Space, Vision and Identity: Imagining and Inventing Shanghai in the Courtesan Illustrations of *Dianshizhai Pictorial* (1884-1898)

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Dedicated to Yu Shujin, Ma Qiufen and Pierre Grenier

Abstract

This thesis investigates various representational modes and strategies in the Shanghai courtesan illustrations in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. The aim of the study is to examine how Shanghai's early modern identity was imaged, imagined and contested through the courtesan figure. I argue that by establishing a new urban iconography, *Dianshizhai Pictorial* transformed the Shanghai courtesan from a traditional archetypical *meiren* to a universal image of the urban beauty. On the one hand, the modern city, previously an alien concept, was made familiar and acceptable through the image of the Shanghai courtesan. On the other hand, the ambivalence of the courtesan's new image mirrored a mixed feeling of fear, anxiety and disdain towards the emerging metropolis. The courtesan illustrations, hence, served as an important domain where different public understandings of the city were negotiated and expressed in pictorial terms.

Résumé

Cette thèse fait l'état des lieux des différentes façons d'illustrer les courtisanes de Shanghai dans les revues *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. L'intention de cette étude est d'examiner comment l'identité moderne de Shanghai fut mise en image, imaginée et contestée à travers la figure des courtisanes. Je propose qu'en établissant une nouvelle iconographie urbaine, *Dianshizhai Pictorial* a transformé la courtisane de Shanghai, de l'archétype traditionnel *meiren* en image universelle de beauté urbaine. Les illustrations combinent différents types de représentation traditionnelle pour suggérer la modernité et l'exotisme. D'une part, la ville moderne, qui était un concept étranger, fut rendue familière et convenable à travers l'image de la courtisane de Shanghai. D'autre part, l'ambivalence de la nouvelle image de la courtisane reflétait un sentiment ambigu de peur, d'anxiété et de dédain dans la métropole émergente. A partir de cela, les illustrations de courtisanes devinrent un espace public ou différentes compréhensions de la ville était exprimées et échangées en terme de représentation graphique.

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INTRODUCTION: SHANGHAI—THE SHANGHAI COURTESAN—DIANSHIZHAI PICTORIAL: A SPACE OF INTERSECTION

> "The magazine was widely circulated in Shanghai's foreign concessions. It contained many pictures. The male figures were depicted either fighting on the street or smoking opium. The female figures, mostly courtesans or prostitutes, were seen showing off themselves in public. There was no shame on their faces, only the ugly glow from hell."
>
> *Jean-Luc Guimond*, Ten Years in Shanghai, *1900: 92*

> "[The magazine] first appeared in Shanghai when I was only thirteen years old. The latest issue usually arrived in Suzhou on an over-night boat. The first thing I would do in the morning was to go to the nearby shop and buy a copy with five coins. Browsing the pictures made me dream of Shanghai, a city of wide-open boulevard, *nouveau* curiosities and the beautiful women known as *Shanghai flowers*. These Shanghai women would enter my dreams late at night."
>
> *Chen Difeng*, Hometown Story, *1910: 70*

> "All the women [illustrated in the magazine] looked like prostitute and all the men looked like hooligans. The magazine was just as distasteful as the city itself. "
>
> *Li Xinwan*, Letter to Xiao Meng, *1922: 10*

Jean-Luc Guimond , Chen Difeng, and Li Xinwan, three men, from rather distinct socio-cultural background, lived in Shanghai from the 1890s to the beginning of the 20th century. Above, in their personal tales about the city, they reminisced on a Shanghai magazine titled *Dianshizhai Pictorial* (点石斋画报).[1] Evidently, their opinions toward the magazine ranged from fascination to disgust, from nostalgia to pessimism. Although all three men were accomplished writers in their own fields, they seem to have been more provoked by the magazine's sensational images on Shanghai urban life, rather than its textual commentaries. According to Chen Difeng, the representation of Shanghai in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*

[1] According to the short biographies in their books, Jean-Luc Guimond, a French missionary living in the 1880s in Shanghai, produced his own missionary journal but lost in the competition with more popular magazines like *Dianshizahi Pictorial*. Chen Difeng is a writer in Shanghai, who spent his childhood in the nearby city Suzhou. Li Xinwan, a left-wing literary writer, also read Dianshizhai Pictorial while living in the nearby town Shaoxing.

was like "a fantastic moving picture with crowds, open boulevards, theatres, teahouses, goof-ball foreigners, tall Western buildings, bizarre inventions, and especially, glamorous women fleeting by on horse-drawn carriages. Their look was quintessentially *Shanghai*....." (90) Among the entire visual phantasmagoria in the emerging Chinese metropolis, the most memorable images were probably those of Shanghai courtesans, euphemistically known as *Shanghai flowers*. The memoirs of Guimond, Chen and Li are witness accounts on the Shanghai courtesan lives, with descriptions of the courtesan images and stories they read from the Shanghai entertainment press.

As we can tell from the opening quotes, the imagery of the Shanghai courtesan played a significant role in formulating their views on Shanghai and even shaping their individual memories about the city long after they had left it. While the courtesan images made Chen Difeng, an adolescent boy from the countryside, dream of the gleaming metropolis, they induced much contempt and pessimism from Jean-Luc Guimond, a French missionary living in the city. In his memoir, Guimond moaned the loss of readership for his Catholic publications and blamed *Dianshizhai Pictorial* for creating a moral void for the city dwellers. In comparison, Li Xinwan, a pro-revolutionary writer, was utterly disgusted by the lack of revolutionary spirit of the city. He drew a symbolic parallel between the city and the courtesan, and even called both of them "permeated with hopeless self-indulgence and decadence." (65)

Based on the above readings, I propose that how the Shanghai courtesan was represented and interpreted had a close connection with how Shanghai, as an emerging modern metropolis, was imagined, negotiated and understood in the public and private psyches.

Since the 1870s, the importing of Western printing technology and the growth of a local leisure market gave rise to an entertainment press in Shanghai, including tabloid newspapers, pictorial magazines and city guidebooks. *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, the earliest, was one of the largest and also one of the most significant publications. Established in 1884 in Shanghai by the English merchant Ernest Major, *Dianshizhai Pictorial* (literally means *Touch-Stone Studio Pictorial*) is commonly viewed by scholars as the first mass-produced urban magazine in Chinese modern history. (Hay 1999, Reed 2004) Christopher Reed called it "the first long-lived supplier of industrially produced, mass-marketed images of Shanghai urban society." (46) The magazine was in the format of an illustrated journal, which was modeled on the contemporary Western publications, such as, the *London Illustrated News, Harpers, Illustrated Paper, and The Graphic*. Designed to provide entertaining illustrations, and leisure-time reading, the thrice-monthly magazine was immensely popular and successful in and beyond Shanghai. *Dianshizhai Pictorial*'s illustrations can be organized into four categories: 1) The depictions of famous Shanghai sights, such as newly-opened boulevards, public parks, Catholic churches, Western architectures and Western-styled restaurants; 2) exaggerated and somewhat grotesque portrayals of Western "oddities", ranging from Western clothing to Western dining with knife and fork; 3) scandalous local crime stories; and, 4) images of the Shanghai courtesan on all aspects of her life.

Dianshizhai Pictorial's courtesan illustrations are of special interest to me. Recent scholarship views the rise of print culture as the opening of the first modern public and commercial sphere in China. (Lee 1999; Mittler 2004; Reed 2004) Scholars have noted that female figures depicted in urban settings make up one of the core components of the Shanghai entertainment press, in both visual and textual

terms. These representations, moreover, tend to be embodied in a few female archetypes, ranging from the courtesans of the late 19th century to the movie starlets of the 1930s. The most well-known one is "Shanghai lady" as seen in the 1930s' commercial print culture, such as, cigarette advertisings and movie posters. The socio-cultural implication of "Shanghai lady" has been explored by scholars as a social agent that heralded Shanghai's crucial historical transition to urban modernity. A common conclusion is that as "Shanghai" became the synonym of the modern in Chinese context, "Shanghai lady" epitomized Shanghai modernity. (Dal Lago 2000, Mittler 2004) However, almost all such studies focus mainly on the visual production of the 1930s. There is a lack a critical reflection on the connection or disconnection between the image of "Shanghai lady" in the 1930s and the earlier representations of the Shanghai woman in print culture. I argue that the image of "Shanghai lady" could be traced to the budding stage of Shanghai modern print industry which commenced soon after the importation of modern lithographic technology in the 1870s. Examining these early representations gives us a broader historical perspective on how Shanghai modern sensibility has developed since the 19th century.

Catherine Yeh's recent work on Shanghai courtesan illustrations is an attempt to cement the missing link. In her essay *Creating the Urban Beauty: The Shanghai Courtesan in Late Qing Illustrations* , Yeh argues that, by the 1880s, the Shanghai courtesan, like the Paris courtesans of the Second Empire, had become the city emblem, epitomizing the city's claim to be an Asian capital of entertainment, comfort and wealth. "The development of an entertainment business unavailable anywhere else in the Chinese world with a range of theaters, singing halls, story-telling houses, teahouses, and Western-style restaurants, grandly enlarged the

courtesan's venue and allowed the courtesan to expand her activities into the public realm." (Yeh 407)

Shanghai courtesans' lurid images and marginal social role made them a convenient source of visual entertainment for the mass-market readership. Noting the market value of the courtesan, the print industry developed a rich array of visual products about her, from illustrations of her daily life, to quasi-journalistic features to illustrated city guide books centered on her life. The courtesan's self-staging as Shanghai's trend-setter was multiplied and enhanced through print narration and illustrations of her and her unique city. Between 1870s to the 1910s, the Shanghai courtesan was the most illustrated urban type and even dominated the representation of Shanghai's entertainment world. (Yeh 397) Catherine Yeh even argues that the courtesan illustrations in *Dianshizhai Pictorial* eventually refashioned the courtesan as the model for the new "urban beauty." (400) Looming large as the city's most glamorous icon, the Shanghai courtesan had a growing impact on public behaviour, fashion trends, and the life-style for the women in Shanghai. It is from the courtesan illustrations of the late 19th century that the sensibilities of "urban beauty" were originated and gradually mutated and spread to other forms of print culture.

In this thesis, I would like to explore the symbolic relationship between the courtesan illustration and Shanghai's early urban modernity. I hypothesize that the courtesan illustrations of *Dianshizhai Pictorial* not only fashioned the courtesan into an urban icon, but also turned her and her world into a semiotically dense "site" of urban narrative and urban spectacle. What got written into the "site" were various and oftentimes contradictory messages about Shanghai, the first modern metropolis in China. It is in the process of the consumption of the images of the courtesan that the urban subjectivity of Shanghai was formed and internalized. The thesis, thus, is

an attempt to investigate the various visual modes and strategies of the Shanghai courtesan representation in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, and the ways in which Shanghai's early modern identity was imaged, imagined and contested through the courtesan figure.

I would like to, first, introduce *Dianshizhai Pictorial* by situating its birth and growth in the context of the early development of the modern print industry in Shanghai. Historian Christopher Reed spearheaded the research on the development of early print industry in Shanghai with his book *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese Print Capitalism, 1867-1937* (2004). Reed's book provided an account of Shanghai's urban modernity by looking into the rise of a new commercial print industry in Shanghai from the mid 19th century to the 1930s.[2] Reed credited the imported Western print technologies, especially modern lithography, for replacing Chinese xylography and producing a modern printing industry from 1876 to 1937. Reed argued that lithographic technology helped to initiate industrialized print commerce and new forms of institutional organization in the Shanghai region. He observed that hundreds of small newspapers and magazines that had sprung up in Shanghai in the late 19th century fully adopted lithographic illustration as the main component of their content and further developed it into a new pictorial genre for the mass consumption. *Dianshizhai Pictorial* was undoubtedly the key exemplar in Shanghai's "Gutenberg Revolution." (Figure 1)

Printed with lithographic technology, *Dianshizhai Pictorial* incorporated impressive amount of illustrations to its content. During the fourteen-year life span, *Dianshizhai Pictorial* published over four thousand illustrated images. According to

[2] According to Reed, before the advent of Western technology, printing had been a Chinese cultural industry for more than nine centuries. Chinese commericial printing industry especially reached the height in the late Ming, that is, the 16th and the early 17th century. However, the traditional Chinese printing industry was based on woodblock technology, and it was managed in a much less organized form.

Reed, in the late 1880s, lithography was widely used by Shanghai's entertainment press for three main reasons. First, lithography allowed low-cost mass-production of image and text. Second, lithography allowed the reproduction of images from ready-made ones. In order to guarantee the quantity of illustrations in each issue, Ernest Major and his Chinese illustrators appropriated a large number of printed images from existing Western illustrations and Chinese visual artefacts. Last but not least, lithography appealed to the Chinese reader's aesthetic taste, which contributed greatly to its popularity. Reed argued that lithography had a better ability to preserve the original calligraphic strokes on the printed surface, better than other modern printing technologies available in Shanghai, such as the copper plate. (111) By commercializing the technology, *Dianshizhai Pictorial* fully exploited its stylistic potentials in lithographic illustration. As a consumer phenomenon, *Dianshizhai Pictorial* was significant for redirecting Shanghai's publishers from seeking elite patronage from the literati officials to more modern forms of patronage from the mass-oriented marketplace.[3]

[3] Jonathan Hay. "Painters and Publishing in Late Nineteenth-century Shanghai," in *Art at the Close of China's Empire*, ed. Ju-his Chou, special ed. Of Phoebus 8 (1991): 134-88.

CHAPTER 1: EXPLORING COURTESAN AS THE METAPHOR OF EARLY MODERN SHANGHAI

"Shanghai Flowers": a New Picture

In recent historical studies of modern Western culture, prostitution in the early modern period has been theorized as the epitome of modernity. As an urban profession that accelerated in the second half of the 19th century, prostitution was linked as a source of urban pleasure, an entrepreneurial profession, a site of moral danger and physical disease, a marker of national decay, and a component of national identity. In *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850* (1990), Alain Corbin delineates the relationship between prostitution and the French state and argues that prostitution provided "a particular fruitful means" of understanding the formation of modern France, particularly between 1850 and 1920. In *City of Dreadful Delight: Narrative of Sexual Danger in Later-Victorian London* (1992), Judith Walkowitz shows that prostitutes in London occupied multivalent, symbolic positions as "public" figures after 1880 and were simultaneously viewed as a threat to civic virtue and a source of pleasure. Sensational serial murders of prostitutes served as "texts" expressing certain "imaginative" views of the city, which not only hunted urban residents on a daily basis but also crafted their conception of the city. These works have established city prostitutes as an economic, social and symbolic connection to the public imagination of the city.

Charles Baudelaire, Georg Simmel and Walter Benjamin, three pivotal observers of metropolitan life, saw the prostitute as a typical figure of urban life, providing a fitting trope of modernity. For Simmel, the proliferation of prostitution emblemizes what he called "the money economy," in which the prostitute-client

relationship was "[the] most significant case of the mutual reduction of two persons to the status of mere means."[4] The prostitute not only took the forms of commodification of the human body and human relationship, but also condensed merchant, goods and service into a single role. For Charles Baudelaire, the prostitute was the living embodiment of "the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent" and her "prehensile visuality" was argued as distinctively modern.[5]. In summarizing theorizations on prostitution in relation to modernity, Tim Gilfoyle remarked that prostitution articulated "the point of intersection of two widely disseminated ideologies of modernity"—the modern sensibility of being "temporary, unstable, and fleeting and" the modern social relation that was "frozen in the form of the commodity."[6]

I am interested in bringing a Chinese perspective to these theorizations and examining how certain "imaginative" views of Shanghai in its early modern forms were influenced by the changes in prostitution in the city. In the same period when the streets of Paris and London were filled with prostitutes, Shanghai also witnessed a steep rise in prostitution in the city's foreign concessions. (Figure 2) However, it was a different kind of prostitute who cruised along the Bund of Shanghai than the Montmarte of Paris. They were courtesans, also known as *hai shang hua,* (Shanghai flowers), a name that first emerged from *Biographies of Shanghai Flowers*, a popular novel about the Shanghai courtesan.

Courtesan-ship was by no means a new creation of Shanghai. Courtesan entertainment has a long history in Chinese cities. Mainly concentrated in the major

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[4] Georg Simmel, "Prostitution" [1907], in Levine, Gerog, Simmel, pp. 121, 122.
[5] Charles Baudelaire. "The Painer of Modern Life – Modernity" [1863}, translated excerpt reprinted in *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, Francis Frascina and Charles Harrison (eds.), New York, 1982, p. 23.
[6] Tom Gilfoyle. "Prostitutes in History: From Parables of Pornography to Metaphor of Modernity." *The American Historical Review*, vol. 104. no. 1. 1999:117-141.

cities of the Lower Yangtze region, the traditional courtesan was part of the vibrant urban culture. Like the Japanese geisha, the traditional Chinese courtesan belonged to a prestigious group of prostitutes who were highly trained in musical performance and literary composition and provided their services almost exclusively to the elite literati class.[7] As part of courtesan entertainment, the patrons and the courtesans exchanged poetry and played classical music together. The combination of the courtesan's beauty and artistic skill symbolized the literati's cultural pursuit. Her image was often represented in the literati poetry and painting to channel the literati's feelings of either romance or sorrow.

In comparison to other more important cities in the Lower Yangtze region, Shanghai was only a medium-sized trading port possessing little political and cultural gravitas in the early 19th century. With only a small literati class, Shanghai neither had a vibrant urban culture nor a huge courtesan culture before the mid-19th century. It seems rather unlikely that a secondary city like Shanghai would witness a "sudden burst of new courtesan revival." (Hershatter, 69) However, it is Shanghai's dramatic urban transformation in the late 19th century that fostered a new crop of courtesans in Shanghai and set them apart from their traditional predecessors.

Traditional courtesans, prior to the 19th century, largely confined to the literati's private life and an insular social circle. In comparison, Shanghai courtesans were concentrated in Shanghai's foreign concessions—they depended on the foreign police for protection and also became subject to foreign taxation. (Hershatter, 25) The Shanghai courtesan was not entertaining the client with sophisticated arts. Instead, the Shanghai courtesans served a new crop of clientele—Shanghai's *nouveau riche* merchant class. These Chinese merchants mostly gained their wealth

[7] Victoria Cass. *Dangerious Women: Warriors, Grannies and Geishas of the Ming*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999.

from Shanghai's business affairs with the Westerners. Although they never had an orthodox Confucian education, they quickly became successful in the treaty-port business by acting as an intermediary or as a Chinese agent of a foreign establishment. [8] They patronized courtesans not only to display their wealth in public, but also to imitate the literati's lifestyle and cultural taste. Since courtesan entertainment was previously exclusive to the literati, the *nouveau riche*'s courtesan entertainment could also be viewed as their way to access high socio-cultural capital. However, their vulgar taste essentially set the tone of Shanghai's courtesan entertainment. Figure 3 is a photo portrait of a courtesan and her businessman client, who were pretending to play zither and flute against a fake Western architectural background. They were posing and restaging a moment in which a literati scholar and a traditional courtesan were appreciating each other's accompany and exchanging *qing* (romantic feeling or emotion) through musical performance.

On the one hand, the Shanghai courtesan played along with the *nouveau riche* patrons and staged herself as a symbol of traditional cultural refinement; on the other hand, she had to adapt to the patrons' vulgar tastes and garish lifestyles. Together with their *nouveau riche* patrons, the Shanghai courtesan frequented Shanghai's newly-opened boulevards, public parks and entertainment venues and stunned the public with outlandish fashion and flamboyant public behaviours. They openly displayed a playful and flirtatious manner in public. (Yeh, 399) It is reasonable to argue that, by the late 19th century, the Shanghai courtesan had shifted from the literati's private sphere into the public realm of urban entertainment, from the emblem of high aesthetic refinement to a link in the production and consumption of urban leisure. Never before in Chinese history had women stepped out so visibly

[8] Wen-hsin Yeh. "Shanghai Modernity: Commerce and Culture in a Republican City." In *Reappraising Republican China*. Frederic Wakeman, Jr. and Richard Edmonds. (ed.) 2000. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. 70-79.

in the public and put themselves directly under the public spectatorship. Occupying a rather controversial space in the city, the Shanghai courtesan represented a break from the traditional courtesans and even challenged the basic values of traditional womanhood. Compared with her traditional predecessors, the Shanghai courtesan embodied an old prestige open for sale. By combining commodification with "romance", courtesan-ship in Shanghai was much more ambivalent compared to the crude materiality of street prostitution in early modern cities of the West.

Growing concurrently with Shanghai's rapid urban change, the Shanghai courtesan clearly served as a barometer of the accelerated process of Shanghai's transformation from a secondary trading port to an emerging metropolis. Here, I propose to look at the Shanghai courtesan in the late 19th century as a unique figure embodying the multiple cross-cutting relationships in Shanghai . The courtesan linked the *nouveau riche* of the present to certain cultural prestige of the imperial past; spatially, she also took a quintessentially Chinese profession to foster appreciation of the new and the foreign. The elements of the old (*gu,* 古) and the new (*jin,* 今), the Chinese (*zhong,* 中) and the foreign (*yang*) were confronted and negotiated on her figure. The conflicts and the contentions reflected through her urbanity were also the very characteristics that defined her city, Shanghai. It is through the intersecting relationships that we can possibly draw symbolic parallels between Shanghai and the Shanghai courtesan in the late 19th century. To elucidate this point, in the following sections, I will look at some of the new urban characteristics which emerged in Shanghai at this period. I will also examine how these new urban characteristics subsequently gave rise to an engendered cultural imaginary of the city, which, to some extent, brought a gendered metaphorical connection between the city and the figure of the Shanghai courtesan.

Spatial Porosity and Shifting Spectatorship in Shanghai's Foreign Concessions

Shanghai's rapid industrialization in the late 19th century and early 20th century transformed Shanghai from a peripheral trading port on the eastern seacoast to China's first modern metropolis. Shanghai became one of the "shock cities" of Asia. According to Leo Ou-fan Lee, by the 1930s, Shanghai had become a bustling cosmopolitan metropolis of five million residents, the fifth largest city in the world, and China's largest harbour and treaty-port. It was a world of splendorous modernity that sets it apart from the still tradition-bound countryside that was China. (23) It is during this period that Shanghai became an international legend and its name became the epitome of mystery, adventure and license of every form.

Shanghai's dramatic trajectory was directly attributed to her "opening" as a treaty-port. In August 1842, after being defeated in a year-long Opium War against Britain, the weary Chinese government signed the humiliating Treaty of Nanjing as one of the penalties. According the Treaty, China ceded Hong Kong to the British control and opened five Chinese ports for foreign trade—the biggest one among them was Shanghai.[9] Led by the British, other Western forces soon moved in to take a piece of the city to establish their own settlements.[10] The 1842 Treaty of Nanjing marked the "opening" of Shanghai to the West (*kaibu* in Chinese) and the beginning of the semi-colonial occupation.

Shanghai "opening", or *kaibu*, fundamentally transformed the city's spatial makeup and brought spatial openness and porosity to the city. The traditional Chinese city was typically a walled enclosure. The Chinese term for city, *Cheng*

[9] Pott Fong. *History of Shanghai: the Growth and Development of the International Settlement*. Kelly & Walsh. 1988. 79.

[10] Although the Qing Dynasty was eventually overthrown in 1919, foreign establishments retained and continuously deepened their controls over Shanghai foreign concessions.

(城), is etymologically rooted in the classical word or "wall". According to the ancient city building manual, *Kaogongji*, walls were usually erected first before everything was built.[11] A quintessential imperial city like Beijing is also known as *Beijing Cheng*, meaning "walled Beijing". The wall served as a key element in defining the very idea of the Chinese city and also inscribed the power structure of the state onto the urban spatial surface.[12] However, it is precisely due to the walled design that traditional Chinese cities lacked open and collective spatial fields for social congregation. The Western urban concept of "agora" simply did not exist. Although Shanghai had a walled urban structure prior to 1842, the city wall was never the urban feature that defined Shanghai.[13] Unlike prestigious capital cities such as Beijing, Shanghai's indigenous urban culture had much to do with exchange, importation and absorption of the influence from the outside. The two characters, *Shang-hai,* literally mean "above/on the sea", a reference to Shanghai's close tie to the overseas.

Soon after Shanghai's "opening" in 1842, foreign settlements controlled by foreign consuls sprang up in Shanghai suburbs and fundamentally transformed the city in horizontal and vertical dimensions. A French concession was established on the marshland just outside the old walled city and a British concession along the muddy waterfront (renamed the "Bund", a Hindi word meaning "embankment"). Later, an International Settlement was established in the north of the French concession, made up of British and American settlers, and governed by the foreign-

[11] The first canonically sanctioned diagram of an ideal city is documented in *Kaogongj* documents in the 1st century. A City included four-sided walled enclosure punctuated with gates, cardinal orientation and alignment, centrality of the king's palace, and altars corresponding to auspicious locations in relation to the king's palace. Kings, alongside diviners, decided on the city boundary and alignment through divination processes.

[12] Multiple city walls structurally bound the city as a concentric totality, with the most powerful political entity located at the center, such as the Forbidden City in the case of Beijing.

[13] Shanghai, as a trading port, never possessed the kind of political and cosmological prestige of cities such as Beijing.

controlled Shanghai Municipal Council. By the late 19th century, the city of Shanghai had the particular feature of being divided into three territories—the French Concession, the International Settlements and the area of the Chinese Municipality—each endowed with an autonomous organ of power. (Fong, 69-70) Figure 3 and Figure 4 show the comparison of Shanghai in the early 19th century and Shanghai around 1900.

Inside foreign concessions, the narrow alleyways were widened into open boulevards to make room for Western horse-led carriages. Boulevards soon connected into the transportation network. The newly-constructed public parks and squares punctuated the boulevards. The result of these efforts was that Western-style "agora"—large open spaces with its fluidity, continuity and its tendency to gather—began to emerge. What accompanied the increase of "agora" was an emerging and rising metropolitan life in public.[14] The establishments of foreign concessions subsequently transformed Shanghai from a singular walled city into a city of multiple spatially-porous "pockets". For the Chinese, the foreign concessions represented not so much forbidden zones as the "other" world—an exotic world of glitter and vice, a combination of spectacles and the grotesque—all summed up in the phrase "ten-mile foreign zone" (*shili yangchang*).

The spatial opening was connected to a new urban spectatorship as Shanghai's Foreign Concession became a "theatre" of urban spectacles. Jonathan Hay notes that one of the most popular pass-times of the Shanghainese was to gather in the open public spaces and observe the city's "fascinatingly strange" (*qi* 奇) with

[14] Jonathan Hay quotes the descriptions from Wang Tao's Yingruan Zazhi (1875) and the Shanghai guidebook Huyou Zaji (1876-1878) that Shanghai leisure life include many activities in public spaces of foreign concessions, Chinese restaurants and teahouses, Western restaurants (which also had many Chinese customers), opium houses, courtesan houses, bathhouses, traditional Chinese theatres, horse-racing, the practice of watching the rowing competitions of the Westerners and sightseeing in temples and gardens. (168)

a mixed reaction of fascination and disdain.[15] An illustration from *Dianshizhai Pictorial* depicts several foreign workers from the British municipality paving the road in the British-American Concession. (Figure 5) The Chinese spectators gather along the sidewalk and on the balconies of the teahouse and the courtesan houses to marvel at the scene. Shanghai's newly-opened street and the porous architectural layout provide multiple, unobstructed viewpoints. This urban spectacle was also witnessed by the courtesans who mingled with her patrons in the crowd.

Imaginary of a Feminized City: Shanghai vis-à-vis the Shanghai Courtesan

If Shanghai's modernizing process can be traced to the defining moment of the "opening" of the semi-colonial treaty-port, it is reasonable to consider Shanghai modernity as a gendered process from very beginning. In the Chinese popular discourse, Shanghai was widely known as "the emperor's ugly daughter." As Stella Dong aptly described, Shanghai is "half Chinese, half Occidental; half land, half water; neither a colony nor wholly belonging to China; inhabited but by the citizens of every nation in the world but ruled by none, the emperor's ugly daughter was an anomaly among cities." [16] Such a feminine name implied Shanghai's ambivalent status in the Chinese psyche for it was being both a privileged city and a shame of the empire.

To the West, the "opening" of Shanghai was a gendered encounter with the Orient—the conqueror from the outside being predominantly Anglo-Saxon male and the conquered remaining as the weak, soft "Chinaman." As Shanghai evolved in her status of a semi-colonial treaty port, Oriental fetishism was a key component in the

[15] In his essay, Jonathan Hay notes that "observing the city's foreigners and everything associated with them" is a major leisure activity, which is presented "as part of a discourse of *qi*, the fascinatingly strange." (168)
[16] Dong, Stelle. *Shanghai: The rise and fall of a decadent city, 1842-1949*. New York: Harper Trade, 2001: 2.

colonial imagination of the city. Shanghai first appeared as an erotic female body in the letters and memoirs of British merchants and military personnel in the 1850s. Located by the swampy delta of lower Yangtze waterways, the physiognomy of Shanghai was referred to as the female private part in the Westerners' descriptions of the city. The exploration of the geo-body of Shanghai and its surrounding area induced much erotic fantasy among the male Anglo-Saxon explorers. British merchant John J. Major described Shanghai as a "swampy entryway" into China's inner river network and landmass. He remarked that travelling through the misty landscapes and wavy canals surrounding Shanghai made him feel like being physically close to a Chinese woman. In his sojourn in Shanghai, he observed the tolerance of Shanghai's Chinese population toward multinational newcomers and developed a new stereotype of the "soft", submissiveness Shanghainese, a typical feminine trait of the Orient.[17]

The opium intoxication conjured up a rather different feminine image for Shanghai. The opium habit, far from abating, had become entrenched among the treaty-port Chinese inhabitants. Since China's defeat in the Opium War, some six million pounds of opium were being imported into Shanghai between 1850 and 1870. Western missionaries often compared Shanghai with a fallen woman, whose lack of rationality and capability to reason led to her financial and moral demise.[18] A European missionary once said that, "If God lets Shanghai endure, he owes an apology to Sodom and Gomorrah."[19] The rampant drug addiction, prostitution and decadent lifestyle brought Shanghai the popular nickname, "Whore of the Orient." Widely circulating in the Western discourse of Shanghai, it bestowed the city with

[17] Smith, D. Warres. *European Settlements in the Far East*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1900: 46.
[18] Ibid., 79.
[19] Ibid., 69.

an aura of mixed eroticism and seediness. During the 1930s, the city was further immortalized as a prostitute in Hollywood films, such as *Shanghai Express*, when Marlene Dietrich purred: "It took more than one man to change my name to Shanghai Lily." Shanghai in Western cultural imaginary assumed a centralized feminine figure: an exotic and drug-ridden Oriental female, who made a living by "opening" her body to the outsiders, but ultimately needed to be saved from her moral abyss by a white Western male.

Such feminizing interpretations of Shanghai might help establish several symbolic parallels between the city and the Shanghai courtesan. Firstly, Shanghai's historical condition as a semi-colonial "treaty-port" conjured up a symbolic image of Shanghai "prostituting" her body to the Western "patrons—the nations that had set up settlements on her geographic body. As Shanghai's nickname "emperor's bastard daughter" suggested, the city's reputation alternatingly slid from an irrevocable sense of humiliation to the new prestige achieved through modern urban development. This slippery process may have best defined Shanghai's ambivalent urbanity. It is also in this sense that Shanghai can be metaphorically compared to the Shanghai courtesan. Although courtesan-ship was an ancient profession, the Shanghai courtesan-ship was a new profession created in Shanghai's foreign concessions. To the *nouveau riche*, the Shanghai courtesan possessed the residual prestige of a refined cultural past; to the ordinary Chinese, she also set the latest urban trend by her fashion, leisure activities and public behaviour. However, all her façade was created and used as a business strategy. As Shanghai's residents struggled to re-define the city, the courtesan provided a fitting and convenient trope to Shanghai.

Secondly, as a "half Western city in China", Shanghai was both "high" and "low" in the Chinese cultural sense. It was considered as "high" because the city's modern development had won much admiration; it was considered as "low" by the conservative literati because the Western-administered Shanghai represented a sudden and total rupture from the imperial past. On a similar note, the Shanghai courtesan was also a figure straddled between "high culture" and the low social class. In traditional Chinese culture, the courtesan had the license to be innovative and even outrageous in fashion and social behaviour. She was able to "experiment" with the emerging trend, and also to subvert tradition without offending. The motif of the courtesan had great potential for representing the new and the unusual. Hence, she was best qualified to represent the combination of traditional cultural refinement with imported modernity. Such symbolic and social power of the courtesan enabled her image to render the emerging urban sensibilities, something still foreign and strange to most Chinese, into something acceptable and even fantastic. It is also for this reason that the Shanghai courtesan may have channelled the complexity of Shanghai through visual representations.

Thirdly, both Shanghai and the Shanghai courtesan were objectified as spectacles by multiple publics. Under the colonial gaze from the West, Shanghai was a feminized Oriental conquest. The Western spectatorship sometimes conveyed a sexual desire to mark and inscribe the feminine *Other*. Inside China, Shanghai's urban transformation was marvelled at as a spectacle of the modern. The city was constantly under the public gaze through the representation of Shanghai entertainment press. With the advent of modern printing and imaging technology, both Shanghai and the Shanghai courtesan were increasingly mediated through signs, symbols and imaginations. Hence, reading about Shanghai and the Shanghai

courtesan became the new form of public spectatorship, which is more than a physical act—it is a collective experience that connected people's perceptions about the city and its engendered historical condition. (Anderson 1991) Reading as spectatorship, as manifested through reading courtesan images in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, was situated in the rise of illustration-based entertainment magazines in the late-19th-century Shanghai. It took the form of visual consumption, but was simultaneously a mode of production. While the Shanghai courtesan became part of the urban spectacle to be marvelled at, talked about, imitated from and even perhaps mocked at, the discourses on the courtesan, on a deeper level of consciousness, actively produced Shanghai's modern urban identity. Moreover, the concept of "Shanghai" may also have been extended to signify a realm of emerging urban lifestyle, aesthetics, sensibility and a new mentality.

In this chapter, I have attempted to articulate a metaphorical space of intersection between Shanghai and the Shanghai courtesan in the late 19th century. The unique status of Shanghai as a semi-colonial treaty-port provided a fertile ground to cultivate the Shanghai courtesan's new urban persona. The Shanghai courtesan, in return, epitomized the city's new metropolitan image and its emerging modern sensibility. The traditional cultural capital of the courtesan profession also gave her the wherewithal to substantiate the city's claim to culture and refinement. Unlike urban prostitutes in the Western context, the Shanghai courtesan was neither stigmatized as a public threat to civic virtue, nor solely allegorized as the symbol of the capitalist society. Instead, she was admired for her powerful status as the new spectacle of the emerging metropolis. Hence, I argue that Shanghai and the Shanghai courtesan in the late-19th-century were two cultural entities that mutually embodied each other. Their historical conditions and complexities lent themselves to a process

of mutual production and consumption. In this context, the mass market city magazines, such as *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, are an excellent domain through which to examine how Shanghai was imagined, invented, and understood in relation to the Shanghai courtesan.

In my following reading of *Dianshizhai Pictorial*'s courtesan illustrations, I will approach the images as a combination of a pictorial art form, a communication medium and a social agent heralding Shanghai's crucial historical transition to urban modernity. I will examine their social context and visual manifestation, with a focus on the visual relationship between the courtesans and the urban spaces, places and social scenarios in which they are located. My reading of courtesan illustrations attempts to answer three questions: 1) How the courtesan illustrations shifted the social archetype embodied by the courtesan, from the "exclusive beauty" of the literati to the "popular beauty" of the city; 2) How the Shanghai courtesan became a potent symbol of the commercial culture of Shanghai, standing for taste, fashion and a particular life-style; 3) Both as a fashion icon and an object of social satire, how the courtesan's new image was wrought with ambivalence and contradiction.

CHAPTER 2: IMAGINING THE CITY THROUGH THE SHANGHAI COURTESAN'S "FLOWER HOUSE"

Producing the Courtesan Illustrations in the Cultural Geography of Fuzhou Road

While Shanghai and the Shanghai courtesan had a symbolic connection to each other, it is through the courtesan's physical engagement to the urban spaces and places that the connection became manifested externally. On the one hand, by living at the courtesan houses and sealing themselves from public view, the courtesan existed as a mysterious body that aroused the erotic fantasies of the predominantly-male reading public. On the other hand, by frequenting the city's latest entertainment venues, the courtesan also provided a fantastic moving image for the urban spectators. Elizabeth Grosz argues that both bodies and cities play a role in defining and establishing one another through a series of disunified systems or spaces.[20] In the changing urban landscape of the late 19th century Shanghai, *Dianshizhai Pictorial*'s illustrators have purposefully represented the Shanghai courtesan in different urban sites, spaces, and places, including the courtesan's house and carriage, Shanghai's streets, and public entertainment venues. In the following section, I will focus my analysis on how the courtesan's identity and Shanghai's place identity were mutually imagined and negotiated pictorially through the courtesan's engagements to the urban space.

Euphemistically known as the "flower house," the courtesan's house was the center of everyday courtesan life, and also served as an exclusive entertainment and social space for her patrons. Almost all of the houses for the high-ranking courtesans were concentrated on Fuzhou Road, the fashionable entertainment district of the

[20] Grosz, Elizabeth. "Bodies and Cities." *Sexuality and Space.* Ed. Beatriz Colomima. Princeton: Princeton University School of Architecture, 1992, 249.

British-American Concession. During the 1870s and 1880s, the leading courtesans took pains to ensure that their addresses were in the entertainment district around Fuzhou Road.[21] Inside the courtesan house was a self-contained world ruled by elaborate rituals, etiquette, and languages all regulated by courtesan handbooks.[22] The male patrons, predominately *nouveau riche* merchants, financially supported the extravagant lifestyle of the courtesan house. In order to gain their favourite courtesan's sexual favours, patrons had to hold lavish banquets for her before such a "favour" would even be considered.[23] The courtesan-patron relationship was not as simple as a temporary monetary transaction; rather, it was based on a long-term relationship that resembled the master-concubine relationship.[24] To a certain extent, actually, the courtesan house was like the patron's extended household.

The historical records on the architectural plan and interior design of the courtesan's house was scarce. Most of what we are aware of today has been extracted from the descriptive accounts of courtesan novels, magazine illustrations, and different versions of Shanghai courtesan handbooks. Wang Liaoweng noted that

> "[By] the 1890s, almost all the top Shanghai courtesans lived in Western-style buildings on Fuzhou Road. A typical courtesan house was a large three-story residential compound that contained around a dozen of courtesans' private residences. The main entrance was always shut. The red lanterns hung on each side of the main gate was a trademark reminding people of the special nature of the place.....[however], the ordinary people could hardly catch a glimpse of the mysterious inside world." [25]

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[21] Wang Liao Weng, "Shanghai jiyuan didian zhi yange" 2. (On the changes in location of Shanghai courtesan houses.) In Shanghai liushi nian huajie shi. 1922.

[22] See Catherine Ye's "*Reinventing Ritual: Late Qing Handbooks for Proper Customer Behaviours in Shanghai Courtesan Houses.*" Late Imperial China (19.2) 1998. 1-63.

[23] The client who wished to meet a courtesan and enter her house had to be brought by a patron who was well acquainted with her. The rules of these courtesan houses were elaborate and numerous. See Hershatter, "Hierachy of Shanghai Prostitution," 463-98; Henriot, "From a Throne of Glory," 132-63; and Henriot, *Prostitution and Sextuality in Shanghai*, 22-33.

[24] Many courtesans would eventually marry their patrons as concubines as a way to leave their profession.

[25] Wang Liao Weng, "Shanghai jiyuan didian zhi yange" 2. (On the changes in location of Shanghai courtesan houses.) In Shanghai liushi nian huajie shi. 1922.

The following three images are illustrations selected from *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, *Picture Daily,* and *Illustrated City Guidebooks of Shanghai* depicting the interior of the courtesan's house. (Figure 6, Figure 7, Figure 8) As we can see from these images, the courtesan's house was a spatial structure that combined public, semi-public, and private functions. The first floor was usually a welcoming area with a centrally-located staircase that led to the public hall on the second floor. The second floor was divided into several porously-connected spatial pockets, each endowed with a specific function, including banquet hall, opium room, music room, gambling room, powder room, and so on. The courtesans' private residences were usually located behind the central area, fully furnished with a private guest room and a private bedroom. Seen from these illustrations, typical furnishings in the courtesan's house included the most fashionable Western interior objects, such as a large Western-style mirror hung tilted on the wall, bright kerosene or gas lamps, Western clocks, and a Western-style cast-iron stove instead of the traditional charcoal-filled pan. Chen Chali, a visitor to Shanghai in the late 1880s was dazzled and overwhelmed by the interior décor of the courtesan's house. He noted in his essay that "every object displayed in these houses was of the richest and finest quality" and "[the set-up] conveyed the mesmerizing atmosphere of a world of dissipation."[26]

The enclosed façade and the guarded access bestowed the courtesan's residence with an aura of secrecy and exclusivity. The enclosed house of the courtesan set a sharp contrast against her high visibility in the public view and induced much public fascination with the world behind the closed gates. The imagery of the dazzling interior also underscored the status of the courtesan's house

[26]Chen Chali. "Travelogue to the Yangtze delta (Jiangnan)". 53.

as a visual commodity for the treaty-port public.[27] Feeding on the rising fascination with the Shanghai courtesan's house, *Dianshizhai Pictorial* serially published in 1890 a set of lithographic illustrations of Shanghai courtesans, later known as *One Hundred Illustrated Beauties of Shanghai* (海上百艳图). The illustrations first came out in the form of supplementary sheets inserted into each issue of *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. They were also simultaneously published by *Dianshizhai Pictorial*'s affiliated publications, *Feiyingge Pictorial* and *Youxi Pictorial*. The illustrations were later bound into an album and sold at Dianshizhai Bookstore. The content of the illustration album focused on Shanghai courtesan daily life and leisure activities inside the "flower house." The illustrated series took the viewer directly inside the courtesan's hidden quarters and allowing an unprecedented look at the courtesan's secret internal world.

The so-called "one hundred beauties" indicated by the title did not imply one hundred individual courtesans; rather, it referred to a generic group of courtesans with generalized characteristics and no individual personalities. The success of the illustrated album set a new trend for Shanghai's entertainment tabloids. During the last two decades of the 19th century, courtesan illustrations dominated the content of entertainment tabloids in Shanghai. Hundreds of smaller publications even recycled the illustrations directly from the album and produced a multitude of similar images.

The illustrated album was attributed to Wu Youru, a commercial painter in Shanghai's art market and also *Dianshizhai Pictorial's* principal illustrator. Wu Youru modeled his courtesan album directly after the visual style of the traditional *meiren hua*, or "beautiful woman" paintings, a major pictorial genre in Chinese

[27] To satisfy the insatiable public demand, a large number of courtesan novels and illustrations depicting the lives within the *flower house* were published in Shanghai in the last two decades of the 19th century. The well-known ones were Han Bangqing's serialized novel "Legends of Flowers of Shanghai" (海上花列传)1892-94, Dreams of extravagance in Shanghai (海上繁华梦) 1903-08.

painting. The *Meiren* had always been a popular genre, subject to the taste of not only the literati but also a broader print market. It stemmed from the Tang dynasty's court painting and proliferated steadily, reaching stylistic maturity in the late Ming and the Qing dynasty.[28] By the 19th century, the genre had maintained a repertoire of limited visual motifs.[29] The most common imagery focused on a lovesick woman whose one-sided love affair left her "eternally pining or waiting for an absent, never-to-return lover."[30] Along with the court lady and the concubine, the courtesan was a major type of *meiren* (beauty). Although the courtesan had always lived in major urban centres, she has never been depicted in an urban setting prior to the late 19th century. Traditionally, she was often located in her boudoir and garden, an idealized space completely detached from the cityscape.[31] Catherine Yeh observed that the mood and atmosphere conveyed in the traditional courtesan illustrations were those of a "dreamscape" rather than of a specific place on earth. (401) Figure 9 is a 17th-century woodblock illustration that exemplifies the dreamy mood of *meiren*'s setting.

One Hundred Illustrated Beauties of Shanghai followed the *meiren hua* tradition by illustrating courtesans within their space. However, the ambivalent status of the Shanghai courtesan made it easier to attach new cultural messages and cultural values to her. Using both subtle and blatant visual strategies, Wu Youru reinvented the *meiren* genre by associating the courtesan habitat to its immediate urban surroundings. Shanghai publisher and essayist Chen Difeng commented that

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[28] Wu hung, "Beyond Stereotypes: the Twelve Beauties in Qing Court and the Dream of the Red chamber", in Ellen Widmer and kang-I Sun Chang, eds. *Writing Women in Late Imperial China.* Standford, 1997. 323.

[29] According to Wu Hung, the beauties depicted were also limited to the palace lady, the courtesan, and concubines (from the late Ming and early Qing Dynasty, as the courtesan/concubine began to dominate pictorial representations of beautiful women). In the early Qing, *meiren* paintings became a court favourite. In the late 19th-century Shanghai art market, *meiren* paintings in portable album formats became a popular commodity. Commercial artists painted and reproduced beauty paintings in small-format versions of painting albums.

[30] Ellen Johnston Laing. "Erotic Themes and Romantic Heroines Depicted by Ch'iu Ying." Archives of Asian Art 49 (1996): 68-91.

[31] Ibid.70.

Dianshizhai Pictorial gave the courtesan and her spaces an "updated look that is uniquely Shanghai." (Chen 79) Jonathan Hay also noted that the illustrations reflected a general mood of "urban extravagance, fun, and novelty."[32] Although *One Hundred Illustrated Beauties of Shanghai* largely adhered to the general rules of the traditional genre, the spatial relationship between the *meiren* and her urban setting presented a significant departure from the traditional *meiren*/courtesan painting.

Scholars on Shanghai history have long used *Dianshizhai Pictorial*'s courtesan illustrations as an important historical source. (Hershatter 1997, Henriot 1997) However, it is doubtful that *Dianshizhai*'s courtesan album can be treated as a truthful account of the Shanghai courtesan's life. The reasons are two-fold. Firstly, Wu Youru and other *Dianshizhai* illustrators, belonging to a lower social class, normally did not have the access to the inside world of the courtesan's house. Secondly, the genre of *meiren* painting had a long tradition of fictionalizing the *meiren*'s space. In fact, a *meiren*'s space was not supposed to be a realistic portrayal, but a symbolic trope that defined a *meiren*'s social status and cultural capital. Thus, I argue that Wu Youru's depiction of the courtesan's space is better considered as a constructed space to symbolize the courtesan's urban identity. Upon observing the new urban phenomena, Wu Youru skilfully blended his understanding of the city into his representation of the courtesan space. Hence, his representation, to a certain extent, illuminates the ways in which the Shanghai and the Shanghai courtesan were understood and constructed in relation to each other. Departing from this premise, I will first examine the spatial dialogue between the courtesan's house and the Fuzhou Road district and how their relationship had a significant impact on Wu Youru's representations.

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[32] Jonathan Hay. "Printers and Publishing in Late Nineteenth-century Shanghai" *Art at the Close of China's Empire*. Ed. Ju-his Chou. 1998.

Stretching for nearly two kilometres, Fuzhou Road was the first and the longest boulevard in Shanghai. Constructed by the British Civil Engineering Bureau in the early 1850s, Fuzhou Road came about as a solution to the increasing traffic of horse-led carriages. As Shanghai's first "expressway," Fuzhou Road connected the British-American Concession's residential quarter to the Bund,[33] the famed waterfront for Western business establishments. Fuzhou Road's unique location soon turned it into a major district of leisure. In the 1860s and 1870s, Fuzhou Road had an impressive line-up of Western entertainment venues that ranged from photo studios and racing tracks to opera houses and public parks. (Fong, 52) Most of them imported technological facilities directly from the West, and almost all of them maintained a mixed clientele of the Chinese and the Westerners. As the entertainment businesses continued to spread to the adjacent city blocks during the 1880s, the whole area east of Fujian Road, west of Wuhan Road, north of Canton Road, and south of Hankou Road formed the entertainment district of the British-American Concession, with Fuzhou Road traversing across the entire district. (57-68)

Fuzhou Road was also the origin site of Shanghai's modern printing industry. The first printing establishment was the London Missionary Society Press in 1849. (Reed 2004) In 1872, Shanghai's first modern newspaper *Shenbao* (Shanghai News) was founded on Fuzhou Road by an English merchant named Ernest Major. Later, Major built his entire publishing empire on Fuzhou Road, including three major publishing ventures, *Shenbao Publishing House, Dianshizhai Pictorial*, and *Dianshizhai Bookstore*—all situated within close vicinity. In *Gutenberg in Shanghai*, Christopher Reed noted that, since the import of lithography

[33] The Bund (*wai-tan* in Mandarin Chinese) is the Hindi word for waterfront. The Bund in Shanghai was China's busiest port located along the section of the *Whangpoo* (Huang-pu) River near the *Wusong* River that leads to the coast and the open sea.

into China between the mid-19th and early 20th centuries, 148 known newspapers and magazines and nearly 150 publishing houses were established on Fuzhou Road and the nearby neighbourhood. Fuzhou Road was no doubt the center of Shanghai's commercial print, information, and leisure industries. Such status won Fuzhou Road the name of *Wenhua Jie*, or Cultural Street. Figure 11 is a re-constructed map of 1930s Shanghai's Fuzhou Road/*Wenhuajie* district. It illustrates the high concentration of printing presses in the district. The co-existence of the entertainment infrastructure and printing facilities on Fuzhou Road formed a chain of leisure consumption and production; the former yielded a commercial market of leisure consumption, while the latter produced visual and textual representations based on the former, further simulating the consumption of urban leisure culture.

Situated on Fuzhou Road, the Shanghai courtesan's house was a major contributor to the cultural economy of the publishing/entertainment district. The clusters of the courtesans' houses on Fuzhou Road were spatially punctuated by entertainment venues such as opera houses, theatres, Western-style restaurants, and gambling houses as well as numerous commercial publishing houses. Figure 12 shows the precise location of the courtesans' houses marked in black. As seen on this map, the most famous of the courtesans' houses, *Jiangxiang Tower*, occupied almost the entire inner street block of Fuzhou Road and Fujian Road. Its immediate next-door neighbour was *Dianshizhai Pictorial*'s editorial office. Serving as each other's spatial context, the courtesans' houses and *Dianshizhai Pictorial* worked together in a process of mutual invention and imagination. The courtesans' houses collectively took advantage of the entertainment press to publicize their image in the city; the courtesan's glamorous presence and scandalous stories, in return, provided sensational materials for the printed press. The relationship between the leisure

industry, printing industry, and courtesan's house on Fuzhou Road articulated a "cultural eco-system," conjointly producing, consuming, and circulating modern urban consciousness through images and texts in Shanghai and the cities beyond.

Defining an urban meiren (urban beauty) by her interior space

As I remarked earlier, the traditional genre of the *meiren hua*, which *One Hundred Illustrated Beauties of Shanghai* was modeled upon, placed a high importance on the *meiren*'s interior space. According to Wu Hung, in traditional *meiren* painting, a *meiren* was not necessarily envisioned through her character and physique, but in the concept of the *meiren*'s space as a totalizing entity. (326) In the late Ming and early Qing dynasty, an iconography of the *meiren*'s space was systemized in the literati's poetry and essay writing and, later, integrated into *meiren* painting[34]. Wu Hung summarized three things that made up the place of a *meiren* in the iconography: the architectural layout, individual items, and the tableau of female activities. According to Wu, the architectural layout provided the space with a dynamic spatial/temporal structure and points of view; the individual items offered static "features" of a feminine space; the ritual activities activated the *meiren*'s space into the *meiren*'s place. The definition of a meiren was not by recognizing her face but by surveying her courtyard, room, clothing, and gestures. A *meiren* was by definition idealized and must surpass any form of individuation. As a constructed persona, a *meiren* was therefore identical to her artificial domain.

However, unlike in many cases of the traditional *meiren*, the urban locale was utterly significant to the Shanghai courtesan. A courtesan centered her public appearances on Fuzhou Road in order to gain a more public profile. The glamorous

[34] Although the concept of feminine space has existed can be traced to the Tang poetry and painting, it is only in the late Ming that an iconography of meiren's space was systemized in writing.

image of Fuzhou Road also helped them attract flamboyant *nouveau riche* customers who constantly sought out fun and excitement in the district. The significance of Fuzhou Road in the courtesan's life fundamentally changed how the courtesan's dwelling was represented in Wu Youru's courtesan illustrations. Wu's illustration introduced a new spatial paradigm in depicting a *meiren*: it is her place in the city and not her idealized boudoir or garden that determines her new urban identity. Hence, her dwelling is only a symbolic space, but also a concrete urban site with specific spatial meanings in relation to the whole city. Working within the confinement of the *meiren* painting, Wu Youru initiated a process of somewhat difficult negotiations between the traditional tropes of a *meiren*'s space and the new iconography of Shanghai. It is in the uneasy conjunction of the two that the Shanghai courtesan was invented as a *dushi meiren* (urban beauty).

During the same period when Wu published his *One Hundred Illustrated Beauties of Shanghai*, the prolific painter/illustrator simultaneously created an ink painting album for Shanghai's art market titled *Shanghai Meiren Tuji* (Illustrated record of Shanghai Beauties). Unlike his courtesan illustrations, Wu's painting album strictly followed the traditional conventions of the *meiren* painting. However, it is almost certain that neither of these oeuvres was entirely an original creation; rather, it has respectively recycled the ready-made compositions and motifs from the existing repertoire of *meiren* paintings. Wu Youru's painting illustration albums, unsurprisingly, bore a great resemblance to each other. In the following paragraphs, I will compare the differences and the similarities between these two albums in an attempt to illuminate the ways in which Wu Youru developed a new spatial paradigm for his courtesan illustrations. The ink painting I chose from the painting album is titled *Sounds From the Instrument and the Tree* (Figure 13). It portrays a

meiren playing the classical musical instrument *piba* in her boudoir while being accompanied by a maid. The woman is framed by a moon-shaped garden gate that opens up her semi-enclosed space to the viewer. Her exposed interior space is decorated with classical furniture, classically-bound books, and blossoming narcissus—all the conventional signifiers for the *meiren*'s refined taste and high cultural education. With no specific indications of her individuality, she appears to be a classical *meiren* practicing music, enjoying her solitude, or maybe missing her lover on a beautiful spring day. The lithographic illustration I chose from *One Hundred Illustrated Beauties of Shanghai* is titled *Lingering aura of Xunyang* (Figure 14). Since Xunyang is the name of a famous courtesan district in the Ming dynasty's capital, the title is permeated with a sense of nostalgia for the legendary past of the courtesan's culture. It also hints that the woman in the picture is a contemporary Shanghai courtesan who is simply imitating a classical courtesan.

The most significant difference between the two images, perhaps, lies in how the architectural space is organized around the figure of the *meiren*. In traditional *meiren* paintings, the architectural space of a *meiren*'s boudoir has the dual functions of enveloping her and revealing her at the same time. On one hand, the architecture seals a *meiren* inside her claustrophobic boudoir and removes her from the public view[35]; on the other hand, the arrangement of the architectural space allows and guides a "visual penetration," as we may call it, into her boudoir. This visual penetration would come across a series of spatial openings and closings. A *meiren* could not be revealed directly, but through a progress of visual exploration. Hence, the process of unveiling a meiren is charged with tantalizing visual movements and seductive pleasure.

[35] It is best exemplified in a series of *meiren* court paintings commissioned by the Yongzheng emperor.

In Wu Youru's ink painting, the *meiren* figure is located within a multi-layered "frame," composed of the garden wall, the moon-shaped gate, curvy trees and wavy curtains. The "frame" demarcates an intimate and exclusive space that not only contains the *meiren*'s body but also separates her from the world-at-large. More importantly, the composed "frame" functions as a sophisticated space-making device, which creates a series of illusory spatial zones between the viewer and the *meiren*. Located outside the *meiren*'s boudoir, the viewer's gaze has to surpass the various spatial layers of the garden and the boudoir to reach her. The result is an expanded field of distance between the *meiren* and the viewer. Caressing her body and surveying her space from afar, the viewer is as if peeping into a *meiren*'s private quarters. Charged with erotic longing and pleasure, the viewer might identity himself as the *meiren*'s lover or even her master. To a certain extent, what has confined the *meiren*'s body in a semi-enclosed space is not the architectural layout alone, but also the viewer's vision.

Compared with this conventional composition, Wu Youru's lithographic illustration of the Shanghai courtesan takes a rather different stylistic approach. While adhering to the main compositional rules, Wu re-organized the field of vision between the viewer and the courtesan by significantly reducing its spatial complexity. In the illustration, *Lingering aura of Xun Yang*, all tantalizing spatial devices have been removed. What have also disappeared are the interior objects that used to indicate the *meiren*'s high cultural taste. The simplified space shortens the visual distance between the viewer and the courtesan. The viewer now experiences the illusion of being inside the courtesan's room, enjoying an unobstructed, intimate view of the courtesan's body and her space. Such a mode of vision seemingly grants

instant gratification to the voyeur/viewer, and even further eroticizes the courtesan-viewer relationship into a courtesan-patron relationship.

Wu Youru also strategically re-arranged the interior display of the courtesan's house. In the illustration, a modern heating stove replaced the elegant screen and curtain that used to be on the right side of the painting, while a Western-style clock replaced the blossoming narcissus on the desk next to the courtesan. Furthermore, a Western-style dressing mirror replaced the bookshelf in the background. If the traditional objects signify the *meiren*'s refined taste and her mood of solitude, these imported modern objects associate the courtesan with an emerging material culture in Shanghai's foreign concessions. They are not depicted as an intrusion into the courtesan's space, but naturally blend into her setting as symbols of the new urban consumer taste. Having undoubtedly never been inside the courtesan's house, Wu Youru "imaged" these fashionable objects into the courtesan's interior space. His imaginative "fabrication" defines the courtesan's house as a trendy urban site and the courtesan as a consumer icon in Shanghai's entertainment quarter.

The second aspect of the comparison between Wu's painting and his illustration concerns the *meiren*'s daily rituals and leisure activities. In his book *Manual of Beautiful Women*, the Qing Dynasty writer Xu Zhen provided a comprehensive "iconography" by listing a beauty's charming activities, such as "taking care of orchids; preparing tea; burning incense; looking at the reflection of the moon; watching flowers on a spring morning; composing poems; reciting poems; comparing posies collected on Duanwu Festival; playing *piba* and zither,,,." and so on[36]. To qualify as a *meiren*, a woman should have naturally practiced these

[36] See Wu Hung's *Beyond Stereotypes*.

romanticized activities on a daily basis, either alone or accompanied by a maid instructor. The ritual activities did not require the presence of an audience because the activities were for the purpose of self-cultivation and not for the sake of public performance and entertainment. Only when like-minded literati came along would a *meiren* practice the activities together with him, as a way of exchanging "*qing*" (emotion or feeling).

In Wu Youru's painting, the female figure is obviously playing music as a form of self- cultivation; however, in the courtesan illustration, he shifts the practice of cultivation to entertainment for the others. He slightly alters the composition by adding another female *piba*-player on the left corner. The subtle change makes a reference to the courtesans' musical group performance at the patron banquet, a subject that numerous illustrations have depicted (Figure 15). In this image, the courtesan appears to provide the entertainment to the unseen male patron(s) who may be in the same room and remained outside the pictorial frame. Hence, the courtesan seems under a double-gaze—the gaze of unseen patrons in the room and the gaze of the magazine readers on the outside. As the two gazes overlap, a male magazine reader could illusorily have identified with the courtesan's patron. Such an imagination as evoked by the pictorial composition and references to familiar images is undeniably a powerful factor in formulating the courtesan's identity in the public consciousness.

However, Wu Youru did not always faithfully contain his courtesan illustrations within the frame of the *meiren* genre. In many images of *One Hundred Illustrated Beauties of Shanghai*, Wu daringly discarded the *meiren* traditional motifs altogether and took a quasi-"journalistic" approach. He associated the Shanghai courtesan with a series of newly-imported social custom and leisure

activities in the British-American Concession. Such an unprecedented attempt was a major reason for the tremendous popularity of the illustrated album. Some of the images were re-produced numerous times by other magazines and even achieved an iconic status. For example, the illustration titled *Bright eyes and white wrist* (Figure 16) depicts a group of courtesans playing billiards under an electrical lamp. The illustration titled *Women with a different flare* (Figure 17) shows a group of courtesans enjoying a Western-style meal in a 19th century European interior. The illustration *Having a different view* shows two courtesans taking a photo portrait in the courtesan's house (Figure 18).

Whether or not the Shanghai courtesan actually played billiards or took photographs in the courtesan's house is difficult, if not impossible, to verify in the historical sources. However, it is widely known that these activities were extremely popular in entertainment venues on Fuzhou Road and that they were fervently pursued by Shanghai's *nouveau riche* class. Although the majority of Shanghai's residents had never been inside of any of these venues, many of them loitered outside to gawk at the flamboyant clientele. Wu Youru's "imaginative" portrayal not only satisfied the voyeuristic desire to peep into the courtesan's private quarters, but it also fed an insatiable appetite for the details of the most fashionable leisure activities on Fuzhou Road. By doing so, Wu Youru's illustrations gave the viewer the illusion that the exclusive space of the courtesan's house was also a public entertainment venue.

However, the courtesan's house, as a public entertainment venue, was not just admired by the public. It was often ridiculed and mocked in the more serious media venues. *Shanghai News*, the parent publication of *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, often satirized Western-style entertainment for its bazaar and "uncivilized" foreign

quality. For example, its issue from November 23rd, 1891 called pool-playing "degrading and barbaric" because the game required bending down one's body in order to take aim for a shot. The same article criticized Shanghai's *nouveau riche* for their senseless pursuit of a foreign game. Interestingly, Wu Youru's illustration of courtesans playing billiards was published in the same issue of *Shanghai News* as a supplementary insert page. Read within this editorial context, Wu's illustration sent out competing messages: on one hand, courtesans playing billiards represented the fun-seeking atmosphere prevalent on Fuzhou Road; on the other hand, it was also denounced as an uncivilized foreign folly. This ambivalence also extends to other fashionable pursuits on Fuzhou Road, such as Western-style dining with a knife and fork. A satirical essay on *Shanghai News* remarked that the Shanghai merchant and the courtesan adopted a new "awkward" and "crab-like" Western eating custom.[37] Such critiques were often written by the city's literati who sold articles for meagre incomes. Partly driven by their jealousy and frustration, the literati writers defamed the *nouveau riche* class and the courtesan as pretentious, unrefined, and even vulgar.

It is necessary to take into account the ambiguous undercurrents beneath the glamorous, trend-setting façade of the courtesan. The illustration of courtesans playing billiards depicts a prominent courtesan figure laying her body on the pool-table to prepare for a shot. (Figure 16) This depiction corresponds with the exact body position that the contemporary Shanghai media ridiculed. The inscribed title for this illustration, *Bright eyes and white wrist*, was altered from a traditional phrase to describe a classical beauty, "bright eyes and white teeth". By replacing "teeth" with "wrist," Wu Youru purposefully drew the viewer's attention to the courtesan's ungraceful body position. By stretching her arm, the courtesan exposes

[37] "Haishanghai qiwen" (Strange social scenes of Shanghai), *Shanghai News (Shenbao)*, Aug. 29, 1897, 2.

her entire right wrist from her heavy sleeve. The opening of sleeves provides an entry for the viewer's erotic gaze.

The courtesan's bending body and the open sleeves present a change from the controlled and composed posture of the traditional *meiren*. The effects of such a change might be multiple. By representing Western leisure activities inside the courtesan's house, Wu demystified those activities to which ordinary Chinese had little access. While presenting the courtesan's body as an erotic object for the public's viewing pleasure, Wu simultaneously used controversial images to "scandalize" the courtesan. Thus, the visual entertainment comes not only from the eroticized body, but also from a sensational account corresponding with the contemporary social critiques of that time. However, to soften the controversial edges of these activities, Wu Youru also intentionally inserted some of the quintessential Chinese habits and behaviours into the Western setting. For example, in the illustration of Western dinning (Figure 17), a courtesan cut her food with knife and folk while her maid was serving her a Chinese pipe. Such detail brings a sense of familiarity to the image and also neutralizes its "barbaric" and "uncivilized" characteristics.

In sum, the interior of the courtesan's house in Wu Youru's illustration is a world constructed in negotiation between the *meiren* painting tradition and mass market demands. By largely conforming to the traditional visual languages of the *meiren* genre, the album offers the viewer a sense of visual familiarity. Within this traditional frame, Wu Youru, somewhat blatantly, incorporated a new iconography of Shanghai into the courtesan's habitat. Such a strategy strengthened its spatial link with the surrounding Fuzhou Road and established the courtesan's house as an important site of the entertainment district at the time. It is the flexibility of the

courtesan's unique status that allowed Wu Youru to mix the opposing messages into her space. Once again, the courtesan's urban setting overcame her individuality and served as the criterion to define her as a public *meiren* of the city. By doing so, Wu Youru put the Shanghai courtesan at the intersection of urban fashion, imported fun, and contemporary cultural controversy.

Vision at the Liminal Space: Courtesan as Spectator of the City

As noted in the images I have discussed so far, the viewer's gaze was almost completely centred on the elaborately-dressed woman inside the interior of the courtesan's house. However, the Shanghai courtesan by no means remained only a passive object of the gaze. In fact, many images in *One Hundred Illustrated Beauties of Shanghai* represented the courtesan as an active spectator of the city. The act of looking out on the city became the latest addition to the *meiren* painting motifs; more importantly, it became a new characteristic associated with the courtesan's urban identity.

Several historians have discussed "gawking on the street" as an urban fad in Shanghai's foreign concessions in the late 19th century. According to Reed, the rapid modernization project in the foreign concessions turned "looking" into an urban sport—Shanghai citizens gathered on the streets of foreign concessions to look at the fantastic things emerging there on a daily basis. (76-79) Barbara Mittler commented that one of the Shanghai *nouveau riche*'s favourite pastimes was sitting at restaurant terrace to look at the hustle and bustle on Fuzhou Road. (54) Often dressed up dandy-like, they also wished to be seen by the passers-bys as fashionable urban figures. With her house centrally situated on Fuzhou Road, the Shanghai courtesan was situated perfectly to participate in the fashionable sport of city-looking. The

Shanghai courtesans were often seen leaning against the balcony railing, looking at and commenting on the urban landscape, providing the only opportunity for pedestrians to catch a glimpse of them in their own habitat.

The courtesan-as-spectator of the city is the subject of a dozen of images in *One Hundred Illustrated Beauties of Shanghai.* If the images of the interior of the courtesan's house guide the viewer into her private space, these illustrations lead the viewer to look out at the urban landscape at-large. The shift in the courtesan figure from a woman under the male gaze to an active viewer herself draws our attention to how the courtesan—displaying various modes of looking–articulated a set of emerging relationships between the courtesan and the city. Here, I will mainly discuss three modes of looking as exemplified by three illustrations.

In traditional *meiren* painting, *yuan tiao* (looking into the distance) is a well-established visual motif. It often depicts a *meiren* leaning against a tree or balcony banister and gazing far into the distance. The *meiren* engaging in *yuan tiao* often has one hand withdrawn into the sleeve and one hand raised to the chin—the body gesture described by Ellen Johnson Laing as "a standard gesture of a lovelorn women".[38] The most conventional place for the *yuan tiao* motif is the *meiren*'s garden. The garden is treated in both *meiren* poetry and *meiren* paintings as a transitional space connecting the *meiren*'s boudoir to the outside world. The nature contained in the garden has symbolic functions in expressing her romantic lament, while the lushness of the nature is often contrasted against human grief. In the traditional *yuan tiao* motif, *yuan* (distance) does not signify concrete distance but remain a symbolic emotional field charged with romantic longing. The vision of

[38] Ellen Johnston Laing, "Erotic Themes and Romantic Heroines Depicted by Ch'iu Ying," *Archives of Asian Art* 49 (1996): 68, 70.

yuan underlines the *meiren*'s smouldering mood and, perhaps, even a poetic mental image of her lover, not a concrete vision in front of her eye.

In a similar *yuan tiao* image from *One Hundred Illustrated Beauties of Shanghai* titled *Only when looking afar is there clarity,* the location for *yuan tiao* and the symbolism of "*yuan*" significantly has shifted. (Figure 19) The traditional trope is subsequently reformulated with different emotional implications and compositions. In this image, three courtesans are looking out at the city from their balcony. Unlike the traditional passive pose of the forlorn and sad *meiren,* the Shanghai courtesan here appears eager and active. Through a pair of binoculars, a courtesan is earnestly scrutinizing the Western-style urban landscape looming in the distance. Stretching over the banister, her body is charged with energy and curiosity. On the lower left side of the image appears to be Shanghai's horizon line dominated by the Trinity Church.

In this image, the courtesan's balcony replaces the *meiren*'s garden as a primary site for looking out on the city. Dominating almost half of the pictorial space, the balcony serves as a spatial connection between the courtesan's internal world and the city at large. What it also links is the courtesan's exclusive space behind her and the public domain in front of her. The half-opened door behind the standing courtesan provides a sneak peak into the courtesan's private space; however, it is the vast urban-scape that captures the viewer's attention. As an advantageous vantage point in the city, the balcony provides the courtesan with a magnificent city view, a privilege that she enjoyed as a powerful urban figure.

Moreover, the binoculars, as the courtesan's viewing device, has completely changed the poetic and emotional meanings of *yuan* (distance.) Devoid of all romantic implications, the binocular is a scientific tool fixated on Shanghai's city

landscape. Through the binoculars, the courtesan's *yuan* (distance) is no longer a symbolic space as in traditional *meiren* paintings, but a concrete spatial field that could be measured, enlarged, reduced, and attained by a modern viewing device. As the title *Only When Looking Afar is There Clarity* implies, the advantage of binocular-aided vision lies in the clarity of the vision. With a pair of binoculars, every detail of the city is potentially under the courtesan's scrutiny. The city is condensed to an object, ready to be controlled and consumed. The vision generated by the binoculars is closely tied to a sense of immediacy, as opposed to the long duration of waiting in the traditional *meiren* painting. On an emotional level, the feeling of loneliness and missing someone is replaced by an overwhelming sense of curiosity, fun, and excitement of discovery. In rather blatant fashion, Wu Youru has replaced the traditional *meiren*'s lover with the Shanghai courtesan's Shanghai.

The most important feature that distinguishes this illustration from any previous image is the representation of the urban horizon line. The city, with its Western-style infrastructure and material culture, has become a new symbol of high culture. The linear perspective of the horizon creates a spatial depth of the urban landscape, dotted with Western architectural styles. The looming peaks of the Trinity Church, as a new icon of Shanghai, signify the presence of the colonial power and the urban advancement it had brought to the city. Such iconography in Shanghai's landscape replaces the symbolism of the natural landscape in the traditional *meiren* painting.

As the very object of the courtesan's spectatorship, the horizon line on the far left side corresponds to the gazing courtesans on the upper right side of the image. The diagonal composition underscores a symbolic relationship between the courtesan and the city. As a public beauty of the city, the courtesan personifies the

urban desire to see and to be seen. By living in a "high-rise" residence and possessing a Western viewing device, the Shanghai courtesan also displays a visual power larger than any Shanghai commoner. In this case, the traditional cultural status of the *meiren* and the newly established Shanghai urban landscape—two essential icons of the city—combine into mutual reflection. The foreignness of Shanghai is essentialized as a new kind of dreamscape, a new iconographic myth, in the desire of seeing. It is from this new interpretation of beauty and city, seen as integral parts of each other, that the essentialized and romanticized courtesan of the city emerges.

The second mode of courtesan spectatorship I would like to discuss is the so-called "wandering eye." Contrary to the intense gaze demonstrated in the last image, some other illustrations in Wu Youru's series display a rather callous and careless look at the city. These illustrations are also created through a fascinating negotiation of traditional *meiren* motifs and a new iconography of Shanghai, although through a rather different approach. For example, in the illustration titled *Wondering Eyes and Floating Mood,* a courtesan is taking a moment off from her musical practice and looking outside her window (Figure 20). Unlike the previous illustration, the point of view of this picture is directly oriented toward the courtesan, instead of the city landscape. The lamppost on the right side has replaced the trope of garden tree in traditional *meiren* painting, reminding us of the existence of a vibrant urban space.[39]

However, unlike in any previous illustration, the courtesan in this picture is neither looking at the love birds perched on the electrical wire nor the modern street lamp. Her eyes are simply cast downward and wandering off in a dreamy state. We

[39] The *meiren* vis-à-vis the garden tree was a well-established visual metaphor. Different kinds of trees communicated the different emotional states of the *meiren*. For example, the voluptuous leaves of a banana tree have a strong erotic connotation; the catalpa tree (*wutong*) traditionally carried a pun on the expression "we together" (*wutong*). In this image, the lamppost stands in for the garden tree.

can only imagine what is within her visual scope, whether it is the street crowd or the early evening traffic. Totally relaxing on the balcony banister, the courtesan's body and facial expression are devoid of the eagerness and curiosity displayed in the previous illustration. She displays neither the romantic sentiment of a traditional *meiren* nor the eagerness and excitement of a city newcomer. She appears casual, careless and even somewhat blasé. As the illustration title adequately describes, the courtesan is in a casual mood of "wandering" and "floating." Her "wandering eyes" might randomly travel from one urban object to another, consuming all at once but remaining with no attachment. She appears to be an experienced urban spectator who is already familiar with the daily excitement. In this sense, the "wandering eye" resembles the eyesight of a city *flaneur*. The city is her object of visual consumption, with such consumption already integrated into her everyday ritual.

In the last two illustrations I discussed, there seems to emerge a pattern of looking; that is, the courtesan's body gesture, attitude, and architectural space assume more significance than what she actually sees. The interpretation of the city depends on how the courtesan looks at the city, not merely what fell into her vision. The courtesan's spectatorship not only defines her relationship with the city, but also orients the viewer's relationship with the city. The viewer adopts the courtesan's habit of city-looking. Through either an eager or casual visual attitude, the city is born. In some other illustrations, the urban landscape even totally fades out and disappears, leaving only the courtesan to suggest the presence and the meaning of the city. In the illustration *Her look, her smile and her voice*, three courtesans are looking out from the balcony at urban landscape (Figure 21). The courtesan in the middle gazes intensely into something and points towards it with a finger. The one on her right also looks in the same direction. The courtesan on the far left waves at

someone down below. Although the urban landscape remains as a void, all three courtesans react to the city with their attitude and bodily gestures. The urban landscape is, hence, imagined through the viewer's interpretation of the courtesan's gestures.

By resting her knee on the bench, the courtesan reveals her bound foot, the erotic "lotus", which arouses the erotic imagination of the viewer through the opening under her thick pants. The excitement conveyed through the courtesan's posture effectively suggests an exciting tableau of urban life unfolding in front of their eyes. It is the courtesan's excited body that leads the viewer to imagine the exciting body of the city. The courtesan's body, being more pronounced than any urban landscape, serves as the viewer's index to imagine and navigate the urban landscape.

In short, the core of the visual revolution, realized through *One Hundred Illustrated Flowers of Shanghai,* lie in the transformation of the beauty's setting more than herself. The central driving force in the transformation is the questionable status of the courtesan's house as an urban site. In the context of the courtesan-*meiren* illustration series, the courtesan is used for a very specific purpose: to accentuate her "flower house" as a landmark site in the entertainment district of the British-American concession. The "flower house" present a conjunction where courtesan's identity and Shanghai's place identity are imagined in relation to each other. Having rarely been inside any courtesan's house, Wu Youru modeled the interior of the courtesan's house on the entertainment venues surrounding it on Fuzhou Road. The leeway and freedom offered by the Shanghai courtesan allowed Wu Youru to blend both city glamour and contemporary cultural critiques into the interior of the "flower house." He used the window and balcony and the liminal

space of the courtesan house as both a belvedere of the city and also a highly visible site of self-display.

In *One Hundred Illustrated Beauties of Shanghai*, the courtesan's image was further transformed into the universal image of the "urban beauty" by shedding the particular attributes that had identified her as a traditional courtesan. Wu Youru invented defining aspects of the new urban beauty based on his own understanding of Shanghai: he created a new *meiren* motif in which the city and beauty were seen as an integral whole; he essentialized Western material culture into the new emblem of a flamboyant urban lifestyle suitable to the Shanghai courtesan; and he intentionally forged a symbolic relationship between the Shanghai courtesan and the city landscape in front of her eyes. The courtesan's image thus changed from being a supplement to traditional culture to being a trendsetter—and even the transmitter of the new. These courtesan illustrations, especially the newly-established urban iconography, helped insert and reinforce the modern urban consciousness to its viewers. The modern city, previously an alien concept to most Chinese, was hence made familiar and acceptable through the fantastic representation of the courtesan as an urban beauty.

CHAPTER 3: MAPPING A TOURIST CITY WITH THE COURTESAN'S PLEASURE RIDE

Courtesan's Western-style Carriage and Her Ritual Carriage Ride

In the previous chapter, I have discussed how *Dianshizhai Pictorial*'s courtesan illustrations transformed the courtesan's "flower house" from an enclosed, exclusive space to an urban place porously connected to its urban context. By engaging the courtesan's body and her way of looking at the cityscape, the Shanghai courtesan was integrated as an essential and illustrative part of the urban landscape. Hence, the complex make-up of the courtesan's urban identity can be seen as a process of negotiation between the courtesan and urban spectators. In this chapter, I will examine another courtesan space, namely, the courtesan's Western-style carriage.

Introduced to Shanghai in 1855 by English merchant J. Smith, the Western horse-drawn carriage soon became popular among the Chinese merchant class for its "comfortable spring-box, steel-frame and noiseless rubber tires."[40] Riding on a carriage along Shanghai's newly-opened boulevard was viewed not only as a modern mode of transportation, but also as a privileged leisure activity. Thus, making public appearances on a courtesan's carriage was quickly made a new component of courtesan entertainment. The courtesans were required to frequently "accompany clients to all kinds of amusements and [be] 'on call' (*jiaoju*) in the public realm." (Yeh, 70) An illustration published in 1898 depicts Zhang Shuyu, a celebrity courtesan, getting ready for a carriage ride in the company of her maid. (Figure 22) The carriage waiting outside is the most popular kind--the open, double-

[40] Wen-hsin Yeh. "Shanghai Modernity: Commerce and Culture in a \republican City." In Reappraising Republican China. MASS. MIT Press. 2000. 25.

seated Victoria.[41] Together with their patrons, celebrity courtesans, like Zhang Shuyu, paraded through a characteristic Shanghai urban setting, which included Western buildings and installations such as electric street lamps, fire hydrants, and different kinds of horse-drawn coaches. The courtesan's pleasure ride was partly to meet the demand of the *nouveau riche* patron, and partly a business strategy to enhance her public profile and attract potential clients.

For both the Chinese and the foreigners, the sight of an elaborately-dressed courtesan dashing by on a Western-style carriage was one of the most stunning spectacles of Shanghai. A German journalist of *Der Ostasiatische Lloyd* observed that,

> "..... As the sun is setting, vigorous horses would gallop eastward like lightning or a gush of wind; the bystanders get only a glimpse, but this [is enough to] dazzle their senses and confuse their hearts.... One will see innumerable palanquins making the way hither and thither; their occupants are mostly almond-eyed beauties in the gayest and richest attire."[42]

An essay on *Dianshizhai Pictorial* considered the street scene of courtesan riding carriages together a worthy tourist attraction.

> "No place has more horse-drawn carriages than our city, and none has more courtesan establishments. Everyday around five or six o'clock in the afternoon, people are in the habit of taking friends or going with courtesans for a ride to Jing'an Temple...Courtesan carriages pass by like fish following dragon. What a magnificent scene. This should be what people visit Shanghai for."[43]

The carriage ride was an important ritual in the courtesan's daily life. As described in the above journalistic reports, the courtesans rode along the same route everyday at a fixed hour. Her itinerary was not taken randomly, but strategically; it

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[41]The Victoria was the most popular carriage. Other popular carriages were the double Victoria, the landau, and the brougham, so that passengers would face each other and could have more social interaction.

[42] J.D. Clark, *Sketches in the around Shanghai*, 49.

[43] "Haishanghai qiwen" (Strange social scenes of Shanghai), *Shanghai News (Shenbao)*, Aug. 29, 1897, 1.4.

was planned to ensure that the most fashionable and the most visible urban attractions of Shanghai were connected at a given period. The courtesan's carriage ride allowed her fans to gather alongside the boulevard and catch a glimpse of her passing by for the moment. The courtesan's daily outing mobilized a spectator event in public and established the temporal and spatial rituals that eventually seeped into the urban landscape. Although the carriage ride started out as a self-staged performance to build up courtesan stardom, its ritual ultimately had far-reaching effects in shaping the viewer's urban consciousness.

Based on recent research on the courtesan's daily life in the late 19th century, Institut d'Asie Orientale in Lyon constructed a map of the Shanghai courtesan's carriage ride. (Figure 23) Seen from the map, the courtesan's carriage traversed six areas in the city: 1) The carriage journey usually started from the center of the entertainment and media district, Fuzhou Road. Parading along Fuzhou Road, the courtesan's carriage passed "such teahouses as Prosperous Peace of the Four Seas (Sihai Shengping Lou) and One above the Others (Gengshang Yiceng Lou), Western-style restaurants such as First-class Taste (Yipinxiang) and billiard halls such as the Variety Club (Huangzhong hui). As the carriage traveled eastward, it went by numerous publishing houses, including the location of the London Missionary Society Press (Mohai Shuguan) and *Dianshizhai Pictorial*."[44] 2) From here, the carriage usually entered the wealthiest residential neighbourhood and passed by fancy Western mansions, including the one *Dianshizhai Pictorial*'s publisher Ernest Major had built for himself. 3) From here, the carriage entered Zhang Garden, the first public "theme park" of Shanghai. 4) Then, the carriage turned east onto the Bund, Shanghai's famed waterfront full of Western and Chinese

[44] J.D. Clark, *Sketches in the around Shanghai*, 51-56.

commercial institutions embodying Shanghai's commercial might. 5) The carriage then entered Nanjing Road, Shanghai's shopping district. 6) Eventually, the carriage rode into the district of newly-established public institutions, including the legal court, the Town Hall and the public library. From there, the courtesan returned to Fuzhou Road.[45]

The courtesan's ritual carriage ride moved through different layers of the city with each of them entrenched with potent cultural meanings that defined Shanghai as a semi-colonial Chinese metropolis. Her itinerary not only connected all the major tourist attractions but also the most powerful cultural and political institutions in the public domain. The courtesan's ride traversed the districts, highlighted certain sights as points of interest and gave her a say in determining and defining the city's attractions. She was the one who showed Shanghai to her client, and she selected as most attractive those areas of the city that interacted best with her own lifestyle and interests. In planning her route, she also targeted those to whom she would show herself. This audience in turn was elevated to the status of potential client. The courtesan's carriage ride, hence, can also be viewed as the courtesan's public performance to assert power and influence on not only her spectators, but also on her potential clients and her city.

In the 1890s, *Dianshizhai Pictorial* published a series of illustrations to promote Shanghai's major tourist attractions, many of which were loosely grouped under the theme *Illustrated Grand Scenes of Shanghai*. The series included, in general, two kinds of illustrations: Shanghai's new architectural wonders and the "real" scenarios that occurred at the sites of the tourist attractions. Images of carriage-riding courtesans were heavily used in both kinds of illustrations. While the

[45] Ibid. 60.

former category tended to glorify and glamorize the courtesan's pleasure ride within Shanghai's Western cityscape, the latter treated the courtesan's carriage as a key device to sensationalize and scandalize the city.

In the images related to *Illustrated Grand Scenes of Shanghai*, the courtesan's body and her moving carriage functioned to activate Shanghai's tourist sights and gave the new architectural landscape an animated look. However, a pertinent question arises: how did the graphic narration of the modern carriage function to connect and negotiate the relationship between the status of the Shanghai courtesan as a city tourist, and the status of Shanghai as a tourist city? With this question in mind, I will examine two key spatial features and also tourist destinations on the courtesan's sight-seeing itinerary, the Shanghai boulevard network and Zhang Garden, Shanghai's first theme park.

Shanghai boulevard as an urban theatre

The courtesan's carriage ride, to a certain extent, was enabled by Shanghai's boulevard network, which was mainly constructed by the British Civil Bureau in the 1860s. By1890, the city already had a grid-like boulevard network that criss-crossed through the French concession, the British-American concession, and the Chinese walled city. The most known boulevards, such as Fuzhou Road and the Boulevard of the Bund--with their impressive architectural line-ups, their promenades shaded by French catalpa trees, their street lamps and their unobstructed views of the open space, were the newest spectacles. (Figure 24) These famous boulevards were, in effect, display-windows showcasing Shanghai's glamour and her commercial might. They were also Shanghai's urban theatre with colourful personalities parading away on a daily basis. The Shanghai courtesans certainly had appropriated Shanghai's

boulevard as a venue of self-display. In the illustrations by Chinese artisans, the courtesan emerged as the most prominent moving subject of the boulevard. Built and controlled by the Western colonial powers, the Shanghai boulevard was visually *dominated* by the Shanghai courtesans on their carriages. The *domination* was evoked through visual strategies that emphasized the speed of the courtesan carriage and also the playful spectatorship between the male pedestrians and the courtesan.

During this period, the combination of paved boulevard surfaces and the rubber-tired carriage enabled the carriage riders to move in an unprecedented high speed. Speedy movement on the carriage was a privilege for the rich and the glamorous. The illustration *Steel-framed carriage* (Figure 25) shows a courtesan and her patron enjoying a speedy joy ride on an anonymous, generic-looking boulevard in Shanghai. The illustration suggests the high speed of the carriage by showing the groom's whip flying over in the air. In the moment of excitement, the concrete city landscape is reduced to fragments, leaving only a Western-style building and an electrical street-lamp to symbolize the urban setting. These fragmentary images seem to reflect well the fragmentary impressions that the courtesan received as she passed by the city.

In a more refined style, Wu Youru portrayed two elaborately-dressed courtesans dashing by in a luxurious carriage captioned, *Women sharing a carriage* (Figure 26). Wu located the carriage prominently in the foreground and illustrated it in elaborate details. Behind the carriage lies an abstract track that suggests the field of space the carriage may have traversed. In this image, Wu Youru let the whole city landscape fade into a pictorial void, contrasting it against the whirlwind movement the two graceful-looking courtesans are enveloped in.

Speed also sometimes turned the courtesan's carriage from a vehicle of privilege and glamour into a vehicle of danger. During this period, the courtesans enjoyed carriage racing with other courtesans on the street, which often led to accidents and verbal and physical assaults. *Fashionable pursuit of Shanghai society* (Figure 27) shows such a carriage race. The illustration's commentary explains that "the fashion of courtesans riding in open carriages could turn into a hazardous venture and result in a dangerous race. Worse, clients often took the reins from the grooms, as seen in the first carriage." The illustration, *Horse carriage accident*, depicts a precise moment when two fast-running carriages have a head-on collision. (Figure 28) In the illustration, *By the Chezhong Gate*, two courtesans are hurling insults at each other after a carriage race. (Figure 29) While such scandals might have earned courtesans some scorn, mostly of the amused sort, the reports heightened their public profile and were thus beneficial to their business.

The courtesans' "misuse" of the boulevard subverted the image of Shanghai as the land of wonder by recasting the wonders in outrageous real-life context. The glorious image was not fully negated, but a sense of ambivalence and urban irony was established. By galloping though the boulevard and posing dangers to the public, the courtesan claimed the boulevard as her own space and asserted her subjectivity in her actions. If the grand scenes of Shanghai boulevard only presented a generic representation of the city, these sensational reports wove graphic narration about specific sites along the boulevard. Through the circulation of the courtesan illustrations, these sites were later remembered as concrete places in the city by their connections with the courtesan.

The courtesan's speedy carriage, as a moving object, induced various modes of spectatorship in the public space. The pedestrian gawker was almost a fixated

feature in most of the illustrations about courtesan carriages. For example, in the illustration, *One hundred times passing without being worn out*, the street gawkers dot the sidewalk like city landmarks themselves. (Figure 30) Their stiff body positions and blank facial expressions seem to convey a mixed feeling of shock, disbelief and fascination. To a certain extent, their unsophisticated spectatorship functions to direct and fixate the viewer's attention on the boulevard. The courtesan, in return, lends the viewer a particular reading of the city. Totally at ease, she plays the role of the Chinese commentator on these Western innovations to the Chinese pedestrian spectators. Embodying the metropolitan entertainment and leisure, the courtesan ensures the Westernized cityscape to not only be non-threatening, but also fashionable, fantastic, and even suitable to every treaty-port citizen.

In comparison, other scenario-based illustrations present a rather theatrical and even chaotic spectatorship. The illustration titled *The Crowded chaos after the end of the theatre performance* depicts a brief period of time when the courtesans exit from the theatre and board their carriages in front of the popular Suzhou Opera theatre and the Maoer Theater. (Figure 31) This was probably the only time when ordinary men on the street could physically mingle with the courtesans and also have a close look at the courtesans before they dashed off to another entertainment venue. The boulevard space presented in this image is the liminal space that connected the theatre exit, the public space and the semi-private, compartmental space of the courtesan carriage. In the transitory existence of the spectator space, the male onlookers on the sidewalk and the courtesans on the carriages are busy exchanging flirtatious glances at each other and serving as each other's spectators. While the male viewers remain anonymous in the crowd, the courtesans appear as individuals on their own carriages. The liminal space of spectators in front of the

theatre will vanish once the courtesans' carriages take off. The courtesans' mobility and the spatial position she occupies bestow her with a higher privileged position over the pedestrian onlookers. The spectators' longing for the courtesan is a reflection of their longing for the unexpected, fantastic experiences of the city. Many male spectators fell into the role of courtesan patron, precisely due to this reason.

In *Dianshizhai Pictorial*'s illustrations, the Shanghai boulevard is collectively represented as a tourist attraction. As the courtesan's carriage moves along various sections of the boulevard network, all signs, places, buildings, institutions, and people are presented in relationship to one another. No item is introduced separately as something in and of itself; instead, they remain locked into and connected within an interrelated whole. The illustrations about the courtesan carriage ride draw a visual sketch of Shanghai, consisting of a constellation of places connected along the boulevard network and "activated" by the carriage ride. Here, the courtesan's carriage is more than a transportation tool—it is also an exhibition medium. Through the representations, the carriage exhibited Shanghai's famous sights along the courtesan's sight-seeing route. In the meantime, the carriage was also a mobile site of self display through which she gained more socio-cultural capital. The boulevard and the courtesan on the carriage were intimately intertwined into a core ingredient of the cultural landscape of Shanghai. The courtesan served as a human signifier to channel the spectators' fascination of the city and also expressed urban fear and anxiety, as seen in the various images of carriage accidents.

The Courtesan Tourist and the first amusement park of Shanghai

In the courtesan's sight-seeing journey, she passed by several well-known tourist sights. Among them, Zhang Garden was the most extraordinary one. Zhang

family's Weichun Garden, generally known as Zhang Garden, was the first "modern" amusement park in Shanghai, which opened its door to the public in 1885.[46] The entertainment publications, such as *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, published a large number of illustrations on Zhang Garden and firmly established it as a famous tourist destination on Shanghai's sight-seeing map. Zhang garden originated as a small Chinese garden, owned by a literati family. After a Chinese salt merchant Zhang Su Ho bought the garden and its surrounding land in 1880, Zhang continually expanded the garden and built a number of entertainment venues around it, all modeled on Western theme park attractions. By the late 1880s, Zhang Garden's outdoor attractions included the traditional Chinese garden, the horse race track, and the legendary Ankaidi entertainment complex.[47] The Ankaidi's name was directly translated from "Arcadia," the idyllic Greek landscape that provided the setting for many Hellenistic romantic love novels. (figure 11) The Ankaidi was a Western-style compound, containing a five-hundred-seat theatre for Pekin and Suzhou opera performance, a billiards hall, and Western boutique shops. It also featured a fantastic "electric game" featuring "an electric light, fan, and doorbell and an electric lion that roared when a button was pressed."[48] Zhang Garden was a bizaare *collage* of Western and Chinese leisure spaces and activities.

Zhang Garden's visitors were predominantly Westerners, rich Chinese merchants and their courtesans. As Zhang Garden was located in the Chinese part of the city, Zhang Su Ho ensured the city's boulevard network extended from the Foreign Concessions to the entrance of his amusement park. Even inside the garden, he made sure every attraction site was linked with the widened roads through which a carriage could easily pass. Hence, the visitors could visit all the scenic spots

[46] J.D. Clark, *Sketches in the around Shanghai*, 98-101.
[47] For details on Zhang Garden, see Shanghaitong She, "*Shanghai yanjiu zilao*" xuji, 569-74.
[48] "Ge Zhang yanchi" (Relaunching their business), Youxi Bao, Oct. 10, 1898, 2.

without even getting off their carriages. The experience of visiting a garden on a carriage was novel for the treaty-port Chinese. Thus, its visual representations frequently made into promotional illustrations of Zhang Garden and even became a trademark of the place.

In 1885, Minhu Zhibao (Minhu Daily) published a pair of illustrations to promote the grand opening of Zhang Garden. (Figure 32) The upper right corner of the picture reads two Chinese characters from right to left, Zhuang Yuan for Zhang Garden. The direction of writing from right to left at this time also determines the direction from which we read these two images. The image on the right displays a carriage of visitors making a grand entrance into Zhang Garden. The image on the left appears to be the actual photographic image showing a courtesan and his male client posing on a carriage against an idyllic landscape.

The image on the right is semiotically dense with the electrical street-lamp, the English garden sign, the Western-style ticket office and the Art Deco Sun motif on top of the gate, blatantly expressing this park as the *sum* of style, fun and entertainment that this city can offer. The image has been applied with a significant amount of shading. As a result, it resembles photo-lithographic illustrations often seen on contemporary Western pictorials. For this reason, the landscape looming beyond the garden gate also has an illusionary Western look. In front of the garden gate, a photographer is taking a photograph of the visitors. On-site photo-taking was a rare and expensive practice in the late 19th century and only reserved for the city's elite during the major events. The truthfulness of such practice at Zhang Garden is surely doubtful, however, including this component in a promotional illustration certainly marked the entrance as an important passage into another world. The fanfare accentuates the internal space of Zhang Garden as a compact city within the

city, an independent and enclosed world with a high concentration of amusements. The photo-taking practice at the gate constructs the courtesan's identity as the city's elite tourist who visits a brand-new amusement park to see the spectacles, as well as to be seen by the city's tabloid at the same time. Being photographed at the gate also makes a symbolic parallel with the city's craving for both the images of the courtesan and the images of the new theme park. As the images circulated in the city's entertainment press, the courtesan's status as an urban trendsetter and Zhang Garden's identity as the latest tourist attraction were reinforced in relation to each other.

The representation of the internal world of Zhang Garden also involved using the courtesan and the carriage to animate the park spaces. The illustration titled *A visit to Zhang Garden in a four-wheeled open carriage* details a courtesan and her patron sight-seeing at the traditional Chinese garden, the original component of the immense site occupied by Zhang Garden. (Figure 34) As mentioned earlier, the Chinese garden was previously owned by a literati family. Zhang Garden's owner and creator, Zhang Su Ho, incorporated this quintessential literati garden to his amusement park to add a flavour of literati aesthetics.

A *nouveau riche* merchant is seen sitting on a carriage and pointing at the garden view to his courtesan. Wearing fashionable floral-patterned *chang-shan* and a pair of sunglasses, the patron has the typical look of a Shanghai dandy during this period. The accompanying commentary states that "the courtesan and the patrons, who possess the refined taste of a literati, tirelessly moved from one site to another in Zhang Garden without getting off their carriage."[49] The typical tourist attitude and

[49] Hushang Youxizhu, Haishang youxi tushuo, 1898, 2.

behaviour expressed in the commentary are fundamentally at odds with the aesthetic essence of a classical Chinese garden.

Emerging as a distinctive aesthetic culture in the Ming and Qing dynasty, the garden was the primary site for the literati to materialize his refined taste, lifestyle and worldview. A literatus designed a garden with the same aesthetic philosophy that he applied to the literati landscape painting. The garden was more than a leisure space; it was an intimate realm of dwelling and aesthetic cultivation. Spatially, the garden consisted of alternating sequences of openings and enclosures. The crisscrossing pathways sometime walled and sometimes meandered through open space, which produced an illusion of a maze. Hence, traditionally, a Chinese garden was not meant to be "visited" temporarily as an attraction, but lived in, gazed upon, contemplated at and appreciated by a cultivated mind.

Visiting a Chinese garden on a horse-drawn carriage fundamentally changed the temporal-spatial make-up of the garden. The route of the courtesan visit was limited to several garden pathways that had been widened for carriage traffic. Instead of submerging oneself in the garden, the courtesans remained on the carriage. The carriage-led sightseeing experience was reduced to only selective scenic spots located conveniently along the roadside. In this context, the carriage itself functioned as a "viewing device", allowing certain things to be seen and filtering out other things at the same time. In many ways, the passive sight-seeing activity, determined by the pre-planned route, resembles a modern, mass-market tourist.

In this context, the literati's garden is removed from its original context and became nothing more than a stop on the tourist itinerary. The courtesan's carriage directly linked the city boulevard to the pathway of the literati garden. The difference between the Western-style amusement park and a literati's personal space

of aesthetic pleasure was, hence, erased. Both of them fall into the same category of tourist spectacles. Although the Chinese garden's *literati aesthetics* cast a sharp contrast against the rest of Western-style sights in Zhang Garden, the contrast was effectively absorbed into the tourist sensation of sampling different world cultures at one convenient carriage stop.

As mentioned earlier, there were generally two kinds of illustrations in *Dianshizhai Pictorial* city guides: the first category focused on the architectural attractions and the second category concentrated on the real social scenarios occurring at the tourist sites. The illustrations I have discussed so far belong to the first category. They unanimously present Zhang Garden as a pleasant and serene "stage set" with the courtesan and her carriage as fancy props to animate the set. The images in this category are strikingly devoid of any social conflict and problem. In contrast, the illustrations in the second category have a rather different flavour. Centered on supposedly "real" incidents, they aim at using sensational and exaggerated reportage to *scandalize* the urban sites of tourism in order to attract more viewers' attention. In this context, the courtesan's carriage is often employed as a site of accident, crime, public confrontation and social subversion. Contrary to the previous serene images, many more illustrations about Zhang Garden depict how the courtesan is violently removed from her carriage, either by accident or due to the "crimes" she committed. The center of humiliation is always on the courtesan's body.

The illustration titled *Changes in the world of women* is a typical image from the second category. Published in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*'s special series on horse-racing, the image reported an incident during Zhang Garden's annual horse racing event in 1891. (Figure 35) Two courtesans, attending the event in men's clothing,

were dragged out of their carriage. The hooligans had then surrounded one of the courtesans and pulled off her hat, whereupon her braided hair had come tumbling down. According to Catherine Yeh, there was a prevailing fashion among wealthy and powerful men of taking male lovers. By dressing up as men in a public event, the courtesans openly exhibited the homosexual sub-culture and incorporated such a fad into their own repertoire of play.

While the courtesan on the carriage enjoyed a higher social status through a glamorous appearance, dragging the courtesan from her carriage to the ground symbolized her removal from a shaky pedestal. Her fall from grace was to strip off her veneer of prestige and glamour. The image essentially illustrates two paralleling spectacles: the horse race and the attack on the two courtesans. Taking place concurrently, they are respectively depicted in two paralleling spatial zones. Bursting with animalistic energies, the racing horses on the right corresponds to the human rage and the violence on the left side of the racing track. For the men in the crowd, watching horse racing and watching an attack on the courtesans are essentially similar kind of urban spectacles involving physical aggression on the body.

The crowd of spectators might also be considered as the third spectacle in this image, which visually dominates a diagonal stretch across the pictorial space. Mostly Chinese merchants, they might also patronize courtesans themselves. However, situated in the city crowd, they are transformed from courtesans' companions to anonymous onlookers, entertaining themselves with her humiliation in public. While glossy illustrations of the courtesans and the patrons cruising along Shanghai's boulevards on carriage painted an admirable portrait of the courtesan, the

images of Chinese merchants attacking her reveals fragility and the shallowness of her status as a glamorous urban icon.

To a certain extent, it is the courtesan's versatility that allows her to be both the symbol of Shanghai's glamour and commercial might, as well as of its follies. Her ambiguous status enables her to represent the city for its diverse and contradicting faces. Thus, Zhang Garden's image as a place of tourism is constructed through both grand architectural images and the racy reportage about the fallen courtesans. The intertwined existence of glory and shame aligns Zhang Garden with the complex make-up in Shanghai's place meaning, and therefore, established Zhang Garden firmly as a tourist destination that is quintessentially *Shanghai.*

The courtesan's modern carriage, as an exhibition medium, mediated the relationship between the courtesan as a city tourist and the status of Shanghai as a tourist city. In this process, the courtesan carriage assumed multiple roles. The elegant open carriage signalled the Shanghai courtesans' extravagance and modern luxury, and it provided, in life and illustration, an elevated moving platform on which to stage themselves in public. With the carriage alone, the locale is identified and characterized as imbued with a Western presence. However, apart from the glamorous images, the carriage was also represented as a source of danger, shock, transgression and even violent attacks in the city space. In these cases, the figure of courtesan is often removed from the carriage and became the target of public humiliation. As much as the portrait of the Shanghai courtesan's carriage ride reflected the news media's hunger for scandal and sensation, it also highlighted the Shanghai citizens' ambivalent attitude toward the emerging metropolis. Their mixed feelings of anxieties and fear found expressions in the images of catastrophic

carriage accidents or disgraced courtesans. What was evoked through these representations is Shanghai, a city with a glossy veneer for the tourists, constantly balancing herself between the "glamorous" and the "vulgar", the "glorious" and the "immoral" and the "high" and the "low."

CONCLUSION

In this project, I have attempted to investigate the various representational modes and strategies in the Shanghai courtesan illustrations in *Dianshizhai Pictorial.* My aim was to examine the ways in which Shanghai's early modern identity was imaged, imagined and contested through these images. I argued that *Dianshizhai Pictorial*'s courtesan illustrations existed in a cultural space articulated by the threefold interaction between Shanghai, the Shanghai courtesan and the city's entertainment press. Shanghai's historical condition as a semi-colonial "treaty-port" conjured up a symbolic image of Shanghai "prostituting" her body to the Western "patrons"—the nations that had set up settlements on her geographic body. The feminizing interpretations of Shanghai in the Western cultural imaginary reinforced the symbolic parallel between the two.

Dianshizhai Pictorial's courtesan illustrations effectively transformed the Shanghai courtesan from a traditional archetypical *meiren* to an urban beauty. In his courtesan portraits, *Dianshizhai Pictorial*'s illustrator Wu Youru established an urban iconography to shed the particular attributes of the traditional courtesan to invent an urban woman for the public eye. The newly-established urban iconography intimately engaged the courtesan's body to a series of interconnected urban space and place, including the courtesan's house, the courtesan's carriage, Shanghai's boulevards and entertainment venues. Treating the city and the courtesan as an integral whole, Wu Youru essentialized Western-style material culture into a new emblem of a flamboyant urban lifestyle suitable to the Shanghai courtesan. The courtesan's image was, thus, changed from being a supplement to traditional culture to being an urban trendsetter and even the symbol of the emerging metropolis. Furthermore, Wu Youru's illustrations also combined different sets of cultural

conventions in order to suggest a sense of familiarity. It is through such courtesan representations that the modern city, previously an alien concept to a majority of the Chinese, was made familiar and acceptable.

However, the courtesan's new image was not always uniform, but wrought with ambivalence and contradiction. Apart form being depicted as Shanghai's glamorous icon, the courtesan was represented as someone who frequently "misused" and "subverted" the public space with her vulgar behaviour. She fell from her iconic status as victim of traffic accidents, urban crime and public humiliation. Straddled between "high cultural refinement" and low social class, the Shanghai courtesan lent herself to be both the symbol of Shanghai's glamour and commercial might, as well as of its follies. I argue that the contradicting representations of the Shanghai courtesan reflected the ambivalence in the public understanding of Shanghai—the city stood not only for the triumph of modern urban development, but also for the loss of certain high cultural ideals and failing moral values. Hence, what was written into the subversive images of the courtesan was a mixed feeling of fear, anxiety and disdain towards the emerging metropolis. The courtesan illustrations served as a prominent and convenient site where these mixed sentiments toward the city were negotiated and expressed in pictorial terms.

The courtesan illustrations of *Dianshizhai Pictorial* are a cultural product of disunited and often conflicting interests of art and commerce, of pictorial traditions and modern printing technology, and of Chinese and Western aesthetics of the late 19th century. It is in this seemingly "messy" negotiation process that "Shanghai" emerged as a concrete modern city, and also a cultural concept exerting influences on the public and on private Chinese psyches.

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PLATES

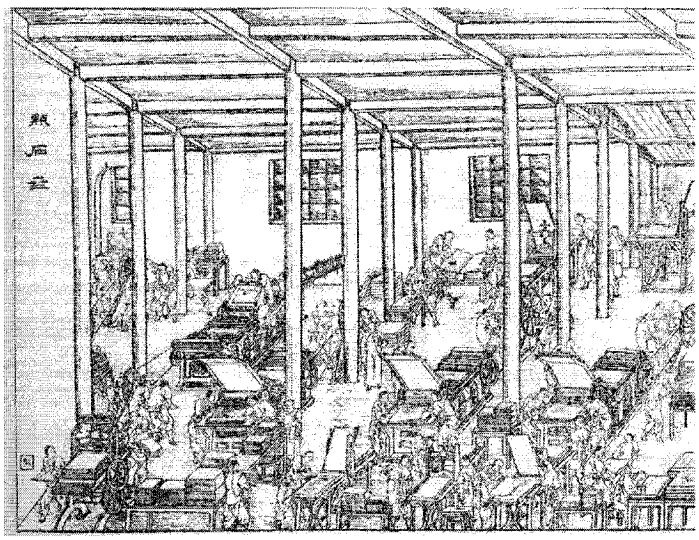

Figure 1 Dianshizhai lithographic printing plant, Shanghai, c. 1884. Lithographic Illustration.Wu Youru, *Illustrated grand scenes of Shanghai,* Shanghai: Dianshizhai Pictorial, 1884, 7: 8.

Figure 2 Famous courtesans of the late Qing period. Photograph, c.1900. Source: Tang Zhenchang, Jindai Shanghai fanhua lu, (1905)

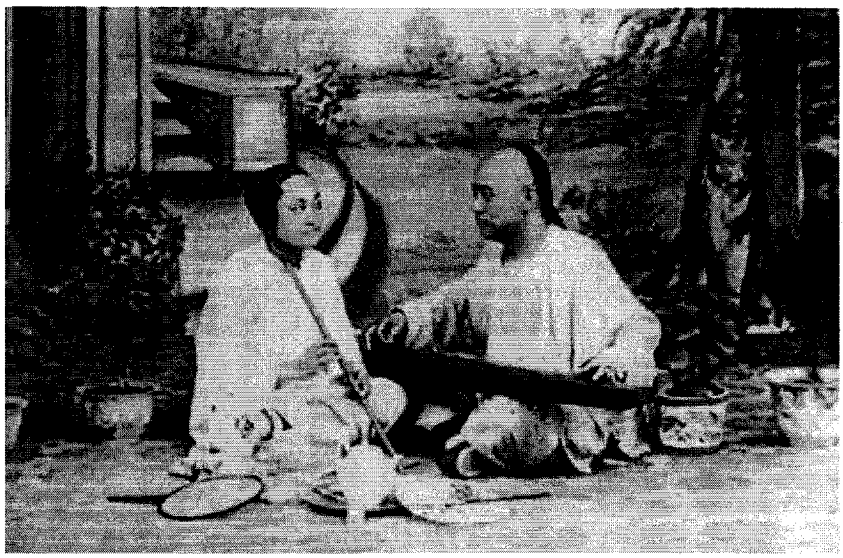

Figure 3. A Courtesan and her patron. Photograph, c. 1900. Source: Tang Zhenchang, Jindai Shanghai fanhua lu. (1905)

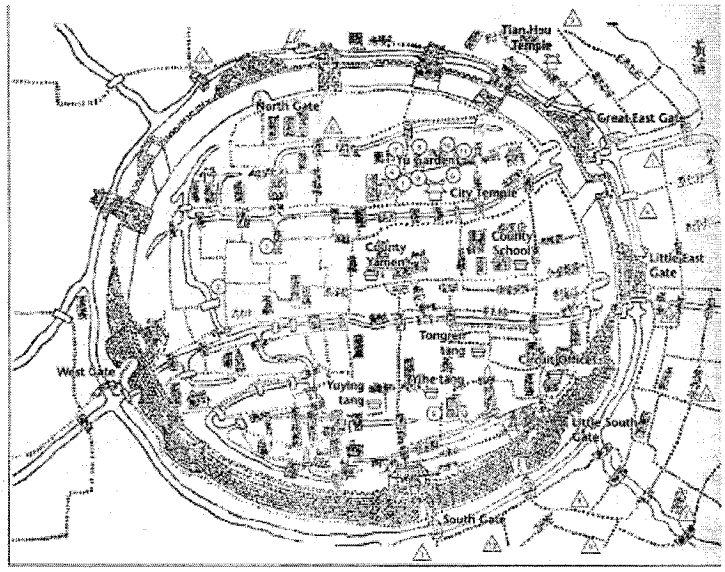

Figure 3 Shanghai map around the 1830s. Source: Jiangnan jindai dili tuji. (1981)

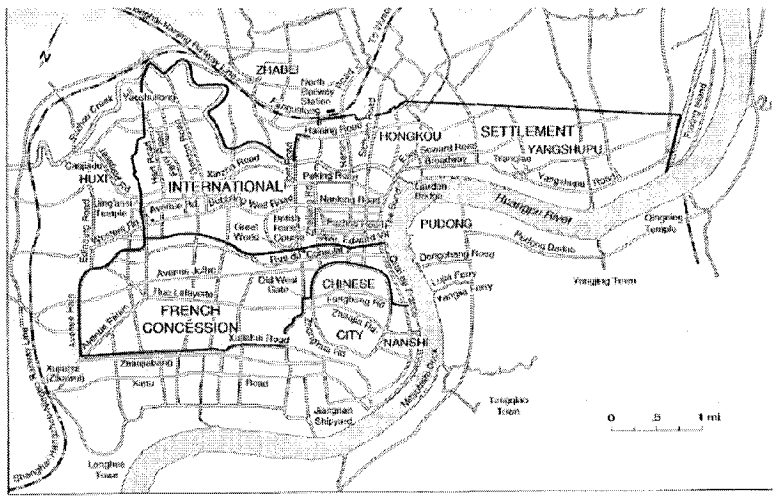

Figure 4 Shanghai map around 1900. Source: Jiangnan jindai dili tuji. (1981)

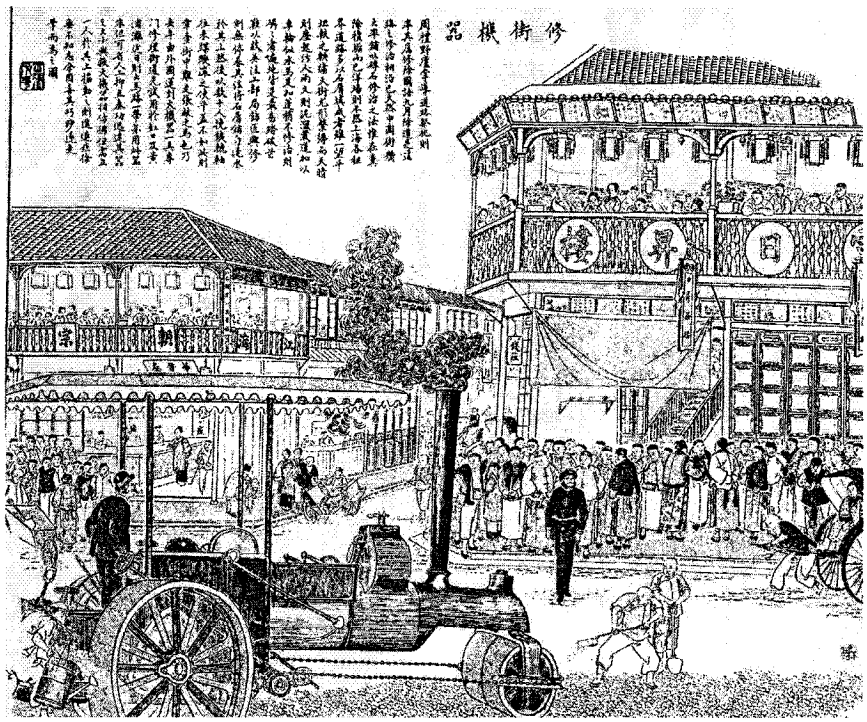

Figure 5. "Pving the street with a machine."1884. Lithographic Illustration.Wu Youru, *Illustrated grand scenes of Shanghai,* Shanghai: Dianshizhai Pictorial, 1884, 2: 4.

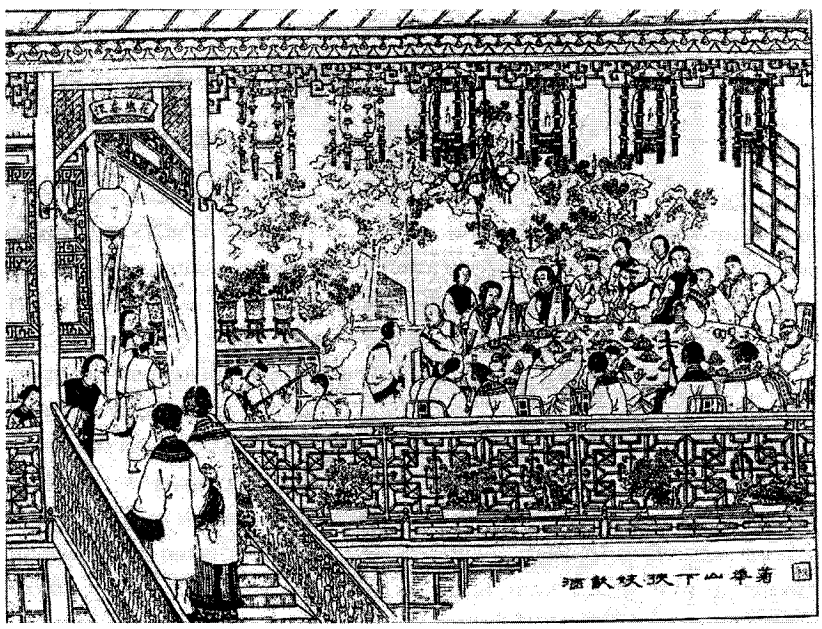

Figure 6. "Drinking with courtesans in the foot of Juhua Mountain". Lithographic Illustration.Wu Youru, *Illustrated grand scenes of Shanghai,* Shanghai: Dianshizhai Pictorial, 1884, 2: 4.

Figure 7 "Sights of Shanghai courtesan house: Entertaining at banquets without pause" (Shanghai quyuan zhi xianxiang: chenghuan daiyan wu xianxia). Lithography. Picture daily (Tuhua ribao) no. 249 [1910]

Figure 8 Illustrated City Guidebooks of Shanghai

Figure 9. "Gazing into the distance (yuan tiao)". Woodblock print. (Deng Zhimo, Sensen pian)

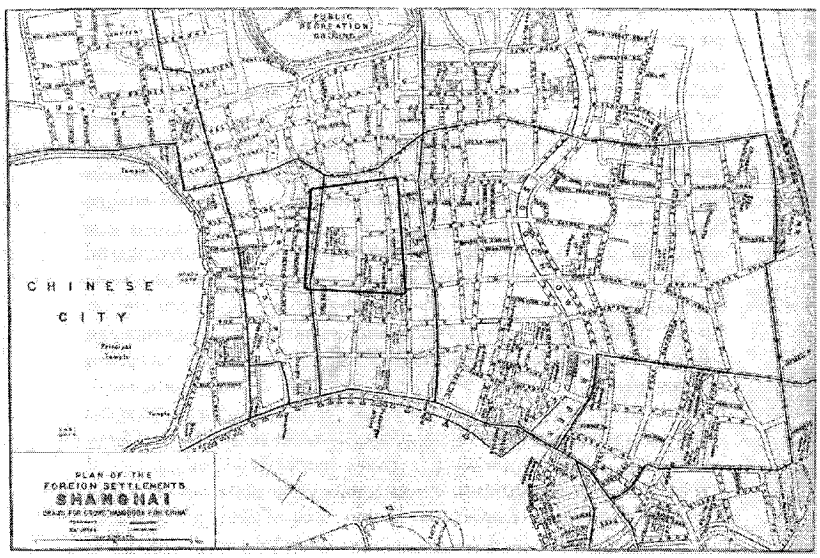

Figure 10. Map of Shanghai concessions in 1916, with Fuzhou Road and the entertainment district outlined. Source: Carl Crow, Handbook for China, 2nd ed. (Shanghai:Kelly & Walsh, 1916), pp. 82-83.

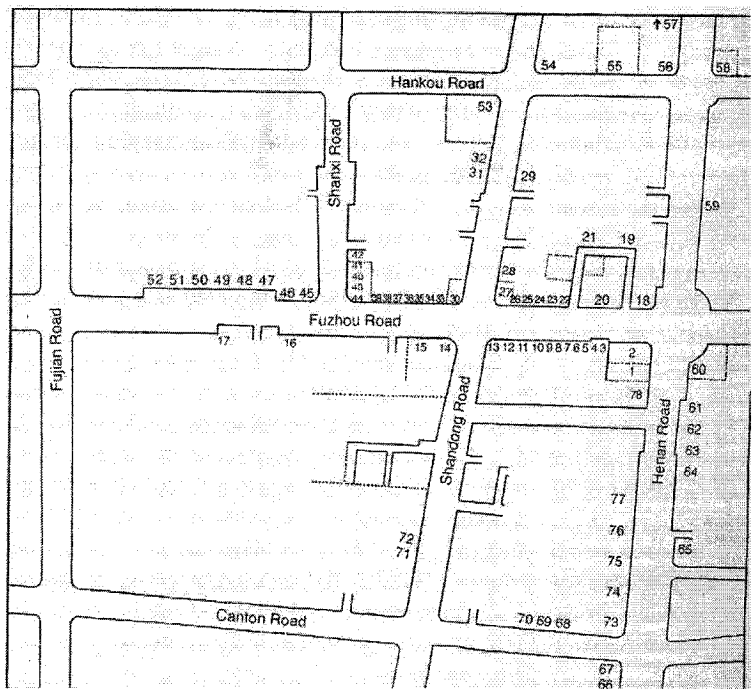

Figure 11. A bird's-eye view of the printing presses on Fuzhou Road. Source: Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876-1937, Appendix.

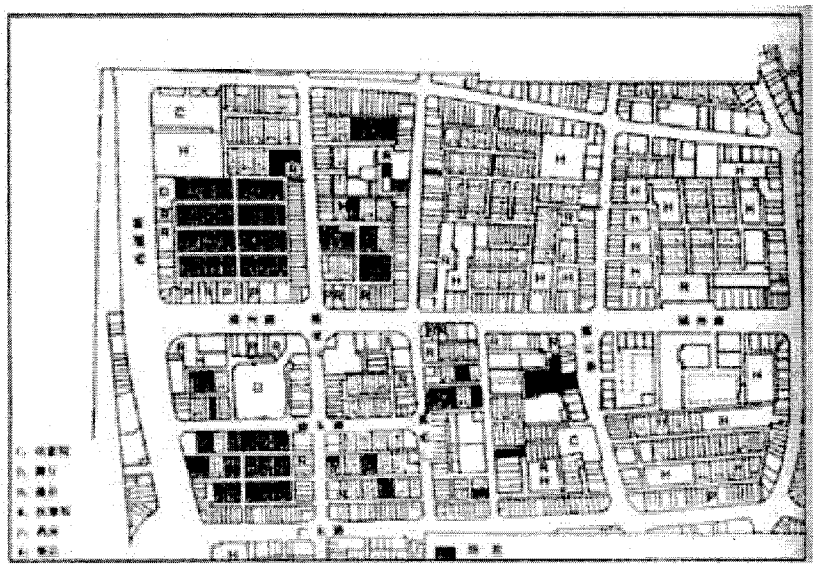

Figure 12 Map of courtesan houses on Fuzhou Road district. http://www.sina.com.cn

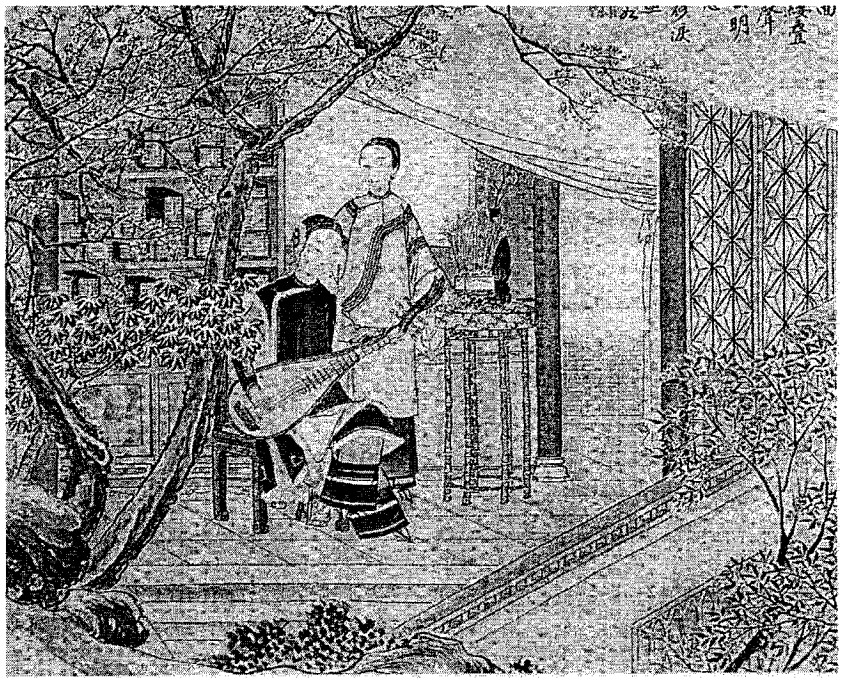

Figure13. Wu Youru, "Sounds From the Instrument and the Tree". Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper, 1884 circa. From Masterworks of Shanghai school painters from the Shanghai Museum collection.

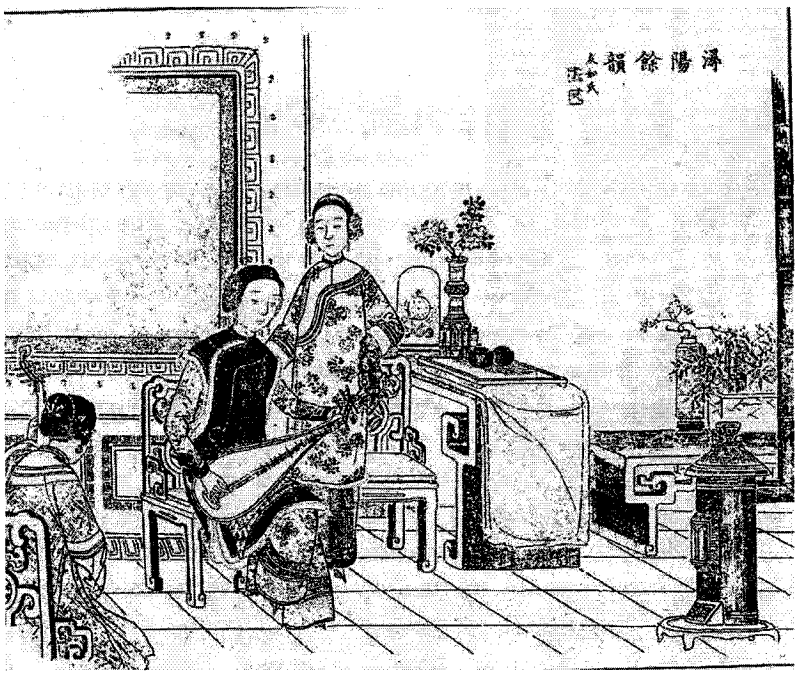

Figure 14 Wu Youru, "Lingering aura of Xunyang". From *Shanghai Baiyan tu, One Hundred Illsutated Beauties of Shanghai.* Dianshizhai Pictorial, 1884.

Figure 15. "Night Banquet". Lithography. Courtesan performers in a patron banquet with a Western-style cast-iron stove in front of the table. Huayu Xiaozhu Zhuren, Haishang qinglou tuji, 1892, 4:9.

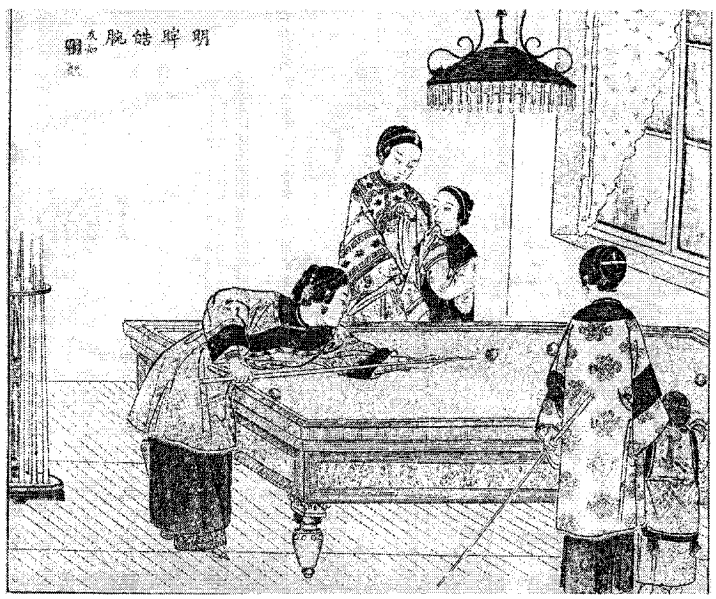

Figure 16. Wu Youru, "Bright eyes and white wrist". From *One Hundred Illustrated Beauties of Shanghai*, Dianshizhai Pictorial, 1884.

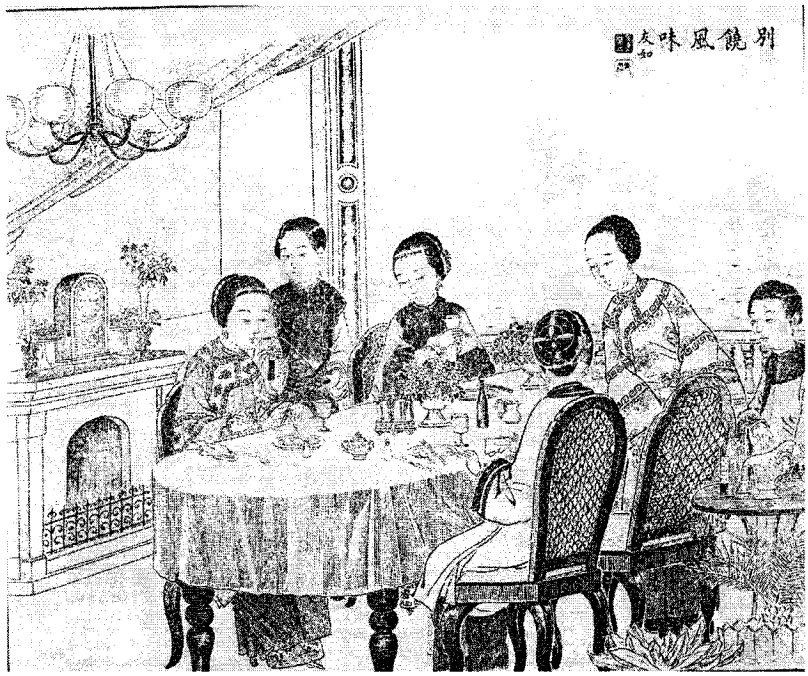

Figure 17. Wu Youru, "Women with a different flare". From *One Hundred Illustrated Beauties of Shanghai*, Dianshizhai Pictorial, 1884.

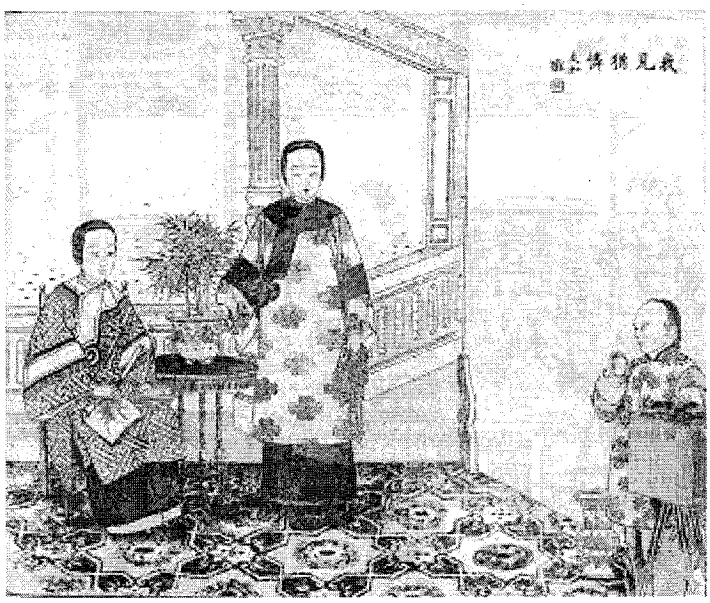

Figure 18. Wu Youru, "Having a different view". *From One Hundred Illustrated Beauties of Shanghai*, Dianshizhai Pictorial, 1884.

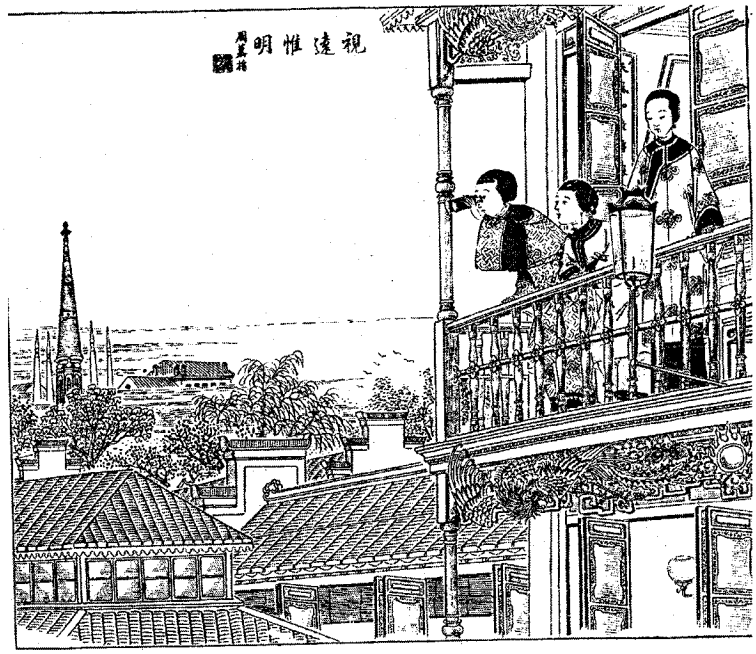

Figure 19. Wu Youru "Only When Looking Afar is There Clarity". From *One Hundred Illustrated Beauties of Shanghai*, Dianshizhai Pictorial, 1884.

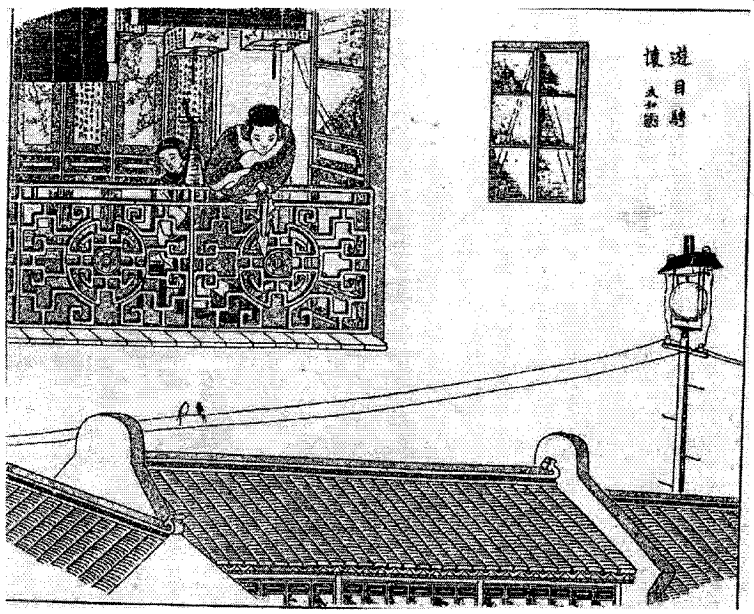

Figure 20. Wu Youru, "Wondering Eyes and Floating Mood ". Lithography illustration from *One Hundred Illustrated Beauties of Shanghai*, Dianshizhai Pictorial, 1884.

Figure 21. Wu Youru, "Her look, her smile and her voice". Lithography illustration *from One Hundred Illustrated Beauties of Shanghai*, Dianshizhai Pictorial, 1884.

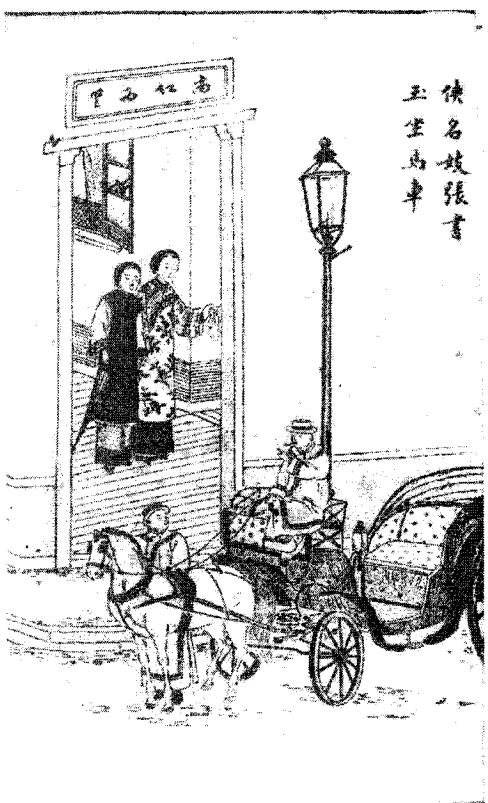

Figure22 "Illustration of Shanghai fun: The chivalrous top-ranking courtesan Zhang Shuyu goes for a ride". Lithography. (Hushang Youxizhu, Haishang youxi tushuo, 1898, 1)

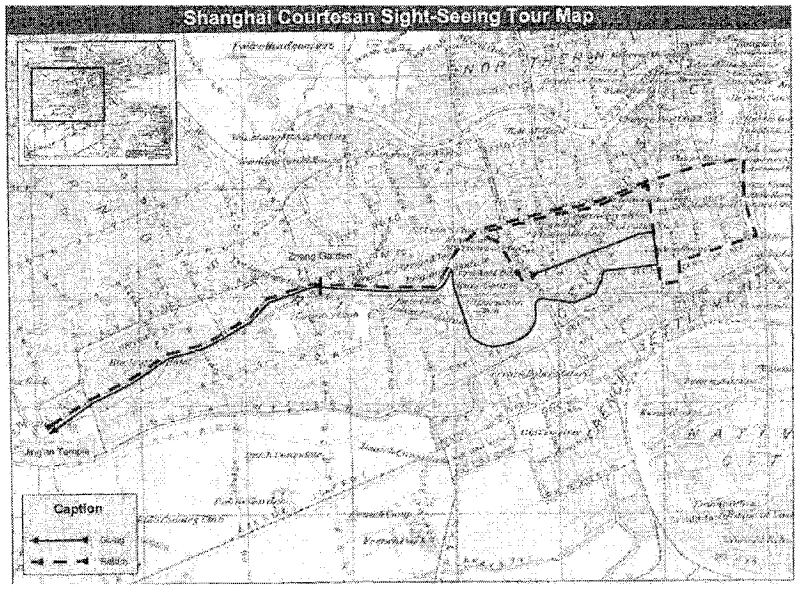

Figure 23. Reconstruction of the pleasure ride on which Shanghai courtesan took their clients during the late nineteenth century. Constructed by Institut d'Asie Orientale, ENG-LSH, Lyon, France. Source: Shanghai Love: Courtesans, Intellectuals, and Entertainment Culture, 1850-1910..

Figure 24 "The English section of the Bund". Lithography, by Wu Youru. (*Dianshizhai, Shengjiang Shengjing tu*, 1884, 1:56) Dianshizhai Pictorial's illustrator Wu Youru published an illustrated city guide book, *Grand Illustrated Scenes of Shanghai*, which included an illustration on the Grand Boulevard on the Bund. He used the linear perspective to show a long and wide boulevard, lined with trees and Western institutional architectures along each side.

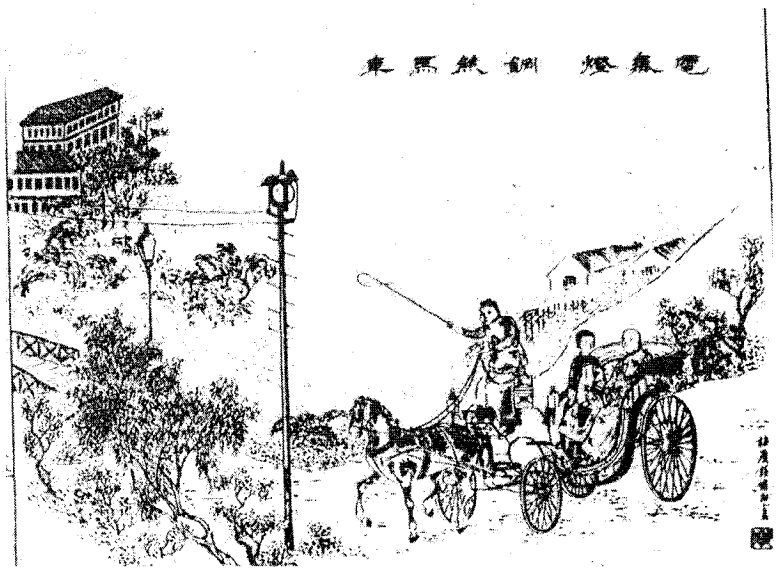

Figure 25 "Steel-framed carriage". Lithograph illustration. (Dianshizhai Pictorial, [July. 1884]: 19)

Figure 26 "Women sharing a carriage". Lithograph illustration. (Dianshizhai Pictorial, [July. 1885]: 31)

Figure 27 "Events in Shanghai society: Showing off by a racing in a carriage". Lithograph illustration. (Dianshizhai Pictorial, [Feb. 1896]: 89)

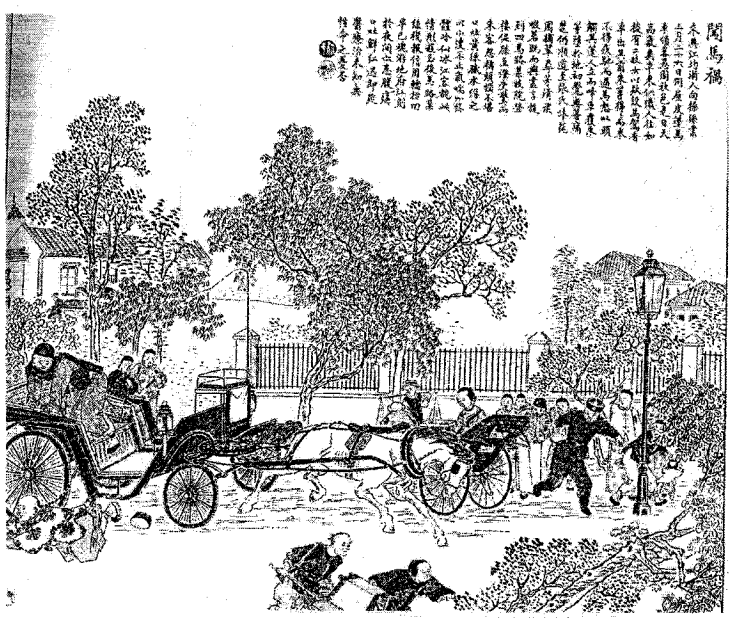

Figure 28 "Horse carriage accident". Lithograph illustration. (Dianshizhai Pictorial, [July. 1885]: 31)

Figure 29 "By the Zhongguan Gate". Lithograph illustration. (Dianshizhai Pictorial, [July. 1885]: 31)

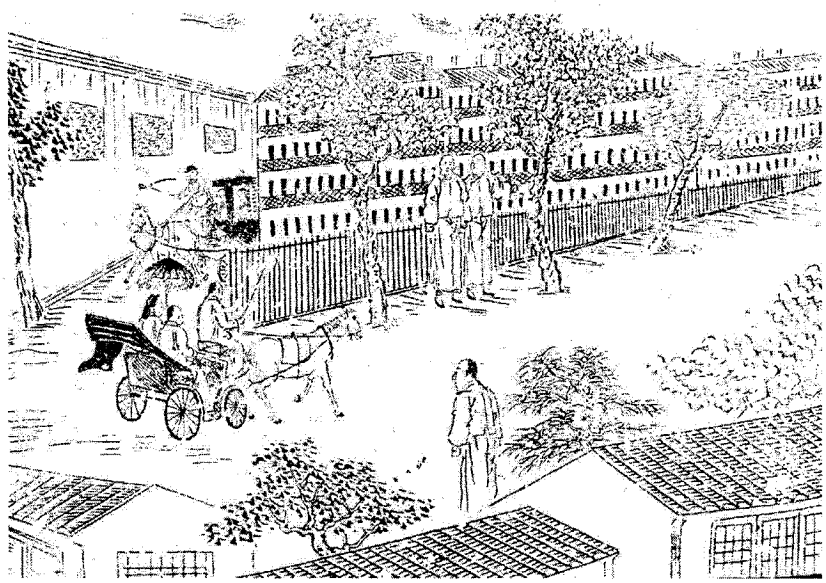

Figure 30 "One Hundred times passing without being worn out". Lithograph illustration. (Dianshizhai Pictorial, [Feb. 1889]: 56)

Figure 31 "Shanghai society's new phenomenon: The Crowded chaos after the end of the theatre performance". Lithograph illustration. (Dianshizhai Pictorial, [Dec. 1898]: 102)

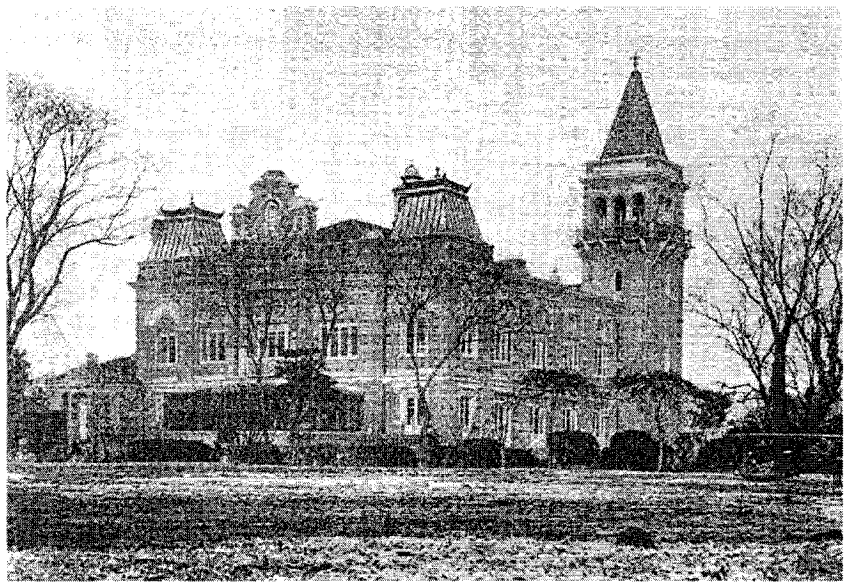

Figure 32 "Zhang Su Ho's Gardens [Zhang Garden], Arcadia Hall." Photography. (Darwent, Shanghai: A Handbook for Travellers and Residence [1903])

Figure 33 "Zhang Garden". Lithograph illustration. (Minhu Daily, 1885)

Figure 34 "Illustration of Shanghai fun: A visit to Zhang Garden in a four-wheeled open carriage". Lithograph illustration by Wu Youru. (Dianshizhai Pictorial, no. shu, 11 [Dec. 1891]: 79)

Figure 35 "Changes in the world of women". Lithograph illustration by Wu Youru. (Dianshizhai Pictorial, no. shu, 10 [Oct. 1891]: 77)