

Michael North. *Artistic and Cultural Exchanges Between Europe and Asia 1400-1900*. Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2010. xv+197 pp. + 35 illus. \$114.95. Review by NAGENDRA RAO, GOA UNIVERSITY.

Cultural interactions between Europe and Asia existed since the ancient times, but it is only in the Middle Ages that European intellectuals and travelers noted, with considerable interest, the Asian art and culture, which resulted in close interaction between two cultures. Traditionally, European scholars had hegemonic attitude towards Asia, wherein Asia was considered as less civilized when compared with European civilization, but recent studies have highlighted need for a different approach towards Asia. Consequently, the European discourse uses the concept “cultural exchange,” which assumes equality between two cultural zones, wherein Asia is not considered as periphery that accepted dominant European ideas.

In the pre-modern period, political, economic, social relationships prevailed between the two regions. European traders maintained trade relationship with Asia, primarily to satisfy demands of European population for both essential commodities and exotic goods. Trade in luxury goods might imply role of elite communities, but one cannot deny huge European demographic base that demanded supply of essential commodities including spices and textiles. In actuality, the Europeans came to Asia as traders, but became interested in Asian art, literature, and religion.

A notable feature of this opus is that it has understood need for replacement of Euro-centrism by the theory of cultural exchange or cultural assimilation, thereby indicating considerable progress in this area of study. One can comprehend reasons for hegemonic perception concerning Asia, as the European powers such as England and France considered and ruled Asian regions as colony. The colonial mindset, nevertheless, is replaced by egalitarian approach. One cannot deny that fact that in pre-modern period, European scholars had accumulated considerable information and material from Asian countries. Large numbers of illustrations in the book exhibits this phenomenon. Apart from Europeans, the Asians were also interested in European culture and scientific advancements. This implies emergence of reciprocal relationship between two zones. The work, however, considers Asia

as a homogenous cultural territory, despite subtle and definite differences between countries such as India and China, even though there are distinct sections that deal with these regions. The work has not differentiated between colonial and non-colonial Asian territories. One is curious know differences between English and Danish experiences with reference to Asia. However, these experiences are indirectly represented in this work.

Another notable aspect of this work is that it covers most of Asian and European regions, both colonial and non-colonial powers. In this sense, one can suggest that this work is not influenced by European hegemonic discourse. The chapters deal with various topics such as: Asian objects and European court culture, Asia as a fantasy of France, European society in colonial India, Mughal architectural elements in European memorials, the role of European companies, the Netherlands experience in Japan, and assimilation between Japan and the west.

It is curious to note that like in the modern period, global exchanges affected culture of different countries of the world. Import and export of commodities had an impact on domestic production and consumption pattern. In the pre-modern period, in the absence of colonialism, European and Asian countries could compete with each other. One notes domination of Asian traders in global trade that compelled England to ban import of printed Indian textiles. This decision encouraged domestic artisans to produce local variety of printed textiles. Indian cotton export to England had positive impact on domestic fashion industry (3). The English artisans assimilated Indian culture by modifying cotton textile designs, which were exported to India. The Chinese and Japanese porcelain had become popular in Europe. At the same time, Japan and China imitated European cookware, and this implies modification and re-creation of products to cater to the needs of large numbers of European consumers.

European and Asian rulers and the elite class played an important role in accumulation of products of other cultures. The European kings, traders, and other nobles accumulated Asian goods such as coconut goblets and Nautilus vessels. The European diplomats, missionaries, and traders acted as medium of cultural exchange, wherein there was exchange of goods and ideas. The Asian rulers and elite

communities did not lag behind in accumulating European 'exotic' goods. As Asian commodities became fashionable in Europe, European commodities became prestige goods in Asia. The medieval kingdom Vijayanagara of South India was known for gem production and exchange (21). Thousands of gems were exported from India to Europe, as there was demand for luxury commodities in the European market, even though it is not possible to locate these gems today due to their modifications over a period of time. European countries looked to East with a view to establish and reassure their own identity. In the case of France, for example, Japanese exotic goods were eulogized, thereby enhancing status of France in the world of nations.

The coming of the Portuguese to Asia was an important development that contributed to enhanced exchange of luxury goods. Asians obtained knowledge concerning European technology while Europeans imported Asian goods, as proved in the case of Bezoar stones that were collected from different Asian animals. Cultural exchanges between Europe and Asia can be divided into two categories. One was the pre-colonial period when Europeans in Asia needed to obtain legitimacy from the local population. During this period, the Europeans, in Bengal for example, constructed buildings based on Asian architectural styles. In the second phase—the colonial period—there was a process of Anglicization wherein buildings were constructed use styles from English architecture, a process that continues in modern times, which represents an exchange of cultural symbols between Europe and Asia.

An important feature of this work is that it has done justice to the topic, as it has covered different cultural zones and located them in time and space. The work has questioned hegemonic perspective, which implied domination of one culture by another. The work has used the appropriate term cultural exchange, which implies reciprocal relationship between the Orient and the Occident. In this way, the work has challenged notions pertaining to Oriental Despotism or Asiatic Mode of Production. The work is useful in offering new perspectives in cultural studies.

Joanne Rochester. *Staging Spectatorship in the Plays of Philip Massinger*. Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2010. 166 pp. + 3 figures. \$99.95. Review by NANCY MOHRLOCK BUNKER, MACON STATE COLLEGE.

Joanne Rochester's important study addresses staged spectatorship in plays by Caroline playwright Philip Massinger. Each chapter presents a different form of metatheatrical inset: plays-within of *The Roman Actor* (1626), masques-within of *The City Madam* (1632), and the miniature portrait of *The Picture* (1629). The conclusion interprets paradramatic and trial scenes. Rochester argues that Massinger's onstage spectators typically "misread, overinterpret or otherwise misconstrue the metadramatic insets they watch, and their responses to these interpretations structure the plots of his plays" (1). She explores the vitality of insets in the Introduction, and assertively points out the presentation and representation of spectatorship as commentary on Early Modern audiences.

A key issue in the text is Massinger's status as a "transitional figure" with a career spanning the reign of two monarchs, three theatrical venues, and ever-changing audiences (3). As head playwright for the King's Men 1625-1642, both plays and their insets demonstrate staged spectator response as fundamental to the plot. Because Massinger foregrounds ethical issues, audiences both on and off stage must be aware of theatre's capacity to create moral judgments. In this way, Rochester argues, the playwright's dramaturgy is "exploration and analysis" (10).

Chapter 1 focuses upon *The Roman Actor* (1626), Massinger's most complex examination of theatrical process and interrelation of staging and spectatorship. Rochester reads the play through the lens of how theatre works, using the series of plays-within to instruct staged spectators toward judgment. Her seminal commentary deals with the tribulations of Paris, who "gets ambiguous admiration awarded to an actor, who cuckolds an emperor, and he gets it because of *what he cannot help*—the interpretations spectators put on what they see" (41). His destiny controlled by an onstage audience even as the theatre's real audience also is a fictional audience. For Rochester, Massinger's inset points out the critical responsibility imposed upon audiences who view public performances; they must look beneath the surface to