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RESEARCH ARTICLE

How to Deal with a Good Child? Prescribed Normality in Images of Children and Child-Adult Relations in *Manhua* Magazine, 1950-1960

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Children in propaganda serve various purposes and are aimed at different audiences. This paper looks at images of children in adult-oriented political cartoons from the 1950s magazine *Manhua* 漫畫 in order to establish the prescribed norms of child behaviour and child-adult interactions. This is achieved through analysing eulogising and satirical depictions of children as embodiments of prosperity and the future, as model citizens and moral authority, as well as misbehaving individuals and victims of abuse. Special attention is paid to the degrees of children's agency, their ability to speak "for themselves" and to stand up to adults, and to the ensuing complications, e.g. the ambiguity of child-adult roles, the unclear ways for children to retain their "good nature" under bad influences, and even the whole idea of impeccably happy childhood under Chairman Mao. It is clear that children in the cartoons mostly act independently, speak up and pronounce their opinions, wishes, and judgements, and expect to be heard by adults. Therefore, children are not presented as voiceless or powerless. However, they are not given any higher position than the other social groups "exploited before the liberation" (labourers, women, ethnic minorities, etc.): their standing appears to be determined by their sense of duty and political consciousness.

針對不同群體的受眾，政治宣傳中兒童的形象往往身負多重使命。1950 年代的《漫畫》是一份以成人為受眾且帶有政治目的的半月刊。通過分析刊物中兒童的形象，筆者發現對兒童角色的歌頌與諷刺，不僅體現對繁榮社會和美好未來的展望，也展示了模範公民與道德權威的標杆。對不端行為和受害者飽受不公對待的刻畫，則是對兒童及其與成人互動時行為規範的側寫。另一方面，在漫畫中兒童應具有一定能動性，積極主動，表達所思所想，因而使之與成人之間易產生矛盾。漫畫中歌頌和批評的內容即是對這些衝突的揭露，讓人對 1950 年代兒童的社會地位有更深的理解。本文旨在闡述社會演變過程中兒童地位的提高也取決於兒童自身的責任感和政治覺悟。

Keywords: Socialist propaganda, cartoon, *Manhua* magazine, child, child-adult relation

關鍵詞：社會主義宣傳，漫畫，《漫畫》半月刊，兒童，兒童成人關係

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Introduction

Children have been used for the purposes of indoctrination, mobilisation, and advertising both as the addressees of messages and as means of conveying messages to the adult population. The two most famous examples from totalitarian propaganda, Herbert Norkus in Nazi Germany and Pavlik Morozov in the USSR, left a very noticeable impact on the way children were educated under these regimes and on the perceptions of children's normative behaviour. The detailed analysis of each boy's life and legacy shows how their mythologised biographies changed shape and purpose over time with little regard for their actual lives (Kelly 2009, 157–59, 173–74; Baird 1990, 118–19). Such an application of children's images is not limited to totalitarianism. Perceptions of children's fragility and, at the same time, importance for the future transcends national, political, and ideological borders. Margaret Peacock demonstrates how, during the Cold War, both governments and societies in the USSR and in the USA wove images of children into the dissemination of ideas about self-defence, peace, order, and the desired future (Peacock 2014). Even outside of such sharp oppositions as the Cold War antagonism, children can just as often become a tool for promoting various agendas. Images of children as happy consumers, symbols of national salvation, pathetic victims in enemies' hands, etc., have remained an effective, ever-sharp instrument. To give but a couple of examples, the British Minister of Agriculture John Gummer was shown feeding his four-year-old daughter a beef burger during the 'mad cow disease' scare of 1990 (Erlichman 1990), while, more recently, international NGOs and the Afghan government insisted on children's school attendance in spite of the immediate dangers of terrorist attacks.[1] Susan Sontag points out how a photograph of a child's mutilated body can be "used and reused" by various sides in conflicts to increase the militant spirit, to legitimise claims to be on the "right" side, and to

[1] A study of children's rights in this matter demonstrates that children "are being used as propaganda tools in the war on terror in Afghanistan by the Afghan government, and their allies and certain national and international NGOs and UN bodies which encourage and facilitate school attendance without adequate security such that the children's right to life and well-being is being treated as if secondary to their right to access education" (Grover 2011, 259).

demonstrate the "oppression and injustice" of opponents (Sontag 2004, 10).[2] On the other hand, joyful smiling children are often portrayed to describe the reliable quality of goods, a stable economic or political situation, proper social values and morals, a bright future, and a peaceful existence. In commerce, politics, religion, and art children remain ubiquitous tools for conveying various messages.

The emphases in the representation of children – both for children's own consumption and for adult audiences – reflect a variety of trends in society and the state: ways of protecting childhood, the extent of a state's involvement in private life, the degree of children's agency, and many other aspects. In the case of the 1950s People's Republic of China, where the party, state, and society were undergoing massive changes, "building socialism" and, therefore, aiming to involve each citizen of every age in multiple political and economic campaigns, the institution of childhood necessarily gained new characteristics. Child rearing and education were ways of raising the new generation of citizens – at once obedient comrades and creative revolutionaries, a paradox pointed out by Anita Chan (Chan 1985, 12). Childhood policies were aimed at strengthening the nation and multiplying the labour force and army, while at the same time dealing with the question of liberating women from childcare and domestic chores. The theoretical grounds for the importance of children were closely connected to the issues of national salvation and the modernisation of China throughout the twentieth century; such ideas were rooted in the preceding millennia of thought and vividly expressed in Lu Xun's 鲁迅 call to "save the children" (*jiujiu haizi* 救救孩子) (Lu 1931, 252; see also Pease 1995, 280, 295; Naftali 2014, 4; Tesar et al. 2019, 383). Pedagogic theories and practices were, therefore, naturally a focus for the newly established Communist government from 1949 – a matter analysed in detail by Margaret

[2] Whereas Sontag refers to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, similar principles can be found in the already mentioned Afghanistan case, where in parallel to the West's and the government's attempts at demonstrating safety through children's school attendance, the Taliban use children "to send the opposing message; that the country will remain unstable and no development progress of any kind made unless the government accedes to extremist Taliban demands" (Grover 2011, 7–8).

Tillman (Tillman 2018, 160–209). However, whereas pedagogy is concerned with children themselves and their parents and educators, the images of children became an important part of Communist propaganda for a much wider audience.

This paper looks into the ways in which the Chinese illustrated satirical magazine *Manhua* 漫畫 (*Cartoon*, published 1950-1960) portrayed children. Since the magazine was not child-oriented, the cartoons depicting young people were not meant to educate children themselves, but rather to entertain older readers and instruct them on how to interact with and learn from children, as well as to create certain aspirations in these adult audiences. Such an approach has already been applied to propaganda posters by Stephanie Donald, who emphasised that Cultural Revolution images of children "continue to exemplify desirable patterns of behaviour and to address adults" (Donald 1999, 97). Yet political cartoons show not only exemplary but also undesirable behaviour, because *Manhua* published both positive eulogising depictions (*gesonghua* 歌頌畫) and negative satirical ones (*fengcihua* 諷刺畫) in response to all the major campaigns in China at the time. This adds another dimension to such adult-oriented images of childhood.

It has been noted that children can be considered among the "subaltern" classes whose right to speak for themselves and to have agency is suppressed or challenged by the "elite" of adults (Hirschfeld 2002, 613). Thus, Mark Lupher writes about the early days of the Cultural Revolution that, "University and middle school students, and in the elite schools most of all, readily related to denunciations of educational authorities in the pre-Cultural Revolution school system" and that the big character posters (*dazibao* 大字報) "call for and celebrate the freedom, release, and empowerment of youth" (Lupher 1995, 328). As the preceding period, the 1950s, the formative years of the PRC and of the "pre-Cultural Revolution" education system, provide an interesting angle from which to study child-adult relations. By considering the displays of children's activity and the adult-child interactions in cartoons, I explore two questions: how does a "good" socialist child look and behave and how should socialist adults respond to such "good" children's actions. These questions relate to some of the

points raised in a paper about childhood and agency in children's literature, in particular to the notion of constructed childhood forming "complex manifestations of power played out within the normalised and desired ideas, beliefs and attitudes of dominant discourses" (Tesar et al. 2019, 384). However, where Tesar and his co-authors elaborate on literary creations for young readers from the most recent years, I consider the construction of "good" children in the adult gaze of the first decade of the PRC. Naturally, cartoons as a medium do not show factual relations, but their messages demonstrate both the prescribed ideal and the criticised deviations. These images are made even more expressive through comparison with the condition of children abroad, visible in the same magazine in a number of cartoons and photographs portraying infants and youths in other socialist countries and in the capitalist world. Iconological analysis and categorisation of the cartoons provide an overview of approved and disapproved behaviour, while also disclosing underlying conflicts between generations and contradictory expectations of different actors.

Sources of the study

Manhua produced 164 issues in the eleven years of its existence, first as a monthly and later as a fortnightly (starting from issue 68, July 1956) illustrated periodical.[3] For the first three years, 1950-1952, *Manhua* published black-and-white images, with only the front and back covers in full colour, each issue consisting in most cases of 22 or 28 pages. The print runs for these early issues were quite low (from 6,000 to 36,500). The time-spread over the three years was somewhat uneven: *Manhua* appeared in the summer of 1950, continued steadily throughout 1951 and the first half of 1952, but then had a pause from September 1952 to March 1953 due to reorganisation. The new version produced after that became shorter in length (12 pages, eventually increasing

[3] This study is based on the issues preserved in the libraries of the Czech Academy of Science in Prague and the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Science in St. Petersburg (issues 7 and 37–164), as well as on digital copies available in the Chinese Pamphlets collection of the Center for Research Libraries (https://dds.crl.edu/search/collection/1). Almost all other issues have been kindly supplied to me in digital form by my colleagues and friends, whom I sincerely thank for their invaluable time and help.

to 16 and 20 towards the late 1950s), but with increased print runs (near or over 100,000) and full colour inner pages, as well as covers. The editorial board was located in Shanghai until 1955, after which it was moved to Beijing. The magazine, although not directly part of the central news press, was first connected to the Shanghai branch of the Chinese Artists Association and the Cultural Bureau of the municipal administration, and later moved under the supervision of the East China Military Government Committee's News and Publishing Office, before finally being published by the People's Art Press and, thus, coming under the control of the Ministry of Culture's Arts Bureau (Altehenger 2013, 86–89).[4] *Manhua* was hardly a mass-read magazine (if only for the reason of the relatively high price of subscription and low per capita print runs even in the late 1950s), but it spread the ideas of mass-produced visual propaganda, published amateur works, and provided local level cartoonists with template images for reproduction; therefore, it has to be considered an informative source on what types of visual images were transmitted between the central government and local activists. Satire as a part of agitation and propaganda existed both in China before 1949 and in other Socialist countries (*Manhua* was largely modelled on the Soviet *Krokodil* magazine), and visual means of indoctrination retained their importance throughout the Mao years.

Children were not a central topic for *Manhua*, but at times there would be whole pages devoted to the treatment of children or their roles in society and labour (as, for example, pages 1, 2, 5, and 8–9 of issue 25, 1 June 1952; 5 cartoons on page 5 of issue 63, 18 February 1956; or the first pages of issue 113, 23 May 1958). In total, there are no less than 536 such depictions in *Manhua*. Before delving into the way these cartoons were spread through the eleven years of the magazine's existence, a remark should be made on what cartoons are taken into account. The two large age groups considered "children" in this study are infants or toddlers and primary school pupils. In some drawings a person depicted cannot be unambiguously identified as a school child or a young adult; sometimes captions and commentary mention either the age or the status

[4] For the history of the magazine, discussion of a part of its contents, and some of the biographies of artists see Altehenger 2013; Crespi 2020, 103–48; Lent and Xu 2017, 79–105.

of the person. Drawings where the depicted can be interpreted as adults and no commentary is provided are not included in the corpus for this study. However, the corpus covers youths from different geographic backgrounds, so long as they appeared in the magazine. In around 70 cases children are portrayed in China's urban surroundings, while more than 150 cartoons show them in rural parts of the country; there is also a large proportion of cartoons which cannot be unambiguously ascribed to either urban or rural areas, but without doubt show China (around 220 cases). At least 25 cartoons display children in the Soviet Union or other socialist countries, and almost 80 cartoons and photographs narrate the life of youngsters in the capitalist world. There is little class differentiation: the vast majority of depicted children are of proletarian origins; the few cartoons about China that criticise rich families' misconduct show children either as tools for their parents to obtain more wealth or as misbehaving and thus exposing the parents' lack of discipline (e.g. Xiao 1954; Miao 1955). Naturally, class division is seen in depictions of Western society, where children fall prey to bourgeois culture and turn into criminals or beggars.

Dynamics in an eleven-year span cannot be traced through a monthly or even a fortnightly magazine with precision, especially because for two years out of these eleven (1950 and 1952) the magazine was published for only half a year, and the volume of issues shifted between 12 and 30 pages. Apart from that, one should bear in mind the amount of campaigns in the first decade of the PRC. Julia Strauss has counted at least four types of campaigns in the early years of state building, three of which required the involvement of wider social groups than the immediate bureaucracy (Strauss 2006, 896–900). This means that *Manhua* together with other media had to promote multiple slogans within the limited space of the magazine. Therefore, statistical data is distorted not only by the magazine's changing frequency, but also by counting cartoons where youths are a marginal element or merely a background for another matter altogether. Nonetheless, some observations can be made from the monthly amount of the magazine's cartoons representing children (see fig. 1).

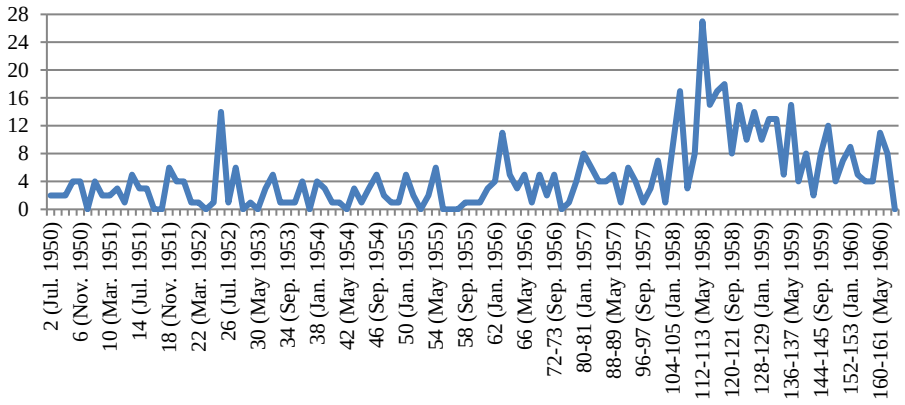

Figure 1. Number of cartoons depicting children in *Manhua*, issues 2–164, per month[5]

The average of less than five cartoons a month is visible throughout the first hundred issues (1950–1957), whereas the issues from the last years of the decade, 1958–1960, demonstrate a greater interest in depicting children. The early spike-like increases are noticeable in issues 25 (1 June 1952) and 63 (18 February 1956), followed by the frequent rises in issues 106 (8 February 1958) to 137 (23 May 1959) and, to a lesser degree, until the end of the magazine's publication in 1960. The February elevations were connected to the theme of women and family related to International Women's Day (8 March), with children as a necessary attribute of both. May and June issues sometimes celebrated youth due to International Children's Day (1 June), and that was when children took up a prominent place on the magazine's covers (Tan 1952; Ma and Zhang 1958; Tian, Wang & Li 1959). The overall increase in the later years of the decade can be explained by the fact that by then a generation of children born "after liberation" grew into the age of active "little revolutionaries" who would be the "successors" (*jiebanren* 接班人) in the socialist country (e.g. Feng 1959, fig. 2).[6]

[5] Issues 68–164 (fortnightly) are represented in pairs to better reflect the monthly dynamic. This causes a certain distortion in comparison to the monthly issues; however, as the rise occurs not in summer 1956, when the magazine became fortnightly, but around February 1958, the distortion can be ignored to some extent.

[6] Feng Zikai 豐子愷 (1898–1975) was a highly acclaimed cartoonist whose works have regained popularity lately. He paid special attention to depictions of children, but was more actively published before 1949 than in the Mao years. His observations of children in pre-Communist years are analysed in Laureillard 2014. For more about the

Figure 2. Feng Zikai 豐子愷 (1959).[7]

At the same time, the policies of the Great Leap Forward brought children's images among the means of showing large harvests, the benefits of people's communes, and the masses' enthusiasm for work and education, while contrasting these against the miseries of life in capitalist countries.

The only theme that showed a clear change over the decade is the sufferings of children in pre-1949 China: such cartoons appeared at least ten times in 1950–1952, but became very rare in later years (no more than eight in 1953–1960). Artists aimed to compare the newer developments, creating a more positive image and juxtaposing China's achievements not so much with its own sad past as with contemporaneous crises in the capitalist camp. Additionally, cartoons from the years of the Korean War

transformations of his art and world views during the War of Resistance, the Civil War, and the decades after 1949, see Barmé 2002: 236–346; Harbsmeier 1984: 127–198; Hung 1990.

[7] The text above the drawing says: "Ten-year-old children's happiness and wisdom are deep, they are the same age as new China. Today they have the honour to join the Young Pioneers troops, in future years they will certainly be successors." Text on the placards the girl and boy are holding says: "Celebrating National Day."

(1950–1953) promoted greater love for the soldiers of the People's Liberation Army, so children can be found expressing their admiration for the "heroic warriors" – this theme naturally withdrew from the foreground with the end of the war. Other matters where children frequently appeared in cartoons remained relatively stable during the decade, so this paper is organised not by chronological but by thematic principle. It first looks at children as "auspicious" symbols and embodiments of the nation's future development; it then explores the young as exemplary citizens and paragons of morality; and finally delves into cartoons criticising misbehaviour by children or towards them.

Prosperity and the future

The tradition of depicting children on religious, funerary, or auspicious images (such as tomb reliefs, Buddhist sculpture, paintings on silk and paper, popular prints, etc.) goes a long way back in China. Han-period tombs (most vividly, the famous Wu family shrines, *Wu shi ci* 武氏祠, second century AD) were equipped with some images of children from didactic stories about filial piety (Wu 1995). During the next centuries, small children became part of iconographic tradition in the Buddhist portrayal of the Pure Land and of Buddha's entourage. Depiction of children (predominantly boys) moved out of an exclusively religious and funerary context by the eighth century (Wicks and Avril 2002, 10) and from the Tang and Song periods onwards developed into a vastly popular genre of auspicious pictures with messages of longevity, abundant and talented offspring, and a happy and prosperous life. Popular prints, such as New Year pictures (*nianhua* 年畫) and deity pictures (*shenhua* 神畫), were wide-spread in imperial China and retain a lot of their attraction to the present day. Cards of good wishes and decorative pictures often show chubby boys playing with auspicious plants and animals and carrying attributes of power, learning, prosperity, and happiness – the boys themselves being the auspicious symbols of healthy male offspring.

Figure 3. Yu Ren 于人 (1959).[8]

When the CCP took power in 1949, these images did not disappear but were partly remoulded to suit new goals. The colourful propaganda posters appropriated their language to promote the promise of a bright socialist future, while also relying on the printing techniques developed during the Republican decades (e.g., Min et al. 2015, 478–81, 486, 577, 584; Chineseposters.net). *Manhua*'s cartoonists also took up some *nianhua*-like aesthetics to demonstrate the achievements of the new state and socialism's benefits for simple families of labourers, albeit with a little less lustre than the propaganda posters, due to the need for cheap and fast printing. In this study's body of sources, from around 460 cartoons showing children in China and the socialist camp, 59 can be described as closely following popular print conventions, of which 7 were placed on the front cover of the magazine. Prominently resembling popular prints are the cartoons "Five children pass exams" (Yu 1959, fig. 3), "Jubilantly greeting National Day" (Zhang 1959, fig. 4), and "Treasure bowl" (Zheng 1958). The first cartoon is filled with *nianhua* attributes: pine, carp, peaches, jade and gold ornaments worn by the children, as well as babies' hairstyles and red bibs. The second cartoon is also explicit in following the tradition: plump children are carrying a peach, musical instruments, and an elephant-shaped vessel overflowing with goods. Yet the differences from the purely auspicious prints of the past are just as evident: in fig. 4 children are dressed in contemporary clothes, they carry staple crops (grain and cotton) and industrial items (coal and, presumably, steel), and both fig. 3 and fig. 4 contain political

[8] Note the 'archaic' calligraphy of the section headline, "New spring greetings". The inscription on all of the children's bibs reads, "People's commune Red Flag".

messages: the benefits of people's communes in the first case and the glory of the PRC's tenth anniversary in the second. In "Treasure bowl" a boy and a girl are carrying a pile of boat-shaped ingots, which, instead of being made of precious metal, are various kinds of fertilisers, from stove cinders in the bottom through various types of animal manure to human faeces at the very top. This was again a response to the policy of collecting all available fertilisers, and such a down-to-earth interpretation of "riches" is hardly imaginable in old popular prints, even though the chief idea of "treasure" is clearly still present.

Figure 4. Zhang Leping 張樂平 (1959).[9]

Quite often children appeared in popular-print-like cartoons to emphasize scale: small humans portrayed next to giant vegetables, cotton bolls, pigs, or bulls underlined the massive harvest and, sometimes, the need for collective effort to plant and gather it (Te 1954; Li 1956; Liu and Yu 1957; Meng 1958; Bi 1958). The concept of years passing related to the *nianhua* imagery developed into visualisations of auspiciously-dressed children (in red garments and bibs) as embodiments of the New Year or future years – although the departure from strictly local tradition is clear in a cartoon where a group of children are pulling a turnip. The turnip represents a 70% increase in agricultural production, and the seven children running to help each other pull it out are the years 1959–1965. The whole item is a eulogising cartoon to celebrate the Soviet

[9] The text on the peach reads, "Long live chairman Mao"; on the elephant, "Long live the Fatherland".

Union's newly announced seven-year plan, with the seven children, therefore, dressed in "Slavic" costumes and the narrative a clear reference to the Russian[10] folk tale about a giant turnip (Jiang 1959).

Another aspect is the child's "innocence" or "purity": in a number of images a child becomes an indicator of peaceful intentions and follows the conventional depiction of an "angel", a winged baby, or an infant riding a dove of peace (Li 1950; Gaoliangyefu 1959; Bi 1959; Luo 1959). Such images had frequently been used earlier, in pre-1949 cartoons. In the 1950s, they stood for the desire of the socialist countries and "people of the world (*shijie renmin* 世界人民)" to stop wars and peacefully conquer outer space (after the successful launch of the Soviet Sputnik in October 1957). In contrast, the image of a child New Year in the capitalist world, cartoons about which were never created in the popular print style, was that of a waif, suffering from cold, hunger, and mistreatment (Zhang 1958; Zheng 1959, fig. 5).

Figure 5. Zheng Wenzhong 鄭文中 (1959).[11]

[10] The folk tale "Turnip" (*Repka*) appears in a number of European languages, but since here it is connected to the Soviet Union, I describe it as Russian. The tale was collected in the Archangelsk and Vologda regions in the mid-nineteenth century (see Russian literature and folklore website, http://feb-web.ru/feb/skazki/texts/af0/af1/af1-1074.htm).

[11] The caption reads, "Conscript press-gang: 'Who cares if he's young or old, just grab anyone!'" The inscription on the helmet in the hands of the person on the left (most probably a caricature of Syngman Rhee 이승만) reads, "National defence force." The plaque in the top left corner reads, "Seoul."

In these images, as in the preceding tradition of popular prints, children were primarily the medium for carrying somebody else's message – parents' hopes in the case of traditional prints and governmental propaganda in the case of cartoons. Children, especially infants, were objects of care or aspirations, mostly voiceless and lacking agency. However, cartoons which moved away from the popular print style depict children as having more opportunities to speak "for themselves" and to express their "own" wishes. This brings us to the cartoons portraying children as "the future generation".

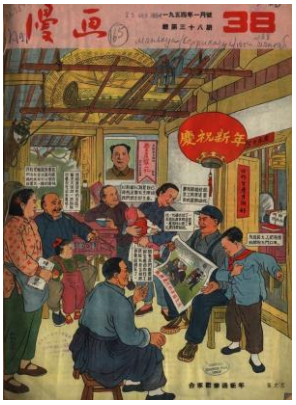

Figure 6. Zhang Wenyuan 張文元 (1954).

The front cover of a January 1954 issue of *Manhua* shows the home of a large family of at least nine people: elderly grandparents sitting slightly in the background at a nicely carved table, the grandfather holding a long pipe and supporting a little girl who is standing a little shakily; two middle-aged women, one of them holding a recently-born infant; two men sitting on stools closer to the foreground, one of them showing a propaganda poster to the others; and a boy of about ten years old wearing a Young Pioneer's (*shaoxiandui* 少先隊) red scarf. The whole interior is blessed by the portrait of Mao Zedong 毛澤東 placed on the wall behind the old couple, the chairman benevolently looking above the family into the eyes of anyone holding the magazine (Zhang 1954, fig. 6). The smallest children – the infant and the little girl – remain silent, the infant even seemingly asleep, the girl only pointing a chubby finger at the colourful poster held by one of the men. On the other hand, each adult and the oldest of the

children – the Pioneer boy – are supplied with square-shaped word-bubbles.[12] Thus, the cartoon demonstrates that all family members, male and female, old and young, are equal, participating in the conversation freely. Their words are highly politicised. The speakers note that life has become better after the liberation; that much more still has to be done to catch up with the Soviet Union (the poster in the man's hands shows "the happy life of Soviet peasants" and consists of a fountain and five human figures, including one child in its father's arms, holding a balloon[13]), and, therefore, that peasants need to join cooperatives to support the industrialisation effort. The Pioneer says: "Wait until I grow up, I will drive a tractor up to our front door." His zeal and positive attitude, confirmed by both his Young Pioneer status and his gestures, resemble the practice of adult workers' socialist pledges to increase production ahead of the plan. Compositionally, the Pioneer boy draws a lot of attention as he is placed in the foreground of the cartoon and right next to the central item, the propaganda poster. His voice is a part of everybody's enthusiasm and hope for the future.

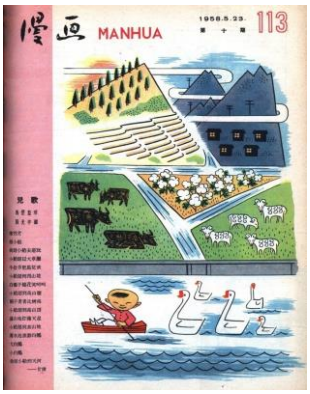

Figure 7. Ma Wen 馬雯 and Zhang Guangyu 張光宇 (1958).[14]

[12] This comic art convention was often used in 1920s and 1930s cartoons, but came to be disapproved of in later Chinese cartooning; this particular cartoon was criticised for the use of such speech-bubbles and their illegibility by one of the magazine's readers in a later issue (Anon. 1954).

[13] The complicated interplay of pictures-within-pictures in this and several other cartoons deserves to be the subject of a separate study.

[14] The song reads, Take a bamboo strip, / Row a small boat, / I am rowing a small boat to go on a trip. / The small boat glides past big grassy banks, / Bulls are mighty, sheep are fat, horses are joyful. / The small boat glides to the

In two other cases, both of which are cartoons on the front covers of late May issues (from 1958 and 1959), a child is solitary, independent, active, and given full voice. There is a poem accompanying each cartoon, containing the first-person singular pronoun (figs. 7 and 8): "I am rowing a small boat to go on a trip" (Ma and Zhang 1958) and "The Commune's pond is my home. [...] Row straight until I grow up" (Tian et al. 1959). The earlier (1958) cartoon is a semi-fantastic voyage in the present – the boy rows his boat up a hill and surveys the treasures of his neighbourhood, reaching the Milky Way. The panoramic view, great numbers of well-fed animals, and electrification of the area are clear references to the ongoing Great Leap Forward, and the boy with his childish tuft of hair participates in surveying these riches. In the later (1959) cartoon, a similar image emerges of a boy in a boat among auspicious symbols – lotus flowers, ducks, and fish – with the difference that the scale is somewhat smaller (the commune's pond) and the boy is now a Young Pioneer, not just roaming for enjoyment but gathering treasures from under and above water all the way into his adulthood. The motif of growing up is present here as in fig. 6, thus moving the reader to think about the future into which everyone is supposed to be investing their labour.

Figure 8. Tian Xin 田新, Wang Jixiang 王紀湘, and Li Cunsong 李寸松 (1959).[15]

Western hillside, / The white-bearded cotton laughs, ha, ha. / The small boat glides halfway up the hill, / The paddy is green and higher than trees. / The small boat glides to the top of the hill, / The whole hill is electric lights, the whole sky is stars. / The small boat glides to the Eastern hillside, / In the reservoir swim white geese, / Big geese, / Small geese, / I row the small boat to the Milky Way (Gansu).

[15] The poem reads, Row a small boat, splash, splash, / The commune's pond is my home. / Above water and under water are treasures, / Flowers are fragrant, fish are jumping, ducks are quacking. / Row a small boat, splash, splash,

Girls were also given a chance to speak about their place in time and their relation to progress towards the future. For example, a five-year-old girl wearing a beautifully coloured dress and holding the flag of the PRC was shown in front of an approaching demonstration in honour of the first Five-year Plan. She sits on her father's shoulder (himself decorated with a medal) and says: "Daddy! I am exactly five years old this year!" (Wu 1954).[16] Another example of a girl pointing out signs of socialist change is the cartoon from the front cover of the February 1956 issue: a primary school girl with an open book sits beside her grandmother, who is busy measuring brightly-coloured cloth, and looks at two passing women of about 20 years old, both carrying tools for measuring plots of land (Jiang 1956). The poem in the caption reads, "Grandmother's ruler – measures cloth to make new clothes; aunties' ruler – measures the fatherland to build socialism!" These words are pronounced from the child's point of view, and the atmosphere of new spring and joy resonates with the idea of the girl as the conscious successor of her parents' and grandparents' generations. Moreover, the shift in women's social roles (from "clothes makers" to participants in nation building) is visible here, and the girl looks up to the "aunties" to decide what her own role will be. Thus children – both male and female – gain their say in defining their country's fate, not only symbolising the transition from gloomy past into shining future, but also embodying the progress, the movement of time, and the notion of "the country belonging to the people". Of course, the words placed in children's mouths are strictly within the bounds of what the CCP and its ideology saw as befitting a patriotic child's thinking, but the same was true of adults' speeches. Importantly, here the interaction between

/ Row straight until I grow big. / The small boat carries a thousand fish, / The bamboo pole drives back ten thousand ducks.

[16] Similarly, in the already quoted cartoon by Feng Zikai, two Young Pioneers, boy and girl, are the same age as their country (fig. 2). The connection between human age and a country's development is shown in a celebratory drawing consisting of 11 panels, each of which shows a boy – first a very thin baby, later growing into a strong and energetic young adult, each age representing a year from 1949 to 1959 (Pitesitelupu 1959; fig. 9). Although the last example is the work of a foreigner, Danish cartoonist Herluf Bidstrup, such a pairing of human life with the fate or "maturing" of the country bears a great resemblance to the ideas of early 20th-century Chinese thinkers and writers; as Catherine Pease points out, "Historically their [Chinese writers' of the 1920s and 1930s] transition from childhood to adulthood – the process of *cheng ren* [成人] (literally, 'becoming a person') – took place within the context of China's entry into the modern world: their paths toward individual personhood paralleled China's progress toward modern nationhood" (Pease 1995, 279–80) and that was given play in the writers' creations.

children and adults is mostly that of support and unified intentions – father and daughter, grandmother and granddaughter, and boys pronouncing themselves members of the commune: everyone is united in yearning for a bright path towards a happy future.

Figure 9. Herluf Bidstrup (Pitesitelupu 皮特斯特鲁普 1959).

Model citizens and moral authority

At the same time, children in cartoons were also very eloquent when it came to shaming adults or pronouncing truths. In nearly 30 cartoons a child asks or says something to an adult to make them see their mistakes, mostly to do with production quality, saving resources, and behaving in public. *Manhua*'s campaign against poorly made consumer goods is analysed in some detail by John Crespi (2020, 122–27); the magazine's critical sections such as "Mirror" (*Jingzi* 鏡子), to which readers could send their complaints about particular cases of bad produce, service misconduct, etc., were often present in issues of *Manhua*. Besides those, the idea that "out of the mouths of babes" the truth sounds stronger was very actively used, mostly outside of criticism directed at particular units or individuals. For example, a girl with straight as joyfully invites her father to look at her grades, while he tries to hide his "marks" – the lowest quality grades for textile production of a cotton mill at which he is the director. The commen-

tary explains that such low grades mean that his production is mostly below the acceptable threshold (Lü 1954). Unlike publication in "Mirror" or a similar section, here no names or addresses are provided, but the contrast between a child's diligence and an adult's negligence presumably exposed all administrators who failed to provide good quality items. In another cartoon, a child's question pinpoints the father's selfishness in preparing his own home for winter, but not doing so at the institution where he works (Miao 1955); similarly, a peasant child's observation of starving cooperative cows in contrast to immensely fat pigs at his father's private pigsty demonstrates how the father steals cooperative fodder to increase his own gains (Zhao 1957). A twelve-year-old Young Pioneer's innocent remark that he is not six any more puts his father to shame for trying to get a free infant ticket (Wang and Ding 1957).

Figure 10. Jiang Fan 江帆 (1958).[17]

[17] The commentary reads, "In Liangtiantun village of Yulintun township in Huailai coun-ty, Hebei province, a percussion ensemble was established; every morning the drums serve as a wake up alarm, but a few individual members of the cooperative still don't get up, so the percussion ensemble pays them a 'visit'."

Towards the later years of the decade, with the Great Leap Forward and smaller campaigns for planting greenery, wiping out illiteracy, and maintaining hygiene under way, children were often shown reprimanding adults for spitting, keeping their clothes and houses in disarray, eating wastefully, breaking road regulations, sleeping late, and many other acts that were frowned upon. A detailed cartoon of a village scene by the "new member of Liming 黎明 cooperative" Jiang Fan 江帆,[18] shows a group of school-age children beating drums and cymbals under the windows of a house. The commentary explains that in Liangtiantun 良田屯 village of Yulintun 榆林屯 township in Huailai 懷來 county, Hebei province, a percussion ensemble was established to wake villagers up in the mornings, "but a few individual members of the cooperative still don't get up, so the percussion ensemble pays them a 'visit'" (Jiang 1958; fig. 10).

The very early waking times (as early as 3:30 a.m.) during the hoeing season drove the village cadres to actually walk into people's homes to get them out of bed (Yan 2003, 126). This cartoon, drawn as eye-witness evidence to the achievements of the Great Leap Forward, demonstrates how children were given the responsibility of shaming and waking the "lazy" peasants (without actually walking into their homes, but under the approving gaze of adult neighbours).[19]

Even the cartoon series by one of the most outstanding Chinese cartoonists, Zhang Leping 張樂平 (1910–1992),[20] "Annals of father and son" (*Fu zi chunqiu* 父子春秋), which mostly consisted of light humour, joined in the campaigns. An example is a six-panel drawing where the father spits and misses the spittoon; the son (a boy of indeterminate age, possibly a primary school pupil) sees this and writes a notice "When

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[18] Jiang Fan (1924–) is a prominent professional cartoonist who actively published his works in *Manhua*; in 1958 he went to this village cooperative to be 'tempered through labour' *laodong duanlian* 勞動鍛煉.

[19] This is to an extent comparable to the way children were encouraged to engage in propaganda work and other relatively safe activities as part of the war effort in 1937–1945 (De Giorgi 2014), as mentioned below.

[20] Zhang Leping's most famous creation was San Mao 三毛, a never-aging kid, who was an urchin in Republican Shanghai – suffering from cold, hunger, and bad treatment, sometimes cunningly getting the upper hand, sometimes looking lost, but never quite defeated, later a hero of the War of Resistance, inventive and miraculously victorious, and then, following the liberation, a Young Pioneer joining the various campaigns of the early PRC years (for more about him see Pozzi 2014b; Liang Liang 2017; Farquhar 1999, 203ff.). This fictional character remains very popular and typically figures in histories of cartoons in China (Bi and Huang 2006, 260–66; Hu 2018, 823–25; Lent and Xu 2017, 25–27, 72, 102).

you spit, please spit into the spittoon" – the comical effect added thanks to the fact that the boy has to ask his father how the character *yu* 盂 for spittoon is written (Zhang 1958). Upon seeing the notice, the father smiles and blushes, so that the education is achieved in a friendly and mutually beneficial way. This can also be interpreted as a suggestion on how adults should respond to children's admonitions, because in another cartoon on a similar topic, the adult's reaction is quite different. In the first part of a two-panel drawing, a little Young Pioneer sees an adult spitting in the street and pronounces through the loudspeaker: "Uncle, please do not spit on the ground!" (a couple of other children are visible in the background also promoting the use of spittoons). In the second panel the "uncle" aggressively shouts, "I know!!!" (Jiang 1958; fig. 11).

Figure 11. Jiang Zhenmin 姜振民 (1958).[21]

[21] The captions read, "Uncle, please do not spit on the ground!" – "I know!!!"

The moral of the cartoon is, therefore, two-fold: one shouldn't spit and one should be polite to little comrades who are doing their part. Yet the cartoon shows the high degree of annoyance at such omnipresent behavioural tips, which was probably not the author's intention. Indeed, there are so many cartoons where children are portrayed as exemplary citizens, enthusiastically participating in campaigns, showing initiative in the small ways available to them, doing good for the public benefit, teaching elders, and being overall ahead of adults in embracing the new norms and values (up to 95 cartoons out of 440 dealing with children in China), that the target of such drawings was clearly double: not only to inspire grown-ups to work more, faster, and with greater enthusiasm through the children's example, but also to get adults to acknowledge the children's "authority" and active role in building socialism, and to approve of such a role.

An effort to convince parents to let their children participate in adult affairs was made earlier, during the War of Resistance, as Laura De Giorgi demonstrates based on publications of *Kangzhan Ertong* 抗戰兒童 (The Resistance Child) magazine from the late 1930s and early 1940s (De Giorgi 2014, 63–64). Although De Giorgi concludes that this was a form of subjugation of children to the needs of adults[22] (which is also true of the 1950s), it meant that children obtained a degree of agency in the public discourse that was much wider than that encouraged by traditional filial piety. Moreover, social hierarchy and degrees of engagement were changing rapidly in the Mao decades: the children of the 1950s would become the Red Guards of the 1960s, and, according to the interviews with former activists of the Cultural Revolution period carried out by Anita Chan, "[t]hey all claim that during the Great Leap Forward they participated enthusiastically and genuinely believed in the value of their efforts" (Chan 1985, 28). The *Manhua* cartoons show that all adults, not only parents, were strongly urged to accept this input from children.

[22] "Celebrating the virtues of an imagined childhood for national salvation, war propaganda perpetuated the subjugation of Chinese children to the expectations and demands of the world of adults" (De Giorgi 2014, 80). Laura Pozzi (2014a) studies the more contradictory images of children in war outside of the main war effort propaganda.

In addition to the already quoted examples, there is a noticeable share of cartoons demonstrating children as adults' teachers and even superiors. A drawing where a peasant girl shows an urban man how to sow seeds is primarily a response to the idea of practical knowledge being more important than "dead" bookish learning (Jin 1958). But a similar cartoon where a little girl picks beans faster than her grandmother to the encouraging smiles of fellow villagers (Ding and Yue 1959; fig. 12) does not juxtapose the city and the village.

Figure 12. Ding Wu 丁午 and Yue Qi 岳岐 (1959), detail.[23]

It contrasts the old experience of past generations to the zeal and energy of their successors, which was primarily necessary to defend the peculiar farming practices of the Great Leap years, but also gave the children and young people more leverage against the traditional respect for old age and experience. In at least seven cartoons children teach older people – neighbourhood housewives, grandparents, and even complete strangers – to read and write. Again, such teaching takes place almost everywhere: it is

[23] The sign on the left reads, "Finishing line of the bean-picking competition."

shown to happen at home (Lü and Wang 1958), in the street (Wu 1958), when chancing upon written characters (Tian 1958; Guo 1958; fig. 13), while helping a woman with her domestic chores (Zhao 1958), in a classroom (Ding 1958), or while writing big-character posters (Miao 1958).

Figure 13. Guo Yan 郭燕 (1958).[24]

The dates of these cartoons (late spring – mid-autumn of 1958) show a close correlation to the slogans "a great leap in eliminating illiteracy" (sao mang dayuejin 掃盲大躍進) and "a cultural 'atomic explosion'" (wenhua shang de 'yuanzi baozha' 文化上的'原子爆炸') announced in the spring of 1958 (Anon. 1958a; Anon. 1958b). In one of the earlier cartoons a child actually invents a name for his elderly grandmother who has lived her whole life without even a name of her own, simply as a woman from Li Si's family – the child thus reverses the social order of elders picking an auspicious name for the young (Yang and Jiang 1953). Children's role as educators appears highlighted in the cartoons, while adults obey their "teachers" with kind and slightly embarrassed smiles.

[24] The characters on the paper in the old lady's hand read, "Chairman Mao."

Adults' doubts about children's eagerness and abilities are mildly ridiculed in several cartoons, e.g. where an adult admires a flowerbed and warns his interlocutor against children who might pull up the flowers – only to learn that it was the children who had planted them (Lü and Wang 1958). In another case, a group of Young Pioneers jokingly hide part of the harvest to puzzle the head of the production brigade and then bring the hidden part out to demonstrate that yields per mu 畝 are as high as required (Wang 1958). Adults thus learn that children are successful and efficient farmers, workers, and creators, not to be ignored, dismissed, or mocked.

It should be noted here, that while establishing the ethical example of children, *Manhua* did not reproduce the images of Chinese child martyrs, even though the early years of the PRC saw the emergence of "a pantheon" of them, "with children an important part of the CCP's cult of the red martyr" (Kauffman 2020, 12). The probable explanation is that, on the one hand, a satirical magazine was not seen as a fit place to visualise such tragic and heroic myths and, on the other hand, since adult readership was not the chief target of child martyr narratives, other media were preferred to convey them.[25]

Misbehaving and abused

It would be somewhat counterproductive for a satirical magazine to portray all children exclusively as exemplary comrades who never err and all adults as perfect friends to them. Therefore, a number of critical cartoons appeared. It should be noted that the perceived limits of a child's "misbehaviour" outside of political satire could vary quite widely – e.g., one of the interviewees of Anita Chan said that due to the high pressure of being a "model of good behaviour" at school, upon returning home he became "naughty", "messed around with the neighbourhood kids, playing hide-and-seek, marbles and chess" (Chan 1985, 25). Of course, playing games with other children could

[25] Kauffman lists the forms of short story, song, poetic drama, and picture book among those used for this purpose (2020, 11).

hardly be considered worthy of serious criticism from the central press, even in the mass mobilisation years. To become an object of criticism in cartoons a child had to do more than frolic. Cartoons criticising children's misbehaviour can be divided into two groups: one is spoilt or lazy children inside the PRC and another the under-age criminals in the capitalist world (no exemplary behaviour was present in depictions of children from Western countries for the implied reason that the conditions of bourgeois culture and the capitalist economy did not yield any good fruit).

In the corpus of this study, there are 44 cartoons that can be recognised as showing Chinese children doing "wrong" things. Out of these 44, 16 cases show parents' or other adults' bad influence causing children to behave improperly, while 12 contain criticism directed at children themselves. 17 cartoons are works by Zhang Leping (some of them from the already mentioned series "Annals of father and son"), mostly with a humorous rather than critical tinge (Jin and Zhang 1956; Zhang 1956a; Zhang 1957; fig. 14).

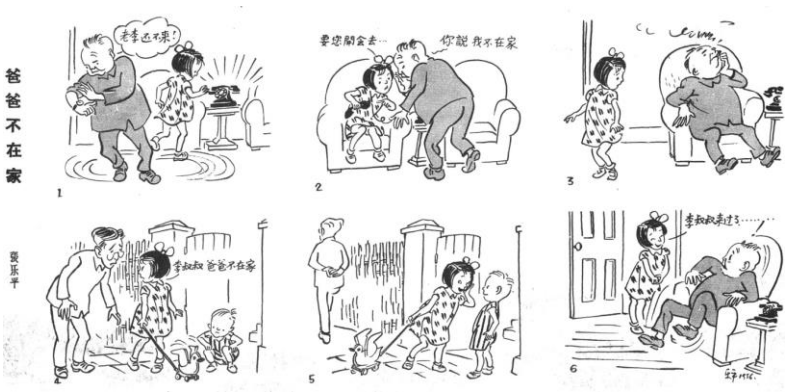

Figure 14. Zhang Leping 張樂平 (1956a).[26]

The drawings where a child is affected by their parents' bad example show youths wanting money for their school grades (Yuan and Lao 1956), bullying people as the

[26] The thought bubble in the first panel says, "Old Li is still not here!" The words in the second panel read, "They want you to come to a meeting..." – "Say I am not at home." In the fourth panel the girl says, "Uncle Li, father is not at home." In the sixth panel she says, "Uncle Li's been..."

high-ranking father does (Lü 1957), smoking, again through their father's example (Li 1960), or generally acting as spoiled brats because of their parents' indulgence (Pan 1955; Zhang 1956b). In a number of Zhang Leping's cartoons, children are shown to have "learnt" from their parent's bad example to the dismay of the adults themselves, and thus the adults realise that teaching a child to lie or covertly tearing library books when nobody but the child sees you can turn out badly even for yourself. In all these cases, the object of criticism is evidently not the child but rather the adults who fail to discipline themselves and their offspring as befits members of socialist society.[27] Parents who brought up their children in the spirit of greed, laziness, egoism, and unhealthy living thus appeared to transgress the prescribed norms of child-parent interaction and carried the responsibility for their children's misconduct. Such drawings also emphasise the idea, expressed quite often and repeated in the same magazine, that by the misbehaviour of a child one can see how "arrogant and wilful" (*jiaozong* 驕縱) the parents are (Hua 1959).

Cartoons laying responsibility on the children themselves are scanty in *Manhua*, possibly because the magazine was not aimed directly at a young readership. The few that are present show the badness of breaking public property – books, musical instruments, and the like – (Lü and Han 1955; Shuo and Shen 1956; Er Chi 1958), as well as being lazy, slovenly, and shying away from work or study (Wang and Shi 1953; Li and Zhou 1959a, 1959b, 1959c). There is one cartoon where school pupils appear to show disrespect to their teacher by leaving the classroom as soon as the bell rings, before the teacher does – this cartoon is interesting because it was made by a school student, as stated next to the publication (Wu 1958). Thus it was an example of the peer-pressure and "collective criticism" encouraged to a degree by pedagogical workers at the time (Tillman 2018, 221).[28] But here as well as in previous cases, the mildness

[27] In one case the cause of misbehaviour lies in the American-style comics a Chinese child reads – such a cause was more typical in depicting misbehaviour among capitalist youth (Zhang 1956c).

[28] Tillman goes on to say that such involvement of children in political discussions "ignored a key injunction" that "teachers aggressively direct children's political growth" (Tillman 2018, 221); however, another key injunction of the 1950s was that cartoons by amateurs (workers, peasants, cadres, children, etc.) had to be given space in mass media, to give the voice to the masses and let them show their creativity, as was especially required during the Great Leap Forward. Such contradictory signals from the top were characteristic of the era.

of the criticism is striking both in comparison to cartoons against political outcasts (e.g. against the Rightists) and against "miscreant" children of the capitalist world.

These latter ones were quite a shocking crowd: there were killers, robbers, racists, vandals, and plotting villains among the young generation growing up in the West, according to *Manhua*. No less than 13 cartoons show children who, upon reading comics or watching Hollywood films, rob strangers or their own parents (Mao 1950; Ye 1956; Sun 1958; Ya 1959) or kill their whole families (Huo 1954; Anon. 1958c). The inverted "normality" of such behaviour in capitalist countries was emphasised in a cartoon where a child shows no inclination to read violent detective stories or watch television thrillers, does not want to join his father in going to a gun-shop, and tries to feed pigeons instead. The child shocks his bourgeois parents by his kindly disposition "unlike other children" so much that they take him to a psychiatric hospital (Zhao 1958; fig. 15).[29]

Figure 15. Zhao Yannian 赵延年 (1958).[30]

[29] Conversely, there was also an eight-panel cartoon showing a father's effort to save his son from the disturbing influences of street hooligans, murder-inspiring comics, aggressive films, shocking TV programmes, etc. – but this is a lonely example against the other cartoons (Ye 1959).

[30] The caption under the last panel reads, "This child is different from the other children, [we] must quickly take him to the psychiatric hospital for examination!"

Almost all of these cartoons emphatically drove home the argument that the criminal behaviour of these Western children (primarily American, but not exclusively) was caused by their bad upbringing, especially reading comics and watching Hollywood films, with the addition of examples from daily news where members of the KKK tortured black people and politicians screamed about the nuclear threat. A clear representation of all such bad influences is shown on the back cover of a March 1956 issue (Ye 1956; fig. 16).

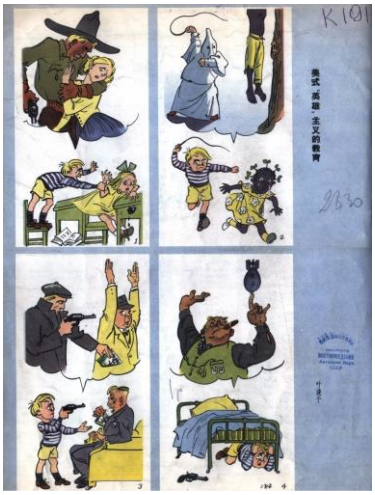

Figure 16. Ye Qianyu 葉淺予 (1956).

In other words, the moral abyss of underage criminality was opened by the corrupt culture and politics of capitalist countries, and children were victims of this corruption. Parallel to this, the youths thus educated were to grow into aggressive and violent soldiers, the tools of future wars – a narrative quite similar to what Margaret Peacock shows in the images of "other" children in the USSR and the USA during the same years (Peacock 2014, 42–58).

Yet there is an even greater number of cartoons about children of workers abroad as victims not so much of wrongful education, as of poverty, hunger, and cold: 59 photographs and cartoons invite the magazine's readers to sympathise with the offspring of labourers in Western countries. Those images most probably brought associations

with China's own "dark past", when orphans were begging and sleeping in the streets. By juxtaposing these pathetic views of the unjust capitalist life with the achievements and happiness of the children's existence in new China and other socialist countries, the cartoons added sharpness to the "benefits" of socialism. Importantly, in photographs of suffering children there is relatively little interaction between them and adults, and children are generally voiceless and passive in their misfortunes.[31] The parents are either absent (e.g. a photograph of children in the street: Anon. 1959a; fig. 17) or, if present, cannot provide care and look away, even if the child is in their arms (e.g. Anon. 1959b; Xian 1959). Such despair was aimed to show the hopeless state of the working class in the West, where the next generations and the future bring no light. The use of photographs as "evidence" is also a striking change from the drawn cartoons about domestic matters.

Figure 17. Anonymous (1959a).[32]

[31] One exception is a cartoon from one of the earlier issues, where a French girl violently refuses to give flowers to a "Yankee" (*Meiguo lao* 美國佬) but a photographer manages to make a snapshot which looks "as if" the French child is happily greeting the American (Zhou 1953). In other cartoons children in the West did not appear to participate in adult protests against the American presence.

[32] The caption explains that photographs are reprinted from Soviet, East German, and Japanese magazines and newspapers. Individual captions to photographs are, top to bottom, left to right: Italy, Japan, USA, South Korea, and Spain.

Mistreatment of children inside China was sometimes criticised in cartoons as well, but this never reached the hopelessness of the capitalist world and, importantly, they were never photographs, the "incontrovertible evidence" of which was reserved primarily for the display of capitalist evils. All the same, there are 28 cartoons showing disapproved adult treatment of children. Most of these (24) appeared in the mid-1950s, before the Anti-Rightist campaign of 1957: in the early 1950s Chinese children were shown as suffering only in cartoons about gloomy past, whereas after 1957 and the Anti-Rightist campaign the magazine aimed to show internal affairs in a positive, eulogising tone, praising the ongoing Great Leap Forward and related lesser movements. The "guilty" parties in these 28 cartoons were: teachers or kindergarten workers (12 cases), parents (10 cases), strangers in the street or in playgrounds (3 cases), and manufacturers who produce low-quality goods or provide poor service (3 cases). One cartoon shows a child who is badly treated by both parents and teachers (Liu 1957), and another does not assign a specific guilty party but criticises some unidentified force that has deprived children of a "children's home" (*shaonian zhi jia* 少年之家), so that they have to loiter about (Feng 1957). Two noticeable kinds of ill-treatment are inattention (8 cases) and physical violence or the threat of it (7 cases). In the former cases, children appear to try and attract the adults' attention (e.g. Xu 1954; Shen 1956; Wang 1959) or, conversely, remain silent in tacit rebuke (e.g. Mei 1956; Li and Zhao 1956; Liu and Er 1956). In the latter cases, the children look offended, pained, and often shocked – as, for example, in cartoons "'Heroes' of the playground" (He and Liu 1956) or "Deliberate offence" (Jiang 1958; fig. 11). As John Crespi writes about the first example, where a group of grown-up hooligans take over the playground while children cry in terror or stand aside, "the callous buffoonery of the middle-aged men in 'Heroes' pushes internal satire into the absurd" (Crespi 2020, 129). This cartoon shows the adults' bad behaviour as immature, ridiculous, and at the same time almost unbelievable – unlike the "realistic" depictions of capitalist misdemeanour and suffering. It also shows the reaction of children – here, as in another cartoon, "Pages of spring sadness" (Zhang 1957; fig. 18), they stay and wait for the adults to leave, looking displeased and showing disapproval with their glances, twisted lips, accusing gestures, grim faces, and

tears. Thus, adults' behaviour is judged by the children, who serve as the moral authority, similarly to the group of exemplary children described in the previous part of this paper.

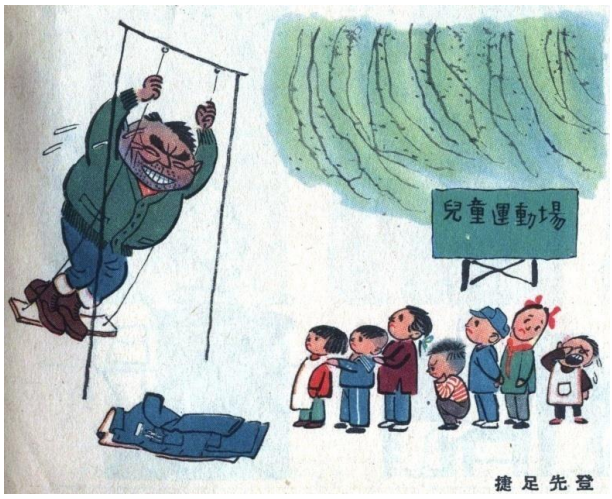

Figure 18. Zhang Ding 張仃 (1957), "Pages of spring sadness 傷春篇", detail titled "Jie zu xian deng 捷足先登" (The swiftest wins the race).[33]

It should also be noted here that kindergarten workers were criticised for the maltreatment of their wards only until early 1957; later the magazine joined in the effort of persuading mothers that kindergartens and crèches are good places for infants to grow healthy and well-educated, where babies are not mistreated but are happy and even eager to go (e.g. Yan 1958; Tong 1959). Such cartoons appeared at approximately the same time as depictions of happy old age in homes for the elderly and generous meals at public canteens in people's communes (e.g. in the front cover cartoon of issue 131, the three are joined as the symbols of all-round care in a commune: Tian Yuan 1959; fig. 19).

[33] The characters on the green board read, "Children's sports ground."

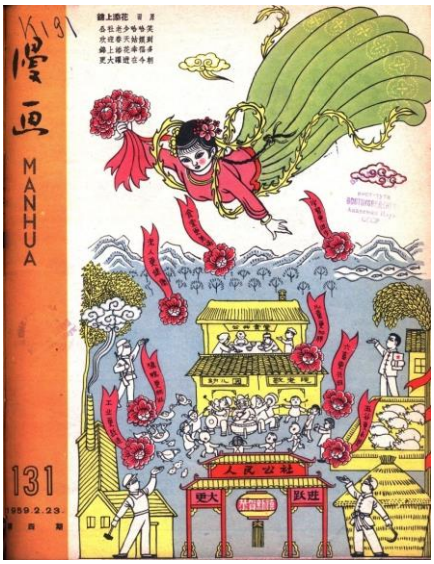

Figure 19. Tian Yuan 田原 (1959).[34]

Such emphasis on the benefits of kindergartens and crèches is easily understood in the light of the Great Leap Forward's need to free female labour from all domestic chores. But at the same time the need to promote kindergartens as safe and enjoyable places for children indicates that many women were unwilling to put their children there – as Margaret Tillman points out, "even in 1958, rumors circulated in the relatively rural Chaoyang [朝陽] district of Beijing that mothers would not be allowed to breastfeed in new daycare centers, and that boys were being kidnapped for adoption in the Soviet Union to rectify its gender imbalance" (Tillman 2018, 195). The children's depicted eagerness to become part of a crèche or kindergarten group was, thus, an argument "from the child" to persuade the parent into following government policy.

[34] The song reads, "In communes old and young laugh, haha, / Welcoming the girl spring's arrival, / Making perfect even better, there is more happiness, / An even greater leap is here today. The characters on the gateway read, "People's commune" and "Even greater leap." The three yellow pavilions are captioned "kindergarten", "elderly home", and "public canteen". The falling red ribbons contain the slogans "Plumper children", "Healthier old people", "More perfect canteens," and promises of greater achievements in grain and livestock production, study, and industry.

Conclusion

The cartoons analysed above, for all their thematic and stylistic variety, have a recognisable prevailing thread that unites them into a relatively coherent portrait of the Mao-era child. This child is by no means a real human, it is rather a prescribed ideal that fits with the above quoted notions of childhood as a constructed manifestation of superimposed power, which subjugated the actual people of the time to the expectations and demands of dominant discourses. In the *Manhua* magazine cartoons, the "normative" children appeared neat, healthy, energetic, enthusiastic, well-educated in whatever knowledge was required from them at the time, helpful, and looking forward to the brave new world ahead. The deviations from such a norm were also present; where a child's misbehaviour was shown, the cartoon was clearly demarcated as criticism – in a mild form when it came to children in China itself and as outright condemnation of the young miscreants of the capitalist world. Physical deviations, such as a child's poor condition – dirty clothes or starved look – were mostly attributes of the capitalist world as well, whereas inside China, according to the "normality" implied by *Manhua*, those were things of the sorrowful past, not even to be depicted towards the mid-1950s. All this was natural to the socialist discourse of happy and healthy childhood, very similar to the contemporaneous images in the USSR and hardly breaking any conventions other than some traditions of pre-socialist China. Yet the satirical nature of *Manhua* magazine opened the way to (probably unintentionally) showing some underlying conflicts and contradictions.

The fundamental issue lies in the degree of agency given to children in cartoons. The images, instead of remaining within the limits of metaphorical representation of prosperity or poverty, insistently showed active young people speaking out in support of or even in opposition to adults, teaching the suddenly less knowledgeable elders, or reprimanding parents for not pursuing the public good. Of course, such agency was not a display of complete freedom – it was not the voice of children but rather of the same authority as was heard in every other form of mass media of the time; however, as mentioned above, many children accepted this voice for their own by embracing Mao's campaigns. Yet for a great part of *Manhua*'s adult readers even such agency was

problematic, whether it was only prescriptive or actually carried out. An urban man who proved himself far less capable of labour than a small village girl would have to undergo a great deal of "education" to accept such a situation. A grown-up who was shamed by a near-toddler for being untidy or a parent whose own child pointed out how one should care for public property would find themselves faced with a question: how to deal with such "good" children? The magazine's cartoons offered unambiguous instructions: children held the moral authority, their efforts were aimed at the common good, and therefore an adult was to accept being taught by them and to correct his or her wrongs.

Such an idealised depiction of exemplary children came into contradiction with pedagogical practice, where teachers held the initiative in shaping children into "little revolutionaries". At the same time, various ideological campaigns of the 1950s undermined teachers' authority. This is curiously reflected in cartoons: there are several critical depictions of teachers mistreating children and only one cartoon criticising children for showing lack of respect to the teacher. The confusion over the matter of children's innate qualities was also visible: while in some cases children seemed to be innately "good" (hence their ability to educate less perfect adults, including their own parents), in other cases children could be spoilt by the adults' bad example (which was more typical for the "corrupt" capitalist society, but also figured in Chinese families). Some of the criticism towards mistreatment of children – lack of child-oriented facilities, adults' misuse of such facilities, teachers' neglect of their primary duties – also unveil a number of contradictions in the depiction of a perfectly happy childhood under Chairman Mao. The "distraction" in the form of "miserable" images of Western children might also have played a misleading role, since among the criticised aspects of children's existence in the capitalist system was either their hard labour or lack of employment – which, illogical in itself, might raise questions about depictions of children working at schools and in communes in China. However, these contradictions seem to have gone unnoticed by the cartoonists (although maybe not by their readers). The prescribed warmth of relations between "good" socialist children and

adults remained a clear ideal, whereas deviations from it were to be cured, not analysed in depth.

To sum up, it is fair to say that children in *Manhua* cartoons became noteworthy and independent actors, expressed their wishes, aspirations, and criticisms, and were to be reckoned with by the adult "elites" – much as the other formerly "voiceless" social groups, "exploited before the liberation" (labourers, women, ethnic minorities, etc.) appeared to speak up and act of their own will. Yet all of them could show agency only in so far as it was immersed in the sense of duty and political consciousness. In this sense, socialism was portrayed as the way to bring people of all ages and genders to being conscious members of the new society, and children served as an example to the slower adults of internalising revolutionary values – but any deviation from the socialist path turned the "guilty party" back into a voiceless object of satire and criticism.

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