



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Shanghai : literary imaginings of a city in transformation

Scheen, L.M.

Citation

Scheen, L. M. (2012, January 26). *Shanghai : literary imaginings of a city in transformation*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/18418>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/18418>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

1

CONTEXT

A CENTURY OF LITERATURE IN SHANGHAI AND SHANGHAI IN LITERATURE

Shanghai was built some 160 years ago, mainly by Westerners. That's the reason it is the most cosmopolitan, global city of China and totally different to any other city. It doesn't have the historical baggage Beijing has, which makes it a much younger city, with bubbling energy, very open-minded and Westernized. That's why I really like it, why I can only live in Shanghai, and why the city inspires me to write.

Shanghai author Weihui 卫慧 (Interview in November 2005 in Leiden)

Weihui's characterization of Shanghai by reference to its colonial past and globalizing present, fully fits the persistent portrayal of the city as a once insignificant fishing village that was turned into a modern metropolis by the Western settlers, but changed into a stagnant grey industrial town after the Westerners left, to revive again as a cosmopolitan vibrant metropolis with the opening-up to the West in the late 1980s. However unjust this simplification of the city's history, "once Shanghai came under the aegis of British domination it was readily absorbed into this Orientalist discourse," as Jos Gamble (2003: 5) justly observes. Even though it is commonly believed that the Treaty of Nanjing 南京条约 (also known as Treaty of Nanking) in 1842 marks the foundation of Shanghai, the area has been settled for over 2200 years (Gamble 2003: 1).

This chapter will begin with a brief summary of the history of Shanghai from its early days until China turned towards its Reform and Opening 改革开放 policy in 1978, followed by the city's urban transformation since then. This is followed by an impression of the literary tradition in which this literature can be placed, i.e. the history of the modern literary field in Shanghai and an overview of influential Chinese novels with a Shanghai setting. In short: a century of literature in Shanghai and Shanghai in literature.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SHANGHAI

Throughout history, Shanghai was a lowly county capital in the bureaucratic hierarchy of imperial China (Johnson 1995: 3). During the Song dynasty (960-1279) the city's name changed from Hudu 沪渎³ ('fishing stake river') to Shanghai 上海:

³ The first character 沪 is still the official abbreviation for Shanghai and appears, for example, on all motor vehicle license plates.

‘up from the sea’ (MacPherson 1996: 496). In the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) the city continued to flourish under conditions of virtually free trade, and in the Ming (1368-1644) it became a major center of cotton production serving the entire empire. The first missionaries introduced Shanghai to Christianity and built a huge church on the outskirts of the city. In 1554, a city wall was constructed as a protection against Japanese pirates, which created a barrier between the city and the river. Port functions nearly disappeared and the city turned inward. Late in the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), commercial suburbs sprung up outside the city walls. The city again became a commercial port city of substantial importance in the economy of the lower Yangzi region, attracting the interest of foreign traders in China, who at that time were confined to the southern city of Guangzhou.

In 1839, China’s opium commissioner Lin Zexu 林则徐 (1785-1850) seized and destroyed 20,000 chests of opium from British traders, which marked the beginning of the Opium Wars (1839-42). The war ended in defeat for the Chinese at the hands of the British military forces. After winning the Opium Wars, the British demanded compensation and the opening to foreign residence and trade of five ports along the coast, including Shanghai. In 1842, the Treaty of Nanjing designated Shanghai as one of the most important Treaty Ports. This was the beginning of what the Chinese now refer to as the ‘century of humiliation’ 百年国耻, a period when China’s foreign and domestic policy was co-determined by the British.

Estimates put the population in 1843 around 270,000. In the years after the treaty, citizens of seventeen countries were given rights of extraterritoriality. In 1849, the French were granted land in the west of the city, which developed into the French concession, where major European-style boulevards were renamed after French generals, such as Avenue Joffre and Avenue Foch. In 1854, the Americans followed suit, and in 1863 the English and American zones formed the International Settlements, run by a Municipal Government dominated by the British. Both areas were in effect colonies within Shanghai, with borders and guards to police travel between them. However, as Rana Mitter (2004: 50) has pointed out, citizens did go back and forth between the areas for work and recreation, and 90 percent of the population in the International Settlements was Chinese. And Catherine Vance Yeh (2006: 12) notes:

Shanghai’s governing council was run by foreigners, but beyond securing the general existence of the place, foreign governments had little say, especially in the International Settlement. In fact, there was often fundamental disagreement and conflict between European governments and foreign settlers. Meanwhile, a multiethnic culture was forming in the city, with Western and Chinese elements blending and connecting at many levels.

For these reasons, the period is often obscurely referred to as *semicolonial* a Marxist term that describes the coexistence of colonial and native feudal structures. The complex situation of Shanghai, however, has turned the term into an object of debate

by scholars who either argue that its prefix *semi* downplays the political power of Shanghai's settlers or argue the exact opposite: that it overemphasizes the foreign dominance.⁴ For this reason, I use the more neutral terms *Treaty Port period*, as well as the term that entered the Chinese domestic discourse in the late 1980s "to avoid using any phrase that may be too directly related to the colonial past" (Lu [Hanchao] 2002: 172): *the 1930s* 三十年代.⁵ Notably, the latter term does thus not necessarily refer to the exact period of 1930-1940, but more generally to Shanghai's cosmopolitan and metropolitan culture during the first decades of the twentieth century.

The International Settlements were under the control of the Shanghai Municipal Police, which recruited policemen in Britain. One of them, Richard Maurice Tinkler (1898-1939), wrote in a letter home: "Shanghai is the best city I have seen and will leave any English town 100 years behind. It is the most cosmopolitan city of the world bar none and the finest city in the Far East" (cited in Bickers 2003: 39). However, the inequality of the extraterritoriality rules – where foreigners from countries such as Britain and the US could not be prosecuted under Chinese law for most offences committed in Shanghai – caused resentment among the Shanghainese population. In some areas, like the public gardens on the Bund, signs declared that 'no Chinese were admitted, except servants in attendance upon foreigners' (除西人之佣仆外, 华人一概不准入内) (e.g. Bickers and Wasserstrom 1995: 460). The injustice was most strongly symbolized in a popular Shanghai story claiming that at the entrance of a British-run park a sign was placed reading 'No Dogs and Chinese Admitted' (华人与狗, 不得入内). Although the sign appears to be an urban legend, the fact that the story is still popular in Shanghai shows how the Chinese feel about the foreign occupiers from this period.⁶ But the attitude of the Shanghainese towards the foreign settlers was ambivalent; although the locals criticized the discriminatory laws, they also celebrated the newly attained financial, cultural and political opportunities.

These opportunities also attracted people from other parts of China to Shanghai, like those fleeing from the many political upheavals in Beijing,⁷ from the Boxer Uprising (1898-1901) through the brutal warlord years (1916-1928).⁸ In the

⁴ Important discussions on the notion semicolonialism for Shanghai, include: Goodman 2000 and Wasserstrom 2009: chapter 4. Shih (2001: 36) explains her use of the term: "[it is] meant to encapsulate multiple and multilayered colonial domination, which contributed to a discursive formation that bifurcated the metropolitan and the colonial."

⁵ Cf. Chen [Danyan] 2001: 83: "Of course those nostalgic young people know that one should not be nostalgic about the time of the foreign concessions, that is why they don't use this term, but prefer the word '1930s'."

⁶ For a study on the legend of the No Dogs and Chinese Admitted-sign, see Bickers and Wasserstrom 1995: 444.

⁷ According to Bergère (1981: 12), only in the spring of 1926 more than fifty university teachers moved to Shanghai for the "relative safety of its Settlements."

⁸ The Boxer Uprising started in 1899 in Shandong, as a rebellion of peasants against foreigners and Christians. According to Fairbank & Goldman (1998: 231), "the conflict came to a head when during the summer of 1900 "diplomats, missionaries, and journalists were besieged by almost incessant rifle fire for eight weeks in the Beijing legation quarter [...]. An international army rescued them, not without

beginning of the twentieth century Shanghai rapidly transformed into a world trading entrepôt, with modern cars, café's, jazz bars and advertisements coloring the streets. Its first commercial shopping street, Nanjing Road, developed into a flourishing economic and cultural center.⁹ It was in Shanghai that, in this period, the English word 'modern' entered into the Chinese vocabulary as a transliteration: *modeng* 摩登 (Wu [Fuhui] 1995: 45).¹⁰ Several scholars have stated that modernity entered China through Shanghai, and more precisely through the International Settlements (e.g. Lee [Leo] 1999 and Howe (ed) 1981). Most of the modern conveniences and facilities of urban culture were introduced in these settlements, starting from the mid-nineteenth century: banks (1848), Western-style streets (1856), gaslight (1865), electricity (1882), telephone (1881), running water (1884), automobiles (1901), and trams (1908) (Lee [Leo] 1999: 6). The first Chinese skyscrapers and neon lights appeared, and foreign companies settled in the International Settlements and on the Bund along the western bank of the Huangpu River. In 1919, overseas Chinese opened big department stores from Hong Kong, such as the Sincere Company and the Wing On Company (Fairbank & Goldman 1998: 271). Modern big buildings in Art Deco and neoclassical style arose, such as the famous buildings of Jardine, Matheson & CO (1920), the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (1923) and the Cathay Hotel (1926-29, since 1956 known as the Peace Hotel). According to Mitter (2004: 42), the city "created a particular type of imperial modernity that sometimes seemed to suspend the reality that it was squarely in Chinese territory, inhabited mostly by Chinese."

Shanghai's (national and international) mixed population turned the city into a hotbed of new ideas and political activities. In addition, an increasing number of students from various places in China went to Japan to study and brought back newfound knowledge to urban centers, including Shanghai. These confrontations with other ways of thinking generated conflicts between young intellectuals and the conservative government of the Qing dynasty. Realizing that they had to yield, the Manchu government introduced reforms, like the abolition of the traditional examination system in 1905 and its replacement by tests in 'Western learning' 西学/羊学. Nevertheless, dissatisfaction with the government grew steadily. In 1911, artillery officer Chiang Kai-shek 蒋介石 (1887-1975; also known as Jiang Jieshi) returned from Japan to Shanghai to take part in the overthrow of the Qing dynasty. On 1 January 1912, the Republic of China was founded and Sun Yat-sen 孙中山 (1866-1925; also known as Sun Zhongshan) was elected as the first 'provisional

bickering, after rumors they had all been killed." After the rebellion the Empress Dowager Cixi and the emperor took off for Xi'an.

⁹ See Cochran (ed) 2000 for the economic and cultural significance of this road. In this book, different scholars focus on the development of commercial culture in and around the nucleus of Nanjing Road during the first half of the twentieth century.

¹⁰ Cf. Lee [Leo] 1999: 5: "[...] the English word 'modern' (along with the French *moderne*) received its first Chinese transliteration in Shanghai itself: the Chinese word *modeng* in popular parlance has the meaning of 'novel and/or fashionable', according to the authoritative Chinese dictionary *Cihai*. Thus in the Chinese popular imagination Shanghai and 'modern' are natural equivalents."

president' 临时大总统 by the Provisional Senate, after which he founded the Nationalist Party Kuomintang 国民党 (also known as Guomindang) in August the same year. Sun resigned after three months, after which Yuan Shikai 袁世凯 (1859-1916) became the provisional president. Yuan tried to re-establish the monarchy and make himself emperor, but he failed and died in 1916. After his death, the central government in Beijing lost its power due to the ongoing political struggles. Powerful warlords now governed territories beyond the control of the central government, which marked the beginning of the warlord era.

After the Peace Treaty of Versailles that concluded the First World War, the former German concessions in Shandong were handed over to Japan, causing great resentment among the Chinese population. On 4 May 1919 some three thousand students held a mass demonstration in Beijing. Police attacked the students, who responded with a student strike and the sending of telegrams to students all over the country. Soon the so-called May Fourth Movement swept through Shanghai, where demonstrations were organized to support the Beijing students, resulting in a boycott of Japanese goods, and clashes with Japanese residents. As Joseph Chen (1971: 1) has showed in his study on the Shanghai May Fourth Movement, although historically it formed an integral part of the May Fourth Movement at large, "its characteristics seemed to make it not only distinct from Beijing, but also unique in its own manner." In 1921 the Chinese Communist Party 共产党 (CCP) was founded in Shanghai, by Chen Duxiu 陈独秀 (1879-1942) and Li Dazhao 李大钊 (1888-1927). The Communists and the Nationalists later cooperated in United Fronts 国共合作 (1923-1927 and 1936-1937) against warlordism and imperialism.

In spite of this political turbulence, the Shanghai economy grew steadily between 1919 and 1927, enjoying exceptionally favorable circumstances. Western countries' heavy demand for raw materials and food stimulated growth and development of the export trade as the fall in gold value lowered the prices to be paid (in Chinese, i.e. silver money) for imports (Bergère 1981: 3-4). The port of Shanghai became more active than ever. During this "period of flourishing private enterprise" (Lieu 1936: 22) the rate of China's industrial growth reached 13.8 per cent per year, which was mainly due to Shanghai's economic boom (Bergère 1981: 4). Every year new flour and cotton mills were built, and between 1912 and 1924 some 200 workshops for mechanical engineering were set up, half of which were using electric power by 1920. By that time Shanghai had 71 native banks, specializing in short-term loans.¹¹ Shanghai's rapid industrialization, and the increase of jobs that came with it, attracted scores of newcomers. Between 1910 and 1927, the population doubled from 1.3 to 2.6 million (Goodman 1995: 89). Meanwhile, the International Settlements expanded into an area ten times bigger than the old center of Shanghai (Zhang [Xudong] 2008: 323). The Paris of the East 东方巴黎 replaced Tokyo as the center of a network of East Asian cities linked together by ship routes for purposes of marketing, transporting, and tourism (Lee [Leo] 1999: 31). Shanghai's development

¹¹ There was no stock exchange and national bank at the time (Fairbank & Goldman 1998: 271).

from a commercial port into an industrial city created a proletarian class that soon organized itself in labor movements. The proletariat became a socially and politically important force. In 1919, they had joined forces with the United Anti-Imperialist Front, and organized many strikes in English and Japanese factories of the International Settlements (Bergère 1981: 11).

In an imperial edict of 1903 the status of merchants had been upgraded and many Chambers of Commerce founded, such as the Shanghai General Chamber of Commerce. In subsequent years, an enterprising, cosmopolitan, urban society blossomed. Apart from a proletariat, a new elite class of entrepreneurs arose. The new Shanghai bourgeoisie established its own organizations, like the Shanghai Bankers Association and the Chinese Cotton Mills Association. Many of the businessmen had been educated in Japan and were internationally minded. In their urge for independence from the foreign powers they also struck a chord with academics active in the May Fourth Movement. From March 1923 businessmen, through the Chambers of Commerce, participated in a national convention in Shanghai that addressed the problem of political reorganization and unity, and the control of troops and finances. Just like the May Fourth Movement, the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce was anti-imperialist and wanted Shanghai free of the foreign treaty privileges. The urge for independence flared up after the May 30 incident in 1925, when police of the International Settlements violently suppressed an anti-imperialist demonstration triggered by the murder of a Chinese worker in a Japanese spinning mill. It provoked a chain reaction of strikes by workers, students and merchants, and the birth of the Shanghai General Trade Union, directly linked to the Communists. After 1925, the Shanghai Municipal Council of the International Settlements included Chinese councilors, and Chinese administrations sprang up in the suburban areas more or less autonomously. In 1926, a Provincial Court was established and soon afterwards, the establishment of the Municipality of Greater Shanghai brought together under its authority the different Chinese parts and outskirts of Shanghai. The British tried to defend their position by restoring concessions at Hankou and Jiujiang, and by building an international force of 40,000 troops to protect Shanghai (Fairbank & Goldman 1998: 283).

In February 1927, Communist leaders Zhou Enlai 周恩来 (1899-1976) and Li Lisan 李立三 (1899-1967) organized a general strike in Shanghai that paralyzed the port and the industry, after which numerous workers were arrested and executed. On 21 March 1927, the Shanghai General Trade Union, under the supervision of the CCP, called a general strike again, and built armed resistance against the warlords.¹² About 600 workers went out on strike, cutting off all electricity and phone lines. After heavy fighting they managed to occupy railway stations, police stations and other key buildings in the city. When the next day Nationalist troops of Chiang Kai-shek marched into Shanghai, they initially supported the trade unions, after which

¹² The armed Resistance consisted of 2,700 workers and possessed many weapons (Spence 1991: 351).

the Shanghai General Trade Union no longer had to hide underground.¹³ At the same time Chiang Kai-shek forged an alliance with the Shanghai mob. Members of the notorious Green Gang became agents for the Nationalists, helping them to gain control over Shanghai. In April, foreign troops and warships confronted the labor unions that were getting significant control in the city. The unions awaited the help of the Nationalists. Yet, the Nationalists, with the help of the Green Gang, betrayed the unions by supporting the attack (Fairbank & Goldman 1998: 284). On 12 April, while Chiang Kai-shek was away to found his capital in Nanjing, a well-orchestrated attack on union headquarters around Shanghai was carried out by paramilitary troops of approximately one thousand men. They wore plain blue clothes and white armbands, but they were heavily armed. On several occasions, they were assisted by Nationalist troops, as well as foreign authorities in the International Settlements. Hundreds of trade union members and Communists were arrested or executed, and Communist organizations were dismantled. A few leaders, among them Zhou Enlai, narrowly escaped. The next day, huge demonstrations by workers and students filled the street of Shanghai. Nationalist troops responded by killing hundreds of demonstrators. The so-called White Terror 白色恐怖 spread to other cities.¹⁴ Having put an end to Communist activities in Shanghai, Chiang Kai-shek forced business people to extend loans of millions of dollars to the Nationalists in return. Those who refused were denounced 'Communists' and imprisoned until they paid.¹⁵

The Settlements, whose international status was thus degraded, no longer offered a safe haven to Chinese residents. As described by Marie-Claire Bergère (1981: 16), the reconquest of Shanghai from the foreigners went hand in hand with tighter control over the new social groups which had blossomed during the preceding years. Especially the bourgeoisie, who were refused participation in the local administration, suffered from the new control by the Nationalists. The Communists kept resisting and many anti-Nationalists demonstrations filled the streets in the next years, increasing the tension between Communists and Nationalists. In 1928 alone, 110 strikes broke out, and even more in the year after (Bergère 1981: 19).

On 3 May 1928, the Japanese Army killed a group of Nationalists in Ji'nan, Shandong province, which became known under the name May 3rd Incident (also: Ji'nan Incident). Many thousands of Chinese civilians were later killed, on suspicion of being Nationalist sympathizers. On 18 September in the same year, the Mukden Incident (also: Manchurian Incident) occurred in southern Manchuria, when a section of railroad, near Mukden (today's Shenyang), was blown up. The Japanese blamed Chinese nationalists for the incident and responded with the complete annexation of Manchuria. These incidents caused the student movements to focus

¹³ According to Spence (1991: 351), at the time, there were 499 trade unions in the city, with 821,282 members in total.

¹⁴ For more on the White Terror, see Goble 1980 and Martin 1996.

¹⁵ According to Martin (1996: 111), "through their crucial assistance to Chiang Kai-shek in April 1927 the Green Gang bosses became an officially recognized element within the Guomindang's new national polity."

their anger mainly on the Japanese. They boycotted Japanese goods and the Japanese responded with the burning of Chinese-owned factories and shops, ravaging the industrial suburbs of Shanghai. In 1932, the Japanese sent an ultimatum to the mayor of Shanghai, Wu Tiecheng 吴铁城 (1888-1953), demanding an apology and the dissolution of all anti-Japanese organizations. In spite of the mayor's concession, the Japanese forced the retreat of the Chinese army from Shanghai and attacked the forts of Wusong and Zhabei. As a result, soldiers and civilians on the Chinese side were unified against Japanese aggression.

After 1932, the world economic crisis reached Shanghai. The Japanese attacks, the Chinese loss of Manchuria, and the desolation of the countryside after the Yangtze floods in 1931 and 1935, all added to the crisis.¹⁶ Foreign trade showed a deep decline and in 1935 a third of the cotton mills in Shanghai were shut down (Bergère 1981: 21). The economy had still not recovered when, in 1937, the Sino-Japanese war broke out.¹⁷ When the Japanese invaded Shanghai, thousands of refugees fled from the Chinese-controlled areas of the city to the more neutral territory of the International Settlements. On 11 August 1937, the *North China Herald* 北华捷报 still claimed that “the admirable co-operation of the local Chinese and Japanese authorities” had so far “succeeded in preserving calmness and an absence of panic in Shanghai” (cited in Mitter 2004: 18). But only a few days later, Chinese air forces accidentally bombed Nanjing Road, killing about a thousand people. In December 1937, the Japanese army committed the notorious Nanjing Massacre (南京大屠杀; also known as the Rape of Nanjing / Nanking); six weeks of killing, torture and rape. Chinese and Japanese troops fought over Shanghai for more than three months, during which large parts of the city were bombed. By 1943, at the height of the Second World War, most foreigners had fled and the concessions had been ceded to the Japanese, bringing Shanghai's one hundred years as a Treaty Port to a close. Despite the ending of the Second World War, fighting continued as Nationalists and Communists continued their civil war for control of China for three more years. Although large parts of the city were destroyed, by the end of the 1940s Shanghai was still by far the largest city in China and the fifth biggest city in the world, with a population swollen to almost six million, many of them refugees.

On 25 May 1949, Chen Yi's 陈毅 (1901-1972) Communist forces entered Shanghai, which surrendered without resistance by the Nationalists. The Communists declared victory on the first of October in the same year and established the People's Republic of China (PRC). Not only had Shanghai been severely damaged by the wars and the economic crisis, certain ‘typically

¹⁶ In 1931, a flood inundated a land area of 8.4 million acres and caused the death of 145,000 people. Hankou City was flooded over three months. In 1935 a flood inundated a land area of 3.74 million acres and caused the death of 142,000 people. People's Daily Online at English.people.com.cn → features → 3gorges → Yangtze.

¹⁷ Since the economic crisis influenced the whole Chinese economy, it must be noted that in 1937, 81.2 percent of China's foreign trade and commerce, 79.2 percent of foreign bank investment, 67.1 percent of industrial investment, and 76.8 percent of real estate investment were still concentrated in Shanghai (Tang [Zhenchang] 唐振常 1989: 9).

Shanghainese' phenomena had also become the epitome of everything the CCP condemned: colonialism, commercialism and decadence. In addition, it had been the financial headquarters of the Nationalist government. 'The Communists will ruin Shanghai, and Shanghai will ruin the Communists,' had become a popular saying among right-wing Shanghainese. All nightclubs and international banks were closed, until little was left of the vibrant cosmopolitan metropolis of the 1920s.

Although it is often claimed that the CCP deliberately let the city stagnate and stopped all forms of investment,¹⁸ this mainly applies to the city's physical structure: there was, for example, no increase and even probably a decline in per capita living area between 1949 and 1956 (White 1981: 252). Nevertheless, at the same time industrial Shanghai was the residence of the 'leading class of the revolution' 革命的领导阶级: the proletariat. Shanghai was thus multi-faceted, representing anti-revolutionary elements as well as revolutionary. Shanghai's revolutionary history had included the May Fourth Movement, the founding of the Communist Party, the labor movement of the 1920s, and the patriotic and anti-imperialist movement of the 1930s and 1940s. Moreover, as Shanghai was still China's largest and wealthiest city, the CCP hoped it could strengthen the economic reconstruction and modernization of China, especially since the Communists' goal was to raise industrial production from ten percent to thirty or forty percent of total economic production within ten to fifteen years (Barnett 1941: 7). The city's previous role as an international financial and commercial center was subordinated to a primary role as a domestic industrial producer, and in 1957 the nationalization of all foreign and Chinese capitalist enterprises was completed.

In the 1960s Shanghai would play an important role in national politics. In 1965, tensions arose between Mao Zedong 毛泽东 (1893-1976) and the CCP establishment, but he regained control with the help of Lin Biao 林彪 (1907-1971), Jiang Qing 江青 (1914-1991, Mao's fourth wife), and a group of Shanghai intellectuals, who would later form the Cultural Revolution Group 中央文革小组 (Fairbank & Goldman 1998: 389). Among these intellectuals were the Shanghai writers (and members of the notorious Gang of Four 四人帮) Zhang Chunqiao 张春桥 (1917-2005) and Yao Wenyuan 姚文元 (1931-2005), who were involved in the founding of the radical Shanghai Writers' Group 上海写作班. After Zhang and Yao moved to Beijing as members of the Cultural Revolution Group in 1965, they kept directing the Shanghai Writers' Group. In November 1965, Yao Wenyuan wrote a fierce critique of the Beijing opera *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office* 海瑞罢官 written by Wu Han 吴晗 (1909-1969) and first published in 1961. The critique was hailed in retrospect as launching the Great Proletarian Revolution Cultural Revolution 无产阶级文化大革命 (1966-1976) (Perry & Li 1997: 9). On 15 January 1967, Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan were declared the first party secretary-cum-mayor and second secretary-cum-vice-mayor of Shanghai, respectively (Perry & Li 1997: 19).

¹⁸ E.g. Mitter 2004, Lee [Leo] 1999, and Zhang [Yingjin] 1999.

Shanghai's distinct proletarian class gave the Cultural Revolution in Shanghai specific characteristics different from other parts of China. Most studies on the Cultural Revolution focus on the leadership role of young, well-educated Red Guards, who dominated the revolution in most places in the countryside. Elizabeth J. Perry and Li Xun (1997) have demonstrated that in Shanghai it was the rebel worker groups who quickly joined the Red Guards and even replaced them as leading actors of the movement. Whereas the students had been sent to the countryside to 'destroy the four olds' 破四旧 – old ideas, old culture, old customs, old habits – the workers' movements in Shanghai had a somewhat different background. They did not emerge during the Cultural Revolution, but had been formed decades before to rebel, among others, against the colonial settlers. Proletarian power persisted in Shanghai throughout the Cultural Revolution decade, particularly within party, governmental, and union organizations. In 1967, Zhang Chunqiao helped to set up the Shanghai Commune 上海人民公社, after the Paris Commune of 1871, which attempted to collectivize property and social roles in a more egalitarian fashion than had ever been seen in China (Mitter 2004: 220). The central Party leadership was alarmed and Mao personally interfered to bring the Commune under control (Perry & Li 1997: 47). He renamed the Shanghai Commune as the Shanghai Revolutionary Committee, and Zhang was appointed as chairman.

Gamble (2003: 8) has identified the most important factors undermining the status of Shanghai during the Mao period as the loss of capital and expertise to Hong Kong, government policies designed to reverse the concentration of the nation's productive capacity in coastal cities and to relocate the economic 'center of gravity' 经济重心 to inland provinces, the centralization of political power to Beijing, and the lack of significant investment in Shanghai. Moreover, Shanghai had to hand over 86.8 percent of its tax revenues to the national government (Jacobs and Hong 1994: 231). Just like the rest of China, Shanghai was for the greater part closed off to the world economy. In 1972, an attempt was made to change this situation with US President Richard Nixon signing the Shanghai Communiqué. It provided a foundation for increased trade between the US and China, but it did not lead to steady investment in Shanghai. However, in spite of all these negative factors, Shanghai still saw significant economic growth, and remained China's pre-eminent industrial center. From 1953 until 1978, the city's economic growth averaged almost nine percent per annum above the national average (Gamble 2003: 9).

URBAN TRANSFORMATION IN SHANGHAI

Shanghai makes magic shows redundant. The city today is an everyday cinematic illusion, capable of conjuring whole skylines into being as if through special effects. Witness the artificial paradise of Pudong, across the Huangpu River. As for religion, foreign or homegrown, it does not hold the city together,

but something else, some strong anticipation of what is about to come – the reappearance of Shanghai as China’s most important international city.

Ackbar Abbas (2002: 38)

Spectacular supermarkets began to appear in Shanghai in the mid-1980s. They brought excitement and joy to my otherwise bland existence as a teenage girl. Soon afterward, many wondrous shops, restaurants and nightclubs sprang up at a dazzling speed right in front of my eyes. My memory of the early 1990s was that if I shut myself in for a month, the city would change beyond recognition. Everyone in the city has been reshaped in this metamorphosis. [...] My rock hero Cui Jian once said, “Shanghai makes me realize what Beijing will look like two years from now. But I am clueless as to what Shanghai will turn out to be in two years’ time, totally clueless.”

Mian Mian 棉棉 (*Time*, 27 September 1999)

Imagine a city with enough fluorescent lighting and big screen LED displays to put Vegas and Tokyo both to shame. Now, add to that mix classical Chinese buildings (hutong), 19th century, stately British architecture (along the Bund) and surround all that by hulking skyscrapers, many of which have shot up within the last two decades. Throw in some Chinese night markets, KTV (karaoke) spots, nightclubs and tea houses, but make sure there’s room for Starbucks and McDonalds on every block. Mix all these images together and what do you have? The ever-evolving, always bustling city of Shanghai. [...]

One thing I noticed about Shanghai, when compared to Beijing, is that even during the Olympics, Beijing has been a bit lacking in a collective credo. Even after the Olympics, people seemed confused or lost in the direction Beijing was and is headed in. Yet for their neighbors to the south, the Shanghai state of mind is all too clear: Come one, come all. Step right up and see the “pearl of the orient” as it becomes the global city of the 21st century. Starting to get a little anxious, New York City?

Steve (blogger at Transparent.com/Chinese/shanghai-introduction)

Any writing on Shanghai today seems to run out of superlatives to describe the city’s dazzling transformation, spectacular architecture, and booming economy. Indeed, in 1978, Shanghai was still a city without many high-rise buildings. The tallest building (at 83.8 meters) was the foreign-built Park Hotel from 1934, which in the 1980s came to symbolize the city’s ‘stagnation’ (Cf. Zhang [Xudong] 2000a: 19). In the entire metropolis only five buildings exceeded twenty floors (Davis 2002: 244). Most of Shanghai’s six million urban residents lived in crowded apartments, often with three or four generations under one roof. Most houses had few facilities and the majority shared bathrooms and kitchens with neighbors. Deborah Davis (2002: 244-5) describes Shanghai’s transformation since 1978 as follows:

Between 1979 and 1989, 830,000 households occupied new or renovated apartments, and between 1992 and 1996 another 800,000 moved. More than 4.5 million people changed address, average space per capita doubled, and in most cases a move guaranteeing a higher material standard of living. By the late 1990s the norm for new construction was a three-room apartment looking out over a skyline punctuated with high-rise towers in diverse international styles.

While, thus, the city's first large physical changes were made after 1978, the year 1990, when Pudong was established as a SEZ, marks a turning point in Shanghai's economic history. The national and city government and foreign companies invested billions of Yuan in infrastructure and buildings, intended to make Shanghai reemerge as a major international financial, commercial and shipping center, as it had been in the 1930s. During his famous Southern Tour 南巡 in 1992, Deng Xiaoping 邓小平 (1904-1997) revealed that looking back his one great mistake had been not to include Shanghai when they set up the Special Economic Zones, and he was quoted saying that Shanghai should 'make some change in one year, and a great change in three years' 一年一个样, 三年大变样. After Deng's visit, the government changed Shanghai's designation from being the center of the planned socialist economy to a thriving international financial and commercial city at the center of a 'socialist market economy' 社会主义市场经济. Seven years later, in 1999, then mayor of Shanghai Zhu Rongji 朱镕基 emphasized that "Shanghai will be China's New York" (*The Economist*, 14 August 1999).

In ten years' time, from 1990 to 2000, 25 million square meters of property was demolished. Initially, the government intended to finish the major reconstruction plans at the turn of the century. However, after it won the 2002 bid to host the 2010 World Expo, new plans for yet another complete makeover were designed. In addition, to impress the many foreigners coming to the World Expo, city planners promised that Shanghai will become China's 'green capital' as well. Already, Shanghai has converted Nanjing Road to a pedestrian mall, created 1,800 hectares of greenway with trees and lawns, and started the Huangpu River Renovation Project.¹⁹ By the end of 2002, with 4,916 tall buildings, Shanghai had nearly double the number of skyscrapers in New York. Between 1997 and 2008, the 494-meters-high Shanghai World Financial Center was built in Pudong, having the world's tallest observation deck with a view from three levels.²⁰

Remarkably, Shanghai's symbols of its 'humiliating' colonial past, the old Bund and some parts of the former concession are among the only parts of the city saved from the wrecker's ball. In the French Concession, old boulevards and villas have

¹⁹ The Huangpu River Project covers 20 km of downtown riverfront on both shores. The harbour will be transformed by green corridors, an elliptical canal, a maritime museum, marinas, riverside parks, and new housing estates.

²⁰ Rumor has it that Architect Kohn Pedersen Fox has resisted suggestions to add a spire on the top of the building to become the world biggest building.

been restored, and the city government has stimulated international banks and hotels to move into their original buildings on the Bund. Former colonial companies, such as Jardin, Matheson & CO, have rented back their old buildings. Nanjing Road, the major shopping road that leads to the Bund, with its mix of bright lights, advertising, and overall consumerism does, in fact, very much resemble its 1920s self. Hence, Shanghai's makeover is different from Beijing's: where for Beijing residents the city's transformation stands for China entering the new world of globalization, for Shanghai residents the transformation stands for the revival of the old Shanghai in its heyday, as much as for the building of a new city.

It is impossible to give the exact size of Shanghai today, but according to the United Nations, Shanghai is the most populous city of China and the sixth largest city in the world.²¹ The Sixth National Population Census of the People's Republic of China 中华人民共和国第六次全国人口普查 put the population of Shanghai at about 23 million, including about nine million long-term migrants, a growth of 37.53% since the 2000 census population of almost 17 million. At the same time, temporary foreign residents currently number around 150,000, not counting an estimated 700,000 Taiwanese living in Shanghai while conducting business.

While, according to the official website for the city of Shanghai, the city has just 1.5 percent of China's population, Shanghai accounts for five percent of China's Gross Domestic Product, eleven percent of its financial services, twelve percent of its total industrial output, and 25 percent of the country's trade. Today's business, both domestic and foreign, has made Shanghai wealthy by Chinese standards, with rising salaries creating an increasingly affluent middle class. However, these rosy numbers hide the fact that while Shanghai hosts an increasing number of millionaires, ordinary Shanghainese must still be counted as residents of a developing rather than a developed nation. Even though the city's average income is one of the highest in the country, it is still not high enough to keep up with Shanghai's real estate prices, which have skyrocketed as a result of the large population influx and wealthy Chinese from around the country purchasing apartments as investment properties.²² Many ordinary Shanghainese are forced to move, because they cannot afford the new apartments.

Furthermore, millions of residents must survive in this relatively expensive city on less than the official minimum wage, not to mention the millions of unemployed living on the streets, without residence permits and therefore intelligible for social benefit. Crime is on the rise, prostitution is back in the public domain, and pollution is a major problem. In addition, the results of urban expansion are not always as the planners expected. According to Hou Hanru (2006), "it sometimes is totally 'entropic': according to some studies, 80 percent of the high rising buildings constructed for the last 4-5 years in Shanghai are in fact empty, especially in the

²¹ In 2011, the population density in the central city was estimated at 8,265 people per square kilometer.

²² For 2003 the average income was ¥14,867 (€1,522) per capita, while the average housing price was over ¥5,000 (€512) per sq. m, more than double the nation's average.

spectacular area of the Special Economic Zone of Pudong.” In the meantime, developer speculation continues to accelerate and the prices of real estate remain excessively high.

So, is Shanghai the global city it strives to be? If we take the term ‘global city’ as coined by Saskia Sassen (1984), the answer to this question is open to debate (cf. Visser 2010a: 176).²³ Most scholars, including Sassen (2009: 3-23) herself, agree that Shanghai is certainly *globalizing* – “a global city in the making” in Michelle Huang’s (2004: 103) words – but not yet a global city in the full sense.²⁴ As Fulong Wu (2009: 126) concisely summarizes the problem:

The application of the global city thesis to Shanghai is obviously a catalyst for analytical tension: on the one hand, Shanghai’s renaissance cannot be understood without reference to China’s increasing integration into the global system; on the other hand, measured by indicators used to quantify global city status, such as the number of multinational headquarters and the size of the finance market, Shanghai is far from being a global city.

Another ‘analytical tension’ is that the (local) government is vigorously turning Shanghai into a global city by transforming the Pudong area into what could be called “a copy of a global city” – to borrow Huang’s (2004: 103) words again – but that the strong role of the state is simultaneously hampering the city’s full integration into the global economy. Whereas Sassen’s paradigmatic cities developed more ‘naturally’ into global cities, Shanghai is arguably being forced into becoming one.

In his intriguing article “Is Global Shanghai ‘Good to Think’,” Jeffrey Wasserstrom (2007: 230) also urges specialists in urban studies to “move away from presenting the route to global city status in evolutionary terms.” Wasserstrom points out that Shanghai’s specific historical development makes it more akin to urban centers that were once part of the Soviet bloc, such as Budapest. Like Shanghai, these cities did not follow a steady evolution toward global city status, but made a “stop-and-start progression.” In colonial times, Shanghai was even more ‘global’ than it is today, while during the Mao era the city became “firmly enmeshed within the national political and economic order,” Wasserstrom (2007: 221-2) further argues, albeit “by no means completely cut off from international currents.”²⁵

For this reason, Wasserstrom proposes the convincing term ‘reglobalizing post-socialist city’: whereas the prefix *re-* refers to the city’s history as a global city, the

²³ Detailed studies on Shanghai and Sassen’s notion of the ‘global city’ include: Chen [Xiangming] 2009, Wasserstrom 2009, Bracken 2009, Chen [Yawei] 2007, and Huang [Michelle] 2004 and 2006. For an interesting study on the specificities of Asian global cities, see Mayaram 2010.

²⁴ Cf. Bao [Yaming] 2004b: 253, Bracken 2009: 220, Wu [Fulong] 2009: 140, Yang [Mayfair] 2009: 6, Chen [Xiangming] 2009b: xv-xxxiii, Wasserstrom 2009: 138, Gu and Tang 2002: 285, Chen [Yawei] 2007: 337-346.

²⁵ Bracken (2009: 15) also argues that the International Settlement in colonial Shanghai could be seen as a forerunner of the global city.

CONTEXT

suffix *-ing* not only stresses the fact that Shanghai has not reached its global status yet, but also that the economic system is still in transition. As for post-socialist, the prefix *post-* suggests that there is still a socialist factor present, while at the same time doing justice to the fact that Shanghai is a market-oriented city characterized by full-blown commercialism.

LITERATURE IN SHANGHAI AND SHANGHAI IN LITERATURE

One hundred years of Shanghai feels like a short dream that has only left us scary nightmares and beautiful illusions.

Wang Anyi (2001: 146)

Shanghai, in its origin as a city port and its later function as a Treaty Port, differs from most big cities in China. In imperial times, according to Rhoads Murphey (1980: 19-20), big cities were founded by the state and served as administrative and managerial centers. They were highly planned, organized and controlled, and the enclosing walls with their huge gates did not in the first place have a defensive function, but symbolized the state-imperial authority; emphasizing and glorifying the city's role as the seat of power. The city was also responsible for the management and defense of the surrounding countryside, while the countryside, in its turn, provided the city with food. This mutual dependence was the basis of a harmonious relationship between the countryside and the city. It was not until the nineteenth century, with the forced opening of China and the establishment of the Treaty Ports, that this symbiotic unity was shattered, and cities became chiefly economic entities. As Arny Schweiger (2005: 52) and Robin Visser (2000: 20) have argued, the shifting status of the city created for the first time a strong opposition between the countryside and the city, which radically changed the notion of the city and the countryside in Chinese thought and imagination.²⁶ With the city in opposition to the countryside, the city became the place of economic rationalization, alienated from the countryside. There is no stronger symbol of this tension, and the ideas of 'modernity' that go with it, than Shanghai.

From 1842 onwards, the Treaty Port of Shanghai functioned as an economic, urban entity detached from the countryside. Due to its semicolonial status, it was often characterized by the cultural elite as an island that the British had named 'Shanghaiand.'²⁷ The city became an object of never-ending curiosity and the

²⁶ For an outline of the different views of Chinese and Western scholars on the question of whether the introduction of the Treaty Ports was in fact the main reason why the relationship between the city and the country changed during the 19th century, see Visser 2000: 20-25.

²⁷ Goodman (2000: 893) explains the linguistic originality of the neologism *Shanghaianders* as "the self-appellation of Anglo-American residents in the city, which staked the foreign settlers' claim to Shanghai while distinguishing them from the Chinese *Shanghaiense*, whose own birthright was thereby implicitly challenged."

inspiration for many writers. Lots of late Qing and Republican-era writings characterized Shanghai's urban culture through its "otherness," illustrating Shanghai's oddities "comprising," as Heinrich Fruehauf (1993: 135) describes, "a mélange of popular poetry, gossip anecdotes, illustrations of the 'bizarre,' and guidebook-style information about trendy entertainment facilities," such as Ge Yuanxu's 葛元煦 *Miscellaneous Notes on Travels in Shanghai* 沪游杂记 (1876). These books also painted the downsides of the so-called Paradise for Adventurers with its endless opportunities for business and pleasure: crime and prostitution. Some books, like Dian Gong's 滇公 *Shanghai's World of Swindle and Deception* 上海之骗术世界 (1914), warned their readers to watch out for the many gamblers, opium smokers and prostitutes, who relentlessly deceived and cheated ignorant outsiders. In the words of Yingjin Zhang (1996: 9-13), pre-1949 Shanghai was simultaneously imagined as a 'city of light' – with its enlightened education, journalism, literary revolution, and social reform – and a 'city of darkness' – a source of contamination, depravity, sexual promiscuity, and moral corruption.

When we view Shanghai as the product of literary imagination, the term 'Shanghai' transcends its purely geographical designation, and becomes a representation of a particular urban culture. 'Shanghai writers,' then, need not invariably be 'from Shanghai' in the conventional sense. In fact, many of the Shanghai writers that feature in this study were not born in Shanghai, and many of them spent time in other Chinese and/or foreign cities. Some authors, such as Wang Anyi and Chen Danyan (see chapter 4) have even claimed that their preoccupation with the city is precisely *because* they are still outsiders "seeking a sense of belonging," as Chen Danyan puts it in *Shanghai Star* 上海星抱 (27 February 2003):

"I wrote these books from the angle of an outside explorer," said Chen. "It helped me find out many subtle things ignored and taken for granted by local Shanghainese."

What these authors do share is a preoccupation with 'Shanghai,' and the fact that their works have been labelled 'Shanghainese,' by critics and other readers.

Late Qing and Early Republic: A Hotbed of Politics and Culture

It was in Shanghai that the first modern printing technologies in China were developed, which boosted the cultural market during the Qing dynasty (Reed 2004). Starting from the late 1800s, countless political and cultural newspapers, journals and magazines spread swiftly over the whole of China. Most of the magazines and books appeared in Shanghai, which, as described above, offered more opportunities for dissent and experimentation than other parts of the country. For instance, the Shanghai Ratepayers Association was able to prevent the Municipal Council from implementing new laws to restrict the freedom of press (Bergère 1981: 12). In the 1920s and 1930s, almost all literary journals and more than 85 percent of all Chinese

books were published in Shanghai (Zhang [Xudong] 2000a: 384). Fuzhou Road and Henan Road became world-famous ‘cultural streets’; in 1939, 92 of the city’s total 245 sizable bookstores were located there (Lu [Hanchao] 1999: 346).

The printing industry also created the circumstances for a new kind of literature and a new kind of writer to emerge: entertainment fiction and the professional author. Several scholars, such as Michel Hockx (2003), Leo Lee (1973), Perry Link (1981) and Christopher Reed (2004), have discussed this relationship between Shanghai’s printing industry and literature. When the Datong Translation Press was established in Shanghai in 1897, it solicited manuscripts by offering payments. Accordingly, the first group of authors writing for money, and for readers beyond a highbrow elite audience, emerged in Shanghai. This professionalization of writing also influenced the type of literary works that were published. For example, serialized fiction in newspapers and magazines became very popular. Bao Tianxiao 包天笑 (1875-1973), a famous Shanghai-based writer, later recalled: “What was the content of these entertainment papers like? Fun, of course, was their core. Their first principle was not to speak of politics; they would hear nothing of ‘the great affairs of the nation’ and things like that” (cited in Hershatler 1997: 413).

In addition, commercial opportunities for publishing also made it easier to distribute new cultural and political ideas. For example, the Commercial Press, which was Shanghai’s leading press from 1904 until 1937, published Western works translated by Yan Fu 严复 (1853-1921) and Lin Shu 林纾 (1852-1924).²⁸ Zou Taofen 邹韬奋 (1895-1944) is an example of writers who, through Shanghai’s commercial print culture, could disseminate their ideas to a broad audience. His popular magazine *Life Weekly* 生活周刊 expanded from a circulation of two thousand in 1926 to over one hundred thousand in 1933, when it was shut down by the Nationalist government (Groot 2004: 16).

The magazine played an important role in the New Culture Movement 新文化运动, a movement of students and intellectuals that challenged Confucian values and institutions in order to modernize traditional Chinese culture. This iconoclastic group resisted both warlordism and imperialism, and was influenced by ideas that swept over Europe in the same period, such as socialism and the emancipation of women.

The New Culture movement began in 1915 when one of China’s most influential intellectuals, Chen Duxiu, founded the Shanghai-based journal *New Youth* 新青年 (with additional French caption *La Jeunesse*). Chen famously summed up the movement with the statement that what China needed was ‘Mr Democracy and Mr Science’ 德先生和赛先生.²⁹ In 1917 Chen Duxiu invited Hu Shi 胡适 (1891-1962), a student at Cornell and Columbia universities, to write about his ideas for literary

²⁸ Reed 2004: 212 and 214. For further reading on Lin Shu and Yan Fu see, among others, Lee [Leo] 1973 and Schwartz 1964.

²⁹ Mitter (2004: 65) writes: “Chen [Duxiu] understood ‘science’ as a concrete, positivistic concept that could stand in stark opposition to Confucianism, and ‘democracy’ had the implication of a search for a new morality, rather than just a political system.”

reform. Hu Shi wrote a famous essay, entitled “Some Tentative Suggestions for the Reform of Chinese Literature” 文学改良刍议, whose publication marked the beginning of the Literary Revolution of 1917. The most important outcome of the revolution in the following decades was the introduction of Western literary theories and models, and the adoption of vernacular language, in all kinds of literature. These influences of Western writers and literary theory in the early 1920s have been exhaustively analyzed by Bonnie McDougall (1971).³⁰ According to Mitter (2004: 22), Shanghai was the focal point of the ‘enlightenment’ taking place in this period. As a result, writers from all over China were drawn to the city, such as Yu Dafu 郁达夫 (1896-1945) and Ba Jin 巴金 (1904-2005), where they would participate in various literary movements.

Treaty Port Shanghai

In late Qing and Republican-era fiction featuring Shanghai, the city was often portrayed as a typical modern commercial metropolis, whereas Beijing was often portrayed as the opposite: a city of tradition and politics. In the words of Zhang ([Yingjin] 1996: 21), Shanghai represented “technology, economy, and cultural diversity,” and Beijing represented “morality, politics and orthodox culture.” The following fragment by Peter Li (1980: 69) describes the way Shanghai is represented in the Qing-dynasty novel *Flowers in a Sea of Sin* 孽海花 (1905):

In Shanghai the old meets the new, and the East meets the West. There is a constant bustle of activity; if it is not a flower exhibition in a public park, then it is a secret revolutionary meeting somewhere else. In the streets and public places, young men and women dressed in Western clothing are talking to foreigners in an alien tongue. Even dignified officials, wearing their long gowns and official caps, can be found dining in Western-style restaurants, eating with knives and forks, and drinking champagne and coffee. In their conversations they talk about the government, politics, literature, and the arts of foreign countries.

The novel, commenced by Jin Tianyu 金天羽 (1874-1947) but finished by Zeng Pu 曾樸 (1872-1935), tells the story of a real-life courtesan, Sai Jinhua 赛金花, who marries a diplomat and travels to several Chinese, European and Japanese cities. The above fragment suggests that Shanghai is characterized by ‘Westernness,’ which seems reasonable when considering the city’s colonial influences. The novel takes place at the end of the nineteenth century, a period when foreigners, as well as Chinese writers and other intellectuals returning from foreign countries, introduced Western ideas and lifestyles into the city. They gathered in the International

³⁰ For more studies on the outcome of the Literary Revolution see, among others, Dolezelová-Velingerová 2001, Goldman 1977, and Lee [Leo] 1973.

CONTEXT

Settlements, whose “special jurisdiction,” as Denise Gimpel (2001: 28-9) writes, “offered a freedom of thought and a radius of action that traditional Chinese moral codes would largely have proscribed.” The social and cultural position of these writers influenced the way they represented Shanghai as a place of Western culture; the Settlements covered just a small part of the entire urban zone of Shanghai.³¹ Nevertheless, the Settlements had become a center for new political and cultural ideas, lifestyles, fashion, and architecture. In the words of Zhang ([Xudong] 2000a: 349), Shanghai was “the epitome of Chinese urban modernity.”³² At the time, some Shanghai critics even suggested that all modern culture in Shanghai was brought to the city by Westerners and Japanese. This is art critic Fu Yanchang 傅彦长 writing in 1923:

Only since the foreigners have come to Shanghai does the city have parks, clean streets, fancy department stores, skyscrapers, a concert season from October to May, museums, libraries, and other tokens of a national cultivation of the arts. (Cited in Fruehauf 1993: 137)

The essay was published in a collection of articles, entitled *Three Personal Views on Art* 艺术三家言, written by Fu and the influential aestheticians Zhu Yingpeng 朱应鹏 (1895-?) and Zhang Ruogu 張若谷 (1905-1960). They argue that the city is the most essential precondition for art in a modern age. Like many Shanghai critics of their time, when they talk about ‘the city’ they appear to mean Shanghai. As Fu remarks:

My artistic ideals are with edifice literature, with city literature, with modern drama and opera – and to my own queer reckoning, those plays should be entirely written in Shanghainese. (Cited in Fruehauf 1993: 141)

Even though cities such as Guangzhou and Macao experienced similar modernization under Western influence, it was only in what Lee ([Leo] 1999: 143) calls, ‘a new urban culture’ in 1930s Shanghai, that the name of one city became equivalent to ‘the City’ or ‘Western modernity’ (Fruehauf 1993: 141), at least to the Shanghainese themselves.

Westernized Chineseness

Paradoxically, the Shanghai writers who were the most ‘Westernized’ in their lifestyles and literary conventions were also the ones who most forcefully

³¹ In 1927, the International Settlements covered about 50,000 *mou* of a total of 1,187,741 *mou* of Shanghai (including surrounding populated rural areas), and of a total population of 2.6 million living in Shanghai, only 23,307 were foreigners (Bergère 1981: 6).

³² Cf. Gimpel 2001: 9-10: “Shanghai was the epitome of all that was modern in early-twentieth-century China.”

propagated anti-imperialist ideas. The same paradox can be observed in writers influenced by Japanese culture: they adopted Japanese literary techniques, while simultaneously rebelling against the Japanese occupation. Shu-mei Shih (2001: 374) has called this apparent contradiction the “strategy of bifurcating the ‘colonial West/Japan’ and the ‘metropolitan West/Japan’.” Shanghai intellectuals resisted colonial power, but welcomed metropolitan, i.e. cosmopolitan, culture. Since Chinese culture during the Treaty Port era was “more the object of metropolitan cultural imperialism than of colonial cultural domination,” in Shih (2001: 373) they did not conceive of themselves as culturally colonized. Moreover, according to Lee ([Leo] 1999: 312-3), the traditional Confucian world had already known a form of cosmopolitanism that would continue to be an integral part of Chinese modernity.

Accordingly, as Lee (1999) and Shih (2001) have pointed out, the fact that these Shanghai writers so eagerly embraced Western culture did not indicate a capitulation. On the contrary: it served the nationalist aim of reforming and modernizing traditional Chinese culture. Lu Xun 鲁迅 (1881-1936), for example, widely seen as the most prominent among modern Chinese writers, wrote essays in favor of “eclectic, confident borrowing from the foreign without fearing the possibility of enslavement by what one borrows” (cited in Shih 2001: 15). In the course of his discussion of Fu Yanchang, Fruehauf (1993: 141-2) writes:

Shanghai, because it was so ‘exotic,’ so different from the rest of China, could become a cultural laboratory where, *in vitro*, the experimental restoration of Chinese civilization would be undertaken. The foreigners had provided the necessary facilities, Fu [Yanchang] calculated, and now the Chinese inhabitants of Shanghai had to be instructed in how to employ them for their own aesthetic evolution. In this manner perhaps the earliest stage of post-May Fourth exoticism was founded upon two pillars: nationalism and the City, that is, Shanghai.

The many translations of Western literature must be seen in the same light: the aim of translating and reading them was to create a Chinese literature that could “become part of the world literary scene,” as Zeng Pu puts it:

To survive in times like these, we must not only strive for progress in science, but also in literature. (...) The crucial point in accomplishing these goals is to read as much Western literature as possible. (Cited in Li [Peter] 1980: 61)

In the prefaces to his translations of Western literature, Lin Shu even condemned some of the ideas expressed in the originals as contrary to Chinese ethics and cautioned the Chinese readers not to be influenced by them. Translator Yan Fu also used his translations for nationalistic purposes, as pointed out by Benjamin Schwartz (1964). In other words, Shanghai writers did not see foreign culture as a substitution for Chinese culture, but instead as an aid in constructing a Chinese modernity.

Shanghainese

In 1927, essayist, critic, and literary scholar Zhou Zuoren 周作人 (1885-1967) published an essay entitled “Shanghai style” 上海气 in his book *About Dragons* 谈龙集. The article ridiculed a Shanghai culture that was “centered on money and sex”: “since Shanghai is a colony for foreigners, its culture is the culture of compradors, hooligans, and prostitutes,³³ fundamentally deprived of rationality and elegance” (cited in Zhang [Yingjin] 1996: 22). Zhou further claimed that Shanghai people had succumbed to a prevailing “attitude of playing with life.” The article triggered a controversy, with writers from Beijing and Shanghai attacking each other in essays for several years.

The two groups of writers were referred to as Shanghai School 海派 and Beijing School 京派, the first represented by writers such as Zhang Ziping 张资平 (1893-1959), Shi Zhecun 施蛰存 (1905-2003), Shao Xunmei 邵洵美 (1906-1968), and Ye Lingfeng 叶灵凤 (1904-1975), and the latter by writers such as Zhou Zuoren, Fei Ming 废名 (1901-1967), Ling Shuhua 凌叔华 (1904-1990), Xiao Qian 萧乾 (1910-1999), Wang Zengqi 汪曾祺 (1920-1997), and Shen Congwen 沈从文 (1901-1988). The Shanghai School was said to write mainly sentimental love stories and lyrical accounts of everyday life, which appealed to a mass audience, but drew scorn from their colleagues in Beijing. Some Shanghai School writers defended themselves by claiming that they had to be commercial, since they did not receive the same governmental financial support as the Beijing School writers. One of the main accusations the Beijing writers leveled at their Shanghai colleagues was the foreign decadence of their work, and their alienation from tradition and the motherland. The Shanghai writers in turn considered the Beijing writers conservative and stuck in tradition, while they thought of themselves as representing a vibrant and liberal culture (Lu [Hanchao] 1999: 59). Lu Xun (Zhou Zuoren’s brother) tried to mediate between the schools, but also ironically criticized both sides, calling the Beijing writers “protégés of officials” and the Shanghai writers “protégés of businessmen” and proposing a “marriage between the officials and businessmen” (cited in Movius 2003).

The terms Shanghai School and Beijing School had emerged in the late nineteenth century over differences in painting style, but later spread to other cultural disciplines. In particular in Beijing opera this dichotomy was also widely used, where, as Lee ([Leo] 1973: 25) has described, the Beijing School “has been termed as generally ‘classicist’ whereas the Shanghai School may be thought of as ‘romantic’; the Beijing School ‘traditional’ and the Shanghai School ‘modern’.”³⁴ According to the Chinese scholar Wu Fuhui 吴福辉 (1995: 1 and 4), the Shanghai School “was not an organizational phenomenon, but a broad trend with profound significance,” of which the writers had one thing in common, “that is, they adopted a

³³ In the early decades of twentieth century Shanghai, 12.5 percent of Chinese women living in the International Settlements were believed to be prostitutes (Zhang [Xudong] 2000a: 382).

³⁴ Schweiger (2005: 232) classifies the opposing cultural notions of “heresy” as the representation of Shanghai, versus “orthodoxy” as the representation of Beijing.

Shanghai resident's perspective to survey this Oriental cosmopolis, and to write their romance about Shanghai as an island in the sea of Chinese culture."³⁵ Yet, since the term 'Shanghai School' had a negative connotation, the title was not used by Shanghai writers themselves, at the time. Furthermore, writers and critics hold different views on which writers fit the label. The so-called Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies School 鸳鸯蝴蝶派 is commonly regarded as the most representative – if not the *only* – and earliest Shanghai School. Most contemporary Western and Chinese critics agree that the modernist writers of the New Perceptionists 新感觉派, and some writers of the 1940s, such as Zhang Ailing 张爱玲 (1921-1995, also known as Eileen Chang) and Qian Zhongshu 钱锺书 (1910-1998) should also be included. Regardless of these different interpretations of the Shanghai School, the rise of fiction with daily Shanghai life as its main subject, during the Republican era, was essential to the development of Chinese urban fiction as a whole. Notably, in this study 'urban fiction' merely refers to fiction with a prominent urban setting and which narrates daily life in the city.

Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies

Novels produced by the Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies School include adventure stories, detective stories, and most of all classical-style tragic love stories interspersed with sentimental poems.³⁶ May Fourth writers used the term to attack all kinds of old-style or entertaining or popular fiction. Some of the novels were written in the classical language, but most of them used vernacular language or the dialects of Shanghai or Suzhou. In the 1910s and 1920s, Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies fiction dominated the literary world of Shanghai, and formed the staple fare of most of its literary magazines.³⁷ Between 1910 and 1930 writers from this school published some 2,200 novels, many of which became best-sellers, such as *Jade Pear Spirit* 玉梨魂 (Fairbank & Goldman 1998: 263). This novel by Xu Zhenya 徐枕亚 (1889-1937) sold several hundred thousand copies and was also made into a popular movie in 1914. It is a typical Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies love story of a widow who falls in love with the teacher of her son.

³⁵ Wu [Fuhui] (1995) has done extensive research on the Shanghai School, and has classified the Shanghai School writers in three groups: 1) writers who departed from the May Fourth tradition and devoted themselves mostly to the urban readership in the late 1920s, such as Zhang Ziping, Ye Lingfeng, Zeng Jinke, Zeng Xubai and Zhang Kebiao; 2) Shanghai modernists writers, such as Liu Na'ou, Mu Shiying, Shi Zhecun, Hei Ying, Xu Xiaocun and He Jin; 3) popular writers who combined Western modernist techniques with traditional Chinese narrative conventions in the 1940s, such as Zhang Ailing, Xu Xu, Wuming Shi, and other popular urban writers, such as Su Qing and Shi Jimei.

³⁶ The term 'Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies' derives from the traditional Chinese symbols of ducks and butterflies for devoted lovers, which often feature in classical Chinese literature. The term was used by left-wing writers and meant in a derogatory way. For a comprehensive study of the Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies School, see Link 1981. For an interesting attempt to trace the genesis of the term, see Gimpel 2001: 223-225.

³⁷ Between 1908 and 1938, 180 newspapers and magazines of the Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies school were published in Shanghai; the year 1914 alone saw 21 new newspapers and magazines of this type founded in Shanghai (Lu [Hanchao] 1999: 60).

Perry Link (1981: 329-30) has identified a connection between Shanghai's urban modernization and the immense growth of Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies fiction in early twentieth-century Shanghai:³⁸

One of the essential causes [...] appears to have arisen from the psychological needs of urban dwellers confronted with the 'modernizing' environment and all that that implied: the transition away from traditional, rural-based values toward the nuclear family, 'universalistic' public intercourse, and what sociologists know as *Gesellschaft* culture generally.

Link (1981: 330) argues that the reasons for this type of fiction's popularity shifted over time from pure amusement to a way of "escaping" reality: "the reader's desire to keep up with the world gave way to the desire to forget that he could not keep up." Furthermore, the Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies school's conservative attitude towards popular Chinese values and its expression of resistance to the West and social modernization, struck a chord with most Shanghai people. Whereas Shanghai intellectuals, as noted above, had a positive attitude towards the 'metropolitan West/Japan,' this was not the case for the ordinary people of Shanghai, who rejected certain aspects of life in the modern city, and in particular modern Western ideas (Link 1981: 343). For example, the famous Qing novel *Sing-song Girls of Shanghai* 海上花列傳, written by Han Bangqing 韓邦慶 (1856-1894), described the lives of Shanghainese courtesans and the Western-style decadence surrounding them. The dialogues are written in Wu dialect (Shanghainese), which is also exemplary for 'regionalist' attitude of the Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies writers.

The New Perceptionists

The term New Perceptionism 新感觉派 (also translated as 'New Sensationalism') was first used by the leftist critic Lou Shiyi 楼适夷 (1905-2001) in 1931. Famous members of this group are Liu Na'ou 刘呐鸥 (1900-1939), Mu Shiyong 穆时英 (1912-1940), Shi Zhecun 施蛰存 (1905-2003), and Hei Ying 黑婴 (b. 1915-1992; Zhang Bingwen 张炳文), who were most active in the 1930s. The New Perceptionists were influenced by French Surrealism and Japanese New Perceptionism, which the writer Liu Na'ou had imported from Japan.³⁹ As Zhang ([Yingjin] 1996: 155) describes, they "made the illegible metropolis 'readable,' inscribed urban chaos as textual fragments, and represented (or re-presented) the

³⁸ Wong (1991) links the rise of this popular fiction to changes in the Chinese working week at the beginning of the twentieth century, when the concept of 'weekend' was introduced to Chinese society. For this reason, the Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies School is sometimes also called the Saturday School 礼拜六派.

³⁹ Kawabata Yasunari, Kataoka Tappei and Yokomitsu Riichi, are among the first Japanese New Perceptionist writers. The movement was only active for six years (1924-1930) and, as Shih (2001: 257) describes, "sought to create a language that could account for the new sensations of modernity in the now-transformed modern metropolis of Tokyo."

experience of modernity from a totally new perspective in Chinese literature.” The protagonists in these works have often been characterized by scholars in Chinese studies as *flâneurs*; urban dwellers who circulated freely in the public space as if it were a private space, making the streets their home.⁴⁰ They found romance and pleasure in the fast-moving urban environment of modernizing Shanghai in the 1920s and 1930s.

Liu Na’ou formulated the New Perceptionists’ view on art as follows:

Modern art aims to capture and describe the tumultuous effect on the human senses and feelings caused by speed – the *jouissance* that one experiences while driving a ‘Roadster’ automobile or watching a movie. (Cited in Lee [Leo] 1999: 81)

The New Perceptionists were fascinated by street scenes in which the cityscape formed the backdrop to ceaseless change and movement. Their experimental works dealt with the effects of this urban dynamism on sense perception. The urban experience is also expressed in their literary style, which used montage, empathic repetition and rhythm, and the narrative technique of internal monologue.

A representative New Perceptionist story is Mu Shiyong’s “Shanghai Foxtrot” 上海的狐步舞, which pictures urban life and street scenes in capitalist, modern Shanghai. A flow of images, feelings, smells and sounds unfolds the experience of modernity in fragmentary style. The story contains entire passages that are repeated several times in the text, analogous to the repeating movements of the dancing couple portrayed. Starting and ending with the sentence “Shanghai, a heaven built on hell,” the story depicts the intoxication of jazz, girls and ballroom dancing, but above all the malevolence of decadence, greed and violence.

There are doubts about the circumstances of Mu Shiyong’s death, but it is believed that both Liu Na’ou and Mu Shiyong were assassinated by the Communists. After being neglected for more than fifty years, the works of the New Perceptionists (particularly Mu Shiyong, Liu Na’ou, and Shi Zhecun) received much attention from literary critics in the 1980s and 1990s. Such critics include Leo Lee (1999), Yingjin Zhang (1996), Shu-mei Shih (2001), and Yiyang Wang (2007), who have all discussed the role of urban modernity in the New Perceptionists’ works.

The League of Left-Wing Writers

According to Zhang ([Xudong] 2000a: 2), the New Perceptionists, “wrestled with the sensuous light and sound of the cityscape and the psychological-aesthetic drama or trauma it produced,” “while realist writers during the 1930s and 1940s (most notably Mao Dun) tried, with varying success, to capture the sociological totality,

⁴⁰ See, for example, Shih 2001, Zhang [Yingjin] 1995, and Wang [Yiyang] 2007. For the role of the *flâneur* in Hong Kong cinema, see Huang [Michelle] 2000.

the politico-economic and class logic of this monstrous urban complex.” The majority of these realist writers became members of the League of Left-Wing Writers 左翼作家联盟 that was established in Shanghai in 1930, after many disputes among left-wing associations. It was the dominant force in the city’s literary activities over the following years. Almost three hundred writers joined the League, and under Soviet influence, it adopted the idea that literature had to be anti-feudal, anti-capitalistic and anti-bourgeois, exposing the ills of non-socialist society and promoting the glorious future under communism (Fokkema 1972: 55-56). Unlike in the works of the New Perceptionists, the countryside remained present in the works of left-wing writers, even in works that had the new cityscape as their setting.

The League was run by CCP cadres. One of the most important figures of the League, Mao Dun 茅盾 (1896-1981), had helped to establish the CCP in Shanghai. Between 1921 and 1932 he was one of the chief editors of China’s foremost literary journal *Short Story Monthly* 小说月报. Mao Dun was one of the few League members who created novels with an entirely urban setting, of which *Midnight* 子夜 (1933) is the prime example. In this highly political novel, Mao Dun fiercely condemns capitalism and imperialism and portrays the city of Shanghai as a place of decadence and moral degeneration.

Lu Xun was already a well-known writer when he helped found the League of Left-Wing Writers in 1930. After taking the first-level classical examinations in 1898, he had studied medicine at Sendai University in Japan, among other subjects. Eventually he decided to settle upon literature as a means of social reform. He was strongly critical of Chinese traditional culture and society, and a pioneer in China of the modern story and the short, polemical essay. He had taught at Peking University and was editor of several influential left-wing magazines such as *New Youth* and *First Growth* 萌芽 (also known in English as *Sprouts* and *Shoots*). Not long before his arrival in Shanghai in 1927, Lu Xun had quit writing fiction after hearing of the May 30 incident of 1925. From then on he focused on writing polemical essays commenting on current affairs and cultural matters. Lu Xun was deeply involved in the League, although his contribution was not so much literary as political. As the only non-Communist founding member, Lu Xun resented the behavior of the CCP cadres running the League, but he resisted its demise in 1935 (Pollard 2002: xxvi).

Another famous member is Ding Ling 丁玲 (1904-1986).⁴¹ Although Ding Ling is invariably associated with Shanghai writers, she was in fact born in a small town in Hunan province and would live in many places throughout China during her life. She left for Shanghai in her late teens and attended a Communist-directed girls’ school, and later Shanghai College. After graduating she went to Beijing to attend Lu Xun’s classes. She became famous after the publication of *Miss Sophie’s Diary* 莎菲女士的日记 in 1927, a story of a young woman living in a hostel room in

⁴¹ For extensive studies on Ding Ling, see Alber 2002 and 2004, Barlow 1986, Chang [Jun-mei] 1978, and Feuerwerker 1977 and 1982.

Beijing and suffering from tuberculosis. This groundbreaking novel became influential, because of the new, individual voice of a woman that openly expressed her sexual desires. In 1930, Ding Ling returned to Shanghai and joined the League, but she was arrested in 1933. After her release she returned to Beijing again, and later to Xi'an. There she stayed until it was possible for her to join the newly arrived Communist forces in Yan'an, where she became friends with Mao Zedong and participated in the Yan'an Rectification Movement 延安整风运动, which established the primacy of Mao Zedong thought on cultural expression (Barlow 2004: 192). During the 'rectifications', Ding Ling soon came under attack herself, among others because of *Miss Sophie's Diary's* protagonist's individualism and self-obsession (Mitter 2004: 79). Ding rebelled against social and literary conventions, which, according to Yi-tsi Mei Feuerwerker (1977: 282), "was expressed by both her liberated life-style and her impassioned writings on the sexual frustration of young women." During the Anti-Rightist Movement 反右派运动 (1958), this caused her to be labeled 'rightist' 右派 and expelled from the party; she was eventually rehabilitated after the Cultural Revolution. Ding Ling's work centers on the condition of women and the world of the proletariat, who are both victimized by the capitalist system.

At the end of 1935, the Shanghai National Association of Cultural Workers was founded as a united front against Japan. Writers from different political backgrounds participated in the front, after which the League of Left-Wing Writers was dissolved.

The 1930s produced a great number of socially critical theater plays. Besides the League of Left-Wing Writers, the League of Left-Wing Dramatists was also established in 1930, in also Shanghai. Tian Han 田汉 (1898-1968) and Cao Yu 曹禺 (1910-1996) are among the most important dramatists of the League. Cao Yu's *Sunrise* 日出, for example, tells the story of Shanghai prostitutes, depicting the suffering of poor citizens in contrast to the extravagance and corruption of the rich.

Ba Jin was one of the few Shanghainese writers with left-wing sympathies who did not want to commit himself to any one association. In 1927, Ba Jin went to study in France, where he started writing his first novel *Destruction* 灭亡, based on his experiences in Shanghai from 1923 to 1927. This novel deals with the struggle of young Shanghainese revolutionaries, who are confronted with moral questions such as whether revolutionary activities are motivated primarily by love or by hatred and whether the individual act of assassination of political enemies is a valid revolutionary method (Lang [Olga] 1967: 108). Ba Jin's novel expressed the same hope for change and revolution as the novels of his fellow left-wing writers.

War and the Mao Years

From the 1930s to 1949 China was engulfed by World War II and the Civil War between the Communists and Nationalists. The Communists had to withdraw to the countryside, which became the basis for the communist revolution, and officially,

the heart of the country, while the city came to represent the old order that needed to be transformed. In 1942, at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art 延安文艺座谈会, Mao Zedong proclaimed that all literature and art were to serve the masses.⁴² He advocated Socialist Realism 社会主义现实主义 as compulsory literary practice, referring to the Soviet technique of realism and strict devotion to party doctrine. The Forum also played an important role in reinforcing the representation of the city as a symbol of decadence and depravity in modern literature.

Since the end of the nineteenth century, contrasting images of the city and the countryside had intensified, whereas with the triumph of the Communist Revolution, "the significance of the city was eclipsed by the ideology of rural populism for at least the next four decades," in the words of Lee ([Leo] 1999: 190). The Communists touched upon a sentiment that was already present in the Chinese imagination: the idea that concepts of cultural tradition and morality were an inherent part of the countryside. In classical Chinese literature, the countryside was often imagined as a place of peace and harmony; with Tao Qian's 陶潛 (365-427) poem "Peach Blossom Spring" 桃花源 as a *locus classicus*.⁴³ With the increasing tendency to contrast the countryside with the city since late Qing literature, the city came to represent the opposite of the countryside, i.e. a place of chaos and violence.

Except for the works of the New Perceptionists, the countryside kept its central position in modern fiction; even in literature with the city as its ostensible setting the countryside is still very much present, either as (imaginary) point of departure or as place of (imaginary) return. Likewise, the character of the illiterate peasant has often been depicted by modern Chinese writers as "a means of evaluating their own qualifications for moral leadership," as Feuerwerker (1998: 96) has pointed out. When discussing the city in modern Chinese literature, Zhang ([Yingjin] 1996: 261) states that the city was "typically configured as distant from or alienating to the genuine Chinese experience, something dazzling that entices and entraps the inexperienced adventurer in the ensuing moment of blindness, or something phantasmagoric to be tasted only in a brief moment of consummation."

Zhang ([Yingjin] 1996: 262) also stresses, however, the fact that both the city and the countryside have ambivalent connotations: "enlightenment / ambition, democracy / disorder, freedom / uncertainty, opportunity / greed, and technology / estrangement for the city; and peace / stagnation, innocence / ignorance, and moderation / subservience for the country." This ambivalence faded away in Communist literature, which favored a dominantly positive image of the revolutionary countryside. For the Communists, Shanghai merely became a reminder of Western imperialism and a symbol of national humiliation. Moreover, it was China's biggest city and the center of Western-influenced urban modernity.

⁴² For an English translation of the "Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art" 在延安文艺座谈会上的讲话, with commentary, see McDougall 1980.

⁴³ The poem tells the story of a fisherman who discovered an idyllic, peaceful, utopian village, when he was travelling along a river and lost his way. After his return home, no one was able to find the village again.

However, all this did not, as one might have expected, result in multiple representations of Shanghai as a place of ‘evil,’ but in the near-disappearance of Shanghai as literary subject matter. Urban literature often had an unspecified setting, and primarily “had to deal with workshops, factories, technology reforms, and production processes,” as literary critic Li Ziyun 李子羽 says in an interview (cited in Zhong 1995b: 107). One of the few examples of urban works with Shanghai as its setting is the four-volume *Morning in Shanghai* 上海的早晨 by Zhou Erfu 周而复 (1914-2004), one of the most important Shanghai writers in the 1950s. According to McDougall and Louie (1997: 241), the novel can be seen as a successor to Mao Dun’s *Midnight*, providing a similarly detailed portrayal of industrial and political life in Communist Shanghai between 1949 and 1956. Most other novels from the 1950s have a rural setting and deal with typical socialist-realist topics such as land reform, e.g. the famous novel *Great Changes in a Mountain Village* 山乡巨变 by Shanghai-based writer Zhou Libo 周立波 (1908-1979).

Because in the Mao era writers in the PRC had to abide by strict rules on the form and substance of their works, experimentation was restricted. City literature thus suffered from a standardization from which only writers in exile, like Zhang Ailing, could escape. Zhang Ailing would become one of the most famous writers depicting Shanghai life in the 1940s and 1950s, and has often been labeled as an important representative of the Shanghai School. Zhang was born in 1920 to a renowned family in Shanghai, but spent her early childhood in Beijing and Tianjin, before returning to Shanghai in 1929. In 1939, she was accepted into Hong Kong University, but when Hong Kong was occupied by the Japanese in 1942, she returned to Shanghai again and stayed there for ten years. In 1952 she moved back to Hong Kong, and three years later she moved to the US, where she would live until her death in 1995. In popular short stories with a Shanghai setting, Zhang Ailing “seems determined to seize the city when it is off guard, off work, absentminded, and dreamy – when it is pinned down and rendered helpless by some external, arbitrary accident such as war,” as Zhang ([Xudong] 2000b: 349) puts it. Since the 1980s, Zhang Ailing’s works are enjoying a revival in popularity.

The 1980s: Scars, Roots and the Shanghai Malady

During the Cultural Revolution, schools and universities were closed, while the ‘educated youth’ 知识青年 were sent to factories and the countryside to ‘learn from workers and peasants’ 学工学农. The campaign escalated and the result was chaos and violence for over a decade, in which a vast number of people were injured, tortured, and killed. After the end of the Cultural Revolution and Mao’s death in 1976, many of the ‘educated youth’ returned to the city. Literary movements arose that dealt in different ways with their years spent in the countryside. The earliest example is the Scar Literature 伤痕文学 (or Literature of the Wounded), a literary movement that began in Shanghai in 1977, when a 23-year-old student, Lu Xinhua 卢新华, presented a story entitled “The Wounded” 伤痕 as a ‘big-character poster’

大字报 on the walls of the campus at Fudan University. The story was soon officially published, and it inspired hundreds of others to write stories about their own frightful experiences during the Cultural Revolution, such as intellectuals who are imprisoned because they have been labeled 'rightist', or teachers who are publicly humiliated, or writers who are beaten to death. Although the stories criticized Lin Biao and the excesses of the Gang of Four, they often ended up glorifying the CCP and were published in state-sponsored literary journals and newspapers. The works would therefore later be used to officially denounce the Gang of Four (Link 2000: 36). The Cultural Revolution was also an important element in the emergence of the Root-Seeking Literature 寻根文学. According to Mark Leenhouts (2005: 1), the main characteristic of this movement was that these writers "considered their Chinese or ethnic minority identity as relevant or even crucial to successful Chinese literature." Their countryside experiences inspired them to search for Chinese identity in the countryside, which is why most of their works have a rural setting. So while writers physically returned to Shanghai, their work still prominently featured the countryside and few of their works had a clear Shanghai setting.

The 1980s had seen China happily fall prey to a so-called 'high culture fever' 文化热 with impassioned intellectual debate on culture in the socio-political sphere. The cultural atmosphere of this decade has been comprehensively described by Jing Wang (1996). However, since the mid-1980s for the first time Shanghai was seen as lagging behind other economic and cultural nodes, i.e. the southern SEZs and Beijing, respectively; this was known as the Shanghai Malady 上海病 (Yang Dongping 杨东平: 229-234). 1985, for instance, was the first year in which not one Shanghai writer won any of the annual national awards for 'best short story.' The literary journal *Shanghai Literature* 上海文学 raised the question why Shanghai literature in the New Era 新时期 (Post-1978) had been disappointing. In 1985 and 1987, meetings of literary critics and writers were held in Hangzhou to discuss the problem. The meeting in 1985 was attended by writers from different cities, such as Han Shaogong 韩少功 (b. 1953), Li Tuo 李陀 (b. 1939), Zheng Wanlong 郑万隆 (b. 1944), A Cheng 阿城 (b. 1949), Huang Ziping 黄子平 (b. 1949), and Ji Hongzhen 李洪志 (b. 1951). Critic Li Ziyun says: "During the meeting, I started to sense a gap between Shanghai writers and writers from other regions. Critics from Shanghai began to feel that the supposedly smart Shanghainese had become rather slow. As discussions and conversations went on, they were unable to have productive dialogues with other writers. In many cases, it was because they did not know what to say" (cited in Zhong 1995b: 101). Li Ziyun further recounts that some people felt that the crowded space of the city could have caused the "narrow-mindedness in citizens and a lack of spirit in literary creation" (103). Shanghai critic Xu Mingxu 徐明旭, however, countered this hypothesis with the following question: "Why is it then that great writers and works were produced in the 1930s, when Shanghai was equally noisy and crowded, a situation not too different from that of today?" (cited in Zhong 1995a: 80).

The 1990s and Beyond: Sweeping Changes and Urban Experience

In the 1980s, Yu Tianbai 俞天白 (b. 1937), Cheng Naishan 程乃珊 (b. 1946), Wang Xiaoying 王小鹰 (b. 1947), Li Xiao 李晓 (b. 1950), Wang Anyi (b. 1954), Chen Cun 陈村 (b. 1954), Chen Danyan (b. 1958), Zhang Min 张旻 (b. 1959), and Sun Ganlu 孙甘露 (b. 1959) were among the most active writers in Shanghai. In their 1980s and early 1990s works, a rural preoccupation can still be identified. In stories that do feature Shanghai, the city is often portrayed as a place of return after the Cultural Revolution, and is contrasted with the authors' experiences of the countryside, while other stories nostalgically portray 1930s Shanghai. In his study about the relationship between urban culture and 1990s fiction, Huang Fayou 黄发有 (1999: 11-12) stresses the fact that because of the complexity of urban culture and the changing ideas of the writers themselves, the literary response to urban culture in the 1990s has been very diverse; He identifies three types of urban fiction:

- 1) "Novels against the city" 背对城市的写作: in these novels urban culture is revealed in its one-sided promotion of material civilization and simultaneous modernization, endangering the spiritual base of civilization;
- 2) "Neutral or ambiguous novels" 中性化或者说灰色化写作: these novels show a deep interest in the city, but maintain a sensitive and vigilant stance towards material desires;
- 3) "Novels that are drawn into the city" 卷入城市的写作: these novels don't resist the city; it is the only possible environment. Their characters lead vagrant lives, immersed in a kind of dizzy intoxication.

1990s urban writers are indeed very diverse, but they do have one important feature in common: they narrate daily urban life, with the characters' private life and individuality as their main subjects. As Huang ([Fayou] 1999: 9) states, 1990s urban writers bluntly narrate their private coming of age experiences, resulting in "non-private privacy".

Interestingly, in the 1990s the once degrading notion of the Shanghai School re-entered the literary discourse, but now with a positive connotation. In discussions on Shanghai literature, for example, 1930s literature is often mentioned as a standard that needs to be matched. These critics argue that with the departure of the foreigners and the closure of the city in Mao times, Shanghai had lost its 'Shanghai School spirit,' and believe that with the 'reopening' of Shanghai and the urban and economic developments of the 1990s, this spirit is reviving.⁴⁴ They maintain that if one wants to study contemporary Shanghai literature, one should first study the literature of the 1920-30s, since, as Xiaobing Tang (1995: 9) argues, "the urban

⁴⁴ Some critics, however, such as Shanghai literary critic Xu Mingxu, feel that Shanghai's history is still haunting the local writers and that for that reason the Shanghai School has now "sunk to the level of deformity [畸型海派]" (cited in Zhong 1995a: 80).

experience that fiction from the 1990s tries to capture is to a large extent a repeat of an interrupted previous development.”

Wang Anyi was one of the many urban youth returning to Shanghai in 1978, where she had grown up as a child and now started writing fiction. Most of her first novels and stories are based on her personal experiences of the countryside and her first years back in the city. It is only since the 1990s that Wang writes stories with a prominent Shanghai setting, where the city no longer features as a ‘place of return,’ but is a subject in its own right, of which *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* 长恨歌 (1995) is the most famous example. The novel recounts the life of a former Miss Shanghai from the 1940s until her death in the early 1990s, and depicts everyday life in typical old Shanghainese lane houses symbolizing the local history of Shanghai. Wang’s writings of the 1990s are often associated with Shanghai School works of the 1930s and 1940s, for which she has been called an heir to the Shanghai School and “the torch-bearer of Zhang Ailing’s style,” as *Wenhui Daily* 文汇报 (7 November 2000) explains: “because she depicts Zhang Ailing’s characters as if they had remained in Shanghai after the Cultural Revolution” (Cf. Movius 2003).

In the 1980s, Chen Danyan also had mainly written biographical stories about her time as ‘educated youth’ in the countryside, but in the 1990s she started writing her bestselling stories and essays collections on Shanghai, including two trilogies nostalgically reconstructing Shanghai history: *Shanghai Trilogy* 上海三部曲 (including *Shanghai Memorabilia* 上海的风花雪月 (1998), *Shanghai Princess* 上海的金枝玉叶 (1999) and *Shanghai Beauty* 上海的红颜遗事 (2000)), and *Shanghai, My City* 上海我的城 (including *Images and Legends of the Bund* 外滩影像与传奇 (2008), *Public Parks* 公家花园 (2009), and *Shanghai Memorabilia* as well). In *China Daily* (27 February 2003), Chen remarked that by writing these books and delving into the city’s past “made her realize her Shanghainese identity.”

It was thus not until the 1990s that the city of Shanghai became a subject in its own right again, like it had been to the New Perceptionist writers of the 1930s. In the words of Lee ([Leo] 1999: 190), “urban consciousness was recovered as the central trope in a new discourse of modernity.” In his study on 1990s city literature, Li Jiefei 李洁非 refers to several writers who lived in the city for a long time, but only started writing urban novels in the 1990s. Li Jiefei (cited in Visser 2000: 13) remarks:

In terms of my personal history I really had no knowledge of anything outside the city, but this doesn’t mean I knew the city. I began to question myself about this and it confused me. Even throughout the eighties the city didn’t inspire me, it’s almost as if I never gave it a second thought. In a word, for many years I simply never saw any reason or necessity for reflecting on the city. When I think about it, my impressions of the ‘city’ only came from watching movies about life in New York, Rome, London, Tokyo, Hong Kong. But from 1993 to 1994, I suddenly became fascinated with the urban space. I began to pay attention to the city landscape and urban events. Better put, the city started to

change in such a way that I had to notice it. And in the second half of the 1990s the trends in literature seemed to support my observations. Of all the new literature since 1995, probably 80-90% is on the topic of the city. This is not to say that rural literature is dying out, but that the real vitality is clearly to be found in urban literature.

As Li Jiefei indicates, since the mid-1990s China has experienced an explosion of urban fiction and discussions on the urban theme. Dozens of journals have appeared for urban fiction exclusively. In 1994 (November issue) the journal *Shanghai Literature* called attention to the so-called New Urbanite Fiction 新市民小说, referring to works written in the 1990s with conflicting values of the contemporary Chinese metropolis as their main subject, including important works by authors hailing from and/or resident in Shanghai, such as Chen Cun, Li Xiao, Cheng Naishan, and Wang Xiaoying. Mao Shi'an 毛时安 (2001: 12) points out that this literature is "written in a time of rapid, chaotic and dazzling change and multiple cultural values, which seems to explain why the literature itself is so diverse." Xueping Zhong (1995a: 79) argues that due to the fact that "the New Era literature is so preoccupied with searching for a new Chinese cultural identity and experimenting with new styles," these New Urbanite writers are not generally well-known and are given little critical attention outside of the literary circles of Shanghai. According to Zhong (1995a: 98), this attitude by Chinese critics "reveals ambivalence towards the urban, an ambivalence that is shared by the CCP's official ideology." However, this ambivalence seems to have disappeared since the late 1990s and 2000s. From then on, the city in general, and Shanghai in particular, would become a predominant setting and theme in novels and literary journals. In 2000, for example, *Shanghai Literature* published a series of 'literary columns' 文学专栏 by local novelists about places in Shanghai that held special meaning for them. The first twenty stories were collected in book form in 2002 under the series title *City Map* 城市地图.

Just as Li Jiefei remarks, the immense changes of the city during the 1990s forced its citizens to notice their urban environment and to reflect on it, and this is visible in literature. Hence, whereas Zhang ([Yingjin] 1996: 267) initially saw the "sweeping changes in the urban milieu" as one of the reasons why writers of the 1980s still focused on the countryside, these "sweeping changes" would inspire the same writers in the 1990s to write fiction reflecting on the city. Almost all Shanghai writers that were young during the first radical changes of Shanghai in the 1990s take the city as their main subject, without any reference to the countryside. Best-selling writers Mian Mian (b. 1970) and Weihui (b. 1972), for example, are prominent among writers of the 'Post-1970' 70后 generation: those born after 1970, who witnessed socialism's metamorphosis into a market economy and society's embrace of commercialization and consumerism. Both Weihui's novel *Shanghai Babe* 上海宝贝 (1999) and Mian Mian's novel *Candy* 糖 (2000) reveal ambivalence towards contemporary Shanghai, embracing newly attained wealth and endless lifestyle choices while criticizing their artificiality, emptiness and destructive

potential. The novels' explicit descriptions of sex and glorification of commercialism triggered fierce criticism of, among others, Ge Hongbing 葛红兵 (b. 1968), professor at Shanghai University. Interestingly, Ge Hongbing later wrote an autobiographical novel *Sandbed* 沙床 (2004), which tells of his turbulent sexual experiences, and caused a similar controversy.

As the above overview has shown, the city-country dichotomy has accompanied China's road into modernity. The continual important role of the countryside, as a symbol of Chinese identity, helps explain that throughout the literary history of Shanghai only two periods stand out by their urban fiction: the Treaty Port period 1920s and 1930s, and the 1990s and after. Not surprisingly, novels of both periods reflect the psychological effects of living in a fast-changing urban environment. In the following chapters, I will examine how this experience is articulated in the works by the authors mentioned in the previous paragraph.

