
Playing Journey to the West

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As an important text for Chinese literature and culture, *Journey to the West* (Xiyou ji) has attracted inexhaustible critical attention, but few have engaged with the narrative structure or stories contained in the structure as games. One interpretive tradition takes the book as a work of fun, a product of intentionally playful writing, rather than a work with religious, philosophical, or political meaning.¹ These criticisms emphasize the author's playful intentions over the stronger tradition of reading the book as a series of allegories and see the book as the outcome of a writing game, *youxi*, played by literati in China, which is briefly discussed in the introduction to this volume. But actual games played by characters are also worthy of attention, as is the journey articulated as the narrative of a game.

I examine a common feature of the way players play and argue that the typical games and play in the *Journey to the West* narrative demonstrate a distinctively transgressive nature, which manifests also in contemporary adaptations. It has been acknowledged that games and play are potentially transgressive—a particularly interesting phenomenon for videogames.² I contend that players in *Journey to the West* are transgressive in a specific manner: cheating—the violation or manipulation of rules of games—is not only commonly employed by players, but even encouraged by the narrative.³ I also propose to view the journey (*you*) itself as a game (*you*) designed by the Buddha and Bodhisattva Guanyin, who form the pilgrimage team of Tripitaka and his disciples, including Sun Wukong (the Monkey King, or Monkey), Zhu Bajie (Piggy, or Pig), and Sha Wujing (Friar Sand, or Sandy), as the main players, and set goals for them: to travel to the Western

Heaven to retrieve Buddhist scriptures. Along the journey, the pilgrims encounter enemies and friends, some of which are intentionally positioned by the Buddha and Bodhisattvas as designated stops in the game, where the players engage in contests, wagers, and other playful activities, albeit ones with serious consequences.

Journey to the West is a cumulative text, written by generations of authors on the basis of previous works, with Wu Cheng'en (ca. 1500–ca. 1582) generally accepted as the author of the 1592 version that is widely considered canonical.⁴ The multiple narrative threads, including (1) the Monkey King creating a turmoil in Celestial Palace, (2) the Tang Emperor's lawsuit with the Dragon King in the netherworld, (3) Buddha and Guanyin's arrangement of the pilgrims' journey for the sutras (including Tripitaka's birth story), and (4) the journey itself, are all part of the larger game of the journey. Each narrative also contains short episodes of games within it. Read through the lens of gameplay, many seemingly arbitrary constraints placed on the narrative make sense. For instance, the troubling inconvenience of the journey that all pilgrims must endure—the entire team following the speed of Tripitaka, a slow traveler and easy target for demons along the way, despite the superb supernatural abilities of all other members—has a sound reason: games require rules that “prohibit more efficient in favor of less efficient means.”⁵ Players of a game “engage in an artificial conflict, defined by rules, that results in a quantifiable outcome.”⁶ The narrative of *Journey to the West* explains that many of the demons that the pilgrims have to defeat are arranged by Buddha and Guanyin (thus “artificial”) so that the pilgrims can arrive at the destination after experiencing the required eighty-one sufferings (thus “inefficient”). The game reading of the *Journey to the West* narrative does not negate previous readings of the journey's various allegorical meanings, but it opens the interpretation of the journey to an additional possibility. The game setup also conforms to the idea of “divine gameplay” (*shentong youxi*) as discussed in the introduction to this volume, albeit in this case in a fictional form.

The analysis in this chapter focuses on three sets of games to demonstrate the transgressive features of gameplay in *Journey to the West*. Part 1 compares three wagers (selected from threads 1, 2, and 4), involving the Buddha, the Dragon King, and Monkey, who all breach the border between the game and the non-game. Part 2 examines shape-shifting, a trick practiced by many

characters, to showcase how border crossing in the gameplay of *Journey to the West* encroaches on the boundary between the original and the copy. Part 3 examines how the continuous rewritings and adaptations of *Journey to the West*, including an increasing number of film adaptations in recent years, have transformed the narrative into a network of metagames that discusses how to restart and replay the game repeatedly through the various playthroughs, generating endless possibilities for new rounds of play.

Video games based on *Journey to the West*, despite their close kinship to the narrative, are not addressed here, due to the limitations of scope and length. There is a deliberate indifference to the distinction between games and play in this chapter, owing to the lack of differentiation of these concepts in Chinese, the varied definitions that both receive in the field of game studies and their inseparable relationship, and the transgressive nature of gameplay in *Journey to the West*.⁷

A Map Is Not the Territory?

Many scholars accept that there might exist an earlier urtext that Wu Cheng'en revised or edited into the 1592 edition of *Journey to the West*.⁸ Fragments of such an urtext, *Journey to the West as Storytelling* (Xiyou ji pinghua; hereafter, *Storytelling*), survive and are recorded in other texts, including the story that introduces the Tripitaka thread of stories into the *Journey to the West* narrative (narrative thread 3), namely the wager between the Dragon King of the Jing River and fortune teller Yuan Shoucheng regarding weather forecasting.⁹ Another fragment is an account of the contest between the pilgrims and three Taoist demons along the journey in Cart Slow Kingdom.¹⁰ The fact that the only two stories surviving from *Storytelling* are records of competitive games speaks to the importance of games for *Journey to the West*; each example represents one type of game commonly played in *Journey to the West* by humans, demons, or immortal characters.¹¹

Although the hundred-chapter *Journey to the West* is far more extensive than the *Storytelling* fragments, the wager between the Dragon King and Yuan Shoucheng remains unchanged: After hearing a report about a fortune teller named Yuan who can accurately predict the best location and time for fishing, the Dragon King transforms into a scholar to meet

Yuan, with the intention of stopping him from causing the demise of sea creatures. When the conversation begins, Yuan answers Dragon's weather inquiry with a forecast of the following day's rain. The Dragon King, a god in charge of local rain, responds self-assuredly with a wager that Yuan's forecast will be inaccurate. However, on returning to his residence, he receives an edict from Jade Emperor about the next day's rain, precisely as Yuan had predicted. Driven to win the wager, the Dragon King resorts to transgression: he changes the quantity and time of the rain for the following day, and subsequently shows up at Yuan's place to claim his winnings.

But Dragon needs only a composed reminder from Yuan before his pride turns into panic: he has committed a capital crime by defying the Jade Emperor's order. From this point on, Dragon's goal shifts from winning the game to saving his own life. Following Yuan's direction, the Dragon King shows himself in a dream of the Tang emperor and begs for help, addressing the human emperor as the "true dragon" while referring to himself the "faux dragon."¹² This flattering contrast between true and false succeeds in winning him the help of the emperor, who tries to save the Dragon King's life but eventually fails: though he could stop Wei Zheng, the designated executioner of the Dragon King, from killing the dragon in life, he cannot stop Wei from doing it in a dream. Dragon is beheaded while Wei Zheng takes a nap.

The Dragon King's infamous failure constitutes a warning for the many game players later in the book: games in this world have serious consequences. Games are always shown as an inseparable part of the world, and to win the game it is important to cross the line between the game and non-game part of life in a productive way. Playing a game is never just about focusing on the game itself. A discussion of the relationship between game and life is more productive when illustrated by Buddha's wager with Sun Wukong, detailed below. Buddha's victory indicates that the way to win is to blur the line between the game and the world, or the line between the map and the territory. Dragon fails due to his inability to manipulate the line. Monkey also fails but learns to become a better player later, applying the lesson to other games in which he participates.

In characterizing play, anthropologist Gregory Bateson uses map-territory relations allegorically, noting that the relationship of language and what it denotes resembles that of a map and the territory it charts—the

map is not the territory, just like the word “cat” cannot scratch us.¹³ According to Bateson, the ability to play means the ability to communicate and understand map-territory relations. He postulates that play implies a combination of primary and secondary (unconscious and conscious) processes. “Play marks a step forward in the evolution of communication—the crucial step in the discovery of map-territory relations. In primary process, map and territory are equated; in secondary process, they can be discriminated. In play, they are both equated and discriminated.”¹⁴ A cat’s playful nip is a bite and not a bite at the same time. Actions of “play” are thus paradoxically related to other actions of “not play.” In *Journey to the West*, the secret of winning lies not only in understanding the map-territory relations, but in a supremacy in playing with the line between map and territory, play and not-play, the unreality in the game and the reality behind the game.

It is via the wager with Buddha that Sun Wukong, having defeated everyone in Heaven and challenged the Jade Emperor’s authority, is eventually subjugated. As a solution to the conflict between Heaven and Monkey, Buddha proposes to Monkey: “If you have the ability to somersault clear of this right palm of mine, I shall consider you the winner. . . . If you cannot somersault out of my hand, you can go back to the Region Below and be a monster.”¹⁵ Monkey believes he can easily win, as a single somersault can carry him 108,000 miles away, while Buddha’s hand is “not even one foot across.” This thought is confirmed after he sees Buddha stretch out his right hand, which is “about the size of a lotus leaf.”¹⁶ He does not know that what he sees is the map and not the territory; he does not know the unreality of what appears to be real. When he jumps away from Buddha’s palm and somersaults to what he believes to be the edge of Heaven, marked by five pillars, he even writes a few words on the pillar and leaves his monkey pee there to prove that he has made it off the Buddha’s hand. Only after he returns is he told that he has never left the palm, with the words he has written on Buddha’s finger, accompanied with the smell of pee, as evidence. Discovering the discrepancy between perception and reality, the disbelieving monkey tries to somersault to the place with pillars again, but Buddha’s five fingers transform into the Five Phases Mountain and imprison Monkey underneath.¹⁷ Buddha has confused Monkey by making the line between the game and non-game permeable. While showing Monkey a palm “the size of a lotus leaf,” when Monkey begins to

somersault Buddha changes the size of his palm to as far as Monkey can fly—or that is one way to see it. Monkey's experience of having left the palm does not count, because the signs left on the fingers indicate that the two different realms are one and the same. Buddha has set a very perceivable realm for the game—what appears for Monkey's eyes as his palm—but once Monkey hops off his palm he replaces the realm of the palm with a realm bigger than Monkey's somersault distance, so the non-game realm is being enclosed within the game. Although strictly speaking Buddha has cheated, he can prove he has not, since for someone who can move the boundary, the map *is* the territory: play is not-play; game is reality. His last action to end the wager—transforming his fingers into mountains to keep Monkey within—indicates that he has violated the rules again (abrogating the promise that he will let Monkey go if he fails to jump free from the palm), but it also proves the danger of a permeated line between realms: his hand, which should be the frame and setting of the wager, transforms into Five Phases Mountain, an element of external reality, reaching both spatially and temporally beyond the game. Everything is within Buddha's palm, but he can also make his palm not his palm. With the ability to erase the border of un/reality, Buddha wins with ease.

Unlike Buddha's manipulations, the Dragon King's cheating move in his wager fails to observe the boundary between play and not-play. Instead of maneuvering, nudging, or corrupting the line, his gameplay simply ignores it. After he wins the game by violating the rules, the real-world consequences catch up with him. Even his alleviating moves after realizing his mistake continue the error: to change the fate of being beheaded in his reality, he begs the emperor of the human world, who in turn also fails to understand the importance of the line between the two worlds: one where he resides and another he can access only via dreams. Both Dragon and the emperor would like to affect the game by blurring the line between the map and the territory, but unfortunately neither has the ability to do so.

For Monkey, after learning the distinction between map and territory, the journey provides abundant opportunities for practice. A wager that he proposes to two minor demons at Level-Top Mountain to win their magic gourd and jade jar illustrates his improved skills in manipulating the line.¹⁸ Learning of the magic gourd and jade jar's capacity to engulf a thousand people, Monkey produces a fake magic gourd which, according to him, can

hold the heavens inside, and procures an agreement with the demons that once he shows them how the gourd engulfs the heavens, they will trade. His task is to convince the demons that the unreality of holding the heavens is a true act. What the demons see is that Monkey throws the gourd in the air with an incantation, and subsequently it becomes pure dark, and they lose sight of everything—the heavens is held inside the gourd. What they do not see, proceedings outside of the game proper, is that Monkey sends a threat/request to Heaven: “I therefore beseech His Majesty with due reverence to let old Monkey borrow Heaven to be stored up for half an hour so that I may accomplish my task. If he but utters half a ‘no,’ I shall ascend to the Divine Mists Hall and start a war!”¹⁹ The discussion in the Divine Mists Hall upon hearing this demand reveals the amusing truth. Quite annoyed at the Monkey’s nuisance, Jade Emperor exclaims, “This impudent ape! . . . How could Heaven be stored up?” Third Prince Nata responds that Heaven, in principle, cannot be stored up, but the deities could create an illusion to help Monkey by unfurling Lord Zhenwu’s banner of black feathers across the South Heaven Gate, and by so doing “the sun, the moon, and the stars will be covered, and it will be so dark on earth that people cannot see each other even if they are standing face to face. The fiends will be deceived into thinking that Heaven has been stored up.”²⁰ Jade Emperor consents to this, and as a result, Monkey wins the wager.

Note that all the deities in Heaven are willing to collaborate with the Monkey King over a trivial wager so that he can win the magic gourd even though he could instead simply steal it from the minor demons. Surely Monkey has deliberated over this latter option but decided against it because his reputation would be ruined by committing robbery in broad daylight. Cheating in a game is more acceptable, apparently, and a regime from above is created to help Monkey win via cheating. The humorous tone of the book and Monkey’s playful character notwithstanding, this incident indicates a game culture in the context of *Journey to the West* that encourages skillful transgression, especially if the line between the game and life is crossed artistically. Monkey’s performance of containing Heaven in a gourd muddles the line between game and non-game successfully by having the support of everyone in the Celestial Palace, who also prove to be experts in presenting the unreal as real, while in the other example Dragon loses his wager due to the lack of a capable supporting network. The only

defect in Monkey's game is that the reader can clearly see how he has cheated, while in Buddha's case no one fathoms how he accomplished the move. But in both cases, the reason that the player's trick works is in the inequality of perception: in the former case, Buddha knows that his palm is and is not the palm, but Monkey does not; in the latter, Monkey knows that his gourd can and cannot contain Heaven, but the demons do not.

This Map Is the Territory

Despite the close association between game and non-game life, it is important to maintain the distinction to survive the game, as indicated by the Dragon King's example. Meanwhile, *Journey to the West* shows a clear preference for the characters' abilities to traverse the line without losing the awareness of it, as indicated in the wager between Buddha and Monkey. In games involving shape-shifting, a trick that Bodhisattvas and demons enjoy alike, playfulness around the border between game and life—to a point that is close to the erasure of it—is even more crucial. As discussed by Roger Caillois, a quality of “make-believe: accompanied by a special awareness of a second reality or of a free unreality, as against real life,” is one of the six core characteristics of play.²¹ While games always engage a “make-believe” element, when the players create a kind of imagined reality, set against “real life,” in the fantasized world of *Journey to the West*, the boundary between the real and the unreal is crossed or temporarily erased by shape-shifting. Instead of relying on players' consent and imagination to create the “special awareness of a secondary reality,” shape-shifting presents a false reality and tricks participants into accepting it as real. This kind of coerced rather than voluntary “make-believe” is transgressive, as it violates the most basic rule of play: that play is free.²² Interestingly, such shape-shifting-enabled crossover of the border between play and not-play in *Journey to the West* is mostly temporary, as if to maintain that although transitory transgressive mimicry is allowed, permanent distortion is unacceptable; the relation between the copy and the original shall not be reversed.

Regarding the relationship of the copy and the original, of the sign and the real, sociologist Jean Baudrillard warns of the disappearance of the distinction between map and territory altogether, or the establishment of a flipped relationship between them, using Borges's allegorical tale about

the map so detailed that it exactly covers the territory: with the decline of the empire, the map becomes a simulacrum, the double without origin. In the age of simulation, “the territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it. Henceforth, it is the map that precedes the territory . . . it is the map that engenders the territory.”²³ Many examples of gameplay in *Journey to the West* feature the endangered origin-copy difference or temporarily inverted map-territory relationship—in other words, a type of transgressive gameplay or simulation exemplified by the Cart Slow Kingdom episode.

The description of the competitions between Buddhists and Taoists at Cart Slow Kingdom in *Journey to the West* is much more elaborate than in the earlier *Storytelling* version. Beside maintaining the contests between the pilgrim monks and the three Taoist demons with Monkey’s victory in the end, the later version also has additional scenarios before and through the contests, which not only serve to showcase Sun Wukong’s skillful art of crossing the lines, but also involve another fundamental skill: simulation. Before meeting the three Taoists, Sun Wukong saved five hundred enslaved Buddhist monks by giving each of them a piece of his hair, which, when invoked, can create an image of Monkey looking so real and formidable that “not even a thousand cavalry would dare charge near him.”²⁴ This hair magic replaces the need for the real Monkey, who is free to continue his journey and to compete with the Taoists.

Another scenario added prior to the contests is the confrontation in the Abbey of the Three Pure Ones between Monkey, Pigsy, and Sandy (Buddhist monks) and the three demons (Taoists). Sneaking into the abbey to enjoy the offerings from the Taoists to the Three Pure Ones, the Buddhist disciples of Tripitaka change into the statues of the three Taoist lords so that they can sit there eating leisurely. To make their role-play more convincing, Monkey even has Pigsy move the real Taoist statues into the outhouse. With the absence of the real statues, the monks become the statues, which were put there to enjoy offerings on behalf of the real (absent) lords to begin with: the Buddhist monks are a simulation of the simulation. Discovering that the offerings are consumed, the Taoists take the pilgrim-transformed statues as the lords in person and perform a ritual and request holy water from them. Finding out that their mimicry of the map is so successful that they must act as the territory, the Buddhists produce some urine and pass it to the Taoists as holy water.

The deeply humiliated Taoists then create a series of challenges to retaliate, all intended to have the Buddhists killed. The first is in response to a drought in the kingdom: a rainmaking competition, which the monks must win in order not to be killed. The Taoists, however, are strong opponents who have brought rain to the kingdom for years in the past. As in the words of the group of rainmaking celestials who have arrived to help make the rain, “the proper magic of the Five Thunder exercised by the Taoist was not faked.”²⁵ Monkey, therefore, must interfere with the real rainmaking ceremony using his fake version. The trick that enables him to cheat without being caught is, again, the reproduction of his own image using his hair. With the spurious Monkey staying with Tripitaka to observe the rainmaking ceremony on the ground, the true body of Sun Wukong rises to midair to improvise his own rain ceremony: he bullies the rain gods into responding to his signals instead of the Taoists’, thus hijacking the Five Thunder proper magic. When it is Tripitaka’s turn to lead the rain ceremony, Monkey, in the air, signals the rainmakers to produce rain at his command, while the spurious Monkey remains on earth ensuring people believe that he has been playing honestly throughout the contest. In the following steps of the contest, Monkey continues to use the make-believe monkey to set himself free to cross the lines of unreality and life and to create more confusion between the real and the fake to win the game.

Monkey’s duplication magic brings freedom, but also indicates a danger. What if the reproduction threatens to replace the original? It was already demonstrated that Monkey can use a replacement head just as well when his original head has been cut off.²⁶ Since the copy head can replace and become the original—Monkey is still considered Monkey afterward—is it possible that in some situations the map can insist that the territory is not the territory, but the map is? When the line between map and territory becomes sufficiently ambiguous, such a situation is bound to occur, as in the widely popular and frequently retold episode of the six-eared macaque, when Sun Wukong meets his worst enemy, a monkey that looks and acts like him with a goal to replace him as the pilgrim on the westward journey.²⁷ The six-eared macaque transforms into Monkey and plays the role so well that no one can tell the real from the fake until they arrive in front of Buddha. The point of the macaque’s mimicry is not to role-play Monkey in his absence, but to act as Monkey in the real Monkey’s presence so that

the real is turned into the fake. Such reversion of the map-territory relation can only be imagined as a disastrous disorder, as indicated by the titular couplet of chapter 58: “Two-Minds cause disorder in the great cosmos; It’s hard for one body to realize true nirvana.”²⁸ The macaque is conquered the moment Buddha announces his real identity—an announcement of his failure to become the simulacrum of Sun Wukong. Monkey then takes an insubordinate action: instructed by Buddha not to move, he kills the macaque with his rod in front of dozens of his superiors. Although Monkey defends himself with the excuse of the macaque’s guilt of assault and robbery, this action is likely caused by fear—an uncontrollable urge to wipe out Monkey’s biggest threat, this map that is seeking to take over the territory.

This episode raises questions about the border between the original and the copy: What is the difference between the Monkey King and the six-eared macaque? How do we decide which one is the true pilgrim? If the macaque has become a perfect copy of Monkey, the distinction between them appears to be arbitrary and liable to break down. If Buddha had made a mistake, if one dares to think it possible, then it could have been the six-eared macaque who accompanied Tripitaka to fetch the scriptures later in the story; the map proceeds to be the territory. The narrative of *Journey to the West* does not tolerate long-term transgression of the map-territory order, as it does not allow permanent shape-shifting, although it does entertain and even encourage shape-shifting as short-term transgressive mimicry. However, such attitudes toward the relationship of the origin and the copy are changing in contemporary adaptations of *Journey to the West*.

The Map Needs to Be Redrawn!

The two sets of examples above illustrate the flexible map-territory relations in the gameplay of *Journey to the West*. With gods as game designers who try to hold absolute control, and players such as the six-eared macaque trying to subvert the game, the game continues as most characters learn to play somewhere in-between. The map-territory relation is constantly being tested; even gods are willing to be flexible, improvising to fix problems in the game. For instance, at the end of the journey, when the pilgrims have left with the scriptures, Bodhisattva Guanyin finds out that the count of ordeals that Tripitaka has undergone is only eighty, one short of the sacred

number eighty-one. An additional ordeal is hence created to complete the number on their way back.²⁹ The finishing line of the game is drawn and then moved, and what seems to be outside of the game soon turns out to be within. The fact that there is no map, nor any clear guidance for the pilgrims, seems to also point out a core lesson of the game: it is about looking for the rules instead of being taught the rules; it is about testing out the boundaries, or figuring out the slippery boundary between the map and the territory.

The transgressive gameplay connects the fictional stories and the life of readers, with the blurred line of game and non-game, original and simulacrum (and, by extension, avatar and gameplayer) emphasized. Perhaps in these games lies part of the secret of why *Journey to the West* has remained attractive to generations of readers. Many adaptations in recent years use the Monkey image for self-representation, as Monkey's struggles exemplify the pains and joys of today's readers.³⁰ There is a theme that many new adaptations share: gods as game designers reset the game repeatedly in each adaptation, so that the game players play the game in desirable ways. The players, on the other hand, particularly Wukong, demonstrate more and more clearly their unwillingness to participate in this coercive game. Such new adaptations can be viewed as new playthroughs of the original tale (or game), in which the pilgrims have increasing degrees of free will and gods find it harder to get the game back on the right track. Two such cases illustrate the transgressive gameplay designed by the gods and the varied forms of resistance employed by the players.

The 1995 Hong Kong film *A Chinese Odyssey* (Dahua xiyou), a two-part comedy, created a tragic Monkey who stays true to his heart but eventually has to succumb to his fate.³¹ The game designers, in this case Guanyin and Jade Emperor, loathing the poor performance of Sun Wukong, who rebels against the role given him, reset the game to have him reincarnated as Joker, who nevertheless resists the fate of becoming Monkey despite being reminded of it repeatedly throughout his life. At his death he succumbs to Guanyin's master plan and adopts the role of Sun Wukong.³² The imposed role-play of Monkey, a clear source of tragic sentiment in the film, is arguably what makes this work deeply appreciated by the generations of audiences who take Joker as a stand-in for themselves. Facing the transgressive game forced on him, Joker's choice is to follow his love

and use his lifetime to reject compulsory make-believe and refuse to play the game. Inspired by *A Chinese Odyssey*, Jin Hezai's internet novella *Story of Wukong* (Wukong zhuan) portrays another Sun Wukong who refuses to submit to the gods' game plan. In this version, none of the pilgrims are voluntary players. Wukong is reincarnated in his current life so that he can play the game as the gods' design without the memory of his past life, the life of a rebel, described as the six-eared macaque. According to that plan, Wukong playing the role of the pilgrim is to erase the existence of the macaque. However, with the help of all the other involuntary players of the pilgrimage game, memories of his past life return gradually and, in the end, when Wukong is coaxed into a battle with the rebellious six-eared macaque, he realizes that he is battling a copy of himself.³³

These two adaptations both feature gods as controlling game designers who use revised editions and copies (Joker and the six-eared macaque) to guide Monkey along the proper route of the game, while the protagonists resist playing their designated roles to varied degrees. In *A Chinese Odyssey*, Joker chooses to run away from the game until the end of his life, at which point his spirit comes to realize he is the Monkey King, after all. Wukong in *Story of Wukong*, in contrast, chooses to end the game for both the other Monkey and himself. After killing the Monkey who is rebelling against Heaven, Wukong is announced as the six-eared macaque and summoned to succumb. The memory of himself being the same Monkey he just killed is restored and he jumps up once again against Buddha before his own disappearance: at that moment he is Wukong and the six-eared macaque simultaneously. He has eliminated the difference between the two monkeys, and thus also deletes himself. While the Wukong in the six-eared macaque episode in *Journey to the West*, as discussed earlier, kills the macaque (the copy) so he (the original) can stay in the game, Joker (the copy) in *A Chinese Odyssey* refuses to participate in the game despite Guanyin's urging. As for the *Story of Wukong*, while the gods become more aggressive in forcing the simulacrum to replace the original—so much so that the line is altogether blurred—Wukong also rejects the coercive gameplay more completely by deleting the simulacrum and the original at the same time: the only way to stay free, outside of the game.

The *you* 遊 (journey or game) to the west is characteristic of transgressive gameplay. From Buddha to Guanyin to Monkey, all players and game

designers are masters in manipulating boundaries, including the lines between game and non-game, the territory and the map, the copy and the original. Whether using shape-shifting or other magical tricks, transgressive gameplay in *Journey to the West* ensures victory by crossing boundaries temporarily without endangering such boundaries. The transgressive gameplay demonstrated by contemporary adaptations allow for a more prolonged blurring of the line between the simulacrum and the original.

Notes

1. There have been many commentaries on the book as a work of *youxi* starting in the Ming and Qing periods; this approach continued with Hu Shi and Lu Xun in the early twentieth century. Western interpretations focus more on religious and philosophical allegories. For a review of Chinese commentaries, see Zang Huiyuan, “*Xiyou ji* zhuti ‘youxi shuo’ fazhan jianlun,” *Journal of Taiyuan University of Technology (Social Sciences)* 3 (2010): 3–7; for a review of Western criticism, see Vincent Yang, “A Masterpiece of Dissemblance: A New Perspective on ‘*Xiyou ji*,’” *Monumenta Serica* 60 (2012): 151–94.

2. Kristine Jørgensen and Faltin Karlsen, eds., *Transgression in Games and Play* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2018).

3. Jie Guo, Li Guo, and Jiayi Chen’s chapters in this volume all engage with transgressive gameplay, albeit with their own focus.

4. Questions of authorship and provenance continue to be debated. For a summary of studies on the authorship, see Anthony Yu, introduction to *The Journey to the West*, by Wu Cheng’en, trans. Anthony Yu, 1–96 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012). This chapter refers to the 1592 Shidetang edition as the original, with the understanding that the relationship between the Shidetang edition and two shorter versions from around the same time, *Tang Sanzang xiyou shi’e zhuan* (A chronicle of Tang Sanzang’s journey to the west and deliverance from the ordeals) by Zhu Dingchen and *Xiyou ji zhuan* (Story of the journey to the west) by Yang Zhihe, remain debatable. For more about the accretive history of *Xiyou ji*, see Glen Dudbridge, *The Hsi-yu chi: A Study of Antecedents to the Sixteenth-Century Chinese Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); Zheng Zhenduo, “*Xiyouji* de Yanhua,” in *Zhongguo wenxue yanjiu xinbian*, 263–99 (Taipei: Wen-guang, 1973) and Yu, introduction. This chapter uses the *Xiyou ji* printed by Ren-min Wenxue Chubanshe (1988) as the Chinese version and *The Journey to the West* translated by Anthony Yu as the English version unless otherwise specified.

5. Bernard Suits, *Grasshopper: Games, Life, and Utopia* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2005), 34.

6. Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman, *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 80.

7. Bo Kampmann Walther reviews the efforts toward differentiating games and play by academics in “Playing and Gaming Reflections and Classifications,” *Game Studies: The International Journal of Computer Game Research* 3, no. 1 (2003), <http://www.gamestudies.org/0301/walther/>.

8. Andrew Plaks, *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987); Dudbridge, *The Hsi-yu chi*; Cai Tieying, *Xiyou ji ziliao huibian* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2010).

9. This episode is recorded in *Yongle dadian* v.13139; the expanded version constitutes chapter 9 and much of chapter 10 of *Xiyou ji*. See Cai, *Ziliao huibian*, 476–78.

10. This fragment is included in *Proverbs of Pak Tongshi* (Pak T'ongsa onhae), a Chinese language textbook printed in Korea in 1677. See Cai, *Ziliao huibian*, 478–84.

11. Other brief references of incidents in *Storytelling* do exist, but they are not fully detailed stories.

12. Both the *Yongle dadian* excerpt and chapter 9 of *Xiyou ji* differentiate the “true dragon” and “faux dragon,” and in *Xiyou ji* the Tang emperor also speaks with his officials about the “dragon in the dream.”

13. Gregory Bateson, “A Theory of Play and Fantasy,” in *The Game Design Reader: A Rules of Play Anthology*, ed. Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman, 314–28 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 317.

14. Bateson, “Theory of Play,” 321.

15. Wu, *Journey*, 1:194.

16. Wu, *Journey*, 1:194.

17. Wu, *Journey*, 1:195.

18. Wu, *Journey*, 2:104–18.

19. Wu, *Journey*, 2:116.

20. Wu, *Journey*, 2:116.

21. Roger Caillois postulates six essential qualities for play: it is free, separate, uncertain, unproductive, governed by rules, and make-believe. See Roger Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games*, trans. Meyer Barash (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1961).

22. Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games*, 6.

23. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulations*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 1.

24. Wu, *Journey*, 2:277.

25. Wu, *Journey*, 2:293.

26. Wu, *Journey*, 2:307–8.

27. Wu, *Journey*, 3:104–17.

28. “Two-minds” here refers to the two monkeys, since Sun Wukong is repeatedly referred to as “mind monkey” in the book. See Yu, introduction, 63–76.

29. Wu, *Journey*, 4:361.

30. See Hongmei Sun, *Transforming Monkey: Adaptation and Representation of a Chinese Epic* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018), on adaptations in literature and cinema with Sun Wukong adopted as a stand-in for contemporary readers.

31. See Li Zeng, “Adaptation as an Open Process: Dahua Fandom and the Reception of *A Chinese Odyssey*,” *Adaptation: The Journal of Literature on Screen Studies* 6, no. 2 (2013): 187–201, for an account of the reception of *Dahua xiyou* in China. See Kun Qian, “Pandora’s Box: Time-Image in *A Chinese Odyssey* and the Becoming of Chinese Cinema,” *Asian Cinema* 1 (2011): 308–28, for an analysis of the time element in the becoming of Monkey’s identity.

32. Jeffrey Lau, dir., *A Chinese Odyssey, Part One: Pandora’s Box*, and *Part Two: Cinderella* (Hong Kong: Newport Entertainment, 1995).

33. Jin Hezai, *Wukong zhuan* (Beijing: Guangming Ribao Chubanshe, 2001).