

## Book Reviews

**Krystyna Kujawińska Courtney and Grzegorz Zinkiewicz, eds., *Shakespeare: His Infinite Variety* (Łódź: Łódź University Press, 2017. Pp. 204).**

Reviewed by *Coen Heijes* \*

*Shakespeare: His Infinite Variety* was published to celebrate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bard's death, and presents a selection of papers on Shakespeare in a volume edited by Krystyna Kujawińska Courtney and Grzegorz Zinkiewicz, both from the University of Łódź. The citation from *Antony and Cleopatra* for this volume was well chosen. On the one hand, the background of the contributors to the volume exemplifies the infinite variety of Shakespeare scholars around the world, including contributions from scholars at universities not only from Poland, but also universities from Italy, Greece, Ukraine, India, Japan, the U.K., and Slovakia. On the other hand, the contributions themselves demonstrate an equal variety, commenting on discourse styles, bullying in Shakespeare, political Shakespeare, Anglo-centric Shakespeare, and a variety of adaptations, ranging from regular theatre productions to movies and seven-minute videos. The aim is, however, not merely to present this infinite variety, which in itself would be impossible, but also to analyze the ongoing attraction. Or, in the words of one of the editors, Krystyna Kujawińska Courtney: "How is it possible for works written with a quill over four hundred years ago by a man in ruffs and tights to resonate with the hearts and minds of contemporary recipients all over the world?" This makes for a far more interesting approach, as it implies that we are moving from a descriptive towards a more analytical approach.

The two longest contributions of the book (which take up almost one-third of the volume) do not take an approach to Shakespeare that is determined by a specific, national context, but rather opt for a more universalistic approach. The first of these, "Shakespeare's ideological conflicts and rhetorical battles," is by Mario Domenichelli, University of Florence. In his contribution, he analyzes how *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and *Othello* all display a variety of changing front-lines in a rhetorical battle between differing

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discourse styles, such as Rome's cold, and rational rhetoric versus the more passionate and hyperbolic Egyptian rhetoric, or, in *Troilus and Cressida*, the Greek versus the Trojan discourse. These extend, however, beyond mere rhetorical battles, as the author convincingly argues, but also represent a battle between underlying and contrasting values. Domenichelli argues how the use of these rhetorical battles might have allowed Shakespeare to have escaped censorship, and not only to praise James I, but also to criticize him.

The second contribution of the first section, "The price of difference: Shakespeare's varieties of bullying," is by Xenia Georgopoulou, University of Athens. While bullying and Shakespeare is generally a topic which draws a fair amount of interest from schools, usually in an attempt to address the topic and make children aware of the negative effects of bullying, this paper takes a different approach and focuses on bullying as a theme in Shakespeare's plays. The specific focus is not so much on the form of the abuse, but rather on the identity and the relation between the bullies and their victims, which usually implies an imbalance in power between the two or a deviation from the (ideal) norm. Xenia Georgopoulou demonstrates the wide extent to which Shakespeare includes bullying in his plays, as well as the wide varieties that occur: unintentional versus intentional bullying, bullying by usurpers and legitimate rulers, by higher and lower class, by men, women, and children, between husband and wife, caused by race, belief, social position, physical characteristics, clothing, language, and so forth. Of necessity, considering the width of the topic and the constraints of space, the author is only able to introduce the topic, but it is beyond doubt that she has opened up a promising venue for further research, which is waiting to be explored in more detail.

The second section on the volume focuses on practices and appropriations, and one of the editors, Krystyna Kujawińska Courtney, kicks off with a paper on Boguslawski's *Hamlet* of 1798, the first *Hamlet* to be staged in the Polish language. She argues how his *Hamlet* influenced generations of theatre-makers in Poland, and how Jan Kott's analysis of *Hamlet*, who referred to the play as a "sponge [...] which] immediately absorbs all the problems of our time," might have had its origins in the 1798 production. Performed at a time when Poland's Partitions were taking place, ending the existence of Poland as a state for 123 years, Boguslawski's *Hamlet* used an ending which restored the crown to Hamlet, the 'Polish Prince', possibly reflecting Polish desire for the country's independence and liberation from foreign powers. Although Bugalowski's *Hamlet* appeared at a time when French Neo-Classical influence was slowly giving way to a more Romanticist approach in Poland, in line with a similar tendency in other European countries, the political ramifications of Boguslawski's changes seem to be more important and to have particularly influenced Polish theatre productions of *Hamlet*.

Next, Mark Sokolyansky, University of Odessa, Ukraine, presents a descriptive overview of how Pushkin appropriated Shakespeare in Russian culture through a variety of genres, such as lyrical poetry, the epic poem, and the translation, but also through his own dramatic works, such as *Angelo*, which was strongly influenced by *Measure for Measure*, and *Boris Godunov*. Like Krystyna Kujawińska Courtney, in the contribution mentioned earlier, Aleksandra Budrewicz, University of Kraków, also focuses on *Hamlet* and its political relevance for Poland. She analyzes the character Polonius, and how the ‘Polish man’ confronted Shakespeare translators and critics with dilemmas in 19<sup>th</sup> century Poland. Through several specific examples, she argues how a country which was non-existent, due to the partitions, tried to reshape Polonius into a more complex character, as a too contemptuous or submissive attitude towards Polonius might all too easily translate into disregard for the own (non-existent) nation.

Sarbani Chaudhury, University of Kalyani, starts her contribution with a citation from Mao Zedong’s 1966 document ‘Bombarding the Headquarters’, which called for and culminated in the Cultural Revolution. It is a provocative, but fitting start to a contribution, which urges the need for bombarding the mainstream approach to Shakespeare in India. Building on previous scholars, she criticizes the “Anglo-American stranglehold” (109), providing examples in pedagogic circles and in the field of theory and criticism. Through an interesting case study, of Shakespeare tradaptations by the Department of English, University of Kalyani, she challenges the hegemonic institution and existing paradigms, while aiming at reconfiguring Shakespeare and laughing at and with him.

The final contribution to the second section, by Anna Pietrzykowska-Motyka, University of Kraków, analyzes Angela Carter’s last novel *Wise Children* (1991), about two twins and their theatrical family. The novel is strongly influenced by the author’s love of Shakespeare, evident in many straightforward allusions, such as the dwelling place of the twins, 49 Bard road, or their birthday, the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April. Leaning strongly on Webb’s analysis, Pietrzykowska-Motyka focuses in particular on Shakespeare’s presence in the novel through the use of Shakespeare’s dialectic of oppositions. The reversal of natural order, cross-dressing and doubling (Carter extends her use of twins to no less than five pairs) receive specific attention, as the author builds her argument on the pervasive themes of the fragility, fluidity, and hybridity of identity, so recognizable from Shakespeare.

The third section focuses on national and cultural and diversity in theatre and does so by looking at three different productions of *Hamlet*, respectively in Japan, Slovakia, and Poland. In her discussion of Yukio Ninagawa’s 2015 *Hamlet*, Emi Hamana, Tokyo’s Christian University, moves beyond mere description. She analyzes how Ninagawa’s eighth production of *Hamlet* (his first was in 1978), does not so much indicate a return to *Japonism* (there was a strong

reliance on Japanese frameworks and visualization), but rather examines and questions Japanese encounters with Shakespeare. While much has been written on Ninagawa, the second review on *Hamlet* moves away from the well-known and discusses a production which has not received any critical attention before. Jana Wild, Academy of Performing Arts Bratislava, reviews the Ratislav Ballek's 2004 *Hamlet*, which was staged in the Rusyn language, recognized as an official minority language in Slavonia since 1990, where it is spoken by slightly over 30,000 inhabitants. She argues how, rather than choosing for the Slovakian, mainstream (i.e. Kottian) approach to *Hamlet*, this production shifts attention away from the struggle against the world, rather questioning the very nature of world and reality. The last contribution in this section reviews a fascinating, seven-minute video of *Hamlet* (2002), an intentionally dissonant mixture of BBC Shakespeare language, superimposed upon young men and women fooling around in a white, unidentified room, by the Polish artistic quartet Supergroup Azorro (2001-2010) in cooperation with the Magisters group (2000-2002). Monika Sosnowska, University of Łódź, using a detailed description of the video, argues how the video not only comments on the pompous, artistic culture in Poland but also questions Polish identity and self-stereotypes, in a timeframe when Poland was moving towards the European Union.

Moving away from the more contextual approach of the second and third section, Grace Ioppolo, University of Reading, discusses in her final contribution how digital and social media helped her in her role as an educator. After presenting a general overview of media, she focuses specifically on the use of Twitter and explains quite enthusiastically why she started using tweets, and how Twitter has gradually evolved into a medium for her to reach far wider audiences than ever before. An interesting anecdote refers to a Shakespeare conference in Stratford-upon-Avon in 2010, where only 3 out of 300 Shakespeareans "admitted" that they used Twitter, after being questioned on this. Although Grace Ioppolo is still being told frequently that her tweets are a waste of time, I am quite sure, that if the Twitter question were asked today in Stratford, much more than 3 Shakespeareans would come forward. In her discussion on the use of Twitter, Grace Ioppolo further exemplifies the increasing diversity of Shakespeare and his reinventions across the world and its many media, and as such this contribution seems a fitting finale to the rich collection of papers in this book. The field of Shakespeare and Shakespeare research is infinite indeed, and this volume offers the reader some tantalizing and fascinating glimpses.

Alexa Huang, *Chinese Shakespeares: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009. Pp. 350); Chinese translation, *Shashibiya de Zhongguo Lvxing: Cong Wanqing Dao Ershiyi Shiji 莎士比亚的中国旅行: 从晚清到21世纪*, trans. Sun Yanna and Zhang Ye (Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 2017. Pp. 320).

Reviewed by *Renfang Tang*\*

Alexa Huang's *Chinese Shakespeares: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange* examines the interactions among Shakespearean texts and performances and Chinese culture in Chinese cultural history spanning from the first Opium War in 1839 to the present times. Having extensively researched the archives of Shakespearean stories, theatre, cinema, and opera productions from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, Huang evaluates both the productions and the nature of their critical reception. It provides a model of intercultural analysis, which treats both text and culture as narrative systems and interprets individual performances through the locality of culture. Huang has used Shakespeare-China interrelations to study the dialectics of difference and universality, and has shown how such narratives unleash new interpretive energy. Grounding her investigation in the manner in which the two global icons—"Shakespeare" and "China"—interact to create a unique interpretive subject, Huang rejects the formulation of "Shakespeare in China" and coins the term "Chinese Shakespeares" instead. Huang emphasizes that the book is not a study of Shakespeare in China, because "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" (p. 39). Instead, it is about "Chinese Shakespeares," which means identifying "the theoretical problems and multiple cultural locations of the ideas associated with China and Shakespeare" (p. 39). Huang's "China" refers to various ideological positions, geocultural locations and historical periods; Huang's "Shakespeare" means "not only the works but also the reputation and values associated with William Shakespeare" (p. 40). Consequently, her case studies examine Chinese Shakespeares in the Sinophone world as "a transformative process..., as cultural practice..., as texts..., and as performances" (p. 39). The novelty, breadth and depth of Huang's approach to treating her topic make the book an exceptional work of theatre scholarship, which establishes Huang as the world's preeminent authority on Chinese Shakespeares.

Huang interweaves her study with the sociological theory of locality criticism. Huang seeks to move away from what she calls "fidelity-derived discourse about cultural ownership" (p. 18) which judges a foreign

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Shakespearean adaptation or appropriation by its proximity to Shakespeare. She proposes the model that both “Shakespeare and China are narrative systems read and written within the framework of performance and cultural translation” (p. 24), and thus symbiotically enhance and transform each other’s uniqueness. By treating them as overlapping narrative systems, Huang avoids uncritical generalizations about both Shakespeare and Chinese culture; instead, she provides case studies of intersections between China and Shakespeare in order to “examine the transnational imaginary of China in Shakespearean performance and Shakespeare’s place in Chinese cultural history from the first Opium War in 1839 to our time” (p. 5). Central to her method is her focus on the locality of particular performances, which is defined as the space “where authenticity and intentionality is derived and ... where differences emerge” (pp. 17-18). This is in stark contrast to the universalizing gestures of much intercultural global performance.

Preferring locality criticism to postcolonial criticism, Huang challenges the fetishization of the universal values of Shakespeare and shifts the spotlight to the local. Huang points out, “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.” (p. 26) In comparison with such locations as India, Africa and the Caribbean, which are the core of postcolonial criticism, regions in East Asia have more ambiguous relationships with the West. In Chinese history, barring small enclaves such as Macao, Hong Kong, and some treaty ports, China was never wholly colonized by Western powers; therefore Shakespeare was not appropriated as a domineering colonial figure but instead served as a model for identity (p. 26), not least because he had a reputation for genius. Avoiding postcolonial perspectives of Western interculturalisms which look at the Asian Other as exotic cultures steeped in magic, mysticism, ritual and rites, Huang’s use of locality criticism enables her to reveal a consciousness and awareness of both Shakespeare and Chinese theatre in the local and global contexts.

After the prologue and the first chapter (“Owning Chinese Shakespeares”), which outlines the theory of intercultural exchanges, the remaining six chapters and the epilogue of the book are organized roughly chronologically, including numerous enlightening case studies. Based on the loose chronological sequence, *Chinese Shakespeares* sets up a new approach to reflecting upon cultural translation and transmission. While conventional studies of reception often trace a clear lineage of the arrival and translations of a particular masterpiece or a canonical author, *Chinese Shakespeares* highlights “site-specific readings” and artistic innovations generated from the host cultural context. In the book, Huang seeks to investigate “a central moment in Shakespeare’s afterlife and in the cultural alterity of China” (p. 23). One such moment is Jiao Juyin’s production of *Hamlet* in a Confucian Temple during the

Sino-Japanese War (1931-1945). Such historically and culturally specific case studies constitute the core of *Chinese Shakespeares*.

Besides loosely following a chronological order, more important about the structure of the book is the way in which the period of focus of the “Chinese Shakespeares” is combined with genre, place and meaning. The genres include spoken drama (huaju), traditional Chinese opera (xiqu), stories, and silent and feature films; the places mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and various Chinese diasporic communities. In terms of meaning, the book covers a whole range of issues that have pressed themselves hard on Chinese society and politics at various times over history. Locality and time both matter in this book, with the whole notion of Chinese-Shakespearean interactions being a fluid one that may change in meaning in different times and places. To illustrate the unique way in which Huang integrates genre, place and meaning, a case in point is Chapter 4 which gives attention to Shakespeare in silent film and addresses the question of womanhood in the early decades of the twentieth century when women’s and feminist issues were receiving increased priority among progressive thinkers and the educated elite in China. Huang examines the silent films *The Woman Lawyer* (1927, adapted from *The Merchant of Venice*) and *A Spray of Plum Blossoms* (1931, loosely based on *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*), showing how they reflect changing concepts of womanhood in early twentieth-century China. *The Woman Lawyer* focuses on Portia as a wealthy and intelligent woman, while *A Spray of Plum Blossoms* shifts the centre of narration to Silvia and Julia who, different from the docile and subservient Chinese women of earlier times, were active, assertive and heroic. Both films demonstrate the rise of the new woman, reflecting the society’s anxiety over and fascination with female professionals.

In 2010, the Modern Language Association of America awarded the Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Prize for Comparative Literature Studies to Huang’s *Chinese Shakespeares*. The citation reads in part, “Remarkable not only for its sophistication but also for its scholarly depth, *Chinese Shakespeares* is a landmark in the renewal of comparative literature as a discipline.” (Back cover) At the macro level, *Chinese Shakespeares* is a comparative study between Western culture and oriental culture. At the micro level, to illustrate the trend of the engagements between China and Shakespeare in the past two centuries, many cases have been deliberately selected and grouped in pairs by Huang to make an analysis in the way of comparative study. For example, in Chapter 3, to apply moralist criticism, Huang cites Lin Shu’s rewriting of Charles and Mary Lamb’s *Tales from Shakespeare* and the popular novelist Lao She’s short story “New Hamlet” as cases of Chinese appropriation of Shakespeare in fiction. Meanwhile, comparative readings of Lin Shu’s and the Lambs’ prose retellings of *The Merchant of Venice* and *Hamlet* illustrate what each chose to emphasize or excise for their respective readerships. Situated at the intersection of Asian

studies, Shakespeare studies, comparative literature, and global cultural criticism, Huang's *Chinese Shakespeares* has made a palpable impact on multiple disciplines. Since the publication of René Wellek's 1958 paper "The Crisis of Comparative Literature," many scholars have attempted to tackle the on-going identity crisis of comparative literature as a discipline, but very few can make a real difference beyond their primary field. In this regard, Alexa Huang offers an excellent and much-needed model.

There are, however, noticeable shortcomings within the book. Firstly, the book at times gives an impression of being somewhat overwritten, and that the author presumes knowledge of historical events that some readers may not have, making reading and understanding occasionally difficult. Secondly, it is advisable that Huang limit her discussion of productions like *New Rome* by Liang Qichao, which are only indirectly influenced by Shakespeare. Thirdly, one omission might strike the reader as puzzling. While the book is not an encyclopedia, one does wonder why Zhu Shenghao and Liang Shiqiu, two most prominent Chinese translators of Shakespeare, do not have a place in the volume. The chronology does mention that Liang published the first complete Chinese translation of Shakespeare's works (forty volumes) in 1967, and it would be useful to incorporate this significant moment of cultural translation into the analysis of "encounter of Shakespeare and China as a transformative process" (p. 39). Last but not least, it is very unusual for an author to go to great lengths in the epilogue to make a detailed analysis of *The Banquet*, a film directed by Feng Xiaogang (2006) with themes of revenge and fate inspired by *Hamlet*, and a stage production of *Richard III* directed by Lin Zhaohua (2001). An epilogue is usually a concluding part that rounds out the design of a book. Therefore, readers might speculate about Huang's reasons for doing so and feel puzzled.

Overall, in spite of some limitations this is a theoretically astute book with solid historical scholarship that is playing and will play an important role in intercultural studies. It examines Chinese Shakespeares from a wider array of genres and localities associated with imaginaries of China than previous studies.<sup>1</sup> It situates Chinese Shakespeares within the critical discourse of global Shakespeares, demonstrating an awareness of China's ambiguous relationship with the European West. Highly infused with theory, it adds to our understanding of the ways in which great cultures interpenetrate and enrich each other. Huang's framework and her accounting of Chinese Shakespeare studies bring much-needed rethinking and significant new insight to the field. *Chinese Shakespeares*

<sup>1</sup> For previous studies on the subject, see Xiao Yang Zhang, *Shakespeare in China: A Comparative Study of Two Traditions and Cultures* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996), Li Ruru, *Shashibiya: Staging Shakespeare in China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003) and Murray J. Levith, *Shakespeare in China* (London: Continuum, 2004).



is indeed an exceptional work of theatre scholarship that is of great value to researchers of Shakespeare, Chinese theatre, and comparative literature.

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**Tang Ping, *The Magic and the Reality: A Study of the Supernatural in Shakespearean Drama* (Chengdu: Sichuan University Press, 2015. Pp. 320).**

Reviewed by *Xu Jia*\*

The supernatural elements, like wizards, witches, fairies, spirits, and magic supernatural elements, sneak into many of Shakespeare's plays, as well as works of Shakespeare's contemporaries such as Christopher Marlowe, Edmund Spenser, Ben Jonson, Thomas Middleton, and Thomas Dekker. Dr. Tang Ping's Chinese monograph *The Magic and the Reality: A Study of the Supernatural in Shakespearean Drama* pays attention to the relationship between the supernatural and the social reality, and analyzes closely the supernatural world presented in three Shakespearean plays, namely, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Macbeth* and *The Tempest*.

Tang carries out her research through the lens of Stephen Greenblatt's Cultural Poetics by reading Shakespeare's plays as "the circulation, negotiation and exchange of social energy" of the Elizabethan era (p. 7). She starts with *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by investigating in detail (1) the images of Oberon, Titania, Puck and Bottom, (2) the metamorphosis by the magic of "love-in-idleness" and (3) the meaning of the dreams. Several insightful points here call for attention. For one example, Tang mentions that Shakespeare might get his inspiration from the popular festivals and celebrations as May Day and Midsummer Festival of his time. For another example, dreams in this play, according to Tang, work as a crucial bridge between the real world and the magical world, which helps the characters to "fashion themselves, reveals the contradictions between reality and ideality, and solves the conflicts among the characters" (p. 201). Yet the most intriguing part of this chapter, to me, lies in that Tang links love affairs among the Athenian youths and conflicts between King and Queen with Greenblatt's self-fashioning theories. Love illustrates the power struggle between male and female, and the absurdity of love is a metaphor for the destructive and subversive power towards social order and human reason. In my opinion, this chapter would be more productive if the author takes into consideration two more plots: firstly, the artisans' unchanging identity—compared with the main characters, the artisans safely pass through the wildness of the forest and stay as themselves. What does this contrast mean? Secondly, at the end of the play, all human beings go to bed, letting the fairies guarding their dreams, as it reads, "But all the story of the night told over, / And all their minds transfigured so together, / More witnesseth than fancy's images / And grows to something of great constancy; / But, howsoever, strange and

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admirable” (5.1.23-27). This ending, in my opinion, reconciles “magic” and “reality” of the whole play, and coincides with the title of Tang’s book.

The second play Tang reflects on is *Macbeth*. Tang points out that in *Macbeth*, Shakespeare “abandons the happy and relaxing supernatural mood in his early comedies and switches to the dreadful witches, the ghost and the unusual natural phenomena, which burdens this play with the gloomy, dark and pessimistic mood” (p. 205). She treats this change as Shakespeare’s reaction to the writers’ “historical mission.” But what is Shakespeare’s “historical mission?” How does Shakespeare react to the calling of his “historical mission?” Tang has not yet explained it clearly. Tang also dwells on the androgynous appearance and dangerous witchcraft of the Weird Sisters, the bloody dagger in the air, the wicked wild animals, the apparition in the historical background of Elizabethan society, and further considers the resonances they have aroused among Shakespeare’s readers and spectators alike. This idea resonates with me because modern audience tends to treat Macbeth’s mental states as a more important drive than the three witches’ curses, yet Tang truly reveals a supernatural world that Shakespeare’s contemporaries may have seen. What’s more, Tang draws attention to one of the most important techniques that Shakespeare has employed: he always encourages his audience to use their imagination to see more than what is before their eyes.

The last play this book deals with is *The Tempest*, in which Shakespeare “walk[s] out of the shadow of the gloomy, cruel and tragical world of *Macbeth* into a peaceful and harmonious new world” (p. xvi). Personally, I find this chapter particularly interesting in that it reads *The Tempest* not only as valuable historical evidence for the state of magic and witchcraft under the reign of Queen Elizabeth I and King James I, but also as an active part of Elizabethan historical construction. For instance, Prospero represents a typical humanist (like John Dee), rather than a colonist. According to Tang, Prospero has undergone three magical states: 1) the magus in the sublime and sacred state, 2) the enchanter in the conceited and exaggerated world, and 3) the wizard caring about his own fate in the Christian world. Prospero’s varying role as a magical figure, furthermore, is believed to “show his development through self-fashioning in the negotiation of the magic world and the reality” (p. 374); whereas the absent witch Sycorax is examined primarily as a sharp contrast to Prospero’s noble image and white magic. After comparing Sycorax with the three witches in *Macbeth*, Tang raises a series of questions: is Sycorax human or monster? Does she die of natural course or of abusing dark magic? Can she speak human language? How does she communicate with Caliban? All these questions are worth thinking about and call for further study.

Tang arrives at the conclusion that from the “happy and relaxed supernatural mood in his early comedy” (*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*), through “the frightening and horrible supernatural elements” in the tragedies (*Macbeth*),

to the final romance where magical power serves as “an important tool to solve the conflicts in the real world” (*The Tempest*), Shakespeare “has unceasingly fashioned himself in his creative career by negotiating and exchanging with the social energy” (p. xviii). Through this conclusion, Tang successfully connects her discussion of the three plays and reflects the change of Shakespeare’s writing from the perspective of New Historicism.

After the 1950s, more and more non-English writers, critics and directors voice out their own opinions, which gives Shakespeare studies new insights and directions, such as Bertolt Brecht’s plays and criticism, Jan Kott’s commentaries, and Peter Brook’s international performance in Paris. China’s Shakespearean criticism also develops in a fast and sound way: for one thing, more and more scholars take part in international academic discussions of hot topics in Shakespeare studies; for another, their research shifts from sheer ideological criticism to a wide range of topics, perspectives, methods and materials. Tang’s book reflects both trends. In this sense, in spite of some limitations (i.e. on the historical background of the Elizabethan era and its relationship to the theater; on James I’s *Demonology* and its influence on Shakespeare and his contemporaries), I wholeheartedly recommend Tang Ping’s meaningful contribution to the field of Shakespearean studies.

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**Tian Yuan Tan, Paul Edmondson, and Shih-pe Wang, eds., *1616: Shakespeare and Tang Xianzu's China* (Arden Shakespeare. London: Bloomsbury, 2016. Pp. xxii + 326).**

Reviewed by *Qiao Xueying*\*

The studies of Shakespeare and Tang are no fledgling fields, with hundreds and thousands of academic researches conducted, either separately or comparatively. Their plays are still adapted and performed, which is strong evidence of their appeal to and influence on the theatre of later generations. With a focus on, but not limited to, Shakespeare and Tang Xianzu, the book *1616: Shakespeare and Tang Xianzu's China*, co-edited by Tian Yuan Tan, Paul Edmondson and Shih-pe Wang, pans across the tapestry of theatre tradition, offering a series of comparisons as well as a panoramic view of English and Chinese theatres in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

Due to the chasm between the two cultures and theatrical traditions, scholars of Shakespeare studies and those who have in-depth knowledge of Ming-dynasty theatre are innovatively brought together and paired, working respectively on the topics of locality, popularity, history making, censorship, circulation, authorship, reception, stage music, theater conceptualization and literary connection. With each one reflecting on the other's paper, the pair work offers a cross-cultural understanding, yet they do not intend to oversimplify a more complex picture by making simple parallels between the two cultures, but to help readers understand the two distinctive but equally vibrant theatrical traditions.

The collection contains ten pairs of essays, each one echoing concerns in the companion piece. Each chapter is given a title to indicate the general topic of the following pair of essays. A paragraph of several lines is attached at the very beginning of each chapter, serving as the introduction to what follows, by which the reader can always grasp the focus of the two essays, and understand the interestingly comparable points of the two theatres. When read separately, each of the essays may not be that impressive, some of them being quite informative yet seemingly a little bit dull for unprepared readers, but placed side by side, the two companion essays can always arouse great interest in the reader as they cut into the general landscape of English and Chinese theatres from the same perspective, exposing and elaborating in one essay with an awareness of the other, making the differences and commonalities even more prominent, providing firm footholds for any possible further comparative study.

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The opening pair of essays is a rediscovery about the worlds that shaped the developments of Tang Xianzu's and Shakespeare's creation career. Tracing the life experiences of Tang Xianzu in different towns and cities in south China, where he had resided and created his masterpieces, Yongming Xu explores the influence of regional theatrical tradition on Tang. Starting with a description of Shakespeare's funeral, Paul Edmondson shares with us Shakespeare's experience at his birthplace, Stratford-upon-Avon. Shakespeare's career as a playwright, actor, entrepreneur and financial speculator is meticulously introduced in the background of theatre development of his time.

In addition to locality, the ever-changing taste of readers and audience both reflects and helps to shape the playwright's creation. Wei Hua studies the evolution and prosperity of Chinese play and theatre after Tang Xianzu in the 17th century, contending that the change of the theatre was a result of a sensationalized imitation of Tang by the late Ming literati who were fascinated by dreams and illusions. Nick Walton examines the playgoers' changing interest between the end of the sixteenth century and the early years of the seventeenth century, and contends that the altering tastes of the audience changed the playwrights' creation, while at the same time great creators of popular stories like Shakespeare also left a legacy that continued to hold the interest of the following playwrights and audiences alike.

Though audience taste varies, historical or current political affairs on the stage are always one of major theatrical interests. With *The Crying Phoenix* as an example, Ayling Wang centers her discussion on *Shishiju*, or plays on current political affairs, which first came into being in late Ming China and became prominent during the Ming-Qing transition. Being noteworthy for their wide-ranging themes focusing on all the major political issues of the period, these plays served as a medium for playwrights to display their social and political concerns. Likewise, Helen Cooper combs Elizabethan plays of Tudor history in the latter half of the sixteenth century, discovering that since direct comment on current affairs was impossible on the stage, very little Tudor history was dramatized under Elizabeth out of outright suppression; nevertheless, many plays echoed current events in disguised forms, which explains why the 1590s saw the composition of all but one of Shakespeare's histories and a good many others.

Partially because of the frequent touches on political affairs, state control was exercised. Tian Yuan Tan approaches the relationship between the Ming state and its theatre, showing the vibrant expansion and prosperity of theatre in Ming Wanli period and its ambiguous authorship and censorship. The extent and impact of state control on theatre in Ming China were obscure due to limited sources, yet by comparing the palace and non-palace texts of the same title, Tan finds out the traces of certain forms of state censorship and the possibility to reassess the roles that the Ming court played in the historical development of

Chinese theatre. In the companion essay, Janet Clare examines the English plays performed at court in the seventeenth century, which were also subject to some aesthetic and ideological censorship, especially those chosen for court performance. She concludes that theatre censorship was in line with the interests of the crown, shaping the plays morally as what happened in Ming China, or politically, as in Jacobean Britain, which undoubtedly laid an impact on theatre artistry.

Apart from theatre performance, the publication and circulation of dramatic texts provide another perspective for us to grasp early modern reading practices as well as business strategies. Stephen H. West pictures the printing, circulation and reading practices of plays in Ming China by depicting the later life of an important Chinese critic and anthologist of performance literature, Zang Maoxun, who, as an entrepreneur in editing and printing texts, had formulated a set of practical theories of drama and rigorously applied them in all facets of his text editing. In comparison, Jason Scott-Warren reviews the historicist research about the marginality or popularity of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, pointing out that modern divisions between the literary and the non- or sub-literary does not apply in this period, and thus the status of early modern playbooks still seems to remain unsettled.

The publication of plays unavoidably brings about the problem of authorship. Patricia Sieber explores the extent to which the emergence of dramatic authorship could attribute to the creation and publication of drama, in spite of the precarious positioning of drama writing in a Chinese writer's life cycle in mid- and late Ming dynasty. The dramatic publication of 1616 is laid under scrutiny in the second essay, where Peter Kirwan argues that print authorship in the realm of drama was a complex picture around 1616 in England, with collaborative plays represented as sole authored, sole-authored ones as anonymous, or authors themselves renamed or misnamed.

With the publication of dramatic works comes also the problem of reader/audience reception. Shih-pe Wang examines audience reception of drama in the late Ming period, with regard to the revisions of Tang Xianzu's masterpiece *Peony Pavilion* done by his contemporary literati-playwrights and performers, which was such a work of genius that the revisions are all proved to be inferior. Anjna Chouban notices that audience expectations and reception always helped to shape the English dramatic creation in the early sixteenth-century, yet playwrights like Shakespeare were also cautious and manipulative.

Music as an integral part of theatre is examined by Mei Sun and David Lindley. Sun explores Chinese theatrical and musical performance of the early seventeenth century, especially comparing a number of scenes from three different editions of *The Lute*, and contends that the insertion of *gun* into an aria as a special device within the joined-song structure made the original plays more understandable to the audience. By exploring the music in the English theatre

around 1616, Lindley points out that the musical transformation of the King's Men from inner acting resources to the regular employment of a separate band of musicians helped to shape the drama itself, and brought about new musical richness, which shifted the nature of the relationship between music, drama and audience, pointing forward to the theatre development after the Restoration, with musical items as set pieces framed within the action.

Given all the differences and commonalities that have been examined in the previous chapters, a basic question arises: how differently were the English and Chinese theatres conceptualized? Regina Llamas and Will Tosh try to shed some light on theatre theory and practice across the two cultures. Taking Xu Wei's *A Record of Southern Drama* as a case in point, Llamas illustrates how Xu successfully established the reputation of Chinese southern theatre on the basis of values of authenticity and naturalness. Laying emphasis on stage design and theatrical architecture, Tosh argues that the year 1616 was significant in the evolution of English theatre in that it witnessed the setting up of the Cockpit playhouse as London's second dedicated indoor space that staged commercially successful plays. Its output, along with that of some other elite indoor theatres, set the theatre fashions of London in the following years.

How do we perceive Chinese and English theatres if they are weaved into the broader literary network in their respective cultures? Xiaoqiao Ling notices that *The Retrieved History of Hailing* was as much about the act of writing as it was about the act of reading, as the discursive reading of *The Western Wing* in the marginal commentary of *The Retrieved History of Hailing* showed the dynamics of elite drama readership. Thus she concludes that it makes a compelling case for us to understand the productive power of reading, and how the prolificacy of imprints helps to cultivate reading as a creative energy. Focusing on the literary characteristics of the dramatic output of the Jacobean theatre as a whole, Kate McLuskie traces the vague connections and coincidences in seventeenth-century English and Chinese theatre and cultures, and insists that we pay attention to the natural divergence rather than the forced similarities between the two theatres and cultures which are equally complex and exuberant.

The late Ming dynasty proves to be the second golden age in the historical development of Chinese theatre, yet the research is met with a variety of difficulties, the top one being the insufficiency of relevant information. Read separately, the essays in this collection are unquestionably original contributions to the study of English and Chinese theatres; taken as a whole, they clearly reveal how the professional theatre and the art of playwriting had achieved new heights of historical accomplishments in the two countries. When Tang Xianzu's China is placed in comparison and contrast with Shakespeare's England, it turns out to be much easier especially for international scholars to have a better understanding of traditional Chinese theatre.