than misleading; it guides us into the ruse of making the past serve the present’s ideological need for a nation-centered discourse of depth and continuity.<sup>17</sup>

That said, the proponents of this kind of origin myth for Chinese manhua do generally recognize the tenuousness of their stories; they can, after all, provide little more than disconnected dots across thousands of years. In contrast, the idea of modern manhua as a generically coherent object of study is firmly established. In fact, it grows only more powerful in the contestation among current scholarly narratives. The battle of these narratives begins with Bi Keguan’s influential book-length survey *A History of China’s Manhua* (*Zhongguo manhua shi*), first published in 1986, and its underlying story of manhua’s struggle against China’s foreign imperialist adversaries on the one hand and reactionary domestic foes on the other. In Bi’s telling, manhua becomes a protagonist in China’s century-long quest for national salvation, an epic tale that gains momentum with the protonationalist attacks on the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), accelerates with the early twentieth-century’s anti-imperialist, anti-fascist struggles against foreign powers, especially Japan, and culminates in the founding of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) under Mao Zedong in 1949. The narrative is compelling, but not original. In one respect, it sticks closely to the heroic vision of manhua that was consolidated decades before during the War of Resistance against Japan (also known as the Second Sino-Soviet War, 1937–45) by the art’s wartime practitioners, who were Bi’s direct artistic predecessors and mentors. One of the most influential of these early artists was Huang Mao (1917–?). Huang’s 1943 book *Talks on Manhua Art* (*Manhua yishu jianghua*) declares on page one that over their relatively short span of existence, China’s manhua have “at every stage tended toward greater perfection in the completion of the historical mission bestowed on them.”<sup>18</sup> Bi’s account also aligns with the orthodox Chinese Communist Party version of twentieth-century Chinese history developed in the 1940s and institutionalized in the 1950s. Both narratives recognize the War of Resistance and the ensuing Chinese Civil War (1946–49), as crucial turning points in the grand narrative of China’s national liberation.

For all its ideological limitations, Bi Keguan's pioneering study has been and still is an important resource for manhua scholarship.<sup>19</sup> In fact, as the only comprehensive work on manhua for several decades, Bi's *History* has determined critical positions for subsequent studies. Among these, one of the earliest and most influential accounts is that of historian Chang-tai Hung. Hung's work on manhua of the War of Resistance and the Chinese Civil War develops Bi's salvational narrative such that anti-Japanese manhua, centering on the activities of the National Salvation Manhua Propaganda Corps (Jiuwang manhua xuanchuandui), become something akin to the hero of a historical novel. Thus, manhua, driven by foreign invaders from the vibrant but decadent treaty port Shanghai, entered the Chinese interior, thereupon discovering its potential to become "great Chinese art" by merging indigenous tradition and Western influence in a way that reflected reality and mobilized the nation's popular masses to help turn the tide against the Japanese.<sup>20</sup> Hung's story continues into the civil war, with manhua joining the internecine life-and-death political struggle on the side of justice, its sword of satire rallying popular opinion against the corrupt, antidemocratic Nationalist regime.<sup>21</sup>

By constructing a coherent subject and sending it along a familiar trajectory, Hung makes his story of manhua approachable and comprehensible. Yet Hung's story of manhua in the service of national resistance is, in fact, the path of least resistance. It follows a narrative trail originally blazed by manhua artists' own accounts of their role in wartime China and later widened by Huang Mao's and Bi Keguan's histories. Subsequent studies of manhua have challenged this portrayal. They do not negate the grand wartime narrative so much as either supplement it or point out its gaps and flaws. Hung himself in fact moderates his story of manhua by presenting the milder, more pacifist artistic vision of Feng Zikai's manhua as a humanist foil to the utilitarian impulses of wartime propaganda art.<sup>22</sup> Geremie Barmé's book-length biography of Feng, cited earlier in this chapter, does much the same, though in greater depth and breadth, to demonstrate how across the mid-twentieth century, forces of commerce and politics marginalized Feng's subdued, individualist, lyrical style. More direct disputations of the heroic wartime narrative of manhua have taken on the representation of women, depictions of children, and the politically sensitive issue of manhua artists who collaborated with the Japanese.<sup>23</sup>

Whatever position they adopt, all these stories and counter-stories are bound to a certain assumption: that manhua exercise a particular power over their viewers, be it inspirational or nefarious. The dominant narrative of wartime manhua, for instance, creates a heroic subject whose true identity emerges only as it learns to exercise the right kind of power over its audience by teaching the Chinese people to fight to save their country first from Japan and then from the corrupt, despotic Nationalist rulers. The counter-narratives, meanwhile, take issue with this story by showing how manhua were indeed efficacious images but in ways that exceed and even cast doubt on the standard nationalistic account. Thus, where anti-Japanese

manhua depicting victorious violence against the enemy might have aroused a sense of militant patriotism in otherwise benighted peasants and townspeople, the pacifist elements of Feng Zikai's manhua moderated viewers' more bloodthirsty wartime impulses with Buddhist-inspired respect for life in all its forms. And while one might think that manhua of Chinese women raped and mutilated by Japanese soldiers would spark intense feelings of patriotic indignation, these same images might also inadvertently end up hypermasculinizing the perpetrators.<sup>24</sup>

Did manhua have this kind of power over audiences? Interestingly, Louise Edwards concludes her study of sexual violence in anti-Japanese propaganda manhua by questioning tacit assumptions of their potency. These images, she remarks, are in many cases far more complex than they have been given credit for, which makes gauging actual reader response a near impossible task.<sup>25</sup> In other words, we are on shaky ground when trying to figure out what these pictures *do* in terms of influencing their original audiences. But at the same time, in order to fashion an argument, or counter-argument, studies of manhua have had to presume that these images exercised some sort of effect on their audience. If they did not, why bother to write about them at all?

One way to move beyond commonsense questions of audience response is, following W. J. T. Mitchell, to ask not what these pictures *do* but what they *want*. In other words, what if the clashing narratives of wartime manhua are driven by the pictures' own desire for power? What if these narratives rely on a primal—or at least unexamined—tendency to fetishize images, to project onto manhua an imagined power born of the critic's desire 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>26</sup> If such is the case, then it would be the pictures themselves that have won the “war,” rather like mercenaries who receive their pay no matter which side they fight for, because, in the end, they have mastered their beholders, Medusa-like, “turning him or her into an image for the gaze of the picture.”<sup>27</sup>

This entrancement with the visual power of images continues in studies of post-1949 manhua. Scholarly work on manhua from the early Mao years has been quite condemnatory.<sup>28</sup> The antagonism is clearly ideological, and it harkens back to the early Cold War period, more specifically the year 1951, when American journalist and intelligence specialist Edward Hunter bluntly described the manhua of Chinese communist propaganda campaigns as a technique of “brainwashing” invented to convert otherwise perfectly sane Chinese citizens into warmongering, anti-American “blind fanatics.”<sup>29</sup> The term *brainwashing* has become a linguistic relic of the Cold War, but recent studies of manhua continue to be inflected by notions of totalitarian deception, censorship, and thought control. Thus, we read of manhua artists sacrificing creative autonomy under “the Party's total control of art,” audiences for manhua succumbing to manipulative anti-American propaganda, and the primary vehicle for this art, the manhua magazine, gradually compelled to give up its supposed stock in trade—political critique—under the

pressure of Chinese communist state supervision.<sup>30</sup> As a result of Cold War ideology's lingering influence, scholarly analysis seems compelled to acknowledge the power of manhua imagery. Sometimes we see this happening through the urge to unveil, to lay bare the antiliberal, utilitarian political motivations behind communist art. Other times it comes through as an impulse to denigrate, by arguing that manhua in the Mao era were robbed of an essential creative independence. Either way, we are told that manhua matter only insofar as their stories can be made to speak to larger stories serving national interests.

I have so far discussed manhua created only from 1937 to the early 1950s, limiting my argument to periods of war and nation-building when global conflict brought forth contentious aesthetic issues surrounding political propaganda and popular mobilization. What, then, of prewar manhua, the boisterous, cosmopolitan, commercially driven work generated by Shanghai's publishing boom of the Republican period, from about 1912 to the onset of war with Japan in 1937? When it comes to these earlier manhua, another narrative beckons. That story invites us to nostalgically celebrate a golden age of creativity, cosmopolitanism, and open expression that was interrupted by the Japanese invasion and doomed by totalitarian communism.<sup>31</sup> Yet I also believe that when we look carefully at certain studies of manhua from the 1920s and 1930s, the terms of analysis differ in a way that can help dislocate narratives based on what manhua are presumed to *do*, that is, their seeming impact and efficacy. What I am suggesting is that certain aspects of research on pre-1937 manhua encourage us, as Mitchell recommends, to "shift the question from what pictures do to what they want, from power to desire, from the model of the dominant power to be opposed, to the model of the subaltern to be interrogated or (better) to be invited to speak. If the power of images is like the power of the weak, that may be why their desire is correspondingly strong: to make up for their actual impotence."<sup>32</sup>

To stress the weakness of manhua in this way is not a judgment on their status in some sort of aesthetic hierarchy, although it is true that manhua, and comics art in general, have persistently been regarded as, to put it mildly, lacking status in relative to other pictorial arts, not to mention literature.<sup>33</sup> The idea of weakness should instead be taken as a theoretical wedge that can, I hope, help us think and talk about manhua in a new way. This weakness becomes evident in a loss of definition found in studies of interwar period manhua. What I mean here is that in-depth studies of manhua from that period begin with the assumption that manhua (or cartoons, or comics, depending on the author's choice of terminology) are well-defined objects of research. But these same studies also find it necessary to confront just how casual, dispersed, occasional, contingent, ephemeral, sketchy, and generally ill-defined manhua actually are. This blurring of boundaries grows out of the direct encounter with primary materials in the form of the actual pictorial newspapers and magazines that served as a matrix for manhua. That matrix has its own agency in the sense that it dispersed manhua into and among the

multiple forms and categories of words and images found on the pages of these periodicals. Thus, without specifically looking for it, pre-1937 manhua research hints at how, on the pages of pictorial publications, the neatly packaged narratives of manhua's development scatter into multiple channels of verbal and visual discourse that comprise the mass-market illustrated magazine. No wonder, then, that research on prewar manhua tends to stray "off topic" into areas like fashion, modern art, literature, politics, entertainment, advertising . . . in short, the entire, all-over-the-place, *mélange* of urban mass culture in China's Republican era.<sup>34</sup>

My distinction between scholarship on pre-1937 and post-1937 manhua is admittedly artificial. The point, however, is not to draw a historical dividing line but to set to one side the question of what manhua do and ask instead what they want, which in essence means being more aware of the relationships of power and ideology at work when "we address and are addressed by images of media."<sup>35</sup> What I believe we see in studies of manhua from 1937 and after—the studies centered on war and propaganda—is how this ambivalence toward the manhua-mediated image tends to be contained by deeply rooted ideologies. These ideologies take the form of established narratives, such as national salvation, humanist redemption, and anticommunism. By contrast, what we see happening in studies of manhua leading up to 1937 is how addressing manhua has elicited a different desire: to explore and make sense of juxtapositions, analogies, resonances, fragmentation, micro-narratives, and so on. In other words, we are seeing how manhua are bound up with the complex hybrid construction of pictorial magazines.

#### POINTS OF DEPARTURE: STUDIES OF SHANGHAI'S PICTORIAL PRESS

This study is hardly the first to be lured into the world of Shanghai's early illustrated entertainment press. The growing accessibility of illustrated papers, tabloids, and pictorial magazines in libraries, archives, and especially as digital resources has over the past two decades made for a minor boom in explorations of Shanghai's cultural and literary history. What this rich and diverse body of scholarly work shares is a move away from elite intellectual culture and toward the culture of the popular. That shift has enhanced our understanding of many late Qing and early Republican-era subjects, such as courtesans, humor and laughter, modern art circles, populist political expression, early Chinese newspaper journalism, women and gender, visual modernity, photography, and the "global imaginaire" of mass-market illustrated newspapers, to name just a few.<sup>36</sup> My understanding of manhua grows out of, and is indebted to, these studies.

Most intriguing to me is how the verbal and visual heterogeneity of Shanghai's entertainment press has impelled scholars to move beyond disciplinary comfort zones on either side of the boundary between text and image. Researchers must grapple with how, on the pages of periodicals, multiple genres of writing

interact with multiple genres of pictures. We have, for example, learned how journal content ranging from translated fiction to patent medicine advertisements to articles on obstetrics can come together to stress self-improvement for middle-class urbanites, or how photographic portraiture, poetry, and articles on physiology seem to reveal alternative conceptions of gender identity among educated early Republican-era women.<sup>37</sup> The complexity and contradiction built into the printed pages of Shanghai's early Republican-era commercial publications has also inspired the idea of "horizontal reading," a methodology that would account for "the spatial relation between texts published in the same issue of the same journal."<sup>38</sup> Horizontal reading's main concern is with literature, especially fiction as it appeared in popular literary magazines. But its attention to the juxtaposition of words and pictures, together with the suggestion that specific issues of illustrated serials might be read as discrete, collectively authored, multimedia works, resonates with what I am attempting to demonstrate here.

My understanding of manhua is also in league with studies that explore the interactive relation between Shanghai's illustrated serials and the modern urban experience. A well-developed example of this approach is Alexander Des Forges's study of installment fiction set in Shanghai from the 1890s to the 1930s. Des Forges reads these works as active agents in a "mediasphere," an expansive, interconnected, hybrid "visual and textual field" comprised of multiple genres of cultural products, including books, magazines, newspapers, film, radio, and so on.<sup>39</sup> The mediasphere, in all its heterogeneity, constructs a vision and practice of the city rather than simply "reflecting" an economic or socially defined historical reality. Pictorial magazines, including, of course, those specializing in manhua, certainly participated in the Shanghai mediasphere, perhaps even more so than installment fiction, which was after all just one genre inhabiting magazines designed to be entertaining and practical multichannel guides to a modern urban lifestyle.

Closer to the kind of interactivity I am thinking about is Catherine Yeh's wide-ranging discussion of Shanghai's tabloid entertainment press and its symbiosis with urban leisure. "The development of various kinds of print entertainment," she notes, "was fostered by a rising demand for urban leisure and the ability and willingness of the Shanghai print industry to take note of this new market and devise relatively inexpensive and attractive media products with which to explore it."<sup>40</sup> Tabloids were print commodities that succeeded insofar as they represented Shanghai to their audience as "China's biggest playground."<sup>41</sup> Whether the entertainment press, as Yeh asserts, "largely treats the reader as a passive consumer" is open to debate.<sup>42</sup> Readers may have consumed these publications individually and in private, but the open and ongoing serial format allowed for an active mode of reading that encouraged a sense of community while also, as Yeh herself emphasizes, offering the means to explore the urban environment.

Closest to how I envision the role of Shanghai's illustrated periodicals are studies that directly engage the actual image-text arrays of individual pictorial magazines

by letting them tell the stories they seem to want to tell. The pioneering study here is Leo Ou-fan Lee's reading of Shanghai's longest-lived and most successful Republican-era pictorial, *Young Companion* (*Liangyou huabao*, 1926–45). Lee deliberately reads the publication's "surfaces," "the images and styles" that "conjure up a collective imaginary," thus letting the magazine's lively and seemingly haphazard miscellany of photomontage, advertisements, and smart, breezy commentary generate narratives of "an emergent urban style of living."<sup>43</sup> Writing over a decade later, Paul Pickowicz, Yingjin Zhang, and Kuiyi Shen described this "affectively charged, cross-genre, inter-media" juxtaposition of contradictory material as "kaleidoscopic."<sup>44</sup> Art historian Richard Vinograd takes this kind of reading further by examining Shanghai pictorials as carefully crafted image-text constructs, shaped by interactivity between editors and audience and guided by an "esthetic of unpredictability."<sup>45</sup> Pictorials, he suggests, gave readers "layered spaces" that were analogous to "complex places" such as department stores, the city of Shanghai, or even the world, while potentially even arousing "deeper psychic processes of projection and fantasy . . . that were akin to the content and operations of dream-work."<sup>46</sup>

#### MANHUA, MASS CULTURE, AND THE PICTORIAL TURN

To review, treating manhua as a kind of historical protagonist in China's national narrative turns them into little more than genre pictures—interesting to look at and sometimes challenging to explain, but irrelevant as regards the interleaved technological, material, social, and economic practices of the illustrated magazine. But with more and more studies of Shanghai popular culture treating these popular publications as active agents in the modern urban experience, the simple genre approach to manhua—reducing them to "cartoons"—becomes unsustainable.

The problem is that existing studies of manhua sometimes recognize links between manhua and mass print culture but take the relationship mostly for granted, as if the print media were a more or less neutral ground for the emergence of manhua. Overlooked here is possibility that, as Benedict Anderson has observed, the modern cartoon "is dependent on a sophisticated printing technology as well as on a partly monetarized economy creating a public able and willing to purchase this type of industrial commodity."<sup>47</sup> In other words, we cannot ignore the connections between manhua and mass culture, nor the fact that manhua emerged within a global situation that enabled a "golden age of print culture" extending from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century and preceding film and radio.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, the "increasingly pictorial character" of mass print culture—through the development of new technologies of image reproduction, starting with woodblock printing and progressing to lithography and then photo-relief processes—is indisputable.<sup>49</sup> Thus, understanding manhua means looking less at a given set of pictures and more at the historical conditions of mass print

culture, most specifically as a form mediated by the mass-produced illustrated periodical. To make broader sense of just what was going on between manhua and magazines, I find several approaches to be helpful.

The first comes from the emerging field of periodical studies. Still very much a work in progress when it comes to theoretical method and geographical scope, periodical studies promises to treat the magazine as a historically and culturally specific media form to be dealt with on its own terms, guided by “a commitment to reading magazines not as transparent containers of information but rather as complex media artifacts whose relation to their cultural and political contexts is articulated through rhythms of seriality, patterns of remediation, and material systems of production and circulation.”<sup>50</sup>

Periodical studies has focused primarily on the golden age of print cultures, from the late nineteenth century through the first decades of the twentieth century, which introduced mass culture to “London, New York, Delhi, Paris, Buenos Aires, and Los Angeles,” and—one hastens to add—Shanghai, along with many other Asian metropolises.<sup>51</sup> One of the more intriguing claims of this new field is that modern mass culture “was created from a still obscure alchemy of commercial and aesthetic impulses and processes” that was “most visible in magazines.”<sup>52</sup> How one goes about deciphering that “obscure alchemy” depends largely on the materials you choose and how you go about examining them. This book does so by exploring the slippery symbiosis between manhua and magazines from the early to the mid-twentieth century, primarily in Shanghai.

For theoretical grounding, this study of manhua also relies somewhat loosely on W. J. T. Mitchell’s notion of the “pictorial turn.” This phrase does not refer to the sudden predominance of images at some historical period. Nor does it refer to pictorial magazines themselves, though I do at times appeal to that semantic overlap. The pictorial turn, as Mitchell puts it, is “a postlinguistic, postsemiotic rediscovery of the picture as a complex interplay between visibility, apparatus, institution, discourse, bodies, and figurality.”<sup>53</sup> Mitchell asks us to question the givenness of pictures, to open ourselves to how we unwittingly assign them agency, how that agency entwines with ideology, and how pictures themselves can be guides to understanding the power they often seem to possess. For me, the pictorial turn helps open conceptual pathways toward broadening and elaborating the idea of manhua. One of these pathways is the notion of the “metapicture”—“media objects that reflect on their own constitution”—as a form of vernacular theory that lets me talk about manhua as media in their own right, thereby keeping them in touch with the interplay of, for instance, seriality, spectatorship, and the experience of urban modernity.<sup>54</sup> In practice, this means that instead of approaching manhua as humorous, satirical, pornographic, propagandistic, patriotic, lyrical, or what-have-you pictures that reflect history or express emotions and ideas, I treat them as self-aware commentators on the relationships of power and ideology through which they are constructed and received.



FIGURE 4. Ma Xingchi, “The Real Shanghai,” *True Record* (*Zhenxiang huabao*), June 5, 1912.

#### THE REAL SHANGHAI

But let’s step away from theoretical musings and look at an actual example of the Republican era’s visual vernacular. “The Real Shanghai” (“Shanghai zhenxiang”; see figure 4) appeared in the June 5, 1912, inaugural issue of the *True Record* (*Zhenxiang huabao*, 1912–13), one of the more prominent publications among a small flood of pictorial magazines entering the market at the time. One reason I have chosen this drawing is that it invites, and resists, articulation to a national narrative. In other words, I want to approach it as telling two different stories. The first of these is prompted by the drawing’s title. The claim that it is a *zhenxiang*—“true appearance,” or “real”—urges us to see the picture as a revelation, in comic form, of the underlying “reality” of otherwise hidden power relations at work in China’s most developed treaty port. But the drawing itself performs a very different way of seeing. It shows us a mass urban spectatorship fascinated not by revealed truth but by everyday surfaces of the modern city. Where the first “reality” leads directly into the politics of national narrative, the second introduces a quite different story, that of the everyday masses engaged with modernity, on their own terms, in and through the mediation of manhua.

To begin with the first, and more conventional, perspective, “The Real Shanghai” is, undeniably, a political allegory. The gigantic, mustachioed, Caucasian-looking figure wearing a checkered waistcoat and button-down vest looms over the city as a personification of the Euro-American authorities then governing Shanghai’s foreign-controlled zones: the International Settlement and the French Concession. As for his long, flowing cape, readers of the time would likely recognize it as a symbol of extraterritoriality, the legal arrangement imposed and expanded through a series of notorious unequal treaties signed from 1842 onward that shielded residents of Chinese treaty ports, including, of course, Shanghai, from Chinese legal

authority, thus facilitating the influx of foreign ideas and practices. The creator of the cartoon, Ma Xingchi (1873–1934), hints at this cultural influence with the two small figures tucked inside the giant Westerner’s cape. One kneeling with hands clasped, the other standing and pointing the way, they seem to symbolize the proselytizing work of Christian missionaries who made the treaty ports their bases of operation in China. The cape, in any case, is key. Extraterritoriality, which made Shanghai into a “protected” zone for residents both foreign and Chinese, was the legal institution that made the city a *butaosou*, or “haven for fugitives,” as the caption on the left declares. We see those fugitives pictured as endless streams of people flowing into the treaty port, by steamship on the right and passenger train on the left.

The arguments for interpreting “The Real Shanghai” along these lines, as an anti-imperialist exposé, are substantial. First, by including the word *zhenxiang* in the title of this drawing, Ma Xingchi directly associates his drawing with the name, and the goals, of the magazine it was printed in. Published in the immediate wake of the Revolution of 1911, which toppled the moribund Qing dynasty and established the Republic of China, the *True Record* took up the patriotic calling of exposing and correcting the deficiencies plaguing the fragile new republic. According to its editor, the magazine emulated the spirit of the seventeenth-century British statesman Oliver Cromwell, admired for beheading King Charles I, establishing a republic, and instructing his portraitist, “Paint me as I am.”<sup>55</sup> Just as Cromwell demanded a representation of himself “warts and all,” Ma Xingchi suggested that his satirical art represent the “real” China, with all its faults and defects.

Seven decades later, long after the Republic of China had fled to Taiwan in 1949 and Mao’s People’s Republic of China had consolidated itself on the mainland, such a reading of Ma’s drawings was alive and well. We find it in Bi Keguan’s elaboration of the relations between Ma’s manhua and China’s national narrative. According to Bi, Ma’s work for the *True Record* “reflects” (*fanying*) the major obstacles China had to overcome to succeed in its quest to become a viable modern nation. These obstacles were “the continuing rule of China’s feudal autocratic forces, the ongoing but vain attempts of the imperialist powers to divide China up amongst themselves, and the extreme poverty of the Chinese people at large.”<sup>56</sup> “The Real Shanghai,” with its outsized caricature of imperialist power, answers to just the second of these three themes. But, to Bi Keguan’s credit, the other two are close at hand. We see them as soon as we step back to view “The Real Shanghai” within its original four-panel, full-page spread (see figure 5). In the oval frame at bottom, labeled “The Real Beijing,” Ma parodies “remnant feudal forces,” presented here as self-serving government officials charging around an athletic field in pursuit of rank and power. Just above that, Ma again takes aim at the dysfunctional republic’s bureaucratic mayhem with a lampoon of China’s political parties, drawn as two boys wrestling one another while an opportunistic foreigner—again wearing a checkered waistcoat—steals the fruit they are fighting over. Shift to the right,



FIGURE 5. “The Real Shanghai” as it appeared on a full-page spread of satirical illustrations.

and we see the dire condition of China’s interior provinces, the poverty-stricken “Chinese people at large,” personified as a destitute, feeble, scabrous old man.

These three lower panels deliver their satirical messages with speed, clarity, and humor, making the assemblage as a whole a typical and quite conventional example of political cartooning. The top panel, “The Real Shanghai,” communicates something more, however, when we take a closer look at Ma’s “fugitive” crowd. Extraterritoriality certainly did make Shanghai a haven for a rogue’s gallery of criminals involved in opium, gambling, prostitution, and a host of other lawless and immoral activities that gave the city its nefarious charm.<sup>57</sup> But the people in Ma’s crowd do not appear particularly villainous. Judging from how he has

clothed them, in a mix of Western-style suits, modern brimmed hats, Victorian-style dresses, and Chinese gowns topped with neat vests, they look more like peaceable, relatively well-to-do urbanites: merchants, shop clerks, and perhaps even educators. Criminal intent is nowhere to be seen. Instead, Ma has drawn a crowd of gawkers. Newcomers to China's largest, most developed treaty port, they stand transfixed by its multistory façade of Western-style banks, customhouses, and shops. Keeping a cautious distance from the foreign-looking buildings, they appear unsure how to respond to this new, alien, but thoroughly engrossing urban scene. But they are not passive bystanders. These initiates to the city are quite animated; they look about, gesture, and converse. One can almost hear the hubbub rising from a gathering that is spontaneous but aware of its own presence and its shared fascination with the spectacle of the modern city.

This curious throng seems free of troublemakers, but its presence makes trouble for the conventional interpretation of "The Real Shanghai" as a politically motivated caricature of Shanghai's semicolonial condition. The problem is, Ma treats his readers to a picture of themselves fascinated with the built space created by the very same foreign powers his drawing urges them to denounce. Bi Keguan spots this ambiguity, not in this drawing, but in Ma's work in general, describing it as a "blurring of the lines between oppressor and oppressed," resulting from a tendency to "cater to the tastes of publishing-house bosses and a certain set of readers."<sup>58</sup> Bi is correct to point out Ma's ideological fence-sitting, but "The Real Shanghai" shows us something more. Not only is it the largest of the spread's four panels, taking up nearly as much space as the other three combined and even overlapping the two middle panels, but its placement at the top of the page anchors the other drawings, enframing them as subordinate elements of a multipart composition designed to occupy an entire page of the magazine. By that reckoning, Ma's representation of curious new urbanites, protected by the enveloping cape of treaty-port extraterritoriality, subsumes the messages expressed by the bottom three panels. Which is to say, Ma Xingchi's community of urban spectatorship creates the very conditions under which the conventional nationalist critique, based on reflections of "reality," can take place at all.

My point here is not to overstate some sort of subversive twist in Ma Xingchi's art. Rather, I want to show how, once we try to account for a "bigger picture," perspectives change. On the one hand, we have, literally, a big picture in the form of a full-page, multipanel composition in a popular illustrated magazine. It is a composition whose dynamic visual hierarchy overrides what the individual panels "ought" to signify in terms of established conventional narratives of the early Chinese political cartoon. Even bigger, in a conceptual sense, is how Ma's drawing offers itself as a metapicture, a media object that reflects on its own constitution. Put another way, yes, we can say that Ma Xingchi's "real" Shanghai reflects defining elements of China's anti-imperialist struggle, thus feeding a narrative in which manhua are meaningful for their political impact, in this case telling viewers how

to properly think and behave as modern national subjects. But by including his readers in the picture, he also prompts reflection on the role of manhua in pictorial magazines and on pictorial magazines as media objects that produce audiences ready to engage the city through surface and spectacle. Ma's ambiguous Shanghai "reality" opens the door to this kind of reading. At one level, it directs a timely political critique at the infringement of national sovereignty brought by treaty-port extraterritoriality. Yet embedded in that critique is the sight of Shanghai's own urbanites marveling at a vision of the city itself. Literate, upwardly mobile, fashion conscious, and, most important, prosperous enough to spare the twenty-five cents needed to buy the latest issue of the *True Record*, these are precisely the people at whom the magazine was aimed. Or perhaps more accurately, this is a representation of the kind of people the magazine's readers imagined themselves to be. By that I mean that the *True Record*, like many other similar magazines, promised to help readers make sense of the modern and thereby transformed them from gawking greenhorns into knowledgeable, engaged, and sophisticated urbanites. Ma Xingchi, in other words, gives his audience a picture of themselves as an interpretive community bound together by its fascination with the spectacle of urban modernity. All in a manhua.

#### FOUR DECADES OF MANHUA

This book examines representative instances of the relationships among manhua, pictorial magazines, and modernity from the 1920s through the 1950s. Rather than knitting together an overarching narrative historical survey of the Chinese cartoon, I highlight repetitions and resonances in the art of manhua across the varied historical circumstances of peacetime, war, and socialist construction. The book extends forward and backward in time from my previous study of manhua art of the mid-1930s, available in the MIT Visualizing Cultures unit on *Modern Sketch*. Chapter 1 builds on the preliminary discussion of manhua in this introduction with a revisionist look at the Manhua Society (Manhuahui), a group credited with reinventing the Chinese cartoon, and *Shanghai Sketch* (*Shanghai manhua*, 1928–30), a magazine regarded as a milestone in the early development of manhua. I argue that neither the society nor the magazine used the word manhua in the way it is now understood, to refer to cartoons. The Manhua Society was a group of artist-entrepreneurs whose professional activities centered on creating content for urban lifestyle magazines. Likewise, *Shanghai Sketch*, a publication created by key figures of the Manhua Society, is not, strictly speaking, a cartoon magazine. In fact, we learn much more about the magazine, and the links between manhua and pictorial magazines, by examining how its English-language name, *Shanghai Sketch*, ties it to its London-based namesake, *The Sketch: A Journal of Art and Actuality* (1893–1959), an entertainment magazine whose brand of "new illustrated journalism" served as a model for mass-culture pictorials of Europe, the United States,

and China from the 1890s onward.<sup>59</sup> The similarities between the two magazines are impossible to ignore. Both helped readers, many of them new to city life, make the urban experience legible by tracking modern ephemera through the imagery of the sketch, the photograph, and the written word. Both functioned as guides to leisure-time lifestyles by using the format of the magazine miscellany to create visual and textual connections between and among the topics of fashion, entertainment, the arts, and consumption. Both mingled high and low culture with an eye toward breaking with social convention. And both aimed to generate a community of readers by facilitating a sense of “knowingness,” defined as “the diffusion of a shared, superficial, contemporary knowledge.”<sup>60</sup> *Shanghai Sketch* was not, however, simply a copycat of *The Sketch* but rather a generic counterpart constructed as much from global journalistic models as from the local lineage of Shanghai’s tabloid press. My analysis of *Shanghai Sketch* keeps these connections in mind as it explores the magazine’s role in helping its urban readers construct for themselves a “shadow” history grounded in their everyday experience of Shanghai’s urban modernity.

Chapters 2 and 3 bookend the eight-year War of Resistance against Japan. Chapter 2 examines the adaptation of manhua, along with manhua’s authors and audience, to a state of all-out war. Prewar pictorials, manhua magazines not excepted, based much of their appeal on the ability to provide readers with entry into a community of modern treaty-port urbanites. The Japanese invasion of China’s coastal regions in the summer of 1937, however, pushed that community and its publications out of Shanghai and several hundred miles up the Yangtze River to Wuhan, a cluster of three cities comprising Hankou, Hanyang, and Wuchang. To understand how manhua responded to this massive exodus, I examine the January 1, 1938, inaugural issue of *Resistance Sketch* (*Kangzhan manhua*, 1938, 1940), a periodical edited and published by the Manhua Propaganda Corps.<sup>61</sup> Read as a discrete work, *Resistance Sketch* comes into view not as a collection of cartoons but as a loosely organized but carefully designed print artifact that activates the pictorial magazine format to transform its peacetime readers—mainly elite coastal *wenhuaren*, or “people of culture”—to a wartime, military footing. That conversion, I argue, is guided by multiple iterations of a rite-of-passage narrative that gives symbolic structure to the psychological trauma and geographical dislocation of the war. Chapter 3 further explores the intersections of manhua and the magazine form through a rereading of the celebrated magazine editor, commercial designer, and manhua artist Zhang Guangyu’s (1900–1965) lavishly illustrated tale *Manhua Journey to the West* (*Xiyou manji*). When Zhang created *Manhua Journey* near the inland wartime capital Chongqing in 1945, straitened wartime conditions and a regime of censorship had made it nearly impossible to publish any form of periodical, let alone the sort of politically irreverent manhua pictorials Zhang had helped invent in the preceding decades in Shanghai. In response, and like many of his artist colleagues also working in China’s interior at the time, he adapted his art

for public exhibition. *Manhua Journey* has been described as a colorful, whimsical, but above all trenchant lampoon of bankrupt politics and society under corrupt Nationalist rule at the close of the War of Resistance. It is indeed a masterful example of satirical art, but it is also much more. *Manhua Journey to the West* must also be understood in conversation with Zhang's long career as a master artist of manhua and as an accomplished editor of pictorials. That dual perspective obliges a rereading of Zhang's fanciful allegory. It is, beyond satire, a celebration of the symbiosis between manhua and the pictorial magazine.

In chapter 4, I revise the ideologically inflected view of China's early socialist-era manhua by looking at one of the most important, but relatively unknown, state-sponsored art pictorials of the 1950s, *Manhua yuekan* (*Manhua monthly*, 1950–60). As discussed earlier, the few studies of 1950s manhua approach these works as political propaganda. And propaganda they were, in service of first the war in Korea and then the decade's many mass-mobilization campaigns, from the Land Reform Movement at the start of the decade to the Great Leap Forward at the decade's end. Lost in the politically fraught analyses of the magazine's manhua images, however, is the generic lineage connecting *Manhua yuekan* of the 1950s with Shanghai's independently published manhua pictorials of the 1930s. Once that link is established, we can see how *Manhua yuekan* both inherited and reinvented the Republican-era pictorial magazine's function as a virtual guide to participating in an urban, cosmopolitan community centered in, but not exclusive to, Shanghai. I show how this was done at two stages of the magazine's ten-year run. In the first part of chapter 4, I look at how theoretical essays, panoramic manhua (*quanjing manhua*) and instructional columns from the magazines first three years, 1950 to 1952, addressed a community of would-be amateur manhua artists, guiding them to recreate the former treaty port as a carnivalesque space of political participation linked to the period's aggressive mass campaigns. The chapter's second part picks up the story of *Manhua yuekan* from 1953. It follows the magazine into the cultural liberalization of the Hundred Flowers period and through the crackdown on that liberalization during the Anti-rightist Campaign of 1957. In contrast to studies that dwell on the hand of the communist state in controlling the meaning and impact of manhua of the 1950s, this section examines the magazine more holistically to reveal how it revisited the pictorial satire magazine's pre-1949 role as a subgenre of the entertainment periodical and as a mediator of the same kind of shadow history discernible in the 1920s and 1930s. What we find is that like *Shanghai Sketch*, *Manhua yuekan* gave readers a humorous, satirical guide to everyday urban experience revolving around the leisure-time spaces of school, home, shops, restaurants, and parks while also entertaining readers with up-to-date information on Western, and especially American, popular culture. The fascinating difference here is how *Manhua yuekan* adapted the discourse of the urban everyday to the era's powerful ideological drive to reconstruct the Chinese nation and its people in the socialist mode.

I conclude the book by very briefly outlining the legacy of manhua as it has extended from the 1960s up to the present day, from the Cultural Revolution (1966–76) through the ensuing decades of reform and opening up and into the Internet age. Given the vast amount of manhua produced during these decades and the vanishingly small amount of attention given to it, I can presume only to point out avenues of future research by surveying some major events and trends.

Finally, a word on terminology. As much as reasonably possible, throughout this book I use the Chinese word *manhua* rather than English terms like *cartoon* or *comic*. My purpose is not to imply that the Chinese cartoons or comics are so distinct from the global forms of humorous, satirical, or sequential art that they deserve their own name. Clearly, the opposite is the case. As we have already seen, the word *manhua* entered wider currency after it was borrowed from Japanese in the 1920s, and from there the artistic practice of manhua became rapidly incorporated into Shanghai's vibrantly cosmopolitan entertainment press precisely through the avid emulation and reinvention of foreign models. My motive is, on the one hand, to prevent the conventionalized meanings of the English-language words *cartoon* or *comics* from dominating our understanding of a diverse practice of illustration that ranged from slick fashion sketches to bombastic propaganda posters. On the other hand, I also wish to retain the word *manhua*'s semantic symbioses with the print genre of the pictorial magazine, or *huabao*, the medium in which manhua thrived through the middle decades of the twentieth century. As we will see, most of the magazines discussed in this study used *manhua* in their names, a choice that in itself points to the importance of the illustrated serials as the defining site of manhua art. Thus, while translating *manhua* as *cartoons* or *comics* may seem expedient, doing so would diminish the historically and culturally specific identity of this art. My hope, perhaps farfetched, is that the Chinese word *manhua* can shoulder its way into the English-language lexicon just as the Japanese word *manga* has, and enrich our experience through its difference.