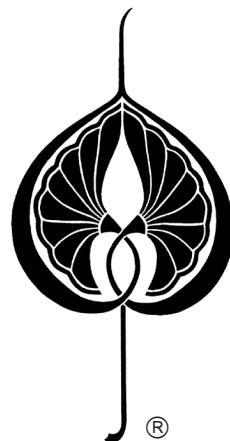


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BOOK REVIEWS

***Emptiness and Temporality: Buddhism and Medieval Japanese Poetics.* By Esperanza Ramirez-Christensen. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008. 224 pages. Hardcover, \$55.00.**

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In *Emptiness and Temporality: Buddhism and Medieval Japanese Poetics*, Esperanza Ramirez-Christensen explores *renga* (linked poetry) and the critical writings by Shinkei (1406–1475) from a comparative perspective. She notes “striking affinities between a medieval Japanese poetic practice and post/modernist critical and philosophical concerns” (p. 2) and is thus able to examine *renga* in terms of Derrida’s *différance*. While Ramirez-Christensen boldly ascribes to the practice of *renga* a possibly redeeming quality for the problems of the twenty-first century—a time she characterizes by globalization, capitalization, and instrumentation—her comparative approach leads to intriguing interpretations in the field of medieval poetics. It is this comparative and critical methodology that clearly distinguishes *Emptiness and Temporality* from other works on the topic of *renga*, such as Wolfram Naumann’s *Shinkei in seiner Bedeutung für die japanische Kettendichtung* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1967), Earl Miner’s *Japanese Linked Poetry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), and, of course, her own work, *Heart’s Flower: The Life and Poetry of Shinkei* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994) and *Murmured Conversations: A Treatise on Poetry and Buddhism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008).

Emptiness and Temporality consists of an introduction, fifteen chapters, and an appendix that includes a glossary and an index. The main part of the book is divided in two sections: “The Poetics of *Renga*” (chapters 1 through 6) and “*Kokoro*, or the Emptiness of the Sign” (chapters 7 through 15).

In her introduction, Ramirez-Christensen asserts that representative medieval arts such as *renga* and *Nō* shared aesthetics that were based on the Buddhist “twin concepts of emptiness and temporality” (p. 1). Accordingly, the book focuses on “understanding the cultural products arising from a milieu strongly influenced by Buddhist ways of seeing and speaking” (p. 4). Furthermore, the author takes up KARATANI Kōjin’s suggestion that “deconstruction was already prefigured in Japan” (p. 3), especially in the medieval arts, an argument she uses to illustrate the philosophical relevance of these aesthetics for the post-modern reader. However, this is not an end in itself but above all a chance to “suggest how deconstruction might be turned towards the ethical ends pursued by Buddhism as a way of mental liberation” (p. 5) in order to “make the earth inhabitable again by all of us, and not only by the fortunate few among us” (p. 7).

The first chapter, “The Grammar of the *Renga* Sequence,” carves out the basic structural features of a poetic sequence produced during a *renga* session. Ramirez-Christensen observes a historical development from the simple pairing of verses as a pure pastime to the complex system that Muromachi-era-linked poetry masters held as a standard. In this later form of *renga*, while the poems’ lines are composed extemporaneously, there are elaborate rules to follow that may be roughly described as “principles of continuity and change” (p. 12). Certain superordinate themes would be pursued for a minimum amount of verses, but within this continuity one also would find interspersions on differing subjects. Thematic unity also had a maximum number of verses after which it would be replaced by other topics. These and other rules—“both thematic and aesthetic in character” (p. 14)—prevented symmetry and monotony. As is made clear through the example of the first fifteen verses of *Minase sangin hyakuin*, one of the characteristic features of *renga* progression was tensility, i.e., a well-defined tension that kept the poetry cohesive and interesting and served to propel the sequence as a whole into motion. Thus, the individual verse is not at all meant to produce an independent statement that has meaning in itself, but has a “purely functional value of shaping the movement of the whole” (p. 20).

Chapter 2, “The Link as a Structure of Signification,” examines how such a tensile structure may be conceptualized as *hen-jo-dai-kyoku-ryū*, which Ramirez-Christensen translates as “prelude-beginning-topic-statement-dissolve” (p. 21). Quoting from Shinkei’s *Sasamegoto*, the

author argues that the alternate production of verses is first “characterized by a lack” (p. 24) in that no single verse may as such stand fully and completely; if it did, there would be no possibility for the next verse to connect, and the movement of the whole would be impeded and eventually come to a standstill. Secondly, the verses have to be “in a mutually defining contrastive relationship” (p. 26). That means that every verse looks to what went before for connection and reference, and is in turn interpreted and reformulated by what follows. Thus it is embedded organically into the prior sequence, but at the same time cannot remain content merely with elaborating on what had been already said. Instead, it has to aim at a twist, a turn, that keeps things apace and interesting. Therefore, “every verse in *renga* is, strictly speaking, ambiguous” (p. 27).

“Emptiness, or Linking as *Différance*,” the third chapter of the book, opens with an introduction to the Buddhist concepts of emptiness and dependent origination. This, according to Ramirez-Christensen, is equivalent to the poetic process of *tsukeai* through which the link between one verse and the other is established. As each verse is devoid of any substantial meaning, *renga* achieves significance only by way of the relation between its verses. It also connects well with “contemporary structuralist and poststructuralist theory” (p. 30), specifically Saussure’s linguistics and Derrida’s deconstructivism. In Saussure’s perspective, a word—and by extension, language—is not an image of reality but “a product of the term’s differential relation with other units of the linguistic system of which it is a part” (p. 30). It is this difference, this gap in between, that Derrida develops into his concept of *différance* which implicates two things: First, *différance* means the relation of difference and mutual conditioning between parts of a (quasi-spatial) system. Second, *différance* also involves temporality because the persistent process of redefinition within the system defers meaning and renders a final and clear-cut definition impossible. Seen this way, “*tsukeai*, or the link between any two verses, can also be characterized by the concept of *différance*” (p. 33). While the individual verses do not carry their meaning themselves and instead only gain significance in their differential relation to the whole of the sequence, they are also constantly reread against what follows later and thereby may gain new significance.

Taking a detour through “meaning-fulfilment” (*Bedeutungserfüllung*) in Husserl’s phenomenology, the fourth chapter, “Linking

as Hermeneutical Process,” illustrates how *tsukeai* must actively understand the preceding verse(s) in order to play its role as motor of the poetic process. This requirement can only be met by paying heed not only to what has been expressly said, but also to what is there, either as intention only or also as anticipation, reflection, association, and correlation. Thus, “*renga* enacts what Gadamer calls ‘a fusion of horizons’” (p. 44). Active poetic understanding must result in an interpretation and reconstruction of the preceding verse by which the meaning of the sequence as a whole is altered.

“The Link as Figuration and Metaphorical Shift,” the fifth chapter, begins by relating the traditional and somewhat obvious possibilities of connecting verses with one another, such as pillow words (*makura kotoba*, words conventionally paired with one another) and puns (*kake kotoba*, most often playing on homonyms). It goes on to also give examples of poems in which the link functions on a more sublime and complex level. Going beyond the surface of linear poetic conventions, such links dig deep into the verses’ “hidden intention” (p. 53) and effect a “metaphorical shift” that turns, transforms, or transposes the simple description of a scene or an emotion into “symbolist poetry” (p. 52).

Chapter 6, “*Différance* and ‘the *Jo-ha-kyū* of the Myriad Arts,’” argues that the structural principle of “Prelude-Break-Climax” (p. 185) plays an important role not only in Shinkei’s *renga* poetics but in all areas of the arts in medieval Japan. Ramirez-Christensen gives the example of Zeami and his theory of Na theater. Therein also, she diagnoses a “mutually signifying relationship” and proposes to accordingly understand *Nō* “less as a visual than a hermeneutic theater” (p. 59). Although there are certainly differences to be made out in the aesthetics of individual arts, the first part of the book closes with the claim that “Muromachi art is everywhere informed by the principle of *symbolic* animation that is *jo-ha-kyū*” (p. 61).

The book’s second part opens with “The Close Link and the Distant Link.” It introduces the distinction between, on the one hand, a close link between verses based on semantics or even association and, on the other, a distant one “lacking in phonological, syntactic, and associative fluidity, but nevertheless producing a unified feeling or thought (*kokoro*)” (p. 66). Given Ramirez-Christensen’s interpretation of the link as dynamic and signifying *différance*, it goes without saying that the distant link is “the most challenging and potentially the most creative space for generating *renga*’s distinct poetry” (p. 67). Thus, “in the

Close Link the words succeed one another in a manner all too predictable” (p. 76, translation from *Guhishō*, attributed to Fujiwara Teika), while the distant link effects a hermeneutical movement capable of resulting in a “powerful shock of awakening” (p. 75) of “quasi-religious” (p. 76) quality.

“Emptiness and Enlightenment in Poetry,” the eighth chapter, explores in greater depth the spiritual implications of *renga*’s Distant Link technique through a close reading of Shinkei’s *Sasamegoto*. The decisively symbolist nature of the Distant Link reacts as a kind of answer to the “riddle” of the preceding verse; at the same time, it makes accessible a realm of “ultimate truth” (p. 78) and as such at least approximates a religious function: “Shinkei’s idea of poetic training is the same as the Way of mental discipline by which one arrives at this ultimate realm of enlightenment (*satori*), or of the direct insight of ‘Zen’ ” (p. 79). Poetry of the highest quality then “has its ground in existential knowledge ... more properly called wisdom” (p. 80). It also includes the moral effect of liberating the reader from her or his illusions and producing insight into the “true nature of reality” (p. 84), the permeability and interrelation of phenomena, i.e., the Buddhist concepts of temporality and emptiness.

Ramirez-Christensen changes perspective in the ninth chapter, “Medieval Symbolic Poetry and Buddhist Discourse.” While it has already become clear that, in order to adequately read *renga* poetics, their Buddhist associations have to be taken into account, the author now argues for more than just a secondary, if illuminating, affinity. Here, she suggests that “established conventions of how particular images ... are handled are based on an earlier ‘primordial,’ historically prior, determination of reality as a whole” (p. 87). The Buddhist connection is thus no accident but rather the matrix that made Shinkei’s poetics possible in the first place. Exploring the double entendre between poetry and Buddhist emptiness—words are empty, and that is precisely why, in a best case scenario, they also render this universal emptiness accessible—Ramirez-Christensen goes on yet another detour through “Wittgenstein’s Silence” and “Heidegger’s Understanding” (p. 93). While Wittgenstein’s concern “with delimitating the sphere of the logical” (p. 94) merely serves to highlight Buddhist soteriology as the “possibility of liberation from ‘the problems of life,’ that is, suffering” (p. 94), affinities are ascertained to Heidegger’s thought which “is said

to have taken a crucial turn (*die Kehre*) that took it beyond philosophy as rational inquiry and into the language of poetry” (p. 96).

“Beyond Meaning: Beauty Is the Aura of Contemplation,” chapter 10, in its discussion of central aesthetic concepts like *yojō* (“aura”) and *y(gen* (“ineffable depth”) relies on thorough interpretations of several specimens of *waka* and excerpts from critical treatises. While such terms are regularly used to describe the effect of individual poems (such as Saigyō’s verses on the snipe rising from the evening marshes), they also serve to delineate a realm in which “objects become manifest within a relation of ... dependent origination” (p. 98), i.e., the realm of “symbolic ambiguity based on a Buddhist understanding of phenomena” (p. 99). Phenomena, lacking substratum, are nothing but traces of other phenomena on the one hand and pervasive emptiness on the other, and therefore “words are there to trace the shape of an absence ... intended to open up a wordless disclosure in the reader’s or auditor’s mind” (p. 107).

The eleventh chapter, “*Ushin*: Poetic Process as Meditation,” pointedly connects the practice of poetry with the Tendai Buddhist meditation practice *shikan* (“tranquility and insight”) (p. 187). Poetry in the implicit understanding of Fujiwara no Shunzei, which gave the *Shinkokinshū* its characteristic coloring and on which also Shinkei relies heavily, aims at “freeing the mind from the apparent solitude of meaning in mundane discourse” (p. 109). It is identical to meditation in “transcending both the fixed formulations of language and of thought itself” (p. 110).

But Ramirez-Christensen has Shinkei going beyond what Shunzei had implicated and explicitly interprets poetic creation as religious practice in her twelfth chapter, “Poetry and the Instantaneous Illumination of Zen.” For Shinkei, language does not merely “represent and transmit meaning; rather, it is a heuristic device for experiencing existence or true reality as it is understood in Mahayana Buddhism” (p. 117). As such, a poem closely resembles—and actually has infrequently been identified with—the *dhāraṇī* (“true word”) as concentration of the mind and “mimetic *embodiments* of enlightenment, of the Real” (p. 120) in esoteric Buddhism.

“Linking by Words and by Mind: Understanding, Interpretation, and Iterability,” chapter 13, elucidates two other categories of linking techniques. The first, “Linking by Conventional Word Associations” (p. 122) is convenient and doubtless the feature that allows for a

communal production of *renga* in the first place. It runs the risk, however, of merely attaching something irrelevant to the preceding verse. A skillful *renga* practitioner would rather approach the sequence's context by way of "Linking by Feeling or Conception." That is because "[r]enga, if it is to aspire to be a serious art, cannot be a merely entertaining game of words; rather it must be a dialogue between the hearts/minds (*kokoro*) of speaking subjects" (p. 124). Only then can the religious quality Shinkei and Ramirez-Christensen are seeking be achieved; only then are the different contributions to a sequence in a relation of dependent co-origination; only then is there the *différance* that allows for a meaningful comparison with poststructuralism.

Poetry that thus commits not to flashy effects on the verbal surface but to the creative integration of a contemplative state of mind results in those aesthetics that have come to be seen as typically medieval. This point is further developed in chapter 14, "The Chill and the Meager (*Hieyase*): Poetics and the Philosophy of the Privative." The poetic product is characterized by a "vital tensility" (p. 142) and tends to a "precise and utterly disciplined choice of words" (p. 145). This characteristic results, in aesthetic terms, in a chill, monochromatic, transparent quality of the poem which, in turn, illustrates the dialectical model of the three truths according to Tendai: "moving from the provisional (or conditioned) phenomena to the realm of emptiness, and then returning to phenomena with an illumined sense of their indeterminacy as both conditioned and empty, or neither, hence at one with the middle truth" (p. 146).

"The Mode of Ambiguity Is the Dharma Body," the book's fifteenth and final chapter, presents a longer quote, again from *Sasamegato*, along with a thorough interpretation of the two given poems and their critical evaluation. It once more emphasizes poetry's capability of liberating the parties involved in its hermeneutical process from their illusions and leading them into a realm of freedom and truth.

The book comes to a close with the following paragraph: "A smile, a tear, a moving power; temporality, the paradox of motion, the gap that elicits a smile or a tear, a breakthrough. Being and time, process, the edges of things, the margins holding the center in place, the supplement that enables the essential. Labor and management, East and West, subject and object. Form and formlessness, the one and the many, the many in the one. Grasses in the wind. Renga" (p. 162). *Emptiness and Temporality* thus challenges the reader. It has already been indicated

that this is not a book which first and foremost aims at the usual academic production and preservation of knowledge. Instead and above all, it seeks—quite successfully—to overturn “those hierarchically organized dualisms that again and again confirm the system of oppression that operates the global society we have constructed” (p. 7). While it certainly seems commendable to question authority and established academic practices, *Emptiness and Temporality* gives, in several places, less the impression of a systematic study on a specific matter than of essayistic association.

This, no doubt, is what Ramirez-Christensen intends, as it truthfully mirrors *renga* practice. But it does, at times, leave the reader bewildered as to why, for example, a discussion of Saussurean linguistics, Buddhist emptiness, and Nietzsche’s view on the relativity of truth is interrupted by a somewhat disconnected and disorienting paragraph on Western logocentrism, science and technology, and the hunt for profit (cf. 30ff.). Maybe the overall structure of the book might have been even more convincing and worked to greater effect in the sense of the author’s intention if such passages consequently had been grouped into a separate part of the book. The present constellation seems somewhat problematic and, depending on the context, at times even drifts into the absurd. For example, in her discussion of the poem “What could it be / in the common dew all around / that thus came to be? / As to that which settles upon / my sleeves—they are tears,” Ramirez-Christensen at first locates the poem firmly within the realm of *yngen* and interprets the question as an ontological one: “what is *within* this transparent globule of water that gives us a clue to its origins? The answer is of course, wholly nothing; there is no inner substance that has made it what it is” (p. 104). But then she takes off into a statement that might make some readers question the sincerity of her otherwise sound interpretations: “It is indeed a question about climate and weather, the one remaining field still to be controlled by science, and about environment and ecology, but only as these are related to the philosophical issue of the ultimately immeasurable ‘formlessness’ that grounds ‘form,’ the dewdrops that are external manifestations of something else” (p. 104).

Moreover, while the translations and their interpretations for the most part are convincing and enjoyable to read, individual concepts are not always translated consistently or explained satisfactorily. For example, *wa shite* is ambiguously defined as “adapting the ‘original

figure' to (Japanese) understanding" (p. 58). *Aware* is translated as "pathos" (p. 18), "moving character" (p. 82), and also as "numinosity" (p. 112). Similarly, concepts taken from the Western traditions are not always pursued consistently, e.g., "discursive" (p. 2), "high art" (p. 139), and "religious experience" (p. 139). Also, there are factual errors: *suji* (sinew) is not identical to *fushi* (node, p. 142); in the comments on a poem by Shūa, the parallelism between warbler/plum and cuckoo/deutzia has become inverted (p. 124). And in her comparative reading of two poems, the amount of five words in Sōgi's is intentionally exaggerated *vis-à-vis* a count of only two in Shinkei's (pp. 132–135).

While such conceptual marginalities might not seem important, one might indeed be skeptical as to whether the term "symbolist poetry" is adequate in a Buddhist context. What exactly is symbolized? Equally, it is not at all clear which Buddhism—being a complex historical phenomenon with a range of philosophical traditions—Ramirez-Christensen is referring to, as in several places the terms Zen, Mahāyāna, Shingon, Tendai, and Buddhism seem to be used rather interchangeably (e.g., the discussion of *dhāraṇī* in the "Illumination of Zen" chapter). The same goes for the prolonged discussion of aesthetic concepts which ends with *yojō*, *y gen*, *en*, *shina*, *yū*, and even *michi* being synonyms for "aware." While the reader certainly is able to grasp the author's intention, one might wish for more conceptual rigorousness and detailed analysis. Also, at least a courteous nod to standard monographs would have been appreciated. A discussion of *Shinkokinshū* aesthetics and *hieyase* seems incomplete without bibliographical reference to David Pollack's *Fracture of Meaning* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986). Similarly, the Buddhist background and resulting religious nature of Shinkei's *renga* poetics were already observed in Naumann's *Shinkei*.

Nonetheless, *Emptiness and Temporality* brings to the table novel and fascinating interpretations of some well-known and many hitherto obscure passages from Japanese poetic and critical literature; a genuine interest in a philosophically inspired dialogue between East and West, past and present; and an outspoken political agenda that goes with a high level of reflection. It makes for a gripping and thought-provoking read for the philosophically interested and critically minded.

***Yongming Yanshou's Conception of Chan in the Zongjing lu.* By Albert Welter. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. 381 pages. Hardcover, \$74.00.**

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Albert Welter's analysis of Yongming Yanshou's (904–975) conception of Chan comes after many years of studying Yanshou and his ongoing interest in the development of Chan Buddhism during the Five Dynasties and early Song periods. Throughout, Welter details Yanshou's multifaceted writings on Chan, and his book is useful for rethinking the role of Buddhism during important developmental periods. He concludes that Buddhism's role in the Song and Ming, especially in regards to literati culture and Confucian learning, needs to be reexamined. Through his analysis of the diversity of perspectives among literati monks, Welter shows that Buddhism should not be reduced simply to the Linji faction of Chan that was a leading branch of Chan during the Song. Yanshou's Chan in the *Zongjing lu* (宗镜录, Records of the Source-Mirror, compiled in 961) leads to a broader analysis of Chan development, and Welter concludes there is much scholarship that needs to occur to further this investigation on Yanshou and Chan.

In the earliest known biography of Yanshou, he is characterized as a “promoter of blessings,” placing him outside sectarian divisions and casting him as a Chan master, a Pure Land practitioner, and an advocate for bodhisattva practice. In Welter's first chapter, he evaluates these multiple identities, using hagiographic data to evaluate each distinction given to Yanshou. Welter points out that the multiple images show how Yanshou did not fit easily into Song sectarian categories; however, because his image remained controversial in Song Buddhist circles, one can conclude his presence was important. The way Yanshou was portrayed by different Buddhist circles was not always in line with his own thought and practice. How his identity was negotiated indicates his place within multiple circles, as well as how different groups understood notions of what Chan/Zen were.

These representations were problematic to a rather divided Song Buddhism, and to overcome this, later Chan advocates took Yanshou on as their own, claiming him as a master. The Song-dynasty Chan monk Daoyuan (道原, n.d.) claimed that Yanshou was a member of

the Chan school. In the *Jingde Chuandeng lu* (景德传灯录, Record of the Transmission of the Lamp, compiled in 1004 by Daoyuan) Yanshou is incorporated into the Fayan lineage and presented as a Chan master. Welter notes the ironies of this inclusion, as Yanshou heavily influenced Chan circles while sparsely mentioning prominent Chan figures in his texts. Welter concludes that for Yanshou, Chan was a part of the broader Buddhist scholastic tradition. Yanshou's work rejected sectarianism, favoring unity among Buddhist teachings. Welter further argues that Yanshou's inclusion of *zong* (正宗) in his *Zongjing lu* was an additional counter to sectarianism. *Zong* is a rather problematic term because it can refer to a doctrinal interpretation from a text or school, but it can also suggest essential truth that unites Buddhist teaching as a whole. Yanshou's understanding of *zong* and Chan were based on the second interpretation of *zong*, and he used the term to advocate correct, implicit truth beyond sectarian divisions.

Yanshou's biography in the *Chanlin sengbao zhuan* (禅林僧宝传, Biographies of Monks of the Chan School, 1123) portrayed a new image of Yanshou, one as a Pure Land practitioner, an influential view that continues to the present. Two aspects of Yanshou made him an attractive Pure Land practitioner: his propensity for *Lotus Sutra* recitation and his potential for helping the Song Pure Land movement in its establishment of a Pure Land patriarchy. As a representative of Pure Land, in the *Longshu jingtu wen* (龙舒净土文, a Pure Land miscellany composed by Wang Rixiu around 1160) it is asserted that Yanshou had a vision of Guanyin—a major figure in the Pure Land cult. It additionally provides episodes of people receiving blessings after worshipping Yanshou's *stūpa*. Both gave rationale for Yanshou's elevated status in the Pure Land cult, and with this high status, Yanshou's identity transformed into an object of admiration and a receiver of supplications.

Welter adds a new identity, Yanshou as a representative of bodhisattva practice. This new identity is not intended to further complicate Yanshou's biography; rather, it is meant to conceptualize Yanshou without the limitations of sectarian hagiography. Welter views Yanshou's *Shou pusa jiefa* (受菩萨戒法, On the Induction into the Bodhisattva Precepts) as evidence of the priority of bodhisattva practice in Yanshou's thought. Welter's rethinking of Yanshou as a proponent of bodhisattva practice is a useful strategy for identifying him, as it enables one to link Yanshou to Chan lineage, while accounting for his image as a Pure Land practitioner. Welter concludes that the

bodhisattva precepts frame Yanshou's understanding of Chan, cast as the means for rebirth in the upper ranks of the Pure Land.

In chapter 2, Welter looks closer at Yanshou's use of *zong*—the term indicating implicit truth that underlies all Buddhist teachings. *Zong* temples were officially designated Chan establishments with *jiao* (教, teaching) temples designating Tiantai ones. Thus, in Yanshou's references, *zong* is referred to as implicit truth while signifying the means of organizing doctrinal Buddhist groups in the Song. In addition to this, the Buddhist scholastic tradition understood *zong* as reference to specific doctrine, interpretation of doctrine, theme/meaning/teaching of a text, or a religious/philosophical school. These different interpretations of *zong* occurred during the Song, but Yanshou largely drew from the abstract and theoretical meanings. In translating *zong* as implicit truth, Yanshou harmonized Chan teachings and the scholastic Buddhist tradition, indicating that ultimate meaning comes from implicit truth that is beyond sectarian divides. Yanshou theorized that *zong* unites doctrines and resolves differences because implicit truth is not confined to a specific sect. Instead, Yanshou borrowed from multiple sources, and his work included scholastic Buddhism, Huayan, and Tiantai. In analyzing Yanshou's method for marking Chan in the *Zongjing lu*, Welter concludes that Yanshou used Chan sources in conjunction with a vast group of Buddhist writings. Yanshou's method went beyond sectarian divisions of the time, as well as uses of *zong* as identifier of Chan establishments. Yanshou instead took the term *zong* as representative of correct, implicit truth, to contend truth is beyond factions. Welter argues Yanshou's writing about *zong* in the *Zongjing lu* was meant to serve as a literary expedient, leading people to correct truth beyond sectarian divisions of the time.

Chapter 3 investigates how Yanshou's program to unify sects through the understanding of *zong* as implicit truth affected his representation of Chan in the *Zongjing lu*. Welter discusses how Yanshou established that one's mind, and not one's sect, leads to implicit truth—*zong*. For Yanshou, truth is a pretext for highlighting the teachings of patriarchs and buddhas, and he argued that the doctrine of mind-as-truth can be found in teachings from Śākyamuni to Bodhidharma. He did so to contend that teachings from the Buddha, Buddhist scriptures, and doctrinal schools are harmonious with teachings of Bodhidharma and Chan lineage. Yanshou asserted that buddhas and patriarchs established the message of *zong*, while sages and worthies established its

essence. Welter finds this contention surprising because Yanshou thus prioritized sages and worthies over buddhas and patriarchs; however, the sages and worthies Yanshou pointed to in the *Zongjing lu* were from diverse sects, including Huayan, Tiantai, and Chan. Welter uses this as a further example of Yanshou's point of view that Chan was connected to, and not separate from, the larger Buddhist tradition. *Zong* was the unifying factor for Yanshou of different sects, and Welter claims this distinguished Yanshou from rival Hongzhou and Linji groups.

In chapter 4, Welter provides an analysis of Chan sources and patriarchs from the *Zongjing lu*; this is important new scholarship. Little work has been done on how Yanshou incorporated Chan patriarchs and their writings into his conception of Chan, and because it is part of the understanding of Chan movements in the Five Dynasties and early Song periods, it should not be overlooked. Yanshou included 170 Chan masters and texts in the *Zongjing lu*, including fragments of Chan masters' teachings. Despite this inclusion, the *Zongjing lu* has only been studied as a supplement to proper Chan because it was seen in competition with the Linji faction. Welter's analysis in this chapter seeks to establish the *Zongjing lu* as one of the earliest and best resources for understanding Chan during an important developmental stage. In addition to aiding scholarship in rethinking Chan developments during the Five Dynasties and early Song, Welter provides a very useful chart of the development of Chan from Bodhidharma through the disciples of Huineng, as explicated by Yanshou in fascicles 97 and 98 of the *Zongjing lu*. Welter's tabling of the *Zongjing lu* Chan masters takes into account the fragments and texts attributed to Chan masters. Additionally, his detailing points to the broadness of the *Zongjing lu*, indicating how Yanshou's Chan incorporated numerous sources. Indeed, Yanshou's references and citations to non-Chan works were more plentiful. What is surmised from detailing these fascicles is that while Yanshou endorsed Chan's connections to other sects, he did not defy orthodox factional identities. Instead, Yanshou's conception of Chan in the *Zongjing lu* includes Chinese lineage masters.

In chapter 5, Welter analyzes the Chan lineage masters' fragments of teachings in the *Zongjing lu*, and he does so in comparison with Yanshou's contemporaries. Fascicles 1, 97, and 98 are the primary locations for his analysis, and his examinations are vital for understanding Yanshou's conception of Chan. Issues Welter contends with in this chapter include: fragments of texts compared to similar texts of

Yanshou's contemporaries; alternate fragments exposing differences with other sources; fragments unique to the *Zongjing lu* depiction of Mazu Daoyi and the Hongzhou faction; fragments attributed to more than one master; and non-Chan masters included in Chan lineage.

Chapter 5 also indicates how Yanshou used *zong* for a double purpose—as implicit truth and lineage. Yanshou's task was to reexamine the function of words and letters to demonstrate their effectiveness. Part of this meant including non-Chan lineage masters, once again placing Chan within the broader scope of Buddhism. Additionally, expanding knowledge meant including fragments from masters who were otherwise unknown and undocumented. Yanshou's primary message, therefore, went beyond doctrinal teachings because, for him, Chan principles were incomplete. To really investigate Buddhism one should read extensively from Buddhist scriptures because it is through scriptural and doctrinal exegesis that truth is revealed. Yanshou's inclusion of non-Chan lineage masters warrants a separate investigation to show the parameters under which Chan and non-Chan masters can be incorporated. This is beyond the space of Welter's work. However, he suggests that the inclusion of Tiantai would be an interesting starting point because the notion of lineage connects the two schools, and many Chinese Buddhists considered Chan and Tiantai as under the same meditation movement.

In chapter 6, Welter ultimately shows the need to reevaluate the role of Buddhism in particular time periods. He contends that scholars have focused on Buddhism during the Tang and Confucianism during the Song, and he wants to get into the subject of Buddhist and Neo-Confucian interactions to expand the understanding of the post-Tang intellectual terrain. While he is influenced by ARAKI Kengo's work, Welter also contends there are missing Buddhists not included in the Linji faction, including Confucian monks and doctrinal Buddhists. Yanshou was a leader in the latter group, and together, the two groups form what Welter labels the Buddhist School of Principle. Yanshou's work is important for this group, extending great influence during the Song. After introducing this new group, Welter explores the implications of proposing a new Buddhist group and suggests two categories—Foxue (佛学, Study of Buddhism) and Chanxue (禅学, Chan Studies)—are useful for recognizing Buddhism as a significant component of the Song literati intellectual terrain. Both imply literati monks participated in debates to validate their own traditions, but Welter points to the

diversity of perspectives among literati monks, going against assumptions that there was a uniform Buddhist position. Groups included in this diversity of the *wen* (文, literary) movement included: those who linked the *wen* revival in the Song to the *wen* of antiquity; more moderate literary figures who combined moralism with literary and cultural interests; Buddhists with interests in *guwen* (古文, neo-classical literature), sometimes called Confucian monks; Buddhists who maintained a traditional approach to Buddhist teaching while on good terms with secular literati; secular literati with contrasting positions to *guwen* principles; and the Linji faction of Chan monks. This typology allows for a greater array of approaches in dealing with Buddhist-Confucian relations.

Welter's work is an important contribution to studies of Chan, the Song, and Buddhism's role during important developmental periods in China. The work is limited in some senses, with chapter 3 remaining unable to delve too deeply into Yanshou's broad influences. This limitation is recognized by Welter and is small in comparison to the primary focus of the work that restores Yanshou's Chan status. Finally, the book concludes with a translation of fascicle 1 of the *Zongjing lu*. This is another important inclusion to scholarship on Yanshou. It is the first translation into a Western language, and the first annotated translation into any language. The text represents Yanshou's notion of *zong* as implicit truth, and Welter's translation of it benefits scholarship on Yanshou and traditions that trace themselves through him.

***Virtual Orientalism: Asian Religions and American Popular Culture.* By Jane Naomi Iwamura. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. 214 pages. Paperback, \$24.95.**

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Jane Naomi Iwamura's *Virtual Orientalism: Asian Religions and American Popular Culture* is a concise yet captivating analysis that demonstrates how mass media perpetuates Orientalist stereotypes. Iwamura posits that constructed representations of Asian religions are hyperreal to the American public. The increasing visual consumption of media reifies these stereotypes in a virtual world within the mind of the consumer.

Consequently, the Orientalist stereotypes in the virtual world become more real than one's actual experiences. The book contains three detailed but accessible case studies to illustrate her claims, which should be helpful for undergraduate classes.

The American stereotype of the "Oriental Monk" is central to Iwamura's argument. She traces its genealogy in the book's introduction. Iwamura asserts that more affable Orientalist stereotypes were developed after the conclusion of the Second World War in contrast to earlier devious representations of Asians such as Fu Manchu and Dragon Ladies. Charlie Chan was the most successful predecessor of the Oriental Monk. Iwamura points out that both Chan and the Oriental Monk relied on a mysterious base of wisdom unavailable to the Western mind. However, unlike Fu Manchu, the Oriental wisdom is not recognized as a threat to the West because it originates from a subservient, effeminate source. Thus, Iwamura warns against viewing these more positive Asian representations as progress as they often harbor latent Orientalist prejudice as well.

Attached to the Oriental Monk is what Iwamura labels "the bridge figure," a representation of the dominant Western culture, most often as a male orphan. Alone and out of touch in his own culture, the bridge figure finds solace in the alterity of the Oriental Monk and his teachings. The mystical wisdom of the East is transmitted to the West through this relationship, saving the latter from the perils of modernization. Despite this criticism of Western social norms, Iwamura writes that the Oriental Monk still "operates as an imaginative construction, circulating widely and subjectively reinforcing this new system of Western dominance" (p. 21).

Although the book examines Asian religions in general, it offers a great deal to Buddhist studies scholars. This is most evident in the second chapter in which Iwamura focuses on D.T. Suzuki and his legacy within American Buddhism. Instead of concentrating on his works, Iwamura demonstrates how Suzuki's image and style came to embody Zen Buddhism. American media was fascinated by the "enigmatic" Suzuki, mostly because he matched Western attitudes of how Oriental Monks were supposed to look and act. Fashion magazines such as *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue* created a certain style for Suzuki that legitimated him in the eyes of American elites and the counterculture Beats as well. Zen as style or fashion "became something to 'try on' and 'entertain' rather than something that directly challenged American

values” (p. 36). Iwamura indicates that Zen’s popularity in the United States was viable due to the neutralization of the Japanese threat after World War II combined with the freedom of American intellectual openness to (appropriate) foreign cultures that separated democracy from its ideological communist opponent.

Iwamura then turns her attention to the media battle over the true successor to Suzuki as inheritor of Zen in the United States. Zen represented an outlet from mainstream American culture that appealed to both elites and hipsters; this divide was soon labeled as Square Zen and Beat Zen, respectively. Iwamura uses the writings of Jack Kerouac—*The Dharma Bums* in particular—as a lens to interpret Beat Zen that was distinguished through spontaneity and nonexclusivity. Simply stated, Zen wisdom could be found anywhere, in anyone, at any time. Iwamura notes that Suzuki was critical of the Beat approach to Zen, yet the popularity of Kerouac’s writings continue to introduce Americans to D.T. Suzuki and Beat Zen. In contrast, Alan Watts eventually came to represent Square Zen despite his early attempts to place himself between the two Zen styles. The media depicted Watts as a more legitimate successor to Suzuki because of his religious vocation as an Episcopal priest and his scholarly approach to the tradition. The transmission of Japanese Zen was complete in Watts in that his appearance was wholly Western, yet he could understand the previously inaccessible details of Zen. Moreover, Watts could lucidly translate these Eastern teachings for Westerners willing to learn. As a result, Japanese Zen was often described as stale and stagnant in contrast to the new sophisticated American version. This attitude expands outside Zen to categorize the American “imperialist nostalgia” directed toward Asia, and Japan in particular, at that time.

In the third chapter, Iwamura presents a case study of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in the role of the Oriental Monk. The Maharishi led the Transcendental Meditation (TM) movement that rose to popularity during the 1960s thanks in large part to its powerful celebrity following.¹ Whereas media portrayals of D.T. Suzuki were often flattering—if not reverent—depictions of the Maharishi were much more ambivalent. Using a variety of magazine articles about the Maharishi, Iwamura deftly unfolds the reasons for their equivocation regarding Mahesh. Although some of the suspicion arose from political concerns—Iwamura notes India’s non-allegiance with communist and democratic states alike during the Cold War—the central concern

of the media was that the Maharishi did not always act according to Western notions of Eastern spiritual gurus. Mahesh was comfortably adept in the West, and this was often the root of the skepticism in the articles. Therefore, when Mahesh stepped outside these prescribed boundaries of behavior for an Oriental Monk, the authors were quick to question his spiritual authority (p. 78). Additionally, photos from the magazine articles capture the Maharishi enjoying his newfound celebrity—thanks to followers like Mia Farrow and The Beatles—and acting suspiciously Western—negotiating over the phone and riding in helicopters. In other words, there was a pervasive belief that there were certain (Western materialist) things of which a “real” Oriental Monk should have no interest, and yet the Maharishi enjoyed them. “All in all, the majority of American reviewers seemed most troubled not necessarily by *what* Mahesh had to say (most of which perplexed commentators), but rather by *how* he achieved popular recognition, namely, through the authorial framework of celebrity” (p. 102, emphasis in original). The legitimacy of an Oriental Monk figure—to be labeled as “real”—is inextricably linked to how well one fits within that Orientalist representation. Iwamura briefly discusses Deepak Chopra to demonstrate how this is as true today as it was four decades ago.

In her last case study Iwamura focuses on the 1970s television show, *Kung Fu* starring David Carradine as Kwai Chang Caine. This is the standout chapter of the book due to Iwamura’s skillful integration of issues regarding class, race, gender, and sexuality into the framework of the Oriental Monk. Caine provides Iwamura with her clearest example of hyperrealism. Despite being a fictional character from a TV show, Caine (and other fictional or fabricated representations of Oriental Monks) collapses the distinction between fiction and reality, “supplementing, if not supplanting, more historical models” (p. 112). That claim is bolstered by the fact that David Carradine was never able to separate himself from the “mark of Caine,” and eventually succumbed to his new “reality” by learning martial arts and spearheading various *Kung Fu* sequels.

Iwamura convincingly argues that *Kung Fu* mediated the significant divide between the burgeoning values of young Americans of the 1970s with the ideals of their older family members. *Kung Fu*, therefore, played to both sides of the divide. It held on to the traditional elements of the Western genre that was popular to the older generation while the protagonist embodied the more progressive ideals of the younger

generation. Iwamura adds that the common themes of human reconciliation and spiritual justice provided the audience a weekly release from the social turbulence of the time. However, whatever racial-ethnic progress is evident in *Kung Fu* is severely undercut by the continued Orientalist representations and implications prominent during the show's run. Although the show highlights minorities as victims of social injustice and racial oppression, it represents these issues as individual issues, never pointing to the systemic issues that condone and perpetuate the oppression. *Kung Fu* preaches a message of pacifism in response to individual injustice in hopes that "the hearts of individuals will automatically lead to a changing society" (p. 135). Yet, instead of understanding the problems of the minority supporting characters, the audience most often identified with Kwai Chang Caine. The biracial protagonist provides the dominant majority white audience a "bridge" to access the foreign, Oriental worldview. Furthermore, it allows Caine the initiative—a right reserved for white males—to take action when necessary. "This authority to judge both the oppressor and the oppressed and to morally engage in justifiable violence becomes the hallmark of the character as ego ideal. Through a Virtual Orientalist frame, Caine not only mirrors the audience's desire for such authority but also confers and reestablishes their claim to such" (p. 143). Before concluding the chapter, Iwamura engages in a brief but fascinating discussion of how *Kung Fu* reflected the United States' renewed fascination with China—the show began in the same year as Nixon's 1972 visit to China. Ultimately, *Kung Fu* maintains American dominance through the pacifism and futility of its wholly Chinese characters.

In the conclusion, Iwamura notes how cultural amnesia allows for the continual immersion in virtual Orientalism of older and younger generations alike. Consumers are often blind to the same arcs and stereotypes—making them substitutable, one Asian stereotype for another—because they address the needs and desires of the dominant majority audience. In an increasingly media-obsessed society countless movies, shows, video games, and cartoons continue to perpetuate Orientalist paradigms. This is especially true of products intended for the youngest audiences. Outrageously popular franchises like *Avatar: The Last Airbender* and *Kung Fu Panda* initiate today's youth into the normative doctrines of American exceptionalism and rugged individualism. Like *Kung Fu*, these new franchises straddle generational gaps while ultimately maintaining patriarchal authority.

Iwamura ends the book with a short case study that holds special interest to Buddhist scholars—the Dalai Lama. The case study is a particularly effective way to conclude the book because the Dalai Lama matches all the elements from the book’s previous case studies. Like Suzuki, the persona and style of the Dalai Lama have come to embody “Buddhism” for many Westerners. This is obvious in that the Dalai Lama has become the template for graphic representations of the Oriental Monk. Furthermore, the Dalai Lama’s numerous celebrity endorsements aid his spiritual and political causes. However, Iwamura stops just short from attributing to the Dalai Lama the same ramifications that resulted from the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi’s celebrity entourage. While this is surely an attempt to sidestep controversy, her silence on this matter seems telling. Similar to *Kung Fu*, the story of the exiled Dalai Lama—newly adopted by the West—is retold through several films where the pacifist Oriental Monk patiently waits for the powerful West to step in and help him seek justice for his oppressed culture. Iwamura saves the most powerful critique of the Dalai Lama as Oriental Monk for last. Through the support of the Dalai Lama and his mission, America reveals its desire to atone for the copious wrongs committed throughout its past and present. Yet, even in this exchange, America takes the upper hand by exerting its hegemonic influence over the oppressed Tibetan culture.

The case study of the Dalai Lama as Oriental Monk is so powerful and devastating that it is surprising that Iwamura chose to tack it on to the end of her conclusion rather than dedicate an entire chapter to it. One can only assume that Iwamura presented this cliffhanger so that she could return to it in the near future. On the other hand, perhaps there was concern that a thorough analysis of the Dalai Lama as an Asian stereotype might be too controversial. These same questions detract from her brief survey of Deepak Chopra. Iwamura goes so far as to posit that Chopra mixes the stereotype of the Oriental Monk with the “American model minority myth,” yet chooses not to provide any detail on the suggestion (p. 110). Undoubtedly, there is still plenty of water in the well of *Virtual Orientalism* should Iwamura choose to return.

Virtual Orientalism is a very strong book that lucidly displays how Orientalism is still thriving three decades removed from Edward Said’s revolutionary work. Although only one of the three case studies is directly focused on Buddhism, the conclusions drawn throughout

the book apply to Buddhist studies. Scholars of American Buddhism should find the chapter on D.T. Suzuki particularly interesting. Not only does Iwamura chronicle the early days of American fascination with Zen Buddhism, she unveils a new way of analyzing American Buddhism through a concept like fashion. Using fashion as a tool to study American Zen seems especially relevant in a time when “Zen” is invoked to describe everything from baby accessories to cellphone games. Additionally, she uncovers new frontiers for research, such as her use of media to illustrate the differences between Beat Zen and Square Zen that could be juxtaposed to the contention between the Rinzai and Sōtō sects. *Virtual Orientalism* provides both new methods and content for future research in Buddhist studies.

That Americans are consuming virtual representations of Buddhism and Buddhist figures should be both intriguing and frightening to Buddhist studies scholars. These increasingly popular stereotypes push students into our classes, yet they come stuffed with hyperreal notions of Buddhism gleaned from video games, movies, and TV shows. *Virtual Orientalism* exposes the perpetuation of these stereotypes through Iwamura’s compelling analysis that should be accessible material for undergraduates. Moreover, it gives scholars a glimpse at how media is a dynamic tool for future research, and a mandate to constantly reevaluate how we engage our students in class.

NOTES

1. A recent new wave of celebrities such as Oprah Winfrey and Russell Brand have been outspoken about the benefits of Transcendental Meditation.