CHINESE SHAKESPEARES

TWO CENTURIES OF CULTURAL EXCHANGE

ALEXA HUANG
Global Chinese Culture

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GLOBAL CHINESE CULTURE

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COVER IMAGE: Daniel Wu as Prince Wu Luan (the drummer) in a pantomime in The Banquet (inspired by Hamlet), directed by Feng Xiaogang, 2006. (Courtesy of Media Asia Distribution)
Contents

List of Illustrations vii
Acknowledgments ix
A Note on Texts and Translation xiii

Prologue 1

Part I Theorizing Global Localities
1. Owning Chinese Shakespeares 23

Part II The Fiction of Moral Space
2. Shakespeare in Absentia: The Genealogy of an Obsession 47

3. Rescripting Moral Criticism: Charles and Mary Lamb, Lin Shu, and Lao She 68

Part III Locality at Work
4. Silent Film and Early Theater: Performing Womanhood and Cosmopolitanism 101
5. Site-Specific Readings: Confucian Temple, Labor Camp, and Soviet–Chinese Theater  125

Part IV Postmodern Shakespearean Orients

6. Why Does Everyone Need Chinese Opera?  167

7. Disowning Shakespeare and China  195

Epilogue  229

Select Chronology  239
Notes  251
Select Bibliography  311
Index  341
Illustrations

1. *LEAR* (1997), directed by Ong Keng Sen  4
2. *King Lear* (2006), directed by David Tse  15
3. Editorial policy and submission guidelines of *Short Story Magazine*, March 1916  74
4. Flower portrait of Shakespeare in *Short Story Magazine*, June 1916  75
5. Advertisement for Lin Shu's works in *Short Story Magazine*, October 1916  76
6. Advertisement for Lin Shu's works in *Short Story Magazine*, March 1916  77
7. *A Spray of Plum Blossom* (*Two Gentlemen of Verona*, 1931), directed by Bu Wancang  122
8. *A Spray of Plum Blossom* (1931)  123
9. *A Spray of Plum Blossom* (1931)  124
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illustrations</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11. <em>Looking for Trouble</em> (<em>Much Ado About Nothing</em>, 1979), directed by Hu Dao</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Stage design of <em>Looking for Trouble</em> (1979)</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. <em>The Tempest</em> (2004), directed by Tsui Hark</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. <em>Lear Is Here</em> (2006), directed by Wu Hsing-kuo</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. <em>Lear Is Here</em> (2004), directed by Wu Hsing-kuo</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scene and line references of Shakespearean plays are keyed to *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2nd ed., edited by G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), with modernized spelling and punctuation. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted. I have adopted the *pinyin* romanization system for Chinese throughout, except for names or phrases that are commonly known in a different form. Historical or official names are also preserved (for example, Canton and Peking University).

Further transcriptions, translations, and critical notes for selected works (accompanied by streaming videos and photographs) will be available online through “Shakespeare Performance in Asia,” a multilingual, freely accessible digital database at http://web.mit.edu/shakespeare/asia/.

Readers not familiar with the history of Shakespeare performance, Chinese cultural history under discussion, or the critical discourses in either field are invited to consult the select chronology and chapter notes.
PART I

Theorizing Global Localities
1 Owning Chinese Shakespeares

... for the eye sees not itself
But by reflection, by some other things.
—Julius Caesar

One of the possibilities enhanced by the encounter between China and Shakespeare might be found in The Tempest:

Ariel: Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange. (1.2.400–402)

Although one cannot say that nothing of Shakespeare or China fades in these historical processes, there has been a sea change in how the world sees them. The cultural space between “Shakespeare” and “China” is a space of (re)writing that is found outside of what is written. It subjects the artists and their local and foreign audiences to see, and be seen, from afar.

As the ideas of Shakespeare and China enter the global cultural marketplace, they initiate collaborative processes by which readers and audiences in different cultures grasp or exclude certain literary meanings and values. Chinese Shakespeares investigates what I suggest is a central moment in Shakespeare’s afterlife and in the cultural alterity of China.1 Attending to both the local and the transnational mechanisms through which the expressive and political values of literature emerge, I consider
what the Shakespeare–China interrelations are, why they have been used to rhetorically construct narratives about difference and universality, and how such narratives have unleashed new interpretive energy.

The answers proposed in Chinese Shakespeares suggest that the rewrites of Shakespeare and China turn them into syntactical categories that are used to generate meanings. Like words and grammatical patterns, Shakespeare and China are used to generate specific meanings in different contexts. Focusing on how artistic interventions modify the transnational knowledge bank about ideas of Shakespeare and China, my case studies of several major cultural events and texts reveal that Shakespeare and China are narrative systems read and written within the framework of performance and cultural translation. The symbiotic “narrative system” consists of writers’, directors’, and audiences’ (whatever their locations and cultural identities) uses of Shakespeare to accentuate the perceived uniqueness of Chinese culture and vice versa.

That is what the Shakespeare–China interrelations are and how they operate. The provenance of Shakespeare or China in different times has allowed the cross-cultural (for example, intercultural performance) and intracultural operations (for example, Chinese social reform) to be carried out. That is why these networks of meanings are dictated by artistic and ideological forces. However, textual fluidity is not a carte blanche for every reader to concoct his or her own meaning. Certain historical moments demand reading to be carried out in the reader’s cultural context, while other historical junctures provoke interpretations that claim to depend on the “text” itself. These patterns of interpretation are informed by recursions to various sites of origin and the reinvention or repression of specific meanings within these sites.

It is commonly recognized that the history of Shakespearean performance is the history of “what we mean by Shakespeare.” The Shakespeare–China relations not only reveal what Asian and Anglo-European readers mean by “Shakespeare” and/or “China,” but also constitute histories that, constructed over time, reveal shifting perspectives on the question of the migration of texts and representations. Shakespeare’s plays have acquired a number of different political and aesthetic functions, allowing Chinese artists and audiences to see China through the eyes of the Other (Shakespeare). This, in turn, makes Chinese interpretations of Shakespeare a visual projection of the gaze of Shakespeare’s Other (Chinese perspectives). This rich network of interpretations and positions enables multifaceted modes of reading both Shakespeare and China.
With the acceleration of economic and cultural globalization, the present time is particularly propitious to investigate the topic of Shakespeare and China. And yet the significance of multiple Chinese Shakespeares extends beyond the cliché but frequently cited reasons, such as Shakespeare’s connection to the formation of world cultures or China—making headlines with increasing frequency—as an important nation to know about in our century. For people who know, or think they know, what China and Shakespeare stand for, the questions are: Whose Shakespeare is it? Whose and which China?

Locality Criticism

The unnatural longevity of Shakespeare’s viability begs the question of the value of local reading positions. The question of where Chinese Shakespeares are situated is ultimately connected to the question of where critics and audiences discover themselves. This question—a long with the relationship between the local and the global—calls for a reexamination of Shakespeare and China as two amorphous discursive entities.

An awareness of the fetishization of the universal values of Shakespeare has prompted scholars to forsake the character criticism established by A. C. Bradley and G. Wilson Knight and turn to various forms of historical knowledge. Interpretive possibilities have multiplied when Shakespeare’s text is lodged in its social networks, then and now. Elizabethan knowledge has been brought to bear on the operation of Shakespeare’s theater. Cultural materialism and new historicism have also transformed other fields through their attention to the interplay between decidedly local forces and artistic production.

However, the local knowledge that informed our contemporary performance has remained marginal in the scholarly inquiries into the meanings of “Shakespeare.” Many contemporary rewrites, especially non-Anglophone ones, are seen as obscure bits of Shakespeariana and too far removed from the core of Shakespearean knowledge to matter. Despite their recognized status as an integral part of postcolonial and performance criticism, literary and dramatic adaptations have long been regarded as secondary and derivative, and the field has accordingly been relegated to the status of an “[un]acknowledged genre in criticism.” To counter this bias, we need to consider the itinerant projections of Shakespeare and various localities where Shakespeare has been put to work.
As Konstantin Stanislavsky suggested, “spectators come to the theatre to hear [and see] the subtext, [because] they can read the text at home.” Elements of cultural politics, nationalism, revolution, and postmodernism form a prominent set of subtexts in which Shakespeare and China are read. Since literary interpretation is always done from specific cultural locations, at the center of my study lies the notion of locality. Artists and critics work through various cultural locations, some of which lie at the crossroads of fiction and reality, such as “Hamlet’s castle,” Kronborg Castle in Denmark. I distinguish not only between historical hindsight and blind spots, but also between individuals reading in the same historical period but in different contexts. Any manifestation of Chinese Shakespeares must be understood in relation to the subtexts of the multiple deferrals to local and foreign authorities, authenticity claims, and unexamined silences. Such an approach opens up the notions of Shakespeare and China to new temporalities and locations. As representations of Shakespeare multiply, so do the localities where these representations themselves are appropriated. These localities constitute a set of historically significant practices—the practices of locating global Shakespeares and transmitting such location-specific epistemologies as the idea of Chinese opera.

While Shakespeare in other locations often speaks simultaneously in the coercive voice of Prospero and the agonized accents of Caliban, the case of Shakespeare and China does not fit easily into the postcolonial theoretical models commonly used to interpret Asian rewrites of Anglo-European literature. Michael Neill rightly observes that Shakespeare’s plays were “entangled from the beginning with the projects of nation-building, empire and colonization” in many cases. However, regions with more ambiguous relationships with the West can be doubly marginalized when dominant critical paradigms, such as postcolonial criticism, are deployed. There are two historical forces behind Chinese Shakespeares’ unique mythology in the historical record of globalization. Except for Macao, Hong Kong, and a handful of treaty ports, China was never quite colonized by the Western powers in the twentieth century. In most parts of the Chinese-speaking world, Shakespeare has rarely been resisted as a dominant figure of colonialism. Further, throughout its modern and contemporary history, China often played multiple and sometimes contradictory roles simultaneously, including the oppressor and the oppressed. In relation to the paradox of China’s status, one may legitimately ask:
“Is China a postcolonial nation?” or “Are contemporary Chinese cultural discourses too ‘nationalistic’ and potentially hegemonic to be included in that cultural frontier?” Cultural production in the territories that were not directly influenced by European colonial forces has begun to attract the attention of scholars such as Gayatri Spivak and Prasenjit Duara. While such locations as India, Africa, and Latin America continue to be the core of postcolonial criticism, my study suggests that it is precisely by virtue of being in an estranged, ambiguous relationship to the post-colonial question that Chinese Shakespeares can provide rich opportunities for reexamining the logic of the field.

Such rethinking may find its inspiration from the cultural-historical contexts of traveling texts and their readers. Locality is a useful concept to understand the audience–performer or reader–text interactions. The concept of locality is a lynchpin of sociological theory that is only beginning to be applied to literary and cultural criticism. The term takes into account the cultural coordinates of a work, including the setting of a play, its performance venue, and the specificities of the cultural location of a performance such as Jiao Juyin’s wartime Hamlet in 1942, in which parallel and antagonistic readings of local and world histories are evoked. The performance in a Confucian temple in rural China offered particular articulations of various localities recognized both in medias res and in retrospect: Hamlet’s Denmark, Fortinbras’s Norway, a China under Japanese invasion, and symbolically defined Chinese virtues. The crux of these readings of Confucianism and Hamlet emerges from the temple, a venue that becomes a fictive and historical space for reflection. These localities shape and define Shakespeare’s extensive posthumous encounters with the world. While it has now been recognized that Shakespeare has occupied an international space for centuries, the theoretical implications of this international space remain unclear. The Shakespeare–China interrelations are determined by interactions between local histories embedded in and superimposed on the works of art, shaping an interchange repeatedly staged since the nineteenth century. The notion of locality recognizes that representations signify relationally. Cultural difference, as Homi Bhabha observes, often introduces into “the process of cultural judgment and interpretation the sudden shock of the successive, non-synchronous time of signification” rather than a simple contention between different systems of cultural value.
The local is not always the antithesis to the global or an antidote to the hegemonic domination that has been stereotypically associated with the West in the shifting reconfigurations of Shakespeare and China in this history. We live in an age when global or universal claims are suspect and the local is often celebrated as a Quixotian hero resisting hegemony or guarded as an “endangered space” in need of being “produced, maintained, and nurtured deliberately.” In China, the global finds subtle articulation in the institution of cultural translation and in politically divisive discourses of modernity. There are indeed times when artists who appeal to Shakespearean universalism are deluded and complicit, although a performer can also let his or her politically driven agenda set up the work as alternative to dominant academic or artistic practices. Odd as it may seem, in other times, such as the Cultural Revolution, the local is the coercive and oppressive agent. Likewise, rampant Sinophobia in Taiwan’s cultural institution subjugates jingju performers in the name of preservation of “local” performing arts. In those moments, the global represents a potential space for liberation. While the local is sometimes deployed to confront transnational values represented by Shakespeare’s increasing, or decreasing, global clout, in other instances the additional purchase of the global is summoned to reduce the authority of the local. The dispersed nature of these transmissions necessarily detaches both the Shakespearean texts and Chinese cultural texts from their perceived points of origin. Contrary to what one might expect, such detachment does not always liberate these texts for reinterpretation. Far from threatening the canonical status of Shakespeare, some rewrites reinscribe the authorial authority and cultural essentialism into the discourse of cultural exchanges. As much as Shakespeare and China are powerful cultural institutions, they are also repositories of emotions and personal histories. Traditionally, the temporal dimension of Shakespeare’s afterlife has received more attention. Locality criticism emphasizes the physical and geocultural dimensions of the processes of rewriting.

If we accept that cultural translation not only occurs in the space between these entities but also defines the interstices of global cultures, we must treat Asian- and European-informed conceptions of Shakespeare and of China as intertwining sets of formulations, as epistemic foundations for a critical understanding of Chinese Shakespeares. Only an adequate theory of what it means to localize Shakespeare can let us decide what does or does not succumb to the ideological forces driving these new works.
Other Shakespeares as a Theoretical Problem

It has become impossible to speak of Shakespeare without becoming aware of other Shakespeares, the othering of Shakespeare, and the linguistic and political diaspora of Shakespeare. Since all interpretations—including criticism and my own positions—bear the imprimatur of specific locations and historical moments, it takes both metacritical and historical modes of inquiry to effectively understand the institutional forces (academic, political, artistic) and cultural forms (fiction, theater, cinema) that produced Chinese Shakespeares. My aim of metacriticism is to examine the unique logic and structure of a work or an artistic claim, and its critical reception.16

There is little doubt that the field of cultural globalization has yet to properly define its object and grasp competing claims made in the name of local/global culture and the tradition of text-and-representation criticism. Since the 1990s, Shakespearean film and theater scholars have repeatedly called for the necessary refinement and application of theories for cross-cultural appropriation, but not all scholars—even those critics on the lookout for new performance trends—agree on the implication of theorization.17 Patrice Pavis, for example, cautions that it may be “too soon to propose a global theory of intercultural theatre” when we are “uncertain as to whether [intercultural performance], the tip of an iceberg, . . . signals a depth of startling proportions hidden from view, or whether it is already in the process of melting away.”18 Pavis’s question of timing is an interesting one, but the obstacle to theorization is not the critic’s temporal proximity to the events that may impede a full appreciation of the discursive fields. Even when critics find themselves within the structure being read, meaningful intellectual work can still be carried out. Rather, the lack of in-depth critical histories of these events impedes the development of any theory, which is why I have opted for a wider range of coverage of historical and critical issues to contextualize the case studies.

The differences and similarities between ideas of Shakespeare and of Asia, rather than the dynamics of the interstitial space, have historically received more critical attention. This in part has hindered the development of a theoretical model for global Shakespeare. The distance between Chinese and Shakespearean aesthetic principles bears dwelling upon, but it can lead observers of cultural exchange to focus instead on the questions of assimilation, defamiliarization, or compatibility between Shakespearean and Chinese representational practices. This tendency leads to
somewhat predictable conclusions about what and how these new works contribute to the host culture and to Shakespeare’s afterlife. A related difficulty is an urge to reconcile fundamental differences between the aesthetics named by Shakespeare and by Asia, and to use their philosophical and structural similarities to support claims of universality.

This is precisely what has occupied the rewriters’ attention, as evidenced by their philosophical investments in authenticity claims and *conventions* of interpretive authenticity. For example, some early-twentieth-century Chinese polemists used Shakespeare and the iconic proposal for a new China to construct nuanced cultural signifiers that were deployed to the exclusion of other competing reformist agendas. Authenticity became a trope that was manipulated to exercise authoritative claims over political and cultural reforms. In a different period, authenticating discourses played another role. In the global cultural marketplace of the late twentieth century, the notion of authenticity enabled marginalized artists to counter oppressive cultural practices such as certain forms of interculturalism that efface local traditions. While the arbitrariness of the conventions of authenticity has to be recognized, it is equally important to be cognizant of what ideological work authenticating discourse can perform. It builds bridges in some places but blocks avenues for exchange elsewhere.

The lack of theorization means that the topic of Shakespeare and China is usually met with surprise and suspicion. Yet our reaction of surprise in relation to the subject is itself surprising. The ideas of Shakespeare and China add several levels of discordance to the fields of Shakespeare and Chinese studies and to the praxis of performance. As much as such discordance is challenging, it can also be the source of exciting and provocative intellectual and artistic works. Despite the increasing currency of transnational studies in the humanities, the politics of recognition has continued to operate not only in the study of minority cultures—as Françoise Lionnett, Shu-mei Shih, and Charles Taylor point out—but also in Shakespeare studies. Selective attentiveness, if not valorization, has routinely been given to the most dominant and the most resistant readings of Shakespeare, highlighting a linear relationship of either assimilation or opposition between Shakespeare and world cultures.

Therefore, one of the first questions to be addressed in the study of Chinese Shakespeares is: Why should we concern ourselves with the place of “China” in Shakespearean criticism where non-European cultures do not seem to have a place? Why should Shakespeare be associated
with China at all, since they appear to be antithetical to each other? The same question could be rephrased as one from the perspective of Asian studies: What can the presence and absence of Shakespeare in the Sinophone world tell us about Asian modernity and postmodernism? Scholars disagree on the theoretical implication of these questions. Jonathan Bate takes the middle ground and posits that Shakespeare’s global appeal results neither from his linguistic virtuosity nor the power of the British Empire.21 Dennis Kennedy, however, takes a more radical position and argues against the idea of cultural ownership and “the native familiarity that English-speakers assume for Shakespeare.”22 There are similar debates about essentialism and the hybridity of modern Chinese literary culture. One of the most contested notions is Chinese culture’s purported independence from other cultures, or China’s exclusivity. James Liu considers twentieth-century Chinese literature and theories too “Westernized” to merit serious study, while Rey Chow defends the necessity to read “modern Chinese literature other than as a kind of bastardized appendix to classical Chinese and a mediocre apprentice to Western literature.”23

These initial points of contention have motivated my study, and cultural and performance theories inform the exploration of the shifting localities of the so-called unfaithful or self-syndicated authentic representations of Shakespeare and China. We should concern ourselves with foreign Shakespeares, because Shakespeare, for the past century, has been writ larger than his text. Specifically, artistic interpretations of Shakespeare and histories of the Sinophone world provide rich materials for locality criticism. The fact that this cultural phenomenon does not settle comfortably into the grammar of our current critical vocabulary can also initiate useful reflection on the critical enterprise itself. The task of cultural criticism in this context is not simply to evaluate how “successfully” a given work represents the source texts or symbols of the host culture, but to locate its logic of representation within the collective cultural memory, politics, and the personal dimension of history.

The Pleasures of (In)fidelity

The reception of both Anglophone and non-Anglophone performances of Shakespeare has been dominated by morally loaded discourses of fidelity and authenticity (“Did they get Shakespeare or Chinese opera right?”), informed by variations of such questions as “Is it
still Shakespeare?” or “Is the performance ‘Chinese’ enough?”24 Even a more established field, such as Shakespeare on film, is still grappling with similar issues.25 Although debates still rage about the status of translated canonical literary works, at stake are such questions as how Shakespeare and China are connected, how the connections are celebrated or contested in different times and places, and what these interactions create (films, theater pieces, ideologies, literary works, and new visions). These two entities are also connected via the market law. Shakespeare’s currency in the Anglophone world generally, and the revival of Shakespeare in England particularly, is connected to the demands of the international cultural markets. The Anglophone cultural globalization in turn complicates the vested interests in Shakespeare among writers and performers in the non-Anglophone world. These interests are frequently marked by signs of resistance, apologia, and many other agendas. The interplay between Shakespeare and China thus reveals the plurality and the referential instability of these discursive entities.

I would now like to think these issues through the rhetoric of fidelity. It bears reiterating that adaptation has to be considered on its own terms. Characterized by its nature of in-betweenness, adaptation is neither a simple rejection of the idea of the singular author—as some avant-garde artists believe—nor an unproblematic tool to unsettle the tyranny of the author—as Gilles Deleuze idealizes.26 Recognizing the discourses about fidelity is the first step to treat rewriting as a site where citations, recitation, and echoes collide to form new meanings.27

The first obstacle to overcome is the assumption of an ethics of fidelity.28 Recent work has shown an acute awareness of these perils, reorienting the relationship between text and performance. Rewriting is not an appendage that gives way to the literariness of Shakespeare’s text, but an agent that participates in the play’s signification process. Even though the word “localization” was not in use until the nineteenth century, resistance to various activities named by localization has created a major ideological force throughout Shakespeare’s afterlife.

The widespread investment in the particularities of Shakespeare’s text and non-Anglophone traditions cuts across a range of otherwise divergent artistic movements and critical schools, including—perhaps surprisingly—those that may be deemed radical and even iconoclastic. This dominant paradigm bears an ethical dimension. Despite the recent shift of the object of inquiry from Shakespeare the text to the cultural institution of “Shakespeare,” many artists and critics continue to be preoccupied
with the issue of fidelity, as evidenced by interpretive strategies that riff on authenticating marketing moves, by mutually implicating historicist and presentist claims, and by artistic and scholarly activities united by the name of appropriation—a problematic term. Although there is greater latitude for parody in East Asia than in Anglophone culture, varying degrees of essentialist reverence of the local culture or Shakespeare dictate that many artists see themselves as speaking for Shakespearean or Chinese aesthetics, or both. Despite having translated and directed several of Shakespeare’s plays in Mandarin and Cantonese (and staged jingju plays in English), Daniel Yang fundamentally rejects the notion of transcultural performance. Ong Keng Sen’s postmodern pronouncements in LEAR—despite his challenge of cultural essentialism—focused on the purported authenticity of cultural locations (“New Asia” or elsewhere). Another equally revealing example is Feng Xiaogang’s Hamlet-inspired feature film. When the high-profile film The Banquet premiered at the Venice and Cannes film festivals and subsequently screened in the Chinese-speaking world in late 2006, it generated heated debates about the film’s dual identity. Is the film Shakespearean enough? Is it Chinese? Critical discourses about this film demonstrate the needs of multiple interpretive communities, including two opposing forces: the tendencies to exalt the hybridity of postnational cultural spaces and to reinscribe the nation into cross-cultural dialogues. Behind these forces is the common tendency to essentialize cultural difference and mistake rigidly defined equivalents for intertextual work.

Even as some artists strive to seek the real, authentic Shakespeare or China, they are able to create only a sense of fullness that satisfies the desires for particular types of experiences dictated by historical circumstances. Therefore, the relation between cultural texts and representations is not a mimetic one, but an enabling relation between two mutually imbricated subjects. The ideas of Shakespeare and of China are informed by performances of all kinds. They are producing subjects in the sense that they do not provide those kinds of reliable and immutable points of reference that many artists and audiences aspire toward.

Ironically, the familiar news about Shakespeare’s global and transhistorical appeal can sometimes dull the critical attention. What is worthy of attention is the selective inattentiveness to the dynamics of “unfaithful” rewrites, or how the process of rewriting itself faithfully reproduces the economic and cultural dynamics of globalization. The distinctions between faithful and unfaithful break down where Shakespeare’s afterlife
is concerned, since the plays are so subject to multiple manifestations. In fact, a particularly compelling point of departure for exploring Shakespeare’s afterlife is the ethical assumption at work in the seemingly commonsense distinction between normative and alternative interpretations (English versus foreign Shakespeares; faithful versus unfaithful adaptations; authentic versus inauthentic representations of China). The so-called alternatives are in fact central to our contemporary performance culture, in which classic plays can still be performed for entertainment and intellectual stimulation. Local Shakespeares are not a binary opposition to canonical metropolitan English-language representations that are perceived to be “licensed” and more faithful.

It is important to recognize that any system of performance, like any mode of cultural production (for example, jingju), is not an alternative to a legitimate, naturalized, mode of representation (for example, English-language or huaju “straight” performance).36 There is nothing outside the very system of signification that is being constantly reconfigured by each instance of performance and by the cumulative history of these reconfigurations. Therefore, it is more fruitful to pursue the question of “alternative to what” than to substantiate authenticity claims. At the risk of appearing to fall back into the remedial mode that defines new theoretical models in negative terms, I would like to point out that theorizing from the margins carries its own rewards.37 Rather than a revelation of the supposed fidelity or infidelity of rewrites, this study focuses on the development of varied and often paradoxical articulations of Shakespeare and China and the tensions between their varied localities, emphasizing the cultural space between Shakespeare and China that sustains a heavily trafficked two-way exchange.

By two-way transactions, I mean the processes that revise and enrich the repertoire of knowledge about Shakespeare and China, as exemplified by Jiao Juyin’s Hamlet (1942), which transformed Hamlet’s philosophy in part through the use of a specific performance venue—a Confucian temple in southwestern China during the second Sino-Japanese War. Interrelations between Shakespeare and China constitute networks of signifiers that are themselves reconfigurations of other cultural signs. Some works have expanded the repertoire of Shakespearean and Asian performance idioms to create interconnecting Shakespeare traditions that are both Asian and Western. One example is Wu Hsing-kuo’s Kingdom of Desire (1986), a play inspired as much by Macbeth as by Throne of Blood (1957) by Kurosawa Akira, who has been identified as an “intensely Japanese
owning chinese shakespeares

[but] paradoxically not solely a Japanese film maker.”38 Two mainland Chinese feature films based on Hamlet, The Banquet (2006) and The Prince of the Himalayas (2006), further expanded the interpretive frameworks for both the Shakespearean and Chinese texts. The Banquet produced a highly elastic vision of ancient Chinese imperial court culture; at the same time, it reinterpreted the structure of emotions in Hamlet through the stylization enabled by the knight-errant (wuxia) film genre. The Prince of the Himalayas was so popular in China that Mandarin–Tibetan huaju (spoken drama) stage versions based on the film, with the same cast and director, have been mounted in Shanghai and Beijing. This was a case where the performance idioms of the screen and the stage converged to create a new space for ethnic minority performers.

These works, in turn, enriched the interpretive possibilities of Shakespeare, just as Sarah Bernhardt’s and Asta Nielsen’s female Hamlets at the beginning of the twentieth century expanded the traditions of cross-dressed performance in Europe and the United States.39 The transformation of cultural forms and values operates in both directions, thus informing and giving voice to the individual interpretations.

Myth Making

Despite these rich critical possibilities, studies of Shakespeare in popular culture and performance still tend to concentrate on Anglophone examples, relegating Asian Shakespeares to cocktail-party definitions of exotic spectacles. Likewise, the topic continues to strive for legitimacy within Asian studies. This is due in part to the technological operations of globalization as they play themselves out across nation-state structures and value systems.

Marginalization and myth making are mutually constitutive processes. Three main factors contribute to the marginalization of non-Anglophone Shakespeares and the mystification of Shakespeare’s and China’s exclusivity in the pedagogical and research contexts. First, due to the ephemeral nature of live theater, even the most commercially successful and the most extensively toured productions can never be as accessible as feature films. The other two factors are closely connected to the politics of the field: the misconception of the referential stability of performances at familiar centers—the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States—and the widespread journalistic mode in writings about non-Anglophone
Shakespearean performance that reduces its subject of study to fleeting news items.

The marginalization of the field is a result of not a lack of publications but, ironically, an overflow of “reports” without theoretical reflection (“This is how they do Shakespeare over there; how quaint”). The reportage mode is unfortunately lacking in ideological analysis. It can be valuable for new works to be made accessible through descriptive reviews, but that cannot constitute the sole model of inquiry in the field. Ultimately, cultural criticism has a different mission than a documentary film about an exotic object. It takes readers into a cultural event or a play in performance within its historical contexts not by replicating a full visual record of it, but by analyzing the logic of vested interests in visual, verbal, and textual signs.

Paradoxically, as an increasing number of rewrites become “familiarly known,” they also become ornamental and predictably exotic objects that are never positioned to be properly known. Many books on Shakespearean appropriation have a “non-West” chapter, but that itself is the problem. The dominance of the British–American axis in scholarship also contributes to the disinterest in non-Anglophone Shakespeares. Editors would not think of including a token chapter on American or British productions. Even scholarly works that engage a globally articulated subject such as racial difference are engulfed by the American and British “obsessions with black and white.” The hierarchies of subject dictate that only selected examples are concentrated on. However, even when non-Anglophone Shakespeares are analyzed, there is a critical neglect of the appropriation of the local interpretive practices (performance, translation, rewriting, reception). A few new works have responded to this critical impasse by demonstrating that symbiotic negotiations over Shakespeare’s works do not occur only in traditionally defined peripheral localities but also at the Anglophone centers of Shakespearean performance. What is needed is a necessarily more capacious and polymorphous sense of China or Shakespeare as a continually evolving repository of meaning rather than a fixed textual corpus. Just as the field of cinematic Shakespeare has recently adopted new paradigms that challenge “the notion that Shakespeare film is only of interest for its immediacy,” the assumption about the ephemeral value of Asian Shakespeares can be fully examined only when we shift the critical energy from documenting individual rewrites as pieces of exotica to historicizing and theorizing their interrelated trajectories.
In the past few years, as the contingency of performance and the referential instability of Shakespeare are being reexamined, Chineseness has been likewise reassessed as a theoretical problem. One of the most contested notions is the purported exceptionality of China in both scholarly discourse and popular culture. On the one hand, European Sinologists (such as François Jullien) and philosophers (such as Leibniz) have repeatedly used rhetorically constructed differences of China to form an antithesis to European philosophy. On the other hand, intellectuals and directors in China, especially those who are actively engaged in cultural translation, often turn China into a repository of idealized cultural values. Subscribing to the idea of identifiable and fixed cultural boundaries, they have developed an obsession with “Chineseness” that contributes to the fantasy that everything Chinese is “somehow better—longer in existence, . . . more valuable, and ultimately beyond comparison.”

The habitual mystification of China is present in many other areas. Within the purview of theater studies in North America, Asian performance remains the ultimate Other, “unknowable, unlearnable, unfathomable, [because] the languages are imagined to be indecipherable, . . . names are backwards, . . . cultural values . . . totally alien, [and] performers are trained from birth.” Ironically, some scholars of Asian studies are willing to endorse this attitude, readily confirming the difficulty of their own specialty and the challenges of cross-cultural dialogues. As recent scholarship has recognized, Chinese institutions—cultural, social, political—are often imagined as though they “began in times immemorial.” On the one hand, contradictory images of China in the popular and academic discourses around the world repeatedly challenge Western conceptual frameworks. On the other hand, assumptions nourished by “an entrenched Eurocentric worldview prevalent in both China and the West” have hindered the development of more productive ways to think about China. Michel Foucault articulates this problem when he writes in his comments on Jorge Luis Borges’s imaginary “Chinese” encyclopedia: “In our dreamworld, is not China precisely this privileged site of space? In our traditional imagery, the Chinese culture is the most meticulous, the most rigidly ordered, the one most deaf to temporal events, most attached to the pure delineation of space.”

Such dreams abound. Early-twentieth-century Chinese writers have been said to harbor an “obsession with China,” whereas contemporary Chinese writers, as David Der-wei Wang observes, have attempted to “break away from hard-core obsession with China” by engaging in a
frivolous “flirtation with China,” approaching the country—“the most serious serious subject”—from very different perspectives. This detachment of political action from literature may be characteristic of cultural production of the postmodern era, but positivism and a redemptive discourse continue to haunt the production and reception of Chinese Shakespeares. Since the late nineteenth century, Chinese artists and intellectuals have repeatedly recast new ideas—local or foreign—in a remedial mode, failing to recognize the fictional space occupied by “China.”

I hasten to add that these obsessions with Chineseness that mystify China are as pervasive among the artists as among the critics, both in and beyond the Sinophone world, who participated in the production of China as a mythic Other in Shakespearean performances. In fact, the double logic of intercultural performance relies on both recognizable, knowable elements of otherness and irreconcilable outlandishness. Both global Shakespeare and Chinese performance operate on the basis of the contrast between a knowable component of the Western canon and an “unknowable” Other. Studies of the phenomenon also share a mystified and undefined vocabulary. China has repeatedly been summoned to fill in for the role of the Other, while Shakespeare remains a constant, a set of texts with established meanings. In an increasingly globalized world where outlandishness becomes harder and harder to achieve, artists and writers resort to even more drastic tactics to produce this otherness to contrast the readily familiar (although not really properly known) canon—Chinese, English, or otherwise.

The history of Chinese-themed performances of Shakespeare in and beyond the Sinophone world is complicated by these stereotypes that sustain social and literary imaginaries about Shakespeare and China. However, the illusion of antithetical and isolated identities of local and global cultures leads to a tendency either to ignore the connections between Shakespeare and China, or to explain the “odd” presence of Shakespeare in the Sinophone world and “China” in Shakespearean performances by the absence of a linear teleological history.

Terms of Engagement

Shakespeare’s impact on non-Anglophone cultures is a two-way process, but the complexity of the two-way transaction is often obscured by confusions about categories and the limits of such dated terminology
as cross-cultural “filtering” that pushes the acts of reading and writing across time and media into a discourse of commensurabilities that simply reaffirms ideological formations of identities. It is no more productive to propose an Asia-centered paradigm to counter the dominance of pre-established Western-centered rubrics, but it is important to be attentive to both what these cross-cultural exchanges enable us to see and what the process of rewriting obscures or denies.

To that end, I will now discuss the basic terms through which I examine Chinese Shakespeares. Much of the dispersion of Shakespeare has been triggered by the more familiar defining factors of diaspora culture, such as the demographic movement of people across different regions (hence the categories of “touring Shakespeare,” “Shakespeare in North America,” and “Shakespeare in colonial India”). However, the global movement of ideas has also played a key role in the course of the long and eventful history of Shakespeare’s afterlife. For my purposes, the more commonly used means of reference, Shakespeare in China, or a brand-name writer in any given culture for that matter, is not a viable critical category. Such categorization obscures the dialectics of exchange between different cultures and implies the imposition of one culture upon another, investing certain texts with a transhistorical status. As its title suggests, *Chinese Shakespeares* examines encounters of Shakespeare and China as a transformative process (for example, expanding the meaning of traditional China through Lin Shu’s bold rewriting of Shakespeare), as a cultural practice (for example, reading Shakespeare during the Cultural Revolution or quoting Shakespeare to support the agendas of the nouveaux riches and political leaders), as texts (fiction and reviews), and as performances.

By the term “Chinese Shakespeares,” I identify the theoretical problems and multiple cultural locations of the ideas associated with China and Shakespeare, rather than the audience simply by nationality. “China” refers to a number of ideological positions (for example, the imaginaries of China) as well as a range of geocultural locations and historical periods that encompass late imperial China (1839–1910), Republican China (1911–1949), Communist China (1949–present), post-1949 Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the Chinese diaspora. As the multidirectional traffic among these richly diverse locations include touring performances and intraregional collaboration, it is important to consider the networks of cultural production within, on the margins of, and outside “China.” Registering these asymmetrical cultural flows enables us to chart new territories for
comparative studies of cultural phenomena that go beyond geopolitically defined “national Shakespeares” such as India’s or the PRC’s Shakespeare.

Similarly, the West represented by Shakespeare is itself a complicated, slippery category.64 “Shakespeare” refers to not only the works but also the reputation and values associated with William Shakespeare. Just as China does not remain the same every time it encounters Shakespeare, “Shakespeare” signifies anew its attendant values each time it encounters China. The artists who engaged with Shakespeare have taken that name to mean a number of different, and at times contradictory, things, including authorial fantasies, editorially mediated modern English editions or translations, updated film versions, influential touring stage productions, Western (or even universal) humanistic values, a desirable point of origin for authenticity claims, an icon of a social class, and a cultural institution (Renaissance humanist, Marxist, postmodernist).65 The illusion that East and West are two self-contained sites recurs in the works of writers, translators, filmmakers, and theater artists who engage in differing discourses of representation that range from the iconoclasm of early-twentieth-century China to the reinscription of the personal into the political in the Chinese diaspora in the twenty-first century. The contrasts between different localities hence inform the strategies of interpretation.

My use of “China” and selection of works for analysis have probably raised questions about the scope of my study: Shouldn’t there be more “representative” productions for each period from mainland China, for example? Why not include more descriptions of the latest performances? Beyond the obvious difference in terms of genre (scholarly monograph versus encyclopedia, and critical analysis versus theater or film review), these questions are in fact part of the ideology being analyzed. It is not my intention to press the case of the writers and artists examined in this study as representative individuals in an outdated area studies model. Nor have I concerned myself with satisfying the appetite for reportage of the latest performances. The tendency to look for signs of updatedness merely in descriptions of exotic works reveals a bias about the type of intellectual labor deemed worthwhile for the field.66 Generations of writers, artists, and critics have spoken as if in possession of Shakespeare or China.67 In this context, we need to reexamine the perceived exclusivity of local culture.68
“There is method in ’t”

To pursue the alignments of ideologies at work, I concentrate on the dynamics of the claims, or self-serving apologia, that attempt to reify Shakespeare’s works and Chinese culture. In an age when performances of Shakespeare, in English or otherwise, are becoming increasingly inter-cultural, oddity should lie not in the Shakespeare–China connections, but in the entrenched views of Chinese identities or Shakespearean authenticity. Through negligence and silence, some artists and their critics have failed to acknowledge how their rhetorical strategies about Shakespeare and China undermine or reinforce a perceived but unquestioned antithesis between different cultures. Recent scholarship has begun to raise and reassess some of these issues, including fundamental questions about interculturalism, “[the obsession with] authenticity,” and theater’s capacity to work against various discourses of legitimation.

Given Shakespeare’s ubiquity, there is an infinite range of genres (translation, literature, theater, film, television) and sites (popular culture, commercial appropriation, the Internet) that would allow us to engage questions of cross-cultural epistemologies. However, the nature of Shakespeare and China as contesting entities emerges most clearly in performances that constitute both contingent sites and palpable sights of such encounters. Therefore, I focus here on rewrites for stage and screen but contextualize the performance culture within the networks of two related modes of cultural production: fiction and cultural translation (missionary writings and travel literature), since these genres are invariably cross-fertilizing. The range of genres illustrates how a transnational knowledge bank anchored in a literary culture might be formed.

More important, the current state of scholarship calls for a more productive conversation. Studies of East Asian Shakespeares often focus on traditional theaters, marginalizing the less “exotic” modes of film or huaju and reinforcing ideological investments in what Asian rewritings of Shakespeare should be. The Chinese silent-film and feature-film adaptations of world literature are rarely, if ever, explored. In the standard books on cinematic Shakespeare, it is the American, British, French, Italian, and occasionally Japanese (almost exclusively Kurosawa) traditions that are investigated, but never the Chinese filmmaking practice or the cultural underpinnings behind it. In the other direction, Chinese film adaptation of world literature is also a topic that existing film studies and
Chinese studies scholarship has singularly failed to address. To rectify this situation, selected cases of Shakespeare in Chinese fiction and cinema are taken into account in a comparative context.

Although some aspects of the history of Shakespeare in the People's Republic of China have been chronicled elsewhere, a critical history has thus far been eschewed. I juxtapose mainland Chinese works with contrasting case studies of works that originated elsewhere (post-1980s Taiwan, postmodern Hong Kong, and touring productions in Europe). Some of the most exciting interpretations of Shakespeare and China have appeared outside China proper. To fully appreciate the discursive richness of the encounters between the Chinese and Western conceptions of Shakespeare and China, we must consider the itinerant projections of Shakespeare and China in different periods, genres, and locations.

My case-study approach to these issues is informed by firsthand observations of performances, archival research, and a range of primary texts that may appear to be insignificant secondhand opinions, such as reviews, interviews, and rehearsal notes. The audience response, constituency of the audience, artists' second thoughts, and processes of experimentation are all subjects that demand critical analysis—along with what happened on stage or on screen. Much of the historical and theoretical work here is carried out in the conviction that textual traces of the production and reception of a work are as important as the visual clues in furthering our understanding of Chinese Shakespeares. Using multiple sources to reconstruct these cultural events enables a critically alert reflection on them, rather than descriptive reports of such elements as the casting, rehearsal, and acting style, commonly found in studies based solely on personal accounts of live performances.

Although my analysis observes a chronological order even as it traces the nonlinear histories, and at times recursive patterns, of these encounters, this framework does not imply that Shakespeare–China relationships have unfolded in a teleological cultural history. Artists are aware of, or react against, past trends and may even advocate a false sense of progress. However, dominance of one mode of engagement or approach does not always signify an evolutionary progress, but points to changes of informing principles and historical exigencies. For example, in the rhetoric of globalization, hybridity is often celebrated as a progressive notion, because its political agency is believed to have activated cultural flows. Whether this is true depends to a large extent on historical period. Only
a location-specific decoding can tease out the links between hybridity and different modes of intercultural engagement. By necessity, the history of these exchanges remains fragmentary. It is both undesirable and impractical to seek a full inventory that runs the risk of replicating the problems of evolutionary cultural history. The weight of teleological history—coupled with nationalism that promotes necessary progress—often writes certain works and events out of the master narrative, denying them the serious consideration they deserve. As Prasenjit Duara writes in *Rescuing History from the Nation*, the mode of “Enlightenment” history assumes that “the Other in geographical space will, in time, come to look like earlier versions of us.” Both the nonlinear flow and arrest of the cultural processes that constitute Chinese Shakespeares have a great deal to teach us about the circuit of world literature.

The rhetoric of localization and globalization obliges us to reassess existing narratives that tend to imply smooth progress and that push history into the realm of myth—Shakespearean, Chinese, or otherwise—or what David Lowenthal calls “heritage” in a different context (narratives that are closed to critical scrutiny). While taking into account the historical experiences of performers, rewriters, readers, and audiences, I have avoided dividing the history of Shakespearean performance or cultural history along rigid geopolitical time lines and regions. For instance, the revival of Chinese-opera Shakespeare in the 1980s calls for an examination of the connections between works produced in different Chinese localities. While it may sometimes be necessary for historians or directors such as Herbert Blau or Richard Eyre to speak of the audience or readers as an imagined unified community, I have tried to retain a certain level of skepticism about the collective by attending to the subtle differences between individuals responding to the same play in the same historical period.

The history of Shakespeare and China is a history of exchanges that have enabled reinterpretations, extensions, debates, and revisions of Shakespeare’s cultural significance and Chinese politics of culture. The ethical is the subject of chapters 2 and 3, but this book also has an ethical dimension. It is necessary to reconstruct and critique the asymmetries between the ideas of Shakespeare and China so that we can better understand the various narratives about cultural difference in a broader context. Research on the different levels of discordance introduced by Chinese Shakespeares is also conducive to productive intra-Asian dialogues in today’s increasingly English-speaking global culture. Let the conversation begin.
1. Owning Chinese Shakespeares

1. Michel Foucault uses “alterity” to refer to the concept of the Other and victimized individuals who are excluded from positions of power. Therefore, “cultural alterity” as a philosophical term can carry negative connotations, implying inferiority in a hierarchical structure. My use of cultural alterity refers to the processes by which both Chinese and Anglo-European readers define and exclude selected cultural values outside of a given group’s normative expectations.


4. Inga-Stina Ewbank’s observation of the lack of reciprocity between Shakespeareans in the United States and Great Britain and in non-Anglophone countries (including Europe) a decade ago still applies: “[S]eminars on translation are now an inalienable part of Shakespeare Conferences and World congresses,” but very few native English speakers attend them, which suggests that the field is “an interesting and harmless occupation for researchers abroad” (“Shakespeare Translation as Cultural Exchange,” *Shakespeare Survey* 48 [1995]: 1).


8. Fredric Jameson has argued that individual texts or works are always part of a larger social formation: texts are “reconstituted in the form of the great collective . . . discourse of which a text is little more than an individual parole or utterance” (*The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Art* [Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981], 18, 76). Kate McLuskie has suggested that the packaging of Shakespearean productions seems as interesting as the product “in the endless game of pass the parcel” (“Macbeth/Umabatha: Global Shakespeare in a Post-colonial Market,” *Shakespeare Survey* 58 [1999]: 155).

9. Recent revisionary efforts have recast the received postcolonial wisdom from such figures as Homi Bhabha and Arjun Appadurai in productive frameworks. Xiaomei Chen argues against the assumption that “indigenous cultural appropriation of the Other” has necessarily negative effects (imperialistic colonization or self-colonization), while Claire Conceison takes issue with the conventional “binaristic hierarchy of hegemony” in postcolonialism and Occidentalism. Xiaomei Chen, *Occidentalsm: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 7; Claire Conceison, *Significant Other: Staging the American in China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2004), 52. See also Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New*
1. Owning Chinese Shakespeares


16. Rather than to ridicule the “follies” of criticism in William Hazlitt’s style. He famously derided the futility of literary criticism by announcing that if one wishes to appreciate the glory of human achievement, he should read Shakespeare, but if one wishes to view the follies of human ingenuity, he can simply read Shakespeare’s commentators.

17. Dennis Kennedy wrote over a decade ago: “We have not even begun to develop a theory of cultural exchange that might help us understand what happens when Shakespeare travels abroad. . . . It is much more important than linguistic analysis, textual examination, psychological assessments, historical research, or any of the Anglo-centered occupations scholars have traditionally valued and perpetuated” (afterword to Foreign Shakespeare, ed. Kennedy, 301). Ten years on, there have been no dramatic improvements. John Russell Brown lamented the lack of interest among Shakespeareans in non-Western theatrical adaptations: “[T]oday most theatres in Europe and North America occupy only a part of the spectrum of what theatre can be and we have become so used to accepting this that . . . we view Shakespeare’s plays through this distorting filter” (New Sites for Shakespeare: Theatre, the Audience and Asia [London: Routledge, 1999], 3).

19. The same is true for exchanges between other European thinkers and China. Franklin Perkins bemoans the lack of interest among scholars in the relationships between Leibniz and China: “[E]ven when people know that Leibniz had a lifelong interest in China and directed his considerable energy and political skills to encouraging cultural exchange—the topic remains strange and peripheral to the concerns of a philosopher engaged with philosophy’s history” (Leibniz and China: A Commerce of Light [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004], ix).


22. Dennis Kennedy, introduction to Foreign Shakespeare, ed. Kennedy, 16.

23. James J. Y. Liu writes, “I shall not deal with twentieth-century Chinese theories, except those held by purely traditionalist critics, since these have been dominated by one sort of Western influence or another, be it Romanticist, Symbolist, or Marxist, and do not possess the same kind of value and interest as do traditional Chinese theories, which constitute a largely independent source of critical ideas” (Chinese Theories of Literature [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975], 5). See also Rey Chow, Woman and Chinese Modernity: The Politics of Reading between West and East (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 33.


26. In his commentary to the French version of Carmelo Bene’s Italian adaptation of Richard III, Gilles Deleuze applauds Bene’s avant-garde adaptation and argues that “adaptation” (as a literary genre and political tool) can open up new space for arts by pursuing different aesthetics trajectories. Deleuze views the author and the idea of the original as tyrannical and feudalistic, representing a despotic order. Yet his notion of adaptation is idealistic. Gilles Deleuze, “Un manifeste de moins,” in Superpositions, ed. Carmelo Bene and Gilles Deleuze (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1979), 85–131.


29. A *New Yorker* cartoon usefully summarizes the common attitude toward film adaptations of literary works and in general adapted works: two goats are eating a pile of film cans when one goat remarks: “Personally, I liked the book better.” Fidelity still figures in several areas. Operating on the assumption that we are now in a posttheoretical moment, David Kastan proposes to “restore Shakespeare’s artistry to the earliest conditions of its realization and intelligibility” (my italics) (*Shakespeare After Theory* [New York: Routledge, 1999], 16, 31). See also James Naremore, introduction to *Film Adaptation*, ed. James Naremore (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 2.

30. “Shakespeare’s plays rarely allow Chinese stylization. If you add these flavors, you are murdering Shakespeare” (Daniel Yang, in Fong Chee Fun [Gilbert], *Xianggang huaju fangtan lu* [*Interviews of Hong Kong Spoken Drama Personalities*] [Hong Kong: Xianggang xiju gongcheng, 2000], 67). Behind this attitude is a powerful but unexamined assumption: that an unadulterated text is even possible in the sense of authenticity that is here implied. Yang is the former producing director of the Colorado Shakespeare Festival (1977–1981, 1985–1990) and artistic director of the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre (1990–2001).

31. Feng claimed that his film was an adaptation of *Hamlet* with “authentic” Chinese flavors set in ancient China in a period known as the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms. Changes have been made to the world of *Hamlet* along the lines of the Oedipal subtext of Laurence Olivier’s film. For example, Empress Wan, the close parallel to Gertrude in this film, harbors illicit desires for her stepson, Prince Wu Luan, the equivalent to Hamlet.

32. See the epilogue.


34. I have taken this notion from Jacques Derrida: “Mimesis . . . is not the representation of one thing by another, the relation of resemblance or identification between two beings, the reproduction of a product of nature by a product of art. It is not the relation of two products but of two productions. And of two freedoms” (“Economimesis,” *Diacritics* 11, no. 3 [1981]: 9).

35. One popular argument for Shakespeare’s universality evokes the notion of timelessness that remains fixated on particular imaginations of Shakespearean characters, language, and meaning, failing to recognize that what has been perceived as timeless actually reveals shifting constructions of the works’ timeliness. If the plays were “timeless,” the ways they were performed would have remained unchanged. The vitality and viability of Shakespeare as a cultural institution is deeply rooted in each generation’s complicit desire to see the plays in its mind’s eye. The plays’ elasticity further aided the illusion of a Shakespearean essence—something naturalized, not natural.

36. Diana E. Henderson opens her new book by tackling the question: Given the “remarkable range and freedom of Shakespeare in performance during [the past] decades, which have brought the plays to larger audiences and new cultural
locations . . . Can there still be an alternative Shakespeare?” (Alternative Shakespeare [London: Routledge, 2008], 1–2). Similarly, in his critique of the notion of authenticity as “a licensed regime of faithful performance,” W.B. Worthen argues that “the rhetoric of authenticity or fidelity, whatever its particular signs, is realized within our contemporary system of theatrical performance . . . that includes a wide range of non-Shakespearean alternatives [and] a wide range of performance technologies” (Shakespeare and the Force of Modern Performance [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003], 215).

37. After having argued for “alternative” Shakespeares for the past decade, Hugh Grady and Terence Hawkes still feel the pressure of theorizing from the margins. They open their latest book by stating: “What is ‘presentism’? It’s easier to begin with what it’s not” (Presentist Shakespeares [London: Routledge, 2007], 1).


39. Sarah Bernhardt was the first female Hamlet on film (1900), as has recently been fully documented in Tony Howard, Woman as Hamlet: Performance and Interpretation in Theatre, Film and Fiction (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).


41. Take Orson Welles’s Touch of Evil (1958), for example. When bringing it into the purview of Shakespeare scholarship for the first time, Scott L. Newstok had to go to great lengths to prove the “subterranean” relationship between the film and Othello with two lists of similarities between the film and the play in terms of the frame of the time “that passes on stage and on screen,” interracial relationships, and other areas (“Touch of Shakespeare: Welles Unmoors Othello,” Shakespeare Bulletin 23, no. 1 [2005]: 33–35, 47–48).


46. For reasons of economy, it suffices to say that by now there is a unanimous consensus that there is no longer a single “origin” of Shakespearean texts, nor are there only a limited number of imperfect versions of a play like Hamlet (Q1, Q2, and so on). The logic of print and performance has generated an indefinite number of textual origins: Alexander Pope’s, Edmond Malone’s, and Gary Taylor’s Hamlets, among others.

48. Among the numerous instances, it suffices to cite one recent example. In a feature article on Hangzhou, the upscale travel magazine *Condé Nast Traveler* indulges in cultural essentialism. China seems to be conveniently antithetical to the West: “Travel within China is famously infamous, a rapidly improving brew of timeless antiquities and turbid masses, sublime insights and ruinous encounters. Privacy and individual space hardly exist, apologizing may be rude and staring polite, and laughter can indicate discomfort, not happiness. Nodding, like pushing and shoving, means nothing at all” (Patrick Symmes, “China Lost and Found,” *Condé Nast Traveler*, October 2007, 226). Mainland Chinese pianist Lang Lang’s interview in the same magazine is no less binaristic: “Americans understand [only] part of China. But every country has its own way of thinking, and Americans should learn more about Chinese traditions, such as Confucius and legendary stories—which are as important to knowing China as Shakespeare is to understanding the West” (Dorinda Elliott, “A Conversation with Lang Lang,” *Condé Nast Traveler*, July 2008, 28). With over 830,000 copies sold per issue in 2007 on average, the magazine is a useful measure of popular discourses about China.


50. Rey Chow reasons that this tendency on the part of the Chinese intellectuals is a “historically conditioned paranoid reaction to the West, [which] easily flips over and turns into narcissistic, megalomaniac affirmation of China.” She attributes the “compulsion to emphasize the Chinese dimension to all universal questions” to recent world history and the “preemptive Western hegemony, which expressed itself militarily and territorially in the past, and expresses itself discursively in the present” (introduction to *Modern Chinese Literary and Cultural Studies in an Age of Theory: Reimagining a Field*, ed. Rey Chow [Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000], 2–3).


57. Gloria Davies notes that “Chinese critical inquiry is predominantly undertaken in the general interest of advancing the national culture, it tends characteristically to include a moral evaluation as well as an inspection of utility . . . with a view to determining whether an idea . . . will benefit China.” The result is a form of “transcendent unity conceived of as the telos of a perfected China enlightened by Reason, Democracy, Science, Chineseness, etc.” (*Worrying About China: The Language of Chinese Critical Inquiry* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007], 11, 241). Although Davies rightly locates the source of Chinese patriotic anxiety, her study employs the same vague terms used by those Chinese intellectuals being critiqued.

58. Xiao Yang Zhang proposes to “summarize the essential characteristics of Western and Chinese cultures through the symbolism of the sun and the moon” (*Shakespeare in China: A Comparative Study of Two Traditions and Cultures* [Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996], 90).


61. In *Shakespeare in China*, Zhang treats the Chinese reading positions as necessarily Confucian (pre-1949) or Marxist (post-1949), ignoring the nuances of
the space within and between Shakespearean texts and Chinese cultural practices (artistic movements, genres, or claims made in the name of collective history). While Zhang’s book and Tetsuo Anzai, Soji Iwasaki, Holger Klein, and Peter Milward S. J., eds., *Shakespeare in Japan* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999), are flawed by an oversimplification and generalization of self-reflexive antitheses between the two “great” traditions, certainly not all the works that fall into this category are problematic. Some of them have specific missions, such as chronicling the reception of an author in a specific culture for the first time; others concentrate on personal accounts of select aspects of cross-cultural influence. Monica Matei-Chesnoiu, *Shakespeare in the Romanian Cultural Memory* (Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006); Robert Wardy, *Aristotle in China: Language, Categories, and Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Andrew F. Jones, “Gramophone in China,” in *Yellow Music: Media Culture and Colonial Modernity in the Chinese Jazz Age* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001), 53–72.

62. Shu-mei Shih uses the notion of Sinophone communities in her study of the flows of images across geopolitical borders, although she focuses on the contemporary period when “it is possible to live virtually in multiple social contexts at the same time” (*Visuality and Identity: Sinophone Articulations Across the Pacific* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007], 12–13).


65. Anthony Dawson rightly observes that the “recent celebrations of the ‘global’ might seem a bit straitened, overly eager to find in the local the possibility of escape from an oppressiveness which is too easily identified as ‘Western’ or ‘European,’ as if those terms were themselves single and uncomplicated. The local can be as much of a straitjacket as the universal” (“Reading Kurosawa Reading Shakespeare,” in *Concise Companion to Shakespeare on Screen*, ed. Henderson, 158).

66. For example, Levith’s *Shakespeare in China* has been compared with Zhang’s *Shakespeare in China*: “Although the books overlap somewhat,” a book review tells us, Levith deals with Shakespeare in Hong Kong and Taiwan, which is not treated at all by Zhang (Edward Berry, “Review of Murray Levith’s *Shakespeare in China*,” *Modern Philology* 105, no. 2 [2007]: 409–10). How many “new” adaptations a study covers is often used as the sole yardstick to measure contributions.

68. Hugh Grady freely admits: “Shakespearian criticism has long been in search of the authentic Shakespearian meaning, and almost every critic, including this one, writes as if s/he had come to be in possession of it” (The Modernist Shakespeare: Critical Texts in a Material World [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991], 1).


72. An example is the earliest book-length study of Shakespeare on silent film: Robert Hamilton Ball, Shakespeare on Silent Film: Strange Eventful History (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1968). The situation may be changed by Judith Buchanan, Shakespeare on Silent Film: An Excellent Dumb Discourse (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). As for films after the silent period, Kurosawa remains the sole token East Asian filmmaker to be analyzed (or mentioned) in many studies, including Roger Manvell, Shakespeare and the Film (London: Dent, 1971), xv; Rothwell, History of Shakespeare on Screen; Judith Buchanan, Shakespeare on Film (New York: Pearson Longman, 2005); Stephen M. Buhler, Shakespeare in the Cinema: Ocular Proof (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002); and Dawson, “Reading Kurosawa Reading Shakespeare,” 155–75.


74. If one wishes to grasp the shape of the entire theatrical experience, he or she would do well to attend the live performance or utilize performance archives. The task of performance criticism does not lie in merely describing the events. More and more critics have found narrowly defined “firsthand” studies inadequate. Timothy Billings writes in a book review: “Li . . . mentions a personal acquaintance or offers a personal observation every few pages . . . . Others will undoubtedly . . . rewrite . . . this stage history . . . more analytically, theoretically, and methodically” (“Review of Shashibiya by Li Ruru,” Shakespeare Quarterly 57, no. 4 [2006]: 495).


76. Duara, Rescuing History from the Nation, 17, 19–20.
2. Shakespeare in Absentia


2. Theodore Huters, Bringing the World Home: Appropriating the West in Late Qing and Early Republican China (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 19.

3. Yangwu was an umbrella term for both diplomatic maneuvers and the attempt to institutionalize translation and adoption of Western knowledge, especially technological and scientific knowledge, between the 1860s and 1890s.


5. Joseph Goodrich, an American scholar living in China at this time, noted in 1911 that “the desire to secure [the] ‘new learning’ [from the West]” even spread into rural districts in “the coming China” (The Coming China [Chicago: McClurg, 1911], 202–3).
