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Illustrating a New Nation:

Shanghai *Lianhuanhua* in the Early Maoist Period

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Art History, Theory, and Criticism

by

Chihho Lin

Committee in charge:

Professor Kuiyi Shen, Chair
Professor Norman Bryson, Co-Chair
Professor Jack Greenstein
Professor Paul Pickowicz
Professor Jordan Rose
Professor Yingjin Zhang

2021

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University of California San Diego

2021

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my grandmother, Chen-Feng Mei-gui (1930–2021), who encouraged me to start the journey to pursuing the PhD degree, and passed away eight days after I defended the dissertation. I am glad I could accompany her in her last days. She will always be in my heart.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Illustrating a New Nation:
Shanghai *Lianhuanhua* in the Early Maoist Period

by

Chihho Lin

Doctor of Philosophy in Art History, Theory, and Criticism

University of California San Diego, 2021

Professor Kuiyi Shen, Chair
Professor Norman Bryson, Co-Chair

This dissertation centers on the formation of socialist *lianhuanhua* in China in the 1950s and 1960s. *Lianhuanhua* is a special genre of comics that was widely welcomed by urban readers in China from the early twentieth century to the mid-1980s. Aiming to reform readers into socialist subjects, the Chinese Communist Party (hereafter CCP) instrumentalized *lianhuanhua* for didacticism and propaganda. Following the Stalinist dictum of "socialist realism," which mandated proletariat art to be "national in form and socialist in content," *lianhuanhua* artists selected pictorial elements from European academic painting, folk art, and Chinese classical

painting from different regions and periods in history to create an effective visual language that answered both the Party-State's demand and urban readers' taste. The dissertation first illustrates the CCP's tactics for reforming the *lianhuanhua* industry in Shanghai in terms of production, circulation, and censorship. In the subsequent chapters, I examine three iconic *lianhuanhua* published by Shanghai People's Art Press, including Zhao Hongben and Qian Xiaodai's *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone Demon*, He Youzhi's *Great Changes in a Mountain Village*, and Ding Binzeng and Han Heping's *Railroad Guerrillas*, to inquire into the following questions: What innovations and conventions were adopted by artists in the making of *lianhuanhua*? How have *lianhuanhua* artists recycled, reinterpreted, and redeployed cultures through time? How do these various reuses reflect their particular political, social, and cultural contexts? By dissecting the visual components in the *lianhuanhua*, I explore how socialist realism, as an aesthetico-political project, evolved and adjusted to fit the conditions in China after its introduction from the Soviet Union. The research adds to recent studies of Chinese socialist culture that question the common perception of socialist realism as a method imposed by the state and therefore is rigid, monolithic, and monotonous. In this research, I demonstrate *lianhuanhua* making as a complex process that involves negotiations between high politics, cultural policies, the target readers' preferences, and artists' understanding of their task of creating new works for a new nation.

INTRODUCTION

Sitting in a row on long benches placed by the rear of a sidewalk, a group of young children, each holding a tiny book in their hands, have immersed themselves in reading. With crossed legs, bent upper bodies, and eyes fixed on the page, they are absorbed by the books as if the hassles of the street behind them are non-existent. Two boys are standing behind the seated ones and are eagerly trying to have a peek at the books. Henri-Cartier Bresson captured the scene in Shanghai during his ten-month trip in China from 1948 to 1949 (fig. 0.1). He was sent by *Life* magazine to record the everyday scenes in Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou, and Nanjing in the uncertain times when the Nationalist army was retreating, and the Communists were starting to establish a new order in the cities. The photograph was titled "Travelling Library Providing Propaganda Story-Books for Children." The "propaganda story-books" the children are reading are palm-sized (five by three and a half inches, and a quarter inch thick) and arranged in a horizontal format, with each page containing a single-frame image. According to these characteristics, the books are not just any "propaganda story-books," but *lianhuanhua* (連環畫 serial picture-book), a unique form of comics that was widely welcomed by Chinese readers from the early twentieth century throughout the early 1980s. From what one sees in the photograph, it is not hard to deduce that *lianhuanhua* is quick and inexpensive to mass produce, easy to transport and circulate, and, most importantly, an attractive form of entertainment to young readers. These characteristics made the medium an ideal instrument to the authorities for didacticism and propaganda. The photograph was taken in September 1949, about a month before the official proclamation of the establishment of the People's Republic of China (hereafter

PRC), and nearly four months after the Communist army took over the city. The Communist administrators must have prioritized the making of *lianhuanhua*. In such a short time, the new *lianhuanhua* for propagandistic purposes were made, circulated, and photographed by an American photographer who sought to capture everyday life in Shanghai.

A poster made in 1974, two years before the end of the Cultural Revolution, depicts a similar scene (fig. 0.2). A group of boys and girls are sitting on small benches and chairs and reading *lianhuanhua* attentively in front of a huge bookshelf. The children are facing the viewers frontally so that viewers can easily see their smiling faces. Although a few books are printed vertically or in a larger size, the format of most of the books is basically the same as the ones we see in Bresson's photograph. All the *lianhuanhua* depicted are existing titles during the Cultural Revolution. The top row of the shelf displays primarily the *lianhuanhua* based on model operas, such as *The White-Haired Girl* (*Baimao nü* 白毛女), *The Red Detachment of Women* (*Hongse niangzi jung* 紅色娘子軍), *On the Docks* (*Haigang* 海港), and *Song of the Dragon River* (*Longjiang song* 龍江頌); the book the boy in a blue shirt is reading is *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* (*Zhiqu weihushan* 智取威虎山), a model opera centered on a unit of PLA (People's Liberation Army) soldiers' heroic actions in eradicating groups of bandits in Northeast China. The second row exhibits mostly stories of model cadres and soldiers, such as the story of Chairman Mao's Good Student Jiao Yulu (焦裕祿), Huang Jiguang (黃繼光, a soldier who sacrificed himself to save his comrades in Korean War), Norman Bethune (the Canadian surgeon who joined the Eighth Route Army during the Sino-Japanese War), and so forth. A sign says, "please return after reading," suggesting that the well-lit, modestly furnished space depicted is probably a library or a reading room in a school. Knowing there is no reason to believe the scene in the poster reflects reality, it is still clear that the Party-State perceives *lianhuanhua*-reading as

an institutionalized activity. *Lianhuanhua* is represented as a tool to entertain and educate children with socialist values.

This research focuses on the *lianhuanhua* produced in Shanghai during the period between the appearance of the two images, and seeks to examine its trajectory as an artistic, mass-oriented, and propagandistic medium. Shanghai from the early 1950s to the mid-1960s saw the formation of a standardized practice in *lianhuanhua*-making, the reform of *lianhuanhua* publishers and market, and the introduction of socialist realism, which incorporates innovative experimental forms and art conventions from various times and cultures. The *lianhuanhua* that were published near the end of the Cultural Revolution, like the ones we see in the poster, basically continued the style and practice developed in the previous decade with a few additions, such as adding more symbols of Mao Zedong, and adjusting the composition according to the principle of Three Prominences (giving prominence to the positive characters, the heroic characters, and the major heroes).

While the poster seems to exhibit the Party-State's top-down deployment of the popular medium, *lianhuanhua*-making, from both the publisher's and the artist's side, was a negotiation between the policy-makers, the artists, and the readers. As Roger Chartier pointed out in his study of readers' activity in *ancien régime* France, a text had to be mediated at least two times before it was in the hands of readers.[1] First, a manuscript had to be printed into books by publishers; then, a book could reach a reader through retailers. In the process, both the publisher and the retailer had a say based on their understanding of the political demands and readers' preferences. In the case of *lianhuanhua* publication in the PRC during the Maoist period, the process is more complicated, not only because most of *lianhuanhua* works are adaptations of

[1] Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 3-5.

existing texts but also state power was directly involved in the creation, circulation, and interpretation of *lianhuanhua*. Artists had to figure out what classical and traditional elements were crucial and how the selected elements could be redeployed to correspond with contemporary political concerns. Publishers and bookstores also had to make balance between political demands and profit. Through a close examination of key *lianhuanhua* works, I seek to describe a more nuanced history of *lianhuanhua*.

Socialist Realism and the Attempt to Create a National Form

The key concepts I seek to illustrate through examining *lianhuanhua* published during the 1950s and 1960s are "socialist realism" and "national form." In the Chinese context, the two terms seem contradictory at first glance. The former originates from the Soviet Union, the latter alludes to classical and folk art that represent Chinese heritage. I contend socialist realism is an aesthetico-political project that strove to build a new culture through reassessing and redeploying all the cultures in all the historical periods. Chinese national form is not antithetical to socialist realism; it is part of the socialist realist project, which created a method to reinterpret and transform classical art to serve the Party State's political purposes.

Socialist realism is the method that dominated the cultural production in Maoist China. The term "socialist realism" was officially used for the first time in 1932, and had been announced as the guideline for the art and literature production of the Soviet Union in the Soviet Writers Congress held in 1934. Andrei Zhdanov, the developer of Stalin's cultural policy, defined socialist realism as a "means of reflecting life in art peculiar to a socialist society," which "demands the portrayal of reality in its revolutionary development."[2] His words suggest that the

[2] Andrei Zdhanov, "Soviet Literature—The Richest in Ideas, the Most advanced Literature," delivered in August 1934, Marxists Internet Archive, 2004.

subject matter of this new art should be actual events and real personalities. The requirement of portraying "reality in its revolutionary development" implied that artists should interpret reality as what it would be under socialism from a Bolshevik perspective.[3] In this new Soviet culture, workers and collective farmers should be the chief heroes; the mood should be optimistic; the Bolshevik revolution should be portrayed as unambiguously good and promising a glorious future.

In terms of the formal features of socialist realist art, the Stalinist dictum demanded that proletarian art should be "national in form and socialist in content." To create the "national form," artists drew inspiration from Greek antiquity, the Italian Renaissance, and nineteenth-century Russian realism.[4] This new form, Boris Groys argues, does not represent an art that regressed from avant-garde to mimeticism. On the contrary, it inherited the ideal of the avant-garde (i.e., transforming the society and its people through art). The avant-garde art created during the revolution aimed to create a new world by destroying all the old artistic conventions. The art of the Stalinist period, on the other hand, strove to transcend the historical framework of the avant-garde by "eliminating the opposition between artistic and unartistic, traditional and new, the constructive and the everyday."[5] Socialist realist art aimed to build a new culture which incorporated all the good of the past and rejected all the bad. Following this concept, any style from any culture could be selected and used. The reason why the realist depiction was favored was that it could visualize the ideas in a way that was intelligible to the people. The verisimilitude of the socialist realist picture was a vehicle for ideology, and the heroic figures

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https://www.marxists.org/subject/art/lit_crit/sovietwritercongress/zdhanov.htm.
[3] Matthew Cullerne Bown, *Art Under Stalin* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1991), 90. Bernice Rosenthal, *New Myth, New World: From Nietzsche to Stalinism* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002): 293.
[4] Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 46.
[5] Ibid.

were the ideology incarnate.

In China, the concept of using both foreign and local forms to educate the majority of the citizens finds precedents in Lu Xun's (1881–1936) writing in the early 1930s. He coined the term "grabism" (*nalai zhuyi* 拿來主義) to denote the active effort to choose and take from both foreign and Chinese cultures, assess which is useful to the Chinese, and create a new, socially aware, modern art in China.[6] Taking *lianhuanhua* as an instrument for enlightenment, Lu Xun drew attention to the popular genre and wrote several articles to instruct young artists. It is worth noting that his target audiences were not the workers in the existing *lianhuanhua* industry, but the progressive-thinking young artists who sought to build a modern society through works of art. Stressing that woodcut artists should prioritize the intelligibility of their works, Lu Xun suggested that they study from the European artists, including Frans Masereel, Käthe Kollwitz, Carl Meffert, and William Siegels, as well as classical Chinese woodblock illustrations, Chinese painting albums, and *nianhua* (New Year's Pictures 年畫).[7]

In Mao's seminal "Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art" (1942), he also responded to the currents of westernization and neo-traditionalism in May Fourth writing. At first, he only assigned a minor role to literature and art from the past, as well as foreign literature and art, and instructed writers to absorb them in a discriminating way. After the establishment of the PRC and the implementation of socialist realism as the official methodology for literature and art production, the talk was heavily revised and republished in 1953. Mao's instruction

[6] The article, "Grabism," was first published in *China Daily* (*Zhonghua ribao* 中華日報) on 7 June 1934. Lu Xun 魯迅, "Grabism" (*nalai zhuyi* 拿來主義) in Lu Xun, *Selected Essays of Lu Xun* (*Lu Xun sanwen* 魯迅散文), Liu Huijun ed. (Beijing: renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2005), 218-220.

[7] Lu Xun 魯迅, "*A Defense for Lianhuanhua*" (*Lianhuantuhua bianhu* 連環畫辯護), 1932. Translated to English by Sean Macdonald in Sean Macdonald, "Two Texts on 'Comics' from China, ca. 1932: 'In Defense of 'Comic Strips' by Lu Xun and 'Comic Strip Novels' by Mao Dun," *ImageText: Interdisciplinary Comics Studies* 6, no. 1 (2011). http://imagetext.english.ufl.edu/archives/v6_1/macdonald/#7.

became “take over all the excellent tradition in literature and art, critically assimilating whatever is beneficial and using them as examples when we create works.”[8] In the same year, Zhou Yang (周揚, 1907–1989), the spokesman of Mao on culture, also gave a speech at the Second Congress of Literary and Arts Workers, during which he mandated artists to work on teaching and research of the national artistic legacies that are “democratic, progressive, realistic, and not imitative” and discard those are “feudal, backward, and antirealistic.”[9]

Although Mao’s standard seems quite vague, two things can be concluded from it. The emphasis on national artistic legacy first and foremost corresponds with the Leninist-Stalinist dictum, which stresses that proletarian art should be “socialist in content, national in form.” The purpose, on the one hand, was to unify the nation through appealing to a shared national pride in a shared heritage on the broadest basis possible, as the CCP was no longer the minority in 1953, but the new ruling group and therefore the heir of the culture of the ruling classes in the past.[10] On the other hand, Zhou Yang’s speech suggests a practice divergent from Lu Xun’s disciples, Feng Xuefeng (馮雪峰, 1903–1976) and Jiang Feng (江豐, 1910–1982), who advocated for westernization rather the revival of national heritage.[11] The formation of socialist realist art in China was not merely a direct transplant of a set of methods or visual language from the Soviet Union, but a process intertwined with historical precedents, revolutionary forms of cultural practice, and state policies and political rivalry.

The studies of modern and contemporary Chinese art, as Christine I. Ho noted, “tended to celebrate an artistic freedom associated with Euro-American models of artistic modernity” in the

[8] Bonnie McDougall, *Mao Zedong’s “Talks at the Yan’an conference on Literature and Art”: A Translation of the 1943 Text with Commentary* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies; University of Michigan, 1980), 65.
[9] Julia F. Andrews, *Painters and Politics in the People’s Republic of China, 1949-1979* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 120.
[10] McDougall, *Mao Zedong’s “Talks at the Yan’an conference on Literature and Art,”* 20.
[11] Andrews, *Painters and Politics in the People’s Republic of China*, 122.

art of the Republican period (1911–1949) and the Reform period (1978–), and saw socialist art as a product of "regressive state cultural policies."[12] Although Julia F. Andrews and Ellen Johnston Laing's groundbreaking surveys map out the interactions between institutions, artists, administrators, and state policies in the formation of the art and culture of the PRC,[13] the complexity and nuances of socialist visual art in China warrant more articulation.

Recently, scholars demonstrated the intricacies and inner contradictions in the representational forms of the early Maoist period. Cai Xiang argues the literature of Revolutionary China is produced by conflict and negotiation between multiple issues, including national/international impulses, national/local knowledge, and collectivity/individuality, produced by existing historical conditions.[14] Krista van Fleit Hang points out that the literature in the first seventeen years of the PRC expresses the paradoxical desire to create a popular but also didactic culture that could attract the majority of citizens and mold them into new national subjects. To achieve this goal, writers inventively incorporated various elements, such as local languages, the chapter format, and characters modeled after heroes in classical novels, to deliver the official ideology.[15] Maggie Greene's research on "ghost plays" in the high socialist period traces the uneasy relationship between the CCP and the traditional, especially supernatural, subject matter in theater production, and examines writers' and artists' endeavor to select and redeploy certain parts of the canon to resonate with contemporary issues and political demands.[16]

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[12] Christine I. Ho, *Drawing from Life: Sketching and Socialist Realism in the People's Republic of China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2020), 12.
[13] Andrews, *Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China*. Ellen Johnston Laing, *The Winking Owl: Art in the People's Republic of China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
[14] Cai Xiang, *Revolution and Its Narratives: China's Socialist Literary and Cultural Imaginaries, 1949-1966*, trans. Rebecca E. Karl and Xueping Zhong (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).
[15] Krista van Fleit Hang, *Literature the People Love: Reading Chinese Texts from the Early Maoist Period (1949-1966)* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
[16] Maggie Greene, *Resisting Spirits: Drama Reform and Cultural Transformation in the People's Republic of China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019).

Emily Wilcox demonstrates the dynamic processes of cultural inheritance and individual innovation in the making of a national form in socialist dance.[17] In art history, Christine I. Ho studies how the practice of mass sketching and sketching tours were implemented in the production of *guohua* that depict the socialist landscape. By analyzing how the drawings reflect the influences of art theories and political movements, she underscores the complexities that artists encountered in the process of creating a national modernity through socialist realism.[18]

By examining the *lianhuanhua* produced during the mid-1950s to mid-1960s, I intend to demonstrate how socialist realism, as an aesthetico-political project, evolved and adjusted itself to fit the conditions in China after its introduction from the Soviet Union. The research adds to recent studies of Chinese socialist culture that explore negotiations between artists and authorities in the making of artworks, and challenges the common perception of socialist realism as a method imposed by the state and therefore rigid, monolithic, and monotonous. To investigate the formation of a national form in *lianhuanhua*, I aim to explore the following questions: What innovations and conventions were adopted by artists in the making of *lianhuanhua*? How have *lianhuanhua* artists recycled, reinterpreted, and redeployed cultures through time? How do those various reuses reflect their particular political, social, and cultural contexts?

Research on *Lianhuanhua* in Socialist China

The first presentation of a comprehensive history of *lianhuanhua* is Aying's *History of Chinese Lianhuanhua* (*Zhongguo lianhuanhua shihua* 中國連環畫史話, 1957), in which he argues that the precursor of *lianhuanhua* can be traced back to Han Dynasty stone reliefs.[19]

[17] Emily Wilcox, *Revolutionary Bodies: Chinese Dance and the Socialist Legacy* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019).
[18] Ho, *Drawing from Life*.
[19] Aying 阿英, *The History of Chinese Lianhuanhua* (*Zhongguo lianhuanhua shihua* 中國連環畫史話) (Beijing:

Aying's writing corresponded with the art policies of the mid-1950s, which demanded that artists and publishers improve the artistic quality of *lianhuanhua* and, most importantly, create a national form through reassessing and reusing classical art. Writers and scholars including Wan Shaojun, Jie Ziping, Jiang Weipu, and Huang Yuanlin followed Aying's narrative. By claiming that *lianhuanhua* inherited its formal qualities from the best works in Chinese art history, they created a norm to discuss *lianhuanhua* which is repeated in many master's theses in China.[20] Their research provided me clues by which to trace the art conventions incorporated into *lianhuanhua*, but I will not take *lianhuanhua* in the socialist period as a continuation (and a down-graded version) of Chinese classical figural paintings. I argue that the redeployment of classical art conventions is part and parcel of Chinese socialist realism—"a radical form of modernism and a radical formulation of the mainstream Enlightenment idea of modernity,"[21] as Xudong Zhang puts it.

Shanghai People's Art Press has published two essential books about *lianhuanhua* in socialist China. The first is an individual volume dedicated to the development of *lianhuanhua* in *Shanghai Modern Fine Arts History Series: 1949–2009*; the second is Liu Yongsheng's *The History of Lianhuanhua in the New China 1941–1999*.[22] As introductory surveys, both volumes

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Chinese Classical Art Press, 1957).

[20] Jie Ziping 介子平, *Lianhuanhua: Faded Memory* (*Tuise de jiyi: Lianhuanhua* 褪色的記憶: 連環畫) (Taiyuan: Shanxi Ancient Book Press, 2004). Jiang Weipu 姜維樸, "Facing the Centennial: Thoughts on Popular Art Forms of *Lianhuanhua*, New Year's Pictures, and Propaganda Posters" (*Miandui shiji zhijiao: guanyu lianhuanhua, nianhua, xuanchuanhua deng tongsu meishu de sikao* 面對世紀之交: 關於連環畫、年畫、宣傳畫等通俗美術的思考), *Arts* (*Meishu* 美術), no. 2 (2000): 73-77. Huang Yuanlin 黃遠林, "The Earliest Existing *Lianhuanhua* in Our Country" (*Woguo xiancun zuizao de lianhuanhua* 我國現存最早的連環畫), *Arts* (*Meishu* 美術), no. 4 (1981): 17-18. Wan Shaojun 宛少軍, *A Study on Twentieth Century Lianhuanhua* (*Ershi shiji zhongguo lianhuanhua yanjiu* 二十世紀中國連環畫研究) (Nanning: Guangzi meishu chubanshe, 2012).

[21] Xudong Zhang, "The Power of Rewriting: Postrevolutionary Discourse on Chinese Socialist Realism," in Thomas Lahusen and Evgeny Dobrenko eds., *Socialist Realism Without Shores* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 283.

[22] Liu Yongsheng 劉永勝, *The History of Lianhuanhua in the New China 1941-1999* (*Xin zhongguo lianhuanhua tushi 1941-1999* 新中國連環畫圖史 1941-1999) (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Art Press, 2011). Wang Jun 王軍, Shi Dawei 施大畏, Zhu Guorong 朱國榮, et al. eds., *Shanghai Modern Fine Arts History Series: 1949-2009, Vol. 6, Picture-story Books* (*Shanghai xiandai meishushi daxi: 1949-2009, 6 lianhuanhua juan* 上海現代美術史大系:

provide an official narrative of the development of *lianhuanhua* under the guidance of the Party-State. They serve as good starting points for locating representative works and learning the Party's attitude toward *lianhuanhua* in China. In English and Japanese scholarship, John A. Lent, Minjie Chen, and Masaya Takeda's studies describe the development of *lianhuanhua* from the early twentieth century to the reform period with a critical distance from the official narrative.[23]

In the past decade, increased accessibility of the archival materials about the socialist reform of the publishing industry in Shanghai enabled scholars to unearth the challenges the CCP encountered in the process. Their findings show that the reform was not instantly welcomed and supported by the people engaged with the industry, as the official history narrates, but was achieved through trial and error. Cheng Jia and Tian Wantong's master's theses delineate these policies and their impacts on *lianhuanhua* artists and publishers when CCP was reforming the industry in the 1950s.[24] In his investigation of the Shanghai Book Trade Association during the period from 1945 to 1947, Nicolai Volland especially notes the small-scale *lianhuanhua* publishers' situation, as they felt marginalized by the large publishers that dominated the association.[25] More recently, Zhang Yongfeng investigates the official criticism of particular *lianhuanhua*, and the publisher's responses in newspapers, and explains how the Party used the

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1949-2009, 6: 連環畫卷) (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Art Press, 2010): 21.

[23] John A. Lent, *Asian Comics* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015), 31-36. John A. Lent, "Comic Art," in Wu Dingbo, Patrick D. Murphy eds., *Handbook of Chinese Popular Culture* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994), 279-305. Minjie Chen, "Chinese Lian Huan Hua and Literacy: Popular Culture Meets Youth Literature," in Cynthia B. Leugn, Jiening Ruan eds., *Perspectives on Teaching and Learning Chinese Literacy in China* (New York: Springer, 2012), 157-181. Masaya Takeda 武田雅哉, *The World of China's Manga "Lianhuanhua"* (*Chūgoku no manga "renkanga" no sekai* 中国の漫画「連環画」の世界) (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2017).

[24] Cheng Jia 程佳, "On the Socialist Reform of the Comic Book Industry in Shanghai (1949-1956)" (*Lun shanghai lianhuanhua ye de shehui zhuyi gaizao* 論上海連環畫業的社會主義改造 (1949-1956)), (Master's Thesis, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, 2011). Tian Wantong 田萬通, "A Study of Shanghai Comic Workers in Early Statehood" (*Jianguo chuqi Shanghai lianhuanhhua zuozhe qunti yanjiu* 建國初期上海連環畫作者群體研究), (Master's Thesis, Dong Hua University, 2016).

[25] Nicolai Volland, "Cultural Entrepreneurship in the Twilight: The Shanghai Book Trade Association 1945-57," in Christopher Rea, Nicolai Volland eds., *The Business of Culture: Cultural Entrepreneurs in China and Southeast Asia, 1900-65* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014), 234–258.

public forum to discipline *lianhuanhua*-making.[26] Rebecca Scott's doctoral research further explores the intricacies of the socialization of *lianhuanhua* publishing and distribution, especially the tension between the market and political demands, during the first seventeen years of the PRC.[27]

Julia Andrews and Kuiyi Shen's research is extremely helpful for understanding the social history of *lianhuanhua*. Seeing *lianhuanhua* as a product of modern technology, commerce, and urban culture, Shen maps out the social context of *lianhuanhua* by describing how artists, small publishers, bookstall owners, and readers in Republican Shanghai engaged with this medium.[28] Focusing on the art of socialist China, Julia Andrews examines the policies and institutional reforms the state implemented for the *lianhuanhua* industry, and some of the best works produced in socialist China, with great insight. She notes sets of contradictions within Communist art policy, including popularization versus high artistic standards and socialist realism versus native traditions, and contends that *lianhuanhua* artists successfully solved these contradictions with their works.[29]

The propagandistic function of *lianhuanhua* has attracted the most interest in English scholarship. John C. Hwang is one of the early researchers who analyzes *lianhuanhua*'s role in political campaigns. He points out that the CCP used this medium to facilitate social change and

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[26] Zhang Yongfeng 張勇鋒, "Rectification and Discipline: The Criticism of Comic Media in the Early Periods of the Founding of the PRC" (*Jiupian yu guixun: jianguo chuqi de lianhuanhua meijie piping* 糾偏與規訓: 建國初期的連環畫媒介批評), *Modern Communication: Journal of Communication University of China* (*Xiandai chuanbo* (*Zhongguo chuanmei daxue xuebao*) 現代傳播(中國傳媒大學學報)) 1 (January 2017): 68-73.

[27] Rebecca Scott, "The Production and Distribution of *Lianhuanhua* (1949-1966)," (PhD Thesis, University of Nottingham, 2016). Rebecca Scott, "'Seizing the Battlefield' in the Face of 'Guerrilla Vending': The Struggle over the Dissemination of *Lianhuanhua*, 1949 to 1956," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 29, no. 1 (2017): 136-171.

[28] Kuiyi Shen, "Comics, Picture Books, and Cartoonists in Republican China," *Inks: Cartoon and Comic Art Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (November, 1997): 2-16. Kuiyi Shen, "*Lianhuanhua* and *Manhua*—Picture Books and Comics in Old Shanghai," in *Illustrating Asia: Comics, Humor Magazines, and Picture Books*, ed. John A. Lent (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 100-120.

[29] Andrews, *Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China*, 133.

indoctrination from the mid-1950s through the Cultural Revolution.[30] Using two different forms of comics, *manhua* and *lianhuanhua*, as visual evidence of the political culture of the early 1950s, Chang-tai Hung explores the demonized images of enemies, including U.S. imperialists, Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist Party, spies and saboteurs, capitalists and landlords, and bourgeois intellectuals.[31] Barbara Mittler takes a broader scope to examine *lianhuanhua* as a component of the culture of the Cultural Revolution. She argues that the Cultural Revolution *lianhuanhua*, although no doubt propagandistic, cannot be seen as a product of a homogenous culture, because it not only inherited the idea of the May Fourth Movement, which sought to create a new audience through art and literature, but also allowed quite a few variations as well as foreign and Chinese traditional elements to play a role in the drawings.[32]

Scholars also focus on individual stories and their adaptation across various media, including the novel, theater, film, and *lianhuanhua*. Rudolf Wagner analyzes the Shao opera, *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone Demon* (*Sun Wukong sanda baigujing* 孫悟空三打白骨精), and its adaptation in Zhao Hongben and Qian Xiaodai's *lianhuanhua*. He discusses how the work reflects the worsening relationship between the PRC and the Soviet Union in the second half of the 1960s, and the conflicts between Mao and his rivals within the CCP, when they were facing the disastrous outcome of the Great Leap Forward campaign (1958–1962).[33] Hongmei Sun's study, also focusing on the image of the character Sun Wukong, touches on the animated

[30] John C. Hwang, "Lien Huan Hua: Revolutionary Serial Pictures," in Godwin C. Chu ed., *Popular Media in China* (Honolulu: East West Center, 1978), 51-72.
[31] Chang-tai Hung, *Mao's New World: Political Culture in the Early People's Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 155-181.
[32] Barbara Mittler, *A Continuous Revolution: Making Sense of Cultural Revolution Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2012), 331-370.
[33] Rudolf Wagner, *The Contemporary Chinese Historical Drama: Four Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 139-235.

film and various *lianhuanhua* of the famous story *Havoc in Heaven*.[34] In Japanese scholarship, Yoko Tamura examines the images of female soldiers, workers, and peasants in the *lianhuanhua* made in the 1950s and 1960s.[35] Nakano Tōru delves into the complex process of multiple revisions across media in the making of the images of ideal heroes in *Railroad Guerrillas*.[36] For *lianhuanhua* in the reform era, Rosemary Roberts presents a case study of the remaking of the "red classic," *The Red Sister-in-Law* (*Hongsao* 紅嫂, 1961), in the early 1990s. She considers how socioeconomic changes and political needs reshaped the original story in terms of issues of the reader, the role of the working class, and the changing nature of propaganda.[37] Nathaniel Isaacson explores the anxiety toward science, technology, global capital, and nationalism expressed in the science fiction work, *Death Ray on a Coral Island* (*Shanhudao shang de siguang* 珊瑚島上的死光, 1978), and its adaptations in cinema and *lianhuanhua*.[38]

The socialist reform of the *lianhuanhua* industry led to the first golden age of *lianhuanhua* in the PRC. The first National *Lianhuanhua* Exhibition, held by the Chinese Artist's

[34] Hongmei Sun, *Transforming Monkey: Adaptation and Representation of a Chinese Epic* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018).
[35] Yoko Tamura 田村容子, "Fantasizing the Soviet Union in *Lianhuanhua*—the Story of Female Soldiers in 'The Dawn Here are Quiet'" (*Renkanga no naka no soren gensō—jyosei heishi no monogatari 'asayake ha shizuka nare do* 連環画の中のソ連幻想－女性兵士の物語「朝焼けは静かなれど」), *Lianhuanhua Studies* (*Renkanga kenkyū* 連環画研究) 7 (March 2018): 48-66. Yoko Tamura 田村容子, "Honors and Secrets—The Inside of the 'Female Worker *Lianhuanhua*'" (*Eiyo to himitsu—'jyokō renkanga' ni miru naimen no byōsha* 栄誉と秘密—「女工連環画」に見る内面の描写), *Lianhuanhua Studies* (*Renkanga kenkyū* 連環画研究) 3 (March 2014): 55-73. Yoko Tamura 田村容子, "From Fiction to *Lianhuanhua*—Wang Wenshi's 'The Newly Met Partner' and Its *Lianhuanhua* Adaptation" (Shōsetsu kara renkanga he—Wang Wenshi 'Xin jieshi de huoban' to sono renkanga sakuhin ni tsuite 小説から連環画へ—王汶石「新結識的夥伴」とその連環画作品について), *Wild Grasses* (*Nogusa* 野草) 93 (February 2014): 22-51.
[36] Nakano Tōru 中野徹, "Deleted "Boys," Added "Adults": A Note on *Lianhuanhua Railroad Guerrillas*" (Kesareta 'shōnen,' tasareta 'otona': renkanga 'tiedo youjidui' ni kansuru oboegaki 消された「少年」、足された「大人」: 連環画「鉄道遊撃隊」に関する覚書), *The Tao-tie* (饕餮) 18 (September 2010): 56-80.
[37] Rosemary Roberts, "The Politics and Aesthetics of Rediscovering Heroes of the 'Red Classics' in *Lianhuanhua* of the Reform Era," in Rosemary Roberts, Li Li eds., *The Making and Remaking of China's "Red Classics"* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2017), 115-135.
[38] Nathaniel Isaacson, "Media and Messages: Blurred Visions of Nation and Science in Death Ray on a Coral Island," in Jennifer L. Feeley, Sarah Ann Wells eds., *Simultaneous Worlds: Global Science Fiction Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 272-288.

Association and the Cultural Bureau in 1963, is the first thorough official assessment of the *lianhuanhua* published thus far. Among more than two thousand *lianhuanhua* submitted from different regions of the country, fifty-three *lianhuanhua* and twenty-seven scripts were awarded prizes. He Youzhi's *Great Changes in a Mountain Village* (*Shanxiang jübian* 山鄉巨變), Ding Binzeng and Han Heping's *Railroad Guerrillas* (*Tiedao youjidui* 鐵道游擊隊), Zhao Hongben and Qian Xiaodai's *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone Demon*, Liu Jiyou's *The Poor Who Changed the World* (*Qongbangzi niuzhuan qiankun* 窮棒子扭轉乾坤), Wang Xuyang and Ben Qingyu's *I Want to Go to School* (*Wo yao dushu* 我要讀書), and Wang Shuhui's *The Tale of the West Chamber* (*Xixiang ji* 西廂記) won the first-class prizes for drawing.

Among the six works that won the first-class prize, the first three listed above were published by Shanghai People's Art Press and the latter three were published by People' Art Press in Beijing. The list shows the leading roles that these two publishing enterprises played during the *lianhuanhua* reform in the 1950s, as their production was endorsed by the Party as the models for other publishers to emulate. The works won the prizes not only because of their artistic quality, but also the propaganda purposes served by their content. These works can be classified into three major categories. *The Poor Who Changed the World* and *Great Changes in a Mountain Village* focus on the agricultural collectivization campaign in the villages; *I Want to Go to School* and *Railroad Guerrillas* are stories about the revolution which aim to exhibit the main characters' fighting spirit against the imperialists and foreign invaders; *The Tale of the West Chamber* and *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone Demon* are based on classical novels and were reinterpreted from a socialist perspective, so that they touched upon current issues, such as Marriage Law and the support for Mao when dissonance emerged within the CCP leadership. The subject matter of the works covered contemporary political campaigns, Communist

revolution, and reinterpretation of classical stories, showing that the aspects the CCP sought to reform were not only in the reality, but in the minds of readers.

This dissertation focuses on the visual language of the three *lianhuanhua* published by Shanghai People's Art Press, the publishing enterprise that owns the largest *lianhuanhua* department in China since 1956. The three works, whose contents resonated with current politics of the time, were made by three groups of *lianhuanhua* artists with distinctive backgrounds. Zhao and Qian were older artists who were trained in the traditional master-pupil system during the Republican period; He Youzhi was a self-taught artist whose skill was greatly improved by attending the *lianhuanhua* workshops held by art administrators in Shanghai in the early 1950s; and Ding and Han were well-trained in academic drawing, as they were graduates of the prestigious East China Campus of Central Academy of Fine Art (hereafter CAFA). Through analyzing the components that form the visual language of the *lianhuanhua*, I seek to demonstrate *lianhuanhua*-making as a complex process that involves negotiation between high politics, state policies, the market, and administrators and artists' agency.

Chapter Summary

The first chapter centers on the reform of the *lianhuanhua* industry in the first half of the 1950s. When the establishment of the PRC was officially proclaimed in October 1949, vast areas of South and Southeast China were still controlled by remnants of the Nationalist army or by various warlord armies, which once allied with the Nationalists during the civil war.[39] Publishing a mass quantity of new *lianhuanhua*, *nianhua*, and propaganda posters, which ingrained the values celebrated by the Communist Party, was considered an effective way to consolidate

[39] Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic* (New York: Free Press, 1986), 73.

support for the Party among the people. The CCP strove to publish new *lianhuanhua* that told stories of war heroes, role models, and the struggles of the peasants and workers to inculcate socialist ideology in the people. To make sure the new *lianhuanhua* were produced in the way (both content and style) the CCP wanted, and could reach a significant number of readers, the CCP implemented reform in three areas: the artists, the publishers, and the bookstores and bookstalls. Artists were reorganized through the *Lianhuanhua* Artists' Association and were reeducated with socialist ideology and drawing skills through conferences and workshops held by the Municipal Cultural Bureau. State publishers were founded, private publishers were merged into public-private joint enterprises, and a standardized work procedure and review system were established. Policies were made to confiscate *lianhuanhua* whose content was deemed unsuitable to the new society, demand bookstall owners to stock the new *lianhuanhua*, and to drive the uncooperative bookstalls out of business. This chapter describes the reforms and the unexpected pushbacks in Shanghai in these three areas by examining the official reports, memoirs of the artists and administrators, and journals and newspapers that served as mouthpieces of the state. The chapter not only provides the background knowledge for the following chapters, but also contributes to the rethinking of the culture of socialist China through revealing the pushback against the reform of the *lianhuanhua* industry.

The second chapter focuses on Zhao Hongben and Qian Xiaodai's *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone Demon.* Zhao and Qian were two of "the great four" *lianhuanhua* artists in the 1940s; their drawing skills were first developed in the traditional master-pupil system in artists' studios, then through the reeducation workshops in the early 1950s. The *lianhuanhua* reflects the turmoil in high politics and international relations from the late 1950s to the early 1960s. The chapter first explores how the hero, Sun Wukong, is represented as the embodiment

of Mao by examining the changing image of Sun in various *lianhuanhua* published in the 1950s. This chapter also aims to identify the classical elements deployed in the *lianhuanhua* and discuss the significance of the elements by delving into the CCP's narrative of art history.

He Youzhi's *Great Changes in a Mountain Village* is the focal point of the third chapter. *Great Changes in a Mountain Village* depicts the process of agricultural collectivization in a village in Hunan province, and exhibits how this process impacts the private and public lives of the villagers. He Youzhi incorporated sketches made during his field trips to the countryside combined with stylized lines and patterns inspired by classical paintings and woodblock illustrations made in the Ming and Qing dynasty. Through examining the works claimed to be the inspiration for *Great Changes in a Mountain Village* and other possible sources, I argue that the motivation for using (and claiming to use) classical elements in *lianhuanhua* is a political, instead of aesthetic, choice. Moreover, the *lianhuanhua* artist's aspiration of being recognized as an artist of fine art is also a motivation for him to identify the masterpieces and the master artists as his inspiration.

Chapter Four examines Ding Binzeng and Han Heping's *Railroad Guerrillas*, which tells an exciting story about a group of communist guerrilla fighters who sabotage the Japanese army's military operations in Shandong during the Second Sino-Japanese War. This chapter first delineates the education the artists received at the East China Campus of CAFA, then investigates how they recreated the image of idealized heroes, modern machinery, and infrastructure brought and built by the Japanese. The academically trained artists successfully created a visual language that combines the meticulousness of Western draftsmanship and the precision of Chinese line-drawing. In the pictures that were rendered purely through outlines, things that were usually depicted through the application of large areas of black, such as objects

covered by shadows or at night, were represented in a way that every detail is clearly visible as if they are seen under broad daylight. I contend that the style the artists created makes everything, especially the modern and the Japanese, seeable under a socialist gaze.

The dissertation concludes with a brief epilogue centering on the *lianhuanhua* published during and after the cultural revolution. During the height of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), most publishing houses were shut down. At that time, many famous *lianhuanhua* artists suffered severe criticism: they were deemed as "ox-ghosts" and "snake-spirits," and their works were labeled as "poisonous weeds" of culture.[40] Zhao and Qian's work made considerable changes to cope with the aesthetics of the Cultural Revolution. He Youzhi's work was impacted by the criticism of the original novel, which was castigated for the detailed description of the middle characters. Ding and Han's *Railroad Guerrillas* was also forced undergo revisions because a character they depicted was modeled after Liu Shaoqi in the original novel.

After Mao's death in 1976, *lianhuanhua* publishing was reorganized once again. With Deng Xiaoping's rule after 1979, rigid controls were abandoned. Blatant propaganda was replaced by subtle messages; artists had more freedom to explore new subject matter and styles. By examing the *lianhuanhua* that won the first-class prizes for drawing in the second and third National *Lianhuanhua* Exhibition held in 1981 and 1986, respectively, I observed that the contents of *lianhuanhua* were gradually detached from propaganda and the national form, which was created for conveying propaganda during the 1950s and 1960s, was out of official favor.

The artistic quality and quantity of publications both reached another high point in the first half of the 1980s. Unfortunately, the number of publications started to decline from 1986

[40] Lu Jun 陸軍, "Heroes of *Liahuanhua*—Jiang Weipu on Hua Sanchuan" (*Lianhuanhua chu yingxiong pu—Jiang Weipu tan Hua Sanchuan* 連環畫出英雄譜—姜維樸談華三川), *Art Observation* (*Meishu guancha* 美術觀察) Vol. 3 (2005): 34.

onward. Compared to the situation in 1985, the number of titles published shrunk by 58 percent, and the number of copies shrunk by 90 percent in 1987.[41] Why *lianhuanhua* suddenly stopped attracting readers is a question debated by scholars. They pointed out a few possible factors, including the competition from television, video cassette recorder, and Japanese manga, the new formal experiments unfamiliar to *lianhuanhua* readers, and the increasingly literate population, who no longer need to rely on the *lianhuanhua* pictures as visual aids.[42] Besides these factors, the reemergence of an art market after the economic reform also accelerated the decline of *lianhuanhua*, as the extra income made by drawing *lianhuanhua* was no longer attractive to artists of *guohua* and oil paintings.

In the 1990s and 2000s, a reviving interest in *lianhuanhua* brought a heated market for *lianhuanhua* collection. The original versions of *lianhuanhua* made during the 1950s and 1960s were sold at incredibly high prices in auctions. Not only were the "classic" *lianhuanhua* reprinted, but guides for *lianhuanhua* collection and investment were also published. This trend proved that *lianhuanhua* has become a collectible artifact of nostalgia, and is no longer at the front of mass entertainment, censorship, and propaganda.

[41] Ibid.
[42] Julia Andrews, "Literature in Line: Picture Stories in the People's Republic of China," *Inks: Cartoon and Comic Art Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (November, 1997): 32. Wan, *A Study on Twentieth Century Lianhuanhua*, 165, 167. Chen, "Chinese Lian Huan Hua and Literacy," 173.

CHAPTER 1

Creating New Readers:

Socialist Reform of the *Lianhuanhua* Industry in Shanghai

When the establishment of the People's Republic of China was officially proclaimed in October 1949, publishing new *lianhuanhua* was considered an effective way to consolidate support for the Chinese Communist Party among urban dwellers. Blaming the old *lianhuanhua* for spreading superstitious, pornographic, violent, and feudal ideas, the CCP strove to produce the new *lianhuanhua* to educate readers with stories of war heroes, model workers, and the struggles of the peasants. This chapter describes the reform of *lianhuanhua* industry in Shanghai in the first half of the 1950s, during which we see the CCP's efforts to monopolize the market through the establishment of publishers, bookstores, and professional associations that were controlled by the Party. I see the reform of the *lianhuanhua* industry in Shanghai as a complex process in which the Party-State was grappling with producing the ideal new *lianhuanhua*: a genre that would attract readers to be willingly exposed to Communist propaganda, and thereby reform them. In this chapter, I will delve into how the CCP brought the *lianhuanhua* industry in Shanghai under its control, and discuss the pushbacks it encountered and compromises it made. The chapter is arranged into three sections. The first section explains why young urbanites were the target readers of the new *lianhuanhua*. The second describes the CCP's effort to reform readers through the reeducation of *lianhuanhua* artists, the establishment and reorganization of publishers, and the application of the review and censor system. The last section focuses on

negotiation—that is, how the CCP's endeavor was reformed by readers. This part centers on the distribution of *lianhuanhua*. As the front line of contact with readers, the behavior of bookstall owners reflected the readers' attitude toward the new *lianhuanhua*.

Section One: Who Are the Readers? What Was to be Reformed?

Before delving into the practices the CCP adopted to reform the *lianhuanhua* industry in Shanghai in the 1950s, it is necessary to unravel the concept of the target of this reform: the readers. In his examination of Chinese contemporary literature, Cai Xiang distinguishes the differences between the political concept of the masses and the literary concept of the reader in contemporary Chinese literature. In Mao Zedong's seminal "Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art," delivered in 1942, the "masses" he refers to are revolutionary subjects (peasants, soldiers, or workers) whom writers should serve; at the same time, the reader is also "a product of some sort of traditional culture" that may not meet the political demands of the CCP.[43] The reader became an ambiguous concept, one which is simultaneously to be served and to be reformed. The Party-State, on the one hand, was striving to reeducate readers; on the other hand, it had to cope with readers' preferences and reading habits. Moreover, the "readers" the CCP was referring to were constantly changing, according to the social context.

The reform of the *lianhuanhua* industry and, ultimately, the readers was implemented through attempts of popularization (*puji* 普及) and raising standards (*tigao* 提高). These two means can also be found in Mao's 1942 talk, in which he lectured the artists, writers, and intellectuals in Yan'an on their social and political responsibilities, demanding that they create works for workers, peasants, and soldiers. "Popularization" and "raising standards" were

[43] Cai, *Revolution and Its Narratives*, 222.

emphasized, reminding art workers that they had to ensure the new works could mediate Communist ideas to the readers, and therefore educate, encourage, and enlighten them.[44] Popularization meant taking forms that could better communicate with the intended audiences, and then spreading the desired ideas through these forms; raising standards not only meant the elevation of the quality of the works, but also the enhancement of the readers' knowledge and political consciousness. Mao urged artists and writers to prioritize popularization over raising standards for pragmatic reasons, because the people engaged in battles (mostly less educated or illiterate) needed works of literature and art that were easy to absorb, and could give them confidence about the final victory.

In the culture of the liberated areas, the concept of the "reader" mainly indicated the peasants. The deployment of the form familiar to peasant viewers first appeared in the production of *nianhua*. Originating from paintings for the four seasons during the Song dynasty, woodblock-printed *nianhua* flourished during the late Ming and Qing dynasties.[45] The subject matter of *nianhua* included, but was not limited to, religious icons, historical figures, theatrical characters, chubby babies, and specific flora and fauna as auspicious symbols.[46] As a popular decoration for the new year, *nianhua* prints were usually pasted on the doors or above the stove to protect the family from evil spirits and bring good fortune. As Ellen Johnston Laing discusses, *nianhua* prints were used to deliver political messages, such as women's education, anti-Christian sentiment, restoration of the republic, and resistance against the Japanese invasion during the late

[44] Mao Zedong, *Mao Tsetung Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art* (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1972), 38-40.
[45] Bo Songnian 薄松年, *The History of Chinese Nianhua* (*Zhongguo nianhua shi* 中國年畫史) (Shenyang: Liaoning meishu chubanshe, 1986), 1-18.
[46] James A. Flath, *The Cult of Happiness: Nianhua, Art, and History in Rural North China* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 4.

Qing dynasty and the Republican period.[47] However, it was not until the late 1930s that *nianhua* was instrumentalized in liberated areas controlled by the CCP. In the Communist base of Yan'an, the young left-wing artists who were educated in the Hangzhou and Shanghai art academies abandoned shading, sharp tonal contrast, and dramatic composition in their modernist woodcut practice; they instead embraced the conventions of folk prints, which were characterized by even, thick outlines and traditional symbols of auspices, to appeal to the conservative peasantry.[48]

Comparing Jiang Feng's *Longshoremen* (*Matou gongren* 碼頭工人, 1931) and *Studying is Good* (*Nianshu hao* 念書好, 1943) one can tell how drastic the style change was (fig. 1.1 & fig. 1.2). Inspired by Clément Moreau's (*né* Carl Josef Meffert, 1903–1988) works, Jiang illustrated the longshoremen walking nonchalantly along the riverbank with stooped backs, heavy strides, and facial expressions that suggest exhaustion. Behind them, the factories are emitting billows of black smoke, giving the picture a gloomy overtone. Created thirteen years after *Longshoremen*, *Studying is Good* is bright, celebratory, and decorative, fitting its function as a *nianhua*. Jiang incorporated the theme of chubby male children, which symbolize the prosperousness of a family, in traditional *nianhua*, but tweaked the theme by adding a female child into the picture and replacing the objects the children usually hold, such as fruits, fish, and seedpods of lotus, with a brush, a letter paper, and an abacus.[49] At the top of the picture, the title reads: "Studying is good; after you study, you can do accounts and write letters." Auspicious symbols, including lucky bats, fish, flowers, coins, rice, wheat, corn, and pumpkins decorate the top and bottom of the picture. The entire picture is illustrated with even outlines. Areas of black

[47] Ellen Johnston Laing, "Reform, Revolutionary, Political, and Resistance Themes in Chinese Popular Prints, 1900-1940," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*, vol. 12, no. 2, (Fall, 2000): 123-175.
[48] Julia Andrews and Kuiyi Shen, *Art of Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 132-133.
[49] Andrews, *Painters and Politics in People's Republic of China*, 19.

are only used for highlighting the decorative patterns on the clothes and shoes of the little boy, who carries a cross-body school bag with a huge star on the flap, indicating the leading role the CCP played in the Yan'an literacy campaign. The change of style exhibits the artist's adjustments in order to communicate with peasant viewers.

Similar to the changes in *nianhua*, *Iron Buddha Temple* (*Tiefosi* 鐵佛寺), carved by Lü Meng (呂蒙, 1915–1996), Ya Jun (亞君 1921–1995), and Mo Pu (莫樸, 1915–1996), serves as an exemplary *lianhuanhua* that demonstrates how the urban artists compromised their aesthetics for the sake of popularization. In the printed pictures—although the use of strong black and white contrast, a signature characteristic of the modernist woodcut prints, is still prominent in the background—the human figures are depicted through a clear, thick outline without any indication of light and shade on the faces. In a picture that illustrates the villain trying to persuade the village cadre to increase the number of the militia (fig. 1.3), the artists used thicker lines to indicate the shades on the body. The faces are depicted with thinner lines to frame the contours. Although the daylight that shines into the house through the doorway illuminates part of the floor, the top of the stool, and the hat and clothes of the militiaman standing behind the main character, the light source is not indicated on the two main characters at all. The artists knew that peasants disliked the expressionist style, as they called the carved faces rendered with sharp contrast of light and shade as "yin-yang face." By using thick outlines and avoiding the contrast of light and shade when illustrating the main characters, the artists modified their style according to the tastes of their readers.

After the founding of the PRC, the urban classes were added into the concept of the reader.[50] Communist administrators who were new to the cities were facing a different group of

[50] Cai, *Revolution and Its Narratives*, 221.

readers in an environment they were unfamiliar with. In the case of *lianhuanhua*, it is safe to see *lianhuanhua* reform as a project which aimed to create an official popular culture catering to the taste of urban dwellers so they could be exposed to Communist values, hence be reformed into socialist subjects. This change in the concept of the "reader" led to the changes in the means of production, circulation, and consumption of *lianhuanhua*. In the following section, I will examine how the CCP perceived and represented urban readers and the readings they favored through a close reading of a *lianhuanhua*, the *Fall of the Youth Li Changkuan* (*Qingnian Li Changkuan de duoluo* 青年李長寬的墮落).

Published in 1956, the *lianhuanhua* consists of two stories, both depicting the process through which a young boy becomes a criminal because the influence of *lianhuanhua*. The main character of the first story, Li Changkuan, is deeply attracted by the fantastic adventures and romantic affairs of the "flying immortals, knights-errant, armed escorts, and bandits"[51] in the *lianhuanhua*. When Li is old enough to go to school, he makes the acquaintance of a counter-revolutionary, who supplies him with more "poisonous" *lianhuanhua* that illustrate the luxurious lives enjoyed by bandits. He later befriends street thugs and is recruited to work for the reactionary forces. After being caught, Li is sent to a work camp. Through the work reform, he finally realizes that he was "poisoned by the corrupted bourgeois thoughts"[52] distributed through the *lianhuanhua*.

The second story, "How Zhou Zhensen Becomes a Criminal" (*Zhou Zhensen shi ruhe zoushang fanzui de daolu de* 周真森是如何走上犯罪的道路的), portrays the bad influence with greater pictorial detail. Like Li, Zhou loves the invisible magic and sword-spitting spells

[51] Bai Chunxi 白純熙, Gao Jifang 高季方, Shu Hua 舒華*, The Fall of the Youth, Li Changkuan* (*Qingnian Li Changkuan de duoluo* 青年李長寬的墮落) (Wuhan: Hubei renmin chubanshe, 1956), 4.
[52] Ibid., 28.

depicted in *lianhuanhua*. Dreaming of going to Emei Mountain to learn martial arts and invisible magic from the sword-immortals, he hides himself in a cargo ship trying to leave his hometown. His plan fails, as he is immediately caught by the sailors and sent back home. One day, when he is at home alone, his *lianhuanhua*-corrupted mind drives him to rape a young girl in the neighborhood. Zhou ends up being put behind bars. The accompanying text ends with Zhou's mother accusing "the reactionary, obscene, absurd books"[53] of being responsible for her son's crimes, and urging the government to take measures against the books.

In the *lianhuanhua*, Li and Zhou are both teenagers from an urban area. In the pictures, they are always in Western-styled shirts and pants. Moreover, being able to access *lianhuanhua* through bookstalls was itself an urban experience. In the pictures depicting the boys strolling on the street or lingering in bookstalls, there are tall buildings in the background, suggesting the stories take place in cities. From the stories, one can deduct that the CCP saw urban teenagers as susceptible to the influences of *lianhuanhua*, and so took them as the major target for reform.

In the two stories, the genre that lured the teenagers to commit crimes is martial arts fiction, which centers on the adventures of knights-errant with an emphasis on the spectacle of sword fights, magic, and superhuman physical prowess. In the picture in which Li Changkuan is enjoying *lianhuanhua* with his friends in a street bookstall (fig. 1.4), the genre of the *lianhuanhua* is indicated through the big characters on the counter, which read "New Arrivals: The Flying-Sword Knight-Errant (*Feijian xia* 飛劍俠)." Similarly, the first picture of Zhou Zhensen's story depicts Zhou walking by a street bookstall with his eyes fixated on the book display (fig. 1.5). On top of the bookcase, three characters read: "The Great Sword Knight-Errant (*Da jianxia* 大劍俠)." Next to the bookcase are three children reading *lianhuanhua*. The older

[53] Ibid., 80.

child is waving a toy sword and reading at the same time. The following picture shows the dark interior of a bookstall. The boy standing in the middle of the picture is wearing a bead necklace and a hat. With the extending index and middle finger and the curled ring and little finger, he is presenting a Daoist sword gesture with his right hand, as if he is about to cast a spell. At the lower left corner of the picture, a boy is carrying a toy sword on his back (fig. 1.6). These details suggest that the boys are deeply immersed in the martial arts *lianhuanhua* that are full of depictions of magic and sword fights. Large areas of shadow are looming over the bookstalls, both indoors and outdoors, indicating that the bookstalls are dangerous places for children.

Another example showing the bad influence of *lianhuanhua* on the reader can be found in a short *lianhuanhua* titled *The Absurd Journey* (*Huangtang de lüxing* 荒唐的旅行) in *Lianhuanhua Pictorial* (*Lianhuanhua Bao* 連環畫報) in 1956. The story describes a teenage factory worker's failed attempt to travel to Wutai Mountain, where he seeks to learn the invisible magic so he can beat American soldiers in the Korean War (fig. 1.7). The text specifically lists a few titles, including *The Seven Swords and Thirteen Knights-Errant* (*Qi jian shisan xia* 七劍十三俠), *The Flying-Gallant Sword* (*Fei xia jian* 飛俠劍), and *The Strange Knights-Errant of the Underworld* (*Jianghu qixia zhuan* 江湖奇俠傳), and suggests these are responsible for fostering the fantasy in the boy's mind. Through looking at the stories, it is safe to deduce that the readers of *lianhuanhua*, in the CCP's perception, were mainly urban teenagers. The genre that influenced them the most, and was thus most urgent to reform, was martial arts fiction.

Knight-errantry has a long tradition in Chinese literature. Ancient records of wandering knights-errant can be found in the *Records of the Historian* (*Shiji* 史記, 91 BC), written by Sima Qian (司馬遷). The stories of knights-errant spread through classical and vernacular literature, drama, and storytelling during the long dynastic history. The knights-errant were characterized

by moral superiority and extraordinary martial skills, which enabled them to conduct chivalric acts and achieve personal righteousness outside of the mainstream, usually corrupt, social order.[54] During the Republican period, the film industry brought the frenzy for the genre to an unprecedented level. Film studios garnered great commercial success through the representation of sensational fighting scenes consisting of acrobatic stunts and special effects. One of the existing martial arts films in the period, *The Burning of the Red Lotus Temple* (*Huoshao hongliansi* 火燒紅蓮寺, 1928), was so successful that seventeen sequels were made between 1928 and 1931. *Lianhuanhua* artists and publishers were highly sensitive to popular topics. They soon started drawing *lianhuanhua* based on the films, aiming to attract readers who could not afford movie tickets or had no access to theatres.

The *lianhuanhua* previously examined exhibit a pattern in the narrative to stigmatize *lianhuanhua*: an urban teenage boy, who is fascinated by the depiction of swords and magic in martial arts *lianhuanhua*, tries to imitate the heroes in the story but breaks social norms when doing it. The pattern of denouncing martial arts *lianhuanhua* finds its roots in the Republican period. As early as in 1931, an article in *Shanghai News* (*Shen Bao* 申報) delineates a story about five workshop apprentices determined to embark on a journey to Mountain Emei to seek superpowers.[55] The journalist describes the actions of the boys at great length, and makes sure the details reveal that they were influenced by martial arts *lianhuanhua*. Before the apprentices leave Shanghai, they burn incense sticks and candles to swear an oath that the one who regrets their actions and gives up the journey shall be damned by lightning and flame. When the police

[54] Zhang Zhen, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen: Shanghai Cinema, 1896-1937* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 206.
[55] "Five Boys Seeking Immortality" (*Wutong qiuxian qu* 五童求仙去), *Shanghai News* (*Shen Bao* 申報) (August 12, 1931).

start their investigation, they find that the boys left no worldly possessions behind except two dozen *lianhuanhua*. The title *The Burning of the Red Lotus Temple* was deliberately mentioned. Similar news about children or teenagers in Shanghai, Nanjing, or even Taiwan running away from home to learn magic and sword skills in the mountains were constantly reported during the 1930s and 1940s.[56] The influence of superstitious *lianhuanhua* even became one of three major reasons, along with domestic abuse and child luring, for children to run away from home, according to a police report in Nanjing.[57]

Zhang Zhen and Bao Weihong's study on early martial arts films provides a path for exploring why both the Nationalist and the Communist government criticized and eventually banned martial arts contents. Martial arts films were first welcomed by May Fourth intellectuals and the Nationalist government. The martial heroes' valiant fortitude and physical prowess dispelled the image of the "sick man of the Orient" (*dongya bingfu* 東亞病夫), which had been internalized by the Chinese people since China's consecutive defeats by Western powers in the late Qing dynasty.[58] Martial arts films resonated with audiences, arousing patriotism and nationalism within the viewers through the representation of the moving body of the heroes.[59]

The Nationalist government soon turned against martial arts films and fictions because of

[56] According to Qu Qiubai, there were six to seven reports about teenagers seeking sword-immortals in the mountains between 1930 and 1931. Qu Qiubai, "The Era of Don Quixote" (*Jihede de shidai* 吉訶德的時代) in Qu Quibai, *Selected Essays of Qu Qiubai* (*Qu Qiubai wenxuan* 瞿秋白文選), Lin Wenguang ed. (Chengdu: Sichuan wenyi chubanshe, 2010), 140-141. For news in Shanghai, see Zhou Ge 周戈, "*Lianhuan Tuhua*," *Shanghai News* (*Shen Bao*) (May 6, 1937). Chen Jiahua 陳家驊, "*The Poison of Lianhuan Tuhua*" (*Lianhuan tuhua zhi du* 連環圖畫之毒), *Shanghai News* (*Shen Bao* 申報) (April 17, 1947). For news in Taiwan, see Sheng-chi Tsai 蔡盛琦, "The Comic-Strip Picture Books Published in Shanghai and Popular in Taiwan (1945-1949)" (*Taiwan liuxing yuedu de Shanghai lianhuan tuhua* 臺灣流行閱讀的上海連環圖畫), *National Central Library Bulletin* (*Guojia tushuguan guankan* 國家圖書館館刊), vol. 1 (June 2009), 83-85.

[57] "A Hundred Fifty Children were Missing Since May" (*Wuyue lai shizong ertong da bai wushi ming zhi duo* 五月來失蹤兒童達百五十名之多), *Central Daily* (*Zhongyang ribao* 中央日報) (May 30, 1948).

[58] Zhang, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen*, 205.

[59] Weihong Bao, *Fiery Cinema: The Emergence of an affective Medium in Cinema, 1915-1945* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 63-75.

the fantastic elements' affinities with the superstitious, and the anarchic potential mediated through the action scenes. Here, the term "superstition" should be viewed within the context of the anti-superstition campaign launched by the Nationalist government in the mid-1920s. In order to create a civil religion that promoted national unity and modernization, the Nationalist Party branded "local cults, temple religions, and all devotional and liturgical forms of ritual practices that express loyalties to family, clan, local and regional social organization"[60] as superstition, and saw them as practices of "danger or lack of knowledge and education."[61] The heroes in martial arts fictions and films are loyal to their families, sects, and sworn-brothers and sisters. During a time when the government strove to mold nationalist subjects, the martial arts genre, like local and regional liturgical practices, exhibited a value system contradictory to authorities' endeavors.

In the field of popular literature, John Christopher Hamm observes that the martial arts fantasy was criticized by May Fourth writers, who advocated for the modernization discourse in literary production, because of it inherited the prominent features of the strange (*yi* 異), the marvelous (*qi* 奇), and the weird (*guai* 怪) in premodern fiction.[62] The non-modernization-based literature, especially martial arts fiction, was rendered illegitimate. As Petrus Liu argues, martial arts literature largely drew upon China's indigenous sources, including but not limited to Daoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and premodern literary models such as linked-chapter fiction and classical-styled word choices.[63] The premodern elements caused martial arts fiction to be

[60] Rebecca Nedostup, *Superstitious Regimes: Religious and the Politics of Chinese Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009), 10.
[61] Ibid.
[62] John Christopher Hamm, *The Unworthy Scholar from Pingjiang: Republican-Era Martial Arts Fiction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 141.
[63] Petrus Liu, *Stateless Subjects: Chinese Martial Arts Literature and Postcolonial History* (Ithaca: East Asia Program, Cornell University, 2011), 8.

seen as an obstacle to be eradicated in order to build a modern nation.

Martial arts films combined modern technology and the pre-modern elements in martial arts fiction. As Zhang Zhen insightfully perceived, martial arts films were antithetical to the Nationalist government's agenda of unidirectional modernization. Not only the special effects that borders the representation of the superstition, but also the characters' actions, exhibit an anarchic energy that defies the restriction of social norms and even the laws of physics.[64] To the Nationalist government, the fantastic bodies in the martial arts films became a threat to the agenda of nationalization and modernization. As a result, martial arts films were banned in 1931; martial arts fiction was banned by both the Nationalist and the Communist government after 1949.

The CCP took martial arts literature and *lianhuanhua* as a major target for eradication as early as they took over the major cities in 1949. The criticism of the martial arts genre in the early PRC is a continuation of the modernization project started during the Republican period. In June 1949, an article in *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao* 人民日報) criticized the contents of martial arts *lianhuanhua* because they were full of fantastic adventures, characters who devoted themselves to blind loyalty and filial piety, swordsmen who rob and raid, and pornographic affairs that allure readers to debauchery.[65] The editor of *People's Daily* and later vice-chairman of the Chinese Artists Association, Cai Ruohong (蔡若虹),[66] also specified that the martial arts fantasy, along with the *lianhuanhua* based on American detective and adventure fictions and films, were responsible for distracting readers from facing the problems of reality and planting

[64] Zhang, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen*, 239.
[65] Wu Lao 吳勞, "Replacing the Old *Xiaorenshu* with the New" (*Yi xin xiaorenshu qudai jiou xiaorenshu* 以新小人書取代舊小人書), *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao* 人民日報) (June 5, 1949).
[66] Michael Sullivan, *Modern Chinese Artists: A Biographical Dictionary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006): 7.

feudal, superstitious, and slavish ideas.[67] Cai Ruohong's view finds its correspondence in May Fourth intellectuals, who saw martial arts literature as escapist fantasy that blocked Chinese people's reception of revolutionary ideas.[68]

Although the CCP inherited the modernist drive to eradicate the martial arts fantasy, it expanded the pool of genres that should be eliminated. On May 20, 1955, the central politburo of the CCP announced measurements against reactionary (*fandong* 反動), obscene (*yinhui* 淫穢), and absurd (*huangdan* 荒誕) books, magazines, and pictures. By the end of Zhou Zhensen's story introduced earlier, Zhou's mother's accusation of "reactionary," "obscene," and "absurd" *lianhuanhua* shows that this book was created to propagate the new policy. Similarly, the short *lianhuanhua The Absurd Journey* was orchestrated as part of the implementation of the policy. An editorial in *People's Daily* explained what kinds of books fall in the category of reactionary, obscene, and absurd. It identifies the reactionary genres as the "detective" and "science" fiction stories that center on the depictions of crimes, because they spread the thoughts of the "ruling class and the imperialists, who use these books to recruit murderers, agents, and spies to undermine the revolution."[69] The article blames the obscene books that "celebrate the corrupted lives of the bourgeoisie and their insatiable appetite for debauchery, incest, and prostitution."[70] Martial arts fantasy is categorized as the "absurd" type of books, because it centers on superpowers such as men riding clouds, breathing fire, and spitting swords.

Later in July, another editorial in *People's Daily* delineated how the reactionary, obscene,

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[67] Cai Ruohong 蔡若虹, "About the Reform of *Lianhuanhua*" (*Guanyü lianhuan tuhua de gaizao wenti* 關於連環圖畫的改造問題), Arts (*Meishu* 美術), no. 1 (1950): 17.
[68] Qu Qiubai, "The Era of Don Quixote," 140-141.
[69] "Strictly Banning the Reactionary, Absurd, Obscene Books" (*Yanli qudi fandong, huangdan, yinhui de shukan* 嚴厲取締反動、荒誕、淫穢的書刊), *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao* 人民日報) (May 15, 1955).
[70] Ibid.

absurd books influenced the readers.[71] The editorial accused the books of being responsible for distracting readers from study and work, as some of them try to learn sword skills in the mountains, and some indulge themselves in debaucherous entertainments. Most importantly, some of them "organize gangs, make sworn-brothers, and get involved in brawling, raping young girls, and stealing public assets."[72] In Li Changkuan and Zhou Zhensen's story, we also see the descriptions of the two boys twisting the act of knight-errantry into bullying the weak, stealing from peasants, and leading mass brawls. Li is even absorbed by a counter-revolutionary organization, which conspires to subvert the local government.

The connection between martial arts fiction and crimes described in the *lianhuanhua* and the editorial in *People's Daily* further reflect the CCP's concern about *lianhuanhua* readers and their susceptibility to being absorbed by organized crime groups, especially gangs like the Green and Red Gang, which had collaborated with the Nationalists during the Republican period. The gangs thrived during the late Qing dynasty by recruiting peasants, who swarmed to the cities due to consecutive wars and the industrial and commercial development in urban areas. The three largest gangs in the Qing dynasty were the Heaven and Earth Society (*Tiandihui* 天地會), the Green Gang (*Qingbang* 青幫), and the Red Gang (*Hongbang* 紅幫). In the early 1920s, the members of the Green Gang and the Red Gang merged in the trading ports of Shanghai, Zhenjiang, and Nanjing.[73] They controlled the trades of opium trafficking, gambling, trafficking of women, and salt smuggling. The gang members had to follow their own rules, since they could not rely on the government to arbitrate conflicts within the organization. Take the Shanghai

[71] "Firmly Enforcing the Measurements Against Reactionary, Obscene, Absurd Books" (*Jianjue di chuli fandong, yinhui, huangdan de tushu* 堅決地處理反動、淫穢、荒誕的圖書), *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao* 人民日報) (July 27, 1955).
[72] Ibid.
[73] Wang Peng, *The Chinese Mafia: Organized Crime, Corruption, and Extra-Legal Protection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 30.

Green Gang, the most powerful criminal organization in China in the early twentieth century, as an example. The Green Gang was organized according to master-pupil relationships. Each member had to be introduced, instructed, and supervised by at least three senior gang members, who acted as his/her "recommender," "master of studies," and "master of preaching," respectively.[74] A new member received a generational name to indicate his/her position in the hierarchical fictive family tree. Close relationships between mentors (gang leaders) and disciples (rank-and-file members) were formed through this mechanism. In martial arts fiction and films, the martial arts sects are usually composed of a sect leader and many disciples. The main characters' loyalties to the sects and sect brothers and sisters found correspondences in the real-life criminal organizations of the time. According to Li Changkuan and Zhou Zhensen's stories, the *lianhuanhua* readers' longing for the lifestyle of a martial hero definitely aroused concern from the CCP.

Furthermore, the gangs had strong connections with the warlords and Nationalist politicians during the inter-war period. The existence of the gangs posed a threat to the stability of Communist rule. For example, Chiang Kai-shek was supported by the Shanghai Green Gang to secure funds for the Northern Expedition. In 1927, the Nationalists and the Green Gang collaborated in the incident known as the Shanghai massacre, which involved the bloody suppression of Communist Party organizations and members in the city. With the help of Du Yuesheng, the boss of the Green Gang and one of the three main Shanghai tycoons, the Nationalist government gained control of the Commercial Bank of China in 1935. The collaboration also helped the Green Gang expand its influence in legal business, including banking, the shipping industry, and food supply.[75] The Green Gang was facing decline in 1945

[74] Ibid., 35.
[75] Brian G. Martin, *The Shanghai Green Gang: Politics and Organized Crime, 1919-1937* (Berkeley: University of

when Japan was defeated, the concessions were returned to China's jurisdiction, and the government no longer needed the gang's assistance to control the city.[76] From 1949 to 1953, the CCP implemented large-scale campaigns and violent suppressions to eradicate the residue of gangs and secret societies. To the CCP, young labor workers in the cities were dangerous, as they were the primary population of gang members during the Republican period. The young urban workers also played a significant part in the consumption of *lianhuanhua*. Bearing in mind the influence of the Green Gang and its connection with the Nationalists, one would not be surprised that the Communist cultural administrators were eager to stop *lianhuanhua* readers from developing a fondness for marital arts *lianhuanhua*.

Interestingly, observing the description of the new policy circulating within the Party, one finds the CCP's stance against martial arts literature and *lianhuanhua* was not actually as firm as the Party expressed in the *People's Daily*. The new policy categorized the problematic books into three groups, and different measurements were to be applied accordingly. The first category of books to be banned were the most "reactive" ones, including, but not limited to, Chiang Kai-shek's story and Hitler's autobiography *Mein Kampf*. Martial arts literature was not outright banned, but was designated to be collected and then gradually exchanged for new books. The third category was for books that were allowed to be circulated even though they were not considered a good fit for socialist standards, including classical novels, novels written by May Fourth writers, the melodramatic novels written by the Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies-school writers, and translated novels from Western Europe, including Sherlock Holmes novels, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Gulliver's Travels*, and *One Thousand and One Nights*.[77] Martial arts literature

California Press, 1996), 159-213.
[76] Wang, *The Chinese Mafia*, 49-50.
[77] "The Politburo's Instruction on Problems of Reactive, Obscene, Absurd Books and Pictures and Strengthening the Management and Reform of Private Cultural Businesses (May 20, 1955)," (*Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu chuli*

and *lianhuanhua* were circulating in the market all the way through the 1960s. The reason why the CCP could not take an aggressive approach, forcing the bookstall owners to give up all the martial arts literature and *lianhuanhua* they had, may lie in the genre's overwhelming popularity and the profit the genre brought to the bookstalls. If the martial arts literature and *lianhuanhua* were abruptly removed from the market, the livelihood of street bookstalls would be greatly impacted, and might cause more social problems. The gap between the CCP's attitude and measures taken against marital arts content suggests that in the 1950s, the CCP's policy could be negotiated through the power of the market. The CCP's reform of bookstalls will be continued in Section Three in this chapter.

Section Two: Reforming Readers through *Lianhuanhua*

Lianhuanhua Reform After 1949

After 1949, producing *lianhuanhua* tailored to urban readers through popularization and raising standards was the major task faced by Chinese communist administrators who sought to control and reform the industry. Along with woodblock prints, *nianhua*, and cartoons, *lianhuanhua* was one of the art forms that Zhou Yang, the vice minister of publicity, emphasized that the Party should prioritize developing, in his speech delivered in the All-China Congress of Literary and Arts Workers in Beijing in July 1949.[78] The CCP acknowledged that monopolizing the market was the foundation of a successful reform. Jiang Feng, then vice chair of the All-China Art Worker's Association, stressed that the new art was still much less prevalent than the

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fandongde, yinhuide, huangdande shukan tuhua wenti he guanyu jiaqiang dui yingsi wenhua shiye he qiye de guanli he gaizao de zhishi 中共中央關於處理反動、淫穢、荒誕書刊圖畫問題和關於加強對營私文化事業和企業的管理和改造的指示) in *Selected Documents Since the Establishment of the PRC* (*Jianguo yilai zhongyao wenjian xuanbian* 建國以來重要文件選編), vol. 6 (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2011), 236-237.

[78] Michael Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth Century China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 131.

old *nianhua* and *lianhuanhua*. To make the new art appealing to readers, he proposed that the CCP should first train a large number of art cadres, as well as reforming folk artists and *guohua* artists to serve in factories, villages, and the army. Moreover, he emphasized that art workers should utilize modern printing technology to produce work in large quantities so the new *lianhuanhua* could replace the old ones in the market.[79]

Although Shanghai was the center of *lianhuanhua* publication in the Republican period, the reform of *lianhuanhua* was first started in Beijing. Mass Picture Press (*Dazhong tuhua chubanshe* 大眾圖畫出版社), a state-owned publishing house dedicated to the publication of *lianhuanhua*, was established in 1950 under Mao's instruction and Zhou Yang's administration.[80] Cai Ruohong was appointed to organize this new publishing enterprise. Mass Pictures Press gathered renowned artists and writers to produce the new *lianhuanhua* that should serve as model works for other publishers to emulate. Later, in 1951, Mass Pictures Press was merged with People's Art Press (*Renmin meishu chubanshe* 人民美術出版社) and began publishing *Lianhuanhua Pictorial*, a magazine designed to disseminate messages about current policies through the *lianhuanhua* format.

The works published by People's Art Press shaped the practices of producing the new *lianhuanhua*. Take *An Urgent Letter* (*Jimao xin* 雞毛信, 1950), a collaborative work by the scriptwriter Cai Ruohong and the painter Liu Jiyou (劉繼卣, 1918–1983), as an example. The work shows the CCP's attempt to raise standards artistically and ideologically, after years of effort prioritizing popularization since the Yan'an period. Through the division of labor, not only

[79] Jiang Feng 江豐, "The Works on Art in the Liberated Area" (*Jiefangqu de meishu gongzuo* 解放區的美術工作), in *Chinese Modern and Contemporary Art History Archive* (*Zhongguo xiandangdai meishushi wenxian* 中國現當代美術史文獻), eds. Kong Lingwei and Lü Peng (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 2013), 357.
[80] Jiang Weipu 姜維樸, *Sixty Years of Lianhuanhua in the New China* (*Xin Zhongguo lianhuanhua liushi nian* 新中國連環畫六十年) (Beijing: renmin meishu chubanshe, 2016), 64, 890.

could the writer and the artist concentrate on the fields they were good at, but this also granted the CCP a tighter grip on censoring the content of the script before it was sent to the artist.

The story centers on a young shepherd boy, who outwits the Japanese soldiers who force him to lead the way to his village, and manages to deliver a piece of urgent military information to the Communist regiment under the noses of the Japanese. The painter, Liu Jiyou, was first trained by his father, Liu Kuiling (劉奎齡, 1885–1967) (also a famous *guohua* painter), and later studied in the Western Art Department at Tianjin Art Museum, where he explored drawing, sketch, water color, and oil painting.[81] His style is built upon sketches of contemporary subjects and finished with the plain line drawing (*baimiao* 白描) technique (fig. 1.8). On the one hand, plain line drawing was a conventional technique applied in *lianhuanhua* and in its predecessors, including *Dianshizhai Pictorial* (*Dianshizhai huabao* 點石齋畫報), and woodblock-printed book illustrations. Choosing plain line drawing as part of this *lianhuanhua* style can be taken as a gesture towards popularization, because it was the form the urban classes were familiar with. On the other hand, adopting drawing techniques from the West was an effort towards raising standards: Western realism, with its verisimilitude, was conceptually connected with modernization and the attitude of facing (and therefore changing) the problems of reality. In the picture which shows the shepherd boy carefully moving himself to escape a room full of sleeping Japanese soldiers, the artist framed the picture from a tilted angle and made use of foreshortening to portray the soldiers lying on the ground in various postures. The picture is outlined with subtle variations in thickness produced by masterful brush control. Synthesizing Western and Chinese

[81] Guangdong Museum, Tianjin Museum, Guangdong Museum of Art eds., *The East Meeting the West: Gao Jianfu, Liu Kuiling, Tao Lengyue* (*Gudao xifeng: Gao Jianfu, Liu Kuiling, Tao Lengyue: ershi shiji zaoqi Zhongguo huajia ronghe Zhong xi de qiusuo* 古道西風: 高劍父、劉奎齡、陶冷月: 二十世紀早期中國畫家融合中心的求索) (Nanning: Guangxi meishu chubanshe, 2003), 79.

conventions, Liu Jiyou's work played a significant role in the formation of the style of *lianhuanhua* in Maoist period.

It is worth noting that, just as the new *lianhuanhua* was created to mold urban readers into socialist subjects, the Party-State aimed to use the new *nianhua* to reform viewers in the countryside. *Nianhua* also underwent a process of raising artistic standards. In the early 1950s, the production of new *nianhua* was promoted in art academies. The academic painters elevated the style created during the Yan'an period by incorporating the skills of portrait painting, Western perspective, Western figural arrangements, and dramatic gestures to illustrate current events, policies, and new interpretations of folkloric and theatrical characters.[82] Lin Gang's (林崗, 1925–) *Zhao Guilan at the Heroes' Reception* (*Qunyinghui shang de Zhao Guilan* 群英會上的趙桂蘭, 1952), based on a well-publicized event in which Mao met a model worker who lost her left arm in an accident in a chemical factory, is an example of the new *nianhua* (fig. 1.9). As Julia Andrews explains, the artist combined the outline technique that reminded viewers of Chinese figural paintings with accurate depictions of the interior space, vanishing-point perspective, and complex figure groupings.

Following the directives of popularization and raising standards, the development of *nianhua* and *lianhuanhua* were parallel with one another from the late 1930s to the 1950s. As a pre-existing genre of popular art, the traditional form was invested with new political messages by left-wing artists in the Yan'an period. In the 1950s, the artists responded to the demand of raising standards by using plain line drawing and Western draftsmanship. Although the transformation of the two genres seemed similar, it was clear that they targeted different groups of readers, as *lianhuanhua* were mainly circulated through street bookstalls in the cities, while

[82] Andrews, *Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China*, 61.

nianhua were distributed through branches of Xinhua Bookstore in the villages. The reform of the two genres displays the CCP's aggressive adaptation of existing popular art forms to reach viewers in both the urban and rural areas.

Lianhuanhua **Reform in Shanghai**

Following the standards set in Beijing, the *lianhuanhua* industry in Shanghai underwent a series of reforms focusing on institutions and people in the industry. However, Shanghai had long been the center of the publishing industry, with a well-developed network of production, publication, and circulation long before the Communist Party rose to power. Reforming the industry was a challenging task for the CCP. To massively produce the new *lianhuanhua* that inculcated Communist values, and to ensure the books reached readers efficiently, publishing and distributing enterprises and professional associations were established or reorganized, including Shanghai People's Art Press, New Art Press, *Lianhuanhua* Author's Association, *Lianhuanhua* Rental Association, *Lianhuanhua* Publication Association, and *Lianlian* (連聯書店) and New China Bookstore (*Xinhua shudian* 新華書店). These organizations covered almost all the personnel in the industry. The description of the socialist reform of the *lianhuanhua* industry in the first half of the 1950s will be delineated through an examination of some of these organizations.

Although the socialist reform seemed like a well-concerted master plan that covered every aspect one could think of, the execution of the reform was actually a chaotic process built on trial and error, with pushback from private publishers, vendors, bookstall owners, and readers. The work report written by Shanghai Municipal Cultural Bureau in 1952 shows us that the strategies of the CCP were constantly changing to adapt to the urban environment. At first, the

cadres focused on the organization of artists, because they believed that making the *lianhuanhua* artists identify with Communism would naturally lead to the production of new *lianhuanhua.*[83] They soon discovered the reason why the artists were reluctant to cooperate was because they earned their incomes from the publishers, whose goal was commercial success, not serving the Communist Party. The greatest obstacle was encountered in the reader's market, something the Communist administrators had little experience of engaging with when they were working in the liberated areas or the army. The official history narrates the reception of the new *lianhuanhua* as a natural process, where readers automatically enjoyed reading the new *lianhuanhua* because they illustrated the stories of the proletariat, not the ruling class. Yet a careful examination of the effort the CCP made told another story, one in which the Party had to negotiate with the market in order to make the new *lianhuanhua* available and acceptable to the target readers.

Artists Exposed: Political Consciousness Made Visible

In the first few years of the 1950s, regulating the content of *lianhuanhua* seemed to be a difficult but urgent task for the Party-State agencies. Although the artists were quick to add the new ideology into their works to cope with the demands of the new regime, and production of the new *lianhuanhua* increased tremendously in 1950 and 1951, the artistic quality of the new works were far from satisfactory to the CCP. In an official report in 1952, the Cultural Bureau denounced the manuscripts produced in the first four months of the establishment of the publisher's association as "hilarious," "absurd," and "full of mistakes" that were almost

[83] Shanghai Cultural Bureau, "A Summary of the Works on *Lianhuanhua* in the Previous Three years (1952)" (*Sannian lai Shanghai lianhuanhua gongzuo de chubu zongjie* 三年來上海連環畫工作的初步總結 (1952)) in Shanghai Archive ed., *Shanghai Archives and Record Studies (Shanghai dang'an shiliao yanjiu* 上海檔案史料研究) (Shanghai: Shanghai sanlian shudian, 2014), 330.

"impossible to revise."[84] For instance, in a *lianhuanhua* that depicted peasant uprisings in imperial China, the peasants utter anachronistic terms such as "proletarian" and "new democracy" in their dialogue. Some publishers recycled old manuscripts: with some minor revisions, such as replacing the coat of arms of the Nationalist army with the star of the Communists, or covering up the emblem of the Nationalists with ink, the old *lianhuanhua* were published as the new "books of liberation."[85] These situations reflect that the CCP had not developed effective censorship to stop the problematic books from being published in the first place.

This section looks into the Party-State agencies' attempts to keep the content of new *lianhuanhua* under control before a reviewing system was established within the publishers – the section will examine the critique of *lianhuanhua* in state-controlled media, including nation-wide newspapers, journals, and local newspapers in Shanghai. Most of the critiques focus on the artists' and scriptwriters' political inclinations, class consciousness, and problematic thoughts that were expressed through their works. The critique not only worked as a reader's guide to choosing *lianhuanhua*, but also served as instructions for publishers to revise their works. Sometimes this critique was presented in the form of readers' letters. A letter from an ordinary reader is a form that is supposed to expresses the voice of the proletariat masses. In some way, this form of criticism imposes more pressure on the *lianhuanhua* artists than articles crafted by the cultural elites.[86] The quantity of the critique reflects that the Party did not have the ability to identify problematic manuscripts, nor stop them from being published in the first place. It also

[84] Zhuang Zhiling 庄志齡 and Xuan Gang 宣剛 eds., "General Information on Reformation Campaign of Picture-story Books in Shanghai, 1950-1952" (*Shanghai lianhuanhua gaizao yundong shiliao* 上海連環畫改造運動史料 (1950-1952)), *Archives and History* (*Dang'an yu shixue* 檔案與史學), 4 (1999): 24.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Zhang, "Rectification and Discipline: The Criticism of Comic Media in the Early Periods of the Founding of the PRC," 69.

suggests the CCP's ideological and aesthetic demands did not reach the artists, though the artists were willing to cooperate, as they expected.

Here, I will compare three versions of *The Twenty-Five Thousand Miles of Long March* (*Erwan wuqian li changzheng* 二萬五千里長征). The story consists of significant episodes in the Red Army's journey, including crossing the Wu River and Jinsha River, taking over Luding Bridge, confronting the forces of the ethnic minorities in Sichuan and Yunnan, crossing snowy mountains and grasslands, and finally the reunion in Northern Shaanxi. I choose to examine these *lianhuanhua* to see what could go wrong, even though the artists and publishers had chosen a politically unquestionable subject matter.

A version of *The Twenty-Five Thousand Miles of Long March* published by East China Bookstore in 1950 attracted great attention from Beijing. *People's Daily* castigated the work for its problematic representations of the Red Army, the Nationalists, and the ethnic minorities. It accused the artist of failing to understand the concept of class struggle, and drawing the soldiers of the two sides in the same way. In some pictures, the Nationalist soldiers even look heroic, which was interpreted as a sign that the artist subconsciously took a distanced attitude toward the Red Army.[87] Moreover, according to the article, the ethnic minorities were depicted in a way similar to the representations of Africans Americans and American Indians in Hollywood films, which revealed the artist's racist, capitalist, and imperialist inclinations.

Since most of the problematic *lianhuanhua* were destroyed, I could not find this exact *lianhuanhua* in my search. However, I found a version published by Xinmin Publishing House in January 1950, which probably bears some resemblance to the book the *People's Daily* criticized,

[87] Shi Yi 適夷, "On a New *Lianhuanhua*" (*Tan yi ben xin lianhuanhua* 談一本新連環畫), *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao*) (April 20, 1950).

especially the representation of the ethnic minorities. In the scene in which the Red Army encounters the force of the Yi people, the script says: "the Red Army arrived at the independent territory of the black and white LoLo—a territory of the primitive and the belligerent."[88] Here, the Yi people are depicted as barbarians who wear huge necklaces and nose rings, hold spears in their hands, and cover their lower body with nothing but a small piece of cloth (fig. 1.10). The depiction tells us that the *lianhuanhua* artist probably had no idea what Yi people looked like. His imagination was molded by American films and comics, which were popular in Shanghai during the Republican period. These influences were so prevalent that they reached and became rooted in the mind of an artist who was clearly unskilled for his trade.

The criticism published in the *People's Daily* must had been taken seriously enough by East China Bookstore that a revised version was published in September 1950. They tried hard to fix the flaws pointed out by the *People's Daily*. The depiction of the ethnic minorities, although still far from accurate, were covered by clothes which make them less similar to the stereotypical images of barbarians in Hollywood films, as the article described (fig. 1.11). Unfortunately, the image of the Communist soldiers led to another critique from the *People's Daily*. It seemed like the artist still could not produce a satisfying image of the Red Army in the eyes of the CCP. In a reader's letter, the flawed image of the Red Army again became a sign showing that the artist lacked understanding of "the glorious long march conducted by this grand army led by the Communist Party."[89] In the picture (fig. 1.12), the soldiers of the Red Army stand triumphantly on the top of a hill, waving grenades and handguns, while the Nationalists are either falling on

[88] Lin Ronggui 林榮貴, *The Twenty-Five Thousand Miles of Long March* (*Erwan wuqian li changzheng* 二萬五千里長征) (Shanghai: Xinmin shuju, 1950), 34.
[89] Wu Shaofang 武少芳, "Insulting the Ethnic Minority is Intolerable—Criticism of a *Lianhuanhua*" (*Bu rongxu wuru shaoshu minzu tongbao—dui yi ben lianhuanhua de piping* 不容許侮辱少數民族同胞—對一本連環畫的批評), *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao* 人民日報) (September 5, 1951).

the ground or running away. There is one soldier in the middle ground on the lower right side who looks like he is running away from the Red Army, but there is a star on his cap. Judging from the picture itself, it is hard to tell the intentions of the artist. It is possible that he carelessly put a red star where there should have been a Nationalist insignia. Another possibility is that he intended to portray the soldier as one of the Red Army, but because of his limited drawing skills, the reader easily mistook a soldier chasing the enemy as the enemy running away. The *People's Daily*, of course, criticized the artist for failing to differentiate the enemy and the Red Army.

Responding to the letter, East China Bookstore published a self-criticism in the *People's Daily*, confessing that "we did not fulfill our responsibility to the people and did not do the job well."[90] Although the artist and scriptwriter had the chance to respond to readers in the official newspaper, they did not try to defend themselves or make any clarifications at all, but admitted that the reader's letter exposed their problematic attitudes and promised to revise the work. As Zhang Yongfeng pointed out, although newspapers seemed to provide a space for readers and authors to exchange ideas, based on the response from East China Bookstore, the exchange between the two was unilateral.[91] The reader's letter spoke as the representative of the proletariat masses, expressing state-approved opinions against the problematic *lianhuanhua*. The publisher and *lianhuanhua* authors accepted the critique and provided a self-criticism, confessing that they made a mistake because of their flawed work methods and political thoughts. Publishing *lianhuanhua* critique in official media was not to encourage the exchange of ideas, but to rectify and discipline the works that were considered to deviate from the norms.

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[90] Shanghai huadong shudian chubanbu 上海華東書店出版部, "Shanghai East China Bookstore's self-criticism about *The Twenty-Five Thousand Miles of Long March*" (*Shanghai huadong shudian guanyu 'erwan wuqian li changzheng' lianhuanhua de jiantao* 上海華東書店關於二萬五千里長征連環畫的檢討), *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao* 人民日報) (September 17, 1951).

[91] Zhang, "Rectification and Discipline: The Criticism of Comic Media in the Early Periods of the Founding of the PRC," 69.

In August 1951, another version was published *in Lianhuanhua Pictorial*, the magazine published by People's Art Press in Beijing. The pictorial was issued twice a month, so it could update readers on the most current events and policies. Most of the stories were a few pages long. Sometimes longer stories were split across more than one issue to entice repeated readership.[92] The content, directly monitored by the Cultural Bureau, was expected be the role model for other *lianhuanhua* in terms of political thoughts and artistic quality.[93] *The Twenty-Five Thousand Miles of Long March* was published on August 1, 1951, to celebrate the anniversary of the founding of the People's Liberation Army. The story was condensed into twenty-four pictures. This version avoided all the pitfalls mentioned in the previous critiques. It minimized the depiction of the Nationalists, and put much effort into portraying the actions of the Red Army. The attacks from the enemy were hinted at through the explosions. The only depiction of the enemy soldier is in picture thirteen, in which the Communist soldiers are charging toward the riverbank (fig. 1.13). Only part of the upper body of a dead soldier of the Nationalist Army is shown at the lower right edge. This approach left no room for readers to confuse the Red Army with the Nationalists.

A new scene in which the leader of the Yi and the Communist General are drinking in the ceremony of sworn brothers is added to the story (fig. 1.14). In the picture, the Yi people are wearing traditional outfits with headbands. Split down the middle of the picture, the Yi people and the Red Army each occupy half of the space. Beside the old man, who stands beside the leader, the headband-wearing Yi and the hat-wearing Red Army soldiers are in a formation that seems almost like a mirror image of each other. The bodily and facial features of the Yi and the

[92] Scott, "The Production and Distribution of *Lianhuanhua* (1949-1966)," 258.
[93] Hua Junwu 華君武, "A Pictorial with a Great Amount of Readers" (*Yiben yongyou daliang duzhe de huabao* 一本擁有大量讀者的畫報), *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao* 人民日報) (September 2, 1951).

Red Army are almost identical. One must use their clothing as a clue to distinguish the two groups. Compare this to a similar scene in East China Bookstore's second version (fig. 1.11), in which the Yi are ostensibly taller than the Red Army and pointy noses are emphasized on their faces. The *Lianhuanhua Pictorial* fully understood and fixed the points criticized in the previous versions.

By examining three versions of *The Twenty-Five Thousand Miles of Long March*, one sees that the Party-State agencies were utilizing public criticism to control the reception of published *lianhuanhua*. The critique of *lianhuanhua* disclosed a party-proven standard, and the artists were revising and recreating the story according to this critique. Following this standard, the production of the new *lianhuanhua* established a politically legitimate explanation for the history of the CCP and the values it advocated. Taking into account the time and the city in which the *lianhuanhua* and their criticism were published, one also finds that in the first two years after liberation, Beijing played a leading role in shaping *lianhuanhua*, both politically and aesthetically. The version in the *Lianhuanhua Pictorial* fixes the depiction of the enemy and the Yi people to avoid accusations of racism and a false understanding of Communism. Furthermore, the human figures are better proportioned, so one can tell the artist knew human anatomy. The creation shows that the Party-State had a better control of *lianhuanhua*-making in Beijing, especially with the establishment of People's Art Press. Through the publication of the two problematic versions of the *lianhuanhua*, we see that the Party could not control Shanghai as well as they did Beijing. Although the authorities criticized books published in Shanghai in official newspapers, the CCP could not communicate its expectations and demands to publishers, nor stop the process of publication before the *lianhuanhua* reached readers.

Reeducating *Lianhuanhua* Artists

On January 8, 1950, under the supervision of the Literature and Art Department of the Military Control Committee (*Junguanhui wenyichu* 軍管會文藝處), the Shanghai *Lianhuanhua* Author's Association was founded. Zhao Hongben, a former underground Communist Party member and one of the "Great Four" *lianhuanhua* artists in the Republican Period, was elected to be the chair of the association. At the beginning, it recruited about 130 members, and almost all *lianhuanhua* authors joined the association, including the artists, editors, and scriptwriters.[94] The Author's Association held forums and conferences every week to make sure the authors are politically aligned with the Party.

Believing that the stories of the new society should not be rendered through the old forms, the need to improve the drawing skills of *lianhuanhua* artists caught the attention of Communist administrators. An article in *Shanghai Arts* (*Shanghai Meishu* 上海美術), the journal of the Shanghai Artists' Association, denounced the old *lianhuanhua* artists for doing nothing but drawing human figures in stiff postures in ancient costumes, and declared that their methods were no longer needed for portraying contemporary subject matter.[95] During the Republican period, most of the *lianhuanhua* artists were either self-taught or trained as pupils in more established *lianhuanhua* artists' studios. They had very little knowledge about Western perspective nor anatomy, and were thus unable to draw pictures that could meet the standards of the new regime—to depict contemporary subjects with modern methods.

For further professionalizing the artists, three series of workshops were held by the

[94] Zhuang and Xuan eds., "General Information on Reformation Campaign of Picture-story Books in Shanghai, 1950-1952," 23.
[95] Xing Jianrong 刑建榕 and Wei Songyan 魏松岩, *Wang Guanqing's Oral History* (*Wang Guanqing koushu lishi* 汪觀清口述歷史) (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, 2016), 40.

Shanghai Municipal Cultural Bureau between 1950 and 1952. The first workshop started in November 1950, with forty students.[96] Most of them were *lianhuanhua* artists who had started their careers before 1949;[97] the goal of the workshop was therefore to reform their thoughts and elevate their skills. It took three months to complete the workshop. Shen Tongheng (沈同衡, 1914–2002), former leader of the All-China Art Worker's Association, was the director; Zhao Hongben was the deputy director. Famous artists and established *lianhuanhua* artists, including Li Binghong (黎冰鴻, 1913–1986), Shen Zhiyu (沈之瑜, 1916–1990), Migu (米谷, 1918–1986), Gu Bingxin (顧炳鑫, 1923–2001), Tu Ke (涂克, 1916–2012), Zhao Yannian (趙延年, 1924–2014), Shao Keping (邵克萍, 1916–2010), and Zhang Wenyuan (張文元, 1910–1992), were invited to give lectures. Li, Shen, and Tu had a solid background in oil painting; Migu and Zhang were experienced *manhua* artists; Shao and Zhao were woodcut artists; Gu was an expert in *lianhuanhua* drawing, and was assigned by the All-China Art Workers Association to oversee the artistic and didactic quality of the new *lianhuanhua*. The lectures not only cover Western draftsmanship, but also methods for making adaptations of an original novel, building characters, and creating expressive art. The second *lianhuanhua* workshop was held in September 1951, with the same structure and number of students as the first one.[98] The third workshop, which took place in August 1952, was greatly expanded in scale with 162 people, including old and new *lianhuanhua* artists.[99] The third workshop being four times bigger than the previous two suggests that the newly trained artists had too little influence in the industry. Orchestrating with the establishment of state-controlled publishing houses, East China People’s Art Press and New

[96] Tian, “A Study of Shanghai Comic Workers in Early Statehood,” 12.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid., 12-13.
[99] Cheng, “On the Socialist Reform of the Comic Book Industry in Shanghai (1949-1956),” 70.

Art Press, the workshop was not only for reeducation, but to usher these newly trained artists into positions in the new enterprises.

After completing the workshop, about 130 of the artists were assigned to new workplaces by the Shanghai Municipal Cultural Bureau. Some of them were assigned to the New Art Press, a public-private joint publishing house established to reorganize and ultimately nationalize private publishing houses in Shanghai; some were sent to other provinces to promote the production of new *lianhuanhua*; some were first assigned to other private institutions in Shanghai, and were then absorbed by the New Art Press in the following years.[100] While the workshop was an effective way to equip *lianhuanhua* artists with Westernized drawing skills, it remained questionable how much the artists understood and accepted the Communist agenda. A report points out that some of the more experienced artists were not willing to learn at all; some just wanted to know more about the new drawing techniques, and did not care much about the political agenda; some of them joined the workshop just to switch to a new career path.[101]

Furthermore, upon the completion of the first workshop, the participants created thirty-five titles of new *lianhuanhua*; the Shanghai Artists' Association and *Lianlian* bookstore then stepped in to recommend the manuscript to private publishers.[102] Unfortunately, the publishers were unwilling to publish the new manuscripts. This again reflects the biggest challenge of *lianhuanhua* reform: the market. Although the quality of drawings was improved, the content was still not entertaining enough to persuade the publishers that printing the new *lianhuanhua* would be profitable.

[100] Wang, Shi, and Zhu eds., *Shanghai Modern Fine Arts History Series: 1949-2009, Vol. 6, Picture-story Books*, 21.
[101] Zhuang and Xuan eds., "General Information on Reformation Campaign of Picture-story Books in Shanghai, 1950-1952," 25.
[102] Liu, *The History of Lianhuanhua in the New China 1941-1999*, 20.

State-Controlled Publishers

Although the new *lianhuanhua* effort encountered some pushbacks, the CCP was determined to win over the market by reforming the publishers. The preparatory committee for the establishment of Shanghai *Lianhuanhua* Publishing Association was founded on July 3, 1949. Having ninety publishers as its primary members, the preparatory committee was formed upon the basic structure of the Shanghai Picture Novels Improvement Committee, an organization of *lianhuanhua* publishers established during the Republican period. Expanding the membership to newly founded publishing houses, the Shanghai *Lianhuanhua* Publishing Association was officially founded on August 20, 1950. A new bookstore, *Lianlian* Bookstore (United Bookstore of *Lianhuanhua* Publishers), was also formed to oversee the distribution of the *lianhuanhua* printed by members of the association.

In the summer of 1952, two new publishing houses, East China People's Art Press (*Huadong renmin meishu chubanshe* 華東人民美術出版社) and New Art Press (*Xin meishu chubanshe* 新美術出版社), were formed. Lü Meng, who was the first director of the Publicity Department in the New Fourth Army and had the experience of making woodcut *lianhuanhua* in Yan'an, was appointed director of both enterprises. East China People's Art Press is a state-run publishing house. It was reorganized and separated from the editorial section of the East China branch of New China (*Xinhua* 新華) Bookstore. With the abolition of the East China greater administrative area, it was renamed Shanghai People's Art Press (*Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe* 上海人民美術出版社) in 1954. The state-run publishing house was aiming to produce *nianhua*, propaganda posters, pictorials, portraits of leaders, and exemplary *lianhuanhua* whose quality surpassed the work made by other publishers. Academically trained artists were assigned to work there. Compared to *lianhuanhua* artists who worked in New Art Press, they

were not only well-trained in academic drawing, but had also been granted more time to work on their manuscripts.[103]

The New Art Press was a joint public-private publishing house, whose establishment was part of the CCP's plan to nationalize private-owned enterprises in the cities. In the early 1950s, the CCP was lenient towards owners of private enterprises. It claimed to unite the petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie, including a varied assortment of commercial entrepreneurs, petty shopkeepers, owners of small factories and workshops, and managers of industrial and commercial establishments, with workers and peasants to form the "national united front."[104] By the end of 1951, things had changed. The CCP launched the Three Anti and the Five Anti Campaign, which targeted the bourgeoisie, investigating corrupt practices conducted by private enterprises. Through heavy fines and other economic exactions, most of the enterprises were depleted of funds and assets. They were forced to become joint state-private enterprises, and eventually nationalized.[105] In January 1956, the CCP declared that the socialist reform of private enterprises was completed, and private-owned enterprises were officially eliminated.

Founded in 1952, and merged with the state-run Shanghai People's Art Press in 1956, New Art Press was a short-lived publishing enterprise that had great influence in the formation of *lianhuanhua* in the history of the PRC. It absorbed about 190 private publishers, and was dedicated solely to the publication of *lianhuanhua* (fig. 1.15). The chief editor was Li Lu, who joined the CCP in 1938, and had been sent to work in the New Fourth Army from Yan'an.[106] Zhao Hongben and many artists who were trained in the *lianhuanhua* workshops in Shanghai

[103] Xing and Wei, *Wang Guanqing's Oral History*, 39.
[104] Meisner, *Mao's China and After*, 79.
[105] Ibid., 85-87.
[106] Xing and Wei, *Wang Guanqing's Oral History*, 39.

were recruited to join New Art Press.[107] Li Lu admitted that the artists and editors who were working in the Communist newspapers and pictorials before 1949 had little knowledge on how to run a commercial publisher, because they spent most of their time working in rural areas.[108] Moreover, the publishing organs of the CCP, since their emergence in the Republican period, were party-dominated, centrally guided, and most importantly, non-commercially driven organizations.[109] Thus, the burden of running the joint enterprise fell on the shoulders of the directors and managers of the private publishers which were merged into the New Art Press. Of course, the people who were entrusted to run the press were politically aligned with the Party, and some had personal connections with the cadres. For instance, Huang Zhongming (黃仲明), the founder of Dazhong Art Press, oversaw the distribution of the books.[110] He had a long-term friendship with the left-wing artists Yu Baishu (余白墅, 1920–2008) and Ye Fu (野夫, 1909–1973). Soon after the liberation, he founded Dazhong Art Press with the two artists and started to republish the woodcut *lianhuanhua* that were first circulated in the Communist-controlled base areas. Wang Xihuai (王希槐, 1923–1985), the founder of Public Education (*Qunyü* 群育) Press, was appointed the chief of the printing section. His family members were senior cadres who joined the Party in Yan'an.[111] Although New Art Press absorbed professionals from the private publishers, it was not run like a commercial publisher in the Republican period. As Julia Andrews points out, not only were the director and all the managers appointed by the East China News Publishing Bureau, but also the paper supply, the prices of the books, and the distribution

[107] Andrews, *Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China*, 131.
[108] Li Lu 黎魯, *Memories of the Lianhuanhua Circle* (*Liantan huishou lu* 連壇回首錄) (Shanghai: Shanghai huabao chubanshe, 2005), 121.
[109] Christopher A. Reed, "Advancing the (Gutenberg) Revolution: The Origins and Development of Chinese Print Communism, 1921-1947," in Cynthia Brokaw and Christopher A. Reed eds., *From Woodblocks to the Internet: Chinese Publishing and Print Culture in Transition, circa 1800 to 2008* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 276.
[110] Li, *Memories of the Lianhuanhua Circle*, 118.
[111] Ibid., 118-119.

of the printed books were directly controlled by the state.[112]

New Art Press was renowned for its human resources. By the end of December 1955, it had twenty-one script writers and editors, and seventy-nine *lianhuanhua* artists, book designers, and art editors. They were divided into four groups, each specializing in contemporary, translated, children's, or ancient stories. The concentration of artists enabled Li Lu to start a few pioneering practices. As early as 1952, Li Lu invited Chen Shengduo (陳盛鐸, 1904–1987), then a professor in Tongji University, to teach the artists plaster cast drawing; Yan Wenliang (顏文樑, 1893–1988) was invited to teach color theory and perspective; He Tianjian (賀天健, 1891–1977) and Tang Yun (唐雲, 1910–1993) were there to teach the techniques of classical Chinese painting. Although the miscellaneous lecturers seemed to expose the *lianhuanhua* artists to the arts of both the West and China, Li Lu prioritized the pursuit of mimetic realism. This obsession with mimetic realism persisted after Shanghai People's Art Press and New Art Press had been merged. Han Heping, who graduated from East-China Campus of Central Academy of Fine Arts, was asked to teach other *lianhuanhua* artists drawing. The artists also had the chance to learn how to draw human figures from nude models. In his memoir, Li Lu explains the reason why he encouraged the *lianhuanhua* artists to master Western drawing skills is that he was a loyal follower of Jiang Feng,[113] who emphasized that Western realism was scientific, and thus the only appropriate means of reflecting the life and ideals of people in modern society. Following Jiang's direction, Li Lu believed that the new art for the new China had to be realistic, and that verisimilitude could only be achieved through Western mimetic realism.

While art administrators were trying to Westernize the style of *lianhuanhua*, a short-term

[112] Andrews, *Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China*, 132.
[113] Li Lu 黎魯, "The Beginning and Ending of New Art Press" (*Xin meishu chubanshe shimo* 新美術出版社始末), *Editors Monthly* (*Bianji xuekan* 編輯學刊) 1 (1993): 74.

project that involved *guohua* painters exhibited the complexity of the attempts to raise artistic standards. Conventionally, the publisher chose one of the pictures from the completed manuscript, and the artist filled colors into the black and white picture to make the book cover. Li Lu proposed to invite renowned artists who had never worked with *lianhuanhua* before to provide paintings for the book covers. In the early 1950s, with the transformation of the economy that led to the disappearance of the domestic art market, many professional painters were facing financial insecurity.[114] To the artists, painting covers for the *lianhuanhua* publishers was a way to make some extra income. Li Lu also took the act as a way to encourage the older and well-established artists to participate in the socialist reform of art.[115] What he did not say is that participation of famous artists was also used to elevate the artistic quality and social status of *lianhuanhua*.

Artists such as Liu Haisu (劉海粟, 1896–1994), Wu Hufan (吳湖帆, 1894–1968), and Jiang Zhaohe (蔣兆和, 1904–1986) contributed works for *lianhuanhua* covers. While Jiang Zhaohe's realist style produced in ink and brush was a perfect fit for the new *lianhuanhua* (fig. 1.16), the book covers painted by the traditionalist *guohua* painter Wu Hufan (fig. 1.17) and the modernist Liu Haisu (fig. 1.18) are surprising to look at. In the cover painted by Wu Hufan, his mastery of brush strokes and ink wash have created a serene countryside scene. To adapt to the small scale of *lianhuanhua*, Wu did not paint the grand landscapes he was famous for, but instead framed the scene from the middle range. He rendered the scene of the countryside with the skills honed by his practices in classical literati painting. The bicycle riders on a winding road are the only hint that the story takes place in a modern setting. Applying the color, ocher, on the

[114] Andrews, "Literature in Line," 22.
[115] Xing and Wei, *Wang Guanqing's Oral History*, 34. Li, *Memories of the Lianhuanhua Circle*, 146.

faces of the figures and the walls of the country houses, the artists make these two parts pop out to the viewer's eyes and help them to mentally locate the scene in a real-life countryside, the powerhouse of the Chinese Communist revolution, instead of the imaginary landscape of the artist.

Liu Haisu, a great admirer of Vincent van Gogh and the sixteenth-century individualist ink painter Shitao, was known for his artistic innovation and managerial talent. He provided a painting that is even more traditional in outlook than Wu's. In the painting, a country man with two oxen is walking into a grove of pine trees in a land covered by snow. Contrasted with the title, which affirms the power of the people to change society and nature, the scene in the painting is serene, without any hint of modernization or socialist revolution.

Wu and especially Liu's works show that the master artists did not modify their styles too much to cope with the new socialist agenda. Their well-established status granted them a certain amount of freedom in artistic expression. It is hard to tell how excited they were to participate in the production of the new *lianhuanhua*, yet Li Lu's innovative collaboration with them can be seen as an attempt to elevate the artistic quality of this inexpensive form of popular entertainment.

In 1956, New Art Press was merged into Shanghai People's Art Press (fig. 1.19), whose *lianhuanhua* department previously had only four script writers and nine artists.[116] Under the direction of Lü Meng, who was still the director, and Li Lu, who was promoted to deputy director, a large group of talented artists and editors congregated to work in Shanghai People's Art Press.

The artists who were recruited to join the two new *lianhuanhua* publishing enterprises

[116] Li, "The Beginning and Ending of New Art Press," 75

can be categorized into three groups, according to their backgrounds. The first group included artists who already made their names in the industry, such as Zhao Hongben and Chen Guangyi (陳光鎰, 1915–1991). The second group of artists consisted of those who learned *lianhuanhua* drawing skills by self-teaching, and had completed a certain amount of work before they were recruited. He Youzhi and Wang Guanqing (汪觀清, 1931–) were the representative figures of this type of artists. Artists of the third group were the young professionals who had just graduated from art academies, such as Ding Binzeng and Han Heping. They were well-versed in Western painting and drawing skills, but had little experience in *lianhuanhua* drawing. The number of this group of artists was quite small compared to the other two.[117] Unlike the elite artists, who were well-trained in *guohua* or Western painting through domestic and foreign academies, *lianhuanhua* artists were mostly from a grassroots background. They experienced a boost in their social status after the establishment of the Communist regime.[118] To them, being able to work in a state-run publisher not only secured them a steady income, it also provided recognition and affirmation of their good standing in political consciousness and professionality.[119]

For *lianhuanhua* publication, two separate departments (one for script editing and one for *lianhuanhua* drawing) were established to accommodate the greatly expanded personnel. With twenty-seven editors and ninety-three artists (including three of the Four Greats in the Republican period), Shanghai People's Art Press became the largest *lianhuanhua* publisher in China.[120] The department of *lianhuanhua* drawing was directed by Zhao Hongben, with the assistance of Gu Bingxin and Zhou Xingsheng (周杏生, 1922–2003). They established a

[117] Xing and Wei, *Wang Guanqing's Oral History*, 31.
[118] Li, *Memories of the Lianhuanhua Circle*, 61.
[119] Xing and Wei, *Wang Guanqing's Oral History*, 32.
[120] Ibid., 35.

standardized procedure to monitor *lianhuanhua* production. A completed manuscript had to go through a preliminary review to gather ideas and suggestions, then the revised manuscript could be submitted for a secondary review, after which it would be ready for final approval from the chief editor.[121] In the Shanghai People's Art Press, Zhao and Gu were the first ones to review the manuscripts; they then sent the revised manuscript to Li Lu and Lü Meng for their approval for publication.[122]

Section Three: The Market: Reader's Reactions Reflected

In a book titled *Striding to the New Era* (*Kua dao xin de shidai lai* 跨到新的時代來, 1955), Ding Ling (丁玲, 1904–1986) notes the young readers in the cities had little interest in reading the books centered on workers, soldiers, and peasants which were mostly sold by New China Bookstore. They loved to read the "Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies" novels by writers such as Feng Yuchi and Zhang Henshui, the martial arts *lianhuanhua*, and the translated foreign novels. The urban readers asked the authorities to publish more books in which the intellectuals and urban dwellers are the heroes.[123] The readers' preference, which was called "the old interest of intellectuals" by Ding Ling, shows that in the first half of the 1950s, readers were not impressed by the new *lianhuanhua*. There was a huge gap between the administrators' vision and reality.

The previous section describes the CCP's tactics to produce new *lianhuanhua* in order to reform urban readers. The readers' response is left unexplored. This section aims to present the

[121] Ibid., 45.
[122] Ibid., 41-45.
[123] Ding Ling 丁玲, *Striding to the New Era* (*Kuadao xinde shidai lai* 跨到新的時代來) (Beijing: renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1953), 186-187.

pushback to the socialist reform of the *lianhuanhua* industry through examining the channels of circulation, including the *Lianlian* and New China Bookstore, and the private bookstalls. I take their reactions, as recorded in reports, as a point from which to observe and deduct the reception of the new publications. Since the readers' letters in official newspapers and magazines are hardly a reliable source of the true expression from an actual reader.

Lianlian Bookstore

There were about 510 publishers in Shanghai in the early 1950. It was estimated that twenty-five to thirty percent among them, or about 150 publishers, were involved in the publication of *lianhuanhua*.[124] Finding themselves situated at the incipient stage of the formation of a new regime, the old private publishers, which had been active since the Republican period, held a wavering attitude toward the publication of the new *lianhuanhua*. After going through the chaotic times of the Sino-Japanese War and the following civil war between the Nationalists and the Communists, the publishers did not have much faith in the continuing existence of the government formed by the CCP. A 1950 report complained that some of them published one or two new *lianhuanhua* as a gesture to please the new government,[125] but they were not willing to invest resources nor energy to publish them on a massive scale.

Established in Shanghai in June 1950, the United Bookstore of *Lianhuanhua* Publishers (*Lianhuan tuhua chubanye lianhe shudian* 連環圖畫出版業聯合書店, hereafter, *Lianlian* Bookstore) was a Party-endorsed organization formed by private bookstores and publishers to administer the contents to be published, and to coordinate the distribution of *lianhuanhua*.

[124] Li, "The Beginning and Ending of New Art Press," 71.
[125] Zhuang and Xuan eds., "General Information on Reformation Campaign of Picture-story Books in Shanghai, 1950-1952," 24.

Started with thirty-nine bookstores and publishing houses as the primary shareholders, its shareholders expanded to sixty-three by 1951.[126] According to the Cultural Bureau, its goal was to facilitate cooperation between publishers so they could pool resources together and avoid situations wherein multiple publishers each produced different versions of the same story.[127]

Within *Lianlian*, a review committee was formed to check if there were "inappropriate" elements in the manuscripts before publication. However, as a private organization, the committee could only provide advice to its member publishers but had no power to force publishers to publish or withdraw a manuscript. The committee did not get much attention from its members. Many of them refused to submit their manuscripts for review.[128] The committee thus shifted its focus to instructions for the making of new *lianhuanhua*. Cooperating with the municipal Cultural Bureau and the Artist's Association, *Lianlian* obtained thirty-five new manuscripts produced during the first *Lianhuanhua* workshop. Unfortunately, its member publishers were extremely reluctant to publish them. The publishers finally agreed because of the pressure from the Literature and Art Department of the Military Control Committee, but the remuneration they paid for the new manuscripts was much lower than for manuscripts of ancient-subject stories.[129] Some of the publishers even tried to use another name to publish the new titles because they did not want to ruin their reputation.[130] The record shows that the publishers thought that the new *lianhuanhua* were unable to bring profit to their businesses, because readers

[126] Yu Zilin 余子林, "The Beginning and Ending of the 'Three Small United'" (*Shanghai 'san xiao lian' shimo* 上海三小聯始末), *Publication Archives* (*Chuban shiliao* 出版史料) 2 (2009): 15.
[127] Shanghai Cultural Bureau, "The Preliminary Conclusion of the Publishing Reform of the Past Three Years (1952)" (*Sannian lai Shanghai lianhuanhua gongzuo de chubu zongjie* 三年來上海連環畫工作的初步總結 (1952)) in Shanghai Archive ed., *Shanghai Archives and Record Studies (Shanghai dang'an shiliao yanjiu* 上海檔案史料研究) (Shanghai: Shanghai sanlian shudian, 2014), 330.
[128] Zhuang and Xuan eds., "General Information on Reformation Campaign of Picture-story Books in Shanghai, 1950-1952," 21.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid., 24.

favored the old *lianhuanhua* over the new ones.

Lianlian was also expected to regulate its members and prevent them from circulating the old *lianhuanhua*. But again, since it had no right to enforce members' cooperation, many were selling both the new and the old *lianhuanhua*. In a report in 1954, the Cultural Bureau accused the publishers that had joined the "new circle," i.e., the publishing association and *Lianlian* Bookstore, of having no intention to leave the "old circle," which indicated the old book market in Taoyuan Road and the bookstalls scattered on the streets, and of profiting from both sides. They were selling the new *lianhuanhua* to *Lianlian* Bookstore in the morning, then selling the old *lianhuanhua* in the book market in the afternoon.[131] Their act also reveals that the old *lianhuanhua* were still popular in the market to an extent that they brought a considerable profit, which the members of *Lianlian* were unwilling to forgo.

New China (*Xinhua*) Bookstore

Another major channel for distributing *lianhuanhua* is the New China Bookstore. All the *lianhuanhua* published by the state-run and joint state-private publishers were retailed through the New China Bookstore. Unlike *Lianlian*, whose customers were mostly urban dwellers, New China Bookstore played a dominant role in disseminating *lianhuanhua* in the rural areas.

During the Republican period, the publishing market was dominated by private publishers. There were only a small number of publishers who were controlled by the Communist party. In the urban areas, there were left-wing bookstores, such as Life (*Shenghuo* 生活) and Glory (*Guanghua* 光華) Bookstore, led by the underground Party members. Suppressed by the Nationalists, it was very difficult for the bookstores to expand their influence. New China

[131] Ibid.

Bookstore was established in Yan'an in 1937 to distribute publications in the Communist base areas. Although New China Bookstore had no competitors in the rural areas, it was challenging to keep the bookstores running because of the poor economic conditions and the lack of proper printing machinery. After the CCP took over the cities, it started expanding its publishing agencies. New China Bookstore also established new branches in the cities. By September 1949, New China had established nine central branches, forty-seven ordinary branches, and 889 subbranches nationwide.[132]

Published by East China People's Press and disseminated through the network of New China Bookstore, *lianhuanhua* that aimed to propagate new policies, such as *The Illustrated Guide to Suppressing the Counterrevolutionary* (*Chengji fangeming tujie tongsu ben* 懲治反革命圖解通俗本) and *The Illustrated Guide of the New Marriage Law* (*Xin hunyin fa tujie* 新婚姻法圖解) sold more than ten million copies.[133] In 1951, the number reached 669 million. More than eighty-nine million copies of *lianhuanhua* were produced between 1951 and 1954.[134] Comparing the number of books issued in the early the 1950s to the Republican period, one finds the number of the former more than astonishing. In Republican period, the average sale of a title was two thousand. The record high number of books issued within a year was set in 1936, with 178 million copies.[135] The publishing and distribution organs controlled by the CCP tripled the number in 1951, when the nation was still recovering from years of war and most of the people in rural areas were illiterate. The officials took the number as an evidence that the new

[132] Hon-Kei Lai 黎漢基, "Official Publishing and Forced Distribution—A Study of Publication Policy in the Early People's Republic of China" (*Zhongdian faxing yu qiangpo tanpai—zhonggong jianguo chuqi chuban zhengce yanjiu* 重點發行與強迫攤派—中共建國初期出版政策研究), *Bulletin of the Institute of Modern History Academia Sinica* (*Jindaishi yanjiusuo jikan* 近代史研究所季刊) 40 (2003): 144.
[133] Ibid., 158.
[134] Wang, Shi, and Zhu eds., *Shanghai Modern Fine Arts History Series: 1949-2009, Vol. 6, Picture-story Books*, 21.
[135] Lai, "Official Publishing and Forced Distribution," 159.

publications were loved by the people. But it is hard not to wonder: how did they distribute such a great number of publications?

Lai Hon-kei points out that New China utilized strategies such as "official publishing" (*zhongdian faxing* 重點發行) and "forced distribution" (*qiangpo tanpai* 強迫攤派) to promote the books. In ordinary circumstances of book retail, a publisher sends books to bookstores and the books stay in the bookstores for readers to purchase. To the leaders in the General Bureau of Publication, letting books sit passively in bookstores waiting for readers was not enough; bookstores needed to play an active role in distributing the books. An "official publishing" was a book selected by the Party, who also designated the number of copies to be distributed by each branch of New China Bookstore. To meet the number assigned, a new job position, distributor (*faxing yuan* 發行員), was created to sell the new published books. Distributors went to newsstands, radio stations, and theaters to promote the books. They also organized promotion teams, *yang'ge* teams, and drum teams to sell the books to factories, villages, schools, and brigades. Some branches even held exhibitions where staff worked as docents to explain to potential customers the necessity of acquiring the books.[136] Sometimes distributors and cadres forced people to make purchases by threatening them. For example, the staff of Chengde branch and the local cadre threatened to accuse the people who refused to buy the *lianhuanhua*, *Illustrated Guide to Suppressing the Counterrevolutionaries,* as accomplices of the counterrevolutionaries.[137] The practice of forced distribution persisted even after it was officially banned in 1953.

In the urban areas, New China Bookstore offered bookstall owners discount to purchase

[136] Ibid., 155.
[137] Ibid., 166-167.

the new *lianhuanhua*.[138] In 1955, New China set up a plan to strengthen its control over bookstalls. It created a system carried out through a "contact person" (*lianxi ren* 聯繫人), who acted as a middle person between New China Bookstore and the bookstall owners. The contact person decided which books should be disseminated through bookstalls by collecting books from New China, and then letting the bookstall owners borrow them and lend them out to readers.[139]

The existence of distributors and contact persons suggests that many of the new publications promoted by New China Bookstore failed to attract readers. It also put a great question mark on whether the sales numbers could be taken as a sign of readers' acceptance of the new *lianhuanhua*.

Bookstalls

Besides the New China Bookstore and the *Lianlian* Bookstore, street bookstalls were another major channel for the *lianhuanhua* to reach readers in urban areas. As Kuiyi Shen's study on comics and *lianhuanhua* of the Republican period shows, bookstores and bookstalls served customers from different social classes.[140] While bookstores were frequented by intellectuals, the bookstalls disseminated books at a grassroots level. The setting of a typical bookstall is described by Mao Dun:

> A typical stall was formed by two planks of wood that were leaning against the wall, with numerous *lianhuanhua* attached to the board that almost looked like medicinal patches. The bookstall—if they can be called a bookstall—was also equipped with a wooden bench. Whoever spent a few coins could sit on the bench reading twenty or thirty titles of *lianhuanhua*. If you were a regular, you might be able to rent forty or fifty of them at the same price.[141]

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[138] Yang Qiushi 楊秋實, "A Good Way to Promote *Lianhuanhua*" (*Tuiguang lianhuanhua de hao banfa* 推廣連環畫的好辦法), *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao*) (March 4, 1951).
[139] Scott, "The Production and Distribution of *Lianhuanhua* (1949-1966)," 251.
[140] Shen, "*Lianhuanhua* and *Manhua*," 100-120.
[141] Mao Dun 茅盾, "Lianhuanhua Novels" (*Lianhuan tuhua xiaoshuo* 連環圖畫小說), *Miscellaneous Essays of Mao*

The humble setting of the bookstalls didn't stop workers, children, or apprentices in the shops from seeking low-cost entertainment there. By the end of 1950, there were more than 2,600 bookstalls in Shanghai, and more than ten thousand titles of *lianhuanhua* were circulated through bookstalls.[142] In the early 1950s, state-sponsored *lianhuanhua* could easily enter bookstores to be distributed, yet a large portion of *lianhuanhua* circulation was still controlled by *lianhuanhua* bookstalls, who held huge stocks of old *lianhuanhua* the CCP was eager to dispose of.

With twenty branches in different areas of the city, and nearly 2,500 members, Shanghai *Lianhuanhua* Renters Association was established in October 1950, under the supervision of the CCP. The purpose was to allow the Party to have direct contact with the vendors and gain a better knowledge of the *lianhuanhua* in circulation. Bookstall owners had to register to obtain a license for business, yet many were unlicensed throughout the 1950s.[143]

The CCP administrators adopted an incentive-based tactic to encourage bookstall owners to exchange the old *lianhuanhua* for the new ones. *Lianlian* Bookstore offered a twenty-five percent off discount for members of the Renter's Association. The bookstall owners had to turn in one old *lianhuanhua* to be qualified to buy a new one with the discount.[144] The offer was a burden on the finances of the private organizations. Later, the municipal government stepped in to support a moderated plan, through which bookstall owners could select fifty old *lianhuanhua* for exchange. In November 1950, as the central government urged Shanghai Municipal Cultural Bureau to accelerate the eradication the old *lianhuanhua,* the Shanghai Municipal Cultural Bureau, *Lianhuanhua* Publishing Association, *Lianhuanhua* Renter's Association, *Lianlian*

Dun (*Mao Dun wenyi zalunji* 茅盾文藝雜論集) (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1981): 343.

[142] Wan Shaojun 宛少軍, "The Social Imagery of *Lianhuanhua* in the Republic of China" (*Minguo shiqi lianhuanhua de shehui xingxiang* 民國時期連環畫的社會形象), *Art Observation* (*Meishu Guancha* 美術觀察) 1 (2008): 102-103.

[143] Scott, "The Production and Distribution of *Lianhuanhua* (1949-1966)," 257.

[144] Cheng, "On the Socialist Reform of the Comic Book Industry in Shanghai (1949-1956)," 55.

Bookstore, and the United Bookstore for Popular Readings (also known as *Tonglian* Bookstore) organized the Committee for Reforming *Lianhuanhua* Bookstalls. Intending to give the bookstall owners more incentives to buy the new *lianhuanhua*, the committee first chose a hundred titles from the existing six hundred titles of new *lianhuanhua* to be sold to the bookstalls at a discounted price—the production cost of the books plus a five percent fee.[145] Then it offered forty percent off for another two hundred titles. The owners had to turn in two old *lianhuanhua* to buy one new *lianhuanhua*. The Cultural Bureau also confiscated the ones that were categorized as reactive, and expropriated those whose contents deliver "feudal beliefs, superstition, violence, and pornography."[146] The government estimated that they could complete the exchange of all the old *lianhuanhua* in Shanghai by May 1951. In reality, the process lasted much longer, as the old *lianhuanhua* continued to be popular among the readers.[147]

To intensify the control and reform of the bookstalls, local cultural administrative agencies were requested to register all the bookstalls. All the renters had to be approved by the Cultural Bureau to obtain a license for business. The Municipal Publicity Department held regular meetings with bookstall owners to get information about the circulation of the books. Agents were assigned to spot check the books in the stalls and compose lists of problematic books to be banned or exchanged for the new ones. To dilute the domination of bookstalls in circulation, the state was also sponsoring culture centers in the cities to buy more books to lend to the renters for free.[148] However, even making the bookstall owners register properly seemed to be problematic for the Communist administrators. The bookstall owners were unwilling to

[145] Ibid., 57.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Scott, "The Production and Distribution of *Lianhuanhua* (1949-1966)," 251.
[148] Wan, "The Social Imagery of *Lianhuanhua* in the Republic of China," 102-103.

register because it would make them unable to be employed in other forms.[149] Some bookstalls were mobile, with irregular operating locations and hours; therefore, it was difficult to track them, and to collect information about their financial status, customer composition, and the old *lianhuanhua* they had in stock. Throughout the 1950s, the bookstall owners continued to rent the old *lianhuanhua to* readers. They complained to the cadres that the price of the new *lianhuanhua* were more expensive than the old ones, the stories were shorter, the contents were dry and didactic, and the depictions were simple.[150] All these were reasons why the new *lianhuanhua* were not to the liking of urban readers, and the bookstall owners refused to give up the profit of lending the old *lianhuanhua*.

Looking at the illustrations of the bookstalls in Li and Zhou's story examined at the beginning of this chapter, one would not be surprised that the Party was highly suspicious of the owners of bookstalls. An official report in 1955 categorized the composition of the bookstall owners into three groups: old renters who started the business during the Republican era, the unemployed, and the hidden counterrevolutionaries, including KMT officers, cult leaders, runaway landlords, bankrupted capitalists, and street thugs.[151] In the *lianhuanhua*, the bookstall was depicted as a dark space, operated by a suspicious man in black shown standing by the front of the bookstall (fig. 1.4), in which children are playing with gestures and accessories that indicate the influence of superstition. In the CCP's conception, the bookstall was a squalid space that not only polluted the minds but also the physical health of children. In the early 1960s,

[149] Scott, "The Production and Distribution of *Lianhuanhua* (1949-1966)," 258.
[150] Zhuang and Xuan eds., "General Information on Reformation Campaign of Picture-story Books in Shanghai, 1950-1952," 24.
[151] "The Politburo's Instruction on Problems of Reactive, Obscene, Absurd Books and Pictures and Strengthening the Management and Reform of Private Cultural Businesses (May 20, 1955)," (*Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu chuli fandongde, yinhuide, huangdande shukan tuhua wenti he guanyu jiaqiang dui yingsi wenhua shiye he qiye de guanli he gaizao de zhishi* 中共中央關於處理反動、淫穢、荒誕書刊圖畫問題和關於加強對營私文化事業和企業的管理和改造的指示) in *Selected Documents Since the Establishment of the PRC* (*Jianguo yilai zhongyao wenjian xuanbian* 建國以來重要文件選編), vol. 6 (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2011), 230.

Shanghai People's Art Press and the municipal government each expressed concerns about the unsanitary conditions of some *lianhuanhua* bookstalls, worrying the air, light, and seating could damage children's health.[152] The continuing stigmatization shows that the CCP was still struggling to get *lianhuanhua* bookstalls under its control ten years after the formation of the Renters Association.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examine the socialist reform of the *lianhuanhua* industry in Shanghai. The CCP strove to make *lianhuanhua* a tool of propaganda for reforming urban readers. Through the reeducation of artists, reorganization of the publishing houses, and introduction of new ways of *lianhuanhua*-making, the Party-State produced a large amount of new *lianhuanhua* that centered on the stories of peasants, workers, and soldiers. The CCP introduced Western mimetic realism to modernize *lianhuanhua*, but still insisted on finishing the pictures with plain line drawing, as it was the formal feature readers were familiar with. The new subject matter failed to attract urban readers who were accustomed to being entertained by content that was deemed "superstitious, obscene, and absurd" by the CCP, exemplified by martial arts *lianhuanhua*. The examination of *Lianlian* bookstore and bookstalls shows that the demand for old content was still strong, as the private publishers and bookstall owners were unwilling to give up the old *lianhuanhua* in their stock for the profit they brought. Before the CCP-controlled publishers and distributors fully monopolized the industry, there was a market that reflected the preferences of readers. The CCP had to make compromises with the private publishers and distributors in order to popularize the new *lianhuanhua*.

[152] Scott, "The Production and Distribution of *Lianhuanhua* (1949-1966)," 260.

CHAPTER 2

The Classical as the Evil:

The Iconography of *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone Demon*

This chapter focuses on the visual language and iconography of Zhao Hongben (趙宏本, 1915–2000) and Qian Xiaodai's (錢笑呆, 1911–1965) *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone Demon* (*Sun Wukong sanda baigujing* 孫悟空三打白骨精). Adapted from the Ming novel, *Journey to the West* (*Xiyouji* 西遊記), the *lianhuanhua* illustrates the battle between a group of pilgrims and demons, and reflects the struggle within the Party leadership in the early 1960s. This chapter starts with a brief introduction to the background of the artists. Built upon Rudolf Wagner and Hongmei Sun's research, I examine Sun Wukong's changing image and meaning in the *lianhuanhua* published during the period between the mid-1950s and early 1960s. I also inquire into how the works reflected their immediate political circumstances. Finally, I delve into the use of classical elements in the *lianhuanhua*. Corresponding to rising cultural nationalism and the policy for elevating artistic standards in *lianhuanhua*, the artists cleverly made use of the visual language in classical landscape painting, the genre that had been targeted for reform in the 1950s, by linking the classical elements with the villain of the story.

Section One: Old *Lianhuanhua* Artists in a New Society

Zhao Hongben was being extolled as one of "the great four" *lianhuanhua* artists in Republican China, along with Zhou Yunfang (周雲舫, 1910–1939), Zhu Runzhai (朱潤齋,

1890–1936), and Shen Manyung (沈曼雲1911–1978), during the 1930s. After Zhou and Zhu's early deaths, two of the great four were replaced by Chen Guangyi (陳光鎰, 1915–1991) and Qian Xiaodai in the 1940s. After 1949, Zhao played a significant role in administrating the publication of the new *lianhuanhua* in East China People's Art Press and then in Shanghai People's Art Press. Chen and Qian kept drawing *lianhuanhua* in the New Art Press and then Shanghai People's Art Press. Shen was assigned to work in a library, then in a cultural museum, till his retirement.[153]

In his biography, Zhao Hongben's life is presented almost like a *bildungsroman*, in which a young man from a humble background breaks free from the exploitation and discrimination imposed on him in the old society and becomes a dignified artist with the help of the CCP. Zhao's career as a *lianhuanhua* artist started in 1931, when he was working as an apprentice in a *lianhuanhua* workshop in Shanghai. The contract he made with his master was rough, as the master provided no lodging, no meals, took no responsibility for the apprentice's health or living conditions, and has the full right to use the works the apprentice produces.[154] In many articles, writers narrate the vivid details of the exploitation Zhao suffered from his master when he was young.[155]

Unlike other *lianhuanhua* artists, who had their first encounters with Communist

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[153] Wang Guanqing 汪觀清, Li Minghai 李明海 eds., *Pictorial Dictionary of Shanghai Lianhuanhua Artists* (*Shanghai lianhuanhuajia meishu tudian*上海連環畫家美術圖典), (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Art Press, 2018), 14, 16, 28.

[154] Zhao Hongben 趙宏本, *Fifty Years of Zhao Hongbsen's Lianhuanhua (Zhao Hongben Lianhuanhua Chuangzuo wushi nian* 趙宏本連環畫創作五十年) (Beijing: Zhongguo lianhuanhua chubanshe, 1990), 12.

[155] Zhao Hongben, "Forty-Seven Years in *Lianhuanhua* Drawing" (*Congshi lianhuanhua chuangzuo sishiqi nian* 從事連環畫創作四十七年), *Lianhuanhua Forum* (*Lianhuanhua luncong* 連環畫論叢), vol. 3 (July 1982): 110-120. Jiang Weipu 姜維樸, "In the Memory of the *Lianhuanhua* Artist Zhao Hongben" (*Lishi zhongjiang bufu chizi zhixin—mianhuai lianhuanhua jia Zhao Hongben* 歷史終將不負赤子之心—緬懷連環畫家趙宏本), *Arts* (*Meishu* 美術), issue 8 (2000): 54. Jiang Weipu ed., "Happy 80th Birthday to Comrade Zhao Hongben" (*Modao sangyü wan weixia shang mantian—he Zhao Hongben tongzhi bashi shouchen* 莫道桑榆晚 微霞尚滿天—賀趙宏本同志八十壽辰), *Lianhuanhua Art* (*Lianhuanhua yishu* 連環畫藝術) no. 29 (Jan. 1994): 78-85.

ideology after the CCP started reeducating urban artists in late 1949 and early 1950, Zhao had been acquainted with underground Party members since 1937.[156] With the encouragement of the Party, he founded a publishing house. He not only drew *lianhuanhua* based on the novels written by left-wing writers, but also composed his own. For instance, in *Heaven, Hell* (*Tiantang, diyü* 天堂、地獄, 1941), the artist exposes the suffering of the Shanghai workers and urges the readers to take actions against the exploitative capitalists (fig. 2.1).

In the early 1950, he was one of the rare artists who knew the communist agenda well, had great success in the world of commercial publication, and was himself an artist with extraordinary drawing skills. The cadres who were assigned to administrate the publishing houses, such as Lü Meng and Li Lu, had experience producing woodblock *lianhuanhua* in Yan'an, but had little to no experience in commercial *lianhuanhua*. Zhao, on the contrary, stayed in Shanghai as an underground Party member in the 1940s. He had a deep understanding of both the industry and the situations the artists were facing. The CCP valued his experience in the *lianhuanhua* industry and appointed Zhao to key positions, including the chair of Shanghai *Lianhuanhua* Artists' Association, board member of the Shanghai Artists' Association, the deputy director of the editing department in the New Art Press, and the director of the *lianhuanhua* studio in Shanghai People's Art Press.

There is very little information about Qian Xiaodai, as he died early in 1965. He kept a much lower profile than Zhao Hongben, although he was also considered one of the great four *lianhuanhua* artists in the 1940s. Qian Xiaodai, whose birth name was Qian Aiquan, learned the basics of landscape and figural painting from his father. After his father's death, he went to

[156] Zhao, "Forty-Seven Years in *Lianhuanhua* Drawing," 118.

Shanghai to work as a *lianhuanhua* artist and stuck to this career path from then on.[157] He was famous for portraying beautiful women, and his work was especially attractive to female readers during the Republican period.

During the 1950s, it seemed that the *lianhuanhua* based on operas, folklores, and classical novels were mainly assigned to the older artists, who had ample experience drawing similar, if not the same, stories during the Republican period. Zhao Hongben drew *Peach Blossom Fan* (T*aohua shan* 桃花扇) and *Legend of the White Snake* (*Baishe zhuan* 白蛇傳) in 1956 and 1957. Zhao rendered the Chinese classics through a combination of plain line drawing and Western draftsmanship. The artist portrayed human figures that looked realistic in terms of anatomy and proportion. He also paid great attention to the use of Western perspective when depicting buildings and interior settings. Take *Legend of the White Snake*, for example. Zhao meticulously constructed a scene through a single-point perspective in the seventy-third picture (fig. 2.2). The character and the architecture look plausible except the handrail leading downstairs. The artist depicted the story in a setting that is designed according to the aesthetics of the late Qing dynasty. The layers of space and the decorative patterns on rows of wooden panels remind readers of *Dianshizhai Pictorial* and *lianhuanhua* in the Republican period (fig. 2.3). In the first few years of the PRC, Zhao absorbed the anatomy and perspective of Western draftsmanship, but his representation of classical stories was still influenced by the images in popular media of the previous decades.

When creating *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone Demon* with Qian Xiaodai, Zhao was in charge of composition and the design of characters. The outlines were mainly done

[157] Qian Ercheng 錢爾成, "Memory of My Father, Qian Xiaodai" (*Yi wo de fuqin Qian Xiaodai* 憶我的父親錢笑呆), http://www.cartoonwin.com/personage/mjft/person.php?cat=m&own=qianxd (Accessed Oct. 2, 2020).

by Qian Xiaodai. Unlike their earlier works, they made reference to Ming and Qing woodblock prints and classical Chinese landscape paintings to raise the artistic standard and create a national form when China was facing a worsening relationship with the Soviet Union.

Section Two: Journey to the West as a Political Allegory

Journey to the West as a Base of Satire

This section provides a brief description of the interpretation of *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone Demon* in the early 1960s. Knowing that the authorities were eradicating content about religion, fantastic adventures, deities, and demonic characters during the *lianhuanhua* reform in the 1950s, one may be surprised by the fact that *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone Demon* became one of the most celebrated *lianhuanhua* in the PRC. Why was the story published by the leading state publishing house during a time when "superstitious" subjects were prohibited? The reason lies with its reinterpretation according to contemporary politics made by cultural leaders in the PRC.

It is worth noting that the CCP is not the first to use the plot of the *Journey to the West* to respond to contemporary politics. Episodes from the *Journey to the West* had been used to satirize current situations since the late Qing and early Republican period. One of the most sarcastic was Chen Jinghan's (陳景韓, 1878–1965) *New Journey to the West* (*Xin Xiyouji* 新西遊記) in 1909.[158] In the novel, the Buddha gives the pilgrims a new task—to investigate the new religion in the West—1,300 years after they completed the task illustrated in *Journey to the West*. Not knowing what the world has become, the pilgrims decide to take a detour to Shanghai. The

[158] David Der-wei Wang, *Fin-de-siècle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction, 1849–1911* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 204–205.

writer addresses social issues by describing the ridiculous reactions of the pilgrims when facing the new in modern Shanghai, including street prostitutes, an opium den, a horse race, and a fundraiser for building railways, just to name a few.

Inspired by Walt Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, the Wan brothers produced the first Chinese animated feature film, *Princess Iron Fan* (*Tieshan gongzhu* 鐵扇公主), in 1941. The film centers on Sun Wukong and his cohort's battle against the Bull Demon King and Princess Iron Fan. The story is intended to be a metaphor for the ongoing Sino-Japanese War. The Monkey King's victory over the Bull Demon King is a collective effort with help from Zhu Bajie, Sha Wujing, and the villagers (who are not included in the original novel). The story sent its contemporary audience a clear message urging them to unite to fight against the Japanese invasion.[159]

Created in 1945, Zhang Guangyu's (張光宇, 1900–1965) *Journey to the West in Cartoons* (*Xiyou manji* 西遊漫記) is an illustrated political satire reflecting the Nationalist government's corruption during the war against the Japanese invasion. This time, the pilgrims are heading to the West to retrieve the sutra of Democracy. They travel through the Kingdom of Paper Money (*Zhibi guo* 紙幣國), the Kingdom of Ancient Aegysine (*Ai qin guguo* 埃秦古國), the city of Dream Hedonia (*Meng de kuaile cheng* 夢得快樂城), and the "Qin Puppet" Demon Empire (*Wei qin yaoguo* 偽秦妖國). In those places, they encounter situations that reflect inflation, forced recruitment of soldiers, the luxurious lives enjoyed by high officials, and the suffering in the Japanese-occupied regions, respectively.[160] The last monster Sun Wukong fights

[159] Sun, *Transforming Monkey*, 62.
[160] John Crespi, "Beyond Satire: The Pictorial Imagination of Zhang Guangyu's 1945 Journey to the West in Cartoons," in Carlos Rojas and Andrea Bachner eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Chinese Literatures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 215-244.

against is a three-headed dragon, whose faces are caricatures of Mussolini, Hitler, and Toji Hideki,[161] representing the Axis powers in World War II.

Reinterpreting *Journey to the West* in the PRC

Feng Menglong (馮夢龍, 1574−1646), the popular novelist of the late Ming, extolled *Journey to the West*, *Water Margin* (*Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳), *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義), and *Plum Blossoms in a Golden Vase* (*Jinpingmei* 金瓶梅) as the Four Extraordinary Books composed in the Ming dynasty. *Water Margin* centers on the loyalty and chivalry of the 108 outlaws who gather at Mount Liang to fight against the injustices inflicted on them by the officials during the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127). *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* is an epic story of warriors and strategists in the kingdoms of Wei, Shu, and Wu, warring for the dominance in the chaos following the downfall of the Han dynasty (202 BC–220 AD). Stemming from two minor characters in *Water Margin*, *Plum Blossoms in a Golden Vase* focuses on the life of Ximen Qing, whose libertine sexual lifestyle with his wives and concubines eventually leads to the miserable downfall of the family. Unlike the other three, *Journey to the West* narrates "an arduous quest for an ultimate goal," [162] as Rudolf Wagner observes. The story starts with the miraculous birth of Sun Wukong (the Monkey King or Monkey) from a stone. As a creation of cosmic force, Sun possesses the temperament of a trickster and immense power, but knows no rules of the gods' court. Feeling belittled by the gods when he is offered a position to

[161] Su-hsing Lin 林素幸, "Exploring Visual Languages: Zhang Guangyu's Cartoon Journey to the West in the Development of Chinese Art and Popular Culture in Early Twentieth-Century China" (*Zongtan yujing—cong Zhang Guangyu "Xiyou manji" tansuo ershi shiji chu zhongguo meishushi ji dazhong wenhua zhi fazhan yu yiyi* 縱探語境—從張光宇《西遊漫記》探索二十世紀初中國美術史及大眾文化之發展與意義), *Chung Hsing Journal of the Humanities* (*Xing da renwen xuebao* 興大人文學報), vol. 45 (March 2016), 77-78.
[162] Wagner, *The Contemporary Chinese Historical Drama*, 139.

govern the celestial stable, Sun creates great chaos in Heaven. To pacify the havoc, the Buddha subdues Sun and incarcerates him under a mountain. Five hundred years later, Sun is set free by the Bodhisattva Guanyin, who orders him to protect Tripitaka during his journey to the Western Heaven for retrieving the Mahayana sutras. Three more monsters, Zhu Bajie (Pigsy), Sha Wujing (Sandy), and a dragon prince (who transforms into Tripitaka's horse), also join Sun to atone for their previous crimes. From a Buddhist point of view, the journey is an allegory for the path Buddhists take to reach enlightenment. Tripitaka, the only human character among the pilgrims, represents a Buddhist. His disciples are incarnations of his inner faculties. Sun Wukong acts as his mind, Zhu Bajie as his visceral nature and lust, Sha Wujing as his stubborn determination, and the horse as his will.[163] Together, they battle with various demons and overcome eighty-one adversaries designed by the Buddha to finally reach the Western Heaven.

During the Yan'an period, Mao constantly made reference to characters in *Journey to the West* to explain his view of contemporary situations. For example, in Mao's report for Anti-Japanese Military and Political University (*Kangri junzheng daxue* 抗日軍政大學) in May 1937, he said "We should wreak havoc in the 'celestial palace' of the reactionary rulers like Sun Wukong, who rampages the Heaven and beats the celestial generals and soldiers."[164] In an editorial in *Liberation Daily* (*Jiefang ribao* 解放日報) on September 7th, 1942, Mao advocated the policy of reorganizing the military and administrative structures to consolidate the outcomes of the Rectification Campaign. He compared the Communist army to Sun Wukong, who shrinks himself to the size of an insect so he can be swallowed by the Iron-Fan Princess and rampages in

[163] Ibid., 161.
[164] Li Zichi 李子遲, "Seventy Years Between Mao Zedong and *the Journey to the West*" (*Mao Zedong yu Xiyouji qishi nian bujie yuan* 毛澤東與西遊記七十年不解緣), *Yangtse Evening Post* (*Yangzi wanbao* 揚子晚報) (Oct. 22, 2012).

her organs.[165] It is worth noting that Sun Wukong was also used to represent the enemy. In a talk in 1938, Mao compared the siege of the Communist army to the palm of the Buddha, which transformed into a mountain to imprison Sun Wukong, who now represented Fascist invaders.[166] In the late 1930s and early 1940s, the association between Sun Wukong and the Communist army or Mao himself was not established yet. Mao used the characters from *Journey to the West* to explain his points because of its popularity among his audiences.

In the People's Republic of China, the narration of the quest offered a familiar plot structure for cultural leaders to narrate the ultimate pursuit of building a Communist society. Beginning in the 1950s, two specific episodes—Sun Wukong wreaking havoc in the celestial palace, and the pilgrims' battle with the White-Bone Demon—were adapted into multiple forms of popular entertainment and garnered extreme popularity. The adaptations of these two episodes became texts fraught with political symbols when read within the specific socio-political context of Maoist China.

As early as in 1948, *Havoc in Heaven* drew the attention of cultural administrators in the debates centering on the reform of Beijing opera. Supporters of the play saw the plot as revolutionary, since it represents peasant revolt against the ruling class.[167] Others worried about the characters being gods, demons, and monsters—i.e., the superstitious subject matter the CCP strove to eradicate from popular culture—and doubted whether the audience could grasp the message about class struggle without being distracted by the descriptions of fantastic battles.[168]

The making of *Havoc in Heaven* in various media, including Beijing opera, animated

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[165] Ibid.
[166] Mao Zedong 毛澤東, "On Protracted War" (*Lun chijiu zhan* 論持久戰), in *Selected Essays of Mao Zedong* (*Mao Zedong xuanji* 毛澤東選集) vol. 2 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1996), 473.
[167] Sun, *Transforming Monkey*, 63.
[168] Zhang Yiying 張一英 and Jiang qi 江琦, "About 'Havoc in Heaven'" (*Guanyu Sun Wukong danao tiangong* 關於孫悟空大鬧天宮), *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao* 人民日報) (Dec. 24, 1948).

film, and *lianhuanhua*, started in the mid-1950s, about five years earlier than the making of *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone Demon.* The plot of the new publications was heavily edited. In the new story, Sun Wukong has never been subdued by the Buddha. After he defeats all the celestial warriors, crashes the celestial palace, and makes the Jade Emperor fall from his throne to run for his life, he returns to his base at Flower-Fruit Mountain to celebrate his victory with his fellow monkeys. The revisions further support the image-making of Sun as an invincible rebel, who fights against the unjust treatment implemented by the celestial authority. As Hongmei Sun pointed out, Sun Wukong's image had changed from a humorous trickster in the original novel to a representation of "positive and progressive values for the proletarian revolution and socialist construction."[169] Rudolf Wagner concurs more specifically that Sun Wukong's battle in Heaven is a parable for the years of war between the Red Army and the Nationalists. The deities serving in the celestial palace represent the state's authorities and ideology in the Marxist notion of the superstructure.[170]

In the first few years after the Communists' victory over the Nationalists, *Havoc in Heaven* became an allegory of the proletarian revolution in China. Sun Wukong became the embodiment of Mao Zedong, the leader of the peasants' revolution. Hongmei Sun's examination of Chen Guangyi's depiction of *Havoc in Heaven* in 1954 reveals the association between Sun Wukong's monkey army and the peasant militia.[171] The last picture of the *lianhuanhua* shows Sun in full armor, surrounded by his kin, celebrating his victory. The monkeys remind readers of peasant militia, as they are in short-sleeved cloth outfits and each is holding a tasseled spear. The red-tasseled spear is an iconic weapon of the Communist militia during the Second Sino-

[169] Sun, *Transforming Monkey*, 60.
[170] Wagner, *The Contemporary Chinese Historical Drama*, 142.
[171] Sun, *Transforming Monkey*, 72.

Japanese War and the subsequent war against the Nationalists. Even after the war, it was still used in villages. By visually linking Sun Wukong's simian kin's images with peasant militia, the *lianhuanhua* renarrates both Sun's rebellion and the CCP's victory through the lens of class struggle.

The New Sun Wukong: From Power to Acumen

The adaptations of *Havoc in Heaven* in the first half of the 1950s had molded the image of Sun Wukong into a rebellious hero with enormous might, who stands for the victorious CCP. When domestic and international politics were becoming increasingly complex in the late 1950s and early 1960s, another episode from *Journey to the West*, *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone Demon,* was rediscovered, revised, and reinterpreted to represent divergent currents within the CCP.

In March 1958, Mao gave a talk in which he encouraged the audience to learn from Sun Wukong because he is the revolutionary anti-dogmatist, who respects neither law nor Heaven but loses half of his revolutionary vigor after wearing the golden skillet on his head.[172] More importantly, he gave his interpretation of the other pilgrims. He saw Zhu Bajie as the liberalists, who are susceptible to the influence of the revisionism; he saw Tripitaka as [Edward] Bernstein, the revisionist who was condemned by Marxist-Leninists for being the traitor of revolution.[173] Mao's interpretation can be seen as his response to the conflicts within the CCP leadership. Throughout 1949 to 1957, Mao was the unchallenged leader of the Party.[174] Envisioning himself

[172] Dong Zhixin 董志新, *Mao Zedong's Reading of the Journey to the West* (*Mao Zedong du xiyouji* 毛澤東讀西遊記) (Shenyang: wanjuan chubanshe, 2009), 137.
[173] Wagner, *The Contemporary Chinese Historical Drama*, 145.
[174] Frederick Teiwes, "Establishment and Consolidation of the New Regime," in Roderick MacFarquhar and John Fairbank, eds., *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 14: The People's Republic, Part 1: The Emergence of Revolutionary China, 1949-1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 59.

leading China into collectivization and industrialization, he implemented the Great Leap Forward Campaign (1958–1962). The campaign caused a great famine, and between fifteen and forty million people starved to death between 1959 and 1961.[175] In 1959, many of the collective leadership noticed the already widespread famine, and advocated that the Great Leap policies be abandoned. In the Lushan Conference, held in the summer of 1959, Mao's policies were criticized by Peng Dehuai, the Minister of Defense, who just had a meeting with Khrushchev in Moscow. Mao suppressed Peng with an iron fist by condemning him as a "right opportunist," and started an Anti-Right-Opportunist campaign throughout the country.

The turmoil in high politics was reflected in popular art through the reinterpretation of the classical characters in *Journey to the West*. In 1957, the Shaoxing Opera Troupe in Zhejiang performed *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone Demon* in the Second Theatre Festival in Zhejiang. The officials in the local Cultural Bureau noticed the political potential of the play. Under the supervision of the Cultural Bureau and the Department of Publicity of Zhejiang province, who were well aware of Mao's talk in 1958, a project was soon launched to make a film adaptation based on the play.[176] The film was released nationwide in the spring of 1961. Due to the popularity of the film, the opera troupe was invited to Beijing for six public performances in October of the same year.

The revision of the plot was made during the time Mao's authority was challenged because of the disastrous outcome of Great Leap Forward. The new version of *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone Demon* metaphorically narrates the struggle within the Party that

[175] Felix Wemheuer, "Dealing with Responsibility for the Great Leap Famine in the People's Republic of China," *The China Quarterly*, 201 (March 2010): 177.
[176] Bai Huiyuan 白惠元, "The Golden Monkey Impetuously Raises his Thousand-*jun* Rod: From Strength to Strategy—the Reform of Monkey Play in the New China" *(Jinhou fenqi qianjunbang: cong 'lidi' dao 'zhiqu'—xin zhongguo houxi gaizao lun* 金猴奮起千鈞棒: 從"力敵"到"智取"—新中國猴戲改造論), *Theory and Criticism of Literature* (*Wenyi lilun yu piping* 文藝理論與批評), no. 1 (2016): 89.

served Mao and his supporters' purposes. Many details that make Sun Wukong look less than an unquestionable hero were removed. In the new story, the pilgrims encounter the White-Bone Demon, who aims to devour the flesh of Tripitaka to gain eternal life, in the middle of their journey. The White-Bone Demon transforms herself into three disguises to lure Tripitaka into her trap. All the disguises are seen through by Sun Wukong, who is born with the "fiery eyes and golden pupils" (*huoyan jinjing* 火眼金睛) that grants him the ability to see the demons' true forms. He tries to kill the demon, yet only manages to destroy the bodily guises, while the demon flees away. The White-Bone Demon first transforms into a young girl with a basket of food. After the disguise is destroyed by Sun, she transforms into an old woman searching for her missing daughter, then an old man searching for his daughter and wife, fabricating a story that Sun has killed an innocent family. Zhu Bajie believes the demon's story and is fooled by the dead bodies the demon leaves. With Zhu's misleading words, Tripitaka dismisses Sun from his duty for the murders he commits. After Sun's departure, Zhu Bajie leads the group to a Buddhist temple, which turns out to be a trap set by the demon. The demon transforms herself into a sculpture of Buddha. When the pilgrims are praying, she reveals herself and captures them. Zhu Bajie barely escapes from the demon's lair. He runs to Flower-Fruit Mountain to ask for Sun's help. Still worrying for the safety of the pilgrims during his "retirement," Sun agrees to rescue Tripitaka. This time, Sun uses the demon's trick to defeat her. He transforms into the demon's mother. Through sweet talk, he leads the demon to confess how she tricked the pilgrims with the transformations, to ensure that Tripitaka realizes his mistake before he kills the demon. After the fight, Sun is welcomed back to the group. The journey continues.

"To look" is the most important action in *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone Demon*. The core of the play is Sun's "fiery eyes and golden pupils," through which he discerns

friends and enemies.[177] The growing conflict between Sun and Tripitaka is also caused by the fact that the rest of the pilgrims cannot see what Sun sees. Compared to *Havoc in Heaven*, in which Sun exhibits unparalleled might, the play emphasizes that it takes wit, not just strength, to spot the demon in disguise.

The interpretation of the play attracted the attention of the high officials, including Mao Zedong himself. After watching the play, Guo Moruo (郭沫若, 1892–1978), the president of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, quickly discerned the educational message of the play in a poem in *People's Daily:*

> Humans and demons he confounds, right and wrong he confuses;
> Toward enemies he is merciful, toward the friend he is mean.
> His incantation of the "Golden Hoop Spell" was heard ten thousand times,
> While a demonic escape of the White-Bone Demon he let happen three times in a row.
> A thousand knives should cut Tripitaka's flesh to pieces,
> One pluck—how would it diminish the Great Sage's hair,
> This timely teaching may be highly praised,
> Even Zhu Bajie's insight surpassed that of the fools.[178]

It is clear that Guo Moruo was criticizing the ideological muddle-headedness of Tripitaka, but here Tripitaka does not represent Edward Bernstein anymore because of the current changes in the Soviet leadership. When Guo was writing the poem, Khrushchev had just proclaimed that "peaceful coexistence with [U.S.] imperialism" should be the baseline of Soviet foreign policy in the Twenty-second Congress of the Soviet Party.[179] In Guo's view, Khrushchev is the traitor of revolutionary ideals. In his poem, Tripitaka, who should be cut to pieces, corresponds to Nikita Khrushchev. More importantly, as Rudolf Wagner pointed out, the verse "one pluck—how would

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[177] Ibid., 90.
[178] Guo Moruo 郭沫若, "A Poem to Zhejiang Shaoxing Opera Troupe After Watching 'Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone Demon'" (*Kan "Sun Wukong sanda baigujing" shuzeng Zhejiang sheng shaojutuan* 看 "孫悟空三打白骨精" 書贈浙江省紹劇團), *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao* 人民日報) (Nov. 11, 1961). Translated by Rudolf Wagner, in Wagner, *The Contemporary Chinese Historical Drama*, 148.
[179] Wagner, *The Contemporary Chinese Historical Drama*, 149.

it diminish the Great Sage's hair" can be read in two ways, as "hair" reads as "*mao*" in Mandarin Chinese. It can also be translated as "One pluck (or 'dismissal')—how would it be a loss to the Great Sage Mao."[180] The title "Great Sage" comes from Great Sage Equal to Heaven (*Qitian dasheng* 齊天大聖), one of the many grand titles of Sun Wukong. By slipping the term the "Great Sage Mao" as a pun into his poem, Guo equated Mao Zedong with Sun Wukong.

Unfortunately, Mao did not endorse Guo's interpretation of the play, except for the equation of him with Sun Wukong. About a month after the publication of Guo's poem, Mao replied with another one, which anchored the symbolism of the characters. The poem goes:

> Once when from the great earth a thunderstorm arises
> There also will be a demonic coming to life of white-bone heaps.
> The Monk is stupid and ignorant, but nevertheless can be instructed.
> The Demon is treacherous and malicious, and by necessity will wreak disaster.
> The Golden Monkey impetuously raises his thousand-*jun* rod,
> And the jadelike firmament is cleared of dust for ten thousand miles.
> When today Sun the Great Sage is acclaimed,
> This is only because demonic vapors are on the rise again.[181]

Mao's poem changes the signification of the characters again. Here, the Khrushchevian revisionists are not embodied by Tripitaka, but the "treacherous and malicious" demon.[182] Tripitaka now represents the majority of the party leadership, who are "stupid and ignorant" but can be instructed and saved by Sun Wukong, the embodiment of Mao himself.[183]

As Wagner argued, the three disciples of Tripitaka each represent the inner composition of the CCP, if one uses Mao's definition to read the story of *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone Demon*. Although Sun Wukong/Mao is the mind and the leader of the pilgrims, he also expresses unwavering loyalty to Tripitaka/the Party. No matter how Tripitaka wrongs him, Sun

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[180] Ibid.
[181] Mao Zedong, "Ten Poems and Lyrics" (*Shici shi shou* 詩詞十首), *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao* 人民日報) (Jan. 4, 1964). Translated by Rudolf Wagner, in Wagner, *The Contemporary Chinese Historical Drama*, 151.
[182] Wagner, *The Contemporary Chinese Historical Drama*, 152.
[183] Ibid., 152-154.

always comes back to save his master when needed. Zhu Bajie is lured by the demon with food, being suspicious of Sun's leadership, and is tricked by the false temple created by the demon. He was interpreted as a caricature for middle- and upper-level Communist cadres, who long for the good life, and thus are easily fooled by the revisionists.[184] Sha Wujing, a firm supporter of Sun, can be read as the working class or poor and lower-middle-class peasants.[185] He is willing to follow Sun's directives, despite the fact that he may not be able to understand the reason behind them. Sha lacks education and sharp wit; all he has is his devotion to Tripitaka and his faith in Sun Wukong. The White-Bone Demon represents the revisionists influenced by Khrushchev.[186] Their goal is to devour Tripitaka—in this context, the Chinese Communist Party. Throughout the story, much emphasis is put on the aggrandizing conflict between Tripitaka and Sun Wukong, reflecting that the growing differences within the CCP were more and more openly expressed.

The differences within the Party resurfaced in the beginning of 1962 in the Seven Thousand Cadres Conference, at which Liu Shaoqi declared that seventy percent of the famine was caused by flawed administrative decisions. The conference lasted for about a month. By the end of the conference, a conclusion was made: the general Party line was correct, but errors had been made in implementing it.[187] Losing Party support, Mao engaged in self-criticism during the conference. Then he took a semi-retired role, handing power reluctantly to Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping.

Section Three: Signs of Good and Evil

Sun Wukong as Mao Zedong

[184] Ibid., 163.
[185] Ibid., 163-164.
[186] Ibid., 164.
[187] Zhou Xun ed., *The Great Famine in China, 1958–1962: A Documentary History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 163.

Zhao and Qian drew *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone Demon*, based on the Shaoxing opera, after Mao wrote his poem in November 1961. The poem was officially published in 1964, but the content and political direction might have been communicated to cultural administrators through unofficial channels. For example, Mao's adamant supporter in the Politburo, Kang Sheng (康生, 1898–1975), personally showed Guo Moruo Mao's poem on January 6, 1962, in Guangzhou.[188] The act stimulated Guo to write another poem to reaffirm Mao's interpretation of the characters. As Rudolf Wagner suspected, the administrators and artists in the Shanghai People's Art Press might be informed about the poems when they were working on the *lianhuanhua*.[189] The costumes and gestures are designed after the Shaoxing Opera. However, the work is not a mere transplantation from one medium to another. Elements in Mao's poem were carefully embedded in the drawings. The *lianhuanhua* became a code to be deciphered, and Mao's poem is the key.

The *lianhuanhua* artists were well aware that seeing and discerning are the essential actions in the play. In the first picture of the *lianhuanhua*, Sun is leading the way for the group (fig. 2.4). He is placed close to the picture plane and the other three are following him in the middle ground, as if the road the pilgrims are treading extends outside of the picture frame. Lifting his right leg to the extent that the knee almost touches his chest, Sun stands on top of a mountain rock with a single leg. His left hand is placed in front of his forehead, a gesture that suggests looking in Chinese opera. He is holding the golden rod behind his back with the right hand, showing that he is vigilant and ready to strike at any moment. According to the direction he looks, one can only suspect that the target he is looking for is outside the picture frame, in the

[188] Ji Guoping 季國平, *Mao Zedong and Guo Moruo* (*Mao Zedong yu Guo Moruo* 毛澤東與郭沫若) (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 2008), 279.
[189] Wagner, *The Contemporary Chinese Historical Drama*, 198-199.

real world among the audience.

In *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone Demon*, two attributes of Sun bear great symbolic significance: the golden rod and the skillet. The former symbolizes his might, and the latter the control imposed on him. In the third chapter of the novel, Sun finds no earthly weapon suitable for his powers. Thus, he travels to the Eastern Sea to see the Dragon King, who shows him a huge pillar-like rod, which weighs 13500 *jin*, at the bottom of the sea. The rod was used by Yu, the mythical figure who controlled the greatest flood, to determine the depth of rivers and seas. Responding to Sun's call, the rod changes its size so Sun can use it as a fighting rod. When he does not need it, he shrinks it to the size of a needle to store it in his ear. With the golden rod, Sun becomes the fearsome fighter, who defeats all the celestial warriors and demons he encounters in the story.

Since the rebellious Sun Wukong was used to represent the Communist army in *Havoc in Heaven*, *lianhuanhua* artists took pains to illustrate the unparalleled might of Sun with his golden rod. Take Chen Guangyi's version published in 1954 (fig. 2.5) as an example. In the scene in which Sun Wukong breaks into the celestial palace,[190] the angry Sun is placed at the top-right section of the picture. He is jumping high in the air, holding the golden rod with two hands, and twisting his torso to his left, ready to make a vehement swing. Everyone else in the picture is either collapsing on the floor or in the midst of running away. On the lower left of the picture, the Jade Emperor is crawling on the floor, trying to flee from the scene with the help of his servant.

Liu Jiyou painted the same scene in eight serial *nianhua* pictures in 1956 (fig. 2.6). In the painting, Sun Wukong, in highly ornate armor, is fighting with the celestial warriors outside of the palace, as one sees the tip of the palace roof in the background at the upper left corner.

[190] The scene does not exist in the original novel. Sun is subdued by the Buddha before he reaches the celestial palace.

Similar to Chen's depiction, Sun is jumping high in the air, raising his golden rod overhead, twisting his torso, as if he is about to attack the resisting warriors with a mighty blow. Right below Sun, along the middle axis of the picture, the defeated celestial generals are collapsing and falling from the battlefield formed by clouds. Observing the two pictures, one sees that both artists chose to illustrate Sun at the moment when he is building up dynamism to deliver a full swing with the rod. His might and his weapon are inseparable. The artists placed him in the air, on top of his enemies with a gap, using the compositional structure to lead the audience to see how Sun overpowers all of the other characters in the pictures.

In *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone Demon*, Zhao and Qian also emphasized Sun's power through portraying him swinging the golden rod toward the enemy (fig. 2.7). They continued the representation of Sun in Chen and Liu's works. In the same vein, Sun is up in the air, concentrating all his strength on swinging the golden rod to hit the demon, who now is disguised as an old man crouching next to Tripitaka.

Comparing the pictures examined above with the *lianhuanhua* published in the Republican period, one finds that Sun's dominating presence in the composition was new in *lianhuanhua* in the 1950s. The example I am showing here is from *The Journey to the West Lianhuanhua* (*Lianhuantuhua Xiyouji* 連環圖畫西遊記), published by World Book Company in 1932. The publishing house published a series of *lianhuanhua* based on classical novels. The series represented the highest level of production during the Republican period. In the picture, Sun is standing in profile when battling with the celestial warriors (fig. 2.8). A large group of celestials are congregating behind Sun, making it difficult for a reader to recognize where Sun is at a glance. At the left end of the group of characters is Nezha, the deity who is standing on two flaming wheels and waving two types of weapons. Instead of Sun, he is the first character the

readers notice, as his robe and his position make him stand out from the group of characters who are covered by armor with complex ornaments. It would be safe to deduce that the trend of depicting Sun as a hero with dominating power corresponds with the reinterpretation of Sun Wukong as a representation of the Communist revolution in China in the first half of the 1950s.

Since Mao publicly accepted the equation of him with Sun Wukong with his poetry exchange with Guo Moruo, one cannot help but wonder: if Sun Wukong symbolizes Mao Zedong, what does his weapon symbolize? Rudolf Wagner argues that the rod should be interpreted as Mao Zedong Thought, the weapon which has the power to destroy revisionism and can be stored in Sun's head.[191] In the *lianhuanhua*, the rod is not only used as a weapon to attack the demon, it also exhibits magic power to protect the rest of the pilgrims. When Sun is leaving the group temporarily to search for food, he uses the rod to draw a circle on the ground. To keep them safe, he asks the other three to sit in the circle, and forbids them to step out no matter what happens outside of the circle. When the White-Bone Demon approaches, the circle emanates golden rays to push her back. Inside the circle, Tripitaka and Sha are absorbed in their meditation and Zhu Bajie is lying on the ground in a relaxed pose, not noticing that the danger has approached and been repelled. The picture suggests Mao Zedong Thought protects different currents in the Party from the attack by the revisionists, even when they are unaware of it. The artists drew the light with straight dotted lines emanating along an invisible half-circle (fig. 2.9). Corresponding with the building of Mao's cult of personality, the artists might refer to the image of Mao's head as the sun, as Rudolf Wagner observed.[192] The symbolism between Mao and the Sun became more obvious in later productions in the mid-1960s, such as the theme songs in the musical *The East is Red* (*Dongfang hong*, 1964), and the film *Tunnel Warfare* (*Didao zhan*,

[191] Wagner, *The Contemporary Chinese Historical Drama*, 142.
[192] Ibid., 171.

1965). The former compares the rising sun to Mao; the latter is titled "Chairman Mao Thoughts Shine a Golden Light."

The skillet is another attribute of Sun that played a significant role in making Sun Wukong an allegorical figure reflecting Mao Zedong's situation in the CCP. In the novel, Bodhisattva Guanyin puts the skillet around Sun's forehead after he is assigned the task of escorting Tripitaka to the Western Heaven. To make sure Sun will obey Tripitaka's commands, Bodhisattva Guanyin teaches Tripitaka a tight-skillet-spell; by chanting this spell, Tripitaka can tighten the skillet to give Sun great pain. In *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone Demon,* Tripitaka uses the tight-skillet-spell to stop Sun's actions to eradicate the demon. In the picture that depicts Tripitaka turning his back to Sun and chanting the spell, Sun is crouching on all fours on the ground. His right hand is on the skillet and his left hand is pressing on the rod, which has fallen on the ground because of the pain (fig. 2.10). Sha and Zhu, sympathizing with Sun, are kneeling by Tripitaka, begging him to stop chanting the spell. Placed on top of the group unit is the complacent White-Bone Demon, who has transformed into an old man, looking down at Sun with a smirk on his face. Bearing the symbolism established by Mao's poem in mind, one finds that the picture suggests that Tripitaka/the Party can cause Sun/Mao great headaches when they are in disagreement.[193] Zhu/high-ranking cadres and Sha/working class are still loyal to Sun/Mao. The only person who is happy about the conflicts within the Party is the White-Bone Demon/the revisionists. The skillet signifies the measures the party leadership can take against Mao, emphasizing that Mao is controlled by the Party, even when it is deceived by the revisionists. The greatest difference in Sun's image in *Havoc in Heaven* and *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the Demon* is the presence of the skillet. During a time when Mao was held responsible for

[193] Ibid., 162.

the outcome of the Great Leap Forward, supporters of Mao not only used this work to extol the power of Mao Zedong Thought but also express Mao's loyalty to the Party, despite the Party misunderstands him.

White-Bone Demon and Her Classical Landscape

In the last section of this chapter, I examine how the artists deployed elements of classical painting in their works and inquire into how the classical elements were legitimized. With the reform of art academies in the PRC, classical genres of painting, especially landscape painting and bird-and-flower painting, were excluded from the curriculum. These genres were criticized as the product of elitism, feudalism, and bourgeois values. The artists made reference to elements in classical painting to respond to the authorities' demand of elevated artistic quality. They carefully selected and embedded the classical elements into places and attributes related to the villain and the threatening environment surrounding the pilgrims. By linking the classical with the evil, the artists legitimized their adaptation of classical painting.

Zhao Hongben and Qian Xiaodai based the costume design on that of the Shaoxing opera to construct the image of the White-Bone Demon, yet they added a new attribute, the demonic vapor, to correspond with the imagery described in Mao's poem. Looking at the first picture of the *lianhuanhua* again, one sees Sun Wukong standing on a mountain rock looking ahead, scouting for the pilgrims, while the rest of the group are approaching the foreground through an obscure path scattered by huge rocks and covered by flowing mist, which is composed of thin, wavy lines (fig. 2.4). On the one hand, the arrangement of mist refers to the convention of Chinese landscape paintings, in which cloud and mist are frequently painted to create depth in the picture. On the other hand, by interpreting the mist as the "demonic vapors" mentioned in

Mao's poem,[194] the picture suggests that the journey in front of the pilgrims is dangerous, with demons lurking around.

Throughout the 110 pictures in the *lianhuanhua*, the artists consciously used vapor, including mist, smoke, and cloud, to foreshadow the pilgrims' encounter with the demon. After Sun is dismissed from the mission, Zhu Bajie leads the group to a temple. While the temple looks grandiose, an unusual amount of smoke is emanating from the space in between the front hall and the main hall (fig. 2.11). Inside the temple, the pilgrims kneel in front of the sculptures of the Buddha and the Arhats to pray. The decorative patterns on the halo behind the sculpture of the Buddha hint that its presence is questionable. Although the halo resembles the sun, the rim is decorated by cloud-shaped patterns. A tremendous amount of smoke, which is depicted in a highly decorative manner, is emerging from the incense burner and the corners of the temple (fig. 2.12). Here, a reader who is familiar with Mao's poem would sense that the temple is associated with the demon. A feeling of suspense is created as in the next picture, the White-Bone Demon and her followers discard their disguises and reveal themselves from the smoke. One would suspect that the artists' use of smoke, cloud, and mist as attributes of the White-Bone Demon is a well-thought-out choice deliberately made to orchestrate with Mao's poem.

Beside deploying the depiction of mist in classical landscape painting to represent Mao's demonic vapor, Zhao and Qian were also inspired by renowned artists, including the late-Ming artist Chen Hongshou (陳洪綬, 1597–1652), and the early Shanghai school artists Ren Xiong (任熊, 1823–1857) and Ren Yi (任頤, 1840–1896).[195] In examining their paintings and woodblock

[194] Mao termed the demonic vapor "*yao wu*" (妖霧). *Yao* can be translated as demon, monster, witch, and evil spirit. *Wu* means haze, mist, and vapor.
[195] Lin Yang 林陽, *Masters of Chinese Lianhuanhua: Big Names of Little Books* (*Zhongguo lianhuanhua dajia qunyingpu xiaorenshu darenwu* 中國連環畫大家群英譜 小人書大人物) (Changsha: Hunan meishu chubanshe, 2017), 67. Zhao, "Forty-Seven Years in *Lianhuanhua* Drawing," 110-120.

illustrations, I found that Zhao and Qian's portrayal of the characters resembles the style exhibited in Ren Xiong's *Illustrations of Knight at Arms* (*Jianxia zhuan* 劍俠傳), in which he portrays thirty-three martial arts heroes in history. Ren Xiong emulated Chen Hongshou's illustrations in his early works. He later created a style that simplified Chen's lines, but kept the decorativeness and the slight exaggeration of the figures in his work.

The movement of the figures in Ren Xiong's illustration is emphasized through the garments composed of wavy lines. Zhao Hongben and Qian Xiaodai absorbed this trait of Ren Xiong's figural images. In the scene in which the White-Bone Demon lures Zhu Bajie to step outside of the protective circle through a basket of dumplings (fig. 2.13), the depiction of the demon, who transforms into a young woman, resembles Ren Xiong's the "Sewing Woman" (fig. 2.14). In Ren's illustration, the woman's lower body is facing right, while her upper body is facing the reader as she is in the middle of turning. The flowy lines of the sash, the skirt, and the left sleeve add dynamism to the character. Zhao and Qian's White-Bone Demon is in a similar garment. Her movement is accentuated by the wide sleeves and long, flowy sashes. She is also turning to her right, but this time, her head and upper body are not twisting to the left. In a metaphorical sense, the White-Bone Demon represents the revisionist. She is luring the pilgrims to the road of the right opportunist (and the left-leaning head of the sewing woman would cause confusion in interpretation).

Ren Xiong was celebrated by the Party because of his humble background and his works in the popular form of art.[196] In the Party's art magazine, *Art* (*Meishu* 美術), Ren Xiong is introduced as a talented young artist from a poor family. In the oppressive old society, the only way to make his talent noticed was through his chance to make acquaintance with Yao Xie (姚

[196] Andrews and Shen, *The Art of Modern China*, 178.

燮, 1805–1864), a literati with the resources to boost his career to the next level.[197] However, his influence on Zhao and Qian is only mentioned in passing in the articles published in the 1980s. I suspect the reason lies in the fact that one of the motivations for creating *Illustrations of Knight at Arms* was to express the artist's resentment toward the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom *(Taiping tianguo*, 太平天國),[198] a Christian theocratic rebel group that waged a civil war against the Qing dynasty in the southeast area of China from 1850 to 1864. Ren Xiong once served in the Qing army as a cartographer. In his work, he projected his wish that the rebels could be vanquished by people who act like the knight-errant he illustrated.[199] After 1949, the CCP took pains to stress the peasant nature of the Taiping Rebellion, just like the Communist revolution.[200] In the early 1950s, historians like Luo Ergang (羅爾綱, 1901–1997) emphasized the egalitarian and revolutionary nature of the rebellion in their research;[201] articles and editorials in *People's Daily* extolled the rebellion as the pinnacle of old-style peasant war (as it proceeded without a progressive leading group);[202] artifacts related to the rebellion were collected by both national and local cultural institutions; an exhibition was held in Beijing library for the memorial of the centennial of Taiping Heavenly Kingdom.[203] The CCP used the Taiping Rebellion as a proof of peasants' revolutionary agency, thus legitimizing itself as the leader of peasant revolution.

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[197] Xue Hongxuan 薛鴻宣, "The Story of Ren Xiong" (*Ren Weichang de gushi* 任渭長的故事), *Arts* (*Meishu* 美術) (March 1959): 47.
[198] Chen Wen-Ting 陳玟婷, "An Investigation on Ren Xiong's Engravings" (*Ren Xiong banhua yanjiu* 任熊版畫研究), *Calligraphy and Painting Studies* (*Shuhua yishu xuekan* 書畫藝術學刊) 8 (2010): 468-469.
[199] Ibid.
[200] Robert P. Weller, "Historians and Consciousness: The Modern Politics of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom," *Social Research*, vol. 54, no. 4 (Winter, 1987): 732-733.
[201] Ibid., 733.
[202] "In Memorial of the Centennial of Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Revolution" (*Jinian taiping tianguo geming baizhounian* 紀念太平天國革命百周年), *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao* 人民日報) (Jan. 11, 1951).
[203] "Centennial of Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Revolution, An Exhibition in Beijing Library" (*Taiping tianguo baizhounian Beijing tushuguan you zhanlan* 太平天國革命百周年 北京圖書館有展覽), *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao* 人民日報) (Dec. 19, 1950).

Although Ren Xiong's profile—a master artist without the upbringing of the ruling class—made learning from his work seems politically unproblematic, the fact that Ren made the work to project his resentment of the rebels might be a reason that the *lianhuanhua* artists could not admit to *Illustrations of Knight at Arms* being the source of their inspiration in the time when the *lianhuanhua* was published.

In the depiction of the background of the *lianhuanhua*, although the artists claimed that they went to the mountains in the suburb in Zhejiang to make sketches so they could represent the mountainous landscape in their work,[204] there is little doubt that the highly stylized forms were inspired by classical landscape painting, a genre no longer allowed to be practiced during the 1950s. Painting manuals, such as the *Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*, were likely one of the sources of Zhao and Qian's references. *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting* is the painter's manual that systematically introduces the method to paint basic elements of Chinese painting, including mountains, trees, architecture, human figures, and birds and flowers. The manual was published by Wang Gai during Emperor Kangxi's reign in the Qing dynasty; many different versions were produced in the following two centuries. In 1960, the version copied by Chao Xun (巢勛, 1852–1917) during the Guangxu period was republished by People's Art Press to propel artists to create new styles based on classical forms.

Zhao Hongben and Qian Xiaodai's landscape exhibits the characteristics of Guan Tong (關仝, c. 906–960) and Liu Songnian's (劉松年, c. 1131–1218) style in the *Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*. In the background of the scene, in which Sun Wukong is attacking

[204] Lü Ming 呂明, "'Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone Demon'—the First of the Four Great *Lianhuanhua* Artists, Zhao Hongben" ("*Sun Wukong sanda baigujing*"*—sida mingdan zhi shou Zhao Hongben* 孫悟空三打白骨精—四大名旦之首趙宏本), *Knowledge is Power* (*Zhishi jiushi liliang* 知識就是力量) (June 2012): 75. Zhao, "Forty-Seven Years in *Lianhuanhua* Drawing," 117.

an old man (another disguise of the White-Bone Demon) from above, the texture of the peaks is represented through repetitive lines that bend at almost a ninety-degree angle (fig. 2.15). In the manual, Gaun Tong's style is exemplified by a monumental landscape. Layers of peaks, whose silhouettes can be reduced to rounded rectangles, are developing around the pillar-like layer in the front-center (fig. 2.16). In the manual, Liu Songnian's landscape is characterized by repetitive strokes bending at square angles, which gives readers the impression that the mountain is composed by a great number of rectangles (fig. 2.17). The *lianhuanhua* artists' use of lines and forms show resemblance to the examples of great masters in the painter's manual.

In the *nianhua* version of *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone Demon* (fig. 2.18), the color choice of the rocks and mountains, namely blue and green, further suggests a reference to the convention of classical blue-green landscape. In the colored picture of Sun's light-emanating magic circle repelling the White-Bone Demon, a unit composed of two huge pillar-like stones with flattened points and various foliage is placed in the foreground. The shape and color of the stones reminds readers of *Ten Thousand Precipitous Peaks* (*Wanhu chaotian* 萬笏朝天) in Ren Xiong's *Ten Magnificent Landscapes* (*Shiwan tuce* 十萬圖冊) album (fig. 2.19). Furthermore, the cliff at the left side of the foreground in the picture that shows the old man seeking Tripitaka's protection in the face of Sun's attack (fig. 2.7) is similar to Ren's *Ten Thousand Bamboo in Clouds and Rain*. In the painting, a sea of mist is floating on top of a bamboo grove that grows next to a gigantic cliff (fig. 2.20). The angle of the bend of the lines to represent the texture of the cliff, and the placement of the scattered dots to represent the foliage and moss, suggest the *lianhuanhua* artists' knowledge of Ren Xiong's paintings.

The coloring of Ren Xiong's painting follows the convention of blue-green landscape. The blue-green mode was the dominant form of landscape in the Tang dynasty. Take *Emperor*

Minghuang's Journey to Shu (*Minghuang xingshu tu* 明皇幸蜀圖) (fig. 2.21), a painting made in the Northern Song dynasty in the Tang style, as an example. The Tang blue-green landscape is characterized by the heavy application of blue azurite and green malachite pigments, the precipitous forms of the peaks, and the precise use of lines. Although there is no written proof indicating that Zhao Hongben and Qian Xiaodai sought inspiration from Tang paintings, the visual language created through the use of lines and coloring in their *lianhuanhua* can be traced back to the blue-green landscape.

Looking at the *lianhuanhua* against the background of the new *guohua* in the 1950s and 1960s, I find the reference made to the convention of blue-green landscape may be the artists' conscious choice to correspond with the rising nationalism in the society. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, *guohua* artists were striving to reform landscape painting by discarding traditional formulaic textural strokes and incorporating new content, techniques, and colors into this genre. For instance, based on a lyric of Mao, Li Keran (李可染, 1907–1989) modernized the monumental landscape painting of the Northern Song dynasty through the dramatic application of red pigment and the strong contrast of dark ink and white paper (Fig. 2.22). In Shi Lu's (石魯, 1919–1982) *Fighting in Northern Shaanxi* (*Zhuanzhan shaanbei* 轉戰陝北, 1959), Mao Zedong is standing at the edge of magnificent cliffs painted with powerful ink strokes and the bold use of red (fig. 2.23). By contrast, the employment of both blue and green pigments in landscape painting is clearly associated with a classical aesthetic, as seen in *Twin Pines and Layered Green* (*Shuangsong diecui* 雙松疊翠, 1959) painted by Wu Hufan (吳湖帆, 1894–1968), a traditionalist who insisted on the visual language of classical landscape (fig. 2.24). Zhao Hongben and Qian Xiaodai's choice of blue and green to paint the mountains and stones in their *lianhuanhua* is not only an attempt to raise artistic standards by referring to a classical style essential in the history

of art in China; Wagner also interpreted the land in which the pilgrims travel as the road to transform society from Capitalism to Communism. In this light, the blue and green mountains in the *lianhuanhua* make perfect sense, because they represent an uncertain stage that has not been turned into red yet.

The cave in which the demon and her followers reside is another element that links the landscape to the aesthetics of the literati class. It is also painted with blue and green in the *nianhua* version. Here, I am focusing on the decorative forms of the stones in the cave. The inside of a cave is rarely seen in classical Chinese paintings. In some Buddhist paintings that center on the story of Bodhidharma sitting in front of a stone wall for nine years, Bodhidharma is placed inside a shallow cave. The dramatic distortion of the forms of the stones in the *lianhuanhua* is not found in this genre of paintings.

The *lianhuanhua* artists referred to another source—the Taihu rocks—to visualize the interior of the demon's lair. Coming from Lake Tai near Shanghai and Suzhou, Taihu rock has been cherished by the ruling and literati class for centuries, because they saw the rocks as manifestations of the telluric energies from the earth.[205] They also served as a miniature of the landscape in the mind of the literati. Four qualities are considered primary in evaluating a Taihu rock: *shou* (leanness), *zhou* (surface texture), *lou* (channels and indentations), and *tou* (foraminate structure, characterized by multiple holes and openings). One of the popular themes in figural paintings is Mi Fu, the painter and calligrapher of the Song dynasty, bowing to a magnificent rock out of awe and appreciation. Rock connoisseurship reached a high point in the late Ming dynasty. This aesthetic can be seen in the paintings. In You Qiu's (尤求, ca. 1525–

[205] Graham Parkes, "Thinking Rocks, Living Stones: Reflections on Chinese Lithophilia," *Diogenes*, vol. 52, issue 3 (August 2005): 75.

1580) painting about the legendary Tang heroine, Hongfu (*Hongfu tu* 紅拂圖), a tall rock full of holes and openings occupies the right side of the picture (fig. 2.25). In Chen Hongshou's painting *Boys Worshipping Buddha* (*Tongzi lifo tu* 童子禮佛圖), the contours of the Taihu rock are done in arc-shaped lines that accentuate the sharpness of the shape (fig. 2.26). Viewers can see through the stone from the irregular openings on different sides of the surface.

The decorativeness and complex visual effects playing on the perception of the inside and outside provide precedent for the *lianhuanhua* artists to represent the scenes inside the demon's cave. In the scene in which the White-Bone Demon sits inside her cave, the foreground is occupied by a huge piece of rock with a large hole in middle that allows viewers to see through it (fig. 2.27). In the picture of the final battle between the pilgrims and the demons, the image is structured around the curving rocks (fig. 2.28). The forms of the rocks make the scene look like an enlarged portion of a Taihu rock. It gives readers a feeling as if they are watching the characters fighting through a hole on the Taihu rock from the outside.

Making reference to the visual representation of Taihu rock, an object of literati connoisseurship, does not seem like an appropriate practice for the new *lianhuanhua*. However, through examining Zhao Hongben and Qian Xiaodai's drawing, one sees the artists could still make use of the elements traditionally associated with the literati class, and avoided accusations of praising the culture of the feudal and the oppressive, if it is deployed in the depiction of evil.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the signification of pictorial elements in Zhao Hongben and Qian Xiaodai's *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone Demon*. The work is interpreted as a parable of the Party's arduous quest to build a Communist society under the guidance of Mao. The hero

in the story, Sun Wukong, is the embodiment of Mao. His image has changed from a ruthless rebel, as in *Havoc in Heaven*, to a leader who has the acumen to see through the disguises of the evil revisionists. Following the policy for elevating artistic standards, the *lianhuanhua* artists drew inspiration from classical woodblock prints and landscape paintings, including Ren Xiong's *Illustrations of Knight at Arms*, the examples from the *Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*, and the convention of blue-green landscape. The reference to the classical landscape warrants closer examination. Although artists were no longer allowed to practice classical landscape painting because of its historical association with the ruling class and literati class, the *lianhuanhua* artists cleverly used classical elements to illustrate the dangerous landscape in which demons (revisionists) are lurking around.

CHAPTER 3

Classicizing the Modern:

He Youzhi's *Great Changes in a Mountain Village*

This chapter examines how the production of He Youzhi's (1922–2016) *lianhuanhua*, *Great Changes in a Mountain Village* (*Shanxiang jübian* 山鄉巨變), exemplifies *lianhuanhua* artists' endeavor to incorporate the conventions of classical painting and make them serve a new political agenda. *Great Changes in a Mountain Village* depicts the process of agricultural collectivization in a village in Hunan province, and exhibits how this process impacts the private and public lives of the villagers. He Youzhi incorporated sketches made during his field trips to the countryside, and combined them with stylized lines and patterns inspired by classical paintings and woodblock illustrations made in the Ming and Qing dynasties. The plot was written to support the acceleration of the CCP political campaign; the form reflects that the policy for cultural production was turning away from "learning from the Soviets," and was instead focusing on creating a "national form," due to the deteriorating international relationship between China and the Soviet Union. Through a close examination of the *lianhuanhua* and the artist's statement, I will explore the following questions: why was He Youzhi's style considered classical by his contemporaries? What was the purpose of emphasizing the references to classical Chinese painting, especially Zhang Zeduan's *Up the River During Qingming* (*Qingming shanghe tu* 清明上河圖) and Chen Hongshou's *Water Margin Leaves* (*Shuihu yezi* 水滸葉子), in his *lianhuanhua*?

Section One: He Youzhi's *Lianhuanhua* Career

He Youzhi was acclaimed as one of the greatest *lianhuanhua* artists in the history of the PRC. Born in a humble family in Zhejiang in 1922, He Youzhi received only an elementary school education. Before establishing a stable career as a *lianhuanhua* artist, he worked in various industries to make a living.[206] He started to draw his first *lianhuanhua, Fugui* (福貴), in 1949.[207] The *lianhuanhua* is an adaptation of Zhao Shuli's (趙樹理, 1906–1970) socialist-realist novel, which reproaches the exploitative social system that forces an honest young man to become a despicable criminal in order to sustain his family. With the publication of this *lianhuanhua*, he gained access to the industry and had the chance to participate in the *lianhuanhua* workshop held by the Shanghai Municipal Cultural Bureau in 1952. Later, he was assigned to work in the New Art Press, whose primary mission was to merge and reorganize private publishers. The New Art Press was merged with the state-owned Shanghai People's Art Press in 1956, and the enterprise became the largest *lianhuanhua* publisher in China. In his long career as a *lianhuanhua* artist, He Youzhi created more than fifty *lianhuanhua* titles in various styles. Two of his works, *Great Changes in a Mountain Village* and *The White Light* (*Baiguang* 白光), won the first-class prize in the first and second National *Lianhuanhua* Exhibition in 1963 and 1981, respectively.

Although He Youzhi was famous for his mastery in plain line drawing, with a style that reminded his contemporaries of Chen Hongshou (陳洪綬, 1598–1652), the master artist in the late Ming dynasty, he experimented with many different styles during the early stages of his career. I argue that each experiment reflects the CCP's attempt to reform *lianhuanhua* through

[206] Lin, *Masters of Chinese Lianhuanhua*, 99.
[207] Ibid., 101

popularization and raising standards, and imbues different styles with various types of political significance.

For example, in *Carry on till Tomorrow* (*Jianchi dao mingtian* 堅持到明天, 1953), a story about a Chinese peasant woman who withstands torture inflicted by the Nationalist army to protect secret information, He used a brush to draw the outlines and minimize the suggestions of light and shade (fig. 3.1). The lines, especially those portraying the folds on the clothes, are rendered in a naturalistic manner. The artist consciously avoided the highly stylized lines that are commonly seen in classical *guohua* paintings. Li Lu, then the chief editor of the New Art Press, enthusiastically promoted this style.[208] In the first few years of the 1950s, when classical Chinese paintings were seen as the residue of the elitist art from the feudal past, artists were experimenting with new techniques that incorporated brush and ink to make sketches without referring to the textual strokes in classical *guohua* paintings. Li Lu believed that intentional "un-educatedness" was best suited to portraying the stories of contemporary subjects.

He Youzhi and Yan Meihua (顏梅華, 1927–) collaborated to draw *The Story of Zoya and Shura* (*Zhuoya yu Shula* 卓婭與舒拉, 1954), which is based on the biography of the Soviet martyr, Zoya Anatolyevna Kosmodemyanskaya (1923–1941) (fig. 3.2). Following the Party-State's policy of "learning from the Soviet Union in every aspect," the artists studied Soviet films and the pictures in the magazine *Spark* (*Ogoniok*). Although the human characters are depicted with outlines, strong contrasts of light and shade created through hatching and cross-hatching pen strokes were deployed to make the form seem Westernized, thus suitable for a story from Soviet Russia. In the collaboration process, He Youzhi mainly did the pencil draft, and Yan did

[208] Li, *Memories of the Lianhuanhua Circle*, 97.

the ink outline of the characters; then He Youzhi completed the backgrounds of the pictures.[209]

1959 and 1960 marked the turning point of He Youzhi's style. He studied classical Chinese painting under Ying Yeping (應野平, 1910–1990) and Xie Zhiliu (謝稚柳, 1910–1997) at the Shanghai Chinese Painting Academy.[210] Both Ying and Xie were classical painters who made their names during the Republican period. Ying specialized in landscape painting; Xie was a versatile scholarly artist who mastered a variety of classical styles and became an adviser to the Shanghai museum after 1949.[211] Through these exchanges with classical painters, He Youzhi's stylistic repertoire was greatly expanded. Moreover, Shanghai People's Art Press published high-quality catalogues, including the collections of Shanghai Museum, paintings of the Song dynasty, and woodblock prints of Chen Hongshou. These resources provided him access to learn technique and composition from classical painting.

Great Changes in a Mountain Village is the work that brought He Youzhi great fame. His study of classical paintings flowered in this work. He developed his signature style, combining sketches made on-site with delicate lines, modernized composition, textual strokes, and decorative patterns inspired by classical paintings and woodblock prints made in imperial China. In his later works that involve stories taking place in the modern countryside, such *as Li Shuangshuang* (李雙雙, 1964) and *Chaoyang Village* (*Chaoyang gou* 朝陽溝, 1979), he returned to this style he established while he was making his most iconic work.

During the Cultural Revolution, He Youzhi was sent for labor reform in a May Seventh Cadre School, along with his colleagues at the Shanghai People's Art Press. The publication of

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[209] Chen Zu'en 陳祖恩, Yan Meihua's Oral History (*Yan Meihua koushu lishi* 顏梅華口述歷史) (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, 2016), 30-31.
[210] Zhu Guorong 朱國榮, *Drawing the Joy and Sorrow of the Popular: He Youzhi* (*Baimiao minjian beihuan qing: He Youzhi* 白描民間悲歡情: 賀友直) (Shanghai: Shanghai wenhua chubanshe, 2015), 56.
[211] Sullivan, *Modern Chinese Artists*, 184.

lianhuanhua stopped due to the political turmoil. It was not until the last few years of the Cultural Revolution that the publication was restarted, due to Premier Zhou Enlai's advocacy. He Youzhi and his colleagues were recruited to draw *lianhuanhua* collectively, including *The Sinful Life of Kong Lao'er* (*Kong Lao'er zui'e de isheng* 孔老二罪惡的一生*,* 1974) and *The Surrenderist Song Jiang* (*Touxiang pai Song Jiang* 投降派宋江, 1976)*,* to orchestrate the Criticize Lin Biao, Criticize Confucius Campaign (1974) and the Criticize *Water Margin* Campaign (1975).

Another work that won him the first-class prize in the National *Lianhuanhua* Exhibition is *White Light,* a *lianhuanhua* adaptation of Lu Xun's short story. To depict the agony and delusion experienced by the main character, He Youzhi adopted a style that reminded readers of the Shanghai school painters. By using ink splash, ink wash, and the alternation between light and heavy application of ink, he fused the bleak winter scenery, oppressive atmosphere, and the scholar's mental turmoil in his pictures.

In 1980, the Department of *Nianhua* and *Lianhuanhua* was established in the Central Academy of Fine Arts. He Youzhi was appointed professor of *lianhuanhua* and taught there till 1987, when the department was abolished. During the 1990s and 2000s, he did several autobiographical works and devoted himself to illustrating different walks of life in old Shanghai. In 2009, he was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Cultural Bureau, China Federation of Literary and Art Circles, and China Artists Association. The illustrations from his *He Youzhi Drawing 360 Professions* (*He Youzhi hua sanbailiushi hang* 賀友直畫三百六十行*,* 2004) were exhibited in the Urban Footprint Pavilion at the Shanghai World Expo in 2010.[212] His illustrations of old Shanghai also decorate the walls at the Yu Garden subway

[212] CAFA ART INFO, "*Lianhuanhua* Master He Youzhi" (*Lianhuanhua dashi He Youzhi: buzuo taido, wo zi*

station. It seems like his illustration has become a cultural icon of the metropolitan. He Youzhi had been drawing *lianhuanhua* for more than half a century. He passed away at age ninety-four in March 2016.

Section Two: Popularizing the Propaganda in *Great Changes in a Mountain Village*

The publication of *Great Changes in a Mountain Village* was part of the official publication project to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the establishment of the Chinese Communist Party. As an official publication project, the production of the *lianhuanhua* was directly supervised by Gu Bingxin (顧炳鑫, 1923–2001) and Wu Nong (吳穠, 1923–1991). Both were vice-directors in the *lianhuanhua* studio in Shanghai People's Art Press, overseeing the pictorial and verbal components, respectively.[213] Shanghai People's Art Press planned to publish six volumes of *lianhuanhua* based on Zhou Libo's (周立波, 1908–1979) novel. Unfortunately, the publishing house managed to publish four volumes, and only two-thirds of the original story was adapted into *lianhuanhua*. From late 1958 to early 1959, Shanghai People's Art Press twice sent He Youzhi to Yiyang, in Hunan province, to make sketches of peasants' lives. Although He Youzhi made accurate sketches in the countryside, the first two submissions of the manuscript were rejected by his supervisors because the style he chose was considered insufficient to represent "the atmosphere one feels in a village in Hunan."[214] It was not until the third attempt that he found the correct style the Communist administrators were looking for. The "correct style," I argue, is a mixture of tactics to popularize the didactic, and practices to raise artistic

minjian lai 連環畫大師賀友直：不做泰斗，我自民間來), http://www.cafa.com.cn/c/?t=218328 (2016/3/17).
[213] Zhu, *Drawing the Joy and Sorrow of the Popular*, 55.
[214] He Youzhi 賀友直, *He Youzhi on Drawing* (*He Youzhi shuo hua* 賀友直說畫) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 2008), 24-25.

standards and create a national form.

In his long career, He Youzhi visualized many texts made to propagate political campaigns. He developed a few methods, including "creating drama" (*zuoxi* 作戲) and "four smalls" (*si xiao* 四小), to popularize the dry texts with creative manipulation of details. His way of popularizing this content was to recreate details in places where the author did not pay much attention to description. He Youzhi concluded that unlike novelists, who spend most of their effort on describing main characters and major events, "a *lianhuanhua* artist needs not only to portray the major characters and necessary events, but also pays attention to depicting, or even recreating secondary characters and the background of the settings" that the writer does not mention.[215] *Great Changes in a Mountain Village* is a great example with which to examine He's technique, specifically in constructing a visual narration that complements the shortened verbal narration in the *lianhuanhua*, and exhibits more nuance and psychological depth than the original novel.

He Youzhi used the "four smalls"—"small movement," "small child," "small object," and "small animal"—to suggest the personalities of, and relationships between, the characters.[216] "Small movements" make the inner mental action of the characters legible to the readers. "Small children" serve as a contrast to the adult main characters. The actions of children provide readers more details that allow them to explore the relationships between the characters. For example, when a local cadre is trying to dissuade a woman from divorcing her husband, her child is standing in between the cadre's legs and resting his upper body on his right thigh with a sense of intimacy. By depicting the "small movement" of the "small child," He implied intimacy between

[215] Ibid.
[216] For He Youzhi's explanation of the "four smalls," please see He Youzhi, *He Youzhi on Drawing*, 53-80.

the cadre and the family (fig. 3.3). The "small objects" are used as a way to accentuate the characters' personalities. In the picture in which an old farmer is yelling at his teenage son, urging him to clean up his room so the cadre from the city can move in, the teenage boy is sitting by the doorstep, cutting up a piece of bamboo with a knife to make scrubbing brushes (fig. 3.4). Making brushes out of a piece of bamboo is work that requires the maker to split the piece of bamboo into extremely thin slices, while keeping the bottom of the piece intact so the slices can be bonded together. It is a work that demands precision, patience, and concentration. Although the boy does not play an essential role in the story, the artist's depiction of the boy being absorbed in the work tells the readers the boy's temperament. In the same picture, one can also observe He's arrangement of "small animals," through which he can exhibit a character's personality via the animal's reaction to the character. In the picture, the cat that is about to pass the doorstep is undisturbed by the old peasant's action. It shows that the old peasant is actually such a soft character that no one, not even the cat, is taking his actions seriously.

He Youzhi especially took pride on how he recreated the drinking scene between two characters, Gong Ziyuan, a class enemy who disguised himself as a peasant, and Flour-Paste Ting, a poor peasant who followed the direction of the Party full-heartedly.[217] This part of the story centers on a casual dinner that is taking place in Gong Ziyuan's house. Flour-Paste Ting is visiting Gong to persuade him to join the cooperative, while Gong is trying to probe him to discover the cadres' next move. The conflict, between a poor and honest but blunt peasant and a counterrevolutionary who conspires to jeopardize the progress of collectivization, is hidden under a seemingly banal scene around Gong's dining table. He Youzhi explained: "although the scene looks banal since there are hardly any changes of action, the writer touched upon the

[217] Ibid., 26-34.

conflicting relationship between the characters, and this provided me some space to make the scene more dramatic."[218] Visualizing a scene this simple was a challenging task. The artist had to reveal the characters' personalities and inner mental activities through manipulation of gestures, objects, and composition.

He Youzhi painstakingly portrayed the two main characters in as much detail as possible to exhibit their different social statuses and personalities. Take Gong Ziyuan's outfit as an example. The man is a wealthy silk merchant who has disguised himself as a poor peasant. He tucks his top into his trousers, something a real peasant would not do because it restricts his range of movement. Gong puts on two pairs of trousers to cover his protruding belly, but the trousers on the outside are so short that they cannot fully cover the pair inside. Judging from the folds of the inner trousers, one would speculate that the trousers were made of a soft material that a poor peasant could not afford. Through the costume, He Youzhi created the image of a counterrevolutionary who tries to dress like a peasant, but cannot help but show his true colors.

Besides the objects, the artist designed legible gestures and facial expressions to facilitate readers' active interpretation. He Youzhi created a series of actions to reveal Gong Ziyuan's inner mental activities: he drops his cup when he is scared by the words that slip from Flour-Paste Ting's mouth (fig. 3.5); he rests his chin on his hand when he is devising strategies (fig. 3.6); he uses his index finger to rub his nose, indicating that he has come up with a scheme (fig. 3.7). At the end of the scene, Gong Ziyuan is told by his wife that a patrolling militia is approaching. Knowing that Flour-Paste Ting is drunk, he stares at Flour-Paste Ting with his upper body leaning forward, one hand raising the wine bottle, and another one pressing on the table as if he is pondering what actions to take against this old peasant, who has become

[218] Ibid., 26.

vulnerable because of the alcohol (fig. 3.8). Contrary to Gong's calculations, Flour-Paste Ting fixes his eyes on the wine most of the time. It is easy for any reader to see how great the attraction of alcohol is for him.

The actions of the third character, Gong's wife, are not mentioned in the novel. Using her actions to build up the tension between the main characters is purely He Youzhi's invention. She does not understand why Gong treats the old peasant with food and wine, but she shares Gong's disdain for the poor peasant. It seems like she is mumbling something grumpily when she is dropping the tobacco ash. She listens to the conversation between Gong and their guest and keeps wondering what is hidden beneath his words. When she notices that there is a militia approaching, she hides her lower face behind the wall and observes the situation with her alert eyes (fig. 3.8). He Youzhi managed to express the personalities of the characters by designing gestures and facial expressions that are instantly legible to the viewers.

Lastly, He Youzhi resorted to drastic changes of angles in composition to reflect the condition of the characters. In the first few pictures, he fixed the compositions from the same angle to show the dull atmosphere. When the plot develops and the conversation between the characters is heating up, the composition changes accordingly. In the last eight pictures, to represent the fact that Flour-Paste Ting is getting drunk, the artist drew each of the pictures from a different angle, as if the pictures are filmed by a camera which is spinning around the two characters, synchronized with the dizzying vision of the drunk character. He successfully adopted the tactic from filmmaking to draw consecutive pictures from varied perspectives, a tactic that shows his mastery in composing pictures with linear perspective, and actively engaged with the unique form of *lianhuanhua* as serial pictures.

The examples examined above showcase He Youzhi's method of recreating the details

and interactions between the characters. His concentration on the "four smalls" and incorporation of camera-work-like composition serve to entice active reading in order to popularize CCP propaganda.

Section Three: Politics and Policies in PRC in the Mid-1950s

Before examining the classical elements in *Great Changes in a Mountain Village*, it will be helpful to look into the political backdrop of the story: the agricultural collectivization campaign from 1953 to 1957. The CCP started to initiate agricultural collectivization after the land reform campaign. The Party planned to raise production and peasants' income by a process of establishing mutual aid teams, then developing them into lower cooperatives, and finally advanced cooperatives in the villages to make use of land, labor, and farming implements more efficiently. The Party planned to invest the surplus generated by the harvest to boost industrialization in the cities.[219] In the first two years of the campaign, Communist leaders in China insisted that agricultural collectivization should be introduced gradually. Being aware of the "peasant's individualism," a way of thinking that prefers to produce on a household basis, and peasants' attachment to their private land, which was intensified by land reform, they believed it required a long period of popular education to realize total collectivization.[220] Unfortunately, the production of 1953 and 1954 fell short of the goal the CCP envisioned. Peasants encountered economic hardship. Using surplus to invest in industrialization also seemed impossible. Blaming the "peasant's individualism" and their capitalist tendencies as the obstacles to promoting social change, by early 1955, the CCP decided to accelerate the progress of

[219] See Barbara P. Hazard, *Peasant Organization and Peasant Individualism: Land Reform, Cooperation and the Chinese Communist Party* (Fort Lauderdale: Verlag breitenbach Publishers, 1981), 155. Meisner, *Mao's China and After*, 130-131.
[220] Hazard, *Peasant Organization and Peasant Individualism*, 155.

collectivization.

The *lianhuanhua* is based on Zhou Libo's novel, published in 1958. The story takes place in the winter of 1955, when the CCP started to speed up the pace of collectivization. At the beginning of the story, a cadre arrives at Qingxi village to reorganize two local mutual aid teams, which are at the brink of collapse because the villagers have little faith in collectivization. She successfully persuades the villagers to work collectively and transforms the mutual aid teams into an advanced cooperative. The process of implementing collectivization eventually not only changes the pattern of the peasants' work, but leads to "the revolution in the deep of their souls." By describing the plight and inner mental struggles experienced by the villagers, the author demonstrates that collectivization is a campaign that requires villagers to change their understanding of the private and the public, social customs, family life, and romantic relationships.

Not only the content but also the form of the *lianhuanhua* is a product of politics, both domestic and international. The relationship between China and the Soviet Union played a crucial role in forming the style of *lianhuanhua*. In the early 1950s, the nascent PRC aimed to learn from the Soviet Union in every aspect. On the one hand, Chinese policymakers demanded that artists learn from Soviet socialist realism, a style that combines Greek antiquity, the Italian Renaissance, and nineteenth-century Russian realism.[221] On the other hand, according to Stalin's dictum, the proletarian art must be "national in form and socialist in content."[222] Chinese artists also needed to draw inspiration from national heritage to create a national form for Chinese audiences. The worsening international relationship between China and the Soviet Union in the second half of the 1950s, and the Sino-Soviet Split in 1960, further intensified the urgency of

[221] Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism*, 46.
[222] Andrews, *Painters and Politics in People's Republic of China,* 119.

creating a national form. In *lianhuanhua* production, Shen Roujian (沈柔堅, 1919–1998) pointed out the importance of raising the quality of *lianhuanhua* through "overcoming the influence from the West [here, the "West" Chinese people had access to was the Soviet Union] and carrying forward the national form."[223]

But what kind of "national" art should artists study? The speech delivered by Zhou Yang in the Second Congress of Literary and Art Workers, held in 1953, provides us a principle for the selection of artworks. Zhou was the vice-chairman of the All-China Federation of Literary and Art Circles, and also the actual leader of cultural reform. To Zhou, not all national heritage was worth studying. He emphasized that in the process of studying national artistic legacies, one should "take the democratic and progressive aspects" and "distinguish them from the feudal and backward parts," and "take the realistic and distinguish them from the antirealistic."[224] To Zhou, the legacies worth studying were the ones that were "democratic," "progressive," and "realistic." In the next section, I will examine He Youzhi's statement and his references to classical art in *Great Changes in a Mountain Village*, and inquire into why his references were considered "democratic," "progressive," and "realistic."

Section Four: Classicizing the Modern

He Youzhi claimed that his work benefited from two practices: delving into life and study of the national heritage. The practice of "delving into life" had been institutionalized during the 1950s and 1960s. Artists and writers had to spend time working and living among the peasants or

[223] Shen Roujian 沈柔堅, "On Some Issues in the Production of *Lianhuanhua*, *Nianhua*, and Propaganda Posters" (*Tantan lianhuanhua, nianhua, zhengzhi xuanchuanhua chuangzuo zhong de yixie wenti* 談談連環畫、年畫、政治宣傳畫創作中的一些問題), *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao* 人民日報) (November 9, 1960).
[224] Andrews, *Painters and Politics in People's Republic of China,* 120.

factory workers to remold themselves and renovate their work.[225] From late 1958 to early 1959, Shanghai People's Art Press twice sent He Youzhi to Yiyang in Hunan province, where Zhou Libo stayed to write the novel, and once to suburban Shanghai to make sketches and observe the lives of the peasants. Although He Youzhi made accurate sketches in the countryside, the first two submissions of the manuscript were rejected by his supervisors because the style he chose was considered insufficient to represent "the atmosphere one feels in a village in Hunan."[226] It was not until the third attempt, in which he drew inspiration from classical art, that his supervisor finally believed that he had found the right style to represent the country scenery. Considering the fact that the last manuscript represents the countryside through a classical lens, He's field trips to Yiyang seemed to serve a political requirement. By taking the field trips, an urban artist from Shanghai gained legitimacy to draw a story about agricultural collectivization in the countryside.

Great Changes in a Mountain Village is the first major *lianhuanhua* to incorporate classical style to portray a story in socialist China. Before that, the classical style was considered suitable for rendering folk tales or "ancient-costume" stories in the imperial period. Here, I will start with the comment made by He Youzhi's supervisor, Gu Bingxin, to see what art conventions He Youzhi's contemporary saw in *Great Changes in a Mountain Village*. Gu commented:

> [He Youzhi] adopted the textual strokes seen in the woodblock prints in Ming and Qing dynasties to depict mountains and rocks. He made use of the classical outline method to draw trees and leaves and made variations so that the depictions are both realistic and generic at the same time because he had to draw so many pictures to compose a volume of *lianhuanhua*. When drawing long-distance views, the artist organized lines into various densities to create the contrast of light and shade as well as layers of space… Although his portrayal of human figures is not as excellent as the depiction of landscape, he humbly studied the method to draw facial expressions from *Railroad Guerillas* to achieve a better

[225] Hang, *Literature the People Love*, 3.
[226] He, *He Youzhi on Drawing*, 24-25.

result.[227]

Railroad Guerillas is another *lianhuanhua* series published by Shanghai People's Art Press. The artists graduated from the East China Campus of Central Academy of Fine Arts and were well-trained in Western academic draftsmanship. Their depiction of figural images and composition are reminiscent of the style seen in Soviet socialist realist paintings (fig. 3.9). Here, Gu pointed out two sources that inspired He Youzhi: Ming and Qing woodblock prints and Western academic drawing, the two contradicting sources that were demanded by the Party in order to fulfill the requirements of "learning from the Soviet" and creating a national form.

However, from Gu's words, one can see that the two sources are not treated as equal. When the scenes are rendered in a classical style, Western academic style is limited to the depiction of the human figures' facial expressions. Looking at two versions of *Great Changes in a Mountain Village*, one also finds a strong tendency to turn from Westernized drawing to the classical style. In the unpublished manuscript, the influence of Western academic art is prominent (fig. 3.10). Constructing the landscape through a single-point perspective from a lowered angle, the artist guides viewers along the winding road, which extends from the foreground to the background in a serpentine shape, to see the field, the open ground behind the trees, and the distant mountains. In the background, the trees are depicted in a rather naturalistic way, and the dark areas formed by the foliage create a contrast of light and dark in the picture. In the published version, He Youzhi elevated the viewpoint, reminiscent of classical Chinese painting (fig. 3.11). Moreover, the realistic depiction of the road and the fields are gone. Executed with repetitive strokes and shapes, the depiction of the trees is stylized.

[227] Gu Bingxin 顧炳鑫, "On the Artistic Achievement of *Lianhuanhua Great Changes in a Mountain Village*" (*Tan lianhuanhua shanxiang jubian huihua de chengjiu* 談連環畫山鄉巨變繪畫的成就), *Arts* (*Meishu* 美術) 4 (1961): 44.

He Youzhi claimed that he "discovered the language of line-drawing from *Water Margin Leaves* (*Shuihu Yezi* 水滸葉子) by Chen Hongshou and found the method of composition from *Up the River During Qingming* (*Qingming shanghe tu* 清明上河圖)."[228] In the next section, I will analyze what He learned from these works, and delve into why they were considered "realistic," "progressive," and "democratic."

Chinese Realism: *Up the River During Qingming*

First, I will focus on He Youzhi's reference to *Up the River During Qingming* (*Qingming shanghe tu,* 清明上河圖). Hundreds of handscroll paintings were titled *Up the River During Qingming* in various historical periods; most of the existing paintings were made during the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing dynasty (1644–1912). The paintings share not only the same title, but also compositional structures and themes.[229] They are long horizontal handscrolls that exhibit a panoramic view that extend from a rural scene on the outskirts of a city, onwards to an arched bridge, then finally to the bustling urban scene inside the city gate. The earliest existing work is attributed to Zhang Zeduan (張擇端, active early twelfth century), a court painter who served in the Northern Song dynasty. Zhang was a deft painter of ruled-line painting (*jiehua* 界畫), which requires an artist to use tools like straight edges and rulers to make detailed drawings of architecture, boats, and other structures.[230] Along with Zhang's painting, Qiu Ying's (仇英, ca. 1494–1552) painting, made in late Ming, and the collaborative painting made by the Qing court

[228] He Youzhi, "Two Reports on the Making of *Lianhuanhua*" (*Guanyu lianhuanhua chuangzuo wenti de liangci baogao* 關於連環畫創作問題的兩次報告) in Wang, Shi, and Zhu eds., *Shanghai Modern Art History Series: Lianhuanhua (1949-2009)*, 160.
[229] Cheng-hua Wang, "One Painting, Two Emperors, and Their Cultural Agendas: Reinterpreting the Qingming Shanghe Painting of 1737," *Archives of Asian Art* 70:1 (April 2020): 85.
[230] Valerie Hansen, *The Beijing Qingming Scroll and Its Significance for the Study of Chinese History* (Albany, N.Y.: Journal of Song-Yuan Studies, 1996), 3.

painters, were the most famous three versions of *Up the River During Qingming*. Although He Youzhi and Gu Bingxin did not specify which version he studied in their writings, there is little doubt that He Youzhi took Zhang's painting as his reference, because of the authorities' and the leading intellectuals' exaltation of Song paintings in the first half of the 1900s. The following discussion will center on the history of Zhang Zeduan's painting in the twentieth century, its status in the history of art, its reevaluation in the PRC, and its influence on He Youzhi's *lianhuanhua*.

Literati painters during the Ming and Qing dynasties appreciated educated brushwork that expressed oneself through their understanding and interpretation of the historical formula of painting. To literati painters, ruled-line painting was not considered a venerable painting genre because it was produced by court or commercial painters, who acquired the skills to make a living, unlike literati painters, who painted to cultivate themselves. In the case of *Up the River During Qingming*, the leading Ming painter and art theorist Dong Qichang (董其昌, 1555–1636) commented that Zhang's "delicate strokes resemble Li Zhaodao,[231] but weak in the bone and the strength."[232] His words suggest that Zhang Zeduan's painting lacks the quality valued by literati painters.

Zhang Zeduan's *Up the River During Qingming* was in and out of the royal collection multiple times from the Song to the Qing dynasty. In 1799, the fourth year of Jiaqing Emperor's reign, the painting joined the royal collection. It remained there even after the monarchy was abolished with the establishment of the Republic of China. The last emperor, Puyi, took the

[231] Li Zhaodao (李昭道, active in the early eighth century) was a painter in the Tang dynasty. He and his father, Li Sixun, excelled in blue-green landscape painting, a genre characterized by using blue-green pigments, steady ink outlines, and detailed depiction of human figures and architecture.
[232] "筆法纖細，亦近李昭道，惜骨力乏耳。" Quote from Zhang Anzhi 張安治, *A Study on Zhang Zeduan's Up the River During Qingming* (*Zhang Zeduan Qingming shanghe tu yanjiu* 張擇端清明上河圖研究) (Beijing: zhaohua meishu chubanshe, 1962), 2.

painting with him when he was forced to leave the palace in 1924. Puyi became the emperor of Manchukuo, a puppet state controlled by the Empire of Japan, in 1934. The painting was in his pocession until August 1945. When the Soviet army captured Puyi on his way to Japan, the handscroll fell into the hands of anonymous commoners.[233] In 1948, Zhang Kewei (張克威, 1901–1974), the chief of staff of the Changchun garrison headquarters (*Changchun jingbei siling bu* 長春警備司令部), acquired the painting and gifted it to the Northeast Administrative Committee (*Dongbei xingzheng weiyuan hui* 東北行政委員會).[234] In January 1953, the painting was displayed in the exhibition *The Ancient Arts of the Great Fatherland* (*Weida zuguo gudai yishu tezhan* 偉大祖國古代藝術特展), in the Northeast Museum. In November 1953, with the opening of the painting section in the Palace Museum in Beijing, *Up the River During Qingming* was one of the five hundred paintings that were brought to the eyes of the public. The painting was collected by the Palace Museum by the end of 1953, and remains there today.

Due to its unique history, Zhang Zeduan's *Up the River During Qingming* was not exhibited nor discussed in the public sphere before the 1950s. Still, through tracing the appreciation of Song painting in modern China, one can see why the painting garnered extraordinary attention in the 1950s and onward.

During the New Culture Movement (*Xinwenhua yundong* 新文化運動, c. 1915–early 1920s), leading intellectuals, including progressive thinkers like Chen Duxiu (陳獨秀, 1879–1942) and Cai Yuanpei (蔡元培, 1868–1940), and loyalists like Kang Youwei (康有為, 1858–

[233] Chen Chuanxi 陳傳席, "The History of the Origin, Time, and Collection of Up the River During Qingming" (*'Qingming shanghe tu' chuangzuo yuanqi, shijian ji shoucang liuchuang shi* 清明上河圖創作源起、時間及收藏流傳史) in Yang Lili ed., *New Essays on Up the River During Qingming* (*Qingming shanghe tu xinlun* 清明上河圖新論) (Beijing: gugong chubanshe, 2011), 217-218.
[234] Ibid.

1927), declared the paintings of the Song dynasty to be the greatest achievement of Chinese art. As Wang Cheng-hua concurred, the elites rediscovered the category of Song painting, whose strength lies in its realist style (*xieshi* 寫實), opposed to Yuan painting, whose expressive style (*xieyi* 寫意) was celebrated by literati painters for centuries.[235] Because of its realist style, Song painting was seen as the Chinese counterpart of Renaissance art, the representation of Chinese civilization that could compete with other advanced nations.[236] The canonization of Song painting was institutionalized when the Palace Museum started to open the royal collection to the public through exhibitions and publication of magazines that targeted various levels of readers. During the Republican period, Song painting, mostly landscape painting and bird-and-flower painting, was praised for its realistic style. When the Palace Museum started to publicize its collection, along with Yuan and Ming paintings, which were seen as the apex of expressive literati paintings, Song painting became one of the three major categories publicized to domestic and international audiences. For example, among the 175 paintings that were selected for the "International Exhibition of Chinese Art" at the Royal Academy of Arts in London in 1935 and subsequently in China in 1936, fifty-six were Song paintings, which composed thirty-two percent of the exhibition.[237] The selection was made by leading artists and collectors, including Xu Beihong (徐悲鴻, 1895–1953), Wu Hufan (吳湖帆, 1894–1968), and Ye Gongchuo (葉恭綽, 1881–1968). From landscape to genre painting, almost all the genres of Song painting were

[235] Cheng-hua Wang, "In the Name of the Nation: Song Painting and Artistic Discourse in Early Twentieth-Century China," in Rebecca M. Brown and Deborah S. Hutton, eds., *A Companion to Asian Art and Architecture* (Oxford; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 547-550.
[236] Ibid, 544.
[237] Chen Yunru 陳韻如, "The Selection of "Song Paintings": Publicizing the Palace Museum Collection of Paintings in the 1930s and Its Contribution to the Refactoring of Chinese Painting History" (*Songhua de jianze: 1930 niandai gugong canghua zhi gongkai ji qi dui chonggou huashi de gongxian* 宋畫的撿擇:1930年代故宮藏畫之公開及其對重構畫史的貢獻), *The National Palace Museum Research Quarterly* (G*ugong xueshu jikan* 故宮學術季刊) 37: 1 (March 2020): 167.

included. The selection reflects the rising appreciation of Song painting during the Republican period.

Around the second half of the 1950s, a wave of reevaluating national heritage from a socialist perspective led to new art history publications. *Up the River During Qingming* received considerable scholarly attention during this period. Redefining this particular painting was part of the CCP's project to reevaluate classical paintings according to the new criteria established by Zhou Yang. The discursive practice around *Up the River During Qingming* aimed to form a new art history, whose values were different from the narratives built by literati in centuries past.

Although Song painting was still celebrated in the PRC for its realistic style, genre painting and figural painting assumed center stage in the art history writings. Archaeologist and researcher of the Palace Museum, Gu Tiefu (顧鐵符, 1908–1990), wrote an introduction to Chinese national heritage in 1958. He named Guo Xi (郭熙, active between the eleventh and twelfth century), Ma Yuan (馬遠, 1190–1224), Li Gonglin (李公麟, 1049–1106), and Cui Bai (崔白, active in the second half of the eleventh century), whose works had been canonized during the Republican period, as the representative painters of the Song dynasty. The first two were great landscape painters, Li was known for figural painting, and Cui was a painter who excelled in bird-and-flower painting. However, there is an inconsistency in his writing, as he did not mention works by the painters listed above as examples of Song painting, but chose Zhang Zeduan's *Up the River During Qingming* instead,[238] showing his intention to raise the status of this painting.

The interpretation of *Up the River During Qingming* in the 1950s explains why Gu

[238] Gu Tiefu 顧鐵符, *Artefacts of the Fatherland* (*Zuguo de wenwu* 祖國的文物) (Beijing: wenwu chubanshe, 1957), 21-22.

intentionally mentioned it in his book. In 1953, with the exhibition of *Up the River During Qingming* in the Palace Museum in Beijing, Zheng Zhenduo (鄭振鐸, 1898–1958) wrote an article for the *People's Daily*. He praised the painting as the "masterpiece of realism," for it reflected the class differences in imperial China as it shows the different activities of the laborers and the people of the leisured class.[239] In 1958, he published a monograph focusing on the painting. He observed:

> Diligent commoners are doing backbreaking labor to barely feed themselves. The landlords, bureaucrats, and their families are either on horses or in sedans… Those who exploit the people are drinking and singing in magnificent buildings… They are drinking the blood and eating the flesh of the people![240]

Zheng argued that Zhang Zeduan's realistic style enabled him to record class conflict and inequality in a feudal society. Here, the realistic style was celebrated not because it could compete with Western paintings in terms of verisimilitude, but because it, like Realist art in France in the nineteenth century, exposed the crude reality faced by common people. Zheng's discourse influenced the interpretation of the painting in the People's Republic of China. Artist and theorist Zhang Anzhi (張安治, 1911–1990) also stressed the social aspect of *Up the River During Qingming* in his study published in 1962. Like Zheng Zhenduo, he contrasted the miserable lives of the laboring masses and the extravagant lifestyle enjoyed by the ruling class.[241] Class conflict became a recurring motif in the analysis of the painting. Zheng further concurred that the painting's realistic style could not be achieved if the artist did not familiarize himself with every detail of society through first-hand experience and close observation.[242]

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[239] Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸, "The Great Tradition of Chinese Painting" (*Zhongguo huihua de youxiu chuantong* 中國繪畫的優秀傳統), *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao* 人民日報) (Nov. 1, 1953).
[240] Zheng Zhenduo, *Zheng Zhenduo's Essays on Art and Archeology* (*Zheng Zhenduo kaogu yishu wenji* 鄭振鐸藝術考古文集) (Beijing: wenwu chubanshe, 1958), 164.
[241] Zhang Anzhi 張安治, *A Study on Zhang Zeduan's Up the River During Qingming* (*Zhang Zeduan qingming shanghe tu yanjiu* 張擇端清明上河圖研究) (Beijing: zhaohua meishu chubanshe, 1962), 3-4.
[242] Zheng, *Zheng Zhenduo's Essays on Art and Archeology*, 163.

Zheng's view resonated with the emphasis on realism in art institutions in the 1950s, which involved practices such as field trips, sketch-making from real-life settings, and direct participation in political campaigns.

In the 1950s, leading writers transferred the reevaluation of the realistic style in Song landscape paintings developed in the 1910s to the analysis of *Up the River During Qingming,* a painting that did not receive any scholarly attention during the Republican period. Moreover, the writers further added the social and class aspects into their analysis. *Up the River During Qingming*, a painting made by a court painter for the imperial collection, was reinterpreted through a framework that associates realism with class struggle, so it could be a work of art worthy of appreciation in the People's Republic of China.

Looking at *Up the River During Qingming*, a reader of *Great Changes in a Mountain Village* would find many scenes familiar. In the picture in which the cadres, Li Yuehui and Deng Xiumei, are stopping villagers from submitting their chickens, ducks, and eggs to the cooperative (fig. 3.12), the structure of the architecture in a village in Hunan in the mid-1950s looks almost identical to the townhouse in twelfth-century suburban Bianjing in Zhang Zeduan's painting (fig. 3.13). In this picture, He Youzhi pieces together the foreground, where Li and Deng are talking to the villagers on a small hill, and the middle ground, where patterns formed by the tiled roofs extend to the upper half of the picture. He cleverly leaves an opening in the middle of the row of houses, so the human activities extend inside the architectural structure. A similar arrangement can also be found in the street scene in *Up the River During Qingming*, where a man is walking into an alley, located in between two rows of houses, from the main street (fig. 3.14). Another arrangement that reminds readers of the Song masterpiece can be seen in the scene in which Liu Yusheng, the leader of the cooperative, is leaving his lover's house (fig. 3.15). He Youzhi

depicted the house from an elevated angle, through which the tiled roof forms a large upside-down L shape in the right half of the picture. A woman is leaning against the frame of an open door located at the corner of the house. Similarly, in *Up the River During Qingming*, one can see a man, possibly a server, through an open door at the corner where two houses join (fig. 3.16).

Unlike Zhang Zeduang, who provided a panoramic view of the city, He Youzhi inventively made use of cropping and the juxtaposition of patterns to develop a modernized image with classical elements. In the picture mentioned above (fig. 3.16), he created patterns to represent distinctive materials, including the tiled roof, brick wall, stone floor, and foliage, and juxtaposed them with each other in the right half of the picture. The decorativeness of the patterns downplays the illusion of three-dimensionality and makes the viewers aware of the flatness of the picture. He Youzhi's use of classical elements is not an attempt to revive the classical, but uses the classical to break from Western academic convention, which dominated the art scene in the 1950s.

The "Progressive" and the "Democratic": *Water Margin Leaves*

In his comments on *Great Changes in a Mountain Village*, Gu Bingxin only suggested that the Ming and Qing woodblock prints are He Youzhi's inspiration, but He Youzhi further specified that it is Chen Hongshou's *Water Margin Leaves* (*Shuihu yezi* 水滸葉子) he was emulating.[243] This section discusses why He Youzhi chose Chen Hongshou's *Water Margin Leaves,* but not other works, by examining the reception of Chen's works in the People's Republic of China.

Chen Hongshou (1599–1652), a painter of the late Ming and early Qing dynasty, was

[243] He Youzhi, "Two Reports on the Making of *Lianhuanhua*," 160.

known for his mastery of figural paintings in the Song and pre-Song style. Despite having failed the civil examination, he was part of the literati class, and befriended leading writers, scholars, and officials. After the downfall of the Ming dynasty in 1644, he identified himself as a loyalist of the Ming (*yimin* 遺民), refused to serve in the Qing regime, and became a professional painter to make a living.

Besides paintings, Chen designed illustrations for printed dramas, novels, and playing cards of mythological figures, novel characters, and famous historical personalities. The work in question, *Water Margin Leaves,* is a set of playing card representations of the characters in *Water Margin* (*Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳), a popular novel recounting the formation and adventure of a company of outlaws who gathered in Liangshan Marsh to fight injustices inflicted on them by the corrupt officials in the Northern Song dynasty. In the introduction of Chen's *Water Margin Leaves*, written by his friend, Wang Nianzu (汪念祖), Chen's skill in figural drawing was praised with the prose:

> Chen Hongshou has once again used his miraculous hand capable of painting even water and fire to sketch out on cards forty of the characters Luo Guanzhong invented. Their cheeks became animated, when he drew the sharpness of their eyebrows it was as if fire burst out; each and every hair, relying solely on his imagination to create them, not one fails to cause the viewer's eyes to be startled or his heart to be shocked.[244]

Chen's achievement in the portrayal of historical personalities was recognized by his contemporaries. His woodblock-printed figural images became comparable to figural paintings done with brush, ink, and paints in terms of artistic quality.[245] The development of illustrated

[244] "陳章侯復以畫水畫火妙手，圖寫貫中所演四十人葉子上，頰上風生，眉尖火出，一毫一髮，任意撰造，無不令觀者為之駭目損心。" Translated by Tamara Heimarck Bentley. See Tamara Heimarck Bentley, *The Figurative Works of Chen Hongshou (1599-1652): Authentic Voices/ Expanding Markets* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2012), 85.

[245] Kobayashi Hiromitsu 小林宏光, "A Study on Chen Hongshou's Prints" (C*hen Hongshou banhua chuangzuo yanjiu* 陳洪綬版畫創作研究) in Shanghai Paintings and Calligraphy Publishing House (*Shanghai shuhua*

books based on historical figures bloomed in the Qing dynasty. Reference to Chen Hongshou's prints could be found in renowned artworks, including but not limited to Liu Yuan's *Portraits of Meritorious Statesmen at Lingyan Pavilion* (*Lingyan ge gongchen tu* 凌煙閣功臣圖), Jin Guliang's *Peerless Heroes* (*Wushuang pu* 無雙譜), Shangguan Zhou's *Pictorial Biographies of the Wanxiao Hall* (*Wanxiao tang huazhuan* 晚笑堂畫傳), Zhang Shibao's *Twenty-Eight Generals of the Cloud Terrace* (*Yuntai ershiba jiang tu* 雲臺二十八將傳),[246] and Ren Xiong's *Illustrations of Knight at Arms*.

In the PRC, it is known that politician Li Yimang (李一氓, 1903–1990), literary historian Zheng Zhenduo, book collector Pan Jingzheng (潘景鄭, 1907–2003), and *lianhuanhua* artist and administrator Gu Bingxin each collected a copy of *Water Margin Leaves.*[247] Gu constantly encouraged the *lianhuanhua* artists he was working with to learn from this work.[248] However, comparing the figural images in Chen's *Water Margin Leaves* and He's *Great Changes in a Mountain Village*, one finds more differences than similarities. In contrast to He Youzhi's statement, the differences between the two shed more light on Maoist cultural production than the similarities.

In *Water Margin Leaves*, Chen Hongshou portrayed human figures through a style consisting of angular lines, blocky volume, and contorted postures. As Chen Chuanxi noted, the repetition of iron-needle-like lines that bend at almost a ninety-degree angle is the most

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chubanshe 上海書畫出版社) ed., *Chen Hongshou Studies* (*Chen Hongshou yanjiu* 陳洪綬研究) (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 2008), 99.

[246] Jung-Chun Liu 劉峻榕, "Research on Chen Hongshou's *Water Margin Leaves*" (*Chen Hongshou shuihu yezi yanjiu* 陳洪綬水滸葉子研究), Master's thesis, National Taiwan University (2009), 107.

[247] Chen Chuanxi 陳傳席, "Chen Hongshou's Figurative Paintings" (*Qingyuan xijing runjie gaokuang—Chen Hongshou de renwuhua* 清圓細勁 潤潔高曠—陳洪綬的人物畫) in Shanghai Paintings and Calligraphy Publishing House (*Shanghai shuhua chubanshe* 上海書畫出版社) ed., *Chen Hongshou Studies* (*Chen Hongshou yanjiu* 陳洪綬研究) (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 2008), 28.

[248] Xing and Wei, *Wang Guanqing's Oral History*, 44.

distinguishing feature in this set of illustrations.[249] For instance, in the depiction of Song Jiang, Chen used short, stiff, and angular lines to illustrate the folds on his sleeves. The line starts thicker at the beginning, extends to the right, then turns downward as if the artist is writing the number "7" as the line gradually gets thinner. Fourteen such strokes form the right sleeve of Song Jiang; the left sleeve is formed by twenty-five strokes. In the image of Hu Sanniang, we see the application of "7"-like strokes on her sleeves. Her flowy garment and shawl are not illustrated by long smooth lines, but a combination of short jagged lines that form various sharp angles. The lines create a decorative motif that resembles chisel cuts in stone, and intensifies the volume and heaviness of the characters. They also deliver a sense of eccentricity, a quality valued by Ming literati because of its association with individuality and sincerity (fig. 3.17, fig. 3.18).[250]

Although He Youzhi claimed that he learned the use of lines from Chen Honghsou's prints, we seldom see the mannerism exhibited in his *lianhuanhu*a. In some places, he piled up angular forms to accentuate certain qualities of the characters. For instance, in depicting the hot-tempered leader of the militia, the sharp triangles formed by the collar and the flowing jacket intensify his belligerent personality (fig. 19). Compared to Chen's lines, He Youzhi's are smoother, steadier, and simpler. The lines used to represent human figures in *Great Changes in a Mountain Village* show little resemblance to Chen Hongshou's *Water Margin Leaves.*

Actually, He Youzhi's depiction of human figures reminds viewers more of Zhang Zeduan's *Up the River During Qingming* than Chen Hongshou's *Water Margin Leaves*. Compared to the immense detail in depictions of architecture and structures, the human figures

[249] Chen, "Chen Hongshou's Figurative Paintings," 30.
[250] Tamara Heimarck Bentley, *The Figurative Works of Chen Hongshou (1599-1652): Authentic Voices/ Expanding Markets* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2012), 90.

in the scroll are rather simple. The basic form of the torso of the human figure can be reduced to a rounded rectangle with a head placed on top and two smaller rectangle-shaped arms attached to the left and right side of the torso. Folds on the clothes are indicated in a minimalistic way: three short straight lines on the side of the torso located between the chest and the waist. On the sleeves, we also see short straight lines distributed from the elbows to the forearms (fig. 3.20). The militia members in picture 100 in the second volume of the *lianhuanhua* are portrayed with a similar formula (fig. 3.21). In the picture, three militia members are surrounding a peasant, who attempts to kill his ox so it will not be collectivized. The militiaman at the right half of the picture is standing upright, holding a spear in his right hand and extending his left arm to point at the peasant. His torso is formed by a huge rectangle. The folds on his jacket are drawn with a group of two or three slightly slanted short straight lines. The militiaman who turns his back to the audience is treated in a similar way, with two to three short consecutive lines on the sleeves and a rectangular upper body; the outline that frames the right side of his torso creates almost a ninety-degree angle, further accentuating the rectangular shape that formed the character's upper body.

Since Chen Hongshou's influence on *Great Changes in a Mountain Village* is not instantly recognizable, one needs to ask why He Youzhi and his contemporaries emphasized that he was emulating Chen Hongshou's *Water Margin Leaves*. To answer the question, one must examine the reception of Chen Hongshou in the 1950s.

Books and articles published in the 1950s and 1960s presented Chen Hongshou as a "people's artist," because he was a professional painter, who designed the popular medium of woodblock illustrations. Contrary to paintings on silk, the woodblock illustrations were

considered "democratic" and folk-originated.[251] In 1961, an article in *Art* (*Meishu* 美術), the official magazine that served as the mouthpiece of the Party, extolled Ming woodblock prints and book illustrations as the medium that had been most closely tied with the people, because the contents of the prints are mostly based on folk tales and the professional artists had no intention to serve the ruling class.[252] Similar arguments can be found in *Artists of Ancient China* (*Zhongguo gudai huajia* 中國古代畫家), published in 1964. Here, Chen Hongshou was portrayed as a sympathetic artist who loved to paint for the people of the lower class.[253]

These arguments can be easily challenged if one looks into the consumption and circulation of the playing cards. *Water Margin Leaves* is a high-end playing card set designed by an artist who was familiar with the literati class. The playing cards assume money and leisure, as they have two functions: to play *madiao* (馬吊) gambling games (the prototype of mahjong), and to provide drinking instructions for parties. The words on the top section of each card indicate its value in the *madiao* game. The writing below provides a short description of the character, and a drinking instruction corresponding with certain features of the character. Participants would take turns drawing cards, and drink according to the instructions. The inscriptions on the *Water Margin Leaves* assume a high level of literacy, as readers need to have a deep understanding of the novel to be amused by the drinking instructions Chen designed. Although playing cards are a popular art form that originated from the "low culture," as James Cahill noted, the "refinements through knowing manipulations of old themes and stylistic allusiveness" [254] can only be fully

[251] James Cahill, *The Distant Mountains: Chinese Painting of the Late Ming Dynasty, 1570-1644* (New York: Weatherhill, 1982), 250.
[252] Pan Zijie 潘茲潔, "Expecting New Figurative Paintings" (*Qiwang yu xin renxianghua* 期望於新人像畫), *Arts* (*Meishu* 美術) 2 (1961): 45.
[253] Xue Hua 雪華, *Artists of Ancient China* (*Zhongguo gudai huajia* 中國古代畫家) (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 1964), 131.
[254] Cahill, *The Distant Mountains*, 252.

grasped by someone of a comparable cultural level. To justify Chen Hongshou and his work through a Communist worldview, the CCP ignored the fact that the "people" Chen worked for were from an educated leisure class, and the "people" the CCP demanded that artists serve were the peasants, workers, and soldiers.

Water Margin Leaves is not the only playing card set Chen Hongshou designed. Beside *Water Margin Leaves*, Chen also designed *Nine Songs Pictures* (*Jiuge tu*, 九歌圖) and *Antiquarian Leaves* (*Bogu Yezi* 博古葉子). However, *Water Margin Leaves* is the one that had been constantly mentioned by artists and writers in the PRC. Since the works are all in the "democratic" form of woodblock printing, one can see that it is the subject matter that caught the attention of Communist cultural elites. During the Republican period, the CCP reinterpreted *Water Margin* as an example of the native rebel tradition to prove the inevitability and necessity of class struggle. Mao Zedong himself was an enthusiastic reader of *Water Margin*. During the 1930s, he carried a copy of *Water Margin* with him when he was roaming in Hunan, Jiangxi, and Shaanxi, and cited passages from it in his writings on military strategy.[255] In the 1960s, *Water Margin* had been taken as a representative novel that "exposes the ugliness of feudal bureaucratic systems, portrays the heroes' actions and minds, celebrates their rebellious spirits, and reflects the class struggle between the oppressed masses and the ruling class."[256] The rural rebellion and class struggle the Communist writers saw in the novel made *Water Margin Leaves* stand out among Chen's woodblock prints.

This section examines why Chen Hongshou's *Water Margin Leaves* was lauded, studied,

[255] John Fitzgerald, "Continuity within Discontinuity: The Case of Water Margin Mythology," *Modern China*, vol. 12, no. 3 (July, 1986), 381.
[256] Gong Zhaoji 龔兆吉, "On Jin Shengtan's Comments on *Water Margin*" (*Lun Jin Shengtan ping shuihu zhuan de guandian* 論金聖嘆評水滸傳的觀點), *Journal of Beijing Normal University* (Beijing shifan daxue xuebao 北京師範大學學報), vol. 2 (1963): 55.

and referenced by He Youzhi in his *lianhuanhua*. After comparing and contrasting the formal features of the two artists, I argue that He Youzhi's action of claiming Chen Hongshou as a source of inspiration is a political, instead of an aesthetic, gesture. When the Communist cultural leaders were reexamining the history of art to find examples for artists to emulate, Chen Hongshou was chosen because of his social status, his achievement in figural paintings, and his prolific woodblock-printed illustrations. He Youzhi's claim reflected the CCP's attempt to reinterpret Chen's life and works through a Communist viewpoint, and He Youzhi's personal aspiration of being recognized as an educated artist of fine art.

Section Five: Other Possible Sources of Inspiration:

The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting* and *Dianshizhai Pictorial

In this last section, I will suggest other possible sources of inspiration that were not specified by He Youzhi and his contemporaries, including *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting* and *The Illustrated News of the Dianshizhai Lithograph Studio* (I will call it *Dianshizhai Pictorial* in the following discussion). Like Zhao Hongben and Qian Xiaodai's case, *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual* of Painting was likely one of He Youzhi's references. He combined unique strokes he invented and patterns reminiscent of the samples exhibited in *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting* to depict trees and leaves. For example, in the scene in which the militia leader is hunting down the peasant who intends to kill his ox when he is having a date with a girl, one finds patterns of leaves in the foreground almost identical with the ones demonstrated in the manual (fig. 3.22, 3.23, 3.24).

I suspect that He Youzhi chose not to mention the manual in his statement because learning this formulaic stroke from the painter's manual is counter to the art practices promoted

by the CCP, which emphasized realism and first-hand observations. This shows a paradox in the artwork that sought to balance realism and national heritage. *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting* demonstrated the textual strokes, composition, and styles of revered landscape painters from the Five Dynasties to the Yuan Dynasty. It served as the beginner's guide for many literati painters. On the contrary, both *Up the River During Qingming* and *Water Margin Leaves* were not top-tier works in the value system shared by Ming, Qing, and Republican orthodox painters, whose interest was mostly in landscape painting done with brush strokes, allusive to the style of great masters in the history of art. The former is a realist work made by a court painter with exceptional skills, but not cultivation; the latter is made by an educated painter whose eccentricity does not fully fit within the framework of literati painting. Although *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting* is integral to Chinese national heritage, its close association with the tradition of literati painting, which was under attack for its detachment from reality and the people, may be the reason why artists refrained from mentioning it as a major inspiration.

Another possible source that helped He Youzhi create his unique style is the pictorials published in the late Qing and Republican period, such as the famous *Dianshizhai Pictorial* (1884–1898), issued by the British businessman named Ernest Major (1841–1908). *Dianshizhai Pictorial* may be an example of work that bridges the Ming and Qing art conventions and modern subjects, and which *lianhuanhua* artists in the PRC could study. Bearing in mind He Youzhi's bold juxtaposition of patterns to represent the country house, one also finds extensive use of patterns to indicate different materials. For instance, in the picture illustrating an unsuccessful horse theft in Korea, the artist uses a combination of patterns to show various materials that composed the humble country hut (fig. 3.25). The tiled roof is composed of repetitive rectangles which are formed by long inclining lines and short horizontal lines. The

wall, which is possibly covered by woven bamboo strips, is represented through small diamond shapes with four short diagonal lines inside. At the front of the hut is a small space for wood chopping. The bricks beneath the paint, which are depicted through parallel horizontal lines and short straight lines in alternating spaces, are exposed at the lower half of the wall.

Unlike Chen Hongshou, who He Youzhi and his colleagues widely mentioned as a major source of inspiration, *Dianshizhai Pictorial* (*Dianshizhai huabao* 點石齋畫報) was never mentioned by artists in the 1950s and 1960s. According to Zhou Yang's speech, any art that is "progressive" and "democratic" can be studied and reused for socialist purposes. Like the woodblock prints in the Ming and Qing dynasties, *Dianshizhai Pictorial* is a commercial product made for educated urban readers. There should be little reason for artists to refrain from reusing it for a socialist agenda. Why is *Dianshizhai Pictorial* never mentioned as a source worth studying? The reason may lie in the low social status of the artists who worked for mass-produced media. The artists who worked in the industry were considered skillful artisans instead of artists. Moreover, *lianhuanhua* artists had been experiencing a sense of inferiority to oil painters and *guohua* painters because they were working in the popular genre. By claiming the masterpieces and famous artists as their sources of inspiration, *lianhuanhua* artists, like He Youzhi, linked their names to the master artists and elevated their social status.

Learning from the works of the masters in the history of art not only raised the artistic standard of *lianhuanhua*-making, but also raised He Youzhi's social status, from an artist of popular art to an artist of fine art. Unlike many artists, who were facing the extinction of the art market after 1949, He Youzhi and other *lianhuanhua* artists enjoyed secure employment with a state publisher. To understand why he still exhibited such ambition to prove himself as an artist who possessed the skill and the knowledge of classical Chinese painting, one should look into

the hierarchy of art genres for an answer. *Lianhuanhua* artists, especially those who started their career before 1949, usually learned drawing skills by working as an apprentice in a master's studio. Most of them were poorly educated, and had never been academically or classically trained. For many *lianhuanhua* artists, being employed by a state publisher was the first time they were treated as artists, not craftsmen. To many of them, especially a capable artist like He Youzhi, being recognized as an educated artist was a lifelong ambition. That ambition was finally realized when he became a professor at CAFA in 1980.

Conclusion

Great Changes in a Mountain Village is a landmark in He Youzhi's career, and became a crucial part of his self-identity. In 1987, he published his illustrated memoir, *My Youth Years* (*Wo zi minjian lai* 我自民間來), in which he drew sixty-six pictures to represent the memorable moments from his childhood to early adulthood. On the last page of his pictorial memoir, He Youzhi depicted the moment when he is assigned to work in the New Art Press, and "both [his] life and career are on to a path to success."[257] In the picture (fig. 3.26), He Youzhi is walking down a winding country road, carrying a bamboo stick on his shoulder, with his luggage hung on the two ends of the stick. The hill, the rocks, the trees, and the farmland in the background were drawn in a way that looks exactly like *Great Changes in a Mountain Village*. He Youzhi depicted the moment when he is on his way to "delve into life" to prepare for the production of *Great Changes in a Mountain Village*. However, the verbal narration does not mention anything about the production of his signature work. Moreover, the year he was assigned to New Art Press was 1952, six years before he was sent to the countryside for the *lianhuanhua*. The memoir aimed to

[257] He Youzhi, *Mes années de jeunesse* (Angoulême: Éd. de l'An 2, 2005), 69.

showcase the unique customs and lifestyles He Youzhi experienced as a child in Ningbo and as a teenager in Shanghai. It covers the years before He Youzhi became a skillful artist. Yet by including a hint of *Great Changes in a Mountain Village*, He Youzhi reminded his readers, old and new, of the crown jewel of his artistic career.

Through examining the works claimed to be the inspiration for *Great Changes in a Mountain Village* and other possible sources, I argue the motivation for using and claiming to use classical elements in *lianhuanhua* is a political, rather than aesthetic, choice. With the growing tension between the PRC and the USSR, the art policy demanded that artists turn from Soviet socialist realist conventions and learn from Chinese national heritage. The two sources He Youzhi specified in his statement, *Up the River During Qingming* and Chen Hongshou's *Water Margin Leaves*, served different purposes for the artist. The former is an example of Chinese realism, and the latter is based on a story centering on a group of rebels' revolt against the unjust authorities, produced by the "people's artist." Moreover, the *lianhuanhua* artist's aspiration to be recognized as an artist of fine art is also a motivation for him to identify the masterpieces and the master artists as his inspiration. By examining *Great Changes in Mountain Village*, one sees the complex interaction between ideologies, policies, and artists' aspirations in forming a new visual culture in socialist China.

CHAPTER 4

Idealizing the Grassroots, Nationalizing the Foreign: Ding Binzeng and Han Heping's *Railroad Guerrillas*

This chapter focuses on Ding Binzeng (丁斌曾, 1927−2001) and Han Heping's (韓和平, 1932−2019) *Railroad Guerrillas* (*Tiedao youjidui* 鐵道游擊隊, 1954–1962). Based on a work of fiction written by Liu Zhixia (劉知俠, 1917–1991), this ten-volume comic is the most popular *lianhuanhua* about the history of Communist revolution ever created in the history of the PRC. Since 1955, *Railroad Guerrillas* has been reprinted more than twenty times, and more than thirty million copies have been issued.[258] The artists, Ding Binzeng and Han Heping, were graduates of the prestigious East China Campus of Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA). They worked within the artistic conventions of socialist realism, including accurate anatomy of human bodies, plausible representation of modern structures, expressive postures and gestures, and compositions which were reminiscent of academic history painting but executed through plain line drawing (*baimiao* 白描), a technique prevalent in Chinese classical painting. This chapter examines how the synthetic style functioned as a means of idealizing and disciplining the grassroots characters under Communist rule, and discusses how the depiction of a destroyed railway, a symbol of imperialism, served to bring the foreign and the modern under control through the making of a national form.

[258] Mai Lihong 麥荔紅, *An Illustrated History of Chinese Lianhuanhua* (*Tushuo Zhongguo lianhuanhua* 圖說中國連環畫) (Guangzhou: Lingnan meishu chubanshe, 2006), 105

Section One: The Academically Trained *Lianhuanhua* Artists

Ding Binzeng and Han Heping were trained in the East China Campus of Central Academy of Fine Arts. In addition to the old *lianhuanhua* artists, who were trained as pupils in their masters' studios during the Republican period, and the self-taught *lianhuanhua* artists, who received limited art education through *lianhuanhua* workshops held in Shanghai in the early 1950s, they and a few other academically trained artists made up the third group of *lianhuanhua* artists who worked in Shanghai People's Art Press. To understand how their training informed their practice and choice of style, one needs to take a closer look at the education they received in the academy before analyzing their signature work.

East China Campus of Central Academy of Fine Arts was the National Arts Academy in Hangzhou. Founded by Cai Yuanpei (蔡元培, 1868–1940) in 1928 and directed by the modernist painter Lin Fengmian (林風眠, 1900–1991) as the first principal, the National Arts Academy in Hangzhou was the nation's most prestigious art institute until 1949.[259] During the Republican period, the teaching goals of the academy were to "introduce Western art, reorganize Chinese art, synthesize Chinese and Western art, and create an art for the present epoch."[260] Artists who practiced in various Western avant-garde styles, including Lin Fengmian, Guan Liang (關良, 1900–1986), Wu Dayu (吳大羽, 1903–1984), and Fang Ganmin (方幹民, 1906–1984) were teaching at the department of Western paintings. French-educated Lin Fengmian sought to synthesize Chinese and Western modern art; Guan Liang practiced Fauvism; Wu Dayu painted in Impressionist and Cubist styles; and Fang Ganmin specialized in Cubism.[261]

After the founding of the PRC, its leadership in art education was transferred to the

[259] Andrews, *Painters and Politics in People's Republic of China*, 27.
[260] Ibid., 28.
[261] Ibid., 47.

Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA), led by Xu Beihong (徐悲鴻, 1895–1953) in Beijing. The National Arts Academy in Hangzhou was renamed the East China Campus of CAFA in 1950, under the command of the Cultural Bureau. After the CCP took control of the administration of the institution, the avant-garde styles and the ideal of "art for art's sake" were considered unsuitable for a new culture which emphasized that art should serve the workers, peasants, and soldiers. Literati painting and modernist painting were seen as the art of the bourgeoisie. In 1951 and 1952, Lin Fengmian and Wu Dayu were criticized for creating "bourgeois" and "formalist" paintings, and were soon forced to leave the academy.[262]

The East China Campus of CAFA aimed to train new artists who were capable of adopting the new principles of art production. The CCP established a Party group in the academy to lead the reform of the curriculum. Jiang Feng (江豐, 1910–1982) was appointed the director of the group. Yan Han (彥涵, 1916–2011) and Mo Pu (莫樸, 1915–1996), two prominent Yan'an artists who were known for their woodblock prints and *lianhuanhua*, were its two members.[263] Outside of the Party group, Jiang Feng and Mo Pu also served as the vice directors of the academy; the French-trained sculptor Liu Kaiqu (劉開渠, 1904–1993) was appointed the honorary director.

According to art theorist, educator, and sculptor Yang Chengyin (楊成寅, 1926–2016), who graduated from the East China Campus of CAFA in 1954, Jiang Feng and Mo Pu transformed a bourgeois art academy into a socialist institution.[264] Jiang Feng implemented the art education model from Yan'an at Hangzhou. Under his command, both the faculty and

[262] Andrews and Shen, *The Art of Modern China*, 142.
[263] Andrews, *Painters and Politics in People's Republic of China*, 43.
[264] Yang Chengyin 楊成寅, "Mo Pu's Contribution to Art Education" (*Mo Pu dui meishu jiaoyü de gongxian* 莫樸對美術教育的貢獻), in *The Era of the Outer West Lake* (*Waixihu shidai* 外西湖時代), ed. Liu Jüqing (Hangzhou: Zhejiang sheying chubanshe, 2013), 21.

students had to remold their worldview by studying Marxism and Mao Zedong's thoughts, and working with workers, peasants, and soldiers, so they could represent their lives through a lens of socialist progress.[265] To promote the production of works for the popularization initiative, Jiang Feng organized three movements focusing on *nianhua* production from 1949 to 1950. Students went to villages, factories, and military camps to experience the lives of the potential subjects of their works. They even participated in the land reform campaign in Yiqiao village in 1951.

While Jiang Feng worked on political education to Yan'an-ize the academy, Mo Pu was the one who took charge of curriculum reform. The National Art Academy in Hangzhou consisted of four departments: Western painting, national painting, sculpture, and design. The students in the department of Western painting started their training with plaster cast drawings, then still lifes in watercolor, and finally landscape painting and portraits.[266] The national painting (*guohua*) department focused on classical landscape and bird-and-flower paintings.[267] Figural painting did not play a significant role in the curriculum, as there were no instructors nor courses specialized in figural painting.[268] In steering the curriculum to train artists of history and figural painting for propaganda purposes, Mo Pu merged the Western and national painting departments. All students were required to take fundamental courses in the first two years, then they could choose their major in the third year.[269] A third-year student in the department of painting had to study oil painting in the first semester and Chinese painting in the second. In their Western

[265] Andrews, *Painters and Politics in People's Republic of China*, 47-48.
[266] Duan Yü 段雨, "Reviewing Art Education in Early PRC: Interviewing Mo Pu," (*Dui jianguo chuqi meishu jiaoxue de huigu: jiu meishu wenti zoufang laohuajia, laoyuanzhang Mo Pu xiansheng* 對建國初期美術教學的回顧: 就美術教學問題走訪老畫家、老院長莫樸先生), *Arts* (*Meishu* 美術) 6 (1994): 25-27.
[267] Ibid.
[268] Ibid.
[269] Cao Siming 曹思明, "The Course I Tread—The Past in Outer West Lake" (*Wo de lichen—waixihu wangshi* 我的歷程—外西湖往事) in *The Era of the Outer West Lake* (*Wasixihu shidai* 外西湖時代), ed. Liu Jüqing (Hangzhou: Zhejiang sheying chubanshe, 2013), 75.

painting courses, students started with learning to paint still lifes, then gradually moved to painting head portraits, human bodies, and finally full portraits. By the end of the semester, students had to submit a portrait of Mao to complete the course.[270] The *guohua* classes also focused on figural painting. Landscape and bird-and-flower painting were removed from the curriculum.

Besides the introduction of new subject matter, line drawing was emphasized as the foundation for both Western and national painting. Formerly Beijing-based artist Jin Ye (金冶, 1913−2006) was transferred to teach oil painting at the East China Campus of CAFA in 1950. He explained that the curriculum reform was done to "cleanse the effect of formalism formed in the old arts academy epoch."[271] In terms of sketch training, pencil line drawing was prioritized because it makes clear the contours, structures, and appearances of the objects and the human figures. Line drawing was categorized as "realist sketching" (*xieshi zhuyi de sumiao* 寫實主義的素描) as opposed to "formalist sketching" (*xingshi zhuyi de sumiao* 形式主義的素描), which stresses the representation of volume, texture, light and shadow, and three-dimensionality.[272] Here, the terms "realist" and "formalist" were invested with political significance. "Realism" was encouraged, as it represented the scenes the common people would recognize and identify with, while "formalism" reflected the preference of the academically trained elites, whose works were considered disconnected from society. Jin's view illustrates why plain line drawing was encouraged in the academy in the early years of East China Campus of CAFA. However, it did not last long, as the academy soon introduced Pavel Chistiakov's (1832−1919) drawing

[270] Ibid., 91.
[271] Jin Ye 金冶, "About the Improvements of Teaching Sketch" (*Guanyu sumiao jiaoxue de yixie gaijin* 關於素描教學的一些改進) in Yang Hualin ed., *Jin Ye's Essays on Art* (*Jin Ye meishu wenji* 金冶美術文集) (Hangzhou: Zhongguo meishu xueyuan chubanshe, 2017), 12.
[272] Ibid., 13-14.

pedagogy from Moscow in 1953, with the intent to reinforce a systemized pedagogy modeled after the Beaux-Arts academy in the teaching of oil painting.[273] In the *guohua* courses, line drawing with ink was still taught, to serve the formation of a "national form" that Jiang Feng promoted, i.e., the outline-and-color painting,[274] as it was the only traditional painting technique that was still allowed to be taught.[275] Line drawing was extensively applied in popular arts, including *nianhua*, *lianhuanhua*, and propaganda posters. The curriculum reform not only aimed to train painters, but also prepared the students to create popularization works, despite many of them being unwilling to pursue a career in the field of popular art.[276]

Ding Binzeng and Han Heping were assigned to work in East China People's Art Press in 1952 and 1953, respectively. Ding Binzeng studied in the department of design. He met Li Lu when he was working in *East China Pictorial* (*Hudong huabao* 華東畫報) as an intern. After graduation, he was assigned to the East China People's Art Press to work as a *lianhuanhua* artist.[277] Han Heping entered the Department of Painting at East China Campus of CAFA in 1949. Four years later, he finished his first *lianhuanhua* "Liu Feihu Brigade" (*Liu Feihu xiaodui* 劉飛虎小隊) as his diploma project. The work impressed Lü Meng, who was the director of East

[273] Ho, *Drawing from Life*, 37-40.
[274] Fu Huimin 傅慧敏 ed., *Shanghai People's Art Press, Footsteps, Han Heping* (上美、足跡、韓和平 *Shangmei, zuji, Han Heping*) (Shanghai: Shanghai daxue chubanshe, 2016), 5.
[275] Andrews, *Painters and Politics in People's Republic of China*, 51.
[276] In Jiang Feng's 1952 report, he criticized the bourgeois tendency expressed by the graduates of CAFA, because most of them wanted to stay in the academy to study oil painting instead of working to produce popularization works. A student even said that he would rather be working as a pedicab driver than producing popularization works. The only thing that attracted art students to create popularization works was it provided a steady income. In the 1950s, painters from the art academy called making *lianhuanhua* and book illustrations a way to "*yang youhua* (support oil painting)." Because the materials for oil painting were so expensive, young artists tended to paint popularization works so that they could sustain themselves to keep making oil paintings. See Jiang Feng 江豐, *Jiang Feng's Essays on Arts I* (*Jiang Feng meishu lunji I* 江豐美術論集 I) (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1983), 46. Cheng 城, "Explaining 'Supporting Oil Painting'" (*"Yang youhua" jie* "養油畫"解), *Arts* (*Meishu* 美術) (1958 March): 18.
[277] Li, *Memories of the Lianhuanhua Circle*, 107-108.

China People's Press. He recruited Han to the publishing house in September 1953.[278]

As mentioned in the first chapter, both the East China People's Art Press and New Art Press were established in 1952. The Party-State assigned different missions to the two publishing enterprises. The state-run East China People's Art Press aimed to publish exemplary books to lead the direction of *lianhuanhua*-making. The goal for the state-private-joint-run New Art Press was to publish a large variety of new *lianhuanhua* in a timely manner. Since socialist realism had become the official style of art, young graduates of art academies were valuable assets because of their skills. After the New Art Press was merged into the Shanghai People's Art Press, Han Heping was assigned the task of holding a sketch workshop for his fellow artists.[279] His colleagues acknowledged that Han's strength was in portraying gestures and facial expressions in a realistic manner. He Youzhi specifically mentioned that Ding and Han's *Railroad Guerrillas* was the work he studied to improve his depiction of human figures.[280]

Shanghai People's Art Press assigned Han Heping to draw *The Story of Xiaopo* (小坡的故事), a story adapted from an excerpt of Liu Zhixia's *Railroad Guerrillas*. The *lianhuanhua* received positive feedback from readers, so the publishing house decided to expand the project to a multi-volumed *lianhuanhua* series,[281] and recruited Ding Binzeng to join Han to handle the great amount of work together. As fieldwork was required to fulfill the requirement of "delving into life" in art practice in the 1950s, they went to Shandong five times during the period between 1955 and 1962. They spent about two months for each trip to take photographs, make sketches, interview former members of the railroad guerrillas, and even practice the signature

[278] Fu ed., *Shanghai People's Art Press, Footsteps, Han Heping*, 5.
[279] Li, *Memories of the Lianhuanhua Circle*, 193.
[280] He Youzhi, "Two Reports on the Making of *Lianhuanhua*," 160.
[281] Fu ed., *Shanghai People's Art Press, Footsteps, Han Heping*, 66-68.

move of the guerrillas—jumping on and off of a moving train.[282] After Ding and Han finished ten volumes of *Railroad Guerrillas*, they were unhappy with the quality of the first two, and so they re-drew the volumes in 1961. The ten-volume *lianhuanhua* contains 1,229 pictures; it took the artists nine years to complete because the production was constantly interrupted by political campaigns, which required them to put aside their long-term project to prioritize the making of works designed for these campaigns.

A comparison of two pictures, representing an identical scene depicted by academic-trained and self-trained artists, further showcases how Ding and Han's academic training transformed the artistic expression of *lianhuanhua*. The first picture is from He Youzhi and Lu Wen's *The Fight on the Train* (*Huoche shang de zhandou* 火車上的戰鬥) (fig. 4.1). Published by New Art Press in 1953, this *lianhuanhua* is adapted from an excerpt of Liu's original novel. The second picture is from the third volume of Ding and Han's version of *Railroad Guerrillas* (fig. 4.2), which was published in 1955 by Shanghai People's Art Press. Both pictures depict a scene from one of the most exciting chapters in *Railroad Guerrillas*, "The Fight on the Train." In this chapter, the guerrilla fighters disguise themselves as common passengers. They approach the Japanese soldiers in each car and treat them with snacks and wine to distract them. When Peng Liang, the guerrilla member whose dream is to become a train driver, takes control of the driver's seat, he sends out a hissing sound through the pipes to signal the guerrillas in each compartment to attack the Japanese soldiers simultaneously. The two pictures in fig. 4.1 and 4.2 show the scene right before the moment of attack: a member of the guerrilla fighters is about to smash a pouch of lime dust in the face of the Japanese soldier to blind him.

The narration in He Youzhi and Lu Wen's version goes:

[282] Ibid.

> After hearing a long hissing sound—as if it was an order to start the operation—the tanned man took out a paper pouch from his pocket. Thinking it was something delicious, the Japanese captain stared at it with his drunken, bloodshot eyes.[283]

The artists loyally visualized the verbal narration to almost every detail. The body language of the characters is legible to the viewers as the guerrilla fighter turns his body to the viewer and exhibits the pouch in his hand, which will be smashed in the soldier's face and start a fight in the following picture. The line of sight of both figures also leads viewers to notice the pouch. The artists visualized the gestures of the characters exactly as the verbal narration describes. They also added the depiction of the interior of the train to make the scene more plausible. However, the composition looks quite dull, because everything is arranged symmetrically. The space within the picture frame is shallow—only half of the width of the train is depicted. Facing each other, the guerrilla fighter and the Japanese soldier are placed at the left and right half of the picture, like mirror images. The two figures are both slightly bending forward and have their eyes fixed on the little pouch in the guerrilla fighter's right hand. The symmetry is intensified by the repetition of straight horizontal lines. In the foreground, one sees the lines of the armrest at the two sides of the picture; in the middle ground, from bottom to top, horizontal lines are used to depict the table, the windowsill, and the luggage rack.

In his comments in the internal review held in the New Art Press in 1953, the chief editor Li Lu praised He Youzhi and Lu Wen's work, noting that their use of outline was unformulaic and the depiction of the characters appeared anatomically accurate and their movements dynamic.[284] The artists adopted thick and simple outlines. Unlike traditional figural painting, the use of lines to indicate the folds on the clothes is restrained to a minimum. The expressive

[283] He Youzhi 賀友直, Lu Wen 盧汶, *The Fight on the Train* (*Huoche shang de zhandou* 火車上的戰鬥) (Shanghai: New Art Press, 1953), 34.
[284] Li, *Memories of the Lianhuanhua Circle*, 97.

lines—be they flowy or zigzagged, as an indicator of the character's personality in classical paintings—are not seen in the picture previously examined. The use of lines suggests that in the first half of the 1950s, the administrators adopted the style of *nianhua*, characterized by thick steady black outlines and flat colors. Furthermore, the *lianhuanhua* artists recruited in the early 1950s were mostly self-taught or trained as apprentices in old *lianhuanhua* studios. They were incapable of producing academic drawing, despite having been trained for a short period of time in the *lianhuanhua* workshops held between 1950 and 1952. It was not until the academically trained artists joined the workforce of *lianhuanhua*-drawing that the conditions for changing the style of *lianhuanhua* started to mature.

On the contrary, in Ding and Han's version, viewers can tell how their training in academic oil painting helped them to construct a more complex and dramatic composition. The narration says:

> The train rocked a little then slowed down. The tanned man was taking out an apple-sized paper pouch from his waist pocket when he was encouraging the Japanese captain to have more drinks.[285]

Comparing it to the 1953 version, the verbal narration here does not give the reader any hints about the upcoming fight. The sense of suspense is created by the picture through visual devices commonly seen in academic paintings. The picture is frozen at the moment when the guerrilla fighter is about to initiate the attack. There are eight men in the picture. The arrangement of the grouping roughly forms a triangle, with the guerrilla fighter located at the apex. By setting the viewpoint behind the characters that are sitting at the other side of the train, the artists created a deeper space, with a more developed middle ground as the center stage for the main characters. Holding a pouch in his right hand and hiding it behind his back, the guerrilla fighter is facing the

[285] Ding Binzeng and Han Heping, *Railroad Guerillas*, vol. 3 (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Art Press, 1955), 18.

Japanese soldier and exposing his back to the viewers. The artists arranged the postures of the characters carefully to make sure the Japanese soldier attracts viewers' attention. The Japanese soldier is placed at the center-left of the picture, and is facing the viewer with a three-quarter profile. The lines of sight of the four bystanders in the foreground and the guerrilla fighter are all fixed on the Japanese soldier. Moreover, the artists took pains to portray his appearance. Details such as the buttons, the chest pocket, the national emblem on his cap, and the decorating stripes on the collar are all rendered with great care. His left leg and right arm are covered by the folds on his uniform. His calves are wrapped by puttee. The other characters are portrayed with clean outlines and less detail. The intricate details formed by lines further guide viewers to lay their eyes on the Japanese soldier.

Using thick and unformulaic outlines, He Youzhi and Lu Wen's drawing shows the influence of *niahnhua* in *lianhuanhua* in the early 1950s. Ding and Han's drawing exhibits the infusion of academic drawing and composition into this popular genre, reflecting the Communist administrators' endeavors to raise artistic standards.

Section Two: From Fact to Fiction to *Lianhuanhua*

This section first examines the idealization of the grassroots characters as a disciplining practice which the Party-State inflicted on the narrative, traditionally seen in the stories of outlaw heroes, in the making of Liu Zhixia's *Railroad Guerrillas*. The novel is based on the true story of a group of guerrillas who were active in southern Shandong during the second Sino-Japanese War. The guerrilla fighters were mostly vagabonds who made their living by robbing and stealing the resources transported via the railway.[286] They were later organized and absorbed by the

[286] Zhang Jun 張均, "The Reality of Railroad Guerrillas and 'Realism'" (*Tiedao youjidui de xianshi yu xianshi zhuyi* 鐵道游擊隊的現實與現實主義), *Journal of Shanxi University (Philosophy & Social Science)* (*Shanxi daxue*

Communist Eighth Route Army. Beneath the description of the exciting fighting scenes, the main theme of the story is the Party's leadership that directs the powerful, even destructive, force of the vagabonds for the purpose of Communist revolution.

The novelist, Liu Zhixia (劉知俠 1918–1991), was born in Ji county in Henan province. Liu departed for Yan'an after the outbreak of the second Sino-Japanese War. Although he aspired to study in Lu Xun Art Academy, the Party assigned him to military study in the Anti-Japanese Military and Political University. Later, he traveled from northern Shaanxi to Shanxi, and then Shandong, with the army. During his journey, he joined the arts and culture work troupe and started to write articles for *Mass Daily* (*Dazhong ribao* 大眾日報*)* to propagate the victories of the Red Army. In 1943, Liu became the editor of a Party-sponsored journal, *Shandong Culture* (*Shandong wenhua* 山東文化). He met Xu Guangtian (徐廣田), who was one of the leaders of the railroad guerrillas and was awarded A-grade combat hero (*Jiaji zhandou yingxiong* 甲級戰鬥英雄), in the heroes' recognition ceremony in Shandong.[287] Attracted by Xu's story, Liu conducted a series of in-depth interviews with guerrilla members in the following years. He published two short stories, "Railroad Regiment" (*Teidao dui* 鐵道隊) and "Political Commissar Li and His Soldiers" (*Li zhengwei he ta de buxia* 李政委和他的部下) in *Shandong Culture* in 1945 and 1947, respectively. The novel *Railroad Guerrillas* was published in 1954 by Shanghai New Culture and Art Press (*Shanghai xin wenyi chubanshe* 上海新文藝出版社).

As mentioned earlier, the guerrilla members were mostly vagabonds, whose image was far from ideal for Communist propaganda. The transformation of the image of the guerrilla

xuebao (*zhexue shehui kexue ban*) 山西大學學報 (哲學與社會科學版)) 41, no. 3 (May 2018): 26

[287] Zhixia 知俠, *Railroad Guerillas* (*Tiedao youji dui* 鐵道游擊隊) (Beijing: jiefang jun wenyi chubanshe, 2007), 498.

members started before the publication of Liu's works. In the first half of the 1940s, the guerrilla members were famous in the Communist base areas through reports in local newspapers controlled by the CCP. Then, through Liu's two short stories and finally the novel, an idealized image of Communist heroes was created, which would spread nationwide and last for decades to come.

The novel takes place in Zao village in southern Shandong province. Most of the villagers there made their living through coal mining or working for the Japanese-controlled railway company, whose mission was to transport soldiers and resources within Northeast China to facilitate the invasion. The two main characters, Liu Hong (劉洪) and Wang Qiang (王強), are locals who joined the Eighth Route Army at a young age. They are sent back to their hometown to jeopardize the Japanese military operations. They are soon joined by the political commissar, Li Zheng (李正), and members they recruited in the village. Li Zheng is in charge of developing strategies and communicating between the guerrillas and the Communist base. Before joining the guerrillas, the fighters are mostly young men who are either jobless or work in heavy menial labor. They are covered with coal dust, wearing "caps tipped to one side of their heads and chests bared, with cigarettes hanging from their lips."[288] Their unkempt appearance and vulgarity shocks Li Zheng when he is introduced to the guerrillas for the first time. Like the bandits portrayed in classical novels, they spend their meager earnings on gambling and drinking. Li Zheng disciplines the behavior of the guerrilla fighters, raises their class and political consciousness, and converts them into loyal Party members. The guerrillas steal guns and resources from trains, destroy rails and bridges on critical routes, fight against Japanese agents and their local collaborators, and eventually interrupt the Japanese army's plan of building a

[288] Chih Hsia, *The Railway Guerrillas* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1966), 92.

secured supply line in Northeast China.

The novel is a typical "legend of revolutionary heroes" that was promoted by the state in the 1949–1966 period. "Legend of revolutionary heroes" is a combination of two pre-existing genres: the martial arts novel and the *bildungsroman* (*chengzhang xiaoshuo* 成長小說).[289] On the one hand, the narrative and vivid descriptions of the guerrillas' operations largely referenced the conventions of the martial arts novel. On the other hand, the novel is a *bildungsroman* because the bandit-like guerrilla members learn the significance of class struggle and change their behavior to become ideal Communists.

Literary historian Chen Sihe described the phenomenon of appropriating the structure of popular novels in revolutionary literature as an "invisible structure," which refers to the phenomenon wherein writers self-consciously or unconsciously use popular forms in their work to attract greater readership.[290] Chen posits that the major characters in the revolutionary popular novel *Tracks in the Snowy Forest* (*Linhai xueyuan* 林海雪原, 1957) adopted the invisible model of "the five elite generals" (*wuhujiang* 五虎將), which was first established in the classical novel *The Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義). In this model, the heroes consist of five major characters, each assigned a distinctive personality.[291] In *Railroad Guerrillas*, Liu also created five major fighters with distinctive personalities: Liu Hong, Wang Qiang, Lu Han, Lin Zhong, and Peng Liang. Although Liu's characters were based on real-life guerrillas, the personalities of the fighters went through rigorous editing to ensure that the grassroots characters' personalities

[289] Nakano Tōru, "Can the 'Meihei' Speak? Political Commissar, Anti-Japanese Base Area, Sacrifice in *Railroad Guerrillas*" ("*Meihei*" *ha kataru koto ga dekiru ka*— "*Tiedao Youjidui*" *ni okeru seiji iin, kounichi konkyochi, shi* 「煤黒」は語ることができるか—『鉄道遊撃隊』における、政治委員・抗日根拠地・死), *The Tao-tie* (饕餮) 17 (September 2009): 72.
[290] Chen Sihe 陳思和, *A Textbook for Contemporary Chinese Literary History* (*Zhongguo dangdai wenxue jiaocheng* 中國當代文學教程) (Shanghai: Fudan University Press,1999), 49.
[291] Ibid., 65.

and conduct produced a positive image of Communist heroes.

Here, I examine the characters in the two stories Liu wrote prior to the *Railroad Guerrillas*, to unravel the process of making ideal characters. In "Railroad Regiment," the main characters appear with their real names: Xu Guangtian, Hong Zhenhai (洪振海), and Wang Zhisheng (王志勝). Later in *Railroad Guerrillas*, Hong and Wang are renamed; perhaps most importantly, Xu Guangtian is completely erased from the novel, because Xu turned to the Nationalists in 1946 due to discontentment with his status in the Red Army. Knowing that any accounts about Xu would be taboo subjects, Liu had to redesign the plots and characters extensively.[292]

To Liu Zhixia, the Xu Guangtian incident was a pivotal point in his writing process. As a practitioner of the principles of socialist realism, who started his writing project from documentary fiction, Liu had been troubled by the fact that the guerrilla members were far from ideal heroic figures in real life. The Xu Guangtian incident freed him from realism and gave him more room for creativity. He thoroughly remodeled the characters by discarding the characteristics that were nonessential to the socialist narrative. Facets of Xu's personality and his deeds were redistributed to the descriptions of other major characters. The character of the political commissar, Li Zheng (李正), is the combination of four political commissars who served in the guerrillas. As Zhang Jun observes, Liu remolded the images of the guerrillas in three layers.[293] First, he discarded the "indescribable" behaviors of the guerrilla members. In the story, Li Zheng disciplined the fighters' problems in drinking, gambling, and brawling; anything related to prostitution or extramarital relationships was intentionally omitted. Second, Liu also

[292] Zhixia, "The Process of Creating *Railroad Guerrillas*" (*Tiedao youjidui chuangzuo jingguo* 《鐵道游擊隊》創作經過), *Historical Studies of Modern Literature* (*Xin wenxue shiliao* 新文學史料), no. 1 (1987): 164-181.
[293] Zhang, "The Reality of Railroad Guerrillas and 'Realism'," 29.

reconstructed the worldview of the vagabonds through a Marxist perspective. Li Zheng is the personification of the Party that enlightens the guerrilla fighters about the role the Party played in the history of revolution. Third, with Li Zheng's guidance, the core members of the guerrilla gradually realize the meaning of their actions within the framework of class struggle, and eventually become new socialist subjects with acute class consciousness. In the making of *Railroad Guerrillas*, the grassroots characters gradually became detached from their prototypes in reality and became embodiments of Communist ideals. The vagabonds' behaviors are disciplined by the political commissar, their class consciousness is awakened, and the raids they conduct on the Japanese-controlled railways become patriotic actions. The outlaws typical of the classical novels are transformed into pristine, idealized socialist heroes, free of human flaws and vices.

Similar to Liu Zhixia's decision to remove the presence of Xu Guangtian in the novel after he became a traitor to the Communist army, two chapters in the novel were deleted during the visualization of the work, because the conduct of the main characters describes there were considered unsuitable for the image of the ideal communist heroes, according to Nakano Tōru's observation.[294] One of the chapters that was eliminated is "The Capture of Xiaopo," which focuses on the adventure of the teenage guerrilla fighter. Xiaopo is captured by the Japanese soldiers after an operation because he falls asleep during the retreat. The Japanese army tortures him in the hope of obtaining information about the guerrillas. Despite the torture, Xiaopo does not give up any information, insisting that he is a lone thief. The Japanese see him as a potential collaborator. Xiaopo is locked into a crowded freight train compartment and sent to a camp. Slowly, he recovers from his injuries, and manages to jump from a moving train to escape.

[294] Nakano, "Deleted 'Boys,' Added 'Adults': A Note on *Lianhuanhua Railroad Guerrillas*," 56-80.

Another chapter that was deleted in the process of *lianhuanhua*-making involves Xiaopo and two other teenage members of the guerilla group, Wang Hu (王虎) and Shuanzhu (拴柱). This time, the guerrillas are hiding in the marshes of Weishan Lake with limited rations and resources. Feeling unable to endure the hardships anymore, Wang Hu and Shuanzhu start to violate the code of conduct for Communist soldiers. With handguns in hand, they decide to turn into bandits. Their conspiracy is exposed by Xiaopo, and the two youngsters are sent back to the Communist base in the mountains to be reeducated by the Eighth Route Army. When they come back from the base, they have become qualified soldiers who prioritize military tasks over personal comfort.

The *lianhuanhua* covers every chapter in the novel except the two mentioned above. That the eliminated chapters center on the teenage members of the guerrilla group should be seen as a deliberate choice, not a coincidence. In the novel, the adolescent members learn how to be proper Communist soldiers throughout the development of the story. Yet, for the *lianhuanhua*, the scriptwriter could not tolerate the imperfection exhibited by the teenage characters. The reckless choices of the immature characters indicated personality flaws that should not be seen in a Communist hero, thus should be eliminated.

These eliminations make it clear that *lianhuanhua* gave little room for the main characters to learn, grow, and transform themselves. The *lianhuanhua* sought instead to represent a positive image of the characters from the beginning. This raises the questions: what qualities and features do characters have which embody Communist ideals? The following examines the visual representations of two heroic figures—the leading fighter, Liu Hong, and the political commissar, Li Zheng—and discusses how the artists created the heroic characters through the invisible model that common urban viewers were already familiar with.

I argue the invisible structure involved in the construction of the ideal Communist heroes is the convention of literary (*wen* 文) and martial (*wu* 武) masculinity that is deeply rooted in Chinese culture. Kam Louie and Louise Edwards propose that the Chinese ideal of maleness falls within the spectrum of literary and martial characteristics.[295] "Martial" is a concept which embodies physical strength and military prowess. On the other hand, a figure with "literary" attributes exhibits strategic acumen and enjoys a scholarly lifestyle, which forms a softer, more cerebral tradition of ideal maleness. Traditionally, "literary" characteristics were considered superior to the "martial," because they were associated with scholars and the power to rule as government officials. An ideal man was someone whose "literary" and "martial" characteristics were in a harmonious state. Liu Hong and Li Zheng both exhibit a mixture of these two attributes; however, as the leading fighter of the guerrillas, Liu Hong is represented with more martial characteristics, and Li Zheng, the political commissar, exhibits more attributes of the literary ideal.

The conventions of Peking opera molded the model of martial masculinity in *Railroad Guerrillas*. In one of the most well-known pictures in *Railroad Guerrillas*, Liu Hong is frozen in the moment when he is jumping off a running train, not yet having landed on the ground (fig. 4.3). His left arm is raised upward with the palm facing up; the upper right arm is extending to his right, and the lower arm is turned downward to hold a bundle of rifles wrapped in straw. Both of his knees are bent, showing that he is in the air. Liu Hong's pose and gesture instantly reminds viewers of the *liangxiang* (presenting the appearance 亮相) pose[296] constantly seen from the

[295] Kam Louie and Louise Edwards, "Chinese Masculinity: Theorizing 'Wen' and 'Wu'," *East Asian History*, no. 8 (December 1994): 135-148.

[296] *Liangxiang* (presenting the appearance) is a basic acting convention in Chinese opera. While performing a *liangxiang*, actors move into a pose and hold it for a short moment. The length of the pause depends on the characteristics of the *liangxiang*. *Liangxiang* can be used upon entrance, before exit, and after a sequence of dance or combat movement. See Xing Fan, *Staging Revolution: Artistry and Aesthetics in Model Beijing Opera during the*

thin-soled martial man character type (*duanda wusheng* 短打武生 lit. "quick fighting" or "short clothing" martial man) (fig. 4.4) in Peking opera. Thin-soled martial man is a sub-category of martial man (*wusheng*) who specializes in martial arts and acrobatics. The roles are usually individual fighters, or disenfranchised bandits and criminals. The thin-soled martial man usually wears hero's clothes (*baoyi* 包衣 lit. "leopard/panther" or "embracing clothes") with a soft beret (*ruan luomao* 軟羅帽) and thin-soled ankle boots (*baodi xue* 薄底靴), which enable the actors to perform martial arts sequences, including hand-to-hand combat and acrobatics.[297] Looking at the pose of the hero in *Fight at Crossroads Inn* (*Sancha kou* 三岔口), one finds that the depiction of Liu Hong in the picture exhibits many similarities with the actor's pose. Ding and Han made some adjustments, such as having the right arm hold the rifles and bending the left leg, to make the pose fit the circumstance the character is in. Even the outfit of Liu Hong seems like a simplified and modernized version of the costume of the thin-soled martial man. The characteristics of the costume—including the short shirt, the flowy bottom of the shirt that intensifies the dynamic of the martial sequences, the fitted but slightly flowy pants, and the hat—can all be found in the image of Liu Hong. By using the martial man pose and costume, which the readers were already familiar with, to construct Liu Hong's image, the artists accentuated the martial prowess of this character. They were channeling the invisible structure seen in Peking opera to make Liu Hong's martial characteristics instantly recognizable to urban readers.

The martial characteristics of the guerrilla fighter also allude to the martial arts films of the Republican period. The martial spectacle not only consists of physical movements, but also engages with instruments and landscapes the body has direct contact with, as Zhang Zhen

Cultural Revolution (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2018), 60.
[297] Xing Fan, *Staging Revolution: Artistry and Aesthetics in Model Beijing Opera during the Cultural Revolution* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2018), 246.

contends.[298] Liu Hong climbs onto a moving Japanese military train, steals the rifles, and leaves triumphantly with a dramatic leap. Liu's movement dominates the foreign, modern force symbolized by the train, and defies the physical limits of the human body. Like the martial heroes of the 1920s, the moving body of the guerrilla is immensely powerful, even anarchic, if not deployed in the way approved by the Party-State; thus, it needs to be directed and contained by the literary character, Li Zheng, who embodies the Party in the story. The artists carefully made reference to the martial elements of the character's body to engage and excite the reader, but made clear that this martial prowess is submissive to the control of the Party.

Li Zheng, the political commissar who is sent from the Communist base to join the guerrillas, is the character whose literary attributes are more prominent than the others. The visual representation of Li Zheng in this *lianhuanhua* intensifies his literary characteristics. In the novel, when he travels from the Communist base in the mountains to Zao village to meet the guerrillas for the first time, he disguises himself as a shepherd by wearing a worn cotton-padded robe, which he borrowed from an old shepherd. However, in the *lianhuanhua*, he wears a *changshan* gown (long robe), which was typically worn by scholars or the gentry class because the design is especially suitable for a more sedentary way of life.[299] This is contrasted with the guerrilla fighters' attire of shirts and pants with short jackets, which suggest both working-class and martial characteristics.

Another visual device to accentuate the superiority of the literary character can be observed in the furniture that the characters use. In the scene in which the guerrilla fighters are welcoming Li to join the unit, Li sits in a round-back armchair whose design could be traced

[298] Zhang, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen*, 213-214.
[299] Valery Garrett, *Chinese Dress: From the Qing Dynasty to the Present* (Tokyo; Rutland, Vt.: Tuttle Pub., 2019), 129.

back to Ming furniture (fig. 4.5). In Ming culture, a chair represented the social status of the one sitting in it. "Where you sit is who you are," as Sarah Handler puts it.[300] The round-back armchair is one of the most prestigious Chinese chairs. With its arms and top rail forming a continuous curve, when a person is seated erect with elbows resting on the high curved chair arms, he gains a uniquely commanding presence and dignity.[301] In the picture in *Railroad Guerrillas*, the round-back armchair and two high-back chairs the guerrillas are using are the rustic version of this elegant furniture. Li Zheng is sitting in the only round-back chair in the room. Seeing a robe-wearing man sitting in a round-back armchair, readers would easily realize who is the most prestigious person in the picture. The captain, Liu Hong, and the leading fighter, Wang Qiang, are sitting in the other two high-back chairs (fig. 4.6). The arrangement of the chairs not only gives the interior space a sense of formality, but also exhibits the hierarchy of power. It is clear that the artists are aware that the round-back armchair is a symbol of power. In the picture sequence showing the guerrillas' welcome dinner for Li Zheng, the round-back armchair is first sat by Liu Hong, the captain (fig. 4.7), then Liu yields the seat to Li. From then on, Li Zheng is the only person that sits in the round-back armchair. Conveying the instructions from the Party and educating the guerrillas, Li is the embodiment of the Party in the story. Liu Hong's action is not just an expression of etiquette; it symbolizes the subordination of the martial to the literary, and the grassroots to the Party elite.

Section Three: Representing the History of Revolution Through Plain Line Drawing

This section focuses on the national form seen in *Railroad Guerrillas* and inquires into the expression of the power of the CCP over the modern structures brought with the invasion of

[300] Sarah Handler, *Ming Furniture in the Light of Chinese Architecture* (Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2005), 107.
[301] Ibid., 112.

the Japanese. National form was loosely explained as the style(s) that exhibit features that are intrinsically Chinese and are presumably welcomed by the masses because they are familiar with the style(s). The Communist administrators did not declare one single style the national form; thus, there was room for artists to experiment with multiple styles. In Ding and Han's *Railroad Guerrillas*, national form is mostly shown by a combination of Western academic drawing and plain line drawing. Through the synthetic style, the artists rendered characters, structures, and objects with accuracy, exactitude, and precision. The style allowed the artists to showcase their careful studies of their subjects, their confidence in depicting them in any way from any angle, and their power to destroy the symbols of Japanese colonialism in the pictures.

Cheng Shifa (程十髮, 1921–2007), who was Ding and Han's supervisor and also an artist specialized in Shanghai-style figural painting and *lianhuanhua*, suggested that they seek inspiration from the famous Peking opera, *Fight at Crossroads Inn* (*Sancha kou* 三岔口), for the depiction of fighting scenes.[302] This play was famous in the early 1950s because it was chosen as the work to represent China in the pantomime competition at the World Festival of Youth and Students, held in East Germany in 1951, and won the gold medal. The play and the troupe later toured in Europe and Latin America from 1955 to 1956. In the play, the hero, Ren Tanghui, is secretly following a general to protect him. In the middle of the night, he accidentally meets the innkeeper at the hall of the inn. The two pantomime a rigorous fight in the darkness (while the stage is fully lit).[303] The concept of representing a fight in the dark on a fully lit stage corresponds to the visibility created through line drawing in the *lianhuanhua*. The visibility is exhibited not only in the figural images, but more importantly, in the modern machinery and

[302] Fu ed., *Shanghai People's Art Press, Footsteps, Han Heping*, 72.
[303] Alexandra B. Bonds, *Beijing Opera Costumes: The Visual Communication of Character and Culture* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 316.

infrastructure, including locomotives, trains, rails, and steel bridges. Plain line drawing forced the artists to conduct thorough studies of the appearance of the figures and objects, as nothing in the pictures could be hidden or blurred through the depiction of night or shadows through darker tones. In *Railroad Guerrillas*, although many of the scenes take place in the nighttime or dark interior spaces, the artists did not apply large areas of black or dark tones to indicate shadows and darkness. Instead, they depicted everything through thin, even, and precise outlines, so that every detail in the pictures is visible for readers to scrutinize.

Looking into the pictures in *Railroad Guerrillas*, one would be surprised by the precise depiction of the infinite details: the small cracks in the wooden furniture, the folds and creases in the clothes, the nuts and bolts on the locomotive, and so on. The representation of details is closely related to the concept of realism and fieldwork that was demanded by the Party-State. In their recollection, Ding and Han stressed the significance their fieldwork held for them. Ding could recall all the vivid details he and Han observed during their trips. They not only made sketches of train stations, passenger cars, boxcars, locomotives, and the flag signals and signs for train departure, but also markets, shops, food stands, transportation they saw on the streets, and people from all walks of life.[304]

To Communist administrators and artists, socialist realism is bolstered by two things: correct understanding of the subjects and a "realistic" depiction based on that understanding. Socialist realism represents reality within socialist progress. Artists depict idealized scenes and figures in a socialist society, rather than the way they look here and now. The details lead viewers to visualize a reality that is filtered through a socialist lens.

[304] Ding Binzeng, "Recollecting the Creation of Railroad Guerrillas" (連環畫鐵道游擊隊創作回憶 *Lianhuanhua 'Tiedao youji dui' chuangzuo huiyi*), in Wang, Shi, and Zhu eds., *Shanghai Modern Fine Arts History Series: 1949-2009, Vol. 6, Picture-story Books*, 179-181.

A feature of plain line drawing is the disappearance of light and shade. Going back to the comparison between He Youzhi and Lu Wen and Ding and Han's drawing of "The Fight on the Train" (fig. 4.1 and 4.2), He and Lu used hatches of vertical lines to create dark areas to represent shadows. The hatches fill up the area beneath the table and above the luggage rack. One also finds smaller dark areas to indicate the shadows inside the sleeve, in between the Japanese soldier's jacket and the shirt, the guerrilla fighter's robe and pants, and the unlit side of the poles supporting the armrest. Although thick outlines were encouraged by officials, the use of large dark areas was not eliminated from *lianhuanhua*. Two years later, Ding and Han completely discarded the use of large dark areas by using a more refined style of outlining. Everything except the black hair of the characters is rendered through thin ink lines. Through this style, the artists created a world in which nothing can be hidden in the shadows. Every detail is laid under broad daylight for viewers to scrutinize.

Here, I choose to examine how plain line drawing represent the trains and rails, not only because the most exciting scenes in this story all center on the guerrillas' interaction with this modern machine, but also because the train, as a symbol of Japanese imperialism, is manipulated by the artists to serve a nationalist agenda. Through depicting, representing, and manipulating these modern machines through plain line drawing, the Chinese artists demystify the technology and take control over the Japanese and the modern forces in the world of *Railroad Guerrillas*.

The first railway in China was built between Shanghai and Wusung by the British firm of Jardine, Matheson & Company.[305] Since its first appearance in China, the railway was closely associated with the idea of the expansion of imperialist powers. As Clarence Davis argues, railways were instrumentalized by imperialist powers, including Britain, France, Germany,

[305] Clarence B, Davis, "Railway Imperialism in China, 1895-1939," in Clarence B. Davis, Kenneth E. Wilburn, Jr., and Ronald E. Robinson eds., *Railway Imperialism* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 159.

Russia, Japan, Belgium, and the United States, for penetration of China during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.[306] In the 1960s, Chinese Economist Fu Rucheng's (宓汝成) *History of Railway in Modern China* (1863–1911) divides the development of railways into three phases.[307] From 1863 to 1889, Western imperialist powers started building railways in China. The Qing government first resisted, then gradually accepted the construction of railways, and finally took railway-building as part of the national policy for "self-strengthening." The second phase lasted from 1889 to 1900. The Qing government expanded the scale of railway construction through loans from foreign banks and by yielding right of control to Western imperialist powers, who started to control areas in China along the railway routes they built. The third phase lasted from 1900 to 1911, when railways became the focal point of the development of nationalism. Chinese intellectuals initiated the Railway Rights Protection Movement to protest the Qing government's plan to nationalize regional railways and yield control of the railways to foreign banks. The movement escalated to violent conflicts and led to the 1911 revolution, which ended the rule of the Qing dynasty. During the Republican period, railway construction restarted after Chiang Kai-shek's successful North Expedition in 1928. The new international situation after World War I allowed the new government to seek foreign loans without giving up its administration of the new railways. The war with Japan in 1937, and the successive civil war between the Nationalists and Communists, further ended foreign control over railways in China.

In *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period*, Carol Gluck argues that the monarch and the locomotive were the two ubiquitous images that became symbols of civilization, progressiveness, and modernization.[308] As the Meiji government built railways

[306] Ibid, 155.
[307] Fu Rucheng 宓汝成, *History of Railway in Modern China 1863-1911* (*Zhongguo jindai tielushi ziliao 1863-1911* 中國近代鐵路史資料 1863-1911) (Beijing: Zhongguo shujü, 1963).
[308] Carol Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University

around Japan to spread the influence of the central government, the locomotive gained symbolic meaning as "an engine of state formation and empire building."[309] In China, Japan took over the control of Manchuria from Russia. Then, as an ally of Britain in World War I, Japan expanded its influence to Germany's Jiaozhou leasehold and the German-built railway in Shandong.[310] Through the operation of the South Manchurian Railway and the Kwantong Army, the Japanese solidified their sphere of influence in northeast China.

The image of the railway played a significant role in visually representing the Empire of Japan's colonial endeavor in Manchuria. In photo albums, such as *South Manchuria Through the Camera Lens* (*Minami Manshū shashin taikan* 南満洲写真大観, 1911) and *The Photo Album of the Manchurian Railway* (*Mantetsu shashinchō* 満鉄写真帖, 1926), locomotives, stations, rails, and workshops are presented as icons of progressiveness and enlightenment brought to the empire's new frontier. The photograph of the interior of the South Manchurian Railway workshop in Shahekou (沙河口) showcases the magnificent space in which a locomotive is being hung in the air by a gigantic steel hanger, on top of another locomotive (fig. 4.8). The caption below the picture describes the ceiling as being strong enough to hold dozens of locomotives, and "with the new workshops, one can envision the industry of the empire surpasses the European and the American."[311] To the Japanese, the ability to build, operate and manufacture locomotives and railways was evidence that they had acquired the ability to compete with the Western countries.

Press, 1985), 101, 261.

[309] Tristan R. Grunow, "Trains, Modernity, and State Formation in Meiji Japan," in Benjamin Fraser, and Steven D. Spalding ed., *Trains, Culture, and Mobility: Riding the Rails* (Lexington Books, 2011), n.p. ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ucsd/detail.action?docID=836983.

[310] Davis, "Railway Imperialism in China, 1895-1939," 164.

[311] Kanazawa Kyūya 金沢求也, *South Manchuria Through the Camera Lens* (*Minami Manshū shashin taikan* 南満洲写真大観), first published in 1911 (Tokyo: Ozorasha, 2008), 76.

Furthermore, the photographers constantly represented the running express train through a composition which placed the locomotive in the foreground, running toward the picture plane, with a long train extending to the vanishing point outside of the picture frame (fig. 4.9). With complex mechanical details, the gleam and the gradation of tones on the metallic structure, and the steam it emitted, the locomotive was presented as an awe-inspiring modern wonder, a proof of the progressiveness of the empire and justification for its colonial endeavor. The rails even extend to the mountains and gorges, showing the progressive power penetrating through the land formerly untouched by modernization (fig. 4.10).

In the novel *Railroad Guerrillas*, the size, the speed, and the momentum of the train invokes such awe in people in China that the train becomes an element of fantasy. Cai Xiang argues that the train is significant in constructing a legend narrative in *Railroad Guerrillas*. He defines the legendary as "a new type of experience . . . outside the realm of traditions of common sense which are hypotheticals or even fantasies."[312] In *Railroad Guerrillas*, the train is the symbol of the modern and the industrial. Looking at it against the background of the traditional and the agricultural, the modern becomes an "imaginary realm of the new and strange," and becomes a "narrative source for legend making."[313] In the legendary narrative of the novel *Railroad Guerrillas*, the prowess of the guerrillas is not only built upon their courage and ability to fight against the Japanese soldiers and spies, but also their ability to operate the machines brought by the Japanese.

The fourteenth chapter of *Railroad Guerrillas* borrows the speech of an old peasant, who expresses his views on trains:

> That train! What a powerful thing! We peasants always thought the bull a very strong beast, but one thousand bulls put together aren't as strong as that train! One

[312] Cai, *Revolution and its Narratives*, 214.
[313] Ibid.

> coach is the size of four or five rooms, and a train of scores of coaches stretches out as long as ten scores of rooms put together. What's more, it can carry away hills of coal in a very short time. Toot! It whistles, rumbles along and vanishes out of sight in a jiffy. It can travel more than a thousand *li* a day. It's such a huge thing yet one man can move it. Those city people are really smart, I'd say![314]

In this conceptualization, the train becomes a beast whose size and power are beyond the old peasant's experience. Subsequent to the old peasant's speech, one of the major members of the guerrilla group, Peng Liang, is introduced to the peasant by the teenage fighter, Xiaopo, as someone who is capable of "leaping with his whole body onto this giant [train]," then he "kills the ghost driver and drives the ghost train wildly down the tracks."[315] Calling the train the "giant" and the driver the "ghost," the train sounds supernatural in the dialogue between the old peasant and Xiaopo. Being able to drive the train and leap on and off the train freely, Peng Liang becomes the character whose power surpasses the modern and the industrial.

Contrary to the novel, which mystifies the train to create a legendary narrative, the *lianhuanhua* exhibits control over the modern in a different way. The artists demystify the modern and the foreign through a thorough study of the subjects, and careful depictions of the details of mechanical parts. Through classical plain line drawing, their pictures bring the modern and the foreign under the control of the Chinese.

By comparing He Youzhi and Lu Wen's representation of a running train with Ding and Han's, one will see how demystification works through the use of pure outline (fig. 4.11 and 4.12). The composition of the two pictures is almost identical. Both show the train, which has been hijacked by the guerrilla fighters, running at full speed toward the viewer. In the 1953 version, He Youzhi and Lu Wen use pencils to create a dramatic contrast of black and white in the picture. The drawing reminds readers the magnificent images of locomotives in the photo

[314] Zhixia, *Railroad Guerillas*, 266-267.
[315] Ibid.

albums of the Southern Manchuria Railway. The artists drew the train from a lower angle, thus creating a sense of monumentality in the locomotive. On the left side of the locomotive, they use dense diagonal lines to indicate speed. Lacking the time and means to observe the trains actually being operated in northeast China, He and Lu cleverly hid the details of the lower half of the train by the application of dark areas and the depiction of steam. The running train, shrouded by shadow and steam, is like a mythical object operated by mechanisms beyond our comprehension.

In Ding and Han's representation of the scene, dark areas are limited to filling the gaps between the parts of the train and between the train and the railway. By depicting all the details of the locomotive, the artists sacrifice the representation of speed. The narration says: "The train rushes through Wang Gou Station with a deafening noise like it is going mad."[316] Yet, judging from the picture, without any visual effect to indicate speed, it seems like the train is stopping by the station. The plain line drawing presents the train like a specimen for scrutiny. Ding and Han portray the *mikai*-class locomotive with more accurate details. *Mikai*-class is a specific model of locomotives made for South Manchuria Railway (fig. 4.13). Based upon the locomotives imported from the U.S. during the middle of the Taisho period (1912–1926), the model was manufactured in both Japan and South Manchuria.[317] It was designed to accommodate the surging demand for supply transport due to World War I, and then was mainly used for transporting coal in north China. After the end of the Second Sino-Japanese War, 1124 *mikai*-class locomotives were transferred to China's administration. The artists could have had ample chances to study the locomotive thoroughly. Not only does the artist meticulously portray the parts on the front of the locomotive, including the headlight, the plaque with the acronym of the

[316] Ding and Han, *Railroad Guerillas*, vol. 3, 15.
[317] Mantetsukai 満鉄会 ed., *Forty Years of Manchuria Railway* (*Mantetesu yonnjyuunen shi* 満鉄四十年史) (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2007), n.p.

model and the numbers on it, the tubes, rods, and nuts and bolts—but the cylinder, which is located behind the buffer and below the steam chest, is also carefully depicted. Comparing the drawing with the photograph of the locomotive, one sees that the artists perfectly reproduced the mechanical parts. Plain line drawing required artists to observe the machine closely so they could render every part with exactitude.

Having the ability to portray the train down to each minuscule detail also enabled the artists to manipulate, even destroy, the train, the symbol of Japanese imperialism, in the world they create. In volume six, a series of pictures depict the guerrillas during an operation: they hijack two trains in the middle of the night, and make them run into each other on a steel bridge, to destroy the transport infrastructure built by the Japanese. Pictures 30 and 31 depict the aftermath of the train crash (fig. 4.14 and 4.15). A train loaded with coal falls from the steel bridge, and is about to hit the freight cars that already fell to the ground. The artists depicted the trains in the midst of scenes that were impossible for the viewer to see in reality. It suggests that they had the confidence to visually manipulate the modern machines. Built upon thorough observation and studious compilation of sketches, Ding and Han's plain line drawing, the technique that is considered intrinsically Chinese, put the modern and the foreign under the control of this native artistic convention.

However, it is worth noting that although the train, the bridge, and the freight cars are tumbled, twisted, and fractured, the locomotive remains intact in the pictures. It seems like what the artists could draw is the locomotive's appearance. They could portray the surface of the locomotive from various angles, but could not penetrate its structure; thus, they were unable to show the inside of a shattered locomotive. In symbolic terms, although the railway, the symbol of Japanese imperialism, is destroyed, the science and engineering that formed the engine of

Japanese imperialism is still beyond the grasp of the Chinese during the 1950s and 1960s.

Conclusion

This chapter examined Ding and Han's *Railroad Guerrillas,* demonstrating the academically trained *lianhuanhua* artists' work to create a national form that inflicted discipline upon the depicted subjects. In the depiction of the heroic characters, the artists emphasized the characteristics of literary masculinity in the political commissar, and martial masculinity in the guerrilla fighters, through their design of posture, costumes, and interior settings. Kam Louie and Louise Edward concurred that in the Ming and Qing dynasty, literary masculinity had been viewed as superior to martial masculinity. The artists allude to the dichotomy of Chinese masculinity prevalent in drama, and classical and popular novels, to assert the superiority of the political commissar over the grassroots fighters. Furthermore, the meticulous drawings of machines, especially locomotives, exhibit an ambition to control the modern and the Western through plain line drawing, a feature intrinsic to Chinese art. Through plain line drawing, Ding and Han created a world in which everything is visible as if it is seen under broad day light. The story encompasses scenes that involve characters and objects which are foreign and Chinese, modern and pre-modern, urban and rural. Their forms were made visible to the socialist gaze constructed by the national form, the synthesis of academic and plain line drawing. In Ding and Han's *Railroad Guerrillas*, the national form can be read as a declaration that the Chinese (method of drawing) had control over the representation of the Japanese, the modern, and the imperialist.

EPILOGUE

This dissertation has examined how the CCP reformed the *lianhuanhua* industry in Shanghai in the 1950s, in terms of production, publication, and distribution, to educate readers on new policies and new social norms. Taking Zhao Hongben and Qian Xiaodai's *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone Demon,* He Youzhi's *Great Changes in a Mountain Village*, and Ding Binzeng and Han Heping's *Railroad Guerrillas* as my case studies, I delve into how artists deployed various styles from Chinese and Western art conventions to form a "national form" and responded to the art policies that were influenced by the tensions in both domestic and international politics. Zhao Hongben and Qian Xiaodai adapted elements from classical Chinese landscape painting, a genre that was attacked for its feudal, bourgeois, and elitist qualities after 1949, to reconstruct the fantastic but dangerous environment described in the classical novel *Journey to the West*. Following the imagery in Mao's poem, the authors legitimized their choices to use classical elements in their work by associating them with the demon, who represented the Khrushchevian revisionists in the politics of the late 1950s and 1960s. He Youzhi claimed that he studied *Up the River During Qingming* created in the Northern Song dynasty and *Water Margin Leaves* in the late Ming dynasty to depict the unique atmosphere of rural Hunan in *Great Changes in a Mountain Village*. His references are closely related to the state's endeavor to reinterpret the history of art, which centers on works that could be deemed "realist," "democratic," and "progressive" in terms of style, media, and subject matter. Ding and Han's *Railroad Guerrillas* renders the history of revolution through a style that synthesizes classical

plain line drawing and academic draftsmanship. The new style not only idealizes the historical figures of the bandit-like guerilla fighters but also imposes control over symbols of the modern, the foreign, and the imperialist in the world the artists created. By examining how artists deployed classical and Western elements in their works, I find that although the ideological side of *lianhuanhua* was constantly compromised when the artists rechanneled art conventions that did not necessarily fit the Communist standards to construct a "national form," when the specific form was continuously adopted to illustrate propagandistic contents, it eventually became a representation of state power.

Lianhuanhua publication was halted during the height of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), as most of the publishing houses were shut down. Many *lianhuanhua* artists were sent down from the cities to the May Seventh Cadre Schools, where they had to work in hard agricultural labor and participate in political reeducation supervised by the "revolutionary masses." Their formerly celebrated works turned into "poisonous weeds" of culture.[318] From 1966 to 1968, there were no records of *lianhuanhua* publication in Shanghai.[319] In 1969, there was only one *lianhuanhua*, titled *The Heroic Story of Chairman Mao's Red Guard, Jin Xunhua* (*Mao zhuxi de hongweibing Jin Xunhua de yingxiong gushi* 毛主席的紅衛兵金訓華的英雄故事), published by Shanghai People's Art Press.[320] It was not until Premier Zhou Enlai advocated the restarting of *lianhuanhua* publication in 1970 that the artists were gradually summoned back to the cities to draw again. Given that many influential *lianhuanhua* artists were condemned as "ox ghosts" and "snake spirits" during the first half of the Cultural Revolution, even though *lianhuanhua* publishing was restarted, most of them could not have their names printed on the

[318] Lu, "Heroes of *Liahuanhua*—Jiang Weipu on Hua Sanchuan," 34.
[319] Wang, Shi, and Zhu eds., *Shanghai Modern Fine Arts History Series: 1949-2009, Vol. 6, Picture-story Books*, 64.
[320] Ibid.

works but were mentioned as collective work groups. From 1970 to 1976, Shanghai People's Art Press published 295 titles of *lianhuanhua*, less than half of the titles published in any single year in the 1950s.[321] Most of the works were drawn after the model operas, in which every detail had been scrutinized and approved by the authorities, and were thus safe subject matter for the *lianhuanhua* artists.

The *lianhuanhua* published during the Cultural Revolution continued the national form established in the previous decade but inflicted further limitations on formal expression. Artists followed aesthetico-political principles, including "Tall, Big, and Complete" and "Three Prominences,"[322] to represent heroic characters. In the composition of the Cultural Revolution *lianhuanhua*, the artists emphasized the grandiose image of the major heroes by placing them in the middle of the pictures, depicting them with strong bodies, and presenting them from a lower angle to make the heroes look larger-than-life. On the contrary, serving as foils of the heroes, negative characters always appeared "sickly, crouched, and bent."[323] They were commonly depicted from the back or the side and placed at the bottom or the corners of the pictures or even left out of the picture frame. As Barbara Mittler argues, the principles create an unmistakable rule for readers to interpret the pictures.[324] They can easily discern heroes and villains from the composition, even when the pictures are not being read in sequence. Absorbing the national form

[321] Ibid.
[322] The aesthetico-political principle of Three Prominences was first summarized by Yu Huiyong (于會泳), the main composer of the Revolutionary Model Plays, from directions given by Jiang Qing (江青), the highest administrator of cultural production during the Cultural Revolution. The principle was revised by Yao Wenyuan (姚文元) and officially announced its definition: "Among all characters, give prominence to positive characters; among positive characters, give prominence to heroic characters; among heroic characters, give prominence to major heroes." See Yizhong Gu "The Three Prominences," in Wang Ban ed., *Words and Their Stories: Essays on the Language of the Chinese Revolution* (Leidon; Boston: Brill, 2011), 283; Kuiyi Shen, "Propaganda Posters and Art during the Cultural Revolution," in Melissa Chiu and Zheng Shengtian eds., *Art and China's Revolution* (New York: Asia Society, 2008), 158.
[323] Mittler, *A Continuous Revolution*, 341.
[324] Ibid., 344.

developed during the 1950s and 1960s, the *lianhuanhua* published during the Cultural Revolution further formulated a visual language through which the heroes finally became ideology incarnate.

Although the three works examined in the previous chapters were endorsed by the authorities and were crowned the best works in the first National *Lianhuanhua* Exhibition in 1963, they had to undergo rigorous revisions during the Cultural Revolution for various reasons. *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone Demon* was republished in 1972. Since the association between Mao and Sun Wukong was established in the 1950s, Sun Wukong and his golden rod had been used as symbols of Mao in many Red Guard factions.[325] As a result, the story did not attract much criticism, but the plot underwent revisions to further accentuate Sun's power. Zhao Hongben was condemned as the "The Nan Batian of *Lianhuanhua*," alluding to the evil landlord in the model ballet, *The Red Detachment of Women*, because the work did not fit the aesthetics of the Cultural Revolution.[326] Zhao had to adjust many pictures—with the assistance of another older *lianhuanhua* artist, Wang Yiqiu (王亦秋, 1925–), because Qian Xiaodai passed away in 1965—to make the *lianhuanhua* better fit the principle of Three Prominences.[327] The changes can be observed in the second picture in the new edition. The presence of the pilgrims, especially Sun, is greatly enlarged. The depth of the fantastic rocky landscape is sacrificed for a clear frontal view of the main characters (fig. 5.1 and 5.2).

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[325] For the iconography of Sun Wukong during the Cultural Revolution, please see Wagner, *The Contemporary Chinese Historical Drama*, 196–219.

[326] According to Barbara Mittler's interview with Zhao Hongben's son and daughter, Zhao was criticized because the depiction of White-Bone Demon was considered too beautiful, Sun Wukong does not look heroic enough, and the pictures contain too much "lewd sexual material," which points to the naked navel and nipples of Zhu Bajie. See Mittler, *A Continuous Revolution*, 344.

[327] Bai Huiyuan made a table to exhibit the differences between the 1962 and 1972 version. Please see Bai Huiyuan, 白惠元, *The Variations of the Hero: The Self-Transcendence of Sun Wukong and Modern China* (*Yingxiong biange: Sun Wukong yu xiandai Zhongguo de ziwo chaoyue* 英雄變格: 孫悟空與現代中國的自我超越) (Beijing: sanlian shudian, 2017), 301-302.

The most significant change in the plot takes place in the scene in which Tripitaka chants the tight-skillet spell to punish Sun because he believes Sun is attacking an old man, who is the White-Bone Demon in disguise. The scene suggests that the muddleheaded Party leadership could cause a great headache for Mao, whose power to eradicate the revisionists is limited by the Party. In the new edition, the picture is replaced with a new one, in which Tripitaka decides not to chant the spell because of the loyalty Sun has expressed throughout the journey, in spite of his disapproval of Sun's actions (fig. 5.3). The smirking White-Bone Demon is removed. The positioning of the characters in the composition was adjusted, and Sun no longer collapses on the ground in great pain in the lower half of the picture. Instead, he is standing straight, placed in a prominent position in the upper-middle part of the picture, above the rest of the pilgrims, whom he stares at with a disapproving expression. The adjustment further accentuates Mao's absolute authority over the other currents of the Party leadership during the Cultural Revolution.

He Youzhi's *Great Changes in a Mountain Village* was affected by the wave of criticism launched against "middle characters" (*zhongjian renwu* 中間人物), which was coined by Shao Quanlin (邵荃麟, 1906–1971) in the conference on short novels about rural subjects held by the Chinese Writer's Association in Dalian in 1962, to refer to the characters that are neither heroes nor villains. Concurring that, in reality, the masses are constituted by a small number of progressive and backward figures while most of the people are in between the two extremes, Shao encouraged writers to describe the complexity of the struggles within the middle characters, instead of a few exceptional heroes.[328] In 1964, Shao's theory was castigated in essays in the *Literary Newspaper* (*Wenyi bao* 文藝報). Shao's exaltation to include middle characters was

[328] Zhao Xianjun 趙憲軍, Zhao Yi 趙毅, *The Concise Dictionary of Chinese and Foreign Literary Theory* (*Jianming zhongwai wenlun cidian* 簡明中外文論辭典) (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 2013), 193.

perceived as a negation of peasants' agency in participating in the revolution and their potential to become progressive characters.[329] Shao and other writers who put great emphasis on representing middle characters in their works were condemned as rightists. Among a few others, Flour-Paste Ting in Zhou Libo's *Great Changes in a Mountain Village* and Xiwang in Li Zhun's *The Story of Li Shuangshuang* (*Li Shuangshuang xiao zhuan* 李雙雙小傳) are the exemplary middle characters extolled in 1962 and then attacked two years later.[330] He Youzhi created the *lianhuanhua* version of both novels. His lively depictions of various reactions the peasants expressed toward the collectivization campaign also became, in the eyes of his attackers, mockery of the poor peasants.[331]

As with Zhou Libo's *Great Changes in a Mountain Village*, Liu Zhixia's *Railroad Guerrillas* was also labeled a "poisonous weed" during the Cultural Revolution. The novel was blamed for its celebration of the loyalty and friendship between the bandit-like guerrilla fighters, whose conduct did not correctly reflect the Party's leadership.[332] To make things even worse, toward the end of the novel, the guerrillas are given the task of leading the way for a "leading cadre" to traverse the Japanese-occupied area near the Tianjin-Pukou Railway. This part of the story is based on a historical event in which the railroad guerrillas escorted Liu Shaoqi (1898–

[329] Literary Newspaper Editorial Department 文藝報編輯部, "Writing Middle Characters is an Advocation for Bourgeois Literature" (*Xie zhongjian renwu shi zichan jieji de wenxue zhuzhang* 寫中間人物是資產階級的文學主張) in *Discussions about Zeitgeist: Selected Documents about "Middle Characters"* (*Guanyü shidai jingshen wenti de taolun ziliao huibian zhi er guanyü xie zhongjian renwu zhuanji* 關於時代精神問題的討論 資料彙編之二 關於寫中間人物問題專輯) (Suzhou: Jiangsu sheng wenlian bangongshi, 1964), 4-5.
[330] Ibid., 33.
[331] Hunan University New Hunan University United Committee Library Unit 湖南大學新湖大聯委圖書館小組, *Criticism on 120 Poisonous Novels* (*120 bu youdu xiaoshuo pingpan* 120 部有毒小說評判) (Changsha: Hunan University New Hunan University United Committee Library Unit, 1968), 114-115.
[332] Ibid., 24. Lu Wen 魯文, "The Black Specimen of the Treachery to the Way of People's War—Criticizing the Poisonous Weed Novel 'Railroad Guerrillas'" (*Pan renmin zhanzheng zhi dao de hei biaoben—chedi pipan ducao xiaoshuo "tiedao youjidui"* 判人民戰爭之道的黑標本—徹底批判毒草小說'鐵道游擊隊') in Hubei Provincial Library ed., *Selected Essays on Criticisms of Poisonous Weed Novels* (*Pipan ducao xiaoshuo wenxuan* 批判毒草小說文選) (Wuhan: Hubei Provincial Library, 1971), 236.

1969) on his travel through Shandong in 1942.[333] Although the deed was perceived as glorious when Liu was the number two figure in the Party, it became scandalous as Liu became "China's Kruschev," the "satanic figure of Cultural Revolution demonology" from 1966 onwards.[334] Due to the presence of Liu's stand-in in the *lianhuanhua*, Ding and Han had to delete that part from the series, although the name of the "leading cadre" was never mentioned, and there was little to no visual resemblance between the character and Liu Shaoqi (fig. 5.4). It was not until the publication of the new edition in the 1980s that this part of the story was restored.

The fate of the three works illustrates that *lianhuanhua* was first and foremost an instrument for propaganda in Maoist China. As the fruits of the reform of the *lianhuanhua* industry in the 1950s, they each represent the Party's attempt to remold readers' understanding of classical novels, the collectivization campaign in rural areas, and the role Communists played in the Second Sino-Japanese War. However, when the works no longer served the Party-State's political purposes, they were either banned or forced to undergo extensive revisions. The artists' creativity in renewing the visual language of the medium was appreciated only when it fit the norms of current politics.

The second—and also the last—golden age of *lianhuanhua* in the PRC followed the death of Mao Zedong in 1976 and the end of the Cultural Revolution. The publishing houses were reorganized. Older artists, who were once castigated and exiled, were joined by a new generation of artists, who grew up practicing Western drawing styles in making propaganda

[333] For the guerrilla members' recollection of their meeting with Liu Shaoqi, please see Du Jiwei 杜季偉, Liu Jinshan 劉金山, Wang Zhisheng 王志勝, "Comrade Shaoqi and the Railroad Guerrillas" (*Shaoqi tongji he tiedao youjidui* 少奇同志和鐵道游擊隊), in Chinese Communist Linyi Party History Committee and Chinese Communist Linshu County Party Committee (*Zhonggong linyi diwei dangshi wei, Zhonggong linshu xianwei dangshi wei* 中共臨沂地委黨史委、中共臨沭縣委黨史委) eds., *Liu Shaoqi in Shandong* (*Liu Shaoqi zai Shandong* 劉少奇在山東) (Jinan: Shandong renmin chubanshe, 1994), 146-156.

[334] Roderick MacFarquhar, *Mao's Last Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 273.

posters and paintings while working in collective farms and factories, and later entered art academies for further education.[335] Together, they explored new subject matter, including the trauma experienced during the Cultural Revolution, novels and films from the Capitalist camp, and the novels of May Fourth writers.

From the late 1970s to the mid-1980s, the public craved public entertainment. *Lianhuanhua* became highly profitable for publishers. Drawing *lianhuanhua* manuscripts became attractive to the new generation of artists because of the high submission fees provided by the publishing houses and the instant fame they could garner from the publications.[336] Similar to the graduates of art academies in the 1950s, who chose to illustrate *lianhuanhua* as a means of "*yang youhua*" (supporting oil paintings), the young talents of the 1980s also saw *lianhuanhua* as a source of steady income while they continued their practice in other media. According to painter Wang Wei, who joined *lianhuanhua* drawing in the early 1980s, the payment he received for drawing one *lianhuanhua* was nearly three times more than his monthly salary for working in a drama troupe.[337] From 1977 to 1980, there were more than three thousand *lianhuanhua* titles published nationwide.[338] More than 400 million copies of *lianhuanhua* were issued in the year 1980. The year 1985 saw the publication of more than 800 million copies of *lianhuanhua*, eight times the amount in 1956.[339]

In 1979, Jiang Feng, who was condemned as a rightist in 1957 and hence was exiled from administration, returned to direct CAFA to complete his unfinished ambition of creating a socialist art academy. He planned to establish a department focusing on *nianhua*, *lianhuanhua*,

[335] Andrews, "Literature in Line," 31.
[336] Ibid., 32.
[337] Lent, *Asian Comics*, 36.
[338] Wang, Shi, and Zhu eds., Shanghai Modern Fine Arts History Series: 1949-2009, Vol. 6, Picture-story Books, 85.
[339] Ibid.

and propaganda posters; however, the idea of training artists to make propaganda posters was vehemently opposed by both faculty and administrators, as they did not see a strong demand for propaganda posters in the future.[340] In 1980, the Department of *Nianhua* and *Lianhuanhua* was established upon Jiang Feng's advocation. He persuaded Yan Han, who worked with Jiang for the reform of the East China Campus of CAFA in the 1950s and was also labeled a rightist, to be the first director of the department to rehabilitate his status. He Youzhi was invited to be the professor who would teach *lianhuanhua* drawing. In the four years of their coursework, students were trained in basic skills, including sketching, art anatomy, coloring, and plain line drawing, with an emphasis on making adaptations from text.[341] After teaching in the department for five years, He Youzhi returned to Shanghai in 1986. The department was reorganized as the Department of Folk Art (*minjian meishu xi* 民間美術系) in 1987 with the advocation of remaining faculty.

At first glance, the establishment of the Department of *Nianhua* and *Lianhuanhua* at CAFA seems like a long-awaited official recognition of the popular arts, as it finally entered the most prestigious art academy in China and became an artistic discipline. Yet the short history of this department suggests that the official support as well as the artists' enthusiasm toward *nianhua* and *lianhuanhua* continuously wane because of their close ties with propaganda, which was not only considered unfitting for the post-Mao era but also below fine art.[342]

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[340] Zhu Yongmei 朱永梅, "From the Department of *Nianhua* and *Lianhuanhua* to the Department of Folk Art: Interview with Yang Xianrang" (*Cong nianhua lianhuanhua xi dao minjian meishu xi: Yang Xianrang xiansheng fangtan* 從年畫連環畫系到民間美術系: 楊先讓先生訪談), *Art Guide* (*Meishu xiangdao* 美術嚮導), no. 1 (2015): 50.

[341] Yang Xianrang 楊先讓, "The Establishment of the Department of *Nianhua* and *Lianhuanhua*" (*Lianhuanhua nianhua xi de chuangjian* 連環畫年畫系的創建) in Fan Di'an 范迪安 ed., *Selected Collections in CAFA Museum: Nianhua, Comics, Illustrations, Lianhuanhua, and Illustrated Books* (*Zhongyang meishu xueyuan meishu guancang jingpin daxi: zhongguo xinnianhua, manhua, chatu, lianhuanhua, huiben juan* 中央美術學院美術館藏精品大系: 中國新年畫、漫畫、插圖、連環畫、繪本卷) (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 2018), 178-179.

[342] The unwillingness to develop *nianhua* and *lianhuanhua* at CAFA can be observed from Yang Xianrang's article

The detachment of *lianhuanhua* from propagandistic functions can be observed from the second and third National *Lianhuanhua* Exhibitions, held in 1981 and 1986, respectively. Five works won the first-class prizes for drawing in the second National *Lianhuanhua* Exhibition, including Wang Hongli's (王弘力, 1927–2019) *Fifteen Strings of Cash* (*Shiwu guan* 十五貫, 1957); Hua Sanchuan's (華三川, 1930–2004) *The White-Haired Girl* (*Baimao nü* 白毛女, 1965); Gu Liantang (顧蓮塘, 1935–1994), Wang Yisheng (王義勝, 1941–), Xu Rongchu (許榮初, 1934–), and Xu Yong's (徐勇, 1933–) *Bethune in China* (*Bai Qiu'en zai Zhongguo* 白求恩在中國, 1973); Chen Yiming (陳宜明, 1950–), Liu Yulian (劉宇廉, 1948–1997), and Li Bin's (李斌, 1949–) *Scar* (*Shanghen* 傷痕, 1979); and He Youzhi's *White Light* (*Baiguang* 白光, 1981). The exhibition assessed the works created during the period between 1963 and 1981, with the exception of Wang Hongli's *Fifteen Strings of Cash*, which was created in 1957 but was not submitted for the first National *Lianhuanhua* Exhibition.

As the first official review of *lianhuanhua* held after the Cultural Revolution, the exhibition awarded works that seem unaffected by or deviated from the Cultural Revolution aesthetics. Wang Hongli and Hua Sanchuan's works were created before the Cultural Revolution. Similar to the works I examined in my case studies, they formulated a national form that synthesized academic drawing and plain line drawing for propaganda purposes. The artists of *Bethune in China*, although drawing the work during the last few years of the Cultural Revolution, did not present Bethune, the main hero, according to the rigid principles promoted by Jiang Qing, who, along with the Gang of Four, was considered responsible for the chaos

and interview, in which he not only expresses his reluctance to transfer to the department, but also thinks transferring other artists to the department was unfair to their careers. See Yang, "The Establishment of the Department of *Nianhua* and *Lianhuanhua*" and Zhu, "From the Department of *Nianhua* and *Lianhuanhua* to the Department of Folk Art."

during the Cultural Revolution. In terms of content, similar to the works that won the first-class prizes in 1963, *Fifteen Strings of Cash* is a socialist reinterpretation of a classical Kun Opera, the *White-Haired Girl*, a revolutionary story in which the oppressed village girl fights against the evil landlord, and *Bethune in China* describes the life story of a hero who devoted himself to Communism.

Awarding first-class prizes to *White Light* and *Scar* is especially significant because it shows that the typical subject matters and the national form formed during the early Maoist period were gradually out of official favor. In *White Light*, He Youzhi discarded plain line drawing and experimented with ink splash and ink wash to create pictures that allude to the expressivity of literati painting (fig. 5.5). *White Light* is adopted from Lu Xun's short story, in which he accused the civil examination system of driving intellectuals to madness. As mentioned in the first chapter of this dissertation, the novels written by many left-wing writers were not exactly considered suitable reading materials by the authorities during their reformation of the publishing industry in the 1950s, because the works focus too much on exposing the dark side of the old society without clear guidance regarding communist ideals. The artists who drew *Scar* deployed ink unconventionally, as if it was watercolor, without any outline to define the contours of human figures and objects (fig. 5.6). Corresponding with the emergence of scar literature, a new genre of fiction that explores the traumatic memories of the Cultural Revolution, the *lianhuanhua* sheds off the celebratory tone of socialist realism in the Maoist period.

In the third National *Lianhuanhua* Exhibition in 1986, You Jingdong's (尤勁東, 1949–) *At Middle Age* (*Ren dao zhongnian* 人到中年, 1981), Li Quanwu (李全武, 1957–) and Xu Yongmin's (徐勇民, 1957–) *The Crescent Moon* (*Yueya'er* 月牙兒, 1983), Han Shuli's (韓書力, 1948–) *Bangjin Flowers* (*Bangjin meiduo* 邦錦美朵, 1983), and Gao Yun's (高雲, 1956–) *Luo*

Lun's Journey to Civil Examination (*Luo Lun gankao,* 羅倫趕考, 1983) won the first-class prizes for drawing. None of the works were made in a style that can be categorized as "national form," nor did they contain blatant propagandistic messages. Illustrating the bleak reality faced by a middle-aged intellectual who was sent to the countryside in her youthful days, You Jingdong combined realist figural painting and a decorative pattern reminiscent of Gustav Klimt to express the inner mental turmoil of the main character. *The Crescent Moon*, based on a novel written by Lao She in 1935, depicts the miserable life of a young prostitute in the old society. Unlike the *lianhuanhua* in the 1950s and 1960s, the artists no longer illustrated the environment surrounding the characters meticulously but extracted specific objects and human figures to represent the scenes. Han Shuli painted a Tibetan folk story by utilizing gloomy colors and patterns inspired by decorative motifs on ancient stoneware and bronze vessels (fig. 5.7). Gao Yun's work is made with plain line drawing, but he twisted the anatomy of the human figures and the forms of architecture to accentuate his unique compositional design.

The two *lianhuanhua* exhibitions in the 1980s show the gradual detachment between *lianhuanhua* and propaganda. Artists acquired more room for creativity and exploration of various styles. It is noteworthy that the Department of *Nianhua* and *Lianhuanhua* at CAFA played a leading role in the transformation of *lianhuanhua*. Not only the professor, He Youzhi, drew in a literati style, the graduates of the department, including Liu Yulian and Han Shuli, created works that exhibit little traces of the national form. Formulated in the 1950s and 1960s, the national form in *lianhuanhua* faced an irrevocable decline.

Although the *lianhuanhua* industry saw another boom in the early years of the reform period, the market for *lianhuanhua* has shrunk drastically in recent decades. The number of publications started to drop from 1986 onwards. Compared to the situation in 1985, the number

of titles published shrunk by fifty-eight percent, and the number of copies shrunk by ninety percent in 1987.[343] By 1991, annual production dropped over ninety percent, with only 350 *lianhuanhua* titles being published that year.[344]

Scholars have debated the question of why *lianhuanhua* suddenly lost its luster in popular culture. With the economic reform in the late 1980s, *lianhuanhua* faced the competition of other media, including television and videocassette players and other graphical reading, such as manga from Japan.[345] Minjie Chen contended that the specific format of *lianhuanhua*—a single-framed picture accompanying a short text on each page—was effective in helping lowly educated readers to comprehend the text; thus, when the illiteracy rate dropped to 22–25% by 1982 and the majority of readers no longer needed visual aid to enjoy stories, the form of *lianhuanhua* became obsolete and redundant.[346]

Moreover, while the first half of the 1980s saw a tremendous increase in *lianhuanhua* publication, the quality of the works went on two extremes. The high-ended works exhibit bold experiments that incorporated various media, including but not limited to ink, oil paint, watercolor, gouache, and woodcut, with styles incorporating European modernist art or the archaic forms in Chinese classical art; the lower-ended ones were crudely made at a fast pace, illustrating martial arts stories and pirated contents from Hollywood films. Thus, we observe the phenomenon in which critics lamented that viewers' reading habits failed to follow the artists' new stylistic experiments, while the officials blamed the low quality of the fast-produced *lianhuanhua* as the cause of readers' loss of appetite for the medium.[347]

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[343] Wan, *A Study on Twentieth Century Lianhuanhua*, 148.
[344] Ibid.
[345] Chen, "Chinese Lian Huan Hua and Literacy," 173; Lent, *Asian Comics*, 36.
[346] Chen, "Chinese Lian Huan Hua and Literacy," 173.
[347] Wan, *A Study on Twentieth Century Lianhuanhua*, 164.

The economic reform impacted the publishers, bookstores, and artists of *lianhuanhua*. The government started to transfer the responsibility of distribution to publishers and bookstores. Without government subsidy, the bookstores were not willing to buy the *lianhuanhua* that seemed unprofitable or marginally profitable to them.[348] Moreover, the opening-up led to the reemergence of an art market, which was nearly non-existent during the socialist period. With the development of the art market in the 1990s, single-frame painting became more lucrative than *lianhuanhua*.[349] Artists also enjoyed more freedom, as they did not have to base their work on existing texts, nor did they need to negotiate with editors and publishers when creating paintings.

With the downfall of *lianhuanhua* publication, a heated market for *lianhuanhua* collection emerged. Most of the *lianhuanhua* published nowadays are reprinted versions of the "classic" works that were first made in the mid-1950s and mid-1960s, serving as nostalgic items that take older readers and collectors back to the good old days. Interestingly, the medium's didactic function still made it the go-to instrument for the authorities to explain policies. A *lianhuanhua* series, *48 Tips for Avoiding Scams* (*fangpian sishiba zhao* 防騙四十八招), was published by Heilongjiang People's Art Press in 2017. The series was commissioned by the Beijing Bingzheng Center for the Promotion of Banking Consumer Right and Interest, which is supervised by the China Banking Regulatory Commission, for distribution in banks. The tactic reminds us of the history of the instrumentalization of *lianhuanhua* in the 1950s and 1960s for the purpose of propagating policies and political campaigns. In the *lianhuanhua* series, scenes of the twenty-first century are rendered through the familiar style composed of plain line drawing and academic draftsmanship, with a thickened outline framing the contour of the main character

[348] Lent, *Asian Comics*, 36.
[349] Wang, Shi, and Zhu eds., *Shanghai Modern Fine Arts History Series: 1949-2009, Vol. 6, Picture-story Books*, 93.

(fig. 5.8). The thick outline and the performative gesture also suggest the influence of the *lianhuanhua* of the Cultural Revolution. It seems that *lianhuanhua* and the style established during the mid-1950s and mid-1960s were still perceived by the authorities as valuable tools for propaganda and didacticism, especially when the imagined audiences are the generation that grew up reading *lianhuanhua* as major entertainment.

APPENDIX 1:

Lianhuanhua Before 1949

It is hard to pinpoint an exact year of the emergence of the first *lianhuanhua.* The form emerged from Shanghai in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, when Shanghai saw the introduction of lithography and a burgeoning publishing industry. Two forms of publication can be seen as the precursors to *lianhuanhua*: news pictorials and book illustrations. In 1885, *The Illustrated News of the Dianshizhai Lithograph Studio* (*Dianshizhai Huabao* 點石齋畫報, hereafter *Dianshizhai Pictorial*), the lithographic illustrated news founded by the British businessman Ernest Major (1841–1908), published eight pictures that illustrate the Gapson Coup, a failed coup d'état that took place in 1884 in Korea. It was the first time a political event was narrated through sequential pictures.[350] The pictures depict themes such as murder cases, trials, wars, incidents and new inventions in the West, and so on. The newspaper *Chaobao* (潮報) published an album which bound its single-page pictorial in 1916.[351] These collections of news illustrations became a prototype of *lianhuanhua*.

Chapter Pictures (*Huihuitu* 回回圖), a form of illustration commonly seen in Ming and Qing chapter novels, may be another precursor of *lianhuanhua*. In the novels, one illustration is paired with one chapter. The format is how this form of illustration got its name.[352] It deals with a more extended storyline instead of illustrating a single event with one or a few pictures. The first lithography Chapter Picture is *The Story of the Three Kingdoms*, illustrated by Zhu Zhixuan

[350] Shen, "*Lianhuanhua* and *Manhua*," 100; Wan, *A Study on Twentieth Century Lianhuanhua*, 27.
[351] Shen, "*Lianhuanhua* and *Manhua*," 100.
[352] Ibid.

(朱芝軒) and published by Wenyi Book Company in Shanghai in 1899.[353] Zhu strengthened a sense of continuity between the pictures by drawing over two hundred pictures based on the titles of each chapter and placing more than one picture in each chapter.[354]

The year 1918 marks a significant change in the content of *lianhuanhua*. In that year, the Peking opera serial, *Exchange the Prince for a Leopard Cat* (*Limao huan Taizi* 貍貓換太子), became a blockbuster in Shanghai.[355] Small publishers hired many artists to draw *lianhuanhua* based on the show that was currently running. From that point on, other popular culture genres, including operas, circus performances, novels, and films, became recurring themes of *lianhuanhua*.

The 1920s and 1930s saw the first boom of *lianhuanhua* publication, and this was when the form of publication got its official name. The production of *lianhuanhua* was handled by a few large and about 20 small publishers.[356] The term "*lianhuantuhua*" first appeared in the book title of *Serial Pictures of Three Kingdoms* (*Lianhuan tuhua sanguo zhi* 連環圖畫三國誌), published by World Book Company in Shanghai in 1927.[357] Since the character "tu" (圖) and "hua" (畫) both indicate pictures in Chinese, the character "tu" was gradually omitted. *Lianhuanhua* became the general term for this kind of publication.

To understand how the Chinese Communist Party reformed the *lianhuanhua* industry, it is necessary to know the *lianhuanhua* production and distribution system during the Republican Period. Since there was no formal training system for *lianhuanhua* drawing, *lianhuanhua* artists

[353] Aying, *The History of Chinese Lianhuanhua*, 24.
[354] Zhou Jiarong 周佳榮, *Fiction of the Ming and Qing Dynasty: In Between History and Literature* (*Ming Qing xiaoshuo: lishi yu wenxue zhijian* 明清小說: 歷史與文學之間) (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2016), 227.
[355] Shen, "*Lianhuanhua* and *Manhua*," 101.
[356] Lent, *Asian Comics*, 32.
[357] Shen, "*Lianhuanhua* and *Manhua*," 103.

were either self-taught or learned their skills by working as apprentices in other established *lianhuanhua* artists' studios. When an artist received a commission from a publisher, he was in charge of producing both text and images. Usually, the artist took care of the compositions and the depiction of the main characters. At the same time, the apprentice was given the task of drawing the background and the details, including clothing patterns, flora, fauna, architecture, etc.[358] There were two new volumes of each *lianhuanhua* serial released to the market daily; the artists had to submit finished illustrations every day to keep up with the publishers' pace.[359] Since time was essential, most of the *lianhuanhua* were produced crudely.[360] The main reason that *lianhuanhua* was attractive to readers is that it illustrated the stories that were currently playing in theaters. Publishers strove to publish as many as they could while the operas were still *en vogue*. To meet such demands, it is not surprising that the artists did not spend much time designing the figures and settings. They often copied what they saw in the opera, so all the traditional symbolism of the costumes, gestures, and make-up were depicted in their works.[361]

During the Republican Period, the *lianhuanhua* industry developed its unique method of distribution—renting, instead of selling, *lianhuanhua* to readers. This method of distribution came from the chasm between the tastes of intellectuals and the less-educated population. Since the contents of *lianhuanhua* were mostly adapted from plays, anecdotes, and legendary stories, cultural elites took *lianhuanhua* as something too vulgar for them to read.[362] *Lianhuanhua* were rarely found in bookstores, since the primary patrons of bookstores were intellectuals. *Lianhuanhua*, however, were welcomed by people with lower incomes and education. Owners of

[358] Shen, "Comics, Picture Books, and Cartoonists in Republican China," 5-6.
[359] Shen, "*Lianhuanhua* and *Manhua*," 105.
[360] Ibid., 101.
[361] Shen, "Comics, Picture Books, and Cartoonists in Republican China," 3.
[362] Shen, "*Lianhuanhua* and *Manhua*," 103.

street book stalls bought *lianhuanhua* from small publishers and then rented them to readers at a very low price. Limited by their meager income, renting the books instead of buying them was the most economical way for commoners to enjoy this form of entertainment.

Another current of *lianhuanhua* in Republican China was led by Lu Xun, along with left-wing intellectuals, who saw *lianhuanhua* as "the most powerful and most prevalent instruments of 'mass education,'" and bookstalls as "the most popular mobile libraries for the masses of Shanghai."[363] Lu Xun introduced modernist woodcut prints made by European avant-garde artists, including Frans Masereel, Käthe Kollwitz, Carl Meffert, and William Siegels, to China and encouraged young artists not only to experiment with the avant-garde style, but also to depict the miserable lives of the oppressed at the bottom of society. He collaborated with the *Liangyou* book company to publish the woodcut narrative series made by Masereel and Kollwitz, but the books' circulation was very limited because the books were printed in small editions with not much exposure. Understanding that the avant-garde woodcut did not seem attractive to the majority of readers, Lu Xun also attempted to hire commercial *lianhuanhua* artists to illustrate the scripts written by left-wing writers. However, the attempt failed because the commercial *lianhuanhua* artists were controlled by the publishers. None of them were willing to work for this new project.[364]

The *lianhuanhua* produced by the left-wing woodcut artists started to reach the common people in the liberated area ruled by the Communists during the Second Sino-Japanese War. Since the late 1930s, the communist capital, Yan'an, assimilated young woodcut artists who had fled from Shanghai and other big cities. In 1942, Mao Zedong announced the ideological

[363] Mao Dun 茅盾, "*Lianhuanhua* Novels" (*Lianhuantuhua xiaoshuo* 連環圖畫小說), *Literature Monthly* (*Wenxue Yuebao* 文學月報), vol. 1, no. 5-6 (1932): 209-211.
[364] Zhao Jiabi 趙家璧, "Memory About Lu Xun and *Lianhuanhua*" (*Huiyi Lu Xun yu lianhuan tuhua* 回憶魯迅與連環圖畫), *Arts* (*Meishu* 美術), no. 8 (1979): 46.

principles that art should serve politics in his "Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art." The woodcut artists, who were inspired by Lu Xun in the 1930s, started to illustrate stories about battles between the Communist and Japanese armies and the lives of poor peasants. The works hybridized the urban avant-garde woodblock printing with *nianhua* popular in the countryside.[365] Woodcut artists gradually abandoned the sharp black and white contrast of the avant-garde style, and turned to using the clear, thick outlines inherent in folk art, because they believed messages conveyed through this folk art style were easier for the peasants to understand. Woodcut *lianhuanhua* artists, such as Yan Han, Lü Meng, and Li Lu, played significant roles in *lianhuanhua* reform after 1949.

[365] Flath, *The Cult of Happiness*, 134-149.

APPENDIX 2: FIGURES

Introduction

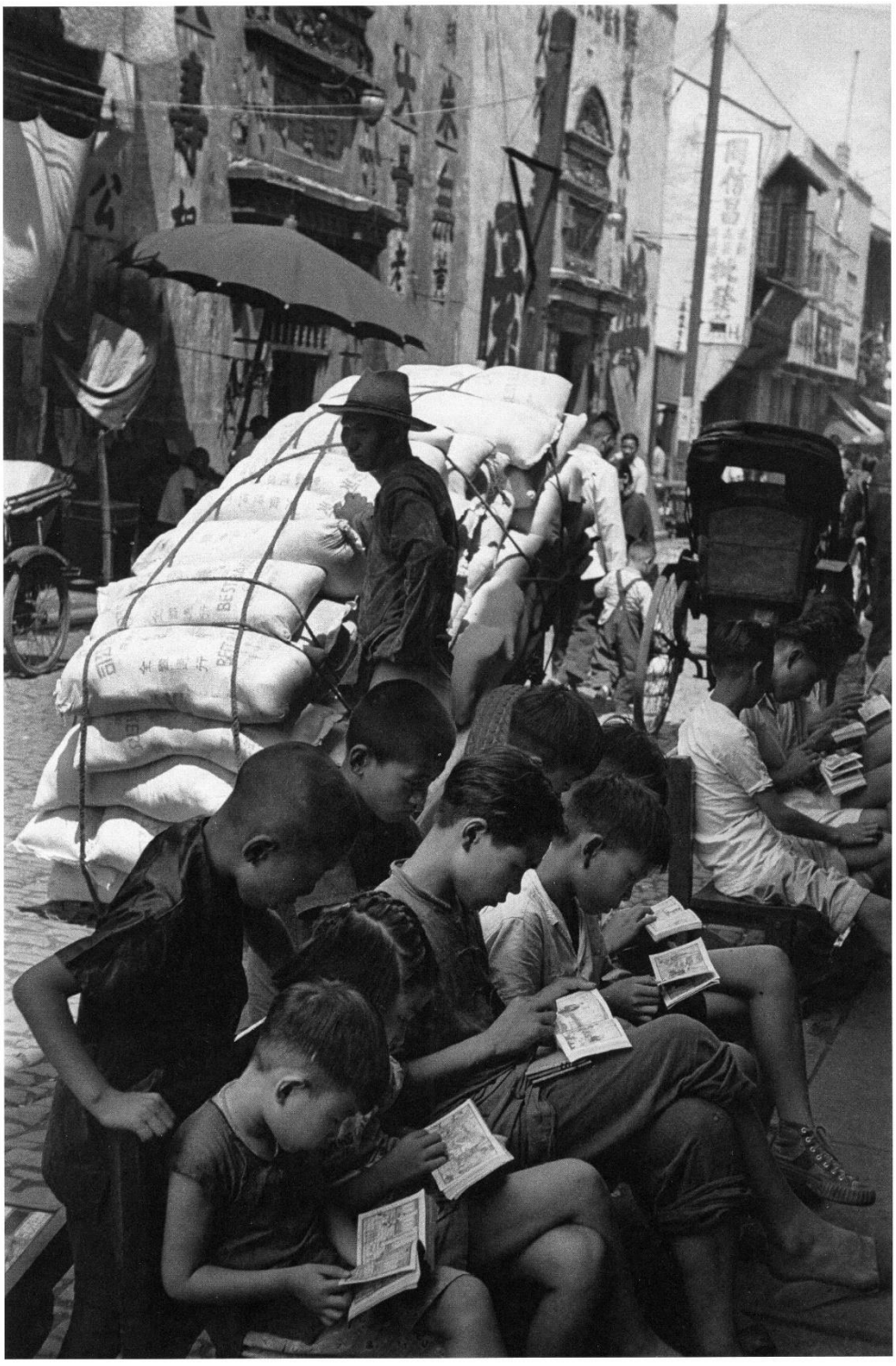

Figure 0.1: Henri Cartier-Bresson, *Travelling Library Providing Illustrated Propaganda Story-Books for Children, Shanghai*, September 1949.

Figure 0.2: Geng Yuemin, *Fascinating*, 1974.

Chapter 1

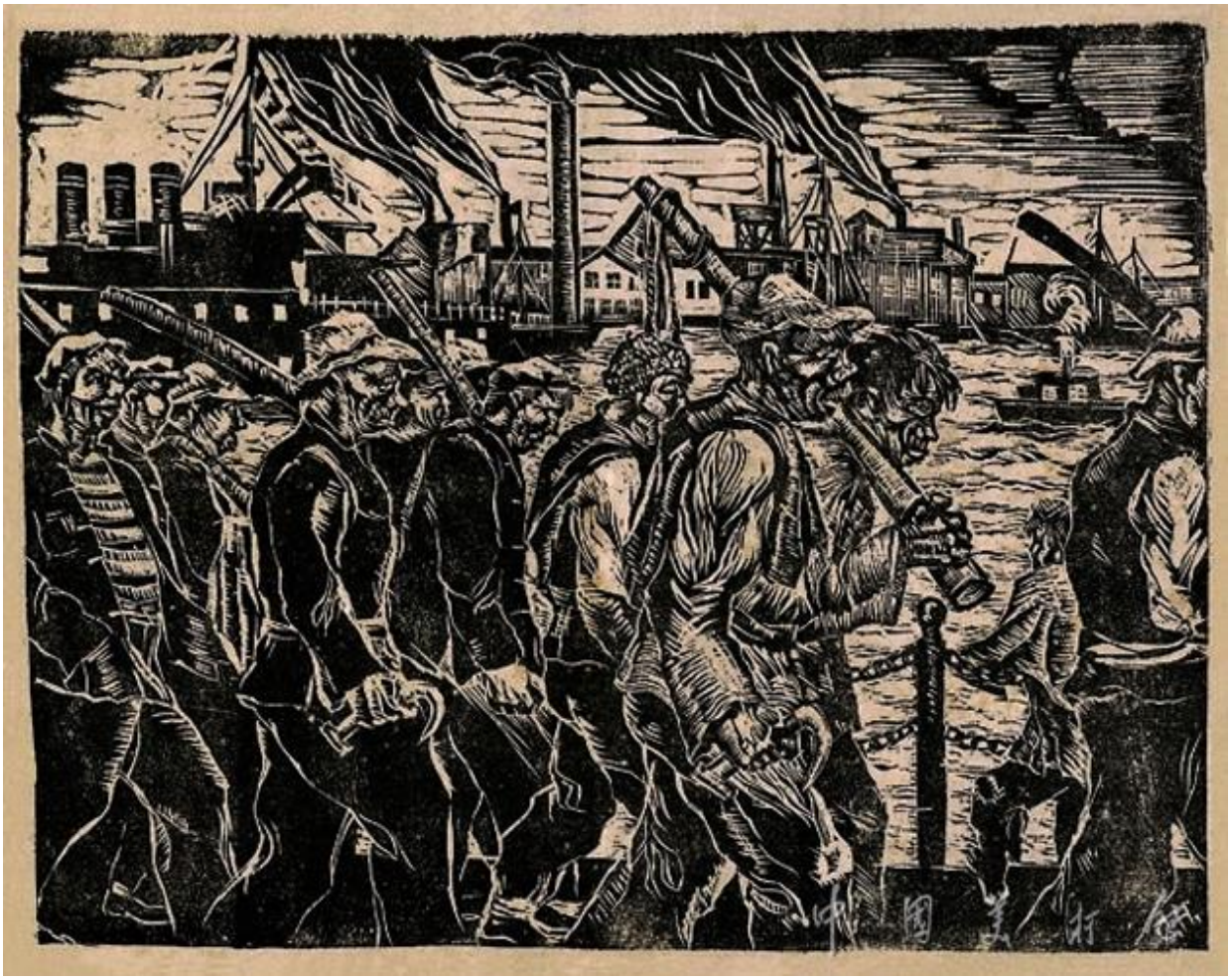

Figure 1.1: Jiang Feng, *Longshoremen*, 1931.

Figure 1.2: Jiang Feng, *Studying is Good*, 1944.


Figure 1.3: Picture 50 in Mo Pu, Lü Meng, and Yajun, *Iron Buddha Temple*, 1943.

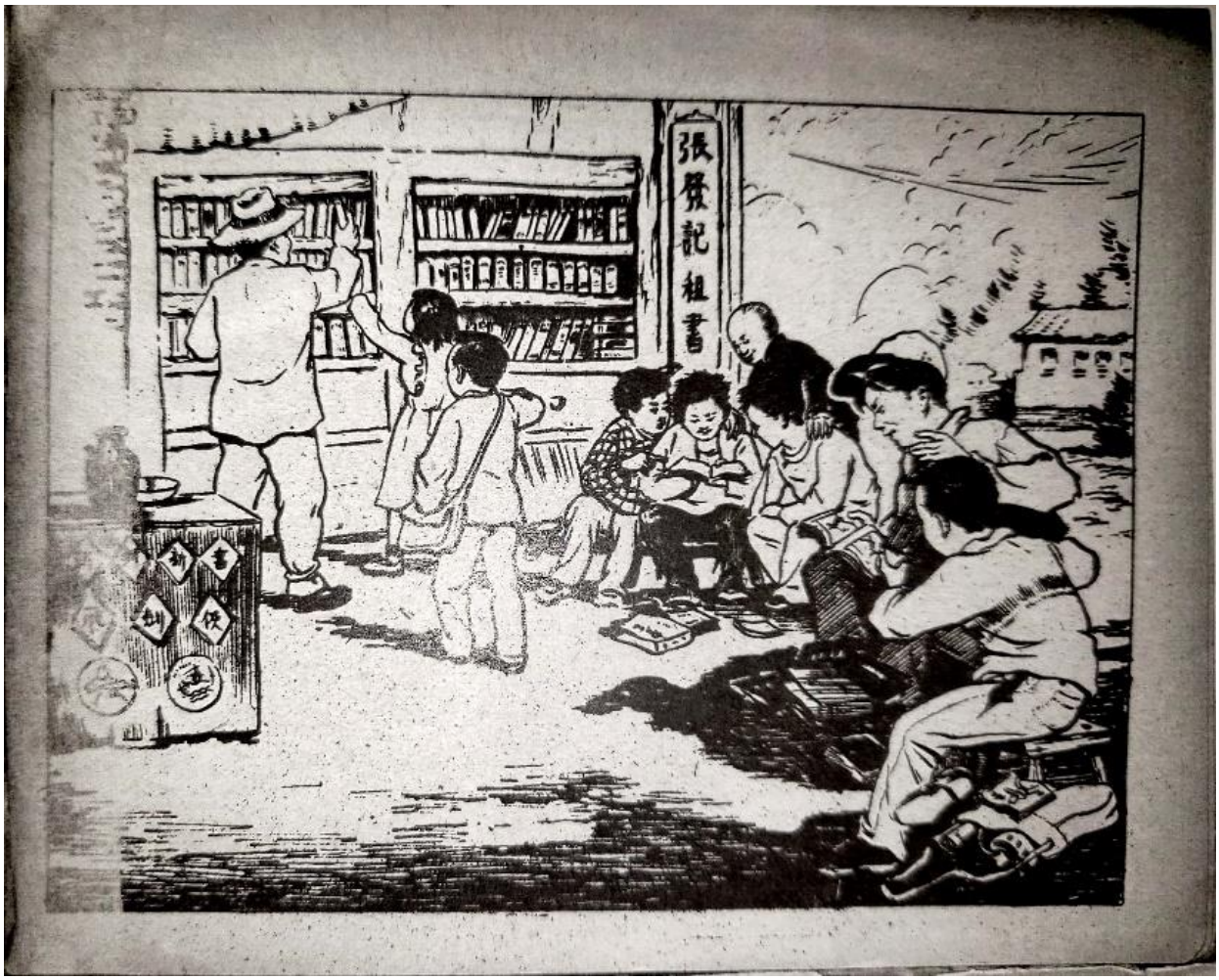

Figure 1.4: Li Changkuan in a street bookstall. Picture 3 in Bai Chunxi, Gao Jifang, and Shu Hua, *The Fall of the Youth, Li Changkuan*, 1956.

Figure 1.5: Zhou Zhensen passing by a bookstall. Picture 59 in Bai Chunxi, Gao Jifang, and Shu Hua, *The Fall of the Youth, Li Changkuan*, 1956.

Figure 1.6: Zhou Zhensen and other children in a bookstall. Picture 61 in Bai Chunxi, Gao Jifang, and Shu Hua, *The Fall of the Youth, Li Changkuan*, 1956.

Figure 1.7: Wang Yongjiu daydreaming about defeating American soldiers in the Korean War. Su Guang, "The Absurd Journey," *Lianhuanhua Pictorial* 10 (May 21 1956), 15.

Figure 1.8: Haiwa, the main character, trying to escape from a room full of sleeping Japanese soldiers. Picture 138 in Liu Jiyou, *An Urgent Letter*, 1950.

Figure 1.9: Lin Gang, *Zhao Guilan at the Heroes' Reception*, 1952.

Figure 1.10: Communist soldiers encounter the Yi people. Picture 34 in Lin Ronggui, *The Twenty-Five Thousand Miles of Long March*, 1950.

Figure 1.11: The General giving guns and ammunition to the Yi as a gift. Huang Yide, *The Twenty-Five Thousand Miles of Long March*, 1950.

Figure 1.12: The Communist soldiers chasing the fleeing Nationalists. Huang Yide, *The Twenty-Five Thousand Miles of Long March*, 1950.

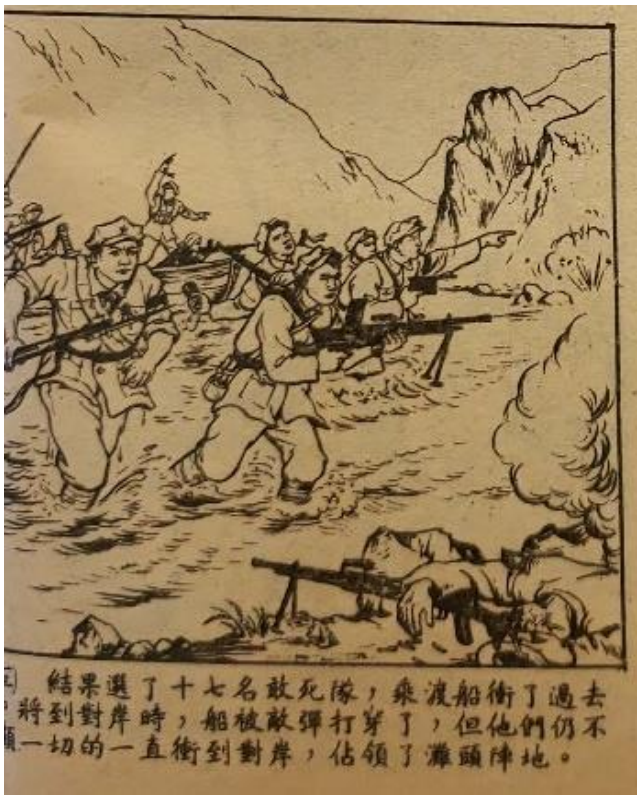

Figure 1.13: The Red Army crossing a river. Lu Guangzhao, ed., "The Twenty-Five Thousand Miles of Long March," *Lianhuanhua Pictorial* 5 (August 1, 1951), 6.

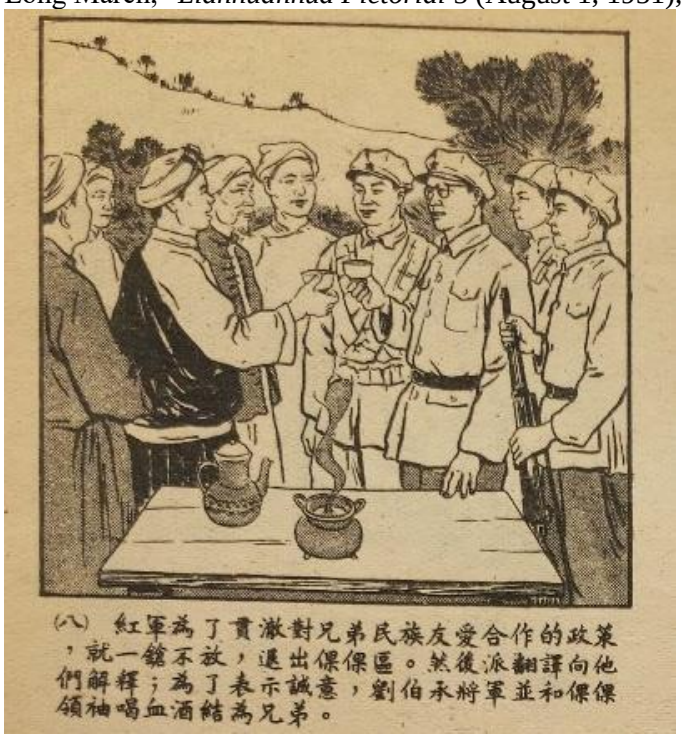

Figure 1.14: The general of the Red Army and the leader of the Yi become sworn brothers in a ceremony. Lu Guangzhao, ed., "The Twenty-Five Thousand Miles of Long March," 5.

Figure 1.15: Staff of the New Art Press. Photographed at the third anniversary of the New Art Press. Sept. 1, 1955.

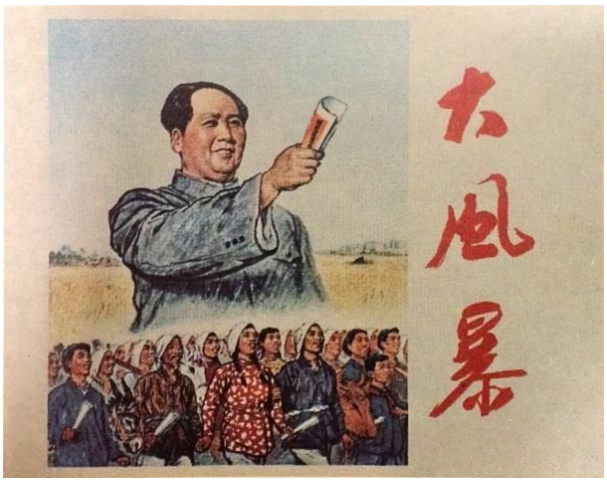

Figure 1.16: Jian Zhaohe, Book Cover of *The Great Storm*, 1955.

Figure 1.17: Wu Hufan, Book Cover of *Midnight Medicine Delivery*, 1955.

Figure 1.18: Liu Haisu, Book Cover of *We Can Do It Too*, 1955.

Figure 1.19: Staff of Shanghai People’ s Art Press. Photographed when the New Art Press merged with Shanghai People’ s Art Press, 1956.

Chapter 2

Figure 2.1: Picture 89 in Zhao Hongben, *Heaven, Hell*, 1941.

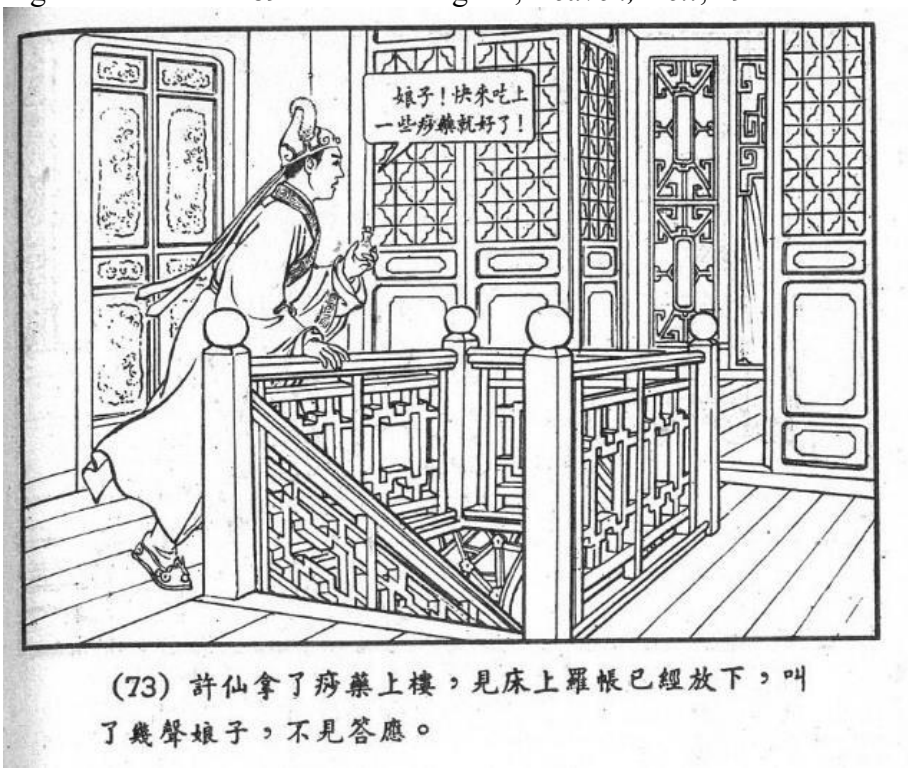

Figure 2.2: Picture 73 in Zhao Hongben, *The Legend of the White Snake,* 1957.

Figure 2.3: Jin Chanxiang, “Imbibing Pimp’s Urine,” in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, vol. 2 (Shanghai: Dianshizhai, 1884), 84.

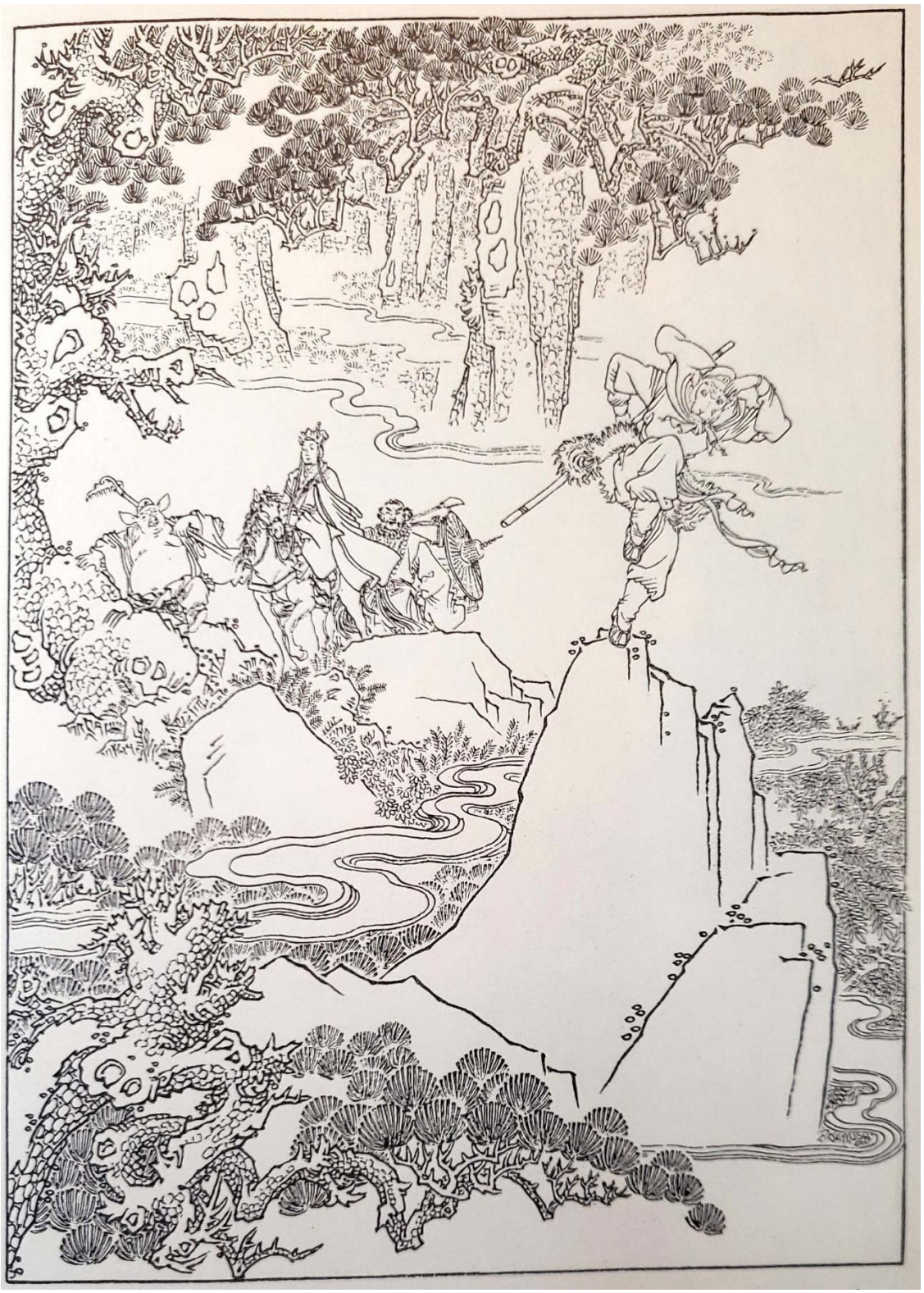

Figure 2.4: Picture 1 in Zhao Hongben and Qian Xiaodai, *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone-Demon*, 1962.

Figure 2.5: Picture 81 in Chen Guangyi, *Great Havoc in Heaven*, 1954.

Figure 2.6: Liu Jiyou, *Havoc in Heaven*, 1956.

Figure 2.7: Picture 47 in Zhao Hongben and Qian Xiaodai, *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone-Demon*, 1962.

Figure 2.8: Picture 13 in Jin Shaomei and Zhang Xingrui, *The Journey to the West Lianhuanhua*, vol. 2, 1932.

Figure 2.9: The circle Sun draws by the golden rod repels the White-Bone Demon. Picture 13 in Zhao Hongben and Qian Xiaodai, *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone-Demon*, 1962.

Figure 2.10: Tripitaka chanting the tight-skillet spell. Picture 54 in Zhao Hongben and Qian Xiaodai, *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone-Demon*, 1962.

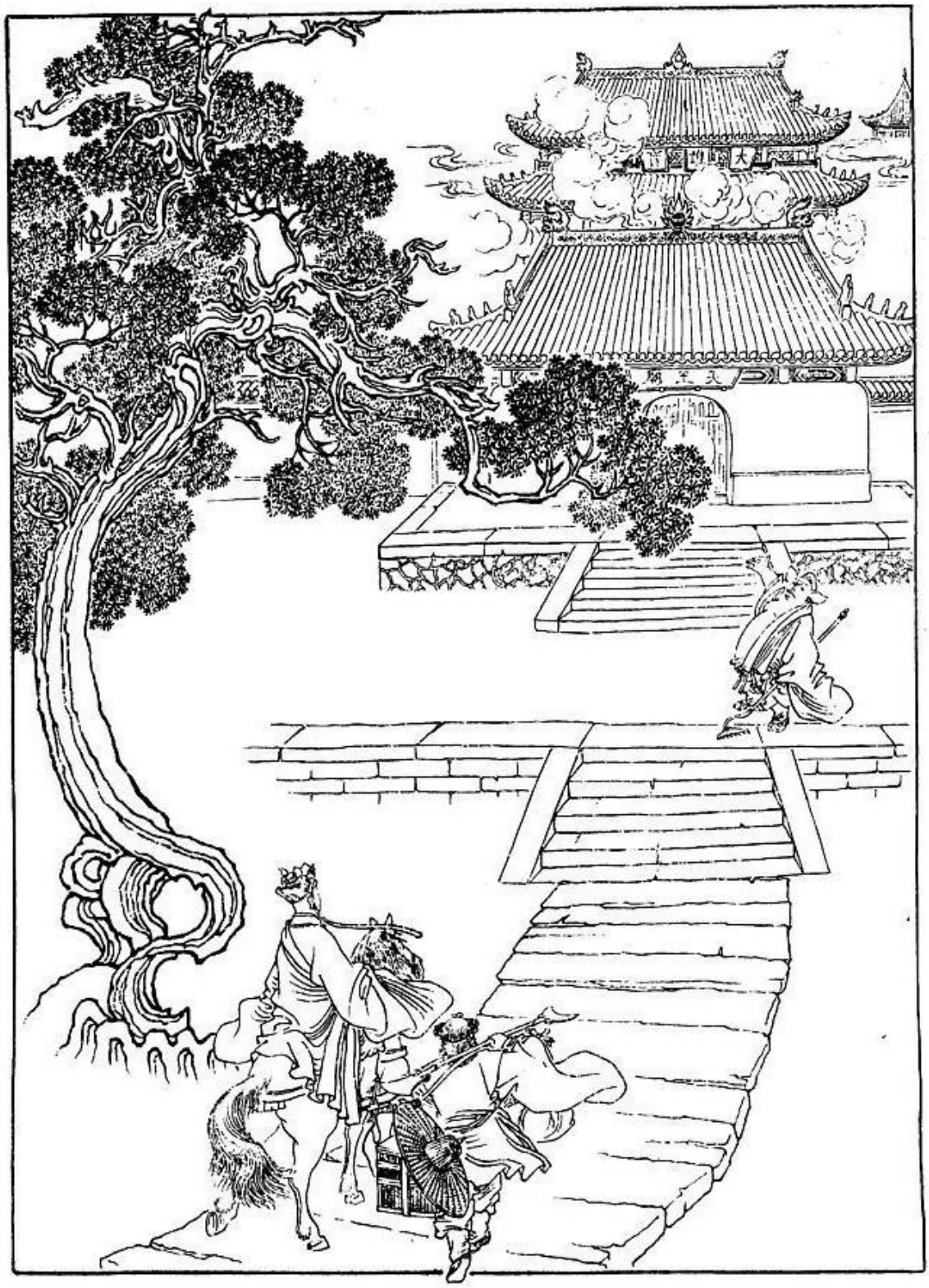

Figure 2.11: Zhu Bajie leads the rest of the pilgrims to a temple. Picture 65 in Zhao Hongben and Qian Xiaodai, *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone-Demon*, 1962.

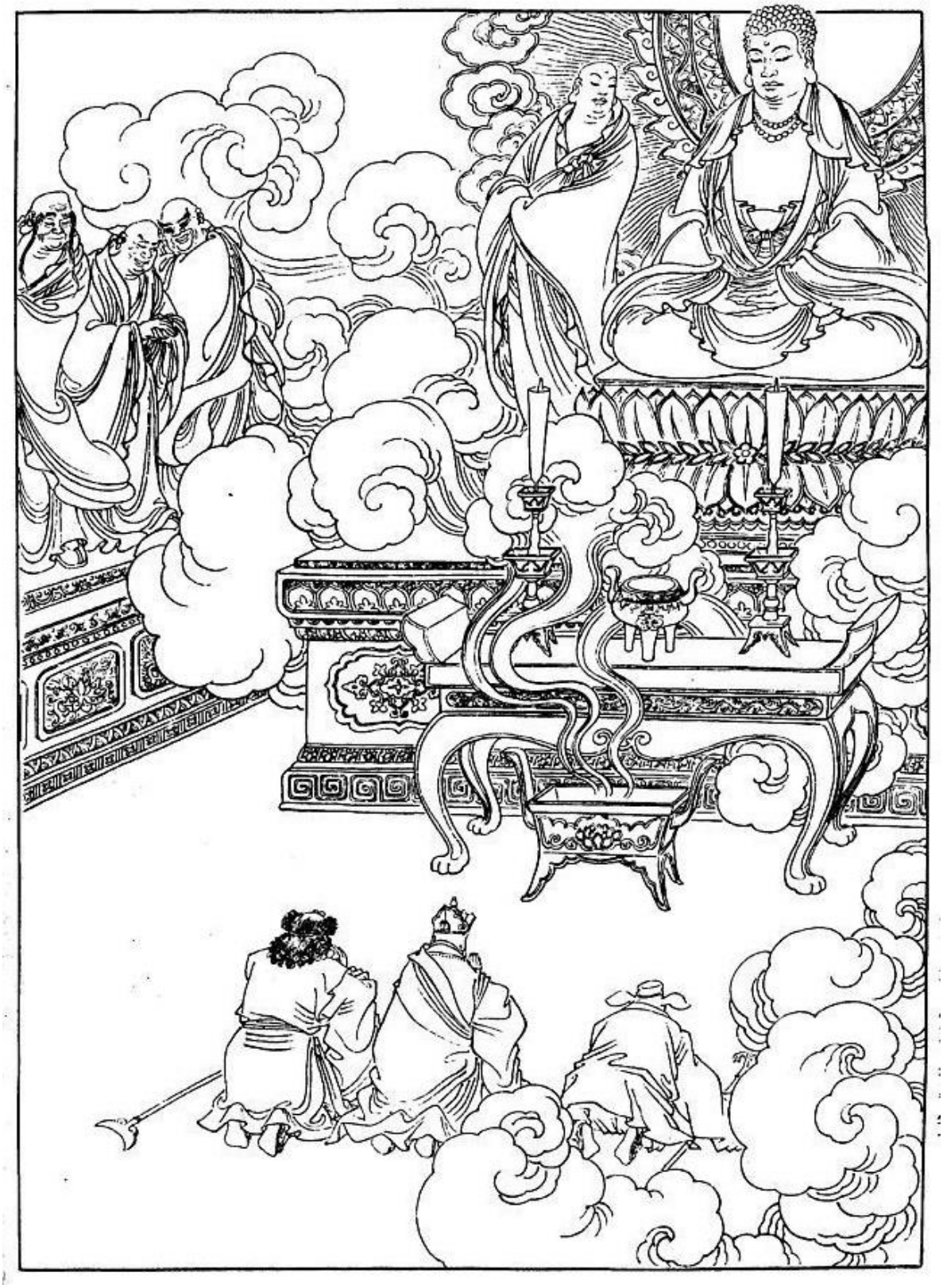

Figure 2.12: Picture 66 in Zhao Hongben and Qian Xiaodai, *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone-Demon*, 1962.

Figure 2.13: Page 16 in Zhao Hongben and Qian Xiaodai, *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone-Demon*, 1962.

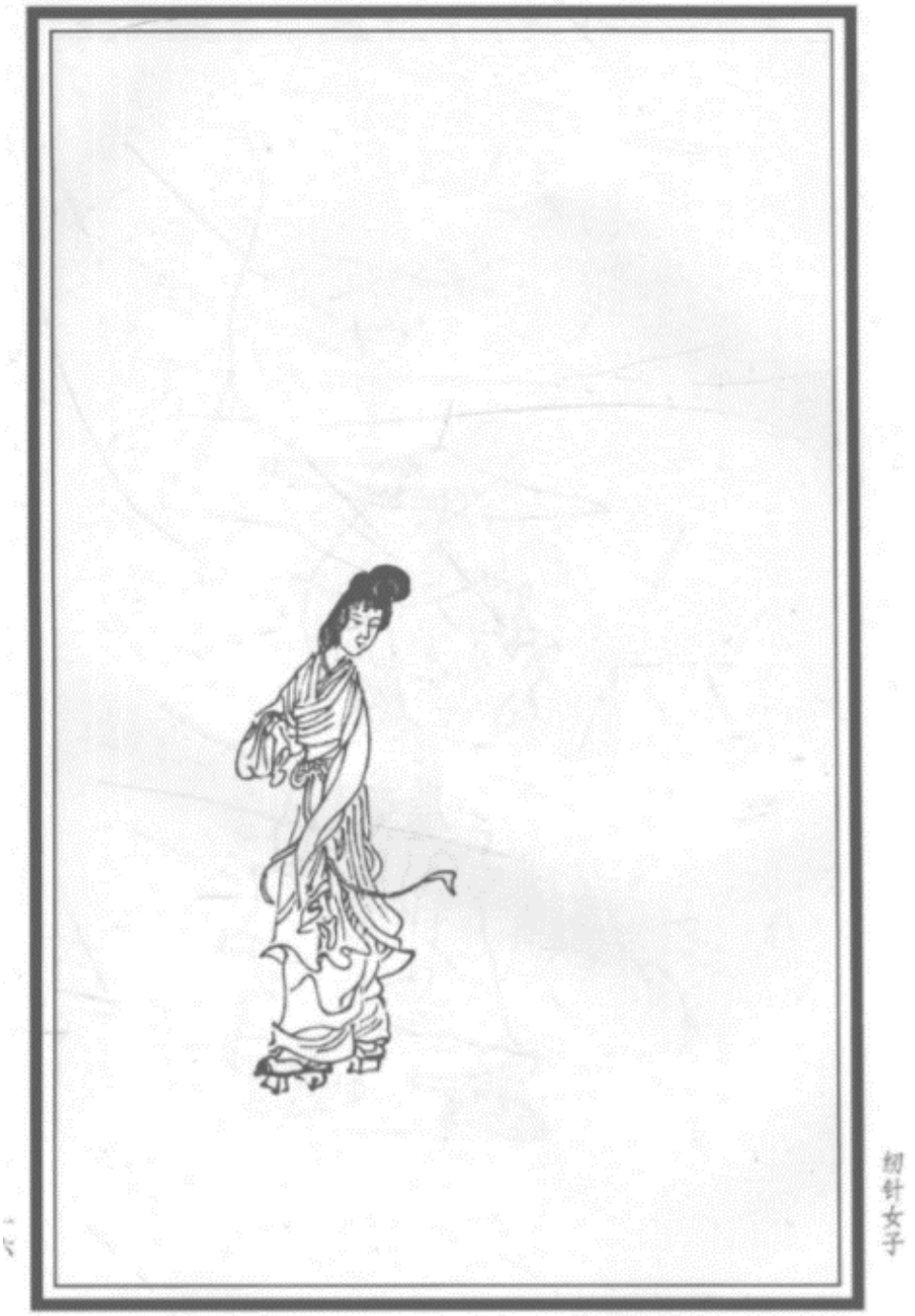

Figure 2.14: Ren Xiong, “The Sewing Woman.” From Luan Baoqun, Wang Jing, eds., *Illustrations of Knight at Arms* (Shijiazhuang: Hebei meishu chubanshe, 1996), 16.

Figure 2.15: Picture 44 in Zhao Hongben and Qian Xiaodai, *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone-Demon*, 1962.

Figure 2.16: The demonstration of Guan Tong's mountains and rocks in *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting: A Facsimile of the 1887-1888 Shanghai Edition*, 1956.

Figure 2.17: The demonstration of Liu Songnian's mountains and rocks in *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting: A Facsimile of the 1887-1888 Shanghai Edition*, 1956.

Figure 2.18: Zhao Hongben and Qian Xiaodai, *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone-Demon*, 1963.

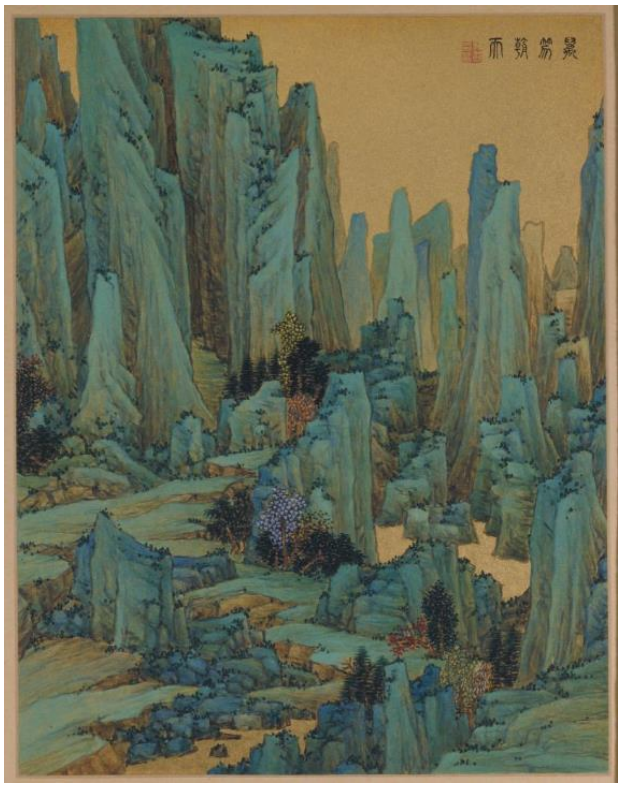

Figure 2.19: Ren Xiong, *Ten-thousand Precipitous Peaks*, 1856.

Figure 2.20: Ren Xiong, *Ten-thousand Bamboo in Clouds and Rain*, 1856

Figure 2.21: Anonymous Artist, *Emperor Minghuang's Journey to Shu*, 618-907.

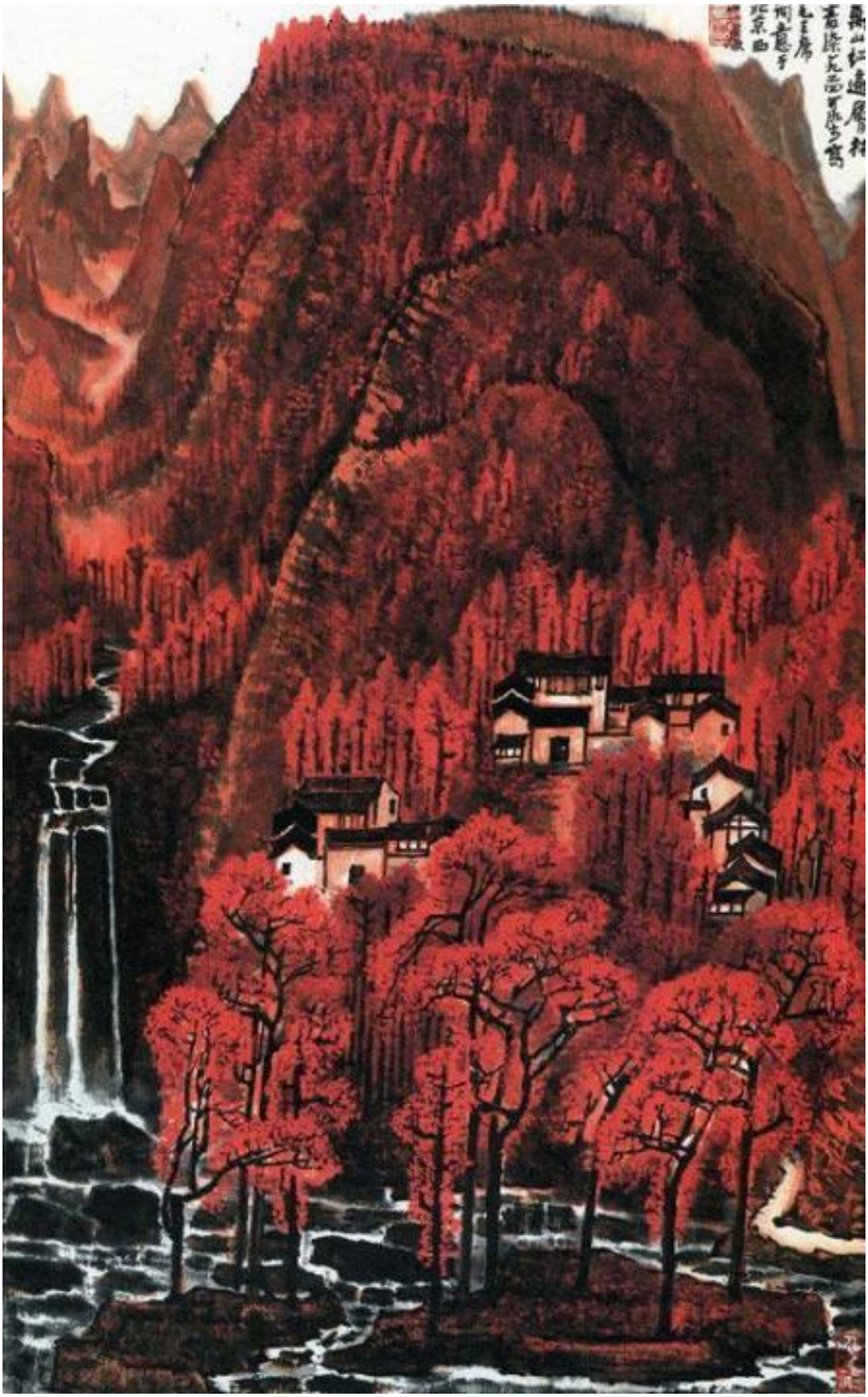

Figure 2.22: Li Keran, *Ten Thousand Mountains Bathed in Red*, 1964.

Figure 2.23: Shi Lu, *Fighting in Northern Shaanxi*, 1959.

Figure 2.24: Wu Hufan, *Twin Pines and Layered Green*, 1959.

Figure 2.25: You Qiu, *Picture of Hongfu*, 1575.

Figure 2.26: Chen Hongshou, *Boys Worshipping Buddha*, ca. 1650.

Figure 2.27: Picture 41 in Zhao Hongben and Qian Xiaodai, *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone-Demon*, 1962.

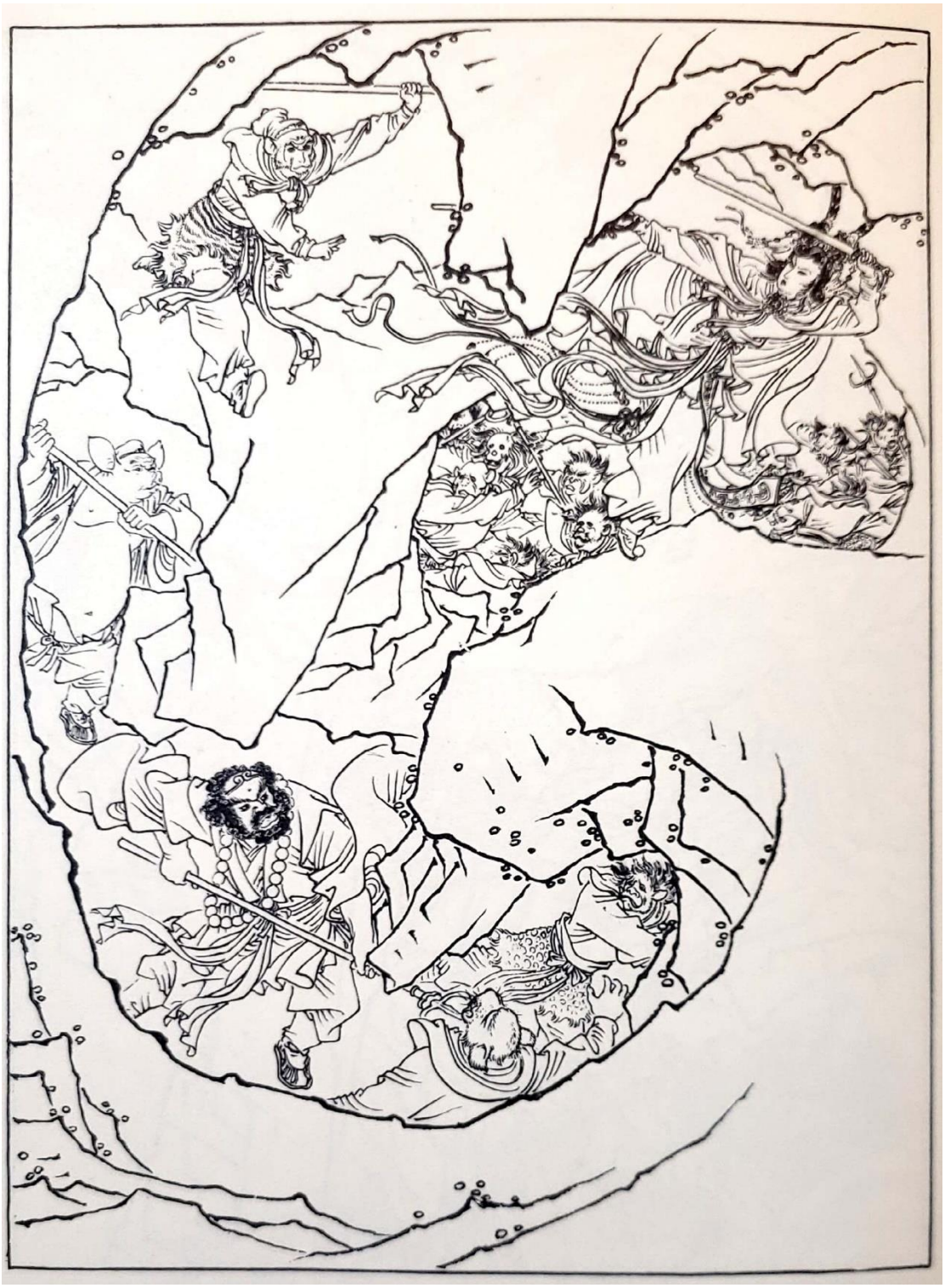

Figure 2.28: Picture 106 in Zhao Hongben and Qian Xiaodai, *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone-Demon*, 1962.

Chapter 3

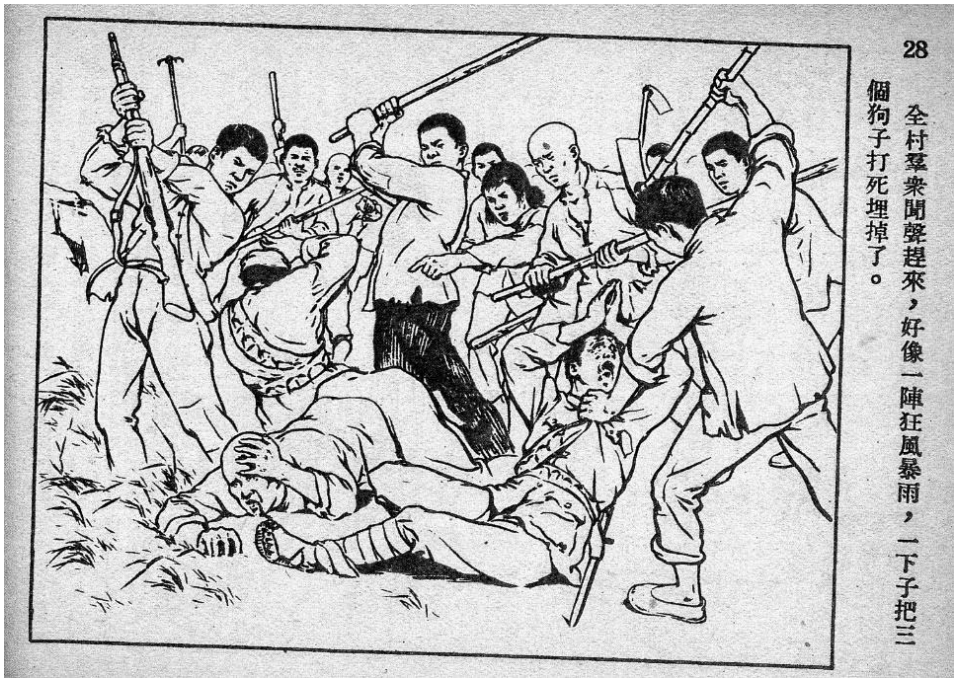

Figure 3.1: Picture 28 in He Youzhi, *Carry on till Tomorrow*, 1953.

Figure 3.2: Picture 49 in He Youzhi and Yan Meihua, *The Story of Zoya and Shura*, 1954.

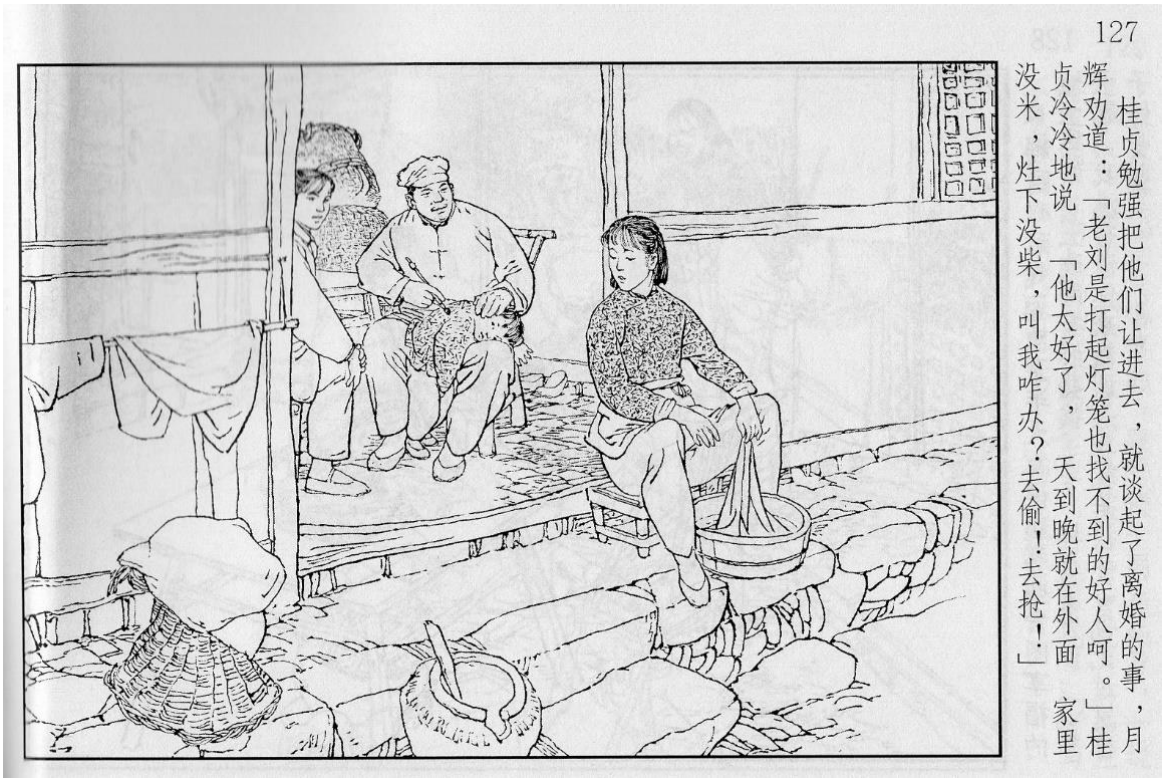

Figure 3.3: Picture 127 in He Youzhi, *Great Changes in a Mountain Village*, vol. 1, 1961.

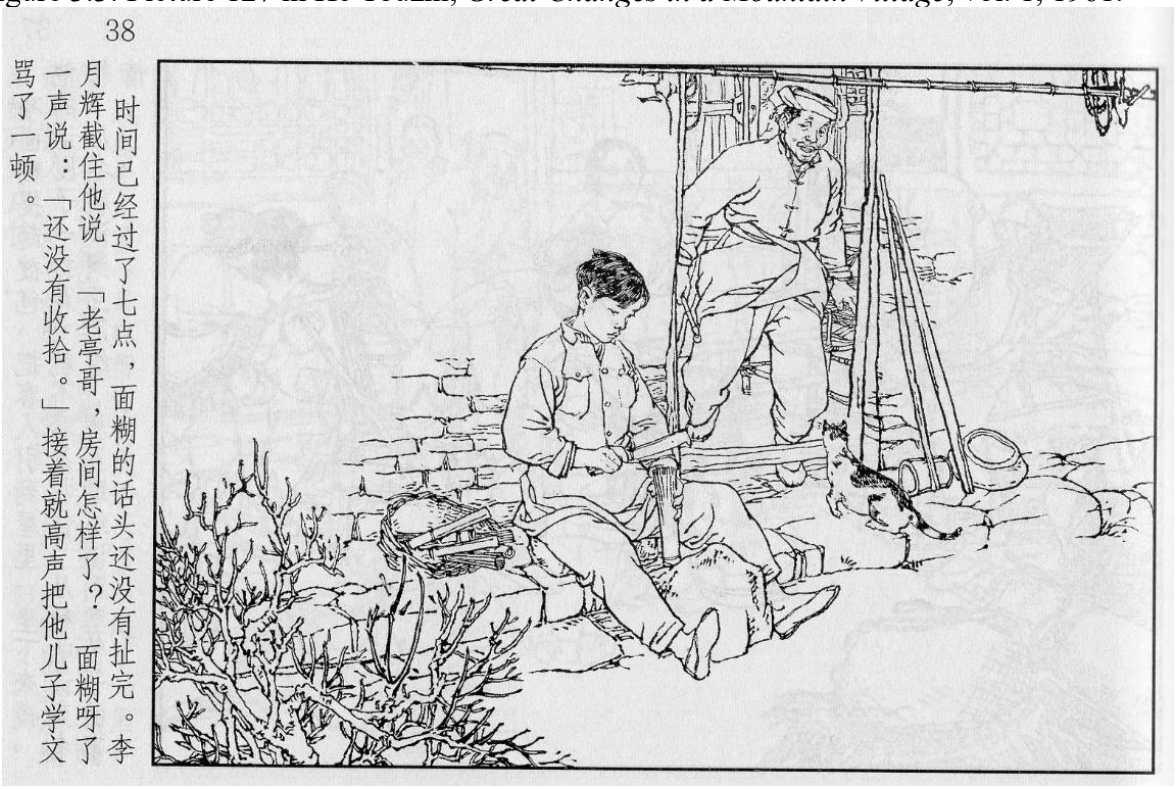

Figure 3.4: Picture 38 in He Youzhi, *Great Changes in a Mountain Village*, vol. 1, 1961.

Figure 3.5: Picture 35 in He Youzhi, *Great Changes in a Mountain Village*, vol. 3, 1962.

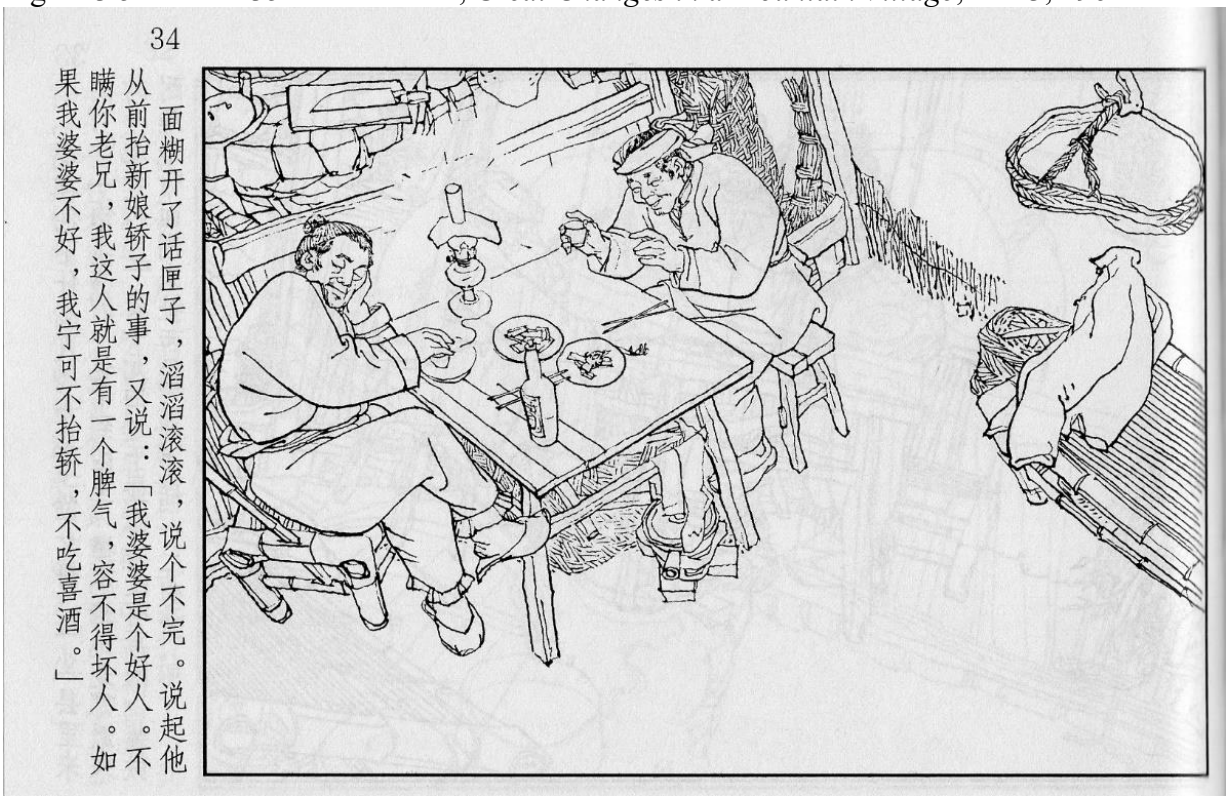

Figure 3.6: Picture 34 in He Youzhi, *Great Changes in a Mountain Village*, vol. 3, 1962.

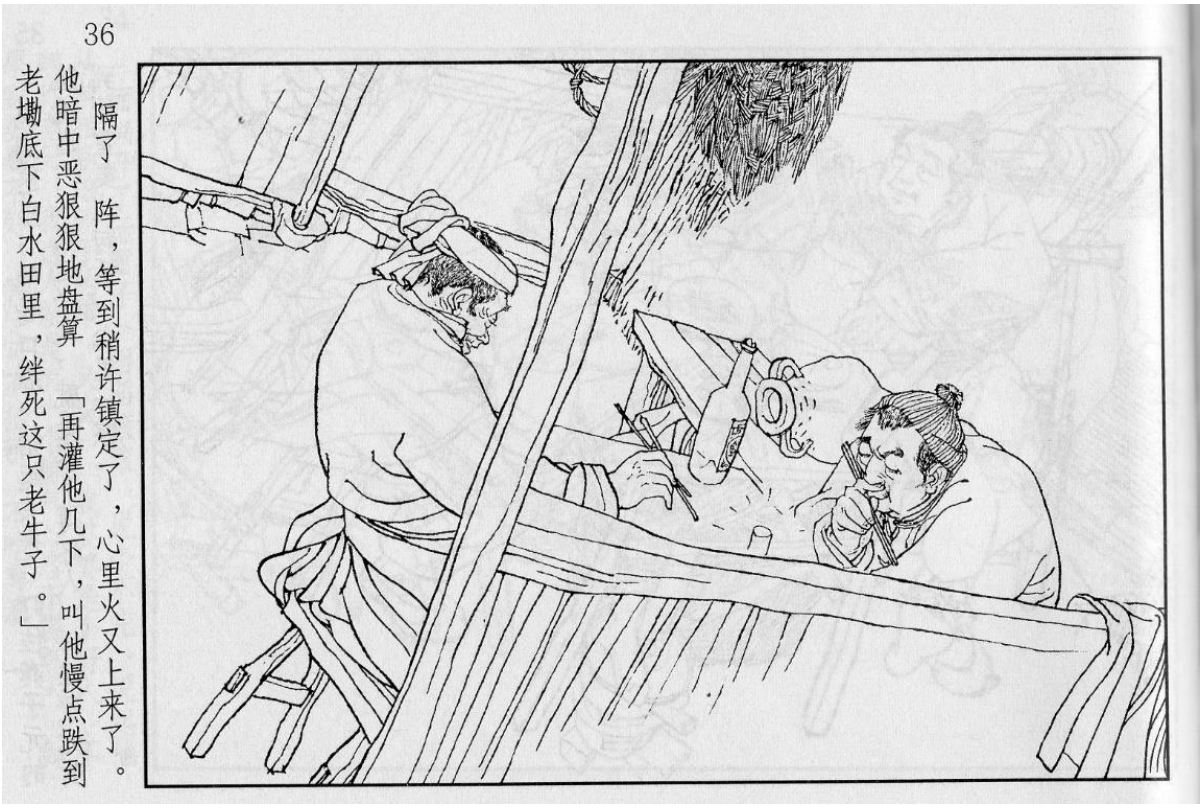

Figure 3.7: Picture 36 in He Youzhi, *Great Changes in a Mountain Village*, vol. 3, 1962.

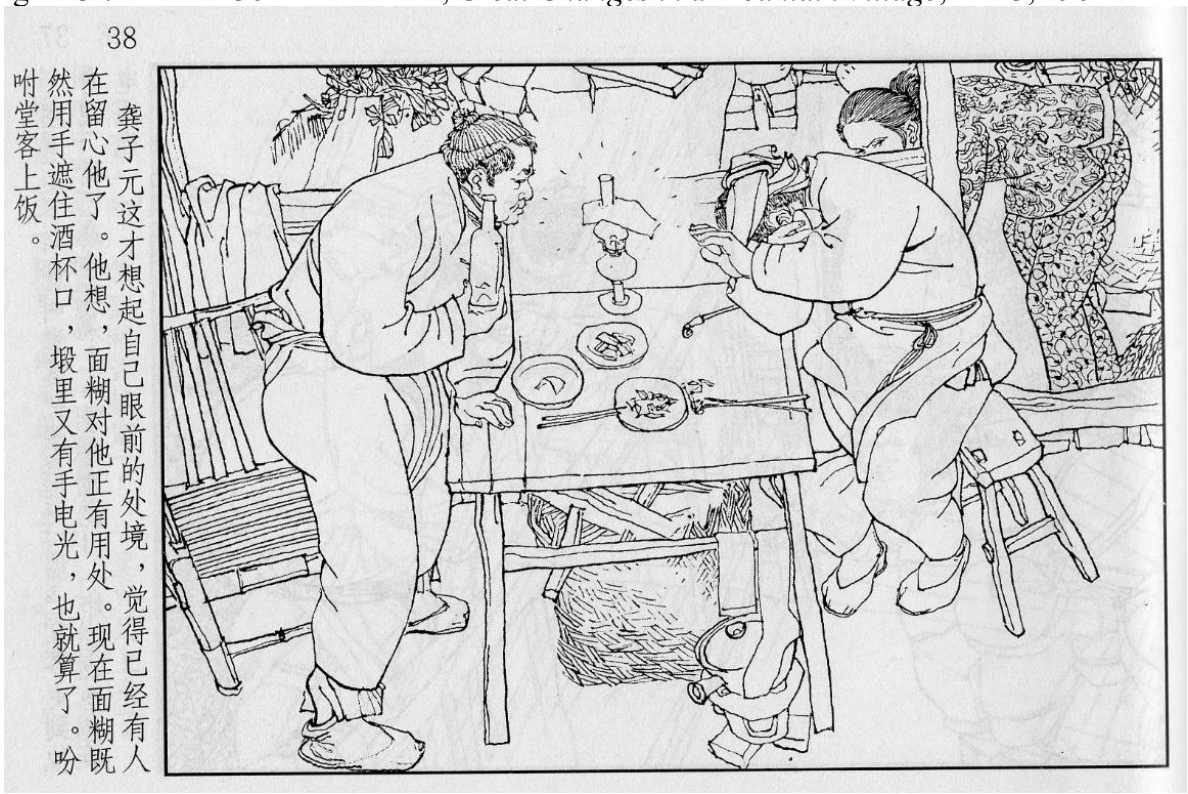

Figure 3.8: Picture 38 in He Youzhi, *Great Changes in a Mountain Village*, vol. 3, 1962.

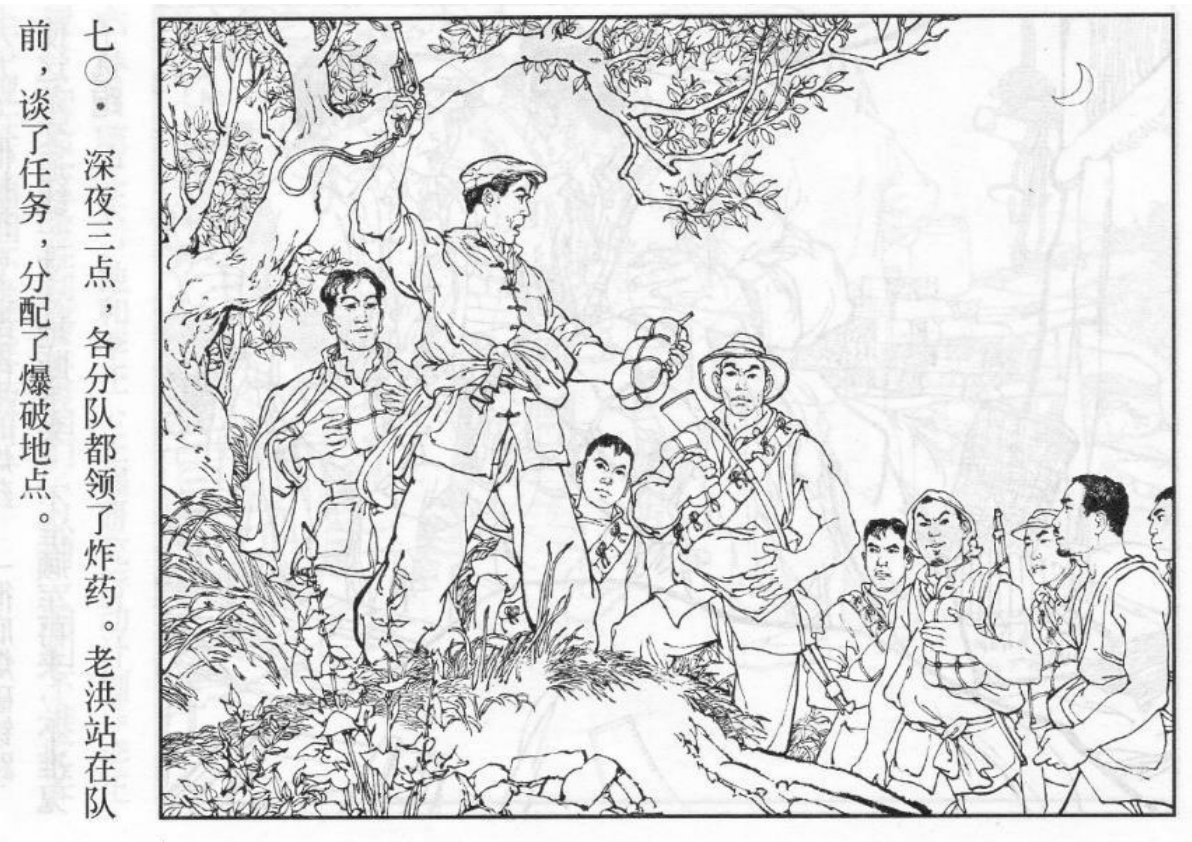

Figure 3.9: Picture 70 in Ding Binzeng and Han Heping, *Railroad Guerrillas*, vol. 10, 1961.

Figure 3.10: He Youzhi, Unpublished Manuscript of *Great Changes in a Mountain Village*, c. 1960.

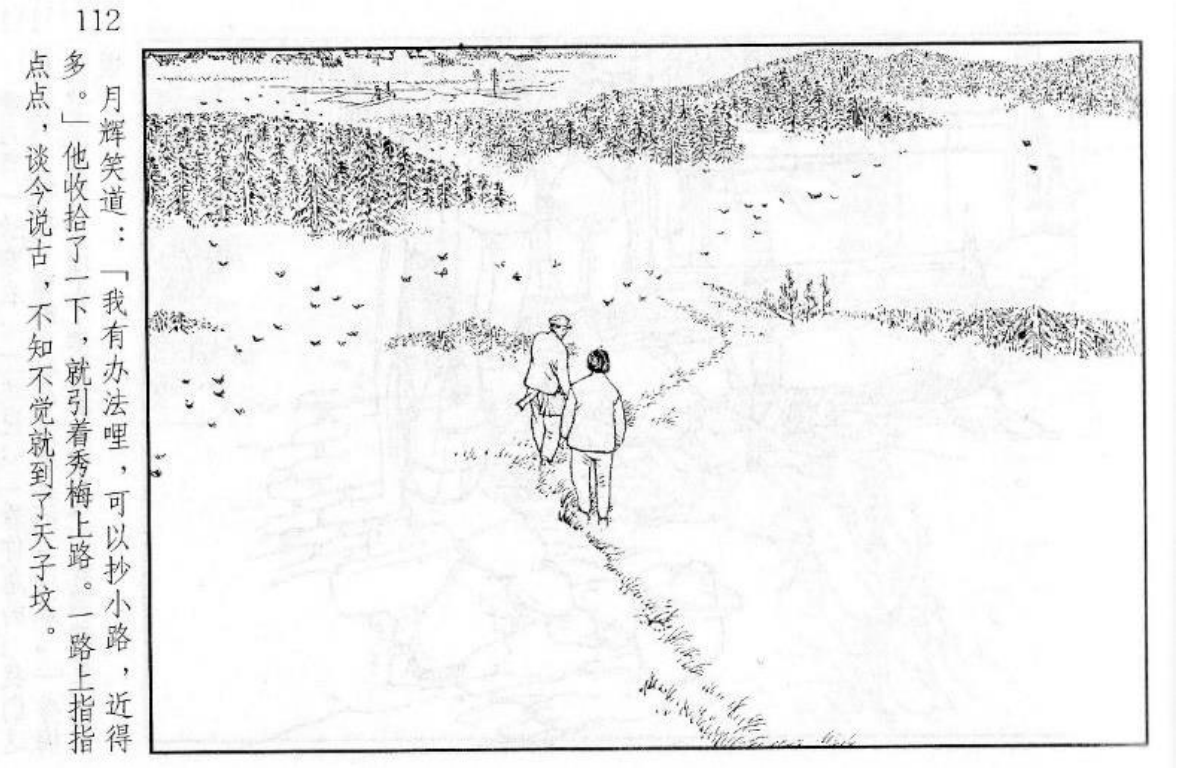

Figure 3.11: Picture 112 in He Youzhi, *Great Changes in a Mountain Village*, vol. 1, 1961.

Figure 3.12: Picture 69 in He Youzhi, *Great Changes in a Mountain Village*, vol. 3, 1962.

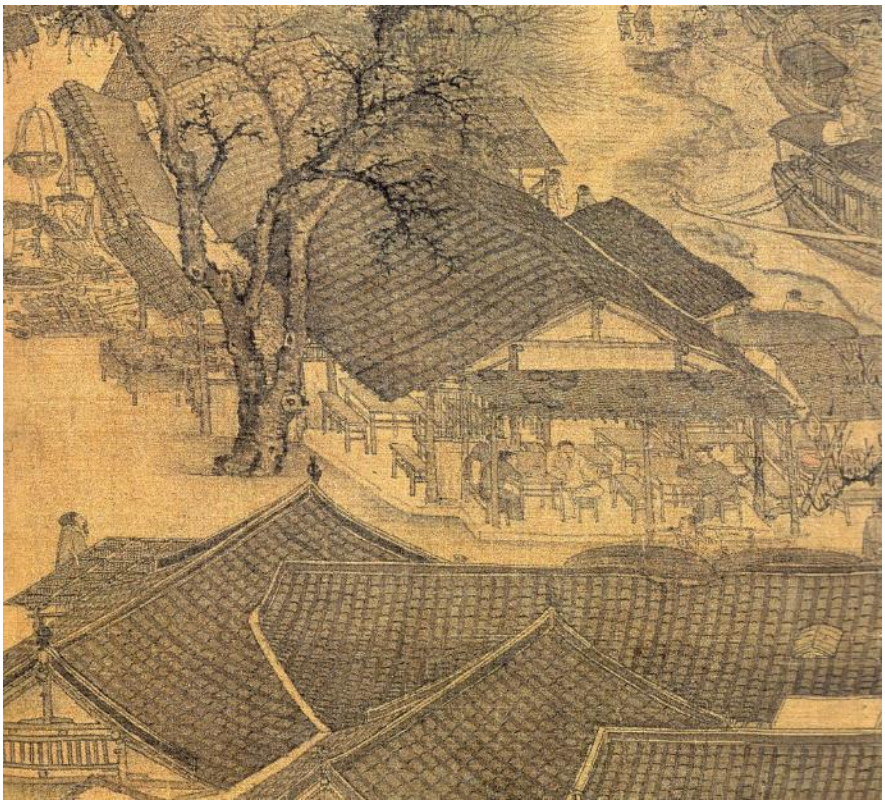

Figure 3.13: Part of Zhang Zeduan's *Up the River During Qingming,* early twelfth century.

Figure 3.14: Part of Zhang Zeduan's *Up the River During Qingming,* early twelfth century.

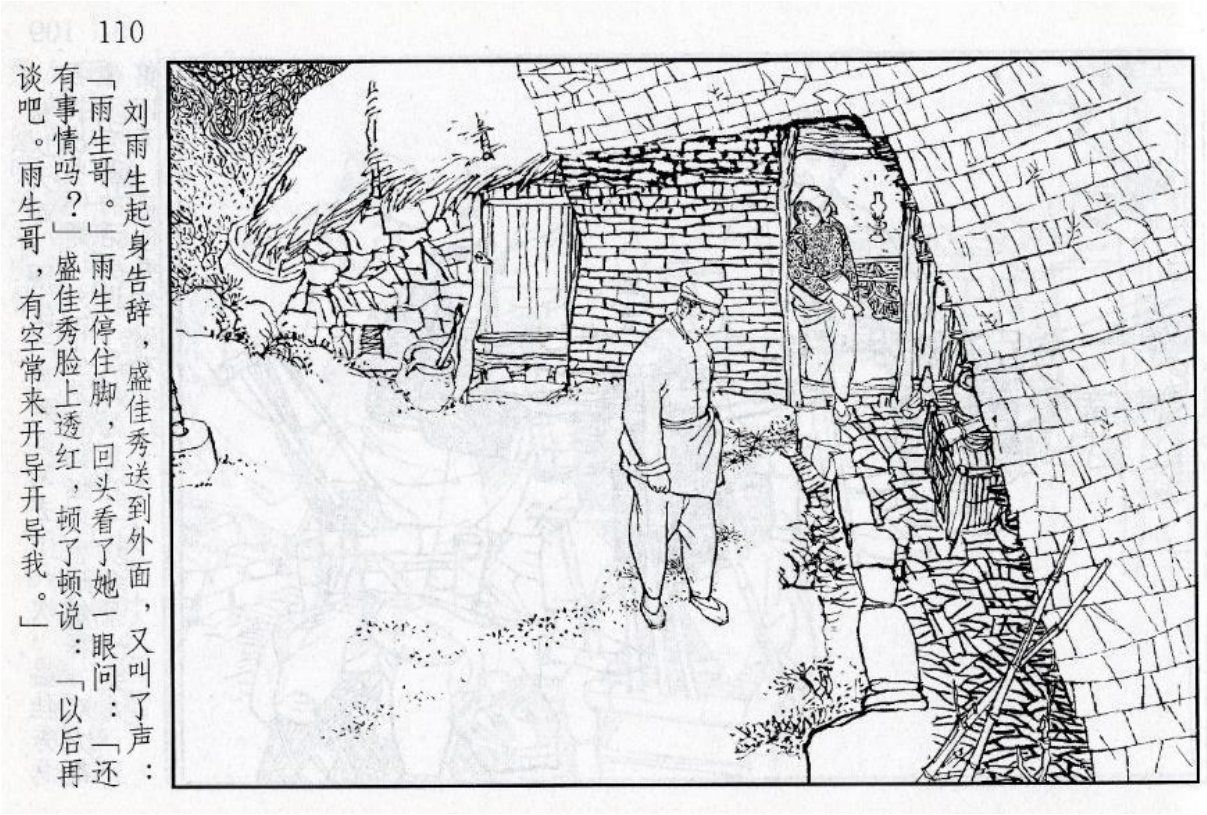

Figure 3.15: Picture 110 in He Youzhi, *Great Changes in a Mountain Village*, vol. 3, 1962.


Figure 3.16: Part of Zhang Zeduan's *Up the River During Qingming*, early twelfth century.

Figure 3.17: Chen Hongshou, “Song Jiang,” printed page from *Water Margin Leaves*, 1633. Woodblock print. Li Yimang collection. Reproduced from Tamara Heimarck Bentley, *The Figurative Works of Chen Hongshou (1599-1652),* 79.

Figure 3.18: Chen Hongshou, “Hu Sanniang,” printed page from *Water Margin Leaves*, 1633. Woodblock print. Li Yimang collection. Reproduced from Tamara Heimarck Bentley, *The Figurative Works of Chen Hongshou (1599-1652),* 92.

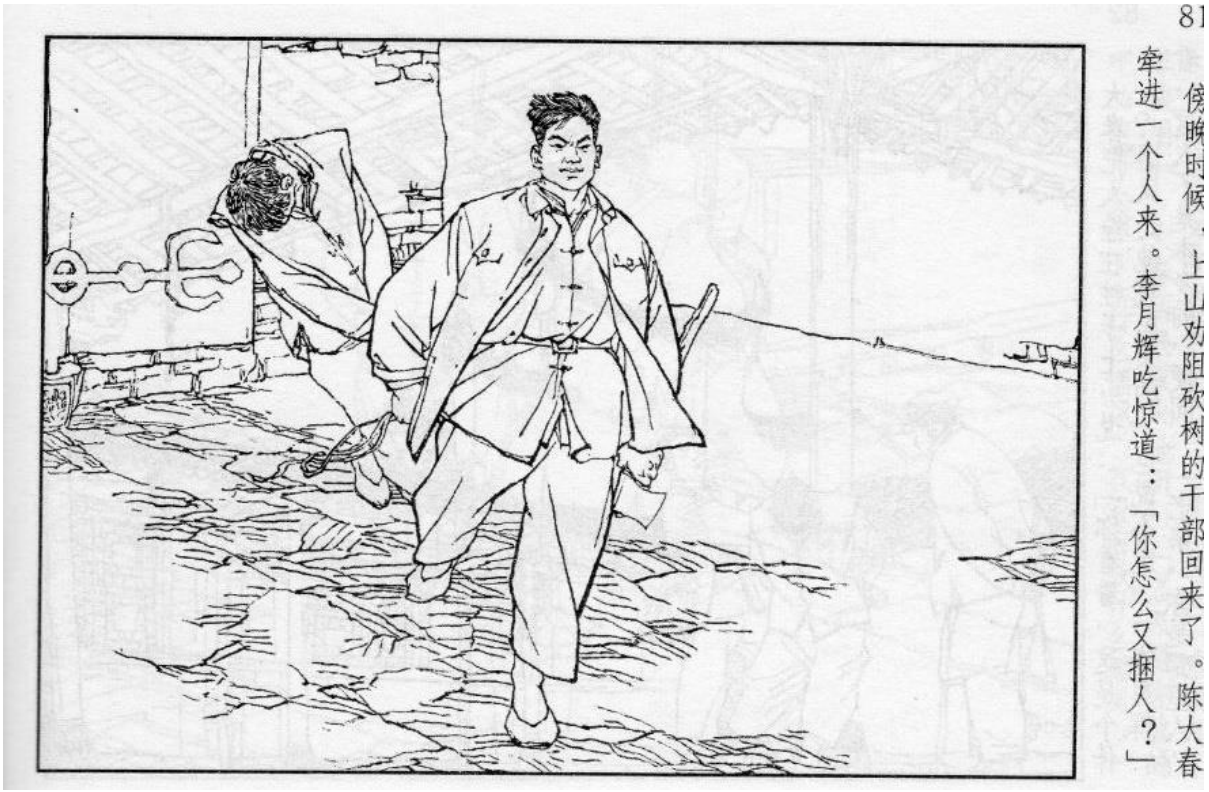

Figure 3.19: Picture 81 in He Youzhi, *Great Changes in a Mountain Village*, vol. 3, 1962.


Figure 3.20: Part of Zhang Zeduan's *Up the River During Qingming* (early twelfth century).

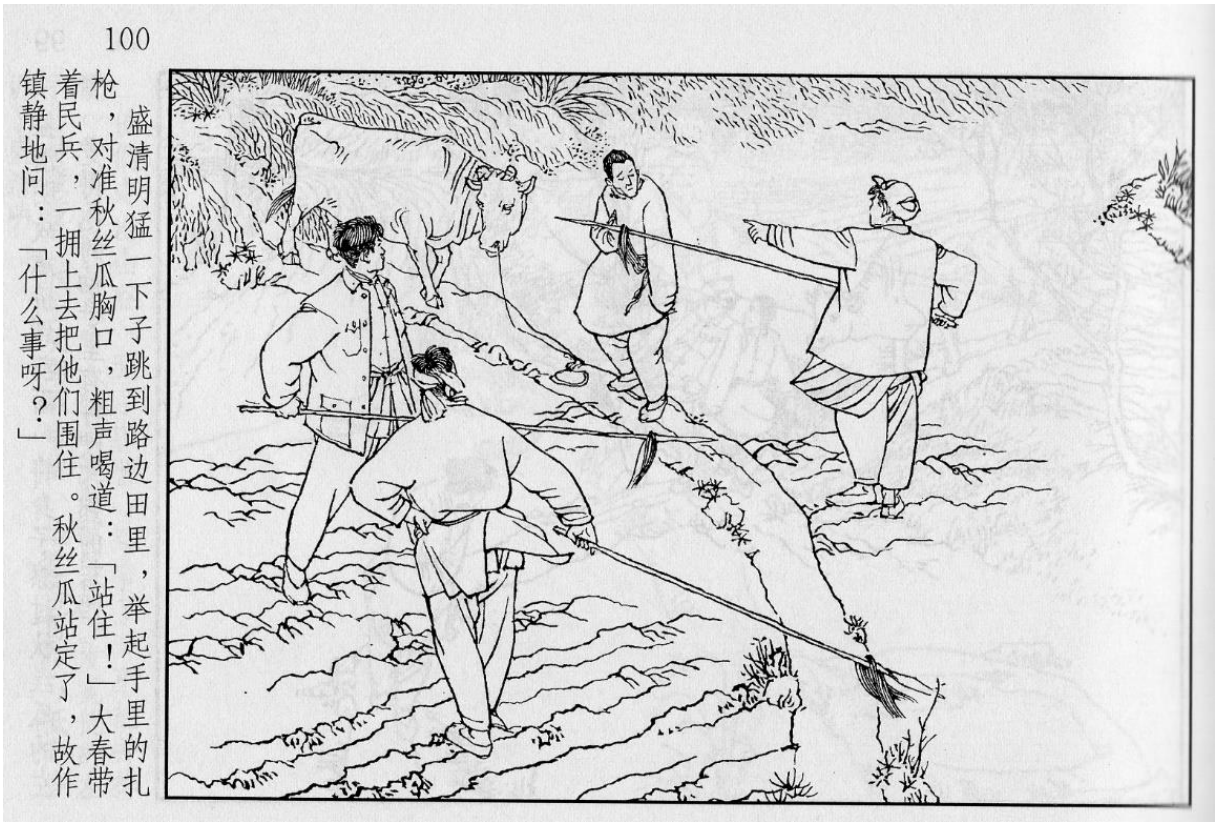

Figure 3.21: Picture 100 in He Youzhi, *Great Changes in a Mountain Village*, vol. 2, 1961.

Figure 3.22: "Methods of Outlining and Coloring Leaves," in *Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*, 1887-1888 Shanghai Edition, reprinted in 1956.

Figure 3.23: "Methods of Outlining and Coloring Leaves," in *Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*, 1887-1888 Shanghai Edition, reprinted in 1956.

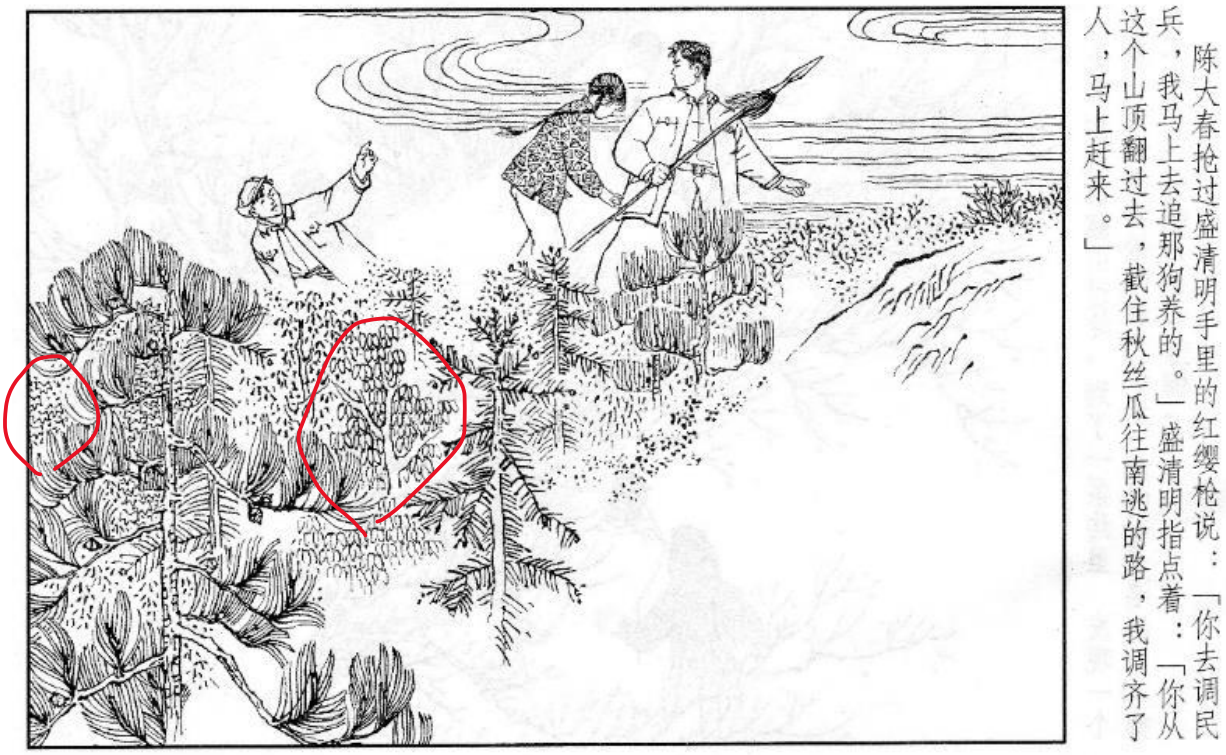

Figure 3.24: Picture 87 in He Youzhi, *Great Changes in a Mountain Village*, vol. 2, 1962.

Figure 3.25: Wu Jiayou, "Dogs and Horses Repay Their Master's Kindness," in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, vol. 1 (Shanghai: Dianshizhai, 1884), 33.

Figure 3.26: Picture 69 in He Youzhi, *Mes années de jeunesse*, 2005.

Figure 4.1: Picture 34 in He Youzhi and Lu Wen, *The Fight on the Train*, 1953.

Figure 4.2: Picture 18 in Ding Binzeng and Han Heping, *Railroad Guerillas,* vol. 3, 1955.

Figure 4.3: Picture 33 in Ding Binzeng and Han Heping, *Railroad Guerrillas,* vol. 2, 1962.

Figure 4.4: The *duanda wusheng* character in *Fight at Crossroads Inn.*

Figure 4.5: Picture 74 in Ding Binzeng and Han Heping, *Railroad Guerrillas*, vol. 2, 1962.

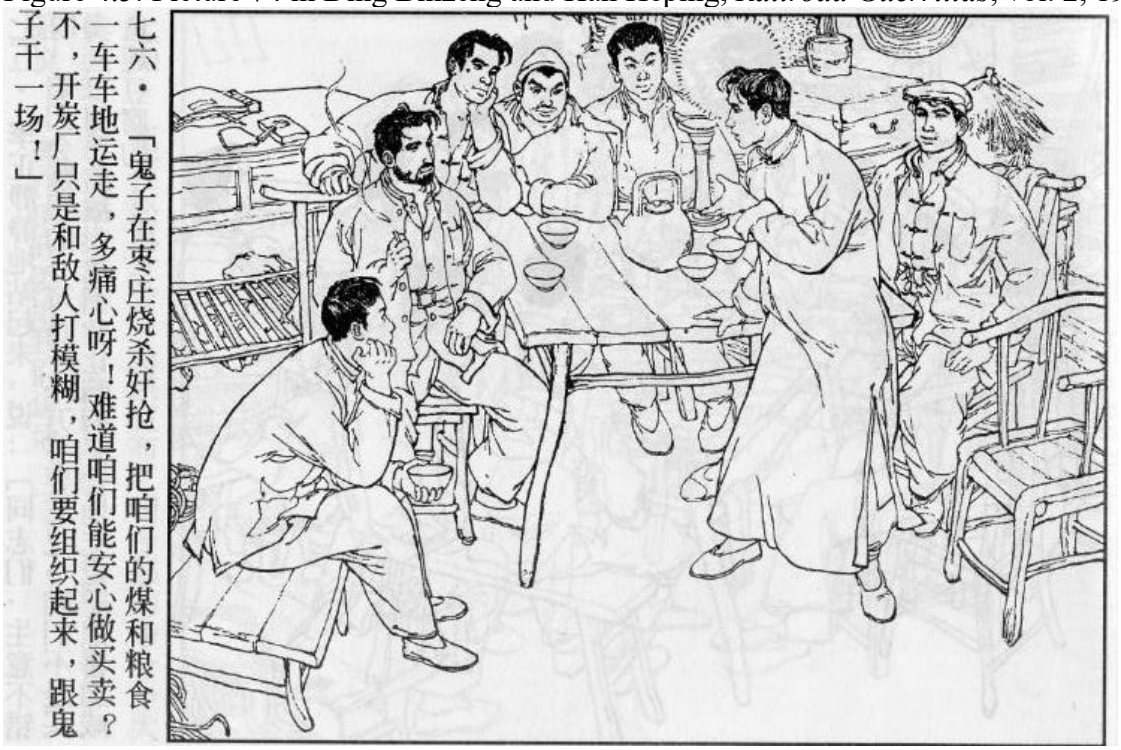

Figure 4.6: Li Zheng is standing from the round-back armchair to give a talk. Liu Hong and Wang Qiang are sitting in the high-back chairs. Picture 76 in Ding Binzeng and Han Heping, *Railroad Guerrillas*, vol. 2, 1962.

Figure 4.7: Liu Hong is sitting in the round-back armchair when the welcome party starts. Picture 72 in Ding Binzeng and Han Heping, *Railroad Guerrillas*, vol. 2, 1962.

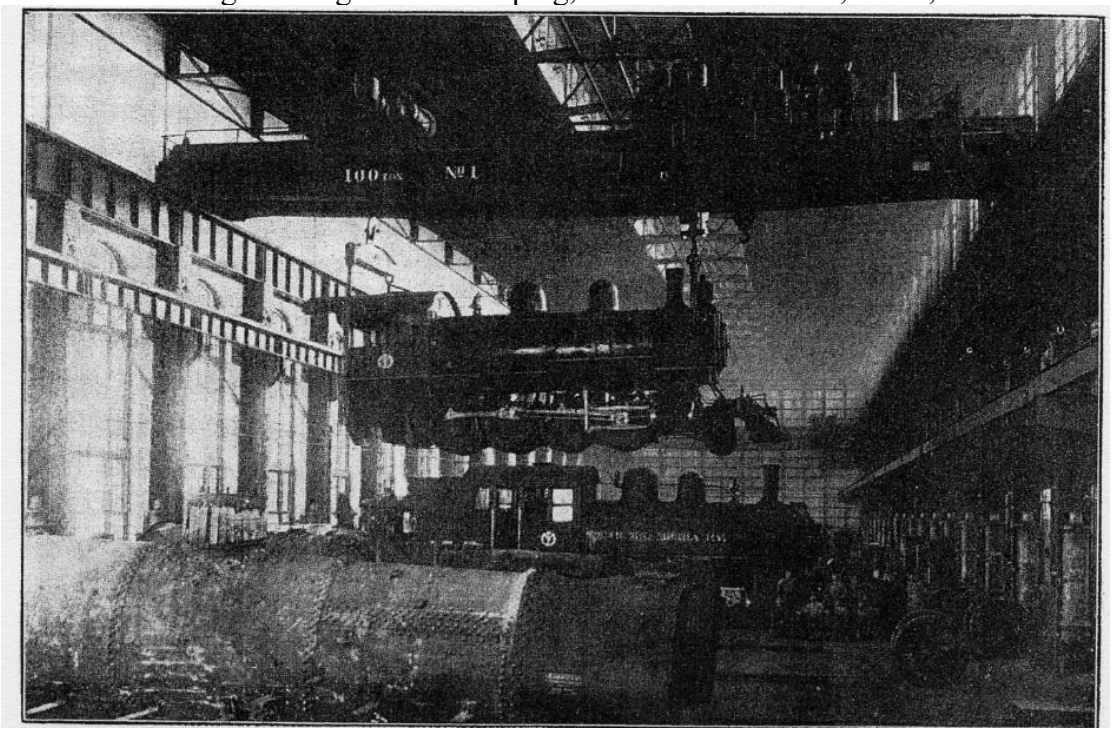

Figure 4.8: Kanazawa Kyūya, "The Interior of the S. M. R. Workshops, Shahokou," in *South Manchuria Through the Camera Lens*, 1911.

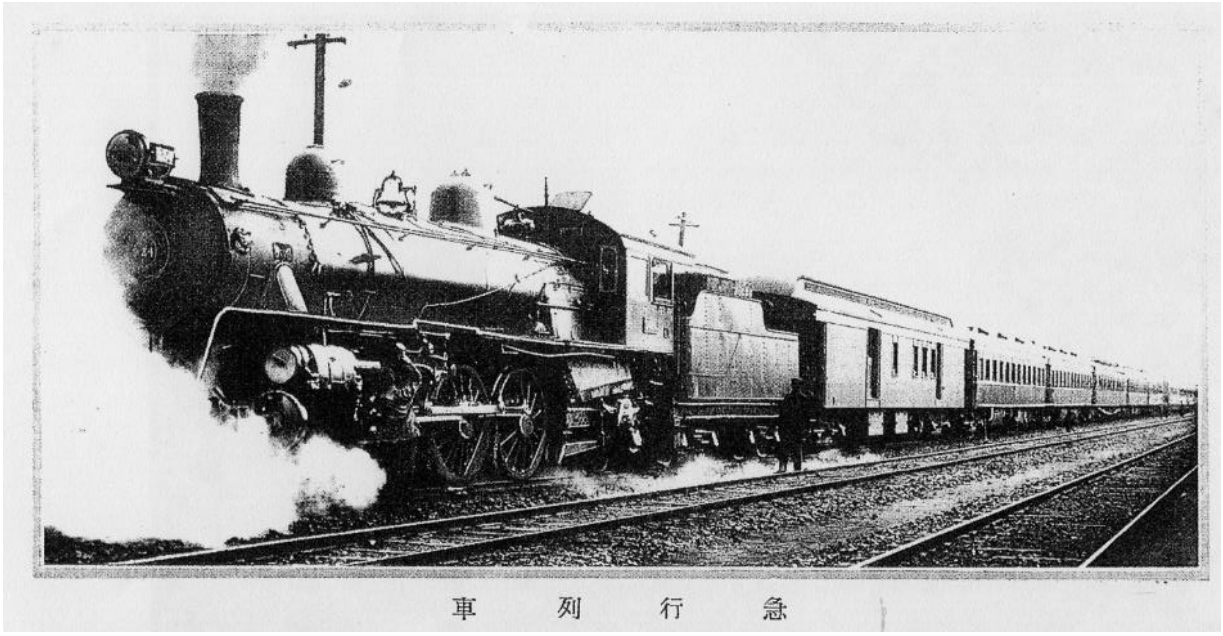

Figure 4.9: “Express” in *Photographic Album of Manchuria Railway*, 1926.

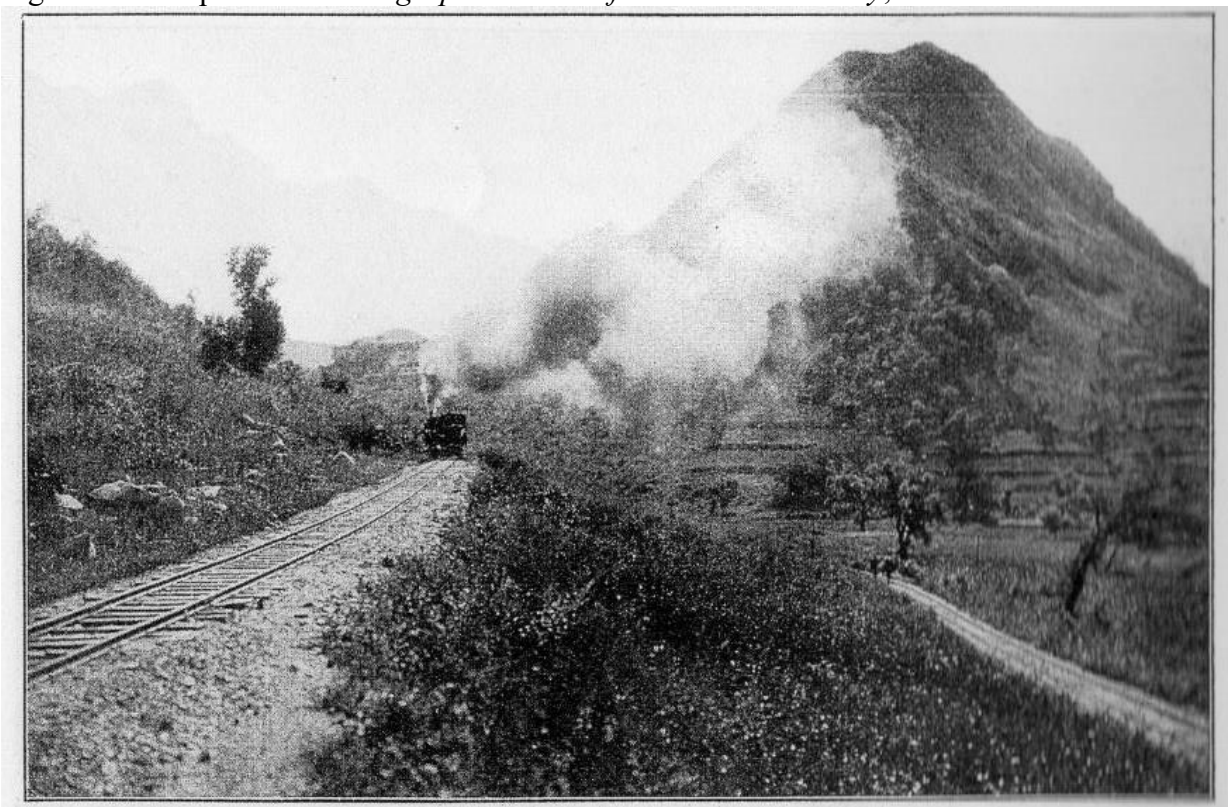
Figure 4.10: Kanazawa Kyūya, “Miniature ‘Fuji’ on Northern Base of Fuchinling,” in *South Manchuria Through the Camera Lens*, 1911.

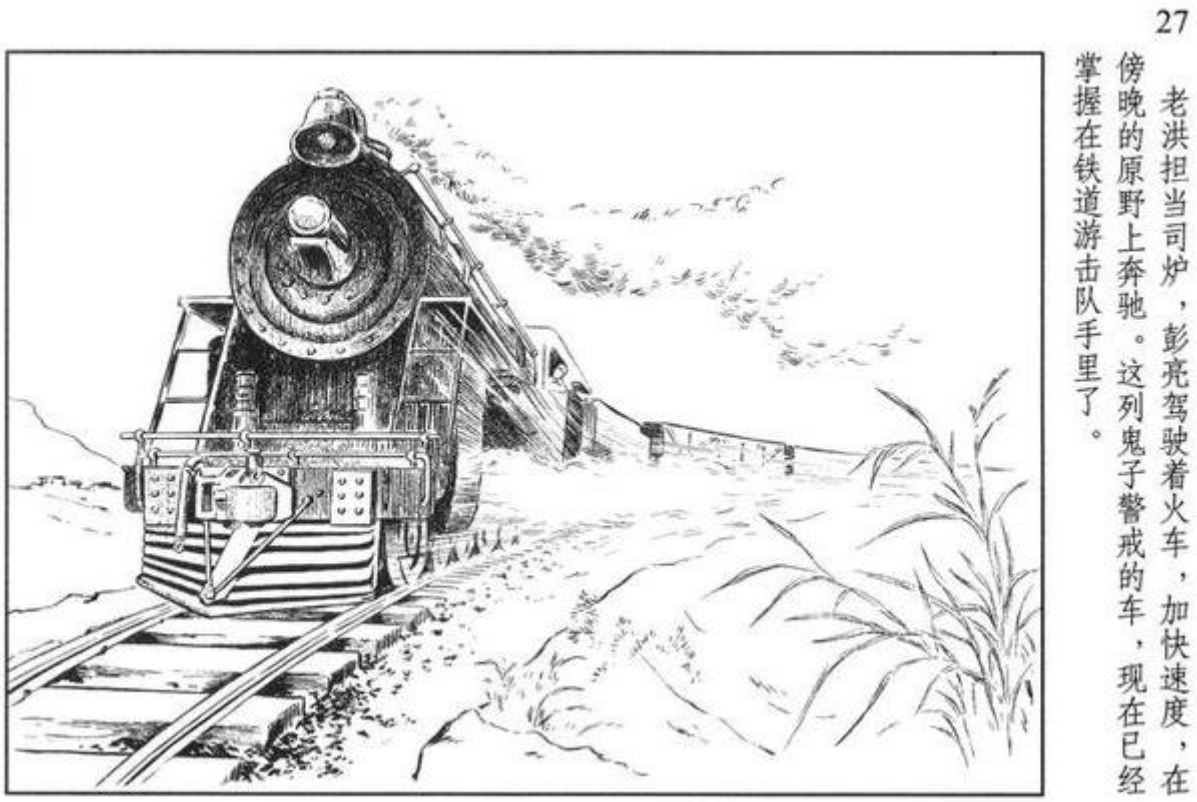

Figure 4.11: Picture 27 in He Youzhi and Lu Wen, *The Fight on the Train*, 1953.

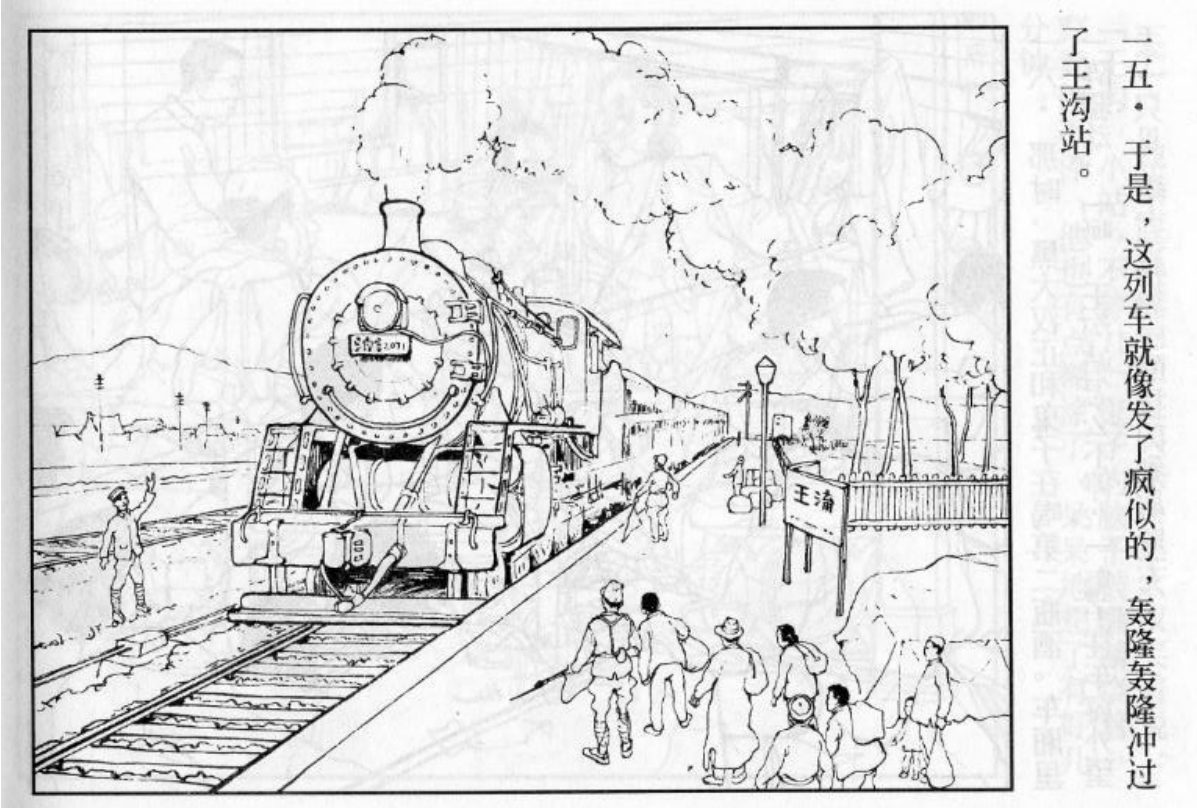

Figure 4.12: Picture 15 in Ding Binzeng and Han Heping, *Railroad Guerillas*, vol. 3, 1955.

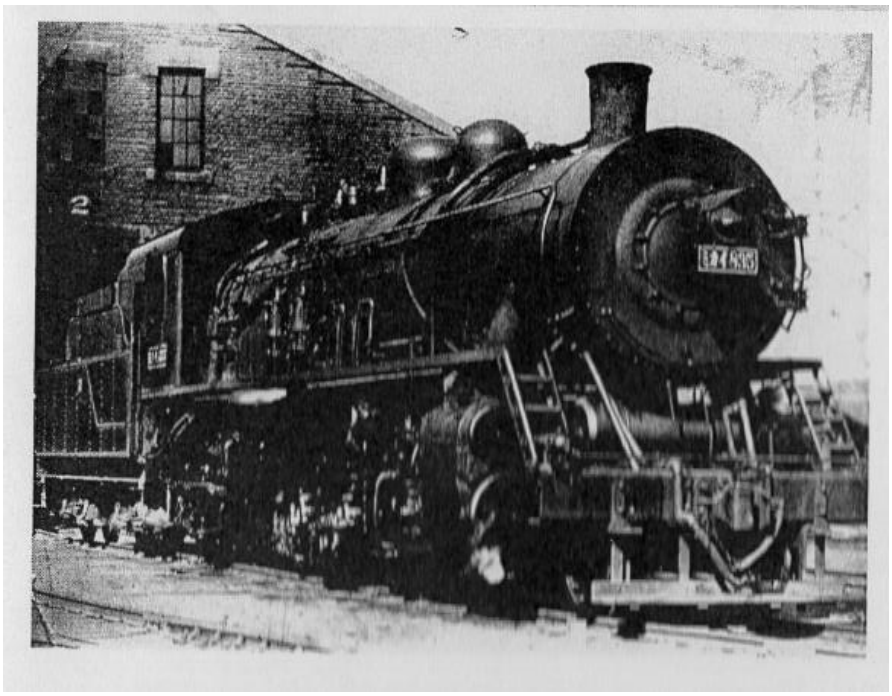

Figure 4.13: A *mikai*-class locomotive. Excerpt from Mantetsukai ed., *Forty Years of Manchuria Railway* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2007), n.p.

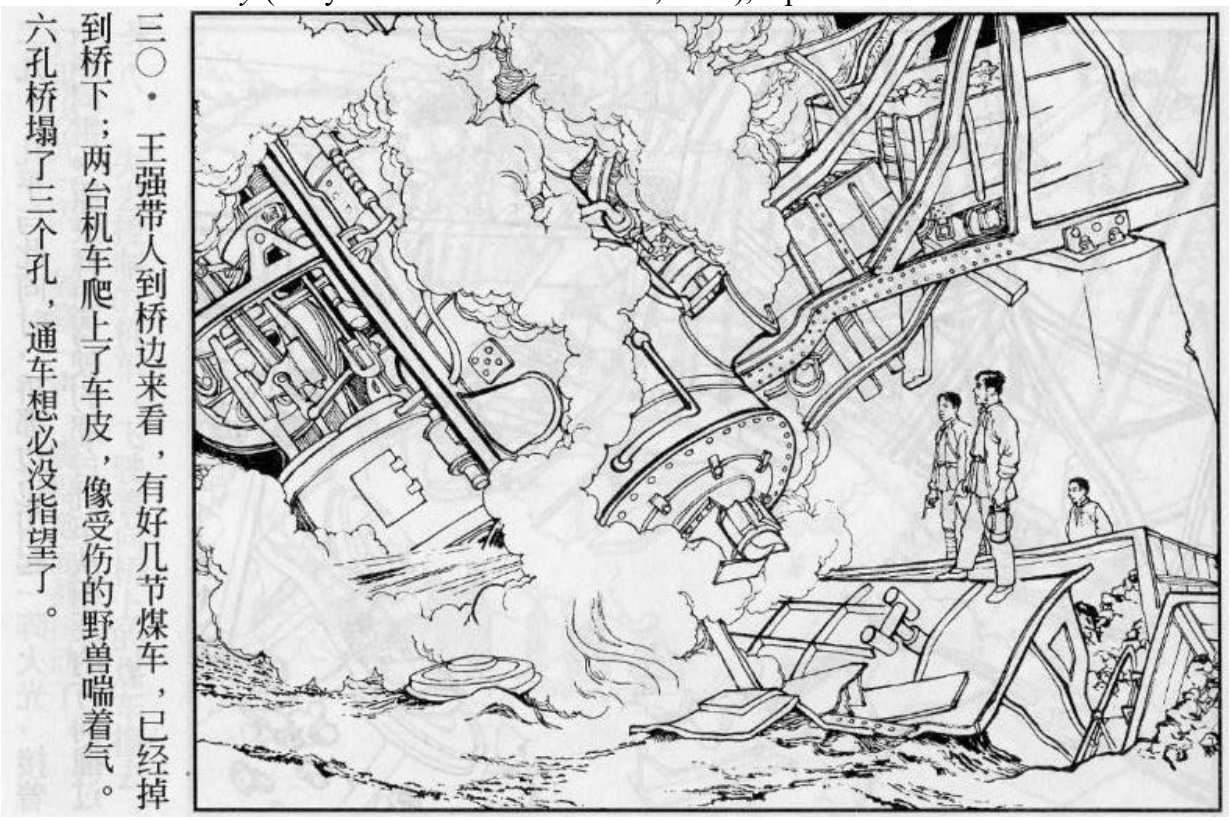

Figure 4.14: Picture 30 in Ding Binzeng and Han Heping, *Railroad Guerillas*, vol. 6, 1957.

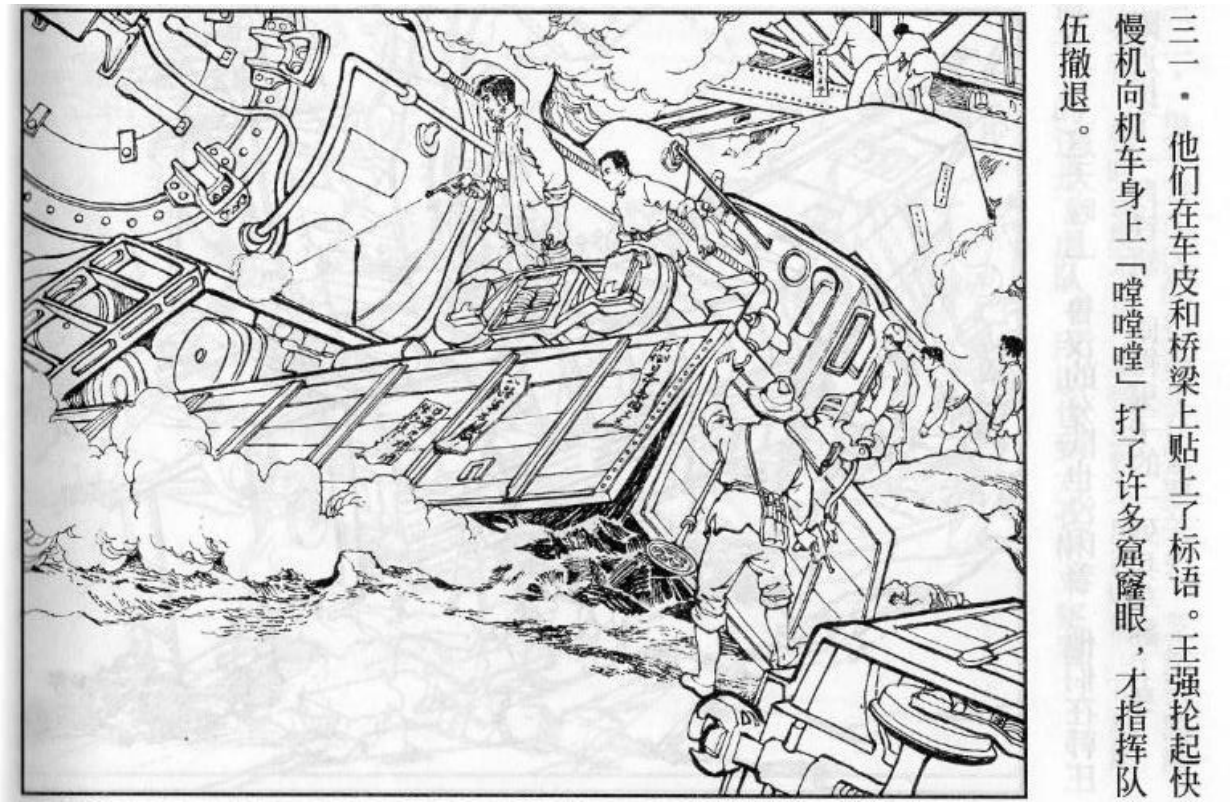

Figure 4.15: Picture 31 in Ding Binzeng and Han Heping, *Railroad Guerillas*, vol. 6, 1957.

Epilogue

Figure 5.1: Picture 2 in Zhao Hongben and Qian Xiaodai *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone Demon*, 1962.

Figure 5.2: Picture 2 in Zhao Hongben and Wang Yiqiu, *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone Demon*, 1972.

Figure 5.3: Picture 44 in Zhao Hongben and Wang Yiqiu, *Sun Wukong Thrice Beats the White-Bone Demon*, 1972.

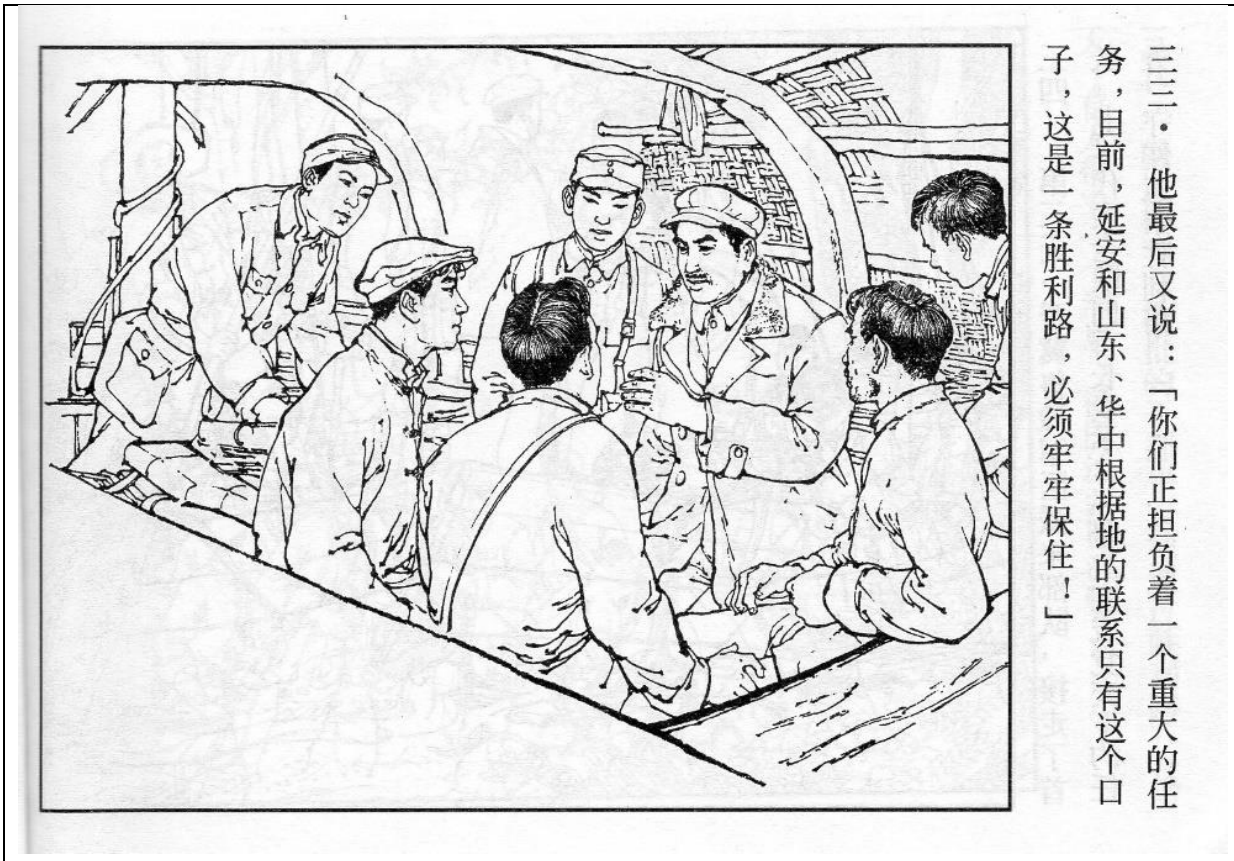

Figure 5.4: Picture 33 in Ding Binzeng and Han Heping, *Railroad Guerrillas,* vol. 10, 1961.

16 他心里仿佛觉得空虚了，心在空中一抖动，又触着一种古怪的小东西了……他挖起那东西来，那东西象块烂骨头。他已悟到这许是下巴骨了，而那下巴骨也便在手里索索的动弹起来，而且笑吟吟的显出笑影，终于听得他开口道："这回又完了！"

Figure 5.5: Picture 16 in He Youzhi, *White Light*, 1981.

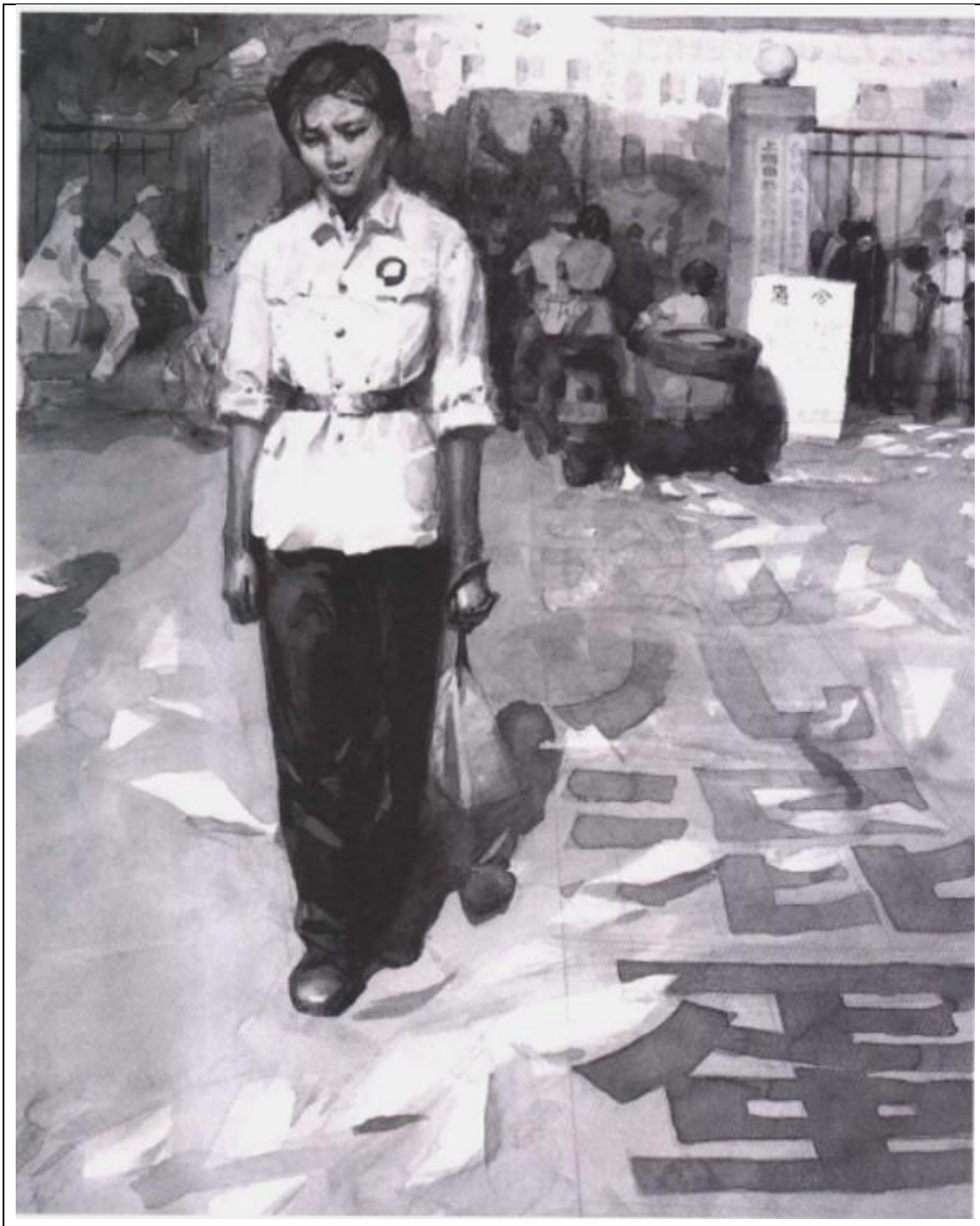

Figure 5.6: Picture 8 in Chen Yiming, Liu Yulian, and Li Bin, *Scar*, 1979.

Figure 5.8: Picture 18 in Han Shuli, *Bangjin Flowers*, 1983.

Figure 5.8: Picture 10 in Dai Rui, “E-Commerce Customer Service Scam,” in Bank of Beijing, *48 Tips for Avoiding Scams*, 2017.

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