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Shanghai Escapade:

Cinema, Anticipation and the Touristic City



Duncan Harte

2014

SOAS, University of London

PhD (Media and Film Studies)

Declaration for SOAS PhD thesis

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates how Shanghai has been branded as a modern metropolis and gateway city between China and the world in the early years of the twenty-first century. Rather than focussing directly on city branding and marketing campaigns, it considers branding as a discursive, hegemonic process, that impacts on spatial practices in the city and imaginings of the urban environment. Exploring this through a range of films, museum exhibits, fashion campaigns and sightseeing attractions, it is proposed that contemporary Shanghai produces, and is informed by, a *culture of anticipation*. This is more complex than simply being a state of looking expectantly to the future; it involves tangled time configurations, immersive sensory stimulation, the fostering of a touristic sensibility, and a desire to apprehend the city and grasp the present moment. In drawing together these characteristics, it is argued that the culture of anticipation is inherently *cinematic*. There is a particular emphasis on these qualities in the Chinese Communist Party's vision of Shanghai and its incitement of a specific mode of engagement with the city in which both locals and visitors are encouraged to act as tourists and sojourners. This coalesces with various transnational film productions in which the formation of a local affinity for Shanghai develops through an appreciation of the city's cosmopolitan openness. The reputation of Shanghai as a gateway city is likewise embraced by the global fashion industry, which not only promotes certain cinematic imaginings of the city, but is also entwined with its physical and economic fabric. This culture of anticipation produces corollary effects: a state of drift in place of dynamic mobility, apprehension as anxiety, and yearnings to escape. A concluding discussion suggests that a means of coping and contending with these side effects may be to engage in practices of *escapade*.

For my parents

CONTENTS

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	6
<i>A Note on Transliteration and Referencing</i>	9
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	10
1. Introduction: Anticipating the City	12
2. Better City, Better Life: Harmonizing Shanghai	63
3. A Paradise for Adventurers: Time Travel, Immersive Shocks and the Bund	122
4. The Gateway to China: Living the Cosmopolitan Dream	181
5. The Pearl of the Orient, The Paris of the East: Re-Fashioning Shanghai	222
6. Conclusion: Shanghai Counterpoint	260
<i>Bibliography</i>	285
<i>Filmography</i>	309

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1:	Film publicity card for <i>Shanghai Express</i>	14
Figure 2:	The official Expo 2010 branding	20
Figure 3:	The Shanghai Charging Bull	37
Figure 4:	Photographing the Charging Bull at dusk	37
Figure 5:	LCD display on the Bund Promenade	38
Figure 6:	A map showing Shanghai's administrative districts	64
Figure 7:	A view of Pudong taken from Puxi in 1990	66
Figure 8:	A view of Pudong from Puxi in 2010	66
Figure 9:	An area in the Old City demolished for redevelopment in 2010	69
Figure 10:	Resident of Jing'an passing buildings marked for demolition	84
Figure 11:	<i>Huan Wo Lü Di</i> — "Give Me Back My Green Space"	85
Figure 12:	The model map in the SUPEC	108
Figure 13:	"The city as remake"	118
Figure 14:	A rare moment of human presence	119
Figure 15:	The Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Centre (SUPEC)	121
Figure 16:	Lujiazui in 1997	128
Figure 17:	Lighting effects in the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel	132
Figure 18:	Multi-coloured illuminations, Reed Flute Cave, Guilin	132
Figure 19:	The entrance to the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel	146
Figure 20:	View upwards from the atrium of the Grand Hyatt Hotel	146
Figure 21:	Looking down the atrium in the Grand Hyatt Hotel	147
Figure 22:	Nanpu Bridge Interchange	147
Figure 23:	Longyang Road Shanghai Maglev Station	148

Figure 24:	Illuminated elevated highways	148
Figure 25:	Inside the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel	149
Figure 26:	The Egg in Shanghai's Wujiaochang area	149
Figure 27:	The city's Middle Ring Road passing under the Egg	150
Figure 28:	A pedestrianized section of East Nanjing Road	150
Figure 29:	James Darren and Robert Colbert in <i>The Time Tunnel</i>	151
Figure 30:	Concept drawing for Irwin Allen's <i>The Time Tunnel</i>	154
Figures 31–33:	Clocks	164
Figures 34–36:	(Designer) watches and calendars	165
Figure 37:	An immersive cinematic environment	173
Figure 38:	Flying through space, blurring the virtual and the real	174
Figure 39:	The readiness is all	179
Figure 40:	Spiralling to the rainbow's end	180
Figures 41–42:	Powerless in the face of progress	185
Figure 43:	"Weightless" history: A phantasy of resurrection	187
Figure 44:	Location shooting/place branding	195
Figure 45:	The streets as <i>tabula rasa</i> and Rosetta Stone	201
Figure 46:	The Oriental Fifth Avenue	203
Figure 47:	A map, but no compass	211
Figure 48:	Unfamiliar signs	211
Figure 49:	Familiar territory	212
Figure 50:	<i>Shanghai Calling</i> poster	219
Figure 51:	Comic Fried Chicken	220
Figure 52:	Costa del Shanghai	221
Figure 53:	Navigating a creative cluster	229

Figure 54:	Industrial fashion	234
Figure 55:	“Catwalking the city”	235
Figure 56:	The city as “the set”	238
Figure 57:	Lagerfeld’s cinematic city dream	239
Figure 58:	An affinity for European fashion	242
Figure 59:	<i>Lady Blue Shanghai</i>	248
Figure 60:	<i>First Spring</i>	250
Figure 61:	The illusion of weightlessness	252
Figure 62:	A feeling of rootlessness	254
Figure 63:	Rooftop drifters	255
Figure 64:	There’s no place like home	256
Figure 65:	Cosmopolitan branding	259
Figure 66:	The Shanghai Concert Hall	262
Figure 67:	Yongkang Road	267
Figure 68:	A local response to late night revellers	268
Figure 69:	Showtime	270
Figure 70:	Encore!	270
Figure 71:	Parodic reworkings	277
Figure 72:	Observing or being watched?	280

Several of the images used in this thesis, such as maps, logos, and certain historic photos of Shanghai, can be sourced from multiple locations. Where it has not been possible to identify the owner of the original image, a web reference to the source location used is provided. Images with no attribution are the author’s own.

A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND REFERENCING

On a couple of occasions, specific Chinese characters are directly referred to and hence these are printed in the text. Otherwise, this thesis uses the *pinyin* system for romanizing Chinese characters.

Chinese practice places the family name before the given name. Some Chinese authors (or authors with Chinese heritage) writing in English choose to adopt the Western practice of placing the given name first. References to these authors in the main body of the text and the footnotes uses whichever ordering the authors themselves employ. Hence, for example, Zhang Zhen, but Yingjin Zhang. In the bibliography, both authors would be listed under the surname, Zhang.

There are frequently different ways of translating Chinese film titles into English. In the main body of the text the most commonly used English translations of these film titles are employed. The *pinyin* version of each title is provided in parentheses after the English translation in the filmography.

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ONE

Introduction: Anticipating the City

In Josef von Sternberg's 1932 film, *Shanghai Express*, the city of Shanghai is eagerly anticipated, but never appears on screen. The closest we come to a glimpse of the metropolis is when the eponymous train finally reaches its destination for the film's denouement. Shanghai's railway station proves both physical and narrative terminus, with the protagonists (played by Marlene Dietrich and Clive Brook) reconciling on the concourse and the screen fading to black before they ever venture out onto the city's teeming streets. And yet, whilst Shanghai as physical place may be absent, its presence as metaphor is keenly felt, with the very name of the locomotive forming an association between the speed of the train and the helter-skelter pace of the city where it is bound. The railroad has become a totemic symbol of modernity, through which "mechanical regularity triumphed over natural irregularity," and, for the Western passengers on board the Shanghai Express, the train serves as a cocoon from the perceived primitivism of the Chinese hinterland. Its destination offers the promise of civilization, and ultimately—after having been captured by a bandit gang led by Warner Oland's Eurasian villain, Mr. Chang—salvation.¹

The allusive function of Shanghai within the film is more complex, however, than as mere signifier of progress, civility and Western influence, in contrast to the stagnation, backwardness and barbarism of the Orient. The train may eventually reach

¹ Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization and Perception of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 22–23. Dutton also cites Schivelbusch in his discussion of the clock tower on Beijing's British-built Eastern Zhengyangmen Railway Station. Michael Dutton, Hsiu-ju Stacy Lo and Dong Dong Wu, *Beijing Time* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 57–58. Yingjin Zhang discusses *Shanghai Express* not in terms of its representation of Shanghai, but as an example of a Western imaginary of Beijing, "as a city paralyzed by an agrarian lifestyle, abandoned by historical progress, and utterly indifferent to Western modernity." *Cinema, Space, and Polylocality in a Globalizing China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010), 76. Within the film, Shanghai implicitly exists as the antithesis to those characteristics identified by Zhang.

its intended destination, but this is no straightforward victory of “mechanical regularity... over natural irregularity.” Mr. Chang informs the Reverend Carmichael that, in China, “time and life have no value,” and sure enough the gambler, Sam Salt, is proved correct in his wager that they will not arrive on schedule. Crucially, though, the train’s delay and the threat to its passengers stems as much from within as without: the mysterious Chang is that classic figure of colonial anxiety, the hybrid, and it is through his machinations that the train is hijacked.²

Chang is by no means the only passenger engaged in masquerade, with latent desires and secrets to hide. As a press release posted in the May 2, 1932 edition of the *Prescott Evening Courier* declared, this is a train “laden with its strange cargo of sin, hatred and desire!”³ A contemporary Western audience in the 1930s would expect nothing less from a vehicle (and film) branded with the name of a city whose reputation for vice, decadence and intrigue had by then already assumed mythic proportions. Equally enigmatic is Marlene Dietrich’s courtesan, once called Magdalen, but now known as Shanghai Lily.⁴ That simple epithet primes the audience’s expectations before Dietrich even appears on screen; this is a woman who, like the city, will surely be at once alluring, opportunistic and dangerous to know. “It took more than one man to change my name to Shanghai Lily,” she informs her erstwhile lover, Captain ‘Doc’ Harvey (Clive Brook), implying that her metamorphosis into the “notorious white flower of China” is the result not only of her relationships with numerous men, but also her prolonged exposure to the seamy side of Shanghai, and its powerful transformative effects. Shanghai Lily is a metonym for

² For Homi Bhabha, “Hybridity represents that ambivalent ‘turn’ of the discriminated subject into the terrifying, exorbitant object of paranoid classification—a disturbing questioning of the images and presences of authority.” *The Location of Culture*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge Classics, 2004), 162.

³ The full advertisement reads, “Out of today’s seething Orient, aflame with passions and shot through with intrigues, thunders the ‘Shanghai Express’—laden with its strange cargo of sin, hatred and desire! You’ll live a lifetime of excitement in a single thrilling night.” See Chapter Three of this thesis for further discussion of cinema, modernity, shocks and thrills in relation to Shanghai.

⁴ Her former name, with its allusion to Mary Magdalene, apocryphally a ‘fallen woman’ redeemed by Christ, is notable here. Shanghai Lily’s trajectory has been in the opposite direction—a once virtuous woman becoming scandalous following her prolonged exposure to Shanghai and China’s east coast—though ultimately her narrative is also one of redemption.

the city whose name she bears: marked both by China and Europe, not bound by respectable Western convention, mysterious, mutable, and wholly intoxicating.⁵



Fig. 1: Film publicity card for *Shanghai Express*
Bill Douglas and Peter Jewell Collection

Although this thesis is neither a postcolonial critique of 1930s Hollywood cinema, nor a study of Treaty Port Era Shanghai, the preceding brief consideration of *Shanghai Express* is nonetheless an apposite starting point, as it teases out a number of key themes that I intend to pursue. I am interested in the circulation and efficacy of certain recurring tropes related to the city, several of which are apparent in von Sternberg's film: Shanghai as pioneer of modern progress within China, and the association of express speed and movement with this; Shanghai as cosmopolitan entrepôt, drawing towards it both Chinese and foreign nationals, searching for profit and the chance to reinvent themselves; Shanghai as a source of vice and corruption; and Shanghai as a site of seduction, allied to a fashionable European sensuality. All of these are considered in the course of this thesis, but what I especially seek to investigate are the ways in which the figurative language of such tropes (visual as

⁵ Various other passengers are also implicated in the train's "cargo of sin, hatred and desire:" Anna May Wong plays a Chinese courtesan who later kills Chang, Eric Baum is a German opium dealer posing as a coal mine owner, and Emile Chautard is a secretly disgraced French army major.

much as written and spoken) becomes entwined with those elements notably absent from *Shanghai Express*—namely the space of the city itself and the experience of being in that space.

The word ‘trope’ derives from the Greek verb *trepein*, meaning ‘to direct, to alter, to change.’ One of the arguments advanced here is that various tropes related to Shanghai involve not simply a ‘directing’ of language to create new linguistic meaning (for example using the metaphor ‘Pearl of the Orient’ to refer to the city), but may also be implicated in an ‘altering’ or ‘changing’ of the environment of the city itself. That is to say, a dialectical relationship exists in which figurations associated with Shanghai emerge from the contexts of the city, which may also, in turn, shape the city’s development. This study is primarily concerned with contemporary Shanghai, but with a recognition that the past constantly informs the present, as evidenced by the persistent purchase today of the various tropes mentioned in reference to von Sternberg’s 1932 film. The discussion of *Shanghai Express* is also an indication that films will provide a significant part of the source material in this exploration of the cultural geography of modern-day Shanghai.

This project shares some affinities with two other cultural studies of major Chinese cities: Michael Dutton’s *Beijing Time* (2008) and Ackbar Abbas’ *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (1997). In analyzing the rhythms of life in Beijing, Dutton and his co-researchers (Hsiu-ju Stacy Lo and Dong Dong Wu) visit a wide array of locales (Tiananmen Square, the alleyways of Jiadaokou, the shantytown of Bajiacun, the Panjiayuan ghost market, and the Dashanzi Art District) and survey a broad range of contemporary cultural phenomena, including neighbourhood security campaigns, counterfeit merchandise, and karaoke bars. Although richly textured with theoretical asides (invoking such philosophers as Benjamin, Mauss, Nietzsche, Elias and Dunning), Dutton’s stylistic approach is that of a travelogue, with vivid evocations of the scenes he encounters supplemented by excerpts from ethnographic interviews. These descriptive passages become part of the analytic method, enfolded into the theoretical discussions as a means of trying to capture the lived experience of the places under consideration.⁶ Like *Beijing Time*, this thesis visits different sites in the city and links an analysis of these locations with broader cultural trends. Although less consistently reportage in tone than Dutton’s work, it does at times adopt what

⁶ Michael Dutton, Hsiu-ju Stacy Lo and Dong Dong Wu, *Beijing Time* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

might be called an experiential approach, seeking to situate the reader within the scene (for example in the second half of Chapter Two, which is structured as a tour around the Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Centre, and particularly in the first section of Chapter Six in which I recount the experience of a recent visit to the city), thereby emphasizing the relationship between place and the subject.⁷ A greater concentration in my own work on cinema and the moving image is, in part, a reflection of an academic background in film studies rather than anthropology. More than this though, it stems from one of the central arguments that will be progressed in this thesis—that the emphasis on immersive spectacle, and the manipulation of time and space, increasingly encountered in Shanghai’s urban landscape, reveal distinctly *cinematic* qualities. Cinema provides, as it were, a blueprint for reading the city’s redevelopment.

Ackbar Abbas also focuses heavily on cinema in his exploration of Hong Kong culture on the eve of its 1997 handover to China. Specifically, the works of several auteurs (including Wong Kar Wai and Stanley Kwan) are analyzed as critical reactions to Hong Kong’s pervasive sense of what he terms, “the *déjà disparu*: the feeling that what is new and unique about the situation is always already gone, and we are left holding a handful of clichés, or a cluster of memories of what has never been.”⁸ Abbas identifies the *déjà disparu* as a defining feature of a “*culture of disappearance*,” which prevails in advance of the handover: if an effect of colonialism had been to obscure the recognition of a specific Hong Kong culture—a state of “reverse hallucination,” rendering the city “a cultural desert”—then “the double trauma of the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984 followed by the Tiananmen Massacre of 1989” brought forth an anxious and late-blooming search for such a culture, the appearance of which was “posited on the imminence of its disappearance.”⁹

With deference to Abbas, I would suggest that modern-day Shanghai exhibits a *culture of anticipation*. There are some distinct parallels here with the effects Abbas describes in Hong Kong, and indeed he notes, citing Virilio, that the July 1997

⁷ See Chapter Two for a theoretical discussion of the term ‘place’.

⁸ Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 25.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 6–7.

handover date turned that city into a “‘hyper-anticipatory and predictive’ society.”¹⁰ Some of these parallels, such as the impact of new telecommunications on our sense of space and time, and the abstraction of space as it becomes increasingly saturated with signs and images, may be seen as widespread symptoms of the city in an era of globalization. Yet other correspondences speak more of the two cities’ specific histories. They are entwined histories—not least with regard to film production—but also with differing trajectories.¹¹ Writing in a separate essay on cosmopolitanism, Abbas has argued that in Shanghai, during the 1920s and 1930s, a form of cosmopolitanism “emerged from the anomalous space of extraterritoriality” (that is, its status as a semi-colonial treaty port on the mainland), yet with “some vestigial interest in nationalism,” whereas Hong Kong came to demonstrate a cosmopolitanism borne of “dependency,” having “accepted its colonial status as *a priori* and turned towards the international.”¹² Consequently, the tenor of the anticipation experienced in these two places in the closing years of the twentieth century pointed in opposite directions: for Hong Kong there was anxiety surrounding the loss of an autonomy founded on colonial dependency, whereas for Shanghai, the impact of Deng Xiaoping’s Open Door Reform policies brought with it the heady expectation of the city’s re-emergence as a major international hub. Indeed, the spectre of a revitalized Shanghai “haunted” Hong Kong, threatening to trump its claims to “world city status,” with pronouncements such as that made by Zhu Ronji in 1999 (at that time Premier of the PRC), in which he claimed that Shanghai was to become the Chinese New York with Hong Kong akin to Toronto, exacerbating such fears.¹³

¹⁰ Ibid., 22. Paul Virilio, *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*, trans. Philip Beitchman (New York: Semiotext[e], 1991), 20.

¹¹ See Wong Siu-Lin, *Emigrant Entrepreneurs: Shanghai Industrialists in Hong Kong* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) for an analysis of how the relocation of Shanghainese industrialists following the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 stimulated the Hong Kong postwar economy. For discussions of links between the Shanghai and Hong Kong film industries, see Poshek Fu, *Between Shanghai and Hong Kong: The Politics of Chinese Cinemas* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003) and Yiman Wang, *Remaking Chinese Cinema: Through the Prism of Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Hollywood* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2013).

¹² Ackbar Abbas, “Cosmopolitan De-scriptions: Shanghai and Hong Kong.” *Public Culture* 12, no. 3 (2000), 777–778.

¹³ David Clarke, “The Haunted City: Hong Kong and Its Urban Others,” in *Hong Kong Culture: Word and Image*, ed. Kam Louie (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010), 41–54.

Former Mayor of Shanghai, Xu Kuangdi, was fond of using a more placating analogy, describing the cities as being “like two good forwards on a football team. They will pass the ball to each other and both will do their best to score more goals. But they are on the same team—China’s national team.”¹⁴ This attempt to allay fears testifies to the sense of anxiety that persisted in the period immediately after the 1997 handover, the early years of an uncertain fifty-year purgatory until July 2047, at which point the One Country, Two Systems approach would no longer be guaranteed.¹⁵ The presence of these specific dates is significant as they provided the focus for Hong Kong’s anticipation of disappearance—a drawn-out vanishing point to which everything tended. Shanghai, however, was not faced with any such starkly defined dates. A July 2, 1993 report in the *Shanghai Star* noted that Mayor Huang Ju invoked comparisons to London, and particularly New York, as he outlined “the city government’s efforts to revive the past glories of Shanghai and make the city an international metropolis in the 21st century.”¹⁶ How an equality of status between major cities can be determined, however, is a moot point, especially when intangible aspects such as cultural vibrancy and international influence are included in the equation alongside more quantifiable factors such as economic growth, infrastructure and population size. And so, whilst a mood of expectation that Shanghai was to become a leading global city may have emerged through the course of the 1990s, this desire initially existed less as a goal with a fixed completion date, and more as a permanent, ongoing process of becoming.

The belief in Shanghai’s inevitable march of progress mapped onto a wider national rhetoric encapsulated in Deng Xiaoping’s oft-repeated aphorism from 1992, ‘Development is the only hard truth’ (*Fazhan cai shi ying daoli*).¹⁷ But this wider projection of national advancement, framed against a succession of five-year plans, came with an additional expectation attached to Shanghai, as evidenced in Huang Ju’s

¹⁴ Xu Kuangdi, interviewed by Mathew Miller and Foo Choy Peng, *South China Morning Post*, China Business Review section, 9 July 1998, 8. Xu used the same analogy again in March 2001, Deng Gang, “Xu Kuangdi: Shanghai Not to Replace HK,” *People’s Daily Online*, 12 March 2001.

¹⁵ It is this potentially seismic year of 2047 that haunts Wong Kar Wai’s film, *2046*.

¹⁶ Quoted in Jos Gamble, *Shanghai in Transition: Changing Perspectives and Social Contours of a Chinese Metropolis* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 10.

¹⁷ Quoted in Xinhua News Service, *Fazhan cai shi ying daoli Xiaoping yiju hua cujin le zhongguo mianmao de gaiban*, August 18, 2004. Available: http://news.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2004-08/18/content_1816165.htm.

reference to the city's "past glories." The city was not only moving towards a glorious future, but also returning to and reclaiming its historical status as a great metropolis; for Shanghai, there was anticipation squared.

To anticipate is to look forward to something, but also to predict it before it occurs, to be there in front of it. The city looks towards the future, to what is about to come, but in addition to this feverish expectation there is an attempt to grasp the moment in advance—grasping because 'to anticipate' is also 'to apprehend', which is in turn both 'to understand' and 'to capture' something that is trying to get away. This act of anticipation or apprehension is assisted by reference to what has gone before. That is why, as will be further explored in the course of this thesis, selective elements of Shanghai's history serve as activating forces for the city's current development.

Shanghai did latterly receive a specific date and project towards which this anticipation tended, with the city's selection in 2002 as the host of the 2010 World Expo. The event—a latter-day world fair—was promoted both within the city and throughout China with growing clamour, particularly from December 2005 onwards, following approval of the Application for the Registration of Expo 2010 Shanghai by the 138th General Assembly of the Bureau of International Expositions.¹⁸ In the years leading up to the event, the official English-language slogan of the Shanghai World Expo 2010, 'Better City, Better Life,' became increasingly hard for visitors to the city to miss: billboards in Pudong International Airport; tannoy announcements as the Maglev train hurtled along at 250 miles per hour; advertising hoardings beside the city's elevated highways; video monitors set into the back of taxi drivers' headrests—all proclaimed the simple, four-word formulation. The phrase provides a maxim for urban living, a two-part equation in which the former element is required for—and inevitably leads to—the realization of the latter. It is also a statement of intent, a determination on the part of the Communist Party of China (CPC) that the happiness of the nation will be secured through the improvement of the urban environment. This emphasis on the city as the locus of a better life is equally explicit in the Chinese version of the slogan, '*chengshi, rang shenghuo geng meihao,*' which can be more literally translated as, 'the city, will let life become more beautiful.'

¹⁸ Shanghai World Expo. "Financial Program." *China 2010 Shanghai World Expo Website*. Available: <http://www.expo2010.cn/expo/english/mf/rtr/userobject1ai29515.html>.



Fig. 2: The official Expo 2010 branding.

The image incorporates the Chinese character 世 (*shi*, meaning ‘world’), manipulated to look like a father, mother and child—the standard Chinese nuclear family.
<http://www.expo2010.cn/expo/expoenglish/oe/tal/userobject1ai35589.html>

The Expo ran from May 1 until October 31, 2010, attracting over 73 million visitors.¹⁹ The state spent \$48 billion on developing both the Expo site (which covered an area twice the size of Monaco) and the wider city.²⁰ This was more than the amount dedicated to preparing Beijing for the 2008 Olympics, and indeed the Expo was touted as Shanghai’s equivalent international “coming-out party.”²¹ However, the huge number of visitors was the result of domestic mobilization rather than a sign of genuine global appeal: only 5.8% of the visitors were foreigners, while there were reports of “state employees and government bureaucrats from virtually every part of the nation [being] ordered to pile onto buses, trains and planes and head to the Expo”

¹⁹ David Barboza, “Shanghai Expo Sets Record With 73 Million Visitors,” *New York Times*, 2 November 2010. Available: http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/03/world/asia/03shanghai.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

²⁰ Chris Hogg, “Shanghai Expo is China’s new showcase to the world,” *BBC News*, 29 April 2010. Available: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/8651057.stm>.

²¹ Sydney Morning Herald, “You’ve come a long way baby: Shanghai finds its big feat,” *Sydney Morning Herald, Traveller Section*, 1 May 2010. Available: <http://www.smh.com.au/travel/travel-news/youve-come-a-long-way-baby-shanghai-finds-its-big-feat-20100430-tzbt.html>.

in order for the state to reach its target of 70 million visitors, and surpass the previous record Expo attendance of 64 million set by Osaka in 1970.²²

For all the promotion of May 1, 2010 as a seminal date, with countdown clocks across the city, the Expo was a temporary event; it did not mark a political sea change, nor did it single-handedly redefine international perceptions of Shanghai. Yet long after the advertising hoardings have been removed, the impact of the Expo branding persists. At the beginning of this section it was suggested that certain tropes associated with the city both emerged from the physical and cultural contexts of the urban environment and could also help define and alter those contexts. The Expo 2010 provides a rather blunt example of this: ‘Better City, Better Life’ was the aspirational theme explored in different ways by the various national and commercial pavilions, and the Chinese state aimed for Shanghai to be the embodiment of this. The ambition was (and is) for Shanghai to become paradigmatic of what constitutes a better city, and the need to begin realizing this in advance of the event catalyzed a huge range of citywide building projects (in particular a massive expansion of the metro system) and provoked a number of cultural edicts, including an advisory that Shanghai residents desist from the popular practice of wearing pyjamas outside the home.²³ The construction of the Expo site itself necessitated the relocation of some 55,000 Shanghai citizens and 272 factories, and now that the temporary pavilions for the event have been dismantled, the site is being redeveloped as a new arts and business district.²⁴

The slogans ‘*Chengshi, rang shenghuo geng meihao*’ and ‘Better City, Better Life’ may have only been promoted in the years immediately preceding the Expo—figurative language imposed from the state level, legitimating a slew of physical changes to the city—but they emerged from the contexts of a wider culture of anticipation. In spite of the frenzy of activity to finish construction projects in time for

²² Barboza, “Shanghai Expo Sets Record.”

²³ Bricoleurbanism, “Shanghai’s Metro and London’s Tube Head to Head,” *Bricoleurbanism*, 25 July 2010, <http://www.bricoleurbanism.org/china/shanghais-metro-and-londons-tube-head-to-head/>; Gao Yubing, “The Pajama Game Closes in Shanghai,” *New York Times*, 16 May 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/17/opinion/17gao.html?_r=0.

²⁴ Chen Yiqin, “Netizens Jump at Chance to Question Expo Chiefs,” *Shanghai Daily, Expo Insight Special*, 17 March 2008, 8; Bridgette Meinhold, “Shanghai World Expo Site to be Redeveloped into a Lush Business District,” *inhabitat*, 3 June 2013, <http://inhabitat.com/shanghai-world-expo-site-to-be-redeveloped-into-a-lush-business-district/>

May 1, 2010, the Expo did not represent the completion of a project so much as provide a showcase for future ambitions. The ‘Better City’ must always be a work in progress and, in addition to its legacy of improved road and rail networks, the Expo served to extend and reinforce an infrastructure of anticipation.

As a defining characteristic in the contemporary landscape of Shanghai, a culture of anticipation means more than simply an emphasis on looking expectantly to the future. It has implications for how the present city is experienced in different ways. Later in this Introduction I will begin to outline what some of these effects may be, but first I wish to consider the *process* by which they are manifested. It was stated earlier that the impact of the Expo’s branding persists long after the advertising hoardings have been taken down. In the next section I look more closely at the notion of *branding*, and argue that it may be understood as a multifaceted phenomenon that is crucial in the determination of Shanghai’s culture of anticipation.

Branding the City:

Indelible Ownership, Impressions of Infamy

Open almost any guidebook to Shanghai and within the first few pages you are likely to encounter a range of epithets that have been commonly applied to the city. Shanghai, meaning literally “on the sea,” has been known variously in the West as the Paris of the East, the Whore of the Orient, Sin City and the Pearl of the Orient.²⁵ These different sobriquets are suggestive of Shanghai’s colonial past and its ambivalent reputation amongst the imperial powers that administered large sections of the city from the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century. During that period Shanghai acquired a reputation as a city of glamour, elegance and endless opportunity, but also of vice, corruption and decadence (as evident in *Shanghai Express*), and it was these conflicting—though not necessarily contradictory—characteristics that were registered in the different appellations given to the city.

²⁵ Damian Harper, Christopher Pitts and Bradley Mayhew, *Shanghai City Guide* (London: Lonely Planet Publications, 2006), 7; Marcus Balogh, “Fireworks in the Pearl of the Orient,” *Credit Suisse eMagazine*, 24 October 2006. <http://tinyurl.com/33n5sqo>

These various epithets imply the distillation into metaphor of characteristics distinct to Shanghai. It is a flawed antonomasia though, for these same terms have frequently been associated with numerous other cities: Penang in Malaysia is often referred to as The Pearl of the Orient, whilst the title Paris of the East has been claimed by (or bestowed on) Beirut, Kabul, Karachi and Bucharest among others.²⁶ In the 1920s Berlin was also known as Sin City, whilst more recently that name has been applied to cities including Pattaya in Thailand and Las Vegas in the United States.²⁷ Clearly Shanghai is not, nor ever has been, the same place as Kabul, Las Vegas, or any other of these different cities. These metaphors circulate, rather, as descriptive shorthand for ill-defined states of opulence and temptation, without clarifying anything on their own about the local specificity of place.

In recent years there has been an increasing trend of cities being ‘branded’ in an effort to secure a distinctive identity within the global marketplace. A 2008 article in *The Guardian* featured interviews with leading brand strategists addressing the question, “How do cities successfully build a name for themselves and make a lasting impact on the public’s perceptions?”²⁸ The problem posed by the article, however, would seem to beg the much wider question of whence comes the agency for change

²⁶ Burhanuddin Abe, “Penang: Pearl of the Orient,” *Jakarta Post*, 29 December 2009, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/12/29/penang-pearl-orient.html>; Michael Martin, “Beirut Reclaims Nickname ‘Paris of the East,’” *The Street*, 28 May 2009, <http://www.thestreet.com/story/10505816/1/beirut-reclaims-nickname-paris-of-the-east.html>; Jere Van Dyk, “Inside the Jihad: Remembrances from a Former Taliban Prisoner,” *The National Interest*, 15 August 2011, <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/inside-the-jihad-remembrances-former-taliban-prisoner-5760>; Palash Ghosh, “Karachi, Pakistan: Troubled, Violent Metropolis was once called ‘Paris of the East,’” *International Business Times*, 22 August 2013, <http://www.ibtimes.com/karachi-pakistan-troubled-violent-metropolis-was-once-called-paris-east-1396265>; Adam Lebor, “European Times: Bucharest: Paris of the East looks westward,” *Independent*, 29 January 1999, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/european-times-bucharest-paris-of-the-east-looks-westward-1076951.html>. (The wide range in geographical location of these different contenders for the title also provides an indication of how fluid a term ‘the East’ has been.)

²⁷ Emily Cleaver, “Sin City: Decadence and Doom in Weimar Berlin,” *Litro*, 15 February 2013, <http://www.litro.co.uk/2013/02/decadence-and-doom-in-weimar-berlin/>; Piyaporn Wongruang, “From Sin City to Green Paradise: Can Pattaya change its spots?” *Bangkok Post*, 26 February 2012, <http://www.bangkokpost.com/learning/learning-from-news/281857/pattaya-from-sin-city-to-green-paradise>;

²⁸ Saba Salman, “Brand of Gold,” *Guardian*, 1 October 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2008/oct/01/city.urban.branding>.

within a city? What does it mean to say that cities brand *themselves* or build names *for themselves*? Does it imply that the brand emerges from the multiple expressions of all the city's many inhabitants? This is certainly the promise espoused by the Liverpool Brand, which began to be promoted after the city was chosen as the European Capital of Culture 2008. "Who speaks for Liverpool?" asks the question featured prominently on the official Liverpool Brand website. The succinct response is offered immediately: "We all do."²⁹ The rhetoric of the Shanghai Tourism Administrative Commission offers a not dissimilar vision of metropolitan inclusiveness. In 2008 the Commission launched a new logo for the city as part of its build-up to the 2010 Expo, featuring a traditional Chinese blue wave pattern behind calligraphic renderings of the Chinese characters 上 (*shang*) and 海 (*hai*), with "Shanghai 2010" printed in English below. According to the Commission, the wave pattern represented Shanghai's spirit of "accepting different cultures, just like the sea containing all rivers."³⁰

The Tourism Administrative Commission's language is in keeping with a wide range of "watery metaphors" that have been associated with Shanghai since the Open Door era. In his ethnographic study of Shanghai at the turn of the millennium, Jos Gamble notes how the economic reforms were frequently described positively in Chinese language publications and by local residents as "opening the floodgates," bringing new "flows" of capital and people and allowing entrepreneurs to "set sail" (*xiahai*) for new opportunities. But Gamble also uncovers negative water-based imagery, with older residents in particular concerned that Shanghai is degenerating or "sinking" (*duoluo*), as "dangerous currents" of sleaze and corruption infiltrate the city.³¹ Gamble's study is revealing as it demonstrates how conflicting views may be articulated utilizing the same overarching conceit—in this case the use of "watery metaphors" to convey differing judgements of Shanghai's economic development.

Branding was described earlier as a multifaceted phenomenon, and these various aspects may begin to suggest themselves by considering how the root word,

²⁹ Liverpool Brand, "Who Speaks for Liverpool? We all do."
<http://www.liverpoolcitybrand.co.uk/> [11 April 2013].

³⁰ Shanghai Daily, "Expo Tourism to Sell 'Discovery,'" *Shanghai Daily*, 18 November 2008, http://www.china.org.cn/travel/news/2008-11/18/content_16782828.htm.

³¹ Gamble, *Shanghai in Transition*, 19–63. Gamble notes that alongside "watery metaphors," the other key type of metaphor structuring the discourse on change in Shanghai was "socio-spatial," frequently involving "roads and routes" (21).

‘brand,’ freights several meanings. Nowadays, the noun is commonly used in association with trade and finance, where it is understood to be “a distinguishing symbol, mark, logo, name, word, sentence, or a combination of these items that companies use to distinguish their product from others in the market.”³² Likewise, the verb ‘to brand’ is typically understood as the act of labelling and publicizing a product with a trademark of some sort. Closely linked to these definitions is the concept of the product itself as indistinguishable from the brand, which is “a characteristic or distinctive kind” of something.³³ That is, a brand does not simply label or mark a product, the brand *is* the product. It is these various meanings that are implied when consultants, marketing strategists and advertisers speak of cities “build[ing] a name for themselves” through branding.³⁴ As suggested, this raises the question of who determines the nature of this brand-building. Further questions—and also the terms in which to frame them—may be found by scrutinizing the etymology of the word ‘brand.’

It was only in the nineteenth century that branding came to mean the labelling of something as a distinctive commodity or service. Prior to that, the emphasis was on branding as an inscription of possession. From the mid-seventeenth century, a brand could be understood as “a mark of ownership impressed on cattle, horses, etc, by branding.” This meaning derived from the Old English usage of “brand” as a “burning stick” (and later a hot iron), which was used to scorch a permanent mark on something. And this was not always a sign of possession, it could also be a mark of infamy on a criminal: from the early seventeenth century, “to brand” could mean “to stigmatize.”³⁵ If we allow these other definitions to enter into our thinking, then it becomes clear that an investigation of how Shanghai is branded must address a range of problems. The modern-day, commercial usage of the term suggests that such an exploration should consider ways in which the city becomes marketed as a service or commodity. But we must also concern ourselves with the ways in which this promotion of the city implies a certain sense of ownership over the urban space. Does branding impress a mark of possession on the city? And, if so, to whom does this

³² Definition from the financial dictionary, *Investopedia.com*.

³³ Definition from *Merriam Webster Dictionary*.

³⁴ Salman, “Brand of Gold.”

³⁵ Definitions from *Oxford English Dictionary*.

possession belong? Might branding also entail some form of stigmatization? Who, or what, becomes stigmatized by the city?

In Middle English, ‘to brand,’ was to mark indelibly. The emphasis here is on the permanence of the visual sign. But by the late seventeenth century the visual marker had migrated to a psychic register and the term could mean to “impress indelibly” not only physically, but also “on the memory.”³⁶ It may be that many of the cultural effects of urban development in Shanghai are not immediately visible, but they are still associated in some way with the visual. Ackbar Abbas has spoken of change in Shanghai happening at such great speed that the city exhibits characteristics akin to a black hole, which cannot be seen, but only inferred from how it draws light towards it.³⁷ In what ways is Shanghai being branded so as to promote a coherent, positive vision of change and what is obscured in this process?

If the visual inscription of branding is associated with space, then its permanent, indelible character stresses the importance of time. This may point us towards a paradox: branding implies some sense of timelessness, an unchanging quality, but it is a permanence rooted in a defining singular moment—the stamping of the product, the stigmatizing of the criminal, the scorching of hide or flesh. Yet in Shanghai it is almost as if constant change, the very impermanence of things, has become its defining characteristic, whilst simultaneously this state of rapid, ongoing change is frequently seized on in descriptions of the city as a “return” to an earlier form—a reawakening of the “old Shanghai,” frenetic once again after decades trapped in a communism-induced “coma.”³⁸

There are certainly parallels between contemporary Shanghai and its previous international heyday in the Treaty Port Era, but it is simplistic to phrase the city’s current development merely in terms of a return or sequel. As Jeffrey Wasserstrom has argued, “the Shanghai-is-back-as-a-Paris-of-the-East line can obscure some key contrasts between past and present.”³⁹ More revealing may be to examine how and why certain aspects of Shanghai’s past are being preserved, restored and integrated

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Abbas’ reference to a “black hole” is taken from his keynote speech, “Between the Visible and the Intelligible in Asian Cinema” delivered at the National University of Singapore on February 22, 2010.

³⁸ Damian Harper, Christopher Pitts and Bradley Mayhew, *Shanghai City Guide* (London: Lonely Planet Publications, 2006), 7.

³⁹ Jeffrey Wasserstrom, “Shanghai’s Latest Global Turn,” *The Globalist*, 7 May 2007. Available: <http://www.theglobalist.com/StoryId.aspx?StoryId=6151>.

into the contemporary city fabric (both physical and psychic), whilst others are demolished, converted or suppressed. It is this complex interaction between a selective reiteration of the past and the promotion of an aspirational future within the present that is at the heart of Shanghai's culture of anticipation; and it is through the process of branding that this temporal interplay is manifested spatially within the city. How is this tension between fixity and flux being expressed in the city? How are images of the past and the future circulated as ways of branding the city? And in what ways does the city form *impressions* on the viewer?

Jing Wang's *Brand New China* emerged from research conducted whilst the author was employed in Beijing by the transnational advertising agency Ogilvy & Mather. Her position as a privileged insider provides various insights into the interactions between Chinese companies and leading international conglomerates, but it also results in a restricted focus on the concerns of the commercial advertising industry, as suggested by the subtitle of her book, *Advertising, Media, and Commercial Culture*.⁴⁰ Chris Berry rightly criticizes Wang's reductive analysis: "With more and more branding companies working with non-private sector organizations, it is a mistake to conflate branding with marketing. Increasingly, it is about managing relationships... How consumption and marketing interact with subjectivity, socialization, governance, family life, the construction of public space, and a host of other questions do not get asked, and they should."⁴¹

A more wide-ranging conceptualization of branding—and one with specific reference both to Shanghai and cinema—may be found in Stephanie Hemelryk Donald and John Gammack's *Tourism and the Branded City*. The authors here are not exploring 'product branding,' as Wang does, but rather 'place branding,' which they describe as "a concerted attempt to pull attractive and distinctive features of a city into a manageable, imagined alignment. It is designed to allow people to build and maintain an ongoing relationship to a particular urban location."⁴² Such a project is never wholly achievable "given the complexity of some forms of lifestyle and urban engagement, particularly if we can describe living in a city as an act of consumption.

⁴⁰ Jing Wang, *Brand New China: Advertising, Media, and Commercial Culture* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

⁴¹ Chris Berry, "Book Review of *Brand New China: Advertising, Media, and Commercial Culture* by Jing Wang," *The China Quarterly* 194 (2008): 440.

⁴² Stephanie Hemelryk Donald and John G. Gammack, *Tourism and the Branded City: Film and Identity on the Pacific Rim* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 8.

Nevertheless, the idea of branding is highly suggestive of an infrastructure of symbolic and emotional capital. Certain key features are captured and promoted, others are disdained or re-narrativized, in order that a more desirable sense of self/place may emerge.”⁴³

So when ‘branding’ is proposed as an underlying concern of this thesis, it is not with a narrow focus that equates this simply with marketing and advertising. Rather, the term is used to invoke simultaneously a wide range of possible meanings and associated questions. Branding is both cause and effect, the mark-making tool and the inscription it leaves. It is a form of desire, which may also be a means of control. Or, to employ an industrial metaphor: branding is the fuel, the machine and the product. With regard to urban development in contemporary Shanghai, the marketing aspect of branding is certainly an important element, but it is one strand of a broader hegemonic process of inscribing and reinforcing a unified, consensual vision of the city.

The most egregious shortcoming of *Brand New China* in Berry’s appraisal is Wang’s “disturbing mischaracterization” of the field of cultural studies, which she attacks for regarding its subjects as blithe “consumers and dupes of advertising texts, which are decoded as ideology.” As Berry observes: “this is a bizarre claim... All the hours scholars like David Morley and Ien Ang spent in television viewers’ living rooms were based precisely on the understanding that they are not passive, and this is enshrined in such fundamental ideas as Stuart Hall’s... ‘dominant, negotiated, and resistant’ readings.”⁴⁴ The concept of hegemony is discussed in greater depth in Chapter Two of this thesis, including a consideration of Stuart Hall’s ideas as referred to by Berry. It is worth stressing at this point, though, that my own description of branding as a hegemonic process does not deny the presence of counter-narratives to the dominant vision of the city—quite the contrary. Indeed, to return to the industrial metaphor invoked earlier, branding involves not only the fuel, the machine and the product, but also the fumes—the bi-product not immediately identified (or necessarily desired), which may have significant and lasting effects.

Donald and Gammack stress that their study is “not a manual, for those who would brand cities.”⁴⁵ Rather they develop an understanding of branding that

⁴³ Ibid., 3.

⁴⁴ Berry, “Book Review of *Brand New China*,” 440-41.

⁴⁵ Donald and Gammack, *Tourism and the Branded City*, 1.

“becomes unbound from the tightly defined outcomes of a marketing campaign or advertising brief... and the impossible requirements of mandated character and consistency, to include constructs powerful enough to handle at least *an idea of* complexity, contradiction, evolutionary trajectories and visual metamorphoses.”⁴⁶ They arrive at this reconceptualization by pursuing a range of questions laid out in their excellent introductory chapter: “how do residents and visitors experience cities, and what part might cultural representations play in that experience? Do the concept and practice of branding have political dimensions? What does branding contribute to a city’s imaginary structure, or, more simply perhaps, how does one live in a ‘branded city’?”⁴⁷

These are important questions, which are echoed in this thesis, but in Donald and Gammack’s book the stated ambition sometimes outstrips the end result—the pitfall of an approach that is both interdisciplinary *and* comparative, drawing on the authors’ respective theoretical backgrounds in film and area studies, and business and psychology, to provide a phenomenological investigation of place branding not only in Shanghai but also Hong Kong and Sydney. Jane Stadler notes approvingly that “the volume does much to establish connections between film and tourism’s understandings of the urban landmarks that are so often their shared concern.” But she also acknowledges that the cross-disciplinary approach leads to a certain lack of depth with the scope of the project precluding a more detailed exploration of cinematic portrayals of city spaces.⁴⁸ This is particularly the case in the chapter dealing with Shanghai, where Donald and Gammack provide some interesting observations from Shanghainese academics and officials into what could be proposed as Shanghai’s aspirational “brand values,” including “openness,” “fusion” and “safety” (*kaifeng, anquan, ronghe*), and touch on various images and narratives of the city that “combine to produce a complex place-brand,” but fall somewhat short in their analysis of how such values and images intersect with the experience of living in a “branded city.”⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Ibid., 174.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 1.

⁴⁸ Jane Stadler, “Book Review of *Tourism and the Branded City: Film and Identity on the Pacific Rim* by Stephanie Hemelryk Donald and John G. Gammack,” *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 23, no. 5 (2009): 753

⁴⁹ Donald and Gammack, *Tourism and the Branded City*, 141–166. The volume’s most successful chapter considers Sydney, where Donald and Gammack draw on Kevin Lynch’s classic cognitive mapping experiments in *Image of the City* (1960) to develop a phenomenological method in which focus group participants reveal their

Equally, whilst quite a number of Shanghai-based films are cited by the authors, the constraints of a single chapter discussion entails that none of these receive more than a cursory examination.

In focussing solely on Shanghai, it is hoped that this thesis may result in a more extensive investigation of the questions raised by Gammack and Donald with regard to that city. Greater emphasis is given to artistic responses that seek to problematize the dominant brand image of the cityscape. These texts are discussed not simply for their narrative content, but also from a formal perspective, as instances of what Robin Visser would call the new “urban aesthetics” emerging in postsocialist China.⁵⁰ Also of particular interest are different modes of emotional engagement with the city as revealed not only by fictional characters in feature films, television and advertising campaigns, but also the subjects of documentary film. At times, films that may initially seem fully to embrace the dominant brand image of the city as espoused by marketing campaigns such as that for the Expo 2010 (‘Better City, Better Life’) reveal certain persistent anxieties when submitted to greater scrutiny. By way of example, one of the films discussed by Donald and Gammack is Wilson Yip’s *Leaving Me Loving You* (2004), of which they write:

Yip’s film, a ‘breakup and make up’ romantic comedy, is not only not very comic, neither is it a great Shanghai movie... However, the film is extremely successful as a paean of praise to Shanghai the international city. This is achieved by shameless exploitation of the city’s landmarks, fashionable paths and river edges... Yip traces the passing of time in fast fades of the skies at night and morning, the lights of the city seen across the river, and the blinking of progressively fewer lights as the day dawns. This is *the view*, Shanghai’s projection of itself as a world city in full colour.⁵¹

affective associations with their city by producing their own maps of their experiences of Sydney’s urban environment. The same experiment is not repeated for Shanghai or Hong Kong.

⁵⁰ Robin Visser, *Cities Surround the Countryside: Urban Aesthetics in Postsocialist China* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2010).

⁵¹ The only other conclusion they draw from the film is a brief mention that two secondary characters may be regarded as operating “at the level of a sub-brand” for Shanghai’s attributes: “they are the little people, the ones that make the city work, the ‘ordinary heroes’ and ‘small potatoes.’” Donald and Gammack, *Tourism and the Branded City*, 144–45.

Whilst my own extended discussion of *Leaving Me Loving You* in Chapter Three agrees with their conclusion that the film is most obviously “a paean of praise to Shanghai,” it also reveals something rather different: an almost relentless fixation on the relationship between speed, nervous stimulation and ennui in the city, with a pronounced yearning for forms of sensory engagement that move beyond the visual, precisely beyond “*the view*.”

These findings may be read as symptoms of what was described earlier as a culture of anticipation. At the end of the previous section it was noted that this must mean more than simply an emphasis on looking expectantly to the future. Having proposed ‘branding’ as a polysemous term that helps convey the complex processes determining and informed by this culture, I return now to the idea of anticipation and begin to outline its relevance to a cultural geography of contemporary Shanghai.

The Touristed Landscape

Donald and Gammack’s focus on tourism and its connections with film and the branding of the urban environment points towards a key aspect of the culture of anticipation: it emerges within the contexts of what Cartier would call a “touristed landscape.”⁵² Cartier uses the term “to signal that tourists significantly patronize these landscapes but that their formation has not fundamentally owed to the culture and economy of those who pass through.” If a broad interpretation of ‘passing through’ is taken, then it could be argued that Shanghai, with its semi-colonial past and its history as a site of domestic Chinese migration, *has* been fundamentally shaped by its visitors. However, Shanghai is not a tourist site in the sense that its economy and infrastructure are primarily geared towards the attraction of tourists. Rather, this cosmopolitan history may have contributed to a more pronounced embodiment of the *touristed* landscape, the idea of which Cartier describes as follows:

⁵² Carolyn Cartier, “Seductions of Place/Touristed Landscapes,” in *Seductions of Place: Geographical Perspectives on Globalization and Touristed Landscapes*, ed. Carolyn Cartier and Alan A. Lew (London: Routledge, 2005), 1–19.

[It] concerns the possibilities of understanding landscape as toured and lived, places visited by their own residents, the dialectic of moving in and out of ‘being a tourist.’ Touristed landscapes are about complexity of different people becoming different things, locals and visitors, sojourners and residents, locals becoming visitors, sojourners becoming residents, residents ‘being tourists,’ travellers denying being tourists: resident part-time tourists, tourists working hard to fit in as if locals.⁵³

Examples of these shifting incarnations of “locals and visitors, sojourners and residents,” and their movement through and experience of the urban landscape of contemporary Shanghai are found in the various texts discussed later in this thesis. The key argument to be put forth at this point is that there is an intimate link between tourism and anticipation.

In his seminal work, *The Tourist Gaze*, John Urry suggests that one of the defining characteristics of the social practice described as ‘tourism’ is that:

Places are chosen to be gazed upon because there is anticipation, especially through daydreaming and fantasy, of intense pleasures... Such anticipation is constructed and sustained through a variety of non-tourist practices, such as film, TV, literature, magazines, records and videos, which construct and reinforce that gaze.⁵⁴

Urry argues that tourism is the paradigmatic example of what Colin Campbell described as contemporary consumerism’s reliance on “imaginative pleasure-seeking.”⁵⁵ Skinner and Theodossopoulos, also drawing on Campbell’s work, identify expectation and imagination as central to the tourist experience: a tourist is “one who peddles in the anticipation of an experience,” yet frequently “the realization of an expectation leads to an anti-climax, since reality rarely meets the anticipated desire, idealized through daydreaming and the hedonism of the imagination. The

⁵³ Ibid., 3.

⁵⁴ John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 2nd Edition (London: Sage, 2002), 3.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 14. Colin Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987).

disillusionment of this fulfilled expectation is thus replaced by the anticipation of a new desire.”⁵⁶

David Crouch proposes the use of the construct “leisure/tourism” in recognition of the increasing overlap between these practices as societies become more affluent—with, on the one hand, tourism becoming an increasingly common, regular flight from the everyday (rather than an occasional event), and on the other, leisure time no longer simply understood as a relaxing intermission from the daily grind, but increasingly involving the kind of dynamic mobility and pursuit of heightened sensation often associated with tourism.⁵⁷ This collapsing together of leisure and tourism contributes to the fluid movement of “locals becoming visitors” in the touristed landscape, which, in turn, leads to a tension in the touristed landscape that the films discussed in the course of this thesis suggest is particularly pronounced in Shanghai. By Urry’s definition, “Tourism results from a basic binary division between the ordinary/everyday and the extraordinary. Tourist experiences involve some aspect or element that induces pleasurable experiences which, by comparison with the everyday, are out of the ordinary.”⁵⁸ Yet in the touristed environment, leisure/tourism economies and practices do not exist discrete from a broader “backstage” world of “real lives.”⁵⁹ Rather, there is constant overlap, with people living their ordinary lives within an environment that is proclaimed as extraordinary as a whole (‘Better City, Better Life’), and within which everyone is encouraged to behave as tourists. Hence experiencing the extraordinary is not an occasional flight of fancy to be indulged, but an ongoing everyday incitement. Sustaining this requires the persistent generation of “anticipated desire.” It is notable, furthermore, that in several of the films discussed in later chapters, the breakdown of this cycle—either through a falling out of love, or the desire for something ‘other,’ something transgressive and not pertaining to the sanitized desire for an ever healthier urban life—coincides with a

⁵⁶ Jonathan Skinner and Dimitrios Theodossopoulos, “Introduction: The Play of Expectation in Tourism,” in *Great Expectations: Imagination and Anticipation in Tourism*, ed. Jonathan Skinner and Dimitrios Theodossopoulos (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2011), 2.

⁵⁷ David Crouch, “Encounters in Leisure/Tourism” in *Leisure/Tourism Geographies: Practices and Geographical Knowledge*, ed. David Crouch (London: Routledge, 1999), 1–16.

⁵⁸ Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 12.

⁵⁹ Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*. 3rd ed. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999.

shift in the type of mobility experienced by the protagonists. The dynamic, directed mobility of the tourist, is replaced by a state of drifting, the production of which may be seen as an instance of what was referred to earlier as the ‘fumes’ or ‘bi-product’ resulting from the process of branding.

The dominant, hegemonic branding of the city space (as particularly described in Chapter Two) seeks to constantly stimulate desirous expectation, especially through forms of visual inscription. Since the original publication of *The Tourist Gaze* in 1990, various scholars, including Urry himself, have critiqued the author’s preoccupation with the visual at the expense of other forms of sensory engagement.⁶⁰ An additional chapter in the second edition (2002) provides a more nuanced conception of “the tourist gaze,” in which the visual remains pre-eminent, but is now understood as something “*embodied*” and “*mobilised*.” First Urry observes that “the notion of the tourist gaze is not meant to account for the individual motivations for travel. Rather I emphasise the systematic and regularised nature of various gazes, each of which depends upon a variety of social discourses and practices as well as on aspects of building, design and restoration that foster the necessary ‘look’ of a place or an environment.”⁶¹ He then stresses that “tourism always involves *corporeal* movement” and, as such the gaze is rarely simply “static” but typically involves “what Schivelbusch terms ‘a mobility of vision’ [... with] swiftly passing panorama, a sense of multi-dimensional rush and the fluid interconnections of places, peoples and possibilities.”⁶² This relationship between the visual and the kinaesthetic—the sense of the body’s movement within and through space—with the subject experiencing an onrushing flow of images, is also, as Giuliana Bruno notes, inherently “cinematic,” whilst film spectatorship is inscribed with the practices of travel culture.⁶³

⁶⁰ See for example, John Urry, “Sensing Leisure Spaces,” in *Leisure/Tourism Geographies: Practices and Geographical Knowledge*, ed. David Crouch (London: Routledge, 1999), 34–45; Adrian Franklin and Mike Crang, “The Trouble with Tourism and Travel Theory?” *Tourist Studies* 1, no. 1 (2001), 5–22; Sally Everett, “Beyond the Visual Gaze? The Pursuit of an Embodied Experience through Food Tourism,” *Tourist Studies* 8, no.3 (2008), 337–358.

⁶¹ Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 145.

⁶² Ibid., 152–153; See also, Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*.

⁶³ Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film* (New York: Verso, 2002). See the section on Cinematic Urbanism in Chapter Two of this thesis for further discussion on the theme of cinema, cartography and mobile viewing practices.

Urry further notes that the corporeality of tourism frequently involves forms of “co-presence.” Firstly there is co-presence with a “particular place,” brought about by “a powerful ‘compulsion to proximity’”—the crucial requirement of the tourist “to be there oneself” and see that place “for oneself.”⁶⁴ Also, though, there is often the co-presence of others, as they too seek to share in an experience, event or activity:

These corporeally defined practices are found in specific, specialised ‘leisure spaces,’ geographically and ontologically distant from work and domestic sites. Indeed part of the attraction of these places, where bodies can be corporeally alive... is that they are sensuously ‘other’ to everyday routines and places... Such places involve ‘adventure,’ islands of life resulting from intense bodily arousal, from bodies in motion, finding their complex way in time and space.⁶⁵

In the touristed landscape, however, these “specialised ‘leisure spaces’” may not be so obviously distant from work and domestic sites. A striking example in Shanghai, drawing together several of the ideas discussed, is the Bund promenade area (analyzed in greater depth in Chapter Three). Looking across from the Bund to the skyscrapers of the Lujiazui business district is *the* great contemporary view of Shanghai. Endlessly reproduced, any visitor to the city will likely have already seen images of this view, yet there is still a desire (indeed a desire made stronger by these images) to experience it for real. But the space is not peopled solely by outside visitors: locals are also there, behaving as tourists, or using the promenade as a leisure space; entrepreneurs are selling goods, and, in the nearby buildings, businesses are involved in their daily trade. As the internet reviews of the Bund area discussed in Chapter Three reveal, the experience of this site is often characterized as an “adventure.” The view is not a one-off event, but an ongoing spectacle, relying primarily on visual impact and a sense of scale. It is a view that is both anticipated and desired by the visitor, and is also itself *about* anticipation and desire. The view is never fully completed because there are always more skyscrapers being built. The construction of these buildings is evidence of economic success, but is also predicated

⁶⁴ Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 154.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 155.

on *anticipation* of future success. Structures simultaneously announce wealth and seek to attract it. It is a marriage of spectacle and speculation—*spectaculation*.

Financial speculation has become a widespread activity in Shanghai since the Open Door reform policies were introduced; not simply the preserve of those working in the City, but enthusiastically pursued by large swathes of Shanghai residents—a quasi-leisure activity which, for many, is more lucrative than their regular employment.⁶⁶ Of course, such speculation is grounded in anticipation, with investors seeking to predict the fluctuations of the financial markets.

The Bund promenade view received a further emblem of anticipated economic dynamism in 2010 with the arrival of its own version of the famous Wall Street Charging Bull statue, a visual testament to the city's aspirations to rival New York. It is notable that the placement of the statue was not in the Lujiazui business district itself, next to the Shanghai Stock exchange Building, but on the other side of the river, affording visitors to the Bund promenade a full view of the triumphant skyline towards which the bull charges. Situated next to the statue is one of several large LCD cubes, with screens on each side, showing a combination of financial data and images of the Bund waterfront accompanied by text extolling the joys of a clean urban environment. The images are akin to those reproduced in tourist advertisements, but their presence in this instance—within the actual site that they in turn re-present—produces a *mise-en-abyme* of architectural and economic prestige, showcasing a destination that is not geographically elsewhere, but right here, in the process of being fashioned.

⁶⁶ See Gamble, *Shanghai in Transition*, 166–188.



Fig. 3: The Shanghai Charging Bull



Fig. 4: Photographing the Charging Bull at dusk



Fig. 5: LCD display on the Bund Promenade, displaying the Bund Promenade:
a *mise-en-abyme* of architectural and economic prestige

Cinematic Urbanism

It was proposed earlier that cinema could provide a blueprint for reading the city's redevelopment, and Urry's discussion of the corporeal, mobilized nature of the tourist gaze is suggestive of why the touristed environment of contemporary Shanghai may also be considered as a *cinematic* landscape. In order to advance this argument further, it is first necessary to explore what might be implicated in using the term 'cinematic.' It is a question that calls to mind the work of one of the key twentieth century film theorists, André Bazin, whose various writings have been compiled into a classic multi-volume collection, translated into English as *What is Cinema?*⁶⁷ A comprehensive overview of the literature on both film theory and film history

⁶⁷ André Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, Volumes 1 and 2, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967).

(disciplines which have frequently vied against each other) is not possible here, but a brief consideration of Bazin's work may help to focus in on a particular strain of film studies that is most pertinent to this current study.⁶⁸

Bazin is especially known for his claims concerning what he calls "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," in which the "inescapable subjectivity" of the painter's work, which offers "illusion," is supplanted (at least in terms of objectivity), by photography and cinema, which are "discoveries that satisfy, once and for all and in its very essence, our obsession with realism." The photograph and the object "share a common being, after the fashion of a fingerprint." Indeed, for Bazin, "The photographic image is the object itself... No matter how fuzzy, distorted, or discoloured, no matter how lacking in documentary value the image may be, it shares, by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is the reproduction; it *is* the model." He goes on to suggest that, "Viewed in this perspective, the cinema is objectivity in time."⁶⁹

Bazin's emphasis on cinema's capacity for objectivity accounts for his exaltation of the aesthetics of Italian neo-realist cinema (which he saw as offering access to metaphysical truths, with its use of deep-focus technology and freely unfolding *mise-en-scène*, in which the meaning remains ambiguous and is not over-determined for the spectator) above the "stylized interwar movements of Soviet montage, German expressionism, as well as the crystallization of narrative editing in American cinema."⁷⁰ Such stylistic hierarchizing has been criticised for promoting an over-essentialized, "grand theory" notion of cinematic realism, and hence there is a certain irony in beginning this discussion of the cinematic with Bazin, as my own

⁶⁸ A helpful primer for some of the major themes to have emerged in the field of film theory is Robert Lapsley and Michael Westlake's *Film Theory: An Introduction*, 2nd Edition (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2006); Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen's edited volume *Film Theory and Criticism*, 6th Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), provides a wide range of selected writings from key film theorists; concise discussions of the work of leading theorists can be found in the volume edited by Felicity Colman, *Film, Theory and Philosophy: The Key Thinkers* (Durham, UK: Acumen, 2009); the various essays in Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams' volume, *Reinventing Film Studies* (London: Arnold, 2000), offer examples of the diverse new avenues of inquiry that had opened up in the field by the start of the twenty first century.

⁶⁹ André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," in *Film Theory and Criticism*, ed. Braudy and Marshall, 166–170.

⁷⁰ Hunter Vaughan, "Andre Bazin," *Film, Theory and Philosophy*, ed. Colman, 105.

deployment specifically calls for a more “ephemeral and mobile” conception of the term.⁷¹

Yet, whilst Bazin’s seemingly idealistic and essentialist position may frequently have been admonished in the final decades of the twentieth century, recent scholarship has sought to recuperate his work with more nuanced readings.⁷² Both Hunter Vaughan and Tom Gunning have drawn attention to the phenomenological emphasis of Bazin’s theory. Vaughan notes that many of Bazin’s critics “seem stubbornly to ignore the final sentence [of ‘The Ontology of the Photographic Image’]: ‘On the other hand, cinema is a language’... In other words, film is a process of signification.”⁷³ He underlines Bazin’s attempts “to understand the very junction of signification in film, the dialectic between the form and content of the text and between the spectator’s imagination and the cinematic fable.” From here he argues that, rather than only being concerned with ideas of spiritual transcendence, Bazin offers a “theory of cinematic immanence... For Bazin there is not only a *real* that is external to cinema, but also a reality in which cinema plays an important role, both as a recording device and also as a sociopolitical force. Bazin’s notion of the real implicates the director, actor and spectator in the world around us, from which we are inseparable.”⁷⁴

Gunning, likewise, draws attention to Bazin’s claims that “photography actually contributes something to the order of natural creation instead of providing a substitute for it.”⁷⁵ However, this same line problematizes the notion of considering film as “a process of signification,” as it denies photography (and hence film), “the chief characteristic of a sign, that of supplying a substitute for a referent.” There is a difference, Gunning suggests, “between a semiotics that approaches the photograph (and therefore film) as a sign and a theory like Bazin’s that deals instead with the way

⁷¹ Noël Carroll, *Theorizing the Moving Image* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). “Ephemeral and mobile” is a phrase used by Jeffrey Geiger and Katrin Littau, whose work is discussed later in this section; Geiger and Littau, “Introduction: Cinematicity and Comparative Media,” in Geiger and Littau, ed. *Cinematicity in Media History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 6

⁷² As an example of such a reevaluation, see Philip Rosen, *Change Mummified: Cinema, Historicity, Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2001).

⁷³ Vaughan, “André Bazin,” 105.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 100; 108.

⁷⁵ Cited in Tom Gunning, “Moving away from the Index: Cinema and the Impression of Reality,” *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 18, no. 1 (2007), 33.

film creates an aesthetic world.”⁷⁶ If “cinema is a language,” as Bazin asserts, then it is one that employs its own form of semiotics.

It was this problem that occupied the work of a later French film theorist, Christian Metz, who argued that cinema was “a language without a *langue*, where *langue* is understood in a Saussurean sense as ‘a system of signs intended for intercommunication.’”⁷⁷ Metz sought to define a semiotics of cinema in which it was the spatio-temporal logic of narrative structures rather than the individual image that could be uncoded, resulting in his most famous work, the so-called *grande syntagmatique*, which was “an attempt to provide an exhaustive classification of the segmentation of cinematic narratives.”⁷⁸ This present thesis is less concerned with the “exhaustive” categorizations of Metz’s later semiotic work, and more interested in the phenomenological emphasis of his early essay, “On the Impression of Reality in the Cinema” (a work to which Gunning also turns in his lucid exploration of cinematic realism, after having first noted that Bazin’s theories cannot be fully explained simply in terms of the photographic image as an index of reality).⁷⁹

Metz writes that, “‘Films release a mechanism of affective and perceptual *participation* in the spectator.’”⁸⁰ This participation must be “engendered” and, significantly, the “strong impression of reality” in the spectator’s perception of the film is the result of “*movement*.”⁸¹ Gunning explicates this claim as follows:

We experience motion on the screen in a different way than we look at still images, and this difference explains our participation in the film image, a sense of perceptual richness or immediate involvement in the image. Spectator participation in the moving image depends, Metz claims, on perceiving motion and the perceptual, cognitive, and physiological effects this triggers. The nature of cinematic motion, its continuous progress, its unfolding nature, would seem to demand the participation of a perceiver.⁸²

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Lapsley and Westlake, *Film Theory: An Introduction*, 38.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 40.

⁷⁹ Christian Metz, “On the Impression of Reality in the Cinema,” in *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema*, trans. Michael Taylor (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 3–15.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 4.

⁸¹ Ibid., 5–7.

⁸² Gunning, “Moving away from the Index,” 42.

The sense of realism which cinematic movement engenders is of a different order to the indexical reality of the photograph—that is, the unfolding film does not necessarily need to look real, in order to *feel* real: “bodily sensations of movement can engage spectator fantasy through perceptual and physical participation. Thus, movement created by animation, freed from photographic reference, can endow otherwise ‘impossible’ motion and transformations with the immediacy of perception that Metz claims movement entails.”⁸³ The Virtual World exhibit in the Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Centre (discussed in detail in Chapter Two) offers a good example of the effect Gunning describes: the computer-generated graphics of the film do not provide real images of Shanghai, but the movement through the city space feels real, particularly as the 360-degree video screen fully surrounds the spectator. Gunning argues that focussing on this “sensation of kinesthesia avoids the exclusive visual and ideological emphasis of most theories of spectatorship and acknowledges instead that film spectators are embodied beings rather than simply eyes and minds somehow suspended before the screen... We do not just see motion and we are not simply affected emotionally by its role within a plot; we feel it in our guts or throughout our bodies.”⁸⁴

Vivian Sobchack presents a ground-breaking exploration of the relationship between film viewing and the embodied spectator in her 1992 work, *The Address of the Eye*.⁸⁵ Drawing on Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s writings on perception and expression she offers a phenomenological reading of the film experience, which seeks “to make explicit the phenomenon of signification in the cinema as it is lived through and embodied in an enworlded subject of vision, that is, as it occurs existentially and directly *for us* and *before us*, rather than abstracted from us or posited against us.”⁸⁶ She argues against film spectatorship as an “*act of viewing*” in which the film is merely a “*viewed object*.” Instead, she regards film itself as a subject—an “eye/I” with a specific view—that is perceived by the spectator/subject. Hence the film viewing experience becomes an intersubjective, communicative act:

⁸³ Ibid., 45–46.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 39.

⁸⁵ Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

⁸⁶ Ibid., 27–28.

What we look at projected on the screen... addresses us as the expressed perception of an anonymous, yet present “other.” And, as we watch this expressive projection of an “other’s” experience, we, too, express our perceptive experience. Through the address of our own vision, we speak back to the cinematic expression before us, using a visual language that is also tactile, that takes hold of and actively grasps the perceptual expression, the seeing, the direct experience of that anonymously present, sensing and sentient “other.”⁸⁷

This notion that the eye’s address to the film may occasion a sensory encounter that is more than just visual is pursued further by Laura U. Marks in *The Skin of the Film* (2000), which explores “the intriguing question of how film and video represent the ‘unrepresentable’ senses, such as touch, smell, and taste.”⁸⁸ She proposes a theory of “*haptic visuality*” in which “the eyes themselves function like organs of touch.” Whilst noting that sound may be “experienced kinesthetically; for example, the booming in the chest caused by deep bass tones, or the complex effects of rhythm on the body,” she focuses especially on this “haptic visuality,” in comparison to “optical visuality,” as the means by which “a work of cinema, though it only directly engages two senses, activates a memory that necessarily involves all the senses.”⁸⁹ This embodied, haptic visuality may function like the sense of touch:

Haptic visuality is distinguished from optical visuality, which sees things from enough distance to perceive them as distinct forms in deep space: in other words, how we usually conceive of vision. Optical visuality depends on a separation between the viewing subject and the object. Haptic looking tends to move over the surface of its object rather than to plunge into illusionistic depth, not to distinguish form so much as to discern texture. It

⁸⁷ Ibid., 9.

⁸⁸ Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000), xvi. See also, Laura U. Marks, *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); Jennifer M. Barker, *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009).

⁸⁹ Marks, *The Skin of the Film*, xvi, 22.

is more inclined to move than to focus, more inclined to graze than to gaze.⁹⁰

Marks identifies a haptic mode of visuality as a salient feature of what she terms “intercultural cinema.” This tends to be cinema resulting from “the new cultural formations of Western metropolitan centers, which in turn have resulted from global flows of immigration, exile, and diaspora.” But although she concentrates on examples in the United States, Canada and Great Britain, Marks notes that “this is an international phenomenon, produced wherever people of different cultural backgrounds live together.” Although not proscribed from commercially-minded films, Marks finds most evidence of haptic visuality in independent and experimental productions, in which the filmmakers have sought to awaken and embody cultural memories that have been displaced by the “power-inflected spaces of diaspora, (post- or neo-) colonialism, and cultural apartheid.” The “violent disjunctions in space and time that characterize diasporan experience” can cause feelings of *disembodiment*, against which a haptic, intercultural cinema reacts.⁹¹

“Violent disjunctions in space and time,” are a feature of the rapid urban transformations in postsocialist China that have caused many Chinese residents to experience an almost exilic state themselves as their old neighbourhoods become unrecognizable, or they are relocated to outlying suburbs, and a number of recent academic works have considered the proliferation of independent and experimental film productions that engage with these effects.⁹² An extensive analysis of

⁹⁰ Ibid., 162.

⁹¹ Ibid., 1.

⁹² See, for example, Zhang Zhen, ed., *The Urban Generation: Chinese Cinema and Society at the Turn of the Twenty-first Century* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007); Robin Visser, *Cities Surround the Countryside: Urban Aesthetics in Postsocialist China* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010); Yingjin Zhang, *Cinema, Space, and Polylocality in a Globalizing China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2010); Luke Robinson, *Independent Chinese Documentary: From the Studio to the Street* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Andreas Tibrand, “Representations – Practice – Spectatorship: A Study of Haptic Relations between Independent Cinema and Market-led Urbanization in Contemporary China,” *Working Papers in Contemporary Asian Studies* 23 (Centre for East and South East Asian Studies: Lund University, 2008). Yomi Braester’s *Painting the City Red: Chinese Cinema and the Urban Contract* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010) traces the historic relationship between cinema and urban planning from 1949 through to the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

independent and experimental cinema in Shanghai is not the project of this thesis, although the work of filmmaker Andrew Y-S Cheng, which is discussed briefly in the final chapter, exhibits various characteristics that belong to Marks' definition of haptic visuality. What is most relevant here is Sobchack and Marks' broader, phenomenological approach in which "cinema is not an illusion but an extension of the viewer's embodied existence...[and] the relationship between spectator and film is fundamentally mimetic, in that meaning is not solely communicated through signs but experienced in the body."⁹³

As Gunning has cautioned that "the greatest limitation visual studies might occasion would be reifying a division of the senses," so Sobchack and Marks argue for an understanding of visuality that becomes embodied and multisensorial.⁹⁴ And yet, it is a corporeal experience that is, nonetheless, mediated through the visual. This is pertinent with regard to the branding of contemporary Shanghai, where a tension emerges between the promise of a fully embodied encounter with the city space, in which unhindered movement and engagement allows "inhabitants" and "users" to actively participate in shaping the urban environment, and a more circumscribed mobility, which is in thrall to Urry's "systematic and regularised" series of views.⁹⁵ The latter may account for the sense of disembodiment, or drift, which seems to afflict various protagonists in several of the films analysed later in this thesis. To talk of these films as both responsive to and constitutive of a city which may itself be analysed in cinematic terms is to move beyond a discussion of films as simply representations of the city, and to consider, as Nezar AlSayyad writes, how cinema might serve "as an analytical tool of urban discourse."⁹⁶ To pursue this argument

⁹³ Marks, *The Skin of the Film*, 149.

⁹⁴ Tom Gunning, "Visual Culture Questionnaire," *October* 77, no. 2 (1996), 38. Cited in Cartwright, "Film and the Digital in Visual Studies," 425.

⁹⁵ "Inhabitants" and "users" are terms deployed by Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), which is discussed in detail in Chapter Two. Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 145.

⁹⁶ Nezar AlSayyad, *Cinematic Urbanism: A History of the Modern from Reel to Real* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 4. Other examples of the growing literature addressing the relationship between cinema and the city include: Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice, ed., *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001); Barbara Mennel, *Cities and Cinema: Routledge Critical Introductions to Urbanism and the City* (New York: Routledge, 2008); and Andrew Webber and Emma Wilson, ed., *Cities in Transition: The Moving Image and the Modern Metropolis* (London: Wallflower Press, 2008).

further, it is necessary to understand how the notion of the cinematic may break free from a strict attachment to the medium of film.

Metz reiterates his emphasis on cinema as a medium grounded in *moving* images in *Language and Cinema* (1974), where he proposes a hierarchy of “cinematic codes” arranged in “groups” or “concentric circles” according to their varying “degrees of cinematicity” (*cinématographicité* in the original). He identifies “iconicity, mechanical duplication, and sequencing,” as “distinctive features of the material of expression proper to the image in the cinema which is, in addition, *moving*.” However, he notes that these “are not the only distinctive features” and, whilst his project is ultimately an attempt to define the essential qualities of cinema as a medium, it is clear that his notion of *cinématographicité* extends beyond film—it is not just in the medium of cinema that aspects of “cinematicity” may be apparent.⁹⁷ Jeffrey Geiger and Katrin Littau make this same observation in the Introduction to their edited volume, *Cinematicity in Media History*:

While the cinema may belong for Metz to the groups or circles of language systems that ‘rest upon the moving picture,’ *cinématographicité* itself becomes something heterogeneous and mobile, and Metz locates it in precisely those art forms and systems of representation (animated designs, photo novels, sequences of still photographs and so on) that are not cinema *per se*.⁹⁸

And so, Metz’s use of the term *cinématographicité* “comes closer to establishing cinematicity less as a quality intrinsic or *proper* to cinema than as a descriptor of how the cinematic can operate at more ephemeral and mobile levels.”⁹⁹

The first two sections of Geiger and Littau’s volume explore the overlaps and porosity of cinematic qualities between different media both before and in parallel with the development of cinema, whilst the final section, “Digital Cinematicity,” seeks to demonstrate “how cinematicity flouts recent discussions concerning the

⁹⁷ Christian Metz, *Language and Cinema*, trans. Donna Jean Umekker –Seboek (The Hague: Mouton, 1974), 224–231.

⁹⁸ Geiger and Littau, “Introduction,” 6.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

‘death’ of cinema, to survive in the digital age.”¹⁰⁰ These various essays echo Gunning’s assertion that, “as a new technology at the end of the nineteenth century, cinema did not immediately appear with a defined essence as a medium, but rather, displayed an amazing promiscuity (if not polymorphic perversity) in both its models and uses.” Ever since, “cinema has never been one thing. It has always been a point of intersection, a braiding together of diverse strands.”¹⁰¹

Scholars such as Gunning make a case “against the *telos* of narrative” and move “beyond the historiography of early cinema itself to consider environmental and psychological features of the world in which the first films were made and seen.”¹⁰² Leo Charney and Vanessa Schwartz’s edited volume, *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, adopts this same approach and presents a collection of essays examining the participation and influence of early cinema in “modern” living, drawing on the work of early twentieth century theorists including Benjamin, Simmel and Kracauer, to advance an argument that “modernity... [is] best understood as inherently cinematic... [and] cannot be conceived outside the context of the city”.¹⁰³ A similar line of enquiry is pursued in various writings by Miriam Hansen (whose chapter on Kracauer and Benjamin, cinema and modernity, concludes Charney and Schwartz’s volume), including an influential essay on “Shanghai Silent Film As Vernacular Modernism,” which explores how Shanghai cinema (both film productions and movie theatre spaces) became a “sensory-reflexive horizon for the experience of modernization and modernity,” as Shanghainese filmmakers and audiences appropriated Western influences and infused them with a local idiom.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 13.

¹⁰¹ Gunning, “Moving away from the Index,” 35–36.

¹⁰² Ian Christie, “Moving-picture Media and Modernity: Taking Intermediate and Ephemeral Forms Seriously,” in Geiger and Littau, ed. *Cinematicity in Media History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 46–47.

¹⁰³ Leo Charney and Vanessa Schwartz, “Introduction,” in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, ed. Leo Charney and Vanessa Schwartz (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 2–4. This conjunction between cinema and modernity was recognized not only by early film theorists, but also practitioners such as Walter Ruttmann and Dziga Vertov, whose work has received renewed attention in recent years from scholars, film festivals and musicians.

¹⁰⁴ Miriam Hansen, “America, Paris, the Alps: Kracauer (and Benjamin) on Cinema and Modernity,” in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, ed. Leo Charney and Vanessa Schwartz (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 362–402; Miriam Hansen, “Fallen Women, Rising Stars, New Horizons: Shanghai Silent Film As Vernacular Modernism,” *Film Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (2000), 10. Several

Ian Christie's chapter in *Cinematicity in Media History* draws on such work in critiquing a teleological view of media history in which the medium of film emerges as the triumphant successor to earlier optical toys and viewing apparatuses, with the main narrative then given over to tracing the stylistic development of "normalized mainstream" cinema.¹⁰⁵ Instead, he stresses that a range of media forms (possessing aspects of cinematicity) "have existed in an ongoing ensemble, with frequent revivals and re-purposings, and of course technological upgrades."¹⁰⁶ A recognition of cinematic fluidity, reconfiguration and persistence, rather than neat succession, problematizes the often arbitrary usage of the term "modernity" to designate a specific period of time, frequently aligned with the historical birth of the film apparatus. This resonates with my own Chapter Three where I consider the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel as a cinematic experience, and helps account for the apparent tension in this tourist attraction functioning simultaneously as a seemingly anachronistic throwback and a highly topical marker of Shanghai's postsocialist neo-modernity.

Film studies, Lisa Cartwright observes, "has always been as much about the experience and conditions of duration, spatiality, perception, attention, and sound in modernity as it has been about film images and texts."¹⁰⁷ Cartwright's work is indebted to Anne Friedberg, whose *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (1993), was a pioneering study of nineteenth century visual entertainments and their convergence with, and anticipation of, the practices of mall shopping, tourism and

books have focussed specifically on early Shanghai cinema as an index of that city's modernity, including Yingjin Zhang's edited volume, *Cinema and Urban Culture in Shanghai, 1922–1943*, Leo Ou-fan Lee's *Shanghai Modern* (which also explores the architecture and literature of 1930s Shanghai), and Zhang Zhen's *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen*, which concludes with a mention of contemporary Shanghai, where the "revamped metropolitan space has once again become a hotbed of mass culture". Such works suggest the validity of Jeffrey Wasserstrom's argument in *Global Shanghai, 1850–2010* that Shanghai's current claims to global city status are not a new development, but represent rather a "re-globalizing" of the metropolis. [Zhang Zhen, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen: Shanghai Cinema, 1896–1937* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 346; Yingjin Zhang, ed. *Cinema and Urban Culture in Shanghai, 1922–1943* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999); Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Wasserstrom, *Global Shanghai, 1850–2010*, 134.]

¹⁰⁵ Christie, "Moving-picture Media and Modernity, 60.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 47.

¹⁰⁷ Lisa Cartwright, "Film and the Digital in Visual studies: Film studies in the era of convergence," in *The Visual Culture Reader* 2nd Edition, ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff (London: Routledge, 2002), 419.

film watching.¹⁰⁸ Friedberg traces the rise of consumer culture and the corollary “increasing cultural centrality” of a distinctive feature of the cinematic apparatus, which she calls the “*mobilized ‘virtual’ gaze*:”

The *virtual gaze* is not a direct perception but a *received* perception mediated through representation. I introduce this compound term in order to describe a gaze that travels in an imaginary *flânerie* through an imaginary elsewhere and an imaginary elsewhen. The *mobilized gaze* has a history, which begins well before cinema and is rooted in other cultural activities that involve walking and travel. The virtual gaze has a history rooted in all forms of visual representation (back to cave painting), but produced most dramatically by photography. The cinema developed as an apparatus that combined the “mobile” with the “virtual.” Hence, cinematic spectatorship changed, in unprecedented ways, concepts of the *present* and the *real*.¹⁰⁹

Friedberg begins with a discussion of Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon device (which Foucault used as an illustration of how “when power enters the visual register, it tends to the non-corporeal”) and notes both the temptations and limitations in taking the panoptic guard (“the *unseen seer* in the position of omnipotent voyeurism”) as a metaphoric model for cinematic spectation:

Like the central tower guard, the film spectator is totally invisible, absent not only from self-observation but from surveillance as well. But unlike the panoptic guard, the film spectator is not in the position of the central tower, with full scopic range, but is rather a subject with a limited (and preordained) scope. The film spectator’s position is one of such *imaginary* visual omnipotence... The panoptic emphasizes the subjective effects of

¹⁰⁸ Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993).

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 2–3.

imagined scrutiny and ‘permanent visibility’ on the *observed*, but does not explore the subjectivity of the *observer*.¹¹⁰

As an alternative to this panoptic model, Friedberg considers the panorama and diorama and identifies in them the proto-cinematic features of a “*mobilized ‘virtual’ gaze*.” These inventions were “building-machines with a different objective: designed to *transport*—rather than to *confine*—the spectator-subject... these devices produced a spatial and temporal mobility—if only a ‘virtual’ one.”¹¹¹

Once more refuting a teleological narrative of the film apparatus, Jackie Hadfield notes that “current participatory and semi-immersive cinema that the viewer can inhabit, is also the technological re-invention of pre film forms of cinematic display, i.e. panorama, camera obscura, phantasmagoria.”¹¹² These technologies intersect with the field of “expanded cinema”—a term first introduced by Gene Youngblood in his exploration of video as an art form. Youngblood described expanded cinema as “expanded consciousness” and Hadfield summarizes the term as “synaesthetic cinematic spectacle (spectacle meaning exhibition, rather than simply an issue of projection or scale), whereby the notions of conventional filmic language (for example, dramaturgy, narrative, structure, technology) are either extended or interrogated outside the *single-screen* space.”¹¹³ Within these immersive cinematic environments “the corporeal body can be central, and the subject as an active becoming rather than a passive given, can be both participant and accomplice in the composition of images.”¹¹⁴

Yet, as noted earlier, in Shanghai, this corporeal emphasis seems frequently to be in tension with a state of disembodiment. This paradox may partly be explained by Friedberg’s observation that “as the ‘mobility’ of the gaze became more ‘virtual’ the observer became more immobile, passive, ready to receive the constructions of a virtual reality placed in front of his or her unmoving body.”¹¹⁵ Rabinovitz suggests

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 19–20; Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979).

¹¹¹ Friedberg, *Window Shopping*, 20.

¹¹² Jackie Hadfield, “Expanded Cinema and Cinema of Attractions,” *art in-sight* 27, no. 1 (2005), 8.

¹¹³ Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema* (London: Studio Vista, 1970), 41; Hadfield, “Expanded Cinema and Cinema of Attractions,” 5.

¹¹⁴ Hadfield, “Expanded Cinema and Cinema of Attractions,” 8.

¹¹⁵ Friedberg, *Window Shopping*, 28.

that “cinema represents a complex interplay between embodied forms of subjectivity and arguments for disembodiment.”¹¹⁶ This can be seen in the case of the proto-cinematic diorama:

The technology of the diorama relied on spectator immobility, but offered a visual excursion and a virtual release from the confinements of everyday space and time.

But if the panopticon was dependent on the enclosure of the look, the inward measure of confined but visible subjects, the diorama was dependent on the imaginary expansion of that look. Unlike the jailer-surveyor, the dioramic spectator was not attempting mastery over human subjects, but was instead engaged in the pleasures of mastery over an artificially constructed world, the pleasure of immersion in a world not present [...] And it is this notion of the confined *place* combined with a notion of *journey* that is present simultaneously in cinematic spectation.¹¹⁷

Links between cinema and travel—and especially the notion of cinema itself “as a machine for travel”—are explored in Jeffrey Ruoff’s edited volume *Virtual Voyages* (2006).¹¹⁸ Lauren Rabinovitz’s essay analyzes early travel ride films, which “simulated railroad or auto travel in order to foreground the body itself as a site for sensory experience. They articulated a seemingly contradictory process for the spectator: they attempted to dematerialize the subject’s body through its extension into the cinematic field while they repeatedly emphasized the corporeality of the body and the physical delirium of the senses.” There is a parallel here with the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel, the Oriental Pearl Tower Space Capsule and the bungee ride in the film *Leaving Me Loving You*, all of which are discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis, and the Virtual World exhibit as analyzed in Chapter Two. The latter also shares affinities with Alison Griffith’s description of the IMAX experience, where

¹¹⁶ Lauren Rabinovitz, “From *Hale’s Tours* to *Star Tours*: Virtual Voyages, Travel Ride Films, and the Delirium of the Hyper-real,” in *Virtual Voyages: Cinema and Travel*, ed. Jeffrey Ruoff (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 45.

¹¹⁷ Friedberg, *Window Shopping*, 28–29.

¹¹⁸ Jeffrey Ruoff, “Introduction: The Filmic Fourth Dimension: Cinema as Audiovisual Vehicle,” in *Virtual Voyages: Cinema and Travel*, ed. Jeffrey Ruoff (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 1.

“motion itself—the kinetic impulse defining travel—is textually inscribed... via the phantom ride (camera located on the front of a moving object such as a plane, train, or vehicle.” The scale and nature of this representational form struggles, she suggests, “to enunciate when dealing with the small, the fleeting, and the intimate.”¹¹⁹

A revised version of Griffiths’ chapter features in her 2008 work, *Shivers Down Your Spine: Cinema, Museums, and the Immersive View*, which proposes “an expanded paradigm of spectatorship, beyond the seated spectator in the darkened auditorium...[examining] the complex spatial relations and embodied modes of encountering visual spectacle that accompany immersive and interactive spectating... [taking] into account one of the most striking features of the case studies examined in this book: audience mobility around the viewing space.”¹²⁰ Griffiths identifies museums as being exemplary of quasi-cinematic, *immersive* spaces in which “one feels enveloped... and strangely affected by a strong sense of the otherness of the virtual world one has entered, neither fully lost in the experience nor completely in the here and now.”¹²¹

This notion of cinematic immersion is particularly pertinent to contemporary Shanghai, where there is both a proliferation of discrete sites such as the Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Centre and Bund Sightseeing Tunnel that offer such an experience, and a more widespread manifestation of the immersive view in aspects of the city’s infrastructure, fashion campaigns, the myriad shopping malls and plazas bedecked with LCD screens frequently showing spectacular images of the city, and landmark locations such as the Bund promenade. If the development of the cinematic apparatus saw “the mass viewing of projected narratives [become] a major leisure activity for an increasing number of twentieth century citizens,” then twenty-first century Shanghai has seen an increasing number of immersive leisure/tourist spaces, combining elements of spectacle and motion, in which the city’s complex past and present becomes configured so as to offer a narrative of current civic success, and an ever greater projected future, to the masses.¹²² The almost visceral sense of

¹¹⁹ Alison Griffiths, “Time Traveling IMAX Style: Tales from the Giant Screen,” in *Virtual Voyages: Cinema and Travel*, ed. Jeffrey Ruoff (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 239–241.

¹²⁰ Alison Griffiths, *Shivers Down Your Spine: Cinema, Museums, and the Immersive View* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 1.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹²² Christie, “Moving-picture Media and Modernity,” 47.

Shanghai's triumphant march forward that these sites seek to engender, has, in Gunning's terms, a distinctly cinematic quality:

Motion always has a projective aspect, a progressive movement in a direction, and therefore invokes possibility and a future. Of course, we can project these states into a static image, but with an actually moving image we are swept along with the motion itself. Rather than imagining previous or anterior states, we could say that through a moving image, the progress of motion is projected onto us.¹²³

Griffiths' emphasis on spectatorial mobility and interactivity in the immersive environment seems initially at odds with Friedberg's assertion that "as the 'mobility' of the gaze became more 'virtual' the observer became more immobile."¹²⁴ Certainly to speak of significant elements of the urban environment itself as being *cinematic* would seem to require a spectatorial involvement that is not truly static, as people are constantly moving physically and not just virtually through this environment. Yet, by extending her notion of the "mobilized 'virtual' gaze" to mall shopping, Friedberg is clearly not restricting this experience to a fully static state with the spectator immobile in the enclosed space of a movie theatre or its equivalent, such as a panorama or diorama. Indeed, she highlights places of apparent mobility: "arcades, department stores, exhibition halls—the timeless spaces that encouraged flânerie."¹²⁵ Her argument, though, is that cinematic type apparatuses "turned the pleasures of flânerie into a commodity form [and] negotiated new illusions of spatial and temporal mobility." In this context, the scale of the "imaginary mobilities" promised to spectators far exceeds the actual mobility occurring within the regulated spaces in which these fantasies are offered.¹²⁶

Michelle Huang's *Walking Between Slums and Skyscrapers* (2004) analyzes the illusory freedoms of various fictive *flâneurs* in her exploration of the effects of globalization on the "lived space" of Hong Kong, Tokyo and Shanghai.¹²⁷ By

¹²³ Gunning, "Moving away from the Index," 42–43.

¹²⁴ Friedberg, *Window Shopping*, 28.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹²⁷ Tsung-Yi Michelle Huang, *Walking Between Slums and Skyscrapers: Illusions of Open Space in Hong Kong, Tokyo, and Shanghai* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University

juxtaposing “official” accounts of the city space (those conceived of by politicians and planners) with the emotional experience of *flâneurs* in film and—in her section on Shanghai—literature, Huang argues persuasively that the liberation of movement promised by the global city remains restricted to those outside a privileged socio-economic elite. Although several of the film texts discussed in this thesis certainly resonate with Huang’s convincing proposition, the greater emphasis here (especially in the earlier chapters) is on how “official” representations of space in Shanghai are themselves structured in distinctly cinematic terms.

This thesis is situated, therefore, not only within the wider discourses of Chinese film and urban scholarship, but also within the contexts of recent academic studies analyzing the links between cinema and cartography.¹²⁸ On a basic level, both film and mapmaking traditionally entail the representation of a three-dimensional world on a two-dimensional surface, and in both cases this transformative mimetic process will tend to involve some form of scaling procedure as the presented image is enlarged or reduced in relation to its referent. Metaphorically, though, cartography can be understood as something more than simply the process of creating the physical object of a map; it is to do with facilitating an understanding of the world by organizing it in spatial terms. As Teresa Castro suggests (citing David Harvey), “‘mapping space is a fundamental prerequisite for the structuring of any kind of knowledge’, the epistemology that shapes the field of cartography reaching well beyond the profession of mapmaking”.¹²⁹

Giuliana Bruno has written of the close association between film spectatorship and the cartographic practices of travel culture:

Press, 2004). Huang’s use of the term “lived space” is taken from the work of Lefebvre, whose ideas are discussed at length in Chapter Two. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

¹²⁸ See, for example, Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture and Film* (London and New York: Verso, 2002); Tom Conley, *Cartographic Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); and Sébastien Caquard and D. R. Fraser Taylor, ed., “Cinematic Cartography Special Issue,” *The Cartographic Journal* 46 no.1 (2009).

¹²⁹ Teresa Castro, “Cinema’s Mapping Impulse: Questioning Visual Culture” in “Cinematic Cartography Special Issue,” ed. Caquard and Fraser Taylor, 11; David Harvey, *Spaces of a Capital: Towards a Critical Geography* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 110–111.

Film's spectatorship is thus a *practice* of space that is dwelt in, as in the built environment. The itinerary of such a practice is similarly drawn by the visitor to a city or its resident, who goes to the highest point—a hill, a skyscraper, a tower—to project herself onto the cityscape, and who also engages the anatomy of the streets, the city's underbelly, as she traverses different urban configurations. Such a multiplicity of perspectives, a montage of "travelling" shots with diverse viewpoints and rhythms, also guides the cinema and its way of site-seeing. Changes in the height, size, angle, and scale of the view, as well as the speed of the transport, are embedded in the very language of filmic shots, editing and camera movements. Travel culture is written on the techniques of filmic observation.¹³⁰

And as travel culture is inscribed "on the techniques of filmic observation," so filmic practices impact on touristed landscapes. Cinema, with its complex spatiotemporal configurations exhibits a particularly strong "mapping impulse", the influence of which extends past the bounds of the movie theatre.¹³¹ The use of effects such as aerial shots and panoramas may influence the ways in which we envisage space and our movement through it. Furthermore (as Castro argues with reference to film footage of First World War sites), these "cartographic shapes" help determine the imagination and comprehension of not only the places portrayed, but also the events associated with those places.¹³² Les Roberts pays particular attention to panoramic views in his exploration of the "shifting cinematic geographies" of Liverpool's waterfront, which considers ways in which the "mobile gaze" has "informed the symbolic construction and consumption of the city's waterfront landscape."¹³³ Roberts' consideration of the cinematic reification of place into sites of touristic consumption has strong parallels with Thierry Joliveau's notion of "set-jetting", which he sees as "an indication of the expansion and popularization of earlier practices that made a link between imaginary places generated through artistic practices, and real

¹³⁰ Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion*, 62.

¹³¹ Castro, "Cinema's Mapping Impulse", 9–15.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 12–14.

¹³³ Les Roberts, "Dis/embedded Geographies of Film: Virtual Panoramas and the Touristic Consumption of Liverpool Waterfront," *Space and Culture* 13 no.1 (2010), 54–74.

places.”¹³⁴ Tourists are attracted to places because they have seen them on screen, and these locations may increasingly be marketed on the basis of that cinematic attraction. This points to a paradox in which cinema “contributes to the ‘realization’... of imaginary and fictional places”, whilst fictionalizing the actual location where the action is filmed, with the result that the imaginary maps onto and is integrated with the real.¹³⁵

Studies investigating the relationship between cinema and mapping have tended to focus on European and North American examples. This thesis seeks to broaden that debate with its consideration of the Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Centre in Chapter Two. In addition to intimating the presence of “mapping impulses” within contemporary Chinese visual media, this case study reveals the existence of a reverse dynamic in which mapping and planning exhibits are actively utilizing cinematic effects. Several other case studies strengthen the arguments put forward in much of the literature discussed in this section, by demonstrating how the cinematic manifests itself in contemporary Shanghai beyond the medium of film, in such areas as sightseeing attractions, public spaces and fashion campaigns.

However, film texts themselves do still play a significant role in this thesis, both as evidence of the psychological experience of living within a culture of anticipation and—as seen, for example, in the discussion of what I term *metropolitan gateway films* in Chapter Four—as active participants in the development of this culture. In the final section of this introduction I explain the approach taken in selecting and analyzing these different sources, and also detail my own experiences in Shanghai (which have inevitably informed my thinking), before concluding with a short outline of the remaining chapters.

¹³⁴ Thierry Joliveau, “Connecting Real and Imaginary Places through Geospatial Technologies: Examples from Set-jetting and Art-oriented Tourism” in “Cinematic Cartography Special Issue,” ed. Caquard and Fraser Taylor, 38.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 37.

Method and Outline

In his introduction to *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance*, Ackbar Abbas writes of his method:

It is not immediately obvious, even to myself, that every text I have chosen to discuss—whether film, building, or writing—merits close attention. But this is very much the nature of the enterprise, that in the space I am evoking the distinction between the meritorious and meretricious is frequently indiscernible. Very often, I can only develop hints of what I find to be fascinating in my chosen texts by first bracketing the question of merit.¹³⁶

My own approach has been similar, in assembling a bricolage of sources, which collapse the distinction between “the meritorious and the meretricious.” Shanghai-based films comprise the main strand of material and my approach to analyzing these is informed by Yingjin Zhang’s discussion of several “types of conventional historiography of national cinema,” which in turn draws on Andrew Higson’s classic work in this field.¹³⁷ Although my own study is not a film historiography, nor is it concerned specifically with the concept of the national, much of what Zhang and Higson discuss remains relevant. An “*auteurist*” or a “*movement approach*” could be adopted for the study of Shanghai-based films, the former prioritizing the work of specific “great” directors, with the latter emphasizing particular “moments of exception at the expense of a more comprehensive picture.” However, I share Zhang’s reservations about these approaches: the *auteurist approach* locates cinema as “high art rather than popular culture,” and privileges the role of the individual director in what is a much wider economically, technologically and politically determined process; whilst in the *movement approach*, material that seems irrelevant or threatening to the main plot tends to be buried away so as not to conflict with the

¹³⁶ Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance*, 15.

¹³⁷ Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* (Oxford: Routledge, 2004), 7–10; Andrew Higson, “The Concept of National Cinema,” *Screen* 30, no. 4 (1989), 36–46; Andrew Higson, *Waving the Flag: Constructing a National Cinema in Britain*. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995).

preferred narrative, resulting in an abnegation of the “complexity and heterogeneity of” a particular era’s cinema.¹³⁸

The method employed here is closer to what Zhang calls a “*theme-and-issues approach*,” which does not focus on specific political or aesthetic movements, but seeks to “diagnose ‘symptoms’ of an entire period by way of analyzing selected directors and films.”¹³⁹ Citing Rey Chow’s study of “primitive passions” in Chinese cinema as a defining example of this type, Zhang suggests that such a method exemplifies what Higson has termed a “text-based approach” (involving close-reading of the film itself, concentrating on its formal and narrative elements) and also a “criticism-led approach.”¹⁴⁰ Higson criticizes this latter approach for its tendency “to reduce national cinema to the terms of a quality art cinema, a culturally worthy cinema steeped in the high-cultural and/or modernist heritage of a particular nation state.”¹⁴¹ Again, Higson is writing about discourses of *national* cinema, but his admonishment of a slavish focus on critically acclaimed “art cinema” is equally pertinent to a study of Shanghai-based cinema. I seek to avoid such a failing by drawing on a broad range of films, from big budget international co-productions to independent documentaries shot on digital hand-held cameras, bracketing the question of artistic merit as Abbas does.

The majority of these films have not drawn any great critical acclaim and consequently have received scant academic attention. Hence this thesis marks the first extended scholarly discussion of several of these sources, and makes the case for recognizing that lack of critical appreciation need not abrogate a film’s analytic value. Furthermore, whilst close textual readings of these sources are offered, they are also situated within the contexts of their production, so that they are considered not simply as representations of the city, but as products emerging from and consumed within a wider culture of anticipation. In addition to interrogating various films, I find further source material in fashion campaigns, a music video, sightseeing attractions and museum displays.

My own experiences of Shanghai are worth briefly detailing at this point. I lived in the central Jing’an District of the city from October 2006 to May 2008. During this time I taught English to the children of both middle-class Shanghainese residents

¹³⁸ Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema*, 7–8.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 9.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.; Rey Chow, *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography, and Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

¹⁴¹ Higson, “The Concept of National Cinema,” 37.

and long-term Taiwanese and South Korean expatriates, whilst studying Mandarin at Jiao Tong University. I also briefly worked for a now defunct company called ChinaVentureFilms, which was seeking to capitalize on a nascent market for the type of “metropolitan gateway films” I discuss in Chapter Four, by producing features set in the city using transnational crew members and foreign and Chinese actors, speaking both English and Mandarin.¹⁴² The company was based in the Tianzifang art zone (referred to in Chapter Five), before the area was designated a Creative Industry Cluster and rapidly expanded in size with significant rent increases. I witnessed first-hand the major transformations in the physical landscape of Shanghai during this period, whilst friendships with Shanghainese families also gave me some insights into life in the city before the Open Door Era.

During the course of writing this thesis I made a number of return visits to Shanghai: one week in July 2010, four days in March 2011, three weeks in July 2011, and one week April 2013. During these trips I visited specific places relevant to my research, including the Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Centre, the Shanghai 2010 Expo site (both during and after the event), and a number of Creative Industry Clusters. In addition these visits allowed me to refamiliarize myself more generally with a rapidly changing city, and discuss ideas informally with a number of researchers and individuals working in the creative sector based in the city, who are mentioned in the Acknowledgments.

A comprehensive cultural topography of a city—let alone one the scale of Shanghai—is clearly beyond the scope of any single project. Hence, with the need to refine the focus of this thesis and in seeking to avoid the “illusion of bringing the pure gaze of some absolute spectator to bear on the world,” I have consciously allowed my personal history in the city to inform my selection of sources and the direction of this research.¹⁴³ There is, therefore, an emphasis on the touristic nature of the city and the imagination of Shanghai as a place open to a wide range of flows. I am aware that this may leave me open to a charge of succumbing to the myopic “Shanghai mind” myself.

¹⁴² ChinaVentureFilms produced one feature, *Milk and Fashion* (2007), before the company ceased operating with claims of financial irregularities levelled at its founder. My own involvement was limited to correcting English translations of scripts and subtitles, and miscellaneous on-set roles during shooting of some scenes in Shanghai.

¹⁴³ Dominique Lecourt, *The Mediocracy: French Philosophy Since the Mid-1970s*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2001). Cited in Isolde Standish, *A New History of Japanese Cinema: A Century of Narrative Film* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 27.

However, my focus on a culture of anticipation—with which these touristic qualities are entwined—is guided by a conviction that this is not something discrete to the foreign visitor’s experience of the city. Rather it is a wider phenomenon, informed by state rhetoric and representations of the city, embracing a vision of Shanghai that intersects with foreign imaginings of the metropolis. This points to a key difference between the “re-globalizing” Shanghai of the early twenty-first century and the city of the Treaty Port Era, as identified by Wasserstrom: foreign capital may be back with a vengeance, but it is a city controlled by a powerful, centralized Chinese state.

A number of excellent recent scholarly works have analyzed the complexities of independent filmmaking in China and the vibrancy of that scene in the face of production and distribution challenges.¹⁴⁴ However, as stated, I am more concerned here with how the city of Shanghai itself becomes *cinematic*, not least in the CPC’s branding of the metropolis. This cinematic quality is a distinctive feature of the culture of anticipation, which has been proposed as a way of thinking about the cultural landscape of contemporary Shanghai. Having provided an overview of the theoretical literature on tourism and cinematic urbanism, which underpins the thesis, this introduction concludes with a brief outline of the remaining chapters.

Each chapter draws on a specific trope that has been popularly associated with Shanghai as the impetus for its analytic focus. Chapter Two, *Better City, Better Life*, considers a rather recent trope—the slogan of the 2010 Expo, which espouses the CPC’s doctrine that the city, not the countryside, is the foundation of a “harmonious society.” In order to help readers take some bearings for the ensuing exploration, the chapter begins with an overview of the contemporary city’s topography, demographics and infrastructure, and a brief historiography of Shanghai. It then turns to a discussion of the term hegemony and an extended overview of theories of place, emphasizing that this involves not only spatial, but also temporal considerations. The final section of Chapter Two is devoted to a case study of the Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Centre, which is presented as totemic of the state’s vision for the city. Structured as a tour around the museum, this section makes a case for the official, hegemonic vision

¹⁴⁴ See, for example, Zhang Zhen, ed., *The Urban Generation: Chinese Cinema and Society at the Turn of the Twenty-first Century* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007); Yingjin Zhang, *Cinema, Space, and Polylocality in a Globalizing China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2010); Luke Robinson, *Independent Chinese Documentary: From the Studio to the Street* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

possessing distinctly cinematic and touristic qualities, with the various exhibits implicated in what I term a *cine-mapping* of the city space. The museum also provides evidence of the selective use of Shanghai's history to propagate and sustain a specific narrative of the city's development.

Chapter Three pursues further this re-historicizing of Shanghai as it departs the museum and moves to the city's iconic Bund promenade. Known in the past as "A Paradise for Adventurers" (the trope was also applied to the city as a whole), the Bund is a key location in the contemporary city's brand identity. A discussion of how the revered status of the Bund has been subject to political vicissitudes, develops the notion of the site as possessing symbolic capital that is linked to the city's changing relationship to modernity. This idea is further developed through a perhaps unlikely case study, the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel, a rather tawdry tourist attraction not constructed until the late 1990s. Through an examination of the sightseeing tunnel, several new important themes are introduced: time travel, a desire for escape, and the ever-increasing need for sensory stimulation—ideas first discussed by theorists including Simmel and Kracauer in their seminal work on cities and modernity. The final part of the chapter presents a close reading of Wilson Yip's 2004 romantic drama *Leaving Me Loving You*, as a demonstration of how the themes addressed in the earlier sections are manifested in a commercially-minded film production set in Shanghai.

The discussion of *Leaving Me Loving You* dovetails into Chapter Four, which begins with an analysis of the film *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* (2011). This initially provides further evidence of the themes developed in the previous chapter before opening up new territory by considering the film's focus on authenticity in a rapidly changing world and its utilization of Shanghai's reputation as "The Gateway to China." The transnational textual and production elements of *Snow Flower* are then explored and, following Mette Hjør's call for a more rigorous conceptualization of transnational film, the term *metropolitan gateway film* is proposed as a categorization.¹⁴⁵ Through reference to Kracauer's writings on the hotel lobby, gateway spaces become understood as spaces of anticipation. Hence a proliferation of metropolitan gateway films set in Shanghai, which construct the city as a transformative interface between China and the outside world, serve as a marker of

¹⁴⁵ Mette Hjør, "On the Plurality of Cinematic Transnationalism," in *World Cinemas Transnational Perspectives*, ed. Nataša Durovicová and Kathleen E. Newman (New York: Routledge, 2010), 12–33.

the city's culture of anticipation. The chapter concludes with an analysis of a specific metropolitan gateway film, *Shanghai Calling* (2012), in which the city acts as the incarnation of an urban cosmopolitan fantasy.

The gateway films addressed in Chapter Four typically follow the formation of a protagonist's sense of affinity for modern Shanghai, either through their appeal to a promise of historical continuity, or an embrace of the welcoming, cosmopolitan openness of the contemporary city. These elements come together in Chapter Five which analyzes the global fashion industry's presence in Shanghai. The success of the Eurocentric fashion system's address to the Shanghai market provides an example of how the intersection of foreign investment, retail, government policy and the domestic real estate market is shaping the city. Implicated in this is how the fashion industry construes Shanghai as a gateway between China and the West, and draws on the city's historical status as "The Pearl of the Orient" and "The Paris of the East," to imagine its own commercial success as an authentic, sensual, and erotically-charged return of European style to the city. After noting how fashion trades on the idea of anticipation and shares qualities with cinema, architecture and travel culture, three specific fashion campaigns utilizing short films are analyzed. The last of these, Yang Fudong's *First Spring*, made for Prada in 2010, suggests the sense of loneliness and dislocation that may attend the role of being a cosmopolitan individual. This, in turn leads onto a broader consideration of what cosmopolitanism might mean with respect to the city.

The notion of cosmopolitanism is picked up in the concluding Chapter Six. Departing briefly from a discussion of films, I describe a visit to Shanghai, made in May 2013, as a means of pulling together the various strands from the previous chapters. In particular, an episode centred on Shanghai's Yongkang Road (a recently redeveloped bar street) provides a tangible example of Lefebvre's spatial triad in action (as first introduced in Chapter Two) and highlights some of the tensions inherent in branding the city as a cosmopolitan place. The scene on Yongkang Road serves as a reminder of the how certain lived experiences of the city may be effaced from the hegemonic vision of Shanghai. I conclude by discussing two films that challenge this dominant vision of the city, Zhao Dayong's *Street Life* (2006) and Andrew Y-S Cheng's *Shanghai Panic* (2001). These engage with a final trope associated with the city—Shanghai as a site of vice and pollution—and are suggestive of a tactical response to the culture of anticipation by those who lack privileged forms of mobility, which I term *escapade*.

TWO

Better City, Better Life: Harmonizing Shanghai

Taking Bearings:

Topography, Demographics and Infrastructure

Shanghai is situated on the broad alluvial plain of the Yangtze River Delta. It is bounded on the east by the East China Sea, to the south lies Zhejiang Province, and to the north and west is Jiangsu Province. The most notable geographical feature of the city is the Huangpu River, which divides Shanghai between east and west. The eastern side of the city is known as Pudong (literally, ‘east of the Huangpu’) and is home to the city’s central business district, Lujiazui. On the western side, Puxi (‘west of the Huangpu’), is not a single administrative district like Pudong, but refers to what was historically the city’s urban centre, and comprises eight separate districts.¹ There are also a further seven administrative districts covering the outlying suburban and rural areas of the city, as well as Chongming County, which governs several islands north of the Huangpu River in the mouth of the Yangtze River, including Chongming Island, the third largest island in China. These different districts all fall under the jurisdiction of Shanghai Municipality. This is one of the four direct-controlled municipalities in China (which have the same administrative status as an entire province), and, as such, Shanghai possesses a substantial degree of autonomy in matters of fiscal policy.²

¹ Previously Puxi comprised nine districts, until Luwan District was incorporated into Huangpu District in June 2011. Yang Yijun and Wu Yiyao, “Shanghai’s Merger Plan Gets a ‘Go,’” *China Daily*, 9 June 2011, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2011-06/09/content_12661332.htm.

² The other three direct-controlled municipalities are Beijing, Tianjin and Chongqing. Hong Kong and Macau also have province status and are referred to as Special Administrative Regions. It should be noted that Pudong, whilst being a district of Shanghai, enjoys sub-provincial status. This has allowed it to have greater administrative independence than the other districts in Shanghai and has facilitated its remarkable transformation into the financial hub of mainland China.



Fig. 6: A map showing Shanghai's administrative districts.
<http://shanghai.made-in-china.com/info/about-shanghai.html>

As of 2010, the municipality stretched approximately 100 kilometres from east to west and 120 kilometres from north to south, with a total area of 6340.5 square kilometres.³ By the end of 2010, the city's permanent population amounted to some 22.9 million inhabitants, of which 14.1 million held residency permits (*hukou*).⁴ The remaining number comprised two categories: long-term migrants (*qianyi renkou*), including foreigners, with paperwork entitling them to reside in the city, but without some of the associated social benefits (including certain healthcare and education provisions) that exist for Shanghai citizens in possession of a *hukou*; and a 'floating

³ Information Office of Shanghai Municipality, *Shanghai Basic Facts 2011* (Shanghai: Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing House, 2011), 7.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

population' of temporary migrants (*liudong renkou*) who lack the full documentation, and hence legal status, required for occupational residency.⁵

Whilst the official land area of the Shanghai municipality has increased greatly since 1949, a disproportionate number of the city's residents live in the older central districts; consequently, Puxi is extremely densely populated. In a 2008 census, Huangpu District had 43,425 official residents per square kilometre, whilst the nearby districts of Jing'an and Hongkou both had over 30,000 official residents per square kilometre (in comparison, the most densely populated local authority in the 2011 UK census was Islington in London, with 13,873 residents per square kilometre).⁶

This extreme population density is testified to by the ever-growing number of high-rise buildings in Shanghai. The massive construction boom that the city has experienced over the last two decades has resulted in numerous remarkable statistics. In the mid 1990s Shanghai was estimated to be using up to one quarter of the world's cranes, whilst in the new millennium "the annual construction area of Pudong was equal to total annual construction for the whole of Spain."⁷ Perhaps the best evidence of the huge physical change in the city can be provided by a simple visual proof: two images of the Lujiazui Central Business District taken from Puxi, one from 1990 and the other from 2010 (Figs. 7 & 8). As can be seen from the photographs, the area now occupied by Lujiazui was largely undeveloped in 1990, yet today contains many of the city's most iconic modern structures, including the Oriental Pearl Tower (completed in 1995), the Jin Mao Tower (1998) and the Shanghai World Financial Centre (2008).

⁵ The size of the 'floating population' is hard to accurately document and the government typically provides very conservative estimates. For a discussion of population estimates see Nick Land, "Pop Science: Figuring out Shanghai People," in Nick Land, ed. *Urbanatomy: Shanghai 2008* (Shanghai: China Intercontinental Press, 2008), 330–335.

⁶ Shanghai Municipal Government, "Population," *Basic Facts: Population and Employment*.
<http://www.shanghai.gov.cn/shanghai/node17256/node17432/node17435/userobject22ai17.html>; Office for National Statistics, "Census result shows increase in population of London as it tops 8 million," 16 July 2012.
<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/mro/news-release/census-result-shows-increase-in-population-of-london-as-it-tops-8-million/censuslondonnr0712.html>

⁷ Cranes Today, "Taking a Positive Stand," *Cranes Today Magazine*, 7 January 2005. Available:
<http://www.cranestodaymagazine.com/story.asp?storyCode=2025787§ioncode=66>; Chen Yawei, *Shanghai Pudong: Urban Development in an Era of Global-local Interaction* (Delft: Delft University Press, 2007), 9.

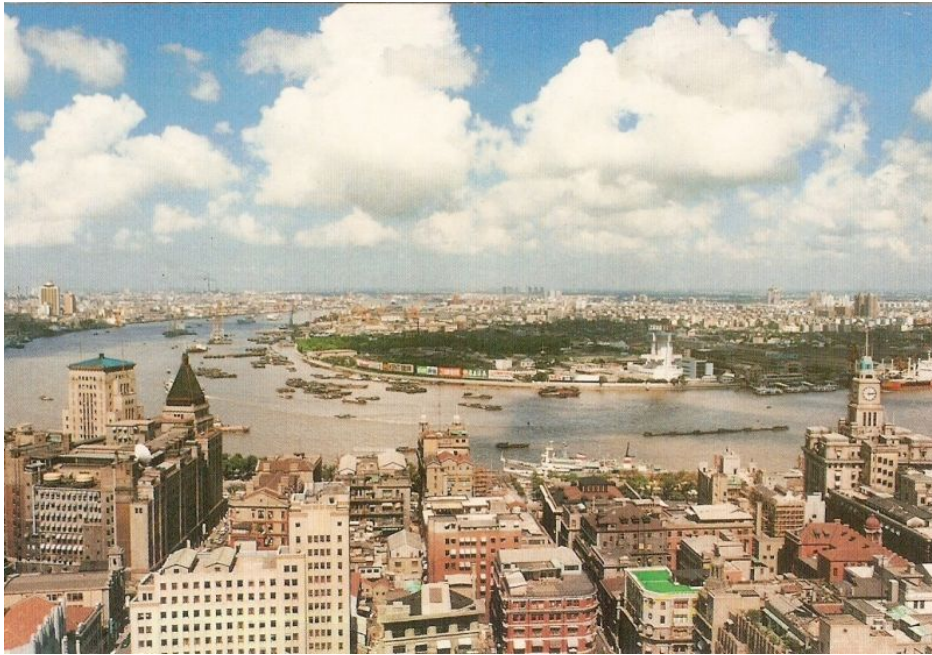


Fig. 7: A view of Pudong taken from Puxi in 1990. The two most distinctive landmarks are the clock tower of the old Shanghai Customs House and the pyramid-shaped roof of the Peace Hotel both on the riverfront street known as the Bund.



Fig. 8: A view of Pudong from Puxi in 2010 (taken slightly further from the river). The Bund is now largely obscured and the scene dominated by the newly-built Central Business District of Lujiazui on the eastern side of the Huangpu River. The tallest structure is the Shanghai World Financial Centre and immediately to its left is the Jin Mao Tower. The Oriental Pearl Tower is further to the left. The majority of the high-rise buildings on the Puxi side of the river have also been built since 1990.

[Both images: <http://www.businessinsider.com/shanghai-1990-vs-2010-6?IR=T>]

Although Shanghai's financial district has relocated to the eastern side of the Huangpu, many of the city's major political and cultural institutions are still situated in Puxi. Several of these, including Shanghai City Hall, the Shanghai Museum, the Shanghai Grand Theatre and the Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Hall, are located around People's Square (*Renmin Guangchang*), an area that was once occupied by the old racecourse of the colonial period. The northern edge of People's Square is bounded by Nanjing Road, the city's premier commercial street and the longest shopping district in the world, receiving over one million visitors every day.⁸ East Nanjing Street is the older section of this road and is now largely pedestrianized. It runs eastwards from the northeast corner of People's Square until it reaches the western bank of the Huangpu River. Here it intersects with East Zhongshan No. 1 Road—more commonly known as the Bund, or *Wai Tan* (literally 'outside beach')—a long curved row of imposing colonial-era buildings, mainly occupied today by upmarket restaurants, bars and clothes stores. Neon-lit views of Lujiazui are now the most instantly recognizable shots of contemporary Shanghai, but for many years it was these monumental stone buildings on the Bund that provided the most iconic images of the city and they continue to act as a reminder of Shanghai's colonial history. Further evidence of European influence on the city can be seen throughout Puxi, which is home to the world's largest collection of Art Deco buildings, although these are easily missed amongst the swelling number of concrete tower blocks.

A distinctive Shanghainese vernacular architecture is found in the lanehouse, or *lilong* buildings, of the old alleyway (*longtang*) neighbourhoods.⁹ These areas developed in the nineteenth century as rural refugees, fleeing the Taiping Rebellion of 1851, moved into the city. Entrepreneurial landlords built cheap houses and sold them to entire village communities. The style has been described as a fusion of "southern English terraced housing" and "the Chinese rural court house." A typical *lilong* residential block "consists of 2–4 storey terraced houses, arranged around very narrow lanes and enclosed by a ring of shops that form a buffer towards the (even then) noisy streets." The most distinctive type of *lilong* housing is the *shikumen* or 'stone gate'

⁸ Wen Zhang, "Nanjing Road," *Encyclopedia of Shanghai City*, 23 January 2009. <http://www.mishanghai.org/Sites/wiki.php?id=13>.

⁹ For a comprehensive history of the Shanghai lane house, see Gregory Bracken, *The Shanghai Alleyway House: A Vanishing Urban Vernacular* (Oxford: Routledge, 2013).

style, so named because of the elaborate stone arches found over the front doors.¹⁰ Many of these *lilong* neighbourhoods have been demolished in recent years to make space for new developments, whilst those that survive are often extremely overcrowded. Others, though, have been gentrified and converted into restaurants, galleries and boutique shops. The best known example of this phenomenon is the Xintiandi area (literally, New Heaven and Earth), located about fifteen minutes' walk south of People's Square. With a juxtaposition typical of modern Shanghai, this new centre of commerce, with a Starbucks Coffee outlet and Bavarian beer houses catering to tourists, expatriates and affluent locals, is situated right next to a museum commemorating the site of the First National Congress of the Communist Party in 1921.¹¹

A far less affluent area, though one equally popular with tourists, is the Old City, located due east of Xintiandi, at the southern end of the Bund. This is the oldest part of the city and has been inhabited for two thousand years. As the foreign settlements developed to the north of here in the nineteenth century, the area became known by its Chinese inhabitants as Nanshi, or 'Southern City'. It is now more commonly known as Yu Yuan in reference to the old garden complex situated within its borders. The original buildings here have been renovated several times over (though this is germane to Chinese architectural practices) and many of the more ornate features seen are modern fabrications.¹² This area has not been so obviously gentrified as other parts of Shanghai: the alleyways remain cramped, laundry hangs between buildings, and hawker stalls abound. However, nowhere in Shanghai is fully immune from change. Evidence of the effects of globalization is found readily, not least in the various branches of Starbucks that have opened within the Old City, while parts of the area have been demolished entirely in recent years to clear the ground for redevelopment, particularly in the build up to the Shanghai Expo 2010.

¹⁰ Viktor Oldiges, "The Shanghai Lilong," in Nick Land, ed. *Urbanatomy: Shanghai 2008* (Shanghai: China Intercontinental Press, 2008), 177.

¹¹ Jeffrey Wasserstrom, "Red Shanghai: Blue Shanghai," *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol. 50-2-08, December 8, 2008.

¹² Nishita Mehta-Jasani, "The Old City: Memory Lanes," in Nick Land, ed. *Urbanatomy: Shanghai 2008* (Shanghai: China Intercontinental Press, 2008), 86.



Fig. 9: An area in the Old City demolished for redevelopment in 2010. The Lujiazui Central Business District can be seen in the background.

The Expo 2010 site was located just south of the Old City and spread over both sides of the Huangpu River. Its construction necessitated the relocation of 18,000 households and accelerated wider infrastructural change throughout the city.¹³ Pudong International Airport opened a second terminal and third runway in 2008, the older Hongqiao Airport (situated in the far west of Puxi and mainly handling domestic flights) opened a second terminal in March 2010, and the city's second major railway station, Shanghai South Station, reopened after major refurbishment in 2006, with a unique circular structure more reminiscent of a sports stadium.¹⁴ The first Shanghai Metro line opened in 1995 and there are now thirteen lines spanning over 430

¹³ Elaine Chow, "Shanghai Residents Planning to Sue Over Expo," *Shanghaiist*, 5 June 2009.

http://shanghaiist.com/2009/06/05/shanghai_residents_planning_to_sue_2.php.

¹⁴ Margie Logarta, "New Hongqiao Airport terminal opens for business," *Business Traveller Asia Pacific*, 16 March 2010. <http://asia.businessstraveller.com/asia-pacific/news/new-hongqiao-airport-terminal-opens-for-business>; Mick Ryan, "Photo Essay: Shanghai South Station," in Nick Land, ed. *Urbanatomy: Shanghai 2008* (Shanghai: China Intercontinental Press, 2008), 221.

kilometres of track.¹⁵ By 2020 this figure will have risen to twenty-two lines covering 877 kilometres. Shanghai's road system, an intricate web of ring roads and central elevated highways, has also been regularly extended and renovated.

Perhaps the city's most impressive transport feature is the Shanghai Maglev Train, which travels a distance of 30 kilometres between Pudong International Airport and Longyang Road Metro Station. The Maglev Train might serve as a metonym for the wider process of urban development in Shanghai. Using imported German technology, it was the world's first commercial high-speed magnetic levitation train line. Reaching speeds of up to 434 km/h, it takes its passengers hurtling past agricultural land, canals and concrete suburban sprawl, towards the skyscrapers of Lujiazui. Digital displays in the carriages provide an additional visual proof of the train's remarkable speed and a countdown to its precise arrival time. Staff are impeccably dressed, tannoy announcements are in Chinese and English, and billboards on arrival carry the Expo 2010 slogan, 'Better City, Better Life.' At 50 yuan for a one-way ticket (ten times more expensive than the equivalent trip by metro), the eight-minute journey is exhilarating and extremely efficient, but also extravagant in a city where the official minimum wage was still only 14 yuan/hour as of 2013, even following a 12% increase.¹⁶ Though of course the Maglev is not intended for the average resident of Shanghai, but rather the tourists and well-paid workers using Pudong International Airport. The latter belong to what Saskia Sassen has identified in her writings on the "global city" as a growing elite of "top-level professional workers largely in the corporate sector", for whom the city space "consists of airports, top level business districts, top of the line hotels and restaurants, a sort of urban glamour zone."¹⁷ However, the functional value of the Maglev is somewhat questionable even for those unconcerned by the ticket price; because

¹⁵ James Griffiths, "What the Shanghai Metro will look like in 2014 and 2020," *Shanghaiist*, 26 August 2013.

http://shanghaiist.com/2013/08/26/what_the_shanghai_metro_will_look_like_in_2014_and_2020.php

¹⁶ China Briefing, "Shanghai Hikes Minimum Wage Levels," *China Briefing Magazine and Daily News Service*, 2 April 2013. <http://www.china-briefing.com/news/2013/04/02/shanghai-hikes-minimum-wage-levels-takes-nations-top-spot-from-shenzhen.html>

¹⁷ Saskia Sassen, "Swirling that Old Wine Around in the Wrong Bottle: A Comment on White," *Urban Affairs Review* 33, no. 4 (1998), 480; Saskia Sassen, "Whose City Is It? Globalization and the Formation of New Claims," *Public Culture* 8, no. 2 (1996), 220.

Longyang Road Metro Station is on the far eastern edge of central Shanghai, it is not easily accessed from most of the city. For many travellers it may be quicker, and certainly more straightforward, simply to be chauffeured by taxi or private vehicle, to and from the airport. But the Maglev is less a means of mass transportation than it is a showpiece for Shanghai's claims to global city status—a key component in its brand identity, and one rooted in speed and anticipation.

Narrating the City's Development

The transformation of Shanghai over the past two decades has taken place at a rate unprecedented in history, but it is not the first time that the city has gone through a period of rapid change. After the First Opium War ended in August 1842 with the signing of the Treaty of Nanjing, Shanghai became the most prosperous of the five Chinese port cities opened up to foreign trade and settlement under the terms of the treaty.¹⁸ Over the next hundred years the city's population swelled until it was the world's fifth largest metropolis and arguably its most internationally diverse. The scale of this development is conveyed on the first page of a classic guidebook to the city, *All About Shanghai and Environs*, published by the Shanghai University Press in 1934:

Shanghai, the most cosmopolitan city in the world, the fishing village on a mudflat which almost literally overnight became a great metropolis... Less than a century ago Shanghai was little more than an anchorage for junks, with a few villages scattered along the low, muddy banks of the river. What it will be a hundred years from now is a test for the imagination.¹⁹

However, whilst it is the case that the area where the foreign concessions developed was a largely unpopulated mudflat, statements such as these fail to acknowledge the presence of the Chinese Old City that had existed for several centuries prior to the arrival of the colonial powers. These narratives belong to what

¹⁸ The other four cities were Guangzhou, Fuzhou, Xiamen and Ningbo.

¹⁹ *All About Shanghai and Environs: A Standard Guidebook* (Shanghai: The University Press, 1934), 1.

has been dubbed the “fishing village myth” of Shanghai—a Western account of the city’s history, which is “the story of foreigners creating something from nothing in an almost magical way.”²⁰ But whilst pre-colonial Shanghai may not have been as significant a settlement as neighbouring Suzhou or Hangzhou, it is clearly an understatement to describe a conurbation of more than 200,000 inhabitants, which had been an officially recognized administrative centre since 1291, as a mere “fishing village.” Western scholarship about the city’s pre-colonial history is relatively scarce, but Linda Cooke Johnson’s, *Shanghai: From Market Town to Treaty Port* (1995), provides a detailed account of the morphology of Shanghai’s urban core and the city’s development as a trade centre from the eleventh century through to the Treaty Port Era. As Johnson observes, the “fishing village myth” is undermined by British records which demonstrate that “of all the towns on the coast of China, Shanghai was chosen first among the new ports opened in 1843” after it “attracted attention precisely because it was already a major coastal port and commercial centre in its own right.”²¹ Likewise, in *Shanghai: China’s Gateway to Modernity* (2009), Marie-Claire Bergère stresses that Shanghai was not “a wretched fishing village just waiting for foreign intervention” and that “The originality of the town... lay not in the implantation of a colonial modernity... but rather in the welcome that its local society had given to that implantation, adopting and adapting it, and turning it into a modernity that was Chinese.”²² This argument is in keeping with Bergère’s earlier research in works such as *L’Âge d’Or de la Bourgeoisie Chinoise* (1986), which examined how “Shanghai’s economic dynamism of the early 1920s was built upon traditional Chinese social foundations, not simply upon the dynamism that developed from the transnational flows of trade and ideas that characterized Shanghai’s existence as a treaty port.”²³

The “fishing village myth” persists, however, amongst some Western commentators. In a New York Times review of Stella Dong’s *Shanghai 1842–1949*:

²⁰ Jeffrey Wasserstrom, *Global Shanghai, 1850–2010: A History in Fragments* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 4.

²¹ Linda Cooke Johnson, *Shanghai: From Market Town to Treaty Port, 1074–1858* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 10

²² Marie-Claire Bergère, *Shanghai: China’s Gateway to Modernity*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 2.

²³ Bryna Goodman, “Book Review of *Shanghai: China’s Gateway to Modernity* by Marie-Claire Bergère,” *The China Journal* 66 (2011), 201; Marie-Claire Bergère, *The Golden Age of the Chinese Bourgeoisie, 1911–1937*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

The Rise and Fall of a Decadent City (2000), the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Sheryl WuDunn—herself the author of a bestselling work on China (*China Wakes*, 1995)—describes the city as being “an obscure fishing village 160 years ago.”²⁴ This in spite of the fact that Dong notes that, by the seventeenth century, Shanghai was already a “major port” and by the eighteenth century “the city had outgrown its walls.”²⁵ What WuDunn really means is that Shanghai was “obscure” as far as the wider world (specifically the Western imperial powers) was concerned. Her statement is a hangover from the prevailing attitude amongst foreign settlers during the Treaty Port Era—who referred to themselves as Shanghailanders—which Arthur Ransome termed the “Shanghai mind.” Dong summarizes the condition as “an outlook characterized by a myopia to all but events directly affecting foreign interests in China.”²⁶

Dong’s writing betrays myopic tendencies of its own. There is no doubt that Shanghai then, as now, was a place of extremes, but such is her agonistic determination to portray it as “the most pleasure-mad, rapacious, corrupt, strife-ridden, licentious, squalid, and decadent city in the world,” one could finish the book imagining that every single resident was either a gangster, whore, drug-peddler, millionaire, or political agitator, and possibly all these things at once.²⁷ The result is an engagingly narrated overview of the period, but one lacking in any finer sense of the quotidian life of the city. More successful in this respect are Robert Bickers’ *Empire Made Me: An Englishman Adrift in Shanghai* (2003) and Lu Hanchao’s *Beyond the Neon Lights: Everyday Shanghai in the Early Twentieth Century* (1999).²⁸ The former provides an insightful and poignant view of the colonial project in Shanghai, as refracted through the experiences of a working-class Englishman serving in the Shanghai municipal police, whilst the latter details the interplay of traditional Chinese rural customs and Western influences in the city’s *lilong* neighbourhoods.

²⁴ Sheryl WuDunn, “Sin City,” *New York Times*, 30 April 2000, <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/04/30/books/sin-city.html>; Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, *China Wakes: The Struggle for the Soul of a Rising Power* (New York: Vintage, 1995).

²⁵ Stella Dong, *Shanghai 1842–1949: The Rise and Fall of a Decadent City* (New York: Perennial, 2000), 12–13.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 175.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁸ Robert A. Bickers, *Empire Made Me: An Englishman Adrift in Shanghai* (London: Penguin, 2003); Lu Hanchao, *Beyond the Neon Lights: Everyday Shanghai in the Early Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

Much of the recent scholarship concentrating on the Treaty Port Era has highlighted the local adoption and adaptation of Western colonial modernity within a Chinese context. A defining work in this field is Leo Ou-fan Lee's cultural history of the city in the years 1930–1945, *Shanghai Modern* (1999).²⁹ After surveying the material development of the city—with new cinemas, dance halls and department stores providing the infrastructure for “public spheres where the colonial and the indigenous, the cosmopolitan and the local, the new and the old could be brought into play”—Lee turns to the local film industry and particularly literary journals and novels to explore 1930s Shanghai “as a cultural matrix of Chinese modernity.”³⁰ Andrew Field, a student of Lee, focuses specifically on the city's nightclubs in *Shanghai's Dancing World: Cabaret Culture and Urban Politics, 1919–1954* (2010).³¹ Drawing on a range of government archives, photos, novels, magazines and other documents, he provides a compelling narrative of the acculturation of American jazz and related nightlife trends into Shanghai society from the 1920s though to the 1950s. Field conjures up a vivid portrait of Shanghai high society, but more than this, his study of cabaret culture as a contested space of modernity offers insights into contemporary labour conditions for those working in the nightclubs and exposes issues of social inequality, all set against a background of Chinese national conflicts.

The literary works Leo Ou-fan Lee discusses, by authors such as Mu Shiying and Liu Na'ou, belong to the modernist ‘Shanghai style’ (*haipai*) fiction, which flourished from the late 1920s through to the 1940s. *Haipai* did not refer simply to a genre of fiction. The term arose in the 1920s and was often used pejoratively to contrast with the “supposedly rigid, tradition-bound and orthodox” *jingpai*, or Beijing style.³² Originally used to describe the Shanghainese variant of Beijing Opera, it soon gained wider currency, with *haipai* “constituted as much by an attitude, a context, a way of living and behaving as by an aesthetic or a set of definable formal

²⁹ Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

³⁰ David Der-wei Wang, “Book Review of *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930–1945* by Leo Ou-fan Lee,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 59 no.1 (2000), 157; Lee, *Shanghai Modern*, xi.

³¹ Andrew Field, *Shanghai's Dancing World: Cabaret Culture and Urban Politics, 1919–1954* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2010).

³² Lu, *Beyond the Neon Lights*, 312.

characteristics.”³³ It was suggested earlier that many places have historically obtained proto ‘brand identities’ long before the more recent trend of actively promoting cities in terms of a brand. Certainly to speak of Shanghai in China has, historically, been not only to refer to a place, but also to a certain style, or brand. Lynn Pan (whose writing is discussed in more detail later) has written of Shanghai Style (‘style’ spelt with a capital) as a specific period style, located between the two World Wars, a unique mixing of Chinese tradition and American, European and Japanese cultural influences. However, she also notes that the term *haipai*, developed a more wide-ranging currency than that. Whilst the term may have been intended as a pejorative, “the Shanghainese sometimes used *haipai* of themselves in ironic self-assertion.”

Indeed, in time the term shed its negative connotations and, instead of denoting all that is wrong with Shanghai, nowadays it signifies all that is right with it. From being a term of opprobrium, it has become a proud defiant banner. Developers use it today to market their condominium blocks restaurateurs their fusion cuisines, conveniently forgetting its suggestion of a meretricious culture given over to surfaces, all style and no substance.³⁴

Alexander Des Forges’ *Mediasphere Shanghai* (2007) examines the literary aesthetics of Shanghainese genre fiction in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, before the emergence of *haipai*.³⁵ His particular focus is on *haishang xiaoshuo*, or instalment fiction—a genre notably predicated on its ability to incite and maintain anticipation, through the stimulation and thwarting of desire. Des Forges argues that such cultural products serve “to ‘construct’ the city instead of merely reflecting it.”³⁶ His interrogation of the aesthetic form of this instalment fiction reveals four recurrent narrative tropes (*simultaneity*, *interruption*, *mediation* and *excess*), which, he suggests, “give shape and meaning to the sensory and emotional overload of the city... and convert a chaotic set of impressions into a coherent understanding of ‘what Shanghai is.’” Taken together, “these forms constitute a conceptual foundation

³³ Lynn Pan, *Shanghai Style: Art and Design Between the Wars* (Hong Kong: Long River Press, 2008), 6.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁵ Alexander Des Forges, *Mediasphere Shanghai: The Aesthetics of Cultural Production* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2007).

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

on which Shanghai's 'social reality' is built, construct a frame through which the city can be perceived, and supply a template for the reader's own experiences there."³⁷ This current thesis also advances the argument that cultural products help constitute the perceptual frames through which visitors and residents experience the city and this is discussed in greater depth in Chapters Two and Three.

Where Lee, Field and Des Forges concentrate their studies on thirty-year periods within the Treaty Port Era, Wen-hsin Yeh's *Shanghai Splendor* (2007), offers a cultural history of the city that spans the entire century of semi-colonial rule and beyond to the eve of the Communist takeover, from 1843–1949.³⁸ Yeh links analysis of the material production of this period to the economic culture, with a particular focus on "the aspirations and frustrations" of the city's middle class office workers.³⁹ Yeh's work intersects with some of the thematic concerns of this thesis, particularly in her Chapter Three which analyzes a developing visual culture of "glamour" that emphasized the visible display of wealth and revealed an inherent "tension between the foreign and the domestic," and in her Chapter Four which explores the intrusion of new temporal-spatial configurations into the working lives of petty urbanites, as the city offered up new socializing possibilities, whilst simultaneously demanding more regulated, "mechanically measured," time structures.⁴⁰ Although Yeh's main narrative ends with the founding of the People's Republic of China, an epilogue offers a bridge to present-day Shanghai, where the author finds a bourgeois economism thriving once more and the postsocialist metropolis styling itself as "a middle-class city of material comfort in everyday life."⁴¹

The best synthesis of the city's history from the Treaty Port Era onwards is found in Marie-Claire Bergère's *Histoire de Shanghai* (2002), which was finally translated into English in 2009 as *Shanghai: China's Gateway to Modernity*. Bergère's work is unusual for its efforts to integrate the semi-colonial period with extended

³⁷ Ibid., 1–2.

³⁸ Wen-hsin Yeh, *Shanghai Splendor: Economic Sentiments and the Making of Modern China, 1843–1949* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

³⁹ Ibid., xi.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 71; 4.

⁴¹ Ibid., 211; Carroll summarizes "economism" as "a state of mind and view of life in which economic matters not only are central to society and the nation but also constitute a calculus of morality and social value." Peter Carroll, "Book Review of *Shanghai Splendor: Economic Sentiments and the Making of Modern China, 1843–1949* by Wen-hsin Yeh," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 70 no. 2 (2010), 497.

discussions of the post-1949 Communist era.⁴² Two other books that traverse the pre and post-1949 eras—albeit with a more contained focus than Bergère’s work—are Peter G. Rowe and Seng Kuan’s edited collection, *Shanghai: Architecture and Urbanism for Modern China* (2004) and Edward Denison and Guang Yu Ren’s *Building Shanghai: The Story of China’s Gateway* (2006). Both volumes are handsomely produced and survey the changing architecture and infrastructure of the city. The latter, in particular, offers a scathing critique of post-1949 developments, with first the architectural stagnation and deterioration of the Maoist era and then the devastation of what the authors term the city’s “ecosystem”, in the 1980s and 1990s, as frenetic redevelopment resulted in population relocation, rising social inequality, and huge damage to Shanghai’s natural environment.⁴³

Christopher Howe’s edited volume, *Shanghai: Revolution and Development in an Asian Metropolis* (1981) contains a range of essays addressing Shanghai’s socio-political transformations from 1949 into the 1970s, whilst the Cultural Revolution’s impact on the city is analyzed in Elizabeth J. Perry and Li Xun’s *Proletarian Power: Shanghai in the Cultural Revolution* (1997).⁴⁴ One of the most engaging works on the city’s post-1978 era of reform is Jos Gamble’s aforementioned ethnographic study, *Shanghai in Transition* (2003). A further insightful anthropological study of Shanghai following the implementation of the Open Door reforms, is James Farrer’s *Opening Up* (2002), which explores the city’s youth sex culture and how was “transformed during the transition to a market economy.” Farrer conceptualises “sexual culture not as a narrow set of socially constructed acts, but as a broad symbolic field of stories, performances, and metaphors in which conventionalized actors, scenes, instrumentalities, and metaphors are as important as the acts.”⁴⁵

⁴² Jeffrey Wasserstrom “Book Review of *Shanghai: China’s Gateway to Modernity* by Marie-Claire Bergère,” *China Perspectives* 2011/1 (2011): 87–88.

⁴³ Peter G. Rowe and Seng Kuan, ed., *Shanghai: Architecture and Urbanism for Modern China* (Berlin: Prestel Publishing, 2004); Edward Denison and Guang Yu Ren, *Building Shanghai: The Story of China’s Gateway* (Chichester, Sussex: John Wiley and Sons, 2006).

⁴⁴ Christopher Howe, ed., *Shanghai: Revolution and Development in an Asian Metropolis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Elizabeth J. Perry and Li Xun, *Proletarian Power: Shanghai in the Cultural Revolution* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997).

⁴⁵ James Farrer, *Opening Up: Youth Sex Culture and Market Reform in Shanghai* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 5–6.

Another modern-day chronicler of Shanghai whose work is particularly suggestive for this current project is Lynn Pan, also known as Pan Ling. Pan's books include *In Search of Old Shanghai* (1982), *Old Shanghai: Gangsters in Paradise* (1984) and *Shanghai Style: Art and Design Between the Wars* (2008), as well as *Sons of the Yellow Emperor: A History of the Chinese Diaspora* (1990) and *The Encyclopedia of the Chinese Overseas* (1998).⁴⁶ The titles of these works are indicative of Pan's own personal history: born in 1945 into an intellectual family that was part of the "pre-revolutionary Shanghainese elite," she moved with her family to Malaysia in the 1950s, becoming part of a "completely insulated Chinese-Shanghainese world."⁴⁷ She later spent two decades studying and teaching in England, as well as a period in Hong Kong working as a journalist, before becoming director of Singapore's Chinese Heritage Centre in 1995. Four years later she returned to settle in Shanghai, where she has since become something of a celebrity amongst literati circles, frequently speaking at events such as the Shanghai International Literary Festival.

It is no coincidence that Pan's return to her birthplace coincided with Shanghai's re-emergence as a city of global significance; she is one of a growing number of diasporic Chinese who are now returning to the city and playing a significant role in business and cultural activities there. Her description of growing up in Malaysia within an "insulated Chinese-Shanghainese world" is revealing—this was a diaspora defined less by its attachments to a nation state than by its affiliations to a Chinese urban cosmopolitanism that had flourished in Shanghai during the Treaty Port Era. A desire to promote this cosmopolitan history as an integral part of the current city's brand identity is evident in the words of the Shanghai Tourism Administrative Commission cited earlier, with an emphasis placed on Shanghai's tradition of "accepting different cultures, just like the sea containing all rivers."⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Lynn Pan, *In Search of Old Shanghai* (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing Company, 1982); *Old Shanghai: Gangsters in Paradise* (Hong Kong: Heinemann Asia, 1984); *Sons of the Yellow Emperor: A History of the Chinese Diaspora* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1990); *The Encyclopedia of the Chinese Overseas* (Singapore: Archipelago Press, 1998).

⁴⁷ Vikram Khanna, "Reviving a Lost Heritage: An Interview with Author Lynn Pan," 1995, <http://www.sherryart.com/newstory/lynnpan.html>.

⁴⁸ Shanghai Daily, "Expo Tourism to Sell 'Discovery,'" *Shanghai Daily*, 18 November 2008, http://www.china.org.cn/travel/news/2008-11/18/content_16782828.htm.

But whilst Shanghai today is undoubtedly a more international city than it was during the second half of the twentieth century (and the return of diasporic Shanghainese such as Lynn Pan may be read as both a symptom and cause of this), Pan has asserted with confidence that present day Shanghai lacks the “more authentic Chinese cosmopolitanism” of the pre-1949 city.⁴⁹ She makes this pronouncement in her thoughtful article, “Of Shanghai and Chinese cosmopolitanism.” Unfortunately Pan does not go on to elucidate why the cosmopolitanism of contemporary Shanghai is somehow less authentic than before, but her implication presumably is that the impact of twenty-first century globalization has homogenized the city in such a way as to diminish the local vernacular responses to international influences. What she does describe is her response to the estrangement felt from the modern city:

If I am to regard Shanghai as ‘home’, then I cannot as easily maintain the kind of quizzical detachment from it that comes from locating my identity ‘elsewhere’. *Here no elsewhere underwrites my existence.*

I do have recourse to a half-escape. The ‘elsewheres’ are not just literal or territorial but, in my own case, chronological and historical—the past is another ‘elsewhere’. The Shanghainese I identify with are not so much the ones living today as the ones who lived before the 1949 revolution, that rupture which shattered Shanghai’s continuity with the past. Since such experience as I have of that era is more vicarious than firsthand—it has come from my parents, from books and movies—this historical ‘elsewhere’ is in fact idealized.⁵⁰

The diasporic condition is most obviously marked by a physical displacement, but it may also involve a temporal dislocation—one that is felt most acutely upon the émigré’s return to a home-that-is-not-quite-home. Pan’s recourse to an “idealized” past as a place of refuge is evident in her books. Whilst they are borne of serious scholarship, she is not averse to prioritizing “atmosphere and feeling” above “objective

⁴⁹ Lynn Pan, “Of Shanghai and Chinese Cosmopolitanism.” *Asian Ethnicity* 10, no. 3 (2000), 218.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

reality”—historical evidence is secondary to capturing the “psychological reality” of a period she mentally and emotionally inhabits much of the time.⁵¹

Pan’s oeuvre may tell us something of the Shanghainese diasporic condition, but it also points to wider issues with regard to the modern-day mediation of the city’s historical narrative. She writes of the 1949 revolution as a “rupture which shattered Shanghai’s continuity with the past.” There is a parallel here with the dramatic changes brought about by the arrival of foreign powers in the city after the Treaty of Nanjing. Linda Cooke Johnson, adopting a Braudelian *longue durée* approach, has emphasized “the enduring, traditional components of Chinese society” within Shanghai even after its establishment as a treaty port, and likewise there certainly wasn’t a total loss of continuity with the past after 1949.⁵² However, it is undeniable that both events precipitated significant economic, cultural and infrastructural transformations within the city. Official rhetoric concerning the urban redevelopment that Shanghai has undergone, particularly with the creation of the Pudong New Area, which encompasses the Lujiazui Central Business District, suggests a similarly dramatic break with the past:

It [the city] will be different every year and radically different every three years. (*Yi nian yi ge yang, san nian da bian yang.*)⁵³

(cited in Huang 2004: 106)

This points to something of a paradox: the CPC may be keen to emphasize the radical transformation of Shanghai, but how does the notion of a rupture with the past fit into the wider framework of a national narrative that is consistently presented by the state as being a history of five thousand years of unbroken civilization?⁵⁴ Further continuity issues arise with the Treaty Port Era—excoriated as a century of shame

⁵¹ Pan, *Old Shanghai*, vii.

⁵² Johnson, *Shanghai*, 13; Wasserstrom, *Global Shanghai*, 77–93.

⁵³ Cited in Tsung-Yi Michelle Huang, *Walking Between Slums and Skyscrapers: Illusions of Open Space in Hong Kong, Tokyo, and Shanghai* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), 106.

⁵⁴ Martin Jacques, *When China Rules the World: The End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order*, 2nd ed. (London: Penguin Books, 2012).

during the Maoist period—now seized on as a time of “past glories” which the modern city is seeking to revive on Chinese terms.⁵⁵

As will be discussed in greater length in the next section, ‘place’ is not simply a location with fixed co-ordinates on a map, nor can it fully be defined in relative terms by the transactional flows between itself and other places, and between the different inhabitants of, and visitors to, that place as they engage in everyday activities. Place is also informed by a *relational* space of individual and collective attachments, memories, dreams and aspirations, which is necessarily inflected with imaginations of both the past and the future. And so the ways in which the city’s past is negotiated and narrated become equally relevant to the experience of living in the contemporary branded city as the more empirical data of demographics and infrastructure outlined in the previous section.

Walter Benjamin wrote of the potential for the historian to stop “telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary” and instead grasp “the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one.”⁵⁶ Jeffrey Wasserstrom—a historian whose writings have a particular fascination with the ways in which various historical moments inform the present day physical and social fabric of Shanghai—takes this approach in his excellent *Global Shanghai. 1850–2010: A History in Fragments* (2009), as he presents “snapshots” of the city at twenty-five year intervals. These fragments reveal both the remarkable changes that have occurred in the intervening years, but also demonstrate how echoes of those different past moments may resonate in the Shanghai of today. Wasserstrom concludes with a chapter that outlines “Ten theses on twenty-first-century Shanghai,” including a prediction that the Expo 2010 will be an important symbolic moment for the city, promoted alongside the 2008 Beijing Olympics “as a kind of one-two punch designed to knock-out old conceptions of China.”⁵⁷ Within these theses, Wasserstrom attempts to define what makes modern-day Shanghai such a distinctive city. It is, he argues, “a re-globalizing metropolis,” “a postsocialist metropolis” and “a futuristic city,” and whilst under each of these definitions there are (imperfect) parallels with other cities (he suggests Istanbul and Mumbai, Budapest and East Berlin, Tokyo and Dubai), the uniqueness of

⁵⁵ Gamble, *Shanghai in Transition*, 10.

⁵⁶ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 263.

⁵⁷ Wasserstrom, *Global Shanghai*, 127.

Shanghai's contemporary existence stems from its particular combination of these different characteristics.⁵⁸ Furthermore, whilst fitting into "all three of these frameworks," Shanghai is, in addition, a "controlled city" administered by an authoritarian central government.⁵⁹

Wasserstrom's recognition of this unique amalgam of characteristics is particularly pertinent. Various aspects of the culture of anticipation which Shanghai evinces are not exclusive to that city, speaking instead of broader effects of twenty-first century free market capitalism and globalization. However, the way in which these effects manifest themselves, their persistent and exaggerated nature, and their intertwining with the formal and narrative qualities of the cultural products discussed, results not just from these wider economic and technological forces, but also from a combination of Shanghai's particular semi-colonial history, the city's unprecedented extreme speed of urban development, and the influence of a powerful centralized Chinese government, seeking to build a "harmonious society."

Hegemony and Place: "Give Me Back My Green Space"

The ideal of a healthy urban environment forms the bedrock of Hu Jintao's doctrine of "harmonious society" (*hexie shehui*), which became the guiding principle behind the CPC's domestic and foreign policies following the Sixth Plenum of the CPC Central Committee in October 2006. It represented a more proactive stance towards social and political concerns such as poverty, unemployment and the environment, following a period of two decades that had prioritized economic growth above all else, with its foreign policy counterpart, "harmonious world" (*hexie shijie*), reflecting China's growing engagement in international affairs in response to external factors including globalized markets and the threat of separatist movements.⁶⁰ From October 2006 the concept of "harmonious" life increasingly pervaded both political discourse and

⁵⁸ Ibid., 133–137.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 138.

⁶⁰ Yongnian Zheng and Sow Keat Tok, "'Harmonious Society' and 'Harmonious World': China's Policy Discourse under Hu JinTao," China Policy Institute, Briefing Series, no. 26 (October 2007): https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/shared/shared_cpi/documents/policy_papers/Briefing_26_Harmonious_Society_and_Harmonious_World.pdf.

popular culture, not least in rhetoric concerning the Shanghai World Expo 2010, which was described on the official Expo website as an attempt “to build a powerful and lasting pilot example of sustainable and harmonious urban living”.⁶¹

In the build up to the Expo, the official slogan of ‘Better City, Better Life’ was hard to miss in Shanghai. Equally prevalent, however, was another emblem whose presence was a direct corollary of the drive towards this revamped urban environment. The character 拆 (*chai*), which translates into English as “demolish,” could be found painted on home after home, storefront after storefront—buildings branded for destruction. This phenomenon was (and is) by no means unique to Shanghai. Buildings throughout the country have been subject to this mark and a number of artists have explored this in their work, most notably Wang Jinsong in his sequence *One Hundred Signs of Demolition* (1999) and Huang Rui in an ongoing series of oil and silkscreen pieces, entitled *Chai-na/China*. The latter makes play of the coincidence that the characters 拆 (*chai*, “demolish”) and 那 (*na*, “that”) are a homophone of the English name for the country—“an allegorical device that situates urban destruction at the very center of Chinese identity.”⁶²

By the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, this symbol was not as ubiquitous in Shanghai as it had been in the late 1990s, but, nonetheless, if you turned left or right from the front entrance of the apartment compound in which I was living in central Jing’an District in 2008, within a few yards you would encounter almost entire streets daubed with the character. Photos taken then are now just ghostly reminders of premises that no longer exist and residents who have been relocated.

⁶¹ Shanghai World Expo. *China 2010 Shanghai World Expo Website*. Available: <http://en.expo2010.cn/oe/indexn.htm>.

⁶² Thomas J. Campanella, *The Concrete Dragon: China’s Urban Revolution and What It Means for the World* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008), 159.



Fig. 10: A resident of Jing'an District walks past buildings marked for demolition.

During that time there was already a spectral presence very near to my apartment. A small park and series of basketball courts, together with a row of late-night eateries, popular with both local residents and students from the nearby school, were razed to the ground over a period of little more than two weeks. On a wall in front of this newly-formed building site an anonymous individual had painted the phrase 还我绿地 (*huan wo lü dì*), or “Give me back my green space”. Within a day this small protest had been painted over; in popular parlance it had been “harmonized”.⁶³ Indeed, “harmonious society” has become the shibboleth of the CPC, justifying, excusing, and requiring the censorship of activities deemed “inharmonious”. In this instance, though, the characters remained just visible beneath a layer of grey paint; the wall had become a palimpsest, simultaneously functioning as barrier to the building site, record of dissent, and evidence of the censorship of that protest. This concrete barrier/canvas speaks of competing visions of place, but it is a

⁶³ Michael Wines, “A Dirty Pun Tweaks China’s Online Censors,” *The New York Times*, 11 March 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/12/world/asia/12beast.html?_r=1&em.

competition of unequal opponents, the graffiti by the demolished basketball courts indicating only a “fleeting triumph” of the dispossessed.⁶⁴



Fig. 11: *Huan Wo Lü Di* — “Give Me Back My Green Space”

Acts of demolition may provoke localized dissent, but as part of a wider hegemonic narrative that promises a better future for all they become more readily justifiable. Although urban developments have greatly improved the living conditions of many Shanghainese residents, research suggests that these changes have disproportionately benefitted those in higher socio-economic brackets, often intensifying residential differentiation.⁶⁵ However, I am less concerned in this current chapter with weighing up the net effects—both beneficial and deleterious—of Shanghai’s urban redevelopment on the city’s population, as I am with exploring the

⁶⁴ The phrase is taken from David Morley’s discussion of graffiti in, *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity* (Oxford: Routledge, 2000), 146.

⁶⁵ Shenjing He and Fulong Wu, “Neighbourhood Changes and Residential Differentiation in Shanghai,” in *China’s Emerging Cities*, ed. Fulong Wu (Oxford: Routledge, 2007), 185–209; see also Ying Ying Tian and Cecilia Wong, “Large Urban Redevelopment Projects and Sociospatial Stratification in Shanghai,” in *China’s Emerging Cities*, ed. Wu, 210–231.

ways in which these changes are articulated by the state. Before pursuing that analysis I wish to consider further the idea of hegemony to which I have already briefly referred, and to link this to another term that is central to this entire thesis—a term so commonplace as to be frequently taken for granted, yet of fundamental significance to human experience—namely, the concept of place.

The idea of cultural hegemony (the term deriving from the Ancient Greek for ‘leadership’ and ‘rule’) was developed by the Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) in the early twentieth century, although his writings did not receive broad attention until the 1970s following the translation and publication of his *Prison Notebooks*.⁶⁶ Gramsci argues that the domination of a ruling group is achieved through two forms of control exercised via a society’s “superstructure” (its institutions, political structures and cultural practices):

- (1) The ‘spontaneous’ consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is ‘historically’ caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence), which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.
- (2) The apparatus of state coercive power which ‘legally’ enforces discipline on those groups who do not ‘consent’ either actively or passively.⁶⁷

Gramsci divides the superstructure into two “levels”: “civil society,” which comprises “all those ‘private organisms’—schools, churches, clubs, journals, and parties—which contribute in molecular fashion to the formation of social and political consciousness,” and “political society,” which comprises “public institutions—the government, courts, police, and army” and is “synonymous with the ‘state.’”⁶⁸ These two levels “correspond on the one hand to the function of ‘hegemony’ which the

⁶⁶ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, trans. Geoffrey Nowell Smith and Quintin Hoare (London: Lawrence & Wishart Limited, 1971).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶⁸ Thomas R. Bates, “Gramsci and the Theory of Hegemony.” *Journal of the History of Ideas* (April 1975), 353.

dominant group exercises throughout society and on the other to that of ‘direct domination’ or command exercised through the state and ‘juridical’ government.”⁶⁹ Crucially, whilst these two “levels” of civil and political society are distinguished from each other, they operate in tandem to form what Gramsci calls the “integral State,” which equals “hegemony protected by the armour of coercion.”⁷⁰

Although Gramsci’s theory was framed within the context of Western bourgeois society, it has significant relevance, as Xiaoling Zhang has argued, “to the understanding and explanation of the strength and the resilience of the political power structure in contemporary China.”⁷¹ The market deregulation and, to a lesser extent, political decentralization that have ensued with the Open Door Reform Era, have created additional opportunities for (limited) political expression and participation, but this does not represent a shift towards widespread democratization. Rather, it is a process of “hegemonization”—a measured accommodation of NGOs and the private sector, which has been necessary to consolidate state power.⁷² Zheng Yongnian calls this a “dual process of domination and legitimation enabl[ing] the CPC to adapt to a changing socio-economic environment.”⁷³

This notion of necessary accommodation as a means of maintaining power, points to a key aspect of Gramsci’s theory of hegemony, in that it contains within it the possibility for counterhegemonic thought and action. Hence it is less deterministic in character than Althusser’s notion of ideology: “[It] saturates society to the same extent... [but] is not airtight and waterproof. We catch on to it and resist its workings... even if we can never completely escape its all-pervasive influence.”⁷⁴ Although Gramsci identified the development of a “compromised equilibrium” as “an imperative to maintain hegemony,” he greatly privileged the determining nature of economic relations, the process of production, and the dominance of the ruling group,

⁶⁹ Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 12.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 263.

⁷¹ Xiaoling Zhang, *The Transformation of Political Communication in China: From Propaganda to Hegemony* (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2011), 21.

⁷² Zheng Yongnian, *The Chinese Communist Party as Organisational Emperor: Culture, Reproduction and Transformation* (Oxford: Routledge, 2010), 139.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁷⁴ Hans Bertens, *Literary Theory: The Basics*, 2nd Edition (London & New York: Taylor & Francis, 2008), 69.

in his own analysis.⁷⁵ Following the ‘cultural turn’ taken in the social sciences, scholars drawing on Gramsci’s work (for example Stuart Hall, as discussed later in this chapter) have placed greater emphasis on the relationship of hegemony to broader cultural relations, the process of consumption, and the nature and influence of counterhegemonic thought and action. Raymond Williams wrote that:

The reality of any hegemony, in the extended political and cultural sense, is that, while by definition it is always dominant, it is never either total or exclusive. At any time, forms of alternative or directly oppositional politics and culture exist as significant elements in society... That is to say, alternative political and cultural emphases, and the many forms of opposition and struggles, are important not only in themselves but as indicative features of what the hegemonic process has in practice had to work to control.⁷⁶

Summarizing this dynamic, Su and Teo state that “hegemony is not an ossified relation to define dominance and subordination, but a dialectic and transformative process... any space becomes a contact zone where people interact with each other to reach a temporal compromise.”⁷⁷ This spatialization of the hegemonic process, with its description of an interactive “contact zone” and the addition of a “temporal” dimension, suggests how we may link a theory of hegemony to the concept of place.

In the late 1970s and 1980s, at the same time as Gramsci’s ideas were being increasingly engaged with by cultural theorists, geographers were radically reappraising their understandings of place. Characterizing this shift, Tim Cresswell suggests that “place is much more than a thing in the world—it also frames our way of seeing and understanding the world. In philosophical terms place is more than a

⁷⁵ Xiaobo Su and Peggy Teo, *The Politics of Heritage Tourism in China: A View from Lijiang* (Oxford: Routledge, 2009), 40.

⁷⁶ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 113.

⁷⁷ Su and Teo, *Politics of Heritage Tourism*, 37–38. Mary Louise Pratt has written at length on the notion of “contact zones” as places where disparate cultures meet and interact with each other. See, for example, Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (Routledge: London, 1992).

question of ontology (what exists) but, perhaps more fundamentally, a question of epistemology (how we know things).”⁷⁸

Historically, place had been an object of study in the ideographic practice of ‘chorology’—that is to say, places, as fixed locations, were scrutinized for particularities (from physical characteristics, to cultural practices) which allowed for their apparent differentiation from other bounded places.⁷⁹ Although this regional approach held on rather more tenaciously in the field of Area Studies, by the 1960s human geographers were increasingly focussing their attentions on space ahead of place. Edward Casey argues that this prioritizing of space was grounded in Kant’s formulation that “general knowledge must always precede local knowledge,” which paves the way “for the idea that space precedes place.”⁸⁰ Space in this understanding is something “empty, pristine, and innocent, waiting to be divided and compartmentalized into places of distinctive qualities.”⁸¹ For geographers seeking to make their discipline more scientific and determine widely applicable laws, there was an obvious appeal in this presumption. Geography as a spatial science allowed for the development of “scientific law-like generalizations” with places viewed merely as particular identifiable locations in absolute space. However, as Cresswell rightly notes, “in order to make this work people had to be removed from the scene. Space was not embodied but empty. This empty space could then be used to develop a kind of spatial mathematics—a geometry. But this idea of place as a fascination with the particular and the study of place as ‘mere description’ depends on a particular naïve view of places as given parts of the human landscape.”⁸²

Casey calls for an inversion of this dynamic, stating that human knowledge stems first from the local: “To live is to live locally, and to know is first of all to know

⁷⁸ Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 110.

Cresswell provides an excellent chapter on “The Genealogy of Place” (15–52), to which this section is indebted. Another helpful overview, focusing on the relationship between space and place, is found in John A. Agnew, “Space and Place,” in *The Sage Handbook of Geographical Knowledge*, eds. John A. Agnew and David N. Livingstone (London: Sage Publications, 2011), 316–330.

⁷⁹ Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction*, 16.

⁸⁰ Edward S. Casey, “How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of time: Phenomenological Prolegomena,” in *Senses of Place*, ed. Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1996), 16.

⁸¹ David Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 166–167.

⁸² Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction*, 19.

the places one is in.” This is a phenomenological approach, which emphasizes human perceptual experience as constituted by and constitutive *of* the world we inhabit, rather than fixating on the empirical data of geography as spatial science. (There are echoes here of Lynn Pan’s prioritizing of “atmosphere and feeling” above “objective reality” in capturing the “psychological reality” of Old Shanghai, as discussed in the Introduction.⁸³) The observation that, “human beings—along with other entities on earth—are ineluctably place-bound,” allows Casey to offer a counterargument to the study of space as the necessary basis of general laws, proposing instead that “place, far from being something singular, is something general, perhaps even universal.”⁸⁴

Casey’s phenomenological critique is in the tradition of humanistic geography that developed in the 1970s—partly in response to the increasing emphasis on geography as a spatial science—through the writings of Edward Relph and Yi-Fu Tuan. Relph was interested in how what phenomenologists call the *intentionality* of the mind—that is, the ways in which different mental states typically involve a consciousness *about* something—might be related to place. In Cresswell’s pithy summation of Relph’s argument, “consciousness is not just of something—but something in its place. The only way humans can be humans is to be ‘in place.’ Place determines our experience.”⁸⁵ Tuan, meanwhile, investigated what he called “topophilia... [the] affective bond between people and place,” and also introduced a temporal dimension into his consideration of the relationship between space and place: “if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place.”⁸⁶

An emotional attachment to place, as explored by Tuan, is an aspect of what Agnew calls a “*sense of place*,” which he identifies as being one of three recurring dimensions in theoretical discussions of place, alongside “place as *location* or a site in space where an activity or object is located and which relates to other sites or locations because of interaction, movement and diffusion between them” and “place as a series of *locales* or settings where everyday-life activities take place. Here the

⁸³ Pan, *Old Shanghai*, vii.

⁸⁴ Casey, “How to Get from Space to Place,” 19.

⁸⁵ Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction*, 22–23; Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion, 1976).

⁸⁶ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1974), 4; Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 6.

location is not just the mere address but the where of social life and environmental transformation.” A “sense of place” is indicated by “a strong sense of ‘belonging’ to a place, either consciously or as shown through everyday behaviour such as participating in place-related affairs... But this need be neither totalistic, in the sense of excluding other objects of affection or identity, nor reactionary and exclusionary.”⁸⁷

Whilst the rise of humanistic geography undoubtedly reinvigorated the study of place, Agnew’s assertion that a “sense of place” need not be “reactionary and exclusionary” is an implicit acknowledgement that for some scholars place has assumed “a more ambivalent role than in the celebrations of humanism.”⁸⁸ The shadow of Heidegger and his support for National Socialist ideology looms large here. Heidegger’s phenomenology, with his focus on how places “are constructed in our memories and affections through repeated encounters and complex associations” has been hugely influential on the work of scholars such as Relph and Casey.⁸⁹ Most famously he uses the illustration of a farmhouse in the Black Forest to pursue his argument that *dasein* (or ‘dwelling’) is the essence of existence and that this is “rooted in place.”⁹⁰ Heidegger’s call for a reconnection to the authenticity of dwelling, with a return to a union between the human and natural worlds, which has been obfuscated by the spread of capitalism, certainly has its appeal—not least to proponents of environmentalist place-based politics.⁹¹

In the Introduction, the term ‘spectaculation’ was proposed to designate the marriage of speculative real estate market practices with spectacular architectural structures that are symbolic of increasing prosperity and anticipated future success in contemporary Shanghai. In Heidegger’s terms, this phenomenon would be an example of building not as an organic process of cultivation, but the “erecting [of] things that cannot come into being and subsist by growing.” Such buildings are far removed from the rooted structures he depicts as authentic to the Black Forest. They are, rather, commercial enterprises which may “even deny dwelling its own nature when they are

⁸⁷ Agnew, “Space and Place,” 326–327.

⁸⁸ Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction*, 26.

⁸⁹ Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 26.

⁹⁰ Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction*, 21–22; Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 160.

⁹¹ Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, 184.

pursued and acquired purely for their own sake.”⁹² The graffito of “Give me back my green space” might then be read as a retort to this denial of dwelling as occasioned by the clearing of parkland to make space for prime real estate.

However, whilst this example drawn from Shanghai may initially seem to support Heidegger’s argument, it actually serves to highlight a problem with his usage of the Black Forest homestead as a rare, material illustration of the metaphysical conceptions of authentic dwelling that he is discussing. As David Harvey notes, this fails to address the question of:

what might the conditions of ‘authentic dwelling’ be in a highly industrialized, modernist, and capitalist world? We cannot turn back to the Black Forest farmhouse [...] He provides no examples of what it might really mean to dwell authentically in our actual contemporary conditions of existence, and herein lies an acute danger. The quest for authenticity is, it turns out, itself a modern value, and it stands to be subverted by the market provision of constructed authenticity, invented traditions, and a commercialized heritage culture.⁹³

Clearly Shanghai—even in its early days as a medium-sized provincial market town and fishing port—has never been anything like the Black Forest. If one were to attempt to identify a distinctive and longstanding quality of the city, then it might well be its history of adapting to changing flows of goods and people. Indeed, the ‘authentic’ vernacular architecture of Shanghai’s *lilong* housing is a product of this very process. The ways in which portions of this older housing are now being preserved (whilst most of it is demolished) demonstrates how a “commercialized heritage culture” may be a significant feature of a “touristed landscape” as described in the Introduction. The Xintiandi shopping district in Shanghai is a striking example of this, where refabricated traditional *shikumen* residences now house multinational restaurants and

⁹² Martin Heidegger, *Philosophical and Political Writings*, ed. Manfred Stassen (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2003), 268; See also Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, 183.

⁹³ Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, 116, 185.

high-end boutiques, alongside the Site of the First National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party and the Wu Li Xiang Shikumen Open House Museum.⁹⁴

Most troubling is the possibility that a fixation on rootedness and authenticity may stimulate a totalitarian, revanchist politics. In its most extreme manifestation this is found in the *Blut und Boden* ('Blood and Soil') ideology of Nazism, but Harvey sees it also implicated in phenomena such as gated communities in Baltimore.⁹⁵ And even if the Heideggerian notion of a rooted spiritual relationship between humans and place need not be an inevitable spur for a reactionary politics of exclusion and violence, its realization remains, at best, deeply unrealistic. Harvey provides a caustic summation of the problem:

Heideggerianism trades upon the undoubted capacity of human beings to sense moments of harmony, peace, and spiritual serenity, if not sublime joy, in particular places at particular times and to develop deep attachments to the places where they live, but it then goes on to suppose that this is all that is relevant to people's lives. The problem, of course, is that if the market system, along with monetary valuations, contemporary technologies (organizational as well as materialist), and capital accumulation, were all to disappear tomorrow, and if all the bankers of the world suddenly committed themselves to the Heideggerean project, then most of those capable of reading this book and many more besides would die of starvation in a few weeks.⁹⁶

Harvey's reference to "contemporary technologies" and "capital accumulation" is suggestive of an argument, epitomized by the work of Manuel Castells, that—irrespective of either the rehabilitary efforts of humanistic geographers in the 1970s and 1980s towards place, or the anxieties of certain radical human geographers concerning the reactionary potential of a fixation on this—in an era of globalization, "'local' ways of life are being undermined by the (network) logic of global capital

⁹⁴ See Introduction for a discussion of *lilong* and *shikumen* architecture.

⁹⁵ David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996).

⁹⁶ Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, 186.

accumulation as place is annihilated by space.”⁹⁷ Castells states that, historically, “[Space] as a social form... has been the material support of simultaneity in social practice.” That is to say, the organization and operation of space has been determined by our need for an immediacy of social communication. In the past, this required physical proximity; hence Castells describes “places” as “the *space of contiguity*,” and asserts that “cities are, from their onset, communication systems, increasing the chances of communication through physical contiguity.” The development of new advanced communication and transportation technologies decisively “transformed the spatiality of social interaction by introducing simultaneity, or any chosen time frame, in social practices, regardless of the location of the actors engaged in the communication process.” He conceptualizes this new spatiality as “The *space of flows*: the material support of simultaneous social practices communicated at a distance.”⁹⁸

Castells does not claim that places have ceased to exist. Indeed, he notes that “the overwhelming majority of people, in advanced and traditional societies alike, live in places, and so they perceive their space as place-based. *A place is a locale whose form, function and meaning are self-contained within the boundaries of physical contiguity.*”⁹⁹ However, these locales are increasingly determined by the demands of the network society, functioning as “nodes of these communication networks.” Yingjin Zhang summarizes Castells’ argument as follows:

In terms of the space-place configuration, place seems to be losing out to space in the era of globalization... Driven by the logic of flows, the world of places (for example, the home, the city) is increasingly superseded by spaces characterized by circulation, velocity, and flow, and this tendency is visually reflected, on the one hand, in the widespread demolition of old neighbourhoods in developing cities like Beijing and Shanghai and, on the

⁹⁷ Phil Hubbard, “Manuel Castells,” in *Key Thinkers on Space and Place*, 2nd Edition, ed. Phil Hubbard and Rob Kitchin (London: Sage Publications Ltd., 2011), 103.

⁹⁸ Manuel Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture, Volume 1: The Rise of the Network Society*, 2nd Edition (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), xxxi–xxxii.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 453. Emphasis in original.

other, in the proliferation of serialized, ahistorical, and acultural architectural projects like international hotels, airports, and supermarkets in world cities.¹⁰⁰

Castells' emphasis on the flow of networks has been hugely influential, but it is also flawed on several fronts. Even setting aside the contestable assertion that places emerge primarily to facilitate communication, Castells' narrow conception of communication equates this largely with transactional activity in which the priority is to defeat space through simultaneity, and underplays the possibility of simultaneous communication across time and not just space—through memories, the imagination, and Benjamin's grasping of constellations between eras—that place can activate. Such communication—or communion—is reliant not on an increasingly homogenous functionality, but a specific historical, social and cultural composition, which informs the lived experience of that place. Likewise, as Crang rightly notes, the proliferating “subway stations, airports, supermarkets” of world cities (what Augé has termed “non-places”), are not simply spaces of “homogenised commodified experience; nor just the rationality of scheduling and ‘flow management’... they are also places of fantasy and desire, places of inclusion and exclusion, and social milieux for different groups of people.”¹⁰¹

Castells' depiction sees place defined by its location in *absolute space* and its functional value within *relative space-time*. It fails to give due consideration to a third category, which Harvey terms *relational spacetime*. A brief consideration of Shanghai's Bund (discussed in more depth in Chapter Three) may provide a tangible example of these three forms of space (congruent with Agnew's *location, locale* and *sense of place*) that Harvey identifies. Imagine the diverse crowd of people present on the Bund promenade, all going about their business: some taking photographs of the Lujiazui skyline, others enjoying their evening exercise, some selling children's toys, and still others en route to an expensive dinner. Setting aside issues such as soil erosion and infinitesimal tectonic movement, the absolute space occupied by the Bund is immovable, timeless and readily identifiable as a location on a map. Yet the Bund as place is clearly more than just this absolute space of geographic co-ordinates and

¹⁰⁰ Zhang, *Cinema, Space, and Polylocality in a Globalizing China*, 5. Zhang is heavily indebted in this passage to Hubbard, “Manuel Castells,” 103.

¹⁰¹ Mike Crang, “Between Places: Producing Hubs, Flows, and Networks,” *Environment and Planning A* 34 (2002), 573; Marc Augé, *Non-places: An Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (London: Verso, 1995).

bounded properties; there is also the relative space-time of “processes and motions,” in which “the spatial frame varies according to what is relativized and by whom.”¹⁰² The various people on the promenade occupy shifting positions relative to the physical infrastructure of the promenade and to each other. They are implicated in a wide range of different flows, including financial transactions, transportation movements, social interactions and ecological processes. To address the question of what the Bund *means*, though, (as Harvey asks of ‘Ground Zero’ in Manhattan), one must also consider “relational spacetime” which is inscribed with such things as collective memory, political ideology, individual dreams and imaginations.¹⁰³

In proposing too rigid an opposition of the global versus the local, with space triumphant over place, Castells understates the degree to which the two interact to generate internal instabilities, contradictions and contestations.¹⁰⁴ A small illustration of this may be found by considering once more the words “Give me back my green space,” daubed on the wall of a Shanghai building site. This protest is not to do with the eradication of a relatively timeless local place suddenly overwhelmed by a space of flows, but it is very clearly related to issues of sentiment, memory and differing conceptions of the value, function and meaning of a certain plot of land. The construction work did not necessitate the destruction of some ancient site of great cultural resonance, but the flattening of a small, modern park with basketball courts (themselves an American cultural import), used mainly by students from the neighbouring Jiandong Secondary School (which in an earlier incarnation had housed the headquarters of the collaborationist Nanjing Nationalist Government’s secret service), many of whom frequented a nearby Lanzhou noodle restaurant (run by ethnic minority Hui Chinese from the west of China), which was also included in the demolition zone.¹⁰⁵ The new construction work may have been driven by the “logic of global capital accumulation,” but the challenge to it emanates not from a site of

¹⁰² Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, 135.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 140–141.

¹⁰⁴ Hubbard, “Manuel Castells,” 104.

¹⁰⁵ The notoriously brutal secret service (featured in Ang Lee’s film, *Lust, Caution*—itself an adaptation of Eileen Chang’s novella) was known simply as “No. 76” due to the location of its interrogation centre at 76 Jessfield Road. Due to a change in street name, the address of the Jiandong Secondary School is now 435 Wanhangu Road. Lynn Pan, *Old Shanghai: Gangsters in Paradise* (Singapore: Cultured Lotus, 1999), 119–121; Frederic Wakeman, Jr. *The Shanghai Badlands: Wartime Terrorism and Urban Crime, 1937–1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 80–92.

authentic dwelling, but a place which is itself the product of a wide variety of historic flows (many of them equally motivated by capital accumulation).

Rather than an understanding of place which overly fixates on the “boundaries of physical contiguity” or which fetishizes the authentic, what is needed, Massey suggests, is a conception of place that is “not self-enclosing and defensive, but outward looking. A sense of place adequate to this era of time-space compression.”¹⁰⁶ She has referred to this as a “global sense of place,” which regards place not as something static, but as a “process,” with permeable boundaries (defined from the outside not just within) and possessing multiple identities.¹⁰⁷ Although Dirlik (who is largely sympathetic to Massey’s argument) has cautioned that in denying any sense of fixity, “The effort to salvage place ends up by declaring that there is nothing special about place after all,” Massey has vigorously reasserted her position:

What is special about place is not some romance of a pre-given collective identity or of the eternity of the hills. Rather what is special about place is that throwntogetherness, the unavoidable challenge of negotiating a here-and-now (itself drawing on a history and a geography of thens and theres)... This is the event of place in part in the simple sense of the coming together of the previously unrelated, a constellation of processes rather than a thing. This is place as open and as internally multiple.¹⁰⁸

Thinking of place as “open and porous” is clearly very different to the essentialist Heideggerian notion “that place is definable in terms of internal histories, timeless identities, or fixed boundaries.”¹⁰⁹ It is also offered as a challenge to the hostility towards place-based politics that Massey detects in David Harvey’s work. Yet Harvey (who offers a particularly nuanced and convincing appraisal of place in his *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, which distils conclusions from much of his previous work) would counter that this is a misrepresentation of his own

¹⁰⁶ Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 147.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 154–156.

¹⁰⁸ Arif Dirlik, “Place-based Imagination: Globalism and the Politics of Place,” in *Places and Politics in an Age of Globalisation*, ed. Roxann Prazniak and Arif Dirlik (Lanham, MA: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 22; Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2005), 140.

¹⁰⁹ Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, 121; Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, 189.

position. He does not believe that place-based politics “inevitably becomes exclusionary and reactionary,” but merely emphasizes this threat for good reason: “If we do not pay close attention to how something potentially progressive can so easily turn reactionary, then we lose sight of the grander political possibilities that always attach to mobilizing the power of place as a moment in the search for the geography of freedom.”¹¹⁰

Indeed, although Harvey is deeply critical of Heidegger’s philosophy of place, he sees in it, nonetheless, the possibility for something “positive and progressive” in its “critique of the existing social order.” The theorist to have pursued this possibility most persuasively, Harvey suggests, is the French sociologist, Henri Lefebvre, who “transforms the Heideggerian concept of ‘dwelling’ into ‘habiting,’ in order to free it of mythical and metaphysical presumptions... [so that] what for Heidegger leads to a withdrawal into the phenomenology of place generates in Lefebvre the spirit of a counter-attack to produce alternative and more humane spaces and places.”¹¹¹

Lefebvre’s writings, especially his 1974 magnum opus, *La Production de l’espace* (translated into English in 1991 as *The Production of Space*) have been hugely influential on the work of a number of social geographers, including Harvey and Massey, and are particularly pertinent to this present thesis. Ironically, Lefebvre does not really deploy the term “place,” but it very much overlaps with his discussions of what he terms “social space.”¹¹² Lefebvre argues that social space is produced by the social relations it contains, and to comprehend this process he proposes the following spatial triad:

- 1 *Spatial practice*... embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation. Spatial practice ensures continuity and some degree of cohesion. [...]
- 2 *Representations of space*, which are tied to the relations of production and to the ‘order’ which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to ‘frontal’ relations.
- 3 *Representational spaces*, embodying complex symbolisms, sometimes coded, sometimes not, linked to the clandestine or underground side of

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 195–196.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 184–188.

¹¹² Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction*, 12.

social life, as also to art (which may come eventually to be defined less as a code of space than as a code of representational spaces).¹¹³

The first element of the triad relates to observable practices (for example, forms of movement), existing within—and helping to define—physical space, as experienced through our sense perceptions. Hence Lefebvre allies this term to what he calls *perceived* space: “under neocapitalism... [spatial practice] embodies a close association, within perceived space, between daily reality (daily routine) and urban reality (the routes and networks which link up the places set aside for work, ‘private’ life and leisure).” *Representations of space*, meanwhile (which include such things as city plans and architectural drawings), constitute the *conceived* space, or “conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers... all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived.” Finally, *representational spaces* are the *lived* space and refer to the social and emotional meanings ascribed to material spaces: “space as directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’, but also of some artists and perhaps of those, such as a few writers and philosophers, who *describe* and aspire to do no more than describe.”¹¹⁴

Aaron Kuntz offers the following helpful demonstration of how the elements in the triad may come together:

A superficial yet practical example... would be a new faculty member who is given a campus map (representation of space), setting out on a walk to the library (spatial practice), and comparing the campus to others she or he has known (representational space). Each element of the triad continually influences the other. As the campus map asserts a sense of possible direction and orientation, the actual walking gives the map newly concretized and experiential meaning, and memories of past campuses fill the landscape with referential meaning.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 33.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 38–39.

¹¹⁵ Aaron M. Kuntz, “Turning from Time to Space: Conceptualizing Faculty Work,” in *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research: Volume 24*, ed. John C. Smart (London: Springer, 2009), 377.

As Kuntz notes, the different elements of the triad exist in dialectical tension with each other. Harvey proposes a two-dimensional grid that sets Lefebvre's triad on one axis against the aforementioned absolute space, relative space-time and relational spacetime on the other, forming a matrix with various categories and combinations, all of which are traversed in the production and analysis of place.¹¹⁶

It is the Lefebvrian dimension that brings our discussion back to the concept of hegemony. Lefebvre contends that it is inconceivable that "the exercise of hegemony might leave space untouched." He argues that knowledge (*savoir*) is a means of hegemony establishing and maintaining power and this connection is made manifest in the production of space. However, "this in no way interdicts a critical and subversive form of knowledge (*connaissance*); on the contrary, it points up the antagonism between a knowledge which serves power and a form of knowing which refuses to acknowledge power."¹¹⁷ Although the elements of the spatial triad are kept in dialectical tension, it is the *conceived* space (*representations of space*) which is associated with *savoir* and is "the dominant space in any society (or mode of production)" whilst the *lived* space (*representational spaces*) relates to *connaissance* and "is the dominated—and hence passively experienced—space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate."¹¹⁸

Returning to the earlier example of the construction site barrier in Shanghai, it can be seen that the wall exists at the nexus of different understandings of space. The imposition of a new terrain in place of the previous "green space" reveals a disjuncture between how this space is conceptualized by city planners and private developers and how it is understood emotionally by the local inhabitants. One such "user", their spatial practice necessarily impacted upon by the redefined space, performs an instance of artistic dissent, inscribing their desirous knowledge of the representational space upon the "concretized" conceived space in the form of the painted characters. It is an explicit example of what the philosopher William J. Gavin has described as the "contexts" of the city constituting "the material of the artist".¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, 145–148.

¹¹⁷ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 10–11.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 38–39.

¹¹⁹ William J. Gavin, "The Urban and the Aesthetic," in *Philosophy and the City: Classic to Contemporary Writings*, ed. Sharon M. Meagher (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 141.

Contemporaneous with Lefebvre, the work of cultural theorist Stuart Hall examines hegemony and different forms of knowledge within mass communications discourse, with a particular focus on television. His classic 1973 essay, “Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse” (revised in 1980 as “Encoding/Decoding”), critiques the conventional linear “sender/message/receiver” model and highlights instead the discursive series of “distinctive moments” of “production, circulation, distribution/consumption, reproduction” in the mass communications process. Hall’s model proposes a moment of encoding in which “*dominant or preferred meanings*” are inscribed, leading to the television programme itself as “meaningful discourse,” which is then “decoded.” This decoding is not a moment of passive reception but of active production, which may give rise to three hypothetical constructions. Firstly, “the *dominant-hegemonic position*. When the viewer takes the connoted meaning... full and straight, and decodes the message in terms of the reference code in which it has been encoded.” Secondly, the “*negotiated version* contains a mixture of adaptive and oppositional elements... It accords the privileged position to the dominant definitions of events while reserving the right to make a more negotiated application to ‘local conditions’... [and] is thus shot through with contradictions.” Finally, in an “*oppositional*” version, the viewer “detotalizes the message in the preferred code in order to retotalize the message within some alternative framework of reference.”¹²⁰

There is equivalence here with Lefebvre’s spatial triad. The moment of encoding—the intended framework of knowledge—approximates to the conceived space of planners and technocrats, the programme as meaningful discourse to the physical, perceived space, and the decoding process to the lived space as understood by users and inhabitants. Lefebvre himself refers to coding and states that “an already produced space can be decoded, can be *read*.”¹²¹ He cautions, though, that “social space can in no way be compared to a blank page upon which a specific message has been inscribed... Both natural and urban spaces are, if anything, ‘over-inscribed’: everything therein resembles a rough draft, jumbled and self-contradictory.”¹²²

This is reminiscent of Massey’s description of the “throwntogetherness” of place. In the Introduction, *branding* was proposed as a multivalent term that might be

¹²⁰ Stuart Hall, “Encoding/Decoding,” in *Culture, Media, Language*, ed. Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe and Paul Willis (London: Hutchinson, 1980), 128–138.

¹²¹ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 17.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 142.

suggestive in conceptualizing the interplay between contemporary Shanghai's rapid urban development and various cultural reactions to (and influences on) this. Branding, as hegemonic process, involves the never fully achieved organization and management of this "throwntogetherness," seeking to secure a dominant or preferred reading of that space. Hall states that, "In speaking of *dominant meanings*, then, we are not talking about a one-sided process which governs how all events will be signified. It consists of the 'work' required to enforce, win plausibility for and command as legitimate a *decoding* of the event" that is amenable to the hegemonic order.¹²³ Hall is writing about television production, but it may be recalled that Massey also refers to place as an "event." In the concluding section of this chapter, the Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Centre is explored as an example of the kind of "work" undertaken by the state to foster a *preferred* decoding of the city space. Meanwhile, the sources considered in later chapters offer up a variety of what might be termed *negotiated* and *oppositional* versions of the urban environment.

Although branding speaks of power and control, it is not monolithic. Branded spaces may be simultaneously understood and consumed in varying ways by different individuals and groups. A determining factor in the differing ways that the same space may be experienced is the possibility for what I term alternative *frames of affinity*. This notion is informed by Nelson Goodman's discussion of "frames of reference" in *Ways of Worldmaking* (1978). Goodman considers the opposition of the statements, "The sun always moves" and "The sun never moves," and concludes that these do not exist as "mutually exclusive truths."

Rather, we are inclined to regard the two strings of words not as complete statements with truth-values of their own but as elliptical for some such statements as "Under frame of reference A, the sun always moves" and "Under frame of reference B, the sun never moves"—statements that may both be true of the same world.¹²⁴

He goes on to suggest that these "alternative descriptions of motion... provide only a minor and rather pallid example of diversity in accounts of the world. Much more

¹²³ Hall, "Encoding/Decoding," 133.

¹²⁴ Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1978), 2.

striking is the vast variety of versions and visions in the several sciences, in the works of different painters and writers, and in our perceptions as informed by these, by circumstances, and by our own insights, interests, and past experiences.”¹²⁵

Goodman’s mention of “our perceptions” is key to my usage of the term *frames of affinity*, which emphasizes the potential for diverse understandings of place. I deploy the term *affinity* to accentuate how spatial and affective aspects combine in the experience of place.¹²⁶ The word derives from the Latin *affinitas*, meaning “connection by marriage.” As opposed to consanguinity, it is not an innate relationship, but one entered into. Interestingly, though, the term has come, in time, to refer most commonly to “a natural liking for and understanding of someone or something.”¹²⁷ This slippage suggests why the term is particularly apt for our purposes: to profess a close affinity to a place is to have entered into a relationship in which the emotional attachment seems almost natural, or pre-given.

To experience a *local affinity* is not necessarily to be a local resident, but rather to believe in an attachment, or have a certain investment in a place. In this way, a tourist may perceive some form of local connection that informs their experiences, even of a place they have never visited before in the flesh. Indeed, commonly used expressions by travellers who feel a close affinity to a place include “I feel like I belong here,” “I feel at home here,” and even “I feel *more* at home here”—as though the visited place has connected with some originary sense of self. This feeling of local affinity is not fixed, but emerges from and feeds into the subject’s relational involvement with the place. These relational elements inform the subject’s frame(s) of affinity. A *frame* provides a narrative structure, which enables subjects to situate themselves within timespace. James Farrer identifies such a process in his analysis of the “narratives of emplacement” deployed by Western expatriates living in Shanghai. These frames may be mobile and multiple, and so narratives that are “claims of entitlement to be in a place,” may also be “simultaneously narratives of displacement,

¹²⁵ Ibid., 3.

¹²⁶ Lefebvre deploys the term “perception” to refer to direct physical sensory perception, whereas Goodman’s usage refers to perception on a more affective level (incorporating artistic visions, past experiences and so forth) and as such is closer to Lefebvre’s notion of “lived experience.” Though, of course, for Lefebvre, the “lived space” of experience and “the social practice” of perceived physical space, are held in dialectical tension, each informing the other.

¹²⁷ *Oxford English Dictionary*

dislocation and even exclusion”.¹²⁸ And, in addition to providing a situating narrative structure, a frame fosters a certain mode of seeing, determining what is perceived within the scene and what is kept out of view. That is to say, the frame circumscribes the phenomenology of place.

The emphasis on the visual here is in keeping with Lefebvre’s analysis of the “logic of visualization” which, he argues, “now informs the entirety of social practice.”¹²⁹ He describes the socially produced space of neocapitalism as “abstract space,” occurring when “labour fell prey to abstraction.”¹³⁰ Abbas writes that, “The more abstract the space, the more important the image becomes... and the more dominant becomes the visual as a mode.”¹³¹ Abbas is drawing on the work of Guy Debord, who argues that relations between people are increasingly being supplanted by relations between commodities and hence “The whole life of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*.”¹³² Lefebvre also references Debord’s “process of spectacularization,” as a function of the “logic of visualization.”

In the course of the process whereby the visual gains the upper hand over the other senses, all impressions derived from taste, smell, touch and even hearing first lose clarity, then fade away altogether, leaving the field to line, colour and light... all of social life becomes the mere decipherment of messages by the eyes, the mere reading of texts... And Harmony, born through and for listening, is transposed into the visual realm; witness the almost total priority accorded the arts of the image (cinema, painting).¹³³

Lefebvre’s reference to “Harmony” returns us to the beginning of this section and the CPC’s doctrine of “harmonious society.” The Expo 2010 may have represented the CPC’s most overt advertisement to the world of Shanghai as a pioneering global

¹²⁸ James Farrer, “‘New Shanghailanders’ or ‘New Shanghainese’: Western Expatriates’ Narratives of Emplacement in Shanghai.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36, no. 8 (2010): 1212.

¹²⁹ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 286.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹³¹ Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance*, 9.

¹³² Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1995), 12.

¹³³ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 286.

city, but the ambitions of the country's politicians and planners to present the metropolis as a model of "harmonious urban living" have been instituted for some time, and nowhere is their vision of the city displayed more systematically than in the temple to urban living that is the Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Centre (SUPEC), which is examined in the next section as exemplary of the hegemonic conceived space of harmonious contemporary Shanghai. Lefebvre's assertion that harmony has been "transposed into the visual realm," and "priority accorded to the arts of the image," with a specific mention of cinema, is particularly pertinent, as the argument put forth in the study of the SUPEC is that the museum space reveals distinctly *cinematic* qualities. In Lefebvre's terms, the SUPEC is a place "produced especially in order to be read." He cautions that, "on close examination" such spaces "are the most deceptive and tricked-up imaginable. The graphic impression of readability is a sort of *trompe-l'oeil* concealing strategic intentions and actions."¹³⁴ The following "close examination" of the SUPEC aims to explore the museum's readability and some of the possible strategic intentions underpinning this. In an attempt to capture something of the immersive experience of being inside the museum, this exploration is structured as a tour around various key exhibits within the building.

Cine-mapping the City:

A Journey Around the Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Centre

On the third floor of the Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Centre—following a curved walkway into a circular room entitled Virtual World, you walk up onto a platform, surrounded by a 360-degree video screen. The screen lights up and you are greeted by a computer-generated image of 'yourself' (a young, enthusiastic boy perched on a hoverboard) and your companion (a creature of uncertain taxonomy who is to be your guide on this journey). And then you're off, sweeping along Shanghai's elevated highways from west to east, overtaking taxis at breakneck speed. Then the music changes and all of a sudden you have jumped location and you're soaring over a leafy People's Square, gliding past the Shanghai Museum, before speeding off once more towards the Bund and over the river Huangpu into Pudong. Fireworks erupt as

¹³⁴ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 143.

you rise over the international airport, then suddenly it's daytime again and you're back at the river, floating past monumental buildings on both sides. The symphonic swell of the music crescendos as the screen grows brighter and the words "Better City, Better Life" appear. Watching the film is a disorienting but exhilarating experience, and it is significant that the journey is mediated through the apparent viewpoint of the child on the hoverboard, as it encourages us to approach this urban utopia with a youthful sense of wonder, whilst at the same time there is an implicit understanding that our guide is schooling us in how to read and appreciate the city.

The affective qualities of the film may be considered in light of Deleuze's discussion of the "movement-image." Cinema, he suggests, does not offer us fixed poses or "a completed figure, but the description of a figure which is always in the process of being formed... it does not give us a figure described in a unique moment, but the continuity of the movement which describes the figure."¹³⁵ In *Virtual World*, the figure being described by the movement is Shanghai itself. The camera is equivalent to trains, cars and aeroplanes, all of which are "means of translation", and its own movement is "a translation in space."¹³⁶ Notably, the camera in *Virtual World* (which is not really a camera as the images are computer-generated) offers the view from the hoverboard; it is itself figured as a means of transportation, faster and more agile than the various taxis and boats around which it skirts. And, as the camera purports to show us our own field of vision on the journey, its movement becomes a metonym of our bodies' own passage through the city space. Following Deleuze's logic of movement defining the figure, the liberated mobility of the camera does not just offer us the promise of unhindered travel to any part of Shanghai, it also implies that we actively partake in constructing the cityscape—our movement translates the city space into an urban touristic playground.

The cinematic movement in *Virtual World* defines a journey through the city, which, although temporally and physically impossible (relying as it does on remarkable feats of teleportation), provides us nonetheless with a comprehensive itinerary of the city's "glamour zones."¹³⁷ It is this cinematic representation of space

¹³⁵ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Continuum, 1986), 5.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 5–8.

¹³⁷ I borrow the term "glamour zones" from Saskia Sassen, "Whose City Is It? Globalization and the Formation of New Claims," *Public Culture* 8 no.2 (1996), 205–23.

that increasingly shapes the imagined cartography of the city for a hegemonic elite of politicians, developers and investors, who in turn continue to mould the city to fit their blueprint. That vision of Shanghai is seen particularly clearly as you walk out of Virtual World to witness the other main exhibit on this level of the SUPEC: a huge scale model of the city that covers most of the third floor.

What is striking about this model is that it achieves the dual effect of expressing the vast size of the city, whilst rendering it unexpectedly intimate. From your position on the surrounding walkway, you assume the role of Michel de Certeau's "voyeur-god," looking out over a city that seems eminently possessable.¹³⁸ This aerial view provides a strangely empowering experience; you feel that if you were just to stretch out and move a building, then, voodoo-like, this same action would be enacted on the city proper. This effect is (literally) heightened for ticket holders to a raised VIP viewing deck, which juts out over the model to provide a more commanding view. Inevitably your eyes are drawn to the high-rise signature buildings as a means of orientating yourself. Quite quickly though you become aware that some of these skyscrapers are unfamiliar. It is then that you notice the description of the model, explaining that this is not a 3-D map of the city as it is now, but an anticipation of how it will look in 2020.¹³⁹ As Baudrillard observed in his classic essay on "Simulacra and Simulations," today the map no longer describes a prior terrain, it is now "the map that engenders the territory."¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 93.

¹³⁹ Most of the unfinished buildings are made of plain translucent plastic, whilst the models of existing buildings are more detailed. But this logic does not seem to have been applied to all the buildings, as some of the tallest unfinished buildings are presented in the same manner as existing structures.

¹⁴⁰ Jean Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulations," in *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster, trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton and Philip Beitchman, 2nd Edition (Oxford: Polity Press, 2001), 169.



Fig. 12: The model map in the SUPEC, with Virtual World in the background.

Mapping also features in de Certeau's essay, "Spatial Stories," in which he draws a distinction between "maps," which present a "tableau" in space, and "tours," which organize movement through space.¹⁴¹ If the model of the city in the SUPEC is the "map," which "collates on the same plane heterogeneous places... [creating] a totalizing stage on which elements of diverse origin are brought together to form the tableau of a 'state' of geographical knowledge," then the cinematic movement of Virtual World offers us the "tour," an "itinerary" of "discursive" possibilities.¹⁴² Taken in conjunction, these two exhibits narrate a "travel story" of the city in which the action of our journey in Virtual World is defined by, but also helps delineate, the body of the model map: "stories of journeys and actions are marked out by the 'citation' of the places that result from them or authorize them."¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 115–130.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 119–121.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 120.

But how discursive really are the possibilities of our tour? It is notable that in spite of the dizzying array of places that we visit in Virtual World, the city's apparent heterogeneity seems oddly homogeneous. This is partly an effect of the computerized rendering of the cityscape, but looking around the other pristine exhibits, one senses that it is also a product of the overall conception of the city space. Alterity is glossed over by a utopian discourse that "repress[es] all the physical, mental and political pollutions that would compromise it."¹⁴⁴ The fluidity of our journey becomes a metaphor for how the concept city smoothes over any alternative visions of the urban space. It is not our mobility that defines the tour, rather it is the tour that determines the limits of our movement. We see this formula at work in another exhibit, a speedboat in which you can sit and 'steer' the boat as it journeys upriver, though of course your vehicle actually remains motionless throughout.

The third floor of the Urban Planning Exhibition Centre offers us a vision of perfected reality, what Baudrillard might call, "a metastable, programmatic, perfect descriptive machine which provides all the signs of the real and short-circuits its vicissitudes."¹⁴⁵ If this idealized vision is "metastable," then how is the fragile equilibrium to be maintained? The model city needs to be populated by a model citizenship and it is visual media especially that are employed to market the utopian conception of space to the city's populace. In addition to television, magazine and billboard advertising, there are now LCD displays in taxis and on the subway, as well as huge video screens on skyscrapers and outside shopping malls, visually saturating the city with images of aspirational fulfilment. The construction of the World Expo site alone necessitated the relocation of 18,000 households, but whilst such signature building projects may negatively affect Shanghainese residents at a local level, they are insistently presented as a source of civic pride and evidence of the city's global status. In Lefebvre's terms, these "monumental buildings mask the will to power and the arbitrariness of power beneath signs and surfaces which claim to express collective will and collective thought."¹⁴⁶

A particularly striking example of this "collective will" being mediated to Shanghainese residents can be found in a music video (sponsored by Coca-Cola) released in 2009 to mark the one-year countdown to the Expo. The video begins with

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 94.

¹⁴⁵ Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulations," 170.

¹⁴⁶ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 143.

footage of the famous Chinese pianist Lang Lang playing a grand piano against a backdrop of the Pudong skyline, intercut with panoramic shots of the city's glamour zones. We then cut to the actor Jackie Chan singing from the rooftop of a skyscraper. This unhindered access to a bird's-eye view of the city is not dissimilar to that offered in *Virtual World*, especially when we consider that the Pudong skyline has been digitally enhanced, whilst one chorus translates as "Heart, city / Resounding, the breath of starry night / *Fly through the heaven of dreams*."¹⁴⁷ The implication of the video is that this "heaven of dreams" is a product not only of the city's architecture, but also the collective will of its inhabitants. This is most explicitly iterated during a spoken-word interlude mid-way through the song in which the basketball player, Yao Ming, informs us that, "City makes life better. Expo makes Shanghai better. You and me make Expo better."¹⁴⁸ As the song continues, residents throughout the city dance through the streets, culminating in a huge group performance at the riverfront led by Jackie Chan. We see an apparently varied demographic: fashionable hip-hop youths in alleyways, young professionals in a warehouse performance space, middle-aged housewives on their balconies, and children with their grandparents. Yet despite this variety, the dancers present a somewhat homogeneous mass. All of them are immaculately dressed, attractive and of similar build; and all of them are linked by their joyous appreciation of the city space.

The video's use of celebrity icons is revealing: Jackie Chan, Yao Ming and Lang Lang represent the height of achievement in acting, sport and music respectively. As international superstars they signal the global claims of the Expo, with the fact that Jackie Chan is from Hong Kong and Lang Lang from Shenyang (close to the North Korean border) suggesting this is an event behind which the entire nation should rally. It is the Shanghainese figure, Yao Ming, though, who directly informs us that, "You and me make Expo better," and just before he delivers his homily we see images of him on several giant video screens in the city, dressed as a variety of professions—traffic policeman, businessman, worker and sports coach. It is an effect similar to that described by Michelle Huang as she notes the rise of the

¹⁴⁷ Translation from, Malcolm Moore, "The Bund is left out of Shanghai's Expo Song," *Telegraph*, 6 May 2009, http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/malcolmmoore/9693699/The_Bund_is_left_out_of_Shanghais_Expo_song/. [My emphasis]

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

popular image of “successful people” (*chenggong renshi*) in advertising throughout the city:

This emergent social icon illustrates not only the rise of the top-level service class in contemporary Shanghai but also how capitalist space eases the social tension engendered in the dual city by marketing the image of “a well-to-do tomorrow for all.”¹⁴⁹

Yao Ming may not be the generic successful businessperson, but his appearance in a range of different work situations seeks to suggest that this global superstar is not so different from us, and that we in turn can aspire to his position. Likewise, as Jackie Chan leaves his rooftop location to dance with a large crowd of Shanghainese residents along the riverfront, the divide in the “dual city” between celebrities and high-end professionals on the one hand, and lower-middle class workers on the other, is glossed over; the video elides “the distance between the monumental space of global capital and the lived space of the local inhabitants.”¹⁵⁰ This is achieved because the video’s narrative unfolds within the logic of the conceptualized space. Although we are apparently shown everyday Shanghainese residents, their actions do not take place within the lived space of their actual homes and workplaces, but in an idealized, digitally-enhanced representation of the city.

However, this perfected vision of the city is not so far removed from reality as to be unrecognizable. It would be overly simplistic to think of the conceptualized space and the lived space as two mutually exclusive planes. The two are constantly overlapping, a complex kaleidoscope of configurations. Likewise, although this exploration of the SUPEC has focussed on what might be termed the “hegemonic” CPC vision of Shanghai’s urban development, I do not intend to frame my use of the term “hegemony” in terms of some constant, rigid opposition in which an all-powerful ruling party, in league with a shadowy cabal of city planners, constantly imposes its will on a downtrodden and aggrieved wider populace. Hegemony is less overtly brutal and much more holistic than this, involving a far-reaching complicity in thought between state and society. In his article on the “Touristic Consumption of Liverpool Waterfront,” Les Roberts notes how a Mersey Ferry captain’s observations concerning

¹⁴⁹ Huang, *Walking Between Slums and Skyscrapers*, 109.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 110.

the development of the waterfront area echo “the rhetoric of the regeneration industry”, suggesting an “uncritical acceptance of the benign efficacy of the tourism economy... [which is] driven by an overarching logic of leisure, consumption, and culture-capital.”¹⁵¹ Similarly, the huge crowds of mainly Chinese visitors queuing for hours at the Shanghai World Expo were testament to the successful, sustained promotion of the event within a wider contemporary Chinese framework “in which the aspirational compass points almost unwaveringly towards the metropole.”¹⁵²

A desire for smoothness, the glossing over of anything compromising to the utopian conception, is most explicit in a new exhibition on the third floor, installed in 2013. Entering through a door on the opposite side of the floor to *Virtual Shanghai*, you are confronted with a room displaying plans of plans. These are the shortlisted “Concept Design Projects of the Third Floor Hall of Master Plans”—three different proposals for a revamped version of the third floor. A display panel introducing the proposals articulates the main “Requirements of the Exhibition Effect,” which include demonstrating innovation, popularizing science, and letting visitors “pay more attention to the bright future of the city.” The top listed requirement, though, is to “Make the exhibition have reasonable spatial configuration, smooth themes, unified styles, and harmonious forms.”¹⁵³

A key feature of all three proposals in addressing this brief is an increase in the cinematic aspects of the third floor and a greater emphasis on anticipation. The model map remains the centrepiece of the floor, but it becomes integrated with new video displays. Most radically, the design bid made by the company Feilaifeiqu proposes enclosing the model within a 360-degree video screen, “immersing” the audience in the exhibition space. The model would connect to the “surrounding screen seamlessly to create an unlimited extension of the urban dynamic picture... blurring the boundaries of the real model and virtual images.” Meanwhile, the proposal from the Shanghai Vision Advertising and Decoration Company promises a film like “a magic trip” allowing viewers to explore the city as it will appear in 2040, making them feel

¹⁵¹ Roberts, “Dis/embedded Geographies of Film,” 69.

¹⁵² Mark Frank, “Vertiginous Metamorphosis: The Shanghai Expo and China’s Love Affair with the City,” *Modern Art Asia* 4 (2010): www.modernartasia.com/mark%20frank%20expo.pdf.

¹⁵³ Quotations in this section are taken directly from the display boards in the exhibition.

as though they are “passing through time and space.”¹⁵⁴ Cinema, as Deleuze wrote, becomes “the organ for perfecting the new reality.”¹⁵⁵

The narrative that emerges from these proposed cinematic journeys through time and space, is not simply one of infrastructural development, but also of touristic mobility, coupled with deep-rooted affinity and appreciation for the city space. The Feilaifeiqu proposal includes a specific zone on the third floor, entitled “Harmony” (or *ganshou hexie*, in the Chinese version, which translates more literally as, “experiencing harmony,” or “perceiving harmony”), which would feature exhibit themes including “Happy Life” and “Shanghai and Me.” The 360-degree film/map centrepiece would climax with imagery of people living in the city in the future with “happiness... welling up in their hearts.”

This anticipated future happiness is reiterated in other exhibits in the SUPEC that focus on the importance of the Huangpu River, as “the embodiment of the city’s rebirth,” including the ongoing “rehabilitation” of the Suzhou Creek area, and the eradication of pollution to form a “beautiful and harmonious ecological metropolis.” The promise offered in a section entitled “Tomorrow,” is that “The Huangpu River will grow even [more] beautiful in the years to come. She is the blueprint the designers are planning, the prospect that the people are delightfully talking about, and the dream that children are dreaming as well.” Another display board states: “[T]he Huangpu River not only witnessed Shanghai’s past, but will look forward to the ‘Meilleure Ville, Meilleure Vie’ in the future with us. *Her tomorrow will be ever remembered* as an ultimate embodiment of the harmonious development of human and nature, and she will be with us for ever more.”¹⁵⁶

This English translation (complete with some French interloping—perhaps to add an air of Gallic romance and sophistication to the idea of Better City, Better Life, and remind us that Shanghai has been known as the Paris of the East), captures rather effectively the future passive mind-set that is conjured by a culture of anticipation (and the future perfect tense is equally symptomatic): first a reference to the past, and then a look to the future, but these are then conjoined in the second sentence into a confident prediction of how the future itself *will be remembered*. It is as though

¹⁵⁴ See Chapter Three for more discussion of the theme of magical time travel adventures.

¹⁵⁵ Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 8.

¹⁵⁶ My emphasis.

tomorrow has already passed, its effects not only looked forward to, but *anticipated*—pre-empted, seized in advance and frozen in aspic.

Confidence about the future is not simply the product of CPC rhetoric. Representations of the city such as Virtual World, the model map and the Expo music video fit into a wider visual discourse about the urban environment. Films such as *Shanghai Calling* (discussed in Chapter Four) cohere with and buttress the vision of the city offered in the SUPEC. These spectacles of the city have a mutually reinforcing effect, influencing how the city is imagined and perceived, not least by foreign investors and tourists, whose capital, in turn, contributes towards further development of the urban space. The conceptualized space bleeds into the lived environment as these visions advertise the ways in which the city is to be consumed and experienced. And whilst the trajectory of this narrative may sometimes seem solely fixated on the future, with limited regard for the discontents of the present, it also involves a nostalgic invocation of the past as a means of ameliorating the disorienting effects of rapid change and offering instead a sense of continuity. It is this process which is encountered upon taking the escalator down from the third floor of the SUPEC and heading towards the museum's mezzanine level.

The mezzanine forms a crescent shape overlooking the lobby of the SUPEC. To the left of the stairwell a wall display charts the development of Shanghai from its early origins to its current status as a sprawling metropolis. This chronology adheres to the official CPC view that Shanghai has been a significant conurbation for several hundred years, and possesses a long history of which the Treaty Port Era of foreign control (from 1843–1943) is only a small element.¹⁵⁷ It is that period, though, to which the majority of the other displays on the floor seem repeatedly to be drawn. To the right of the stairwell are huge pictures of some of the grandest European-style houses in the city. Further similar images are found in two large photo albums that reveal page after page of grand, old European residences, still extant but now used as hotels, restaurants and government facilities. These buildings, operating as dual sites of preservation and transformation are representative of a certain narrative of the city

¹⁵⁷ Wasserstrom, *Global Shanghai*, 2.

that the mezzanine level seeks to promulgate. It is a story of continuity and development that gains currency through a process of historical ‘editing.’

This narrative crafting is encountered in a short film presentation screened alternately in English and Chinese every ten minutes. Against a changing backdrop of Shanghai, two individuals sit at a desk discussing plans for the city. As the film progresses, these city planners turn rapidly from Chinese merchants into Jesuit missionaries, British businessmen, Western architects and Chinese Nationalists. Although the players may be changing, a sense of continuity is preserved by the *mise en scène*: two figures of authority working at a large desk, planning the future development of Shanghai. After the Western architects and Chinese Nationalists, though, a curious elision in the narrative occurs. By the film’s own logic, at this point we should encounter a pair of Chinese Communists. We would then be told how the city developed during more than fifty years of Communist control that saw the elimination of private business, the creation of the *danwei* system and the enforced transformation of Shanghai from a famously bourgeois city into an ultra-leftist one.¹⁵⁸ We might also learn that, due to its uneasy political relationship with Beijing, it was not until the early 1990s that Shanghai began to receive the benefit of economic reforms that had been introduced a decade earlier to the Chinese capital and the southern cities of Guangzhou and Shenzhen.¹⁵⁹ What actually occurs is somewhat different: we hear the rumble of military aircraft overhead, the screen fades to black and there is the sound of explosions, but this noise is not fighting—rather it is almost instantaneously revealed to be the sound of New Year celebrations, as we see footage of fireworks exploding over a twenty-first century Pudong skyline. It is notable that in this present day image of Shanghai we no longer see two officials sitting at the desk, determining the future of the city; already we are being prepped for the vision of the city offered on the third floor in which modern, futuristic Shanghai is imagined as the harmonious collective expression of all its individual residents.

¹⁵⁸ *Danwei* translates as ‘work unit’. Prior to Deng Xiaoping’s economic reforms the *danwei* provided the framework for an individual’s work and living arrangements, determining their housing, welfare, education, pension and medical insurance.

¹⁵⁹ Ackbar Abbas, “Play It Again Shanghai: Urban Preservation in the Global Era,” in *Shanghai Reflections: Architecture, Urbanism, and the Search for an Alternative Modernity*, ed. Mario Gandelsonas (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2002), 44.

The scene of exploding New Year fireworks might suggest a desire to signify a rupture with the past. However, whilst the SUPEC certainly does promote an image of Shanghai as a site of new beginnings, this does not imply a neat severance with what has gone before; the city's relationship with history is more subtle and complex than that. What we encounter is not so much an elimination of history, as a *re-presentation* of the past. If we extend our cinematic reading of Shanghai's urban development, we may think of the city's past as a rich tapestry of footage shot from infinite angles on myriad cameras. From these countless reels, certain key frames are selected and spliced together, creating a montage effect in which various pasts and the present are juxtaposed. It is, in essence, the process of editing, in which frames are arranged, and time and movement manipulated, in order to advance a narrative, with recurring nostalgic images of the past becoming a sort of shorthand for an emotional appreciation of the city's history.

The workings of this montage process and the nature of the images it privileges can be found in what is probably the most popular display on the mezzanine level: a series of wooden cabinets with vertically-aligned drawers, which, when opened, reveal an image of historic Shanghai juxtaposed with that same location as it looks now. As you pull open each drawer, the initial impression is one of wonder as you witness the remarkable transformation of the urban space, with skyscrapers, shopping malls and multi-lane highways where once there were only wooden structures, rickshaws and dusty thoroughfares. Quite quickly, though, you notice that the framing in the two pictures is remarkably similar, and that—despite the monumental changes—the function of the space seems to have remained the same. The message is one of impressive development coupled with continuity, rather than radical transformation. This privileging of continuity over rupture is particularly explicit in a pair of photographs of Yu Garden. The upper picture is a very early image of the structure whilst the lower picture is of the same area in 2001. Other than the introduction of colour and a change of camera angle, the two scenes are almost identical.

The preservation of the past in Shanghai is driven less by a concern for what might be lost, than as a means of forging continuity with an earlier period when Shanghai was an international metropolis. Ackbar Abbas discusses this process with particular acuity when he writes:

[P]reservation is not just a question of the past remembered, but something more complex: the past allows the present to pursue the future. So while the return of Shanghai to pre-eminence will depend in the first place on hard economic and political factors, it will also depend to some extent on memories of what the city once was, as it is the latter that will create the new Shanghai, as will and idea.¹⁶⁰

The invocation of the past in the SUPEC evinces a form of what Augusta Palmer terms “totalizing nostalgia,” which mobilizes “collective national and/or cultural myths” in its pursuit of the dream “of fully rebuilding a mythical, authentic home.”¹⁶¹ Abbas intimates the cinematic resonances of this process when he talks of “the city as remake, a shot-by-shot reworking of a classic, with a different cast, addressed to a different audience, not “Back to the Future,” but “Forward to the Past.”¹⁶²

In creating this sense of commonality, significant aspects of the city’s past and present become edited out. As mentioned earlier, the short film presentation about Shanghai’s history, screened on the mezzanine, omits any mention of the Maoist era. A similar pattern emerges when looking through the photographs in the display cabinets. Pictures from this period are relatively scarce, and when they do occur, they tend to show spaces such as traffic intersections, which provide no indication of the structure of the *danwei* society of that period. In fact, what almost all of the display cabinet images share in common is that they represent spaces of movement and commerce, the flow of people, goods and money.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 38.

¹⁶¹ Augusta Palmer, “Crossroads: Nostalgia and the Documentary Impulse in Contemporary Chinese Cinemas” (PhD diss., New York University, 2004), 112. Palmer suggests that commercially-minded Shanghai-based film productions (such as Shi Ruijin’s *Beautiful New World* [1998]) also typically display this “totalizing” form of nostalgia.

¹⁶² Abbas, “Play it again Shanghai,” 38.

A striking example of this is seen in a pair of photographs of the famous commercial street Nanjing Road. The more recent one displays an abundance of neon signs, but once again the framing and content of the two pictures are very similar; they set up parallel eras of frenetic commercial activity. Each time I look at these photos, though, my eye is drawn to a figure in the lower right-hand corner of the older picture. He appears to be staring at the camera, looking at whoever it is that is representing his environs. His face is what Barthes would describe as the “*punctum*,” the point of the photograph that ineffably attracts our focus.¹⁶³ We shall never know what that man was thinking, but amidst the grandiose displays in the Urban Planning Museum it feels like a rare moment of human presence.



Fig. 13: “The city as remake:” commercial activity on Nanjing Road in different eras.

¹⁶³ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Vintage Classics, 1993), *passim*.



Fig. 14: A rare moment of human presence: a pedestrian looks directly at the camera.

More typically, though, the impersonal nature of urban development in Shanghai and the private anxieties it may incite are foreclosed by a narrative that fosters a comforting nostalgic link between an earlier era of commercial activity and enticing visions of a harmonious future: “The future projected in the upper floors of the hall is thus quite literally built on a nostalgic representation of Shanghai’s cosmopolitan and commercial past.”¹⁶⁴

This intoxication with elements of the city’s semi-colonial history has currency far beyond the bounds of the SUPEC, as evidenced by the recent spate of films which make use of the decadent milieu of Treaty Port Era (many of them international co-productions), and the proliferation of nostalgic imagery and memorabilia in restaurants and bars, bookshops and galleries throughout the city.¹⁶⁵ Developments such as Xintiandi have also capitalized on this marriage of nostalgia and consumption. In the nearby Tianzifang art district, shoppers can indulge in this practice by purchasing prints of old Shanghai lanehouses from boutique galleries

¹⁶⁴ Kirk A. Denton, *Exhibiting the Past: Historical Memory and the Politics of Museums in Postsocialist China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2014), 256.

¹⁶⁵ Recent international co-productions set in the Treaty Port era include: *The White Countess* (2005), *The Painted Veil* (2006), *Blood Brothers* (*Tian Tang Kou*, 2007), *Lust, Caution* (2007), and *Shanghai* (2010).

situated in renovated old Shanghai lanehouses. If they look upwards, to the windows and washing lines of the surrounding residential buildings, however, they may on occasion see banners protesting against the disruptive impact of increased commercial activities in the area.¹⁶⁶

These small protests, like the “Give me back my green space” graffito, are a reminder that the effects of urban gentrification are not embraced by all; harmony in the conceptualized space does not necessarily translate neatly to harmony in the lived space. Just as residential redevelopment has tended to disproportionately benefit those in higher socio-economic brackets, so too the dynamics of increased commercialization favour the more affluent; and in a city where the structuring of space is heavily determined by the logic of consumption and profit, it is those with the greatest ability to consume who are typically heard loudest. That the wonders of the modern city may be more readily available to those with the necessary resources is ironically underscored by the admission price for the SUPEC. The museum presents visions of a city to be freely enjoyed by all, but charges 30 yuan for the privilege. Whilst the nearby Shanghai Museum, (containing some of the finest artefacts from the country’s past) is free, those wishing to witness the splendour of the future must be prepared to pay.

Facing the SUPEC from the street you are struck by its monumental size. You are also immediately aware that the actual city is somewhat different to the vision you have just been offered: the traffic is at a standstill, horns are blaring and—most of all—there are people everywhere. To the right is an entrance to the subway where migrant workers bed down for the evening, and behind you is People’s Square, where students from different provinces and perhaps the odd hustler may try to befriend you.

Examples of the lived experiences of Shanghai excluded from the SUPEC’s vision, including films which offer, in Stuart Hall’s terms, more oppositional decodings of the city space, are considered in the concluding chapter of this thesis. However, the main focus of this project is in progressing an understanding of how the dominant, hegemonic, cine-mapping of space in Shanghai—a process in which a certain mode of visualizing the city intersects with and impacts on the physical fabric and emotional conception of the urban environment—is driven not only by the CPC vision for the city, but also by the complementary success of a similar vision

¹⁶⁶ Jake Newby, “Residents Protest on Taikang Lu,” *Shanghaiist*, 27 April 2008. <http://shanghaiist.com/2008/04/27/taikang-lu-residents-protest.php>.

throughout the marketplace. And so, before concluding with some works that more obviously challenge the hegemonic narrative of a Better City, Better Life, the next three chapters explore ways in which the conceptual vision of the city, as espoused by the SUPEC, intersects with other commercially successful representations of Shanghai and the spatial practices in the city. Chapters Four and Five focus particularly on the idea of Shanghai cosmopolitanism and international involvement in the city. First, though, Chapter Three considers the touristic landscape of the Bund (a key location in the contemporary city's brand identity) and related cinematic adventures in time and space.



Fig. 15: The Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Centre (SUPEC).

THREE

“A Paradise For Adventurers:”

Time Travel, Immersive Shocks and the Bund

Had commerce had its way, and had it lined the foreshore with steamers, we should not have been able to boast that our Bund is one of the handsomest streets in the world... [We may now] take it as settled that the openness of the Bund is secured for ever.

(Rev. C. E. Darwent, *Shanghai: A Handbook for Travellers and Residents*, 1920)¹

In the eyes of Shanghai people, the Bund is a symbol and their eternal pride no matter what changes time may bring to Shanghai.

(Shen Yicheng, *Approaching China, Shanghai*, 2005)²

The apparent similarities between these two statements, made eighty-five years apart, suggests a sense of continuity between different eras, an affirmation of the very permanence that the authors ascribe to Shanghai's famous waterfront. Both identify the Bund as a source of communal high self-esteem (“able to boast”; “eternal pride”), and both appeal to the visual sense (“one of the handsomest streets”; “In the eyes of Shanghai people”), whilst emphasizing the enduring nature of the place (“secured for ever”; “no matter what changes time may bring”). However, when read together, they also serve, conversely, to undermine that same assertion of timelessness. The Reverend Darwent is specifically extolling the charms of the International Settlement riverfront in comparison to that of the French Settlement, which he claims has been

¹ Rev. C. E. Darwent, *Shanghai: A Handbook for Travellers and Residents to the Chief Objects of Interest in and Around the Foreign Settlements and Native City*, 2nd ed. (1920; reprint, Taipei: Ch'eng Wen Publishing Company, 1973), 1–2.

² Shen Yicheng, *Approaching Shanghai*, trans. Fei Yuying (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Fine Arts Publishing House, 2005), 57.

“captured by commerce... [and] is not pleasant to promenade”.³ His comment relates to the physical space of the waterfront, with his guarantee that the attractive “openness of the Bund is secured for ever” based on certain rulings made by the Municipal Council guarding against further building work on the foreshore. Shen Yicheng’s statement, meanwhile, elevates the Bund beyond the material and into the symbolic register, implicitly acknowledging that physical space may be subject to change and stressing instead the infinite efficacy of the Bund as a source of Shanghainese pride.

Yet the symbolic portent of the Bund for the Chinese has been far from fixed. Darwent’s reference to “*our* Bund,” is a reminder that, in 1920, possession and determination of the riverfront was very much in the hands of the foreign powers controlling semi-colonial treaty-port era Shanghai. Before 1928 most Chinese were not even permitted to enter the Public Gardens at the northern end of the Bund, described by Darwent as “small, but invaluable to the settlement,” with the lawns serving as “a resort for infant Shanghai.”⁴ The infamous signage in the park, allegedly stating, “Dogs and Chinese Not Admitted,” may have been an apocryphal construct from after the colonial period, but the persistence of that myth is evidence that the Bund has not always had positive connotations for local Shanghainese people, being associated at times rather with feelings of exclusion, shame and outrage.⁵

A 1975 “travel guide” to Shanghai, Hangzhou, Nanjing, Wuxi and Suzhou, published by the China Travel and Tourism Press, provides further evidence that Shanghainese “pride” in the Bund has been an historically contingent, rather than “eternal,” sentiment. Sections on the four other cities all feature descriptions of treasured historical attractions, including the famous gardens of Suzhou, and the Qing Dynasty pavilions by Hangzhou’s West Lake, alongside accounts of modern-day manufacturing. In the chapter on Shanghai, though, the focus is almost entirely on heavy industry, with such highlights for the visitor as the Shanghai Oil Refinery,

³ Darwent, 1.

⁴ Darwent, 4.

⁵ For a discussion of symbolism of the infamous Huangpu Park sign see Robert A. Bickers and Jeffery N. Wasserstrom, “Shanghai’s ‘Dogs and Chinese Not Admitted’ Sign: Legend, History and Contemporary Symbol.” *The China Quarterly* 142 (1995): 444–466. As the authors observe, there is no evidence of a sign ever having directly juxtaposed a ban on dogs and Chinese.

Shanghai Shipyard and Shanghai Machine Tools Plant. No mention at all is made of the Bund, and it is sighted only once, far on the horizon, in a photo showing cargo ships unloading in Shanghai Harbour.⁶

A somewhat more varied overview of the city is found in a 1984 publication produced by the Shanghai People's Fine Arts Publishing House.⁷ Simply entitled *Shanghai*, the preface begins, "Dear friends, have you ever been to Shanghai? If you haven't this book may hopefully be a help to you in getting a general picture of the city." Although there is still a strong emphasis on industry, commerce, transport and communications, also included are several photos and descriptions of older Shanghai attractions such as Yu Garden, Longhua Temple, and even the European-built Jin Jiang Hotel. Yet although the volume is bookended by an uncaptioned panoramic shot of the riverfront, explicit references to the Bund—or *waitan* ('outer bank') as it is known in Chinese—are noticeable only by their absence. A section on the history of Shanghai makes no mention of the development of the waterfront into an iconic symbol of the city. The treaty port era is referred to only as a time of imperialist aggression, during which foreign "cultural and educational institutions... attempted to poison the minds of the Chinese people with colonialist ideology and influence."⁸

Maintenance and modification of the Bund was largely neglected for the first thirty years of communist rule, other than the reorganization and removal of certain wharves and jetties and the demolition of a few buildings to create additional green space.⁹ It was only in the wake of Deng Xiaoping's *gaige kaifang* ('reform' and 'Open Door') policies that the waterfront area started to be developed once more. From the mid-1980s an increasing number of buildings on the Bund were placed under the protection of the Bureau of Urban Planning and in 1992 the first phase of a major renovation project was completed with the Bund turned into a ten-lane motorway and the riverfront heightened as a flood prevention measure.¹⁰ By 1995 the image of the Bund had been rehabilitated (both physically and metaphorically) to the

⁶ China International Travel Service, *China Travel: Shanghai, Hangzhou, Nanjing, Wuxi, Suzhou* (Beijing: China Travel and Tourism Press, 1975), 27.

⁷ Wang Houkang et al., *Shanghai* (Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Meishu, 1984). The Shanghai People's Fine Arts Publishing House also published Shen Yicheng's *Approaching China, Shanghai*, twenty-one years later.

⁸ *Ibid.*, n.p.

⁹ Christian Henriot, "The Shanghai Bund in myth and history: an essay through textual and visual sources." *Journal of Modern Chinese History* 4, no. 1 (2010): 25.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

extent that the Deputy Director of the Shanghai Municipal Tourism Administration could declare that, “Today, Shanghai is advancing energetically and the Bund will once again become the symbol of one of the most important financial and commercial cities in the world and a sightseeing spot attracting both Chinese and foreign tourists.”¹¹ Since then, swathes of high-end international fashion labels, as well as banks, luxury hotels, expensive bars and restaurants have crowded into the buildings along the Bund, and in March 2010 a 33-month renovation project was completed that significantly lengthened and widened the riverfront pedestrian walkway.¹²

Whilst both the physical space and symbolic resonances of the Bund may have been mutable during the nine decades since Darwent produced his *Handbook for Travellers and Residents*, something that is certainly as true today as it was in 1920 is that “The first walk taken by any visitor to Shanghai will probably be along the Bund, one of the most interesting, famous and handsome thoroughfares in the world.”¹³ And now more than ever a walk along this thoroughfare is *de rigueur* for visitors, as it affords an opportunity to observe not only the Bund’s colonial architecture, but also the skyscraper-crammed financial district of Lujiazui across the river in Pudong, which has been rapidly expanding since the 1990s. For travellers arriving by boat to Shanghai in the late nineteenth century, a view of the Bund was ocular proof of the city’s “magnificence.”¹⁴ Over a century later, it is images of the Lujiazui skyline—photographed from the Bund—that are most commonly used to offer this evidence: an infinitely reproducible calling card for Shanghai’s claims to global city status. The Bund promenade (incorporating the sight of Lujiazui across the river) is both a material testament to the city’s former semi-colonial heyday and a viewing deck to an anticipated triumphant Chinese future, and, more than any other

¹¹ Gao Da, *Waitan Jinxi* (Shanghai: Shanghai Huabao Chubanshe, 1996), 10.

¹² “Shanghai xin waitan duiwai kaifang chunguang mingmei youren ru chao,” *Sina News*, 28 March 2010, <http://news.sina.com.cn/o/2010-03-28/165317287000s.shtml>.

¹³ Darwent, 2. A recent edition of the Lonely Planet Guide to Shanghai remarks similarly, “[The Bund] is the first port of call for most visitors to Shanghai... Coming to Shanghai and missing the Bund is like visiting Beijing and bypassing the Forbidden City or the Great Wall.” Christopher Pitts, and Daniel McCrohan, *Shanghai City Guide*, 5th ed. (Melbourne: Lonely Planet Publications, 2010), 64.

¹⁴ John Macgowan, *Pictures of Southern China* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1897), 11.

site in the city today, it exists beyond its physical presence as a formative part of Shanghai's brand identity.

For many visitors to Shanghai their first port of call will be a walk along the Bund, and it is quite possible that, wishing to know more about this famous waterfront, they might then be attracted by signs on the promenade directing them to the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel. On reading this name, the uninitiated might begin to form an opinion of what could likely be encountered in this tunnel—perhaps a pedestrianized concourse with various displays discussing the history of the Bund and highlighting the most significant sights to see, a virtual tour of the riverfront, or possibly an underwater walkway with views upwards into the Huangpu River.¹⁵ But on descending the escalators into the Tunnel they would discover something else entirely: a curious, psychedelic voyage by automated car. This idiosyncratic journey may bear no obvious relation to the waterfront space that has just been seen above ground, but—in an exaggerated form—it exhibits various characteristics that are symptomatic of contemporary Shanghai and particularly the Bund.

In the following section, differing tourist reactions to the Sightseeing Tunnel are considered as evidence of alternative frames of affinity, arguing in particular that appreciation of the ride may frequently stem from envisaging it not as a discrete attraction, but as part of a wider fantastical encounter with the Bund waterfront. The Tunnel's claims to instantiate a "modern" image of the city are then analyzed, which opens up a wider discussion of modernity and the sensory experience of the city. After illustrating how the aesthetics of the Tunnel have subsequently been replicated in various forms through the city, I conclude this section by suggesting that one appeal of this aesthetic may be that it invokes the image of time travel, which holds out the promise—even if illusory—of an escape from the present.

¹⁵ See for example, a post by the reviewer 'ilovedesert' on *Tripadvisor*, complaining that, "You can not see any underwater scene (like how I imaged it), nor anything relavent [sic] to Shanghai. Stay above the water is my suggestion!" 8 April 2012, http://www.tripadvisor.com.sg/ShowUserReviews-g308272-d311578-r127495283-Bund_Sightseeing_Tunnel-Shanghai.html#REVIEWS.

Fantastic Reveries: A Journey Through The Bund Sightseeing Tunnel

Initiated by the Shanghai Municipal Government in 1998 and formerly known as the Huangpu River Pedestrian Tunnel, the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel was originally conceived as a moving walkway, before the decision was taken to use automated cars imported from France.¹⁶ It functions as a curious hybrid of public transportation and theme park ride, providing direct and relatively efficient transit between Puxi and Pudong, at a cost of 50 yuan for a one-way ticket—more than ten times the price of a regular subway ticket and over twenty times the cost of the ferry crossing. Before analyzing the experience of this underground journey in detail, it is worth briefly considering the historic context of the Tunnel's construction.

Although Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms began to have a major impact on southern China through the 1980s, it was only in 1990 that the Shanghai Stock Exchange reopened and in 1993 that the New Pudong Special Economic Zone was created. Dramatic economic growth quickly followed, but it was not until the end of the decade—and particularly after the millennium—that the more dramatic physical manifestations of the city's new wealth occurred. Photo comparisons reveal the remarkable transformation of the Lujiazui Business District from 1990 to 2010 (Figs. 7 and 8), but even as late as 1997 the skyline was still relatively modest (Fig. 16), with the exception of the famous Oriental Pearl Tower, which was completed in 1994. The spectacular Jin Mao Tower, housing the five-star Grand Hyatt Hotel (until 2007 the tallest building in China and fifth tallest in the world), was not completed until 1999.

Likewise, on the Puxi side of the Huangpu, commercial development of the Bund largely occurred post the millennium. Indeed, Peter Hibbard notes that in the late 1990s, "the Bund was ensnared in an identity crisis:" a Shanghai Municipal Government plan to "sell off" the waterfront buildings to their former international occupants from the 1920s and 1930s had not been successful, with many multinationals preferring the financial incentives and room to expand offered by the new Lujiazui Business District across the river in Pudong. It was only at the end of the decade, as "government planners partly shifted their vision of the Bund away from its predisposition as a financial centre to that of its potential as a world-class

¹⁶ Shi Genrong, "Shiji zhi long: waitan guanguang suidao jianjie." *Shanghai Jianshi Keji* 1 (2000): 11.

showcase for the arts, gastronomy, leisure and retail activity,” that the redevelopment of the Bund buildings began in earnest.¹⁷ Surveying the vast array of glamorous bars and high-end eating establishments located today along the riverfront it seems almost unfathomable that the first international restaurant—the now legendary *M on the Bund*—did not open there until 1999.



Fig. 16: Lujiazui in 1997. Jin Mao Tower is under construction on the right.
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(See Figs. 7 & 8 for views of Lujiazui in 1990 and 2010.)

The years 1998–2000, from the initiation of the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel project to its completion, were therefore a significant period with regard to the branding processes that have shaped (and are shaping) the cultural geography of contemporary Shanghai. With a foundation of rapid economic growth having been set and China on the cusp of joining the World Trade Organization in 2001, these years were a hinge moment for the city. As Shanghai sought to progress from being a Chinese economic success story, towards establishing itself once again as one of the

¹⁷ Peter Hibbard, *The Bund Shanghai: China Faces West* (Hong Kong: Odyssey Books and Guides, 2007), 10–14.

great global metropolises, it became increasingly furnished with the cultural markers of an international cosmopolitan centre, including the arrival of world class hotel chains and European fine dining restaurants, along with the opening of venues such as the Shanghai Grand Theatre (1998), Pudong International Airport (1999) and the Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Centre (2000).

Within this context, the construction of the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel itself may be seen as a notable act of branding—carved out of the earth and onto the cultural landscape. As the title of an article published in 2001 in the Chinese periodical *Jinri Shanghai* (*Shanghai Today*) implies, this “Sightseeing Tunnel Leading to the New Century” was intended not only as a physical passageway from Puxi to Pudong, but also a symbolic concourse to a new era.¹⁸ Zhang Bin, Sales Director of the Tunnel, has remarked in interview, “We couldn’t show the dirty Huangpu, which has no fish, so we went for something bigger and better. It’s the only tunnel like it in the world.”¹⁹ What then does a visitor to the Tunnel witness in lieu of underwater vistas of the Huangpu? What is this allegedly “bigger and better” experience, unique in the entire world? And how does it relate to a wider consideration of the cultural landscape of contemporary Shanghai?

Visitors to the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel board automated cars—akin to small monorail carriages—which then slowly travel through a 647 metre long tunnel from one side of the Huangpu to the other. The five-minute journey is accompanied by a kaleidoscopic light and sound display that purportedly represents a voyage “going from space into the core of the Earth and out again.”²⁰ It is a narrative only made fathomable by English and Chinese language recorded announcements, which inform passengers of the various sights they are witnessing, including “shining stars,”

¹⁸ Ding Xin, “Tong xiang xin shiji de guangguang suidao,” *Jinri Shanghai* 3, no. 2 (2001): 28.

¹⁹ Quoted in Blessing Huang, “The Bund Sightseeing Tunnel,” *Time Out Shanghai*, 15 October 2012, http://www.timeoutshanghai.com/venue/Around_Town-Around_Town/2085/The-Bund-Sightseeing-Tunnel.html. “Bigger and better” (and often “bigger is better”) is a mantra that neatly summarizes the government’s ambitions for Shanghai during the past three decades, not least with respect to the city’s recent architecture. Zhang Bin’s reference to the Huangpu’s lack of fish and the desire to (over-)compensate for this, suggests another way in which the Tunnel is indicative of wider issues at stake in contemporary Shanghai; in this case, environmental concerns, particularly those related to water.

²⁰ This is the official interpretation of the journey as provided by Zhang Bin, Sales Director of the Tunnel. Huang, “The Bund Sightseeing Tunnel.”

“meteor showers,” “space swirl,” and “paradise and hell.” But such is the incongruity of the portentous tone of these disembodied narratorial signposts with the kitsch nature of what is being experienced, that they arguably serve to bewilder and amuse more than they clarify. Reviews submitted on the travel website, *Tripadvisor*, testify to the often perplexed reaction of foreign visitors to the Tunnel, with terms such as “bizarre,” “strange” and “ridiculous” frequently used to describe the experience. Many criticize the high cost of admission and advise against visiting. Typical of this reaction is a comment made by the reviewer ‘Terri W,’ who complains that, “This attraction is way overpriced. I found that the locals enjoy it more than the tourists. Not worth it.”²¹ Those who are more positive, such as the reviewer ‘rodbon1,’ tend to characterize their experience as a guilty pleasure: “the special effects were so unintentionally campy and primitive that we were laughing the whole way.”²²

The existence of several hundred reviews dedicated to the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel is itself a reminder that this idiosyncratic location is a successful tourist attraction. Indeed, it is reputedly the city’s fifth most popular tourist destination, having received approximately two million visitors since it opened to the public in October 2000, and this sheer volume of numbers alone might make the Tunnel worthy of some further analysis.²³ Within the two short reviews cited there are, though, additional hints of why I find the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel to be a particularly revealing source of fascination. Of course, caution is required in not seeking to extrapolate too much from these semi-anonymous reviews (though there are dozens more, similar in tone). Nonetheless, Terri W’s claim that “locals enjoy it more than the tourists” draws attention to several significant questions: what it means to be a local in Shanghai, whether such locals may also act as tourists, and what the different criteria might be for enjoyment of a place. The fact that the reviewer identifies Shanghai as their current hometown—implying that they are not a short-term visitor, but a longer-term resident of the city—suggests further categorical complications, in which the (presumably) non-Shanghainese individual living in the

²¹ Terri W, “Way Overrated,” *Tripadvisor*, 25 November 2012, http://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g308272-d311578-Reviews-Bund_Sightseeing_Tunnel-Shanghai.html.

²² rodbon1, “Bizarre Ride Through the 60’s,” *Tripadvisor*, 15 November 2012, http://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g308272-d311578-Reviews-Bund_Sightseeing_Tunnel-Shanghai.html.

²³ Huang, “The Bund Sightseeing Tunnel.”

metropolis self-identifies as neither local nor tourist, yet seeks to comment on the opinions of both these groups. The figure of the Western expatriate within the wider cultural landscape of contemporary Shanghai is discussed in the next chapter, but at present I wish to explore the idea of reactions to the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel being informed by certain frames of affinities.

Over one hundred Chinese language appraisals of the Tunnel can be found on *Daodao*, the Chinese version of *Tripadvisor*, written both by reviewers based in Shanghai and throughout mainland China. Any claims to local essentialism initially seem largely undermined: there is no obvious consistent difference in the tone or content of comments made by those from Shanghai compared to those from other locations in mainland China, and, as with the English language reviews, there is a fairly even spread between positive and negative reaction, with expensive ticket prices a major source of frustration, and the term *guai* (怪)—which translates as ‘strange’ or ‘bizarre’—often invoked. But when read alongside the English language comments certain differences do become apparent in the more complimentary reviews. Whereas the positive Western reviews typically revel in the kitsch awfulness of the experience, the Chinese equivalents rarely come laden with the same detached irony. Instead, they insistently refer to the beauty of the experience, the wonderful dreamlike environment and the fantastic lighting. It is possible that the disjuncture between the euphoric reaction to the Tunnel related by many Chinese reviewers and the tone of ironic detachment adopted by their non-Chinese counterparts, is in part the result of differing aesthetic tastes. For example, the lighting effects, regarded as garish by many Western reviewers, are reminiscent of a Chinese preference to install multi-coloured illuminations in tourist cave sites.²⁴

²⁴ I do not mean to suggest an essentialist view of Chinese aesthetic tastes. There are cave sites outside China with similar lighting displays, and equally not all such sites in China are necessarily illuminated in this way. However, there is a preponderance of such sites in China, notably around Guilin.



Fig. 17: Lighting effects in the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel

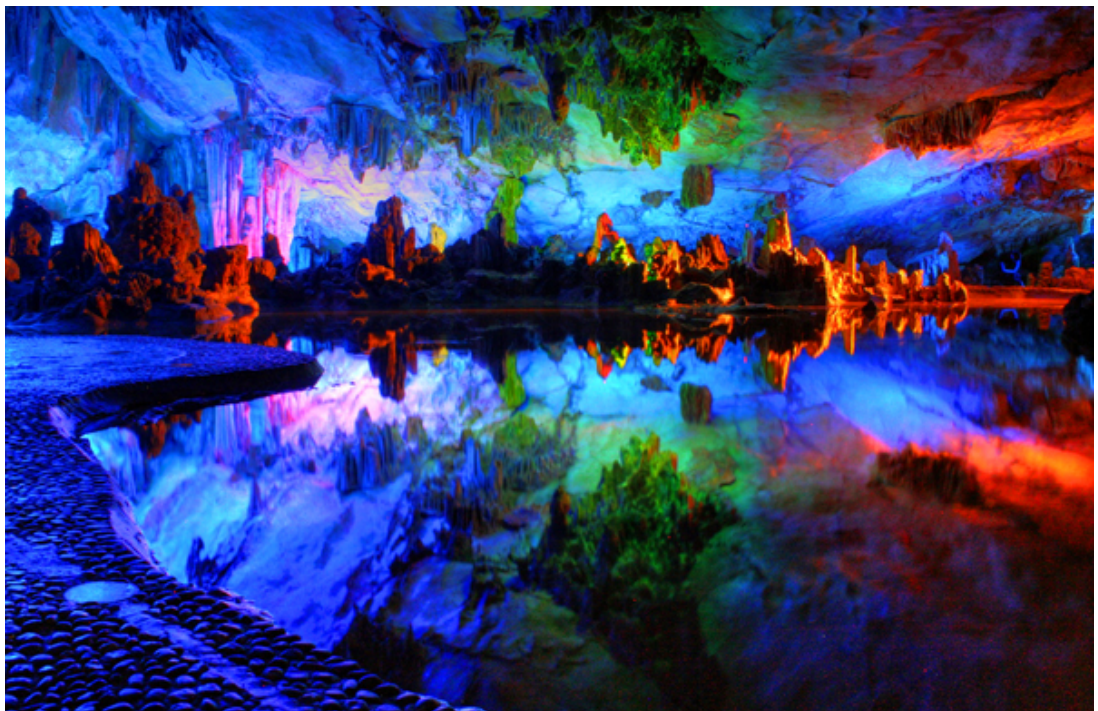


Fig. 18: Multi-coloured illuminations, Reed Flute Cave, Guilin.
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Anna Greenspan's thought-provoking analysis of "The Power of Spectacle" in Shanghai would imply that the reason for this divergence in aesthetic appreciation might extend beyond a fondness for luminous grottoes and pertain to more fundamental cultural differences in how "spectacle" is understood. She argues that, whereas the Western philosophical tradition has a longstanding bias against "the falsity of illusion" (epitomized by Plato's Allegory of the Cave), and "encounters the idea that the world may have the character of a dream as the terror of epistemological uncertainty," Chinese thought—particularly the Daoist emphasis on *yin-yang*—is more comfortable with the notion of duality. The classic example of this is Zhuangzi's famous fable in which he wakes from dreaming he was a butterfly and realizes he cannot be certain if this was a dream, or whether he is in fact a butterfly now dreaming that he is a man.²⁵

I am not claiming that negative reaction to the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel on the part of some Western reviewers stems from a deep-rooted epistemological horror of illusion. But I would argue that many of the positive Chinese language reviews imply an enjoyment rooted in a readiness to embrace the dream-like quality of the underground journey. In a post entitled "Time Machine", the reviewer 'Jade', from Shanghai describes her experience thus:

In the tunnel. The overwhelming lights make people forget themselves in the environment, a beautiful feeling! Enjoyable, but at the same time one can't help but want to sigh at the progress of time.²⁶

It is a remarkably similar description to that found in the "Sightseeing Tunnel Leading to the New Century" article published in *Jinri Shanghai*, which hails the opening of the Tunnel to "tourists from home and abroad". The journey is described as "more like a tunnel through time and space, just a few minutes across a century... The psychedelic lights dazzle people and are dizzying, like an excursion in a time tunnel... you are absorbed in reverie... the whole trip thrills."²⁷

²⁵ Anna Greenspan, "The Power of Spectacle," *Culture Unbound* 4 (2012), 90–91.

²⁶ Jade, "Shiguang chansuoji," *Daodao*, 27 May 2011, http://www.daodao.com/Attraction_Review-g308272-d311578-Reviews-or75-Bund_Sightseeing_Tunnel-Shanghai.html#REVIEWS.

²⁷ Ding Xin, "Tong xiang xin shiji de guangang suidao," 28.

Out of context, the notion that this subterranean journey “to the core of the Earth”—complete with LCD displays in the tunnel walls turning lurid pink, yellow and blue, and a robotic voiceover saying the words “nascent magma” and “basalt in blue water”—might incite a mood of nostalgic reverie seems somewhat unexpected. But it is a response in keeping with a more widespread reaction to the Bund waterfront. Although the Chinese language reviews are all submitted and grouped under the subject of the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel (*Shanghai waitan guanguang suidao*), they frequently describe walking along the Bund promenade, or enjoying a boat ride on the Huangpu, with the Sightseeing Tunnel referred to only as part of the Bund experience and sometimes not even explicitly mentioned at all. It is as if for some of these Chinese reviewers (though I stress by no means all) the Sightseeing Tunnel becomes incorporated within a larger narrative frame, the subterranean voyage all part and parcel of a wider vision of a colourful Bund adventure. As ‘Yuhe Yuhe’ from Neijiang writes, in a post ostensibly reviewing the Sightseeing Tunnel:

Film, television and literature representations give me the impression of the Bund as bustling and stimulating, romantic and mysterious, a rich person’s heaven, a paradise for adventurers. Today, being personally on the scene, that feeling is more profound! The Bund at night, bright dazzling colours, dreamlike, beautiful, people linger and forget!²⁸

In his landmark work, *The Tourist*, Dean MacCannell draws on Charles Sanders Pierce’s analysis of the *sign* as evincing a conjoining of subject and object, whereby “a sign represents something to someone”. He proposes that, “tourist attractions are signs,” involving a relationship in which a “marker” represents a “sight” (Pierce’s “something”) to the “tourist” (the “someone”). Markers provide the tourist with information concerning the sight, frequently in advance of the sight itself being seen. For MacCannell, the definition of markers extends beyond information directly attached to the sight/site (such as a plaque or nearby signpost), and includes “travel books, museum guides, stories told by people who have visited it, art history

²⁸ Yuhe Yuhe, “Shanghai waitan yinxiang,” *Daodao*, 5 June 2011, http://www.daodao.com/Attraction_Review-g308272-d311578-Reviews-Bund_Sightseeing_Tunnel-Shanghai.html.

texts and lectures, ‘dissertations’ and so forth.”²⁹ These markers may inform and determine recognition to the extent that when the sight is actually viewed it becomes displaced, warped or obscured.³⁰

MacCannell’s choice of the term “markers” is particularly apposite. A mark may be a stamp, a stain, or lasting impression, but it can also function as a guidepost on a trail or location point on a map. MacCannell’s markers are branding in action, forming an imaginative impression on the tourist, which may then manifest itself in the recognition and navigation (physical, mental and emotional) of a material place. There is a clear overlap between how I have summarized the efficacy of MacCannell’s “markers” and my own description of frames of affinity. It is a mutually reinforcing relationship in which alternative affinities encourage traction from different “markers” which then help delineate and reinforce the perception of place.

It is striking that the review by ‘Yuhe Yuhe’ from Neijiang explicitly mentions the *markers* that predate her visit: the film, television and literary works that have already formed for her the “impression” of the Bund as a “paradise for adventurers.” These reference points help her to situate her own personal experience, an encounter that does not result in the discarding of those impressions, but rather the deepening of them. She uses the phrase *shen lin qi jing*, which can be translated as “being personally on the scene” and also “immersive.” The Bund remains “dreamlike,” and pleasure is derived from feeling this more “profoundly,” by entering personally—or being immersed—into this fantastical scene, that is simultaneously real.

Not only does her comment closely echo the “Time Machine” post and *Jinri Shanghai* piece, in its emphasis on intense sensation, time and forgetting, it also invokes a well-worn phrase associated with Treaty Port era Shanghai. *Shanghai, The Paradise of Adventurers* was a book written by the Mexican honorary consul, Mauricio Fresco and published in 1937 under the pseudonym G. E. Miller.³¹ Translated into Chinese as *Shanghai, maoxian jia de luyuan*, the term has become a

²⁹ Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, 3rd ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 109–110.

³⁰ Les Roberts, “Dis/embedded Geographies of Film: Virtual Panoramas and the Touristic Consumption of Liverpool Waterfront.” *Space and Culture* 13, no. 1 (2010): 56.

³¹ G. E. Miller, *Shanghai, The Paradise of Adventurers* (New York: Orsay Publishing House, 1937).

clichéd descriptor for Old Shanghai, including appearing in the aforementioned 1984 travel guide, *Shanghai*.³² The tendency of some of these reviews to deploy such hackneyed metaphors and replicate the language found in press descriptions of the Tunnel implies more than a proclivity to deal in stock phrases and idioms—which is a Chinese linguistic feature—or simply a somewhat unthinking regurgitation of absorbed rhetoric on the part of the reviewers. It speaks of a form of perceptual desire—an eagerness and ability to behold a certain *sight*, framed by the vested interests of the viewer in the associated *site*.

As suggested earlier, these frames are mobile and multiple. There is not some permanent rigid opposition between Chinese and non-Chinese local affinities. Rather, relationships with and perceptions of place are fluid, with different frames activated, prioritized and encouraged in different specific contexts, and informed by personal and collective experience. In the Chinese tourist publications described in the opening section of this chapter, the Bund was actively kept *out of frame*: despite its physical presence within the city, it faded from sight in a process of reverse hallucination, excluded precisely because of a lack of affinity to the CPC project. Likewise, when ‘Yuhe Yuhe’ from Neijiang writes that, “Film, television and literature representations give me the impression of the Bund as bustling and stimulating, romantic and mysterious,” she is presumably not referring to fictional representations of the waterfront produced in mainland China between 1949 and the 1980s. In the years following the Communist victory, films such as *Unity for Tomorrow* (1950), *For Peace* (1956) and *The Battle for Shanghai* (1959), depicted the Bund area not as a site of glamour and intrigue, but as a locus of student protests, workers’ mass demonstrations and, ultimately, triumphant liberation parades.

When the earlier 1930s iconology of nightclubs, neon lights and jazz is incorporated—in films such as *Sentinels under the Neon Lights* (1964)—it is done so not to emphasize the “romantic and mysterious” qualities of the city, but as part of what Braester terms a “recidivist chronotope,” in which these elements are highlighted and amplified as evidence of a recurring Shanghai depravity that must be rejected.³³ And whilst the 1984 travel guide may refer to the city in the Treaty Port Era as a “paradise for adventurers,” this is followed immediately by an observation

³² Wang Houkang et al., *Shanghai*, 22.

³³ Braester, *Painting the City Red*, 56–94. Braester takes the term “chronotope” from Bakhtin, to refer to “the coupling of specific locations and temporal perceptions,” 18.

that “Meanwhile, the vast majority of the labouring natives were subjected to cruel oppression and bullying and were in dire straits of extreme poverty.”³⁴

It is only in recent years that mainland screen depictions of the city during the colonial period—such as in the hugely popular 2007 television series, *Shanghai Bund* (*Xin Shanghai Tan*³⁵), a drama set in the 1920s, following the lives of politically animated gangsters—have concentrated more on romance and mystery, with the decadence of the period utilized primarily for entertainment purposes rather than as a target for ideological critique. Equally, various recent films set in modern-day Shanghai may portray the city—and particularly the Bund area—as “a rich person’s heaven, a paradise for adventurers,” but significantly the wealth is no longer restricted to foreign nationals or ruthless and corrupt capitalists; instead the focus now tends to be on an increasingly affluent middle class Chinese populace. Meanwhile, the space of the Bund has become a paradise for *all* adventurers, not only those with the requisite colonial credentials or bank balance. In keeping with the sentiment of the Expo music video discussed in Chapter Two, this “rich person’s heaven” is now a key symbol of a new “heaven of dreams.” The narrative here is that even those without the money to dine in the high-end restaurants, or purchase items from the international fashion houses situated along the riverfront, may have their lives enriched by the experience of this dreamlike spectacle, which they may freely consume.

This shift in representations of the Bund is symptomatic of a wider rehabilitation of the city’s pre-1949 history that went hand in hand with the economic revitalization of the 1990s.³⁶ In the new historical narrative that emerged, the real makers of Shanghai’s uniqueness were not the colonialists or capitalists, but the hard working, adaptable and creative petty urbanites. In 1998, Zhang Zhongli, President of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (which spearheaded the production of the myriad volumes and journals detailing this new urban historiography), asserted that, “The bottom line is: Shanghai was Chinese, Shanghai was Shanghainese. The city

³⁴ Wang Houkang et al., *Shanghai*, 22.

³⁵ Literally, ‘New Shanghai Bund,’ as this was a remake of a 1980 Hong Kong series, entitled *The Bund*.

³⁶ Wang Houkang et al., *Shanghai*, 22; Shen Yicheng, *Approaching Shanghai*, 57.

developed as a result of the people in Shanghai making innovations on inspirations taken from the West.”³⁷

Yeh suggests that this revisionist history served as handmaiden to the implementation of the new economic policies, supplying “wittingly or not, the critical historical justification in favour of the city’s strategic repositioning in the 1990s.”³⁸ This repositioning involved the dismantling of the *danwei* system, the closing or relocation of state-owned factories and the transformation of an industrial centre into a commercial one, complete with hotels, shopping centres and expatriate apartments. “It meant, in short, the construction of an outward-looking economy of consumption built on imported capital, reorganizing a city that had been based upon a rooted economy of industrial production.”³⁹ The historical reappraisal meant that this economic and structural overhaul was not a betrayal of socialism, but rather evidence of the Shanghainese doing what they had always done best: adapting and innovating in the pursuit of building a great Chinese metropolis.

The city, thanks to Shanghai historians, had liberated itself from the long-established master narrative of socialism against capitalism, and nationalism against colonialism. It had arrived happily at an almost “weightless” state free of the burden of its past. There were no more obligatory denunciations against the evils of capitalism or colonialism. Instead, what was materially beneficial for Shanghai had to be ethically good and historically right.⁴⁰

This chapter began with two quotations each ascribing the quality of timelessness to the Bund, yet the waterfront today is clearly a very different place compared with even twenty years ago. The colonial architecture may still be in place, but the absolute physical space has altered considerably with the widening of the pedestrian walkway, the reconfiguration of the road system, the sprucing up of facades and the change in occupancy of the buildings. Perhaps more significantly, the relative space-time of the Bund has radically changed “according to a logic of

³⁷ Quoted in Yeh, *Shanghai Splendor*, 212.

³⁸ Yeh, *Shanghai Splendor*, 211.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 210.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 216.

exchange relations and the flows of people, commodities, and capital that relate to it... the re-engineering of the site offers the prospect of transforming relative space-time so as to enhance the commercial value of the absolute spaces.”⁴¹ Yeh’s argument is that securing political legitimacy for these huge changes, also demanded an attention to the *relationality* of the Bund space. That is, the re-branding of the Bund had to take place not only on a material level, but also a symbolic one.

Margaret Kohn articulates the symbolic vitality of place in her book, *Radical Space*:

The meaning of a space is largely determined by its symbolic valence. A particular place is a way to locate stories, memories and dreams. It connects the past with the present and projects it into the future. A place can capture symbolic significance in different ways: by incorporating architectural allusions in the design, by serving as a backdrop for crucial events, or by positioning itself in opposition to other symbols. Its power is a symptom of the human propensity to think synecdochally; the chamber of labor, like the red flag, comes to stand for socialism or justice. It is a cathexis for transformative desire... The physical environment is political mythology realized, embodied, materialized. It inculcates a set of enduring dispositions that incline agents to act and react in regular ways even in the absence of any explicit rules and constraints.⁴²

The re-historicizing of the pre-1949 era by the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, the changing screen representations of the Bund, and the movement in tourist guides from characterizing the colonial era as a period of “cruel oppression and bullying,” during which the “imperialist aggressors flocked in... [and] cannibalized the city into concessions and spheres of influence,” to embracing the most famous architectural imprint of that time as a “symbol” of Shanghai people and “their eternal pride,” all served to locate new “stories, memories and dreams” within the “physical environment.” In this way, the Bund came to be understood synecdochally as standing for Shanghai, the glamorous, international and outward

⁴¹ Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, 146.

⁴² Margaret Kohn, *Radical Space: Building the House of the People* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 5.

looking “Paris of the East,” rather than Shanghai, the corrupt, tawdry and colonially oppressed “Whore of the Orient.”

This same synechdocal pattern can be seen with many of the positive Chinese language reviews of the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel, where there emerges a distinct trend in which the phenomenological encounter with the Tunnel is frequently related not as the experience of a discrete tourist attraction, but as a part representative of the fantastical Bund waterfront spectacle more generally.⁴³ And so whilst the idiosyncratic effects of the Sightseeing Tunnel may initially seem to share little with the historic colonial riverfront or the overwhelming, grandiose architecture of Lujiazui to which it transports passengers, the dreamlike, time travel experience it engenders for some, serves as a rather apt metaphor for the Bund’s now “almost ‘weightless’ state free of the burden of its past,” with the “master narrative of socialism against capitalism and nationalism against colonialism” replaced by the promise of a paradise for all adventurers, both local and from afar.

The desire of the Shanghai Municipal Government for the Sightseeing Tunnel to be framed not simply as a theme-park ride, but as more widely analogous of certain qualities of the contemporary city, is intriguingly revealed by Bo Chang’s investigation of “Knowledge Construction in the context of the Zhabei Learning Community, Shanghai.” She discusses a day-long fieldtrip undertaken by the Sisters Club, an adult learning group for female migrant workers in Zhabei District. The trip was financed by the government-sponsored Shanghai Women’s Federation and intended as an educational experience for the migrant workers, providing them with an opportunity to visit new places in Shanghai and learn more about the city.⁴⁴ A

⁴³ As another example, see a post by the reviewer ‘*aifengpiaopiao*’ (‘love the fluttering wind’), from Qingdao. Entitled ‘Beautiful Scenery,’ the review comments positively on the friendly people and good service encountered around the Bund, then states that being there (or “having fun” there) is “an extraordinary feeling, especially the sightseeing tunnel.” *Jingxin ciji*—“an extraordinary feeling”—may be more literally translated as a “startling stimulus”. See later in this chapter for a discussion of the relationship of “hyperstimulus,” “shock” and sensational attractions, to modernity and the city.

⁴⁴ Bo Chang, “Culture as a tool: facilitating knowledge construction in the context of a learning community.” *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 29, no.6 (2010): 705–722. Zhabei is one of the 18 administrative districts in Shanghai. The Shanghai Women’s Federation, founded in 1950 under the auspices of the CPC, is a chapter of the All China Women’s Federation. It is nowadays classified as a GONGO (Government Organized Non-Governmental Organization), retaining close links to the CPC and funding from local government. The Zhabei District community learning

parallel fieldtrip for male migrant workers was also organized, under the auspices of the government-funded New Shanghainese Club.

Likening sightseeing to a latter-day form of pilgrimage, MacCannell cites Goffman, describing modern guided tours as “extensive ceremonial agendas involving long strings of obligatory rites.”⁴⁵ It is notable that the two main destinations on the fieldtrip “agendas” (along with lunch in a seafood restaurant and a visit to see the peach blossoms in Century Park) were the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel and the Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Centre, discussed in the previous chapter. In an unpublished interview reflecting on her experience of the trip, Hong, a 46 year-old migrant now working as a shop assistant in Zhabei, commented:

[After visiting those places] we know what Shanghai looked like in the past and nowadays. Now, such a big change—it’s become the national big city. [Laugh] So *I felt I was involved in Shanghai, too*. Shanghai is so beautiful! ...Yes, we got to know Shanghai much better... My husband is a taxi driver and can take me to some places. Some [migrant wives] had never been there [the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel]. When they saw it—that really opened their eyes!⁴⁶

As these remarks suggest, the fieldtrip served not only to display hitherto unseen parts of Shanghai to the participants, but also to engender a sense of personal involvement, a feeling of local affinity. Paradoxically, though, this sense of local involvement, of having their eyes truly opened to the city, is achieved through the process of *becoming tourists* for the day.

According to Chang, the different locations on the itinerary were each selected to embody different “bases” of knowledge about the city for the workers, with the Sightseeing Tunnel providing an opportunity for these day tourists to witness the

projects discussed by Bo Chang were local government funded. In interview with the author, one of the migrant workers remarks on the generosity of the Women’s Federation, noting that that the ticket for the Sightseeing Tunnel “is not that cheap,” 713.

⁴⁵ MacCannell, *The Tourist*, 43.

⁴⁶ Extract from unpublished interview transcript, kindly provided by Prof. Bo Chang. My italics.

“high technology and the modern style of metropolitan Shanghai.”⁴⁷ However, whilst the physical construction of the Tunnel, requiring complex shield tunnelling techniques and the innovative use of an underground cooling tower, is certainly evidence of high levels of technological sophistication, it seems likely that most visitors would be less concerned with the Tunnel’s infrastructure than with the content of the journey itself.⁴⁸ If the Tunnel is intended to represent “high technology and the modern style of metropolitan Shanghai,” then these concepts must necessarily be conveyed in the experience of the underground voyage. It is ironic then that the aforementioned review by ‘rodbon1’ submitted on *Tripadvisor*, should term the special effects “primitive”. Several other reviews likewise describe the Tunnel as “old school,” “very out-dated... way behind in terms of technology,” “not so hi-tech, actually a little backwards.”⁴⁹ The Tunnel embodies and reveals the desire and ambition of the Chinese State and specifically the Shanghai Municipal Government for the city to be *perceived* as being modern. Viewed through the frame of affinity of recently arrived migrant workers—eager to feel part of China’s most dynamic “national big city” and keen to embrace the fun of an exciting day out—this may be how it is perceived. But in the opinion of many reviewers it suggests quite the opposite, offering a comically retrograde experience.

If the term ‘modern’ it is taken to mean ‘cutting edge,’ and so up to date as to be almost futuristic, then to many tourists visiting Shanghai in the twenty-first century the Tunnel’s effects may indeed seem somewhat antiquated. However, if we look instead to a historically specific notion of *modernity*, as a concept designating “an array of technological and social changes that took shape in the last two centuries and reached a kind of critical mass near the end of the nineteenth century,” then the

⁴⁷ Bo Chang, “Patterns of Knowledge Construction,” *AERC Conference Proceedings*, 1 January 2009: 92.

<http://www.adulterc.org/Proceedings/2009/proceedings/chang.pdf>.

⁴⁸ Li Xianglin and Zhou Disheng, “Dixia lengque ta zai waitan guanguang suidao zhong de yingyong.” *Shanghai Jianshi Keji* 3 (2002): 20–21.

⁴⁹ See, for examples, funkymusic, “Funky old school fun,” *Tripadvisor*, 7 November 2012; Lamothe, “Tacky,” 7 July 2012; 351C, “This... was fun!,” 10 November 2012; http://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g308272-d311578-Reviews-Bund_Sightseeing_Tunnel-Shanghai.html#REVIEWS.

Bund Sightseeing Tunnel may be seen as a particularly apposite marker of Shanghai as a *modern* place.⁵⁰

Alongside a “socioeconomic conception of modernity,” which draws attention to “the range of technological, demographic, and economic changes of advanced capitalism,” Ben Singer identifies what he terms a “neurological conception of modernity” as proposed by social theorists including Georg Simmel, Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin, who insisted that “modernity must also be understood in terms of a fundamentally different register of subjective experience, characterized by the physical and perceptual shocks of the modern urban environment.”⁵¹ He argues persuasively that “modernity transformed the texture not only of random daily experience but also of synthetic, orchestrated experience,” leading to forms of “commercialized sensationalism” such as the Coney Island amusement complex, which opened in 1895.⁵² These attractions were an escape or distraction from the “hyperstimulus” of the modern city, whose forms of sensory bombardment they ironically reproduced on an ever-exaggerated scale.⁵³

In 1912, the sociologist Howard Woolston conjectured that the “the restless current in which men are *immersed*” in the modern city created a craving for constant stimulation, and hence the appeal of these new theme park rides lay in their ability to provide the kind of “powerful *shocks*” that were required to “stimulate a jaded attention.”⁵⁴ It was noted earlier that the reviewer ‘Yuhe Yuhe’, used the term *shen lin qi jing*, (which can be translated as “immersive”) in her reflections on visiting the Bund. The phrase also appears in Chinese tourist publications describing the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel, this time coupled with the term *zhen han*, meaning “shock”—“music and sound effects combine with the landscape changing before your eyes to

⁵⁰ Ben Singer, “Modernity, Hyperstimulus, and the Rise of Popular Sensationalism,” in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, ed. Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 72.

⁵¹ Ibid. Singer also identifies modernity as a “moral and political concept” in “a postsacred, postfeudal world,” and as a “cognitive concept” with “instrumental rationality as the intellectual framework through which the world is perceived and constructed.” See also Footnote 69 for “modernism” as a movement in the arts.

⁵² Ibid., 87–88.

⁵³ “Hyperstimulus” was a term coined by the New York social reformer Michael Davis in 1910 to describe the condition of modern urban living. See Singer, 75.

⁵⁴ Cited in Singer, “Modernity, Hyperstimulus, and the Rise of Popular Sensationalism,” 92. My italics.

engender an *immersive shock*.”⁵⁵ As hinted at by this overlap in a language of “shock” and “immersion,” the Sightseeing Tunnel, with its “psychedelic lights [which] dazzle people and are dizzying,” might have happily existed alongside the various “visual and kinaesthetic” modern attractions popular in the early twentieth century.⁵⁶ Likewise, Georg Simmel’s description of “the psychological conditions which the metropolis creates,” as “the rapid crowding of changing images, the sharp discontinuity in the grasp of a single glance, and the unexpectedness of onrushing impression” could equally serve as an accurate summation of the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel’s kaleidoscopic journey.⁵⁷

The “hyperstimulus” of modernity was nowhere more evident than Treaty Port Era Shanghai. But under the first four decades of communist rule, this aspect of the city was transformed, as if the brakes on this freewheeling, accelerating juggernaut had been slammed down, with the resultant energy not so much dissipated as diverted elsewhere, into political campaigns and the building of heavy industry. Although there are significant differences between the Treaty Port Era and contemporary Shanghai, the notion of the city “returning” to its former self from the 1990s onwards has been a popular one, and so there was something very appropriate about the construction of the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel, which replicated (even if unconsciously) features of the commercialized attractions from this earlier period. In this way, it was not only a “Sightseeing Tunnel Leading to the New Century,” but also one connecting the city back to an earlier “modern” era that was being reclaimed on Chinese terms.

Shanghai was not truly in stasis during the first forty years of Communist rule, but nor was it moving at its previous frenetic pace. Rather than this being a “reawakening,” it would be more apt to say that the accelerator has been applied once again, and this time it is turbo-charged. Consequently the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel already feels like something of a period piece, overtaken since its opening by other instantiations of a futuristic vision—maglev trains, neon-lit elevated highways, soaring hotel lobbies. These too are places of transit, belonging to what Giuliana

⁵⁵ http://mice.pudong.gov.cn:8080/page/services_detail.action?services.id=9. My italics.

⁵⁶ Ding Xin, “Tong xiang xin shiji de guanguang suidao,” 28; Singer, “Modernity, Hyperstimulus, and the Rise of Popular Sensationalism,” 88.

⁵⁷ Georg Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, ed. Kurt H. Wolff (New York: Free Press, 1950), 410.

Bruno has called “the new geography of modernity,” which developed first and foremost in the city, producing a “new spatiovisuality”:

Mobility—a form of cinematics—was the essence of these new architectures. By changing the relation between spatial perception and motion, the new architectures of transit and travel culture prepared the ground for the invention of the moving image, the very epitome of modernity.⁵⁸

As an immersive visual and kinaesthetic experience, the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel is inherently *cinematic* and particularly redolent of what Tom Gunning terms a “Cinema of Attraction”—early moving images, which functioned “less as a way of telling stories than as a way of presenting a series of views to an audience, fascinating because of their illusory power.”⁵⁹ It is a *sight-seeing* tunnel, in which the *sights* are simply the fabricated audio-visual effects, its arbitrary narrative of a journey to the centre of the earth very much secondary to the light and sound display. And even that narrative is particularly cinematic in scope involving the space and time compression that would be required by such a journey. Significantly, the Chinese name for the tunnel, *waitan guanguang suidao*, may also be translated as the Bund *Tourist* Tunnel. Seeing sights is not a static enterprise: it entails movement, a journey. And to take the journey on the Sightseeing Tunnel—whether one is a local resident, recently arrived migrant worker, or traveller from afar—is to become a tourist and be immersed in a cinematic architecture. And this is why the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel—regardless of the various reviews that critique it as an overpriced, outdated, gimcrack attraction—is fascinating; it may now seem outmoded, but it anticipated a certain aesthetic and experience that has become talismanic of contemporary, dynamic, pulsating Shanghai.

⁵⁸ Giuliana Bruno, “Haptic Space: Film and the Geography of Modernity,” in *Visualizing the City* ed. Alan Marcus and Dietrich Neumann (Oxford: Routledge, 2007), 13. Bruno’s identification of the moving image as the “very epitome of modernity” echoes Singer’s argument that cinema “culminated the trend toward vivid, powerful sensation.” “Modernity, Hyperstimulus, and the Rise of Popular Sensationalism,” 90.

⁵⁹ Tom Gunning, “The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde,” *Wide Angle* 8, no. 3 (1986): 64.



Fig. 19: The entrance to the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel

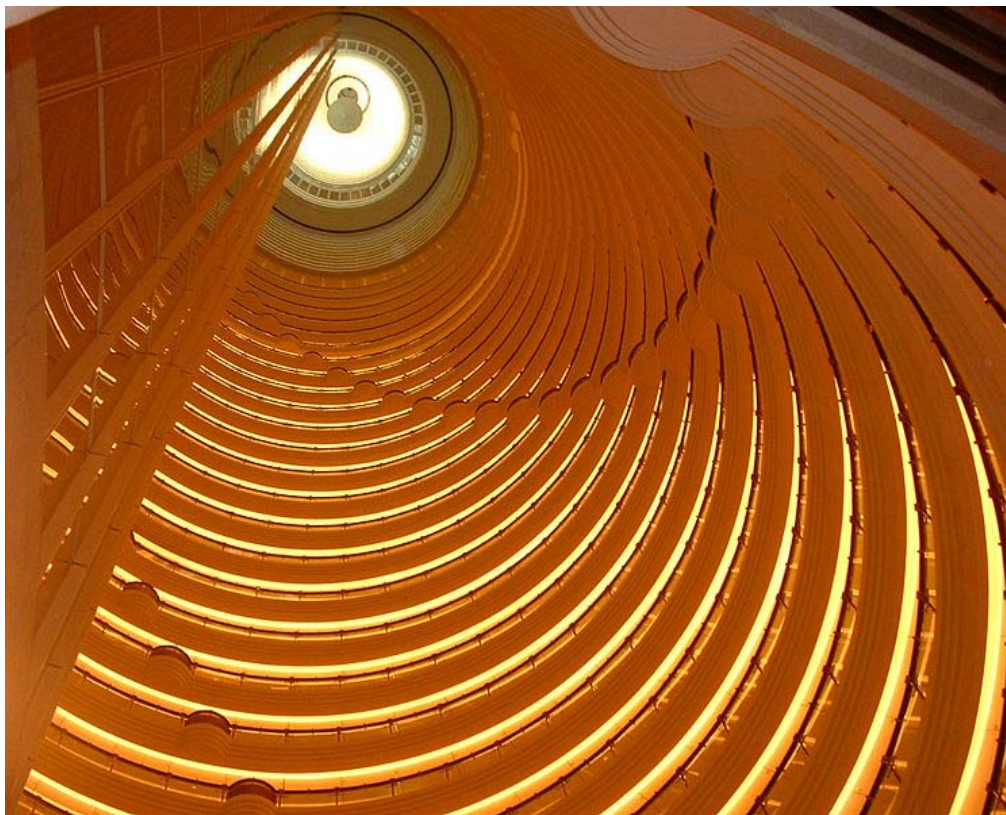


Fig. 20: View upwards from the atrium of the Grand Hyatt Hotel in Jin Mao Tower.
See Chapter Four for a discussion of hotel lobbies as “gateway” spaces.

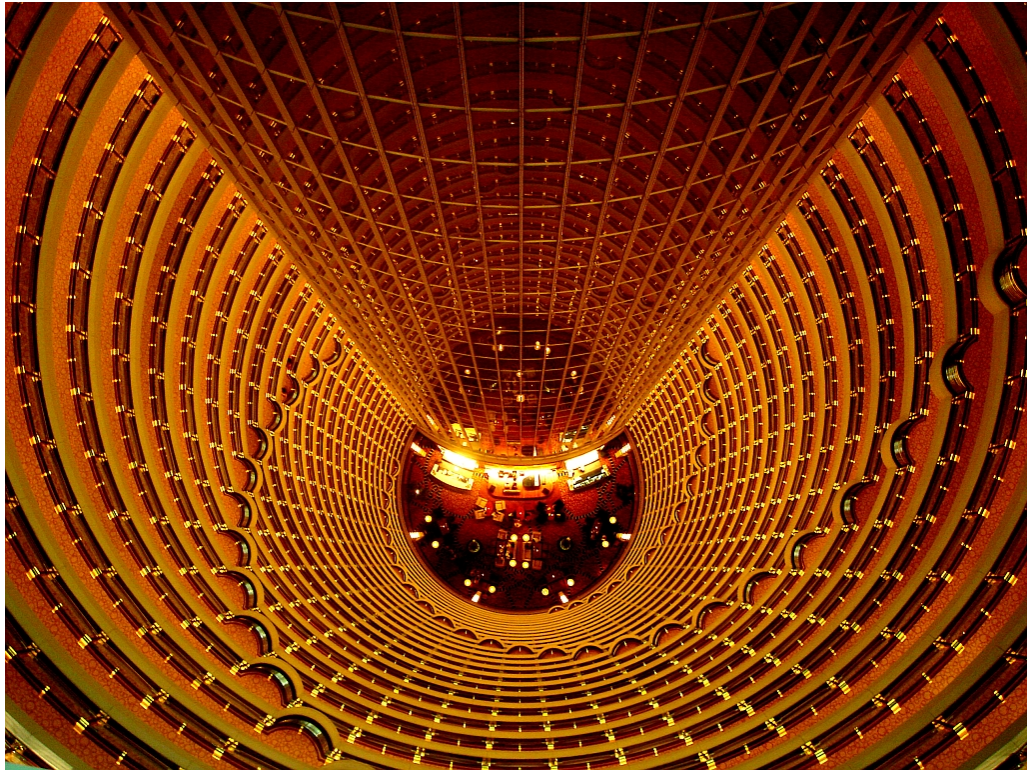


Fig. 21: Looking down the atrium in the Grand Hyatt Hotel
Copyright TopDroPics



Fig. 22: Nanpu Bridge Interchange. Under a “Landscape Lighting Program” the bridge became illuminated in early 2010 in advance of the World Expo.
Copyright Paul Souders



Fig. 23: Longyang Road Shanghai Maglev Station
Copyright Charlie Xia



Fig. 24: Illuminated elevated highways. The city's highways became illuminated on April 18, 2010 in anticipation of the World Expo.
Copyright Feng Li/Getty Images

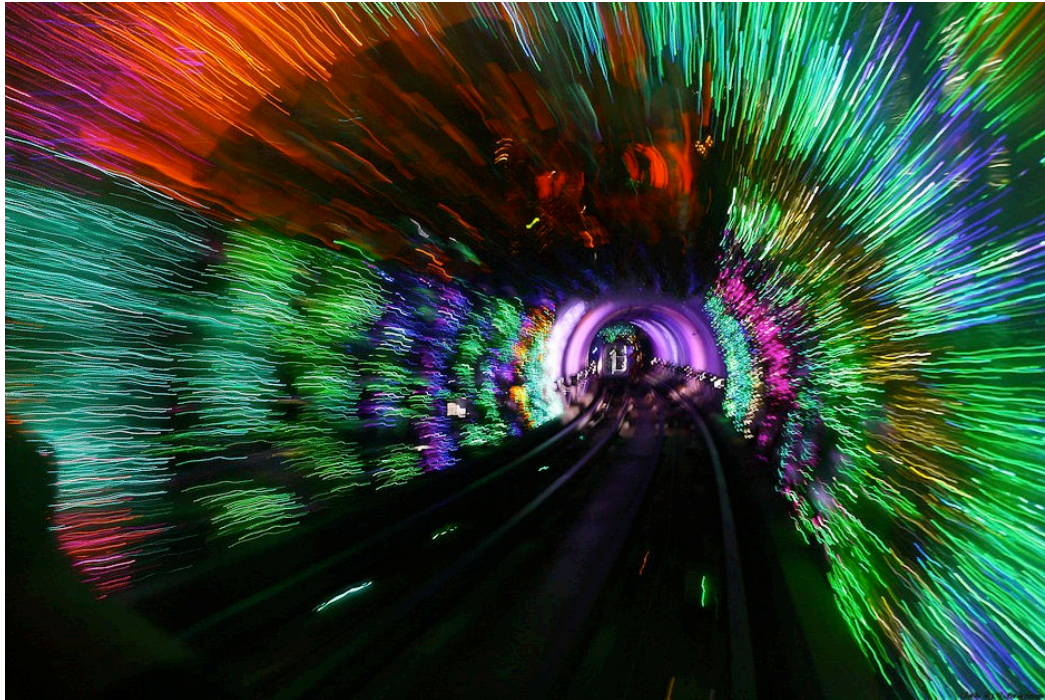


Fig. 25: Inside the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel

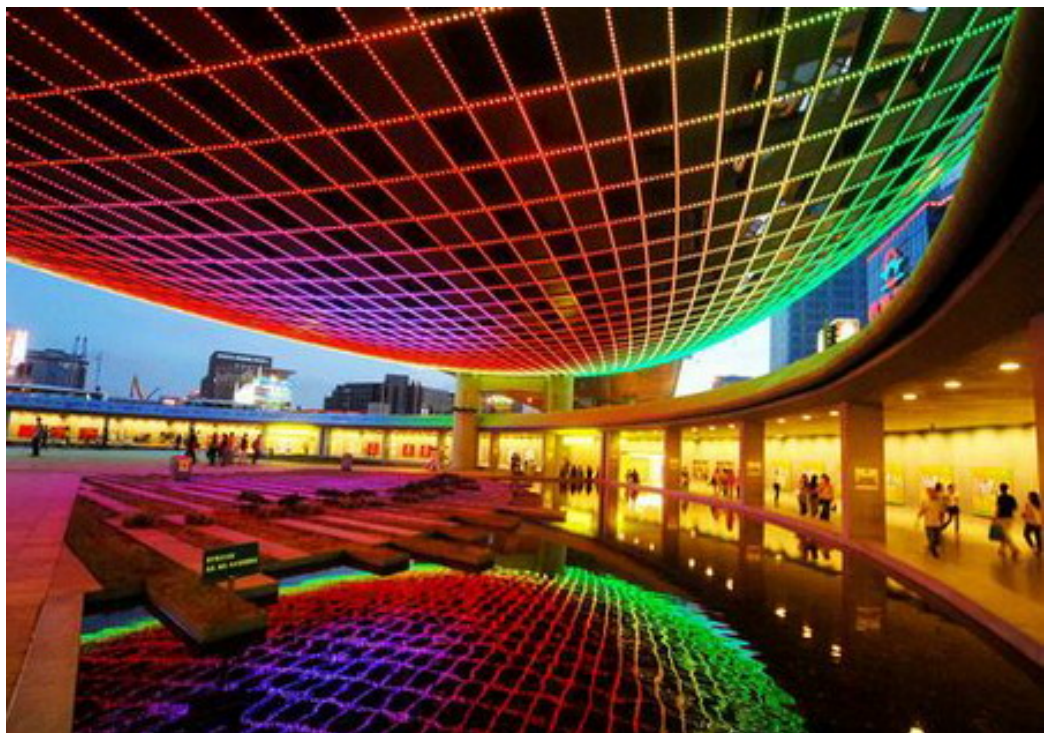


Fig. 26: The Egg in Shanghai's Wujiaochang area has been illuminated by LEDs since September 2005. In 2007, light belts totalling 13 kilometres in length were added so that moving images could be displayed.⁶⁰

Copyright archiCentral

⁶⁰ <http://spluch.blogspot.co.uk/2007/06/huge-colored-egg-lights-up-wujiaochang.html>



Fig. 27: The city's Middle Ring Road passes under the Egg, immersing vehicles in the cinematic experience.
<http://www.shanghaitour.net/areaintro.jsp?tid=35>



Fig. 28: A pedestrianized section of East Nanjing Road.
 Copyright Jodi Cobb/National Geographic

If the aesthetics of the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel predicted the subsequent appearance of similar architectural environments in Shanghai, they also hark back to an earlier classic image—that of a popular American 1960s television science fiction series, *The Time Tunnel*, produced by Irwin Allen (Fig. 29).



Fig. 29: James Darren and Robert Colbert in *The Time Tunnel*.

The series ran for 30 episodes from 1966–67.

Copyright Irwin Allen Properties, LLC and Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation

Although the official narrative of the Tunnel offered by sales director, Zhang Bin, as a trip “going from space into the core of the Earth and out again” does not explicitly mention time travel, as already suggested it implies the need for a manipulation of space and time. Furthermore, a form of architectural time travel occurs in moving between the Puxi and Pudong sides of the Huangpu, allowing the traveller to visit the ‘future’ that has been gazed at across the river. Indeed, it is the experience of “time travel” rather than a visit to the centre of the Earth that is invoked

by the *Jinri Shanghai* article and the *daodao* review, entitled “Time Machine”, discussed earlier.⁶¹

In January 2013 a new time travel element was incorporated into one of the city’s other most popular tourist attractions, the Oriental Pearl Tower. Still arguably the single most iconic feature of the Lujiazui skyline, the Pearl Tower rises like some great concrete rocket over the Huangpu. Situated at the base of the Tower is the Shanghai Municipal History Museum, and so the building follows a similar logic to the SUPEC in having a vision of the future literally built on and projecting upwards from the city’s past, with the basement exhibition space presenting a “sentimental and nostalgic view of Republican-era Shanghai that glosses over questions of historical trauma, imperialism, and class oppression, and erases from Shanghai’s history the city’s role as the base of power for the radical leftists during the Cultural Revolution.”⁶² Attractions within the structure include a revolving restaurant, a games arcade, an indoor rollercoaster, and a 259 metre-high skywalk. Entrance to the higher floors commands higher ticket prices, and for 220 yuan, visitors may gain access to the uppermost ‘pearl,’ which now houses the latest addition to the Tower’s leisure/tourist landscape: The Oriental Pearl Tower Space Capsule.

In essence, the Space Capsule is just another viewing deck, though kitted out to look like the interior of a spaceship. The space age displays (such as an interactive map of constellations and the chance to “dance Gangnam style following an extraterrestrial in front of a large screen”) are few in number and the décor somewhat perfunctory. It feels more like a television home makeover design team has chanced upon assorted leftovers from the set of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, than the result of a purported 20 million yuan overhaul.⁶³ At 339 metres, the view is significantly higher than that afforded by the skywalk, but also more constricted due to the relative narrowness of the windows. It is perhaps not surprising that *Shanghai Time Out*

⁶¹ See also, for example, the *daodao* review by ‘supperapple’ entitled “Cosmic Voyage.” The journey creates “a different atmosphere,” like “being in a time tunnel.” 29 August 2011, http://www.daodao.com/ShowUserReviews-g308272-d311578-r52599482-Bund_Sightseeing_Tunnel-Shanghai.html#REVIEWS [29 January 2013].

⁶² Denton, *Exhibiting the Past*, 256.

⁶³ <http://english.eastday.com/e/130131/u1a7169045.html>

advises visitors to save 60 yuan, “skip the Space Capsule,” and head instead to the floor-to-ceiling vistas of the lower skywalk.⁶⁴

The real success of the Space Capsule lies not in the display area itself, but in the sense of anticipation that is generated in the ticket booth lobby area situated on the lower skywalk floor next to the lift that promises to transport visitors not only to a higher level but also a different time. Ticket holders are greeted by young female astronaut attendants (in outfits more *Buck Rogers* than Buzz Aldrin) and asked to don protective space shoes whilst waiting for the elevator. In the meantime, large television screens play a short video on repeat, utilizing effects similar to those encountered on the third floor of the SUPEC. Panoramic bird’s-eye views of the Lujiazui skyline at night (higher and more spectacular than those available from the Pearl Tower itself) are intercut with tantalizing glimpses of the interior of the space capsule and enthusiastic captions in Chinese and English, emphasizing the visual spectacle and immersive sensory experience to come: “Inspiring lights sparkle above Shanghai. Fantastic adventure immediately starts. Discover. Witness. Shocking. Amazing. Beyond your imagination.” Whether the Space Capsule delivers is debatable, but the promise offered to those considering whether to buy tickets is clear: this is a chance to immerse yourself in a “shocking” environment, which will surpass your expectations and extend Shanghai’s paradise of adventurers into space (a “weightless” environment) and into the future.

A thrilling, futuristic travel experience is also offered by the city’s maglev train (the world’s first of its kind), with its Longyang Road Station (Fig. 23) bearing a remarkable similarity to a concept drawing for *The Time Tunnel* (Fig. 30). The maglev is not quite a time machine, but as the world’s fastest commercial train it traverses space at a startling rate and, as a prominent symbol of ultra modern Shanghai, it is a reminder of Paul Virilio’s remark that, “the propaganda of progress... bears the name of never-ending acceleration.”⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Time Out, “Oriental Pearl Tower,” *Time Out Shanghai*, 14 October 2014, http://www.timeoutshanghai.com/venue/Around_Town-Landmarks/989/Oriental-Pearl-Tower.html.

⁶⁵ Virilio’s comment was given in interview. Caroline Doumoucel, “Paul Virilio,” *Vice Magazine*, September 3 2010, <http://www.vice.com/read/paul-virilio-506-v17n9> [29 January 2013].

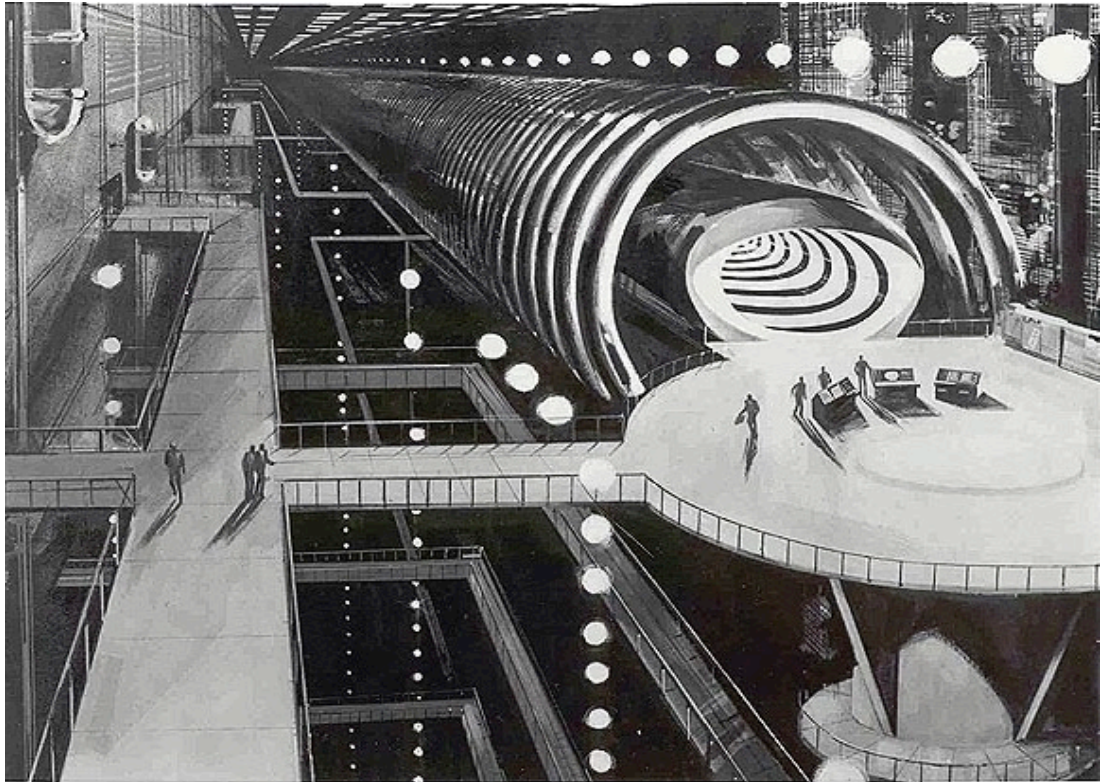


Fig. 30: Concept drawing for Irwin Allen's *The Time Tunnel*
 Copyright Irwin Allen Properties, LLC and Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation

“Progress” was the watchword of the modern age, and although the rapid technological and social developments of modernity may have been disorienting, they were encouraged, Rojek suggests, by a “bourgeois culture [which] held that the pursuit of self-interest by the individual would advance the interests of all” and which “aimed to harness [this] ceaseless change... as an asset in the realization of character and the advance of society.”⁶⁶ There were counter-cultures that challenged this orthodoxy, most notably socialism in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but “[b]oth approached Modernity in technical terms as a set of social, economic and political processes which required the imposition of rational order.”⁶⁷ Postmodernism has punctured the certainty of such “grand narratives,” emphasizing instead the unstable, diverse and contested nature of knowledge, and questioning the surety of

⁶⁶ Chris Rojek, *Ways of Escape: Modern Transformations in Leisure and Travel* (Basingstoke: Routledge, 1993), 101; 108.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 100–101.

traditional disciplinary boundaries.⁶⁸ As Huyssen argued, it has broken down the “Great Divide” between high and low culture found within the modernist movement in the arts.⁶⁹ And, more generally, it has replaced a previous “devotion to universalistic concepts” with a “celebration of particularity and difference.”⁷⁰

However, the dividing lines between the modern and the postmodern are not so easily drawn. On a macro political level, “grand narratives” are still postulated, not least in postsocialist, dirigiste China.⁷¹ But there is also continuity on a more human phenomenological scale, particularly with regard to the aforementioned “*neurological* conception” of modernity. This definition of modernity, stressing the continual “sensory assaults” of modern life, has clear overlap with postmodernity’s emphasis on the juxtaposition of myriad signs and images.⁷² It could be argued that, in a postmodern age we have become so accustomed to these relentless bombardments as to be inured to any shocking capacity they may once have held. Indeed, many of the *Tripadvisor* reviews of the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel are coloured by a postmodern irony, evincing either an air of cynical detachment or a ‘knowing’ embrace of kitsch spectacle. Certainly many of the quondam “shocks” of modernity—cars, electric trams, mechanical rides, vaudeville and cinema—are now taken for granted or have been superseded, and the need for orchestrated sensation to inoculate against and

⁶⁸ An incredulity to the “grand narratives” or “metanarratives” of modernity is a key theme of Jean-François Lyotard’s, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

⁶⁹ It should be noted that Huyssen, who is discussing modernism as a movement in the arts, is careful not to suggest “that there is a total break or rupture between modernism and postmodernism, but rather that modernism, avant-garde, and mass culture have entered into a new set of mutual relations and discursive configurations which we call ‘postmodern’ and which is clearly distinct from the paradigm of ‘high modernism.’” Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986) x.

⁷⁰ Rojek, *Ways of Escape*, 128.

⁷¹ Martin Jacques suggests, for example, that “one of the narratives of Chinese civilization,” which is fostered by today’s state “is that of Greater China, an idea which embraces the ‘lost territories’ of Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, the global Chinese diaspora and the mainland.” *When China Rules the World: The End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order*, 2nd ed. (London: Penguin Books, 2012), 517. The grand narrative of a “Clash of Civilizations” gained traction with the neo-con movement in America (among others) particularly after 9/11. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Touchstone, 1997).

⁷² Singer, “Modernity, Hyperstimulus, and the Rise of Popular Sensationalism,” 73; 75.

prepare for the nervous stresses of everyday city living—what Benjamin called “training in coping with stimuli”—seems unnecessary.⁷³

Yet this very lack of receptivity to shock is precisely the scenario envisaged by Simmel when he wrote that metropolitan life with its “boundless pursuit of pleasure makes one blasé because it agitates the nerves to their strongest reactivity for such a long time that they finally cease to react at all.”⁷⁴ Neurasthenia—with its pathology of nervousness, fatigue, depression and neuralgia—was dropped as a diagnosis from the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders in 1980, with many clinicians now seeing the condition as similar to Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. Interestingly, though, it is still recognized in East Asia as a condition, typically presenting somatically, “that conveys distress without the stigma of a psychiatric diagnosis”.⁷⁵ The tyranny of the affliction as understood by Simmel and various physicians of his era was that “stronger and stronger sensations were needed simply to break through the blunted sensorium, to make an impression and reawaken perception.”⁷⁶

Critiques of the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel that express disappointment are typically underwhelmed by the special effects: the experience has not provided the reviewers with the necessary thrill. Notably this frustration is articulated not only as a waste of money, but also—and even more prominently—as “a waste of time.”⁷⁷ Although the ride only takes a few minutes, in this accelerated world, time—not least leisure time—is a precious commodity and must be used effectively.⁷⁸ The positive

⁷³ Walter Benjamin, “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 4, 1938–1940*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 318.

⁷⁴ Georg Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” 414.

⁷⁵ Pamela Yew Schwartz, “Why is neurasthenia important in Asian cultures?” *Western Journal of Medicine* 176, no. 4 (September 2002): 257.

⁷⁶ Singer, “Modernity, Hyperstimulus, and the Rise of Popular Sensationalism,” 93.

⁷⁷ See for example the following reviews, on *Tripadvisor*: RPCS, “Waste of Time,” 18 January 2013, http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g308272-d311578-r149979128-Bund_Sightseeing_Tunnel-Shanghai.html#REVIEWS; RoyMainer, “A Waste of Time and Money,” 8 August 2012, http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g308272-d311578-r137161954-Bund_Sightseeing_Tunnel-Shanghai.html#REVIEWS.

⁷⁸ A particularly striking example of this comes from reviewer Ricky_Torino who emphasises that the ride only “lasts a couple of minutes” yet still entitles his post, “A waste of time and money!” 22 October 2012, http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g308272-d311578-r143844577-Bund_Sightseeing_Tunnel-Shanghai.html#REVIEWS.

reviews, however, emphasize some change in perceptive state. According to the representative of the migrant workers from the Sister's Club, the experience "really opened their eyes." For others though, the most common description is that of a "dream" or "reverie".

What might this mean with regard to the discussion of neurasthenia induced by the modern city? Both negative and positive reactions imply a craving for some kind of powerful stimulation and both reveal an acute awareness of time. This craving is most satisfied when the cinematic experience transports the individual to a different sense of time—away from the relentless accelerated pace of the contemporary city (which is nonetheless simultaneously still recognized in the "Time Machine" post by the reviewer Jade, who can't help but poignantly "sigh at the progress of time") and to a more dreamlike state. It speaks of a desire to *escape*, which necessitates some form of movement. To travel for leisure has historically been a means of 'getting away from it.' But in contemporary Shanghai, for some, the most desirable form of escape may not be to travel to another place, but to travel to another *time*.

A Blast from the Past: Time Travelling Back (and Forward) to Love

The final section of this chapter moves away from the immersive cinematic experience of the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel to analyze how the 2004 film, *Leaving Me Loving You* intersects in various ways with the ideas discussed so far. This, in turn, dovetails into the opening section of Chapter Four, which considers another Shanghai-based film, *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* (2011). Both films feature protagonists whose sensory enjoyment of life has been diminished or incapacitated by the relentless accelerated pace of the modern city, and are seeking a form of escape; both ultimately inspire in these protagonists a newfound sense of affinity with Shanghai, encouraging them to frame their lives in the city more favourably; and both profess to reveal answers to the vicissitudes of modern life through a kind of time travel.

In April 2011 various Western media outlets picked up the news that the Chinese government planned to "Crack Down on Time Travel," following an edict

issued by the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT).⁷⁹ The apparent over-zealousness of the Chinese censors was matched by the reporting of the story in the Western press, with several newspaper headlines enthusiastically declaring, “China Bans Time Travel”.⁸⁰ The statement from SARFT did not in fact call for an outright ban, rather it discouraged dramas that “casually make up myths, have monstrous and weird plots, use absurd tactics, and even promote feudalism, superstition, fatalism and reincarnation.”⁸¹ Although Andrew Hough’s report for *The Telegraph* acknowledges that the pronouncement, warning companies to avoid producing shows that treat “serious history in a frivolous way,” was not an official ban, he suggests that the guidance would, nonetheless, “effectively ban films such as the Back to the Future trilogy, the Star Trek franchise or Life on Mars.”⁸² But Chinese-speaking netizens commenting below the line on these articles were quick to point out that the criticism was directed less at time travel films in general, than a specific genre, *chuanyue ju*, which has been saturating the marketplace in recent years.⁸³ Popular examples include *The Myth (Shenhua)* and *Palace (Gong)*. These

⁷⁹ David Barboza, “Making TV Safer: Chinese Censors Crack Down on Time Travel,” *New York Times*, 12 April 2011, <http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/04/12/making-tv-safer-chinese-censors-crack-down-on-time-travel/> [31 January 2011]. Barboza notes that SARFT’s new guidelines “fell short of an outright ban.”

⁸⁰ Richard Brody, “China Bans Time Travel,” *The New Yorker*, 8 April 2011, <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/movies/2011/04/china-bans-time-travel.html>; Jonathan Landreth, “China Bans Time Travel Films and Shows, Citing Disrespect of History,” *The Hollywood Reporter*, 13 April 2011, `; Richard Hartley-Parkinson, “Great Scott! China ban films and TV shows featuring time travel (just in case anyone wants to rewrite history),” *Mail Online*, 15 April 2011, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1376771/Great-Scott-China-bans-time-travel-cinema-TV.html#axzz2JqarCCEx> [31 January 2013]. Although the full text of these reports may note that the guidelines do not constitute an official ban, the sub-editors have chosen to lead with the more eye-catching “China Bans...”

⁸¹ Guojia Guangbo Danying Dianshi Zongju, “Guangdian zong ju guanyu 2011 nian 3 yue quanguo paishe zhizuo dianshiju bei'an gongshi de tongzhi,” 31 March 2011, <http://www.sarft.gov.cn/articles/2011/03/31/20110331140820680073.html> [31 January 2013].

⁸² Andrew Hough, “Chinese censors attack 'frivolous' time travel dramas,” *The Telegraph*, 15 April 2011, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/culturenews/8452907/Chinese-censors-attack-frivolous-time-travel-dramas.html> [31 January 2013]. The recent success of the time travel drama *Looper* in China would suggest that the scope and severity of this ‘ban’ was rather exaggerated.

⁸³ See for example Loskit’s post on 13 April in response to Barboza, “Making TV Safer: Chinese Censors Crack Down on Time Travel.”

television dramas typically involve young modern-day Chinese citizens magically travelling back to ancient times, where they can rewrite history and find romance. Nie Wei, a professor at Shanghai University's School of Movie and Television Drama Studies, has suggested that the state disapproves of these dramas because they are frequently "made in a very shoddy way and are irresponsible in not respecting history." Wei's argument is that the censure is a form of cultural protectionism, stemming not from a wariness of time travel *per se* but from a desire to respect history and preserve quality: "whether there is time travel or not is not important. What matters is whether it is a good piece of work or not."⁸⁴ Recent cases of suicides apparently inspired by time travel dramas—with death as the means to travel to another time—have also been posited as a reason for government concern.⁸⁵ Other media critics have suggested though that officials are unhappy with shows that focus on "escaping discontent in the current era to journey back in time to a better life."⁸⁶ As the film critic and journalist Raymond Zhou Liming has commented (discussing theatre and literature), time travel dramas are usually "not heavy on science, but an excuse to comment on current affairs."⁸⁷

While the motivations and subsequent effects of the SARFT guidelines are certainly worthy of further investigation, I am more concerned at present with the edict as evidence of the recent popularity of these time travel dramas. This fad seems to speak of the same yearning for escape from the present mentioned in the previous section of this chapter. What the various *chuanyue ju* shows have in common is "the notion of escape: leaving contemporary, Communist-dominated China for the China of another era, one where, despite mores that are, in some ways, odd and outdated, love and happiness can be found."⁸⁸

There is though another strain of time travel, one that is particularly germane to contemporary Shanghai. Rather than having characters travel back in time to adventures in the past, this involves the past impinging on the present. Sometimes this explicitly takes the form of time travel, as in Stanley Kwan's *Showtime* (2010) in

⁸⁴ Quoted in Hough, "Chinese censors attack 'frivolous' time travel dramas."

⁸⁵ Laurie Burkitt, "Double suicide revives China time travel debate," *Wall Street Journal*, 8 March 2012, <http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2012/03/08/double-suicide-revives-china-time-travel-debate/> [31 January 2013].

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Quoted in Landreth, "China Bans Time Travel Films and Shows, Citing Disrespect of History."

⁸⁸ Brody, "China bans time travel."

which a group of dancers from 1936 Shanghai are transported to the present to mentor a group of young performers. Elsewhere, though, the notion of time travel is deployed more subtly, with the past as a spectral presence informing the actions of those in the present. This is the case with *Leaving Me Loving You* and *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*, which would not be threatened by any ban on time travel. They feature neither a rewriting of history, nor a permanent escape to another era. Instead, the past catalyses the overarching narrative drive towards a reconciliation with—and embrace of—the present.

Leaving Me Loving You: One More Time with Feeling

Wilson Yip's 2004 romantic drama, *Leaving Me Loving You (Da Cheng Xiao Shi)*, coalesces remarkably with various themes considered in the earlier discussion of the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel.⁸⁹ A Mainland/Hong Kong co-production, the film stars Faye Wong and Leon Lai who were both born in Beijing, but have spent most of their professional careers as actor-singers in Hong Kong. What limited plot there is concerns the break up and eventual coming back together of Wong's events planner (Yue), and Lai's concierge doctor, (Dr. Zhou). Yue has been hired to stage a surprise birthday party for the elderly businessman, Mr. Man. When Zhou is appointed Mr. Man's personal physician the former lovers are forced to interact with each other once more, leading to an eventual rekindling of their romance.

The film's opening sequence seems curiously unrelated to the plot. The first shot is of long grasses rustling in the night air, followed by a fixed shot through the windscreen of a parked vehicle looking down an empty country trail, and then a further establishing shot of a person getting inside the same vehicle, now revealed as a truck laden with crates, parked on a road bisecting fertile agricultural land. As a dance music track slowly builds, we follow the vehicle's progress through the countryside and onto a highway and the camera cuts to a close-up of the driver and his passenger—characters we might assume are going to feature significantly in the film. The truck motors towards the city as the sun rises impossibly quickly from the horizon to its zenith in the length of time it takes the vehicle to cross the bridge, and

⁸⁹ The literal English translation is "Big City Small Thing," or "Big City Small Matter."

thence a time-lapse shot of the sun setting over Puxi. As the vehicle then crosses the distinctive camelback truss form of the Waibaidu Bridge over Suzhou Creek, a crane shot rises up to focus on the Lujiazui skyline at dusk. Finally, as the music fades, we cut to a taxi waiting at a red traffic light. When the light turns to green the taxi fails to move forward fast enough and is shunted from behind by the truck, its freight of potatoes scattering across the road.

Neither the taxi driver nor the men in the truck are ever seen again. Narratively the sequence serves no purpose other than to break Yue's jaded reverie as she gazes out of a restaurant window into the street where the collision occurs. Thematically, though, this passage acts as a primer for the rest of the film. The opening is not concerned with introducing the two figures in the car, but rather the city of Shanghai itself. The transition from tranquil countryside to neon-lit city nightscape emphasizes the dynamism of the metropolis, with Yip dramatizing this rural-urban collision very literally, as the truck crashes into the back of a taxi, jolting the enervated female protagonist to attention.

Such rural-urban juxtaposition is found in many classic 1930s leftist Shanghai films, such as *Wild Rose* (1931) and *Daybreak* (1933), which typically follow the progress of village youths migrating from their pastoral homes to the predatory city. Zhang Zhen notes that in these films "the country, at least in its predestruction state, was usually the fountainhead of poetry for both the protagonist and the filmmaker, whereas the city was the bastion of sin, the laboratory of modern subjectivity and revolutionary ideals."⁹⁰ *Leaving Me Loving You* is very different in tone to the politically-animated films discussed by Zhang; it certainly does not portray Shanghai as a "bastion of sin" nor as a crucible of "revolutionary ideals." However, in its own way, it does depict the city as a "laboratory of modern subjectivity."

Donald and Gammack seize on Yip's "shameless exploitation of the city's landmarks, fashionable paths and river edges," describing the film as "a paean of praise to Shanghai the international city."⁹¹ This, indeed, is the most immediately apparent aspect of the film's depiction of the city space, with the opening sequence as just described being the first of many scenes that seem to serve as an extended advertisement for glamorous twenty-first century Shanghai living. (Later scenes

⁹⁰ Zhang Zhen, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen: Shanghai Cinema, 1896–1937* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 290.

⁹¹ Donald and Gammack, *Tourism and the Branded City*, 144.

include: shoppers, silhouetted against the Pudong skyline, gaily carrying their purchases; a coffee date at a chic café; lunch in Xintiandi; various episodes centred around Yue's gentrified, pastel-coloured lanehouse accommodation, and conversations between Zhou and Mr. Man at the latter's huge European-style villa.) Yet *Leaving Me Loving You* also reveals a more complicated appreciation of the relationship between subjectivity and the urban environment. To explore this we must not focus simply on the film's use of the city's landmarks, but consider, in addition, its fixation on certain themes that are set up in the opening sequence: time, speed, sensation and enervation.

Leaving Me Loving You is a film obsessed with time. More specifically, as foreshadowed by the rural truck driver's failure to anticipate the flow of traffic, there is a repeated insistence that the protagonists' love affair has crashed because they have fallen temporally out of kilter both with each other and their environment. Professional and romantic success or failure is predicated on the ability to anticipate the expectations and reactions of others. The bespoke celebrations and surprise experiences co-ordinated by Yue rely on exact planning ahead of the event—responding to and surpassing her clients' requests, which are, in turn, based on an anticipation of what the recipient of the surprise will enjoy—and precision execution in the moment. Zhou must respond to emergency medical call-outs as rapidly as possible, and, in his role as Mr. Man's doctor, accurately predict the physiological impact of Yue's proposed celebrations on his elderly patient's health.

Romantic estrangement parallels professional turmoil. Yue's contract is jeopardized when her ex-lover's medical assessment reveals that she has failed to anticipate the stresses to Mr. Man's health that could potentially be caused by her proposed birthday celebrations. Yue's assistant (Yang) responds to this perceived deliberate sabotage by placing a hoax emergency call to Zhou and his own assistant (Kong) who speed to the unknown address—confused, without a map, and unable to navigate the city's streets effectively—only to be sent hurtling into a construction ditch for the film's second traffic accident. Zhou and Kong encountering trouble with their vehicle is a recurring gag in the film, as they also receive parking fines on three separate occasions from Jiang Yihong's traffic policewoman, Nam. She is one of two recurring minor characters, the other being a postman, whom Donald and Gammack identify as “the little people, the ones that make the city work, the ‘ordinary heroes’

and ‘small potatoes.’”⁹² Significantly, both these jobs are heavily defined by processes of time and space: delivering letters to the correct location on schedule, and issuing parking tickets to vehicles in the wrong place at the wrong time.

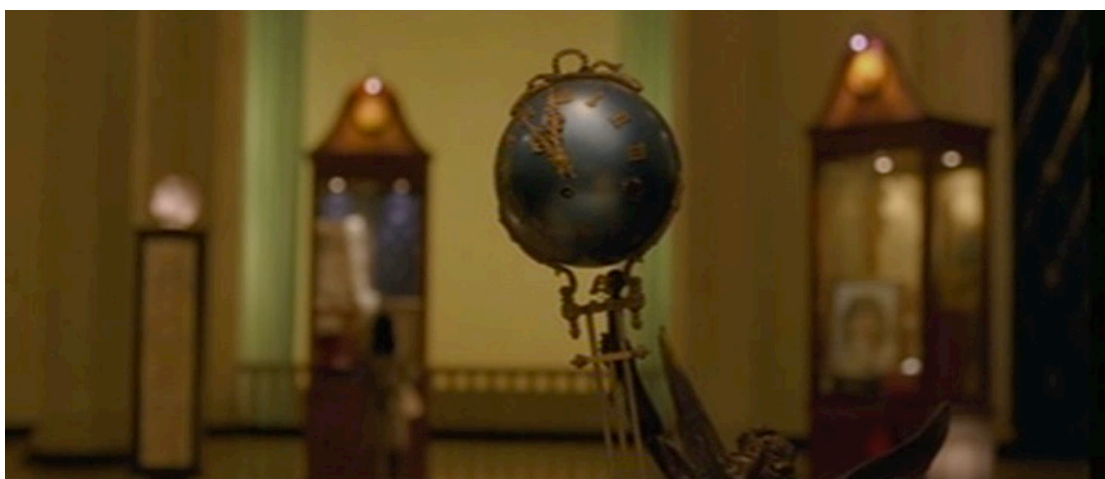
From one of the first lines of the film onwards, where Yue asks, “Is everything set for tomorrow?” an overarching preoccupation with time and being prepared in advance is reiterated in scene after scene, both in the dialogue and *mise-en-scène*. The camera is repeatedly drawn to images of clocks, watches and calendars (Figs. 31–36). Even Zhou’s mobile phone ringtone is the sound of a cuckoo—a bird associated both with telling the time, and seizing the opportunity of another’s nest.

Yue, frequently framed next to a calendar counting down to the day of the big celebration, keeps emphasizing the relentless progress of time, characterizing it as a finite commodity, within the context of which nothing is more egregious than being made to wait: “We’ve been waiting almost three hours... Will he be here on time? ...How long do we need to wait? ...There isn’t much time left... Please hurry up. I don’t want to waste any more time.” The pressing deadline of Mr. Man’s approaching birthday may explain Yue’s particular urgency, but this same incitement to hurry up is also found elsewhere. For example, Kong urges Zhou to concentrate because, “we’re *already* late” for an appointment, and later worries that “we’re wasting her time” when Nam offers to help Zhou move apartments.

This sense that anything unexceptional is necessarily a *waste of time* is reminiscent of some of the earlier cited critical reviews of the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel, whilst the recurrence of the term *already* (even more prevalent in the Chinese where the construction “*yijing... le*” is typically used to affirm that an action has already been completed⁹³) speaks of the culture of anticipation proposed in the Introduction, where it was suggested that anticipation involves not only an excited expectation of things to come, but also an attempt to grasp the moment in advance—grasping because ‘to anticipate’ is also ‘to apprehend’, which is in turn both ‘to understand’ and ‘to capture’ something that is trying to escape.

⁹² Donald and Gammack, *Tourism and the Branded City*, 145.

⁹³ So, for example, what in English might be translated as ‘they are here,’ or ‘they have arrived,’ in Chinese would be more literally, ‘they have *already* arrived.’



Figs. 31 – 33: Clocks...
Copyright China Film



Fig. 34: (Designer) watches...
Copyright China Film



Figs. 35 – 36: And calendars
Copyright China Film

Two short scenes, narratively unrelated to the central plot, but (like the opening sequence) thematically resonant, underline this anxious desire to stay ahead of things. Both Yue and Zhou deliver homilies to their respective assistants about the need to apprehend their clients' expectations, thereby securing their share of the market and preventing the competition from getting away. In both instances, the alleged solution lies in effective self-branding—a more refined attitude for Kong in dealing with clients, and the appropriate designer outfits for Yue and Yang: “Packaging is also very important... If we don't package ourselves how can we get money from our clients?” Such anxiety over staying competitive is a common symptom of capitalism, not unique to Shanghai, though perhaps particularly pronounced with its rapid transition from industrial hub of a socialist planned economy to financial powerhouse of a new febrile market economy under dirigiste conditions in which growing numbers of local and international firms vie for their share of a market where corollary regulatory and legal processes are still taking shape and remain frequently ill-defined. The more general obsession with seizing the moment found in *Leaving Me Loving You* returns us to the writings of late nineteenth and early twentieth century theorists mentioned earlier, for whom the concept of the present moment became an abiding obsession in their interrogations of the psychopathology of modernity.

The dilemma confronted by writers such as Benjamin, Heidegger and Jean Epstein was “the inescapable fact that no moment could stay still.” This problem was defined by two interlocking concepts: “the evacuation of stable presence by movement and the resulting split between sensation, which feels the moment in the moment, and cognition, which recognizes the moment only after the moment.”⁹⁴ A disjunction between sensation and cognition is, in part, an unavoidable aspect of the human condition; as Bergson wrote, “Practically we perceive only the past, the pure present being the invisible progress of the past gnawing into the future.”⁹⁵ However, writers such as Benjamin believed that the “hyperstimulation” of modernity—full of Simmel's crowding images, discontinuities and “onrushing impressions”—

⁹⁴ Leo Charney, “In a Moment: Film and the Philosophy of Modernity,” in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, ed. Leo Charney and Vanessa Schwartz (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 279.

⁹⁵ Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1988), 150. Charney also uses this quote as the epigraph to his chapter, “In a Moment,” *op. cit.*

constituted a sea change in the nature of subject experience, in which this separation of sensation and cognition was not simply a philosophical conundrum, but an acutely troubling feature of the phenomenology of everyday urban life; an alienation of body and mind. There was a “movement away from experience conceived as a continuous cumulation towards an experience of momentary shocks that bombarded and shattered subjective experience like hand grenades.”⁹⁶

Leo Charney identifies the inability to locate a stable sense of the present as a defining feature of modernity, which he describes as *drift*. “In the common sense of directionless passivity, drift provided the background for modernity’s shocking moments, surprising distractions, and overwhelming stimuli. Momentary sensations became startling as perceptual contrasts to the undifferentiated drift of everyday experience.”⁹⁷ It was through these “shocks” that the individual could be lifted from a state of boredom to a recognition of the sensuality of the moment:

The more intense the sensation, the more abruptly the modern subject would feel the waning of its initial strength. The combination of immediate intensity and just as immediate tapering off was felt as shock. To experience shock was to experience a moment... Shock jolted the modern subject into tangible reawareness of the presence of the present. Inside the immediate presence of the moment, what we can do—the only thing we can do—is feel it. The present presence of the moment can occur only in and as sensation.⁹⁸

For Benjamin, the possibility of momentary presence was allied to the immediacy of vision (the “Now of recognizability”) and particularly the cinema.⁹⁹ Likewise, Jean Epstein wrote that “Cinema is the only art that can represent this

⁹⁶ Charney, “In a Moment,” 285.

⁹⁷ Leo Charney, *Empty Moments: Cinema, Modernity, and Drift* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1998), 7–10. This is what Charney calls, the “experiences of drift—drift as ontology.” He also offers another understanding of the term with “drift as an epistemological process.” In this second sense, drift becomes a formal strategy for knowing and interrogating the experience of modernity. Yang Fudong’s works as mentioned in Chapter Five, might be taken as an example of this.

⁹⁸ Charney, “In a Moment,” 285.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 284–285.

present as it is.”¹⁰⁰ Epstein argued that cinema’s success lay in embodying modernity’s “environment of flux, ephemerality, and dis-placement” through its generation of what he called “*photogénie*—fleeting fragments of experience that provide pleasure in ways that the viewer cannot describe verbally or rationalize cognitively. Epstein conceived film as a chain of moments, a collage of fragments that elicited not an even flow of attention but sudden, unpredictable peaks and valleys. Inside those bumps of attention the viewer scavenges moments of pure immersion in image.”¹⁰¹ Cinema was the art form best suited to constantly representing moments of sensation, allowing viewers to salvage the sensual thrill of the present from a state of drift. Put simply, “Mechanical reproduction is boring because it’s the same thing over and over again. A movie has to keep jostling the viewer, changing and jumping away every moment, just to keep you interested... The movie has to keep distracting your attention from the looming threat of boredom.”¹⁰²

Jean Epstein’s elliptical writings from the 1920s may make an unexpected bedfellow to a glossy 2004 Chinese rom-com, but various themes from the work of Epstein and his contemporaries are evident in Wilson Yip’s *Leaving Me Loving You*. The film’s broad fixation on time and seizing the present has already been remarked on, but more specifically it is notable that Yue’s business involves creating incidents of heightened sensation and moments of shock. After her initial brief introduction—jolted back into presence by the traffic collision—we next encounter Yue at work, successfully realizing one of her staged spectacles. A couple enter an old art deco elevator (similar to ones found in various buildings on the Bund), together with Yue’s assistant, only for the lift to lurch violently between floors and then hurtle downwards, before wondrously coming to a safe halt at the basement. The doors open onto a scene of romantic red lanterns and Yue wheels out a huge cake with the words “Jack, Happy Birthday” written in icing. This, she explains to the bewildered gentleman, is a birthday surprise from his girlfriend, Miss Hui—the terrifying incident staged as a tribute to his fondness for the film *Titanic* and his desire to see whether he too would not give up on love in the face of death. However, unlike James Cameron’s 1997 blockbuster, their story needn’t have a tragic conclusion, as Yue informs him: “You don’t want to share Leonardo’s fate and she *doesn’t want to wait*

¹⁰⁰ Cited in Charney, “In a Moment,” 287.

¹⁰¹ Charney, “In a Moment,” 285.

¹⁰² Charney, *Empty Moments*, 120.

until she's eighty!"¹⁰³ Miss Hui apologizes to her partner for not telling him about the surprise, to which he replies that "I should be the one to say sorry" (what for remains unclear, but presumably not seizing the initiative sooner) and promptly proposes to her. Yue's crackpot scheme has been a triumph; her shocking, immersive spectacle, complete with film reference, has jolted Hui's lover to his senses, and spurred him on to propose, thereby ending the drifting nature of his romantic relationship with the sensual realization that there is no time like the present.

That Yue's professional expertise lies in the staging of thrilling moments and the enlivening of passions, whilst she herself is jaded and romantically disenchanted, may be a narrative irony, but according to Simmel's diagnosis of the relationship between the shocks of modernity and neurasthenia, it is an ever-impending risk, as the "boundless pursuit of pleasure makes one blasé because it agitates the nerves to their strongest reactivity for such a long time that they finally cease to react at all."¹⁰⁴ Yue exhibits symptoms of the flu, but in the context of her faltering love life these seem more the somatic expressions of emotional fatigue and distress.

A tension between frenetic action and fatigue also defines the lovers' relationship. In trying to articulate his reasons for curtailing their romance Zhou explains, "I feel that I can't breathe when I am with you. You have endless energy, always running ahead...Something's missing between us." Yue initially refuses to accept that there is a correlation between speed and emotional desensitization, replying, "Bullshit! Too fast, too slow—that's just nonsense and excuses. If you are tired of me, just say so." Later, though, she does concede that the accelerated pace of things may be implicated in their troubles, whilst still firmly laying the blame for boredom with Zhou: "Perhaps everything has been too easy for us. Too fast, too soon, too much sex. Then you got bored and left." If the relentless pressure of linear time casts being made to wait as calamitous, then the attendant fear is that moving too quickly may lead to boredom, which equates with a desertion of feeling.

¹⁰³ (My italics for emphasis.) Paul Virilio notes that *Titanic* "has become the perfect example" of American catastrophe movies which "introduce the anxiety of progress." That Miss Hui's lover does not ultimately suffer the same fate as Leonardo DiCaprio in that film, and is instead supplied with a happy ending, is in keeping with *Leaving Me Loving You*'s overarching narrative structure, in which an exuberant embrace of the future ultimately triumphs over an anxious recognition of the stresses and strains engendered by modern city living. [Doumoucel, "Paul Virilio."]

¹⁰⁴ Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," 414.

Yue explicitly picks up on this notion of time and wandering emotion when she asks of Zhou about two-thirds into the film, “Now that your feelings are back you expect me to carry on like before and have a relationship? Then what?” For someone like Yue, so focussed on the linear progress of time, harking back is of no use if it does not come with the promise of what to expect in the future. Unable to supply an answer, Zhou leaves her apartment, defeated, and walks out into the empty wind-swept streets. His traipsing off into the night is paralleled in the film by various shots of Yue, wandering alone through the city. If emotional numbness and romantic discontent is associated with temporal dislocation it is also linked to a sense of physical displacement and being at odds with one’s environment. After having just driven into the ditch with Kong, Zhou chases after Yue, but does not reach her in time and is subsequently sent reeling as her taxi almost knocks him off his feet. Most notably, in an attempt to reinvigorate her life, Yue leaves her old apartment and moves elsewhere (Zhou in somewhat creepy fashion follows suit and takes a new apartment opposite), though this brings with it further problems when a storm blows her door off its hinges.

Feelings of being weighed down, an inability to meet one’s own desires and those of others, being at odds with the elements and one’s environment—all these are recognized by Ian Irvine as symptoms of the Modernist conception of “ennui”—a condition that he argues is “more virulent than ever” today. It would be stretching too far to suggest that the protagonists of *Leaving Me Loving You* are beholden to a fully realized state of chronic ennui as defined by Irvine: “(1) A stage of anxious boredom... accompanied by fantasies of release from that anxiety. This propelled the sufferer into another stage (2) characterised by bursts of frantic activity... This flurry of activity gave way to (3) a stage of psychospiritual numbness that allowed a person to feel temporarily free from the anxieties and impulsive acting out typical of the previous periods. We may see this third stage as a state of non-being similar to that experienced by the heroin or smack addict, the sex addict, the gambler, the food addict, or the drugged patient in a psychiatric ward etc. It preceded a gradual return to Stage 1.”¹⁰⁵ Yue’s “frantic activity” is more obviously in service to her professional obligations than “the denial of negative feelings” (though her work clearly does serve as a distraction from her romantic struggles), whilst her exhausted succumbing to

¹⁰⁵ Ian Irvine, “Towards an Outline of Postmodern Ennui,” in *The Antigone Review* 116 (1999).

illness and fatigue, though a temporary release from her worries, is not quite analogous to the “psychospiritual numbness” of addiction. More pronounced realizations of this cycle may be witnessed in the films mentioned in Chapter Six. However, there is certainly some overlap in this outline of chronic ennui and the film’s diegesis, not least in how Yue’s romantic agitation coincides with reveries of earlier, happier times, and is juxtaposed both with frenetic activity (such as the preparations for Mr. Man’s birthday and on one occasion a fairly hysterical attack on Zhou with her handbag) and moments of total collapse.¹⁰⁶

Particularly pertinent from Irvine’s analysis of the Modernist usage of the term “ennui” is his suggestion that “the concept represented an implicit critique of Modernity. The depression, *languer*, and melancholy... [of ennui] was in direct contradistinction to the great enlightenment bourgeois ideals of progress, competition, scientific and technological advancement and social evolution.”¹⁰⁷ It is this state of melancholy accompanying the urgency of progress that gnaws away at *Leaving Me Loving You*. Indeed, for all its emphasis on the importance of haste and seizing the moment, the film is, itself, curiously listless. This may stem, in part, from the somewhat unengaging protagonists, and consequent low dramatic stakes, but it is compounded by a formal structure that sets the aforementioned fixation on linear time, against a cyclical pattern of time, as the same flashback sequences keep being repeated and similar scenarios return again and again.

Most repetitive of all is the usage of Henry Mancini’s *Moon River*, a song that features a remarkable seven times in the film as the soundtrack to various montage sequences.¹⁰⁸ Johnny Mercer’s lyrics are particularly apt—perhaps unwittingly so—as Zhou stalks his event-planning, erstwhile girlfriend across town, to the strains of “Oh dream-maker, you heartbreaker/Wherever you’re going, I’m going your way.” The

¹⁰⁶ Whilst I am wary of characterizing a female outpouring of emotion as ‘hysterical,’ the term seems appropriate here. Firstly, it belongs to the vocabulary of heightened emotional states allegedly incited by the hyperstimulation of the city. Additionally, Yue’s overwrought reaction is in keeping with the film’s rather dispiriting gender politics, in which the chief aspiration for the female protagonist (in spite of her own successful professional career) is to have a man finally commit; and apparently the successful route to achieving this is to respond with childish petulance to reasonably-voiced reservations, and engage in game-playing rather than discussion, with the aim of eliciting a grovelling apology, accepted with a coquettish smile.

¹⁰⁷ Irvine, “Towards an Outline of Postmodern Ennui.”

¹⁰⁸ On one occasion the song accompanies a montage sequence, only immediately to start up again in another key for the following scene.

characters in the song are none other than “two *drifters*.” In this instance drift emerges as something potentially positive, its laid-back lack of defined timescale standing in opposition to the characters’ more regimented schedules. Also, much as Charney identified drift as the necessary “background for modernity’s shocking moments, surprising distractions, and overwhelming stimuli” so the song serves at one point (which is its most prolonged usage) as the backdrop to a dreamlike memory of an earlier happier time in the relationship.

This memory is instrumental in jolting Zhou to the realization that he still has feelings for Yue. It is also, itself, the memory of a particularly shocking and immersive moment: Zhou and Yue hurtle thrillingly through the air in a two-person reverse bungee ride. Flanking them on two sides is a huge glass structure of the Xintiandi shopping mall, which both reflects their own image and multiplies the flickering lights from a series of nearby LCD displays. As the camera cuts to a close-up of the laughing couple, they become enveloped by the glass structure and its reflected moving images (Fig. 37). The effect is to immerse the protagonists in a cinematic environment. The term ‘cinematic’ is used quite deliberately here, for although cinema may have come to seem static in the face of more obviously interactive technologies such as computer gaming, its successful endurance as an emblem of modernity that “both epitomized and transcended the period of its initial emergence,” was due in no small part to its ability to embody the new mobility of modernity.¹⁰⁹ The cinematic apparatus provided the spectator with a new and unbridled touristic experience, as it took on the role of a mobile observer not beholden to the previous constraints of time and space. In doing so it exhibited a “cartographic impulse” that was partly prefigured in the multiple perspectives found in earlier “topographically oriented view painting[s],” which pictured “space as an assemblage of partial views—a montage of spatial fragments linked panoramically by a mobile observer.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Charney and Schwartz, “Introduction,” 1.

¹¹⁰ Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion*, 181.



Fig. 37: An immersive cinematic environment
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The film's reverse bungee scene offers a pronounced example of "spatial fragments" being linked by a "mobile observer," as the camera provides a series of different angles, mapping the bungee's journey and defining the architectural space through which it moves. It also places the characters in the position of a film spectator, as they move dizzyingly through space, encountering a rapidly changing series of views—moving images—of the city around them. As Giuliana Bruno has noted, "In film, architectural space becomes framed for view and offers itself for consumption as traveled space that is available for further traveling. Attracted to vistas, the spectator turns into a visitor. The film 'viewer' is a practitioner of viewing space—a tourist."¹¹¹ Bruno's observation evokes the experience of the *Virtual Shanghai* exhibit in the SUPEC as discussed in Chapter Two, and indeed the final image of the reverse bungee reverie is reminiscent of the vision of the city promoted on the third floor of the museum: a wide shot shows the bungee ride soaring skywards, and the camera keeps tilting upwards beyond the top of the Xintiandi mall with its flickering LCD screens to show the city skyline beyond. The filming of the bungee scene relies on chroma key compositing—shooting against a blue or green screen and then integrating the image into the cityscape in postproduction—but the finished effect is to have the protagonists fly upwards through a "heaven of dreams" to conclude on an image of the urban dynamic scene that blurs the boundaries of the real and the virtual.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 62.



Fig. 38: Flying through space, blurring the virtual and the real
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In keeping with the cyclical structure of *Leaving Me Loving You*, there is a second flashback to the bungee episode towards the end of the film, as well as a reference to the scene mid-way through the film, when the ride is seen reflected in the a car window and mentioned by Mr. Man's business successor (Mr. Marsh) as he says, "I never imagined I would find this in Shanghai." Yue's reply that the bungee ride has already been in Shanghai "for quite some time," emphasizes the historical nature of her shared memory with Zhou, and is also suggestive of Shanghai's ability to outpace the imagination.

Irvine identifies one notable symptom of chronic ennui as being "The loss of an animated, enchanted state of identification with the world/ cosmos/nature, with others in society and with one's own needs and desires." He notes that this stage has frequently been described by writers and poets as a "loss of 'vision.'"¹¹² For Zhou, locating an experience where he feels neither suffocated nor bored, and neither out of synch physically nor temporally, but fully present and happily in love, entails turning to the past for the memory of a visually and kinaesthetically shocking moment.

Lessons from the past as a means to salve the wounds of the present are offered by Mr. Man, the figure most associated with the film's cyclical time elements. And yet, whilst Mr. Man's intervention may precipitate a restoration of feeling for and

¹¹² Irvine, "Towards an Outline of Postmodern Ennui."

between the protagonists, it complicates the notion that such an enlivening need necessarily be prompted by shock and visual sensation. From his first appearance, Mr. Man introduces a different rhythm to the film's diegesis: relaxed and spritely despite his advanced years, he greets the exhausted Dr. Zhou with the words, "There is no need to rush. Slowly, slowly, take it easy. Let's do it *after* you finish lunch." In the context of lives dominated by the need to move fast and not to waste time, a prepositional shift from *before* to *after*, an adverbial movement from *already* to *not yet*, becomes quietly radical. From hereon in, the roles of patient and doctor become blurred as Zhou monitors Mr. Man's ailing physical health, whilst his own emotional wellbeing is gently nurtured by the elderly gentleman's example. Through his own practice, Mr. Man encourages a transition from kineticism to contemplation, and an emphasis on gustatory, olfactory and auricular pleasures. The efficacy of this prescription is evident towards the end of film as the two men listen once more to an old gramophone recording of Mr. Man's former mistress, Cheung Ling, singing and he asks Zhou, "Aren't you bored?" to which the doctor replies, "No, I'm not bored. It is very tranquil and comfortable here."¹¹³

If the concept of chronic ennui "represented an implicit critique of Modernity," then the physical and emotional fatigue of the protagonists in *Leaving Me Loving You*—rectified only after learning to slow down, pause and appreciate non-spectacular sensory delights—might be read as implying similar reservations about the parallel accelerated pace of life and rapid economic, technological and social changes encountered in contemporary Shanghai. Certainly the film betrays an ambivalence about the speed and constant movement of twenty-first century Shanghai that is not evident in the harmonious, conceived city space showcased in the Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Centre. However, rather than maintaining this resistance, the film's denouement provides a reconciliation between its linear and circular time frames, culminating in an embrace of the visual spectacle of the present moment and the future to come, that reconfirms the official hegemonic vision of the city presented in the SUPEC, even if the journey there has been circuitous.

After listening once more to the gramophone recording, Mr. Man asks Zhou to drive him to the restaurant he used to frequent with his late songstress lover. Savoring the smells and tastes of the meal, he reminisces about his lost love, including a story

¹¹³ The repetition of the gramophone recording is another example of the cyclical elements in the film.

of how she once helped treat his flu symptoms—a parallel with Zhou’s own efforts to alleviate Yue’s illness. And then the past intrudes fully into the scene as the figure of Cheung Ling appears, sitting at the table. Rather as Zhou’s bungee ride reverie is immediately preceded by a happy memory of him sharing ice cream with Yue, here the sensory pleasures of food, drink and music may nurture the enervated spirit, but are ultimately just the prelude and gateway to the realization of an ecstatic vision.

The scene is intercut with Yue’s journey to an archive where she discovers a photograph of Mr. Man’s late mistress. In keeping with the film’s curious time circuitry the texture of the photo and the singer’s features seem anachronistic, much as the musical production of the gramophone recording also sounds jarringly modern; the past intrudes on the present, but so too the present colours the past. The effect is to emphasize Cheung Ling’s association with the film’s modern-day female object of desire (herself played by the famous singer Faye Wong). The spectral return of Mr. Man’s lover and her symmetry with Yue suggests a fulfillment of the film’s cyclical time elements. However, as Yue gazes at the archival collection, tellingly the camera focuses on a ticking clock in the foreground (Fig. 33), the music swells ominously and a storm breaks, reminding us of the relentless, invincible march of linear time.

The following scene is of Mr. Man’s funeral; his death denying the film the climax it seemed to promise, as Yue’s birthday celebration surprise will now never be staged. However, this lack of completion may point us towards a reconciliation of the linear and cyclical time frames, the relevance of which extends beyond the bounds of the film to contemporary Shanghai more generally. It was noted earlier that Mr. Man invites an adverbial movement from *already* to *not yet*. This is reminiscent of the final two hexagrams of the classic Chinese work the *Yijing*, or *Book of Changes*. The sixty-third hexagram “Ferrying Complete” may also be translated as “already completed,” whilst the final sixty-fourth hexagram, “Ferrying Incomplete,” in which “The little fox, after nearly completing the crossing, gets his tail in the water,” may be translated as “not yet completed.” In his essay, “Reflections on Time and Related Ideas in the *Yijing*,” Wonsuk Chang notes that the incompleteness of this final action “is open to possibilities for further change” and in keeping with the “process-oriented philosophy of the *Yijing*... is actually more auspicious than a process completed.”

[T]ime in the *Yijing* is asymmetric, creative, and irreversible, as much as cyclic, cumulative, and preserving. If there is a proper term to describe it, time

in the *Yijing* can be thought of as *advancing in a spiral motion*. Time in the *Yijing* may serve a conservative purpose—namely, restoring the past. But it also serves the creative purpose of producing novelty. These two aspects of time do not contradict each other. Many passages in the *Yijing*, if not all, express that what restores the past simultaneously involves some element of novel creation. The process begins from its incipient movement and finally reaches the point where creative novelty emerges. This evolutionary process is that of an advancing spiral, which ever produces novelty while simultaneously returning again and again to the nascent sources.¹¹⁴

Mr. Man may have died, but—as his successor, Mr. Marsh, pronounces in his funeral oration—“[he] will live in everyone’s hearts forever.” He has passed on, but also remains: released from his earthly existence following an ecstatic vision of his former mistress, the mantle of star-crossed lovers passes to Zhou and Yue, replicating what has come before but also moving forward with novelty. Mr. Man (complete with his sprawling European-style villa) serves as a metonym for the romance and glamour of Shanghai’s pre-1949 golden era. As such, the two parallel relationships form a bridge between the city’s original modern era and its early twenty-first century renaissance. Yet this symmetry points, in turn, to an asymmetry: the Shanghai of Mr. Man’s heyday “hardly had the energy for introspective searching into its own past. Whether in pursuit of capitalist splendor or socialist revolution, the city, for much of the twentieth century, measured its progress by negating its past... Modernity under capitalism, in Shanghai as well as elsewhere, was incapable of either memory or reflection.” It was only with the re-historicizing of the pre-1949 era, as discussed earlier in this chapter, that “The reinvigoration of an urban historical narrative not only served to enrich the city’s imagination of the future, but also bolstered its claim to the legitimacy of doing so.”¹¹⁵

“The past allows the present to pursue the future,” writes Ackbar Abbas, and in *Leaving Me Loving You*, it is the vital, reinvigorating influence of Mr. Man (including his death) which is the catalyst for our protagonists’ final reconciliation.¹¹⁶ Yue issues

¹¹⁴ Wonsuk Chang, “Reflections on Time and Related Ideas in the *Yijing*,” *Philosophy East and West* 59, No. 2 (2009), 223–227. My italics.

¹¹⁵ Yeh, *Shanghai Splendor*, 207–208.

¹¹⁶ Abbas, “Play It Again Shanghai: Urban Preservation in the Global Era,” 38.

Zhou with a challenge: “If you can find me before midnight, we talk.” Once more the urgency of linear time is to the fore and Zhou sets off hastily around the city, tracing a cartography of heightened emotions and missed opportunities imprinted on the city as he visits Yue’s apartment, her office and the site of the bungee ride, all to no avail. But as fatigue and despair sets in, Zhou has an epiphany and heads to the intended scene of Mr. Man’s birthday surprise. It is a long tunnel, supposedly situated near the very top of the Jin Mao Tower (though no such place actually exists), leading to a magnificent view from the skyscraper, over Lujiazui and across the Huangpu to the Bund. He fixes on this location because, in cyclical fashion, he has already been here for a work meeting with Yue earlier in the film. That time, Yue was waiting expectantly for him, instructing her assistant over a walkie-talkie to “Just be ready” (Fig. 39). On this occasion though, Zhou arrives just as the clock turns to midnight; when the time is out of joint, the readiness is all, and now Zhou, for once, is able successfully to anticipate Yue. Linear and cyclical time find an equilibrium and, finally, Zhou finds himself in the right place at the right time.

The architecture of this correct place bears a startling similarity to the Time Tunnel/Bund Sightseeing Tunnel aesthetic described earlier. And as Zhou offers his apology to Yue, we are transported back to the beginning of the film and the birthday spectacle staged for Miss Hui’s partner (“I should be the one to say sorry”). We are also returned to the earlier scene between the two protagonists in this same location, except this time, “waiting round the bend” of the tunnel is not a frosty stand-off, but the “rainbow’s end” which the “two drifters” have finally found as they look out over the Huangpu River to marvel at the scene of exploding fireworks beyond.¹¹⁷ “Can we start over?” Zhou had pleaded earlier. It is a question which cuts to the very heart of a late twentieth and early twenty-first century Shanghai seeking to brand itself once more as a world-leading, international metropolis. The answer, now thrillingly supplied by the city’s illuminated skyline, is a euphoric, “Yes!”

¹¹⁷ Extracts from song, *Moon River*, Mancini/Mercer, 1961.

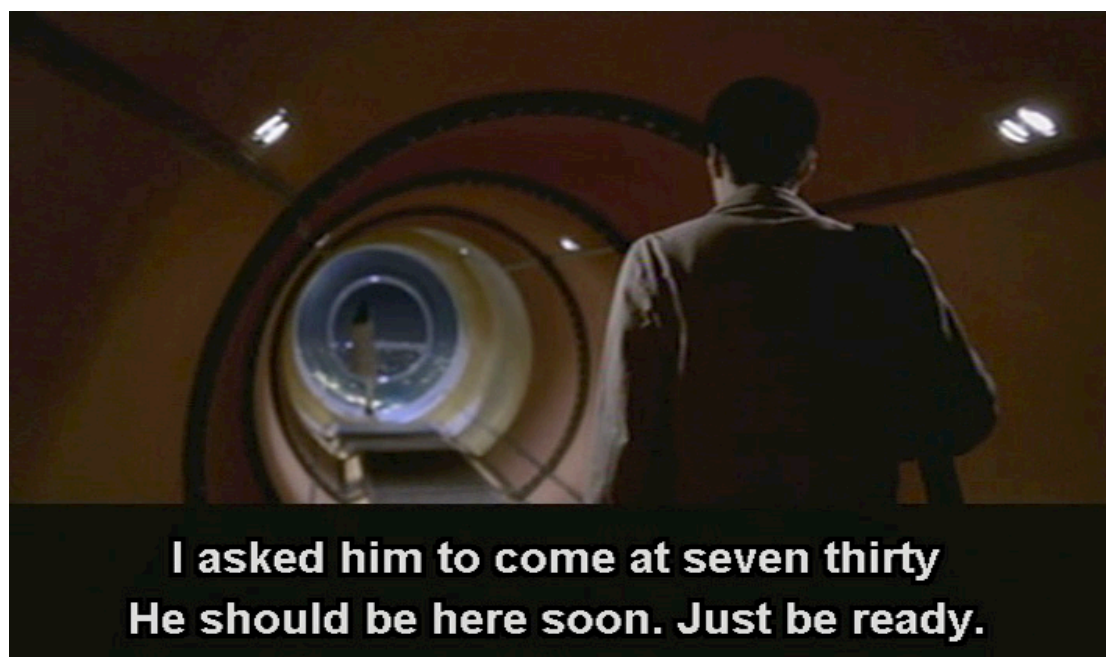


Fig. 39: The readiness is all
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The camera circles high over the skyscrapers of Lujiazui, presenting panoramic shots akin to those in the promotional video for the Oriental Pearl Tower Space Capsule. Meanwhile, the fireworks are reminiscent of the final scene of the history of Shanghai video played on repeat on the mezzanine level of the SUPEC, where the Maoist era is elided and the narrative jumps straight from 1949 to contemporary New Year celebrations. Zhou's request had earlier been countered with another question: "What then?" Yet in the final event, anxieties about the enervating nature of contemporary city life, and uncertainties about the future are cast aside, as the film subjugates itself to the view. Whilst the implication, presumably, is that Yue is now convinced that Zhou is fully committed to him, the real change from earlier seems to be simply that both characters have given themselves over to the spectacle that surrounds them. As Minnie Riperton declares in her opening line of the song that plays immediately following that earlier scene: "Lovin' you is easy cos you're beautiful." But this reawakening of love, this recognition of presence, whilst stimulated by a shocking sensation, is one that has also been complemented by the lessons of the past. Where previously the thrill had gone, spiralling time has realized the fantasy of being given another chance. The past repeats itself, but novelty also emerges; the lovers return to a previous scenario once again, but this time with added

feeling. And as they gaze out over the spectacular urban dreamscape, looking hopefully towards the future, the shape that extends behind them is a spiral—ever repeating, ever moving forwards, chasing and escaping, and ever anticipating itself.



Fig. 40: Spiralling to the rainbow's end
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FOUR

The Gateway to China: Living the Cosmopolitan Dream

In seeking to articulate contemporary Shanghai's culture of anticipation, this thesis finds itself irresistibly shaped by the spiral form. Hence this fourth chapter begins with a discussion of Wayne Wang's 2011 feature film, *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* (henceforward referred to as *Snow Flower*), which echoes themes from the previous chapter, whilst opening up new territory for exploration, through its search for Chinese authenticity in the contexts of globalization. *Snow Flower*'s transnational elements and Shanghai's role in the film as an interface between the past, present and future and also between China and the wider world, leads onto a discussion of what are termed *metropolitan gateway films*. These are cinematic threshold spaces, constructing the city as a site of desire, fantasy and transformation for different international stakeholders. After outlining certain recurring features of these films, the chapter concludes with an analysis of *Shanghai Calling* (2012), which follows the story of a Chinese-American lawyer who has been reluctantly assigned to his company's Shanghai office and traces his developing affinity for a city that is promoted as the epitome of harmonious cosmopolitan living. It also engages with China's reputation for *shanzhai* practices (the creation of fake, or pirated copies), which, it is argued, are an aspect of Shanghai's culture of anticipation.

Snow Flower and the Secret Fan: Shanghai Soul Sisters

Loosely adapted from Lisa See's 2005 novel of the same name, *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* tells the story of two women in nineteenth century Hunan Province in southern-central China. Lily and Snow Flower, who have both been subjected to the practice of foot-binding, are pledged to each other from a young age as *laotong*, a tradition in Hunan, whereby women were formally contracted as eternal kindred sisters. The women have very different personalities and experience divergent

fortunes: the more pragmatic Lily comes from a poor background, but secures marriage into a wealthy and influential family because her feet are considered particularly beautiful, whilst Snow Flower's father has squandered their fortune and she is forced to marry a butcher who frequently beats her. See's novel is narrated by an eighty year-old Lily as she reflects on the increasingly strained relationship between the two women against the backdrop of a turbulent national history, particularly the period of the Taiping Rebellion from 1850–1864. The two *laotong* are ultimately reconciled, with Lily tending to a dying Snow Flower, but the book concludes with the narrator's self-recrimination and a plea for forgiveness: "For forty years, the past only aroused regret in me. Only one person ever truly mattered to me, but I was worse to her than the worst husband... if the dead continue to have the needs and desires of the living, then I'm reaching out to Snow Flower and the others who witnessed it all. Please hear my words. Please forgive me."¹

The film adaptation (with a screenplay by Angela Workman, Ron Bass and Michael K. Ray) removes the older Lily's narration and introduces in its place a parallel storyline set in contemporary Shanghai in which the characters Nina and Sophia are modern-day counterparts of Lily and Snow Flower, and played by the same actors (Li Bingbing and Gianna Jun). Childhood best friends and sworn *laotong*, they have lost contact after falling out over Nina's disapproval of Sophia's romantic choices. But when an accident leaves Sophia in a coma, Nina is notified by the hospital and postpones the opportunity to accompany her English-speaking Chinese diaspora boyfriend in establishing a company office in New York, to remain at her friend's bedside. As she waits for the situation to improve, Nina delves into Sophia's past, and uncovers the research she has been conducting into her ancestor's own *laotong* relationship—the story of Snow Flower and Lily. The film ends with Sophia slowly waking from her coma, Nina lying by her side.

The imposition of this modern-day storyline at the expense of Lily's reflective narration denudes the original tale of its most compelling material: the detailed exploration of a lifelong *laotong* relationship in androcentric nineteenth century China, complete with its use of *nü shu* (a private language used only by women, passed down through generations), and also the "gentle erotic undertow" of Lily and

¹ Lisa See, *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), 333.

Snow Flower's friendship.² Meanwhile, the structural parallels feel contrived due to the stark incongruities in the sociocultural situations of the two pairs of women. Manohla Dargis neatly skewers the absurdity of it in her *New York Times* review: "Wearing towering heels can be painful, as a shot of a modern miss kicking off a pair shows. Yet it is laughable to suggest, as this movie does, that there are real analogies between Lily and Snow Flower—who are forcibly maimed and married, and have all the rights of animals at slaughter—and their designer-wearing modern counterparts."³

However, whilst the additional contemporary material met with critical disdain, it is central to a film that reveals little about nineteenth century Hunan Province, but does offer insights into aspects of twenty-first century Shanghai.⁴ *Snow Flower* may be read as a film about modern Shanghai not simply because there are sequences filmed in the city, but because of how certain elements of its story intersect with the broader themes already discussed in Chapter Three, and also how the contexts of its production provide evidence of wider processes of transnational interactions that are involved in shaping the metropolis.

Paul Virilio has stated that "Today, history is entirely accidental." It is "speed," he argues, which defines the modern age, with history no longer determined by a sequence of events, but rather a series of "accidents." A failure to grasp the accelerated pace of things—a failure to anticipate—results in the surprises and ruptures that inform our existence: "an accident is the event of speed. Our accidents are linked to the acceleration of history and of reality... Today's events, like the stock market crash, are speed accidents. I call these 'integral accidents' because they trigger

² Michael Phillips, "Source story gets short shrift in 'Snow Flower,'" *Chicago Tribune*, 21 July 2011, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2011-07-21/entertainment/sc-mov-0719-snow-flower-secret-fan-20110722_1_laotong-nu-shu-snow-flower.

³ Manohla Dargis, "Ties That Bind: Life-Sustaining Friendships Transcending Life's Brutalities," *New York Times*, 14 July 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/15/movies/snow-flower-and-the-secret-fan-review.html?ref=movies>.

⁴ Of the thirty-one reviews of the film collated on *Metacritic*, the element overwhelmingly singled out for criticism is the awkward connection between the two time periods. <http://www.metacritic.com/movie/snow-flower-and-the-secret-fan/critic-reviews>. For example, see Roger Ebert, "Snow Flower and the Secret Fan," *Chicago Sun Times*, 20 July 2011, <http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/snow-flower-and-the-secret-fan-2011>, and Carrie Rickey, "Female friendship in old, new China," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 22 July 2011, http://www.philly.com/philly/columnists/carrie_rickey/20110722_Female_friendship_in_old_new_China.html?c=r.

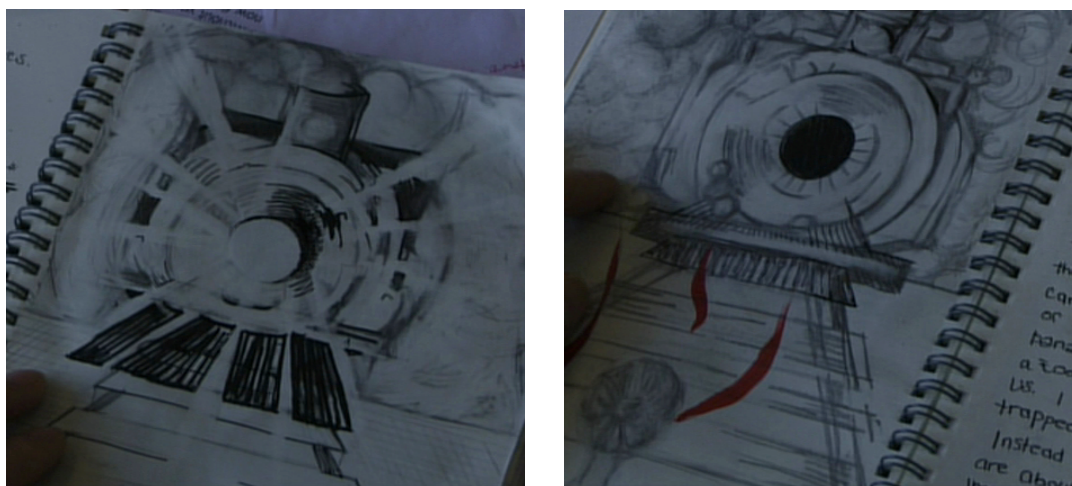
other accidents.”⁵ In *Snow Flower*, Wayne Wang dramatizes this “event of speed” literally, with one of the earliest scenes featuring—as with *Leaving Me Loving You*—a traffic collision. In this instance though, the crash does not simply jolt a protagonist to attention, but precipitates Nina’s investigation into Sophia’s past and hence sets in motion the film’s entire narrative.

Nina’s search leads her to uncover the story of Snow Flower and Lily, which Sophia has been writing, and also initiates a series of flashbacks within the modern-day storyline. Several of these are framed against the occasion and fallout of a much larger “speed accident,” the 1997 Asian financial crisis. It is the effects of the stock market collapse, and her father’s subsequent death, which tilt Sophia’s life into disarray and result in her forbidding stepmother ultimately living in a dilapidated old building; the sole remaining structure in a demolition site dwarfed by new tower blocks, it seems to hover in some twilight place between life and death like the architecture of Greg Girard’s photographic series, *Phantom Shanghai*.⁶

Sophia has been staying in a similarly decrepit building, and it is there that Nina discovers her friend’s journal, revealing a mind haunted by the image of being knocked down. In two separate drawings, a train—that classic symbol of speed and progress—thunders headlong towards the viewer, in the second picture bearing down on a female figure on the track (Figs. 41 & 42). Accompanying text speaks of Sophia’s desire to escape, enviously comparing the freedom of swans to her own condition, which is likened to that of a caged animal: “If they feel stuck, they can just swim away or fly... I feel like I’m in a zoo, trapped, trapped, trapped.” With this unearthing of Sophia’s troubled emotional state, the film’s opening accident retrospectively becomes the culmination of her alienation from, and oppression by, modern city life; her comatose state leaving her in her own liminal zone between the living and the dead.

⁵ Doumoucel, “Paul Virilio.”

⁶ Greg Girard, *Phantom Shanghai* (Toronto: The Magenta Foundation, 2010).



Figs. 41 & 42: Powerless in the face of progress
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Notably, her journal reveals that the cinema has operated for Sophia as a temporary means of escape, with her fantasy being that this could somehow exist as a permanent state: “I went to the cinema by myself. I like this darkness and being by myself, getting lost for a few hours. I don’t need to think about the past or future... I wish the entire day could be lost in a cinematic dream.” Yet the onrush of time cannot be denied. As the online reviewer, Jade, wrote of her experience in the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel, people may “forget themselves in the environment, a beautiful feeling... but at the same time one can’t help but want to sigh at the progress of time.”⁷ How then, may one be reconciled to this passage of time? The solution presented by the film follows a similar narrative arc to *Leaving Me Loving You*: exhaustion and disenchantment with urban life are the corollary to a falling out of love (romantic in one case, sisterly in the other); by repairing the relationship a newfound affinity to the city emerges, complete with a sensuous appreciation of the moment and hope for the future. In both instances, the healing process is catalyzed by a form of time travel, as stories of days gone by provide direct assistance in the present, culminating with visions of figures from the past materializing in the modern city. In *Leaving Me Loving You* this vision is of Mr. Man reunited with his lover, which serves as the prelude to Zhou and Yue’s reconciliation and second chance at love, whilst in *Snow Flower* the figures of Lily and her *laotong* are seen sitting on a

⁷ Jade, “Shiguang chansuoji,” *Daodao*, 27 May 2011, http://www.daodao.com/Attraction_Review-g308272-d311578-Reviews-or75-Bund_Sightseeing_Tunnel-Shanghai.html#REVIEWS.

terrace on the Bund, doing their needlework, with the Lujiazui skyline behind them, reminding us that their spirit lives on, just as Sophia—herself a survivor—wakes from her coma.

The shots of Lily and Snow Flower on the Bund are immediately preceded by a montage sequence with voiceover from Nina. “The world is always changing. Every day it’s changing. Everything in life is changing,” she states, as the soft focus lights of a river of traffic flow across the screen. The camera cuts to images of elderly Shanghainese sitting on benches and ongoing construction work, as she continues, “We have to look inside ourselves to find what stays the same, such as loyalty, our shared history, and love for each other. In them the truth of the past lives on.” Nina then gazes out of the hospital window, seemingly onto the scene of the rematerialized Snow Flower and Lily, as she offers a plea similar to that found at the conclusion of See’s original novel: “Now I see with shame and sorrow that I understood nothing of deep-hearted love... So many years without you. This is my penance. If you will come back to me I will never leave you. Never again.” In the book, Lily’s petition is left unanswered, but in the modern-day Shanghai of the film version, Snow Flower looks directly to camera and smiles, whilst her twenty-first century counterpart, Sophia emerges from her coma. Thus, painful reminiscence becomes a nostalgic phantasy of resurrection. “Different from a written record that calls up memories of yesterday, nostalgia, as the fashion of contemporary China, uses the construction and embellishment of remembrance to assuage the present.”⁸

Anxieties over the rapid transformation of the urban environment are tucked away with benign acceptance and supplanted by the promise of eternal shared values, which are virtuous, universal and also rather banal. Furthermore, whilst Nina’s voiceover may acquiesce to the relentless passage of time, the film’s forays into the past, climaxing with the appearance of the nineteenth century Hunanese *laotong* pair in contemporary Shanghai, offer the allure of quite the opposite—a cinematic triumph over the constraints of time and space. Those closing shots of Snow Flower and Lily suggest a blurring of illusion and reality, such that, when Sophia finally opens her eyes—in a city itself now risen from its communist-induced “coma”—and the screen fades to white, it seems she may have wakened into the “cinematic dream” she so

⁸ Dai Jinhua, “Imagined Nostalgia,” trans. Judy T. H. Chen, *Boundary 2* 24, no. 3 (1997), 145.

craved; one no longer restricted by the bounds of a movie theatre, but extending before her in the landscape of modern-day Shanghai.⁹



Fig. 43: “Weightless” history: A phantasy of resurrection
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The film’s piecemeal appropriation of the past to imply a reassuring and apolitical continuity amidst the rapid changes of the present is akin to the type of “weightless” history promoted in Shanghai from the 1990s onwards, where “As the course toward the future was being boldly mapped, voices from the past grew correspondingly more audible yet less certain.”¹⁰ Indeed, the use of two nineteenth century Hunanese women, who during the course of the film are forced to escape from the Taiping rebels, to imply a timeless cultural authenticity amidst Shanghai’s rapidly changing urban landscape, is unwittingly ironic, for it was “the several million Chinese immigrants who flooded the city, many of them refugees and reformers fleeing violent campaigns in the countryside, beginning in the mid-1800s with the

⁹ Harper et al., *Shanghai City Guide*, 7.

¹⁰ Yeh, *Shanghai Splendor*, 215.

Taiping Rebellion who provided the labour resource for the rapid urbanisation” that transformed Shanghai during its previous era of modernization.¹¹

Wang’s camera may flirt with images of buildings awaiting demolition, but is not concerned with resurrecting “specific urban experiences and environments in the interest of sustaining local identity and of emphasizing the disappearance of individual neighbourhoods and urban experiences,” which Augusta Palmer—following Svetlana Boym—sees as the hallmark of a “fragmentary” form of nostalgia that “emphasizes the second half of the word ‘algia,’ meaning ache or longing.”¹² An example of this “fragmentary” form would be Shu Haolun’s 2006 independent documentary, *Nostalgia*, a deeply personal essay-diary, prompted by the director’s discovery that the old *lilong* (lanehouse) area in which he grew up (and where his grandmother still lives) has been earmarked for demolition.

Shu is explicit in his condemnation of the disaggregating effects of globalization, describing high-rise buildings as “monsters” and stating that he “doubts” whether anyone “really worships these skyscrapers”. In its critique of present day urbanization, the emotional thrust of the film stems from a re-presentation of the past. The period evoked is not Shanghai’s old glory days, but the 1970s when the *danwei* system was still in place. However, although many of the old *lilong* sights, sounds and smells are lovingly recalled, Shu is not simply offering up the past as a rose-tinted alternative to the present (for example he also shows us the site where a neighbour committed suicide during the Cultural Revolution). What the film suggests is that these memories—positive or otherwise—help constitute the person Shu is and hence the destruction of the physical places that invoke these memories unsettles the filmmaker’s sense (and space) of being. With the buildings themselves disappearing, the best hope of retaining these memories is for Shu to commit them to film, his stated intention in his narration being “to write my nostalgia through my lens”.

Yet whilst he utilizes typical film effects to invoke a sense of longing for the past, he simultaneously picks at the seams of this cinematic practice to offer a critique of the image-making processes of such Shanghai nostalgia. Events from the past are signalled by the use of re-staged scenes filmed in black and white, with the *mise-en-*

¹¹ Tim Lindgren, “Fashion in Shanghai: The Designers of a New Economy of Style” (PhD diss., Queensland University of Technology, 2013), 65.

¹² Palmer, “Crossroads,” 112–114; Svetlana Boym, *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

scène of these sections more structured and artfully composed than the documentary footage from the present day. But the filmmaker deliberately foregrounds this play of artifice: after a discussion of how tourists enjoy looking at old images of lanehouses, present day footage of the *lilong* area is frozen, turned to black and white, and made to look like postcards. Shu's film demonstrates how easy it is for an image to be displaced from its original emotional referents and marketed as a commodity.

It is such a displacement and commodification of the past that occurs in *Snow Flower*, with history reduced to vague platitudes and images that might be found in a glossy fashion magazine.¹³ The juxtaposition of the well-groomed nineteenth century *laotong* couple against the gleaming Lujiazui skyline is similar to the photo montage exhibits on the mezzanine level of the SUPEC, discussed in Chapter Two, where "all that may have been painful or unattractive about the past [is enveloped] in a kind of fuzzy, redeemingly benign aura."¹⁴ This belongs to Boym's other category of nostalgia, a "totalizing" form, which she describes as "reconstructive" and "utopian" and is "more closely linked to the concept of 'nostos,' or home, in that it dreams of fully rebuilding a mythical, authentic home."¹⁵

Palmer notes that, "Not surprisingly, we can link a utopian nostalgia which longs to rebuild the 'home' to a new vision of national, or cultural identity, in short, to the notion of Chineseness."¹⁶ This raises the question of which "home" in *Snow Flower* is being rebuilt, and for whom. One can imagine an alternative film version with the parallel narrative set in modern-day Hunan Province rather than Shanghai; a film unwilling to shy away from the deprivations and challenges of each era, and which offered a more nuanced interrogation of the cultural continuities—and discontinuities—between the two timelines. In Wang's film, however, transcendent Chineseness seems to boil down to broad, unspecific values ("loyalty, our shared history, and love for each other") and looking good in colourful silk clothing. But the very universality of these virtues is the point, as the film seeks to appeal to the widest possible audience. Nina's closing speech offers the assurance of cultural continuity in the face of the transformative powers of globalization, whilst the camera's lens

¹³ See Chapter Five for an extended discussion of the global fashion industry's representation of Shanghai.

¹⁴ Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (New York: The Free Press, 1979), 14.

¹⁵ Palmer, "Crossroads," 112.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 113.

simultaneously translates this culture into a series of glossy images that can be readily appropriated and consumed by a global audience: “a rich, ancient world both exotic and erotic and made even more seductive by director of photography Richard Wong, who makes the most of the opportunity to shoot in China.”¹⁷

For all its scenes set in rural Hunan Province and the script’s emphasis on explaining the rituals of foot-binding and arranged marriages, *laotong* loyalty and self-sacrifice, perhaps the film’s most pertinent line comes during another moment of exposition—one extraneous to the main plot—in which Nina’s father declares, “Shanghai is a seaport. Everyone from somewhere.” The line is reminiscent of the Shanghai Tourism Administrative Commission’s advertising of the city as a place “accepting different cultures, just like the sea containing all rivers.”¹⁸ Dai Jinhua has written that the nostalgic tendencies that emerged in Shanghai following the rise of consumerism in China during the 1990s are “extraterritorial and transregional,” with the city becoming “today’s important ‘immigration’ city and yesterday’s ‘premier port of the East.’”¹⁹ *Snow Flower* may espouse notions of eternal Chineseness, but it is ultimately less concerned with constructing a coherent vision of national identity, than it is with utilizing and promoting Shanghai as a cosmopolitan metropolis and gateway to China.

Metropolitan Gateway Films

Writing in 1997, Sheldon Hsiao-Peng Lu noted that, “at the end of the twentieth century, new patterns of international coproduction and global distribution render the idea of Chinese national cinema rather problematic. The study of *national* cinemas must then transform into *transnational* film studies.”²⁰ Since then, Chinese cinemas

¹⁷ Betsy Sharkey, “Movie Review: ‘Snow Flower and the Secret Fan,’” *Los Angeles Times*, 15 July 2011, <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/la-et-snow-flower-20110715-story.html>.

¹⁸ Shanghai Daily, “Expo Tourism to Sell ‘Discovery,’” *Shanghai Daily*, 18 November 2008, http://www.china.org.cn/travel/news/2008-11/18/content_16782828.htm.

¹⁹ Dai Jinhua, “Imagined Nostalgia,” 158.

²⁰ Sheldon Hsiao-Peng Lu, “Historical Introduction: Chinese Cinemas (1896–1996) and Transnational Film Studies,” in *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity*,

have proved to be particularly fertile terrain for a rapidly developing field of transnational cinema studies, which has recognized the “dissolution of any stable connection between a film’s place of production and/or setting and the nationality of its makers and performers,” and sought “to better understand the changing ways in which the contemporary world is being imagined by an increasing number of filmmakers across genres as a global system rather than as a collection of more or less autonomous nations.”²¹ As Lu and others have demonstrated, cinema has had transnational elements almost since its very inception—not least in China, where this Western technology was first imported to Shanghai in 1896, one year after its invention.²² Consequently, the term has attained “an aura of indisputable legitimacy,” but also frequently become “a largely self-evident qualifier” and “assumed a referential scope so broad... [that it] ends up playing a strangely homogenizing role... in which conceptual distinctions are effaced rather than properly developed.”²³

In seeking to reinvigorate the term, Mette Hjort calls for a more rigorous taxonomy, distinguishing first between “strong” and “weak” instances of transnationality (assessing the “number of specific transnational elements related to levels of production, distribution, reception, and the cinematic works themselves”), and also between “marked and unmarked transnationality,” which may be determined by the extent to which the film’s authors “intentionally direct the attention of viewers towards various transnational properties that encourage thinking about

Nationhood, Gender, ed. Sheldon Hsiao-Peng Lu (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1997), 25.

²¹ Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden, “General Introduction: What is Transnational Cinema,” in *Transnational Cinema, The Film Reader*, ed. Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden (London: Routledge, 2006), 1. For examples of writings on China, cinema and transnationalism: Sheldon H. Lu, *China, Transnational Visuality, Global Postmodernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001); Yingjin Zhang, *Screening China: Critical Interventions, Cinematic Reconfigurations, and the Transnational Imaginary in Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (Michigan, MI: Ann Arbor, 2002); Sheldon Hsiao-Peng Lu and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, ed., *Chinese-Language Film: Historiography, Poetics, Politics* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2005); Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar, *China on Screen: Cinema and Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); Yingjin Zhang, *Cinema, Space, and Polylocality in a Globalizing China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2010).

²² Lu, “Historical Introduction,” 4.

²³ Mette Hjort, “On the Plurality of Cinematic Transnationalism,” in *World Cinemas Transnational Perspectives*, ed. Nataša Durovicová and Kathleen E. Newman (New York: Routledge, 2010), 12–13.

transnationality.”²⁴ She goes on to offer a detailed typology, proposing various forms of cinematic transnationalism, which need not be mutually exclusive.²⁵

Rian Johnson’s 2012 time travel thriller, *Looper* would be an example of a film informed by what Hjort terms “opportunistic transnationalism [which] involves giving priority to economic issues to the point where monetary factors actually dictate the selection of partners beyond national borders.”²⁶ Although largely set in a dystopian Missouri, certain scenes take place in China. Johnson had originally intended for these sequences to be shot in Paris, but due to the commercial incentives of financing the film as a Chinese co-production, the action was moved to Shanghai. (Insisting that the switch was not only financially but also artistically opportune, Johnson remarked that, “In many ways Shanghai was a more natural setting for a sci-fi movie than my beloved Paris.”²⁷) When *Looper* was released simultaneously in China and the US in late September 2012, it was hailed as a box office landmark—the first time that a Hollywood film’s Chinese opening had exceeded domestic takings for its opening weekend.²⁸ Much was made of this success being predicated on the film’s classification as a Chinese/foreign co-production (exempting it from China’s annual foreign film quota and allowing it to be screened during holiday “blackout periods” reserved for domestic productions) and the inclusion of additional Shanghai-based scenes in the Chinese theatrical release.²⁹ These had been eliminated from the US version as test audiences felt they “upset the film’s pacing”, but were reinserted at the

²⁴ Ibid., 13–14.

²⁵ Ibid., 16–30.

²⁶ Ibid., 19.

²⁷ Quoted in Helen Pidd, “Sci-fi blockbuster *Looper* achieves Chinese box office first,” *Guardian*, 1 October 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2012/oct/01/looper-sci-fi-blockbuster-china>.

²⁸ Tentative box office figures provided by the production company, Endgame Entertainment, were reported by Nikki Finke in the industry blog, *Deadline Hollywood*, 29 September 2012, <http://www.deadline.com/2012/09/looper-opens-1-in-china-first-time-international-film-debut-there-beats-u-s/>; the story was then picked up by other news outlets. See for example, Gregg Goldstein, “China partner helps ‘*Looper*’ win big,” *Variety*, 6 October 2012, <http://www.variety.com/article/VR1118060324/>, and Pidd, “Sci-fi blockbuster *Looper* achieves Chinese box office first.”

²⁹ Goldstein, “China partner helps ‘*Looper*’ win big,” provides further detail on the development of the production relationship between Endgame and the China-based distributor DMG (Dynamic Marketing Group). See also, Phil Hoad, “*Looper* bridges the cinematic gap between China and the US,” *Guardian*, 28 August 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/filmblog/2012/aug/28/looper-china-us-dan-mintz>.

request of Chinese financiers who reportedly “didn’t care about pacing.”³⁰ In a rather embarrassing climb-down the film’s executives later admitted that initially reported box office takings had been wildly inflated by “accounting error”, with figures in Chinese RMB accidentally mixed up with US dollars.³¹ *Looper* did ultimately still perform very strongly, taking over \$20 million at the Chinese box office, but this success did not necessarily stem from having some scenes set in China.³² Indeed, feedback from Chinese netizens writing on Douban and Sina Weibo, suggested that one of the major complaints of audiences related to the Shanghai scenes, which were felt to impact negatively on the film’s “pacing!”³³

There are elements of *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* that betray a similar opportunistic thinking, not least in the casting of the leading Korean actor Gianna Jun (also known as Jeon Ji-hyun) as Sophia/Snow Flower. Although Jun learned to speak Mandarin for her Snow Flower scenes, her Korean parentage is explicitly acknowledged in the twenty-first century storyline, justifying the use of English as a *lingua franca* for the contemporary sequences. Thus, although Jun’s presence requires a plot contrivance, it may strengthen the film’s appeal to distributors and audiences in South Korea and amongst her broader East Asian fan-base, whilst simultaneously making the film more accessible to English-speaking audiences who are not confronted with subtitles in the modern-day sections. A further opportunistic casting decision is at play in an incongruous cameo appearance by Hugh Jackman (godfather to producer Wendi Deng Murdoch’s daughters), as Sophia’s Australian boyfriend, Arthur.³⁴ His character is never fully developed (making Nina’s strong disapproval of

³⁰ Steven Zeitchik, “A more Sino-centric version of ‘Looper’ will be released in China,” *Los Angeles Times*, 19 June 2012, <http://articles.latimes.com/2012/jun/19/entertainment/la-et-mn-joseph-gordon-levitts-looper-will-be-released-differently-in-china-20120619>. Zeitchik is quoting an individual involved in the film’s production who wished to remain anonymous.

³¹ Ben Child, “Looper’s unprecedented Chinese box office down to accounting error,” *Guardian*, 4 October 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2012/oct/04/looper-chinese-box-office-error?newsfeed=true>.

³² Box office data from *Box Office Mojo*, <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=loopers.htm>.

³³ Rachel Lu, “Pandering Misfire: Sino-Centric *Looper*’s Lesson for Hollywood Producers,” *Tea Leaf Nation*, 5 October 2013, <http://www.tealeafnation.com/2012/10/pandering-misfire-sino-centric-loopers-lesson-for-hollywood-producers/>.

³⁴ Rachel Aspden, “Nicole Kidman and Hugh Jackman become Murdoch daughters’ godparents,” *Guardian*, 31 March 2010,

him somewhat inexplicable), but Jackman brings a little Hollywood glitz to proceedings and Arthur's job as a cabaret singer allows for a sequence set in the columned lobby of Shanghai's Peninsula Hotel, which draws on memories of the city's pre-1949 dancing world.

The use of the Peninsula for the cabaret set piece is particularly apt as the building itself trades on recreating the iconography of the city's Treaty Port Era heyday. Although designed in an art deco style, the hotel only opened in October 2009—the first new building on the Bund in over sixty years—heralding the return of its parent company, The Hong Kong and Shanghai Hotels Ltd. (still majority owned by the Kadoorie family), to Shanghai, where it had owned and operated several leading hotels from the 1920s to the 1950s.³⁵ A number of other scenes, including the closing sequence of *Snow Flower and Lily* framed against the Lujiazui skyline, were shot in the hotel. The Peninsula has been quick to use its association with the film in promotional material (Fig. 44), demonstrating how such location shooting arrangements may constitute a mutually beneficial transaction in which the site owners' compensation is not simply a direct financial payment. The film has become part of the hotel's brand identity, with patrons able to purchase a special *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* cocktail in its Salon de Ning nightclub—an example of what Thierry Joliveau terms “set-jetting” whereby places draw on their association with fictional settings to encourage touristic consumption. The film world bleeds into the lived space and social practices of the real world.

<http://www.theguardian.com/film/2010/mar/31/nicole-kidman-hugh-jackman-rupert-murdoch>.

³⁵ Hilary Doling, “Luxury on Location: *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* (2011),” *The Luxury Travel Bible: The World's Ultimate Destination Guide*, 25 July 2011, http://www.luxurytravelbible.com/luxury-hotels.asp?active_page_id=548. The Kadoories were one of several wealthy Mizrahi Jewish families (including the Sassoons and the Hardoons) who were extremely influential in the development of trade and infrastructure during the Treaty Port Era.



Fig. 44: Location shooting/place branding: a mutually beneficial transaction
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Yet whilst “marketing-driven” elements undoubtedly informed certain script and shooting decisions, *Snow Flower* is a more complex transnational hybrid than *Looper*.³⁶ In Hjort’s terms, it is not just “strongly” transnational at the level of production, distribution and reception, but also clearly “marked” as such. Financial considerations may underpin some of the transnational elements, but these are then worn as a badge of honour in the film’s diegesis despite it being based on a novel set firmly in nineteenth century rural China. Following Hjort’s more detailed typology, *Snow Flower* also displays characteristics of a transnationalism “defined by the cosmopolitanism of the particular individuals who exercise executive control over the filmmaking process.” Hjort designates this as “cosmopolitan” rather than “exilic” transnationalism due to the mobility of those exerting control, freely able “to move back and forth between different sites.”³⁷

³⁶ Phil Hoad, “Can cinema help China tackle 4,000 years of history?” *Guardian*, 8 November 2011, <http://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2011/nov/08/cinema-china-history-zhang-yimou>.

³⁷ Hjort. “On the Plurality of Cinematic Transnationalism,” 21.

Snow Flower's director, Wayne Wang, clearly fits this cosmopolitan mode: a Hong Kong born Chinese-American, he is best known for *The Joy Luck Club* (1993), a multigenerational story exploring the lives of Chinese immigrants in the United States. However, the most significant figures in the film's realization were the two co-producers who brought Wang on-board: Wendi Deng Murdoch and Florence Sloan. Both are Chinese-Americans (Deng moved from China to the States at the age of twenty, whilst Sloan was born in Kuala Lumpur and had mainland Chinese grandparents), married to hugely wealthy partners, and themselves successful businesswomen.³⁸ Despite their husbands' links to the movie industry, neither woman had a background in film production; their commitment to the project was very much driven by personal appreciation of Lisa See's novel and a desire to present a story about their cultural heritage to a global audience. As Deng stated in interview, "I think making a film about China can help promote Chinese culture to the world... I hope by doing so I can stimulate more Hollywood producers to come to work with Chinese directors."³⁹

Deng's comments were made in June 2011 at the 14th Shanghai International Film Festival (SIFF), during which the film was heavily promoted prior to its mainland China release later that month. Ma Ran has written of the SIFF's "vaguely defined vision of 'being international/internationalization' (or *guojihua*)," which eschews innovative programming and the promotion of locally-produced films, prioritizing instead "its film market and role in networking film professionals and facilitating deals with transnational co-productions," as a marker of Shanghai's development into a "'Global City' (*Quanqiu Chengshi*)."⁴⁰ *Snow Flower* was part-funded by SkyLand Entertainment, which was set up "to bankroll crossover projects for both Chinese and US audiences."⁴¹ Originally jointly owned and controlled by the Asian private-equity firm SAIF Partners and IDG China Media (the China-focused

³⁸ Wendi Deng Murdoch filed for divorce from her husband, Rupert Murdoch, in June 2013. *Snow Flower* was distributed in the USA by Fox Searchlight Pictures, a subsidiary of Rupert Murdoch's media conglomerate 21st Century Fox. Florence Sloan's husband, Harry E. Sloan is the former Chairman and CEO of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

³⁹ China Radio International, "How a Chinese story gets told in an int'l way," *CRI*, 13 June 2011, http://www.china.org.cn/arts/2011-06/13/content_22772344.htm.

⁴⁰ Ma Ran, "Celebrating the International, Disremembering Shanghai: The Curious Case of the Shanghai International Film Festival," *Culture Unbound* 4 (2012), 156.

⁴¹ Derek Elley, "Snow Flower and the Secret Fan," *Film Business Asia*, 25 July 2011, <http://www.filmbiz.asia/reviews/snow-flower-and-the-secret-fan>.

investment arm of Boston's International Data Group), SkyLand is now also owned by the California-based Relativity Media.⁴² In interview, the film director and President of the Film and Television School of the Shanghai Theatre Academy, Sherwood Hu, has called for more such collaborations as a means of strengthening Shanghai's film industry and contemporary image through exposure to Hollywood and European technical expertise.⁴³

Hu was commenting as part of a panel discussion about cinema in Shanghai on the television show, *Culture Matters*, the flagship arts programme for International Channel Shanghai (ICS). Launched in January 2008, ICS is "the only comprehensive variety TV Channel in the Chinese Mainland broadcasting in English, Japanese and Mandarin Chinese" and seeks "to enhance Shanghai's global impact, to show the true face of this great city, and to improve the world's understanding and appreciation of Shanghai." Now "broadcasting four hours daily in the greater New York area" and "transmitting locally-produced programs to countries and areas like the US, Australia, Japan, Germany, Singapore, Africa, Hong Kong and Taiwan," ICS is itself a marker of Shanghai's recognition that cultural promotion must form part of its global brand identity.⁴⁴ And so both the SIFF and co-productions such as *Snow Flower* are enfolded into a wider process of "modernizing transnationalism" in which, Hjort argues, a transnationalized film culture can be one "means of fuelling, but also signifying, the mechanisms of modernization within a given society," where the "symbolic capital associated with culture" is recognized as an important component in forging the image of being a world-class city.⁴⁵

Drawing together these various aspects of *Snow Flower*'s "external or relational properties" and its "immanent properties," it becomes possible to offer up a conceptual categorization of the film that moves beyond the broad descriptor of simply "transnational."⁴⁶ *Snow Flower* might be defined as a *metropolitan gateway film*. Such films are typically defined by transnational elements at the production and

⁴² Jeremy Kay, "Relativity scores Chinese coup with Huaxia, SkyLand deals," *Screen Daily*, 15 August 2011, <http://www.screendaily.com/news/finance/relativity-scores-chinese-coup-with-huaxia-skyland-deals/5030851.article>.

⁴³ Interview available: <http://vimeo.com/102004331>.

⁴⁴ International Channel Shanghai, "About Us," ICS, <http://www.icshanghai.com/en/ad/ics/2012-04-01/92.html>.

⁴⁵ Hjort, "On the Plurality of Cinematic Transnationalism," 24–25.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

distribution level, but textually the city rises free from issues of national sovereignty and politics, to embrace a vague Kantian cosmopolitanism.⁴⁷ This is not to suggest that the national may not be addressed, but it is done so in broad cultural, rather than political terms, as the urban environment becomes a crucible for transcultural engagement and, ultimately, a “cathexis for transformative desire.”⁴⁸ Indeed, whilst *Snow Flower* concludes with a promise of enduring Chinese values, the transcultural collision is as much transhistorical as transnational, with two of the cited unchanging qualities (“loyalty” and “love for each other”) being universal in nature. The third element, “our shared history,” may seem to relate more explicitly to Chinese audiences, as shots of *Snow Flower* and *Lily* are juxtaposed with images of contemporary Shanghai, but the line (followed shortly after by the words “I will never leave you. Never again”) is also a reminder of the city’s historic role as the key site of interface between China and the West.

Snow Flower’s use of the Peninsula Hotel was remarked on earlier as an example of how film and material space in Shanghai may intersect in their recitations of an imagined past; “nostalgia... informs not only the stories our spaces tell us, but also the stories we so often tell about space.”⁴⁹ It is, furthermore, a reminder that the metropolitan hotel was recognized by Kracauer as “the paradigmatic local instance of an emerging global culture in which space serves as an object of consumption through highly differentiated forms of tourism, mass media and urban spectacle.”⁵⁰ A trained architect, Kracauer drew explicit parallels between cinema and hotel spaces, describing “the hotel and film palace” as “optical fairylands shaping the face” of the city.⁵¹ He construed the hotel lobby as “a form of mediatized space,” serving as “a gateway to the metropolitan.”⁵²

Discussing Kracauer’s writings, Katz notes that hotel lobbies function “as mediating structures, whether one is employing them figuratively or passing through

⁴⁷ In his famous essay on “Perpetual Peace,” Kant talks of “cosmopolitan law” as “a universal law of humanity,” governing “a universal community,” that has “developed to the point where a violation of laws in *one* part of the world is felt *everywhere*” (cited in Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, 17).

⁴⁸ Kohn, *Radical Space*, 5.

⁴⁹ Marc Katz, “The Hotel Kracauer,” *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 11, no.2 (1999), 150.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁵¹ Cited in Katz, “The Hotel Kracauer,” 145.

⁵² Katz, “The Hotel Kracauer,” 146. My italics.

them as units of space. The lobby of the big city hotel orients the guest or visitor as they enter from the street: it marks what is exterior and interior and, accordingly, what practices are to be sanctioned.” In addition, “the hotel recuperated urban life on terms that extended its own ability to manufacture desire. The hotel was not just an airbrushed city within the city; it also sold the city outside, the dirty city, a distinctly cosmopolitan self-image... Construction was in this fashion tied to local boosterism: grand hotels were often conceived as civic showcases meant to put the city on the larger map as economically and culturally viable.”⁵³ Mike Crang emphasizes that the “gateway spaces” of hotel lobbies (and airports) are defined by flows, with people coming and going, but “they are not just liminal or threshold spaces, though there is that element... they are also places of fantasy and desire, places of inclusion and exclusion, and social milieux for different groups of people... [T]hese places hold together space as both commodity and social ideal. They are not places where people are at home, though they are familiar.”⁵⁴

Returning to the concept of *metropolitan gateway films*, it can be said that these movies present the city “as both commodity and social ideal” and act as “mediating structures” on several levels. Firstly, they promote an image (or range of images) of the metropolis itself to a global audience. The choice of location for the film’s setting is informed by the relevant city already having some sort of cachet in the popular imagination, which the picture exploits, either reaffirming this reputation or seeking to redefine it. An example of this would be the anthology film *Paris, je t’aime* (2006), which takes its cue from the French capital’s legendary status as a place of romance, to narrate eighteen short tales set in the city, each by a different director, but all on the subject of love. The film’s producer Emmanuel Benbihy followed this up with another anthology, *New York, I Love You* (2008), and he is now developing a Cities of Love franchise that will extend the format to other major world cities. Notably, the next two instalments will be Rio de Janeiro (currently occupying a prominent place in the global imagination due to the recent 2014 World Cup and the forthcoming 2016 Olympic Games) and Shanghai.⁵⁵ Selection for the franchise

⁵³ Ibid., 136–137.

⁵⁴ Crang, “Between Places,” 573.

⁵⁵ Benbihy was also interviewed on the aforementioned *Culture Matters* episode about cinema and Shanghai in June 2014 on ICS. <http://vimeo.com/102004331>.

becomes a small-scale marker of that city being integrated into a broad transnational network defined by universal cosmopolitan aspirations rather than national borders.

Secondly, with regard to Shanghai, these films construct the city as a gateway into Chinese culture for an international audience, translating the apparently unfathomable into something comprehensible. As in the film *Shanghai Calling* (2012), discussed later in this chapter, this typically involves an outsider arriving in Shanghai and undergoing a process of spiritual self-growth as they learn to navigate both the physical and cultural environment of the city. The audience experiences the city through the touristic movement of this protagonist. Obstacles present themselves for dramatic effect, but they are typically overcome as these gateway films embrace a vision of mobility. This touristic consumption of space becomes wedded to local knowledge through the journey of the protagonist, who emerges, by the film's conclusion, not as a fleeting visitor, nor an outsider now bound long-term to the city through necessity (as, for example, the migrant street hustlers discussed in Chapter Six), but as an idealized cosmopolitan sojourner who may choose to depart or stay as desired.

Thirdly, the city may function as a nodal point within a more geographically specific nexus of transnational flows. Examples of this would be the anthology film, *About Love* (2005), which constructs Shanghai, Taipei and Tokyo as gateway cities within an East Asian landscape, and also *The Longest Night in Shanghai* (2007), which tells the story of Masahiro Motoki's Japanese celebrity hairdresser falling in love with Zhao Wei's Shanghainese taxi driver. Here the city becomes a forum for exploring what Hjort calls "affinitive transnationalism," which often stems from perceived similarities due to "partially overlapping or mutually intelligible languages, and a history of interaction giving rise to shared core values," but may also "arise in connection with shared problems or commitments."⁵⁶ Significantly, in the *Longest Night in Shanghai*, it is the infrastructure of the city that facilitates this intelligibility. Japanese and Chinese are mutually incomprehensible when spoken, but in writing there is overlap, due to the Japanese use of *kanji*, which are adopted Chinese characters (*hanzi*). In one scene, the protagonists, in an attempt to overcome the linguistic barrier, begin writing on a taxi windscreen with lipstick. By some strange alchemy the lipstick never runs out and soon they have covered a large portion of the

⁵⁶ Hjort, "On the Plurality of Cinematic Transnationalism," 17.

street and the walls of the surrounding buildings with huge red characters. The pavement offers itself as both *tabula rasa* and Rosetta Stone—an empty space for inscribing the characters’ feelings, which then become translated into a shared emotional understanding. The city streets are the *lingua franca* of romantic engagement in these gateway films, which market the capitalist urban space to a transnational middle-class audience as a welcoming surface for the inscription of personal stories (fig. 45).



Fig. 45: The streets as *tabula rasa* and Rosetta Stone:
The city’s infrastructure becomes the *lingua franca* of romantic engagement.
Copyright Movie-Eye Entertainment

Fourthly, on a production level, these films may act as an interface for filmmakers from different nations, fostering, as Sherwood Hu has suggested, a sharing of industry practices and expertise. Fifthly, such collaborations provide a gateway into the potentially lucrative Chinese market for foreign investors that circumvents the restrictive quota on foreign-produced films, whilst simultaneously opening up foreign markets for Chinese co-financiers. And finally, as evidenced in the discussion of fashion shorts at the end of Chapter Five, such films may be incorporated into the multi-platform promotional strategies of other industries, as international firms seek both to gain traction in the Chinese market and appeal to a

Western clientele through the circulation of alluring imaginations of Shanghai. Although individual metropolitan gateway films may manifest these various aspects in different ways, they all serve as “threshold spaces,” into the city, seeking to apprehend Shanghai and fashion it as a place of “fantasy and desire,” which is experienced through a series of touristic encounters. These films are, like Kracauer’s hotel lobby, spaces of anticipation.

The Oriental Manhattan, The American Shanghai

Returning in 2011 to the Jing’an District neighbourhood where I had lived three years previously, the majority of properties once slated for demolition (Fig. 10) were no longer standing. In place of the former low-level residential area was a sizeable building site, flanked by billboards advertising the luxury apartment complex that was now under construction. The Grand Summit residence (sales for which opened in August 2014) markets itself as “The Perfect Combination of Prosperity and Tranquility with a Spectacular View All Your Own,” and is one of several real estate developments in Shanghai financed by K. Wah International Holdings Limited, a Hong-Kong investment company with a number of subsidiaries in mainland China.⁵⁷ Slogans on the advertisings hoardings extolled the prime location of this development in “the heart of the city.” Notably, one of these emphasized the fashionable nature of Jing’an by summoning up an oft-repeated descriptor for the district’s famous shopping street, West Nanjing Road, calling it the Oriental Fifth Avenue (Fig. 46).

The relationship between fashion and the city is explored in Chapter Five, but for the purposes of this current section, the Grand Summit billboard is of particular interest because of its allusion to another trope frequently attached to Shanghai—the city as an Asian Manhattan. A July 2, 1993 article in the *Shanghai Star* reported Mayor Huang Ju as stating that the city’s development plan was to create an “Oriental Manhattan.”⁵⁸ Since then, the city’s radical transformations have seen Shanghai—and especially Pudong—referred to by Western journalists as both “Manhattan on acid,”

⁵⁷ KWIH, “Press Release: Grand Summit,” 7 September 2014, http://www.kwah.com/Publish/press_pdf/20140906130958_4cde3S1dJS.pdf.

⁵⁸ Cited in Gamble, *Shanghai in Transition*, 10.

and “Manhattan on steroids.”⁵⁹ It is this notion of Shanghai as a copy of New York that is explored in the following discussion of Daniel Hsia’s *Shanghai Calling*, a metropolitan gateway film that both plays with this classic trope and seeks to invert it.



Fig. 46: The Oriental Fifth Avenue

Shanghai Calling: “Home is for suckers”

Hsia’s film begins with a very literal inversion—an upside down image of a writer at his desk which then tilts through 180 degrees to reveal a window looking out of the Lujiazui skyline. The ensuing narrative follows the story of an attorney, Sam (Daniel Henney), after he is unwillingly assigned to the Shanghai office of his New York law firm, in order to oversee the legal affairs of an American technology mogul, Marcus Groff (Alan Ruck), who is investing in a new mobile phone invented by a reclusive

⁵⁹ See, for example, Suzy Menkes, “Shanghai’s new heaven on earth,” *The New York Times*, 18 May 2004, http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/18/style/18iht-fshang_ed3_.html; Jonathan Fenby, *The Penguin History of Modern China: The Fall and Rise of a Great Power* (London: Penguin Books, 2008), Kindle edition.

Chinese designer. Although of Chinese parentage, Sam regards himself firmly as an English-speaking American and is entirely, and almost proudly, lacking in knowledge about the city to which he has moved. This cultural illiteracy proves his undoing when he makes a poorly informed legal recommendation, resulting in Groff's product hitting the market first via a rival manufacturer, Mr. Lin (Jesse Huang), despite the American having secured a sole licensing agreement. Enlisting the services of a local fixer, Awesome Wang (Geng Le), and helped by an assortment of new friends—Mandarin-speaking American relocation specialist, Amanda (Eliza Coupe); Chinese paralegal, Fang Fang (Zhu Zhu); an American English teacher, Brad (Sean Gallagher), and successful entrepreneur, Donald (Bill Paxton)—Sam eventually tracks down Lin and puts an end to his operation. A final plot twist reveals that Groff forged the date on his licensing contract after discovering that Lin had legitimately trumped him in securing a deal with the phone's inventor. Refusing to become complicit in corporate fraud, and with a newfound affinity for Shanghai, Sam reveals Groff's wrongdoings, quits his company and establishes his own law practice in the city.

The film, using cast and crew from both China and the US, and co-produced by China Film Company and Americatown, with financing from Huaying Film and Television Investment, is strongly transnational on a production level. Like *Snow Flower*, much of the creative impetus stems from Chinese-American input, most notably in the form of director, Daniel Hsia, and seasoned Hollywood Producer, Janet Yang. Whilst diasporic directors have frequently explored the challenges facing Chinese émigrés in the West, Hsia is interested in the reverse journey.⁶⁰ *Shanghai Calling* shares this quality with another metropolitan gateway film, David Ren's *Shanghai Kiss* (2007), which sees a struggling Chinese-American actor, Liam (Ken Leung), travel to Shanghai after he is left a property by his late grandmother. Both films feature male protagonists undergoing a process of spiritual renewal as a result of their exposure to the city, but their transformations point them in opposite geographic directions.

In Ren's film, Liam's metamorphosis is precipitated by an encounter with a beautiful and enigmatic Shanghainese woman, Micki (Kelly Hu), who serves as a metonym for the city. A speech mid-way through the film in which Liam declares that

⁶⁰ See, for example, *The Joy Luck Club*, *The Wedding Banquet*, *Red Doors*, *Saving Face*, *The Home Song Stories*.

Shanghai is unlike any place he's ever been, and that he feels at home here, culminates with him looking at Micki, who is framed by a view of the Bund, and declaring, "You are the most amazing girl I've ever met." Their sexual encounter transitions to a montage of neon lights going up and down a building, frenetic shopping activity on Nanjing Road, and cars spiralling around the Nanpu Bridge interchange at night (Fig. 22), all suggestive of an erotically charged architecture of desire. Although his romantic liaison with Micki later falters, it nonetheless leads Liam to a reconciliation with his Chinese identity and he returns to the United States to start his life afresh, revitalized by his encounter with Shanghai, during which he has been able to play at being local, whilst ultimately indulging in an extended vacation.

Shanghai Calling opens with a voiceover from the writer seen in the opening shot (later revealed to be Awesome Wang), informing the viewer that "Shanghai is like a beautiful woman—seductive, mysterious, and these days very attractive to foreign businessmen." However, the film then specifically resists defining Sam's experience of Shanghai in terms of an erotic encounter, suggesting that true appreciation of the city results from jettisoning such stereotypical imaginations and opening oneself up to the exciting possibilities afforded by the modern city. Indeed, much of the film centres on the gradual dismantling of Sam's preconceptions as he discovers the reality of life in Shanghai. When notified that he must move to China, the wall behind Sam collapses to show his imagination of the country—a rural landscape with an elderly Chinese farmer holding a chicken. Upon arrival though, he discovers a clean, modern and varied city, with the taxi journey to his new apartment serving as a visual primer for many of the city's landmarks, emphasizing not just the spectacular skyline, but also cultural highlights such as the Shanghai Museum and Jing'an Temple.

A romance does blossom, but this is not with Sam's glamorous Chinese assistant, as might have been expected. Instead he falls for Amanda, an American divorcée who has mastered Chinese, lived in Shanghai for four years, and now works as a relocation specialist. The apartment she has found him is of the super-deluxe variety offered at the Grand Summit. However, whilst it may initially seem like "The Perfect Combination of Prosperity and Tranquility with a Spectacular View All Your Own," the comic revelation is that the apartment is beset by construction noise, as the building has not yet been completed. It is a problem so common to those familiar with

Shanghai for the joke to feel somewhat tired, but it is, at least, a cliché drawn from actual experience of the city, rather than an orientalist stockpile. It is also about the only moment that reveals a negative aspect of living in Shanghai, in a film that is relentlessly boosterish is its portrayal of the city; its “Capra-esque ending” and “representation of all mainlanders as uniformly upstanding and well-intentioned,” neatly cohering with the Better City, Better Life vision offered in the SUPEC and Expo music video discussed in Chapter Two.⁶¹

Shanghai Calling may present a glossy, sanitized image of the city, but this is typical of its romantic-comedy genre. More revealing than the attractive panoramic shots of Shanghai, the well-mannered local populace and the impressively clean streets, are the additional elements that mesh with the hegemonic vision of the metropolis. Hsia’s film distinguishes itself in its evident research into Western expatriate life in Shanghai.⁶² It is by no means a comprehensive portrayal and there is a certain box-ticking quality to its range of characters, but, as James Farrer’s ethnographic research into foreigners in the contemporary city reveals, it is possible to formulate certain categories to account for different modes of Western expatriate engagement—with the caveat that these categories are not rigidly fixed and allow for movement and multiple identifications amongst them—and the characters in *Shanghai Calling* (some of whom were based on actual people) are recognizable incarnations of several of Farrer’s proposed types.⁶³

Farrer’s study is particularly helpful in moving beyond the paradigm of Western expatriates as latter-day incarnations of the Shanghailanders of the Treaty Port Era. Certainly there is much nostalgic celebration of the past, and a “cosmopolitan appropriation of ‘Old Shanghai’” is one of the strategic “narratives of emplacement” that expatriates deploy in formulating stories of a personalized relationship to the city.⁶⁴ However, the New Shanghailander model exists alongside—and may be entangled with—the notion of being New Shanghainese, which draws on the postsocialist Chinese state’s promotion of this term (*xinshanghairen*) from around

⁶¹ Maggie Lee, “Review: ‘Shanghai Calling,’” *Variety*, 10 July 2012, <http://variety.com/2012/film/reviews/shanghai-calling-1117947884/>.

⁶² Derek Elley, “Shanghai Calling,” *Film Business Asia*, 19 June 2012, <http://www.filmbiz.asia/reviews/shanghai-calling>.

⁶³ Farrer, “‘New Shanghailanders’ or ‘New Shanghainese;’” Trista Baldwin, “Behind Shanghai Calling: The real stories that inspired the movie,” *City Weekend*, 9–22 August 2012, 12–17.

⁶⁴ Farrer, “‘New Shanghailanders’ or ‘New Shanghainese,’” 1217–1220.

2000 to describe “an immigrant who identified with the new global Shanghai and had the cultural and economic wherewithal to contribute.”⁶⁵ Whilst initially applied to university graduates from other provinces and returning diasporic Chinese, Taiwanese and Hong Kongers, it soon came to encompass Western expatriates as well.

Although still accounting for only a small proportion of the city’s population, the influential nature of this growing group should not be underestimated. In 2002 the Chinese-language international affairs newsweekly, *Yazhou Zhoukan*, declared the New Shanghainese to be “China’s new elite generation. Not born or raised in Shanghai, they cannot speak Shanghainese. Yet it is these New Shanghainese that will take charge of the city’s future.”⁶⁶ Tsung-yi Michelle Huang notes that this concept of an “elite” is crucial to understanding the figure of the New Shanghainese, for whilst “central to the ‘New Shanghainese’ discourse is a cosmopolitan spirit of universal hospitality,” membership is circumscribed by state intervention, as “the central and local governments not only supervise and monitor the reconstruction of the cityscape but also keep a short leash on the population of Shanghai.”⁶⁷

Farrer identifies certain groups that have been excluded from the New Shanghainese category, including the city’s several million rural migrant labourers and increasing numbers of Asian restaurant and domestic workers: “The rhetoric of New Shanghainese was thus a political strategy grounded in the neoliberal ideal of Shanghai as a centre of global capital, which needed to attract ‘talent’ from all parts of the world while carefully managing rural migrant workers, and ignoring the emergence of transnational working-class migrants.”⁶⁸ In this way, “a presumably ideal collective identity articulating a seamless network across different scales (urban, national, regional, global), ironically becomes a highly localized and parochial signifier accessible only to the privileged class—provincialism in cosmopolitanism’s clothing.”⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Ibid., 1216.

⁶⁶ Cited in Tsung-yi Michelle Huang, “The cosmopolitan imaginary and flexible identities of global city-regions: articulating new cultural identities in Taipei and Shanghai,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 7, no. 3 (2006), 476. [Shanghainese is a distinct dialect in China.]

⁶⁷ Ibid., 477.

⁶⁸ Farrer, “‘New Shanghailanders’ or ‘New Shanghainese,’” 1216.

⁶⁹ Huang, “The cosmopolitan imaginary and flexible identities of global city-regions,” 477.

White collar Western expatriates offer a particular manifestation of the limits of this flexible citizenship—economically desirable to the Chinese state and carrying “propagandistic value for promoting Shanghai as a global city,” they are, nonetheless, not readily seen as politically assimilable.⁷⁰ “[T]hey are not considered candidates for full citizenship even after decades living in the country. Indeed, very few ‘white’ foreigners have been allotted the coveted Chinese permanent residency though officially eligible, and there is no retirement visa for foreigners, meaning that many long-term settlers will be left in legal limbo in their old age.”⁷¹ The power balance is, therefore, very different from that of the Treaty Port Era, with foreigners today being “less the agents of change than a means by which the city has renewed itself economically and culturally in its own radical embrace of global capitalism.”⁷²

It is in navigating the complexities of this partial state of assimilation that “narratives of emplacement” become important. For some this involves an appeal to nostalgic timeframes, either through an engagement with memories of Old Shanghai to forge a link to an earlier era of cultural belonging, or through personal experience of the city before, or in the early days of, its more recent capitalist boom. However, *Shanghai Calling* notably refuses to indulge in nostalgia, with the closest it comes to this being when the entrepreneur Donald reminisces to Sam about when he volunteered to move to the city twenty years ago because nobody else in his company wanted the job. This, though, is nostalgia as the basis for recognizing the possibilities of the present; Donald is now “the third highest paid exec in the company and the Mayor of Americatown” (a fictional entity invented by the film to describe the tight-knit and economically influential American expatriate community in Shanghai). Shanghai, he informs Sam, “is the new land of opportunity.” Based on a real-life Shanghai “old hand” and board member of the Shanghai American Chamber of Commerce, Donald is an example of pragmatic expatriate “old timers,” who capitalize “on their knowledge of the changing city landscape in their interactions with new arrivals.”⁷³

Indeed, such has been the positive transformation in the city’s global image since Donald arrived in China, that Esther Wu, his young rival for the position of

⁷⁰ Farrer, “‘New Shanghailanders’ or ‘New Shanghainese,’” 1216.

⁷¹ Ibid., 1217.

⁷² Ibid., 1216.

⁷³ Baldwin, “Behind Shanghai Calling,” 13; Farrer, “‘New Shanghailanders’ or ‘New Shanghainese,’” 1221.

mayor, informs him—thereby educating a foreign audience, and providing gratifying confirmation for a Chinese one—that, “Shanghai isn’t a hardship post for outcasts anymore. It’s a gold star on your resumé and it’s attracting the best and brightest these days.” She evinces the bravado of a category of “young foreign ‘players’... claiming cultural citizenship in the expansive vision of Shanghai as the capital of a China-dominated twenty-first century,” many of whom (like Esther Wu) are ethnically Chinese, offering them “advantages in terms of networks and linguistic scales.”⁷⁴

Whilst there is a “conception of Western expatriates as highly paid mobile ‘talents’ [this] conceals the fact that many are neither mobile nor highly paid, nor are their skills easily sold in the transnational labour market.” The increasing number of English teachers, whose only marketable asset is their language skills (and some of these are non-native English-speaking Europeans), is an example of this category, as are those men who stay in Shanghai as “a social and sexual refuge where they [can] still find willing sex partners despite their advanced age and modest incomes.” Farrer observes that this figure of the “loser” foreigner who has ended up in the city as a “last resort,” is often drawn on by other Westerners to assuage their own anxieties of slipping from the elite strata of the competitive labour market, “using them as negative measures of their own social mobility and entitlement to urban citizenship.”⁷⁵

In *Shanghai Calling*, Sean Gallagher’s English teacher and aspiring playboy, Brad, might be seen as an example of this “loser” type. However, in keeping with the film’s relentlessly positive image of Shanghai as a cosmopolitan land of opportunity, he is happily integrated into a circle of successful corporate figures, and experiences his own journey of self-growth. By the film’s conclusion, this sees him in possession of a luxury car as a new status symbol (how he has afforded this is never made clear), which, in turn attracts the flirtatious attentions of a young African-American woman, leading him (as intimated by Awesome Wang’s closing voiceover) to jettison his fruitless (and offensive) fixation on local women as sex objects and direct his romantic affections elsewhere. In the film’s world, success in Shanghai is equated with respect for the local, whilst being simultaneously outward looking and upwardly mobile; to have made it in Shanghai, is to be a true cosmopolitan.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 1222.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 1223–1224.

The main narrative arc of the film is the story of Sam finding his own “narrative of emplacement” in Shanghai. As a Chinese-American he has no connection to the postcolonial nostalgia for Old Shanghai, nor does he have the postsocialist nostalgia of Shanghai “old-timers” with their lengthy attachments to the city. He certainly has not moved to China as a “last resort,” but neither has he been seduced by the image of becoming a “player” in this new booming economy. Of the types identified by Farrer, the category he most obviously belongs to is the short-term expat, an “intra-corporate transfer employee... with few local ties and little local knowledge.” Such expats typically stay for a maximum of three years and “live in a generic ‘anywhere’ (or nowhere) of corporate-provided suburban comforts, schools, clubs and hospitals, derisively described as the ‘expat bubble.’” Significantly, this figure of the “constructed ‘expat’” is not a “narrative of emplacement” adopted by the individuals themselves, but serves as a “rhetorical foil” for other expatriates in the city, who prefer to see themselves as “settlers.”⁷⁶ Amanda, whose job as a relocation specialist places her constantly in touch with these short-term expats, seeks consciously to present herself as not belonging to this category. She speaks fluent Mandarin, socializes with Chinese friends and stresses to Sam during a party at an upmarket roof-top bar that this is not the type of place where she usually hangs out. Most pointedly, she tells him, “We Americans like to call ourselves expats, but the fact of the matter is we’re immigrants.”

The most obvious means for Sam to move beyond this negative stereotype of the ignorant short-term corporate hire, would be a recourse to his ethnicity, identifying with the city through his Chinese ethnicity as Liam does in *Shanghai Kiss*. However, the film resists any narrative of Sam becoming “a ‘born again Chinese.’”⁷⁷ Instead, his affinity with Shanghai is founded on his own personal experiences of the people and spaces he encounters there. The formation of this intimate connection to the city is reinforced towards the end of the film in a sequence that deliberately parallels an earlier scene where Sam, attempting to locate his office shortly after arriving in Shanghai and running late for a meeting, becomes confused by the unfamiliar street names and architecture. He has a map, but as yet no local compass, and becomes hopelessly lost. Shot from below, to emphasize the overwhelming height of the surrounding Lujiazui skyscrapers, the camera circles repeatedly (Fig.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 1224.

⁷⁷ Lee, “Review: Shanghai Calling.”

47), and this is intercut with split-second shots of road signs (Fig. 48), inducing a dizziness that mirrors Sam's own disorientation.



Fig. 47: A map but no compass
Copyright China Film Company



Fig. 48: Unfamiliar signs
Copyright China Film Company

He later finds himself in the same location, en route to the airport, having resigned himself to the fact that he is not going to be able to halt Mr. Lin's operation. The approach to this former scene of confusion is not an anxious sprint this time, but a slow walk through Lujiazui Park. He stands once more surrounded by the skyscrapers, but this time he is upright and without a map (Fig. 49). The camera circles more slowly as he takes in the view and this is intercut with flashbacks to the various people with whom he has formed attachments during his stay. Where previously Shanghai was a site of unfamiliar street co-ordinates and legal transactions, he is now viewing it through a frame of affinity, informed by locally embedded memories. He is no longer trying to navigate absolute space, but surrounded by buildings that carry meaning, and drawing on an understanding of relational spacetime as the basis for his decision making. Realizing that he is not yet ready to leave, he aborts his journey and visits a coffee shop, where he has an epiphany that leads him to successfully track down Mr. Lin's factory.



Fig. 49: Familiar territory: a city inscribed with personal memories
Copyright China Film Company

Sam's newfound affiliation to Shanghai coincides with a desire to do "the right thing." When he subsequently learns that it was Groff rather than Lin who was guilty of malpractice, and he refuses to cover this up, it becomes clear that his interpretation of this mantra entails acting honourably and being morally upright, ahead of serving his client. His hope of being a better person is realized through staying in Shanghai, with the city serving as "a cathexis for transformative desire."⁷⁸ Awesome Wang's closing voiceover reiterates the point: "Shanghai is a city that is always changing. Why should the people who come to Shanghai be any different. You may learn to become a far more humble person; become the person you always dreamt of being; realize that you've been chasing the wrong dream for too long."

When Sam informs Amanda of his intention to return to the United States, prior to his change of heart, she is disappointed that he is conforming to the short-term expat stereotype, and reproaches him: "Sooner or later you were always going home." His decision to stay represents an acknowledgement of Donald's earlier exclamation that "Home is for suckers." The closing scene of a party at Amanda's house—where Sam presumably now lives as well—full of both Chinese and foreign guests, suggests that Shanghai has become his home. However, the final line of Awesome Wang's monologue, extolling the city's transformative abilities, expressly links this theatre of dreams to an image of mobility: "you may find the trip you never wanted to take has become the most rewarding journey of all." Sam is certainly no longer a short-term visitor, but his travelling continues, as life in the touristed landscape of contemporary Shanghai allows him a flexible, mobile identity. It is worth reiterating at this point Carolyn Cartier's definition of touristed landscapes as not simply pertaining to tourists, but being about the "complexity of different people becoming different things, locals and visitors, sojourners and residents, locals becoming visitors, sojourners becoming residents, residents 'being tourists,' travellers denying being tourists: resident part-time tourists, tourists working hard to fit in as if locals." In recognizing that "home is for suckers," Sam has embraced these fluid possibilities, most obviously playing the role of the long-term foreign sojourner. Potential future problems of permanent residency or retirement visas do not impact on the world of the film. Instead what is offered is a portrait of the idealized "New

⁷⁸ Kohn, *Radical Space*, 5.

Shanghainese”—a harmonious group of economically productive, morally upright, apolitical and upwardly mobile cosmopolitans.

The closing monologue’s emphasis on the realization of dreams is the culmination of *Shanghai Calling*’s fixation on truth and illusion, the authentic and the fake, and inversions of expectations. The film’s narrative impetus is supplied by a quasi-case of technological piracy, as Groff’s phones appear on the market via another manufacturer. In addition to this central storyline, there are numerous incidents that question the relationship between appearance and reality: Mr. Lin’s lawyer is revealed to be a British actor hired for the role; Awesome Wang is not the slick sleuth that Sam imagines, but a mild-mannered and bespectacled journalist; Amanda, a white American, is fluent in Mandarin, whilst Sam, who is ethnically Chinese, is unable to speak a word; Fang Fang is assumed to be from an affluent background, but actually lives with her parents and grandmother in a small lanehouse and works as a KTV club waitress in the evenings to make ends meet; Sam thinks that a taxi driver is attempting to scam him, when in fact he is declining the fare because the destination is so close; Marcus Groff, remembered by Sam as a proud Texan, is now a Chinese tea-drinking Sinophile who relishes nothing more than practising his calligraphy; and a man Sam assumes to be a monk is revealed to be simply a regular customer in a café, who enjoys dispensing advice and sports a shaved head and traditional Chinese clothing.⁷⁹ Above all, there is the gulf between Sam’s expectations of an unwelcoming, rural backwater, and the modern cosmopolitan city he encounters.

The piracy plot element is topical and effective because it draws on China’s notorious reputation for intellectual property rights infringements, with the focus on mobile phone technology particularly apt, as this is an area that has become especially implicated in the country’s *shanzhai* culture of producing fake products. The term is translated into English as “copycat,” but literally refers to “a fortified mountain village” and originates from the medieval period when illegal products were produced in such remote locations.⁸⁰ Anna Greenspan argues that the derivation of the term links *shanzhai* “to the rebellious side of Chinese culture, and is therefore associated with *Outlaws of the Marshes*, one of China’s four great classic novels, which tells the

⁷⁹ KTV stands for karaoke television, a popular form of entertainment in China.

⁸⁰ Jeroen de Kloet and Lena Scheen, “Pudong: the *shanzhai* global city,” *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 16, no. 6 (2013), 692.

story of bandits that operate outside official control.”⁸¹ She goes on to outline some of the defining characteristics of *shanzhai* culture:

[Unlike] standard knock-offs, *shanzhai* products don't try to hide that they are copies. Instead, 'Hi-phone,' 'Nikia' and 'Motopola cellphones seem to take a comic pride in the fact they are fakes. At first *shanzhai* referred almost exclusively to mobile phones, a device that has a special affinity with disruptive technology in the developing world... [Since 2007] *shanzhai* phones have mushroomed, capturing an enormous share of both the domestic market and also of emerging markets in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and South America...With the proliferation of *shanzhai* products in both China and abroad, *shanzhai* manufacturers are slowly making the shift from imitation to innovation. The mutation was not intentional. Due to *shanzhai*'s uniquely rapid production cycle, companies have been forced to innovate simply because the branded companies are too slow to come up with new products to copy... Indeed their incredible speed is one of the key characteristics of *shanzhai* producers... Today companies need only speculate on a product, and the *shanzhai* version immediately exists.⁸²

Shanzhai culture has thrived on its ability to anticipate. Hence, a pertinent question presents itself: if contemporary Shanghai's development is informed by a culture of anticipation, might the notion of *shanzhai*—itself inflected with anticipatory qualities—be relevant to this? *Shanzhai* goods are most commonly associated with the city of Shenzhen, though counterfeit practices are widespread throughout China and numerous fake or copied products can be readily found in Shanghai. However, it is by extending the notion of *shanzhai* beyond specific goods and to the production of the city itself that the term becomes particularly suggestive with respect to Shanghai.

Jeroen de Kloet and Lena Scheen identify Shanghai's Pudong District as exemplary of how the idea of *shanzhai* may assist in conceptualizing the development of the modern Asian metropolis. They critique Koolhaas' iconoclastic celebration of

⁸¹ Greenspan, *Shanghai Future*, 201.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 201–202.

the (largely Asian) “generic city” for its generalizing of the urban experience, arguing that in applauding the liberatory qualities of a homogenized city that becomes less fixated on issues of identity and subjectivity, he fails to acknowledge the “negative effects of economic globalization, such as increasing inequality” and restrictions on individual freedom that exist in “places under a repressive, authoritarian regime.”⁸³ They suggest that Ackbar Abbas’ concept of the “fake” is closer to the city forms they see emerging in Asia, yet this “simultaneously reifies the problematic idea of an authentic original.”⁸⁴ Abbas contends that the fake is generated by an aspiration to replicate a desirable original and appears “only when cities are just about to enter the world economy and become exposed to media representations of global commodities.”⁸⁵ Hence, “a certain linear developmentism underpins his argument, in which the fake is part of a nation that is positioned at a specific stage of globalization, assuming all nations to move slowly towards another stage.”⁸⁶

The underlying assumption for both Abbas and Koolhaas is that “an Asian city mimics what is labelled as a global city, but whose aesthetics are imagined as western, in particular as New York-ish.”⁸⁷ Shanghai might be seen as the example *nonpareil* of this phenomenon with its stated ambition in the 1990s to become an “Oriental Manhattan.” Yet the paradox that de Kloet and Scheen identify is that the creation of Pudong as an Asian New York, has led to it becoming “*the* image of Shanghai” and almost “more Manhattan than Manhattan itself,” such that “some cities no longer express the ambition to create a Manhattan, but to create ‘a Pudong’, and cities such as Mumbai and Bangalore proudly proclaim to be(come) ‘the Shanghai of India.’”⁸⁸ It is in this context that they propose thinking of Pudong as a *shanzhai* global city:

[T]he notion of *shanzhai* enables us to push the alleged archetypical model for the global city further to the background, and instead, to point

⁸³ De Kloet and Scheen, “Pudong: the *shanzhai* global city,” 697–698.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 692.

⁸⁵ Ackbar Abbas, “Faking globalization,” in *Other Cities, Other Worlds: Urban Imaginaries in a Globalizing Age*, ed. Andreas Huyssen (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), 253 [cited in De Kloet and Scheen, “Pudong: the *shanzhai* global city,” 699.]

⁸⁶ De Kloet and Scheen, “Pudong: the *shanzhai* global city,” 707.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 706

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 702–705.

at how the urban developers of Pudong were able to create a new global city unique in its own right.

[...] Whether it is considered to be authentic or not, the buildings that mark the skyline of Pudong have become signifiers of the new Shanghai, not of some generic idea of the global city. In other words, the *shanzhai* global city is, above all, a rooted, local city. From this view New York is also a *shanzhai* city, it mimics the idea of a global city, *but not quite*... it is, at most, a global city with specific characteristics. What we want to question is the privileging of the global over the local, and the subsequent conflation of the global with the West.

[...] We are neither living in a generic city, nor in a fake environment, but we may be living in a *shanzhai* city. This is not so much a Baudrillardian environment in which everything around is a simulacrum, but more so an environment in which everything around us is a unique copy of an original that has ceased to exist as a univocal entity. Everything that seemed fake has become solid again.⁸⁹

De Kloet and Scheen's discussion of the *shanzhai* city sheds light on *Shanghai Calling*'s engagement with the notion of the fake. The film, which is set predominantly in Pudong, does not overtly embrace the "creative destruction" represented by *shanzhai*, but it does specifically target the formula of authenticity being equated with the West.⁹⁰ The British lawyer is revealed to be a phony, whilst Sam only learns to navigate the local legal waters once he starts to accept the advice of his Chinese colleagues. This is not, however, an indictment of an opaque Chinese legal process. Indeed, the film portrays China as a law-abiding place, respectful of due process: "The system worked!" exclaims Sam in surprise when he succeeds in shutting down Lin's operation, with the assistance of an official from the Administration of Industry and Commerce. The real fraudster, though, is the American businessman, Marcus Groff. Despite affecting the clothing and habits of a classical Chinese scholar he is actually a corrupt opportunist who has faked a

⁸⁹ Ibid., 703–707.

⁹⁰ The term "creative destruction" has been used by Cai Mingjie (chairman of the company Mediatek which produces semiconductors used in *shanzhai* mobile phones) to describe the positive potential of *shanzhai* in breaking the monopolies of multinational companies and stimulating innovation. Ibid., 703.

licensing agreement to ensure that he profits from a technology he does not own. The need for the licensing contract itself points towards an inversion of expectations. Irrespective of who has the right to manufacture the new phone, the inventor of the technology is Chinese. Hence, *Shanghai Calling*, in addition to providing the assurance that legal process is respected in China, also offers an instance of Chinese wish-fulfilment by portraying a transition from “Made in China” to “Created in China.”⁹¹

The revelation that Mr. Lin, acting faster than Groff, legitimately secured the licensing rights, pricks the assumption that it must be the Chinese engaging in underhand practices. That preconception is founded on the country’s reputation for intellectual property theft, but it also feeds off a tendency to regard authenticity (and particularly the authentically modern) as necessarily stemming from the West. De Kloet and Scheen highlight this in their observation that the architecture of Pudong is frequently criticized as “kitsch and fake” by Western critics, who simultaneously praise the Bund, which was, itself, styled as an “Oriental Manhattan” by the international settlers of the 1930s: “The fact that the Bund was built by foreign powers when Shanghai was (partly) colonised raises questions about the relation between power and authenticity. The discrepancy between perception of the Bund as genuine architecture, and Pudong as a copy of western architecture, seems to imply that it is still the West who owns the ‘copyright’ to an alleged original.”⁹²

The Chinese title of *Shanghai Calling* is *niuyue ke@shanghai*, which translates literally as New Yorker@Shanghai (the @ sign playing on the theme of digital technology). For Sam, New York is very much the yardstick—the headquarters of his global company and the place to which he is initially desperate to return. On arriving in Shanghai, he is surprised to discover that the rural outpost he had expected is, in fact, a modern metropolis. However, the film’s persistent emphasis on inversion suggests that Shanghai is not just revealed as an ersatz Manhattan, rather than a backwater town, but as the real deal. Shanghai emerges as the image of the authentic, twenty-first century global city. The film is about the American Shanghai in that it focuses on the United States expat community in the city, but it also raises the possibility that Shanghai could now have a claim to be the

⁹¹ Huanguo Zhang, “Turning Made in China into ‘Created in China,’” *ON Magazine* n.d., <http://uk.emc.com/leadership/points-view/created-in-china.htm>.

⁹² De Kloet and Scheen, “Pudong: the *shanzhai* global city,” 705.

true yardstick by which others are judged. As a poster for the film suggests, it is not necessarily Shanghai that is attempting to copy and be a reflection of New York (Fig. 50). Like the film's opening shot, there has been a 180-degree inversion. Viewed in this way, Sam has not travelled to the Oriental Manhattan, but arrived in Pudong from the American Shanghai.



Fig. 50: *Shanghai Calling* poster: The Oriental Manhattan, The American Shanghai
Copyright China Film Company

Shanghai Calling critiques the fake, but obliquely celebrates the *shanzhai* spirit of the creative copycat. Donald's hugely successful restaurant franchise is called Jimmy's Fried Chicken. If abbreviated, this would read as JFC, which is reminiscent of the various *shanzhai* Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) restaurants that have proliferated in China as striking examples of the "comic pride" seemingly taken in being a knock-off brand (Fig. 51). Meanwhile, although the designer of the new mobile phone is Chinese, the handset is clearly derived from Apple's iPhone 5 model. And although Sam misidentifies the person giving him advice as a monk, his provenance becomes irrelevant if the wisdom he dispenses has the required effect.



Fig. 51: Comic Fried Chicken: Chinese restaurants embracing the *shanzhai* spirit
<http://piximus.net/others/chinese-fastfood-ripoffs>

The final scene of the film shows Sam talking in the garden with Amanda's young daughter as the camera then rises up to show the glittering Lujiazui skyline. However, this is not the standard view of Lujiazui, shot from the Bund; it is filmed from 'suburban' Pudong, the foreground filled with greenery and Spanish-style villas (Fig. 52). This image is indicative of the film's espousal of the *shanzhai* spirit—a wedding of the copied and the local to create something original—but also the limits of this engagement. It is an image of the ultra-modern business district skyline, built to replicate New York's financial centre, which has become "more Manhattan than Manhattan itself," and standing in front of this, a collection of faux-European holiday homes. In showing this curious juxtaposition, the view is uniquely Pudong, and a fitting conclusion to a gateway film which has sought to demonstrate not only Shanghai's claims to global city status, but also the vibrant lives and relationships of the people living there—the lived space that exists in addition to the conceived, and endlessly reproduced, skyline. Yet it is also a reminder that this insight into Shanghai living has been very partial. Amanda may criticize the short-term expat mind-set, but the housing development where she lives is typical of the privileged, residential enclaves favoured by the expatriate communities that serve as a rhetorical foil in other foreign settlers' "narratives of emplacement." Meanwhile, Sam may have remained in Shanghai to set up his own law firm after rejecting the mercenary, unscrupulous

behaviour of his New York employers, but he remains firmly embedded in a network of global capitalism and on the correct side of the “growing disjunctures and inequalities” caused by that system.⁹³

Shanghai Calling implicitly celebrates aspects of the *shanzhai* spirit, but it displays none of its rebellious, underground and non-official nature; qualities that also link the term to “deviations from the standard, mischief and caricature,” and have led the author Yu Hua to state that “It would not be going too far to say that ‘copycat’ has more of an anarchist spirit than any other word in the contemporary Chinese language.”⁹⁴ In fact, whilst espousing a positive and progressive spirit of cosmopolitan openness, the film is also deeply conservative in its assurances that “the system work[s].” The closing image of the film coalesces perfectly with the hegemonic vision of Shanghai promoted in the SUPEC: a carefree existence, based in an ecologically vibrant area, with Spanish-style villas suggestive of the touristed landscape, looking out onto the glittering view of Shanghai’s global city skyline. It is an image of the Better City, Better Life: a beautiful present, anticipating an even happier future.



Fig. 52: Costa del Shanghai: Spanish-style villas in Pudong and the Lujiazui skyline
Copyright China Film Company

⁹³ Ibid., 703.

⁹⁴ Yu Hua, “Copycat China,” *Prospect*, 22 August 2012, <http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/features/copycat-china-yu-hua-china-in-ten-words>.

FIVE

The Pearl of the Orient, The Paris of the East: Re-fashioning Shanghai

A more rebellious, underground side of Shanghai is considered in Chapter Six. First, this present chapter turns to a discussion of the global fashion industry's implication in the branding of modern-day Shanghai. If *shanzhai* culture represents a potential challenge to the monopolies of multinational companies, it also simultaneously points to the hunger for branded items in contemporary China and the need for such companies to assert their authenticity and desirability in order to capitalize on this market. Building on the previous chapter's discussion of Shanghai as a gateway into China, this chapter looks at how the fashion industry actively draws on the city's historical reputation as the country's cosmopolitan fashion capital in seeking to imply an innate affinity between Shanghai and European style. An extended discussion of the contemporary fashion scene in the city is beyond the scope of this current project, but this chapter serves to indicate certain ways in which fashion intersects with the broader themes of this thesis, before turning to an analysis of three specific fashion short films, which, in turn, leads onto a concluding discussion of the challenges of being cosmopolitan.

Spiralling back briefly to the closing credits of *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*, a meeting of the film and fashion worlds is revealed. It is commonplace for feature films to involve partnerships with fashion houses akin to the mutually beneficial location shooting deal referenced earlier involving the Peninsula Hotel, but even so, the costume credits of *Snow Flower* are notable for reading like a roll call of the world's most luxurious labels (Chanel, Louis Vuitton, Diane von Furstenberg, YSL, Christian Louboutin, Tom Ford, Jimmy Choo, Christian Dior, Mont Blanc, Bvlgari, Gucci and Max Mara). The camera's fixation on designer handbags and the red soles of Nina's Louboutin heels during the film, serves to emphasize her modern, affluent and cosmopolitan lifestyle, in comparison to the constrained world of her foot-bound ancestor, Lily. Indeed, as Xiaoping Li notes, "the Chinese term *shizhuang* (fashion) has always signified the modern, as it is clearly contrasted to *fushi*

(costume) which refers to clothing styles in Imperial China and of ethnic minorities. It is *shizhuang* (fashion), not *fushi* (costume), that links China to the outside world. If *fushi* always points to tradition and past, *shizhuang* is closely associated with internationalization and modernization.”¹

The closing sequence of *Snow Flower and Lily* in their nineteenth century costume against the Lujiazui skyline may claim to symbolize the persistence of traditional Chinese values, but equally it constructs Shanghai as a mediating site between ancient China and the modern, international world. Those images (Figs. 43 & 44), used frequently in promotional campaigns for the movie, slide free from the film’s diegesis to exist independently, more like scenes from a fashion shoot. As such, they become evidence of fashion’s ability to appropriate selective imagery from the past, “fusing cultures and histories, reconfigur[ing] the past in the light of the present.”² Fashion draws on the past, but as a means of promising something new, of being ‘on-trend.’

Orvar Löfgren has written how “the cultural grammar of the fashion world” with its “potential to give direction and to stake out paths into the future” has been adopted by “the technologies of brand building, place marketing, [and] event management.”³ He terms this the “catwalk economy” and specifically identifies the process of “catwalking the city” in which “performance, style and aesthetics become an important part of the brand message.”⁴ Producers of the “catwalk economy”

¹ Xiaoping Li, “Fashioning the Body in Post-Mao China,” in *Consuming Fashion: Adorning the Transnational Body*, ed. Anne Brydon and Sandra Niessen (Oxford: Berg, 1998), 75.

² Caroline Evans, “Yesterday’s Emblems and Tomorrow’s Commodities: The Return of the Repressed in Fashion Imagery Today,” in *Fashion Cultures: Theories, Explorations and Analysis*, ed. Stella Bruzzi and Pamela Church Gibson (London: Routledge, 2000), 100.

³ Orvar Löfgren, “Catwalking and Coolhunting: The Production of Newness,” in *Magic, Culture and the New Economy*, ed. Orvar Löfgren and Robert Willim (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 65.

⁴ Orvar Löfgren, “Catwalking the City,” in *Branding Chinese Mega-Cities: Policies, Practices and Positioning*, ed. Per Olof Berg and Emma Björner (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2014), 195. Notably, the film *Leaving Me Loving You* (discussed in Chapter Three), contains a scene in which Yue—who has previously emphasized the need to be dressed in all the best brands—is seen strolling along the street only for this image to then appear on a huge video screen behind the restaurant where Zhou and his friends are dining. The camera offers a catwalking showcase for Yue—and hence the star image of the actor Faye Wong—which becomes extended to

promise “to help control an uncertain future” and—drawing on the lexicon of the fashion world—“provide the important asset of ‘being ahead of the pack.’”⁵ That is, fashion operates as a dynamic branding force because of its putative ability to anticipate.

Fashion thrives by being at the cutting edge of the present, pursuing the future, whilst scavenging the past for inspiration. As Walter Benjamin wrote:

[To the French Revolution] ancient Rome was a past charged with the time of the now... blasted out of the continuum of history. The French Revolution evoked ancient Rome the way fashion evokes costumes of the past. Fashion has a flair for the topical, no matter where it stirs in the thickets of long ago; it is a tiger’s leap into the past.⁶

In moving forwards, fashion consistently cycles back, as “traces of the past...[are] woven into the fabric of a new story.”⁷ Characterized by this spiralling motion and anticipatory instinct, it is, therefore, not unexpected to find that fashion, as an industry and metaphor, is heavily entwined in the branding of contemporary Shanghai.

Just as a transnational film culture may be a “means of fuelling, but also signifying, the mechanisms of modernization within a given society,” so too a city’s relationship with the fashion industry may function as part of its “symbolic capital.” On 15 October 2000, at the opening of the Shanghai International Centre, city mayor, Xu Kuangdi announced that one of the main planning “goals” for the first decade of the twenty-first century was for Shanghai “to build itself into the world’s sixth fashion centre, alongside London, Paris, New York, Milan and Tokyo.”⁸ Although other Chinese cities (including Dalian, Ningbo, Hangzhou and—most significantly—Beijing) had similar aspirations to become leading fashion centres, Shanghai was seen as particularly well suited to achieve this aim due to the strength of its textile

the architectural fabric of the city itself, rather like Yao Ming’s appearance in the Expo music video examined in Chapter Two.

⁵ Löfgren, “Catwalking and Coolhunting,” 68.

⁶ Cited in Evans, “Yesterday’s Emblems and Tomorrow’s Commodities,” 99.

⁷ Evans, “Yesterday’s Emblems and Tomorrow’s Commodities,” 108.

⁸ Xu Xiaomin, “Paris of the East—again,” *Shanghai Star*, 10 April 2003, <http://app1.chinadaily.com.cn/star/2003/0410/fo9-1.html>.

industry and the legacy of its stylish *haipai* culture, stemming from its historic role as a gateway to Western design influences. The intention was for Shanghai to emerge as the “Paris of the East—again.”⁹ (This same trope was recalled in the plans for the new Pudong developments of the early 1990s, where the centrepiece Century Avenue boulevard was “proposed to appease the government’s aspiration to have a civic element in the ‘manner of Paris;’ referring to the eighteenth-century Champs Elysees.”¹⁰)

In his recent doctoral thesis on Shanghai fashion designers, Timothy Lindgren argues that “a strong domestic fashion system that supports and nurtures fashion designers in Shanghai is needed if the aspirations of the city’s leaders are to be achieved.”¹¹ Yet, whilst Shanghai has flourished as a manufacturing hub, its progress in becoming a globally recognized creative centre has been less sure-footed.

[T]he pillars of authenticity that for foreign brands extend far into their cultural and creative histories, often for tens of decades in the case of the European luxury brands of Louis Vuitton, Burberry or Christian Dior, do not exist in China in this era of globalisation. Here the cultural bedrock allows these same pillars to extend only thirty or so years into the past, to the moments when Deng Xiaoping granted China’s creative entrepreneurs passage, and therefore Chinese fashion designers have had less time to assemble their brands and reputations.¹²

Of course, Shanghai’s reputation as a style capital extends back further than the Open Door Reform Era, but this is rooted in its past history as the geographic interface between China and the West rather than on the basis of time-honoured Shanghainese brands that have sustained a global appeal. Hence, in practice, resurrecting Shanghai as the Paris of the East has tended to see the city attach itself to “the dominant Eurocentric fashion system [which] offers a model that has successfully perpetuated

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Non Arkaraprasertkul, “Power, Politics, and the Making of Shanghai,” *Journal of Planning History* 9, no.4 (2010), 250.

¹¹ Lindgren, “Fashion in Shanghai,” 6.

¹² Ibid., 6–7.

the mythology of Paris as a global fashion capital, and whose products have been embraced by rapidly growing numbers of Chinese consumers.”¹³

Just as the Shanghai International Film Festival has prioritized “its film market and role in networking film professionals and facilitating deals with transnational co-productions” over the nurturing of local talent, so too “the role of Shanghai’s local government in promoting fashion moves the rationale of Shanghai Fashion Week toward place making rather than a support mechanism for creativity.”¹⁴ This is in keeping with wider governmental approaches to forging Shanghai as a global city, which have privileged “place-oriented strategies aim[ed] at attracting capital investment and enticing tourists... often involv[ing] infrastructure and property development, the promotion of cultural events, and the building of cultural venues (e.g. museums, theaters, libraries),” ahead of “people-oriented strategies emphasiz[ing] human development, focusing on either principal producers of arts or cultural consumers.”¹⁵

The rehistoricizing of the city’s pre-1949 past during the 1990s, as discussed in Chapter Three, was allied to these “place-oriented strategies.” The city may have been “liberated... from the long-established master narrative of socialism against capitalism, and nationalism against colonialism,” engendering a “weightless state” that allowed individual memories of Shanghainese urbanites to rise free, but this was, O’Connor argues, itself a deeply political process, activated by a ruling party acutely aware of its own history and need for self-preservation.¹⁶

The city’s “opening up” was “highly partial... It was a narrowing down or hollowing out of the promises of an older urban modernity into new forms of lifestyle consumption. The individuation of memories is not (only) the result of the weightlessness of postmodern history but the

¹³ Ibid., 6.

¹⁴ Ma Ran, “Celebrating the International, Disremembering Shanghai,” 156; Lindgren, “Fashion in Shanghai,” 7.

¹⁵ Weiping Wu, “Cultural strategies in Shanghai: regenerating cosmopolitanism in an era of globalization,” *Progress in Planning* 61 (2004), 162.

¹⁶ Yeh, *Shanghai Splendor*, 216.

concomitant exclusion of any form of social input into the plans taken and decisions made by the city on behalf of its citizens.¹⁷

From the mid-1990s, these plans included the leasing or renting of land “to international developers in exchange for much needed capital, which in turn would bankroll the city’s leap into the new century... and to make room for outside investors and their developmental capital, Shanghai simply scooped up established residents and relocated them to the urban peripheries.”¹⁸ This “inward investment” was key to the vision of “remaking Shanghai as a world city.”¹⁹ But the modernizing “‘city of finance and culture’ did not step into the vacant spaces left by older industries as in the West; it shoved them aside.”²⁰ The global fashion industry has been a part of this process, with major luxury brands now occupying prime real estate in the city as they seek to capitalize on a Chinese market that is expected to account for about 20% of global luxury sales by 2015.²¹

The media analytics company Global Language Monitor recently placed Shanghai at number ten in its ranking of “Global Fashion Capitals,” up twelve places from 2012, making it the leading Asian city in the list.²² As Shanghai’s fashion star has risen, there are indications that the city is finally starting to attract greater attention for its own home-grown designers in addition to being the gateway city for international labels into the huge Chinese market.²³ Lindgren suggests that Shanghai is reaching a “tipping point” with some Shanghai-based designers developing—and now gaining recognition for—“an uncompromising design aesthetic” that is not

¹⁷ Justin O’Connor, “Shanghai Modern: Replaying Futures Past,” *Culture Unbound* 4 (2012), 27.

¹⁸ Yeh, *Shanghai Splendor*, 209–210.

¹⁹ Fulong Wu, “The Global and Local Dimensions of Place-making: Remaking Shanghai as a World City,” *Urban Studies*, 37, no.8 (2000), 1359–1377.

²⁰ O’Connor, “Shanghai Modern,” 28.

²¹ Yuval Atsmon, Vinay Dixit and Cathy Wu, “Tapping China’s luxury-goods market,” *McKinsey & Company Insights & Publications* (2011), http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/marketing_sales/tapping_chinas_luxury-goods_market.

²² Global Language Monitor, “New York Takes Top Global Fashion Capital Title from London, edging past Paris,” *Global Language Monitor*, February 2014, <http://www.languagemonitor.com/fashion/sorry-kate-new-york-edges-paris-and-london-in-top-global-fashion-capital-10th-annual-survey/>.

²³ Casey Hall, “Shanghai Fashion Week, 10 Years and Counting, Kicks Off,” *Wall Street Journal*, 18 October 2012, <http://blogs.wsj.com/scene/2012/10/18/shanghai-fashion-week-10-years-and-counting-kicks-off/>.

beholden to “the dominance of the Eurocentric fashion system in China.”²⁴ This might be taken as evidence of the efficacy of the Shanghai Municipal Government’s greater promotion of creative industries since 2005 (with “fashion, leisure, and lifestyle services” comprising one of five officially designated creative sectors) as part of its development strategy.²⁵ Central to this has been the formation of Creative Industry Clusters (CICs), which are viewed by the Municipal Government “as a solution to the woes of bankrupt state companies and a means to invigorate derelict inner city industrial spaces.”²⁶ These function, in theory, as a fusion of place-oriented and people-oriented strategies of urban regeneration, with redundant industrial areas revitalized as artistic enclaves, catalyzing a creative economy and attracting tourists, thereby strengthening the city’s cosmopolitan image.

However, Lindgren argues that there has been little evidence of creative clusters facilitating collaboration among like-minded tenants, with a dynamic, creative milieu evolving more effectively through designers’ own dispersed social networks.²⁷ Likewise, Xin Gu notes that, whilst organically developing arts enclaves have benefitted from increased commercial exposure, they have often foundered when subsumed into government-directed CICs:

Though frequently isolated from their immediate local communities these enclaves were soon connected to wider circuits of global cultural capital. This has often been presented as a process of commercialisation driving out artists from the clusters but in fact much of this was welcomed, insofar as it opened up access to global art markets for artists with no chance of public subsidy. The real problem followed from the recognition of the global image potential of these clusters, and the development of a mechanism—the official Creative Industry Cluster policy—which allowed these clusters to become major real estate engines. The management of the clusters, with some exception, paid little attention to

²⁴ Lindgren, “Fashion in Shanghai,” iii.

²⁵ Sheng Zhong, “Production, Creative Firms and Urban Space in Shanghai,” *Culture Unbound* 4 (2012), 172.

²⁶ Ibid., 170. There are now more than eighty CICs in Shanghai.

²⁷ Lindgren, “Fashion in Shanghai,” 227.

the sorts of ‘untraded interdependencies’, social networks and public goods produced by the earlier creative clusters.²⁸

Regular busloads of Chinese and foreign tourists testify to the commercial success of the vibrant Tianzifang art zone in Huangpu District, which has grown to such an extent since 2006 that maps are now displayed offering suggested walking itineraries (Fig. 53). However, rising rent prices have forced out a number of the individuals who were instrumental in the area’s original development as an arts enclave before the days of CICs.²⁹

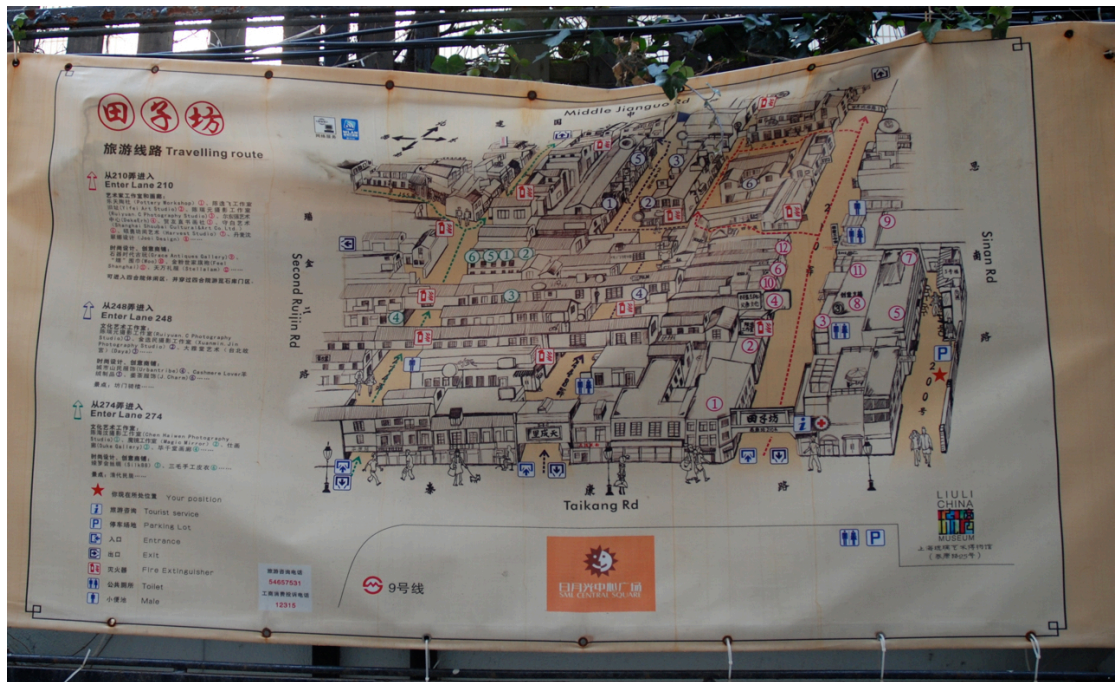


Fig. 53: Navigating a creative cluster: suggested travelling routes in Tianzifang

²⁸ Xin Gu, “The Art of Re-Industrialisation in Shanghai,” *Culture Unbound* 4 (2012), 207.

²⁹ Zhou Ping, “Famed artist to leave Tianzifang,” *Global Times*, 10 October 2012, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/737539.shtml>.

A more ruthless government overhaul of an organic arts community is highlighted by Anna Greenspan:

[The] fissure between a culture that is real and an imagined creative class was illustrated with preposterous precision in the case of ‘Weihei [sic] 696,’ an art cluster located in the heart of the Jingan district. The property contains a richly layered historical structure that served as a villa, army barracks and electrical factory. Artists found the dilapidated structure in the mid-2000s and... transformed the rambling edifice into a warren of artists’ studios. In 2011, however, the Jingan district decided that ‘Weihei [sic] 696’ should be turned into a creative cluster. Their first act was to kick out all the artists.³⁰

The intention of the Jing’an District Government is “to turn Weihai Road into an extension of the prestigious and expensive Nanjing Road” which is situated only a few hundred meters away and is the home to “the Louis Vuitton China flagship store, Prada and numerous other big-name brands.”³¹ Clearly the issues at stake here extend beyond the world of fashion; Louis Vuitton and Prada are not directly responsible for evicting members of local artistic colonies. What these episodes indicate, though, is an intersection of foreign investment, retail, government policy and the domestic real estate market that has complex ramifications for Shanghai’s residents and the city’s creative culture.

The clearing of Weihai 696 is a fairly egregious example of profit being prioritized at the expense of local artistic endeavour, but this is not a straightforward parable of local culture being quashed by the homogenizing forces of globalization. As suggested by Gu, creative communities in the city have also benefitted from increased access to global markets. Meanwhile, Shanghai’s cosmopolitan, outward-looking reputation has encouraged “younger artists, ‘creatives’ and entrepreneurs

³⁰ Anna Greenspan, *Shanghai Future: Modernity Remade* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2014), 101. (The correct *pinyin* spelling is Weihai, not Weihei.)

³¹ Lindgren, “Fashion in Shanghai,” 88; Chris Gill, “Time running out for Shanghai artists’ colony,” *The Art Newspaper*, 23 February 2011, <http://www.theartnewspaper.com/articles/Time-running-out-for-Shanghai-artists-colony/23207>.

from the rest of China, from Korea and Japan, and from the West” to flock to the city, bringing with them greater dynamism to the cultural landscape.³²

This contested usage of space, and the wide range of human, economic and technological flows implicated in this, is a reminder of the complex nature of place, as discussed in Chapter Two: “For the developers, the site does not merely exist *in* relative space-time: the re-engineering of the site offers the prospect of transforming relative space-time so as to enhance the value of the absolute spaces... The temporal horizon is then dominated by considerations of the amortization rate and the interest/discount rate applying to fixed capital investments in the built environment.”³³ As noted previously, Harvey proposes a two-dimensional grid with absolute space, relative space-time and relational spacetime on one axis, and the Lefebvrian triad of perceived space (spatial practice), conceived space (representations of space) and lived space (representational spaces), along the other. Thinking about the global fashion industry in Shanghai provides a striking example of how the different elements of this matrix exist in dialectical tension.

Clearly the fashion industry impacts on aspects of spatial practice, both in shaping the physical spaces that are “perceived” and informing the dress codes that are displayed. Also as stated, issues of relative space-time intersect with the absolute space as sites are developed into retail spaces—a process that implicates the fashion industry into the category of those who “conceive” space and are “tied to the relations of production and to the ‘order’ which those relations impose.”³⁴ The results of this may be an affront to certain “‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’” who ascribe different emotional meanings to the transformed site, rooted in a relational sense of spacetime, which draws on memories, dreams and aspirations. But what is particularly notable, is how the fashion industry itself—as demonstrated in the short films discussed at the end of this section—appeals to a sense of relational spacetime and seeks to situate itself within a personal lived space with its “associated images and symbols.” This, in turn, feeds into how consumers imagine their own identity and the city they inhabit. By way of example, in their study of Shanghai Tang—a Hong Kong clothing label that consciously draws on Shanghai’s *haipai* legacy in its combination of Western

³² Justin O’Connor and Xin Gu, “Creative industry clusters in Shanghai: a success story?” *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 20, no. 1 (2014), 2.

³³ Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, 146.

³⁴ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 33.

and Chinese detailing—Wu Zhiyan, Janet Borgerson and Jonathan Schroeder cite an interview with “Miss J,” a Malaysian-Chinese resident of the city, who embraces the brand as a means of asserting her own “cosmopolitan identity” and attaching herself to a certain imagination of the city:

Shanghai Tang captures the essence of old Shanghai—freedom, fashion, multi-cultures—mmm [...] metropolis, and civilization. Lots of movies, dramas, and novels are set in Shanghai of that time. They showcase dazzling neon lights, sexy and elegant female curves sheathed in exquisite *cheongsam* [or *qipao*], and seductive melodies.³⁵

The point being emphasized here is that, as with the films discussed in this thesis, the fashion world’s various imaginings of Shanghai do not exist as free-floating representations of the city. As sources for textual readings, they may provide insights into the cultural landscape, but they are also actively involved in the branding of that landscape, both through their circulation of specific images of the city and their attachment to broader industrial processes.

In an article written for *The Times* in September 2012, Giorgio Armani opined on the current lack of globally recognized Chinese designers. He drew attention to shortcomings in the local business infrastructure and the damaging effects of the Cultural Revolution on the nation’s design heritage, but asserted that he was confident that China would “produce a designer who shows in London, Paris and Milan,” even if he could not be sure when this would occur. Writing about his hopes for China’s future fashion landscape and the changes that needed to occur, there was an irony in Armani declaring that, “On the streets, Western brands rule, they are what people aspire to... China might be a manufacturing powerhouse, but it is still learning how to represent itself creatively,” as his own fashion empire is a key player in the Eurocentric fashion system that has energized but also created challenges for local style economies, not least in Shanghai.³⁶ Western fashion labels have thrived, in

³⁵ Wu Zhiyan, Janet Borgerson and Jonathan Schroeder, *From Chinese Brand Culture to Global Brands: Insights from Aesthetics, Fashion and History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 123–124.

³⁶ Giorgio Armani, “Armani in China: Giorgio’s verdict on the rising superpower,” *The Times Luxx Magazine*, 22 September 2012, 48–49. It should also be noted that Armani has demonstrated a commitment to fostering Chinese design talent through his

part, because of access to cheap Chinese manufacturing, whilst also telling the Chinese populace that these foreign brands are exactly what they should aspire to, and contributing to huge rate increases in retail spaces.

Armani's cursory discussion of the challenges facing young Chinese fashion designers is bookended by a story of his own experience of the country:

I first became interested in China when it was closed to the West. I imagined a mystical, magical world of eternal, refined sophistication, far removed from our Western ways. Of course when I finally visited, in 2004, I realised that my impressions had been naïve. The overriding impression was of a busy, grey urban landscape, full of energy and people in a hurry to create a better future.

....Backstage, though, I had a revelation. We were pinning a green couture gown being worn by Du Juan, China's most famous model...Du was so elegant. She melded with my clothing and spoke of my romantic visions of Asia. Maybe I was not so naïve after all? Maybe China still possesses an ancient mystery and magic. It lives on in how a beautiful young woman wears a Giorgio Armani Privé dress, covered in crystals, trailing down a catwalk in a disused gasometer in the new China.

The combination of self-aggrandizement and fawning orientalism (having just stated that China "is still learning how to represent itself creatively") might be consigned as merely evidence of a preening fashion industry, but Armani's words are suggestive more generally of tensions in the Western encounter with China following the Open Door Reforms. An exoticized Other becomes unfathomable in new ways through the scale of the country's radical post-reform transformations. Yet there is a desire to have a stake in this new market, which requires the confidence that this difference can somehow be understood—not controlled necessarily, but anticipated and "melded" with in a kind of erotic meeting between China and the West; and it is in Shanghai, with its history of openness, where this encounter is particularly envisaged as occurring.

collaboration with the Academy of Art and Design at Tsinghua University.
http://www.tsinghua.edu.cn/publish/aden/1749/2012/20120628140959804347225/20120628140959804347225_.html.

Armani was describing a fashion show in Beijing, but he might equally have been talking of Shanghai, where disused industrial sites are increasingly being geared towards creative output and cultural showcasing, through the formation of CICs, which have “rapidly bec[o]me sites for fashion shoots, launches, events and conferences.”³⁷ And indeed, once inside the gasometer (Fig. 54), the centrepiece of the show’s staging was an enclosed water tank within the circular catwalk, onto which were projected night scenes of Shanghai’s futuristic skyline (Fig. 55).³⁸



Fig. 54: Industrial fashion: Giorgio Armani One Night Only in Beijing
Copyright Ng Han Guan/Associated Press

³⁷ O’Connor and Gu, “Creative industry clusters in Shanghai,” 7. The authors note that, “Shanghai has more CICs than Beijing; they are much more concentrated in the urban centre and are thus potentially more integrated into the urban fabric than in the capital,” 2.

³⁸ Red Luxury, “Hugo Boss and Armani’s Beijing Extravanzas,” *Red Luxury*, 5 June 2012, <http://red-luxury.com/brands-retail/hugo-boss-and-armanis-beijing-extravanzas#!prettyPhoto>.

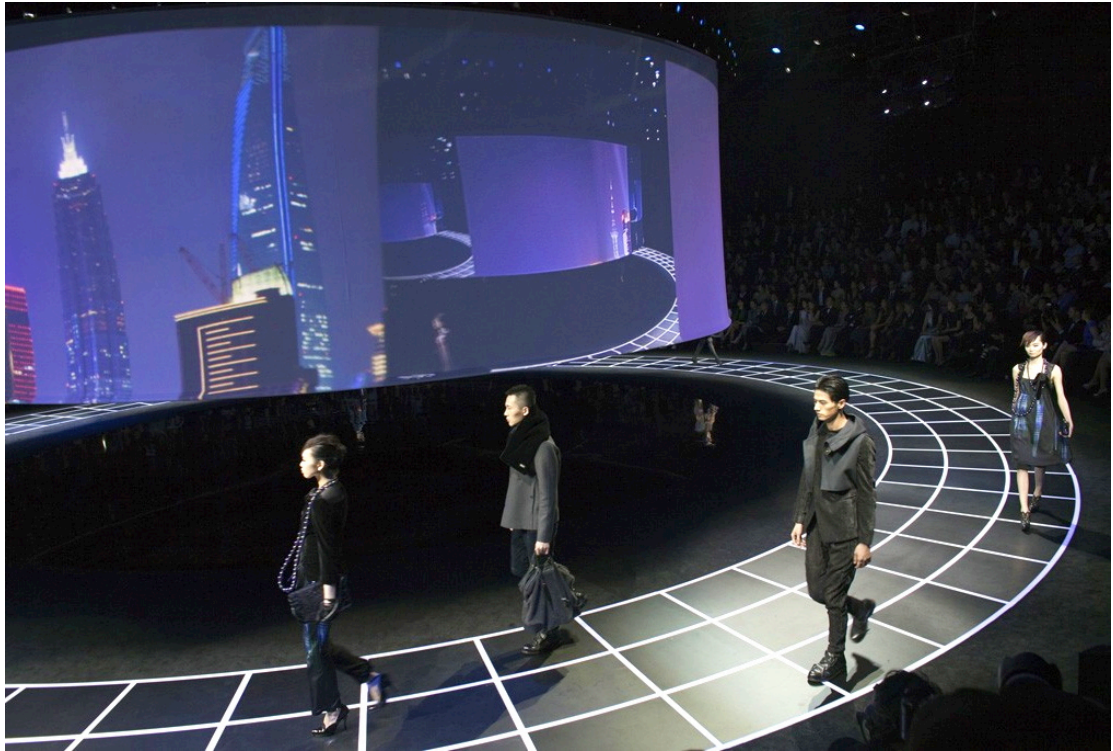


Fig. 55: “Catwalking the city:” Models parade around images of Shanghai
Copyright Ng Han Guan/Associated Press

Nick Land argues that this futurism in Shanghai is “immediately retro-futurism, since urban innovation is what was happening before [during the city’s former “Golden Age”], and invention is bound to a process of rediscovery.”³⁹ He identifies the city’s “neomodernist reanimations of derelicted structures” whereby industrial heritage is “aesthetically transfigured” into tourist, leisure and exhibition spaces, as striking instances of “Shanghai’s signature time-looping” in which “the insistent message is re-emergence, an advance through the past.”⁴⁰ Whilst the exhibits in the SUPEC may valorize the smoothness of urban improvement, “neomodern construction manifests, and celebrates, discontinuity.”⁴¹

Land’s description of the neomodern as something “manifested indirectly, through display spaces... point[ing] away from itself, and towards what it revives,” is

³⁹ Nick Land, “Dark intimations of the time rift,” *Shanghai Times* (Urbanatomy Electronic, 2014), Kindle edition.

⁴⁰ Nick Land, “Neomodernity,” *Shanghai Times* (Urbanatomy Electronic, 2014), Kindle edition. Land invokes the image of the spiral (also referencing Wonsuk Chang’s aforementioned, “Reflections on Time and Related Ideas in the *Yijing*”) to describe this “(accelerating) progressive change with cyclic recurrence.”

⁴¹ Ibid.

reminiscent of Caroline Evans' identification of Walter Benjamin's concept of the "dialectical image," as a "methodology particularly appropriate to fashion...[which] allows us to perceive similarities across periods apparently separated by rupture and discontinuity, and to plot historical time not as something that flows smoothly from past to present but as a more complex relay of turns and returns, in which the past is activated by injecting the present into it."⁴² If fashion offers a demonstration of the dialectical image, Benjamin specifically linked the concept to film: "the relationship between images of the past and the present worked like the montage technique of cinema. The principal of montage is that a third meaning is created by the juxtaposition of two images, rather than any immutable meaning inhering in each image."⁴³

Giuliana Bruno also links fashion with cinema and architecture, stating that "all are engaged in the making of visual space, which involves a new habitation of the self... Fashion, like motion pictures, lives on the power of the moving form and 'depends upon the loss of sensibility to nervous incitements.' Fashion works, as film does, to frame and map the appearance of the body, redefining its sensibility and energetic borders... [Fashion] informs architecture, for architecture itself is dressed, designed, and engaged with ornament and the lack thereof to such an extent that, in modern times, it has become an art of clothing."⁴⁴ The close association between film spectatorship and the cartographic practices of tourist culture was noted in Chapter Two. Equally, Bruno observes that "travel and fashion are intimately connected. Like the cinema, they are ways of absorbing, or incorporating, culture as an imaginative, moving place."⁴⁵

Bruno's female traveller, "absorbing, or incorporating, culture," displays the kind of cosmopolitanism explored by Mica Nava in "Cosmopolitan Modernity: Everyday Imaginaries and the Register of Difference" (2002), which is founded on the consumption of difference as a means of embracing being modern.⁴⁶ Jinna Tay identifies this version of cosmopolitanism—differing qualitatively from more elitist

⁴² Evans, "Yesterday's Emblems and Tomorrow's Commodities," 104.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁴⁴ Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion*, 122–124. The in-text citation is from Georg Simmel, "Fashion," in *On Individuality and Social Forms*, ed. Donald N. Levine (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 320.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁴⁶ Mica Nava, "Cosmopolitan Modernity: Everyday Imaginaries and the Register of Difference," *Theory, Culture and Society* 19, no. 1–2 (2002), 81–99.

conceptions (such as that proposed by Ulf Hannerz) which have been defined in terms of a privileged intellectual (and typically male) stance of openness—as the most relevant to her own study of the role of fashion journalism and the quest to “look modern” in Shanghai, Singapore and Hong Kong. It is a cosmopolitanism that does not deny “the reality of commercial impulses, the lure of the aesthetically beautiful, the inspiration and agency that is fired by attraction and the pleasure of the consumption of new lifestyles.”⁴⁷

Touristic consumption; a desire to appear modern; “the loss of sensibility to nervous incitements;” pursuing the future with reference to the past; montage; the fashioning of space—all these themes have previously emerged in this thesis as recurrent features in the cultural landscape of contemporary Shanghai. All attach themselves in various ways to cinema, fashion and travel culture, and it is these three elements that come together now, as this section concludes with a brief consideration of three fashion short films, which construct Shanghai as a metropolitan gateway between China and the West.

Paris–Shanghai: A Fantasy

French fashion returns to Shanghai once more in Karl Lagerfeld’s *Paris–Shanghai: A Fantasy*, a 22-minute short film that provided a rather literal example of “catwalking the city” when it was projected onto an outdoor screen in December 2009, as the centrepiece of the label’s Pre-Fall 2010 show. Sarah Mower, writing for the hugely influential fashion website *Style.com*, portrayed the scene as follows:

How often does a city actually play a leading role in a fashion show? It happened tonight in Shanghai, where the spectacular twenty-first-century skyline and teeming waterfront—complete with kaleidoscopic neon, *Jetsons*-meets-*Blade Runner* towers, improbable glittering disco-ball telecommunications installations, and fast-moving pleasure boats,

⁴⁷ Jinna Tay, “Looking Modern: Fashion Journalism and Cultural Modernity in Shanghai, Singapore and Hong Kong” (PhD diss., Queensland University of Technology, 2013), 100–102; Ulf Hannerz, “Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture,” *Theory, Culture and Society* 7 no. 2–3 (1990), 237–251.

barges, and tugs—became the live, moving backdrop to Chanel's Paris-Shanghai pre-fall runway. As a thousand guests sat on a darkened pontoon moored in the Huangpu River, models ranged to and fro in front of a translucent wall, so the speedy, dirty, visually thrilling urban nightscape became, as Karl Lagerfeld put it, "the set."⁴⁸



Fig. 56: Chanel Pre-Fall 2010 Show: The city as “the set”
Copyright Lucas Schifres/Pictobank

⁴⁸ Sarah Mower, “Review: Chanel Pre-Fall 2010,” *Style.com*, 3 December 2009, <http://www.style.com/fashion-shows/pre-fall-2010/chanel>.



Fig. 57: Lagerfeld's cinematic city dream
Copyright Lucas Schifres/Pictobank

This description of Shanghai as a great cinematic “set,” is in keeping with Lagerfeld’s vision of the city revealed in the film, which announces itself with an opening caption as, “The trip Coco Chanel only made in her dreams.” The film begins with a scene of Coco, played by the model Jane Schmitt, having afternoon tea with Wallis Simpson, Duchess of Windsor, who recalls her wild youth in Shanghai. After falling asleep on her couch, Coco travels back to China in the 1960s, where she meets a couple of youths in caps and Mao-style suits, to whom she dispenses fashion advice. This is the first of a series of vignettes, as the designer travels further back through time, first to a 1940s Shanghai nightclub dressing room, then to a recreation of scenes from *Shanghai Express* (1932), complete with a Marlene Dietrich figure, followed by a 1920s gambling den, and finally an audience at the Imperial Court. The two figures that Coco meets in this scene appear to be the Empress Dowager Cixi, and Prince Chun, father of the last Qing Emperor, Puyi, but this is not made explicit. Nor is it clear how the Imperial Court is now in Shanghai. However, as the Prince Chun figure informs her, “Historical details are unimportant because all this is just a dream,” at which point the picture turns from black and white to vibrant colour.

To emphasize this supposed unimportance of historical detail, the imperial prince is played, not by a Chinese model, but Lagerfeld's French muse, Baptiste Giabiconi. Indeed, with the exception of a few background figures, all the Chinese characters in *Shanghai–Paris: A Fantasy* are, controversially, embodied by Western models, with heavy kohl-lined eyes.⁴⁹ Lagerfeld sought to pre-empt charges of racism by describing it as “an homage to Europeans trying to look Chinese... It is about the idea of China, not the reality. It has the spirit of, and is inspired by, but is unrelated to China.”⁵⁰ Lagerfeld's China may be an invention, but, as Edward Said observed, “none of this Orient is merely imaginative. The Orient is an integral part of European *material* civilization and culture.”⁵¹ Furthermore, as the show was staged in Shanghai, by a leading player in a multi-billion pound global industry, in which China is the fastest growing market (not to mention the main producer of counterfeit versions of these products), and was, according to reviews, appreciatively received by the assembled “crowd of Shanghainese beautiful people before everyone migrated across the road for a vast cabaret party at the recently restored Peninsula Hotel,” such imaginations also become part of Shanghai's material culture.⁵²

Lagerfeld's plundering of Chinese history—and his own depiction of this process—fits with critiques of a late twentieth century and early twenty-first century postmodern visual economy in which “the incessant return to the past... [becomes] itself a kind of deathly recycling of history which empt[ies] it out of meaning, rendering it bankrupt, good only for costume drama and fantasy.”⁵³ However, Caroline Evans, following Benjamin, contends that “contemporary fashion has an unerring eye for the topical in its choice of historical imagery.”⁵⁴ Both accounts have merit in respect to Lagerfeld's Chanel Pre-Fall 2010 show. He is offering a fantasy that self-consciously eschews historical detail, and yet the appropriated fragments of

⁴⁹ Minh-Ha T. Pham, “The Truth of Lagerfeld's Idea of China,” *threadbared*, 7 December 2009, <http://threadbared.blogspot.co.uk/2009/12/truth-of-lagerfelds-idea-of-china.html>.

⁵⁰ Lisa Movius, “Karl Lagerfeld Talks Shanghai and Fashion,” *WWD*, 3 December 2009, <http://www.wwd.com/fashion-news/fashion-features/karl-lagerfeld-talks-shanghai-and-fashion-2385327>.

⁵¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 2.

⁵² Mower, “Review.”

⁵³ Evans, “Yesterday's Emblems and Tomorrow's Commodities,” 99. Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, (London: Verso, 1991).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

the past, when viewed in the context of the present, provide that “flash of recognition” of Benjamin’s dialectical image, finding a fresh topicality and bringing into focus pertinent issues relating to the culture of contemporary Shanghai.⁵⁵

The staging of this fantastical fashion pageant, with the Bund promenade as “the set” (Figs. 56 & 57), coalesces with the hegemonic vision of the city detailed in the previous chapters, in which Shanghai becomes a cinematic heaven of dreams, with the waterfront area, in particular, reborn as a “Paradise of Adventurers.” A trio of scenes set from the 1920s to 1940s draw a link with an earlier period of modernity and consumption. The vignettes chosen to capture those decades feature a gambling den and a cabaret act—acts of speculation and spectacle placed together—and also a recreation of *Shanghai Express*, a film which, as discussed, contains various elements apposite to contemporary Shanghai. During this era, foreigners frequently took on performative roles (including “trying to look Chinese”), and Amanda Lagerkvist has noted how tourists and “expatriate connoisseurs” in the contemporary city are encouraged to indulge in “playful... embodied sensory acts,” as a way of recalling that period.⁵⁶

Before those Treaty Port Era scenes, however, there is Coco Chanel’s visit to Maoist Shanghai, closer in time to a twenty-first century audience, yet in certain respects more distant. It is, though, an era whose traces still mark the modern city, even if the earlier “Golden Age” is now more obviously celebrated.⁵⁷ Indeed, even before 1949, Shanghai displayed many notably “red” revolutionary tendencies, which added to the ambiguities of that earlier period of “urban heroic modernization”—ambiguities that now return as “style” and “lifestyle consumption” in sites such as the Xintiandi shopping district.⁵⁸ Such a shift was foreshadowed in 1995, when Shanghai’s vice-mayor, Jiang Yiren, stated, “The socialist system wants to beautify people’s living. When we paid attention only to class struggle and denounced bourgeois things, everyone wore the same clothes and colours. There was no concept of beauty.”⁵⁹ It is the notion of style and beauty that Coco offers to the communist

⁵⁵ Ibid., 102.

⁵⁶ Amanda Lagerkvist, “Gazing at Pudong—‘With a Drink in Your Hand:’ Time travel, Mediation, and Multisensuous Immersion in the Future City of Shanghai,” *Senses and Society* 2, no. 2 (2007), 155–172.

⁵⁷ Wasserstrom, “Red Shanghai, Blue Shanghai.”

⁵⁸ O’Connor, “Shanghai Modern.”

⁵⁹ Quoted in Tay, “Looking Modern,” 18.

youths she encounters on her journey, as the film seeks to encourage a certain frame of affinity for viewing and understanding China. In the Shanghai of the film, the European traveller is able to feel comfortable in her voyeuristic stance: “You young people in China are so beautiful and elegant. I love to look at you.” This sense of ease is facilitated by the use of European models in place of Chinese actors, so that, for all the supposed alien distance of the environment, it is reassuringly familiar. There is a sense that Coco Chanel belongs here. Indeed, this is emphasized as she encourages the youths to try on her jackets and informs them, “You see, everyone in the whole world can wear Chanel” (Fig. 58). Hence, the film also implies that the Chinese have an affinity for Chanel, and “if ‘Chinese’ people who are imagined as located in a time, place, and culture so far removed from (and thus alien to) fashion's modern Western cosmopolitan centre can desire Chanel fashions then anyone can.”⁶⁰



Fig. 58: An affinity for European fashion:
 “You see, everyone in the whole world can wear Chanel”
 Copyright Karl Lagerfeld/Chanel

⁶⁰ Pham, “The Truth of Lagerfeld’s Idea of China.”

The final scene in the Imperial Court reveals further links between past and present. The reference to Puyi situates the action on the cusp of a period of national transformation, whilst through the figure of Cixi (born in 1835), and the Qing Dynasty setting, an association is drawn with an earlier moment of rupture, with the West's opening up of China through the formation of the treaty port system. The topicality of the film resides, then, in recognizing contemporary concerns over what Chinese authenticity might mean in a period of dramatic change, and how this time of change is entwined with a re-negotiation of the power balance between China and the West, and re-negotiation for Shanghai of what it may mean to be cosmopolitan. In *Snow Flower*, reassurance was provided in the form of allegiance to universal, timeless values. For Lagerfeld, by having Coco present at all these points in Chinese history, it is the act of wearing (real) Chanel that becomes historicized into a definition of authenticity and a means of integration into this cosmopolitan environment.

Mica Nava argues that in London in the early decades of the twentieth century, modern cosmopolitan consciousness was first experienced at the boundaries of consumption. Crucially, though, this consumption of foreign difference existed “not just as a reflexive stance of openness, but also as a dialogic formation—a counterculture—part of a psychic and often gendered revolt against the conservatism and xenophobia of the parental culture.”⁶¹ John Galliano explained that his Dior Cruise 2011 collection drew on the French New Wave because he was “trying to recapture that excitement that was happening at that time in Paris, which is very similar to what is happening in Shanghai today.”⁶² The *nouvelle vague* was famously countercultural; but whilst Galliano and Lagerfeld are intoxicated by the anticipatory energy of contemporary Shanghai (which, as mentioned in Chapter Three and explored further in Chapter Six, may have as its corollary a sense of drifting—akin to that demonstrated by various protagonists in French New Wave films), there is not anything directly countercultural in the workings of the hegemonic global fashion industry. The real dream at the heart of *Paris–Shanghai: A Fantasy* is, Minh-Ha T. Pham suggests, “the neoliberal dream of increased global markets for Western

⁶¹ Nava, “Cosmopolitan Modernity,” 81.

⁶² Tiffany Godoy, “Christian Dior Resort 2011,” *Style.com*, 15 May 2010, <http://www.style.com/fashion-shows/resort-2011/christian-dior>.

commodities.”⁶³ Chanel is not anticipating a May ’68 moment, but rather business as usual—just more of it.

Lady Blue Shanghai

A more tortured relationship between Europe and China is portrayed in David Lynch’s *Lady Blue Shanghai*, one of a series of five online short films produced by the fashion house Christian Dior as part of a multi-platform media strategy to promote various editions of their iconic Lady Dior handbag. All five films star the French actor, Marion Cotillard, with each one helmed by a famous director and featuring a different major world city. The other shorts are set in Paris, New York, London and Los Angeles, and hence *Lady Blue* situates Shanghai within an elite transnational network of leading fashion cities. Indeed, the choice of Shanghai is tied to the brand’s assertion that “the future of the fashion industry lies in an economically accelerated East Asia that is rediscovering its love of luxury.”⁶⁴ The release of the film on the Dior website on 15 May 2010 was timed to coincide with the grand reopening of the brand’s boutique in the Plaza 66 Mall on West Nanjing Road, the first month of the World Expo, and the launch of John Galliano’s Dior Cruise 2011 collection, inspired by the French New Wave.⁶⁵

Shanghai meets France in Lynch’s film as well. Cotillard plays an unnamed visitor to the city who has “just arrived yesterday” and does not know “anyone here in Shanghai.” After an establishing shot of the Lujiazui skyline, the film begins in that classic gateway space of the hotel lobby, as Cotillard enters and then proceeds down a corridor to her room, from where she can hear 1920s jazz music playing. Inside the room, Cotillard switches off the music and turns around to find a mysterious blue handbag on the floor. Hotel attendants are summoned to investigate and she relates to them her visit earlier in the day to look at the Pearl Tower. “As I

⁶³ Pham, “The Truth of Lagerfeld’s Idea of China.” [Similarly, *Style.com*, described the evening as “a giant social power play for the eminence of brand Chanel in China.” (Mower, “Review.”)]

⁶⁴ John Berra, “Lady Blue Shanghai: The strange case of David Lynch and Dior,” *Film, Fashion and Consumption* 1, no. 3 (2012), 247.

⁶⁵ Carly Zinderman, “Dior Launches Limited Edition Blue Collection,” *Just Luxe*, 18 May 2010, <http://www.justluxe.com/luxe-insider/trends/feature-628267.php>.

looked up at the tower,” she tells them, “I felt I had been here before, in Shanghai.” This initiates a sequence in which the jazz music is heard once again as Cotillard describes how “It seemed as if suddenly I was in the Old Shanghai.” She is met in a salon room by a handsome Chinese man and the couple flee through the lanes of Old Shanghai, pursued by parties unknown. Then suddenly they are chasing through the modern city, until they reach a rooftop on the Bund. Cotillard’s lover informs her that he has to leave. Holding out a blue rose, he moves backwards, fading into the brickwork, as Cotillard repeats the words, “I love you,” over and over. The action then cuts back to Cotillard’s hotel room, where she tearfully opens the handbag—the moment of anticipation towards which the film has been building—to discover the blue rose, and the film ends with her clutching the bag and flower to her breast, illuminated in light like the Madonna and Child.

Lynch was given free reign over the project, with the only requirements being that he had to feature “the handbag, the Pearl Tower and some old Shanghai.”⁶⁶ John Berra notes that this relative artistic freedom poses the question of whether the film exists primarily as a Dior advertisement, with Lynch’s involvement providing some art-house cachet and serving as a “marker of authenticity,” or if *Lady Blue* can be seen as a bona fide addition to the auteur director’s canon.⁶⁷ The film itself feeds on this tension, producing an ambiguous portrait of the city. Lynch is attuned to the curious time looping tendencies of contemporary Shanghai, as “brief cutaways to balconies and stairwells evoke memories of an earlier period, while still clearly being shot in 2009, thereby writing, or distorting, distinct strands of time and space.”⁶⁸ These distortions are in keeping with the previously discussed instances of time travelling in *Leaving Me Loving You* and *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*, where figures from the past emerge in the present. As with those films, they are allied to a trope of reunion—in this instance, the return of European style to Shanghai.

The central storyline of a beautiful French woman vividly recalling her 1920s amour, is reminiscent of Jean-Jacques Annaud’s *The Lover*, (based on the novel by Marguerite Duras) which details an illicit affair between a French teenager and her glamorous Chinese suitor in 1929 Indochina. Annaud’s film also ends with a declaration of undying affection from Asia to Europe as the now elderly French

⁶⁶ Berra, “Lady Blue Shanghai,” 236.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 240.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 243.

narrator recalls hearing many years later from the Chinese man, informing her that he had always loved her; heartache becomes transfigured into exquisite nostalgia and sensual reassurance. In *Lady Blue*, however, the effect is more ambivalent. Here, physical reunion does occur, but it is almost simultaneously ruptured, despite the couple's abiding love. "It's all very beautiful," Cotillard's lover remarks, as he gazes from her face to the Lujiazui skyline, but "I can't be here, I wish I could." Desire is thwarted, the past seems irreconcilable with the future, and the lovers' brief proximity only serves to emphasize the distance between them.

This frustrated desire becomes transferred to the sensuality of the handbag. As Berra notes, "The branded product becomes a central character that undergoes a transformation from a source of anxiety to a fetish object that replaces Cotillard's love interest."⁶⁹ In this reading, the handbag becomes a metonym for the lover and hence Shanghai itself. The film's marketing message seems to suggest that by purchasing this bag you purchase something of the beguiling allure of Shanghai. The mysterious handbag functions first as a focus of anticipation and then gateway to desire, opened to reveal the blue rose. And yet, as fetish object, it simultaneously announces the lack of the actual thing desired. Europe's relationship with Shanghai will never be resumed on its previous terms again.

Lady Blue's surreal noir tone bears strong similarities with Lynch's other work, particularly *Mulholland Drive* (2001). A shot of a beaming, posturing Marion Cotillard appearing on a large LCD screen advertising the handbag (fashion dressing the architecture of the city) juxtaposed with the tearful image of her reaching out to her parting lover, is typical of a director who is fascinated with the traumas that live beneath the veneer of glossy surfaces. This is not the soft-focus, comforting nostalgia of *The Lover*, rather it may be the fevered imagination of a troubled mind. Indeed, the flatness of Lynch's digital camera and the starkness of the lighting undercuts the romantic vision, whilst the use of slow shutter speeds as the couple dash through the city emphasizes their ghostly, unstable quality. The film crafts an erotic vision of the handbag and the city with which it is associated, but it is an unsettling eroticism, where 1920s jazz strains vie with brooding synthesizers, couples adventure through the streets but also run in fear, and desire goes hand in hand with apprehension.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 247.

It is this notion of apprehension that may help to situate Lynch's film in the broader context of a discussion of Shanghai's culture of anticipation. As stated previously, anticipation as a seizing in advance implies the apprehending of something. And to apprehend is both to capture and to understand. But apprehension is a slippery term, for it also means a state of foreboding. This is more than just playing with semantics, for this condition of foreboding is the spectre that haunts the heady excitement of anticipation. Touristic mobility, with the sense of anticipation this entails, is promised by the modern city. The urban environment is envisaged as a site of escapist fantasy. Yet at the same time there is an insistence on being in front, grasping things before they get away, *preventing* escape. A tension between escape and capture, was hinted at the very start of this thesis with the discussion of *Shanghai Express*. Indeed the city that was a "paradise for adventurers," also gave its name to the practice of Shanghaiing, in which people were abducted to serve as crew members on ships frequently bound for the Chinese city.

The question of how one escapes from the city whilst still living in it, is explored further in Chapter Six. For now though, the point to be emphasized is that a desire to apprehend the city may slide into a fear of being apprehended. In the feature films discussed in the previous chapter, which more obviously fit the *metropolitan gateway* description, the city facilitates apprehension as understanding, sometimes involving a transition away from apprehension as foreboding. Other elements of *Lady Blue* associate with these gateway films: imagining the city as an interface between China and the West through the arrival of a cosmopolitan traveller; the film as a means of promoting Dior to the Chinese luxury market, and appealing to Western consumers by offering them the allure of Shanghai; the situating of Shanghai in a transnational network of other fashion cities; and the use of transnational crew members in its production. However, in sustaining its foreboding atmosphere, and infusing this meeting of China and the West with an unresolved anxiety, it exists as a perverse cousin of the more typically glossy gateway films, combining Lynch's singularly unsettling vision, and the fashion industry's predilection for eroticism through unresolved sexual tensions. What is striking, as seen in the campaign images accompanying the film (Fig. 59), is how this lack of resolution becomes dramatized in Shanghai as a tension between anticipation and fear, apprehension and escape.



Fig. 59: *Lady Blue Shanghai*: anticipation and fear, apprehension and escape
Copyright Steven Klein/Dior

First Spring

Cosmopolitanism is addressed more ambivalently in Chinese artist Yang Fudong's *First Spring*, a 9-minute film commissioned by Prada to promote its 2010 Spring/Summer Collection. Shot in black and white, with a dreamlike quality, following travellers arriving in the city, and featuring Art Deco styling, elegant 1920s–1940s clothing and older, traditional Chinese costume, the film shares certain surface elements with Lagerfeld's work. Tonally, though, Yang's film could not be more different. Where *Paris–Shanghai: A Fantasy* sports a playful attitude, tongue-in-cheek dialogue and several self-contained episodes forming a single overarching story of Coco's trip to the Chinese metropolis, *First Spring* displays many of the characteristics familiar from Yang's gallery installations: "glossy black-and-white

cinematography, no dialogue, mood music, beautiful young people who appear lost, looks off-screen, and the promise of narrative coherence without delivery.”⁷⁰

First Spring begins with the English title printed in simple white font against black. This is followed by the title in Chinese, in black brushstrokes against white, immediately suggesting a fluidity of states that characterizes the film as a whole. An opening medium-shot shows two European men panting heavily and looking anxiously off-screen. Where they are and the source of their fear is never explained. They appear later, seemingly having just arrived in Shanghai, wearing hats and carrying suitcases. It is not just these Europeans, but also a Chinese couple (the man played by the actor Geng Le, who portrayed Awesome Wang in *Shanghai Calling*) who are visiting—or returning to—Shanghai, likewise carrying luggage with them. Their clothing is suggestive of the 1940s, but resists any firm periodization. Likewise the various mandarin figures they encounter, as Yang himself has said, could be from the “Song, Yuan, Ming, or Qing dynasty.”⁷¹ Have these travellers escaped here from elsewhere? Are they about to leave? It remains unclear, and they never assume greater importance than any of the other figures who drift through the various scenes, the *mise-en-scène* of each shot offering itself as a perfectly composed image to be lifted from the film and used as a still image for advertising billboards (Fig. 60).

⁷⁰ Chris Berry, “The New Gestural Cinema: Yang Fudong and the Gallery Film,” *Film Quarterly* 67, no. 3 (2014), 17.

⁷¹ Li Zhenhua, “Yang Fudong,” *Bomb: Artists in Conversation* 118 (2012), <http://bombmagazine.org/article/6266/yang-fudong>.

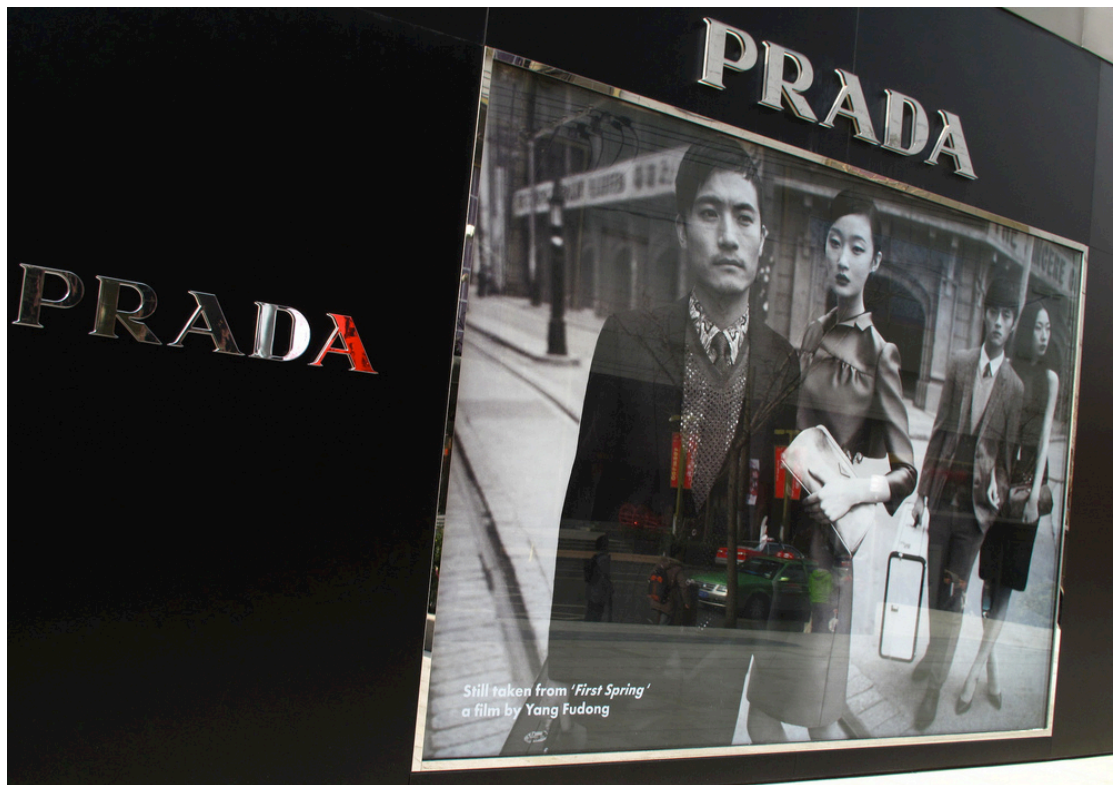


Fig. 60: *First Spring*: An advertisement outside the Prada store in Plaza 66
Copyright Nozomiiqel/Flickr

The city they arrive in appears to be a largely deserted Treaty Port Era Shanghai, the most distinctive landmark being the Sincere Department Store, which opened in 1917 and “initiated the new mass-consumer design for offering diverse merchandise.”⁷² Consumption is a motif in the film: figures wander through an emporium inspecting objects; there is a dinner party in which both wine and Chinese tea is being drunk; and from outside, the 1940s couple looks in on this scene, as though they are shoppers admiring a window display. Tracking shots and fixed shot tableaux display a mélange of European-style glassware and candelabras, Chinese fans and furniture, antique globes and cages, but any specific symbolism in these individual items remains as unresolved as the musical cadences of the soundtrack. The overall effect, though, is to create a mood of temporal and geographic displacement. This is further emphasized by a fixation on various modes of transport (a horse, a car, a tram) from different eras, all co-existing in the street, culminating in the final shot of the film, which shows the Chinese couple—now wearing late

⁷² Lee, *Shanghai Modern*, 15.

1980s/early 1990s clothing—sitting at the back of a moving tram, their expressions illegible, as they are followed by a procession of the older, historical figures trotting along on foot.

This temporal fluidity might be suggestive of the “weightless” state of history promoted in Shanghai from the early 1990s. Indeed, in one of the film’s most striking sequences, various figures float upwards into the air, whilst a small, pre-twentieth century, Chinese military unit troops past on the ground. And yet, Yang reveals the illusory quality of this weightlessness by clearly displaying the suspension wires that support the actors/models (Fig. 61). The film was shot not in the actual Old City, but at the Shanghai Film Park (in Songjiang District), which houses sets from all different eras of Chinese history, and Yang has stated that a key intention was to display the fabricated nature of the production:

The set is such an artificial environment that there must be a key to breaking down its essence and mystery. Maybe the key was a suspension wire... It wasn’t only for the sake of safety; it was something penetrating the line between reality and fiction. A lot of my friends argued that they were not convinced by the mixed time periods; they experienced difficulty entering the story in order to believe it. But why believe it? That is my point. I don’t feel like explaining it too much. Let the suspension wire explain it. It is totally inevitable to see the impossible and the fake coexist on set.

In a contemporary China where it is “increasingly difficult to distinguish what is real and what is fake or ‘new antique,’” Yang’s work has shown a sustained fascination with this co-existence, most famously in his five-part cycle, *Seven Intellectuals in Bamboo Forest* (2007), which draws on the legend of “a group of unruly Taoists who withdrew from public life in the Wei and Jin dynasties, sang and drank together in the bamboo grove, pursued pure conversation and a passion for reckless liberty.”⁷³ The reference to Daoism is a reminder of the discussion of spectacle in Chapter Three, where it was noted that strands of Chinese philosophy are much more

⁷³ Molly Nesbit, “Wild Shanghai Grass,” in *Yang Fudong: Seven Intellectuals in Bamboo Forest*, ed. Angie Baecker (Stockholm: Jarla Partilager), 42.

comfortable with the notion of duality than the Western epistemological tradition and its bias against the falsity of illusion.



Fig. 61: The illusion of weightlessness
Copyright Yang Fudong/Prada

If it is possible to reconcile the real and the simulated, then Yang's oeuvre suggests that navigating the attendant temporal and physical dislocations entails a sense of vulnerability and trepidation. There is scant evidence of "reckless liberty" or political antagonism in the actions of the elegant and earnest intellectuals who drift through his works. Rather, in a national environment that does not "encourage the rhetoric of adversarial debate, the articulation of marked critical thought, the development of explicit positions on topics, or any other kind of 'sticking your neck out' practice," Yang deliberately makes use of the ambiguous and ambivalent in his creation of what Chris Berry has described as "gestural cinema:"

With it, he has discovered an artistic mode that allows him to conjure up emotions, affects, and other embodied experiences without anchoring them to any fixed meaning. Yet, at the same time, the kinds of figures who

perform these gestures in his works suggest that he is not using excess to simply escape from history. Instead... these figures associate them with a certain new social group, the young intellectual in China's market economy today.⁷⁴

Yang—who lives and works in Shanghai—regards himself primarily as “an artist rather than a Chinese artist,” and the market for his work is within the “transnational artscape.”⁷⁵ Yet his films also have a particular resonance with regard to Shanghai, in their explorations of the young, transnational, intellectual experience in China, their hinting at the “unease that seeps through the cracks in this brave new world,” and their suggestion of the loneliness and dislocation that may accompany the condition of being cosmopolitan.⁷⁶

Coda: There's No Place Like Home

In his analysis of Thai literary responses to globalization, Suradech Chotiudompant argues that “the cosmopolis can become a space of emptiness in which people lack a sense of belonging to their locality.”⁷⁷ Rootlessness as the bi-product of a cosmopolitan sensibility is certainly evident in Kevin Kai Huang's *Park Shanghai* (2008), which follows the reunion of a group of former university classmates.⁷⁸ Aged in their late twenties, they are of the first One Child Policy generation and also have no living memory of the Cultural Revolution. Although not in the elite stratum of wealthy young Shanghainese, they are affluent, fashionable and well-educated, comfortable conversing in English, and have experience of living overseas. As such,

⁷⁴ Berry, “The New Gestural Cinema,” 18, 27.

⁷⁵ Claire Roberts, “Tolerance: The World of Yang Fudong,” *Humanities Research* 29, no. 2 (2013), <http://press.anu.edu.au/apps/bookworm/view/Humanities+Research+Vol+XIX.+No.+2.+2013/10571/ch08.xhtml>; Berry, “The New Gestural Cinema.”

⁷⁶ Berry, “The New Gestural Cinema,” 27.

⁷⁷ Suradech Chotiudompant, “Cosmopolitanism and Its Limits in Contemporary Thai Novels,” in *Disturbing Conventions: Decentering Thai Literary Cultures*, ed. Rachel V. Harrison (London: Rowman and Littlefield International, 2014), 224.

⁷⁸ I am grateful to the director for providing me with a copy of this film for viewing.

they are representative of the figure of the young, Shanghainese cosmopolitan—the aspirational class that might well sometimes shop at Chanel, Dior or Prada.

In Huang's film there is a listless, empty quality to their lives. Dialogue-heavy, and shot in an understated fashion, using mainly interior locations, the most striking sequence occurs mid-way through the film, when the central character, Dong, goes onto the roof of the KTV building where the party is taking place, to have a cigarette with an old acquaintance, Nick, who is unrelated to the class reunion. The gregarious Nick, a diasporic Chinese who speaks an English-Mandarin patois, also begins talking to Wu Yi, a Mongolian ethnic minority Chinese, who works as a drinks waiter at the KTV venue, and is taking a break on the rooftop. Nick asks Wu Yi if he is local, to which the waiter responds that he doesn't know where he is from, having moved around so much in his life. Although the conversation is between Nick and Wu Yi, the camera focuses on a largely mute Dong during this scene, and as he slowly wanders around the rooftop, there is a sense that he shares Wu Yi's feelings of uncertainty as to where he belongs (Fig. 62).



Fig. 62: A feeling of rootlessness
Copyright Haixiang Media

When Nick then leaves to re-join his friends, Dong remains outside and climbs a set of stairs up to a higher level to survey the city. From his vantage point he looks down on a group of youths, skateboarding on the lower level—an activity popularly associated with countercultural, drifter types (Fig. 63). Dong's own privileged socio-economic position offers him a mobility not necessarily afforded this group, and yet he seems equally adrift. The scene affirms Szerszynski and Urry's

observation that “one of the more subtle but highly significant implications of the cosmopolitan condition is the way that growing numbers of humans might now be said to ‘inhabit’ their world at a distance.”⁷⁹



Figure 63: Rooftop drifters

Dong’s rooftop position affords him a view of the city, but this is not the triumphant skyline presented in the SUPEC’s Virtual World exhibit, nor Lagerfeld’s cinematic “set.” A layer of smog films the evening air, as cars move along an overpass, next to a series of nondescript tower blocks. Other than a ferris wheel (a symbol of fairground escapism and a ride defined by cyclical motion), there are no distinct landmarks, and certainly none of the glamour zones most associated with Shanghai (Fig. 64). This is closer to Koolhaas’ image of the homogenous, “generic city,” in which, he speculates, “maybe...characterlessness provides the best context for living.”⁸⁰ Yet Dong does not seem liberated by this environment in the way Koolhaas imagines. He is the type of mobile individual for whom Shanghai’s touristed landscape offers itself up for pleasurable consumption, but as he gazes out

⁷⁹ Bronislaw Szerszynski and John Urry, “Visuality, mobility, and the cosmopolitan: inhabiting the world from afar,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 57, no. 1 (2006), 115.

⁸⁰ Quoted from interview in, Katrina Heron, “From Bauhaus to Koolhaas,” *Wired* 4, no. 7 (1996), <http://archive.wired.com/wired/archive/4.07/koolhaas.html>. As de Kloet and Scheen note, there is an “ironic undertone and iconoclastic nature” to Koolhaas’ statements. [“Pudong: the *shanzhai* global city,” 697.]

over a city that has changed radically in the course of his lifetime, the challenge facing this young cosmopolitan is in trying to locate what now constitutes home.



Figure 64: There's no place like home

Ulf Hannerz has characterized the cosmopolitan mind-set as “a state of readiness, a personal ability to make one’s way into other cultures”—that is, a state of anticipation.⁸¹ Suradech notes that, in Hannerz’s “rigid categorisation, most cosmopolitans belong to the middle-class group who tend to have enough financial privileges to enjoy cultural difference and diversity in an aesthetic manner.”⁸² In arguing against Hannerz’s “Eurocentric narrative of cosmopolitan privilege,” Mica Nava stresses a more rebellious quality in cosmopolitanism’s openness to difference, “rooted in a psychic revolt against the parents and the parental culture—not only, therefore, in a sense of not-belonging, of no-home, no-country, but also in a desire to escape *from* family, home and country.”⁸³

It has been noted in the course of this thesis that contemporary Shanghai displays a culture of anticipation, one of the defining characteristics of which is a tension between the city as a site of escapist fantasy, and the corollary generation of a desire *for* escape in its inhabitants. As has been implied in Chapter Three, this may be read, in part, as a symptom of postsocialist Shanghai’s rapid re-engagement with capitalist modernity. In light of the divergent positions of Hannerz and Nava, though,

⁸¹ Hannerz, “Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture,” 239.

⁸² Suradech, “Cosmopolitanism and Its Limits in Contemporary Thai Novels,” 220.

⁸³ Nava, “Cosmopolitan Modernity,” 90.

it seems possible to speculate that this tension may also derive from the (related) condition of contemporary Shanghai grappling with what it means to be cosmopolitan. It must be emphasized that this is not meant to imply that there already exists some ideal model of Western cosmopolitanism towards which Shanghai is maturing. Rather, it is that Shanghai is now consciously branding itself as a “Cosmopolitan City” (Fig. 65) and the challenges and contradictions that present themselves in this—the complex relationships between the conceived space of the cosmopolitan city and its lived experience—demand attention in the West, as much as in China, for the lessons that may be learned.

Hannerz defines cosmopolitanism as “an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness towards divergent cultural experiences.”⁸⁴ However, he “excludes tourists, migrant workers and exiles of oppression as necessarily possessing this intellectual disposition, presenting an intellectuality that is privileged and located as a minority.”⁸⁵ Even setting aside the problematic nature of Eurocentric, privileged, male bias in Hannerz’s definition, conceptualizing cosmopolitanism primarily as an individual “mode of orientation to the world”—with strict parameters for that individual—is clearly insufficient when thinking about what it might mean for a city to be cosmopolitan.⁸⁶ The Shanghai Municipal Government itself speaks in broad terms of the city “accepting different cultures, just like the sea containing all rivers,” (*haina baichuan*), though this can readily slip into simply conflating cosmopolitanism with the vaguely defined idea of *guojihua*, or “being international” (Fig. 65).⁸⁷ As Hongwei Bao cautions (following Bruce Robbins) “cosmopolitanism should not be considered as a utopian world of universal love and mutual understanding, instead it points to a domain of contested politics.”⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Hannerz, “Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture,” 239.

⁸⁵ Tay, “Looking Modern,” 101.

⁸⁶ Szerszynski and Urry, “Visuality, mobility, and the cosmopolitan,” 114.

⁸⁷ Ma Ran discusses the term *guojihua* as it has been used in connection to promoting the Shanghai International Film Festival as a marker of the city’s cosmopolitanism: “In an interview with SINA.COM.CN, the Vice Executive Secretary General of the SIFF Organizing Committee, Tang Lijun (also a government official of Shanghai), admitted that their articulation of ‘being international’ was a bit ambiguous. Instead she suggested that they considered ‘diversification’ (*duoyuan*) as an interchangeable term, which was no less fuzzily defined by the spokeswoman.” [“Celebrating the International, Disremembering Shanghai,” 152.]

⁸⁸ Hongwei Bao, “Queering/Querying Cosmopolitanism: Queer Spaces in Shanghai,” *Culture Unbound* 4 (2012), 102. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins, ed. *Cosmopolitics*:

The rooftop scene in *Park Shanghai* intimates the limitations of Hannerz's prescriptive definition. Dong and (especially) Nick fit the mould of highly mobile individuals, ready "to immerse themselves in different local cultures with an open perspective and a willingness to learn about and appreciate cultural difference," whereas Wu Yi is a migrant worker, who has not been abroad, and whose movement around China has been determined by economic necessity rather than an active pursuit of "divergent cultural phenomena."⁸⁹ And yet, he must equally find ways of negotiating the complex flows of twenty-first century Shanghai, whilst the film also implicates Dong's sense of disconnection and lack of belonging within the same space-time location as the various drifters on the KTV building's rooftop. In this way the scene endorses Ackbar Abbas' observation on contemporary cosmopolitanism:

The cosmopolitan today will have to include at least some of the less privileged men and women placed or displaced in the transnational space of the city and who are trying to make sense of its spatial and temporal contradictions: the cosmopolitan not as a universalist arbiter of value, but as an arbitrageur/arbitrageuse... This is arbitrage with a difference. It does not mean the use of technologies to maximise profits in a global world but refers to everyday strategies for negotiating the disequilibria and dislocations that globalism has created [and]... to the larger historical lessons that can be drawn from our experiences of the city.⁹⁰

Shanghai has changed drastically since Abbas' article was published in 2000, but his words seem every bit as pressing today, and although an extended investigation into "the less privileged men and women placed or displaced in the transnational space of the city" is beyond the scope of this thesis, I now conclude by considering some of these "everyday strategies for negotiating the disequilibria and dislocations that globalism has created," and their intersection with cinema, anticipation, and the touristic city.

Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

⁸⁹ Suradech, "Cosmopolitanism and Its Limits in Contemporary Thai Novels," 220.

⁹⁰ Ackbar Abbas, "Cosmopolitan De-scriptions: Shanghai and Hong Kong," *Public Culture*, 12, no. 3, 786.

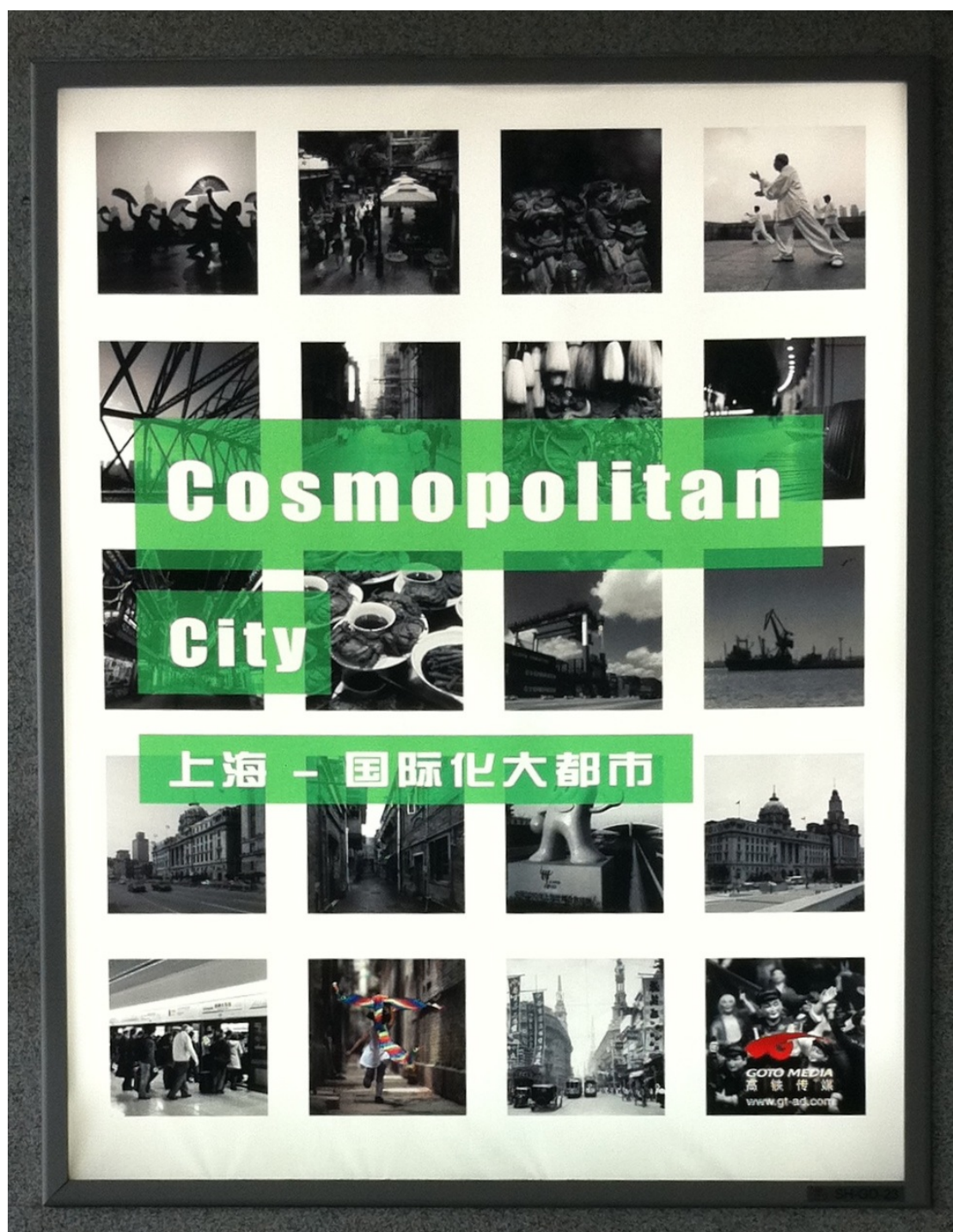


Fig. 65: Cosmopolitan branding: *shanghai – guojihua da dushi*
 A poster displayed in Shanghai's Hongqiao train Station (2011).
 The translation of the Chinese is "Shanghai – International Metropolis."
 Copyright GOTO Media

SIX

Conclusion: Shanghai Counterpoint

Confessions of a Tour Guide

In the Introduction it was noted that, rather than succumbing to the “illusion of bringing the pure gaze of some absolute spectator to bear on the world,” I had consciously allowed my personal experience of Shanghai to inform my selection of sources.¹ Consequently, it could be argued that my identification of a culture of anticipation—entwined with the generation of a touristed urban landscape and the promotion of the city as a cosmopolitan metropolis—is reliant on having considered the city from a tourist’s perspective. This is a valid point that requires addressing. As emphasized in the Introduction, I certainly do not claim that the heterogeneous culture of such a vast and varied city as Shanghai can be fully accounted for in the terms of the analysis that I have offered. Rather, my discussion of anticipation becomes one way of thinking about the cultural impulses of the contemporary city, and future research would seek to enrich this analysis by considering a wider range of textual sources, physical sites, and different communities within Shanghai.

Even if the experience of contemporary Shanghai described in this thesis did only pertain to foreign visitors’ encounters with the city, there would still be merit in this analysis, especially in light of the large number of foreign tourists to the city (2010 saw 7.3 million overseas visitors, with the city aiming to attract 10 million annually by 2015), who have a significant impact on Shanghai’s economy.² However, whilst there has been a particular focus on the Western imagination of, and encounter with, Shanghai in the previous two chapters, I have also sought to

¹ Dominique Lecourt, *The Mediocracy: French Philosophy Since the Mid-1970s*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2001). Cited in Isolde Standish, *A New History of Japanese Cinema: A Century of Narrative Film* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 27.

² Anne Tang, “Shanghai Targets 70% growth in tourism revenues by 2015,” *Xinhua*, 17 February 2011, http://english.gov.cn/2011-02/17/content_1804809.htm.

demonstrate that the “touristed landscape” is not solely restricted to the experience of foreign visitors. Far more significant to the city’s economy than the several million foreign tourists is the vast number of domestic tourists. In 2010, Shanghai received 215 million domestic tourists, with plans to attract 240 million by 2015. Perhaps more pertinently, the Shanghai Municipal Government set a target in 2011 to increase tourism revenues by a remarkable 70% by 2015, earning 520 billion yuan (78.9 billion US dollars) and contributing 8.5% of the city’s GDP. By that same year, the aim was to create a further 300,000 jobs in the local tourist industry.³ Within this context, it is the government that fosters a mode (or modes) of touristic consumption through spaces such as the SUPEC, as much as the global fashion industry does through its multi-platform marketing strategies.

The vision of a touristic Shanghai becomes a widely disseminated way of imagining the city, which extends not only to the experiences of foreign and domestic tourists, but also the growing expatriate population (which exceeded 173,000 by early 2013—a 6.7% increase from 2011), as suggested by the metropolitan gateway films discussed in Chapter Four, and affluent local residents as portrayed in the film *Leaving Me Loving You*.⁴ Foreign capital and commerce—as evidenced through a brief discussion of the global fashion industry in Chapter Five—intersects with this process, impacting not only on the circulation of certain imaginations of Shanghai, but also on the physical space of the city, through its relationship to real estate prices and retail practices. Meanwhile, although it is the affluent classes, both local and non-local, who can most readily indulge in touristic consumption of the city, the practice is not necessarily restricted to these people. Indeed, the fieldtrip undertaken by the female migrant workers of the Zhabei Sisters’ Club, referred to in Chapter Three, suggests that the promoted pleasures of the touristed landscape may be latched onto by potentially marginalized individuals as a means of feeling integrated in the city. Sites such as the Bund Promenade or the Oriental Pearl Tower are the most obvious examples of the touristed landscape, but the effects of this landscape, and its entwinement with a culture of anticipation and the notion of being cosmopolitan, are not restricted to specific, signature tourist attractions. This became particularly

³ Ibid.

⁴ Tiffany Wang, “The Decline of the Expat: Foreigners in China Proliferate, But Become Less Special,” *Tea Leaf Nation*, 20 February 2013, <http://www.tealeafnation.com/2013/02/the-decline-of-the-expat-foreigners-in-china-proliferate-but-become-less-special/>.

apparent to me on my last visit to Shanghai—an experience which I wish briefly now to discuss, due to its relevance to the themes of this thesis.

In May 2013, my brother encouraged me to coincide a research trip to Shanghai with a concert series being given in the city by the Aurora Orchestra, with which he was on tour. The series was staged at the Shanghai Concert Hall in Huangpu District, just south of People’s Square (Fig. 66). The venue itself provides a particularly dramatic example of the Municipal Government’s conservation policy in which the preservation of high profile historical buildings invokes “a continuity with a legendary past” and “an implicit assertion of the state’s involvement in and contribution to the future development of Shanghai,” amidst an unprecedented building boom.⁵ Remarkably, in 2007, the entire concert hall was lifted 1.7 metres and relocated 66.4 metres to the east to make way for the Yan’an Elevated Road.⁶



Fig. 66: The Shanghai Concert Hall
The banner is advertising the Aurora Orchestra’s concert series

⁵ Abbas, “Play It Again Shanghai,” 49.

⁶ Enerpac, “The Shanghai Concert Hall lifting and moving project,” *Enerpac*, <http://www.enerpac.com/en-us/projects/markets/buildings-and-stadiums-0/the-shanghai-concert-hall-lifting-and-moving-project>.

Staged in this 1930s building, the orchestra's Mini Festival was a four-day event that provided a condensed version of the South Bank Centre's *The Rest is Noise* festival—a year-long programme of events exploring the most important Western music of the twentieth century. These concerts might be seen as the musical equivalent of the metropolitan gateway films discussed in Chapter Four. They provided an opportunity for Shanghai concertgoers to experience a whistle-stop tour of Western classical music, whilst for many of the orchestra's players this was a first visit to China. In a spirit of transnational cultural engagement, the orchestra also collaborated with young players from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. The concerts were enthusiastically received by a largely local audience, who could strengthen their cosmopolitan credentials listening to a programme ranging from Schoenberg to Ligeti—though the loudest cheer was reserved for a rendition of a trio of pieces by the US-based Chinese composer Huang Ruo.

The festival provided an international showcase for Aurora, but was also part of Shanghai's own cosmopolitan branding, associating the city with a leading UK orchestra and, via the Southbank connection, a world famous arts venue. Furthermore, it became an opportunity for Shanghai to showcase itself to these international musicians, who were hosted at one of the city's leading hotels, the Longemont. Acting as a quasi-tour guide, I observed the ways in which the orchestra's members consumed the city, and also my own role as an intermediary figure. Indeed, more so than on any previous visit to Shanghai, I was conscious of my (privileged) mobility in being able to switch between the roles of fellow traveller, visiting scholar, China Old Hand, and local guide, in a manner typical of how Cartier describes the touristed landscape.⁷

Unsurprisingly, the first port of call for almost all of the players was the Bund Promenade area, followed by a cocktail on the 87th floor of the Park Hyatt Hotel in Lujiazui, affording a glittering birds-eye view of the Huangpu at night. Notably, many of the musicians had also read about the SUPEC in guidebooks, and elected to visit the museum as a way of acquainting themselves with the city. Various players used the adjective “cinematic” to describe the Lujiazui skyline and spoke excitedly of the thrill of speeding along the city's neon-lit elevated highways at night. They also marvelled at the height of the skyscrapers and soaked up the atmosphere of the bars

⁷ Cartier, “Seductions of Place/Touristed Landscapes, 3.

of the French Concession and the Tianzifang art zone—referred to by a number of the musicians as “cosmopolitan.” Yet, talking to several of the players some months later, the experience they particularly reminisced about was not an overtly spectacular one. Rather, the favoured memory was of a neighbourhood restaurant where we headed for a late-night dinner on several occasions. Although almost opposite the Longemont, the pleasure came from feeling suddenly “local.” Of course, this sentiment was, itself, a form of touristic consumption—dropping into an immersive multi-sensory environment of new sights, sounds, and smells, with the heady anticipation of how these unfamiliar dishes might taste—yet able the following night to eat at an international restaurant, order room service, or return to the neighbourhood diner as desired.⁸

Ironically, despite being perceived as the knowledgeable local, I was also spending the daytime, whilst the orchestra rehearsed, attempting to reacquaint myself with a city that had changed rapidly in the eighteen months since my previous visit, and visiting locations of which I had no prior experience. Doing this provided evidence of how aspects of the culture of anticipation extend beyond the confines of the SUPEC, the spectacle of the Bund Promenade, and the cinematic immersion of the Bund Sightseeing Tunnel, and are dispersed more broadly within the lived space of the city. An example of this is provided at the end of this section, but first it is worth reiterating the various elements of this anticipatory culture that have been determined over the course of the previous chapters.

At its most basic level, anticipation entails both looking expectantly to the future and attempting to grasp the moment in advance. This fosters a spirit of *spectaculation*, in which artifice does not seek to deceive, so much as attract and make real. Hence “domestic and international investors did not come to Shanghai because of its booming economy, but because of the *image* of a booming economy, an image created by the Pudong skyline.”⁹ Reassurance from the inherent uncertainty this entails is offered by an emphasis on mapping. This mapping is both spatial and temporal. The hegemonic vision of this evinces cinematic qualities, both in the ways that the city space—and movement through it—are conceived (with, for example, a

⁸ For an example of a multi-sensory approach to analyzing Western consumption patterns in Shanghai, see Lagerkvist, “Gazing at Pudong—‘With a Drink in Your Hand.’”

⁹ De Kloet and Scheen, “Pudong: the *shanzhai* global city,” 702; see also, Greenspan, “The Power of Spectacle.”

prevalence of panoramic and birds-eye views), and the montage-like approach to history, in which linear narrative can be re-edited and moments juxtaposed to suggest new meaning. The past is evoked—and invoked—as a means of anticipating the future, with time seemingly repeating yet also moving forward in a manner suggestive of a spiral; a geometric pattern which, curiously, manifests itself in the spatial form of the city and becomes linked to a theme of time travel in films.

A constant emphasis on grasping the moment in advance, the accelerated pace of life, and rapid urban transformations, may result in a state of hyperstimulus, with the need for ever increasing sensation, as understood by Simmel in his diagnosis of the neuropathology of modernity. The hegemonic vision of the city anticipates this need by promoting Shanghai as a touristed landscape, an immersive cinematic environment of pleasure to be thrillingly enjoyed. Such a view is buttressed by the portrayal of Shanghai in metropolitan gateway films which themselves function as anticipatory threshold spaces; interfaces between China and the West, with the city imagined as a site of transformative desire and endless possibility. The global fashion industry seeks similarly to reify this view of Shanghai, drawing on the city's legacy as China's fashion capital in its own projections of future success and its promise that it can anticipate the next fashionable look. In these various visions of the city, the urban landscape becomes both a site of escapist fantasy and a crucible for cross-cultural apprehension, the epitome of a cosmopolitan metropolis. Yet, there are corollary anxieties: a fear of wasting time, of failing to seize the moment, of being trapped and apprehended, and a sense of drifting loneliness and a yearning to escape from the present. These tensions are, in part, suggestive of the complex challenges of cosmopolitanism, which may demand a stance of constant anticipation, mobility and readiness to embrace difference, whilst also entailing a sense of not belonging, of rootlessness and a wish to break away from an established order. Finally, the Chinese concept of *shanzhai* suggests how copycat practices may intersect with this culture of anticipation as they recycle, but also innovate, spiralling chaotically forwards, anticipating new trends whilst borrowing from elsewhere.

Yongkang Road: A Very (Un)Cosmopolitan Street

I had arrived in Shanghai several days in advance of the orchestra, and on my second evening there was invited out for a drink by two old friends who had been living in the city for almost three years. By chance, I had also been visiting Shanghai around the time they first arrived and it was a curious role reversal to find myself this time being guided by their recommendations on places to eat, shop, and visit. The city had undergone so many changes in the past three years that it felt, in certain respects, more confusing than when I originally moved to Shanghai in 2006 because this time I arrived with a mental map of the city, only to discover that large sections of it had to be rewritten. My friends were keen to take me for drinks on Yongkang Road in the area known as the French Concession, as they suspected I would be interested in the recent commercial development in this place. The names of the surrounding streets were familiar but I had no recollection of having visited that specific road in the past, and certainly no expectation of the scene I encountered there when we arrived. What had, until recently, been a relatively quiet street was now lined on either side with small bars, café and eateries. The customers, numbering several hundred, were largely Westerners, though there were also some Chinese. In 2009 the local government had provided the Platform development company with a contract to transform the area into a shopping street. After this initial scheme failed to take off, the street was developed into its current form.¹⁰

The demographic of the street's clientele—a combination of young, international professionals, many of them working in creative industries such as advertising and marketing, and twenty-something travellers who had incorporated Shanghai into their Asian itinerary—was indicative of the growing number and changing patterns of Western short and long-term visitors to the city. A *China Daily USA* article on the street quotes a young British designer, and frequenter of Yongkang Road: “We love this old street. There are traditional grocery stores and shoe shops here and we don't need to dress up like we would if we were going to fancy bars on the Bund. It's very Shanghainese here, people feel comfortable and

¹⁰ Jamie Fullerton, “The Battle for Yongkang Lu,” *Time Out Shanghai*, 3 October 2013, http://www.timeoutshanghai.com/features/Bars__Clubs-Nightlife_features/14537/The-battle-for-Yongkang-Lu.html.

relaxed."¹¹ Conversations with customers revealed similar sentiments that this was a trendy, relaxed and preferable alternative to the bars located on the Bund which were regarded as being for tourists and the city's high-rollers. Filled with a range of eating and drinking options, from Japanese yakitori to Belgian Trappist beer, with thriving independent businesses, owned both by foreigners and Chinese, and with patrons who appreciate the area for its simultaneous diversity and local flavour, the street would seem in many ways to be a marker of Shanghai's growing cosmopolitanism.



Fig. 67: Yongkang Road: A 'cosmopolitan' scene
Copyright Tobias Kegler/teNeues Digital Media

And yet, at ten o'clock, there was a distinct change in atmosphere. The street had been getting busier and noisier over the past few hours. The bars were by no means winding down, but when it reached that time, the owners of the various establishments informed their customers that there was a strictly enforced curfew due

¹¹ Zhou Wenting, "Bar street heaven for expats, hell for locals," *China Daily USA*, 17 July 2013, http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-07/17/content_16787264.htm.

to local residents' complaints over noise pollution. People were welcome to quietly finish their drinks inside, but were not to remain on the street. Most of the drinkers seemed oblivious to the request and made little effort to leave the area. Suddenly a cascade of water fell from an upper floor window, followed by another, and another. Frustrated residents have taken to hurling water into the street in a desperate attempt to make the revellers leave the area as noise levels have become so disruptive.



Fig. 68: A local response to late night revellers

Derrida, interrogating the tension between Kant's notion of cosmopolitanism law as encompassing "universal hospitality without limit" and the exclusion of a "*right of residence*" from his definition of that hospitality, wrote:

Hospitality is culture itself and not simply one ethic amongst others. Insofar as it has to do with the *ethos*, that is, the residence, one's home, the familiar place of dwelling, inasmuch as it is a manner of being there, the manner in which we relate to ourselves and to others, to others as our own or as foreigners, *ethics is hospitality*.¹²

¹² Jacques Derrida, "On Cosmopolitanism," in *The Cosmopolitanism Reader*, ed Garrett Wallace Brown and David Held (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 419.

His concern (in an essay on the notion of cosmopolitan “cities of refuge” for asylum seekers) is with the “always possible perversion of the law of hospitality” when the state police and legal apparatus determine what constitutes a right of residence. The behaviour of many of those drinking and eating in Yongkang Road might be seen as a violation of hospitality in that there is also an implied ethical responsibility on the part of the guest to the host. But this raises the question of who constituted the host in this context.

The owners of the bars are keen to have this business, whilst the private developers of the street (in conjunction with the local government) are now seeking to buy out the local residents and redevelop surrounding streets as well.¹³ As such, the revellers are being actively encouraged to socialize in these areas and respond by gratefully making the most of the hospitality extended to them. It is, rather, the locals who have had their right of residence called into question. If, as Derrida suggests, *ethics is hospitality* and rooted, through *ethos*, in “the familiar place of dwelling,” then it follows that, to show hospitality—that is to show a spirit of cosmopolitanism—requires a firm sense of home. In this instance, though, the local residents have had their own place of dwelling *defamiliarized*. They have been divested of the basis for the gift of hospitality. In this light, the development of Yongkang Road emerges not as a triumph of local cosmopolitanism, a welcoming embrace of difference, but a victory for the market and a reminder that, in China, the state’s imagination of cosmopolitanism “remains closely tied up to both global capitalism and neoliberalism.”¹⁴

However, in the context of the arguments put forth in this thesis, what was most striking of all about the Yongkang Road residents’ improvised protest, was that, rather than taking these water bombs as a cue to leave the streets, large numbers of people instead flooded back into the middle of the road, cheering, goading, and crying out for more. The residents duly responded and this grotesque pageant continued for a further half hour. The protest had been appropriated into the touristed landscape, and recast into an attraction—an (at times literally) immersive spectacle to be eagerly anticipated each night (Figs. 69 & 70).

¹³ Fullerton, “The Battle for Yongkang Lu.”

¹⁴ Hongwei Bao, “Queering/Querying Cosmopolitanism,” 102.



Fig. 69: Showtime: Waiting for another water bomb on Yongkang Road



Fig. 70: Encore!

Shanghai Escapade

The preceding discussion of Yongkang Road demonstrates how, in Lefebvre's terms, spatial practice, the conceived space and the lived space exist in dialectical tension. The state, the private developers and bar owners have conceptions of how the street can be productively transformed. Realizing this vision (or visions) impacts on the spatial practices of the physical environment—the layout of the street, its lighting, the range of activities performed in that setting. It also impacts on how the space is emotionally understood. For example, for local residents the street may represent a former refuge after a long day's work, which has now become a site of unbearable noise and overpowering restaurant smells; for the bar owners this may be the realization of a long-held dream of running a business; for expatriates it may be a place to swap anecdotes, network and unwind; and for travellers to the city, perhaps a welcome opportunity to meet other English-speakers. Following Pred's notion of place as "process," it can be seen that the street is always evolving.¹⁵ The negative reaction of residents to the developments engenders new spatial practices, such as the throwing of water—though this, in turn, may provoke different receptions: it may be understood as a source of entertainment, or shame, or a threat to profits. Possibly it may even encourage re-imaginings at the conceived level from the state and private developers. Such negotiations are always occurring in the process of place making. What matters is the relevant agency or otherwise that different stakeholders have in directing the outcomes of this process, and—linked to this—how the workings of this process are mediated.

What is apparent is that the complexity of these negotiations is effaced in the hegemonic vision of the city's development. As emphasized in Chapter Two, this does not primarily constitute a silencing of dissent; rather, hegemony seeks to generate "spontaneous consent," such that the outcomes in the process of place-making are seen as widely desirable. Cinema's implication in this process has been considered in the previous chapters, both in terms of the cinematic as a mode of conceptualizing the city, and specific films as offering evidence of how certain recurring imaginations of the city are circulated. Although the films analyzed so far

¹⁵ Allan Pred, "Place as Historically Contingent Process: Structuration and the Time-Geography of Becoming Places," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 74, no. 2 (1984), 279–297.

may have hinted at anxieties regarding the contemporary city, they have largely buttressed the hegemonic vision of the city as a harmonious, cosmopolitan space, to be consumed in a touristic fashion. Having indicated in the discussion of Yongkang Road a tangible example of frictions occurring in the city due to a disconnection between the lived space and the conceived space, leading to conflicting spatial practices, I conclude this thesis by offering two examples of films that more vigorously criticize the dominant representation of the city, Zhao Dayong's *Street Life* (2006) and Andrew Y-S Cheng's *Shanghai Panic* (2001).

More specifically, I argue that these films are both informed by, and seek to critique, various aspects of the culture of anticipation that have been previously identified. In doing this, I suggest that the protagonists in these films—and the films themselves—employ a tactical response to the culture of anticipation that shares something of the liberatory subversiveness of Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque.¹⁶ This idea of tactical responses to the hegemonic vision of the city is introduced here more as an indication of future paths for investigation, with the film discussions that follow necessarily brief. However, a term for this mode of engagement may be speculatively proposed, which foregrounds certain characteristics of the culture of anticipation within which it works—*escapade*. As noted, the touristed landscape, with its constant generation of expectation and desire, forms a central element of the culture of anticipation, promising the city as a site of carefree enjoyment. Yet several of the sources previously discussed have also contained an undercurrent of yearning for some form of escape. Escapade carries with it both the sense of adventure, and—from its Latin origin, *excappare*—the notion of escape from confinement or restraint. It is an escape that is, however, only temporary—a performance of escape. In this way it may be understood as a response to the effects of the contemporary city for those who lack privileged forms of mobility. And, crucially, it also has connotations of unconventionality, mischievousness, and possibly lawlessness. That is to say, it displays a *shanzhai* spirit.

¹⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1968).

Shanghai Vice

Tim Cresswell notes that, “The creation of place by necessity involves the definition of what lies outside. To put it another way the ‘outside’ plays a crucial role in the definition of the ‘inside.’ ...Often, when people, things and practices are seen as ‘out-of-place’ they are described as pollution and dirt.” Two examples he offers of groups who are frequently regarded in this way are the homeless and those whose sexuality is “out-of-place.”¹⁷ The films considered here deal with these two groups—homeless, petty criminals in *Street Life*, and a collection of queer sexualities in *Shanghai Panic*, which also features a female, heterosexual, occasional hustler. Cresswell’s studies of place focus on examples drawn from the Western world. However, these two groups are likewise typically defined as being “out-of-place” in Shanghai, whilst nonetheless being related to popular imaginations of a city which has been known not only as “The Pearl,” but also “The Whore of the Orient,” and an infamous site of vice and corruption.

Street Life: Recycling the City

Yomi Braester has described how Shanghai’s reputation for moral depravity framed a political rhetoric during the Maoist years that focussed on the need to cleanse the city’s filth.¹⁸ With the post-Open Door Reform Era, and the end of ultra-leftist ideology, an excess of the revolutionary zeal to purge remained and had to be directed elsewhere. It has found a new outlet for this in campaigns to clean up the city’s environment, particularly through the Suzhou Creek Rehabilitation Project, which has endeavoured to turn an area of stagnant waterways and dilapidated warehouses into a mixed-use business, residential, arts and leisure district: “The underbelly of the city, its network of ports and waterways once the stage for triad deals, drug traffickers, and houses of ill repute, is being sanitized to make its flows of capital more ‘transparent.’”¹⁹ However, the language of “murky flows” still has currency in Shanghai, and this has frequently conjoined the notion of filth with the

¹⁷ Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction*, 102–104.

¹⁸ Braester, *Painting the City Red*, 56–94.

¹⁹ Visser, *Cities Surround the Countryside*, 193.

influx of migrant workers into the city, searching for financial improvement.²⁰ Lacking a Shanghai *hukou* (residency permit) these individuals have no recourse to social services provision and finding stable employment is a challenge. Many end up destitute and living on the margins of society, and some, as with the individuals in *Street Life*, are forced to engage in a mixture of petty crime, begging and scavenging as a means of surviving.

Zhao's film (also known as *Living on Nanjing Road*) is an independent documentary focussing on a loose collection of homeless individuals living around the city's famous Nanjing Road, mentioned in Chapter Five as the "Oriental Fifth Avenue." The semi-pedestrianized eastern end of the street intersects with the Bund and is one of the city's busiest locations. It is around this area that these men and young boys eke out a living, sometimes engaging in opportunistic pickpocketing, bag snatching and thieving of bikes, electrical wire and manhole covers, but primarily spending hours every day collecting empty plastic bottles that are sold on through a chain of buyers until they are eventually recycled. One of the great ironies of the film is that these men, so associated with dirt, effectively help keep the city clean. Furthermore, whilst they have been failed by postsocialist China's embrace of capitalism, they are acutely, obsessively, attuned to the workings of the market economy. There is not much for these men to be excitedly looking forward to, yet they inhabit a hyper-anticipatory environment in which each item is finally calibrated for its transactional worth, every cigarette guarded as a prized possession to gift or trade, and every bottle perceived as a minute profit to be made before it has even touched the ground.

Shot on hand-held camera, Zhao's documentary belongs to a mode called *jishizhuyi*, "on-the-spot realism," characterized by "a spontaneous and unscripted quality."²¹ More specifically, it is a film informed by the experience of *xianchang*, which Luke Robinson translates as "liveness...a state requiring the simultaneous copresence of director, event and audience: in other words, it is the ability to capture or watch something when it happens, where it happens."²² Zhang Zhen describes its

²⁰ Gamble, *Shanghai in Transition*. See Phil Agland's *Shanghai Vice* (1999) for examples of Shanghainese residents characterizing migrants as a form of pollution.

²¹ Chris Berry, "Getting Real: Chinese Documentary, Chinese Postsocialism," in Zhang Zhen, ed. *The Urban Generation*, 122.

²² Luke Robinson, *Independent Chinese Documentary: From the Studio to the Street* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 30.

aesthetic as “a particular social and epistemic space in which orality, performativity, and an irreducible specificity of personal and social experience are acknowledged, recorded, and given aesthetic expression.”²³ This *xianchang* mode becomes an appropriate formal approach to work within and complicate a culture of anticipation. Being “on-the-spot” and capturing “something when it happens, where it happens,” is suggestive of the anticipatory urge to grasp that has already been remarked on at several points. And yet, there is also a fundamental difference. As Robinson emphasizes, *xianchang* is defined by its “contingent” nature. Things have to be allowed to happen before they can be captured, they may not be seized in advance. This, in turn, demands a readiness and a flexibility, but it is not deterministic, it is not mapped out in advance. Indeed this readiness and openness to changing circumstance might be thought of as an invitation—a gifting of hospitality to the event of others. In this respect it becomes a cosmopolitan filmmaking practice, even if the subject matter does not immediately appear as such.

Zhao’s work is a street level gateway film, taking the viewer into the spatial practices and lived space of these homeless individuals. Although un-staged in all that it records, it is, nonetheless, artfully edited. Through a gradual process of accumulation it builds to a devastating critique of the failed promise of postsocialist China encountered in Shanghai. This is achieved through Zhao’s mapping of space and his mediation of the practices of escapade employed by the subjects of his film. It is striking that the majority of these drifters, with no home in Shanghai, are known to each other by their province of origin. Hence, we are introduced to Anhui, Little Anhui, Hubei and Big Fatty Shandong. Their very names serve to provide them with an identity through place, whilst simultaneously impressing that they are out of place. At times, these subjects explicitly refer to their disappointment in the Shanghai dream. Anhui remarks that, “At first I was full of hope. The views were great. The lights were so beautiful.” The Shanghai spectacle has not lived up to its promise. Little Anhui, meanwhile, articulates the disconnect between the imagined and experienced: “I saw the Oriental Pearl Tower. Not such a big deal actually. I

²³ Zhang Zhen, “Introduction: Bearing Witness: Chinese Urban Cinema in the Era of ‘Transformation’ (*Zhuanxing*),” in Zhang Zhen, ed. *The Urban Generation: Chinese Cinema and Society at the Turn of the Twenty-first Century*. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007)

imagined it would be beautiful with lots of flowers. That's what others told me. But when I saw it I wasn't impressed."

The film's success in critiquing the touristic sensibility attached to Shanghai in the hegemonic vision of the city, resides not only in how it exposes the limitations of the subjects' mobility, but also how, in doing this, it suggests the truly special yet easily taken for granted nature of a privileged touristic mobility. Shot incessantly from a low level, and rooted to the tightly defined locations of the various characters' patches, the film slowly maps the confined space of its protagonists' lives. Deleuze's observation that the cinema "does not give us a figure described in a unique moment, but the continuity of the movement which describes the figure," bears repeating here.²⁴ Zhao's shooting techniques are so different to the sweeping panoramas and birds-eye views offered in the SUPEC that they serve to remind how conditioned is our sense of the figures and the spaces being described, by the type of movement doing the describing. When a momentary sequence (no more than a few seconds) shows Anhui and his girlfriend on a rickshaw bicycle and a pop song plays, the sense of liberation is immense, its brevity and rarity in the film a reminder of the precious and fragile nature of unimpeded movement. A later scene is framed by Zhao to set up a hierarchy of mobility, the camera lingering on a man with crutches as he moves agonizingly slowly across the screen, only for some bicycles to rush past. Behind is a travel agent decorated with airplane logos.

Michael Dutton writes that, "More than a bumper crop in agriculture, mass production of garbage is a sign of vigorous capitalism. It implies an imbalance between desire and matter, an excess of consumption."²⁵ He identifies rubbish as exemplifying a cyclical pattern that contests the relentless march of linear time in Beijing: "Rubbish tells us a lot about a city, not only about the scale and tempo of changes taking place, but also about its fashions and excesses as they are endlessly remade and recycled... For a place like Beijing, where time is linear and progress is unquestioned, the eternal return is itself a dirty word, an irreversible curse."²⁶ We have seen with Shanghai, however, that linear time is not unquestioned. Rather, it loops back on itself with delight as a means of moving forward.

²⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Continuum, 1986), 5.

²⁵ Dutton, *Beijing Time*, 152.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 142.

A parallel between this process and the workings of fashion was noted in Chapter Five. Caroline Evans, invoking Benjamin, describes the fashion historian as a “ragpicker,” who is, in turn, a collector of “the refuse of history.”²⁷ Lagerfeld’s Coco Chanel cycled back through history, appropriating moments of the past to assert her own authentic rights to Shanghai. In *Street Life*, it is the figure of Big Fatty Shandong—the character who might most obviously be said to engage in forms of escapade—who scrabbles through the refuse of history; not simply repurposing material goods, but reworking snatches of old communist ditties, lines from *The Journey to the West*, and imagined martial arts movies. His constant switching of personas, is in some respects an escape from his present existence, but it is a performative escape, one that draws in other people as the street becomes a public space for the sharing of his improvisations.

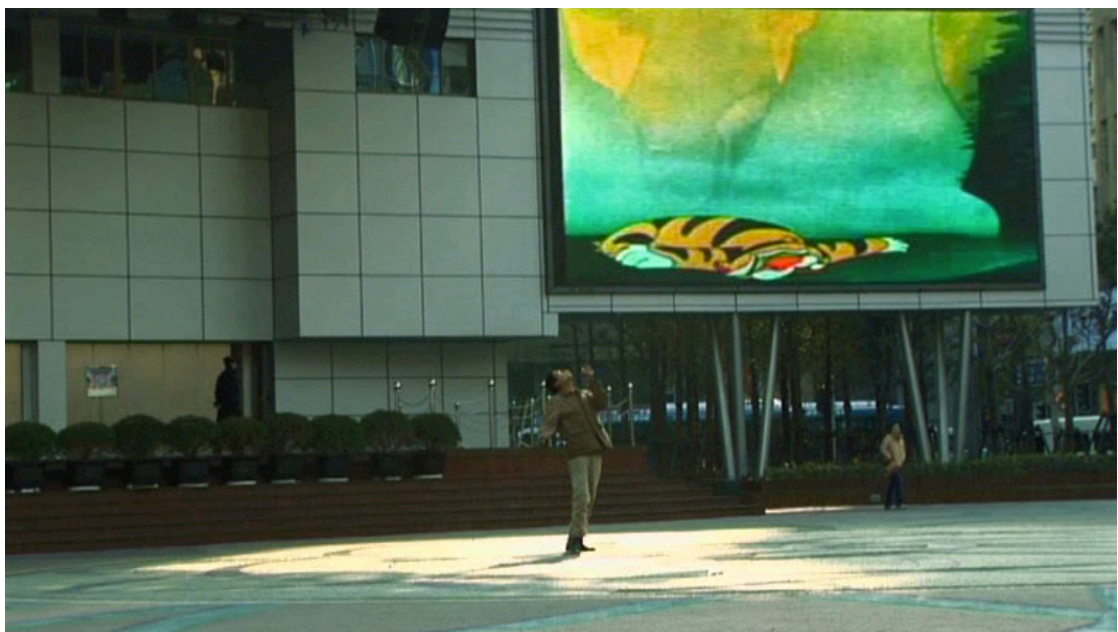


Fig. 71: Parodic reworkings:
Black Skin dancing in front of a screening of *Journey to the West*
Copyright Zhao Dayong

In this way it is not escape as retreat, but escapade as a mode of engagement. And in his juxtaposing of the reworked fragments from the past with the daily grind of the bottle collectors, and the mental disintegration of the hoodlum Black Skin (Fig. 71), Zhang makes the “liveness” of the present deeply historicized. In this way, the

²⁷ Caroline Evans, “Yesterday’s Emblems and Tomorrow’s Commodities,” 108.

disenfranchised condition of these men becomes understood not simply as a consequence of the disequilibria of global capital, but as a local, historically contingent situation; the failings of the postsocialist society with regards to these men constantly reaffirmed in the parodic return of the past—fragments of a history confined by the hegemonic vision of Shanghai, but mischievously set free by Big Fatty's escapade.

Shanghai Panic: Queering the City

Andrew Y-S Cheng's *Shanghai Panic* (2001) suggests a dis-engagement with the city, and certainly an estrangement from the "glamour zone" locations fixated on by the SUPEC and many mainstream films.²⁸ Produced on a very low budget, with limited technical support and using non-professional actors, Cheng's film (for which he was also the scriptwriter, cinematographer, sound recordist and editor) comes about as close as it is possible to being truly "independent." The film's plot is as listless as its five central characters frequently seem. What driving narrative there is concerns the paranoid fear of a young former ballet dancer, Bei, that he has contracted AIDS, which leads to a growing panic amongst his friends as they fixate on his (and their own) possible symptoms. But Cheng is less concerned with the development of a traditional narrative arc than he is with tracing the emotional peregrinations of his characters, as they get high, go clubbing, discuss attempted suicides and explore their sexuality.

Limited financial and technical resources circumscribe the film's aesthetic. However, it is not a case of the film attempting to succeed in spite of these restrictions; there is, instead, a collapsing of form into content, in which the production limitations determine and reinforce the constrained environment the characters inhabit, and produce what Marks would call a "haptic" mode of visibility.²⁹ The one scene shot in a more obvious Shanghai "glamour" location occurs at night around the Bund waterfront area, where the low shutter speed required to capture the footage in such lighting conditions, combined with Cheng's restless camerawork,

²⁸ The film is adapted from the novel, *Wo men hai pa* (*We are Panic*), by the author Mian Mian, who also stars in the film.

²⁹ Marks, *The Skin of the Film*.

frequently results in a blurring of the action. There is more emphasis on displaying the emotional spaces and textures of the characters' lives than the monumental spaces of the city. Indeed, almost all of the exterior scenes in *Shanghai Panic* produce a wider city backdrop that is out of focus, emphasizing the state of dissociation that exists between the characters and the metropolis through which they drift.

The majority of the action takes place within starkly lit interior settings, in which production and narrative requirements again merge together. The use of private apartments for shooting greatly decreases the possibility of external interference, whilst clear sound recording becomes far more manageable in such small interior spaces. At the same time, these settings reinforce the cooped-up nature of the protagonists' lives. This feeling of incarceration is particularly evident as Bei's friends, Kika and Casper, consider the possibility that he may be sent into quarantine on an island if found to have AIDS, whilst Cheng's voyeuristic, fly-on-the-wall style camerawork records the scene through a metal window grille (Fig. 72). As they discuss their fear of being placed under surveillance, Kika suddenly turns to look directly into the camera, breaking the fourth wall. Shortly afterwards she pointedly closes the window and slams shut a nearby door, preventing any further conversation from being filmed. It is a discomfiting moment for the viewer: are we complicit in society's monitoring of these non-mainstream citizens, or are we the ones being observed, and the door closed on our own prison cell? We become implicated in a wider structure of surveillance and control, but our position of power within this system remains ambivalent.

Yet despite the unsettling nature of such moments, the breaking of the fourth wall in Cheng's work also signals a playfulness and sense of hospitality in which the viewer is drawn in at times as a confidant; the flitting between fiction and documentary both critiquing Shanghai's illusory qualities, whilst celebrating a fluidity of roles. As Kika remarks: "Shanghai easily crafts the illusion that it allows you to reach all of your dreams. Actually you can be quickly extinguished or through rapid assimilation become a ubiquitous part of Shanghai instead of yourself. The only thing I can do is to keep from falling into this game about reaching dreams." Amidst the sadness and anxiety in *Shanghai Panic* there is a celebratory refusal to be assimilated. Yet this does not entail fleeing. Instead it involves a resistance to normative modes of engagement with the city space and a playful proliferation of identities in the refusal to be apprehended.

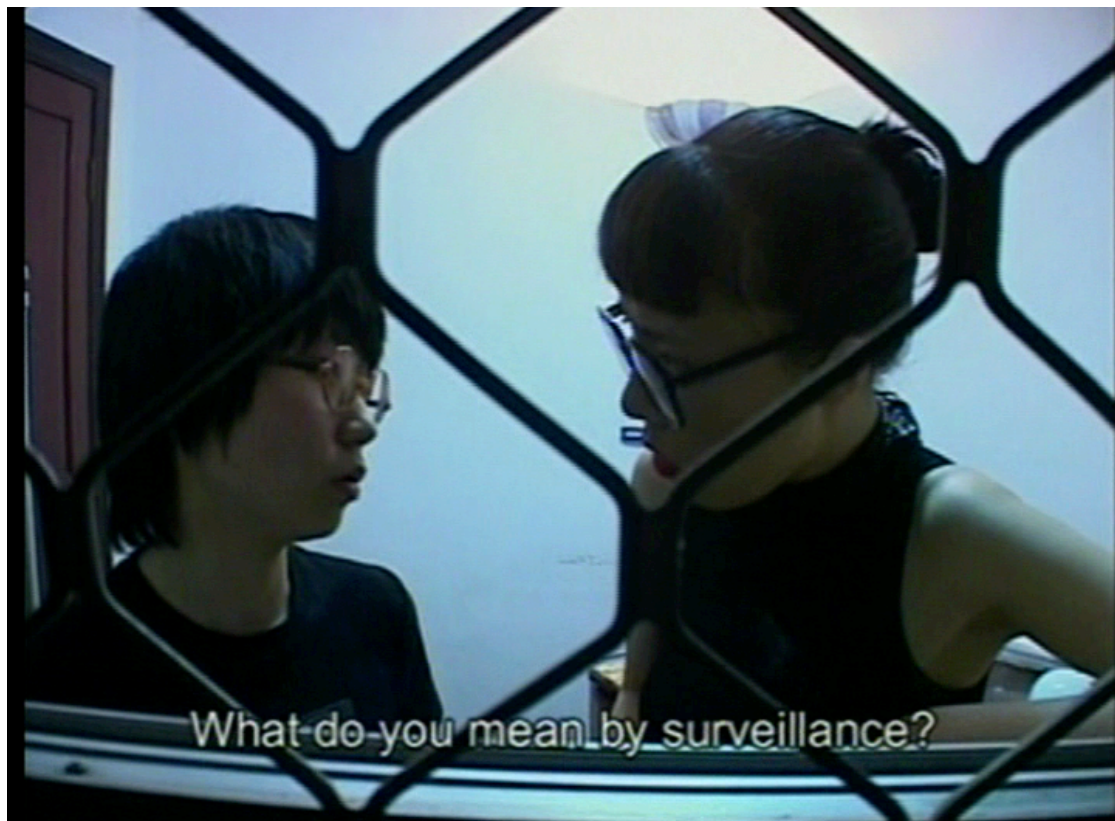


Fig. 72: Observing or being watched?
Copyright Andrew Y-S Cheng

Epilogue: Future Mappings

It is tempting to say that films such as Cheng's operate as Foucauldian heterotopic places, outside the dominant order, in which transgressive practices thrive and are able to be productive.³⁰ However, Harvey argues insightfully that the simple virtue of constructing discrete, "absolute spaces" does not necessarily imbue them with a "radical political significance." Any cordoned off zone—including gated communities—becomes a site of "alternative ways of doing things and therefore in some sense heterotopic. What appears at first sight as so open by virtue of its multiplicity suddenly appears as banal: an eclectic mess of heterogeneous and different absolute space within which anything 'different'—however defined—might

³⁰ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 1966).

go on. Ultimately [Foucault's] whole essay on heterotopia *reduces itself to the theme of escape*.³¹ And *escape* does not offer a productive solution for emancipatory change. Indeed, it is the very promise offered by the touristed landscape of Shanghai, which "under capitalism is bogus because the system cannot permit consumers to escape from dependency upon the commodity form."³²

Thinking instead in terms of *escapade*, as a kind of engaged form of escape, a subversive, playful, act of adventure, entailing release from confinement, seems closer to Lefebvre's counter-definition of heterotopias, which Harvey summarizes as:

spaces of difference, of anomie, and of potential transformation, but... [embedded] in a dialectical conception of urbanization. [Lefebvre] kept the idea of heterotopia in tension with (rather than as an alternative to) isotopy (the accomplished and rationalized spatial order of capitalism and the state), as well as with utopia as expressive desire...The differences captured within the heterotopic spaces are not about segregation and separation, but about potentially transformative relations with all other spaces.³³

William J. Gavin suggested in 1971 that we had lost our ability to think of the city in aesthetic terms and now perceived it only as "a problem or an object", rather than the "contexts" or "material" for our own artistic expression.³⁴ Gavin cites the notion of "harmony" as an example of the kind of aesthetic category from which we have "alienated ourselves" in our relationship with the city. Of course, in China, "harmony" has been promoted as a guiding principle behind contemporary urban development. But is it a harmony of the type described by Gavin? His argument is that unity does not necessarily require unison, rather it emerges from "a 'continuously changing' equilibrium" that always admits "new individuality."³⁵

³¹ Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, 160. [My italics]

³² Rojek, *Ways of Escape*, 123.

³³ Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, 162.

³⁴ William J. Gavin, "The Urban and the Aesthetic," in Sharon M. Meagher ed., *Philosophy and the City: Classic to Contemporary Writings* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press), 140–142.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 141.

This is not to suggest some Western normative view of city living to which Shanghai fails to measure up. Western cities are beset by their own problems and much of the urban redevelopment in China has brought tangible benefits to the country's citizens. Rather, it is because the redevelopment of Shanghai has been so extraordinary, and in many respects so impressive, that it demands particular attention. What is to be hoped is that as the process of urban change continues, the efforts to "harmonize" the public space do not efface the polyvocal narratives that might point towards the realization of a cosmopolitan city.

Returning to where this concluding chapter began—with music—it might be noted that the word for "harmony" (*hexie*) in Chinese carries the same musical connotations as its English equivalent. The thrill of harmony emerges from difference, as it demands a range of voices rather than one single sound. Complementary to this is the musical theory of counterpoint—simultaneously moving lines of music that form vertical harmonies as they move forward horizontally. Applying this concept—similar to Lefebvre's heterotopias—to the cinematic imagining of the city, it can be argued that alternative representations of the urban experience need not imply a rigid distinction between a dominant, monolithic, conceptualized vision of the city and a marginal, oppositional voice. Indeed, by framing certain cinematic visions too readily as marginal, the risk is that they become compartmentalized, their efficacy neutered, and the dominance of the centre merely reaffirmed. We need to examine the ways in which such visions become participatory, not simply resisting, but also actively influencing. How to stimulate a move from escape to escapade?

If the urban space is truly to become more harmonious, what is required is not a single city melody, packaged as a totalizing cinematic spectacle. Rather, the city should be thought of as "heterogeneous, plural, and playful", involving a rich braid of voices, with influence stemming not only from the top down, but throughout the various intertwined layers.³⁶ The challenge is to encourage a space in which these various voices can describe themselves and have the opportunity to be heard within, and thereby enrich, a wider harmony. If the city is truly to be cosmopolitan, what is needed is a Shanghai counterpoint.

³⁶ Iris Marion Young, "City Life as a Normative Ideal," in *Philosophy and the City*, ed. Meagher, 168.

How this might be achieved is uncertain, but it is likely to require a sense of place that is outward looking, yet “does not require us to leave our attachments at the door, one in which people are not asked to detach themselves from the particular.”³⁷ Szerszynski and Urry have called for a “cosmopolitics” of this type “if we are not all to be fated to become mere visitors in our own worlds.”³⁸ They see this as a possible consequence of “a cartographic citizenship [which may be] part of the culture of cosmopolitanism in which many humans are now implicated,” involving “multiple mobilities” and “a transformation of vision, one that relies on the removal of the self from immediate everyday engagement in the world... [and seeing it] from afar, through a cartographic visuality.”³⁹ It is such a potential fate that troubles away at the freewheeling, ever moving, touristed landscape of Shanghai—distance disguised as immersion. And yet, if mapping the city in Shanghai is allied to the cinematic, and cinema also has the scope for giving voice to those not possessing the privilege of “multiple mobilities,” might this offer the possibility for new kinds of cartography; cine-mappings that encourage new forms of visualizing and engaging with the city? What role might the cinematic play in fostering a Shanghai cosmopolitics? The answers to these questions are, as yet, unclear. But as Shanghai pursues its own brand of postsocialist neo-modernism, growing, transforming and spiralling forwards each day, we may await them with some hope, some trepidation, and brimful of anticipation.

³⁷ Szerszynski and Urry, “Visuality, mobility, and the cosmopolitan,” 128.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 128.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 115.



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