

**Copyright Matters - Imitation, Creativity and Authenticity in Contemporary Chinese Literature**

People in the West imagine Chinese culture to be a genuine copycat-culture. In Western popular opinion "the Chinese" imitate, if not fake, anything from high-speed megalev trains and brand clothing to DVDs and books. Is imitation something particularly Chinese? With this question in mind, I analyze recent Chinese bestseller literature in search of traces and fragments borrowed, or even stolen from other literary sources. In the course of this analysis, I argue that imitation is, in fact, a highly effective tool for creativity. Through borrowing, Chinese authors create genuinely new texts and convey innovative messages. This even holds true for plagiarism: if one does not simply dismiss plagiarized texts on moral grounds, but subjects them to literary analysis, it becomes clear that even such texts are highly creative and new pieces of art.

My project consists of five case studies that examine the phenomenon from different perspectives: One chapter is concerned with Harry Potter fakes, i.e. entirely with black market publications. A second chapter focuses on the young bestseller author Han Han, who conceives himself as victim of such black market publications. The issue of authorship and of ownership of his name and works are of vital importance to him. A third chapter covers the case of Guo Jingming, the first Chinese author convicted of plagiarism. The study traces the creative strategies between 'original' and 'plagiarism', as well as the author's artistic way to justify himself. Following this a fourth chapter analyzes Jiang Rong's highly successful novel Wolf's Totem and its follow-up publications. What, at first sight, appears to be a phenomenon of free-riding, reveals itself as a lively discourse on various matters on closer inspection. The last study deals with academic plagiarism. With this I argue that intellectual property is an issue that matters in contemporary China.

**Research Interests**

- Contemporary Chinese popular literature
- Plagiarism in China
- Imitation vs. Creativity
- Harry Potter fakes in China
- Chinese music
- Modern Chinese literature and culture
- Early 20th century literature
- Chinese Life Writing