Shijing, on the Debris of *Shijing*

Nostalgia about the 1980s-2000s
in Contemporary China

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13th September 2021

Word count: 10,305

MA Architectural History

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Abstract

This dissertation examines China's contemporary nostalgia towards the 1980s-2000s by aligning it with nostalgia for the disappearing *shijing* (市井) place in the cities. *Shijing*, in the 1980s and 1990s, was characterised by the increasing inflow of rural migrant workers searching for urban membership. They appropriate *shijing* places into their mediating ground to contest the right to the city, but in contemporary contexts, such places are often tagged as urban villages (城中村; Chengzhongcun) to be demolished in city renewal schemas.

The disappearance of *shijing* places led to the nostalgic construction of a duplicated *shijing* place in the catering complex Wenheyou (文和友) in Changsha, Hunan province. This essay evaluates this nostalgia by regarding it as a process of negotiating urban membership, rather than an event representing authentic/fake memory. This real-fake dualism is challenged by recognising Wenheyou as a Duplitecture that do not intend to be an exact copy of *shijing*. Furthermore, by adopting *shijing* as an evaluative concept, this dissertation scrutinises this process through the prism of dynamic interactions between the authors, readers, and spectators of nostalgia. *Shijing* in three memory frames – the "real" *shijing* (in memory), the "fake and material" *shijing* (in Wenheyou), and the "fake and virtual" *shijing* (on social media) – are analysed to reveal this dynamism. While the "real" *shijing* is inevitably irretrievable, the "fake and material" *shijing* still contests the right to narrate and to create heterogenous atmospheres. From a feminist perspective, this heterogeneity also enables female spectators to be in a state of uncertainty, unfettered by existing binds and bonds. However, in effect, this indeterminacy is overshadowed by the determinacy of spectatorship in an atmosphere where the political is rendered as cultural and cultural as anti-cultural.

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Fig. 1 *Shijing* Street in Wenheyou (Photo by the Author)

1 Introduction

1.1 <u>Research Background and Questions</u>

This paper aims to analyse the nostalgia about the 1980s-2000s in contemporary China by tracing the semantic change of a single word – *Shijing* (市井) – in an urban context. As a noun, *shijing* refers to an urban area where commercial spaces are mixed with residential spaces of ordinary people, full of the hustle and bustle.[1] As an adjective, according to the orthodox dictionary *Da Cihai*, it is used to describe philistine, vulgar and despicable people in the city.[2] Contrarily, in everyday use, it denotes an urban culture with *renqingwei* (human touch; 人情味; literally, the taste of human feelings) where the desires and emotions of ordinary people outweigh grand narratives.[3] The contradictions and ambiguities of this word reveal the tensions between the elite and the ordinary, and the grandiose and the everyday over the right to the city, which I will give further account in chapter 1.

Marked as roughly the first twenty years of China's reform and opening up (from December 1978), the 1980s-2000s are mourned as a lost golden era across diverse settings. Intellectuals, writers, and journalists disappointed by the tightening political restraint lament

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[1] Shifen Zhou, *Shijing (市井)* (Jinan: Shandong Pictorial Publishing House (山东画报出版社), 2003), p. 15.
[2] *Da Cihai - Yuci Juan (大辞海·语词卷)*, ed. by Zhili Chen and Zhengnong Xia (Shanghai: Shanghai Lexicographical Publishing House (上海辞书出版社), 2011), p. 3170.
[3] Yang Li, '"The Dream of Empire" and "Urbanity". The Chinese Story in Along the River during the Qingming Festival ("帝国梦"与"市井情":《清明上河图》中的中国故事; "Daguo Meng" Yu "Shijing Qing": Qingming Shanghe Tu Zhong de Zhongguo Gushi)', Journal of Chinese Literature (中國文學學報), 2 (2011), 85–96 (p. 89); Tao Jiang, 'On the Rebirth of Shijing Literature and the Discovery of Modernity in the "Shijing Tradition" in the Early 1980s (论 80 年代初市井文学的重启与"市井传统"的现代性发现; Lun 80 Niandai Chu Shijing Wenxue de Chongqi Yu "Shijing Chuantong" de Xiandaixing Faxian)', *Journal of Yantai University (烟台大学学报; Yantai Daxue Xuebao)*, 31.01 (2018), 62–72 (p. 64).

that the 80s and 90s were "the days when ideals shined".[4] Users of the networking website Douban gather on the social media club "pretending to live in the 1980-2000 group" to share their memories and photos.[5] "It was a golden age spiritually", "it was full of hopes", "it was slow, more real, less commercial", "it was more open and more inclusive", "it was full of *renqingwei*", they sighed.[6]

Based on the premise that interactions between social relations would necessarily have a spatial form, I approach this nostalgic elegy by unfolding its spatial frame.[7] To be exact, I will use the catering complex Wenheyou (文和友), known for its vintage-themed ambience of the 80s and 90s, as my primary study site of nostalgia. Situated at the high-end shopping mall Hisense Plaza in Changsha city, capital of Hunan province, Wenheyou claims that they preserve the *shijing* culture by duplicating *shijing* streets, buildings and food in the city core (Fig. 1).[8] For them, *shijing* is a bridge between a past with *renqingwei* and a now without.[9]

Designed by and for Hunan Wenheyou Culture Development Group, this project has attracted widespread public attention since its opening in 2019. Three years on, it serves an average of 20,000 customers a day and has expanded two more branches to Guangzhou and Shenzhen.[10] Furthermore, it is recognised as an exemplary case of *Wanghong* (Internet Celebrities; 网红) economy, with 108,000 posts written about it on the popular lifestyle social networking platform Xiaohongshu (RED; 小红书). Among these posts, "Recommended locations for taking photos" and "Photo-shooting strategies" are heated topics. Thus, the spread of photos is crucial for Wenheyou's commercial success – photos by online influencers attract offline customers, who again turn what they see into images, posted

[4] *My Hometown Is in the 80s (我的故乡在八十年代, Wode Guxiang Zai Bashi Niandai)*, ed. by New Weekly (新周刊) (Beijing: CITIC Press Group, 2014); *Back to the 80s (重返八十年代, Chongfan Bashi Niandai)*, ed. by Guangwei Cheng (Beijing: Peking University Press (北京大学出版社), 2009); *Interviews about the 80s (八十年代访谈录, Bashi Niandai Fangtanlu)* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2006); Hongtao Li, '"The Days When Ideals Shined": Journalistic Nostalgia and the Myth of Golden Age in China', *Communication and the Public*, 1.4 (2016), 452–70 <https://doi.org/10.1177/2057047316682258>.

[5] Jia Li, 'Why This Group of Young People Pretend Living in the Past (这群年轻人为什么假装生活在过去; Zhequn Nianqingren Weishenme Jiazhuang Shenghuo Zai Guoqu)', *China Youth Daily (中国青年报)*, 5 February 2021 <http://zqb.cyol.com/html/2021-02/05/nw.D110000zgqnb_20210205_4-06.htm>.

[6] 'Why Do Our Group Members, Who Are Predominantly Born in the 1990s and 2000s, Feel Nostalgic about the 1980s and 1990s? (为什么组内 90 00 居多，却对千禧前二十年间有怀恋的感觉?; Weishenme Zunei 90 00 Juduo, Que Dui Qianxiqian Ershinian Jian You Huainian de Ganjue Ne?)', *Douban (豆瓣)*, 2020 <https://www.douban.com/group/topic/201679829/> [accessed 27 July 2021].

[7] Doreen B. Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), p. 120.

[8] 长沙文和友 (Changsha Wenheyou), WeChat <https://www.wechat.com> [accessed 29 July 2021].

[9] 长沙文和友 (Changsha Wenheyou).

[10] Peiyin Yu, 'Revealing Wenheyou: How to Create Queues with Queues (揭秘文和友：怎样用排队创造排队)', 2021 <https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_12337639> [accessed 13 June 2021].

online.[11] Apart from business accomplishments, Wenheyou is nominated for the "city for humanity award" by the influential *Sanlian Life Week Magazine* to promote "the social values and humanitarian concerns in Chinese cities".[12] The nomination speech highlighted the need to reposition the role of architecture in the "age of consumerism" – "Super Wenheyou in Changsha rejuvenates the diversity of urban street life by representing historical imageries with the 'sense of authenticity', and it also rediscovers the architectural typology in the age of consumerism".[13]

Previous descriptions reveal that *shijing* plays a significant role in the spatial frame of nostalgia. It is simultaneously regarded as a part of the irreversibly lost "golden age" (in the urban dimension) and a feasible cure for this loss (in Wenheyou). At the conjunction of urban nostalgia and nostalgic construction, *shijing* can be employed to scrutinise this contemporary nostalgia. More explicitly, having described *shijing* as an urban area where ordinary middle- and lower-class people dwell, I regard *shijing* as an evaluative concept of reading people's right to the city. In doing so, I problematise the acclaimed "authenticity" of nostalgia in Wenheyou by questioning its authorship and readership – that is, who defines the nostalgia, to whom the nostalgia belongs, and how this nostalgia retains or redefines the right to the city?

1.2 Research Context

Wenheyou, a Postmodern Moment?

Being embraced with both commercial and critical success, Wenheyou has attracted considerable interest from architectural critics. Nevertheless, no consensus has been reached on to which type of architecture Wenheyou belongs. Some intellectuals consider it as a borrowing from urban villages (城中村; Chengzhongcun) that are commonly described as "dirty, disordered, and bad (脏，乱，差)" in official rhetorics to justify the demolition of these areas – areas often inhabited by the flowing population.[14] Consequently, they argue

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[11] Yu.

[12] Sanlian Life Week Magazine, 'City for Humanity Awards (人文城市奖; Renwen Chengshi Jiang)' <http://cityaward.lifeweek.com.cn/awards> [accessed 6 August 2021].

[13] Ran Jiang and Yiwu Zhang, '"Number 60,000" Proves the "Mode of Wenheyou" Is a Convincing Urban Innovation（"6万号"证明"文和友模式" 是有说服力的城市创新)', *National Business Daily*, 2021 <http://www.nbd.com.cn/articles/2021-04-12/1693386.html> [accessed 6 August 2021].

[14] Qipeng Zhu, Zhiseng He, and Han Li, 'The Super Wenheyou Phenomenon: From Typological Demarcation to the Future of Villages in the City（"超级文和友现象"：从类型界定到城中村的未来)',

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that Wenheyou is a critical reflection against the large scale demolishment of informal spaces in urban renewal schemas.[15] Some scholars categorise it into *Wanghong* architecture (Architecture popular online) and focus on its promotion strategies.[16] Others position it as a commendable piece of interior design, where montages of architectural ornaments are organised to construct narratives of *shijing* culture.[17] Casting a critical eye on the prevalence of photo shooting activities in Wenheyou, Li Han of Drawing Architecture Studio equates it with photo studios.[18] By doing so, Wenheyou enjoys no more uniqueness and can be paralleled with projects of similar concepts such as the food-themed amusement park Shin-Yokohama Ramen Museum, which replicates streetscapes of Tokyo in 1958.[19] Attributing the overarching value of Wenheyou to that of consumerism and of quantity but not quality, Li claims that Wenheyou is just a banal piece of postmodernism architecture.[20]

Indeed, the varied responses Wenheyou received expose the two-fold destinies of postmodern architecture. On the one hand, by presenting ornamental elements from urban villages, Wenheyou challenges the domination of a linear progressive modernisation process that obliterates all seen as "dirty, disordered, and bad". It is what Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour advocated on the rise of postmodern architecture that "the rigid order of the urban renewal project" should be questioned in favour of the "ordinary architecture" with complex symbolic systems.[21] On the other hand, by arranging ornaments for the convenience of photo-taking, Wenheyou risks reducing meanings to spectacles, spectacles to consumptions, consumptions to empty, meaningless stares. This reduction leads to the death of postmodern architecture, as Charles Jencks acknowledges, for not escaping complicity with commercial corporations.[22]

Architectural Journal (建筑学报), 04, 2021, 94–99 (p. 96) <https://doi.org/10.19819/j.cnki.ISSN0529-1399.202104019>.

[15] Zhu, He, and Li, p. 96.

[16] Wanlu Yu and Chaoqun Wang, 'A Study on Building Imageries of Wanghong City by Short Videos - An Example of Imagery Promotions of Changsha City (短视频对网红城市形象构建的研究——以长沙市形象发展为例)', 北方传媒研究 *(North Media Research)*, 01, 2020, 84–87 <https://doi.org/10.19544/j.cnki.bmyj.2020.0019>; Zhuo Li, 'Research on the Type Definition and Circle Breaking Strategy of Online Popular Architecture (网红建筑的类型定义与破圈策略初探)', 住区 *(Zhuqu)*, 02, 2021, 150–58 <https://doi.org/CNKI:SUN:ZUQU.0.2021-02-023>.

[17] Zongjian Wu and Qiqi Lian, 'Research on the Emerging Applications of Interior Architecture Montage in Dining Space: A Case Study of Wenhoyo Superb (蒙太奇式内建筑装饰在餐饮空间中的应用研究——以超级文和友为例)', 装饰 *(Zhuangshi)*, 08, 2020, 108–11 <https://doi.org/10.16272/j.cnki.cn11-1392/j.2020.08.025>.

[18] Zhu, He, and Li, p. 95.

[19] Zhu, He, and Li, p. 95.

[20] Zhu, He, and Li, p. 97.

[21] Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form*, 9th printing (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1988), pp. 52 & 152.

[22] Stephen Parnell, 'The Birth and Rebirth of a Movement: Charles Jencks's Postmodern Odyssey in AD', *Architectural Design*, 91.1 (2021), 48–55 (p. 53) <https://doi.org/10.1002/ad.2652>.

This dual fate of Wenheyou epitomises that the lineage of Chinese architectural postmodernism is somewhat different from what western architectural vanguards recount. In the Chinese context, the rise and "death" of postmodernist architecture seem to burst synchronically. Unlike the Euro-American world, Chinese postmodernity does not come after modernity but comes along with post-revolutionary secularisation and post-Mao economic reform.[23] Accordingly, it is insensible to apply or banish postmodernism once and for all. Otherwise, the gap between modern individuals in material needs and postmodern individuals in material abundance – widened by the uneven development across disparate sectors of Chinese society since the reform – would be rendered invisible.[24] To confront this gap, I will complicate the architectural discourse on postmodernity with multiple temporalities.

In this regard, this dissertation reinterprets postmodernism through the prism of nostalgia. As literary critic Svetlana Boym remarks, nostalgia is the superimposition of heterogeneous times where the past and present are overlapped to imagine the future as unrealised potentialities.[25] However, scholarly discussions have sparked controversies regarding how nostalgia of postmodernity results in asymmetrical emphases on the past, present, and future. For geographer Doreen Massey, nostalgia leads to the fixations of the present and fixed identities of place, where "the comfort of being" supersedes "the project of becoming".[26] According to cultural theorist Fredric Jameson, postmodern nostalgia obscures the present and past by incorporating the "art language of the simulacrum" and appropriating the missing past through stylistic connotations instead of representing genuine historicity.[27] More approvingly, literary critic Andreas Huyssen argues that reflective nostalgia enables people to grasp "the transitoriness of all greatness and power" and imagine an alternative future beyond corporate neoliberalism.[28]

While these views – with respective stress on the present, present/past, and future – can expose postmodernism to renewed scrutiny of heterogenous times, they do not provide sufficient accounts of the "author" of nostalgia. Such negation would be problematic in unpacking nostalgia in Wenheyou. First, they approach nostalgia either as a geographical

[23] *Postmodernism & China*, ed. by Arif Dirlik and Xudong Zhang (Durham, [NC]: Duke University Press, 2000), pp. 4–5.
[24] Dirlik and Zhang, p. 3.
[25] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), pp. xiv, xvi–xvii, 30 & 168.
[26] Massey, pp. 119, 132 & 171.
[27] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 2. print. in pbk., [Nachdr.] (London: Verso, 2007), pp. 19 & 21.
[28] Andreas Huyssen, 'Nostalgia for Ruins', *Grey Room*, 23 (2006), 6–21 (pp. 13 & 20) <https://doi.org/10.1162/grey.2006.1.23.6>.

concept (Massey), films (Jameson), or aura (Huyssen) without giving credit to the ordinary people.[29] The nostalgia of the latter as "popular memory" is the "antithesis of the written history" where no "genuine historicity" (Jameson) is pursued after.[30] Second, these views mainly treat nostalgia as an event rather than a process, ignoring the dynamic interplays of authorship during the nostalgic process. Third, limited attention is paid to how gender biases influence interpretations of nostalgia.

1.3 <u>Methodology</u>

This dissertation aims to examine the nostalgia towards the 1980s-2000s through a comparative method. Precisely, I will parallel the concept of *shijing* concerning the right to the city with the above-mentioned postmodern discourses concerning heterogenous nostalgic times. Hence, the multiple temporalities of various authors participating in this nostalgia can be exposed. However, it does not mean to compare the Chinese and the western concepts side by side as cultural exchange. Instead, I regard it as a path to understand the condition of Chineseness as "a generator of postmodernity" and "significant contributors to the operations of capitalism".[31]

My primary sources are composed of images and videos I gleaned from my field trip to Wenheyou, the image-based social platform Xiaohongshu, and the online archival source "City Memory (城市记忆)" of Changsha. Relying on these visual materials, I build my argument through visual analysis that concentrates on how visual encounters engage people into a dialogue between viewers, images, and surroundings as joint actions of interactive meaning-making.[32] In the end, I take this dissertation project as an opportunity to participate in this meaning-making process by presenting a video about the journey of a fictional flaneuse searching for *shijing* in Wenheyou. In short, this video-based research method not only visualises the changing authorship during various visual encounters but also intends to generate more potential dialogues.

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[29] Massey, p. 168; Jameson, p. 19; Huyssen, p. 9.
[30] Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture*, Rev. ed. (London, New York: Verso, 2012) Chapter: Unofficial Knowledge, 1. Popular Memory, para. 12. Retrieved from https://book4you.org/book/2720133/66b9e4 on 18 August 2021.
[31] Dirlik and Zhang, p. 3.
[32] Olga Belova, 'The Event of Seeing: A Phenomenological Perspective on Visual Sense-Making', *Culture and Organization*, 12.2 (2006), 93–107 (pp. 104–5) <https://doi.org/10.1080/14759550600682866>.

1.4 Dissertation Structure

A change of frames brings about forgetting.[33] Different memory frames would change the contents, authors, and social relations embedded in nostalgia. This essay identifies three types of nostalgic frames of *shijing* to expose its internal conflicts and dynamism (Digram 1):
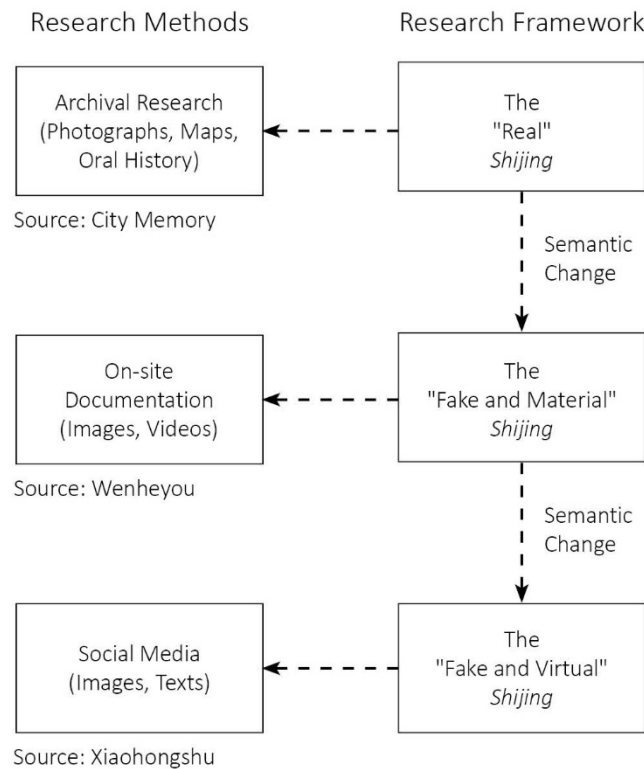

Diagram 1 Research Framework and Methods

The "Real" Shijing:

The "real" *shijing* leaves its marks in people's memories. Chapter 1 will explore "referents" of the "real" *shijing* from historical and geographical perspectives based on historical maps, photographic archives, and interviews.

The "Fake and Material" Shijing:

The "fake and material" *shijing* is constructed as the nostalgic site in Wenheyou. Chapter 2 will analyse how such fakeness manifests itself in this new material frame. By categorising Wenheyou as a Duplitecture – architecture that duplicates the past across time, I will discuss

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[33] *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. by Astrid Erll and Nunning Ansgar (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), p. 111.

how the duplication process is responsible for the fakeness and how the concept of Duplitecture challenges the real/fake dichotomy. This discussion will rely on images and videos from my on-site documentation.

The "Fake and Virtual" Shijing:

The "fake and virtual" *shijing* going viral on social media platforms adds another dimension to this nostalgic construct. Chapter 3 will unroll this added layer by analysing the triadic relationships between female bodies, nostalgic atmospheres, and nostalgic narratives that are concurrently influenced by and influencing virtual representations of *shijing* online. By doing so, I hope to bring gender factors into considerations to renew our understandings of nostalgia.

2 Chapter 1: the "Real" *Shijing*

2.1 <u>Introduction</u>

Social historians Malcolm Chase and Christopher Shaw have outlined three primary conditions of nostalgia: (1) A linear and secular sense of time. (2) A historical view that pinpoints the present as deficient. (3) Objects, images, and buildings from the past that are available.[34] The first two premises highlight that nostalgia is brought about by awareness of a fundamental, irreversible change. In the context of Wenheyou, it is the loss of *shijing* that leads to nostalgia towards the 1980s and 1990s. Accordingly, this chapter discusses the causes of nostalgia by aligning it with the "referent" of the "real" *shijing* that is seen as lost.

However, before I embark on that, I need to briefly explain what the "real" and "referent" mean here from the viewpoint of historiography. For structuralists, "referent" – that is, what the signs refer to and what we call the "real" – is temporally constructed, non-objective, and should be put in brackets.[35] Influenced by this view, the postmodern history theory also casts doubts on the objectivity of interpreting the past as the "real referent" of history.[36] While acknowledging the validity of this scepticism, I take my stance on the view that the realness of the past is independent of any philosophical or theoretical interpretations and, more crucially, "one need not give up history to challenge its hegemony".[37]

Existing literature on *shijing* exemplifies this hegemonic construct, which tends to interpret

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[34] Malcolm Chase and Christopher Shaw, 'The Dimensions of Nostalgia', in *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia*, ed. by Malcolm Chase and Christopher Shaw (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), pp. 3–4.
[35] Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, Anniversary ed (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), p. 84.
[36] Perez Zagorin, 'History, the Referent, and Narrative: Reflections on Postmodernism Now', *History and Theory*, 38.1 (1999), 1–24 (pp. 13–14) <https://doi.org/10.1111/0018-2656.731999073>.
[37] Zagorin, pp. 14 & 16.

shijing culture as "precious Chinese traditional culture".[38] It reflects an essentialised culturalist view that is dependent on illusioned presumptions of pure culture and stable values.[39] To counter this narrative, I will contextualise *shijing* in spatial-temporal dynamism from a historical and regional perspective, respectively.

2.2 The Referent of *Shijing* – A Historical Perspective

When translated into English, *shijing*（市井）is referred to varyingly as "folklife", "marketplace atmosphere", and "urbanity" in various texts.[40] When translated from English, *shijing* describes "everyday life of the city" and "the commonest phases of street-life".[41] Such discrepancy in usage alludes to the underlining difference in understanding urbanity concerning the commercial and the everyday between the English and Chinese contexts.

Urbanity, in the established accounts of urban studies, is deeply intertwined with western theories of modernity.[42] Referring to this (western) context, geographer Jennifer Robinson succinctly defines urbanity (constructed by the west) as "a social form produced in the crucible of processes of historical change – modernisation – and cultural practices of innovation – modernity".[43] This universalised (western) conception of urbanity that links the modern with the urban has pervasively impacted scholarly inquiries into urban social forms as different sets of binary constructions.[44] Examples range from Georg Simmel's urban life of intensified mental stimulation/rural life of slow mental imagery flows to Ferdinand Tönnies'

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[38] Ye Liu, 'A Study of the Existing Shijing Buildings in Changsha (长沙市现存市井建筑研究; Changsha Shi Xiancun Shijing Jianzhu Yanjiu)' (unpublished MA thesis, Hunan University, 2005) <https://kns.cnki.net/kcms/detail/detail.aspx?FileName=2005124002.nh&DbName=CMFD2005>; Kai-lun Chen and Chao Zhou, '"Keeping the Marketplace Atmosphere of the Past" - Research on the Transformation of Traditional Farmers' Market Based on Marketplace Culture ("留住当年的烟火气"——基于市井文化的传统农贸市场改造研究)', *Smart Buildings and Smart Cities (智能建筑与智慧城市; Zhineng Jianzhu Yu Zhineng Chengshi)*, 10, 2020, 52–54; Weiji Zhu, 'Traditional Chinese Neighbourhoods in Shijing Culture (市井文化下的中国传统街区; Shijing Wenhua Xia de Zhongguo Chuantong Jiequ)', *Shanxi Architecture (山西建筑)*, 36.06 (2010), 37–39 <https://doi.org/10.13719/j.cnki.cn14-1279/tu.2010.06.180>.

[39] Martin Powers, *China and England: The Preindustrial Struggle for Justice in Word and Image*, 1st edn (Abingdon, Oxon ; NewYork, NY : Routledge, 2019.: Routledge, 2018), p. 12 <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315145754>.

[40] Jin Chen, *Folklife in the Late 20th Century China* （市井中国：20 世纪末街巷里的流年影像; *Shijing Zhongguo: 20 Shijimo Jiexiang Li de Liunian Yingxiang)* (China Intercontinental Press, 2017); Chen and Zhou; Yang Li.

[41] Lewis Mumford, *The City in History (城市发展史——起源、演变和前景; Chengshi Fazhan Shi - Qiyuan, Yanbian he Qianjing)*, trans. by Junling Song and Wenyan Ni (Beijing: China Architecture & Building Press), p. 82; Robert Henry Cobbold, *Pictures of the Chinese: Drawn by Themselves (市井图景里的中国人; Shijing Tujing Li De Zhongguoren)*, trans. by Ben Liu and Jianfeng Xing (Shanghai: Xuelin Press, 2017), p. 193.

[42] Jennifer Robinson, 'The Urban Now: Theorising Cities beyond the New', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 16.6 (2013), 659–77 (p. 659) <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549413497696>.

[43] Robinson, p. 659.

[44] Robinson, p. 659.

old Community (*Gemeinschaft*) of the rural milieu/new Society (*Gesellschaft*) of the urban environment, to Lewis Mumford's urban life as the hard kernel of power/the organic rituals of the village.[45] Embedded in these discussions is a taken-for-granted urban-rural dualism that is socially constructed and closely linked to the Industrial Revolution.[46] The anxieties provoked by the 19th-century industrialisation and industrial capitalism have sustained to the present day, giving rise to persistent sentiments towards a slow, communal, organic, idyll village life that is distinctive from city life.[47]

On the other hand, unbothered by the urban-rural division of the 19th-century industrial revolution, *shijing* instantiates how a force growing mainly within the city generates spaces of urban-rural encounters. In the following part, I will explain this process by firstly contextualising *shijing* in the urban context of three different historical periods – the Zhou dynasty (the 5th-3rd century BCE), Tang dynasty (618-907 AD), and Song dynasty (960-1127 AD). By doing so, I hope to elucidate how conflicts between three types of forces in shaping the city change the meaning of *shijing* that still impact our perceptions of the city today. Contending that these three forces are connoted respectively by three Chinese characters – *shi* (市), *jing* (井), and *fang* (坊), I will mainly approach the shifting meanings of *shijing* by discussing the dynamic relationships between the urban and the forces represented by these three characters.

(1) The Idealised Capital in Regulations of Workmanship

According to the classical *Regulations of Workmanship* (考工记; Kaogong Ji) of the Zhou dynasty, the ideal capital should be an enclosed rectangular walled city with three gates on each side (Figure 2). This plan positions the palace in the centre, with the Audience Hall (朝; chao) in the front (south; the front direction of the emperor), the Altars of Soil and Grain (社; she) to the right, the Ancestral Temple (祖; zu) to the left, and the Market (市; shi) in the back.[48] Historians believe that this arrangement had a far-reaching influence on the planning

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[45] Georg Simmel, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, ed. & trans. by Kurt H. Wolff (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1950), p. 410; Ferdinand Tönnies, *Tönnies: Community and Civil Society*, ed. by Jose Harris, trans. by Jose Harris and Margaret Hollis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 19; Keith Tester, *The Life and Times of Post-Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 68; Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1961), pp. 88–89.
[46] Grace Harrison and Ben Clifford, '"The Field of Grain Is Gone; It's Now a Tesco Superstore": Representations of "Urban" and "Rural" within Historical and Contemporary Discourses Opposing Urban Expansion in England', *Planning Perspectives*, 31.4 (2016), 585–609 (pp. 587–88) <https://doi.org/10.1080/02665433.2015.1103197>.
[47] Michael Bunce, 'Reproducing Rural Idylls', in *Country Visions*, ed. by Paul J. Cloke (Harlow, England; New York: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2003), pp. 15 & 17.
[48] Hung Wu, *Monumentality in Early Chinese Art and Architecture* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford UP, 1995), p.

of Chinese cities for almost 1900 years, from Chang'an in the Han Dynasty to Peking in the Qing Dynasty.[49]
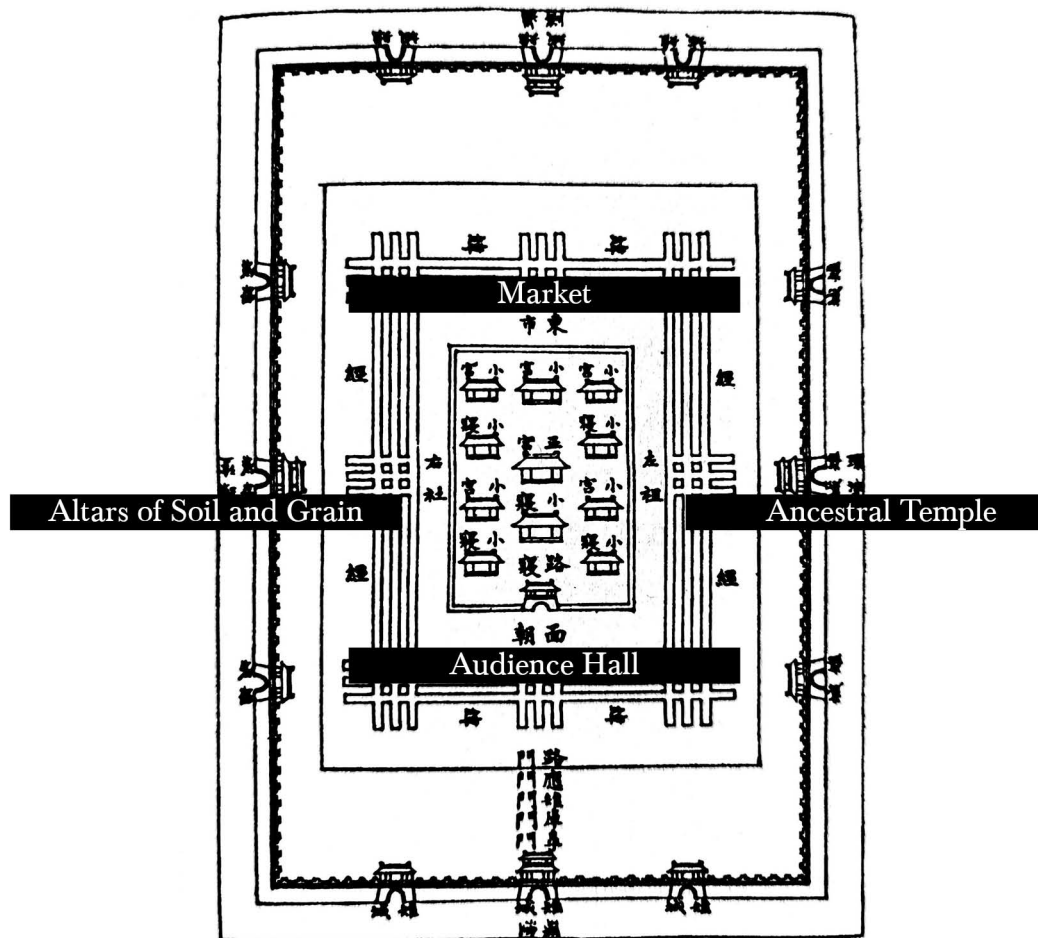

Fig. 2 The Idealised Capital in *Regulations of Workmanship*

The origin of *shijing* is reflected in the scaled plan of this ideal city. As figure 3 presents, the grid system of this idealised capital is planned in accordance to the scale of *jing* (井) – a measurement unit of the *jingtian* (井田) system that represents a grid of 300 steps long and wide.[50] Following this strand, scholars who have studied the origin of the term *shijing* argue that the "*jing* (井)" in "*shijing* (市井)" is an implication of *jingtian* (井田) system and *shijing* originally means the exchange market measured, confined and regulated by the government

148.

[49] Yeju He, *A Study of the City Planning System in the Rules of Workmanship (考工记营国制度研究; Kaogongii-Yingguo Zhidu Yaniiu)* (Beijing: China Architecture & Building Press (中国建筑工业出版社), 1985), p. 18; Wu, *Monumentality in Early Chinese Art and Architecture*, p. 148.

[50] He, pp. 50–51.

in the city.[51] Although other scholars have argued that "*jing* (井)" should be understood literally as the well (*jing*; 井) and *shijing* originates from the phenomenon that people exchange goods when they fetch water, I am prone to accept the first explanation because the second does not explain why *shijing* is understood to be an exclusively urban phenomenon.[52]
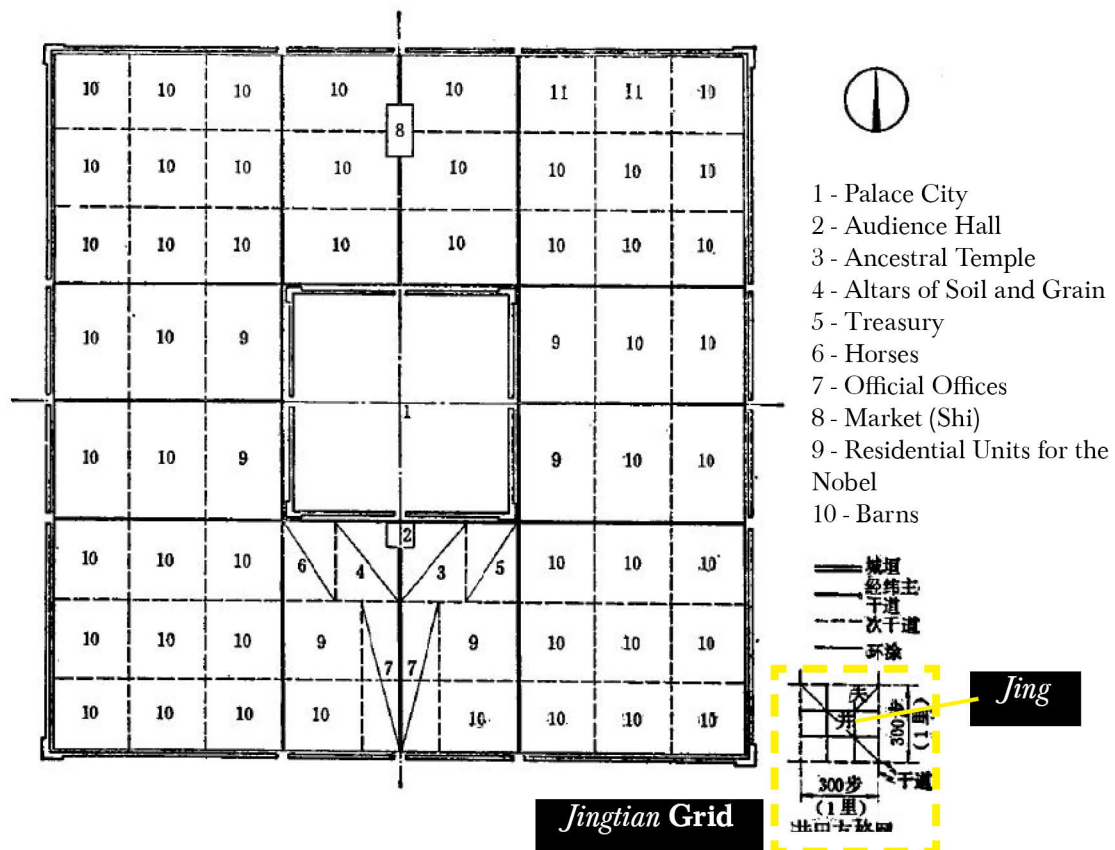

Fig. 3 Grid System of the Idealised Capital Plan

(2) Chang'an of the Tang Dynasty

Whilst there are inevitably huge disparities between the real and the ideal, the enduring pursuit of consolidating political authority through the urban form never ceased influencing Chinese imperial cities. For instance, in Chang'an city of the Tang Dynasty, planners applied logic akin to the idealised capital in several ways. Similarly, they placed the palace on the

[51] Huilian Sheng, 'A Study on the Origins of Shijing (市井得名考; Shijing Deming Kao)', *Gansu Social Sciences (甘肃社会科学)*, 1, 1999, 91–92 (p. 92); Zhou, p. 12.
[52] Shanying Jin, 'A Debate on the Origins of Shijing (市井得名考辨; Shijing Deming Kaobian)', *Cultural Journal (文化学刊)*, 3, 2010, 163–65; Zhou, p. 12.

Fig. 4
Chang'an in the Tang Dynasty

A Unit of one *Fang*

Shi (**Market**)

Fig. 5
Urban Manage System – *Fang*

central axis, arranged the ancestral halls to the east, altars to the west, and three gates to the western, southern and eastern sides (Figure 4).[53]

In addition, the separation of different functional areas in the grid system is enforced by the *fang* (坊) system. As Figure 5 illustrates, the *fang* is the basic city administrative unit with enclosed walls and warded gates. By closing the gates of *fang* after the sunset, curfews are strictly imposed in the city.[54] Moreover, built in different forms, the *fang* divides residential and commercial units (*shi*; 市) and also separately accommodates the ordinary people and the nobles.[55] Due to this division, *shijing* is used more broadly as an adjective to describe the opposite of the aristocratic.[56] Nevertheless, spatially, it was not until the Song dynasty did *shijing* acquires its contemporary connotations.

(3) *Shijing* of the Song Dynasty

The highly restrictive *fang* system collapsed during the Song dynasty due to the rapid development of commercial sectors.[57] This historical turn is recognised as the "Medieval urban revolution", characterised by commercial activities "spilled out from within their walls".[58] It led to a mixture of residential and commercial functions in the city, and buildings oriented inwards within the *fang* began to face the streets.[59] The meaning of *shijing* has subsequently altered. Since there were no longer distinctions between the dwelling and trading units, *shijing* began to be more widely referred to as the plebeian trade zone that simultaneously accommodates the ordinary people.[60] Behind this transition, argued by anthropologist William Skinner, was a secularisation process involving the retreat of governmental control from social and commercial regulations.[61]

As diagram 2 summarises, the meaning of *shijing* is first and foremost the opposite to the noble – be it the regulated marketplace, or the (separated) market and living units of the ordinary people, or the mixed commercial and residential areas of the ordinary people. Such

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[53] He, p. 10; *The City in Late Imperial China*, ed. by G. William Skinner (Taipei: SMC Publishing, 1995), pp. 56–57.

[54] Yahong Shen, 'The Ordering of the Chinese City' (unpublished Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1994), p. 154 <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/ordering-chinese-city/docview/304114720/se-2?accountid=14511> [accessed 24 August 2021].

[55] Mengdi Zhang, 'Chang'an City Life in the Legend of Tang Dynasty （唐传奇中的长安市井生活)', *Shanxi RTVU Journal (陕西广播电视大学学报)*, 21.1 (2019), 43–46 (p. 45).

[56] Zhou, p. 13.

[57] Qianwei Wei, 'A Study of the Administrative Rvolution of the Nothern Song Cities (北宋城市制度變革考; Beisong Chengshi Zhidu Biange Kao)', *Xin Songxue (新宋学)*, 2003, p. 27.

[58] Mark Elvin, *The Pattern of the Chinese Past* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1973), p. 175; Skinner, p. 23.

[59] Shen, p. 310.

[60] Zhou, p. 15.

[61] Skinner, pp. 25–26.

opposition should be understood in relation to imperial China's governing principles that often highlight the importance of agricultural activities while disparaging the commercial ones.[62] Secondly, there are two competing sides that determine the form of *shijing* in the city. On the one side are the *jing* of the *jingtian* system and the *fang* of the administrative system, which both impose the pure geometric form onto the social form to strengthen political authority. On the other side is the *shi* of the market forces, which constantly spills out of the walled geometric form. To borrow Henri Lefevre's phrases, while *jing* and *fang* enforce "empty abstractions" onto members of various groups and classes, *shi* enables ordinary people's right to the city by rejecting the segregation led by the all-encompassing centralised authority.[63]

	Shijing (市井)	*Jing* (井)	*Shi* (市)	*Fang* (坊)
Zhou Dynasty (The 5th-3rd Century BCE)	Government regulated markets (Narrow meaning)	*Jingtian* System	Government regulated markets	/
Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD)	Government regulated markets /Residential units of the common people	/	Government regulated markets	Administrative Unit
The Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127 AD)	Mixed residential and commercial areas of the common people	/	Markets	/

Diagram 2 The Changing Meanings of *Shijing*, *Jing*, *Shi*, and *Fang*

2.3 The Authors of *Shijing* – A Regional perspective

Having explained that, thanks to the forces of *shi*, *shijing* empowers people to defy the restrictions imposed by pure geometric form within the city, I now analyse how it enables urban-rural encounters to include the authors of the "real" *shijing* in this discussion.

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[62] Zhou, pp. 21–22.
[63] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 107; Henri Lefebvre, 空间与政治 (*Espace et Politique; Space and Politics)*, trans. by Chun Li, 2nd edn (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2015), p. 13.

1
After the Reform and Opening-up
(in the late 1970s - early 1980s)

2
Weng's Childhood
(in the late 1980s - early 1990s)

3
Weng's Childhood
(around the late 1990s - early 2000s)

4
Weng's Adulthood
(around the late 2000s - early 2010s)

5
Weng's Adulthood
(around the late 2000s - 2010s)

Fig. 6 *Shijing*, from the 1970s to 2010s

Specifically, by analysing the nostalgic site of Wenheyou – Xichang Street in Changsha, I attempt to uncover how *shijing* in the 1980s and 1990s continued acting as the mediating ground for people to contest the right to the city.

In one symposium among a group of architectural critics, Weng Donghua, founder and designer of Wenheyou, gave the audience his memories of *shijing* in the 1980s and 1990s:

> I was born in this street (Xichang Street), which is about two miles long. This photo (Figure 6-1) was taken by my parents when they first came to Changsha after the reform to sell food and vegetables […] There are dozens of fascinating alleys along the street, but slowly they all disappeared now.[64] (0:27:02, author's translation)

Weng's narration and images in figure 6 convey two messages – firstly, the flowing population mobilised after the reform and opening-up was once accommodated by the *shijing* place, and secondly, such places are disappearing. While the second point directly relates to contemporary nostalgia towards the 1980s-2000s, the first point highlights the importance of considering the flowing population as the author of *shijing* due to the specificity of this period. On the one hand, the *shijing* of the 80s and 90s is comparable to that of the "medieval urban revolution" because it allows people to dwell in the city through commercial ties. On the other hand, different from the commercial leap of the Song dynasty, the growing need to accommodate the mobile population in the cities was prompted by the relaxation of the Chinese migration policy. This policy once strictly controlled population flows – especially flows from the rural to urban – to protect the interests of urban citizens.[65] Economically, The free market nurtured by the reform absorbs the increasing number of rural migrants by allowing them to trade or rent a home in the city.[66] Spatially, rural-urban encounters take place in the *shijing* place, among which Xichang Street is an example.

As the map shows (Fig. 7), what distinguishes Xichang Street from its surroundings is that this street operates on an intermediary scale. Compared to the main traffic arteries at both ends of Xichang street, the *shijing* place along and around this street has a smaller and more human scale. It forms an intermediary part of sequential scales in the city, blurring the boundaries between private rooms and urban spaces. Thanks to it, the city can be scaled to

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[64] '[Our City] Super Wenheyou: Super Symbolic City Landmarks ([我们的城市]超级文和友：超级符号化的城市地标)', *Bilibili*, 2020 <https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1Pk4y1B71P/> [accessed 23 August 2021].
[65] Jiaosheng He and Jim Pooler, 'The Regional Concentration of China's Interprovincial Migration Flows, 1982–90', *Population and Environment*, 24.2 (2002), 34 (p. 153).
[66] He and Pooler, pp. 153–54.

suit ourselves as both makers and users.[67] Therefore, the right to the city – "the right to the oeuvre, to participation and appropriation" – can be potentially achieved.[68]
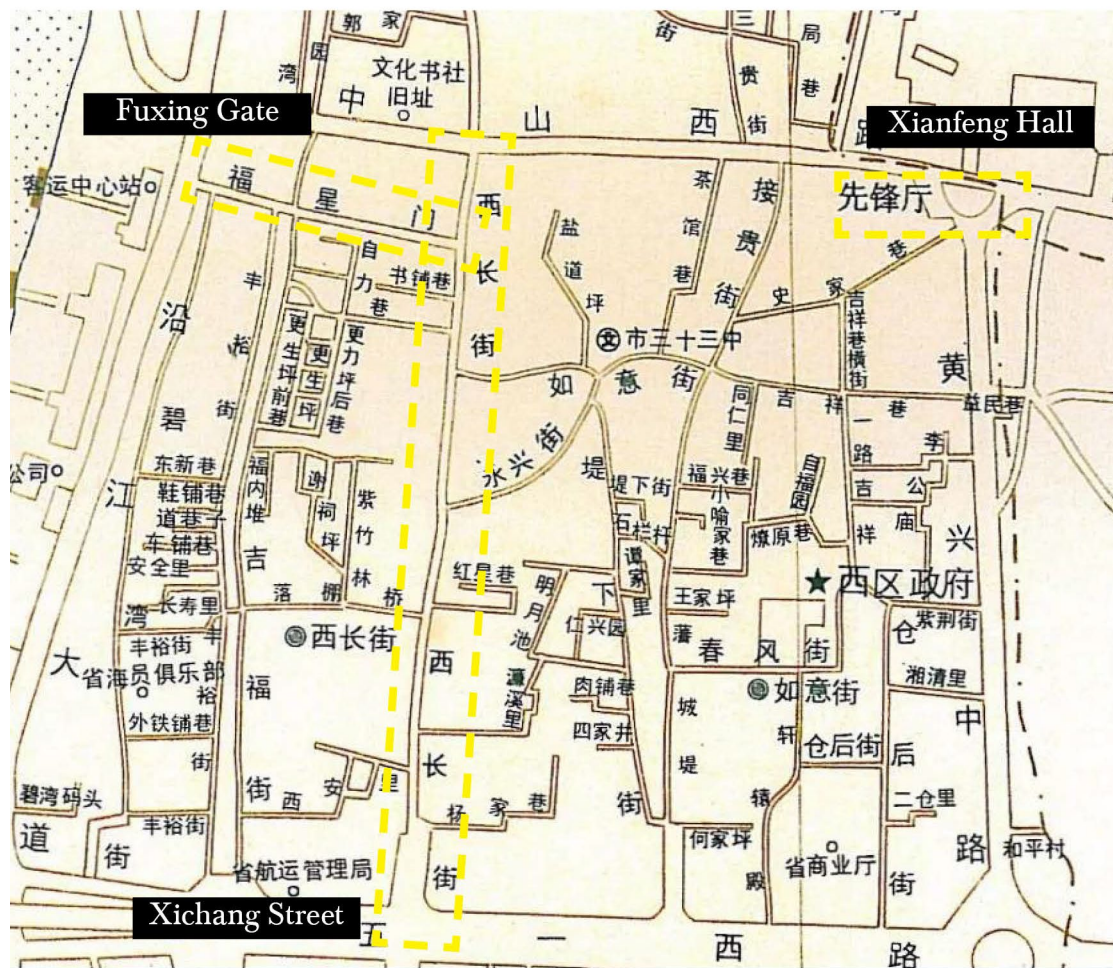

Fig. 7 The Map of Xichang Street in 1986

In his memoir about Xichang street, Liu Jianqiu, the native of Changsha, describes how this intermediary scale empowers the flowing population to claim the right to the city. Known as *nongmingong* (农民工; literally, peasant workers), the flowing population in China is discriminated against in multiple levels, from the household registration system to the management of urban space.[69] For example, according to Liu's memoir, in the 1990s, "many *nongmingong* who tried to look for jobs initially gathered in Xianfeng Hall (Fig. 7). Yet since

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[67] Timothy Makower, *Touching the City: Thoughts on Urban Scale* (Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2014), p. 19.

[68] Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, trans. by Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Cambridge, Mass, USA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), pp. 173–74.

[69] Biao Xiang, 跨越边界的社区: 北京"浙江村"的生活史 (*Transcending Boundaries: Zhejiangcun: the Story of a Migrant Village in Beijing*), Revised (Beijing: LifeBookstore Publishing Co. Ltd., 2018), p. l–lii.

Xianfeng Hall is just next to the main traffic road, they were expelled for being an 'eyesore' for the city".[70] After the expulsion, these *nongmingong* changed their location to the Fuxing Gate near Xichang Street (Fig. 7). As a result of this move, the original Flannelette Factory by the Fuxing Gate was converted into a labour market in service for *nongmingong* looking for jobs.[71]

This story shows how *shijing* place forms an indispensable part of multi-scalar landscapes in the city to make room for differences. As a mediating ground, *shijing* place enables participatory planning shared by the flowing population and defies the technocrats' comprehensive planning of maintaining the cityscape of their preferences.[72] On the other way round, the flowing population also changed the space of *shijing* place. By "the space of *shijing* place", I intend to demonstrate that the constructed schism of modernity between space as the space of multiplicities and place as the place of fixed identities can be questioned because *shijing* place exemplifies a place of porous localities.[73]

The porosity of *shijing* place in Xichang street is achieved by the appropriation of space led by the active participation of *nongmingong*. According to Ma Tong, a journalist and Changsha native, "from 1980 onwards, with a growing number of *nongmingong*, the Farmers' Market of Xichang Street became flourished".[74] Similarly, Li Weixia also remembered that "from 1979, food stalls began to be set up on the empty space along Xichang Street".[75] Figure 8 shows how street peddlers appropriated the space in Xichang Street at three levels: street, surface and infrastructure. As Lefebvre states, "To inhabit is to appropriate space, in the midst of constraints, that is to say, to be in a conflict—often acute—between the constraining powers and the forces of appropriation".[76] Temporary

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[70] Jianqiu Liu, 'A Memoir of the Old Shops and Danwei in Xichang Street (记忆中西长街的老商铺及单位)', *WeChat Official Accounts (微信公众平台)*, 2020
<http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MzIxNDM3Mjk5OQ==&mid=2247501572&idx=1&sn=84c91d0657d9eeaa259d39db2693310d&chksm=97aa00eca0dd89fa9040c8a148414e820f6099216ac211e0d1bae4f54d823bc7a18b0a6e25a6#rd> [accessed 23 August 2021].
[71] Jianqiu Liu.
[72] Henri Lefebvre, 'Reflections on the Politics of Space', ed. by Michael J. Enders, *Antipode*, 8.2 (1976), 30–37 (p. 32) <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.1976.tb00636.x>.
[73] Massey, pp. 1, 5, 6, 9.
[74] Tong Ma, 'Everything I Know about That Old Xichang Street (关于那条老的西长街，我所知道的一切)', *WeChat Official Accounts (微信公众平台)*, 2019
<http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MzIxNDM3Mjk5OQ==&mid=2247495335&idx=2&sn=0730a1f1c1f55c8f3ddc65e894ae040e&chksm=97aa294fa0dda0598c77853e3a496c9bac5a89d3d240d095e4e157664d6d856770728270f1a1#rd> [accessed 27 August 2021].
[75] Weixia Li, 'How Xichang Street Became Prosperous? (西长街是如何"发家"的?)', *WeChat Official Accounts (微信公众平台)*, 2021
<http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MzIxNDM3Mjk5OQ==&mid=2247505625&idx=1&sn=c13d9a8740b992b0c603b49d2ecc5f48&chksm=97aa1131a0dd98271b2aeee07e83283ffeaf636aadfa0127eba4fa8a7b0730cede78538623f3#rd> [accessed 27 August 2021].
[76] Lukasz Stanek, *Henri Lefebvre on Space: Architecture, Urban Research, and the Production of Theory* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), p. 87.

Fig. 8 The Earliest Food Stalls in Xichang Street in the Early 1980s

Fig. 9 The Farmers' Market along the Xichang Street

parasols and stands are set up in the streets, temporary signs, hung on the walls, and dishes, washed under temporarily diverted water pipes – such temporariness is the very strategical response to the constraints (Fig. 8).

This temporary appropriation not only allowed the flowing population to settle down but also established connections among other social groups. According to Ma, the prosperity of the Farmers' Market changed the life of original residents in Xichang Street – "They (residents) converted all the houses facing the street into shopfronts, either renting them out or running their own businesses there".[77] Figure 9 shows how the everyday life of this *shijing* place is characterised by such a mixture of dwelling and commerce. Also, through this functional mingling, Xichang Street became a place open to residents, passers-by and strangers to the city. Spatially, this mingling is manifested through the elusiveness of the shopfronts' interiority and exteriority – with their doors open, goods extending to the street, and sun shields leaning towards the passers-by (Fig. 9). The mixture of the dwelling and the commercial, the interior and the exterior made *shijing* place in Xichang Street contrasts itself with the abstract space fractured by boundaries and functional zones.[78] Without imposed boundaries, the multiple localities of *shijing* place are realised through the interrelations of various groups.[79]

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[77] Ma.
[78] Stanek, pp. 152–53.
[79] Massey, p. 7.

3 Chapter 2: the "Fake and Material" *Shijing*

3.1 <u>Introduction</u>

Chapter 1 has focused on "why" – why *shijing* and why the 1980s-2000s become the referents of contemporary nostalgia. In answering these, I have concluded that, for the former, *shijing* empowers people to contest the right to the city. For the latter, *shijing* place in that period expresses the sense of multiple localities. In this chapter, I will turn to answer questions about "how" – specifically, how references from the past are arranged to mimic the "real" *shijing*.

By "mimic", I want first to point out that any nostalgic construction is by no means a faithful copy of the original. Essentially, memory is about remembering by forgetting due to a range of reasons from limited memory capacity, psychological pressures to social biases.[80] Also, nostalgia, sandwiched between the individual and communal memories, is continuously shaping and shaped by external symbols such as artefacts, museums and archives.[81]

Secondly, I categorise Wenheyou as Duplitecture, which duplicates the disappeared *shijing* place across time. Architectural mimicry in contemporary China has drawn widespread scholarly attention, and the term Duplitecture is employed to describe the direct replica of western canonical buildings and sites amid rapid urbanisation in Chinese cities.[82] I adopt this term to suggest a new phase in Chinese urbanisation when duplication spans more across

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[80] Aleida Assmann, 'Canon and Archive', in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. by Astrid Erll and Nunning Ansgar (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), pp. 97–108 (p. 97).

[81] Jan Assmann, 'Communicative and Cultural Memory', in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. by Astrid Erll and Nunning Ansgar (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), pp. 109–18 (p. 111).

[82] '1 INTO "THE LAND OF COURTLY ENJOYMENTS": An Introduction to China's Architectural Mimicry', in *Original Copies*, by Bianca Bosker, ed. by Ronald G. Knapp and Xing Ruan (University of Hawaii Press, 2017), pp. 1–19 (p. 1) <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780824837839-003>; Bauer Bernhard and Canestrini Duccio, 'Copysites: Tourist Attractions in the Age of Their Architectural Reproducibility', *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 17.1 (2019), 13–26 (p. 1) <https://doi.org/10.1080/14766825.2019.1558020>.

time than across space – marked by President Xi's speech addressing the "disordered phenomenon" of xenocentric buildings in China.[83]

Spectacle (Debord), simulacrum (Baudrillard), pastiche (Jameson) – these terms can be well fitted to criticise Wenheyou for it being an empty agglomeration of signs.[84] However, these concepts all have an obsession for the "real". In the following chapter, I will complicate the much-criticised "fakeness" in nostalgia by positioning the role of Wenheyou as Duplitecture. Adopting visual analysis methods, I will discuss two types of surfaces in Wenheyou – the urban surface and the duplicated urban surface – to elucidate how the authorship of *shijing* are changed along with the process of duplication.

3.2 The Urban Surface in Duplicated Wenheyou

Upon arrival, visitors are less likely to relate what they see in the surface level – shiny glass panels of a high-end shopping mall – to the *shijing* of the 1980s and 1990s. Fenced with an iron palisade, warded by the guards, the facade of Wenheyou is no different from other modernist skyscrapers', except for being identified with the sign "Changsha Wenheyou" (Fig. 10). Essentially, signs on the surface as names create taxonomies and distinguish between different objects and classes.[85] By branding the surface as "Changsha Wenheyou", Wenheyou directly refers to itself and its designers as authors of this "fake" *shijing*. Together with the fences and guards, this practice distinguishes the "fake" *shijing* from the "real" one. While the former is organised, institutional, always secure, the latter is spontaneous, discursive, and sometimes perilous.

However, it should be noted that these glass panels are only the first layer of the double surface system (Fig. 11). Once coming closer, visitors would find themselves in front of the entrance to a semi-open space concealed behind the glass veil. The exposure of the neatly designed glass surface and the relative concealment of the more porous, chaotic, and less consistent entry surface should be first understood as a strategical response. According to its designers, their design intention is to "resist the 7-storey, 20,000 m², vertical tower that extends more than 300 metres into the air by reconstructing the alleys and streets of 300

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[83] China Daily, 'China Daily Criticizes Strange Buildings (人民日报批奇葩建筑)', *Xinhua Net*, 2015 <http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2015-04/21/c_127714568.htm> [accessed 25 August 2021].
[84] Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (London: Rebel Press, 1992); Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (University of Michigan Press, 1994); Jameson.
[85] Sabina Andron, 'Graffiti, Street Art and the Right to the Surface: For a Semiotic, Cultural and Legal Approach to Urban Surfaces and Inscriptions' (unpublished Dissertations & Theses, University of London, University College London, 2018), p. 193.

Fig. 10 The Exterior Surface of Wenheyou (Photo by the Author)

Sign: Changsha Wenheyou

Guards

Fences

First Layer (Glass)

Second Layer

Indication: Yongyuan Street

Direction:
Morning Market

Direction:
Delivery Station

Potential
Consumers

Direction:
Queuing Place

Ads: Take-away Food

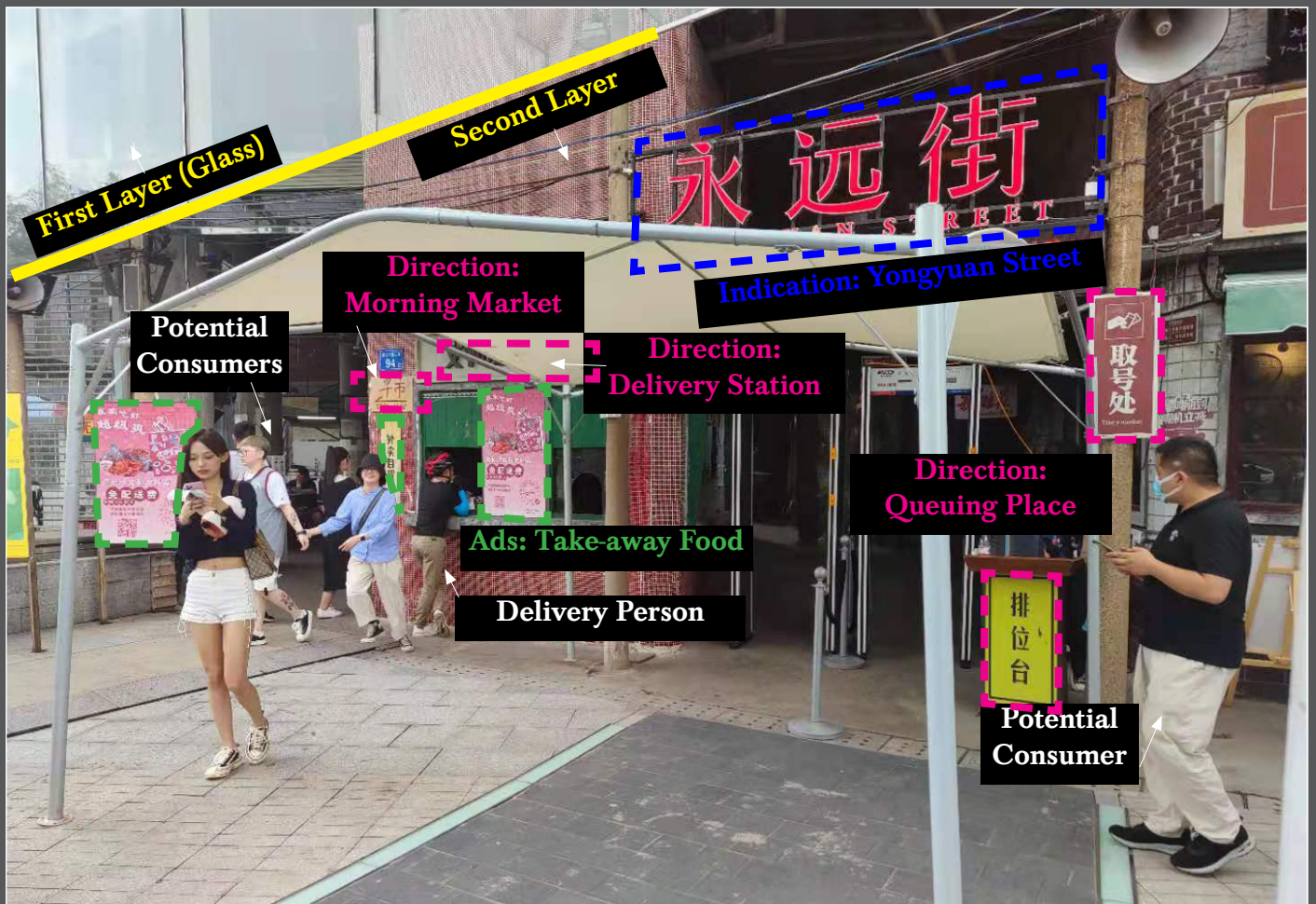Delivery Person

Potential
Consumer

Fig. 11 The Double Surface of Wenheyou (Photo by the Author)

metres long" (Fig. 12).[86] Considering that vertical surfaces are integral to the visual images of the city, through exposure or concealment, they act as a way to represent, respond, cover, or defy existing power relations.[87] Hence, the double surface of Wenheyou should above all be interpreted as an attempt to resist the modernisation process that replaces *shijing* place with skyscrapers.

Fig. 12 Design Strategy - Resisting the Vertical Tower

This professed resistance seems impotent in light of how Wenheyou shapes its urban facade. As Figure 11 shows, I categorise signages on the second layer into three semiotic systems – directional, promotional, and indicative. While, just like the first layer, the authorship of all these signs belongs to the brand, the directional and promotional signs further confine the readership by categorising visitors into potential consumers and delivery people. For consumers, two directions are designated – either queuing at the main entrance or entering the "morning market" by the flank side. For delivery people, advertising posters promoting

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86 Changsha News (长沙发布), 'In Changsha, There Is a "Super Wenheyou" That Constantly Innovates (在长沙，有个不断创造的"超级文和友")', *The Paper (澎湃新闻)*, 2021
<https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_5374799> [accessed 26 August 2021].
87 Andron, 'Graffiti, Street Art and the Right to the Surface', pp. 56–57.

takeaway food indicate the need for their presence. Yet they are directed to the delivery station, separated from the visitors' route. This separation changed the sense of place in real *shijing*, which is based on the relative rather than definitive identities of the occupants, visitors, and strangers.

Unlike the other two, the indicative sign – Yongyuan Street – above the main gate does not target any specific group of people. However, this non-specificity, again, does not increase the inclusiveness of the space but causes more confusion. Notably, a change in scale from the original to Duplitecture can devalue the latter into a simulacrum.[88] In Wenheyou, *shijing* is scaled up from the intermediary scale of streets to the scale of a skyscraper. By naming an architectural monolith a street, Wenheyou becomes a simulacrum whose sign as value is invalidated while the death sentence to its reference is validated.[89] Between the scale of the original (the streetscape) and the scale of the copied (the building scape), the intermediary scale that once provided negotiating ground for the flowing population is sentenced dead.

3.3 The Urban Surface Duplicated in Wenheyou

The above analysis has shown that, during the duplication, the original urban surface of *shijing* is rejected and distorted through branding, commodifying, and scaling. Yet these distortions can be defended from another dimension of Duplitecture – the nature of the copy. As design intentions, the nature of the copy can vary from producing an "exact" copy, a "similar" copy, a copy "in the style of" the original, a commodified copy of the original, et cetera.[90] Varying purposes would involve stakeholders of disparate interests as to the degree and aspects of similarities or dissimilarities.[91] Indeed, figure 12 shows that the resistance to the modernisation process claimed by Wenheyou is not designed to be achieved through external facades but internal duplicated surfaces. In this respect, I categorise the duplicated surfaces inside Wenheyou into two categories with distinctive purposes.

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[88] Nelson Graburn, Gravari-Barbas Maria, and Staszak Jean-François, 'Simulacra, Architecture, Tourism and the Uncanny', *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 17.1 (2019), 1–12 (p. 6) <https://doi.org/10.1080/14766825.2019.1560773>.
[89] Baudrillard, p. 6.
[90] Graburn, Maria, and Jean-François, p. 3.
[91] Graburn, Maria, and Jean-François, p. 3.

Rhythmic Surfaces: The (De)Territorialisation of Shijing

The social life of walls is rhythmic from two aspects.[92] Firstly, as the surface of public expression, they carry messages of different rhythms possessed by different people, objects and events – pauses, heartbeats, silences, recommencements – I call it "rhythms of the urban".[93] Secondly, as territorial boundaries, they have life cycles for being temporary, generational, cyclic, or "immemorial – I call it "rhythms of the wall".[94] These two aspects are intrinsically inseparable because the life and death of the walls are directly related to the concentration or dispersal of people, who would leave traces of their lived experience on the wall, whether knowingly or not.

Figure 13 gives a cross-section of how rhythms of the urban possessed by two groups of people coexist on the duplicated wall through intentional (fake) contestations over the right to the surface, which essentially epitomises the right to the city.[95] Although the "right" can have all-encompassing meanings from the right of freedom, participation, occupation to a cry, a demand, I specify it in this case as the right of deterritorialisation.[96] Despite potential accusations of over-romanticising detachment and uprootedness, I employ deterritorialisation as a conception protesting against the centre-periphery hierarchy and any form of pure or authentic identities.[97]

For starters, inscriptions generate territories.[98] As figure 13 shows, by writing their names on the surface, people claim their right to be present in *shijing* place – they delimitate their own territories. Yet simultaneously, these names also indicate endeavours of deterritorialising *shijing* place. "Di loves Peng", "Zhiqiang was here for a visit" – names of lovers and strangers are all embraced on the surface without demarcating people inside *shijing* place from people outside. Furthermore, advertising posters – posted on top of the previous torn-off ones – also challenge the consolidations of boundaries excluding strangers and migrants. "Pack & Stack", "Pipeline Dredge", "Cleaning Service" – these informal economies, indicatively, sustain the livelihoods of migrant workers and the urban poor in *shijing* place. For them,

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[92] Andrea Mubi Brighenti, 'Walled Urbs to Urban Walls - and Return?', in *The Wall and the City / Il Muro e La Città / Le Mur et La Ville*, ed. by Andrea Mubi Brighenti (Professional Dreamers, 2009), p. 66.

[93] Brighenti, p. 66; Henri Lefebvre, *Henri Lefebvre: Key Writings*, ed. by Stuart Elden, Elizabeth Lebas, and Eleonore Kofman, Athlone Contemporary European Thinkers (New York: Continuum, 2003), p. 194.

[94] Brighenti, p. 66.

[95] Sabina Andron, 'The Right to the City Is the Right to the Surface', in *Urban Walls: Political and Cultural Meanings of Vertical Structures and Surfaces*, ed. by Andrea Mubi Brighenti and Mattias Kärrholm (Oxford: Routledge, 2019), pp. 191–214.

[96] Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, pp. 158, 173–74.

[97] Nikos Papastergiadis, *The Turbulence of Migration: Globalization, Deterritorialization and Hybridity* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2000), p. 118; Rosi Braidotti, *Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 5.

[98] Andron, 'The Right to the City Is the Right to the Surface', p. 207.

Fig. 13 Rhythmic Surfaces - Life (Photo by the Author)
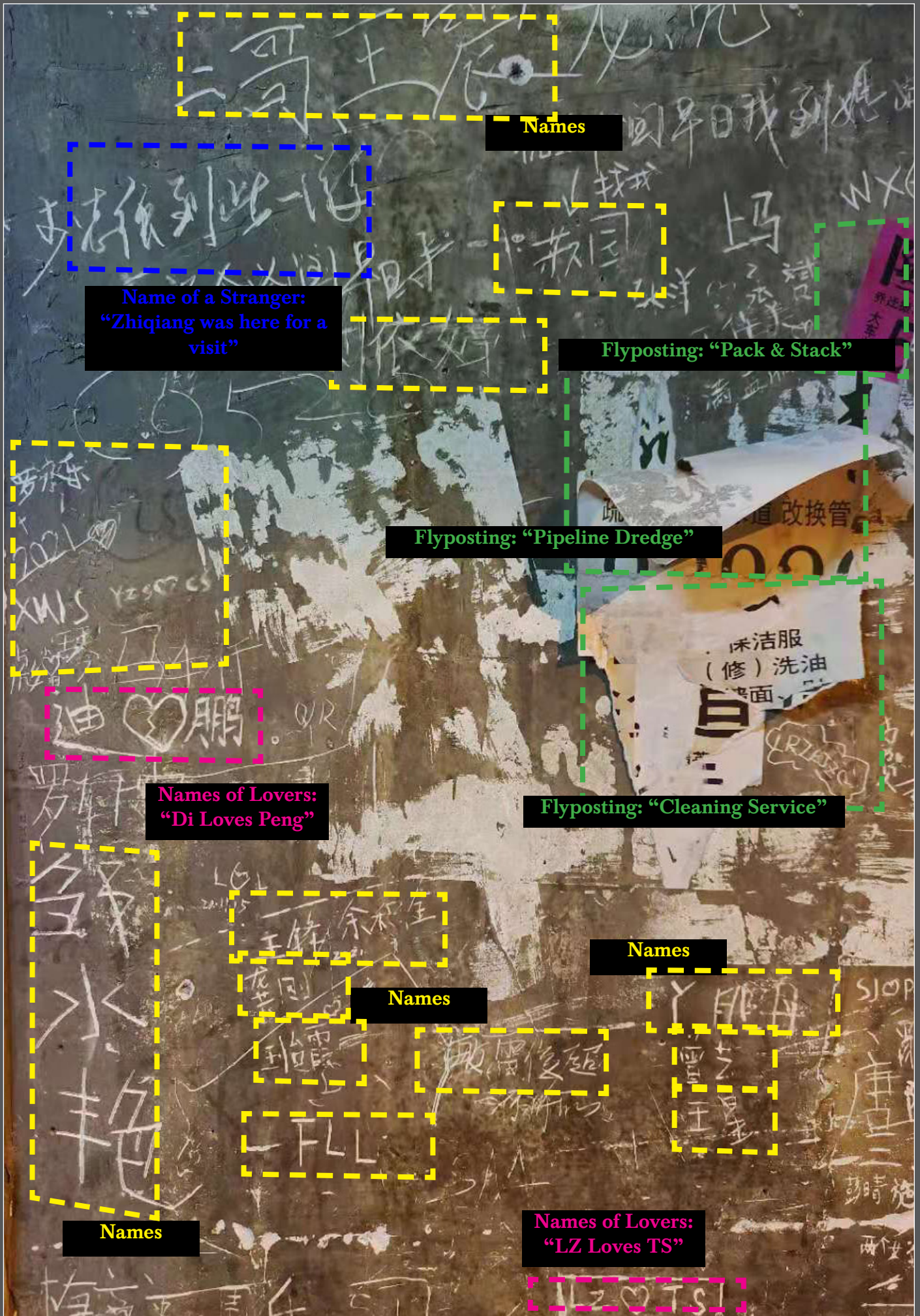
Names

Name of a Stranger: "Zhiqiang was here for a visit"

Flyposting: "Pack & Stack"

Flyposting: "Pipeline Dredge"
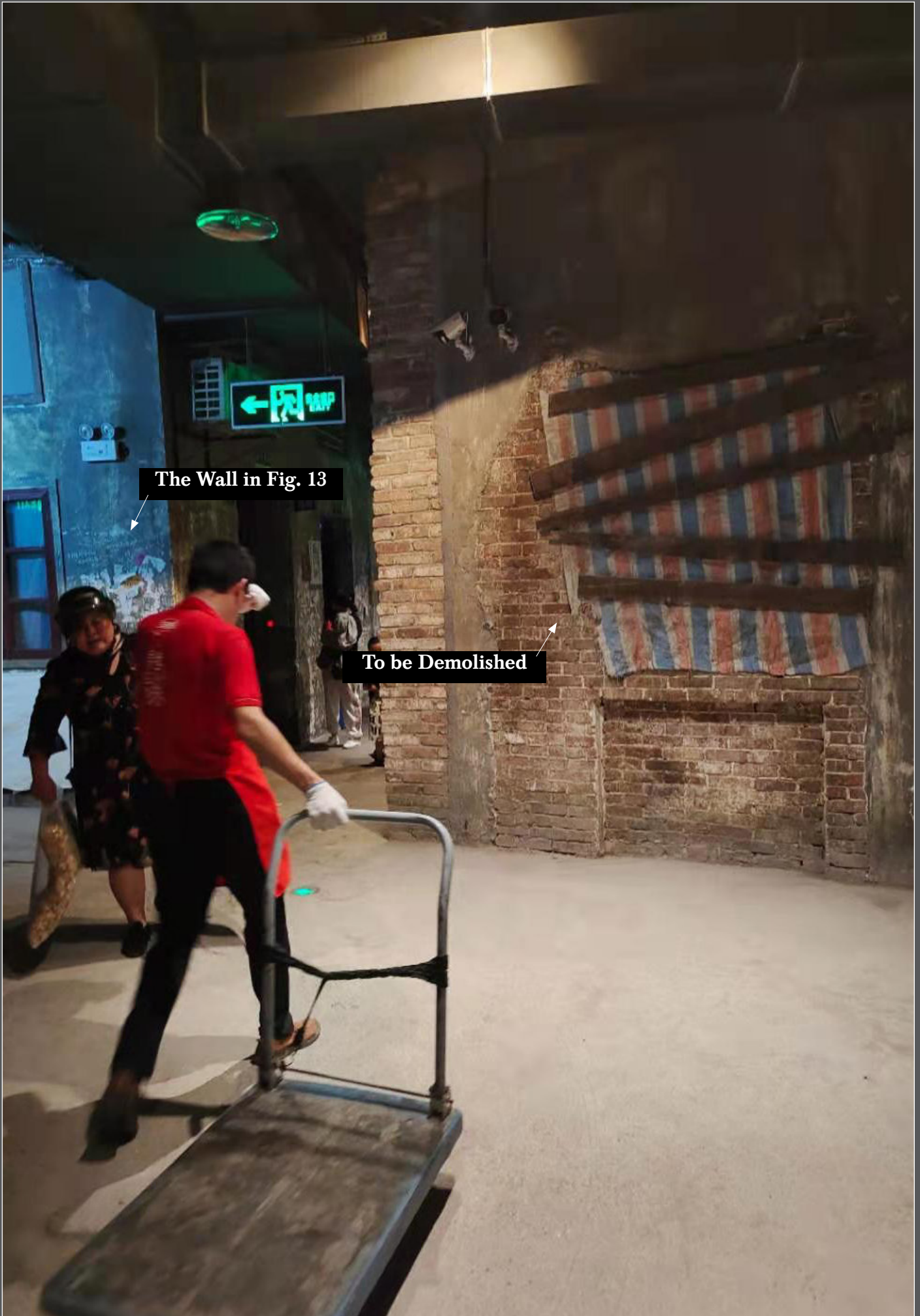
Flyposting: "Cleaning Service"

Names of Lovers: "Di Loves Peng"

Names

Names

Names

Names of Lovers: "LZ Loves TS"

Fig. 14 Rhythmic Surfaces - Death (Photo by the Author)

The Wall in Fig. 13

To be Demolished

walls are their territories to deterritorialise *shijing* place.

It is vital to note that the migrant workers here are distinctive from those in the western context who are "undergoing 'reterritorialisation' following a periodic deterritorialisation".[99] In contemporary China, people involved in informal economies often do not seek reterritorialisation but instead seek to exploit the in-between position of the deterritorialised *shijing* place, such as urban villages, for homeownership elsewhere.[100] In other words, *shijing* place has to be deterritorialised for them to negotiate their urban membership.

By contrast, if figure 13 shows how rhythms of the urban actively participate in shaping the rhythms of the wall, the wall in figure 14 reverses this relationship. Considering that the rhythmicality of walls can be altered by the changing sequence of openings and doors, the nailed bars and coverings stifling the original windows are the culprit for this reversion.[101] Through sealing the opening, efforts to reterritorialise *shijing* place as shantytowns to be demolished are enacted. With gestures of prohibition, this suffocation disperses people who originally live and make a living here, as well as people who are new and strange here. In brief, the rhythm of walls is altered by urban renewal projects to control urban rhythms, replacing people's right to the city with the bulldozers' right to the *shijing*.

The fakeness of these two walls is obvious. Most notably, the graffiti and advertisements on the wall have clearly been scrutinised and purified, without the presence of any dirty words or illegal businesses. Instead of being an exact copy, as I will argue, these surfaces are designed to copy walls of *shijing* place to construct narratives, which is made possible due to the indispensable tie between narratives and rhythms. By definition, narratives are to be comprehended configurationally as "a set of events".[102] It is dependent on these configurations that we can grasp, for example, dancing movements as "a dance rather than as a set of random motions".[103] Also, by definition, rhythms are to be recognised as "movements and differences in repetition".[104] In parallel, rhythms are what make narratives not as random ones. Therefore, by showcasing how rhythms of the urban and the walls are

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[99] *Drifting: Architecture and Migrancy*, ed. by Stephen Cairns (Routledge, 2004), p. 1.
[100] Yang Zhan, '"My Life Is Elsewhere": Social Exclusion and Rural Migrants' Consumption of Homeownership in Contemporary China', *Dialectical Anthropology*, 39.4 (2015), 405–22 (p. 408) <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10624-015-9401-6>.
[101] *Urban Walls: Political and Cultural Meanings of Vertical Structures and Surfaces*, ed. by Andrea Mubi Brighenti and Mattias Kärrholm (Oxford: Routledge, 2019), p. 2.
[102] Hayden White, 'The Structure of Historical Narrative', *Clio*, 1.3 (1972), p. 18 <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/structure-historical-narrative/docview/1300318883/se-2?accountid=14511>.
[103] White, p. 18.
[104] Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, p. 231.

intertwined, these walls tell stories (the deterritorialisation and territorialisation of *shijing*) of specific people (*shijing* dwellers, strangers, lovers, migrant workers) in a specific place (*shijing* place).

Surfaces Montage: Shijing Atmosphere

Once approaching the boundaries of the duplicated *shijing* place, visitors would find themselves immersed in the hyperreal world of the Disneyland or *Truman Show* – a world that presents itself as "imaginary" and is not ashamed to admit its falsity.[105] Figure 15 illustrates how this falsity is manifested along the bordering line of Wenheyou. Curtains are not covering openings but concrete and brick walls. Mechanical elevators for transporting dishes are juxtaposed with decayed walls of the 1980s and 1990s when no such technology was ever available. The high-end shopping mall is just adjacent to the run-down atmosphere of *shijing* place. To borrow Baudrillard's diagnosis of nostalgia towards the lost referential in history, these deliberate exposures of falsehood can be symptomatic of the hyperresemblance as "they no longer resemble anything, except the empty figure of resemblance".[106] Such emptiness left impressions on people only as "montages" from a combinatory culture rather than as veritable facts.[107] Nonetheless, this interpretation shuns from answering the questions of authorship and spectatorship – Who are designing the hyperresemblance? Who is interpreting it? Can they have their own agency of interpretations, and most importantly, can we call this agency hyperreal?

In answering these questions, I contend that a critical understanding of "montages" would be necessary because "montages" are the principal logic of creating the *shijing* atmosphere in Wenheyou. To explain in detail how this logic functions at operational, effectual, and perceptive levels respectively, I now contextualise it in a specific scenario. In figure 16, it can be observed that the duplicated surface is designed to be a montage, where various fractured surfaces of disparate styles, materiality, and configurations are pieced together. It fits what film director Sergei Eisenstein defines that montage arises through the collision of independent pieces.[108] Furthermore, this collision, argued by Eisenstein, results in an

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[105] Baudrillard, p. 13; Susee T. Bharathi and I. Ajit, 'Hyperreality as a Theme and Technique in the Film Truman Show', *Global Media Journal*, 16 (2018), 1–5.
[106] Baudrillard, pp. 44–45.
[107] Baudrillard, p. 45.
[108] Christie and Taylor, 1993, p. 195, cited in Richard Koeck, *Cine-Scapes: Cinematic Spaces in Architecture and Cities* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 15.
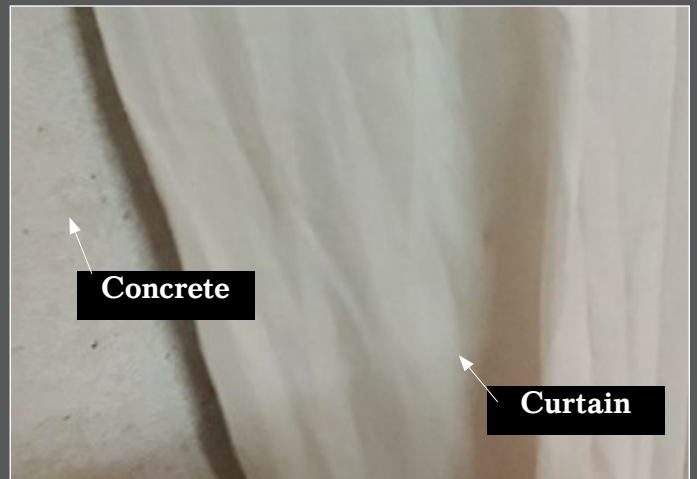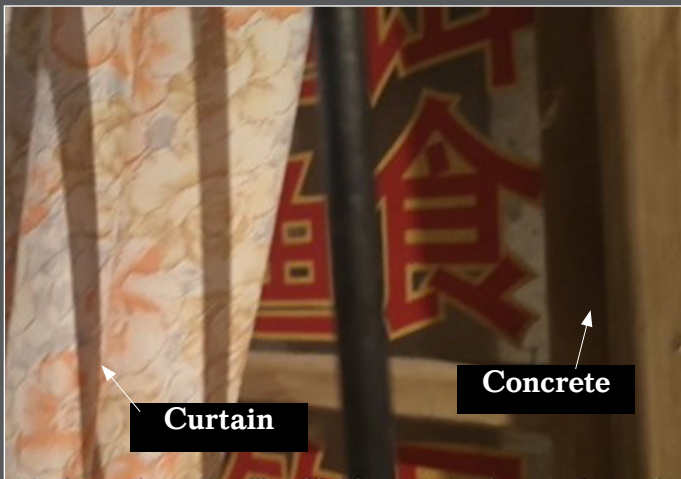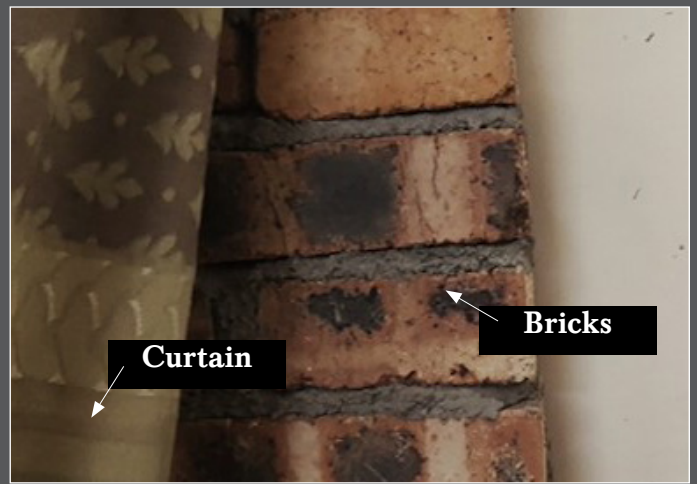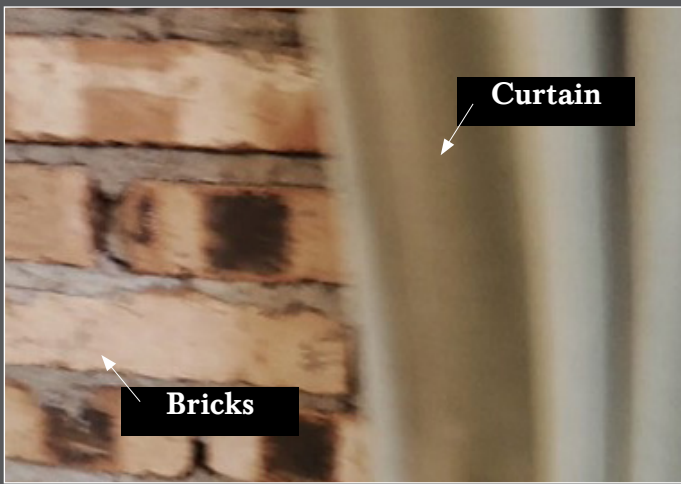
Fig. 15 Exposures of Falsehood along the Boundaries of Wenheyou (Photo by the Author)

Fig. 16 Surfaces Montage (Photo by the Author)

enunciative phenomenon.[109] In Wenheyou, this phenomenon can be described as the informality of *shijing* place. As is annotated in the picture, the informality connoted by this surface can be observed from the juxtaposed ornaments of different patterns, additive constructions, as well as ad hoc appropriations.

Noteworthily, behind this seemingly arbitrary informality lies referents of the "real" *shijing*. As is mentioned, there has been the need to accommodate the growing flowing population in cities since the reform. Such need is often satisfied in urban villages, where landowners reap maximum profits by adding extra rooms to original structures or rebuilding houses into multi-storey ones.[110]

These added structures imply that montages are not only the method to duplicate *shijing*, but they are also the phenomenon of *shijing*. As architects Diana Agrest and Mario Gandelsonas explain, "it (Montage) works on the surface, constructing new objects (and subjects) out of new relations of image to image".[111] The surfaces of urban villages share the same logic with montage by following this rule of additions. Consequently, at the operational level, montages as both the referent and the duplicating technique cannot be sufficiently criticised as generating "hyperresemblance" – the reality itself is a montage. The authorship of this surface should also be attributed to those who appropriate and survive by the informal spaces in *shijing* place – namely, *shijing* dwellers and migrant workers.

Moreover, it is undeniably difficult to avoid montages as a way of organising our everyday lives. As film theorist Jonathan Beller argues, "montage as fragmentation and montage as the connecting of fragments are at once the condition of modern life and the condition for the production of meaning in modern life".[112] Similarly, for film director Dziga Vertov, the meaning of modern life can be reformatted by means of montage, which dismantles the reificatory effects of capital circulation by creating "a new relation to the social product at once collective and personal".[113] Architectural montage, comparably, enables the emergence of meanings heterogenous to the original or the existed. Or, in Agrest and Gandelsonas' words, architectural montage is a way to review possibilities that "allow an

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[109] Koeck, p. 15.
[110] Ya Ping Wang, Yanglin Wang, and Jiansheng Wu, 'Urbanization and Informal Development in China: Urban Villages in Shenzhen', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 33.4 (2009), 957–73 (p. 961) <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2009.00891.x>.
[111] Koeck, p. 17.
[112] Jonathan Beller, *The Cinematic Mode of Production: Attention Economy and the Society of the Spectacle* (Lebanon: University Press of New England, 2006), p. 39.
[113] Beller, p. 45.

exotic theme to be read without resorting to direct representation".[114] This ambition of generating real meanings through fake representation again proves Baudrillard's division of the (not-anymore) real/fake too simplistic. Hence, at the effectual level, architectural montages generating exotic feelings can reinterpret *shijing* not as an exact copy but as a heterogeneous construct of existing social relations.

At the perceptive level, the design of the *shijing* atmosphere through montages plays a central role in expressing the sense of heterogeneity. My use of "atmosphere" here is indebted to philosopher Gernot Böhme's argument that "atmosphere is the common reality of the perceiver and the perceived".[115] By his definition, atmospheres are neither objective nor subjective.[116] Yet in the meantime, atmospheres are thinglike – as ecstasies, they are articulated by the things through qualities possessed by things – and subjectlike – as senses, they belong to subjects whose bodily presence unfolds in space.[117] In Wenheyou, the ecstasies of the *shijing* atmosphere are magnified by the increased density of visual artefacts in space. If we compare figure 16 with figure 9, neither the density of advertising boards nor that of duplicated facades is a faithful representation of the real *shijing*. From the perspective of atmospheres as thinglike, this betrayal of the original can be justified since the copy intends to duplicate the atmosphere of *shijing* through montages, where informality supersedes the total design. Yet from the perspective of atmosphere as subjectlike, this betrayal seems questionable considering that, as I mentioned in the research background, the *shijing* atmosphere for internet celebrities becomes only the background of their photos. In the next chapter, I will begin with this question by examining how people react to the *shijing* atmosphere. Before this, a short conclusion would suffice to end this chapter:

Despite losing the original scale and sense of place when duplicating *shijing*, Wenheyou as the Duplitecture of duplicating narratives and atmospheres can still be regarded as the "real" nostalgia about *shijing*. The realness is not reflected as exactness but instead as the intention of the copy, which aims to contest the right to narrate and the right to defy and indeed, the right to the city as an "eyesore".

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[114] Agrest and Gandelsonas, 1995, cited in Koeck, p. 15.
[115] Gernot Böhme, 'Atmosphere as the Fundamental Concept of a New Aesthetics', *Thesis Eleven*, 36.1 (1993), 113–26 (p. 122) <https://doi.org/10.1177/072551369303600107>.
[116] Böhme, p. 122.
[117] Böhme, p. 122.

4 Chapter 3: the "Fake and Virtual" *Shijing*

4.1 Introduction

Chapters 1 and 2 have addressed the conditions ("why") and material representations ("how") of nostalgia. In this chapter, I mainly discuss the impacts of nostalgia ("what") by analysing the dialectic relationships between the nostalgic bodies and the spatial frames of nostalgia. I use nostalgic bodies to indicate previously mentioned "subjectlike" in the duplicated *shijing* atmosphere. Distinctively, although the nostalgic bodies in Wenheyou can in no way be seen as a group of people with shared homogenous identity, statistic reveals that 70% of Wenheyou's customers are female and 70% are under age 35.[118] Given that most of its customers are young female photo addicts, Wenheyou has drawn many criticisms for being only a *Wanghong* (influencers and microcelebrities, mostly female) store.[119] Under one media coverage about Wenheyou's expansion to Shenzhen, the most heated comment reads, "it is all about those women, gathering together, taking pictures and posting online (with 951 likes)".[120] This apparent misogynistic response presents us with a glance into two stereotypical views attached to nostalgia. First, nostalgia is often viewed as "the random cannibalisation of all the styles of the past" and a fashionable background of photo shooting activities.[121] Second, since nostalgia is all about styles, simulation, pastiche, consumption, it is often deemed feminine, and with the backwards-looking gaze, it at best conceals the

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[118] Yu.

[119] David Craig, Jian Lin, and Stuart Cunningham, *Wanghong as Social Media Entertainment in China*, Palgrave Studies in Globalization, Culture and Society (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021), p. 110 <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-65376-7>.

[120] IC Laboratory, '10,000 People Are Queuing Here: Why Do People Still Find Wenheyou Attractive, Which Is Just Another Wanghong Store? (韭菜长腿，万人排队: 文和友的网红店套路为什么还有人买账?)', *NetEase*, 2021, p. 000 <https://www.163.com/dy/article/G84N6S6O0531A0DX.html> [accessed 2 September 2021].

[121] Jameson, p. 18.

present and the past, at worst, hinders the future.[122] These stereotypes are further worsened by the omnipresence of photo-taking activities in Wenheyou, which turns the material *shijing* into virtual *shijing*, deepening the sense of fakeness in the nostalgia for *shijing*.

To refute these views, I maintain that the "fake and virtual" *shijing* in images should not be firstly understood as a distortion of nostalgia because there is no authentic nostalgia whatsoever, as I argued in chapter 2. In addition, the electronic-formatted nostalgia for *shijing* should not be recognised as a symptom of female passivity in front of consumerist spectacles. Such a view can only find its resonance in some male intellectuals' deep-rooted discriminative opinion, attaching female consuming behaviours to women's inability to resist the seductions of pleasure and desire.[123] To build a counterargument, I insist that female spectatorship is an indispensable contributor in shaping the connotations of *shijing* both virtually and materially. Accordingly, the following chapter will examine the relationships between nostalgic bodies and *shijing* in these two types of spatial frames – the virtual one and the material one. Two questions will be looked into to evaluate the result of this nostalgia: (1) How do the nostalgic bodies interpret the "fake and material" *shijing* through the virtual platform? (2) How do these interpretations, in turn, change the "fake and material" shijing?

4.2   Bodies in the "fake and virtual" *Shijing*

One of the most popular topics about Wenheyou on the photo-sharing social networking platform Xiaohongshu (小红书) is recommended photo poses and strategies. The popularity of this topic reveals that the very nature of Wenheyou as a photo studio is widely accepted by its visitors. Given that photography cannot be innocent from being the art of forgetting under the guise of memory, it can be argued that such emphasis on the role of photography in Wenheyou renders the nostalgic atmosphere into stylistic nihilism.[124] As is maintained by media theorist Anne Friedberg, the culprit for the loss of memory is the cinematic spectatorship in the "society of the spectacle", which detemporalises and derealises subjectivity.[125] By "Detemporalise", Friedberg means that the capacity to retain the past is

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[122] Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 15.
[123] Felski, p. 62.
[124] Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 182.
[125] Friedberg, p. 182.

undermined, and "derealise", spectators' sense of presence and identity, questioned.[126] Additionally, quoting philosopher Luce Irigaray, Friedberg warns against the possibility that the dominance of the look would dematerialise the body at the expense of impoverishing other bodily relations connected with smell, touch, taste, and hearing.[127]

Yet these criticisms can be rebutted if *shijing* as a narrative and an atmosphere can communicate its connotations with nostalgic bodies, which are represented as the "fake and virtual" *shijing*. This communication, without the obsession for sticking to the real, would render "detemporalise", "derealise", and "dematerialise" irrelevant. As journalist Bianca Bosker commented on architectural mimicry, as long as spectators leverage the synergies between "mental accord" and "visual correspondence", it is possible for them to grasp meanings of a simulacrum as deep as that of the real.[128] Figures 17 and 18 present several examples of mental and visual encounters, of which the backgrounds are the recommended photo shooting locations popular online. In the following part, I categorise these locations into two according to their different relations with the nostalgic bodies – locations that used by the nostalgic bodies to tell narratives of the *shijing* atmosphere (locations 1, 2, and 3) and locations that shape the atmosphere of *shijing* narratives without the active participation of nostalgic bodies (locations 4 and 5).

Bodies in Shaping Narratives of the Shijing Atmosphere

(1) Narrative in Location 1: "Please do not lean, please do not linger!"

The message conveyed by the whole semiotic system in location 1 appears to be clear (Figure 19). The potholed stone railing is painted with the red warning: "Do not lean". As for the stairs, they are literally architectural signs for walking up or down, and thus signs for "do not linger".[129] Nevertheless, when confronted with people fascinated by taking photographs, these forbidden signs become ineffective. Therefore, the narrative of location 1 is about counternarratives, about leaning and lingering.

However, such counternarratives would not be permitted if it is not the theme of the *shijing*

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[126] Friedberg, pp. 125 & 185.

[127] Friedberg, pp. 32–33, quoted in Pollock, 1988; Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference*, reprinted (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2003), p. 70 <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203819531>.

[128] '2 THE FASCINATION WITH FAUX: Philosophical and Theoretical Drivers of Architectural Reproduction in China', in *Original Copies*, by Bianca Bosker, ed. by Ronald G. Knapp and Xing Ruan (University of Hawaii Press, 2017), pp. 20–36 (p. 27) <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780824837839-004>.

[129] Jonathan A. Hale, *Building Ideas: An Introduction to Architectural Theory* (Chichester [England] ; New York: John Wiley, 2000), p. 145.

Fig. 17 Axonometric Drawing of Floor 1,2 (Top) and 3 (Below) and Recommended Photo-taking Locations

Fig. 18 Axonometric Drawing of Floor 4 (Top) and 5 (Below) and Recommended Photo-taking Locations
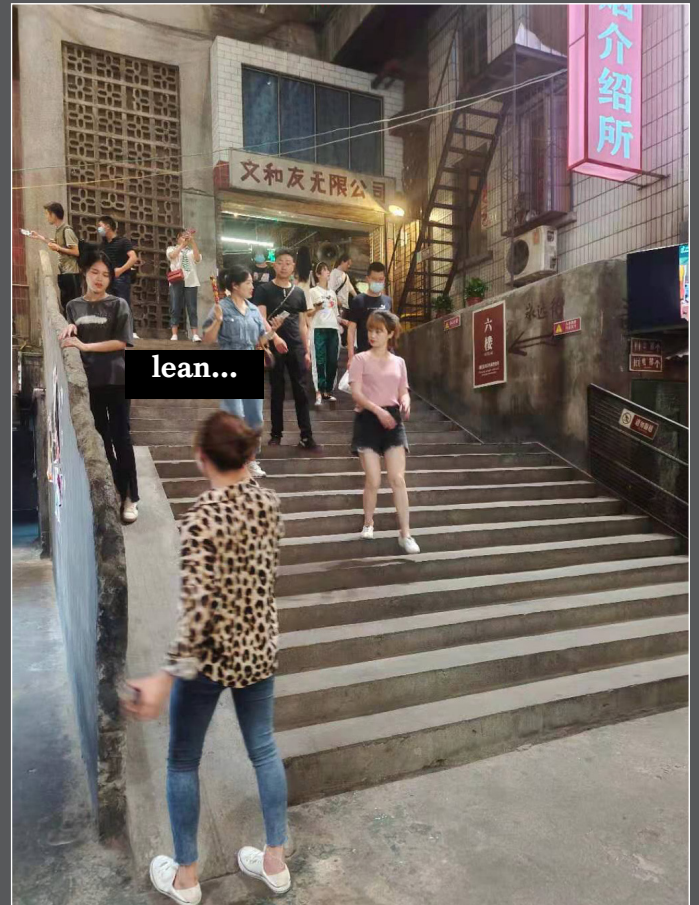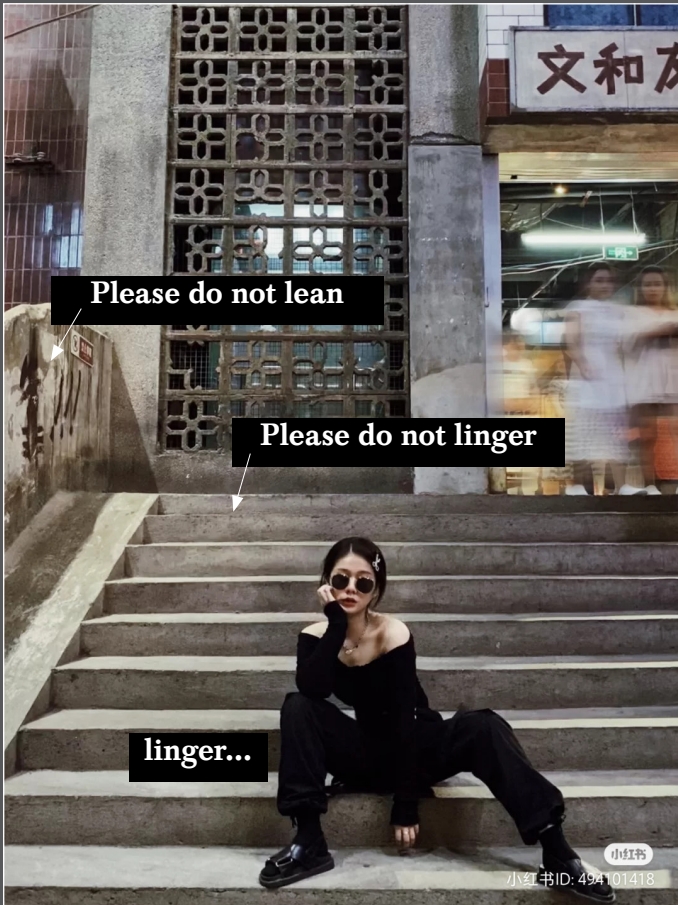
Figure 19 Location 1: "Please do not lean, please do not linger!"

Figure 20 Location 2: The Flaneuse

Figure 21 Location 3: A story of Ruins

Figure 22 Locations 4, 5: Atmospheres of Shijing Narratives

atmosphere, neither the real *shijing* nor the fake *shijing*. Considering that atmosphere is a determining factor in "subtly shaping beliefs, norms and cultural values" through artefacts, counternarratives as the "normative" behaviour would not be possible without *shijing* as the atmosphere accepting abnormity.[130] I use "normative" here to refer to the normality of being abnormal in the *shijing* atmosphere. Such abnormality has already been touched on in chapters 1 and 2, where I have suggested how the "abnormal" flowing populations, strangers, informal spaces are admitted, narrated, and represented in the *shijing* atmosphere.

Such transgressive acts pose a strong defence against Irigaray's worrying about the dematerialisation of our bodies. As Koeck explains, no matter how dominating the visual perception is, our perception of space is never purely visual.[131] The act of photo-taking can also be tactile, extending our perceptions of the *shijing* atmosphere into screen-formatted images through bodily transgressions. However, before acknowledging this interpretation of *shijing* as counternarrative, it is worth reckoning that due to the ephemeral nature of photo-taking activities, what is the significance of such an evanescent transgressive act? Isn't it another example of displaying bodies as spectacles?

(2) Narrative in Location 2: The Flaneuse

If *shijing* place is characterised by its inclusiveness and people of heterogenous identities, then the virtual *shijing* in figure 20 (left) also presents some of these qualities. Noteworthily, the identity of the female subject in this image is indeterminate, and we can only recognise her as someone walking alone in the street at night, lit by the faint yellow light. The two words in the previous sentence – street, night – are already telling in terms of how this female spectator perceives the narratives of the *shijing* atmosphere. "Street" indicates women's presence in the public realm, and "night", women's presence unbounded by time. Together, they hint that the *shijing* atmosphere empowers women to defy the long-established public and private dichotomy, which is often drawn upon the polarity of masculinity and femininity.[132] On this occasion, virtual representations do not detemporalise the past but rather retemporalise the past through the remaking of atmosphere – atmospheres of the street, night.

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[130] Gagliardi, 1996, p. 575, cited in Brigitte Biehl-Missal, 'The Atmosphere of the Image: An Aesthetic Concept for Visual Analysis', *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 16.4 (2013), 356–67 (p. 357) <https://doi.org/10.1080/10253866.2012.668369>.

[131] Koeck, p. 62.

[132] Griselda Pollock, 'Excerpts from "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity"', in *Gender Space Architecture: An Interdisciplinary Introduction*, ed. by Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner, and Iain Borden (London, New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 154–67 (p. 164).

In this vein, the atmosphere is not what mystically shapes the norm and belief, whose mechanisms I have not elucidated in the previous discussion about location 1. To explain the mechanisms of the *shijing* atmosphere in shaping the counternarratives and blurring the public-private dichotomy, I recognise the atmosphere as feelings "experienced in bodily presence in relation to persons and things or in spaces".[133] Figure 20 shows a shared logic in shaping the bodily relations between the "real" *shijing* (Fig. 8 & 9) and the "fake" *shijing* (Fig. 20, Right) – manifesting users' subjectivity through spatial appropriations in practice (for the "real" *shijing*) or in appearance (for the "fake" *shijing*). As arrangements of objects can indicate the presence of users, these appropriations manifest the presence of human subjects through organising objects – roadside stalls, billboards, and flyposting on the walls – that disrupt the abstract geometric perspective of the street.[134] In other words, the indication of human presence in the *shijing* atmosphere hints at "eyes on the street", which make the public street full of *renqingwei* (taste of human touch, meaning private feelings).[135] Thanks to such ambiguity between the public and the private rendered by *renqingwei*, the female urban subject – flaneuse – is mobilised.

Nevertheless, the absence of sun shields and umbrellas (compared with Fig. 9) in the "fake" *shijing* (Fig. 20) implies its interiority. This implication signals the tragic fate of flaneuse's mobility as confined within the consuming environments.[136] To narrate flaneuse's mobility in *shijing* street by virtual images can be a mask of the fact that there is none in reality. Isn't it a retreat of flaneuse from *shijing* place back to the department store?

(3) Narrative in Location 3: A story of Ruins

Another popular spot for taking photos is an open space surrounded by a broken brick fence with a piece of an intentionally articulated ruined facade as the background (Fig. 21). Stories about the suffocation of everyday urban rhythms in *shijing* place narrated by the "fake" *shijing* seem to be readily accepted by the virtual narrators. If the previous example shows the liberating power bequeathed to the flaneuse by the blurred public-private boundary, this example also shows the power of the same kind, though not liberatingly this time. In this instance, the public-private boundary is obliterated by the destructive power of bulldozers, leaving what Wu Hung calls "non-space".[137] The obliteration of boundaries does not create

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[133] Böhme, p. 119.
[134] Hale, p. 101.
[135] Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), p. 54.
[136] Friedberg, p. 37.
[137] Hung Wu, *A Story of Ruins: Presence and Absence in Chinese Art and Visual Culture* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2012), p. 217.

new kinds of space, but the space of urban ruins belong to no one, cared for by no one.[138] The representation of such non-space in Wenheyou forms a disputation against Andreas Huyssen's claim that "authentic ruins" refusing the wholeness and classical closure are already non-retrievably historical in the age of late capitalism.[139] By "authentic", he attaches it to the "aura", and by "late capitalism", he attaches the present representations of ruins to "authentic remakes" – another example of devaluing Duplitecture.[140] To reiterate my point, authentic or not, it is more pertinent to discern how such remakes alter the authorship and spectatorship of *shijing* and also, who has the right to narrate?

Admittedly, the re-representation in the virtual platform can be a significant distortion of the narratives of *shijing* ruins. Most notably, the pictures taken by spectators reveal no identities of the spectators in relation to the ruin, derealising spectators' sense of identities. Yet, it is equally important to note that the fact of having spectators in ruins is already noncompliance. It unleashes the "transitoriness of all greatness and power" from the aura.[141] A touch, a glance, a smell of the ruined *shijing* may all conjure up the spectators' sense of transience. Moreover, from the feminist perspective, losing the sense of identities in the public space can, on the contrary, be the realisation of individuals. Referring to Virginia Woolf's "principles of uncertainty", Rebecca Solnit advocates the disappearance of the self in the urban space as a means to disappear from the bonds and binds imposed on female identities.[142] Being derealised is being lost, open to the unknown, imagining the lost self as another person, in another space.[143] Getting lost, therefore, would be an opportunity to challenge the unity of identity that is often oppressive for women.[144] As a result of being lost, the sense of derealisation in photographs of the virtual *shijing* may not mean reducing all meaning to nihilism, or detemporalisation (location 1), or retreat (location 2) – as long as the spectators' identities are blurred, questioned, and problematised.

Bodies in Shaping the Atmosphere of Shijing Narratives

Locations 4 and 5 are different from the previous locations because the narrative of *shijing* is told more by the atmosphere than the spectator (Fig. 22). The overriding theme of both

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[138] Wu, *A Story of Ruins: Presence and Absence in Chinese Art and Visual Culture*, p. 217.
[139] Huyssen, pp. 10, 15, 20.
[140] Huyssen, pp. 11, 20.
[141] Huyssen, p. 13.
[142] Rebecca Solnit, *Men Explain Things to Me (爱说教的男人)*, trans. by Chenchen Zhang (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2020), p. 93.
[143] Solnit, pp. 93–94.
[144] Solnit, p. 94.

locations is the neon signs – "Changsha" (Fig. 22, Left) and "Chinese memories" (Fig. 22, Right). Venturi et al. have defended the prevalence of neon signs in the Las Vegas Strip, for they convey meanings and bring vitality to this area.[145] Initially published in 1972, this book was written to defy the domination of orthodox modern architecture – white boxes, plain surfaces, non-ornamental buildings. While they embrace the "meanings" of neon signs, they avoided judging the meanings of these "meanings", which heralds the "death" of postmodern architecture as merely commodities and spectacles. Although I have analysed that Wenheyou is a heterogenous space confronting the wipe-clean of the modernisation process, now, through the prism of neon sighs, this confrontation seems to be rendered in vain.

As urbanist Matthew Gandy argued, the varied properties of light can shape different urban atmospheres to serve specific purposes of cultural or political (im)mobilisation.[146] By anchoring the meaning of neon signs as place bounded – "Changsha" or "Chinese", Wenheyou weaves the collective memory of *shijing* into the realm of something cultural rather than political. The major difference between the two is that the former can be defined as "community's specific way of life, led within its self-spun webs of meaning", and the latter is concerned more about social justice revolving around questions about welfare, freedom, and virtue.[147] By tagging the "fake" *shijing* place as somewhere belonging to specific communities, these neon signs serve to mask the struggles of people not belonging to the community in contesting urban mobility.

When it comes to the spectators' activities of taking photos with these neon signs, the cultural aspect of the urban atmosphere in Wenheyou becomes even more dubious. What attracts their attention is that these atmospheres have a coloured array similar to Hong Kong movies', which can be best represented by movies of Hong Kong director Wong Kar-Wai.[148] For instance, Xiaohongshu user named "Wonderland" commented that "the best place to take Hong Kong-style photos is not Hong Kong" in her post and recommended that "looking for red and blue light sources when taking photos" (Fig. 22, left).[149] This displacement turns what is originally cultural into anti-cultural, replaces narratives of *shijing* with atmospheres of fake, virtual and empty denotations of "Hong Kong-style".

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[145] Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenour, p. xvi.

[146] Matthew Gandy, 'Urban Atmospheres', *Cultural Geographies*, 24.3 (2017), 353–74 (p. 366).

[147] Erll and Ansgar, p. 4; Michael J. Sandel, *Justice: What Is the Right Thing to Do* (New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 2009), p. 19.

[148] Gandy, p. 366.

[149] Wonderland, 'The best place to take Hong Kong style photos is not Hong Kong (最适合拍港风照片的地方居然不是香港)', *Xiaohongshu*, 2018.

Lastly, the replacement of *shijing* narratives on the virtual platform, in turn, changes the narratives of "fake and material" *shijing*. Figure 23 shows two instances of these shifts. The top image illustrates a moment when people play billiards not for the billiards but for taking photos. The image below shows a jumble of people queuing in a restaurant whilst waiting for taking photos with the neon sign "Changsha". These two moments epitomise that there no longer exists a sense of loss for spectators. The "principle of uncertainty" is overtaken by the certainty of being spectators, photographers, and bodies in photographs.

Fig. 23 Spectators Change the Functional Meanings of Spaces (Photos by the Author)

5 Conclusion

This dissertation unfolds itself based on a double agenda (Diagram 3). Firstly, it attempts to adopt *shijing* as an analytical tool concerning the right to the city and scrutinise how the authorship of nostalgia is altered and narrated across various memory frames. Secondly, using *shijing* as an evaluating concept, it aims to provide a brief portrait of the urbanisation process over the last thirty to forty years by employing Wenheyou – at the nexus of modernity and postmodernity – as a case study. Methodologically, I use visual materials to build my arguments, which will be in turn summarised as a video presented after this essay.
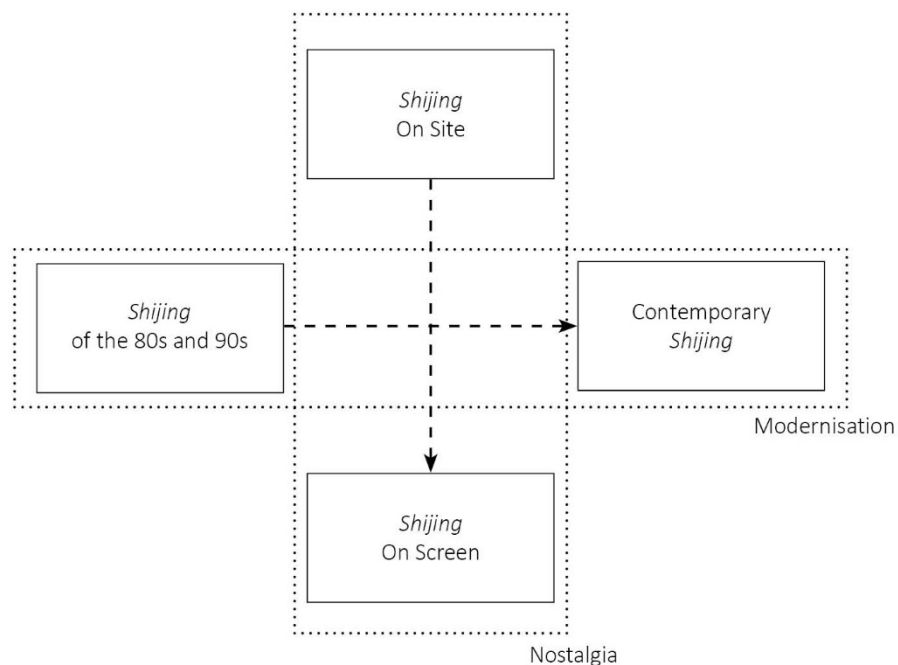

Diagram 3 The Double Agenda

In chapter 1, I put *shijing* into historical contexts and trace its spatial origin to the urban revolution in the Song dynasty when the force of *shi* (市) defeats the forces of *jing* (井) and *fang* (坊). Thus, the birth of "real" *shijing* place in the cities can be celebrated as a moment when spaces of representation defeat the representations of space and when the right to the city dissolves the abstract space. The dissolution of geometric abstractions results in the mixture of commercial and residential spaces in the city. This connotation continues its influence on people's perception of *shijing* to date. For instance, urban villages are often referred to as *shijing* places for having mixed functional spaces.

What makes *shijing* place of the 1980s and 1990s comparable with that of the Song dynasty is that it was similarly unchained from a period of tightening political regulations. What makes it unique is that its intermediate scale provides a negotiating ground for the flowing population to contest their urban citizenship. Thanks to the active participation of these migrant workers, *shijing* place establishes its sense of place based on the relative identities between people instead of definitive identities. The relativity is also reflected in its spatial forms, which are appropriated and whose public-private boundaries, blurred. Through tracing the "real" *shijing* in history, I propose that the right to the city (Lefebvre) and the right to the *shijing* can correspond and complement each other. Therefore, the nostalgia for *shijing* can be a potentially liberating concept in refuting the spatial segregations brought about by the modernisation process.

However, at the converging point of the modern and postmodern, Wenheyou alters the authorship of nostalgia through commodifying and gentrifying. In chapter 2, to respond to the controversies concerning its typology in existing arguments, I categorise it as Duplitecture. This classification distances my discussions from the all-affirming view of postmodern architecture as a defy towards modern architecture (Venturi et al.) or the all-denying view of postmodern architecture as simulacrums and styles (Baudrillard and Jameson). Instead of sticking to the "authenticity", I argued that attention should be directed towards the intention of copying. Two types of surfaces are identified – the rhythmic walls are duplicated in order to narrate the life and death of *shijing* place, and the surfaces montage is copied so as to create the atmosphere of informality.

In chapter 3, through the lens of cameras and phones, the virtual nostalgia of *shijing* seems to be more questionable. While female spectators are blamed for the nihilism led by photo-taking activities, I refute this view by showing how female spectators shape the narratives of *shijing* through virtual nostalgic frames. Three types of narratives prove to be manifesting

female subjectivity in *shijing* – stories about transgression, flaneuse, and ruination. Although these narratives provide opportunities for women to search for indeterminate identities unbothered by oppressive bonded relations, my analysis of how the *shijing* atmosphere is produced and perceived shows that these possibilities are ignored. What was once political was turned as purely cultural, and cultural turned anti-cultural. In the end, spectatorship is readily accepted as the only identity of spectators.

This narration of *shijing* across various nostalgic frames epitomises the urban development since the reform era – *shijing* emerges from the debris of *shijing* – or maybe even since the Song dynasty. I do not intend to romanticise this repetitive process of death and rebirth as it is important to reckon that would it be the nature of *shijing* itself that is leading to its own demise? For example, would it be its emphasis on the *shi* (市), rather than other political protests and manifestations, that is making it inept to resist spatial abstractions? This question should be kept in mind as we are entering the third decade of the 21st century when narratives of deglobalisation and state authorities increasingly eclipse the dominating narratives of neoliberalism in the first two decades.

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Photos by the Author.

8 Video

Name: *Shijing*, on the Debris of *Shijing*

Duration: 05:12

Narrator: The Flaneuse

URL: https://vimeo.com/603574930

Script:

ACT 1 Searching

我知道，我在寻找着什么。

I know that I am looking for something.

每当走在路上，我都在渴望着某种邂逅。

Whenever I walk along the street, I am longing for some kind of encounter.

邂逅，不是与一个人、一件事，

An encounter, not with a person or an event.

而是与一种，感觉——市井的气息。

but with a… a feeling – the smell of the shijing.

他们说，我不是唯一一个在寻找这种感觉的人。

They say I am not the only one looking for this feeling.

ACT 2 Shijing

"我们在市井街巷寻找灵感…

"We look for inspiration in the shijing...

希望带你回到那个充满人情味的长沙八九十年代。"

and hope to take you back to the 1980s and 1990s in Changsha with human touch."

——这是文和友给自己的定位。

- This is how Wenheyou describes itself.

站在这座商业综合体面前，

Standing in front of this commercial complex,

我感到一瞬间的迷失。

I felt lost for a moment.

安检、保安、健康码，

Security checks, security guards, health codes.

我更像是站在市井的出口，

It was more like I was standing at the exit of the shijing,

出口通向一片仅是欢乐、仅是安全的乐园。

The exit leads to a paradise of joy and safety.

那么市井是什么呢？

So, what is "shijing" exactly?

一种感觉。

A feeling.

规则的反面、宏大的反面。

The opposite of rules, the opposite of grandeur.

墙上的小广告、随手的涂鸦、混乱、带点肮脏。

Flyposting on the walls, random graffiti, chaos, a sense of filth.

是情欲的、不受控的、常游走在灰色地带。

Sometimes erotic, uncontrolled, often wandering into grey areas.

有人在这里住、在这里活、在这里死、在这里笑。

Some people live here, make a living in here, die here and laugh here.

文和友展示了这一切，

Wenheyou shows all this.

然我知道，这都是虚假的。

Yet, I know that it is all false.

ACT 3 Fakeness

这种虚假感首先从边界向我坍缩、将我包围。

This sense of falsity first collapses towards me and envelops me from the boundary.

门，掩映着混凝土。

Doors that conceal concrete.

窗帘，盖着砖块。

Curtains that cover the bricks.

防盗护栏，并不在保护着谁。

Burglar guards that are not protecting anyone.

砖块、混凝土。

Bricks, concrete.

在虚假与真实的世界之间游走，

Moving between the world of the fake and the real,

往复于市井与非市井的辖域。

In and out of the precincts of shijing.

虚假催生的首先是一种晕眩。

Falsehood spawns, above all, a dizziness.

ACT 4 Dizziness

晕眩，是一个中性的词汇。

Dizziness is a neutral word.

它能使女性在被标记着 "男浴池" 的地方聊天。

It enables women to chat in places marked as "male baths".

在虚假的莲花池边上，

By the fake lotus pool,

孩子们在垂钓。

Children are fishing.

晕眩催生快乐。

Dizziness gives rise to pleasure.

在真实的小猪边上，

By the real piglet.

游客为它的真所惊吓。

One visitor is shocked by its realness.

晕眩催生快乐。

Dizziness breeds joy.

再假的地方，也可以真的卖书。

Even a fake place can really sell books.

晕眩中也有真实。

There is truth in dizziness.

ACT 5 (In)Determinacy

晕眩在真与假之间产生，

Dizziness arises between the real and the fake,

指向一种不确定的自由状态，

pointing towards a state of indeterminate freedom

使人游离在束缚、枷锁与压迫之外。

that makes one wander beyond bondage, chains and oppression.

抬头，使人游离地表。

Raising one's head takes one away from the ground.

废墟，使人游离当下。

Ruin takes one away from the present.

而一旦晕眩成为被凝视的对象。

And once dizziness becomes the object of the gaze,

其本身就又落入了一种确定性。

It falls back into a determinacy in itself.

抬头，成为一个看客。

Looking up, one becomes a beholder.

废墟，成为一个客体。

The ruined becomes an object.

它不会再发出沉重的悲鸣。

It no longer utters a heavy mournful cry.

ACT 6 Neon

霓虹灯也制造晕眩，

Neon lights produce dizziness, too.

制造，而非创造。

produce, not create.

他们制造

They produce

"最佳拍照地点"、"最佳拍照姿势"。

"the best places to take pictures" and "the best photo poses".

他们制造叙事——

They produce narratives -

"长沙"、"中国记忆"、"我们"。

"Changsha", "Chinese memory", "us".

不知所指的叙事，

Narratives that do not have specific referents,

其呼喊弥漫整个空间。

whose shouts permeate the entire space.

在阳台上，人们追寻着"长沙"，

On the balcony, people are looking for "Changsha".

在圆桌旁，人们等待着"长沙"，

At the round table, people are waiting for "Changsha".

只为了在离开时，

Just for the purpose of, by the time they leave,

固定住与它在阳台上遥距一瞥的合影。

They would have a picture with it at a distance on the balcony.

ACT 7 Exit

离开的时候，

On my way out,

我又与数人擦肩而过。

I passed by more people.

送货的人、保洁的人、送快递的人。

Delivery people, cleaning people, courier people.

他们被赋予了形容词上的意义，

They were bestowed meanings by those adjectives.

而这使一切都指向了市井的反面。

And this makes everything the opposite of shijing.

市井，呼唤人的存在。

Shijing calls for the presence of the "people".

而这里，只有VR人像，

Yet there are only people in virtual reality,

旋转，旋转，旋转。

Spinning, spinning, spinning.

ACT 8 The End

当我想用英语来解释"市井"的时候，我发觉语言是无力的。

When I try to explain "shijing" in English, I find that words become feeble.

这种无力感，与其说是来自一种退却，倒不如说——

This feebleness comes not so much from a retreat as from …

是一种极速的甩荡。

a kind of swirling swing.

我无法找到一种合适的语言，去描述——

I cannot find the right words to describe –

街道被一句私语唤醒，

How the street is awakened by a whisper,

一张脸在热馄饨的蒸汽中消失，

a face disappeared amid the steam of hot dumplings,

一阵答答的脚步声。

and the sound of footsteps, tip-tap, tip-tap.

在一阵被时代变迁甩荡后产生的眩晕中，

In a dizzying hallucination after the swirling swinging of our times,

深夜回望 只洒下点点光影。

A late-night look back, spilling only a little light.

有谁被遗忘？

Has anyone been forgotten?