
Visions de la société chinoise de l'époque républicaine à travers les bandes dessinées de Ye Qianyu et Liang Baibo / Visualising the Chinese society of the Republican era through the comics strips of Ye Qianyu and Liang Baibo

Marie Laureillard*¹

¹Institut d'Asie Orientale (IAO) – Lyon 2, ENS Lyon – Institut d'Asie Orientale (IAO) Ecole Normale Supérieure de Lyon 15 Parvis René Descartes, BP 7000 69342 Lyon Cedex France, France

Abstract (in French and English)

Ye Qianyu (1907-1995) inaugure sa célèbre bande dessinée Mr Wang en 1928, publiée par épisodes dans des revues illustrées. Il la poursuivra jusqu'en 1938, au début de la guerre sino-japonaise, lui ajoutant L'histoire non officielle de petit Chen à Nankin à partir de 1934. Ces deux bandes dessinées, qui ont connu une nouvelle reconnaissance dans la Chine des années 1990, mettent en scène des personnages de la classe moyenne des années 1930 dont elles dépeignent tous les travers au sein d'une société urbaine en pleine mutation : goût du luxe, hédonisme, gourmandise, népotisme, jeu, corruption... Mr Wang, qui fut adapté au cinéma onze fois durant les années 1930, s'inspirait de *Bringing Up Father* de George McManus, très populaire aux Etats-Unis, de *Colonel Blimp* de David Law, ainsi que des dessins de Sapajou et de Schiff, artistes européens alors installés à Shanghai. Ces bandes dessinées, qui nous offrent une sorte de reportage sur la société urbaine de l'époque, seront analysées sous plusieurs angles (artistique, mais aussi sémiotique, historique, sociologique et anthropologique). Nous étudierons aussi le prolongement de ces images narratives dans ce que Pierre Fresnault-Deruelle nomme les "panels" ou unités condensées, ces images isolées publiées dans la presse et que Ye Qianyu produisit également en abondance pour mieux refléter les réalités urbaines qu'il avait sous les yeux et qui apparaissent aujourd'hui comme un document historique précieux sur la Chine républicaine. Ye Qianyu (1907-1995) began to draw his famous comics Mr Wang in 1928, published as a serial in illustrated journals. He will continue until 1938, at the beginning of the Chinese-Japanese war, adding to it *The Unofficial Story of little Chen in Nanking* from 1934. Those two comics, which enjoyed a rebirth in China in the 1990s, feature characters of the middle class of the 1930s whose they depict all the deficiencies of a changing urban society : taste for luxury, hedonism, gluttony, corruption... Mr Wang, adapted in cinema eleven times during the 1930s, was inspired by *Bringing Up Father* of George McManus, very popular in the US, by *Colonel Blimp* of David Law, as well as by drawings of Sapajou and Schiff, European artists based in Shanghai. These comics, which offer a kind of report on urban society of that time, will be analysed from several perspectives (artistic, but also semiotic, historical, sociological, and anthropological). We will study the extension of these narrative pictures in what Pierre Fresnault-Deruelle calls "panels" or condensed units, isolated pictures published in the press

*Speaker

and that Ye Qianyu produced to reflect the urban realities he witnessed, which nowadays appear to be a precious historical document about Republican China. This paper studies a graphic novel entitled "The Yellow Ribbon" of the Beijing artist Ye Shuguang . This work, at first published in serial form in the journal Lianhuanhubao (Comics) in 2008, tells the story of two Manchurian families from Beijing during one century, from the end of the empire until today through the Republican period, the Japanese occupation, the communist revolution, the cultural revolution... It is a singular form of graphic novel, which reminds of the lianhuanhua or "linked images" of the beginning of the twentieth century in China, where one image on every page was connected with a text above. We will think about the complementary function of text and image, whose role is equally important here. We will compare this fiction, whici in a personal, internal point of view on Chinese history, to the notebooks of sketches of his brother Ye Xin , which might be called "report comics" (Yellow Earth, ...). This paper will be completed with interviews of both artists about their connection to comics. We will also question the memory and identity quest which are reflected in their creations.

Keywords: roman graphique, identité chinoise, histoire chinoise