From the novels of Lao She and Lin Shu to Lu Xun’s search for a Chinese “Shakespeare,” and from Feng Xiaogang’s martial-arts film to labor camp memoirs, Soviet–Chinese theater, and silent film, Shakespeare has yielded a rich trove of transnational imagery and paradoxical citations in the fiction, theater, and cinema of China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. *Chinese Shakespeares* is the first book to theorize competing visions of “China” and “Shakespeare” in the global cultural marketplace, challenging fidelity-based criticism and cultural exclusivity.

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*China Quarterly*

**GLOBAL CHINESE CULTURE**

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

**COVER DESIGN**: Alejandro Largo

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In this study’s conclusion lies its beginning. The epigraph to chapter 1, “. . . for the eye sees not itself / But by reflection, by some other things,” bears dwelling upon. It is a useful allegorical resource to further our understanding of the rhetorical and critical construction of Chinese Shakespeares. Shakespeare’s plays have allowed the writers, performers, readers, and audiences to see China through the eye of the Other, but this vision also becomes a projection of the gaze of Shakespeare’s Other. The simultaneous dissociation of Shakespeare from the English Renaissance culture and association of unexpected texts create a new space of fiction—a postnational public sphere of diverse forms of multiculturalism in which the figures of Shakespeare and China operate.¹

The heterogeneity and heteroglossia of Chinese Shakespeares frustrate intellectual tokenism and monolithic stereotypes. As the accents and visual signs of cultural production are fluidly shifted and reconfigured, they not only reflect changing historical exigencies but also register the artists’ and readers’ personal histories and localities. An experimental director may activate a series of Asian cultural markers but refuse to affiliate herself or himself with any of them (Ariane Mnouchkine and Ong Keng Sen); a writer may lay claim to both Beijing localism and cosmopolitan visions (Lao She); at international festivals, a Beijing-based director may
prefer to be recognized for his personal style rather than his Chinese roots (Lin Zhaohua); a Taiwan playwright can belong at the same time to the communities of Taiwanese Americans and mainland Chinese emigrants to Taiwan (Stan Lai); in cyberspace, a Beijing-opera theater company can create new local connections with its potential patrons via interactive media (Wu Hsing-kuo’s Contemporary Legend Theatre); and an immigrant director may identify simultaneously with London and Hong Kong (David Tse). An English actor may have an epiphany on a Chinese stage. Reflecting on the Royal Shakespeare Company’s (RSC) first touring production in China (Merchant of Venice, 2002), Ian Bartholomew commented: “I have never encountered such sympathy playing Shylock before. Maybe performing the play in a non-Christian country creates a more even-handed response.”

The articulation of these wide-ranging localities is dictated by the roles of local and international cultural markets in the distinction between indigenous Shakespeares and those productions with less explicitly local association. As Chinese Shakespeares emerge in the international scenes, in addition to the thorny questions of authenticity and authority, one of the new artistic concerns is the pursuit of what can be called a global vernacular. The infatuation with Asian visuality examined in chapter 6 and elsewhere returns to haunt filmmakers and theater directors as they search for new vehicles to carry new artistic ideas across different cultural locations. These maneuvers are especially evident in films aiming at international markets and theater works commissioned by festivals. To tease out the practical and critical issues at stake behind the question of visuality, I would like to conclude with brief examinations of the uses of masks in Feng Xiaogang’s film The Banquet and live video and children’s games in Lin Zhaohua’s stage production of Richard III.

The Banquet (Yeyan, 2006), with an all-star cast, emerged from a wave of period films and romantic epics that evoked internationally transferable and marketable conventions of cultural authenticity, ranging from John Madden’s Shakespeare in Love (1998) to Zhang Yimou’s Hero (2002) and House of Flying Daggers (2005) at the turn of the century. Feng’s film relies on transnational collaboration and symbolic geographies. Like a number of Chinese films that cater to transnational audiences, The Banquet exhibits a harmonious coexistence of grave subject matter and visual beauty, or what Rey Chow calls “a conjoined subalternization and commodification” in a different context. Multiple slow-motion shots and fight sequences presented as stylized dance movements suggest a close
affinity with other Chinese martial-arts films that have enjoyed popularity in the West but have been harshly criticized in the Chinese-speaking world, such as Ang Lee’s *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000). What distinguishes Feng’s film from this group of films is its uses of masks as motifs and narrative devices. *The Banquet* incorporates some features of the sword-fighting knight-errant (*wuxia*) genre into a mask theater infused with the supernatural; a type of martial-arts performance that gives primacy to visual articulation but does not rely on, as is the case with nō theater, demonstration of the spiritual states of the characters through subtle shadings of the masks.  

*The Banquet* opens and closes with bold sequences involving masked figures engaged in a sword fight. The long opening sequence establishes a hierarchical order in which the visual dominates the verbal. In self-exile, the melancholic Prince Wu Luan is studying singing and mask dancing in a bamboo compound in the remote Yue region of southern China, when the messengers sent by his stepmother, Empress Wan (the Gertrude figure, played by Zhang Ziyi), arrive with the news of the death of his father and his uncle’s ascension to the throne. Following the footsteps of the messengers, a group of assassins sent by the new emperor soon arrive at the compound. The prince wears a white mask without any patterns. Several shots focus on his eyes. It is notable that other than the opening narration and the imperial decree read by the messenger, no verbal exchange takes place in the prolonged scene, which is a study in color symbolism and nonverbal representations of emotion. In contrast to the prince and his companions’ white masks and robes, symbolizing purity, the assassins wear black iron masks with bold patterns and are clad in black armor. An unnecessarily long and brutal fight sequence soon follows.  

The masks serve several functions. As identity markers, they also conceal emotions. Prince Wu Luan wears the same mask and robe as his companions, and is thus able to escape the massacre. The ways the actors perform with the masks deny the audience access to their emotions throughout the fight. Very little eye contact between the characters is shown in this scene, which distinguishes it from the martial-arts-film convention it appropriates.  

The film spells out the theme of surveillance in *Hamlet* through watchful eyes behind the masks. The camera movements frequently signal that the audience and the characters are gazing at a spectacle from a privileged position of invisibility. We see more varied uses of masks as the scene switches from the massacre at the bamboo compound to the imperial
court, which is inhabited by more masked imperial guards who display no body language to indicate humanity or emotions. The camera follows Empress Wan through several corridors filled with guards. She finally stops in front of the dead emperor’s armor, helmet, and dark mask. It is only when the camera zooms in that viewers see the new emperor’s eyes behind the mask and recognize his presence. Empress Wan’s first words to him touch on the mask’s commemorative value and the theme of reality and representation: “The mask does not sit well on you.” Her comments highlight the theme of conceit, to which Emperor Li replies candidly, “Indeed, this is not a good fit. I shall have a new one made.” Dialogues and movement are kept to a minimum, as the contentions over identities—old and new—are conveyed through eye-line shots.

The same mask attracts the prince’s attention, too, upon his return to the court (figure 26). The scene of Prince Wu Luan standing in front of his dead father’s mask and armor is interpolated with an intimate scene between Emperor Li and Empress Wan. The presence of the ghost of Old Hamlet is indicated at this moment by a stream of bloody tears flowing from the hollow eyes of the mask. The camera moves to the back of the mask and shows the prince looking into its eyes. Again, the mise-en-scène prioritizes the visual over the verbal. The verbal exchanges between Hamlet and the ghost in the rampart scene are presented as a confrontation and alignment of the two pairs of eyes of the prince and his dead father, lending the scene a sense of ambivalence and air of a pantomime. Explicitly presented as a performer in the film, the prince
meets the eyes of the Other, the empty signifier that is his dead father’s mask. The scene recalls Wu Hsing-kuo’s dramatization of the split of the selves of Wu and King Lear in his on-stage costume change in Lear Is Here. The sequence of the black mask with tears streaming down its cheeks is later interpolated with the dumb-show scene. Driven by his desire for Empress Wan’s hand and for revenge, the prince is implicated in the visible and invisible aspects of reality. A devoted performer of mask theater, he not only plans the dumb show dramatizing the murder of his father to catch the conscience of Emperor Li, but also appears on stage as the drummer throughout the performance. The presence of a performer behind his mask intently observing his audience turns the play-within-a-play, a theatrical device that starts its career in the Renaissance, into a bold frame for the self-reflexivity of twenty-first-century cinema. Different aesthetic and social functions of masks lead to a pointed debate between Prince Wu Luan and Empress Wan. While the former insists that a good actor performs with masks and concentrates on body language, the latter rejoins that “the most sophisticated performer uses his or her own face and turns it into a mask.” One has to wonder whether she might be right, as the prince is the only principal character to be obsessed with masks throughout the film.

The long documentary-style voice-over narration at the beginning of the film establishes the historical setting of Hamlet’s story in ancient China. Engineered here is a constructed sense of superiority that is articulated through the perceived historical depth of the romantic epic, a sense of seriousness that seems to override Feng’s presumably less worthy comic films in contemporary settings. Feng is at pains to establish the authenticity of the Yue song and mask dance. He is one of the most successful Chinese filmmakers in the comedy genre, and Ge You, the lead actor playing Emperor Li, is an acclaimed comedian. The Banquet was Feng’s first attempt at a tragedy and period drama that was aimed at international film festivals, which may explain the need to manufacture a sense of closure, rather than an opening up of possibilities, around the cultural textures of ancient China. The film uses the idea of a lavish visual feast, as its title seems to promise, as a global vernacular.

Artists and critics of different persuasions and cultural backgrounds tend to agree on the market value of Asian visuality. Kenneth Rothwell, a scholar of Shakespeare on film, asserts that non-Anglophone filmmakers “enjoyed the luxury of reinventing the plays in purely cinematic terms, as if they were silent movies,” because they did not need to “record in
English on the sound track.” It is useful to recall what I have termed positive stereotyping in chapter 6 (the use of masks in Huang Zuolin’s kunju-style Macbeth, for example) in the tendency to see Asian theater and film as pure spectacle. The idea of a necessarily Asian visuality is implicated in a hierarchical view informed by an ideology of the print that puts spectacles to the service of textual elucidation.

Although visual beauty is commonly seen as an integral part of transnational Chinese cinema, the disparity in the film’s reception raises the questions of how border-crossing works are seen and why. These debates are no less dramatic than the film itself. In fact, much more than just a metadrama of the intercultural performance, the film’s reception itself is a performative act of exchanges initiated by spectacles. Heated debates about different issues ensued when this high-profile, big-budget feature film premiered at the film festivals in Venice and Cannes, and subsequently in the Sinophone world. The film has been critiqued by both Chinese and Western constituencies for transgressing cultural norms. At the center of the debate is the film’s dual identity. The Banquet was initially promoted as a Shakespearean film with martial-arts elements, but nearly all European judges found the film to be too Shakespearean in outlook to be a viable Chinese film to interest Western audiences. One critic at the Venice festival wrote, “We hope to see a Chinese movie with Chinese taste here in Italy. But we feel a bit disappointed. If the background was cut out, we could hardly tell that this was a Chinese movie.” Yet according to most Chinese critics, the film was a disappointing, indulgent costume epic aimed at a “completely non-Chinese audience.” In particular, Ge You “got laughs whenever he appeared since Chinese moviegoers are familiar with his [famous] comedy roles and found his seriousness unnatural.” Feng contributed to the mass culture construction of the myth about China in the same way Shakespeare’s celebrity biography has been packaged in a time warp in Shakespeare in Love. In this process, Shakespeare and spectacles of China’s past have emerged repeatedly as a repository of abiding qualities of sensibility. As much as Feng’s attempt to dislocate Hamlet via a visual method may invite skepticism, it is also part of the globalization of visual culture as a late capitalist response to the dominance of oral and print cultures. The problem goes beyond extensive knowledge or ignorance of either Shakespearean or Chinese aesthetics, and the case of The Banquet is not unique.

Lin Zhaohua’s Richard III (2001) was just as controversial as Feng’s The Banquet, but for different reasons. It received mixed reviews in Beijing
and Berlin. Lin handled the question of visuality differently. Commissioned by the Asien-Pazifik Wochen festival of Berlin with a transnational network of funding from Japan, China, and Germany, the production starred wildly popular Chinese television stars such as Zhu Yuanyuan. One of the most respected mainland Chinese avant-garde directors today, Lin refused to succumb to the logic of naturalized cultural equivalences. The many political interpretations examined in preceding chapters suggest that the Cultural Revolution or Mao Zedong’s rise to power as a mass murderer and dictator favored by the masses may provide powerful points of reference for directors and audiences. Instead of contemporary relevance or iconic local visual signs—a strategy commonly used by both Anglophone and Asian directors—Lin opted for formal experiments. One of the recent performances that capitalize, and indeed rely, on naturalized modern equivalences to Shakespearean setting and circumstances is Richard Loncraine and Ian McKellen’s film Richard III (1995). In the long sequence of the climatic battle scene (Bosworth Field), set in the Battersea power station, the director is at pains to establish the credibility of the much anticipated line “A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!” by trapping Richard’s jeep in mud and destroying any other possible means of escape (in fact, all vehicles in sight). Lin’s production in Berlin was supposed to serve up a palatable portion of contemporary Chinese theater for the German and international audiences—culturally specific presentations with transferable Chinese tastes to fit on the sampling platters of international festivals. However, unlike Sulayman al-Bassam’s Arab Richard III (RSC Complete Works festival in Stratford-upon-Avon, 2007) or Al Pacino’s Looking for Richard (1996), which stripped or questioned English history and Shakespeare’s text, Lin’s production did not accommodate local cultural history or distinctively local performance styles (as in Pacino’s “large incursions of urban American speech patterns”). Collective memory improvises and challenges history, revealing as much as it obscures. Lin’s production calls to mind Leopold Lindtberg’s 1962 production of Richard III at the Vienna Burgtheater. Forced into exile because of his Jewish origin during the Nazi period, Lindtberg not only opposed what he called “the boredom of indoctrination that is alien to art,” but also refrained from any design, costume, or stylistic elements suggestive of Hitler or Nazi Germany—“too cheap an effect to mould Richard III into a paraphrase of recent historical events.”

Like his earlier production of Hamlet, Lin’s Richard III thrived on the notion of theatrical doubles and extemporized games. Richard both
entertained and killed. Ma Shuliang took great pride in his double role as the narrator/director and Richard of Gloucester.\textsuperscript{21} The multimedia performance was framed by various children’s games, including tag, musical chairs, hide and seek, shadow play, and other playground games. At one point, the characters turned innocent games into cruel, violent ones without Richard’s guidance. With a unique take on the comedic potential of the tragedy, the production turned \textit{Richard III} into a game space that paralleled the “kitchen table massacre” and the arcade games that Chiron and Demetrius play in Julie Taymor’s film \textit{Titus}—although in Lin’s production it is the adults, not the children, who engaged in child’s play.\textsuperscript{22} Inoculated with live and prerecorded video footages, the production strategically deployed media convergence to allegorize Richard’s propagandistic inclinations. The lighthearted performance became a deliberate contrast to the tragic events following the game scenes. As scenes of conspiracy and murder morphed into light-hearted exercises and games of cruelty, actors frequently appeared to be both immersed in and detached from the scenes at the same time.

Surrounded by corpses left over from an earlier game, Richard wooed Lady Anne. Close-up shots of their interaction and, alternately, their faces were projected onto the left side of the proscenium arch, separating the physical and verbal components of the seduction. The video projection simulated televised narratives that sought to replace the liveness of newsworthy events. Richard held a defenseless Lady Anne, also clad in a black suit, in his arms while giving her his full attention. While the live video footage in the wooing scene competed for the audience’s divided attention, the striking prerecorded video footage at the end of the stylized murder of Clarence attempted to better the nonchalant staging of fratricide. Clarence first appeared on stage among the stagehands. He helped to erect an elegant structure that would become his own prison cell. Richard appeared briefly on stage to push Clarence into the brightly lit prison and left the stage to the two murderers. Clarence stood motionless at the center of his cell. As he described his “miserable night/\ldots full of fearful dreams \ldots [and] ugly sights” (1.4.2–4), the lights began to dim. The first murderer killed him with a symbolic slap on his face, with the sound effect provided by the second murderer clapping his hands: “Take that! And that!/\ldots I’ll drown you in the malmsey-butt within” (1.4.269–70). The death of Clarence and the reference to a keg of wine cued the stage-wide projections of gasping fish bathed in blood (shot in a fish market in Shenzhen), accompanied by light jazz music. It seemed as if the alternative
aesthetics derived from the children’s games came up short and had to be supplemented by a richer network of visual citations of social violence.

The same strategy of visual citation was used in the coronation scene, in which Buckingham literally orchestrated Richard’s rise to power (accompanied by close-up shots of Richard’s face projected at the side of the stage), with the Lord Mayor and the citizens of London singing Richard’s praises—under Buckingham’s direction—from within the same structure that was formerly Clarence’s prison cell. After Richard exited with exaggerated bouncy, clownish movements, a prerecorded video of hundreds of ants crawling in all directions took over the stage. Similarly, in an earlier scene, after the death of Edward IV, another video appeared. A few teens were playing violent video games in an arcade. There were moments when it was no longer clear from the close-up shots whether they were just playing or engaging in an actual killing spree.

Obsessively clean in its streamlined presentation of violence, the production is far less sanguine than most twentieth-century performances. Western critics have been struck by its ongoing “cross-pollinations between different media” and juxtaposition between visual pleasure and disgust, as evidenced by, among many instances, Clarence’s death in a “visually pleasing prison cell” and the “unsettling stage-wide projections of gasping fish heads in pools of blood” immediately after his death. Such juxtaposition between live performance on stage and video footages mediates between Shakespeare as a visual event and a textual show.

The parodic and citational impulse of Lin’s Richard III hearkens back to Lao She’s “New Hamlet” (1936) and Xiong Yuanwei’s Hamlet / Hamlet (2000), but its significance goes beyond the dichotomized model of popularization of Shakespeare’s history plays in modern times or Asian avant-garde theater in Europe. The convergence of filmic and theatrical modes of presentation might be the new “sportive tricks” Richard needs to woo the global spectator. The intercultural reading of Richard III shows that non-Anglophone performances of Shakespeare are not a matter of dumbing down or selling out, an enterprise at the mercy of the currency of local equivalences and the constructed quality of global vogues.

The Richard III project has allowed Lin and his audiences in different cultural locations to see Shakespeare and their own visions of China through the eye of the Other, while The Banquet posed new questions about the nature of martial-arts period film and Hamlet, a play that has always already begun for modern English-speaking audiences. Since 1839, several generations of writers, filmmakers, and theater directors
have taken imaginative approaches to engage productively with the gap of knowledge about different texts, creating various models of localization that diffuse and sustain multiple origins of plot, artistic form, and social circumstances. They did not interact with Shakespeare and China through a bilateral relationship with an original source, even though they often claim to the contrary, but instead worked in constant dialogue with a kaleidoscope of sources and modes of representation found in fictive localities. Their works bear out the troubled relationship between what is seen as the local and the global. Far from a parochial enterprise, Chinese Shakespeares have contributed to the transformation of local cultural practices and national and personal identities.

The challenge of thinking about cultural exchange at the present time is that even though the constructedness of such entities as Shakespeare and China is increasingly seen as self-evident, their encounters are often comfortably compartmentalized and typecast. The significance of the history of Chinese Shakespeares lies in its transformative power for artistic and critical endeavors, not in its evolutionary sequentiality (Did they finally get Shakespeare and Chinese opera right?) or popular use of polarity (English versus foreign Shakespeares; authentic versus inauthentic Chinas). As China occupies a transitional, multiply determined space, the differing faces of Chinese Shakespeares signal an epistemic shift, the arrival of multiple forms to engage widely circulated texts, personal history, and local consciousness. This shift is partly governed by the late capitalist market economy (as it is in the West) and partly determined by the rise of the local artist’s star power as a new form of cultural prestige in competition with Shakespeare’s reputation.

The end of almost two centuries of Chinese Shakespeares is the beginning of a fresh chapter for artists and critics, invigorated and challenged at once by the future localities yet to be created. Performing otherness is an art of re/writing as well as reading, and translation an act of obliteration as well as restoration. Historical and imagined boundaries constitute the very locality from which Shakespeare and China begin their presencing. The alternating absence and presence of Shakespearean and Chinese texts throughout history suggests that new readings of intercultural signs will persist, that cultural rootedness—even if articulated differently—will continue to matter, and that visions of Shakespeare and China will remain open for future inscriptions.
space of meditation” (13–14). For excerpts of other reviews, including one by Louis Helmer (director of the World Music Theatre Festival, Amsterdam), see King Lear, stage bill.


70. Bennett sees the film as an instance of “avant-garde filmmaking conducted in the face (and against the grain) of commercial profit-drive” (Performing Nostalgia, 39). See also Susan Bennett, “Godard and Lear: Trashing the Can(n)on,” Theatre Survey 39, no. 1 (1998): 11.

Epilogue

1. Compare William Childers, Transnational Cervantes (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 242. He suggests that an intercultural reading of canonical literature (such as an Americanized reading of Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda) can serve readers in both the culture that is closer to and the culture that is further from the contexts of such literature.

2. Ian Bartholomew was commenting on the disparity between the English and Chinese receptions of the production. The production in London was ill received, but the performances in China (with Chinese supertitles) attracted rave reviews. During a Shanghai television interview, the director and actors emphasized the new meanings generated by the new cultural location of the production. Bartholomew stated: “In England, the audience tends to laugh at Shylock’s humiliation. Here [in China] they seem stunned into silence” (quoted in Alfred Hickling, “Sit Down and Shut Up,” Guardian, June 12, 2002, quoted in Maria Jones, Shakespeare’s Culture in Modern Performance [New York: Palgrave, 2003], 100).


5. In general, there are two categories of martial-arts films: the sword-fighting knight-errant (wuxia) genre, informed by dynastic fantasy literature, and the kungfu genre in contemporary settings, which was shaped by Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan.

6. The music was composed by Tan Dun, who is known for his Grammy- and Oscar-winning scores for Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon and Hero.

8. With a US$20 million budget, *The Banquet* (*Yeyan*) is, in the standard of Chinese cinema, a big-budget film by a director who was not widely known internationally.


10. Kozo writes, “*The Banquet* is a member of that suddenly popular Asian Cinema genre: the indulgent, overproduced costume epic aimed at a completely non-Chinese audience many thousands of miles away” (http://www.lovehkfilm.com/panasia/banquet.htm [accessed June 10, 2007]).


13. Widely regarded in Japan as a director with too much Western influence, Kurosawa Akira is known outside Japan as an iconic Japanese filmmaker. But Asian artists are not the only ones to champion the aesthetic possibilities of intercultural visuality. Ariane Mnouchkine’s *Richard II* (Paris, 1981), Trevor Nunn’s *Henry IV* (London, 1982), and Adrian Noble’s *Henry V* (Stratford, 1984) are prime examples of productions that thrive on a visual feast. While, as Jan Kott observes, a distrust of politics in the theater has driven directors to search for “new visual expression[s],” the market law has played a larger role in the pursuit of visualization as a global vernacular in *The Banquet* (quoted in Charles Marowitz, “Kott, Our Contemporary,” *American Theatre*, October 1988, 100).


15. Based on the Chinese translation of *Richard III* by Liang Shiqiu; major funding secured by Ueda Misako in Japan.

16. Lin Zhaohua is best known as the director who discovered Gao Xingjian, the French-Chinese Nobel literature laureate (2000), in the 1980s. Together with Gao, Lin emerged as a key figure in avant-garde theater. He began his career in 1931 with the preeminent, state-funded, Beijing People’s Arts Theatre (BPAT) as a follower of Stanislavsky’s psychological realism, as dictated by the Soviet–Chinese Communist ideology, but became increasingly rebellious against orthodoxy after he formed his own company, the Lin Zhaohua Workshop, in 1989, when the Chinese economic reform released theater artists from the confining infrastructure endorsed and sponsored by the state. He has moved from the BPAT’s homogenizing routine of mimetic realism to interpolations that call for superimposed styles and rewritings of seminal texts at the heart of Chinese and Western cultures, including Lu Xun and Shakespeare.

17. Other examples abound: Billy Morrissette’s *Scotland PA* (2001) lucidly translates Macbeth’s Scotland to a fast-food joint in mid-twentieth-century
Pennsylvania by lowering the register of Shakespeare’s tragedy; Baz Luhrmann’s William Shakespeare’s Romeo + Juliet (1996) relies on the lyrical transformation of the inexplicable feud in Verona to perfectly explicable twentieth-century gang culture and corporate war in Verona Beach; and Simon McBurney’s Measure for Measure (Complicite, National Theatre, London, May 2004; revived in 2006) featured prisoners in orange jumpsuits reminiscent of the U.S. military detention camp in Guantánamo Bay, unabashedly presentist in the blunt commentary on the Iraq War. Taking a step beyond “Shakespeare in modern dress,” the production made extensive use of surveillance devices to signal the contemporary connections to the world of Measure for Measure. In dim light, the face of Angelo (Paul Rhys) could well be mistaken for that of Peter Mandelson, a trusted adviser to Tony Blair. The word “war” in Angelo’s press conferences ushered in images of George W. Bush on screen. For an in-depth analysis of the production, see P. A. Skantze, “Uneasy Coalitions: Culpability, Orange Jumpsuits and Measure for Measure,” Shakespeare 3, no. 1 (2007): 63–71.

18. Al Pacino focused on the tension between the American actor and the British tradition (and between the acting profession and academia) and experimentation with media and facetiousness (farcical visits to Shakespeare’s birthplace). Contemporary China, a country in the midst of rapid transformation, shares a similarly uneasy relationship with the British tradition represented by Richard III. Critics have observed the ways in which Looking for Richard plays off the tensions between British and American performance traditions by “compress[ing] long speeches into shorter ensembles of speech-actions, and unmoors entire passages in order to restructure our experience of the play” (Thomas Cartelli and Katherine Rowe, New Wave Shakespeare on Screen [Cambridge: Polity, 2007], 98).


23. Cartelli and Rowe, New Wave Shakespeare, 42.


25. In film studies, as well as in performance studies, the notion of cultural discount has been proposed to account for the dominance of particular performance idioms. It has been argued that a work with “degree zero” cultural specificity will travel better than one that requires extensive decoding. Colin Hoskins
and Rolf Mirus, “Reasons for the U.S. Domination of the International Trade in Television Programmes,” *Media, Culture, and Society* 10, no. 4 (1988): 499–516. Scott Robert Olson has further connected the global circulation of specific performances to transparency, a textual apparatus that “allows audiences to project indigenous values, beliefs, rites, and rituals into imported media or the use of those devices.” Transparency also refers to narrative structures that “easily blend into other cultures” (*Hollywood Planet: Global Media and the Competitive Advantage of Narrative Transparency* [Mahwah, N.J.: Erlbaum, 1999], 5). The assumption behind the cultural logic of nil particularity is clearly problematic. Charles R. Acland has observed that “signs of cultural specificity may be precisely the qualities prized by international audiences” (*Screen Traffic: Movies, Multiplexes, and Global Culture* [Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003], 34).


27. The cases of Shakespeare in Japan and Korea in the 1990s share some of the same anxieties. Commenting on the modernist localized Shakespeare in Japan, John Gillies observes that a Japanese Shakespeare emerged as a sign of “the endurance and reassertiveness of the local in the face of global value,” contrary to the common expectation that the local will be “erased or compromised” when Shakespeare’s plays are performed “beyond the Western pale” (“Afterword: Shakespeare Removed: Some Reflections on the Localization of Shakespeare in Japan,” in *Performing Shakespeare in Japan*, ed. Minami Ryuta, Ian Carruthers, and John Gillies [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001], 236–37). In a study of Lee Yountaek’s production of Hamlet that premiered in Seoul in 1996, Yeeyon Im is more pessimistic, writing that Korean performances of Shakespeare reflect “the impasse of contemporary Korean society, whose postcolonial reality is obscured by an optimistic idea of interculturalism” (“The Location of Shakespeare in Korea: Lee Yountaek’s *Hamlet* and the Mirage of Interculturality,” *Theatre Journal* 60, no. 2 [2008]: 257–76).

28. As Martin Heidegger posits, “a boundary is not that at which something stops but . . . that from which something begins its presencing” (quoted in Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* [London: Routledge, 1994], 1).