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MINORITARIAN ENUNCIATION
AND GLOBAL PRODUCT CULTURE

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This essay came about after reading Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's linguistic and literary theories in *A Thousand Plateaus* and *Kafka*. I am interested in applying their concept of minoritarian enunciation to product culture. Inspired by the "shanzhai" cultural phenomenon, a folkloric reference that has been revived by counterfeiters of global branded goods in China, I examine how global brands have been differently "consumed" in the Chinese market via Apple's iPhone product. As a counterpoint, I ask what it means to look at "shanzhai" through literary production and consumption. How consumption is defined is therefore crucial to my understanding of enunciation and to a theory of its agency.

Modernity and globalization since the Enlightenment can be described as a complex negotiation of processes and ideas at odds: imperialist expansion and democracy, universal rights and private ownership, a growing sense of global inter-connectedness within the effects of deterritorialization, and so on. Because globalization is a cultural, political as well as an economic process, contemporary global brand marketing is not immune to these interwoven and diacritical forces. How global brands mediate and collapse the distinctions between one and all, belonging and otherness, sharing and difference within their markets also discloses how the unsanctioned and unintended consumption of their products outside of their markets is a response to the complexities of globalization.

While brands use product and service design, and messaging strategies to differentiate themselves from the competition, they also seek to expand their business by creating new desires in consumers and by converting those who already patronize the competition. Global brands know that consumers want to self-enact through their product choices and say "I do" via their brand loyalty. But in a country like China where the attitude with regards to authority, lifestyles and income of the average consumer are quite different from those to whom global brands typically market, the peculiar way Chinese consumers view the idea of modernity—a Western-centric notion not only defined by lifestyle narratives seen through global media but also defined by notions of creativity and property—may be observed via the ways in which local counterfeiters appropriate global branded products to cater to local consumers. Although typically not associated with linguistics, the ways in which global brands reach their targeted and unintended audience,

are strategized through their products and delivery, and the ways in which the consumption of global brands describe global cultures and their interrelationship illustrate how global brands are analogous to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of a major language in the world economy. By claiming Chinese knockoffs as evidence of a minor use of language in the context of globalization, I frame global brands and their knockoffs as objects in a system of power relations to contextualize them from broadly geo-political and geo-economic perspectives. As Deleuze and Guattari's conception of language proposes that variations of constants disclose the decentering flow of rhizomatic circuits, I am interested in exploring whether these variations in the order-words of global brands—their transfixing insistence as the emblems of the contemporary, universal "good life"—could suggest how modernity might be redressed in China and consequently in the West.

Background: modernity and consumption

In our global digital era, companies covet their technological know-how more than any other asset. The deluge of intellectual property rights lawsuits between global corporations and business acquisitions as the means to acquire patents attest to this claim. In her recent examination of the emerging definition of creativity and the rise of intellectual property rights offenses between China and the West, cultural critic Laikwan Pang connects the Western hegemonic discourse of modernity that began with the Enlightenment to the ways in which contemporary global corporations use IPR in legal and political contexts to further define creativity as property. She contends that, "with the Global triumph of Western modernity, what grounds the development of China's and other developing countries' current socioeconomic development is not the culture's own philosophical history but that of the West" (30).

Although historically, imperialist expansion sought to colonize foreign lands through military power, the aims of these regimes were fueled by the search for new markets and new resources to support the production of goods. Political might as reflected by military strength only shadows the true source of power. For the better part of the twentieth century, modernization and the experience of modernity are connected to the rise of the U.S. on the world stage and may even be seen as American-driven narratives. But

while the U.S. has been the largest world economy for more than a century and has fanned the post-WWII growth of the advertising industry, the global narrative of modernity via American brands eventually gave way to the minor uses of its language outside of the major consumer markets of global branded goods.

Scholars in anthropology and material culture studies have examined how people make, trade, consume and share things, both within local communities and in a global context. Daniel Miller describes consumption as "a process having the potential to produce an inalienable culture" and a model for a "progressive possibility"(17–18). Arjun Appadurai theorizes that the media within globalization produces different cultural spheres in different parts of the world to the extent that people consume by (re-)imagining the representations of modernity in their local contexts. Appadurai frames this type of consumption as a "translocal dialogue" that produces "alternative, interactive modernities" (64–65). Across these two views, consumption is both an ephemeral form of engagement and a material means with which to define cultural belonging. Defined either as the exchange of money for goods or as the use of materials, consumption is rarely conceptualized as a process that yields or produces. But both Miller and Appadurai's work suggests a different way of conceptualizing the activity as they connect its process with forms of cultural production that engender new cultural outcomes. My definition of consumption expands on these framings to include the unsanctioned remaking of branded artifacts sold in China's consumer market, in particular, knockoffs of Apple's iPhone. Obviously, something is produced for something to be consumed so that consumption is always seen as secondary to production. But the way in which I approach consumption through knockoffs also imbricates consumption and production. If global brands define the narrative of contemporary life by means of their advertisements and the way of life their products supposedly enable and engender, knockoffs are the means by which consumers outside of the brand targets can insert themselves in the primary global narrative of modernity even as their economic realities place them at once on the outside and within it. Knockoffs create a micro-proxy of the branded universe—modern as imagined by brands—so that these consumers can be in step while being out of step.

Thus, the ways in which people appropriate branded artifacts and undo them to re-imagine their belonging within global culture disclose how people have culturally, socially and materially responded to the effects of globalization. Because I contend that the material consumption of global brands is a collective assemblage of enunciations, I consider this type of consumption a Deleuzian "line of flight." This view sets up two things. First, the assemblage contextualizes globalization as a rhizome, and second, it defines modernity from the standpoint where consumption is a form of material production within globalization.

Global branded products and their knockoffs: a linguistic view

Deleuze and Guattari's theory of the order-word is crucial to their conception of language. They do not see it as a category of statement but instead, as a linguistic function, such that order-words concern the ways in which power spreads through social relations and the implicit social obligations the statements effectuate. They say that,

> Language is not content to go from a first party to a second party, from one who has seen to one who has not, but necessarily from a second party to a third party, neither of whom has seen. It is in this sense that language is the transmission of the word as order-word, not the communication of a sign as information. (77)
> … Questions, promises, are order-words (79).

As order words operate in relation to each other so as to effectuate social obligations, the minor use of language—that is, the ways in which a collective assemblage makes use of "the set of all order-words, implicit presuppositions, or speech acts" to push the "*condition of possibility of language* [through] the usage of linguistic elements" to result in how individuality is felt through the variations within speech (79, 85). What Deleuze and Guattari drive at is the "revolutionary potential of the order-word," a minoritarian enunciation that transforms the order-word from its deterministic nature into an emancipatory operation (110).

Paradoxically, without knockoffs, global brands might not have encountered the a-parallel evolution necessary to actualize their vitality.

Through the globalizing machine, this deterritorializing movement is the "'extra something' that 'remains outside of the scope of the entire set of linguistic categories and definitions'" and that transforms branded objects into a living language (82).

Through advertisements, social networks and the entertainment industry, global brands and their products are popularized in developing economies even if they are only intended for small segments of consumers in those societies. This global reach is analogous to the way in which, historically, languages, such as Latin, Chinese, English and Arabic, spread into neighboring and distant cultures through wars, trade and migration. But where geo-political and geo-economic issues within localized regions do not necessarily establish the development of a minor language as Deleuze and Guattari explain, the majority is "necessarily worked upon by all the minorities of the world, using very diverse procedures of variation" so that they are dependent upon each other (102). To suggest that the consumption of global branded products instigates a minor language equally points to an examination of how, globally, we subvert and are limited by the parameters of cultural, social, political and economic relations as they evolve over time.

Globalized material culture is instrumental in elucidating the potential agency of "speech acts" in a non-linguistic field. Much like grammatical regulation, the branded products I explore here are forms and systems, follow rules, are conjugated, make up clichés, refer to a network of other things, and so exhibit the arborescent structure of a major language. More than that, the social relationships evidenced in their global transactions, their uses and their perversions make them analogous to the pragmatics of language. Insofar as global brands and their products can be seen as a major language where they operate as illocutionary order-words in a globalized cultural landscape, their knockoffs could be seen as speech acts that intervene into the material content of hegemonic expansion. Knockoffs result from a pragmatics of brands as material language in a globalizing field.

In Deleuze and Guattari's terms, the definition of a language is the transmission of the elementary unit of the order-word through the grammatical rules that are power markers before they are syntactical markers (76). The practice of branding—giving a brand a name, a visual identity, a story and a philosophy to target specific demographic customers—has the

ultimate goal of business expansion through profit growth. The practice roots the tree of brand attributes that grows into product lines and their subsequent editions. Everything about a brand, including its advertisements, products and business practices are all part of its linguistic machine. A brand's advertisements are obvious instances of order-words as linguistic functions. But the branded products they sell also exhibit the arborescent characteristics of major languages because they, too, are concatenated to function as order-words.

The Apple brand is a case in point. At the most basic, Apple's product offerings blend premium price points with a proprietary software platform, user-centric interface design, sleek visual appeal as evidenced in the minimalist object aesthetics, like the choice of materials and finishes. The brand ethos scripts these product characteristics and the marketing program into an illocutionary scenario. Apple's marketing program, such as the advertisements and the stores, are order-words that pre-establish an incorporeal transformation of the consumer through the branded touch points. What is transacted between Apple and its customers is not so much currency and goods—money and commodity—but an order-word for its echo, its presupposition and linguistic currency.

While devotees of the brand and app developers help the language spread, it proliferates as an inflexible set of linguistic demarcations that "transform" and thus define the Apple user, but the Apple user is not about to transform the Apple product. This is a one-way street. Anyone who has ever disassembled an iPhone to look inside will realize that much of the device has been glued together in ways that prevent the phone from being easily reassembled. Obviously, disassembling the phone also voids the warranty. Furthermore, it is well known that Apple's Mac OS, unlike Linux, is not an open software platform. While language is neither simply communication nor information, as Deleuze and Guattari point out, Apple's lines of products are a kind of indirect discourse employed by customers.

As long as the Apple brand is a thing in and of itself, the brand's visual characteristics across all its products need to be conjugated and chained together. As power markers that transmit none other than the assertion of its own ethos, this syntax might further reveal the totalizing and standardizing instincts that belie it. Obsolescence and succession are strictly orchestrated. Each Apple product and each product line that succeeds it are carefully

scheduled for market release to determine the product "rollout." The timing allows Apple to control the pipeline of technology that is made available to the masses.

The scheduled orchestration of product releases has larger financial implications. Since most of us depend on such mobile technologies for our day-to-day living, the control of this pipeline assures Apple or its competitors a chance to dictate who gets to sell what and where and how in the digital age. The software platforms (Windows, Android, Mac OS) regulate the development of platform-specific applications (apps). In turn, these are linked to how digital goods and services are sold. Think magazine and newspaper subscriptions, music and movie downloads. This is the now and future of content-driven businesses. One gets to control product pricing, deals across industries and distribution networks of products and services (Rusli, nytimes.com). This functional interdependence assures a reciprocal presupposition. Deleuze and Guattari quote Foucault in saying that "we constantly pass from order-words to the 'silent order' of things, … and vice versa" (87).

The Apple brand as order-word performs its function so seamlessly that you have no idea how or when the incorporeal transformation occurred: one minute, Apple is talking to you and about you ("Think Different"), then the next minute, it is not just about you because you are part of "us" ("The Computer for the Rest of Us"), and somehow, you end up simply speaking from the first person with your i-products. You speak through this product and use it to share. You belong while you are unique. The branded scenario unleashes the whole series of incorporeal transformations in one unending stroke.

The transformation can be traced back to those jewel-colored iMacs that rescued Apple Computers from its financial weariness in the late 1990s. Where these models hailed the return of Steve Jobs and the marketing machine, they did so by manifesting the brand ethos of individuality across the semantic inculcation of imagination, innovation and design sophistication. The jewel-toned, semi-translucent plastic casings that said so along with the prefix naming rule of "i-" was carried through to the iPods and their minis and their shuffles, on to the iPhones and the iPads. Technologically, iPod is a precursor to the iPhone that in turn is a precursor to the iPad. One generation of touch technology went into the next and so on. The most important aspect of this linguistic concatenation is the way in which it

established a syntactic contingency. The devices themselves turn out to be a foil. The semantic enunciation of the iMacs and iPods implicitly presupposes an innovative, individualized platform whereby mere consumers can transform themselves into visionary individual users. But then came iTunes. By servicing the device customers with a virtual territory that ties goods (music, movies, books, etc.) produced externally to the devices, consumers are joined in their collective freedom to shop anywhere and any time. As iTunes enables instant digital purchasing, it also allowed Apple to expand its business from hardware development to virtual goods, giving the company control over the licensing, sales terms and delivery of digital products produced by other providers worldwide. Apple's devices are the tangible means in the hands of each consumer with which to access the limitless virtual warehouse of digital content. iTunes frees the Apple brand from a syntactic contingency by blurring the inflexible, arborescent Apple language with the rhizomatic collective of the participatory web space.

Interpreting the Apple brand as a major language of personal computing, entertainment and communication technology also inculcates the brand's ethos in the American hegemonic narrative. Where America's dominant cultural ideology is being played out through the trade of products (including services and technologies) and the advertising of lifestyles in the global marketplace, the ways in which China's emerging economy intersects and interacts with global brands only highlight the disparities between the consumers of the developing and the developed economies. They may also foretell what new cultural tendencies will emerge as China is expected to eventually overtake the US as the largest world economy.* In the years leading up to this paradigm shift, counterfeit branded goods produced in

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* In 2014, the International Monetary Fund announced that China has overtaken the U.S. as the world's largest economy. Using "purchasing power parity" (PPP) as the basis of its calculation, the IMF arrived at China's new status by factoring the currency's value within the nation, such as how much the yuan is able to buy in China, as well as the size of the population. Critics argue that PPP gives the yuan a handicap that unrealistically accounts for China's economic strength vis-à-vis other developed economies in the world. While many media outlets have adopted the IMF's ruling, because I focus on the experience of the average Chinese consumer, I have opted to side with the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* to state China as the second largest world economy.

China present a kind of collective assemblage of enunciation. This type of consumption has the potential of redefining the characteristics of modernity. This collective includes not just China but a host of fast-growing economies around the world, such as India and Brazil.

Almost a decade ago, the Hi Phone appeared on the Chinese market. A knockoff of Apple's iPhone, the Hi Phone plays with all of Apple's brand attributes and not just with the mobile phone itself (Barboza, nytimes.com). Manufactured in China, it has been reported that the Hi Phone and other off-brand and unauthorized versions of iPhones like it are the products of a counterfeiting network of cottage industries dubbed "shanzhai." In the Chinese language, the contemporary usage of the term "shanzhai" means black market, punk, do-it-yourself, outside of the mainstream, grassroots, and so on. Bloggers and the news media in the West often use the terms "shanzhai" and "copycat" as synonyms, making "shanzhai" the opposite of originality, inventiveness and individuality. But in China, "shanzhai" has a distinctly parodic dimension that highlights the counter-establishment potential of the choice to appropriate. For instance, in 2008, a "shanzai" television show on the Internet took on the most-watched program in China (Zhang and Fung). But unlike the Spring Festival Gala, the tightly staged variety mega-show programmed by the state-run CCTV which has a monopoly, the "shanzhai" version developed by a wedding planner in Beijing used a grassroots campaign to drive the mock show's popularity and featured ordinary people as performers (ibid).

Literally translated as "mountain hideout," the term "shanzhai" alludes to folk myths in China dating back to the twelfth century. These oral tales, such as *The Outlaws of the Marsh* and *The 108 Heroes* that became popularized through their printed distribution in fourteenth century China are about outlaws from the lower cultural and economic echelons of society who banded together to take from the corrupt establishment (Hennessey). Because these stories maintained their social relevance across Chinese culture, they survived history and are commonly used as analogies and metaphorical expressions in everyday language.

Today, "shanzhai" is a cottage industry of counterfeiters operating predominantly in Southern China's Shenzhen area who band together to market and produce these Hi Phones. They share bill of goods, each

responsible for a technological and manufacturing specialty so that the product in the end is the result of their networked collaborative production. Cottage industries in Hong Kong that burgeoned during the 1950s were also called "shanzhai" (Zhang and Fung).

Launched in China around 2008, Hi Phones and other knockoffs like them are not exact replicas of the iPhone in that they offer a range of customizable features. Costing a little over USD 30, these phones have dual SIM card slots so that users can share phones, subscribe to multiple carriers, travel abroad without switching devices, and more. Though they look like an Apple product, some models actually run on Android. Some have terrestrial HD video and telephoto lenses. Some are flip phones. One producer offers nano and mini versions. And still, there are Hi Phones with interchangeable metal shells that mimic the colors of the iPod.

These tactics indicate a thorough co-option of the Apple brand language. It is a veritable collective assemblage of enunciations. You say individual, innovative, imaginative? We'll show you how it's done where you hold out on us! It is the usage of the constants "in relation to the variables internal to enunciation itself" (Deleuze and Guattari 85). With the changes made to the branded originals, counterfeiters graft onto Apple's dominant and inflexible language to pervert it with its own tongue. The Hi Phone and the counterfeit and off-brand products like it "intervene in contents, not to represent them but to anticipate them or move them back, slow them down or speed them up, separate or combine them, delimit them in a different way" (86).

But as the market economy pervades China, there is increasing desire to consume as an exercise of personal freedom. Government trade regulations that often delay the launch of Western products further exacerbate consumer impatience. Meanwhile, counterfeiters and the consumers to which they cater spot a marketable opportunity within the situation. They anticipate attributes of customized features, slow down the noticeable disparity between their lifestyles and that of the West, and speed up product cycles by reinserting inherent aspects of a product's genealogy left out for purposes of corporate regulation. Doing so deregulates even the control of product roll-out, profit planning, brand equity building as well as government red tape. Counterfeiters and consumers collectively say "I do, too" with their Hi

Phones. With their "shanzai" devices, consumers perform a kind of speech act within the global marketplace.

With the Hi Phone's "becoming minor of a major language," the following is a case where "minority elements…invent a specific, unforeseen, autonomous becoming" to indicate that Apple knockoffs don't end with the devices (106). In 2011, an expatriate American living in the second-tier city of Kunming, China discovered a knockoff Apple retail store. According to her personal blog (BirdAbroad.wordpress.com), everything about the store, including the sales staff, seems absolutely believable. It was not until she decided to verify it through the Apple corporate website that she could confirm it as a fake. But the story is not so much about the bit of paint missed on a wall or the slightly unusual signage that tipped off the blogger. It is about the apparently genuine Apple products the fake store sells and the fact that Apple stayed mum when confronted by the media. No one knew how the fake store could sell official products for the same prices. How did it come upon the inventory in the first place? Perhaps also because Apple products are made and assembled in China and there are trade relations involved, and that China is Apple's frontier consumer market, an immediate protest might have backfired (Chang, Forbes.com).

By piggybacking on this lone blogger's single post, news media in the U.S. spread the discovery to denounce the theft of our heritage of branding and innovation. BirdAbroad saw her readership skyrocket overnight. Aside from her, no journalist reported from Kunming. Having crawled through enough of the news sites back when the news broke, I noticed a gradual degradation within days: sources began to alter the blogger's report, such as whether the sales staff were aware that the stores were fake to the official status of the goods sold through the store. It seems that no one is immune to the bastardizing bug. To make a little-known blog go viral, the media machine demonstrated a "power takeover…within a political multiplicity" (Deleuze and Guattari 7). The actions of the news media in this instance co-opt the rhizomatic potentiality of the internet—they feign their becoming of the rhizome itself in order to root—and maintain their de facto status as information brokers in the digital terrain.

Ideology and globalization

The 1959 Kitchen Debate between the then U.S. Vice-President Richard Nixon and the Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev made clear how product design became a proper tool at the State's service. The debate took place during the American National Exhibition in Moscow where a typical American suburban kitchen was on display as part of a model home. The Cold War contest of ideologies played out in the following conversation against a backdrop of domestic technologies and their implied lifestyles.

> Nixon: American houses last for more than 20 years, but, even so, after twenty years, many Americans want a new house or a new kitchen. Their kitchen is obsolete by that time.... The American system is designed to take advantage of new inventions and new techniques.
> [...]
> Khrushchev: The Americans have created their own image of the Soviet man. But he is not as you think. You think the Russian people will be dumbfounded to see these things, but the fact is that newly built Russian houses have all this equipment right now. (teachingamericanhistory.org)

The fact that political ideologies are channeled through domestic appliances points to a connection between technological innovation, product marketing, global politics and social and gendered identities during the Cold War era. On the one hand, the mass-produced goods, such as kitchen appliances, extend out of the order-words of brand marketing, production management and normative lifestyles. On the other hand, these are chains of order-words arranged to express an ideological syntax—a social syntax as produced by an ideological apparatus.

In her book *Domesticity At War*, design historian Beatriz Colomina makes a strong case for the design of the everyday as a direct extension of the American military machine. "War does not go away. Rather, it is carried out in the mass-produced spin-offs of military technology and efficiency" (Colomina 54). With examples that chart the development of plywood and chemical agents from defense research during the war to their subsequent

domesticated uses, Colomina demonstrates the relationship between military technology and the engineering and design of the everyday experience. Where the standardization of languages, such as written Latin in the Middle Ages, was intended for the effective enforcement of law and order over imperial territories (de Landa 200–201), the design of the everyday realm since the early twentieth century became a new material sphere for Empire's infiltration.

Whereas the Cold War was waged between political powers and their ideologies, today this geo-political tension is renewed in how creativity is defined and in whose terms modernity expresses the contemporary and future global experience. Between the sanctioned and standardized order-words of global brands and the unsanctioned, non-normative stammerings of the "shanzai" way of making, a legal fight that seems to be waged between nation states, such as over intellectual property rights and the (im)morality of copying or altering someone else's creation actually foils an ideological battle between grassroots and the establishment.

As this analogy begins to take shape, the problem of situating ideology in a Deleuzian inquiry needs to be addressed.

Michel Foucault's analysis of ideology is useful to help explain its awkward place in Deleuzian thought. By tracing ideology's Classical route and connecting it to Kant, Foucault explains that:

> …Ideology, by extending its reflection over the whole field of knowledge—from primary impressions to political economy, by way of logic, arithmetic, the sciences of nature, and grammar—tried to resume in the form of representation precisely what was being formed and re-formed outside representation. This resumption could be accomplished only in the quasi-mythical form of a simultaneously singular and universal genesis: an isolated, empty, and abstract consciousness must, beginning with the most tenuous form of representation, build up little by little the great table of all that is representable. […] the Kantain critique, on the other hand, marks the threshold of our modernity; it questions representation, not in accordance with the endless movement that proceeds from the simple element to all its possible combinations, but on the basis of its rightful limits. (Foucault 242)

Deleuze and Guattari attack ideology by its nature as representation to drive the critique of power to its fundamental materiality, not the abstraction of its relations. They maintain that "there is no ideology. The concept itself is an illusion. … once you accept that the organization of power is the unity of desire and the economic infrastructure" ("On Capitalism and Desire" 264). On the other hand, Louis Althusser, acknowledging the illusory, imaginary conception of ideology, develops a theory that focuses on the material practices of the apparatuses of the State and its ideologies by building on the structure of beliefs that reflects its configuration.

Their opposition can be summed up this way: the representation of power structures and their proliferation in Althusser vs. the organization of power itself in Deleuze and Guattari. Where the term "ideology" defines the set of material practices of the bourgeoisie in Althusser, rather than power itself, his critique centers around the representation of power through the Ideological State Apparatuses that inculcate class struggle. In ideology, we are to see the oppressive conditions and the mechanisms of the established order, and how these reproduce themselves in order to secure the continual dominance of this power structure (Althusser 128). The social formation and the reproduction of the conditions of its production presuppose that everyone is a subject, subjected to a capitalist economic system. By stating that "*individuals are always-already subjects*," Althusser connects Marxism to Freudian pathology (176). But instead of attacking the production of subjectivity, it is the a priori condition behind the workings of a system that produces class struggle. In discussing the "ruling ideology" to which subjection serves and from which his theory of ideology emerges, Althusser states that everyone in this model "must in one way or another be 'steeped' in this ideology in order to perform their tasks 'conscientiously'—the tasks of the exploited (the proletarians), of the exploiters (the capitalists), of the exploiters' auxiliaries (the managers), or of the high priests of the ruling ideology (its 'functionaries'), etc" (133).

As this premise inscribes a binary opposition between the exploited and the exploiters where everything in between is a set of stratifications that uphold this model, it excludes the possibility of variations in capitalism. Emmanuel Wallerstein shows in his essay "The Bourgeois(ie) As Concept and Reality" that the situation is not so cut and dry.

In his elaboration of the bourgeois as the central economic and political agent in the evolution of capitalism, Wallerstein charts its historical definition to the twenty-first century. He states that, since the post-WWII period, "a 'new middle class' was coming into existence":

> By the new middle class was meant the growing stratum of largely salaried professionals who occupied managerial or quasi-managerial positions in corporate structures in virtue of the skills in which they had been trained at universities—originally, primarily the 'engineers', then later the legal and health professionals, the specialists in marketing, the computer analysts, and so on.
>
> […] These 'new middle classes' are presumed to be an 'intermediate stratum' (as in the eleventh century), but now located between the 'bourgeoisie' or the 'capitalists' or 'top management' and the 'proletariat' or the 'workers'. […] This change […] did point to another changing reality: the differences in style of life and income level between skilled workers and these salaried professionals were narrowing. (Wallerstein, 96)

As material differences narrow, the connection between property and class struggle loosens among the majority. Although class division as the basis of ideology becomes less resonant in this view, it does not necessarily remove the discourse of ideology and its representations. But instead of producing class separations so distinctly, ideological apparatuses produce subjectivities that are less stratified as it effectively cultures a rhizome of middle class consumers. Occupy Wall Street's slogan, "We Are the 99%," makes it clear that the overwhelming majority is the so-called middle class that Wallerstein refers to and that the general economic circumstance of skilled workers and white-collar professionals alike can be distilled into the enactment of a collective subject. The collective cry of the have-nots also implicates consumption as a form of collective labor—the right to keep the market active, so that, in fact what we collectively produce in the end is the right to participate in the making and the administration of the market itself.

Although China is the world's second largest economy, critics have challenged the long-term sustainability of the exponential growth rate in the

Chinese economy over the last decade and an economic slow-down is being reconfirmed almost daily in news outlets. The average wage-earner is caught between the speed of the country's economic boom and the lack of realizing benefits on the individual level. The disproportionate distribution of wealth and power is a global reality regardless of regimes. "Shanzhai" articulates these frustrations through a different style of speech.

Although the ideological battle between capitalism and communism dominated much of the twentieth century, we are now facing the coming of another geo-political paradigm shift where exchange rates, per capita income and the gross national product of a nation has definite global political consequences. What was once a contest between two views of the world based on the concept of class and labor has now been reframed. Between economies, the fight is over capital, equity, liquidity and the means to modulate this endless cycle. As the growth of the middle class parallels globalization's contemporary reach, it is in the interest of global brands to turn every person, regardless of their geographic locality and economic status, into consumers. In the space of global corporatism, everyone has surplus value to spare. It matters little if people belong to one demographic group or to another just as long as they are buying. Where one lacks the funds, credit is given. The ability to consume is itself packaged as a product for consumption. We saw how that worked in the 2008 mortgage and debt crisis. In our current economic model, we are all bourgeois.

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's political concept of altermodernity—an analogy to alterglobalization (alter-mondialiste in France) as a third way after the modern and anti-modern stances we witnessed in the past—suggests that an alternative set of social relations centered around the concept of "the multitude" could challenge the notion of property, and thus the claims of ownership. If property is defined through "the multitude" within contemporary globalization, the opposition between class and State and the logic that is premised upon class struggle collapses into the rhizome. In effect, "shanzhai" renders the rhizome apparent. In this conceptual view, the question of becoming gains focus and the analysis of ideology magnifies the collective assemblage of enunciations.

Where the Kitchen Debate links product culture to America's hegemony, the conversation about lifestyles mingles politics with retail

marketing in the order-words of domestic goods as they are shown to be the props of a hegemonic narrative. In our contemporary context, the ways in which branded designs are strategized to circulate in global consumer culture show us how the organization of power has an illocutionary force that produces an unmistakable global narrative. It is acknowledged by all, repeated by many, and memed by some as the unintended consequence of the "shanzai" old-as-new, free-for-all tradition within the globalization process.

In explaining his concept of the apparatus, Foucault states that it has "a strategic objective. […] a process of functional overdetermination [and] a perpetual process of *strategic elaboration*" ("Confessions of the Flesh" 195). While I agree that ideology is in part an illusion and that it is the organization of power that is always at the heart of the problem, given the complexities of global economics, organizations of power are multiplied and non-local. In a sense, they are deterritorialized bodies without organs. As Deleuze says, "Captialism […]it's all desire in flux. […] its lines of escape […] are the very conditions of its operation. Capitalism is founded on a generalized decoding of every flow […]. The system is leaking all over the place" (Deleuze and Guattari 270).

In global branding, products are merely catalysts to set the system of relations in play. "The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements" (Foucault 194). Because the system of brands and the design of goods are ubiquitous, they can be seen as instruments in Foucault's "heterogeneous ensemble" of elements that make up society (ibid.) Not only do these produce our subjectivity (Hardt and Negri x), they are the material with which we produce a network of socializing relations.

If we take the order-word as the hegemonic narrative syntactically linking these elements into an ensemble of atomized subjects and the circuits through which they relate, I think we can call this a narrative, and its result is what I would call a *distributed* idealogy. Distributed idealogy moves beyond socio-economic class divisions so that organizations of power operate as a paradox of territorialization within a deterritorialized condition.

Today, "shanzhai" does not represent any Chinese state ideology. Far from it, these are independent tactics to short-cut the globalization deal.

Counterpoint: literary production

Having ventured to see material culture in a linguistic sense, it would be fair to ask how we might consider literary production and consumption as aspects of material culture. Literature is one actualization of language; it is linguistic in its fiber. But to fairly entertain the comparison to material culture, I argue we need to consider literary production as linguistic in the same way we consider products by way of their consumption. This highlights the complexities of designating minoritarian enunciation where the roles of producer and consumer, speaker and interpreter, are less clearly assigned. By using literature as a product, I turn the tables so to speak, to explore what it implies when I claim that "shanzhai" is enunciative.

Studies on the recent impact of globalization on literature have explored, among many topics, translations, adaptations, literary genres, themes of migration and hybrid cultures, and the influence of Western brand name publishers on the landscape of publishing in the developing world. The question of product origin that imbricates authorship, readership, business interests, and national identity in literary production also complicates the designation of minoritarian uses laid out in the case of Apple and the Hi Phone. Firstly, because literary production is inevitably tied to nationhood and cultural identity and, second, because the global reach of large Western publishers shapes literary consumption in developing economies, literature as products may seem at first to share many of the same issues of global brands and their knockoffs. But instead of counterfeiters as consumers of global brands, readers of literature emerge as the ones who *place in variation the constants of the given*, whether that constant is a body of content, editorial choices or the global publishing business. Furthermore, alterations by the reader, the author, the editor and the publisher speak of different intentions and imply different social effects so that "what we must determine is not an origin but points of intervention or insertion in the framework of the reciprocal supposition" (Deleuze and Guattari 87). Thus, literary production offers the opportunity to interrogate a compounded set of relations and to further probe how minoritarian uses are designated through products and their consumption in a broader cultural framework.

Fans of literature have been inspired to write stories based on their

favorite literary characters, change and extend plot features, and so on. Although fan fiction seems to illustrate "shanzhai," different social pragmatics of fanfic may disclose some contradictions inherent in appropriation. For instance, J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series has spawned many fan works in addition to a slew of officially-sanctioned adaptations, games and theme parks. The series was also co-opted by fans and counterfeiters in China. "As in some other countries, there are the unauthorized translations of real Harry Potter books, as well as books published under the imprint of major Chinese publishing houses, about which the publishers themselves say they have no knowledge. And there are the novels by budding Chinese writers hoping to piggyback on the success of the series—sometimes only to have their fake Potters copied by underground publishers who, naturally, pay them no royalties" (French, nytimes.com). But many of the fake titles suggest that readers see an inexhaustible formula in the *Harry Potter* franchise. An example is *Harry Potter and the Showdown*, written by a fan who wanted to satisfy his son's thirst for "what happens next" once the series ended (ibid). Why not keep it going? But fan-fiction of global hits points to the phenomenon of co-option that is common even in the West. The difference is that fanfic communities in the U.S. apparently self-regulate with communal codes of ethics that border on morality. "… [S]ocial norms are often the most effective means of regulation" because people are incentivized to conform, reasons a law review article on the legal issues surrounding fan fiction and remix culture (Hetcher, p. 1873). "… [N]orms and law influence one another and work in tandem to regulate behavior (Hetcher, 1875)." Some of these communal rules socially prohibit commercial gains by fan-authors. Some of these cast out the sexually deviant re-imaginations of characters in fan creations.

Where earlier I referred to global brands as the sanctioned and standardized order-words and knockoffs as the unsanctioned, non-normative stammerings of counterfeiters, literary production as products offers other examples to reverse this designation. Depending on who can claim the right to sanction, knockoffs are not always the only unsanctioned versions of the original source. Instead, these editions of literary works published for the sake of reaching a wider audience are perfectly legal. To consider literary production as a dispositif where the notion of originality is purely

capitalistic means that consumption can emerge, paradoxically placing the representational function of ideology in focus. Doing so also makes it clear that questions of legality do not always order and define enunciative functions. Rather, the social dimension of minor uses leads to a broadened complex understanding of the issues surrounding the margins of creativity and what it means to alter.

In *Textualterity*, Joseph Grigely explores the transmission and transformation of literature and visual art in culture. One perplexing case he discusses concerns the *Reader's Digest* edition of *Tom Sawyer* (40–44). The condensed work comes with a separately published *Parents Guide* that promises to be free of "difficult wording." While the disclaimer also assures that the meaning of the work is intact, Grigely asks if "the act of removing words merely effaces meaning or does it change meaning" as the omission creates a new history for the work (40). This *Reader's Digest* edition is an abridged version of the original work that reroutes the content. By removing parts of the work to condense it, including the omissions of racial references the *Reader's Digest* edition of *Tom Sawyer* "[tells] us what we must think, retain, expect, etc" (Deleuze and Guattari 79). It is, as Grigely says, much more about *Reader's Digest* than it is about Mark Twain. And it is even less so about the reader. In writing about the changes made to cultural texts, such as errors and their corrections, Grigely explains that whether intentional or unintentional, changes made to a text can "have latent semantic power" (28). Sustaining these changes throughout the cultural life of a work, various editions and printings appear and may be equally authoritative. "What it does instead is to ask us to position difference against itself, and examine what this difference has to tell us about literature in the broadest cultural terms" (29). But instead of seeing intentional or unintentional changes as anomalies, Grigely points out that the plurality of interpretations is a fact of a work's life. He says:

> … we should be more surprised by interpretive uniformity than interpretive divergence. And it is difference, playing off its etymology of existing *between* two states or things, that reminds us that identities exists primarily to other identities. Difference, that is, is an evolving set of relations, not a predeterminate paradigm or set of qualities" (29).

In the case of *Tom Sawyer*, an abridgement further lead to an egregious alteration of a work's cultural significance. Changes made in the *Reader's Digest* edition depart from the original and root a new reading of our history. Not only do the editorial changes reflect on *Reader's Digest* as Grigely says, I take these changes to describe how *Reader's Digest* frames its market, either by assuming that these consumers desire a rewriting or by producing an alternative readerly subjectivity. But in a global market where there are different linguistic spaces, what are the implications if different linguistic subjectivities pose the risk of changing how "we" inherit culture when there is no longer a universal "we" as readers and producers that can be claimed?

In "The Task of the Translator," Walter Benjamin posits that translation is not about "the faithful reproduction of the sense and, in its service, fidelity to the word" across languages (259). Instead, translations are extensions of the original works—an "echo"—to help "the life of the originals attains its latest, continually renewed, and most complete unfolding" (255). The task of the translator is thus to read between linguistic spaces to produce a form that reverberates "in an alien [language] … of integrating many tongues into one true language" (259). In examining the politics inherent in translation through postwar writings in Japan, Naoki Sakai argues that the view of translation as a bridge linking cultures only diverts translation from its form as "an essentially hybridizing instance" (3). Sakai's view stems from his conception of a translator's attitude with regards to the unity of a language, such that a translator that "adopts the position representative of a putatively homogeneous language society and relates to the general addressees, who are also representative of an equally homogeneous language community" is different from one "for whom neither reciprocal apprehension nor transparent communication was guaranteed" (4). Even as Benjamin's metaphor of the echo makes translation as much about interpretation as it is about representation, Sakai's positioning of the translator introduces the problems of subjective stance and social context into the task. Translation is not only about a text being conveyed in another language where the original pivots between forms, but about who is translating to whom because it posits translation as a structure of social relations. Without the certainty of what Sakai calls a "homolingual address" in which the unity of a language community between the translator and the reader is assumed,

in a "heterolingual address" miscomprehension is likely (9). "In this respect, you are always confronted, so to speak, with foreigners in your enunciation" so that "two conflicting modes of alterity" between the addressor and the addressee is made apparent (8–9). The translator acts within a rhizome of linguistic multiplicity and substantiates Benjamin's idea of translation as "pure language fully formed from the linguistic flux" (261).

"Shanzhai" products share the characteristics of literary translations. Each depends on an original that precedes it. Each echoes the original in its own way by attempting to denote the same social and cultural intentions even if they are differently defined. Benjamin writes that "just as the tenor and the significance of the great works of literature undergo a complete transformation over the centuries, the mother tongue of the translator is transformed as well" (256). By co-opting the arborescent language of the global brand, the Hi Phone might potentially alter the narrative of global modernity. But the subjective stance of the speaker and interpreter towards that of the audience begs further questions: behind the "shanzhai" attitude, do we hear a foreigner speaking in her own language or do we hear her attempting to speak a language foreign to herself?

The fact that translations and editorial changes frame our perception of culture is no news. Conceptual writing of the last decade also shows that appropriation—methods that include copying, rearranging, and indexing existing texts from everyday sources, including consumer "literature" like shopping mall directories and direct-mail credit card offers—critically reveals how our subjective experience of everyday reality is rendered through the financial and consumer markets' linguistic drone (Stephens). While I am not equating conceptual writing practices with editorial alterations and literary translations, these all point to questions about origins, consumption, and enunciative positions in ways that challenge how "shanzhai" can be viewed linguistically and as a social effect emerging from within globalization.

The collective assemblage of consumption

We generally ascribe notions of originality and authorship to literature and global branded products as categories. Because my view of consumption includes the experiential and intellectual interaction with "things," I draw

a parallel between the chance to read or interpret a literary work and how "shanzhai" reiterates modernity through reinterpretation of its branded terms and objects. As literature highlights how we process our experience of culture and politics through reading, and in a different way, knockoffs come out of the process of one economy's disjointed relationship with another in the global economy, the life of the order-word of brands and of literary production and consumption also exposes their social dimension. Knockoffs, reading and editorial changes disclose globalization as a socially co-creative process through consumption from different positions of intent. It is how majority as such depends on the variants enunciated by minorities to make itself vital (Deleuze and Guattari 106).

In discussing "the notion of *minority*", Deleuze and Guattari state that it "is the becoming of everybody, one's potential of becoming to the extent that one deviates from the model" (105). Thus, in seeking the revolutionary potential of a minoritarian enunciation, the focus is the becoming-minority in developing and developed economies alike. As much as knockoffs could be thought of as the lines of flight from the rhizome that is globalization, counterfeiters are in it for the money. Commercial gains as the incentive to appropriate still reaffirm the capitalist impulse, perhaps even demonstrating how the marginalized just want to be part of the main flow. In the plot of *The 108 Heroes*, a fourteenth-century folk tragedy about a motley crew of kung-fu fighting social outcasts united by the "shanzhai" code, it was revealed in the end that, all along, they were driven by their deep-seated desire to join the imperial army to fight off invasion (Hennessey). Although I draw a connection between "shanzai," minoritarian enunciation and the modern definition of creativity early on through Pang's critical investigation into intellectual property rights, her call for a new understanding of creativity that "connects individuals and also points toward one's own alterity" might at first seem to cement "shanzhai's" parasitic relationship to hegemony. But borrowing from Sakai's analyses of translation, if "shanzhai's" echoing of global brands can be situated from two subjective attitudes to simultaneously address the Chinese market and the world market, then the alterity of both could emerge through the gestures of knockoffs. The becoming minority of everyone is articulated when an enactment of the self in "i" is repeated elsewhere as an address to the Other (say "hi").

Even as China is poised to overtake the United States as the world's largest economy in the next few years by economists' accounts, individual income in China lags quite far behind Western wage standards. While the yuan may buy more vegetables in China than the dollar could in the U.S., the yuan certainly does not buy more iPhones. "Shanzhai" may be a way to witness billions of desires on the fringe inside the frays of an emerging superpower reacting to the rhizome of globalization. "But if desire constitutes the very texture of society in its totality," says Guattari, "including its mechanisms of production, a movement of liberation can 'crystallize' in that society" (Deleuze and Guattari, "On Capitalism and Desire" 266). What is at stake is a new territorialization of modernity and what new responses it would in turn demand. The question is not whether Chinese designers and manufacturers would eventually come to create their super brands to compete with the West. By and large, "shanzhai" products are remakes of the original that play on their similarities and differences. This exposes an attitude towards cultural material (brands seen by everyone), creativity and modernity in social and cultural terms. It is about recognizing the agency of collective deviance in this given cultural moment and in this geo-economic landscape.

Shifting the critique of power from production and consumption to *consumption as production* refocuses the revolutionary potential to the agency in the rhizome. This implies that, whether it is American or Chinese, hegemonic ideology and the way creativity is currently being defined cannot anchor the becoming differently-modern of globalization. We need only heed the examples of social norms as internal social regulation within fanfic communities and the bourgeoisification of the masses as a product of financial packaging to see that the contradictions between major and minor make the view of ethics and morality in consumption a precarious proposition. Sharing in these sanctioned spaces of object and service functions, like Facebook and Twitter and the apps that make your mobile devices "smart", where inherently standardized user-centric and customizable functions cleverly mask the arborescent in the rhizome, the creative burgeons within the pre-programmed measures of flight and of limits. While people already use digital platforms to facilitate a kind of "commonwealth," people ought to realize that these types of "innovation" confound the difference between enunciative acts and controlled modalities of enunciation. One is

a tactical intervention while the other is the strategized production of the order-word. How to effectively speak through the givens, to enunciate from the middle, would thus depend on our discernment of the terrain and of our recognition of the terrain itself as a product. Ethics cannot be constituted if we simply swap one organization of power for another.

In their call to arms against the conditions of living in "an *entirely produced* world," Tiqqun, a French collective of philosophers from the late 1990s, posits that "theft, crime and fraud" are the forms of resistance against these conditions (180):

> … although we enter the apparatus, we remain attentive to the prevailing norm. That is what the thief, the criminal learns: to unsync internal and external tempos, to split, to layer one's conscience, being at once mobile and static, on the lookout and deceptively distracted. To accept dissolution in the name of a simultaneous, asynchronous multiplication of its modalities. (Tiqqun 178)

Tiqqun's cautionary statements foreground the ethics of consumption in capitalist society. For them, theft is a form of intervention into the social: a space that is a product of the apparatus. Tiqqun argues that the act of stealing makes the thief critically aware of her performative disruption of the apparatus. In seeking a way out of capitalism's totalizing circumscription of life, Tiqqun drives at a "science of crime" for a "conspiracy, […] an actual circulation of illegal knowledge" (181). Their proposition demands a conscientious observation of the phenomena of variations: the changes of production and usage in ever shifting relations.

The order-word function of brands and the consideration of literary production as a counterpoint demonstrate how the arbor and the rhizome coexist in today's collaborative social spaces of consumption. Could designating "shanzhai" as minoritarian uses be sufficient for enunciation to effectuate a revolutionary potential? For instance, the growth of on-demand technologies, such as rapid prototyping (3-D printing), that is being designed to interface with internet social-networking services will further emphasize the role of the individual consumer in the digital commons where the arbor and the rhizome co-mingle. Just as capitalism is, as Deleuze and Guattari call,

desire in flux, a "science" that seeks to circulate minoritarian tactics will have to account for the territorial flux in the so-called commonwealth and unsync major and minor designations from national ties. But while "shanzhai" is intellectual property theft by intent, and while "shanzhai" products circulate in culture and adopt cottage industry as a model of production organization, any "science" of minoritarian enunciation inevitably circulates in this era when the ease with which to and the popularization of remix and remake, engendered by technological progress, may have already compromised its potentiality.

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