government regulators, rather than people as individuals (i.e., the views of Africans, Latin Americans, Indians, and Chinese, who constitute, after all, most of the world's population).

The authors of *China, the United States, and Global Order* offer a detailed and balanced analysis that will have a lasting impact on the discipline. The book should be read by everyone interested in Chinese and U.S. foreign policy, and the institutionalization of international normative frameworks.

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The involvement of the literati class in drama during the late Ming period is a much studied trend of the era. The Chinese male elite, particularly those located in Jiangnan, took a keen interest in every aspect of dramatic production. Literati hired and trained their own drama troupes, composed plays for reading and performance, and were impassioned critics of the aesthetics and musicality of this operatic form of drama. Many of these printed dramatic texts contain exquisite illustrations and mark a high point in the illustrative art of the era. Li-Ling Hsiao’s *The Eternal Present of the Past: Illustration, Theater, and Reading in the Wanli Period, 1573–1619* is the most comprehensive study to date of illustrations in dramatic texts of the Ming era. The author argues strongly for "the intellectual ambition of the medium" of illustration in contrast to those who would see illustration as merely decorative or aesthetic, or as the result of market competition to attract readers (pp. 14, 30–31, 37). She believes drama illustrations were "highly self-conscious and purposeful and fully complicit in the most important intellectual movements of the day" (p. 36).

Chapter 1 of *The Eternal Present of the Past* offers a synthesis for the main arguments of the book. The following chapters deal with the controversy among drama critics about the performability of the literati play (chap. 2), illustrations in
printed dramatic texts that adopted the visual imagery of the theatre (chap. 3),
literati understandings of plays as bringing the past into the present through stage
performance and printed renditions (chap. 4), the fruitful dynamic between
illustration and painting (chap. 5), and contemporary notions of reading as a type
of “theatrical experience” (chap. 6). In these chapters, Hsiao translates and dis-
cusses a large corpus of paratextual matter in Ming plays and relevant dramatic
criticism. She is seeking to position her chosen dramatic illustrations within the
broadest possible context of Ming literati preoccupations, including their under-
standing of the relationship between theatrical performance and printed text and
concerns about whether excessive literary refinement detracted from the musicality
and appropriateness of the operatic performance. Hsiao’s erudite discussion is
often stimulating and insightful. However, the individual chapters tend to work as
separate essays, and the synthesis of all these ideas, promised in chapter 1, appears
somewhat elusive when one proceeds in detail through the evidence provided.

Chapter 3 is the most original contribution and adds significantly to our
understanding of the theatricality of a certain type of illustration popular in
dramatic texts of the Ming Wanli period (1573–1620). In this chapter, the reader is
presented with a feast of illustrations from famous Ming plays and a detailed
discussion of the way that these present a mimesis of dramatic performance. Hsiao
argues for several modes by which this act of mimesis was effected: the use of stage
design in illustrations, the use of theatrical gestures, and the inclusion of stage
structures, name boards, curtains, valences, props, and so on. This chapter con-
tains twenty reproductions from the history of Chinese illustrations, beginning
with the Diamond Sutra, to assist the reader to assess the evidence.

While stage trappings can be found in earlier fictional illustrations such as
pinghua (prose tales), chantefables, and novels, it is clear from Hsiao's study that
the use of theatrical imagery reached a new height in the Wanli era and was one of
the most important illustrative trends of the era. Chapter 3 offers additional insight
into how the poses and gestures of the characters in illustrations provide a mimesis
of stage enactment. Hsiao treats gestures of entering and journeying on stage,
greeting and speaking, crying and rejoicing, serving drinks at banquets, even the
expression of feminine shyness. Some illustrations are even given an onstage
audience, the better to create the illusion of a theatrical experience. Others offer
evidence of particular types of stage (that is, a stage in the market place or a carpet
stage in a private home). This chapter demonstrates through meticulous detail and
analysis the importance of stage-inspired illustrations in printed dramatic texts of
the late Ming.

However, as Hsiao is aware, her chosen category of “performance illustra-
tions” was known before the Wanli era and dominated dramatic illustration for
only a limited period. She notes the “forty-year reign of performance in illustra-
tion” after which this illustrative mode gave way to those featuring elaborate
landscapes or flowers and birds, in imitation of popular styles in contemporary
album painting (pp. 31–32). One could infer from this that the performance illustration was one trend among many of the late Ming and simply reflects changing tastes among the literati, publishers and readers. However, Hsiao insists that the temporary dominance of "performance illustration" reflects a fierce battle between two ideological forces in contemporary dramatic theory (as discussed in chap. 2). It is a war waged, she believes, between those who see drama as literature and those who see it as performance. According to Hsiao, "performance illustrations" were "a spearhead in this struggle" (p. 86). The danger here is in placing an ideological weight on drama illustrations that this medium cannot easily support.

The Wanli period was renowned for the sheer proliferation of illustrations in all sorts of printed publications, including biographies, art albums, portraiture, and the recirculation of these motifs in arts and crafts, including porcelain. While Hsiao does draw from time to time on graphic forms of expression beyond those of her Wanli period dramatic texts, her study would have been more illuminating if she had followed Hegel in placing her chosen texts within the broad spectrum of late Ming visual culture. This might well have allowed us to see more clearly the changing trends in dramatic illustration from the early to the late Ming and better understand why this took place. The performance illustrations in fictional texts one finds before the Wanli period, for example, show a clear line of continuity with the late Ming examples in dramatic texts, but the former were much more artisanal and stereotypical in nature compared with those of leading drama publishers of the late Ming. This observation points to a strong literati involvement in the production of dramatic texts and the influence of changing aesthetic standards, but not necessarily an ideological position on whether drama is primarily a work of literature or a performance art.

Hsiao tends to neglect artistic motifs that detract from her paradigm of stage-inspired illustration such as grass, roads, mountains, and so on, which, as far as we know, were not backdrops to theatrical production in the late Ming. Conventional postures and stereotypical histrionic actions were a fixture of Chinese illustrated fiction for centuries before the late Ming and were not in any way unique to dramatic illustrations. In addition, as Hegel has earlier noted, Chinese drama differentiated characters by makeup and costume into particular roles such as old scholar, young woman, and so on, which made the characters readily identifiable. Narrative and dramatic illustrations of the period, on the other hand, usually provide only sketchy depictions of human faces and do not seek to provide striking visual differentiation of character roles. It would have been helpful if Hsiao had discussed obvious exceptions to the general prevalence of performance illustrations in drama such as the edition of the Xixiangji by Min Qiji (1580–after 1661), which Hegel regards as perhaps "the most elaborately printed play" of the era. He notes the illustrations have "the form of a landscape scroll painting" with grotesquely shaped Lake Tai rocks, balustrades, trees, and exotic foliage. How does this beautiful and prized volume fit into the general argument Hsiao presents
In addition, Hsiao’s argument would have been stronger if there was more evidence for direct literati-author involvement in the commissioning and creating of illustrations for their own dramatic texts. With few exceptions, such evidence is wanting, and we know next to nothing of the illustrators’ own intentions, even their names and backgrounds.

In later chapters, Hsiao provides translations and detailed discussion of the prefatorial or other paratextual material with which literati playwrights graced their illustrated dramatic volumes. In these prefaces, literati composers, editors, and publishers provide what is essentially an apologia for their dedication to the production of texts considered at best frivolous, or at worst immoral, in line with the Confucian orthodoxy of the day. Here literati demonstrate much the same view as earlier writers of popular fiction, such as the Sanguo yanyi, specifically, that these plays have grave moral import, they help teach the uneducated masses, they make historical figures come alive in the present, and they fill in gaps in the transmission left out by the official histories. This sort of argument was standard in paratextual material for fiction, drama, and short stories in the late imperial period and provided a justification for literati involvement in these pursuits of the Minor Way as distinct from the classical tradition. It was not necessarily linked specifically to an ideological debate about whether literati involvement in playwriting had led to a loss of performative attributes, but rather part of a broad discourse that one could call an apologia for the writing of fiction and drama shared by literati in general in the Ming period.

While one could take issue with some of the arguments presented in this volume, Hsiao’s insightful analysis of stage illustrations offers a valuable contribution to our ability to decode and interpret this sort of performance illustration. We can now see more clearly how publishers and illustrators sought to create a mimesis of stage representation in the printed text and make a better assessment of the artifice that lies behind this style of representation. The enormous number of illustrations provided (107 in all) will be greatly appreciated by the reader. There is a useful glossary and lengthy bibliography. This volume will be of significant interest to those with an interest in Chinese theatrical traditions, the history of art illustration, and the development of print culture in China during the late imperial period.

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NOTES


3. Hsiao argues that there may well have been such backdrops but does not provide any evidence for their prevalence during the Ming wanli period. According to James I. Crump, theatrical props did not offer elaborate backgrounds but comprised screens, drapes, and items of furniture (*Chinese Theater in the Days of Kubilai Khan* [Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1981], pp. 57-66).

4. Hegel notes such conventional scenes as "supplication and submission" in both fictional and dramatic texts (*Reading Illustrated Fiction*, p. 225). An important study not cited by Hsiao that analyzes the conventionality of narrative illustration in the Ming period is Anne Farrer's "The Shui-hu Chuan: A Study in the Development of Late Ming Woodblock Illustrations" (PhD diss., University of London, SOAS, 1984).


6. Ibid., p. 197.

7. See illustration provided in Hegel, *Reading Illustrated Fiction*, p. 199.

8. Hsiao does refer to this edition but limits her discussion to a single illustration contained within it of a puppet show, where the central characters of the play appear as puppets. This certainly illustrates her central argument about performance illustrations. However, it begs the question of how one is to account for the mimesis of a landscape scroll one also finds in this same volume.


While few educators deny that understanding China is important for today’s students, until now most materials on Chinese history and society have primarily for the postsecondary classroom.

*China and the World: A History since 1644* seeks to fill this gap and for the most part does an admirable job. Twenty chapters divided into five units cover the period from the Manchu conquest in 1644 down to the present day. The narrative and pacing of the curriculum are neat and efficient. Each unit and chapter is well structured with separate headings for chapter contents, an organizing idea, key questions, and a list of terms. While written for secondary students, the compilers and chapter authors have done a commendable job in not dumbing down important concepts.

Most international China scholars will be satisfied with the tone and content of the narrative. I qualify “international” China scholars because while the text
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