

### 3 Site-Specific *Hamlets* and Reconfigured Localities: Jiang'an, Singapore, Elsinore

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From Western perspectives, non-anglophone, especially Asian, Shakespearean performances often appear 'remarkably localized',<sup>1</sup> 'contemporized',<sup>2</sup> and 'richer in sounds, music, and presentational support'.<sup>3</sup> What roles do 'localization' and the 'local' play in Shakespearean appropriation? Why do some adaptations appear remarkably localized? Central to the debate about the nature of appropriation is not just cultural difference but the dynamic interactions between fictional and cultural localities. The concept of locality will be the focus of my discussion, because in the theatrical transculturation, Shakespeare's currency is developed through a combination of sights (visions of Shakespeare on and off stage) and sites (allegorical and physical locations of the production). The locality of performance is an integral part of the question about the nature of Shakespeare's afterlife.

At stake is the interplay between the locality where Shakespearean authenticity is derived and the locality where global differences emerge. What happens when Shakespearean adaptations capitalize on, and indeed rely upon, not just historical frictions but reconfigured localities within and beyond Shakespeare's plays (for example, the setting of *Hamlet* vs. the authentically fake site, Kronborg, in Denmark)? How do twentieth- and twenty-first-century theatre artists adapt *Hamlet*'s localities to enhance the perceived value of the performance and its venue? What do these aesthetic maneuvers tell us about Shakespearean appropriation?

Within the *Shakespearean International Yearbook*'s comparative context, this chapter examines the presence of Shakespeare in world cultures and its ambiguous relations to cultural boundaries in two site-specific *Hamlets*: a *Hamlet* directed by Jiao Juyin and staged in a Confucian temple in Jiang'an in wartime China (1942) and the Singaporean troupe Theatre Works' *Search*:

*Hamlet*, directed by Ong Keng Sen and staged at the Kronborg Castle in Elsinore, Denmark (2002).<sup>4</sup> Both cases show that *Hamlet* has been appropriated, by different figures at different Asian cultural moments, for patriotic, anti-patriotic, and globalizing agendas. Rich and diverse in dramaturgical concerns, these two productions also showcase how Shakespearean localities, performance venue, and the cultural location of the performance interact with one another. Jiao's jingoistic *Hamlet* took advantage of the unique architectural space and metaphorical dimension of a temple that had been converted into a makeshift performance venue. In contrast, Ong's *Search: Hamlet* experimented with a multinational cast and intercultural theatre, yet the play clung obstinately to the notion of site-specific performance. While Jiao's production glossed over the disjunction between the play's locality (pre-modern Denmark) and its performance venue (a Confucian temple in wartime China), Ong's production, commissioned by the Hamlet Sommer Festival, highlighted the connections between its sites of origin – Asia, Europe, America – and its performance venue, Kronborg, in order to create an anti-essentialist discourse.

Concentrating on selected aspects of these performances, especially the contestations of locality-derived authority and authenticity, this chapter establishes how these two national or transnational appropriations negotiated and translated the currency of locality through the site of performance (a Confucian Temple in Jiang'an, China, and Kronborg Castle in Elsinore, Denmark), the perceived sites of origin of the performance idioms (ancient China, Singapore, or Europe), as well as the allegorical sites and settings of *Hamlet* that erase or accentuate, as the case may be, the presence of 'Shakespeare', 'Europe', and 'Asia'. In each of these cases, primacy was given to the performance venue and the 'local habitation' of the play. These elements were configured to participate actively in the meaning-making processes.

#### DEFINING LOCALITY

He was not of an age, but for all time!  
Ben Jonson (1623)<sup>5</sup>

How many ages hence  
Shall this our lofty scene be acted over  
In states unborn and accents yet unknown!  
*Julius Caesar* (3.1.111–13)<sup>6</sup>

As one of the earliest poetic tributes to literary universalism, Ben Jonson's eulogy in the preface to Shakespeare's First Folio configured the survival and popularization of Shakespeare's texts in temporal terms, highlighting the role

of immediacy and the tension between past and present, which also prophetically foresaw the dominance of New Historicism in Renaissance studies. Shakespeare's own insight into the matter illuminates another key aspect of performance: spatiality and locality. He has his Cassius, who resides in a version of Rome on the Elizabethan stage, look beyond the horizon and consider other localities and their possible relationships to the action in the Capitol and the death of Caesar. While it is commonly held that theatre works are defined and confined by their temporal *and* spatial configurations, studies of Shakespeare's afterlife have focused on how 'the past and the present might be put into meaningful dialogue with one another'<sup>7</sup> and on the tension between Shakespeare's historical specificity and the performer's (or reader's) contemporaneity, as has been aptly summed up, respectively, by James Bulman and Jean Howard:

Traditional assumptions about universality and continuity in the performance history of Shakespeare's plays are themselves cultural constructs.

Since objectivity is not in any pure form a possibility, let us acknowledge that fact and acknowledge as well that any move into history is an *intervention*, an attempt to reach from the present moment into the past to rescue both from meaningless banality.<sup>8</sup>

It is indeed important to recognize the temporal configurations of Shakespearean performance and of our understanding of Shakespeare, but it is equally useful to consider, in dramaturgical terms, the interactions between the localities embedded within Shakespearean plays and their permutations in the theatrical space.

The concept of locality has recently come to the forefront of the studies of intercultural theatre and Shakespearean appropriation. In his aptly titled essay, 'On Location', Robert Shaughnessy highlights the role of performance space in contemporary productions at Stratford-upon-Avon and Shakespeare's Globe. He argues that the spectatorship and audience-performance interaction are configured by the meanings of the performance spaces and by the ways in which performers and audiences negotiate these meanings.<sup>9</sup> In *Local Shakespeares*, Martin Orkin defines 'local' as what is 'epistemologically current' within each reader's culture.<sup>10</sup> In her introduction to *World-wide Shakespeares*, published in the same year with the same focus on local Shakespearean appropriations, Sonia Massai, taking cues from Ferdinand de Saussure and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, suggests that all signifying processes, including Shakespearean performance, 'depends on giving airy nothings "a local habitation and a name"'.<sup>11</sup> This is the case because the global is 'the product of specific, historically and culturally determined localities'.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, global and local are correlative terms. The recent turn from 'global Shakespeare'

to 'local Shakespeare' reflects recognition of the dialectics of complex negotiation between value systems that are far from binary and antithetical. Barbara Hodgdon maintains that many local readings of Shakespeare call for 'a more precise measurement of the continuities and discontinuities among ... local performance conventions' and the 'reciprocal impact' of appropriation.<sup>13</sup> She appropriates the realtor's mantra, 'location, location, location', to underscore the need to redraw Shakespeare's 'cultural coordinates'.<sup>14</sup> However, the wide range of localities that contributed to Shakespeare's afterlife is not to be confused with the retrograde notion of universality, or of certain literary works' perceived ability to transcend history. Dennis Kennedy hinted at the importance of locality when he pointed out a paradox associated with literary universalism: 'often what we believe to have comprehensive attraction turns out to be more local or more time-bound than we think'.<sup>15</sup>

While local Shakespeares have always been part of the global Shakespeare industry, the increasingly frequent deployment of locality as a critical category has shifted the terms of ongoing debates about the nature of Shakespearean texts – both in print and in performance – from their historicity to their spatiality. Or, to put it another way, it adds physical and allegorical localities to the equation, insisting on both the temporal and spatial dimensions of Shakespeare's afterlife. The implication of the term 'local Shakespeare' has evolved from a binary, if not derogative, proprietary opposition to Shakespeare's perceived universal values to a celebration of the repossession of difference in a globalizing world. Local appropriations and readings of Shakespeare are no longer perceived as straightforward mimicry of originals of a higher order, a 'sign of a double articulation' in Homi Bhabha's term,<sup>16</sup> but as key sites that produce local banks of knowledge that, in turn, reshape the Shakespearean epistemology.<sup>17</sup>

In the context of live theatre, 'site-specific' as a category might seem redundant. After all, local specificities are part of many live performances. John Russell Brown, among other theatre scholars, has maintained that 'live actors' and 'live audiences' are always 'site-specific'.<sup>18</sup> The dynamics of a production differ from one evening to another, even with the same cast at the same venue. In his article, 'Shakespeare and the Global Spectator', Dennis Kennedy highlights one key difference between theatre and film: 'Giant entertainment conglomerates ... create products that operate economically the way Coca-Cola does, through mass reproduction and distribution of a valuable master or original. ... Theatre, on the other hand, remains a unique economic event in every performance, indigenous, place-bound, and ... based on the repetitive labor of actors and technicians.'<sup>19</sup> In addition to the economically determined site-specificity of theatre, the intricate interactions between actors and audiences are transient and cannot be replicated. While these features of theatre are true most

of the time and have gone uncontested, a new internationalism began to make theatre resemble the mass production of film and television. Since the mid-twentieth century there have been more and more productions that are locally conceived but globally marketed, that tour widely and are far from site-specific. In fact, much of their viability hinges upon their 'transportability' and global accessibility. The Royal Shakespeare Company's touring performances are some of the most prominent examples. Some Asian productions of Shakespeare are also designed with a wide range of global audiences in mind, including Yukio Ninagawa's and Suzuki Tadashi's transnational adaptations, though the directors themselves and their critics hold different views on this.

In contrast to productions that tour to multiple locations, the site-specific *Hamlets* discussed in this chapter, spanning the years between 1942 and 2002, are defined by their local specificities that will be lost on a different audience in a different performance venue or context. When Shakespearean localities collide or merge with the localities of the performance, new stories are created to meet the challenge or to exploit the perceived connections and disjunctions. Site-specific appropriations contrast with more readily transferable performances that tour from city to city and with Hollywood Shakespearean appropriations. Shakespearean scholars located within the Western European and North American localities that Martin Orkin calls 'the Shakespeare metropolis'<sup>20</sup> have, for the past decade, come to appreciate the value of non-English Shakespearean appropriations and the reciprocity of the act of cross-cultural appropriation. Stanley Wells maintains that Shakespeare's impact in non-anglophone cultures is a 'two-way process, blessing those who give as well as those who receive'.<sup>21</sup> This chapter problematizes the unique blessings and curses in some site-specific readings of *Hamlet* that provide a glimpse into a different aspect of local 'international' Shakespeare.

The dynamics between the geographical location and cultural location of a performance complicate the locality of the play being performed. A production of *Hamlet*, for example, can be set in ancient China but staged in Kronborg Castle in Denmark. While certain meanings of the production will be produced by the performance style and adapted story, other meanings must be produced by the clash of these two localities. Theatrical performances stage at once the fictional, cultural, and actual sites embedded within and beyond the plays themselves. Further, directorial choices would have to be made in relation to the play's and the performance's localities, suppressing or highlighting the differences as the case may be.

#### HAMLET IN A CONFUCIAN TEMPLE

While Ong challenged established readings of *Hamlet*, some Chinese theatre artists readily connected Hamlet's situation with local exigencies and the connotations of the local venue. A case in point is a *Hamlet* performance set in pre-modern Denmark and staged in a Confucian temple in wartime China. The production married the foreign setting to local theatrical and allegorical spaces in a dialectical process that testified to the reciprocal impact on both the target and source cultures.

The most urgent questions to be answered include: why theatre during the war, and why *Hamlet*? In wartime China, as in many other countries, the Shakespearean canon was an obvious choice to avoid censorship by the Nationalist government. Theatre's function as a site for social education as well as theatre's potential for propaganda were seen as compelling reasons to stage public performances during the war. Performances provided entertaining relief, raised funds for military operations, and boosted the audience's morale.

Since Shakespeare's plays were first translated and performed in China in the late nineteenth century, adaptations have oscillated between the two poles of exoticization and localization, between emphasizing distance, or proximity between the Shakespearean and Chinese localities. Towards the end of the 1930s, many theatre artists opted for topical presentations and social relevance in their work, as they were torn between a number of wars, including the civil war between the Communist Party and the Nationalist Party, the Second World War (1939–45), and the Anti-Japanese War (1937–45). Helping to educate vigilant and patriotic citizens – despite financial limitations – became the dominant mission of both local and adapted plays and performances. The locality of the Chinese audience was given primacy, and many site-specific Shakespearean appropriations emerged.

Further, after two decades of improvisational appropriation, since the 1930s Shakespeare's plays had fast become part of the Chinese repertoire to train *huaju* actors; hence their popularity in drama academies and conservatories. The founding Principal of the National Drama School, Yu Shangyuan (1897–1970), included Shakespeare in the repertoire of the new school and theatre he founded, for he believed that 'Shakespeare is the most important playwright in the history of drama, and we [Chinese theatre artists] cannot ignore him'.<sup>22</sup> Yu obviously followed his Anglo-European contemporaries in eulogizing Shakespeare. He maintained that the reason to stage Shakespeare in China was that 'performance of Shakespeare has been an important criterion to measure success for theatres worldwide and not just in England', and that 'the most celebrated and achieved actors of our age [outside China] achieved fame

through their performances of Shakespearean characters' (Drama Review Section, *Central Daily News*, 1937). One of the degree requirements at the National Drama School [Guoli Xiju Zhuanke Xuexiao] was a Shakespearean production. Each graduating class was required to stage a Shakespearean play. During wartime, the requirement, stipulated by Yu, was not enforced every year, but the first, second, fifth, and the fourteenth graduating classes did perform Shakespearean plays at graduation, including *The Merchant of Venice* (1937), *Othello* (1938), and the 1942 *Hamlet* being discussed in this section.<sup>23</sup> Yu himself also co-directed with Yan Zhewu a production of *The Merchant of Venice* on 25 April 1948, celebrating Shakespeare's birthday.

In addition to the prestige of performance associated with Shakespeare's stature, the ability to stage and attend plays during a time of war was itself perceived as a victorious gesture. What was made propagandistic was not always only the allegorical dimension of the play but the act of staging the play itself. Jiao's *Hamlet* was staged in 1942, five years after the fall of Nanjing under the Japanese invasion. Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi, 1887–1975) and his Nationalist government moved the capital to Chongqing in Sichuan province in southwestern China. This triggered a nation-wide migration following the government's footsteps. Elites, bankers, scholars, artists, and members of other social classes who could afford to move all relocated to Chongqing, as did schools and universities. The realities of the new locality – backward economic conditions and frequent Japanese aerial attacks – further lowered the morale of these refugees who were uprooted from their home towns that were now in the Japanese occupation zone. Live theatre became a symbol of cultural life, and the presence of cultural life helped to maintain the dignity of the Chinese refugees. Yu, among his contemporaries, was invested in the symbolic value of wartime theatre. At the revival of the Jiang'an *Hamlet* in Chongqing, Yu wanted the performance to achieve two goals:

[1.] The social significance of *Hamlet* [to us] is Hamlet's progressive and revolutionary [geming jinqu] spirit, which is what the Chinese people need during the Anti-Japanese War. ... Prince Hamlet resisted the destiny arranged by Fate, countered feudal oppressions, and sought liberation from an environment filled with licentious and corrupt individuals. [2.] Those countries that produce the most high quality Shakespearean productions are the countries with the highest cultural prestige. ... Performing Shakespeare is a crucial step for our country to catch up and to join the countries with world-class cultural achievements.<sup>24</sup>

What exactly is this desirable spirit? How does Yu's pro-colonialist interpretation relate to the pre-1940s Chinese critical tradition of a 'Confucian Hamlet'?<sup>25</sup> As the first Shakespearean play to be translated into Chinese in its entirety, *Hamlet* holds a special place in Chinese visions of Shakespeare. There have

been numerous Chinese adaptations and spin-offs of *Hamlet* including a parody entitled *Shamlet*.<sup>26</sup> Theatre artists and literary critics in mainland China have concentrated on selected themes in *Hamlet* that resonate with traditional Chinese literary culture and with Confucianism such as usurpation, authority, filial piety, legitimacy of rulership and power, as well as revenge.<sup>27</sup> As Lu Gu-sun observed, 'to some of the early Chinese readers and critics of *Hamlet* the ... theme of the play was ... conveniently in compliance with the Confucian ethical code demanding filial piety ... and constant chastity, and with Buddhist tenets of karma'.<sup>28</sup> For example, Tian Han (1898–1968), widely regarded as the 'father of modern Chinese drama' and the first translator of *Hamlet* into Chinese (1922), associated Hamlet's melancholy and 'patriotic' anxiety ('The time is out of joint: O cursed spite / That ever I was born to set it right!' 1.5.188–9) with *On Encountering Sorrow* [*Lisao*] by the Confucian poet Qu Yuan (c.339–c.278 BC) in his postscript to his translation.<sup>29</sup> Similar to English-language Shakespeare scholarship and editions in the 1960s, Chinese scholarship emphasized moral criticism, though the Chinese preoccupation with morality lasted nearly an entire century.

In this context, the locality of this wartime performance was already loaded with decidedly local connotations for a play like *Hamlet*. Yu remarked that even though it is a tragedy, its wartime production was actually an uplifting experience, because the spirit was 'exactly what the Chinese people needed to resist the Japanese invasion'.<sup>30</sup> This attitude reminds us of another prominent wartime Shakespearean appropriation from the same period, Laurence Olivier's *Henry V* (1944). Compared to Olivier's jingoistic and nationalist film, which was dedicated to the 'commandos and airborne troops of Great Britain', the choice of a hesitating Hamlet motivated by personal causes – instead of, say, a traditionally patriotic Shakespearean hero – may seem quite odd at a time when China, like Olivier's England, was at war. While Olivier's *Henry V* has been theorized as an example of what Walter Benjamin called 'the aestheticization of politics',<sup>31</sup> Jiao's *Hamlet* is an exercise in what Benjamin theorized as the politicization of art.<sup>32</sup> This is most evident in the director's statements.

It is necessary to unpack the meanings of the performance venue before delving into details of the performance itself. This production was first staged in the temple in the small town of Jiang'an rather than in Chongqing, because the school was located in Jiang'an. The Confucian temple was chosen as the site of performance not because that particular temple was attractive or more culturally significant than other temples or venues, but because the temple, like many village temples in rural China, functioned as a convenient and traditional gathering space in the town. Further, it was financially unfeasible to construct a theatre during the all-out war of resistance. The architectural structure and

allegorical space of the Confucian temple provided a ready site for such a performance and was used as a makeshift performance space. In other words, the choice of performance venue inherited the accidents and frictions of history. In historical hindsight, the temple bears the marks of wartime exigencies and limitations, though not all of these marks were intended at the time of production.

While temples and teahouses, among other informal performance spaces outside playhouses, were regularly used for public performances in China up to this time, the courtyards and the central halls of Confucian temples were used almost exclusively for dedicatory ritual performance. Further, Confucian temples are found in a great number of towns and cities. Temples serve as sites for collective memories and gathering places, but the Confucian temple has been regarded as a sacred site for Chinese intellectuals. Therefore, Jiao's *Hamlet* became a major public event not only because of its innovative stage design but also because it was an unconventional performance space for a Western-style spoken drama performance.

This is the historical context of *Hamuleite* [*Hamlet*], staged by the National Drama School in Jiang'an in rural Sichuan for general audiences during the Sino-Japanese War in 1942.<sup>33</sup> Accompanied by live music commissioned by the director, the production ran for three performances in Jiang'an but left a lasting impression on the audiences, many of whom came from nearby rural areas to experience their first *huaju* [Western-style spoken drama] experience.

Directed by Jiao Juyin (1905–75), a French-trained Chinese director who would become one of the major figures in theatre,<sup>34</sup> the performance was based on a popular translation, with cuts, rather than a sinicized adaptation. Scripted and not improvised as many early twentieth-century Chinese performances had been, this production was one of the earliest complete performances of *Hamlet* in the *huaju* format.<sup>35</sup> The drama-school initiated performance of *Hamlet* thus attracted both intellectuals and villagers. This site-specific performance led to its revival later that year in a formal indoor theatrical space (not in a temple) in Chongqing, the biggest city in the province. The production was revived as part of the Ministry of Education's '[wartime] social education' week campaign [Shehui jiaoyu kuoda xuanchuan zhou] in Chongqing, the provincial capital of Sichuan and the temporary capital of China during the war.<sup>36</sup> The 'social education' in this context was a wartime patriotic campaign. The choice to perform *Hamlet*, a work thought to represent anglophone cultures (including that of China's ally America), would certainly encourage support of China's Western allies. However, extant historical documents show that the director and promoters of this production were more interested in *Hamlet*'s symbolic capital and the perceived prestige and significance of being able to stage Shakespeare

under challenging wartime material conditions. They, and their audience, did not seem to be invested in *Hamlet*'s cultural connection with China's Western allies during the war, though the production, in the context of Yu's drama school, had a pronounced purpose to boost the morale and confidence of the Chinese.

Much of the vitality of this production lies in its ingenious use of the temple as an allegorical space under poor material conditions including frequent power outages. The production was staged on the balcony in front of the shrine of Confucius in a Confucian temple, with seated audiences in the courtyard looking up to the balcony at the end of a stone staircase. The temple had two wings and a hall at the centre. The stage design took advantage of the pre-existing structure of the temple, covering the red pillars with black cloth. Jiao also added a few more pillars. The depth of the stage was some 60 meters. Four 24-foot curtains on each side, hanging down between the pillars, decorated the stage. The large variety of curtain action, concealing or revealing a combination of pillars and scene depth, was well received, as the twists and turns and haunted atmosphere represented 'the sinful and perilous Danish court'.<sup>37</sup> For example, Polonius gave his blessing and his advice to Laertes, 'Neither a borrower nor a lender [be]' (1.3.57–81), as he followed Laertes back and forth around different pillars, moving toward the back of the hall, which, for lack of lighting, was dark. Similar movements around the pillars were used for Polonius' other speeches. The arrangement highlighted Polonius' ill-received lengthy speeches and the unseen twists and turns of court politics. The performance area thus acquired the depth of a proscenium stage. The ghost entered from the deep and dark end of the path lined with the pillars and curtains. The minimalist stage design – two chairs, a bed, and a table – worked well with the dim open space in creating a sense of mysteriousness.

The most striking instance when the localities of *Hamlet* and the performance venue are brought to confront each other is seen in the emotionally charged nunnery scene. Posed against the backdrop of the exigencies of this particular location, Hamlet's question, 'to be or not to be' (3.1.55), acquired personal and political urgencies for wartime Chinese audiences who rushed to air-raid shelters on a daily basis, dodging Japanese aerial attacks. Attending theatre in the temple, much like time spent in air-raid shelters with neighbors and families, became a communal experience that provided temporary relief through entertainment and at the same time a sober moment of reflection in the hustles of war. The remote world of Denmark, Fortinbras' resounding footsteps, and the Hamletian ontological question crossed the vast historical and cultural distance to form a 'patriotic' play. As Li Ruru observed, the performance in Jiang'an 'linked Hamlet and his situation in Denmark with Chinese intellectuals and their environment'.<sup>38</sup> Performed against the backdrop of a

Confucian temple, the 'foreignness' of Hamlet and his outlandish yet oddly familiar story, for the Chinese audiences, became an apt expression of wartime anxieties.

Wen Xiying, playing Hamlet, was infuriated by the fact that Ophelia was sent by Polonius and that Polonius might be present. The scene culminated in Hamlet's passionate outburst and retreat into the backstage (3.1.142–9). He exited slowly toward the end of the hall, with the gradual drawing of the curtains following the rhythm of his heavy footsteps. There was a 2-foot gap left between the curtains, and audience members peeped through the gap onto the lonely Hamlet moving in the dim 60-meter corridor.<sup>39</sup> At the end of the corridor was the shrine of Confucius, which was not part of the set but was not removed for this performance. The local audience knew full well of the location of the shrine of Confucius, which intruded into the performance. The temple now existed simultaneously on different temporal and spatial dimensions in the fictional and real worlds, complicated by the desire to produce an 'authentic' *Hamlet* in an authentic Confucian temple. Buried in his thoughts, Hamlet appeared to be heading toward the shrine – something that exists outside of the Danish setting and outside the stage set – as if he now was seeking advice from the Chinese sage. It is not clear whether or how he found an answer, but the director and his audience have eagerly provided a number of inspiring but sometimes conflicting answers to the question of wartime theatre.

The Anti-Japanese War (launched on 7 July 1937) prompted Jiao to look for moral messages in *Hamlet*. In an essay written on 12 December 1942, before the revival of the production in Chongqing, Jiao directly related Hamlet's problems to the Chinese situation, highlighting the lessons to be learned from Hamlet's procrastination. He pointed out that in this context the aesthetics of the performance can only be secondary:

The character of Hamlet ... [contains] a lesson for us who are living in the period of the Anti-Japanese War, an irony to undetermined people, and a stimulus to those who do not have faith in our ultimate victory. The Danish prince has seen clearly what he needs to do when confronted by political and familial crises; however, he hesitates and does not put his thought into action. [This] ... will lead to ... failure and destruction. Therefore, we learn from the tragedy of Hamlet that the victory of the Anti-Japanese War hinges upon immediate and synchronized actions by all the [Chinese] people. This is why we introduce *Hamlet* to the Chongqing audience. The success of [the troupe's] performing skills is secondary.<sup>40</sup>

This interpretation creates a negative picture of a hesitating Hamlet. However, Jiao seemed to contradict himself when he tried to explain Hamlet's hesitation away. Recognizing the procrastination as the most important characteristic of Hamlet, Jiao argued that Hamlet hesitated because of his 'love for truth', not

because of cowardice.<sup>41</sup> Yet, desperate to draw connections between the localities of *Hamlet* and his production, Jiao brushed aside Hamlet's 'love for truth' and asked his audience to heed the moral of the performance: procrastination and inaction pave the road to failure.

How could Hamlet be at once a Confucian hero, with exemplary 'spirit' fit for a time of war, and a negative example of procrastination, teaching the Chinese audience a good lesson for war? Much ink has been spilt in the history of Chinese Shakespearean criticism over the character of Hamlet. While much has been said about the shared qualities between Hamlet and a typical Confucian gentleman, Jiao's production was the first documented performance to take place in a Confucian temple. Up to the 1940s, before the Communist Party took over China and replaced Confucianism with Marxist-Leninism, most interpretations of *Hamlet* aligned Hamlet with historical and quasi-historical political figures who take it as their responsibility to set aright 'the time out of joint' (1.5.188). Their frustration at not being able to communicate or realize their moral and political ideals led to their melancholic state.<sup>42</sup> Less closely analyzed by Chinese critics were Hamlet's negative qualities, as evidenced by his attitude towards Gertrude in the chamber scene or his treatment of Ophelia. Unlike English-language criticism of the same period, mainland Chinese criticism did not give equal attention to the problem of Hamlet's procrastination. When it was mentioned at all, Hamlet's insistence on seeking truth was used to explain away the inconsistency, as Jiao did. Performed against the backdrop of a Confucian temple and a tradition of 'Confucian Hamlets', Jiao's production might have downplayed Hamlet's procrastination were it not for the demands of wartime theatre. While Hamlet's sense of duty to the state was emphasized in the performance, the ending was not altered, because the performance was based on a translation.<sup>43</sup> The obvious contradiction in a truth-seeking noble Confucian Hamlet's untimely death and the victory of the Machiavellian Fortinbras prompted Jiao to extrapolate a moral lesson from Hamlet's negative example.<sup>44</sup>

#### SEARCHING FOR HAMLET IN DENMARK

Over half a century after Jiao's production, *Hamlet* continues to inspire Asian theatre artists in different ways. The interaction between Hamlet's locality and the meanings of the performance venue was configured by history's accidents in Jiao's production in the Confucian temple. With the rapid development of cultural tourism and theatrical interculturalism, for better or for worse, twenty-first century artists capitalize on not just historical frictions but reconfigured

localities surrounding Shakespeare's plays and the performance venues in order to enhance the value of the site-specific production.

A recent example is the Singaporean director Ong Keng Sen's play inspired by *Hamlet*, staged at the Hamlet Sommer Festival in Elsinore in 2002.<sup>45</sup> Separated by six decades, Jiao's *Hamlet* and Ong's *Search: Hamlet* provide illuminating contrast in terms of their engagement with locality and performative authority. While Jiao's *Hamlet* was characterized by the omnipresence of Hamlet, Ong created a *Hamlet*-inspired performance in which the title character is missing. *Search: Hamlet* was sponsored by a number of private, government, and (trans)national funding agencies including the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), the Danish Centre for Culture and Development (DCCD/CKU), Singapore National Arts Council, Embassy of Japan, Embassy of Indonesia, and the Danish Theatre and Music Council. *Search: Hamlet* is the last piece of Ong's Shakespeare trilogy, preceded by a pan-Asian *Lear* (1997) and an avant-garde *Desdemona* (2000), both of which were equally well supported by a myriad of transnational funding agencies, including the Japan Foundation Asia Center (JFAC). Established in 1972, the Japan Foundation promotes overseas Japanese-language education. In 1995, the Asia Center was formed as a subsidiary organization to promote 'the co-existence of different ethnic groups' and 'the harmonization of traditional and contemporary culture'. The JFAC has an intra-Asian focus, believing that in order to tackle various social ills brought forth by the rapid development and accumulation of wealth in Asia, 'efforts must be made to promote balanced mutual exchange ... through exposure to the best of Asian arts and cultures ... and to encourage a more comprehensive grasp of Asian languages, histories, and societies'.<sup>46</sup> Ong's *Lear*, funded by the JFAC, thus took an intra-Asian approach to intercultural performance and to Shakespeare's text. This intra-regional focus can also be seen, with revisions, in some of his other works.

Ong's parents immigrated to multi-ethnic Singapore from southern China, and Ong speaks English, Mandarin Chinese, and a southern Chinese dialect.<sup>47</sup> Ong's unique multicultural background and Singapore's cultural policy to encourage border-crossing works contributed to his inclination to fuse multiple performance traditions to create new spectacles. Ong, the founder and director of TheatreWorks, Ltd in Singapore, received his training at the Tisch School of New York University. As a result, he is versed in postcolonial and postmodern theories. According to Ong in an interview, he wanted to gain further insight into Asian performing traditions and intercultural possibilities, and that was why he chose to study at NYU, one of the few institutions that would provide such an opportunity.<sup>48</sup> This intra-Asian focus distinguishes Ong from most East Asian intercultural directors with experiences studying in America or

Europe, who seek to wed Western styles to local traditions. Curating and directing in New York, Berlin, Tokyo, Australia, Denmark, among other places in 2002 alone, with only four weeks at home in Singapore, Ong is very aware of all intercultural processes and cultural transmission.

Ong's work has been described as 'highly self-conscious, deeply Asian, and undeniably marketable with its high gloss – even glib – post-modernism'.<sup>49</sup> However, Ong has maintained that marketability should not take over art, because 'it is important to expand the meaning of "Asian" rather than to limit it'. He cautioned that:

We have to be careful not to stereotype what is meant by 'Asian' – that it has to be traditional or that it has to be filled with history. These definitions of Asian would immediately exclude you [referring to his interviewer] and I [*sic*] in the sense that we are English-speaking and completely contemporary.<sup>50</sup>

Over ten years ago, in 1996, Ong began planning his Shakespearean trilogy surrounding three themes of the individual and family (*King Lear*), the individual and race (*Othello*), and the individual and politics (*Julius Caesar*). Ong was attracted to the conflict among multiple identities in *King Lear* since he had read the tragedy as a teen when his sister was studying the play at school. Therefore, *King Lear* was the first play to appear in Ong's trilogy. However, for financial reasons and artistic considerations, Ong was unable to execute the plan to adapt all three plays. The invitation from Hamlet Sommer replaced *Julius Caesar* with *Hamlet* as the last piece in Ong's trilogy.

*Search: Hamlet*'s mode of fusing disparate cultural locations represented by actors' bodies and performance styles can be traced back to the first play in Ong's trilogy, the multilingual pan-Asian *Lear*. Ong's *Lear* singles out the theme of miscommunication in *King Lear*. The production features four languages (Chinese, Japanese, Thai, and Indonesian), six nationalities, and a variety of Asian performing styles (Peking opera, Noh, and Penkac Silat, among others). Needless to say, the adaptation does not follow Shakespeare's script. Like Goethe's Wilhelm Meister who searches for a national identity through the performance of *Hamlet*, Ong puts his actors in search of a new Asian identity through this multilingual production. The audience had to rely on the English subtitles to follow Ong's play, but this pan-Asian *Lear* played to full houses in Tokyo, Osaka, Fukuoka, Singapore, other parts of Asia, and Europe.

Ong's *Lear* can be considered a milestone in Asian theatre and in Shakespeare performance, because it uses multiple Asian languages and performing styles to physically embody a key theme (identity formation) in *King Lear*, which would have been unthinkable until just a while ago. Ong also addresses the issue of globalization through the amalgamated performance vocabulary.

The king not only speaks Japanese, but acts in the stately style of the traditional Noh theatre. The power thirsty elder daughter, who kills him and the sister, speaks Mandarin, and not just colloquial Mandarin but the high-pitched Peking opera chanting. The younger sister speaks in Thai, though she seldom speaks. The assassins sent by the elder daughter speak Indonesia and cross the stage in the style of Penkak Silat martial art. Different languages and different performing styles also symbolize the conflict between parent and child. The Old Man (a loose equivalent to Shakespeare's *Lear*), played by Naohiko Umewaka, walks in the style of Noh and speaks a stately Japanese, while the elder daughter speaks Chinese and performs in Peking opera style. The diversity of and discrepancy between languages and performance styles physicalize on stage the confrontation between localities and generations. Ong points out that 'in this production of *Lear*, [I have] attempted to search for a new world, a new Asia. This new Asia will continue to have a dialogue with the old, with traditions, with history'. He emphasizes that 'harmony is not what [I] seek but discord. We can no longer hold onto simple visions of the outside world and the "other"'.<sup>51</sup> The play negotiates roots, identity, and tradition.

*Search: Hamlet* shares some similar features with *Lear*, but it also marks a new beginning in Ong's intercultural engagements. On the one hand, keenly aware of the homogenizing effect of transnational patrons and intercultural borrowings, Ong attempted an alternative approach to theatrical cosmopolitanism: a presentational style that displayed cultures yet recognized the beauty of difference. *Search: Hamlet* sought for a style that did not stereotypically align each culture with its perceived 'traditional' form of expression, the key to the perceived successes and alleged failures of Ong's controversial pan-Asian multilingual *Lear*. While the performance space of *Search: Hamlet* is filled with Danish historical specificities and fictional Shakespearean references, the premise of the performance is far from site-specific. The viability of this production hinges on the interaction between site-specific presentations and an undefined titular character.

On the other hand, *Search: Hamlet* continued the themes of identity formation and identity crises that Ong explored in *Lear* and *Desdemona*. His attempt to reveal and solve a series of identity crises posed by the plays (*Hamlet* and *Search: Hamlet*) and by the international cast led to even more malleable boundaries between different sites of identity formation. Some characters were played by performers of the opposite sex. Gertrude was played by Pichet Kluchun, a cross-dressed classical Thai dancer, the Ghost by Carlotta Ikeda, a Japanese-French dancer, Laertes by Aida Redza from Malaysia, and Polonius by Ann Crosset, a Danish-American actress. With race-blind casting, Ong hoped to avoid 'a simple substitution of an Asian face for a European face'.<sup>52</sup>

The scenes are arranged into five 'books' following the style of a Noh play. The first half of the performance began in different spaces in the castle and moved gradually into the courtyard. Audience members are invited to participate in interstitial tours. During the first part of *Search: Hamlet*, one can choose one and only one of the simultaneous guided tours through the basement or different rooms of the castle, walking past costumes and other actors in preparation. The second half of the play is a *tour-de-force* of the five 'books' including a prologue and an epilogue: Book of the Ghost, Book of the Warrior (Laertes), Book of the Young Girl (Ophelia), Book of the Mad Woman (Gertrude), and Book of the Demon (Claudius). A short film made by the Chinese filmmaker Wu Wenguang was shown during the interval, which reminded the audience of the homemade movie in Michael Almereyda's *Hamlet* (2000) that replaces the play-within-a-play, and provided a self-reflexive moment. Pulling this diverse group of characters and actors together is a Noh-style storyteller played by Charlotte Engelkes from Sweden.

The performance was billed as an indoor and open-air 'dance-theatre event, a free interpretation of Shakespeare's play' in Ong's words.<sup>53</sup> It is a performance about Hamlet in which Hamlet is missing yet omnipresent because of his absence. Hamlet does not have a face or a body. The arrangement invited the audience to posit the possibility that anyone can be Hamlet. Ong's conceptual questions of 'Who is Hamlet in our time?' 'Can everyone be Hamlet?' and 'Is Hamlet an everyman?' can be perceived as universal, relevant to contemporary audiences from all cultures, and not site-specific. They beg the questions of why Kronborg and why *Hamlet*.

When invited to participate in the 2002 Hamlet Sommer Festival by Peter Langdal and Henrik Hartmann (theatre directors of the Betty Nansen Teatret), Ong insisted that he would only accept the invitation if he could stage a 'site-specific version [of *Hamlet*] at Kronborg, in its different rooms'. As a celebrated intercultural director, Ong has gone through a number of different phases, from creating 'New Asian' identities through a multilingual performance with a pan-Asian cast to battling his Western audiences' tendency to box him and label him as an 'Asian' intercultural artist providing an 'ethnic night out'.<sup>54</sup> He named several reasons to stage the site-specific *Hamlet*. He argued that *Search: Hamlet* was not about cultural categories but about 'personal idiosyncrasies' and 'personal eccentricities' in relation to the particular site of Kronborg.<sup>55</sup> The casting and flexible combination of improvised scenes and scripted choreographed dances in different parts of the castle demonstrated that each individual performer and actor would have a different experience and relation to the site and the production as a whole. Ong pointed out that while Kronborg might be foreign to some Asian artists unaccustomed to performing in such a space, the



castle is not alien to Ann Crosset, an American performer who has lived in Denmark for many years. What passes as local is not defined by race, ethnicity, or cultural heritage but rather by lived experiences.

All of the reasons Ong named demonstrate his awareness of the perils of rash eulogies of interculturalism that can be easily associated with his stature (a staple of 'progressive' yet quintessential Asia) and Elsinore (the locus of fantasies of origin for *Hamlet*). There have been reasons for concern about the ethical implications of Ong's intercultural projects. Critics were not optimistic about the visions of interculturalism found in Ong's pan-Asian *Lear*,<sup>56</sup> but Ong – at odds with his 'own hybridity as a Chinese-Singaporean' who speaks Chinese with his parents but 'conceptualizes his productions in English'<sup>57</sup> – is constantly on the move. He has not been restricted to a specific vision – or a specific locality – in any work. *Search: Hamlet* evidences some of the new directions he is exploring. He named this new approach 'site-specific' production.

Ong rightly pointed out that 'locating [*Search: Hamlet*] at Kronborg would raise all sorts of cultural issues such as cultural authenticity and possession'. He went on to argue that this positionality would enable his audience to rethink a set of questions, such as 'should globalization develop specificities to take into account different localities, different contexts, different individual circumstances?'<sup>58</sup> Ong was less interested in mingling different iconic cultural symbols (as he did in *Lear*) than in locating the meaning of *Hamlet* (in our age) and the specificities of his *Hamlet* custom-made for Kronborg. He stated in an interview:

Audiences in Tokyo, Berlin, New York, Singapore and Denmark are not the same. You cannot produce one work and tour it to five cities with an identical production. The fact that we are site specific at Kronborg forces us to tailor it to Denmark, which I think is very important in this floating space of international performance. Kronborg is an important root to make us specific.<sup>59</sup>

What remains unanswered is whether Kronborg is seen by Ong and his audience as a site of collective memories of flirting with historical authenticity. Do the Hamlet-Sommer-internationalism and the Hamlet-myth of Kronborg make the castle a convenient yet enticing point of reference and a point of origin? The programme of *Search: Hamlet* qualifies, in Danish and in English, that:

Shakespeare ... never visited Kronborg, or Denmark for that matter, but several of his friends did, and besides the story about the Danish prince was widely known throughout Europe.<sup>60</sup>

The programme also elaborates the motives for the collaborative project that are decidedly local. Langdal and Hartmann of Betty Nansen Teatret, one of the key organizers, write straightforwardly:

The project [*Search: Hamlet*] is born out of a political question: why do 75% of the Danish population vote for 3 major parties, whose goal is to send the 2% that are of non-European heritage out of Denmark? What makes us so afraid of foreigners that we do not want them to be in our country? We want to use our theatre space to find the answer to this question.<sup>61</sup>

*Search: Hamlet* is an intercultural exercise in formulating an ontological answer ('every one is Hamlet', as shown by Wu's short film, to which I'll return) to the political question above. The presence of the cultural locations of 'Denmark', 'Asia', and 'China' in the performance is accidental as evidenced by the epilogue. The Storyteller comments that '[she is] not yet playing Hamlet', and that '[she doesn't] know where he is' or 'why everybody is looking for him'. She concludes that she is 'not looking / But [she is] definitely existing'.<sup>62</sup> Following the Danish theatre tradition of commemorating a renowned performer, the Storyteller danced with a spotlight, a 'living space' in Ong's words, that came to represent Hamlet.<sup>63</sup> Ong was concerned about the inadequacy of any performer to play Hamlet in such a multicultural production. He decided to design the performance to revolve around Hamlet's stories but to eliminate the role of Hamlet. However, the absent Hamlet was still represented by a spotlight in a style appropriated from the Danish tradition to honor a dead performer. As such, Hamlet became 'a living space' suggesting rather than confirming 'a concrete situation'.<sup>64</sup>

Consistent with this configuration of cultural locations through actors' bodies (or the absence thereof), Wu's film *Search: Hamlet in China* also brings different localities into one theatrical presentation. Shown during the intermission, Wu's film about hunting for Hamlet in contemporary China provided interesting meta-narratives. The film drives home the message that being gay and being Chinese at the same time can be disastrous, especially in Beijing, the perceived core of Chinese political authoritarian culture. Ong indicated that he intended to use the Wu film to turn the table:

In [*Hamlet*], Hamlet organises a touring company of actors [to perform] ... in order to make the king reveal himself ... hopefully [Wu's film] reveals certain things to the audience about themselves. Maybe how open they are. Just like Hamlet held a mirror up to Claudius, Wenguang is holding the mirror up to us, the audience.<sup>65</sup>

That mirror showed the audiences not only the prospect for one to become an outsider in a globalized world (by putting on display a Chinese gay man's journey in Beijing), but also residual images of a cultural site (China), as did the presence of other Asian performers. Their presence made their bodies into sites of cultural memories on display. Yet Ong considered the film to be allegorical, a mid-point in the signifying process, not a display of cultural difference:

The film brings to fore the whole question of to be or not to be a gay man in a culture [China] where it is illegal to be gay. And you also begin to realise that perhaps one part of Hamlet's tension was that he could never be right.<sup>66</sup>

Ultimately, sexuality is not the most important theme of this film that concentrates on defamiliarization of cultural space (Beijing) through the perspective of an outsider (a gay man) who is cast as a loose equivalent to Hamlet, an outsider in the castle. Wu's film appeared to be a documentary, with street shots and scenes shot on an underground train in China. We hear a gay man speak about humiliations and an old Chinese woman commented, 'I don't know much about Hamlet, but everyone should have an offspring.' Ong hoped the audience would see Hamlet's problem, not just China's social ills. Whether this self-conscious rootedness could cure the ills of under-theorized eulogies of interculturalism remains problematic, but it is clear that *Search: Hamlet* has articulated a vision of locality-inflected cosmopolitanism through reconfigured localities, the multinational cast, and productive fusion of European and Asian performing traditions.

#### CONCLUSION: THE LOGIC OF 'AUTHENTIC' VENUES

In both Jiao's and Ong's *Hamlets*, the fictional inhabits the actual site of production. In turn, the performance site and its cultural location reconfigure the fictional. The situatedness of Jiao's production exemplifies a rooted configuration of localities in nationalistic terms, while Ong's work produces *difference* and fertile novelty to comment on the ethics of cosmopolitanism. *Search: Hamlet* articulates forms of 'rooted cosmopolitanism', to borrow Domna C. Stanton's term from a different context.<sup>67</sup> Though one may wonder whether the multiple local origins in *Search: Hamlet*, like the site of Kronborg itself, were used as a platform for international attention, it is clear that Ong prioritizes the need to deny cultural authenticity derivative of any single cultural location being represented in the performance. Jiao, by contrast, insisted on performative authority derived from cultural authenticity. His *Hamlet* was informed by the exigencies of his locality. Despite these aesthetic differences, these two *Hamlets* share similar visions – self-conscious or not – of conjunctions and disjunctions of Hamlet's world and the worlds of the audiences, yet they demonstrate different approaches and motives. There are four differences.

First, although both directors were invested in the unique performance spaces, a castle and a temple, their approaches to the display of local specificities differ. In Jiao's *Hamlet*, politics and moral arguments superseded artistic concerns. Jiao's *Hamlet* openly encouraged its audiences to extrapolate political

messages from the play, performed in a Confucian temple, the locus of local politics. Ong intentionally kept the particularities of each locality (his 'Singapore', each actor's 'Asia' or 'Europe') under-defined, which was a different approach from his pan-Asian *Lear*, a multilingual display of defined theatrical forms and cultures. *Search: Hamlet*, a self-consciously site-specific presentation, set out in search of ideals that its creators hoped to achieve through the site (Kronborg) and the malleable localities of the players from throughout the world. Jiao, on the other hand, had been very clear about the promises and limitations of the Confucian temple as a performance space, and he did not hesitate to display the local specificities: Confucian values, wartime exigencies, and the convergence of the physical and allegorical spaces in the temple.

Second, the omnipresence of Hamlet and Confucius in Jiao's production contrasts with the absence of and search for Hamlet in Ong's version. While Ong made conscious choices to design a site-specific *Hamlet*, Jiao had little choice but to make the best use of the meager resources available to him during the war, including the Confucian temple, one of the most prevalent architectural spaces to be found in towns small and large; hence a natural site for a wartime theatrical event when proper theatre spaces are difficult to find. Therefore, the Confucian moral contexts became present in this particular production first by accident but were subsequently consciously deployed by the director and critics.

Third, as Martin Esslin famously argued, all drama is 'a political event', either asserting or undermining the codes of conduct of the society.<sup>68</sup> Ong's and Jiao's *Hamlets* are ultimately products of politics, but the two directors broached the subject differently. Jiao openly announced that art takes a second seat to politics in his wartime *Hamlet*, while Ong sent messages through his statements in the programme and interviews that *Search: Hamlet* was in search of many things, including humanism, a desirable form of globalization, and a new art form.

A fourth aspect to be considered is international tours. The meanings of Jiao's wartime *Hamlet* are intimately connected to its original performance venue, a temple, and will be lost on audiences in a different place. While Jiao did not intentionally design the performance to be site specific, Ong insists on the significance of designing site-specific productions that cannot and will not be toured to other locations in the hope that this will resist certain undesirable effects of globalization.

These examples show that Shakespearean appropriation can be inspired and complicated by the tensions between (self-)syndicated 'authentic' sites for the presence of Shakespeare and for the presence of cultural otherness.

'Shakespeare' is manufactured and consumed at the junctures where these localities meet. These projects not only appropriated Shakespeare's texts but also the various sites of representation.

This returns us to the dialectical relationship between locality and authority. The concept of locality encompasses a number of related ideas, including the setting of a drama, the city and venue of a performance, the cultural coordinates of the audience, and all the meanings derived from these physical and allegorical sites. A great deal of creative energy has been directed toward the instance when the locality from which perceived authenticity is derived (such as 'Hamlet's castle') and the locality of performance converge. Festivals and artists work hard to bring their patrons an authentic Shakespearean experience in venues openly known as fictional. These sites cannot properly be said to exist. Some of these sites serve as the backdrop of Shakespeare's plays, and tourists flock to experience the illusion for themselves. The locations then dress themselves up to meet and generate the demands of cultural tourism, dressing themselves up as something they are not, as evidenced by the following statement by Hamlet Sommer at Kronborg Castle. The statement explores *Hamlet's* Danish connection (the following quotation preserves the oddity of the original text):

400 years ago Shakespeare wrote the drama about Hamlet, which takes place at Kronborg Castle and has proved to be internationally very durable. ... Saxo Grammaticus, tells the legend about Amled, a Prince of Jutland, in his 'Danish Chronicles' that were written just before year 1200. Since 1816 there have been many performances of *Hamlet* at Kronborg Castle, with great actors like Laurence Olivier, Vivian Leigh, John Gielgud, Kenneth Branagh, Jacob Jacobi. ... A Hamlet-cult commenced and established the local link to Elsinore, which flourishes to this very day.<sup>69</sup>

The Danish 'Hamlet's castle' operates on similar principles found in the promotion of cultural tourism to Harry Potter's England, the Tokyo Daikanyama neighborhood of *Lost in Translation*, the New Zealand of *Lord of the Rings*, or the *Da Vinci Code's* Europe (Louvre, Église Saint-Sulpice, Rosslyn Chapel, and more). Manufactured and consumed in cycles of fictionalization, these locations now exist simultaneously on different temporal and spatial dimensions in the fictional and real worlds. It is important to note that authenticity in and by itself may not always be the claim to fame of these sites, as evidenced by Disneyland's 'blatantly inauthentic attractions' that attract many tourists.<sup>70</sup> Rather, it is often the site's ability to 'point to a sedimented history and ... a connected otherness ... that reach[es] ... to the land of the dead' that fascinates and solicits repeated visits.<sup>71</sup>

A large part of this phenomenon is driven by the forces of market economy,<sup>72</sup> but it is important to recognize the intricate interplay between self-syndicated

'authentic' venues (for the presence of Shakespeare or his characters) and theatrical spaces where 'Shakespeare' is produced and consumed. Two examples that readily come to mind are Stratford-upon-Avon and the Globe Theatre, both representing historically authentic venues baptized by a Shakespearean presence that fuels what Hodgdon has called 'fantasies of origin'.<sup>73</sup> The worldwide Shakespeare industry has constructed venues competing for this authenticity, including locations with 'authentic' local flavors that contrast with the foreignness of Shakespeare, and self-syndicated authentic sites for imported spectacles such as the Tokyo Globe.<sup>74</sup>

Theatre artists' and audiences' preoccupation with 'authentic' venues are twofold, as shown by the two *Hamlets* analyzed in this chapter. On the one hand, there have been a number of highly symbolic, victorious 'returns' of productions to the locations where the plays are set, such as *Macbeth* to Scotland (Shanghai Kunju Theatre's *Story of Bloody Hands [Xieshou Ji]* in 1987)<sup>75</sup> and *Hamlet* to Denmark (Laurence Olivier's *Hamlet* in 1948 and Shi Yukun's Peking opera *The Revenge of the Prince* in 2005). While the virtues of these performances may well lie with their artistic innovations, the currency of 'authentic' localities frequently takes a more prominent role in marketing campaigns and, increasingly, in critical appraisals by audiences and artists.

On the other hand, there have been some performances that were staged in non-traditional venues (such as Jiao's *Hamlet*). In some cases, the choice of a non-traditional venue was intentional, with well thought-out dramaturgical plans to incorporate the idiosyncrasies of the site to add 'authentic' local flavors to the Shakespearean play. For example, a Chinese-language *Much Ado About Nothing* with a capitalist twist was staged under the Proletarian Heroes' Monument in the Huangpu Park against the modern skyline of the Bund and the Oriental Pearl Tower in 1995.<sup>76</sup> In other cases, the choice was accidental, imposed by historical exigencies or material conditions. For example, Jiao Juyin's 1942 *Hamlet*, staged in a Confucian temple for lack of formal theatrical space during wartime, gained accidental additional purchase on Hamlet's perceived nobleness with Confucian twists. Through their reconfigurations of different localities, Jiao's, Ong's, and Shi's site-specific *Hamlets* generate meanings for both the locale where *Hamlet* was staged and the play itself.

These site-specific productions are as much readings of Shakespeare's symbolic capital as re-readings of globally articulated localities. The historical and imagined boundaries between each of these sites constitute the 'venue' from which 'Shakespeare' and its Others begin their presencing.<sup>77</sup>

## NOTES

1. John Gillies, "Shakespeare Localized: An Australian Looks at Asian Practice," in *Shakespeare Global/Local: The Hong Kong Imaginary in Transcultural Production*, ed. Kwok-kan Tam, Andrew Parkin, and Terry Siu-han Yip (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 2002), 101.
2. Dennis Kennedy, "Introduction: Shakespeare without his language," in *Foreign Shakespeare: Contemporary Performance*, ed. Dennis Kennedy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 6.
3. John Russell Brown, "Foreign Shakespeare and English-speaking Audiences," in *Foreign Shakespeare: Contemporary Performance*, ed. Dennis Kennedy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 32; John Russell Brown, *New Sites for Shakespeare: Theatre, the Audience and Asia* (London: Routledge, 1999), 130.
4. I follow the East Asian convention and put family name first, followed by given names.
5. Ben Jonson, "To The Memory Of My Beloved, The Author, Mr William Shakespeare, And What He Hath Left Us," in *Mr. VVilliam Shakespeares comedies, histories, & tragedies* (London: Printed by Isaac Iaggard, and Ed. Blount, 1623), n.p.
6. William Shakespeare, *The Riverside Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, 2nd ed., ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1997). All references to Shakespeare's text are from this edition unless otherwise noted.
7. Stevie Simkin, *Early Modern Tragedy and the Cinema of Violence* (New York: Palgrave, 2006), 3.
8. James Bulman, "Introduction," in *Shakespeare, Theory and Performance*, ed. James Bulman (London: Routledge, 1996), 3–4; Jean Howard, "The New Historicism in Renaissance Studies," in *Renaissance Historicism: Selections from English Literary Renaissance*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney and Don S. Collins (Amherst, MA: Massachusetts University Press, 1987), 33.
9. Robert Shaughnessy, "On Location," in *A Companion to Shakespeare and Performance*, ed. Barbara Hodgdon and W.B. Worthen (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 79, 99.
10. Martin Orkin, *Local Shakespeares: Proximations and Power* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 2.
11. Sonia Massai, *World-wide Shakespeares: Local Appropriations in Film and Performance* (London: Routledge, 2005), 3.
12. *Ibid.*, 9.
13. Barbara Hodgdon, "Stratford's Empire of Shakespeare; or, Fantasies of Origin, Authorship, and Authenticity: The Museum and the Souvenir," in *The Shakespeare Trade: Performances and Appropriations*, ed. Barbara Hodgdon (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 159.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Dennis Kennedy, "Shakespeare worldwide," in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. Margreta de Grazia and Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 252.
16. Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," in *Modern Literary Theory: A Reader*, ed. Philip Rice and Patricia Waugh (London: Arnold, 1989), 235.
17. Orkin, *Local Shakespeares*, 1–4.

18. John Russell Brown, "Theatrical Pillage in Asia: Redirecting the Intercultural Traffic," *New Theatre Quarterly* 14, no. 1 (1998): 12.
19. Dennis Kennedy, "Shakespeare and the Global Spectator," *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, vol. 131 (Bochum: Verlag Ferdinand Kamp, 1995), 50.
20. Orkin, *Local Shakespeares*, 1.
21. Stanley Wells, "Foreword" to *Four Hundred Years of Shakespeare in Europe*, ed. A. Luis Poujante and Ton Hoenselaars (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003), 7.
22. Yu Shangyuan, *Yu Shangyuan xiju lunwen ji* [*Collective essays on drama by Yu Shangyuan*] (Wuhan: Changjiang wenyi chubanshe, 1986), 28.
23. Cao Shujun and Sun Fuliang, *Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage* [*Shashibiya zai Zhongguo wutai shang*] (Ha'erbin: Ha'erbin chubanshe, 1989), 99.
24. *Ibid.*, 105.
25. There were also sporadic non-Confucian engagements with *Hamlet* that challenge the tradition of Confucian criticism of Chinese and Western literary works. Lao She (1899–1966), for example, was so affected by *Hamlet* that David Der-wei Wang identified a 'Hamlet syndrome' in Lao She's works inspired by Hamlet's problems, especially procrastination. These characters and works include Tian Liede in the short story *New Hamlet* [*Xin Hanmuliede*] (1936), Ma Wei in the novel *The Two Mas* [*Er Ma*] (1929), and the anti-Japanese drama, *Homecoming* [*Guiqulaixi*] (1942). Tian Liede even declares, 'I am Shakespeare's Hamlet; we share the same first name [Liede and 'Let' in Hamlet].' See Lao She, "New Hamlet [Xin Hanmuliede]," in *Clams and Seaweeds* [*Hezao ji*] (Shanghai: Kaiming shudian, 1936), 157, reprinted in *Complete Collections of Lao She's Fictions* [*Lao She xiaoshuo quanji*], ed. Shu Ji and Shu Yi, 11 vols (Wuhan: Changjiang wenyi chubanshe, 2004), vol. 10, 443–59; David Der-wei Wang, *Fictional Realism in Twentieth-Century China: Mao Dun, Lao She, Shen Congwen* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 126.
26. Alexander C.Y. Huang, "Shamlet: Shakespeare as a Palimpsest," in *Shakespeare Without English: The Reception of Shakespeare in Non-anglophone Countries*, ed. Sukanta Chaudhuri and Chee Seng Lim (Delhi: Pearson Longman, 2006), 211–21.
27. Xiao Yang Zhang, *Shakespeare in China: A Comparative Study of Two Traditions and Cultures* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996), 210–35.
28. Lu Gu-sun, "Hamlet Across Space and Time," *Shakespeare Survey* 36 (1988): 56.
29. Cao and Sun, 49.
30. Quoted in Tian Benxiang, *Zhongguo xiandai bijiao xiju shi* [*A Comparative History of Modern Chinese Drama*] (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 1993), 453.
31. Kenneth S. Rothwell, *A History of Shakespeare on Screen*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 51.
32. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999), 235.
33. *Hamuleite* [*Hamlet*] was performed from 2–7 June 1942 with the following cast: Wen Xiying as Hamlet, Chen Jingxian as Claudius, Peng Houjun as Gertrude, and Luo Shui as Ophelia.
34. Jiao Juyin, born as Jiao Chengzhi on 11 December 1905, in Tianjin, is one of the most influential directors in modern China. He worked closely with Cao Yu, Ouyang Shanzun, and Zhao Qiyang to create the aesthetic style of Beijing People's Art Theatre. In addition to adaptations, Jiao is recognized for his productions of canonical modern

- Chinese plays such as Lao She's *Teahouse* [*Chaguan*], which was revived by the Beijing People's Art Theatre as part of the centennial celebration of Jiao's birthday in 2005.
35. The script was translated by Liang Shiqiu.
  36. The revival of the production was given a slightly different title, *Danmai wangzi Hamuleite* [*Danish Prince Hamlet*]. It was staged at the Huangjiayakou Experimental Theatre in Chongqing on 17 November 1942, and in the Guotai Theatre [Guotai Da Xiyuan] in the same city from 9–19 December 1942.
  37. Cao and Sun, 104.
  38. Ruru Li, *Shashibiya: Staging Shakespeare in China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), 34.
  39. Jiang Tao, "Directing Shakespeare on the Chinese stage [Lun Zhongguo shaju wutai shang de daoyan yishu]." *Drama* [*Xiju*] 3 (1996): 106.
  40. Jiao, Juyin. "About *Hamlet* [Guanyu *Hamuleite*]," vol. 2, *Collected Works of Jiao Juyin* [*Jiao Juyin wenji*] (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 1988), 167–8.
  41. Jiang, "Directing Shakespeare", 107.
  42. For a summary of Chinese visions of *Hamlet*, see Zhang, *Shakespeare in China*, 213–16.
  43. *Ibid.*, 216.
  44. It is of interest to note that a few months before *Hamlet* was staged in Guotai Theatre in Chongqing, a Chinese play bearing strong resemblance to *Hamlet* was staged there. The five-act Chinese historical play *Qu Yuan* by Guo Moruo (1892–1978), one of the most widely recognized historians and writers, was staged by the Chinese Dramatic Art Society [Zhonghua Juyi She] and directed by Chen Liting in the same theatre in April 1942. The titular character Qu Yuan is a historical figure who has become an icon of the melancholic Confucian politician wronged by his emperor. Many of Guo's contemporaries pointed out the similarities – in terms of characterizations of *Hamlet* and *Qu Yuan* and dramatic techniques – between Guo and Shakespeare.
  45. The production premiered at Kronborg Castle, Elsinore, Denmark, 16–23 August 2002. It ran for another three nights (22–24 September 2002) at the Betty Nansen Theatre in Edison, Copenhagen, Denmark.
  46. Japan Foundation Asia Center, *The Japan Foundation Asia Center: Towards Mutual Understanding in Asia in the Twenty-First Century* (Tokyo: n.d.), 2.
  47. Ethnic Chinese comprise 76.2 per cent of Singapore's population, and Malays and Indians 13.8 per cent and 8.3 per cent respectively. The four official languages are English, Malay, Mandarin Chinese, and Tamil.
  48. Ong, Keng Sen, "A Talk with Director Ong Keng Sen [interview with Mok Wai Yin]," *Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral – A Meditation* [stage bill] (TheatreWorks, Victoria Theatre, Singapore 1995).
  49. Elizabeth A. Kalden, "All the World's a Stage Now," *Straits Times* (1998): 2; quoted by C.J.W.-L. Wee in "Staging the Asian Modern: Cultural Fragments, the Singaporean Eunuch, and the Asian Lear," *Critical Inquiry* 30 (Summer 2004): 781.
  50. Ong, "A Talk with Director Ong Keng Sen."
  51. Ong Keng Sen, "Lear: Linking Night and Day," *Lear* [stage bill] (Tokyo: The Japan Foundation Asia Center, 1997), 5.
  52. Ong, *Search: Hamlet*, Programme Notes (Elsinore, Denmark: Hamlet Sommer 2002), 18.

53. *Ibid.*
54. Ong, "Encounters," *The Drama Review* 45, no. 3 (2001): 132.
55. Alette Scavenius, "Search for Hamlet: An Interview with the Director," *Search: Hamlet* (2002), 45.
56. Rustom Bharucha, "Consumed in Singapore: The Intercultural Spectacle of *Lear*," *Theater* 31, no.1 (2000): 122–4; Wee, "Staging the Asian Modern," 782.
57. Kalden, "All the World's a Stage," 2.
58. Ong, *Search: Hamlet* (2002), 18.
59. *Ibid.*, 45.
60. *Ibid.*, 13.
61. *Ibid.*, 6.
62. Ong, *Search: Hamlet*. Programme Notes. Kronborg castle edition, 2003, 8.
63. Ong, *Search: Hamlet* (2002), 20.
64. *Ibid.*
65. *Ibid.*, 46.
66. *Ibid.*
67. See her "Presidential Address 2005: On Rooted Cosmopolitanism," *PMLA* 121, no. 3 (2006): 627–40.
68. Martin Esslin, *An Anatomy of Drama* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 29.
69. Hamlet Sommer official website (<http://www.hamletssommer.dk/>), August 2006.
70. Erik Cohen, "Tourism at Play," *Religion* 15 (1985): 292; quoted in Dennis Kennedy, "Shakespeare and Cultural Tourism," *Shakespeare and His Contemporaries in Performance*, ed. Edward J. Esche (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 19.
71. Kennedy, "Shakespeare and Cultural Tourism," 10–11.
72. Susan Bennett, "Shakespeare on Vacation," in *A Companion to Shakespeare and Performance*, ed. Barbara Hodgdon and W.B. Worthen (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 507.
73. Hodgdon, "Stratford's Empire," 191–240.
74. Koji Takao, "The Tokyo Globe in the Context of Shakespeare in Japan," in *Shakespeare Global/Local: The Hong Kong Imaginary in Transcultural Production*, ed. Tam et al. (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 2002), 146–50.
75. *The Story of Bloody Hands*, Shanghai Kunju Theatre Company, adapted from *Macbeth* by Zheng Shifeng, directed by Li Jiayao, Shen Bin, and Zhang Mingrong; artistic director, Huang Zuolin, premiered in Shanghai in 1986. While some directors consciously moved away from the opportunity to gain purchase of locality-derived authenticity and resisted rootless tours of their productions, the Chinese reception of the international tours of this *kunju Macbeth* (Scotland) and the Shanghai Peking Opera Company's 2005 *Hamlet* (Kronborg Castle, Denmark) demonstrated anxieties about the authenticity of performance venues. This explains the pride associated with 'Chinese-made' Shakespeare touring the characters' 'homeland,' *Macbeth*'s Scotland and *Hamlet*'s Denmark. While these adaptations were believed to have gained additional values through the 'authentic' performance venues, none of them were site-specific; they were performed in China before the international tour with the same cast and staging. Li Jiayao, the director of the *kunju* adaptation of *Macbeth*, referred to the performance in Scotland as the highest achievement of *kunju* opera in its four centuries of history and as the highlight of his acting and directing career (Li, interview with author, 2005). The names of the characters and locations within *Macbeth* have

been sinicized and relocated to a fictional feudal kingdom in ancient China. The requirements of Chinese operatic theatre further restricted the presence of Shakespearean lines. Even though this could hardly pass as a 'Scottish' play, the theatre company and their Chinese critics still took great pride in the performances in Scotland.

76. *Wushi shengfei* [*Looking for Trouble*], a Western-style spoken drama adaptation of *Much Ado About Nothing*, was directed by Yu Luosheng, translated by Zhu Shenghao, and produced by Shanghai People's Art Theatre Company, in Huangpu Park in Shanghai, 16–19 November 1995. The open-air production had a cast of over sixty people.
77. To paraphrase Heidegger: 'A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing.' Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 152.

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