

follows the lead of his Japanese sources. These “completely ignored” China, he writes, because of their attention “solely on Japan’s competition with the Western powers” (p. 128). Japan out to prove itself to the world, displays an “intense yearning for sympathy” and shows itself “morbidly anxious for praise” (p. 144). It accepts Britain’s invitation to send additional troops into China “for the sake of civilization” (p. 128, 136, 145), and is handsomely rewarded in January 1902 with the Anglo-Japanese Alliance aimed implicitly against Russia. Meanwhile, China in Japanese sources ends up “a powerless nonentity” – “so utterly powerless” as to be degraded to the same level as Korea (pp. 146, 148). In 1904, when Japan goes to war with Russia, Japan presents itself “as the disinterested champion of Chinese and Korean integrity and independence” (p. 148), even as it coerces China to declare neutrality on its own soil and then excludes China from the peace negotiations.

In short, between 1895 and 1904 Japan finds itself transformed from a cautious and anxious entity uncertain about China and deferential toward the “civilized” West, to an independent actor on the regional and international stage. A watershed era for Japan and East Asia, Zachmann ably charts the transformation of Japanese self-perceptions against developments in China. As for China itself, the book makes no attempt to uncover anything new. Students of modern China need nonetheless to read this book, since it tracks Japan’s road to expansion with primary reference to China. Unfortunately, the book’s steep price puts it out of reach of most personal libraries.

DOUGLAS REYNOLDS

Chinese Shakespeares: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange

ALEXANDER C. Y. HUANG

New York: Columbia University Press, 2009

xi + 350 pp. \$26.50; £18.50

ISBN 978-0-231-14849-8 doi:10.1017/S0305741010000196

It is often said that modern Chinese literary culture owes its existence in part to translation and appropriation of Western literature and thought, but books that offer detailed and insightful analyses of this question are few. Alexander Huang’s *Chinese Shakespeares: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange* represents the best of a new generation of scholarship based on rigorous archival research that moves the field in significant new directions by perceptively examining both Chinese aesthetics and its foreign counterparts. Lucidly argued and elegantly written, this path-breaking book makes an already fascinating topic far more accessible. In order to grasp key moments “in the cultural alterity of China” (p. 23) and “Shakespeare’s place in Chinese cultural history” (p. 5), Huang considers “China” in appropriately broad terms to juxtapose mainland China and various diasporic Chinese locations.

In present-day scholarship, claims about universality are regularly dismissed, while the local has been elevated to the status of quotidian hero. Huang argues to the contrary and demonstrates that “the local is not always the antithesis to the global” nor an antidote to cultural imperialism that has been “stereotypically associated with the West” (p. 28). Critiquing notions of authenticity in nationalism, modernity, Marxism, and personal identities, *Chinese Shakespeares* makes a convincing case that the transformative power of cultural exchange leads to artistic innovation which breaks down the stronghold of ideological investments in the “conventions of authenticity” (p. 20). The study raises a number of thought-provoking questions, such as why

“Shakespeare” and “China” as cultural institutions have been deployed to “rhetorically construct narratives about difference and universality” and “how such narratives have unleashed new interpretive energy” in popular and academic cultures (p. 24).

The historically grounded and critically alert chapters consider these important questions with a series of illuminating case studies, including a fascinating *kunqu* play by Liang Qichao, late Qing creative translations by Lin Shu, Lao She’s novella inspired by China’s “Hamlet syndrome,” a silent film starring Ruan Lingyu, theatre works by Li Jianwu and Huang Zuolin, Chinese–Soviet collaborations in theatre, Wu Ningkun reading *Hamlet* in a labour camp, comedy and Cultural Revolution, the articulation of the agency and problematic image of the New Woman, as well as political uses of *Timon of Athens*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Julius Caesar* by Chinese and Taiwanese leaders (Jiang Zemin, Zhu Rongji and others).

The chronological structure of the book, from the first Opium War in 1839 to the present time, serves as an excellent framework to equip readers, along the way, with the knowledge necessary to appreciate the diversity and beauty of this rich cultural history.

The Prologue opens with snapshots of Jiao Juyin’s production of *Hamlet* in a Confucian temple during the Sino-Japanese war (1937–45) and Ong Keng Sen’s multilingual pan-Asian *Lear* in 1997, before taking a long view of history. It is immediately clear that this is an ambitious study not of a canonical writer in a different country, but of the dynamics between different claims made in the name of Shakespeare and/or China. Chapter one, “Owning Chinese Shakespeares,” theorizes the key concept that informs subsequent case studies. Recognizing that “representations signify relationally,” the methodology of locality criticism takes into account the setting of a work, the venue where it is read or performed, and the specificities of its multiple, coexisting cultural locations. This is an effective tool to critique the ill-conceived, journalistic, mode of scholarship that exoticizes non-Western traditions rather than advancing the study of cross-cultural exchanges. The study thus distinguishes itself from similar books by scholars who are either unfamiliar with recent theories pertaining to globalization, or not conversant with Chinese cultural history.

Chapters two through six tackle a series of cultural events, rewritings, productions and films in which imaginations of China and Shakespeare play an important role, beginning with the late-Qing obsession with the Bard before Shakespeare’s texts were translated, read or performed in China. Of special note is chapter seven where Huang examines two striking interpretations of Buddhism, the figure of the patriarch, and diaspora. The religious and autobiographical narratives in Wu Hsing-kuo’s solo *jingju* performance of *Lear Is Here* (Taipei, 2004) and Lai Sheng-chuan’s three-man *Lear and the Thirty-seven-fold Practice of a Bodhisattva* (Hong Kong, 2000) bring the notion of cultural ownership to its head, hence the chapter title “Disowning Shakespeare and China.” The book concludes with an epilogue on the visual global vernacular in works commissioned by art festivals or tailored to the international market (Feng Xiaogang’s film *The Banquet* – the striking image on the book cover – and Lin Zhaohua’s production of *Richard III*). The new visual language signals an epistemic shift in Chinese artists’ engagement with widely “circulated texts, personal history, and local consciousness” (p. 238).

Some sixty pages of discursive endnotes are cleanly shelved at the end of the book. However, one wonders whether the notes could be more succinct. Some notes where Huang corrects errors in other scholars’ works and challenges some unexamined assumptions could be incorporated into the main text to bring to the fore Huang’s important contributions to the field. Likewise, the illuminating metacriticism offered in chapter one might have been usefully revisited in the concluding chapter.

Richly illustrated by images in the book and videos available from an open-access online archive, *Chinese Shakespeares* will not only find an audience in general readers but will also work well in the classroom for courses on modern Chinese culture and drama, translation studies, history of Sino-British cultural exchange, and other relevant topics. There is a helpful chronology at the end that contextualizes key historical and cultural events from 1596 to 2008, concentrating on the years since 1839.

If the hallmark of a great book is its capacity to teach readers something new and to inspire new perspectives on what was once perceived to be familiar, *Chinese Shakespeares* is highly successful. This amazing book defines a new field of study, makes a formative contribution to Chinese and comparative literature scholarship, and opens new vistas for readers who care about cultural and literary globalization.

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