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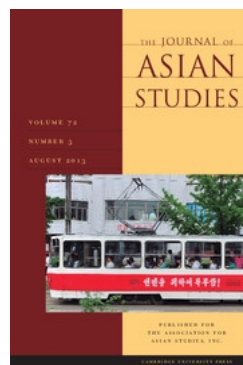
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Drawing Sexual Violence in Wartime China: Anti-Japanese Propaganda Cartoons

LOUISE EDWARDS

During the War of Resistance against Japan (1937–45), China’s leading cartoon artists formed patriotic associations aimed at repelling the Japanese military. Their stated propaganda goals were to boost morale among the troops and the civilian population by circulating artwork that would ignite the spirit of resistance among Chinese audiences. In keeping with the genre, racialized and sexualized imagery abounded. The artists created myriad disturbing visions of how militarized violence impacted men’s and women’s bodies differently. By analyzing the two major professional journals, National Salvation Cartoons and War of Resistance Cartoons, this article shows that depictions of sexual violence inflicted on Chinese women were integral to the artists’ attempts to arouse the spirit of resistance. By comparing their depictions of different types of bodies (Chinese and Japanese, male and female, soldiers’ and civilians’) the article argues that the cartoonists believed that the depiction of sexually mutilated Chinese women would build resistance and spur patriotism while equivalent depictions of mutilated male soldiers would sap morale and hamper the war effort. The article concludes with a discussion about the dubious efficacy of propaganda that invokes a hypersexualized, masculine enemy other.

ON SEPTEMBER 20, 1937, only weeks after Japanese bombs tore through the heart of Shanghai, Wang Dunqing 王敦庆 declared a “Cartoon War” (Manhua zhan 漫画战) with the launch of a new journal titled *National Salvation Cartoons* (Jiuwang manhua 救亡漫画). Wang (1937a, 6), editor of the new publication, boldly claimed in its inaugural issue that it would serve as “the camp barracks for cartoon warriors” (*manhua doushi de yinglei* 漫画斗士的营垒) in the struggle for “final victory against the enemy” (*kangdi jiuwang zuihou shengli* 抗敌救亡最后胜利). He reminded his readers that during the last European war cartoonists from England, France, America, and Belgium were instrumental in securing victory against Germany. Similarly, the USSR’s political leaders used cartoons to “eliminate” both internal and external enemies. It was time, Wang declared, for China’s cartoonists to realize the power of their art and strive to repel the Japanese invaders. In periods of war, Wang argued, cartoons can “stir people’s emotions, encourage soldiers to face death fearlessly, increase people’s patriotism and launch a serious attack on the enemy” (5).

Wang's 1937 "call to arms" marks the start of the first concerted and coordinated use of cartoons as weapons of war in China.¹ Prior to the Japanese attacks of the 1930s, Chinese artists had for the most part stayed distant from official military matters, preferring instead to remain in the refined world of artistic expression, biting political satire, or commercial opportunity.² Wang's journal sought to change this pattern by bringing the artistic world into direct engagement with the military effort. He was not a lone voice. *National Salvation Cartoons* was the organ of a newly formed, Shanghai-based group, the Cartoonists Association for National Salvation (Manhua jie jiuwang xiehui 漫画界救亡协会). Over the next three months, the association would publish twelve weekly issues of *National Salvation Cartoons* and distribute them to other major cities. Each issue included around forty to fifty different cartoons as well as essays and political critiques. The magazine rapidly gained popularity and achieved a circulation of 20,000 copies. By the seventh issue, the magazine boasted Nanjing, Hankou, and Hong Kong editions (Ye 1938a).³ All the key left-wing cartoonists joined this association and published their artwork within the pages of its journals. Prominent cartoonists Ye Qianyu 叶浅予 (1907–95), Sheng Gongmu 盛公木 (aka Te Wei) 特伟 (1915–2010), Zhang Leping 张乐平 (1910–92), Hu Kao 胡考 (1912–94), Wang Dunqing 王敦庆 (1899–1990), and Lu Shaofei 鲁少飞 (1903–95) led the group that would grow to include forty-one artists (Shen 2005, 1). The eldest of these founding members was only thirty-four years old, and the majority were aged in their twenties.⁴

The political success of their initiative was evident when in January 1938 they moved their operations to the Nationalist Party's headquarters in Wuhan and came under the wing of the government's Third Bureau of the Military Affairs Commission's Political Affairs Department (*Junshi weiyuanhui zhengzhibu disan ting* 军事委员会政治部第三厅).⁵ The journal adopted a new name, *War of Resistance Cartoons* (*Kangzhan manhua* 抗战漫画) and, as the official "national" cartoon journal, garnered a prestige and legitimacy that other publications lacked. It regularly included "reports from the provinces" about cartoon propaganda activities taking place around the nation (see, e.g., *Kangzhan manhua* 1938a).⁶ The goal of the new journal remained in keeping with its predecessor:

¹Chang-tai Hung (1994) provides a discussion of the Western artistic influences on Chinese cartoonists and explores the differences in style that developed in the Chinese art scene. An excellent book-length account of the connections between Chinese cartoonists and global art trends can be found in Paul Bevan's (2012) SOAS PhD dissertation.

²Their political satire had included criticism of the government's apparent weakness in negotiating with an increasingly powerful and aggressive Japan. John A. Crespi (2011b) describes the situation in 1936 as follows: "China's elites, cartoonists included, were outraged by this disregard for national integrity. Nor were they pleased with political passivity among their countrymen, or worse, the acts of collaboration—whether willing or coerced at bayonet-point." His "visual narrative" provides reproductions from *Modern Sketch* that relate to the "Japanese menace."

³Propaganda Corps located outside of Shanghai also engaged in distributing cartoons without a published magazine format. For example, the Guangzhou Corps held street exhibitions of anti-Japanese cartoons, overcoming the need for printing presses and distribution networks (Mori 1999, 14).

⁴For a detailed list of names, complete with age, provincial affiliation, and professional background, see F. Chen (2004, 69–70).

⁵For the guiding principles of the reformed association, see *Kangzhan manhua* (1938c).

⁶All references to *National Salvation Cartoons* are taken from Shen (2005). The original is housed at the Shanghai Library but is too fragile to be used. *War of Resistance Cartoons* is available in reprint

“to stimulate the morale of all our fellow nationals in this war of resistance, and engage in a battle to the death with the evil propaganda of the enemy!” (*lai ciji quanguo tongbao de kangzhan qingxu, he diren de xuanchuan zuo shusi zhi zhan!* 来刺激全国同胞的抗战情, 和敌人的恶宣传作殊死之战!) (Ye 1938a).

But their elevation into the formal operations of the government’s war effort through the Third Bureau drew them into the rapidly escalating conflict between the communist members of the Nationalist Party and its right-wing members.⁷ Prominent communists Zhou Enlai 周恩来 and Guo Moruo 郭沫若 headed the Third Bureau, and their presence cast suspicion over all the activities of the 3,500 people working in the unit (Xiao and Zhong 1992, 82). The then bimonthly journal would not survive the ever-widening gap between these two groups, and after only fifteen issues it ceased regular publication in mid-June 1938.⁸ Many of the cartoonists did indeed hold left-wing sympathies, and some even directly supported the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). For example, when the Communist Party formed its newspaper *New China Daily* (*Xinhua ribao* 新华日报) in January 1938, Cartoon Propaganda Corps member Hu Kao assumed the position of artistic director; his articles in *War of Resistance Cartoons* were sometimes directly critical of the Nationalist Party’s lack of “unity” with the CCP (Hu 1938, 7294). The communist sympathies dominating the Third Bureau were also clear when they sent forty-five cartoons to an exhibition in Moscow in March that year (Mori 1999, 42–43). In the summer of 1938, concerned about CCP influence, the Nationalist government reconfigured the Bureau; many of the Corps members were pushed out and thereby left the world of GMD-authorized propaganda work. The Third Bureau changed its name to the Cultural Work Committee (*Wenhua gongzuo weiyuanhui* 文化工作委员会), and the staff in this new body talked of performing “cultural work” (*wenhua gongzuo* 文化工作) rather than “propaganda work.”⁹

The instability in this area reflected the absence of a clear strategy in the Nationalist government’s propaganda against Japan. In his study of Japanese imperial propaganda, Barak Kushner (2006, 140) explains, “even after the war against Japan ended in August 1945, the KMT [Nationalist Party] still had no central policy concerning what type of literature and art it wanted to produce.” Whereas the CCP took propaganda

(issue no. 9 is missing), published in Beijing by the Quanguo tushuguan wenxian suowei fuzhi zhongxin in *Kangzhan manhua* (2006). All references to the latter magazine are from this reproduction.

⁷For detail on the complex politics of the United Front between the Nationalists and the Communists in the “Third Bureau,” see F. Chen (2004, 72–74).

⁸Not to be completely silenced in 1938, the cartoonists resumed publishing *War of Resistance Cartoons* in 1940 from a new base in China’s wartime capital, Chongqing. With Te Wei as editor it produced a final three issues (Shen 2005, 121) before the ever-widening schism between the Nationalist government and the CCP closed this opportunity as well. In January 1941, as a result of the Southern Anhui Incident (*Wannan shibian* 皖南事变), the magazine’s revival was cut short with the complete collapse of the cooperation between the Nationalist government and the CCP. Trust between the two sides eroded, and the Nationalist government forced the closure of Te Wei’s publishing operations. Some of the cartoonists joined the communist movement, and many were sympathizers. For example, Cai Ruohong and Zhang Ding exhibited their work in the CCP base in Ya’nan in 1941 (Mori 1999, 28).

⁹Chen Feng-shen (2004) explores the Nationalist Party’s complex and changing position on the use of art as propaganda during wartime.

work very seriously, the Nationalist government lacked initiative and “its cultural policies centered on censorship laws and ordinances designed to obstruct not create” (140). In contrast, the Japanese state had devoted considerable energies *before* the war, not only during it, to drawing ordinary Japanese people into state projects through such actions as the Campaign to Foster National Strength of the 1920s and National Spiritual Mobilization Campaign of 1937–40. The Japanese state integrated messages of national unity, economic strength, and progress through the school system, the commercial advertising world, and direct government agencies (Garon 1997). Japan’s wartime propaganda continued from this decades-old state project of influencing the hearts and minds of ordinary people, and the cartoon artists were mobilized specifically.¹⁰ In 1937 Japan’s cartoonists were required to join the New Cartoonists Association of Japan (*Shin Nippon Mangaka Kyokai*) or face bans on their work. The value the government ascribed to their work is evident from the fact that the association’s magazine, *Manga*, continued to be published even during war-induced paper shortages.

Chinese experience in this field was limited, and the tensions between the Nationalists and Communists compounded the problem. The dispersal of the Cartoon Propaganda Corps in mid-1938 prompted members to publish in newspapers, nonspecialist magazines, and even some new cartoon magazines, such as *The Sword and the Brush* (*Dao yu bi* 刀与笔) and *Weekly Cartoon* (*Xingqi manhua* 星期漫画) (Mori 1999, 44), but the heyday of the Cartoon Propaganda Corps as a nationally coordinated project was largely over. Members moved to different parts of the country to continue their work: Guilin, Guangzhou, and Hong Kong especially. Wherever they went, they established cartoon magazines, published booklets and posters, and conducted “cartoon warfare” (46).¹¹ Anti-Japanese cartoons would continue to be created, published, and distributed, but they would not operate as a coordinated army of cartoonists from within one identifiable “barracks” as Wang had originally hoped.

During their publication life, *National Salvation Cartoons* and *War of Resistance Cartoons* provided us with important insights into how China’s cartoon artists regarded their role and potential political impact in influencing the war. The target audiences for both journals were primarily the cartoonists themselves and their educated peers from the literary and art scenes—their key message was to engender the participation of these groups in the war effort. Columnists reveal anxiety about the degree of support China’s cartoonists would devote to arming this war effort. The journals’ moral lessons, warnings, and advice on how best to engage in cartoon warfare assumes an intimacy of “in-group” professional cartoonists. For example, Wang Dunqing summarizes the journal’s current achievements and future prospects while addressing his readers as “we cartoonists.” Wang (1937b, 118) declares that all of “us comrades” in the cartoon

¹⁰The Japanese government consciously targeted an international audience in its “cultural diplomacy” campaigns as well. Sang Mi Park (2009, 2) explains that they sought to “persuade the West to acknowledge Japan’s self-appointed position as a leader in Asia.” A famous cartoonist of this period, Yokoyama Rytichi (1992), wrote a vignette on his wartime artistic service in Indonesia and on the home front that talks of his ambiguity about the war effort. Andrea Germer’s (2011) discussion of the multilingual magazines published from Japanese-occupied China by photo-journalist Natori Yonosuke provides intricate details on how this project was conducted.

¹¹See, for example, Zhao (1940). Thanks to Danke Li for alerting me to this pictorial collection.

world should “undertake some serious self-criticism and examine our art, our ideology and our techniques.” The same assumed readership was presented in *War of Resistance Cartoons*, with Ye Qianyu (1938a) announcing in the first issue the “second life” (*di er ge shengming* 第二个生命) of *National Salvation Cartoons* in this new format and citing extensively from Wang’s 1937 “Cartoon Warfare.” Its second article was the text of a speech by Lu Shaofei (1938, 7218) titled “War and Cartoons” in which he calls upon “we cartoonists” to shoulder “our” grave responsibilities to use cartoons as weapons. The magazines *National Salvation Cartoons* and *War of Resistance Cartoons* were in this respect professional publications targeting writers and artists and are rich sources of information about the ideas on war propaganda circulating among the urban educated elite of the literary and art worlds.

As a result, *National Salvation Cartoons* and *War of Resistance Cartoons* included extensive essays on matters of professional politics that would have been irrelevant to the broad Chinese masses. To reach the broader population, cartoonists reproduced their work in pamphlets, posters, and story booklets that were distributed in workplaces and markets or they held exhibitions and parades and posted banners to attract public attention to their work. They also aimed to have their anti-Japanese cartoons included on calendars, advertisements, and wrapping paper.¹²

Chang-Tai Hung (1990, 40) regards cartoons as being particularly useful as “unofficial registers” that “reflect the political and social conditions of the age and offer valuable insight into popular attitudes.” But in the war context of the two journals in question, the breadth of their “popularity” is uncertain since, as we will see below, the artists themselves expressed constant concern that their work did not connect sufficiently directly to the ordinary people of China. Moreover, the cartoons they produced had a clear didactic function to alter readers’ perceptions of their world rather than to “reflect” their attitudes. In the pages of these magazines we read and view material that the cartoonists presumed would serve the purpose of “boosting the moral of the military when read at the front lines, and boosting the moral of the people when read behind the lines” (S. Lu 1938, 7218). Accordingly, the cartoons and the magazines they appeared in reveal a great deal about the ideology of the cartoonists of wartime China and their perceptions of how to rouse people to fight the invaders, but do not necessarily reflect the views of the population as a whole or even China’s ordinary masses. Bearing this perspective in mind, this current article is an exploration of the mindset of a group of patriotic artists as they sought to influence the direction of the war they were experiencing in all its gore and violence.

Like in propaganda cartoons elsewhere during these decades, race and sex were frequent themes within the material created for *National Salvation Cartoons* and *War of Resistance Cartoons*. John W. Dower’s (1986) seminal study of the Japanese and American propaganda machineries during the Pacific War exposes the racist nature of the materials created. “To scores of millions of participants, the war was also a race war. It exposed raw prejudices and was fueled by a racial pride, arrogance and rage on many sides” (4). Creators of propaganda in both Japan and the United States used race as a powerful emotive trigger to inspire civilian support for the war effort and to invigorate

¹²For a photo of one of the street rallies, see Mori (1999, 41).

enthusiasm among the fighting troops. Invocations of sex in propaganda perform a similar role in generating an emotional response from audiences. Race-based and sexualized violence fill the pages of *National Salvation Cartoons* and *War of Resistance Cartoons*.

Prevailing gender ideologies play important roles in the justification for and perpetuation of militarized conflict. Joshua Goldstein (2001) argues that gender shapes war and war shapes gender, while Cynthia Enloe (2007, 13) alerts us to the importance of paying attention to the gendered nature of militarized violence in her comment that the violence of war impacts men's and women's bodies differently. This corpus of research argues that understanding the mechanisms by which gender is mobilized is central to understanding war. To this end, this article explores the ways in which the cartoonists' pens gendered violence. Conscious of the interconnection between war and gender, the article examines the implications of a gendered notion of violence as it was mobilized to achieve the cartoonists' explicitly stated goals of spurring enthusiasm for the war effort. It shows that sexual violence dominates their depictions of Chinese women and argues that in the cartoonists' minds the destruction of women through sexual mutilation would not jeopardize the overall goal of building resistance to the invasion and spurring patriotic sentiments among the viewing audience.

CARTOONING, WOMEN, AND GENDERING VIOLENCE

Prior to the war, cartoons of women featured regularly in publications like Lu Shao-fei's *Modern Sketch* (*Shidai manhua* 时代漫画) (1934–37).¹³ Pictures of modern women accompanied critical commentary on the superficiality of commercialism or the power of sex to corrupt and degrade. The allure of young female beauties was the subject of many a diverse romantic drawing as well, and cartoonists were regular contributors to pornographic publications that by their very nature featured pictures of women. But, in wartime propaganda, the images of women would change dramatically as cartoonists determined that these previous imaginings of women were not applicable to the war stage.

From its very first issues, *National Salvation Cartoons* established a gendered tone for its readers through explicit invocations of the appropriate depiction of women. As the naturalized “norm,” men and masculinity did not attract equivalent attention. But images of women became markers of the moral status of the cartoonists—the pre-war depictions of romantic or lusting beauties and commercial modern girls signified a frivolous indulgence unsuited to the crisis facing the country. For example, in issue 3, Zi Mei (Wang Zimei 汪子美) (1937b) contributed a poem called “Our loudspeaker” (Women de laba 我们的喇叭) that ran:

What are you hesitating for? You still haven't taken up your brush!
 Don't paint any more water buffalo, don't paint any more willows.
 Don't draw another modern girl stretching out her fine hands.
 We need to draw the big knives of the 29th Army chopping the heads off the enemy!

¹³For a discussion of *Modern Sketch*, including reproductions of the various ways images of women featured in this pre-war publication, see Crespi (2011a).

What are you hesitating for? You still haven't taken up your brush!
 Don't paint any more waxing moons, nor any more bunched flowers.
 Don't paint any more sexy women with open red lips.
 We want to paint the flaming torch of the Chinese people's desire to save the nation!

The same tone had been elaborated on in the previous week's edition with Wang Zimei (1937a, 21) challenging cartoonists to "move like lightening" to save the nation. His discussions of the change required of artists in these new conditions are peppered with gendered and sexualized imagery. Prior to the war, Wang argues, artists could indulge in a leisured style in which cartoons were decorations and beautiful like "quiet virginal girls" (*jing ru chunü* 静如处女) (21). In wartime, he declares, such quietude is not possible and artists must unite and cooperate to speak with one voice to oppose the Japanese aggressors. His attacks on the reluctant members of his profession assume an explicitly gendered and sexualized tone. He demands that artists with "pornographic cravings" (*seqing chengpi* 色情成癖) cure themselves of their venereal disease (*hualiu bing* 花柳病) to enter the fray and join in the defense of China (21). Wang uses "lipstick" as a synecdoche for the frivolous decoration of these intransigents' current art works. He warns that they ultimately risk being labeled "cartooning traitors of the Han people" (*manhua hanjian* 漫画汉奸) if they fail to cleanse their hands of their previous indulgences and take up their brushes for the noble cause of stimulating resistance to the Japanese (21). The new cartoons should "satirize, attack and expose the enemy's trickery and violent actions; they should instruct people in national defense measures and encourage mass participation in them" (22). The artists' partiality for solitude and indulgence in mysticism or despondency is directly linked to debauchery (*yinyi* 淫逸) in Wang's delineation of wrong practice. Invoking the debates between left-wing writers and the "art for art's sake" that had raged through the 1920s and 1930s, Wang sneers at the romantics for their inability to connect to the masses through their desire for so-called "pure art" (*chuncui yishu* 纯粹艺术) (22). The structure and logic of the discussion follows directly from the existing debates about the link between politics and art circulating more generally in the literary and art scenes, but the use of sexualized and gendered imagery as fodder provides us with direct insights into the cartoonist's mind.

The pre-war images of women were variously symbols of beauty and quietude, like willows and water buffalo, waxing moons and flowers, *and* symbols of depravity and distracting debauchery through their lips, limbs, and promise of plundered virginity. How then would these ideas about women and gender be transported to the violent new battlefield of cartoon warfare? At their most benign, the cartoonists use images of female beauties to signify the absence of seriousness of patriotic purpose in their wartime cartoons. For example, in Xuan Xiangquan's 宣相权 (1938a) five-framed cartoon titled "Today's Shanghai," a sleazy magazine seller stands next to a display of his wares—images of women's faces and provocative female forms abound on their covers. Xuan's textual commentary on the frame tells readers that the magazine world promotes frivolous and distracting content while ignoring promoting resistance against the Japanese.

However, the more striking aspect of both these particular wartime cartoon journals' depictions of women is the frequently recurring image of the impact of militarized

violence on Chinese women's bodies through the graphic and disturbing depictions of their rape and sexual mutilation by Japanese soldiers.¹⁴ Depictions of or discussions about rape are a persistent part of militaristic narratives circulated during wartime. And the involvement of Japanese soldiers in rape and mutilation of Chinese women's bodies is also widely known and documented (Eykholt 2000; Tian 2005)—particularly its systematic occurrence during the occupation of Nanjing starting in December 1937. However, the use of the raped and mutilated female body as a sustained icon of the “horrors of war” in the cartoon artists' work for *National Salvation Cartoons* and *War of Resistance Cartoons* was unaffected by this incident, as indicated by the fact that there is no difference in the frequency of images of rape and sexualized mutilation in the two journals before or after December 1937.¹⁵ This phenomenon is a result of the fact that rape and sexual mutilation are a sustained, ongoing component of narratives about war, as well as its reality.

Belligerents in war routinely use stories of rapes by each other's male soldiers against female civilians in propaganda. For example, English-language propaganda produced by the Japanese government via the South Manchuria Railway Company in 1937 explained that Chinese troops commit heinous crimes against Chinese women. In August, during the defense of Shanghai, the booklet advised its readers that Chinese women were forced into “recreation and comforting battalions.” “These unfortunate women were subjected to the most dreadful treatment, performing the functions of ‘wives’ for the officers and men” (Information and Publicity Department 1937, 54). On September 30, this Japanese publication reported that the defeated Chinese troops plundered and pillaged as they retreated and in one building alone a hundred corpses were found. “It was difficult to ascertain the motives for the cold-blooded murder of their own nationals, but the dead women had all been fiendishly raped” (55). In 1944 Germans were subjected to newsreels showing the “corpses of women and girls who had been raped and murdered by drunken Red Army soldiers,” but many people viewing these horrors assumed them to be “part of a gross exaggeration” by the Propaganda Ministry, whose demonization of the enemy was constant (Beevor 2005, xiv). The women of Berlin would find out that their optimism was misplaced, as more than 100,000 women were raped in the weeks following the conquest of Berlin alone (Enzensberger 2005, xi). Stories about the rape

¹⁴Other propaganda cartoon magazines of this time also included rape scenarios. See, for example, the Fuzhou publication *Kangdi manhua* 抗敌漫画 (Resist the enemy cartoons) and its 1938 drawing “He's a beast” (“Shi qinshou ye”). This image is a simpler version of Zhang Ding's (1938) cover of *War of Resistance Cartoons* that same month. It depicts a soldier rebuckling his pants, knife between his teeth, with one leg on the prone, raped woman. Another rape scene appears in Er Shi's 耳氏 (Chen Tingshi 陈庭诗, 1913–2002) “Defend the rural areas” (Er 1938a). This cartoon includes a frame in which a Japanese soldier is rebuckling his trousers over a naked, prone Chinese woman. Er Shi continued the rape/murder theme into the June issue with his four-framed cartoon titled “A bundle of news” (Er 1938b). The news Er Shi shares includes a four-framed cartoon in which readers are reminded of the extent of the devastation wreaked by the invaders with a cartoon of a raped and murdered woman, entrails exposed, and another with a naked woman, knees up just after being assaulted.

¹⁵A cartoon in the CCP's *Xinhua ribao* as late as 1945 includes a panel that depicts women about to be raped. The accompanying text narrates the gang rapes of village women and girls and their post-rape murder by sword by GMD troops (Zuo and Jia 1945).

of women and girls in wartime propaganda are legion—as are the actual incidents themselves.

We know from extensive historical data that such horrors really did occur during this particular war, just as they did in other wars within China between Chinese. Edward McCord (2001, 2005) has noted that rape and sexual mutilation (of both men and women) occurred in the warlord-led chaos between 1918 and 1920 in China. Gail Hershatter's (2011, 54–61) rural informants related tales of mass rape of Shaanxi women by armed men of all varieties through the decades from the 1920s to the end of the 1940s. The CCP newspaper *Red China* (*Hongse Zhonghua* 红色中华) reported in March 1933 that Nationalist Party troops raped women, young and old, on a nightly basis as they moved through Anyuan, Jiangxi, as part of their campaigns to eliminate the CCP. The same paper reported in the summer of 1934 that the Nationalist Party's 44th Army pillaged Anyuan yet again and repeatedly raped women in their homes and while the women were gathering firewood in the hills (*Hongse Zhonghua* 1934). The article includes a line drawing of an immobile, naked female form lying prone on the floor while two GMD soldiers stand over her body. Rape and sexual mutilation continues to occur around the world as a routine part of warfare today. So rampant is this feature of warfare that sexual violence has become the subject of recent attention by the United Nations (UN Action 2011). Sexual assault of men and sexual mutilation of male bodies is also common in warfare. McCord's (2001, 2005) data shows that it occurred in China during these decades, and the UN campaign tells us that it has a long history globally and continues to occur today (see also Sivakumaran 2007). Yet images of the rape and sexual mutilation of men do not appear in the cartoons at all.

This article is not addressing the reality of rape and sexual mutilation in warfare. The brutality of war systems, the gendered nature of war's impact on combatants and non-combatants, and the highly sexually charged atmosphere created by military battles are not in question.¹⁶ Rather, I explore the ways that the cartoons reflect the mentality of the cartoonists who chose to create these images and promote them in campaigns designed explicitly to “boost the morale” of soldiers and ordinary people and spur them on to greater resistance. Depictions of women's sexually mutilated bodies were deemed useful to the war propaganda efforts.

The frequency of the appearance of these disturbing images in *National Salvation Cartoons* and *War of Resistance Cartoons* contrasts dramatically with the treatment of sexual violence in wartime women's magazines. Magazines written by women activists and aimed at engendering women readers' participation in the war effort do not include any such graphic images. Instead they discuss how to assist women victims of sexual violence and how to simultaneously advance women's rights and promote resistance to the Japanese invasion. Sachiko Egami's (1999) study of Chinese women's wartime magazines, and specifically their discussion of Japanese troops' sexual violence, provides important insights. She shows that feminist journals sought to eradicate the idea that women should commit suicide as a marker of loyalty to their nation after being raped by enemy soldiers.¹⁷

¹⁶Danke Li (2010, 6) explains in her study of wartime Chongqing that war makes sexual abuse more prevalent and alerts us to its prevalence in the unoccupied areas as well as in the Japanese occupied areas.

¹⁷Their goal was to eradicate this longstanding practice from China's war culture (see Li Wai-Yee [1999] regarding its occurrence in the Ming-Qing transition). Only a few decades earlier, during the

The Cartoon Propaganda Corps' depictions of the mutilated female form also contrasts with the use of women's bodies in cartoons produced in Japanese-occupied territories of China. For example, the Japanese-backed *Beijing Cartoons* (*Beijing manhua* 北京漫画) (1941) sets its goal as the promotion of "the peaceful construction of the nation" (*heping jianguo* 和平建国). There are no images of sexual mutilation or rape in this publication either—despite the Japanese being aware of its existence and their reports about retreating Chinese soldiers being responsible for its occurrence. Instead, images of sexualized women's bodies feature variously as objects of desire, arousal, humor, and "springtime" fun—prompts for distraction from life's suffering rather than the indignant rage sought by the Cartoon Propaganda Corps artists.

Thus, war propaganda, of all persuasions, is intensely gendered from conception, in its production, and through to its consumption. Artists, publishers, and military leaders make decisions about what images should be created and displayed on the basis that they assume the image will advance their particular propaganda cause—be that prompting fierce resistance to the Japanese invasion (as in *National Salvation Cartoons* and *War of Resistance Cartoons*) or pacification and cooperation with the occupying forces (as in *Beijing Cartoons*).

This article focuses on the manner in which rape and sexual mutilation of women's bodies were deployed within the patriotic propaganda, rather than their actual occurrence, in order to understand how women's bodies perform ideological work within this particular war system. This distinction is important and is not intended in any way to minimize the horror of or responsibility for the reality of the actual atrocities committed during war. However, wartime propaganda is not produced as a factual record of events as they occur. Broadly speaking it either is a weapon deployed against the enemy that is designed to demoralize and weaken their commitment to fight or, in the case of the material discussed here, is designed to persuade would-be supporters to resist the enemy and their invasion and occupation. It is created to "shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist" (Jowett and O'Donnell 1986, 16). Wartime cartoons deserve interrogation as documents infused with discursive meaning independent of the reality of the many rapes, mutilations, and murders experienced by Chinese women during the 1930s and 1940s. They provide us access to the culture of war created by significant figures in China's literary and artistic elite and reveal how militarized violence is gendered in their imagination.

THE INTEGRITY OF THE MALE CHINESE SOLDIER'S BODY IN THE FACE OF VIOLENCE

The rape and sexual mutilation of women's bodies in *National Salvation Cartoons* and *War of Resistance Cartoons* stands in stark contrast to the comparative absence of images of mutilated and sexually violated male bodies. In keeping with the overall goals of the propaganda corps to improve morale and spur the spirit of resistance

Boxer Rebellion of 1900, public commentary lauded the heroism of women who committed suicide after being raped by foreign, enemy soldiers.

among artists, readers, and troops, the magazine editors and cartoonists clearly deemed that the presentation of raped and sexually mutilated women would have a positive effect (i.e., in generating hatred, anger, and active resistance towards the Japanese troops), whereas equivalent images of men would have a negative effect (i.e., generating feelings of vulnerability, fear, and defeatism). Within the discursive world of wartime cartoonists the humiliation and degradation of Chinese women was acceptable, whereas this was not the case for Chinese men. Chinese women's bodies were expendable commodities in the artists' economy of war, for their power to evoke strong emotions, whereas Chinese men's were not.¹⁸

The pattern is set from the first issue of *National Salvation Cartoons*. Cai Ruohong's 蔡若虹 (1910–2002) "We have no home" is a five-frame series that instructs readers on how to seek revenge for Japanese atrocities (Cai 1937). It moves from a scene of a poor but happy family (comprising husband, wife, child, grandmother, and cat) gathered around the kitchen table lamplight. The husband eats, the wife is sewing, and the grandmother is feeding the baby. The second frame shows their house destroyed in a Japanese air raid. The third moves to the destruction of the family themselves. The husband's enraged form fills the foreground of the frame, carrying his decapitated child. He assists his frail mother to walk as her left arm dangles limp—the hand amputated by the Japanese. In the distant background a Japanese soldier stands over the prone body of the wife. Her knees are raised, and her arms reach up in a gesture of helplessness. The soldier stands between her knees, pointing a bayonet to her throat. The fourth frame shows refugees all huddled in fear, pain, and hunger, and the final frame provides the reader with the solution to their misery. The raging husband, fists clenched, arms raised in defiance, stands with solid legs above a crowd of people, all drawn with angry faces and raised, clenched fists. The accompanying rhymed text, perhaps the words the husband is shouting, reads as follows: "A tree without branches cannot produce flowers, a nation that doesn't exist cannot have homes. If you want your home to be revived, unite together in heart and strength to protect China!" The wife is abandoned as the rape progresses while the husband escapes with his mother and dead child. The raped female body is expendable because her discursive function, as a woman depicted in the midst of being raped, is to symbolize the ongoing, in-progress humiliation of China by the Japanese.¹⁹

Zhang Leping (1937a) creates a similar narrative in his eight-frame cartoon titled "Extremely vicious consequences." It shows a bulky Japanese soldier marching out to war after praying to a pig-like Buddha image. His first act is to spear a naked Chinese baby with a bayonet. His second is to rape a woman. The rape frame includes a prone, semi-naked woman, knees raised and breasts exposed. Her motionless arm suggests

¹⁸An example of an image of a mutilated Chinese male body is provided in the four-framed piece titled "Are you willing to be a conquered country" (*Kangzhan manhua* 1938b). The second frame depicts a Japanese soldier bayonetting a Chinese person while a previously murdered man lies with blood spewing from his head in the foreground. The other three frames relate to Japan's colonial designs and its desire to steal Chinese property and bully people out of their assets.

¹⁹Other examples from *National Salvation Cartoons* of naked women, bayoneted through the womb, include: Ding Cong 丁聪 (1916–2009), "The civilized 'King Kong'" (Ding 1937); and Lu Zhixiang, "The enemy troops committing rape and slaughter now" (Z. Lu 1937).

passivity but her raised knees indicate she is still alive and able to hold them up. The foreground of the frame is dominated by a full frontal view of the soldier rebuckling his trousers, pubic hair and belly button confronting the reader. He holds his dripping knife between his teeth, and his head is tossed back for balance as he fixes his trousers. His face is hidden from view, so readers' attention is drawn to his bloodstained knife and just-covered pubic area. The immediacy of the image establishes that the humiliation is "in progress" and ongoing. The blood dripping from the knife indicates that the woman is possibly in the process of dying and her humiliation is potentially not completely over. But, like Cai Ruohong's 蔡若虹 cartoons discussed above, the cartoonist seeks to provide readers with a solution to the horror they are experiencing in reading the cartoon. To ensure that the cartoon does not produce feelings of impotency and despondency, Zhang Leping's final frame has an equally large Chinese soldier slicing the head off the kneeling Japanese begging for his life. Again, the just-raped Chinese woman, her naked, ravaged body laid out for the reader's inspection, is an expendable body—able to arouse violent anger, and when appropriately avenged, will not produce despondency among readers.

That humiliated women's bodies are low-risk commodities for the propaganda effort is reinforced by the frequency with which rape scenes appear without the "revenge solution." The 1938 Zhang Ding 张汀 (1917–2010) drawing titled "Brutality" that provides the cover of the first issue of *War of Resistance Cartoons* is an excellent case in point. The body of a just-raped woman and her attacker's evident post-rape posture are the keys to generating the sense of urgency and immediacy among people to rise up and resist Japan. An enormous Japanese soldier stands with one foot on the body of a naked woman, the knife in his mouth drips blood, and his huge hairy hands are rebuckling his trousers. In the background, a village burns and smoke from the fire billows forth. The woman's body is squashed under the soldier's foot, but it is also contained into the bottom right-hand corner of the frame and could easily be overlooked if it were not that the soldier's rebuckling of his trousers fills the center middle of the picture. The picture provides no solution to readers' rage.

In contrast, the images of male Chinese soldiers are routinely fully clothed, broad shouldered, with chiseled jaws, fists clenched or poised for action with guns in hand. Lu Shaofei's (1937a) cover of the third issue of *National Salvation Cartoons* typifies this image of the strong, fearless, noble Chinese soldier. Chinese soldiers on horseback dominate the page as they forge forward, crushing the terrified and desperate "dog-faced" Japanese beneath their horses' hooves and penetrating their bodies with bayonets. Chen Yanqiao's 陈烟桥 (1911–70) "Behind the fallen is a column of successors" from the same issue brings the power and strength of the Chinese male body to full view in a frame that is dominated by a huge, strong-legged, broad-shouldered soldier (Y. Chen 1937a). Chen's (1937b) contribution to the fifth issue, titled "Waging war for the independence and freedom of the race-nation," has a similarly large, thick-necked, strong-featured Chinese soldier with his rifle raised in victory above his head. Equally fine-chiseled fellow soldiers lie in readiness behind him.

A few exceptions to this pattern appear, but they are comparatively rare occurrences. For example, Lu Shaofei's (1937b) cover of the final issue of *National Salvation Cartoons* depicts two Chinese men, identified as ordinary people (*pingmin* 平民) rather than soldiers, tied to posts and penetrated by Japanese bayonets. The caption tells readers,

“They use live people as targets for bayonet practice.” The agony on their faces is alleviated only by the blindfolds obscuring their eyes from the reader’s gaze. Another notable exception is Lu Zhixiang’s 陆志庠 (1910–92) “Look! Evidence of the imperial troops! Rape! Murder! Lewdness! Pillaging!” that shows the bodies of three men strung up with blood dripping on the floor (Z. Lu 1938). Unlike the common depiction of women facing similar treatment, however, all three male bodies are fully clothed despite their ordeal. The female images in the same Lu Zhixiang series are naked and grotesquely sexually mutilated. *National Resistance Cartoons* provides regular updates on life in in “orphan Shanghai” that provide muted versions of the same phenomenon of clothed male bodies and naked female bodies. Xuan Xiangquan’s (1938b) “Intelligence from the orphan island” (*Gudao qingbao* 孤岛情报) shows Japanese troops bullying fully clothed Chinese men but stripping clothing off a Chinese woman to reveal her breasts.

The cartoonists do recognize the physical dangers of battle for Chinese soldiers. But the injured bodies of Chinese soldiers are presented within the context of healing and field hospitals. Titled “The No. 15 Provisional Hospital: Visiting our sacred heroes,” Ye Qianyu’s (1937b) illustrated essay in the ninth issue of *National Salvation Cartoons* typifies this nurturing narrative. The cartoons decorating this essay include lines of men resting after their various minor injuries have been attended to—bandaged feet, hands, jaws, and heads. The damage done to the body has been contained by bandaging, the mutilation resolved by medical attention. Another image shows a strong, upright soldier seemingly unconcerned while nursing his bandaged arms and holding a walking stick—a stick that he is not leaning upon. The stick shows the concern the army has for his injury, but he really does not need it. A third image shows the field surgeon in action fixing a leg injury on a soldier. The reader cannot see any damage to the leg and instead sees the healing, teamwork, and courage. Ye’s essay accompanying his art reinforces the spirit of stalwart dedication and willing sacrifice expressed by the wounded, and now well-tended, soldiers. A similar series of images of bandaged and hospitalized Chinese soldiers, also by Ye Qianyu (1938b), appeared in *War of Resistance Cartoons* under the title “Injured nameless heroes.”

The major exception to this sex-delineated pattern is the depiction of Chinese traitors who are male (*Hanjian* 汉奸) and Japanese male soldiers.²⁰ Their bodies are regularly depicted as suffering humiliation and gruesome deaths. In a special issue dedicated to *Hanjian*, *War of Resistance Cartoons* published Feng Teng’s 冯腾 (1938) “The traitors’ end” in which the bleeding heads of five traitors are hung from the city wall with the masses below rejoicing in their decapitation and humiliation. Another image in the same issue, titled “The blade on the bloodsucking traitors,” by Jiang Mi 江牧 (1912–89) depicts a large knife slicing through the bleeding skulls of two kneeling traitors (Jiang

²⁰In contrast to Allied visual propaganda from World War II, where women are regularly depicted as betraying their menfolk, the “traitor” role appears to be more commonly one gendered male in China. See Gubar (1987, 240) for a discussion of women with “loose lips” and female spies and vamps that find weakness in sex-starved soldiers. Compared to Gubar’s findings, there is a remarkable dearth of images of women as traitors providing solace to the Japanese in the Chinese materials. In *National Salvation Cartoons* and *War of Resistance Cartoons*, Chinese traitors tend to be men with women in tow. Gubar also notes that the imagery from the allies is redolent with “a hatred of women” (250)—this too is absent in the Chinese case in *National Salvation Cartoons* and *War of Resistance Cartoons*.

1938a). The gruesome punishments inflicted on traitors by the vengeance-seeking Chinese people and the Chinese military are a steady theme in the cartoonists' warnings against collaborating too closely with the Japanese. In the third issue of *National Salvation Cartoons*, Te Wei (1937) contributed a particularly gruesome cartoon that shows the body of a Japanese soldier, held aloft by the Chinese bayonet that has penetrated his body. The buttocks of the dead Japanese are exposed as his pants sag about his knees. In his hand he still holds a bayonet upon which a naked Chinese baby is pierced. The accompanying text reads: "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." The cover of the seventh issue, drawn by Ye Qianyu (1937a), is a dramatic side view image of the Japanese prime minister kneeling on the ground with his jacket open and pants loosened to expose his stomach. In his hand he holds a massive knife that is plunged into his belly. His sickened eyes stare out at the reader with the accompanying text reading, "The day the Japanese prime minister commits hara-kiri is not far away."²¹

Though Japanese men's nakedness is commonly depicted, especially naked buttocks, Chinese male bodies are protected from exposure. The modesty about Chinese male bodies, desexualizing their forms, contrasts with gratuitous displays of Japanese bodies. Zhang Ding's (1937a) "Guarantee of peace in East Asia" shows a pig-like Japanese, naked from the waist down, whose buttocks, legs, and stomach are dotted with hair; a sword is positioned to look like an erect penis. The animal-like, hypersexual Japanese is raging as he tries to march forward in war as his leg is chained to a post—implying that chaining the Japanese military to a stake is the only sure way to secure peace. Like the naked Japanese, the humiliated woman is further evidenced by the frequency of the displays of women's naked or semi-naked forms. In 1937 Zhang Ding (1937b) reminded readers of the 1922 treaty between Japan and the Nine Nations that had affirmed China's territorial integrity.²² His gruesome cartoon "A trampling scathing refutation" uses a naked, disemboweled female form, intestines trailing and breast swaying, to symbolize the degradation of the treaty as Japan shows disdain for the agreement. The woman is suspended by one arm and displayed by a proud, grinning Japanese soldier. The vulnerability of women, their passive naked forms presented for curious readers' eyes, reinforces the extent of the expendability of female dignity in this particular war culture.²³

²¹For more images of mutilated Japanese bodies, see: Zhang Leping's (1937b) "The results that we'll be able to see in the future," which includes a prostrate Japanese body with a sword through the stomach and blood pooling on the floor; and his "Stubborn," which depicts a sword-wielding samurai furiously slicing himself to pieces until his limbless, headless corpse is impaled by a huge, new sword decorated with the Nationalist Party's sun symbol (1938b).

²²The nine countries that signed the agreement were the United States, Japan, France, Great Britain, Italy, Belgium, Netherlands, Portugal, and China.

²³In addition to the mutilated bodies of male Japanese soldiers, *National Salvation Cartoons* also included images of dismembered Japanese women, but in Japan itself. Zhang Yan (1937) includes women's body parts in the crushed corpses strewn along a railway track—destroyed by a train labeled "Off to Battle in China" (*Chuzheng Zhongguo* 出征中国). The accompanying text tells readers of the devastation Japanese people are experiencing as a result of the war effort, and the graphically dismembered, decapitated, and crushed bodies add a corporeal dimension to the message.

The repeated appearance of the raped and humiliated Chinese woman, in the context of the dearth of images of the mutilated Chinese man and the relative absence of images of humiliated and degraded Chinese soldiers, points to a particular function for Chinese women's bodies in the wartime culture created by the Cartoon Propaganda Corps. Moreover, the coupling of these degraded Chinese women's bodies with degraded bodies of Chinese traitors and animalistic (half-dressed, hairy) Japanese soldiers suggests that the naked form and the sexualization of particular bodies reflects underlying conceptions of the ideological functions Chinese women's bodies can perform. For the cartoonists, Chinese women's degraded bodies are expendable wartime commodities because they are perceived to have a positive impact in eliciting resistance rather than the despair and fear that equivalent images of Chinese men might generate.

BIOLOGICALLY CONCEIVED NATIONALISM: DEATH AFTER RAPE

The sexualized humiliation of women is a commonplace aspect of patriarchal societies during both peacetime and wartime, but in times of military invasion and in particular in nations where the borders of national identity are configured biologically, the female body's centrality in reproduction gains new significance. A biologically configured notion of Chinese nationalism, racial nationalism, emerges within the cartoons of the Propaganda Corps through the post-rape female corpse.²⁴ The cartoons depict the Japanese invasion as directly threatening the survival of the Chinese *minzu* 民族 (race-nation), and the frequency of their use of rape imagery invites the question of pregnancy and the birth of half-Japanese babies—a second generation that stands to destroy a “Chinese” China. The death of raped women provides a tidy solution to this problem for the cartoonists. For the propaganda to be reassuring and inspire retaliatory action, rather than despair, raped women had to die—otherwise the Chinese women's body would be a conduit for the destruction of the race-nation of China through the birth of half-Japanese babies. Women who have potentially been impregnated by Japanese soldiers are routinely depicted as dead or dying from their assaults. The overwhelming majority of the images of explicit rape within *National Salvation Cartoons* and *War of Resistance Cartoons* are of dead or dying post-rape women. Moreover, the rapes depicted are normally accompanied by sexualized mutilation of the female body. Knives, swords, and bayonets pierce wombs or genital areas. Lower stomachs are stabbed, not mid-stomach; breasts are pierced, not shoulders—the mutilation of the women in the cartoons is sexualized.²⁵ Knives and bayonets stand in for the penis, penetrating the woman's pubic region.

Other nations have also conceived of children born as a result from wartime rape as being problems for a collective identity. And by no means all of these nations uphold racial nationalism. Ruth Harris's (1993, 170) research on World War I and French anxiety about “the child of the barbarian” produced as a result of rape reveals that nation's concern about “a new invasion of German-sired bastards.” This anxiety ensured that the prospect or actuality of rape was featured in propaganda posters, pamphlets, and reports. The key difference with the Chinese propaganda appears to be that the women and girls depicted

²⁴Margherita Zanasi's (2006) exploration of economic nationalism notes that Wang Jingwei also conceived of the economic revival as a racial nationalist project—*minzu jingji* 民族经济.

²⁵In contrast, babies are frequently depicted as being headless or stabbed through the midriff.

in French and British material survive to provide testimony to the German army's barbarism and the ongoing horror of its invasion. Moreover, the children produced by rape had the potential to become French through good mothering. In the Chinese case, the propagandists avoided the problem of dealing with the "Japanese-sired bastard" with the death of the raped woman. Racial nationalism, as a congenitally and patrilineally configured system, cannot turn a half-Japanese child into a member of the Chinese nation. Nicoletta Gullace's (1997) work on British propaganda around the "Rape of Belgium," also during World War I, supports the view that the Chinese propagandists preferred rapes to conclude in death more than did their British counterparts. The images Gullace includes are primarily of living women with implicit pre- or post-rape contexts, although the text-based propaganda includes descriptions of raped, mutilated, and then murdered women. In the Chinese-produced cartoons of the Sino-Japanese war, there is no escaping death for the rape victim—in surviving she has a limited positive discursive function for racial nationalism.

Not only are the raped women routinely depicted as dead, and the mutilation of their bodies targeted at the sexual organs, but the reproductive organs of women are often visibly and graphically destroyed. The physical locus for the pollution of the Chinese race-nation by the Japanese is physically wrecked. Accompanying this gruesome destruction of women's reproductive body is the reminder that the existing Chinese family line has also been destroyed. Dead babies and fetuses appear routinely alongside their raped mothers. The Chinese race-nation is under threat from the destruction of the existing family lines, but readers are reassured that no Japanese sons will be borne by Chinese women, because of the death of the latter.

Zhang Zaimin's 张在民 (1938) "They kill our men and rape our women compatriots" provides readers with the view of the consequences of rape in its foregrounding of the naked, disemboweled, and "knife-left-in-genitals" female corpse. It is unlikely that soldiers would leave weapons in bodies, so the depiction of the upright knife stands in for the cruel penis of the Japanese soldier and invites readers to dwell on mutilated female genitalia. Lu Zhixiang's (1938) "Look! Evidence of the 'imperial troops'! Rape! Murder! Lewdness! Pillaging!" includes two images with mutilated women. The center-page image is of a dead woman, lower body exposed, with a dead child lying face-down alongside her tangled legs and clothing. Beneath her, and dominating the foreground of the picture-set, is a naked, large-breasted female form, her uterus open and a curled-up fetus spilling out onto the ground. The nakedness of both corpses suggests death post-rape.

Ye Qianyu's (1938c) cover of the seventh issue of *War of Resistance Cartoons* depicts the double cruelty of destroying the Chinese race-nation through the degradation of women and Chinese children. The gruesome picture has a baby, sitting center frame, crying with large tears rolling down its face as it looks at its mother's corpse. Her head is tossed back and stares backwards at the readers, breasts sagging to one side, clothing in a heap to the right. In the background, two Japanese soldiers stand, one with a blood-dripping knife. Their conversation proceeds, "Let's kill the kid, eh!" To which the other replies, "Wouldn't it be more fun to let it starve to death?" (*Rang ta ziji esi bu geng youyi* 让他自己饿死不更有意).²⁶ The same issue includes a curious cartoon by Jiang Mi (1938b)

²⁶Even the normally restrained cartoonist Feng Zikai 丰子恺 (1898–1975) includes a graphic image of a dismembered mother in his "Bomb" (Hongzha 轰炸), which depicts a woman sitting and

that depicts a Japanese woman, her heavily pregnant stomach exposed. The text accompanying the cartoon is a conversation between a Japanese officer and a soldier. The former asks the latter, “How many reserve troops have we still got?” To which he receives the reply, “There’s one in here!” (*Zai zheli hai you yige!* 在这里还有一个!) as he points at the woman’s stomach. This cartoon is suggesting a weakness in the Japanese reserve troop supply, but it also alerts us to the extent to which women’s reproductive roles in creating soldiers of the future operated in the cartoonists’ discourse of war economics.

In Tan Bi’s 谭弼 (1938) “The bestiality of the ‘imperial troops’” the destruction of the family line is made complete with the murder of three members of a family: husband, baby, and wife. The husband has been strung up and stabbed in the stomach. The baby is skewered to the central pillar of the house with a knife through its entire body. The wife’s naked body occupies center page with a knife through her pubic region, an arm tied like an animal to the pole on which her baby hangs. Her clothing lies alongside in a heap and her suffering continues, as it appears that death has not yet taken away her pain. The three Japanese soldiers are looting, drinking, and rampaging. The immediacy of the image and the evidence of torture, including a relatively rare vision of a mutilated Chinese male body (although not a soldier) make this a particularly arresting cartoon.

The cartoons in *National Salvation Cartoons* and *War of Resistance Cartoons* are active in their resolution of the threat to the biologically conceived race-nation that was China during these years. The children of the Chinese race are being murdered and their women violated. The mitigating factor providing reassurance of ultimate victory for the Chinese race-nation in the future is integrally tied to the death of the raped woman. Victory is assured because “our” women will not unwittingly carry the seeds of a second generation of Japanese invaders.²⁷

EFFECTIVE PROPAGANDA?

The persistence of these horrific images of women’s bodies throughout the two journals tells us that the cartoonists assumed they were effective. Yet, Inger Skjelsbæk’s (2001) research on sexual violence in war alerts us to the opposite potential consequence of the use of images of such violence—they can serve to masculinize the perpetrator and feminize the victim. In this case, the cartoonists may inadvertently have strengthened the image of the Japanese as a powerful, manly, even super masculine force and created a vision of Chinese as vulnerable and feminine.²⁸ The gendering of sexual violence

breastfeeding her child with her head blown off. The child suckles on, oblivious to his mother’s death (Ming 1991, 177).

²⁷The desire for death of raped women continues in the present day within popular representations of the war in relation to the fate of women forced into sexual slavery within the “comfort women” camps (see Edwards 2012).

²⁸Prior to the formal start of the war in 1937, *Modern Sketch* included a Wang Guodong cartoon protesting the Mongolians’ collaborations with Japan titled “Pornographic behavior under the blue sky and red sun” (*Qingtian hongrixia de seqing biaoqian* 青天红日下的色情表现), in which a Chinese man in imperial robes is tongue-kissing a Japanese woman in a kimono (Crespi 2011b, ms26_024).

provokes a diverse array of arousal responses rather than a singular and extreme desire for revenge.

Besides the inherent problem of controlling the arousal response generated by the cartoonists' use of gendered imagery of racial power and racial victimization, there lies another persistent problem with their "cartoon war"—how effective were their efforts to spread resistance to the war to the masses? Hung (1990, 43–44) explains their idealized position: "Cartoonists realized that they possessed a unique weapon—a brush capable of producing powerful graphic images. Such a weapon, if used with skill and ingenuity, could have enormous impact in a land of widespread illiteracy and contribute to victory."²⁹ Yet, throughout the articles in both journals, the artists are preoccupied with the difficulty of actually reaching these illiterate masses. Those Chinese who were illiterate in reading Chinese characters were also frequently "illiterate" in reading images as well. The cartoonists came to realize that ordinary peasant folk, many of whom now flooded into urban areas as refugees, had to be taught how to read and understand images and sequenced cartoon strips. Urban readers had been schooled in reading images for decades through pictorial magazines and newspapers, but rural folk were a new intended audience for the wartime cartoonists and they did not have this "cartoon literacy."

In an article marking the fifty-fifth day since the publication of *National Salvation Cartoons*, Wang Dunqing (1937b, 118–19) celebrated the fact that "we have taken the cartoons from the boudoirs of the young ladies and gentlemen's studies and into the streets and countryside to the masses." He notes that artists have "popularized their subject matter (*tikai tong-suhua* 题材通俗化) and made their style more realistic (*fengge xie shihua* 风格写实化)." But the challenges in achieving "cartoon literacy" among illiterates or rural people with their local customs and beliefs remained a repeated point for discussion in the journals. For example, in early 1938 different regional cartoon associations discussed the limitations in their outreach and in March *War of Resistance Cartoons* published a contribution by Ye Qianyu (1938d) about the Wuchang meeting in which he argued that "we need to be engaged in more types of direct depictions of heroism to stimulate anti-enemy morale among the masses and to build their fanaticism." His advocacy of less abstraction and more direct imagery was aimed at targeting the illiteracy of many of the ordinary people and soldiers.

In February 1938, social education movement advocate Tu Shaomei 涂少梅 (1938) challenged the artists to overcome the barrier of illiteracy in mobilizing the population by using drawings to stand in place of characters. Hu Kao (1938, 7295) continued on this theme in the second issue of the same month, calling on his fellow cartoonists to focus more on the rural dwellers and to make their art more accessible to this group. He warned against the slogan-like tendencies in much of their current work. Posters relying on character-based political slogans draw less attention than the theater advertisements, according to Zhang Leping's (1938a) cartoon titled "Wuhan's numb-nerve illness."³⁰ Sometimes cartoonists tried to use preexisting, commonly recognized

²⁹Hung (1994, 141) also ponders the question of the mass impact of the cartoons in his work on the civil war period and concludes that "cartoons were at one a means of political expression and testimony to prevailing ideas."

³⁰The Wuhan "numb-nerve illness," complete with well-dressed women having fun with dissolute men, was spreading to Xi'an, according to the cartoon series "Wake up! All China's compatriots!" (*Kangzhan manhua* 1938d).

symbols as a mechanism for increasing readers' comprehension. Yet, throughout the magazines, commentators express repeated concern about the utility of these symbols in a wartime context. Lai Shaoqi's 赖少其 (1938) "Cartoons and political knowledge" queried the efficacy of repeatedly using a lion to represent China on the basis that most Chinese simply equate the lion with a proud complacency (*deyi* 得意) rather than resistance. This emotional response, he argued, is akin to the wrong-headedness of depending only on military hardware to win the war.

Cartoonists invoked traditional symbols, like in Li Bainiu's 礼拜牛 (1938) "Five poisons," which equates known images for evil (e.g., snakes, centipedes, scorpions, spiders, and toads) with traitors, licentious men, and people who use public causes for personal gain. The new evils are superimposed on the shadows of the traditional creatures, but without the explanatory text beneath the picture it is hard to instantly understand the meaning of the images. Other times, the cartoonists depart from Chinese symbols altogether, such as the use of a Christian symbol to mark a gravesite, the cross. For example, Lin Langmin's 林浪民 (1937) "Japanese militarists going to their graves" depicts a one-legged, bespectacled Japanese soldier with a broken arm hobbling around with dozens of crosses behind him. Unless the reader was literate, and therefore able to read the accompanying text discussing graves, or sufficiently culturally literate in Christianity to recognize the cross as a marker of a gravesite, the power of the cartoon would be diminished.

In sum, the gendered and sexualized human body is clearly a powerful image ripe for ideological deployment during times of war. Just as Dower (1986) showed that the Pacific War's propaganda leveraged a brutal racialized ideology, it is clear that propagandists in China's War of Resistance against Japan exploited a horrific sexual politics too. The cartoonists repeatedly drew gruesome images of the mutilated female body in the belief that they would arouse people to resist rather than cooperate with the Japanese invaders. But the efficacy of these images as instruments designed to spur resistance and resolve remains in doubt, in part because of the complexity of the arousal response generated by such graphic depictions of sexual mutilation. Ultimately, the magazines, complete with their text and images, reveal the attitudes of the young cartoonists of the Propaganda Corps on gender, militarized violence, and propaganda. They also stand as evidence of the manner in which gender ideologies and war systems interact to reinforce the masculinization of violence.

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