



**MEDIA@LSE**  
Department of **Media** and **Communications**

---

**MEDIA@LSE MSc Dissertation Series**

Compiled by Bart Cammaerts, Nick Anstead and Richard Stupart

---

**Representations of Calendar Girls and An  
Ideology of Modernity in 1930s Republican  
Shanghai**

**Yifan Song,**  
MSc in Global Media and Communications (LSE & USC)

---

Other dissertations of the series are available online here:

[http://www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/mediaWorkingPapers/  
ElectronicMScDissertationSeries.aspx](http://www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/mediaWorkingPapers/ElectronicMScDissertationSeries.aspx)

**Dissertation submitted to the Department of Media and Communications, London School of Economics and Political Science, August 2016, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the MSc in Global Media and Communications (LSE & USC). Supervised by Dr Wallis Motta.**

**The author can be contacted at: [songyifa@usc.edu](mailto:songyifa@usc.edu)**

Published by Media@LSE, London School of Economics and Political Science ('LSE'), Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE. The LSE is a School of the University of London. It is a Charity and is incorporated in England as a company limited by guarantee under the Companies Act (Reg number 70527).

Copyright, Yifan Song © 2017.  
The authors have asserted their moral rights.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior permission in writing of the publisher nor be issued to the public or circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published. In the interests of providing a free flow of debate, views expressed in this dissertation are not necessarily those of the compilers or the LSE.

# **Representations of Calendar Girls and An Ideology of Modernity in 1930s Republican Shanghai**

**Yifan Song**

---

## **ABSTRACT**

Republican Shanghai (1912-1949) underwent significant developments in its economy, society and culture after its opening to foreign trade and westerners' settlements due to China's failure in the First Opium War (1840-1842). It became one of the most modern cities in the world, on a par with Paris, London and New York at that time. Against this background, the calendar poster, a unique media genre that mixes features of paintings, calendars and advertisements was born. Its representations of beautiful Chinese women won great popularity during the Republican era and dramatically influenced Shanghai's visual culture.

Supported by a conceptual framework consisting of concepts of Republican Shanghai modernity defined by Lee, Lacan's mirror-phase model and Althusser's ideology, this research attempts to investigate the relationship between the representations of women in 1930s calendar posters and an ideology of modernity in Republican Shanghai. In the light of Barthes' semiotic visual analysis, complemented by Lacan's mirror-phase model and the concept of the gaze, ten images of calendar posters are analyzed to examine both their representations and ideological implications. The results indicate that the calendar girls are represented as combining both Chinese and Western features, as provocative women attractive to male gaze, and as wealthy, educated, confident and independent women who live a leisurely bourgeois lifestyle. These representations further lead to an ideology of a hybrid culture, an ideology of a commodified popular culture and an ideology of an imagined reality respectively, which are the three components of Republican Shanghai modernity according to Lee's definition. Thus, I argue that the representations of women in 1930s Shanghai calendar posters support an ideology of modernity in Republican Shanghai.

The research is intended to fill the gap between studies on Republican Shanghai modernity and studies on old calendar posters. Its adoption of psychoanalysis also contributes to a new research perspective on Old Shanghai's visual culture.

## **INTRODUCTION**

By 1930, Shanghai had become a bustling cosmopolitan metropolis, the fifth largest city in the world, and China's largest harbor and treaty-port, a city that was already an international legend ('the Paris of Asia') and a world of splendored modernity set apart from the still tradition-bound countryside that was China. (Lee, 1999a: 75)

### **Background of Shanghai in the Early Twentieth Century**

Due to China's defeat in the First Opium War (1840-1842) with the British Empire during the Qing Dynasty (1636-1912), five Chinese cities including Shanghai were forced to open to Western trade. After the signing of a series of unequal treaties between Qing government and the western powers, Shanghai gradually became an international settlement for the British, the French, Americans, and many other European countries. As a semi-colonized city, Shanghai was 'run by a Western-style city council, which functioned independently of the Chinese local government' (Laing, 2004: 2). In the foreign concessions, western sojourners not only built a living environment similar to their own countries' including western-style buildings, public gardens, theatres and racecourse, but also brought to Shanghai their lifestyles such as nightlife, going to cinema and playing equestrianism (ibid.). By the early twentieth century, foreign enclaves in Shanghai 'already had the "infrastructure" of a modern city even by Western standards' (Lee, 1999a: 77).

The most important influence on Shanghai, however, was its development of economy. As an important harbour and port enjoying a good location, Shanghai drew attention to merchants from all over the world. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many Western and Chinese companies began doing businesses in Shanghai (Laing, 2004), including 'British and American tobacco, medicine, cosmetic, textile, and oil companies' (Lee, 1999b: 76).

With the development of Shanghai's prosperous economy, a printing industry and the mass media also developed quickly. In the Republican era (1912-1949), pictorial magazines, newspapers, and books 'were published widely and relatively cheaply for the first time' (Stevens, 2003: 84). Some companies took advantage of this development and began to promote their products through printed advertising (Laing, 2004: 3). Among various forms of advertisements in Republican Shanghai, calendar poster was very successful and became one of the most popular print media at that time (Ni, 2008).

## **Calendar Poster in Republican Shanghai**

Calendar poster is a unique media genre that combines the features of paintings, calendars and advertising. Its target audiences are Chinese people, not westerners (Laing, 2004: 3). It is a vertical rectangular poster with a central image in the middle for the represented people and the advertised product, with a calendar at the bottom of or along the edges of the image, and sometimes with additional pictures surrounding the central image (Zhao & Belk, 2008: 46). In fact, calendar posters had already been used as a commodity by the Chinese before the Republican era 'for holiday celebrations during the Chinese Lunar New Year' (ibid.), but they were produced by Chinese wood block printing, and the pictures were usually about Chinese gods and landscapes, nothing to do with advertising (Laing, 2004). The advertising calendar poster was introduced from the West and printed in colour lithography (ibid.). At first, western images were used in the posters for foreign companies, but since they were not popular among the Chinese, the foreign businessmen began to hire Chinese painters to paint images that could be acceptable by the Chinese (ibid.).

Calendar posters in the Republican era usually depicted beautiful women, and they proved to be greatly favoured by the Chinese. Within the framework of the image, an attractive woman is usually represented without the advertised products, because some posters were painted first and then selected by companies (Dal Lago, 2000: 140). Eventually, only the image of an attractive lady was shown on the poster, even without calendars (Wu, Zhuo, Huang, & Lu, 1994).

During the 1920s and the 1930s, calendar posters were so popular that 'their release was usually announced in advance in newspapers' (Zhao & Belk, 2008: 46). They could be bought from street stalls at a very low price, or they were given as a gift if the customer purchased certain number of products (Ni, 2008: 25). Since the posters could be easily acquired, they were even available to the lowest social class (Laing, 2004: 29). They can be seen everywhere such as in people's homes, retail stores, barbershops and restaurants (Zhao & Belk, 2008). They were usually hung on the wall as a decoration in ordinary people's living environments, and they 'dramatically changed the visual culture of early-twentieth-century Shanghai' (Laing, 2004: 3).

## **The Reason for the Research**

Although advertising calendar posters were very popular during Republican Shanghai, it gradually disappeared after the Japanese invaded Shanghai in 1938. Besides, since these calendar posters in semi-colonized Shanghai were related to a history that is 'a national humiliation' (Lee, 1999b), it was not until the 1990s that researchers began to study on these

historical pictures (Peng, 2010). Among these studies, some treat these posters as an art form, discussing about the painting techniques or the aesthetics of those calendar girls' dressings (Bu, 1959; Peng, 2010). Some examine these posters from the production site. A representative work is Ellen Johnston Laing's (2004) book *Selling Happiness: Calendar Posters and Visual Culture in Early-Twentieth-Century Shanghai* in which she introduces the backgrounds of several famous Chinese painters of these posters. Some study the posters from the perspective of advertising and consumer culture (Jiang, 2003; Ni, 2008; Zhao & Belk, 2008). Still many studies talk about those women representations from the perspective of feminism (Dal Lago, 2000; Cheung, 2003).

Among the studies on Republican Shanghai modernity which will be elaborated in the theoretical chapter, some also mention the calendar posters. However, they focus either on the novels at that time (Lee, 1999b; Stevens, 2003), or on the political ideals about a modern nation (Edwards, 2000), but the discussions on calendar girls are far from enough.

On the whole, seldom do studies combine both calendar posters and modernity in Republican Shanghai together. Although there do have such studies (Zheng, 2005; Zeng, 2010), their discussions on calendar girls put so much emphasis on the background of Shanghai at that time rather than on the representations themselves.

Therefore, this research is intended to bridge the research gap and discuss the relationship between representations of women in calendar posters and modernity in Republican Shanghai.

## **THEORETICAL CHAPTER**

In this chapter, I will first locate Shanghai modernity in the research field, after which relevant theoretical literatures will be outlined.

### **Modernity in Shanghai in the Early Twentieth Century**

In this section, I will explore the meanings of modernity in Shanghai during the early twentieth century and find out the most appropriate one for my research.

The studies on Shanghai urban history during the Republican era (1912-49) began popular among the academia since the 1980s, especially among scholars from America (Lee, 1999b). According to Yeh (1997), those studies can be divided into three categories. The first one focuses on the relationship between state and society, influenced by sociology including Max Weber's theories on city; the second, inspired by economic history, studies on Shanghai's urban economy (*ibid.*). The third one as well as the latest one is the studies on cultural industries in Old Shanghai including advertising, trying to examine 'the new urban visual culture and its material foundation...in light of the phenomenon of modernity' in Republican Shanghai (Yeh, 1997: 376).

In fact, modernity is a key concept frequently discussed in all the three categories of studies on Old Shanghai. Modernity in China stemmed from 'the Chinese reception of a Social Darwinian concept of evolution' made available to the public by the translations of Chinese literati Yan Fu and Liang Qichao at the turn of the last century (Lee, 1999a: 98). Most ideas are from 'the Western Post-Enlightenment tradition of modernity' (*ibid.*). Among studies on Shanghai in the first category according to Yeh's (1997) division, Shanghai modernity means a modern urban society and urban politics. In terms of the studies on Shanghai's urban economy, Shanghai modernity means economic modernization due to its open to the foreign merchants as a treaty port from the late nineteenth century (Bergere, 2009). By the beginning of the twentieth century, modernity of Shanghai was equal to westernization, which means that Shanghai reproduced Western economic practices (*ibid.*).

Since calendar posters as a unique media genre belong to visual culture, my discussion on Shanghai modernity will mainly focus on the studies in the last category. A prominent scholar on cultural study of Shanghai modernity is Leo Ou-fan Lee. In searching of the concept of Shanghai modernity, Lee used a strategy called 'cultural imaginary' (1999b: 63), through which he tried to investigate various cultural productions produced at that time, including magazines and advertisements, especially literatures on Republican Shanghai written by Chinese. In his view, Shanghai modernity is an 'imagined reality as created by print media'

(Lee, 1999b: 74), featuring ‘a commodified popular culture and its hybrid images that mixed the East and the West’ (Yeh, 1997: 381). This modernity put forward by Lee, as O’Connor (2012) concludes, combines both Chinese traditional culture and Western modernity. Likewise, although Liang’s approach to Shanghai modernity is different from Lee’s in that he starts his research from ‘the urban spaces of everyday life’ instead of print media (2010: 1), he also argues that Shanghai modernity was a ‘hybrid’ rather than a culture completely imported from the West (2010: 26).

This hybridity is reflected in the ‘hybrid images’ in Lee’s modernity, images which are usually modern Westernized Chinese women, and these images are commodified for commercial purposes, which is ‘a key feature’ of Republican Shanghai modernity (Yeh, 1997: 393). Women images in print media at that time were closely related to a hybrid culture and a commodified popular culture. Although in Stevens’s eyes, it is ‘the most superficial aspects of modernity’ (2003: 90), it cannot be denied that women images can be a lens for us to examine Republican Shanghai modernity.

After the brief review of different scholars’ research on Shanghai modernity in cultural field (Yeh, 1997; Steven, 2003; Liang, 2010; O’Connor, 2012), it can be found that the convergence of these scholars’ studies is Lee’s research. Based on his view, this research will use the concept of modernity, ‘an emerging cultural ideology’ in Republican Shanghai (Yeh, 1997: 376), as ‘an imagined reality’ that has characteristics of a commodified popular culture and a hybrid culture featuring women images.

### **The Imaginary**

In this section, I will explore further about ‘imagined reality’ proposed by Lee to match it with certain theoretical supports.

Lee’s (1999a) approach of ‘cultural imaginary’ is supported by Benedict Anderson’s ‘Imagined Communities’ in which novels play a crucial role. According to Anderson, when people read a novel, although they don’t know and won’t meet each other, they have confidence that thousands of others are doing the same activity simultaneously, thus forms an ‘imagined community’ (1991: 35). This is applied by Lee into the construction of Republican Shanghai modernity where novels written by Shanghai writers encouraged Shanghai residents to imagine that they were connected to a modern urban city influenced by ‘Western material culture’ (1999a: 93).

Nevertheless, although Lee's use of Anderson's imagined community can well explain 'cultural imaginary', it fails to explain the formation of 'imagined reality'. Therefore, I turn to theories on social imaginary (SI) to find the answer.

Charles Taylor's (2002) theory on modern SI is heavily influenced by Anderson's *Imagined Communities*. His discussion is based on Western modernity, which in his view means a 'historically unprecedented amalgam of new practices and institutional forms (science, technology, industrial production, urbanization), of new ways of living (individualism, secularization, instrumental rationality), and of new forms of malaise (alienation, meaninglessness, a sense of impending social dissolution)' (Taylor, 2002: 91). Supporting Western modernity, SI is 'the ways people imagine their social existence, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations' (Taylor, 2004: 23). It is not a social theory, but is 'what enables, through making sense of, the practices of a society' (Taylor, 2002: 91). Moreover, with the great influence of modern theory on moral order, SI becomes increasingly connected with social practices (Taylor, 2004). Although Taylor's SI theory also studies images (*ibid.*), his focus is more on social practices related to politics rather than culture. More importantly, his theory is grounded upon Western history, which may fail to be applied in other contexts where modernity is different (Taylor, 2002), for example, modernity in Republican Shanghai. Therefore, I turn to other broader concepts of SI that are not restricted to specific contexts.

Different from Taylor, Cornelius Castoriadis discusses SI from the perspective of psychoanalysis rather than sociology. His discussion is a reaction to French thinker Jean-Paul Sartre's *L'imaginaire* (1936) in which Sartre argues that the imaginary is 'something pertaining to the individual, not to society' (Andacht, 2000: para. 22), and the imaginary feelings 'are unreal and only appear in front of unreal objects' (Andacht, 2000: para. 21). As for Castoriadis, he rejects many philosophers' ideas that the imaginary is a reflection of the external world and argues that 'the imaginary is the subject's whole creation of a world for itself' (Elliot, 2002: 143). In Castoriadis's definition of SI, the 'imaginary' means it is being created rather than a correspondence to reality, and the 'social' means that 'they only exist as instituted and as an object of participation of an impersonal and anonymous collective entity' (Andacht, 2000: para. 3). Thus, Castoriadis combines both social and psychic imaginaries together in his theory of SI (Elliott, 2002).

Another scholar who discusses SI is Jacques Lacan. He proposed the concept of 'the Imaginary' in one of his most prominent psychic models – 'The Mirror Phase'. It is a stage when the child recognizes his image in the mirror, 'a process of identification of internal self with that external image' (Loos, 2002: para. 7). When the child thinks that the image in the

mirror - called by Lacan an 'Ideal-I' - and himself are the same, it is 'the Imaginary' that unites the child and his spatially-separated image (Williamson, 1978: 62). The Imaginary 'becomes the internalized image of this ideal, whole, self and is situated around the notion of coherence rather than fragmentation' (Loos, 2002: para. 9). Another term developed from this model is 'the Symbolic', a contradictory concept to 'the Imaginary'. It means difference rather than sameness, namely, that the image in the mirror is 'split' from the child (Williamson, 1978: 62). It is also similar to what Peirce calls 'symbol' and what Saussure calls 'signifier' (Loos, 2002: para. 10).

Although Castoriadis critiques against Lacan in that Lacan's concept of subjectivity is passive in the 'mirror-phase' model (Elliot, 2002), I prefer Lacan's idea to Castoriadis's since 'the Imaginary' put forward by Lacan is 'the mediator (as in Freud) between the internal and the external world' (Loos, 2002: para. 9). Instead of a 'radical imagination' that is totally created by the subject as argued by Castoriadis, Lacan's imaginary model can provide a reasonable explanation for the relationship between external representations and people's imaginary. It is due to this reason that the 'mirror-phase' model is frequently employed in media studies (Loos, 2002). Besides, another concept derived from his model, 'the Real', 'which resists representation', implies that 'the real is everything that is not media, but that informs all media' (Loos, 2002: para. 11). This idea is in accordance with Lee's 'imagined reality' because this so-called reality represented in print media is in fact not real; rather, it is imagined. On the whole, Lacan's 'mirror-phase' model is suitable for my research to examine 'imagined reality' created by print media.

### **Ideology, 'The mirror-phase' and Advertising**

Since Lacan's social theory is closely connected to French philosopher Louis Althusser's theory on ideology (Elliot, 2002), it is necessary to explore more on this concept to get a deeper understanding of the connection between calendar posters and Republican Shanghai modernity.

Before Althusser's theory on ideology is discussed, several scholars' views on ideology will be presented first. According to J. B. Thompson, ideology refers to 'the ways in which meaning is mobilized for the maintenance of relations of domination' (Gill, 2007: 54), which is 'the single most widely accepted definition of ideology' (Eagleton, 1991: 5). Similarly, Terry Eagleton thinks that ideology is naturalized and universalized beliefs and values promoted by a dominant power who intends to legitimate itself by excluding its rival's thoughts and obscuring social realities (1991: 5). Ideology works as a 'common sense' that people usually accept it uncritically (Orgad, 2012: 26), and it structures our social reality unconsciously (Zizek, 1989: 30).

Compared to those definitions highlighting the dominance of ideas and beliefs for certain group, the structuralist Marxist Althusser's contention on ideology is much broader (Eagleton, 1991: 18). As a post-structuralist Marxist, he rejects 'class reductionism' in 'classical Marxist formulations of ideology' (Hall, 1985: 91, 97). Instead, he formulates his theory taking reference to Lacan's theory on psychoanalysis, especially the 'mirror-phase' model.

According to Althusser (1998), ideology works through concrete Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA) such as churches, schools and media. His first thesis is that 'Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence', and this imaginary relationship has 'a material existence' (Althusser, 1998: 693). Here, the 'Imaginary' is borrowed from Lacan's theory because Althusser finally realizes that ideology only works through a psychoanalytic process (Hall, 1985: 105). By borrowing Lacan's another concept 'interpellation' (ibid.), he further puts forward his central thesis that 'all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects, by the functioning of the category of the subject' (Althusser, 1998: 699). The process of interpellation is like a policeman calling you on the street, and if you reply, you are the subject (ibid.).

Modernity in Republican Shanghai is an 'imagined reality', and in the light of Althusser's theory, this modernity as an imaginary relationship between people and their living realities is represented by an ideology, which interpellates individuals as subjects through print media including calendar posters. While the material existence of this relationship is presented through people's behaviours in real life, such as people buying the products advertised in media.

From the discussion so far, we can see that both Lacan's psychoanalytic model and Althusser's ideology provide helpful theoretical supports for my examination on modernity in Republican Shanghai. In the following, I will explain how calendar posters are related to ideology and Lacan's 'Mirror-phase' model.

Althusser explains that the 'real conditions of existence' is experienced through the systems of representation (Hall, 1985: 104). Hall even argues that 'there is no experiencing outside of the categories of representation or ideology' (1985: 105). Similarly, Turner argues, 'our only access to reality is through its representation...saturated with ideology' (2006: 213). Therefore, ideology works through representation, which means 'using language and signs to say something meaningful about, or to represent, the world meaningfully, to other people' (Hall, 1997: 15). In this way, images - full of signs and circulated through media which is one of the Ideological State Apparatuses - are a form of representation. Accordingly, calendar

posters are also a system of representations carrying ideologies. It works particularly through its representations of women.

The connection between calendar posters and ‘the mirror-phase’ is established by taking reference to Williamson’s compelling analysis of advertisements in the light of both Lacan’s psychoanalysis and Althusser’s ideology. Williamson thinks that ‘the interchangeability of ourselves and the people in the ad leads to the idea of the ‘mirror phase’ (1978: 49). Through interpellation, the ad provides the ‘the imaginary’ for a subject that the people represented in the ad, ‘a perfect version of oneself’ (Williamson, 1978: 67), is spatially unified with the individual. However, as a system of symbols and signifiers, ads can only be ‘the Symbolic’ that highlights difference rather than sameness as in ‘the Imaginary’. Consequently, in fact, ads represent the Imaginary that hails an individual, provokes his/her desire that s/he can become the person in the ad, and thus encourages him/her to buy the product (Williamson, 1978: 65). Such a process can be appropriated to my later analysis of calendar posters as well.

### **The Gaze**

Another concept that derives from Lacan’s Mirror-phase is ‘the gaze’, which is useful for my psychoanalytic discussion on calendar posters.

Here is Lacan’s definition of the gaze:

In our relation to things, in so far as this relation is constituted by the way of vision, and ordered in the figures of representation, something is transmitted, from stage to stage, and is always to some degree it—that is we call the gaze.

(Lacan, 1981: 73)

According to this definition, the gaze is a relation between a viewer and a system of representation. In the mirror-phase, the gaze is ‘a function of the imaginary’, and it ‘functions in the process of ideological interpellation’ (McGowan, 2003: 28), a process that the child identifies with his image in the mirror. As Žižek points out, this process works ‘on the level of the gaze, not on the level of the content’ (1991: 108). Therefore, only examining the representation itself is not enough to explore its ideological function, unless the gaze is discussed.

The gaze in the mirror-phase model, namely, the look of the subject (the child) at the object (his image in the mirror), encourages many exponents of traditional Lacanian film theory, especially film theorist Laura Mulvey, to develop the theory on gaze related to film (McGowan, 2003). Since films, like images, are also a form of representation that is saturated

with ideology, I will appropriate some of the concepts put forward by Mulvey to my discussion on calendar posters.

In her essay on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', Mulvey proposes the concept of male gaze that through male's two types of gaze at female in conventional cinema, male spectators can acquire pleasures in looking. The first type of gaze, scopophilic, 'arises from pleasure in using another person as an object of sexual stimulation through sight' (Mulvey, 1989: 18). The other type, 'developed through narcissism and the constitution of the ego, comes from identification with the image seen' (ibid.). It's a process similar to Lacan's mirror-phase in which the male spectator identifies with the male protagonist in the film, imagining that he gazes at the female protagonist in a natural space. To put it simply, the first type of gaze is a direct gaze at the represented female due to sexual instincts, while the second is a gaze indirectly through the male protagonist in the film due to 'ego libido', a concept from Freud, and the film screen is blurred in the second one (ibid.). What's more, Mulvey proposes two mechanisms of gaze, one is voyeuristic associating with 'sadism' (Mulvey, 1989: 21). The other is 'fetishistic scopophilia' that the represented female body is turned into a product in the male's look (ibid.). The first one requires a narrative while the second can 'exist outside linear time as the erotic instinct is focused on the look alone' (Mulvey, 1989: 22). Since nearly all calendar posters represent female rather than male, and calendar posters are non-linear representations, the second type of male gaze through identification and the voyeuristic mechanism are not suitable for my research. Rather, 'fetishistic scopophilia' due to sexual instincts can be helpful in my further discussion.

The above discussion is based on Lacan's early theory on gaze. However, in his later work, the gaze was developed into the look of the object at the subject (McGowan, 2003). When a subject looks at an object, in fact the object has been already gazing at the subject (Zizek, 1991: 109). This is different from previous Lacanian film theorists' view that the gaze is in the mastery of the viewer; In this case, the gaze of the represented images can plant a desire in the viewer rather than the spectator's identification with the represented images (McGowan, 2003). This inspiring point can also be used in the analysis of the represented women's gaze in calendar posters at viewers.

In short, in order to examine the interaction between the ideological function of representations and the subject, the function of gaze is an important point to be considered.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

After the critical review of relevant research literatures, a conceptual framework for my research project becomes clear. First of all, the core concept in my research is Republican Shanghai modernity, a modernity on a cultural sense based on Lee's discussion, which is an 'imagined reality' created by print media, featuring a hybrid culture and a commodified popular culture in which images of women were extensively used.

Then, I turn to Lacan's psychoanalytic model on imaginary – 'the Mirror-phase' to examine the concept and the mechanism of 'imagined reality'. This model helps to explain how the imaginary is linked to the reality, providing an appropriate theoretical support for Lee's definition of modernity. Also, this model helpfully bridges the gap between calendar posters, an external representation, and Lee's 'imagined' modernity, an abstract concept existing in people's internal minds.

However, although Lacan's model offers solid theoretical supports for the subject's side, it fails to support on the object's side, namely the calendar posters. Therefore, I make reference to Althusser's theory on ideology, which is closely connected to Lacan's model. Althusser's ideology helps to set Lee's modernity in the field of ideology and provides a transition to representations in calendar posters, which belong to the Ideological State Apparatuses. Moreover, in the light of Williamson's analysis on advertisements using Lacan's model, the relationship between calendar posters and the mirror-phase is connected.

Finally, as a useful concept to examine the interaction between representations and subjects, the gaze as a concept deriving from Lacan's mirror-phase model is explored. I will use Mulvey's 'fetishistic scopophilia' as a male gaze and Lacan's revised gaze that the object looks at the subject in the later discussion part.

All in all, the three key concepts constructing my conceptual framework is modernity in Republican Shanghai proposed by Lee, Lacan's mirror-phase model and Althusser's concept of ideology. These three main concepts also help to link other concepts together in my research project, including calendar posters, advertising, representation and the gaze.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH**

The purpose of my research is to examine the representations in calendar posters and try to find out the relationship between these representations and modernity in Republican Shanghai. The rationale for my research is based on previous research on calendar posters and modernity in Old Shanghai so far, which I have discussed in the introduction part. My research is intended to bridge the research gap between calendar posters and Republican Shanghai modernity, providing a new perspective to examine calendar posters and acquire a deeper understanding of modernity at that time.

Since women are the main representations in all these calendar posters, I will focus on representations of women. The posters I will discuss are from the 1930s because it was the peak time for Old Shanghai calendar posters (Wu, *et al.*, 1994). The formulation of my research questions is based on the three components in Lee's definition of modernity. Thus, this research will attempt to answer the following main question:

How do representations of women in 1930s Shanghai calendar posters support an ideology of modernity in Republican Shanghai?

In order to answer this question, the research is designed to address the following sub-questions:

- How do the representations of calendar girls support an ideology of a hybrid culture?
- How do the representations of calendar girls support an ideology of a commodified popular culture?
- How do the representations of calendar girls support an ideology of 'an imagined reality'?

## **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

To answer the research question, this research adopts Roland Barthes' semiotic visual analysis to examine the representations of women in calendar posters, complemented by a psychoanalytic model – 'the mirror phase' proposed by Jacques Lacan to discuss those representations' ideological implications for the modernity. In this chapter, reasons for the choice of this methodology, the sampling strategy, the operation of the research and reflexivity will be stated.

### **The Choice of the Methodology**

It's said that the choice of methodology depends on the 'nature' of the research question and the theories (Hansen, Cottle, Negrine, & Newbold, 1998: 3). According to my research question, representations of images and their ideological implications are my research focuses, which all belong to interpretations of visual images. Rose argues that this interpretation can occur at three sites, 'the site(s) of the production of an image, the site of the image itself, and the site(s) where it is seen by various audiences' (2001: 16). Since my research emphasizes the calendar posters themselves rather than their painters, institutions or the production process, the production site is not appropriate. While for the audience site, as contemporary audiences must have different interpretations from those in Republican Shanghai, this site is rejected as well. Considering that calendar posters as historical images are the most authentic documents reflecting representations and ideas at that time, the image site itself is the most appropriate one to analyze meanings of images.

On the image site, both quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis were considered. However, quantitative analysis including content analysis was rejected because it only focuses on the frequency of particular representations but fails to analyze them deeply. Among many approaches in qualitative analysis, semiotics, 'the most developed method of visual analysis' (Hansen, *et al.*, 1998: 6), is the most suitable approach. First of all, semiotics has been broadly used to analyze popular culture (Aiello, 2006: 94). Thus, as a kind of popular culture in Republican Shanghai, images of women in calendar posters are appropriate to be analyzed by semiotics. Besides, semiotics aims to analyze images in very detail (Leeuwen, 2001), which helps me to examine representations of the images carefully. Nevertheless, the most important reason is due to the perfect compatibility of Barthes' semiotic analysis with my research. In order to explain this, his semiotic analysis will be briefly introduced first.

Barthes' semiotics takes reference to the famous linguist Saussure's ideas that the basic element of a language is a sign consisting of signifier and signified (Hall, 1997: 38). This

fundamental idea is later adopted by Barthes into his analysis of images. The key idea in his approach is 'layering of meaning' (Leeuwen, 2001: 94). The first layer is denotation that is the most obvious and 'innocent' messages in images (Barthes, 1977: 42), namely who and what are being represented. The denotation then turns into a signifier and signifies ideological meanings in the second layer called connotation. This second layer of meaning is in the field of ideology including 'the general beliefs, conceptual frameworks and value systems of society' (Hall, 1997: 38). Barthes also proposes the concept of 'myth' at this layer. As Aiello explains, 'whereas connotation is the ideological meaning that is attached to a specific sign, myth relates to ideological concepts that are evoked by a certain sign' (2006: 95). This means that myth links to an even wider ideological system and turns 'the social, cultural, ideological and historical into the natural' (Barthes, 1977: 165).

In fact, it is the second layer of meaning in his approach that decides the close connection to my research. The connotation implies that signs in images are ideological (Moriarty, 1991). Accordingly, Barthes' semiotic analysis is not only a research method for exploration of representations of images, but also an analytical method for searching their ideological meanings. The dual functions of his approach exactly meet the purpose of my research.

However, the analysis of ideological implications in images using Barthes' semiotics is far from enough, especially when answering the third sub-question related to 'imagined reality'. Thus, the analysis is complemented by the 'mirror-phase model' which has been discussed in the theoretical chapter. In fact, semiotics and psychoanalysis 'are inextricably connected' by ideology (Williamson, 1978: 41). These two complementary methods applied in my research will contribute to acquiring a deeper insight into those representations of women in calendar posters.

### **The Sampling Strategy**

Since semiotics focuses on 'detailed case studies of relatively few images' (Rose, 2001: 73), I planned to choose nearly ten images out of a large database about Old Shanghai calendar posters. Unfortunately, there's no such database currently, so I turned to find images in books about calendar posters published in China. Considering that there are three sub-questions need to be addressed separately, I choose images respectively according to each question. Altogether I chose ten images, three each for the first two questions, and four for the last one. Several criteria have been applied to my sampling strategy. First of all, the calendar posters should have been painted during the 1930s. In order to ensure this time period, I found images in books instead of online because seldom do those online images have production date attached. The second important criterion is to choose images that are 'conceptually interesting' rather than 'statistically representative' (ibid.). However, to avoid

repetition, I tried to choose those interesting images having different themes, painters and advertised products. Basically, the images I choose share certain characteristics in each question but have their own distinct features.

### **The Operation of the Research**

Generally, the analysis of the images will be divided into two steps. The first step is the analysis of the representations, while the second step is the analysis of their ideological implications. Barthes' semiotic visual analysis will be applied in both steps, while psychoanalysis will be a complementary in the second step when necessary. In the first step, the detailed signs of images on the denotative level will be listed in the Appendix 2 according to Dyer's checklist of signs of humans including representations of bodies, manner, activity, props and settings (1982: 96-104). Based on his model, I will add one dimension that should also be considered in my research – dressings (including accessories and makeups). When listing these signs, the order is not important because signs are not 'linear' (Hall, 1997: 69). In the discussion part, I will only need to briefly describe the diegesis of the image as a summary of the denotative meanings (Rose, 2001: 79).

This operation of the research is revised after my previous pilot work in which two problems were found. First, the description of signs on the denotative level accounted for so much space that there was even no space for the analysis on the connotative level. Second, semiotic analysis of ideology was limited; another analytical method was needed. Thus, the methodology and tools adopted in this research are designed to avoid these two problems.

### **Reflexivity**

In terms of methodology itself, semiotics is 'culture bound', which means that only in certain culture are signifiers meaningful (Gill, 2007: 48). As a result, when signs are selected and interpreted, the process is greatly influenced by the researcher's own knowledge or ideology, as in Rose's words, the 'look is not natural or innocent' (2001: 16). This also applies to psychoanalysis. As Turner argues, 'It is impossible to stand outside ideology and talk about it in a language which is itself free of ideology' (2006: 198). Consequently, the researcher's own ideology affects interpretations of images.

Similarly, the sampling process is also influenced by the researcher's ideology. Choosing images that are interesting is in fact a very subjective process depending on the researcher's own taste, which is a part of his/her ideology as well (ibid.). Certain bias cannot be avoided. Furthermore, biases of the publishers, the editors and the authors of the books in which I choose the images should also be considered. Some images of calendar posters of nudes or

semi-nudes are not included in the books probably because they are not allowed to be read by the public. The images I can reach only account for a small proportion; most are unknown for various political, social or historical reasons. In short, it is necessary to be aware of the possible biases in the research process.

## **RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION**

In this chapter, results and interpretations of the images will be presented. The discussion will be divided into three parts, each answering one of the sub-questions. (All the images are attached in Appendix 1.)

### **An Ideology of a Hybrid Culture**

In this section, I will intend to answer ‘How do the representations of calendar girls support an ideology of a hybrid culture?’. As discussed in the theoretical chapter, this hybrid culture in Republican Shanghai’s context is a culture mixing both Chinese and Western features, which will be examined through semiotic analysis.

#### *Image 1.1*

This calendar poster was painted by Ni Gengye (dates unknown) for a Chinese tobacco company. Several packages of cigarettes are listed at the bottom of the image. On the denotative level, this slim young Chinese lady standing in the middle of the image is in a flower-patterned Qipao and wears a pair of white gloves. She is smiling and looking directly at the viewer, with her right hand waving at the viewer. She wears delicate makeups and her hairstyle was the fashionable one. Two airplanes in the background indicate that she is at the airfield, just getting off the plane or going to take the plane.

On the connotative level, her facial features and the Qipao she wears connote an ideology of a Chinese culture, while her hairstyle, her figure and the background connote an ideology of a western one. First of all, this woman’s facial features, together with her black hair suggest that she is a Chinese rather than a western lady. In fact, all the women depicted in 1930s calendar posters are Chinese. Then, Qipao is a symbol of Chinese culture. It was for Manchu women in Qing Dynasty (1636-1912), but it was later reformed in style and made popular during the Republican era (Zeng, 2010: 16). The typical style of Qipao in 1930s Shanghai is a one-piece close-fitting dress with long slits up to the thighs and a high collar with butterfly buttons (Chang, 2003), just like the dress in this image.

Unlike these two signifiers, others signify a western culture. First, the fashionable elements on this lady connote various western elements. Her hair is tied to the back with finger waves

in the fore part, which is a popular technique from the West during the 1930s (Peng, 2010: 28). Also, her pair of white gloves is a foreign good usually worn by western ladies. Besides, this lady's figure is westernized as well. Before 1930s, women were depicted as 'fleshless' in both calendar posters and Chinese paintings (Dal Lago, 2000: 130). Their bosoms were flat like a man. However, the figure of this lady is shapely, and her skin is whitened according to western aesthetic standards. Finally, the airplanes in the background connote a western modernity because airplanes were invented by Americans at the beginning of the last century.

*Image 1.2*

This one was painted by Xie Zhiguang (1900-1976) for a Japanese medicine brand. Different like the previous one in which the woman has no interaction with the product, the lady in this image is holding the package of the medicine for stomach in her hand, with the medicine open on the table by her. Sitting by the table in a stylish dress, she is grinning contentedly at someone, as if she is recommending the product to her friends. The sofa, the paintings on the wall, the chandelier and the fireplace indicate that she is living in an apartment with western interior decorations.

Similar to the last image, the finger-waved hairstyle of this woman also connotes a fashion influenced by the West. The difference is that this lady has a pair of double-fold eyelids. According to Zeng, this is also a western beauty principle because traditionally, Chinese women regarded 'long and narrow eyes with no fold in eyelids' as beauty (2010: 22). Thus, the change of eyelids of this lady suggests the influence of a western ideology about beauty. Nevertheless, the impact of the West is most obviously shown in the western-style setting behind this lady. All the decorations including electric lights and sofas, which were not commonly seen by most people in China, signify a modern western culture.

Although the woman looks as if she is totally westernized, her dressings indicate a Chinese feature, which makes her whole representation a hybrid. She is wearing a gathered skirt and a Qipao-style coat with high collars and trumpet sleeves, which were popular at the beginning of the Republican era. Altogether, on the connotative level, the whole image shows a mix of both Chinese and Western features.

*Image 1.3*

It was painted by Zheng Mantuo (1888-1961) for a Chinese tobacco company (China Nanyang Brother's Tobacco Company). There are more than two characters in the image, which is seldom seen in calendar posters. Images of the products are shown at the bottom of the image, but they have no interaction with the characters. Two Chinese ladies are presented at

the center, dancing in a dance hall with wood floors and several red lanterns hanging down from the ceiling. They both wear one-piece dresses with delicate embroidered designs and a pair of high-heels. In the background, Chinese musicians in western suits are playing western musical instruments.

The impact of western culture in the image is obvious. The setting of these two ladies is in a foreign mansion as signified by the wood floor and western-style pillars. In addition, the dressings and hairstyles of these two ladies imply a western ideology about fashion. As Cheung suggests, women's fashion at that time 'was an explicit expression of worship of the West' (2003: 19). It is shown in their western style one-pieces, their short ear-length hairdos and their high heels. Chinese women in previous ages all had long hair, so their short hairstyles imitating western women also signify a kind of modernity that is different from the past. Similarly, the high-heel leather shoes they wear imply a western culture because traditionally Chinese women wear shoes made from cloth due to their bound feet (Zeng, 2010). It was not until the Republican era that anti-foot binding movements were widely launched in China. Together with high-heeled shoes that were western products in the 1930s, dancing including fox-trot and tango was also an entertainment learned from the West (Lee, 1999a: 76). Altogether, these signifiers connote an ideology of a western culture.

However, the representation of these two ladies is not totally westernized as indicated by the red lanterns in their setting. Red lanterns are a typical Chinese decoration during festive days to create a joyful atmosphere. Due to this sign, one can make sure that the ladies in the image are Chinese not other races.

From the analysis above, a conclusion can be drawn that on the connotative level, the representations of calendar girls in each image indicate an ideology of a hybrid culture that combine both Chinese and Western features. This leads to a myth that modernity in Republican Shanghai is not sheer westernization, but a mix of both Chinese and Western elements. Since ideological implications of these images can be explained by semiotic analysis itself, psychoanalysis is not used in this section.

### **An Ideology of a Commodified Popular Culture**

In this section, the sub-question that 'How do the representations of calendar girls support an ideology of a commodified popular culture?' will be answered. Before the examination on those representations, the definition of 'a commodified popular culture' will be briefly discussed. Popular culture is a commercial culture 'widely favoured or well-liked by many people' (Storey, 2009: 5). Taking reference to Mosco's definition of commodification, a commodified popular culture is a culture that is transformed into popular commodities 'that

are valued for what they can earn in the marketplace' (2008: 4). Calendar posters in Republican Shanghai were very popular among the public. As discussed in the theoretical chapter, the women images in calendar posters are a kind of popular culture that is commodified for its commercial purposes, a practice that appeared in Shanghai for the first time. Therefore, a commodified popular culture in this context means a commodification of calendar girls' representations. In the following, after examining the representations of woman in each calendar poster respectively, I will discuss their ideological implications related to commodification in the light of the concept of the gaze.

*Image 2.1*

This one was painted by Hang Zhiying (1900-1947) and his studio for an advertisement of mosquito repellent incense coils. Calendars are omitted in this image. On the denotative level, a young Chinese woman wearing a close-fitting and see-through dress is stretching herself, right hand pointing at the product. She is grinning shyly and looking at elsewhere.

The setting in this image is quite simple, but the woman who accounts for the largest space in the image has many implications. The lighted incense coil signifies that it is near bedtime because people usually light it before sleep (Zeng, 2010: 27). This corresponds to her gesture of stretching the body, which suggests that she is going to sleep. According to Dal Lago, such an 'exposed-armpit position...generate erotic stimulation' (2000: 134). This is confirmed by her plump body shape in her translucent dress. Her tiny waist, the shape of her breasts and her protruding nipples are visible. The lovely pink colour of her dress and her maiden-like facial expression make her even more desirable. Connotatively, the representation of this woman indicates a strong sexual implication for men. Her facial expressions and gestures are just like the reaction when a man is gazing at her.

*Image 2.2*

This poster was painted by Ni Gengye for Qidong Tobacco Company. A package of cigarettes is shown at the lower left corner. In a setting that is decorated by various Chinese plants, a lady wearing a light blue Qipao and a pair of well-matched high-heels is lying lazily on a bed, leaning towards the viewer on the bedrails, grinning and gazing directly at the viewer. A book is lying on the floor, as if she has just finished reading it and wants to take a rest now. Connotatively, the representation of this lady suggests a sexual invitation. The bed is a symbol closely connected to sex, and the lady's provocative pose reinforces such an ideology. Besides, her gaze at the viewer is also suggestive, which I will explain later.

*Image 2.3*

This poster was painted by Zubao for an advertisement of wines for a foreign company. Images of various bottles of wines are shown on the edges. In the middle of the image, a fashionable Chinese lady wearing a translucent Qipao is sitting on a sofa with crossed-legs, her right hand supporting on the sofa with her armpit exposed. Her finger-waved hairstyle, tasseled eardrops and leather high-heels are the most popular style at that time. Through her see-through dress, along her exposed leg, one can vaguely see her white underskirt with lace edges. The lady is grinning and gazing seductively at the viewer. On the table besides her, two goblets are filled with champagne. This connotes that the lady is inviting the viewer to have a drink with her. Since crossed legs are 'a possible reminder of sexual availability' (Dal Lago, 2000: 107), the representation of this lady also signifies a sexual invitation for male viewers.

From the analysis of these images, it can be found that male viewers are targets of these calendar posters because the representations of women all suggest certain sexual invitations. For the first image, the body and the gesture of the woman evoke men's sexual instincts and thus invite a male gaze. As for the other two images, the gaze of the women at viewers acknowledges the existence of them and 'demands that the viewer enter into some kind of imaginary relation with him or her' (Kress & Leeuwen, 1996: 118). The type of the relation is decided by other signifiers in images, such as facial expressions and gestures, and it is this relation that includes certain viewers but excludes others (ibid.). In these two images, the provocative gestures and the seductive smiles of the women demand an imaginary sexual relation with male viewers. Thus, the viewers' sexual desire is stimulated, which leads a male gaze at these women. Therefore, women in all these three images are finally viewed as an object through fetishistic scopophilia, which satisfies male viewers' sexual instincts (Jiang, 2003: 54). In such a way, women are equal to commodities advertised in the calendar posters as incense coils, cigarettes and liquors that men can consume. Moreover, these commodified representations of women work for marketing purposes, encouraging male viewers to buy the advertised product so that when they consume the product, they can imagine that they are consuming those beautiful women at the same time and increase their 'pleasurable sensation' accordingly (Dal Lago, 2000: 41). To conclude, the representations of calendar girls connote an ideology that images of women are commodified, and this commodification is not only for satisfying male viewers' sexual instincts, but also for marketing purposes. It is such an ideology of a commodified popular culture that is related to ideology of modernity in Republic Shanghai (Lee, 1999b: 73).

**An Ideology of 'An Imagined Reality'**

This section will answer the last sub-question ‘How do the representations of calendar girls support an ideology of ‘an imagined reality’?’. If a hybrid culture and a commodified popular culture are two key features of Republican Shanghai modernity, then an imagined reality is the fundamental attribute of modernity at that time. In the following, I will examine the representations of women in each calendar poster first, and then I will discuss their relation to an ideology of an imagined reality together in the light of Lacan’s mirror-phase model and the concept of the gaze.

*Image 3.1*

This poster was painted by Hang Zhiying and his studio for a Chinese tobacco company. The image of the product is shown at the top right corner. In the middle of the image are two Chinese ladies, one riding on the horse confidently, the other leading the horse happily. The lady on the horse wears equestrian apparels, with a pattern of Republican national flag on her chest, indicating that she is a Chinese. The other wears a Qipao of flower patterns and a pair of high heels, one hand holding a purse. They both enjoy themselves very much. The setting is a racecourse in Shanghai at the Bund during that time.

Equestrianism in Republican Shanghai was a modern entertainment for upper-class (Wu, Zhuo, Huang, & Lu, 1994). This signifies that the ladies in the image are among the rich. Besides, traditionally, Chinese young women were not allowed to frequently show themselves in public places including racecourses and parks (Zeng, 2010: 14). Thus, representations of these two women also indicate a break with traditional codes.

*Image 3.2*

This one was also painted by Hang Zhiying and his studio for a Chinese tobacco company. Various packages of cigarettes are presented at the bottom of the poster. A young Chinese lady sitting on a rock in a beautiful Chinese garden is smoking and gazing confidently at the viewer.

Connotatively, in addition to the park which signifies ‘leisure and entertainment’ (Lee, 1999a: 84), the delicate dressings and stylish accessories of this lady indicate that she is from an upper-class family. Similar to the last poster, this lady also shows herself in a public place. Furthermore, she is even smoking and dares to gaze directly at the viewers. In fact, in Republican Shanghai, women’s smoking was a fashion among celebrities (Wu, *et al.*, 1994). Cigarettes were not only advertised for men, but also for women. However, for most people, women’s smoking would still leave negative impressions. Therefore, the representation of

this woman suggests an image of a confident and cheerful woman from upper class who pursues herself bravely.

*Image 3.3*

This poster was painted for a Chinese brand of cloth called ‘Yin Dan Shi Lin’. The painter is unknown. The characteristic of this brand is that colours of their cloths are plain colours without patterns (Wu, *et al.*, 1994), just like the images shown at the bottom of the poster. At the center, a lady in short hair is sitting on a bench outdoors with books open on her laps, leaning herself on the backrest. She wears a navy-blue Qipao made of this brand of cloth and a watch on her left wrist. She is gazing directly at viewers with a firm look and a faint smile.

Different from previous posters in which texts on images are only used to explain the product, the texts on this image also explain the identity of the lady. Here, I will treat texts as signs as well. The texts on the left just besides the lady mean that elegant and thrifty female students would choose this brand of cloth. This reveals that the lady in the image is a student. It corresponds to her hairstyle and the book on her laps. Most Chinese at that time were still illiterate, especially for women since they were not allowed to attend schools in feudal societies even though some of them could afford tuition. Thus, the book signifies that this lady is literate. Besides, her bobbed hairdo was a popular hairstyle among female students. This trend began after the May Fourth movement (04.05.1919) launched by Chinese students and intellectuals who advocated learning democracy and science from the West and denouncing old values of feudalism and imperialism in China (Bergere, 2009). Many female students during the movement got this haircut to express their emancipation from tradition (Edwards, 2000: 129). Later, it became a popular hairstyle for female students which symbolizes independence, being literate and revolutionary (Ni, 2008: 27). This symbolic meaning is also reflected from her look that is determined, resolute and confident.

Another signifier that is meaningful is her watch. Similar to jade and jewelry, a watch is a symbol of middle-class or upper-class (Wu, *et al.*, 1994). In fact, families who could afford their children’s education were at least middle-class in the Republican era. To conclude, this representation connotes an ideology that female students are the symbol of independence, civilization and a middle-class status.

*Image 3.4*

This one was painted by Xie Zhiguang for a Chinese company of electric appliances. Various products are listed at the bottom of the image. A woman wearing a one-piece dress covered

with furs and a pair of leather high-heels is reaching out her right hand towards the heater, which is one of the products of this company.

Electricity supply to private houses was very rare in Old Shanghai, not to mention electrical appliances. The heater in the home symbolizes her wealth. Also, the western interior decorations signified by western-style wall lamps, the sofa, and the gramophone in the background confirms her high status. This status is also indicated by her dressing since furs were imported products, only the rich could afford to buy. Altogether, the representation of this lady delivers an ideology that the bourgeoisie live a wealthy, leisurely and a high-quality life.

From the analysis above, a shared characteristic is found that these women are all bourgeois, a specific social class in Republican Shanghai (Bergere, 2009: 140). They are beautiful, wealthy, educated and leisurely. They are also independent, confident and courageous. No doubt, everyone wants to be as perfect as they are and wants to enjoy a life as comfortable as they do as represented in the posters. However, such a social class was only belonged to a very small number of people. Most people could reach them only by their imagined reality. It works through their viewing at these representations in the posters. When they look at the posters, a bourgeois lifestyle and an image of female independence and confidence interpellate them, especially the female viewers, making them identify themselves with the represented women. It is the imaginary proposed by Lacan that works in this process. They project themselves on those ladies, imagining a reality that they also play equestrian sport in public, smoke confidently, become an educated and independent student, and live an affluent life. This imaginary is even reinforced by the direct gaze of the represented women. In Image 3.2 and Image 3.3, both women are gazing directly at subjects, which helps to 'connect the participants with the viewer' (Kress & Leeuwen, 1996: 117). When those women's gazes merge with the viewers', the represented women are just like reflections of the viewers in a mirror (Williamson, 1978: 68), making them even more easily identify with their 'reflections'. This identification links the representations of calendar girls to an ideology of an imagined reality.

However, the gap between the imaginary and the viewers' real living conditions still exists. Since the advertised products function as an accessory of this imagined reality, they become the substitute of the imagined reality so that owning the products in calendar posters is equal to becoming the same type of people or living the same life as those calendar girls. In this sense, the represented women serve to marketing purposes again, just like those discussed in the last section.

In fact, as the fundamental attribute of Republican Shanghai modernity, this ideology of an imagined reality is supported in every calendar poster. In the posters discussed in previous

two sections, the represented women are all from middle class indicated by their dressings, activities or settings. Their representations such as dancing (Image 1.3) or drinking imported wines (Image 2.3) also provide an imaginary for the viewers that they can live the same lifestyle as those confident and charming ladies.

Likewise, as two key characteristics of Republican Shanghai modernity, an ideology of a hybrid culture and a commodified popular culture are also indicated in each calendar poster. As for an ideology of a hybrid culture, the dressings, hairstyles, entertainments and settings of calendar girls all represent a combination of Chinese and Western cultures. For example, in Image 2.3, her high heels, the sofa and the champagne indicate a western culture, but her traditional Qipao dress is a sign of Chinese culture. Similarly, in Image 3.1, the Qipao and the equestrian sport suggest a hybrid culture. As for an ideology of a commodified popular culture, since nearly all calendar posters in Old Shanghai depict glamorous females rather than males, their representations are attractive to male viewers and commodified by male gaze, and thus help to stimulate the sale of the products.

To conclude, the interpretations of the results suggest that the three points of Republican Shanghai modernity are supported by the representations of women in the calendar posters.

## CONCLUSION

This empirical study has discussed the relationship between representations of women in 1930s Shanghai calendar posters and an ideology of modernity in Republican Shanghai. By applying Barthes' semiotic analysis and Lacan's mirror-phase model, I find that these representations support an ideology of modernity in Republican Shanghai through their support of the three main features of Shanghai modernity, namely, an ideology of a hybrid culture, an ideology of a commodified popular culture and an ideology of an imagined reality. Therefore, the initial research question that 'How do representations of women in 1930s Shanghai calendar posters support an ideology of modernity in Republican Shanghai?' has been answered.

This research is backed by Lee's definition on Republican Shanghai modernity that modernity at that time is an imagined reality, featuring a hybrid culture and a commodified popular culture using women images. This definition of modernity is further backed by Lacan's mirror-phase model and Althusser's concept of ideology. In order to examine the calendar posters, concepts like representations and the gaze are also used as theoretical supports. Since Barthes' semiotic visual analysis alone is insufficient to explore the ideological implications of the representations of calendar girls, the interpretation is supplemented by psychoanalysis.

In the samples studied, first, I find that the representations of calendar girls suggest an ideology of a hybrid culture that has both Chinese and Western characteristics indicated from their dressings, hairstyles, activities and settings. Then, an ideology of a commodified popular culture is also found through the seductive representations of calendar girls indicated by their gestures, dressings and the gaze. Their provocative representations invite a male gaze that commodifies the calendar girls, and thus serve to marketing purposes. Finally, I find that the representations of independent, confident, educated, leisurely and wealthy calendar girls provide the viewers with an imagined reality that they could live the same modern bourgeois lifestyle as those represented ladies. Altogether, these three findings lead to the final conclusion that the representations of calendar girls support an ideology of Republican Shanghai modernity.

This research affirms the claim about calendar posters that what they represent is a wish for a rosy future (Wu, *et al.*, 1994: 12). It is consistent with Lee's claim that modernity in Republican Shanghai is constructed by imaginary (1999b: 80). The representations of calendar girls not only reflect a unique culture in Shanghai's golden age, but also create an

illusion for the Chinese in Shanghai at that time. As Stevens argues, 'cultural displays do both reflect and create reality' (2003: 101).

Among the literatures related to calendar posters and Republican Shanghai I have found so far, no research applies psychoanalysis as an analytical method. From the results of my research, psychoanalysis can be a helpful method to dig out deeper ideological implications in representations in visual culture. Therefore, future research can employ psychoanalysis as a methodology to examine visual cultures in Republican Shanghai. Besides, content analysis can also be applied to this topic if sufficient samples are available, so that the frequency of certain representations of calendar girls can be categorized and investigated. Finally, further research can make a comparison between the representations of calendar girls in Republican Shanghai and the representations of women in contemporary Shanghai's ad posters, and discuss if the ideological implication about modernity in Shanghai has changed or not. I hope by conducting various research on Old Shanghai calendar posters, more and more researchers will be aware of and appreciate the charm of those calendar girls and the amazing history of Republican Shanghai.

## REFERENCES

- Aiello, G. (2006) 'Theoretical advances in critical visual analysis: Perception, ideology, mythologies, and social semiotics', *Journal of Visual Literacy* 26(2): 89–102.
- Althusser, L. (1998) 'Ideology and ideological state apparatuses', pp. 693-702 in J. Ribkin & R. Michael (eds.) *Literary theory: An anthology*, Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing.
- Andacht, F. (2000) 'A semiotic framework for the social imaginary', URL: <http://www.iupui.edu/~arisbe/menu/library/aboutcsp/andacht/socimagn.htm> [Last consulted 14 August 2016].
- Anderson, B. (1991) *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism (Rev. ed.)*, London and New York, NY: Verso.
- Barthes, R. (1977) *Image, music, text*. (S. Heath, Trans.), London: Fontana Press.
- Bergere, M. C. (2009) *The golden age of the Chinese bourgeoisie, 1911-1937*. (J. Lloyd, Trans.), Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Bu, J. (1959) 'Jiefang qian de 'yuefenpai' nianhua shiliao [The calendar posters before The People's Republic of China]', *Research of Art* (2): 55-60.
- Chang, E. (2003) 'A chronicle of changing clothes', *Positions* 11(2): 427–441.
- Cheung, Y. (2003) 'Modern women in Republican Shanghai, the 1920s-1930s: Discourses and images', paper retrieved from CUHK Electronic Theses & Dissertations Collection.
- Dal Lago, F. (2000) 'Crossed legs in 1930s Shanghai: How 'modern' the modern woman?', *East Asian History* 19: 103–144.
- Dyer, G. (1982) *Advertising as communication*. J. Fiske (Ed.), London: Routledge.
- Eagleton, T. (1991) *Ideology: An introduction*, London: Verso.
- Edwards, L. (2000) 'Policing the modern woman in Republican China', *Modern China* 26(2): 115–147.
- Elliott, A. (2002) 'The social imaginary: A critical assessment of Castoriadis's psychoanalytic social theory', *American Imago* 59(2): 141–170.
- Gill, R. (2007) *Gender and the media*, Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Hall, S. (1985) 'Signification, representation, ideology: Althusser and the post-structuralist debates', *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 2(2): 91–114.
- Hall, S. (1997) 'The work of representation', pp. 13-74 in S. Hall (ed.) *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*, London: Sage.
- Hansen, A., Cottle, S., Negrine, R., & Newbold, C. (1998) *Mass communication research methods*, New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Jiang, Y. (2003) 'Yuefenpai guanggaohua zhong nvxing xingxiang yanbian zhi fenxi [The analysis of the change of women's representations in calendar posters]', *Journal of Nanjing Arts Institute: Fine Arts & Design* 1: 53–56.
- Kress, G., & Leeuwen, T. V. (1996) *Reading images: The grammar of visual design*, London: Routledge.
- Lacan, J. (1981) *The four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis*. J. A. Miller (Ed.). (A. Sheridan. Tran.), New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Laing, E. J. (2004) *Selling happiness: Calendar posters and visual culture in early-twentieth-century Shanghai*, Hawaii, HI: University of Hawaii Press.
- Lee, L. O. (1999a) 'Shanghai modern: Reflections on urban culture in China in the 1930s', *Public Culture* 11(1): 75–107.
- Lee, L. O. (1999b) *Shanghai modern: The flowering of a new urban culture in China, 1930-1945*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Leeuwen, T. V. (2001) 'Semiotics and iconography', pp. 92–118 in T.V. Leeuwen & C. Jewitt (eds.) *Handbook of visual analysis*, London: Sage.
- Liang, S. Y. (2010) *Mapping modernity in Shanghai: Space, gender, and visual culture in the sojourners' city, 1853-98*, New York, NY: Routledge.
- Loos, A. (2002) 'Symbolic, real, imaginary', URL: <http://csmt.uchicago.edu/glossary2004/symbolicrealimaginary.htm>. [Last consulted 14 August 2016].
- McGowan, T. (2003) 'Looking for the gaze: Lacanian film theory and its vicissitudes', *Cinema Journal* 42(3): 27–47.
- Moriarty, M. (1991) *Roland Barthes*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Mosco, V. (2008) 'Political economy of the media', pp. 1-9 in W. Donsbach (ed.) *The international encyclopedia of communication*, Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Pub.
- Mulvey, L. (1989) *Visual and other pleasures*, Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan.
- Ni, W. (2008) 'Shangpin jingzhen zhong de nvxing shenti: Lun 'yuefenpai' nvlang [Female bodies as commodities: About calendar girls]', *Journal of Zaozhuang University* 25(1): 23-29.
- O'Connor, J. (2012) 'Shanghai modern: Replaying futures past', *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research* 4: 15–34.
- Orgad, S. (2012) *Media representation and the global imagination*, London: Polity.
- Peng, B. (2010) 'Cong 'yuefenpai' guanggao kan minguo nvxing fushi shenmei yixiang de goujian [An analysis of aesthetics about women's clothes in Republic China through the lens of calendar posters]', paper retrieved from China Masters' Theses Full-text Database.
- Rose, G. (2001) *Visual methodologies: An introduction to the interpretation of visual materials*, London: Sage.
- Song, J. L. (ed.) (1997) *Lao yuefen pai [Old calendar posters]*, Shanghai: Shanghai Huabao Chubanshe [Shanghai Paintings Publisher].
- Stevens, S. E. (2003) 'Figuring modernity: The new woman and the modern girl in Republican China', *NWSA Journal* 15(3): 82–103.
- Storey, J. (2009) *Cultural theory and popular culture: An introduction*, London: Pearson.
- Taylor, C. (2002) 'Modern social imaginaries', *Public Culture* 14(1): 91–124.
- Taylor, C. (2004) *Modern social imaginaries*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Turner, G. (2006) *Film as social practice*, London: Routledge.
- Williamson, J. (1978) *Decoding advertisements: Ideology and meaning in advertising*, London: Marion Boyars Publishers Ltd.
- Wu, H., Zhuo, B. T., Huang, Y., & Lu, W.W. (eds.) (1994) *Duhui modeng [The city and modernity]*, Hong Kong: Joint Publishing HK.
- Yeh, W. (1997) 'Shanghai modernity: Commerce and culture in a Republican city', *The China Quarterly* 150: 375–394.
- Zeng, Y. (2010) 'The representation of modern women in yuefenpai in 1920s and 1930s Shanghai: A comparison between the calendar posters of Zheng Mantuo and Hang Zhiying', paper retrieved from LUP Student Papers: Lund University Libraries.
- Zhao, X., & Belk, R. W. (2008) 'Advertising consumer culture in 1930s Shanghai: Globalization and localization in Yuefenpai', *Journal of Advertising* 37(2): 45–56.
- Zheng, L. J. (2005) 'Setting and image: Modernization of the Chinese society and the calendar in the 1920s and 1930s', *Hundred Schools in Art* 4: 62-67.
- Zizek, S. (1989) *The sublime object of ideology*, London: Verso.
- Zizek, S. (1991) *Looking awry: An introduction to Jacques Lacan through popular culture*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

APPENDIX 1 - Images

Image 1.1 (Wu, et al., 1994: no. 31)



Image 1.2 (Wu, et al., 1994: no. 26)



Image 1.3 (Wu, *et al.*, 1994: no. 47)



Image 2.1 (Song, 1997: 63)



Image 2.2 (Song, 1997: 135)



Image 2.3 (Wu, et al., 1994: no. 48)



Image 3.1 (Wu, et al., 1994: no. 40)



Image 3.2 (Wu, et al., 1994: no. 46)



Image 3.3 (Wu, et al., 1994: no. 33)



Image 3.4 (Wu, et al., 1994: no. 28)



**APPENDIX 2 – Tables of signs**

**1. Representations of bodies**

<b>Images</b>	<b>Age/Gender/Race/Hair</b>	<b>Body</b>	<b>Looks</b>	<b>Dressings</b>
<b>1.1</b>	A young Chinese lady, hair with finger waves, hair with finger waves	Whole body, slim, shaped, whitened	Elegant, stylish	A flower-patterned Qipao, a coat, a pair of white gloves, a purse, blue high heels
<b>1.2</b>	A young Chinese lady, hair with finger waves	Part of the body	Wealthy, stylish	Dress, a Qipao style coat, two rings on her fingers, stylish eardrops
<b>1.3</b>	Two young Chinese ladies, short hair & hair with finger waves	Whole bodies	Stylish	Western style One-piece dress, high heels, eardrops
<b>2.1</b>	A young Chinese lady, short hair	Upper part of the body	Seductive, sexy	Close-fitting and translucent dress
<b>2.2</b>	A young Chinese lady, hair with finger waves	Whole body	Seductive	Qipao, high heels
<b>2.3</b>	A young Chinese lady, hair tied to the back with finger waves	Whole body	Seductive	Translucent Qipao, long underwear, high heels
<b>3.1</b>	Two young Chinese ladies, one's hair with finger waves	Whole bodies	Stylish, confident	Equestrian apparel, Qipao, high heels
<b>3.2</b>	A young Chinese lady	Part of the body	Confident, stylish	Qipao, eardrops, rings
<b>3.3</b>	A young Chinese lady, short hair	Part of the body	Confident, ambitious	Qipao, a watch, an umbrella
<b>3.4</b>	A young Chinese lady, hair tied to the back	Whole body	Wealthy	A one-piece dress with furs, high heels

**2. Representations of manner**

<b>Images</b>	<b>Expression</b>	<b>Eye contact</b>	<b>Pose</b>
<b>1.1</b>	Grinning, happily	Gaze at the viewer directly, Line of sight at the same level	Standing and facing the viewer, one hand waving, the other holding her belongings
<b>1.2</b>	Grinning, happily	Look elsewhere	Sitting on a chair, right hand holding the product
<b>1.3</b>	Smiling	One looking at her partner, the other looking at their hands	During dancing
<b>2.1</b>	Grinning, shyly	Look elsewhere	Stretching her left arm, right hand pointing at the product
<b>2.2</b>	Grinning, seductively	Gaze at the viewer directly	Half sitting and half lying on the bed, leaning on the bedrails, leaning towards the viewer
<b>2.3</b>	Grinning, seductively, confidently	Gaze at the viewer directly	Sitting on the sofa, stretching her right hand, cross her legs
<b>3.1</b>	Both grinning	Both look elsewhere	One riding on the horse, the other leading the horse
<b>3.2</b>	Grinning	Gaze at the viewer directly	Sitting on the rock, one hand holding the cigarette
<b>3.3</b>	A faint smile, a firm look	Gaze at the viewer directly	Sitting on the bench, leaning on the backrest
<b>3.4</b>	Calmly, a faint smile	Look elsewhere	Sitting on the sofa, leaning towards the heater

### 3. Representations of activity

<b>Images</b>	<b>Touch</b>	<b>Body movement</b>	<b>Positional communication</b>
<b>1.1</b>	The purse	Active	In the middle of the image
<b>1.2</b>	Right hand holding the product	Active, leaning forward	Account for the largest space in the image
<b>1.3</b>	Their hands touch each other	Dancing	Both are in the middle of the image, the other people are in the left corner
<b>2.1</b>	/	Relaxed	In the middle of the image, in the light
<b>2.2</b>	The bed	Relaxed	In the middle of the image
<b>2.3</b>	The sofa	Relaxed, active	In the middle of the image
<b>3.1</b>	The horse	Confident	In the middle of the image
<b>3.2</b>	The cigarette	Confident	In the middle of the image
<b>3.3</b>	The book	Confident, active	In the middle of the image
<b>3.4</b>	The sofa	Active	In the middle of the image

#### 4. Props and settings

<b>Images</b>	<b>Props (objects that have particular cultural significance)</b>	<b>Settings</b>
<b>1.1</b>	Qipao, Gloves, airplanes	At the airfield
<b>1.2</b>	The product in her hand and those on the table, sofas, paintings on the wall, a chandelier, a fireplace	Indoors, at home
<b>1.3</b>	Piano, Violins, Saxophone, red lanterns	In a dance hall or in a private house
<b>2.1</b>	Close-fitting dress, mosquito repellent incense coil	At home, at night
<b>2.2</b>	The bed, the book on the floor	Indoors, at home
<b>2.3</b>	The sofa, two goblets on the table	Indoors
<b>3.1</b>	The horse, the racecourse	Outdoors, at the racecourse
<b>3.2</b>	The cigarette, the park	Outdoors, at the park
<b>3.3</b>	The book, the watch	Outdoors
<b>3.4</b>	The heater, western-styled wall lamps, dress with furs, gramophone	Indoors, at home

## **Electronic MSc Dissertation Series**

The Media@LSE Electronic MSc Dissertations Series presents high quality MSc Dissertations which received a mark of 74% and above (Distinction).

Selected dissertations are published electronically as PDF files, subject to review and approval by the Editors.

Authors retain copyright, and publication here does not preclude the subsequent development of the paper for publication elsewhere.

---

---

---