

SHANZHAI

DECONSTRUCTION IN CHINESE

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Shanzhai

山寨

Untimely Meditations

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Deconstruction in Chinese

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Quan: Law

權

It is Hegel, no less, who ascribes to the Chinese an innate tendency to lie. He accuses them of “great immorality.” In China, he claims, there is no honor. The Chinese are “notorious for deceiving wherever they can.”¹ Hegel is astonished that no one resents this, even if the deception comes to light. The Chinese act, Hegel continues, “astutely and craftily,” so Europeans have to be cautious when dealing with them. Hegel finds no logical explanation for this “consciousness of moral abandonment.” As a result he traces it back to Buddhism, which regards “as the Highest and Absolute—as God—pure Nothing,” and considers “contempt for individuality ... as the highest perfection.” Thus Hegel assumes a nihilistic nothingness in the

negativity of the Buddhist notion of *emptiness*. For example, he holds it responsible for the “great immorality” of the Chinese. Hegel clearly thinks that nihilistic nothingness accepts no reliability, no finality, no constancy. According to Hegel, the opposite of this nihilistic nothingness is the god who stands for truth and truthfulness.

In reality, emptiness in Chinese Buddhism means the negativity of *decreation* (Ent-schöpfung) and *absence* (Ab-wesen). It empties out and desubstantializes *Being* (Sein). Essence (Wesen, *ousia*) is what is permanent, ² underlying all change and transience as that which remains the same. ³ The belief in substantive immutability and constancy determines Western ideas of both moral subjectivity and normative objectivity. By contrast, Chinese philosophy is deconstructivist from the outset, to the extent that it breaks radically with Being and essence. The Tao (literally, “the way” or “the path”) also presents a counterfigure to Being or essence. It embraces change, while essence resists transformation. The negativity of *decreation* and *absence* empties out *Being* in the *process* or *way* that has neither beginning nor end.

With its unrelenting metamorphoses, process also dominates the Chinese awareness of time and history. For example, transformation takes place not as a series of events or eruptions, but discreetly, imperceptibly, and continually. Any kind of creation that occurred at one absolute, unique point would be inconceivable. Discontinuity is a characteristic of time based on events. The event marks a rupture that breaches the continuum of change. Ruptures or revolutions, however, are alien to the Chinese awareness of time. This is why Chinese thought does not appreciate *ruins*. It does not recognize the kind of identity that is based on a unique event. ⁴ To this end it does not accept the idea of the original, as originality assumes a beginning in the

emphatic sense. Not creation with an absolute beginning, but continual process without beginning or end, without birth or death, defines Chinese thought. For this reason neither death in the emphatic sense, as in Heidegger's work, nor birth in the emphatic sense, as in the writings of Hannah Arendt, ⁵ arises in Far Eastern thinking.

Being desubstantializes itself and becomes a path. Heidegger also often uses the image of the path. But his path is fundamentally different from the Taoist path, as the former does not *progress* but rather *deepens*. Heidegger's famous "forest paths" are paths that "mostly overgrown ... come to an abrupt stop where the wood is untrodden." The Chinese path, by contrast, is *flat*, continually changing course without stopping "abruptly," without going deeper into the "untrodden" or approaching the "mystery." Neither the notion of abruptness nor of depth plays a significant role in Chinese thought.

The ancient Greek word for the impassable or inaccessible is *adyton*. The *adyton* is the inner space of an ancient Greek temple containing the sanctum, which is completely closed off from the outside. This separation, the sharp caesura, distinguishes what is holy. This windowless enclosure, inaccessible depth, or inwardness is alien to Far Eastern thinking. A defining characteristic of the Buddhist temple is in fact its penetrability, being open on all sides. Some temples actually consist almost entirely of doors and windows that shut nothing off. There is no *adyton* in Chinese thought. Nothing separates itself, nothing shuts itself off. Nothing is absolute, that is, in itself detached and separate. The original itself is a variety of this separation and shutting off. We might also say that the *adyton* contributes to the constitution of originality and authenticity.

Chinese thought is *pragmatic* in a specific sense. It does not trace essence or origin, but rather the changeable constellations of things (*pragmata*). It is a question of recognizing the changeable course of things, correlating with it situationally, and deriving benefits from it. Chinese thought distrusts fixed, invariable essences or principles. To Hegel, this suppleness or adaptiveness, which traces back to the lack of essence, to emptiness, clearly seems cunning, insincere, and immoral.

Ren quan (人權) is the Chinese term for human rights. The character *quan* contains a semantic range that gives the Chinese notion of law or rights a special cast. In particular it lacks any notion of finality, absoluteness, or invariability. Literally *quan* means the weight that can be slid back and forth on a sliding-weight scale. Thus in the first place *quan* means to *weigh* or *assess*. It has no fixed, final position. Rather, it is *moveable*, *adjustable*, and *provisional*, like the sliding weight on the scale. It changes its position according to the weight of its counterpart in order to achieve *balance*. As a law it is balancing, not excluding or ostracizing. Exclusiveness is alien to it. Of course, Chinese thought is also familiar with the regularities of conventional norms (jing, 經),⁶ but at the same time it is strongly influenced by the awareness of continuous change. In Zhu Xi we find the following saying (chang ze shou jing, bian zu cong quan, 常則守經, 變則用權): “Under normal conditions we adhere to the rules of convention, but in times of change we use *quan*.”⁷

Quan describes the ability to adapt to changing circumstances and to profit from this. For example, *quan yi zhi ji* (權宜之計) means a tactical, appropriate course of action. *Quan* describes the potential inherent in a situation rather than a set of rules that remains the same, independent of conditions and situation. In the context of *quan*, nothing is final. This layer of meaning to *quan* necessarily inscribes the ideas of both relativity and situativity into the Chinese notions of law and human rights. Equally, power (權力, *quan li*) is different from strength (力, *li*); unlike the latter, power represents not a static but rather a constellative factor. The person who makes use of and exploits situative and constellative potential gains power. Power belongs not to subjectivity but to situativity, that is, it depends on the situation.

Moreover, the character *quan* is used both in the Chinese concept of intellectual property (zhi shi chan quan, 知識產權) and in the concept of copyright (zhu zuo quan, 著作權). Consequently, these concepts also are indelibly inscribed with a notion of relativity or provisionality, at least in their semantic dimension. *Zhi* (智) is the Chinese character for wisdom. This character, which is related to the character for knowledge (知) used in the concept of intellectual property, means

cunning, tactical skills, or a strategic course of action, as well as wisdom. ⁸ Thus the Chinese notion of wisdom is radically different from the Western conception of truth or truthfulness, which is based on immutability and constancy. This conception is deconstructed by the relativity and situativity of *quan*. For the ponderousness of Being, Chinese thought substitutes the sliding weight of *quan*; *gravitation* is replaced by *situation*.

Zhen ji: Original

真跡

In a letter of December 6, 1896, Freud wrote to Wilhelm Fliess: “I am working on the assumption that our psychical mechanism has come about by a process of stratification: the material present in the shape of memory-traces is from time to time subjected to a rearrangement in accordance with fresh circumstances—is, as it were, transcribed. Thus what is essentially new in my theory is the thesis that memory is present not once but several times over, that it is registered in various species of ‘signs.’”¹ Accordingly, memory images are not immutable representations of what has been experienced. Rather, they are products of complex construction by the psychic apparatus, and thus are subject to continual change. New constellations and connections are always arising to alter their appearance. In this the psychic apparatus follows a complex temporal movement, in which later events also reshape earlier ones. Past, present, and future interfuse within the

psychic apparatus. Freud's theory of transcription casts doubt on the theory of representation that assumes that experienced scenes are recorded unaltered in the mind and can even be recalled in identical form after a long period of time. These memories are not representations that always remain the same, but *traces* that intersect and overlap.

In classical Chinese the original is called *zhen ji* (真跡). Literally this means the "authentic trace." This is a particular trace, as it does not follow a teleological path. And there is no *promise* inherent in it. It is associated neither with anything enigmatic nor kerygmatic. Moreover, it does not condense into a clear, monomorphic *presence*. Rather, it deconstructs the idea of any such original that embodies an unmistakable, immutable, centered presence and identity. ² Processuality and differentiability give the trace a deconstructive, centrifugal force. The trace does not tolerate any completed, centered work of art that might possess a final form and avoid any change. Its *difference to itself* does not allow the artwork to come to a standstill whereby it could achieve its final shape. Thus the trace always lets the artwork *differ from itself*. The Chinese notion of the original as trace (*ji*, 跡) contains the structure of the Freudian "memory-trace" that is subject to continual rearrangement and transcription. The Chinese idea of the original is determined not by a unique act of creation, but by unending process, not by definitive identity but by constant change. Indeed, change does not take place within the *soul* of an artistic subjectivity. The trace effaces the artistic subjectivity, replacing it with a process that allows no essentialist positing.

The Far East is not familiar with such pre-deconstructive factors as original, origin, or identity. Rather, Far Eastern thought *begins with*

deconstruction. Being as a fundamental concept of Western thought is something that resembles only itself, and that tolerates no reproduction outside itself. Plato's banishment of mimesis is a direct result of this conception of Being. According to Plato the beautiful or the good is something immutable that resembles only itself. It is monomorphic (monoeides). Thus it allows no variation. In every reproduction, this notion of Being sees something demonic that destroys original identity and purity. The notion of the original is already outlined in the Platonic Idea. A *lack of Being* is inherent in every image. By contrast, the basic figure in Chinese thought is not the monomorphic, unique *Being* but the multiform, multilayered *process*.



Ni Zan, Dwelling amid Water and Bamboo.

A Chinese masterpiece never remains the same in itself. The more it is admired, the more its appearance changes. It is regularly overwritten by connoisseurs and collectors. They inscribe themselves into the work by means of inscriptions and seals. In this way inscriptions are layered upon the work like memory-traces in the psychic apparatus. The work itself is subject to continual change and permanent transcription. It is not *static*. Rather, it is *fluid*. The *trace* makes it fluid. The trace is opposed to *presence*. The work empties itself out to become a generative, communicative locus of inscriptions.³ The more famous a work is, the more inscriptions it has. It presents itself as a palimpsest.

Not just individual works but an artist's entire oeuvre is subject to transformation as well. The oeuvre changes constantly. It shrinks and grows. New pictures suddenly turn up to fill it, and pictures that were once ascribed to a master's oeuvre disappear. For example, the oeuvre of the famous master Dong Yuan looks different in the Ming dynasty from how it looked during the Song dynasty, with even forgeries or replicas defining a master's image. A temporal inversion occurs. The subsequent or retrospective defines the origin. Thus the inversion deconstructs it. The oeuvre is a large lacuna or construction site that is always filling up with new contents and new pictures. We might also say: *the greater a master, the emptier his oeuvre*. He is a signifier without identity, who is always being loaded with new significance. The origin turns out to be a *retrospective construction*.⁴

Adorno too sees the artwork not as a static, fixed, im-mutable construction, but as something spiritual and alive that is able to change. For example, he writes about Wagner: "But what has changed about Wagner ... is not merely his impact on others, but his work itself, in itself. ... As spiritual entities, works of art are not complete in themselves. They create a magnetic field of all possible intentions and forces, of inner tendencies and countervailing ones. ... Objectively, new layers are constantly detaching themselves, emerging from within; others grow irrelevant and die off. One relates to a work of art not merely, as is often said, by adapting it to fit a new situation, but rather by deciphering within it things to which one has a historically different reaction."⁵ Here the artwork is presented like a living creature that grows, sheds its skin, and transforms itself. However, the change is

founded not in the *external* “situation” but in the *inner* essence that lies at the heart of the work. Adorno explicitly distances himself from the kind of change in the *self* that is due to a situation. In addition, according to Adorno, the artwork is a changing or shape-shifting body (*Wandlungsleib*) that is, however, not *subjected* to change, but changes *itself* from within. The *inner* richness and *inner depth* of the work make it living and adaptable. It is characterized by inexhaustible *fullness* and unfathomable *depth*. They *inspire* it to become a living organism. Its richness develops independent of the situation. By contrast, the Chinese artwork is in itself *empty* and *flat*. It is without soul and truth. The desubstantializing emptiness opens it up for inscriptions and transcriptions. Thus even the oeuvre of a Chinese master is capable of transformation, as it is in itself *empty*. It is not the inwardness of the essence but the outwardness of the tradition or the situation that drives change onward.

Not only a master’s style, but his subject matter, too, changes all the time. Each era visualizes the master differently. For example, it is quite possible for the master’s true originals to be removed from his oeuvre, while forgeries that suit contemporary taste are included, thus making an impact on art history. In this case, the forgeries have more art-historical value than true originals. Indeed, they are more original than the originals. The aesthetic preferences of an era, the prevailing contemporary tastes influence a master’s oeuvre. Pictures treating subjects that are not fashionable are forgotten, while pictures of preferred subjects proliferate. For example, if an era is characterized by a love of folklore, pictures with folkloric motifs turn up more frequently in Dong Yuan’s oeuvre. The quiet transformations of his oeuvre follow the various requirements of the time. In the Ming dynasty, for instance, when merchants played an important role in art as patrons, a new motif suddenly appeared in Dong Yuan’s pictures: that of the dealer.⁶ Forgeries and replicas are constantly transforming oeuvres.

In ancient Chinese artistic practice, learning takes place specifically through copying.⁷ Moreover, copying is considered a sign of respect toward the master. One studies, praises, and admires a work by copying it. Copying is the same as praising. Indeed, this practice is not

unknown in European art. Gauguin's copy of a work by Manet is a declaration of love. Van Gogh's imitations of Hiroshige are expressions of admiration. It is well known that Cézanne often visited the Louvre to copy the Old Masters. Earlier Delacroix had regretted the fact that the practice of copying, which he considered to be an essential, inexhaustible source of knowledge for Old Masters such as Raphael, Dürer, or Rubens, was being increasingly neglected. The cult of originality relegates this practice, which is essential to the creative process, to the background. In reality, creation is not a sudden *event*, but a slow *process*, one that demands a long and intense engagement with *what has been*, in order to *create* from it. In this sense, creation is primarily the act of creating. The construct of the original spirits away what has been, the prior entity from which it is *created*.



Édouard Manet, Olympia.



Copy by Paul Gauguin.



Hiroshige, The Plum Garden in Kameido.



Copy by Van Gogh.



Hiroshige, Sudden Shower over Shin-Ōhashi Bridge and Atake.



Copy by Van Gogh.

It was of no small importance for a painter's career in China to get a forgery of an Old Master into the collection of a well-known connoisseur. He who succeeds in such a forgery of a master's work gains great recognition, as it provides proof of his ability. For the connoisseur who authenticated his forgery, the forger is equal to the

master. Even Chang Dai-chien, one of the best-known Chinese painters of the twentieth century, got his breakthrough when a famous collector exchanged an original by an Old Master for his forgery. As far as connoisseurship is concerned, there is no essential difference between forgers and connoisseurs. A competition develops between them, even a “duel of connoisseurship,”⁸ over the question of who has a more intimate knowledge of the master’s art. If a forger borrows a painting from a collector, and when returning it hands over a copy unnoticed instead of the original, this is not considered a deception but an act of fairness.⁹ In this case the rules of the game say that everyone should own the paintings they deserve. It is not the purchase but the connoisseurship alone that determines the lawfulness of the possession. This is an extraordinary practice from ancient China that would put an end to today’s art speculation.



Eugène Delacroix, Medea about to Kill her Children (1838).



Copy by Paul Cézanne.

In Orson Welles's movie *F Is for Fake*, Elmyr de Hory says this while forging a work by Matisse in front of the camera: "Many of these drawings are very weak. Matisse's lines were never as sure as mine. He was hesitant when he made a drawing. He added to it a little more and a little more. It wasn't as flowing, it wasn't as sure as mine. I had to hesitate to make it more Matisse-like." Elmyr is deliberately painting badly so that his forgery looks more like an original. In this way he turns the conventional relationship between master and forger on its head: the forger paints better than the master. However, we could also say that a Matisse copy by Elmyr could possibly be more original than the original, if Elmyr's skills enabled him to approximate Matisse's intention better than Matisse himself.

When the famous Vermeer forger Han van Meegeren exhibited his freely composed imitation, *The Supper at Emmaus*, in Paris, the painting was declared genuine by all Vermeer experts who considered themselves infallible. Even technical analyses were unable to detect any forgery. ¹⁰ In September 1938 the painting was presented to the public. The critics rejoiced. Van Meegeren was very thorough in his

forgery. He studied old documents in order to be able to reproduce the original pigments. Like an alchemist he experimented with oils and solvents. He sought out worthless seventeenth-century paintings from antique dealers to obtain original canvases, which he then completely stripped of paint before applying a new ground. In strict isolation for seven months, he then painted the new Vermeer.

After the war, when Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring's collection of paintings was being inspected, a hitherto un-known Vermeer, *Christ and the Adulteress*, was discovered. During the search for the Dutchmen who had sold the Vermeer to the Nazis, Han van Meegeren was arrested and put in prison. At first no one believed his claim that *Christ and the Adulteress* was a forgery. So, under supervision, he painted his last Vermeer, *Jesus among the Doctors*. During the trial he was reported as saying: "Yesterday this picture was worth millions. Experts and art lovers from all over the world came to see it. Today it's worth nothing and nobody would even cross the road to see it for free. But the picture hasn't changed. What's different?"

*English translation: Vermeer-Van Meegeren, *Back to the Truth, Two Genuine Vermeers* (Rotterdam: Ad Donker, 1951).



Han van Meegeren, The Supper at Emmaus.



Han van Meegeren, Christ and the Adulteress.



Hans van Meegeren, *The Supper at Emmaus*, having just been declared an original by “experts.”

In 1951, while van Meegeren’s son was still maintaining that other greatly admired masterpieces hanging in major Parisian galleries were his father’s forgeries, Jean Decoen published his book *Retour à la vérité** in which he attempted to prove the authenticity of the picture *The Supper at Emmaus*.



Han van Meegeren painting his last Vermeer, Jesus among the Doctors.

In structure, the idea of the original is closely linked to that of truth. Truth is a cultural technique that counteracts change using *exclusion* and *transcendence*. Chinese culture uses a different technique that operates using *inclusion* and *immanence*. Solely within this other cultural technique is it possible to work freely and productively with copying and reproductions.

If Elmyr and van Meegeren had been born during the Renaissance they would undoubtedly have enjoyed more recognition. At least they would not have been prosecuted. The idea of artistic genius was only in its infancy. For example, the artist still generally remained in the background behind the work. What counted was artistic skill alone, which could be proven by producing forgeries of masterpieces that ideally were indistinguishable from the latter. If a forger painted as well as a master, then he was indeed a master and not a forger. As we know, even Michelangelo was a forger of genius. He was, as it were, one of the last Chinese of the Renaissance. Like many Chinese

painters he created perfect copies of borrowed pictures and gave them back instead of the originals. ¹¹

In 1956, an exhibition of masterpieces of Chinese art took place in the Paris museum of Asian art, the Musée Cernuschi. It soon emerged that these pictures were in fact forgeries. In this case the sensitive issue was that the forger was none other than the most famous Chinese painter of the twentieth century, Chang Dai-chien, whose works were being exhibited simultaneously at the Musée d'Art Moderne. He was considered the Picasso of China. And his meeting with Picasso that same year was celebrated as a summit between the masters of Western and Eastern art. Once it became known that the old masterpieces were his forgeries, the Western world regarded him as a mere fraud. For Chang Dai-chien himself they were anything but forgeries. In any case most of these old pictures were no mere copies, but rather replicas of lost paintings that were known only from written descriptions.

In China, collectors themselves were often painters. Chang Dai-chien too was a passionate collector. He owned more than 4,000 paintings. His collection was not a dead archive but a *gathering* of Old Masters, a living place of communication and transformation. He was himself a shape-shifting body, an artist of metamorphosis. He slipped effortlessly into the role of past masters and created a certain kind of original: "Chang's genius probably guarantees that some of his forgeries will remain undetected for a long time to come. By creating 'ancient' paintings that matched the verbal descriptions recorded in catalogues of lost paintings, Chang was able to paint forgeries that collectors had been yearning to 'discover.' In some works, he would transform images in totally unexpected ways; he might recast a Ming dynasty composition as if it were a Song dynasty painting." ¹² His paintings are originals insofar as they carry forward the "real trace" of the Old Masters and also extend and change their oeuvre retrospectively. Only the idea of the unrepeatable, inviolable, unique original in the emphatic sense downgrades them to mere forgeries. This special practice of persisting creation (*Fortschöpfung*) is conceivable only in a culture that is not committed to revolutionary ruptures and discontinuities, but to continuities and quiet transformations, not to Being and essence, but to process and change.

Xian zhan: Seals of Leisure

閑章

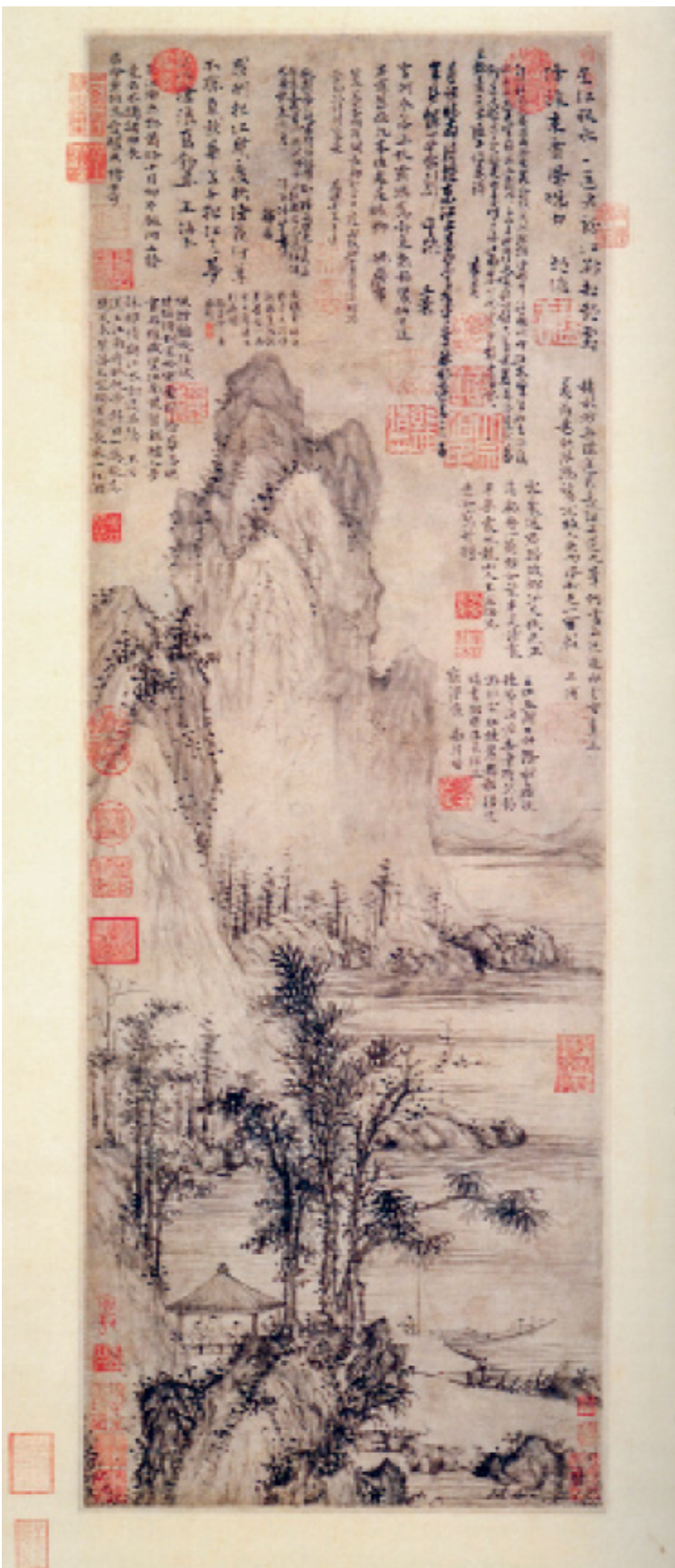
The seal stamps on old Chinese paintings are fundamentally different from the signatures used in European painting. Primarily they do not express the authorship that might have authenticated the picture, thereby making it unassailable. Instead, most seal stamps come from the connoisseurs or collectors who inscribe themselves into the picture not only through their seals but also through their commentaries. Here art is a communicative, interactive practice that constantly changes even the artwork's appearance. Subsequent viewers of the picture take part in its creation. The more famous a picture, the more its fame makes it subject to alterations. In addition, the history of a collection is art-historically important in that it changes the work both physically and aesthetically. ¹



Qianlong's jade seal: "The Ruler Who Believes in Heaven."

In Chinese painting, seal stamps themselves form part of the picture's composition. Thus they are not a paratext but belong to the

text itself. From the start Chinese paintings are designed to facilitate later inscriptions. With areas of the picture left empty as communicative spaces, they directly invite viewers to inscribe themselves. Thus with his seal the Chinese painter does not establish his *presence* as a creative subjectivity. Rather, he uses it to open a field of dialogue by merely marking a *trace* that serves to take it forward. As well as name and location seals (名章), there are also so-called *seals of leisure* (閑章). They contain beautiful aphorisms with poetic or moral content. The art-loving Emperor Qianlong (乾隆, 1711–99) is said to have owned some 1,000 seals, from a small seal of just 4 mm with the inscription “ancient fragrance” (古香), to a seal of over 20 cm that bears an entire poem in praise of virtue. One seal, which he is said to have used after his enthronement as emperor, reads: “It is hard to be a ruler” (為君難).



Wang Fu, Farewell Meeting at Feng-ch'eng.

According to a charming custom among Chinese officials, who were all men of letters, ² a friend, who is being transferred to another location, is taken to a beautiful country spot to celebrate his departure. A picture by Wang Fu (1362–1416), titled *Farewell Meeting at Feng-ch'eng*, depicts a beautiful mountain landscape with a pavilion where friends are celebrating his farewell. Each friend adds a poem to the landscape picture with a seal stamp. Here painting is a sociable, communal act. Writing poetry in the Far East is also a communicative event. It promotes sociability. Above all, it serves to lift the spirits and to entertain. Writing poetry is thus not based on the suffering of a solitary, poetic soul.

The seal stamps on Chinese paintings do not actually *finalize* anything. Rather, they *open up* a communicative space. They lend the picture no authorial, authoritative presence. In this they differ significantly from the signatures used in European painting. ³ As seals of *finito*, the latter finalize the *work*; indeed, it is as if they seal it up and prohibit interventions. In contrast to Chinese seal stamps, which are inclusive and communicative, they have an exclusive, executive effect.



Van Eyck's picture, *The Arnolfini Portrait*, embodies the *image of presence*, which is diametrically opposed to the Chinese *image of*

absence. The signature “Johannes de Eyck fuit hic” (“Jan van Eyck was here” or “Jan van Eyck painted this”) in the middle of the picture locates the presence of the painter in the center of the image. The consciously staged simultaneity of authorship and bearing witness consolidates and concentrates his presence.⁴ The signature lends the picture the character of an inalterable, definitive document. The date 1434 below the signature *fixes* the picture in time. Thus any alteration would amount to a falsification of the *truth*. In addition, the demonstrative pronoun *hic* creates a referential structure that specifically emphasizes authorship in a way that the name alone would not be capable of. It expressly points out that the named person is also the creator of the artwork.

Jan van Eyck, The Arnolfini Portrait.

Below the signature is a convex mirror. Its radius of reflection extends beyond the frame of the main picture. This creates the impression that the mirror is reflecting reality, whose components are mimetically depicted by the picture. Thus the painting offers itself as a mirror on the world. In the mirror we can see two more people who are present at the betrothal scene. The signature “Johannes de Eyck fuit hic” immediately above the mirror suggests that van Eyck is one of these spectators. Thus the painter is present not only as a signature but also as an image within the image. The mirror is the locus of self-reflection for the painter and for painting. These multiple authorial inscriptions emphasize him specifically as the creator of the picture.



The "Eye of God."

Moreover, because of its circular shape and lateral light reflections, the convex mirror looks like an eye. The medallions that frame the mirror and depict scenes from the Passion, and the cross shape of the window reflected in it, create a clear link between the mirror and the eye of Christ. The divine gaze that coincides in the center of the picture with the scriptural and figurative presence of the painter consolidates the structure of subjectivity. The Passion of Christ is commonly considered to be a mirror of the soul. In this way the

painting is *inspired* (be-seelt) by the juxtaposition of representations of the Passion and the real mirror. The picture's true setting is thus the *soul*.

Chinese images of absence are, by contrast, *without soul*. Neither authorship nor bearing witness attaches them to identity. In addition, as a result of their aperspectivity and asubjectivity, they are *gaze-less*. In *Berlin Childhood around 1900*, Walter Benjamin recounts an anecdote he says is found in a Chinese tract on painting:

The story comes from China, and tells of an old painter who invited friends to see his newest picture. This picture showed a park and a narrow footpath that ran along a stream and through a grove of trees, culminating at the door of a little cottage in the background. When the painter's friends, however, looked around for the painter, they saw that he was gone—that he was in the picture. There, he followed the little path that led to the door, paused before it quite still, turned, smiled, and disappeared through the narrow opening. In the same way, I too, when occupied with my paintpots and brushes, would be suddenly displaced into the picture. I would resemble the porcelain which I had entered in a cloud of colors.*

Here the primary experience of the picture is not an idea (Vorstellung) of the picture that originates with a subject, but a mimetic distortion (Entstellung) that moves into the picture—a contemplative emptying of the subject. The viewer empties *himself*, subjectlessly entering the picture that can itself open up in this way because it is inspired and inhabited by no one—because it is an image of absence.

并九扁客 As but a guest in this place I
題龍舟裡 wish my friend safe passage
山一送 on his return journey home. Fall colors glimmer in the sky
人箇君 over the river that suddenly
王輕歸 seems far distant. A small boat, fragile as a leaf,
孟如故 waits by the shore. The knapsacks are filled half
端葉鄉 with poems and half with
為半江 medicinal herbs. The inhabitant of the
彥是天 Mountain of the Nine
如詩秋 Dragons (Chiu-lung-shan),
寫囊色 Wang Meng-tuan (Wang Fu),
半正 painted this picture for Yen
Ju and added an inscription.

藥 茫
囊 茫

Art as Friendship

胡 來看鳳城 相期霜降 送君龍江 吳江秋 By Wu River the
儼 月 餘 別 水[] bleakness of fall has
already arrived.I wish my friend safe
passage and say farewell
at the Dragon River.We have arranged to
meet when the first sharp frosts arrive.Together
we want to
admire the moon in
Phoenix Town
(Fenghuang Cheng).
Hu Yan

皇 采 吳 汀 On the isle in the river the nobles
都 菱 淞 洲 are resting.At the place of farewell a westerly breeze blows.Beauty taps on the edge
of the
春 歌 秋 杜 boat.The traveler's path stretches
色 易 水 蘅 south of the Yangtze River.Where does the path south of the
早 斷 多 歇 Yangtze River lead to?The gaze is drawn to Wusong in
遲 送 淥 南 the East.Here are many rivers covered in
子 子 遍 浦 fall mists.Everywhere the water is crystal
促 愁 芙 西 clear, surrounded by meadows
來 雲 蓉 風 overgrown with almond
歸 亂 渚 生 mallows.Beyond the meadows lies the
李 愁 渚 路 Nine-Dragon Mountain.Near the mountain is the Bay of

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 至 | 來 | 外 | 指 | Sanmao. | There on the water people have |
| 剛 | 可 | 九 | 江 | found a home. | In the twilight they return from |
| 奈 | 龍 | 南 | | harvesting water chestnuts. | As they harvest the water |
| 何 | 山 | 行 | | chestnuts they sing. | Often the |
| 思 | 山 | 路 | | song pauses, | but it resumes. |
| 滿 | 邊 | 指 | | | |
| 江 | 三 | 江 | | | |
| 南 | 柳 | 南 | | | |
| 岸 | 灣 | 行 | | | |
| 江 | 人 | 江 | | | |
| 南 | 家 | 南 | | | |
| 不 | 臨 | 向 | | | |
| 可 | 水 | 何 | | | |
| 思 | 住 | 許 | | | |
| 勸 | 日 | 東 | | | |
| 子 | 暮 | 望 | | | |
| 情 | 采 | 吳 | | | |
| 依 | 菱 | 淞 | | | |
| 依 | 還 | 去 | | | |

I am unspeakably anxious taking
leave of my friend, and even the
clouds are churned up.

When the heart is sad, how can
one make it joyful again?

On the riverbanks south of the
Yangtze River yearning is
everywhere.

At this time one should hide
one's yearning. I should comfort my friend, full
of grief I find the separation
hard. In the capital, spring usually
arrives earlier. May the belated friend hurry
back.

Li Zhigang

王片秋江畫 Tomorrow morning the
 景帆水上船 charmingly decorated boat sets
 一連青曉 off to the east of Phoenix
 夜天山發 Town. The green wooded mountains
 到三雲鳳 soar above the river, countless
 吳百幾城 layers of cloud drift across the
 淞里重東 sky. Over many hundred meters the
 fall river water and the skies
 merge into one. The small sailboat will dock in Wusong overnight.
 Wang Jing

姚此官 The waters of the
 廣日河 Imperial Canal are
 孝送水 ebbing and the fall
 君落 frosts will soon
 還正 arrive. From the southern
 舊秋 homeland, where
 隱九霜鴻 the rice and millet
 峰雁 ripen, a message
 佳南 comes. On this day I bid
 處來 my friend safe
 是熟 passage to the old
 鱸稻 retreat. The best place
 鄉梁 under the nine
 the mountain peaks is
 the home of the
 perch.
 Yao Guangxiao

翰影故長碧 The green river
 林向鄉卿水 stretches out, on both
 老孤耆初芙 banks the almond
 友村舊自蓉 mallow blossoms. For the first time the
 王樹逢日兩 illustrious one returns
 達裡相邊岸 from distant lands. The inhabitants and
 來接迴開 old friends leave their
 homes to greet the

home-comer. The village is left
 behind, the crowds
 are filling the woods.
 Wang Da, an old
 friend from the
 Imperial Academy

解 〇 丈 秋 The fall frosts have suddenly set in. The traveler strikes out for home. A glance to the
 縉 生 夫 霜 sky is enough, and one marvels how far and high the swan geese can fly. How can we
 復 誓 忽 worry only about our daily bread (rice and millet)? A man should swear to serve the
 〇 許 已 fatherland. One should take to the high seas and achieve great things. In doing so I
 〇 稽 國 凝 must now think of home. There are floods there, one wants to help with all one's
 首 溟 客 heart. In this life there are no other desires. So I will pay respect to the nobles and
 師 渤 行 follow the example of their character and writings.

Xie Jin

堅 當 歸
 章 舟 故
 航 鄉
 矧 仰
 茲 瞻
 念 鴻
 桑 雁
 梓 戾
 泮 豈
 災 為
 勢 謀
 稻
 懷 梁
 襄

王 京 我 Many falls have passed
 汝 華 別 since I bade farewell to
 玉 送 松 Songjiang. The flowers and
 子 江 grasses in the meadow
 松 幾 by the river cannot
 江 度 soothe my melancholy. From the capital I bid
 去 秋 my friend safe passage
 to Songjiang. In my dream I am once

夢渚 again sitting in the old
落花 boat on the river in my
滄汀 homeland, fishing
浪草 alone.
舊不 Wang Ruyu
釣勝
舟愁

楊由片吳 The River Wu
士來颿江 seems far away and
奇君河渺 never-ending. At the start of the
命上無 tenth month it
重發極 cloaks itself in a
非竟蕭 sad mood. A small sailboat
為去條 sets off down the
愛不十 river. It sails away, not
鱸躡月 hesitating for a
魚躡初 moment. My friend has
always had a great
destiny. And he does not
want to lead an
ordinary life.
Yang Shiqi

王離送楚 In the land of Chu the
洪情上天 leaves fall from the trees. On the flower island in
與江木 the river the almond
江南葉 mallows blossom
水舟落 everywhere. We sing out and raise a
相孤夫 glass of wine. We will bid our friend
逐帆容 safe passage to the boat
共帶徧 that sails south on the
悠斜芳 Yangtze River. The solitary sailboat
悠日洲 awaits in the light of the
一長 setting sun. A wild goose flies high
the waters of the river. One succeeds the other in

雁 歌 sorrow.

飛 — Wang Hong

高 杯

秋 酒

鶴 想 宦 Far from home we serve our country, with talent and expertise, and yet we look to the
城 得 遊 south on the Yangtze River. Big, fat crabs and silvery sea bass often appear in my sweet
楊 到 纔 dreams. We think of arriving home, in the place we sing and make poetry, like the
斌 家 賦 tumbledown bridge, the courtyard fences, the wonderful red acorn leaves in the evening
吟 望 sun.

Yang Bin of the Crane City (Hecheng)

樂 江

處 南

野 紫

橋 蟹

籬 銀

落 鱸

晚 入

楓 夢

酣 甘

王 故 迢 積 The high waters stretch far
偁 人 遞 水 into the never-ending
能 白 渺 distance. I bid my friend safe passage
問 雲 無 on the river taking him home. Where can we see the nine
訊 間 際 mountains? They soar above the white
相 舊 送 clouds. The water chestnuts and lotus
見 業 君 blossoms of the old days have wilted. In the fall winds, the seagulls
一 菱 還 and herons circle to and fro. We greet old friends and visit
開 荷 江 them. When we meet up, we are
顏 老 上 happy and there is much
秋 還 laughter.

Wang Cheng

風 九

鷗 峰

鷺 何

閑處
數

高 畫 拒 使 三 At the estuary of the
得 錦 霜 節 江 three rivers and five
暘 榮 紅 詢 五 lakes the traces of the
殊 繞 源 湖 water now disappear. Someone asks how
甚 岸 委 口 things are going. Childhood scenes of
歸 禾 罷 童 此 fishing and games are
承 稷 時 際 conjured from memory. Red almond mallows
寵 綠 記 水 flower all along the
渥 連 釣 痕 riverbank. The fields full of green
優 疇 游 收 grain extend into a large
expansion. Study brings respect and
prosperity, fame is
overwhelming. Return brings goodwill
and favor from the
Emperor.
Gao Deyi

*Walter Benjamin, *Berlin Childhood around 1900*, trans. Howard Eiland
(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 134–135.

Fuzhi: Copy

複製

In 2007, when it became known that the terra-cotta warriors flown in from China were copies, the Hamburg Museum für Völkerkunde decided to close the exhibition completely. The museum's director, who was apparently acting as the advocate of truth and truthfulness, said at the time: "We have come to the conclusion that there is no other option than to close the exhibition completely, in order to maintain the museum's good reputation." The museum even offered to reimburse the entrance fees of all visitors to the exhibition.

From the start, the production of replicas of the terra-cotta warriors proceeded in parallel with the excavations. A replica workshop was set up on the excavation site itself. But they were not producing "forgeries." Rather, we might say that the Chinese were trying to *restart* production, as it were—production that from the beginning was not creation but already reproduction. Indeed, the originals themselves were manufactured through serial mass production using modules or components—a process that could easily have been continued, had the original production methods been available.

The Chinese have two different concepts of a copy. *Fangzhipin* (仿製品) are imitations where the difference from the original is obvious. These are small models or copies that can be purchased in a museum shop, for example. The second concept for a copy is *fuzhipin* (複製品). They are exact reproductions of the original, which, for the Chinese, are of equal value to the original. It has absolutely no negative connotations. The discrepancy with regard to the understanding of what a copy is has often led to misunderstandings and arguments between China and Western museums. The Chinese often send copies abroad instead of originals, in the firm belief that they are not essentially different from the originals. The rejection that then comes from the Western museums is perceived by the Chinese as an insult.

In spite of globalization, the Far East still seems to be the source of a great deal of surprise and confusion, which could release deconstructive energies. The Far Eastern notion of identity is also very confusing to the Western observer. For the Japanese, the famous Ise shrine, the supreme sanctuary in Shinto Japan to which millions of Japanese make pilgrimage every year, is 1,300 years old. But in reality this temple complex is completely rebuilt from scratch every twenty years. This religious practice is so alien to Western art historians that after heated debates UNESCO removed this Shinto temple from the list of World Heritage sites. For the experts at UNESCO the shrine is twenty years old at most. In this case, which is the original and which the copy? This is a total inversion of the relationship between original and copy. Or the difference between original and copy vanishes altogether. Instead of a difference between original and copy, there appears a difference between old and new. We could even say that the copy is more original than the original, or the copy is closer to the original than the original, for the older the building becomes the further it is from its original state. A reproduction would restore it, as it were, to its “original state,” especially since it is not linked to a particular artist.

Not just the building but all the temple treasures too are completely replaced. Two identical sets of treasures can always be found in the temple. The question of original and copy does not arise at all. These are two copies that are at the same time two originals. It used to be that

when a new set was produced, the old set would be destroyed. Flammable parts were burned and metal parts were buried. As of the last regeneration, however, the treasures are no longer destroyed but put on display in a museum. They owe their rescue to their increased exhibition value. However, their destruction belongs to their cult value itself, which is clearly disappearing more and more in favor of their museum exhibition value.



The old shrine.



Recently cloned.



Which is the original and which the copy?

In the West, when monuments are restored, old traces are often particularly highlighted. Original elements are treated like relics. The Far East is not familiar with this cult of the original. It has developed a completely different technique of preservation that might be more effective than conservation or restoration. This takes place through continual reproduction. This technique completely abolishes the difference between original and replica. We might also say that originals preserve themselves through copies. Nature provides the model. The organism also renews itself through continual cell replacement. After a certain period of time the organism is a replica of itself. The old cells are simply replaced by new cell material. In this case, the question of an original does not arise. The old dies off and is replaced by the new. Identity and renewal are not mutually exclusive. In a culture where continual reproduction represents a technique for conservation and preservation, replicas are anything but mere copies.



One of the treasures of the temple: beyond original and copy.

Freiburg Minster is covered in scaffolding almost all year round. The sandstone from which it is built is a very soft, porous material that does not withstand natural erosion by rain and wind. After a while it crumbles. As a result the Minster is continually being examined for damage and eroded stones are replaced. And in the Minster's dedicated workshop, copies of the damaged sandstone figures are constantly being produced. Of course, attempts are made to preserve the stones from the Middle Ages for as long as possible. But at some point they too are removed and replaced with new stones. Fundamentally, this is the same operation as with the Japanese, except in this case the production of a replica takes place very slowly and over long periods of time. Yet ultimately the result is exactly the same. After a certain period of time one effectively has a reproduction. However, one imagines one is looking at an original. But what would be original about the Minster if the last old stone were replaced by a new one?

The original is something imaginary. It is in principle possible to build an exact copy, a *fuzhipin* of the Freiburg Minster, in one of China's many theme parks. Is this then a copy or an original? What makes it a mere copy? What characterizes the Freiburg Minster as an

original? Materially its *fuzhipin* might not differ in any way from the original that itself may someday no longer contain any original parts. It would be, if at all, the place and the cult value related to the practice of worship that might differentiate the Freiburg Minster from its *fuzhipin* in a Chinese theme park. However, remove its cult value completely in favor of its exhibition value and its difference from its double might disappear too.

In the field of art as well, the idea of an unassailable original developed historically in the Western world. Back in the seventeenth century, excavated artworks from antiquity were treated quite differently from today. They were not restored in a way that was faithful to the original. Instead there was massive intervention in these works, changing their appearance. For example, Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598–1680) arbitrarily added a sword-hilt to the famous statue of Mars, *Ares Ludovisi*, which was itself a Roman copy of a Greek original. During Bernini's lifetime the Colosseum itself was used as a marble quarry. Its walls were simply dismantled and used for new buildings. The preservation of historical monuments in the modern sense of the term begins with the museumization of the past, whereby *cult value* increasingly gives way to *exhibition value*. Interestingly this goes hand-in-hand with the rise of tourism. The so-called Grand Tour that began in the Renaissance and reached its apogee in the eighteenth century was a precursor of modern tourism. In the eyes of tourists, the exhibition value of ancient buildings and artworks, which were presented to them as attractions, increased. In the same century as tourism was beginning, the first measures to preserve ancient structures were undertaken. Now it seemed imperative to preserve ancient structures. The onset of industrialization further increased the need for the conservation and museumization of the past. In addition, the burgeoning fields of art history and archaeology discovered the *epistemo*-logical value of old buildings and artworks and rejected any intervention that might alter them.

A prior, primordial positing is alien to Far Eastern culture. It is probably this intellectual position that explains why Asians have far fewer scruples about cloning than Europeans. The Korean cloning researcher Hwang Woo-suk, who attracted worldwide attention with

his cloning experiments in 2004, was a Buddhist. He found a great deal of support and followers among Buddhists, while Christians called for a ban on human cloning. Hwang legitimized the cloning experiments through his religious affiliation: “I am Buddhist, and I have no philosophical problem with cloning. And as you know, the basis of Buddhism is that life is recycled through reincarnation. In some ways, I think, therapeutic cloning restarts the circle of life.” ¹ For the Ise shrine, too, the technique of preservation resides in allowing the circle of life to begin anew over and over again, maintaining life not *against* death but *through and beyond death*. Death itself is built into the system of preservation. In this way *Being* gives way to the cyclical process that includes death and decay. In the unending cycle of life there is no longer anything unique, original, singular, or final. Only repetitions and reproductions exist. In the Buddhist notion of the endless cycle of life, instead of creation there is decreation. Not creation but iteration, not revolution but recurrence, not archetypes but modules determine the Chinese technology of production.

As we know, even the terra-cotta armies are manufactured from modules or stock components. Production in modules is not consistent with the idea of the original, as from the outset these are stock components. Foremost in modular production is not the idea of originality or uniqueness, but *reproducibility*. Its aim is not the manufacture of a unique, original object but mass production that nevertheless allows variations and modulations. It *modulates* the same, thereby creating differences. Modular production is modulating and varying. Thus it allows for a great deal of variety. However, it negates uniqueness in order to increase the efficiency of reproduction. For example, it is not by chance that printing was invented in China. Chinese painting too uses modular technology. The famous Chinese treatise on painting, the *Manual of the Mustard Seed Garden*, contains an infinite row of component parts from which a painting could be composed or indeed assembled.

The question of creativity arises once again in light of this modular type of production. Combining and varying elements become more important. Here Chinese cultural technology works like nature: “Chinese artists ... never lose sight of the fact that producing works in

large numbers exemplifies creativity, too. They trust that, as in nature, there always will be some among the ten thousand things from which change springs.”² Chinese art has a functional relationship with nature, not a mimetic one. It is not a question of depicting nature as realistically as possible but of operating exactly *like nature*. In nature, successive variations also produce something new, clearly without any kind of “genius”: “Painters like Zheng Xie strive to emulate nature in two respects. They produce large, almost limitless quantities of works and are enabled to do so by module systems of compositions, motifs, and brushstrokes. But, they also imbue every single work with its own unique and inimitable shape, as nature does in its prodigious invention of forms. A lifetime devoted to training his aesthetic sensibilities enables the artist to approximate the power of nature.”³



From the Manual of the Mustard Seed Garden.

- a.
- b.

Shanzhai: Fake

山寨

Shanzhai (山寨) is the Chinese neologism for “fake.” There are now also expressions such as *shanzhaism* (山寨主義), *shanzhai culture* (山寨文化), and *shanzhai spirit* (山寨精神). Today *shanzhai* encompasses all areas of life in China. There are *shanzhai* books, a *shanzhai* Nobel Prize, *shanzhai* movies, *shanzhai* politicians, and *shanzhai* stars. Initially the term was applied to cell phones. *Shanzhai* cell phones are forgeries of branded products such as Nokia or Samsung. They are sold under names such as Nokir, Samsing, or Anycat. But they are actually anything but crude forgeries. In terms of design and function they are hardly inferior to the original. Technological or aesthetic modifications give them their own identity. They are multifunctional and stylish. *Shanzhai* products are characterized in particular by a high degree of flexibility. For example, they can adapt very quickly to particular needs and situations, which is not possible for products made by large companies because of their long production cycles. The *shanzhai* fully exploits the situation’s potential. For this reason alone it represents a genuinely Chinese phenomenon.





Forgery or original?

The ingenuity of *shanzhai* products is frequently superior to that of the original. For example, one *shanzhai* cell phone has the additional function of being able to identify counterfeit money. In this way it has established itself as an original. The new emerges from surprising variations and combinations. The *shanzhai* illustrates a particularly type of creativity. Gradually its products depart from the original, until they mutate into originals themselves. Established labels are constantly modified. Adidas becomes Adidos, Adadas, Adadis, Adis, Dasida, and so on. A truly Dadaist game is being played with these labels that not only initiates creativity but also parodically or subversively affects positions of economic power and monopolies. This is a combination of subversion and creation.



Who is who?



Does it make the product a fake if it shows the Apple mutating into incredible shapes, people growing wings, or the Puma learning to smoke?

The word *shanzhai* literally means “mountain stronghold.” The famous novel *Water Margin* (shui hu zhuan, 水滸傳) tells how, during the Song dynasty, outlaws (peasants, officials, merchants, fishermen, officers, and monks) would hole up in a mountain stronghold to fight the corrupt regime. The literary context itself lends *shanzhai* a subversive dimension. Even examples of *shanzhai* on the Internet that parody the Party-controlled state media are interpreted as subversive acts directed against the monopoly of opinion and representation. Inherent in this interpretation is the hope that the *shanzhai* movement might deconstruct the power of state authority at the political level and release democratic energies. However, if we reduce *shanzhai* to its anarchic and subversive aspect, we lose sight of its playful and creative potential. It is precisely the way in which it was produced and created, not its rebellious content, that aligns the novel *Water Margin* with *shanzhai*. In the first place, the authorship of the novel is very uncertain. It is presumed that the stories that form the heart of the novel were written by several authors. Moreover, there are many very different versions of the novel. One version contains 70 chapters, while others have 100 or even 120 chapters. In China, cultural products are often not attributed to any one individual. They frequently have a collective origin and do not display forms of expression associated with an individual, creative genius. They cannot be unequivocally ascribed to one artist who would emerge as their owner or even their creator. Other classic works, too, such as *Dream of the Red Chamber* (hong lou meng, 紅樓夢) or *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (san guo yan yi, 三國演義), have been rewritten time and again. There are different versions of them by different authors, some with and some without a happy ending.

In the Chinese literary world today we can see a similar process. If a novel is very successful, fakes immediately appear. They are not always inferior imitations that simulate a nonexistent proximity to the original. Alongside the obvious fraudulent labeling, there are also fakes that transform the original by embedding it in a new context or giving it a surprising twist. Their creativity is based on active transformation and variation. Even the success of Harry Potter initiated this dynamic. There now exist numerous Harry Potter fakes that

perpetuate and transform the original. *Harry Potter and the Porcelain Doll*, for instance, makes the story Chinese. Together with his Chinese friends Long and Xing, Harry Potter defeats his Eastern adversary Yandomort, the Chinese equivalent of Voldemort, on the sacred mountain of Taishan. Harry Potter can speak fluent Chinese, but has trouble eating with chopsticks, and so on.

Shanzhai products do not deliberately set out to deceive. Indeed, their attraction lies in how they specifically draw attention to the fact that they are not original, that they are *playing* with the original. *Shanzhai's* game of fakery inherently produces deconstructive energies. *Shanzhai* label design also exhibits humorous characteristics. On the *shanzhai* iPhone cell phone, the label looks like an original iPhone label that has slightly worn away. *Shanzhai* products often have their own charm. Their creativity, which cannot be denied, is determined not by the discontinuity and suddenness of a new creation that completely *breaks* with the old, but by the *playful* enjoyment in modifying, varying, combining, and transforming the old.



Zhang Bin, *Harry Potter and the Porcelain Doll*.

Process and change also dominate Chinese art history. Those replicas or persisting creations that constantly alter a master's oeuvre and adapt to new circumstances are themselves nothing but superb

shanzhai products. Continual transformation has established itself in China as a method of creation and creativity. ¹ The *shanzhai* movement deconstructs creation as *creatio ex nihilo*. *Shanzhai is decreation*. It opposes identity with transformational difference, indeed working, active *differing*; Being with the process; and essence with the path. In this way *shanzhai* manifests the genuinely Chinese spirit.

Although it has no creative genius, nature is actually more creative than the greatest human genius. Indeed, high-tech products are often *shanzhai* versions of products of nature. The creativity of nature itself relies on a continual process of variation, combination, and mutation. Evolution too follows the model of constant transformation and adaptation. The creativity inherent in *shanzhai* will elude the West if the West sees it only as deception, plagiarism, and the infringement of intellectual property.

Shanzhai operates through intensive hybridization. In China, Maoism was itself a kind of *shanzhai* Marxism. In the absence of a working-class and industrial proletariat in China, Maoism undertook a transformation of Marx's original doctrine. In its ability to hybridize, Chinese communism is now adapting to turbo-capitalism. The Chinese clearly see no contradiction between capitalism and Marxism. Indeed, *contradiction* is not a Chinese concept. Chinese thought tends more toward "both-and" than "either-or." Evidently Chinese communism shows itself to be as capable of change as the oeuvre of a great master that is open to constant transformations. It presents itself as a hybrid body. The anti-essentialism of the Chinese thought process allows no fixed ideological definition. As a result, we might expect surprising hybrid and *shanzhai* forms in Chinese politics too. The political system in China today already reveals markedly hybrid characteristics. Over time Chinese *shanzhai* communism may *mutate* into a political form that one could very well call *shanzhai democracy*, especially since the *shanzhai* movement releases anti-authoritarian, subversive energies.

- b.
- a.
- a.
- b.

Notes

Quan: Law

[1.](#) G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibreen (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1956), 131.

[2.](#) Kant too defines substance in relation to permanence: “All appearances contain the permanent (substance) as the object itself, and the transitory as its mere determination that is, as a way in which the object exists.” *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1964), 212.

[3.](#) The verb *substare* (literally, “to stand beneath”) from which the concept of substance is derived, means among other things to withstand. *Stare* is also used in the sense of to survive, to hold one’s ground, to withstand. The substance is the identical thing that, fixed in itself, distinguishes itself from the Other. Substantiality is thus nothing but steadfastness and permanence. Alongside basis or essence, *hypostasis* also means withstanding and constancy, which heroically withstands (*wider-steht*) all changes.

[4.](#) The event can be understood as an imaginary construct that suppresses what has gone before, from which it has become, and establishes itself as an absolute beginning.

[5.](#) Cf. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 247: “The miracle ... [is] the birth of new men and the new beginning, the action they are capable of by virtue of being born. ... It is this faith in and hope for the world that found perhaps its most glorious and most succinct expression in the new words with which the Gospels announced their ‘glad tidings’: ‘A child has been born unto us.’” For Heidegger, being-toward-death causes heroic individuation and resoluteness toward self.

[6.](#) François Jullien obscures the aspect of *jing* too much from Chinese thought. The idea of decreation also determines *jing*. For example, Confucius interestingly denied authorship of his teachings. He is not a creator but a medium. He mediates what has already been: “I transmit but do not innovate; I am truthful in what I say and devoted to Antiquity” (*Analects*, 7.1).

[7.](#) Cf. Harro von Senger, “Strategemische Weisheit: Chinesische Wörter im Sinnbezirk der *List*,” in *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte*, vol. 39 (Bonn: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1996), 27–102, at 52.

[8.](#) Harro von Senger points out that in Western Chinese dictionaries this level of meaning of *zhi* is not mentioned. This unusual detail can be explained by the fact that the Western understanding of wisdom precludes its contiguousness with cunning. Cf. von Senger, “Strategemische Weisheit.”

Zhen ji: Original

1. Sigmund Freud, *The Origins of Psychoanalysis: Letters to Wilhelm Fliess*, trans. Eric Mosbacher and James Strachey (New York: Basic, 1954), 173.

2. Derrida too calls this “différance” that resists any mark of presence and identity the “trace” (see *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982], 18). His concept of the trace also lacks any teleological, theological dimension. This also makes it different from Heidegger’s notion of the “trail,” which as an “almost imperceptible promise” announces “that we would be set free into the open, now dark and perplexing, now again lightning-sharp like a sudden insight.” *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 41.

3. Not just the history of its reception but other factors as well are implicated in the constant alteration of the original:

Changes in format as a result of new mountings, cropping because of material damage, aesthetic or even commercial considerations, retouchings or retrospectively added signatures all have an impact on the work’s form over time. With regard to a Chinese picture in extreme cases the metaphor of a ship holds true, a ship that returns to its home port for the first time in generations after all its parts have been gradually replaced en route in the course of repairs. Is this the same ship to any extent? The crew is different, the inhabitants of the home city are different, and there are no blueprints that could provide information as to whether at least the original shape of the ship has remained the same while its parts have been replaced.

(Christian Unverzagt, *Der Wandlungs-leib des Dong Yuan: Die Geschichte eines malerischen Œuvres* [Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2007], 184)

4. Even the claim to truth, which is alien to the Chinese, cannot clearly establish a master’s oeuvre. Wilhelm Valentiner’s 1921 catalog of Rembrandt’s works contains 711 paintings. In 1935 Bredius listed 630 works as being by the artist’s own hand. Thirty years later in 1968 Horst Gerson identified only 420 pictures as authentic. The Rembrandt corpus of the Rembrandt Research Project, which claims to eliminate from his oeuvre paintings by Rembrandt’s colleagues as well, lists approximately 300 works. Even the meticulous stylistic analysis of so-called connoisseurs or experts is not free from arbitrariness.

5. Theodor W. Adorno, “Wagner’s Relevance for Today,” in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert, trans. Susan H. Gillespie (Berkeley: University of California Press), 586–587.

6. See Theodor W. Adorno, “Classicism, Romanticism, New Music,” in *Sound Figures*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 108.

7. See Wen Fong, “The Problem of Forgeries in Chinese Painting,” *Artibus Asiae* 25 (1962): 100: “The fact is that the age-honored tradition of learning the art of painting through copying in China made every Chinese painter a potential forger, and it is well known that some of the greatest Chinese painters and connoisseurs were, or were said to be, master ‘forgers.’ According to Chao Hsi-ku (early thirteenth century), Mi Fu made a habit of taking advantage of his preeminence as a connoisseur by substituting important masterpieces, which were brought to him for ‘authentication,’ with exact copies.”

8. Unverzagt, *Der Wandlungsleib*, 199.

[9.](#) See Fong, “The Problem of Forgeries,” 99:

It should be noted that art forgery in China has never carried such dark connotations as it does in the West. Since the aim of studying art has always been either aesthetic cultivation or pure enjoyment, rather than scientific knowledge, the acquisition of a genuine masterpiece—and by the same token, the ability to create a perfect forgery—was a matter of virtuosity and pride. The legal or ethical problems of an “honest business transaction” never entered into the picture. As a matter of fact, it was precisely for very good reasons of ethics and even better ones of fact, that the owner of a forgery was usually protected, as far as possible, from knowing the truth. Scientific truth certainly had no immediate bearing on art appreciation. If someone is gullible enough to buy as well as derive pleasure from forgeries, why spoil the poor man’s illusions?

[10.](#) See Frank Arnau, *Kunst der Fälscher—Fälscher der Kunst* (Düsseldorf: Econ Verlag, 1964), 258: “The eighty-year-old Nestor of Dutch art historians, Dr. Abraham Bredius, an authority on Dutch master painters, examined the painting and declared it to be by Vermeer. As a precaution the ‘four tests of authenticity’ that were still considered infallible at that time, were also undertaken: 1. The resistance of the paint to alcohol and other solvents. 2. Evidence of lead white in the white areas. 3. X-ray examination of the lower ground. 4. Microscopic and spectral examination of the most important pigments. These tests revealed nothing that argued against the authenticity of the picture.”

[11.](#) The idea of genius and of the original comes into existence with Leonardo da Vinci. He elevated the painter to the status of a creative genius and derived the preeminence of painting above other arts from the impossibility of creating an exact copy of a painting. On painting he wrote:

It cannot be taught to someone not endowed with it by nature, as can be done with mathematics in which the pupil takes in as much as the master gives out. It cannot be copied as can writing, in which the copy has as much worth as the original. It cannot be reproduced as can sculpture, in which the cast shares with the original the essential merits of the piece. It cannot produce infinite offspring, like printed books. Painting alone retains its nobility, bringing honours singularly to its author and remaining precious and unique. It never gives rise to offspring equal to itself, and such singularity gives it greater excellence than those things that are spread abroad. (Martin Kemp, ed., *Leonardo on Painting*, selected and trans. Martin Kemp and Margaret Walker [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989], 19)

[12.](#) Fu Shen and Jan Stuart, *Challenging the Past: The Paintings of Chang Dai-chien* (Washington: University of Washington Press, 1991), 37.

Xian zhan: Seals of Leisure

- [1.](#) See Unverzagt, *Der Wandlungsleib*, 186: “The form of the work that accrues over the course of the collection’s history reflects the fact that the artistic value of a picture has a social component. ... As the age of a picture grows, so does the power of the social relations made manifest in it.”
- [2.](#) In the examination to become an official, candidates were also required to compose poems on given themes. Huizong, the art-loving Song dynasty emperor, even introduced painting as an examination subject.
- [3.](#) Signatures on pictures in Europe only came into use from the sixteenth century onward.
- [4.](#) The picture apparently depicts a betrothal scene.

Fuzhi: Copy

- [1.](#) Cf. Byung-Chul Han, “Das Klonen und der Ferne Osten,” *Lettre International* 64 (2004): 108–109.
- [2.](#) Lothar Ledderose, *Ten Thousand Things: Module and Mass Production in Chinese Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 7.
- [3.](#) *Ibid.*, 213.

Shanzhai: Fake

- [1.](#) The creativity on which the shanzhai movement is based assumes an active process of adaptation and playful combination. This form of creativity cannot be expressed in such hackneyed Asianisms as “not-doing” or contemplation. In his discussion of creativity, even Hans Lenk is unable to transcend these Asianisms:

In Taoism, for example, if we think of Laozi’s *Tao Te Ching*, inaction or *wu wei* plays a highly important role. Creative thought does not take place as a thing compelled or enforced, not when one wants to generate or even force it, but one must tune into letting it happen. *Wu chi* means “no knowledge.” Accordingly it means that one does not force the activation of knowledge, but instead adopts a kind of open, primitive, naïve state of comprehension. *Wu yu* is the state of non-desiring which means showing no desires,

interests, passion, “disinterested pleasure” in the sense of Kant’s Aesthetics, or disinterested openness and tolerance. This passive kind of meditation without action, without knowledge, without passions—this is the idea on which creativity is based in Taoist meditation. Letting it happen is considered the mother of creativity. (Hans Lenk, *Kreative Aufstiege: Zur Philosophie und Psychologie der Kreativität* [Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2000], 108–109)

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