

understand the role of China as an RGP, and hence strengthen the theme of the book.

Overall, this is a timely work that addresses the role of an old but also new power on the global stage that is still rapidly rising and whose impact upon the well-being of the world is increasingly discernible. It provides the readers with broadened views and fresh angles through which they can understand and know the new rising power better. It enriches the scholastic literature on international politics, especially China Studies. The author's diligent exploration into the issues, many times in good depth and breadth, makes it a valuable work dealing with this subject.

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Chunmei Du. *Gu Hongming's Eccentric Chinese Odyssey*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019. vi, 264 pp. Hardcover \$69.95, ISBN 978-0-8122-5120-3.

Chunmei Du's *Gu Hongming's Eccentric Chinese Odyssey* is pleasant to read. As the first English-language book that studies the controversial late Qing scholar Gu Hongming's (1857–1928) life, his intellectual and psychological journey of identity building, this book is a great contribution to Gu Hongming scholarship. Instead of adopting a typical biographical account of the eccentric historical figure, the book focuses on the transcultural context and the psychological impact of colonialism on Gu Hongming as a Chinese diaspora during World War I era.

World War I era was the time that the West was experiencing modern, industrial movements, and ongoing colonialism; and the East, particularly China, was struggling with modernization, traditional trends, and revolutionary events. This opened the stage for the “trickster-sage” (p. 21) who was a historical symbol of the interactions between “Easterners” and “Westerners” to perform. Gu's performing of “Chinese authenticity” was examined by the author through the lens of his intellectual and psychological worlds.

The first part of the book, Gu Hongming's "Intellectual Journey," centered around his well-known work *The Spirit of the Chinese People* (1915). In the book, Gu opposed the Western worldview of civilization that was based on material progress. His search for an alternative worldview to remedy the Western illness was China and the Chinese people. As "a conscious cultural messenger" (p. 25), Gu praised China as a superior counterpart to the materialist modern West. The author made an insightful argument about how Gu provoked a rethinking of civilization through his trickster's performance that reversed "the colonial rhetoric of the civilized West" (p. 34): Gu understood that the dominant belief of (material) progress within Western civilization was the very basis for Western domination over China. He manipulated language for attention—his interpretation of the spirit of the Chinese people was shockingly conservative to Western readers. He took advantage of his knowledge of the West and battled from "within"—he borrowed from Western romanticism to criticize modern Western society. In that way, Gu's effort of "spreading Chinese culture" (p. 31) was not "simply a Romantic nostalgia or Confucian utopianism" (p. 32). It "must also be seen in an anticolonial context as an ideological statement of a Chinese 'self-representation' countering what he considered Westerner's biased portraits" (p. 32).

Gu's contribution to rethinking of the conception of civilization could be seen from three aspects: first, breaking down the dividing line of East and West (p. 34); second, advocating "humanity as the new universalist basis of civilization" (p. 34); and third, promoting "Confucian moral universalism" (p. 41). The author calls this civilization reevaluation process or strategy a "double Othering process" (p. 44). Gu created an ideal (not necessarily real) China as the counterpart of the modern West, and consequently, celebrating Chinese civilization and demeaning the Western civilization become a dual construction process—it defines both—"East and West are imagined together" (p. 45).

I find the concept "double Othering process" very inspiring, especially for the discussion of transcultural dialogue. It certainly was very meaningful for challenging Western hegemonic discourses on civilization, hence, colonialism (Western imperialist extension) at that critical moment in world history. I believe it is still meaningful for today's discussion on civilizations. I will come back to this topic later.

The above discussion outlines the first part of the book—how Gu Hongming's intellectual journey, his performance as a spokesman of China, contributed to transcultural dialogue. The second part of the book—"Psychological Passage"—focuses on unveiling the cultural amphibian's deep/dark motivation for his public performance.

Gu Hongming's identity transformation path from "an imitation Western man" as a young colonial elite to "a Chinaman again" as a disillusioned adult is

carefully examined, and it seems that this path fits pretty well with certain psychological analysis agenda. The author believes that as a Chinese diaspora who lived between cultures, “Chinese identity was something that Gu struggled with all his life and was never able to fully attain. . . . The drive to reconfirm his Chinese identity appears to have been a powerful current underlying much of his thought and behavior” (p. 112). Furthermore, Gu’s encounters with Westerners were full of “unspoken injuries” (p. 126)—the insults Gu received when he worked for the British geographer Archibald Ross Colquhoun, his youth and study life in Edinburgh, the Yellow Peril influences on the Western imagination of Chinese, his interaction with English elite writer Maugham, and so on. Therefore, Gu’s obsessive display of Chineseness and shocking behaviors were “deeply therapeutic,” “like a wounded healer” (p. 127). The author provides and analyzes many cases to show that Gu’s odyssey and search for self-identity was highly performative. The following quoted paragraph summarizes the author’s points very well:

Seen through the lens of the trickster, many of Gu Hongming’s eccentricities become meaningful. He performed and promoted an image of absurdity, using shocking effects to trap his more powerful enemies and achieve his own agendas. He played with the *de rigueur* tropes in all their duplicity. The queue evoked both anachronism and femininity; the bound feet of Chinese women showed mental and physical frailty and Oriental suppression and despotism; rickshaw men related to the old caste system and were antiliberal and antidemocratic; and the civil examination system led to stagnation and corruption. All these chosen topics fit nicely within colonial images of the natives, yet they turned out to be deeply problematic and undermining of the colonial and modernist narrative. His queue, for example, posed a counterintuitive experience and a contradiction for Western observers when mixed with his Western classical learning. It was a trickster’s trick, a delusional trap, and a political tool of resistance. Meanwhile, his defense of the empress dowager and Chinese women spoke to the opposite of the modern, civilized, enlightened world, but in essence resembled Victorian ideals. It was a reversed way of signifying and a twisted trickery. (p. 153)

From this perspective, the author ends the book with a chapter entitled “A Trickster’s Trip on a Mobius Strip,” using the two conceptual tools “trickster” and “Mobius Strip” to demonstrate that Gu’s life (identity building) journey was a “paradoxical” one: Gu objectified Chineseness by putting it on public display and performing it constantly. He constructed a new self in the adopted homeland, China, based on a total renunciation of his own past and perceived ideological Other, the West. The author poses a rhetoric question, “was he a real deceiver or was he deceived?” Then she concludes “Working both for the common good and his own gain, Gu’s wit could also have trapped him. These are the paradoxes of a trickster’s trip on a Mobius strip” (p. 170).

I believe a psychological reading of Gu Hongming's case does have its merit and justification. It is a fresh look at Gu Hongming as an eccentric historical figure in the time of the first serious encounter between the East and the West. However, a psychological reading through the lens of trickster's performance will inevitably tend to explain all the activities as highly performed and "therapeutic"—it obviously has its shortcomings. Moreover, a psychological reading of a wounded figure cannot but have a sense of tragedy. It seems to fall into its own Mobius Strip.

I would like to return to the issue that raised earlier in Part I—the double Othering process in East–West imagination. As we can see, Gu's creation of a superior, ideal civilization in China goes hand in hand with his performance of Chineseness that, according to the author, poses questions about authentic identities. In a way, we could say "playing authenticity" and "double Othering" are almost inevitable in transcultural activities. For a transcultural figure such as Gu Hongming, when he traveled between cultures, he was indeed both familiar and foreign to the two worlds—just as we scholars who live or work between cultures, in most cases, are both familiar and foreign to the cultures we breath. As social and intercultural individuals, we are living "in-between" and consciously or unconsciously play authenticity and exercise "double Othering," although they are not necessarily to be "psychologically impactful."

If we prefer not to read Gu Hongming's approach toward cultural exchange as highly performative or as a psychological impact, we could look at Gu's approach to transcultural dialogue, that is, his double Othering process of the East and the West, and searching for authentic identity as a global–local context-sensitive one. In other words, Gu Hongming searching for the local's path toward the global helps raise the voice of locality (the oppressed culture or individual). Reevaluating Gu's praise of Chinese culture or self-confirming of Chineseness, his practice and popularity, can provide an opportunity to look beyond the complex of "modernization" or "westernization," especially for the East, and build a new, healthy internationalism or transcultural dialogue/ imagination. True internationalism naturally consists of both the authentic and the imagined identities.

Overall, *Gu Hongming's Eccentric Odyssey* is a thoughtful account of Gu Hongming and transcultural dialogue. The new global contexts inspire the author to look at Gu Hongming from a fresh and intriguing perspective. The book will provoke further thoughts on issues in global discussions, such as identities, civilizations, transculturalism, or internationalism.

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