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UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI
Do Cities Dream of Swallowed Futures?

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With the world shifting as quickly as it does today, people seem to be striving towards identities that no longer exist. We are swept along by the tides of change, with only a tenuous grasp on our place in a world where nothing remains fixed for long. Identity is a device we use to validate our being and establish place, formed as much from our environs as it is from our inner selves. We represent our own self-concept through image; yet, society is filled with hollow signs that conceal their own lack of meaning.

Shanghai is one such place; it exists as much in its own invented mythology as it does in its physical location. The city is more than the sum of its parts: people, buildings, history, culture. It is most valuable to the Chinese government as a symbol. The Pudong New Development Area began as a collection of empty signs, meant to project the image of a successful, global city, and Shanghai has increasingly come to resemble the simulation of a city, masking what might be the absence of any profound reality. In trying to assert a homogeneous image to the world, the city fails to recognize the multiple identities that define it. It is impossible to pin down a collective identity for anything longer than a brief moment. The city acts as an ever-changing, fluid network that brings in outside influences as it sends its own out into the world.

These themes are specifically addressed in this thesis through Shanghai’s land subsidence problem. The city sits on five aquifers, separated by layers of soft clay and silt. As a result of excessive groundwater withdrawal and the weight of new construction, the entire city is gradually sinking. Surgical processes are performed upon the existing buildings with the ultimate goal of new tissue formation to create a habitable landscape. A momentary, heterogeneous collective identity is pieced together through the shared experience of survival.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract

**Book I: Image**

Prologue 2

The Identity of the Postcolonial 6

The Identity of the Nation 20

The Identity of the Other 28

**Book II: Distortion**

Graphic Narrative 37

Epilogue 60

**References**

Appendix: Site 61

Acknowledgements 66

Bibliography 67

Illustration Credits 71
It makes no sense to divide cities into these two species [happy and unhappy] but rather into another two: those that through the years and the changes continue to give their form to desires, and those in which desires either erase the city or are erased by it.

PROLOGUE

Shanghai is a city steeped in mystique and endless possibility. Known alternately in past ages as the “Whore of the Orient,” “Paradise of Adventurers,” and “Paris of the East,” Shanghai has developed a reputation that is larger than reality. Despite a history of decadence and debauchery, the city has maintained its importance as a prime location for international trade; Shanghai was and remains China’s gateway to the Western world. The city draws people from both foreign nations and neighboring provinces: those who seek adventure or the chance to make their fortune. As a result, Shanghai has a variable and fluctuating identity, marked by the ebbs and flows of its ever-changing population. As Shanghai, along with the rest of China, races recklessly on towards “modernity,” demolition and development occur almost overnight. Old communities are razed, and the glittering glass towers that replace them rise to dizzying heights. In the appropriation and consequent amalgamation of various Western styles, the Chinese government aspires to construct a homogenous image that neglects many of the other variable identities that comprise Shanghai. The effect of this process is the denial of Shanghai’s own collective memory and accumulated past.

Since it is a global city that attracts people from all over the world, Shanghai’s population is in a constant state of flux as these
people come and go. Cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz lists out six ties that bind groups together: blood ties, race, language, region, religion, and custom.\(^2\) Shanghai is a city of multiple races, languages, and religions all coexisting together. In such a situation, it is difficult to carve out a homogenous collective identity, particularly when the city has always been defined by multiple identities. Anthropologist Aihwa Ong, whose work concerns citizenship and globalization in the Asia Pacific region, defines the city “not as a fixed locality but as a particular nexus of situated and transnational ideas, institutions, actors, and practices that may be variously drawn together for solving particular problems.”\(^3\) Shanghai can thus be viewed as a point of assembly for multiple cultures, ideas, and identities, due to its propensity for trade, a trait that has remained constant through its long history.

Though many of the residents of Shanghai will leave the city at some point, oftentimes permanently, they share a collective memory with all the people who have ever inhabited the city and contributed to its development. As French philosopher Maurice Halbwachs observes, both place and group will receive an imprint of the other.\(^4\) Though critics will dismiss recent architecture in Shanghai as empty and soulless in comparison to its Western counterparts and lament the loss of Chinese heritage, the fact remains that Shanghai has been influenced by Western civilization almost since its conception. It is just as much a product of China as it is the French, British, and American contingents that developed on vast tracts of its land. The city was never purely Chinese; it was always a contested space. The imitation of Western culture by the Chinese government and citizens actually belies a very purposeful appropriation utilized as a demonstration of power and perhaps even dominance. The intent of this investigation is to begin to understand the power of Shanghai as a symbol and how this image relates to the city’s identity.

Notes:

“Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspective deceitful, and everything conceals something else.”

THE IDENTITY OF THE POSTCOLONIAL

Contrary to Western settler accounts, Shanghai was not a desolate swamp village transformed into a magnificent city by foreign settlement. Favorably located at the confluence of the Huangpu River and Wusong River, the Chinese walled city was connected both to the ocean and the rest of the country. Shanghai was founded in the Song dynasty, sometime between the 10th and 12th centuries. The exact date is debatable; however, most records agree that Shanghai became a district administration in 1291 AD, which transformed it into an important administrative, cultural and commercial center. This prosperity began to attract unwanted attention in the 16th century as Japanese naval forces and Chinese pirates assaulted and pillaged the city. In response, the local residents built a large wall around the city to protect it from future attack.

Even during this period of relatively pure “Chinese” development, Shanghai developed differently than other Chinese cities, which were organized by rectangular walls and linear streets. Shanghai had a rather minor political status in comparison to China’s larger imperial cities of the time, so it developed organically with an irregular street plan that seemed to defy structured logic. These peculiarities in planning were evidence of Shanghai’s cultural and commercial diversity even before the effects of foreign imperialism.
Trade created a city that became famously tolerant of different cultures and ideas, the main source of Shanghai’s divergence from traditional Chinese urban design.

Though the Chinese Empire had historically remained isolated from the rest of the world, a growing desire among foreign nations to trade in China resulted in the Emperor declaring Canton (present-day Guangzhou) the sole port open to foreigners in 1757. The trade soon proved to be uneven, as the British extracted tea and silk in great quantities but failed to find a market for their cotton and wool in China. Growing debt caused the British government to employ a campaign of opium dealing to further open the doors of the Chinese Empire. In addition, corruption and unfair trading seriously damaged relations between Chinese and foreigners in Canton, so foreign merchants began to seek alternative routes to China’s untapped commercial potential. Attempts to breach Shanghai diplomatically were unsuccessful, so the British invaded and settled Shanghai during the Opium War. The Treaty of Nanking in 1842 was the official beginning of foreign intervention in China and legalized foreign trade in five ports: Guangzhou, Xiamen, Fuzhou, Ningbo, and Shanghai.

From the beginning, it was readily apparent that there was a great cultural disparity between these two groups. In the foreigners’ perception, the “repugnant” Chinese city was outclassed in every way by their own settlements; while the Chinese viewed the foreigners as uncivilized and looked down upon the settlements springing up outside their walled city. As James Ricalton described Shanghai:

[The native city] is traversed by lanes or streets which might better be termed fetid tunnels, seething with filth and teeming with miserable and vicious looking humanity. Odours are suffocating and the eyes can find nothing beautiful to rest upon: squalor, indigence, misery, slush, stench, depravity, dilapidation, and decay prevail everywhere. One almost fears to enter a place of so many repugnant scenes.

Differences in the two cultures can be seen in two maps of Shanghai from similar time periods. On the next page, Figure 1 shows a British map from the 1920s, which depicts the International Settlement alongside the old Chinese city; however, it is evident that the “native city” is drawn in considerably less detail than the outlying foreign developments. Figure 2 is a Chinese representation of Shanghai from 1901, which unlike its Western counterpart, focuses more on bridges and roadways than institutional landmarks.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Shanghai existed as twin cities: a progressive International Settlement contrasted with a Chinese city that had changed very little over 700 years. As a young city, Shanghai was able to absorb elements of modern infrastructure as soon as they were developed in Europe. These included gas production and distribution, water purification and distribution, sewage treatment, and electricity.

Settlement happened sporadically, for all foreigners who came to Shanghai were focused more on making money than planning cities. A British Settlement, American Settlement, and French Concession were parcelled out as land was painstakingly acquired from the Chinese. Complicated territorial rights ensured that settlement happened unevenly, and even Shanghai’s famous Bund remains a clutter of narrow streets and awkwardly placed buildings, due to the ad hoc purchase of land titles in the early days that was never rectified. In the second half of the 19th century, a number of uprisings and rebellions shook the foundations of Shanghai, but never failed to stop trade in the city. Shanghai eventually emerged as a tripartite urban form dominated by three foreign powers in contrast to its previously single unit form as a Chinese mercantile city. Shanghai came to be governed by a Municipal Council, which consisted of nine elected land renters; the Chinese had no representation.
Figure 1: Official Chinese Map of Shanghai, 1901.

Figure 2: Map of Shanghai, 1920s.
Shanghai of the 1920s and 1930s was a sparkling city of overindulgence and intrigue. Against a backdrop of political scheming and revolution, Shanghai became a safe haven for both Chinese and international refugees. These refugees would eventually be followed by thousands of European Jews fleeing Nazi persecution. This prosperity would not last, however, as the political machinations of the 1920s and 1930s caught up with Shanghai: the creation of China’s Communist Party, the establishment of the Nationalist government, World War II, and the Japanese invasion. In 1927, Shanghai began gathering troops to face the Nationalist threat, since one of the doctrines of the Nationalists was to rid China of foreign imperialism.

The true end to Shanghai’s extraterritorial status, however, was the Japanese invasion during World War II. Japanese forces took control of the city and dismantled the Municipal Council. During their brief reign in Shanghai, the Japanese had intentions to raze the former International Settlement, eradicating all traces of Western influence, as well as develop Pudong, which was a mostly industrial area across the river from the city proper; however, the war ended before any of these plans could come to fruition. One of the schemes proposed in a competition held by the Japanese administration in 1942, took its inspiration from Le Corbusier’s Mundaneum, a world museum in Geneva. Whereas Le Corbusier’s plan was intended for the unifying congress of nations collaborating for peace, the Japanese plan called for a homogenous axis that crossed the river into Pudong, culminating in a complex of buildings to house the constituents of a Japanese Pan Asian Empire.

Due to the heavy foreign influence that marks Shanghai’s past as well as its tendency to develop in a “non-Chinese” way, it is problematic to speak of Shanghai in regionalist terms. Once the city was exposed to foreign trade, it could not be considered a “Chinese” city by any means. The premise of regionalism is based on a social model that presumes all societies contain a core essence that must be discovered and preserved. Alan Colquhoun writes that regionalism is the search for authentic culture in the very moment when such a phenomenon seems about to disappear; however, we have to question whether such an “authentic thing” ever actually existed. The architecture of regionalism merely forms a mental image of such a thing, and it can only exist as a representation. In discussing Shanghai, it is this concept of the authentic or traditional, which becomes controversial. The city has drawn on so many different sources during the course of its development, it is difficult to find a trace of the authentic, other than what existed in bits and pieces at a given point in time. Kenneth Frampton writes of a “resistant, identity-giving culture” that is still rooted in universal techniques in his texts on Critical Regionalism. Frampton’s Critical Regionalism seeks to “deconstruct” the spectrum of world culture through a kind of synthetic contradiction, which manifests itself as a critique of universal civilization. Though the concept of Critical Regionalism addresses a number of issues about modernity and cultural identity, the fact remains that typical cited examples of critical regionalism, such as the Australian architect Glenn Murcutt or even Chinese architect Wang Shu, all involve the architect’s interpretation of a regional style being imposed on a place.

In Shanghai’s long history, there has been a great deal of “copybook” architecture, not just by Europeans trying to capture the
now presents itself as a rapidly developing global city whose economic power is enough to rival any Western city.

Besides intimidation, Shanghai also employs camouflage in the city’s adoption of skyscrapers and the people’s great fondness for the Art Deco style. The Art Deco movement’s peak decade was the 1930s, which was a period of great prosperity for Shanghai. The appropriation of the dominant architectural style of that particular time seeks to recall the period’s affluence and grandeur. Lacan points out that in the painter’s gaze is always present in the painting. Shanghai’s gaze is alternately turned toward the West as well as towards its past glory; however, its gaze ultimately looks past both of these, instead seeking not to match but to surpass. The painting in turn has a relation with the gaze of the viewer, which involves the “laying down of the gaze.”

Architect Mark Rakatansky attempts to reconcile identity and the gaze:

“You don’t capture your identity in the space of the mirror, it is in this seeking after our identity that you are forever in the act of being captured, captured in the space between yourself and the mirror, in these spatial temptations of identity circulating between your inner and outer world, your ‘self’ and your ‘environs.’ We are always tempted to endeavour after these identities, spatialized as they always give the appearance of being, as insides and outsides, homelands and awaylands (even if for the migrant, homeland is not the one that is away), here-lands and there-lands.”

Homi Bhaba describes colonial mimicry as the desire for a “reformed, recognizable Other,” a subject that is almost the same but not quite. Not quite because mimicry contains elements of both mockery and a menace to the colonial power. In order to mimic the colonizing race, it is perhaps necessary to suppress one’s own cultural identity. The mockery comes from imitating the signs of power exhibited by the colonizing power; the menace emerges from the colonized realizing they are actually entitled to the same rights and liberties as the colonizers while imitating their oppressors. Traces of postcolonial mimicry still exist in contemporary Shanghai. It began as a mockery in Pudong when the government began constructing a new financial district across the river from the city center, attempting to imitate the signs of a global city, even though initially, there was no reality to signify. The menace, what Lacan might call intimidation,

feeling of their homelands, but also by the Chinese who see foreign as modern. In mimicking Western ideas and architecture as an attempt to modernize, Shanghai, like many other Asian cities, is trying desperately to close a gap, the distance to be traveled in order to catch up with the modernized West. Political scientist Benedict Anderson calls this phenomenon the “spectre of comparison.” In his essay “Of Mimicry and Man,” Homi Bhaba claims that mimicry, in its ambivalence, conceals no presence or identity. This definition of mimicry seems to refer to the colonized suppressing his own cultural identity in order to imitate the colonizer. Referring back to Jacques Lacan, however, mimicry is quite the opposite of ambivalent; it never happens passively. It can be deployed either as travesty, camouflage, or intimidation, and it is motivated by something more purposeful than adaptation, which results from the needs of survival. Lacan also warns not to focus on the other who is being imitated. “To imitate is no doubt to reproduce an image. But at bottom, it is, for the subject, to be inserted in a function whose exercise grasps it.” The imitated subject is intentionally used for a specific purpose.

A clear example of this sort of mimicry can be seen in Shanghai’s version of Wall Street’s “Charging Bull.” The bull is not an exact replica of the Wall Street bull. Though the “Bund Bull” was installed during the Shanghai Expo in 2010, it was meant to be installed before the end of the Year of the Ox, infusing the bull with the qualities of the Chinese Zodiac’s Ox. Presumably, this is an attempt to make a Western symbol more culturally relevant to a Chinese city. Shanghai officials have stated that its version of the bull was meant to represent “the energy
of Shanghai’s economy;” thus, the “Bund Bull” appears younger and stronger than the original.32 Other differences include the bull’s reddish tint, which is intended to represent the “color of China,” and a more menacing tail that corkscrews upward.33 Additionally, Shanghai’s bull leans to the right instead of the left to further differentiate itself from its predecessor. Each of these modifications to a symbol of financial strength indicate a process of calculated appropriation. The menace also presents itself, as Shanghai’s modifications to the “Charging Bull” indicate a younger, stronger economy that yearns to prove itself on a global stage.

Bhaba writes that all cultural statements and systems are created in what he terms the “Third Space of enunciation,” which he describes as the in-between space that carries the burden and meaning of culture. His Third Space opens up the possibility of an international culture based not on cultural diversity, but on cultural hybridity.34 Hybridity, as Bhaba expresses it, becomes a resistance to colonial power that challenges not only its authority but its own authenticity.35 The inherent hybridity of Shanghai’s culture does not suggest that the cross-cultural exchange was equal; after all, there was always an imbalance of power between the colonizers and the Chinese population. Quite the contrary, as Bhaba cautions, “hybridity is not a third term that resolves the tension between two cultures.”36

Cultural contradictions, disjunctive historical spaces, identifications created on the crossroads – these are the issues that the arts of cultural hybridization seek to embody and enact rather than ‘transcend.’ It is an art that is no less valuable because it takes what is unresolved, ambivalent, even antagonistic, and performs it in the work, underlining the struggle for translation.37

Even so, in Shanghai, there occurred a transculturation that ultimately proved to be mutually beneficial, one that came to define a great deal of the city’s character.
Notes:

4. Ibid., 20.
5. Ibid., 26.
6. Ibid., 30.
9. Ibid.
11. Ibid., 75.
12. Ibid., 38.
13. Ibid., 128.
15. Ibid., 192.
16. Ibid., 199.
18. Ibid.
21. Ibid., 21.
26. Ibid., 100.
27. Bhaba, *The Location of Culture*, 122.
THE IDENTITY OF THE NATION

No matter how worldly Shanghai becomes, the city’s growth and development is completely dependent on its relationship with the national government in Beijing. The central government maintains the authority to appoint most provincial leaders, which includes Shanghai’s top officials. Thus, for the first 30 years of Communist rule, Shanghai was closed down from the rest of the world. When the Communist Party pushed the Nationalist Party out of the mainland in 1949, it soon became apparent that Shanghai’s capitalist character and liberal spirit were inconsistent with the values of the People’s Republic of China. Under Mao Zedong, Shanghai was transformed into a military base to defend against foreign powers, and his Red Guard ransacked the city, removing all symbols and vestiges of feudalism, capitalism, and colonialism.

In 1979 with its Open Door policy, Beijing handpicked a select few economic zones to lead China forward. Shanghai was denied the opportunity to participate. At the time, Party allegiances played a critical role in determining the fortunes of each city in China, and in the early 1980s, Shanghai had no strong connections with Beijing’s elite, effectively casting the city into a diplomatic wasteland. Shanghai’s mayor at the time, Wang Dao Han, urged Beijing to support a plan to develop Pudong, a largely undeveloped tract of land across from the historic Bund, into an economic development zone, but the proposal…
was ignored due to a lack of diplomatic connections.\textsuperscript{5} Though there was much anti-foreign sentiment after the 1940s, this rhetoric was mostly a political strategy to distract from a Communist Party plagued with internal power struggles. These struggles were evident terrible political campaigns that did not bode well for Shanghai; however, a change of political tide in the 1980s brought the city back to prominence.\textsuperscript{6} In 1984, Beijing declared 14 cities open to foreign development, Shanghai included. In the 1990s, Beijing set up a Special Economic Zone across the river from the city center, which would become the Pudong New Area, the site of Shanghai’s “modern development area.”\textsuperscript{7}

As China’s political capital and the seat of imperial China, Beijing tends to capture more of what people might view as traditional Chinese essence. Pervasive in both Chinese and foreign perception is an image of Beijing as a bastion of traditional Chinese culture in contrast to Shanghai’s piecemeal identity. Beijing’s history is always visibly on display; tourist destinations, such as the Forbidden Palace and Tiananmen Square are obvious examples of this. The city’s famed \textit{hutong} neighborhoods are yet another example of its traditional character. A furious debate continues between preservationists seeking to maintain these traditional neighborhoods as they are and Chinese developers caught up in the country’s rapid modernization.\textsuperscript{8} Yet, \textit{traditional} is a problematic idea, in that it is largely a notion created to describe a phenomenon as it is about to disappear.

A Shanghai culture exists alongside the “traditional” Chinese culture of Beijing. The people of Shanghai pride themselves on their \textit{haipai} culture, a name which literally means the sea receives hundreds of rivers. This culture is based on the fact that Shanghai has close connections with ideas from all over the world, giving it the most modern image among Chinese cities.\textsuperscript{9} Despite this, even a city like Shanghai has “traditional” aspects of culture it seeks to protect. Shanghai’s old housing stock consists of \textit{lilong} housing, a cross between the English row house and Chinese courtyard house. The \textit{lilong} are a physical manifestation of the merging of multiple cultures, and their indiscriminate destruction has also caused a great deal of public controversy,\textsuperscript{10} just as the \textit{hutong} have. Even in a city as diverse and eclectic as Shanghai, people are crying out against the loss of culture.

The Pudong New Area is the symbol of all of Shanghai’s ambitions and aspirations. The national government had long been afraid to allow Shanghai to become a Special Economic Zone for fear that it would become a revival of the foreign concessions from Shanghai’s past.\textsuperscript{11} The district can also be interpreted as a response to the postcolonial Bund, which it faces on the other side of the river. If the Bund is a vestige of colonial rule, Pudong is the realization of a global, modern Shanghai. In many ways, for the Chinese government, Shanghai as a symbol was more important than Shanghai as an actual city.

Historically, Shanghai had always been a progressive city, but after the revolution, it began to fade in comparison to the rising powers of Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore, causing people to question the advantage of Communism over capitalism. If Shanghai could be rebuilt as the world’s most futuristic city, the Communist Party felt it could win people over to the cause of “the people’s democratic dictatorship.”\textsuperscript{12} The architecture of Pudong thus begins to reflect a shift in the nature of the Communist regime. At one end of Century Avenue, the wide boulevard that runs through the center of the district, is the Pudong New Area Government Building, a somber building of reflective glass that was built to intimidate. Though the cadres inside the building can look out onto Pudong, the citizens cannot see inside. Journalist, Daniel Brook, describes the building as the crux of China’s new Communism: the people cannot know they are being watched. This stands in stark contrast to the Pearl Tower, a symbol of old Communism, where propaganda was blatantly thrust upon the people.\textsuperscript{13}

Pudong was built to be the new central business district of the city, but its primary purpose was to create the image that Shanghai
could compete on a global stage, even if it was not quite ready for that yet at the time the district was built. With a master plan in place, mayor Zhu Rongji relocated 300,000 residents of Pudong to high-rise apartments to clear land for quasi-private real estate development, the first of its kind in Shanghai since the Cultural Revolution. Once the people were moved out, he began to move domestic companies in. State-run banks erected skyscrapers along the river within the basic framework of a master plan developed by the Shanghai Urban Planning and Design Institute. There was no unifying style to these new skyscrapers; rather, the single cohesive thread was in fact that they were all unique. Each client wanted their building to look unlike any other, sometimes to the point of outright absurdity.

The Chinese government then offered tax incentives to foreign businesses to draw them in. The strategy they employed to attract foreign companies was “starchitecture” based. They held an international competition for the first of three supertall structures to be designed for Pudong, the Jin Mao Tower. The commission eventually went to Adrian Smith, then of SOM. At the time, the city was more intent on constructing the skyline than filling the buildings. In 1999, the vacancy rate in Pudong was a staggering 70 percent, which amounts to 1.22 million square meters of empty office space. The vacancy rate dropped to around 9.5 percent in 2011, which is less than Manhattan’s 10.3 percent. It seems that in their attempt to create all the signs of a global financial center, Shanghai was actually able to create the reality. Shanghai’s image is no longer of the order of appearances, but rather that of simulation. The simulation uses global cities such as New York, London, and Hong Kong as its model. Shanghai creates a system of empty signs that have no reality behind them, a hyperreal, as Jean Baudrillard terms it:

Such is simulation, insofar as it is opposed to representation. Representation stems from the principle of the equivalence of the sign and of the real (even if this equivalence is utopian, it is a fundamental axiom). Simulation, on the contrary, stems from the utopia of the principle of equivalence, from the radical negation of the sign as value, from the sign as the reversion and death sentence of every reference. Whereas representation attempts to absorb simulation by interpreting it as a false representation, simulation envelops the whole edifice of representation itself as a simulacrum.

The simulacra Baudrillard describes are the symbols and signs that piece together our perceived reality. The cities that become Shanghai’s model are more than mere physical cities. They are symbols of invisible power: financial and political. Baudrillard writes that for a long time power has created nothing but the signs of its resemblance, while simultaneously another figure of power arises in the demand for the signs of power. Cities like New York, London, and Hong Kong have all become simulacra of themselves, and that is what gives them power. When the real no longer exists as it did, the production of signs begins to escalate and manifests itself as deterrence, which works to propagate in reverse, the “fiction of the real.” Baudrillard’s hyperreal is characterized by an inability to distinguish reality from the simulation of reality. The paradox of the sign is that the system no longer seeks to imitate the real; rather it is the difference between the system and the real that allows their equivalence. Baudrillard writes that the collapse of two traditional poles into each other creates an implosion of meaning, which negates causality as well as the differential mode of determination. Therein begins the simulation.
Logic and order would have us seek the real rather than lose ourselves in the process of simulation. Baudrillard allows this point, but refutes it by claiming that it is not possible to isolate the simulation, and conversely it is no longer possible to isolate the process of the real or to even prove its existence.\(^\text{24}\) It can be argued that Shanghai’s Pudong New Development Area is still of the order of reproduction, in that it seeks to create a system of signs and convey resemblance through its representation of a certain ideals. At its core, the concept of the city is still rooted in previous models. Baudrillard suggests that it is no longer necessary to reproduce the city in any manner that resembles production:

Even the scenario of the underground city - the Chinese version of the burial of structures - is naive. The city does not repeat itself any longer according to a schema of reproduction still dependent on the general schema of production, or according to a schema of resemblance still dependent on a schema of representation. The city no longer revives, even deep down -- it is remade starting from a sort of genetic code that makes it possible to repeat it indefinitely starting with an accumulated cybernetic memory.\(^\text{25}\)

Pudong is already a district of signs, which began as the masking of the absence of any profound reality. It can be argued that it has begun to produce a kind of real out of these signs, but it is more of a hyperreal, inextricably linked to the simulation which produces it. The next step is for Shanghai to discard the schema of reproduction altogether and remake itself through an irreversible simulation.

Notes:

4. Ibid., 206.
5. Ibid., 208-209.
6. Ibid., 211.
7. Ibid., 215.
12. Ibid., 304.
13. Ibid., 309.
15. Ibid., 307.
20. Ibid., 23.
21. Ibid., 6-7.
22. Ibid., 13.
23. Ibid., 31.
24. Ibid., 21.
25. Ibid., 71.
“Arriving at each new city, the traveler finds again a past of his that he did not know he had: the foreignness of what you no longer are or no longer possess lies in wait for you in foreign, unpossessed places.”

THE IDENTITY OF THE OTHER

If identity as a purely situational self-concept, it is necessary to examine where it comes from. Identity is built from memories that have been gathered and stored over time. Without a recollection of past events, one would have no basis for formulating a self-concept at all. This is true of both individuals with their personal memories and groups of people whose shared identity comes from a collective memory based on an accumulated past. As French historian Pierre Nora explains, “self-consciousness emerges under the sign of that which has already happened, as the fulfillment of something always already begun.” Just as identity is neither fixed nor static, memory does not retain the fixed narrative of history. Social theorist, David Harvey draws off the work of Walter Benjamin, defining memory as a potentiality that can emerge suddenly in times of crisis to reveal new possibilities.

Unlike history, memory is intrinsically tied to the way we view the present. French philosopher Henri Bergson observes that reality contains both recollection and perception, and there is a constant exchange between the two. By bringing together external observation with internal experience, it is possible to project a state that had been purely internal. Bergson observes that the processes of recollection and perception are actually quite similar, and recollection tends to
imitate perception, becoming more real as we detach ourselves from
the present and replace ourselves in the memory of our past.7

Only memory can bring forth the variable identities that exist
in the in-between; it is necessary to articulate the liminal spaces that
might begin to subvert an official identity built on the events of history. French
historian Tristan Landry iterates that “memory is precisely that
which lives in the margin, in near ignorance of these places which are...
the fruits of chronological and eventful political history, and which are
therefore not works of memory.”8

Over time, Shanghai has accumulated a powerful mythology
that draws people to the city in the hopes of finding adventure
and wealth. The collective memory of the city is imbued within its
architecture. The Bund remains as a relic of a crooked colonial past.
The lilong are an exhibit on how the East met the West as well as a
physical reminder of the kind of community living that was prevalent
in the city. Finally, the striking forms of the Pudong skyline stand as
the face of a nation striving to prove itself on a global stage. In time,
these skyscrapers will also become the containers of memory in their
own right. These all reflect Shanghai’s history, but its memory exists in
the spaces that have not been formally articulated.

There are many different collective identities that exist in
Shanghai: the “local” Shanghainese, expatriates from foreign nations,
and migrant workers from other Chinese provinces. There are multiple
identities within each of these groups, but it is possible to begin to
distinguish between those that identify with Shanghai as a “place,” those
that identify with Shanghai for the moment, and finally, those who do
not identify with Shanghai at all. Movement happens both physically
and cognitively, sometimes one without the other. Shanghai’s identity
exists not as a static location in time and space, but is instead defined
by the connections between different ideas and ways of life.

Crawford Young, whose work deals with the politics of cultural
identity in the developing world, described identity as “a subjective self-
concept or social role; it is often variable, overlapping and situational.”9
Shanghai’s identity is inextricably tied to the exchange of ideas, people,
goods, money; it is a fluid and variable self-concept, one that does not
necessarily fit neatly into a static image. Anthropologists Andrew
Dawson and Mark Johnson describe the present as “a condition of in-
betweenness, a crossroads of various real and imagined comings and
goings.”10 Liminality is the awareness of the between, not a temporary
state in the process of movement from one fixed state to another. There
is no homogenous, singular identity that can be cobbled together from
the various groups that occupy Shanghai. It springs from a common
thread that binds multiple, unique identities together. A collective
identity might be built for a time out of some kind of shared experience,
but like all identities, it is momentary.

A substantial workforce is required to build and maintain the
infrastructure of a rapidly modernizing city. According to Weiping
Wu, the projected decline in Shanghai’s workforce will be offset by a
growing population of migrant workers, similar to trends in other places
in the world; however, the migrancy laws in Shanghai ensure that most
migrant workers do not have the opportunity to improve their quality
of life.11 Though Chinese law has largely relaxed migration policies
in order to bolster the workforces in urban areas, it does not allow
migrant workers to obtain urban household registration. The result is
that migrants have no access to free education, subsidized housing, or
pensions. While they spend most of their adult lives in Shanghai, only
returning home once each year on Chinese New Year, migrant workers
still strongly identify with their hometowns. They live solely to work
so that they will be able to send money back home to give their children
a better future. These migrant workers are typically at a disadvantage
compared to their Shanghainese counterparts, with fewer opportunities
and lower salaries for doing the same work.12 Most migrant workers
are relegated to jobs undesirable to the local population, such as
construction, domestic services, and factory labor. Since they are
excluded from the mainstream housing system, migrant workers live in crowded housing conditions, forming their own informal sector of urban life.\textsuperscript{13}

The mass exodus of migrant workers from the rural villages to the city is just one aspect of China’s modernization. China’s rural population has been gradually shifting into urban areas. The rural population makes up about 47 percent of the nation’s population today in contrast to the 80 percent it comprised just three decades ago.\textsuperscript{14} In the next twelve years, China plans to move 250 million people from rural villages into newly constructed cities and towns.\textsuperscript{15} The World Health Organization estimates that by 2050, 70 percent of the world’s population will be located in urban areas.\textsuperscript{16} China’s population is currently 1.35 billion;\textsuperscript{17} 250 million people moving to cities would bring its urban population up to 71 percent within 12 years, if all goes according to plan. The government is enacting these changes in order to change China’s economic structure, hoping to increase domestic consumption of products rather than rely purely on export.\textsuperscript{18}

If this large segment of the population will indeed be moving to the cities, Shanghai can certainly count itself among the cities that will have to find places to house these people. In the current situation, Shanghai simply has not considered the infrastructure necessary to maintain its migrant workforce. Not only is there no place for them to physically settle, but they do not have access to the same benefits that the locals experience, such as the documents that would allow them to register for local schools or qualify for local medical programs.\textsuperscript{19}

City officials seek to represent collective memory as purely homogeneous when in fact it is composed of various fragments from multiple sources. This leaves a portion of Shanghai’s diverse population with no representation and in the case of the migrant workers, with no space or place in the city. If the city government does not account for the Other, these marginalized groups will begin to appropriate spaces for themselves within the existing infrastructure of the city.

Though he is quick to note that this marginal group is by no means homogenous, Michel de Certeau writes of a marginal majority:

\begin{quote}
Marginality is today no longer limited to minority groups, but is rather massive and pervasive; this cultural activity of the non-producers of culture, an activity that is unsigned, unreadable, and unsymbolized, remains the only one possible for all those who nevertheless buy and pay for the showy products through which a productivist economy articulates itself. Marginality is becoming universal. A marginal group has now become a silent majority.\textsuperscript{20}
\end{quote}

Shanghai is comprised of multiple marginal groups all of which have begun to push forward into the majority. The government can no longer ignore these groups; they require not only a place in the physical city but also in the social and economic organization of Shanghai’s framework.

Architectural theorist Stephen Cairns postulates that traditionally, one of the functions of architecture has been to neutralize the so-called “threat” of migrancy, suggesting that there is a link between the ontological value of a being to its situation, typically a stable locality. Additionally, he identifies migrants as a group of people whose ultimate goal is still stability and settlement, despite their nomadic way of life.\textsuperscript{21} Geographer Eric Dardel confirms this, ‘Before any choice there is this ‘place,’ where the foundations of earthly existence and human condition establish themselves. We can change locations, move, but this is still to look for a place; we need a base to set down our Being and to realize our possibilities, a here from which to discover the world, a there to which we can return.’\textsuperscript{22} The here is the point of perception from which we relate everything else we experience, that stable locale which people refer to as “home.”

A large percentage of Shanghai’s population does not call Shanghai home, yet they still contribute to Shanghai’s collective identity. If global cities are not fixed localities, but something more
like Aihwa Ong’s nexus of ideas and practices, there never existed any fixed cultural worlds delineated by spatial and temporal boundaries. As anthropologist James Clifford describes it, with ways of life “increasingly influencing, dominating, parodying, translating, and subverting one another...all is situated and all is moving.” This investigation is focused on that movement, the condition in between here and there.

Notes:

15. Ibid.
19. Ibid.


A treaty was signed, forcing the kingdom to open itself up to international trade.

As it grew wealthier, walls were constructed to protect the city against pirate raids.

War erupted once diplomatic attempts to open the city to trade broke down.

The city belonged to an empire that was in self-imposed isolation from the rest of the world, guarding its ancient secrets. However, foreign lands eyed the kingdom jealously, hoping to extract some of its great wealth in tea and silk.

The city grew into a sparkling den of inequity, rich and vibrant, a place where a man could make his fortune.

Eventually, the republic decided to open up the city once again to trade.

Built from nothing, this new district began as an empty symbol of the city’s aspirations; however, as the buildings were filled with banks and large corporations, the city created a new reality from an image they had merely been projecting.

This glittering district emerged as a symbol of the republic’s great power; it was the image of a true global city.

Then, a great war tore through many kingdoms and the city was no exception. War finally drove the foreigners out.

Soon after, the empire fell and was replaced by a republic. The city was closed off from outside lands, and it soon began to fade.

The city grew into a sparkling den of inequity, rich and vibrant, a place where a man could make his fortune.

The republic sanctioned construction of a new financial district across the river from the old city.

The city began as a small fishing village at the confluence of two rivers.

As it grew wealthier, walls were constructed to protect the city against pirate raids.
THE CITY SAT UPON FIVE AQUIFERS. BEDROCK WAS ON AVERAGE AT LEAST 300 METERS BELOW THE SURFACE.

EXCESSIVE GROUNDWATER WITHDRAWAL WAS CAUSING THE AQUIFERS TO CAVE IN. AS A RESULT, THE CITY WAS SINKING 2.64 METERS EVERY 100 YEARS.

TO REVERSE THE EFFECTS OF LAND SUBSIDENCE, THE CITY BEGAN TO PUMP WATER BACK INTO THE AQUIFERS THROUGH THE SAME WELLS USED TO WITHDRAW WATER. SINCE THE MAJORITY OF GROUNDWATER WAS USED TO COOL FACTORY MACHINERY, THE INJECTION OF WATER HAPPENED IN THE WINTER MONTHS WHEN THE FACTORIES WERE NOT OPERATING.

HOWEVER, 30% OF THE CITY’S LAND SUBSIDENCE WAS CAUSED BY CONSTRUCTION. THUS, AQUIFER RECHARGE ALONE WOULD NOT STOP THE SINKING.

AS THE CITY ROSE HIGHER, THE WEIGHT BECAME TOO MUCH FOR THE SOFT SOIL TO BEAR.

AMIDST THE PROBLEMS OF CRACKING GROUND AND SINKING BUILDINGS, POLLUTION LEVELS AT THE SURFACE WERE GROWING TOXIC.

COLLAPSING AQUIFER CAVITIES BEGAN TO CAUSE MASSIVE PROBLEMS AT THE SURFACE IN THE FORM OF HUGE RIFTS IN THE GROUND AND UNPREDICTABLE SINKING.
The people scrambled to find a solution. On the surface, the buildings were stripped to lighten their load until only ghostly forms remained in the image of a city that could no longer be inhabited.

The skeleton city captured a glorious moment of the city's past and held it frozen in time.
Then, deeper foundations were excavated under the skyline to support the skyscrapers up top, while the aquifers were reinforced to create a new underground city.

While the hollow caverns of empty aquifers were salvaged within the boundaries, underground city, underneath the rest of the city, the aquifers had totally caved in.

Gradually the people began to move from the surface down to the new subterranean city.

The official citizens thus created a new life for themselves in the underground city, almost identical to the lives they had led before, mirrored in the dark.
In various light wells that punctured the underground city, the people planted small crops and created parks that grew under what little light penetrated the thick smog that laid waste to the surface.

The green spaces were located between the deep foundations of the surface towers. Some were shallow, while others extended the depth of the underground city.

Some were shallow, while others extended the depth of the underground city.

The underground city could be entered from various access points along the perimeter of the old financial district.

These people came to occupy buildings deemed unimportant to the city's skyline.

These access points were the only place where the official citizens interacted with the marginal groups that remained on the surface. Here the surface dwellers received artificially grown food from the underground city in return for manning the factories that powered the city.

Nothing would grow on surface anymore. Only huge power plants remained at the fringes of the skeleton city, operating at all hours to generate power for the underground city.

The factories were manned by former migrant workers who had no real place in the formal city.
The ghost city was held up by the great foundations of the underground city.

While machines roamed the surface, in a desperate attempt to stabilize the surface buildings.
As living conditions slowly grew more stable, normative strategies were developed to deal with various situations.

First, there were strategies for individual buildings.

Using scrap from the stripping of the city skyline, they propped and patched the crumbling buildings.

The interventions were rough - put together with whatever they could find.

The people sought to maintain the existing buildings in their former positions.

They soon discovered they would have to create their own landscape as the ground shifted beneath them ceaselessly.

As living conditions grew more stable, normative strategies were developed to deal with various situations.

Cauterizing

Suturing

Grafting

Filling

Sometimes they used scrap they had stripped from the skyline: glass, metal panels, and steel beams.

Other times, they simply filled in holes with masonry and brick rubble.
IN THE BEGINNING, THE PEOPLE SOUGHT TO NORMALIZE THE INTERIORS OF THE CRUMBLING BUILDINGS BY CREATING NEW FLOORS AND WALLS AT LEVEL PLANES.

THE STRATEGY GRADUALLY SHIFTED FROM MERELY STABILIZING THE EXISTING BUILDINGS TO CREATING AN INFRASTRUCTURE THAT COULD ADAPT TO THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE.

UNTIL THE SUPPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE CEASED TO BECOME MERELY PROPPING DEVICES AND BECAME THE SPACES WHERE PEOPLE LIVED.

EVENTUALLY THE SURGICAL PROCESSES BEING APPLIED ON THE BUILDINGS CHANGED IN SCALE FROM INDIVIDUAL BUILDINGS TO PROCESSES THAT COVERED MULTIPLE BUILDINGS AT A TIME.
It soon became evident that simply creating level floor planes in the buildings' shells was not enough to reconcile with the buildings with the shifting ground.

And thus, completely new spaces were created that were no longer constrained by the crumbling shells of the existing buildings.
The ossification was supported by columns that reached down to spikes of bedrock that occurred below the surface. Steel cables held the new structures in tension. That way if any part of land collapsed unexpectedly, the structure would hold for a time, so the people could patch things up.

Ossification became the ultimate goal: the creation of new tissue to sustain life at the surface.
The surface dwellers had all come from different places and lived different lives, but they pieced together a momentary, collective identity from the shared experience of survival.
EPILOGUE

She was a city of great weight. People came to conduct Important Business in the splendor of her magnificent halls. Their strides fell heavy upon the earth. Their words fell heavy on solemn ears. The earth could no longer bear the weight of such a city and slowly began to reclaim her.

The people could not stop the slow, inexorable demise of their city. In their desperation to salvage all they knew, the city was transformed into a place barely recognizable, save for the hollow ghosts that recalled a golden age long past. The people had constructed a new identity, one born from ravage and ruin.
APPENDIX: SITE

Shanghai is built on soft soil and a series of five aquifers, separated by aquitards consisting of soft clay and sand. Since the 1920s, the groundwater in these aquifers has been steadily drawn out, leaving behind air pockets, which then begin to collapse, causing land subsidence. Shanghai reached its worst point in 1965; at that point, the city had sunk about 2.63 meters. In 1964, recharge of the underground aquifers began through injection of river water through the same wells the water was withdrawn from. This injection happens primarily in the winter months when many factories are not operating and the river water is coldest. Most of the water withdrawn is used to cool factory machinery; therefore, introducing cold water into the aquifer systems is advantageous to their purposes. Since countermeasures have been introduced, the sinking has slowed, though it increased again in the 1990s for reasons that are yet to be definitively proven.

Another method to combat soft soil that has been met with some success in other cities is digging a bathtub foundation. Such a method was used for the World Trade Center in Manhattan. At its deepest, bedrock at the WTC site is about 80 feet deep. In order for it to remain watertight, the bathtub had to be excavated to the depth of the bedrock. The continuous underground walls were constructed with bentonite slurry as a temporary support for slot excavations in tricky soil conditions. The slots were then filled with reinforcing steel cages, assembled on site, which were attached to individual panels. Following this, tieback anchors were installed in the wall, anchoring it back to the bedrock to give it lateral support.
Notes:

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
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ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

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All images in book II have been edited by the author; originals are cited below.

Page 36:


Page 37:


Page 38:


Page 39:


Page 44:


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