

THE WAY OF BECOMING BEAUTIFUL IN CHINA IN THE 1980s - 1990s

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the formation of an awakening consciousness of beauty in the 1980s and 1990s in Mainland China. The study focuses on three discourses of beauty that appeared in the Beauty Column of *Zhiyin* 知音 magazine, including individual beauty, natural beauty, and male beauty. Focusing on these areas helps us understand how an emerging discourse of physical appearance allowed people to articulate and experience new forms of personal individualism in Reform Period China (1979 onwards).

The thesis contains five chapters. As an overall introduction, the first chapter introduces my research methodology, sources, literature review, and discusses the originality of this study. Chapter Two examines the trend of the individualization of beauty through looking at the buzzword "individual beauty." This chapter considers the appearance of the concept of "individual beauty" as part of the historical change of the discourse of individualism in modern Chinese history. *Zhiyin* magazine expressed an ambiguous attitude toward the individualization of beauty. Expressing a doubtful tone towards global beauty knowledge might have been a way to assert a sense of national control over the process of liberalization and individualism. It is helpful to consider the magazine's sometimes conflicting stances on the issue of beautification, because this might have mirrored national political attitudes.

Chapter Three discusses four natural beautification methods promoted by the magazine, including having a good lifestyle, food and herb therapy, exercise, and do-it-yourself cosmetics. These four methods are interrelated and interacted on each other. In contrast to the overpriced imported cosmetic products and technologies, "natural beauty" emphasizes the cooperation of *nei* 内(inner) and *wai* 外(external) beautification, the naturalness and healthiness of beautification methods, and the popularization of low-cost cosmetic items.

Chapter Four investigates the idea of male beautification in the 1980s-90s. This chapter reveals that "male beauty" creates a blurry space to redefine masculinity and femininity as varied ideas and practices and implies a series of desirous and uneasy thoughts and emotions among male officials, editors, intellectuals, readers and

customers in the 1980s-90s. Meanwhile, gender is just one way to analyze the discourse of beauty. Other factors such as age, occupation, personality, marital status, and social context also have impact on the analysis of beauty. Chapter Five concludes the thesis with a summary of my arguments and some additional prospects for further study.

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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores the formation of a new awakening of beauty consciousness in the 1980s and 1990s in Mainland China. With the end of the Cultural Revolution and the subsequent economic reforms launched by the central government, Chinese society entered into a historical phase that contained a variety of new thoughts and practices. The consciousness of beauty in the 1980s-90s bore much of the weight of both governmental and popular expectations and hesitations to the changes that occurred in Chinese society. Ambiguous feelings toward beauty were manifested in many aspects of everyday life, including the consideration for a personal right to pursue beauty, the tension between natural beautification methods and foreign cosmetic products, and the application of the term "beauty" to male appearance. Given these controversial but fascinating issues, this study will explore the process by which different ideas of beauty interacted, negotiated, compromised, and conflicted with each other in shaping the new emergence of beauty in the 1980s-90s.

### **Methodology**

This thesis focuses on the conception of beauty in the first two decades of post-Mao China. The national mode in the 1980s and 1990s was characterized by ambiguity and complicity. As expressed in the media and other public forums, many people experienced a period of self-examination, alteration, hope, and a sense of nostalgia as China started economic reforms. Focusing on this in-between period, this study attempts to organize a historical discourse of beauty that ties these two decades together with the past and future. To achieve an accurate sense of historical significance, my study of the new awakening of beauty in the 1980s-90s has been conducted with reference to the broader historical context, which ranged from the abolition of Confucianism in the May Fourth period to the boom of global commercialism in the twenty-first century. This goal of this study, however, is not confined to a narrow retelling of the various definitions of beauty and beautification methods in the past century. Instead, the center of this study is the recognition of new concepts of beauty in the 1980s-90s with reference to important interpretations,

representations, and argumentations about beauty in other eras.

As the subject of this thesis, the concept of the term "beauty" needs to be explained in three respects. First and foremost, beauty has a close association with everyday life. As an abstract term, beauty provides a broad interpretive site with multiple levels for scholars to understand its various meanings, functions, and effects. Beauty can be applied to the official promotion of building a beautiful society, a philosophical explanation relating to aesthetic significance in an abstract sense, or public opinion of what people consider "good looking." Although these meanings of beauty are sometimes interrelated, this study focuses on beauty at the popular level that references people's everyday lives. The practice of day-to-day beautification, such as the daily choice of attire, cosmetics, adornments, social relations, and values that have been exposed through these personal selections, is the focus of this study.

Secondly, this study does not consider beauty as a necessarily gendered concept. Beauty could hardly find a place in Chinese tradition that has long been dominated by the *wen/wu* (literacy/martial arts) framework used for the description of men. Adolescent boys have been an exception to this dichotomy because of their status as "yet-to-be" men. However, beauty (the English translation of *mei* 美) in the 1980s-90s did not necessarily imply a perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. Compared to two alternate adjectives—handsome (*yingjun*, 英俊) and pretty (*piaoliang*, 漂亮), used to describe the appearances of boys and girls respectively—*mei* could be applied to both male and female beauty. Thus, this study doubts the duality of beauty in terms of gender differences and proposes a re-definition of masculinity and femininity. Additionally, beauty in this study contains another two research aspects, which will be discussed in Chapter Two, "Individual Beauty," and Chapter Three, "Natural Beauty."

The third aspect addressed in this study is the variety of standards to define beauty and beautification methods. In twentieth century China, beauty as a discursive term has been endowed with diverse meanings by politicians, scholars, writers, journalists, and common people. In the 1920s-30s, for example, beauty meant robustness as a vehicle to strengthen the nation and the popular method of becoming beautiful was exercise. During the Mao period, however, beauty was defined in the

limits of socialist revolution. People who pursued beauty devoted themselves to the national construction projects. Thus, beauty is not a completely new concept that emerged in the 1980s-90s. Its sense of newness is related to changes in the discourse of beauty, the consequence of altered content and methods of expressing beauty in the post-Maoist period.

### Sources

*Zhiyin* 知音 magazine (1985 - present) is the primary source of this study. By the mid-1980s, a host of newly founded official, semi-official, and unofficial newspapers and magazines had taken up topics such as women and family issues. *Zhiyin* is one such semi-official magazine. Founded by the Women's Federation in Hubei province in the mid-1980s, the magazine was set up as a business and was responsible for its own profit and losses. Most articles discussed in this study come from the Beauty Column of *Zhiyin* magazine, published from 1987 to 2000. The column was written especially for the promotion of the idea of beauty to common people. After the magazine was privatized in 2000, the Beauty Column was discontinued.

*Zhiyin* magazine has a large readership. With the exception of government officials who received the magazine from the Women's Federation gratis, common people brought the magazine at newsstands and bookshops. At a time when mixed voices concerning inquiries into beauty in everyday life were heard, the magazine attempted to combine the authoritative requests from the Women's Federation with readers' demands for trendy and personalized beauty advice. These consumer demand was fulfilled by the magazine's introduction of foreign cosmetic information, traditional medical knowledge, and people's own creations of cosmetics.

To some extent, *Zhiyin* magazine articulated the state discourse of beauty and physical appearance. However, to address this phenomenon of readers' personal choices on beautification, the magazine provided some additional suggestions. An important one was the emphasis on internal beauty, such as having a good lifestyle, eating healthy food, and being full of confidence. At the same time, editors persuaded

readers not to jump into trends blindly and not to believe cosmetic promises and technologies excessively. Many of these suggestions found precedents in popular publications in the 1920s-30s, such as *Shenbao* 申報, *Liang You Pictorial* 良友画报, *Ling Long* 玲珑, et cetera. However, the tone of nationalism in the 1920s-30s changed to a more relaxing and encouraging tone in the 1980s-90s. *Zhiyin* magazine argued that its purpose was to guarantee the safety and appropriateness of recommending beauty treatments to its readers. The specific practices involved in pursuing beauty were considered a personal matter that did not need to be fully guided. The application of foreign products was warned against and doubted as ineffectual, but not strictly criticized as unpatriotic behavior.

This tolerant attitude corresponded to the quality of *Zhiyin* magazine as an example of common people's cravings for beauty. The number of copies that could be sold every month was an essential principle for editors to think about concerning the content and arrangement of the magazine. In order to gain support from readers at different levels and thus put other similar types of popular publications out of business, the Beauty Column of the magazine offered a variety of new information about cosmetic products and medical technologies. Beautification methods varied from drinking traditional medicines, doing regular exercise, using skin care products, choosing appropriate makeup, and wearing suitable attire, to more extreme methods such as plastic surgery.

Additionally, this thesis discusses relevant literary works, television dramas, periodicals, and magazines published before and during the 1980s-90s. The purpose is to place *Zhiyin* magazine at the crossroads of the study of beauty in modern Chinese history. On the one hand, the discussion of beauty in the magazine was part of the landscape of popular cultural and gender studies in the modern period. On the other hand, beauty can be explained from different perspectives in other sources in the 1980s-90s. *Zhiyin* magazine is just one voice contributing to the discourse of beauty in this period.

## Literature Review

Using materials like the Beauty Column of *Zhiyin* magazine as primary sources may seem unusual, and indeed no previous studies have written about or quoted from articles from this publication. For one, as a local semi-official publication, *Zhiyin* magazine does not have a high level of name recognition especially compared to *Women's World* (*Nüzi shijie*, 女子世界), *Home* (*Jiating*, 家庭), and *Women's Friend* (*Funü zhi you*, 妇女之友), *Zhiyin* is relatively untouched by scholars. Secondly, *Zhiyin* magazine is usually considered a tool for disseminating official views because its publisher was the Women's Federation of Hubei province. As this study will show, however, editors were required to take both the official doctrines and people's demands into consideration. Thirdly, the Beauty Column is a small column in the magazine. Normally, the column accounts for just a few pages in a single issue. However, the column covers a variety of information related to beauty, including individuals' rights, global fashion, living habits, cosmetic innovations, male anxieties, Chinese medical knowledge, the importance of the household, and the redefinition of masculinity and femininity.

In addition to *Zhiyin's* under-utilization as a source, the second issue is the timeframe of this study. The first two decades after the Cultural Revolution seems to be an awkward period for most historians. Many previous studies which focus on these two decades are not conducted by historians but by researchers in Anthropology, Sociology, Asian Studies and Cultural Studies. Examples include the anthropologist Yan Yunxiang, who is an anthropologist who is interested in individualism in contemporary China, and Vanessa Fong, whose *Only Hope: Coming of Age under China's One-Child Policy* investigates new forms of relationships among family members in post-Mao China.<sup>1</sup> This situation may be seen as the result of the arrangement of discipline system. But a basic question that many historians may bring forward is: can we call the period of 1980s-90s history?

The doubt of the historic significance of the 1980s-90s comes from two misunderstandings of the period. The first misunderstanding is to see the end of

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<sup>1</sup> Yan Yunxiang, *The Individualization of Chinese Society* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2009); Vanessa Fong, *Only Hope: Coming of Age under China's One-Child Policy* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004).

Cultural Revolution as a critical watershed in modern Chinese history that completely separates the Maoist period and the post-Maoist period. This way of thinking simply puts the two periods in opposition and emphasizes more discontinuity than continuity. The second misunderstanding is to regard the post-Maoist period as an inseparable entity from the present. But China's Open Door Policy and economic reforms have been implemented for more than thirty years already. Both the government and common people have changed their views of the past and the future over time. The social and cultural practices of the 1980s and 1990s are now distinctly different from that of the present.

It is worth noting that some historians have already realized this problem. They have started to discuss the post-Mao period from a historical perspective. Many studies have reached the impact of the Mao era on people's minds when they learned to live in post-Mao China. One example is the book *Personal Voices: Chinese Women in the 1980s*, written by two famous historians Emily Honig and Gail Hershatter. The book draws on the periodical press and interviews conducted from 1979 to 1986 to show changes in urban women's thoughts and lives. Their interviewees' experiences in the Mao era set the historical background of this study, and play the role as an unforgettable memory that still haunts their minds.<sup>2</sup>

This thesis attempts to go one step further. On the one hand, this study pushes the time period under analysis forward to the 1990s. This is mainly due to the circumstances of the publication of *Zhiyin* magazine. The magazine was founded in the mid-1980s and privatized in 2000. In this period, the magazine recognized that beauty and beautification methods were in a state of flux. For example, the magazine paid less and less attention to the promotion of exercise as a method to become beautiful in the 1990s. On the other hand, this study, as I mentioned previously, attempts to build a historical network concerning beauty. Many issues that *Zhiyin* magazine addressed in the 1980s-90s could be traced back to the Republican Period and continue to have a great impact on people's imaginations today. These issues

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<sup>2</sup> Emily Honig and Gail Hershatter, *Personal Voices: Chinese Women in the 1980s* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1988).

include the idea of individualism, global commodity trends, the social function of the household, Chinese medical knowledge, and the relationship between femininity and masculinity.

Finally, the third aspect pointing to the originality of this thesis refers to the expansion of understandings of beauty. In previous studies it is quite common to see that scholars who focus on beauty issues tend to narrow down their research to the prosperity of the modern beauty industry. Bonnie Adrian's book *Framing the Bride: Globalizing Beauty and Romance in Taiwan's Bridal Industry* is an in-depth consideration of contemporary bridal practices in Taiwan. Before a wedding, the Taiwanese bride-to-be aspires to have fairer skin, eyes like a Western baby doll, and gowns inspired by sources from Victorian England to MTV. Through her research and interviews with brides in photo studios in Taipei, Adrian touches upon broader issues such as courtship, marriage, kinship, globalization, and the meaning of the "West" and "Western" cultural images of beauty.<sup>3</sup> This book is successful in that it places the bridal beauty industry at the core of the study and extends to other related social and economic issues. But beauty as the subject of the study is discussed only through the methods of makeup, hairdressing, and wedding gowns. In other words, in Adrian's book the discussion of the meaning of beauty and the ways of becoming beautiful are circumscribed. In contrast, this thesis argues that both beauty and beautification methods are diverse, varied over time, and give us important insight to people's changing values, social practices, and political expectations.

Another feature of previous works is that their discussion of beauty was often limited to women experiences. In most cases, the issue of beauty is tied to the female body, women's clothing, legal rights, and household responsibilities. However, there are two periods when previous studies address the topic of beauty. The first period is the 1920s-40s when the concept of "Modern Girls" first appeared in Chinese society. Leo Lee's book *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945* devotes several pages to the emergence of "Modern Girls" who applied

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<sup>3</sup> Bonnie Adrian, *Framing the Bride: Globalizing Beauty and Romance in Taiwan's Bridal Industry* (Berkeley, Calif.: London: University of California Press, 2003).

foreign cosmetics and wore intricate Western clothing in Shanghai. Lee states this new female image represents the golden age of Shanghai urban culture, a modernity partially shown by the start of a new trend of beauty.<sup>4</sup>

Additionally, the third chapter of Tsai Weipin's book *Reading Shenbao: Nationalism, Consumerism and individuality in China, 1919-37* discusses the construction of *Shenbao's* image of the housewife. Tsai called this group of women "modern housewives" and argues that the demand for common sense in home economics did not mean the suppression of their personal requirements, especially the material enjoyment to dress as they liked.<sup>5</sup> Gao Yunxiang's article "Nationalist and Feminist Discourses on *Jianmei* (Robust Beauty) during China's 'National Crisis' in the 1930s," published in *Gender and History* in 2006 focuses on modern female images published by newspapers and magazines, such as beautiful Hollywood stars, Chinese film stars, famous ladies and female athletes. Gao analyzes the national meaning of "Robust Beauty Girls," which blended Western and indigenous ideas of beauty in the formation of Chinese modernity.<sup>6</sup> So while these studies still focus primarily on women as actors and symbols, their conclusions are not limited to women's experiences but rather touch on national and even international issues.

The second period that looks at beauty is the Maoist era, especially during the Cultural Revolution. The image of "Iron Girls" (*tie guniang*, 铁姑娘) who devoted their lives to socialist constructive projects has attracted many scholars. Emily Honig's paper "Iron Girls Revisited: Gender and the Politics of Work in the Cultural Revolution, 1966-76" in *Re-drawing Boundaries: Works, Households, and Gender in China* and Jin Yihong's article "Rethinking 'Iron Maidens': Social gender and labor during the Chinese Cultural Revolution," published in *Sociology Studies* in 2008 discusses the loss of gender difference and women's double burden of work and family during the Cultural Revolution. They attempt to answer the question of why

<sup>4</sup> Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: the Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> Tsai Weipin, *Reading Shenbao: Nationalism, Consumerism and Individuality in China 1919-37* (Basingstoke, UK; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Gao, Yunxiang. "Nationalist and Feminist discourses on *Jianmei* (Robust Beauty) during China's 'National Crisis' in the 1930s." *Gender & History* 18 (November 2006): 546-573.

the Communists failed to liberate women and even brought more harm to women physically and mentally in the 1960s-70s. Their studies criticize the CCP's harsh policies to regulate women's clothing, lives, and work before the economic reforms launched in the late 1970s.<sup>7</sup>

Male beauty is the other side of the equation of the discussion of beauty to women's studies. As I stated previously, the term "beauty" was not normally used to describe the male appearance. The study of male beauty in fact touches upon the rethinking of masculinity and femininity. In 2010, Geng Song's article "Chinese Masculinities Revisited: Male Images in Contemporary Television Drama Serials" was published in *Modern China*. The article investigates the discourse of masculinity in contemporary Chinese popular culture by using critical readings of three sweepingly popular TV programs from 2003 to 2007. Although she admits that the coexistence of a variety of competing discourses has taken over the overwhelming pursuit of one particular type of masculinity, Geng Song focuses on only one type of manhood, characterized by a strong body, aggressive mind, and rebellious sensuality.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, my research suggests that the concept of male beauty in the 1980s-90s created a blurred space between masculinity and femininity. The ambiguous relation between manhood and womanhood set the foundation for today's popularity of "Flower Boys" in East Asia, as we shall see in Chapter Four.

### Structure and Organization

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapters Two to Four are the main parts of this thesis. The three chapters explore three types of beauty, including individual beauty, natural beauty, and male beauty.

Chapter Two examines the idea of individual beauty that *Zhiyin* magazine

<sup>7</sup> Emily Honig, "Iron Girls Revisited: Gender and the Politics of Work in the Cultural Revolution, 1966-76," in Barbara Entwisle and Gail E. Henderson, eds., *Re-drawing Boundaries: Works, Households, and Gender in China*, 97-110. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000; Jin Yihong 金一虹, "'Tie guniang' zai sikao: Zhongguo wenhua geming qijian de shehui xingbie yu laodong," "铁姑娘"再思考: 中国文化革命期间的社会性别与劳动 [Rethinking 'Iron Maidens': Social gender and labor during the Chinese Cultural Revolution] *Shehuixue yanjiu* [Sociological Studies] 1 (2008): 1-20.

<sup>8</sup> Geng Song, "Chinese Masculinities Revisited: Male Images in Contemporary Television Drama Serials," *Modern China* 36 (April, 2010): 404-434.

promoted in the 1980s-90s. The magazine vacillated between publishing contents that represented the authority of the government and contents that reflected the readers' ideas of individuals' rights of beauty selection. This ambiguous attitude toward the individualization of beauty is manifested in its reinvention of the concept of individual beauty, its standpoint of introducing imported knowledge of beauty, and its renewal of the relationship between beauty and national construction.

Chapter Three deals with the trend of natural beautification as it appeared in the 1980s-90s. Representing an alternative to imported cosmetic products and technologies, natural beauty is described in this chapter via four popular practices. These four methods include having a good lifestyle, food and herb therapy, exercise, and do-it-yourself cosmetics, practices which overlapped and interacted with each other in important ways. Natural beautification methods emphasize the cooperation of inward and outward beautification. Their popularity suggests widespread doubts regarding foreign cosmetic technology, and the wish to cut down the cost of beautification used in daily life.

Chapter Four investigates the discourse of male beauty as one of the manifestations of masculinity exposed by *Zhiyin* magazine in the 1980s-90s. Created by diverse factors, male beauty meant something different depending on the person. But in general, outward appearance became an increasingly important indicator of male beauty that to a large extent caused desires and uneasiness for men toward themselves, their families, and the newly created society. This chapter also reveals new ways to judge beauty besides gender, and proposes new definitions of masculinity and femininity in this context.

Chapter Five is the conclusion. This part concludes the thesis with a summary of the viewpoints in the previous chapters as well as some additional prospects for further study.

## CHAPTER 2. INDIVIDUAL BEAUTY

This chapter focuses on the buzzword "individual beauty," which appeared in *Zhiyin* magazine in the 1980s-90s. Arising in a politically transitional period when the self-interest of individuals was reaffirmed and encouraged by the central government, "individual beauty" provides an illustration of both the challenges and opportunities of the breaking up of collectivization and centralization in microcosm. Indeed, a fierce debate on individualism occurred in the 1980s-90s, suggesting that the course of this process did not go smoothly. On the one hand, conservative factions within the Communist Party of China (CCP) did not lose their voices along with the end of Cultural Revolution in the late 1970s. Considered as a by-product of nascent economic reforms began in 1978, individualism was believed to represent the victory of Western capitalist liberalism over the Chinese socialist revolution. On the other hand, the reform factions led by Deng Xiaoping were determined to continue China's march towards economic modernization, with individualism being a key concept in this movement. Deng's emphasis on the priority of economic reforms was further clarified in his speech in Canton in 1992. Emerging alongside these parallel trends, the concept of "individual beauty" articulated in *Zhiyin* magazine constituted a part of the discussion of individualism in the 1980s-90s. Situated between the critique of capitalist liberalism and the promotion of economic reforms, the individualization of beauty embodied the uncertainty and ambivalence of Chinese reforms in the post-Mao period.

I will explore three issues in this chapter. The first issue concerns the definition of the concept of "individual beauty." This idea was considered a way to demonstrate the interest of individuals and formed a crucial part of the interpretation of individualism. I thus first examine individualism as a discourse from a historical perspective. The meaning and value of this neologism experienced three changes before the end of the Cultural Revolution in the late 1970s. In the 1980s-90s, the discourse of individualism faced its fourth turning point. I then investigate *Zhiyin* magazine's discussion of "individual beauty." As a semi-official popular publication, the magazine's reinvention of the term "individual" implied the struggle between the

authority of the party state and the respect of its citizens' options.

The second issue deals with the process of the rediscovery of "individual beauty" in China under the rubric of global beauty practices. One of the preconditions to achieve "individual beauty" was the expansion of consumer choices for individuals. With the implementation of the Open Door Policy and ever-increasing contact between China and other countries, foreign opinions concerning beauty, health, and fashion were introduced to Chinese society in the 1980s-90s. *Zhiyin* magazine was one of the advocates of this new trend. It aimed to diversify people's methods and practices for individual beautification. But the magazine still maintained an ambivalent attitude toward imported knowledge. Such an attitude can be seen through the decline of the number of articles that concerned foreign conceptions of beauty, which lowered dramatically from the late 1980s.

The third issue focuses on the role that "individual beauty" played in reshaping the relationship between beauty and nation in the 1980s-90s. In the Republican Period, beauty as a contested discourse was adopted by politicians, scholars, and journalists to hold out the promise for resolving the problem of building a modern and independent nation state. The concept "Robust Beauty" (*jianmei*, 健美) was a typical example in linking the beauty of the female body's shape to the strength of the nation. But as *Zhiyin* magazine illustrates, national factors of beauty became much less visible in the 1980s-90s. Meanwhile, with the promotion of individuals' rights to become beautiful, the importance of household rather than the nation was re-emphasized as a private space to practice and achieve "individual beauty."

### **What is "Individual Beauty"?**

#### **A Brief Historical Overview of the Discourse of Individualism**

The concept of individualism was introduced into East Asia by Japanese Meiji scholars, who translated the term as *kojin shugi* (*geren zhuyi*, 个人主义). At the turn of the twentieth century, this neologism was introduced to China.<sup>9</sup> Chinese intellectuals

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<sup>9</sup> Lydia He Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity --- China, 1900 - 1937* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995), 83.

at that time translated the term "individual" into a family of words, such as *geren*, *gewei*, and *geti*. Similar to many other imported terms and concepts, "individual" was translated in such a manner as to accord with Chinese intellectuals' desire to transplant foreign terms into the context of indigenous language. The multiple ways of translation implied that "individual" and the discourse of individualism had the possibility for different interpretations. In the first half of the twentieth century, this process occurred during three transitional points.

The first turning point occurred during the May Fourth Period. The New Cultural Movement in 1917 instigated the radical polarization of tradition and modernity. Individualism as a Western discourse was used to criticize the perceived backwardness of Chinese tradition. Yet in the few years before the New Cultural Movement, there was no single dominant interpretation of individualism. In *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity --- China, 1900-1937*, Lydia Liu examines the various understandings of individualism. *Eastern Miscellany* is one of the typical magazines that she investigates. In a 1914 article, "Geren zhi gaige" (Reforming the Individual), author Du Yaquan attempted to reconcile the relations between individualism and Confucianism, and between individualism and socialism. He believed that individualism was a modern version of Confucianism that emphasized the need for self-reform while also articulating a version of socialism that promoted an interest in the average members of society.<sup>10</sup>

Some of Du Yaquan's contemporaries held different points of view. In his article "Gewei zhuyi" (Individualism) published in 1916, Jia Yi championed the Western Enlightenment notion of the individual and argued that the interests of the modern individual and the traditional state collectives were fundamentally incompatible.<sup>11</sup> This kind of oppositional rhetoric would soon help unleash the conflict between tradition and modernity, between individual and nation state during the New Cultural Movement and the May Fourth Period. Conversely, Min Zhi's article "Wo" (I or Self) mediated between these two ideas. Published in the same journal in 1916, this article

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<sup>10</sup> Liu, 88-89.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

drew a distinction between *siwo* (private self) and *gongwo* (public self). Min argued that just as a candle illuminates every corner of the room when it gives out light, so can the pursuit of self-interest benefit others. According to his opinion, *gongwo* and *siwo* are interconnected and mutually reinforcing.<sup>12</sup> As shown by these three examples, Chinese intellectuals prior to 1917 almost certainly did not view individualism as a problem indigenous to China, or one that had a native history of playing a critical role in rebelling against old Chinese traditions.

Matters came to a head in 1918. The famous author Hu Shi, having recently translated nineteenth century Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen's play *The Doll House*, proposed that the play's central themes of society restricting individual expression were highly applicable to China. One of Hu's arguments was that the Chinese individual personality had long been suppressed under Confucian paternalism. Under the pressure of society, young individuals could hardly realize their own values. Under these circumstances, Hu called on young people to construct themselves as individuals and to fight for personal liberation.<sup>13</sup> Later on, a series of topics were brought forward by many intellectuals in the May Fourth period, such as the abolition of Confucianism, the promotion of free love, and the trend of young people going outside of the home to work and/or joining national revolution. The discourse of individualism thus became an effective tool for iconoclasm. However, individualism in the May Fourth period was not a systematic theory. As Leo Lee explains, it was merely a pervasive mentality among intellectuals who tried to get rid of the shackles of traditional society, and to affirm a sense of personal worth.<sup>14</sup>

For May Fourth intellectuals, individualism could be interpreted differently. In *Ten Talks of Modern Chinese Literature and Modernity*, Leo Lee explores several modes of understanding individualism among May Fourth writers. Lee argues that Hu Shi was not an advocate of absolute individualism. He did not view the individual-society relationship as being necessarily hostile, instead believing that

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<sup>12</sup> Liu, 89.

<sup>13</sup> Leo Ou-fan Lee 李欧梵, *Zhongguo Xiandai Wenxue yu Xiandaixing Shijiang* 中国现代文学于现代性十讲 [Ten Talks of Chinese Modern Literature and Modernity] (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2002), 24-25.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

individuals could not be sustained without the existence of society.<sup>15</sup> By way of contrast, Lee emphasized Xu Zhimo's idea of individualism that cut the connection between the individual and society. According to Xu, individuals did not need society in order to realize their self-worth.<sup>16</sup> Besides, Lee mentions Zhou Zuoren's adoption of individualism to literary writing. Zhou encouraged his fellow writers to record their personal emotions and disagreed with the educational function of literary works.<sup>17</sup> Many May Fourth intellectuals then used literature as a vehicle to project their worries and anxieties regarding Chinese society and the nation.

The second turning point in the discourse of individualism happened in the 1920s when a group of leftist and Marxist intellectuals tried to reinvent the relationship between individual and society. Individualism was named as a part of traditional Chinese culture (Wang Xingong and Chen Duxiu) and as a part of bourgeois ideology (Deng Feihuang), which formed the roadblock to social progress and was the opposite of socialism or Communism.<sup>18</sup> The May Fourth "Literary Revolution" (*wenxue geming*, 文学革命) movement was changed by leftist critics and writers to what they called "Revolutionary Literature" (*geming wenxue*, 革命文学). Many writers shifted their focuses from their personal experience to a broader social reality. From the mid-1920s through the early 1930s, numerous literary works attempted to depict the lives of the masses, such as Mao Dun's *Midnight*, Xiao Hong's *The Field of Life and Death*, and Lao She's *Camel Xiangzi*.

However, not all May Fourth intellectuals followed this leftist ideology. Many intellectuals, such as Zhou Zuoren and writers that belonged to the New Sensation School, insisted on writing their own thoughts and feelings toward China. This form of writing empowered literature as a way for individuals to criticize society. Leo Lee postulates that this critical attitude eventually conflicted with Mao Zedong's idea of the function of intellectuals and their literary works.

Mao Zedong's famous "Yan'an Talks" in 1942 was the third turning point of the

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<sup>15</sup> Lee, 23.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 25-27.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-30.

<sup>18</sup> Liu, 96-97.

interpretation of individualism. In the early 1940s, many May Fourth intellectuals moved to the Yan'an revolutionary base. In order to create a means to link urban intellectuals and peasants into an effective political force, Mao adopted a strategy to transform the literary intelligentsia. These intellectuals were called upon to immerse themselves in the ordinary life of the countryside in order to become different people in the course of living altered lives. Mao redefined the Soviet model of "realism" as having a positive attitude toward the masses and being led by the CCP.<sup>19</sup> Individualism that emphasized writers' personal emotions toward Chinese society was inappropriate not merely from a literary standpoint, but more importantly from a political one as well.

In the last twenty years of the Mao era, political attacks on individualism reached an apex. From Chinese actual situation, People's Commune became the basic social unit that pooled land and capital assets and organized people to eat and work together. The entire collectivization process was based on the assumption that collectivization could in itself be the motivating force in bringing about agricultural and industrial development, and eventually the development of socialist and communist society.<sup>20</sup> Even people's style of dressing became uniform. Blue cotton jackets, trousers, and black shoes formed the standard uniform at that time. Together with these collective practices that left no space for personal choice, ideological correctness was the precondition for people to live and work. People were educated to follow Mao Zedong Thought. Individualism was treated as a petty-bourgeois and anti-revolutionary ideology, standing on the opposite side of the party state.

#### "Individual Beauty": a New Understanding of "Individualism"

With the end of the Cultural Revolution, the discourse of individualism encountered its fourth turning point in modern Chinese history. In the 1980s-90s, Mao's critique of individualism lingered in people's minds. At the same time, however, personal interest was promoted by the government in the process of conducting

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<sup>19</sup> Ellen R. Judd, "Prelude to the 'Yan'an Talks': Problems in Transforming a Literary Intelligentsia," *Modern China* 3 (July 1995): 381-390.

<sup>20</sup> Victor D. Lippit, "The Commune in Chinese Development," *Modern China* 2 (April 1977): 249-251.

Chinese reforms. The discourse of individualism became one of the most widely discussed topics in both political and intellectual spheres. The discussion could be divided into two main aspects.

The first aspect focused on the reinvention of individualism from a post-revolutionary perspective. Many scholars trace this discourse back to the Western enlightenment tradition. Issues related to the formation of the Western notion of the individual such as liberty, equality, freedom, self-reliance, civil society, and public space were debated among a new group of Chinese intellectuals. Through comparing Western and Chinese situations, a common argument was that Chinese state-managed individualization bears little resemblance to Western individualism. The anthropologist Yan Yunxiang explained this idea in *Individualization of Chinese Society*. He believes that individualism in the post-Mao reform era has moved in an egotistical and utilitarian direction through the mass media and the ideology of consumerism, which represents both a misinterpretation of Western individualism and a rupture with traditional collective ethics of *guanxi* (personal networks) and *renqing* (norms and values that regulate interpersonal relations). Yan calls this phenomenon "individualization without individualism."<sup>21</sup>

The second aspect concentrated on the proper role the party-state should play in keeping the balance between its authority and individual options. From the late 1970s onward, the start of Chinese reforms was accompanied by critical voices on the Cultural Revolution, People's Commune system, and the utopian plan of building a communist society. How to re-establish the authority of the government was an important question for new Party leaders. This issue only became more complex when individual interests and rights were permitted by the party state. To what extent would the government allow the common people to pursue individuality? And to what degree would the practice of individualization be realized? It is based on these questions that the following paragraphs explore the formation of a new understanding of individualism in China through the field of "individual beauty."

"Individual beauty" acted as one part of the development of "individualism" in

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<sup>21</sup> Yan Yunxiang, *The Individualization of Chinese Society* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2009), xxxii-xxxiv.

the 1980s-90s. It represented the adoption of individualism in the arena of beauty in everyday life. In September 1988, *Zhiyin* magazine published an article with the aim of helping contemporary Chinese women develop an appreciation for physical beauty and fashionable clothing. Author Gu Li provided several ways to achieve these goals, including regular attendance of art exhibitions, reading fashion magazines, and the exchange of beauty information with female friends. It was the hope of the author that women's taste for beauty could be improved through these methods. Gu particularly emphasized the importance of "individual beauty." The author did not support the idea that women should follow prevailing fashions; instead, Gu explained that each woman had the ability to build up her own understanding of beauty in everyday life. Considering their own personalities, women could find styles of clothing most suitable for themselves.<sup>22</sup>

This article is one of numerous texts concerned with "individual beauty" in *Zhiyin* magazine. Saying farewell to the plain uniform clothing of the Mao era, "individual beauty" endowed meaning to people's understanding of beauty in a new historical context. Rather than being considered a political taboo to serve as a foil to the revolutionary spirit, beautification became a personal matter with diversified interpretations. As a semi-official popular publication, *Zhiyin* magazine had dual responsibilities. On the one hand, the magazine placed "individual beauty" in a global context. Included in the column was information concerning becoming beautiful, defined in both foreign and indigenous terms. In order to give readers detailed information about the effects of certain products, the magazine even introduced medical analysis and suggestions. On the other hand, the magazine acted as an instructor to shape people's preferences. Although people faced multiple choices, the magazine set the standards of beauty by reclaiming its "real meaning."

The magazine removed the previous political implications of beauty and expanded the range of acceptable variations of the term. In the Mao period, especially during the Cultural Revolution, the concept of beauty was limited to a revolutionary

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<sup>22</sup> Gu Li 古里, "Xiandai funü jianshangli yu fuzhuang tiaoxuan," 现代妇女鉴赏力与服装挑选 [Contemporary women's tastes for the selection of clothings] *Zhiyin* (September 1988): 43.

framework. Blue cotton clothes, pants, and shoes were the standard dress of common people. Showy attire, cosmetics, and accessories were harshly criticized as petty-bourgeois habits that were in opposition to Chairman Mao, the CCP, and the Chinese socialist revolution.<sup>23</sup> However, in the 1980s-90s, the political assessment of beauty was challenged. The term was reinvented as an apolitical concept. *Zhiyin* magazine prompted a new meaning of beauty that could be practiced by consumers in everyday life. The magazine introduced multiple methods and accessories to promote beautification, including jackets, shoes, dresses, and cosmetics. Individuals were encouraged to choose their own way of practicing new ideas of beauty.

The magazine went a step further to expand the selection of beautification methods. The principle editors and writers insisted on diversification. This was shown in two respects. The first referred to the variety of methods taught by the magazine to become beautiful. These methods included proper diet, adequate exercise, healthy habits, tasteful dress, perfect make-up, and suitable accessories. Writers typically persuaded readers to combine these methods together, but the exact method to combine them depended on each person's individual needs. The second way focused on people's multiple choices on certain categories of clothing and accessories. For example, in January 1988, an article introduced several popular styles of winter coats. The author, Yan Feng, made his/her opinion clear that the new trend of beauty was based on individuation, as expressed in the opening statement, "I would like to present three styles of winter coat for readers to choose their favorite one(s)."<sup>24</sup> The three styles were a V-neck long coat with shoulder pads, a loose dress-length coat without buttons, and a short coat with wide sleeves and a cloak over the shoulders. The article talked about the peculiarities, advantages, and suitable use of each style of coat. Also, hand-painted models were provided besides textual explanation so readers could visualize the coats.

The coordination of different handbags to clothes was discussed in another

<sup>23</sup> Jin Yihong 金一虹, "'Tie guniang' zai sikao: Zhongguo wenhua geming qijian de shehui xingbie yu laodong" "铁姑娘"再思考:中国文化革命期间的社会性别与劳动 [Rethinking 'Iron Maidens': Social gender and labor during the Chinese Cultural Revolution], *Shehuixue yanjiu* [Sociological Studies]1 (2008): 15.

<sup>24</sup> Yan Feng 严风, "Jindong shimao nūdayi kuanshi,"今冬时髦女大衣款式[The styles of female coat in this winter] *Zhiyin* (January 1988): 33.

article. In order to look attractive, author Zhang Yanlong reminded his/her readers to pay attention to their selection of handbags. The article described four perfect matches between handbags and dresses. Cambric skirts should be paired with small straw handbags; jeans should be accompanied by big straw handbags; suits should be worn with patent leather handbags; and sportswear should be matched with big white handbags.<sup>25</sup> These examples show that people have diverse styles of handbags in which to choose. But this article was also prescriptive in the sense that it emphasized "correct" matches. This relates to the third action the magazine took to interpret "individual beauty" in the 1980s-90s.

This move by the magazine to interpret "individual beauty" was emphasized in their discussion of the specialty of beautification. The specialty contained two cases. The first case related to the specialty of personal characters. In August 1987, author Zhu Jun stated that people wearing glasses in their daily lives should practice special ways of beautification, especially while applying cosmetics. Zhu divided people with glasses into two main categories. For people who were nearsighted, they needed to use dark eyeliner, lighter eye shadow, and draw dark eyebrows. Far-sighted people, on the other hand, should choose lighter or colorful eyeliners and mascara.<sup>26</sup>

In order to meet readers' special needs, some articles classified people by their physical characteristics. For instance, an article published in February 1990 introduced six make-up methods for women with different facial forms. Those facial forms included big faces, long faces, triangular faces, inverted triangular faces, round faces, and square faces. For people with square faces, for instance, the author stressed the importance of drawing eyebrows as downward curves.<sup>27</sup> Fang Xiaowen adopted a similar approach and made a broad classification for the shape of legs. For people with slim legs, it would be better for them to wear long trousers in bright colors, while people with stockier legs could hide them under bell-bottomed pants and long skirts.

<sup>25</sup> Zhang Yanlong 张彦龙, "Qiaopei shoudai tian meili,"巧配手袋添魅力[A good selection of handbag will increase one's charisma] *Zhiyin* (July 1995): 15.

<sup>26</sup> Zhu Jun 朱军, "Dai yanjing de ren zenyang huazhuang,"戴眼镜的人怎样化妆[The ways of applying cosmetics for people who wear glasses] *Zhiyin* (August 1987): 8.

<sup>27</sup> Xiao Ping 肖萍, "Nüxing butong lianxing huazhuangfa,"女性不同脸型化妆法[Make-up methods for women with different facial forms] *Zhiyin* (February 1990): 40.

The author even took bowlegged people into his consideration, advising them to wear loose long trousers and dresses.<sup>28</sup>

In February 1997, an article was written in the question-and-answer format between an eighteen-year girl and the author. Although there has no evidence to prove the authenticity of their dialogue, the new format best illustrated the magazine's determination of realizing "individual beauty." The girl described herself as being very stocky, with a heart-shaped face, plump upper body, and robust lower legs. Describing how difficult it was for her to dress beautifully, she asked the writer to provide some suggestions. According to her physical characteristics, the writer told her to part her hair on the side and to apply light color foundation on her cheeks. During the summer, the writer continued, she ought to wear loose linen clothes with low collars and long dresses; while in the winter, her coat should be neither too short nor too long, and her dresses should not be too tight.<sup>29</sup>

It is important to notice that there was no scientific definition of these personal characteristics. The magazine used ambiguous adjectives to depict people's physical characters, such as strong, slim, fat, plump, robust and so forth, without providing quantifying measures of such qualitative terms. Thus, readers might have different understandings of these words and apply *Zhiyin's* advice in different ways. In fact, this kind of uncertainty toward beauty standards had also appeared in the 1920s-30s. At that time, Western ideas of "robust beauty" were introduced to Chinese society. Ignoring the specific statistics that Westerners used to define the perfect body shape, Chinese editors, journalists and writers appropriated similar adjectives *Zhiyin* magazine. In the 1980s-90s, they employed these adjectives to describe the so-called Chinese "Robust Beauty."<sup>30</sup> They questioned the possibility for adopting Western standards for use on Chinese people. And more important, they attempted to reinvent the concept of "robust beauty" in the Chinese context. Editors and writers of *Zhiyin*

<sup>28</sup> Fang Xiaowen 方小文, "Ruhe zhuangban ni de tui,"如何装扮你的腿[The way to smarten your legs] *Zhiyin* (April 1996): 39.

<sup>29</sup> Lin Li 林莉, "Shencai buhao de nǚhai ruhe daban,"身材不好的女孩如何打扮[The way to dress for girls who do not have fit bodies] *Zhiyin* (February 1997): 47.

<sup>30</sup> Nian 年, "Biaozhun de tige,"标准的体格[Physical Standard] *Ling Long* 229 (1936): 805; Gao Yunxiang, "Nationalist and Feminist discourses on Jianmei (Robust Beauty) during China's 'National Crisis' in the 1930s," *Gender & History* 18 (November 2006): 553.

magazine might have similar concerns as their predecessors. But these ambivalent adjectives also demonstrated the acknowledgment that people could make decisions based upon their personal evaluation of their body shape.

A second example that shows the specialty of beautification concerns the appropriate time and/or social circumstances for certain fashions. For instance, the magazine included articles that were written as beauty guides for getting married, attending parties, and traveling. An article in February 1988 addressed the subject of dressing and applying make-up for brides. The author suggested that brides wear white capes over bright red dresses. With lighter eyeshadow, brides could apply pink blush on their cheeks. Brides with round faces should wear long earrings.<sup>31</sup> Another article in 1996 suggested tips for saying attractive during a trip. The author divided the method of beautification into four aspects. Readers were encouraged to drink a lot of water to prevent dry skin, to massage their eyes in order to avoid wrinkles, to apply lip balm to moisturize their lips, and to use hairbrushes made of static material to keep hair from getting untidy.<sup>32</sup> These articles introduced ways of becoming beautiful in particular circumstances. Compared to the first case of specialty based on people's internal characteristics, the second one interpreted "individual beauty" in terms of its diverse external factors.

The first two actions -- the expansion of selection and the care of special time and social circumstances for certain fashions -- allowed for greater individualization of beauty in the 1980s-90s to take two steps forward. However, a third action by the magazine forced the individualized process one step back. In the eyes of the editors, "individual beauty" did not mean individual freedom in an absolute sense. As previously mentioned, the magazine was suspected of dictating its readers' selections through its instructive tone. Its definition of beauty followed the principle of how well one's make-up, clothes, shoes, accessories, and fragrance suited to the his/her age, occupation, personality, skin color, the place of living, and social settings. In the case

<sup>31</sup> Xia Zi 夏子, "Tan xinhun shi ruhe daban,"谈新婚时如何打扮[The way to deck oneself up for wedding] *Zhiyin* (February 1988): 9.

<sup>32</sup> Xie Yuguang 谢玉光, "Lüxing meirong,"旅行美容[Beautification methods in the trip] *Zhiyin* (February 1996): 7.

of choosing shoes, an article proposed five regulations. For example, colorful shoes were suitable only for young girls. Quiet people should wear light-colored shoes. People should wear leather shoes when they go to parties. Peasants and workers ought to wear cloth and rubber shoes.<sup>33</sup> For the use of fragrance, author Xiao Yuan reminded people that when they eat dinner outside, they should avoid strong fragrances. Pregnant women were suggested to use fresh fragrances. Additionally, the author emphasized that women needed to choose a fragrance that matched their boyfriends.<sup>34</sup> In September 1994, an article taught its readers the proper way of selecting earrings. It stated that the shape of the earrings needed to match the length of neck, the color of skin, and the style of clothes. For women wearing glasses, the author explained, a pair of simply designed earrings was the best choice.<sup>35</sup> None of these articles spoke in an imperative tone of voice, but they drew intangible boundaries for people to practice "individual beauty" in the 1980s-90s. The term "individual" in such circumstances was a comparative concept, which was subject to various principles of suitability that were defined by the magazine.

## **Global Fashion and the Localization of "Individual Beauty"**

### **"Individual Beauty" in a Global Context**

An important precondition for the individualization of beauty in the 1980s-90s was the expansion of people's freedom of choice. The more choices people faced, the more opportunities there were for them to actualize "individual beauty." In the process, numerous beautification methods and products from different areas outside Mainland China were introduced into Chinese society. *Zhiyin* magazine did not leave out this trend. In the Beauty Column, knowledge and practices of beautification coming from Taiwan, Japan, the United States, Europe, and Southeast Asia were transmitted to Chinese readers. As people were presented with these choices, the concept of

<sup>33</sup> Jin Agen 金阿根, "Xuangou xiezi de wutiao yuanze," "选购鞋子的五条原则" [The five principles of choosing shoes] *Zhiyin* (March 1991): 24.

<sup>34</sup> Xiao Yuan 晓原, "Ruhe xuanyong xiangshui," "如何选用香水" [The selection of perfume] *Zhiyin* (October 1991): 43.

<sup>35</sup> Wang Jianhuai 王建槐 and Deng Ningxin 邓宁辛, "Ruhe peidai erhuan," "如何佩带耳环" [The way of wearing earrings] *Zhiyin* (November 1994): 33.

selection was necessary. On the one hand, people made buying decisions based upon their consideration of age, personality, occupation, body shape, and social setting. On the other hand, a good choice relied on how much Chinese people knew about this imported beauty information. At this point, *Zhiyin* magazine attempted to broaden its readers' horizons and deepen their understanding of foreign beautification methods and concepts.

The magazine acknowledged global trends in beauty. In March 1987, an article edited by Lan Shan discussed the return of the bow worldwide. The article discussed the popularity of the bow in Paris, New York, London, and Milan and said that it was now coming to China. The editor encouraged readers to wear a bow as a way to get into worldwide fashion trends.<sup>36</sup> Four years later in 1991, this introduction of global fashion into China expanded to the color, style, and patterns of clothing. Author Gu Li presented the global trend in fashion in the 1990s. Comfortable and simple knitted shirts and pants were considered fashionable. The most sought after colors were pink and ice-blue. A popular theme of design was nature as many designers were inspired by Indian culture, including Indian plants, animals, and traditional cloaks.<sup>37</sup>

In addition, the magazine discussed a variety of beauty methods all over the world. These methods contained several aspects, including ways of matching clothes, doing exercise, maintaining the skin, embarking on plastic surgery, and living a healthy life. In 1990, a Japanese specialist in regimen, Matsu Natsuko, was introduced by the magazine. She mentioned five methods that had anti-aging effects, the most important being "mastering" one's life. People were encouraged to exercise regularly and spend time reading and thinking for themselves. This method helped people have a calm state of mind and a sense of certainty.<sup>38</sup> Another article in 1994 taught women the correct way of dressing for attending parties at night. Author Guo Shulong suggested women apply heavy make-up and wear brightly colored clothes in the same way as Western women. Guo mentioned that both skirts and trousers were appropriate

<sup>36</sup> Lan Shan 岚山, "Hudiejie dongshan zaiqi," 蝴蝶结东山再起 [The return of bow] *Zhiyin* (March 1987): 39.

<sup>37</sup> Gu Li 古里, "Jiushi niandai shijie shizhuang zong chaoliu," 九十年代世界时装总潮流 [The global trend of dressing in the 1990s] *Zhiyin* (May 1991): 7.

<sup>38</sup> Wang Chunling 王春玲, "Ribei yangsheng xuejia tan yan huan shuailao," 日本养生学家谈延缓衰老 [Japanese specialist in regime talks about anti-aging methods] *Zhiyin* (October 1990): 10.

for a party. The Hollywood film star Katherine Hepburn was used as a typical example. Guo pointed out that Hepburn once wore a pair of silk trousers and high-heel shoes to attend a party.<sup>39</sup>

Sometimes articles referenced medical knowledge to explain the function of imported beautification methods and products. In 1993, an article recorded Japanese beauty-specialists' explanations for the use of skin-care products. They enumerated four main characteristics of the products, including ones with no fragrance, no color, low alcohol content, and fewer preservatives. Readers who had sensitive skin because of allergies, stress, or fatigue were recommended to use these cosmetics. Besides this, specialists suggested that readers use tonic water to help the skin retain needed moisture.<sup>40</sup> Another article recorded the author Xiao Ying's interview with a doctor called Niu Cuixia from Shenzhen. Doctor Niu was a specialist in plastic surgery, especially in breast surgery. Coming back from a cosmetic workshop held in Southeast Asia, Niu introduced the two most popular kinds of prostheses used for breast augmentation surgery. One was made of silica gel and the other consisted of a water bag. Niu also talked about three possible places in which to make the incision, including the armpits, the areola, and beneath the breasts.<sup>41</sup> To a large extent, this medical knowledge gave an authoritative disquisition about beauty methods and practices from different areas.

Moreover, the magazine's effort to put "individual beauty" in a global context relied on its reports of celebrities and stars from all over the world. Most of these famous people were female. They "lived under the flash bulb" and were admired for their beauty, elegance, and talent. As idols, the methods they used to keep beautiful were growing in popularity in China. Except for the case of Katherine Hepburn, the magazine covered singers and film stars from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Japan. An article published in 1988 revealed star Deng Lijun's "secret" plan to lose weight. Deng

<sup>39</sup> Guo Shulong 郭书龙, "Nüxing yejian fuyan ruhe daban," 女性夜间赴宴如何打扮 [The way of dressing for women to attend night party] *Zhiyin* (December 1994): 53.

<sup>40</sup> Xiao Bo 晓波, "Ribei meirong zhuanjia da duzhe wen," 日本美容专家答读者问 [Japanese beauty-specialist answers readers' questions] *Zhiyin* (May 1993): 57.

<sup>41</sup> Xiao Ying 小英, "Longrushi rang ni huanxi rang ni you," 隆乳术让你欢喜让你忧 [Breast augmentation surgery can raise you to heaven and can dump you in hell] *Zhiyin* (December 1995): 10.

was a well-known Taiwanese singer in Mainland China and Japan in the 1980s. Her plan included regular exercise, eight-hours of sleep, the consumption of fish, and avoiding liquor and tobacco.<sup>42</sup> Another article made Weng Qianyu's ways of staying young and beautiful known to the public in 1991. Wong was a Japanese-born Chinese whose nickname was "Eastern Pearl." She was famous singer, film star, and painter. The article described that Wong placed great emphasis on diet and exercise. She loved eating fruit, drinking water, eating mutton in the autumn, playing tennis and golf, and skating in the winter.<sup>43</sup>

Around the mid-1990s, singers, models, and film stars from Mainland China were everyday objects of fascination for readers. These stars included Song Zuying, Jiang Shan, Zhang Mi, Kuang Meiyun, Peng Li, Qu Yin, Li Lin, Wang Luyao, and Jin Qiaoqiao. The magazine place these people together with other Asian and Western stars. They were quite famous in the 1990s and some of them maintained their popularity well into the 2010s. They were paragons of beauty as seen from their good taste in dressing, their skill in applying cosmetics, their healthy and regular lifestyles, their insistence on doing sports, and their ability to maintain a good attitude in everyday life. In 1997, a distinguished singer Song Zuying advocated her methods of staying beautiful in the magazine. Song suggested that readers eat more vegetables, fruits, coarse cereal, and dairy products. In addition, she suggested that reading helped her to gain the spirit of joy.<sup>44</sup> In the same year, an actress called Wang Luyao shared her experience of taking good care of her lips. She explained that lips were fragile, thus people should help them retain needed moisture and give them protection from the sun. Meanwhile, Wang emphasized the importance of picking a lipstick to suit the shape of lips.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Ding Hong 丁红, "Deng lijun gongkai jianfei mifang," 邓丽君公开减肥秘方 [Deng Lijun opens her method of losing weight] *Zhiyin* (January 1988): 9.

<sup>43</sup> Zhang Ruipeng 张锐鹏, "Jiankang daigei nuren qingchun he meili --- 'Dongfang mingzhu' Weng Qianyu xiaozhuan," 健康带给女人青春和美丽——"东方明珠"翁倩玉小传 [Healthiness makes women young and beautiful --- "Eastern Pearl" Weng Qianyu's story] *Zhiyin* (March 1991): 21.

<sup>44</sup> Xia Qingchen 夏清晨, "Song Zuying chongshang de meirong shishang," 宋祖英崇尚的美容时尚 [The Cosmetic fashion that Song Zuying admires] *Zhiyin* (October 1997): 32.

<sup>45</sup> Xiao Zhang 晓张, "Wang Luyao: meichun tian fengcai," 王路瑶:美唇添风采 [Wang Luyao: charming lips] *Zhiyin* (December 1997): 48.

### The Localization of "Individual Beauty": Hidden Reeducation

As discussed previously, *Zhiyin* magazine held an ambivalent attitude toward "individual beauty." On the one hand, the magazine helped individuals create their own forms of beauty by expanding people's choices and introducing information regarding beauty from different areas. On the other hand, the magazine implied that global trends of beauty had their limits. Imported products and technologies were neither assumed to be perfect nor claimed to be suitable for Chinese people. At this point, the magazine conducted its promotion of global beauty in a deliberate manner.

An obvious signal could be seen from the number of articles that concerned foreign methods of beauty, which made up only a small proportion of the magazine. If we count all the articles that even incidentally mentioned imported products, methods, and celebrities, they consisted of less than one-sixth of the total amount of articles in *Zhiyin* magazine. It is worthwhile to note that the magazine's interest in American and European knowledge of beauty gradually decreased in the 1990s. The introduction of American aerobics, Western rules of dressing, and Hollywood and European stars' cosmetic secrets appeared mostly before 1991. In contrast, Japanese skin-care products and cosmetics, singers and film stars from Hong Kong and Taiwan were emphasized more by the magazine in the first half of the 1990s. From the mid-1990s onward, as mentioned above, the Beauty Column was filled with stars and celebrities from Mainland China. In this regard, the magazine's focus on global beauty shifted eastwards, and eventually rested upon China's realities in the 1980s-90s.

This change of focus was accompanied by the magazine's efforts to shatter readers' illusions of imported products and technologies as panacea for beauty. In 1995, Zhang Lei pointed out several misinterpretations of imported cosmetics by Chinese people in the past ten years. Coconut oil, hair oil, skin balm, and skin cream were included in his critique. Zhang stated that many foreign beauty products emphasized natural ingredients, such as coconut oil, chamomile and aloe vera extracts, and light-capturing minerals. In many cases, however, the unique formula could not remove skin problems; on the contrary, certain formulas might impede the skin's ability to breathe. Zhang finally reminded his readers to not blindly accept and overdo

foreign products.<sup>46</sup> Another article published in 1990 ventured a similar opinion. It discussed the safety and hygiene of cosmetics. The author Yao Yun suggested to Chinese customers that they choose cosmetics based upon their physical appearances. A better way, he/she continued, was to use the cosmetics for several days on a trial basis.<sup>47</sup>

Meanwhile, these queries on imported products contained the magazine's denial of foreign standards of beauty. In 1991, an article addressed the issue of the double eyelid operation. Admiring Westerners' beautiful and deep-set eyes, author Fen Fen examined the trend of double eyelid operations in China over the past several years. In the article, nevertheless, Fen Fen enumerated four types of women who were not suitable for this plastic surgery. Women who had round faces were not recommended to have double eyelid operation because the change would not affect their sweet temperaments. For others who had round eyes, puffy eyes, or bulging eyes, the author maintained that the double eyelid operation would make these people look even more ugly.<sup>48</sup>

Alongside this suspicion of imported beauty methods and products, the magazine took steps to regulate the trend of luxury consumption. In 1988, an article brought forward the idea that old clothes could be dressed in new styles. The author Fang Fang suggested readers make small changes to their old clothes, including wearing a belt around an old dress, adding a pocket square, cutting off the legs of pants, and replacing old buttons. Through these methods, the author believed that people could not only stay beautiful but also save money.<sup>49</sup> This public criticism of luxury consumption was shown in an article published in 1991. The article discussed the phenomenon of young people who had low salaries but madly clung to products of various famous brands. Named "noble bachelors" (*danshen guizu*, 单身贵族), author

<sup>46</sup> Zhang Lei 张磊, "Youguan meirong huazhuangpin de kanwu," 有关美容化妆品的勘误 [Some misunderstandings of cosmetic products] *Zhiyin* (July 1995): 47.

<sup>47</sup> Yao Yun 姚云, "Nazhong huazhuangpin zui anquan he weisheng?" 哪种化妆品最安全和卫生 [Which cosmetic product is safe and sanitary?] *Zhiyin* (December 1990): 29.

<sup>48</sup> Fen Fen 芬芬, "Nazhong leixing nüxing buyi ge shuang yanpi," 哪种类型女性不宜割双眼皮 [Some women are not suitable to have double eyelid surgery] *Zhiyin* (January 1990): 22.

<sup>49</sup> Fang Fang 芳芳, "Jiuyi qiao chuan yi dongren," 旧衣巧穿亦动人 [The way of dressing second-hand clothes] *Zhiyin* (April 1988): 27.

Qian Liping stated that these young people added a huge burden on their families. The best brand of products, Qian continued, had very high profits and lacked price verification. At the end of the article, Qian made a comparison between Western and Chinese consumers. He/she described Western consumers as lovers of natural goods. They enjoyed buying products that did not have designer labels.<sup>50</sup> Although Qian did not quote any materials to prove the authenticity of Western consumption habits, his/her intention was clear: that is, the promotion of rational consumption.

Qian's interpretation of Western consumerism was answered in another article in 1994. The article recorded an interview between popular singer Zhu Mingying and a journalist. Returning from the U.S., Zhu talked about her opinions of fashion. She first explained that American people cared about the match of different parts of clothing rather than the brand name. Dress arrangement included the coordination of color, style, and garment material. Then Zhu pointed out that famous-brand dresses in China were much more expensive than those in the U.S. In China, the high price of dresses contrasted with the low quality of materials. Thus, Zhu suggested that readers focus on simple domestic dresses with good quality.<sup>51</sup>

In fact, Zhu was one of numerous celebrities the magazine used to promote simple modes of living. Other famous stars included Zhang Manyu and Ye Liyi. According to Zhang, casual clothes such as cotton T-shirts and jeans were her favorite. She changed her style of dressing regularly and never followed global trends of fashion.<sup>52</sup> Ye emphasized that the purpose of dressing was to highlight the beauty of her body rather than to pursue famous-brand dresses. The magazine even recorded that Ye often wore sweaters knitted by herself.<sup>53</sup>

### Rescuing Beauty from the Discourse of Nation

<sup>50</sup> Qian Liping 钱立平, "'Danshen guizu' de mingpai xiaoying ji houguo," "单身贵族"的名牌效应及后果[The famous brand effect and outcome of "Nobel Bachelordom"] *Zhiyin* (November 1991): 40.

<sup>51</sup> Yang Linlin 杨林林, "Zhu Mingying guowai guilai hua chuanyi," 朱明瑛国外归来话穿衣[Zhu Mingying's talk of clothings] *Zhiyin* (December 1994): 58.

<sup>52</sup> Xiao Yuan 晓圆, "Zhang Manyu tan yizhuo fengge," 张曼玉谈衣着风格[Zhang Manyu's style of dressing] *Zhiyin* (December 1989): 25.

<sup>53</sup> Fang Fang 方方, "Duju tese de Ye Liyi fushi," 独具特色的叶丽仪服饰[Ye Liyi's special clothings] *Zhiyin* (February 1990): 15.

From *Jianmei* to *Meirong*

In October 1994, the Beauty Column of *Zhiyin* changed its name from "To Your Health and Beauty" (*Zhu nin jianmei*, 祝您健美) to "Zhiyin's Cosmetic Garden" (*Zhiyin meirong yuan*, 知音美容苑). The change centered on the key term that the magazine used to define beauty. From a linguistic perspective, the former name *jianmei* 健美 focused on the connection of one's physical condition to beauty; while the latter one *meirong* 美容 stressed the contribution of beauty products and technologies to beauty. The magazine did not explain the reason for changing the name of the column. As a matter of fact, the content of Beauty Column did not change significantly. It seemed that this was just a change of name, and the reason for it might be that the term *jianmei* was considered old-fashioned compared to *meirong* in the 1980s-90s. But if we go further into the arrangement of articles that were published in the Beauty Column in the long run, we found that this was not just a name change but a new historical choice on the concept of beauty.

The new choice was specifically manifested in the reconfiguration of the relationship between exercise and beauty. Before October 1994, the Beauty Column of *Zhiyin* contained many articles discussing the positive role exercise played in keeping people fit and beautiful. Its curative effect covered a number of different aspects, including plumping of the breasts, losing weight in a healthy way, keeping skin smooth and elastic, regaining one's figure after giving birth, diminishing dark circles by eye massage, and delaying rapid aging. In short, exercise was depicted as a panacea for staying young, healthy, and beautiful. But from 1990 onward, the link between exercise and beauty gradually faded from the public eye. From 1985 to 1990, fifteen articles attributed the aging of body and unhealthiness to lack of physical exercise. Before the name of Beauty Column was changed in October 1994, the number of articles addressing the positive function of exercise dropped to two per year from 1991 to 1993. Until the cancellation of the Beauty Column in 2000, only four articles mentioned exercise. It might be noted that the central theme of these articles was the introduction of beauty methods used by celebrities. Regular exercise was mentioned as a method for beauty but it was not the dominant method. In most

cases, food, clothing, cosmetics, mentality, and lifestyle were more essential elements than exercise for maintaining beauty. For example, an article in 1997 presented film star Li Lin's five beauty tips. Exercise was lined up behind four other factors, which included cleanliness, keeping a stable mind, wearing casual dresses, and eating more fruit.<sup>54</sup> In this regard, although exercise still had an impact on beautification, its connection to beauty was greatly overshadowed along with the name change of the Beauty Column.

The interaction of sports and beauty could be traced back to the 1920s-30s when the term *jianmei* was introduced to Chinese society. The term *jianmei* came from European and American "Life Reform Movements" that occurred in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Robustness was considered one of the most essential characteristics to represent natural and healthy human beauty.<sup>55</sup> In the 1920s-30s, Chinese newspapers, magazines, advertisements and poster calendars were laden with images of Western and Chinese *jianmei nühai* 健美女孩. These images, representing a new physicality for women, formed a sharp contrast to the feeble Chinese womanhood in the past. Their fit and beautiful bodies, explained by Chinese scholars, editors, writers, and journalists, depended on regular outdoor exercise. Thus, the term *jianmei* at its initial stage was linked to sports in the Chinese context. The promotion of *jianmei* in the 1920s-30s was consistent with Chinese intellectuals' (especially male intellectuals) admiration of Western healthy and fit beauty as early as the late Qing dynasty, claiming that toning the body would strengthen the nation. To a large extent, the advocacy of *jianmei* constituted an essential part of the national project of devising a Chinese national allegory.

During the Maoist period, although the concept of beauty was hardly mentioned by the Party, exercise was not entirely driven out of official discourse. It was considered a way to gain strength and improve economic production. After the Cultural Revolution, *Zhiyin* was an example of one that adopted the term *jianmei*

<sup>54</sup> A Li 阿力, "Li Lin: wenwen'erya ji meili," 李琳:温文尔雅即美丽[Li Lin: being gentle and cultivated means being beautiful] *Zhiyin* (August 1997): 49.

<sup>55</sup> George Mosse Lachmann, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (New York: H. Fertig, 1985), 48-49.

again to rebuild its connection to the discourse of beauty, particularly "individual beauty." National factors that used to exist like sports and beauty became less visible. Though as discussed previously, the issue of "individual beauty" was still more or less under the direction of the central government, the magazine emphasized the function of exercise for the sake of physical health and beautification.<sup>56</sup>

However, the name change of the Beauty Column in 1994 indicated a new relationship between exercise and beauty. On the one hand, exercise was no longer treated as a decisive factor of beautification. There were many ways of becoming beautiful, such as applying cosmetics, dressing in fashionable clothes, living a healthy life, and having plastic surgery; exercise was the only one of these beautification methods that became less and less important. On the other hand, in the four articles in 1997 that mentioned the positive function of exercise on beautification, exercise worked for "individual beauty" that had no connection, at least no direct connection, to the nation state. In an article, the purpose of swimming, playing tennis and table tennis was described as just to keep the skin smooth and elastic.<sup>57</sup>

#### The Rediscovery of the Household

The household has long been regarded as the basic economic unit of Chinese agrarian society. It used to play an indispensable role in organizing common people under the rule of the central government. As a representative of the imperial power, traditional household faced great challenges during the May Fourth period. It was described as a backward force that neither met the new requirement of constructing a modern nation state nor endowed enough freedom for young individuals to pursue their happiness. At that time, many intellectuals devoted their literary works to the anti-family movement, such as Feng Yuanjun's *Isolation* and Ba Jin's famous novel *Family*. Accordingly, these intellectuals advocated the protection of the right of the individual, and this promotion resulted in a heated discussion of individualism. A new

<sup>56</sup> Fen Fen 芬芬, "Xiangjiniu jianshenfa ke shi ni shencai jianmei," 橡筋箍健身法可使你身材健美 [Using elastics to strengthen body] *Zhiyin* (August 1987): 45; Zhang Tao 张涛, "Nu qiangren jianmeicao," 女强人健美操 [Aerobics for women] *Zhiyin* (May 1988): 7.

<sup>57</sup> Gong Xuefeng 宫雪峰, "Bai Xue shuo: huopo hui shi ni qingchun yongzhu," 白雪说: 活泼会使你青春永驻 [Bai Xue says: active personality will help you stay young] *Zhiyin* (July 1997): 9.

pattern of the relationship among individuals, family, and the nation was then formed. In this pattern, the traditional concept of the household was abandoned, and individuals now participated in the project of nation-building directly.

The household as a social unit was mentioned again in the 1930s along with the "New Life Movement" promoted by the Nationalist government in Nanjing. In the movement, women were encouraged to stay at home in order to build modern, healthy, and happy families for their husband and children. They were asked to be virtuous wives and good mothers who took care of household duties, such as cleaning, cooking, laundry, shopping, and knitting; and who also loved reading, writing, exercise, and listening to music. Song Meiling, Chiang Kai-shek's wife, was reputed to be the model of "new women" at that time.<sup>58</sup> In this regard, women were largely charged with the task of constructing a new form of household that differed from the traditional one before the May Fourth Period. This new form of household was depicted by official propaganda as the backup of (male) individuals' direct contact with the nation state.

In the first few years of the People's Republic of China, the low level of agricultural and industrial foundation caused women once again to be pushed back to the family. Creating a comfortable and harmonious home life for family members was the responsibility of women. But with the beginning of the Great Leap Forward and the People's Commune campaign in the late 1950s, more and more women left home and launched into production and social activities. Meanwhile, the position of household was relegated in the process of collectivism. In contrast to the People's Commune as the "big home" (*dajia*, 大家), family was considered the "small home" (*xiaojia*, 小家). If one took the stuff of his/her family more seriously than that of the People's Commune, he/she would be suspected as being an anti-revolutionary and criticized as a self-centered person. The oblivion of household continued and reached a peak during the Cultural Revolution. Heroic images of diligent and dedicated workers were consistently reported and portrayed by the government, such as Lei

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<sup>58</sup> Fan Hong, *Footbinding, Feminism, and Freedom: the Liberation of Women's Bodies in Modern China* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 237-240.

Feng and "Iron Maidens" (*tie guniang*). A common feature among these heroic images was that they all put their responsibilities of the state first. They were appraised due to their passion and dedication to their jobs, and the personal and family sacrifices they made accordingly.

In the post-Maoist period, the ousehold regained its significance as both the economic unit of society and the place of practicing the interest of individuals. In the realm of beauty, the household was important in helping establish a private space for "individual beauty." On the one hand, people's houses were the place where various beautification methods would be conducted. An article in 1993 recorded the talk of Ms. Huang, who was a beauty-specialist from Taiwan. She pointed out the importance of a clean and tidy house for women who wanted to become beautiful. Creating a wholesome living space, she further explained, would help produce a stable mood and a healthy lifestyle.<sup>59</sup> Besides, several beauty methods could only be practiced at home. For example, one article introduced a specific way of taking a shower at night in order to encourage the breasts to grow. Quoting from doctors' professional suggestions, the article recommended that female readers shower with lukewarm water around 40-50 degrees first, and then change to cold water around 10-20 degrees. The alternation of lukewarm and cold water would whip up the circulation of the blood.<sup>60</sup> Another article presented an effective way of increasing skin hydration before going to bed. Dr. Lin Qingwen told readers to mix hot water with milk, use the mixture to wash the face, and then employ water vapor to help it be absorbed by the skin.<sup>61</sup>

On the other hand, household articles could be used as personal beauty tips to realize "individual beauty." In 1988, the magazine published an article to let people know that certain cosmetics were hidden in the kitchen. The article listed several seasonings and food that were commonly seen in the kitchen, such as rapeseed oil,

<sup>59</sup> Chai Jian 柴剑, "Ni xiang chengwei meinü ma --- Taiwan meirong zaoxing quanwei Huang nüshi,"你想成为美女吗——台湾美容造型权威黄女士[Do you want to be a beautiful woman --- Taiwan beauty specialist Mrs. Huang] *Zhiyin* (October 1993): 52.

<sup>60</sup> Liu Ligang 刘立刚, "Ruhe shi ni de rufang geng fengman --- 'Nüxing rufang jianmei' zhishi lianzai zhi er,"如何使你的乳房更丰满——"女性乳房健美"知识连载之二 [How to augment your breast --- the second article of the serial 'Female breast beauty'] *Zhiyin* (June 1993): 54.

<sup>61</sup> Ye Zi 叶子, "Niunai meirong xinfa,"牛奶美容新法[A new beautification method by milk] *Zhiyin* (July 1996): 47.

olive oil, honey, baking soda, and cucumber. The author then explained that rapeseed oil could be used as hair conditioner, olive oil plus honey was good for moisturizing lips, baking soda was effective for brightening teeth, and cucumber would help to get rid of puffy eyes.<sup>62</sup> Another article in 1990 introduced ways of making facial masks at home. For example, a facial mask containing tomatoes, cucumbers, and lemon would add nutrition to your skin. If readers wanted to whiten their skin, they could add chlorine, milk powder, red tea, and brown sugar to the facial mask.<sup>63</sup> It is interesting to note that the household not only provided an individual space for beautification but also offered cheap raw materials of beauty products. Through making these household beautification methods known to the public, the magazine implied its promotion of rational consumption among common people.

### Conclusion

"Individual beauty" in the 1980s-90s represented the practice of individualism in the field of beauty in people's daily lives. *Zhiyin* magazine attempted to reconcile two varied, if not opposing, forces to reinterpret the individualization of beauty: the state tried to re-establish its authority, which encouraging people to pursue their personal beautification rights. This attempt was manifested in the magazine's ambiguous attitude toward the global trends of beauty. At a time when new and detailed information of foreign beautification methods were introduced to Chinese readers, the magazine shattered people's illusions of imported products and technologies as panacea for beauty. Meanwhile, the magazine made efforts to loosen the tie that used to bind nationalism and beauty together. National factors became less visible and were gradually replaced by the household as a private space to achieve "individual beauty."

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<sup>62</sup> Min Min 民民, "Chufang li de huazhuangpin," 厨房里的化妆品 [Cosmetics in the kitchen] *Zhiyin* (July 1988): 39.

<sup>63</sup> Du Dadong 杜大栋, "Ruhe shiyong jiating mianmo meirongshu," 如何使用家庭面膜美容术 [The usage of homemade masks] *Zhiyin* (September 1990): 15.

### CHAPTER 3. NATURAL BEAUTY

"Natural beauty" was not a common term in *Zhiyin* magazine in the 1980s-90s. The discussion within this chapter is based on a model of dichotomous thinking maintained by the magazine on the issue of beautification methods. On one side was the application of chemical-based makeup and medical cosmetic techniques. Thanks to China's reform and opening-up, a great amount of foreign knowledge and information about beauty entered Chinese society. During this process, numerous cosmetic brands and forms of plastic surgery quickly attracted public attention. Depending on chemical, biological, and medical professions, these two methods were said to have "magic" powers that helped people actualize their beauty in a more rapid way. This type of beautification represented the achievement of modern world levels of science and technology that applied to beauty industry.

"Natural beauty" is on the other side of this dichotomy. Instead of updated techniques that allowed for instantaneous results, "natural beauty" was an alternative ideal of beauty that rested on personal habits, exercise, diet, and homemade cosmetics. "Natural beauty" would be classified as a traditional idea of beautification on the process of the modernization of the beauty industry to a certain degree. However, the term "traditional" here did not imply backwardness; instead, it referred to natural, non-chemical options and pain-free ways of becoming beautiful. In order words, the idea of natural beauty attempted to shatter people's modern illusions of machine production, refinement tests, and medical operations.

There have been two misunderstandings around the concept of natural beauty. The first misunderstanding related to this trend of thought is that "natural beauty" placed traditional China in opposition to the modern West. "Natural beauty" was not built upon the dichotomy between China and the West, which was an idea that simplified both China and the West. On the one hand, Western beautification methods did not equate the application of cosmetics and plastic surgery. Aerobics was a natural way of becoming beautiful. Especially in the late 1980s and early 1990s, doing American style aerobics was promoted by the magazine as a good way to improve one's health and the shape of one's body. On the other hand, many beautification

methods that were not included in natural beauty came from non-Western regions, like Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Southeast Asia. But still, various ways to massage one's body and self-made cosmetics from these regions were considered ways of realizing "natural beauty." In this regard, the division of "natural" and "non-natural" beauty was not based upon geographical factors.

The second misunderstanding of "natural beauty" refers to the magazine's attitude toward foreign medical knowledge. "Natural beauty" excluded plastic surgery that was accompanied by the development of certain medical techniques. But the concept showed no rejection of modern medical knowledge in general. On the contrary, natural beautification methods sometimes relied on modern medical knowledge to know, for example, the functions of different vitamin pills, and the alkalinity of certain foods and household items. As a result, many Do-It-Yourself (DIY) cosmetics and beautification methods were produced as natural and healthy ways of becoming beautiful.

This chapter contains two main parts. The first part discusses four basic methods of achieving "natural beauty," including a good lifestyle, food and herb therapy, sports activities, and DIY cosmetics. These four methods often worked together and were used to deal with a variety of problems. Readers were allowed to choose the one that most suited themselves. The second part analyzes three trends of beauty embedded in the promotion of natural beautification in the 1980s-90s. The first trend focused on the coordination of inward and outward beautification. The second trend concerned people's doubt of foreign cosmetic technology. And the third trend pointed to the popularization of beauty by cutting down the cost of beautification.

### **Four Ways of Becoming "Naturally Beautiful"**

#### **Good Lifestyles**

In July 1988, one article provided readers with twenty hints and tips for losing weight. Most of the suggestions concentrated on healthy eating. The article advised people to drink eight glasses of water every day; to eat three meals on time; to use less sauce when cooking; and to spend more than twenty minutes eating a meal. Author Li

Xiaojuan made it clear that these methods not just helped one lose weight but also allowed for a healthy way of living. Once one maintained a good lifestyle, Li stressed, you were on the way to become both slim and beautiful.<sup>64</sup> This article was just the tip of the iceberg of a multitude of articles that concerned the importance of forming good daily habits, especially eating habits, to reduce weight and become more beautiful. In the 1980s-90s, the Beauty Column included a series of articles that discussed the relationship between beauty and people's lifestyle. What these articles all stated was that good lifestyles would help the actualization of beauty without applying cosmetics or participating in plastic surgery.

The concept of a good lifestyle contained many aspects. Except for healthy eating habits, sleeping posture was essential to maintain beauty due to the long hours we spend every day sleeping. An article in 1987 addressed the importance of establishing a good sleeping posture to increase skin elasticity. In a normal night, author Qiong Qiong argued, people frequently change position. Yet he/she suggested the best posture was to lie flat on the back and breathe deeply. Besides, a suitable pillow was needed. The height of pillow should be even with shoulders. Only in this way could one avoid creases on the face and neck, and keep skin soft and delicate.<sup>65</sup> Another article discussed the relation between breast care and sleeping posture. It emphasized that a good sleeping position would prevent breasts being squeezed into strange shapes. In order to help breasts grow naturally, keeping a good position was especially vital for teenagers.<sup>66</sup>

The third aspect of lifestyle that the magazine was particularly concerned about was face washing. In 1991, Xiao Liu wrote an article that introduced methods of how to make people beautiful through the washing of faces. The article dealt with four elements of face washing, including the temperature of water, the frequency of washing, the selection of soap, and the steps of washing. The author recommended

<sup>64</sup> Li Xiaojuan 李晓娟, "Guanyu jianfei de ershi tiao yinshi tishi,"关于减肥的二十条饮食提示[Twenty tips of diet to lose weight] *Zhiyin* (July 1988): 38.

<sup>65</sup> Qiong Qiong 琼琼, "Shuimian zishi yu meirong,"睡眠姿势与美容[Sleeping postures and beautification] *Zhiyin* (January 1987): 44.

<sup>66</sup> Liu Ligang 刘立刚, "Nüxing gege shiqi de rufang baojian,"女性各个时期的乳房保健[The health protection of breast in different periods] *Zhiyin* (July 1993): 10.

readers to wash their faces twice per day with lukewarm water around 30 degrees. The temperature of water and high frequency of washing, Xiao Liu reminded, would cause dry skin and create wrinkles on the face. The choice of soap was also vital. The author used modern medical knowledge to classify soaps into neural, acid, and alkaline types. Neutral and weak acid soaps were believed to be the ideal ones because they would effectively protect the skin from bacterial diseases. Finally, Xiao Liu talked about the correct steps of washing the face. After wetting the hands, one was encouraged to spread the soap on the palm of one hand, then pat the face from bottom to the top, finishing with cleaning your face with soft towel.<sup>67</sup>

Sometimes articles stressed the formation of good living habits in a broader sense. One article in 1994 listed six main enemies of beautiful skin. These enemies were smoking, excessive drinking, eating too fast, malnutrition, lack of exercise, and exaggerated facial expressions. All of these daily behaviors, author Hao Wen argued, would accelerate the rate of aging.<sup>68</sup> Methods of maintaining beauty in the summer was broached by Yan Zi in 1997. The article included four daily habits that called readers' attention. In the morning, drinking a cup of warm milk would promote a good metabolism to burn fat. During the daytime, it was suggested that women twist their hair into a bun in order to expose their faces. Within three hours before going to bed, Yan Zi hoped that people could stop eating, particularly irritating food like chocolate and coffee. Instead, people could have a bath with lukewarm water around forty degrees.<sup>69</sup>

### Food and Herbs as Medicine

The second method of achieving "natural beauty" was food and herb therapy. Different from cosmetics with chemical ingredients, the application of food and herbs were considered a pure and natural way of becoming beautiful. The magazine explained this method from three angles. Influenced by modern medical knowledge,

<sup>67</sup> Xiao Liu 晓流, "Xilian de meirong zhi dao,"洗脸的美容之道[The method of becoming beautiful through washing faces] *Zhiyin* (April 1991): 31.

<sup>68</sup> Hao wen 郝文, "Meili jifu de da di,"美丽肌肤的大敌[The enemy of skin] *Zhiyin* (October 1994): 39.

<sup>69</sup> Yan Zi 燕子, "Xiari meirong beifenlu,"夏日美容备份录[Beautification methods in the summer] *Zhiyin* (May 1997): 23.

the first angle focused on the absorption of necessary vitamins from one's diet. In 1988, an article built the direct link between female beauty and cosmetic food. For middle-aged women, the article argued, vitamins A, C, D, and E were quite important for accelerating the circulation of blood and increasing the skin elasticity. However, the absorption of vitamins did not rely on taking vitamin pills, which we do today but depended on eating certain kinds of food containing such vitamins naturally. These effective foods were fish, eggs, walnuts, sesame seeds, and fruits (especially oranges). Zhang Rongshan hoped that mid-aged female readers could eat them regularly and constantly.<sup>70</sup> Another article in 1996 also discussed the importance of vitamin for beautification. The article enumerated the function of vitamins A, B, C, and E and recommended various foods that contained each type of vitamin. For instance, Vitamin A would boost gland secretion to protect the skin from the changes in temperature. Vitamin A was included in foods like milk, eggs, carrots, and peaches. Vitamin C would help improve the fragility of blood vessels, and thus would prevent scurvy and infectious disease. People who wanted to get rid of the spots on their faces could eat tomatoes, apples, and lemons that contained abundant amounts of vitamin C.<sup>71</sup>

In addition to modern medical knowledge, traditional Chinese medical expertise was also quoted in *Zhiyin* magazine as a second angle through which to explain food therapy. An article in 1996 discussed the value of Chinese medicine for natural beautification. It is interesting to note that author Wang Mingkui did not make a distinction between inedible Chinese herbs and edible Chinese medical food. For Chinese herbs, Wang only gave a general explanation that they contained biological alkali, amino acids, and vitamins. Yet the functions of specific types of Chinese herbs were not mentioned in the article. For edible Chinese medicine, Wang took six concrete examples to illustrate its uses to his readers. Loongan (*longyan*, 龙眼) was considered as being able to help get rid of wrinkles and keep the skin soft. Walnuts

<sup>70</sup> Zhang Rongshan 张荣山, "Meirong shiwu yu funü jiankang," 美容食物与妇女健康 [Beautification and female healthiness] *Zhiyin* (November 1988): 39.

<sup>71</sup> Liu Ying 刘颖 and Wang Shu 王舒, "Meirong li bu kai weishengsu," 美容离不开维生素 [Beauty can not leave vitamins] *Zhiyin* (December 1996): 23.

has obvious effects of nourishing *yin* and supplementing kidney functions. Isatis root would help reduce inflammation and increase body resistance.<sup>72</sup> Wang highly appraised the effects of Chinese medicine for natural beautification in the article. He believed that his article was an alternative suggestion to Chinese readers about beautification methods. Instead of criticizing imported makeup and medical operations, his purpose was to provide another option for readers who wanted to become beautiful.

The third angle related to Chinese medicine in terms of inedible Chinese herbs. One article in 1998 was a typical example. The article addressed the functions of Chinese herbs and plants from a historical perspective. During the Shang dynasties, people mashed flowers to make blush. During the late Warring State period, Chinese herbs were used for a variety of makeup, including lipstick, blush, and eyebrow pencil. Author Ni Zi mentioned Wu Zetian, who was the only female Chinese emperor in Tang dynasty and loved eating flowers to stay young and beautiful. Quoting from Li Shizhen's work *Compendium of Materia Medica* (*Bencao gangmu*, 本草纲目), Ni Zi argued that there were 168 categories of Chinese herbs that could be used for skin protection and cosmetics. The author had a passionate desire to apply Chinese traditional beautification methods to 1980s-90s society. She paid particular attention to hair care and suggested that readers use saponin, pseudo-ginseng, fleece-flower root, fructus ligustri lucidi, Chinese prickly ash, and barbados aloe to wash their hair. She believed these herbs would protect hair from breakage, climate, and temperature changes. Interestingly, Ni Zi argued the usage of Chinese herbs was a method that followed the worldly trend of loving nature and environmental protection. Also, she expected the cooperation of Chinese herbs and modern technology to occur eventually. However, she did not explain how they would cooperate clearly.<sup>73</sup>

### Regular Exercise

<sup>72</sup> Wang Mingkui 王明奎, "Liangyao ku kou liyu mei," 良药苦口利于美 [Bitter medicine is good for becoming beauty] *Zhiyin* (September 1996): 53.

<sup>73</sup> Ni Zi 妮子, "Zhiwu --- meitian ai ni duo yi xie," 植物——每天爱你多一些 [Plants --- everyday love you more and more] *Zhiyin* (July 1998): 53.

As discussed in Chapter Two, exercise as a beautification method accompanied the introduction of Western concepts of beauty into China in the 1920s-30s. Although the national element of this method weakened after the Cultural Revolution, it played an important role in actualizing natural beauty in people's everyday life. The apex of its popularity in post-Mao China was in the late 1980s when the term *jianmei* occupied a vital position in public discourse. The Beauty Column at that time appropriated certain techniques of physical training from the U.S., including rubber band exercise and aerobics.

In August 1987, an article introduced a way of doing exercise at home by using a large rubber band. Illustrated by hand-painted Western models, the article presented five actions to strengthen the shoulders, arms, stomach, hips, and leg muscles respectively. Through regular and constant exercise, author Fen Fen believed that people would have incredibly fit bodies.<sup>74</sup> One year later, American aerobics was recommended by author Zhang Tao. The article demonstrated four exercises that were good for reducing weight and shaping the body. It is particularly fascinating that Zhang named these four exercises in a very Chinese way. For example, he described sit-ups as two dragons holding a pearl (*erlong baozhu*, 二龙抱珠). Another exercise practiced horse-riding steps and asked people to lift the weights above head. Zhang named it "one pillar to prop up the sky" (*yizhu qingtian*, 一柱擎天).<sup>75</sup>

Meanwhile, the magazine attempted to correct people's false impressions concerning exercise. In June 1988, an article was translated by Hong Hong to discuss ten common misconceptions people had toward exercise. These misconceptions contained both the method and the effect of doing exercise. For example, some people did exercise all day long; some people did not eat anything before exercising; some people believed sweating would help lose weight; and some people worried about big muscle masses. Hong Hong corrected these misunderstandings by saying that exercise should be performed both regularly and constantly. She explained that how many calories you burn per day depended on your exercise time rather than exercise

<sup>74</sup> Zhu Jun 朱军, "Dai yanjing de ren zenyang huazhuang,"戴眼镜的人怎样化妆[The ways of applying cosmetics for people who wear glasses] *Zhiyin* (August 1987): 8.

<sup>75</sup> Zhang Tao 张涛, "Nü qiangren jianmeicao,"女强人健美操[Aerobics for women] *Zhiyin* (May 1988): 7.

intensity. In addition, she suggested that people eat a little bit of food before doing exercise.<sup>76</sup>

At a time when Western physical training exercises were introduced into Chinese society in the 1980s-90s, massage was also regarded by the magazine as a form of exercise. One article in 1987 addressed a new massage method in Japan that would prevent the appearance of a double chin. The translator Jiang Qun used seven hand-painted pictures to illustrate the massage approach. The model's palms moved from chin to ears, to collar-bone, and then to the back of the neck. Jiang suggested readers do the massage twice a day like doing an exercise.<sup>77</sup> Another article in 1988 mentioned a massage method for getting rid of dark circles around the eyes. Author Liu Lang provided several ways of dealing with dark circles, including eating good food and getting enough sleep. A massage of people's eyelids was an effective way to get more sleep. Yet Liu did not offer a detailed procedure of this kind of massage.<sup>78</sup>

In some cases, writers combined physical training exercise with massage in order to gain better and quicker effects. One article in 1989 discussed the restoration of a female fitness body after giving birth to a baby. The article argued that childbirth would cause the decrease of the elasticity of uterus and cavum pelvis. To help improve the situation, the article put forward a combination of abdomen massage and the motion of legs like pedaling a bike. In this way, women would consume fat and build muscle tissue more rapidly.<sup>79</sup>

#### Do-It-Yourself Cosmetics

Many articles in the Beauty Column focused on the fascinating power of cosmetics. The most efficient way to introduce these cosmetics was to make use of celebrities and stars to advertise cosmetic products. Normally, these articles recorded

<sup>76</sup> Hong Hong 虹虹, "Nüxing jianmei yundong shi da cuojue," 女性健美运动十大错觉[Ten misunderstandings of female aerobics] *Zhiyin* (June 1988): 23.

<sup>77</sup> Jiang Qun 江群, "Fangzhi chansheng 'shuang xiaba' de zuixin anmofa," 防止产生"双下巴"的最新按摩法[The new massage of preventing 'double chin'] *Zhiyin* (April 1987): 15.

<sup>78</sup> Liu Lang 刘浪, "Zenyang xiaochu hei yanquan," 怎样消除黑眼圈[The way to get rid of black circle] *Zhiyin* (April 1988): 7.

<sup>79</sup> Lian Zhongyuan 连仲元, "Chanhou jianmei tixing," 产后健美体形[Aerobic after childbirth] *Zhiyin* (July 1989): 21.

famous people's multiple suggestions of becoming beautiful. The application of makeup constituted an important part of their beautification methods. They talked about their habits and ways of applying makeup, and sometimes introduced their favorite cosmetic brands. In 1997, an article recorded the beauty recommendations made by Wen Qing, who was a famous presenter on China Central Television. She liked invisible and natural makeup, and paid attention to the coordination between makeup and her clothing. Ordinarily she used pearl power and pollen to improve skin complexion, and she particularly suggested Christian Dior lipsticks.<sup>80</sup>

With little doubt, Wen Qing's investment on beauty required a huge amount of financial support. Common people could hardly afford pearl power and Christina Dior lipsticks. There was a gap between people's strong sense of imitating celebrities' beautification methods and their limited financial ability. In order to solve this problem, the magazine promoted the concept of DIY cosmetics. This concept has three main characteristics. Firstly, DIY cosmetics had a natural quality. For common people with no chemical and/or technical expertise, they could not produce similar cosmetic products as factories did. The ingredients of DIY cosmetics were usually picked from people's daily life, such as seasonings, vegetables, fruits, and some kinds of drinks. An article in 1987 discussed the method of making eyelashes thick and long. Instead of applying mascara, other effective ways were provided by the article. The DIY mascara depended on the usage of cod-liver oil, sesame-seed oil, and a mixture of olive oil and red wine.<sup>81</sup> Another example was to create a homemade mask. In 1990, an article presented four kinds of masks to solve various facial problems. Masks that contained tomatoes, cucumbers and lemons would increase cell regeneration and replenish skin nutrients, while masks made of olive oil would help prevent dry skin. The article emphasized that masks made by ourselves were better than those sold in shops because they did not have additives. In contrast to formal cosmetics, DIY

<sup>80</sup> Chen Yin 陈垠, "Zhiye nǚxing zenyang rongguanghuanfa: zhongyang dianshitai jiemu zhuchiren Wen Qing de meirong jianyi," 职业女性怎样容光焕发: 中央电视台节目主持人文清的美容建议 [How career women become beautiful: hostess on China Central Television Wen Qing's suggestions] *Zhiyin* (June 1997): 11.

<sup>81</sup> Xiao Rui 晓蕊, "Zenyang cai neng shi nin de jiemaogeng mi geng chang," 怎样才能使您的睫毛更密更长 [The way to make your eyelashes thick and long] *Zhiyin* (May 1987): 33.

cosmetics were special for being healthy and natural.<sup>82</sup>

The naturalness of DIY cosmetics had great impact on its second and third characteristics. The second characteristic was its convenience. Since the majority of ingredients used in making DIY cosmetics came from daily life, one could, for example, make a mask at home and have a facial whenever he/she wanted. Besides, *Zhiyin* magazine was not against people making innovations on homemade cosmetics. If a person has extremely dry skin, he/she could add more olive oil to the mask.<sup>83</sup> The third characteristic was its economy. Compared to the high price of cosmetics sold in shopping mall, the cost of DIY cosmetics was affordable for common people. Its low cost of production would help not only accelerate the spread of natural beautification but also correct people's luxurious consumptive habits.

#### The Combined Method

The above four natural beautification methods (a good lifestyle, food and herb therapy, sports activities, and DIY cosmetics) were related to and complement one another. In many cases, one article gathered two to four natural methods to solve one specific beauty problem. For example, an article in 1988 discussed the way to improve dry and cracked lips in winter. The article reminded readers to eat food that contained vitamins, to drink more water, to do lip massages by themselves, and not to wet their lips in daily life.<sup>84</sup> These suggestions put the first three methods of achieving natural beauty together. The article treated these methods equally without particular emphasis on one or two of them.

There were many similar examples that could be cited. In 1991, an article attempted to answer readers' question about losing weight. The article pointed out two special periods. The first special period was called the lag phase. It was a crucial period when the loss of water reached the physiological limit so that fat would burn. At this time, having a regular lifestyle by eating moderately was quite important. The

<sup>82</sup> Du Dadong 杜大栋, "Ruhe shiyong jiating mianmo meirongshu," "如何使用家庭面膜美容术[The usage of homemade masks] *Zhiyin* (September 1990): 15.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>84</sup> Zou Yaoming 邹耀明, "Dongri yufang zuichun ganlie," "冬日预防嘴唇干裂[The prevention of dry lips in the winter] *Zhiyin* (January 1988): 23.

second special period referred to the time of women's menstruation. During menstruation, women are sought to eat more food than normal. Thus, the article persuaded women to eat fresh vegetables, corns, and watermelon rather than meat and snacks, and take exercise constantly and properly. Overall, the article did not support the ideas of taking pills and/or applying surgery to lose weight. It suggested that readers lead a regular life.<sup>85</sup>

The combination of natural beautification methods implied two purposes. One purpose was to stress the commonness of these four methods. Although the four methods took different forms and were welcomed by people in various ways, they all promoted a natural way of becoming beautiful. If they worked together, writers believed that natural beauty would be actualized much more effectively and efficiently. Another purpose rested on people's multiple choices concerning methods of natural beautification. Writers in *Zhiyin* magazine broke away from people's fixed ideas about beautification methods in the 1980s-90s. Except for applying cosmetics and plastic surgery, the magazine introduced four natural opportunities to achieve beauty. Readers were allowed to choose their favorite methods according to their interests and demands.

Moreover, *Zhiyin* magazine used the experiences of both foreign and domestic celebrities to show the popularity of combined beautification methods. In 1990, an article presented the beauty secrets of seven western women, including Margaret Thatcher, the Queen of England, Princess Diana, Sophia Loren, Barbara Bush, and two American film stars. Thatcher was described as loving bland food, fruits, and disliking sweets. Princess Diana and Sophia Loren were lovers of sports. Tennis and swimming were Princess Diana's two favorite sports, while Loren liked to go jogging. They both ate food with low fat content. The article mentioned that all of these Western celebrities were not interested in applying cosmetics or getting medical operations. Barbara Bush was depicted as a person who thought hair dye and losing

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<sup>85</sup> Chi Shui 赤水, "Jianfei, weihe zai shou bu xia qu," 减肥, 为何再瘦不下去 [Losing weight, the reason why we can not be more slim] *Zhiyin* (June 1991): 9.

weight were a waste time.<sup>86</sup> Another article published in 1997 recorded Chinese designer Xiao Han's opinions of beauty. She believed that the precondition of becoming beautiful was self-confidence. A calm mentality would help people relieve pressure and stress in everyday life. She hoped people could help the skin retain moisture all the time by eating more fruits and vegetables than meat. Also, she emphasized the importance of the time and quality of sleep. Her suggestion was to drink a glass of milk before going to sleep at night.<sup>87</sup>

### The Embedded Trends of "Natural Beauty"

#### First Trend: the Cooperation of *Nei* and *Wai*

Non-natural beautification methods such as cosmetics and plastic surgery depended on chemical and medical knowledge to beautify people's outward appearance. But "natural beauty" focused on the internal enhancement of the human body through the cooperation of *nei* and *wai* forces. Although *nei* and *wai* forces shared the task of regulating the circulation system inside body, they differed from each other in the fulfillment of their tasks. The *nei* force stressed the healthy absorption of nutrients and medicine by taking things that could be eaten. Eating foods that were rich in vitamins and Chinese medicine falls into this category. The *wai* force of natural beauty, in contrast, was for external application. The force included the establishment of a good lifestyle, the insistence of engaging in regular exercise, the use of herbs, and the creation of DIY cosmetics. These methods had the expectation that nutrition would be absorbed from the exterior of body or through more non-absorbant ways.

However, the *nei* and *wai* forces of "natural beauty" did not constitute a dichotomy. Instead, they interacted with each other to shape a quicker and efficient way of actualizing natural beauty. Such interaction had two forms. The first form referred to the interrelated function of the two forces. For example, exercise is unable to provide digestible nutrients, but it helped the increase of blood circulation, the

<sup>86</sup> Long Wen 龙文, "Guowai ming nüren qingchun changzhu tanmi," 国外名女人青春常驻探秘 [The exploration of the way foreign female celebrities maintain beautiful] *Zhiyin* (August 1990): 45.

<sup>87</sup> Chen Yin 陈垠, "Yiwei fuzhuang shejishi de meirong guandian," 一位服装设计师大师的美容观点 [A dress designer's opinion of beautification] *Zhiyin* (July 1997): 45.

improvement of the immune system, and the acceleration of absorption processes happened both outside and inside of the body. The second form was reflected in *Zhiyin* articles' writing style. As I discussed previously, many writers tended to tie the methods of natural beauty. For skin protection, the joint action of a correct way of washing and taking swimming regularly resulted in a soft and healthy skin.<sup>88</sup>

### Second Trend: Doubting Foreign Cosmetic Technology

*Zhiyin* rarely paralleled natural beautification methods with non-natural ones within one specific article. The only exception was an article published in 1993. The article proposed several effective ways for breast enhancement, and these suggestions were classified by author Liu Ligang into two categories. The first part of the article discussed the benefits of exercise and bathing, which were typical natural beautification methods. Readers were taught to breathe deeply and expand their lungs four times every day. Doing push-ups three times per day and lifting dumbbells twice a day was recommended as well. Meanwhile, having a hot bath was valued by Liu as a good way to promote the circulation of blood. The second part of the article addressed medical injection. It explained the effect of estrogen injection and the basic operating principle of technology used for breast augmentation. At the end of the article, Liu warned readers that the later two beautification methods depended on imported technology and had potential side effects that might have limited functions for breast augmentation.<sup>89</sup>

Liu's critical tone regarding estrogen injections and breast augmentation surgery implied more or less his deep distrust of foreign cosmetic technology. In fact, Liu was not the only writer who had such a cautious and skeptical attitude. As I argued in Chapter Two, imported products and knowledge of beauty were not assumed to be cure-alls by *Zhiyin* magazine. Writers reminded readers to pay attention to the expiration date of cosmetic products, the correct way for cosmetic storage, and the

<sup>88</sup> Bei Guoxin 贝国新, "Tong nü qingnian tan pifu baoyang," 同女青年谈皮肤保养[Talking to young women about skin protection] *Zhiyin* (November 1987): 21.

<sup>89</sup> Liu Ligang 刘立刚, "Ruhe shi ni de rufang geng fengman --- 'Nüxing rufang jianmei' zhishi lianzai zhi er," 如何使你的乳房更丰满——"女性乳房健美"知识连载之二[How to augment your breast --- the second article of the serial 'Female breast beauty'] *Zhiyin* (June 1993): 54.

appropriate use of certain makeup.<sup>90</sup> One writer in 1995 pointed out that skin cream would not help soften skin; instead, it could irritate and clog pores.<sup>91</sup>

Contrary to Liu's cynicism about foreign cosmetic technology, exercising and bathing were promoted and praised by the author. Similar to all the articles written about natural beauty, Liu considered one of the most remarkable characteristics of natural beautification methods to be its avoidance of chemical additives and/or the pain of medical operations. Methods to achieve natural beauty such as exercise and bathing were much healthier and safer.<sup>92</sup>

Another interesting point that related to many writers' skeptical views of foreign cosmetic technology was the promotion of indigenous beautification methods in the past and new cosmetic creations. On the one hand, Chinese medical knowledge was quoted by writers to teach people to eat healthy food and apply Chinese herbs. To some extent, it reflected the revival of the part of Chinese tradition that had long been criticized as backward and feudal ideology since the May Fourth period. In the 1980s-90s, traditional medical knowledge ranked with, and sometimes being used to resist, modern foreign beautification methods. One writer in 1998 proposed the idea of the cooperation of Chinese herbs and modern foreign technology, but she did not explain in what way they should work together.<sup>93</sup> On the other hand, all DIY cosmetics the magazine introduced were made of food, seasonings, and drinks in daily life. These innovative cosmetics sometimes mimicked the names and ideas of foreign cosmetic products, such as mascaras, facial masks, and hair conditioners.<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, such imitation helped DIY cosmetics compete with foreign ones. DIY cosmetics were described as having similar function of beautification as foreign

<sup>90</sup> Fa Zai 发仔, "Huazhuangpin de shiyongqi," "化妆品的使用期[The expiration date of cosmetic products] *Zhiyin* (December 1995): 10; Huang Weihua 黄卫华, "Shiyong huazhuangpin xu zhuyi de wenti," "使用化妆品须注意的问题[Problems of applying cosmetic products] *Zhiyin* (August 1996): 7.

<sup>91</sup> Zhang Lei 张磊, "Youguan meirong huazhuangpin de kanwu," "有关美容化妆品的勘误 [Some misunderstandings of cosmetic products] *Zhiyin* (July 1995): 47.

<sup>92</sup> Liu Ligang 刘立刚, "Ruhe shi ni de rufang geng fengman --- 'Nuxing rufang jianmei' zhishi lianzai zhi er," "如何使你的乳房更丰满——'女性乳房健美'知识连载之二[How to augment your breast --- the second article of the serial 'Female breast beauty'] *Zhiyin* (June 1993): 54.

<sup>93</sup> Ni Zi 妮子, "Zhiwu --- meitian ai ni duo yi xie," "植物——每天爱你多一些[Plants --- everyday love you more and more] *Zhiyin* (July 1998): 53.

<sup>94</sup> Xiao Rui 晓蕊, "Zenyang cai neng shi nin de jiemaogeng mi geng chang," "怎样才能使您的睫毛更密更长[The way to make your eyelashes thick and long] *Zhiyin* (May 1987): 33; Du Dadong 杜大栋, "Ruhe shiyong jiating mianmo meirongshu," "如何使用家庭面膜美容术[The usage of homemade masks] *Zhiyin* (September 1990): 15.

makeups. At the same time, the naturalness, healthfulness, convenience, and low cost of DIY cosmetics were underlined by writers. By comparison, DIY cosmetics were regarded as being more worthwhile than imported ones.

### Third Trend: Beauty in a Popular Style

I previously used Wen Qing's example to indicate that not everyone could enjoy the benefits brought by foreign cosmetic products in the 1980s-90s. For the majority of Chinese people, exclusive cosmetics like Christian Dior's lipsticks were not what they could afford in daily life, even though they had the same desires of becoming beautiful. But *Zhiyin* magazine continually insisted on the equal rights of people to pursue beauty. Under such circumstances, DIY cosmetics were promoted by the magazine because of its low costs of production. As I mentioned, the raw materials of DIY cosmetics came from daily necessities, including food, drinks, and seasonings. Besides the economy of such creations, DIY cosmetics were believed to be more competitive than foreign ones due to their naturalness and convenience. In fact, these three characteristics of DIY cosmetics were shared by three other natural beautification methods. Having a good lifestyle, a healthy diet, and regular exercise all had low cost and existed in people's daily lives.

To a large extent, the magazine's emphasis on price reflected its disagreement with the trend of luxury consumption in Chinese society. This point has been discussed previously in Chapter Two. The magazine attempted to use various ways to regulate people's consumptive behavior. These ways ranged from the proposal of simple ways of living, to public criticism of noble bachelors (*danshen guizu*), and to the reinterpretation of Western people's consumptive habits. Natural beauty discussed in this chapter was regarded as a method that could kill two birds with one stone: people's demands of becoming beautiful were satisfied while at the same time, natural beauty was characterized by its inexpensive costs.

The four natural beautification methods played a large part in the promotion of beauty in the 1980s-90s. They met people's requirements who wanted to become beautiful. More importantly, because of their convenience, naturalness, and low cost

of production, these methods might also attract people who were indifferent or doubtful about beautification in general. It was not just that everyone had an equal right to pursue beauty but also that beauty took a popular style that belonged to everyone. Besides, the meaning of beauty has been expanded upon by the magazine: on the one hand, beauty related to chemical cosmetics and medical operations, on the other, beauty connected to the issues of nature, health, and popular consumption.

### **Conclusion**

"Natural beauty" is one side of a model of dichotomous thinking maintained by *Zhiyin* magazine. Different from chemical-based makeup and medical cosmetic techniques, natural beautification methods were characterized by naturalness, healthiness, convenience, and low prices. These methods mixed Chinese and foreign medical knowledge, included readers' innovation of DIY cosmetics, and solved the problem of common people's limited financial ability to purchase overpriced cosmetic products.

#### CHAPTER 4. MALE BEAUTY

This chapter explores how the concept of male beauty was delineated, disseminated, understood, and practiced through official propaganda, local mediation, and people's preferences. In the mid-1980s, male beauty became a new topic in Mainland China, along with the discussion of issues of marriage, job-hunting, and family relations. Under these circumstances, the Beauty Column published a small portion of articles focus particularly on the subject of male beautification. These articles clarify three points that relate to the discourse of male beauty in modern China.

First and foremost, the creation of male beauty in the 1980s-90s played a transitional role in linking the martial image of the male hero in the Mao era, and the feminized taste of male beauty in the present. When we look backward to the 1950s-70s, steel-like bodies and revolutionary spirits dominated the discourse of male (as well as female) beauty. Rather than a plea for gender neutrality, slogans in the Mao era required women to be like men while men were not encouraged to be like women.<sup>95</sup> Such masculine standards of beauty stood in stark contrast to the popularity of "flower men" (*huameinan*, 花美男) seen contemporary society. From the late 1990s onward, the term flower men has become a new synonym for Prince Charming along with the great success of the drama *Boys Over Flowers* (花より男子, 花样男子) which has spread from Japan to mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, and Southeast Asia in the early 2000s.<sup>96</sup> Using "flower" to describe male appearance, the term flower men represents and extols a model of male beauty to which young people aspire, so that it is this style of beauty that young men seek to emulate today.

<sup>95</sup> Emily Honig, "Maoist Mappings of Gender: Reassessing the Red Guards," in Susan Brownell and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, eds., *Chinese Femininities/Chinese Masculinities: A Reader* (Berkeley, Calif.; London: University of California Press, 2002), 257-258.

<sup>96</sup> The drama is based upon a popular cartoon drew by Yōko Kamio. From 1996 to 2009, the cartoon has been adapted into movies and TV plays by Japanese, South Korean and Taiwanese directors. The four male protagonists, the so-called "Flower Four" (F4), won numerous girls' hearts from Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan to Southeast Asia. They all have attractive outward appearances as charming as flowers. In the cartoon, the "Flower Four" gave viewers a strong impression of their admirable faces, exquisite dresses, aristocratic behaviors, and shapely and muscular bodies. In order to reproduce these ideal portrays in movies and TV plays, producers and directors were highly selective about the actors admitted to appear in the role of "Flower Four". Taiwanese version employed four participants who stand out in a large group interview due to their proper heights, weights, and handsome looks. While both Japanese and South Korean versions used teenage idols that already enjoyed tremendous popularity because of their good looking.

However, the change of the standard of male beauty did not happen overnight and was never a one-way street. This chapter will show that change in male beauty ideals was the result of a gradual and complex process in which social transformation, political pressure, cultural translation, individual preferences, and historical heritage were all involved.

Secondly, the discourse of male beauty was endowed with paradoxical meaning in the 1980s-90s. On the one hand, male beauty was separated from female beauty as a way to reject the genderless language that was used during the Cultural Revolution, such as "people" and "comrade." The Beauty Column divided articles into two categories based on sexual difference (although such differentiation did not accept gay men, lesbians, transgendered individuals or hermaphrodites). Many writers made clear distinctions in their titles to show whether these articles were written for male or female readers. On the other hand, male beauty was judged and categorized by a variety of criteria, including physical condition, age, marital status, occupation, and the change of season. These criteria normally mixed together, and thus indicated diversified meanings of male beauty. Because of this, this chapter challenges the duality of masculinity and femininity in the 1980s-90s. As one of the important manifestations of masculinity, male beauty represented not merely martial and strong characters. Instead, the magazine *Zhiyin* created a space to redefine male beauty and female beauty as varied and overlapped ideas and practices in the new historical conditions.

Last but not the least, the discourse of male beauty implied a series of desirous and uneasy thoughts and emotions among male officials, editors, intellectuals, readers and customers in the 1980s-90s. These anxieties can be classified into three main types. The first type of male anxiety rests on outward appearances. It concerns the necessity of learning how to wear Western clothing, and the acceptance of beauty methods that were traditionally used by women, such as wearing rings, necklaces, earrings, and chain bracelets. The second type of male anxiety refers to the question of who is likely to play the leading role in the day-to-day practice of male beauty. It seems that the magazine *Zhiyin* endowed female readers with the right to decide male

beauty. Yet, this chapter will try to show that editors tended to build a kind of commonality of interests and values rather than a potential struggle between male and female readers on the issue beauty.

The third type of male anxiety relates to the creation of a new society in the 1980s-90s. The rise of the market economy resulted in a new value system, whereby the former heroes of the collective era have given way to new heroes with attractive outward appearances and the ability to make money. A man's outward appearance is closely connected to his opportunity of making money.

### **"Male Beauty:" Redrawing the Line between Masculinity and Femininity?"<sup>97</sup>**

#### A Brief Historical Overview of Ideas of Male Beauty

Chinese traditional patriarchal beliefs differentiated men from women by the conventional sexual division of labor. The *yin/yang* binary in theory and the separation of inside and outside in the home showed that traditional society assigned men and women different tasks. Throughout Chinese history, there have been two competing emblems of maleness. One is the warrior or military man, who emphasized physical toughness; the other is the gentleman, who represented gentility and who disdained physical exercise in favor of the arts and other forms of cultural refinement. The second emblem of maleness was particularly formed and promoted by the imperial examination system. The system linked men's literary and artistic talents to their political achievements and social statuses. In contrast, womanhood was generally organized around images of physical attractiveness, moral virtue, and reproductive capabilities. Except for exceptional cases in practice, women, theoretically speaking, were circumscribed in the inner chambers both physically and mentally.<sup>98</sup> They were required to pay attention to their appearance and behavior in

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<sup>97</sup> The discourse of masculinity and femininity in contemporary society should be examined as a set of competing constructions without a fixed, monolithic definition. Geng Song, "Chinese Masculinities Revisited: Male Images in Contemporary Television Drama Serials," *Modern China* 36 (April, 2010): 405-406. In this chapter, I consider the concept of "male beauty" is one of the representatives of Chinese masculinity in the reform era.

<sup>98</sup> The Ming-Qing transition is a special period. At that time, many elite women who lived in Jiangnan 江南 region managed publishing house with their husbands, traveled often with family members and friends, and taught girls in other elite families. See Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-century China* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994).

daily life. Their virtues and talents were mainly shown by their ability to give birth to family heirs and to manage the household properly. The underlying appeal of such representation of femaleness has focused constantly on biological achievement.

Beginning in the late Qing and early Republican periods, the traditional division of men and women appeared fractured in the public sphere. Female images were used by male reformers and revolutionaries in their plans to strengthen the nation. As the weakest group of people in the eyes of male intellectuals, women were encouraged to, firstly, build up their bodies through regular exercise; and secondly, receive formal education and step out of the inner quarters. Although the original purpose was to cultivate excellent "national mothers," more and more "new women" came into public vision from the 1910s onward. These new women had independent personalities, professional knowledge, and were eager to participate in social activities. They displayed talents in various spheres as writers, publishers, doctors, teachers, shop assistants, and soldiers.<sup>99</sup>

But patriarchal values did not disappear overnight. Regarding themselves as social designers, men attempted to keep their privileged roles in workplaces. In urban cities like Shanghai in the 1930s-40s, female graduates found that they were not employed as easily as men. Many companies and institutions openly announced that they did not want female workers.<sup>100</sup> The New Life Movement sponsored by the Guomindang (GMD) in the 1930s worsened women's situation in the cities. Raising the slogan of "Understanding Wife and Loving Mother," the *Nanjing* government stated that women should place domestic tasks before all others. They were encouraged to care about and serve their husbands and children at home.<sup>101</sup> Similar conditions appeared in rural areas governed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

<sup>99</sup> These "new women" were commonly seen in newspapers and popular magazines in the 1920s-40s. For instance, female writer Zhang Ailing, female editor of the *Linglong* magazine Chen Zhenling, female sociologist Lei Jieqiong, and female soldier Xie Bingying who wrote the novel *Nübing Zizhuan* 女兵自传 [Autobiography of a female soldier].

<sup>100</sup> Xu Cheng 许成, "Xin nǚxing de zhiye wenti," 新女性的职业问题 [The problem of new women's career] *Shishi Xinbao*, February 12, 1935.

<sup>101</sup> For more information about the New Life Movement, please see Wang Xiaohua 王晓华, "Mofan" Nanchang: *Xinshenghuo Yundong Ceyuandi* "模范"南昌:新生活运动策源地 ["Model" Nanchang: the Origin of the New Life Movement] (Nanchang: Jiangxi meishu chubanshe, 2007); Wen Bo 温波, *Chongjian hefaxing: Nanchangshi xinshenghuo yundong yanjiu (1934-1935)* 重建合法性: 南昌市新生活运动研究 (1934-1935) [Rebuilding the validity: a study of the New Life Movement in Nanchang, 1934-1935] (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2006).

As the major political opponent of the GMD and the advanced communicator of the idea of gender equality in the countryside, the Party's more egalitarian policies concerning women in the early Yan'an period were later adjusted and suppressed in order to win more and more support from rural people.<sup>102</sup>

However, the other side of this story of the survival of patriarchal norms is the appearance of a group of "modern men" (or playboys) in big cities in the Republican period. They were normally described as lacking interest in study and work, wandering in and out of coffee shops and dancing balls. They aspired to have deluxe lifestyles and charming outward appearances. In order to beautify themselves, this group of modern men wore imported western attires and other products like hair oil. At that time, their behaviors were criticized as traitorous because they caused national and cultural decadence.<sup>103</sup>

The division of manhood and womanhood in the Republican period caused many ambiguities and uncertainties. An increasing number of women were engaged in public works, while some men embraced foreign modern fashion and conceptions of beauty to symbolize an alternative maleness. Under such circumstances, the new Communist authority in 1949 attempted to reestablish the line between masculinity and femininity. One of the well-known Maoist slogans which claimed that "the time has changed, men and women are the same" has been criticized by feminist historians as gender sameness and/or neutrality. The collective femininity was in many points similar to the collective masculinity such as tough, ambitious and progressive. The most striking example is the model of "Iron Girl" in the 1960s-70s. They were depicted as a group of new revolutionary women who threw away their feminine appearances and joined in work that had previously been conducted by men.<sup>104</sup> Non-revolutionary beautification, for both women and men, became an official taboo. Although people used various methods to inquire the forbidden beauty in everyday life, the operation was largely limited to a small sphere.

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<sup>102</sup> The invasion of Japanese troops, the relaxation between the CCP and GMD, and the difficulty to transform local people's conservative attitudes toward women resulted to the less radical policies made by the CCP in Yan'an period. See Harrison Forman, *Report From Red China* (New York: Henry Holt, 1945).

<sup>103</sup> Jun Xi 君曦, "Modeng shaoye," 摩登少爷 [Modern Gentlemen] *Shenbao*, November 28, 1933.

<sup>104</sup> Honig, 261-264.

In the wake of the Cultural Revolution, the revolutionary legacy of manhood and womanhood was re-gendered in the 1980s-90s. The new understanding of masculinity and femininity was accompanied with the country's open policy in the contexts of globalization and commercialization. Against this backdrop, the concept beauty emerged in public sphere with its new standards. And male beautification, as one of the representatives of the newly established Chinese masculinity (ies), did not necessarily become the other side of feminine beauty.

### Two Narrative Approaches to Discussing "Beauty"

Everyone has right to pursue beauty. This is one of the main premises of the Beauty Column. It was assumed that first beauty was not a gender-biased concept and is distributed evenly between both men and women; and second the demands of beauty were individualized because each person has his/her own opinion of becoming beautiful. With the aim of offering proper suggestions to ordinary people's inquiries concerning beauty in everyday life, the Beauty Column embraced many kinds of information, ranging from skin care, make-up techniques, physical training and beauty diet plans. In general, such information was disseminated by two different narrative approaches.

The first approach is to divide the articles into two categories based on sexual difference. Instead of using broad terms like "people," "citizens," or "readers" as recipients of beauty information, editors distinguished articles about male beauty from those about female beauty (although these two concepts are not totally opposite or different in practice). Many writers made clear distinctions in the title of the article to show whether their articles were written for male or female readers. These titles included, for instance, "The fashion trend of female winter coats," "Methods of beautifying women's foreheads," "Women, do you know how to choose brassieres," "The procedure of applying cosmetics for brides," "1989: male beauty industry in Guangzhou," and "How do men wear accessories?"<sup>105</sup> These articles either used

<sup>105</sup> Xiao Gu 小古, "Nü dongzhuang liuxing qushi," 女冬装流行趋势 [The fashion trend of female winter coats] *Zhiyin* (February 1987): 20; Xue Ji 雪吉, "Qiaoshi nǚxing meili e'xing," 巧饰女性美丽额型 [The methods of

gender terms such as women (*nüren*, 女人), men (*nanren*, 男人), brides (*xinniàng*, 新娘), female (*nǚxìng*, 女性), and male (*nánxìng*, 男性), or feminine objects like brassieres to clarify the sex of readers to which the article focused.

However some of the articles did not specify if their potential readers were men or women. The title of the article which recommended five ways of using an elastic band to do physical exercises did not indicate whether these acts were good for men, women, or both genders.<sup>106</sup> But the illustrations beside the article used images of Western females. These images suggest that this way of becoming energetic and beautiful was more suitable to women. Another example is the introduction of several methods to select proper swimming suits.<sup>107</sup> Similarly, no gender was indicated in the title. Yet the whole article focuses on female swimming suits. For instance, the author advised women who have flat chests to choose swimming suits with beautiful decoration on the breasts. Obviously, female readers were kept in mind for this article.

The approach of sexual differentiation reveals that on the one hand, previous non-gender specific forms of address like "comrades" and "people" were replaced by the binary of men and women (although such differentiation does not accept gay men, lesbians, transgendered people, or hermaphrodites); on the other hand, the Beauty Column tended to pay more attention to the needs of women than that of men. Only a small part of the articles were written for male beautification. And it shows that in the 1980s-90s, *Zhiyin* magazine was inclined to encourage more women rather than men to pursue beauty. As a semi-official popular magazine, its different tempos toward male and female beautification can lead us to make certain assumptions: one is that official propaganda gave the priorities of day-to-day beautification to women in the initial stage of post-Maoist China; and secondly, women in reality might have more

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beautifying women's foreheads] *Zhiyin* (December 1989): 8; Ren Zhuquan 任竹泉, "Nǚxìng, nǐ huì xuǎnzé nèiyī ma?" 女性,你会选择内衣吗? [Women, do you know how to choose brassieres?] *Zhiyin* (August 1994): 7; Li Jiang 李江, "Xinniàng huàzhuāng chéngxù," 新娘化妆程序 [The procedure of applying cosmetics for brides] *Zhiyin* (January 1993): 48; Zhu Hongge 朱洪戈, "1989: Guāngzhōu nánshì měiróng dàshìjiè," 1989: 广州男士美容大世界 [1989: male beauty industry in Guangzhou] *Zhiyin* (November 1989): 41; Li Changyu 李长余, "Nánxìng ruhe pèidài zhūbǎo shòushì," 男性如何佩带珠宝首饰 [How do men wear accessories?] *Zhiyin* (November 1995): 19.

<sup>106</sup> Fen Fen 芬芬, "Xiāngjīngū jiànshēnfǎ kě shì nǐ shēncǎi jiànmei," 橡筋箍健身法可使你身材健美 [Elastic helps you have a robust and beautiful body] *Zhiyin* (August 1987): 45.

<sup>107</sup> Zhao Bing 赵兵, "Ruhe xuǎnzé shìhé nǐ shēncǎi de yǒngzhuāng," 如何选择适合你身材的泳装 [How to choose proper swimming suits] *Zhiyin* (August 1991): 12.

passions and desires than men to pursue beauty.

The second approach towards information on beauty by the magazine went a step further than the first approach. It disambiguated the terms "male beauty" and "female beauty" into various forms. Each form had its own style of beauty. Since female beauty is not the main focus of this chapter, the following analysis deals with the facts of internal differentiation of "male beauty" in the Beauty Column. It is necessary to notice that suitability or appropriateness (*shihe*, 适合) was one of the central arguments in almost all the articles about male beauty. This argument neither questioned the suitability of men to pursue beauty the same as women, nor required male beauty to be suitable for men's gender identity. In fact, it disagreed with the claim that gender is the only perspective to consider the beautification of men, and suggested the possibility of many other standards and ways to categorize male beauty. One frequently-used standard was personal physical condition. Such a condition includes height, weight, color of skin, shape of the face, body configuration, and so forth. In an article that taught men proper ways to wear jewelry, the length of his finger determined what the kind of ring a man should select.<sup>108</sup> The writer suggested that men who have long fingers should wear navy design rings and diamond rings on their little fingers. The purpose was to increase the width of the palm. For men who had short and stubby fingers, they should avoid wearing rings on their little fingers and choose rings with horizontal designs.

Another standard to understand male beauty was one's age. Elder, middle-aged, and young men were treated differently. Some articles explained explicitly that the targeted readers were men of a certain age group. One example was men's use of plastic surgery. Although the writer did not assert that elder men have no need to try the operation, the focus was mainly on middle-aged men who had stable careers and families. Also, the writer reminded male adolescents to be cautious with surgery because their bodies might not grow to full size.<sup>109</sup> Since plastic surgery was quite a new technology in mainland China in the 1980s-90s, the article was written in a

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<sup>108</sup> Li, 19.

<sup>109</sup> Zhu, 41.

relatively conservative tone to call attention to health and safety.

Except for physical condition and age, there are other standards and ways to categorize male beauty, including marital status, occupation, and the change of season. It should be noted that most articles were not organized on the basis of one standard. Normally, these standards were mixed together, and this further indicated the diversity of male beauty ideals. In the previous case of the means for men to wear jewelry, the length of finger was one deceive factor to choose rings. For necklaces, however, the selection depended on both age and social context. Massive metal necklaces were regarded as more suitable for young men in leisure circumstances. When men went to formal events, they are advised not to wear necklaces of any kind.<sup>110</sup>

The multiple descriptions of male beauty implied the formation of an idea that beauty has been individualized in the 1980s-90s. The magazine provided diversified choices in order to shape and/or satisfy men's different preferences. Such behavior could also be seen in the language the magazine used. Instead of choosing imperative words and phrases such as "have to," "must," and "the only way," the majority of articles tended to give suggestions and advice rather than absolute opinions. Writers used terms like "maybe," "you can try," and "you better not" to create a light atmosphere for discussion. In contrast to the unify image of men during the 1960s-70s, *Zhiyin* magazine in the 1980s-90s proposed the idea that each man could choose the style of beauty that was most suitable to him, even though the magazine still played an instructive role.

#### Blurred Space: Masculinity and Femininity

As mentioned in the previous section, *Zhiyin* magazine separated articles about male and female day-to-day beautification as one of its narrative approaches. But the sexual division of beauty did not result to the fixation of masculinity and femininity in the 1980s-90s. Instead it created a space to redefine masculinity and femininity as a varied, if not necessarily different, idea and practice in a new historical condition. Editors and writers used diverse adjectives to describe the beauty of men and women,

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<sup>110</sup> Li, 19.

and these adjectives reflected various social expectations toward masculinity and femininity. Through multiple methods of daily beautification, such as the selection of clothes, plastic surgery, and the choice of accessories, the boundary of masculinity and femininity was redrawn. At the same time, masculinity and femininity came to be blurred in the 1980s-90s.

Firstly, although beauty as a concept applied to both men and women, the term "beauty" only appeared in articles about female beautification. Compared to today's popular expressions started in the late 1990s and early 2000s like "beautiful men" (*meinan*) and "flower men" (*huameinan*) to praise men's good looks, adjectives other than "beautiful" were chosen by editors and writers to describe male beauty in the 1980s-90s. Frequently-used adjectives included "fresh," "gracious," "concise," "natural," and "decent." In most cases, these words were used to depict men's clean hair and faces, proper behaviors, suitable attires, shoes, and accessories. Sometimes writers put these words together to describe several of the aspects of a specific man's beauty; while at other times, they used these words separately to emphasize a certain kind of male beauty based on different ages and contexts. For instance, the term "fresh" was normally applied to delineate young men and /or the attire worn for leisure occasions such as traveling, hiking, and shopping.<sup>111</sup>

However, the description of the beauty of women was quite another case. The adjectives of female beauty were more numerous, including "innocent," "cute," "pretty," "charming," "fashionable," "vigorous," "curvy," "sexy," and so forth. Women's facial appearance, body shapes, hairstyles, attire, shoes, and accessories were the main targets of this description. Meanwhile, synonyms of "beauty" (*mei*) were used in these articles, such as "sweet beauty" (*tianmei*, 甜美), "gentle beauty" (*roumei*, 柔美), and "delicate beauty" (*jiaomei*, 娇美). But writers did not make a clear distinction among the usages of these similar words.

Despite the varied words used to characterize male and female beauty respectively, a special group of adjectives were employed to depict the beauty of both men and women. These adjectives were the ones mentioned to describe male beauty

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<sup>111</sup> Li, 19.

("fresh," "gracious," "concise," "natural," and "decent"). Some articles, for instance, also selected "fresh" to delineate ladies' spring and summer attires, and chose "decent" to delineate middle-aged women's clothing. One reason for this is that writers regarded these words as having no specific gender-orientation. That means these words were probably used to emphasize various styles of beauty rather than a difference in gender. Another possibility is that writers considered these adjectives as unisex words. They could be used to define and explain both masculinity and femininity from the perspective of beauty in the 1980s-90s. In this sense, it is possible to argue that the line between masculinity and femininity was quite flexible at least in the sphere of lexicology in daily use.

In addition, the various terms used by writers to describe male and female beauty indicated both men and women's diversified inner characteristics. These characters attributed to the re-creation of masculinity(ies) and femininity(ies) in the 1980-90s. The adjectives to depict female beauty reflect three main types of female personalities. Terms such as "cute," "innocent," "sweet," and "vigorous" usually mirrored young ladies' simple, lively and easy-going characters; "decent," "gracious," and "elegant" in most cases were used to describe middle-aged and elder women who were steady, experienced, better educated, and having good tastes; while "charming," "curvy," and "sexy" implied the message that some women loved beauty and wanted to look attractive to men through certain ways of dressing and/or applying cosmetics. Instead of praising one type and criticizing another, all these types of femininity were acceptable for the magazine. One important criterion was the coherence between their inner personalities and outward appearances. That is to say, a certain woman needed to dress properly according to her age, character, occupation, and the context that she is in.

Similar criteria also worked to shape masculinity. In an article about male plastic surgery, the writer emphasized the unity of outward beauty and inner character.<sup>112</sup> The article listed some case that the reason for many middle-aged men to undergo plastic surgery was to save their marriages. They believed that their wives

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<sup>112</sup> Zhu, 41.

did not love them anymore because of their loose and wrinkled skin. Thus, these men underwent face-lifts in order to appear younger. The writer did not criticize their intentions, but reminded readers that the improvement of outward appearance is not necessarily a decisive factor for a happy marriage. The writer believed that the change of personality and habits, good communication, and mutual understanding between husbands and wives were more essential than plastic surgery in ameliorating the problems of a marital relationship. The ideal masculinity, as mentioned in almost all articles about male beauty, was to be generous, mature, stable, and confident.

Through the use of adjectives such as "gracious," "understated," "natural," and "decent," to describe male personalities, we find that these words were empowered by resembling social expectations to define male and female beauty in the 1980s-90s. As mentioned before, one type of femininity stressed women's stable moods and their abundant experiences in life. In most cases, they appeared as clever and capable career women and in their thirties, forties, and fifties. Perhaps the similarity between the kind of femininity represented by this group of women and the ideal masculinities is due to the influence of revolutionary legends, such as "Iron Maidens", in the 1960s-70s. But, it is clear that the re-definition of male and female beauty, and the re-creation of masculinity and femininity in the 1980s-90s did not go in entirely different directions. There are some ambiguous and contested spaces to negotiate. The discussions and debates of the emergence of more successful businesswomen in contemporary times is a typical example. Some people regarded them as a male-like woman, while others believed they had their own type of feminine strategies to become successful.

Furthermore, men and women shared some, if not all, methods and ways to become beautiful in the 1980s-90s. On the one hand, dressing well was a chief requirement of male and female beauty. It demanded good taste in attire, smart selections of accessories, and a masterful coordination of color. The Beauty Column offered instructions for both men and women to pick clothes and adornments based on their bodily shapes, age, occupations, inner personalities, particular context, and the change of seasons. One article proposed ten common mistakes of Chinese men

wearing western suits.<sup>113</sup> Quoting the words from French dress designer Pierre Cardin, the article suggested correct ways to wear blouses, suit jackets, trousers, and shoes. For instance, the neckband of a blouse was not supposed to be open widely, the sleeves of the suit ought to be shorter than that of the blouse, and the crotch should neither be too tight nor too loose. On the other hand, as new technology appeared in mainland China in the 1980s-90s, plastic surgery applied to men and women who decided to beautify their outward appearances quickly and thoroughly. The main services include nose re-shaping, the double eyelid operation, breast surgery, and face-lifts. Although men and women might emphasize different effects of the surgeries due to physical difference, plastic surgery as a way of becoming beautiful was not necessarily gendered.

Except for the two methods of beautification mentioned above, female beauty could be achieved through other methods, such as using skin care products, applying cosmetics, drinking traditional Chinese medicine, and engaging in regular exercise. Yet these methods are not specified in articles about male beauty. Just as the amount of articles about female beauty far exceeded that of articles about male beauty, male beautification developed at a low level in the 1980s-90s. However, the few articles about male beauty in the Beauty Column did open a new possible space for men to beautify themselves. Men were allowed to take an interest in clothing and plastic surgery. These possibilities provided the foothold of, the popularity of "flower men," and men's choices of applying light cosmetics in everyday life.

### **Three Types of Male Uneasiness and Desire**

Male beauty, as a newly created representation of Chinese masculinity in the 1980s-90s, implied a series of complex thoughts and emotions among male (as well as female) officials, editors, intellectuals, readers, and customers. When heroic models in the revolutionary period suddenly vanished in post-Mao China, many questions related to the re-definition of men and masculinity in the new historical circumstances

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<sup>113</sup> Xiao Ping 晓坪, "Nanshi zhuozhuang de shi da tongbing," 男士着装的十大通病 [Ten common mistakes of wearing men's attire] *Zhiyin* (March 1996): 19.

appeared in the public sphere. The mid-1980s was a particular time when those questions became hotly disputed. In 1985, *Zhiyin* magazine, as a semi-official popular publication, started to provide comments and suggestions toward the issue of male beauty. According to our previous discussions, male beauty was not a fixed concept in the 1980s-90s that was simply the opposite of female beauty. Instead, it was found to be variously based on male age, personality, occupation, and the change of season, and social context. By instructing proper ways to achieve male beauty, the magazine gave a strong hint as to what men were worried about in the 1980s-90s, including their outward appearances, their relationships with women, and their abilities to adapt to a new value system.

First and foremost, men were uneasy and anxious about the beautification of their outward appearances. This anxiety is for mainly two reasons. Both reasons suggested the rejection of the ideologies shaped during the revolutionary period. The first reason refers to the necessity for men to accept Western ways of dressing. Present historical materials prove that plain blue jackets, trousers, and black cotton shoes were the main attire people wore in the Mao era. In the Cultural Revolution, military uniforms became extremely popular due to the high status of the People's Liberation Army as elevated by Chairman Mao. Wearing military uniforms at that time was considered a glorious sign that indicated an individual's high political consciousness and enthusiasm for the Chinese revolution. However, following the end of the Cultural Revolution in the late 1970s, the aura that surrounded the military uniform dispersed.

In addition to this, various western and Japanese fashionable clothes came into Chinese market due to the Open Policy started in 1978. Men (as well as women) began to come into contact with new styles of clothes, such as western suits, T-shirts, blouses, jeans, and leather shoes. This sharp transition in people's daily attire resulted to the fact that many men were worried about the methods in which to dress in these new clothes. One example was the wearing of male western suits. In 1996, *Zhiyin* magazine published an article to correct men's present ideas of wearing Western suits. As mentioned, the article used French dress designer Pierre Cardin's opinions as the

criteria to judge if men wore the western suit successfully or not. The ten common mistakes listed by the writer concerned the sizes of blouse and trousers, the lengths of sleeves and trouser legs, the color of the tie, the material of the jacket, and the style of leather shoes.<sup>114</sup> The adoption of western designers' vocabulary increased the authority of the content. By emphasizing the importance of wearing western suits properly and correctly, the article indicated the difficulties and problems Chinese men faced in the transition of their clothing.

The second aspect of male anxiety was toward the adoption of female beauty accessories that were traditionally used only for female beauty, such as wearing decorated rings, necklaces, earrings, and chain bracelets. As I argued in the previous section, society endowed male and female beauty with various meanings. Men and women have equal rights to pursue beauty, and the methods of becoming beautiful (for males and females) overlapped. Men, as a diverse group, were allowed to wear accessories and undergo plastic surgery in the 1980s-90s. Similar to women, they were also instructed by the magazine to choose the most suitable type of adornments and surgeries for themselves.<sup>115</sup> Such behavior reflected the change of the criteria of beauty from the Maoist to the post-Maoist era. The abandonment of personal adornments, the popularity of the military uniform, and the propaganda of heroic images of Iron Girls (*tie guniang*), in the 1960s-70s showed that the revolutionary beauty was austere, plain, disciplined, and hard-working. These characteristics indicated that the concept of beauty in the revolutionary period tended to move toward a kind of masculinized beauty. As Emily Honig argues, both men and women were taught to be male-like in both appearance and action during the Mao era.<sup>116</sup> It was a kind of beauty that was gendered male. It was a rejection of both exaggerated feminine and the New Culture "dandy."

At the same time, the similar methods for beautification adopted by men and women in the 1980s-90s implied a deep cultural anxiety of men. When the Cultural Revolution ended in the late 1970s, a group of young writers, namely Lu Xinhua, Liu

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<sup>114</sup> Xiao Ping, 19.

<sup>115</sup> Zhu, 41; Li, 19.

<sup>116</sup> Honig, 265-266.

Xinwu, Cong Weixi, Feng Jicai, and Ye Xin began to write novels about their physical and mental scars in the past two decades as "young intellectuals" (*zhiqing*, 知青). These works are called "Scar Literature" (*shanghen wenxue*, 伤痕文学) by later generations. They revealed how badly these "young intellectuals" were treated in the rural areas during the Cultural Revolution. In their novels, the state is represented a masculine power who tried to feminize Chinese men.

Since the mid-1980s, another form of literature, the so-called "Seeking Roots Literature" (*xungen wenxue*, 寻根文学), appeared to re-evaluate Chinese traditional culture. A new group of intellectuals who also experienced the Culture Revolution, namely Han Shaogong, A Cheng, Jia Pingwa, Wang Anyi, and Mo Yan, emerged in the public sphere. To defeat the hegemonic Western culture in literature was one of their aspirations. Their main goal was to search for the roots of Chinese manhood in traditional culture rather than continually follow the discipline of the CCP in the reform era. Literary works at this time used the original and even brutal culture in border areas to represent the masculinity of Chinese culture as well as Chinese men. A typical example is Mo Yan's novel *Red Sorghum* (*Hong gaoliang*, 红高粱), which was adapted into a film by Zhang Yimou. The search of Chinese masculinity in the literary sphere does not surprise scholars and students who have basic knowledge of modern China.

However, I would like to make a point here that this is just one of the many ways to define and explore masculinity in the 1980s-90s. This study reveals that male beauty could represent an alternative choice of seeking manhood. *Zhiyin* magazine basically held a positive attitude toward western items and technology, and attempted to include these new elements in the shape of masculinity. This seems to be common and popular way for men, especially for those living in urban areas to accept. Meanwhile, men's pursuits of beauty that promoted by the magazine could also be seen as a critical response to the masculine-oriented culture in the 1960s-70s. Male beauty in the 1980s-90s blurred the boundary of masculinity and femininity, and set the foundation for a feminized masculinity represented by the flower men of today.

Secondly, the articles about male beauty in *Zhiyin* magazine implied men's

anxiety about romantic relationships with women. A key point was who was likely to play the leading role in the day-to-day practice of male beauty. The magazine endowed men with rights to pursue beauty, and the form of male beauty varied from one man to another. Yet male beauty, by definition, was not a concept without limits. As discussed previously, these limits were shown in the relation between male and female beauty, and the various factors that should be considered when a man tried to navigate new conceptions of beauty. Since people need to make decisions in accordance with specific contexts, most articles in the Beauty Column merely provided a general idea of male beautification in theory. However, how these theories would work in daily practice was unknown. We do not know how much credence readers gave to the ideas of those articles, what methods readers would like to choose to practice male beauty, and to what extent readers understood themselves and the one who they might help to dress.

All of these unknown facts relate to the essential question of the readership of *Zhiyin* magazine, especially those of the Beauty Column. Two facts give us a quick impression that the Beauty Column was organized mainly for women rather than men. The first fact is that the magazine as a whole was sponsored by the Women's Federation of Hubei province. As an affiliate of the Women's Federation, the magazine tended to put more focus on female issues, including their physical condition, emotions, feelings, home life, and beauty. Such preferences were shown by the second fact that the number of articles concerning female beauty in the Beauty Column was greater than articles about male beauty. From 1987 to 2000, only three of them talked about male beauty. The rest articles were more likely to attract female readers rather than male ones.

When women as mothers, girlfriends, and wives read articles about male beauty in the magazine, a possible outcome was that they would likely put those theories into practice. They would choose proper clothing for their sons, boyfriends, husbands, and other male relatives in daily life. In this sense, the day-to-day practice of male beauty was to be conducted and determined by women rather than men in the 1980s-90s. Besides, the fundamentals of male beauty devised by the magazine should not go

beyond what female readers would accept. The newly created male beauty on the one hand helped women to understand the new criteria of an ideal man after the Cultural Revolution; on the other hand, it indicated that male beauty needed to be achieved through fulfilling women's expectations.

As mentioned previously, some basic elements of male beauty referred to clean exterior, polite conduct, and mature mentality. These characteristics could also be seen in the novels written by female writers around the same period. Chen Ran's 1995 novel *Potential Sexual Affair* (*Qianxing yishi*, 潜性逸事) is a typical example.<sup>117</sup> The story centers on a couple, Yüzi and her husband. The husband was born and grew up in the Maoist era while Yüzi is much younger. Their age gap causes many problems. The novel reveals Yüzi's dissatisfaction and sometimes anger with her husband's old habits such as chewing his food loudly, picking up stale fruit and vegetables every day, and refusing to spend money outside the home. Yüzi feels quite lonely in the marriage and continually pondered over the meaning of life. It is noteworthy that the ideal man in her imagination should be gentle, decent, kind, and a little bit romantic.

Then, can we make a conclusion here that the Beauty Column of *Zhiyin* magazine promoted women's autonomy by using men's beauty as a way to image women's new roles and expectations. As discussed, the Women's Federation of Hubei province was the main sponsor of the magazine. Yet both the chairman of the editing committee Hu Xunbi and the executive editor Hao Peiwen were men. Because they held the responsibility for the magazine's profits and losses, these two men played a more essential role in selecting and editing articles in daily publication. Meanwhile, many articles in the Beauty Column were written by writers who have male names, such as Zhao Bing, Zhang Ruipeng, Gu Li, Wang Mingkui, A Li, and Tian Xu. Considering the possibility that many writers used their pen names to write, it is hard for us to justify whether these writers were men or women. But in some cases, writers adopted male perspective directly or indirectly when they discussed female beauty. An article written by Tian Xu in 1993 recorded a couple's conversation about female

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<sup>117</sup> Ran Chen 陈染, *Qianxing yishi* 潜性逸事 [Potential Sexual Affair] (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 1995).

clothing.<sup>118</sup> In the conversation, the wife played the student's role and asked questions and spoke her opinions at first, while the husband always refuted his wife's opinions and proposed his own ideas to persuade and educate his wife. The husband had three main arguments: ugly women were better not to wear colorful clothes; fat women might not wear tight, light-color clothes; and women should keep calm in choosing their attire rather than blindly following fashion trends. We may understand this article as a retort made by men, or as a satisfaction to female readers who wanted to know men's opinions toward female beauty. It also represents a new kind of intimacy and shared consumerism between husband and wife. However in general the magazine tried to show good communication rather than potential struggle between men and women on the issue of beauty.

Thirdly, the articles about male beauty in *Zhiyin* magazine suggested men's anxiety regarding the creation of a new society. The change of political views from communism to socialism with Chinese characteristics, and the shift of the economy from collectivism toward a more open market economy, had great impact on social structure and people's everyday life. In such circumstances, people's understandings of concepts such as gender, masculinity, and femininity changed over time as well. It is at a time like this that anxious feelings toward the creation of a new social value system appeared. Articles about male beauty in the Beauty Column focused on such anxieties of men. Two kinds of male worries were reflected in the articles through the day-to-day practice of male beauty.

The first kind of anxiety refers to the ever-increasing social emphasis on appearance. The article about male plastic surgery stated two causes for why men want to change their exteriors. One cause related to men's relationship with women. Young men hoped to become attractive so as to find beautiful girlfriends; while middle-aged and elder men wished to look younger in order to save their marriages. Exterior beautification came to be a crucial way to display men's charms in private sphere. Another cause concerned men's career in public places. A good-looking man

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<sup>118</sup> Tian Xu 田虚, "Yu qi tan zhuozhuang,"与妻谈着装[Talking about dressing with wife] *Zhiyin* (August 1993): 54.

seemed to have a much easier life than men with plain features in order to find jobs, get promotions, and gain appreciation by supervisors as well as customers. The article did not provide detailed information about the criteria to judge a man's appearance, but it showed that many men started to know the importance of their exterior impressions to other people.<sup>119</sup> During the Maoist era, "class" was a decisive factor that influenced people's selection of marriage and career. For instance, many young intellectuals who had been sent to the countryside in the 1960s-70s chose to marry local villagers.<sup>120</sup> People came from poor peasant and working-class backgrounds were endowed with leading positions in the *danwei* 单位 system. But in the 1980s-90s, the concept of class lost its decisive power in the state discourse. Outward appearance became one of the new signs to affect marriage and job-hunting.

The above two causes were connected since a man who was in a high position tended to be more attractive to women. Such connection pointed toward the second kind of men's anxiety: the great necessity of making money. The rise of the market economy resulted in a new value system, whereby the former heroes of the collective era gave way to new heroes, such as pop stars, businessmen, sports athletes, and professionals in academic sphere. They shared a common point, that is, the ability to earn more money than regular people. They were perceived as the repository of talent, intelligence, and competence that situated on the top level of the new society. They have spacious homes and luxurious cars, they ate expensive meals and dressed in high-quality clothing. The admiration of these chosen people inspired men (as well as women) to change their fates through achieving great success in workplace. And daily beautification is one of its necessary elements.

### Conclusion

This chapter investigates the discourse of male beauty as one of the

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<sup>119</sup> Zhu, 41.

<sup>120</sup> The political marriage causes many social problems after the Cultural Revolution. A famous TV drama called *Nie Zhai* 孽债 [Sin and Debt] in 1995 reveals the dilemma the generation of young intellectuals who had been sent to the countryside. Some of them go back to the cities and re-marry with urban people after the Cultural Revolution. But when children from their previous political marriages come to cities and find them, the generation of young intellectuals faced the difficulty to deal with their previous children.

manifestations of masculinity exposed by *Zhiyin* magazine. Situated in a period of change, male beauty was created by various factors and its meaning diversified from person to person. Outward appearance comprised a significant proportion for us to understand male beauty in the reform era. It revealed the new criteria of male beauty in a visible way. Men's clean, fresh, decent, generous, gracious, concise, and natural characters could be seen directly by their choices of hairstyle, attire, accessories and shoes. While at the same time, the study of male beauty in this chapter touches upon deeper issues. These issues include the new approaches to analyze beauty besides gender, the new definitions of masculinity and femininity, and men's anxieties toward themselves, their families, and the newly created society. Overall, my hope is to understand male beauty as a fluid and assorted concept that stood at an important crossroads in modern Chinese history.

## CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

This thesis explores a new appreciation of the concept of beauty by the semi-official *Zhiyin* magazine in the 1980s-90s. The study focuses on three discourses of beauty, including individual beauty, natural beauty, and male beauty. Individual beauty was a buzzword that indicated the magazine's affirmative attitude toward the individualization of beauty. Natural beauty stemmed from the magazine's promotion of natural beautification methods as the antithesis of imported overpriced cosmetic products and technologies. Male beauty appeared in a few articles of the magazine that shifted people's idea of beauty as a gendered term. It is worth noting that articles in the Beauty Column of *Zhiyin* magazine were not classified according to the three discourses of beauty. Instead, the three discourses of beauty were interrelated and interacted on each other. For example, articles that concerned the beautification of men emphasized the variety of beautification methods should be selected based upon personal characteristics. The advertisement of natural beauty reflected the magazine's ambiguity to the introduction of global cosmetic knowledge as an effective way to realize individual beauty through the expansion of people's selections. In this regard, although the three discourses of beauty in this study are discussed separately, their interactions should not be ignored.

This thesis attempts to make three suggestions on the future research of beauty in modern Chinese history. The first suggestion refers to the study of beauty in a historical network. Commonly acknowledged as a product of popular culture, beauty's historical meaning has hardly touched by scholars. Accompanied with the change of social and political backgrounds, the term beauty has been defined and represented variously over time. This study argues that beauty is a topic that has been discussed continually in twentieth century China. Beauty in the 1980s-90s was neither a mimic of *Jianmei* in the 1920s-40s nor a new concept for Chinese people who grew up in the Maoist era.

The second suggestion points to a non-gendered direction of the study of beauty. Previous studies tended to equate the discussion of beauty with the study of women. The study of *Zhiyin* magazine calls our attention to both female and male

beautification activities. Although the standard and practice of female and male beauty might be not exactly the same, male desires of becoming beautiful should not be overlooked. More importantly, this study argues that gender is not the only angle to discuss beauty. As a complex historical site, beauty can be judged by age, occupation, personality, marital status, and social circumstance.

The third suggestion is the idea of using beauty as a perspective to study other historical issues. Beauty is not only the subject of this thesis but also a viewpoint through which various topics are explored, including the rise of individualism, the re-evaluation of household, the encouragement of popular consumption, and the re-categorization of femininity and masculinity in the 1980s-90s. The discussion of beauty in this study not only tie these issues together but also provide some new recognitions of these issues.

The content of the Beauty Column of *Zhiyin* magazine is quite rich. In addition to the three discourse of beauty that are mentioned in this thesis, scholars may find many other angels to investigate the new awakening of beauty in the 1980s-90s. At the same time, future research can make a comparative study of *Zhiyin* magazine and other popular publications appeared around the same period.

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