



Shanghai Modernity: Women and the Practice of Everyday Life

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Women and the City

WOMEN and the cities they inhabit have intimate and complex connections. How are women related to the city in which they live? How do women inhabit the space of a city's imagination? Feminist critics have often pointed out the problematic relationship between women and urban space. According to Elizabeth Wilson, "the relationship of women to cities has long preoccupied reformers and philanthropists. In recent years the preoccupation has been inverted: the Victorian determination to control working-class women has been replaced by a feminist concern for women's safety and comfort in city streets. But whether women are seen as a problem of cities, or cities as a problem for women, the relationship remains fraught with difficulty. With the intensification of the public/private divide in the industrial period, the presence of women on the streets and in public places of entertainment caused enormous anxiety, and was the occasion for any number of moralising and regulatory discourses."¹ Elizabeth Wilson's summary of women as problems to the city and the city as a problem for women highlights the problematic social structuring many cities have for women, especially for ordinary women in the workforce.

However, the perceived tension between public urban space and its women inhabitants can vary from city to city. Local cultures differ dramatically in how women relate to the urban environment they are in. There are also many ways in which women can relate to the city constructively and positively, especially in their roles as household

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managers, shoppers and consumers. Activities conducted by women in both public and private space in the city contribute significantly to the material culture and are fundamental to the prosperity and identity of the city. Women's practice of everyday life, from their work activities to their shopping, movements, socialising and general household-running, shapes the city and defines the space they frequent or occupy. The performances in the quotidian by women is, above all else, the most conspicuous feature of a city's appearance. Hence, investigations of the relationship between women and the city should consider and evaluate how women function in the city in their practice of everyday life. Scholarship on women as consumers and their household-running activities has argued that women play a significant role in shaping a city's urban identity and thus cast the relationship between women and the city in a more positive light. Robyn Dowling remarks that "consumption, defined as activities surrounding the purchase and use of commodities, is central to the lives of women and the constitution of femininity".²

Using the above critical stance as a point of departure, this article aims at demonstrating that in contemporary Chinese writing, Shanghai women are presented as highly proactive in their practice of everyday life activities and thus their relationship with the city is unambiguously positive. On the one hand, Shanghai women actively seek control of their subjectivity through work in and outside their homes. On the other hand, in the process of Shanghai women's identity being shaped by their activities in the city, the city is simultaneously also defined by how women conduct their daily lives. Examples are aplenty in recent writings about women in Shanghai, which illustrate how the urban space of Shanghai is constituted by women in pursuit of their goals in the quotidian.

The city of Shanghai, in both popular imagination and literary configuration, appears feminine. In Chinese popular perception, Shanghai is seen as a city dominated by femininity for many reasons: it is situated in the south of China which does not have the harsh winter of China's north; its local language sounds very soft to the ears of northerners; its opera used to be performed by actresses only; the Shanghai cuisine always irritates with a pinch of sugar too much; Shanghai women often have the last





word in household matters, and the list goes on. However, interestingly, such popular perceptions have never been challenged. Moreover, writings about Shanghai in recent decades instead forcefully reiterate Shanghai's femininity to the extent that the subject of Shanghai automatically entails elaboration on the practice of everyday life in the city, which necessarily foregrounds women's activities.

In the early 1990s, China's economic boom and urban development triggered off Shanghai nostalgia on a phenomenal scale. As a result, Shanghai has become the focal point of popular imagination and academic research. An enormous number of books have been published on this particular city in a variety of genres, including scholarly studies, popular history, commentaries, fiction, prose-essays and photographic albums. Closer examination of these recent publications reveals two favourite topics: women and coffee houses, both of which are regarded as indicators of Shanghai's leadership in Chinese material modernity. Whereas coffee houses are automatically connected with cosmopolitan lifestyle, women are written as far more complex symbols of Shanghai modernity, and range from bearers of fashion, successful entrepreneurs, charming girl students from foreign missionary schools to nannies or housemaids. In my anecdotal survey, most of the recent books on Shanghai have female figures on the cover, especially the quintessential curvaceous female body dressed in a *cheongsam*, whether the book deals with the city's colonial past or its present nostalgia, whether it is fiction about Shanghai's post-Mao commercial prosperity or a memoir of the glorious days of its film industry. In other words, there has been a strong tendency to depict Shanghai through portrayals of Shanghai women and their lived experiences. In the following discussion, the recent publications by the three best-known and most popular Shanghai women writers have been selected to demonstrate how the city of Shanghai is intricately connected with the practice of everyday life by women in literary representation.

Shanghai in Memoirs and Popular History

One pertinent example of the focus on women in recent popular history and memoirs is *Shanghai-Fashion* (2005) by Cheng Naishan (b.1946).³ The





English word “fashion” is part of the Chinese title, although the author does not use the word to refer to “trends” in commercial activities but adopts its extended sense of “style or manner” in daily life choices. *Shanghai-Fashion* has four sections: the first is “Fashion in Shanghai”, which actually introduces Shanghai’s cuisine and dining customs; the second is “Sketches of Shanghai Women” with subsections on *cheongsam* dresses, sewing and sewing machines, hairstyle, sisterhood, women and their fashion accessories; the third section is on “Foreign Spheres”, which covers Shanghai’s cinema culture, Russians and other foreigners, English-speaking nannies from overseas, and the spread of pidgin English in Shanghai’s laneways; in the last section, the book discusses the interior decorations of Shanghai households, elaborating on bamboo utensils, decorative laces, the architecture of Shanghai’s prominent stone-gate houses as well as children’s games. In the preface, Cheng Naishan claims that *Shanghai-Fashion* is “the ABC of Shanghai culture”. Speaking with an authoritative voice on Shanghai’s local traditions and customs, she demonstrates certain cultural prejudices that “old” Shanghai locals hold against more recent migrants into Shanghai.

Cheng Naishan came to prominence in Shanghai’s literary scene in the 1980s with her novel *The Blue House* that is set in Shanghai and depicts the fate of “capitalists” under the harsh political purges instigated by the Chinese Communist Party. Cheng’s entire writing career has been devoted to the single subject of Shanghai, except for a couple of recent books on Hong Kong. Since 2002 she has produced many collections of essays on Shanghai, which are all similar to *Shanghai-Fashion*, and they are apparently intended to be Shanghai’s cultural guide. Coming from a prominent Shanghai family, Cheng Naishan is known as a local Shanghai writer with “inside” knowledge of Shanghai’s local culture. In her confident assertion of authority as to what is the “authentic Shanghai”, a sense of superiority prevails. Because she comes from a wealthy family that has lived in Shanghai for a number of generations, her “old Shanghai” family is of course the site of “authentic” Shanghai local culture. To a large extent, her family background has given her a taste of what life was like for the well-to-do in the heyday of Shanghai’s colonial times, and she is





someone who knows Shanghai intimately. Cheng Naishan's confidence in setting her family's lifestyle as the yardstick to measure Shanghai betrays a prevailing upper-class arrogance that is also "authentic" among wealthy families of "old Shanghai", who tend to regard migrants into Shanghai from other parts of China after the 1950s as outsiders, if not intruders.

Interestingly, Chen Danyan (b. 1958) is such an outsider. She was born in Beijing and came to Shanghai at a young age when her parents were relocated there to work. Although she also writes primarily about Shanghai, she writes as an outsider and adopts a style of pastiche that bridges across oral history, memoir, fiction, biography and autobiography.⁵ Her books are overtly feminine with titles such as: *Shanghai's Flowers and Moon*, *Shanghai Princess*, and *Stories of Shanghai Beauty*, and also with covers that put women in the centre stage against the background of Shanghai's cityscape. These three books are her most popular, and are called "Shanghai Trilogy" by critics. Based on her interviews with a number of elderly women of "old Shanghai", Chen Danyan documents Shanghai's local history and culture from the 1930s (that she herself had not experienced) to the Shanghai of her own lifetime since the 1970s. The recollections of these elderly women abound with "trivial" details of their everyday life, and exude a more "authentic" ambience than Cheng Naishan's in-your-face illustrations and instructions. Deliberately or incidentally, Chen Danyan's interviewees are mostly women, and these interviews succeed in invoking their voices as the author draws out their trajectories of life in Shanghai. In the process, the city's modernity is shown through women's active participation in Shanghai's popular culture and their everyday presence.

In *Shanghai's Flowers and Moon*, for instance, Chen Danyan documents the life of a few women with overseas connections, obviously selected to illustrate Shanghai's modernity and cosmopolitanism. One of her interviewees is a woman by the name Guo Wanying, who also has an English name, Daisy.⁶ Daisy was born in Australia but came to Shanghai with her family at the age of eight. Daisy's father and uncle were businessmen in Melbourne and they established the first Chinese-owned department store in central Shanghai, where Daisy was educated at an





international school. She married and started her own business in the 1940s. When the People's Republic of China was established, the entire family fled Shanghai but Daisy decided to stay on, because her husband was from Shanghai and their business had just started to prosper. She subsequently suffered a great deal of misfortune during the Maoist era. Her husband died as a young man in prison. One of Daisy's brothers had left behind a handgun, so he buried it under a tree in the family courtyard. It was discovered and used as evidence that he was attempting to use it against the Communist state. Widowed in her thirties, Daisy brought up two children on her own. During the Cultural Revolution, Daisy had problems, because she came from Australia and often lapsed back into speaking English at the public denunciation meetings. The book reprints many of Daisy's photos – those of her happy childhood in Melbourne, her glamorous youth in pre-Communist Shanghai and her demise to working as a low-ranking clerk in her own company after the Communist takeover. Daisy retains her grace and dignity throughout her years of political, financial and family hardship and she now tutors English at home to make a living. There were opportunities for Daisy to migrate overseas or to return to Australia, but she has made the choice of remaining in Shanghai, where she leads an independent life and feels most at home.

After her "Shanghai Trilogy", Chen Danyan produced a memoir of her own childhood and youth. In the process of writing about the past of others, she felt the need to sort out her own relationship with Shanghai. Having grown up in Shanghai in a family that had relocated from elsewhere, she is not sure if she loves the city, and she gives a different answer each time she is confronted with the question. With the title *Shanghai Salad* (the English word "salad" is in the original title), Chen Danyan recounts a selection of her own experiences in Shanghai. In the preface she declares that she herself had migrated into Shanghai, and thus had a problematic relationship with the city. Apparently, "salad" is a metaphor for the random mixture of materials in the book as a result of her mixed feelings about Shanghai. "Salad" also has the meaning that what she has collected in the book are materials from her daily life, events of no national or political significance. It also has a touch of exotica with





its descriptions of many items of memorabilia collected from her parent's travels around the world as diplomats. The book title is also derived from a dish called "Shanghai Salad", a creation by Shanghai locals that is based on the Russian potato salad but also contains ingredients such as peas and chopped green apples. Another interesting feature of the book is its colourful illustrations, drawn by the author herself, in place of the photographs that she could not have taken when she was a child. The images she draws, she explains, are from her childhood memories that somehow have turned out to be very bright with patches of loud pink, powder blue and apple green. There is an obvious authorial distance in the stories Chen Danyan narrates, even in the case of her own life stories. Nonetheless, for Chen Danyan, the stories of Shanghai are stories of Shanghai women, who are inventive, resourceful and courageous. A noticeable commonality between Cheng Naishan and Chen Danyan in their presentation of Shanghai culture is their focus on the well-to-do and the well-known personalities.

Women's Practice of Everyday Life in Shanghai

Like Chen Danyan, Wang Anyi (b.1954) came to live in Shanghai with her parents when she was one year old. While Chen Danyan only began publishing in the 1990s with Shanghai as her primary subject matter, Wang Anyi has been a highly successful novelist since the 1970s and has been actively responding to China's social and cultural change with a prolific literary output on a large variety of subject matter. Wang Anyi is considered to be one of the best writers of China today, and she has been awarded numerous honorary titles and prestigious awards. When Shanghai's feverish nostalgia started in the early 1990s, Wang Anyi was among the earliest established writers to join the mass cultural movement with her best novel to date: *Song of Unending Sorrow* (1995). Subsequently, she has produced another three books featuring women in Shanghai as protagonists, namely, *Little Sister* (2000), *The Village Girl Fuping* (2000) and *Peach Blossoms* (2003).⁷ The 2005 collection of her recent essays, *Looking for Shanghai*, is a summary of her reflections on how she perceives Shanghai.⁸ Again, Wang Anyi's presentation and representation





of Shanghai are gender specific, but she does not limit her observation and elaboration to the wealthy and the glamorous. Instead, her writings stand out precisely because she covers a wide spectrum of classes. She declares that her intention is to locate Shanghai in the daily events of the laneways, and the demographic details of the laneways are what she sets out to capture in her writings.

As early as the mid 1980s when it was the literary trend for Chinese writers to write about China's cultural traditions as a means to undo the ideological didacticism of the authorities, Wang Anyi had already begun pondering the question of Shanghai identity and the roots of its cultural traditions. In her book, *Looking for Shanghai*, she speaks of her dilemma about Shanghai's relation to China and Chinese tradition. While other Chinese writers at the time, as she recollects, went on adventures to discover "China" in remote regions where the mountains stand high, the rivers flow fast and the passions of the villagers or herdsmen are seen as "primitive", and therefore more "authentic", she was sitting in the libraries of Shanghai trying to locate the city's history and past.⁹ Wang Anyi has developed her own theory about Shanghai and is convinced that the city's cultural space is primarily feminine. She declares in an essay entitled "Women of Shanghai": "If one wants to write about Shanghai, the best representatives are women.... If there needs to be heroes in a Shanghai story, it has to be Shanghai women." She further singles out women at middle age in their thirties and forties as the most typical of Shanghai, because she sees these women as having matured with the necessary life experiences and so are relentlessly resilient in their strategies at coping with daily life.¹⁰ These "middle-aged" women, according to Wang Anyi, are the solid embodiment of Shanghai's spirit of survival and the locals' quest for a better life.

As a result, in her short stories and novels about Shanghai, Wang Anyi invariably focuses on the life stories of women who come from very different class backgrounds and with different occupations. *Song of Unending Sorrow* traces the rise and fall of a former Miss Shanghai, beginning in the 1940s a few years before she won the title until her death in the early 1990s. Without doubt, Miss Shanghai serves as an analogy





for the city: her glory in the heyday of the colonial past, her downfall and resilience under the rule of the Chinese Communist authorities, followed by her gradual resurrection in the reform era since the 1980s. The life stories of the city and Miss Shanghai are intricately intertwined to allow Miss Shanghai's personal stories to embody the cultural changes that have taken place in Shanghai. Miss Shanghai is the archetypal Shanghai woman – stylish, resilient, determined and heroic in her daily struggle to survive and to strive for a decent and aesthetic life. It is not without irony that Miss Shanghai's extensive exposure to the mannerisms, lifestyle and aspirations of the rich and the glorious under the Nationalist regime is transformed into the material reality of recent Shanghai nostalgia. Shanghai's dominant cultural values and common practices of everyday life are thus projected and perpetuated through Miss Shanghai, a woman who rose from Shanghai's ordinary laneways. In order to reinforce her typicality, the narrator repeatedly reminds the reader that there are hundreds and thousands of such Miss Shanghai scattered in the laneways, because the selected Miss Shanghai is not so much an extraordinary beauty as a pretty woman with a style and mannerisms appropriate to the laneway neighbourhoods of Shanghai. For Wang Anyi, without such women aspiring to a better life and greater sophistication in quotidian practice, Shanghai would no longer be Shanghai. *Song of Unending Sorrow* has been the most popular novel on Shanghai since its publication. Not only has it been reprinted many times, it has been adapted for theatre, film and television-series productions. It has also attracted an enormous amount of academic attention, and dozens of research essays discussing various narrative aspects of the novel have been published.

Little Sister (2000) is a novella examining another kind of Miss Shanghai minus the glamour of the latter. However, like Miss Shanghai in *Song of Unending Sorrow*, the woman with the pet name "Little Sister" is designed as the archetype of Shanghai's laneway beauty. This novella, therefore, reads like a documentary of a typical Shanghai girlhood, detailing Little Sister's growth in the neighbourhood from an adorable little girl to a successful businesswoman. The story begins with descriptions of the interior of Little Sister's home to show her upbringing, and is followed





by accounts of how knowledge and wisdom for survival are acquired gradually through girly games in the environment of the narrow laneways. Not surprisingly, Little Sister's parents have the most common of occupations in Shanghai: her father is a sales assistant in a fabric shop and her mother is a textile factory worker. She has two brothers but they are distant figures in her life, as she is the one adored by her parents as well as the neighbours. Little Sister's sharp intelligence in daily life develops into a valuable sensitivity for fashion which, combined with the friendship she has formed in her laneway residence, becomes valuable capital for a successful business. As business success takes her out of her laneway neighbourhood, however, Little Sister loses touch with her native Shanghai. She divorces her husband, leaves her son to the care of her parents-in-law and migrates to South America. The character Little Sister is depicted as one of the thousands of women living and working in Shanghai who shape the urban space of Shanghai with their presence and their sense of fashion. They are indisputably active contributors to the prosperity of Shanghai.

The Village Girl Fuping tells the stories of two generations of women migrants to Shanghai from a village in the area of Yangzhou not far away. The older woman, whom the young woman addresses as Granny, has been a housemaid in Shanghai for many years, since her widowhood in the 1940s. She had to make a living for herself so she came to Shanghai. Decades pass and society changes but her job as a housemaid remains the same. Her retirement plan is to return to her native village to live with a "grandson" she had adopted ten years ago. She paid for his education until he finished high school. The young woman named Fuping is from the same village. Supposedly having agreed to marry Granny's foster grandson, Fuping accepts the invitation from Granny to visit Shanghai. However, the village girl Fuping is soon seduced by Shanghai and is no longer satisfied with what village life has in store for her. After rejecting the original marriage proposal as well as a number of offers from other village lads, Fuping becomes the wife of a young man who lives with his widowed mother in a shanty in a slum area on the outskirts of Shanghai. The young man is a cripple who makes a living by repairing small





household utilities. He is gentle, kind and very bright, and it turns out that he is from a middle-class family in pre-Communist Shanghai, showing that Fuping has developed a keen sense for identifying what counts as “authentic” Shanghai.

The biographical depiction of these two generations of village women in Shanghai amounts to a gaze into two kinds of Shanghai interior landscape: the aspirations and concerns of the migrants from small towns and villages outside Shanghai and the structure of Shanghai households. To begin with, these two village women’s dislocation is voluntary, and life in Shanghai, although it can be very hard, is still better than in the village and it also gives them exposure to a wider but much more interesting world. The transformation of a village girl’s expectations by Shanghai in such a short time shows the seductive power of Shanghai and the dynamics of the city. *The Village Girl Fuping* is a radical departure from *Song of Unending Sorrow* with its focus on the permanent “other” of Shanghai, namely the city’s large army of migrants who work in the service industry as housemaids, repairmen or builders. These people are secondary citizens of the city, partly because of their occupation but also because of their place of origin.¹⁶ Women like Granny and Fuping have an accent that betrays their country origin which inevitably subjects them to all sorts of discrimination. However, the livelihood and aspirations of these “second-class” citizens are an integral part of Shanghai and they no less actively shape the city’s space and outlook.

In *Peach Blossoms*, the major character Yu Xiaoqiu is a girl with “obscure” parentage. Her mother is a well-known comedian, a dubious profession even in the best of times in China. In addition, apart from her mother, no one knows who her father is. Growing up as an illegitimate child in the laneway neighbourhood, Xiaoqiu suffers enormous discrimination that, unfortunately, begins at home with her half brother and sister. Neglected by her own mother, Xiaoqiu’s ambition from an early age is to survive, and survive she does. She manages an ordinary life of greater and smaller difficulties with inner strength and practical skills. Her primary and secondary education coincides with the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) and she ends up working for the neighbourhood factory making paper





cups for a living. Eventually her compassion for others leads her to a good marriage and she lives happily ever after with her husband and his family. Xiaoqiu is another example of the resilience and resourcefulness of Shanghai women. Most significantly, the author is able to explore the laneway's collective psyche and dynamics through the neighbourhood attitude towards Xiaoqiu and her mother.

Women's personal transformation and transcendence are prominent themes in Wang Anyi's recent fiction on Shanghai but her primary concern is to investigate Shanghai's cultural complexity. Her deliberate and frequent location of Shanghai within the laneways, especially the laneways along the sides of Avenue Joffré, has at least two obvious reasons. First, the area is the commercial centre where the shops remain favourites of the locals. Other shopping districts, including the famous Nanjing Road, are understood to be tourist attractions. Second, Avenue Joffré is adjacent to the French concession and the surroundings remain the most desirable residential area for the locals. Although the Bund and Nanjing Road areas are more glamorous, the expensive hotels and apartments are for foreigners and the Chinese elite. In other words, the laneways along Avenue Joffré are intersections between the international community and the Shanghai locals, and are seen as being Shanghai "proper" by the locals. For Wang Anyi, the story of Shanghai simply has to be stories taking place in the laneways in that part of the city, and above all, only women can be the true heroes in her laneway stories.

Women and Shanghai's Modernity

Consumption is central to both Shanghai and Shanghai women's lives, and this aggravates Shanghai's cultural ambiguity. Shanghai's urban space has been culturally and politically ambiguous since becoming a treaty port in 1842, when it was ceded to the British. The presence and influence of colonial powers in the construction of the city and the affluence of material culture characterize the city, and the consequences of such defining moments are Shanghai's inability to identify itself with the Chinese nation. Instead, cosmopolitanism flourishes in Shanghai, which, to many Chinese, is synonymous to Westernisation. Indeed, of all





the writings discussed in this essay, Shanghai locals never appear to be in favour of any particular ideology or government, despite the turmoils it has experienced with the changes of ruling authorities. The urbanites are forever engrossed with the daily business of living their lives, which are, naturally, dominated by women.

Shanghai's material modernity, with its most prominent characteristics embodied in women, poses a serious alternative to the political and institutional modernity desired and propagated by Beijing. Women's aspirations, education, occupations and their activities of household management and consumption, which are modern and avant-garde in many respects compared with the rest of China, all contribute to the formation of the city of Shanghai. Furthermore, Shanghai's colonial legacy has endowed the city with a sense of the feminine. The city's otherness vis-à-vis other Chinese cities is the result of both its induction by colonial powers, as well as its past and present prosperity through colonial presence and foreign investments. The lack of national and state institutions in the city means that Shanghai is dominated and controlled by Beijing in a way similar to how men dominate the social life of China. According to Wang Anyi, Beijing's stories are based on its political power and the grandeur of its cultural history, whereas Shanghai, with its short existence of slightly more than a century, has not had the chance for self-reflection, let alone nostalgia of any considerable significance. As she puts it: "Beijing is a world of culture while Shanghai is just a vanity fair". She further warns that readers should not mistake Shanghai for a city of culture, despite the fact that it was once capable of gathering a crowd of cultural elite.¹² Shanghai's local culture, for Wang Anyi, is the culture of plebeians, those who have come from elsewhere for various reasons and who have to struggle in order to survive. She deliberately locates her stories of Shanghai in the least spectacular of Shanghai's daily life, in the female-dominated domesticity of laneway houses, because she wants to capture the essence of Shanghai's resolve and determination to survive. In other words, for Wang Anyi, Shanghai's local identity lies in the arenas of female gender and the middle or low class "citizens" of Shanghai.

Considering that Wang Anyi has been acknowledged for her superior





articulations of Shanghai identity in literature, the inevitable question must be: is there a contradiction between life in the laneways and Shanghai's self-perceived sophistication in cosmopolitan practice? The answer is no, because Shanghai's cosmopolitan outlook and practice are so deeply rooted in its practice of everyday life, as demonstrated in the writings of the three writers discussed above. The connection between the world and Shanghai lies not only in the Bund and Avenue Joffré but also, if not always as spectacularly, in the materiality of the houses in the narrow laneways that lie quietly at the centre of Shanghai.

As shown above, the domestic, feminine space in Shanghai women's stories is not homogenous. Class, taste and degrees of cosmopolitan experiences underlie the fabric of life in the laneways. As neighbours living in close proximity of one another, these women share a physical space, so their class differences become highly pronounced. And yet, it is precisely within these feminine domestic spaces that Shanghai's localness is characterised through its devotion to the quotidian. Whether they are housemaids, nannies, businesswomen, factory workers or part of the leisured class, whether fictional, historical or contemporary personalities, Shanghai women are inevitably conditioned by Shanghai as a modern city. They are attracted by the city and, like faithful lovers, try their best to remain in the city whether the city treats them kindly or not. At the same time, Shanghai is also largely fashioned by its women. Their daily activities create the city's materiality and their status, behaviour and image inform Shanghai's conditions of modernity. Although the women represented in the writings above can be modern in different ways, they share at least one common characteristic, that is, they are proactive in maintaining control of their subjectivity and destiny. The autonomy they retain in this city enables them to be active agents of their own transformation, and it is precisely this degree of freedom allowed to Shanghai women that demonstrates Shanghai's modernity. Because of women's close connections with lifestyle, modern Shanghai women are inevitably portrayed as the presenters of Shanghai's cosmopolitan outlook, especially with regard to how the city's modernity is manifested in its prosperous material culture created and personified by women. In other



words, Shanghai owes its reputation as a modern city to its women and their patterns of consumption.

Notes

- 1 Elizabeth Wilson, "The Invisible Flâneur" in Sophie Watson and Katherine Gibson (eds.), *Postmodern Cities and Spaces*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p. 59.
- 2 Robyn Dowling, "Femininity, place, and commodities: A retail case study" *Antipodes* 25. 4 (1993), pp. 295-319.
- 3 Cheng Naishan, *Shanghai Fashion*, (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2005).
- 4 Cheng Naishan's recent publications on Shanghai include: *Shanghai luoman shi* (History of Shanghai Romance), (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu, 2006); *Shanghai nüren* (Shanghai women) (Hangzhou: Zhejiang shueying, 2003); *Shanghai Lady* (Shanghai lady) (Shanghai: wenhui, 2003); *Shanghai tange* (Shanghai tango) (Shanghai: Xuelin, 2002).
- 5 Chen Danyan's writings about Shanghai women and life include: *Shanghai Salad* (Shanghai salad) (Taipei: Shibao wenhua, 2002); *Shanghai de fenghua xueyue* (Shanghai's flowers and moon) (Beijing: Zuoqia chubanshe, 2001); *Shanghai de hongyan yishi* (Shanghai beauty) (Beijing: Zuoqia chubanshe, 2000); *Shanghai de jinzhi yuye* (Shanghai princess) (Beijing: Zuoqia chubanshe, 1999).
- 6 Chen Danyan, "Guojia xiaojie" (The Princess from the Guo Family), *Shanghai's Flowers and Moon*, pp. 250-264.
- 7 Wang Anyi's recent fiction on Shanghai include: *Changhen ge* (Song of Unending Sorrow) (Beijing: Zuoqia, 1995); *Fuping* (The village girl Fuping) (Changsha: Hunan wenyi, 2000); *Meitou* (Little sister) (Haikou: Nanhai chuban gongsi, 2000); *Tao zhi yaoyao* (Peach blossoms) (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi, 2003). Unfortunately not many of Wang Anyi's novels have been translated into English, as her narrative language contains many expressions specific to Shanghai locals, especially to Shanghai women, which translators find extremely difficult to render.
- 8 Wang Anyi, *Xunzhao Shanghai* (Looking for Shanghai) (Shanghai: Xuelin, 2005).
- 9 Wang Anyi, *Looking for Shanghai*, pp.1-22.
- 10 Wang Anyi, *Looking for Shanghai*, p.86.
- 11 Emily Honig, *Creating Chinese Ethnicity: Subei People in Shanghai, 1850-1980* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992). In this book Honig shows that in Shanghai people from northern Jiangsu Province are generally regarded as inferior and suffer a great deal of discrimination. She further demonstrates that in China regionality can be an indication of one's social status.
- 12 Wang Anyi, *Looking for Shanghai*, pp. 140-141.