

Da

Intransitive Encounter

Sino-U.S. Literatures and the Limits of Exchange

All sorts of literary encounters and exchanges took place between China and the United States in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, involving an unlikely array of figures including canonical Americans such as Washington Irving, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow; Chinese writers Qiu Jin and Dong Xun; and Asian-American writers like Yung Wing and Edith Eaton. Yet present-day interpretations of these interactions often read too much into their significance or mistake their nature—missing their particularities or limits in the quest to find evidence of cosmopolitanism or transnational hybridity. In *Intransitive Encounter*, Nan Z. Da offers an in-depth study of nineteenth-century Sino-U.S. literary and textual interactions that highlights their lack of transpacific interpollination, synthesis, and convergence. She contends that these were exchanges in which nothing substantial was exchanged, at least not in ways that could easily be tracked. Da re-creates a nineteenth-century transpacific world through original readings spanning American poetry, fiction, and transcendental ethics to late Qing political thought, Asian American allegories of reading, and Chinese social theories of the book. She proposes that these glancing encounters point toward a different path for Sino-U.S. relations—not a geopolitical showdown or a celebration of hybridity but self-contained cross-cultural encounters whose participants do not have to confess to the fact of their having taken place. *Intransitive Encounter* is an unconventional and theoretically rich reflection on how we ought to interpret global interactions and imaginings that do not fit the patterns proclaimed by contemporary postcolonial and literary studies.

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