

Repetition: Pirate Culture and the Mobile Phone

In 1979 Andrei Tarkovsky created the haunting cinematic masterpiece *Stalker*. The film portrays a realm called the Zone that exists on the threshold between worlds. In *Roadside Picnic*, the novel by the Strugatsky brothers upon which the Tarkovsky film was based, the Zone is envisioned as an abandoned site left after an alien visitation. Stalkers scavenge the area for mysterious machines called 'empties', which run off a strange and imperceptible force that they then trade in the thriving black market for alien swag that exists on the edges of the nearby town. Like all traffic in pirated technology, the stalkers' trade is difficult to keep contained and enclosed. The most unsettling feature of the Zone, as it is depicted in both the story and the film, is its infectious nature. The Zone breeds. 'Its alien rhythms', writes xenofeminist philosopher Amy Ireland, comprise 'an inhuman logic of reproduction'.¹ By the end of *Roadside Picnic*, emigration from the town on the perimeter of the Zone has been banned for fear of a growing contagion – that '[a]ll that used to be in the Zone [will finally] settle in the outside world'.² The town, the stalker tells us, is 'a hole into the future. And the stuff we fish out of this hole will change your whole stinking world'.³

To depict the strange reality of the Zone, Ireland contrasts it with the familiar parameters of Kantian critique, which she describes as a specifically anthropomorphic rhythmic regime. 'Linear time, simultaneous, three-dimensional space, and objecthood', she writes, 'are its framing parameters – its tempo or its beat'.⁴ Most of that which occurs happens inside this framework. 'Time remains linear; space, simultaneous. Consequently, experience, at its most fundamental and unconscious level is ordered, familiar, comfortable, and homely, scaled reassuringly to match our perceptual affordances'.⁵ The Zone's exteriority is not empirical and concrete but abstract and transcendental. In the words of Mark Fisher, it is not 'just a matter of something being distant in space and time but of

something which is beyond our ordinary experience and conception of space and time itself'.⁶

In conjuring the Zone as the site of an alien outsidership, Ireland turns to Fisher's book *The Weird and the Eerie*, which repeatedly reflects on Tarkovsky's films and the fictions on which his movies are based. In the Zone, writes Fisher, nothing is uniform. 'Time, as well as space, can curve and fold in unpredictable ways'.⁷ The stalkers' intimacy with the Zone grants them what Fisher describes as a practical ethics of the eerie. Stalkers realise that the routes they once knew unexpectedly mutate into the unfamiliar, that 'you can't always take the straight path', that the maps they make 'rarely prove useful', and that 'one can never go back the way one came'.⁸ In *Roadside Picnic*, the stalker throws nuts to mark a future crossing. 'It's Hansel and Gretel', he says, 'but in reverse'.⁹ In this alternative and alien world, 'patterns are disturbed', the beat is broken, 'space and time no longer function following previously intelligible laws. . . Compasses and watches are ineffectual. Gravity is fractious. Radio waves, light waves and genetic information partake in inexplicable exchanges under a strange logic of transversal refraction'.¹⁰ The Zone is not a place, but an imperceptible alteration of space-time; an invisible but absolute mutation. The stalker senses the presence of a kind of alien sentience, pregnant with a desire of its own. 'Over the pile of ancient trash, over the colorful rags and broken glass drifts a tremor, a vibration, just like the hot air above the tin roof at noon'.¹¹

Ireland's essay 'Alien Rhythm' tracks the ways in which the Zone, 'as a sudden, monumental, unexplained disturbance in anthropomorphic space-time', morphs into a trope that spreads out from *Stalker* across other science fiction narratives. She writes of its alliance with the prefix xeno – the marker of that which arrives from outside. To elucidate, Ireland quotes Rebekah Sheldon, 'queer theorist, feminist, and witch', who details the etymology of the term. 'Xeno is trans. As graft, cut, intrusion, or excision, Xeno names the *movement between*, and *the moving entity*. It is the foreign and the foreigner, the unexpected outside, the unlike offspring, the other within, the eruption of another meaning'.¹²

The film *Stalker* takes place on land, but in his other great masterpiece *Solaris*, Tarkovsky suggests that the exteriority of the Zone is aligned with the aquatic. In the swirling seas of the alien planet Solaris, a mysterious intelligence swallows all interior states and projects them outward. 'The sublime alterity of the Solaris ocean', declares Fisher, 'is one of cinema's great images of the unknown'.¹³ At the end of her essay, Ireland too calls upon the watery waves. She writes of the biologist in Vandermeer's *Annihilation* trilogy, who,

xeno

aquatic zone

S.L. - a. r. z. & aqua

immersed in an untimely event, watches as her double emerges from the black abyss of the sea.

In the multiplicity of that regard, she saw what [the eyes] saw. She saw herself, standing there, looking down. She saw that the biologist now existed across locations and landscapes, those other horizons gathering in a blurred and rising wave – a single abstract Wave at the intersection of all concrete forms.¹⁴

The Special Economic Zone

This chapter focuses on the coastal city of Shenzhen, one of the first, and by far the most successful, of China's Special Economic Zones (SEZ). The Special Economic Zone is clearly distinct from the zone trope that traverses the science fiction imaginary. Nevertheless, they share some critical properties. The city of Shenzhen, where much of the world's wireless media gets made, has hosted a vibrant pirate culture that innovated practices of repetition. The continuous copying and mutant iterations at the heart of this techno-culture fundamentally disrupt a familiar, stable order that is based on the primacy of the original. Its wave-like recurrence is commensurate with the radical alterity evoked by the exteriority of the Zone.

There is such an intimate connection between Shenzhen's rise and the spread of the mobile phone that they seem to have manifested as two aspects of a single event. The global advance of wireless media depended on Shenzhen in part because of its strategic position as an outsourcing hub for the manufacturing of digital technology. Initially, Shenzhen's attractiveness as a site for manufacturing was a direct result of the fabricated extraterritoriality of the SEZ. These pockets of experimentation allowed China to introduce market systems as trial runs in fenced-off territories, which could be applied elsewhere if and when they had been proven to work. SEZs are themselves modelled after a variety of similar precedents. 'Free ports', as Keller Easterling writes, 'have handled global trade for centuries.'¹⁵ The pre-history of the modern zone, as Mary Ann O'Donnell, Winnie Wong and Jonathan Bach explain, 'lies in capitalism's impetus to maintain strategically ambiguous spaces that enable more fluid circulation of goods, people, and capital than might otherwise be permissible given political constraints of empires and, later, of nation-states'.¹⁶ In China, the success of the Export Processing Zones of the Asian tigers was also extremely influential. It was 'the mid twentieth-century development of the Export Processing Zone, or

Shenzhen SEZ bring waves of alterity

EPZ, as a more formalized economic and administrative instrument', writes Easterling, 'that marks the beginning of the modern zone'.¹⁷

SEZs were critical to China's strategy of Reform and Opening, which used relatively small-scale sites with special incentives on taxation and regulation, customs and ownership as well as the establishment of a 'Zone authority' as an exceptional legal entity to test transformative policies. Liang Xiang, the first Party chief and mayor of Shenzhen, used the phrase 'ant theory' to describe the deliberate strategy of seductive modelling. Ant theory 'stated that only after a scout ant had discovered a patch of sweetness would other ants be attracted to the area'.¹⁸ Shenzhen, then, became a model for Chinese globalisation precisely by being an anomaly. Anthropologist Aihwa Ong names such investigative probes 'practices of urban modeling'. Special Economic Zones, she writes, are 'world conjuring projects'.¹⁹ 'Today Asian cities are fertile sites, not for following an established pathway or master blueprint, but for a plethora of situated experiments that reinvent what urban norms can count as "global"'.²⁰

The SEZ, like the image of the Zone, operates as a gateway between inside and out; both occupy an in-between site on the borderlands of time and space. The Zone, writes Jonathan Bach referring to the SEZ, 'serves as a spatial threshold' that mediates between the Chinese economy and that of other countries. It 'is neither fully home nor abroad – at the same time both inside and outside the system'. It also 'serves as a temporal threshold between stages of development – the China that was and the China that will be'.²¹ The Zone is a form of urban fantasy, situated both in the already mythic recent past as well as in the continuously updated version of the City of Tomorrow.

Shenzhen, in particular, was designed as a window 'through which one can look both in and out'.²² The city's liminal position is made manifest in marvellously surreal fashion in a downtown theme park called 'Window of the World', which is located just on the border of the densely packed urban village of Baishizou. The park was built in 1993 in an era when Chinese citizens rarely travelled abroad. Its wacky audacity, however, which perfectly captures the critical role of the SEZ, ensures that it continues to serve as one of the metropolis's most important icons. This scenic spot contains almost 150 miniaturised versions of the planet's most archetypal monuments. Tourists dressed in Japanese Imperial and French Baroque costumes stroll among dwarf replicas of St Mark's Cathedral, Mt Fuji and the Eiffel Tower, now all overshadowed by the clusters of skyscrapers that dominate the still-swelling neighbourhoods outside.²³

anomaly model

SEZ & Technology Zone

Shenzhen's position as a city on the edge is further strengthened by its intimate relationship with the boundary areas that make up Greater China. For the Taiwanese tech industry, the metropolis served as a doorway into the mainland. Shenzhen is at the border, where the Special Economic Zone meets the Special Administrative Regions of Hong Kong and Macau. Sitting as it does at the frontier of 'One Country, Two Systems', Shenzhen is strategically placed to attract investment from overseas Chinese in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Its geographical location on the Pearl River Delta, and especially its proximity to Hong Kong, were critical factors in the city's development. Hong Kong is Shenzhen's virtual twin. It has functioned 'simultaneously as Shenzhen's future (what it *would be like* in years to come) and its spectral past (what Shenzhen *might have* been under other circumstances)'.²⁴ The island city itself is a model for the marginal tendencies of the Cantonese world.²⁵

Nevertheless, many argue that Shenzhen's liminal quality is ultimately subject and subordinate to a higher power.²⁶ The SEZ, writes Ong, is the result of 'flexible Chinese state practices', tactics which she names 'zoning technologies'. In China, she argues, these tactics 'have interacted to produce an evolving system of variegated sovereignty'.²⁷ Economic policies are used to consolidate 'distinct political entities such as Hong Kong and Macao, and even Taiwan and Singapore, into an emerging Chinese axis'. For Ong, the apparent fragmentation manifest in 'Greater China' is, in the end, a centralising strategy that serves to economically integrate disarticulated political entities as a detour towards eventual political integration. In *Learning from Shenzhen*, O'Donnell, Wong and Bach make a similar argument. Outposts such as Shenzhen, they contend, 'where states effectively section off a part of their country and give it an intermediate status', are best understood as a new mode of government astutely adapted to the 'smooth space' of late capitalism.²⁸ The Zone is an ultimate expression of the 'changing practices of sovereignty', which use 'nested exceptionalisms: the interplay of exception and rule that creates intersections for networks, markets, and political rule'.²⁹ In Keller Easterling's terms, the Zone is a prime example of 'Extrastatecraft' whose diversity of regulations enables a supervision and governance of populations that is both economic and biopolitical. In creating 'special' places and periods where laws and regulations can be unilaterally altered, the Zone recalls Carl Schmitt's infamous dictum: sovereign is he who can make the exception.³⁰

There is no doubt that in the complex landscape of Shenzhen the central sovereign is strong. Still, the conjunction of Shenzhen and wireless media owes much to the frontiers and borderlands of

WR

more govt adapted to capital space

Shenzhen governr adapted to global space

a decentred China and its affiliation with the non-human mode of reproduction that leaks out from the exteriority of the Zone. This is most apparent in the unique, locally grown, copycat culture of manufacturing, known as *shanzhai* (山寨), a form of piracy that ultimately challenges all straightforward narratives about the Shenzhen epoch and its role in the creation of our wireless age. Joshua Neves, in his discussion of piracy in the context of China's contemporary mediascapes, recalls 'Cicero's 2,000-year-old proclamation that pirates, because they operate outside of territorial sovereignty and ordinary jurisdiction, are the "enemy of all" (*hostis humani generis*)'. This absolute alterity, he points out, 'does not neatly map onto Carl Schmitt's well-known articulation of the "state of exception"'.³¹ Schmitt himself held that piracy, a practice born from the 'freedom of the sea', was outside the control of the land-based sovereign. 'On the open sea', he wrote, 'there were no limits, no boundaries, no consecrated sites, no sacred orientations, no law and no property'.³² Neves elaborates as follows:

The exception operates on the dichotomy of 'law' versus 'no law', where, in theory, the law is operative or it is suspended, and the sovereign is the one who can decide. In contrast, piracy inaugurates a paradoxical formation. It is a legal category that makes the exception permanent, extralegal – which is to say it is only ever partially a legal formation to begin with.³³

Shenzhen's exteriority lies in its pirate culture, with its embrace, even celebration, of the copy and the fake. Rather than value an original, eternal primary essence (*ti*) that stands over and above its replication (*yong*), Shenzhen created a culture of the copy that was freed from its ties to the original. In this it broke from a linear trajectory, adopting a practical ethos based on simulation that is immanent to the rhythmic repetition characterised by the ongoing rise and fall of the wave.

The Shenzhen Epoch

In his book *Cities and Civilization*, urbanist Peter Hall tells a history of the world based on the short, innovative eruptions that occur in certain places at certain times. Hall's book concentrates on the legendary moments of global urban history: Athens in the fifth century, Victorian London, nineteenth-century Florence in the fourteenth century, the beginning of the Industrial revolution in Paris, Manchester at the beginning of the Industrial revolution, New York in the mid-twentieth century, Detroit and Motown, LA and Hollywood, Memphis and the Blues.³⁴ Like the examples

of state of exception

Sol 8
suspension of law
piracy as legal form

Suspension of law; piracy is

discussed by Hall, twenty-first-century Shenzhen is an explosive energetic eruption. These golden ages, which are always and necessarily urban ages, manifest as brief bursts of creativity that appear in particular places at particular times. In these singular instances, Hall contends, a city becomes not so much a place as an epoch. Those who experience these exceptional urban ages know them instinctively. To become a Berliner one only had to breathe in the air of Berlin with a deep breath, stated a resident of Weimar Berlin: 'Berlin tasted of the future.'³⁵

Shenzhen
as
era
Deng
深圳
速度

Anyone who has visited Shenzhen in the past few decades will have a visceral understanding of this sentiment. Shenzhen in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century is more an event than a location. No city has ever grown with such intensity. The mythic story of Shenzhen's recent past begins with a declaration by Deng Xiaoping, who has an almost talismanic presence in the city. In 1978, when Deng announced the policy of Reform and Opening (*Gaige Kaifang* 改革开放), Shenzhen, the story goes, consisted of a string of backwater coastal settlements with a population of 300,000. Forty years later it has morphed into a megacity of over 20 million people, and by the 2010s was counted, along with Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou, as one of China's first-tier cities. This high-velocity transformation has come to be known as Shenzhen speed (*Shenzhen sudu* 深圳速度), a slogan that has consolidated into a historical expression.³⁶ This dramatic pace of urban expansion is reflected in the city's GDP, which grew at an average annual rate of 30 per cent between 1980 and 2010.³⁷

The intensity of Shenzhen's urban growth began with the conjunction of a number of detrterritorialised flows, which were unleashed in the economic recession of the 1970s. The end of the gold standard, stagflation and the oil crises marked the decline in the West of the post-war boom. Tremendous transformations in the global technological economy were born in the downturn of the fourth Kondratiev long wave. For much of the twentieth century, the vertically integrated firm, which kept everything 'in house', operated as an organic whole, organised from above.³⁸ By the early 1980s, however, the integrity of these organisms was under threat. Pushed by a complex situation involving globalisation, deregulation, increased financialisation and corporatisation, companies shifted away from vertical integration, zooming in on 'core competencies' and outsourcing peripheral tasks.³⁹ Horizontal networks, enhanced by new technologies, spread across the planet as increased globalisation lured outsourcing offshore. East Asia surfaced as the preferred manufacturing site. Governments in the region, having rejected the protectionist, interiorised models of import substitution, embraced a nationalist

深圳速度

Shenzhen + detrterritorialised flow

industrial strategy of low-cost production for export. This 'export-oriented model of growth' offered lower barriers for entry for foreign firms, tax reductions, infrastructure investment and a vast pool of cheap manual labour.

nlr, low-cost prod

It is this restructuring of the global economy that powered the personal computer (PC) revolution of the 1980s and 1990s. Steve Wozniak completed the Apple 1 in 1976. The next year Apple 2, the company's first consumer product, was released. In 1982 the Commodore 64 was introduced, a machine that was recognised by the *Guinness Book of World Records* as the largest-selling single computer of all time. Already, a massive restructuring of the US information technology industry was underway. High-tech districts were radically reshaped as companies in the US and Europe moved their factories and manufacturing facilities offshore. The result, write Boy Lüthje and his co-authors in *From Silicon Valley to Shenzhen: Global Production and Work in the IT Industry*, was that

by the 1990s, with the rise of the 'new economy', the IT industry was no longer dominated by vertically integrated giant corporations such as IBM but rather was shaped along horizontal lines of specialised suppliers of key components such as computer chips, software, hardware disk drives, and graphic cards.⁴⁰

From Silicon Valley to Shenzhen documents the reorganisation of the industry based on a model of production known as 'Wintelism' in which key component providers (Windows and Intel) dominate a manufacturing ecosystem that assembles machines from standard components. Under Wintelism, there is a separation between product innovation and electronic contract manufacturing. Famous PC makers such as Dell, HP and Apple became 'marketing and distribution companies with no in house resources for manufacturing or product development'.⁴¹

outsourced manufacturing

In this industrial mutation, the Chinese periphery played a particularly critical role. From the start, Shenzhen's growth was intimately tied to its role as the global hub for the assembly and distribution of electronics. New technologies build themselves through a conglomeration of parts from all around the world; the design teams of Silicon Valley, the raw material from the mines of Africa, the capital markets fuelled by the Middle East. Shenzhen has emerged as the gathering place, a central node in the circulatory system.

Yet China's centrality to digital technology grew from the edges not the core. In the mid-1980s Morris Chang, a Taiwanese citizen who worked initially for Texas Instruments, had the idea of developing a foundry that specialised in the production of computer chips,

nationalist industrial strategy - low-cost production

which could then be sold to a variety of firms that concentrated solely on design and distribution. Establishing a silicon foundry, however, costs billions of dollars. Chang found a backer in the Taiwanese government, which was by then eager to compete with the rise of Korea and Japan. The Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) was established in 1987 and rose to become the world's largest semiconductor foundry. It pioneered a model of fabless production that helped jumpstart the island's tech sector. 'By the late 1990s', reports business writer Clyde Prestowitz, 'nearly 80 percent of all laptop computers and 50 percent of all computer motherboards were being made in Taiwan [while] 60 percent of all desktop PCs were manufactured or had a motherboard manufactured there.'⁴²

As China's policies of Reform and Opening took hold, the Taiwanese tech giants shifted certain elements of production to the mainland,⁴³ taking advantage of low-cost labour as well as 'the large-scale factories and manufacturing infrastructures that were built up in the major areas of export production along the Chinese East coast'.⁴⁴ Among the Taiwanese firms to establish sites in the Pearl River Delta, Foxconn rose to the top. Foxconn, a subsidiary of Honhai Precision Industry, was set up by Terry Gou as a small-scale electronics component manufacturer in 1974. Today, the company is the largest electronics manufacturer in the world, employing over a million people who assemble the digital machines of the world's most-famous brands. Shenzhen's 'Foxconn City' is a vast complex hosting thousands of workers. It includes a main shopping street, entertainment facilities, over a dozen major factories as well as a host of other large-scale buildings filled with roboticised equipment designed to create the latest manifestation of consumer hardware. Foxconn has become a symbol for the split between manufacturing and distribution and design that structured global electronic production in the late twentieth century. The entrenched divisions are inscribed in small letters on the back of every iPhone, iPad and MacBook: 'Designed by Apple in California. Assembled in China.'

In contrast to the message embedded in this slogan, industrial designers have always worked closely with the factory floor.⁴⁵ In the production of global electronics, core and periphery are intimately intermixed. In Shenzhen, the designers and engineers at Apple and Foxconn work in tight collaboration through a process of multiple iterations, with Foxconn innovating manufacturing tools and procedures to implement Apple's designs, which are, in turn, in constant need of adaptation. Design is frozen only at the very last minute, just as the product is released. In contrast to the messiness of this reality, the global division of labour presumes a model in which

high-end value-added work (research, design and prototyping) is done in America, while China is meant to blindly execute ideas that come from elsewhere. In its most extreme formulation this division corresponds to a Cartesian-style dualism in which an active, rational mind guides a passive, inert body. Understood in this way, the global unity of techno-capitalism is, just as China first imagined it in the early years of the telegraph, based on the primacy of the West.

Shenzhen's role, however, not only in the nation but also in the world, is interwoven with its intrinsic marginality. The central government dictated Shenzhen's extraterritoriality by granting it status as an SEZ. Yet the planned bright, glossy and hyper-designed SEZ did not just materialise fully formed out of nothing. Instead, the string of villages on the watery edges of the Pearl River Delta mutated into a metropolis that manifests the cyberpunk futurism of the Zone.⁴⁶ Here, in the tight streets and alleyways of the urban village, which are sensuous, intimate, cryptic and messy, Shenzhen's *shanzhai* (or copycat) culture was born.

The Shenzhen Myth

Shenzhen is said to have been the inspiration for Rem Koolhaas's *Generic City*, a non-space of total convergence that is forged out of 'an endless repetition of the same fractal module'.⁴⁷ The generic city is 'a place of weak and distended sensations, few and far between emotions', where all horizontality has been erased. In this pervasive urban landscape, Koolhaas declares, 'the street is dead'.⁴⁸ This vision of a city devoid of identity, culture, time and space has long dominated discussions of Shenzhen. Yet far from being an 'instant city' precisely engineered, Shenzhen, especially during its period of hyper-growth, was a cacophonous place; a sentient city filled with contradictions, ambiguities and complex negotiations, in which urban and rural, formal and informal, skyscraper and street are deeply intertwined.

Shenzhen is frequently held up as exemplifying China's top-down growth, a place with no history, the ideal tabula rasa for the fantasy of a modernist metropolis. The popular fable, writes urbanist Juan Du, is that the city was 'called into existence in 1979 with the establishment of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone under the grand vision of then Premier Deng Xiaoping'.⁴⁹ Du's book *The Shenzhen Experiment* disputes this myth. Nationalist policies and central economic planning cannot account for Shenzhen's dramatic acceleration, which emerged instead from the local geography, history and culture of the Shenzhen region as well as the singular features of its urban form.

Cartesian
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Pearl River
Delta as Zone

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Pearl River as Zone

Before there was Shenzhen, the territory on the Pearl River Delta that was destined to become one of the most dynamic megacities of the twenty-first century was not just empty space. Rather, it was occupied by several thousand agrarian villages clustered on some of the most fertile agricultural land in southern China. Prior to its elevation to Shenzhen municipality, Bao'an County had a hybrid cultural geography, which mixed Cantonese, Hakka and Weitou. Local historian Mary Ann O'Donnell writes of oyster farmers and fishermen who worked the waterways linking Guangzhou and Hongkong. The large fertile area consisted 'of at least three networks of loosely integrated market towns and villages, which were connected through riparian networks as well as paths through rice fields and lychee orchards'.⁵⁰ Instead of emerging fully formed through a dictate from on high, then, the metropolis of Shenzhen grew up organically out of the resilient remains of these older settlements. Hardy enclaves, which came to be known as urban villages (*chengzhongcun* 城中村), were preserved within the newly materialising city, interrupting the high-rise monotone of the planned landscape with hidden pockets of quasi-informality.

In China's rapid urbanisation, the split between urban and rural, which is registered at birth and encoded in the *hukou* or household registration system, is more political than it is empirical. As Jonathan Bach stresses in his study of Shenzhen, the 'distinction between rural and urban cannot be overestimated: social control, resource allocation, biopolitical interventions from reproduction to health care, education, relative social status, and mobility all came to hinge on this distinction'.⁵¹ Due to the geographical and historical specificities of Shenzhen, much of the indigenous population stayed rural even as the city surfaced all around them.⁵² The regulations and benefits applying to the legal urban residents of Shenzhen did not extend to anyone living in the villages. As a result, these borderline communities, which flourished not only at the urban edges but throughout the entire city (with many urban villages occupying prime real estate), evolved with a distinct political, social and economic status and their own specific urban codes and zoning rules. They thus became, as Du writes, 'self-governing rural-status islands in the midst of the fastest and fiercest development environment in China'.⁵³

Once freed from the controls of the command economy, people from all across the country poured into the coastal cities looking for work. They met a welcoming culture in Shenzhen, where subway signs read: just come, and you are a Shenzheners (*lai le, jiu shi Shenzhen ren* 來了就是深圳人). The gap between the Party's blueprints and more messy reality produced by this unplanned 'floating' population is evident in the numbers. Shenzhen was designed as a city of 1 million, yet by the turn of the millennium more than 10 million people had made

massive
overpopulation

it their home. Village residents were highly attuned to the immense transformative opportunities that had been unleashed. They realised that 'with no rural land left to tend' they could rent out buildings and apartments to migrant workers and 'farm property' instead.⁵⁴ The quasi-informal structures constructed by the former villagers 'became the standard choice for anyone arriving in Shenzhen seeking temporary or affordable housing'.⁵⁵

Urban villages thus provided space and opportunity for the vast population of newly urbanised and grew to become the most densely built-up areas in the entire city. The metropolis of Shenzhen co-evolved with these internal villages, which supported the city's growth by offering 'informal solutions to boomtown conditions'.⁵⁶ By creating an essential 'supply of low-cost housing', notes David Bandurski, 'urban villages have underwritten low-cost labour in China and mitigated the associated costs of urban living'.⁵⁷ Shenzhen speed fed off the villages' social and legal ambiguity. Urban villages, which consist of a mixture of residents, businesses and light industry, are characterised by a unique form of hyper-dense architecture known as 'handshake buildings'. The name comes from structures that are packed so tightly together that you can open your window and reach out to shake the hand of your neighbour in the building next door. The result is a labyrinth of cramped and dim spaces, often considered squalid and backward, whose only light comes from thin 'threads of sky'. Residents socialise outside. The thicket of construction creates a compact web of lanes and alleyways, too narrow for cars to pass, that hosts an intensely lively street culture filled with open-air restaurants, crowded markets, fish and fruit vendors who share their narrow spaces with pool halls, repair workshops and mahjong rooms that spill out on to the street. 'Density and closeness are omnipresent: of people, stores, aromas, buildings – all hovering between the comforting vibrancy and vertiginous confinement of proximity'.⁵⁸ Small-time entrepreneurs occupy hybrid spaces – a noodle shop inside an apartment building that is also used as a mini grocery store.

This condensed commercial environment produces an intensity of transactions that urbanists argue is the key indicator in analysing the true density of the rising hypercities of the developing world. Mary Ann O'Donnell, whose own artist space Handshake 302 is located in Baishizhou, a large and central urban village, describes her neighbourhood, a place which stands at the cusp of redevelopment and gentrification:

There are Shenzhen based chain stores in Baishizhou, however, individuals rather than state owned enterprises or multi-nationals run the majority of fresh markets, shops, restaurants and production centers.

pop
density

pop
&
appts

pop density in pop density

Start-ups share factory space with logistic companies, car detailing studios, and workshops that assemble small batches of circuit boards to spec as well as hip centers of youth culture – a kendo studio, a hacker space, two micro-breweries, and a bar with live music.⁵⁹

It is in the micro-spaces of these street markets that the entrepreneurial energy and vast creative dynamism of contemporary China can be found. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the electronic markets of *Huaqiangbei* in downtown Shenzhen, where an enormous array of components and devices are sold, recycled and assembled. Though the markets moved to a cluster of multi-storey malls, the drab concrete and glass exteriors of the 'Generic City' mask the intensity of the culture inside. Hanging racks of pork and duck are sold amid VR goggles, selfie sticks and battery stands.

Building after building, floor upon floor, stall upon stall, shelf upon shelf, is dedicated to the buying, selling, and building of electronics. Everywhere are mountains of wires, mounds of chips, spools of lights, cases of buttons and knobs. *Huaqiangbei* Shenzhen is high-tech toolbox to the world.⁶⁰

The dynamism of the tech markets, with their seductive urban undercurrents, counters the glossy sci-fi vision of the City of Tomorrow with a cyberpunk realism in which hackers and tinkerers operate alongside itinerant peddlers and street food stands. The electronic street markets of the urban village and not the planned boulevards of the SEZ are what gave birth to a planetary wireless media. It is this underground vision of the future that *shanzhai* production comes from and serves.

Shanzhai 山寨

By the turn of the millennium, with the dot-com crash, the downturn in the IT industry and the emergence of wireless media, it had become apparent that Shenzhen was more than just the factory to the world. People were switching from personal computers to mobile phones. In Shenzhen the ground had started to shift. In part this was due to a predictable 'move up the value chain' resulting from modes of capitalist production that were familiar from elsewhere. After decades of massive relocation of electronic manufacturing to China, Taiwanese companies such as Acer, HTC, Asus and Foxconn, which had been constructing the machine components for other brands, had built up the technological and organisational skills to develop substantial

intellectual property rights on their own.⁶¹ While some companies began catering predominantly to large established firms, a dense network of entrepreneurs saw an opportunity to establish themselves in the growing gaps of the global economy. Original Equipment Manufacturing (OEM) evolved into Original Design Manufacturing (ODM), which soon entered the market with branded mobile phone models of their own. Much more crucial, however, was what was happening on the sidelines. Outside or on the edges of a seemingly well-established economic system, the *shanzhai* mode of production had begun to thrive.

A catalytic event occurred in 2004 when Mediatek, a semiconductor design company from Taiwan, introduced an innovation that significantly reduced the cost and complexity of producing mobile phones. Mediatek's all-encompassing 'turnkey solutions' meant that for small producers that wanted to make their own phones, all that was left to design was the user interface and the plastic shell.⁶² In the Pearl River Delta, clusters of small companies sprang up to take advantage of this plug and play production, cranking out cheap knock-offs known as *shanzhai ji* (sometimes translated as bandit phones). Mediatek was quickly able to 'establish itself as the major chip company in the Chinese mobile handset market' and by 2006 had taken '40 percent market share'.⁶³ Since then, *shanzhai* phones have mushroomed throughout the lower-tier markets in both China and abroad and have thus been critical to the globalisation of wireless media.

Scholar Josephine Ho traces the practices of *shanzhai* to 1950s Hong Kong, where small-scale, family-run factories operated outside the official economic order to produce cheap, low-quality household goods. *Shanzhai* wares became popular by offering fake versions of well-known retail brands such as Gucci and Nike to markets that could not afford the expensive originals. The creation of these imitation products spawned a singular process of production. Ultimately, the significance of *shanzhai* is not in the copycat technology itself, but rather in the unique ecosystem of manufacturing in which these copies get made. This inventive mode of manufacturing found a perfect product in the mobile phone.

The *shanzhai* ecosystem is composed of a dense, horizontal web of component producers, traders, design solution houses, vendors and assembly lines, many of them informal, which catered to lesser-known or no-name clients that were not of interest to the larger players. This web of electronic fabrication is based on what is known as *gongban* (公版 public boards) and *gongmo* (公模 public shells and casings). *Gongban* are typically fabricated in independent

turnkey solutions

50s
Ming

manufacturing ecosystem

to make shells all the easy assembly of mobile phone parts
gongban & gongmo

design houses that connect chip manufacturers with factories that handle assembly. Boards are designed to fit a multiplicity of casings and customers can take a *gongban* of their liking as is, or modify it according to their tastes. Manufacturers are motivated to support as many customers as possible, who coat the *gongban* with a wide variety of 'skins' or 'shells' (*gongmo*).

关系

This singular techno-economic culture operates through a system of *guanxi* (關係 social connection), in which local players mix in with diasporic alliances (especially from Hong Kong and Taiwan). In the electronic markets of *Huaqiangbei* competitors' stalls sit side by side. There is a tendency to share resources in a way that is alien to the worldwide regime of intellectual property rights. *Shanzhai* allows for - and even feeds off - open trade in reference boards, BOMs (Bills of Materials) and other elements of design. It has functioned as an open manufacturing system with easy access to electronic components, ready-to-produce key solutions and a network of relationships and providers that operate outside IP laws, patent rights and the world of brands. Bunnie Huang, an engineer who has been studying *shanzhai* for many years, calls it the 'Galapagos Island' of open source.⁶⁴

informal frame

accel. entrepreneur

V&A EA, 2015

Shanzhai goods do not come with end-user licence agreements or service models and are not accompanied by big data analytics or advertising plans. Neither do they feature in expensive marketing campaigns or rely on the backing of venture capitalists. Instead, capital is borrowed through informal networks and companies operate primarily with the conventional rules of trade that emerge spontaneously in highly competitive markets. Markets tend not to drift far from financial fundamentals. Unlike VC funds, which choose investment in the hope of betting on the next monopoly, *shanzhai* investors are concerned only that they are repaid with the interest that was promised. This encourages a culture of fierce entrepreneurialism characterised by breakneck speed, micro-experimentation, and the use of the market itself as a product-testing ground. Walk around the malls and you never know what you will find. The result is a kind of low-end, 'folk art' style of its own: a bracelet that is also a USB cable; a power bank modelled on an anime cat; a whole range of variations on the electronic unicycle; a flashlight that is also charger, mobile phone and bluetooth speaker. This is not the sleek, high-tech design of a global elite that tends towards minimalist uniformity, but rather a cheap, multifaceted and niche technology of a vast population which lives predominantly outside the cherished high-end markets that are catered to by well-known global brands. In December 2015 London's Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) acknowledged this indigenous culture of design as part of an exhibition at the Shenzhen

easy-to-embed boards - fused with diaspora 关系 for coasts speed + entrepreneurship

Architecture Biennale. The V&A, which has established a gallery in Shenzhen's Shekou Design Museum, entitled its first show *Unidentified Acts of Design* and put *shanzhai* phones on display.

The strength of *shanzhai* is to bring new products to market with remarkable speed at a fraction of the price of the well-known international brands. Small batches are produced and then tested on the market. If there is demand and they sell quickly, more will be made. There is a commitment to never building from scratch, and prototyping and consumer testing occur rapidly and alongside the manufacturing process. These disruptive mechanisms of frugal innovation, with their ethos of recycle or repair, have enabled the creation of devices cheap enough to open new markets for the urban poor not only in China, but across the world. There is, then, in short, an alternative grey market in electronics, which has more in common with the street food hawker than it does with the fast food chains that fill food courts in shopping malls. Yet, while it is less visible than the well-known brands, Shenzhen's open ecosystem is enormous in scale. The intensity of this network has greatly impacted companies such as Nokia and Motorola, which cater primarily to high-paying customers. Cheap phones designed in Shenzhen are distributed in Africa, India, South America,⁶⁵ Europe and the United States. They are sold as no-name devices in Wal-Mart and Target and are also behind disruptive brands, such as Wiko in France. *Shanzhai* participates in an underground, alternative globalisation, based on the copy, which has played an enormous role in the planet-wide transmission of wireless media.

shanzhai aka global

Shanzhai is rooted in high-velocity practices of piracy and reverse engineering. The intensity of Shenzhen speed meant that knock-offs quickly outpaced the originals. In the *shanzhai* ecosystem, ideation, prototyping and design happen alongside the manufacturing process, such that mobile phones can go from conceptual designs to production-ready in as little as 29 days. The *shanzhai* version of the iPhone 6 was on the market long before the latter's official release. The iPhone Mini could be spotted in Shanghai's digital markets without Apple having ever designed one. Soon companies needed only to speculate on a product for the *shanzhai* version to manifest. *Shanzhai* production also tends to modify and adapt, inventing bespoke, quirky designs made explicitly for the markets that it serves. This is why with *shanzhai* the copy is frequently superior to the original. The *shanzhai* iPhone Mini, for example, included an FM radio player and multiple SIM cards for those who travel frequently between Hong Kong, Taiwan and the mainland. Dual SIM cards, long a feature of *shanzhai* phones, were only adopted by Apple in 2018 with the iPhone X.

quicker than iPhone

market

knock-off or superior

shanzhai cheap & quick as alternative globalisation shanzhai are quicker than iPhone

Shanzhai poses a radical challenge to the myth of original creation. Its embrace of the copy is attuned to the replication at the heart of digital technology. Moore's law predicted that the number of transistors on a chip would be duplicated every year. Steve Jobs famously made use of Picasso's line: 'Good artists copy, great artists steal', stating plainly about Apple: 'We have always been shameless about stealing great ideas.' Alan Turing taught us, at the dawn of the digital age, that machinic intelligence is ultimately an imitation game. The computer, which is based on the repetition of binary code, is intrinsically aligned with cloning, replication and simulation. This is why digital culture has such a long and deep sympathy with piracy, open source and remix culture, all of which defy a model of creativity based on authentic originality. *Shanzhai* adopts imitation in all its complexity. In doing so it allows for a contemporary Chinese cyber-culture that accepts its long and deep affinity with the replica, the simulation, the clone.

Fake stories about fake food are common in contemporary China. Joshua Neves opens his book *Underglobalization* with the story of a 2007 Beijing television report, which turned out to be false, about a shop selling dumplings stuffed with cardboard instead of pork. His book addresses issues of media, development and legitimacy. In the introduction Neves explains that the concept of 'underglobalization' uses a reformulation of Ackbar Abbas's essay 'Faking Globalization' as an emblematic frame. Abbas sees the fake as a response to unequal globalisation. Copying is the result of a time lag inherent in the capitalist mode of production in which the periphery is understood to be temporally behind. From this perspective, imitation, writes Neves, paraphrasing Abbas, is 'part of a historical stepladder', which enables 'backward' places that are lower on the value chain the chance to catch up.⁶⁶ This well-trodden mode of technology transfer occurs only at particular moments of development, just as cities enter the world economy. Once they become more fully integrated, piratical practices diminish as regimes of copyright and intellectual property take hold.

Yet, while Abbas considers copying a legitimate strategy of the marginalised, he cautions us not to 'romanticize the fake'.⁶⁷ Ultimately, he believes, fakery is a form of cheating. Though resourceful, its creations are substandard, dangerous and ultimately not inventive enough. Imitation involves disturbance, but the disruptions it implies are only ever superficial. There is a 'passive quality of the fake that makes it work as symptom, but not subversion'.⁶⁸ Abbas's essay, then, retains an arc of linear progression, which evolves out of the fake and into original, authentic creation. In the end, what he

rem orig
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Shanzhai's challenge to orig [Del Δ Rep]
digital culture has not appl. it

advocates is for China to follow this linear order and develop its own culture of design.

This attitude and strategy has been adopted in Shenzhen, where urban villages are being torn down and *shanzhai* culture is receding. As the city attempts to move up the value chain, municipal officials meet with Silicon Valley executives as well as industry leaders from around the world who join with makers, accelerators, incubators and entrepreneurs in an attempt to rebrand Shenzhen as a 'city of design'. In *Huaqiangbei*, street food stands are being replaced with luxury brand name stores. In this transformation, low-quality knock-offs are dismissed as a backward 'stage of development' that the country must pass through in order to progress. Like Korea, Japan and America before it, it is expected that China will move from an era of reproduction, piracy and replication towards the creation of original goods and brands. According to this narrative of progression, imitation must be banished, simulation overcome.

Abbas appears ultimately to conform to this narrative, calling for the copyers to 'take up design as a geopolitical fix'.⁶⁹ Neves adamantly objects. Rather than accepting this familiar and 'deeply problematic' conclusion, Neves contends, 'against such dismissals, that piracy and fakes – as modes of cultural, economic, and political life under conditions of illegality and illegitimacy – have more to tell and teach us'.⁷⁰ In a sense, Abbas would seem to agree with the criticism. His own conclusions are inherently self-contradictory, holding both that the fake is something that 'developed' places overcome, while at the same time maintaining that replication is deeply ingrained in the fabric of globalisation itself. To elaborate, Abbas turns to Orson Welles's 1973 film *F is for Fake*. Welles's documentary centres on the figure of Elmyr de Hory, one of the greatest art forgers to have ever lived. The film treats de Hory as a kind of modern folk hero, detailing the elaborate interconnections between trickery and expertise upon which museums and art markets depend. 'Without the expert who authenticates', writes Abbas, 'the forger could never succeed in the deception: the knowledgeable expert is in collusion, however unwittingly, with the faker'.⁷¹

The idea of the 'good fake' troubles the solid categories upon which globalisation depends. 'The contemporary fake', writes Abbas, 'forces us to re-examine all the objects and processes around it, like legal systems, politics, technology, design culture and globalization'.⁷² At its intensive limit, the fake calls into question the fundamental, abstract concepts upon which it rests. Welles, at the heart of his film, famously quotes Picasso. When faced with his own forger, the great artist is said to have commented unabashedly: 'I can paint fake Picassos as well

as anybody.' For Abbas the most profound 'problem of the contemporary fake is not how close it is to the original, but how close the original is to the fake . . . to use the language of simulacra, then, the original is also a simulacra of the fake'.⁷³

All the complexities of fakery, with its deep intermingling between the copy and the original, are intrinsic to the workings of global capitalism. In his essay 'Brands and their Surfeits', Constantine Nakassis describes the ways in which the inherent mix of material commodity and immaterial qualities (image, trust etc.) that are implicit in the fake meld together to form a brand. Due to this merging of the concrete and abstract, he argues, brands are constituted in relation to their exteriority (their surfeits). The original lives alongside the copy, the real and authentic alongside the fake. Just as there is no counterfeit without the brand, 'there are no brands without counterfeits', or more precisely, without the 'brand's surfeits', he writes. 'By varying degrees, exceed the brand's authority and legibility: knock-offs, fakes, brand-inspired goods, overruns, defect goods, generics, and the like.'⁷⁴ His essay turns to the nineteenth-century history of the trademark to illustrate how the 'ability to invoke a particular imaginary of fidelity, standardization, quality control, and trustworthiness imbues the commodity with something more than its exchange value. The trademark, which guarantees that particular goods are authentic and original, also creates a system 'against which particular economic practices and objects could be labeled as "fakery" and "piracy"'.⁷⁵ This socio-economic paradigm has intensified since the 1970s. With the global reorganisation of labour, design and distribution have been increasingly decoupled and distanced from the manufacturing process. The gap between speculative forms of capital and physical production widened as goods were made in distant factories, far from company headquarters. Nike, Levi's and Apple were becoming 'no more than marketing companies for their brands'.⁷⁶ This distance opened a space in the grey market, which trades in the shadows of the 'real thing'. Since the copy is also a commodity, produced under the same conditions, sometimes in the very same factory, the question becomes 'what do such "counterfeits"'

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This profound disturbance of the real and the artificial, the truth and the lie, suggests that what is at stake with the fake is more than simply a linear game of catch-up. Instead of powering a nation to step forward from the back of the ranks, the innovative potential of imitation is situated elsewhere, underneath or to the side. The fake, notes Abbas, 'is a species of underground culture; the underground

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is its ethos, is where it derives its energy and inventiveness from'.⁷⁸ Neves locates this underground on the margins. 'This study asks how mundane and mediated practices of faking (and its myriad cognates) undergird and transform globalization.' Contemporary China is analysed through an exploration of the 'informal, illicit, and fringe practices' of its peripheral populations – the 'illegible, illegitimate, illegal'.⁷⁹ The concept of 'underglobalization', Neves contends, emerges from a position at the 'epistemological edge', an alterity that is exposed by the logic of the fake. In *F is for Fake* Welles adopts the guise of a magician. Piracy, copying, trickery, imitation have an alliance with illusion, coincidence, repetition and doubling, all of which, as Mark Fisher has theorised, belong to the realm of the 'weird and the eerie' and its 'fascination with the outside'.⁸⁰

Shanzhai epitomises this exteriority. From the start, its culture differed in small but significant ways from the familiar piracy of counterfeit Gucci watches and Louis Vuitton bags that had long proliferated in the new Chinese metropolis. Unlike these standard imitations, *shanzhai* products don't try to hide the fact that they are copies. Instead, the 'Hiphone', 'Nikia' and 'Motopola' seem to take a comic pride in the fact that they are fakes. *Shanzhai*, notes philosopher Byung-Chul Han, does not deliberately set out to deceive. The attraction of *shanzhai* products 'lies in how they specifically draw attention to the fact that they are not original, that they are playing with the original'.⁸¹

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Handwritten note: *comic pride in fakes*

In English, *shanzhai* translates literally as mountain village or mountain fortress. The term connotes an informal, outlaw tradition associated with the Song dynasty classic *Water Margin* (*Shuibuizhuan* 水浒传), which tells the tale of a group of 108 outlaws who battle against an established, corrupt bureaucracy. 'There's an element of criminality about *shanzhai*, just the way that Robin Hood is a bit of an outlaw', says Lyn Jeffrey of the Institute of the Future. 'But it's really about autonomy, independence, and very progressive survival techniques.'⁸² In his book *China in Ten Words*, author Yu Hua contends that *shanzhai* (translated as copycat) 'represents a challenge of the grassroots to the elite, of the popular to the official, of the weak to the strong . . . It would not be going too far to say that "copycat" has more of an anarchist spirit than any other word in the modern Chinese language.'⁸³

By 2008 *shanzhai* had ceased solely to signify mobile phones and came to conceptualise a DIY, grassroots creativity that spread throughout the culture. 2009 opened with a copycat version of the CCTV New Year gala, a vast televisual event that had long symbolised the official hold on the media. There were reports – made

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frequently with a tinge of humour and delight – on *shanzhai* restaurants, *shanzhai* architecture,⁸⁴ *shanzhai* brands and retail shops (the southern city of Kunming opened a near-perfect replica of an Apple store that was lauded as ‘the best rip off ever’); there were even *shanzhai* pets (one trend had people dyeing the coats of their dogs so that they looked like tigers and pandas). The *shanzhai* ethos was associated with anti-authoritarian subversive energies that arose spontaneously from the anarchic open culture of the street. *Shanzhai* emerged as one of the most interesting, generative and creative concepts to come out of twenty-first-century China.

Land and Sea

In her blog *Shenzhen Noted*, Mary Ann O’Donnell repeatedly returns to the theme of land reclamation in the construction of Shenzhen. The coastal metropolis has been built, she writes, through a vast and relentless occupation of the ocean. In her prolific documentation of the city, she mourns how the growing metropolis has buried the coastlines, fish and other denizens of the sea. City building on the southern shore is a land grab. In constructing solid urban landscapes of concrete and glass, the territorialising forces of centralisation cover over the aquatic spaces of an older, amphibious, maritime population. Yet despite all the energy and resources involved, the power of the watery forces underneath is difficult to constrain. ‘There is nothing in the world more soft and weak than water and yet for attacking things that are firm and strong there is nothing that can take precedence of it’ reads the Daoist classic the *Daodejing*. Twentieth-century Shenzhen recalls this teaching.⁸⁵ Its bond with all ‘things that are firm and strong’ is infused by a more covert alliance with a realm that is fluid and unsettled.

In the Western tradition the cosmic opposition between land and sea has biblical roots. The Book of Enoch, an ancient Judaic apocalyptic text, tells of ‘two monsters who became separated; a female monster, whose name is Leviathan, dwelling in the depths of the sea, above the springs of waters; And a male monster, whose name is Behemoth; which possesses, moving on his breast, the invisible wilderness’.⁸⁶ In the Chinese context, the abstract divide between earth and water can be mapped on to tensions, long held, between a territorial centre and the coastal periphery. In introducing their book *China Off Center*, Susan Blum and Lionel Jenson write that ‘in the popular Western imagination, China has for centuries been a symbol of centeredness, in large part because of our casual translation of

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one of China’s names for itself, *Zhongguo*, as “Middle Kingdom” or, even more elaborately, “the Center of the World”.⁸⁷ The pull of integration and unification, however, has always coexisted with potent regional and local tendencies towards dissolution and fragmentation. ‘Alongside, beneath, and intersecting this purported centeredness and presumed homogeneity is an immense diversity of peoples, languages, terrain, and everyday practices.’⁸⁸

In his influential 1991 essay ‘The Periphery as the Center’, historian and philosopher Tu Wei-Ming contrasts the critical role of Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and other overseas Chinese in the foundations of the ‘Asia-Pacific century’, which developed, at least initially, with minimal influence from mainland China. ‘Although the phenomenon of Chinese culture disintegrating at the center and later being revived from the periphery is a recurring theme in Chinese history’, he contends, ‘it is unprecedented for the geopolitical center to remain entrenched while the periphery presents such powerful and persistent economic and cultural challenges.’⁸⁹ For Tu, the transformative power of the edges raises critical questions about the meaning of ‘Chineseness’ and its relation to modernity. Tu’s own project mobilises the distinction between the diasporic *huaren* (華人 people of Chinese origin) and *zhongguoren* (中國人 people of China, the state) in positing a cultural identity that can serve to decentre the authority of the geopolitical nation.⁹⁰

In defining centre and periphery, Tu recalls the classical contrast between the agrarian and the nomadic, the ‘civilised’ and the ‘barbaric’. Yet in considering the differences between the maritime regions and the inland areas further north, he also draws attention to the divergence between land and sea. He speaks about the dichotomy in relation to his recollection of the famous TV documentary *River Elegy*, which explored the relationship between China and modernity and was broadcast by CCTV in 1988 on the eve of the protests at Tiananmen. The influential show ‘provoked a heated nationwide debate on tradition, modernity, change, China, and the West’.⁹¹ *River Elegy* 河殤 was based on a differentiation between two cultures, one associated with the ‘Blue Ocean’ and the other with the ‘Yellow Earth’. It proposed a theory, widely shared in the post-reform 1980s, that Chinese historical decline was due to the Ming decision to ban maritime trade and to the subsequent territorial domination over foreign, technological, sea-trading cultures. The argument of *River Elegy*, stated forcefully in episode 6, entitled ‘Blueness’, was that the history of China was based on an ancient victory of a wheat-eating, land-based civilisation influenced by nomadic culture, over a ‘blue’ civilisation ‘based on a staple diet of rice, understanding the

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art of ship and sea-based warfare, and influenced by Southeast Asian and Pacific cultures'.⁹² As the land-based civilisation increased in power in China, there was a retreat of 'blueness', and with it a seep-show closes with a hopeful celebration of a renewed era in which the 'Yellow river overcomes its fear of the Sea.' The writers of the series looked for evidence in the vibrant entrepreneurs of Shanghai and Zhejiang. They were especially heartened, however, by the new coastal city of Shenzhen:

In 1980, the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone was established. It announced to the whole world that this 'land-based' civilization of several thousand years had finally moved to the edge of the sea, and that the face which it had always kept turned to the land had turned to the gaze at the distant ocean.⁹³

One does not need to appeal to the rhetoric of Tu or the hyperbole of *River Elegy* to make the case that the Chinese periphery is populated by sea-based cultures that are more closely identified with water than with land. The alliance is clear with even a cursory visit to the coastal regions. Here, local temples are decorated with the goddess Mazu, protector of fishermen and sailors, venerated by the denizens of the deep. Mazu is purported to be the deified form of a Fujianese shamaness. In Shenzhen she is identified as Tianhou, the 'Heavenly Mother, and Goddess of the South China Sea', who is 'worshipped as a guardian of seafarers and anyone that lives on or by the sea'.⁹⁴ The Chiwan Tianhou Temple 赤灣天后宮 on the southern tip of Shenzhen's Shekou Peninsula 'was once one of the largest and most revered pilgrimage sites in Southern China'.⁹⁵

In her book *Ancient China and the Yue: Perceptions and Identities on the Southern Frontier*, Erica Fox Brindley investigates the diverse peoples of the South. She discovers that 'enmeshed in a vast riverine and maritime network' are people whose 'language and cultures are radically different from those of the Central State'.⁹⁶ Buried in the history of the Yue people of the premodern South, with their 'commercial and maritime mobility' and frequent 'escape to the sea', is a challenge to 'the logic of centrality and centeredness' embedded in the powerful story of a monolithic Chinese identity rooted in the state.⁹⁷ Throughout the southern periphery, in China, the geography of the outside lies at the watery shore.

This aquatic sensibility is affiliated with the idea of waves as elemental media. Melody Jue, in her book *Wild Blue Media*, aims to counter media theory's terrestrial bias by exploring the milieu of the ocean as an environment for thought. Weixian Pan, who works in a

similar vein, is developing a 'critical oceanic perspective' in order to theorise China's southern mediascapes. Pan notes that the concept of the 'Internet as Ocean' proliferates in the vernacular cultural imagination.⁹⁸ Like the English phrase 'surfing the web', in Chinese everyday usage, she writes, 'the Internet ("hu lian wang", as differentiated from "wangluo" for "network") is often articulated in relation to the ocean (haiyang). The vernacular expression "Hulianwang de haiyang" can be translated literally into "Internet (as) Ocean".⁹⁹ These liquid associations are also apparent in the naming of the mechanisms of control. This was most obvious in the early – ultimately failed – attempt to mandate that 'Green Dam' software be installed on all PCs in China. Fang Binxing, the 'father of China's Great Firewall', drew on this same analogy when lamenting the fact that Google was still available in China after its initial retreat. 'It's like the relationship between riverbed and water', he said. 'Water has no nationality, but riverbeds are sovereign territories, we cannot allow polluted water from other nation states to enter our country.'¹⁰⁰

China's historical affinity with wireless media appears as a conjunction between a newly rising nation and the development of novel technology. Yet, as the *shanzhai* culture of Shenzhen shows, there are aspects of this relationship that diverge from – and even oppose – the growing consolidation of the Chinese state. The global IT industry, which has its manufacturing centre in Shenzhen, is undoubtedly subject to the territorialised demands of a contracting core. Yet the location of the global hub in a zone on the coastal edge of the South China Sea ensures that the external power of an intrinsically diffuse, inherently fluid, maritime periphery remains.

Simulation

Shanzhai in Shenzhen is derived from a culture of unanchored simulation. In his book *Shanzhai: Deconstruction in Chinese*, Byung Chul Han explores the philosophical and aesthetic value of this ungrounded repetition. The book begins by discussing the importance of the artistic practice of reproducing a masterpiece. When performed correctly, Han argues, this careful imitation is an act of reverence. Copying is considered a means of paying respect to the master. To copy is to praise. Many of the great painters of the Western tradition also duplicated their predecessors as an expression of admiration and love. Han's own book features full-page reproductions of Gaughin's copy of Manet, Van Gogh's imitations of Hiroshige and Cezanne's version of Delacroix. For the artist, imitation is inherent in the act

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[Kyoto School]

Over internet as sea

[essay as sea - y Kyoto School]

of invention. 'Creation is not a sudden *event* but a slow *process*, one that demands a long and intense engagement *with what has been*, in the past. Han celebrates simulation as an expression of what he sees as Far Eastern thought's radical embrace of change. Unlike European intellectual traditions, which resist transformation by emphasising origin, essence and permanence, Chinese philosophy, Han argues, does not assume that 'underlying all change and transience is that which remains the same'.¹⁰² Instead, it attunes itself to the 'creativity of nature itself', which 'relies on a continual process of variation, essence', it defines itself according to 'the changeable constellation of things'.¹⁰⁴ In this theoretical milieu, the idea of creation does not look back to an origin, but exists instead as a 'continual process without beginning or end, without birth or death'.¹⁰⁵

no basis in screen

admira as

Copyleft

Chinese artistic masterpieces, Han contends, exhibit this context by shifting over time. The original is constantly mutating as collectors and connoisseurs add their personal seals and words of appreciation. 'The more it is admired', writes Han, 'the more its appearance changes.' The Chinese 'idea of the original is determined not by a unique act of creation, but by an unending process, not by definitive identity but by constant change'.¹⁰⁶ For Han it is this 'active transformation and variation' that is behind the ingenuity of *shanzhai*, as well as the culture upon which it is based.¹⁰⁷ *Shanzhai's* delight in replication draws on a deep cultural tradition that is captivated by simulacra. In China, natural landscapes are appreciated for looking like paintings, stones are cherished for appearing as mountains, formations in caves are admired for approximating animals, vegetables are made to look like meat. One of the most prized artistic treasures among the magnificent collection in Taipei's National Palace Museum is 'Meat-Shaped Stone', a rock that bears a striking resemblance to a juicy piece of braised pork belly. The profound value placed on imitation is stressed in the very first stanzas of the *Analects*: 'To learn and at due times to repeat what one has learnt, is that not after all a pleasure?' In 'ancient Chinese artistic practice', Han writes, 'learning takes place specifically through copying'. In 2015 an exhibition called *Copyleft* held at Shanghai's Power Station of Art reflected on the modern instantiations of this tradition. *Copyleft* equated *shanzhai* with *linmo*, a deeply repetitive practice of calligraphy that cultivates embodied knowledge of each brushstroke. *Linmo* is used to study technique, pay tribute to the masters, and only eventually to express personal style. On display were works such as Qiu Zhijie's *Copy of Lanting Xu 1000 Times*, in which the artist records

China philosophy day of... some...

himself reproducing one of the most famous and revered pieces of calligraphy. He repeats himself over and over again on the same piece of paper until it is entirely covered with black ink.

The Chinese culture of artistic reproduction intersects with the *shanzhai* ecosystem in Dafen village, a neighbourhood on the edges of Shenzhen. For decades, Dafen village has been home to a cluster of painters who supply a global market with cheap copies of the world's masterpieces. In the streets and alleys of Dafen, an oil counterfeit of Van Gogh's *Starry Night* can be bought for just a couple of hundred renminbi. Many commentators dismiss the artists of Dafen as mere copycats; the cultural practices of the painters living there, however, defy a host of assumptions about genius, authenticity, self-expression and copyright that dominate notions of creativity in the West.¹⁰⁸ The skills of the Dafen artists and their creative capacity to conform to a global market calls into question implicit assumptions about the cultural value attributed to both the original and the fake.

accce a forger

In China connoisseurs accept and even value forgery as part of their collections. With a connoisseur's stamp of approval, Han explains, 'a forger is equal to his master'. These conflicting attitudes towards the copy have resulted in some illuminating cultural clashes, which Han's book documents. In 1956, for example, an exhibition of Chinese masterpieces was sent to the Paris museum of Asian art. When the museum discovered that the paintings were forgeries it considered it fraud. This determination, however, was complicated by the fact that the fakes were the creations of 'none other than the most famous Chinese painter of the twentieth century, Chang Dai-chien'.¹⁰⁹ Many of the reproductions, moreover, were painted from verbal descriptions, making the copies one of a kind.

original forger

Cultural misunderstandings are even more acute in the area of historical conservation. When replicas of the terracotta soldiers were sent to be shown in a museum in Hamburg, the director decided that they had no choice but 'to close the exhibition completely in order to maintain the museum's good reputation'.¹¹⁰ In the West, preservation tends to highlight remnants of the original. Alexander Stille, in his book *The Future of the Past*, contends that the West's layering of continuous historical civilisations helps construct a linear temporality that is made manifest in the Jewish, Christian and Islamic calendars, which all start from a fixed point of time. In China, on the other hand, techniques of preservation are based on the continual process of reproduction and the construction of replicas is often deployed as a mode of protection. This is compatible, as Simon Leys notes, with a culture that is comfortable with the idea that change is inherent in the Real.¹¹¹ Byung Chul Han, much like Xiong Shili, maintains that

aprod as pen

conservation as abstract

in the Chinese intellectual tradition the notion of essence (*ti*) is not stable, eternal or fixed. 'Chinese thought', he contends, is outside the 'cult of the original'. Its notion of truth does not rely on the principles'. 'In the unending cycle of life, there is no longer anything unique, original, singular or final.'¹¹²

Del
my
&
mimic

'The modern world', writes Gilles Deleuze at the start of *Difference and Repetition*, 'is one of simulacra.'¹¹³ This thesis - that modernity is closely tied to mimicry - is well known. Yet Deleuze's conception differs from most accounts, which tend to mourn the departure from a past authenticity and, even in their most radical postmodern formulations, retain, at least in part, a nostalgia for the real.¹¹⁴ For Deleuze the weird trope of the mirror or the double, whose presence, more like furtive and fleeting, reveals a deep and alien exteriority that lies at the heart of that which is closest and most at home.

Plato

Difference and Repetition is based on the Nietzschean project of overturning Platonism. At the crux of the inversion is a challenge to the foundational hierarchy, which insists that what repeats is always fundamentally similar to that which has already been. For Plato, the ideal world exists above and beyond our illusory realm of shadowy imitations. Transcendence is embedded in a distinction, which holds that copies are nothing other than degraded resemblances of the original, necessarily secondary 'instances of the Same'.¹¹⁵ This distinction between a highly valued real and a disdained, subordinated copy is sustained in Platonic philosophy, just as it is with the modern brand, through scrupulous policing. 'Platonism as a whole is erected on the basis of this wish to hunt down the phantasms', writes Deleuze. The 'simulacra must be exorcised'.¹¹⁶ Dreams, shadows, reflections, copies all must be silenced, put aside, banished and sent back to the bottomless ocean from which they came.

To overturn Plato is to reject this exile and recognise the power of the simulacra in themselves. According to this alternative line of thought, the copy is not merely a defect or secondary resemblance. This anti-Platonism, which appears momentarily even 'at the heart of Platonism', arrives 'like a flash of lightning in the night', testifying to 'a persistent activity on the part of simulacra, to their underground work and to the possibility of a world of their own'.¹¹⁷

Elend
Del

In exploring this alterity, Deleuze turns to one of the richest philosophical expressions of simulation, the Nietzschean idea of 'Eternal Return'. According to Nietzsche's own account, the thought of the Eternal Recurrence came to him as a sudden revelation in the year 1881. According to a history marked by the long cycles of techno-

Del - simulacra w/ bad' robot origin

capitalism, this moment occurred in the trough, just before the third Kondratiev upswing, which powered the electric age. It was also, crucially, not long after the discovery of entropy - the physical justification for the straight line of time.¹¹⁸ In this revolutionary juncture in both the science and technology of temporality, Nietzsche introduced the philosophy of Eternal Return. What if the world is caught in endless cycles of repetition, such that the origin is already a replica? What if simulation is not a shadow of the real but is instead all that there is?

&
entropy

One of the fundamental philosophical problems raised by the idea of Eternal Return is in what sort of time does recurrence take place? Is there an original stable permanence that underlies the continuous repetition? Are the constant temporal loops subordinated to an extended succession - a straight line of time? Or, alternatively, is it that time itself is a cycle that continuously repeats? Deleuze adamantly rejects both of these interpretations. Repetition, he insists, is not merely an imitation of a primary origin, nor is it destined to an infinite imitation of the same.

How could the reader believe that Nietzsche, who was the greatest critic of these categories, implicated Everything, the Same, the Identical, the Similar, the Equal, the I and the Self in the eternal return? How could it be believed that he understood the eternal return as a cycle, when he opposed 'his' hypothesis to every cyclical hypothesis? How could it be believed that he lapsed into the false and insipid idea of an opposition between a circular time and a linear time, an ancient and a modern time?¹¹⁹

In place of these dichotomies, Deleuze envisions the Eternal Return as a secret, tortuous, decentred circle, which is 'beyond the reach of the empirical' and which arrives at the end of a straight line of time. This eternally excentric circle, he writes, turns upon itself, causing 'only the yet-to-come to return'.¹²⁰ It thus synthesises the repetition that is inherent to copying with the creative novelty implicit in change.

Wave philosophy is based on repetitive continuity. It dissolves the distinction in which the single unity of the Real is valued and the multiplicity of the copy is debased. It does not banish simulation into the depths of the ocean. It celebrates constant variation rather than assuming that all manifestation is necessarily the repetition of the same. China's relation to wirelessness includes this ulterior perspective. Alongside the attempts to consolidate a techno-political control, its engagement with contemporary media invokes older swirling cosmologies, which have been largely overlooked because they do not conform to a monolithic, predetermined structure, but operate, instead,

Del - etched return as decentered circle - beyond the
beyond the only the yet-to-come is to return

according to time waves, external to the linear-historical order. These alternative cosmologies do not belong to the ideas and practices of the land-based core, but are rather aligned with the watery edges of the periphery. With no stable or permanent grounding in a separate substance or essence, they are commensurate with the exterior plane of the Untimely and its fluid, alien rhythms, which 'ceaselessly [rumble] in another dimension' underneath the 'laws of nature that govern the surface of the world'.¹²¹

Notes

1. Amy Ireland, 'Alien Rhythms', *Alienist* VI (1 January 2019): 69.
2. Arkady Strugatsky and Boris Strugatsky, *Roadside Picnic* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2012), 85.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Ireland, 'Alien Rhythms', 61.
5. *Ibid.*, 62.
6. Mark Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie* (London: Repeater, 2016), 22.
7. *Ibid.*, 116.
8. Strugatsky and Strugatsky, *Roadside Picnic*, 28.
9. *Ibid.*, 68.
10. Ireland, 'Alien Rhythms', 67.
11. Strugatsky and Strugatsky, *Roadside Picnic*, 17.
12. Ireland, 'Alien Rhythms', 58.
13. Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 116.
14. Ireland, 'Alien Rhythms', 71.
15. Easterling, *Extrastatecraft*, 25.
16. Mary Ann O'Donnell, Winnie Wong and Jonathan Bach, 'Introduction: Experiments, Exceptions, and Extensions', in *Learning from Shenzhen: China's Post-Mao Experiment from Special Zone to Model City*, ed. Mary Ann O'Donnell, Winnie Wong and Jonathan Bach (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 11.
17. Easterling, *Extrastatecraft*, 25.
18. Mary Ann O'Donnell, 'Heroes of the Special Zone: Modeling Reform and its Limits', in O'Donnell, Wong and Bach, eds, *Learning from Shenzhen*, 45.
19. Aihwa Ong, 'Introduction', in *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global*, ed. Ananya Roy and Aihwa Ong (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 1.
20. *Ibid.*, 1.
21. Jonathan Bach, 'Shenzhen: From Exception to Rule', in O'Donnell, Wong and Bach, eds, *Learning from Shenzhen*, 29.
22. *Ibid.*
23. See Jia Zhangke's 2004 film *The World*.

24. Bach, 'Shenzhen: From Exception to Rule', 32.
25. See, for example, Kevin Carrico, 'Recentering China: The Cantonese in and beyond the Han', in *Critical Han Studies: The History, Representation, and Identity of China's Majority*, ed. Thomas Mullaney, James Leibold, Stéphane Gros and Eric Vanden Bussche (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012) and Ien Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living Between Asia and the West* (London: Routledge, 2001), which begins with Rey Chow's reminiscence of Hong Kong as an 'unsettled and unsettling location between China and the West'. For Chow, the 'unstable, ambivalent, doubly marginalized position of Hong Kong' opens up the 'in-between space of hybridity' which can grant 'the power to interrupt, to trouble, to intervene tactically rather than strategically and to contaminate . . . established narratives and dominant points of view' (quoted in Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese*, 2).
26. The power of this force of integration is such that even zones with greater autonomy – Hong Kong and perhaps even Taiwan – find it difficult to escape.
27. Ong, 'The Chinese Axis', 83.
28. Bach, 'Shenzhen: From Exception to Rule', 22.
29. Jonathan Bach, 'Modernity and the Urban Imagination in Economic Zones', *Theory, Culture & Society* 28, no. 5 (2011): 100.
30. The time of the coronavirus pandemic was known as 'the special period'.
31. Joshua Neves, *Underglobalization: Beijing's Media Urbanism and the Chimera of Legitimacy* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020), 40.
32. Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of Jus Publicum Europaeum*, trans. G. L. Ulmen (New York: Telos Press, 2006), 43.
33. Neves, *Underglobalization*, 11.
34. Peter Hall, *Cities in Civilization* (London: Pantheon, 1998).
35. *Ibid.*, 241.
36. Shenzhen speed initially referred to the construction of the Shenzhen International Trade Building (*Guomao*), for which workers put up one floor every three days. See Weiwen Huang, 'The Tripartite Origins of Shenzhen: Beijing, Hong Kong and Bao-An', in O'Donnell, Wong and Bach, eds, *Learning from Shenzhen*, 65–85.
37. *Ibid.*, 65.
38. This was theorised most famously by Ronald Coase in his 1937 paper 'The Nature of the Firm', *Economica* 4, no. 16 (1937): 386–405.
39. See C. K. Prahalad and Gary Hamel, 'The Core Competence of The Corporation', *International Library of Critical Writings in Economics* 163 (2003): 210–22.
40. Boy Lütthje, Stefanie Hürtgen, Peter Pawlicki and Martina Sproll, *From Silicon Valley to Shenzhen: Global Production and Work in the IT Industry* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2013), 28.

41. Ibid., 57.
42. Clyde Prestowitz, *Three Billion New Capitalists: The Great Shift of Wealth and Power to the East* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 55.
43. The Taiwanese have been careful not to shift the most specialised aspects of semiconductor production offshore.
44. Lüthje et al., *From Silicon Valley to Shenzhen*, 118.
45. For details, see the work of 'Hacked Matter', <http://www.hackedmatter.com/>.
46. For more on the temporality and aesthetics of the Zone, see the work of scholar-photographer Tong Lam.
47. Rem Koolhaas, *The Generic City* (New York: Sikkens Foundation, 1995), 1251.
48. Ibid., 1251–3.
49. Juan Du, 'Don't Underestimate the Rice Fields', in *Urban Transformation*, ed. Ilka Ruby and Andreas Ruby (Berlin: Ruby Press, 2008), 198.
50. Mary Ann O'Donnell, 'Excavating the Future in Shenzhen', in *Urban Asias: Essays on Futurity Past and Present*, ed. Tim Bunnell and Daniel P. S. Goh (Berlin: JOVIS, 2018), 250.
51. Jonathan Bach, "'They Come in Peasants and Leave Citizens': Urban Villages and the Making of Shenzhen", in O'Donnell, Wong and Bach, eds, *Learning from Shenzhen*, 143.
52. See Mary Ann O'Donnell, 'Laying Siege to the Villages: The Vernacular Geography of Shenzhen', in O'Donnell, Wong and Bach, eds, *Learning from Shenzhen*, 107–23.
53. Du, 'Don't Underestimate the Rice Fields', 200.
54. David Bandurski, *Dragons in Diamond Village: Tales of Resistance from Urbanizing China* (New York: Melville House, 2016), 12–13.
55. Du, 'Don't Underestimate the Rice Fields', 200.
56. O'Donnell, 'Laying Siege to the Villages', 111.
57. Bandurski, *Dragons in Diamond Village*, 7.
58. Bach, 'Modernity and the Urban Imagination in Economic Zones', 150.
59. O'Donnell, 'Excavating the Future in Shenzhen', 260.
60. Anna Greenspan and Suzanne Livingston, *Future Mutation: Technology, Shanzhai and the Evolution of Species* (Shanghai: Time Spiral Press, 2015).
61. Lüthje et al., *From Silicon Valley to Shenzhen*, 28.
62. Ibid., 108.
63. Ibid.
64. Bunnie Huang, 'The \$12 "Gongkai" Phone', Bunnie's Blog (blog), 18 April 2013, https://www.bunniestudios.com/blog/?page_id=3107.
65. A number of *shanzhai* companies from Shenzhen, in an attempt to consolidate profits, have set up factories in these places to be closer to the markets that they serve.
66. Neves, *Underglobalization*, 3.
67. Ackbar Abbas, 'Faking Globalization', in *Other Cities, Other Worlds: Urban Imaginaries in a Globalizing Age*, ed. Andreas Huyssen (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 251.

68. Ibid.
69. Neves, *Underglobalization*, 3.
70. Ibid., 8.
71. Abbas, 'Faking Globalization', 253.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid., 254–5.
74. Constantine V. Nakassis, 'Brands and their Surfeits', *Cultural Anthropology* 28, no. 1 (2013): 112.
75. Ibid., 114.
76. Ibid., 118.
77. The difficulty of this puzzle becomes even more acute when dealing with the intrinsic reproducibility of digital technology.
78. Abbas, 'Faking Globalization', 262.
79. Neves, *Underglobalization*, 24.
80. Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 8.
81. Byung-Chul Han, *Shanzhai: Deconstruction in Chinese* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017), 76.
82. Lyn Jeffery, 'Mining an Unexpected Source of Innovation: Lessons from Shanzhai', *Institute for the Future*, September 2013, <https://slidetodoc.com/mining-an-unexpected-source-of-innovation-lessons-from/>.
83. Hua Yu, *China in Ten Words* (London: Duckworth, 2012), 181–2.
84. Although as scholar Jeffrey Wasserstrom notes, China is hardly alone in borrowing other cultures' building styles. Wasserstrom, 'Copycat Travels', *Los Angeles Review of Books*, 13 May 2015, <http://blog.lareviewofbooks.org/chinablog/copycat-travels/>.
85. The quote is from Lao Zi, *Daodejing*, Passage 78. I have used the translation by James Legge, *Chinese Text Project: A Dynamic Digital Library of Premodern Chinese*, <https://ctext.org/dao-de-jing>.
86. The oppositional elements earth and water, land and sea were obsessively explored by German political theorist Carl Schmitt. Schmitt, a Nazi sympathiser writing in the midst of the Second World War, is well known for his critique of maritime liberal modernity. He envisioned the history of the world as a universal battle between a land race represented by the giant beast Behemoth and a watery people embodied by the sea serpent Leviathan. Schmitt's political philosophy is based on this fundamental contrast between 'firm land and free sea'. Law and order, he argued, is rooted in the cultivation of the soil and the solid ground of the earth. On the sea, 'fields cannot be planted and firm lines cannot be engraved'. Schmitt identified the maritime mode of human existence, which is 'different from that which is purely earth defined', with the English and the Jew. He contended that the maritime culture's lack of fixity was intimately tied to piracy and trade, which was ultimately associated with the threatening upheavals of a techno-capitalist world. Leviathan, he laments, 'transformed itself from a great fish into a machine'. Carl Schmitt, *Land and Sea: A World-Historical Meditation*, ed. Samuel Garrett Zeitlin and Russell A. Berman (Cantor, NY: Telos Press, 2015).

87. Blum and Jensen, *China Off Center*, 1.
 88. *Ibid.*, 2.
 89. Wei-Ming Tu, 'The Periphery as the Center', *Daedalus* 120, no. 2 (1991): 12.
 90. Sinophone scholar Ien Ang, commenting on Tu's 'famed but controversial cultural China project', argues that the very idea of 'Chineseness' employed by Tu has a re-centring, re-territorialising effect. Ang praises Tu's privileging of the periphery as the new cultural centre. His discourse, she writes, 'is an important challenge to traditional, centrist and essentialist conceptions of Chinese culture and identity'. Yet the very postulation of a 'cultural China' as the name for a transnational intellectual community held together not just by a 'common awareness' but also by 'a common ancestry and a shared cultural background', 'a transnational network to explore the meaning of being Chinese in a global context' is a move that is driven by a desire for, and motivated by, another kind of centrism, this time along notionally cultural lines. Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese*, 42. Ang is part of another group of scholars 'truly on the periphery', whose decentring discourses offer even 'more radical narratives which push the diasporic to its limits, to the extent that any residual attachment to the "centre"' tends to fade away. Ien Ang, 'Can One Say No to Chineseness? Pushing the Limits of the Diasporic Paradigm', *Boundary* 25, no. 3 (1998): 223–42.
 91. Tu, 'The Periphery as the Center', 5.
 92. *Ibid.*, 253.
 93. *Ibid.*, 262.
 94. Juan Du, *The Shenzhen Experiment: The Story of China's Instant City* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020), 91.
 95. *Ibid.*
 96. Erica Fox Brindley, *Ancient China and the Yue: Perceptions and Identities on the Southern Frontier, c.400 BCE–50 CE* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 39.
 97. *Ibid.*, xii.
 98. Weixian Pan, 'China Southern: Digital Environments as Geopolitical Contact Zones', PhD dissertation, Concordia University, 2019, 88, <https://spectrum.library.concordia.ca/id/eprint/985659/>.
 99. *Ibid.*, 100.
 100. Bratton, *The Stack*, 113.
 101. Han, *Shanzhai*, 16.
 102. *Ibid.*, 2.
 103. *Ibid.*, 78.
 104. *Ibid.*, 4.
 105. *Ibid.*, 3.
 106. *Ibid.*, 11.
 107. *Ibid.*, 76.
 108. Winnie Wong, *Van Gogh on Demand: China and the Readymade* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

109. Han, *Shanzhai*, 29.
 110. *Ibid.*, 60.
 111. For more on this theme, see Pierre Ryckmans, 'The Chinese Attitude towards the Past', *China Heritage Quarterly* 14 (2008): 1–16.
 112. Han, *Shanzhai*, 4.
 113. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), xix.
 114. See, for example, Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Glaser (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1994).
 115. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 265.
 116. *Ibid.*, 127.
 117. *Ibid.*, 128.
 118. Physicists argue that it is because disorder increases that we experience linear time. In the late 1800s, with the understanding of a directional entropic universe came the concurrent puzzle of pockets of increasing evolutionary order. Eventually life was reconceived as closed, looped, feedback systems that seemed to run counter to the dominant current.
 119. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 299.
 120. *Ibid.*, 298.
 121. *Ibid.*, 241.