Representations of Cities in Republican-era Chinese Literature

Thesis

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By

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Abstract

The present study serves to explore the relationships between cities and literature by addressing the issues of space, time, and modernity in four works of fiction, Lao She’s *Luotuo xiangzi* (Camel Xiangzi, aka Rickshaw Boy), Mao Dun’s *Ziye* (Midnight), Ba Jin’s *Han ye* (Cold nights), and Zhang Ailing’s *Qingcheng zhi lian* (Love in a fallen city), and the four cities they depict, namely Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing, and Hong Kong, respectively.

In this thesis I analyze the depictions of the cities in the four works, and situate them in their historical and geographical contexts to examine the characteristics of each city as represented in the novels. In studying urban space in the literary texts, I try to address issues of the “imaginability” of cities to question how physical urban space intertwines with the characters’ perception and imagination about the cities and their own psychological activities.

These works are about the characters, the plots, or war in the first half of the twentieth century; they are also about cities, the human experience in urban space, and their understanding or reaction about the urban space. The experience of cities in Republican era fiction is a novel one, one associated with a new modern historical consciousness. The human experience of cities is one that intertwines with the historical moment of China changing its role from empire to republic. The emergence of the city
and of the literature about the city is also part of the historical change that ensued from the revolution to overthrow the empire and to establish the republic.

The representations of cities in Republican-era Chinese literature suggest the emergence of the importance of the city in China’s modernization process. The city was the locus of modernity and social transformation and city life became desirable. The emerging city and its changing social and cultural position thus required representational legitimacy through description and narration. As I have shown in this thesis, literature was an important vehicle for this shaping of this public urban imagination. The representations of cities in literary works developed side-by-side with the urbanization progress, and participated in this progress by shaping the public consensus about how the city should evolve and what kind of city life people should live. These four works imagine four cities and how its residents interact and come to identify with their cities in times of rapid modernization and traumatic warfare.
Dedication

To my family
Acknowledgments

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# Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. ii

Dedication .............................................................................................................................. iv

Acknowledgments ................................................................................................................ v

Vita ........................................................................................................................................ vi

Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 1

Chapter One: *Camel Xiangzi* and Beijing ........................................................................ 22

Chapter Two: *Midnight* and Shanghai ............................................................................ 40

Chapter Three: *Cold Nights* and Chongqing .................................................................. 60

Chapter Four: *Love in a Fallen City* and Hong Kong ..................................................... 76

Conclusion ............................................................................................................................. 94

Glossary ................................................................................................................................. 101

Bibliography ......................................................................................................................... 104
Introduction

Cities and literature are closely associated. Novels, poems, and essays often have cities as their background, and cities in turn inspire writers to write about them, creating a culture surrounding cities and city life. There are many examples in Western literature demonstrating this particular relationship between literature and cities, such as Baudelaire who illustrates the changes of urban space and modern living in Paris, and Joyce who writes about the psychological activities of Dublin urbanites. With regards to the relationship between cities and literature, Richard Lehan writes: “[T]he city has determined our cultural fate for the last three hundred years—has become inseparable from our personal and national destiny. As the product of the Enlightenment, urbanism is at the very heart of Western culture, the source both of political order and of social chaos. As such, the city is also the source of intellectual excitement and challenge” (1998: 3). The excitement and challenge imposed upon intellectuals from the urbanization process would explain why there are so many texts about cities. In addition, Yingjin Zhang (1996) cites Marc Blanchard saying that although “the city is in the streets, viewed and experienced through the eyes and the gestures of a passer-by,” it is also “in the texts, which are invested with a wealth of psychic experiences, historical references, and cultural values and which are so constructed as to demonstrate ‘through [their] diverse
figures and appearances, less what makes the city than what the city makes possible”” (xvi). Therefore, the urban space in cities is not only experienced physically, it is experienced through reading and writing literary texts about cities as well.

Literary depictions of urban space increased dramatically as the human-inhabited world urbanized greatly after the Industrial Revolution. The images writers displayed of cities also became diverse as more countries and cultures experienced the urbanization. In the first half of the twentieth century China began to modernize and urbanize. Its writers also began to write about China’s changing urban landscape. But Chinese literary representations of the city are by no means the same as those of Joyce’s Dublin or Baudelaire’s Paris. The difference lies in the way they observe and experience, and also lies in how the Chinese writers write, what kind of words and tone they used to portray the cities. Some of them write of the cruel living conditions in the cities, and portray cities as a malicious force toward their characters. Some depict the city as the essence of the human spirit, and emphasize the pleasure and excitement of the city.

Besides being the settings of stories, some modernized cities also arouse the imagination about other less developed cities or about the ideal model of modern cities, and a yearning for the city life. David Harvey argues that Balzac’s depiction of Pairs “helped to create a climate of public opinion that could better understand (and even accept, though unwittingly so) the political economy of urban transformation in Second Empire Paris” (2001: 65). He further contends that the literary accounts about modern cities “helped shape the popular imagination as to what the city was and might be” and “create a climate of opinion or some ‘consensus of the imagination’ in which certain
kinds of political-economic action suddenly seem both possible and desirable” (65). It is through reading of those works that one obtains the imagination and initial impression about the modern city and city life.

However, it is not enough for us to ask how cities and city life are portrayed in literature; we need to further question why they are represented and what the representation means. For example, the city can sometimes be read as a place that defines time and space in literary works and represents some aspects of the unfolding modernity pursued in this period. Such is the case in China, especially in the Republican period. As Yingjin Zhang notes, it is the fiction that first discovers issues about cities in this period (1996: xvii). The present study serves to explore the relationships between cities and literature by addressing the issues of space, time, and modernity in four works of fiction, Lao She’s (2001; originally published in 1936) *Luotuo xiangzi* (Camel Xiangzi, aka Rickshaw Boy), Mao Dun’s (1984; originally published in 1933) *Ziye* (Midnight), Ba Jin’s (1986; Pa 1978; originally published in 1946) *Han ye* (Cold nights), and Zhang Ailing’s (1999; Chang 2007; originally published in 1944) *Qingcheng zhi lian* (Love in a fallen city), and the four cities they depict, namely Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing, and Hong Kong, respectively. The order in which I treat these four texts takes into consideration both the historical setting of each work and the political and social status of each city. I treat *Camel Xiangzi* first both because temporal setting in the 1920s is the earliest of the four works and because it is set in the political center of China—Beijing. Although Beijing’s political role was in decline in the 1920s, it had a long history as the imperial capital. *Midnight* follows *Camel Xiangzi* in terms of its time setting, which is
1930’s Shanghai, a city that, quite different from Beijing’s traditionalism, stood at the forefront of China’s modernization and Westernization. Although Love in a Fallen City predates Cold Nights in terms of the time of its writing, both treat the period of the Second Sino-Japanese War. I place the latter first, however, because of Chongqing’s political importance as the wartime capital city under the Nationalists. Love in a Fallen City is mostly about Hong Kong, a British colony at the time when the novella was written and published. As a colony, Hong Kong is slightly different from the other three cities, though it shares similarities with Chongqing (such as its mountainous terrain) and Shanghai (the Western influence). Choosing these texts and treating them in this order allows us to examine how four different cities—with very different topographies, layouts, architecture, and political and cultural meanings—are represented in literature. All four cities represented in these texts share an experience of war, whether warlord conflicts, Communist-led uprisings, or all-out war with the Japanese. Juxtaposing these texts can highlight both the different and similar experiences of people living in various urban spaces under traumatic conditions and in times of dramatic social and cultural transformation.

In this thesis, I attempt to answer the following questions for each work:

1. Why do the authors choose a particular city to write about, and what facet of that city do they write about?

2. What is the temporal and historical background of the work? This will help us to understand how the city is presented.

3. How do the novels present the city, through what kind of language, narrative
mode, and style? What do they inform us about the city? What impressions do they leave for the readers about these cities?

4. And finally, why do they present the cities in the ways they do? What literal, cultural, or ideological purposes do their representations serve?

In answering these questions, I analyze the depictions of the cities in the four works, and situate them in their historical and geographical contexts to examine the characteristics of each city as represented in the novels. Also, I attempt to relate the writing styles to the depicted urban space to see how the space reinforces or contrasts with such a style. In studying urban space in the literary texts, I try to address issues of the “imaginability” of cities to question how physical urban space intertwines with the characters’ perception and imagination about the cities and their own psychological activities.

Time and space are dimensions through which human beings perceive the world, and the two dimensions are often associated with each other: time is sometimes measured by the distance traveled by watch hands, and space defined by the time consumed in traveling. In a discussion about the invention of the chronometer, Edward Casey (2009: 4) mentions that “space is equivalent to time” because “to solve the problem of longitude the exact measurement of time at sea was necessary: time had to be brought to bear on space.” People rely on time to know where they are; and at the same time, they use a piece of machinery (timepieces) to spatially represent and measure the movement of time. People who travel today still consider how much time it takes to drive, ride, or fly a
certain spatial distance.

As Pamela Gilbert (2008) points out, time is often credited as a “dimension” and is associated with the representation of modernity. Elias José Palti further explains the relationship established between modernity and temporality. He notes that as modernity was defined as a particular way of conceiving of time, temporality bestows legitimacy to the notion of “modern age.” This has led to an investigation of modernity, which in its typical sense, rests in the experiencing of temporality (Palti 1997). Compared to time, space has only recently emerged as primary category for critical analysis. Michel Foucault’s brief essay, “Of Other Spaces,” is perhaps the first to establish the association between time and modernity, and suggests that space could open up a new field of study beyond that of modernity (Gilbert 2008: 102). According to Foucault, this is due to the fact that space lost its sacred character not only because Galileo proved the place of earth in the solar system; it is also because Galileo discovered an immeasurable and infinitely open space. “In such a space the place of the Middle Ages turned out to be dissolved. As it were; a thing’s place was no longer anything but a point in its movement, just as the stability of a thing was only its movement indefinitely slowed down. In other words, starting with Galileo and the seventeenth century, extension was substituted for localization” (Foucault 1998). After Foucault discovered Galileo’s redefining of spatiality and opened up “space” as one of the important topics in critical analysis, more and more scholars started to focus on theories and practices of spatiality. The spatial turn in studies of literature and culture as well as geography is tangible throughout the twentieth century (Gilbert 2008: 102).
The study of space has expanded from the natural sciences to the social sciences, thus lending new meanings to the word “space.” We now talk about two kinds of space: physical space and social space (Gilbert 2008). Physical space includes natural and built environments. They can be changed both physically and ideologically through human interaction with the space. For example, people can raze a hill if their perspectives on what is beautiful changes. Social space, as its name suggests, mainly represents an imagined space for social groups. The framework of social space can be used in the study of behavior for given social groups, such as women (Borden 2002: 6).

From the perspective of geography, after the mid-twentieth century several scholars started to emphasize the human factor over quantitative data in the study of place/space. David Harvey, for instance, argues that the question of “what is space” should be substituted by “how is it that different human practices create and make use of distinctive conceptualizations of space” (Harvey 2002: 61). He further asserts that space should be understood socially, since it would also require the understanding of “how human activity creates the need for specific spatial concepts,” and how daily social practice solves “philosophical mysteries concerning the nature of space and the relationships between social processes and spatial forms” (62). Harvey puts forward the need for human involvement in the study of space, and therefore leads the way for other scholars to analyze space with human factors.

Yi-fu Tuan is another geographer who includes the human experience in studying space. Inspired by phenomenology and existentialism, he advocates for a human element in geography in the context of 1970s Europe (Cresswell 2008). Unlike other spatial
scientists of his time, Tuan centers his work on the relationship between people and the world. With regard to what can be known and what cannot be known in the study of space, in *Space and Place* he writes that “the given cannot be known in itself. What can be known is a reality that is a construct of experience, a creation of feeling and thought” (54). This argument explains his understanding that “space” transforms into a “place” when invested with human meanings and values. In addition to laying the foundations for a humanistic geography, Tuan also contributed to the study of the relationship between space and literature: his book includes many observations about everyday life, anthropology, sociology, psychology, poetry, and novels. The difference between place and space, in Pamela Gilbert’s view, is that place is confined while space is not. She defines place as “the particularities of a named space experienced as unified, with clear boundaries, characteristics and a history” (Gilbert 2008: 103). She further contends that people interact with place rather than space; place can contain human experience, such as memory, nostalgia, emotion, etc. In doing so, she situates space and place in a two-fold structure: space is objective, open, and unlimited, whereas place is subjective, closed, and confined by ideas and perceptions.

In his discussion of “implacement” and “displacement,” Edward Casey (2009) puts place prior to time and space, though he does not define what place is, nor does he explicitly differentiate, as do Tuan and Gilbert, between place and space. From his discussion about place and space, however, he points out: “[P]lace, that most innocuous and taken-for-granted item in our experience, offers a way out, if we are willing to reconsider our prejudices and to question our all-too-absolute presuppositions regarding
time and space. We need to get back into place so as to get out of (the binding and rebinding of) space and time” (11). Casey suggests picking up the concept of “place” as a new way to analyze both time and space. He prioritizes place in order to promote a new way of thinking about space and time; his concept of place covers both time and space but is not subject to previous conceptions of time and space. He describes the relationship between place and space-time as “parent and child” and “primus inter pares, a first among equals” (13). He also admits that place is confined: “the boundary or limit of a thing determines its place” and “a thing constitutes its (own) place” (16). For Casey, place is a notion that appears before time and space, and in the same time, implying that place is solid whereas space is void. Place is what people inhabit and which people interact with; and space, like time, is not directly associated with human activities. Place depends on space and time, but comes first when seen from a human perspective.

Place is often related to the idea of home, identity, and value, thus studies of place often put the human factor at the forefront. David Seamon and Jacob Sowers cite Edward Relph’s discussion of the necessity of introducing human experience into the field of geography in his book *Place and Placelessness*: “[H]ow could one study place attachment, sense of place, or place identity without a clear understanding of the depth and complexity of place as it is experienced and fashioned by real people in real places” (Seamon and Sowers 2008: 44). Relph disagrees with Casey’s notion that space is a void or an isometric plane or container that holds place, and contends that the study of space should progress with the study of place to stress human experience. Relph sees the unique quality of place in its power “to order and to focus human intentions, experiences, and
actions spatially” (44). Space and place are, in Relph’s understanding, dialectically structured in human environmental experience for the human understanding of space, which is related to the places human beings inhabit, and which obtain meaning from the spatial context. This is different from Pamela Gilbert and Edward Casey, who associate only place with the human factor.

In Relph, Casey, and Gilbert’s understanding about space and place, the city would have characteristics both of place and space. Although the concept of place is prioritized before time and space, “place” is generally more of a confined space in a particular period of time; “place” juxtaposes the notions of both time and space, making it difficult to discuss either time or space individually (Casey 2009: 11).

These inspiring discussions of place/space have contributed to the study of space and time. Geography, for instance, has been reconfigured as a social and imaginary representation of space and place rather than the study of fixed and abstract spatial rules. These studies have opened up the field of space and time for other academic fields, and are useful to me in my analysis of literary works in regards how space and time are represented. Studies regarding space, especially urban space, extend to the literary studies. For example, geographers study and analyze the realistic representations of cities in fictional works.

Geographers have used literary works in their studies in several ways. Mike Crang writes in his book Cultural Geography that “[L]iterature is replete with poems, novels, stories and sagas that describe, strive to understand and illuminate spatial phenomena” (1998: 43). According to Crang, a conventional method is to treat literature
as data, to deem the geographical descriptions in the fictional literature as the same as observations of the actual territory with no regards to human experience; it is a tendency of traditional geography studies, which downplay the human factor. To give an example, one could refer to Franco Moretti’s *Atlas of the European Novel*, which manages to “locate actions on an existing map of Paris” (Harvey 2001: 66). More recent studies, however, have tended to see literature as a reflection of human experience and of “the affective, emotional, relationship of people to spaces” (43).

In contrast to quantitative studies, the merit of using literature lies in its subjectivity. Subjectivity might be a hindrance for an objective study, but for spatial studies about human experience, subjectivity is just the ticket. The subjectivity of the writings about city reveals the social and literary meanings of place and space. Various writings about different cities in particular periods tell us a lot about the nature of the cities and their city life. Humanistic geographers, such as the aforementioned Yi-fu Tuan, especially highlight the value of literature in their studies because it provides accounts and insights regarding human experience in relation to place and space.

Furthermore, scholars in the field of literary studies are also finding ways to decipher the influence and significance of space and place in literature. Li Fengmao and Liu Wanru (2002), in the edited conference proceedings on space, region, and culture, note that spatiality has already surfaced as a theme or metaphor in literary works. Studies of literary works that are informed by theories of space reveal that space itself and activities over geographical space (physical space) can constitute a major part of the text, or can become a metaphor of characters’ perceptions. In Zhu Tianxin’s *Gudu* (Ancient
Capital 2002), for example, the protagonist travels through a Taipei that is the product of her imagination of the old capital and of various textual representations. In her trip, she keeps revising her own memories and knowledge of the city and its urban space, because her understanding, experience, and memory of the city are not stored only in her mind, but also in the time and space of the city (Peng 2002: 430). In revisiting the urban space from a different perspective, she also discovers the memory and experience of the Japanese who used to reside in Taipei and designed it as the capital city of their colonial possession. Zhu’s novel offers readers multiple understandings of Taipei’s urban space by revealing the protagonist’s personal experience and historic narration (and imagination). Therefore, literary analyses of this sort not only reveal understandings of urban space—in other words, how cities become the settings, metaphors, and themes in a given literary work—they also investigate how literature shapes the culture and understanding of cities.

Urban space is presently one of the most studied topics in academia. Urban space is radically different from rural space, and has come to stand for many symbolic meanings, including modernity. Of course, urban spaces embody the developments of industrialization, capitalism, technology, and the concentration of population. When analyzing the representation of modernity in urban space, the planning of the space (the city) was often regarded as “modern” (Gilbert 2008). To uncover the various symbolic meanings in urban space, it is necessary to analyze the representations of urban space in writings, because writers often reflect the experience and understanding of that space. Studies of urban space show that space experienced in reality and that depicted in fictional works are closely associated. Burton Pike notices this relationship and writes:
“[W]riters seem to pay careful attention to this difference between reality and image…they wished to insure its metaphorization, to place it firmly as possible in the realm of the imaginary while at the same time presenting it as a ‘reality’” (1981: 13).

In studying the perceptions of urban space and how the image of a city developed from actual human experience, one could look to Kevin Lynch’s concept of the “imageability” of a city outlined in his book *The Image of the City* (2001: 35). Imageability is a measurement of a given object in the urban space that leaves a recognizable image to observers. There are five elements in determining the imageability that can help one recognize the city: paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks. Paths include sidewalks, roads, and railway lines, along which observers move and get familiar with the city. The path is a major element in the image of the city. It not only defines the structure of the city, outlining its various neighborhoods; it also joins the various parts of the city together into a whole. Other elements are also found alongside the paths. Whereas paths separate the city into different districts, edges define the city’s borders. An edge can be a natural boundary, such as a lake or a river, but it can also be man-made. Districts are areas of the inner city that are also helpful in identifying one’s position in a city. Nodes are spots where paths concentrate; they are sometimes entrances to the city or districts. Landmarks are a somewhat more loosely-defined element of the urban landscape. Landmarks, like nodes, are recognizable sites in the city. Unlike nodes, however, landmarks are not easy to approach. They are mostly buildings, mountains, or other physical objects that are relatively easy to identify from a distance. But a landmark can also be any physical detail in the city that calls the observers’ attention. Even the sun
can be seen as a landmark, according to Lynch’s explanation (2001: 36). The five elements are very useful in analyzing the image of a city. In close reading of literary texts about the urban space, one could find many representations of the city with regards to modernization and modernity.

Before moving on to how modernity was represented in urban space, it is first necessary to briefly discuss how modernity was introduced into the Chinese context. In his article “In Search of Modernity” (1990), Leo Ou-fan Lee announces the coming of a new mode of historical consciousness in the late Qing and Republican eras and explains why Chinese intellectuals of the day pursued modernity and modernization:

In twentieth-century Western literature and the arts, the terms stemming from the word modern—modernity, modernism, post-modernism—have so dominated creative imagination and critical thinking as to become themselves paradigmatic “traditions.” In China… the word modern has suddenly come into intellectual fashion in post-Mao China, in part because it is semantically linked with the word modernization, which has been further canonized in the official Four Modernizations… I should like to argue, however, that the roots of these recent “modernisms” can be traced to a new mode of historical consciousness developed since the turn of the century. This new historical consciousness, based on a new conception of time and human progress, has tended to dominate the general outlooks of Chinese intellectuals of different political persuasions; it has also served to inspire new forms of literary creation that have come to be known, since the Literary Revolution of 1917, as New Literature. (109)

According to Lee, modern Chinese intellectuals viewed human society as being in a constant state of progressing and deemed modernization one indispensable step in the overall development of China. Such a view of history, as Lee suggests, is rooted in the Chinese introduction and interpretation of Darwin’s theory of evolution in the late Qing
period, which in turn shaped a new historical consciousness: a unilinear view of history supplanted the traditional cyclical view. Out of the logic of this new view of history emerged the notion that it was critical to modernize China so that it could keep pace with the world, evolve, and fit in the world in order to survive. Otherwise, China would be too weak and would be unable to defend itself against advanced countries. This obsessive desire to modernize was set in motion in the late Qing and May Fourth periods and continues until the present day.

The four literary works I analyze in this study were all written after the May Fourth period. In their concern with cities and with urban space, these works reveal much about the desire for modernization and modernity and about the experience of modernization in Republican China. However, “modernity” is a derivative term imported from the West, thus raising questions about Chinese intellectuals’ positioning and their colonial relation to Western culture (Luo 2008; Fruehauf 1993; Visser 2005). I investigate this issue in the chapters on Midnight and Love in a Fallen City.

In regards to the interrelationship between literature, cities, and modernity, Mike Crang (1998: 53) suggests that we look for how literary works exhibit modernity. Sometimes modernity is associated with industrialization, and therefore taken as a synonym for modernization. In this case, the concept of modernity is a “structure of feeling” in the process of industrialization. Central to the “structure of feeling” is a two-fold concept including the organizations of bigger and smaller human agglomeration. One of the organizations, the smaller agglomeration, is Gemeinschaft or “community,” where everyone knows everyone else and participation from outside the community—
namely, strangers—is excluded, such as a small town; another is Gesellschaft, roughly translated as “society,” which is mostly a world of strangers, such as a big city. The sense of and desire for modernity emerges from Gesellschaft, which according to Georg Simmel (1995), calls into question the mentality of members of Gemeinschaft. People from rural “communities” would face huge numbers of people and fast pace of life in the city. Such a fast-paced life and concentration of population in the “society,” along with other stimuli and novel experiences, are part of the sense of modernity for a member from the “community.”

With the emergence of modern city life, certain characters in the city are often repeatedly depicted and examined in literary works. The flâneur and the greenhorn are two obvious examples from Western literature that can also be found as character types in Chinese literature, including in the works discussed in this thesis. The flâneur, a male figure often depicted as a stroller on the streets of nineteenth-century Paris, was a representation of modernity in many literary works (Crang 1998: 54). The modern individual flâneur was an urban dweller sensitive to the emergence of modernity. His most famous appearance would be in Baudelaire’s poems about Paris.

In his work “Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century,” Walter Benjamin deems Paris and the developing forms of the city life there as representing the characteristics of modernity, of modern life, and their unsettling consequence for social relations and individual minds. He thinks Baudelaire writes his own traumatic shocks encountered in the modern city (Benjamin 1995). Baudelaire was among the first to investigate this topic, and his literary works are about Paris and its developing modern urban space in the
nineteenth century.

In Baudelaire’s works, the flâneur loiters on the streets, hunting for new shops and excitement, and appears to be a stranger to all. He seems to be reacting against the accelerated pace of modern city life, always having leisure time when other people are busy working to make a living; he is fascinated by the culture of commodity and the flow of capital, but does not involve himself in either; he lingers in public, urban spaces, sometimes in a department store or an arcade, watching other people, mostly women, for amusement. His leisure and slowness show his wealth, which coincides with the common sense that “time is money.” His activities in the city represent this modern “structure of feeling,” or sense of modernity itself (55). In addition to flâneur, Yingjin Zhang also groups the characters of dandy and detective with the that of flâneur as the three typical urban characters (Zhang 1996: 225), emphasizing their roles in the metropolis.

The greenhorn, as Jonathan Raban examines in his book *Soft City* (1974), is a newcomer to the city. Unlike the flâneur, who is fascinated by the city’s concentration of population, its flow of commodities and capital, and its accelerated rhythm of life but blasé toward the intensive stimuli from such a concentration, the greenhorn is more subject to the stimuli. When people living in the countryside suffer from food shortage or warfare, they migrate in waves to the cities. These greenhorns follow the path of other greenhorns to enter the cities, on foot, by sea, or by rail; they are awed by its big ports, monumental architecture, and grandiose railway stations, which serve as gateways to city life; they are at once fearful and admiring of the vast scale and intensity of the metropolis.

Greenhorns might get lost—either physically or mentally—in the big city, but the
freshness and excitement of city life is attractive and could sometimes transform the
greenhorn into part of the city. In this process of transformation, greenhorns could
experience feelings of broken promises, disillusionment, and disappointment. Sometimes
they choose to join the city by acting according to their observations and reflections about
city life. Xiangzi in *Camel Xiangzi* is a greenhorn who comes to Beijing from the
surrounding countryside; he tries to dress and behave like a normal urban resident; he
spends money on clothing and a rickshaw, and drinks tea like an urban resident (Lao
2001: 70, 94).

Although greenhorns’ backgrounds vary tremendously, their mentality about the
city life, and about what constitutes city life, would suggest some commonalities. Issues
such as place attachment and spatial identity in human geography apply to the studies
about greenhorns. Place attachment means a strong sense of belonging to a place. Spatial
identity would be an action of self-identifying with a particular space. For example, when
Xiangzi, a greenhorn, lives in the city for a very long time, he gradually develops his
place attachment to Beijing, and identifies himself as someone who lives in Beijing.
When he is away in the countryside, he wishes to return to the city. Another example
would be Wu Huifang in *Midnight*. She cannot attune herself to city life in Shanghai, and
always wants to return to her rural home. She sees herself as someone from the
countryside, and places her attachment back in the rural town.

As suggested by the example of *Camel Xiangzi*, literature plays an important role
in these changes of experience about urban space. It depicts characters, such as the
flâneur and the greenhorn, that become central to urban identity and the defining of city
life. Literature not only describes and illustrates the city, it also constructs the city in its own way. By doing so, literature does not merely depict modernity, it incorporates that modernity into its representation of the city. One facet of this process is how literature handles space and time: how power and culture influence and fragment urban space; and how time is conceived as speed and as a rhythm of city life. Such changes of time and space would, as Simmel suggests, have serious impacts on the mental life of urban residents: they have problems understanding the city, the world as a whole, and even themselves. Literature is good at locating, exhibiting, and analyzing these problems. In *Camel Xiangzi*, Xiangzi struggles in the old capital of Beijing, trying to make a living by working as a rickshaw puller (contrary to our stereotypes, when it was introduced into China from Japan in the late nineteenth century, the rickshaw was a new and modern transportation technology). In *Midnight*, when he comes to Shanghai from the countryside, Old Mr. Wu almost literally dies from the intense stimuli of the city’s speed, lights, women, and other forms of excitement. There are more examples we can find in reading Chinese literature of the Republican period, and that reveal how literature is related to the issues of space, time, and modernity. Although it is not uncommon for pre-modern literature to depict cities, such as the Song dynasty writer Meng Yuanlao’s accounts (2000) of Dongjing (today’s Kaifeng), the emphasis on human experience of urban space is quite a modern practice, not to mention the intertwining of psychological activities and physical space, such as in *Cold Nights*.

In the following chapters, I bring to the fore the discussion about the relationship between the city and literature through analysis the four novels and their respective
representations of the four cities. In *Camel Xiangzi*, the discussion is mainly about the urban layout of Beijing and its influence on Xiangzi, a rickshaw puller who walks on the streets everyday, about how he conceives the city, how he develops affections for the city as a greenhorn, and how he becomes desperate. I focus on the physical urban space and the psychological reflections of the characters in the novel.

The second chapter investigates the Shanghai of *Midnight*. Shanghai is famous for being at the forefront of modernization and urbanizations ahead in China in the Republican period, and my emphasize is on its intensive stimuli as a large city, a “society” with numerous strangers, as well as its distinction from that of the countryside, or “community,” as Georg Simmel suggests. In terms of modernization, this chapter includes some discussion about the extended urban space created with the help of technologies of transportation and communication. I also pay attention to the capitalists who live in the city and control large land and industries, as one kind of particular “urban” figures that often appears in fictional works.

The next chapter seeks to sort out the image of Chongqing in *Cold Nights*. The novel is set in wartime Chongqing, a city featuring mountainous terrain and foggy weather. The war period is closely associated with the appearance of urban space in Chongqing, such as the overcrowded streets, the terror of air raids, and shortage of food, supplies, and jobs. This novel also provides excellent exhibition of the psychological activities of the characters, and it sometimes uses their environment to convey them, such as the coldness and darkness of the city and the desperation of the main character Wang, the foggy weather and the ambiguous Zeng, and the death of Wang in the carnival of
celebration for the victory over Japan. The intensive stimuli in the city are also one of the
topics in this chapter, and it helps to explain the experience of the characters in this
particular space, in this particular period of war.

The final chapter deals with *Love in a Fallen City*. The novella is set in two cities,
namely Shanghai and Hong Kong, but it puts more emphasize on Hong Kong while using
Shanghai as a contrast to Hong Kong. In the comparison between the two cities, it reveals
the characteristics of Hong Kong as a Western colonial city, more vulgar, more
exaggerated, and non-traditional.

The issues discussed above would help to pull the arguments in the four chapters
together: modernity and modernization, time and space, the stimuli of city life, the
distinction between “community” and “society”; the specific urban characters such as
greenhorns, flâneur, and dandies; the five elements of the image of the city as introduced
in the next chapter, the imageability of the city, and so on. This thesis is an attempt to
investigate both physical and mental space, and to reveal what the representations of the
cities are, and how the representations matter in each novel.
Chapter One: *Camel Xiangzi* and Beijing

Lao She wrote *Camel Xiangzi* in 1936, but set it in 1920s’ Beiping (Zhang 1996: 61). Throughout its history, Beijing was renamed Beiping twice, first in the Ming dynasty, and then from 1928 to 1949 when the Nationalist government moved China’s capital to Nanjing. In the novel the city is called Beiping, so the story happens after 1928 (Yang 2006: 95), though the reader is never given an exact date. Since the city is more frequently referred to as Beijing, I use Beijing as its name hereafter.

Lao She, whose real name is Shu Qingchun, is one of the famous figures in modern Chinese literary history. He studied abroad and taught Chinese at the University of London. He returned to China in the 1930s, when he started to write fiction. He showed sympathy to Leftist movement, and was one of the founding members of the All-China Resistance Association of Writers and Artists. He remained in China after the Communist takeover, but, under pressure from Red Guard persecution, committed suicide at the beginning of Cultural Revolution. Overall, he was one of those leftist writers who supported the Communist against the Nationalist party; he integrated some of the topics of Communist propaganda into his works, such as depictions of the wickedness of traditional society and sympathy for the working class, but he did not explicitly express support for communist ideologies before 1949. He was above all a writer, who was more
concerned with his writing than political movement. Born and raised in Beijing, he was particularly interested in writing about his home city. *Camel Xiangzi*, as well as other works, exhibit his refined literary representation of the ancient capital of Beijing and its residents, traditions, cultures, and languages (Guan 2006).

Xiangzi is from the countryside. After losing his parents and land at the age of eighteen, he goes to the city of Beijing to earn a living (Lao 2001: 10). He tries many different kinds of occupations, but finally settles on rickshaw pulling. He deems himself too simple-minded for any other kind of jobs, and prefers to work alone, relying on his own strength and will, not unlike a farmer who works individually and expects a harvest at the end of a year’s hard work. Xiangzi is a greenhorn whose mentality reflects a transition from the country to the city, though he is still influenced by the rural lifestyle. The novel draws attention to this relatively strong rural influence on Xiangzi. For instance, when Xiangzi walks on the streets near the red walls of the park, he “squatted down on his hunkers,” since he had not “forgotten his country ways” (187).

Xiangzi develops a passion for pulling the rickshaw. He hopes that one day he will be able to buy a rickshaw of his own and become a top-level rickshaw puller, not like those old rickshaw pullers who look cheap and poor. Owning his own rickshaw is part of Xiangzi’s dream for success. Moreover, he dresses in good clothes and shoes, and tries his best to maintain good form when he pulls his clients.

After three years of hard work, he saves enough money for a new rickshaw. But soon after buying it, Xiangzi is robbed by a group of soldiers and his rickshaw is stolen. Xiangzi manages to escape with three camels when the soldiers disappear. He then works
in Liu Si’s rickshaw company for a while, and Liu’s daughter Huniu falls in love with Xiangzi. But Xiangzi does not want to be sidetracked from his work and tries to break up with Huniu. He goes to the Cao family where he works exclusively as their private rickshaw puller. But Huniu finds Xiangzi and lies to him that she is pregnant; she wants him to inform her father that they are in love and would like to get married. Xiangzi, for his part, still hopes to live on his own and buy himself a rickshaw.

The Cao family seems to be subject to police surveillance. When the Cao family is preparing to escape from Beijing to avoid imminent police raids, Xiangzi is intimidated by Detective Sun into giving him all his money. Once again, Xiangzi loses all the money he has saved to buy a rickshaw of his own. He has to return to Liu Si’s company to rent a rickshaw, and is therefore reunited with Huniu. At his own birthday party, Liu Si discovers that Xiangzi and Huniu are getting married, and he becomes very angry. He refuses to give Huniu any of his money and sells his company. Huniu is desperate because she now has become the wife of a rickshaw man. She uses her own savings to buy a rickshaw for Xiangzi so that he can continue to work as a rickshaw puller.

Soon Huniu gets pregnant—this time for real—but she dies giving birth. In order to pay for her funeral, Xiangzi sells his rickshaw. He falls in love with his neighbor Xiao Fuzi and promises to support her and her family. He continues to work very hard in the Xia family as their private puller, but is seduced by Mrs. Xia and infected with a sexually transmitted disease. Xiangzi manages to find the Cao family again. Mr. Cao agrees to let him work for them and give him and Xiao Fuzi a room in his house. But when Xiangzi returns to find Xiao Fuzi, she has already committed suicide because of the shame and
hardship of prostituting herself.

After Xiao Fuzi’s death, Xiangzi falls into extreme despair. He gives up all hope, about becoming the top rickshaw puller, about buying a rickshaw of his own, and about living independently and uprightly. He starts to become lazy in his work or not to work at all; he would rather cheat to make a living. The story ends without a definite ending, but from the tone of the narration, it is clearly not a happy one. *Camel Xiangzi* is the story of how Xiangzi comes to the city of Beijing with hope and love, strives to make a living, but ends up without any hope.

Although a greenhorn from the countryside, Xiangzi gradually develops a passion for the city. After successfully escaping from the soldiers who stole his new rickshaw, he has to walk back to Beijing in the heat of the scorching sun; he feels hot and thirsty, but his passion for the city sustains himself throughout his trip. “It could wait till he got back to town. How he longed to see Beiping again! Though he had neither family nor property there, it was after all his home. The whole city was his home, and once there he would find some way out” (Lao 2001: 59). The city gives Xiangzi hope and the will to continue walking. He really enjoys living and working in Beijing and sees it as his home. This passion is further revealed in the next chapter, when he returns to the city from the city gate:

Without stopping again for breath he trudged to Guanxiang. The medley of horses and people there, the cacophony of sounds, the stench of dust so soft beneath his feet tempted him to stoop down and kiss the malodorous earth, the earth that he loved, that was his source of money. He had no parents or brothers, no relatives at all; the only friend he had was this ancient city. It had given him everything. So even if he starved here, he loved it better than the
countryside. Here there were things to see and things to hear, light and sound everywhere… Endless good things too, more than he could eat or wear. Here even a beggar could get soup with meat in it, whereas in the countryside there was nothing but maize flour. (Lao 2001: 73)

Xiangzi explicitly expresses his love for the city. He cherishes its intense concentration of people, commodities, and capital. Unlike the urban resident who might develop an indifference to the city’s attractions, he enjoys the stimuli of sights and sounds, as well as the smell of dust, which are produced by the massive population of the city. Unlike a newcomer who first comes to the city with a sense of fear of its stimuli, Xiangzi is well attuned to them; but being a greenhorn, he is still attracted by them and this attraction becomes part of his love for the city.

His love for the city is, on the one hand, based on the benefits the city has to offer, such as the easily-earned money (he calls the land of the city “his source of money”), the availability of opportunities and commodities demonstrated by the above-quoted sentence “even a beggar could get soup with meat in it, whereas in the countryside there was nothing but maize flour.” On the other hand, his love is unconditional, like the love for parents, brothers, and friends. Moreover, his love for the land beneath his feet represents an emotion similar to that of a farmer who loves the earth he sows. This dimension of his love for the city suggests his greenhorn origins and his continued connection with the ways of the farming life.

Xiangzi’s unconditional love for the urban landscape is largely depicted through descriptive scenes. He notices the beauty of the city. Once when he is taking Mr. Cao past Xinhuaumen, he notices that “the wide street thinly covered with snow seemed to stretch
away to infinity, and everything around took on a more solemn air” (231). The solemn feeling even expanded to the snow on the ground which looked like “golden sand” when lit up by a car’s headlight. After another night of snow, the sun rises, and the whole city is bathed in light. Xiangzi finds the sunlight “so dazzling that one could scarcely open one’s eyes,” and it made everything looked a “golden shimmer” (279). Narration about Zhongshan Park and the area around the Forbidden City also emphasizes the beautiful natural and historical scenes of Beijing (Zhang 1996: 85). Xiangzi’s taste for Beijing’s beauty, however, is impaired by the series of misfortunes he experiences in the city. There are few depictions about the urban landscape in the latter part of the novel, which seems to suggest that Xiangzi loses his taste in the surrounding environment. It also suggests that his identification with the city is intertwined with his personal dreams of success and achievement.

Yingjin Zhang attributes the depictions of the natural beauty in Camel Xiangzi to a manifestation of the local culture, in which the urban residents cherish nature in a way that is similar to that of country folk (1996: 85). The cultural meanings of those images lie in the proximity between Beijing and nature. In the images of Beijing described by Lao She, Beijing is according to Zhang a city “friendly to its residents, palpable (the stone wall) and tasteful (the sour dates), beautiful and natural (the tadpoles and the dragonflies), comforting and nurturing like mother nature (a baby sleeping in a cradle)” (85). Regarding the image of a city that is close to nature, Zhang argues that the traditional rural values still prevail in Beijing; the love of natural beauty, therefore, derives from the rural appreciation of nature. As a greenhorn who still partially adheres to
his rural lifestyle, Xiangzi sees Beijing’s natural beauty from the perspective of a peasant. However, the love of natural beauty is not in opposition with a love for cities. For example, Frank O’Hara writes in his essay *Meditations in an Emergency* (1995: 197) that “I can’t even enjoy a blade of grass unless I know there’s a subway handy,” which clearly exhibits his love for the natural beauty of Central Park in New York. The love of nature in the Beijing residents’ mentality does not necessarily tell us that they still cherish the rural values more than urban ones. It is through other aspects of their lifestyle that we can see the influence of rural values, which I discuss later.

Xiangzi is very sensitive to the environment, including the urban landscape of Beijing. This is partly due to the nature of his job. Working as a rickshaw puller, he needs to run through the whole city and to memorize its streets and landmarks, to have a map of the city in his mind. He has to know directions and be able to identify locations in the city, to get to his customers’ desired destination. He therefore needs to perceive the city as a whole and form a mental map of the city in his mind. How does Xiangzi outline this mental map? To borrow Kevin Lynch’s concept of the “imageability” of a city outlined in his book *The Image of the City* (2001: 35), there are five elements that can help one recognize the city: paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks.

Paths include sidewalks, roads, and railway lines, along which observers move and get familiar with the city. Xiangzi, who runs through the city, is always on a path and is naturally familiar with the objects along them. Compared with the wider streets of more modern cities, the hutong is one characteristic of Beijing’s urban layout, or at least it was in the 1930s when the novel is set. *Hutong* is a local name for the alleyways that
crisscross Beijing’s neighborhoods and connect with major roads. In the Republican era, there were over 4,800 hutongs in Beijing, according to Yingjin Zhang (1996: 72). Unlike major streets, some hutong are winding and confusing, and on several occasions in the novel Xiangzi gets lost in those alleyways and relates his feeling about the experience (206). Another feature of Beijing’s urban layout that does not welcome strangers is the *siheyuan*. *Siheyuan* is an enclosed compound with houses built surrounding a courtyard. It was the basic housing unit in Beijing and was not substantially different from rural architecture. *Siheyuan* are one-story, spacious, and decorated with natural elements such as gardens (Zhang 1996: 88). The layout facilitates communication among the people who live in the same compound. For example, when Xiangzi and Huniu move into a *siheyuan*, they soon became friends with their neighbors, Xiao Fuzi and her family (325), who live in the same compound. People sharing a *siheyuan* formed their own community, without the necessity of interaction with outsiders. *Siheyuan* were situated along Beijing’s hutongs; but to passers-by, they appeared only as high walls with small entranceways.

Whereas paths separate the city into different districts, edges define the city’s borders. An edge can be a natural boundary, such as a lake or a river, but it can also be man-made. In the case of Xiangzi’s Beijing, the city walls are what define the borders of the city. (It should be mentioned that the city walls were torn down in the 1950s in order to build wider roads and facilitate the flow of traffic.) Other walls, such as those around the park and the Forbidden City, also constitute edges. Xiangzi uses these walls to find his bearings and know where he is in the larger urban fabric.
Districts are areas of the inner city that are also helpful in identifying one’s position in a city. Often mentioned in *Camel Xiangzi* is Tianqiao district, which is a market and entertainment area for comedy shows, Beijing operas, and street performance.

“South, east and then south again, he headed for the Tianqiao district. After New Year, shop-attendants would congregate there around nine o’clock after their breakfasts, for peddlers and showmen of every kind set up their stands very early. By the time Xiangzi arrived, the sound of cymbals and drums here and there had already attracted large crowds” (Lao 2001: 333). Tianqiao district was very close to the old Qianmen (Zhengyangmen) railway station on the Jinghan railway line (Liu 2007: 134). Therefore Tianqiao was always crowded with visitors, and Xiangzi could easily identify this area. In addition, he is also familiar with Xicheng district (Western city); after leaving Liu Si’s company with Huniu, he tries to steer clear of this district to avoid embarrassing encounters with rickshaw men who work for Liu Si (Lao 2001: 363).

Nodes are spots where paths concentrate; they are sometimes entrances to the city or districts. In *Camel Xiangzi*, the city gates are obvious nodes, and they are the first thing the arriving greenhorn experiences of the city. When Xiangzi escapes from the soldiers, he follows a boulevard toward Xizhimen (West main gate). As he approaches the gate, the story introduces this node as follows:

The gateway through the city wall was crowded with vehicles and pedestrians of every kind, all in a hurry to get through although none dared move too fast. The cracking of whips, the cries, curses, the honking of horns, the tinkling of bells and the laughter all mingled to form one great din as if the tunnel were an amplifier with each individual in it clamouring. Xiangzi pushed through the crowd… till he squeezed his way into the city. Before him stretched the wide,
straight boulevard of Xinjiekou. At the sight, his eyes shone as brightly as the reflected light on the eastern rooftops. He nodded to himself. (Lao 2001: 77).

Xiangzi’s excitement and cheerfulness at seeing the city is quite explicit. The city inside the gate looks bright; the streets in the city seem so wide and straight. Xizhimen, as a node of the city, is crowded with traffic from all directions: noisy and busy with people and their vehicles rushing through. Passing through the gate tunnel was a particular experience for Xiangzi. The city walls of Beijing were very thick, sometimes as wide as 20 meters, and the gates were rather narrow, creating a bottleneck for the traffic that flowed through them and thus further concentrating people, with their various incentives, at this node. It is at a city gate, an entrance to the city, that Xiangzi first experiences and forms his first impression of the city: noisy, crowded, and dark. The darkness of the tunnel also offers passers-by a dramatic build-up as they approached the light at the other end, which could explain why Xiangzi feels the city looks so “bright.”

Later in the story, Xiangzi again passes through Xizhimen (West main gate), but this time he is leaving the city. In contrast with his optimism when first entering the city, Xiangzi was “struck by the desolation of the countryside.” He saw “[T]rees stood starkly by the road without even a bird in their branches. Grey trees, grey earth, grey houses lay silently beneath the leaden sky” (501). He leaves the city to find Xiao Fuzi, his old neighbor, who was sold by her father to a whorehouse out of town (called Bai Fangzi, literally the White House). This depiction of the countryside clearly shows his disappointment about the countryside where he came from. Although he still maintains some habits from the countryside, he has become accustomed to the urban environment,
the lifestyle of the city, and being a part of the city.

Compared with the first four elements, landmarks are a somewhat more loosely-defined element of the urban landscape. Landmarks, like nodes, are recognizable sites in the city, but not as approachable as nodes. In *Camel Xiangzi*, there are already many places in the city that could be called “landmarks,” if the word is used in its original meaning. One example would be Zhongshan Park, where Xiangzi and Huniu meet (187). The park has many beautiful sites in and around it, such as palaces, lakes, and trees. It is also the place where the Xia family often goes to visit. With its red walls and natural beauty, it would be easy to identify in the city. Another example is the above mentioned railway station; it is a special place in the rickshaw men’s eyes because they can charge extra for trips there (31). Other famous Beijing landmarks, such as Beihai, Zhongnanhai, Xinhuamen, and Tiananmen, appear in the novel. These landmarks stand out from their environment, and provide markers for Xiangzi to locate himself in the city.

Besides the five elements established by Kevin Lynch, Beijing’s urban layout is also unique among other Chinese cities, and helpful for Xiangzi to navigate his way round the city. Like most of China’s ancient capitals, Beijing was designed as a system of grids, with most of its streets running north-south and east-west. The design reflects cosmological and moral meanings: with the imperial city at the center of the balanced and symmetrical north-south and east-west axes, it shows the emperor’s power and that his personhood is the core of the empire’s ethical well being (Yang 2006: 21). The north-south axis is roughly 8 kilometers (5 miles). Three layers of walls protected the Forbidden City, the imperial seat of power. Many buildings in the city were exclusively
built and located for ritual purposes, such as the four altars (sun, moon, earth, heaven), situated along the two axes, one altar for each cardinal direction (22). The roads, gates, palaces, and the grid system in Beijing all followed an idealized pattern that reflected cosmology, political power, and moral harmony.

Most of Beijing’s urban residents back in the Qing dynasty served the imperial and noble families. They resided in large areas of land outside the Forbidden City and lived in _siheyuan_, connected by _hutong_. The small alleys and lanes twist and wind their ways toward the wider streets, supplementing the grid system. Whereas it is easy to know which direction one is facing on the main streets, this is not necessarily true on the _hutong_. Xiangzi navigates the city—both in running for his job and walking on his own—using the four cardinal directions and rarely thinks in terms of left and right. He also employs his knowledge about the directions in the city to avoid encountering the rickshaw men from Liu Si’s company who worked in the western city (362).

Xiangzi’s job requires him to be familiar with the urban fabric of Beijing. When he first starts pulling a rickshaw, he often gets lost when trying to take a shortcut through the small alleys. He gradually becomes familiar with nearly every alley and forms a mental map in his mind. When faced with Huniu’s threat to talk with her father about their marriage, Xiangzi relates his feelings of disorientation about Huniu to an earlier experience of getting lost in the alleyways (206). Since some alleyways do not follow the grid system, Xiangzi’s knowledge about the urban layout does not help him to navigate in the alleyways that he is not familiar with. He tries to avoid the alleyways thereafter.

However, Xiangzi’s strong sense of direction sometimes results in feelings of
disorientation as well. “Where should he go? He didn’t know. Normally his legs followed
directions given by others, today they were free but his mind was a blank. Walking south
from the Xisi Arch through Xuanwumen Gate, the road stretched straight before him and
he felt even more at loss” (331). Xiangzi knows he is heading south, and finds out that he
is at the west side of the city because he went through the Xisi (Western fourth) Arch.

The urban fabric of the grid system in Xiangzi’s Beijing is radically different from
most other Chinese cities. In the novel, other cities—in particular Tianjin and Shanghai—
are described as different from Beijing. The novel first mentions other Chinese cities
when Xiangzi starts to work exclusively for the Yang family. “Mr. Yang was from
Shanghai, his principal wife from Tianjin and his second wife from Suzhou. Between
them, with their medley of northern and southern accents, they had produced an amazing
number of children” (103). None of them is local, thus they all speak different dialects
other than that of Beijing. Xiangzi dislikes hearing their dialects, which makes him feel
confused: “The first day of work there nearly made Xiangzi pass out” (103). Even the
Tianjin dialect the principal wife speaks and which is very close to that of Beijing makes
Xiangzi feel uneasy. The Yang family is also portrayed as always quarrelling and very
mean to Xiangzi—quite different from the other families Xiangzi worked for. The Yang
family is ill-tempered, cheap, and uncultivated, and the novel seems to relate these
characteristics to the fact that they are outsiders and do not speak the local dialect.

Tianjin is a port city very close to Beijing that was opened to foreigners after the
Second Opium War. It developed into an important city and was connected with Beijing
by rail. When Xiangzi is pushed by Huniu to celebrate her father’s birthday, he thinks
about leaving Beijing for Tianjin: “Once there he might be lucky enough to land some other job and stop pulling rickshaw. Could Tigress [Huniu] follow him to Tianjin? For him, any place you needed to take a train to was necessarily very far away; so she certainly wouldn’t be able to follow him there!” But his love for Beijing wins over his fear of Huniu, and he decides to stay: “[T]his seemed a good idea, but deep down he knew it was a last resort, because if he could stay in Beiping [Beijing] he would” (205).

In the original Chinese, the name “Beiping” appears twice and is accompanied by an exclamation mark (204). The sentence shows Xiangzi’s great passion for Beijing: he is willing to sacrifice his freedom in order to stay in his beloved Beijing, because the city is his home.

Xiangzi’s plan to leave Beiping and Huniu resurfaces when they start to live together. Again, he soon abandons the idea: “The fact that he could not bear to leave Beiping was half due to this Tianqiao district. The sight of its mat sheds and throngs of people reminded him of many amusing and likable things… He knew he ought to go to some quiet spot but could not tear himself away. No, impossible to leave this dear bustling place, impossible to leave Tianqiao, leave Beiping. Go away? There was nowhere to go” (333). Like a greenhorn, Xiangzi is naturally attracted to the stimuli of the crowds and performances. He cannot bear to live in a quiet place. He likes Tianqiao, which he calls a “dear” and “bustling” place; he sees it as a representation of Beijing. For Tianqiao, for Beijing, he decides to work out a solution with Huniu so that he does not have to leave.

Xiangzi decides to stay in Beijing. But Huniu’s father, Liu Si, leaves Beijing after
being irritated by Huniu. Unlike Xiangzi, Liu Si is not moved by the bustling scenes of Beijing. He leaves Beijing because his daughter made him lose face by marrying a rickshaw puller: “He was ashamed to stay in town after his daughter had disgraced him completely” (373). In addition, he thinks that to stay in Beijing would reflect poorly on his “manhood”: “If he never in his life left the capital… he couldn’t pride himself on being a man” (373). He planned to go to Tianjin and Shanghai for fun, but mostly to avoid the possible shamefulness he would face if he stayed in Beijing (373). From his reaction about losing face, it is implied that Liu Si is still living among his acquaintances, the people who knew him, part of a “community.” If he were living among many strangers, he would not care so much about losing face. This, along with other characteristics of Beijing, such as the hutong and siheyuan, suggests that for Lao She Beijing in the 1920s was still a relatively small city, a city whose residents still cherished rural values, a place where people continued the old ways of living in a “community,” not in a “society.” The interpersonal connections were still constructed upon personal, face-to-face relationships, not commercial or legal ones. Most of Beijing residents still live in siheyuan houses, separating themselves with the larger outside world, enjoying the natural beauty and “rural” lifestyle. Only in places like the major roads, the railway station, and the Tianqiao district one could find the high concentration of population, commodity, and capital one associates with the modern metropolis. Only at these places could strangers mingle and meet. As colonial cities, Tianjin and Shanghai, however, were crowded with strangers. In fleeing Beijing for Tianjin, Liu Si can easily disappear among its many strangers; he is escaping the familiarity of “community” for the anonymity of
“society.”

At the end of the story, Xiangzi despairs about the city of Beijing. He starts to cheat and lie to people, and he loses all his credibility, because he is living among people who know him. Beijing, like Xiangzi, is in a desperate situation. It is no longer the capital, but an “ancient capital,” a capital of the past. Its glory, its tradition, its cuisine, its language, and even its people, were leaving for other cities, cities where money and power were reconcentrating: “Beiping’s Mongolian mutton hotpot was available in westernized Qingdao, and the bustling streets of Tianjin also echoed at midnight to the mouthful low chant of, ‘Stiiiiif dooooough caaakes!’ [Stiff dough cakes, a kind of Beijing snacks]. Shanghai, Hankou, Nanjing all employed policemen and clerks who spoke Beiping dialect, and all enjoyed sesame paste buns… Even coffin carriers of Beiping sometimes took the train to Tianjin or Nanjing to carry the coffins of the rich and powerful” (537).

After opening up to foreigners, other cities in China prospered through the process of modernization and industrialization. Though Beijing was an ancient capital, it also followed the modernization process, though to a lesser degree than cities like Tianjin and Shanghai. It opened a tram line in the 1920s (Lao 2001: 523). Private automobiles and bicycles drove on the streets. A modern police force was employed to restore order in the many periods of disorder after the Republic was established (76). Banks and other financial services emerged in Beijing, although Xiangzi does not understand them (168). Electricity powered street lights, such as the one in front of Liu Si’s company (117). People enjoyed movies, like Mr. Cao does (209). Xiangzi witnesses the push of
modernization as he pulls his rickshaw around the city. He uses a chemical carbide lamp when working at night (209). Moreover, he has to compete with automobile drivers, whom he initially considers himself inferior to (178). Later in the story, he starts to intentionally block their way by slowing down his own speed: “When they hurtled towards him, blowing up the dust, he refused to make way no matter how loudly they honked or the passengers ranted” (467). By doing so, he avoids choking on the dust the fast cars blow up, and takes revenge on these people with their superior status. Even the rickshaw Xiangzi pulls is a modern and foreign invention: introduced from Japan, where it was invented in the 1860s (Strand 1993: 23). The prevalence of rickshaws over automobiles, however, also demonstrates that Beijing was ultimately a relatively small and traditional city that could depend on human labor for everyday transportation.

Beijing lost its power after losing its status as the national capital. It was a city designed as a capital, and it was painstakingly transforming itself into another type of city. The city used to be inhabited mostly by the imperial and noble families and their servants. Large areas of land were occupied by magnificent imperial gardens. Most functions of the city centered on its political role as the capital, where the emperor lived and from which he governed the whole country. When the empire fell, when the emperor was gone, the capital ceased to function, and people soon fled. Beijing was no longer affluent and thriving; people then turned their eyes to the more prosperous Shanghai, and other modern cities that usurped Beijing’s glory.

In investigating how *Camel Xiangzi* presents Beijing, how Xiangzi perceives the city and interacts with it, we have a picture—both a visual and a mental one—of the
ancient capital in the 1920s. The novel forefronts the characteristics and problems of a city conflicted by its imperial past and modernizing present. Moreover, Lao She draws attention to how the physical space of the city leaves a strong imprint on the mind of its residents, such as Xiangzi. Xiangzi’s affection for Beijing is partially due to his interaction with the urban space of Beijing. Looked at in terms of the concepts of “space” and “place,” as discussed in the Introduction, Lao She’s Beijing, as a whole city, is a place filled with Xiangzi’s personal experience and memory. Xiangzi explores Beijing’s urban space and discovers its various details, such as paths, nodes, edges, districts, and landmarks. The numerous characteristics of those details constitute his understanding of this space, and help to form his emotions for and emotional interaction with the city. Lao She shares the urban experience of his characters in this novel with readers, whose very perception of Beijing could be fundamentally changed in the process.

In the next chapter, I move to a discussion of Mao Dun’s novel *Midnight*, which is set primarily in Shanghai, a city that, as suggested above, is very different from Beijing in terms of its physical layout and architecture, as well as in its cultural meanings.
Chapter Two: *Midnight* and Shanghai

While Beijing was struggling to adjust itself to its new role as a once-glorious, former capital, as depicted in *Camel Xiangzi*, Shanghai overcame Beijing as the largest and most prosperous city in China. Until the Yuan dynasty Shanghai was a tiny fishing village under the governance of Suzhou, and its prosperity came only after Taiping Rebellion migration and the opening up as an important port by Western colonists (Yang 2006: 31). According to Yang Dongping, the route Shanghai took in its urbanization process was radically different from that of Beijing. The difference also explains why the urban layout of Shanghai is so distinctive. He cites Rhoads Murphey to explain the two routes along which a metropolis can emerge: one is from the high concentration of power and political institutions, which Rome, London, and Beijing exemplify; the other is from the abundant availability of inexpensive transportation and manufacturing workforce in a highly developed economic and integrated system, such as New York, Rotterdam, Osaka, and Shanghai (2006: 30). In other words, Beijing was a city chosen by the ruling power, namely the emperor, to be the capital, and it developed mostly to accommodate political needs. By contrast, Shanghai developed because of its advantageous location, with cheap water transportation (the point where the Yangtze River enters the East China Sea), and its proximity to a highly populous region (the Yangtze River delta). Beijing emerged as a
large city for political preferences; Shanghai did mostly for economic reasons.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Beijing’s urban layout—balanced, symmetrical, and hierarchical—reflects the cosmological and ethical characteristics of imperial power (Yang 2006: 21). The streets and districts of Beijing adhere to a grid system, with the imperial palace at the convergence of north-south and east-west axis lines. The overall urban layout of Shanghai followed no strict planning thoughts or models, though each concession administration implemented some planning in their own turf. One of the key features of Beijing was its layers of walls. Shanghai also had a city wall, but it lasted for only a short period of time; and due to a shortage of funding, its walls were constructed as circular rather than square (Yang 2006: 30). The circular city wall is not as good looking as the square one, and thus does not exemplify the idea of *tianyuan difang* (the sky is circular and the earth is square) in the planning of the wall. Most of the other Chinese city walls are square, regardless of it is a more effective defense against the enemy.

One of the most noticeable features of Shanghai’s urban layout was its foreign concessions. A foreign concession is an area of territory in the city that was occupied, governed, and policed by a foreign power. In the case of Shanghai, all the foreign concessions were located by the Huangpu River, including the French concession between the Chinese city and British concession, which also suggests that the port facilities in the concessions would be under foreign control. There used to be four concessions in Shanghai, opened respectively by Britain (1842), France (1847), America (1863), and Japan (1895) (Codrington 2005: 520). The concessions provided protection
and various conveniences to the foreigners living there, and they denied entry to some Chinese residents, highlighting the problem of the discrimination against Chinese on Chinese land. Nevertheless, the concessions safeguarded both foreign and domestic businesses from the interference of local and national governments. Among the businesses that thrived in the concessions were publishing houses and newspapers, which were protected against Chinese censorship laws; Chinese authorities rarely had control over the print media. Although some were based outside the concessions, there were over fifty publishing houses, mostly large and influential ones, in the foreign concessions (Wang 1999: 7).

For the freedom of speech and publishing opportunities Shanghai had to offer, many writers gathered in the city during the Republican period. Some of them, such as Zhang Henshui, wrote for the growing middle-class readership. Writers like Zhang are often ascribed to the Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies group of writers, who wrote popular love stories and other genres of entertainment fiction. Other writers, who claimed to be writing serious literature, formed two literary groups that competed with each other for hegemony in the emerging “new literature” field (Hockx 2008): the Association of Literary Studies (文学研究会) and Creation Society (创造社) both made Shanghai its center of activity, including publishing journals, holding reunions, and advocating their respective ideas about writing (Wang 1999: 31). Many writers of both organizations, including Mao Dun, tended to write about Shanghai, because they were familiar with it and fascinated by its prosperity and its influx of both Chinese and Western cultures.

Mao Dun, whose original name was Shen Yanbing, joined the Association of Literary Studies (文学研究会) and Creation Society (创造社) both made Shanghai its center of activity, including publishing journals, holding reunions, and advocating their respective ideas about writing (Wang 1999: 31). Many writers of both organizations, including Mao Dun, tended to write about Shanghai, because they were familiar with it and fascinated by its prosperity and its influx of both Chinese and Western cultures.
Literary Studies. He advocated the slogan proposed and endorsed by the Association: "literature for life" (为人生的文学). This slogan encapsulates the group’s attitude toward writing; the group deemed literature a vehicle for changing society, while keeping it independent and not merely a political tool. For Mao Dun, this attitude meant that literature should expose social problems and help to solve them (32). Many Shanghai leftist writers in Mao Dun’s time shared this tendency to exhibit social problems in their works, mostly problems related to labor and the working classes. This tendency was supported by the relative freedom of speech the writers had in Republican Shanghai, and triggered by the growing income gap between the rich and the poor as commodity, capital, and population concentrated in the city (11).

As one of Mao Dun’s major works, Midnight takes the conflicts between capitalists and workers as its central theme. The novel was first published in 1933, and revised in 1954. The protagonist is Wu Sunfu, a so-called “nationalist capitalist” who attempts to become rich while helping to build China’s economy and industry in semi-colonial Shanghai. The narration starts with Wu’s father, Old Mr. Wu, coming into Shanghai to avoid the warfare that is plaguing their hometown and many other parts of China. Though from a very different social class, like Xiangzi, Old Mr. Wu is a greenhorn who leaves the country for the shelter of the city; but unlike Xiangzi, who quickly adapts to city life, Old Mr. Wu is too old and stubborn and revolts against the intense stimuli from the speed, light, and sexual enticement the city offers. He soon dies, as if from excessive exposure to the stimuli.

Many rich and powerful figures gather in Wu Sunfu’s house for Old Mr. Wu’s
funeral ceremony. Zhao Botao, who works as an investor for foreign capital, discusses with other Shanghai capitalists stock market investments. He manages to persuade both Wu Sunfu and Du Zhuzhai to follow his lead on investing in the market, to form a majority to control the price. They succeed. However, fluctuations in the stock market hamper the development of local industry, including Wu Sunfu’s own factories. Other nationalist capitalists such as Sun Jiren and Wang Hefu elect Wu as the leader of a new joint venture company. They hope to put together enough money to buy more companies in this bad economic situation, and to diversify business into mines, silk factory, matches factory, and transportation, etc. Wu Sunfu is very pleased to serve in this position because he has long wished to support the national economy. While involved in buying other factories, a Communist-led uprising of farmers impedes his investments in his hometown of Shuangqiao. In Shanghai, the workers in his factory also go on strike. To suppress the strike, Wu promotes Tu Weiyue, an intelligent worker who is willing to go against his fellow striking workers. Tu bribes one of the leaders of the strike, Yao Jinfeng. When the bribe is discovered, Tu gets Wu to promote the worker who discovered the bribe and to demote Yao. This makes many workers believe that Yao Jinfeng is still on their side, and they in turn ask to resume Yao’s post. By doing so, Tu gains the trust of the majority of the workers, and he is able to persuade them to stop the strike.

Wu Sunfu starts fighting with Zhao Botao over control of the stock market. Zhao buys the stocks Wu sells, and vice versa. After the first round, Wu loses eighty thousand yuan. In order to get back his loss, he intends to lower the pay of the workers in his factories. The lowering of the pay irritates the workers, and they prepare to start another
strike. This time, Tu is unable to stop the strike and the whole factory goes on strike. Wu mortgages his factories and his own house to buy stock in the market. He even sends spies to steal information from Zhao, but the spies are actually double agents; they reveal Wu’s information to Zhao as well. Wu also tries to persuade Du Zhuzhai to support him in the market, but Du changes sides at the last moment, buying the stocks Wu just sold, thus pushing Wu into bankruptcy.

The story ends with Wu Sunfu asking his wife to leave Shanghai for the summer holidays. He maintains a façade of being able to live a luxurious lifestyle, but he has actually lost everything: his industry, his factories, his money, and even his own house. He is forced to leave Shanghai. Besides Wu Sunfu and Tu Weiyue, there are many other characters that play an important role in the novel, such as Wu’s wife and family members, other female workers in the factory, the communists in Shanghai, other capitalists, and so on. Their stories interweave with the main story line; the city life of Shanghai is exhibited through these various characters from different social classes.

The exhibition of the city and city life seems to be one of Mao Dun’s major concerns. Yingjin Zhang suggests that there are two modes of presenting the city in the novel. The first is on a global scale, employing the aerial, bird’s eye view of the geography of Shanghai’s urban landscape and scenes of commercial activities. The second one is on a local scale, to give a close-up shot to individual characters and their everyday activities in the city (1996: 125). The story begins with a scene in the former mode: an aerial view, a cartographic representation of Shanghai society and physical space (126):
The sun had just sunk below the horizon, and a gentle breeze caressed one’s face. The muddy water of Soochow Creek [Suzhou Creek], transformed to a golden green, flowed quietly westward. The evening tide from the Whangpoo [Huangpu River] had turned imperceptibly, and now the assortment of boats along both sides of the creek were riding high, their decks some six inches above the landing-stages. Faint strains of music were borne on the wind from the park across the river, punctuated by the sharp, cheerful patter of kettledrums. Under a sunset-mottled sky, the towering framework of Garden Bridge was mantled in a gathering mist. Wherever a tram passed over the bridge, the overhead cable suspended below the top of the still frame threw off bright, greenish sparks. Looking east, one could see the warehouses of foreign firms on the waterfront of Pootung [Pudong] like huge monsters crouching in the gloom, their lights twinkling like countless tiny eyes. To the west, one saw with a shock of wonder on the roof of a building a gigantic NEON sign in flaming red and phosphorescent green: LIGHT, HEAT, POWER! (Mao Dun 1979: 1)

Its depiction of the horizon (the sun has just gone down), the rivers of Shanghai, the port, the Bund, and the bridges paints a holistic picture of modern Shanghai in the 1930s. The scene also serves to remind the reader of the settings of this metropolis and to relate the story with the concepts of modernity and modernization. To further emphasize the settings, the narration then describes the metal bridge and the trams, along with the light from the skyscrapers and neon advertisements.

As seen in the introduction to this thesis, Chinese in the Republican period aspired to modernize the nation. Leo Ou-fan Lee raises the question about Shanghai and modernity: “What makes Shanghai modern?” (1999: 5). To answer this question, he says we need to pay attention to the “material aspects of Western civilization” (6). The skyscrapers, tramlines, metal bridges, automobiles, as well as the abundance of artificial light, constituted the experience of modernity in 1930’s Shanghai. In terms of the novel,
depicting these facets of Shanghai’s modernity serves to place the story in the particular context of a modernized metropolis. As noted by Yinjing Zhang (125), the aerial view at the beginning of this book, a narrative technique that is relatively new in Chinese literature; it introduces a virtual map onto the city, an imagined view, and a connection between different urban spaces. The scale of the modernized metropolis is fragmentary and piecemeal, beyond the grasp of any individual, if viewed from the ground level. The bird’s eye view helps readers see the city from a new viewpoint, to make the city comprehensible and “readable” as a text (Zhang: 1996: 129). Zhang cites Michel de Certeau, who writes that the experience of an aerial view “transforms the bewitching world by which one was possessed into a text that lies before one’s eyes. It allows one to read it, to be a solar Eye, looking down like a god” (129). In other words, the aerial view allows the reader to read the city from an omniscient perspective. Therefore the aerial view facilitates the shift between scales of global and local, as well as between different urban spaces, and different characters. The aerial view lets the reader see the overall picture.

Mao Dun uses this aerial view as a technique in *Midnight*. The aerial view often appears at the beginning of a chapter, or at a transition between different settings, to give a brief sense about the physical space. This technique is typical of “realist” literature and its function is very much like an “establishing shot” in film: it sets the spatial context for the events about to unfold. For example, chapter two begins with descriptions of the weather and the overall reaction to the hot weather, and then enters into more detailed narration about the preparations for Old Mr. Wu’s funeral. In other parts of the novel, the
narration closely follows certain characters, like a man carrying a camera following the actors in a movie scene. The two types of views seems to be making the same effort to illustrate the modernized Shanghai in the 1930s; but according to Yingjin Zhang, the ground level view is more complicated and to a certain extent, confusing, in experiencing the city (130). When seen from ground level view, the city looks like “a labyrinth inviting exploration, an enigma awaiting decipherment, a series of disconnected spaces that need to be reorganized, and an endless parade of fragmented impressions that need to be fixed in their proper places” (130). This could be said of 1930’s Shanghai, a city not designed according to an overall plan, and one that expanded over a large area of land, and with a density of population, commodities, and capital. The labyrinth-like city makes the greenhorns and even some urban residents confused and lost in the city.

Zhang goes so far as to relate the ground level view with the experience of modernity, which is characterized by fluidity and uncertainty. From Zhang’s perspective, the ground level view is an innovative technique in Republican literature, whereas the aerial view represents a more traditional mode of narration. He argues that the feeling of order conveyed through aerial view description does not relate to the experience of modernity: “the cartography of urban scenes—through an imposed aerial view—does provide the reader with a readable text of the otherwise illegible city” (130). Therefore, the aerial view allows for a mapping of the city that conveys “a sense of order in the city, a sense that ensures, and is ensured by, the continuity of tradition” (130). However, it is somewhat inappropriate to directly relate modernity with ground level view. The sense of order, as Georg Simmel argues in his *The Metropolis and Mental Life*, comes out of the
acceleration of pace of life and the use of money, “the calculative exactness” (Zhang 1996: 133). “Calculative exactness” is one of two characteristics of urbanites Simmel that coins. He notes that the modern mind has become very calculating, and the calculative exactness of practical life comes into sight with the money economy, and this exactness coincides with the emphasizes on natural science. The calculative exactness transforms the world into a mathematical problem, and needs to fix the word with formulas and orders (Simmel 1995). The sense of order, as Georg Simmel singles out in his conception about “calculative exactness,” is one of the characteristic features of the experience of modernity. Unlike the association between the ground level view and modernity, I believe the sense of order derived from the aerial view is more appropriate to associate with the experience of modernity. To imagine a city from above also requires knowledge about the spatial character of a city. For example, one could draw inspiration from a movie scene that exhibits the whole panoramic view of the city or from an actual sight on a tall building, such as a skyscraper. The sense of order is also something we can associate with modernity. With the help of those inspirations, the aerial view of a city does express the sense of orderliness, which intensifies the experience of modernity in a city.

The aerial view in Midnight helps to establish the setting of Shanghai, to exhibit the magnificent scale of Shanghai’s urban expanse, and to illustrate the particular shape and character of this metropolis, such as its skyline, its architecture, and the brightness of its lights at night. These characteristics are hard to see from the ground level; Shanghai’s unique character is best conveyed from above.

The ground level view, as seen in Midnight, is to a certain extent uncertain and
fluid. Unlike in *Camel Xiangzi*, readers are rarely told where exactly individual parts of the story happen. The representation of Shanghai in *Midnight* does not closely follow the layout of the real city. We learn about where the Huangpu River, the concessions, and the Bund are, but other than that, most of the settings in the novel are not clearly specified. Where is Wu Sunfu’s house? Where is his factory? Where is the stock market? And the hotel in which he and Zhao discuss investments? Mao Dun does not specify. *Camel Xiangzi* presents a detailed spatial layout of Beijing that can be imagined and experienced by readers, if guided by the five elements Kevin Lynch sees as critical to the “imaginability” of the city. Conversely, Shanghai as depicted in *Midnight* does not give many accounts to the spatial organization of the city in the same way *Camel Xiangzi* does. Among the images of the city in the novel, however, there are some descriptions that might suggest Lynch’s five elements to perceive the city. For instance, some of the major streets in the concessions run mostly north-south and east-west, which could work as “paths” in perceptions of the city. The Huangpu River and Suzhou Creeks are “edges,” as well as the borders of each concession. The concessions, while administered by different agencies, are “districts” that are quite different from each other in terms of architecture style and layout. And the clock tower of the custom house, the Bund, the famous hotels, and various skyscrapers are “landmarks” that assist observers in identification and orientation.

Mao Dun does, however, make legible in the novel a clear distinction between the city and the countryside. At the beginning, Old Mr. Wu and two of his children enter Shanghai to seek shelter from violence in the countryside, but he soon dies from the
stimuli of the city. His death and his inability to accept the urban stimuli are partly due to the huge gap between the city and the countryside in 1930’s China. One of Old Mr. Wu’s children, A Xuan, soon forgets the lessons his father taught him and plays all day.

Another child, Wu Huifang (Miss Fourth), develops a kind of urban sickness, and she frankly tells Wu Sunfu that she wants to leave Shanghai for the countryside (502): “I always lived with father in the countryside. I can’t live comfortably in Shanghai.”

Shanghai leaves her with a feeling of uneasiness; city life goes against her nature. She cannot get used to its food and drink. She doesn’t think that she deserves to live in the city and that she belongs to the rural town. So when Zhang Susu takes her to the countryside near Shanghai, she finds the setting comfortable. Mao Dun’s description of the scene makes the distinction between the city and the countryside rather obvious:

The car rushed out from the city districts, running on half muddy, rough road, blowing the hot and spicy yellow dust in the air. On both sides of the road laid green fields; once in a while there were forgotten tombs. Suddenly the car jumped, Miss Fourth opened her eyes, finding herself in the countryside, thinking she was having a dream; she pulled herself together, pushed Zhang Susu who was next to her, asking her softly… (521)

The countryside is depicted as having muddy and rough roads, but also a lot of green fields. Huifang always dreamed of being back to the countryside, and now her dream comes true: “Miss Fourth was very happy. She stared into the fast passing fields, feeling her soul flying back to the hometown. This place was no more different from her hometown, except the dust the car kicked up” (521). However, she soon wakes up from her dream that this rural scene was like her hometown: she sees cars parked under the
willow trees; neighbors are dressed fashionably and act like Shanghai people (522). She loses hope of returning to her hometown; she closes her eyes, almost crying her heart out (522).

For Huifang and for Old Mr. Wu, the difference between the city and the countryside is not limited to the physical space. Besides the visual difference between the city and the countryside, there are also social and cultural differences. In the countryside of 1930’s China, men and women would not dress in modern fashions and flirt with each other publicly. The novel makes the performance of flirtation between man and woman visible, not only to the reader, but also to the surrounding public in the novel. The exhibition of such a relationship seems to be part of the “sense of modernity,” as Zhang notes (1996: 139). Urban residents in the novel seem always willing to surrender to their desire, as if endorsed by the modern urban ethic. This new ethic is in contrast with Huifang and Old Mr. Wu’s traditional ethic. As Old Mr. Wu keeps saying, “lewdness is the biggest evil” (Mao 1984: 13). Huifang finally escapes from the Wu family and disappears. Although she admits that the countryside does not seem so rural when people dress themselves in stylish modern fashions (524), she still wishes to return to her rural hometown rather than stay in Shanghai. She is, like her father, a greenhorn, one who rejects the stimuli and benefits of the city for the comfort and familiarity of the countryside.

We learn from a telegraph that Wu Sunfu has some investments in his hometown of Shuangqiao (58), which is about two hundred kilometers from Shanghai (93). The communists are approaching the town, and Sunfu knows that most of his investment will
vanish if they succeed in entering. He dreams about building his hometown according to a modern ideal. He develops plans about how to modernize the town, including building big factories with tall chimneys, bringing in steamboats and automobiles, and constructing a power plant, to make it his “Shuangqiao Kingdom” (127). He wants his hometown to look like a small Shanghai, to have the technologies that represent modernization. Wu Sunfu, influenced by the modernization and convenience of the city life, wishes to break down the distinction between city and countryside, which Huifang wants to maintain. Wu Sunfu and Huifang have different opinions about how their hometown should be according to their own identities as urbanites or country people. The desire to modernize his hometown comes from his own experience of modernity in the city.

The novel offers many descriptions of modern technologies, ranging from fast cars, steamboats and diesel boats, railroads, streetlights, and electricity, to the telegraph and telephone. As a rich businessman, Wu Sunfu travels around Shanghai in his private car, to and from his house and factories, and to meet other business partners and rivals. However, there are very few accounts about what he sees and comes across on his car trips. Mao Dun seems to ignore the urban space between his various destinations. A similar kind of time-space compression emerges when Sunfu uses the telegraph and telephone to communicate with people around the city. The new technologies not only provide conveniences to those urban residents who can afford them, they also suggest a novel experience about time and space. A concentrated feeling about the physical urban space emerges with the time-space compression; the city seems smaller since it takes less
time to travel within; the convenient communication makes the distance between people seemingly smaller. Whereas Sunfu embraces these technologies and seems to relish the stimuli they offer, a greenhorn would need time to adjust to this kind of intensive consolidation of time and space, along with the concentration of population and commodities that the city offers.

On a larger, national scale, new technologies also compressed the distance between cities. Because of the civil war going on between the Communists and the Nationalists in the 1930s, Shanghai businessmen, as depicted in the novel, pay a lot of attention to the war, for several reasons. First, they invest in the Nanjing government loans (the government loan seems to be one of the stocks in the stock market), and the price of stocks fluctuates according to the performance of the Nationalist army. Second, the political stability of the nation affects the potential market for their products. Third, if the war were to approach Shanghai, they will need to prepare to escape. Lastly, the war raises the hope of the working class to strike in support of the Communist army, and the strikes will affect the productivity of their factories. In chapter 10 of *Midnight*, the stock market declines sharply after the Nationalist army suffers a big defeat. People try to obtain the latest news from a variety of sources, including foreign secret agents, telegraph, telephone, newspapers, and news headlines, such as “Reds threaten Hankow, reported!” from the *North China Daily News* (304). Though the war takes place far away from Shanghai, it nonetheless heavily influences the markets there, proving that Shanghai is the economic center of 1930s China. The urban residents in this novel live in their own perception and imagination about this war, calculating their losses or gains as the
situation changes. The technologies that compressed time and space made this connection between different locations possible. They shorten the time information takes to travel, make distant places connected with each other, help to shape the sense of a single nation-state, and form a national market. In this case, the Shanghai stock market is influenced by the warfare taking place in other regions of China, demonstrating the role of the Shanghai stock market as a “national” market of China.

On analyzing the time-space compression effect brought by new technologies in the late nineteenth century, Jeremy Stein writes: “[T]he effect was to shrink national space. The ‘annihilation of space and time’ was a common term used to characterize the experience of railway travel in the mid-nineteenth century. The metaphor of ‘annihilation’ evoked the sudden impact and violence of the railway as it overturned existing notions of time and distance” (2001: 109). In the case of the Shanghai of Midnight, the “annihilation of space and time” arrived somewhat belatedly but no less dramatically. The automobile shrank the urban space for rich businessmen, and the telegraph and telephone not only reduced the time information traveled, it also helped the capitalists to extend their power and control, such as Wu Sunfu dealing with the affairs in Shuangqiao.

Stein further explains what advanced communication technologies achieved: “[B]y separating communication from transportation it changed the ways in which communication was thought about, for example, contributing to organic and systematic modes of thinking” (110). The new communication technologies made it possible to control distant colonies from one single center, creating the idea of real “empire.” It also
leveled the commodity market, reduced the importance of local supply and demand, made geographic distance less relevant, and provided a futures market to buy and sell future contracts of commodities such as silk and rice, like those businessmen at the Chicago Exchange who buy and sell the wheat in advance (Stein 2001: 110; Cronon 1992). The telegraph and telephone expedited communication between distant locations; they made the political control of large territories easier and more efficient.

In the novel, Wu Sunfu frequently calls Tu Weiyue to pass down his orders; he also sends telegrams to his representatives in Shuangqiao to deal with the uprising. The effects of the new technologies are two-way in this novel: they change the feelings of the characters about their surrounding space; they concentrate money and power in the hands of the few who have these advantages. As David Harvey points out, “the history of capitalism has been characterised by speed-up in the pace of life, while so overcoming spatial barriers that the world sometimes seems to collapse inwards upon us” (1989: 240). The new technologies that helped break down spatial barriers were among the important forces leading to the development of capitalism. And because technologies came to different places at different times, some places progressed faster and further than others. Jeremy Stein notes “[O]ne consequence of improved global communications was the greater contrast between technologically advanced regions and those that were relatively technologically backward” (1995). In Midnight, the contrast is clear between Shanghai and Shuangqiao. Shanghai capitalists such as Wu Sunfu can control the shops and banks in Shuangqiao through their mastery of new technologies. It is Shanghai’s modern technologies, at least in part, that make Huifang so uncomfortable living there. In
Shanghai, everything is faster than in her hometown, even the relationships between men and women. The fast flow of money, commodities, and information exceeds her tolerance threshold. The intense stimuli she experiences while traveling from the smaller rural “community” to the bigger urban “society” sickens her, and kills her father Old Mr. Wu. She disappears from the story after suffering in the city.

The mentality of urban residents, as discussed by Georg Simmel, gradually developed an immunity (previously discussed as “the blasé attitude” [1995: 35]) toward the intense stimuli. The city’s concentration of money also brings out two other characteristics of urbanites that Yingjin Zhang calls “calculative exactness” and “self-preservation” (1996: 133). The first characteristic has been explained above in accordance with Simmel’s concepts. The second one, “self-preservation,” is an aftereffect of the first. Simmel relates the mentality of self-preservation to the coming of the calculative exactness and money economy. He writes:

Money, with all its colorlessness and indifference, becomes the common denominator of all values…In this phenomenon the nerves find in the refusal to react to their stimulation the last possibility of accommodating to the contents and forms of metropolitan life. The self-preservation of certain personalities is brought at the price of devaluing the whole objective world, a devaluation which in the end unavoidably drags one’s own personality down into a feeling of the same worthlessness (1995: 36).

With regards to the loss of value in metropolitan life, one develops the mentality of self-preservation in order to keep hold of one’s own value.

Although Xiangzi counts his money once in a while; his economic consciousness is not comparable to that of the Shanghai capitalists in Midnight. Wu Sunfu deals with
huge amounts of money, and the money is sometimes borrowed or mortgaged, sometimes
invested in the stock market or other industries, and sometimes lost to fluctuations in the
market. The flow of money is more large scale and more rapid than Xiangzi’s, and moves
virtually without the exchange of bank notes. In terms of “self-preservation,” the female
double agents who work both for Wu Sunfu and Zhao Botao demonstrate this
characteristic most clearly. They do not care about moral values or ethics and do
whatever they can to get enough money to survive, even if that means playing both sides.
Characters in Midnight embody the characteristics of urban residents that Zhang sketches
out: “Shanghai is a modern metropolis where individuals repeatedly fall prey to desires
for money and woman, where the intellect (exemplified by calculation, scheming, and
deception) reigns over the emotions (exemplified by Mrs. Wu’s unfulfilled romantic
love)” (1996: 139). Faced with these stimuli and characteristics, it is no wonder that rural
greenhorns find themselves lost and anxious in the city.

Whereas Beijing in Camel Xiangzi exhibits many qualities that are similar to rural
villages, Midnight’s Shanghai is radically different from rural areas and traditional
Chinese cities. The difference is so huge that greenhorns, such as Wu Huifang and Old
Mr. Wu, cannot make the transition. Shanghai, to those urbanites who get used to the city
life, is also the place where capitalists enjoy advanced technologies to control a much
wider area more efficiently. As a result of these technologies, the urban residents in
Midnight experience a compression of time and space; depictions of the urban space
became vague and uncertain as well, especially seen from ground level. The narration
then adds aerial views to aid the reading in the comprehension of the overall urban space,
and to distinguish the urban settings—the metropolis of Shanghai with its skyscrapers, fast transportation, and artificial light—from its rural surroundings. “The sense of modernity, which is imagined as specific to the experience of Shanghai, is articulated in *Midnight* through a particular strategy,” writes Yingjin Zhang, who ascribes the urbanite’s surrender to money and women in the story as a “particular strategy” (1996: 139). However, as analyzed in this chapter, the vague and uncertain urban space, the fashionable city life, the suffering experience of the greenhorns, and the new technologies, also convey the sense of modernity as the particular experience of Shanghai—the Chinese metropolis of the 1930s.
Chapter Three: Cold Nights and Chongqing

As Ba Jin notes in his epilogue, he started to write the novel Cold Nights in Chongqing during the winter of 1944, when the Japanese army took over Guilin. The Second Sino-Japanese war started in 1937 and lasted until 1945. On October 25, 1938, the Nationalist government retreated to Chongqing after the Japanese army occupied Wuhan (Bowman 2000: 154). Chongqing became the provisional capital (Peidu in Chinese, the auxiliary capital) of the Nationalist government, a protective base from which to fight the Japanese invaders.

Chongqing sits at the confluence of the Yangtze River and the Jialing River. Despite this advantageous location, Chongqing was a relatively small town in the Ming and Qing dynasties (He 2004: 215), used more as a strategic military location than as a commercial center. It was not until the late nineteenth century, when China was forced to open Chongqing as a treaty port, the city started to grow in both population and wealth (215). In 1929, Chongqing was officially designated a city; it had a population of 470,000. During the Sino-Japanese war, many refugees flowed from the east into the city, swelling the population to over one million (229). This rapid influx of people made for a densely crowded urban environment. As depicted in Cold Nights, Chongqing was chaotic and quality of life in the city was poor. Peng Deng provides some American accounts about
the city and quality of life in wartime Chongqing:

But the heroic image pales as time passed, and by the end of the war, few of the Americans living in wartime Chongqing harbored a love for the city itself. Graham Peck, for example, called Chongqing a “backwater” and a “doghouse” for Americans there. A city which had hardly emerged from medieval backwardness… Most outsiders detested the primitive roads and sanitary conditions in the city, its terraced slums teeming with “people like blue maggots in long irregular wounds.” Americans… resented the insularity of Chongqing. They might find a sort of glamour in the most bombed city in the world, but still felt a certain nostalgia for the coastal area (1994: 6).

As the war continued, the situation in Chongqing worsened. The mountains to the east protected Chongqing, so the Japanese army never managed to reach there. Instead, they used their air force to bomb the city. According the U. S. Foreign Broadcast Information Service, in 1939, Chongqing was bombed 34 times with over 800 sorties, dropping 2000 bombs; in 1940, it was bombed 80 times in over 4000 sorties with more than 10,000 bombs dropped (1995: 42). *Cold Nights* illustrated both the terror of Japanese bombing and the resulting chaos of the streets of Chongqing.

The wartime capital Chongqing depicted in *Cold Nights* is neither like the ancient capital Beijing in *Camel Xiangzi* nor the modernized metropolis Shanghai in *Midnight*. Because of the war, life there was dangerous and the living standard low. The stimuli of the city were much more intense than that of other urban representations discussed above. They not only come from the concentration of population, commodities, and capital; they also arrive with the air raid siren.

Ba Jin, whose real name was Li Yaotang, moved to Chongqing along with the
retreat of the Nationalist government in 1939. He was one of the members of the All China Resistance Association of Writers and Artists, which Mao Dun and other fellow writers founded earlier in Wuhan. Ba Jin shared their leftist standpoint on political issues (Hong 2000). There are several reasons that could explain why he put the background of this novel in Chongqing. Ba Jin was born in Chengdu, which like Chongqing was a city in Sichuan province. Ba Jin could have been motivated by a personal preference for writing about his home province. Chongqing was also China’s wartime capital, to which millions of refugees had moved in the late 1930s, and the center of Nationalist resistance efforts against the Japanese. As such, it was a bustling, if poor and backward, city that merited serious literary depiction. But it is most likely that Ba Jin was drawing from his personal experience of living in Chongqing during the war, his own feeling about the city and its residents. He observed the severely bombed city in person, and familiarized himself with people like the main characters in his novel, who retreated to Chongqing and gave up their ideals and hopes (Ba 1989: 703). The background of this novel in Chongqing was based on his own experience of the city, and he writes in a style that is both sentimental and desperate, associated with the experience of wartime Chongqing. He witnessed himself the chaotic city with its muddy roads covered in garbage. The city of Chongqing as depicted in this novel manages to capture the historical moment of the Second Sino-Japanese war. The streets of Chongqing are one of its primary settings, using it to elaborate the physical and psychological states of the protagonists. An important, often overlooked, dimension of the novel is the interaction between the city, the urban space of Chongqing, and the people, the characters. We can understand how
they perceive the city, what they have experienced in the city as urban residents. In addition, their experience of the urban space is related to their own sentiments. Zeng Shusheng relates her ambiguity to the famous Chongqing fog; Wang Wenxuan wanders on the chaotic streets trying to pull himself together; the rich and powerful people, like their bosses, sit comfortably in their automobiles, passing the streets crowded with refugees from all over the country. The painful city life in Chongqing experienced spatially adds to their already severe personal anguish.

There are three main characters in the novel: Wang Wenxuan, his wife Zeng Shusheng, and his mother. Wang and Zeng get married, though their marriage is unofficial because they have not registered with the government. Their shared ideal is to build a school, a school like a family in the countryside. After the war breaks out, they have to give up their ideal and flee to Chongqing from Shanghai. Zeng works in a bank, but she calls herself a “flower vase” for the bank, suggesting that she is not satisfied with her boring and meaningless job. Wang’s mother comes to help Wang and Zeng, but conflicts arise between the two women. Wang’s mother thinks Zeng is inconsiderate and uncaring, far from the traditional ideal for a Chinese woman: she pays more attention to herself than to her family. At the beginning of the novel, Zeng quarrels with Wang and his mother, and she leaves home.

Wang still loves Zeng and hopes she will come home to live with his mother and raise their son. One day, he goes to the bank at which she works and waits for her. She appears, and they make an appointment to meet later at the International Café. When he asks her whether she has another lover, she feels irritated and leaves the café. He is
frustrated and walks back home. At home, his mother makes a rare dinner with meat in it, but Wang is not happy without his wife. He then goes out for a drink and comes across an old classmate from middle school. They talk about their lives, and Wang learns that his classmate’s wife died because of bad medical treatment in a Chongqing hospital. Wang gets very drunk and, on his way home, bumps into Zeng. She then accompanies him home and promises not to leave.

On another day, he goes to work, but by noon begins to feel sick. He then asks for half a day off to rest at home. But his wife has not returned by the time. She has gone out to dance, and later confesses that she danced mostly with Chen, her boss. Wang returns to work several days later, though he has not recovered yet from his illness. He attends his boss’s birthday party and involuntarily gives him a relatively large amount of money as a gift. He then returns home. His illness worsens, and he coughs up blood.

He manages to keep working in the following days; family life seems all right, so does his illness. But his wife and mother still fight with each other, making him feel frustrated as a husband and son. He then goes to drink and meets his classmate once again. When they finish drinking and leave the inn, his classmate is hit by a car in the chaotic Chongqing traffic. Shocked by witnessing his friend’s death, his illness worsens, and he stops working for a few days.

While he rests at home, Zeng’s boss, Chen, asks Zeng to flee to the safety of Lanzhou, because the Japanese army is approaching Chongqing. While she contemplates whether or not to go with him, Wang is fired by his boss. Moved by his worsening illness, Zeng promises not to leave him. However, her boss has already booked her flight and
promised her a new job in Lanzhou; in the end, she leaves Chongqing. Husband and wife correspond for some time, writing each other letters, but she finally sends him a farewell letter, saying that she loves him no more. He dies in desperation a few days after Japan surrenders to China and the war ends. After the war ends, Zeng comes back to Chongqing, only to learn that her husband has died from illness and that his body was taken away by his mother. She cannot find her son. She seems undisturbed by the death of her husband and the disappearance of her son and is determined to start a new life.

In the prologue to *Cold Nights*, Ba Jin confesses that he intended to give this novel a relatively tragic and hopeless tone: “I did not add a sentence of ‘oh, the dawn is coming!’ at the end of the story according to the instructions of some so-called critics… the only reason is that those who are destroyed by the unreasonable system (不合理的制度) are too exhausted by their lives to call for the dawn” (1989: 704). The mess and terrifying urban space of Chongqing echoes this tone. The physical urban space intensifies the emotions the characters feel. The chaos of the streets makes them feel dangerous, the insanity leads to nausea, the overcrowding and curvy roads let them feel stressful and exhausted, and the frequent air raid siren reminds them that their very lives are under constant threat. The human experience of the city, of the urban space, is one of the greatest contributions of this novel. It bridges the divide that has often separated personal psychological activities and the experience of urban space in literature, and leaves clues as to how Chinese cities were perceived in the Republican period. The way Ba Jin relates the physical space to his writing style proves that the human experience in
physical space is one of the important factors in the interrelations between literature and city.

As is well known, Chongqing is often labeled a “mountain city” and “foggy town.” Of his impression of Chongqing’s notorious fog, Ba Jin uses the fog (or smog, as they are the same word, wu, in Chinese) to express Zeng’s inner conflict about Wang and her boss Chen, and her desperation about the future. He writes: “A thin white smog now covered the river, and she had no idea when it had appeared. She could actually smell it. The smog reached the shore and now encompassed them. The smell was stifling, as if it were set in the smog” (1978: 74). The description of fog is relatively negative in the novel. It represents the uncertainty in the lives of the characters, and the deepening of their desperation about the future. This impression about fog also emerges when Wang’s wife Zeng is leaving Chongqing. The car she takes “rushed into the fog like an arrow” (626). As He Yimin points out, large portions of Chongqing sit on a series of mountains and are covered by fog for much of the year (He 2004: 215). Because of the particular spatial characteristic of its terrain, the urban space and organization of Chongqing is quite different from that of Beijing and Shanghai, which I discussed in the last two chapters. To borrow Lynch’s five elements again, the size of the city is comparatively smaller than other large Chinese cities, and the city expands not from one single “district” or “node” (as Beijing does from the Forbidden City) or from one single “edge” (as Shanghai does along the Huangpu River), but from several independent “districts,” like Shapingba (沙坪坝) or Chaotianmen (朝天门). They also serve as the “nodes” where traffic accumulates. The Yangtze River and Jialing River are two “edges” for the city, and they
also work as “landmarks” along with the mountains that lies between districts. From these districts have emerged different neighborhoods connected to each other by roads, and traveling between different districts would be like traveling between nodes on a path. Chongqing is thus a diffuse city, a multi-district city without a clear focal node or core. Each district is like a small town, though often crowded with people and traffic from other districts.

Because the size of each neighborhood is relatively small and the roads are narrow, short, and curvy, it is more convenient to walk than take a bus or drive. According to research done by Ren Qiliang and Li Shuqing, even in 2002 62.68% of Chongqing’s residents relied on walking as their primary transportation mode (2005: 50). The hilly landscape has made it especially difficult and expensive to build roads and public transportation as the city expanded.

Naturally, during the war period, when automobiles were relatively scarce, residents relied even more heavily on walking. Most movement through the city in *Cold Nights* is by foot. Wang walks between his office and home; he goes to the bank and the café to meet his wife; he and his mother run to the shelter when the air raid siren sounds. The hilly Chongqing terrain discourages the use of a bicycle, and automobiles are too expensive for most of the 1940s residents of the city. There are rickshaws in the city—when Wang loiters on the street, he is almost knocked down by a running rickshaw (455)—but they are much less central to Chongqing’s urban landscape than to Lao She’s *Beijing*. In *Cold Nights*, as in *Midnight*, the automobile is a sign of personal wealth and social status. For example, Wang’s boss, Zhou, arrives fashionably late for his own
birthday party in a car (489). Likewise, Zeng’s boss, Chen, travels across the town in a car, and picks up Zeng in his car when they are leaving for Lanzhou. Because of the terrain, in the 1940s, there was no tram service within or rail service to Chongqing. Air flights were available, but only to the wealthy few. To purchase an airline ticket, one needed to buy it from the black market, which was not affordable to ordinary people (531). Likewise, intercity mail service relied heavily on airplanes rather than trucks or trains. When Zeng leaves Chongqing, Wang receives her mail and money orders predominantly by air mail (633). The lack of available transportation in wartime Chongqing also helps to shape the desperate situation of Wang in this novel. The lack of transportation also creates a sense of insularity for Chongqing that seems to be paralleled in the psychological lives of the characters in the novel. Chongqing is cut off from the rest of China. The water channeled down river is blocked by the Japanese, the roads to other unoccupied areas are limited and in poor condition, and intercity transportation heavily relies on flight, which is extremely limited in wartime. For inner city travel, buses are overcrowded and often subject to delays due to the primitive roads or bad weather. Walking seems to be the only choice, and characters in the novel must bear with the hills and the many strangers on the street.

Wang walks every day in the city, and if he needs to reach a farther destination, he has to take a bus. Because of overcrowding in the city and the limited availability of gasoline, taking a bus could be a very unpleasant experience, as described in the following scene from the novel: “After a thirty minutes’ wait at the station, he was pushed into a bus by other passengers. Since there was no empty seat available, he again
had to stand, this time for an hour and a half, riding a distance that would normally take a little more than forty minutes. The rain had made the ride much longer” (Pa 1978: 158).

The mountainous geography separates Chongqing into several independent zones, which are poorly connected to each other (Huang 2005: 59), and it is difficult to travel from one to the other. As suggested above, Chongqing is a city that seems more of a loosely connected network of neighborhoods than a modern city with a downtown core that gives unity to the whole. This was perhaps especially true in the 1940s.

The short walking distances give the city an extremely compact and crowded feel. In such an urban environment, it is easy to encounter strangers as in a “society.” There is another reason for the crowding of so many strangers: lots of people had come from different parts of China to congregate in Chongqing during the war. Regardless of whether the urban space there is large enough to bear such a massive population, strangers are a key component of a large city, which as a true urban “society” that does not exclude outsiders. The streets of the city are public spaces open to all. There are many strangers on the streets in Cold Night. For example, when Wang is walking home after the air raid siren has stopped, he sees the street “waking up”: street peddlers selling food and people gathering in front of the food stalls (424). Unlike Midnight, in which the urban public space is rarely mentioned because the main characters travel mostly in automobiles, Cold Nights’ depiction of strangers on the street is inevitable because the characters are always walking. In fact, many important incidents in Cold Nights, such as the death of Wang’s classmate and several encounters between Wang and his wife, take place on the streets. Sometimes Wang would just “walk” to kill time: “[H]e walked
without a destination in mind. He was neither ‘rushing’ nor ‘loitering’” (655). Streets become the places where he contemplates, where he recognizes the city, and where he struggles to find hope, though the city itself is difficult to comprehend physically and mentally. By contrast, Wang’s own apartment and his workplace, the “interior space,” is stifling and claustrophobic, and it reflects his oppressed mental state of mind to a certain degree. This juxtaposition of interior and exterior spaces (the streets) is an important characteristic of the novel.

In addition, the geographic characteristics of Chongqing make its urban stimuli perhaps even more intense than that of other cities. Because of its narrow, windy roads and its hills packed densely with houses and buildings, Chongqing has a cramped and concentrated character that is very different from Beijing, with its flat and open urban landscape and grid configuration, and Shanghai, with its straight streets and high rises. Add to that urban environment a large population crammed into a small space and we can see the particular commotion, confusion, and chaos of Chongqing’s street culture. This sense of confusion and chaos is conveyed in the following passage of narrative description:

One beautiful day after lunch he went out for a walk. The same dusty streets were still crowded with cars, the traffic conditions still chaotic, and the same unsightly garbage still piled on each street corner. Covering his nose, he walked along the streets. Unwittingly his feet took him to the International Café, where his eyes dwelt on several birthday cakes and all sorts of American candy in its display window. (Pa 1978: 132)

The stimuli offered by the city are strong. They come from the mess on the street; the
dust, the crowds, and even the scattered rubbish are a feast for the eyes and the nose. Unlike a long time urban resident who may develop indifference toward all these stimuli, Wang is still sensitive to his surrounding environment. Whereas he covers his nose to avoid the smell of the garbage, most of the other passersby barely seem to notice. In this scene, Wang also shows interest in the commodities in the café window, like a flâneur who appreciates the exhibition of concentrated capital and commodities; and like a flâneur, he sometimes walks the streets aimlessly. But Wang knows he cannot afford the cakes and candies enticingly displayed there. The over-priced food only makes him long for his wife, with whom he used to enjoy dining out (640).

Ba Jin’s Chongqing also offers stimuli of a less benign sort: frequent air raids and the perennial dangers of street traffic. Although the sights and sounds of Shanghai lead to Old Mr. Wu’s death in Midnight, the stimuli of wartime Chongqing are clearly of a different order, too potentially life-threatening to ignore. The city life in wartime Chongqing is intensely stressful. To make a living here is already too much for Wang, and the threat of the constant air raids and dangerous traffic is an added psychological burden.

The particular weather in Chongqing also adds to the atmosphere of uncertainty and to the terrifying tone of the novel. Seen from the ground level view, the foggy weather could make the pedestrian confused and lost in the city. In his comparative analysis of ground level and aerial views in Chinese novels, Yingjin Zhang notes that from the ground level view the city looks like “a labyrinth inviting exploration, an enigma awaiting decipherment, a series of disconnected spaces that need to be reorganized, and an endless parade of fragmented impressions that need to be fixed in
their proper places” (1996: 130). Ground-level narrations present the city as fragmented, uncertain, and unclear; this view, Zhang believes, relates to the experience of modernity.

From the beginning of Cold Nights, the narration sets to emphasize the darkness and coldness of the urban space, which the characters observe from the ground level view. Typical is the following passage: “He stood up from the stone stair in front of the metal gate of the bank, walked to the sidewalk, raised his head to watch the sky” (Ba 1989: 419). These kinds of passages are often accompanied by descriptions of the feelings of the protagonist, such as the feeling of cold or of being lost in the night. As suggested in the title of the novel, Cold Nights renders the darkness and coldness of the night very well: “[T]he coldness of the night gradually passed through his thin jacket, he suddenly quivered” (419) and “[T]here was the not so thick darkness surrounding him” (419). The narrator even calls the passage to Wang’s home a “black hole”: “[T]he gate was like a black hole; today it was this district’s turn to lose power, and no kind person lit a oil lamp in front of the gate. He scrambled across the pitch black passageway, and walked onto the stairs” (449). The metaphor of night is prevalent in the narration, which frequently emphasizes the darkness and coldness of the experience of wartime Chongqing.

Unlike Midnight, which frequently uses bird’s eye level description, the ground level narrations in this novel present the urban space as foggy, uncertain, and like a labyrinth. Wang often gets lost in the city: “Where should he go to find her? It would take more than a night to walk around this big mountain city! She could be on any street; she could be nowhere. In the end, where should he go to find her?” (422). Wang’s most frequent emotional relation to Chongqing is the feeling of being lost. Of course, this
feeling also relates to his own life, lost as he is on the way to realizing his ideals and finding true love and peace for his family. The feeling of being lost in this novel is a very modern one, because it combines historical circumstances and the psychological experience of Wang. The detailed narration of the character’s mental activities reflects that space as an important dimension of human perception; this experienced spatiality connects the physical space with the characters’ psyche. This is the kind of literary work that humanist geographers might use to prove the importance of human experience in their studies. The characters’ experience of urban space does suggest that the terrain and the urban layout have significant influence on human experience, perception, and identity.

In *Midnight*, the civil war between the Kuomintang army, the communists, and other warlords result at most in fluctuations of the stock market. Wu Sunfu and other capitalists pay close attention to the war because of the large amount of money they have invested in government loans for the war. In *Cold Nights*, the threat of the Sino-Japanese war is more severe: Wang and other urban residents could lose everything, their homes, jobs, and even family. The war heightens the anxiety and confusion of the characters in terms of their relation to the city and their perception of the city. The wartime residents of Ba Jin’s Chongqing need to be constantly aware of the location of the Japanese army, because that directly affects their personal lives. Many wealthy people in the novel flee to Lanzhou, as do Zeng and her boss. When Guiyang is conquered by the Japanese and refugees from Guiyang escape to Chonqing, the residents get more nervous than ever before. Newspapers report on the war, but rumors spread about the “real” situation.
because people don’t trust the veracity of newspaper accounts.

When the Japanese finally surrender, the whole city celebrates the victory:

Suddenly firecrackers exploded in the street, a sound rarely heard in the city during the last few years. At first, few people took any notice of it, but the noise went on unabated, from far and near, as if an important event were being celebrated. People were scrambling everywhere, many running, many singing, and others noisily chatting with one another.

He was about to ask what was going on when his mother started to speak up.

“The Japanese have surrendered! The Japanese have surrendered!” a boy’s voice drowned her out, yelling the news in the street, a voice echoed by many other voices (Pa 1978: 161).

The streets are even more chaotic in celebration than they were in the chaos of war, filled with visual, aural, and olfactory stimuli. The mess of Chongqing’s streets has come to the extreme. Ironically, in these happy circumstances Wang is dying. The residents of Chongqing are parading on the streets, “airplanes performed many stunts and scattered celebration leaflets” (Pa 1978: 166). The sharp contrast between this celebration and Wang’s physical and psychological pain intensifies the desperate tone of this novel.

He Yimin tells us that, ironically, the situation in Chongqing after the war actually worsened. The sudden increase of population during the war to a certain extent destroyed the infrastructure of the city. After the war, most of the government departments, universities, companies, factories, and embassies that moved to Chongqing during the war returned to Nanjing. In addition, hyper-inflation and the increase of commodity prices after the war unsettled the economy and greatly reduced production in Chongqing factories. The city fell into a long decline, so did the population, which decreased from
over a million to about nine hundred thousand (He 2004: 229). Ba Jin was right; the cold nights did not end with the defeat of the Japanese, and the dawn did not arrive in Chongqing. The city’s chaos continued.

Chongqing’s identity as a city in Ba Jin’s novel is intertwined with its historical role as wartime capital. The war brings intense stress to the novel’s three main characters, Wang, Zeng, and Wang’s mother. The mountainous terrain of the city separates the city into many independent zones poorly connected by roads and public transportation, thus forcing the characters to travel by foot, from which perspective the reader is presented with a particular ground level view of the city that is unclear and uncertain and that reflects the characters’ psychological feelings of confusion, helplessness, and disorientation. The streets are crowded with strangers such as refugees and street peddlers. Walking in the city is exhaustive and dangerous, and subject to casualties caused by the chaotic automobile traffic. City life in Chongqing, as depicted in Cold Nights, is harsh and desperate. The foggy weather adds to the experience of the city as cold and uncertain. Many of the novel’s scenes are set at night and emphasize the darkness of the nights, further suggesting the desperation of the protagonist. All of these elements—the cold, dark nights, the uncertain and fragmented urban space, the crowds filling an urban space with myriad stimuli, the garbage, etc.—reinforce the negative image of Chongqing as a wartime capital and the tragic tone of the story.
Chapter Four: *Love in a Fallen City* and Hong Kong

Zhang Ailing (Eileen Chang) returned to Shanghai in 1942 after Japan occupied Hong Kong (Wang 2006: 151). She published *Love in a Fallen City* (*Qingcheng zhi lian*) in 1943, introducing wartime Hong Kong to her Shanghai readers. Considering that Shanghai was under Japanese occupation at the time she published this novella, Zhang seems to have been rather unconcerned about the war and the resistance struggle against the Japanese. Otherwise she might have followed writers such as Lao She, Mao Dun, and Ba Jin to Chongqing and have participated in “national defense literature” literature they promoted there. She even left Mainland China after 1949, showing that she did not endorse the leftist standpoint shared by the other writers discussed in this thesis. Zhang had been in Hong Kong as a college student, but when the war broke out, she was forced to leave; in the process, all her transcripts and documents at the university were burned (Zhang 1996: 322). The war between the Japanese and the British colonists in Hong Kong left her with indelible memories. As a result, she writes the war into this story as a narrative device to change the fate of the two main characters in *Love in a Fallen City*. Unlike the war depicted in *Cold Nights*, which is severe and horrifying, the war in Hong Kong between the Japanese and the British colonists is relatively short and does not involve great casualty.
The novella’s depiction of the urban space is not as plentiful as in the other novels discussed in the previous chapters. The narration about Hong Kong is perhaps more substantial than that of Shanghai. But the title of the novel, Love in a Fallen City, suggests an emphasis on the role of the cities. Why in a fallen city? Why does the story have to happen in a city? This demonstrates that, in Zhang Ailing’s perception, the city is already an important factor that affects the story. The “city” in the title represents city life, urban residents, intensive stimuli, and the concentrated population. The city offers the convenience brought by technologies; the city is modernized, and provides the culture and the desire for modernity. The city plays a very important role in the overall narration of Zhang’s novella. The implication of a “fallen city” would suggest the defeat of something great, something of grave importance, and contrast with the rather trivial and insignificant personal fate, such as love affairs. This connection between personal fate and the fate of a great city suggests the human experience of urban space could involve more than the perception of the city, as in Camel Xiangzi, in which Xiangzi takes Beijing as his home and friend and internalizes the urban space of Beijing in his everyday life. It also involves more than the modernized urban landscape depicted in Midnight that influences the viewpoint of Wu Sunfu about what his ideal hometown is. And it is more than a suffering from the terrain, living conditions, and underlying background for psychological activities, as in Cold Nights. In Love in a Fallen City, the experience of the city becomes part of a personal fate, a turning point in someone’s life. The city is no longer a setting of a story; it actively involves itself in the development of the story. Such a role for the city was also due to the personal experience of Zhang Ailing, who was
affected by the city when the war broke out.

The premature end of her college studies deepened Zhang’s beliefs in an apocalyptic viewpoint about her own life and achievements. The term “fallen city” in the title of this story exhibits this apocalyptic viewpoint: the city is destined to fall into the enemy’s hand. The image of the fallen city is often associated with ominous female beauties, as in the Chinese idiom qingguo qingcheng (倾国倾城). The relationship between one individual woman and the fate of a nation or city also brings the story a prophetic implication of ultimate devastation. This point of view enters the story as well. When Bai Liusu and Fan Liuyuan, the story’s protagonists, are walking in the fields, they find a tall wall. Fan suggests that maybe one day human civilization and the whole world will collapse; but if the wall still exists, and he and Bai meet here, they will truly fall in love forever (Zhang 1999: 21).

Phrases about the destruction of the world and human civilization appear several times in the story, and they are related to the representation of the fallen city and the wall. Later in the story, after the Japanese take over Hong Kong and Bai and Fan are living together, Bai remembers the wall and Fan’s promise; she realizes that the whole world is ephemeral and subject to destruction (39). Ironically, when this story was published, Shanghai had also “fallen” to the Japanese. The story provides few accounts about this fact, and does not view it from an apocalyptic viewpoint.

The story begins with an introduction to Bai’s family. Bai Liusu lives in a big family in Shanghai; the family’s lifestyle is traditional and slow. Other women in the family are not comfortable with Bai Liusu because she recently divorced her husband.
From the perspective of traditional Chinese values, divorce is frowned upon, if not taboo; but to Bai Liusu, it is something quite modern and fashionable. She only regrets that she is unable to live on her own and must live in this big and noisy family that so scorns her.

Liusu’s younger sister is looking for a husband. Mrs. Xu volunteers to help her find one, and she also promises to find a man for Liusu. For Bai Liusu’s sister, she finds Fan Liuyuan, and for Liusu a middle-aged man who recently lost his wife. Bai’s family all go to meet Fan. It turns out that Fan and Bai Liusu develop affections for each other, which irritates the whole family. They think that Liusu is robbing her sister of a potential husband, and her sister is more valuable than she is, because Liusu is older and has married before. From their perspective, Liusu does not deserve Fan Liuyuan, a young and rich man who has lived abroad. Liusu, for her part, thinks that Fan is among the best men she can find, though she is not so sure that Fan truly loves her. When Mrs. Xu asks her to leave for Hong Kong with the Xu family, Liusu harbors doubts, but agrees to go anyway. When Bai Liusu arrives in Hong Kong, Fan is there waiting for her. Bai figures out that Fan is living next to her room in the hotel, and she realizes that her trip is part of his arrangement.

They have a great time in Hong Kong; they go to the dance halls, restaurants of various cuisines, and even to the countryside and the beach. Bai gets to know a friend of Fan’s, a self-labeled “princess” from India. For a while, Fan seems to intentionally ignore Bai. She becomes angry when she learns that Fan is not going to marry her, and she returns to Shanghai.

Her return home is a matter of shame for her family. Several months later, Fan
asks her to go to Hong Kong again. She knows that she has no other choice. They reunite, and confirm their relationship. When Fan informs her that he must soon make a trip to the United Kingdom, Bai agrees to wait for him in Hong Kong. They rent a house and hire a servant. A few days later, the Japanese invade Hong Kong, and the ship Fan was to take to England cannot leave. Fan is forced to stay in Hong Kong, and the two finally get married. The war prevents Bai and Fan, the two lovers in the story, from being able to leave Hong Kong. The situation gets direr when Fan runs out of money. Therefore, they leave for Shanghai as soon as the travel restriction is lifted.

Fan’s attitude toward Bai changes in the story. He first gets to know her at the marriage appointment set up by Mrs. Xu. When she arrives in Hong Kong, the two become friends. Although they flirt with each other and enjoy themselves, their relationship is platonic; Fan does not even touch her hands (25). Bai thinks he is merely hoping to start a platonic relationship with her (22). However, when Fan confesses his love to Bai on the telephone, he explicitly tells her that he does not wish to marry her. In addition, Fan seems to have a very close relationship with the Indian princess. His behavior seems to suggest that he is a “dandy,” which Yingjin Zhang, citing Baudelaire, defines as “the man who is rich and idle, and who, even if blasé, has no other occupation than the perpetual pursuit of happiness” (1996: 226).

Having received an inheritance, Fan Liuyuan is comfortably wealthy. His rich and idle lifestyle coincides with that of a dandy as defined by Yinjing Zhang (Zhang 1996: 225). He seems to have no other occupation beyond idling his time away with other rich people. As a dandy, he is also not serious about marriage. He does not wish to get
married, because he still has time and money to waste and he thinks marriage would restrict him from the “perpetual pursuit of happiness.” Fan says this of marriage: “I’m not such a fool that I’ll pay to marry someone who has no feelings for me, just so that she can tell me what to do! That’s simply too unfair. And it's unfair to you, too. Well, maybe you don't care. Basically, you think that marriage is long-term prostitution--” (Chang 2007: 149). The war changes his attitude and his pursuit of happiness. His money begins to run out, and he pays more attention to eating than ever before. After meeting the Indian princess after the war, Fan voluntarily asks Bai to marry him. His idleness, his wealth, and even his individualism, do not fit into “this time of turmoil and chaos of war” (39).

Yingjin Zhang categorizes dandy characters, such as Fan, with the flâneur and the detective as the three typical urban characters (Zhang 1996: 225), emphasizing their roles in the metropolis. Being typically urban, dandies choose to live in cities. Therefore, it is no wonder that Fan always chooses the bigger cities, such as Hong Kong, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and London.

*Love in a Fallen City* takes place in two cities: Shanghai and Hong Kong. Over one half of the story is dedicated to Hong Kong, and the accounts of Shanghai are very limited by comparison. In the story, the Bai family of Shanghai seems very traditional and old fashioned. They use an old clock, which is one hour behind the daylight saving time used by the rest of the city. They do not meet guests at night. Their family values are traditional, thinking that a woman should marry only once and never divorce. To find a husband requires a matchmaker. Even dancing is considered dishonorable because they are a family of “poetry and rites” (13). That said, the family’s living conditions are
relatively low. When Bai recalls her life in Shanghai, she thinks of how very crowded it was: “From her earliest youth, she'd lived in an overcrowded world. Pushing, squeezing, trampling, hugging, hauling, old people, young people, people everywhere. Twentysome people in a family, all in one house; you sat in a room clipping a fingernail--someone was watching you from the window” (Chang 2007: 157). The crowding of the Bai family even extends to their use of taxis: seven family members manage to squeeze into one taxi when they go to meet Fan Liuyuan (Zhang 1999: 11). Liusu thus prefers to live in Hong Kong, alone, waiting for Fan Liuyuan, rather than go back to this crowded and old-fashioned family in Shanghai. Although the Shanghai cinemas and dance halls are mentioned in this story, the narration gives no description of or comment on them. The representation of Shanghai in this story is relatively vague.

Bai Liusu is from Shanghai. By employing her view on Hong Kong, the story tells us how a Shanghai woman appreciates Hong Kong, and how she compares Hong Kong to Shanghai. When discussing the story, Zhang Ailing admits that she is writing a legend of Hong Kong for the Shanghai people (Wang 2006: 151). She also notes that she views Hong Kong from a Shanghai perspective, and only Shanghai readers could understand the meanings of the local expressions in her works, something they can use their knowledge and experience learned in Shanghai to discover the deeply hidden Shanghai spirit. Her attitude toward Hong Kong demonstrates her pride in being a Shanghai woman, and she insists on judging Hong Kong according to the perspectives developed in Shanghai. This attitude is passed down to Bai Liusu.

For Shanghai residents in the 1940s, Hong Kong was far away, and not so
attractive to them. The first benefit Mrs. Xu uses to attract Bai Liusu to Hong Kong is that there are many Shanghai people in Hong Kong. “Shanghai people would naturally like someone from Shanghai, so young women from Shanghai are very popular there” (Zhang 1999: 14). To attract Shanghai people to Hong Kong by advertising its Shanghai population suggests that Shanghai people view Hong Kong as an unattractive place. Because Hong Kong is so far away from Shanghai, the ship ticket is expensive. Mrs. Xu promises to buy one for Bai Liusu, which clears her worries about going to Hong Kong. Since the ticket is expensive and her relationship with Mrs. Xu is not that good, she also begins to doubt that Fan Liuyuan is actually the one who wants her to go to Hong Kong.

When Bai’s ship approaches Hong Kong, she goes on deck to catch the sights. The first thing she sees are big advertisement billboards: “Not until the ship had finally reached the shore did she have a chance to go up on deck and gaze out at the sea. It was a fiery afternoon, and the most striking part of the view was the parade of giant billboards along the dock, their reds, oranges, and pinks mirrored in the lush green water. Below the surface of the water, bars and blots of clashing color plunged in murderous confusion. Liusu found herself thinking that in a city of such hyperboles, even a sprained ankle would hurt more than it did in other places. Her heart began to pound” (Chang 2007: 131). The colors of the advertisement, to Bai Liusu, are too exaggerated and ugly. They do not conform to her aesthetic tastes developed in Shanghai. She goes so far as to think that maybe a fall on the streets in this city would hurt more than elsewhere because this is a city of exaggerations.

After Bai meets Fan, he suggests they go dancing. While introducing the dance
hall to her, he comments that the place is the most old-fashioned place he ever saw. The architecture, the light, the decoration, and the band, are all old English style, forty to fifty years behind the trend. The only exciting thing about it is the Westerners who dress like northern Chinese (18). This implies that the dance halls in Hong Kong are not as fashionable as in Shanghai.

While in the dance hall, Bai meets the Indian princess. She asks Fan where Bai is from. After learning that she is from Shanghai, she says that Bai does not look like someone from Shanghai. Bai understands that the princess thinks she is from the countryside. Fan explains that since Bai is a real Chinese, she is different from a Shanghai person (20). This conversation explains how the people in Hong Kong view Shanghai. They think that Shanghai is more fashionable, more metropolitan than Hong Kong, and someone from Shanghai should not look like a “real” Chinese. This view coincides with what Bai thinks of Hong Kong when she comes here: it is a city not comparable to Shanghai in terms of its status and urban development. Although the representation of Shanghai is not explicit or detailed in the story, the views expressed by different characters make clear a sharp contrast between Hong Kong and Shanghai.

In the epilogue to Shanghai Modern, Leo Ou-fan Lee discusses this contrast between Hong Kong and Shanghai in Zhang Ailing’s works. From his perspective, Zhang’s stories seem to suggest that Hong Kong is the “other” of Shanghai. “If it takes the ‘other’ to understand the self, the city of Hong Kong is also crucial to our understanding of Shanghai” (Lee 1999: 327). Compared with Shanghai, a semi-colonial city with foreign concessions, Hong Kong is a colonial city completely under the control
of foreign colonists. To Zhang, Hong Kong is “too blatant, too vulgar and flamboyant in its Western imitation” (327) as Leo Ou-fan Lee puts it. While comparing Bai with the Indian princess, Fan appreciates Bai’s pure Chineseness, a remark that suggests that someone from Shanghai is still not completely westernized or colonized, like the princess from India, another British colony; the city of Shanghai still belongs to the Chinese. Bai Liusu’s thoughts on the advertisement boards and Fan’s comments on the dance hall, which is old English style and out of fashion, display Zhang’s idea about Hong Kong being merely a foreign colony without its own culture.

However, since Zhang compares Hong Kong with Shanghai, there should be something in common that makes the comparison valid. Besides being colonized by foreigners, Hong Kong and Shanghai share the “urban cultural sensibility rooted in cosmopolitanism,” since Hong Kong and Shanghai are cities that give inspiration to “China’s search for modernity” (339). In Zhang’s time, however, Shanghai was already the metropolis of Asia, while Hong Kong remained comparatively underdeveloped. It was a replica of its colonist master, lacking its own characteristics. This is why Zhang would emphasize the Chineseness of Bai Liusu, a woman from Shanghai, to contrast with the Indian princess.

As a Western imitation, there are many Western style buildings in Hong Kong. The hotels, the dance halls, and even the names of the streets all have a British flavor. The army which fights the Japanese is the British army. The food preserved for the army is canned milk, beef, lamb, and all kinds of bread, which is not Chinese food. Fan Liuyuan talks with the Indian princess in English, which Bai Liusu does not understand.
Some details about the city emphasize it as a colony of the British, a replica of its colonial master.

Like Chongqing, Hong Kong is also a mountainous city, but with the ocean rather than rivers separating the city into parts. Disembarking at Hong Kong, Liusu and the Xu family take two cars to go to the hotel where they live. “The cars drive out of the downtown, tramp over hills and dales. The cars run for a long time, all they see are yellow earth cliffs, and red earth cliffs. Dark green trees and blue and green seas emerge in the gaps of the cliffs” (Zhang 1999: 16). The terrain of Hong Kong is similar to Chongqing, and the city develops into several independent zones, with areas of natural landscape woven in between. The downtown is the most popular place in the city. For Hong Kong, the downtown usually refers to some part of Hong Kong Island and the Kowloon peninsula across Victoria Harbour. There are cinemas, theaters, casinos, pubs, cafés, Indian cloth shops, and Western- and Chinese-style restaurants in the downtown area (24).

Repulse Bay (淺水灣) is famous for its beautiful beach, and is a more developed tourism area. When Liusu and the Xus approach Repulse Bay, they find many cars driving back to the downtown area filled with flowers. They take a walk around the bay, and they find that there are many people, many strangers, walking there as well (21). Strangers are walking on the road near the hotel. They are enjoying the beautiful mountain and ocean views. A bridge connects two hills, and on one end, there is the wall where Fan Liuyuan promises his love to Bai Liusu. The wall is big and tall, and seems invincible. Fan and Bai wonder whether their love could be indestructible like the wall. A
tourism attraction like Repulse Bay is an extension of the urban space of downtown Hong Kong. Urban residents gather at this point; they walk and experience the place as a supplement to their daily experience of the city. There is even a bus for the urbanites to commute between the bay and downtown (23).

According to Kevin Lynch’s five elements about the image of a city, downtown and Repulse Bay would be two separate “districts,” each defined by “edges,” such as the sea or mountains surrounding them. The downtown district seems rather compact, with a large variety of shops and restaurants available to Bai and Fan. Repulse Bay also appears to be important and identifiable as a district. The sea, the peaks, and the smoke of the burning house serve as “landmarks” in identifying the directions. The road connecting the two districts is a “path,” so is the road near the hotel that leads them to the wall. They observe the hills, the sea, the bridge, and the cliffs along the paths while taking the bus, walking, or driving between Repulse Bay and downtown. The road leading to the downtown from their house on Babington Road is a curvy one, where they find the sky terrifying. The curves and the slopes of the road are often mentioned, for example, when they go to their rented house, which is on a hill slope facing the sea, so the urban landscape of Hong Kong could be perceived not as a flat one. Besides, the billboards Bai encounters when entering Hong Kong serve as the “entrance” to the city. The exaggerated graphic and the bright color leave Bai the impression of vulgarity and Westernization. Highlighting Zhang’s description of the physical space of the city allows as to more easily see her intentions for Hong Kong: Hong Kong is a great city, a city that does not adhere to traditional values and that provides the freedom and emptiness Bai
Liusu needs; it is also a place that is more natural, built between the mountains and the sea, and less developed than Shanghai in the novel. If not for the war, the stimuli experienced in the city would not be so intense. The higher living conditions and the freedom she could enjoy in Hong Kong contribute to Bai Liusu’s decision to wait for Fan Liuyuan in Hong Kong.

Later when Liusu returns to Hong Kong, she and Fan Liuyuan move into a house on Babington Road (巴丙顿道, according to the English version, Chang 2007: 156. The Chinese version I used wrongly typed it as 巴而顿道). This house sits on a hillside. When the war breaks out, the Japanese forces fire artillery on the Science Laboratory, which became a major battlefield during the brief battle of Hong Kong. The sound and vibration of the explosives echo from the peak to the foot of the hill. “In between the explosions, the silvery winter mist slowly cleared, and on the peaks and in the valleys, all the people on the island looked toward the sea” (Chang 2007: 158). The street where Bai lives becomes a war zone between the hills and the sea. The sea and the hills could be the “landmarks” for the residents to use to identify their location. The sea is where the enemy comes from, and the hills are where Hong Kongers live, and from where the British army defends the city.

The story presents different areas of Hong Kong to the readers. Bai Liusu tries to call the Xu family when the war begins, and they live in Happy Valley (跑马地, a place in Causeway Bay, which is part of the downtown). The ship Fan takes drops the first-class passengers, including Fan, off at the hotel in Repulse Bay. As previously mentioned,
Repulse Bay is at the south end of Hong Kong Island, and is famous for its beach. It is developed as a tourism attraction, a special “district” to the Hong Kong residents in the story. Fan tries to get to Bai the first day, but the traffic between the Bay and downtown is very heavy, which underlines the insularity and loneliness Bai feels in her empty house; Bai also thinks that she will be staying in the house for quite a while. Fan manages to find a truck to get to Bai the next day. He takes Bai back to the hotel in the hope of getting some food, but British soldiers have been billeted in the hotel and most of the food is reserved for them. The war continues near the hotel, and Bai and Fan almost get killed. After the war, they walk toward their house downtown, and follow the “path” along the red and yellow cliffs. Of course, walking home over the mountains is slower than riding in a car. This time, they observe the scenes along the path more closely. As they walk, because the cliffs all look similar, they even do not know if they have gone in the wrong direction, heading back to the bay. The cliffs, the hills, and the wall on one end of the bridge in Repulse Bay help them to identify where they are going, as “landmarks.” There are also houses burning on the hillside, and they can tell the direction by the color of the smoke: “The smoke from north of the hill is white, and the smoke from the south is black” (Zhang 1999: 37). The color changes according to the sunlight: “The sun moves slowly over the hill, and half of the hill buries in giant blue shadow” (37). As Lynch explains the element of “landmark,” he says that even the sun could work as a landmark (2001: 36). It is no wonder that Fan and Bai would pay so much attention to the cliffs, the hills and peaks, the valleys and the sea, and even the shadow and the smoke, to orient themselves between the downtown and the Bay. These are the elements for them to
perceive and situate themselves in the city.

The mountainous terrain divides the city into different zones. Zhang Ailing tells us more about the hills and the sea than she does about Hong Kong’s downtown. It could be that Hong Kong is underdeveloped, and there is not much to say about the downtown. Because many people had left Hong Kong when the Japanese invaded, the city life seems not so intense and noisy. At night, the city of Hong Kong becomes a “dead city, without light, without voice” (38). Except for the war, there is no description of the kind of modern urban stimuli we see in Midnight and Cold Nights. The biggest problem for Bai and Fan is food. Their hired Guangdong servant flees with her son, and they have to cook for themselves. Gas is still available, but the water is cut off. Fan manages to fetch water from up the hill. Bai, who never cooked before, makes dishes with a Shanghai flavor. Their life in the city seems ordinary: “This time of turmoil and chaos of war, cannot give individualists shelter, but it could shelter an ordinary couple” (39).

The mountainous terrain of Hong Kong means that, as in Chongqing, few of its roads are straight. When Bai and Fan see off the Indian princess after she has a meal at their place, they walk downtown together. There is a particular downhill curve on the road, which gives them a good view of the sky. Seeing this terrifying sight of a dark and empty sky, Fan Liuyuan becomes afraid of what the future holds for them, and expresses his thoughts about the love between Bai and him. The sight of the sky, like the tall wall in Repulse Bay, leaves a strong impression on them in terms of their experience of the city.

Bai and Fan travel between Hong Kong and Shanghai several times, thus establishing an inherent connection and implicit comparison between the two cities in this
story. The first time is when Mrs. Xu asks Bai to come to Hong Kong. Although she lives in a first-class cabin on the ship, the trip is hard and not so pleasant, what with the rolling of the ship and the presence of the Xu family. Mr. and Mrs. Xu are seasick, and seem to vomit all the way to Hong Kong. Their children cry and scream. The second time is when Bai discovers that Fan is not willing to marry her. She goes back to Shanghai to wait for a better offer from him. Fan accompanies Bai on the trip, but he treats her coldly. Once Bai reaches Shanghai, she finds herself to be a source of shame for her family. That Bai and Fan live together in Hong Kong is already shameful; but that she cannot get her hands on his money is even more disgraceful. Several months later, she has no choice but to return to Hong Kong, and compromises her standards on marriage. After they finally do get married in Hong Kong, they travel back to Shanghai. Bai is still not welcomed back home; the family thinks she is too successful, and that she is responsible for the divorce of her fourth sister.

These trips establish a narrative and a symbolic comparison between the two cities, such as the feeling of tradition and slowness about Shanghai and the feeling of exaggeration and vulgarity about Hong Kong. Other cities or countries also appear in the story—for example, the fact that Fan was born and lived for years in the U. K., possibly London. His father is from Malaysia, with roots in Guangzhou. Fan is afraid of going back to Guangzhou, so he lives in Shanghai most of the time. The so-called princess is from India, and she was a mistress of an old British man first, and when the Japanese troops capture the man, she lives with an Indian policeman who used to help her. The frequent references to other cities and countries lend this story a sense of
cosmopolitanism. The fact that people from the world come to one city suggests the importance and attractiveness of the city. Being an urban resident of a city like Hong Kong, one also needs to be able to perceive the world, to imagine the space between these distant locations and their relationship to Hong Kong itself.

Zhang’s juxtaposition of 1940s Hong Kong and Shanghai in *Love in a Fallen City* presents Hong Kong as less developed and less attractive than Shanghai. Of course, after 1949, Hong Kong takes Shanghai’s place as the major Chinese metropolis of East Asia. The depiction of Shanghai as the more traditional and slower of the two cities, one that cherishes family values more than individual freedom, seems to foretell Shanghai’s later demise. In the story, Hong Kong may be fallen, but not for long. Furthermore, the fact that Hong Kong falls is precisely what helps Bai Liusu to marry the man she loves. After the communist takeover, Shanghai from its former status of “Paris of the Orient.” In a sense, the fall of Shanghai gives Hong Kong the chance to emerge in its place. The positions of “self” and “other,” as defined by Leo Ou-fan Lee, reversed after the Communists’ takeover.

*Love in a Fallen City* is not a very long story, and the plot is relatively simple. However, Zhang Ailing manages to tell a “tale of two cities”: a story bridging Hong Kong to Shanghai, a tale to present the British colonial city to the readers of Shanghai, whose was once the representation of modernity. Restricted by its terrain and separated by the sea, Hong Kong develops its downtown and other zones around the hills and mountains. Through the story of Bai and Fan, we see how urban residents struggle to find their happiness and love between these two East Asian cities. For Bai Liusu, Shanghai is
a “place” that is intertwined with her personal memory and identity, whereas Hong Kong is a free “space” in which to explore her relationship with Fan. Perhaps only at the end of the story, when Bai and Fan have shared the trauma of war in the urban space of Hong Kong does it become for them a “place” imprinted with their experience.

The contrast between Bai’s feeling about Shanghai and in Hong Kong reveals the shift of the status of the two cities. Shanghai declines after 1949, while Hong Kong emerges as the connection between the West and Red China. Zhang Ailing’s literary construction of the relationship between cities and personal emotions continues the traditional conception of the relationship between the female beauty and the destruction of a nation or city. It is female beauty that destroys the nation or the city in the original idiom qingguo qingcheng; in Zhang Ailing’s story it is the fallen city that changes the fate of the female protagonist.
Conclusion

Through my reading of four fictional works, there emerge the depictions of four actual cities: Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing, and Hong Kong. The relationship between each individual work and the particular city (or cities) varies, but they share an experience of modernity or modernization. In *Camel Xiangzi*, we see how a greenhorn like Xiangzi comes into the city and gradually develops affection for it. The five elements coined by Kevin Lynch helps us understand how Xiangzi perceives and experiences the physical space in the ancient city, which was designed according to traditional Chinese urban planning ideas. The straightness and grid system of Beijing help Xiangzi, a rickshaw puller to identify himself in the city. The city of Beijing, however crowded and bustling, still cherishes the aesthetic values of nature and excludes strangers from the *hutong*. The city is still transforming itself from its role as the national capital into “ancient capital” that belongs to the past. Xiangzi also loses his hope for getting a better life in this transformation.

In *Midnight*, the author Mao Dun employs both the ground level view and aerial view to present the complicated and sophisticated urban landscape of Shanghai. Shanghai, being both an economic and cultural center of China, spreads its power and influence with the help of modern technology. The over concentrated population, commodity, and
capital, also make the stimuli even more intense than other places, which leads some greenhorns to fail to adjust themselves to the stimuli and make them wish to leave the city. Under the circumstances of war in China’s hinterland, the economy declines and the workers start to strike in Shanghai. Suffering from the frequent strikes and the fluctuations in the stock market, the protagonist Wu Sunfu gambles in the market, but loses all his money. He, like his sister and father, also has to leave Shanghai. The aerial view interweaves the different stories of multiple characters, and establishes a connection between the various urban spaces, such as Wu’s house, his factory, the stock market, the hotel and restaurant, and so on. The orderliness shown in this aerial view also exhibits the emergence of modernity, along with the introduction of new technologies that facilitate transportation and communication. A sense of modernity derives from the change of the sense of the temporal spatiality that comes through implementing these technologies.

Chongqing is a mountainous city in the Chinese interior, far removed from the battlefields of the Sino-Japanese war, when it was wartime capital and a massive population escapes to this relatively undeveloped city. The particular terrain of the city gives the urban residents a different experience compared to other cities: the crowded and dangerous streets, the intensive stimuli from the over concentration of population in the city, the lack of transportation, not to mention the pressure and anxiety from the possibility of being killed by the frequent bombings. Most of the narration is seen from the ground level view, which depicts the urban space at street level. The foggy weather and the lack of light help to shape the tragic and desperate tone in this novel, and Ba Jin employs this tone to depict the frustration faced by the urban residents at the end of the
war. Even the end of the war and the waves of celebration do not change the tone of the novel. On the contrary, they contrast with the suffering of the protagonist Wang and his family.

The war between the Japanese and the Chinese also changes the fate of Bai Liusu in Zhang Ailing’s *Love in a Fallen City*. Being an urban resident of Shanghai, Bai lives in a style that goes against her family’s traditional values. The foreign-born Fan Liuyuan gives her the chance to leave Shanghai for Hong Kong to start a new life. Hong Kong becomes the “other” for Bai to contemplate the “self.” In Hong Kong, Bai discovers the Chineseness of Shanghai, as well as of herself, especially compared with the Indian princess. The terrain of Hong Kong is similar to Chongqing, but with more natural scenes in between, and the condition of intercity transportation is much better than Chongqing. Its role as mediator between the East and the West leaves an impression of its potential in becoming a metropolis that will overcome Shanghai in the future, although as described in this story, it is still a Western replica.

These four fictional works represent four cities. Reading these works together and from the common perspective of their representations of the city, these works reveal how central the urban imagination is to modern Chinese literature, but also how that imagination changes from writer to writer and from city to city. From 1936 to 1946, the representations of the four cities changed radically, not only in terms of the images of modernization, but also the human experience of urban space. Beijing depicted in *Camel Xiangzi* is an ancient city, still confined by its city walls and crisscrossed by narrow *hutong*, with few modern buildings and transportation. Xiangzi’s resulting perception of
the city derives from its traditional urban layout and the integration of natural beauty, which is part of its aesthetic value. With *Midnight*, we see a shift of aesthetic value in its representation of Shanghai, where artificial beauty triumphs over the natural: skyscrapers piercing the sky, metal bridges spanning rivers, and the flow of people, information, and money accelerated by the urban and interurban infrastructure. The mental gap between urban and rural lifestyle enlarges, as greenhorns from the countryside find themselves unable to adjust to the Shanghai’s fast pace (Xiangzi, also a greenhorn, has little trouble fitting in with Beijing’s slower and more traditional mode). The change of aesthetic view implies that Chinese urbanites started to embrace modernization and urbanization from a more traditional lifestyle that cherished the exclusion of strangers and closeness to nature. *Love in a Fallen City* writes about a similar impact of different aesthetic views, but in an opposite way: Bai Liusu finds Hong Kong vulgar and ugly when viewed from her Shanghai perspective. In *Cold Nights*, the narrative focuses less on the gap between urban and rural lifestyle and the change of aesthetic value and more on the relationship between the physical space and the characters’ personal experience and mental activities. The war and its impact on the physical appearance of the city are clearly central to this personal experience and psychology.

Indeed, war is a common theme in these four works. From a secondary position in *Camel Xiangzi* and *Midnight*, war takes on a more central role in *Cold Nights* and *Love in a Fallen City*. In the urban experience of all four works, war is always one of the most important factors in influencing the fate of the characters. It is, of course, also a reflection of the modern Chinese history from 1936 to 1946, a time when China suffered from both
internal civil conflicts and imperialist threats from outside. It also seems to suggest that if not for these wars, Chinese cities would have had a very different destiny, one in which they modernized faster and better and the human experience in urban space would have been very different from that depicted in the four fictional works.

These works are about the characters, the plots, or war in the first half of the twentieth century; they are also about cities, the human experience in urban space, and their understanding or reaction about the urban space. Kevin Lynch’s five elements help us to see how the urban layout is experienced in some cities, how the characters observe the urban scenes along “paths” and enter particular “districts” defined by “edges,” and how they orient themselves according to “nodes” and “landmarks.” Literary characters, such as greenhorns, flâneur, and dandies, represent human reactions to the quickly changing “society” that Georg Simmel differentiated from “community” in regards to the former’s acceptance of “strangers.” While presenting the physical impact of the urban experience and the mental adjustment to the new conditions in the city, these works of fiction also show how modernizations changes the shape and function of the city, and bestows new power to the capitalists who live in the city, concentrating the resources there, making it an “empire” that controls the hinterland after time and space are compressed. By adding human experience to urban space, one sees how important it is to examine space with human factors. The human intentions, experience, and actions are ordered spatially in the city. Cities are perceived as confined places filled with personal memory and identity; they can also be open spaces that calls for exploration, from both aerial and ground level perspectives.
The experience of cities in Republican era fiction is a novel one, one associated with a new modern historical consciousness. The human experience of cities is one that intertwines with the historical moment of China changing its role from empire to republic. The emergence of the city and of the literature about the city is also part of the historical change that ensued from the revolution to overthrow the empire and to establish the republic. In the process of going from the empire to the republic, some Chinese cities emerge on the scene and earn themselves a reputation, such as being either the wartime capital or the metropolis of East Asia. Although some of them submerge after 1949, the works present accounts of how the cities used to be, and how the Chinese urban residents or greenhorns experienced and felt about the cities. Their historical accounts are precious. They allow one to compare the cities with how they were before, and to compare how a present-day resident feels with how an old resident might have felt. They let one better recognize and experience cities.

The representations of cities in Republican-era Chinese literature suggest the emergence of the importance of the city in China’s modernization process. The city was the locus of modernity and social transformation and city life became desirable. The emerging city and its changing social and cultural position thus required representational legitimacy through description and narration. As I have shown in this thesis, literature was an important vehicle for this shaping of this public urban imagination. The representations of cities in literary works developed side-by-side with the urbanization progress, and participated in this progress by shaping the public consensus about how the city should evolve and what kind of city life people should live. These four works
imagine four cities and how its residents interact and come to identify with their cities in times of rapid modernization and traumatic warfare.
Glossary

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Ba Jin (Li Yaotang) 巴金（李尧棠）

Babington Road 巴丙顿道

Bai fangzi 白房子

Bai Liusu 白流苏

Beihai 北海

Beiping 北平

Chaotianmen 朝天门

China Resistance Association of Writers and Artists 中华全国文艺界抗敌协会

Chongqing 重庆

Creation Society 创造社

Dongjing (Kaifeng) 东京（开封）

Du Zhuzhai 杜竹斋

Fan Liuyuan 范柳原

Guangzhou 广州

Guiyang 贵阳

Hankou (Hankow) 汉口

Han Ye 寒夜

Happy Valley 跑马地

Huangpu River 黄浦江

Huniu 虎妞

Hutong 胡同

International Café 国际咖啡馆

Jialing River 嘉陵江

Kuomintang (a.k.a. Nationalist) 国民党

Lanzhou 兰州

Lao She (Shu Qingchun) 老舍（舒庆春）
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese Characters</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liu Si 刘四</td>
<td>Taiping Rebellion 太平天国</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luotuo Xiangzi 骆驼祥子</td>
<td>The Cao family 曹家</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mao Dun (Shen Yanbing) 茅盾（沈雁冰）</td>
<td>The Xia family 夏家</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanjing 南京</td>
<td>The Xu family 徐家</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North China Daily News 字林西报</td>
<td>Tiananmen 天安门</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Mr. Wu 吴老太爷</td>
<td>Tianjin 天津</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peidu 陪都</td>
<td>Tianqiao 天桥</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pudong (Pootung) 浦东</td>
<td>Tu Weiyue 屠维岳</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qianmen 前门</td>
<td>Wang Hefu 王和甫</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qingcheng zhi lian 倾城之恋</td>
<td>Wang Wenxuan 汪文宣</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qingguo qingcheng 倾国倾城</td>
<td>Wu 雾</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repulse Bay 浅水湾</td>
<td>Wu Huifang 吴慧芳</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Sino-Japanese war 抗日战争</td>
<td>Wu Sunfu 吴荪甫</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shapingba 沙坪坝</td>
<td>Xiangzi 祥子</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shuangqiao 双桥</td>
<td>Xiao Fuzi 小福子</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siheyuan 四合院</td>
<td>Xicheng 西城</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun Jiren 孙吉人</td>
<td>Xinhuamen 新华门</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzhou 苏州</td>
<td>Xinjiekou 新街口</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzhou Creek 苏州河</td>
<td>Xisi Arch 西四牌坊</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

102
Xizhimen 西直门

Xuanwumen 宣武门

Yao Jinfeng 姚金凤

Zeng Shusheng 曾树生

Zhang Ailing 张爱玲

Zhang Susu 张素素

Zhao Botao 赵伯韬

Zhengyangmen 正阳门

Zhongnanhai 中南海

Zhongshan Park 中山公园

Ziye 子夜
Bibliography


