

Alexander C.Y. Huang and Charles S. Ross, eds. 2009: *Shakespeare in Hollywood, Asia, and Cyberspace*. West Lafayette: Purdue UP. 306 pp. ISBN 978-1-55753-529-0

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Alexander Huang and Charles Ross's *Shakespeare in Hollywood, Asia, and Cyberspace* is a pioneering, erudite and fascinating work which aims to understand the complex relations between Shakespeare, Hollywood, Asia and the digital age. In spite of the fact that the recent interest in Asian Shakespeares/Shakespeare in Asia is giving rise to collections of essays devoted to the analysis of stage and screen productions of Shakespearean works in the Asian continent (Trivedi and Minami 2009; Kennedy and Lan 2010), Huang and Ross's volume stands as the first collection within this critical trend. For Huang, *Shakespeare in Hollywood, Asia, and Cyberspace* brings to a spectacular close his wide-ranging research on the subject of Shakespeare in Asia. His article 'Asian Shakespeares in Europe: From the Unfamiliar to the Defamiliarised' (2008), his co-foundation with Peter Donaldson of two open-access digital video archives, *Global Shakespeares in Performance* and *Shakespeare Performance in Asia*, and his special edition of 'Asian Shakespeares on Screen: Two Films in Perspective' (2009), which concentrates on *The Banquet* – a Chinese film based on *Macbeth* – and *Maqbool* – an Indian remake of *Macbeth* – are only some of his contributions to this field. His co-edited volume with Ross not only attests to the strength of Asian Shakespeare(s), but also shows how the current global trends that dominate the world influence the reception of Shakespeare. The analysis of Shakespeare in cyberspace is timely because it addresses an area of the corpus of Shakespearean scholarship which is still uncharted territory.

Huang and Ross's work is neatly structured into four distinct thematic sections: the three announced in the title ('Shakespeare in Hollywood'; 'Shakespeare in Asia' and 'Shakespeare and Cyberspace'), together with an additional interesting section ('Chronology and Selected Bibliography'), which smoothes the way for future research. One of the book's greatest virtues is the considerable number of cultural products it analyses: film adaptations, stage productions in the Asian continent and even on-line video games such as the Arden game.

Inspired by questions such as 'how do the collaborative processes of signification operate as local stagings of Shakespeare and global locales?', Huang and Ross begin their collaborative project with the aim of answering them. In the Introduction, the editors are wise to identify the benefit of the impact of the English dramatist in Eastern and Western contemporary culture, instead of bemoaning a possible loss in translation and in the visual medium. The introduction likewise covers the literature review of worldwide appropriation of Shakespeare. The remainder of this first part offers a succinct summary of all the articles which comprise the book.

The articles gathered by Alexander Huang and Charles Ross in the first section of the volume ('Shakespeare in Hollywood') compare the Shakespearean texts with the film adaptations, with the aim of exploring what the filmmakers have decided to leave out. Thus, they start from Lynda Boose and Richard Burt's idea (1997) that a comparison of the adaptations with the original texts makes no sense. In 'Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*

and the Tradition of Screwball Comedy', Mei Zhu analyses how Franco Zeffirelli's *Taming of the Shrew* adopts the Hollywood genre of screwball comedy. Given that screwball comedies are characterised by the battle of the sexes with the male hero generally losing, Katherina is the leader of the 'game' in this appropriation, with Liz Taylor as the female protagonist. In her article titled 'Method Acting and Pacino's *Looking for Richard*', Su Peirui concentrates on the way Al Pacino performs his Richard III, using method acting, and how he was influenced by his role of Michael Corleone in *The Godfather*. Given the general thrust of *Shakespeare in Hollywood, Asia and Cyberspace*, it is not so easy to place the chapter by Charles Ross 'Underwater Women in Shakespeare Films' within its overall structure, for the interconnections between Shakespeare in Hollywood and Asia are completely lost, and the 'Asian perspective' is not obvious. Yet, out of the four articles included in this section, Ross's work is the most challenging and the most intellectually stimulating. Ross focuses on the water images in the form of rain, bath or drowning used by Michael Almereyda, Kenneth Branagh, Julie Taymor and Baz Luhrman to portray their Shakespearean female characters as suggesting oppression. He finally connects the images of the underwater Shakespearean characters with Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* and Chinese fiction. The final article in this section, titled 'Cultural Anxiety and the Female Body in Zeffirelli's *Hamlet*', is by Xianfeng Mou. Grounded consistently in feminist theory (especially Judith Butler), Mou shows how the employment of certain cinematic techniques by Franco Zeffirelli contribute to the power of Hamlet, and the clear degradation of women – by making Ophelia invisible and by turning Gertrude into a sexual fetish. Zeffirelli's attitude towards women consolidates patriarchal society.

The core section of the book is 'Shakespeare in Asia', which contains thirteen chapters. This second section shows the geographical ubiquity of Shakespeare by analysing screen and stage productions in China, Indonesia, Cambodia, Korea, Taiwan, Japan and Malaya. It is important to ponder here that the issues most discussed in the chapters are gender and/or politics. The central purpose of David Bevington's 'Imagining the East and Shakespeare's Asia' is to discover what Shakespeare knew of Asia, the ways he looked at foreigners, and how the world beyond Shakespeare became a world of imagination. Moving from abstract material to concrete examples, Yuwen Hsiung compares a play (an adaptation of *Macbeth* entitled *Kingdom of Desire*, directed by Wu Hsing-kuo) and a film (Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*). In her complex and nuanced analysis of the play and the film, Yuwen Hsiung asserts *Throne of Blood*'s influence on *Kingdom of Desire*. Exploring the role of the witch – since neither in *Throne of Blood* nor in *Kingdom of Desire* are multiple witches allowed – she reaches the conclusion that "the heroic status of Macbeth in both works has been decreased considerably but in opposite ways" (78), since he is killed in both productions by his own men. If chapter two within this section sees *Throne of Blood* as the major force operating on *Kingdom of Desire*, Lei Jin's critical work engages entirely with Kurosawa's famous adaptation of *Macbeth*, and equally explores Asian alterations in the Shakespearean text. Her incisive criticism of Kurosawa sheds light upon how the filmmaker manipulates silence and shows the interaction between silence, natural sound and *nob* music to rebuild the power of dialogue in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* on screen. The last article dealing with *Macbeth* is Alexander Huang's 'The Visualization of Metaphor in Two Chinese Versions of *Macbeth*'. The two versions discussed are Wu Hsing-kuo's *Macbeth* and the Kunqu opera *Macbeth* directed by Huang Zulin and Li Jiayao. Huang pays special attention to the fusion of foreign verbal metaphors with local visual signs in both productions.

Huang's brilliant essay is a springboard to a cluster of articles on Shakespeare – mostly on productions of the plays – in diverse Asian locations that either implicitly or explicitly comment on the localisation or indigenization of Shakespearean works. In his article 'Shakespeare in Contemporary Japan', Daniel Gallimore argues that "Shakespeare in Japan is a resourceful creature, adapting to the culture by using a variety of styles and rhetorical devices" (119). In an entertaining and academically stimulating chapter, Michiko Suematsu also brings into fruition Shakespeare in Japan, focusing on the Tokyo Globe years 1988 to 2002. The main hypothesis of Suematsu's chapter is the great role the Tokyo Globe played in the reception of Shakespeare in Japan, since his plays were completely naturalized in this period. The Japanese productions of Shakespeare adapted the Bard to indigenous performance traditions, such as *kabuki* or *kyogen*; they fused Shakespeare with local tradition and creativity. Meewon Lee takes up the challenge of exploring *Hamlet* in Korea via six different productions of the Shakespearean play – each one produced in a different decade, ranging from the nineteen fifties until now. Throughout her rich study, Lee becomes aware of the variety of international influences such as *Tales from Shakespeare* by Charles and Mary Lamb and that of Japan in the appropriation of *Hamlet* – and, by extension, Shakespeare – in Korea. According to Nurul Farhana Low Bt Abdullah, Malaya's first encounter with Shakespeare is through British colonialism, not through Japanese influence, as in Korea. She provides a useful, very specific account of the presence of Shakespeare in Colonial Malaya in which she asserts that Bangsawan productions of Shakespeare are clearly influenced by Parsi theatre adaptations, which came to Penang from India. The main similarity is that both productions were not mere Western-influenced artifacts, but hybrid, considerably 'Malayanised' cultural products, which departed consistently from the text, and with a clear commercial motto. The localisation or indigenization of Shakespeare taken to the extreme is also Masae Suzuki's line of enquiry in her chapter 'Shakespeare, Noh, Kyogen and Okinawa Shibai' where she states that "the reception and adaptations of Shakespeare plays in Japan work as a touchstone to indigenous theatre" (163).

Although there is not much Shakespeare in Cambodia, which was a French colony, Kevin J. Wetmore Jr. focuses on two examples of intercultural Shakespeare there. In his chapter 'Spectres of Hamlet in Colonial and Postcolonial Indonesia', Evan Darwin Winet provides a thorough analysis of three productions of *Hamlet* undertaken by W. S. Rendra and his Bengkel Theater in 1971, 1976 and 1994. For Darwin Winet, these productions are not epitomes of Indonesian Shakespeares. The application of traditional *xiqu* (Chinese opera) forms to a Shakespearean work is the main concern of Elizabeth Wichmann-Walczak's study of a production of *King Lear* by the Shanghai Jingju Company. She explains how, in order to preserve the Chinese opera forms, the plot was simplified, characters were recreated and some of them cut, hinting at the difficulties of localising Shakespeare. The last chapter in this section, by Adele Lee, clearly sheds light upon interculturality. She refers to the new ways of approaching Shakespeare in Hong Kong that do not consist of passively imitating Western-style performances or simply adopting Shakespeare to traditional Chinese theatre practices; they are thus moving in a new realm.

The last chapters in the collection openly display the recent tendency to dissect Shakespeare in the digital age. Just as the question 'where is Shakespeare?' was frequent in Asian Shakespeares, so is it in Cyberspace, game space and the media. Yet, the editors see the glass half-full, and consider that "cyber Shakespeares may lead us to expect revolutionary new forms of engagement" (9). In 'Aesthetics of Fragmentation in Taymor's *Titus*', Lucian Ghita asserts how Taymor's experimentation with a semiotics of

fragmentation in her version of *Titus* reflects the dismemberment typical of the media. Simone Caroti's study 'Science Fiction, *Forbidden Planet*, and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*' insists on the curious blend of Shakespeare and 1950s science fiction in *Forbidden Planet*, in which Prospero's island is placed in outer space. This chapter emphasizes the different places to which Shakespeare can be transposed. In his brilliant study of a Vietnamese/US-American production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* entitled *A Dream in Hanoi* and of a Japanese film called *Warai no daigaku* based on *Romeo and Juliet*, Richard Burt wonders what happens when Shakespeare is mobilized in different media. He is aware of the problem of postcolonial interpretation, and hints at new possibilities for future research in a world where technology is predominant. Christy Desmet and Sujata Iyengar, in 'Appropriation and the Design of an Online Shakespeare Journal', insist on how useful cyberspace is, and explain the whole process of creating an e-journal. In a smooth chapter that flows easily and reads well, Peter Holland traces the history of Shakespeare on the web community. Told from a first person narrative, Holland's work 'Performing Shakespeare for the Web Community' first explores his experience playing the online game *Arden: The World of William Shakespeare*, which proved to be a complete failure, and later explains the interesting experience of Shakespeare on YouTube – the author visibly transmitting his fascination to the readers. Holland's chapter provides a fitting closing statement to the last section of the volume – and in a way to the whole collection of scholarly essays – for it touches upon the possibilities of the web for cultural exchange: a wider visualization of Asian Shakespeares or transcultural Shakespeares will be increased thanks to the new technologies. The volume is brought to a close with a chronology of Shakespeare in Hollywood, Asia and Cyberspace by Alexander Huang and a detailed bibliography by Alexander Huang and Lucian Ghita, which will captivate bona-fide Shakespearean fans. The chronology highlights the most important historical events, the year in which Hollywood and worldwide film adaptations of Shakespearean works were released and the year in which famous stage and screen productions were premiered. The chronology is a valuable asset that can be used for reference or turned into a pedagogical tool.

Placed at the end of the collection, the chronology and the bibliography aim to provide a sense of unity to the book, since they bundle together the three main strands of the volume. However, given the disparity of interests displayed by the contributors, the huge number of articles and the thematic sections between which on many occasions no interlinks seem to be available, readers often lose track of the main objective of the book. Consequently, at times, the volume's claim to unity is more of a desire than a reality. The collection of essays equally lacks a discussion of more contemporary screen productions. All the Hollywood productions of Shakespearean works explored – Franco Zeffirelli's *The Taming of the Shrew* (1967), Al Pacino's *Looking for Richard* (1996) or Franco's Zeffirelli's *Hamlet* (1990) – are not exactly recent additions to the Shakespeare on screen canon and have been analysed over and over again. The over-present Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* (1957) may impoverish the second section a bit, though this is compensated sufficiently by the discussion on the small-time Shakespeare production *One Husband Too Many*, which, though not excitingly new (1988), at least is a rare case that is worth studying. In spite of the fact that interculturality is constantly suggested, it is always a spectre. A thorough discussion of the nature of the term in the introduction is felt to be absent. Throughout the book there are no surprises, and a clearer methodological grounding is missing. The only attempt at a theoretical background is provided by Masae Suzuki when she compares the 'euphoric' version of interculturality with the dysphoric. Yet, it is clear that the focus

of the volume is not an explicit debate on interculturality, but to provide an introduction to intercultural exchange.

It is precisely in the presentation of a great number of Asian productions of Shakespeare that the strength of the volume resides. In Alexander Huang and Charles Ross's *Shakespeare in Hollywood, Asia and Cyberspace*, readers have a bold and innovative work which constitutes an important contribution to the field of Asian Shakespeares, and a crucial understanding of the currents linking Shakespeare, Hollywood and Asia in Cyberspace. The editors' awareness of the influence of Asian performance modes in the global appropriation of Shakespeare initiates a new critical paradigm.

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