Simone de Beauvoir in Taiwan’s Popular Media—Politics of Freedom and Lifestyle

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This essay is work in progress. It is a reflection on the intersection between media and the production of a feminist subject, between cultural practices, social organizations, and power.

The site of intervention is Simone de Beauvoir in popular media. I often encounter Beauvoir in coffee advertisements, posted at different sites, including women’s magazines, internet, TV commercials, and even on buses and mass transit system. Since I have done some work on media feminism, this encounter is quite fascinating to me for it offers an exemplary case on how feminism is used, appropriated, and packaged as a commodity to be sold to the “quality” female consumers—defined by the advertising agency as the group of 20-35 year-old, college educated, career women. However, as many women see this type of advertisement as speaking to their hearts and as an improvement over the images of “traditional woman,” I begin to feel discontented with the language of commodity feminism. The notion of commodity feminism assumes the parasitic nature of media feminism and the “original” character of academic feminism or feminist activism. Commodity feminism, while offering a critique of capitalism’s power to co-opt alternative politics, also privileges the space of feminists working in the academic and
social movements. It forecloses concerns about issues of the shaping of
the self through affective attachments. The (critical) feminist self always
stands above the masses while (consuming) women’s selves are
corrupted by commercialism. Here lies the difficulty of analyzing this
phenomenon of media feminism--how to think about these ads without
falling into the trap of dividing the line between us (academics) and
them (female consumers), while at the same time maintain a critical
spirit to capitalism.

Rather than explore how academic feminism gets appropriated in
the commercial space, I want to use a different set of theoretical tools to
analyze popular media’s uses of feminism in Taiwan. I want to shift the
focus to the production and organization of women’s selves in
contemporary culture. The notion of the production and organization
of the self prioritizes, on the one hand, the unstable, contingent, and
transitory character of the self, on the other hand, the systematic of the
social in organizing social subjects that are governable and self-
governing. This way of conceptualizing the self avoids the pitfalls that
commodity feminism holds in believing the purity of an academic
feminist self and a corrupted other, while insisting on the notion of
power/systematic in the structuring of the self as well as desire. I find
the theoretical notion of ordering, proposed by Kendall and Wickham,
useful here in thinking about the organization of self through cultural
practices.

Kendall and Wickham suggest ordering as an organizing principle
for cultural studies. Ordering is loosely defined as control or
management. Rather than conceptualize ordering in negative terms such
as domination (though this can be one dimension of ordering, but not
necessarily), Kendall and Wickham suggest that ordering is part of
living in the world. We know and live the world through ordering:
"Ordering is not merely constraint—ordering is productive as well as
constraining. In this way, objects are constituted as objects, they
actually become objects, through being addresses by an ordering practice—objects are objects through being ordered.”

Our relationship with objects and with the world is the result of ordering practices and that relationship is also part of the ordering projects. Moreover, “every ordering practice is itself subject to ordering.” Society is formed through different systems of ordering practices, but “there is no need to posit an original level for ordering: no such level is required and there are not even any levels of ordering and ordering systems, though hierarchies and patterns may be formed temporarily.”

Though society attempts at complete control, at achieving order through ordering, but total control is never achieved. Ordering is always in process and therefore, always in the becoming, and is always going somewhere. However, patterns can be found in “social and organizational ordering” where different ordering projects intersect. Groups of ordering projects come together to form modes of ordering. Modes of ordering are “stories about the self and the world, the way the self was, the way it is and the way it ought to be, but definitely not pools of total ordering.” Narratives of ordering form “patterns in contingency” and these patterns are “imputed to the sociotechnical networks.” But these modes are “more than these stories about the world”. They are “performed and embedded” in concrete mechanisms, which form the material world.

I route through Kendall and Wickham’s notion of ordering as a detour to understand the use of Beauvoir in Taiwan’s popular media as a

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3 Ibid. P.46
4 Ibid. P.42.
5 Ibid. P.42.
form of ordering: on the one hand, the stories of Beauvoir are created as part of ordering projects to regulate consumer desire and shape female consumers’ selves; on the other hand, this ordering narrative about Beauvoir is itself the product of ordering by advertising agencies which also circulate stories about female consumers. Hence, stories of Beauvoir are connected to stories about female consumers. But these stories are not only the tools and the outcome of ordering, they are also performed, embedded in concrete mechanisms, such as TV commercials and advertising agencies.

In this essay, I will start with a description of the stories of Beauvoir in Taiwan’s popular media, then, I will move on to other ordering stories that produce these Beauvoir stories. In moving to other stories, I want to show that these stories are connected and performed in concrete mechanisms. At the end, I want to show that stories form patterns; these are patterns in contingency, not a priori patterns. These contingent patterns are formed in this particular historical juncture, along with other ordering projects, to sustain a notion of the self that is autonomous and free. The stories about a free and autonomous self, while connected to stories about lifestyle that are in turn created by advertising agencies, form a larger story about individual choice. This story is quite powerful in contemporary society and is intrinsic to the functioning of capitalism. For one, within the realm of consumption, one’s choice to a particular lifestyle is exercised through one’s consuming practices. Hence, this essay ends with a discussion on freedom and choice as contextual as a different ordering practice to counter the dominant ordering practice in popular media.

**Simone de Beauvoir and Left Bank coffee.**

I will now offer a description about my encounters with Simone de Beauvoir. As I said earlier, Beauvoir’s stories are told in different media spaces, including TV commercials, buses, MRT, internet space,
women's magazines, and music stores (CDs). All these stories circulated in contemporary media space are produced by Left Bank coffee. I will choose two ads to illustrate how Beauvoir is presented in popular media.

(Advertisement for Left Bank Coffee, Non-no Magazine, June 2000)

I've encountered this ad in many different occasions: when I browse through women's magazines, surf on the internet, take a bus in Kaohsiung, and take MRT in Taipei. This advertisement features a woman in her twenties or thirties, alone, reading a book in a coffee house. She, with her cup of coffee on the table in front of her, is positioned on the upper-right corner of the picture. This diagonally structured composition allows us to feel her alone-ness (she is not

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6 Left Bank Coffee is the brand-name for 左岸咖啡, it refers to the left bank of the Seine River.
placed at the center of the picture); however, without diverting our attention away from her. At the same time, the camera position (from bottom left to top right) also allows us to view the décor of the coffeehouse—framed paintings on the walls as well as other empty seats. The black and white color conveys a sense of timelessness, and the still image, tranquility. The bottom part of this ad is a poem written on a piece of paper with coffee stain on the left top to indicate that it is conducted in a coffee shop, probably by the woman in the picture. On the bottom of the right corner is the brand mark—Left Bank Coffee House (左岸咖啡馆). The linguistic code reads:

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「She is leaving Paris again
（她又要離開巴黎了）」

They say women should not travel alone
（人們說女子不宜獨自旅行）

「She brings with her an unfinished book
（她帶著一本未完成的書）」

A kind of feminine writing
（那是一種陰性氣質的書寫）

「She drinks Latte... coffee: milk 1:1
（她喝著拿鐵... 咖啡牛奶, 1:1）」

Sweetly proves that the second sex is, nonexistent
（甜美地證明著第二性，不存在）

「The aroma continuously flows from her to me... Not just the aroma of coffee
（那香味不斷地從她流向我……絕不只有咖啡香）」

This is in 1908; women have become a primary gender
（這是1908年中的一天，女性成為一種主要性別）

「She is Simone de Beauvoir, we are both travelers, encountering each other at Left Bank Coffee House
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This is a story about Beauvoir, about modern women (who are being interpellated as consumers), about their encounter, about feminism, and about coffee consumption. Here, Beauvoir is presented as a “feminist” who travels, writes books, drinks coffee. Her feminism is about independence (traveling alone) and gender equality (1:1). It is also about refusing to be the second sex and celebrating the feminine (feminine writing). As with the image, the subject position created in the text is also a third person point of view, a story about Simone de Beauvoir. This third person point of view allows the readers to have an omniscient view of Beauvoir—a view carefully constructed to convey a sense of being independent, literary, and feminine. At the end of the text, an encounter with Beauvoir transforms the I (the woman in the picture) into Beauvoir. The gap between the text (she is Simone de Beauvoir) and the image (a faceless woman, but definitely not Beauvoir) also creates an ambiguity/fluidity in the meaning “she,” which allows the reader to interpret that the she in the text can be Simone de Beauvoir or the I in the text (which is assumed to be the subject position created for any woman who chooses the same lifestyle and belief). In other words, this fluidity creates a space for the readers to freely choose (or not) to be the she in the text/image.
The second advertisement I am analyzing here is from the cover of a CD, *Rendez Vous: Quintetto Accento & Farfarello*, produced by Jingo Records (金格唱片). In this picture, the notion of “Left Bank” is literal—river on the right side and bank on the left, with trees lining along the left of the bank and boats harboring between the bank and the river. At the end of the river and the bank and along the right side of the river are Western style buildings. The balanced composition (with boats forming a diagonal line stretching from right bottom to left top, which intersect with two lines, formed by trees and buildings respectively, at the background) gives us a sense of tranquility, calmness, and eternality. A variation of brown color is employed here to sedate the viewer. In the foreground, a couple, hand in hand, walk along the bank toward the vanishing point. The linguistic code, placed in the foreground, reads: “In the beginning of the 20th century, Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir developed their love here; in the beginning of the 21st century, you and I meet here under the shadow and light of the river bank.”

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of this CD features the same picture, however, with the middle and background cut out, leaving the couple strolling along the Left Bank. The linguistic code placed at the top, in bold, and large font, reads: “Left Bank can be a book, a painting, a cup of coffee, or a piece of music.” Different from the first picture I analyze, the message here is about the promise of heterosexual encounter, the promise of eternal love and romance and its associated meaning of transcending earthly affairs and time constraints.

Both of the stories about Beauvoir—one emphasizes Beauvoir’s feminism and the other, Beauvoir’s love with Sartre—present Beauvoir in terms of lifestyle. The first ad addresses Beauvoir as a woman traveler, who writes and reads in coffee shops, who is not afraid of breaking conventions, who drinks coffee and believes in gender equality, but that belief in gender equality does not deprive her of her femininity. Here, feminism operates as a particular lifestyle, not as a political philosophy that theorizes women’s subordination to men (through a discussion on gender as socially constructed as Beauvoir does in many of her writings). Nor does feminism function as a political movement or strategy that aims to change patriarchal structure. The second ad emphasizes Beauvoir’s love with Sartre, however, that romantic love is presented as strolling around the river bank—a lifestyle choice—not as reflections on the structural as well as psychological difficulties of love, jealousy, and monogamy that occupy Beauvoir’s writings.

**Other Stories About Beauvoir**

These two stories of Beauvoir are connected to other stories about Beauvoir that have been circulating around in different sites. In this
section, I will describe how Beauvoir is translated, marketed, and sold to the public for these stories not only form our understanding about Beauvoir but also inform us about how Beauvoir is used as a form of ordering. The material I am looking at largely comes from two sources—newspapers that invoke Beauvoir and promotional blurbs that aim to sell Beauvoir's writings (these two do overlap, too). Before I dive into the detailed descriptions about contemporary use of Beauvoir, I would like to say a few words about the first introduction/translation of Beauvoir into Taiwan in the 1970s for this translation has much bearing on the later interpretations of Beauvoir.

Beauvoir is first introduced to Taiwan through the translation of her groundbreaking book, The Second Sex, in 1972. In this translated version, the first part, "Facts and Myths," a theoretical explication on women's oppression is eliminated, leaving only the second part. The decision is made on the basis that the second part: "does not have lengthy preachings, nor complex academic theories. Instead, it describes in detail women's real experiences and real conditions from childhood to old age." In 1992 when the same translated version was reprinted,

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9 The first translation of The Second Sex (which is still the most popular version in Taiwan) was translated by 歐陽子 and 王愈靜 in 1972 by 晨鐘新刊. It was republished by 志文 publications in 1992. This Chinese version was translated from the English version, translated by H.M. Parshley. The Parshley version is by now notorious for its distortion and elimination of Beauvoir's more radical ideas (Moi). In translating from the English version, Parshley's biased interpretations are also translated. Moreover, the Chinese version eliminates the first part on theoretical formulations, and leaves only the second part which emphasizes the difficulties women encounter in their lives (歐陽子, 1972, p.2).

10 From Translators' Introduction to The Second Sex. Original quotes: "此集沒有冗長的說教，也沒有艱深的學術理論，卻詳細分析說明女人自童年到老年的實際經歷，實際處境" (歐陽子1972, p2).
United Daily News promoted the book as “the first declaration on women’s emancipation” (「解放女性的首次宣言」) which explores the different dimensions of women’s intellect, body, and mind, including women’s first menstruation, love, sexual experiences, first wedding night, their relationship with their parents, their role as housewives, as well as the biological differences between men and women, their different attitudes toward love and sexual desire. Moreover, issues such as abortion, prostitution and homosexuality are discussed. Given this decision about what to translate and what to exclude, as well as what to emphasize in interpreting a book, it can be concluded that the structuring principle of inclusion and exclusion in interpreting and translating The Second Sex is understood in Taiwan’s context through the notion of biographical trajectory or life experiences.

This particular emphasis on autobiography is connected to other stories about Beauvoir, which accentuate her ambiguous identity as a feminist and her relationship with Sartre. The dominant interpretation of Beauvoir through the lens of her autobiography is informed by this ideological selection: on the one hand, she is constructed as the icon, the “mother” of feminism, but refuses to be labeled as such until much later in life; on the other hand, she attributes all her ideas and achievements to the enlightenment of Sartre, and publicly romanticizes/mythologizes her relationship with Sartre. The translation of Beauvoir in Taiwan’s popular media operates along these two axis—the 1:1 Latte feminism.


12 The particular version of feminism articulated by Left Bank coffee is contradictory in the sense that it emphasizes 1:1, a liberal rhetoric which points out that women and men are the same, hence, should enjoy equal rights. But on the other hand, it also celebrates femininity, which is predicated on a notion of feminine difference, not sameness. I have pointed out elsewhere that this contradiction can only be sustained when feminism
and heterosexual romance, with an emphasis on lifestyle choice.

In terms of feminism, the book *The Second Sex* has been reduced to the term "the second sex," which indicates a ranking in gender power. Phrases such as "women are the second sex," or "women are no longer the second sex in contemporary society," or "women do not want to be the second sex, but the first sex" abound in popular media. For example, "French feminist Simone de Beauvoir wrote ‘The Second Sex’ for women, American sociologist Mike Broom called career women ‘the third sex.’ But women today do not care much about what these two people say. No matter it is the second, third, fourth or fifth sex, it can not take into account all the different faces of women. I believe many smart women know, without expressing so, that they are the first sex."¹³

In addition, terms associated with the book that are often invoked in popular media such as "women want equality" or "women are not born but become women" are also reduced to jargons or catchphrases to grasp the attention of consumers for quick consumption—neither philosophical discussions nor systematic investigations of women’s lived experiences are offered.

The notion of gender equality that informs media’s construction of Beauvoir’s feminism is manifested in the construction of Beauvoir as a traveler—a woman who defies patriarchal social conventions and travels alone to other countries. In many travel reports on coffee shops along the Seine River, Beauvoir’s name is invoked—she has become part of the history, along with other literary figures such as Sartre and Hemingway, of the coffee shops she used to hang out with: "Existentialists such as Camus, Sartre, and Beauvoir hang out in coffee shops as if they were staying at their own home, producing great works becomes a lifestyle choice, not politics. 

much admired by young people but misunderstood by conservatives."14

Through this invention of coffee shop history through literary figures, coffee, coffee shops, literature, and art are articulated to form a notion of artistic-ness that is dissociated from the drudgeries of everyday life, but is connected to the great traditions of culture. For example, “coffee inspires the writing of literary works and coffee shops provide free spaces for writing. The coffee shops in Paris can be called the fortress of literature and art...”15 Hence, essays such as “Paris Love and Aromatic Coffee,”16 “Literary Flavored Coffee,”17 “The Aroma of Coffee Flows Through Long History,”18 and “Tasting Paris’ Romance”19 populated media coverage on travel reports. This interpretation of Beauvoir as a traveler, a writer, and a coffee drinker is filtered through the ideology of individualism, with its resultant emphasis on autobiography and lifestyle.

This ideology determines the selective translation of Beauvoir’s books, which further contributes to the understanding of Beauvoir as a woman who lives a desirable lifestyle. If we look at Beauvoir’s books that are translated into Chinese—Lettres à Nelson Algren (越洋情書)、告別式（與沙特對話）、L’Amérique Au Jour Le Jour （西蒙波娃美國紀行） and The Second Sex （第二性）—and the

promotional blurbs that frame the interpretations of these books, we find that it is Beauvoir’s lifestyle choices—in particular, her traveling experiences and her love life that have become the center of media attention. With Sartre, their love is eternal and intellectual: “knowing and loving each other for half a century, Beauvoir and Sartre have composed an eternal poetic romance. Beauvoir and Sartre are a perfect match intellectually, they shared same views toward love.” With Algren, it is passionate love: “this book (Lettres à Nelson Algren) presents one aspect of Beauvoir that is rarely seen: her passionate love, humble behavior, and unbelievably ‘small womanism.’” However, in most media coverage, it is Beauvoir’s love with Sartre, framed as intellectual, eternal, romantic, and poetic, that is venerated, despite Sartre’s relationships with many women.

These “other stories” about Beauvoir are all about interpreting Beauvoir’s autobiography through her choice of lifestyle. Venuti points out that translation forms domestic subjects, that is, the books we choose to translate, the way we translate are filtered through the lens of ideology most acceptable to the domestic subjects. In doing so, translation interpellates and forms domestic subjects. In introducing a feminist figure such as Beauvoir to Taiwan, we find that it is Beauvoir’s

21 Chen, Yu-hui (陳玉慧). “The Publication of Simone de Beauvoir’s Book on ‘A Small Woman’” (西蒙波娃「小女人」的書面世). United Daily News. 4-6-1997. This essay states how Beauvoir, as a feminist, belittles herself for the love of Algren. “Small womanism” here refers to the kind of thoughts (−ism) that subordinate women to men for love, as opposed to The Second Sex which advocates gender equality.
autobiography interpreted through the lens of lifestyle choice that gets translated; leaving out her painstakingly articulated existential feminism. Furthermore, this autobiographical understanding about Beauvoir informs the production of Beauvoir’s other stories; however, no matter it is the feminist Beauvoir or the romantic Beauvoir, it is her choice of a particular lifestyle—traveling, drinking coffee, hanging out in cafes, choosing Sartre as her lifelong companion—that gets emphasized in media.

This intertextual understanding of Beauvoir allows us to put the Left Bank’s ads in a bigger picture—this dominant interpretation of Beauvoir through autobiography (rather than politics and philosophy) in popular media informs the production of Left Bank coffee and allows Left Bank to play with the ambiguity between feminism and romance, but within the intelligibility of consumerism and lifestyle choice. If as Kendal and Wickham suggests, stories about the world are modes of ordering and patterns found among stories reveal society’s attempts to order, then what I am describing here suggests that, the different stories produced at different sites, from Left Bank coffee ads to publishing houses, Beauvoir’s stories consistently follow the pattern which can be explained through the notion of lifestyle choice. However, as Kendall and Wickham point out, stories are only part of ordering practices; stories are performed and embedded in concrete materiality. Here, I will to move to a different site to explore the concrete mechanisms that manufacture Beauvoir’s stories—I move to the site of advertising agency to explore Left Bank’s choice of telling Beauvoir’s storie.

Producing Beauvoir Stories

In this section, I will focus on how Left Bank Coffee makes the decision to produce coffee stories featuring Beauvoir. At the time President Company decided to launch a new coffee product in 1996, Mr. Brown coffee dominated the canned coffee market. Mr. Brown Coffee,
as its name indicated, was sold mostly to male consumers. Product differentiation is the first strategy to create a new niche. To differentiate from the “short and fat” Mr. Brown can coffee, President Co. went for the tall and slim plastic bottle tailoring to urban female consumers and named it Left Bank Coffee House (the left bank of Seine River in Paris). This name aims to distinguish itself from the more masculine, local spirit that Mr. Brown coffee conveys: “environmental awareness” (「重視環保」) and “reviving the vitality of local music” (「重新展現本土傳統音樂生命力」). Many people attribute Left Bank’s success to its branding strategy. The name Left Bank Coffee House allows President Co. to create meanings associated with all the products sold in a coffee house than just a particular product. As a result, Left Bank was able to sell products other than coffee, such as black tea, desert, coffee mugs, music and so on.

As Yeh, the executive director of Mediaedgecia, states, “the concept of consumer is very important. The target consumers of Left Bank Coffee are educated, young (20-39 years old), urban, career women. Left Bank coffee is, after all, canned coffee. Taste is not at issue here, what is at issue is to create a feeling for a product, and this feeling is literary (人文). Female consumers are more emotional, they will pay more if they feel romantic about this product.” Many aesthetic strategies are used in Left Bank ads to create a feeling, a concept, a story, an atmosphere, and an experience so that consumers can associate this brand with a particular desirable lifestyle.

23 編輯部：〈把咖啡藝術化：人文左岸風靡市場〉，《動腦雜誌》第317期（2002），頁36-39。
25 Interview with Alison Yeh, executive director of Mediaedgecia (霞飛媒體傳播公司). Interview conducted on Jan. 21, 2004.
Advertisers work around the name Left Bank to create a core value for this brand: exoticism (「來自異國」). The director of Ogilvy Advertising, Hsin-yi Wu (吳心怡), states that the concept exoticism is that something that adds extra value and gives life to this brand name: “Coffee is not just coffee, it is part of everyday life, part of leisure. When you assign spirit, flavor, and personal traits to it, its value will be higher.” Advertisers use different strategies to express the concept exoticism, mediated through the notion of literary, by linking it to the Western world of arts and literature. Hence, in a series of the ads placed by the Left Bank, images of literary figures, artists, artistic cultural forms (including architecture, music and so on) from France are invoked to create an atmosphere that is “artistic,” as evidenced in the ad of Rendez Vous CD, “Left Bank can be a book, a painting, a cup of coffee, and a piece of music.” However, for the advertisers, that artistic aura has to be linked to “human story” in order to invoke consumers’ emotion for identification. The human stories employed emphasize loneliness and individuality—“enjoy alone and enjoy loneliness” (「孤獨享受，享受孤獨」) and “in the last day of Spring, I am at Left Bank Coffee House (「在春天的最後一天我在左岸咖啡館」)—and heterosexual romance—“we encounter each other on Left Bank” (「我們在左岸相遇」). These calculative strategies inform the creation of Left Bank advertisements.

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26 編輯部：〈把咖啡藝術化：人文左岸風扇市場〉，《動腦雜誌》第317期（2002），頁36-39。

27 This articulation is part of the historical legacy of imperialism and colonialism, which constructs the West (in this case, France) as the cradle of culture and civilization as opposed to the colonized in need of cultivation. This postcolonial reading is critical to the interpretation of Left Bank Coffee ads; however, as my focus is on Beauvoir and my political attempt to deconstruct the notion of freedom, autonomy, choice, and lifestyle, I will not go into depth about this reading.
The choice to feature Simone de Beauvoir in Left Bank advertisements is the result of detailed calculation—the need to create a feeling for a product that will touch female consumers and that feeling can be created through the world of arts and literature from the West. In fact, it is not important who Simone de Beauvoir is as long as she provides the target consumers with a feeling of the literary. However, this literary “feeling” is the articulation of previous stories circulating in mediascape. As previously shown, the interpretation of Beauvoir in popular media is framed within her autobiography mediated through lifestyle. This lifestyle focus constructs Beauvoir as a writer, a coffee drinker who hangs out in coffee shops, a traveler, a lover, and a feminist who believes in gender equality but is romantically involved with men—all these interpretations meet the needs of the advertisers to create Left Bank Coffee House as literary and artistic.

In this section, I have investigated the site of advertising agency to demonstrate the connection between the production of stories about Beauvoir in Left Bank and the stories about female consumers. It is the knowledge about female consumers that orders the decision to tell, and what and how to tell a Beauvoir story. In the next section, I will investigate the kind of stories about consumers, especially female consumers.

28 In my interview, Alison Yeh said that she did not notice that Beauvoir was part of the story. The purpose was to create a feeling of the literary (interview conducted on Jan. 21, 2004). In another interview with Lei-ming Wei, the producer and director of the travel documentary on France for Asia Plus Broadcasting Limited (東風衛星製作股份有限公司), Mr. Wei told me that he did not know who Beauvoir was. The people in the coffee house he was filming told him about Beauvoir and Sartre, so he included them in the commercial (Interview conducted on Aug. 20, 2003).
The Arts of Ordering—"Topology"

I will use an advertisement in Brain, a trade journal, to discuss the operations of advertising agency as practices of ordering. The primary mission of an advertising agency is to reach consumers. Hence, stories about consumers are produced and circulated in trade journals as attempts to manage consumers. This knowledge about consumers then functions as the basis for producing popular knowledge (through ads and commercials) in order to reach their target consumers. The stories about Simone de Beauvoir constructed in popular media are thus, mediated through this knowledge. In this section, I will investigate how stories about consumers are produced—specifically, I will look at the interlocking relations between the arts of ordering/ruling and the production of knowledge (about consumers).

The advertisement placed by Taiwan Dentsu advertising agency in the March issue of Brain, 2001 claims to invent a theory about consumers and how to manage consumers. In this ad, a full page of black-color picture with caramel net-like lines circling some unknown individuals immediately catches the attention of the readers. In the foreground of this picture, we see three nameless people enclosed within three separated cells, each with its own space of movement both inside and outside their own cells. In the middle ground, three smaller people are enclosed in three cells, though the lines circling these people and those connecting them from cell to cell, and the people inside were much smaller than the ones in the foreground. Each cell has its own sphere of movement, expressed through lines of movements connecting them to other cells. The whole picture conveys the meaning that consumers are both individuated and collective, separated by cells and connected through lines of forces. However, with the net-like lines encircling the margins of this page, a sense of total surrender of the individual to the net-like grid of lines of forces is conveyed, despite the fact that each individual also has his own space of movement, which
separates him from other individuals (see photo below).

Taiwan Dentsu Advertisement, Brain, 2001.3

The linguistic code on the right page functions as an "anchorage" of meaning. It controls the meaning of this picture to "communicating to the mysterious consumer through topology." The title of this essay states: "Taiwan Dentsu Considers Advertising to Be a Topology." Hence, we know the image on the left page is the concrete manifestation of "topology." In this ad, technologies of ordering used by the advertisers are specified. The role of the advertisers, according to Taiwan Denstu, is to communicate to the 「生活者」, that is, the consumers. From the point of view of the advertisers, consumers are like a patch of darkness, consisting of tiny black spots, unknown to the advertisers. The advertisers are determined to know them in order to

“communicate” to them. Here, the search for knowledge coalesces with the desire to control. Different technologies are used to know these black spots, from mapping these black spots onto a three dimensional mathematical imagination \((X,Y,Z)\) to that of classification and categorization. Relations among black spots (consumers) are also drawn to facilitate classification. However, despite all the effort, advertisers realize that these black spots (consumers) move, according to their own will: “the irregular, unpredictable trajectories of the heart beats” (不規則、測不準的心動軌跡). Hence, they invent a new way of understanding consumers: to calculate a well-designed space, which allows consumers to move wherever they want, but are eventually folded back to their original place. The advertisers call this “topology”:

This advertisement exemplifies what advertisers’ attempts to order consumers by producing knowledge/stories about consumers. In this ad, consumers are constructed as autonomous, evidenced by his/her having free will to choose to move about, but also unpredictable (the irregular trajectories of heartbeat). But despite the fact that they are constructed as the subjects of movement, they are also the objects of knowledge that cannot escape the control of the advertisers. To know is to order, to control, to transform them in such a way that they feel free to move about but always within the control of the advertisers. And the space of control mapped out by the advertisers for consumers to move about is the space of everyday life (生活)—hence, the term, 生活者.

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In the next section, I will discuss how this particular understanding about consumers as autonomous who is free to move about and unpredictable (emotional) inform the two advertising strategies that are commonly used by advertisers today—lifestyle and branding.

**Advertising Strategies—Lifestyle and Branding**

First, I will take up the notion of 生活者 in advertising. The space of 生活者 is the space of power grid. Everyday life has become a terrain of investigation as a way to understand every movement that生活者 makes as well as his/her income, age, sexual preference, life values, desires, moods, and so on. This knowledge is to facilitate “communication”—so that information about goods can be conveyed to the生活者 to transform his/her desire and behavior. One of the tools invented for “investigating media consumer’s life” is called “Media in Mind.” Media in Mind aims to investigate consumers’ behavior, media use, and all aspects of consumer life and combine all the research to create a better understanding of, for example, the relation between moods and degree of concentration on media use. Everyday life is compartmentalized and engineered into time (how an individual distributes time), space (home, workplace, and outdoors), status (alone or with other people), amount of media use (TV / broadcasting / print / internet / theatre), attitudes toward advertising, degree of concentration in media use, mood (happy/ relaxed/ tired).  

This compartmentalization and penetration of everyday life exemplifies the need of advertisers to engineer power into individual psyche and behavior at the most detailed and comprehensive level.

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31 優勢參考：（媒體企創新工具—Media in Mind：研究媒體消費者的生活），《動腦雜誌》第296期（2000），頁74-77。
The stories produced by advertisers maintain that consumers are free to move about within the grid of everyday life, and that freedom constitutes the consumer's individuality as he/she is able to make his/her own decisions as to where to go. But freedom has to be understood within sociality. This freedom has to be situated within a social organization that allows individuals to achieve individuation within collectivities. As the previous advertisement demonstrates, individuals live in cells with relation to other cells, which, together, form the space of society. Individuality (difference) and collectivity (identity) are two sides of the same coin. The advertising slogan best illustrates the notion of autonomy/individuality within collectivity: "This is the age for individualism and this is also the age for group identity." One's difference is established through one's identification with a particular group, which differentiates itself from another group. This knowledge matrix about identity and difference, autonomy and collectivity, leads the advertisers to understand the terrain of everyday life, not through the lens of individuals but collectivities. Certain collectivities have to be mapped out in order to penetrate into their everyday lives, to map out their lifestyles, which, in turn, define the identities of these collectivities.

One of the traits that advertisers often use in mapping out collectivities is gender, and in the case that Media in Mind offers, women between 20-49 years old. Their views and attitudes are mapped out in detail in the realms of consumption, media, relationships, environment, finance management, advertising, life, and work. Another way commonly used by the advertisers to organize collectivities is age (which also corresponds to attitudes). One such

33 優勢參肯：〈媒體企劃新工具—Media in Mind：研究媒體消費者的生態〉，《動腦雜誌》 第296期（2000），頁74-77。
example is done by McKen Advertising Corporations, which divides Taiwanese consumers into Identity Builders, Career Builders, Family Builders, and New Life Builders.34

In any case, these ways of mapping collectivities is to create pictures of different lifestyles, for example, a woman aged 35 will be placed onto a particular lifestyle map: she devotes herself to work but enjoys shopping, devotes time to relationships but dislikes being submissive to men, reads international women’s magazines, watches sex and the city and so on. This mapping of lifestyle is embedded in the notion of individuals as autonomous and free. Within this lifestyle politics, everyday life becomes a matter of choice—an individual has the freedom to choose whether to work or not, what to buy and what not to buy, and what to read and not to read, etc. This choice, however, is only intelligible within the terrain of everyday life administered by the advertisers.

The second actual advertising strategy commonly adopted by advertisers is branding. Branding as a sales strategy is also embedded within the intelligibility of identity and difference, collectivity and individuality. Branding is about giving values, functions, commitments, promises, characteristics, and experiences to a particular product or group of products so that a product identity can be established.35 Individuals, through the consumption of a particular brand, can establish their identity through the meanings that that brand conveys. In advertising magazines, different methods are discussed to increase brand loyalty, or “brand belief system.”36 Moreover, branding is

34 編輯部：《四大族群 各顯神通》，《動腦雜誌》第295期（2000），頁97-98．（動腦楊文星採訪整理）
35 高端訓：《致勝的品牌策略》，《動腦雜誌》第316期[2002]，頁60-64．
36 《廣告專輯：讓顧客成為品牌的信仰者》，《動腦雜誌》第312期
discussed in terms of "extension"—what kind of promise that the brand makes can allow the maximum extension of the range of products? How to use vertical extension to include senior or junior population (such as Giorgio junior)? What benefits can co-branding (such as Starbucks and Barnes and Noble) brings?\textsuperscript{37}

I route through these two actual sales strategies commonly discussed in advertising trade journals to point out that the knowledge used to understand consumers (research on lifestyle) and the strategies used to sell products (branding) operate within the intelligibility of identity and difference, collectivity and individuality. Now I want to connect these two advertising strategies back to the Left Bank Coffee advertisements I talked about in the first section as well as the Beauvoir stories Left Bank produces. In terms of branding, as mentioned earlier, Left Bank's branding strategy is to create a feeling that speaks to an identity group, in this case, urban female consumers, in order to differentiate from Mr. Brown coffee. The brand feeling that Left Bank conveys is literary and artistic—something that touches women's heart. This branding strategy allows Left Bank to extend its products to include coffee mugs and music as long as the products are conferred with this new meaning.

The particular branding strategy can only be effective when it is connected with an understanding of the lifestyle of its target consumers. The lifestyle of the group of educated, urban career women aged between 20 to 39 that Left Bank aims to address, according to Yeh, is mobility, and they are individualistic, yet desirous of something extraordinary, such as romance and art.\textsuperscript{38} The notion of mobility informs the spaces where the ads are placed, such as the buses, MRT,

\textsuperscript{37} 高端訓：〈品牌無限延伸〉，〈動腦雜誌〉第321期[2003]，頁46-49。
\textsuperscript{38} Interview with Alison Yeh, conducted 1-20-1003.
magazines, and internet, for these urban spaces constitute the everyday life of these women. Moreover, mobility also taps into tourism. As urban, educated women, they have abandoned the traditional idea about staying at home and being domestic and submissive. They have a strong sense of self and believe in gender equality, yet they still desire a heterosexual romance, and something literary to touch their heart. This knowledge about the lifestyle of female consumers informs how Beauvoir story is told in advertisements—she is a traveler, a feminist who wants gender equality but is also involved with men, and a writer who produces works in coffee shops.

**Politics of Lifestyle**

I want to bring back Kendal and Wickham again as a way to conclude this paper. Kendal and Wickham talk about stories as ordering practices, and in this essay, I use the stories of Beauvoir to demonstrate the patterns of ordering, and that pattern is lifestyle. I point out that stories about Beauvoir in popular media are told through the lens of lifestyle. These lifestyle stories about Beauvoir are produced within concrete mechanisms—the advertising agencies—which produce understandings about consumers as autonomous in the sense that they are endowed with the freedom to choose and to move about. But freedom and autonomy, as my descriptions demonstrate, are located within the matrix of identity and difference, collectivity and individuality mapped out by the advertisers. As the Topology advertisement demonstrates, the terrain of consumers’ everyday life is the terrain of detailed calculation and ordering. Advertisers order/manage the terrain of everyday life through dividing consumers into different identity groups and explore their lifestyles as a way to situate consumers within the grid of power. Consumers are then seen as autonomous agents who are able to freely choose the kind of lifestyles corresponding to their identities.
But Kendall and Wickham point out that descriptions and analyses are also ways of ordering, and here I want to answer the question of my relationship with the kind of ordering practices I present in this paper. If the patterns of the stories I provide here are about choices and lifestyles, then, my effort to connect these stories from different sites aims to illuminate that the concept of lifestyle functions as a particular way of ordering produced, within contemporary Taiwan, by advertising agencies to promote consumption. In other words, choice and freedom in contemporary mediascape is articulated to lifestyle, which can be obtained through consumption.

This understanding about lifestyle allows me to explore issues of freedom, autonomy, and choice within feminism. The stories about Beauvoir point out that popular feminism is about women wanting it all—individuality, independence, gender equality, and romance—and the way to have it all is through consumption. Given that “the history of women’s oppression is about women’s choicelessness, women deprived of their choice, of choices made by men for women,”39 these stories that address women as subjects of freedom and choice are quite empowering. However, the issue of formation of desire and its relationship with freedom needs to be addressed here. If we are ordered by advertising agency as choosing subjects, then we need to ask what it is that we want (i.e. how we are constituted as we are) and what freedom we have. This essay shows that what we want is partly ordered by the media as the media construct a Beauvoir lifestyle that is “desirable.” But do we all have the choices to what we want, in this case, the kind of lifestyle that Beauvoir has?

In thinking about the issue of freedom in light of the poststructuralist notion of a self that is constituted and ordered, Nancy

Hirchmann argues that feminists need to abandon the notion of autonomy, defined as having the ability to make rational decisions and choices, but offer a theory of freedom that takes seriously social constructivism:

Social construction suggests that "who I am" is central to determining "what I want"; but "who I am" is shaped by what I do, how I live, and the concrete options that are open to me, what is required of me, what is prohibited, what can be imagined as well as what is unimaginable and inarticulate. Who I am and what I want is also to a significant degree a function of discursive categories of meaning and ideological pictures of social relations that produce the material conditions within which choice is exercised. If choice is key to freedom, then what is necessary to understanding freedom is an examination not only of the conditions in which choices are made but also of the construction of choice itself: what choices are available and why, what counts as a "choice," who counts as a 'chooser,' how the choosing subject is created and shaped by social relations and practices.  

In thinking about freedom and choice, we need to think about the conditions within which choice is exercised. This means that we need to examine both the external structures—the material conditions, the options that are available to women—as well as the "psychological, emotional, epistemological, and discursive conditions that produce desire, preference, and decisions." It is "a recognition of the need to conceptualize freedom in terms of the interaction and mutual

constitution of the external structures of patriarchy and the inner selves of women. In light of the stories about Beauvoir presented here, if freedom and choice are articulated to lifestyle politics, then we need to ask what constitutes choice, the conditions of choice, as well as who counts as the "choosers" and the social conditions that shape the choosers. We need to question that the subject of popular feminism constructed here is not universal, but young, urban career women with money to spare and the choice is only available to women with consuming power. Moreover, we also need to question that the feminist subject's desire is framed within heterosexual belongings—a condition that subordinates women to men. In disconnecting choice and freedom from the kind of lifestyle politics that construct Beauvoir as a feminist traveler and coffee drinker, we need to examine the conditions, that is, the particular context, in which choice is framed and exercised as choice in order to articulate a feminist theory of freedom. In calling attention to the conditions of freedom, and in offering stories about consumers and advertising agencies as part of the conditions of freedom, I am offering a kind of ordering practice to counter the dominant thinking about the freedom-lifestyle complex which confines freedom to the realm of consumption rather than politics.