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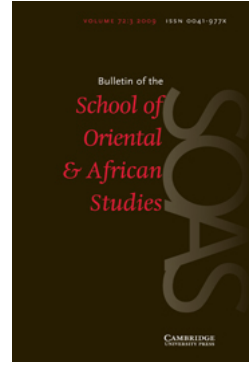
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**Daniel Bryant: *The Great Recreation: Ho Ching-ming (1483–1521) and His World.* (Sinica Leidensia.) xxxii, 720 pp. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008. €179. ISBN 978 90 04 16817 6.**

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Based on the Chinese text provided in Part 2 of the book, below are my comments on a few points where my understanding of the text differs from that of the translator:

p. 40: The lines 按紅牙則換羽移宮，自然合度 are translated as “Following the beats of *hongya*, the performers change their cloaks and move from scene to scene; the stage action seems to be quite proper”. I think *huan yu yi gong* 換羽移宮 refers to the change of musical modes, and *ziran hedu* 自然合度 describes how such changes are achieved smoothly and in compliance with the musical requirements.

p. 68: the words 明妃西子 are translated as “Xizi, a Ming imperial consort”. I believe it should be referring to Wang Zhaojun (Mingfei) and Xi Shi (Xizi).

p. 93: the line 風流誰道白司馬 is translated as “Who says Sima is daring and romantic?” with a footnote explaining that “Sima” refers to Sima Xiangru. I think “Bai Sima” refers to Bai Juyi.

p. 110: the four lines starting from “The jade cups are filled with shimmering agate light” are translated as a *ci* poem written to the tune of *Ji tang*. (See the “Index of *ci* tunes” on p. 200.) The term *Ji tang* 集唐 is not a tune title and it means a pastiche of lines from Tang poems.

p. 173: The footnote for “Chunyu” in line 1 points the reader to the ancient Chunyu capital or the paragon daughter Chunyu Tiying. I think “Chunyu” here refers to Chunyu Fen from the Tang classical tale “Nanke taishou zhuan” (An Account of the Governor of the Southern Branch).

I should emphasize that the above comments are not intended to detract in any way from the value of this work. *A Dream of Glory* is a most welcome addition to the translations of Classical Chinese drama and is a pleasure to read. It provides a lively and readable translation of a fascinating story about a woman’s self-representation and reflection on one’s gender in eighteenth-century China. This book will be of interest not only to specialists in Chinese drama and gender studies, but also to any reader who wishes to learn more about women writers in late imperial China.

**Tian Yuan Tan**

DANIEL BRYANT:

*The Great Recreation: Ho Ching-ming (1483–1521) and His World.*

(Sinica Leidensia.) xxxii, 720 pp. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008. €179. ISBN 978 90 04 16817 6.

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A monograph on Chinese poetry of the Ming dynasty is long overdue. Professor Bryant’s new book finally fills this gap, and also redresses the balance in the current scholarship on Ming literature. He reminds us that, contrary to the dominant May Fourth interpretation which overemphasized the rise of vernacular literature in late imperial China, “the dominant forms of writing in Chinese, right down to the beginning of the twentieth century, were poetry and prose in the Classical language” (p. 561). By focusing on the life and the world of the mid-Ming Archaist poet Ho Ching-ming (He Jingming, 1483–1521), Bryant also aims to depart from the usual emphases given to the first and last few decades of the dynasty and on what happened in southern China. The resulting book is a scrupulous effort that greatly extends our understanding of the literary world of China in the north and in the mid Ming.

The book provides, in the author's own words, "a full, even a 'thick', account of Ho Ching-ming's life and the world he lived in" (p. xvii). This is well supported and enhanced by Bryant's translations of a vast number of Ho's writings (mostly poems). Chronology is at the centre of the book. Ho's life is assiduously traced through the twelve chapters of the book based on Bryant's meticulous dating and chronological arrangement of Ho's writings. This study represents the culmination of the scholarship of a literary historian who has worked on Ho Ching-ming for many years. The serious reader should read it alongside Bryant's earlier Chinese monograph titled *Ho Ching-ming Ts'ung-k'ao* (*He Jingming congkao*, Collected Studies of He Jingming) (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1997), which in many ways lays the foundation for the book under review.

Interwoven into the life story of Ho Ching-ming are Bryant's careful readings and analyses of Ho's poems throughout the chapters. It appears that rather than imposing his own opinions and arguments, Bryant prefers to allow the life of Ho and his writings to speak to the reader, which explains the tremendous amount of rich primary source material translated and included in this book. In fact, it is often when chronology becomes inadequate, for example in the years 1509–1511 during which datable texts are scarce, that we see Bryant break from the biographical narrative and address the significance of Ho's poems more directly. Another exception is in chapter 9 where Bryant once again steps out of the chronological account to give a full discussion of Ho's role in the Archaist movement. This chapter provides an illuminating account of what we often call Archaism in the mid Ming, and reassesses the role of the major figures involved, including that of the influential transitional figure Li Tung-yang (Li Dongyang, 1447–1516). It also includes an excellent discussion of the debates between the two Archaists, Ho and Li Meng-yang (Li Mengyang, 1475–1529), as well as a brief but very interesting comparison between Archaism in literature and in art history. The book's title, *The Great Recreation*, comes from Ho's literary name (*hao*), *Ta-fu* (*Dafu*), but also points more broadly to the significance of Ho in the literary world of the sixteenth century, especially in terms of his role in the Archaist movement.

The four substantial appendixes at the end of the book contain very helpful materials in various aspects. Appendix 1 discusses the characteristics and evolution of the various biographies of Ho Ching-ming. Appendix 2 gives a survey of the textual issues in the different editions of Ho's works. This is a concise and updated (see, for example, p. 634 n. 49) version of the full information found in the author's earlier Chinese monograph. Readers should certainly not miss an excellent discussion on the misleading label of "The seven masters of the Ming" in Appendix 3, which fully develops the argument Bryant put forth briefly earlier in his chapter on "Poetry of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries", in Victor H. Mair (ed.), *The Columbia History of Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001). Finally, Appendix 4 provides us with a handy finding list of the over 200 complete and partial translations of Ho's writings included in the book.

Considering that Chinese poetry of later dynasties is less often anthologized and translated, the huge number of translations of Ho Ching-ming's poems in the book, as well as serving to provide a "thick" account of Ho's life, are in themselves a major contribution and a real treat for the reader. In addition, translations are often followed by informative glosses on the allusions and literary sources used in the poems, which are not only extremely helpful to the reader, but also fitting for a study on the continuity and recreation of Archaist poetics. The transcription of the poet's name as Ho Ching-ming in the book title should alert any reader unfamiliar with the old Wade-Giles romanization system. Throughout the book, Bryant

chooses to use Wade-Giles rather than *pinyin*, for reasons explained in his preface and also argued more specifically elsewhere in his two earlier articles (p. xxi).

Bryant's *The Great Recreation* is a major contribution that not only introduces us to the often neglected world of literature and poetics in mid-Ming China, but also asks broader questions about literary historiography. It is essential reading for anyone interested in the Ming dynasty and in Chinese poetry, and the exemplary scholarship demonstrated throughout the book will undoubtedly reward its readers.

Tian Yuan Tan

MAXWELL K. HEARN:

*How to Read Chinese Paintings.*

173 pp. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008. £18. ISBN 978 0 300 14187 0.

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Ingeniously conceived as a manual for those unfamiliar with or daunted by Chinese painting, this volume offers splendid photographic details of thirty-six works of painting and calligraphy in the permanent collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The book faithfully recreates the chronological and thematic flow of the 2008 exhibition *Anatomy of a Masterpiece: How to Read Chinese Paintings*, starting with the cover illustration, the highly magnified portrait of the imperial steed Night-Shining White, by the eighth-century horse specialist Han Gan. In the painting galleries, an even larger blow-up of the same painting occupied the front central case, in which normally hangs a hoary monumental landscape for maximum impact. From the outset, curator Maxwell K. Hearn signals a turn away from the usual rotation of Met masterpieces – enthroned, self-contained, in a low-lit grotto for hushed contemplation. Harnessing digital technology, both exhibition and book impel the viewer to penetrate the potentially monochromatic sameness of the objects, to enable closer and more meaningful engagement with these great works.

Intended for initiates, *How to Read* does not present ground-breaking scholarly research and does not serve as a comprehensive catalogue to one of the deepest collections of Chinese painting outside China. But neither does it read like a Chinese Painting for Dummies. Hearn invokes the *literati* practice of “reading a painting” (*du hua*), imbuing the learning process with a balance between intellectual gravitas and playful enjoyment. The act of reading predicates the possession of specialized knowledge, which the book metes out in easily digestible doses. After examining each entry in turn, the reader will come away with at least one transferable skill and one historical context. Thus, in the first of thirty-six mini-chapters, one might grasp how the panoply of red seal-marks on the “Dragon Steed” Night-Shining White functions as provenance, while a fully indexed map of the painting itemizes its other-worldly pedigree. Subsequent chapters introduce other important tools in, for example, reading calligraphic line as “Exquisite Discipline” or “Controlled Spontaneity”, in reading composition to conjure up a “Landscape of Emotion” or “Dream Vision” and in reading word/image juxtapositions in the practice of “Painting as Calligraphy” and “The Integration of Poetry, Painting, and Calligraphy”. Enlargements of written passages prove particularly effective in helping those unable to read Chinese approach calligraphy as functional in form