IS THERE A CHINESE SUBJECT IN CHINESE SHAKESPEARES? READING *CHINESE SHAKESPEARES: TWO CENTURIES OF CULTURAL EXCHANGE*

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Abstract: This is a review essay on Alexander C. Y. Huang's book Chinese Shakespeares: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange. The global traveling of "Shakespeare" and the globalization of Shakespeare studies correlate to the advance of Chinese modernity which was very much characterized by cross-cultural exchanges between China and the West. Prompted by Huang's book, the essay examines the cross-cultural issue of "Chinese Shakespeares" in three interrelated levels: "China" in Shakespeare, Shakespeare in China, and China and Shakespeare. After exploring the colonial legacy in Shakespearean studies relating to China and Shakespeare's reception in modern China, the paper applauds Huang's innovative attempt to go beyond the "Shakespeare in China" model by offering a fresh look into the cross-cultural relation between China and the West surrounding the traveling of "Shakespeare" over the past two centuries. In the meantime, it also highlights the problematic of Chinese subjectivity in Chinese-Shakespeare scholarship, and in Chinese cross-cultural studies in general.

I. "China" in Shakespeare

WHEN I WAS a graduate student in the department of comparative literature at UC Berkeley in the early 1990s, I was a "Graduate Student Instructor" for several years teaching English reading and composition courses for which I got to design the course themes with five literary texts of my own choice. But the department set forth several guidelines and rules for choosing the texts, two of which I remember clearly: one of the texts must come from an "underrepresented group" which means ethnic, minority, non-Western, a woman writer, etc.; and one of the texts must be a Shakespeare. To insist that Shakespeare be part (one fifth) of the readings in a compulsory freshmen course demonstrates to me a subtle and clear statement on the canonicity under multicultural challenge. I was by no means a Shakespeare expert, but coming from the 1980s cultural background in China, I was not unfamiliar with Shakespeare either. At least I had some rudimentary knowledge about Shakespeare as acquired from, say, *A History of English Literature* by Chen Jia.[1] But the Shakespeare text I chose for my courses had definitely taken on a Berkeley flavor—*The Tempest*.

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[1]Chen Jia, *A History of English Literature*, Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1982. Though offering a "rudimentary knowledge of English literature" as the author put it in "Foreword," this book was taken as something like a "Bible" for English-major Chinese students preparing for graduate school examination. I am yet to see "A History of Chinese Literature" written in beautiful Chinese by a sinologist published in England or America to be read feverishly by undergraduate Chinese-major students in England or America.

The Tempest is certainly a very hot text in Shakespearean studies in the current multicultural environment. Traditionally, *The Tempest* had always been read as a "Prospero's play" in the sense that the theme of usurpation and reconciliation involving the dethroned Duke of Milan reveals the authorial voice and commentary on European politics during the Renaissance period. The play was set on an "island" where a crew of European explorers consisting of members of Prospero's former court were saved after a shipwreck presumably caused by Prospero's "magic." In the traditional reading, the colonial relevance of the play in terms of its setting and characters was not exactly totally ignored, in fact it was always footnoted that Shakespeare wrote the play probably having read the Bermuda pamphlets and was aware of Montaigne's essay "Of Cannibals." However, the significance of its colonial implications was generally glossed over and taken for granted. It was not until the 1980s that race and colonialism became serious issues in Shakespearean scholarship along with the advance of the post-structuralist and post-colonial critique. As Barker and Hulme point out, for instance, the source criticism by providing some historical materials for reference merely obscures the discursive meaning of colonialism as embedded in the text. When discussing the character of Caliban, traditional reading usually posits it as highlighting the Renaissance theme of nature vs. nurture. As such, Caliban's claim that "This island's mine by Sycorax my mother/Which thou tak'st from me" (I, ii, 333-334) is easily occluded since Caliban is after all a "savage" whose humanity itself is very much in doubt. But the intended closure to maintain the unity of meaning in traditional gloss still leaves unresolvable cracks in the text, for instance, as Barker and Hulme argue, in Prospero's sudden anger over Caliban's revolt, when he explains aside: "I had forgot that foul conspiracy/Of the beast Caliban and his confederates/Against my life: the minute of their plot/Is almost come" (IV, i, 139-142). Then, as the text goes, the previous dancing nymphs and reapers "heavily vanish."[2] Indeed, when such cracks are taken seriously, the real significance of colonial discourse will emerge, and traditional Shakespearean scholarship will "heavily vanish" like the dancing nymphs and reapers in the play.[3]

Since the 1980s, "Shakespeare's last play, *The Tempest* (1611), is the one most widely and most controversially linked to issues of colonialism and race," in Loomba's words (Loomba, 2002, 161). The text is read not only in terms of its New World colonial experience, but also as revealing the Old World Mediterranean geo-political histories.[4] In fact, the appropriation of *The Tempest* had begun earlier in Third World anti-colonial struggles while the post-colonial critique was merely catching up with the consciousness of the de-colonized peoples. In the anti-colonial

[2]Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Ed. Rex Bibson, New York: The Cambridge University Press, 1995.

[3]See Francis Barker and Peter Hulme, "Nymphs and reapers heavily vanish: the discursive contexts of The *Tempest*," in *Alternative Shakespeares*, ed. John Drakakis, London and New York: Methuen, 1985.

[4]See for instance Jerry Brotton, "'This Tunis, Sir, was Carthage': Contesting Colonialism in *The Tempest*," in *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*, Ed. Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin, London and New York: Routledge, 1998.

struggles of African and Latin American peoples, Caliban was found to be a symbol of their oppression and was appropriated to be a heroic figure to rebel against the colonial domination.[5] Actually, it does not take much theoretical sophistication or political consciousness to identify the link between the play and the issues of race and colonialism, as well as Shakespeare's apparent racial and colonial bias against the European Other. I used to ask my students to do a simple exercise: just to list the terms used in the text by various characters to refer to Caliban. And the list goes like this: "a freckled whelp, hag-born, not honored with a human shape," "villain," "tortoise," "filth," "vile race," "a fish," "beast," "Indian," "devil," "savage," "cat," "monster," "a very shallow monster," "a very weak monster," "a most poor, credulous monster," "puppy-headed monster," "a most scurvy monster," "an abominable monster," "a most ridiculous monster," "a howling monster," "a drunken monster," etc. The question is: if Caliban was taken to be an "Indian," was Caliban also a "Chinese" in the imagination of Shakespeare and his European contemporaries? After all, as we all know, Columbus' original destination was India and China, and "Indian" was thus named because he thought he had already arrived there.

To my knowledge, such "Chinese" question has never been raised in any form of Shakespearean scholarship so far. The "Chinese" relevance in Shakespeare's plays, however, centers around the interpretation of the term "Cataian." There are two occurrences of the term "Cataian" in Shakespeare's plays, once in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*:

> Page: I will not believe such a Cataian, though the priest o' th' towne commended him for a true man.

And the other in *The Twelfth Night*:

> Sir Toby: My lady's a Cataian, we are politicians, Malvolio's a Peg-a-Ramsey, and "Three merry men be we."

In the two most famous Chinese translations of Shakespeare by Liang Shiqiu and Zhu Shenghao respectively, the Chinese readers would have no idea that "Cataian" has anything to do with the Chinese:

> 佩：我不願信任這樣的一個狡詐的人，縱然教區牧師稱贊他是好人。(Liang)
> 培琪：我就不相信這種狗東西的話，雖然城裡的牧師還說他是個好人。(Zhu)
> 陶：小姐是個騙子，我們是政客？(Liang)
> 托比：小姐是個騙子，我們是大人物。(Zhu)

[5] See Octavio Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*, trans. P. Powesland, London: Methuen, 1956; Aime Cesaire, *Une Tempete*, Paris: Seuil, 1969; Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann, New York: Grove Press, 1967.

In the first instance, the literal meaning of Liang's translation is "a cunning person," while that of Zhu's "a son of bitch," and in the second instance, both translations mean "a swindler." In the first instance, Liang did offer a footnote explaining that the word "Cataian" refers to Chinese, a derogatory term for cunning heretics, originating from "Cataia" or "Cathay"—an archaic term for China. Chinese Shakespeare scholars rarely pay attention to or take seriously these Chinese references in Shakespeare's texts. One exception is Zhou Junzhang's "Shakespeare and Chinese," in which Zhou applauds the translations by Liang and Zhu for not rendering "Cataian" literally into "Chinese," for if so, "it would be quite misleading" (Zhou, 1994, 4). Zhou quotes George Steevens' annotation of "Cataian" as "a thief" or "a rogue" for his argument. But in fact, Zhou's claim was quite contradictory as he does not spell out why it would be misleading. On the contrary, Zhou tries to argue that Shakespeare's usage of "Cataian" was very much influenced by the cultural prejudice prevalent at the time in Europe. From Renaissance onwards, along with the development of capitalism and colonization, Euro-centrism was the dominant mode of cultural attitude and Shakespeare's derogatory reference to Chinese very much demonstrates such cultural prejudice and superiority.

In "Caterwauling Cataians: The Genealogy of a Gloss," Timothy Billings offers a sophisticated and illuminating reading of the meaning of "Cataian" in the exegetical tradition of Shakespearean texts. Billings would agree that Chinese translators did a great job for not rendering "Cataian" as "Chinese," but Zhou's claim was confusing as he was apparently unaware of the genealogy of glossing the term "Cataian" in English literary tradition. Billings's point is that "Cataian" in Shakespeare's time indeed did not refer to Chinese as such, and it was not until the eighteenth century that George Steevens established his authoritative annotation linking "Cataian" to a derogatory notion of the Chinese and his annotation held sway in the English literary tradition ever since. As Billings points out, Cataians at Shakespeare's time were not categorically represented as thieves, scoundrels or rogues in popular travel literature. "Elizabethans' predominant image of Cataia (Cathay, Cathaio, Kythai, etc.)—derived from John Mandeville, Marco Polo, and Frère Hayton, and filtered through encyclopedias and cosmographies such as those of William Watreman, Stephen Batman, and Sebastian Münster—was of an almost utopian kingdom of abundance, civility, craftsmanship, and stunning opulence" (Billings, 2003, 4). And the Cathayans were actually considered as "a white kind of people," courteous, rich and resourceful, and clever at craftsmanship. The geographical imagination of the Elizabethans put Cataia in an ambiguous position and there was a great deal of doubt as to whether Cataia and China were one and the same. In fact, many maps in the Renaissance period put Cataia and China as distinct entities. Therefore, Billings argues that the term "Cataian" at Shakespeare's time may not refer to Chinese or Asians at all. Rather, they refer to those Europeans who discourse about a far-away wonderland with unimaginable riches and exotica. Precisely because of the glaring and hyperbolic manner in which these big-talking European travelers constructed such a discourse of fantasy that the term "Cataian" began to take on the meaning of someone who is subject to lying, cheating, and scheming. As Billings's genealogy of glossing tradition of "Cataian" reveals, it was George Steevens in the eighteenth

century who invented the racially defamatory Eurocentric "Cataian" as "Chinese." As such, while deconstructing Steevens's colonial legacy in Shakespearean "China" scholarship, Billings successfully rids Shakespeare himself of that legacy.

But I am equally interested in the racist colonial legacy as in the original authorial intention. After all, given the veracity of Billings's claim, the fact is that it was Steevens's Shakespeare that held sway for over three centuries and is still relevant today. Using circumstantial references of his own day, Steevens pinned down the racial character of the Chinese in his Shakespeare annotation: "The Chinese (anciently called *Cataians*) are said to be the most dextrous of all the nimble-finger'd tribe; and to this hour they deserve the same character" (Steevens, 1778, 25). According to Billings, an important source for Steevens's ethnocentric stereotyping of Chinese must be the popular travelogue—*A Voyage Round the World* based on George Anson's expedition of 1740–44, where Chinese were portrayed as a race of liars. While outlining the genealogy of the glossing tradition, Billings reminds us that that tradition lingers even today, and he cites the annotations "Cataian" as follows: "the 1997 New Cambridge Shakespeare edition of *Merry Wives*: "*OED* suggests that, among other things, the word was used to mean a scoundrel, and that seems the appropriate sense here"; the 1997 *Norton Shakespeare*: "Chinese; but also ethnocentric slang for 'trickster' or 'cheat'" and "*Chinese; scoundrel*"; the 2000 Arden Shakespeare: "native of Cathay, trickster"; and the 2000 Pelican Shakespeare: "literally, a native of Cathay (China), a jocular term of disparagement, reflecting distrust for people from faraway countries" (Billings, 2003, 10). The caterwauling of "Cataians" is still going on. And in that regard, the Shakespearean notion of "Chinese" as produced and circulated today in the West is not that far from the character of Caliban, after all.

II. Shakespeare in China

In introducing and appropriating Shakespeare into Chinese modernity, Chinese scholars seldom pay much attention to what "Shakespeare's China" does in the cultural politics of Western cultural relations with its Other. This is perhaps not so much because the reference to "China" in Shakespeare's texts was marginal and seemingly insignificant, but rather Chinese modernity has its own subjectivity in terms of its cross-cultural strategies, priorities, deliberations, conflicts and trajectories. The history of Shakespeare reception and appropriation in China is tied up with the logics and twists and turns of the ongoing Chinese modernity project.

Like many Western novelties, the name Shakespeare was first brought to Chinese attention via missionaries in the mid-19th century. The first Chinese to watch a Shakespeare play was perhaps Guo Songtao (1818-1891), who attended Lyceum Theatre London when he was a Chinese diplomat there. By late 19th century, China's modernity was opened up irreversibly under Western and Japanese military encroachment. All kinds of Western ideas and literatures were translated and introduced to the Chinese scene. It was no coincidence that Shashibiya (莎士比亞), the Chinese transliteration for Shakespeare, was first coined by Liang Qichao,

probably the most influential Chinese Enlightenment thinker of the day. But the most important figure at the turn of the century in popularizing Shakespeare in China was undoubtedly the eminent translator Lin Shu, who translated, with the help of his collaborator Wei Yi, many Western classics into elegant classical Chinese. Lin did not translate any original works by Shakespeare, but rather adapted into Chinese *Tales from Shakespeare* by Charles and Mary Lamb, itself adaptations of the stories in Shakespeare's plays. Entitled *Yingguo shiren yinbian yanyu* (英國詩人吟邊燕語) (An English Poet Reciting from Afar), Lin's translation played an important role in the Chinese appropriations of Shakespeare's plays, as his texts served as the source scripts for many of Chinese performances of Shakespeare's plays in the form of "wenmingxi" (文明戲) in early Republican China.

During the Republican period, Chinese modernity was characterized in a sense by the advance and acceptance of *baihua* (vernacular Chinese) as the national language. More and more Western classics were translated into *baihua* Chinese. Shakespeare's plays began to be staged in China and his works continued to attract wider attention. Comparatively speaking, however, "Shakespeare" as a modern Chinese cultural phenomenon did not amount to the intellectual attention paid to such writers as Henri Ibsen or Bernard Shaw. The lack of Chinese translations of Shakespeare's works even became a topic of ridicule for Lu Xun who accused Western-trained returned scholars of not having done their job by failing to bring out a complete translation of Shakespeare's works. Liang Shiqiu, one of Lu Xun's opponents, took up the cudgel and spent thirty seven years to complete the translation of Shakespeare's plays. Another monumental, and perhaps more legendary, achievement for Chinese Shakespeare studies was the complete translation of Shakespeare's plays by Zhu Shenghao, a somewhat obscure editor of a Shanghai journal of a humble family origin who did and completed his arduous work of translation under poverty-stricken and precarious circumstances during China's War of Resistance against Japan. However, it was not until the 1980s onward during the Reform Era that there emerged a "Shakespeare craze" in China. Along with China's post-Cultural Revolution reform spirit, "Shakespeare" became a symbol for opening-up to the world receptive of Western cultural icons. A record number of Shakespeare's plays were put on stage, both in *huaju* and traditional Chinese *xiqu* forms. The First Chinese Shakespeare Festival was held in Shanghai in 1986 where 25 Chinese Shakespeare plays were staged during the fourteen-day festival. In 1994, an International Shakespeare Festival was held in Shanghai which attracted over 500 participants including Shakespeare scholars and actors not only from mainland China but also from Taiwan and around the world. Shakespeare studies were also being institutionalized in China where Shakespeare Society of China, including many regional and provincial branches, was set up and Shakespeare's works became standard texts in college textbooks, particularly for English major students.

A considerable amount of research has been done on the topic of "Shakespeare in China." Chinese-language works include, for instance, *Zhongguo shaxue jianshi* (Shakespeare in China: A Brief History) by Meng Xianqiang, *Zhongguo shashibiya piping shi* (The History of Shakespearian Studies in China) by Li Weimin, English-

language works include *Shakespeare in China* by Xiao Yang Zhang, *Shakespeare in China* by Murray J. Levith, *Shashibiya: Staging Shakespeare in China* by Li Ruru.[6] The problem with most of such research on "Shakespeare in China" so far is that "Chinese Shakespeare" was treated as if it were a natural extension of a "global Shakespeare" phenomenon. It just happened that Chinese cultural practices related to Shakespeare occurred in China. This geographical location only constitutes another province for the ever more globalizing Shakespeare vitality. Following this model, it seems that what researchers can do is to provide and chronicle positivistic information about Chinese cultural practices related to Shakespeare, so that such practices enlarge the global capacity of Shakespeare studies. In fact, for Chinese Shakespeare studies to be included in the world Shakespeare family was a most desirable goal for some Chinese Shakespeare scholars. Meng Xianqiang, author of *Shakespeare in China: A Brief History*, points out, for instance, that Shakespeare studies was esteemed as the Olympia of international scholarship, as if the "Shakespeare craze" in post-Mao China was like China's holding the Olympic Games in international scholarship.[7] On the other hand, Murray J. Levith's *Shakespeare in China* was published at all because the author claims that much of the "local" Chinese Shakespeare related information was not available in English. Even that claim, however, was not true. In short, there is no Chinese subject in Shakespeare studies following the "Shakespeare in China" model.

III. China and Shakespeare

Alexander C. Y. Huang's book *Chinese Shakespeares: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange* attempts to surpass the "Shakespeare in China" model in Chinese Shakespeare studies. To Huang, the primary concern is not "Shakespeare in China" as such, but rather "China and Shakespeare." "The scholarship that seeks to cross borders loses its intellectual punch when it is able to consider only one perspective, or when it merely seeks to add to, say, the already long list of Shakespeare's global reincarnations," (Huang, 2009, 20) as Huang puts it. The central concern of Huang's book is therefore twofold to address the following two questions: "what does 'Shakespeare' *do* in Chinese literary and performance culture? Conversely, how do imaginations about China function in Shakespearean performances, and what ideological work do they undertake—in mainland China, Taiwan, and other locations?" (Ibid., 3) As such, the book offers us a fascinating and fresh look into the cross-cultural relation between China and the West surrounding the traveling of

[6]See Meng Xianqiang, *Zhongguo shaxue jianshi* (Shakespeare in China: A Brief History), Jilin: Dongbei shifan daxue chubanshe, 1994. Li Weimin, *Zhongguo shashibiya piping shi* (The History of Shakespearian Studies in China), Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2006. Xiao Yang Zhang, *Shakespeare in China*, Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996. Li Ruru, *Shashibiya: Staging Shakespeare in China*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003. Murray J. Levith, *Shakespeare in China*, London: Continuum, 2004.

[7]See Meng Xianqiang, "Preface," *Zhongguo shaxue jianshi* (Shakespeare in China: A Brief History), Jilin: Dongbei shifan daxue chubanshe, 1994.

"Shakespeare" over the past two centuries. On the other hand, however, Huang's pioneering work further highlights the importance of the question as to what a "Chinese subject" entails in such cross-cultural studies.

The book consists of four parts with seven chapters entitled "Owning Chinese Shakespears," "Shakespeare in Absentia: The Genealogy of an Obsession," "Rescripting Moral Criticism: Charles and Mary Lamb, Lin Shu and Lao She," "Silent Film and Early Theater: Performing Womanhood and Cosmopolitanism," "Site-Specific Readings: Confucian Temple, Labor Camp, and Soviet-Chinese Theater," "Why Does Everyone Need Chinese Opera?" and "Disowning Shakespeare and China," respectively. Unlike previous studies based on the "Shakespeare in China" model, Huang's is both theoretically sophisticated and empirically enriching. Loosely chronological in order and focusing on case studies, Huang's discussion on the cross-cultural topic of Shakespeare and China spans "two centuries of cultural exchange," involving the works of intellectuals, writers, filmmaker, theater artists, such as Lin Shu (1852-1924), Liang Qichao (1873-1929), Lu Xun (1881-1936), Lao She (1899-1966), Huang Zuolin (1906-1994), Li Jianwu (1906-1986), Ruan Lingyu (1910-1935), Jiao Juyin (1905-1975), Yevgeniya Konstantinovna Lipkovskaya (1902-1990), Stan Lai (b. 1954) and Wu Hsing-kuo (b. 1953).

Huang's theoretical promulgations are laid out in the first chapter "Owning Chinese Shakespeares." On the cross-cultural practice of Chinese adaptations of Shakespeare, the most popular question centers around its authenticity. And this authenticity question is also twofold: whether these Chinese Shakespeares are still "Shakespeare" or "Shakespeare" enough, or whether they are "Chinese" or in what way they are "Chinese" and how much "Chinese." Such (in) fidelity inquiries may occur in both English and Chinese critical world, but the former is more likely a discourse among Chinese reception while the latter among English reception. Huang's entire book is in a sense to dispel such ghost of authenticity claims and to open up a cross-cultural conversation whereby meanings of such cross-cultural practices must be accounted for in the specific sites of cross-cultural encounters. In the current multicultural and post-colonial environment, "alternative Shakespeares" have attracted much critical attention. Post-colonial critics have explored the meaning and relevance of Shakespeare studies in relation to Latin America, Africa and India. But Huang points out that Chinese Shakespeares don't quite fit in with the post-colonial model of critique either, and argues 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" (Ibid., 27). Indeed, Chinese cross-cultural studies ought not to follow the logic of post-colonial studies, and should certainly go beyond the authenticity discourse. Chinese adaptations of Shakespeare necessarily produce cross-cultural hybridities that contribute to and formulate meanings in Chinese modernity. To be entangled in the question whether Chinese Shakespeares are authentic Shakespeare or authentically Chinese merely denotes two sides of the same coin: a Eurocentric concern. The assumption that there is a superior authentic Shakespeare for other cultural adaptations to emulate certainly smacks of a Eurocentric essentialism, while an obsession to look for essential Chineseness in Chinese adaptations of Shakespeare can

very well manifest Orientalist preoccupations. Either concern denies the Chinese subjectivity in the Chinese cross-cultural practices involving the appropriation of Shakespeare in modern China. Huang is sure to be lauded for setting out his theoretical framework on a critique of cultural essentialism in regards to cross-cultural studies on Chinese Shakespeares. Chinese Shakespeares "are not a binary opposition to canonical metropolitan English-language representations that are perceived to be 'licensed' and more faithful" (Ibid., p34), as Huang put it. Our critical work is not to look for "alternative Shakespeares" as such, since "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)…it is more fruitful to pursue the question of 'alternative to what' than to substantiate authenticity claims" (Ibid., p. 34). Therefore, the critical task in Chinese Shakespeare studies should focus on the two-way exchanges: "By two-way transactions, I mean the processes that revise and enrich the repertoire of knowledge about Shakespeare and China" (Ibid., p. 34).

In the following six chapters, Huang examines such two-way transactions of Shakespeare and China by focusing several case studies over the last two centuries. While Huang's intention was not merely to provide some insider information about "Shakespeare in China," the coverage of Huang's discussions is quite extensive and impressive, and perhaps the most up-to-date in that regard. Huang's choice of cases for his inquiry avoids the linear and teleological developmental model of Shakespeare's induction into modern Chinese cultural history, and pays special attention to marginal appropriations, particularly Shakespeare-related rewrites, that are usually neglected Shakespeare-in-China-like accounts. For instance, Huang highlights the importance of the fact that it was Lin Zexu who first introduced Shakespeare in Chinese accounts, even though it was a mere reference. Taken into account the historical circumstances, however, the linkage between the introduction of Shakespeare and British colonial encroachment was obvious. In Liang Qichao's Kun opera (*kunju*) *Xin Luoma* (New Rome) (1898), Shakespeare appears as a character in the play. Such cross-cultural phenomenon usually did not occupy any place in any account of Shakespeare in China, but to Huang, this deserves serious critical attention as it carries much significance in understanding how Shakespeare, along with other European masters, was utilized by Liang as a moral authority in that specific historical juncture. Huang also takes Lao She's "New Hamlet" (Xin Hanmuliede, 1936), the earliest Chinese parody of Shakespeare's famous character, as "a milestone for East Asian interpretations of Shakespeare" (Ibid., p. 87). Written in the mid-1930s, Lao She's "New Hamlet" was a critical comment on the contemporary Chinese socio-political life when the nation was caught in between old and new values and intellectuals were caught in bewildering inaction in face of an ever aggressive Japanese encroachment. I believe Huang is at his best in the final chapter when he examines the performance and rewrites of *King Lear* by two contemporary Taiwanese artists Wu Hsing-kuo and Stan Lai (Lai Sheng-chuan). Both rewritings of *King Lear* demonstrated unique ways in which Buddhist motifs were utilized with a personal touch. "Lai's and Wu's rewritings of King Lear are two instances where performative conversations surrounding religious discourses and

personal identities take place" (Ibid., 197). If Huang's examination of Chinese Shakespeares in modern Chinese cultural history was genealogical in nature, his accounts on these two contemporary Taiwanese instances are definitely affirmative and appreciative. To Huang, Wu's and Lai's cross-cultural appropriations have successfully "disowned" the authenticity discourses on Shakespeare and China, for to these two artists, "Shakespeare" no longer carries any moral or historical allegories, but is mainly concerned with their personal reflections upon their identity (what Huang calls "small-time Shakespeare"), and being from Taiwan, it also deconstructs any essential discourse on the authenticity claim of Chineseness.

Huang's somewhat postmodern inclinations in his Chinese Shakespeares studies provide him with theoretical sophistication to surpass the informant model of "Shakespeare in China." His critical sensitivity to dispel essentialist authenticity claims on both "Shakespeare" and "China" paved way for real possibilities for two-way cross-cultural studies. But the question still remains: what kind of cross-cultural studies has been practiced on the issue of Chinese adaptations of Shakespeare? What can we expect to learn, both ways, from Huang's Chinese Shakespeares?

If we were to expect revelations and illuminations about the meanings of Chinese Shakespeares in the formation of Chinese modernity by following Huang's provocative promise to investigate "what does 'Shakespeare' *do* in Chinese literary and performance culture?" readers may find themselves somewhat disappointed. Unlike, for instance, Chen Jianhua's recent investigation on the discursive practices of Napoleon in the formation of the modern Chinese discourse of "revolution,"[8] Huang's examination on what "Shakespeare" does in modern Chinese culture is sporadic and insufficient to allow the readers to formulate coherent understandings about the formation of Chinese modernity as such in terms of "Chinese Shakespeares." Perhaps Huang would not even agree that there is such a thing as "Chinese modernity," because the very notion of "Chinese" has been sufficiently deconstructed along with the authenticity claims of "Chinese."

Huang's theoretical framework is grounded in what he calls "locality criticism." In countering the Eurocentric essentialism and Orientalism in terms of their ownership claims on Shakespeare and China, Huang's strategy is to raise two questions: "Whose Shakespeare is it? Whose and which China?" (Huang, 2009, 25) That question implies that not only are there different representations of China but also multiple "Chinas" depending on who's talking. While Huang insightfully sees the inapplicability of post-colonial criticism on the Chinese historical situation, as "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," Huang goes on to claim that, "throughout its modern and contemporary history, China often played multiple and sometimes contradictory

[8]See Chen Jianhua, "Napuolun yu wanqing 'xiaoshuojie geming'" (Napoleon and "Fiction Revolution" in Late Qing), in his *Cong geming dao gonghe* (From Revolution to Republic), Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2009.

roles simultaneously, including the oppressor and the oppressed."[9] In these politically charged claims, Huang seems to be conflating two distinct notions of "China:" a cultural Chinese Nation and a political Chinese State, though nation-state cannot be totally divorced. By "Chinese Shakespeares" then, Huang does not mean any "'national Shakespeares' such as India's or PRC's Shakespeare," but rather "the theoretical problems and multiple cultural locations of the ideas associated with China and Shakespeare," and these localities are site-specific: "'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" (Ibid., p. 39). In other words, to avoid a teleological developmental model of accounting modern China and her adaptations of Shakespeare, Huang treats these "different Chinas" as separate "site-specific" entities only within which cross-cultural practices of Chinese Shakespeares can be conversed upon.

What kind of meaning can we then expect from Huang's reading these site-specific local practices of Chinese Shakespeares? Certainly not in any coherent sense that will contribute much to our understanding of "modern Chinese literary and performance culture." Chapter Five is entitled "Site-Specific Readings: Confucian Temple, Labor Camp, and Soviet-Chinese Theater," in which Huang discusses three cases in "mid-twentieth century" China: Jiao Juyin's production of *Hamlet* in a Confucian temple in 1942 during China's War of Resistance against Japan, Wu Ningkun's reading of *Hamlet* in a labor camp during the Cultural Revolution, and the Soviet-Chinese production of *Much Ado About Nothing* before and after the Cultural Revolution (premiered in 1957, revived in 1961, and again in 1979). At first glance, one may marvel at the author's daring in grouping such disparate cases together and wonder what kind of coherent meaning can be revealed. Then one soon realizes that disparity is precisely the coherence for Huang's readings. Huang understands and points out that twentieth-century China was a battleground for cultural politics, and theater-making is no exception. Heavily entangled in ideological wars, Chinese adaptations of Shakespeare were ideologically and politically charged, often a matter of life and death for those involved. In historicizing the politicization of aesthetics, however, Huang presents his observations of these three cases in their own specific historical periods and finds them, as-a-matter-of-factly, equally interesting and meaningful. Jiao's *Hamlet* was staged in wartime China and the Shakespearean character was appropriated to boost up national sentiment and China's self-esteem. "In this context, this wartime performance was already loaded with decidedly local connotations" (Ibid., p. 133). In other words, Confucian and nationalist Chinese appropriations of *Hamlet* produce "local" meaning in Huang's locality criticism. So does Wu Ningkun's reading of *Hamlet* as recounted in his memoirs *A Single Tear*. When in a labor camp Wu was persecuted and deprived of freedom, he managed to sneak in a Shakespeare and read himself into Hamlet. So Huang comments that

[9]Ibid., 26. So far as I know, there is only one instance in which China would be called "the oppressor" in modern Chinese history, that is, by those who call for Taiwan independence.

"Wu's reading of Hamlet emphasized the connection between particularities of his locality (suffering, injustice, politics) and those of Hamlet's" (Ibid., p. 141). In other words, Wu's suffering, injustice done to him and the politics involved present their meaning no more no less as fitting his "locality." Following that approach, one may not be surprised to find that Huang holds an equally cool and receptive stance towards Soviet-style Chinese production of *Much Ado About Nothing* first directed by Yevgeniya Lipkovskaya in 1957, which Huang applauded as one of those "stirring works that were enormously inspirational to the 50s-70s generations" (Ibid., p. 143).

One may wonder what constitutes Huang's criteria in choosing his case studies for his locality criticism. In terms of its historical significance and momentum, the post-Cultural Revolution Reform Era was certainly a golden age for Chinese Shakespeares. In Li Ruru's *Shashibiya: Staging Shakespeare in China*, for instance, we find only the first chapter devoted to pre-Cultural Revolution Chinese adaptations of Shakespeare while the rest five chapters devoted to the Reform Era. But that is not included in Huang's cases. Huang only touches upon the "Shakespeare craze" in the 1980s with the instance of the 1979 revival of *Much Ado About Nothing*. For Huang, that revival tells us something about "memory," about "recycling productions that created collective cultural memory" (Ibid., p. 157). This hardly says anything about an important episode of Shakespeare's intervention into modern Chinese cultural politics. By contrast, Li Ruru offers us a much detailed and nuanced account on the intricacies of cultural politics involving Lipkovskaya's first production of *Much Ado* and the consequent two revivals in quite different political contexts. When Shakespeare's plays were allowed to perform in China in the early 1980s, it was a very emotional experience for the audience who felt genuine excitement and hope. It signaled a new era and a new kind of political and cultural life. As Li put it, "The illusion conveyed by the comedy [Much Ado] paralleled our own high spirits and the mood of the whole nation…how we wished we might escape to 'the golden days of Merry England'" (Li, 2003 58-59). It is certainly not a matter of recycling collective memory, nor a "procolonial" affirmation. As Chen Xiaomei points out, Chinese appropriations of Shakespeare in the post-Mao China constitute very much a counter-discourse to the dominant ideology of the Party State. When *Macbeth* was premiered in 1980 in Beijing, Chinese audiences read their own Cultural Revolution experience into the play and induce meaning from it. As Chen tells us, "No theater-goers in 1980 China could have missed the implied message. Indeed, for the majority of the members of Chinese audiences that watched the Shakespearean world of intrigue and conspiracy in *Macbeth*, it was no doubt difficult to forget their terrifying experiences during the Cultural Revolution, a national catastrophe in which Mao and his followers persecuted numerous Party officials, state leaders, and old 'comrades-in-arms'" (Cen, 1997, 161). In other words, "Shakespeare" participated in modern Chinese experience as Chinese experience it. It was so in Lin Shu's time, all the way through the continuous Chinese modernity project which is still unfolding today.

Given Huang's genealogical gaze into specific sites of Chinese Shakespeares, it seems which case gets discoursed upon does not matter that much after all, except perhaps when he investigates Taiwanese postmodern personalized appropriations of Shakespeare with much appreciation and affirmation. When "China" is effectively

deconstructed into site-specific "localities," one wonders if there is a Chinese subject in "Chinese Shakespeares." If there is no Chinese subject in Chinese cross-cultural studies, such investigation becomes merely conversational. And as such, one needs to ponder: what is the effect and ethics of such "conversation" in a global environment where "Cataian" continues to be glossed in the legacy of "Caliban"?

Acknowledgement: I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments.

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