

*Faraway Settings: Spanish and Chinese Theaters of the 16th and 17th Centuries.*  
Juan Pablo Gil-Osle and Frederick A. de Armas, eds.  
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The twelve essays that comprise this volume explore the fascination held by early modern Spanish writers for the marvel of all things Chinese. No reader of *Don Quijote* can forget the astonishing (and perhaps apocryphal) claim that Cervantes made in the dedication to the Conde de Lemos in the 1615 continuation that the emperor of China sent a letter via a special envoy, begging the author to be the founding rector of a new college where the Spanish language would be taught through a reading of Cervantes's novel. China and the Far East in general in early modern Spain, and perhaps up until today, represented the epitome of the exotic. The book's preface, penned by the editors, Juan Pablo Gil-Osle and Frederick A. de Armas, establishes that the musical

skits associated with Chinese theater in Fujian, a province on the southeastern coast, were known in Spain as early as 1575 (10). Theatrical performances during the Ming dynasty took place mainly in the private residences of elite families, staged by troupes that belonged to these privileged classes. The plays were often extraordinarily lengthy and abounded in supernatural elements (12). The essays in this book deal primarily with the commonalities and differences between Spanish literature (especially theater) of the Golden Age and the practices observed in China of roughly the same period.

The remaining essays in the book are grouped in thematic clusters, the first of which is titled “Theatrical Origins.” Building on his own earlier work, Bruce R. Burningham’s “Jongleuresque Origins” points out that the “dialogic relationship between performer and spectator” (29) that Bertolt Brecht thought to have discovered in a twentieth-century performance by a Chinese actor named Mei Lanfang, was in fact derived from a European tradition of popular performance prevalent in the Middle Ages. Jorge Abril Sánchez authors the second paper in this cluster: “Spain Learning about Chinese Theater (Miguel de Lúcar’s *Verdadera relación de la grandeza del reino de China*.)” In his text, this sixteenth-century Spanish soldier described, among many other things, the propagandistic theatrical performances that he witnessed in the Quiam region of China as part of a diplomatic mission there in 1575.

The three essays of the second cluster, “Oneiric Excesses and Theatricality,” all share an interest in the expression of emotions in Chinese and Spanish art and theater of the early modern period. Frederick A. de Armas authors “Painting Emotions and Dreams (Tang Xianzu’s *Peony Pavilion* and Lope de Vega’s *La quinta de Florencia*.)” These two contemporaries both depicted the sway of melancholy in some of their finest works. Juan Pablo Gil-Osle’s “Global Climate and Emotions” develops the intriguing “connections between climate and literature; and more specifically between extreme climate situations and literature of exacerbating love dreams” (90). Carmela V. Mattza Su’s study, “Emotion, Object and Space (Tang Xianzu’s *Peony Pavilion* and Pedro Calderón de la Barca’s *La vida es sueño*)” closes out this cluster. It compares and contrasts the two fairly contemporary plays in terms of their use of a garden or pavilion, the role played by a dream in both plays, and the role played by portraits in the two dramas.

The four studies of the next cluster bear the overarching title of “Global Stagings” and deal with modern Chinese adaptations to the stage of some canonical Spanish Golden Age works. They are: Alejandro Gonzalez Puche’s “Picaresque Theater (Miguel de Cervantes’s *Pedro de Urdemalas*, directed by Alejandro González Puche and Ma Zhenghong); Ma Zhenghong’s “Theatrical Characters (Pedro Calderón de la Barca’s *El astrólogo fingido*, directed by Alejandro González Puche and Ma Zhenghong); María José Domínguez’s “Audience Reception (Pedro Calderón de la Barca’s *El astrólogo fingido*, directed by Alejandro González Puche and Ma Zhenghong); and Matthew Ancell’s “From Novel and Theater (Pedro Calderón de la Barca, *La vida es sueño*, directed by Chen Kaixian).”

Two articles make up the book's final cluster, titled "Sinosphere." Javier Rubiera's "Christian Sacred Plays and Nō Style" focuses on "the use of religious theater as a vehicle of contact and communication between the Iberian Catholic and Japanese cultures" (209–10) by Jesuit missionaries in Japan in the sixteenth century. Claudia Mesa Higuera's "Depicting Japan: Lope de Vega and *Los primeros mártires del Japón*" examines "the concepts of 'simulacra and simulations' associated with Jean Baudrillard, to problematize the notion of divine representation" (226) in this play attributed to Lope de Vega, the only one in the entire corpus of Spanish Golden Age drama with a setting in Japan.

The brevity of a review does not allow me to do justice to the nuanced complexity of the arguments developed in the essays of *Faraway Settings: Spanish and Chinese Theaters of the 16th and 17th Centuries*. It is long overdue and a welcome addition to the developing field of Sino-Hispanic studies.

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