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Left for Dead: Tactical Safe Spaces and Rogue Chinese Archives on the Gaming Platform Steam

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Master of Arts

in Asian Studies

by

Patrick D. Fryberger

Committee in charge:

Professor Mayfair Yang, Chair

Professor Xiaorong Li

Professor Thomas Mazanec

June 2019

The thesis of Patrick D. Fryberger is approved.

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Xiaorong Li

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Thomas Mazanec

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Mayfair Yang, Committee Chair

June 2019

Left for Dead: Tactical Safe Spaces and Rogue Chinese Archives on the Gaming Platform Steam

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by

Patrick D. Fryberger

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ABSTRACT

Left for Dead: Tactical Safe Spaces and Rogue Chinese Archives on the Gaming Platform Steam

by

Patrick D. Fryberger

In this paper, I consider how Chinese gamers modify both ideologies and technologies on the gaming platform Steam. Working from Mayfair Yang's notion of "socialist space" and Lefebvre's "representational spaces," I argue that these gamers seek to transform their representational spaces into reality by "modding" the content and code of computer games and archiving roguish discourses on the tactical safe space of the Steam Workshop. Because of these modders' paratextual activity, a China-specific version of the Steam client will be released in the near future, thus censoring Steam *as is* in mainland China. To better understand this "China Steam" swap and the relationship between modding and censorship, I employ a diachronic approach, examining historical precedents of other "propaganda archives" in both premodern and modern eras. Moreover, I engage with fan fiction studies to further conceptualize modding and censorship, fusing de Certeau's "strategies and tactics" with Abigail De Kosnik's "rogue archives" and thus putting forth the framework of a *tactical safe space*. After laying out this approach, I share the process and findings of my "guerilla netnography" of Chinese modders on the *Left for Dead 2* (*L4D2*)

Workshop, detailing three categories of mods and their associated paratexts. Finally, I turn to Steven J. Jackson and Cuban thinkers and scholars to show how modding is a part of a larger sociopolitical narrative of repair and inventiveness in post-socialist contexts such as the PRC, in which modders turn the socialist ideology of the state upon itself.

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Introduction: A Cat-and-Mouse Game on Steam

Both in the media and academia, online censorship in China has often been portrayed as a game of cat-and-mouse.[1] While some have attempted to challenge this notion, it remains an extraordinarily potent image for engaging with these issues, recalling the classic American cartoon *Tom and Jerry* which also remains popular in China today.[2] In such an analogy, there is an implicit understanding that the mouse ultimately cannot prevail; it may run and hide, but the cat, however bumbling in its efforts, maintains its superiority in size, speed, force, as well as in its hunting ability and resourcefulness. In short, the *strategy* of the cat is to eliminate the spaces where the mouse can flee to, while the *tactic* of the mouse is to simultaneously delay the cat in these aims and wait for a prime opportunity to escape.[3] As I will repeatedly attempt to do in this paper, I hope to make a slightly more nuanced historical analogy—ironically to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) itself, which during the Republican era was involved in a kind of cat-and-mouse game with the Nationalists (KMT), being chased on a 5600-mile "Long March" (長征) across the country to the city of Yan'an in Shaanxi Province between 1934 and 1935. Where this analogy differs from the cat-and-mouse one above is that the Communists effectively made their semi-permanent base at Yan'an—not simply hiding away or regrouping, but expanding—building up not only a pool of flesh-and-blood troops, but also an *archive* of ideology to draw on and fight with in what was a genuinely momentous struggle. In the modern "Chinese civil war" of censorship, there are many tactical bases like Yan'an sprawled across the internet, especially outside of the so-called "Great Firewall of China" (GFW; 防火长城). As will be explained below, the GFW often works both ways, keeping domestic users in and foreign users out (much like how Yan'an was shielded by its relatively remote location in the northwest). Unlike Yan'an,

however, these online tactical bases have traditionally remained outside of the jurisdiction of the People's Republic of China (PRC), existing instead on the less-clear-cut but ever-increasingly-policed frontier of cyberspace. As a result, dozens of foreign media platforms have simply been blocked and replaced with domestic alternatives. Yet in recent years, the CCP authorities and private-sector censorship apparatuses under their influence have developed new and creative strategies to combat the proliferation of these *tactical safe spaces*: namely, procuring the direct cooperation or even appropriation of foreign media sites, the most recent example of which is the gaming platform Steam.

As can be perceived from the analogies above, this encounter between the "cat" of the CCP authorities and the "mouse" of those who are critical of them is essentially one involving space, or rather a "spatial struggle." In her article of the same name, Mayfair Yang examines these "microstruggles over space" between the secular PRC state and some of its more spiritually-minded citizens in rural Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province during the 1990s, focusing specifically on the preservation, demolition, and (re)construction of temples, shrines, churches, ancestor halls, and other ritualistic sites. Working from the spatial theories of French thinkers like Michel de Certeau, Henri Lefebvre, and Michel Foucault, Yang develops her own notion of a "socialist space" impinging on local cultural and religious practices,[4] which in themselves can be understood as an incarnation of Lefebvre's "representational spaces…embodying complex symbolisms, sometimes coded, sometimes not, linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life."[5] Yang further quotes Lefebvre at length in order to illustrate the significance of representational spaces for underrepresented groups:

> Groups [or] classes…cannot constitute themselves, or recognize one another, as "subjects" unless they generate (or produce) a space. Ideas, representations or values which do not succeed in making their mark on space, and thus generating…an appropriate morphology, will lose all pith and become mere signs… [W]hatever is not invested in an appropriated space is stranded, and all that remain are useless signs and significations. Space's investment—the production of space—has nothing incidental about it: it is a matter of life and death.[6]

Some twenty-five years later, the "post-socialist space" of the CCP is still making its presence known on a different kind of space, or cyberspace, and the Chinese government's chronic preoccupation with such Foucauldian concerns as "state security and surveillance through spatial arrangements"[7] is thus reenacted online. Although perhaps not as dramatic as the KMT army bearing down on the CCP during the 1930s, the PRC government employs the Great Firewall in a distinctive blend of fear, friction, and flooding[8]: the GFW represents ideology backed up by force on the one hand,[9] and propaganda backed up by censorship on the other. Much like how some scholars have argued that the building of the (actual) Great Wall was in effect an offensive maneuver,[10] the GFW has steadily evolved from a seemingly defensive technology to an offensive juggernaut aimed at bending the World Wide Web to its will. This is perhaps why the activity of *modding*, or modifying the content and code of computer and video games, is perceived by the PRC authorities as particularly dangerous, especially when combined with "rogue" ideologies critical of the Party-nation-state. And this is one of the reasons why the CCP has begun to co-op platforms such as Steam, where both technology and ideologies are modded at will.

Steam is an internationally-popular gaming platform developed by the Valve Corporation. Released to the public in 2003, the Steam client operates first and foremost as an online shopping portal, storage cloud, and server-provider for users' computer games, and secondarily as a social network and fan community. Given its near-monopolization of the

digital distribution market,[11] Steam has unsurprisingly been the first foreign platform to make inroads in mainland China, reaching some thirty million Chinese users as of 2018;[12] in fact, at the time of writing more than half of the users currently on the platform have selected "simplified Chinese" as their default language.[13] This growing majority of users from China has been xenophobically interpreted by some non-Chinese users as an "invasion,"[14] with allegations of cheating,[15] review bombing,[16] and other gaming-related behaviors perceived as negative, and this invasion has not gone unnoticed by the Chinese government, either: in recent years, Steam has seen some of its major features blocked in the country, most notably the Steam Community and other related functions (e.g. the activity feed, forums, and Steam Workshop) which were given the axe in 2017.[17] This process has continued with the blocking of individual games[18] and entire genres[19] from the Steam Store, and as of 2018, Valve has announced that a China-specific version of the client will be released in collaboration with Perfect World, a Chinese game developer which manages local operations of popular Valve titles like *DOTA 2* and *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive* (*CS: GO*).[20] These developments reflect the CCP's long-standing concerns with maintaining social stability (维稳) and political control on the one hand, and economic protectionism on the other, recalling previous arrangements with foreign media companies such as Microsoft agreeing to release a Chinese "TOMS" Skype[21] or Apple forfeiting control of its iCloud servers for mainland users to Guizhou-Cloud Big Data (GCBD).[22] And these developments equally threaten the viability of Chinese Steam users to post and participate in modding and fandom communities on what might be called the "tactical safe space" of the Steam Workshop.

In this paper, I argue that Chinese gamers seek to transform their representational spaces into reality by "modding" both ideologies and technologies and archiving roguish

discourses on the tactical safe space of the Steam Workshop. To make the case for this, I will first provide a working definition of modding as well as a broad overview of the corporately-appropriated modding community of the Workshop. Next, I consider the issue of censorship, employing a diachronic approach in examining the imperial collection the *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 (*The Complete Library of the Four Treasuries*) and the Qianlong literary inquisition (乾隆文字獄) of the early Qing Dynasty (1772-1793). I take this historical detour to illustrate how the "China Steam" swap functions as a propaganda archive in conjunction with the censorship practices (fear, friction, and flooding) of the Great Firewall, much like how the inquisition worked hand-in-hand with the compilation project of the *Siku*. Third, I engage with fan fiction studies to further conceptualize modding through the theoretical lens of French thinkers Gérard Genette and Michel de Certeau, fusing de Certeau's "strategies and tactics" with Abigail De Kosnik's "rogue archives" and thus putting forth the framework of a *tactical safe space*. After laying out this theoretical approach, I share the process and findings of what might be called my "guerilla netnography" of Chinese modders on the *Left for Dead 2* (*L4D2*) Workshop, detailing three categories of mods and their associated discursive modes of discourse competition, pop activism, and culture jamming. Finally, I turn to Steven J. Jackson and Cuban thinkers and scholars to show how modding is a part of a larger sociopolitical narrative of repair and inventiveness in post-socialist contexts such as the PRC, in which modders turn the socialist ideology of the state upon itself. But first, just what is modding? What is the Steam Workshop? How can we understand the significance of modding in both Chinese and foreign contexts? These questions and more are addressed in the following sections.

"Playbouring" in the Sandbox: Mods and the Steam Workshop

Modifications, mods, or add-ons (模组) are alterations made to the content or code of a computer or video game by "modders" who are generally unaffiliated with its official development. In *Players Unleashed! Modding* The Sims *and the Culture of Gaming*, Tanja Sihvonen defines modding as "the activity of creating and adding of custom-created content, mods, short for modifications, by players to existing (commercial) computer games."[23] Some mods represent simple aesthetic changes, such as new "skins" for avatars or weapons, while others take the form of "total conversions,"[24] and yet other mods aim to "reduce player effort, make visible invisible parts of the game, enable information sharing, aid players in coordinating with one another, and capture aspects of play history."[25] Dan Pinchbeck, in his monograph on the classic first-person shooter (FPS) *DOOM*, discusses modding at length:

> Modding is creating new variations on a game by using a combination of new assets, new level designs, and alterations to the game's codebase. Mods can be freely distributed and shared, with developers and publishers understanding that these communities and experiences add significant value and shelf life to their products, introduce new users to their games, uncover new talent, and break new ground in terms of experimentation and optimization.[26]

This *understanding* between the official and unofficial, between the "authorized" and the "rogue," where developers, publishers, and distributors turn a blind eye toward modding communities and the revisions they make to games, is crucial to understanding the dynamic of modding as a whole. Unlike authorized modifications—originally known as expansion packs and now as downloadable content (DLC) or patches—mods have predominantly existed outside of this official realm, spreading instead on the "rogue archives" of fan sites and forums. Julian Kücklich has described this dynamic and the work of modders as "playbour," a loose umbrella term encompassing everything from "modding's uncertain

status in respect to traditional notions of work and leisure, the deprivation of modders of their intellectual property rights, the game industry's outsourcing of risk to the modding community and the ideological masking of modding as a collaborative process."[27] Similar to Pinchbeck's points above, Kücklich further outlines five benefits that mods and modding communities provide the gaming industry, or that 1) mods can help establish a brand, 2) mods add to the shelf-life of a product, 3) mods increase customer loyalty, 4) modding is an important source of innovation in the industry, and 5) the modding community is also used as a recruiting pool for the industry. Taken together, Kücklich examines the relationship between modders and the gaming industry from a political economy perspective, or as one of "dispersed multitude" up against exploitative capitalist controllers, respectively—a dynamic which is naturally rife with uncertainties and the potential for conflict. Consequently or perhaps in despite of this dynamic, the modding world has from time to time encountered pronounced legal resistance from corporate gaming interests,[28] a fate analogous to its cultural counterpart fan fiction, which will be discussed later in this paper. Furthermore, in recent years modding communities have been increasingly co-opted by these corporate interests, most conspicuously by Valve, which in 2012 introduced the Steam Workshop, a modding community and archive built directly into the infrastructure of the Steam platform itself. Founded in 1996 by former Microsoft employees Gabe Newell and Mike Harrington, Valve was and still remains a company largely built on modding—the studio's first flagship title, *Half-Life,* was legally designed on top of the *Quake* engine (conceived by rival developer id Software), while their second major title, *Counter-Strike*, was adapted from a mod of *Half-Life* itself.[29] Unsurprisingly, Valve has continued this trend with other titles such as *Team Fortress*, *Day of Defeat* (*DoD*), *Garry's Mod, Alien Swarm*, *DOTA 2*, and *Black Mesa*,

appropriating mods as commercial products, putting modders on the payroll, and ultimately annexing entire modding communities into the Steam Workshop.

Originally a rather narrow feature showcasing monetized, user-made content for Valve's AAA title *Team Fortress 2* (*TF2*),[30] the Steam Workshop has since exploded into a free and relatively open archive encompassing a vast swathe of games and their associated user-created mods. Game developers can decide for themselves whether or not to institute Workshop compatibility and are also able to set the technical parameters of what kinds of mods can be uploaded.[31] Some titles take a "sandbox" approach,[32] facilitating a large degree of flexibility and variability with regard to modding opportunities, while others are more limited in scope, such as the "curated" *TF2* Workshop where users' mods can be officially incorporated into the game. After some intense initial controversy, monetized and curated Workshops have largely fallen out of favor,[33] and at the time of writing, most of the several million mods produced for the 1000 or so games on the Workshop are user-created and generally unaffiliated with official development. The Workshop page of a compatible game can be accessed either on the Steam Community—a social network-like hub which also includes a news feed, forum discussions, screenshots and fan artwork, walkthroughs and strategy guides, live stream broadcasts and other related videos, as well as user reviews of the game—or directly through a user's Steam Library, which stores a list of the user's games both in the Steam cloud and locally on his or her computer. The interface of the Workshop provides a convenient searchable database of mods organized by tags (representing different categories of game content—characters, campaigns, maps, weapons, items, sounds, scripts, the UI, and so on) as well as by catch-all categories such as "Most Popular," "Most Subscribed," and "Most Recent" (figure 1.1.). Through this interface, Steam users are free to

upload their own mods as well as download and "subscribe" to other users' mods, thereby incorporating them into their own games. The page of a given mod features 1) the mod's title, author, and file size, 2) the date when it was uploaded as well as subsequent "change notes" (modifications made to the mod itself), 3) a description with screenshots and/or videos, 4) a rating system (both five-star and thumbs up/thumbs down) including button options to "share," "favorite," and "report," 5) page statistics ("unique visitors," "current subscribers," and "current favorites"), and 6) a comment section and even a discussion forum (figure 1.2). This highly sophisticated interface builds upon the diverse and innovative designs predicated by fan sites and modding communities which were once peppered across the internet during the 1990s and 2000s. The difference now, of course, is in the centralization of the archive and its appropriation by corporate interests and gaming developers, further regulated by the technical parameters they establish. Technical or code constraints aside, the content of mods in the Workshop is at best intermittently policed, and through its moderators Valve permits a black mass of copyrighted, violent, and borderline-

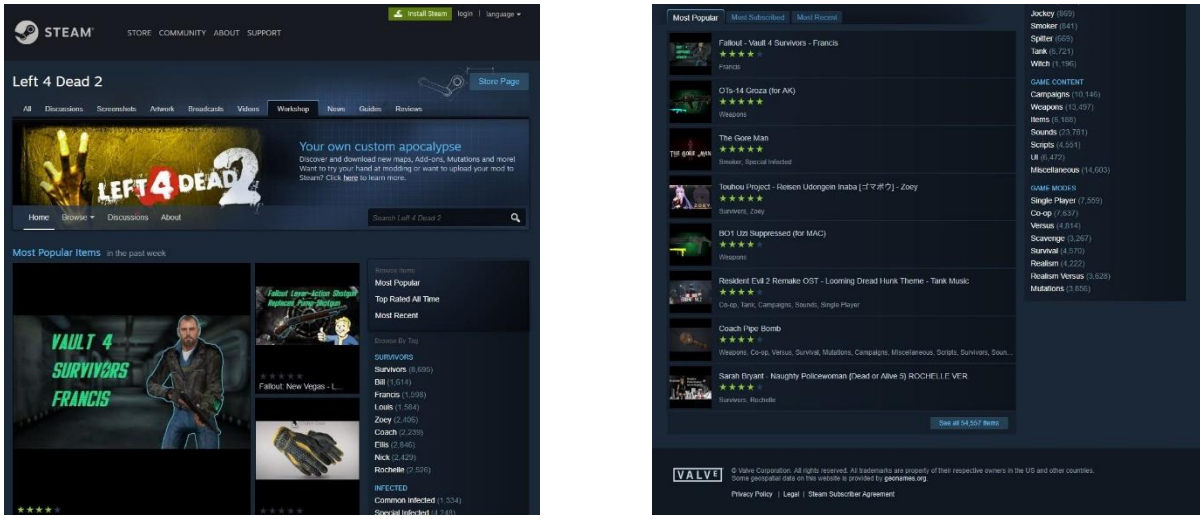

Figure 1.1. An example Steam Workshop page for Valve's *Left for Dead 2* (*L4D2*). Left: the top half of the interface; right: the bottom half of the interface. Screenshots taken March 2019.

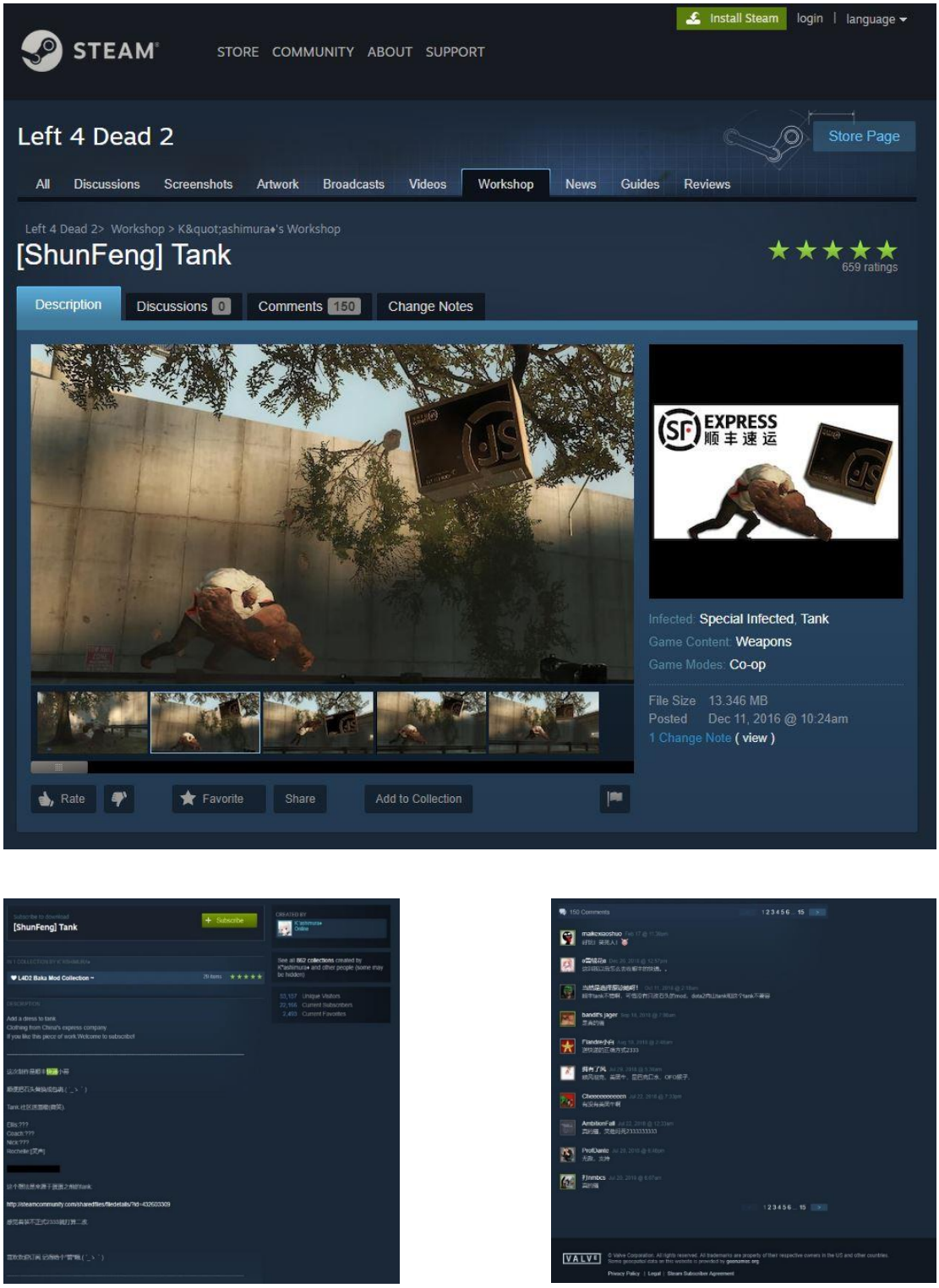

Figure 1.2. An example mod page from the *L4D2* Workshop. Top: the mod's title, avatar, and sample images; left: the author and mod description; right: the comment section (in Chinese). Screenshots taken March 2019.

pornographic material to be shared over the platform in the form of mods. Moreover, the Workshop is not region-specific; in the comment sections inlaid below mods, one can often find users communicating in a wide variety of languages including Chinese, English, Russian, Spanish, German, Portuguese, and French, but with China's planned ban and eventual replacement of the platform, users of its most common language will inevitably be walled off from this cosmopolitan "public sphere"[34] and the kinds of sociopolitical discourses it produces.

Although the Workshop and the Steam client's communal functions have been blocked in mainland China, mainland users still utilize Virtual Private Networks (VPN) and other "wall-crossing" (翻墙, alluding to the GFW) software to post mods and indeed participate in the Steam Community. Of particular interest for this paper is the politically-charged or "roguish" nature of some of these mods and their associated paratexts as produced by Chinese Steam users and shared across the Workshop. Ranging from overtly-nationalist material (the Chinese flag, People's Liberation Army, and other spectacular cultural symbols), to banned memes (former PRC President Jiang Zemin, known colloquially as "The Elder"), and other politically or socially sensitive topics (Taiwan), Chinese users on both sides of the political spectrum, on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, and indeed on both sides of the world have been "making do" with what I might be called a *tactical safe space* for free and open sociopolitical discourse in the Steam Workshop. Unlike other major online platforms (including, at the time of writing: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Whatsapp, Reddit, and Amazon in the US, or QQ, Sina Weibo, bilibili, WeChat, Zhihu, and Taobao in China), Steam's controversial and relatively laissez-faire content policy[35] allows users to post "everything…except for things that [Steam moderators] decide are illegal, or straight up

trolling."[36] And while some Steam users may lament the corporate appropriation of modding communities by Valve, for mainland Chinese users, who have for years had to continuously develop and reinvent complex, coded language and word games[37] and other related "tactics" under the heavy censorship of Chinese social networks, the Workshop provides not only a liberating, even democratizing space where different political discourses can be engaged with via self-generated mods and their paratexts, but also a *rogue archive* for these practices to be documented, celebrated, and further developed even as they are simultaneously censored, deleted, and relentlessly suppressed behind the Great Firewall. And as Valve follows in the footsteps of Microsoft and Apple and submits to the Chinese government's demands, the very existence of this tactical safe space is now in jeopardy, so I hope that this paper, too, may serve as an archive for these mods and their associated discourses to be preserved.

Before detailing my semi-ethnographic research on how Chinese Steam users make do with Workshop as a tactical safe space and rogue archive, I will first look at how the activity of modding is integrally related to not only censorship, but also the notion of a *propaganda archive* in a Chinese historical context. Subsequently, I will turn to what Megan Condis has called modding's "analog cousin"[38] or fan fiction, and its associated scholarship of fandom studies to establish a theoretical framework going forward.

Modding, Censorship, and Propaganda Archives: The *Siku quanshu* and the Qianlong Literary Inquisition

As indicated above, modding, or modifying the content and code of computer and video games, has been understood as a relatively recent phenomenon, a type of "new media"

distinct to the digital age. However, if we extend this definition to include other, more traditional types of art—literature, painting, and poetry, for example—then it can be argued that at least in a Chinese context, some form of modding has almost always existed, and long before the advent of computer and video games. In *The Three Perfections: Chinese Painting, Poetry, and Calligraphy*, Michael Sullivan poses what at first seems like a simple question, or "what, and why, do the Chinese write on their paintings?"[39] To examine this phenomenon, Sullivan frames it as more of a paradigm in which imperial-era literati, scholar-officials, and artists would see paintings "as a living body, an accretion of qualities, imaginative, literary, historical, personal, that grows with time, putting on an ever-richer dress of meaning, commentary and association with the years."[40] His analysis is richly illustrated with works from the Tang to Qing Dynasties and even features examples from as late as the Mao era and up to the present day, including several inscriptions which were added considerably *later* by someone other than the original painter. Most conspicuously, the Qianlong Emperor (r. 1735-1796) of the early Qing was notorious for writing on or over anything and everything set before him—a modder and censor *par excellence*. Apart from Qianlong and the three perfections, it is also commonly accepted that the "Four Great Masterpieces" of Chinese literature (四大名著) were all likely edited or "modified" by several authors over the course of their development,[41] while another classic novel, *The Plum in the Golden Vase* 金瓶梅, could even be regarded as one of the first examples of "fan fiction" given that it is essentially a spin-off of *Water Margin*—one of the four classic novels. Correspondingly, composition of the *ci* poetry of the Song Dynasty (宋词) basically amounted to reworking or adding new lyrics to popular songs,[42] while other forms of poetry, such as "poems written on walls" (題壁詩)[43] and calligraphy written on the ground in Chinese parks, or other forms of writing,

such as the "big character posters" (大字报) of the Cultural Revolution and the Democracy Wall shortly after, all involved writing over or "modding" other works of art. Even today, on Chinese video sites like bilibili (哔哩哔哩, or "B 站"), users' "bullet screen" (弹幕) comments—or comments which scroll horizontally across the video itself—flood popular videos to the point where one cannot even make out the original video-images. Moreover, on the Steam Workshop, some Chinese modders will customize not only various elements of games, but also other users' mods—borrowing them with or without credit—making slight alterations here and there. As I attempted briefly in the introduction, in this section I hope to make a nuanced historical allegory in order to better understand the processes and indeed historical precedents of not only modding, but also the notion of a *propaganda archive*, looking in particular at the connections between imperial-era collections and the "China Steam" swap. Yet aside from this loosely-defined and relatively apolitical list of examples above, it can be challenging to trace the history of modding given its almost dialectical relationship to another form of rewriting, or *censorship*. In other words, in order to delineate a history of modding, we also need to examine the history of censorship, and as two sides of the same coin, we can see that censorship and modding indeed develop in conjunction with one another, employed respectively as "strategies and tactics" in the struggle over a kind of greater cultural space.

Like modding, censorship has a strong precedent in a Chinese historical context. Although different incarnations of censorship and censorship practices have existed across a whole range of societies throughout history, the PRC's development of such sophisticated and stifling apparatuses as the Great Firewall has led to its reputation as a surveillance state, indeed calling forth historical connections. Apart from what might be called the post-

Tiananmen era (1989-present), several distinct periods of particularly stringent censorship can be identified based on current scholarship as well as archival and archaeological finds:

- The short-lived Qin Dynasty (221-206 BCE), which implemented strict Legalist reforms and purportedly carried out the notorious "burning of books and burying alive of Confucian scholars" (焚書坑儒).
- The reign of the first emperor of the Ming Dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang (r. 1368-1398), who sought to purge Mencius from the Confucian canon while also issuing propagandistic proclamations and carrying out a ruthless literary persecution on a scale not experienced since the Qin.
- The "literary inquisition" (文字獄) of the early Qing (1772-1793), in which the Qianlong Emperor sought out the destruction of so-called "seditious" works while also overseeing the compilation of the largest collection of texts in Chinese history, or the *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書.
- The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) of the Mao era, or a crude political maneuver masked as ideological purification in which the efficacy of the twin apparatuses of propaganda and censorship ultimately spiraled out of control.

In *Censored: Distraction and Diversion inside China's Great Firewall*, Margaret E. Roberts provides what is both a comprehensive and rather helpful definition of censorship for examining these periods, describing it as "the restriction of the public expression of or public access to information by authority when the information is thought to have the capacity to undermine the authority by making it accountable to the public."[44] Roberts further delineates three mechanisms of censorship which can influence both the media and individual citizens

alike: 1) “fear,” or threats of punishment which may deter the access or spread of information, 2) “friction,” or a kind of tax on information, either in time or money, such as the GFW, and 3) “flooding,” or information coordinated as distraction, propaganda, or confusion, often associated with China Central Television (CCTV) state media and *wumao* (五毛) commenters.[45] Although Roberts primarily focuses on a contemporary context, these mechanisms are equally applicable to the historical periods listed above, providing a kind of theoretical conduit in which to consider them collectively. In this section, I review the *Siku quanshu* and its associated literary inquisition—which together could be said to epitomize the age-old mix of fear, friction, and flooding—while employing the other periods as peripheral examples. Looking at the *Siku* offers a pertinent and exceptionally rich framework for analyzing the relationship between modding, censorship, and the role of archives in this greater “spatial struggle.” In other words, before examining the “rogue archive” of the Steam Workshop, we first need to look at an example of its evil twin, or what might be called a propaganda archive, of which the *Siku* is a prototypical example.

As a brief aside, some may question the place of such a discussion in a paper on “modern” China, much less one on computer games and mods. Apart from resisting this silly premodern-modern dichotomy and its associated institutionalization in the academy,[46] I firmly believe that this kind of diachronic perspective can help make the case for a discernable relationship—if not direct connections—between different eras of modding and censorship in Chinese history, even if it is by no means a linear narrative or deterministic in nature. For instance, it is well known that the Qianlong Emperor praised the reign of Zhu Yuanzhang, while Mao Zedong just as (in)famously called for a reassessment of the ruthless and Machiavellian Legalist rule of the Qin. Mao himself has often been compared with Zhu

in terms of their shared peasant background and authoritarian style, while even today, Mao-era personality cults and hardline propaganda have resurfaced following the rise of "princeling" (太子党) Party officials whose fathers once found themselves on one side or the other in the Cultural Revolution struggle. One prominent example of this princeling phenomenon would be the fall of Bo Xilai, who fell from grace in a power play after instituting neo-leftist "red culture" policies and Zhu-esque anti-corruption campaigns (唱红打黑) in Chongqing, while another would be the rise of Xi Jinping himself, who is beginning his second (and now indefinite) term as the President of the PRC at the time of writing. In other words, *history repeats itself through itself*, and unfortunately, the Xi era appears to be no different, with "The National Project of Qing History" 国家清史编纂工程 (*Qingshi* 清史)[47] eerily and ironically echoing what might be called its predecessor project, or the *Siku quanshu*.

The *Siku quanshu*, often translated into English as *The Complete Library of the Four Treasuries*, was an imperially-sponsored collection of historical texts compiled in the early Qing largely on account of a 1772 edict by the Qianlong Emperor. R. Kent Guy summarily introduces this massive project in his seminal monograph on the subject, *The Emperor's Four Treasuries: Scholars and the State in the Late Ch'ien-lung Era*:

> In the winter of 1772, the Ch'ien-lung Emperor initiated the compilation of the *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu* (Complete library of the four treasuries) by ordering local and provincial officials to search for, report, and make copies of all rare and valuable manuscripts held in libraries within their jurisdictions and to forward the results to Peking. At the same time, he urged private collectors to send their treasures to Peking voluntarily. In March of 1773 an administrative apparatus was created at the capital to receive the books and to evaluate their contents. The staff for the project grew, finally encompassing over seven hundred editors, collators, and copyists, including some of the most important figures at court and in the literary circles of the day. The final products, created and corrected over a twenty-two year period, were an annotated

> catalog of 10,680 titles extant in the empire grouped in four categories or "treasuries" (classics, history, philosophy and belles lettres), and an enormous compendium in which 3,593 titles were recopied filling 36,000 *chüan*. The darker side of the effort was a campaign of censorship undertaken by the imperial court in the late 1770s and early 1780s. By some counts as many as 2,400 titles were destroyed in this campaign, and another four or five hundred "revised" by official fiat. The products of the *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu* project were, of course, of enormous bibliographic significance. But in a sense the processes of collecting, editing, and censoring were even more significant, for they shed light on an issue and an era.[48]

Likewise, in a much earlier and even more ground-breaking dissertation on the contemporaneous "literary inquisition," L. Carrington Goodrich contends that by the time of the late Qianlong reign, censorship in China had evolved into "a systematized search, organized on a huge scale, and linked inseparably with a process the Chinese have honored by frequent practice and long esteemed…the assembling of rare books and manuscripts for the formation of a *ts'ung-shu*, in this case to be the largest ever compiled."[49] Although an appropriate moniker, the term *congshu* 叢書 (alternatively translated into English as "collection," "library," or "reprint series") does not really do the *Siku* justice, as the *Siku* catalogues a huge number of *congshu* itself.[50] It would perhaps be more useful to designate the *Siku* as an *archive*, through which its compliers sought to "unify critical understanding with textual verifiability"[51] on the one hand, and neutralize heterodox ideologies and "rogue archives" on the other. In other words, the power upholding the late Qianlong reign was indeed one of a "combination of anthology creation and literary inquisition,"[52] resulting in a grandiose exercise of fear, friction, and flooding. The *Siku* was thus the ultimate embodiment of what might be called "imperial space," a *propaganda archive* which repressed the representational spaces of its critics via the censorship of the inquisition, and a "strategy" which had been developed over the course of a number of dynasties and eras and through

which the new Manchu rulers could assert their dominance over the Han-Chinese literati and bureaucracy (and by extension, the Chinese realm as a whole).

Goodrich and others have examined in detail the horrors of the Qianlong literary inquisition and the fear it brought the Chinese literati and bureaucracy. Indeed, the inquisition embodied the censorship mechanism of "fear," the compilation process was one marked by "friction," and the finished product entailed a "flooding" of the historical record with the new imperial propaganda archive of the *Siku quanshu*. In a brutal campaign which has been compared to the purges and hysteria of Cultural Revolution,[53] the Qianlong court made countless examples of officials, literati, clerks, bookstore owners, and even their family members via admonishment, demotion, banishment, imprisonment, and execution, resulting in the escalation of an empire-wide book-burning effort which soon snowballed out of control. As such, violence was committed against not only bodies but also cultural relics: words were smudged off both books and steles—pages were ripped out, shrines were "renovated," and headstones were effaced (again recalling Qianlong's predilection for "modding" poetry and paintings) in this all-encompassing campaign to stamp out sedition.[54] As with the Zhu Yuanzhang literary persecution some 400 years earlier,[55] the inquisition put a chill over the bureaucracy—representing one of several factors which led late imperial-era literati to focus on the relatively narrow scholarly pursuit of textual research and criticism (考證).[56] At present, the administration of fear in censorship practices also comes at a cost—for both the censors and censored alike. As Roberts explains, fear "must be observable to work and the expansion of people involved in public discourse has reduced the credibility of government threats. Instead, potential backlash against censorship can create unrest that reduces the legitimacy of the regime… The government [thus] reserves more traditional fear-

based censorship strategy to target journalists, public opinion leaders, and activists."[57] As we will see below, Chinese modders on the Steam Workshop allude to and indeed satirize these strategies with comments referring to "checking the water meter," "drinking tea," and "firing squads." And it is precisely because the mechanism of fear backfires and can only be directed toward a relatively small contingent of people that the CCP has been forced to rely on other methods, particularly friction.

In his examination of Ming-Qing era censorship practices, Timothy Brook relates the anecdote of Korean envoy Pak Chi-won who, while visiting Qing China in 1780, candidly remarked that "instead of burying the scholars alive as the Qin dynasty did, the court buries them in labours of collation; and instead of burning the books as the Qin did, it scatters them in the Bureau of Assembled Pearls."[58] This glib anecdote reflects the transition of state censorship practices from fear to friction, and eventually to what would become the "flood" of the *Siku* project. Whereas in the imperial era, the mechanism of friction consisted mainly of clumsy maneuvers such as exiling officials and burning books, the Great Firewall is perhaps the ultimate embodiment of friction[59]: taxing information, filtering content, and funneling internet users onto domestic platforms and portals. Friction can also have its consequences, however, as an overreliance on any one strategy will inevitably draw attention to the censorship itself. Much like how Weibo and its users over- and self-censor to an almost arbitrary extent,[60] loose guidelines, uncertain standards, and the absence of a formal definition of sedition led to an equally overzealous degree of censorship during the inquisition, when local officials essentially had to create "front-line operating manuals" as they went along.[61] This ultimately forced the Qianlong court to delicately dissolve the inquisition effort, a miscalculation which the CCP will be unlikely to repeat: the Party has

been incredibly cautious and patient in censoring the Steam platform, recognizing the danger of stripping away a recreational outlet—a "Valve" to let off "Steam," if you will—for millions of gamers across the country. Just as the court subtly imposed the friction of the compilation project upon the literati and bureaucracy, the CCP has steadily chipped away at the Steam client, levying a "tax" on the accessibility of certain games, genres, and even features of the platform, as noted in the introduction. Yet fear and friction often result in only a gap in the record, or even worse, an "ideological void." As such, the court similarly recognized the dangers of simply partaking in censorship; it also realized the necessity of producing a propaganda archive, "flooding" the cultural space of the Qing Empire with a new historical record.

Even with the prevalence of fear and friction, the *Siku* project operated primarily in the mode of flooding, serving as a propaganda archive while also working in conjunction with the censorship of the inquisition. As Guy suggests, by "the mid-1770s the imperial attention seems to have shifted from correcting extant historical texts to writing new histories… [I]n order for the new works on Manchu history to be believable, older ones had to be destroyed or discredited."[62] Speaking to the centrality of the written record in imperial China, Arthur F. Wright expounds on this point through his analysis of the role of propaganda, remarking that "the record is blank or incomplete on mass movements that were always knit together by heterodox ideologies and invariably presented a threat to the social order. The record is therefore as thin on the uses and effects of propaganda among dissidents as it is rich on the use of representations by the established powers."[63] In other words, *propaganda archives* have often triumphed by means of the strategy of censorship, while *rogue archives* have had to resort to the tactic of modding. Thus for the Chinese state

(whether imperial or otherwise), the mechanism of flooding would be ineffective without friction, the (re)production of a propaganda archive would be fruitless without censorship, and the completion of a massive collection like the *Siku* would be nearly impossible without its associated inquisition, especially for "barbarian invaders" such as the Qianlong Emperor and the Manchus. On the foreign space of Steam, the CCP has resorted to similar strategies to essentially legitimatize their rule, censoring certain features of the platform in the ultimate aim of swapping one archive for another. In sum, the *Siku* and Qianlong inquisition can serve as a mirror not only for the China Steam swap, but also for recent historical endeavors such as the National Project of Qing History, reflecting a larger trend "as old as the Chinese imperium itself."[64]

If the compilation of the *Siku quanshu* and its associated literary inquisition entailed a kind of strategy which swapped out one archive for another—censoring the historical record and inserting propaganda in its place—then the China Steam swap follows in much the same tradition, serving as a propaganda archive in order to, indeed, "set the record straight." And just as the Manchu authorities and their Han-Chinese collaborators sought to stamp out the representational spaces of their critics through fear, friction, and flooding, the CCP has made a relatively smooth transition from this notion of "imperial space" to a "(post-) socialist space," making the most of the new technologies at their disposal (i.e. the GFW). On the other hand, if the *Siku* and China Steam represent official propaganda archives, then the space of the Steam Workshop is just as much what Abigail De Kosnik has called a "rogue archive," or a kind unauthorized storage space for roguish discourses and ideologies. And if China Steam exemplifies the incursion of post-socialist space, then Chinese gamers have "poached" and "made do" with the Steam Workshop as a *tactical safe space*, "modding" the

space to their own aims and ends. Having established these historical precedents and connections between modding and censorship, between propaganda archives and rogue archives, and between the *Siku* and China Steam, I will now turn to the theoretical framework from which I conceptualize modding, or a tactical safe space. And as we shall see, the West has its own precedents of modding as well, most notably in the form of fan fiction.

Paratextual Activity: Conceptualizing Modding and Tactical Safe Spaces

While there are certainly other ways to conceptualize modding—whether as a novel configuration of Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin's "remediation"[65], as part of the larger "remix culture" put forth by Lawrence Lessig[66], or as an example of Azuma Hiroki's "databaseification"[67]—fan fiction or fandom studies offers a more pertinent theoretical framework given its proximity to modding as a cultural activity. At least in the U.S., the beginning of fan fiction has often been attributed to the early fandom surrounding Gene Roddenberry's hit NBC TV show *Star Trek* (1966-1969) and its franchise of additional series, feature films, literature, games, and other spinoffs. Fan studies scholars such as Henry Jenkins, Constance Penley, Lincoln Geraghty, Heather Joseph-Witham, and Larisa Mikhaylova have all tackled this phenomenon of "trekkies" from different perspectives,[68] but perhaps most important for our analysis here is their common theoretical ground: numerous fandom scholars have engaged with the work of a pair of French thinkers (Gérard Genette and Michel de Certeau) and a kind of conceptual vocabulary they introduced in two seminal works published in the 1980s. Genette provided the field with two of its most fundamental concepts in "paratexts" and "hypertexts," the former of which he defines as "a title, a subtitle, intertitles; prefaces, postfaces, notices, forwards, etc.; marginal, infrapaginal, terminal notes;

epigraphs; illustrations; blurbs, book covers, dust jackets, and many other kinds of secondary signals, whether allographic or autographic" and the latter as "any text derived from a previous text" either through simple transformation or more indirect imitation.[69] A mod represents a hypertext, while the archival and communal spaces surrounding these mods are more paratextual in nature. On its own, a mod cannot entirely exist outside of the original game text, but through the process of modification, the game text and its associated spaces are also changed into something slightly—if not entirely—new. Additionally, Genette's discussion of parody is also fruitful for looking at such "paratextual activity" as fan fiction and modding; tracing the etymological roots of the term back to its original Greek context and to Aristotle's understanding of *parodia*, Genette characterizes parody as "singing beside: that is, singing off key; or singing in another voice—in counterpoint; or again, singing in another key—deforming, therefore, or *transposing* a melody."[70] Like parody, modding entails a deformation of a text, and one which indeed is often satiric in nature. As shall be shown below, the vast majority of the Chinese-language mods on the Steam Workshop are either humorous, satiric, or draw on other media; in other words, mods are (almost always) parodies. Finally, if, as Genette claims, "parody is always already present and alive in the maternal womb" of traditional verbal and literary media forms such as rhapsody,[71] then modding is most definitely already present in the game text, both in spirit and technically in the game's code. Unlike fan fiction (which has itself since moved onto digital platforms), modding was born in the digital era, and thus mods themselves are born both literally and figuratively from game texts, only further intensifying the aforementioned Web 2.0 processes of remediation, remix culture, and databaseification. In a Chinese context, however, these

hyper- and paratexts are perhaps more politically-charged, as the "grand hypotext" modders seek to parody is the state ideology of the PRC itself.

Whereas Genette provides a conceptual vocabulary for looking at fan fiction and modding, another French theorist, Michel de Certeau, supplies his own more politically-charged terminology ("making-do," "poaching," "strategies and tactics," "bricolage," "Brownian movements") which is ultimately more relevant for a Chinese context. The crux of these terms, which fan studies scholars like Jenkins and Penley turn to for the theoretical underpinnings of their research, is best summed up in de Certeau's own words: "the consumer cannot be identified or qualified by the [cultural] or commercial products he assimilates: between the person (who uses them) and these products (indexes of the 'order' which is imposed on him), there is a gap of varying proportions opened by the use that he makes of them."[72] In other words, the consumer or fan pries open this gap by making use of media products to create something of his or her own, whether in the form of fan fiction or mods. Indeed, this connection between de Certeau and fan-produced hypertexts has also been made with regard to modding; Anne-Marie Schleiner characterizes the "act of the modder's appropriation of the pre-existing game" as a manifestation of de Certeau's notion of poaching.[73] In the context of Chinese modders on Steam, however, employing de Certeau's *strategies and tactics* are perhaps more productive as these terms take on a dual meaning: the politically-charged power structures Chinese modders operate in represent more than just a producer-product-consumer relationship; there is, in fact, an additional layer of "authority" for Chinese fans to deal with, or the PRC government itself, which on the mainland (and increasingly in Hong Kong and Macau[74]) not only exerts the traditional ideological influence

of a centralized nation-state, but also directly interferes on each level (producer-product-consumer) of this mediated capitalist relationship through propaganda and censorship.

In this framework, de Certeau ties strategies to place and the postulation of power, while tactics are associated with time and the absence of power. Yang's notion of a "spatial struggle" is especially relevant here, as Chinese modders and the PRC government are essentially fighting for control over the literal and figurative space of the Steam platform and Workshop. Put differently, the spatial struggle over cyberspace is marked by the *post-socialist space* of the Party-nation-state imposing on and indeed seeking to stamp out the *representational spaces* of its critics, while these critics seek out a space where they have adequate time to archive and even develop their roguish discourses and ideologies. As de Certeau suggests, "strategies are able to produce, tabulate, and impose these spaces… whereas tactics can only use, manipulate, and divert these spaces"[75]; correspondingly, the primary tactics of Chinese gamers have been not only to poach and mod mainstream media, but also to utilize VPNs in order to find a *tactical safe space* outside of the Great Firewall where they can openly produce, share, and discuss content, thus materializing their "representational space." The strategies of the PRC government, on the other hand, include not only issuing propaganda, but also censoring, deleting, and suppressing content within the "space" under its control, as well as blocking, appropriating, and compromising entire spaces normally outside of its jurisdiction, such as Steam. Yet whereas in the past a platform like Twitter would simply be blocked and replaced with a Chinese equivalent like Weibo, the Chinese government now seeks to bring these foreign spaces directly under CCP supervision by creating a "China Steam" which simultaneously leaves intact and erases Steam in its original form, a move highly reminiscent of the *Siku quanshu* and National Project of Qing

History mentioned above. Taking these factors into account, a "rogue archive" such as the Steam Workshop becomes all the more significant, as the act of archiving material targeted for censorship by the Chinese authorities becomes a tactic in itself.

Rogue archives, one of the two terms I have been using throughout this paper to describe how Chinese gamers and modders "make do" with the Steam Workshop, derives from Abigail De Kosnik's book of the same name, *Rogue Archives: Digital Cultural Memory and Media Fandom*. Likewise, De Kosnik herself draws this title for her discussion on fan fiction archives from the work of Jacques Derrida, who relates the traditional figure of the "rogue" to democracy and the process of democratization.[76] While De Kosnik does not directly follow up on Derrida's meta-political analysis, she does indicate that with the rise of "digital networked media…ties binding public memory to the state began to loosen" and these technologies thus have the potential to "democratize cultural memory."[77] De Kosnik's largely Anglo-American focus on English-language fandoms and social issues emanating from a Western context leads her to explore what has been "excluded or ignored" from this mainstream cultural archive; all the while, two-thirds of the world's internet users live under regimes with government censorship,[78] most of all in China, where the question to be explored might instead be what is "censored or suppressed" from an archive which is distinctively global in scope. As hinted in the introduction, the Great Firewall of China works both ways: PRC state censorship mechanisms do not simply "wall off" Chinese internet users from the outside world; they also wall off the outside world from a Chinese context, as Chinese internet users and the content they produce are increasingly funneled in and restricted to local internet platforms directly under CCP supervision which do not gain much traction outside of the PRC (a "friction" strategy which echoes the isolationist policies of the

late Qing Dynasty, or "closing the passes and sealing off the country" 閉關鎖國). In this sense, I seek to "modify" De Kosnik's rather strict definition of a rogue archive, which by her own admission would not include corporate platforms such as YouTube, Tumblr, or Steam, and instead link it back to Derrida's more directly-political understanding of the term rogue and his broader notion of "democracy to come." The Steam Workshop does not, in fact, tally with De Kosnik's definition in that 1) Valve is a corporate entity which engages in at least some policing of its content for copyright or social reasons, 2) it permits developers to limit the Workshop parameters of their games, restricting certain types of mods from showing up in the archive, and 3) the content of the Workshop is also managed by the modding community and can be taken down at any point by individual modders themselves, making the archive relatively fluid and unstable. For the same reasons, the Workshop does not easily fit into De Kosnik's categories of universal, community, and alternative archives, but in a Chinese context, these classifications may simply be superfluous; for Chinese users, the characteristics of the Steam Workshop represent a pronounced upgrade from domestic social networks, forums, and fan sites where users' content is incessantly prone to direct censorship and control by the PRC government. In other words, the rogues have found a *safe space* of their own.

Indeed, the fact that Steam has not been blocked outright by the CCP is a testament to the tactic of Chinese gamers making it into a space of their own, forcing the authorities to tread lightly and resort to the censorship mechanism of friction. WeChat blogger "Yeah, yeah, yeah, you're all industry insiders" (对对对你们都是业内) comments on the Party's uneasy tolerance of (and now uneasy alliance with) this "Valve" for gamers to let off "Steam":

> *Neihan Duanzi* [a popular Chinese humor site run by new tech giant Bytedance] also had several thousand Chinese users and it was shut down in a snap, so why couldn't Steam be, too? Because behind Neihan Duanzi was a Chinese company, so shutting it down mean that both the app and the community were totally gone. When the tree falls, the monkeys scatter. But Steam can't be destroyed like that because it has foreign roots. If it were suddenly blocked, hundreds of thousands or maybe even millions of users would jump the Great Firewall to use it out of habit. This would create a difficult to predict or maybe even catastrophic situation. A blocked Steam would result in many very angry gamers. On the other side of the Great Firewall, they might well express their disapproval on Steam's community pages through *posts, games, pictures, short videos, and memes*. Gathering rapidly, they would call into question and criticize the censors' decisions and amplify each other's anger to become a powerful current that would echo back into the country and make waves abroad. No wonder the relevant agencies have to take a more measured approach.[79]

For these angry Chinese users, the Steam Workshop thus serves as not only a rogue archive, but also what I call a *tactical safe space*, or a space for the production, circulation, and "modification" of politically-sensitive discourses and roguish ideologies. "Tactical" is of course poached from de Certeau's understanding of the term, while "safe space" is drawn from its popular and academic usage which is purported to have been coined by American LGBT groups in the 1960s. In a Chinese context, these tactical safe spaces are marked by both their technological and ideological characteristics: the Workshop's servers are located beyond the borders of the PRC (for the time being) and outside of the CCP's jurisdiction—thus blocked by the GFW and requiring a VPN to access, while the spaces themselves serve not so much as echo chambers but rather as a "public sphere" where different sociopolitical discourses can be openly engaged with and debated. In fact, as we shall see below, Chinese modders on the Steam Workshop have been able to partake in a wide variety of discursive activities including discourse competition, pop activism, and culture jamming, tactically adapting the space to their own ends. Yet as some feminist studies scholars have noted, no safe space is truly safe,[80] and thus the users of these spaces must be both tactical and resourceful—always ready for their next move (both literally and figuratively)—in order to

keep their "representational spaces" a reality. With all of this in mind, then, I now turn to the research from my "guerilla netnography" on how Chinese Steam users have made do with the Workshop as a tactical safe space and rogue archive—developing, deliberating, and indeed safekeeping their politically-sensitive mods and roguish ideologies even as they are "left for dead."

Left for Dead 2: Roguish Chinese Mods on the Steam Workshop

This project was originally inspired by the Chinese-language Workshop content of *Left 4 Dead 2* (*L4D2*), an FPS zombie-apocalypse survival game released by Valve in 2009.[81] *L4D2* features both single and multiplayer gameplay, including cooperative and versus modes, where players can control human survivors (or so-called "Special Infected" zombies in versus mode) and fight their way through a zombie apocalypse—organized in a cinematic story stretching across a number of campaigns with three to five maps each. Even before its release, *L4D2* was controversial for its perceived brazen normativization of ultraviolent content, getting banned or partially censored in countries like Australia, Germany, Japan, and the UK while also facing such disparate accusations as corporate greed and racism.[82] By 2013, *L4D2* had been updated with Workshop support, and since then, part of the success of its Workshop can be attributed to the game's status as an in-house or flagship title, meaning that it was developed and produced by Valve itself and put out through their own digital distribution platform, or Steam. This home-field advantage of sorts results in particularly aggressive marketing and sales, extensive Steam-based server support, and an "anything goes" mentality with regard to modding opportunities in the Workshop, where Valve games like *L4D2* still hold a healthy lead over their competitors. For example, at the time of writing

Valve's *Garry's Mod* has amassed over 1,300,000 mods in its Workshop, *Portal 2* maintains around 687,000, and *CS: GO* has 281,000—consider that only approximately 22% of Workshop games have reached the 1000-mod mark.[83] While *L4D2*'s current total of 57,000 may not sound like much in comparison, the relative flexibility and variety of modding opportunities (characters, campaigns, maps, weapons, items, sounds, scripts, UI, and so on) available through Valve's Source SDK (software development kit) and its associated *Left 4 Dead 2* Authoring Tools facilitates the production of more roguish mods than the curated and "policed" Workshops of *TF2* and *DOTA 2*, not to mention when compared to the extremely limited parameters (mostly maps and/or campaigns) of the *Portal 2* Workshop. And while I had originally wanted to conduct research on the full lineup of Valve's Workshop-supported titles[84] as well as games on Steam which are 1) tagged as moddable, 2) offer simplified-Chinese language support, and 3) contain over 1000 mods on their Workshop, I soon found that the mods in *L4D2* were more than sufficient to be representative of the Chinese-language content shared across the Workshop as a whole. Either way, a mass of Chinese gamers and modders have gradually populated the Workshop just as they have "invaded" the Steam platform, sharing their mods and content amongst one another and ultimately with the rest of the world.

In this section, I share and analyze the findings from what might be called my "guerilla netnography" of the *L4D2* Workshop and its Chinese userbase. By *guerilla netnography*, I refer to Guobin Yang's notion of a "guerilla ethnography" fused with the methodology of "netnography" as introduced by Robert V. Kozinets[85]; in short, I have conducted detached, anonymous, and yet deeply-engaged semi-ethnographic archival research on the social network of Chinese Steam users and the Chinese-language Workshop

content they produce, share, and comment on. By *Chinese-language Workshop content*, I refer to mods and their associated paratexts (avatars, descriptions, comment sections, and so on) marked by either a prevalence of Chinese characters (simplified or traditional) or which reflect what could be perceived as distinctly "Chinese" characteristics such as culture-specific artifacts, social issues, and memes. Some of these hypertexts were not even authored by Chinese modders themselves but are still poached by Chinese users in the mods' comment sections and forum discussions, which are also reviewed below. Pinpointing this content involved searching within the *L4D2* Workshop for broad queries such as "China" (中国) as well as more specific keywords, tags, and other relevant terms in both Chinese and English. While a majority of the Chinese-language content in the *L4D2* Workshop has been adapted from other games as well as from what is some borderline-pornographic Japanese anime,[86] I have identified three categories of roguish mods which consist of either 1) patriotic or nationalist themes, marked by "discourse competition," 2) sensitive sociopolitical satire in the form of "pop activism," or 3) subversive memes such as "Moha Culture" or "The Elder" which represent a kind of "culture jamming." Taken together, these mods and their modders have found a tactical safe space and rogue archive in the Steam Workshop for the preservation and development of sensitive sociopolitical discourses which are all too often censored back in China—even when those discourses are patriotic in nature.

Modded in China: Nationalistic Mods and Discourse Competition

Compared with the relatively tame output for *TF2* and *Portal 2*, the "anything goes," wild west-like atmosphere of the *L4D2* Workshop makes it an ideal place to begin examining

the rogue archives of Chinese mods on Steam. First of all, there is a wide variety of patriotic and distinctly-Chinese cultural artifacts modded into the game, usually in the form of weapons or items (figure 1.3). Some of these are modeled off actual People's Liberation Army (PLA) arms (e.g. military assault rifles), while others depict guns and melee weapons imprinted with either the red and yellow color scheme of the "Five Star" Chinese flag or the blue and white porcelain (青花瓷) pattern associated with traditional Chinese pottery (or in one case, the Chinese flag as a weapon itself, essentially used to beat down and kill one's enemies). There are also projectiles in the form of mooncakes (月饼) and Chinese milk tea brands (阿萨姆奶茶), healing items reimagined as Chinese food (steamed stuffed buns, lamb kebabs, and beer), as well as melee weapons like the magical staff (如意金箍棒) wielded by Sun Wukong in *Journey to the West*, a Tang Dynasty sword, and a real-life kitchen knife manufactured by a Hong Kong company which the modder claims to use in his or her home (pictured). Accompanying these items are campaigns and characters of a similarly patriotic bent, such as a rendering of a "bloody battle" (血戰) at the Bund in Shanghai during the War of Resistance against Japan (alongside other maps set in Chinese locations such as high schools, train stations, and villages), or a group of PLA soldiers which replace the human survivors. Finally, while *L4D2* provides simplified Chinese language-support, there are also language-based mods which supply further translation of in-game material (e.g. posters and graffiti) as well as the addition of Chinese sound effects and music (rap).

Most of the Chinese-language comments on these mods are generally supportive in nature (e.g."赞一个""不错""好看""好评""无敌""帅""很强势""china no. 1""666""233333"), but sometimes discussions in comment sections can take a

Figure 1.3. Patriotic or nationalist Chinese mods in the *L4D2* Workshop. Collage compiled November 2018.

radically political turn. For example, in the comment section of the PLA soldiers mod mentioned above, the third commenter from the bottom (known colloquially in Chinese as the "third floor" 三楼 / 3L) sets off a firestorm of sorts when he or she states that "This is the army of the Party, not the army of the country and the people. It's the 'Party's Defense Army'" (这是党的军队 不是国家和人民的军队，是党卫军). Other users soon respond by telling the third floor commenter that he or she "should read more" (3 楼该多读书) and "a brain is a good thing" (3L，脑子是个好东西) while another user offers a more qualified retort: "The third floor is going to be flattened by a tank… Fortunately this is Steam, otherwise every minute there would be people 'checking the water meter'" (3L 要被坦克压了.....幸亏这里是 steam，不然分分钟水表).[87] The tank reference in itself sets off an

additional firestorm in which commenters begin making allusions to or directly debating the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 (六四) when tanks rolled through the streets and over the people of Beijing, but the discussion ultimately devolves into crude name-calling whereupon several Chinese users refer to the third floor as a "Taiwan dog" (台湾狗), most likely because the user's profile lists his or her country or region as Taiwan (even though the user is typing in simplified Chinese, which is primarily used in the mainland). Finally, near the end of the full list of comments (165 at the time of writing), a commenter comes to the defense of the third floor claiming that "The third floor's words are coarse, but his or her logic is anything but; in my country the Party indeed commands the guns" (三楼话糙理不糙，我国确实是党指挥枪), while another addresses the modder directly in English, saying "AUTHOR, I am sorry about there are so many irrational men calling each other names. Just ignore them! I like your models very much!" Simply put, this kind of politically sensitive discourse would most likely be censored or self-censored on Chinese social and gaming networks. Whether via a mod, post, comments section, group chat (群聊), or increasingly even in private conversations between individual users on apps like QQ and WeChat, the "post-socialist space" of the PRC state security apparatus is making its presence known (and often circuitously through self-censorship by the platforms and users themselves[88]). As a result, Chinese internet users on both sides of the political spectrum find a space in the Workshop which, while not necessarily civil, is nonetheless "safe" for this kind of political discussion.

This *tactical safe space* is also characterized by what Rongbin Han has called "discourse competition," or a situation where "state and nonstate actors attempt to engineer popular opinion and construct beliefs, values, and identities online" and in which cyber-

communities "become battlefields of multiple discourses as netizens with distinct political orientations coexist or compete."[89] As Han notes, the dominant modes of discourse competition (unfortunately) include "defamation and attack," which are also regularly employed in the *LFD2* Workshop: some of the discussions in these mods' comment sections rapidly deteriorate into ugly nationalistic debates between mainland Chinese and Taiwanese, even implicating other nationalities such as South Koreans and Americans. For example, in the comment section of a "QBZ-95" Chinese assault rifle mod, one commenter responds to a South Korean user whose remarks have since been deleted with "Death to your mother, you Korean thug, you just have to go looking for a fight on Steam. Can I trouble everyone to send in a wave of reports on him? In the many games I've played, the Korean thugs I've encountered all have low character—a garbage country will really produce garbage people" (司马棒子，非要在 steam 引战，麻烦大家举报一波，我玩很多游戏遇到的棒子素质都极低，真是垃圾国家出垃圾人民).[90] Another comment echoes this sentiment: "Come and see, everybody, it's a feral Korean 'keyboard hero,' ~~maybe we can take this kid and boil him into soup~~, nobody wants this grandkid's boiled soup" (来来来大家看看，野生的韩国键盘侠，~~这孩子也许能拿来炖汤~~ 这孙子炖汤都没人要).[91] Following these two, there are other, more vulgar remarks which I will not reproduce here, as well as some snide comments in English about Chinese gamers and products, but the point is that these nationalistic mods tend provoke this kind of discourse competition precisely because of the echo chamber of Chinese social and gaming networks. As mentioned earlier, on account of the Great Firewall, Chinese and non-Chinese internet users do not often encounter each another online, therefore when the two sides collide in the comment sections of these patriotic Chinese mods (or of other "nationalistic" symbols such Taiwanese and South Korean weapons and flags, or even

a concert of classic Hong Kong pop music on a stage draped with the colonial-era British flag), fireworks can ensue. And while one would assume that Chinese authorities would turn a blind eye to this kind of patriotic or nationalist discourse, this is increasingly not the case,[92] and so frustrated Chinese gamers and modders resort not only to the tactic of crossing the Firewall, but also to reinterpreting or poaching mainstream media—both Chinese and foreign—in the form of satire.

Sticking it to the State: Sociopolitical Satire and Pop Activism

An apt example to begin this section on satirical and sociopolitically-sensitive hypertexts is with the poaching of mass media symbols themselves, where Chinese gamers mod the state television "CCTV" logo onto the HUD (heads up display) of the game and sometimes in relation to certain memes discussed below.[93] These mods produce the effect of making the computer screen appear more like a TV or movie channel, an irony not lost on Chinese commenters: "Mom, I'm watching a movie, not playing games" (麻麻，我在看电影。没有玩游戏) or "An interactive movie, haha" (互动电影，233). Yet more significantly, the presence of this logo also evokes the power of the PRC state itself, leading other commenters to call out the author of the mod in a whimsical mix of censure and trepidation: "You're looking for trouble, big time" (作大死), "Water meter" (水表), or "The water meter's already been demolished" (水表已拆). This diverse range of responses can be understood as a product of what Rongbin Han calls "pop activism," or the playful mix of pop culture and politics in online discourse. Han maintains that pop activism is primarily driven by "dynamics of state control and anti-control, the discourse competition between various

Figure 1.4. *L4D2* mods exhibiting sociopolitical satire within a "Greater China" context. Collage compiled November 2018.

online groups (including both pro- and anti-regime groups), as well as netizens' pursuit of fun" and is also focused on such themes as "concerns about disadvantaged social groups, criticism of corruption, patriotism, and the pursuit of freedom, justice, and democracy."[94] As can be seen above, mods featuring CCTV logo can elicit different responses from different types of commenters, either in the mode of playing with the political or vice-versa—politicizing the playful. The ambiguity of such discourse is itself a product of life under censorship—a dynamic replicated even outside of the GFW. Taken further, pop activism can also be related to modding; as Han explains, "since consumers can actively engage in reproduction and redistribution, they may take the original message out of its packaging and replace it with a new one."[95] Whether supportive, critical, or simply ambivalent towards the

Party-nation-state, Chinese gamers partake in pop activism by modding both technologies and ideologies on the tactical safe space of the Steam Workshop.

Other, more spectacularly playful and political symbols provoke an even greater reaction from Chinese users. In one mordant example, the hammer and sickle of Communism replaces large chunks of rock and pavement which the boss-like "Tank" zombie-character lobs at players over the course of a match. Again, the irony of pairing Communist imagery with a so-called "tank" is not lost on Chinese commenters: "Communist tank, haha" (共产主义坦克 233), "I don't believe in Communism, Li Ming.jpg" (我不信共产主义了，李明.jpg), and "Adding on this evil symbol suddenly makes it even more evil than zombies" (加上这个邪恶的标志瞬间比僵尸还要邪恶). While the vast majority of users seem in on the fun—making the usual references to state agents checking the water meter, delivering packages, and dropping in for unexpected visits—some commenters are taken aback by the outspokenness of the modder himself. In the mod description, the author quips that "Now all these Tanks believe in that same old bullshit of the Communist Party" (现在这些 Tank 都信奉共产党的那套鬼话了), to which one user responds, "Isn't this reactionary? Communist…bull…shit?" (这不是反动吗。。。共产的。。鬼？？话？？). Another takes offense, "Communism is not bullshit!" (共产主义不是鬼话！), while other commenters seem to lament the blocking of the Steam Community in the mainland on account of politically sensitive mods like this one: "This is one of the reasons the Community was walled off: doing everything you can to vilify the CCP, supporting Taiwanese independence, and opposing One China, you're really too awesome" (社区被墙的原因之一，使劲黑 GD、支持台独、反对一个中国，稳的不行).[96]

Moreover, satire of the Party-nation-state can also be embodied in caricatures of state agents themselves, such as *chengguan* (城管), or thug-like officers from City Urban Administrative and Law Enforcement Bureaus who have come under heavy criticism both domestically and abroad for their brutality.[97] One modder lampoons *chengguan* via a mod in which the efficacy of their characteristic "nightstick" (警棍) is enhanced, described at length by the modder in colorful, sardonic language complete with his or her own English translations:

> 中国最强作战部队——城管的武器现已加入求生组
> Now you can pick up the China No.1 "army"——chengguan's weapon in L4d2.
>
> 抄起家伙，与小伙伴一起执法！
> Use it and "enforce the law" with your friends! Wwwwwwww
>
> 告诉小僵尸，特感谁怕谁
> Tell the infected and the special infected "Nothing can beat me!"
>
> 告诉 TANK,WITCH 谁是老大！
> Tell Tank and Witch "Who's your Daddy!"

After sticking it to state symbols and agents, modders then turn to state apparatuses, even going for a dip across the Taiwan Strait. For example, the same author of the hammer and sickle mod above incorporates Taiwan's legislature, or the Legislative Yuan (立法院), into the game as a survival map (figure 1.4). While the general response in the comments (88 at the time of writing) from both mainland Chinese and Taiwanese users is surprisingly muted, divergent sociopolitical discourses slowly but surely come out of the woodwork over the course of this anxious cross-strait exchange. On the one hand, Taiwanese users overwhelming rejoice in the author's "accurate" portrayal of the daily disorder of the legislature: "As a Taiwanese, I feel extremely satisfied with your reproduction of the day-to-

day of the Legislative Yuan (joking)" (身為台灣人，對於您重現了立法院日常感到非常滿意 (滑稽 [*sic*]).[98] Other Taiwanese commenters relate the map to the Sunflower Student Movement of 2014, when student demonstrators stormed and occupied the legislature for a month to protest a trade agreement with the mainland: "The Sunflower Student Movement redux" (太陽花學運再現). Some of these Taiwanese users' remarks are patriotic in nature ("Long live the Republic of China!" 中華民國萬歲！！) while others are considerably more critical ("The KMT has left a legacy of trouble for our world—first they brought disaster on China, and then on Taiwan—they're rotten to the core!" KMT 遺害人間，先禍害 China 再禍害台灣，爛透！！). Finally, like their mainland counterparts mentioned above, several Taiwanese commenters show concern for the modder's well-being: "Friend, you made this [ROC] flag so big, I'm a little worried about your safety" (朋友，這旗子放這麼大，我有點擔心你的安全). On the mainland, meanwhile, some commenters become particularly sensitive to the wording of the mod's title, "The Legislative Yuan of the Taiwanese Authorities" (台湾当局立法院), calling instead for its location to be referred to as the legislature of "Taiwan province" (台湾省). One mainland user even has a beef with the mod's description, observing that "The author describes, 'This is the Legislative Yuan of the government of the Taiwanese authorities—it is equivalent to their congress.' Shouldn't you add quotes around 'congress?'" (作者描述"这是台湾当局政府的立法院，相当于是他们的国会了。"里面"国会"不加双引号的？).[99] Lastly, variations of the meme phrase "What's that? My Great Qing has perished?" (什么？ 大清亡了？) proliferate in the comment section, likely in reaction to a portrait hung in the legislature of Sun Zhongshan—the

founding father of the Republic of China (ROC; now equated with Taiwan) who overthrew the Qing Dynasty in the 1911 Revolution.[100]

Taken together, there is almost a tacit understanding between users on both sides of the Taiwan Strait not to delve into the kinds of ugly nationalistic debates and discourse competition detailed above, as both parties seem to acknowledge the significance of having a *tactical safe space* to propagate, deliberate on, and indeed satirize these issues. In fact, Sino-specific satire on the *L4D2* Workshop is not limited to the realm of politics; there are also broader forms of pop activism including anti-Japanese, anti-American, and anti-Korean protest signs parodying Chinese nationalism, high school English and math textbooks poking fun at the Chinese education system, fake money burned as offerings to the dead (冥币) in an apparent send-up of traditional Chinese culture, as well as renderings of controversial figures like Tencent CEO Ma Huateng whose QQ instant messenger/social network and its penguin logo is also modded into the game. Inevitably, the content of some of these mods becomes reminiscent of memes, and indeed several "meme-mods" show up in the Workshop precisely because they have been relentlessly censored and suppressed behind the Great Firewall. These subversive memes and their associated mods are analyzed below.

"Too Violent!": "Moha Culture" and Culture Jamming

As an active and longtime patron of Steam and its Chinese-language community, I was not surprised to find some familiar "faces" populating the Workshop, including *zhuangbi* (装逼), *huaji* (滑稽), and "Doge" facial expressions, *guichu* (鬼畜) sound effects ripped from viral videos in China, as well as spoofs of historical figures such as the Tang Dynasty poet

Du Fu and more contemporary cultural material like Hong Kong TV series. Some of the most well-represented memes on the *L4D2* Workshop include "Philosophy" (哲学), a meme originating in Japan which involves softcore gay porn,[101] and "Jinkela" (金坷垃), a fertilizer brand from Henan Province whose advertisements have been parodied by Chinese internet users for years on end.[102] Most of these memes can also be found on Chinese social networks and video sites such as Weibo and bilibili, but there are a few select examples which are consistently censored and suppressed by the CCP because of their politically or socially sensitive nature, and as a result, these subversive "meme-mods" tend to show up in droves within the largely unpoliced archives of the Workshop. While the satirical mods analyzed in the previous section similarly depict sensitive sociopolitical content, they predominantly represent individual cases not tied to any specific meme and are generally not as popular on the Workshop as the mods analyzed here. For example, some of the "Moha Culture" meme-mods I introduce below maintain between 2000-8000 subscribers and 200-500 comments apiece, whereas the CCTV logo mod discussed above only boasts 200 subscribers and twenty comments, and the *chengguan* mod has ninety and ten, respectively. As such, these subversive meme-mods represent the core of the rogue archive of Chinese mods on Steam: "rogue" in that they are strategically targeted by the PRC state, and "archived" by Chinese modders in the *tactical safe space* of the Workshop.

One of the most enduring and indeed relentlessly censored subversive memes is "The Elder" (长者), also known as "Moha Culture" (膜蛤文化 or "toad worship culture"[103]), which refers to the online cult surrounding former Chinese President Jiang Zemin (1926-). Jiang reigned as President of the PRC from 1993-2003 and also served in other leadership roles from 1987-2005. His boastful, outspoken style and willingness to engage with foreign

media has left a profound impression on a whole generation of post-80s and 90s young Chinese,[104] in stark contrast to his relatively monotonous, bureaucratic predecessors and successors in Deng Xiaoping, Hu Jintao, and Xi Jinping. Jiang also remains a highly controversial figure, given that his terms in office (coming right after the Tiananmen protests of 1989) have been linked to spells of unchecked corruption, the persecution of minority and religious groups, and the laying off (下岗) of millions of workers from state enterprises in the 1990s,[105] and it is even rumored that Jiang still wields an immense amount of power in the Party at the ripe old age of 92.[106] The cult or "worship" of Jiang originated with a video of a 2000 press conference in Hong Kong where local journalists grilled Jiang and then-Hong Kong Chief Executive Dong Jianhua on the transparency of the election process in the newly-minted Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR).[107] Departing from the scripted performances of his predecessors, Jiang elected to lash back at the journalists and lecture them as a self-professed "elder," a tirade which ultimately provided Chinese internet users with a treasure trove of memorable quotes and moments to poach and make do with as memes. This video was complemented by two others: 1) Jiang's 2000 CBS interview with Mike Wallace, which he also made reference to in his Hong Kong rant, and 2) a 2009 reunion at the China United Engineering Corporation, where Jiang had once worked as an engineer.[108] Taken together, a whole host of oblique references, audiovisual parodies, and other fan "paratextual activity" stemming from these videos make up the crux of the Moha or Elder meme, and many of these intertexts have found a safe space in the archive of the *L4D2* Workshop.

On his personal website, *Confessions of an ACA-Fan*, Henry Jenkins has posted a 2018 essay by Qiyao Peng, a student in Jenkins's grad seminar Participatory Politics and

Civic Media at USC. Peng's currently unpublished paper examines Moha Culture through the lens of culture jamming and civic imagination, and is also helpful for looking at the Moha mods analyzed here. Working from Marilyn DeLaure and Moritz Fink's notion of "culture jamming,"[109] or "a series of *tactics* used by activists to critique, subvert, and 'jam' the dominant forms of power," Peng argues that the hypertextual videos, pictures, and memes (or in this case, mods) produced by Moha fans not only represent transgressive, political attacks on PRC censorship mechanisms, but also serve as a nostalgic, rose-tinted foil to the increasingly authoritarian reign of current Chinese President Xi Jinping.[110] Moreover, Peng demonstrates that participating in Moha Culture equates to a form of culture jamming in that it tallies with DeLaure and Fink's definitive characteristics of the concept; in addition to poaching other material, Moha memes and mods are artful, playful, anonymous, participatory, political, serial in nature, as well as transgressive and boundless. In short, Moha meme-mods "confront authority with imagination" and maintain an "emphasis on play and having fun while attacking dominant ideologies."[111] Even then, as with the work of de Certeau and De Kosnik above, some "modifications" are in order when considering culture jamming in a Chinese context, and these alterations can even be seen in Peng's own paraphrasing (quoted above) of DeLaure and Fink's original definition of the term.[112] Broadly speaking, while culture jamming scholars in the West focus overwhelmingly on Euro-American contexts and are thus inevitably concerned with issues of consumer capitalism and the corporatization of mainstream culture, Chinese jammers may concentrate more on issues of authoritarianism, censorship, and the repression of basic freedoms, which most Western jammers already have access to as they protest other matters. As indicated earlier, Chinese modders' *tactical jamming* takes on a dual meaning as they mod foreign

media technologies (computer games on Steam) in order to disrupt hegemonic ideologies and narratives ("post-socialist space") back home.

Much like the examples from previous sections, Moha mods in *L4D2* can be embodied in a wide variety of forms (figure 1.5). For one, there are first aid kits transformed into a popular 2005 biography of Jiang (*The Man Who Changed China: The Life and Legacy of Jiang Zemin*《他改变了中国：江泽民传》by Robert Lawrence Kuhn) or simply reskinned with his face on them. There are pain pills modded as a Harbin-brand beer in a play of words on "Moha"[113] and other supplements like "hong kong newsman adrenaline" [*sic*] shots. Predictably, there are also weapons, including a bloody axe with Jiang's face plastered on it, not to mention a playable rendering of Jiang himself, replacing the human survivor-character nicknamed "Coach." Finally, some mods are even integrated into the game's user interface (UI) or HUD, such as a Jiang-themed logo for loading screens, a modded menu where images are replaced with gif memes of the Elder, and hit indicators refashioned in the meme-related expressions of "+1s" and "-1s." These numerical expressions, "+1s" and "-1s," represent a fundamental element of Moha Culture—*xuming* (续命), literally the "replenishing of life." Here, *xuming* refers to the addition or subtraction of one second (s) onto either Jiang's or one's own life. As the longest living PRC leader who was once (in)famously rumored to have passed away,[114] "toad fans" have become increasingly sensitive to Jiang's feeble state, showing their support for him with a subtle "+1s" as well as to fans who conceive of clever, tactical ways to celebrate him—ultimately making Jiang's annual birthdays a long day for Weibo censors.[115] Conversely, because of the apparent sensitivity of these issues, participating too openly in Moha Culture is also considered harmful to one's health (-1s), as government agents may come knocking to

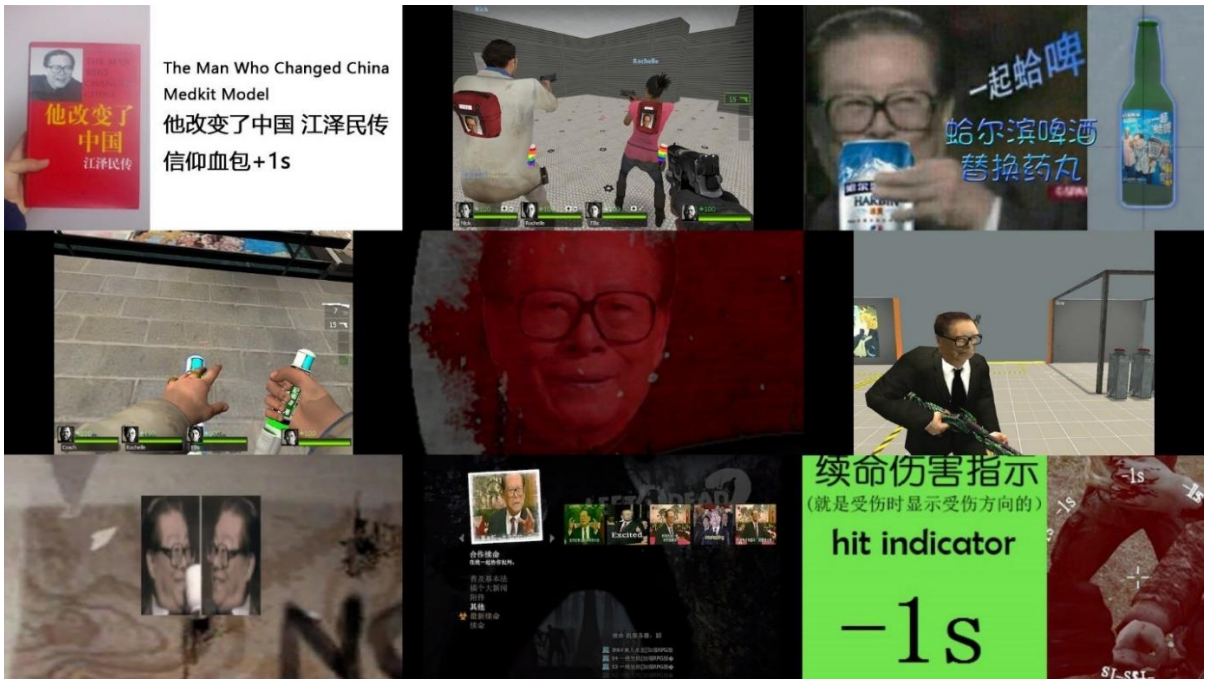

Figure 1.5. Subversive "Moha" or "Elder" meme-mods. Collage compiled November 2018.

"check the water meter" or invite one out to "drink tea." As such, in the *L4D2* Workshop, *xuming* expressions not only show up in the comment sections of mods as signs of approval or disapproval, but also are integrated into the mods themselves, giving modded healing items like the first aid kits (Jiang's face and book), adrenaline shots (for Hong Kong journalists), and pain pills (Jiang-sponsored beer) introduced above a whole new meaning. In other words, these mods "replenish life" both in and outside of the game, and debates over their efficacy spill out into the comment sections. For example, in the comments of the Harbin beer/pain pills mod, users creatively come up with phrases to warn the modder of his or her impending doom: "Eating dates and *pills*" (吃枣药丸) becomes a homophone for "Sooner or later you'll be finished" (迟早要完). Likewise, on the Jiang biography/first aid kit mod, another commenter jokes that "Isn't it that the more you use this med kit, the less blood you'll have?" (这个血包难道不是越用血越少？). Some of these admonitions

"poach" several of Jiang's most famous lines in both Chinese and English, including "Don't always try and make a big news story" (不要总想搞个大新闻), "You guys, you still need to study a certain someone" (你们啊，还需要学习一个),[116] "Too young, too simple" (图样，图森破), and of course, "Naive!" Other warnings are shared communally amongst the commenters, such as "We'll see each other on our next accounts" (咱们下一个 ID 见) or "Not one of you who subscribed to this mod will be able to get away" (订阅的一个都跑不了), while yet others, like the water meter and tea examples mentioned earlier, are more direct: "Firing squad" (枪毙), "Being alive is no good, huh?" (活着不好吗), "I'll replenish one second for you" (我为你续一秒), or "August is full! Schedule him for September's [firing squad] list" (八月满了！九月名单安排下). Indeed, one of the most common admonishments in these Moha mods' comment sections is "Too violent" (太暴力了), a somewhat dense phrase which requires further explanation.

When internet commenters label a Moha meme as "violent" (暴力), they are expressing either a kind of awe-struck approval or an equally incredulous disapproval of the meme author's degree of "toad worship." In other words, they see the author as "violently worshipping" (暴力膜) Jiang, and this intense level of veneration unsurprisingly provokes strong reactions from fellow toad fans. On the tactical safe space of the *L4D2* Workshop, "too violent" thus takes on additional connotations, given the controversially graphic nature of the game on the one hand, and the "violent" political discourses which this space facilitates and indeed archives on the other—a space which, at least for now, remains out of the reach of CCP censorship. Therefore, when a mod like the bloody Jiang axe (pictured) is produced, it serves not only as a tongue-in-cheek provocation to calls of violent worship, but

also as a reflection of the concrete danger ("new accounts," "drinking tea," "water meters," "firing squads," and so on) for Chinese internet users that such kinds culture jamming can entail (also reflecting the abovementioned censorship mechanism of "fear"). And as Chinese users continue to employ their highly-developed tactical language to debate and celebrate these sensitive mods, this discourse has found a safe harbor, or rather a safe archive, in the Steam Workshop—as opposed to the tight, relentless censorship it would face on a Chinese gaming platform like Tencent's WeGame. As their language lingers on and this discourse steadily accumulates, the archive itself expands, and so does the attention it attracts from the PRC state. Unlike another one of Jiang's famous euphemisms, "Keep silent and make big money," (闷声发大财), Chinese users on Steam have been doing much the opposite: illicitly engaging with sensitive discourse, unproductively poaching official Chinese or foreign media, and brazenly developing a *rogue archive on the tactical safe space of the Steam Workshop*. But as Valve shuts the door on Steam in China, another archive will be broken, and Chinese users will once again be "left for dead."

Conclusion: *Cacharros* and Compromised Spaces

Logging off Steam and ferrying halfway across the world, we can encounter another (post-) socialist context where modding plays a pivotal role—both for the authorities and rogues alike. In Cuba, the image of classic American cars from the 1940s and 50s lining the streets of Havana has almost become cliché, but as Sarah Hill points out, there is more to these chrome-finned land yachts than meets the eye: "The original brand names tell merely the origins of Frankenstein inventions that continually morph through remaking into cars that

bear but superficial resemblance to their original selves."[117] In other words, these automobiles have been *modded*, not for aesthetic or performance reasons, but rather for survival. Thus what was once the pride of Detroit is no longer really American, and the "Cadillacs" cursed by Castro are now an integral part of the Cuban landscape, embodying something in-between—a *tactical safe space* challenging the sociopolitical status quo. Unsurprisingly, the history behind this phenomenon is quite complex, implicating everything from the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union to issues of nostalgia and public transportation, but scholars have ultimately concluded that these modded rides are indeed a kind of political statement: "The *cacharro* [jalopy] is a surrogate for dealing with life and the system imposed by the Revolution with its shortages, its patchwork solutions, and its unfulfilled promises."[118] Like Chinese gamers on Steam, ordinary Cubans have poached and modded foreign technologies in order to contend with the ideology—or rather the space—of the socialist state, and these phenomena also represent instances of the processes of *repair and inventiveness*, a sociopolitical dynamic shared across post-socialist contexts all around the globe.

In "Rethinking Repair," Steven J. Jackson conducts what he calls an "exercise in broken world thinking," challenging media and technology studies scholars to ask "what happens when we take erosion, breakdown, and decay, rather than novelty, growth, and progress, as our starting points in thinking through the nature, use, and effects of information technology and new media."[119] Jackson's exercise builds upon or rather *rebuilds* notions of breakdown, maintenance, and repair—notions which in China are anything but new. For Chinese users on Steam, modding is *simultaneously a form of breaking and repair*: Western-centric games like *L4D2* are "broken" and then repaired with culturally-specific mods,

hegemonic state ideologies are ruptured with politically-sensitive or subversive roguish discourses, and the archives and repertoire surrounding these discourses are slowly but surely restored after being continually "shot down" (枪毙) behind the Great Firewall. In other words, the reason a meme like Moha Culture or "The Elder" has survived for so long is precisely because it is always breaking down: its origins have to be intermittently rediscovered, its oblique references have to be constantly rewritten or modded, and new rogue archives have to be periodically reestablished on tactical safe spaces like the Steam Workshop. Jackson continues:

> Repair is about space and function—the extension or safeguarding of capabilities in danger of decay… Above all, repair occupies and constitutes an *aftermath*, growing at the margins, breakpoints, and interstices of complex sociotechnical systems as they creak, flex, and bend their way through time. It fills in the moment of hope and fear in which bridges from old worlds to new worlds are built, and the continuity of order, value, and meaning gets woven, one tenuous thread at a time.[120]

What will be the aftermath of the "China Steam" swap? What will happen to the rogue Chinese archives and their tactical safe space on the Steam Workshop? What, in effect, will these modders do? The answer, perhaps, is that they will simply "make do": they will revamp and rewrite; they will repair and resume; they will continue to be rogues; they will continue to *mod*. Jackson claims that in order to understand issues of breakdown, maintenance, and repair, their "secret history…must be made empirically and conceptually familiar, even normal,"[121] but normal to whom?

In his seminal 1969 manifesto, "For an Imperfect Cinema," Cuban filmmaker Julio García Espinosa appeals for the material, aesthetic, and indeed ideological necessity of inventive forms of repair in socialist societies, posing and answering the question "What is considered beauty today, and where is it found? On Campbell's soup labels, in a garbage can

lid, in gadgets?... Imperfect cinema is no longer interested in quality or technique. It can be created equally well with a Mitchell or with an 8mm camera, in a studio or in a guerrilla camp in the middle of the jungle."[122] Espinosa further extends these issues to larger, more metaphysical concerns: "The traditional rejection of the body, of material life, is due in part to the concept that things of the spirit are more elevated, more elegant, serious and profound… We should understand from here on in that the body and the things of the body are also elegant, and that material life is beautiful as well."[123] Like imperfect cinema, modding is an imperfect form of artistic expression, in which modders find themselves working with leftover material—hypertexts which all but erase their original authors—while ultimately serving larger political aims. In post-socialist contexts such as China and Cuba, these political aims take on a particular and highly idiosyncratic nature. Ariana Hernández-Reguant, in her chapter "The Inventor, the Machine, and the New Man," similarly examines the role of "inventiveness" in the context of Cuban socialism, contending that both "the encouragement and admiration of inventions and the glorification of the figure of the inventor have been features of socialist ideology since the early twentieth century."[124] Hernández-Reguant defines this role of invention even more clearly later in her essay:

> Inventions, in sum, were concrete forms that expressed ideological desires for better worlds as well as workers' social ambitions. Whether in practice socialist inventions were useful or useless, they were the stepping stones of a progress that was said to be built, along with science, on trial and error—just as national independence was to be built, at least in Castro's Cuba, by turning defeat into victory.[125]

In other words, inventions and repair are not so much about products as they are about means, and by poaching these means—by inventing and reinventing outside the realm of the state—Chinese modders are turning the socialist ideology of the PRC upon itself.

Thus the "socialist space" with which we began this essay finds itself in quite the predicament. In the PRC state's relentless quest to censor, suppress, and appropriate the representational spaces of its critics through fear, friction, and flooding, it has ironically forged an equally formidable opponent—a "mouse" which has essentially become immune to its strategies, a bona fide "Jerry" for its Tom—much like how the actions of the overly-oppressive and inept KMT ultimately led to support among the people for the CCP during the Chinese Civil War. The tactics of today's rogues include "jamming" not only ideologies but technologies, modding a roguish game like *L4D2* to attack the CCP's official line, and also to show that even a "Great Wall" can fall. This battle-hardened inventiveness is an unintended but inevitable consequence of the state's aggressive censorship strategy, leading the CCP to seek new alternatives and strike deals with foreign tech companies such as Valve—producing yet another "propaganda archive" and further augmenting their post-socialist space. Yet just as the villagers of rural Wenzhou in the introduction showed signs of "cunning adaptation and challenges to the new spatialities of the state-capital power alliance,"[126] Chinese modders on Steam have also exhibited their own inventiveness in adapting cyberspace to their own aims, transforming their representational spaces into reality by modding both ideologies and technologies and archiving roguish discourses on a tactical safe space like the Steam Workshop. Even if the tactical safe space of the Workshop has been compromised, the representational space behind it will live on and another rogue archive will soon pop up in its place. In a word, for China's rogues, it's only a matter of time.[127]

Indeed, repair and inventiveness have been the norm in China for years, from the repairpersons and recyclers who roll through residential complexes (小区) advertising their services, to the reformers in the Party who propelled the Reform and Opening Up policy and

its “modding” of socialism, there is nothing new about the old in China. Making do with the cultural dominant of the early twenty-first century,[128] today’s rogues are *zombies*—left for dead only to rise again.

Notes

[1] Han, *Contesting Cyberspace in China: Online Expression and Authoritarian Resilience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 10; Michael Anti, "Behind the Great Firewall of China," TED YouTube video, July 30, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yrcaHGqTqHk.

[2] In Chinese, *Tom and Jerry* is simply translated as *Cat and Mouse*《猫和老鼠》, making it even more apt for comparison. For more information on the popularity of *Tom and Jerry* in China, please see Lan Lin, "These Boys Are Having Fun Parodying 'Tom and Jerry,'" *SupChina*, March 13, 2019, https://supchina.com/2019/03/13/these-boys-are-having-fun-parodying-tom-and-jerry/.

[3] I employ the conceptual language ("strategies and tactics") of Michel de Certeau here, which will be introduced in more detail later in this paper. See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1984 [1980]).

[4] Mayfair Mei-Hui Yang, "Spatial Struggles: Postcolonial Complex, State Disenchantment, and Popular Reappropriation of Space in Rural Southeast China," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 63, no. 3 (August 2004): 722, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4133460.

[5] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991 [1974]), 33.

[6] Ibid, 416-17.

[7] Yang, "Spatial Struggles," 722.

[8] The terms I use here, "fear, friction, and flooding," represent three different censorship mechanisms as theorized by Margaret E. Roberts, whose work I will discuss below. See Margaret E. Roberts, *Censored: Distraction and Diversion inside China's Great Firewall* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 5-6.

[9] That is to say, the technological and ideological processes of the GFW recall Louis Althusser's notions of ideological and repressive state apparatuses. See Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)," trans. Ben Brewster, in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: NYU Press, 2001 [1970]), 85-126.

[10] "The Great Wall has been cast, correctly, as marking a new phase – a new plateau – in the history of the northern frontier. However, this phase is often understood as one of worsening tensions between nomads and agriculturalists deriving from the expansion and strengthening of the nomadic economy and society in the north. Contrary to this view, I have argued that the walls' presence in the northern regions is consistent with a pattern of steady territorial growth by the states of Yen, Chao, and Ch'in, which adopted a defense technology developed among the Central States to expand into the lands of nomadic or semi-nomadic peoples and then to fence off the conquered territory from other nomadic people who either had been displaced or had grown aggressive because of the military presence of Chinese states in these regions. The walls were part of an overall expansionist strategy by Chinese northern states meant to support and protect their political and economic penetration into areas thus far alien to the Chou world. This is consistent not only with the general trends in relations with foreign peoples as they developed through the Spring and Autumn period but also with the political, economic, and military imperatives facing the Central States in the late fourth century B.C." Nicola Di Cosmo, *Ancient China and Its Enemies: The Rise of Nomadic Power in East Asian History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 155; Also see: Ming-k'o Wang 王明珂, *Huaxia bianyuan: lishi jiyi yu zuqun rentong* 華夏邊緣：歷史記憶與族群認同 [The Chinese frontier: historical memory and ethnic identity] (Taipei: Yun chen wenhua shiye gufen youxian gongsi, 1997).

[11] "Steam still has a colossal lead on its main competitors, but with Twitch, Green Man Gaming, Humble, Itch.io and GOG among others all now vying for a greater slice of the digital pie, publishers tell us this will only bring more benefits for consumers." Katharine Byrne, "Games publishing 2017: Steam's 'benevolent monopoly' and the discoverability 'bun fight,'" *MCV*, August 7, 2017, https://www.mcvuk.com/business/games-publishing-2017-steams-benevolent-monopoly-and-the-discoverability-bu; "Steam's near monopoly has always been happily supported by players and even the press." Tim Colwill, "Valve is not your friend, and Steam is not healthy for gaming," *Polygon*, May 16, 2017, https://www.polygon.com/2017/5/16/15622366/valve-gabe-newell-sales-origin-destructive; Also see: Wesley Yin-Poole, "Shops slam Steam 'monopoly,'" *Eurogamer*, November 11, 2010, https://www.eurogamer.net/articles/2010-11-11-shops-slam-steam-monopoly.

[12] Liz Lanier, "Steam's China User Base Swells to Over 30 Million," *Variety*, October 18, 2018, https://variety.com/2018/gaming/news/steams-china-userbase-over-30-million-1202984255/.

[13] "As of November 2017, Steam, the world's largest online marketplace for PC games, is no longer a primarily English-speaking platform. More than half of its users read and write Chinese. The sudden transition is, in no small part, due to a single game: *Playerunknown's Battlegrounds*." Charlie Hall, "PUBG creator on the rise of China and the future of Battlegrounds," *Polygon*, December 22, 2017, https://www.polygon.com/interviews/2017/12/22/16810348/pubg-1-0-release-playerunknown-interview-china.

[14] "The sudden influx of a large number of Chinese players has caused a huge stir. The games forums on Steam and Reddit are full of threads bemoaning the arrival of the Chinese players. Not just that they have arrived, of course. *ARK* is played on a big map on big servers and you don't necessarily ever know who is out there. Instead there are complaints about how they cheat, or they exploit the game, or how they are just being a big bunch of jerks." Phil Hartup, "The Chinese 'invasion' of ARK reveals the cultural imperialism in videogames," *New Statesmen America*, August 11, 2015, https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2015/08/chinese-invasion-ark-survival-evolved-reveals-cultural-imperialism-videogames; Also see: ⇋ঌ◌◌Boxer, "PUBG EU/NA and the Chinese invasion," Steam Community PLAYERUNKNOWN'S BATTLEGROUNDS discussion forum post, October 10, 2017, https://steamcommunity.com/app/578080/discussions/1/1484359403774811526/; EIPAO, "chinese invading why?" Steam Community PLAYERUNKNOWN'S BATTLEGROUNDS discussion forum post, July 7, 2018, https://steamcommunity.com/app/578080/discussions/1/1727575977587402944/.

[15] Nathan Grayson, "Majority of Battlegrounds Cheats Are From China, PlayerUnknown Says [UPDATE]," *Steamed*, December 21, 2017, https://steamed.kotaku.com/99-percent-of-battlegrounds-cheats-are-from-china-play-1821513424.

[16] Wes Fenlon, "Steam review bombing is working, and Chinese players are a powerful new voice," *PC Gamer*, June 28, 2017, https://www.pcgamer.com/steam-review-bombing-is-working-and-chinese-players-are-a-powerful-new-voice/.

[17] ValveTime (@ValveTime), "The Steam Community has been blocked in China. Steam and the Steam Store are still accessible. http://bit.ly/2yTdcw1 #steam," Twitter tweet, December 18, 2017, https://twitter.com/ValveTime/status/942782859865198592; GreatFire, "www.steamcommunity.com is 100% blocked in China," GreatFire URL test, accessed November 9, 2018, https://en.greatfire.org/www.steamcommunity.com.

[18] BjornB, "Hearts of Iron IV removed from Steam in China," Paradox Interactive Hearts of Iron IV forum post, November 2, 2017, https://forum.paradoxplaza.com/forum/index.php?threads/hearts-of-iron-iv-removed-from-steam-in-china.1052971/.

[19] Xinmei Shen, "Steam won't let Chinese users see adult-only games," *Abacus*, October 1, 2018, https://www.abacusnews.com/digital-life/steam-wont-let-chinese-users-see-adult-only-games/article/2166514.

[20] "Valve said in a statement announcing the partnership that Steam China will have nothing to do with the existing Steam Platform. But Chinese gamers are concerned that the government will ban the global version once the domestic platform is launched. If that happens, Chinese gamers may have to look elsewhere for their fix." Zheping Huang, "Steam forges ahead in China as domestic gaming industry squeezed by Beijing's freeze on approvals," *SCMP*, October 23, 2018, https://www.scmp.com/tech/article/2169638/unlikely-winner-chinas-gaming-crackdown-us-platform-steam-least-now; "It will likely also mean that the Steam store will be subject to Chinese censorship. Details of how Valve will handle this, and how it will approve games for launch in the Chinese store, haven't been announced yet." Jacob Kastrenakes, "Valve will officially launch Steam in China," *The Verge*, June 11, 2018, https://www.theverge.com/2018/6/11/17451484/steam-china-announced-valve-perfect-world; Also see: Josh Ye, "Steam is finally coming to China… but gamers think it's dead on arrival," *Abacus*, June 13, 2018, https://www.abacusnews.com/digital-life/steam-finally-coming-china-gamers-think-its-dead-arrival/article/2150573.

[21] charlie, "TOM Skype is Dead. Long Live Microsoft Surveillance," *GreatFire*, November 13, 2013, https://en.greatfire.org/blog/2013/nov/tom-skype-dead-long-live-microsoft-surveillance.

[22] "So what's behind this change? Well, basically…henceforth everything that Chinese Apple users store in the cloud will be accessible to the Chinese state." John Naughton, "What price privacy when Apple gets into bed with China?" The Guardian, March 4, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/mar/04/apple-users-icloud-services-personal-data-china-cybersecurity-law-privacy.

[23] Tanja Sihvonen, *Players Unleashed! Modding* The Sims *and the Culture of Gaming* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 37.

[24] Derek Johnson, "StarCraft Fan Craft: Game Mods, Ownership, and Totally Incomplete Conversions," *The Velvet Light Trap* no. 64 (Fall 2009): 50, Project MUSE.

[25] Bonnie Nardi, *My Life as a Night Elf Priest* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 146.

[26] Dan Pinchbeck, *DOOM: SCARYDARKFAST* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 119.

[27] Julian Kücklich, "Precarious Playbour: Modders and the Digital Games Industry," *The Fibreculture Journal* 5 (December 2005), http://five.fibreculturejournal.org/fcj-025-precarious-playbour-modders-and-the-digital-games-industry/.

[28] "While there are arguments to be made for fair use defenses or definitions of mods as derivative works, mods exist in a consistently shifting legal grey area, subject to the vagaries of developer whimsy." MTLR, "Gaming Mods and Copyright," *Michigan Technology Law Review* (*MTLR*), 2012, http://mttlr.org/2012/11/gaming-mods-and-copyright/; Also see: Christopher Pearson, "The IP Implications of Video Game Mods," *NYU Journal of Intellectual Property & Entertainment Law*, February 29, 2016, https://blog.jipel.law.nyu.edu/2016/02/the-ip-implications-of-video-game-mods/.

[29] Kücklich, "Precarious Playbour."

[30] An "AAA" title is the gaming industry's equivalent of a blockbuster movie, entailing a big budget aimed at commercial success. Between 2007 and 2017, *TF2* maintained a run of almost unrivaled popularity, matched only by other similarly-massive online multiplayer games such as *World of Warcraft* (and later by *DOTA 2* and *PLAYERUNKNOWN'S BATTLEGROUNDS*). Valve thus tied the launch of the Steam Workshop to what was at the time their "flagship" title, or *TF2*.

[31] Steamworks, "Steam Workshop," Steamworks Documentation, accessed November 23, 2018. https://partner.steamgames.com/doc/features/workshop.

[32] "Sandbox" commonly refers to a genre of games pioneered by the 2011 Swedish title *Minecraft* which offer the user a customizable, open-world experience with little or no limitations in terms of story or objectives; in other words, a game which users can literally and figuratively "engineer" their own experience. I have extended the use of this term here to include Workshops which similarly afford modders with a high degree of freedom.

[33] Zorine Te, "Valve Removes Paid Mods from Steam," *Gamespot*, April 27, 2015, https://www.gamespot.com/articles/valve-removes-paid-mods-from-steam/1100-6426931/; Adam Rosenberg, "Why the first big attempt at paying game modders failed spectacularly," *Mashable*, April 28, 2015, https://mashable.com/2015/04/28/steam-workshop-ends-paid-mods-negative-feedback/#BhVU4ZPOTgqI; Cyand Wondel, "Remove the paid content of the Steam Workshop," Change.org petition, 2014, https://www.change.org/p/valve-remove-the-paid-content-of-the-steam-workshop.

[34] Thus the "world of letters" and "forums for discussion" of Habermas's public sphere can now be found on online platforms like the Steam Workshop: "The process in which the state-governed public sphere was appropriated by the public of private people making use of their reason and was established as a sphere of criticism of public authority was one of functionally converting the public sphere in the world of letters already equipped with institutions of the public and with forums for discussion." Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991 [1962]).

[35] Dave Lee, "Steam games store to 'allow everything,'" *BBC*, June 7, 2018, https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-44393415; Erik Kain, "Valve's New 'Anything Goes' Policy Fails To Address Steam's Biggest Problems," *Forbes*, June 7, 2018, https://www.forbes.com/sites/erikkain/2018/06/07/valves-new-anything-goes-policy-fails-to-address-steams-biggest-problems/#7535c49b5647; Oli Welsh, "Steam's content policy is both arrogant and cowardly," *Eurogamer*, July 6, 2018, https://www.eurogamer.net/articles/2018-06-07-steams-content-policy-is-both-arrogant-and-cowardly.

[36] EJ, "Who Gets To Be On the Steam Store?" Steam Blog post, June 6, 2018, https://steamcommunity.com/games/593110/announcements/detail/1666776116200553082.

[37] As will be seen below, Chinese commenters tactically exploit the Chinese language's unique proclivity for homophones to avoid censorship and indeed create a kind of coded, roguish language for the preservation and development of sensitive sociopolitical discourses. For more on this phenomenon, please see "The Grass-Mud Horse Lexicon," China Digital Space, China Digital Times, accessed November 23, 2018, https://chinadigitaltimes.net/space/Main_Page.

[38] Megan Condis, *Gaming Masculinity: Trolls, Fake Geeks, and the Gendered Battle for Online Culture* (Des Moines: University of Iowa Press, 2018), 68.

[39] Sullivan, Michael. *The Three Perfections: Chinese Painting, Poetry, and Calligraphy* (New York: George Braziller, 1999 [1974]), 9.

[40] Ibid, 27.

[41] For an introductory primer on the "Four Great Masterpieces," please see C.T. Hsia, *The Classic Chinese Novel: A Critical Introduction* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2015 [1968]).

[42] For an overview of Song *ci* lyrical poetry, please see Zongqi Cai, ed, *How to Read Chinese Poetry: A Guided Anthology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

[43] Judith Zeitlin, "Disappearing Verses: Writing on Walls and Anxieties of Loss," in *Writing and Materiality in China: Essays in Honor of Patrick Hanan*, eds. Judith Zeitlin, Lydia H. Liu, and Ellen Widmer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003).

[44] Roberts, *Censored: Distraction and Diversion*, 37.

[45] *Wumao* commenters, or the "50 Cent Party" (五毛党), refers to internet commenters employed by the CCP to direct and influence public opinion in times of crisis, "flooding" online forums and social networks with comments supportive or defensive of the authorities while also condemning voices critical of them. Alternatively, these terms can also be used to ridicule pro-Party or nationalist voices, official or otherwise.

[46] "Our response to the ideologization of periods ought to be to develop *and to seek to institutionalize* a variety of competing concepts, including transperiodizing ones… Periodizing scholarship promotes historical microcosm, in which the place of original scholarship (and hence advanced work) appears only at the highest levels of historical magnification… The problem is that the structural relationship between the particular and the general produced by these limitations encourages certain kinds of questions and certain kinds of answers, and discourages or makes impossible others. Because we do not train graduate students to ask questions about large historical periods, for instance, we produce students who in general do not ask such questions… The end result is that the system reproduces itself, which is of course what all systems do, but it does so too neatly. The institutionalization of periods need not include the institutionalization of periodization." Eric Hayot, "Against Periodization; or, On Institutional Time," *New Literary History* vol. 42, no. 4 (Autumn 2011): 742-747. https://www.jstor.org/stable/41328995.

[47] "[T]his task has become part of the intense struggle for control over the characterization of the Qing period—one in which Xi has co-opted the history project to defeat challenges to his historical confabulations from either conventional Marxist historians in China or from foreign scholars of the Qing… Xi's strategy in remixing history is to draw selectively from the Nationalist and Communist historiographies, throw in some volatile nationalism, and resolutely suppress the implications of the new globalized and comparative historiography." Pamela Kyle Crossley, "Xi's China Is Steamrolling Its Own History," *Foreign Policy*, January 29, 2019, https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/01/29/xis-china-is-steamrolling-its-own-history/.

[48] R. Kent Guy, *The Emperor's Four Treasuries: Scholars and the State in the Late Ch'ien-lung Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 1.

[49] L. Carrington Goodrich, "The Literary Inquisition of Ch'ien-Lung" (Baltimore: Waverly Press, 1935), 30.

[50] Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A New Manual Fifth Edition* (USA: Endymion Wilkinson, 2018), 1087-1088.

[51] Hung-lam Chu, "High Ch'ing Intellectual Bias as Reflected in the Imperial Catalogue," *The Gest Library Journal* 1, no. 2 (1987): 51, https://library.princeton.edu/eastasian/EALJ/chu_hunglam.EALJ.v01.n02.p051.pdf.

[52] Alexander Woodside, "The Ch'ien-lung Reign," In *The Cambridge History of China Volume 9, Part One: The Ch'ing Empire to 1800*, ed. Willard J. Peterson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 284.

[53] "In the end the inquisition's victims within the educated elite were more likely to be 'bureaucrats accused of laxity than scholars charged with treason,' and in this the literary inquisition resembled revolutionary political campaigns in Mao Tse-tung's China." Ibid, 292.

[54] Research on the Qianlong inquisition "shows that entire items from a literary collection could be omitted, that a number of standard vocabulary items could be arbitrarily replaced with different words, and that phrases and sentences could be significantly re-written, sometimes purposely and sometimes merely carelessly, in either case giving an unintended and erroneous meaning… [W]ords having possibility defamatory implications for sensitive Manchu alien rulers have been arbitrarily altered…we see some such words rubbed off the paper and new character inserted in those blank spaces; in other cases offending characters are marked over by a brush and new character are written in at the side." Frederick Mote, "Reflections on the First Complete Printing of the Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu," *The Gest Library Journal* 1, no. 2 (1987): 32-39. https://library.princeton.edu/eastasian/EALJ/mote_frederick.EALJ.v01.n02.p026.pdf; "Ch'ien-lung even ordered thorough investigations of the stone shrine tablets of the generals of past dynasties, especially along the nomad-sensitive northern frontier from Chihli to Shansi. He made it clear that any offensively inscribed and ethnocentric stone text with a potential for anti-Ch'ing purposes was not to be eliminated through mere burial in the ground, because it could be excavated later. Instead, the old texts were to be effaced and more appropriate new messages carved over them. In Feng-t'ien alone, some 166 stone texts at graves, at spirit shrines, and on

village gates were scheduled for effacement and rewriting by 1779." Woolside, *The Ch'ing Empire to 1800*, 292.

[55] For more on the Zhu Yuanzhang literary persecution, please see Chieh-Kang Ku, "A Study of Literary Persecution During the Ming," trans. L. Carrington Goodrich. *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 3, no. 3/4 (December 1938): 254-311.

[56] "What we see in the eighteenth-century inquisitions is the dark side of an education policy in which tuition support, academic prizes, and scholarly recognition reinforced the status-conferring function of education and rewarded scholarship. By providing the institutional preconditions for the growth of philology into an exact discipline, Manchu policies in fact made *k'ao-cheng* research possible on a large scale. Ch'ing scholars turned to precise scholarship for a variety of reasons. One reason certainly was the fact that Manchu policies prohibited political discussions that might prove detrimental to the state…" Benjamin A. Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology: Intellectual and Social Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 17.

[57] Roberts, *Censored: Distraction and Diversion*, 115-116.

[58] Timothy Brook, *The Chinese State in Ming Society* (New York, NY: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), 121.

[59] "Outside of removal of social media posts, the Great Firewall of China is perhaps the most obvious example of online information friction in China." Roberts, *Censored: Distraction and Diversion*, 151.

[60] "This vagueness inevitably leads content providers including Sina Weibo to self-censor excessively in order to stay well within the bounds of acceptable discourse. The company and its users may have a sort of sixth sense for knowing what may or may not be off-limits, but the fact that there is no officially published blacklist from the government, coupled with the fear of punishments (including closure of the site), compels them to step even further back from the imaginary line." Jason Q. Nq, *Blocked on Weibo: What Gets Suppressed on China's Version of Twitter (And Why)* (New York: The New Press, 2013), xxiv.

[61] "The administration of the inquisition was dispersed and complex, and a nightmare for historians to try to reconstruct. Creating its own front-line operating manuals as it went along, the inquisition was intended to be a forcing-house of local explorations into the nature of cultural and political sedition, for which no single definition could ever have existed." Woolside, *The Ch'ing Empire to 1800*, 290-291; Also see: Guy, *The Emperor's Four Treasuries*, 170.

[62] Guy, *The Emperor's Four Treasuries*, 163-164.

[63] Arthur F. Wright, "Chinese Civilization," in *Propaganda and Communication in World History Volume I: The Symbolic Instrument in Early Times*, eds. Harold D. Lasswell, Daniel Lerner, and Hans Speier (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1979), 224.

[64] The full quote reads: "Political interference with the written word was, in fact, as old as the Chinese imperium itself." Guy, *The Emperor's Four Treasuries*, 159.

[65] "Refashioning within the medium is a special case of remediation, and it proceeds from the same ambiguous motives of homage and rivalry." Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 49.

[66] "We're living in this remix culture. This appropriation time where any grade-school kid has a copy of Photoshop and can download a picture of George Bush and manipulate his face how they want and send it to their friends. And that's just what they do. Well, more and more people have noticed a huge increase in the amount of people who just do remixes of songs. Every single Top 40 hit that comes on the radio, so many young kids are just grabbing it and doing a remix of it. The software is going to become more and more easy to use. It's going to become more like Photoshop when it's on every computer. Every single P. Diddy song that comes out, there's going to be ten-year-old kids doing remixes and then putting them on the Internet." Lawrence Lessig, *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2008), 14.

[67] "[Speaking to the rise of 'novel games' in Japan,] on the one hand, there is a database of sets and elements, and, on the other hand, users assemble small narratives from them as they please… This implies a certain sphere of values. Basically, any number of data assemblages is possible, which makes the original game into but one other possibility, so why can't you make your own style of game through a different data assemblage?" Hiroki Azuma, Yuriko Furuhata, and Marc Steinberg, "The Animalization of Otaku Culture," *Mechademia* Vol. 2 (2007): 175-187, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41503736.

[68] Henry Jenkins III, "Star Trek Rerun, Reread, Rewritten: Fan Writing as Textual Poaching," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 5, no. 2 (June 1988); Constance Penley, "Brownian Motion: Women, Tactics, and Technology," in *Technoculture*, eds. Constance Penley and Andrew Ross (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1991); Lincoln Geraghty, "'A Reason to Live': Utopia and Social Change in Star Trek Fan

Letters," In *Popular Media Cultures: Fans, Audiences, and Paratexts*, ed. Lincoln Geraghty, (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Heather Joseph-Witham, *Star Trek Fans and Costume Art* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1996); Larisa Mikhaylova, "*Star Trek* (2009) and the Russian ST Fandom: Too Many Batteries Included," in *Fan Culture: Theory/Practice*, eds. Katherine Larsen and Lynn S. Zubernis (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2012).

[69] Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997 [1982]), 3-5.

[70] Ibid, 10.

[71] Ibid, 15.

[72] de Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*, 32.

[73] Anne-Marie Schleiner, *The Player's Power to Change the Game: Ludic Mutation* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), 36-37.

[74] Lijiu Zheng, "In Hong Kong and Macau, Pressure from China to Tighten Freedoms," *The Epoch Times*, December 28, 2009, https://www.theepochtimes.com/in-hong-kong-and-macau-pressure-from-china-to-tighten-freedoms_1519240.html.

[75] de Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*, 30.

[76] Abigail De Kosnik, *Rogue Archives: Digital Cultural Memory and Media Fandom* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2016), 2.

[77] Ibid, 1-2.

[78] Amar Toor, "Two-thirds of the world's internet users live under government censorship: report," *The Verge*, November 14, 2016, https://www.theverge.com/2016/11/14/13596974/internet-freedom-decline-global-censorship-facebook-whatsapp.

[79] Found via (and translated by) Christina Xu, Tricia Wang, and Pheona Chen, "#14 Gaming Platform Steam Rolls Into China," *Magpie Kingdom*, June 22, 2018, https://medium.com/magpie-digest/14-gaming-platform-steam-rolls-into-china-8e1dd05f50af (*my emphasis*); Original Chinese: "内涵段子也有几千中国用户，说干掉就干掉了，为什么 Steam 就不行？因为内涵段子的后台是一家中国公司，干掉就干掉了，整个 App 和社区彻底没了，树倒猢狲散。但 Steam 干不掉，Steam 在海外，如果突然直接屏蔽，出于惯性，依然会有一大批用户翻过去使用，数量有可能会达到几十甚至百万级。这会造成完全不可预料的后果，有可能是灾难性的。屏蔽了 Steam，这些玩家必然会很不开心，会愤怒。然后，他们很有可能在已身处墙外的 Steam 社区发表言论，进行创作，产生各种文字、图片、表情、段子。对文化监管的质疑与批判，会在短时间内聚集起来，彼此共鸣，形成一股洪流，反哺回国内，辐射到国外。这显然会让有关部门很被动。" Dui dui dui nimen dou shi neigong 对对对你们都是内贡, "Steam bixu ruhua 必须入华 [Steam must enter China]," WeChat post, June 16, 2018, https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/2QUHGfGxM8sGcDypHzAU7w.

[80] "*Safety*, and by extension *safe space*, are even trickier concepts. James Baldwin often spoke about safety and its status as an 'illusion' on which the dominant society depends. I, too, am not convinced that safety or safe space in their most popular usages can or even should exist. Safety is commonly imagined as a condition of no challenge or stakes, a state of being that might be best described as protectionist (or, perhaps, isolationist). This is not to say that the ideal of finding or developing environments in which one might be free of violence should not be a goal. Most liberation movements call for freedom from such exploitations of power, and Baldwin saw the role of the artist as one who must 'disturb the peace.' Ultimately, I argue that the quest for safety that is collective rather than individualized requires an analysis of who or what constitutes a threat and why, and a recognition that those forces maintain their might by being in flux. And among the most transformative visions are those driven less by a fixed goal of safety than by the admittedly abstract concept of freedom. This is all, I might add, to say nothing about the benefits or limits of a stance of nonviolence." Christina B. Hanhardt, *Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 30.

[81] *Left for Dead 2* is translated into Chinese as《求生之路 2》(mainland translation), roughly meaning "The Path to Survival 2." For a cinematic trailer of the game, please see Valve, "L4D2 Teaser," YouTube video, June 1, 2009, https://youtu.be/Jz6FCFoL3k4.

[82] James Kozanecki, "Left 4 Dead 2 banned in Australia," *Gamespot*, September 17, 2009, https://www.gamespot.com/articles/left-4-dead-2-banned-in-australia/1100-6228600/; Chris Gampat, "Left 4 Dead cover art censored in Japan and Germany," *Geek.com*, December 26, 2008, https://www.geek.com/games/left-4-dead-cover-art-censored-in-japan-and-germany-655101/.

[83] As of June 2019, only 232 out of 1065 Workshop-supported games have reached the 1000-mod mark.

[84] Namely, *Alien Swarm: Reactive Drop*, *CS: GO*, *DOTA 2*, *Garry's Mod*, *L4D2*, *Portal 2*, and *TF2*.

[85] "'[G]uerrilla ethnography'…emphasizes limited involvement, fluid movement in networks, and exploration of links." Via Han, *Contesting Cyberspace in China*, 23; Originally from Guobin Yang, "The Internet and the Rise of a Transnational Chinese Cultural Sphere," *Media, Culture & Society* 24, no. 4 (2003): 471; "In addition, netnographic researchers are not dealing merely with words, but with images, drawings, photography, sound files, edited audiovisual presentations, website creations and other digital artifacts… Actual netnographic data itself can be rich or very thin, protected or given freely. It can be produced by a person or by a group, or co-produced with machines, software agents and bots. It can be generated through interactions between a real person and a researcher, or sitting in digital archives. It can be highly interactive, like a conversation. Or it can be more like reading the diary of an individual. It can be polished like a corporately created production, or raw and crude, full of obscenities and spelling errors." Robert V. Kozinets, *Netnography: Refined* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2015): 5.

[86] As Genette notes, "[t]he same hypertext may simultaneously transform a hypotext and imitate another." From Genette, *Palimpsests*, 30.

[87] "Checking the water meter" (查水表) or simply "water meter" (水表), is a phrase which alludes to the phenomenon of Chinese government agents masquerading as repairmen, deliverymen, and other blue collar professionals in order to threaten, arrest, and even abduct people targeted by national or local authorities. An older variation of the phrase, or being invited to "drink tea" (喝茶), is analogous in tone and also signifies an intent to intimate. In this instance, the commenter employs this ominous allusion to further highlight the *tactical safe space* of Steam ("Fortunately…").

[88] "Thus, there are multiple layers of censorship occurring. There is the government-mandated blacklist of off-limit topics—what we'd typically consider censorship—as well as two more subtle forms: the enforced self-censorship by content providers, who must make judgment calls on what needs to be censored in order to stay in the government's good graces; and self-censorship by users, who face the threat of being detained and punished for perceived antigovernment posts." Nq, *Blocked on Weibo*, xxv.

[89] Han, *Contesting Cyberspace in China*, 14-16.

[90] "棒子," alternatively "高丽棒子" or "朝鲜棒子," literally translates to "[Korean] cudgel" and has been roughly translated here as "Korean thug." This derogatory term has been used to refer to Koreans since at least the Qing Dynasty.

[91] "键盘侠," or "keyboard hero," refers to internet users who can talk the talk (online), but cannot walk the walk (offline). A looser translation in English might be a "troll."

[92] "As Hu Ping, editor in chief of the New York–based dissident magazine Beijing Spring, has commented, 'Currently, the Chinese Communist Party is suppressing voices from both liberals and leftists and Maoists. Under such a circumstance, it is ridiculous for someone who perceives himself as a leftist, whose voice [is] suppressed, to defend the repressive regime.'" Han, *Contesting Cyberspace in China*, 189; Also see: Rob Schmitz, "In China, The Communist Party's Latest, Unlikely Target: Young Marxists," *NPR*, November 21, 2018, https://www.npr.org/2018/11/21/669509554/in-china-the-communist-partys-latest-unlikely-target-young-marxists; Ketian Zhang, "'Patriots' with different characteristics: deconstructing the Chinese anti-Japan protests in 2012," *MIT Center for International Studies*, Spring 2015, https://cis.mit.edu/publications/newsletter/patriots-different-characteristics-deconstructing-chinese-anti–japan.

[93] One of these CCTV-logo mods is creatively fused with the "Philosophy" meme introduced in the following section.

[94] Han, *Contesting Cyberspace in China*, 78-79; 97.

[95] Ibid, 96.

[96] "稳," which usually translates into English as "stable" or "steady," has come to mean something more like "厉害," ("awesome," "kickass," "badass," etc.) online. In this comment, the tone seems more sarcastic—it would be like someone saying in English, "Wow, you're such a badass."

[97] Matt Schiavenza, "Meet the 'Chengguan': China's Violent, Hated Local Cops," *The Atlantic*, July 22, 2013, https://www.theatlantic.com/china/archive/2013/07/meet-the-chengguan-chinas-violent-hated-local-cops/277975/.

[98] Cindy Sui, "Taiwan's brawling in parliament is a political way of life," *BBC*, July 18, 2017, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-40640043.

[99] "国会," the Chinese term for congress or parliament, denotes a kind of national sovereignty with the first character "国," which can be translated as "country," "nation," or "state." In other words, the mainland commenter is making a fuss because the use of "国会" implies that Taiwan is a sovereign state, a claim which the CCP and most mainland Chinese would not recognize.

[100] The meme phrase "My Great Qing has perished?" originates from the 2002 Hong Kong TV series *The King of Yesterday and Tomorrow*《九五至尊》, in which a character from the Qing Dynasty awakens in the modern era only to see a TV clip of Sun Zhongshan and the 1911 Revolution. By employing this phrase here, commenters may be equating the PRC with the Qing, as the image of the ROC legislature calls into question the legitimacy of the PRC.

[101] For more information on the "Philosophy" meme, please see the video (in Chinese) Junwu ci lamian 军武次拉面, "Zhexue he xionggui geng daodi shi zenme lai de ne? 3 fenzhong dai ni zoujin zhexue de shijie 哲学和兄贵梗到底是怎么来的？3 分钟带你走进哲学的世界 [How on earth did the Philosophy and Brother Gui memes come to be? We'll take you inside the world of Philosophy in three minutes]," Wangyi 网易 video, accessed November 23, 2018, https://3g.163.com/v/video/VSBH7T90N.html.

[102] Laforet and mona_jpn, "Jinkela," Know Your Meme entry, January 16, 2010, https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/jinkela.

[103] "蛤" ("Mo" of Moha), or "toad," suggests Jiang's resemblance to a toad or frog. For more information on the Moha Culture or Elder meme, please see (in Chinese) Sheng ben du 圣本笃, "Yonghu:sheng ben du/moha wenhua 用户:圣本笃/膜蛤文化 [User: Saint Benedict of Nursia/Moha Culture]," Wikipedia user page, accessed November 23, 2018, https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:%E5%9C%A3%E6%9C%AC%E7%AC%83/%E8%86%9C%E8%9B%A4%E6%96%87%E5%8C%96.

[104] While in the US, generations are often referred to with culture and era-specific monikers ("Boomers," "Millennials," etc.), in China, generations are simply referred to by the decades in which they were born ("post-80s" 八零后, "post-90s" 九零后, etc.).

[105] While conducting his ethnographic research on male impotence in China, Anthropologist Everett Zhang uncovered a popular "ditty" from the 1990s regarding Jiang Zemin and massive layoffs of the time: "Chairman Mao wanted us to *xiagang* (下鄉, go down to the countryside) / Deng Xiaoping wanted us to *xiahai* (下海, plunge into the sea to work for private business and make money) / Jiang Zemin wants us to *xiagang* (下崗, step down from a job, be laid off)." Everett Yuehong Zhang, *The Impotence Epidemic: Men's Medicine and Sexual Desire in Contemporary China* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 75.

[106] "To be exact, of Jiang Zemin, who retired as the head of the ruling Communist Party in 2002 and as president in 2003, but has retained enormous influence through a network of allies in the party, the military and business, analysts said. To change China from a state congealing under corruption and economic vested interests, Mr. Jiang's two decade-old network needs to be cleared away, they said." Didi Kirsten Tatlow, "After Tigers and Flies, Now a Spider: Jiang Zemin," *The New York Times Sinosphere*, August 14, 2014, https://sinosphere.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/08/14/after-tigers-and-flies-now-a-spider-jiang-zemin/?_r=0; Also see: John Pollock, "China's coming soft coup: Xi Jinping's challenge to Jiang Zemin," Medium blog post, September 3, 2017, https://medium.com/@John_Pollock22/chinas-coming-coup-xi-jinping-s-war-with-jiang-zemin-2353d9e49f1f; Larry Ong, "Here's How Former Chinese Leader Jiang Zemin Could be Brought Down," *The Epoch Times*, November 3, 2016, https://www.theepochtimes.com/heres-how-former-chinese-leader-jiang-zemin-could-be-brought-down_2181176.html.

[107] The video of Jiang's press conference with English subtitles: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5GIj2BVJS2A.

[108] 1) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dpn_fZY01-kand 2) https://youtu.be/lsZjnO4NwYw (no English subtitles)

[109] Marilyn DeLaure and Mortiz Fink, *Culture Jamming: Activism and the Art of Cultural Resistance* (New York: New York University Press, 2017).

[110] Qiyao Peng, "'Moha Culture': Toad Worship Regarding a Former President of China," Confessions of an ACA-Fan, edited by Henry Jenkins, posted September 19, 2018, http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2018/9/19/moha-culture-toad-worship-regarding-a-former-president-of-china-part-one; http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2018/9/19/moha-culture-toad-worship-regarding-a-former-president-of-china-part-two (*my emphasis*).

[111] DeLaure and Fink, *Culture Jamming*, 8.

[112] DeLaure and Fink's original definition of culture jamming reads as follows: "'Culture jamming' commonly refers to a range of tactics used to critique, subvert, and otherwise 'jam' the workings of consumer culture." Peng modifies this definition to read "dominant forms of power" instead of "consumer culture," thus implying a more political slant. Ibid, 5.

[113] The Harbin beer mod avatar in the upper right corner of figure 1.3. involves a series of complex meme-related homophones: “Let’s toad-beer together” / “Let’s be happy together” (一起蛤啤), “Toad-erbin Beer” / “Harbin Beer” (蛤尔滨啤酒), and “Replaces the pain pills” / “Replaces being finished” (替换药丸).

[114] Tania Branigan and Associated Press, “Jiang Zemin death rumours spark online crackdown in China,” *The Guardian*, July 6, 2011, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jul/06/jiang-zemin-death-rumours-online-china; marcariuschan and Don Caldwell, “Jiang Zemin’s death rumor,” Know Your Meme entry, July 6, 2011, https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/jiang-zemins-death-rumor.

[115] Jun Mai, “‘Happy birthday, Uncle Toad’ — fanbase shows its love for Jiang Zemin,” *SCMP*, August 17, 2016, https://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2005306/happy-birthday-uncle-toad-fanbase-shows-its-love-jiang; Zheping Huang, “China’s toad-like 90-year-old former president has become an unlikely idol for the country’s millennials,” *Quartz*, August 15, 2016, https://qz.com/758945/chinas-90-year-old-former-president-is-the-unlikely-idol-of-the-countrys-millennial-generation/.

[116] By “a certain someone,” Jiang was likely referring to former 60 Minutes journalist Mike Wallace, who interviewed him in 2000, or simply to Western media in general. Commenters now employ this phrase ironically to indicate that one should study the ways of Jiang himself.

[117] Sarah Hill, “Recycling History and the Never-Ending Life of Cuban Things,” *Anthropology Now* 3, no. 1 (April 2011): 1.

[118] Jeffery S. Smith, Charles O. Collins, and Jennine Pettit, “Cacharros: The Persistence of Vintage Automobiles in Cuba,” *Focus on Geography* 56, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 7.

[119] Steven J. Jackson, “Rethinking Repair,” in *Media Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality, and Society*, eds. Tarleton Gillespie, Pablo J. Boczkowski, and Kirsten A. Foot (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2014), 221.

[120] Ibid, 223.

[121] Ibid, 225-226.

[122] Julio García Espinosa, “For an Imperfect cinema.” trans. Julianne Burton, *Jump Cut* no. 20 (1979 [1969]): 24-26, https://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC20folder/ImperfectCinema.html.

[123] Ibid, 24-26.

[124] Ariana Hernández-Reguant, “The Inventor, the Machine, and the New Man,” in *Caviar with Rum: Cuba-USSR and the Post-Soviet Experience*, eds. Jacqueline Loss and José Manuel Prieto (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 199.

[125] Ibid, 205.

[126] Yang, “Spatial Struggles,” 750.

[127] Expounding on de Certeau, Yang remarks that “[t]ime will eventually conquer the strategies of space.” Ibid, 721.

[128] Reworking Frederic Jameson’s claim that postmodernism was the “cultural dominant” of the late twentieth century, De Kosnik argues that “memory-based making—facilitated by digital tools, published on digital networks, and saved mostly in ‘rogue’ digital archives—is the cultural dominant of the early twenty-first century.” De Kosnik, *Rogue Archives*, 6.

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