

the facts of Shakespeare's life are few there can be no single life of Shakespeare, so Holderness writes nine. Instead of presenting the facts straightforwardly, where historical evidence is privileged above all, the problems of this approach are admitted and the myths of Shakespeare are given equal importance. The consequences of this are that first, any false part of a fact is exposed. Second, the conventional critical methodology of supporting an argument using evidence is jettisoned, given that the evidence is deemed unreliable in the function of proving an argument. Yet this methodology is hard to shake off, and the dust jacket still claims that "the nine possible short 'lives' of Shakespeare" are "supported by a body of critical and biographical work". The methodology gathers facts and authoritative evidence to support an argument while at the same time fundamentally questioning the usefulness of this approach.

The innovation of the "new" biography, as Holderness calls it, is simultaneously to include several lives of those that may have been lived, a Shakespearean multiverse, conceding that a single authoritative interpretation of Shakespeare's life is inadequate. The "nine lives" are possible lives Shakespeare could have lived or even possible aspects of his personality: as a writer; actor; butcher; businessman; husband; homosexual lover; heterosexual lover; crypto-Catholic; and the "life" of his face. Chapter One opens with the facts, the tradition and the speculation, then follows with a short section of fiction exploring the "impossible, unfillable gap" (35). This bold move becomes even bolder as he creates a fictional account of Shakespeare the Writer in the style of Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code*, being an "obvious form for its exploration" as a "pseudo-scientific romance thriller" (34). Beyond this, Holderness fails to justify why this literary work should be imitated above another. He draws on other canonised and mythologised men from literature for his creative writing, such as Oscar Wilde, Arthur Conan Doyle, Jonathan Swift and Ernest Hemingway. In this way, perhaps the most overwhelming impression we get from *Nine Lives* is the range of voices that speak from this text, its form reflecting its polyphonic argument.

This book luxuriates in suppositions, uncertainties and teasing imaginings, where possibility is as useful as fact. It uses fake historical documents and imagined conversations between Shakespeare and his fellow actors. Holderness recreates the style of a document from 1715 with "Some Further Account of the Life &c. of Mr. William Shakespeare", adopting an archaic style with irregular spelling, winding sentences and frequent italicisation of words. From every century during and since Shakespeare's birth, voices trustworthy and untrustworthy are admitted, where judge-

ment of their authenticity or veracity is implicitly withheld. In this way, *Nine Lives* is interested not only in Shakespeare's life but in the telling of that life. It is constantly aware of other voices that gather around Shakespeare, such as the recent biographies of Peter Ackroyd, Katherine Duncan-Jones and Stephen Greenblatt. Holderness argues that the presence of the biographer is such that every biography becomes an autobiography. Thus, instead of writing one biography of Shakespeare he puts many interpretations of Shakespeare's life on display.

Holderness justifies his fictional creations by making their invented status explicitly clear. In this sense he has advanced the academic argument by making important distinctions in the miasma of Shakespeare's life, in the topic of "Shakespeare" rather than the man himself. This is an academic book to the extent that it engages with metabiography – the theory of writing biography – about which it is well-informed. Yet the fictional sections tend to dominate because of their radical nature and they feel more like creative writing designed for a popular audience. As part of the "Shakespeare Now" series that aims to bring a public audience to scholarly discourse, this is part of Holderness's remit. But because of the thorough theoretical grounding, he does well to intellectualise the popular rather than popularise the intellectual. This is a stimulating and thoughtful book, which should be read by anyone interested in the biography of Shakespeare, and more broadly, the implications of turning a life into a narrative.

Alice LEONARD

Alexander C. Y. Huang, *Chinese Shakespeares: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 368pp., ISBN 978-0231148498, \$US 26.50.

"Chinese Shakespeares" is a term for a decidedly heterogeneous set of cultural encounters: certainly, there are intentionally "straight" performances of the plays in China, but more often Huang is interested in efforts to *localize* the stories, characters and meanings behind the plays. Many of these efforts *rewrite* the plays to say something about "China" – a term which after all means something quite different to the nineteenth-century moralist translator of Lamb into Chinese than it does to the twenty-first-century Taiwanese dramatist. What Huang's study reveals is a cultural space that has seen "heavy traffic", leaving layer

upon layer of political, social, and at times deeply personal interests.

Three cases illustrate the scope of the study and Huang's skills as a practitioner of cultural criticism grounded in "locality" and "visuality", and the contribution he has made to global Shakespeares.

Hamlet was staged in 1942 in a Confucian temple in a small town outside of Chongqing, the wartime capital of the Nationalist Chinese government. In this "pastoral other place", amidst the exigencies of an all-out war of resistance against the Japanese, director Jiao Juyin's production mesmerized audiences with a Hamlet full of hesitation and self-doubt, the better to symbolize a nation with a "Hamlet syndrome": "We Chinese people are often too cautious about everything, and as a result we lose courage". This reading of Hamlet as a negative example is common in German, as well as early Chinese, receptions.

However, a different, culturally conservative reading altered the Hamlet figure, replacing self-doubt with patriotism and filial piety. This is already evident in Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*, and was much amplified in the 1904 Chinese version of that text, the better to assure Chinese readers that Shakespeare's story proved that Confucianism, a philosophy founded on service to state and family, was in fact an articulation of universal humanism. Jiao's 1942 temple setting finds Hamlet fleeing the Act III Scene 1 confrontation with Ophelia towards a backstage that audience members know contains an altar to the Sage. Building on this and other elements dependent on the locality, Huang shows that Confucian moral contexts may become present by accident, but are subsequently deployed strategically.

Several such "site-specific readings" take readers on a fast tour through the emergence of Shanghai film and theatre adaptations during the Republic and the war era, on into the 1950s, when the mandates of socialist realism and Maoist political campaigns left arts and literature riven with tension and paradox. Few events could bear witness to this as well as Yevgeniya Lipkovskaya's Shanghai production of *Much Ado About Nothing* in 1957, the same year that the Anti-Rightist Campaign silenced thousands of Chinese artists and critics studying Western literary works. Lipkovskaya effectively delivered a dose of pre-Communist discourses of love in disguise as a portrait of socialist utopia derived from Friedrich Engels' reflections on "merry England", the pre-industrial Arcadia that could serve as a vision to the masses. Madame Lipkovskaya was sent home after 1957 as China's leaders abandoned the Soviet model to conduct ever-more radical social transformation projects of their own; such was her influence, though, that protégé Hu Dao revived *Much Ado* in 1961, during

a moment of looser controls, and again in 1979, after the ten years of Cultural Revolution had decimated Chinese arts. Huang's interviews with audience members and production crew show that the 1979 revival was an act of collective memory symbolizing new hope after massive national trauma. Moreover, Madame Lipkovskaya's "historicist" approach had proven compatible with the crew's "presentist" concerns, thus blurring a dichotomy in the field.

This last point touches on a thread of polemic that undergirds Huang's readings. Briefly, "China" and "Shakespeare" are cultural tokens often associated with alterity and constancy, but China is no more a single, uniformly "other" epistemology than Shakespeare is a set of uniformly universal values. "Authenticity" is a quixotic focus for critics and production teams, one that must be always picked apart to detect what vested interests it masks. Similarly, notions of "progress" infuse Chinese Shakespeares, but the cultural critic would be wise to look backstage of "progress" to see the very real, if unconscious, agendas of adaptation.

The uptake of Shakespeare into Chinese opera, for example, nurtures the fallacy that intercultural performance performs a "remedial" function – it is springtime for Shakespeare in China. One fallacy leads to another, as Huang ably shows: a boom of Shakespeare criticism justifies national pride; practising Chinese opera stars misunderstand contemporary English theatre practices; Chinese opera and Shakespeare are misconstrued as antithetical modes of expression. Such false propositions obscure the "discursive richness of the dynamics of exchange".

Huang makes these exchanges clear in fascinating readings of Chinese opera Shakespeares, which, like film Shakespeares, achieve iconification via stylized *visuality*. One must-read analysis concerns a Taiwanese practitioner of Beijing opera, Wu Hsing-Kuo, whose original solo performance, *Lear is Here*, features the actor negotiating the identities of Lear, the Fool, Goneril, Gloucester and others in adapted opera costumes. The Act I climax features a transformation of Wu from old Lear into a Taiwanese actor, removing his headdress, opera beard, and costume to reveal his undercoat. Wu speaks to the audience and to his mask "to reveal the performer in search of an identity", in effect playing on the motifs in Shakespeare's text ("Who is it that can tell me who I am?") to create personal, autobiographical content.³

Adaptations featuring personal content indicate a large-scale shift in Chinese Shakespeares, from

3. Footage from this scene is available at the web page Huang helped design, "Shakespeares in Asia": <<http://web.mit.edu/shakespeares/asia/>>.

attending to the political to attending to the personal. Far from representing "progress" in any simple sense, the shift is a product of the new regime of capital and markets in mainland China, of the tense hybridity found on the island of Taiwan and in other Chinese "contact zones", and of the gradual decline of the values of alterity and constancy within such cultural tokens as "China" and "Shakespeare".

Huang's work stands out as a model for dynamic exchange between global Shakespeares and national literatures, demonstrating thorough grounding in critical theory without loss to acces-

sibility or to sensitive close readings that are times thrilling and evocative. It is these "site-specific readings" that make the book a crucial contribution to the field. An extensive, multidimensional timeline at the back of the book is worth perusing at length both for its trivia (*Pony Pavilion*, 1598, often cited as the greatest romance in Chinese drama, was published one year after *Romeo and Juliet*) and as a primer to the complexities of modern Chinese history, which are also expertly handled for the non-specialist in the text proper.

Jesse FIELD

MOREANA

Moreana is a bilingual biannual journal founded in 1963 which embraces all fields of research connected to Thomas More, Humanism and the Renaissance. It is affiliated to FISIER (International Federation of Societies and Institutes for Renaissance Study), and dispatched in over 30 countries.

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BOOKS RECEIVED

This list includes books received during the past six months which are not reviewed in this issue. The listing of a book in this section does not preclude its review in a subsequent issue.

Literature, Texts and Criticism

• Shakespeare

Paul Hammond, ed., *Shakespeare's Sonnets: An Original-Spelling Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), xvi+495pp., ISBN 978-0-19-964207-7, £75.00.

The introduction to this original-spelling edition of the *Sonnets* focuses on how we might read the poetry, discussing the sonnet form, the tradition within which Shakespeare was writing. The forms of sexuality evoked in the sonnets are charted, but readers are steered away from biographical speculation.

Janette Dillon, *Shakespeare and the Staging of English History*, Oxford Shakespeare Topics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 150pp., ISBN 978-0-19-959315-6, £14.99.

This series (General Editors Peter Holland and Stanley Wells) provides teachers and students with short, alertly-written books by leading specialists on major topics of Shakespeare criticism. The aim of this book is to make early modern "spatial practice and other aspects of performance [...] evident and accessible" (4) through an analysis of many examples. More specifically, the focus is on Shakespeare's history plays and their characteristics, such as "recurrent and familiar [...] scenic units" (5).

Sean Lawrence, *Forgiving the Gift: The Philosophy of Generosity in Shakespeare and Marlowe* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Duquesne University Press, 2012), xxiv +244pp., ISBN 978-0-8207-0448-7, \$58.00.

The theoretical framework of this study is provided by a dialogue between different understandings of gift-giving, that influenced literary schol-

arship: Marcel Mauss's essay *The Gift*, that sees gift-giving as based on exchange and reciprocity while praising it as an instance of disinterested social solidarity; and the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas that associates ethics and alterity, "the encounter of self and Other prior to an economy, even the gift economy that Mauss turns into a description of all societies" (16). Jacques Derrida and Paul Ricoeur act as mediators between the two approaches. Sean Lawrence explores the "charming but strictly internal generosity" (37) that excludes aliens in *The Merchant of Venice*, the dangers of speaking love and thereby opening it to betrayal, in *The Merchant, Edward II or King Lear*, the concern to hear Lavinia's voice in *Titus Andronicus* after her value in exchange has been erased. Parental gifts, such as Titus surrendering his hand to try and save his sons or Prospero relinquishing power for Miranda, are instances of a "primary generosity [that] inspires politics and even language" (39).

Robert I. Lublin, *Costuming the Shakespearean Stage: Visual Codes of Representation in Early Modern Culture*, Studies in Performance and Early Modern Drama (Abingdon: Ashgate, 2011), x+200pp., ISBN 978-0-7546-6225-9, £55.00.

Archeology, stage history and textual editing have contributed to reconstruct the material conditions of performance in early modern culture. But what did actors actually look like on stage, and how did they look to their audiences? What cultural and other information did costumes convey? Lublin works from the information that can be gleaned from the texts themselves, as well as from a wide range of other contemporary sources, to address these sartorial questions that, he argues, are all the more central in that "the costumes are the characters" (4): conveying identity, (cross-)gender, social status, historical period, etc.

François Ost, *Shakespeare, la comédie de la loi* (Paris: Michalon éditions, 2012), 314pp., ISBN 978-2-84186-662-5, €18.00.