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Propositions to go with

Shanghai: Literary Imaginings of a City in Transformation
Lena Scheen

1. It is not urban change itself that makes Shanghai such an interesting case study, but the sheer scope and speed of Shanghai’s transformation, making it both a magnifying glass and an accelerator for the literary imagination.

2. Shanghai nostalgia equally fosters the collective memory of old Shanghai and collective amnesia of Mao-era Shanghai.

3. Contemporary Chinese women writers use ‘body writing’ as a means to disrupt male-dominated language in the same way as female and male Chinese writers of the 1980s used ‘body writing’ as a means to disrupt politico-ideological language.

4. Local writers’ prevailing characterization of Shanghai by reference to its colonial past and globalizing present is partly Orientalist in nature.

5. Research on urban transformation in all academic disciplines will benefit from considering evidence from literature and art.


7. For male authors of Chinese literature, the commercialization of literature constitutes a threat; for female authors, an opportunity.

8. If Chinese literature does not move non-Chinese readers, it is often said not to be real literature. If it does, it is often said to be not really Chinese.

9. The best way to take away a fear of life is by triggering a fear of death.

10. Emancipation of women will only work if in addition to having the same choices as men, women are judged in the same way for the choices they make.

11. Governments have little to fear from freedom of speech in societies where actual power lies with multinational corporations.

12. The growing number of foreign starchitects in China painfully reveals the attractiveness of authoritarian regimes.