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*DRIVING IN THE MORN*  
*KILLS DESPERATION*  
LIANG Yue | 梁玥

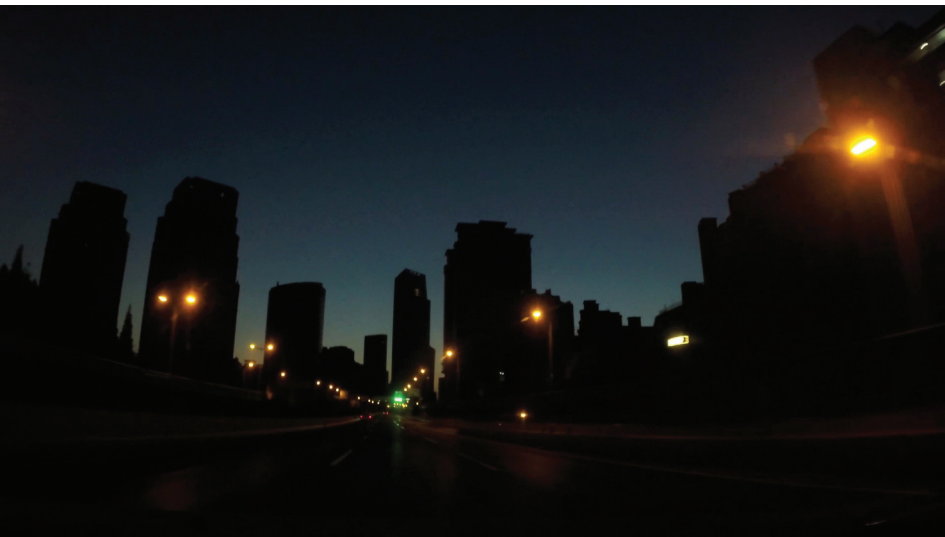


Single-channel video projection (still), 23:04 min, 2014



Q: How would you like to describe Shanghai, the city where you were born: 1. F (She-city), 2. M (He-city), 3. X (the others)? Why?

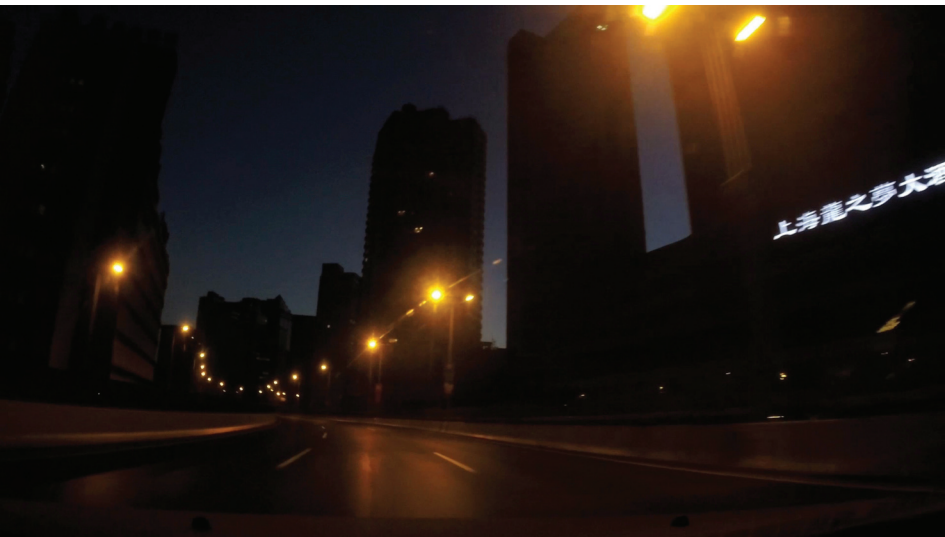
A: This is a very good question. I have never thought about this before. But just feel it like home, always complain about it, and go back every night.



Q: Please pick a route of your personal Shanghai mapping (as some reference points for you in the past, present or future), and tell us stories on the route or in-between the lines.

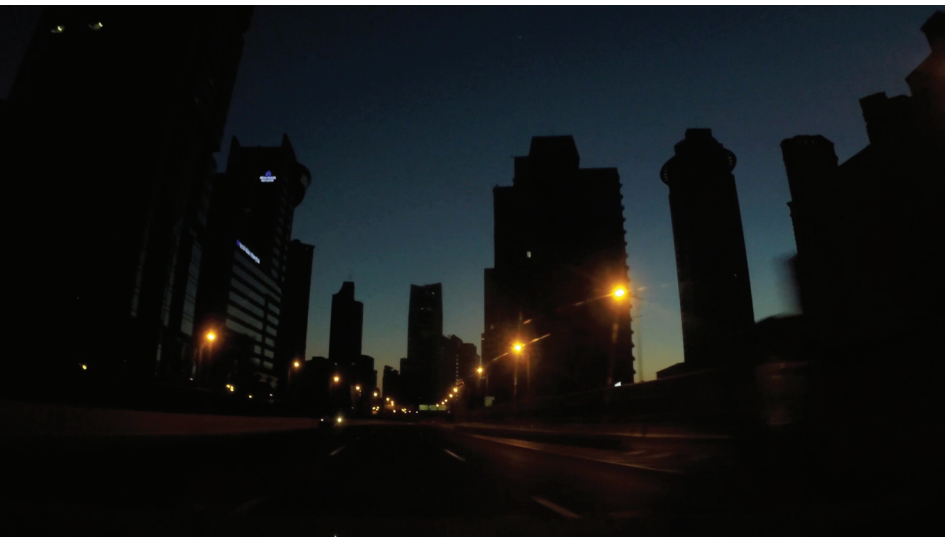
A: A route for me is a route that is always in front of my eyes, leading to somewhere, but normally, I use GPS.

Stories happen every day. Sometimes, I'm angry, shouting in my driving position for the traffic, or peaceful, silent, looking and thinking about the whole world when facing a red light.



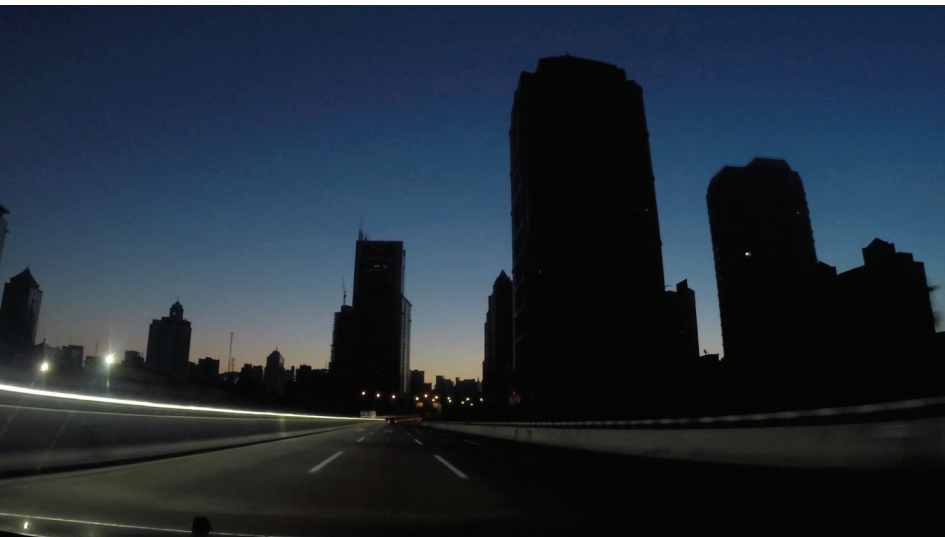
Q: Which part/area of “disappeared/re-appeared” Shanghai, that you discovered at later age, has subconsciously embedded in your spatial/cultural memory of the city?

A: There's some part totally different and disappeared, together with the young age and memories. It seems like it never happened. Sometime I'm confused if I have really experienced those days.



Q: Has any historical or social event happened in Shanghai that has special (subversive) meaning to you?

A: I can't remember.



Q: In which part/area of contemporary Shanghai you feel most alienated? Why?

A: It depends on the moment. I can't tell you here.





Q: Have you tried to configure/construct a kind of relationship (long-term/accidental, physical/mental/existential, etc.) with your hometown? And how (e.g. by 'dressing-up' an identity or observing from certain point of view)?

A: Actually I feel I have no relationship with the hometown; all the relationships are friends, family and work. Without them, I could be anywhere.

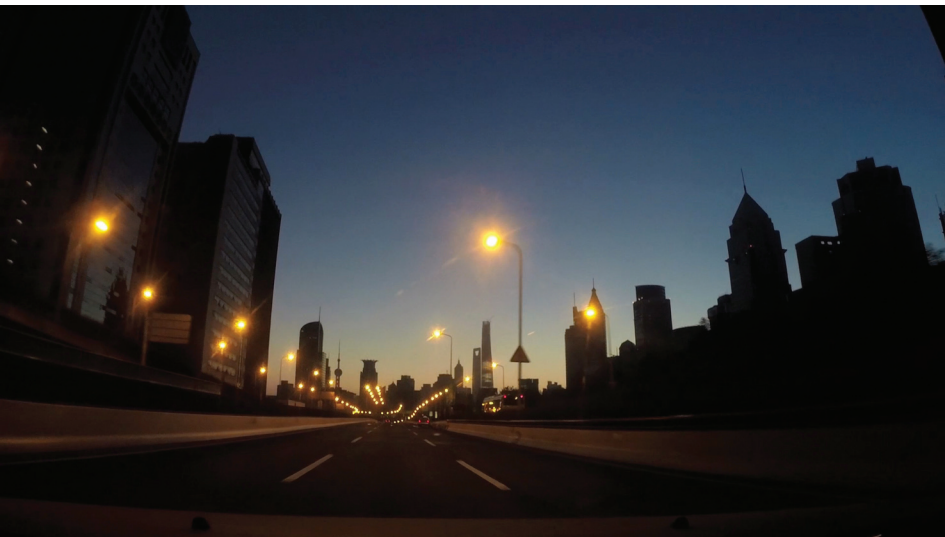


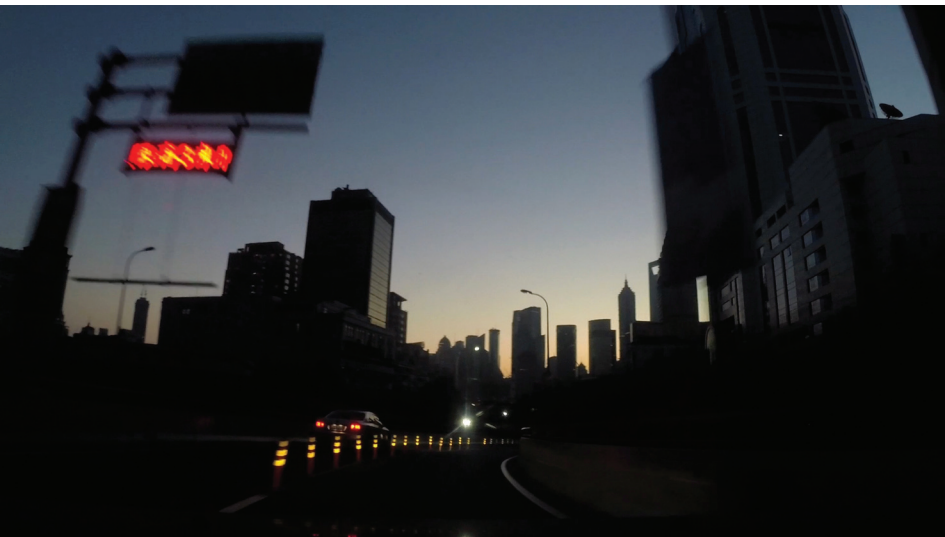
Q: Please describe a specific/daily moment of your personal history/herstory in this mega-city, which could be symbolic of the rapid reforms, in/unparallel with the development in China.

A: Everyday there are many idiots who don't drive properly, changing lanes like their life depended on it, making right turns and not letting pedestrian cross.



Everyday there are people bragging on the internet about what coffee they drank, what restaurant they went to, where they went on a luxurious holiday, their way of caring about current affairs is to forward posts - all this makes me feel very alienated. Examples like these are countless, I can open my eyes each day and start cursing, until I enter my studio, into my own wonderland.





# 上海拉拉

中國都市女同志社群與政治



金曄路 著  
廖愛晚 譯



# *Shanghai Lalas: Female Tongzhi Communities and Politics in Urban China*

Lucetta Yip Lo KAM

"Since economic success is highly regarded in the Chinese family, a higher economic status can "compensate" for a marginalized positioning caused by a socially stigmatized sexual status. This explains why lalas in China heavily emphasize material security and success, as well as being able to live life as well as (if not better than) married women."

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Chinese edition, 2014, translated by LIAO Aiwan.  
Dr. Lucetta KAM, Assistant Professor at the Department of  
Humanities and Creative Writing, Hong Kong Baptist University.

Q: How would you like to describe Shanghai, the city where you were born: 1. F (She-city), 2. M (He-city), 3. X (the others)? Why?

A: 1. F (She-city)

I love this question. I never thought about Shanghai in terms of gender.

I have a love-hate relationship with Shanghai. It provided me with the best part of my life but it also showed, or is still showing me, the not-so-adorable side of human beings. In a very stereotypical way, I would see Shanghai as a feminine being, for both of “her” good and bad sides.

The best part of my life was spent in Shanghai before I moved to Hong Kong with my family. Looking back, the seven years I lived in the old family house in Jing-an area were like a sweet dream. Shanghai at that time was more humble and sophisticated. Almost every family in our neighbourhood or from my grandparents’ or even my parents’ generations had some extraordinary family stories to tell. It was not a pleasant and comfortable time for the so-called “bourgeois class” which formed the majority of our neighbourhood. The adults were suffering. But as a child, I have never been deprived of the love and material comfort that a spoiled kid used to have. Therefore, Shanghai is feminine to me in a sense that she was like my two Shanghainese grandmothers who were devoted to spoil me regardless of the hardship they were subject to at that time.



Shanghai also presented to me the worst side of femininity (also in a stereotypical sense). After I moved to Hong Kong, the old Shanghai that I was familiar with disappeared rapidly. Old buildings were demolished. Old neighbourhoods were uprooted and relocated to the outskirts of the city. New and monstrous-looking buildings were erected. People were getting more and more rude and insensitive. Shanghai has gradually become a horrible being to me. It can be a he or she.

Q: Please pick a route of your personal Shanghai mapping (as some reference points for you in the past, present or future), and tell us stories on the route or in-between the lines.

A: No matter how rapidly Shanghai is expanding outward, my personal map of Shanghai starts from the old downtown area where I grew up and ends at the waterfront of the Bund (*Waitan*). The area at the other side of *Waitan* was like the other side of the world. As a child, I remember I was told that the other side is chaotic and is the “lower” part of Shanghai. I guess “lower” refers to the geographical location and also to the social class of people living there.

The usual route of “home coming” is a walk along North Wulumuqi Road and its neighbouring area such as Huashan Road and the area of Jing’an Temple and Jing’an Park. This consisted of my life world as a child. My kindergarten and my primary school, the cinema we frequented, and the shops where we purchased everyday items, the park where used to be my childhood wonderland were all within this neighbourhood. And occasionally we would go further to Nanjing Road and

other parks in the city. As you can imagine, the old downtown area of my childhood has changed tremendously. But still, I always want to take a walk around there and every time the climax or the saddest moment will be the passing of my old family house. To me, the Jing'an area is my "hometown" and no matter how rapidly it has been transformed (or destroyed), I will remember its old face and will try to visit the area as much as I can.

Q: Which part/area of "disappeared/re-appeared" Shanghai, that you discovered at later age, has subconsciously embedded in your spatial/cultural memory of the city?

A: Can it be a community? Or a group of people? When I came back to the city in 2005 for research, I "discovered" the local lesbian community. Since then, a very intimate part of myself is connected with my hometown. Shanghai is no longer just a nostalgic past comprised of fading memories of the 1970s and disappearing family members (because of broken relationships, broken marriages, emigration of family members and the passing away of grandparents). I re-connect myself with the city, in the present tense, through my new lesbian (or lala) friends. They extend my memory and knowledge of the city in both spatial and cultural terms. It is a queer (re)connection.

Q: Has any historical or social event happened in Shanghai that has special (subversive) meaning to you?

A: I can't think of any at the moment. Shanghai in general is a



Lucetta (middle) and family members at the tennis court in the neighbourhood. Photo taken in 1974. The tennis court has been removed to build a modern commercial building.

very “conventional” city to me, including the mentality of the people. It’s hard to think of any events that are “subversive” that happen in Shanghai.

Q: In which part/area of contemporary Shanghai you feel most alienated? Why?

A: The entire city, including the people, the smell of the city, the language (the local language has changed a lot from what it used to be in the 1970s), the aura of the city. I was a child who grew up in the city in the 1970s. And after that the child-who-was-growing-up-in-the-1970s-Shanghai has never left me. She remained in the 1970s. The constant mourning of the “loss”, the loss of my Shanghai literally and spatially, has become a core part of my adult self. I always feel like an alien in today’s Shanghai: an alien who is travelling from a bygone era. My new local friends said the Shanghainese I speak is “archaic”. My family house is still there, lying in the city centre. It is my “home”, my “root”, but the house is no longer our property, and the neighbourhood is no longer the one I was familiar with. I like to visit my family house when I return to Shanghai. I feel like a ghost wandering around outside the house. I miss it. I miss my Shanghai. I miss the time I spent in this house. But all is gone. It’s a past life.

Q: Have you tried to configure/construct a kind of relationship (long-term/accidental, physical/mental/existential, etc.) with your hometown? And how (e.g. by ‘dressing-up’ an identity or observing from certain point of view)?

A: I am aware of my constant effort to keep connected with Shanghai. Partly it is because of the collective trait of Shanghai people that we usually have a strong local identification. Both sides of my family stress the “Shanghainess” in our daily life in many different aspects. Especially after we migrated to Hong Kong, the local identity has become something we can differentiate ourselves with from the rest of the (Cantonese) people in Hong Kong. My family keeps the local cuisine at the dining table and demands us, the kids in the family, to speak Shanghainese at home. While as a new immigrant I disliked the accent in my Cantonese, now I find myself feeling comfortable with the very slight accent in my Cantonese that shows my non-local origin.

For myself, I inherited the strong local identification from my family. I know my connection with the city is fading as time passes. To tell people my origin and the fact that I am an immigrant from mainland China has been a standard part of my self-introduction or self-narrative. Academically I have built up a connection with Shanghai through my research project of the local lala community. And from this research, I have developed another strong and intimate relationship with the city, that is, the queer bonding with the lala women I met in Shanghai. I do not know how long this queer bonding can be kept alive since the population in Shanghai has been so mobile and the queer women are even more mobile compared to women in a conventional family structure. But besides the cultural and familial connections, the queer community in the city will be one of my important sites of belonging.

Q: Please describe a specific/daily moment of your personal history/herstory in this mega-city, which could be symbolic of the rapid reforms, in/unparallel with the development in China.

A: The first thing that came to my mind is the fading out of Shanghainese as the major everyday language in the city. Like what we do in the rest of the country, we have to use Putonghua to buy things at shops and to order food in restaurants. The younger generations are more fluent in Putonghua than in Shanghainese.

Another typical transformation in both sides of my family is the mobility of people. Family members of my paternal and maternal sides are either moving out of China and have settled in other parts of the world or are forced to move out of their original homes in downtown areas to those newly developed areas where there used to be the “countryside”.

People are losing their language and leaving their old homes, either voluntarily or involuntarily. In some sense, this means the loss of memory and history of one’s past. We’re “uprooted” and relocated to a life and re-framed into a language that are all too homogeneous and “national”.



Lucetta outside the old family house, which has become the office of a company. Photo taken in winter 2014.



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