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*The Shoe Queen*. Anna Davis. Vintage, 2007.

Reviewed by Gillian Dooley, *Adelaide Review*, 25 May 2007, p. 21.

Genevieve Shelby King is a young Englishwoman in 1920s Paris, married to rich American businessman. She loves the high life, staying out all night with her bohemian friend Lulu, and fancies herself as a poet. Her husband doesn't really like Paris and wants to start a family and go home to Boston. And then there is her obsession with shoes.

This novel could have been the shallowest kind of satire of the high life of the roaring twenties: there is a lot of name-dropping – ‘Oh look, there’s James Joyce’ – and many of the fictional characters are based on real-life originals, as Davis explains in her afterword. But while there is some satire there is also a lot of warmth in Davis’ depiction of these two ill-matched but well-intentioned people working out their differences, and an expansive feeling about the possibilities of life even when things don’t work out as one would like them to. The high fashion – Genevieve’s clothes and especially her shoes are always described in loving detail – is fun but it’s really just a veneer under which a not very original but nevertheless engrossing plot is played out. A thoroughly charming and likeable novel.