Transforming Monkey: Adaptation and Representation of a Chinese Epic. By Hongmei Sun. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018. ix, 219 pp.
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Transforming Monkey by Hongmei Sun is an enlightening study of adaptation, tracing the rewritings, reconfigurations, and reincarnations of the Monkey King Sun Wukong from Wu Cheng'en's *Journey of the West*. In fact, these adaptations can be summarized as three types of journey. First, *Transforming Monkey* maps a journey across time from traditional China into the twenty-first century. After all, *Journey to the West* in itself is a work of adaptation from various sources into what is today known as the canonical classic. The temporal journey of *Transforming Monkey* covers two chapters each on adaptations in premodern China, on those from the twentieth century and on those from the first decade of the twenty-first century. Second, *Transforming Monkey* maps a journey around the globe, varying the motif inscribed in the original title of the *Journey to the West*. While the "West" in the original referred to India as the origin of Buddhism, the twenty-first-century adaptations of the epic take the Monkey King from the PRC to Hong Kong and the United States. Third, Sun studies a journey across media, starting with a sutra and a drama that were among the sources of Wu's novel, through fiction, drama adaptations, Peking opera, animated films, *lianhuan hua*, movies, Internet literature, and graphic novels. The twentieth- and twenty-first-century works covered include the first animated feature film in China, *Princess Iron Fan* (1941); the Mao-era *Havoc in Heaven* adapted into opera, graphic forms, and animated film (1961–64); the comedy *A Chinese Odyssee* (1995, Hong Kong); the Internet fan fiction *Story of Wukong*; the television mini-series *The Lost Empire* (2001); the movie *The Forbidden Kingdom* (2008); and, lastly, with Gene Luan Yang's graphic novel *American Born Chinese* (2006), which tackles the issue of Asian American identity.

With its focus on the transformations of Sun Wukong in the adaptations, *Transforming Monkey* attains neat analytical conciseness, in terms of both content and theoretical considerations. After all, the Monkey King is essentially about transformation; he is conceptualized as a "transforming monkey" not only by Sun, but by Wu Cheng'en. He changes form and appearance, and he maneuvers between the human world and that of the gods. This renders him multivalent, allowing readers to identify with (parts of) him, which in turn explains the fascination the character has exerted over readers, as well as over other authors: with multivalence engraved into his character, he lends himself particularly well for adaptation. Unsurprisingly, then, transformations of the character continued after the "original" epic through adaptations of the text. *Transforming Monkey* thus feeds into an emerging stream of recent scholarship that engages with issues of rewriting, adaptation, translation, and the power of models, such as Pang Laikwan's *The Art of Cloning* or Xing Fan's *Staging Revolution*.[1] While these discuss cultural production during and leading up to the Cultural Revolution, Sun traces one figure and the myth surrounding it through its various adaptations and rewritings over time.

This approach brings to light two observations that may be applied more broadly to adaptation studies. First, each adaptation is a representation of the original myth; it

[1]Pang Laikwan, *The Art of Cloning: Creative Production during China's Cultural Revolution* (London: Verso, 2017); Xing Fan, *Staging Revolution: Artistry and Aesthetics in Model Beijing Opera during the Cultural Revolution* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2018).

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represents one distinct interpretation of the original story (or what is taken to be the respective original). The vast amount of Monkey King adaptations rests on the multivalence of the original figure—and reinforces it in turn, as there is not just one Monkey King available to contemporary audiences, but multiple Monkey Kings. The figure is known to most Chinese, yet may signify something entirely different based on which adaptation, representation, or interpretation one grew up with. Second, adaptations rightly deserve to be regarded as creative works in their own right and some, like *A Chinese Odyssee*, have themselves become classics by now spurring fan cultures of their own.

Adaptations thus complicate concepts of authorship, with authorship becoming attributable to both the original author and the adaptor into the various genres and media. Sun demonstrates that "[i]n many of these cases, the image of Sun Wukong is used as self-representation, and accordingly the monkey's story is revised and the image changed or even manipulated the political agenda of the adaptors" (p. 7). In his rewritings, Sun Wukong thus is turned from the clever trickster into a national hero, from a fighter into a lover, depending on the agenda of the respective adaptor. More than that, in the graphic novel *American Born Chinese*, he even appears as an alter ego of his author, who uses the multivalence inscribed into the original Monkey King to negotiate his own experiences as a Chinese in America. The author as a category in literary theory may be dead, yet in the literary practice of readers and authors, he continues to matter—particularly when he disguises himself as yet another incarnation of the powerful myth of Sun Wukong. Sun's well-executed book therefore deserves the attention not only of the fans of the Monkey King, but also of those interested in the broad questions of the techniques, the status, and the implications of adaptation, rewriting, and representation more generally.

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The Art of Being Governed: Everyday Politics in Late Imperial China. By Michael Szonyi. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2017. xv, 303 pp. ISBN: 9780691174518 (cloth, also available as e-book).
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Given that, almost without exception, "every state must have an army" (p. 1), how did China under the rule of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) manage the daunting tasks of defending its extensive border and maintaining, within that, a semblance of order? The question is important not only for historians drawn to the traditional realm of military history but also for others interested in how the Chinese state actually functioned and how pre-twentieth-century China could be compared with other contemporaneous polities.

But central as this line of inquiries regarding state capacity and administrative efficacy may be, as Michael Szonyi argues in this pathbreaking and elegant book, there is another equally compelling story waiting to be told: how individual households in the Ming dynasty—households that had for various reasons come to be registered as "military"—managed their obligations to the state while pursuing as best as they could their own interests. So though this is certainly a book about the Ming military institution

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