

GAO YAN. *The Art of Parody: Maxine Hong Kingston's Use of Chinese Sources*. Many Voices, Ethnic Literatures of the Americas, vol. 2. Bern: Peter Lang, 1996. x + 178 pages. Illustrations, bibliography, index. Paper SFR 41.00; ISBN 0-8204-3043-9.

Published in the year 1996, Yan Gao's book *The Art of Parody* is helpful to scholars for at least two reasons: (1) because it systematically explores and elaborates on Kingston's use of Chinese sources in her three novels, *The Woman Warrior* (1975), *China Men* (1980), and *Tripmaster Monkey* (1989); and (2) because it can be used as a comprehensive guide for readers unfamiliar with the Chinese sources by acquainting readers with the content, significance, and framework of the original sources. The book also closely examines how Kingston twists and appropriates sources to formulate her verbal identity. However, sophisticated readers who are looking for a truly thorough and complex discussion of Kingston's use of Chinese sources, and a solid theoretical elaboration on her "art of parody," may remain dissatisfied with what this text has to offer.

As the author promises in her preface, the book "distinguishes itself as an in-depth, systematic study of Kingston's employment of Chinese sources in all her books" (x). The author consistently traces origins and justifies mutations of different sources fabricated in Kingston's three novels. She organizes her book to demonstrate how Kingston (1) establishes her verbal identity, (2) deals with the (Chinese and American) father's history by using the theme of discovery and gender transformation, and (3) extends her solo voice as a Chinese-American female writer to a chorus that unifies several voices in her third major work, which features song of the self and which draws from sources that are Chinese and American classics. For instance, Gao demonstrates how Kingston unravels the Chinese mother's stories (e.g., Fa Mu Lan, Ghost Exorcist, No Name Woman, and Ts'ai Yen) in an American context, and establishes her verbal identity in a cross-cultural space of discourses in *The Woman Warrior*. Here the text offers substantial evidence from Kingston's works and their Chinese sources. A detailed textual analysis and comparison between the original "Song of the Barbarian Reed-Whistle in Eighteen Stanzas" and Kingston's appropriation is provided to illustrate Kingston's "translation of the Chinese oral tradition into American-English writing; her celebration of herself through the movement from silence into poetry; her transformation of her 'anger and sadness' about her life 'among ghosts' into an autobiography; or her homecoming at the end of her personal journey" (47). Along with the detailed analysis and comparison, the complex meanings of Chinese homonyms such as *qi* 旗 (flag) or 脐 (navel cord) are discussed at length to show how Kingston's metaphorical strategy in her cross-cultural writing enriches and pluralizes these cultural dialogues (20-21). At the end of every chapter the author provides a comprehensive summary of her major argument that may have been fragmented due to the complexity of analysis. In short, this book serves as a comprehensive guide for readers who want to explore Kingston's appropriation of Chinese sources.

In comparison to the book's substantial textual analysis and systematic exploration of Kingston's use of Chinese sources, the author's mastery of related sources and her reading strategies appear to be less solid and original academic contributions. Although a key phrase in the book, "art of parody" is not clearly defined or satisfactorily explained; it is thus not clear how an examination of the art of parody, or a dialogical reading of the novels, can provide original insight into the work of Kingston. In addition, a substantial corpus of research on Kingston's handling of Chinese sources was discovered after Gao's research between 1989 and 1990 (Gao gives these years in her preface). Therefore, although the book was published in 1996, readers serious about the latest development on this important topic are advised to go beyond Gao's book in order to gain a better understanding of Kingston's complex use of

Chinese sources. However, scholars interested in reading and understanding Kingston's sources from Chinese culture will find Gao's book clear and helpful as a bridge into the cross-cultural world of Kingston, one of the most read contemporary Chinese-American female writers.

Doris L. W. CHIANG
Fu Jen Catholic University
Taipei

HARRELL, STEVEN, BAMO QUBUMO, and MA ERZI. *Mountain Patterns: The Survival of Nuosu Culture in China*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000. viii + 64 pages. Color plates, b/w photographs. Paper US\$20.00; ISBN 0-295-97937-2.

Mountain Patterns is a richly and beautifully illustrated catalog—or more accurately, a companion volume—to an exhibit that took place at the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture, University of Washington, Seattle. The exhibit's purpose was not simply to familiarize the American public with the people and cultural artifacts of a population hidden away in the steep mountains and deep valleys of southwestern China but also to show how their culture adapted and survived within the changes China has undergone in the last few decades. It is fortunate that two of the writers originate from Nuosu culture and that they speak about their culture in a recognizably different tone than the foreign observer. The well balanced mixture of dedicated and keen observation of and personal involvement in this culture makes the volume significantly more attractive.

The first chapter is a general introduction and guide to the country of "Cool Mountains," Liangshan, its physical features, cultural environment, and the web of clans and castes that constitute Nuosu society. This is not a picture of days past: it is one that shows the survival strategies that this independent minded population created in response to the pressures from the Chinese government, especially during the Cultural Revolution, and how after the Cultural Revolution it regained as well as reshaped its own cultural expression within a new China.

It is natural for a museum exhibit to concentrate on artifacts, the tangible products of a culture. Much space is therefore given to such subjects as architecture, clothing and textiles, lacquerware and silverware, and musical instruments. But far from having produced a dry description of the items on exhibit, the authors make a considerable effort to position these things in their cultural environment, to let the readers know how items, such as women's clothing, are made, who makes them, for what purpose they are made, and what they mean for the people who use them. To mention just one example at random, in the chapter on textiles and clothing, one reads about how certain kinds of clothing are made, and then realizes that while learning about the more technical aspects of clothing one also learns much about the complex social system of class and classifications; the reader begins to gain a feeling of how socially important such things as clothing style and the making of clothing are. In such a way, the reader begins to appreciate more fully the craftsmanship visible in a product and to become conscious of its social or symbolic significance in Nuosu society.

The last two chapters deal with a markedly different topic: the world of Nuosu beliefs and religious practices. In the chapter on rituals and their performers, the *bimo*, the author has to restrict himself to introducing just a few examples from the rich heritage of rituals; but, with a practical scheme of classification, the author gives the reader a good impression of the variety of rituals while arranging them in an understandable framework. The final chapter on ghost boards and spirit pictures is the one that captured this reviewer's attention most. Rather