

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

**Chinese Shakespeares: An Intercultural Study of
Adaptations across Performance Genres**

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by

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Abstract

My dissertation uses the proliferation of contemporary adaptations and performances of Shakespeare in Mainland China from the 1980s to the present as an example to demonstrate the complicated language, historical, cultural, and socio-political interactions between the Chinese and the Anglophone world during the last three decades. It is an inquiry of the (re)presentation, (re)construction, and perception of Shakespeare in contemporary China, in a period of dramatic local, social and economic changes, *vis-à-vis* the increasingly powerful impact of the global consumption of literary, cultural artefacts. Focusing on the interactions that take place among Shakespearean text and performance and Chinese culture, the dissertation addresses the following issues: Why should Shakespeare be associated with China? To what extent can Chinese interpretations of Shakespeare tell us about social changes in China? How has Shakespeare affected Chinese theatre and Chinese culture? How can Chinese Shakespeares contribute to the general interpretive possibilities of Shakespeare and to the global awareness of foreign Shakespeares?

Theorizations of theatrical interculturalism began in the 1970s, but until now, there has not emerged a unanimously agreed theory to explain intercultural theatre. My dissertation deploys cross-disciplinary approaches of translation studies, performance theories, cultural studies, comparative literature and the sociological theory of locality criticism to examine the mechanisms of adapting Shakespeare into Chinese theatrical forms and offers a thick account of the producing, promoting and perceiving of Shakespeare in today's China. My analysis focuses on shifting localities that cluster around the artists, their works, and their audiences. The first chapter reviews the complexity of encounter between Shakespeare and China, laying the ground for my premise that Chinese performances of Shakespeare are invariably informed by ideological, political or cultural norms and constraints of Chinese society. Three genres of performances—*huaju* (spoken drama), *xiqu* (Chinese opera) and *dianying* (films)—are singled out in this study to discover key cultural and aesthetic moments of their encounter, influence and reception. Nine stage and screen productions are examined as products of the interculturalism of Chinese Shakespeares. My contention is that these intercultural productions have consciously interweaved Shakespeare and Chinese theatrical forms to resonate with the issues of Chinese society and construct the image of China in the globalised world.

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A Note on Texts and Translation

All references to Shakespeare's plays and line numbers are from *The Norton Shakespeare*, 2nd edition, eds. by Stephen Greenblatt, et al. (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), if not, otherwise noted.

All citations from books, journals, magazines and newspapers published in Chinese and all quotations from Chinese sources are my translation, unless otherwise indicated. I have adopted *pinyin* 拼音, the official romanization of Chinese in the People's Republic of China, as the standard transliteration of Chinese into English. All the significant terms and names from China are rendered in *pinyin*, followed by Chinese characters as they first appear, and translated into phonetic English, as well as shown in the Glossary. Historical or official names are also preserved (for example, Canton and Peking Opera). With regard to the Chinese authors cited in the dissertation, their names are given in the Chinese tradition, that is, family names come before given names.

Introduction: Theorizing Intercultural Adaptations of Shakespeare

Interculturalism, an increasing global phenomenon, has opened up new possibilities for contemporary theatre worldwide. In 1986, the Shanghai Kunju Theatre Company adapted *Macbeth* into a *kunju* opera and performed it at the first Chinese Shakespeare Festival. In October 2012, the Royal Shakespeare Company opened their *World Elsewhere* season with a new adaptation/translation of the thirteenth-century Chinese play *Zhao shi gu'er* 赵氏孤儿 (*The Orphan of Zhao*), written by James Fenton and directed by Gregory Doran.¹ Such intercultural adaptations bridge two different theatre traditions. In both cases, theatrical elements from an otherwise largely unfamiliar culture were incorporated into the native culture via performance and were adapted to its specific needs. However, the two examples constitute only the tip of an iceberg of bigger questions and pervasive cultural practices that have yet to be admitted to the scholarly discourse on Shakespeare and Chinese modernity. Lingering behind these practices is a long history of constantly reconfigured relationships that have connected and disconnected Shakespeare and China.

In the past few decades, the tendency to integrate elements from divergent cultural and theatrical traditions in theatre performance has given rise to a pluralistic

¹*The Orphan of Zhao* (Chinese: 赵氏孤儿; pinyin: *Zhaoshi gu'er*) is a Chinese play from the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368), attributed to the thirteenth-century dramatist Ji Junxiang (纪君祥). The play is classified in the *zaju* genre of dramas. It contains both dialogue and songs. The play tells the story of the sole remaining heir of the house of Zhao, who proceeds to avenge his family by killing the general responsible for the massacre of his entire clan. The story of *The Orphan of Zhao* takes place during the Spring and Autumn period. In the sixth century CE, there was a state called Jin in China. Two powerful ministers, Tu'an Gu and Zhao Dun were politically antagonistic. To seize more power, Tu'an Gu persuaded the stupid King into slaughtering the entire house of the Zhao, but a country doctor called Cheng Ying smuggled out a baby boy, namely, the Orphan of Zhao born to his princess mother. Hearing this, Tu'an Gu commanded that all newborn boys in the state be killed if the Orphan was not found. In order to save the Orphan and other innocent babies, Cheng Ying found the retired minister Gongsun Chujiu, and they decided that Cheng Ying should pass his own son off as the Orphan, and then reported to Tu'an Gu that Gongsun sheltered the Orphan. Deceived that the baby had been killed, the childless Tu'an Gu took Cheng Ying's son, who in fact was the Orphan, as his adopted son. When the Orphan came of age, Cheng Ying told him the truth. By killing Tu'an Gu, the Orphan avenged his family's extermination.

Although playwright James Fenton did not mention the specific sources of his adaptation, from the passages he quotes, one can infer his sources: Yu Shuyan's (1890-1943) and Ma Lianliang's (1906-66) Beijing opera versions, Ji Junxiang's *zaju* version and Xu Yuan's *chuanqi* version, of which Ji Junxiang's version was at the centre.

development of practice, conception, and critical perspective. As Susan Bennett says:

We might start with the fascination of the West in this century with theatre from alien cultures. Both Brecht and Artaud looked to the East for models with which to challenge the hegemony of Western theatrical practice, and the use of ritual in non-Western theatre has had an enormous impact on Western experimental theatre practice. Such ritualistic performances developed outside the boundaries of Western culture nevertheless present an evident attraction for theatre audiences of that culture.²

The interest in Asian theatrical traditions in particular has been instrumental in changing the orientation and complexion of twentieth-century Western theatre. Antonin Artaud's experience and interpretation of Balinese theatre and his seminal conception of 'Oriental Theatre' had significant bearings not only on the formation of Artaud's own theatre aesthetics but also on the ways Western avant-garde theatre (since Artaud) has encountered and used Asian theatres. Chinese and Japanese theatres inspired Vsevolod Meyerhold's efforts to re-theatricalize the theatre and to redefine the course of twentieth-century theatre both in Russia and in the West. Edward Gordon Craig was keenly interested in Asian theatres in the first two decades of the twentieth century while he was waging a battle against Naturalism in European theatre. Bertolt Brecht's experience of Mei Lanfang's performance helped to define and articulate his concept of the *Verfremdungseffekt*—one of the most circulated and influential ideas in twentieth-century world theatre. Of our contemporary practitioners of intercultural theatre, Peter Brook, Ariane Mnouchkine, Eugenio Barba, Richard Schechner, Robert Wilson, and Peter Sellars have made great contributions to the development of twentieth-century international theatre. Brook's production of the Indian epic *Mahabharata* (1988) is not only a milestone in his search for a universal language of theatre, but has also triggered heated debate on the practice and theory of contemporary intercultural theatre. It has been the catalyst for Rustom Bharucha to assert that: 'the practice of interculturalism cannot be separated from the larger history of orientalism in which it has been inscribed'.³ Mnouchkine's postmodern revision of Aeschylus, Shakespeare and

² Susan Bennett, *Theatre audiences, a theory of production and reception* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.101.

³ Rustom Bharucha, 'Somebody's Other: Disorientations in the Cultural Politics of Our Times', in *The Intercultural Performance Reader*, ed. by Patrice Pavis (London: Routledge, 1996), pp.196-212

Molière (1981-present) is a marriage of multinational casts and various Asian-inspired theatre forms. Her Shakespeare cycle of three plays performed over 1981-84—*Richard II*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Henry IV, Parts I and II*—deployed, in a self-conscious manner, Japanese, Indian, Chinese and Indonesian theatre conventions such as frontality of acting, masklike makeup, hand gesture and startling visual metaphors so as to forge an interculturalism that did not attempt a suffusion with the source culture, but rather created presentationalist and formalist underlining of meanings. In his study of and experiments with theatre anthropology, Eugenio Barba, perhaps the most ambitious and dedicated artist in contemporary intercultural theatre, has conducted field studies in a number of Asian countries and has long been engaged in direct experimental collaboration with artists from Bali, China, India, and Japan, leading to his vision of a Eurasian Theatre. The postmodern intercultural experiments by Wilson and Sellars have proven highly innovative and controversial and have opened up new vistas for the development of intercultural theatre in our postmodern age.

In Asia, at the turn of the twentieth century, intellectuals and theatre artists in Japan and China saw merit in using Western realist theatre in the service of building modern nation-states. The concomitant introduction and practice of realism in the East fundamentally transformed the composition of Asian theatrical scenes during the first half of the twentieth century. In more recent decades, however, the rise of major Asian economies has led to a transformation of their geopolitical roles and a resurgence of creativity in Asian theatres—with revived interest in Asian traditional theatrical forms as well as a renewed interest in adapting and appropriating Western theatre, rather than taking it on its own terms. This is especially the case with its experiments with the most iconic world author: William Shakespeare. Since the series of international tours of Shakespearean productions of Suzuki Tadashi and Ninagawa Yukio in the 1980s and 90s, scholarly attention to Shakespeare in Asian languages, or within the framework of Asian theatrical traditions, has developed. The recognition, circulation, and approbation of Asian versions of Shakespeare in the last few decades mark a shift in intellectual property relations. It would, therefore, be true to say that a side benefit of globalisation (which is often only seen in economic terms) has been the expansion in the areas of cultural reckoning: Other Shakespeares

can now cohabit the same urban playing space. Overall, the restaging or rewriting of Western theatres into the gestural, symbolic, stylized or ritualized worlds of Asian languages and theatrical forms reflects the interface in aesthetic, theatrical, cultural and political terms. In this sense, these intercultural performances contribute to the understanding of how widely differing cultures negotiate such encounters and of the implications of this worldwide re-playing for a reassessment of Shakespeare's theatre.

The current surge in scholarly attention in the field of Shakespeare as performance and in the intercultural medium as a channel for such investigation of his works has raised several important questions about Asian Shakespeare and intercultural theatre: What is intercultural Shakespeare? What differentiates intercultural Shakespeare from other Shakespearean adaptations and appropriations? How does the interaction between Shakespeare and varied Asian performance practices, styles and culture inform and affect our understanding of Shakespeare and performed interculturality?

With these questions in mind, my PhD study aims to establish a model for understanding the interactions between diverse adaptation strategies and the performance aesthetics of Chinese Shakespearean performances. It also demonstrates how these interactions suggest the potential for new research directions in the discursive field of intercultural Shakespeare. The Chinese Shakespearean performances discussed in this study suggest Chinese Shakespeare is not only expanding the boundaries of Shakespeare as a cultural field, but also challenging how we think about Shakespeare and modern Shakespearean adaptations. Before the main discourse of this dissertation can begin, it is important to clarify my principal critical perspective and to establish a proper theoretical framework in understanding Chinese Shakespeare as an intercultural phenomenon. Throughout this study, I will utilise a group of theories that are invaluable in tackling certain aspects of the topic. This introduction begins with an exploration of the usage of the term 'interculturalism' among different theorists, aiming to approach a working definition for my study. The second section places some of the current leading theories and models in a critical perspective. The third section is a critique of intercultural Shakespeare studies. The last section explains my theoretical perspectives for investigating Chinese Shakespeare adaptations.

I Defining Interculturalism and Intercultural Performance

Interculturalism is one of the most hotly debated international trends in the late twentieth century. In recent years, theatre companies of widely differing cultures have shared an increasing interest in transplanting elements of foreign theatre traditions into their own productions. However, like Peter Brook's famous adaptation *The Mahabharata*, which has been criticized for simply appropriating Eastern elements, the notion of intercultural performance is uncertain and always provokes controversies. There has been much dispute over some theoretical issues of intercultural theatre, and even the term interculturalism itself is much contested. One only has to refer to Pavis's *The Intercultural Performance Reader* (1996) to appreciate the range of approaches encompassed by the term "interculturalism," and the extent to which it evades any neat definition. The difficulty in defining interculturalism is partly because there is not yet a strongly defined theory of culture that can be commonly applied to divergent cultures and processes of exchange, and that can balance socio-historical and ideological factors with cultural, anthropological ones.⁴ Thus, in approaching a possible definition, we need to clarify one of the key issues in interculturalism: the relationship between theatre and culture.

The Intercultural Performance Reader begins with Pavis's exploration of the meanings of 'culture' and its specific implications related to theatre. Pavis first introduces the idea of 'culture' through the words of Camille Camilleri (1982) as that which is related to the practices and perspectives of a specific community: 'Culture is a kind of shaping, of specific "inflections" [sic] which mark our representations, feelings, activity—in short, and in a general manner, every aspect of our mental life and even our biological organism under the influence of the group'.⁵ Cultural order is 'artificial', is 'art', as opposed to natural order, or nature.⁶ In the words of Geertz (1973), it is:

a system of symbols thanks to which human beings confer a meaning on their own experience. Systems of symbols, created by people, shared, conventional, ordered and obviously learned, furnish them with an

⁴ Patrice Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, trans. by Loren Kruger (London: Routledge, 1992), p.183.

⁵ Camille Camilleri, 'Culture et sociétés: caractères et fonctions', *Les amis de Sèvres*, 4 (1982), p.16; qtd. in *The Intercultural Performance Reader*, ed. by Patrice Pavis (London: Routledge, 1996), p.3.

⁶ Patrice Pavis, ed. *The Intercultural Performance Reader* (London: Routledge, 1996), p.3.

intelligible setting for orienting themselves in relation to others or in relation to a living work and to themselves.⁷

Thus, ‘the body of the actor is [...] penetrated and moulded by “corporeal techniques” (Marcell Mauss) proper to his/her culture and by the codifications of his/her tradition of performing [...] Actors simultaneously reveal the culture(s) of the communities in which they have trained and in which they live, as well as the bodily technique they have acquired, be this rigorously formalized by an established tradition (such as in the Peking Opera, for example) or camouflaged by an ideology of the “natural” (as with the Western Naturalistic actor)’.⁸

If such a definition adequately delineates what is cultural, then what is intercultural and how does it affect our ways of seeing and understanding performance? Apparently, the prefix ‘inter’ seems to promise an equal relationship between cultures, and intercultural theorists attempted to define interculturalism as such. Intercultural theatre, for Pavis, ‘creates hybrid forms drawing upon a more or less conscious and voluntary mixing of performance traditions traceable to distinct cultural areas’ from which it ‘seeks to draw a mutual enrichment’.⁹ He introduces the idea of ‘intercultural’ as what happens, in the case of theatre, when practitioners self-consciously bring together disparate elements from within and without their community, or create an intercultural community, in order to make something new. For example, perhaps an intercultural dramatic text ‘accumulates innumerable sedimentations resulting from various languages and experiences, and re-forms them into a new text’.¹⁰ One of the things that intercultural performance also does, argues Pavis, is ‘expose’ as ‘conventions’ the practices of a community’s habits, even the supposed naturalism of Realism. Thus, the familiar is made unfamiliar and vice versa. My understanding of what Pavis is saying is that it is the amalgamation that takes place, the forms of accretion that must of necessity take place as a theatrical stimulus, which is passed through other languages, cultures and social and theatrical practices, that makes the process and product intercultural, not simply its international ingredients. Intercultural theatre is thus a *procedural* activity, not a *Smörgåsbord* of tasty theatrical delights concocted as a series of smaller theatrical

⁷ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p.130; qtd. in Patrice Pavis, ed. *The Intercultural Performance Reader*, p.2.

⁸ Pavis, *The Intercultural Performance Reader*, p.3.

⁹ Pavis, *The Intercultural Performance Reader*, pp. 8-9.

¹⁰ Pavis, *The Intercultural Performance Reader*, p.3.

products juxtaposed for the benefit of hungry spectators and critics. Pavis argues that a performance simply being put on in an international setting, such as a festival, for example, does not automatically make it an intercultural experience. Therefore, put simply, intercultural theatre is a hybrid derived from an intentional encounter between cultures and performing traditions. It is primarily a Western-based tradition with a lineage in Modernist experimentation through the work of Tairov, Meyerhold, Brecht, Artaud, and Grotowski. More recently, intercultural theatre has been associated with the works of Richard Schechner, Peter Brook, Eugenio Barba, Ariane Mnouchkine, Robert Wilson, Tadashi Suzuki, and Ong Keng Sen. Even when intercultural exchanges take place within the non-West, they are often mediated through Western culture and/or economics. Ong's 'Pan-Asian' spectacles, *LEAR* (1997) and *Desdemona* (1999), are cases in point.¹¹

With the flourish and fruition of intercultural theatre, critics and theorists, as well as practitioners, have advanced models and modes explicating the making and working of this international phenomenon. These theories and models provide critical insights and sophisticated analyses, as well as utopian visions. However, because of the cultural and geographical location of their originators, they are often culturally and geographically centralized. Erika Fischer-Lichte notes that in intercultural theatre such as Brook's 'cosmopolitan theatre', theatrical interculturalism 'is not concerned with specific cultural identities, but is aiming towards the 'universal' [*sic*], the whole human homogeneity beyond the differences determined by one's own culture'.¹² Dennis Kennedy gives a reason why Anglophone critics normally pass over the subject of foreign Shakespeare:

Rather than seeing the use of Shakespeare's texts in foreign languages as a phenomenon separate from their use in English, they have normally chosen to see it as further vindication of the importance of their subject, and by implication, of the superiority of English as the medium for Shakespearean cognition. They have constructed a universal

¹¹ See Jenny De Reuck, "'The mirror shattered into tiny pieces": Reading Gender and Culture in the Japan Foundation Asia Centre's *LEAR*', *Intersections: Online Asian Studies Journal*, 3.6 (2000), <<http://www.sshe.murdoch.edu.au/intersections/issue3/jenny3.html>> [accessed on 12 January 2013]; and Helena Grehan, 'Performed Promiscuities: Interpreting Interculturalism in the Japan Foundation Asia Centre's *LEAR*', *Intersections: Online Asian Studies Journal*, 3.6 (2000), <<http://www.sshe.murdoch.edu.au/intersections/issue3/grehan.html>> [accessed on 12 January 2013].

¹² Erika Fischer-Lichte, 'Staging the Foreign as Cultural Transformation', in *The Dramatic Touch of Difference: Theatre, Own and Foreign*, eds. by Erika Fischer-Lichte, Josephine Riley and Michael Gissenwehler (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1990), pp. 277-87.

Shakespeare based on the value of his original language.¹³

Such universalist presumptions often ignore or downplay the social, historical, cultural, political and ideological factors that are specific to the intercultural theatre of a certain country or region. They also somewhat stunningly display the lack of thought and acknowledgement that modern Western, Anglophone scholars pay to the cultural, linguistic and social Otherness of the early modern period—and the foreignness of Shakespeare's London, or Warwickshire, when compared to their own. Therefore, it is not suitable to take Western-authored intercultural theories literally to explain Shakespeare on the Chinese stage.

Intercultural performance, in my study, refers to the mode of performance/theatre that consciously or intentionally incorporates elements of performance traditions that derive from foreign cultures as an approach to artistic creation. The foreign here indicates sets of cultural entities that differ from one's own in both geographical and temporal terms, and whose traditions and forms are unfamiliar or difficult to decipher by the receiving audience. Foreign elements range from subject matter and textual material, through cultural norms and symbols, to manners of expression or style, and philosophical and ideological discourses. Text, language, performing technique, casting and staging conventions may accordingly be taken out of their original aesthetically contained and unified contexts for inventive exploration.

In tackling the issues of theatrical interculturalism, we therefore not only examine the process of acquisition of foreign materials—historically specific symbols, discourses, and ideology—we also delve into the native context and the production of localised meanings. We also look into the underlying perspective in an intercultural performance in search of a set of ideas that can reflect a notion of culture and assert the value of confronting the culturally foreign. Whether it sees interculturalism as a way to reach reciprocity and understanding among divergent societies,¹⁴ or to transcend cultural differences by producing a hypothetical 'world culture',¹⁵ or to revitalize the native culture by productively receiving the foreign,¹⁶

¹³ Dennis Kennedy, ed. *Foreign Shakespeare: Contemporary Performance* (Cambridge, New York, Victoria: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.2.

¹⁴ cf. Gershon Shaked, 'The Play: Gateway to Cultural Dialogue', trans. Jeffrey Green, in *The Play Out of Context: Transferring Plays from Culture to Culture*, eds. by H. Scolnicov and P. Holland (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 7-24.

¹⁵ cf. Erika Fischer-Lichte, 'Interculturalism in Contemporary Theatre', in *The Intercultural*

or, particularly in the case of cultures that have been historically colonized, to confront the dominant colonial culture and to reconstruct one's repressed tradition,¹⁷ or to strategically politicize one's culture to gain self-empowerment,¹⁸ this perspective is determined by the socio-cultural agendas of the artists and spectators involved. In short, theatrical interculturalism is not just a hermeneutic process of transcoding what a symbol means in different cultural contexts and how it is represented. It is also an ideological, political re-positioning, a mode of cultural engagement that involves a conscious selection of foreign cultural symbols and techniques in order to construct a collective new identity for the intended audience.¹⁹

II Theoretical Models of Interculturalism

Interculturalism is an urgent topic for theoretical inquiry in the twenty-first century. As nationalism, which was dominant for much of the twentieth century, gives way to twenty-first century *transnationalism*, hybridity and syncretism have become characteristic of cultural production everywhere. In such a context, it is imperative that the ways in which cultural exchange is performed be critically re-examined. Allow me then briefly to undertake such a re-examination and to survey established theories and models of intercultural theatre, as I also explore new ways of thinking about theatrical flow across and between cultures.

Interculturalism has been widely adopted in interpreting theatrical transfer between two cultures. Marvin Carlson has offered a scale consisting of seven categories of cross-cultural influence based on 'possible relationships between the culturally familiar and the culturally foreign'.²⁰ While useful for differentiating types of projects, this scale does not move beyond an essentially taxonomic analysis of the field. Patrice Pavis came up with the famous 'hourglass model' in the early 1990s to

Performance Reader, ed. by Patrice Pavis (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 27-40.

¹⁶ cf. Erika Fischer-Lichte, 'Staging the Foreign as Cultural Transformation', in *The Dramatic Touch of Difference: Theatre, Own and Foreign*, eds. by Erika Fischer-Lichte, Josephine Riley, Michael Gissenwehler (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1990), pp. 277-287.

¹⁷ cf. Rustom Bharucha, *Theatre and the World: Performance and the Politics of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993)

¹⁸ cf. Diana Taylor, 'Transculturating Transculturation', *Performing Arts Journal*, 13.2 (1991), pp. 90-104.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.91.

²⁰ Marvin Carlson, 'Peter Brook's *The Mahabharata* and Ariane Mnouchkine's *L'Indiade* as Examples of Contemporary Cross-cultural Theatre', in *The Dramatic Touch of Difference: Theatre, Own and Foreign*, eds. by Erika Fischer-Lichte, Michael Gissenwehler, and Josephine Riley (Tübingen: Narr, 1990), pp.49-56 (p.50).

illustrate how ‘source culture’ through social, cultural and artistic mediations decides the output of ‘target culture’ (which is criticized as occident-centric). Indian scholar Rustom Bharucha has thus advocated ‘intracultural’ as an anti-response to intercultural theatre. Jacqueline Leo and Helen Gilbert from Australia emphasize the importance of finding and articulating in the artistic work mutual influences between the two cultures. Erika Fischer-Lichte replaces the commonly acknowledged concept with her own metaphor of material interdependence; she calls it: ‘interweaving cultures in performance’.²¹ Fischer-Lichte focuses specifically on the adaptation process, which, she insists, follows a model of ‘productive reception’ rather than one of translation.²² Productive reception is different to any concept of translation in that it emphasizes aspects of a performance that have been caused or influenced by its reception by the new author. My own inquiry, in what follows of this dissertation, involves a hybridised review and development of Pavis’s ‘theatre translation’ model and Fischer-Lichte’s ‘productive reception’ model. The purpose of this review is to find an appropriate approach or conceptual framework for analysing the Chinese Shakespeare performances in the later chapters of my study.

Pavis’s Translation Model

Pavis’s theorization of intercultural theatre addresses appropriation of the source text and meaning-transference through extralinguistic codes such as actors’ bodies. Based on a semiotic model of exchange and a general model of *mise en scène*, he constructs a provisional model in his article: ‘Problems of Translation for the Stage: Interculturalism and Post-modern Theatre’ (1989); he later elaborates it in *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture* (1992). Pavis finds correlation between the general conception of culture (seen as a signifying, or modelling, system) and that of the theatrical *mise en scène* (the stage enunciation of a particular theatrical culture). He argues that translation theory can provide a model of intertextuality in dealing with the semiotic process of cultural exchange and reconstruction in the context of any receiving culture:

The relationship of this intercultural model to that of translation is

²¹ Erika Fischer-Lichte, ‘Interweaving Cultures in Performance: Different States of Being In-Between’, *New Theatre Quarterly*, 25 (2009), 391-401 (p.393).

²² Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Show and the Gaze of Theatre: A European Perspective* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997), pp.154-55.

undeniable, since we can simultaneously understand interculturalism as a kind translation of one culture into another and translation as an intercultural exchange in the broad sense of the term.²³

Pavis's theory adopts Kruger's source text/target text dynamic in theatrical translation,²⁴ seeing translation as a rhetorical act rather than a search for equivalence. The exchange is accordingly far more than verbal transfer from one linguistic code to another; it includes non-verbal elements such as the actor's body and gestures. Through a series of 'concretizations,' the source text is transcoded textually and dramaturgically into a future performance and finally reaches the target audience. A complete theatrical translation, according to Pavis, is simultaneously a dramaturgical analysis that deals with the linguistic and the cultural codes, a *mise en scène* that deals with the theatrical codes and is capable of re-coding a message to the audience that deals with the new spectators' capacity for reception.²⁵ The need to predict the target audience's 'hermeneutic competence'²⁶ makes transcoding even more complicated for the translator. In all cases, theatre translation constitutes an appropriation of one text by another, for the translator's perspective is never neutral.

The most significant part of Pavis's application of translation theory is how he sees the link between the intercultural exchange and *mise en scène*. In order to transfer the gesture of language to the gestures of utterance in another culture, he argues, one has recourse to an imaginary *mise en scène* of the source text to grasp the way the verbal text is orchestrated with the gestural and other theatrical codes (what Pavis calls the 'language-body'²⁷), and subsequently seeks a matching *mise en scène* in the target language before finally creating a verbalized target text.²⁸ Thus, Pavis makes a radical departure from traditional dramatic translation theory by qualifying *performance* as a vital component of any translation. Theatrical translation involves not only transferring the 'meanings' of words, but the bodies that speak them and the cultural, ideological context in which they are spoken. He quotes Brecht to illustrate 'performance as a method of translation', stating 'We were obliged to do what

²³ Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, p.209.

²⁴ Loren Adrienne Kruger, *Translating (for) the Theatre: The Appropriation, Mise en Scène and Reception of Theatre Texts* (Diss. Cornell University, 1986)

²⁵ Patrice Pavis, 'Problems of Translation for the Stage: Interculturalism and Postmodern Theatre', trans. Loren Kruger, in *The Play Out of Context: Transferring Plays from Culture to Culture*, eds. by Hanna Scolnicov and Peter Holland (Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp.25-44 (p.29).

²⁶ Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, p. 142.

²⁷ Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, p. 146.

²⁸ Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, pp.148-52.

linguistically better equipped translators ought to do: translate *Gestus* [...] for language is gestic'.²⁹ He also cites the French director-translator Antoine Vitez, whose staging of Greek tragedies gave the foreign, ancient text contemporary relevancy by presenting parallels in today's reality through its *mise en scène*. He observes: '[i]deally the translation should be able to command the *mise en scène*, not the reverse. Translation or *mise en scene*: the activity is the same; it is the art of selection among the hierarchy of signs'.³⁰

In his 'Towards a Theory of Culture and *Mise en Scène*,' the opening chapter of *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, Pavis elaborates this translation theory into the hourglass model in order to systematize the translation of theatrical material from one culture to another. The hourglass model depicts, in its upper bowl, the foreign or source culture (represented by filters 1 and 2 in the diagram below), 'which is more or less codified and solidified in diverse anthropological, sociocultural or artistic modelizations'.³¹ The 'grains of culture' trickle down to the lower bowl, being filtered and rearranged in the process. The filters 3 through 11, put in place by the target culture and the observer, largely determine the final formation of the grains.³²

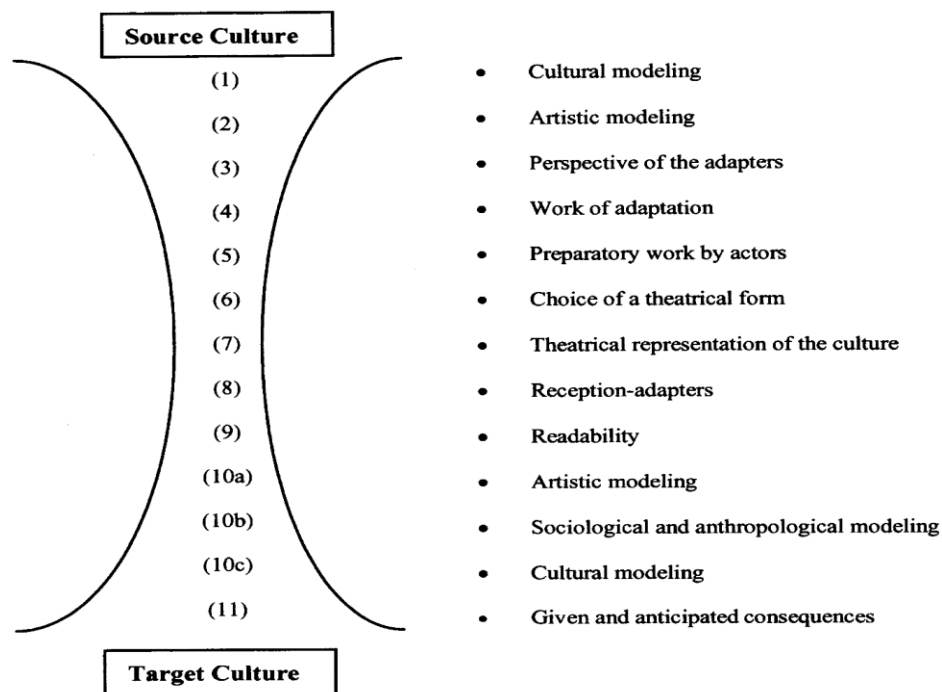


Diagram: Pavis's Hourglass Model of Intercultural Theatre

²⁹ Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, p.153.

³⁰ Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, p.146.

³¹ Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, p.4.

³² For detailed explanation, see Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, pp. 4-20.

The model operates an intertextual analysis to trace the eleven stages of intercultural transfer. It compares and contrasts the source text's and target text's 'artistic modelling' and 'cultural modelling'—how the artistic activity is codified and what sociological subgroup it belongs to in each given culture. It examines the perspective imposed by the adapter(s) on the source work, to determine, for instance, whether a Classicist, pan-humanist or postmodern relativist and consumerist ideology is in operation; it also studies the actors' preparatory work and the choice of the form of representation; and it measures the readability of the target audience, to know at which levels— narrative, thematic, formal, or ideological—it can decode the cultural factors in the receiving work.³³ The point of the rehearsal and adaptation process described by Pavis's hourglass is to perceive and prepare foreign material for reception within a separate target culture, a process that is overseen in theatrical culture by the director. The hourglass has the merit of organizing intercultural theatre explanations into a set of workable headings.

Pavis's model suggests that intercultural exchange is a negotiating process in which the 'slippage'³⁴ between the foreign and one's own culture exists alongside a conscious attempt at 'fine-tuning' (narrowing of the intercultural process at the hour glass's constrained centre) and the appropriation of the foreign joins hand-in-hand with a desire to communicate the exotic Other. Pavis stands with a relativistic and sceptical attitude towards the pan-culturalist perspective that is prevalent in much of today's Western interculturalism, and other problematic issues, such as the economic driving forces behind much intercultural exchange. He does not see such a trend as leading towards a synthesized world culture, but rather to 'a quest for foreign sensuality and for coded abstraction'.³⁵ Still, he aspires to an intercultural theatre that searches for extra-European inspiration—Asian, African, and South American, so as to de-centre ('*désorienter*') the currently predominant Euro-centric intercultural practices.³⁶

Pavis's hourglass has, certainly, neither been universally adored, nor immune to criticism, and other ways of understanding intercultural theatre have challenged its

³³ Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, pp. 13-20.

³⁴ Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, p.14.

³⁵ Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, p. 211.

³⁶ Patrice Pavis, 'Introduction: Towards a Theory of Interculturalism in Theatre?', in *The Intercultural Performance Reader*, ed. by Patrice Pavis (London: Routledge. 1996), pp. 1-21 (p.19).

rather instrumentalist model; but it has been of enormous and indisputable value to intercultural theatre studies.³⁷

Pavis's hourglass model sparked a frenzied debate in the 1990s. Scholars who took issue with Pavis's hourglass were concerned with the one-directional flow of information that his hourglass represents. An extension of the 'uni-directional' flow of information is the false binary it perpetuates, a binary that Ric Knowles calls: 'the West and the rest', and one which, he correctly points out, is present even in Pavis's follow-up volume to *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture, The Intercultural Performance Reader*, which structurally divides scholars' contributions based on whether they position themselves from the occident or the orient.³⁸ This binary is further perpetuated in much of the scholarship that follows, although in 'Toward a Topography of Cross-Cultural Theatre Praxis', Gilbert and Lo imagine a model that allows the cultural flow of information to go in two ways. Ric Knowles identifies Pavis's 'focus on the responsibility of the Western artist to control the circumstances of the (intercultural) exchange' as the central problem with Pavis's work, which, he claims, also praises Peter Brook for essentially 'distorting' a sacred Hindu text,³⁹ an act that critics of Brook and Pavis, such as Rustom Bharucha, admonish. Whatever the merits and demerits of each participant in this debate, it must be acknowledged that theatre is currently being made from multiple cultural perspectives and is being performed for audiences who are nothing like the monolithic 'target culture' that Pavis imagines in his work. According to Ric Knowles: 'What is needed now [...] is a model of scholarly praxis that is humble before the dizzying multiplicities of its objects of study, that is cognizant of the researcher's own positioning and the process of scholarship as itself necessarily intercultural performance, and that does its homework in terms of attempting to understand cultural and performance forms in

³⁷ For a summary of the influence and reception of Pavis's model in the intercultural debate, see Barry Freeman, *Toward a Postmodern Ethnography of Intercultural Theatre: an Instrumental Case-study of the Prague-Toronto-Manitoulin Theatre Project* (Diss. University of Toronto, 2010), pp.69-71 and 89. For specific criticisms of Pavis's model, see Rustom Bharucha, *Theatre and the World: Essays on Performance and Politics of Culture* (Columbia: South Asia Publications, 1990), p. 244; Jacqueline Lo and Helen Gilbert, 'Toward a Topography of Cross Cultural Theatre Praxis', *The Drama Review*, 46.3 (2002), 31-53; and Li Ruru and Jonathan Pitches, 'The End of the Hourglass: Alternative Conceptions of Intercultural Exchange Between European and Chinese Operatic Forms', *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 32.2 (2012), 121-137.

³⁸ Patrice Pavis, ed. *The Intercultural Performance Reader* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp.25-60.

³⁹ Ric Knowles, *Theatre and Interculturalism* (New York: Palgrave, 2010), p.25.

situ'.⁴⁰

Fischer-Lichte's Productive Reception Model

Fischer-Lichte's theory significantly complements the problems derived from Pavis's working model. Instead of proposing a global theory of theatre interculturalism, she offers an alternative model of exchange by analysing various regional, historical examples of intercultural theatre from the perspective of reception. Her model is based on diachronic ('historical') and synchronic ('simultaneous') analyses: the former examines the historical relationship of interculturalism within the domestic theatre tradition, and the latter studies interculturalism in the domestic theatre in relation to foreign cultures.⁴¹

Fischer-Lichte differs from Pavis mainly in arguing that cross-cultural adoption is motivated not by the interest in communicating the cultural Other (the 'Foreign'), but primarily by interest in the Self (the 'Own').⁴² She sees the foreign as a catalyst indispensable for changing and solving an otherwise unresolved problem—aesthetic or socio-cultural—within the home tradition. She cites an example to make her point. In adapting Brecht's *Good Person of Sichuan*, the Chinese Sichuan Opera regained strong social relevance and artistic contemporaneity in its performance, the lack of which had long been criticized as a problem of the form (and, by extension, of the stagnant social milieu in the People's Republic of China).⁴³

Accordingly, observes Fischer-Lichte, the starting point of an intercultural performance is the native theatre and, in particular, the specific problems within this tradition; it is not the source text or culture, as the translation model suggests. The foreign is selected and appropriated due to its relevance to the situation and the underlying problem at home. Thus, she claims, theatrical interculturalism should not be understood as a process of translation, or as communicating the source text/culture to the target. Rather, it should be seen as a creative process strongly dominated by reception factors. Fischer-Lichte adapts Günter Grimm's literary theory of 'productive reception' to stress the necessity to reverse the perspective

⁴⁰ Knowles, *Theatre and Interculturalism*, p.61.

⁴¹ Erika Fischer-Lichte, 'Theatre, Own and Foreign. The Intercultural Trend in Contemporary theatre', eds. by Fischer-Lichte, et al. (1990a), pp. 11-19 (p.17) (Cited as 1990a).

⁴² Erika Fischer-Lichte, 'Staging the Foreign as Cultural Transformation', eds. by Fischer-Lichte, et al. (1990b), pp. 277-87 (p.283) (Cited as 1990b).

⁴³ Fischer-Lichte, 'Staging the Foreign as Cultural Transformation', pp. 281-83.

from the production aspect to the reception aspect in tackling the theatrical phenomenon:

An intercultural performance productively receives the elements taken from the foreign theatre traditions and cultures according to the problematic which lies at the point of departure. The potentiality, particularly the special '*uslovnost*' ('conventionality') (Lotman) of the underlying system of performance (of the theatrical form) as well as the specific restrictions of production and reception and the impending problem, are decisive in the answer to the question as to which culture or theatre tradition will be looked [sic], which elements shall be chosen, in what ways shall these be altered, and how shall they be combined.⁴⁴

Fischer-Lichte's model presents interculturalism not so much as a dialogue between a binary system of the source and the target, but as a self-examination of the past and present exclusively within the home tradition. Each theatre tradition is engaged in a process of continuing evolution and transformation in relation to the demands of its accompanying social, cultural and historical conditions; and the recourse to the foreign is motivated by an internal aesthetic and/or cultural imperatives for change. When productive reception works, it may trigger 'qualitative change,' which either expands the expressive range of the performance genre or establishes an entirely new theatrical form.⁴⁵ The process normally takes much time to evolve, but sometimes can occur in one intercultural performance, which operates as a 'time accelerator' to compress and condense this process.⁴⁶ Fischer-Lichte does not see the aim and result of intercultural theatre as necessarily to create aesthetic 'hybridization,' a term Pavis uses to indicate the coexistence of two theatrical systems. Rather she sees great potential in this type of theatre beyond aesthetic concerns. Intercultural theatre, which hosts a 'permanent dynamic' among foreign traditions/cultures, is more than an 'aesthetic indicator of a potential social change', but is rather 'the place of execution and instrument of such cultural change'.⁴⁷

Fischer-Lichte brings our attention exclusively to the receiving tradition and sees intercultural theatre as a means of empowering and reviving a failing or antiquated theatre/culture. She resolutely opposes the theoretical concept and

⁴⁴ Fischer-Lichte, 'Staging the Foreign as Cultural Transformation', p.284.

⁴⁵ Fischer-Lichte, 'Staging the Foreign as Cultural Transformation', p.285.

⁴⁶ Fischer-Lichte, 'Staging the Foreign as Cultural Transformation', p.286.

⁴⁷ Fischer-Lichte, 'Staging the Foreign as Cultural Transformation', p.287.

vocabulary of the translation model, for, in her view, interculturalism is a ‘tactical strategy’ aiming only at solving particular problems at home, not at gaining new knowledge from the foreign: ‘This is due to the fact that the source culture and the target culture are one and the same thing, i.e. the own culture’.⁴⁸ Fischer-Lichte’s model is sophisticated; however, in reducing the interdependent dynamic of cultural Self and Other in favour of a single perspective of the Self, this intercultural hermeneutics runs the risk also of being reductive and ethnocentric. When the foreign culture is considered on a par with the domestic and is thus subject to appropriation, it is highly questionable as to how it can function productively as a cultural stimulus and inspiration. Without a genuine understanding of the Other, the Self seldom generates a relativistic perspective which, through its creation of an ‘alienation effect,’ can help to reveal that what seems normal and natural in the home tradition is actually the ‘product of convention[s which are always governed by] an ideological structure’.⁴⁹ Without the efficacy of the culturally unfamiliar, can the domestic find a path to its suppressed or unconscious, in which lies the potential to subvert its dominant paradigm? Can diversity and pluralism be possible?

III Intercultural Shakespeare Studies

Although the performance of Shakespeare has become canonized in the academy,⁵⁰ intercultural Shakespeare, that is, performance in non-European theatre forms, languages and cultures, is still seen as an esoteric indulgence. The academy has not yet fully extended its critical gaze at the ‘Others’, including Asia, from a non-Western Perspective. Dennis Kennedy’s *Foreign Shakespeare* (1993) was one of the first books to extend the critical purview beyond Anglo-America, but it was largely confined to the Euro-centric.⁵¹ Blackwell’s *Companion to Shakespeare and Performance* (2005), edited by B. Hodgdon and W.B. Worthen, devotes but three essays out of thirty-four to the intercultural, a gap particularly noticeable given the

⁴⁸ Fischer-Lichte, ‘Staging the Foreign as Cultural Transformation’, p.284.

⁴⁹ Antony Tatlow, ‘Repression and Figuration from Totem to Utopia’, Hong Kong: Dept. of Comparative Literature, University of Hong Kong, Cultural Studies Working Paper No.1 (1990), p.101.

⁵⁰ See W. B. Worthen, *Shakespeare and the Force of Modern Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Barbara Hodgdon and W. B. Worthen, eds. *A Companion to Shakespeare and Performance* (Blackwell, 2005).

⁵¹ Dennis Kennedy, ed. *Foreign Shakespeare: Contemporary Performance* (Cambridge, New York, Victoria: Cambridge University Press, 1993)

claim of comprehensiveness for the weighty collection.⁵² Shakespeare studies remain inextricably tethered to English language performances and to philological and historiographical modes of criticism that are based on textuality. The increasing worldwide repertory of translated and localized Shakespeares rarely received attention in Shakespeare studies until the 1990s. Asian performance of Shakespeare established itself as part of Shakespearean studies during the World Shakespeare Congress in Los Angeles (1996), at which a seminar on Japanese Shakespeare and presentations on Indian Shakespeare by the well-known Indian director Habib Tanveer and the academic S.K Dasm, as well as on Chinese Shakespeare by Li Ruru, were for the first time included. The subsequent two decades have seen an increasing presence of non-European productions at international theatre festivals, such as the ‘Globe to Globe’ season (1997-2000) at the London Globe, the ‘Complete Works’ festival at the Royal Shakespeare Company (2006), and ‘The World Shakespeare’ Festival (2012). From such evidence, it would seem that intercultural Shakespeare is the fastest area of growth in the field. Critical assessment of the intercultural, however, has been controversial: initially, the charge of neo-colonial exploitation by Rustom Bharucha against Peter Brook’s *Mahabharata* highlighted the political implications of the practice and polarised the debate around issues of ‘freedom of choice’ versus an ethics of borrowing.⁵³ Up to now, there has been no consensus on the intercultural in theatre. As Holledge and Tompkins have put it: ‘[i]nterculturalism in the late twentieth century continues to be a theoretical, theatrical and cultural minefield.’⁵⁴ Much discourse continues in a similar, circular and unproductive vein of appropriation versus commodification. Artists defend their autonomy of choice in relation to the always theatrically present borrowing of forms, narratives and techniques (the magpie art of theatre), and resist its regulation as a result of questions/allegations relating to the dislocations from the source culture that such borrowings entail—especially evoking the postmodernist valorization of the constructed and the patched. Performance critics have tried to open up the debate and have developed taxonomies and models—such as Marvin Carlson’s sevenfold

⁵² *A Companion to Shakespeare and Performance*, eds. by Barbara Hodgdon and W. B. Worthen (Wiley-Blackwell, 2005)

⁵³ Julie Holledge and Joanne Tompkins, *Women’s Intercultural Performance* (London: Routledge, 2000), p.10.

⁵⁴ See Richard Schechner, ‘Talking with Peter Brook’, *The Drama Review*, 30.1 (Spring, 1986), 54-71; See also Rustom Bharucha, *The Theatre and the World* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1990) and the ensuing debate on this in *The Drama Review*.

classification of cultural influence⁵⁵ or Patrice Pavis's hour-glass model of intercultural interaction⁵⁶—so as to negotiate this impasse in the understanding of the intercultural. However, so much discussion of intercultural Shakespeare remains caught in a cleft stick of authenticity versus difference, of the universal versus the hybrid, and of the global versus the local, resulting in an unresolved tension between these sometimes-artificial polarities. The authority of the Shakespearean text and essentialized notions of the 'purity' of that text continue to condition attitudes towards intercultural production. Such an attitude is seen in Barbara Hodgdon, who endorses worldwide Shakespeares as a: 'resource for mapping the poetics and politics of cultures'; but betrays her tacit anxiety about the rights of dead playwrights and the increasing prevalence of 'minimalist textual Shakespeare' in international performance.⁵⁷ W. B. Worthen, despite his alertness to the inevitable dominance of the text, as also towards the racialized and neo-colonialist proclivities of Western Theatre practice, concludes his elaborate discussion of 'other Shakespeare' in *Shakespeare and the Force of Modern Performance* (2003) with the view that they are characterized by: 'an inability to reflect an authentic Shakespeare.'⁵⁸ In addition, although he concedes that 'other Shakespeares [...] have a different kind of force,' that force, according to him, is 'invisible'.⁵⁹ Non-European intercultural Shakespeare is thus routinely put down as impenetrably different and foreign, and is often rejected as 'inauthentic' by the normative and canon-shaping activities of Western critics, scholars and theatre professionals. The chapters that follow in my study of Chinese Shakespeares seek to counter such stereotyping, erasing and effacing; they demonstrate that the intercultural, as argued by Pavis, needs to be seen in itself, as 'a third term [...] with its own laws and specific identities [...] as a resistance against standardization, against Europeanisation.'⁶⁰ My dissertation seeks to make visible and coherent the forces both within and without the West that produce *Other Shakespeares*.

⁵⁵ Marvin Carlson, 'Brook and Mnouchkine: Passages to India?', in *The Intercultural Performance Reader*, ed. by Patrice Pavis (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 82-83.

⁵⁶ Patrice Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.4.

⁵⁷ Barbara Hodgdon, afterword to *World-wide Shakespeare: Local Appropriations in Film and Performance*, ed. by Sonia Massai (London: Routledge, 2005), p.157 and 160.

⁵⁸ W. B. Worthen, *Shakespeare and the Force of Modern Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 168.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Pavis, 'Introduction: Towards a Theory of Interculturalism in Theatre', in *The Intercultural Performance Reader*, p.15 and 19.

IV Toward a Methodology of Investigating Chinese Shakespeares

Following the trend towards globalisation, China has experienced a transformation of its geopolitical role and has asserted a stronger influence in the cultural arena. Shakespeare studies in China have accompanied this trend of rising nationalism and robust cultural exchange. Each year, hundreds of Shakespeare adaptations emerge in China in a wide range of languages, dialects, performing styles, and a variety of media including fiction, theatre, cinema, and popular culture. Many of these adaptations have become new classics for the Chinese stage, or have expanded the repertoire of traditional Chinese opera. However, the general lack of published material on Chinese Shakespeare studies in the West has created difficulties for the Western scholar who seeks to understand the reception of Shakespeare in a country that boasts five thousand years of civilization and one-point-three billion non-English speaking people.⁶¹ In the last few decades, scholarly interests in Chinese Shakespeare have seen an explosive growth. Among others, Zhang Xiao Yang, Murray J. Levith, Alexander [now Alexa] C. Y. Huang and Li Ruru have made significant contributions to the scholarship of Shakespeare in China.

Zhang Xiao Yang's monograph *Shakespeare in China: A Comparative Study of Two Traditions and Cultures* (1996) discusses the interactions between Shakespeare's plays and Chinese culture. Presented within a New Historicist paradigm, Zhang's book offers an essential list of Shakespeare productions in China, discusses in detail operatic adaptations, and offers remarks on pedagogy, such as how to teach Shakespeare in China, as well as a national survey of Shakespeare curricula among colleges and universities in China.

Murray J. Levith's book, *Shakespeare in China* (2004), aimed at a general Anglophone readership, traces the history of Shakespeare in the country from first translations in the early twentieth century to the PRC's second Shakespeare festival

⁶¹ So far, there is a relatively limited range of resources in English, which focus on Chinese adaptations of Shakespeare. These include a few books such as Zhang Xiao Yang's *Shakespeare in China: A Comparative Study of Two Traditions and Cultures* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996), Li Ruru's *Shashibiya: Staging Shakespeare in China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), and Alexander C. Y. Huang's *Chinese Shakespeares: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009). There are also some journal articles in *Asian Theatre Journal*, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, etc., and a handful of theses. Websites such as SPIA (Shakespeare Performance in Asia) and A/S/I/A (Asian Shakespeare Intercultural Archive) make available metadata, video footage and commentary on several key productions of Shakespeare in China, synergising the field of Asian Shakespeare intercultural performance studies.

in 1994. Levith focuses on the many translations of Shakespeare's works into Chinese. A small section of the book deals with historical accounts of Shakespearean productions in China. Levith points out that most Chinese Shakespearean criticism seems inwardly directed—that is, addressed to other Chinese scholars or maybe even political leaders who share the same prejudices (a naïve and simplistic idea of 'Shakespeare studies with Chinese characteristics,' a clear echo of Deng Xiaoping's slogan 'socialism with Chinese characteristics').⁶² What Levith describes, however, is only the picture before the new millennium. After the new millennium, voices from Chinese scholars and theatre practitioners are increasingly heard either through their monographs, articles, or performances of Shakespeare's plays.

An interesting phenomenon is that in China the study of Shakespeare in performance seems to be much less popular than the study of his written works as literary texts. Despite this tendency, Li Ruru's monograph, *Shashibiya: Staging Shakespeare in China* (2003) offers an anthropologically thick description of modern and contemporary Chinese theatre scenes through case studies of Shakespearean performance. It is an eyewitness's narrative of Shakespeare's stories on the Chinese stage. In the major chapters, Li focuses her analyses on technical particulars of four *huaju* (modern spoken drama) productions and five *xiqu* (traditional opera) adaptations. Li also discusses a central question that has preoccupied Chinese Shakespearean scholars for decades: Shakespeare's appearance in traditional Chinese theatre has posed questions of choice between a complete localisation of the story on the one hand and Westernization on the other (a method based on *huaju* models in design and storytelling). Li argues that there are difficulties in both methods. She cites *Xie shou ji* 血手记 (*Blood-Stained Hands*), an adaptation of *Macbeth* that provides a successful example of the former approach; it both challenges and offers innovative changes to the *kunju* form. Similarly, *xiqu* adaptors and directors of other Shakespearean plays—including a *yueju* (or Shaoxing Opera) *Twelfth Night*, a *huangmeixi* (an opera form based on rural folksong and dance) *Much Ado*, a *yueju Hamlet*, and a Peking Opera *Othello*—have never found it easy to balance Shakespeare's content with a Chinese form. Notwithstanding this, Li's book offers an opportunity to feast on the performance of Shakespeare's plays in China.

Among all these, the most accomplished book, no doubt, is Alexander (now

⁶² Murray J. Levith, *Shakespeare in China* (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 132.

Alexa) C. Y. Huang's *Chinese Shakespeares: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange* (2009), which not only gives the most detailed and historically based account of Shakespeare in China—from the late nineteenth to the early twenty-first century, but also highlights the localisation of Shakespeare in the Sinophone world.⁶³ The book is an exceptional work of theatre scholarship in that it provides a new model of intercultural analysis that treats both text and culture as narrative systems, and interprets individual performances through the locality of culture. Huang explores the whole notion of what Shakespeare and China mean culturally, ideologically and socially, and considers 'what the Shakespeare-China interrelations are, why they have been used to rhetorically construct narratives about difference and universality, and how such narratives have unleashed new interpretive energy.'⁶⁴ As a scholar from Taiwan, however, Huang's book does not cover much about Shakespeare criticism in Mainland China after the 1990s.

Such increasing scholarly efforts demonstrate the importance of research into Shakespeare and China. The problem with most of such research on "Shakespeare in China" so far is that "Chinese Shakespeare" was treated as if it were a natural extension of a "global Shakespeare" phenomenon. It just happened that Chinese cultural practices related to Shakespeare occurred in China. This geographical location only constitutes another province for the ever more globalising Shakespeare vitality. Following this model, it seems that what researchers can do is to provide and chronicle positivistic information about Chinese cultural practices related to Shakespeare, so that such practices enlarge the global capacity of Shakespeare studies. In addition, some of the works are just recycles of publications on the historical overviews of twentieth-century adaptations of Shakespeare's plays in China. There is a widespread journalistic tone in the writings about Chinese Shakespeares, so that Chinese Shakespeare scholarship seems an overflow of narrative *reports* without theoretical reflection and critical analysis.

As an alternative to all of these works, however, my study approaches the Chinese theatre's interculturalisation of Shakespeare both from an aesthetic/artistic perspective and from a variety of cultural, social, historical and political perspectives. Homi K. Bhabha has proposed to focus on the 'inter,' the 'in-between,' the

⁶³ Alexander C. Y. Huang, *Chinese Shakespeares: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2009)

⁶⁴ Huang, *Chinese Shakespeare: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange*, p.24.

‘borderline,’ or the ‘Third Space’ in the study of cultural engagement and exchange. He argues that it is in the ‘inter’ or the ‘in-between’ space—‘the overlap and displacement of domains of difference’—that the difference, value, and meaning of culture are articulated and negotiated.⁶⁵ Bhabha’s argument has a significant relevance to the study of intercultural theatre in general and in particular, to my study of Chinese Shakespeare, which focuses on the ‘inter’ space of engagement and exchange between Chinese and Western theatres. In my point of view, to make clear about the mechanism of Shakespeare in intercultural theatre, we need to be aware of the interfaces that lie between the following issues:

Self and Otherness

In intercultural performance, performing with another culture inevitably complicates basic perceptions of both Self and Otherness. While Rustom Bharucha argues that intercultural tension is based on a local-global dynamic,⁶⁶ in humanist terms, rather than geo-political ones, the intercultural performative encounter could also be said to pivot on different ways of exploring the tension between Self and Other. When both Shakespeare and the performance culture(s) involved in intercultural Shakespeare have long histories of performance and cultural authority in their home contexts, neither is going to be Othered easily. Yet paradoxically, neither can entirely escape the influence of the position of Otherness. Performing Shakespeare with, among and against other cultures (particularly non-Western cultures) directly confronts Otherness. As each tradition brings its own culture to the rehearsal space, each culture views itself as the Self or subject culture approaching an Other.

The positioning of the Other is thus a necessary act to identify and consolidate the Self as a cultural body. Behind the pursuit of the Other is the drive to know, understand and potentially to change the deep structures of national culture through the discovery of alternatives. European Modernist avant-garde artists adapted a non-indigenous model from East Asian theatre precisely to break away from the stultifying effects of their own culture’s fascination with realistic drama. Chinese and Japanese intellectuals, by contrast, saw realistic drama as an ideal form

⁶⁵ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004), p.2, 56

⁶⁶ Rustom Bharucha, *The Politics of Cultural Practice: Thinking Through Theatre in an Age of Globalization* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.107.

to deal with modern themes and ideas, and thus imported the entire genre into their home cultures. Both endeavours transformed the practice as well as the conception of theatre. The presentation of the Other is always conditioned by tradition (historical, social, ideological, political, cultural as well as theatrical and theoretical) and practical desires, and the needs of the Self. In accordance with the Self's desires and needs, then, certain theatrical elements, techniques or ideas of the Other are taken out of their historical, cultural, and theatrical contexts in order to be appropriated and assimilated into the theatrical practice or theoretical discourse of the Self. Through the Self's subjective and imaginative interpretation, therefore, the Other is renewed or reinvented. The effect of intercultural (mis)interpretation of foreign theatrical traditions, canons and modes of performance is thereby both creative (in the sense that it serves the renewal or reinvention of the Self) and destructive in the sense that it tends to corrupt and erode the identity and integrity of the Other.

Intercultural and Ideological Translation

Theatre is essentially a social, communal, and cultural event. Any theatre production, whether it comes from a time-honoured tradition or the vision of an individual artist, is influenced and conditioned by the cultural givens of a society. Walter Benjamin challenges the traditional theory of translation that attaches paramount importance to fidelity and likeness to the original, saying: 'a translation issues from the original— not so much from its life as from its afterlife'.⁶⁷ Thus, intercultural translation must take into account the cultural, ideological, political, and ethnic aspects that, largely, determine the identity and afterlife of the original. In addition, intercultural translation for the stage involves not only textual and dramaturgical translation, but also, more importantly, theatrical and performance translation through theatrical means using performers' bodies.⁶⁸ Presentations of the individual artists' bodies on the stage, physical or psychological, are informed and imprinted by the specificities of the cultural and artistic tradition to which they are subject in daily life and in the process of artistic training. In intercultural theatre, the

⁶⁷ Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator', in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt and trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968), pp.69-82 (p.71).

⁶⁸ Patrice Pavis, 'Problems of translation for the stage: interculturalism and postmodern theatre', trans. by Loren Kruger, in *The Play Out of Context: Transferring Plays from Culture to Culture*, eds. by Hanna Scolnicov and Peter Holland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp.25-44; Patrice Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp.136-59.

exchange between individual artists with different cultural heritages is inevitably an exchange of different cultural givens in terms of performing conventions, bodily techniques, energy modelling, and the like. Central to this exchange, whether it is an act of appropriation or a form of 'barter',⁶⁹ is displacement, or more precisely inter-displacement of different culturally infected conventions and methods. Adaptations of the Other are guided by the Self's desires and such needs originate within the Self's own specific cultural as well as theatrical context.

In intercultural theatre, the displacement of the Other by the Self is inextricably tied with certain ideological placements. According to Pavis, Brook's *Mahabharata* is a kind of intercultural translation called 'intergestural translation': 'Gesture for Brook is not the pivot of ideology, but the terrain of a universal encounter among actors of different cultures'.⁷⁰ However, I would argue that the afterlife brought by Brook's theatrical and cinematic translation is no longer inherent to the Indian epic, but is instead much more deeply influenced by Brook's Western, Humanist view of culture, ideology, politics as well as theatre. This kind of intercultural translation also applies to the Chinese Shakespeare as an inter-translation of Chinese and Western theatres and cultures, interwoven with the ebbs and flows of dominant and emerging Chinese ideologies. In Nancy Guy's *Peking Opera and Politics in Taiwan*, she observes that 'no country believes more deeply in the power of drama or takes greater pains about what is in a play than does the People's Republic of China, and no drama in any country and in history has been so frequently and so directly involved and used in ideological feud[s], political purges, mass campaigns and high-level power struggles as has that of the People's Republic of China', whereas conversely 'in Nationalist Taiwan, Peking Opera became like a museum piece with preservation as the main aim'—a fact that meant that the overuse of propagandistic purpose accelerated the downfall of traditional theatre.⁷¹ The 'propagandistic purpose' of using the Chinese traditional theatre to promote

⁶⁹ Barter, a term Barba applied to the theatre in the early 1970s, is closely linked to the concept of relationship. As in economic barter, the defining principle of theatrical barter is exchange, but in theatrical barter, the commodity of exchange is performance: A performs for B and, instead of paying A money, B performs for A. A play is exchanged for songs and dances, a display of acrobatics for a demonstration of training exercises, a poem for a monologue, etc. See Ian Watson, *Towards a Third Theatre: Eugenio Barba and the Odin Teatret* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp.22-23.

⁷⁰ Pavis, 'Problems of translation for the stage: interculturalism and postmodern theatre', pp.39-40.

⁷¹ Nancy Guy, *Peking Opera and Politics in Taiwan* (Chicago, USA: University of Illinois Press, 2005), pp. 8, 161.

Chineseness, however, is nearly always distanced by Shakespeare's foreign image in *xiqu* Shakespeare adaptations; and in the twenty-first century, such Chineseness is actually one of the most exportable cultural assets of China.

Eastern and Western Performance Aesthetics

According to Wen-shan Shih, the philosophical concepts such as moral affectivism, manifestation of the cosmic Tao, and unification of nature and man in Chinese culture have helped evolve an affective-expressive poetics, which is non-mimetic in spirit and presentational in style.⁷² It generates an aesthetic principle in criticism and in praxis called 'xie-yi 写意,' which, taken from the brushwork style of Chinese painting, literally means 'writing meaning', or grasping the essential quality of the object rather than duplicating its outward appearance.⁷³ This principle is responsible for Chinese theatre's heavy use of 'xu-ni 虚拟,' or miming and gesticulating, to fictionalize the bare stage. It also accounts for the theatre's low demand for 'iconic identity', to cite Kier Elam's term⁷⁴—the use of realistic-inspired properties for mimetic effect. *Xu-ni* techniques allow the actor to convey not only the physical situation (horse riding in the battlefield or loitering in a moonlit garden) but also the intensive mental imagery with which to create the 'essence' of the fictional character. Under the *xie-yi* principle and *xu-ni* convention, theatre does not represent life through its outward appearance; it distills and extracts the most salient elements from reality, exaggerates and distorts them until daily behaviours become aesthetically appealing and ethically appropriate acting codes. Thus, reality is enhanced and emotion is intensified in artistic expression. Characters and situations are typified, rendered *larger* than life. This is the theatrical manifestation of Chinese

⁷² Wen-shan Shih, *Intercultural Theatre: Two Beijing Opera Adaptations of Shakespeare* (Diss., University of Toronto, 2000), p.72.

⁷³ On the use of this term to describe the style of Chinese theatre, see Antony Tatlow, *Repression and Figuration from Totem to Utopia*, Hong Kong: Dept. of Comparative Literature, University of Hong Kong, Cultural Studies Working Paper No. 1, p.106; and Huang Zuolin, 'China Dream': A Fruition of Global Interculturalism', in *The Dramatic Touch of Difference: Theatre, Own and Foreign*, eds. by Fischer-Lichte, et al. (Tübingen: narr, 1990), 179-186 (p.185). *Xie-yi* is a critical term used in traditional Chinese landscape painting, in distinction from *gong-bi*, the realistic and detailed depiction. *Xie-yi* style emphasizes the capturing of the essence, or soul, of the objects being presented, while *gong-bi* strives for presenting the verisimilitude of their outward appearance. This principle was first adapted into theatre criticism by Huang Zuolin, who first translated it into English as 'essentialism' but later changed it into 'ideographics' (in contrast to 'photographics'). He observes four internal *xie-yi* features in traditional Chinese theatre: 'the ideographics of life,' 'the ideographics of movement,' 'the ideographics of language,' and 'the ideographics of décor' (1990: 185-6).

⁷⁴ Kier Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005)

affective-expressive poetics.

A significant development of this poetics is the high value of technical brilliance in Chinese theatre—including insistence on the use of role models and long systems of training in acquiring artistry. This leads to the conventionalism and conservatism of many Asian traditional theatres, in which the role categories, their specific acting and musical expressions, and the subjects dealt with by theatrical performances, are all rigidly codified. Conventions are artistic codes regulated by the prevalent cultural and aesthetic principles of a society. They serve to reduce the otherwise arbitrary expression of life and permit the audience to contemplate the significance of the scene.⁷⁵ Moreover, they are a conscious manipulation, and open celebration, of artistry. As Mei Lanfang explains: ‘Chinese theatrical conventions are the result of abstracting from a certain reality its essential pattern’.⁷⁶ They are deliberately meant to prevent immediate recognition of the external world being portrayed. Dramatic conventions of this sort are particularly difficult to translate from culture to culture. Other literary genres have their specific rhetorical and formal structures: lyric has the rhythm of association, prose has the rhythm of continuity, and epos (oratorical art such as the psalm and hymn) has the rhythm of recurrence.⁷⁷ These ‘rhythms’ give literary works concrete modes of translatability. With drama, a genre to be realized onstage through many media other than verbal and linguistic structures, and a complex interrelation of attributes that have no specific controlling rhythm,⁷⁸ there is little universal code upon which to rely. Many first-time spectators of Noh drama or Beijing Opera are frustrated with the heavy ‘make-up’⁷⁹ of the codified presentation, which has no resemblance to life and thus becomes entirely indecipherable for the uninitiated.

In many Asian theatre genres, the fear of not being able to emulate the standard of the previously established tradition has given rise to the burden of

⁷⁵ Earl Miner, *Comparative Poetics: An Intercultural Essay on Theories of Literature* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1990), p.44.

⁷⁶ Richard Dana Skinner, ‘The Screen: King of Jazz’, *Commonweal*, 12 (May 21, 1930), pp.80-81; qtd. in William Tay, ‘Peking Opera and Modern American Theatre: The Reception and Influence of Mei Lanfang’, *Asian Culture Quarterly* 18.4 (Winter 1990), 39-43.

⁷⁷ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 243-337.

⁷⁸ See Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, p.250. However, Frye calls drama a rhetorical form with the rhythm of decorum, for drama is a mimesis of dialogue in which the speaker's speech conforms to his social rank and the genre of the play (comedy or tragedy, for instance, in Elizabethan drama). Frye's definition of decorum is very much culturally bound.

⁷⁹ See Earl Miner, *Comparative Poetics: An Intercultural Essay on Theories of Literature* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1990)

conventionalism. In Asian theatre and other visual arts, therefore, the dominant concern has become not so much the originality of the subject as the overall quality of the performance; through virtuosity, this should engage the whole consciousness of both the artist and the viewer in the creative process. This engagement is not achieved through illusionism—the mimetic imperative of much Western art, emulating reality and substituting for it—but rather through the candid use of artificial codes. Artistic conventions, when well performed, thus create in every nuance ‘the same distance from the actual: [and] the whole achieves a total unity of style’.⁸⁰ They present, as Miner pertinently remarks, the ‘virtual’—not the realistic, or real, or false;⁸¹ he quotes Japanese Noh master Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653-1731) on the nature of artistic conventions:

Art is that which occupies the narrow margin between the true and the false [...] It participates in the false and yet is not false; it participates in the true yet is not true; our pleasure is located between the two [...] It is the same for the design of a play—*within recognizable likeness there will be points of deviance.* (Emphasis added)⁸²

In the West, Aristotle’s poetics of mimesis, which prioritizes the representation of human universals in a dramatic structure, has eventually led to the neglecting of dramatic conventions. Free from artificial conventions, the mirroring of what actors, playwrights and directors offer as ‘life’ can be more effectively achieved. The Naturalist theatre of the late nineteenth century, for example, substantially reduced unnatural make-up on the stage in order to represent ‘a slice of life’ in its very details. Likewise, ‘the fourth wall’ and ‘magic if’ in realistic dramaturgy and actor training seek to sustain the illusion of reality in a performance. Despite their original application and development in relation to a particular theatrical Avant Garde of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, such mimetic fascinations have grown to dominate much modern Western theatre, even when practitioners approach historically distant material for which such Naturalist approaches are anachronistic. Moreover, Western theatre demands that actors partake of the ‘public solitude’ (Bernard Dort) and talk and behave as if in a private domain; this accepted form of deception turns the spectator into a quasi-voyeur of an imaginary private life,

⁸⁰ Stark Young, ‘Mei Lanfang’, *Theatre Arts Monthly*, 14.4 (1930), 295-308 (p.300).

⁸¹ Miner, *Comparative Poetics: An Intercultural Essay on Theories of Literature*, p.44.

⁸² Miner, *Comparative Poetics: An Intercultural Essay on Theories of Literature*, p.15.

observed voyeuristically in order to obtain a vicarious and surrogate experience. Proceeding along another track, the development of expressivism in Western theatre, which reached its prime in the doctrines of Romanticism, has led to the critical criterion of originality.⁸³ Such critical values have accounted for the incessant need in Western art and culture for novelty and innovation in subject and form, whilst also providing the appearance of reality. To a great degree, these facts have also been tacit drives behind the attempt to acquire and assimilate alterity in a Western intercultural theatre that has become bored of its own traditions.

Globalisation and Localisation

The economic drives of globalisation have led to the emergence of neo-liberal humanist localisation and a resurgence of identity politics (first established in the class and gender struggles of the twentieth century). The linkage between the global and the local has thus been contradiction-ridden not only because of cultural production that produces uneven cultural capital, but also because the forces driving the two sides of the global and the local are frequently ideologically opposed to each other.⁸⁴ The question of global Shakespeare has thus entailed that of local Shakespeare. For centuries, Shakespeare's works have been read in English, translated into an enormous diversity of languages, adapted and performed in a plethora of styles, local or otherwise. Through this process of global spread, Shakespeare has been localised and even indigenised to such an extent that some non-English cultures regard him as their home author. Global capitalism additionally creates the illusion of universal Shakespeare in the form of international theatre festivals and world tours. The intercultural Shakespeare phenomenon thus offers a ready example to Fredric Jameson's warning of 'the becoming cultural of the economic, and the becoming economic of the cultural' in postmodernity.⁸⁵ The ever-growing Shakespeare tourist industry, in a variety of festivals, heritages, theme parks and so forth, is just one telling example of Jameson's poignant statement about

⁸³ Earl Miner, 'Some Theoretical and Methodological Topics for Comparative Literature', *Poetics Today*, 8.1 (1987), 123-140 (p.125).

⁸⁴ Robert Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake, eds. *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), p.5.

⁸⁵ Fredric Jameson, 'Notes on Globalization as a Philosophical Issue', in *The Cultures of Globalization*, eds. by Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), pp. 54-77 (p.60).

commodification of cultures in our postmodern world.⁸⁶

The fundamental point of the apparently confusing tripartite question of global/local is, however, that most of us are ambivalent about global Shakespeare. While, on the one hand, we have great expectations of it, on the other, most of us have equally great anxiety about it. We tend to notice prominent postcolonial resistance against global Shakespeare, or anger about uneven relations or exchange between the Shakespearean centre and the peripheral others, the West and the rest. As James R. Brandon puts it: '[i]n the early twentieth century, in Japan, Korea, and China, the attempt to "act European" [*sic*] in order to perform Shakespeare was part of the larger movement to copy modern Western realistic acting.'⁸⁷ In other words, Shakespeare's engagements in some parts of Asia were acts of mimicry, representing what Bhabha terms 'an ironic compromise,'⁸⁸ a negotiation between two competing authorities, the global and local. John Gillies reduces Brandon's three Shakespeares in Asia—canonical Shakespeare, localised Shakespeare and hybrid Shakespeare—into a binary but rather fundamental confrontation between 'canonical' and 'localised' Shakespeare;⁸⁹ whereas earlier scholarship on Asian Shakespeare paid more attention to the issue of authority between canonical icon and indigenous culture. As Mark Houlihan comments: '[w]e often take the global to be the multinational and the corporate, blandly disseminating sameness throughout the world; and the local to be the heroic, small-scale attempts to sustain specific difference [...]'⁹⁰ Sonia Massai observes the same tension between global and local, arguing that the global should not be interpreted merely 'in terms of a progressive cultural impoverishment and erasure of local differences.'⁹¹ This is where Bhabha's notions of a third space and hybridity become very important in understanding the complexity of cultural exchange, which underlies the self-fashioning of a distinctive Chinese Shakespeare.

⁸⁶ For further discussion on cultural tourism, see Dennis Kennedy, 'Shakespeare and Cultural Tourism', in *Shakespeare and his Contemporaries in Performance*, ed. by Edward J. Esche (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 3-20.

⁸⁷ James R. Brandon, 'Some Shakespeare(s) in Some Asia(s)', *Asian Studies Review*, 20.3 (1997), 8.

⁸⁸ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p.122.

⁸⁹ John Gillies, 'Shakespeare Localised: An Australian Looks at Asian Practice', in *Shakespeare Global/Local: The Hong Kong Imaginary in Transcultural Production*, eds. by Kwok-kan Tam, Andrew Parkin, and Terry Siu-han Yip (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002), p.101.

⁹⁰ Mark Houlihan, 'Hekepia? The Mana of the Maori Merchant', in *World-wide Shakespeares: Local Appropriations in Film and Performance*, ed. Sonia Massai (London: Routledge, 2005), p.141.

⁹¹ Sonia Massai, ed., *World-wide Shakespeares: Local Appropriations in Film and Performance* (London: Routledge, 2005), p.4.

The established concept of global Shakespeare is primarily understood from a Shakespeare-centred perspective. However, from a non-Anglophone perspective, Shakespeare in a sense needs to be destroyed, reconciled, integrated, negotiated, reinterpreted, adapted, transformed, challenged, and transferred within different locations, various timeframes, and assorted cultures in order to be truly global. Shakespeare cannot become truly global unless his work is re-dressed and localised within the local context in which he is adapted. Shakespeare is undeniably global; however, it is not Shakespeare who owns an international passport and a series of tourist visas; but rather it is those non-Anglophone worlds that invite and grant access to him, to add value and cultural capital to Shakespeare by making his works a global phenomenon. When Shakespeare was brought into Asian theatres and adapted into local contexts, it was each specific local culture that was the primary concern for the adaptor. For example, when Chinese artists adapted Shakespeare into various forms of *xiqu* (Chinese opera), it was the decline in *xiqu* that they were trying to stave off. In this case, Shakespeare was merely translated, shaped, modified and adapted to the needs and desires of adaptors who needed to serve that local purpose. As Rustom Bharucha explains: ‘Shakespeare is mobilised as a catalyst (literally, a foreign element), producing a countercontext, or more precisely, a metatheatrical performative event where the dramatic text of Shakespeare as such is not the issue.’⁹²

Today, the dialogue between East and West should be reciprocal and even multi-dimensional. During the process of two-way exchange, the importance of local Shakespeare needs always to be stressed. When Shakespeare’s texts travel to a new place, they are often hybridised into the local cultures, and audiences are invited to engage with Shakespeare’s knowledge from the text. Knowledge, as the case may be, can be exported, and the reverse should also be true that it could be ‘benignly imported.’⁹³ Hence, the relationship between Shakespeare and local knowledge is very much a two-way street; as Joughin suggests: ‘as we continue to appropriate Shakespeare, it is worth remembering that Shakespeare also continues to appropriate us.’⁹⁴ In this regard, these local Shakespeare productions will in return bring ‘new

⁹² Bharucha, ‘Foreign Asia / Foreign Shakespeare: Dissenting Notes on New Asian Interculturality, Postcoloniality, and Recolonization’, in *Theatre Journal*, 56.1 (2004), p.1.

⁹³ Martin Orkin, *Local Shakespeares: Proximations and Power* (London: Routledge, 2005), p.2.

⁹⁴ John J. Joughin, ‘Philosophical Shakespeares: An Introduction’, in *Philosophical Shakespeares*, ed. by John J. Joughin (London: Routledge, 2000), 16.

sightings of the imaginative vision that created the plays,⁹⁵ and new ways of interpretation in which ‘we have yet to catch up with him.’⁹⁶

In accord with this argument, my study tries to contribute to reforming our understanding of global Shakespeare through examining Chinese Shakespearean performances. Specifically, I use the proliferation of contemporary adaptations and performances of Shakespeare in Mainland China from the 1980s to the present as an example to demonstrate the complicated language, historical, cultural, and socio-political interactions between the Chinese and the Anglophone world during the last three decades. It is an inquiry of the (re)presentation, (re)construction, and perception of Shakespeare in contemporary China, in a period of dramatic local, social and economic changes, *vis-à-vis* the increasingly powerful impact of the global consumption of literary, cultural artefacts. My purpose is to find out how interactions take place between Shakespearean text and performance and Chinese culture in the context of globalisation. The key questions I shall investigate are as follows:

Why should Shakespeare be associated with China? What adaptations and performances have been undertaken in China? To what extent can the Chinese interpretations of Shakespeare tell us about social changes in China? How has Shakespeare affected Chinese theatre and Chinese culture? How can Chinese Shakespeares contribute to the general interpretive possibilities of Shakespeare and to the global awareness of foreign Shakespeares?

Theorizations of theatrical interculturalism began in the 1970s, but until now, there has not emerged a unanimously agreed theory to explain intercultural theatre. Therefore, my dissertation deploys cross-disciplinary approaches of translation studies, performance theories, cultural studies, comparative literature and the sociological theory of locality criticism to examine the mechanisms of adapting Shakespeare into Chinese theatrical forms and offers a thick account of the producing, promoting, and perceiving of Shakespeare in today’s China. In a way of combining ‘thick description’⁹⁷ and critical analysis, the dissertation focuses on

⁹⁵ John Russell Brown, “Foreign Shakespeare and English-speaking Audiences,” in *Foreign Shakespeare*, ed. by Dennis Kennedy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.34.

⁹⁶ Terry Eagleton, *William Shakespeare* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), ix-x.

⁹⁷ See Clifford Geertz, ‘Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture’, in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp.3-30. “Thick description” is a notion proposed by Clifford Geertz. In anthropology and other fields, a thick description of a human behaviour is one that explains not just the behaviour, but its context as

shifting localities that cluster around the artists, their works, and their audiences. Three genres of performances—*huaju* (spoken drama), *xiqu* (Chinese opera) and *dianying* (films)—are singled out in this study to discover key cultural and aesthetic moments of their encounter, influence, and reception. Nine adaptations are examined as products of the interculturalism of Chinese Shakespeares. I lay out the chapters of my dissertation according to the significant aspects (i.e. theatre translation) and genres in the work of adapting Shakespeare to Chinese stage and screen, thus to avoid simply making a historical narrative report of Chinese Shakespeares. The following is a description of the five chapters in my dissertation:

Chapter 1, ‘Shakespeare and China: A Complex Intercultural Encounter,’ reviews a history of Chinese reception of Shakespeare, specifically in linguistic translation and theatrical presentation. It offers an account of China’s encounter with Shakespeare from the early twentieth century to the most recent stage productions and film adaptations in the twenty-first century. The historical review lays the ground for my premise that Chinese performances of Shakespeare are invariably informed by ideological, political or cultural norms and constraints of Chinese society.

Chapter 2, ‘Translating Shakespeare to Chinese Stage: Performative Translation and Cultural Transformation,’ aims to find out how Chinese translators configure the relationships between the source and target languages and cultures, and between the performative and the literary in their specific social-cultural contexts. I have selected for my focus *Qing jun ru weng* 请君入瓮 (Please Step into the Urn), a translation of *Measure for Measure* specially produced by Ying Ruocheng for stage performance in 1981 as the research case, analysing the translating methods, language in use and cultural transfer. This translation is performance-oriented and closely related to the Chinese social and cultural context, showcasing Chinese theatre artists’ bold attempt to explore how the moral and social issues in Shakespeare’s time could relate with the reality of Chinese society in the early 1980s, when China had just emerged from the turmoil of Cultural Revolution and began the reform and opening-up to the

well, such that the behaviour becomes meaningful to an outsider. The term was used by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz in his *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973) to describe his own method of doing ethnography (Geertz 1973: 5-6, 9-10). Since then, the term and the methodology it represents has gained currency in the social sciences and beyond. Today, ‘thick description’ is used in a variety of fields, including the type of literary criticism known as New Historicism. In his essay ‘Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture’ (1973), Geertz explains that he adopted the term from philosopher Gilbert Ryle, specifically his lecture ‘What is le Penseur doing?’.

outside world. Through an analysis of examples cited from *Qing jun ru weng*, I conclude that Ying's translation principles and strategies accord with the viewpoints of many cultural translation theorists, which help to realize the colloquialism and performability that is desirable in Shakespeare translation for the stage.

Chapter 3, 'East Meets West: Identity and Intercultural Discourse in *huaju* Shakespeares,' investigates Shakespeare performances in *huaju* (spoken drama). The aim is to find out Shakespeare's influence in establishing and developing a modern Chinese theatre, and how Shakespeare is associated with twenty-first century China in the context of globalisation. This chapter brings together intercultural theory and practice through the close analysis of two distinct *huaju* performances of Shakespeare, *Da Jiangjun Kou Liulan* 大将军寇流兰 (*The Tragedy of Coriolanus*, 2007), a Mandarin adaptation by Lin Zhaohua, and *King Lear* (2006), a Mandarin-English bilingual production by David Tse Ka-shing. The study of these *huaju* adaptations allows me to re-examine and interrogate the dynamic intercultural relationship between Shakespeare and specific historical, cultural, sociopolitical, and dramatic contexts, and enables me to investigate the current condition of globalised Shakespeare. *Coriolanus* and *Lear* when restaged in contemporary China demonstrate how (intercultural) identity is constructed through the subjectivity and iconicity of Shakespeare's characters and the performativity of Shakespeare's text.

Chapter 4, 'Sinicizing the Bard: Shakespeare in Traditional Chinese Operas,' examines three adaptations of *Macbeth* in different genres of indigenous Chinese theatre, the *kunju* *Xie shou ji* 血手记 (*Blood-stained Hands*, 1986), the all-female *yueju* *Ma Long jiangjun* 马龙将军 (*General Ma Long*, 2001), and the *chuanju* solo *Makebai furen* 马克白夫人 (*Lady Macbeth*, 2001)—with a focus on the dramatic techniques and styles of operatic adaptations. Underneath their iridescent theatricality, the three adaptations of *Macbeth* each inculcate values structured by their distinct socio-political and cultural environs. In the *kunju* *Blood-stained Hands*, Shakespeare was used to celebrate the ancient theatrical tradition and to reaffirm concerns and sentiment that had been deliberately destroyed in the previous decade. The *yueju* opera *General Ma Long*, conversely, resorted to Shakespeare's authority for artistic experiments in an attempt to revitalize a theatre with its repertoire traditionally confined to plays of romance and love and expand its acting vocabulary. In *Lady Macbeth*, Shakespeare became a site for intellectual exploration of ethics,

gender, Zeitgeist and a new aesthetic. The three sinicized adaptations are innovative artistic development to renew Shakespeare. They take the international cultural icon off his pedestal in English literature to illuminate China in the context of globalization and cross-cultural exchange.

Chapter 5, ‘Adapted for the Screen: Shakespeare in Chinese Cinema,’ discusses how Shakespeare and Chinese aesthetics are brought together to create diverse incarnations and bold imaginations of Shakespearean plays. This chapter examines a 1931 silent movie *Yi jian mei* 一剪梅 (*A Spray of Plum Blossoms*) adapted from *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and two Chinese *Hamlets* released in 2006—Feng Xiaogang’s *Ye yan* 夜宴 (*The Banquet*) and Hu Xuehua (Sherwood Hu)’s *Ximalaya wangzi* 喜马拉雅王子 (*Prince of the Himalayas*), with regard to their local and transcultural actualization of the portability potential inherent in Shakespeare’s plays. I focus on how the three movies as independent art works make use of Shakespeare’s cultural capital to present their hermeneutics of both Shakespeare and local cultures through the popular medium of cinema. I discuss the transformation of the image of Chinese women, from the obedient passive figures in Confucian culture, to the leading ladies and martial heroines in the silent film *A Spray of Plum Blossoms*. *The Banquet* converted *Hamlet* into a martial arts epic, while *Prince of the Himalayas* relocated the same play into ancient Tibet. Whether such films represent the homogenization and suppression of local cultures by a commercially driven global culture, or subversive retorts to global culture by developing nations and previously disenfranchised communities, twenty-first century Shakespeare on film is frequently concerned with multiculturalism, creatively exploring tensions between the global and the local, and using Shakespeare’s plays to communicate local traditions and languages to a wide audience.

V Coda

I have attempted above to draw on theories in the field of intercultural theatre as a way of understanding the complexities of cultural exchange between the East and West through adapting Shakespeare. Despite my effort to integrate a diverse range of theories and practices, I am not advocating a totalizing theory of interculturalism. Rather, the discussion in this introduction is designed to situate my study of Chinese Shakespeare in a big-picture of the field, so as to enable a strategic

way of rethinking the local and context-specific through the global, and vice versa. Not surprisingly, in-depth studies of Shakespeare's reception in a single country (such as those of Werner Habicht, Minoru Fujita and Leonard Pronko, Tetsuo Kishi and David Bradshaw)⁹⁸ have provided fresh insights into the mechanisms of intercultural adaptation. There is also a substantial literature that studies Shakespeare adaptations from feminist, Marxist and other critical perspectives. The Chinese experience of Shakespeare provides a means of testing the post-modern models of *global*, *foreign* and *intercultural* Shakespeare, which have succeeded Jan Kott's challenging paradigm that we find 'Shakespeare our Contemporary'.⁹⁹ Moreover, the interaction between Shakespeare and Chinese theatre reflects the nature of the exchange between Western and Asian theatre in the twentieth century and forms a substantial part of the tendency towards the interculturalism of postmodern theatre. This tendency, as critics have pointed out, demonstrates that Western theatre shows an interest in the 'distancing sense' and stylised techniques of Asian theatre, while Eastern theatre tries to imitate the naturalistic dramatic techniques of Western theatre.¹⁰⁰ My overview of the intercultural theories here is not exhaustive, given the wide range of scholarship with regards to intercultural Shakespeare adaptations, but it does locate the principal critical works undertaken in this field, and attempts to articulate where within this field my own study is situated.

This thesis, I believe, is an important addition to current scholarship in global Shakespeare. Located in the field of intercultural theatre, my study takes into account Chinese adaptation of and engagement with the Shakespeare canon, and the interaction between Shakespeare and Chinese history, politics, culture and theatre. It is my emphasis on interculturalism and plurality of displacement and interchange that is the thesis's richest contribution to the present state of scholarship in global Shakespeare. As the thesis title suggests, it is about Chinese Shakespeares, and not the comfortable zone of Anglophone Shakespeare that many Western scholars are familiar with. Rather than textual study, it spans a variety of performance genres,

⁹⁸ See Werner Habicht, 'Romanticism, Antiromanticism, and the German Shakespeare Tradition', in *Shakespeare and Cultural Traditions*, eds. by Tetsuo Kishi, Roger Pringle and Stanley Wells (Newark DE: University of Delaware Press, 1994), pp. 243-52; Minoru Fujita and Leonard Pronko, *Shakespeare East and West* (Richmond, Surrey: Japan Library, 1996); Tetsuo Kishi and David Bradshaw, *Shakespeare in Japan* (New York: Continuum, 2005).

⁹⁹ Jan Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (Norton, 1974)

¹⁰⁰ Yi Yu, 'The Exchange between Oriental Theatre and Western Theatre', in *A Selection of Comparative Drama*, eds. by Xia Xie Shi and Lu Run Tang (Beijing: Chinese Drama Press, 1988), pp.118-48.

covering ambitiously three different types of Shakespeare adaptation: spoken theatre, traditional Chinese opera and film. It is a much-needed work for Chinese academia where publications of Shakespeare in performance are scant and research into Shakespeare's theatre translation is totally lacking. The majority of the case studies that I explore in depth in this thesis, including Ying Ruocheng's *Qing jun ru weng*, Lin Zhaohua's *Coriolanus*, the *yueju* and *chuanju* Macbeth, and the Tibetan *Hamlet*, have not yet been touched upon by other scholars. Therefore, my thesis is the most up-to-date research into this field and can help Western scholars to learn about what is happening on Chinese stage. Chinese Shakespeares is indeed a fascinating terrain of cross-cultural interactions in a time of rapid commercialisation and globalisation of the art of theatre. By completing the thesis, I believe that I have pushed Chinese Shakespeare scholarship a small step further and have also contributed to the research into global Shakespeare.

Chapter 1 Shakespeare and China: A Complex Intercultural Encounter

Starting from the mid-nineteenth century, Shakespeare has become more and more popular in China. His name has been referred to as a literary authority and cultural icon, his works have been translated into Chinese in different ways, his plays have been performed on China's stages and taught in China's schools, and a large number of Chinese scholars have devoted considerable time and effort to the study of his works. Chinese writers, filmmakers, and theatre directors have engaged Shakespeare in their works in a wide range of contexts. Performances range from the 1910s' civilized drama and mid-twentieth-century Soviet-Chinese theatre collaboration to a global array of approaches in cinema and postmodern theatre. This chapter reviews a history of Chinese reception of Shakespeare for about two centuries, specifically in linguistic translation and theatrical presentation. It offers an account of China's encounter with Shakespeare from the mid-nineteenth century when Shakespeare was only a name learned by the Chinese to the most recent stage productions and film adaptations of Shakespeare in the twenty-first century. This history of China's reception of Shakespeare mirrors the changes of Chinese attitudes in adapting Western culture to Chinese society and culture. Over the course of about two hundred years of exposure to the playwright, the Chinese have changed their attitudes towards him and his works, albeit influenced by certain historical factors, including politics, the economy, culture, and society. This chapter will analyse the various shifts in China's attitudes towards the English dramatist during its contact with the West in different historical periods.

Shakespeare's entry into China is different from his transmission to any other country in the world. As Kennedy said in the 'afterword' of *Foreign Shakespeare: Contemporary Performance*, the importation of Shakespeare into China 'followed neither the nationalist model established in central Europe in the eighteenth century, nor the imperialist model of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Instead it followed almost directly the political condition and changing circumstances of the country.'¹⁰¹ China was not, like India, forced under colonialism to import

¹⁰¹ Dennis Kennedy, 'Afterword: Shakespearean orientalism', in *Foreign Shakespeare: Contemporary Performance* ed. by Dennis Kennedy (Cambridge, New York, Victoria:

Shakespeare as a model of a superior culture. Nor was China as lucky as Japan to experience a relatively smooth transitional process of Westernization, in which a literary master builder like Tsubouchi Shoyo could translate Shakespeare's complete works into elegant Japanese and use him as an aesthetic alternative to Japan's literary tradition.¹⁰² Viewed historically, China's reception of Shakespeare began under the threat of gunboat diplomacy from Western powers. As Takeuchi Yoshimi contended: 'The modern orient was born only when it was invaded, defeated, and exploited by the West.'¹⁰³ China, an ancient country which is proud of its rich historical and cultural heritage, had to open its doors to the Western world after the Opium War (1839-1842). Under the advocacy of '师夷长计以制夷' (learning the advanced techniques of foreign countries in order to resist them),¹⁰⁴ the name of Shakespeare was introduced to China by some patriotic Chinese. During the initial contacts, Shakespeare's works were translated only indirectly into Chinese as tales, rendered in classical Chinese, and such narrative literature served as sources for a number of stage productions. The translation of Shakespeare's complete plays started in the 1920s after the New Culture Movement, which aggressively introduced ideas from the West and facilitated the spread of Shakespeare's influence in China, though Ibsen was promoted more fervently than Shakespeare was at that time. The post-1949 Communist China manifested a contradictory vision about Shakespeare. While Chinese Shakespeareans upheld Marx's and Engels's positive appraisal of Shakespeare, Mao Zedong's utmost class ideology negatively confined the interpretation of Shakespeare's works; furthermore, Russia's Stanislavsky system strictly dictated the stage performance. It was in China's contemporary era that Shakespeare enjoyed a golden age, when the Shakespeare industry flourished in both study and performance of various forms. Overall, the Chinese reception of Shakespeare has been entwined with the social, cultural and political changes in China. While Shakespeare has witnessed China's shifts in politics, literature and culture over the last century, the increasing popularity of the English dramatist in

Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 297.

¹⁰² Andrea j. Nouryeh, 'Shakespeare and the Japanese Stage', in *Foreign Shakespeare: Contemporary Performance* ed. by Dennis Kennedy (Cambridge, New York, Victoria: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 253-269 (p.255).

¹⁰³ Quoted in Alexander (now Alexa) C. Y. Huang, *Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage, 1839-2004: A History of Transcultural Performance* (Diss., California: Stanford University, 2004), p.104.

¹⁰⁴ Quoted in Tu Minggao, ed. *Modern History of China* (Chongqing: South-west Normal University Press, 1989), p. 41.

China signifies the penetration of Western influence in China.

1.1 In the Name of *Shashibiya* (Shakespeare): Mid-Nineteenth Century to the Turn of Twentieth Century

Shakespeare was initially introduced to China by patriotic Chinese intellectuals as well as Western missionaries around the mid-nineteenth century for different purposes. Meng Xianqiang has noted, '[t]he first man who translated the name of Shakespeare into Chinese was Lin Zexu (1785-1850), a politician and senior official (Governor-general of Hu-Guang provinces) in the late Qing dynasty (1640-1911).'¹⁰⁵ The name 'Shakespeare' was first mentioned in a passing reference by Lin Zexu in his rendition of Hugh Murray's (1789-1845) *Cyclopedia of Geography* (1836), which was published in 1839 under the title *Sizhou zhi* 四洲志 [Annals of the Four Continents].¹⁰⁶ Lin was a national hero in the First Sino-British Opium War (1839-1842). Entrusted by the Emperor of the Qing dynasty, Lin went to Hunan and Guangdong provinces to ban the illegal British opium trade, which not only cost China enormous sums of money but also brought harm to the health and moral quality of those Chinese who were addicted to the drug. Realizing that the Qing government had completely isolated itself from the rest of the world, Lin organized his people to translate Western books and newspapers in order to counteract the invasion of Western countries through acquiring a better understanding of their politics, history, geography and technology. Lin's *Annals of the Four Continents* is divided into thirty-four chapters for different countries and one chapter for 'world religions.' Shakespeare, translated as *Shashibi'a* [沙士比阿] was mentioned along with Milton under the section 'Miscellanies [Zaji 杂记]' in Chapter 28, 'England.' The chapter records the political and military system, the economics, and 'national character' of England. The only phrase used by Lin to describe Shakespeare is '*fu zhu shu* 富著述 [prolific],' which is followed by a comment on the British as being

¹⁰⁵ Meng Xianqiang, 'The Reception of Shakespeare in China: a Historical Overview', in *Shakespeare Global/Local: The Hong Kong Imaginary in Transcultural Production*, eds. by Kwok-kan Tam, Andrew Parkin and Terry Siu-hian Yip (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002), p.116.

¹⁰⁶ Lin Zexu, trans. ed., *Sizhou Zhi* [Annals of the Four Continents] (Shanghai: Zhuyitang, 1891); reprinted in Lin Zexu, *Sizhou Zhi*, annot. Zhang Man (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 2002), p.117. This was a collaborative translation—the prevalent mode of translation at that time. In addition to translating and compiling information from *The Cyclopedia of Geography*, Lin also inserted his opinions about each country he introduces and compares them to China.

‘greedy, fierce, alcoholic, yet skilful in handicraft [俗贪而悍，尚奢嗜酒，惟技艺灵巧].’¹⁰⁷ Obviously, Lin’s goal was not to introduce Shakespeare and his works. Rather, his purpose was to introduce knowledge about the West with the aim of resisting encroaching European powers by knowing the enemy better. No concrete content from Shakespeare’s plays or analyses of their Englishness were used to meet Lin’s objective of informing his fellow officials about English national character or their likely behaviour in time of war. Like many of his contemporaries, Lin had only minimal English and relied on interpreters and collaborators to feed him the content, which he then *translated* and compiled in the reference book.

The Opium War forced China, a country with a history of more than two thousand years of feudal society, which had always been self-contained and considered herself the centre of the world, to open her doors to the West. The War, followed by a series of unequal treaties between China and Western countries, marked China’s great change from a feudal kingdom to a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country in that era of her history.

After the 1850s, English and American missionaries came to China and many missionary schools were established as a way to introduce Western civilization to China. The name of Shakespeare was often mentioned as a great poet and dramatist of the Elizabethan age in the translations of various books on culture, geography and history written by the missionaries.¹⁰⁸ Seventeen years after Lin Zexu’s reference, Shakespeare was introduced as ‘*Shakesibi* [舌克斯毕]’ in Chinese transliteration by a British missionary named William Muirhead in 1856 in his translation of Thomas Milner’s *The History of England: from the Invasions of Julius Caesar to the Year A.D. 1852*, entitled *Da Ying Guo Zhi* 大英国志 [An Account of the Great British Empire].¹⁰⁹ Shakespeare was mentioned along with Sidney, Spenser, Bacon, and Hooker as one of the literary celebrities nourished by the rich culture of Elizabethan

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Li Ruru, ‘Shakespeare Translation in China’, *Leeds East Asia Papers*, 4 (1991), 1-25.

¹⁰⁹ Muirhead’s translation was published by Mohai Academy in Shanghai in 1856. Quoted in Ge Baoquan, ‘Shashibiya Zuopin Zai Zhongguo 莎士比亚作品在中国 [Shakespeare’s Works in China]’, *Shijie Wenxue* 世界文学 [World Literature], May 1964; reprint: *Shashibiya Yanjiu* 莎士比亚研究 [Shakespeare Studies] (China), 1 (1983), 332-342 (p.332), and Li Ruru, *Shashibiya: Staging Shakespeare in China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), p. 247, note 6. Ge Baoquan’s findings (1964; 1983: 332-342) about *Da Ying Guo Zhi* 大英国志 [An Account of the Great British Empire] is supplemented by other scholars. Also, see Rudolph J. Chu (1970); Simon Chau (1981), 5-10; Wang Yiqun (1987); Li Shixue (1988); Wang Zuoliang (1991); Zhang Xiao Yang (1996); Wen-shan Shih (2000), 141; Alexander C. Y. Huang (2004), 37.

England. In another work published by an American missionary, Chevalier, *The History of the World* (*Wan Guo Tong Jian* 万国通鉴, 1882), Shakespeare was called a ‘poet noted for his plays which express man’s joys and sorrows with a penetration unequalled since Homer.’¹¹⁰ In the next twenty years, Shakespeare’s name appeared frequently in various works, almost all by European missionaries, and was lauded with honorific descriptions.¹¹¹ Among them probably the most pertinent comment was from *Si Xue Qi Meng Shiliu Zhong* 思学启蒙十六种 (literally translated as ‘Introduction to Sixteen Western Works,’ 1896), edited and compiled by an American missionary, which established the subsequent conception of Shakespeare in relation to his ability to represent the truth of human nature:

None of his poetic works did not vividly and truthfully imitate man’s joy, rage, sorrow and happiness. Furthermore, he has such profound understanding of life and artistry that he portrays human manners faithful to characters of high and low, virtue and vice. With economical depiction, each character fully reflects true humanity.¹¹²

The Western-influenced Chinese intellectuals first paid attention to Shakespeare at the turn of the twentieth century. As the Manchu Empire went into terminal decline and the country lapsed into economic recession, Chinese intellectuals became increasingly concerned to transform the people into ‘new citizens,’ and one route was through the promotion of Western literature. Yan Fu (1812-1921), a thinker and the translator of Darwin’s *The Origin of Species*, who had studied in England for a few years, made passing references to Shakespeare’s international reputation in his writing. Yan wrote in 1894¹¹³ that Shakespeare’s characters reflected common humanity: ‘Shakespeare’s characters look very similar to people living today. We can identify ourselves with [Shakespeare’s] characters not only in appearance and manner, but also in thought and emotion’.¹¹⁴ In another book in 1908,¹¹⁵ Yan took Antony’s speech in *Julius Caesar* (3.2.73-107) as a way to explain the function of

¹¹⁰ See Ge (1964: 333) and Zhang Xiao Yang, (1996: 99). The passage is quoted and translated in Wang Zuoliang, ‘The Shakespearean Moment in China’, *Shashibiya Xulun* 莎士比亚绪论 [*Preliminary Essays on Shakespeare in China*] (Chongqing: Chongqing Publishing, 1991), 162-181 (Chinese); 207-221 (English) (p.207).

¹¹¹ See Ge (1964: 333) and Zhang Xiao Yang (1996: 99-100).

¹¹² Qtd. in Ge (1964: 333).

¹¹³ Yan Fu, *The Evolution of Nature* (1894; reprint, Beijing: Science Press, 1971), p. 57.

¹¹⁴ Qtd. and trans. in Zhang Xiao Yang (1996: 101).

¹¹⁵ Yan Fu, *An Elementary Introduction to Logic* (1908; reprint, Beijing: Commercial Press, 1981), p.56.

logic in argument:

Shakespeare wrote a play recounting the murder of Caesar. When Antony delivers a speech to the citizens while showing the body of Caesar to the public, he uses logic to stir up the citizens cleverly because Brutus warned him that he would not be allowed to redress a grievance for Caesar and blame the murderers. The citizens are greatly agitated by the speech and their resentment against Brutus and his comrades is running high. We should attribute Antony's success to the function of logic!¹¹⁶

Yan points out that Antony's speech makes an effective use of reasoning to arouse the citizen's desire for revenge, and thus Antony accomplishes his own political goal. During the first phase of Shakespearean reception in China, the name of Shakespeare was transliterated in various ways, such as *Shashibia* by Lin Zexu (1785-1850), *Shekesibi* by William Muirhead (1822-1900), *Shaisibier* by Joseph Edkins (1823-1905), and *Shasipier* by Devello Z. Sheffield (1841-1913), an American priest. It was only in 1902 that Liang Qichao (1873-1929) fixed transliterating Shakespeare as *Shashibiya* 莎士比亚 in an article for a literary column in the journal *Xin Min* 新民 (New People).¹¹⁷ Liang expresses his awe of the poet's creative scope: 'Poets such as Shakespeare, Milton, and Tennyson all wrote poems which were composed of several tens of thousands of words. Alas! Leave alone their poetic styles, the voluminousness alone is overwhelmingly impressive'.¹¹⁸ Lu Xun (1881-1936), an influential writer-critic who earnestly exhorted China to learn from the West, mentioned Shakespeare and other literary masters as the foundations of European culture because the thoughts and sentiments in their works helped unify their nations.¹¹⁹ According to Lu, a modern nation needed great literary works to maintain a balance between the value of science and that of emotion:

¹¹⁶ Zhang Xiao Yang, *Shakespeare in China: A Comparative Study of Two Traditions and Cultures* (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1996), pp.100-101.

¹¹⁷ The name *Shashibiya* was first used in 1902 by Liang Qichao (1873-1927), an early advocate for Chinese learning from the West and of the 1898 *coup d'état* leaders. Liang mentioned great literary names, including Homer and Shakespeare in *Yinbingshi shihua* 饮冰室诗话 (Poetic Talks from Yinbing Study), published in the May issue of *Xinmin congbao* 新民丛报 (New People's Serial Journal) in 1902. This Chinese name *Shashibiya* has been adopted thereafter. For more information on early introduction of Shakespeare to China, see 孟宪强, *中国莎学简史* (长春: 东北师范大学出版社, 1994) [Meng Xianqiang, *A Brief History of Shakespeare Studies in China*, 1994], p.11.

¹¹⁸ Qtd. in Ge (1964: 331).

¹¹⁹ 鲁迅, '科学史论' (1907), *鲁迅全集*, 20卷, 第1卷 (北京: 人民文学出版社, 1973) [Lu, Xun, 'Comment on the History of Science' (1907), in *The Complete Works of Lu Xun*, 20 vols., no.1 (Beijing: People's Literature Press, 1973)], pp. 24-37.

[...] what a society needs is not only Newton but also Shakespeare [...] a writer like Shakespeare can make people have a sound and perfect human nature and avoid an odd and partial humanity, making them the very people a modern civilized society needs.¹²⁰

So far we have examined different references to the name of Shakespeare by writers with diverse agendas. The missionary writings that referenced Shakespeare were produced in a systematic program to introduce Christianity—along with Christian civilization—into China and to convert China. The writings in the vein of ‘know thy enemy’¹²¹ referenced the name of Shakespeare as part of an effort to know the British culture. The translations of Western works by such scholars as Yan Fu focused on yet another dimension, namely the prospect of using Western cultural models to serve the needs of modernization projects. However, the uniformity of these references is striking. Almost all of them speak of Shakespeare as a symbol of the superiority of Anglo-European cultures.

Even though Shakespeare came to China at the ‘right psychological moment,’ as Wang Zuoliang comments a century later,¹²² indicating China’s first opening up to receive Western cultural influence, beyond these references to Shakespeare’s name and status in the English canon no Chinese translations were available at this time and very few Chinese had read Shakespeare’s plays. For about fifty years, the Chinese knew nothing about Shakespeare other than his reputation as a poet and playwright in England. Shakespeare remained a sonorous name with lofty epithets but without his art being understood by any. The name of Shakespeare was introduced to China only among some translations of English history and geography. Consequently, the first reception phase of Shakespeare in China was completely outside the field of art and literature. This indicates the Chinese fascination with a foreign poet who turned into a symbol of cultural glory and who, a landmark in English history, gave his national literature a strong identity. The Chinese

¹²⁰ Qtd. and trans. in Zhang Xiao Yang, *Shakespeare in China: A Comparative Study of Two Traditions and Cultures* (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1996), pp.101-102.

¹²¹ The phrase ‘know thy enemy’ comes from the ancient Chinese general Sun Tzu. The full quote is: ‘Know thy enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles, you will never be defeated. When you are ignorant of the enemy but know yourself, your chances of winning or losing are equal. If ignorant both of your enemy and of yourself, you are sure to be defeated in every battle.’

¹²² Wang Zuoliang, ‘The Shakespearean Moment in China’, *Shashibiya Xulun 莎士比亚绪论 [Preliminary Essays on Shakespeare in China]* (Chongqing: Chongqing Publishing, 1991), pp.162-181 (Chinese); pp. 207-221 (English) (p.208).

intellectuals, many of whom lost faith in their own tradition, earnestly searched for such a model in foreign cultures.

1.2 Exotic Tales from the Overseas: The Early Twentieth Century

In the early phase of China's discovery of Shakespeare no translation of his actual work was available. It was through the translation—and modifications—of Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* that the Chinese first knew the works of Shakespeare. In 1903, ten pieces from the Lambs' *Tales*¹²³ were rendered and published by an anonymous translator into classical Chinese, the literary language used in China for over three thousand years.¹²⁴ The translation was entitled *Xie wai qi tan* 邈外奇谈 [*Exotic Tales from Overseas*]. In his preface, the anonymous translator incorrectly attributed the authorship of the work to Shakespeare, who was an 'unprecedentedly famous actor' earning 'highest admiration throughout the European Continent' by writing 'scripts and novels'.¹²⁵ Unaware that the *Tales* were originally plays, this writer considered his translation able to 'broaden the scope of Chinese novels'.¹²⁶ Following the format of traditional Chinese fiction, the ten stories were arranged as ten chapters of a novel, with each chapter headed by an eight-character poetic line giving the gist of the chapter's contents. *The Merchant of Venice*, for instance, was 'Antonio Borrows Money by Making a Contract of Flesh'; *The Taming of the Shrew*, 'Pertruchio Tames the Woman with Habits of Jealousy'; and *Hamlet*, 'Avenging the Murder Hamlet Kills his Uncle'.¹²⁷ From its preface and the chapter headings given to the tales the translator opted for a popular, entertaining version of the *Tales*.

This anonymous translation of the *Tales* did not circulate widely. In the following year 1904, the complete Lambs' *Tales from Shakespeare* was rendered by Lin Shu (1852–1924)¹²⁸ and Wei Yi, under the title *Yingguo shiren yinbian yanyu* 英

¹²³ The ten stories are: *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Cymbeline*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *Hamlet*.

¹²⁴ He Qixin, 'China's Shakespeare', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 37.2 (Summer, 1986), 150.

¹²⁵ See Ge (1964: 334).

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 335.

¹²⁸ Lin Shu, the most popular English-Chinese translator of the early twentieth century, rewrote in classical Chinese prose a large number of novels by nineteenth-century writers including Dickens, Scott, Hugo, and Balzac.

国诗人吟边燕语 [The Delightful Narration of an English Poet]. This version contained all twenty stories of the *Tales*, but again mistakenly credited Shakespeare as its original author. More significantly, Lin Shu, its major translator, described the subject of the *Tales* as ‘mystical,’ and wondered why an advanced culture such as the English would celebrate a pre-modern work fraught with ghosts and the talk of the supernatural:

Shakespeare’s poetry parallels that of China’s [great poet] Du Fu. His subjects and figure of speech, however, often find expression in the mystical. If Westerners are truly civilized, they should have banned and burned such things so as not to confound the enlightenment of society. However, the fact is that the intellectual elite of the West all indulge in his poetry; every household recites it. Moreover, they use his verses as scripts for performances on the stage. Gentlemen and ladies all go to listen to them, sighing and weeping along. Nobody criticizes the old concepts in his work, nor is any one exasperated by his bent for the mystical.¹²⁹

Since numerous allusions to classical mythology could be found in Shakespeare’s plays, Lin Shu categorized the *Tales* as ‘*shenguai xiaoshuo* 神怪小说’ (stories of gods and spirits), a category very familiar to Chinese readers. Lin explained: ‘Shakespeare looked to fairies and monsters for his inspiration, themes and language’.¹³⁰ Treating the tales as *Chuanqi* 传奇 (legend),¹³¹ Lin gave each story a two-character mythical title, as in the traditional *Chuanqi* story form. The following were some examples of the titles of the twenty tales Lin rendered:¹³²

<i>Rou quan</i> [The Contract of Flesh]	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>
<i>Zhu qing</i> [The Tempering of Love]	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>
<i>Gui zhao</i> [The Ghost’s Command]	<i>Hamlet</i>
<i>Nü bian</i> [The Rebellion of Daughters]	<i>King Lear</i>
<i>Gu zheng</i> [Driven by Venom]	<i>Macbeth</i>

Traditionally, the Chinese categorized all literary genres other than formal

¹²⁹ 林纾, ‘序’, 林纾, 魏易, *英国诗人吟边燕语* (上海: 商务印书馆, 1904) [Lin Shu, ‘Preface’, in Lin Shu and Wei Yi, *The Delightful Narration of an English Poet* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1904)], pp.1-2.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹³¹ *Chuanqi* 传奇, literally meaning ‘transmitting the marvelous,’ is a narrative genre popular in the Tang (618-907 A.D.) and Song (960-1279 A.D.) dynasties. Many of the *chuanqi* works depict mystical, fantastic tales in contemporary settings.

¹³² 林纾, 魏易, *英国诗人吟边燕语* (上海: 商务印书馆, 1904) [Lin Shu and Wei Yi, *The Delightful Narration of an English Poet* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1904)], Table of Contents.

poetry and prose (essay) as indistinguishably *xiaoshuo* 小说 (literally ‘small talk’), including short stories, epic novels, and dramatic forms; thus when Western literature was first introduced into China, drama and the prose narratives were not consciously separated and were often interchangeable in form, and while some adapted or translated Western novels into the dramatic (dialogue) form, others rendered foreign plays into narrative form following traditional Chinese novels. This trend explains why the earliest translators of Shakespeare recognized him as a theatre artist but did not question why his works were narratives and not dramatic plays.

Interestingly, the fact that Lin Shu did not know any European language himself but managed nevertheless to *translate* over 180 Western works with the aid of interpreters¹³³ explains his perception of Shakespeare. With the *Tales*, Lin was assisted by Wei Yi’s oral interpretation of the Lambs’ narratives, and rendered it into elegant classical Chinese. Translating as such is considered no less honourable or creative than an original story, just as scholars in the past would partake in a genealogy of a collective authorship through commenting on existing canons. In the decade after 1910, Lin Shu and Chen Jialin co-authored story summaries of four of Shakespeare’s history plays and one of his tragedies.¹³⁴ Lin’s works were very well received by the Chinese during China’s first contact with Western literature. His translations of Dickens, Dumas *films*, Balzac, Hugo, Scott, and Stowe soon found a wide readership.¹³⁵ A number of them were adapted into theatre. Lin’s translation of the *Tales* appeared in three different editions and they were reprinted eleven times between 1905 and 1935.¹³⁶ Lin’s loose translations and his interpretation played a crucial role in the introduction of Shakespeare to the Chinese public. Many Chinese literary figures commented on how much they had been influenced by Lin’s *Tales* when they were children. A number of scholars have quoted from the 1928 essay of ‘My Childhood’ by Guo Moruo (1892-1978), a prominent poet and playwright in modern China, to emphasize the significance of Lin’s version in the popularization of Shakespeare’s stories in China: ‘Unconsciously I was much influenced by [Lin’s]

¹³³ Wang Zuoliang, ‘The Shakespearean Moment in China’, *Preliminary Essays on Shakespeare in China* [Shashibiya Xulun] (Chongqing, Sichuan: Chongqing Publishing, 1991), pp.162-181 (Chinese); pp. 207-221 (English) (p. 208).

¹³⁴ The five plays are *Richard II*, *Henry IV*, *Henry V*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Henry VI*, published in *Xiaoshuo yue bao* 小说月报 [*Fiction Monthly*], 7 (1916), Nos. 1, 2-4, 5-7 and 12 (1925), Nos. 9-10.

¹³⁵ cf. 阿英 (钱杏村), *晚清文学丛钞* (北京: 小说戏曲研究院, 1961) [A-Ying (Qian Xingcun), *The Anthology of Literary Works of Late Qing Dynasty* (Beijing: Research Institute of Novels and Plays, 1961)], p.2.

¹³⁶ Li, 2003, p. 16.

translation. Later on I also read *The Tempest*, *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet* and other Shakespeare's originals. But it has never been surpassed by such an intimate experience as reading [Lin's] fairy tale narratives'.¹³⁷ Cao Yu (1910-1996), one of the 'founding fathers of modern Chinese drama',¹³⁸ made a comment which testified to the appeal of Lin's rendition of the *Tales*: 'One of my favourite Western playwrights is Shakespeare, and my fondness of Shakespeare's plays started from reading Lin Shu's *Tales* when I was a little boy. As soon as I was able to read the original English, I was eager to get hold of a Shakespeare play, because Lin's translation of Shakespeare's fantasy world was so fresh in my young mind.'¹³⁹

Although Lin Shu's reproduction of Shakespeare's plays cannot be considered proper translations, his books were frequently quoted by other Chinese writers of his time and such narrative literature became a primary source for the early Chinese productions of Shakespeare's plays. At the beginning of the twentieth century, many Chinese intellectuals held the opinion that the traditional music theatre—with its strictly conventionalized modes of acting, singing, recitation, dance and martial arts—was merely ornamental, and scarcely a suitable vehicle for the introduction of radical ideas and new ways of thinking. Attracted by Lin's *Tales*, Chinese theatre artists attempted to borrow novel European methods to create a new type of theatre: *wenmingxi* 文明戏 (civilized drama)¹⁴⁰. *Wenmingxi* retained many practices of traditional theatre, however, since its producers, without training or experience in modern methods, naturally resorted to the customary. The shows were scripted in the form of *mubiao*¹⁴¹ or scenarios where actors were only given an outline of the plot and were expected to expand these scenarios on the stage through improvisation (somewhat similar to *commedia dell'arte*). Thus the 'fantasy world' and the 'strange stories' in Shakespeare offered this new dramatic form a ready-to-use repertoire. The earliest staging of Shakespeare's plays occurred in 1913-1916. *The Merchant of Venice* was the first, renamed variously: *A Pound of Flesh* (*Yibang rou*), *Flesh Contract* (*Rou quan*), *Securing a Loan by Pledging Flesh-cutting* (*Jiezhai gerou*) and

¹³⁷ Qtd. in Ge (1963: 336); Wang Zuoliang (1991: 161).

¹³⁸ *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], 16 December 1996; quoted in Li Ruru, *Shashibiya* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), p. 246, note 5.

¹³⁹ Li, 2003, p. 16.

¹⁴⁰ *Wenmingxi* (civilized drama) is another name for the *xinju* (new drama) introduced to Chinese theatre in the 1910s by some returned students from abroad. It diverges from traditional Chinese drama.

¹⁴¹ *Mubiao* (playbill) contains act-by-act summaries of the play. *Wenmingxi* performers rely on the playbill rather than a script for their impromptu performances.

The Woman Lawyer (Nü lüshi). In 1913, *Xin min she* 新民社 (the New People's Society), a professional civilized drama company, presented to Shanghai audiences an adaptation of *The Merchant of Venice* directed by Zheng Zhengqiu under the title *Contract of the Flesh (Rou quan)*¹⁴². The company later gave repeated performances of the play, making it a permanent part of the company's repertoire. During the same season, the Spring Willow Dramatic Society (*Chunliu she*) staged *Othello (Aosailuo)* with all the character names sinicized.

Civilized drama was not merely designed to civilize Chinese audiences and transform them into modern citizens; rather civilized drama also appropriated Shakespeare's plays as political parodies to attack feudalism and the attempt to restore the monarchy. In 1916, Zheng Zhengqiu's Yaofeng New Dramatic Company (*Yaofeng xinjushe*) staged an ambiguous Shakespeare adaptation called *The Thief Stealing the Throne (Qie Guo Zei)*. This was in fact a veiled attack on Yuan Shikai, who, four years after the establishment of the Republic, had seized power and attempted to restore the monarchy with himself as Emperor. Chinese scholars were for some time divided over which of the two Shakespearean plays, *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, had served as its model about the overthrow of tyranny. An advertisement in 'The Republic Daily' of March 11, 1916 suggests that the model was *Hamlet*:

He is the minister of the court but he usurps the power of the King and the country, and also commits adultery with the Queen. He is the brother of the King but steals his sister-in-law from her husband and seizes state power. To avenge his father's death, the hero has no choice but to sham insanity. In the end, death spares no one. What a ruthless tragedy this is.¹⁴³

Zheng strengthened the play's anti-imperial message with added songs that suggested people's indignation. During performances of the play Gu Wuwei, a well-known actor at that time, would step out of his role and, in asides, fiercely condemn the self-proclaimed emperor. The audience would then respond with thundering applause. Outraged by this public denouncement, Yuan Shikai had the actor arrested, imprisoned and sentenced to death on the charge of 'inciting the people to rebel and creating tension in the community by way of performing a play.'¹⁴⁴ Fortunately, Gu's

¹⁴² 曹树钧, 孙福良, *莎士比亚在中国舞台上* (哈尔滨: 哈尔滨出版社, 1994) [Cao Shujun and Sun Fuliang, *Shakespeare on stage in China* (Ha'erbin: Ha'erbin Publishing House, 1994)], p.71.

¹⁴³ Li, 2003, p.22.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

life was spared when Yuan's short-lived monarchy dissolved. The event suggests the impact of Shakespeare performance and how it was used to fight against imperialism and feudalism during the *wenmingxi* period.

1913 to 1916 was considered the first thriving period for the adaptation and performance of Shakespeare's plays, based mainly on Lin's classical translation of the *Tales*. According to Ming Fei's *Xinju kaozheng baichu* 新剧考证百出 (*A Study of 100 New Plays*), in the early phase of vernacular drama at least twenty of Shakespeare's plays were performed on the stage in the style of *wenmingxi* as part of the fight against local feudalist rules.¹⁴⁵ A list of Shakespearean plays performed in China during this early period of modern drama is as follows:¹⁴⁶

Original plays	Titles of Chinese adaptations	Translation of the Chinese titles
<i>Hamlet</i>	<i>Gui zhao</i>	The Ghost's Command
	<i>Luan guo jian xiong</i>	The Arch-careerist Brings Calamity to the Country
	<i>Qie guo zei</i> (possibly shares the same title as an adaptation of <i>Macbeth</i>)	The Thief Stealing the Throne
	<i>Hanmulie wangzi</i>	Prince Hamlet
	<i>Cuan wei duo sao</i>	Usurping Supreme Power and Snatching the Sister-in-law
	<i>Tian chou ji</i>	Deep Hatred
	<i>Sha xiong duo sao</i> (<i>chuanju</i>)	Kills the Elder Brother and Snatches the Sister-in-law
<i>King Lear</i>	<i>Kouxiao yu xin Xiao</i>	Filial Devotion in Word and

¹⁴⁵ *A Study of 100 New Plays* was under the editorship of Zheng Zhengqiu.

¹⁴⁶ Sources are derived from: Li Ruru, *Shashibiya: Staging Shakespeare in China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003); 曹树钧, 孙福良, *莎士比亚在中国舞台上* (哈尔滨: 哈尔滨出版社, 1994) [Cao Shujun and Sun Fuliang, *Shakespeare on stage in China* (Ha'erbin: Ha'erbin Publishing House, 1994)]; 汪义群, '莎剧演出在我国舞台上的变迁', *莎士比亚在中国*, 中国莎士比亚研究会 编辑 (上海文艺出版社, 1987) [Wang Yiqun, 'The Development of Shakespearean Performances on the Chinese Stage', in *Shakespeare in China*, eds. Shakespeare Society of China (Shanghai: Arts Press, 1987)], pp. 91-103.

		from the Heart
	<i>Jie mei huang di</i>	Imperial Crowned Sisters
<i>Macbeth</i>	<i>Wu huo</i>	The Witches' Curse
	<i>Xin nan bei he</i>	The New North-South Accord
	<i>Qie guo zei</i>	The Thief Stealing the Throne
<i>Othello</i>	<i>Hei jiang jun</i>	The Black General
	<i>Wosailuo</i>	(transliteration of <i>Othello</i>)
<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	<i>Rou quan</i>	Contract of the Flesh
	<i>Yi bang rou</i>	A Pound of Flesh
	<i>Nü lüshi</i>	The Female Lawyer
	<i>Jie zhai ge rou</i>	The Debt and Severed Flesh
<i>Twelfth Night</i>	<i>Luan sheng xiong mei</i>	Twin Brother and Sister
<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>	<i>Yuan ou cheng jia ou</i>	A Grumbling Couple Made Happy
	<i>Yuan hu</i>	Bitterness
<i>As You Like It</i>	<i>Cong jie mei</i>	Cousins
<i>All's Well That Ends Well</i>	<i>Yisheng nü</i>	The Doctor's Daughter
<i>Comedy of Errors</i>	<i>Luan wu</i>	Mistaken Twins
<i>Measure for Measure</i>	<i>Weiyena da gong</i>	The Duke of Vienna
	<i>Jia mian ju</i>	The Mask
<i>Cymbeline</i>	<i>Zhi huan en chou</i>	The Ring of Love and Hate
<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	<i>Xia ye meng</i>	Dream on a Summer Night
<i>The Tempest</i>	<i>Qu mei</i>	The Tempest as a Matchmaker
<i>Timon of Athens</i>	<i>Chou jin</i>	Hostile Gold
<i>Pericles</i>	<i>Bolige</i>	(transliteration of <i>Pericles</i>)
	<i>Chen zhu ji</i>	The Story of the Sunken Pearls
<i>The Winter's Tale</i>	<i>Xiang zhao</i>	The Portrait's Command
	<i>Xiang huo</i>	The Portrait Comes to Life
<i>Two Gentlemen of Verona</i>	<i>Qing huo</i>	Confused Feelings
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	<i>Zhu qing</i>	The Tempering of Love

<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>	<i>Xun han</i>	(translation of the original title)
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Very few historical records remain about the Shakespeare performances of this period. Xu Banmei, an active figure in the early modern drama period, recalls in his *Huaju chuangshiqi huiyilu* 话剧创始期回忆录 [*Reminiscences of Spoken Drama in Its Initial Period*] how *Hamlet* was advertised by the theatre company to the audiences:

We were doing a run of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* one spring when it rained a lot. The rain lasted for more than one week. We had chosen a folk proverb as the title of the advertisement for *Hamlet*, 'Just as the rain is bound to fall, so is a woman bound to get married'.¹⁴⁷ The cause of the tragedy of Prince Hamlet was the fact that his mother insisted on remarrying.¹⁴⁸

The theme of remarriage was topical at that time in line with the new and fashionable movement of women's rights. Therefore, it would be natural that this Chinese Hamlet was either a victim of his mother's decision to remarry or a defender of his mother's honour. An advertisement in the newspaper *Minguo ribao* 民国日报 (The Republican Daily) in 1916 describes the performance of *The Merchant of Venice* with the title *The Female Lawyer* (Nü lüshi) as:

'[...] one of Shakespeare's famous plays. Cutting off a piece of one's own flesh to borrow money and, though a woman, she still becomes a lawyer. Excellent literary style; a wonderful story full of fun. It is a masterpiece performed by [Wang] Youyou, [Li] Tianying, Li Beishi and Xu Banmei'.¹⁴⁹

The newspapers were clearly pandering to popular taste, but the performances described by Xu Banmei and the advertisements must be viewed as products of their times. Xu and most theatrical workers prior to the 1920s had no knowledge of English. All that they could possibly have known about Shakespeare must have come from Lin Shu's translation. The performances were inspired by imagination, and produced on the basis of limited experience and knowledge. Nevertheless, the twenty plus Shakespearean plays performed on the Chinese stage then showed their

¹⁴⁷ The original Chinese proverb is 'tian yao xiayu, niang yao jia 天要下雨娘要嫁'. The word 'niang 娘' in the proverb is a pun, which can mean either woman or mother. The advertisement, by using the proverb, referred to the weather as well.

¹⁴⁸ 徐半梅, *话剧创始期回忆录* (北京: 中国戏剧出版社, 1957) [Xu Banmei, *Reminiscences of Spoken Drama in Its Initial Period* (Beijing: Chinese Drama Press, 1957)], p.88.

¹⁴⁹ *Minguo ribao* 民国日报 (The Republican Daily), 25 May 1916, p.5.

popularity—a token that Shakespeare was well received in his initial contact with China.

As Meng Xianqiang said, ‘*wenmingxi* Shakespeare plays in China, derived from the Lambs’ *Tales*, were over-simplified adaptations.’¹⁵⁰ To call on W. B. Worthen’s term, the early Chinese adaptors and performers’ approach was purely ‘performative’.¹⁵¹ It might be questioned whether these productions should be regarded as true Shakespeare performances since they were based on Lin Shu’s summaries of the storylines and were staged before any translation of a complete Shakespearean play was available. They did not research the original circumstances of authorship, or conditions of performance, but took the texts simply as raw material for theatrical fashioning. The richness of Shakespeare’s original plays was yet to be probed, for such richness could only be explored through translations and fuller understandings of the texts.

In spite of the inadequacies and distortions, we should not adopt a flatly negative attitude towards the early Shakespeare performances in China. The staging of more than twenty plays helped Chinese audiences to get to know Shakespeare, albeit only the adapted plots or tales of his plays. The strengths of Shakespeare lies ‘in the sense of range and stretch’.¹⁵² However, to become familiar with the stories of his works is probably the first essential step in the process of appreciating his works. One of Samuel Johnson’s aphorisms justifies it thus: ‘The merit of Shakespeare was such as the ignorant could take in, and the learned add nothing to’.¹⁵³

The early performances of Shakespeare were connected with the emergence of the new genre of spoken drama. It can be safely asserted that Shakespeare performances provided an impetus to the development of spoken drama in China. Ouyang Yuqian, a leading modern drama figure, recalled that in those early days they ‘had to stage a new play for every day’,¹⁵⁴ and Shakespeare’s works supplied a ready

¹⁵⁰ Meng Xianqiang, ‘Shakespeare in China, before the People’s Republic’, *Shakespeare and Asia* [A Publication of the Shakespeare Yearbook, Vol. 17], eds. by Lingui Yang, Douglas A. Brooks & Ashley Brinkman (The Edwin Mellen Press, 2010), pp. 127-159 (p. 136).

¹⁵¹ W.B. Worthen, *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance* (Cambridge University Press, 1997)

¹⁵² Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (London, Gart-Davis & MacGibbon, 1977), p.95.

¹⁵³ Samuel Johnson and Joseph E. Brown, *The Critical Opinions of Samuel Johnson: A Compilation and Interpretation of Dr. Johnson's Principles of Criticism (part One) and His Opinions of Authors and Work (part Two)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1926), p.469.

¹⁵⁴ 欧阳予倩, ‘回忆春柳’, *中国话剧运动五十年史料集 1907-1957* (北京: 中国戏剧出版社, 1985) [Ouyang Yuqian, ‘Reminiscences of the Spring Willow Society’, in *Historical Materials Concerning the Chinese Spoken Drama Movement over 50 Years, 1907-1957* (Beijing: China Drama Press, 1985), pp.13-46 (p.34).

repertoire and attracted audiences who were used only to traditional music theatre.

1.3 Shakespeare VS Ibsen: The May Fourth Period to 1949

The early rendering of tales from Shakespeare was done in classical Chinese prose style. With the gradual introduction of Western science and art, Chinese intellectuals at the beginning of the twentieth century felt a pressing need to replace classical Chinese with the vernacular for general communication and even for intellectual discourse and literature. The New Culture Movement, initiated by Hu Shi in 1917, gave birth to the modern Chinese language.¹⁵⁵ With the increasing popularity of this newly accepted literary form, Shakespeare's plays were translated into modern Chinese and were introduced, for the first time, in their original dramatic form to the Chinese audience. In 1922, Tian Han (1898-1968), late chairman of the Chinese Dramatists' Association during the 1950s and early 1960s and a noted playwright, published his translation of *Hamlet* in modern vernacular Chinese, the first attempt to put a full-length Shakespeare play into Chinese.¹⁵⁶ Two years later, Tian's translation of *Romeo and Juliet* also appeared in print.¹⁵⁷

As Shakespearean drama had no equivalent form in Chinese tradition, the way the first translators rendered it in the early 1920s reflected significant issues of theatre interculturalism such as cultural appropriation. One approach was to preserve the foreignness of the source text, as demonstrated by Tian Han's translation of *Hamlet*.

Tian Han's *Hamlet* preserved the original dramatic form and linguistic meanings. The first complete Shakespeare play translated into Chinese, this work is

¹⁵⁵ The New Culture Movement 新文化运动 (1915-1919), also called May Fourth Movement 五四运动, was a literary revolution for the adoption of modern Chinese. Hu Shi started the movement with his article 'Some Suggestions for the Reform of Chinese Literature,' in the journal *New Youth* in January 1917.

¹⁵⁶ It is likely that Tian Han's translations relied on a Japanese version. There is no direct proof for this assumption because, following Chinese conventions, no attribution was given in his work. However, his knowledge of English did not seem adequate to translate Shakespeare's plays from the original and he translated *Hamlet* while he was a student in Japan.

¹⁵⁷ 曹树钧, 孙福良, 莎士比亚在中国舞台上 (哈尔滨: 哈尔滨出版社, 1994) [Cao Shujun and Sun Fuliang, *Shakespeare on stage in China* (Ha'erbin: Ha'erbin Publishing House, 1994)] Tian Han (1898-1960s?) translated *Hamlet* in his early twenties. He had hoped to translate ten Shakespeare's plays under the heading *Shakespeare's Masterpieces*, but after *Romeo and Juliet* (1924) he never translated any Shakespeare, perhaps due to his increasing involvement in China's Spoken Drama movement. Later he became a distinguished playwright, director, critic, producer, and leader in modern Chinese theatre. Tian enjoyed high official position in China after Communist rule, but disappeared during the Cultural Revolution, most likely persecuted (Ge 1964: 337; Chau 1981: 16-7).

generally regarded as the foundation of Chinese translation of Shakespeare, as it established the conventions for future translators, particularly the use of vernacular prose to transcribe Shakespeare's poetic language.¹⁵⁸ In order to preserve the maximum meaning and formalistic character of the source text, Tian adopted the method of 'word-to-word' translation to render Shakespeare into Chinese. The method, however, tended to ignore the enormous difference in syntactical structure between Renaissance English and modern Chinese, thus creating a rather 'wordy' and sometimes incomprehensible version of *Hamlet*.¹⁵⁹ Tian did not provide footnotes or references to help the first time Chinese reader cross the cultural gap embedded in the original.¹⁶⁰ His translation struck scholar Chang Chen-Hsien in the 1950s as 'readable' but 'unactable,' not meant for the popular stage but for the eyes of the Chinese students of English literature.¹⁶¹

Tian's translation represents more historical than literary significance from today's point of view. A young, aspiring playwright seeking to experiment with dramatic form and language, Tian followed Shakespeare's text word-for-word in his translation, presumably to preserve his language flow and poetic imagery. This can be seen as a bold attempt to break away from the native dramatic conventions and to embrace the totally foreign form for its newness. Tian's *Hamlet* must have made great appeal to the current readers as well; in ten years it had gone through seven reprints.¹⁶²

Following Tian Han's effort, the literary approach to Shakespeare demanding more accurate rendering and serious scholarship regarding the plays' contexts gained more currency. Some Chinese scholars began to view the free adaptations of Shakespeare's plays as irresponsible, and serious study of Shakespeare began.¹⁶³ A number of scholars translated and published several of Shakespeare's plays such as *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁸ See Chang Chen-hsien, 'Shakespeare in China', *Shakespeare Survey*, 6 (1953), 112-116 (p.115); Simon S. C. Chau, *Hanyi Hamuleite Yanjiu* 汉译哈姆雷特研究 [A Critical Study of the Chinese Translations of *Hamlet*] (Hong Kong: Chinese UP, 1981), p.355.

¹⁵⁹ Chau, *A Critical Study of the Chinese Translations of Hamlet*, p.356.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Chang, 'Shakespeare in China', p. 115.

¹⁶² Chau, *A Critical Study of the Chinese Translations of Hamlet*, p.34.

¹⁶³ F. C. Fei and W. H. Sun, 'Othello and Beijing Opera: Appropriation As a Two-Way Street', *The Drama Review*, 50.1 (2006), 120-133 (p.123).

¹⁶⁴ Zhang Xiao Yang, *Shakespeare in China: A Comparative Study of Two Traditions and Cultures*

The New Culture Movement was a campaign driven by Western influences, and its leaders were Westernized Chinese intellectuals who sought to promote various Western ideas and thinking while fiercely attacking traditional Chinese culture. These intellectuals also desired to establish a new form of modern Chinese theatre, a kind of Western style theatre, radically different from indigenous Chinese theatre (*xiqu* 戏曲). These trends promoted by the New Culture Movement facilitated the spread of Shakespeare's influence in China. However, the most influential Western dramatist in China at that time was Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) rather than William Shakespeare.

There were historical reasons for this preference. From the middle of the nineteenth to the early twentieth century, China had been defeated by several developed Western countries as well as by Japan. To rescue China, the Chinese elite intellectuals continuously made great efforts to learn from the West in many different ways, including borrowing ideas from the West. The May Fourth was one of those movements of learning from the West, and it set goals to strengthen China, such as Western-oriented individualism, freedom, democracy, science, and literature. Literature, above all, was largely used by intellectuals to carry out their mission of rebuilding a new and modern China. The 1920s was the period of rapid development for spoken drama. Young Chinese who had studied drama and theatre in the United States and Europe came back to China after completing their courses and became leading figures in the modern theatre. Playwrights now appeared in China and wrote plays for the spoken drama stage. Dramatists remained concerned with topical subjects and this developed into a significant feature of the maturing spoken drama. At that time, drama and theatre were considered an effective vehicle for conveying and spreading new thoughts, and even a powerful weapon to attack old morality. Dramatists were drawn to western works of realism and naturalism. Among the plays staged at that time were those of Ibsen, Shaw, Gorky, and even Wilde. For a while, Shakespeare was forgotten, since his plays did not seem relevant to the contemporary society. In contrast, Ibsen's so-called social problem plays (*shehui wentiju* 社会问题剧) like *A Doll's House* and *An Enemy of the People* were regarded as both representative of Western drama and a perfect model for modern Chinese theatre in the making. For this reason, the leaders of the New Culture Movement

(Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1996), p.104.

were more concerned with drama and theatre as social and political tools than as art per se. A typical example of this attitude is reflected in *Xin qingnian* 新青年 (*New Youth*), a periodical edited by the leaders of the New Culture Movement and which fascinated a large number of young intellectuals. *New Youth* published a special issue on Ibsen in June 1918, in which Hu Shi 胡适 (1891-1962), one of the leaders of the New Culture Movement, advocated the so-called Ibsenism (*Yibusheng zhuyi* 易卜生主义). Thus, it is not difficult to understand why at that time Ibsen's plays exerted more obvious influence than those of Shakespeare.

Noticeably, Ibsen was more or less a contemporary to the May Fourth intellectuals while Shakespeare, who lived in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, around the late Ming dynasty (1368-1644) in China, was a historical figure. No doubt Ibsen's plays touched the crude social issues of the time and were positively promoted by the modernizers. The escape of Nora from the sheltered home in *A Doll's House*, for instance, called for Chinese women's emancipation, the pursuit of individual freedom, and set forth a series of heated discussions about Chinese Nora. Shakespeare's plays, though not as radically targeting social problems of the time as Ibsen, also appealed to the early twentieth century audience with their modern spirit. As Faye Chunfang Fei and William Huizhu Sun remark, 'The perception was that Shakespeare's plays conveyed a definitively modern spirit in comparison with the so-called feudalistic old Chinese operas'.¹⁶⁵ For instance, the images of 'the new woman' advocated by the New Culture intellectuals were vividly perceived in Portia, the woman lawyer who apparently outwitted all the men in *The Merchant of Venice*, as well as in the outgoing young couple, especially the female character, in comedies like *Twelfth Night* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. Nevertheless, Shakespeare's plays then were most highly praised for their artistic value.

Since the May Fourth period, though translating works that reflected pertinent social problems such as Ibsen's were considered to be more urgent than 'classical literature' such as Shakespeare's,¹⁶⁶ a serious attempt to establish Shakespeare in the indigenous literary canon was made by a number of ambitious individuals who set

¹⁶⁵ F. C. Fei and W. H. Sun, 'Othello and Beijing Opera: Appropriation As a Two-Way Street', *The Drama Review*, 50.1 (2006), 120-133 (p.122).

¹⁶⁶ 王建开, '艺术与宣传: 莎剧译介与 20 世纪前半中国社会进程', *中外文学* [Wang Jiankai, 'Arts and propaganda: the translations and introduction of Shakespeare's plays and the progress of China's society during the first half of the twentieth century', *Zhong wai literary monthly*], 33.11 (2005), 33-52 (p.38).

out to translate his complete works into Chinese. In the 1930s, a large-scale translation of Shakespeare was undertaken, despite the fact that China was actually fighting a war of resistance against Japan and later a full-blown civil war. It was then that two of the prominent translators of the time—Liang Shiqiu (1902-1987) and Zhu Shenghao (1912-1944)—tried to render the complete works of Shakespeare and their translations have greatly influenced the later Shakespeare renditions up to the present day.

Of the twenty or so pioneer Chinese translators of Shakespeare, Zhu Shenghao is probably the most remarkable. Zhu was a young editor who worked in the Shanghai World Publishing House after graduating from the Department of English Literature at Zhejiang University in 1933. In 1935, at the age of twenty-four, he set himself a target to render all of Shakespeare's works and viewed his goal as a 'patriotic act'¹⁶⁷ because many world masterpieces were not available in Chinese at the time. In one of his letters to his wife, Zhu even saw himself as a future national hero after successfully translating the complete works of Shakespeare.¹⁶⁸ Thus, his effort to translate Shakespeare's complete works was tinted with nationalism. Zhu's first translation of a Shakespearean play, *The Tempest*, was completed in 1936 and he was planning to finish translating all of Shakespeare's plays within two years. However, this ambitious plan was crippled by the Japanese invasion of Shanghai in 1937. Fleeing from the bombarded city in the middle of the night, Zhu lost all his personal belongings and more than a hundred books on Shakespeare that he had painstakingly collected in the previous two years. All he had with him was a copy of the Oxford Shakespeare and a few of his manuscripts. After wandering about the country for several years, Zhu finally settled down in 1942 in his hometown, Jiaying, not far from Shanghai, determined to carry out his original plan. Although poverty-stricken and haunted by illness, and his original manuscripts having been destroyed twice in the Sino-Japanese War, Zhu shut himself up in a small room and plunged into the translation. Zhu worked under such difficult conditions until he was bed-ridden and died of tuberculosis in December 1944. Only six and a half plays of Shakespeare were untranslated. Upon the approach of death, Zhu deeply regretted his unaccomplished work, saying that if he had known death would come so soon, he

¹⁶⁷ 朱宏达, 吴洁敏, *朱生豪传* (上海: 上海外语教育出版社, 1989) [Zhu Hongda and Wu Jiemin, *The Biography of Zhu Shenghao* (Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Languages and Education Publishing House, 1989), p.107.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

would have gone all out and tried at all costs to fulfil his life-long ambition. Zhu's renderings were published by *Shijie Shuju* [The World Book Store] in 1947, three years after his death. Young as he was at his death, Zhu was the one who had translated the greatest number of Shakespeare's plays before 1949. The value of Zhu's work is demonstrated by the fact that his translations formed the principal contribution to the sole version of *The Complete Works* published in Mainland China prior to 2001, and most spoken drama productions of Shakespeare since 1949 have employed Zhu's translations.

Liang Shiqiu is the only Chinese who single-handedly finished rendering Shakespeare's complete dramas. Liang took up the task of translating Shakespeare in 1931, when he was invited by Hu Shi, who was the Chairman of the Translation Committee of the China Educational and Cultural Foundation, to be part of the committee (other members included Wen Yiduo, Xu Zhimo, Zhen Dongbo and Ye Gongchao) and participate in the project of translating the complete plays. However, the actual situation deviated from their initial plans as one of the members Xu Zhimo died accidentally in a plane crash in the same year and the others refused to take part in the project. Liang was then the only translator left to take on this formidable task. Liang translated eight plays in the 1930s, namely, *The Merchant of Venice* (1936), *All's Well That Ends Well* (1936), *Macbeth* (1936), *King Lear* (1936), *Othello* (1936), *The Tempest* (1937), *Twelfth Night* (1938), and *Hamlet* (1938).¹⁶⁹ He did not finish his translations until 1967, eighteen years after he moved to Taiwan. The same year saw the publication of his translations of Shakespeare's thirty-seven plays by the Taipei Far East Publishing House. Since Zhu Shenghao died at the young age of thirty-two and only managed thirty-one and a half of Shakespeare's plays, Liang was therefore the first translator to finish rendering the whole collection of Shakespeare's works. Spanning thirty-three years, from 1936 to 1969, his project was finally and successfully completed. Even to this day, Liang is still the only Chinese scholar who has accomplished the task single-handedly. Unfortunately, because of the bad relationship between the Chinese Communist Party and the Kuomintang, Liang Shiqiu's *The Complete Plays of Shakespeare* was not introduced into Mainland China until 1996.

Scholars have expressed differing opinions as to how Shakespeare should be

¹⁶⁹ In terms of publication date, Meng Xianqiang has a different opinion from Zhou Zhaoxiang, and here all the years in the bracket follow Meng's.

rendered into Chinese. Many issues have been debated: which edition should be used; whether or not to include stage directions (most of which do not appear in the First Folio); whether Chinese dialects should be used to express Shakespeare's slang; whether it is necessary to translate Shakespeare into verse; and, furthermore, how to define 'verse' in the Chinese language. Shakespeare's lines are notoriously difficult to translate. While it is not impossible to capture some of the power of Shakespeare and the evocative imagery of his poetry in sonorous Chinese prose, this may involve some distortion or lengthy presentation. The following two examples are from Zhu Shenghao's translation of *Hamlet*. In Hamlet's 'Let me be cruell, not unnaturall' (2266), Zhu translates 'unnatural' as 'unfilial.' The next line, 'I will speake dagger to her' (2267), is spelt out ponderously: 'My words which are as sharp as a dagger will pierce her heart'.¹⁷⁰

In his writings about his intentions and methodology for this work, Liang defended his prose style of translation: 'To be honest I was not able to take the rhythm of Shakespeare's poetry into account. I felt that it was already difficult enough if I could try to express the full and accurate meaning of the original'.¹⁷¹ His approach to Shakespeare's text was inspired by Percy Simpson's *Shakespeare Punctuation*.¹⁷² Liang argued that instead of following contemporary usage regarding punctuation Shakespeare had created his own system to 'help actors in recitation of their lines and enable them to reproduce these lines with the right cadence.' Liang claimed that in his translation he would 'keep Shakespeare's original punctuation intact' and would 'take sentences as translation units'.¹⁷³

While Liang Shiqiu mainly translated the playwright's original blank verse and prose into vernacular Chinese prose, verse did appear in his rendition when Shakespeare let his actors speak in rhymed verse, as Zhou Zhaoxiang says of Liang: 'The original blank verse and prose have been translated into vernacular Chinese prose, whereas rhyme and interlude all into verse.'¹⁷⁴ Take his translation of Shakespeare's rhymed couplets as an example:

¹⁷⁰ Zhu Shenghao (trans.), *Hamuleite* (Chinese version of *Hamlet*), *Shahibiya QuANJI* (*The Complete Works of Shakespeare*), Vols. 11, Vol. 8 (Beijing: Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 1984), p.83.

¹⁷¹ 梁实秋, *略谈中西文化* (台湾: 远东书局, 1971) [Liang Shiqiu, *Brief Talk on Western and Chinese Culture* (Taiwan: Yuandong Press, 1971)], p.58.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ Liang Shiqiu, 1971, p.59.

¹⁷⁴ Zhou Zhaoxiang, 'Studies on Chinese Translations', p. 21. '用白话散文译原文的无韵诗和散文, 但原文的押韵处和插曲等一律译做韵语。'

I'll have grounds
More relative than this. The play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King.
(*Hamlet*, 2.2.599-601)

我要有比这更确切的证据。

演戏是唯一的手段 [duan]

把国王的内心来试探 [tan]

(Liang's Chinese translation)

(I'll have evidence

More precise than this. The play is the only method

To test the conscience of the King.)

In contrast to his normal prose translation, Liang used the same rhyme of 'an' at the end of the last two sentences, *duan* and *tan* respectively, in retaining Shakespeare's rhyme of 'ing'. What is more, Liang divided his translation into lines in order to emphasize his similarity in form with Shakespeare's verse.

The translations of Zhu Shenghao and Liang Shiqiu had far-reaching influence on the translation of Shakespeare's works in China. Many translation works of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* thereafter took their translation as the reference.

Besides Zhu and Liang, many other Chinese scholars have been engaged in translating Shakespeare's works. By 1949, thirty-one plays of Shakespeare had been put into Chinese by translators. Some of the plays appeared in as many as five different translations. There are two interesting facts to be noted about the translation of Shakespearean drama before 1949: first, the six plays which had not been touched by Chinese translators were all history plays; and, second, the most frequently rendered plays were the tragedies—*Hamlet* (1922, 1924, 1930, 1946, 1947), *Romeo and Juliet* (1924, 1928, 1944, 1946, 1947), *Julius Caesar* (1925, 1931, 1935, 1944, 1947), and *Macbeth* (1930 [twice], 1936, 1946, 1947). Only one comedy, *The Merchant of Venice*, had also been translated five times before 1949 (1924, 1930, 1936, 1942, 1947).

By the mid-1920s, Shakespeare's position as a canonical literary figure had been consolidated to the extent that, following 'Shashibiya,' the standard Chinese transliteration of 'Shakespeare' coined by Liang Shiqiu, Chinese people started to refer to him as 'Sha Weng,' or 'Old Man Sha,' to express their great respect. This attitude was reinforced in Communist circles by the doctrine espoused by Engels in

the ‘Introduction to the *Dialectics of Nature*’ that the Renaissance ‘was the greatest progressive revolution that mankind has so far experienced, a time which called for giants and produced giants — giants in power of thought, passion, and character, in universality and learning.’¹⁷⁵ Since 1949 when the literary theory of Marx and Engels became the ruling ideology, Shakespeare, as a ‘Renaissance giant,’ gained an unprecedented status honoured universally in the People’s Republic.

The same pre-1949 period was also marked by some daring attempts at staging Shakespeare’s plays. China was a war-torn country from the late 1920s to the 1940s. Shakespeare’s plays were adapted to serve the needs of the country, such as highlighting the issue of anti-repression or fight for freedom;¹⁷⁶ moreover, the performances were carried out in urban centres as a means of boosting ‘national morale,’ and proving that ‘China was still a part of the civilized world’.¹⁷⁷ As *huaju* (spoken drama) came to maturity, there were a number of significant Shakespeare productions using complete translated texts, including *The Merchant of Venice* (Shanghai, 1930), *Romeo and Juliet* (Shanghai, 1937), *Hamlet* (Jiang’an, 1942), *Romeo and Juliet* (Chongqing, 1944), and *Macbeth* (Shanghai, 1945). These productions were of significance artistically as well as contributing to patriotic spirit amid the terrible sufferings of the Sino-Japanese War.

The Merchant of Venice staged in Shanghai in 1930 is the first performance of

¹⁷⁵ In the ‘Introduction’ to *Dialectics of Nature* Engels wrote:

It was the greatest progressive revolution that mankind has so far experienced, a time which called for giants and produced giants -- giants in power of thought, passion, and character, in universality and learning. The men who founded the modern rule of the bourgeoisie had anything but bourgeois limitations. On the contrary, the adventurous character of the time inspired them to a greater or less degree. There was hardly any man of importance then living who had not travelled extensively, who did not command four or five languages, who did not shine in a number of fields... The heroes of that time had not yet come under the servitude of the division of labour, the restricting effects of which, with its production of one-sidedness, we so often notice in their successors. But what is especially characteristic of them is that they almost all pursue their lives and activities in the midst of the contemporary movements, in the practical struggle; they take sides and join in the fight, one by speaking and writing, another with the sword, many with both. Hence the fullness and force of character that makes them complete men. Men of the study are the exception — either persons of second or third rank or cautious philistines who do not want to burn their fingers.

(Ed. & trans. by Clemens Dutt, preface & notes by J.B.S. Haldane New York: International Publishers 1960), pp. 2-3.

¹⁷⁶ 王建开, ‘艺术与宣传: 莎剧译介与 20 世纪前半中国社会进程’, *中外文学* [Wang Jiankai, ‘Arts and propaganda: the translations and introduction of Shakespeare’s plays and the progress of China’s society during the first half of the twentieth century’, *Zhong wai literary monthly*], 33.11 (2005), 33-52 (40-41).

¹⁷⁷ Li, 2003, p.33.

a full-length Shakespearean drama. This production of *The Merchant* by the Shanghai Drama Assembly (Shanghai Xiju Xieshe) was directed by Ying Yunwei, who later became a famous film director in the early 1940s. Compared with earlier Shakespeare performances, this was a serious production that used a complete translated text (by Gu Zhongyi, who later became a leading dramatic theorist in China). The scenery and costumes were designed in accord with Italian paintings of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries: ‘A fountain, a garden with a winding bridge, a balcony and a street all appeared on the stage. The lighting changed along with the development of the plot. The costumes were well designed and exquisitely made’.¹⁷⁸ When Portia appeared on the stage in her Italian robe made of embroidered golden silk, there was enthusiastic applause from the audience. In spite of such serious intentions, the understanding of the play, however, may not have been much deeper than before, as a newspaper advertisement shows:

A sentimental young lady chooses her husband by arranging different chests (for young men to select); and a prodigal young man marries his wife by getting into debt. A miser stirs up terrible trouble at the court, and a female lawyer wisely judges the peculiar case.¹⁷⁹

Ironically, in the 1930s the image of Shakespeare as the symbol of high culture tended to deter Chinese practitioners from putting on his plays, insofar as the modern Chinese theatre was created to address the needs of people and society in the prevailing historical context. For instance, although the left-wing director Zhang Min interpreted the theme of the 1937 *Romeo and Juliet* as ‘an ethical code destroys the tender shoot that desires for freedom; the flame of youth burns the feudal fetters,’¹⁸⁰ some critics thought that it was an inappropriate choice at that time when the Japanese had occupied north-eastern China. For them ‘a play should be relevant to our country and our time. It should be of some use.’¹⁸¹ The influence of Stanislavsky—though knowledge of his method remained slender at that time—could be found in this production of *Romeo and Juliet*, which focused heavily on the realistic effect of performance. A Russian fencer was invited to teach fencing skills

¹⁷⁸ Jiang Tao, ‘Lun Zhongguo shaju wutai shang de daoyan yishu’ [Directing Arts of Shakespeare Performance on the Chinese Stage], *Xiju* [Drama], Issue 3 (Beijing: Zhongyang Xiju Xueyuan, 1996) 105-26 (p.105).

¹⁷⁹ Cao Shujun and Sun Fuliang, *Shakespeare on stage in China*, p.88.

¹⁸⁰ Cited in Ge Yihong, *Zhongguo huaju tongshi* [The History of Chinese Spoken Drama] (Beijing: Wenhua Chubanshe, 1990), p.169.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

for about two months and the fencing episodes were so true to life that actors kept being injured! The stage design was magnificent, especially in the courtyard scene, which made use of an elevator to raise Juliet's coffins at times so that the audiences could see her. Leading to the platform was a wide staircase. The backdrop and the side curtains were made of black velvet, and the lighting was mainly provided by big candles arranged in the aisle. This mechanical conglomeration created an atmosphere of solemnity which impressed the audience. One review in the *Dagong bao*¹⁸² praised the production as 'astonishing' and 'great'.¹⁸³ On the other hand, misunderstanding of Stanislavsky's method may have led actors to seek the so-called 'reality' and to escape from efforts in acting. As a result, some reviews criticized that the actors' acting was as dull as 'reciting a book of classical Chinese'.¹⁸⁴

The Sino-Japanese War began in the summer of 1937 and lasted till 1945. The resulting divisions of the country into various political and military regions disrupted and fragmented theatrical activities. Toward the end of the 1930s, with the advent of the civil war (between the Communist Party and the Nationalist Party), a full-scale Japanese invasion (launched on 7 July 1937), and the Second World War (1939-1945), local calls for literary utilitarianism of theatre re-emerged. Performances had to be relevant to 'our country and our time.'¹⁸⁵ Therefore, directors in the 1940s sought out a different approach to staging Shakespeare, responding to both the financial restrictions and new ideological needs. Against this backdrop of war-time financial restrictions and the increasing demands for a war-time theatre that would fashion vigilant and patriotic citizens, Shakespearean performances in the 1940s opted for immediate social relevance and employed minimalist stage sets and costumes. Performances during this period steered clear of lavish style and elaborate stage design. Directors and audiences highlighted the allegedly relevant themes of the plays.

One obvious characteristic of the drama performances in this period was that they were mainly concerned with patriotic and anti-Japanese themes. Traditional Chinese theatres began putting on plays which showed heroic figures struggling against the foreign invaders and the appalling sufferings of the people during the war.

¹⁸² 《大公报》，the name of a newspaper.

¹⁸³ *Dagong bao*, 8 June 1937, p.2.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ Li Ming, 'Luomi'ou yu Zhuliye—gongyan hou de pingjia [A review of the production of *Romeo and Juliet*],' *Da gong bao zengkan [Dagong Daily Supplement]*, 8 June 1937, p.14.

Modern Chinese drama from its birth had been closer to politics and current affairs and it is not surprising to find that two thirds of the spoken drama repertoire during this period consisted of plays with war themes, depicting the impact of the war on the life of the common people, the deep pessimism of many intellectuals, and so on. Shakespeare performances during this period are best understood in these terms. The following quotation from a speech by Jiao Juyin, the director of *Hamlet* (Jiang'an, 1942), is a good illustration of the attitude to Shakespeare production during the war:

The character of Hamlet is like a mirror, a lesson to us people who are living in the period of the Anti-Japanese War. [...] So the conclusion we can draw from the tragedy of Hamlet is that victory in our Anti-Japanese War will depend on the joint action taken by the people all over the country, and also more on the immediate action taken by the people without any hesitation.¹⁸⁶

Likewise, Huang Zuolin's 1945 adaptation of *Macbeth*, produced four months before the end of the Second World War, was adapted into a tenth-century Chinese setting with the title *Luanshi yingxiong* 乱世英雄 [The Hero of the Turmoil]. The underlying connections of a medieval Scottish tyrant, the chaos in ancient China, and the suffering that audiences had undergone in the war 'really shocked' the audience,¹⁸⁷ and a new character, based on Macduff, who sacrificed his son for the sake of the country, eulogized the heroism demanded by the time.

During the period from the 1920s to 1949, all the Shakespeare productions were based on full translations or were serious adaptations. The successful performances accelerated the development of Shakespeare scholarship in China. However, the pre-1949 chaotic social environment more or less obstructed the development of education and culture in the country, including the research, performance and translation of Shakespeare's plays. As one review in the *New York Times* put it, the performance of *Hamlet*, at the Guo Tai Theatre in Chungqing in December 1942, might be sincere and painstaking, but was 'not yet ready for Broadway.'¹⁸⁸ Although the number of Shakespeare's plays translated during this

¹⁸⁶ Jiao Juyin, 'Guanyu *Hamuleite*' (About *Hamlet*), in *Jiao Juyin wenji* (Selected Works of Jiao Juyin), 4 Vols. (Beijing: Zhongguo Xiju Chubanshe, 1988), vol. II, pp.167-8.

¹⁸⁷ For detailed discussion of these plays, see Li, Ruru, 'A Drum! A Drum! Macbeth doth come! — When Birnam wood moved to China', *Shakespeare Survey*, 57 (October 2004), 169-85; Li Ruru, *Shashibiya: Staging Shakespeare in China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), pp. 31-9.

¹⁸⁸ Brooks Atkinson, 18 December 1942, pp.1, 38.

period was quite impressive, each edition was rigidly limited and was circulated mainly among scholars, students, and other educated citizens. The high rate of illiteracy among the Chinese before 1949 meant that the translations reached only a very small proportion of the four hundred million Chinese people.

1.4 Political Shakespeare: Post-1949 Maoist Communist China

After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, China at last entered a peaceful period that should theoretically have favoured Chinese Shakespeareans. However, in the new-born communist country Chinese Communist ideology confined the development of Shakespeare studies and also obstructed Chinese Shakespeareans' attempts to study Shakespeare in depth.

This phase plays a rather important role in the history of Chinese reception of Shakespeare: Chinese Shakespearean criticism was dawning. In other words, in addition to translating and staging Shakespearean works, Chinese scholars began to state their understanding of Shakespearean plays through critical essays in journals. Due to the socialist system and the close political relationship between China and the Soviet Union, Chinese literary scholarship followed that of the Soviet Union. In the years immediately following 1949, the Soviet Union was regarded as the "Elder Brother," the great friend, and China's most important ally. China followed the Soviet Union indiscriminately in every aspect ranging from political and economic orders to cultural appreciations, for 'the good experience of foreign countries, especially Soviet experience, can serve as our guide'.¹⁸⁹ Russian literature, especially the Russian proletarian literature immediately before and after the Russian October Revolution of 1917, was translated into Chinese in large quantities. The Russian theory and practice of education was indiscriminately imitated in Chinese schools. Similarly, literary criticism in China was imported almost completely from Russia. Shakespeare was regarded as an important Western writer for Soviet critics and Soviet theatre; accordingly, more and more Chinese academics were encouraged to study Shakespeare and his works. A select number of essays on Shakespeare by Russian critics were translated from Russian into Chinese, so that Chinese critics

¹⁸⁹ 毛泽东, 在延安文艺座谈会上的讲话 [Mao Zedong, *Talks at the Yan'an forum on literature and art* (1942), <http://news.xinhuanet.com/mil/2007-11/24/content_7138256_2.htm> [accessed 2/12/2013].

could appreciate Russian attitudes and opinions about Shakespeare and his plays, to the extent of becoming indispensable reference books for teaching foreign literature and Shakespeare's plays at the department of the Chinese Language and Foreign Languages. Two texts are worth mentioning for their frequent appearance in Chinese translations: *Shakespeare in the Soviet Union* by Mikhail Mikhailovich Morozov (1897-1952), published in China in 1953 with two Chinese translations: one by Wu Ningkun (1921-) and the other by Wu Yishan, and Alexander Anikst's *Shakespeare and His Plays* published in China in 1957. Under the strong influence of established research paradigms from the Soviet Union—Marxist criticism of Shakespeare, the Chinese critics concentrated on discussing the historical background of Shakespearean works and the social conflicts and class relations expressed in them, regarding the plays as representatives of realism and approving Shakespeare's humanism in them.¹⁹⁰

In this period, Chinese Shakespeareans were in a contradictory position. On the one hand, they had a protective talisman: Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895), the founding fathers of Communism, were enthusiasts of Shakespeare's plays, explicitly appraising the dramatist in their own writings. On the other hand, Chinese Shakespeareans were confronted by the doctrine of Mao Zedong 毛泽东 (1893-1976). When commenting on a play by the German socialist Ferdinand Lassalle (1825-1864), both Marx and Engels named Shakespeare as a successful example of a dramatist. In a letter to Lassalle, Marx suggested that he 'Shakespearize more' rather than 'transforming of individuals into mere speaking tubes of the spirit of the time'.¹⁹¹ By the same token, in a letter to Lassalle dated May 18, 1859, Engels championed Shakespeare: 'The realistic should not be neglected in favour of the intellectual elements, not Shakespeare in favour of Schiller.' He advised Lassalle to pay more attention to the significance of Shakespeare in the history of the development of the drama.¹⁹² Marx's and Engels's interest in Shakespearean works has particularly inspired Chinese Marxists to interpret the dramatist and his plays. In a politically sensitive time, Chinese

¹⁹⁰ 孟宪强, 中国莎学简史 (长春: 东北师范大学出版社, 1994) [Meng Xianqiang, *A Brief History of Shakespeare Studies in China* (Changchun: North Eastern Normal University Press, 1994)]

¹⁹¹ Karl Marx, 'Letter to Ferdinand Lassalle', in *Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Bernard E. Dukore (Fort Worth: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Incorporation, 1974), 797-798 (p.798).

¹⁹² F. Engels, 'Letter to Ferdinand Lassalle', in *Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Bernard E. Dukore (Fort Worth: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Incorporation, 1974), 799-801 (p.780).

Shakespeareans, for their own security, frequently quoted Marx's and Engels's commentary on Shakespeare, and often underlined the historical fact that the two founders of Communism were clearly in favour of the great dramatist. Drawing on Marx's preference for Shakespeare over Schiller, critics frequently use the labels 'Shakespearizing' or 'Schillerism' to categorize literary works. In general, the classics of European literature have been conveniently absorbed into contemporary Chinese culture through ideological means. (This is only the case in the People's Republic, of course, and does not apply at all to Taiwan or, at least not yet, to Hong Kong.) Shakespeare's special standing made him one of the very few ideologically safe Western playwrights. Although his works were banned during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) along with all Western art and literature, in the years following that extreme decade practitioners used Shakespeare to test the acceptability of Western plays.

Although Marxism-Leninism has been proclaimed the guiding ideology in China since 1949, the ideas and instructions of Mao Zedong—the Chinese form of Marxism-Leninism, known in China as 'Mao Zedong Thought'—were the political and cultural guidelines for the Chinese before Mao's death in 1976 and continue to have a strong influence on all aspects of Chinese life. In literary criticism, the principles Mao established in his works have played a far more important role in directing the Chinese critics than have the writings of Marx or Lenin. Although Marx's and Lenin's comments on literature and art are quoted by Chinese critics, the dominating principle in Chinese literary criticism comes from Mao's works, especially from two of his speeches: 'Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art' (1942) and 'On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People' (1957).¹⁹³ The major issues discussed in these two speeches can be summarized under three major questions asked by Mao: For whom are Chinese literature and art intended? What role do literature and art play in the Chinese revolution and construction? What are the criteria in literary criticism? In his 'Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art', Mao Zedong asserted: 'In a class-based society there is only human nature defined by class; there is no human nature capable of transcending social class. [...] As for the so-called love of humanity—there has been

¹⁹³ Mao Zedong, *Mao Zedong Selected Works (1941-1945)* (New York: International Publishers, 1956), IV, 63-93; V, 384-421.

no such all-comprehensive love since humanity was divided into classes.¹⁹⁴ To Mao, every form of art is designed for a specific class, and those who believed that art could transcend class, in fact, upheld bourgeois art. Since art belonged to specific classes, it followed specific political lines. The task for art in China, assigned by Mao in 1942, was to help to ‘overthrow the enemy of our nation and accomplish the task of national liberation’;¹⁹⁵ in 1957, it was to unite the six hundred million people for ‘the great task of building socialism’.¹⁹⁶ On the basis of this political approach to art and literature, Mao determined that there were two criteria in artistic and literary criticism: artistic and political. However, in both of his speeches, Mao only generally mentioned the artistic criterion while engaging himself in a very detailed discussion of the political one. Mao’s ‘Talk’ was once the Bible for all Chinese writers, critics and scholars. Since he emphasized the role of social class (*jiejixing* 阶级性), and absolutely denied the existence of any human nature transcending social class, Chinese Shakespeareans were unable to acknowledge much of the vision that Shakespeare’s works render, as this was an offence to political conventions.

In such a historical and political climate, Chinese critics, in keeping with the orthodox Marxist approach, attempted to use ‘the theory of class struggle’ to interpret Shakespeare. In their analyses of Shakespeare’s plays, many essays began with an account of England in the last decade of the sixteenth century and the first decade of the seventeenth century, analysing the social classes and the emerging bourgeoisie, emphasizing not so much the basic historical facts of the age but rather a Marxist-dialectical understanding of that particular historical period. One of the chief issues for the critics was the question of whom Shakespeare wrote his plays for. In his essay *On Hamlet* (1956), Bian Zhilin, a leading Chinese Shakespearean scholar of the period, discussed English society in Shakespeare’s age and concluded that Shakespeare ‘had written for the people, not for the ruling class, and that Shakespeare opposed the feudal system in the early part of his career and exposed the evils of capitalism in the later part.’¹⁹⁷ Shakespeare’s affinity to the people, Bian

¹⁹⁴ 毛泽东, ‘在延安文艺座谈会上的讲话’, *毛泽东选集* (北京: 人民出版社, 1967) [Mao Zedong, ‘Talks at the Yan’an forum on literature and art’, in *Selected works of Mao Zedong* (Beijing: People’s Press, 1967)], pp. 804-835 (p.827).

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 384.

¹⁹⁷ Bian Zhilin, ‘On *Hamlet*’, *Essays on Literature* (Beijing: Beijing University Press, 1956), II; rpt. in *Reference Material for Foreign Literature* (Beijing: Central Party School Press, 1963), p.107; quoted in He Qixin, ‘China’s Shakespeare’, *The Shakespeare Quarterly*, 37 (1986), p.154.

claimed, was the central theme of his plays and was also the key to his great success in subsequent centuries.¹⁹⁸ Needless to say, this was not an opinion shared by the dominant Anglo-American scholars of the mid-twentieth century.

No matter which social class William Shakespeare stood for—ironically, there was no working class or proletariat in Shakespeare’s time—and how Chinese scholars followed the established research paradigms in the Soviet Union, it was undeniable that Shakespearean criticism came into its own in China in the 1950s. Chinese interest in Shakespeare and his plays was awakened and Shakespearean studies, for the first time, reached a peak in the 1950s and early 1960s in the fields of translating, performing, cinema and literary criticism.

In 1954, Zhu Shenghao’s translations of 27 Shakespearean plays were published in twelve volumes by the Beijing Writers’ Press. The 1954 edition was reprinted in 1958 and 1962 respectively. At the same time other translators’ renderings of Shakespeare also came into print, such as Cao Yu’s *Romeo and Juliet* and Bian Zhilin’s *Hamlet*, and Fang Ping’s *Venus and Adonis*, all of which made a great contribution to Shakespearean studies and translations in China.

Regarding the performances of Shakespeare in China during this period, due to the contemporary and political concerns of the government, for seventeen years between 1949 and 1966 there were only nine Shakespeare productions staged in Beijing and Shanghai, the two cultural capitals in China. The nine productions¹⁹⁹ were:

Date	Production	Company	Translator/ Adapter	Director/ Stage Designer
1956	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Zhongyang Xijuan (Central Academy of Drama) Beijing	Zhu Shenghao	Dan Ni/A.V. Raikov
1957	<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>	Shanghai Xueyuan (Shanghai Xijuan)	Zhu Shenghao	Yevgeniya Konstantinov

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Sources are derived from Li Ruru, *Shashibiya*, 2003, Appendix 1, p. 234.

		Theatre Academy)		na Lipkovskaya
	<i>Twelfth Night</i>	Beijing Dianyning Zhuanke Xuexiao (Beijing Film School)	Zhu Shenghao	Lipkovskaya
1958	<i>Twelfth Night</i>	Shanghai Dianyning Yanyuan Jutuan (Shanghai Film Studio)	Cao Weifeng	Kazansky
1959	<i>Twelfth Night</i> (revival of the 1958 production)	Shanghai Dianyning Yanyuan Jutuan (Shanghai Film Studio)	Cao Weifeng	Lin Zhihao
	<i>Hamlet</i>	Zhongyang Xiju Xueyuan (Central Academy of Drama) Beijing	Zhu Shenghao	Jiao Juin
1961	<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i> (a revival of Lipkovskaya's 1957 production)	Shanghai Xiju Xueyuan (Shanghai Theatre Academy) , Shiyan Jutuan (Shanghai Theatre Academy's Experimental Company)	Zhu Shenghao	Hu Dao
	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Zhongyang Xiju Xueyuan (Central Academy of Drama) Beijing	Cao Yu	Zhang Qihong
1962	<i>Twelfth Night</i> (a revival of the 1958 production)	Shanghai Dianyning Zhuanke Xuexiao (Shanghai Film School)	Cao Weifeng	Lin Zhihao

It is interesting to see that only three plays featured in the nine productions listed above, and that they were either romances or comedies. This was no doubt caused by the strict censorship imposed by the authorities, since people did not dare to touch plays that conveyed a political message or which were in any way ambiguous. Among the nine productions, four were the work of Russian directors who had been invited by the Government to teach in the drama academies. Also, Zhang Qihong, the director of the 1961 *Romeo and Juliet*, had studied at the Moscow Art Theatre and her production was part of her 'study report' when she came back to China from the Soviet Union. All three productions by Chinese directors, in fact, reflected the work of Russian experts.

Therefore, one can see the apparent influence of the Soviet Union. In the 1950s, following the Soviet Union was a trend. A number of Soviet theatre experts, Yevgeniya Konstantinovna Lipkovskaya (1902-1990) as an example, were invited by the Chinese Communist Party to work as drama teachers to teach Stanislavski's System in China. Under the guidance of the Soviet experts in directing and acting, Stanislavsky's concept of 'starting from the self of the actor' was theorized in demonstrating a realistic representation of life on the Chinese stage. For instance, while directing Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* in Shanghai in 1957, Lipkovskaya required her Chinese students to wear costumes in rehearsals, to write autobiographies of the characters and to ask themselves many 'if' questions in order to strengthen their imagination that they lived in 'Merry England'—words by Engels in his *The Conditions of the Working Class in England*, as Stanislavsky claimed: 'If acts as a lever to lift the world of actuality into the realm of imagination'.²⁰⁰ In theatrical circles, the Soviet influence was rather powerful: the Stanislavsky method imported from the Soviet Union was revered as Marxist-Leninist doctrines. Under the direction of Russian experts, Chinese artists enthusiastically staged Shakespeare's plays dictated by 'the prevailing realistic style of modern Western drama'; as stated by Fei and Sun, 'the in-depth reading and literary analysis of the play text was applied to all spoken drama, which the government proclaimed should be modelled after Ibsen's realistic drama and performed in Stanislavsky's

²⁰⁰ Li Ruru, *Shashibiya: Staging Shakespeare in China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003)

representational style'.²⁰¹ Under such guideline, for instance, the Central Academy of Theatre 中央戏剧学院 produced *Romeo and Juliet* in 1956, and the Shanghai Theatre Academy 上海戏剧学院 produced *Much Ado About Nothing* in 1957.²⁰² Moreover, Chinese directors and actors were required to read Stanislavsky's directorial plan for *Othello* in Chinese translation.²⁰³ Russian direction certainly helped the Chinese to enhance their productions technically and politically, but, on the other hand, it also restricted the development of Chinese creativity. Russian opinions on the selection of plays and the interpretation of scripts, and their realistic style staging were extremely respected and strictly followed by Chinese theatrical circles. The Chinese Shakespearean repertoire was, as a result, extremely narrow. From 1949 to 1966, the first 17 years of the People's Republic, none of Shakespeare's major tragedies was publicly performed; producers concentrated almost exclusively on the comedies and romances. Whatever the text was, the interpretation was expected to meet the ideological specification derived from Engels: to extol the overthrow of medieval feudalism by the humanistic forces of early modern civilization, the hero to be portrayed as a 'Renaissance giant'.²⁰⁴ Chinese actors, pretending to be westerners, wore richly embroidered doublet-and-hose costumes, coloured wigs, *Western* make-up, and prosthetic noses, while the magnificent set composed of arches and high pillars suggested Palladian architecture.²⁰⁵ Rather than conveying the illusion of an authentic foreign setting, the effect as perceived by Chinese audiences tended to convey the exoticism of an enchanting fairy-tale.²⁰⁶

Shakespeare thus provided practitioners and audiences of Mainland China with a welcome escape from the standard theatrical presentation of contemporary industrial and agricultural themes and the heroic struggles of stereotyped workers, peasants,

²⁰¹ F. C. Fei and W. H. Sun, 'Othello and Beijing Opera: Appropriation As a Two-Way Street', *The Drama Review*, 50.1 (2006), 120-133 (p.123).

²⁰² 周培桐, '中国的莎剧演出', *莎士比亚词典*, 孙家琏 等编辑 (石家庄: 河北人民出版社, 1992b) [Zhou Peitong, 'The performances of Shakespeare's plays in China', in *The Dictionary of Shakespeare*, eds. by Sun Jiaxiu, et al (Shijiazhuang: Hebei People's Press, 1992b)], pp. 406-411 (p. 408).

²⁰³ F. C. Fei and W. H. Sun, 2006, p.123.

²⁰⁴ Frederick Engels, 'Introduction', in *Dialectics of Nature*, ed. and tr. Clemens Dutt (New York: International Publishers, 1960), 2-3.

²⁰⁵ See Li Ruru, *Shashibiya: Staging Shakespeare in China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), pp. 42-44; and Li Ruru, 'Millennium Shashibiya: Shakespeare in the Chinese-speaking world', *Foreign Shakespeare: Contemporary Performance*, ed. by Dennis Kennedy (Cambridge, New York, Victoria: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 170-87 (p.172).

²⁰⁶ See Li Ruru, 2003, *Shashibiya*, Chapter 2.

and soldiers against the class enemies. The motivation may not have been simply escapism, either. Maintaining as much ‘foreignness’ as possible, and emphasizing the distance between the ‘foreign’ and the ‘indigenous’, might also be seen as implicit resistance to the theatre of propaganda. Moreover, the respect for authority inherited from Confucianism and the confinement of Communist political correctness suppressed any ambition to apply experimental approaches to Shakespeare’s plays.

Undoubtedly, Stanislavsky had a great influence on modern Chinese drama, but the core of his system was partly misunderstood. The reason was that in the 1950s and 1960s, his works such as *My Life in Art*, *An Actor Prepares*, *Building a Character* and *Stanislavsky Produces Othello* were all translated into Chinese but his *Creating a Role* did not appear in China until the end of 1970s. This led his Chinese followers to pay attention only to his scheme of elementary-psychological action and to stress the need for the performers to experience the actual feelings of the role. They ignored Stanislavsky’s own theoretical adjustments and his powerful insistence on the importance of style and technique. Worse still, Stanislavsky’s system in China received political approval and was given priority over any other school of acting or directing. Those who did not agree with Stanislavsky’s ideas or tried to create characters in other ways were severely criticized.

Also relevant is the fact that, in the 1950s and 1960s, to further promote such a realistic, literary approach to Shakespeare, a number of films adapted from Shakespeare’s plays were imported into China from abroad and shown in the cinema either with Chinese dubbing or captions, including several made in the Soviet Union, and were interpreted as authentic and authoritative. Among those films, Laurence Olivier’s 1948 *Hamlet* was the most influential.²⁰⁷ Its Chinese title was *The Story of the Prince’s Revenge* and dubbed in 1958 on the basis of Bian Zhilin’s translation. Sun Daolin 孙道临 (1921-2007), who was good at English and a well-established actor and director in China, dubbed the role of the protagonist Hamlet. His familiarity with the English language and his perfect dubbing skills won him a good reputation and meanwhile attracted more and more Chinese audiences to watch the film. Olivier’s *Hamlet* is still being sold on DVD today, with the same dubbing, to Chinese drama students who want to learn *authentic* Shakespearean language. Considering that a movie usually had a larger audience than a theatrical production,

²⁰⁷ F. C. Fei and W. H. Sun, ‘Othello and Beijing Opera: Appropriation As a Two-Way Street’, *The Drama Review*, 50.1 (2006), 120-133 (p.123).

it is highly likely that these imported movies would have played a vital role in the increase in Shakespeare's popularity in China.

Although the teaching, research and performing of Shakespeare's plays in the 1950s and the early 1960s were quite limited, all of these activities came to a halt during the Cultural Revolution 文化大革命 (1966-76). The period of the Cultural Revolution was a disaster in Chinese history. Ultra-leftists purified the Party by purging the so-called 'bourgeois' and anti-socialist tendencies. They attacked all traditional values and strongly objected to foreign literature, declaring that Western culture and bourgeois things could corrupt proletarian ideas and socialist ideology. Instead, the celebration and eulogy of workers, peasants and soldiers became the core idea in art and literature. The prevailing political instability had a great impact on Chinese economic development, social stability, school education and diplomatic policy. China was once again shut off from the outside world. All masterpieces of world art and literature, labelled as 'feudal, bourgeois or revisionist', were completely banned. There was virtually no Shakespeare scholarship, and as He Qixin writes, 'even Shakespeare's name vanished from the lips of a population of nine hundred million people.'²⁰⁸ For a time during the Cultural Revolution, Mao's works were the only books on the shelves of bookstores and there was fanaticism throughout China in studying his instructions and treating him as the omnipresent and omnipotent 'God' in twentieth-century China. Every day the Chinese were asked to recite and memorize Quotations from Chairman Mao, which were collected in a pocket-size book with a red plastic cover, known as the 'Little Red Book'. Almost every Chinese person had such a Red Book in his or her pocket. Those scholars and teachers who had studied Western works were cruelly denounced in public by the Red Guards. During the early years of this period, spoken drama entirely disappeared, and stages throughout China were dominated by a few so-called 'model revolutionary dramas' (*geming yangbanxi* 革命样板戏)—modern plays of Beijing opera with Western style ballets—to sing the praises of Chairman Mao and the 'red' proletarian ideas. The Cultural Revolution, like the Dark Ages in Europe, was indeed an era of ignorance, superstition, repression and social chaos, in which few advances in art and literature were made. Under the propaganda that all literature and art should serve socialism and Chinese writers should address workers, peasants and

²⁰⁸ He Qixin, 'China's Shakespeare', *The Shakespeare Quarterly* 37 (1986), 155.

soldiers, everything about Shakespeare and his works in China was completely removed from bookstores, libraries, stages, cinemas and any other public place, although some Chinese intellectuals carried on reading Shakespeare in private. The boom in Chinese Shakespearean studies that had been awakened in the 1950s came regrettably to a halt.

1.5 A Golden Age of Shakespeare: 1978-Present

When the Cultural Revolution was over, or more precisely, from the end of the 1970s, China gradually re-opened to the West. After coming into power in 1981, Deng Xiaoping (1904-1997) advocated opening China's doors to the world and initiated economic reforms, pioneering socialism with Chinese characteristics with his theory: 'Whether you are a black cat or a white cat, as long as you are able to catch mice, then you are a good cat.' Consequently, the Chinese witnessed monumental social, economic and political changes, which simultaneously ensured immense enthusiasm in the Chinese reception of Shakespeare, finally bringing a promising golden age in the history of Chinese appreciation and interpretation of Shakespeare. Against a new historical, social and cultural background, Chinese scholars approached Shakespeare with new ideologies, values and aesthetic tastes.

As a mark of the Chinese renaissance, *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* (*Shashibiya quanji* 莎士比亚全集) in the Chinese language was published in 1978. This eleven-volume book included contributions from many Chinese Shakespeareans. The translation of Shakespeare's plays was a result of co-operation amongst a group of scholars who revised Zhu Shenghao's work and then translated what Zhu had left undone. In November 1979, the Old Vic Company performed *Hamlet* with Derek Jacobi, with simultaneous Chinese translation through earphones, in Shanghai and Beijing. Thereafter local productions increased, both professional and amateur. Chinese directors and adaptors made great efforts to perform Shakespearean dramas either in English or Chinese in two forms: as spoken drama and/or as traditional Chinese theatre. In 1979, little over two years after the end of the Cultural Revolution, Hu Dao's *Much Ado About Nothing* bravely appeared in Shanghai. Shakespeare had not been staged for nearly two decades, and the publicity was very low key as political sensitivity remained at the time. Chinese cultural circles were still shrouded by the lingering fear of the notorious Cultural Revolution, and the

stage and media constantly adulated the new leadership and denounced the ‘Gang of Four’.²⁰⁹ *Much Ado*, a revival of a landmark production in 1957 by the Russian director Lipkovskaya, opened a bright and colourful world in front of Chinese audiences who embraced it unhesitatingly. The success of this production led to a resurgence of Shakespeare performance in China. In 1981, Ying Ruocheng (1929-2003), a well-known translator, actor and director, adapted and directed *Measure for Measure* with the help of the visiting director Toby Robertson, which was a successful adaptation of a Shakespearean play on the Chinese stage. In the same year a group of students from Tibet performed *Romeo and Juliet* in the Tibetan language at the Shanghai Drama Institute in order to ‘broaden the horizon of the staging of Shakespeare in China’.²¹⁰ Apart from the new dramatic form of spoken drama, during this period many Shakespearean plays were also adapted for the traditional Chinese stage. For instance, the Beijing Experimental Beijing Opera Company (BEBOC) staged its version of *Othello* in 1983, adapted by Shao Hongchao from a Chinese translation. In December 1984, the Chinese Shakespeare Society was founded in the Shanghai Theatre Academy and Cao Yu was elected president. The first decision made at the inaugural conference of the Society was to establish the journal *Shakespeare Studies* and to sponsor a Chinese Shakespeare Festival. Accordingly, in April 1986, the first Chinese Shakespeare Festival was held simultaneously in Shanghai and Beijing. This was a significant event in the history of Chinese reception of Shakespeare, showing that Chinese Shakespearean studies had reached an unprecedented phase. At the Festival, a total of twenty-eight productions of eighteen different plays were mounted between 10 and 23 April, some of them in a quasi-western style, some in traditional Chinese Opera style.²¹¹ Diversity was a noticeable feature of Shakespeare productions in the Chinese festival. Comedies (*Love’s Labour’s Lost*), tragi-comedies (*All’s Well That Ends Well*), and tragedies (*King Lear*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*) were staged. In the past, never had so many different styles of Shakespeare’s plays been performed together in China.

²⁰⁹ Coined after Mao’s death, this term refers to a political alliance between Jiang Qing (Mao’s wife), Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyan and Wang Hongwen. The official announcement is that the ‘gang’ in fact dominated China in the closing years of the Cultural Revolution. They were arrested in October 1976.

²¹⁰ He Qixin, ‘China’s Shakespeare’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 37.2 (Summer, 1986), 49-159 (p.155).

²¹¹ The festival is treated in ‘Shakespeare in China,’ a special section of *Shakespeare Quarterly* 39 (1988), 195-216; reports are provided by J. Philip Brockbank, by Zha Peide and Tian Jia, and by Edward Berry. Two further short reports (by Huang Zuolin and by Yang Hengsheng) are contained in ‘On China’s First Shakespeare Festival,’ *China Reconstructs*, 35 (July 1986), 40-43.

Furthermore, Shakespeare's plays were mounted not only as spoken drama but also in various forms of *xiqu* from different areas and historical periods. Five performances at this festival were in the different genres of *xiqu*. They are the Beijing opera *Othello*, the ancient *kunju* opera *Macbeth*, the *yueju* operas *Twelfth Night* and *The Winter's Tale*, and the *huangmei* opera *Much Ado About Nothing*. The *kunju* opera *Macbeth* was a highly artistic performance with the stories of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth adapted into that of an ancient Chinese usurper and his beautiful but hard-hearted wife. The *yueju* opera *Twelfth Night* was also a beautiful performance in which a talented young actress played Viola with ease and elegance, and the stage design and music accompaniment blended Chinese style with western style. These two performances were highly successful.²¹² *Kunju* is a *xiqu* form with a history of around 500 years,²¹³ while *yueju* opera is a young sub-genre of *xiqu* emerging at the beginning of the twentieth century. The success of the Festival attracted and encouraged Chinese enthusiasm for Shakespearean studies. In looking back on the Chinese Shakespeare Festival of 1986, Philip Brockbank called it a Shakespeare renaissance in China: while it was winter for Shakespeare in England it appeared to be spring in China.²¹⁴ After the first Festival, *Blood-stained Hands*, the *kunqu* *Macbeth*, was invited to be performed at the Edinburgh International Festival in 1987 and was welcomed by the Western audience.

The attempts and efforts to stage Shakespeare's plays in various *xiqu* forms were applauded by Shakespeareans inside and outside of China, for whom the universality of Shakespeare's plays was certified once again. Indeed, it is rather clever to present Shakespeare's plays in a *xiqu* form. There are many similar points between the Elizabethan theatre and the traditional Chinese stage. In an Elizabethan theatre, the stage was almost bare. There was no front curtain and no painted scenery. There were few stage properties or furniture. The bare stage might represent any place, domestic or foreign, indoors or outdoors. Therefore, the changes of scenes were very convenient. Symbolism was much used: a king in armour signifies he was

²¹² 周培桐, '首届中国莎士比亚戏剧节', *莎士比亚词典*, 孙家琏, 等编辑 (石家庄: 河北人民出版社, 1992c) [Zhou Peitong, 'China's first Shakespeare festival', in *The dictionary of Shakespeare* eds. by Sun Jiaxiu, et al (Shijiazhuang: Hebei People's Press, 1992c)], pp. 411-412.

²¹³ On 18 May 2001, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization for the first time awarded the title of "Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity" to nineteen outstanding cultural spaces or forms of expression from the different regions of the world. *Kunqu* was one of the nineteen granted the title.

²¹⁴ J. Philip Brockbank, 'Shakespeare Renaissance in China', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 39.2 (1988), 195-204.

on the battlefield, and a man entering in spurred boots meant that a messenger was coming to report news. Under such crude conditions, the most important thing was the actor's declamation and performance. In Elizabethan times, there were no actresses. Female parts were played by boys. All these features very much resemble the old Chinese drama. The similarities between Elizabethan theatre and traditional Chinese *xiqu* provided the Chinese with convenience for them to interpret and perform Shakespeare's plays. Further, what Mnouchkine calls 'Shakespeare's ideological neutrality'²¹⁵ makes it more appropriate to adapt Shakespeare than any other Western playwright. Moreover, Chinese incorporation of the aesthetics and techniques of *xiqu* into Shakespeare productions enriched the theatrical practice of the English dramatist's plays and mapped out a new space for the Shakespeare industry.

However, some Chinese scholars exaggerated the impact of Shakespeare on *xiqu*, and even regarded the English dramatist as the saviour of the indigenous Chinese theatre. For instance, Zhang Xiao Yang claimed:

Shakespeare has replaced traditional Chinese drama to become the most important and authoritative dramatic form in Chinese cultural circles today [...] There are indications that some actors of traditional drama try to tailor their performances to the taste of contemporary Chinese with new methods that are apparently influenced by Shakespeare's dramatic ideas.²¹⁶

This seems to reflect the psychological state of some Chinese in the post-Mao era—everything from the West is advanced, and everything Chinese is backward. Actually, the roots of the psychological state can be traced back to the nineteenth century when China was constantly defeated by developed Western countries and Japan. As discussed before, the Chinese elite intellectuals once made great efforts to learn from the West in different ways, and May Fourth intellectuals cruelly attacked traditional Chinese culture, including *xiqu*, on the grounds that traditional Chinese culture was hampering China's modernization.

Speaking of theatre or performing arts (in a broad sense) in the 1980s, a variety of pop entertainments imported from the West indeed kept drawing a large audience

²¹⁵ Cited in Dennis Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare: A Visual History of Twentieth-Century Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.286.

²¹⁶ See Zhang, 1996, p.129.

away from *xiqu*. Some Chinese theatre people did hope to increase *xiqu* audiences through adapting and performing Shakespeare's plays. Ironically, the reality is that the Shakespeare productions of *xiqu* were only favourites in those Shakespeare festivals that were financially supported by the government. Compared to the traditional *xiqu* repertoire, Shakespeare productions of *xiqu* were short-lived, and they could never hold a central place in the day-to-day box-office receipts of *xiqu* performances. In short, it was not realistic to promote the influence of *xiqu* by performing Shakespeare's plays.

The flourishing reception of Shakespeare in China advanced steadily into the 1990s. In 1994, the Chinese Shakespeare Society held the 1994 Shanghai International Shakespeare Festival, attracting three drama companies from Germany, England and Scotland. There appeared more *xiqu* performances of Shakespeare in the 1990s, including *Hamlet* (retitled *The Revenge of the Prince*) performed as a *yueju* opera in 1994, and *King Lear* performed as a Beijing opera in 1996. In addition, the link between Chinese and international Shakespearean studies was strengthened by China's sending, for the first time, a delegation of twelve professors and scholars to the Sixth Congress of the International Shakespeare Association held in Los Angeles in 1996, and the appointment of translator Fang Ping, as the first Chinese, as a member of the Executive Committee of this international organization. The 1998 International Shakespeare Conference was co-organized by the Shanghai Theatre Academy and the Chinese Shakespeare Society in association with the Hong Kong Shakespeare Society and Australian Shakespeare Society. A promising new century of Chinese reception of Shakespeare had begun.

In the field of translation, many Chinese renditions of Shakespearean works came into print. For example, Bian Zhilin, Sun Dayu (1905-1997)²¹⁷ and Yang Lie²¹⁸ respectively published their poetic versions of Shakespeare's *Four Great Tragedies*. Even more popular was the introduction of Liang Shiqiu's *The Complete Plays of Shakespeare* to Mainland China for the first time in 1996.²¹⁹ Two years later, experts on English literature and drama such as Qiu Ke'an, He Qixin, Shen Lin and Gu Zhengkun were invited to revise Zhu Shenghao's rendition of Shakespeare published in 1978. Following that, the Yilin Publishing House printed the revised version of

²¹⁷ Sun Dayu 孙大雨 was a Chinese poet and translator, the first one to advocate five *dun*/顿 in translating Shakespeare's iambic pentameter.

²¹⁸ Yang Lie 杨烈 was a translator of Shakespeare.

²¹⁹ Meng Xianqing, 'The Reception of Shakespeare in China: a Historical Overview', 2002, p. 118.

The Complete Works of Shakespeare (supplement) with the help of Suo Tianzhang, Sun Fali, Liu Bingshan and Gu Zhengkun in retranslating and enlarging Shakespeare with the newly found *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and *Edward III*. So far this supplement collects together the most complete works of Shakespeare in China. In 2000, a new translation of *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* in poetic form—the first time in the history of Shakespearean translation—was edited under Fang Ping’s guidance. In addition, three versions of Shakespeare’s Sonnets were published in China between 2003 and 2004, including Wang Yu’s *Shakespeare’s Sonnets*, Jin Fayan’s *Collection of Shakespeare’s Sonnets* and Ai Mei’s *Sonnets*.

In spite of the absence of the professional Shakespeare Festival,²²⁰ performances of Shakespeare have not stopped. Amateur performances of Shakespeare have become popular among universities; for example, the first Competition of Shakespearean Performances at Chinese Universities was held in January 2005, with more than twenty universities participating in the English contest, including Beijing University, Fudan University, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and Macao University. In 2013, a Chinese production of Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus* by the Beijing People’s Art Theatre became one of the highlights of the Edinburgh International Festival. Under the avant-garde and often controversial director Lin Zhaohua, the pace of the action was set by the electric guitars and rock beats of two of China’s most popular heavy metal bands. Pushing the boundaries, Lin used stylized heavy rock to punctuate heightened moments of conflict in the story of Coriolanus, the heroic general who joins forces with the enemy after being rejected by the common people. The huge crowd scenes in *Coriolanus*, the idea of a noble hero and the sacrifices of the individual for the betterment of a society are something many Chinese people would identify with. In addition, in Chinese culture filial duty is so important and audiences would certainly relate to Coriolanus’ devotion to his mother—the only person who appears to have any real influence upon his decisions.

²²⁰ Since the two celebrations in the late twentieth century, the Chinese Shakespeare Festival—originally planned once every four years—was not carried out on schedule.



Figure 1 Pu Cunxin (Coriolanus) and Li Zhen (Volumnia, Coriolanus' mother) in *The Tragedy of Coriolanus*, dir. by Lin Zhaohua, Edinburgh International Festival 2013. (Courtesy of Beijing People's Art Theatre)

The past three decades has also seen a boom in new Asian cinematic Shakespeares. This new wave of filmic creativity reveals how Shakespearean aesthetics and Chinese perspectives have been brought together to form locally-inspired but transnationally-produced artworks. Many of Shakespeare's works have been reimaged by Chinese artists into silent film, period epic film, urban comedy, and martial-arts film. *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet* are often at the centre of these cinematic imaginations. Anthony Chan's *One Husband Too Many* (*Yi qi liang fu* 一妻两夫, Hong Kong, 1988) weaves *Romeo and Juliet* into a contemporary urban comedy, while Cheah Chee Kong's *Chicken Rice War* (*Ji yuan qiao he* 鸡缘巧合, Singapore, 2000), engages such films as Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* (1996) and John Madden's *Shakespeare in Love* (1998) from an ironic distance.

What is most striking in this phase is the great development in Chinese Shakespeare criticism. The open door policy since the 1980s has brought relative freedom to Chinese scholars and critics and they have re-evaluated Shakespeare and his works according to their own varied ideas. Along with frequent cultural exchanges between China and the West, literary and art theories in the West have also brought to the Chinese new research approaches, broadening Chinese Shakespeare studies and particularly Shakespearean criticism. Chinese academics have actively published their studies of, and research into Shakespeare. As Meng

Xianqiang estimated, ‘During the last two decades, they (Chinese scholars) produced five Shakespearean monographs, eighteen collections of essays on Shakespeare, and five various types of Shakespeare dictionaries’,²²¹ for example, Fang Ping’s *Making Friends with Shakespeare*,²²² Liu Bingshan’s *A Shakespeare Dictionary for Chinese Students* in 2001, Zhang Chong’s *Topics on Shakespeare* in the year 2004 and others. In these critical essays on Shakespeare and his works, ‘Chinese scholars have done [with] polemical discussions and challenged Russian and traditional Western critical assertions’²²³ so as to respond to Cao Yu’s, the previous president of the Chinese Shakespeare Society, call for ‘Shakespearean studies with Chinese characteristics’. In his *Learning from Shakespeare* published in the *People’s Daily* in 1983, Cao Yu remarked, ‘Our studies of Shakespeare are conditioned differently from our Western counterparts. We have a long cultural tradition.... We approach Shakespeare and admire the “world giant” with Chinese eyes of a new historical phase.’²²⁴ Subsequently, in trying to establish a Chinese style of Shakespearean criticism, Shakespearean scholars and critics no longer follow the traditions of literary criticism of other countries, say, Russian Shakespearean criticism. What is more, instead of criticizing the playwright and his works from the political viewpoint of class struggle – Mao Zedong’s guidelines for art and literary criticism, they attempt to adopt an artistic approach to appreciate and interpret the humanistic ideas and aesthetic values in his plays and poems. Relatively freed from any political persecution, the Chinese academics are increasing their interest in the Shakespeare scholarship. Among the various methods of researching Shakespeare and his plays, including image study, psychoanalysis, archetypal study, feminism study, religion study, anthropological study, post-colonialism, and deconstruction, cultural studies is the most popular in the Chinese criticism of Shakespeare. The playwright has been compared with Chinese and foreign writers in terms of writing style, theme, plot, characterization and structure. On the other hand, from the dramatic perspective, similarities and differences between Shakespeare’s plays and Chinese dramas show the comprehensibility and compatibility of the two cultures, encouraging more adaptations and receptions of Shakespeare on the Chinese stage in the future.

²²¹ Meng Xianqing, ‘The Reception of Shakespeare in China: a Historical Overview’, pp.120-121.

²²² The book, including Fang’s seventeen essays on Shakespeare between the late 1970s and early 1980s, was published in Chengdu by the Sichuan People’s Press in 1983.

²²³ Meng Xianqing, ‘The Reception of Shakespeare in China: a Historical Overview’, p.121.

²²⁴ Cao Yu as quoted in Meng, ‘The Reception of Shakespeare’, 2002, p. 120.

1.6 Coda

Apparently, Shakespeare's encounter with China over the past two centuries is rather complex. It is impossible to make a comprehensive analysis in one chapter on all aspects of the cultural history, which will be explored further in the forthcoming chapters. As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, I have chosen to focus on Chinese responses to Shakespeare in different historical periods. When we look back on Shakespeare's place in the history of modern Chinese theatre, we find that his image gradually evolved from a culturally-inflected icon of Englishness—or the West—into a Western curiosity and an image of progressive political iconography. To the Chinese, although Shakespeare has never become part of modern Chinese drama as Henrik Ibsen has, he has always been useful as a forum for political commentary and as a new site for artistic experiments. Along with the progress of Shakespeare translation and study, Shakespeare performances in China have gradually grown into maturity. Shakespeare served as an important force in the development of *huaju* in China, and also became a means by which new life could be breathed into traditional Chinese theatre. In the twentieth century, modern Chinese drama, theatre and literature were closely associated with politics. Within such a historical framework, studies and productions of Shakespeare were naturally sensitive to and affected by politics because of Shakespeare's Western identity. Having experienced a series of dramatic changes, nevertheless, Shakespeare eventually enjoyed a golden age in China. The variation in Chinese attitudes towards Shakespeare demonstrates the tortuousness of China's politics, literature, and theatre over the last century; on the other hand, the extent of Shakespeare's popularity in China reflects the penetrating influences of the West on the largest country outside of Western culture.

Chapter 2 Translating Shakespeare to the Chinese Stage: Performative Translation and Cultural Transformation

Already the most translated Western author in China, William Shakespeare—known locally as *Shashibiya* or even Old Man Sha—is getting a major boost. In September 2014, the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) initiated a project to translate the *Complete Works*, all 37 plays and 154 sonnets, from Elizabethan English into modern standard Mandarin. Backed by 1.5 million pounds from the British government, the project is central to a wider effort by the RSC to produce a global folio of Shakespeare translations in time for the 400th anniversary of the famous *First Folio*, published in 1623. The motives of the project are to ‘create stronger links with China’,²²⁵ and to boost economic activity and tourism. The company is now collaborating with Chinese writers and translators, who are involved in the RSC’s rehearsal process and invited to create new Mandarin translations of Shakespeare’s plays. I believe there will be much to expect in the RSC’s translation, as it is the first time that the translation of the *Complete Works* into Mandarin will be a performative translation.

Shakespeare has been around in translation as far back as the playwright’s lifetime. In the early 1600s English theatre companies on tour in Europe performed versions of Shakespeare’s plays, first in English but soon adapted to the local vernacular—a German version of *Titus Andronicus* was published as early as 1620.²²⁶ Although German came first, translations to other languages followed in the eighteenth century, with Voltaire’s French translations in the 1730s, Sumarokov’s Russian in 1750 and translations into Italian (1756), Spanish (1772), Czech (1786), and more translations across the rest of Europe. Within the British Empire, Shakespeare was performed in Calcutta in the 1780s in Marthi, Gujurati and Parsi, and Urdu translations came in the nineteenth century. Elsewhere there were translations into Hebrew (1874), Japanese (1885), Arabic (1890s) and Korean

²²⁵ *Government funding of £1.5 million to Royal Shakespeare Company allows the Bard’s complete works to be translated into Mandarin* (2014), <<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-takes-shakespeare-to-new-audience-of-one-billion-people-in-china>> [accessed on 13 April 2015].

²²⁶ Dennis Kennedy, ‘Shakespeare worldwide’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*, eds. by Margreta de Grazia and Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 251-264 (p.254)

(1921)²²⁷. In her 2008 PhD dissertation, Yanna Sun carefully documents the history of Shakespeare translation in China, noting that the first translation of a complete Shakespearean play (previous translations were fragmentary) was that of *Hamlet* by Tian Han in 1921.²²⁸ Since the publication of Tian Han's *Hamlet*, many Chinese scholars have made efforts to translate Shakespeare's works. Well-known playwrights such as Cao Yu, poets such as Bian Zhilin, Dai Wangshu and Zheng Min, famous scholars with higher degrees from American and English elite universities such as Liang Shiqiu, Cao Weifeng and Liu Wuji, and professional translators such as Sun Dayu and Fang Ping have all published different versions of Shakespeare.²²⁹ Translations of Shakespeare's works occupy an important position in China because they are not only read by general readers and used by theatre companies for performance, they are also taught in Chinese departments at universities and are essential research materials for those who have no access to the English language—a number of Chinese Shakespeareans cannot read Shakespeare's texts or any related criticism in English. Up to the present, three major translation versions of the *Complete Works* are available in China, including Zhu Shenghao's, a prose version and the most popular one,²³⁰ Liang Shiqiu's, which, for political reasons, was not available to general readers in Mainland China until 1996,²³¹ and Fang Ping's 2000 verse translation.²³² To add to the three translation versions of the *Complete Works* are dozens of single- or multi-play editions, as well as translations of Shakespeare's

²²⁷ In 1919, some of the *Tales of Shakespeare* by Charles and Mary Lamb were translated into Korean. The first full translation was Hyun Chul's translation of *Hamlet*, serialized 1921-22 and first published in full in 1923. See Jong-hwan Kim, 'Shakespeare in a Korean Cultural Context', *Asian Theatre Journal*, 12.1; and Younglim Han, 'Korean Shakespeare: The Anxiety of Being Invisible', in *Shakespeare Without English: The Reception of Shakespeare in Non-anglophone Countries*, eds. by Sukanta Chaudhuri and Chee Seng Lim.

²²⁸ Yanna Sun, *Shakespeare in China* (Diss., Dresden University of Technology, 2008), pp.18-19.

²²⁹ Lu Tonglin, 'Zhu Shenghao: Shakespeare Translator and a Shakespearean Tragic Hero in Wartime China', *Comparative Literature Studies*, 49.4 (2012), 521-36.

²³⁰ Zhu Shenghao's 11-volume version, published by the People's Literature Press in 1978, consists of 31 plays translated by Zhu during the 1920-30s, the rest of the plays and the poems completed by other translators. *Henry V* was translated by Fang Ping; *Richard III* by Fang Chong; *Henry VI* by Zhang Yi and *Henry VIII* by Yang Zhouhan. Translations of poems were by Liang Zongdai, Zhang Guroo, Yang Deyu, Huang Yushi, etc.)

²³¹ The special political context of China contributed to this situation. In 1949 with the Communist Party defeating Kuomintang (Nationalist Party) in the domestic war, Liang fled to Taiwan with the Kuomintang and was condemned by the Communist Party as a 'reactionary scholar' and 'walking dog' of the bourgeoisie. He regained his reputation in the 1980s when the ideological taboo was removed, and his works began to be published for Mainland readers. Liang Shiqiu was the first to translate all the plays of Shakespeare himself. He began the translations in Mainland China but completed them while living in Taiwan, where they were published by the Taipei Far East Publishing House in 1967. His translation of *The Complete Plays of Shakespeare* made its appearance in Mainland China only in 1996. See Xiaoyang Zhang, *Shakespeare in China*, p.106.

²³² Fang Ping's 12-volume version was published by Hebei Education Press in 2000.

sonnets and poems.²³³ While most translators translated Shakespeare primarily for literary appreciation, Ying Ruocheng's (1929-2003) translations, including *Measure for Measure*, *Hamlet* and *Coriolanus*, were specially produced for stage performances.

Recent translators of Shakespeare strive to preserve the Shakespearean text's potential for performance by making space in their translations for non-verbal codes of theatrical presentation. Translation theorists such as Susan Bassnett-McGuire and Patrice Pavis focus not only on the meaning of the words to be translated but also on the relationship of those words to the body that speaks them and the cultural context in which they are spoken. However, current Chinese scholarship on Shakespeare translation is still limited to traditional theories which focus on the equivalence between the source and target languages, considering translation simply as 'a science of linguistic transfer',²³⁴ while more crucial levels/aspects of translation – performability and cultural factors – are often ignored. According to Nord, 'Linguistics alone will not help us. Translation is not merely and not even primarily a linguistic process'.²³⁵ In fact, 'it takes place in concrete, definite situations that involve members of different cultures',²³⁶ and it is inevitably constrained by both the source and target cultures. As Alexa Huang notes, 'The dual canonicity of Shakespeare as a text being widely read and globally performed calls for an analysis of the locality of performative translation and how the distance between different cultural coordinates of the plays and their audience is negotiated.'²³⁷ In any given performance the additional languages of body, rhythm, sound, costume, and gestures would have been added to the lines delivered by actors. Drama embodies the undistinguishable twins of performance and texts, and the play text is only an incomplete half of the drama, or *troué* in Anne Ubersfeld's term.²³⁸ Shakespeare's

²³³ Some of the noteworthy editions include Sun Dayu's *Shakespeare Tragedies*, Tu An's *Collected Sonnets* (by Shakespeare), *Hamlet* (a three-play verse translation), and Sun Fali's *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (prose translation).

²³⁴ Yang Lingui, 'Cultural transformation and linguistic Transfer-Chinese transplant of Shakespeare', *Multicultural Shakespeare. Translation, Appropriation and Performance*, vol. 2 (2005), pp.37-49 (p.37).

²³⁵ Christiane Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained* (Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2001), p.10.

²³⁶ Mary Snell-Hornby, *Translation Studies: An Integrated Approach* (Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2001), p. 40.

²³⁷ Alexander (Alexa) C. Y. Huang, 'Where is Shakespeare? Locality and Performative Translation', *Ilhado Desterro: A Journal of Language and Literature*, 49 (2005), 255-64 (p.257).

²³⁸ Quoted in Susan Bassnett, 'Still Trapped in the Labyrinth: Further Reflections on Translation and Theatre', *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters

plays exist physically both on pages and stages. Further, the political-social and cultural contexts in which Shakespeare is read and performed complicate the issue of the translation of these plays.

In this chapter, in which I intend to discuss Shakespeare translation in China, I shall focus on the performative translation and cultural transformation that occurs from page to stage, and consider translation as a three-dimensional interface between source texts and target languages and cultures through the sifting of the cultural context of the translator and the audience. To illuminate this point, I draw upon some translations of Shakespeare that have received performance in China. Though others could have been selected, I have chosen for my focus a *huju* (modern Chinese theatre) production of *Measure for Measure*, retitled *Qing jun ru weng* 请君入瓮 (Please Step into the Urn), which was translated by Ying Ruocheng, and directed by British director Toby Robertson²³⁹ for the Beijing People's Art Theatre Company in 1981. Another British artist also participated: Alan Barret designed the set. To illustrate the differences between performative translation and literary translation, I draw on Zhu Shenghao's (1912-1944) translation of *Measure for Measure* as a comparison with Ying's translation. The purpose is to find out how Chinese translators configure the relationships between the source and target languages and cultures, and between the performative and the literary in their specific social-cultural contexts.

2.1 Performability and Culture: Key Issues of Theatre Translation

With the development of globalization, more and more scholars are becoming concerned with the nature of theatre translation. Such scholars include Bassnett (1978, 1980, 1985, 1991, 1998), Pavis (1989, 1992, 1997), Kruger (1986, 2004), Nikolarea (2002), and Aaltonen (1996, 2000). From various perspectives—semiotic,

Ltd., 1998), p.120.

²³⁹ Toby Robertson (29 November 1928—4 July 2012) was the artistic director of the Prospect Theatre Company from 1964 to 1978. He was recognised as having 're-established the good name and reputation of touring theatre in the UK after it had become a byword for second-rate tattiness in the 1950s'. Over ten years, led by Robertson, Prospect appeared at eight Edinburgh festivals, mounting 16 productions, 13 of them presented in London. However, things started to go wrong when the company sought a base at the Old Vic in 1977, and there were questions whether this contravened the terms of their touring subsidy. Robertson was in effect fired from the post of artistic director in an Arts Council-backed palace putsch in 1980, while he was abroad with the company in China. He never really recovered from this disappointment and fell out with Timothy West, his successor as artistic director at the Old Vic. See Michael Coveney, 'Toby Robertson obituary', *The Guardian*, 8 July 2012. <<http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2012/jul/08/toby-robertson>> [accessed on 6 May 2015].

cultural and theatrical—most of the authors agree that theatre translation is peculiar with its own rules. According to Pavis, we cannot simply translate a text linguistically; rather we confront and communicate heterogeneous cultures and situations of enunciation that are separated in space and time.²⁴⁰ He quotes George Mounin when he tells the difference: ‘A playable theatre translation is the product, not of linguistic, but rather of a dramaturgical act (...) one would translate the language well enough, without translating the play’.²⁴¹ Ismail El-Naggar holds that: ‘Central to translating drama is the issue of performability since the play is meant to be performed and not merely read. Moreover, a translator translating the dialogue of a play has to be able to choose the language suitable to the occasion and the relationships between characters’.²⁴² Pavis thus claims that in order to conceptualize the act of theatre translation, we must consult the literary translator and the director and actor; we must incorporate their contribution and integrate the act of translation into the much broader translation (that is the *mise en scène*) of a dramatic text.²⁴³ On the contrary, some scholars, Bassnett being a typical example, argue against performability as the major criterion of theatre translation. For Bassnett this term has no credibility, because it is resistant to any form of definition.²⁴⁴ In her opinion, the notion of performability, with its implicit, ill-defined and indefinable qualities, is used by many translators to excuse their various linguistic strategies, or so-called literal or draft translation to a playwright to suit his or her own purpose. She advocates that the time has come to focus more closely on the linguistic structures of the text itself for, after all, ‘it is only within the written that the performable can be encoded and there are infinite performance decodings possible in any playtext’.²⁴⁵ Therefore, Bassnett argues that an investigation into the linguistic structuring of

²⁴⁰ Patrice Pavis, ‘Problems of Translation for Stage: Intercultural and Post-Modern Theatre’, in *The Play Out of Context: Transferring Plays from Culture to Culture*, eds. by Hanna Scolnicov and Peter Holland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 25-44 (p.25).

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.28.

²⁴² Ismail El-Naggar, *The Problematic Areas in Literary Translation* (2008),

<<http://www.translationdirectory.com/article1066.htm>> [accessed on 2 March 2014].

²⁴³ Pavis, ‘Problems of Translation for Stage: Intercultural and Post-Modern Theatre’, p. 25.

²⁴⁴ Susan Bassnett, ‘Translating for the Theatre: The Case Against Performability’, *TTR (Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction) Studies in the Text and its Transformations* (Special Issue: Languages and Cultures in Translation Theories) 4.1 (1991), 99-111 (p.102); Susan Bassnett, ‘Still Trapped in the Labyrinth: Further Reflections on Translation and Theatre’, in *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation*, eds. by Susan Bassnett & André Lefevere (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1998), pp. 90-108 (p.95).

²⁴⁵ Susan Bassnett, ‘Ways Through the Labyrinth: Strategies and Methods for Translating Theatre Texts’, in *The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation*, ed. by Theo Hermans (London: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 87-102 (p.102).

drama texts should take precedence over ‘an abstract, highly individualistic notion of performability’, and that ‘the satisfactory solution of such textual difficulties’ will result in the creation of a translated text that can be submitted ‘to the preperformance readings’ of those who will be involved in the performance. Thus she claims that ‘the translator, like the writer, needs not be concerned with how that written text is going to integrate into the other sign systems. It is a task for director and the actors.’²⁴⁶ Actually, in producing a dramatic text, it is important for the playwright to bear in mind all the unique features of plays. It is common sense that the nature of plays lies in their theatricality. Therefore, the reverse is true that the translator, as the writer, needs always to be concerned with how to make the text performable on the stage, even though Bassnett is correct to remark that theatre is a ‘collaborative process in which not only are different sign systems involved, but a host of different people with different skills’.²⁴⁷

The common idea among the above-mentioned scholars is a close relationship between performability and theatre translation. According to Boulton, ‘A true play is three dimensional; it is literature that walks and talks before our eyes.’ ‘Though in fact plays are often read in silence, the text of the play is meant to be translated into sights, sounds and actions which occur literally and physically on a stage’.²⁴⁸ In China, the holistic view of drama is also popular. Wang Guowei, an eminent literary critic in the Qing Dynasty, defines drama as a play to be performed on the stage. Contemporary dramatists like Dong Jian, Ma Junshan²⁴⁹ as well as Tan Peisheng²⁵⁰ share a blurring theory of drama, that is, the true nature of drama lies in both its dramatism (literary nature) and theatricality (theatre-orientedness). Similarly, in translating a theatre text, the translator himself should be responsible for the performability of the text while he can consult the director or actors and others, which means that Bassnett’s discussion of the expectations of a theatre translator makes real sense to ‘have to know both languages and theatrical systems intimately and experience of gestic readings and training as a performer or director in the two systems’. I also agree with Nikolarea that the enduring polarization of performability and readability is a reductionist illusion. It is a reflection of the weakness of all

²⁴⁶ Bassnett, ‘Translating for the Theatre: The Case Against Performability’, p.111.

²⁴⁷ Bassnett, ‘Still Trapped in the Labyrinth: Further Reflections on Translation and Theatre’, p.99.

²⁴⁸ Marjorie Boulton, *The Anatomy of Drama* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), p. 3.

²⁴⁹ Dong Jian, Ma Junshan, *50 Lectures on Dramaturgical Art* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2006)

²⁵⁰ *The Chinese encyclopedia*, (The Chinese Encyclopedia Press, 2007), p. 1007.

<<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deixis>> [accessed on 6 October 2013].

prescriptive approaches in translation studies, or a fallacy as it may be called.²⁵¹

Besides performability, culture is now being conceptualized as an important part in theatre translation. From the cultural perspective, translation can be defined as a dynamic dialogue of cultural encounter, as a negotiation of differences as well as a difficult process of transformation. Since the 1970s there has been a paradigm shift known as the “cultural turn” in translation studies. Polysystem theory, the descriptive approach and the Manipulation School were the most influential theories in the 1970s.²⁵² Hence, target-language-culture-oriented translation theory came into being. To the credit of her Germanic perspective, Snell-Hornby discovers a precedent of the cultural turn in Hans Vermeer’s seminal work on Skopos theory in the early 1980s, which examines translation in terms of how it serves its intended purpose (in Greek, *skopos* means ‘purpose,’ ‘aim,’ or ‘goal’). Vermeer distinguishes five types of translation: the interlinear version (word for word translation), the grammar translation (at the sentence level), the documentary translation (oriented toward the source), the communicative translation (oriented toward the target), and the adapting translation (the source as raw material for something new). With this dynamic skopos model, Vermeer envisions the possibility of ‘de-throning the source text’ and appropriating it merely as a ‘means to a new text.’²⁵³ In 1990, the term “cultural turn” appeared in the book *Translation, History and Culture* written by André Lefevere and Susan Bassnett, in which the two authors urged translation studies to move from text to culture, thereby marking a cultural turn in a field previously dominated by the scientific, linguistic approach.²⁵⁴ They argue that the traditional definition of translation as a kind of language transfer limits our practice and suggest the study of translation to be the study of cultural interaction, and redefine the subject of study as a verbal text within the network of literary and extra-literary signs in both the source and target cultures. In addition, translators have always served as a vital link enabling different cultures to interact. Thus, translations are never the simple reproduction of the source texts. Instead, they are the products of both the

²⁵¹ Ekaterini Nikolarea, ‘Performability versus Readability: A Historical Overview of a Theoretical Polarization in Theatre Translation’, *Translation Journal*, 6 (2002), 10-11.

<<http://www.bokorlang.com/journal/22theater.htm>> (accessed on 14 February 2014).

²⁵² Theo Hermans, *Translation in Systems: Descriptive and System-oriented Approaches Explained* (Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2004), p.13.

²⁵³ Mary Snell-Hornby, *The Turns of Translation Studies: New Paradigms or Shifting Viewpoints?* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2006), p.54.

²⁵⁴ Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, eds. *Translation, History and Culture* (London: Pinter, 1990)

impact of the social-cultural background and the translators' own choices.

As an influential representative of the cultural school of translation, Lefevere proposed Manipulation Theory in his book *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*. His theory considers translation as 'a rewriting of an original text'.²⁵⁵ According to Lefevere, 'All rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way.'²⁵⁶ The translated version can never truthfully reflect the flavour of the original mainly because the translation activities are manipulated by three factors: poetics, ideology and patronage. The images of the translated works and the viewpoints of the translator are all closely related to the mainstream poetics and ideology of the current society. Furthermore, patronages including political parties, classes, the royal palace, religious institutions, publishing houses, and mass media, etc. are always manipulating the whole process of translation activities.²⁵⁷

The above-mentioned scholars' theories have made clear that translation is far more than a linguistic matter. No translator can be separated from his or her cultural background. On the contrary, culture would be deeply engraved upon his or her mind. Therefore, during the process of translation, translators are inevitably influenced by culture, politics and ideology, etc. Thus, it is noteworthy that cultural factors are an indispensable part of translation studies and the cultural turn in translation studies is of great significance.

2.2 General Problems in Translating Shakespeare

‘生存还是毁灭，这是一个值得考虑的问题。’ (‘Survive or be destroyed: This is the question worth considering.’)²⁵⁸ That is one version of how Hamlet's ‘To be or not to be’ soliloquy sounds in Chinese, in which ‘to be’ is just not translated. ‘没有只能换到没有 (Not having anything can only result in not having anything),’²⁵⁹ says

²⁵⁵ André Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), xi.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ 朱生豪 (译), ‘哈姆雷特’, *莎士比亚全集*, 11 卷, 第8卷 (北京: 人民文学出版社, 1978) [Zhu Shenghao (trans.), *Hamuleite* (Chinese version of *Hamlet*), *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, Vols. 11, Vol. 8 (Beijing: People's Literature Press, 1978)], Act III, Scene I.

²⁵⁹ 朱生豪 (译), ‘李尔王’, *莎士比亚全集*, 11 卷, 第9卷 (北京: 人民文学出版社, 1978) [Zhu

the Chinese King Lear, instead of ‘Nothing will come of nothing’ — because Chinese, like many languages, has not made a noun out of ‘nothing.’ While rendering Shakespeare’s plays into Mandarin, the Chinese translator comes across many problems. Of all the difficulties of translating Shakespeare, in my opinion, the greatest are the language divergences and cultural differences.

2.2.1 Language Divergences

The English language, based on the phonetic principle of spelling and pronunciation, is different from the Mandarin spoken in the People’s Republic of China today, whose characters are primarily of a monosyllabic nature. China has always had dozens of major regional oral languages and thousands of minor oral dialects. In dynastic China, the common language of communication, or *interlingua* for the Chinese from different provinces, was not any oral language, but classical Chinese, a refined and concise written language that has changed very little over thousands of years. Mandarin (*Putonghua* 普通话) is based on the Beijing dialect, which had been strongly inflected by the Manchurian language since the Manchurians governed China in 1644. In the English language system, stress is of importance within a sentence. In Shakespeare’s *Sonnet 18*, for example, the stress is on the second syllable: ‘So long | as men | can breathe | or eyes | can see / So long | lives this | and this | gives life | to thee’, which is different from the four tones in the pronunciation of Mandarin, for example, *Bái rì yī shān jìn, huáng hé rù hǎi liú* (白日依山尽, 黄河入海流).²⁶⁰ The fundamentally different language systems lead to different systems of ideas and modes of thought. ‘A word in any language is nothing but a cluster of connotative as well as denotative meanings which it has accumulated down the centuries since its birth.’²⁶¹ For example, Shakespeare expresses the meaning of being jealous as ‘green-ey’d jealousy’ (*The Merchant of Venice*, 3.2.104),²⁶² while in the Chinese language it is called a “red-eyed disease”. Moreover, Elizabethan English differs from present-day English in that, for instance, irregularity may happen, whether in the formation of words or in the combination of

Shenghao (trans.), *Li'er wang* (Chinese version of *King Lear*), *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, Vols. 11, Vol. 9 (Beijing: People’s Literature Press, 1978)], Act I, Scene I.

²⁶⁰ These are the first two lines of a well-known poem *dēng guàn què lóu* 登鹳雀楼 (*Mounting the Guanque Tower*) by Wang Zhihuan (688-742), a famous poet in the Tang Dynasty (618-907).

²⁶¹ Simon S. C Chau, ‘The Nature and Limitations of Shakespeare Translation’, *New Asian Academic Bulletin*, 1 (1978), 239-50 (p.241).

²⁶² All the quotations from Shakespeare’s plays in this chapter are taken from *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, ed. by William James Craig (London: Oxford University Press, 1914).

words into sentences. For example, almost any part of speech can be used as any other. A noun can be used as a verb, ‘He will pleasure his friends’; an adjective can be used as an adverb, ‘He has done it easy’; or as a noun, ‘You can talk of “fair” (instead of “beauty”)', and so on. The change of words in meaning and usage since Shakespeare’s time also adds difficulty to the Chinese translation of Shakespeare’s plays. Take the word ‘cousin’ as an example. Nowadays, cousin refers to a child of one’s uncle or aunt. However, during the Renaissance it was a general term for a relative descended from a common ancestor. That is why Claudius addresses Hamlet ‘now my cousin Hamlet, and my son’ (*Hamlet*, 1.2.67). Zhu Shenghao makes a literal translation while rendering the following line:

Nay, then I cannot blame his cousin King
That wished him on the barren mountains starve (*Henry IV*, Part I, 1.3.164-5)
啊，那就难怪他那位做了国王的叔父
恨不得要让摩提默在荒凉的山谷之间饿死了。²⁶³
(Aha, that’s why his uncle, who has become King [Henry IV],
Wishes Mortimer to starve to death in the desolate mountains.)

However, historical materials prove that King Henry IV was Richard II’s cousin rather than uncle, for none of Richard’s six uncles ascended the throne and Henry IV – Henry Bolingbroke – was the son of his third uncle John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, which is by chance in accord with its modern general meaning. Hereupon, He Xianglin suggests that the translator deduce its exact meaning from the context of the given situation instead of mechanically following its superficial understanding.²⁶⁴

Shakespeare liked to use puns in his plays, which was much to the delight of his audiences, but often confuses modern audiences as well as translators. Generally speaking, a pun is a linguistic game, in a given context, mainly relying on meaning, usage and pronunciation of words which have the same sound but different meanings; ‘thus a pun can serve as an ambiguous answer to a direct question, rendering the response devoid of any real information.’²⁶⁵ Hamlet quibbles from time to time, using puns as weapons of attack and counterattack in the Danish court. At Claudius’s

²⁶³ Zhu Shenghao, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (Beijing: People’s Literature Press, 1994), p.122.

²⁶⁴ He Xianglin, ‘Admiring, Questioning and Wishing’, in *A Collection of Essays on Shakespeare*, ed. by He Xianglin (Xi’an: Shanxi People’s Press, 1982), pp.294-314 (p.307).

²⁶⁵ Teresa Hooper, ‘Dangerous Doubles: Puns and Language in Shakespeare’s Hamlet’, *Chrestomathy: Annual Review of Undergraduate Research at the College of Charleston*, 2 (2003), 120-34 (p.121).

claim of familial bond upon him, Hamlet defends himself: ‘Not so, my lord; I am too much i’ the sun.’ (*Hamlet*, 1.2.70) With the help of a pun, Hamlet objects to being called “son” too often by Claudius, thus changing the literal meaning of the text. The puns in Shakespeare’s plays are a challenge for the Chinese translator, because the ambiguity of the pun (its connotative and denotative meanings) can be distorted in Chinese, resulting from the overlap between the different language systems. The Chinese translator often literally translates Shakespeare’s puns. For example, Zhu Shenghao’s translation of ‘I am too much i’ the sun’ is ‘我已经在太阳里晒得太久了’ (I have been baked in the sun for too long).²⁶⁶ Nonetheless, the translation misses the connotative meaning of Shakespeare’s pun. Liang Shiqiu sacrifices Shakespeare’s wordplay by directly rendering it into ‘我受的阳光太多了’ (The sunbeam rests on me too much), but then makes amends in later explanatory notes.²⁶⁷ For Shakespeare’s pun in ‘A little more than kin, and less than kind’ (*Hamlet*, 1.2.68), Liang renders it into ‘比侄子是亲些, 可是还算不得儿子’ (A little more than nephew, and less than son),²⁶⁸ thus Hamlet’s implied meaning is thoroughly unmasked and the pun correspondingly loses its value.

Breaking the language barriers is one of the most difficult challenges of translating Shakespeare. Because of the great differences in languages, the basic step for Chinese translators to render Shakespeare is to examine carefully the meaning of the word in the text. In particular they should ask if there is a fixed meaning, or they must deduce its meaning from the context to capture its variable meaning, so that they can render one aspect of the Shakespearean culture into an equivalent or its approximation in Chinese culture, for ‘[a]bsolute equivalence in translating is never possible’.²⁶⁹

2.2.2 Cultural Differences

Translating Shakespeare into Mandarin is recreating Shakespeare’s original language in a Chinese linguistic and cultural context. In her article entitled ‘Shakespeare Translation as Cultural Exchange,’ Inga-Stina Ewbank writes,

²⁶⁶ Zhu Shenghao, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (Beijing: People’s Literature Press, 1994), p.291.

²⁶⁷ Liang Shiqiu, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (Beijing: China’s Radio and TV Press, 2001), p. 35.

²⁶⁸ Liang Shiqiu, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, p.33.

²⁶⁹ Eugene A. Nida as quoted in Luo Xuanmin, ‘Linguistic Contributions to the Development of Translation Studies in China’, *Meta* XLIV, 1 (1999), p. 102.

‘Translation is never a purely philological activity but a collusive re-creation in which cultural differences cling to grammar and syntax and history mediates the effect even of single words... Translation, then, is only one form of rewriting.’²⁷⁰ As a good illustration of cultural differences, sexuality is a difficult topic to handle when translating Shakespeare’s plays into a Chinese language. Some Chinese translators, with their traditional Chinese cultural background, would delete or excise Shakespeare’s bawdy from his text. Zhu Shenghao’s translation of *Othello*, one of ‘Shakespeare’s most sexual, most bawdy plays’,²⁷¹ is a case in point. At the beginning of Act III, Cassio instructs some musicians to play music for the newly married Othello and Desdemona, but is interrupted by Clown:

Clown	Why, master, have your instruments been in Naples, that they speak i’ the nose thus?
First Musician	How, sir, how?
Clown	Are these, I pray you, wind-instruments?
First Musician	Ay, marry, are they, sir.
Clown	O! thereby hangs a tail.
First Musician	Whereby hangs a tail, sir? (<i>Othello</i> , 3.1.6-11)

Obviously, Shakespeare’s ‘tail’ contains an ambiguous sexual allusion; however, Zhu’s Chinese translation shows that he completely cuts out ‘O! thereby hangs a tail. / Whereby hangs a tail, sir?’ from the original text. Fortunately, the vulgar expressions omitted by Zhu have been translated in the 1978 edition. It is also true in the case of rendering the implied sexual activity within Shakespeare’s puns. For example, in the sentence ‘for this drivelling love is like a great natural, that runs lolling up and down to hide his bauble in hole’ (*Romeo and Juliet*, 2.4.45) we perceived a possible pun on ‘bauble’ (the Fool’s sceptre) – the penis; nevertheless, Zhu prefers to give a direct translation rather than attempt to paraphrase the author’s intended meanings, and expressions of sexuality in particular.

As a matter of fact, purifying the text and deleting sexuality from Shakespeare’s plays is not unfamiliar to Western readers, as Stanley Wells contends in his Foreword to Eric Partridge’s *Shakespeare’s Bawdy*: ‘Partridge was writing at a time when all editions of Shakespeare intended for use in schools were bowdlerized, when editors even of scholarly editions frequently shied away from sexual glosses, and when

²⁷⁰ Inga-Stina Ewbank, ‘Shakespeare Translation as Cultural Exchange’, *Shakespeare Survey*, 48 (1995), 1-12 (p. 6-7).

²⁷¹ Eric Partridge, *Shakespeare’s Bawdy* (London: Routledge, 2001), p.57.

attitudes to expressions of sexuality were far less liberal than they were to become during the 1960s.²⁷² The circumstance in Mainland China was similar to or possibly even more restrictive than that in England at the time, due to the great influence of Confucianism in China.

Shakespeare's plays are full of information on a variety of topics and can be called encyclopedic, with topics ranging from astronomy, geography, history, politics and science, to culture, including the Bible and mythology. Therefore, the Chinese translator has to read as widely as Shakespeare to understand his history plays well, for instance, English history at least from the Plantagenet (1216-1485) to the Tudor dynasties (1485-1603), which is not an easy task at all. Mythological references can be found in many of his plays. *Hamlet* is one of the best examples. When Hamlet is called in by his mother, he fulminates against her remarrying the present king, who is his father's brother and murderer as well:

Look here, upon this picture, and on this; / The counterfeit presentment of
two brothers. / See, what a grace was seated on this brow; / Hyperion's curls;
the front of Jove himself; / An eye like Mars, to threaten and command; / A
station like the herald Mercury / ... (*Hamlet* 3.4.63-68)

At this very moment, Hamlet compares his father to four gods in Greek and Roman mythology, all of whom are unknown to the Chinese reader. The translator is then faced with the problem of how best to translate them into Chinese. Generally speaking, he/she will directly transliterate foreign names. But this common method seems unsuitable in the case of these gods, for all of them are related to myths and have certain connotations. Therefore, in translation it is important to get Shakespeare's mythological references across to the Chinese reader. In contrast to Zhu Shenghao, who translates 'Mars' into '战神' (god of war) by indicating the meaning of the name in Chinese, Liang Shiqiu preserves the original form by, firstly, transliterating them into 'ma'er shi 马尔士'; secondly, giving explanatory notes to help the target reader understand the sources well.

Similarly, the fact that Shakespeare took his stories from the Bible increases the difficulty of translating into Chinese. As He Xianglin points out: 'One of the reasons that the translator has failed to give a correct rendition is that the Book is completely

²⁷² Eric Partridge, *Shakespeare's Bawdy* (London: Routledge, 2001), viii.

unfamiliar to the Chinese.’²⁷³ In *Twelfth Night*, Feste blames Malvolio for his ignorance by saying ‘there is no darkness but ignorance, in which thou art more puzzled than the Egyptians in the fog.’ (*Twelfth Night*, 4.2.21) The fog, in He Xianglin’s view, is quoted from Chapter 10 of EXODUS in the *Old Testament*: The Lord sends a plague of locusts – this is followed by thick darkness in all Egypt for three days – when Moses is cast out from the presence of the Pharaoh, who forbids him to leave with his people. He Xianglin suggests the word ‘fog’ be translated into ‘黑暗’ (darkness); otherwise, the literal translation by Zhu Shenghao needs a detailed explanation about the source of the story.²⁷⁴

Despite the problems of rendering the works of Shakespeare into Chinese, Chinese translators have made every effort to present Shakespeare to the Chinese reader and to hone their translations over the course of the years. As an example, Zhu Shenghao’s 1954 version of *Complete Works of William Shakespeare* was revised in 1978 and again in 1998 with some additions. Certainly, it is likely that the growing globalization of politics, the economy, society and culture will bridge some of the difficulties and discrepancies in translating Shakespeare.

2.3 Ying Ruocheng’s Translation of *Measure for Measure*

From April to June 1981, the Beijing People’s Art Theatre Company staged *Qing jun ru weng* 请君入瓮, a Chinese adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure*. Playing to almost capacity audiences every night, the play proved very successful at the box office. To watch the Chinese production of the play at Beijing’s Capital Theatre and to hear the laughter of the audience was to be made acutely aware that Shakespeare’s plays are indeed ‘not of an age but for all time.’²⁷⁵ And it would seem that the play *Measure for Measure* exemplified this in China at the turn of the 1980s. The production was significant for many reasons. It used a new translation specially produced by Ying Ruocheng for stage performance. It was the first Chinese production inviting an English professional, Toby Robertson of the Old

²⁷³ He Xianglin, ‘Admiring, Questioning and Wishing’, in *A Collection of Essays on Shakespeare*, ed. by He Xianglin (Xi’an: Shanxi People’s Press, 1982), pp. 294-314 (p.307).

²⁷⁴ He Xianglin, ‘Admiring, Questioning and Wishing’, pp.307-8.

²⁷⁵ These words of praise, probably the most famous ever written about Shakespeare, were penned by Shakespeare’s good friend and fellow writer, Ben Jonson. The line appears in the Preface to the First Folio.

Vic, as visiting director. Robertson collaborated with Ying and a cast of Chinese actors who had survived the terrors of the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 70s, and who offered their own considerable talents to bring the Elizabethan play to life in Communist China. Then why *Measure for Measure*? The Shakespearean play is believed to have been written in 1603 or 1604, and was first published in 1623 in the *First Folio*. The original version of *Measure for Measure* for Ying Ruocheng's translation was edited by W. J. Craig, published by Oxford University Press in 1935.²⁷⁶ The play examines the complex interplay of mercy and justice. Because it explores a set of important moral and social issues without ever quite resolving anything (the play leaves us with an artificial happy ending), literary critics often refer to *Measure for Measure* as a problem play. *Measure for Measure* has been performed with increasing frequency in the West over the past few decades,²⁷⁷ but its troubling inconsistencies, its incomprehensible Elizabethan references, and its emphasis upon topical Elizabethan religious and political issues are difficult even for Western audiences. Imagine the difficulties it imposes for Chinese spectators untutored in its dramaturgy, its themes, and its Christian backdrop. Yet in China drama has always been assumed to concern the present, and recent events seemed to prepare the audiences for *Measure for Measure*. It was only five years after the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) and the fall of the Gang of Four.²⁷⁸ For a country that had just gone through one of the most profound political and cultural upheavals in human history, the exploration of 'governance' and its 'properties' was particularly sensitive in China.²⁷⁹ Robertson has noted that the trial of the Gang of Four, which was 'looming over all of China' at the time, seemed to condition everyone's response to the play.²⁸⁰ Thinking of Angelo's abuse of power and the Duke's trust, one

²⁷⁶ W. J. (William James) Craig, ed. *Measure for Measure*, by William Shakespeare (London: Oxford University Press, 1914)

²⁷⁷ In 1976, there was a New York Shakespeare Festival production featuring Sam Waterston as the Duke, Meryl Streep as Isabella, and John Cazale as Angelo. The play has only once been produced on Broadway, in a 1973 production that featured David Ogden Stiers as Vincentio and Kevin Kline in the small role of Friar Peter. It was later presented by the New York Shakespeare Festival in 1993, directed by Michael Rudman and starring Kevin Kline as the Duke, and with Andre Braugher as Angelo and Lisa Gay Hamilton as Isabella.

²⁷⁸ 'The Gang of Four' was the name given to a political faction composed of four Chinese Communist Party officials. They came to prominence during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) and were subsequently charged with a series of treasonous crimes. The members consisted of Mao Zedong's last wife Jiang Qing, the leading figure of the group, and her close associates Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, and Wang Hongwen.

²⁷⁹ Paul Allen, 'Interview with Athol Fugard', *New Statesman and Society*, 7 September 1990, p. 38.

²⁸⁰ Toby Robertson, in John Elsom, ed. *Is Shakespeare Still our Contemporary?* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), p.83.

intelligent spectator said, ‘it’s a wonder Shakespeare could guess what the Chinese villains would do and say several hundred years later.’²⁸¹ For Chinese audiences who had suffered bitterly from the persecutions during the Cultural Revolution, they found incredible echoes in the play, and they were very surprised that an English playwright had written such a story several centuries ago.



Figure 2 Duke Vincentio (Yu Shizhi) and Claudio (Xiao Peng) in *Qing jun ru weng* (*Measure for Measure*), dir. by Toby Robertson, 1981. (Courtesy of Beijing People’s Art Theatre)

In terms of language, a major part of *Measure for Measure* is written in blank verse, or unrhymed iambic pentameter; some in prose; a small part in rhymed couplets. Like all other Shakespeare works, *Measure for Measure* is rich in Greek legends, Roman allusions and Biblical references. Shakespeare creates a lot of jokes in the plot. Word games and puns are frequently used, and the dictions of different characters are unique. These characteristics make the translation of the play a hard task. In spite of the difficulties of translation, there have been four well-known Chinese translation versions of *Measure for Measure*, produced by Zhu Shenghao, Liang Shiqiu, Fang Ping and Ying Ruocheng respectively, among which Ying’s translation was specially produced in 1981 for stage performance.

²⁸¹ The Chinese spectator is quoted in Carolyn Wakeman, ‘*Measure for Measure* on the Chinese Stage’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 33 (1982), p.501.

2.3.1 The Translator and His Translation Principles

Born in 1929, Ying Ruocheng was a dramatic all-rounder. As actor, director, translator, and China's Vice Minister of Culture, Ying helped internationalize theatre in the New China. A graduate of the prestigious Qinghua University in 1950, Ying became a founding member of the Beijing People's Art Theatre (BPAT), where he performed as an actor and worked as an archivist, literary supervisor, and director. He was jailed for three years during the 1966-76 Cultural Revolution, and then banished to the countryside to plant rice with other artists and intellectuals. The so-called "re-education" imposed on him lasted ten years. When the mayhem subsided, he returned to the Beijing People's Art Theatre and re-established his career. With the opening up of China, Ying rose to become the Vice Minister of Culture (1986-1990) and played an important role in transforming China's cultural life, encouraging international exchange and urging creative freedom for writers. Being an experienced actor, Ying had played important roles in plays, films and TV series. He was not only famous for his acting in Bertolucci's films *The Last Emperor*²⁸² and *Little Buddha*²⁸³, and for his role as Kublai Khan in the NBC television miniseries *Marco Polo*, but also played renowned stage characters Liu Mazi in *Cha-guan* 茶馆 (*Teahouse*)²⁸⁴ and Willy Loman in the Beijing production of *Death of a Salesman*. As a director, he directed important productions such as *Amadeus* and *Major Barbara*. Being a diligent translator, Ying translated more than twenty plays in his lifetime, including works of Chinese playwrights into English and those of international writers into Chinese. Until the time when he was seriously ill and hospitalised for cirrhosis of the liver, he still kept on translating Shakespeare. During the last few months before his death in 2003 he translated *The Tragedy of Coriolanus* for a new production to be directed by Lin Zhaohua, which I will scrutinise in the next chapter. Right before his death, he was putting the final touches to his new translation of *Hamlet*. According to his family, Ying had done the translation before, but he did not

²⁸² In Bernardo Bertolucci's epic movie "The Last Emperor" (1987), Ying Ruocheng portrayed the sympathetic prison governor who helps the emperor undergo a radical mental change in the hope of becoming a citizen of New China.

²⁸³ Ying Ruocheng acted the senior Buddhist monk in Bertolucci's "Little Buddha" (1993).

²⁸⁴ *Teahouse* (Cha-guan 茶馆) is a masterpiece of modern Chinese drama written by the playwright Lao She (born Shu Qingchun 1899-1966) in 1957. Set in an old-style Beijing teahouse, the play is about the struggles of ordinary people during a period of political and social turmoil in China, from the final days of the Qing Dynasty, through the years of Republican China and up to the eve of the 1949 communist victory, as seen through the eyes of Beijing teahouse owner Wang Lifa and his two friends.

think the first version was good enough for the stage in China.²⁸⁵ In 2007, China Translation & Publishing Corporation reprinted *Ying Ruocheng's Classical Drama Translation Series*, which includes three Chinese plays translated into English, and five English plays translated into Chinese.²⁸⁶ A notable fact is that nearly all of these translations are performance scripts, and all of the plays translated by Ying, both English and Chinese ones, have been put on the stage and are well received by the audiences. Here are two typical examples in Ying's collection of translations.

Ying translated the Chinese play *Teahouse* into English and acted the character Liu Mazi. The play had a critically acclaimed tour in Europe in 1980 and made a record of over 400 performances.²⁸⁷ As China's first piece of modern theatre to travel abroad, it was hailed in Europe as 'a miracle of Eastern theatre' and the Western audience felt it helped them make sense of the communist revolution.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁵ 'Ying's work touched the hearts of millions', *China Daily*, 31 December 2003.

²⁸⁶ They are *Teahouse* (by Lao She), *The Family* (by Ba Jin and Cao Yu), *Uncle Doggie's Nirvana* (by Liu Jinyun), *Measure for Measure* (by William Shakespeare), *Major Barbara* (by George Bernard Shaw), *Death of a Salesman* (by Arthur Miller), *The "Caine" Mutiny Court-Martial* (by Herman Wouk) and *Amadeus* (by Peter Shaffer).

²⁸⁷ *Teahouse* toured Europe between September and November 1980; visited Japan in 1983; played in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Canada in 1986; went to Taiwan in July 2004; and toured Washington, D.C., Berkeley, Pasadena, Houston, and New York in October-December 2005, marking the first time a professional spoken drama from China was ever performed in the United States. Ying Ruocheng's English translation was used for the supertitles during performances.

²⁸⁸ 'Remembering Mr. Teahouse' (2013), <http://news.asiaone.com/print/News/Latest%2BNews/Showbiz/Story/A1Story20130318-409522.html> [accessed on 4 May 2015].



Figure 3 Ying Ruocheng as Liu Mazi Jr. in the 1979 revival of *Teahouse*. (Courtesy of Claire Conceison and Beijing People's Art Theatre)

In 1983, Arthur Miller and Ying collaborated on staging Miller's *Death of a Salesman* in Beijing. Ying translated the play, Arthur Miller directed it, and Ying played the part of Willy Loman. Ying also worked as Miller's interpreter and assistant director. Ying reworked the language to attune the conversations more to the style of the Beijing People's Art Theatre — a talent that impressed Miller immensely. Miller commented during his work in Beijing: 'It is surprising that I can follow each line and know the end of each idea, and I know where the actors are at every second; I know them by the rhythms of the translation.'²⁸⁹ This Chinese production of *Death of a Salesman* opened on May 7, 1983 at the Beijing People's Art Theatre, and played continuously to packed houses through the autumn. The success of the production led to a breakthrough in Chinese theatre in the 1980s. Ying's interpretation of Loman, the tired but tireless salesman who would do anything and sacrifice himself for his sons, brought tears and resounding ovations from theatregoers. The flawed hero and moral ambiguities stood in sharp contrast to the morality tales typical of China's official theatre at the time. The story of a family

²⁸⁹ 'Ying's work touched the hearts of millions', *China Daily*, 31 December 2003.

in crisis and the failure of the American Dream also spoke to the Chinese audience who had had similar experiences during the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution.



Figure 4 Willy Loman (Ying Ruocheng), Linda (Zhu Lin), Happy (Mi Tiezeng) and Biff (Li Shilong) in *Death of a Salesman*, directed by Arthur Miller for the Beijing People's Art Theatre in 1984.

For translating a drama, apart from linguistic competence, the translator should be equipped with additional qualifications for the task. One of these requires the translator to have some sense of theatre. Lai, for instance, claims that 'the translator of a play would need to have, in addition to his linguistic skills and his ability to gauge what is familiar or unfamiliar to his audience, a sense of drama.'²⁹⁰ The special qualifications also include target-language acceptability, speakability, and adaptability. Ying was born and bred in Beijing and had read English literature at Qinghua University. His acting experience gave him a profound knowledge in differentiating the nuances between the dialogue on a stage and in printed words. Ying's educational background, together with his work in acting as well as directing, his international working context and intercultural professional experience, endowed him with a combination of qualities to be a good theatre translator, having an actor's

²⁹⁰ Jane Lai, 'Shakespeare for the Chinese Stage with Reference to *King Lear*', in *Page to Stage: Theatre as Translation*, ed. by Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1984), pp.145-154 (p.150).

understanding of stagecraft, a scholar's understanding of Shakespeare and a native-born Beijing resident's mastery of the street language of the capital. Ying gave an explanation about how he rendered Shakespeare's language in *Measure for Measure*: 'I found I could render Elizabethan English into Chinese, using colloquial Beijing dialect for the ordinary characters and classical Chinese for the great speeches of the Duke, Claudio and Isabella.'²⁹¹ This concurrence of circumstances made his translation of *Measure for Measure* stage worthy.

Although he did not present his translation theories systematically, in the Preface to *Ying Ruocheng's Classical Drama Translation Series*, he put forward his theoretical thoughts on drama translation regarding performability, colloquialism, brevity, and individuation of characters.

According to Ying, performability, which consists of speakability and actability, is the first and foremost criterion for a good theatre translation. When talking about the reason that drove him to translate what are deemed in China to be the classic plays such as Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* and Bernard Shaw's *Major Barbara* all over again rather than using existent published translations, Ying contended that 'these existing translations are not suitable for performance,' and 'the experienced actors would tell you that it was very difficult for them to find a really colloquial version of translation'.²⁹² A translated drama that is suitable for stage performance should firstly be speakable, for drama is a form of art that depends largely on the 'immediate effect of spoken language'.²⁹³ The oral features of language should be greatly emphasized in translation. Some existing Chinese translations of famous English dramas, however, have a common lack of speakability and, therefore, are not qualified for stage performance. This kind of translation may be quite faithful to the original linguistically, but it is too heavy stylistically. The sentence structures are often lengthy and complicated; many words are awkward-sounding and hard to pronounce. As a result, the translation is difficult for the actors to speak aloud, and comprehension on the part of the audience is almost impossible. Spoken drama is a kind of art that relies most heavily on the direct effect of orality of the dramatic discourses. Audiences receive simultaneous messages through actors'

²⁹¹ Patricia Mirrlees, 'Ying Ruocheng: Chinese actor and politician' (Monday 12 January 2004), *The Guardian* <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/2004/jan/12/guardianobituaries.china>> [accessed on 8 March 2013].

²⁹² Ying Ruocheng, 'The Translator's Preface', in *Qing Jun Ru Weng* (English-Chinese Translation of *Measure for Measure*) (Beijing: China Translation & Publishing Corporation, 1999), p. 9.

²⁹³ Ying Ruocheng, 'The Translator's Preface', p. 11.

speech and actions. Moreover, the immediacy of the acting and watching makes it impossible for any additional explanations. Therefore, dramatic language in translation should be sonorous and forceful, and avoid obscurity and irrelevance. Ying claims that the ultimate goal he strives for in his translations is the ‘immediate effect of language’.²⁹⁴ He contends:

The problem is that, when many translators deal with their translation, they do not pay attention to the immediate effect on stage, but to the careful and detailed reproduction of the quotations, the associations as well as connotations of the source text into target text [...] if these translated texts are to be carefully studied by scholars, there is nothing to be said against it and sometimes it is necessary. However, the performance on stage has its special requirements. What the audience wants to hear is clear and crisp phrasing; neat and smart dialogues and refutation, which are abundant in many great works by Oscar Wilde or Bernard Shaw. A translator is responsible for presenting them in front of the audience.²⁹⁵

Here, Ying maintains that the translation of dramatic dialogue should be terse and trenchant. To quote from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, ‘for brevity is the soul of wit’ (*Hamlet*, 2.2.4). Compared with a novel, drama is a brief form, and the development of plots is much faster and the language is much more concise. This is mainly because the performance of a drama always has a time limit. Some translators, however, have not considered this. What they are concerned about is the faithful reproduction of every nuance of meaning, all the rhetorical devices, the possible connotation of every word, every classical or biblical allusion, etc. in the translated version. Plays translated in this way may provide an excellent reading experience, but they are definitely not adequate for stage performance.

Secondly, much attention should be paid to the actability of the language in translated dramas. While writing their plays, the majority of playwrights consider the actability of their dramatic dialogue. The language in the drama usually implicates potential actions. Dramatic dialogue is full of encoded gestic signs to ensure the acting of the play. Actors do things with words, such as provoking, threatening, comforting, contending, warning and so on. It should not be regarded simply as a system of verbal signs but as a network of latent non-verbal signs waiting to be

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

brought out in performance. As a result, the translator should make a great effort to detect the underlying actability in the original play and then reproduce it creatively in his/her translation.

Another principle of theatre translation that Ying emphasizes is the individuation of characters. Every stage character is different in a way; no character is identical to another. Due to their different personalities, the characters' ways of speaking, body language, facial expressions etc. are varied. Even the supporting roles that have only a few lines such as several neighbours or some soldiers may differ from one another greatly. It is amazing sometimes how a vividly depicted minor role can leave a deep impression in the audience's mind.²⁹⁶ To reproduce all those carefully individuated characters, with particular idioms, in translation is no easy task. Nevertheless, Ying achieved this in his translation of *Measure for Measure* in which he combines stylistics with translation and uses styles appropriately to match them with the social and geographic locations of the characters.

2.3.2 Factors Influencing the Translator's Translation

For a long time, the source-text oriented translation research mode has prevailed in Chinese translation studies, in which translation is only considered as the reproduction of the source text, and faithfulness being the only criterion for evaluating a translated version. Translation studies in this mode consequently turn out to be a simple summing-up of the translator's translation thoughts and practice, while ignoring the fact that social and cultural norms exert great influence on the translator's translation theory and activities. Gideon Toury believes that the translator plays a social and cultural role and fulfils a function allotted by a society. He proposes using socio-cultural constraints to account for the regularities and preferences that translators show in their translation process. He calls these constraints norms. He defines norms as 'the translation of general values or ideas shared by a community — as to what is right and wrong, adequate and inadequate — into performance instructions appropriate for and applicable to particular situations, specifying what is prescribed and forbidden as well as what is tolerated and permitted in a certain behavioural dimension.'²⁹⁷ Theo Hermans developed this

²⁹⁶ For instance, Molly Mahood's *Playing Bit Parts in Shakespeare* (Routledge, 1998) is a unique survey of the small supporting roles —such as foils, feeds, attendants and messengers—that feature in Shakespeare's plays.

²⁹⁷ Gideon Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* (Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2001), p.55.

concept further into Norm Theory. He distinguishes three kinds of translation norms: preliminary norms, operational norms and initial norms.²⁹⁸ ‘These norms are socio-cultural constraints specific to a culture, society and history’,²⁹⁹ and ‘affect the entire process of translation, including source-text selection’.³⁰⁰

In light of the varied theories from the cultural perspectives, I am going to analyse Ying’s translation of *Measure for Measure* taking into consideration the locality of China at the turn of the 1980s. I will examine Ying’s translation as a part of a comparative study with Zhu Shenghao’s translation. Specifically, my investigation intends to find out how social cultural contexts, politics and ideology exerted significant impact on the translators and, as a result, how these sets of cultural and political circumstances present us with two quite different versions of the play in the Chinese language.

2.3.2.1 Social and Cultural Contexts

According to Skopos Theory, ‘translation is the production of a functionally appropriate target text based on an existing source text, and the relationship between the two texts is specified according to the skopos of the translation.’³⁰¹ The translators adopt different translation principles to guide their translation according to their different purposes. The translator’s purpose of translation is first of all determined by the social and cultural background of the society in which the translator lives.

Living in different periods of Chinese history and society, Zhu Shenghao’s and Ying Ruocheng’s purposes of translating Shakespeare’s works are quite different. Patriotism was Zhu’s motive to ‘take on this most important historical task’.³⁰² Zhu was born in 1912 in Zhejiang Province. After his graduation from the Department of English Literature at Zhejiang University, Zhu worked at the Shanghai World Bookstore as English editor. On 18 September 1931, the Japanese invaded Manchuria, after which China was under the shadow of the Sino-Japanese war. In the

²⁹⁸ Theo Hermans, *Translation in Systems Descriptive and System-oriented Approaches Explained* (Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2004), p.79.

²⁹⁹ Jeremy Munday, *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 115.

³⁰⁰ Theo Hermans, *Translation in Systems Descriptive and System-oriented Approaches Explained*, p. 76.

³⁰¹ Mona Baker, ‘*Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*’, p.237.

³⁰² Meng Xianqiang, *A Historical Survey of Shakespeare in China*, trans. Mason Y. H.Wang and Murray J. Levith (Changchun: Shakespeare Research Centre of Northeast Normal University Press, 1996)

spring of 1935, Zhan Wenhui, the head of the English Division of the World Bookstore, impressed by Zhu's remarkable talent in both Chinese and English literature, encouraged Zhu to take up the job of translating Shakespeare's *Complete Works*.³⁰³ At about the same time, Zhu Shenghao learned from his brother Zhu Wenzhen that a Japanese writer had claimed that '中国是无文化的国家, 连老莎的译本都没有' (China is a country without culture; it doesn't even have Shakespeare translations).³⁰⁴ Zhu Wenzhen said:

In those days, Japanese imperialism was arrogant and laughed that Chinese culture was so backward that it even did not have Shakespeare's translation version. So I think his determination of translation is to win honour for the motherland except for his interest.³⁰⁵

For Zhu, translating the *Complete Works of Shakespeare* was a heroic act to challenge the Japanese mockery and to establish national pride. Sponsored and encouraged by Zhan Wenhui, Zhu began his ten-year translation of Shakespeare with amazing perseverance. Living in the harsh conditions of poverty, poor health and the roaming of Japanese cannon in China, the job of translating Shakespeare was hard. His first drafts were destroyed in the fire of war. However, he dedicated himself for many years to this patriotic task of translating Shakespeare. In 1944, after a severe deterioration in his health, he died at the age of 32, with the translation of thirty-one and a half of Shakespeare's works completed. Although Zhu did not finish translating the *Complete Works*, his translations formed the principal contribution to the sole version of the *Complete Works* published in Mainland China prior to 2001, and most spoken drama productions of Shakespeare since 1949 have employed Zhu's translations. His translations have not only helped Chinese people to know more about Shakespeare, but also have greatly promoted the study of Shakespeare in China.

In the preface to his translations of Shakespeare, Zhu reveals what in Shakespeare especially appealed to him and motivated him to translate his works:

³⁰³ 王秉钦,《二十世纪中国翻译思想史》(天津:南开大学出版社,2003)[Wang Bingqin, *A History of Chinese Thoughts on Translation in the Twentieth Century* (Tianjin: Nankai University Press, 2003)], p.195.

³⁰⁴ 朱生豪,《朱生豪情书》,朱尚刚编辑(上海:上海社会科学院出版社,2003)[Zhu Shenghao, *Zhu Shenghao's Lover Letters*, ed. Zhu Shanggang (Shanghai: Shanghai Social Sciences Academy Press, 2003)], p.273.

³⁰⁵ Zhu Shenghao, *Zhu Shenghao's Lover Letters*, p.288.

于世界文学史中，足以笼罩一世，凌越千古，卓然为词坛之宗匠，诗人之冠冕者，其为希腊之荷马，意大利之但丁，英之莎士比亚，德之歌德乎...然以超脱时空限制一点而论，则莎士比亚之成就，则远在三子之上。盖莎翁笔下之人物，虽多为古代之贵族阶级，然彼所发掘者，则古今中外贵贱贫富人人同具之人性。故虽经三百余年以后，不仅其书为全世界文学之士所耽读，其剧本且在各国舞台与银幕上历久搬演而弗衰，盖由其作品具有永久性与普遍性，故能深入人心如此耳。³⁰⁶

(In the history of world literature, only four authors, Homer of ancient Greece, Dante of Italy, Shakespeare of England, and Goethe of Germany, have transcended temporal and spatial limits. They are great masters and crowned kings of the poetic world. ...But in terms of transcending temporal and spatial limits, Shakespeare surpasses by far the other three. Although most characters created by Shakespeare belonged to an aristocracy of the past, what he tried to penetrate was the human nature shared by all, be they ancient or modern, Chinese or foreign, aristocrat or commoner, rich or poor. Thus, after three centuries, not only are his works read assiduously by admirers of literature but his plays also continue to attract large audiences on the stage and on the screen in different countries. Because his works are eternal and universal, they still touch people's hearts deeply.)

What Zhu emphasizes in this passage are those qualities that make Shakespeare accessible to common readers and spectators, such as ‘超脱时空限制’ (‘transcending temporal and spatial limits’), ‘永久性普遍性’ (‘eternity and universality’), ‘则古今中外贵贱贫富人人同具之人性’ (‘the human nature shared by all, be they ancient or modern, Chinese or foreign, aristocrat or commoner, rich or poor’). Zhu's emphasis on the universal appeal of Shakespeare suggests that he intended to make Shakespeare's plays a part of global popular culture through his translations. He intended to make Shakespeare reach as many Chinese people as possible not only through texts but also through stage performances. Today we may find his claims about the eternity and universality of Shakespeare to be slightly problematic—especially in a postcolonial context. Nevertheless, the author of this preface sacrificed everything in his life to realize this humanistic vision of world literature. Because of his efforts, Shakespeare has indeed reached a significant number of Chinese readers over the course of the nearly seventy years since his translations were first published.

The *skopos*, or purpose, of Ying Ruocheng's translating Shakespeare is to produce scripts suitable for stage performance and promote cultural exchanges between China and the West. In the Maoist China of the 1960s and 70s, China had

³⁰⁶ Zhu Shenghao, preface (1944), in *Wu Jiemin and Zhu Hongda, Zhu Shenghao zhuan* [Zhu Shenghao's Biography] (Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Press, 1989), 263.

been isolated from other countries. Chinese people knew little of overseas countries, and overseas countries knew China even less. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), together with other Western literature and China's own cultural heritage, Shakespeare's plays were banned as "feudal, bourgeois and revisionist" and were not performed or studied. With the fall of the Gang of Four in 1976, when the political catastrophe finally ended, China opened up international contacts and cultural and economic exchanges. Literature began to resuscitate itself in China, and foreign literature started coming back to China's libraries and book market. In the freer atmosphere, when the whole nation was avid for a sense of connection to the world beyond Maoist China's borders, there was a renewed interest in Shakespeare among the public and the revitalisation in Chinese Shakespeare studies and performance. As I have outlined in Chapter One, for literary and theatre practitioners who felt they needed to remain cautious regarding what could safely be written or put on the stage at that time, Shakespeare appeared to be an ideal choice by virtue of being a representative of the Western canon who enjoyed Marxist approval. In November 1979, the English theatre company the Old Vic, led by Toby Robertson, presented *Hamlet* with Derek Jacobi, with simultaneous Chinese translation through earphones, in Beijing and Shanghai.³⁰⁷ Thereafter local productions increased. During 1980 and 1981, *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Merchant of Venice* were presented by two dramatic troupes in Shanghai and *The Merchant of Venice* was presented by the China Youth Art Theatre in Beijing; in 1981, the Beijing People's Art Theatre performed *Measure for Measure*, translated by Ying Ruocheng, with Toby Robertson as visiting director;³⁰⁸ in the autumn of 1982, the London Shakespeare Group toured several cities in China and staged *Twelfth Night*; and some film versions of Shakespeare's plays were brought back to movie theatres and TV screens to satisfy the film-hungry public. *Romeo and Juliet* was produced for the first time in the

³⁰⁷ Derek Jacobi and the Old Vic Company gave nine performances of *Hamlet* in Shanghai and Beijing in November 1979, during which the translation was performed through earphones by the staff of the Beijing People's Art Theatre. Ying Ruocheng's translation during the performances left a deep impression on the English production team. Barrie Rutter, an old British actor who made the acquaintance of Ying Ruocheng in 1979 with the excitement of being part of the first English-speaking theatre group to visit China since the Cultural Revolution, said that 'I have very fond memories of Ying Ruocheng, a man who had never been out of China, whose English was perfect, and whose simultaneous performance of the gravedigger in *Hamlet* is a treasured memory due to his timing and the reaction it created from the audience'. See He Jianwei, *British actor back on the Beijing stage after 28 years* (1981) <<http://www.expactscn.com/html/61/n-61.html>> (accessed on 20 May 2015)

³⁰⁸ *Measure for Measure* was staged by the Beijing People's Art Theatre from April to June 1981, and was reviewed in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 33 (1982), 499-502.

Tibetan language by a group of Tibetan students at the Shanghai Drama Institute in 1981, and a Beijing Opera adaptation of *Othello* was staged in Beijing in May 1983. Furthermore, a revised version of Zhu Shenghao's translation of thirty-one plays, together with translations of the other six plays, was published in 1978 under the title *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, a project originally scheduled for the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth in 1964. Although the reliability of Zhu Shenghao's translation has always been problematic,³⁰⁹ the first printing of Shakespeare's complete works in Chinese marks a significant event in the study of Shakespearean drama in China. The production and translation of Shakespeare's plays in China in this period before and after 1980 is important not only because it sheds light on Chinese attitudes to Western thought in drama, but also because it acts as an indicator of change within Chinese theatre over the previous five years. It was in such a social and cultural context that the Beijing People's Art Theatre Company accepted Toby Robertson's suggestion of *Measure for Measure* while the company was touring West Germany with Lao She's play *Teahouse*. For decades after the founding of the Beijing People's Art Theatre Company, there had been no Shakespeare performance on its stage. Impressed by the company's handling of *Teahouse* and the characterization in the Chinese writer's work, Toby Robertson came together with Ying, a leading actor and director in the company, to stage the play. The proposal soon turned into a plan. Ying took up the job of translating the play so that it could be performable on stage. In 1981, *Measure for Measure* was first staged in China.

What kind of role does the translator play in the entire translation process, as translation itself is a norm-governed activity? In answering this question, it is of prime importance to discuss the subjectivity of the translator constrained by the socio-cultural norms in the whole translation process. Norms are social and cultural constraints in nature. Toury uses them to account for the regularities and preferences that translators show in their actual translating practice. They are seen as 'performance instructions', imposing constraints on the translator determining his

³⁰⁹ The lack of reliability in Zhu Shenghao's translation has been discussed in two critical essays in 1980s: He Xianglin, 'Some Comments on Zhu Shenghao's Translation of Shakespeare's Plays', in *Essays on Shakespeare*, ed. by He Xianglin (Xi'an: Shanxi People's Publishing House, 1982), pp. 294-314 and Bian Zhilin, 'On Translating Hamlet into Chinese and on the Chinese Dubbing of the Film Version', *Shakespeare Studies* (China), 1 (1983), 6-25.

‘translational behaviour’.³¹⁰ In a social-cultural context, the translator’s decision-making is unavoidably constrained by these norms. Thus, the translator’s subjectivity can be defined as the translator’s subjective activity manifested in the translation process on the prerequisite of being adequately aware of the socio-cultural norms to achieve the purpose of translation.

Different from Ying Ruocheng, Zhu Shenghao did not have any experience of living abroad. He stayed in China and experienced the bitterness of the Chinese society at that time. He was comparatively conservative towards Western thoughts and ideology. Thus, when facing obscenities in Shakespeare’s works, Zhu would either bowdlerize or delete the narration. Since his purpose of translation was for China to have the *Complete Works* of Shakespeare, he put much emphasis on how the play would survive in China. He applied the domestication method on the basis of faithfulness, and changed some foreign images into Chinese. Domestication and foreignisation, terms created by the American translation theorist Lawrence Venuti, are two basic translation strategies that provide both linguistic and cultural guidance. According to Venuti, the former refers to ‘an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, [to] bring the author back home,’ while the latter is ‘an ethnodeliant pressure on those (cultural) values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad.’³¹¹ Generally speaking, domestication designates the type of translation in which a transparent, fluent style is adopted to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text for target language readers, while foreignisation means a target text is produced which deliberately breaks target conventions by retaining something of the foreignness of the original.³¹² As a writer greatly influenced by traditional Chinese culture, Zhu could hardly tolerate translation that would read unlike Chinese. His linguistic and literary talent enabled him to translate with fluent and refined phrases with a classical Chinese flavour.

Though Ying Roucheng’s translation was stage-oriented, he also paid much attention to fidelity. In most cases, when Shakespeare’s works were performed out of England, there were substantial changes in the name of acculturation. For example,

³¹⁰ Gideon Toury, *In Search of a Theory of Translation* (Tel Aviv: The Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics, 1980), p.51.

³¹¹ Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London & New York: Routledge, 1995), p.20.

³¹² Shuttleworth, M. & M. Cowie, *Dictionary of Translation Studies* (Manchester, UK: St Jerome Publishing, 1997), p.59.

Ducis's rewriting of *Hamlet* in accordance with French taste is a classic case of acculturation, for norms of taste prohibited a complete rendering of Shakespeare's play. In a letter to Garrick in 1770, Ducis explained that he had been unable to include the character of the ghost, as it would have offended good taste (he also removed the players, the combat scene between Hamlet and Laertes and some fifteen characters):

So I was forced, in a way, to create a new play. I just tried to make an interesting character of the parricidal queen and above all to depict the pure and melancholic Hamlet as a model of filial tenderness.³¹³

Ducis's letter raises another major issue that affects the translation of theatre texts: the expectations of the target audience and the constraints imposed by the target theatrical system. Therefore, in translations we find radical cuts, additions and revisions in order better to accommodate the demands of the target audience. However, Ying Ruocheng was definitely against such renderings. His purpose was 'to present a real Shakespeare to the Chinese audience'. He aimed to convey Shakespeare's spirit to Chinese audience in an accurate, adequate and artistic manner. In order to achieve such a goal, he adopted the strategy of literal translation for most of the dramatic text. He tried to retain the original form and language structures as much as possible. Keeping faithful to the original form helped much in enabling the English director Toby Robertson to express his intention to actors and his interpretation of the original work. Besides, maintaining the rhythms, speed, pauses, not only kept the verve of the original work, but also played an important role for performance. When revising the translation, Ying looked through the play text to not only ensure the accuracy of content, the fluency of language, but also read the translation as an actor and director to see whether the translation was convenient and clear for performing on the stage. His ultimate goal was to realize the 'immediate effect of spoken language'.³¹⁴

2.3.2.2 Politics

Politics is one of the very important constraints on a translator's behaviour. Nobody can deny that political factors govern the context in which translations occur. It is obvious that politics circumscribes the translator's ideological space, and

³¹³ Romy Heylen, *Translation Poetics and the Stage* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993)

³¹⁴ Ying Ruocheng, 'The Translator's Preface', p.11.

translators tend to have relatively little freedom in their dealing with politics, at least if they want to have their translations accepted by the target readers. More often than not, politics makes it quite clear what subject matters can be translated from foreign cultures at a given historical time to meet the need of social development and political stability of the target culture. Therefore, the political influence on the shaping of the translator's translating activity should not be underestimated.

In recent times, Shakespeare continues to be buffeted by the political currents in Communist China. Consider, for example, the case of two translators of Shakespeare's *Complete Works*, Liang Shiqiu and Zhu Shenghao. The former, attacked by Lu Xun and Mao Zedong himself, was until quite recently reviled, while the latter, who died young was portrayed as something of a cultural hero. This hero and villain mentality has had its effect on the reputations of Liang Shiqiu and Zhu Shenghao in the not too distant past. Liang's edition, published in 1967 in Taiwan, for many years was not available on the mainland because of the translator's political beliefs, while Zhu's life and work has been sentimentalised into an example of someone sacrificing his life and selflessly devoting himself to the revolution for his Shakespeare translation.

As Murray Levith comments, 'To a large extent modern China has not met Shakespeare on his own terms, but rather has used him to forward a national political propaganda.'³¹⁵ We have seen this at work in Mao's vilification of one of Shakespeare's translators and what could be viewed as the heroic sentimentalisation of the other. He Qixin's Kent State University doctoral dissertation 'Shakespeare Through Chinese Eyes' (condensed and adapted as 'China's Shakespeare' in *Shakespeare Quarterly*), though now somewhat dated, is courageous in pointing out that the Chinese political and ideological approach to Shakespeare is misguided, causing distortions in translations, productions, and criticism. He observes that the same principles that are followed for modern Chinese literature have been adopted by most Chinese Shakespeare critics. 'According to these principles, literature is subordinate to politics; any form of literature is aimed at propagandizing for a special class of people in the society, and each author is consciously or unconsciously writing for his own class'.³¹⁶ Such dictates arise, as I have mentioned in Chapter One of this dissertation, from Mao's 'Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Art

³¹⁵ Murray Levith, *Shakespeare in China* (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), p. 131.

³¹⁶ He Qixin, *Shakespeare Through Chinese Eyes* (Diss., Kent State University, 1986), p. 31.

and Literature'. Professor He concludes: 'the rigid limitations of this political and ideological approach to Shakespeare often hinder Chinese critics and result in biased and unsatisfactory interpretations of Shakespeare's plays.'³¹⁷ Chinese critics, He contends, sometimes misunderstand Shakespeare and thus mislead their readers.³¹⁸ Similarly, in the face of political constraints, Chinese translators may distort a source text that is considered politically inappropriate given the necessary consideration of political censorship. In addition, they can adopt some translation strategies, such as revision, abridgement, and interpolated comment to manifest their subjectivity. In the performance script of the BPAT's production of *Measure for Measure*, some five hundred lines at sixty-two different places in the play were omitted, most of which were allusions to God, references to prostitution, and lines that might have contradicted current political concepts in China.

2.3.2.3 Ideology

Ideology refers to the dominant social and political thoughts and values of society, normally emanating from a certain class, individual or elite group. The influences of the ideology within which any translator is located could lead to the deformation of the original in translation. 'What kind of image would the translated literary works create is to a great extent determined by the translator's ideology, which can be the translator's own or the one imposed upon the translator by patrons'.³¹⁹ Therefore, under the influence of a different ideology, things bearing the unique feature of the original culture may be weakened, deformed, or disappear.

Ideology has become an important subject in the field of translation studies. Bassnett was the first to introduce the notion of ideology into translation studies. She defines ideology as a 'conceptual grid that consists of opinions and attitudes deemed acceptable in a certain society at a certain time, and through which readers and translators approach texts'.³²⁰ Lefevere says, 'On every level of the translation process, it can be shown that, if linguistic considerations enter into conflict with considerations of an ideological and/or poetological nature, the latter tend to win out'.

³²¹ He also says, 'Ideology is a certain concept of what the world should be like.

³¹⁷ He Qixin, *Shakespeare Through Chinese Eyes*, pp.31-32.

³¹⁸ He Qixin, *Shakespeare Through Chinese Eyes*, p.124.

³¹⁹ Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*, 1992, p.41.

³²⁰ Susan Bassnett & André Lefevere, *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation* (Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2001), p. 48

³²¹ André Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.39.

Ideology particularly shapes the translator's strategy in solving problems.'³²² No wonder that ideology influences the translator's decision-making in the whole translation process, from source-text selection to actual linguistic choices and the reception of the translated work.

The choice of a source text, which is governed by preliminary norms, is commonly seen as ideologically driven. In other words, the translator's choice of a source text for translation must fit in with the target ideology for the consideration of authoritative censorship and its reception among the target readership. Thus, the translator has to make some adaptations or even omissions regarding the source text so that the ideologies represented in his translation can be adequately accepted by target readers.³²³ This strategy can be seen through the example of China during the period of the Cultural Revolution, when a large number of translated literary works were regarded as *heresy* and used as objects for ideological criticisms, including memoirs written by Anglo-American political personages, works by militarist Japanese writers and modernist novels by Latin-American writers. Translation is like a bridge that brings the source ideology and the target ideology together, both of which may be relatively compatible with each other or absolutely not. Besides, what cannot be ideologically tolerated for the target reader at one historical time may be welcomed, even as classic or fashionable, at other times. Therefore, the translator may exert his subjectivity and resort to different strategies, so as to guarantee the conformity of his translated text to the expectations of target readers.

In brief, as a key factor of socio-cultural constraints on the translator, ideology determines the production, circulation, and acceptability of translated texts. But translators are not innocent bystanders of cultural prejudices, but rather active participants contributing to particular cultural constructions.

2.3.3 Examination of the Translation of *Measure for Measure*

Different social and cultural norms and target audiences affect translators' behaviours greatly. Zhu's translation is purely literary while Ying's is apt for performance. In the process of translation, both Zhu and Ying must have met with difficulties when it came to carrying the cultural elements from one language to

³²² Theo Hermans, *The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation* (London & Sydney: Croom Helm, 1985), p.217.

³²³ Kong Huiyi & Yang Chengshu, *Translation in Asia: Past and Present* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2000), p. 145.

another. Roughly, the cultural barriers are in the aspects of religion, mythology, historical and literary allusions, idiomatic expressions, and sexual allusions, etc. In the following sections of this chapter, we will examine Ying Ruocheng's translation of *Measure for Measure* with examples cited from his translated text. Ying employs various flexible strategies such as rhyme, foreignisation, domestication and cuts. I hope that these examples can illustrate how Ying achieves an 'immediate effect of spoken language',³²⁴ how he reproduces the style of the original drama and, at the same time, gives due attention to the audience and the actor.

2.3.3.1 Speakability

Josep Marco highlights two points about the speakability of drama translation: first, play texts are presented by actors on stage, thus dramatic language must meet the oral conventions in the target language culture to fulfil the instantaneity in dramatic language; second, dramatic language must match actors' actions on the stage, and vice versa.³²⁵ No matter if the characters in the play use verse or, more generally speaking, poetic language, or colloquial speech, they use the language in its spoken way. The translation of a play for the stage should, therefore, be speakable, for there is great difference between what looks well on the page and what sounds well on one's lips.

The speakability of dramatic language, in the first place, is reflected by the rhythm of breathing. To reproduce speakability in drama translation, the sentences in the translated play should not be too long and complicated, for they will be spoken by the actors and will be comprehended by the audience within a transient period of time. Certain awkward-sounding words that are hard to pronounce should be carefully avoided in translation. Take for example the following lines of translation in *Measure for Measure* by Ying Ruocheng:

1) Isabella	Merciful heaven, Thou rather with thy sharp and sulfurous bolt Splits the unwedgeable and gnarled oak, Than the soft myrtle. [...]	<i>(Measure for Measure, 2.2.141-44)</i>
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伊莎白拉	慈悲为怀的上天啊， 你宁可运用雷霆万钧的电火，
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³²⁴ Ying Ruocheng, 'The Translator's Preface', p. 11.

³²⁵ Josep Marco, 'Teaching Drama Translation', *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology*, 10.1 (2002), 55-68.

去劈开那坚硬、扭曲的橡树，
却不去碰柔弱的长春花。 [...]

(Ying Ruocheng, 1999: 89)

(Isabella Merciful heaven,
 You would rather, by using your thundering fire
 Split the hard, twisted oak,
 Than touch the delicate periwinkle. [...])

In the original monologue, structuring this section around half and full iambic pentameters, Shakespeare uses 20 English words, which are divided into 4 clauses in order to be more speakable for the actor on the stage. The average length of every clause, therefore, is only 5 words. Accordingly, Ying Ruocheng adopts the technique of division skilfully in order to separate long sentences into shorter parts that are easier to pronounce and understand. Ying's version has 4 clauses and 41 Chinese characters in total, with an average length of 10 words in each clause.

2.3.3.2 Musicality

Drama as a comprehensive art form takes full advantage of the acoustic features of language to achieve musical effect. The reproduction of acoustic beauty in translation is a big challenge to the translator. The translation of drama should recreate the beauty of sound so as to be appropriate for pronunciation and pleasant to the ear. As a professional actor, Ying understands very well the power and magic of spoken words in the theatre. As a matter of fact, he talks about the issue in his postscript to his translation of *Measure for Measure*, saying:

In addition to issue of rhythm and rhyme, the most important thing is that the employment of words must accord with the rules of level and oblique tones in the Chinese language. Otherwise, the actors will feel the speeches awkward to speak and the audience will feel the speeches unpleasant to the ears. Most often it is changing of one single word that makes the difference.³²⁶

Many elements contribute to the musicality of drama. The language of drama is characterized by rhyme, rhythm, stress, intonation, pitch, loudness, speed of delivery, etc. All of them can create acoustic beauty. Among these elements, rhyme and rhythm account for a large part of drama's musical effect, and yet they are the most difficult to be recreated in translation.

Rhyme is 'correspondence of sound between words or the endings of words,

³²⁶ Ying Ruocheng, 'Postscript to the Translation of *Qing Jun Ru Weng*', *Foreign Literature*, 7 (Beijing: Foreign Languages Teaching and Research Press, 1981), 37-38 (p.37).

especially when these are used at the ends of lines of poetry'.³²⁷ In order to create a musical and aesthetic effect, rhyme is often employed in drama, especially in verse drama. Many plays written by Shakespeare are imbued with rhymes that are essential to their beauty of sound. Here is a monologue delivered by the Duke of Vienna in *Measure for Measure* that is typical of its rhymed effect.

2)

Character	English text	Chinese text	Rhyme
Duke	He who the sword of heaven will bear Should be as holy as severe; Pattern in himself to know, Grace to stand, and virtue go; More nor less to other's paying Than by self-offenses weighing. Shame to him whose cruel striking Kills for faults of his own liking. Twice treble shame on Angelo, To weed my vice and let his grow. O, what may man within him hide, Though angel on the outward side! How may likeness made in crimes, Making practice on the times, To draw with idle spiders' strings Most ponderous and substantial things! Craft against vice I must apply. With Angelo tonight shall lie His old betrothed but despised; So disguise shall, by th' disguised, Pay with falsehood false exacting, And perform an old contracting.	替天执法责任重, 无私才能无情; 时刻必须谨言慎行, 不可轻举妄动。 对人对己应秉公, 以己度人, 权衡轻重。 可耻之徒, 自身行恶, 他人同罪, 却处极刑! 无耻之尤安哲罗, 对人凶狠, 对己宽容! 外貌有如天使, 内心丑恶狰狞! 恶人常靠伪装行, 得以欺世盗名, 蜘蛛结网巧经营, 多少猎物丧生! 不用智谋, 邪恶不去, 我何妨将计就计? 安哲罗旧欢早遗弃, 今夜偏床头相遇。 以假对假, 作法自毙, 旧日姻缘重续。	[zhong] [qing] [xing] [dong] [gong] [zhong] [e] [xing] [luo] [rong] [shi] [ning] [xing] [ming] [ying] [sheng] [qu] [ji] [qi] [yu] [bi] [xu]
	(<i>Measure for Measure</i> , 3.2.112-133)	(Ying, 1999: 175, 177)	

The whole monologue in Shakespeare's text is permeated by rhymes that create harmonious and echoing sound effect. In order to provide the Chinese audience with a similar musical effect, the end rhymes in this monologue should be recreated in translation. Ying Ruocheng did a remarkable job in his translation, for he not only made his translated monologue as rhymed as the original, but also made his translation terse, fluent and natural. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that Ying deliberately imitated the style of the *nian bai* 念白 (the spoken parts of a traditional Chinese opera) in *Yuan zaju* 元杂剧 (a poetic music drama in Yuan Dynasty

³²⁷ *Oxford English Dictionary*.

comprising of four acts) in translating this monologue. The reason for doing so, according to Ying, was because the setting of *Measure for Measure* was in Vienna with the characters in the play speaking the language of the sixteenth century that is a little bit aforesaid even for Shakespeare's original audience. By using the style of traditional Chinese opera, the translation compiles with the classical Chinese theatrical convention of monologue, and a similar spatio-temporal distance is created.

Rhyme is an essential constituent of the beauty of sound in a verse drama, but rhythm is the vital element that makes for achieving musicality in prose as well as verse drama. Both prose and verse drama can adopt rhythmic patterns to emphasize musicality, to diversify the dramatic language, and to unite words and sentences into an organic whole. In a drama performance, the rhythm and speed of a line is as important as its content. When it comes to translation, much will be lost if this rhythm is damaged. Therefore, the rhythm and speed of the source text must be well preserved in the target text so as to promote the smooth progress of the performance.

Before we deal with the matter of reproducing rhythm in translation, a discussion of the differences between the English and the Chinese ways to create rhythmic effect is necessary. Chinese is a tonal language whose rhythm originates from the opposition between oblique and even tones, i.e. phonetic differences in duration and tone. Rhythm in the English language, however, is based on stress. It is, in brief, the pattern of regular arrangement and alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables. English is a stress-timed language, which implies that the stressed syllables tend to occur at a roughly equal interval of time. The rhythm in the English language, therefore, is natural and wave-like. In actual speech, however, stressed syllables are not always evenly separated from each other by unstressed ones. In order to attain smooth rhythm for actors to speak the lines aloud, a playwright usually regulates the distribution of stresses to maintain an evenness of beat throughout the utterance. Consider the following example from *Measure for Measure*:

3) Isabella **I**gnomy in **r**ansom and **f**ree **p**ardon
Are of **t**wo **h**ouses; **l**awful **m**ercy
Is **n**othing **k**in to **f**oul **r**edemption.
(*Measure for Measure*, 2.4.124-26)

This example consists of two coordinated sentences that do not rhyme with each

other but have similar rhythmic patterns. The rhythmic effect of these two sentences can be analysed as follows:

`Ignomy in `ransom and `free `pardon are of `two `houses;
`Lawful `mercy is `nothing `kin to `foul re`demption.

In each of these two sentences, a similar rhythm is detectable in the regular occurrence of six stressed syllables. Due to the difference between English and Chinese phonological features, the musical rhythm in these two sentences has no counterpart in the Chinese language. However, a similar sound effect can still be achieved by certain alternative means. Ying Ruocheng translated these two sentences as follows:

Bēibǐ de shúmǎi hé kuānróng shèmiǎn bù néng tóng rì ér yǔ
卑鄙的赎买和宽容赦免不能同日而语;
Hé yú fǎ lǜ de cí bēi yǔ chǒu è de huìlù háo wú liánxì
合于法律的慈悲与丑恶的贿赂毫无联系。(Ying, 1999: 113)
(Mean purchase and free pardon can not be linked;
Lawful mercy and evil bribery have no connection.)

Antithesis as a rhetorical device is adopted in the above translation. With similar sentence structure and approximately the same length, a native Chinese speaker will understand that the two sentences echo each other in sound effect. A kind of balance is therefore achieved, and the original rhythmic effect is conveyed to a great extent.

2.3.3.3 Cultural Domestication

As for slang, demotic speech, set phrases, metaphors and puns, which are usually deeply rooted in cultural specialties, it is hard for translators to preserve all the images and subtleties of the source in the target text. Ying's triple identity as translator, director and actor reminds him of the feeling of the potential audience all the time. Within a few seconds, it is hard for the audience to take in an unfamiliar or foreign message that is hard to understand immediately. Ying's strategy is to render them in a domesticated way. The audience for Shakespeare's works in England was diversified in educational background. The stage of the Globe Theatre was surrounded on three sides by the 'pit' in which spectators who paid just for a standing ticket stood and, at a slight remove, by a three-storey high amphitheatre, each having a gallery and seating for more affluent theatre-goers. This indicates that

Shakespeare's audience included from the well-educated to the uneducated. Ying Ruocheng comments that Shakespeare's works 'suit both refined and popular tastes'.³²⁸ Bearing this in mind, Ying introduces some Chinese folk adages into his translation. Let us examine some examples.

To diminish the gap between the play and the cultural traditions of the Chinese spectators, Ying discarded Shakespeare's title in his translation, realizing that the Biblical associations of the phrase 'measure for measure' would be entirely lost. The play's title is a reference to an idea that occurs several times in the New Testament, for example, in St Matthew's Gospel:

Judge not, that ye be not judged.
For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what
measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.³²⁹

Rather than using either '*e you e bao* 恶有恶报' ('A Story for Measuring Crime') or '*yi bao huan yi bao* 一报还一报' ('You Will be Judged as You Judge'), the titles provided by the two previous Chinese translators of the play Liang Shiqiu and Zhu Shenghao, Ying used the Chinese proverb '*qing jun ru weng* 请君入瓮' ('please step into the urn') as the title of the translated play. The phrase alludes to a famous story from the Tang Dynasty in Chinese history about a cruel official who was asked by a wise and virtuous magistrate what punishment should be administered to one who refuses to admit a crime. The evil official responded that an urn should be heated to a very high temperature and the offender should be placed inside the scalding vessel, a technique that would surely make any criminal confess. At this point the virtuous magistrate ordered his servants to prepare just such a fiery urn, and he instructed the evil official to step inside. Thus, the current title, '*Qing jun ru weng* 请君入瓮' ('Please Step into the Urn'), instantly evokes for a Chinese audience the notion of an official unwittingly caught in his own trap, defeated by his own nefarious designs.

As we know, figurative language is commonly used in literary works including dramas, but not all figurative images are in line with the conception of target readers. See the following example of metaphor:

4) **DUKE** Where I have seen corruption boil and bubble

³²⁸ Ying Ruocheng, 'The Translator's Preface', p.10.

³²⁹ St. Matthew Ch 7 vv 1-3.

Till it o'er-run the stew: laws for all faults,
But faults so countenanc'd, that the strong statutes
Stand like the **forfeits in a barber's shop**,
As much in mock as mark.

(*Measure for Measure*, 5.1.334-38)

公爵 我见到这里腐败，堕落，世风日下，
不可收拾；对待犯罪虽有法律，
但对罪恶的包庇使那些严厉的规章
变成了挂羊头卖狗肉的
一场儿戏。

(Ying, 1999: 273)

(DUKE I have seen the corruption boil and bubble here,
And the moral values of the society are worsening day by day.
There are laws for faults,
But the faults are so countenanced that the strong statutes
Turn into a game to display a sheep's head but sell dog meat.)

In example 4 the Duke compares the law of Vienna to 'forfeits in a barber's shop', which is a rather strange metaphor for Chinese people to understand. Ying Ruocheng's translation is '变成了挂羊头卖狗肉的一场儿戏' (turn into a game to display a sheep's head but sell dog meat) which totally changes the metaphor and replaces 'forfeit' and 'barber's shop' with Chinese images '挂羊头' (display a sheep head) and '卖狗肉' (sell dog meat). Here Ying Ruocheng either replaces the metaphorical images with corresponding ones in Chinese culture or even deletes the metaphor as long as the audience can understand the information. He tends to use short and concise language; he once mentioned that 'the language of drama should not be tedious but sonorous and forceful, and translators should think over the 'immediate effect of language'.³³⁰ By using '堕落' (corruption), '世风日下' (the moral values of society are worsening day by day), the language turns out to be more forceful which can easily and rapidly raise the emotion of the audience.

Moreover, Ying has domesticated Shakespeare's idiomatic and allusive language in the following examples:

5) That in the captain's but a choleric word,
Which in the soldier is flat blasphemy.
将官嘴里一句一时气愤的话，在兵士嘴里却是大逆不道。(Zhu, 2005: 203)
(In the captain's mouth it may be just an angry word for a moment, while in the mouth of a soldier, it sounds outrageous.)

³³⁰ Ying Ruocheng, 'The Translator's Preface', p.12.

只许州官放火, 不许百姓点灯。 (Ying, 1999: 89)
(The magistrates are free to set fire, while the common people are forbidden even to light lamps.)

6) Haste still pays haste, and leisure answers leisure;
Like doth quit like, and Measure still for Measure.
一个死得快, 一个也不能容他缓死, 用同样的处罚抵消同样的罪, 这才叫报应循环! (Zhu, 2005: 305)
(One died fast, and the other is not allowed to die slowly. Set up the same punishment for the same crime, and this is called a retribution cycle.)

种瓜得瓜, 种豆得豆,
天网恢恢, 疏而不漏! (Ying, 1999: 283)
(As a man sows, so does he reap.
The net of Heaven has large meshes, but it lets nothing through.)

In these two cases, Zhu Shenghao employs a foreignizing translation strategy, while Ying Ruocheng uses domesticating translation. The effects of these two strategies in these cases can be analysed as follows:

Each of Zhu Shenghao's and Ying Ruocheng's translations conveys the semantic meaning of the original text. However, they have different stage effects. Zhu's translation adheres to the original work and creates unfamiliar images to the Chinese audience and these unfamiliar images cannot arouse the audience's curiosity. They are just plain and nothing novel to the Chinese audience, only serving the function of giving information. Ying has employed Chinese folk adages to replace the English idiomatic language for the purpose of creating direct stage effects. Here he applies Chinese idioms which are dynamically equivalent to the original idioms: '只许州官放火, 不许百姓点灯' (The magistrates are free to set fire, while the common people are forbidden even to light lamps), '种瓜得瓜, 种豆得豆' (As a man sows, so does he reap) and '天网恢恢, 疏而不漏' (The net of Heaven has large meshes, but it lets nothing through). For one thing, they are familiar not only to the Chinese audience but also the actors. The audience may feel empathy with the actors because they have a shared experience and cultural knowledge. For the other, the set phrases usually comprise carefully selected words that make the utterance brief. 'For brevity is the soul of wit.' Brevity is one of the principles of dramatic speech. If we count the Chinese characters of each version, we could easily realize that Ying Ruocheng's translation is expressed in many fewer characters than Zhu Shenghao's. The advantages of brevity lie in the fact that the speed of the utterance is accelerated and

the rhythms are strengthened to be more regular. In our daily life, passionate expressions have a more noticeable rhythm. The speeches of an emotional person will become more regular as his emotion rises to a climax. For instance, in the first case (example 5), the utterance is spoken by Isabella when she receives unfair treatment by Angelo. Her anger is forced to an intense degree, so her utterance is emitted without careful thinking. A familiar saying will appear in her mind and be spoken out. The original saying must be very familiar to an English audience but new to a Chinese audience. Zhu's faithful reproduction of the semantic meaning of the original text leads to the unbearably long and unfamiliar phrase translation, which is too loose to express the character's emotions. The second utterance (example 6) is spoken by the Duke in the epilogue, when he declares each party's fate. The four four-letter words in Ying Ruocheng's translation reinforce the fair judgment passed by Duke and build an honest and impartial image of the governor. Though Zhu's translation echoes the title of the play, the explanative style weakens the power of language and cannot evoke the audience's empathy. In Ying's translation, by using witty and expressive language, a stage-oriented play text is created. By applying idioms and images with heavy Chinese flavours, an audience-oriented play text is thus produced.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'pun' as 'the use of a word in such a way as to suggest two or more meanings or different associations, or the use of two or more words of the same or nearly the same sound with different meanings, so as to produce a humorous effect; a play on words.' Puns in both English and Chinese can be divided into homophone and homograph. The usage of puns was a kind of fashion in Shakespeare's time, and we can see Shakespeare's plays are rich in various puns, and thus his plays leave the audience the impression that his language is witty, clever, colourful and meaningful. When translating Shakespeare's plays, the translator should make every effort to reproduce the writing style of the original in this respect, too.

For the translation of those puns, Ying and Zhu adopt different strategies. Take the translation of characters' names for example, 'Mistress Overdone' is a bawd whose surname *Overdone* simultaneously plays on the second sense of 'being "worn out" in sexual activities'³³¹ or 'sexually debilitated'³³² since she was said to have

³³¹ Eric Partridge, *Shakespeare's Bawdy* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), p.156.

wed nine times. The name is translated as ‘咬弗动太太’ (Mrs. Tough to Chew) by Zhu while Ying translates it as ‘干过头夫人’ (Mrs. Already Worked Over). Evidently, Ying’s translation reserves the sense of irony and humour while Zhu simply translates the form of address according to the pronunciation of the word, ignoring the implied meaning of the address.

It is apparent that puns cannot be faithfully translated into another language which has its own phonetic system and cultural background. Therefore, the translator has to resort to other methods in translating puns. Here is one example in Act III, Scene II:

7) LUCIO The duke, I say to thee again, would eat mutton on Fridays.
(*Measure for Measure*, 3.2.86)

路西奥 我再告诉你吧，公爵在持斋的日子会偷吃羊肉。
(Zhu, 2005: 328)

(LUCIO: I tell you again that the Duke eats mutton secretly during days of fasting.)

路奇欧 公爵那个人，我再说一遍，七情六欲，样样俱全。
(Ying, 1999: 167)

(LUCIO: The duke, I tell you once again, is complete with all human desires.)

In example 7, Zhu Shenghao sacrifices some of the humour of the pun by using ‘公爵在持斋的日子会偷吃羊肉’ (the Duke eats mutton secretly during days of fasting), while Ying Ruocheng’s translation is obviously more explicit here. He transfers the connotation of ‘mutton’ directly into explicit and dramatic words ‘七情六欲，样样俱全’ (complete with all human desires).

2.3.3.4 Bawdy

Zhu Shenghao and Ying Ruocheng have taken different attitudes and approaches to the bawdy language frequently used by Shakespeare in *Measure for Measure*. In order to cater for the taste of his audiences and create a life-like atmosphere, Shakespeare knitted thousands of obscene words into his plays. For example, in Act I, scene II of *Measure for Measure*, Lucio mocks Claudio, saying Claudio ‘lost at a game of tick-tack’. Here ‘tick-tack’ has some obscene meaning implying sexual affairs. Zhu Shenghao, living in old China and heavily influenced by

³³² Gordon Williams, *A Glossary of Shakespeare’s Sexual Language* (Athlone Press Ltd, 1997), p.223.

traditional Chinese culture and moral standards, tends to bowdlerize or lessen the obscene meaning. He translates ‘tick-tack’ into ‘一时玩耍’ (play for some time). Ying Ruocheng here uses ‘一时荒唐’ (indulge in adultery for some time) for ‘tick-tack’, which sounds sonorous and implies the obscene reference, to express the original meaning while making sure that the language is speakable and easily understood on stage.

Here is another example in Act II, Scene IV:

- 8) ISABELLA I am come to know your pleasure.
 ANGELO That you might know it, would much better please me,
 Than to demand what 'tis. Your brother cannot live.
 (Measure for Measure, 2.4.39-41)
- 依莎贝拉 我来听候大人的旨意。
 安哲鲁 我希望你自己已经知道，用不着来问我。你的弟弟不能活命。
 (Zhu, 2005: 211)
- (ISABELLA I come to know your decree.
 ANGELO I hope you yourself have already known this, so you don't
 need to come to ask me. Your brother cannot live.)
 伊莎贝拉 我来询问大人的心意。
 安哲罗 如果你不是来询问，而是来满足
 我的心意，我会更满意。你的弟弟不能活命。
 (Ying, 1999: 105)
- (ISABELLA I come to ask what your wish is.
 ANGELO If you are not coming to ask, but to satisfy my wish, I will
 be more satisfied. Your brother cannot live.)

In Angelo's first encounter with Isabella, the deputy for the Duke is uncontrollably attracted by Isabella's beauty and begins to think of possessing her body. When Isabella comes to plead for her brother, who has been sentenced to death and is scheduled to be executed soon, he tells Isabella to come back to his home the next day for his decision as to whether he will release her brother. When Isabella arrives at his home the next day, Angelo greets her with a question ‘how now, fair maid?’, which shows his desire for her. Very ignorant of Angelo's shady intention, Isabella answers that she comes to inquire his final decision.

Here the word ‘pleasure’ uttered by Isabella is sexually suggestive to Angelo; in addition to her intended meaning of ‘decision/will’, it also has the unintended meaning of ‘bodily pleasure’, which corresponds with the evil idea brewing in Angelo's mind. In his mind, Angelo chooses to interpret Isabella's innocent ‘I have

come to know your pleasure' as the language of sexual gratification. For him, to get to know a woman is to have sexual relations with her. Therefore, in his answer, he plays on the sexual aspect of the word, once again revealing his lustful intention towards her. The audience will notice that Angelo and Isabella are actually referring to different things although they are using the same word 'pleasure (please)' and foresee forthcoming conflict deriving from the different intentions. Here, the subtle implications of a between-the-lines reading can be perceived by the audience through their interpretation and interpolation of the word 'pleasure'.

In Zhu Shenghao's translation, 'pleasure' is translated into '旨意' (decree) in Chinese and in Ying's version, it is rendered as '心意' (wish). The implications behind these two Chinese words are slightly different. Though the two words both carry the same semantic meaning of decision/will, their emotional inclinations are different. The word '心意' (wish) is the decision made out of personal preference or willingness and tends to be more subjective, while '旨意' (decree) is an order emanating from government regulations. It is objective and unchangeable. The translator selects this word for the equivalence of pleasure in order to show Isabella's last hope that for the sake of God Angelo could give her brother a way out. However, to Angelo, the word '心意' carries sexual implication, so he answers 'better please me'. Ying translates 'please' as '满足我的心意' (satisfy my wish) to cater to the expectations of the Chinese audience and the implied underrunning intention is rendered more explicit so the audiences notice quickly the different referents to which the two speakers are referring. While Zhu Shenghao's version '我希望你自己已经知道, 用不着来问我' (I hope you yourself have already known this, so you don't need to come to ask me) is direct and obvious. Angelo's hideous face and lust for sex are lost in this version.

How to decode the implications between lines and encode it into the translated text is also an issue for successful drama translation. Ying fully understands this issue and successfully deals with it in the translated text. His translation exposes Angelo as a hypocrite man in his pose of morality, and his lust for Isabella is much truer to his underlying character.

2.3.3.5 Religion

Religion can also affect translators' selection of source texts as well as their

choices of translating principles. With regard to the selection of source texts, translators need to be especially cautious, because religion usually has a very limited tolerance of heterodox works and translations. It was for religious reasons that in certain historical periods in Chinese translation history the translation of Western books, including religious books, was forbidden. Even when the ban had already been lifted, translators had to be on their guard. An example is the translation of *The Quran*. It was not until 1981, about one thousand years after Islam was introduced into China, that the first complete Chinese translation of *The Quran* was published, which was the fruit of the Chinese government's enlightened religious policy. In *Chinese Shakespeares: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchanges*, Huang finds that productions inspired by *The Merchant of Venice* in China witnessed 'negligence of racial and religious differences [that] has persisted throughout the history of Chinese Shakespeares',³³³ from the late-nineteenth century's accentuation of the mercantilism of this play, to *The Woman Lawyer*'s emphasis on new womanhood in 1927, and back to the economy of exchange in the new millennium. This blindness to race and religion has everything to do with China's feudal tradition, imperial power, cultural centralism, and Confucianism. Finally, religious belief also wields its influence on the choice of translation strategies. If there exists something in a chosen foreign text that is considered as offensive or unacceptable to the target religion, translators tend to adopt domesticating strategies. Take for example a Hebrew translation of Shakespeare's sonnets to the young man. In this Hebrew translation by Schwartz, the gender of the addressee is changed from male to female. As a result, the sonnets become love poems, unequivocally directed to a woman, in a striking contrast to their original intent. Gideon Toury thought Schwartz's behaviour was not difficult to account for, if in light of the prevailing religious belief of the period. In the early twentieth century Hebrew translations, for the most part, were produced by 'observant' Jews, or, at least, by Jews who had had intensive religious training and for an audience of the same background, for whom 'love between two men was simply out of bounds'.³³⁴ Of course, there may be some other socio-cultural norms that tend to constrain the translator's behaviour in the process of translation and the translator can make his or her subjective role prominent by deliberately manipulating

³³³ Alexander (now Alexa) C.Y. Huang, *Chinese Shakespeares: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p. 116.

³³⁴ Gideon Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* (Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2001) p.118.

the source text.

The story of *Measure for Measure* took place in Vienna in the sixteenth century when Christianity was spreading widely and penetrating into every corner of society. In the play the allusions, places and addresses of the persons are all related to Christianity. How to translate these religious words becomes a problem for the translator. Is foreignisation or domestication preferable?

In Zhu Shenghao's translation, considering the reader's reception of religion, he tries to set the places of worship and terms of address in a Buddhist context. To Chinese readers of the 1930s, Buddhism was a more popular and familiar religion than Christianity. Therefore, in Zhu's version we can find that Christian buildings such as 'monastery', 'nunnery' and terms of address such as 'Friar', 'nun', are rendered as '寺院' (temple), '尼庵' (Buddhist nunnery), '师傅' (master) and '尼姑' (Buddhist nun) respectively. In addition, some of the dialogues are rendered in a Buddhist way. For example, '为了存心济世, 兼奉教中之命, 我特地来此访问苦难颠倒的众生[...]' ('Bound by my charity and my mission as a friar, I come to visit the suffering people here in the prison.') The original text is 'Bound by my charity and my blest order, /I come to visit the afflicted spirits /Here in the prison.) Zhu Shenghao's intention is for the sake of the readers and it places them in a more familiar and acceptable context. But he does not and cannot keep a consistent Buddhist context for the readers. The reason is that in the play there are other passages, which are related to Christianity, but which cannot be translated into a Buddhist context. For example, there are quotations from the Bible and vows in the name of the Bible. What are the equivalents of these phrases in Buddhism? The most critical one lies in this sentence 'I will be supposed upon a book [...]' .What does 'a book' refer to? Obviously, it refers to the Bible in the context of Christianity. However, if the context is changed into a Buddhist one, which book does the speaker refer to? There is no such printed work in Buddhism. Inevitably, the Bible has to be mentioned in this sentence and cannot be replaced by any other book.

Furthermore, when the play is shown on the stage, costumes, as one of the non-linguistic factors, have to match the status and identity of the characters and conform to the conventions of the country and times. The following picture is taken from the performance of *Measure for Measure* when it was performed in the Capital Theatre on April 1st, 1981. The costumes are typical Western court dresses with a rosary

around the Friar's neck. Buddhism is definitely incompatible with such scenographic referents.



Figure 5 A scene in *Qing jun ru weng*, produced by the Beijing People's Art Theatre, 1981.

But Ying's translation follows a foreignising strategy. He maintains the original religion—Christianity—of the play and translates 'monastery', 'nunnery', 'Friar' and 'nun' as '修道院' (monastery), '女修道院' (convent), '神父' (spiritual father), '修女' (a woman who belongs to a religious order or congregation devoted to active service or meditation, living under vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience). All the dialogues were translated in a Christian way as well. So the previous line 'Bound by my charity and my blest order, /I come to visit the afflicted spirits /Here in the prison' is translated by Ying into '出于博爱之心，也是按照教会的指令，我到监狱来探望苦难的众生' (For the love of fraternity, and in accordance with the church's instructions, I come to the prison to visit the suffering beings), in which, '博爱' (fraternity), '教会' (church) are both terms derived from Christianity. To Chinese audiences of the 1980s, Christianity was no longer a strange or unheard of religion. Though the audiences' knowledge about Christianity was very limited, they longed to learn more from the drama about everything exotic. Ying's foreignising translation regarding religion is, therefore, not only understandable, but also appealing to the audience.

2.3.3.6 Cuts

It is a common practice that when Shakespeare's works are performed on the

stage, there must be some cuts. But what to cut and what to retain has long remained a disputed topic. Ying Ruocheng's translation of *Measure for Measure* published by China Translation & Publishing Corporation is a faithful reproduction without cuts. However, in a real stage performance presented in 1981, not all the translated dramatic text was performed by the actors. Parts of the dramatic text were removed, and some of the cuts were substantial. So why does a drama translator who sticks to the principle of presenting Shakespeare faithfully to the audience make cuts of the original text? To answer this question, Ying Ruocheng explains in the postscript of the translation *Measure for Measure*:

To maintain the original spirit and style of Shakespeare's work, we tried to avoid substantial cuts. (Because we took on the conventions of the Globe Theatre) we decided not to change scenes and arranged no curtains (so that more time was saved for the stage performance). The relatively substantial deletion is Act Two Scene One. The comedic lines in this scene refer to the social phenomena in the seventeenth Century. Some of the lines are not even understandable, let alone funny to the audience in modern times (including the English audience nowadays), so I have to cut it though I am not willing to. As for the cuts in other places, some are due to the less-known religion which is unfamiliar to Chinese audience. Others are for the purpose of avoiding an excessively long performance.³³⁵

Different from prose and poetry, drama for performance is time-bound and culture-bound. Theatres have developed according to very different conventions, and the expectations of audiences differ radically too. In mainstream British theatre today, for example, audiences expect a play to run for roughly two and a half hours, with an interval of an additional half an hour, an overall time of three hours. Chinese audiences also have such expectations. They do not expect the performance to last too long, otherwise, their attention and concentration will dissipate. Consequently, the interaction between audience and actors is likely to fail. Therefore, it is not surprising that present-day Shakespearean performances, both in English and in translation, do not usually present the full text. And Bassnett has pointed out that different expectations regarding the length of performance, across cultures and theatre practices, are 'bound to have an effect on translation strategies'.³³⁶ Plays are

³³⁵ 柯文辉, *英若诚* (北京: 北京十月文艺出版社, 1992) [Ke Wenhui, *Ying Ruocheng* (Beijing: Beijing October Arts Press, 1992)], p.48.

³³⁶ Susan Bassnett, 'Still Trapped in the Labyrinth: Further Reflections on Translation and Theatre', in *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation*, eds. by Susan Bassnett & André Lefevere

consequently cut and adapted to suit the expected time frame of the performance. With regards to this issue, the translator alone can hardly complete the cuts and adaptation. Even for Ying Ruocheng, an experienced director as well as translator, he himself alone could only make a prediction or proposal for the adapted text. The final version could and should only be worked out in the realisation of a performance. This echoes Pavis's assertion that the adaptation/translation of a play can only be fully realised when the translated text is tested on the stage—the phase of *mise en scène*.

2.4 Coda

Through the collaboration of English artists and Chinese actors, the BPAT's production of *Measure for Measure* achieved huge box office success, giving more than forty performances continuously in the spring of 1981. The translation emphasized contemporaneity by using Beijing street dialect for the bawds, contrasting this to the formal elegance of the courtly characters. In Carolyn Wakeman's words, the actors' speech 'captured with astonishing effectiveness, in the idiom of the Beijing streets, the pungency and bawdiness of Shakespeare's punning humour, while transmitting with equal deftness the stately eloquence and dignified formality of the courtly characters' speech'.³³⁷ Different from the other Chinese performances of Western dramas in which Chinese actors imitate the appearance and gestures they think of as typically Western—to put on big noses, blond wigs, and heavy blue eye make-up, and to shrug their shoulders repeatedly—the production deliberately strove to make the actors look natural, to emphasize that they were Chinese under their Western characters. The costumes were neutral and traditional, subtly encouraging recognition of the play as a mirror of the spectators' world. The natural hairstyles and facial features of the actors testified that beneath the stage dress were real Chinese people, not foreign members of a race apart. The guards' belted tunics, the crisp Mandarin collars, the heavy fur hats, the onlookers' padded jackets all suggested details of clothing common on the streets of Beijing in the 1980s. And when in Act I, Scene II, for example, the hapless Claudio and Juliet were led, bound, onstage to the sound of drums and noisemakers and paraded in tall white

(Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1998), pp. 90-108 (p.106).

³³⁷ Carolyn Wakeman, 'Measure for Measure on the Chinese Stage', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 33.4 (1982), 499-502 (p.502).

dunces' caps before a crowd of curious spectators, the action would have evoked scenes of public criticism and humiliation with which the audience were familiar, because many of them had experienced the same kind of suffering during the Cultural Revolution.



Figure 6 Angelo (Ren Baoxian) and Isabella (Li Rong-gu) in *Qing jun ru weng* (*Measure for Measure*), dir. by Toby Robertson, 1981. (Courtesy of Beijing People's Art Theatre)

When Toby Robertson visited China at the turn of the 1980s, he commented that the theatre he witnessed was still a kind of off-shoot of the Beijing Opera, highly fantastical, like a museum. It was like walking back into the past. There wasn't anything modern about it at all. All Europeans in the Chinese productions were given an enormous amount of nose putty, because the Chinese thought that Europeans all had big noses.³³⁸ After making the choice of *Measure for Measure*, Robertson wanted to do the play in modern dress, and do it very simply in a convention that was understood in the West in the 1970s to be basically in a black box. With reference to the structure of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, British stage designer Alan Barrett devised a simple scenic set for *Measure for Measure*. Although costumes and props were utilized, changes of scene were not conducted by

³³⁸ John Elsom, ed. *Is Shakespeare Still Our Contemporary?* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), p.82.

stagehands during brief curtain closings. There was no proscenium arch, no curtains, and no stagehands to speak of other than the actors themselves. Instead, changes of scene were indicated explicitly or implicitly in the speeches and narrative situations that are encoded in the text of the plays. The direct effect of this well-organized scenic set was to maintain the scenes and lines of the original work to the utmost so that the audience could appreciate Shakespeare's work in a full round. In rehearsals, the negotiation between the British artists and the Chinese actors was interesting. The British artists wanted to stage it simply, to strip the play down to its basic ingredients, which the Chinese actors found very odd in rehearsals. They would turn up with every single aid to acting that they could possibly use—hats, sticks, moustaches and false noses—to which Robertson said 'No', and they were upset. But in the end Robertson did attain his goal of 'striping it down to the ironic play that it is'.³³⁹ His impression was that the Chinese actors' sense of the ironic is very highly developed, probably because 'the older the civilization, the greater sense of irony'.³⁴⁰ That is the reason why *Measure for Measure* was a good choice for China. The success of the stage performance proved the credibility of Ying's translation and Robertson's directing thoughts. Night after night, *Measure for Measure* cast its spell over a full capacity audience of workers and peasants, intellectuals and students, high officials and government functionaries, mingling occasionally with foreign residents and tourists, who laughed together at the comic scenes, and pondered the serious issues, until the Duke's veiled designs became clear. No longer did Shakespeare in China seem either highbrow or inaccessibly remote and foreign. Robertson and Ying found something necessary for the Chinese audience in the special context of the 1970s and 1980s — a theme that was contemporary, relevant and important.

With a clear purpose of translating for stage performance and striving for colloquialism, performability, individuation and the 'immediate effect of spoken language',³⁴¹ Ying's translation principles and strategies accord with the viewpoints of many cultural translation theorists. Most importantly, as a theatre translator, Ying sets a good example for drama translators to equip themselves with enough knowledge and experience of theatre performance to excavate the factors that make

³³⁹ John Elsom, ed. *Is Shakespeare Still Our Contemporary?*, p.83.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Ying Ruocheng, 'The Translator's Preface', p. 11.

plays performable and to skilfully present major aspects of the source text. The acknowledgement of form, target audience, cultural location and linguistic registers in theatre translation helps to retain an appropriate level of the translator's subjectivity.

Chapter 3 East Meets West:

Identity and Intercultural Discourse in *huaju* Shakespeares

Foreign Shakespeare performances in different cultures offer new perspectives on the understanding and interpretation of the plays, and illustrate the ongoing cultural exchanges between the playwright and the indigenous theatres as well as their audiences. In China, the majority of Shakespeare productions have been in the form of *huaju* 话剧 (spoken drama), a genre that developed in the early twentieth century on the model of contemporary Western theatre.³⁴² *Hua* simply means “dialogue” and *ju*, “drama.” The term *huaju* emphasized dialogue as the primary artistic medium—a language of colloquial, everyday speeches that could comprehensively portray contemporary life and express modern ideas, as opposed to the ornate poetic language of verse and song in *xiqu* 戏曲 (sung-drama/traditional opera). *Huaju* was performed in vernacular Chinese and thus accessible to the masses, and had immediate political application. A genre born from the intercultural discourse between China and the West, *huaju* is an interesting field to explore the encounter of Western and Chinese culture, ideology, conception, and aesthetics. Moreover, *huaju* provides a lot of raw materials concerning the development of Chinese society and culture of its own. In 1907, a Chinese student group in Japan called *Chunliu she* 春柳社 (the Spring Willow Society) performed *Heinu yu tian lu* 黑奴吁天录 (*The Black Slave’s Cry to Heaven*), based on Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. *The Black Slave’s Cry to Heaven* was the first Chinese language spoken drama (*huaju*),³⁴³ and signalled the beginning of a new dramatic genre. While being influenced by the American concept that everyone is created equal, and using it as an argument against Confucian tradition, the first generation of Chinese dramatists was attracted to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* for its powerful judgment against slavery. Thus, issues of racial conflict, national identity, and resistance to oppression took a central stage in modern Chinese drama from its origin. Of equal importance, the Spring Willow Dramatic Society experimented with new creative possibilities unavailable in the old theatre. Shakespeare is one of the major

³⁴² Chen Xiaomei, ‘Introduction’, in *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Chinese Drama*, ed. by Chen Xiaomei (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), pp. 1-55.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*

influences on the *huaju* theatre. Shakespeare was first staged professionally in China in 1913,³⁴⁴ and during the twentieth century, the Chinese practitioners accorded Shakespeare a special status among foreign playwrights. In the first part of this chapter, I am going to write a historical review of *huaju* Shakespeares in China to address the following questions: What is Shakespeare's influence in establishing and developing a modern Chinese theatre that centres on the practice of spoken drama? How is Shakespeare associated with twenty-first century China in the context of globalisation?

This chapter also aims to bring together intercultural theory and practice through the close analysis of two distinct *huaju* performances of Shakespeare, *Da Jiangjun Kou Liulan* 大将军寇流兰 (*The Tragedy of Coriolanus*, 2007), a Mandarin adaptation by Lin Zhaohua for the Beijing People's Art Theatre (BPAT), and *King Lear* (2006), a Mandarin-English bilingual production by British-Chinese director David Tse Ka-shing. Both productions premiered at the time when *huaju* was celebrating its hundredth anniversary, and later toured China and the UK. The reason I choose these two *huaju* Shakespeares is not only because they are good examples of cultural exchanges between the East and the West in recent years, but also because the two works share the same conviction to link Shakespeare to contemporary Chinese culture and politics. Of more importance is that the two works provide distinctive approaches to the issues of identity in intercultural discourse. At the core of both productions lies the fundamental question: 'Who am I?' At stake are the artists' personal and cultural identities as the processes of globalisation intensify. The question is as urgent for contemporary translators, directors, and audiences as it is for the protagonists in *Coriolanus* and *Lear*. The study of these *huaju* adaptations allows us to re-examine and interrogate the dynamic intercultural relationship between Shakespeare and specific historical, cultural, socio-political, and dramatic contexts, and enables us to investigate the current condition of globalised Shakespeare. These performances not only exemplify the intercultural productivity of a Shakespearean text, but more critically, illustrate how Shakespeare and intercultural discourses are internalized and reconfigured by the nation and culture that consume and re-produce them. *Coriolanus* and *Lear* when restaged in

³⁴⁴ Before 1913, some missionary schools performed Shakespeare for the purpose of language teaching. The first professional production of Shakespeare was an adaptation in Shanghai of *The Merchant of Venice* entitled *Rou quan* 肉券 (*The Contract of Flesh*).

contemporary China demonstrate how (intercultural) identity is constructed through the subjectivity and iconicity of Shakespeare's characters and the performativity of Shakespeare's text.

3.1 *Huaju* Shakespeares: A Centenary Review

The development of the *huaju* genre in China's theatre is a pivotal point when discussing Chinese Shakespeare, since Shakespeare's growth in China developed alongside an emerging Chinese modern theatre. As Li Ruru posits, the variation of Shakespeare performances that we see today in China would be very different if the initiative to create a new theatrical form had not existed.³⁴⁵ *Huaju* developed through the need for a vehicle that could introduce new radical ideas suitable for changing Chinese society. By the late nineteenth century, *Zhong guo* 中国 – the “Middle Kingdom” (literally “the centre of the world”) – had awakened from the humiliations of European imperialism and military defeat in the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95). A civilization with a history of five millennia faced a catastrophic threat to its survival. The question of how the nation ought to react to the outside world had become a vital issue in intellectual and political circles. Disputes arose between radical intellectuals who wished to emulate foreign cultural models through the drastic reform of Chinese culture and those who wished to defend traditional culture against such changes. It was at such time that Shakespeare was introduced to Chinese readers in a 1904 free translation of Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales of Shakespeare* by Lin Shu. Early translators of Western literature—predominantly English literature—proclaimed it a model for the enlightenment of the nation.³⁴⁶ Advocates of Western spoken drama argued that indigenous Chinese theatre should be banned for its failure to deal with actual issues of society in the style of European realism. This utilitarian mentality determined how Shakespeare was assimilated into modern Chinese culture. Performances in realistic theatre were designed to delight and instruct through the novelty of the contents (e.g. legal discourse, bonds of flesh) and form (e.g. dialogue-driven rather than aria- or soliloquy-driven stage actions).

³⁴⁵ Li Ruru, *Shashibiya: Staging Shakespeare in China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), p. 23.

³⁴⁶ Lu Xun, ‘Some heretical views on culture’, in *Complete Works of Lu Xun* (Beijing: People's Literature Press, 1981), I. 56. All quotations from Chinese sources have been translated by the author.

Shakespearean repertoire, themes, and characterization provided some of the key ingredients for the reinvention and reforms of Chinese genres. The pro-Western, anti-traditional school of translators and literary critics denigrated Chinese culture and sincerely believed that Western literature was ‘far superior’ to Chinese literature.³⁴⁷ The justification offered for this obeisance was that Western literature alone constituted a serious inquiry into ‘human nature’, and that as such it would alleviate the nation’s ‘spiritual poverty’ and remedy the people’s ‘human shortcomings’. Translations of Western literature were therefore ‘emergency food relief’ during a Chinese literary famine.³⁴⁸ The first Chinese professional Shakespeare production, a version of *The Merchant of Venice* based on Lin Shu’s translation, appeared in 1913.³⁴⁹ Following the first Shakespeare performance, about twenty plays from the Lambs’ *Tales* were staged without written texts, in an improvisatory manner similar to Commedia dell’Arte. An exasperated critic fumed: ‘All that our Chinese dramatists are capable of is appropriating Shakespeare’s plots to make their own plays...[which has] nothing to do with Shakespeare.’³⁵⁰ By the 1920s, modern Chinese spoken drama (*huaju*) had evolved in Shanghai, Tianjin, Guangzhou, and other large cities, but by then Shakespeare was seen by radical dramatists as a representative of the canon and thus irrelevant to contemporary Chinese concerns.

It was only in the 1930s that full-length Shakespearean plays were performed, under the direction of Western-educated Chinese scholars. By this time, however, modern theatre and literature in China had become synonymous with left-wing revolutionary literature, so that the promotion of Shakespeare was considered by reformist intellectuals as antiquarian escapism. Shakespeare’s stories about ‘gods and spirits’ were regarded as too outdated for a theatre that wanted to represent social issues and problems. Instead, Chinese playwrights looked to Ibsen, Shaw and Gorky as inspirations to stage realism and naturalism in Chinese theatre.³⁵¹ It was also during this period that *huaju* began to flourish since it was seen as the suitable performance form to assimilate Western models of realistic and naturalistic theatre. The development of *huaju* caused theatre companies during the late 1930s to borrow

³⁴⁷ Hu Shi, ‘The making of a theory of literary revolution’, *New Youth* 4 (April 1918).

³⁴⁸ Hu Shi, ‘On translation: letter to Meng Zengpu’, in *Collected Works of Hu Shi* (Beijing: People’s Literature Press, 1998), III, 222-3.

³⁴⁹ Xi Zua, ‘Three basic elements of new drama’, in *Ju Bu Cong Kan (A Series on Theatre)*, Part I (Shanghai: Shanghai Jiaotong Press, 1919).

³⁵⁰ Cited in Cao Shujun and Sun Fuliang, *Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage*, p.79.

³⁵¹ Li Ruru, *Shashibiya*, p.24.

greatly from the Stanislavsky System of acting. Due to the Japanese invasion and civil war between the Nationalist Party government and the Communists, performances of Shakespeare largely ceased, although a few important productions were staged during the 1930s and 1940s. *Hamlet* (in Jiang'an, 1942), *Romeo and Juliet* (Chongqing, 1944), and *Macbeth* (Shanghai, 1945) were of significance artistically as well as contributing to patriotic spirit amid the terrible sufferings of the Sino-Japanese War.

After World War II, as Marxism started to influence the social and cultural practices of the Chinese during the 1950s and early 1960s, Shakespeare became an increasingly important cultural figure in China. Shakespeare was a significant writer for the Soviet critics and theatre, and Chinese literary scholarship tended to follow the “elder brother”, the Soviet Union.³⁵² The influence of Marx and Engels began to alter the reception of Shakespeare in China, and Shakespeare’s plays like *The Merchant of Venice* and *Timon of Athens* were used to criticize the evils of capitalism’s obsession with wealth. In fact, stage presentations kept in line with the dogma Marx and Engels adopted. Li suggests that Engels’s *Introduction to Dialectics of Nature* has shaped and influenced the general attitude towards both Shakespeare and the Renaissance in China since the 1950s.³⁵³ Engels notes that the Renaissance ‘was the greatest progressive revolution that mankind has so far experienced, a time which called for giants and produced giants – giants in power of thought, passion, and character, in universality and learning.’³⁵⁴ These sentiments were reiterated in Chinese articles about Shakespeare’s plays and in records of directors’ production notes, as Shakespeare was termed ‘the Renaissance giant’ and his corpus was said to reflect ‘the progressive forces of the time’. Although this closed socialist state was mainly antagonistic to the West during this period, Shakespeare was once again adapted to suit the ideological and aesthetic values of Marxism and the taste of the proletarian revolutionaries.³⁵⁵ From 1949 to 1966, the first seventeen years of the People’s Republic, none of Shakespeare’s major tragedies were publicly performed; producers concentrated almost exclusively on the comedies and romances. Regardless of the text, however, the interpretation was

³⁵² Dennis Kennedy, *Looking At Shakespeare: A Visual History of Twentieth-Century Performance*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 297.

³⁵³ Li, *Shashibiya*, pp. 44-45.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁵ Zhang Xiao Yang, *Shakespeare in China: A Comparative Study of Two Traditions and Cultures* (London: Associated University Presses, 1996), pp.239-47.

expected to meet the ideological specification derived from Engels: to extol the overthrow of medieval feudalism by the humanistic forces of early modern civilization, the hero to be portrayed as a ‘Renaissance giant’.³⁵⁶ The standards of presentation were set by the model productions by invited Soviet directors and designers in the 1950s, which emphasized Stanislavsky’s system of psychologically based acting and generated the atmosphere of the European Renaissance through visual means. Chinese actors, pretending to be foreigners, wore richly embroidered double-breasted costumes, coloured wigs, *Western* make-up, and prosthetic noses, while magnificent scenery suggested Palladian architecture. Rather than conveying the illusion of an authentic foreign setting, the effect as perceived by Chinese audiences tended to convey the exoticism of an enchanting fairy tale.³⁵⁷ However, after China broke from the Soviet Union in the late 1950s, Mao Zedong’s doctrine became the dominant discourse that served as political and cultural guidelines for the nation, as all literary and artistic activities had to adhere to strict party regulations. Shakespeare scholarship and performances virtually disappeared during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). Chinese theatre was dominated by ‘revolutionary model operas’ and many forms of theatre were banned because they were denounced as decadent and artists were sent to work in factories and in the countryside.³⁵⁸ China was thus made into a cultural desert for nearly a decade.

China’s reopening its doors to the West, however, saw the decline of Mao’s and Marxist ideological influence, and a renewal of interest in Western culture and radical social transformations. Perhaps no nation has navigated such massive change in so short a time as China has since the late 1970s. Western tourists to China today witness an endlessly fascinating blend of opposites the country encompasses: East meets West, ancient meets modern, Third World meets First World, and political communism meets economic capitalism. Yet China has integrated these contradictions skilfully to create its most successful society in 5,000 years. While the differences between China and the West (e.g. the nation’s government is unelected; the access to YouTube and Facebook is denied, etc.) remain to be the topic of criticism, it is an undeniable fact that China has made great leaps forward in freedom, Westernization and prosperity during the post-Mao/1976 era. Shakespeare began to

³⁵⁶ Frederick Engels, *Introduction to Dialectics of Nature*, ed. and trans. by Clemens Dutt (New York: International Publishers, 1960), p. 23.

³⁵⁷ See Li Ruru, *Shashibiya*, chapter 2.

³⁵⁸ Li, *Shashibiya*, p.50.

flourish again, and China's cultural confidence is further enhanced by its ability to claim Shakespeare, the paragon of the Western model, as its own. The confidence was evidenced in the Inaugural Shakespeare Festival in 1986, and was reaffirmed by the Shanghai International Shakespeare Festival in 1994. The first-ever Chinese Shakespeare Festival opened in 1986 in Beijing and Shanghai with twenty-five productions of fourteen Shakespeare plays, including five traditional operatic adaptations. Eight years later in 1994 the Shanghai International Shakespeare Festival showcased revamped versions exclusively (with one exception), many in traditional operatic forms. Numerous Shakespeare adaptations in various Chinese operatic styles demonstrated the usefulness of Shakespeare for local artists, and in the twenty-first century, productions of Shakespeare increased again. The Chinese could now approach Shakespeare with artistic freedom and create adaptations that are more daring in terms of intercultural representation. The drastic changes to China's political, social, cultural and economic infrastructure opened another avenue of association with Shakespeare and his world. The face of *huaju* was to transform again to accommodate the changing ideals the new generation had about Chinese history and Chinese theatre. Lin Zhouhua with his contemporaries such as Mainland directors Meng Jinghui³⁵⁹, Tian Qinxin, and British-Chinese director David Tse represented a new generation of practitioners and theorists, who attempted *huaju* very differently from their predecessors. This new generation of theatre practitioners was exposed to Western avant-garde theatre and was less restricted to Chinese official ideologies and theatrical modes. They rejected the Chinese imitation of the

³⁵⁹ Meng Jinghui (1966-) is a celebrated avant-garde director. His work is integral to the renewed popularity of *huaju*. Meng is a resident director of the National Theatre Company of China in Beijing. He is also artistic director of the independent PlayPlay Studio, a collaborative group organized in the mid 1990s. Meng's signature work, *Si Fan*, juxtaposed a traditional Ming dynasty *kunshan* opera with stories from Boccaccio's *Decameron*, and caused a sensation in 1993. His adaptations of foreign and newly written Chinese plays include: *The Balcony*, *Put Down Your Whip—Woyzeck*, *Gossip Street*, *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, *Rhinoceros in Love*, *Bootleg Faust* and *The Bedbug*. Meng's *I Love XXX* and *Love Ants* were produced, like all his plays, in connection with his work unit, the Central Experimental Theatre, but authorities 'banned' his controversial *Comrade Ah Q*, while still in rehearsal. Meng's first feature film is *Chicken Poets* (*Xiang jimao yiyang fei*, 2002). While exploring larger social issues and politically sensitive subjects, Meng's productions are comedies infused with playful, animated energy, cajoling and provoking the audience. His style is characterized by a mix of politics and popular culture, and of dark and humorous elements. He juxtaposes disparate styles, periods and cultures, including classical references, current events and pop culture—TV, film and the latest slang. Recurrent elements include mime, dance, music, poetry and prose, a vignette structure with a chorus of actors playing multiple roles, improvisation and spontaneity, sound and movement rhythm games, vocal 'sound parts' and gibberish, a rock band and multi-media. The 'Meng style' is so popular that other directors imitate his unconventional techniques. Source from Edward L. Davis, ed. *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Chinese Culture* (Routledge, 2005), pp. 540-541.

Ibsenite and Stanislavskian tradition, and pursued a non-illusionist theatre of open theatricalism, *jiadingxing* 假定性 (conventionalism) and ‘primitivism’.³⁶⁰ When we turn to the two *huaju* Shakespeares produced in the 2000s, *The Tragedy of Coriolanus* (2007), and *King Lear* (2006), it becomes immediately apparent that both experimented in new and distinctive ways, ‘infused with avant-garde approaches that seek to dislocate Chineseness in search of a new global identity for China.’³⁶¹ Although in different plays and in different languages (Mandarin and English, monolingual and bilingual), each production derived from its director’s personal concerns rather than an established political or social point of view. It was the first time that Coriolanus became a suitable Shakespearean character to portray Chinese discontent as he stood for a hero who was alienated in the modern society and failed to ‘author the self’ (5.3.36). The conflicts between Coriolanus and the common citizens could readily be associated with the memory of the tumultuous Cultural Revolution experienced by Chinese intellectuals. Tse’s *King Lear* (2006) offers a globalised perspective of China that represents the miscommunication, confusion, and moaning for the loss of identity felt by people during the fast-paced modernization and globalisation. Such daring ventures in seeking China’s modern image in modern capitalist propaganda must be understood alongside the acknowledgement of Sino-centric cultural confidence, as well as the sudden growth in China-West interactions in recent decades. Since the late 1970s, China’s Open Door Policy facilitated a more open attitude toward the West. At the turn of the twenty-first century, with a more determined capitalist pathway than in all of Chinese socialist history, China is now eager to become a world super power. Besides its leading economic status that fundamentally controls global economics, the number of Chinese overseas students has exploded to an unprecedented level and is still growing. The number of full-time postgraduate students from China studying in England in 2012/13 was 28,390—up nine per cent on the year before. 23 percent of students doing full-time taught masters degrees in England were Chinese, compared to 26 percent who were from the UK.³⁶² How many of them are studying

³⁶⁰ Tian Min, *The Poetics of Difference and Displacement: Twentieth-Century Chinese-Western Intercultural Theatre* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008), p.178.

³⁶¹ Eko Fiza Laukaban, *From China to Taiwan: Occidentalism in Contemporary Sino-Shakespeare* (Diss., Royal Holloway, University of London, 2013), p.225.

³⁶² Hugo Gye, *There are now almost as many Chinese students on postgraduate courses at English universities as British students* (2014), <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2594935/There-Chinese-students-postgraduate-courses-English-universities-British-students.html>> [accessed on

Humanities in the UK is yet to be confirmed by other demographics-based studies; however, it is not difficult to detect the swarming numbers of Chinese students in the Business and Management Departments of UK universities. Though the capitalist interest is obviously more powerful than the cultural one, the Chinese students demonstrate how the Chinese government is currently loosening its rein on Chinese civilian interaction with the West. In other words, the Chinese are finally able to carry their Sino-centricism to the West, particularly to the UK, to be face-to-face with Shakespeare.

3.2 ‘I play the man I am’:³⁶³ *Coriolanus* with Chinese Characteristics

Coriolanus, Shakespeare’s last Roman tragedy, tells the story of a brilliant Roman general Caius Martius Coriolanus from the 5th century B.C. who, having conquered the city of Corioles and been hailed as a hero, is persuaded to run for consul. When the Roman citizens reject him, however, Coriolanus joins forces with his enemies to revenge for his banishment, and eventually gets downfall at the hands of his archenemy. This controversial play has received large critical attention in the West, especially in relation to its politics and the psychological complexity of the protagonist. Performances of the play have demonstrated similar concerns. By contrast, Chinese study on the play is scant,³⁶⁴ and rarely has *Coriolanus* been produced in the PRC. So far, there has been only one stage version (the 2007 adaptation titled *Da Jiangjun Kou Liulan* 大将军寇流兰 [*The Great General*

16 November 2014].

³⁶³ The quotation is from *The Tragedy of Coriolanus*, 3.2.13-14.

³⁶⁴ Despite the popularity of this Shakespearean play among Western critics, there have been very few papers written on it in China until recent years. Fang Ping in ‘The Double Banishment of Marcius,’ from the perspective of class conflicts, attributes the tragedy of the heroic Marcius to his class-prejudiced pride and his extreme individualism, which respectively causes his corporal exile from Rome and spiritual exile from family. However, it is debatable when he insists that the playwright is critical of the representation of nobles while sympathetic with the common people. Zhang Chong in ‘Coriolanus: A Political Metaphor of Democracy,’ agrees with critics who categorize this last Roman play of Shakespeare’s as a tragedy of a flawed protagonist: extremely proud and easily irritated. Zhang lays much emphasis on the roles of the two tribunes whose manipulation of the commonalty reflects the alienation of democracy and he demonstrates how they form the direct and important external cause of Coriolanus’s tragedy. With an attempt to avoid class prejudices in the analysis of the character, Mo Yunping tries to make ‘An Interpretation of Values in Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus*.’ According to the author, the conflicts between Coriolanus and the citizens are due to their different philosophies of value, a superior one as against an inferior one. Assuming Coriolanus’s morality as independent of, if not superior to, the Roman society, Mo has mystified the hero so as to solve the fundamental problem between the two parties.

Coriolanus] by the Beijing People’s Art Theatre [BPAT]’s director Lin Zhaohua, as part of the modern Chinese drama centenary celebration). Supported by the Ministry of Culture of the PRC, *Coriolanus* was performed on the 20th and 21st of August in the Edinburgh Playhouse as part of the 2013 Edinburgh International Festival.³⁶⁵ What is attractive and modern is that two heavy metal bands—*Zhixi* 窒息 (Suffocated) and *Tongyang* 痛仰 (Miserable Faith) — are integrated into the performance. The production at Beijing and Edinburgh is not just about a Chinese director and a group of Chinese actors celebrating a particular love of Shakespeare. As an intercultural adaptation, it is about bridging cultures through mutual identification. For instance, the huge crowd scenes in *Coriolanus* are something with which many Chinese people would identify. The idea of a noble hero and the sacrifices of the individual for the betterment of a society are familiar to the Chinese audience, since there are many analogous figures in Chinese history. In addition, the motif of a dominant mother and her obedient son is also very Chinese, because in Chinese culture, filial duty is so important and audiences would certainly relate to Coriolanus’ devotion to his mother—the only person who appears to have any real influence upon his decisions. In spite of the affinities, the elitism of Coriolanus and Volumnia, and the view of the masses as ignorant, selfish, corrupt, and easily manipulated are contrary to Mainland China’s political ideology. What in *Coriolanus* attracted the director Lin was the alienated relations between the hero and the common citizens, which led to his downfall. Lin said to Andrew Dickson of *The Guardian* in an interview, ‘In ancient Rome, people admired heroes. From my point of view, Coriolanus is a hero.’³⁶⁶ The director had no purpose of pushing the common people onto the centre stage, as Bertolt Brecht did in the 1950s. What the production focused on was its tragic personae. The Chinese title of the production “Da Jiangjun Kou Liulan”, literally meaning “The Great General Coriolanus”, refers to the Roman hero and conveys respect for the protagonist. Although it was set in ancient Rome, Lin agreed with Dickson that the play has a resonance with contemporary China, ‘It is a good phenomenon if the play refers to current events. Those in power like to control citizens, and some common citizens are foolish.’³⁶⁷

The director Lin Zhaohua, who has formerly adapted *Hamlet* (1989) and

³⁶⁵ Programme notes.

³⁶⁶ Andrew Dickson, ‘Guitar hero: Coriolanus goes rock’, *The Guardian*, 6 August 2013.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

Richard III (2001), has a great standing in the history of Chinese spoken drama. Although he does not like his *huaju* productions to be labelled avant-garde, he has remained in the field of experimental drama since the early 1980s.³⁶⁸ Lin is a complex case, because the 78-year-old is often described as China's most controversial theatre director. Having been at the vanguard of innovative Chinese drama for four decades, Lin has directed an extraordinary body of work, flitting between spoken drama, stylised Peking Opera and reworkings of Western classics.³⁶⁹ Lin was born in Tianjin in 1936. He graduated from the Central Academy of Drama in 1961, and joined the Beijing People's Art Theatre as an actor, before finding his career stalled by the Cultural Revolution. With the end of the Cultural Revolution and the reinstatement of *huaju* at Beijing People's Art Theatre, Lin began to steer his career toward directing. He later teamed up with the playwright and novelist Gao Xingjian, who received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2000, for a trio of plays that began in 1982 with *Absolute Signal*.³⁷⁰ This marked the dawn of experimental theatre in China with Lin's trademark mix of confrontationalism and absurdism, a form that in itself was deeply politically subversive in its rejection of socialist realism, and as a result they faced official criticism and some of their works were banned by the Chinese government.³⁷¹

³⁶⁸ 王翠艳, 邹红, '林兆华: 在沉郁冷静中打造实验话剧的理性品格', *中国实验话剧*, 编辑 张仲年 (上海: 上海人民出版社, 2009) [Wang, Cuiyan and Zou Hong, 'Lin Zhaohua: Forging the Ideal Personality of Experimental Drama in Calm and Peace', in *Chinese Experimental Drama*, ed. by Zhang Zhongnian (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press, 2009)], p. 236.

³⁶⁹ Lin Zhaohua's major *huaju* productions include *Weddings and Funerals*, *Nirvana of Gou'erye*, *Bird People*, *Ruan Lingyu*, *Antiques*, *Tea House*, *Frameless Wind and Moon*, *Beijingers*, *Hamlet*, *The Orphan of the Zhao Family*, *Faust*, *Chess People*, *Three Sisters Waiting for Godot* and *Richard III*. His *jinju* (Peking Opera) works include *Turandot* and *The Humpbacked Prime Minister Liu*.

³⁷⁰ *Absolute Signal* (1982), written by Gao Xingjian, directed by Lin Zhaohua, is generally regarded as the first little theatre production in China, which was staged in a banquet room in the Capital Theatre, BPAT's home theatre. With simple platforms, railings, chairs and a few lights, the play tells the story of thwarted robbery of night freight train. It takes place in the conductor's car between an old conductor, his assistant, an under employed young man, his girlfriend and the young man's gangster boss. The immediacy and unpretentiousness of presentation supported a non-linear structure with multiple flashbacks and out of sequence monologues and dialogues that were from time to time lit only with flashlights. The play ran 159 performances and widely copied throughout the nation. See Kevin J. Wetmore, Jr., Siyuan Liu and Erin B., *Modern Asian Theatre and Performance 1900-2000*.

³⁷¹ Lin Zhaohua directed three of Gao Xingjian's major plays between 1983 and 1986. Heavily influenced by Beckett, their *Bus Stop* (1984) was banned after ten performances and declared 'seriously flawed' by the censoring authority. The two collaborators were often criticized as 'harbingers of strangeness' and 'rebels against orthodoxy'. 胡伟民, '林兆华的意义', *林兆华导演艺术* (哈尔滨: 北方文艺出版社, 1992), p.157-61. [Hu Weimin, 'The Significance of Lin Zhaohua', in *Lin Zhaohua's Art of Direction*, ed. by Lin Kehuan (Harbin: Northern Literature and Art Press, 1992), p.157-61; Yan Haiping, ed. *Theatre and Society: An Anthology of Contemporary*

Lin as a director has always done things his own way. He is celebrated for his endeavours in foraying the West for artistic inspiration and sources to refashion Chinese theatre, thereby creating a unique interculturalism that differs from Western conceptions of performance *hybridites*. His style is often considered an eclectic synthesis of abstraction and realism, combining Stanislavskian systems relating to the building of character, modern improvisation techniques and narrative acting styles drawn from Chinese theatre. As the very first man to initiate small-theatre modern drama and the Modernist movement in China, Lin's style has been identified as avant-garde and experimental, but Lin himself denies that his works have any particular style, advocating instead an organic and dynamic style-forming process that is the direct result of the nature of each individual play. He proclaims in an interview:

I have no style, no, not at all. Every drama has its own unique style. I think a director does not work for his or her own style, but for the drama itself. He or she will just represent what he or she has felt. I believe in and respect my own feelings, and at the same time, I hope I will have new experiences. That is my production logic.³⁷²

Among Lin's reworkings of Western classics, his *Hamlet* (1989) is considered as the most radical experiment with Shakespeare.³⁷³ Performed in a rehearsal room of the BPAT, Lin's production featured three performers, including Pu Cunxin, dressed in their own daily clothes and performing in a space bare except for a barber's chair. The most controversial device introduced by Lin in this production was that he made the three actors share the roles of Hamlet, Claudius and Polonius, and switch their parts during the performance. At certain points, for example, the two actors who predominantly played Hamlet and Claudius interchanged roles. At another moment, the actor playing Polonius became Hamlet. The 'To Be or Not to Be' soliloquy was shared by all three actors. The purpose of this was to blur the moral opposites in apparently opposed character roles, suggesting that the characters all shared elements of good and evil, honesty and falsehood. In this way, Lin presented a lonely Hamlet

Chinese Drama (London: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), xvi.

³⁷² Lin Zhaohua: *A Wanderer between the Worlds of Avant-Garde and Realism* (2014), <http://www1.chinaculture.org/library/2008-01/17/content_70443.htm> [accessed on 9 August 2014].

³⁷³ Li Ruru, *Shashibiya: Staging Shakespeare in China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003)

as ‘every one of us.’³⁷⁴ Depending on your perspective, it captured either capitalist alienation, or the disillusion that followed the collapse of the student protests at Tiananmen Square in 1989.³⁷⁵ The parallels were cloudy—theatrical censorship is vigorously alive in the PRC—but there to be seen. While many found Lin’s directorial innovations difficult to understand and argued that these performances failed to communicate effectively with audiences, some critics praised his work as the model for the future development of the *huaju* form.

While much philological criticism of *Coriolanus* centres on either the concept of democracy and its insinuation, or the vicious conflicts between the protagonist and common citizens, I intend to argue that Lin’s adaptation instead explores the tragic existence of individuality in modern society, in which many individuals strive in vain for recognition of the independent self. The tragedy of the Roman hero embodies a modern tragedy of individuals whose idea of freedom is forever deferred in reality. It mirrors the dilemma of any individual who presumes to be the ‘author of himself’ (5.3.36) regardless of social forces beyond his (or her) control. Local audiences find themselves sympathetic to and they identify with the protagonist who speaks their tongue in a setting familiar to their everyday life. Through localisation, the “Self” of Shakespeare’s eponymous protagonist acquires layers of new meanings. First, he represents the modern individual as a whole, for whom the tragic experience of *Coriolanus* inevitably becomes their own. Second, it is a deliberate manifestation of the “Self” of the director. Through the production, the director expressed his own perspectives of politics and aesthetics, making Shakespeare our contemporary and speaking for our own times.

3.2.1 The Shifting Politics

Known as Shakespeare’s most political play, *Coriolanus*, like the Chinese historical play *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office* emerging in mid-twentieth century China,³⁷⁶ is always politically sensitive and has strong echoes of contemporary

³⁷⁴ Li Ruru, *Shashibiya*, p.89.

³⁷⁵ Li Ruru, *Shashibiya*, chapter 3.

³⁷⁶ Hai Rui (1514–87) was a Chinese official of the Ming Dynasty. In China he has been remembered as a model of honesty and integrity in office. A play based on his career, *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*, gained political importance in the 1960s, during the Cultural Revolution. An article entitled ‘Hai Rui Dismissed from Office’, was written by Communist Party official Wu Han in 1959 and later made into a Peking Opera play. Wu’s play was interpreted by the Gang of Four member Yao Wen Yuan as an allegorical work, in which the honest moral official Hai Rui representing the disgraced communist marshal Peng Dehuai, who was purged by Mao after criticizing the Great Leap Forward. According to Yao, the corrupt emperor in Wu’s play represented Mao Zedong. On

society. At its core are the questions of authority, democratic franchise, freedom and submission that are of eternal relevance to the discussion of political ideals. The play's themes of popular discontent with government are dangerously contemporary, and it was briefly banned in France in the 1930s because of what was seen as fascist elements in the text. In Communist China, one suspects the resonances of the play can easily become explicit. Lin, however, has claimed not to be interested in politics or applying any particular agenda to his production. Lin contends,

我有一个挺简单的信条，就是人想什么就一个一个地做去吧！你不可能影响政治，你也不可能用你这个东西来影响戏剧界，不可能也用不着。³⁷⁷

(I have a rather simple motto, that is, to do whatever project you want one by one. You cannot exert an influence on politics, and you cannot have a hold on the circle of theatre with your plays, either. It is neither possible nor necessary.)

Lin prefers to embody his innermost personal world and aesthetics via various theatrical methods rather than to attempt to reflect political problems. Yet *Coriolanus* is an interesting choice for a director who repeatedly insists that he is not political, especially if viewed as part of the triptych of his other Shakespeare appropriations, his *Hamlet* (1989), and *Richard III* (2001). As scholars Li Ruru and Alexa [formerly Alex] Huang have explored in relation to Shakespeare in Mainland China, and Dennis Kennedy has explored in relation to political Shakespeare behind the Iron Curtain,³⁷⁸ sometimes simply the act of putting on a particular play is the political comment and metaphor.

The main vehicle for the play's political theme is the bitter conflict between the plebeians of Rome and the city's greatest general, Caius Martius, later Coriolanus. Shakespeare draws on Thomas North's 1579 translation of Plutarch's (*ca.*46-120 BC.)

November 10, 1965, an article in a prominent Shanghai newspaper, '评新编历史剧《海瑞罢官》' [A Criticism of the Historical Drama "Hai Rui Dismissed From Office"], written by Yao, began a propaganda campaign that eventually led to the Cultural Revolution. Yao's campaign led to the persecution and death of Wu Han.

³⁷⁷ 吴文光, 长篇访谈: 戏剧大师林兆华的创作生涯 [Wu Wenguang, *Long Interview: The Creating Career of Great Director Lin Zhaohua*] (2011), < <http://ent.sina.com.cn/v/33920.html> > [accessed on 19 June 2014].

³⁷⁸ Li Ruru, *Shashibiya: Staging Shakespeare in China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003); Alexander C. Y. Huang, *Chinese Shakespeares: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009); Dennis Kennedy, ed. *Foreign Shakespeare: Contemporary Performance* (Cambridge, New York, Victoria: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans for both historical detail and literary tropes.³⁷⁹ According to Plutarch, the plebeians revolted because the moneyed patricians had promised easier terms on loans if the plebeians would agree to fight the nearby Sabines. After the plebeians acquitted themselves bravely in battle, the patricians reneged on the agreement and sold into slavery those debtors—many of them war veterans—who were bankrupted by high interest rates. Shakespeare translates these Roman class conflicts into terms more immediate for his contemporaries: in Shakespeare’s text, the people riot because they are hungry. There is a shortage of grain, and the starving plebeians rise in open revolt against the patricians who store grain for themselves. The rebellion is suppressed only when the plebeians are granted five tribunes to represent them in the Senate. Marxist historicist critics have argued that this is a contemporary reference to the Midland Revolt of 1607, where the rural poor in the Midland counties west of London rioted against the enclosure of common lands. In May 1607, ‘a great number of common persons’—up to five thousand, Stow tells us in his *Annales*—assembled in various Midlands counties, including Shakespeare’s own county of Warwickshire, to protest the acceleration of enclosures and the resulting food shortages.³⁸⁰

Fascinated by its politics, German playwright Bertolt Brecht wrestled with an attempt to adapt *Coriolanus* for two years, from 1951 to 1953.³⁸¹ Sceptical of heroism, Brecht rewrote the play, turning it into ‘the tragedy of a people that has a hero against it.’³⁸² Brecht’s aim was to rescue the play from various fascist

³⁷⁹ Lee Bliss, ed. *Coriolanus*, The New Cambridge Shakespeare, updated edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 10.

³⁸⁰ John Stow, *Annales* (London, 1631), p. 890. See Sidney Shanker, ‘Some Clues for *Coriolanus*’, *Shakespeare Association Bulletin*, 24 (1949), 209-13; E.C. Pettet, ‘*Coriolanus* and the Midlands Insurrection of 1607’, *Shakespeare Survey*, 3 (1950), 34-42; and Brents Stirling, *The Populace in Shakespeare* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), pp. 126-28, for discussions of this uprising and its political consequences in the play.

³⁸¹ Brecht discusses his development of the original and his ideas for its staging in an essay entitled ‘Study of the First Scene of Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus*’, which is written in the form of a dialogue with his collaborators at the Berliner Ensemble theatre company. The play was first staged by Heinrich Koch at the Frankfurt Schauspielhaus theatre, where it opened on 22 September 1962. It was later staged by the Berliner Ensemble in September 1964. The play was published in an English translation by Ralph Manheim in volume nine of Brecht’s *Collected Plays*. See John Willett, *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht: A Study from Eight Aspects* (London: Methuen, 1959), p.63; Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. by John Willett, British edition (London: Methuen, 1964), pp. 252-265; Ralph Manheim and John Willett, eds. *Collected Plays: Nine*, by Bertolt Brecht, Bertolt Brecht: Plays, Poetry, Prose Ser. (New York: Vintage, 1972)

³⁸² Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, pp. 253, 258; Margot Heinemann, ‘How Brecht Read Shakespeare’, *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism*, eds. by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), p.221.

interpretations that had arisen in the 1930s.³⁸³ In Brecht's view, the conventional way of focussing upon the psychological torment and martial *puissance* of the hero led to an over-romanticizing, an exaggerated stress on audience identification with the main protagonist, and a resulting lack of critical detachment. From a political point of view (façism), this in turn had dangerous affinities with the cult of hero worship and led in the direction of totalitarianism. Therefore, in Brecht's version, the emphasis goes to the working class rather than the individual, and what is important is the collective dilemma—tragedy of the people confronted with a destructive bourgeois hero.

Does Brecht's Marxist interpretation still hold water in China today where one finds little difference from the rest of the modern, global, capitalist world? What parallels can be drawn between Shakespeare's Rome and contemporary China? A reviewer of the performance at the 2013 Edinburgh International Festival found that there were 'echoes of the Cultural Revolution in this Chinese company's Shakespeare.'³⁸⁴ The programme notes for the Edinburgh run told audiences that the translator Ying Ruocheng's and the director Lin Zhaohua's shared interest in this play, about a leader devoured by the masses he arrogantly believes he is leading, could be attributed to their own experiences in the Cultural Revolution—during which numerous short-lived demagogues from different factions were destroyed. The patrician ruling class both courts and despises volatile masses prone in their turn equally to street celebration and angry violence. The production thus emphasized the rise and fall of demagogues. While some spectators readily identified the tribunes with wretched and meddling functionaries in work clothes, the older generation saw in their diction and demeanour unmistakable references to the radical Revolutionary Committee members during the Cultural Revolution.

³⁸³ *Coriolanus* had been banned for the fascistic interpretations in France in the 1930s, and then by the American occupying forces in Germany in the immediate aftermath of the war, while in Hitler's Germany, the play served as educational propaganda preaching military bravery and heroism in the face of questionable democracy.

³⁸⁴ Martin Hoylewith, *The Tragedy of Coriolanus, Edinburgh Playhouse—review* (2013), <<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/d560115c-0a4f-11e3-9cec-00144feabdc0.html#axzz31KEn3SsO>> [accessed on 23 May 2014].



Figure 7 *The Tragedy of Coriolanus* by the Beijing People's Art Theatre, Edinburgh International Festival 2013.

The production opened with the hungry plebeians ‘with staves, clubs, and other weapons’ (1.1.1) rising up against the Roman patricians for the mounting price of grain. In the performances in China, Lin recruited a hundred migrant workers, including plasterers, cooks, guards, and so on, to play the plebeians, clearly placing Roman history in the context of China today. The migrant workers, wearing sackcloth tunics that could barely cover their work clothes, struck audiences as ‘the most authentic “people”, their shy, embarrassed, flabbergasted expressions not meant to be dramatic [...] these non-professionals stand for commonality not to be ignored’.³⁸⁵ The hybridity of classic and modern struck the audience immediately as the rioting Roman plebeians were accompanied by three guitarists rocking and rolling onto the stage (See Figure 7). The guitar players, who were members of two heavy metal bands, stood out of the enacted Roman commonalty with their T-shirts, long hair and black clothing. In spite of the perceivable discrepancy between them and the rest of the cast, they made an indispensable part of the performance. The noisy music was not only a signification of rebellion, but also a symbolic voice of the angry crowds. With the first citizen asking to make an announcement, the performance of the three guitarists ended. ‘You are all resolved [rather] to die than to famish?’ (1.1.3), the first

³⁸⁵ Liu Yan, *China News Weekly*, 45 (2007).

citizen passionately proclaimed. The angry citizens then accused the elite of profiting from war, and denying them bread, while an old patrician Menenius Agrippa spoke in support of the patricians and sought to disarm the mob. Into this confrontation, strided the arrogant martial hero Caius Martius (Pu Cunxin). The conflict between the plebeians and Caius Martius started from his first entrance, where he greeted the plebeians as ‘dissentious rogues, / That rubbing the poor itch of your opinion / Make yourselves scabs’ (1.1.164-66). Lin’s choreography of the confrontation manifested tension between the two parties. With Coriolanus entering from the back stairs, the Roman citizens, who previously occupied the main stage, moved to the right side of the edge, leaving room for Coriolanus and Menenius to stand on stage left. Coriolanus approached the plebeians repeatedly, showering them with many of his curses. He scorned the people’s grievances and declared his readiness to use his sword against them. He accused the people of being cowardly worthless scum and fickle in their loyalty to their betters.

What would you have, you curs,
That like nor peace nor war? The one affrights you,
The other makes you proud. (1.1.157-59)

His loyal friend Menenius retired from his former mission of appeasing the mutinous members and in response to his angry speech added force to his charge. As spatial relations among characters corresponded to a material hierarchicization,³⁸⁶ the space separation between different characters structured conflicts between them. The opening scene made conspicuous the conflicting relationship between Coriolanus and the common people. The latter called Coriolanus the ‘chief enemy to the people’ (1.1.5-6), thought it a threat for their life to have Coriolanus in their country and resolved to get rid of him. Although they recognized his merit on wars, they could not bear his pride any longer and displayed contempt for them. Lin’s protagonist stood aloof against the citizens, which showed his alienation and foretold his downfall. Dramatic tension was sustained as to what would become of this riot and how the avant-garde application of band music by the director would fit into the performance.

In presenting the confrontation between the citizens and Coriolanus, it was

³⁸⁶ Anne Ubersfeld, *Reading Theatre*, trans. by Frank Collins (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), p.104.

perhaps not difficult for the Chinese migrant workers to play the plebeians of Rome en masse, as they were presenting their own identities on the Chinese stage, in other words, playing the men they were. Like the seventeenth century England, in today's rural urbanization in China, millions of farm labourers have been forced off their farms, flooding into cities and becoming the so-called migrant workers. They make a living in the cities by working long hours but getting low wages. By the end of 2010, the population of migrant workers had risen to 260 million.³⁸⁷ A new industrial working class, transformed from agrarian labourers, has therefore come into being in Chinese society. This rapid and significant change in the social structure urges the government to adjust social policies in a timely and responsive manner.

The electrifying crowd scenes played by migrant workers in Beijing, however, became *limp* in some critics' eyes in the performances in Edinburgh. Due to financial considerations, it was obviously impossible for the director to transport so many migrant workers abroad to play the extras. The mob was instead acted by thirty Chinese students temporarily recruited from the University of Edinburgh, mostly young, middle class looking boys and girls with shiny hair. They resembled overseas students rather than democracy protesters, or rioting peasants. With one hour's training and just one rehearsal, these locally recruited extras were actually good in the circumstances, even if they were not very menacing. Moreover, the stage of the Edinburgh Playhouse is tiny and there is not enough space at the two wings. That is why there were only 30 of them, not 100 as when they performed in Beijing. The difference between the two sources of extras for the crowd scenes is, however, a sign of the distinction between social classes in contemporary Chinese society that the director found difficult to replicate in the UK. Nowadays, more and more urban middle-class families are sending their children abroad for university or even high-school education, which is obviously not affordable to the large rural population and the newly born migrant worker class in China.

Critics such as Tom Sutcliffe and Lyn Gardner, coming from their British culture, struggled to see the politics in the Chinese *Coriolanus*. Gardner's review for *The Guardian* said,

This production remains mysteriously opaque, offering empty spectacle in

³⁸⁷ Zhang Yi, 'New changes in China's social class structure', *People's Daily Online* (2012), <<http://english.people.com.cn/102780/7750165.html>> [accessed on 13 September 2014].

the place of nuanced political comment and metaphor. Unlike the Shakespeare that came out of Romania and Poland during their communist eras, it seems determined to offer no comment upon the society that spawned it.³⁸⁸

I understand why Gardner, as a British critic and someone from the *free world* feels that the political side was sidestepped, but this kind of comment was simply, as the saying goes, ‘putting yourself in other people’s shoes when judging them’. Yes, in an ideal world, a world of no political persecution, we would all love to use the right of free speech and express our minds in various art forms. However, in China’s past and present, there are too many horrible stories about what happened to people who dared to utter one word of disagreement, even just some insinuation. While Gardner dismissed the Chinese *Coriolanus* as ‘offering empty spectacle in the place of nuanced political comment and metaphor’, I would like to say that choosing to stage this play is one brave act itself. If one wants to say something in relation to Chinese politics, he or she should get to know China better. What if Gardner had read about the original production in Beijing? In an interview in 2011 Lin had said, ‘In *Coriolanus*, I cast real *min gong* 民工 [migrant farm labourers] to express my ideas about society—it was my way to express who are the real heroes. New China was built with their hands.’³⁸⁹ The Roman plebeians presented by Chinese migrant workers stand for the masses in China who are both the real heroes of history and victims of injustice in the society. ‘These non-professionals stand for commonality not to be ignored.’³⁹⁰ When the citizens onstage discussed whether the herd, the populace, should have any rights at all, the director let the play speak for itself, but the Chinese audience would immediately find resonance with their own life. Therefore, it is more about the politics in contemporary China than Shakespeare’s Rome. The play thus serves as a way for the director to express his deep concern about the society and to provoke empathy from the audience.

Lin’s casting real migrant workers as the plebeians was innovative, but he could have done better if he had cast the same kind of people rather than the professional actors as the First Citizen, Second Citizen and Third Citizen, etc. and had he let them

³⁸⁸ Lyn Gardner, ‘The Tragedy of Coriolanus—Edinburgh festival 2013 review’, in *The Guardian* <<http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2013/aug/21/the-tragedy-of-coriolanus-review>> [accessed on 9 November 2014].

³⁸⁹ See Saffron Walkling, *Chinese Coriolanus at the Edinburgh Festival: Play out of Context?* (2013), <<http://saffronatstudy.wordpress.com/2013/08/28/chinese-coriolanus-at-the-edinburgh-festival-play-out-of-context/>> [accessed on 11 August 2014].

³⁹⁰ Liu Yan, *China News Weekly*, 45 (2007).

speak the lines in various dialects from their hometowns in China. I feel it is a pity that the migrant workers did not speak a line at all throughout the performance. They were acting the Roman civilians, and like the rural Elizabethan peasants who had been deprived of land by the enclosure movement and had had now to enter the cities to work, they themselves had a similar experience in China. However, they had no chance to say so. They were not permitted to have their dialect voices on stage, just as such voices have always been silenced in history.

Critics' and audiences' praises of Lin's production, which culminated in a controversial tycoon as the lifelikeness of Coriolanus, were often made at the expense of the more Marxist, Brechtian interpretation. Ye Tingfang, an academic associated with the Beijing theatre scene and a follower of Lin, did compare the production to Brecht's adaptation of the play; but concluded that, unlike Lin, Brecht had been misled by ideology and class bias. This anti-Brechtian argument is typical of current intercultural discourse in China, in this case assuming that Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* personifies 'individual dignity, which he defends at the expense of justice'.³⁹¹ The people are blind to the greatness of this warrior, Ye Tingfang held, and therefore Coriolanus is exiled for a 'mere flaw in his style of thinking'—and thus relieved of any obligation to a 'motherland for which he shed blood but which belongs to him no more'. Supporters of this interpretation feel that Shakespeare's play is a fable that carries a cautionary tale about the future of democracy in China, or a critique of the 'people idolatry' that could lead to 'the dictatorial oppression of the intellectual elite by the masses'.³⁹²

The Brechtian tradition, as interpreted on stage and in print by Erich Engel, Herbert Ihering, Manfred Wekwerth, and others, sees the character Coriolanus as the symbol of an *ancien regime*, a destructive hero, a representative of the elite social group, while the plebeians are the ur-proletarians capable of running the affairs of the state once mobilized by their tribunes.³⁹³ By contrast, Lin seemed to rehabilitate what Brecht had tried to relegate to the dustbin of history, a romanticized view of Coriolanus as some kind of saviour. With Brecht, Coriolanus is a destructive hero; with Lin it is the people who are destructive. If Brecht's reassembling of

³⁹¹ Ye Tingfang, 'Attraction of Paradox: about *Great General Kou Liulan*', in *Journal of the Beijing People's Art Theatre*, 1 (2008).

³⁹² Li Jing, 'Grand General Coriolanus, or "an anti-democratic" tragedy', *New Beijing Daily*, 16 April 2008.

³⁹³ See Wilhelm Hortmann, *Shakespeare on the German Stage: the twentieth century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), chapter 7.

Shakespeare was intended to reveal the events behind the events, Lin used drastic measures to strike a pose without any consistent dialectical discourse—perhaps out of fear of association with that now-most-dangerous word in China: ideology.

Migrant workers from the countryside, the most exploited and lowest paid people in China, were presented as Shakespeare's plebeians, but who were the equivalent of the patricians? While neither the artists of the production nor its defenders were themselves capitalists, compradors, or descendants of communist or nationalist dignitaries, their allegiance clearly lay with a patrician view of culture. A writer in the *New Beijing Daily* made clear his approval of Lin's approach:

Ever since the Enlightenment the struggle between the 'cultural Coriolanus' and 'cultural plebeians' has been escalating [...] The corrosive power of cultural plebeianism is turning into a calamity for civilization. [Plebeian politics] proposes that all literary and artistic works are products of class, gender, race, and national interests and that therefore the pinnacle of human civilization [...] should be topped [...]. This is the logic of the cultural plebeians. And this logic has run wild in cultural and ideological fields from the West to China, threatening creativity.³⁹⁴

In China today, practitioners of pure art profess to be independent from everything they place under the rubric of politics. However, this loudly expressed desire for freedom from a defunct ideology is just a facile ploy to cover their inability to commit to any cause, or to make any intellectual impact. To compensate for an ineffectuality of mind, they emphasize aesthetic appeal.

3.2.2 *Mise en scène*

In the following section, my analysis will focus on the *mise en scène* of Lin's *Coriolanus*, which includes stage design, acting, sound and various other elements in connection with the performance. While the Chinese *Coriolanus* is a conventional interpretation in the eyes of many Western critics, its *mise-en-scène* has been influenced by traditional Chinese theatre, which did not come across adequately to the Western audience. A study of Lin's *mise-en-scène* can help to answer some important questions: How do Western and Chinese performing cultures interact on the stage of *huaju* (spoken drama)—a theatre introduced from the West? How can a Chinese adaptation of the Shakespearean play distinguish itself from Western performances? How do the various aesthetic elements in Lin's production help to

³⁹⁴ Li Jing, 'Grand General Coriolanus, or "an anti-democratic" tragedy', *New Beijing Daily*, 16 April 2008.

define the identity of the protagonist?

3.2.2.1 Simplicity of the Stage

With white lighting, a bare stage stretched all the way to the brick walls at the rear, beside which leaned several scattered ladders. The climbing up and falling of men at the backdrop enacted an imagination of soldiers launching attacks onto the city wall. Designed by Yi Liming, the stage presenting the Roman tragedy was very simple. The design had absorbed not only Western aesthetics, but also the essence of traditional Chinese theatre, specifically the assumptive nature of the stage. In traditional Chinese theatre, as well as in Western spoken drama, actors are the emphasized centre of the stage, whose performance should be integrated with setting and music. Jerzy Grotowski defines the theatre as: ‘what takes place between spectator and actor’, so that ‘all the other things are supplementary—perhaps necessary, but nevertheless supplementary’.³⁹⁵ Peter Brook also defines theatre as the interaction between actor and spectator: ‘I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across his empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged’.³⁹⁶ He further develops his idea in *The Open Door: Thoughts on Acting and Theatre* and puts forward the notion that if a theatre director wants to compete with a film director he has to adopt empty space instead of a realist setting.³⁹⁷ Lin’s simple stage, in a way, bears resemblance with Grotowski’s ‘poor theatre’ or Peter Brook’s ‘empty space,’ whose stage, unlike the realistic stage, which attempts to create an illusion of life, is often bare of decorations. However, the idea of Yi Liming’s design, I believe, did not derive from Grotowski or Peter Brook, but from the tradition of Chinese theatre. With the conventions of Chinese theatre in mind, we can imagine a performance of Beijing Opera in the mid-nineteenth century. The actor stood alone on a bare platform stage. Although elaborate scenery was in use throughout European and American theatres at this time, in the Beijing Opera there were no clever scenic elements to capture the audience’s imagination, no special lighting effects to focus their attention. The actor had to use his own resources to create everything that the audience would see. For

³⁹⁵ Jerzy Grotowski, ‘The Theatre’s New Testament’, in *Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greek to Grotowski*, ed. by Bernard F. Dukore (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc., 1974), pp. 978-96 (p.982).

³⁹⁶ Brook, Peter, *The Empty Space* (New York: Simon&Schuster Inc., 1968), p.7.

³⁹⁷ 彼得·布鲁克, *敞开的门: 谈表演和戏剧*, 于东田译 (北京: 北京新星出版社, 2007) [Peter Brook, *The Open Door: Thoughts on Acting and Theatre*, trans. by Yu Dongtian (Beijing: Beijing New Star Publishing House, 2007)], p.39.

this, the actor was singularly well prepared. With a few steps, he crossed an invisible threshold and entered a new room or building. With a flick of his whip, he rode a non-existent horse; with a swaying motion, he was carried down the river in an imaginary boat. There were few stage properties. A few basic pieces of furniture were all that helped designate location. A table and two chairs in different configurations changed the scene from a palace to a law court to a bedroom or indicated a wall, a bridge, or a mountain. A stagehand whose invisibility was an accepted convention of the Chinese theatre appeared as needed to reposition the furniture or to add or remove the few additional props that gave further definition to the changing space. The flexible approach to staging meant that performances could easily accommodate multiple locations and shifting conditions, such as time of day and weather. This style of performance emphasized the bond between the actor's skill and the audience's imagination. It also depended heavily, as so many performance traditions do, on a body of theatrical conventions accepted and understood by all participants in the dramatic event.

For *Coriolanus*, Yi divided the stage space into three parts: the apron stage, the centre and the back stairs. On the apron stage (see Figure 8), there was a long wooden table with seven chairs behind and two on both sides, all facing the audience. This arrangement was adopted twice to set the capitol of either Rome or Volscie. When the table and chairs lowered and became invisible to the audience, the apron stage joined the main stage and the spot before it then turned into a battlefield to hide the Roman soldiers. Above the centre stage, a five-column movable frame could rise up to symbolise either the city wall of Corioles or the Roman capitol in the scene of Coriolanus's triumphant return. On the back stage, there were several ladders leaning against the backdrop, suggesting the inside of Corioles or the market place where citizens gather. Apart from the angelic statues in the prologue, stage properties included a cushion for the domestic scene, two movable bandstands, microphones, long sticks held by the citizens and a rolled-up paper as the contract of peace for the last scene. Lin's simple stage, similar to the empty stage of traditional Chinese theatre, ensured flexibility in narration. It projected an ensemble of theatrical codes, open to interpretation. The stage space was at the same time the icon of a given social or socio-cultural space and a set of signs aesthetically constructed in the

manner of abstract painting.³⁹⁸ While leaving room for the audience to reflect upon what they perceived, the assumptive nature of Lin's stage produced spatial metaphors to serve the purposes of his adaptation.



Figure 8 The Apron Stage in *The Tragedy of Coriolanus*, dir. by Lin Zhaohua, Edinburgh International Festival 2013.

3.2.2.2 Estrangement Effect in Acting

In the Chinese *Coriolanus*, instead of creating the illusion of the war scene, Lin chose to demonstrate it by means of the Brechtian estrangement effect. The estrangement effect (German: *Verfremdungseffekt*, or simply V-effect), more commonly known (earlier) through John Willett's 1964 translation as 'the alienation effect', is a performing arts concept developed by Bertolt Brecht. To alienate an event or character, in Brecht's view, means to strip the event of its self-evident, familiar, obvious quality and create instead a sense of astonishment and curiosity about events, so as to show at once their present contradictory nature and their historical cause or social motivation.³⁹⁹ Brecht, as early as 1929, was saying that he wanted a style of acting that would prevent a theatre audience from plunging into

³⁹⁸ Ubersfeld, p.101.

³⁹⁹ Peter Brooker, 'Key Words in Brecht's Theory and Practice of Theatre', in *The Cambridge Companion to Brecht*, eds. by Peter Thomson and Glendyr Sacks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 209-24 (p.215).

‘self-identification with the protagonist’s feelings’.⁴⁰⁰ Such self-identification could best be prevented, he later claimed (in about 1936), by having the actors in his epic theatre ‘refrain from going over wholly into their role, [by] remaining detached from the character they were playing and [thus] clearly inviting criticism of [them]’.⁴⁰¹ Such detachment and distancing, Brecht was quick to insist, had long been a feature of certain traditional theatres. In 1935, Brecht saw a Peking Opera performance in Moscow by famous female impersonator Mei Lanfang (1894-1961), and ultimately confirmed the realization of his theories of *Verfremdungseffekt* taking the example of Chinese performance art. In a famous essay on ‘Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting’ published in 1936, he described the effect as ‘playing in such a way that the audience was hindered from simply identifying itself with the characters in the play. Acceptance or rejection of their actions and utterances was meant to take place on a conscious plane, instead of, as hitherto, in the audience’s subconscious.’⁴⁰² Thus, the Brechtian theory of *Verfremdungseffekt* owes much to *xiqu* 戏曲 (Chinese opera), to which Lin Zhaohua has also paid tribute. For Brecht, Chinese opera seemed so unrealistic that he assumed that both the actor and the audience were distanced from emotional involvement and freed for critical, rational analysis (his major interest). However, what seemed strange and unemotional to Brecht was moving and believable to the Chinese. Many Chinese theatre artists and theorists advocate a frontal, presentational acting style, episodic structure, the dialectical juxtaposition of disparate ideas and elements, and a clear awareness of theatre as theatre (manifest in such strategies as stylised gestures, mime, on stage musicians, direct address to the audience, song). Highly influenced by the theatrical traditions of *xiqu*, Lin Zhaohua required actors in *Coriolanus* to ‘be’ the characters they play and at the same time to keep a distance from them.⁴⁰³ While seeing the performance, audiences could obviously notice traces of the characters’ acting. In the battle scene at the city of Corioles, Coriolanus delivered his encouragement or rather his threats to his Roman soldiers in a carelessly detached manner. He calmly watched his soldiers rushing into the battlefield and stood with his back to them. Likewise, his counterpart, the Roman

⁴⁰⁰ Bertolt Brecht, ‘Über Schauspielkunst’, in *Brecht on Theatre*, ed. by John Willett, 2nd edition (New York and London, 1974), p.28.

⁴⁰¹ Brecht, ‘Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction’, in Willet, *Brecht on Theatre*, p.71.

⁴⁰² John Willett, ed. and trans., *Brecht on Theatre* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), p.91.

⁴⁰³ 林克欢, ‘历史·舞台·表演’—评林兆华的文化意向与表演探索, *艺术评论*, 07 (2005), 53-57 (p.55). [Lin Kehuan, ‘History, Stage and Performance: A Critique on Lin Zhaohua’s Cultural Images and Performance Exploration’, *Art Review*, 07 (2005), 53-57 (p.55).]

general Titus Lartius remained in silence, stage left. The battle started without their active participation. Five Volscian senators, who stood on the platform hanging above centre stage to indicate the city gate of Corioles, shook their heads and bodies as reactions to the seeming attack. When the Romans began to retreat out of fear towards the enemy, Coriolanus cursed them even more severely than before, calling them curs, ‘souls of geese/ [t]hat bear the shapes of men’ (1.4.34-35). However, the actor Pu spoke these lines quickly but not angrily as Shakespeare’s text indicates, as if he was not really offended by the coward crowd. Coriolanus then led another charge, was shut into the city, and fought all alone. Upstage, audience members witnessed his slowed-down combat with the Volscians. Through making strange the performance, the director therefore provoked in his audiences reflections on what they would in Naturalistic theatrical conditions have normally taken for granted. Inspired by the stylised acting of *xiqu* performance, Lin’s production did not create the illusion of the war full of blood and danger, but tended to explore humanity through the character. By doing this, the director held the attention of audiences upon the actors in performance, rather than commenting on the war itself.

The use of direct audience-address is one way of disrupting stage illusion and generating the estrangement effect. In performance, as the performer ‘observes himself’, his objective is ‘to appear strange and even surprising to the audience. He achieves this by looking strangely at himself and his work’.⁴⁰⁴ The estrangement effect happened in the scene in which Coriolanus went to the market in a gown of humility. The protagonist went on the stage from stage right, with Menenius in his company, to ensure that he behaved properly. Meanwhile, from the stage left a ritual procession of four people walked around onto the centre. The first one carried a big stool over his head, while the other three were playing different musical instruments. Without seeing that the first one had stopped, they bumped into one another. This comical presentation revealed the rite as a meaningless farce and contrasted with the seriousness Coriolanus took in what he believed as a betrayal of his nature. Images of acting and theatricality were thus used by Lin Zhaohua negatively to stress the protagonist’s honesty.⁴⁰⁵ On stage, the actor Pu indifferently carried out the role of Coriolanus. He stepped onto the stool, with his head up and eyes looking into the

⁴⁰⁴ John Willett, ed. and trans., *Brecht on Theatre* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), p.92.

⁴⁰⁵ Maurice Charney, *Shakespeare’s Roman Plays: The Function of Imagery in the Drama* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), p.170.

front, and started his speech to get people's votes. Having got approval from two citizens by promising them that he would present his wounds in private, he got down from the stool quickly and addressed the audience directly, congratulating himself in a mocking tone that he has received two votes. Brecht's alienation effect was achieved here: by disclosing and making obvious the manipulative contrivances and 'fictive' qualities in their acting, the actors alienated the viewer from any passive acceptance and enjoyment of the play as mere 'entertainment'. Instead, the viewer was forced into a critical, analytical frame of mind that served to disabuse him or her of the notion that what he is watching is necessarily an inviolable, self-contained narrative. This effect of making the familiar strange served a didactic function insofar as it taught the viewer not to take the style and content for granted, since the medium itself was highly constructed and contingent upon many cultural and economic conditions.

The director's passion for frontal, presentational acting style in *Coriolanus*, however, was not well received by many Western critics. In his review in *The Huffington Post*, Matthew Tucker said,

It is a shame that the performances on stage are not as connected to the play's emotion as the music. Key characters often fail to interact with each other, instead facing stage front as they deliver their war speeches and declarations. It appears to be a stage filled with soliloquies.⁴⁰⁶

Likewise, on BBC Radio 4's *Saturday Review from the Edinburgh Festival*, Tom Sutcliffe described *Coriolanus* as 'a very dull production':

Pu Cunxin (*Coriolanus*) comes to the front of the stage and many of the scenes are blocked geometrically so the characters are all speaking out at us, not addressing the characters that they are actually talking to in those scenes, and it gave it a very rigid, very formal feel which I felt just drained all the excitement out of it.⁴⁰⁷

I wonder if Sutcliffe has ever read Brecht's story of going to see the Peking Opera performance by Mei Lanfang, and, as a result, coming up with the V-effekt. This

⁴⁰⁶ Matthew Tucker, *The Tragedy Of Coriolanus (REVIEW): Shakespeare Meets Heavy Metal At the Edinburgh International Festival* (2013), <http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2013/08/23/the-tragedy-of-coriolanus_n_3806736.html> [accessed on 18 September 2014].

⁴⁰⁷ *Saturday Review from the 2013 Edinburgh Festival* (BBC Radio 4's broadcast audio online) (2013), <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b038x1lz>> [accessed on 18 September 2014].

unrealistic performing was meant not only to alienate, but also to connect. For Sun Huizhu, performance in the style of *xiqu* creates poetic stage illusion that is capable of lessening the distance between characters and audiences.⁴⁰⁸ Pu's seemingly talking to the audiences built a bridge between the character's world and reality, so as to engage the spectators in more substantive reflection. In doing this, the director brought the story of a temporally and spatially remote character close to contemporary Chinese audiences.

3.2.2.3 Heavy Metal as Soundtrack

The most talked about innovation of the production was Lin Zhaohua's incorporation of two heavy metal bands, *Miserable Faith* and *Suffocated*, into the production, used not only as incidental music but, as commentators have put it, as a metaphorical battle of the bands between Coriolanus/the Romans and Aufidius/the Volscians. 'Heavy Rock *Coriolanus* Turns Up Volume at Edinburgh Festival,' shouted the BBC headline. The two bands were pulled on and off stage on bare metal platforms, creating a visual battle of the bands, representing the tension between the common people of Rome and the reigning nobility who must ultimately work for the voices of the powerful masses. The musicians were kept discreetly tucked to the side of the stage for the majority of the show, so as not to overpower the actors, allowing the atmosphere to move easily between giddy rock concert and high-brow art. The metal score created punctuation for the battles, and the bloody politics of *Coriolanus*, interjecting riffs to create drama and tension. For the most part, the heavy guitar chords and drum thrashing added punch to Shakespeare's twists and turns, but there were occasional misjudged outbursts that merely created melodrama verging on comedy, as though a pantomime baddy had walked on stage.

Both in its performances in China and at the Edinburgh International Festival, the use of two heavy metal bands in this Shakespeare production received much critical attention and many voices were heard. Fu Jin believed that the bands created a dramatic context in which intellectuals could not make their voices heard amidst the general uproar.⁴⁰⁹ Wang Fei contended that the revolting spirit of rock-and-roll fitted the character of Coriolanus, who fights against tradition and social norms. In

⁴⁰⁸ 孙惠柱, '从“间离效果”到“连接效果”——布莱希特理论与中国戏曲的跨文化实验', *戏剧艺术* [Sun Huzhu, 'From "Alienating Effect" to "Connecting Effect"—Intercultural Experiment of Brecht's Theories and Chinese *xiqu*', *Drama Art*], 6 (2010), 100-106.

⁴⁰⁹ 傅谨, '大将军和“人艺”的林兆华时代', *读书* [Fu Jin, 'The Great General and the BPAT's Lin Zhaohua Period', *Reading*, 04 (2008), 71-75.

his interpretation, the heavy metal stood for the externalization of people's internal strife in a turbulent society.⁴¹⁰ Andrew Dickson of the *Guardian*, veteran reviewer of the World Shakespeare Festival and Globe to Globe, loved it, describing it as surprising, gnarly, and as adding 'volcanic energy' when the bands *Miserable Faith* and *Suffocated* 'slide in periodically from the wings and punctuate the action with frenzied surges of nu-metal.'⁴¹¹ Dominic Cavendish of *The Telegraph*, in another thoughtful, if not so thoroughly researched, review found it an 'arresting concept' evoking 'China's tumultuous embrace of Western influences.'⁴¹² Many reviewers returned to this idea of Western influence in the music. In fact, Brian G Cooper of *The Stage* complained that in Lin's *Coriolanus*, a production transferred from Beijing (unlike the National Theatre of China's *Richard III* devised for 2013 Globe to Globe), the 'uniquely Chinese theatrical influences are conspicuously absent throughout'.⁴¹³ He was perhaps not aware that until very recently, *xiqu* (Chinese traditional theatre) and the more recognisable *huaju* (Chinese spoken drama), originally a Western import, have been two distinct traditions. These rock bands reminded me of the musicians in Peking Opera, who often sit on stage left, wearing normal street clothes. Chinese audiences are quite familiar with seeing the musicians appearing on the stage together with the actors. While lutes and flutes often accompany Shakespeare, musicians of Peking Opera play *jinghu*, a small, high-pitched, two-string spike fiddle, to accompany performers during songs, and they clash cymbals whenever a general or king enters the scene. Therefore, this supposedly Western-style production is rather more Chinese than some critics give it credit for.

The production's fusion of traditional and contemporary is more obvious where another modern sign — the microphone — is deployed. The Roman general Titus Lartius adopted the instrument twice to praise Martius's valour in the battle against

⁴¹⁰ 王菲, *摇滚大将军引质疑, 濮存昕替林兆华打抱不平* [Wang Fei, *When the Rock 'Great General' Provokes Suspicion, Pu Cunxin Appeals for a Fair Judgment on Li Zhaohua's Work*] (2007), <<http://www.xhuayuan.com/b-a-360590.htm1>> [accessed on 20 June 2014].

⁴¹¹ Andrew Dickson, 'Guitar hero: Coriolanus goes rock', *The Guardian*, 6 August 2013.

⁴¹² Dominic Cavendish, 'Edinburgh Festival 2013: The Tragedy of Coriolanus, review', *The Telegraph*, 21 August 2013, <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/edinburgh-festival/10257093/Edinburgh-Festival-013-The-Tragedy-of-Coriolanus-Playhouse-review.html>> [accessed on 18 September 2014].

⁴¹³ Brian G Cooper, 'Edinburgh International Festival: The Tragedy of Coriolanus', *The Stage Reviews*, 22 August 2013, <www.thestage.co.uk/reviews/review.php/38849/edinburgh-international-festival-the-tragedy> [accessed on 18 September 2014].

the Volsces. The referent of this theatrical sign in modern society is quick to tell. With the development of the internet and mass media, the world is becoming more and more like a global stage on which men and women consciously or unconsciously perform to enact their desired representation of themselves. Aided by rock music, Lartius managed to speak out in a tone different from that on other occasions. This was particularly evident in both the ‘O noble fellow’ (1.4.55) verse [in which he learns that Martius ‘is himself alone, /To answer all the city’ (1.4.53-54)] and his wish of ‘Prosperity by thy page’ (1.5.24) (coming after the hero decides to fight Aufidius in the battlefield). The nature of performing the self was manifest when Lartius had the microphone. It was as if the instrument rather than the character spoke. The metaphorical intention of the microphone became even more obvious when we considered the rivalry over it that was presented by Brutus and Lartius in the banishment scene. Having successfully manipulated the Roman citizens to turn against Coriolanus (who had already received their voices for consulship), the tribune was now in charge of the microphone and proclaimed ‘in the name o’th’people’ to banish from Rome him that seeks means ‘[t]o pluck away their power’ (3.3.99, 96). Here, Lartius stepped over to grab the microphone from Brutus, in order to speak for Coriolanus as well as to assert the power of the ruling patricians. Nevertheless, the tribune prevailed. The microphone returned to Brutus’s hand over which he shouted: ‘It shall be so’ (3.3.105). It would therefore seem clear that the director added this theatrical sign as a metaphor of ideological power antecedent to the expression of personal opinion by any social individual.

Similarly, the confrontation between Coriolanus and Aufidius was not presented through sword fighting as Shakespeare’s text reveals, but a fierce microphone-debate (see Figure 9). Here, the crowd from the former scene exited and the two heavy metal bands rolled onto the centre stage, one on each side standing for the two armies. The two generals, each holding a sword in his right hand and a microphone in his left, rushed from the back stage to the front of their bandstands and immediately began to pour violent words out. In the meantime, the guitarists from both sides played loudly in order to add to the effect of the soldiers’ infuriation. The microphones here became the real weapons of war—and the political conflict between the two countries was revealed as a competition to take control of the dominant ideology. Lin thus presented Coriolanus and his Volscian counterpart as practitioners of power.

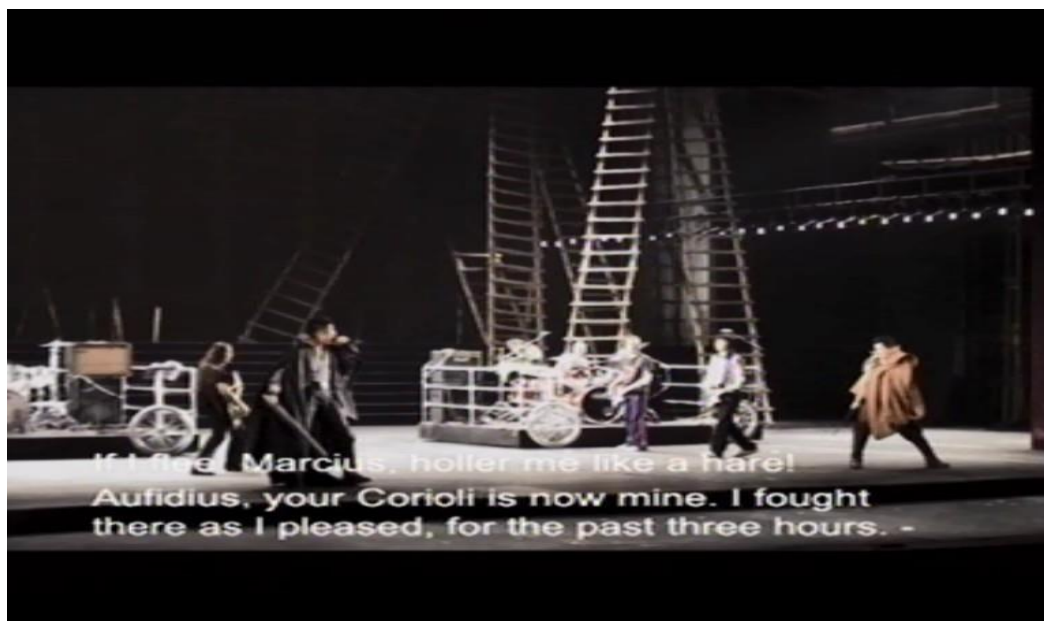


Figure 9 Pu Cunxin (Martius) and Jing Hao (Aufidius) combat with microphone in *The Tragedy of Coriolanus*, dir. by Lin Zhaohua, Edinburgh International Festival 2013.

To sum up, Lin appropriated Shakespeare's Roman play on modern Chinese stage to cater for local audiences' understanding. Not only did all the characters speak Mandarin—language as an identity of Chinese Shakespeare, but also there were obvious Chinese characteristics—the images of migrant workers as citizens and the influence of traditional Chinese theatre on its *mise en scène*, which familiarize the Chinese audience with the Western other. The irony of the plebeians who have a power that they have no power to claim for can be identified from the migrant workers who in a people's republic are still living marginalized lives. The simplicity in the stage design emulated that of the traditional Chinese opera stage. Modern acoustic techniques, i.e. heavy metal and microphones, brought about the effect of disharmony. The ancient Shakespearean setting mirrored modern globalising society. The globalisation of economy and the development of technology bring the globalisation of culture. The old philosophical question of “who am I” is re-enquired repeatedly when individuals are struggling for a clear identity. Lin's presentation of Coriolanus's titular self projected a common dilemma in modern society, in which there is a duality between what might be considered by any given individual as ideal and what is politically and socially expedient and practical. Coriolanus's failure in ‘authoring the self’ reveals the stupidity of modern man as an existential being, who believes in the freedom of the construction of identity by the individual, unhampered

by the constraints of the political ideologies and power structures within which his existence is embedded. For the director, it was a successful endeavour to appropriate this less-performed Shakespearean play for the modern Chinese stage. Lin's production not only enriches Shakespearean scholarship in China; providing a Chinese vernacular in the global market of Shakespearean performances, it also sets an inspiring example for intercultural theatre practice in the future.

3.3 'Tell me who I am:'⁴¹⁴ Searching for Identity in a Bilingual *King Lear*

Bilingual and multilingual theatre is a new form of *huaju* Shakespeare that has emerged in the past few decades, informed by the concerns of late capitalist society as cultural globalisation and Westernisation pick up the pace. As directors and theatre companies move ever more freely across national boundaries, linguistic difference is called upon to be the marker of the contentious space between cultures. Intercultural theatre is not a trouble-free undertaking, as international festivals tend to suggest. The use of two or more languages in a single production (often with surtitles in the language of the locality in which the performance takes place) can signal its transnational network of funding and artistic collaboration. (e.g., a multinational cast, international collaboration in the choice of venue(s), multinational financial arrangements to support the production, international media coverage etc.), but it can also suggest ways in which intercultural theatre creates an exaggerated expectation of cultural assimilation and reconciliation and so undermines its own purposes. Performing in a foreign tongue while touring (e.g. the Chinese *Coriolanus* at the 2013 Edinburgh International Festival) offers an opportunity to address some of these issues, but performing in two or more languages reveals that intercultural performance is far from uncomplicated.⁴¹⁵

As a play about the emptiness of words and the failure of language to express the existential angst of naked human existence, *King Lear* is a useful platform for experiments with multilingual theatre. Since selected scenes from *King Lear* were

⁴¹⁴ The quotation is from *King Lear*, 1.4.34.

⁴¹⁵ Note, for instance, Ruth Morse, 'Reflections in Shakespeare Translation', *Yearbook of English Studies*, 36.1 (2006), 79-89; and Maria del Sapio Garbero, 'Translating *Hamlet*: Botching up Ophelia's Half Sense', *Textus: English Studies in Italy*, 20.3 (2007), 519-38.

first performed in English in Chowringhee Theatre, Calcutta, in 1832,⁴¹⁶ the play has had a special place in Asian theatre history. The problematic nature of cultural re-infection, marked through strategies of linguistic deferral, continues to resonate in British-Chinese director David Tse's 2006 Mandarin-English production of *King Lear*. Co-produced by Tse's London-based Yellow Earth Theatre⁴¹⁷ and the Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre, it was an exhilarating but challenging collaboration between artists from completely different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Following Shakespeare's text with a modern twist, interwoven with Chinese lines based on Zhu Shenghao's translation, it brought together a mixed cast of Chinese and British actors to perform in their native tongues and explore the question of the translatability of cultures. Tse relocates Lear's story to a futuristic Shanghai of 2020, which is set as one of the world's business and financial centres. Lear is a wealthy and powerful Chinese tycoon whose business empire spans continents. In his Shanghai penthouse on the 188th floor, Lear calls a video conference to decide how his global business empire will be divided among his three daughters. While justifying their inheritance, the two elder sisters flatter their father in elegant Chinese but English-educated Cordelia, no longer fluent in her father's tongue, says 'Nothing'. The loss of face sends Lear into a spiral of fury and madness. Hence, the story of Lear became one of both domestic struggles and international corporate wars. The audiences were led into a vicious and visceral world where greed and ambition turns sister against sister, and child against parent. The supposedly more civilized world that is closer in time to the world of the audience than either Shakespeare's England, or his historical setting for *Lear* is still just as haunted by betrayal, lust and murder as Shakespeare's. What hope is there for love?

Such a version of *King Lear* attaches importance to the issues of cultural identity for diasporic communities in the increasingly globalised world today. Tse explains, 'Set in a future Shanghai and London, when those with power and money live above

⁴¹⁶ Alexander (now Alexa) C.Y. Huang, 'Comical Tragedies and Other Polygeneric Shakespeares in Contemporary China and Diasporic Chinese Culture', in *Shakespeare and Genre: From Early Modern Inheritances to Postmodern Legacies*, ed. by Anthony R. Guneratne (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp.157-172 (p.167).

⁴¹⁷ A touring theatre company, established in 1995 by five British East Asian performers to raise the profile of British East Asian theatre. The company tours nationally and internationally, and produces quality ensemble physical work, using performing traditions of east and west and to celebrate the meeting of different cultures. It has become the UK's only revenue-funded British East Asian touring theatre.

the law, the play is in many ways an exploration of Chinese and British identities.⁴¹⁸ The production reframed the gap between Lear and Cordelia in terms of linguistic difference. Highlighting the difficulties of intercultural and intergenerational exchange, Lear and Cordelia's fatal relationship is compounded by a Chinese Lear and an English-educated Cordelia. Providing a challenging cross-cultural interpretation, East meets West in this exploration of Chinese and British identities, Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, spiritual and financial wealth, family loyalty, and generational divides.

3.3.1 The Macaronic Stage

Tse's bilingual *King Lear* is the type of macaronic performance defined by Marvin Carlson. Tracing the history of bilingual or multilingual performing traditions in different parts of the world, especially Europe and North America, Carlson says, 'in certain strongly bi-lingual communities, such as in the French- and English-speaking theatre centre of Eastern Canada, a significant body of bilingual drama has recently appeared.'⁴¹⁹ Regarding the definition of a 'macaronic stage,' Carlson explains,

The model of a monolingual congruence between play and audience, requiring translation into a parallel language when the target audience changes, is so familiar that it might appear almost universal, but in fact nearly every period of theatre history offers examples of plays that utilize more than one language, and our own era is particularly rich in the number and variety of multilanguage performances. Such plays might be called "macaronic," a term first coined to characterize Renaissance texts that mixed Latin with vernacular languages, but later used for any text employing more than one language.⁴²⁰

The macaronic theatre, according to Carlson, has two major categories. In one category, the dramatic text features linguistic elements borrowed across cultures. In the other category, a text is originally written in a single language, but in the adapted performance, more than one language is utilized. In light of the latter, a case in point is a Chinese adaptation of Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. In 1998, *A Doll's House* was

⁴¹⁸ Lew Baxter, 'Shanghai Meets Shakespeare', *Daily Post/Shanghai Star/China Today* magazine, 22 November 2006.

⁴¹⁹ Marvin Carlson, 'The Macaronic Stage', in *East of West: Cross-cultural Performances and the Staging of Difference*, eds., by Claire Sponsler and Xiaomei Chen (New York: Palgrave, 2000), p.21.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid*, p.16.

staged in Beijing by Central Experimental Theatre with Wu Xiaojiang as its director.⁴²¹ Agnete Haaland, an actress from Norway, was invited to play the role of Nora in the performance. The play was reset in the early 1930s in a city in northern China. Helmer became the son of a wealthy Chinese landlord. He had his university education in Europe, where he became married to a Norwegian woman. After he returned to China, he worked at a bank. In the play, the Norwegian Nora tries hard to adapt herself to Chinese culture. Not only does she learn to cook Chinese food, she also learns to speak Chinese. She even studies Chinese opera. During the performance, Agnete speaks English with Chinese words, while Helmer and the rest of the cast speak Chinese with a few English words.

This bilingual performance engaging a Norwegian actress was quite a fresh experience for most Chinese audiences. The purposeful arrangement of languages is not without symbolic meanings. Reflecting on the bi-lingual or multi-lingual productions, Marvin Carlson thinks that they are:

not primarily for the traditional reason of increasing audience rapport and making a minimal communicative statement, but for the much more complicated and interesting purpose of utilizing language as one of the major symbolic structures that directly contribute to the hoped-for message or messages of the production as a whole.⁴²²

In the bilingual performance of *A Doll's House*, English is used as a symbol of Western culture. The failure of communication and misunderstandings between Nora and her Chinese husband suggests the cultural differences between China and the West. The production brings about heated debate.⁴²³ While the bilingual experiment was hailed by some as innovative and forceful, others criticized the simplistic dualism between Chinese and Western cultures. The Western values symbolised in Nora are consolidated, the weakness of Chinese culture exaggerated. The use of languages in theatre has become an issue of political significance. 'To ask whose values are heard and whose are silenced by the use of specific languages therefore seems essential to a more politicised form of interculturalism.'⁴²⁴

⁴²¹ The same production was revived repeatedly in different Chinese cities.

⁴²² Carlson, p.24.

⁴²³ See Wu Xiaojiang, 'Universalization, Localization, and Nationalization: Directorial Approaches to Ibsen's Drama on the Chinese Stage', in *Proceedings for 9th International Ibsen Conference*, eds. by Pal Bjorn and Asbjorn Aarseth (Bergen: Alvheim and Eide, 2001), pp. 77-88 (p. 85).

⁴²⁴ Jacqueline Lo and Helen Gilbert, 'Toward a Topography of Cross-Cultural Theatre Praxis', in *The*

Multilingual Shakespeare is of course not exclusive to China or the contemporary period. These productions feature extensive use of two or more languages—usually with surtitles in local languages—to highlight the processes of late capitalism and globalisation, and to redirect the traffic in intercultural theatre. Their juxtaposition of different languages on stage often produces very different aesthetic and political meanings that go beyond both those in national Shakespeares (German, Indian, Japanese and so forth) and those of the liberally sprinkled foreign phrases in the plays of Shakespeare and other Renaissance playwrights, such as Thomas Kyd (*The Spanish Tragedy*), Thomas Dekker (*Patient Grissil*) and Thomas Middleton (pidgin English as Dutch in *No Wit, No Help Like a Woman's*) and numerous other plays. Shakespeare and the Elizabethans often used foreign speech for comic effect.⁴²⁵ The “learning to speak English” scene between the French queen Katherine and her servant Alice (3.4) and the wooing scene (5.2) in *Henry V* are particularly striking. Katherine speaks entirely in French in other scenes, and Pistol also has an extended dialogue with a French-speaking soldier. Shakespeare’s contemporary Thomas Dekker was particularly enamoured of linguistic mixing, with substantial non-English passages in six of his plays, spoken by four Dutchmen, four Welshmen, and one Irishman. The Welsh scenes in his *Patient Grissil* are so detailed and accurate that it has been suggested that Dekker may have here utilized a Welsh-speaking collaborator.⁴²⁶ While such early modern macaronic cases have generated extensive commentaries for centuries,⁴²⁷ our contemporary directors’ treatment of the theatricality of multilingualism remains under theorised. Though the presence of foreign languages in early modern English drama was passed off for comic effect, bilingual or multilingual performances of our time tend to put the languages to question, challenging at once Anglo-centred Shakespeare and intercultural Shakespeare.

Drama Review, 46.3 (fall 2002), 31-53 (p. 46).

⁴²⁵ This tendency had been noted and critiqued by some Renaissance writers. In his *Defence of Poesie* (1595), Sir Philip Sidney critiques the often derogative and comical portrayal of foreign accents: ‘For what is it to make folks gape at a wretched beggar or a beggarly clown, or, against law of hospitality, to jest at strangers because they speak not English so well as we do’. Philip Sidney, *Miscellaneous Prose of Philip Sidney*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones and Jan Van Dorsten (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973)

⁴²⁶ David Mason Greene, ‘The Welsh Characters in *Patient Grissil*’, *Boston University Studies in English*, 4 (1960), 171-80.

⁴²⁷ See David Steinsaltz, ‘The Politics of French Language in Shakespeare’s History Plays’, *SEL Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 42.2 (2002), 317-34; and Deanne Williams, *The French Fetish from Chaucer to Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

This new breed of intercultural performance raises many questions. While Shakespeare's King Henry V tells Princess Katherine of France in the wooing scene, 'It is as easy for me [...] to conquer the kingdom as to speak so much more French' (*Henry V*, 5.2.184-5), one might ask whether it is as easy to conquer the global economic marketplace as to employ culturally performers who speak different languages. Does watching Shakespeare with surtitles—especially at high-profile festivals—overcome or reinforce cultural boundaries? What do such encounters with foreign-language Shakespeares entail? What are their effects?

Many such bilingual or multilingual performances of Shakespeare have taken place in the past few decades, though some were better toured or more memorable than others were. In 1983, an English-Mandarin bilingual *Mid-summer Night's Dream*, directed by Tisa Chang, was staged in New York's Pan Asian Repertory Theatre. The different languages were used as markers of emotions and characters' personalities. In the play, members of the royal court and Puck spoke Mandarin, and other characters spoke English with occasional use of Chinese when under stress. In 1995, Karin Beier directed a multilingual *Midsummer Night's Dream* in Düsseldorf—with fourteen actors speaking German, Hungarian, French, Italian, Polish, Russian, and three other languages and performing in several styles including the *commedia dell'Arte*. Dennis Kennedy noted that the innovative production, 'a Babel of miscommunication from Europeans desperately trying to be one,' made Shakespeare a lingua franca, a 'common cannon for post-industrial and post-Cold-War Europe.'⁴²⁸ In 1996, a year after Bier's pan-European *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Ong Keng Sen staged a pan-Asian multilingual *King Lear* in which performers from several Asian countries spoke in their mother tongues and employed the performance styles representative of their countries of origin. However, unlike Bier's production, linguistic difference is hardly the only marker of class and identity. Ong aligned each language with a symbolic traditional theatre form that presumably represented that culture. The power-thirsty Goneril spoke only Mandarin and employed Peking Opera chanting and movements. The Old Man (the counterpart to Lear in this production) spoke stately Japanese and performed in the Noh style. The confrontation between Goneril and Lear in the play thus took on additional significance generated by the clashes of Japanese and Chinese cultures. In China, the

⁴²⁸ Dennis Kennedy, 'Looking at Shakespeare, A Visual History of Twentieth-Century Performance, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.329, 332.

Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre produced an adaptation entitled *Romeo and Zhu Yingtai* (2008, directed by He Nian), which was billed as a ‘romantic tragicomedy.’ The director stages the comical encounters of two cultures by setting “Romeo” against Zhu Yingtai, Liang Shanbo’s mistress in the iconic Tang Dynasty tale of a pair of lovers. Reflecting the multicultural setting of *Romeo and Zhu Yingtai* in early and late twentieth-century Shanghai, New York, and Paris, the actors spoke Mandarin with liberal sprinklings of Japanese, English, and French.

Macaronic performances have the tendency to flourish on the global stage. Marvin Carlson is very optimistic with regards to the macaronic theatre: ‘The amount of multi-language theatre being produced around the world today is considerable, and seems to be growing, just as the exposure of a variety of languages is everywhere increasing.’⁴²⁹ Apart from the fact that these macaronic performances present new challenges to the theatre professionals, they also demand that the theatre-goers adopt new strategies of reception and get used to the bilingual or multilingual performance on stage. According to Carlson, they reflect, as the theatre always does, current cultural consciousness and historically specific concerns:

The experimentation of macaronic theatre uses languages to explore in theatrical and performative terms the implication of living in an increasingly multi-linguistic culture. These productions seem to have developed from the recognition that in modern international culture, not only different languages but also different language speakers are being placed in contact to a greater extent than in any previous period [...] today performers and audiences move across cultural borders much more common[ly] than at any period in the past, vastly increasing the complexities of potential reception strategies.⁴³⁰

The macaronic performances of foreign plays will increase in China too. Being the most internationalised city in China, Shanghai has developed for years a cross-cultural and multi-lingual environment, true to the imagining of the city in Tse’s *King Lear*. When staged in Shanghai, this bilingual performance was warmly received by the multi-cultural audiences. The bilingual or multilingual performances onstage in Chinese theatres are but a natural consequence of globalisation.

Settling the story in an intercultural context, with actors performing in Mandarin

⁴²⁹ Carlson, p. 23.

⁴³⁰ Carlson, p. 27.

Chinese and English (with surtitles) and creating a cosmopolitan atmosphere,⁴³¹ Tse's *King Lear* represents a new breed of Asian-European Shakespeare in what might be called the "post-national" global Shakespeare industry. As a bilingual and bicultural performance, it provides a different experience than those more traditionally defined "foreign" Shakespeares. The production played in Shanghai, Chongqing and Chengdu in October 2006 before touring the United Kingdom. Playing to full houses throughout the UK, Tse's *King Lear* stages several contradictions and precarious conditions of globalisation.

Using a mixed cast of Chinese and British (including British Asian) actors, Tse explores the promise and perils of globalisation in the context of local conditions of translation, highlighting the themes of miscommunication and intergenerational conflict. Half of the cast members were native English-speakers while the other half mainly spoke Mandarin Chinese. Lear is played by the distinguished Shanghai actor Zhou Yemang—a household name in China after numerous television and film appearances. The British-born actor David Yip—whose family roots are from Southern China—doubles up as Gloucester and Albany. Apart from Zhou and Yip the cast includes China born Zhang Lu as one of Lear's daughters Goneril, Xie Li as Regan and He Ju as Kent; with English-speaking actors Daniel York as Edgar/Cornwall, Matt McCooley as Edmund and Nina Kwok as Cordelia and Oswald. From the beginning to the end, Zhou Yemang's Lear commanded a powerful presence on stage, but other actors had some rough moments because they were required to switch back and forth constantly between their native tongue and a foreign language. Some dialogues could be challenging to follow because actors switched between the two languages in the same block of lines or even mid-sentence. The performance embodies the tensions between different linguistic spaces marked off by the bilingual dialogues and the bilingual surtitles. The dialogues and surtitles compete for the audience's attention and often intrude into each other's processes of signification. Tse's arrangement of linguistic texts prominently highlighted the felt pressure of cultural difference and displacement. The actors' performances of alternating speech patterns, rhythms and cadences actively embodied such anxieties,

⁴³¹ The bilingual feature became a major source of complaints for some reviewers. See, for instance, Huang's reviews in *Shakespeare*, 3.2 (August 2007), 239-42, and in *Theatre Journal*, 59.3 (2006), 494-95, and Claire Conceison, 'Huang Zuolin Festival' (Review), *Theatre Journal*, 59.3 (2006), 491-93. At the same time, the style of the Chinese translation of *Lear*—a version that was translated by Zhu Shenghao in 1943 and was popular in China – was criticised by Conceison (p. 492) for its 'jarring contrast to the poetic English version'.

particularly because none of them was bilingual actor in this demanding bilingual production that required British and Chinese actors with training to share the same stage.

The play opened with an updated division-of-the-assets scene. Set in the Shanghai penthouse office of the modern Lear's transnational corporation, the scene involved a creative re-interpretation of the miscommunication in Lear's famous test of love. The opening scene immediately set up an intercultural scenario, where elements from different cultures were juxtaposed and different languages used. Lear is a Shanghai-based business tycoon who solicits confessions of love from his three daughters. Lear, Regan and Goneril spoke fluent Mandarin Chinese, but the English-educated Cordelia, a member of the Chinese diaspora living in London, was no longer proficient in her father's language. Joining the conversation from behind a semi-transparent screen that represented a video link from London (See Figure 10), she is both physically and culturally remote from the rest of the characters at the meeting in which family affairs and business coalesce. As Goneril and Regan carried on their confession of love, Chinese fonts projected onto the screen panels and onto Cordelia's face. Immersed in oppressing Confucian values that implicate family roles into the social hierarchy, Lear insisted upon patriarchal authority and respect from his children. The test of love becomes a process of reaffirmation of one of the key Confucian virtues: filial piety. For Lear, unconditional love of a family member is beside the point.



Figure 10 *King Lear*, dir. by David Tse, 2006. Cordelia (Nina Kwok) replies to King Lear.

Of interest ontologically and dramaturgically is the word “nothing,” articulated along with its Chinese counterpart “*meiyou* 没有” that both Cordelia and Lear used in their brief but tense confrontation. This was a moment when Asian Shakespeares in Europe were made into something that was disruptive and new again dramaturgically. Lear’s fateful question ‘Which of you shall we say doth love us most?’(1.1.51), a bilingual tag line in Tse’s production, is not really an inquiry, but an order to his daughters to protest their quantity of love. Cordelia, as she announces in an aside, will not answer a question so wrongly posed: ‘What shall Cordelia speak? Love, and be silent.’(1.1.60) When Lear asks her what she can say ‘to draw / A third more opulent than your sisters’ (1.1.84-5), she eventually replies, ‘*Meiyou* 没有 (Nothing).’ It was the only word Cordelia could speak in Chinese; and yet it signified ‘nothing.’ Lear briefly probed the ontological significance of nothing in this exchange and urged Cordelia to give him something:

CORDELIA	Nothing, my lord.
LEAR (in Mandarin)	<i>Meiyou</i> 没有 (Nothing)?
CORDELIA (in accented Mandarin)	<i>Meiyou</i> 没有 (Nothing).
LEAR (in accented English)	Nothing will come of nothing. Speak again.
CORDELIA	Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave My heart into my mouth. I love your majesty According to my bond, no more nor less. ⁴³²

In the performance, the word “Nothing” is uttered softly first by Cordelia in English, echoed with bewilderment by Lear in Mandarin, affirmed by Cordelia in accented Mandarin, used again in Lear’s pleading in accented English, half in disappointment and half in anger. It comes up again as an echo in the Fool’s jest and Lear’s reply. (I.iv.) Shakespeare uses the utterance of “Nothing” as a kind of aural motif, a kind of echo to relate various parts of the play. The bilingual version of the dialogue gave this aural motif sufficient prominence in phrasing and repetition.

The word ‘nothing’ here is incredibly important, because it suggests the identity of both Lear and Cordelia, and the miscommunication between them. Born and raised in Shanghai, Regan and Goneril are fluent in Chinese and are therefore

⁴³² Mandarin-English bilingual script of *King Lear* (2006), adapted and directed by David Tse Ka-shing, coproduced by Yellow Earth Theatre and Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre, p.6.

capable of giving ornate speeches that testify to their great love for their father. In contrast to the empty flattery of Goneril and Regan, Cordelia offers her father a truthful evaluation of her love for him: she loves him ‘according to my bond’; that is, she understands and accepts without question her duty to love him as a father and king. She chooses to let her love made plain through deeds rather than mere words. As Cordelia’s subsequent actions demonstrate, the youngest daughter is actually the most dutiful, honourable and loving daughter, and her bond is in reality a sustaining, generous love.

Lear, on the other hand, shows his very different character through how he uses the word ‘nothing.’ When he voluntarily gives up the assets of his business empire to embrace the nothing that is his traditional end—‘Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything,’ as Jaques would have it (*As You Like It*, 2.7.165-66)—Lear attempts in effect to bargain with the nothingness of death, embracing nothingness on his own terms and for his own ends. In giving his daughters control over the extended body that is his business empire, Lear would make them his mothers, deliberately putting himself in the position of infantile need from which he will experience the rest of the play. When Cordelia says ‘Nothing,’ Lear hears what he most dreads: emptiness, loss of respect, the extinction of identity. His response to Cordelia after she has disappointed him shows us what is at stake for him in this bargain: he will trade in his *all* (‘I gave you all’ [2.4.252] to secure Cordelia’s *all*, exchanging both possessions and adult autonomy for the promise of her unconditional and undivided love, in order to make her nursery his final resting place (‘I lov’d her most, and thought to set my rest/On her kind nursery’ [1.1.123-24]). However, when she declares that she loves her father ‘according to my bond’ (1.1.91), Lear understands these words too to be the equivalent of ‘nothing.’ He is unable to understand Cordelia’s love expressed through silence and interprets it as a sign of defiance. Lear’s rage at what he perceives to be her lack of affection sets the tragedy in motion. Notice Lear’s use of the word truth in his response:

好，那么让你的**忠实**做你的嫁奁吧。
凭着太阳神圣的光辉，
凭着黑夜的神秘，
凭着主宰人类生死的星球的运行，
我发誓从现在起，

永远和你断绝一切父女之情和血缘亲属的关系.....⁴³³
(Let it be so! Thy **truth** then be thy dower!
For by the sacred radiance of the sun,
The mysteries of Hecat and the night,
By all the operation of the orbs
From whom we do exist, and cease to be,
Here I disclaim all my paternal care [...])

Ironically, Lear uses the word ‘*zhongshi* 忠实 (truth)’ when he is not able to see the ‘truth’ and understand the depth of Cordelia’s regard for him.

In the tense exchange between Cordelia and Lear, the word ‘nothing’ looms large as Chinese fonts are projected onto the screen panels, behind which Cordelia stands. The Chinese characters projected on the set and skin of Cordelia became part of the scenographic *mise en scène*. It is as if the characters of language are being used to construct and comment on a deficiency in the dramatic character of Cordelia. Because this is a Mandarin-English bilingual performance, the word ‘nothing’ and its Chinese equivalent ‘*meiyou*’ generate new meaning and effect on the audiences of different languages. In its Stratford performance where the majority of the audience did not know Chinese, the word *meiyou* created an ontological hollow space that embodied “nothingness,” key to the conflict in this scene and to Tse’s Buddhist interpretation of Lear’s redemption later in the play. In its performances in China, where the majority of the audience could not easily follow the English part of the dialogue without the surtitles, *meiyou* stood out as a powerful signifier of the scene.

As the love test scene exemplifies, bilingualism onstage is deployed as a symbol of the failure of assimilative Westernisation as the dominant form of globalisation, sensitising the audience to various assumptions of Anglo-universalism. Throughout the performance, the majority of the audience could only follow one part of the dialogue with ease and had to switch between the action onstage and the surtitles. Translation thus acted in this production as both a metaphor and a plot device, such a multilingual Shakespeare being no less effective than plot parody in laying bare the process of relocating meaning within local theatrical cultures.

3.3.2 Juxtaposition of Eastern-Western Cultures

Tse’s *Lear* is not only bilingual but also bicultural, which enables it to explore the question of the translatability of cultures through juxtaposition of cultural

⁴³³ Mandarin-English bilingual script of *King Lear* (2006), adapted and directed by David Tse Ka-shing, coproduced by Yellow Earth Theatre and Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre, p.7.

references and a mixture of traditional and modern elements. The adaptation employed Buddhist-themed music, future–retro costumes with both Western and Chinese features, an ensemble cast with significant doubling and cross gender casting, mobile phones, text-messaging, aerial work, multimedia elements, and *jingju* 京劇 (Peking Opera) percussion patterns and movements to embody the performative anxieties of diasporic artists as well as the uneasy coalition between radically different cultures. A scene capitalising on the presence of two cultures was the duel between Edgar (Daniel York) and Edmund (Matt McCooey). Following the rhythms of Peking Opera percussion beats, the actors engaged in a highly stylised ritualistic fight using flick knives. Their movements evoked both English sword fighting and the combat styles seen in Peking Opera.

It was through a medley of cultural elements that an image of Lear was brought to life in this production. Interestingly, this arrangement perhaps also complicated expectations about what a ‘Chinese Lear’ should look like, with the cultural references better approached as citations rather than unproblematic expressions of innate *Chinese* identities or properties. A good example here was the association between Lear and the Fool. In this small-scale production of *King Lear*, the role of the Fool was cut but some of his lines were delivered by an ensemble consisting of the cast members available at that moment.⁴³⁴ Tse intended to use the ensemble to enact the innermost voice of Lear himself. He explained:

The fool’s function in the play is to speak the truth. In many ways, he also speaks as Lear’s conscience by still speaking the truth to Lear. Because Lear in the play goes mad, it makes sense that he is talking to himself. That’s what I hope the whole ensemble represented. We had many ideas [during rehearsals]: we tried Peking Opera, glove puppets [. . .] What worked best was when they copied everything Lear did [. . .] It seemed to tell the story clearly that they were the mirror images of Lear.⁴³⁵

The effect was further augmented by the visual appearance and the physical arrangement of this ensemble, which showed a diverse mixture of cultural influences.

⁴³⁴ The small cast resulted in the cutting of minor scenes and characters, and the doubling of cast members. For example, in the opening scene Cordelia’s suitors, Albany and Cornwall, were cut. Only later did audiences learn that Albany and Cornwall were doubled by actors who played, respectively, Gloucester and Edgar. In addition, Nina Kwok, who played Cordelia, also doubled as Oswald.

⁴³⁵ See Lia Wen-Ching Liang, ‘Negotiating New Terrains: Yellow Earth Theatre’s *Lear’s Daughters* and *King Lear*’, *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 19.3 (2009), 289-297. Information in this paragraph is taken from Lia Wen-Ching Liang’s interview with Tse on 24 May 2007.

The ensemble wore gowns with long white ‘water sleeves’, a costume element common in several genres of traditional Chinese theatre such as Peking Opera. Their lines were performed in a style of chanting similar to that of Buddhist monks, and their voices were accompanied by the beat of wooden fishes, an instrument used by Buddhist monks in China and other East Asian countries. Most notably, the ensemble’s footwork was associated with *Suriashi* movement, a walking style from Japanese Noh theatre. *Suriashi*, which means “sliding feet,” is a form of an exaggerated walk of which Noh makes use. Because the audiences are unable to see the feet, it creates the impression that the actor is floating. Since many Noh plays are about ghosts and ghosts have no feet, *suriashi* helps convey this illusion. Emulating Lear’s movements in the scene, the ensemble mirrored Lear’s fraying physical and mental condition.

The use of diverse cultural references in the ensemble acting complicated the relationship between identity and cultural practices, and offered no easy or straightforward correspondence between the two. Whereas some might suggest that Peking Opera should be viewed as a theatrical form that ubiquitously stages ‘an unmistakable Chinese identity’,⁴³⁶ the diverse theatrical elements seen in this scene problematized precisely the issue of cultural identity in a globalised world. The ‘Chinese Lear’ in Tse’s production amounted to an assemblage of different references from diverse East Asian cultural sources and beyond. Rather than using what might be considered as *pure* Chinese cultural elements or themes throughout the performance, an intercultural atmosphere was constructed where traces of traditional Chinese culture were vague and, indeed, merely one among many other equally possible cultural references that could be drawn from an *assemblage* or amalgam of multi-cultural referents. As such, the production defied the convenient classifications and expectations usually associated with China. Juxtapositions of diverse cultural elements and styles reflected instead Tse’s ambition to depict a contemporary China that is undergoing rapid social, economic and cultural transformations in an age of globalisation. Notably, this was not a tranquil terrain of harmony and traditional values, but an imaginary space full of confrontations between competing cultural and economic forces from different sources. Set in the context of financial and market driven globalisation, Tse’s imagination about the

⁴³⁶ Daphne Pi-Wei Lei, *Operatic China: Staging Chinese Identity Across the Pacific* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 22.

identity of a futuristic China is a fusion of Eastern and Western cultures, which have been influencing each other. Such an identity is not static, but in a perpetual state of change.

Tse's *King Lear* foregrounded intercultural discourse not only through hybrid performance idioms and uses of two languages, but also through scenography and costumes. The set and costume designs were influenced by Taoist concepts of *yin* and *yang*, masculine and feminine, hard and soft, light and dark. Performed in the Cube at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, an innovative makeshift black-box theatre constructed in the auditorium while the RST was undergoing renovation, Tse's *King Lear* took advantage of the intimate stage. Entering the theatre, the audience saw a brightly lit open stage with sparse scenery within close proximity of the seats. At centre stage stood three interlaced floor-to-ceiling screens made of rectangular reflective panels. One screen on the edge of the stage evokes the rigidity of an emperor's armour as well as contemporary skyscrapers. Another transparent screen suggests the inner organic flow of nature. Most of the actions took place in front of the screens, which were transformed through lighting from a regal façade to a semi-transparent video screen to the wilderness for the storm scene. The Buddhist notion of redemption and reincarnation informed some of the design elements and presentational styles. The production opens and closes with video footage, projected onto the three interlaced floor-to-ceiling reflective panels, that hints at both the beginning of a new life and life as endless suffering. Images of the faces of suffering men and women dissolve to show a crying new-born baby held upside down. If the stage design suggested Taoist simplicity and postmodern minimalism, the costumes evoked a fusion of Chinese and Western elements, inspired by both Western high-fashion styles as well as garments from Peking Opera. Edmund (Matt McCooey) wore a leather skirt in Jean Paul Gaultier style, while Edgar's (Daniel York) costume bore explicit elements of traditional Chinese clothing worn by the gentry class. Kent (He Ju) appeared in a page outfit with a wig. Lear's (Zhou Yemang) costumes contained both traditional Chinese and modern Western design patterns. He wore a velvet regal robe with a white shirt underneath. His cane symbolised his authority and frailty as he pointed the walking stick at Regan in a moment of rage and leaned on it in a moment of epiphany. Goneril (Zhang Lu) and Regan (Xie Li) were sharp-suited, evoking femme-fatale figures in the global boomtown that is twenty-first-century Shanghai.



Figure 11 Edmund (Matt McCooley) and Edgar (Daniel York) duel in the Mandarin-English *King Lear*, directed by David Tse, 2006. (Courtesy of Yin Xuefeng and Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre)

Targeted at both Chinese and English audiences, Tse's *King Lear* raises questions about the intercultural nature of spectatorship: how do spectators relate to what they watch, when a performance foregrounds and implicates the particular cultural position from which they are watching, with its values, habits, and limitations, all of which define what they are able to see? What part does the spectator play in the staging of an encounter between Shakespeare and another culture? Depending on one's level of familiarity with Shakespeare and one's cultural background, what one saw in this bilingual and bicultural *King Lear* and how one reacted to it would differ, sometimes markedly, from what someone else might notice, find interesting, attractive, or objectionable. As a Chinese Shakespearean researcher, with a close knowledge of the text of *King Lear*, and a knowledge of the Chinese forms used, I am conscious that I half listen to the Mandarin and English that I partially follow, and half read the translation between English and Chinese, thereby tracing a constant movement in comprehension closer to and further from the action. I register through the dialogue the echoes and points of departure from Shakespeare's text. I note details of the different costumes, gestures, vocal styles, both for how these aspects of production re-create and resemble the roles in *King Lear*, and where they depart from the conventions of the Chinese forms. Above all, I am acutely aware of the display of Chinese forms as defining and staging a unique presentation,

equally unfamiliar in English Shakespeare and Chinese performance traditions. I thus watch this production from parallel inside/outside positions, at the unstable interstice of a passage I make motions back and forth between Shakespeare's original text, its Western performance tradition and Chinese theatre traditions. Neither *King Lear* nor the Chinese theatre form is fully presented on stage, but is mentally invoked by the connections I make between them. In addition, in the multiple embodied, enculturated, cognitive and visceral process of interpretation with which I engage, I alternate between seeing each from the other side. This interstitial position would be different from one spectator to another, changing as the production toured to China and the UK, and it is a spectatorial position peculiar to the demands that intercultural performance makes on its audiences.

3.3.3 Thematic Problematics

One of the main emphases in Tse's *King Lear* is the problem of communication between generations, a topic exacerbated by the older generation's belief in the father as a kind of 'king', i.e. an absolute authority, of the family. Set in an intercultural context, *King Lear* offered a good opportunity for Tse to explore 'the potential for misunderstanding between a Chinese Lear, with his Confucian values, and an English-educated Cordelia no longer fluent in her father's tongue and reduced to saying "nothing"'.⁴³⁷ The production therefore highlighted different values between generations reflected in the father–daughter relationships, and revolved tightly around the financial wars later mounted by Goneril and Regan against their father.

As intercultural adaptation generally reflects a local concern, Tse's *King Lear*, to some extent, 'embodied the anxieties of diasporic artists.'⁴³⁸ It sought a voice that is recognisable by both the British and the Chinese—and especially the British Chinese who have been struggling for their cultural identities for generations.⁴³⁹ In this fast

⁴³⁷ Arthur Jones, *China gets on Bard: 'Lear' features bilingual script, mixed cast* (2006), <<http://variety.com/2006/legit/news/china-gets-on-bard-1117953713/>> [accessed on 21 August 2014].

⁴³⁸ Huang, *Chinese Shakespeares: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange*, p. 15.

⁴³⁹ The first recorded Chinese in the UK, Shen Fu Tsong, was a celebrated guest at the court of James II in 1685. The British Chinese/East Asian (BC/EA) community grew during the twentieth century and at 1.6% is now the UK's third largest minority. Most British Chinese are descended from people who were themselves overseas Chinese when they came to Britain. Most are from former British colonies, such as Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. People from mainland China and Taiwan and their descendants constitute a relatively minor proportion of the British Chinese community. Compared to most ethnic minorities in the UK, the Chinese are socioeconomically more widespread and decentralised, have a record of high

globalising world, struggles for identity have emerged as one of the most striking characteristics of the social, cultural and political scene. The ethnic diasporas of globalisation have to deal with identity struggles of their own. They have to incorporate the transnational experience of displacement, disembeddedness, adaptation to and hybridisation with the culture of their host societies in their identities. For many migrants this process of identity formation and reformation is aided to some degree by the availability of the electronic media and information and communication technologies that provide a link to their “home” communities. However, their communities of origin can offer little help in the lived experience of hybridity—the migrant’s so-called “double vision” that often leads to feelings of not belonging to any community or culture and the longing for the recovering of the cultural purity that has been lost.⁴⁴⁰

This production was not only about miscommunication, but also celebrated a longing for contemporary universality, filtered through a particular cultural experience, which could then be applied to more universal experience. It provided a chance for the East Asian actors to perform the classics, a chance to be heard. The play is close to the heart of the Chinese-British director David Tse, who believes that *Lear* speaks strongly of diaspora artists and audiences who maintain links, but are unable fully to communicate, with their families residing in their home countries. In an interview, Tse says, ‘There are misunderstandings in a family of immigrants where the elder immigrants have difficulties in communicating with their children.’⁴⁴¹ One of the barriers within the immigrant families, such as the overseas Chinese ones, is perhaps language. While the younger generation are fluent in the native tongue, their parents, the first-generation immigrants, usually have problems. Tse’s approach in directing *King Lear* was informed by his own personal relationship with his parents.⁴⁴² In particular, his experiences of growing up in an immigrant Chinese family in Britain were pivotal for his individual connection to *King Lear*. At

academic achievement, and have one of the highest household incomes among demographic groups in the UK. In the 1950s, the first wave of Chinese economic migrants arrived in the UK. Many of these families are now in their second and third generations. This new generation of British Chinese face issues of identity and belonging.

⁴⁴⁰ Farrel Corcoran, ‘The Refugee Challenge for Ireland: Cultural Globalisation or Identity Crisis?’, *Media Development*, 3 (1998), pp.3-6.

⁴⁴¹ See Lia Wen-Ching Liang, ‘Negotiating New Terrains: Yellow Earth Theatre’s *Lear’s Daughters* and *King Lear*’, *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 19.3 (2009), 289-297. Information in this paragraph is taken from Lia Wen-Ching Liang’s interview with Tse on 24 May 2007.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*

the age of eleven, Tse suddenly stopped talking with his father, even though Tse had previously enjoyed their conversations. Only when Tse was older was he able to understand that his inarticulacy in his mother tongue was the cause of his behaviour. While his father could not speak English well, Tse gradually began to forget his Cantonese as he grew up. Because of his linguistic limitations, Tse was afraid that he might say something inappropriate and unintentionally anger his father, and he therefore resorted to speaking little or not at all to his father. Drawing from his own family's circumstances, Tse felt an affinity to Cordelia, who chooses to bite her tongue and say nothing. He also saw parallels between Lear and his father. Using the experience inherited from his family, David Tse wished to communicate to his British audience about the East.

Tse's *King Lear* deliberately juxtaposed fragments from different cultures and in this respect, its bilingual feature deserves closer attention. It was true that, in the love-test scene, Cordelia's incompetence in spoken Mandarin was suggested to be the reason for both her manner and Lear's initial anger towards her, which in Shakespeare's play, according to Tse, was 'triggered by miscommunication'.⁴⁴³ Yet, examined more closely, the love-test scene in Tse's *King Lear* was in fact the only part in the production that presented a coherent and convincing example of intergenerational miscommunications caused by linguistic difference. Within the first few minutes of the performance, the production had established a communication mode that switched between two spoken languages. It would thus be somewhat misleading to argue that the bilingual feature actually only served the purpose of depicting miscommunication, when conversation always occurred quite smoothly onstage.⁴⁴⁴ In the broader picture, the linguistic plurality of this production can be said to be part of Tse's effort to depict a cosmopolitan, intercultural and technologically advanced setting that was suggested to be Shanghai in 2020. For example, the activities conducted during the financial wars that constituted the play's battle scenes were shown with projected visual installations of changing currencies, and therefore effectively and clearly presented moments in which we could observe onstage, to use Appadurai's terms, the technoscapes and finance-scapes in global

⁴⁴³ Programme notes.

⁴⁴⁴ Nevertheless, while the conversations onstage flowed well in two languages, according to Tse, the early stages of rehearsal were a challenge for all involved. The rehearsal script was printed bilingually, but a translator was needed initially to cope with the language barriers.

flows.⁴⁴⁵

Tse's efforts to employ a wide array of cultural references in order to portray an intercultural scenario might seem to evoke a term from Gilbert and Lo—'cultural cosmopolitanism': a disposition marked by 'openness to divergent cultural influences *as well as* practices of navigating across cultural boundaries'.⁴⁴⁶ Nevertheless, amid the intended transformations there was one dimension that was ostensibly missing—namely, the potential political associations of the original play. The direction of the opening love-test scene is illustrative in this aspect. Terence Hawkes suggests that the 'emblematic force' of Shakespeare's *King Lear* is witnessed during the staged map-reading and the accompanying territorial partition of the kingdom in the opening scene.⁴⁴⁷ For William Dodd, the political relevance of a fictional English king fragmenting his territories was that it 'reflects and refracts' both Elizabethan and Jacobean monarchic politics vis-à-vis landlordship.⁴⁴⁸ Dan Brayton argues that Lear's decision to divide his kingdom ultimately 'leads to a stunningly bald demystification of sovereignty as an institution of spatial domination'.⁴⁴⁹ And, in the context of Chinese politics, as Rossella Ferrari comments, such issues in *Lear* can be taken as inadvertent 'allegories of inter-Chinese power balances' that are fraught with internal conflicts as well as the risk of dissolution.⁴⁵⁰ However, the political theme of territorial division and the disintegration of a kingdom was not made clear in Tse's *King Lear*. The result, as discussed above, was an interpretation of the *Lear* story in terms of family events and financial wars. Gone were the idiom of national territories and the famous map-reading scene. Instead, sibling rivalries and intergenerational gaps were presented against the backdrop of stiff competition in profit-driven capitalism. Goneril and Regan were credited with Chinese *renminbi* and US dollars at the end of their love tests, while British pounds were taken out from Cordelia's bank account in London. Near the end of the production, the final battlefield was changed from Dover to the Shanghai Stock

⁴⁴⁵ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

⁴⁴⁶ Helen Gilbert and Jacqueline Lo, *Performance and Cosmopolitanism: Cross-Cultural Transactions in Australia* (Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 8.

⁴⁴⁷ Terence Hawkes, *Meaning by Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.121.

⁴⁴⁸ William Dodd, 'Impossible Worlds: What Happens in *King Lear*, Act 1, Scene 1?', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 50.4 (1999), 477-507 (p. 481).

⁴⁴⁹ Dan Brayton, 'Angling in the Lake of Darkness: Possession, Dispossession, and the Politics of Discovery in *King Lear*', *ELH*, 70 (2003), 399-426 (p. 400).

⁴⁵⁰ Rossella Ferrari, 'Transnation/transmedia/transtext: Border-crossing from Screen to Stage in Greater China', *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, 2.1 (2008), 52-65 (p. 61).

Exchange Centre, where a spectacular financial war was being waged between ‘Lear International’ led by Cordelia, and the joint force of the ‘Goneril Group’ and ‘Regan Regina’.

With *Lear* rendered in this way, the potential political associations regarding territorial disintegration were carefully and systematically sifted out. Such a choice may be understandable in the light of the political stance of China on the independence movements in, for example, Tibet and Taiwan.⁴⁵¹ Indeed, the stakes would have become very high if Tse had staged in present-day Shanghai a drama suggestive of a division of modern China, a sensitive scenario that would ensure controversy and risk alienating the political authorities as well as the general public.⁴⁵² This adaptation thus exhibited a process of depoliticisation that especially dispensed with the potentially offensive issue of territorial division, even as this strategy usefully helped to settle the story of *Lear* to a new terrain – namely, a futuristic Shanghai imagined as one of the world’s financial centres. On the other hand, this does not mean there was no political dimension at all in Tse’s *King Lear*. Indeed, the depiction of a multicultural and cosmopolitan Shanghai as one of the world’s financial centres that host important global events provided a vivid allegory of nationalistic pride with reference to the then on-going preparations for the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing. And, just like the case of the 2008 Olympic Games, the political dimension in *King Lear* was realigned in Tse’s production so that *universal values* packed with nationalistic subtexts could be showcased onstage. However, it is still worthwhile considering what was muted or marginalised under this agenda.

To sum up, Director David Tse’s *King Lear* was initially informed by his personal experiences as well as by his belief in the ‘universal aspects’ of the *Lear* story. The bilingual feature of Tse’s *King Lear*, and the free use of diverse cultural references helped to construct a cosmopolitan atmosphere that allowed the story of a ‘Chinese *Lear*’ to unfold in a globalised city. By engaging in such intercultural evocation, the production challenged the viewer to reconsider the conventionally

⁴⁵¹ A case in point is the Anti-Secession Law of China, which was ratified on 14 March 2005. The law formalised China’s policy that ‘non-peaceful means’ could be taken against Taiwan independence. For the significance of this law, see, for instance, Keyuan Zou, ‘Governing the Taiwan Issue in Accordance with Law: An Essay on China’s Anti-Secession Law’, *Chinese Journal of International Law*, 4 (2005), 455-63.

⁴⁵² Regarding the tight control exerted on media, literary works and performance arts in contemporary People’s Republic of China, see, among others, Eugene Perry Link, *The Uses of Literature: Life in the Socialist Chinese Literary System* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

accepted boundaries between cultures and successfully settled the story of Lear into a context that appeared receptive to cultural diversity. Nevertheless, such a portrayal is not without its own blindneses. As I have demonstrated, a kind of depoliticisation can be perceived in the omission of the scene of territorial division, important thematically in Shakespeare's play, and the substitution of the story of a disintegrating *business* empire. Such an adaptation not only pointed towards what a Chinese Lear may have meant for the director personally, but also highlighted constraints that perhaps have to surround attempts to stage a play such as *King Lear* in contemporary China.

3.4 Coda

This chapter has examined the history and current state of *huaju* adaptations of Shakespeare in China. Although Shakespeare does not rank as the most important playwright in shaping modern Chinese theatre, *huaju* is undoubtedly the most popular form of Shakespeare performance in China. As Li Ruru says, 'the story of Shakespeare in China is more about China than Shakespeare',⁴⁵³ Shakespeare in China has shifted and transfigured according to China's changing political and cultural circumstances. Chinese Shakespeare presents a very interesting example of how the study of intercultural Shakespeare performances in Asia cannot be removed from history, as China's transformation from a monarchy in the Qing Dynasty, to a Republic, and later to a Communist state has impacted the many re-presentations of Shakespeare in the past and influences the Shakespeare that China knows today. This reminds us that the change in theatre and the attitudes towards Shakespeare appropriations are always tied to political ideologies and cultural agendas, and do not represent straightforward examples of artistic progression.

As examples of *huaju* Shakespeares in twenty-first century China, Lin Zhaohua's *Coriolanus* and David Tse's bilingual *King Lear* illustrate the cultural encounter between the East and the West and inspire questions about individuals and their wider cultural identities. Incorporating resources from both Western and traditional Chinese theatre, Lin's *Coriolanus* shows that the intersection where the

⁴⁵³ Li Ruru, 'Millennium *Shashibiya*: Shakespeare in the Chinese-speaking World', in *Shakespeare in Asia: Contemporary Performance*, eds. by Dennis Kennedy and Yong Li Lan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 185.

East meets the West can bring out an extraordinarily new form of performance. The bilingual production of *King Lear* exemplifies how Chinese heritage can create Shakespeare in a way that enables both Chinese and British audiences to explore possibilities for the Western canon to reflect upon a foreign culture that is now integrated with the UK. Both productions explore the issue of personal and wider social and political identity through relating Shakespeare with contemporary life. Tse saw the question of identity in an age of linguistic globalisation as one without fixed answers; while Lin's *Coriolanus* told the tale of a lonely individual alienated by modern society. The two productions not only demonstrate the opportunities afforded by the hundred-year development of Chinese spoken drama, but also point towards the new direction of contemporary China and Chinese modern theatre.

Chapter 4 Sinicizing the Bard: Shakespeare in Traditional Chinese Operas

Over the past three decades, adaptations of Shakespeare in *xiqu* (traditional Chinese opera) have attracted Western audiences with their stage charms: arresting music, elegant acting styles, fantastic dance and acrobatics, and gorgeous costumes. Few adaptations of Shakespeare seem to Western eyes as extreme as the transfers into traditional Chinese theatre, while back in China these productions have successfully engaged audiences formerly uninterested in traditional theatre and provoked intercultural discussions. The artistically conscious endeavor of Sinicizing Shakespeare as Chinese opera began in the mid-1980s, and *Macbeth* has been a favourite for Sinicized adaptations. Among the nine *Macbeth* productions that have been made in Mainland China so far, six are adaptations into the various genres of Chinese opera.⁴⁵⁴ Li Ruru, who has written extensively on China's Shakespeare, in an essay reviewed several *Macbeth* productions and analysed how they reflect the adapters' individual personalities, artistic experiences, and theatrical and generic backgrounds.⁴⁵⁵ Equally important, these adaptations also epitomize the distinct sociopolitical and cultural situations of Mainland China since the 1980s. This chapter examines three adaptations—the *kunju* opera *Xie shou ji* 血手记 (*Blood-stained Hands*), the *yueju* opera *Ma Long jiangjun* 马龙将军 (*General Ma Long*), and the Sichuan opera *Makebai furen* 马克白夫人 (*Lady Macbeth*)—with a focus on their subtle transfiguration of thematic emphases, philosophical concerns and ethical sentiments, as well as their dramatic techniques of adaptation. The chapter starts with a historical overview of Shakespeare on the Chinese opera stage. The second part

⁴⁵⁴ The nine *Macbeth* productions in Mainland China are: 1) *Heros of the Turmoil* (*Luan shi yingxiong*), spoken drama adaptation, Bitter Toilers Drama School, 1945; 2) *Macbeth*, spoken drama, Central Academy of Drama, 1980; 3) *Macbeth*, radio play, Shanghai People's Broadcasting Station, 1986; 4) *Blood-stained Hands* (*Xue shou ji*), *kunju* adaptation, Shanghai *Kunju* Company, 1986; 5) *The King of the Turmoil* (*Luanshi wang*), *jingju* adaptation, Wuhan City *Jingju* Company, 1986; 6) *The Bloody Sword* (*Xue jian*), *wuju* adaptation, *Wuju* Small Hundred Flowers, Dongyang Company, 1987; 7) *King Dian's Dream* (*Dianwang meng*), *dianju* adaptation, Kunming City *Dianju* Company, 2000; 8) *General Ma Long* (*Ma Long jiangjun*), *yueju* adaptation, Zhejiang Shaoxing Xiaobaihua *Yueju* Opera Troupe, 2001; 9) *Lady Macbeth* (*Makebai furen*), *chuanju* adaptation, Sichuan Youth *Chuanju* Opera Company, 2001.

⁴⁵⁵ Li Ruru, 'A Drum! A Drum! *Macbeth* doth come! —When Birnam wood moved to China', *Shakespeare Survey*, 57 (October 2004), 169-85 (p.177).

looks at the reasons for the interest in adapting Shakespeare to Chinese opera during the past three decades. Part Three analyses the problems encountered by adapters and their artistic strategies. Part Four is a close examination of the above mentioned three operatic adaptations of *Macbeth*. The three adaptations illustrate that *Macbeth*'s encounter with Chinese audiences has been hugely influenced by the rapid socio-political-economic changes in Mainland China over the past thirty years. Set in this context, this part compares each of the three adaptations' distinct approaches toward matters such as the interpretation of Shakespeare's characters, the strategy for presenting the philosophical issues, restructuring the original play for the operatic genre, the creation of arias, the performers' gestures, movements, makeup and costumes, and the *mise-en-scène*.

4.1 Shakespeare on the Chinese Opera Stage: An Overview

Before the introduction of Western-influenced spoken drama via Japan in the early twentieth century, Chinese drama was sung. For this reason, it is often referred to as *xiqu* 戏曲, or Chinese opera. *Xiqu* approximates total theatre⁴⁵⁶ as it combines music, speech, pantomime, dance, acrobatics, martial art and pageantry. In lieu of verbal signs—monologues and dialogues—it is arias, percussive beats, elaborate body movements and colours that constitute the most eloquent vehicles of dramatic expression. Performance is highly codified and stylized in every aspect: minimal stage setting, symbolic props, anachronistic costume, anti-naturalist face painting, standardized character types and stylized acting. Distinct from Western realist and naturalistic theatres, traditional Chinese theatre is self-consciously anti-illusionary, excessively theatrical and is characterized by what Brecht has called 'the alienation effect'⁴⁵⁷. Statistics show that besides the best-known *jingju* 京剧 (Peking opera) there are over three hundred regional operas in various parts of China today, usually named after their provinces and areas. Although these national and regional theatres share many common qualities, it is misleading to obscure the enormous differences

⁴⁵⁶ Total theatre is a term much used in the twentieth century to describe performance that draws upon and exploits numerous artistic devices—music, dance, acting, scenography and the plastic arts, costume, masks, lighting, playhouse architecture, the configuration of the stage and auditorium, and spectator environment—to create a powerful or overwhelming experience for the audience.

⁴⁵⁷ Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. by John Willett (London: Methuen, 1978), pp. 91-99.

among them and to consider Chinese opera as a unified and standardized theatre. Yu Qiuyu, former president of the Shanghai Theatre Academy and a prominent scholar and writer, has argued that each of the operatic theatres has its own ‘cultural ecology’, reflecting the unique history, geography and customs of its region. An innate quality, an ‘easily identifiable aesthetic structure’, makes a particular theatre irreplaceable by other theatres.⁴⁵⁸ The chief difference between them lies in their use of diverse local dialects and unique melody patterns.

In the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368), a style of theatre known as *zaju* 杂剧 was popular and highly influential during subsequent developments in Chinese theatre. In the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), Chinese drama reached new heights with the advent of *kunju* 昆剧, the music of which was dominated by the Chinese transverse flute, or *dizi* 笛子. *Kunju* was developed in the area of Kunshan near the town of Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, in eastern China. What is usually considered to be the greatest of *kunju* dramas, *Mudan ting* 牡丹亭 (The *Peony Pavilion*), was written during the Ming dynasty in 1588, around the same time as Shakespeare’s *Love’s Labour’s Lost*. Tang Xianzu (1550-1616), author of the *Peony Pavilion*, was an almost exact contemporary of William Shakespeare (1564-1616). The sophisticated style of *kunju* was enjoyed by the Chinese elite. *Jingju* (Peking Opera) developed from 1790 when opera troupes from Anhui Province were invited into the capital to perform for the Emperor Qianlong’s (r. 1736-1796) eightieth birthday celebrations. Peking Opera became an entertainment for the wealthy and privileged but eventually came to be appreciated by all levels of society by the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Meanwhile, regional operas also flourished with lyrics sung in local dialects. In the early twentieth century, new styles emerged which were heavily influenced by existing forms of drama, including those from the West, for example *yueju* 越剧 of the Shanghai area, also known as Shaoxing opera. *Xiqu* suffered gravely during the Cultural Revolution (1966–76), when it was almost completely banned, and since then has found itself eclipsed by modern forms of entertainment. Still, it survives today as a classical art, honoured and appreciated for its significant place in China’s traditional culture.

The adaptation and staging of Shakespeare in Chinese opera can be traced back

⁴⁵⁸ 余秋雨, ‘文化视野中的越剧’, *戏剧艺术* [Yu Qiuyu, ‘Yue Opera in Cultural Perspective’, *Drama Art*], 4 (1993).

to the early twentieth century. In 1914, Wang Guoren from the Ya'an area in Sichuan Province recreated *Hamlet* as an indigenous *chuanju* 川剧, or Sichuan opera, which is 'famous for its face-changing performance skills and high-voice arias'.⁴⁵⁹ He gave it the title '*Sha xiong duo sao* 杀兄夺嫂' (Killing the Elder Brother and Marrying His Wife). The opera was unexpectedly well received by the audience, which was perhaps mostly interested in the alluring plots and the spectacular ending when the evil and immoral king was finally killed. Similar to the early *huaaju* (spoken drama) in China when actors acted extempore on the synopsis of the play without a script or rehearsal, early opera appropriations were only inspired by Shakespeare into rough hasty work.

Between the 1980s and 1990s, there emerged a spurt of Shakespeare adaptations into traditional Chinese operas. In the 1980s, having liberated from the ideological oppression and confinement of the Cultural Revolution, China started reforms and opened itself to the outside world. In April 1986, the First Chinese Shakespeare Festival was held grandly in both Beijing and Shanghai. A Shakespeare craze swept the country—proof that China had the social conditions and a large number of audiences to accept the Bard. Twenty-eight Shakespeare productions were presented simultaneously in Beijing and Shanghai: sixteen were in Shanghai and twelve were in Beijing, with a total of 102 performances altogether. Twenty-three different companies at a dozen theatres performed eighteen different plays of Shakespeare, attracting an audience of more than one hundred thousand.⁴⁶⁰ There was no precedent of an activity with such scale and variety in the history of Shakespeare performance, which was the reason why the late professor Philip Brockbank called it 'Shakespeare Renaissance in China'.⁴⁶¹ At the first Chinese Shakespeare Festival, five of Shakespeare's plays were adapted and staged in traditional Chinese theatrical forms, of which the most important was the *kunju* version of *Macbeth* (retitled *Xie shou ji* [Blood-stained Hands]). In the 1990s even more Shakespeare plays were adapted to traditional Chinese theatrical forms, such as the Shaoxing *yueju* version of *Hamlet*—*Wangzi fuchou ji* 王子复仇记 (The Revenge of the Prince), presented at

⁴⁵⁹ Wu Hui, 'Adapting Shakespeare from Western Drama to Chinese Opera', *Shakespeare in Southern Africa*, 20 (2008), 1-11 (p.4).

⁴⁶⁰ Zhang Xiao Yang, *Shakespeare in China: A Comparative Study of Two Traditions and Cultures* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996), p.115.

⁴⁶¹ J. Philip Brockbank, 'Shakespeare Renaissance in China', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 39.2 (1988), 195-204.

the 1994 Shanghai International Shakespeare Festival, and the *jingju* version of *King Lear*—*Qiwang meng* 岐王梦 (King Qi's Dream), staged by the Shanghai Jingju Theatre Company in 1995. Obviously the two Shakespeare festivals occasioned by a short-lived renaissance of drama after the 1966-76 turmoil of the Cultural Revolution fanned up the enthusiasm of appropriators, who were helped by a few surviving senior Shakespearean scholars trained in English or in the West. Since 1996, though a third Shakespeare festival has never come as expected, still eleven Shakespeare productions have been made in various opera styles, the most recent one being Cantonese *yueju* 粤剧 *Haomen qianjin* 豪门千金 (*The Merchant of Venice*) in 2007.

So far, Shakespeare has been presented in more than a dozen Chinese operatic forms.⁴⁶² Some adaptations use episodes from Shakespeare, others the entire drama. The operatic adaptations are heavy on Shakespeare's tragedies and comedies but none on his histories, which are perhaps hard to be politically correct to pass through the state censorship in China, much the same as the state censorship of many histories in the Eastern-bloc. In addition, it seems that some of Shakespeare's plays merge better with Chinese operas than others. *Hamlet* and *King Lear* have been more favoured by Chinese operatic adapters than other Shakespearean plays. *Macbeth* has been by far the most performed on the Chinese opera stage, totalling six adaptations in different genres of the traditional music theatre.

4.2 Why Sinicization of Shakespeare?

In the Western discourse about intercultural theatre, the focus is usually on Western artists' encounters with the cultural other, as represented in the works of Bertolt Brecht, Jerzy Grotowski, Peter Brook, Richard Schechner, Eugenio Barba, and others. Thus a common criticism, in the wake of Edward Said's seminal 1978 book *Orientalism*, is that cross-cultural adaptations reflect colonialist and post-colonialist power configurations, and often take advantage of non-Western cultures.

⁴⁶² They include the *jingju* (Beijing opera) *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear* and *A Midsummer's Night Dream*; the *yueju* or *Shaoxing* opera (Shenxian tunes) *King Lear*, *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Hamlet*, *Measure for Measure* and *Macbeth*; the other *yueju* opera (Cantonese tunes) *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Twelfth Night*, *Macbeth* and *The Merchant of Venice*; the *yu* opera and *errenzhuan* opera (*yuju* and *errenzhuan*) *Romeo and Juliet*; the *kunju* (*kun* opera) *Macbeth*; the *huangmei* opera (*huangmeixi*) *Much Ado About Nothing*; the *sixian* opera (*sixian xi*) *King Lear*; the *Hebei bangzi* opera (*Hebei bangzi*) *Hamlet*; the *Xiang* opera (*Xiangju*) *The Merchant of Venice*; and the *Sichuan* opera (*Chuanju*) *Hamlet* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

Following Said, Rustom Bharucha writes:

I also see the fascination for ‘other’ cultures by western interculturalists—and ‘fascination’ is a key word—emerging from a fundamental dissatisfaction with their own cultural resources. Indeed, one could argue that interculturalism was born out of a certain ennui, a reaction to aridity and the subsequent search for new sources of energy, vitality and sensuality through the importation of ‘rejuvenating materials’. We need to question the implication of this importation for the ‘other’ (non-western) cultures themselves. It is all very well to be rejuvenated, but at what cost? And at whose expense? ⁴⁶³

Here Bharucha criticizes Western interculturalists’ adaptation of the materials as well as the styles of non-Western cultures. Yet his analysis in the first half of the quotation can also be applied to the Chinese practice of adapting Western materials, specifically when Chinese theatre people used Shakespeare’s stories and characters to help rejuvenate their own theatre in the twentieth century. Bharucha might argue that Asians’ use of Western texts and styles should not be called adaptation, because in many cases throughout the history of colonialism, various Western cultural products, from the Bible to Shakespeare to Hollywood movies, were imposed on non-Western peoples. However, in China things are slightly different: China was not colonized in the way that India was, and oftentimes the Chinese have actively reached out to procure Western cultural products they deemed useful. In the twentieth century, Chinese theatre people used Shakespeare’s stories and characters to rejuvenate their own theatre. Their goals were to learn Western ways and make China competitive against Western powers, as well as to enrich the cultural life of the Chinese people.

The past three decades have witnessed a growing interest in adapting Shakespeare to *xiqu*. The reasons are manifold. Beginning in the early 1980s, audiences for *xiqu* declined progressively as television, film, popular music and other modern media became more widely available. Meanwhile, Chinese scholars and stage directors wanted to seek means of revitalizing Chinese opera, injecting fresh blood to it and drawing new audiences for them. Shakespeare was recognized as a renowned Western author performed throughout much of the world; productions based on his plays offered prestige and international cachet and were therefore a

⁴⁶³ Rustom Bharucha, ‘Somebody’s Other: Disorientations in the Cultural Politics of Our Times’, in *The Intercultural Performance Reader*, ed. by Patrice Pavis (London: Routledge, 1996), pp.196-212 (p.207).

potential draw for both audiences and funding. Because some of the circumstances and actions found in Shakespeare's plays have no standard *xiqu* conventions for their portrayal, innovations in performance were needed and it was believed that such innovations also had the potential to draw new audiences. In contrast to modern and contemporary Western adaptations of Shakespeare (by Brecht, Eugène Ionesco, Edward Bond, Tom Stoppard, Heiner Müller, Charles Marowitz) that were made to rediscover or reinvent Shakespeare's modernity and contemporaneity,⁴⁶⁴ the Chinese adaptations went to the opposite direction in an attempt to find or identify Shakespeare's historicity in ancient Chinese culture and history. Adapted and reconstructed in traditional Chinese theatrical forms, Shakespeare's plays were displaced and Sinicized into the framework that was nourished, crystallized and shaped by Chinese history, culture and ideology. Besides, the fact that Shakespeare was 'one of the favourite writers of both Marx and Engels' and was frequently cited in their writings gave the adaptations of his plays a Marxist ideological and political cover in China. Marx's argument for "Shakespearization" in contrast to "Schillerism" has been considered in China one of the core tenets of Marxist literary theory. Chinese directors could act with 'less risk of offending Marxist ideology as a whole.'⁴⁶⁵ With China's fast growing economic and political impact on the international stage, the Sinicization of Shakespeare has also been partly driven by the lure of international festivals and global market. The possibility of invitations to tour abroad has influenced some theatre companies to stage adaptations of Shakespeare. This is perhaps best exemplified by the *kunju Macbeth*'s appearance at the 1987 Edinburgh Festival and its subsequent tour of a number of major British cities, which unquestionably helped establish the perception of it as the finest Chinese adaptation of Shakespeare to date. Another example is the *jingju* adaptation of *Hamlet* produced by the Shanghai *Jingju* Theatre Company, which was specially proposed and designed for the Hamlet Festival at Kronborg Castle in Helsingor, Denmark in 2005, sponsored by Hamlet Sommor, a Danish cultural organization. It was later staged in Amsterdam of the Netherlands.

The adaptation of Shakespeare into traditional Chinese theatre may bring forth

⁴⁶⁴ Ruby Cohn, *Modern Shakespeare Offshoots* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976); Tian Min, *Shashibiya yu xiandai xiju: Cong Henglike Yibusheng dao Haina Mile* [Shakespeare and Modern Drama: From Henrik Ibsen to Heiner Müller] (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 2006)

⁴⁶⁵ Li Ruru, 'The Bard in the Middle Kingdom', *Asian Theatre Journal*, 12.1 (1995), 50-84 (p.75).

productive intercultural fertilization to both Shakespeare and Chinese theatre. Shakespearean drama reflects an ‘intimate attentiveness to life’⁴⁶⁶ which traditional Chinese theatre considerably lacks and which the post-Cultural Revolution China has strongly sought to create in its art after years of cultural repression, distortion and isolation. In return, traditional Chinese theatre may help restore what has largely been missed in many Western Shakespeare performances since the dark interpretation of Jan Kott became seminal—the celebratory, public atmosphere in a theatrical event.⁴⁶⁷ In addition, the ever-present socio-political focus in Chinese interpretation of Shakespeare will continually place the meanings of his play in a larger social and cultural context and grant these classical texts a topicality that is often lost in the West.⁴⁶⁸ As German scholar Robert Weimann observes, modern Shakespeare performance is always characterized by a tension between ‘past significance and present meaning...between Renaissance values and modern evaluations’.⁴⁶⁹ While Shakespeare may discover a sense of congeniality in Chinese theatrical expressions, the Chinese can also find Shakespeare a true *contemporary*.

4.3 Sinicizing Shakespeare: Problems and Strategies

Scholars have noticed the fact that, of all the foreign plays ever staged as Chinese local operas, Shakespeare’s plays have formed the highest percentage. This might not be accidental. Shakespearean plays might be less difficult to adapt into Chinese local operatic forms than most other foreign plays. Professor Xu Qiping of the Shanghai Theatre Academy, who directed several Shakespearean plays, including *Romeo and Juliet* and *Titus Andronicus*, says:

I found Shakespeare’s plays and traditional Chinese operas have much in common and surprisingly resemble each other. For example, the multi-scene structures, the free handling of stage time and space, the actor-oriented performance, the use of monologue and asides, and the full display of the principle of artistic supposition without overemphasizing the verisimilitude of scenes, events as well as characters.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁶ Brockbank, ‘Shakespeare Renaissance in China’, p.195.

⁴⁶⁷ Brockbank, ‘Shakespeare Renaissance in China’, p.203.

⁴⁶⁸ cf. *Foreign Shakespeare: Contemporary Performance* ed. by Dennis Kennedy (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), pp. 297-300.

⁴⁶⁹ Robert Weimann, ‘Shakespeare on the Modern Stage: Past Significance and Present Meaning’, *Shakespeare Survey*, 20 (1967), 113-120 (p.115).

⁴⁷⁰ Xu Qiping, ‘The Director’s Notes to *Romeo and Juliet*’, *Shashibiya yanjiu* 莎士比亚研究

As Xu says, there exist many similarities between Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese operas as far as their concepts of theatre are concerned. Both are based upon the concept of "supposition" rather than upon that of "verisimilitude". They do not attempt to create an illusion of reality but rather admit that they try to affect the audience with fictitious roles and events. This theatrical concept leads to great freedom in handling stage space and time; as Gower says in *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*:

Thus time we waste, and long leagues make short;
Sail seas in cockles, have and wish but for't,
Making, to take our imagination,
From bourn to bourn, region to region. (4.4.1-4)⁴⁷¹

In the use of sets and props, both Shakespeare's plays and Chinese operas tend to be allusive—simple stage properties and sets can signify many *real* occasions and things. The two types of theatre also have similarities in performing skills, in that both are symbolic in performance, and that both try to establish direct contact with the audience through asides and monologues. Structurally, both Shakespeare's plays and Chinese operas adopt *open* structure in most cases rather than the *closed* one; i.e., both employ multi-scenes and multi-acts, both suggest the possibility that the story related in the plays might be continued, and so on.

Despite these very affinities, there are, of course, difficulties in adapting and performing Shakespearean plays in Chinese local operatic forms, and many problems must be solved if they are to be accepted by the Chinese audience. When Shakespearean plays were adapted and acted as Chinese operas, they were often reset in ancient China, with the *dramatis personae* transformed into Chinese emperors, kings, generals, ministers, princes, maids of honour and so on. The Shakespearean plays thus became typical Chinese historical plays. This approach of adaptation, which I call the 'sinicized mode,' was based on two assumptions: first, it could make full use of traditional Chinese operatic forms with their performing patterns, skills, devices and techniques, so that the actors might have something to borrow from and rely on; secondly, it could make the Shakespearean plays more

(Shakespeare Studies), 1 (1984), 1.

⁴⁷¹ William Shakespeare, *Pericles, The Prince of Tyre*, ed. by Suzanne Gossett (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2004)

accessible to the general audience of Chinese local operas.

These assumptions are reasonable. Chinese operas, unlike Western operas include synthesized acting, dance, acrobatics, music and fine arts (makeup and costumes). There are conventional character-types of *sheng* (males), *dan* (females), *jing* (hot-tempered males with painted face), *mo* (old males) and *chou* (clowns), each with a separate code of behaviour based on age, sex, personality and status in society. The actors and actresses employ a whole set of highly stylized movements, symbolic gestures, unique tunes and various performing patterns and devices. During the long years of their development, various schools of performance have evolved, differentiated mainly by their styles of singing. Modern Chinese opera players usually follow one of these schools, thus acquiring a unique style. Since classical Chinese operas usually centre on the characters and events of ancient China, all the performing patterns and skills have been developed to suit the particular content. The actors and actresses are accustomed to these old patterns and devices of performance which cannot be readily applied to modern plays. As Shakespeare's plays deal with foreign characters and events, it would be even more difficult to apply to them the stereotyped performing patterns and skills of Chinese operas.

In spite of the difficulties in adapting Shakespeare into *xiqu*, if the adapters and artists are able to overcome the challenges, the resulting performances can be successful. The Chinese approach of sinicizing and presenting Shakespeare in full *xiqu* forms, first of all, observes the dramaturgy of *xiqu*, transforming Shakespeare's plays into *xiqu*'s musical and dramatic structure, with the plays reset in ancient China and divided into some loosely related episodes that summarize the basic stories and arguments of the original plays, and with their characters given Chinese names and wearing Chinese costumes.

An important issue for the adapters is to create situations for arias, because singing is the most important component in *xiqu*. Looking at the six operatic adaptations of *Macbeth*, the principal arias tend to be arranged at the following points: the conspiracy scene, with either a soliloquy sung by Macbeth expressing his inner conflicts or a duet between the couple; before or after the assassination; the banquet scene; and Lady Macbeth's final hand-washing scene. The rule by which singing is organized in a play derives from the ancient theory of poetry: 'The affections are stirred within and take on form in words. If words alone are inadequate, we speak them out in sighs. If sighing is inadequate, we sing them. If singing them is

inadequate, unconsciously our hands dance them and our feet tap them.’⁴⁷² Hence, the singing has to originate from the character’s inner emotions.

Arias are sung in a very different way from Western opera. Apart from the musical instruments and the use of percussion, Chinese operatic performers always accompany their arias with sequences of spectacular body movements. These movements typically exploit traditional features of the costumes, such as long sleeves, boots with high platforms, plumes or pompoms on the helmets, as well as the make-up, beards and hair, and props such as fans and swords. It is worth noting that all the adaptations changed Macbeth’s dagger to a Chinese sword. Daggers rarely appear on the traditional Chinese opera stage, perhaps because the shape and smallness of a dagger offer performers little opportunity for dances or gestures. Swords, on the contrary, are widely employed and there are numerous sets of conventional body movements and dances for using swords in both male and female roles.

Moreover, to adapt spoken drama into opera, it is necessary to streamline the play and cut minor roles and even subplots to leave room for arias, duets and choruses. In the 1995 *jingju* version of *King Lear* (retitled *Qiwang Meng* [*King Qi’s Dream*]), the Gloucester family was reduced to Edmund, who is hanged by the dying Lear in the end, without mentioning he is a bastard. Apart from cutting, there are always significant additions or alterations. For instance, the *jingju* version of *King Lear* starts with the celebration of King Lear’s eightieth birthday, at which the manifestation of love is mixed, for bidding, with the plan to govern the divided kingdom. Cordelia acts with foresight to bravely dissuade her father’s rash decision, sided by Kent who remains silent until the king disowns his own daughter. In the 1994 Shaoxing *yueju* version of *Hamlet* (retitled *Wangzi fuchou ji* [*The Prince’s Revenge*]), the eavesdropping of Polonius in Gertrude’s chamber is prolonged. His shout to betray his hiding comes near the end of the scene when Hamlet asks his mother not to sleep with his uncle again and pledges to kill the usurper. His belated death, together with the immediate arrival of Claudius is believed to help intensify the conflict.

A Shakespearean play features a large, male-dominated cast, but Chinese operas, with a small but typified cast, often stereotype them. The 1983 *jingju* *Othello* had to

⁴⁷² Stephan Owen, ‘Great Preface’ (*Ta-hsü*) to *Book of Songs (Shi Ching): Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Cambridge, MA, 1992), p. 41.

codify a typical Shakespearean role but not so typified in Chinese opera—Iago. The solution seemed to amalgamate the codification of *chou* 丑 (clown) and *laosheng* 老生 (old male) character types. The rearrangement presented difficulties for the actor, as opera actors are traditionally trained all their life in the canon of one stock codification only. Even if the characters happen to favour the cast, the actor oftentimes has to combine different stock stereotypes of singing and acting to show the character's individual psychological development, such is the case of Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* (1985) in Shaoxing yueju.

4.4 Three Operatic Adaptations of *Macbeth* in China

By reviewing certain aspects of three operatic adaptations of *Macbeth*, the analysis below examines what artistic techniques have been adopted by the adapters and how essential meanings may metamorphose in such Sinicized adaptations.

4.4.1 AN 'OUT-AND-OUT SINICIZED,'⁴⁷³ POETIC *KUNJU MACBETH*: *Xie shou ji* (*Blood-stained Hands*), Shanghai *Kunju* Theatre, adapted by Zheng Shifeng, directed by Li Jiayao, Shen Bin and Zhang Mingrong; artistic director, Huang Zuolin, premiered in Shanghai in 1986.

At the first Chinese Shakespeare Festival in 1986, five of Shakespeare's plays were adapted and staged in different genres of traditional Chinese opera,⁴⁷⁴ among which the most outstanding was the *kunju* version of *Macbeth* by the Shanghai *Kunju* Theatre titled *Xie shou ji* 血手记 (*Blood-stained Hands*). It came to Britain for the 1987 Edinburgh Festival and later toured Manchester, Birmingham, Cardiff, and London. Well received at home, it won prolonged applause, too, from the foreign audiences, who were, of course, familiar with Shakespeare's story, but unfamiliar with Chinese opera. *Blood-stained Hands* retains the story of *Macbeth*, but totally changes in form and becomes an excellent Chinese opera. Understanding what this intercultural version implies could well compel us to relocate ourselves as readers of texts and interpreters of culture. My critique will be based on the video of the

⁴⁷³ Zhang Xiao Yang, p.157.

⁴⁷⁴ They include *Macbeth* in *kunju* opera, *Much Ado About Nothing* in *huangmei* opera, *The Winter's Tale* and *Twelfth Night* in Shaoxing yueju opera, and *Othello* in Beijing opera.

performance in 1986, and will refer to the responses to this performance in Britain. I wish to show that this Sinicized performance contributes to the contemporary reappraisal of Shakespeare's work, and that it forces us to look again at the differences and possible conjunctions between Western and Chinese theatre.



Figure 12 Ji Zhenhua as Ma Pei (Macbeth) and Zhang Jingxian as Tie Shi (Lady Macbeth). *kunju Blood-stained Hands/Macbeth* (1986). Photo courtesy of Shanghai Kunju Theatre.

Originating from the Kunshan area of Jiangsu Province in Ming Dynasty, having a history of over four hundred years, *kunju* (or *kunqu*, Kun opera)⁴⁷⁵ is regarded as the oldest surviving form of Chinese opera. It was fully developed by the end of the sixteenth century. The golden age of *kunju* is almost the same epoch as Shakespeare's time, and it is coincidence that the *kunju* playwright Tang Xianzu (1550-1616) died in the same year as Shakespeare. In its art form, *kunju* combines

⁴⁷⁵ Bearing in mind that there may be a confusion regarding the usage of terms *kunju* (昆剧) and *kunqu* (昆曲), there is a need to clarify the usage here. In Chinese, the term *kunju* is more related to the form, whereas the term *kunqu* indicates both the form and the music. This thesis will use *kunju* instead of *kunqu* throughout unless there is a special concern with *kunju*'s music.

drama, opera, ballet, poetry and music recital, as well as elements from earlier Chinese theatre such as mime, farce, acrobatics, ballad recitals, and medleys. The spoken sections in *kunju* are broken up by traditional melody arias called *qupai*, with gestures coordinating with the music and percussion. *Kunju* uses minimal props and scenery so that greater emphasis is put on the actors' movements. The main difference between *kunju* and the more familiar *jingju* lies in the characteristic of the music. Its leading instrument is the Chinese transverse flute, or *dizi*, with its gentler tones. There is also a greater range of character-types than in *jingju* and a more expressive style of dance that accompanies the emotions expressed through song. The ancestor of many younger genres, *kunju* has greatly influenced the rest of Chinese theatre, providing them with stories, role types, poetry, music, and acting styles. Embodying the lyrical and symbolic essence in Chinese opera, it has produced many romances and legends. However, it is surely a great challenge for this prosodic and elegant opera to transfer itself to the bloody and savage tragedy of *Macbeth*. Why did *kunju* become the adapters' choice for adapting *Macbeth*, and vice versa?

Regarding the intentions of adaptation in intercultural theatre practice, Pavis suggested 'the goals of the adapters' in *The Intercultural Performance Reader* (1996):

Every relationship with a foreign culture is determined by the purpose of the artists and cultural mediators who undertake its adaptation and its transmission. This purpose is as much aesthetic as ideological and, often remains implicit or unconscious. Most often, the adaptor is not someone specifically charged with transposing the contents and forms from one cultural shore to another. It is rather a group of enunciators intervening at all levels and at every stage of the production.⁴⁷⁶

The purpose of adapting *Macbeth* is to introduce Shakespeare to Chinese people, and at the same time introduce Chinese opera to the world. In addition, another purpose is to maintain and re-produce these two theatre styles as well as to try to strengthen their classical, artistic lives, because both of them have developed across four centuries, reached the peak in theatrical arts, and presented the most important artistic forms in the East and West. Thus, the artistic director Huang Zuolin decided that the style in this play must present 'Chinese,' '*kunju*,' and also 'Shakespeare's'

⁴⁷⁶ Patrice Pavis, 'Introduction: Towards a Theory of Interculturalism in Theatre', in *The Intercultural Performance Reader*, ed. by Patrice Pavis (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 16-17.

essence. In Huang's words:

The exquisite essence of *kunju*, its elegant and powerful poetry and its beautifully stylized dances make it stand head and shoulders above other forms of Chinese theatre, and all these elements constitute a form that a Shakespeare adaptation needs. Both *kunju* and Shakespeare were popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Both comprise poetic drama and both employ non-realistic stage effects.⁴⁷⁷

In Huang's concept, there is close affinity between Shakespeare and *kunju* in terms of their emphasis on poetry, because Shakespeare's style is lyrical and poetic in general, while *kunju*, honoured as 'the origin of theatres,' is the most lyrical and poetic theatre style in Chinese traditional forms. Therefore, *kunju* is a proper operatic form to present the spirit of Shakespeare. Huang has pointed out that as attested by the *kunju Macbeth*, traditional Chinese theatre restored poetry to Shakespeare and thereby Shakespeare reasserted himself to a great extent.⁴⁷⁸ The director Li Jiayao had the same view. In his opinion, what underlines the adaptation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* to *kunju* is that *kunju*, characterized by its poetic style and variety of role types and performance conventions, is well suited to portray the psychologically complex and multifaceted characters of Shakespeare's psychological tragedy.⁴⁷⁹

Blood-stained Hands relocates the setting, the characters and other aspects of the play to a fictional feudal kingdom in ancient China. The names of the characters were Sinicized: General Macbeth became General Ma Pei, who served under a Chinese King Zheng instead of King Duncan of Scotland.⁴⁸⁰ The actors wore costumes of ancient China and observed the etiquette of the Chinese royal court. The text of Shakespeare's play was altered and rearranged in conformity with the dramaturgical and musical conventions of *kunju*. Li Jiayao asserts that the performance of Shakespeare in traditional Chinese opera must consider how to represent the spirit of Shakespeare in the first place.⁴⁸¹ However, at the same time, he

⁴⁷⁷ Li Ruru, *Blood-stained Hands: Macbeth in Kunju Form*, Department of East Asian Studies, University of Leeds (1994), p.1.

⁴⁷⁸ 黄佐临, *我与写意戏剧观* (北京: 中国戏剧出版社, 1990) [Huang Zuolin, *I and the Idea of xieyi Theatre* (Beijing: Chinese Theatre Press, 1990)], p.89.

⁴⁷⁹ 李家耀等, '中西文化在戏剧舞台上的遇合——关于“中国戏曲与莎士比亚”的对话', *戏剧艺术*, 1986年03期 [Li Jiayao, et al., 'The Meeting of Chinese and Western Cultures on Stage: Dialogues on 'Traditional Chinese Theatre and Shakespeare', *Theatre Arts*, 3 (1986)], 36-48 (p.42).

⁴⁸⁰ In my discussion of the 1986 *kunju* adaptation of *Macbeth*, I refer to all the characters with their Shakespearean names, not their Sinicized names, for the sake of convenience and clarity. The lines quoted, as well as other citations of Chinese texts, are my translation unless otherwise noted.

⁴⁸¹ Li Jiayao, et al., p.42.

understands perfectly the overriding significance of *kunju* music, especially its prescribed *qupai* 曲牌 (tunes), in relation to its acting and libretto: it is of necessity to have *qupai* determined in the first place, which dictates the formulation of *kunju* acting and the writing and rewriting of the libretto.⁴⁸² A traditional Western drama is usually composed of five acts without titles. ‘Act’ is the equivalent of ‘*zhe*’ in Chinese opera. There are several ‘*zhe*’ in an opera. Each of them is given a title as a summary of the content. According to the dramaturgical and musical conventions of *kunju*, the adapters divided the original five acts of *Macbeth* into seven *zhe* (episodes), the title of each episode being given a two-character title that captured the main theme.

<i>Blood-stained Hands</i>	<i>Macbeth</i>
Episode [<i>zhe</i>] 1: <i>Jin jue</i> (Promotion to nobility)	Act 1 Scenes 1, 3, 4
Episode [<i>zhe</i>] 2: <i>Mi mou</i> (Conspiracy)	Act 1 Scene 5
Episode [<i>zhe</i>] 3: <i>Jia huo</i> (Shifting the blame)	Act 2 Scenes 1, 2, 3
Episode [<i>zhe</i>] 4: <i>Nao yan</i> (Ruining a banquet)	Act 3 Scene 4
Episode [<i>zhe</i>] 5: <i>Wen wu</i> (Seeking advice from the witches)	Act 4 Scene 1
Episode [<i>zhe</i>] 6: <i>Gui feng</i> (Madness in the boudoir)	Act 5 Scene 1
Episode [<i>zhe</i>] 7: <i>Xue chang</i> (Paying with Blood)	Act 5 Scene 7

This version has eliminated virtually all the subsidiary speaking parts in Shakespeare while focusing on the key episodes of the story. The first four episodes tell the essentials of the story up to the end of Act III in the play. The three episodes after the interval correspond to IV.i, V.i, and the final battle. While the externalizing, stylized performance slows the play down, this episodic concentration upon the essentials has the effect of intensifying the plot. The royal doctor, a minor role in the play, becomes a leading character in the opera and plays an important role in maintaining continuity between the episodes. It is he who knocks at the gate, upon hearing a strange noise at

⁴⁸² Li Jiayao, et al., p.43.

night, and when he talks to Lady Macbeth, he finds her abnormal. Afterwards, he hurries to tell the successor to the throne to escape.

Due to the nature of the genre—extensive arias and choreographic movement—Shakespeare’s characters and lines were significantly trimmed. Such cutting, however, is common enough in modern productions of Shakespeare and almost inevitable for musical adaptations. Generally speaking, the original text of the drama has to be edited when it is adapted as a musical, because the plot density of Shakespeare is greater than that of Chinese opera. This is also true for Western opera, such as Verdi’s *Falstaff* or Berlioz’s *Beatrice and Benedict*. Therefore, the first thing all adapters do is to delete the less important episodes in the play to concentrate on specific characters and parts of the plot. In addition, the singing pace is much slower in Chinese opera. Even just one word in the text becomes a long musical phrase. Particular dance steps also need enough time and space to be performed. ‘Thus Li Yu, a playwright and drama theorist (1611-1680), stressed the importance of “trimming threads’ in the plot, and of focusing on ‘one person and one thing throughout the play’’. Having centralized the story line, the prime aim is to develop episodes that furnish opportunities for singing, recitation, gesture, dance and martial arts.’⁴⁸³

More remarkable than the condensation is the substantial enhancement of supernatural elements in the process of Sinicization. The play starts with a grotesque dance of the three weird sisters and their *nianbai* 念白 (spoken parts of a Chinese opera). The portrayal of the three witches is a remarkable feature of this adaptation. Huang Zuolin got the idea of presenting the three creatures from Shakespeare’s lines: ‘When shall we three meet again? / In thunder, lighting, or in rain?...Fair is foul, and foul is fair.’(I. I. 1-12) As the play begins, on a darkened stage clouded with smoke, accompanied by conventional *kunju* music and percussion, a tall figure in a long black cloak emerges. It is a man. He is a witch. He wears a grotesque mask on the back of his head. In the actor’s real face, there is no white patch on the nose—the conventional symbol for a clown. Instead, his light pink make-up makes him closer to a female role. His cloak sweeps open and closes with the rhythm of his movements. ‘I am true and false,’ says the witch in a voice pitched between that of a man and a woman. Following the rhythmic percussion, he makes a sudden movement and a figure rolls out from one side of the still billowing cloak. Another

⁴⁸³ Li, *Shashibiya: Staging Shakespeare in China*, p. 115.

witch, a midget, tumbles onto the stage. Then from the other half of the cloak, the same thing happens. Both the second and the third witch act as dwarf figures with their legs bent double, walking in *aizi bu* 矮子步 (crouching and sliding steps)—a conventional clown routine—so that a choreography of one tall and two short figures is formed. Everything here is fluid, in movement. Nothing stays still. And when they turn their heads, all three witches display grotesque facial masks with grinning teeth or red out-stretched tongues under protuberant eyeballs fixed to the back of their heads. They are all made double-faced, so that they show the audience a calm and smiling female face but a hideous visage is displayed while they turn round. This invention gives a physical and visual projection of the sense of metaphysical and moral ambiguity expressed in the prophecy of Shakespeare’s witches: ‘Fair is foul, and foul is fair’ (I.i.11). This antithesis of Shakespeare is represented by the three witches in the Chinese adaptation through the new lines in rhyme, and in the contrast of good and evil, truth and falsehood, and beauty and ugliness:

Witch A I am true and false.

Witch B I am benevolent and malevolent.

Witch C I am beautiful and ugly.

Witch A [We] keep each other company floating in the air of the Phantom Beach.

Witches [We] keep each other company floating in the air of the Phantom Beach.

Witch C The cold wind is blowing, but I am hot and sweating.

Witch B The bright sun is shining, but my heart is freezing.⁴⁸⁴

The three double-faced witches glide smoothly along the stage, exuding an atmosphere of mystery and menace. One reviewer described his impression of the production at the Edinburgh Festival: ‘Shakespeare’s poetic vision of the sinister doubleness of things has been magically translated into a different, visual language.’⁴⁸⁵ Right from the start, the three witches create a stunning, dislocating, and particular visual effect that certainly does not occur in traditional Chinese theatre. It produces an intellectual and emotional shock and will do so in both cultures.

Surprised by the three witches while returning from the battlefield, Macbeth asks, ‘Are you human or ghost?’ ‘Neither, but composed of cosmic essences over a thousand years.’ Contrary to Shakespeare’s original, the weird sisters are visible and audible to Macbeth alone, who addresses them as “Madam Fairy”. They greet Macbeth, prophesize his advancement and coronation, and explicitly warn him of

⁴⁸⁴ Li, *Shashibiya: Staging Shakespeare in China*, p.129.

⁴⁸⁵ Harry Eyres, ‘Review of “The *Kunju Macbeth*” at the Leith Theatre’, *The Times*, 27 August 1987.

Banquo, who could spoil his good fortune if Macbeth does not ‘root out the malady entirely.’ Their message is understood to be nothing less than oracular. In episode six, when the troubled King Macbeth goes back to consult them, they call him “Heaven’s Favourite” and explicitly tell him that the words are directly from the Jade Emperor (the supreme ruler over heaven and earth in popular religion). The supernatural force, then, is fully institutionalized.

At the close of the production, which cuts the final scene of Shakespeare’s text that shows the crowning of Malcolm as the new king, the three witches reappear to dispel the illusion of the performance by revealing its fictionality to the audience, asking them not to treat the performance as real. It is intended as a finishing touch to generate the Brechtian ‘alienation-effect’.⁴⁸⁶

Witch A How splendid the battle was.

Witch B How tumultuous it was here.

Witch C But now everything is quiet.

Witch A *Sheng, dan, jing, mo, chou*,⁴⁸⁷ all the character types in the opera are now hurriedly removing their make-up.

Witch B The story is true but not really true; [it] is false but not really false.

Witch C [Do you] want to know what happens afterwards?

Witches Of course something may happen afterwards.

Witch A A play can continue forever.

Witch B But the curtain has to fall.

Witch C [May I] give you some advice: never take it all as a true story.

Witches We sisters will now be gone with the wind!⁴⁸⁸

The witches’ scenes not only expand the conventions of *kunju*, but also show the power of theatricality in interculaural Shakespeare performance. Played by cross-dressed male actors of remarkable acrobatic skill, these odd fairies have very powerful visual impact and carry much greater authority than their counterparts in Shakespeare.

Blood-stained Hands is a world inhabited not only by fairies but also by ghosts. In Shakespeare, Banquo’s ghost is pale and silent and, depending on the director, could even be wholly imaginary; here, his presence at the banquet scene is much more substantial, engaging Macbeth in stylized fighting. Ji Zhenhua, the actor who plays Macbeth, employs many physical techniques typical of *kunju* performance in

⁴⁸⁶ Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. John Willett (London: Methuen, 1978), pp. 91-99.

⁴⁸⁷ Chinese terms for different role types in *kunju*.

⁴⁸⁸ Li, *Shashibiya: Staging Shakespeare in China*, p.129.

this dramatic episode—*douran* 抖髯 (beard-flicking), *shuaiifa* 甩发 (hair spinning), *cuobu* 磋步 (dragging-gait), *guibu* 跪步 (kneeling-gait), *wujian* 舞剑 (sword play), *liangxiang* 亮相⁴⁸⁹, etc. —to show Macbeth’s frenzy and panic, suggesting the formidable power of Banquo’s ghost. Initially, Macbeth is carefree, relaxed and proud. The nervous crisis that he suffers on seeing the ghost is dramatized in this episode involving long arias sung by Macbeth and the ghost, the intense rhythm and sound of drums and gongs, together with beautifully arranged choreography for everyone on the stage including Lady Macbeth and the courtiers. While singing, Macbeth adroitly throws his crown from his head, his tightly bound long hair now loosened and dishevelled. The highly skilled technique of turning the head to make the long hair swing through the air in a wide circle renders the situation even more appalling. The loud clashing of cymbals, in time with Macbeth’s swaying dance, seems to strike his body like physical blows, and his movements demonstrate the reaction to each blow. In addition, while Banquo’s ghost has an intense fight with Macbeth, the actor who plays the ghost uses *bianlian* 变脸 (instant change of facial make-up), a technique often used in *chuanju* (or Sichuan opera), to project Macbeth’s inner conflict. The scene forms an astounding synthesis of the rich and powerfully externalized Chinese stage conventions and the Shakespearean psychological dimension. Francis King, a British reviewer, observed after seeing the performance at the Edinburgh Festival in 1987: ‘The verbal indications of guilty agony in the original are given thrilling visual form.’⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁹ The main character strikes a pose either at entrance or just before exit, literally to “brighten up the appearance”. Alternatively, a pose may be struck at the conclusion of a dance set or a fight routine. In these cases a whole group may be involved. The purpose is to attract applause and to signal the right moment for applause.

⁴⁹⁰ Francis King, ‘Strange Union of Farce and Tragedy’, *Sunday Times*, 30 August 1987, p.33.



Figure 13 Macbeth (Ma Pei) recoils with fear during the Banquet scene. The Ghost of Du Ge (Banquo) is behind the table. *kunju Blood-stained Hands/Macbeth* (1986). Photo Courtesy of Shanghai Kunju Theatre.

In addition to the banquet scene, Lady Macbeth’s sleepwalking scene—a brief scene in the original—is markedly elaborated and transformed into a spectacular and most memorable ghost scene. The frightful ghosts of Duncan, Banquo, Lady Macduff (who is also Lady Macbeth’s sister in the adaptation), and a parrot (whose neck was earlier wrung by Lady Macbeth for revealing the crime) each emerge from a darkened background, assaulting Lady Macbeth not only verbally but also physically. She scoffs at some and begs others for pardon, but all to no avail, as the avenging ghosts together chase her around the stage, waving their sword or *shuixiu* 水袖 (“water sleeves”, long white silk extensions of regular sleeves, conventional costume in traditional opera)⁴⁹¹ and breathing fire, demanding that she surrender her life. After a prolonged struggle—performed with superb physical movement and marvelous manipulation of four-foot-long water sleeves set to clamorous percussive beats—Lady Macbeth collapses in the end, literally beaten to death by the ghosts.

Chinese opera has a set of unique performance rules. Even each of the four skills (singing, recitation, acting and dancing, including martial arts) has its own rules which comprise a complex and hierarchically codified system. It is regarded as

⁴⁹¹ For a concise account of water sleeves and their different movements, see Scott, pp.96-107.

chengshihua 程式化 (conventionalization), a term coined in 1927 by Zhao Taimou⁴⁹² and consists of two parts, performance conventionalization and music conventionalization. In this system, the role categorization is central. There are four basic types: male role (*sheng*), female role (*dan*), male painted-face (*jing*) and the clown (*chou*).⁴⁹³ Some indigenous operas have their own special roles. A performer usually specializes in a particular role-type. Different role types have specific requirements for voice, gestures, movements, make-up and costumes. The conventionalization is formalized, but not absolutely inflexible and unchangeable. In order to present the vivid and rich personalities of Shakespeare's characters, adapters break the constraints that usually bind the characters in *kunju* opera, particularly their strict division of functions. The actor of Macbeth combined the characteristics of two role types in *kunju* opera—*wusheng*, or military male, specializing in acrobatics and fighting, and *wensheng*, or civil male, specializing in diction and singing, in order to depict the Shakespearean character who is on the one side, military and ambitious, and on the other, doubting and tormented. In the episode 'Madness in the boudoir', the actress playing Lady Macbeth combined three types of *dan* roles with their different styles of song and performance. She successfully created a beautiful but cruel and schizophrenic character in just a twenty-minute episode. In the same way, a new role type was created for the interpretation of the three weird sisters. In the *kunju* version, the traditional role category of *caidan* 彩旦, a dwarf, (female) comical figure, whose eyes roll with diabolical mischief, was combined with the traditional role category of *chou*, or clown, thus extending the conventional role categories of *kunju* to complement exactly Hazlitt's judgement of the witches, 'they should be women but their beards prevent it'.⁴⁹⁴

For an indigenous opera, singing, together with dancing, is the soul of the performance. Let us take a look at Macbeth's psychological reflections before he kills the king in the dagger scene. Here the dagger has been replaced by a sword, which is called the "Dragon Spring" sword and bestowed by the king upon Macbeth for his victory over an armed rebellion.

⁴⁹² Zhao Taimou, 'Guoju' (National Drama), in *Guoju yundong* (The National Drama Movement), ed. by Yu Shangyuan (September 1927), 7-20 (p.14).

⁴⁹³ The translation of these terms follows Li Ruru's translation in her book *Shashibiya: Staging Shakespeare in China*.

⁴⁹⁴ William Hazlitt, *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*, London, 1817. Shakespeare's weird sisters should be comical, but in traditional Chinese theatre, the comical part is played by the male. Here, the use of two role types breaks the accepted convention.

Macbeth:
Sings
 The tides in my heart are suddenly rising as I glance at this Dragon Spring sword,
 In the twinkling of an eye the person who presented me with this sword will be killed by it.
 Oh, why am I so distracted at the last moment?
 Everything is blurred and I don't know where I am.
He stares into space. He sees another imaginary sword in the flicking shadows of the candles, and he almost gives up:
 Macbeth:
Sings
 Ah! What is that flickering in front of my eyes?
 Another Dragon Spring.
 It is clanging in the sky.
 Dripping with blood, the sharp blade is shining!
 It is changing, now long, now short,
 Sometimes half of it appears, sometimes it hides.
 The sword is slipping away from my grip.
 Chorus: It makes the people who work with their minds lose their minds.
 Macbeth: It makes the people who work with their hearts break their hearts.
 Chorus: It makes the people who work with their hearts break their hearts.
 Macbeth: It makes the people who work with their muscle gain nothing.
 Chorus: It makes the people who work with their muscle gain nothing.⁴⁹⁵

The hesitation and conflict presented by this monologue in *Macbeth* is quite fitting to sing in the opera. Macbeth's singing not only expressed the conflicts between his ambition and consciousness, but it also developed the story. At the same time, Ji Zhenhua, who played the part of Macbeth equipped with a traditional Chinese sword, used his excellent acrobatic skills to show different physical movements like turning, bending and swaying. At last, his virtuoso singing and dancing conquered the audiences. It seemed as if the invisible sword was a real one in Macbeth's hand, and a murder was about to be committed.

According to Zhang Xiao Yang, *Blood-stained Hands* is an 'out-and-out sinicized Shakespeare production'.⁴⁹⁶ In this *kunju* version, the adapters used Shakespeare to rehabilitate a centuries-old operatic genre and celebrate the ancient theatrical tradition of China. The performance, as the artistic director Huang Zuolin wished to achieve, captures the 'spirit or essence' of beauty that is synonymous' with

⁴⁹⁵ Li, *Shashibiya: Staging Shakespeare in China*, p.111.

⁴⁹⁶ Zhang Xiao Yang, p.157.

‘poetic feeling.’⁴⁹⁷ As a product of transculturation and acculturation, the *kunju Macbeth* illustrates, illuminates, and informs both the Shakespearean text and the Chinese theatre. The production has toured in Europe as well as Asia, stirring international audiences with its arresting music and dazzling spectacles, and becoming a good medium for intercultural exchange.

4.4.2 AN ALL-FEMALE, YUEJU MACBETH:

***Ma Long jiangjun* (General Ma Long), 2001, by the Zhejiang Shaoxing Xiaobaihua Yueju Opera Troupe, scriptwriter: Sun Qiang, director: Xu Qinna.**

Yueju, or Shaoxing opera, noted for its refined singing and elegant dancing, is one of the most popular local styles of opera in the south of China. In contrast to *kunju* and *jingju*, *yueju* is relatively a young form of Chinese music theatre. While its origins can be traced back to the 1850s in the rural areas of Shaoxing of modern Zhejiang Province, *yueju* as a theatrical form that combines musical storytelling with performance of impersonation was formed and developed in the 1910s. In its early history, *yueju* was performed by males only. Female performances were introduced in the 1920s and gradually gained popularity and dominance and eventually replaced male performances in the following two decades. Such a feature was criticized under the Communist ideology. Therefore, beginning from the 1950s, boy trainees were admitted to learn male roles, and the opera reformed itself to adapt to modern influences in order to remain relevant to its evolving audiences, incorporating elements of spoken drama, *kunju*, and even Western music. Artistically, *yueju* attaches paramount significance to singing in its performance characterized by its romanticism, lyricism, and feminine style, but is not as strong and sophisticated as *jingju* and *kunju* in its performance of military or physically defined roles and scenes. The feminine flavour of the opera-type makes it especially suited for plays of romance and love, as in such play as *The Butterfly Lovers*. There are exceptions. In Su Leici’s *yueju* adaptation of *Hamlet*, entitled *Wangzi fuchou ji* (*The Prince’s Revenge*), performed at the 1994 Shanghai Shakespeare Festival, the prince was played by a man. Because of its flexibility, *yueju* has weathered the challenges of modernization better than most traditional styles. It has become the second-largest

⁴⁹⁷ Huang Zuolin, ‘*Kunju Macbeth*’, *Cowrie: A Chinese Journal of Comparative Literature* I, no.5 (Nanning 1988), 34-44.

opera form in China, after *jingju*, though maintaining such a prominent position is a constant struggle. Due to its popularity in China, *yueju* has been favoured by adapters of Shakespeare and has more adaptations than any other traditional Chinese opera—seven in total, as are shown in the chart below:

Year	Original plays	Yueju adaptations	Company	Adapter	Director
1942	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	<i>Qing tian hen</i> (Love and Hate)	Yuan Xuefen Jutuan (Yuan Xuefen Company), Shanghai	(no further information)	(no further information)
1946	<i>King Lear</i>	<i>Xiaonü xin</i> (The Heart of a Filial Daughter)	Fu Quanxiang Jutuan (Fu Quanxiang Company), Shanghai	(no further information)	(no further information)
1985	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	<i>Tianchang dijiu</i> (Everlasting and Unchanging Love)	Shanghai Hongkou Yuejutuan (Hongkou District Yueju Company in Shanghai)	(no further information)	Xie Honglin and Zhou Zhigang
1986	<i>Twelfth Night</i>	<i>Twelfth Night</i>	Shanghai yuejuyuan Santuan (Shanghai Yueju Theatre, Company No.3)	Zhou Shuihe	Hu Weimin and Sun Hongjiang
1986	<i>The Winter's Tale</i>	<i>The Winter's Tale</i>	Hangzhou Yuejuyuan Yituan (Hangzhou Yueju Theatre, Company No.1)	(no further information)	Wang Fumin
1994	<i>Hamlet</i>	<i>Wangzi fuchou ji</i> (The Prince's)	Shanghai yuejuyuan	Xue Yunhuang	Su Leci

		Revenge)			
2001	<i>Macbeth</i>	<i>Ma Long jiangjun</i> (General Ma Long)	Zhejiang Shaoxing Xiao Baihua Yuejutuan(Zhejiang Shaoxing Xiaobaihua Yueju Opera Troupe)	Sun Qiang	Xu Qinna

The 2001 *Macbeth* (retitled *Ma Long jiangjun* [*General Ma Long*]), by Zhejiang Shaoxing Xiaobaihua Yueju Opera Troupe, kept the plot of Shakespeare but changed it into a Chinese story. On the triumphant return after quashing the rebellion, General Ma Long/Macbeth met three spirits who knew the future. They made the prediction that Ma Long would ascend the throne, which aroused his evil lust. That night, incited by his wife Jiang Shi (Lady Macbeth), Ma Long killed the king, the escaped prince and General Shu Ban (Banquo), and took the throne. However, the couple suffered greatly in their spiritual world. Shao Kang, Shu Ban's son, took an elite army to reach the city gates, swearing to take revenge for his father's death. Facing hostility on all sides, Ma Long got the Witches' prophecies again, 'You would not be defeated unless the forest could move forward. If a man could kill Emperor Ma Long, he must be King of Hell instead of a mortal born by a woman.'⁴⁹⁸ The two prophecies gave Ma Long much confidence, encouraging him to fight against the enemy force all by himself. However, it turned out that the forest really moved towards the city wall and Shao Kang happened to be a man born through Caesarean operation. Feeling mocked by the fate, Ma Long collapsed completely. The fierce and powerful man killed himself on the city wall. The *yueju* version of *Macbeth* reflects the conflict between fate and desire, revealing sentiments that may be encountered by everyone. This is also where conflicts of rationality, irrationality, emotion and desire lie in Western aesthetics. The Witches' prophecies are actually one's self-suggestion from the inside. One may be shaken and go out of control being driven by the devil inside. To seek power, one may 'exchange heaven and earth with sword and blood', making it hard for other people to live on; one may let

⁴⁹⁸ The translation is based on the performance video of *General Ma Long*, kindly offered by the Shaoxing Xiaobaihua Yueju Opera Troupe. All translation is mine unless indicated otherwise.

the ‘fire of desire’ burn until it is too difficult to put it out, even if it will change the nation into ‘a pile of bones’. The adaptation sticks to the tradition of Shaoxing *yueju* by a small all-female cast. It features virtuosity of a sword dance at the banquet scene by the star-actress Wu Fenghua who acted General Ma Long/Macbeth, and heavier roles of the Witches who switched to Doctor, Eunuch, Maid, Porter, and some other minor roles. One of the witches walked antic-dwarf-like steps, a tradition first used in the *kunju* version of *Macbeth* (*Blood-stained Hands*) sixteen years ago.

It was the first time that adapters staged a *yueju* version of Shakespeare with an all-female cast. Adapters were faced with two important issues in the process of adaptation: keeping the Shakespearean spirit (the humanistic ideal and the vivid characterizations) in the original script and bringing out the flavour of traditional Chinese opera. The former is the question of how to integrate the spirit of Shakespeare with the spirit of Chinese culture. The latter is concerned with the change of the acting vocabulary between different aesthetic values of different cultures. This is in fact a common problem in the sinicization of any classical foreign play. The scriptwriter Sun Qiang said, ‘The approach that we took in our adaptation was to be faithful to the spirit of the original play and sinicize the Western story completely.’⁴⁹⁹ The play was not only performed sufficiently and fluently in the acting vocabulary of traditional Chinese opera, but also kept the spirit of Shakespeare to a great extent.

Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* reveals the hero’s psychological world vividly: under the torture of ambition and sin, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth suffer from frenzy of the soul, disorder of thoughts, and shock to the body and mind. To keep such essence of Shakespeare, the *yueju* adaptation takes full advantage of the merits of traditional Chinese opera, whose arias excel in expressing inner emotions. It focuses on unfolding Ma Long’s inner world, showing the audience the ever-changing and shocking inner experience of Ma Long and Jiang Shi before and after they murder the King. It expresses the view that evil and desire devour human nature and destroy society.

In the opening scene, Ma Long is heard singing from the backstage, ‘Smoke signals of the enemy forces in 800 miles have been put out.’ Then accompanied by

⁴⁹⁹ Sun Qiang, ‘Yueju *Macbeth*: My *General Ma Long*’, *Drama Literature*, 5 (2001), 48.

the percussion beats, Ma Long's handsome figure appears on the stage and his singing continues:



Figure 14 Wu Fenghua as Ma Long/Macbeth on his triumphant return after quashing the rebellion. *yueju General Ma Long/Macbeth* (2001). (Courtesy of Zhejiang Shaoxing Xiaobaihua Yueju Opera Troupe)

People all over the country are celebrating the victory.
I have ridden on the crest of success and defended the country.
Is there anybody else in the world who is as great a hero as me?
Looking up, the mountains and rivers of my homeland are exceptionally bright;
Looking down, the paths are covered with fragrant flowers and green grass.
I miss home more and more since my campaign in the desert.
Travel-worn and weary, I step on the journey back home.
My wife is waiting earnestly for my return in her dressing room upstairs.
The pink walls and green bamboos in the garden are welcoming me back.
Being earnest to go home, I urge my horse to run faster.⁵⁰⁰

Along with his singing, Ma Long strikes a pose on the stage with a series of stylized physical movements such as split, stride, scurry, shoulder rolls, lifting the leg, etc. This long aria in the opening scene establishes Ma Long's heroic image as a handsome courageous warrior. Though the prophesy of the Witches that he will be granted high positions by the King arouses his interest, and his wife Jiang Shi

⁵⁰⁰ Xie Bailiang, Hao Yinbai and Yan Quanyi, *Chinese Operas—Collected Plays and Papers by the Teachers and Students of Chinese Opera Academy*, II. (Shanghai: Shanghai Ancient Books Press, 2008), p.795.

persuades him to murder the King and take the throne, Ma Long refuses to plot against the King, because ‘Now the princes vied for supremacy and the country is not peaceful. People expect me to protect them with my sword.’⁵⁰¹ Later, Jiang Shi exhorts Ma Long again and again, ‘The old stupid king and the coward prince who does not know any martial art can take the throne. Why can’t you, a hero who has made much more contributions to the country than them, take the throne?’⁵⁰² Ma Long is caught in the temptation and feels confused: ‘I know clearly it is not a loyal deed to murder the King and steal the country from him. However, it is hard to resist the temptation of the shining crown. The devil stirs up a dark desire in my heart. The sword is ringing in my scabbard. My heart is cracking and messing up.’⁵⁰³ Ma Long experiences several layers of psychological struggle—‘Carrying a big responsibility I should contribute to the country. I kowtow to express deep thanks to Your Majesty’;⁵⁰⁴ ‘Killing numerous people and washing my hand in the blood, I still remain a saint’;⁵⁰⁵ ‘I am entangled by nightmares and end up in being utterly isolated.’⁵⁰⁶ Employing the virtue of *yueju* in expressing emotions, the actress Wu Fenghua who acted Macbeth gave a convincing interpretation of the character’s complex layers of psychological changes. Adapters designed the arias according to the actress’ voice features and the character’s personality. The aria design was based on the vocal cavity of the Fan School of *yueju*⁵⁰⁷ and merged the operatic tunes of *shaoju*, Beijing opera and female *yueju*.

⁵⁰¹ Xie Bailiang, Hao Yinbai and Yan Quanyi, *Chinese Operas—Collected Plays and Papers by the Teachers and Students of Chinese Opera Academy*, II, p. 800.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 801.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 798.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 803

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 813.

⁵⁰⁷ Yueju opera has a dozen of schools. Different schools (or styles) have different founders. They have different distinct characteristics in style and way of singing. For example, for a female playing a man’s role, the Lu School is founded by Lu Jinhua; his style is pure and simple. The Xu School is sonorous and passionate, while the Yin School is deep and melodious with fancy nasal tones. The Fan School is bold and solid, characterized by rustic, energetic singing. Yueju opera players usually follow one school.



Figure 15 Wu Fenghua as Ma Long/Macbeth and Chen Fei as Jiang Shi/Lady Macbeth celebrate his ascension to the throne. *Yueju General Ma Long/Macbeth* (2001). Courtesy of Zhejiang Shaoxing Xiaobaihua Yueju Opera Troupe.

Wu is usually referred to as the famous “actor” of *yueju* since she acts the male role in performances. Since the initial development of *yueju* in the 1920s, most of the male roles, *xiaosheng* 小生, have been performed by actresses. When we look at the history of Chinese opera, we find that the art of cross-dressing has always been very popular. In fact, the most famous “actress” of Beijing opera was Mei Lanfang, a man. Obviously, cross-dressing is very appealing to audiences. After putting on an ancient costume and applying make-up, an actress can look like a handsome male and an actor can appear as a beautiful woman. Wu is a master at this kind of cross-dressing. She is currently recognised as the most outstanding of all female *xiaosheng* performers. Usually female *xiaosheng* takes the role of young scholars, something they can make fine and exquisite. In the *yueju* genre, female *xiaosheng* naturally imbues a sense of femininity into their roles, but Wu is capable of also expressing masculinity on the stage. Wu has won high praise for her performance in the title role in *General Ma Long*. The character Ma Long created by Wu is ‘tough, stubborn, greedy, has a lust for power, unreasonably proud, cruel and suspicious. She does not imitate the role of Macbeth acted by other performers, because she knows what she should act is Ma Long in *yueju* genre, who is not only a hero, but also a villain. It is an artistic figure who has thinking and a tormented soul, extreme behaviour, double

personality and complex character.’⁵⁰⁸ With her handsome appearance in the adaptation, Wu has become the first female Macbeth in the history of traditional Chinese opera. ‘Through complicated acting and the emphasis on body language, he (or she) tries to convey the character’s psychological activity.’⁵⁰⁹ ‘Wu’s timbre is wide and bright. Her voice fluctuates between the normal voice and falsetto.’⁵¹⁰ Wu’s Macbeth makes the audiences feel sympathy with the hero’s fall while criticizing him. This is different from all the other Macbeths we have ever seen before.

Chen Fei, the actress who acts Jiang Shi (Lady Macbeth), has a crisp, graceful and sweet voice. Her appearance on the stage is tender, glamorous and many-faceted. ‘Her vocal cavity is colourful and smooth.’⁵¹¹ While persuading Ma Long to seize the throne, she sings:

I, daughter from the Jiang family, have beautiful dreams.
I often dream that I hold the imperial jade seal of the Empress.
Being a hero having put down the rebellion, you win all the people’s
recognition and support.
It is high time that you became the next king.⁵¹²

‘It is a pity that the ideal of a hero is wasted while being busy for other people’;⁵¹³ ‘Jade plates and gold cups are cheering. There is never such a grand and dignified atmosphere before at the royal court’;⁵¹⁴ ‘How hard it is to clean my hands full of blood!’⁵¹⁵ The contradictory characteristics—cruelty and charm, ambition and delicacy, beauty and treachery—are unified in her. ‘Jiang Shi in the *yueju Macbeth* is different from the normal female roles of *yueju* in that she is an ambitious and determined woman, not just a good wife of a general whose contributions have been greater than those of the King.’⁵¹⁶ In *General Ma Long*, with her cool temperament and excellent acting skills, Chen Fei not only shows a woman’s beauty and tenderness,

⁵⁰⁸ Gao Tian, ‘Purgatory for the Soul—After Viewing *Ma Long Jiangjun* by the Shaoxing Xiaobaihua Yueju Opera Troupe’, *Drama Literature*, 5 (2001), 51.

⁵⁰⁹ See Shaoxing Xiaobaihua Art Centre, *An Introduction to Wu Fenghua’s Performing Art*, 2007, 162.

⁵¹⁰ Zhao Jie and Wu Fenghua, *A Study on a New Edition of Yueju Playlets* (Shanghai: Shanghai Culture Press, 2003), p. 246.

⁵¹¹ Zhao Jie and Chen Fei, *A Study on a New Edition of Yueju Playlets* (Shanghai: Shanghai Culture Press, 2003), p.246.

⁵¹² Xie Bailiang, Hao Yinbai and Yan Quanyi. *Chinese Operas—Collected Plays and Papers by the Teachers and Students of Chinese Opera Academy*, II (Shanghai: Shanghai Ancient Books Press, 2008), p.799.

⁵¹³ *Ibid.*, p.800.

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.809.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.812.

⁵¹⁶ See Shaoxing Xiaobaihua Art Centre, *An Introduction to Yueju Actress Chen Fei*, 2007, 40.

but also portrays vividly a deceitful female careerist and schemer, displaying different aspects of the character's personality.

As mentioned earlier, in the process of Sinicizing the Bard, there is a question of changing the acting vocabulary between Western drama and Eastern drama. To deal with this issue, the adaptation does not apply mechanically the stylization of traditional Chinese opera, but reorganizes and develops the acting vocabulary of *yueju* according to the feature of the original play, the uniqueness of the character, and the stylization and virtualization of traditional Chinese opera. First, all the roles of the play were divided into different role types. Then the roles were acted on the basis of their role types. For example, Ma Long (Macbeth) was portrayed as a civil and marshal role, Jiang Shi (Lady Macbeth) a piquant female role and shrewish role, Shu Ban (Banquo) a painted face, and the prince a child male role. On the basis of role types, the traditional stylization was further developed. For example, though Ma Long was a civil and marshal role, the actor's performance incorporated the performances of painted face and official junior male in *kunju*. Concerning the time and space of drama, the adaptation made full use of the concepts of supposition and virtualization in traditional Chinese opera. The whole performance took place on a rectangular tilting platform that could rotate. The stage design shortened the distance between performers and the audience visually. When the higher end of the rotating platform turned to the foremost edge of the stage, the actors standing on the higher end of the platform would look into the eyes of the audience. The effect is similar to that of the sliding close-ups of film. The shape of the platform is a neutral geometric solid, which gives performance virtually full freedom. In the context created by the actor himself, the actor enters the role, acts the character, and brings his acting skills into full play. The dramatic effect that results is sometimes incomparable to other ways of performance. When Ma Long sat down on the 'dragon chair' with his mind going to pieces and his madness going out of control, the two actors who acted the 'dragon chair' suddenly propped Ma Long high up and threw him forward. This expression could not possibly be accomplished by any actual scene. Thus the expressive force and artistic charm of traditional Chinese opera was displayed to the full.

The scenography of this play shows an elaborate artistic conception. The story is vaguely set in China's Spring and Autumn and the Warring States Periods. The use

of *taotie* 饕餮 (figure of a creature of Chinese mythology engraved on bronze ware during the Yin-Zhou dynasty) character in the stage design gives the audience a visual suggestion and imagination about the periods in the Chinese history. The scrolls hung under the *taotie* character embody both flags and men, which can be understood as the metamorphosis of *shoujiu* 守旧—a stage curtain in traditional Chinese opera, which is often decorated with patterns irrelevant to the story. This is a design with characteristics of Chinese art. Besides, the whole performance uses a large quantity of flags and masks to create visual scenes of the battlefield or the court. The actors are dressed in classical costumes of Han people in the Spring and Autumn Period. In the opening scene when Ma Long appears on the stage, he wears a red cloak, which symbolizes victory. The cloak flies about elegantly with Ma Long's physical movements, embodying Ma Long's happy mood to return to the court after the victory. It is also a metaphor that both victory in the battlefield and murder progress on the blood river. In the last scene of Ma Long's suicide, more than 100 masked puppets hang on the stage. A huge mask stands behind Ma Long in the centre of the stage. When Ma Long raises his sword to commit suicide, the mask flies to the air dragging a large piece of red cloth. The effect looks like the splashing of blood. This scene has a strong visual impact on the audience.

The adaptation strategy of *General Ma Long* is, while keeping the humanistic spirit of Shakespeare, changing it from the original spoken drama into *yueju*, a traditional Chinese opera. At the aesthetic level, Shakespeare's aesthetic spirit is grafted on to *yueju*'s aesthetics in this adaptation. The differences between West and East in culture and art have been crossed over successfully. While respecting the traditional rules and artistic concepts, Shaoxing Xiaobaihua Yueju Opera Troupe did not just adhere to the stylization and convention of *yueju*, but adjusted the performance to the aesthetic concepts of the present time. The all-female *General Ma Long* is a successful endeavor of adapting Shakespeare appropriately into Chinese *xiqu*.

4.4.3 A GENDER-CONSCIOUS, *CHUANJU* SOLO *MACBETH*:

***Makebai furen (Lady Macbeth)*, 2001, by the Sichuan Youth Chuanju Opera Company, scriptwriter: Xu Fen, directors: Cao Ping and Tian Mansha.**

The *kunju* and *yueju* opera adaptations did not exhaust all the possibilities for Sinicizing *Macbeth* in the form of traditional opera. Since 1980s, more attempts have been made in the Chinese-speaking communities, such as the Beijing opera *Kingdom of Desire*, the Cantonese opera *Yingxiong panguo (The Rebel Hero)* and the *chuanju* (Sichuan opera) *Makebai furen (Lady Macbeth)*. The *chuanju Lady Macbeth*, premiered in 1999, is the most intriguing. *Chuanju* is the form of music drama found in the southwestern province of Sichuan as well as in some regions of the neighbouring provinces of Yunnan and Guizhou. For reasons of geography and dialect, the culture that developed in this region was quite distinct from the dominant culture originating around the Yellow River and the Central Plains. Whereas traditional theatres in most of China have been facing problems of declining audiences since the mid-1980s, *chuanju* has retained its popularity in its heartland. In performance, stagecraft and repertoire *chuanju* is in general similar to other opera styles, including *jingju* (Peking opera). However, *chuanju* is famous for its unique stunts, such as sword-swallowing, fire-breathing, juggling with burning candles, and the sudden appearance of a third eye on an actor's forehead. The latter is a breathtaking skill in which the actor kicks up his foot for a split second, attaching a fake third eye to his forehead. However, the most closely guarded secret, and certainly the local style's signature spectacle, is a special effect known as '*bianlian* 变脸' ('face-changing'), whereby painted full-face silk masks are changed up to fourteen times in magically quick succession. In contrast to the more classical and national forms of *kunju* and *jingju*, *chuanju* is much closer to the common people. Its language is more colloquial, and it is more adaptable to changing political, social, and cultural mores. Indeed, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, *chuanju* was the first recorded operatic genre to have adapted Shakespeare's play.⁵¹⁷ Not surprisingly, *Lady Macbeth* registers the impact of contemporary realities. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the open-door policy started by Deng Xiaoping had been in place in China for twenty years, and Chinese society was becoming increasingly diverse and dynamic. Communism was being qualified by capitalism, collectivism by individualism, and ideological dogmatism by pragmatism or even opportunism. Feminism also emerged. All these currents surge through the play.

⁵¹⁷ In 1914, Ya An Sichuan Opera Troupe staged *Murdering the Elder Brother and Marrying His Wife*, an adaptation of *Hamlet*. See Zhang Xiao Yang, 1996, p.143.



Figure 16 Tian Mansha as Lady Macbeth in the *chuanju Makebai furen/Lady Macbeth*.
Courtesy of Tian Mansha.

Written by Xu Fen, *Lady Macbeth* is virtually a solo performance by Tian Mansha, who plays the title role, although Macbeth and palace maids also appear. The palace maids create a court atmosphere and, in a practical sense, they help Lady Macbeth change costumes on-stage at the coronation scene. The role of Macbeth, who dominates most of the action and delivers extensive soliloquies in Shakespeare, is completely suppressed: he is a non-speaking part in the play and merely walks around the stage, pantomiming lightly with simple gestures. Much of the play is presumably dialogue between the couple, but what Macbeth says is available to us only through Lady Macbeth's fragmentary quotation. For example, Lady Macbeth says: 'Oh, you met the spirit on your way home.' Then the next line is: 'Don't believe any spirit. What it said is in fact what you have thought to yourself.'⁵¹⁸ During the performance, Macbeth's facial expression is also minimal, as it is hard to detect on his face heavily painted in gold. This drastic reduction of Macbeth and expansion of Lady Macbeth is phenomenal, but not totally incomprehensible. In fact, Lady Macbeth's responsibility in the terrible crime of regicide has been emphasized and overemphasized by critics and adapters alike. Macbeth often looks like a weak and innocent victim of his scheming and manipulative wife, a femme fatale who, like Eve, serves as an instrument for her man's downfall. Like Shakespeare's play, both *Blood-stained Hands* and *General Ma Long* apports the blame to Lady Macbeth: it is her powerful rhetoric born of womanish superstition or suspicion as well as ambition that compels him to proceed. This 'fiend-like queen' (5. 8. 35), however,

⁵¹⁸ The translation is based on the video of the production collected by SPIA (Shakespeare Performance in Asia), an Asian collaborative online research archive of performance materials: <<http://web.mit.edu/shakespeare/asia>>.

subsists primarily in relation to her king: her eloquence justifies Macbeth's criminal action and her insanity and death plague him and further dramatize his downfall. Conversely, the Sichuan opera adaptation is keenly gender-conscious in presenting Lady Macbeth as a three-dimensional character, who exposes her psychology in a first-person confession.

In Shakespeare, Macbeth's letter reaches home before he does, informing Lady Macbeth about the weird sisters' prophecy and its partial fulfillment. In the *chuanju* performance, Lady Macbeth waits in suspense. After congratulating Macbeth on his victory over the rebel forces, she immediately asks: 'I wonder if His Majesty has offered any reward as a token of appreciation?' Learning of his new title, she ponders, 'Then, you are above tens of thousands, and only below one person!' She sighs, 'In fact, with your wisdom and courage, it would be a shame for you to be under anybody, even just one person!' The idea of usurping the throne seems perfectly reasonable. 'Why not?' she repeats the rhetorical question, and narrates her initial encounter with Macbeth in the third person in her aria:

The past springs up in this instant:
A beautiful maid was wandering in the garden.
From the embroidered pavilion, she caught sight of a handsome young man.
When he walked, he walked like a jade tree standing against the wind.
When he stood, he stood like Mount Tai holding up the sky.
Raising his bow to his shoulder, he shot the wild geese flying high in the sky.
With bare hands, he captured the wild boar hiding in the woods.
The maid eloped with the man—a great warrior with unusual talents.
Extraordinary, exceptional,
He surely deserves to sit in the golden throne.
No longer to be commanded by anybody,
Between heaven and earth the sole sovereign you will be.

The last line reveals that this seemingly legendary romance is her own story. After she finishes this aria, the last line is echoed by an offstage chorus: 'Between heaven and earth the sole sovereign I will be.' This female voice speaks her true mind. Her aspiration for power is unambiguous and deeply rooted, and she married Macbeth precisely because he showed the potential to help her fulfill this desire. Unlike in the other two adaptations, here Macbeth is used as an instrument for her own ambition. Lady Macbeth then instantly conceives a murder plan. While Macbeth is offstage entertaining the king, she grabs a shining, two-foot-long steel knife and starts to sharpen it. This is a nightmarish scene indeed, as she grinds the knife left and right

and grins, making petrifying cackles. She argues with Duncan in her imagination: ‘Old Fool King, people all commend you for your great wisdom. If you were truly wise, you should abdicate in favour of a more competent person—you should yield your crown to my husband Macbeth!’ Legend has it that emperors Yao (2357–2255 bce) and Shun (2255–2205 bce) abdicated in their old age. Rather than passing the crown to their sons, they assigned competent successors outside their families to guarantee a peaceful transition of power and good government, and their selfless love for the people has been celebrated by the Confucians as exemplifying the political virtue of the Golden Age. Lady Macbeth’s allusion to this political legend is extremely ironic—she and Macbeth are the polar opposites of these saintly kings. Shamelessly, she justifies their regicide: ‘Your lack of bounty—not our lack of duty—is to blame for your death tonight!’

It is not a new invention that Lady Macbeth is ambitious, but what is striking is her blatant honesty about it. The way she articulates her desire also reinforces her ingenuity. Contrary to the arias in other operatic adaptations, those in *Lady Macbeth* are not delivered with stringed or winded instruments; instead, they are only accompanied by occasional percussive beats. The overall effect of using unaccompanied arias is that, rather than polished pieces of musical art—sophisticated, elaborate, and ornate—they sound like a genuine voice from her heart. Significantly, there is no mention of witches or fairies, of nocturnal dream or waking vision, of prophecy obscure or unequivocal.

Lady Macbeth does not need to invoke the authority of supernatural beings — her ambition is fully conscious, her rationale sound, and her action premeditated. Nor is Duncan’s suspicion or Banquo’s betrayal—reasonable sources of anxiety and fear for the couple in *Blood-stained Hands* and in *General Ma Long*—an issue here. For the Sichuan opera *Lady Macbeth*, desire for power suffices all; other excuses or disguises are utterly unnecessary. Such frankness is only conceivable in an overtly pragmatic society, where individuals are prioritized over structure, where self-interest overrides ethical principles, where economic opportunism extends to moral and political opportunism.

Terry Eagleton has called Shakespeare’s *Lady Macbeth* a ‘bourgeois individualist’,⁵¹⁹ but not until the end of the millennium did such a woman find a

⁵¹⁹ Terry Eagleton, *William Shakespeare* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p.5.

home on the Chinese stage. She makes it plain that her ambition is not unique—she is only lucky to have fulfilled it. Happily crowned as queen on the golden throne in the golden palace hall, she relishes her good fortune:

For this eye-dazzling radiance of gold,
How many have marched and battled in agony?
How many have made their journey to Hades?
How many have destroyed their own family?
How many friends have turned deadly enemies?

Four questions in a row concisely summarize all human history. Her desire is only typical, not exceptional, and her regicide is posited as a minor offence compared to the terrible crimes of many usurpers.

The assassination is completed by Lady Macbeth after she has taunted her husband: ‘What? Not dead yet? [...] You cannot do it again?! You coward! Go away and stand there. Let your wife add one more thrust for you.’ In her acting, Tian arranges three attempts to stab the emperor. After the first hesitation, Lady Macbeth rushes to the left side of the stage as if the emperor were lying behind the side-curtains. She raises her broadsword high above her head, but suddenly stops. She is frozen, and the female chorus interjects: ‘Oh, no. It’s wrong.’ Very few forms of indigenous Chinese theatre include a chorus, but it plays an important role in *chuanju*. The chorus, called ‘*bangqiang* 帮腔’ (assisting chorus), has different functions in different circumstances. It can give comments, asides, or a soliloquy, representing a voice from the innermost heart of the character. Throwing down her sword, Lady Macbeth sings:

The wounded old man is groaning.
His white hair and wrinkled face just look like my father.
Blood is spurting out, flowing in front of my eyes.
My father is injured, and I, his daughter, am taking his life.
The scene is too horrid to look at.
It is the feeling between bone and flesh that has made my heart...
Chorus That has made my heart, my heart...
Lady Macbeth *Walks towards the left-side curtains.* Father! *Suddenly awakes.*
He is not my father. He is the emperor.

When the chorus accuses Lady Macbeth for lack of conscience, she bitterly refutes it. This argument even extends to the audience across the fourth wall. Directly speaking to the audience, she says, ‘I’m afraid you would only be more vicious and venomous if you were in my shoes!’ This disruption of theatrical illusion

is very powerful when delivered as a complete surprise. To strengthen her determination, she recapitulates the reasons to kill the old man: 'For my husband. He wants to be the emperor. So we must give him another thrust!' Having steeled herself mentally and physically, Lady Macbeth grasps the broadsword, jumps into the air, swirls, and then kneels down to pray to the heaven to give her courage, before finally proceeding to the killing. The creation of the three attempts before the final stabbing points to an important aspect of the aesthetic ideation of the indigenous Chinese performing system. As seen in the other two adaptations, in contrast to Western spoken drama, traditional Chinese music theatre does not concern about offering audiences an illusion of realism, but lays emphasis on the expression of a character's inner world and the display of the actor's unique skills.

The finale of *Lady Macbeth* is perhaps the most Shakespearean of all three operatic adaptations. It is her guilty conscience, manifested in the imagined blood stains on her hands, and her fear of being discovered—not the attack of avenging ghosts or the trauma of miscarriage—that eventually defeat her. Her panic is vividly portrayed in the hand-washing scene. Twelve palace maids were choreographed to stand in circles, forming three human wash basins, while Lady Macbeth rushes from one to another, rubbing her hands rigorously. The palace maids' long white water sleeves, reflecting a bluish light, comprise the water for her wash; and in a dramatic lighting change, the 'water' instantly turns red the moment her bloody hands touch them. The different arrangements and stage blocking for each group of the attendants are interwoven with Lady Macbeth's leading dance, generating a beautiful scene on the stage. It presents the *xieyi* style of Chinese *xiqu* in contrast to the realism of Western spoken drama. A real wash basin is not needed at all in the hand-washing scene of a *xiqu* appropriation of *Macbeth*, but the meaning can still be conveyed clearly and perhaps more impressively. The play's ingenious use of lighting, colours, human props, pantomime, and flashback creates a surreal and futuristic ambience. The play starts and ends with a knock on the door while Lady Macbeth turns her back to the audience in the center of the stage, a symmetrical structure which further enhances the dreamlike atmosphere. The actress Tian's superb techniques based on her training as a Sichuan opera actress, however, remind the audiences that they are watching an ancient theatrical genre—electrifying are her expressive body movements and unbelievable maneuvering of the five-foot-long, two-foot-wide water sleeves. As she swirls, her whole body appears wrapped under the white and

purple sleeves.

Presenting ‘guilt that arises as a consequence of the struggle for power’,⁵²⁰ *Lady Macbeth* is a short, violent and tense production. Formalistically, the play is dialectic between futurity and pastness; its spirit, however, is essentially a product of present-day China.

4.5 Coda

The three adaptations discussed in this chapter illustrate a diversity of approaches to the interpretation and presentation of *Macbeth*. Dennis Kennedy has remarked that ‘the universality we so often admire derives not from Shakespeare’s transcendence but from his malleability, from our own willingness to read in the pastness of the texts and find ourselves there. What selves we find depends on who we are.’⁵²¹ Underneath their iridescent theatricality, the three adaptations of *Macbeth* each inculcate values structured by their distinct socio-political and cultural environs. In the *kunju Blood-stained Hands*, Shakespeare was used to celebrate the ancient theatrical tradition and to reaffirm concerns and sentiment that had been deliberately destroyed in the previous decade. The *yueju* opera *General Ma Long*, conversely, resorted to Shakespeare’s authority for artistic experiments in an attempt to revitalize a theatre with its repertoire traditionally confined to plays of romance and love and expand its acting vocabulary. In *Lady Macbeth*, Shakespeare became a site for intellectual exploration of ethics, gender, *Zeitgeist* and a new aesthetic. The three Sinicized adaptations are innovative artistic development to renew Shakespeare. They take the international cultural icon off his pedestal in English literature to illuminate China in the context of globalisation and cross-cultural exchange. They make the complex transfer from one language to another language, from one culture to another culture, and from one art form to another art form, reaching a wide and new audience.

⁵²⁰ *Shakespeare aus Asien, Ein Theatrefestival 2001*, trans. by Heidi Frances.

⁵²¹ *Foreign Shakespeare: Contemporary Performance*, ed. by Dennis Kennedy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 301.

Chapter 5 Adapted for the Screen: Shakespeare in Chinese Cinema

Chinese participation in re-imagining Shakespeare's works on the screen was comparatively unheard of until 2006 when Feng Xiaogang and Hu Xuehua (Sherwood Hu)⁵²² launched their films of Shakespearean interest. However, Shakespeare's plays were adapted for the Chinese screen even in the era of silent motion pictures. To illustrate how Chinese filmmakers approach Shakespeare, this chapter, after outlining a brief history of Shakespeare adaptation in the Chinese cinema, examines the 1931 silent movie *Yi jian mei* 一剪梅 [*A Spray of Plum Blossoms*] adapted from *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and the two Chinese *Hamlets* released in 2006—Feng Xiaogang's *Ye yan* 夜宴 [*The Banquet*] and Hu Xuehua's *Ximalaya wangzi* 喜马拉雅王子 [*Prince of the Himalayas*], with regard to their local and transcultural actualization of the portability potential inherent in Shakespeare's plays. I shall focus on how the three movies as independent art works make use of Shakespeare's cultural capital to present their hermeneutics of both Shakespeare and local cultures through the popular media of cinema. I will examine how they reinvent the Shakespearean story and how they treat the local history and culture, in which they set their cinematic narratives.

For their Shakespearean components, *A Spray of Plum Blossoms*, *The Banquet* and *Prince of the Himalayas* join their counterparts elsewhere around the globe that interpret, appropriate, dissemble and reconstruct Shakespeare's canonical text. At a structural level, this chapter argues, Shakespeare is essential both to the internal organization of the films and to their final effects. The films pursue core questions posed by the plays, utilizing Shakespeare as a strategy of legitimation and referencing his works as indices of an on-going debate between tradition and change. However, in the three adaptations, a Shakespearean presence is felt not so much through citation (although this is a recurring feature) but via revision: *Prince of the Himalayas*, for instance, becomes a tragedy of forgiveness rather than revenge, while Shakespeare's picaresque adventure of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* turns into a

⁵²² Throughout this chapter, Asian names are kept in their original order (family name first, e.g., Feng Xiaogang), except for names better known in other forms, such as Akira Kurosawa.

bildungsroman about two modern Chinese women in *A Spray of Plum Blossoms*. Gravitating towards each other in their preoccupations, *A Spray of Plum Blossoms*, *The Banquet* and *Prince of the Himalayas* address, albeit in contrasting ways and via distinctive representational registers, the encounter between, on the one hand, East and West and, on the other hand, modernity and older sets of values (including those centred upon the family and the individual). In this connection, localisation takes on a gendered complexity, for women in the films are figured as variously striving for independent subjectivity, functioning as political agents and agitating to preserve narrative memory. Embracing the shifting status of gender in China, the films contemplate, through women, male-defined systems of control. This is most apparent in *The Banquet*, in which the representation of Empress Wan (Gertrude) emphasizes fluctuating masculine and feminine polarities of power. The three film adaptations of Shakespeare as a group demonstrate the means whereby the inherited cultural capital of Shakespeare is enlisted in an interrogation of new Chinese realities, and, conversely, the extent to which adaptation can vitally reshape a play's emotional and generic contours.

5.1 Toward a History of Shakespeare on the Chinese Screen

Shakespeare on film started in the late nineteenth century, beginning with a silent film, Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree's *King John* (1899). The short film is a record of Tree's performance on stage. It was intended to promote Tree's production, which opened on September 20, 1899, at Her Majesty's Theatre in London.⁵²³ Many other early silent films tended to replicate stage productions. The beginnings of Shakespeare in Chinese cinema, however, are a very different story, although that story also begins with silent film.

At the turn of the nineteenth century when film was introduced into China as a new medium, the earliest films were imported productions in foreign languages. During this period, China saw her final days of imperial rule under the Manchu Dynasty, which was overthrown by the revolutionaries in 1911. However, the founding of the new republican government did not immediately bring wealth and power, two goals sought by the revolutionaries. On the contrary, the political disintegration that had already become evident in the late nineteenth century only

⁵²³ Maurice Hindle, *Studying Shakespeare on Film* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 19-20.

escalated during the early Republican period. Following the death of Yuan Shikai, the first president of the Republic of China, the era of warlordism began. Meanwhile, Western and Japanese imperialists increased their political and economic exploitation of China. China's defeat in the 1895 Sino-Japanese war and the Allied intervention following the Boxer Uprising of 1900 marked the high tide of imperialism in China. It was in this context of increasing foreign penetration and intensifying internal conflict that film was first imported. On 11 August 1896 in Shanghai, a Spaniard named Galen Bocca exhibited the first motion picture to a Chinese audience at a teahouse called *Xu yuan* (Xu Garden) where variety shows and acrobatic performances were given daily. Billed as 'electric shadow plays from the West,' the screening was part of a roster that included magic acts and fireworks.⁵²⁴ Soon, China developed its own film industry and market in a momentum driven by national pride, cultural identity and an increasing demand for domestic media. The first Chinese-made production was the 1905 filmed swordfight based on the opera *The Battle of Mount Dingjun*.⁵²⁵ The national film industry slowly gained momentum, culminating in the boom years of the 1920s and 1930s. Not surprisingly, cosmopolitan Shanghai was in the front of the Chinese movie industry. Nearly half of all films produced in China during the boom were created in Shanghai, where China's first movie theatre opened in 1908. By 1930, the city was home to fifty-three movie theatres, showing mainly Chinese-produced films.

Hollywood had a major influence on the Chinese film industry. Film critics of the time compared national stars Ruan Lingyu and Jin Yan to Greta Garbo and Rudolph Valentino, respectively. Western-style serials such as *The Perils of Pauline* attracted large audiences, and home-grown love stories such as 1931's *The Peach Girl* and fallen-women dramas such as 1934's *Shénnǚ* became as popular as similar films were in the West.

As with early films in the West, Chinese filmmakers drew on literature for plots.

⁵²⁴ See Xiao Zhiwei, 'Chinese cinema', in *Encyclopaedia of Chinese Film*, ed. by Zhang Yingjin (London & New York: Routledge, 1998)

⁵²⁵ Chinese film production began in 1905. A photographer named Ren Fengtai (1850–1932), who owned a photographic studio in Beijing, built the city's first movie theatre at the turn of the century as a sideline business venture. By that time, movie-going had become so fashionable that the supply of foreign films could not keep pace with demand. So Ren decided to make his own films. In spring 1905, with the help of his assistants, Ren filmed a segment of *The Battle of Mount Dingjun*, featuring Tan Xinpei (1847-1917), then the 'King of Beijing Opera', and he continued to film some more stage performances by Tan and other renowned Beijing opera singers later that year.

In China, cinema's symbiotic relationship with literature has been strong since the 1920s, after the consolidation of narrative cinema.⁵²⁶ While the bulk of silent cinema in China is heavily indebted to the rich tradition of classical Chinese literature, as well as the modern vernacular literature that flourished in the early decades of the twentieth century, a number of attempts were made to adapt Western literature to the Chinese screen. The earliest Chinese adaptation of Western literature can be traced back to 1913 when Alexandre Dumas' *La Dame aux Camelias* was used for a silent movie.⁵²⁷ The method of adapting domestic and foreign literature developed rapidly during the New Culture Movement in the 1920s.⁵²⁸

In this wave of adapting literary works, Shakespeare was one of the most welcomed Western authors. After the revolution of 1911, his plays were regarded as a weapon against imperialism and feudalism. Theatre artists and early filmmakers engaged in a double mission: to both develop the domestic cultural industry and change the backward society. Unlike their Western counterparts who attempted to replicate or promote specific stage productions, Shakespeare in Chinese silent film was part of the film studios' self-conscious attempt to market cinematic actualisation to increasingly global communities located within and beyond China, including Shanghai's Chinese cosmopolitan urbanites, European expatriates, Hong Kong audiences, and Chinese immigrants in Southeast Asia and other parts of the world. With foreign audiences and the international film market in mind, most silent films were inserted with both Chinese and English intertitles⁵²⁹ when produced. Thus, the domestication of a Western play turns inversely into a process of making and marketing a cosmopolitan film.

⁵²⁶ For a discussion of the genesis of Chinese cinema and the emergence of narrative cinema, see Zhang Zhen, 'Teahouse, Shadowplay, Bricolage: *Labourer's Love* and the Question of Early Chinese Cinema', in *Cinema and Urban Culture in China, 1922-1943*, ed. by Zhang Yingjin (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

⁵²⁷ Wu Hui, 'Shakespeare in Chinese Cinema', *Multicultural Shakespeare: Translation, Appropriation and Performance*, 10.25 (2013), 51-59 (p.52).

⁵²⁸ The New Culture Movement of the mid 1910s and 1920s sprang from the disillusionment with traditional Chinese culture following the failure of the Republic of China, founded in 1912, to address China's problems. Scholars like Chen Duxiu, Cai Yuanpei, Li Dazhao, Lu Xun, Zhou Zuoren, and Hu Shi, had classical educations but began to lead a revolt against Confucianism. They called for the creation of a new Chinese culture based on global and western standards, especially democracy and science. This Enlightenment Movement was marked by the magazine *New Youth* published in 1915. It promoted democracy, science, new morals and vernacular Chinese instead of feudal autocracy, superstition, old morals and classical Chinese.

⁵²⁹ In motion pictures, an intertitle (also known as a title card) is a piece of filmed, printed text edited into the midst of (i.e. inter-) the photographed action at various points, generally to convey character dialogue ("dialogue intertitles"), or descriptive narrative material related to, but not necessarily covered by, the material photographed ("expository intertitles").

In the 1920s and 1930s, a new woman's movement emerged as a powerful force in literature and arts. During this period, not only were women admitted to higher education, and even the legal profession formerly reserved for the male elite, but they also began to appear on stage and on screen as performers. A significant number of Western-style educational institutions—including women's schools and colleges—were set up in metropolitan areas, in which female students frequently produced public performances of Shakespeare and other Western plays. The Chinese film industry also showed its concern about and actively engaged with the new woman's movement in this period.

The earliest Shakespeare adaptation for the Chinese screen is *The Woman Lawyer*, a 1927 silent film based on *The Merchant of Venice*. The film does not focus on love, race, religion and friendship as many Western interpretations do, nor on the conflict about *A Pound of Flesh*, which was the Chinese title of the literary version. Instead, it concentrates on Bao Qixia (Portia) and the trial scene, dramatically emphasizing the charming and intelligent female perspective throughout the story. The film reflects its contemporary society's anxiety and curiosity about the presence of women in the legal profession, which was itself just being established in Chinese urban centres. Using Chinese transliteration, the film keeps intact the setting and the characters' names, such as Xue Luke (Shylock), Bao Qixia (Portia), An Dongyi (Antonio) and Bai Shiyi (Bassanio). Extant historical documents show that the film's plot stays fairly close to Shakespeare's text, but it concentrates on Portia's image as a new woman with a sharp mind and considerable wealth, rather than a woman impersonating a man (the court scene) or a prize in a ridiculous lottery (the caskets scene). As a woman exercising authority, she flaunts her male attire as she comes to Antonio's rescue in the court.⁵³⁰ Bao Qixia volunteers her *zhuanglian* 妆奁 (dowry) to repay An Dongyi's debt in the court, but Xue Luke refuses it. *The Woman Lawyer* plays down the problematic status and fate of Shylock in order to assert a gender-conscious narrative that emphasizes social mobility and the role of the new woman.

⁵³⁰ 中国电影艺术研究中心, 中国电影资料馆 编辑, *中国影片大典: 1905-1930* (北京: 中国电影出版社, 1996) [China Film Art Research Centre, China Film Archive, eds., *Encyclopedia of Chinese Films: 1905-1930* (Beijing: China Film Press, 1996)], p.130; *中国电影大词典* [Chinese Film Dictionary], p.720; and Alexander (now Alexa) C. Y. Huang, *Chinese Shakespeares*, p.115.



Figure 17 Hu Die as Bao Qixia (Portia) gives a special ring to her lover Bai Shiyi (Bassanio, played by Jin Yuru) as symbolic of her undying love in *The Woman Lawyer* (dir. Qiu Yixiang, Shanghai, 1927).

Unfortunately, the development of the emerging Chinese film industry was interrupted by the Japanese invasion during the Second World War. Even then, there were a couple of film adaptations of Shakespeare in China. In the 1940s, two more Shakespeare films were produced: *Cong Xin Cuo Yu*, based on *The Comedy of Errors* by Zhao Shuqin in Hong Kong, and *Da Fu Zhi Jia*, adapted from *King Lear* by Tu Guangqi, who moved from Shanghai to Hong Kong.⁵³¹

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, Shakespeare was not seen on screen in Mainland China until the early 1980s when the country started to open up again. Though Chinese filmmaking did not touch Shakespeare, Chinese studies of Shakespeare began to catch up with their equivalents elsewhere in the world. During the *Shakespeare Fever* of the 1980s, his plays were studied by Shakespeare scholars and their students, and were frequently performed on the stage. On the other hand, the few Shakespeare movies shown in the Chinese cinema since the 1980s were Russian, British, or American productions. For the Chinese movie industry, it took a little longer to begin to do Shakespeare. He remained absent from the Chinese movies except in a few filmic allusions or references to his name, his works, and other filmic adaptations of his plays. One of the few examples is *A Time to Love* (dir.

⁵³¹ Isabel Wolte, *Research about Chinese Films Adapted from Foreign Stories* (Diss., Beijing Film Academy, 2009), pp. 24-27.

Huo Jianqi, 2005) that is loosely connected to *Romeo and Juliet*. Set initially in the 1970s and ending in the present, *A Time to Love* tells a love story whose protagonists Qu Ran (played by Zhao Wei) and Hou Jia (played by Lu Yi) repeatedly compare themselves and their lives to the title characters and story of *Romeo and Juliet*. The film not only makes use of Shakespeare's story but also weaves some Shakespearean moments into a modern Chinese tragicomedy. The physical and metaphysical presence of Shakespeare can be found in the movie's structure and themes. Not only do Qu Ran and Hou Jia share a library copy of a translated edition of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, but they also share the misfortunes of the dramatic characters. Their love suffers from a feud between the two families that originated from an incident during China's Cultural Revolution. Allusions to Shakespeare's play abound in the film. There are many Shakespeare-related scenes in which the protagonists are reading Shakespeare in Chinese translation, quoting Shakespeare in their reflection on their own life, reciting lines from the balcony scene, and watching a Shakespeare movie, identifiably, Franco Zeffirelli's 1968 *Romeo and Juliet*. Contrary to expectations, this version has a happy ending—the lovers eventually get married.⁵³²

⁵³² See discussions about these cross-cultural references in Yang Lingui 'Shakespeare's Cultural Capital Made in China: From Pre-modern to Post-modern' and Richard Burt 'Alluding to Shakespeare in *L'Appartement*, *The King is Alive*, *Wicker Park*, *A Time to Love*, and *University of Laughs*: Digital Film, Asianization, and the Transnational Film Remake', in *Shakespeare Yearbook 17: Shakespeare and Asia*, eds. by Yang Lingui and Douglas Brooks (New York: Edwin Mellen, 2010).



Figure 18 Qu Ran (Zhao Wei) and Hou Jia (Lu Yi) are watching Franco Zeffirelli's 1968 *Romeo and Juliet* in *A Time to Love* (dir. Huo Jianqi, 2005).

Chinese film artists seem to be ready to embrace the Bard now that conditions are right for large-scale adaptations on screen. The market economy, an increasingly urbanized population, a consumerist society, political liberalisation and globalisation have set the stage for such films. Moreover, adaptation means that a famous cultural brand, such as a classic work of literature, can help to promote the product. It evokes an imprinted memory of cultural symbols in the public mind and facilitates communication and advertisement of the subject.

5.2 Silent Knights, Martial Heroines: *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* in Silent Movie

The Two Gentlemen of Verona is one of Shakespeare's early comedies, telling the romance of two pairs of lovers: Valentine and Silvia, and Proteus and Julia. The Chinese silent film *Yi jian mei*⁵³³ transplanted the story into the 1920s' Republic of

⁵³³ *Yi jian mei* 一剪梅 (*A Spray of Plum Blossoms*), 1931, by Lianhua Studio; scenario Huang Yicuo, adapted from William Shakespeare's *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*; director Bu Wancang; cast: Ruan Lingyu, as Lily Yuen (Hu Zhuli/Julia), Lin Chuchu (Shi Luohua/Silvia), Wang Cilong (Bai Lede/Proteus), Jin Yan, as Raymond King (Hu Lunting/Valentine), Gao Zhanfei (Diao Li'ao/Tiburio), Wang Guilin (General Shi), Chen Yanyan (A Qiao/Lucetta), Liu Jiquan (Fatty Zhu), Shi Juefei (Li Yi, the Old Bandit Chieftain), Zhou Lili (Female Guard/Lady-in-Waiting), Li Lili (Piano Player) Original.

China and turned the protagonists into two pairs of Chinese lovers. On the Chinese screen, the two gentlemen became ‘silent knights’,⁵³⁴ while the two ladies emerged as the leading characters, especially Shi Luohua (Silvia) who was portrayed as a commanding general—a martial heroine, as opposed to the traditional image of a woman in Confucian culture—a virtuous wife and good mother. Bu Wancang, director of the film, attempted to create new role models for Chinese women. As Huang observes: ‘the cultural figure of the new woman is an integral part of the contested modern nation project, embodying an urban subjectivity in its new social image’, thus: ‘the new woman in the film and drama of the 1930s represents the fear, promise, and perils of Chinese modernization and nation-building.’⁵³⁵ The following sections analyse the features of the adaptation, such as nationalist motif, female agency, martial arts genre and plum blossom symbolism.

5.2.1 Shakespeare Connection and Sinicization

In the Chinese adaptation, while the storyline largely follows Shakespeare’s original, the characters and plots have been sinicized. The Duke of Milan becomes General Shi, the military governor of Canton (Guangzhou). The film retains Shakespeare’s two pairs of troubled lovers, but they have been transformed into Chinese lovers: Hu Lunting (Valentine) and Shi Luohua (Silvia), Bai Lede (Proteus) and Hu Zhuli (Julia). Derived from transliteration, the Chinese names carry no clues to the symbolic meanings of the English names—Valentine being the patron saint of lovers, Proteus being a Greek sea god known for changing shapes (hence, a synonym for deceit), Julia derived from the hot summer month July and connoting passionate temper, and Silvia referring to the woods and foreshadowing the pastoral setting near the play’s ending.⁵³⁶ Yet, certain words in the Chinese names manage to hint at appropriate personality traits: *lun* 伦 in Lunting (Valentine) highlights ethical integrity, and *le* 乐 in Lede (Proteus) reveals indulgence in pleasure while the surname Bai 白 implies his ultimately abortive effort. The most fitting name is Diao Li’ao 刁利葵 (Turio), who is transformed from a typical but defeated rival in the original to a cunning, arrogant schemer. Absent from the Chinese line-up of characters are three comic figures in the original: clownish servants Speed and Lance

⁵³⁴ Alexander C. Y. Huang, *Chinese Shakespeares* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p.115, 118.

⁵³⁵ Alexander C. Y. Huang, *Chinese Shakespeares*, p.114.

⁵³⁶ Kurt Schlueter, ed. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1990), pp. 52-53.

and the latter's dog Crab. One reason for their absence is perhaps the difficulty of translating the lengthy and allusion-rich speeches of these characters and generating instant humour through short intertitles; another is that their hilarious side shows, amusing as they were to the early modern English theatre audience, would be too distracting to the core narrative. The film, nonetheless, manages to transfer some clownish traits to Bai Lede (played by Wang Cilong), who repeatedly puts on exaggerated facial expressions and, typical of silent film's embodied performance, uses hand tricks to entertain Hu Zhuli and Shi Luohua.

Different from Shakespeare, the film adds kinship relations to its characters: Hu Lunting and Hu Zhuli are siblings (as their Chinese surname indicates), while Shi Luohua is the daughter of General Shi, and the cousin of Bai Lede. The Duke of Milan, who is unrelated to Proteus in Shakespeare, is now his uncle. The familial connections shift the audience's attention to domestic matters. Their kinship creates a situation in which Hu Lunting owes a favour to Bai Lede after Bai Lede writes a letter of introduction for him to his uncle, General Shi. Furthermore, Hu Lunting entrusts his sister to Bai Lede's care, and that favour kindles Bai Lede and Hu Zhuli's romance in Shanghai, where they exchange rings before Bai Lede leaves to join Hu Lunting in Canton. Hu Zhuli later disguises herself as a boy to go to pursue her brother, not her lover, highlighting the Chinese emphasis on familial ties. Subtly intertextualized, the 'kinship' between Shanghai and Canton is evoked in the 'domestication' of Shakespeare's play.⁵³⁷

5.2.2 Infusion of Nationalist Sentiment

A woman with bobbed hair wears a form-fitting *qípáo* dress, holds an evening bag, and raises her hand in greeting as she alights from an airplane. This arresting image was used to advertise British American Tobacco Company cigarettes and illustrates the emergence of Shanghai's *modern woman*. By the 1930s, the image of the Chinese woman as subservient, with bound feet balancing elaborately styled hair, had been replaced by her twentieth century version: chic, mobile, modern—code at the time for Western.

A centre of international trade and commerce since the mid-nineteenth century, Shanghai was divided into separate districts for English, American, French, Russian, and Chinese communities. By the 1930s, the port city was infiltrated by Western

⁵³⁷ Zhang Yingjin, *Chinese National Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp.153-54.

culture and technologies. Huge department stores opened on Nanjing Road, Chinese men sported Western-style suits, and automobiles and electric trams thronged the streets. Chinese advertising promoted a Western lifestyle, with images of stylish Chinese women playing golf, listening to gramophones and dancing together. Nightlife in Shanghai catered to the large international population, with nightclubs, restaurants, and, inevitably, movie theatres.

‘One of Chinese film’s most striking attributes is the way it has responded and reacted to political events.’⁵³⁸ *Yi jian mei* articulated the nationalistic and anti-imperialist sentiment of its time. China’s defeat in the 1895 Sino-Japanese war and the Allied intervention following the Boxer Uprising of 1900 marked the high tide of imperialism in China. In the years leading up to World War II, and especially following the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931, filmmakers had to tailor their subject matter to the fickle political climate. The Japanese occupation of Manchuria in September 1931 generated a nationwide, patriotic fever. A new Chinese nationalism emerged, which served as ‘the ideological glue of campaigns against imperialism and the privileges of foreigners.’⁵³⁹ Just as the ‘devaluation and displacement of love and aesthetics by revolution and national salvation initiated a masculinising tendency’⁵⁴⁰ in Chinese films of the early 1930s, *Yi jian mei*’s military atmosphere resonates with the climate of the time and with Lianhua’s nationalist mission. The film distances itself from Shakespeare’s play, recasting romance in an ambivalent light and playing up the motif of nationalism.

The Two Gentlemen of Verona is a romantic comedy highlighting the theme of love and the conflict between love and friendship. Under his father’s command, Proteus has to part with Julia and go to Milan. Finding that she cannot stop the flame of love in her heart, Julia decides to go to Milan to look for Proteus. Love becomes the driving force, initiating her to take the difficult journey. Valentine, who despises love at the beginning of the play, becomes a captive of love immediately after meeting Silvia. He says, ‘Love’s a mighty lord / And hath so humbled me, as I

⁵³⁸ Xiao Zhiwei, ‘Chinese cinema’, in *Encyclopaedia of Chinese Film* ed. by Zhang Yingjin (London & New York: Routledge, 1998), p.3.

⁵³⁹ William C. Kirby, foreword to *Chinese Nationalism in Perspective: Historical and Recent Cases*, eds. by C. X. George Wei and Liu Xiaoyuan (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001), ix. Major anti-imperial events following the Boxer Rebellion include the 1905 Anti-American Boycott and the 1918 May Fourth Movement.

⁵⁴⁰ Zhang Yingjin, *The City in Modern Chinese Literature and Film: Configurations of Space, Time, and Gender* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996), p. 206.

confess / There is no woe to his correction / Nor to his service no such on earth.’ (2. 4. 134-37) Framed by his best friend Proteus, Valentine is forced to leave Silvia. He suffers so much that he even wants to commit suicide, feeling that with the despair of love and the betrayal of friendship, he has lost the light and happiness of life. When Valentine is banished from Milan, Silvia escapes from the Duke’s palace. The play ends with the two pairs of lovers getting married and living together happily: ‘One feast, one house, one mutual happiness. (5. 4. 171)

The young protagonists in Shakespeare prioritize love above everything else, while the film’s heroes and heroines have nobler causes— nation, family, and social justice. In service of these causes, the film deviates from its source in a few notable particulars. First, rather than scholarly gentlemen, Hu Lunting and Bai Lede are recent graduates of a Shanghai military academy seeking posts in Canton. In contrast to Shakespeare’s lovesick, melancholic gentlemen, the film’s protagonists must shoulder patriotic duty. The nationalistic ideology is not only evident in the narrative of the film, but also is delivered in a very direct way. For example, characters would try to persuade other characters in the film, as well as audiences, to join the project of national salvation. While Shakespeare’s Valentine prompts Proteus to ‘see the wonders of the world abroad’ (1.1.6), the Chinese Valentine’s reproof of Proteus’s idleness in the opening scene articulates a spirit of patriotism: ‘This is time for us to serve the country; we should refrain from being ruined by perfumes and girls.’⁵⁴¹ Later, Hu Zhuli also encourages Bai Lede to join the army even though this will result in their separation. Framed by Bai Lede, Hu Lunting is banished and becomes the chief of outlaws. Learning about her brother’s exile, Zhuli resolves to go to Canton to investigate the truth, which is different from Julia’s trip to Milan to chase her love. In this film, familial responsibility—a sense of honour, as much if not more than sororial affection—means even more to women than love. Second, to match the climate of China’s contemporary society, the film added a social concern to the original plot. Emboldened by his commander’s trust, Diao Li’ao and his military police squad manhandle the commoners. By contrast, Hu Lunting and the bandits imitate Robin Hood and his Merry Men to redress such wrongs. The conflict

⁵⁴¹ Quoted from *A Spray of Plum Blossoms*, dir. by Bu Wancang (Shanghai: Lianhua Studio, 1931), DVD, 00:04:39. The film’s title cards appear in Chinese and English. The Chinese title card reads: *Zhe shi wo men wei guo xiao lao de shi qi. Bu gai ba bao gui de guang yin, xiao mo zai zhi fen he xiang shui li mian.* (这是我们为国效劳的时期。不该把宝贵的光阴，消磨在脂粉和香水里面。)

between the two groups acts out social tension between the power bloc and the people. The film's final scene, in which two pairs of lovers supervise marching soldiers on horseback, departs drastically from Shakespeare's romantic vision of 'one mutual happiness' (5.4.171) for four lovers; instead, it places four protagonists in solidarity and conveys to its audience a desirable sense of power at a time when China faced an imminent threat of invasion after Japan had occupied Manchuria. The love theme of Shakespeare has therefore been placed in a secondary position, while nationalism becomes a more important theme in *Yi jian mei*.



Figure 19 Ruan Lingyu as Hu Zhuli (Julia) and Lin Chuchu as Shi Luohua (Silvia) in military uniform and skirt examine the military police squad in the final scene of *A Spray of Plum Blossoms* (dir. Bu Wancang, Shanghai: Lianhua Studio, 1931).

5.2.3 Masculinisation of the New Woman

While concentrating on the nation as a critical issue, the film also engages the concept of the "New Woman". The New Woman was an imported concept during the May Fourth Movement period.⁵⁴² Both male and female writers of this period,

⁵⁴² The May Fourth Movement (1915-24) is also referred to as the Chinese Enlightenment or the Chinese Renaissance. It is the cultural revolution that was brought about by the political demonstrations on the fourth of May 1919, when citizens and students in Beijing paraded the streets to protest over decisions made at the post-World War I Versailles Conference, and called for an abolishment of traditional culture and the invention of a new one. It was therefore especially the idea of "new everything" that became a focal point in the May Fourth Movement. Within the "new everything" debate, that, amongst others, included "new youth" and "new literature", the "new woman" was an important issue. See Rey Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), p.35.

e.g. Ding Ling, Hu Shi and Mao Dun, probed the shifting ideals of womanhood in their works. According to them, a lower status of women in Chinese society meant a serious impediment to further modernisation and strengthening of the nation.⁵⁴³ Education of women was therefore necessary. The need for a woman's own independent personality was also of importance. Key authors such as Hu Shi and Lu Xun looked to Europe and the United States for examples of independence and found the New Woman, which they translated as *xin nüxing* 新女性.⁵⁴⁴ In the United States, Europe, and Japan during the 1890s, the concept of the “New Woman” at first referred primarily to educated, politically active public women with women's rights agendas such as suffrage, labour, or birth control. This definition was blurred by the popularization of the New Woman's marital and financial freedoms. The subsequent generations in the following three decades came to be characterized by their apolitical image and function in consumer society—short hair, modern fashions, and free love—but “New Woman” did retain the distinct connotation of politically vocal feminism.⁵⁴⁵ The cultural figure of the new woman was an integral part of the modern nation project in early twentieth century China. The Chinese new woman was formed as a result of the many discussions in popular magazines such as *Xin Qingnian* 新青年(New Youth). There was even a new magazine (*Xin nüxing* 新女性 [New Woman]) entirely dedicated to the woman issue.⁵⁴⁶ The concept of “new women” indicated the search for women's identity in a new China that had rejected Confucian values. The new woman was a modern woman with her own subjectivity. From the 1910s to the 1930s, “*modeng nüxing* 摩登女性” (modern women) and “*xin nüxing* 新女性” (new women) were two terms frequently used in Chinese literature and film, and ‘contending groups of Chinese intellectuals [also] used the “woman

⁵⁴³ Amy D. Dooling and Kristina M. Torgeson, *Writing women in Modern China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p.13.

⁵⁴⁴ 胡适, ‘美国的夫人’, 新青年, 5.3 (1918) [Hu Shi, ‘American Ladies’, *New Youth*, 5.3 (1918)], 213-224.

⁵⁴⁵ On the New Woman in the United States, Europe, and Japan: Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader, 1837-1914* (London: Oxford University Press, 1994); Sumiko Higashi, *Cecil B. DeMille and American Culture: The Silent Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1941); Atina Grossmann, ‘The New Woman and the Rationalization of Sexuality in Weimar Germany’, in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, ed. by Ann Snitow et al. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), pp.153-171; Barbara Hamill Sato, ‘The Moga Sensation: Perceptions of the *Modan Gam* in Japanese Intellectual Circles during the 1920s’, *Gender and History* 5.3 (1993), 363-381; Laurel Rasplia Rodd, ‘Yosano Akiko and the Taisho Debate over the “New Woman”’, in *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945*, ed. by Gail Lee Bernstein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp.175-198.

⁵⁴⁶ Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: Norton & Company, 1990), p.312.

question” as a keyhole through which to address issues of modernity and the nation.⁵⁴⁷ “The woman question” centred on freedoms of love and marriage, access to education and employment, while it also developed into a potent symbol for modernist discourse in China.

With “the woman question” as its main concern, the film reduces Shakespeare’s emphasis on the early modern European discourse of male friendship,⁵⁴⁸ and displaces the themes of fidelity and betrayal in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* into a female-centred frame of narration that was perceived by the filmmaker and the studio as more modern. The film features independent female characters and female-to-male cross-dressing, a device often used in Shakespeare’s comedic plays. The women in the film are active and assertive, very different from the stereotype of the docile and subservient Chinese woman of earlier times. Luohua is the daughter of the military Governor of Canton, yet behaves more like a heroine from an American Western genre. When she first appears in the film, on her way to a horse ride in the open country, the intertitle card describes her as ‘a maiden with a spirit of masculinity.’⁵⁴⁹ We often see her riding horses with her male peers across rolling, open countryside and walking around the interior scenes with a horsewhip in hand. Her military skills enhance her profile as a modern woman: she commands her male and female subordinates with authority, and she single-handedly fights off two sexual assaults by Bai Lede and Diao Li’ao consecutively. Like her Shakespearean analogue, Luohua is defiant, choosing her outlaw lover over an arranged match. With long, unbound hair, wearing a wide-brimmed hat and accompanied by two uniformed handmaidens, she is a world away from Ruan Lingyu’s (1910-35) character Hu Zhuli, who was a sophisticated city girl sporting bobbed hair and *qipáo* dresses, the embodiment of the Shanghai modern woman. Ruan departs from her previous roles as a tragic heroine (for example, a modern woman who is unable to resist her tragic fate) to play a witty and self-determined woman. Zhuli, for her part, outperforms Shakespeare’s Julia on many counts. At her first appearance in the film, a scene in which she sings and plays the song “I Am Willing” (*Wo yuan yi*)

⁵⁴⁷ Sarah E Stevens, ‘Figuring Modernity: The New Woman and the Modern girl in Republican China’, *NWSA Journal*, 15.3 (2003), 82-103.

⁵⁴⁸ William C. Carroll, ed. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (London: Arden, 2004), pp.3-32.

⁵⁴⁹ Or ‘*jinguo zhong you zhangfu qi* 巾幗中有丈夫气’ in Chinese. 中国电影资料馆 编辑, *中国无声电影剧本*, 3 卷本 (北京: 中国电影出版社, 1996) [ZDZ (Zhongguo dianying ziliaoguan) [China Film Archive], ed. *Zhongguo wusheng dianying juban* [Chinese silent movie scripts], 3 vols. (Beijing: China Film Press, 1996)], p. 2138.

on the piano, the English intertitles introduce her as ‘a model of the modern maidens’ or, literally translated from Chinese intertitles (*chaoyue shidai de modeng nüxin* 超越时代的摩登女性), ‘a modern woman transcending her times.’⁵⁵⁰ Using the point of view shot, she is seen from the viewpoint of Bai Lede, peering through a window as she is enclosed in a domestic space and serves as the object of male gaze in an exhibitionist mode (singing and dancing). In the play, planning with her maid Lucetta the trip to Milan to track down Proteus, Julia would travel ‘not like a woman, for I would prevent the loose encounters of lascivious men’ (2.7.40-41), while the film shows Zhuli arriving in Canton in a borrowed biplane in extremely feminine clothes and in tears, alone. This modern girl from Shanghai, the piano-playing, singing and dancing girl dressed in a white *qipáo* that we see at the beginning of the film, undergoes a metamorphosis after arriving in Canton. Luohua takes Zhuli under her wing and the two quickly form a sisterly bond. Rather than serving Bai Lede as his page in disguise as in the play, Luohua has her dress as a man and serve as her protégé. Thus, Zhuli joins Luohua to carry on their war with the opposite sex. Romance in the film is not so much the end as the means by which the two modern Chinese girls learn more about themselves and forge an alliance with one another. In much of the film, the two leading ladies are dressed in military uniforms. Luohua, daughter of the Governor-general, is no love-starved maiden locked away in the deep recesses of an aristocratic palace but a military officer with a rank.

The film offers a rare glimpse of the lighter side of Ruan Lingyu (1910-1935), who is best known for her roles as a tragic heroine in films such as *Spring Dream of the Old Capital* (*Gu Du Chun Meng* 故都春梦, 1930), *Goddess* (Shen Nü 神女, 1934), and *New Woman* (*Xin Nüxing* 新女性, 1935), but offers here a surprising performance as the witty and intelligent Hu Zhuli. One of the most revered actresses of the 1930s, Ruan appeared in twenty-nine films before committing suicide at the age of twenty-four. As a famous star, Ruan’s private life attracted as much media attention as her films. Her unhappy marriage, pending divorce, and affair with another man attracted vindictive coverage.⁵⁵¹ Her extramarital romance interest and

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid. p.2135.

⁵⁵¹ In Contrast to her success on the screen, Ruan’s personal life was a tragedy. She fell in love with Zhang Damin, the young master of the house where her mother worked, before starting her film career. They lived together eventually. However, in a class-divided society they could not get married because of the objection from Zhang Damin’s mother. Their relationship deteriorated when she became successful. She later left Zhang and lived with a businessman Tang Jishan.

defiance of normative social roles assigned to women in real life seems parallel to her role in *Yi jian mei*.⁵⁵² Ruan's Zhuli became a role model of the New Woman on screen, but her life in the real society ended in tragedy, suggesting that the transformation of the new woman was an irony. The film prompts today's audiences to explore the context and the history, from Ruan Lingyu's suicide to China's half-century of suffering.

Recent scholarship has attributed the idea of modern womanhood in the early twentieth century to China's translational practice. In her study of the 'composition' of the New Woman in China in the late Qing period, Hu Ying finds that the new woman is a composite figure situated in a space between different cultural sources, and this highly gendered representation constitutes the core of a collective production of the modern imaginary.⁵⁵³ Zhang Zhen believes the Chinese New Woman in literature and film is 'a translated cosmopolitan product, bearing resemblance to *La Dame aux camélias*,⁵⁵⁴ *Sophia Perovskaya*,⁵⁵⁵ and *Madame Roland de la Platière*⁵⁵⁶...yet tak[ing] on features and behaviours of her would-be literary ancestors and sisters in the Chinese literary tradition.'⁵⁵⁷ It is therefore not surprising for the audience to find the new woman with multiple identities: a revolutionary who is also a filial daughter and a 'chaste widow [who] recite[s] a poem from *Romeo and Juliet*'—in short, a composite figure that is neither 'original'

When Zhang sued Tang for damage this became a scandal in 1930s Shanghai and Ruan Lingyu was hounded by the tabloid press. Under severe pressure, Ruan Lingyu committed suicide by sleeping pill overdose in the early morning of 8 March 1935. Her sudden death ignited fierce debate on the behaviour of tabloid newspapers and the protection of women in public life. Her funeral was attended by thousands of people. See '*The Tragic Life of Ruan Lingyu*', <<http://history.cultural-china.com/en/224H11187H14263.html>> [accessed on 8 January 2015]

⁵⁵² Alexander C. Y. Huang, *Chinese Shakespeares*, p.118-19.

⁵⁵³ Hu Ying, *Tales of Translation: Composing the New Woman in China, 1899-1918* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000), p.5.

⁵⁵⁴ *La Dame aux camélias* is the titled protagonist in the novel *La Dame aux camélias* (English: *The Lady of the Camellias*) by Alexandre Dumas, *filis*, first published in 1848.

⁵⁵⁵ Sophia Lvovna Perovskaya (Russian: Со́фья Льво́вна Перо́вская; 13 September [O.S. 1 September] 1853-15 April [O.S. 3 April] 1881) was a Russian revolutionary and a member of *Narodnaya Volya*. She helped orchestrate the successful assassination of Alexander II of Russia.

⁵⁵⁶ Jeanne-Marie Roland de La Platière, better known simply as Madame Roland and born Marie-Jeanne Phlippon Roland (17 March 1754 – 8 November 1793) was, together with her husband Jean-Marie Roland de la Platière, a supporter of the French Revolution and influential member of what was considered a relatively moderate pro-democracy party called the Girondists. Madame Roland directed her husband's political career during the French Revolution, greatly influencing the policies of the Girondist faction of bourgeois revolutionaries.

⁵⁵⁷ Zhang Zhen, 'Cosmopolitan Projections: World Literature on Chinese Screens', in *A Companion to Literature and Film*, eds. by Robert Stam and Alesandra Raengo (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 144-63.

nor ‘coherent.’⁵⁵⁸ In light of this, Luohua’s ability to dash off a classical poem while wearing the uniform of a military officer would come across as quite natural in the eyes of the contemporary spectator.

While the fair ladies transform into militant new women, a gender reversal happens in this film, whereby male characters become deplorable, even desperate victims of love. The Chinese film makes Bai Lede (Proteus) a philanderer, and a clown-like figure with typically hilarious gestures (squinting and constantly touching his moustache). Bai Lede’s indulgence in romance earns him the nickname ‘perfume general’ [*zhifen jiangjun*] before his graduation from the military academy in Shanghai,⁵⁵⁹ and subsequently drives him to betray his lover, friend, and uncle, to the point where he almost commits suicide in shame at the film’s end. Even though he does not change as dramatically in the film as in the play from a detractor of romance—‘a folly bought with wit / Or else a wit by folly vanquished’ (1.1.34-35)—to a captor of love—‘I have done penance for contemning Love / Whose high imperious thoughts have punished me’ (2.4.127-28), Hu Lunting has to be banished from Canton and become a love-wounded bandit chief.

5.2.4 Hybrid Martial Heroes and Heroines

The subplots of sisters-in-arms in *Yi jian mei* should be viewed with regard to the craze of the *wuxia* (martial arts) film that rose at meteoric speed in the late 1920s and expanded both the domestic and foreign markets for Chinese cinema. The literary traditions of *wuxia* (or ‘martial romance’) are very old and include epic narratives such as the fourteenth-century *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and *Outlaws of the Marsh*. Usually, the *wuxia* hero is a noble outlaw on a quest for justice, which makes this genre especially compatible with the revenge tragedies of the English Renaissance. In general, there are two categories of martial-arts films: the *wuxia* (sword-fighting knight-errant) genre, informed by dynastic fantasy literature, and the *kung fu* genre in contemporary settings, which was shaped by Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan. In recent *wuxia* films, as can be seen from *Yi jian mei* and *The Banquet*, ‘elements from Western culture are frequently “copied and pasted” into Asian traditions, recycled not merely for a Chinese audience but aiming at a

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁹ 中国电影资料馆 编辑, *中国无声电影剧本*, 3 卷本 (北京: 中国电影出版社, 1996) [ZDZ (Zhongguo dianying ziliaoguan) [China Film Archive], ed. *Zhongguo wusheng dianying juban* [Chinese silent movie scripts], 3 vols. (Beijing: China Film Press, 1996)], p.2135.

global mainstream market.’⁵⁶⁰

In *Yi jian mei*, Hu Lunting is declared to be ‘an ambitious new graduated cadet’ at his graduation from the Shanghai military academy, while Shi Luohua, the daughter of General Shi, is portrayed as ‘a maiden with a spirit of masculinity’—young, beautiful, kind-hearted, faithful to love. With an intertextual reference to Chinese martial arts pictures of the 1920s,⁵⁶¹ Hu Lunting acts as an archetypal knight-errant who roams around in disguise, assisting the poor and needy, and punishing villains like Diao Li’ao (Turio) who becomes head of the military police through a backdoor connection and whose subordinates bully people all the time. ‘The military prowess of the hero’,⁵⁶² which was subsequently added to the play’s performance texts, is projected in vibrant detail in the film. Like a valiant knight-errant, Hu Lunting leaps to the rooftop with ease and throws flying arrows at targets with precision. The wilderness where Hu Lunting is turned into a knight and where the narrative reaches its denouement is also the place where the film further betrays its indebtedness to the martial arts genre. The headquarters of the outlaws is called ‘Plum Blossoms Village,’ a typical name often used in *wuxia* literature and film. While Shakespeare’s play does contain a digression in which Valentine is banished and chosen by the nameless outlaws as their leader, the film extends and transforms this digression. After Hu Lunting, the gentleman from the city, is adopted as the head of the wild bunch, he decrees that their gang will not do anything harmful to the poor or to women. Rather, they will live by the principle of ‘Eradicating the Powerful and Aiding the Weak,’ a motto in the world of knight-errantry made popular by martial arts fiction and film in the 1920s. This is also the intertextual representation of the condition raised by Valentine after being chosen as the head of the outlaws in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, ‘do no outrages on silly women or poor passengers’ (4.1.70-71). Jin Yan (as Hu Lunting) played a handsome hero with a noble character, whose nobility does not diminish even when he becomes the chief of outlaws. The heroic image he created in the film brought a kind of novelty to its audiences.

Perhaps due to its flaunted hybridity, *Yi jian mei* is criticized by an official in Chinese film history as ‘an awful mediocre picture in which certain characters wear

⁵⁶⁰ Ingo Berensmeyer, ‘Cultural Ecology and Chinese *Hamlets*’, in *New Literary History*, 42.3 (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 419-438 (p. 431).

⁵⁶¹ Zhang Zhen, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen: Shanghai Cinema, 1896–1937* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp.199-243.

⁵⁶² Kurt Schlueter, ed. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1990), p.29.

bizarre [*qixing guaizhuang* 奇形怪状] clothing.’⁵⁶³ Presumably referring to the film’s ‘militant fashion’,⁵⁶⁴ this criticism captures precisely the effect of cultural hybridization authored by Chinese filmmakers through intertextual performance. Not only is the film a cinematic reinvention of Shakespeare, it borrows conceptually and visually from early American cinema as well: ‘while the female soldiers with long, permed hair and military uniforms (jacket, skirt, and boots) look like sisters of Pearl White from *Pearl of the Army*, which was widely popular in China around 1922, the male lead... plays a Robin Hood figure modelled on the American male adventure films that circulated between 1922 and 1925.’⁵⁶⁵ Valentine’s *bizarre* bandit outfits (tattered jacket and leather boots) and, when in disguise, his black hooded long cloak simultaneously reference the Robin Hood legend and the Chinese knight-errant tradition. The convergence of Robin Hood and knight-errantry promises the best of both ‘chivalry and romance’ [*xiayi aiqing* 侠义爱情] genres, as the film was advertised in *Film Magazine* in October 1930.⁵⁶⁶ Indeed, the film’s complete title would be *Qingdao Yijianmei* 情盜一剪梅 [A passionate bandit named *A Spray of Plum Blossoms*].

In the late 1920s, the large bulk of films with *nüxia* as protagonists constituted a sizable subgenre of the new martial arts film commonly known as martial heroine (*nüxia*) film. Films like *Red Heroine* (*Hong Xia* 红侠, 1929) and *Female Knight-errant of Huangjiang* (*Huangjiang Nüxia* 荒江女侠, 1929-31) feature a maiden turned knight-errant who serves as the arbiter of a community; in the process, the heroine usually rescues another maiden in distress. In many films, the veteran heroine also initiates the other maiden into the world of martial arts and knightly grace.⁵⁶⁷ In Shakespeare, the picaresque itineraries of the two interweaving romances are meant to be part of the education of the two (supposedly) knightly gentlemen, whereas in the film, the women groom and train themselves to be knightly subjects,

⁵⁶³ Cheng Jihua, Li Shaobai and Xing Zuwen, eds. *Zhongguo dianying fazhan shi* [History of the development of Chinese cinema]. 2nd edition. 2 vols (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 1981), p.153.

⁵⁶⁴ Zhang Zhen, ‘Cosmopolitan Projections: World Literature on Chinese Screens’, in *A Companion to Literature and Film*, ed. Robert Stam and Alesandra Raengo (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 144-63 (p.154).

⁵⁶⁵ Bao Weihong, ‘From *Pearl White* to *White Rose Woo*: Tracing the Vernacular Body of *Nüxia* in Chinese Silent Cinema, 1927-1931’, *Camera Obscura*, 20.3 (2005), 193-231 (p.218).

⁵⁶⁶ *Yingxi zazhi* 影戏杂志 [Film magazine], Shanghai, 1.10, October 1930, p.369.

⁵⁶⁷ Zhang Zhen, ‘Bodies in the Air: The Magic of Science and the Fate of the Martial Arts Film in China’, *Post Script* 20: 2-3 (2001), 43-60.

both in heart and in style. They take control of their circumstances rather than being dictated to by them. The two gentlemen became ‘silent knights,’⁵⁶⁸ while the two ladies emerged as heroic women, especially Shi Luohua (Silvia), who was portrayed as a commanding general. The theatrics of female agency mean that other characters are relegated to the background. The men they love to hate (Bai Lede and Diao Li’ao) serve as mere foils to the two *gentlewomen*. Of special interest is a scene in which Luohua, after Lunting is banished, takes over his position as the chief of the military police squad, presenting ‘the way of a perfume general.’⁵⁶⁹ As she takes command at the front of the squad in a courtyard and her squad salutes her, she walks in military uniform, sabre hanging from her waist. However, she dons a striped skirt and wears her hair long instead of tucking it into the officer’s cap. The scene highlights the theatricality of a woman playing the role of a general. The film adds a twist to the popular female-knight genre by portraying the figure of the new woman as necessarily masculine in appearance and outlook. Zhuli and Luohua’s androgynous quality also reflects the widespread anxiety about the hybrid identity of the new woman, which is located between tradition and modernity, and between variously defined gender roles.

The rhetoric of female agency helps to turn Shakespeare’s *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, ‘a shallow story of deep love’ (I.1.21), into a *bildungsroman* for two *gentlewomen* of Shanghai and Canton. The film’s appropriation of the figure of the new woman was quite popular and well received. A reader of the *Film Magazine* wrote enthusiastically from Nanjing:

I finally got a chance to see the long-awaited *A Spray of Plum Blossoms*...Because it was raining I decided to see it in the capital [Nanjing, instead of going to Shanghai]. I want to inform you of the Chinese people’s enthusiasm for Lianhua’s productions! It was raining so hard that day. We arrived at the theatre two hours in advance but there were already many waiting for tickets. As soon as the door opened, people rushed in. Many got their clothes and umbrella torn up...From the beginning to the end, I watched contentedly with my mouth open.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁸ Alexander C. Y. Huang, *Chinese Shakespeares*, p.115, 118.

⁵⁶⁹ The Chinese intertitle reads, ‘zhifen jiangjun de bense.’

⁵⁷⁰ *Yingxi zazhi* 影戏杂志, October 1, 1931, 42; Zhang Zhen, ‘Cosmopolitan Projections’, 2004, p.158, 163. This reader goes on to comment on the film in some detail, including the presentation of translated intertitles: ‘Compared to *Love and Duty* which has a couple of flaws, *A Spray of Plum Blossoms* is perfect...My only misgiving has to do with the English translation of the [diegetic] announcements and letters. They should have been put in intertitles consistently, and not projected on the wall sometimes in Chinese and sometimes in English.’

5.2.5 Plum Blossoms Symbolism

The film's Chinese title '*Yi jian mei*' (A spray of Plum Blossoms) derives from an elaborate symbolism of plum blossoms. It is the name of a form of *ci*, a classical Chinese poetry genre. In lieu of Shakespeare's trope of letter writing, the film invents a scene in which Hu Lunting and Shi Luohua take turns composing a classical poem together as a token of love set to the tune of '*Yi jian mei*' (A spray of plum blossoms), and grace a giant rock in Miss Shi's plum blossom-filled garden with their calligraphy of verses and an ink-drawn plum blossom. Serving as a witness to their literary skills as well as their mutual affection, this rock will become a reminder of their love a year later when the separated lovers are reunited. The poem (generating the poetic Chinese film title), like many other things in the film not found in the original, is one of the points where the film takes on a life of its own.

As an intertitle announces earlier, the plum blossom's connotation of 'fragrance and purity' (*lengyan qingga* 冷艳清高) resembles Shi Luohua's character.⁵⁷¹ One line of intertitle in the film reads that 'Luo Hua loves the plum most, for its beauty and purity agrees well with her personality.' The plum is used as an emblem for this pure girl, and appears everywhere as a visible sign or even synecdoche for her. In a flourish of cinematic excess, Shi Luohua's living quarters are festooned with plum symbols: 'in an industrially designed glass door and window frame, in sofa pillows',⁵⁷² in huge wall and floor designs, and in Luohua's chest pin, which she refuses to give away, as Diao Li'ao requests, but gladly fastens to Hu Lunting's military uniform. An additional spin on the already elaborate plum symbolism is accomplished through naming the self-disciplined bandit group '*Yi jian mei*' and their hideout 'Plum Blossom Village,' where their cave is decorated with two plum blossom banners, motifs corresponding to Shi Luohua's residence. More local colour is laid over the play with the insertion of a minor character, Feizhu (homophone for 'fat pig'). To entertain the gang, Feizhu sings Peking Opera songs associated with the famous female impersonator Mei Lanfang. The plum motif thus links Hu Lunting's integrity intertextually to Shi Luohua's, and his 'rebellious spirit'

⁵⁷¹ 中国电影资料馆 编辑, *中国无声电影剧本*, 3 卷本 (北京: 中国电影出版社, 1996) [ZDZ (Zhongguo dianying ziliaoguan) [China Film Archive], ed. *Zhongguo wusheng dianying juban* [Chinese silent movie scripts], 3 vols. (Beijing: China Film Press, 1996)], p.2140.

⁵⁷² Bao Weihong, 'From *Pearl White* to *White Rose Woo*: Tracing the Vernacular Body of *Nüxia* in Chinese Silent Cinema, 1927–1931', *Camera Obscura*, 20.3 (2005), 193-231 (p.218).

finds further legitimation in his quest for social justice.⁵⁷³ Somewhat unexpectedly, such legitimation is extended on a national scale as the plum blossom had newly acquired political significance after it was proclaimed the national flower and around 1927 was featured in the national anthem.⁵⁷⁴ The plum symbolism, a self-authorized Chinese invention in this film, thus functions as a compelling example of ‘cosmopolitan projections’⁵⁷⁵ as it combines, in distinctive hybrid form, Chinese political authority with cosmopolitan aspirations, traditional aesthetics with art deco *mise-en-scene*, ideological legitimation with rebellious stance, and nationalist sentiment with personal dedication.

Apart from the embellishment of the plum blossoms symbolism, many Chinese literary and historical allusions are inserted in the film, in order to make the adaptation more like a domestic film (*guopian* 国片). Such plots are all rewritings in order to meet the literary tradition of China: for instance, Bai Lede calls A’qiao, Hu Zhuli’s lady-in-waiting ‘*Hongniang* 红娘’ (a clever, aggressive maid who delivers love messages and facilitates the consummation of her mistress’s love with a scholar in the Chinese drama *Romance of the West Chamber* [*Xixiang ji*]); Hu Lunting makes three principles with the bandits; the intertitles are interspersed with classical Chinese poems from time to time.⁵⁷⁶ Zhang Zhen points out that this kind of transcultural practices ‘create a space in which the original and the adaptation coexist with tension. At the same time, they generate a surplus of meaning that cannot be subsumed by either the source language/culture or the target language/culture.’⁵⁷⁷ The Chinese elements in the film serve to domesticate the foreignness of the source to cater to the ordinary Chinese moviegoers, while the Western elements, mainly in the modern/Western lifestyles represented in the film, illustrate a voluntary bow to the West in semi-colonial China. The coexistence of these elements in the adaptation makes it a transnational *palimpsest*, where layers of texts are superimposed on yet do not cancel out one another.

⁵⁷³ Qin Liyan, *Trans-media Strategies of Appropriation, Narrativization, and Visualization: Adaptations of Literature in a Century of Chinese Cinema*, (Diss., University of California, San Diego, 2007), pp. 94-158.

⁵⁷⁴ Zhang Zhen, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen: Shanghai Cinema, 1896-1937* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p.230.

⁵⁷⁵ Zhang Zhen, ‘Cosmopolitan Projections: World Literature on Chinese Screens’, in *A Companion to Literature and Film*, ed. Robert Stam and Alesandra Raengo (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp.144-63.

⁵⁷⁶ Hu Ying, *Tales of Translations: Composing the New Woman in China, 1899-1918* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p.116.

⁵⁷⁷ Zhang Zhen, ‘Cosmopolitan Projections’, pp.146-7.

In a comprehensive catalogue of a hundred years of Shakespeare on film, Eddie Sammons finds only two adaptations of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*—a ‘modern version of the play’ from China in 1931 and a ‘fairly faithful adaptation’ made for TV, from West Germany in 1963—and attributes the scarcity of adaptations to ‘the peculiarities and the light-weight nature of the play.’⁵⁷⁸ Nevertheless, as I have illustrated above, the Chinese version transforms the comedy into a popular film animated with intertextuality and performance, relevant to both traditional Chinese culture and contemporary Chinese life. The 1931 silent film depicted the New Chinese Woman who, opposed to the traditional docile and subservient woman in Confucian culture, was independent, active and assertive, embodying the modernity called for by early twentieth-century China.

5.3 Localisation, Internationalisation: Two *Hamlet* Movies in Comparison

In the history of Shakespeare on film, there have been many *Hamlet* adaptations, such as the British *Hamlet* by Laurence Olivier in 1948, the Russian *Hamlet* by Grigori Kozintsev in 1964, the British-Italian *Hamlet* by Franco Zeffirelli in 1990, the British *Hamlet* by Kenneth Branagh in 1996 and the American *Hamlet* by Michael Almereyda in 2000. However, the Chinese film versions of *Hamlet* did not appear until 2006: Feng Xiaogang’s *The Banquet* and Hu Xuehua’s *Prince of the Himalayas*. *The Banquet* was a blockbuster in China and enjoyed global release, distribution and visibility. Accessibility was facilitated in large part through a kinship with blockbuster martial arts movies—such as Ang Lee’s *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000) and Zhang Yimou’s *Hero* (2002)—that, drawing upon chivalric and operatic motifs, remodel Eastern heroism for audiences around the world.⁵⁷⁹ With

⁵⁷⁸ Eddie Sammons, *Shakespeare: A Hundred Years on Film* (Shepherd-Walwyn Ltd., 2000), pp. 164-65.

⁵⁷⁹ One might also mention here *House of Flying Daggers* (dir. Zhang Yimou, 2004) and *The Curse of the Golden Flower* (dir. Zhang Yimou, 2006). Like these ‘Chinese’ *wuxia* (sword-play) and *kung fu* (fist-fighting) movies, to which *The Banquet* is allied in terms of cast and crew, the film belongs to an international brand. See Chris Berry, ‘Cinema: from Foreign Import to Global Brand’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Chinese Culture*, ed. by Kam Louie (Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 219, 316; Christopher Berry and Mary Farquhar, *China on Screen: Cinema and Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), pp. 53, 72; Felicia Chan, ‘Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon: Cultural Migrancy and Translatability’, in *Chinese Films in Focus: 25 New Takes*, ed. by Chris Berry (London: BFI, 2003), p. 316; and Ma Shengmei, *East-West Montage: Reflections on Asian Bodies in Diaspora* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press,

home audiences in China, the film enjoyed box office success but received criticism for its commercial aesthetics. Compared with *The Banquet*, *Prince of the Himalayas* was not so successful in the cinemas, but it was critically-acclaimed and won several prizes at film festivals in Monaco, Italy and the U.S.⁵⁸⁰ Successful or not, there is some novelty with which the two films retell the *Hamlet* story, in the adaptors' presentations of history and culture, as relevant to Shakespeare's fiction, for twenty-first century audiences.

The narratives of both films are structured by a style that celebrates local landscape and ancient culture through borrowing, in one way or another, Shakespeare's plots wrapped in a colour-saturated *mise-en-scène*. The notable plot of a prince's revenge within the royal family, along with other families' revenge subplots, a play-within-the-play, eavesdropping and the prince's tragic fate, are clearly visible and comparable in both movies. Through reinventing the Shakespearean story and the local cultures, each makes a cinematic narration of a fictional world of ancient history—either in the war-ridden Chinese empire of the tenth century or in pre-Buddhist Tibet. Both films considerably change the story of *Hamlet*, particularly when it comes to the question of justice and revenge. The creativity of both films is that they modify the plotline by rewriting the play's structure and the relations of the protagonists. Both are essentially psychological studies. *The Banquet* puts the emphasis on negative feelings and tempting power, whereas *Prince of the Himalayas* eventually overcomes hatred and teaches love. Both films are successful aesthetically, with their picture, colour setting and music as well as other filmic details corresponding to the general designs. In addition, such designs give more care to local cultures than to their source play. While both *The Banquet* and *Prince of the Himalayas* share a sense of themselves as national films working within an international market and a similar philosophy of Shakespearean borrowing, they differ in their philosophies of filmmaking.

5.3.1 In Search of Motifs from Eastern Culture

2007), p. 61.

⁵⁸⁰ *Prince of the Himalayas* won the Best Picture award at the 2007 Chinese American Film Festival, the Best Picture award at the 2008 Calabria International Film Festival in Italy, and the Best Director and the Best Actor awards at the 2008 Monte Carlo International Film Festival. Although *Prince of the Himalayas*, like *The Banquet*, premiered at international film festivals and was screened at the 2011 meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America, the film has had a particularly chequered distribution history. This was somewhat compensated for by a highly successful theatrical run in 2011-12 at the Rubin Museum of Art, New York, which excited extensive plaudits.

Transplanted to ancient China, *Hamlet* becomes a typical Chinese palace-struggle tragedy in *The Banquet*. At the beginning of the film, a long documentary-style voiceover as narrator of an audio-visual prelude, composed with the sound and fury of battlefields, brings modern audiences into a bloody moment in Chinese history: ‘China, 907 A.D....the period [of]...the “Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms”...an era plagued by widespread turmoil, treachery amongst government officials and a bitter struggle for power within the imperial family’.⁵⁸¹ It was a period known as the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms, when mighty lords wrestled for power after the collapse of the last regime of the Tang Dynasty. The setting initiates Feng’s attempt to fuse the Chineseness and Shakespeare through reliance on the historicity of both his sources. This backdrop sets up the tension in the warring country similar to that of Shakespeare’s Denmark, a country threatened by the foreign forces of Norway, which are ‘The source of this our watch, and the chief head /Of this post-haste and rummage in the land’ (1.1.106-7). In the story of *Hamlet*, however, external turmoil—the foreign political and military power oppressing Denmark—is not the source of woe, for the conflicts inside the court outdo that external pressure through their intensity, complexity and deadliness. These qualities are much enhanced in *The Banquet* by China’s memory of the historical turmoil; thus, the internal conflicts at court become the more bewildering but at the same time more recognisable as the Chinese theatricality exploited by this production. As the movie unfolds, it portrays the machinations of desire in political intrigues and power struggles. Civil wars and upheaval plague the country when unrestricted desires are unleashed and pervade all corners of society. Against this background, the movie intersperses filmic reconstructions of historical and cultural artefacts with the fiction about events of an imperial family.

In *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon says that themes are perhaps the easiest story elements to see as adaptable across media and even genres or framing contexts. Characters, too, can obviously be transported from one text to another. Pacing and focalization of the adapted story can also be transmediated. Nevertheless, all of these may well change—often radically—in the process of adaptation, and not

⁵⁸¹ Movie subtitles. On the ‘Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms’, see John King Fairbank and Merle Goldman, *China: A New History*, 2nd edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 87; and John Keay, *China: a History* (London: Harper Press, 2008), p. 292.

only in terms of their plot ordering.⁵⁸² Centring on the themes of revenge and procrastination, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* vividly portrays human life amongst the paradox of 'to be or not to be'. The various characters, while floundering between power and lust, see themselves clearly through reflecting on the world and religion and questioning their soul. *The Banquet*, however, shifts the audiences' attention to power and desire, emphasizing that the greed for power and sensual indulgence is the most primitive human desire and the most destructive force to human beings. The motif of desire facilitates a new interpretation of the characters. The prelude of the film tells that Prince Wu Luan (Hamlet) has run away to study music and dance in order to console his broken heart because three years ago his father married the woman Wu Luan loved, Little Wan (Gertrude). So, in this film, Gertrude is not Hamlet's mother, but rather Hamlet's ex-girlfriend. This romantic history affects the way Wan treats Wu Luan throughout the film, most obviously in her efforts to protect him from the ambition and violence of his uncle, Emperor Li (Claudius). Desiring both the kingdom and the beauty, Emperor Li kills his elder brother, takes the throne and marries his sister-in-law. He says to Little Wan at their wedding night, 'The tug between power and love has tormented past emperors for centuries [...] Before tonight everything was simple, I cared only for my kingdom. But after tonight when there is you, sister-in-law, what need do I have of a kingdom?'⁵⁸³ Having won the beauty's body, he still hopes to win her heart. Seeking to protect the Prince and ensure her own safety, Wan agrees to marry the Emperor, simultaneously sending messengers to warn the Prince of Li's assassination of his father and usurpation of the throne and to beg him to return to court. As Wan attempts to protect Wu Luan from the Emperor, Li desperately tries to win her heart as well as her body, and thus Wan is torn between her desire for Wu Luan, Li's desire for her, and her own ambition for power. In *The Banquet*, the quiet loneliness of Daniel Wu's introspective, artistic Prince Wu Luan stands in stark contrast to Kenneth Branagh's performance in his 1996 film production of *Hamlet*⁵⁸⁴—littered as it was with winks and smirks that broke the fourth wall and directly addressed the audience. Unlike Branagh's *Hamlet*, and unlike the *Hamlet* tradition in general, Wu Luan is primarily silent. At court, Wu Luan appears absent of desire, except as manifested in

⁵⁸² Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp.10-11.

⁵⁸³ *The Banquet*, directed by Feng Xiaogang (China: Huayi Brothers and Media Asia, 2006), DVD, 00:22:22, English subtitles.

⁵⁸⁴ *Hamlet*, directed by Kenneth Branagh (1996, Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2007), DVD.

introspective, artistic endeavours. Wu Luan lacks ambition, and unlike Hamlet, he does not pause to admire the ambition and efficacy of a brash Fortinbras.⁵⁸⁵ But Wu Luan is still a figure of desire. He desires Little Wan but seems not to be willing to act on this desire; he desires vengeance for his father's death but seems similarly frozen in pursuing this; he desires an end to his loneliness but he only connects with Qing Nü (Ophelia), whom he ultimately rapes.

Hu Xuehua's *Prince of the Himalayas* displaces *Hamlet* to the western highlands of today's Tibet in a pre-Buddhist period before the seventh century A.D. The film tells an ancient tribal tragedy. Something is rotten in the state of Jiabo. The prince, Lhamoklodan (Rgyal), has returned from his education in Persia to find his father Tsanpo dead and his mother married to his uncle Kulo-ngam (Lobzangchapel), now the king. His mother Namn (Zomskyid) is oblivious to the nefarious facts behind the demise of her late husband, whose ghost has taken to walking the parapets. So far, so Shakespearean. Yet, screenwriters Hu Xuehua, Trashidawa and Dorje Ysering impose enough variations to keep that from being the case. We learn rather early Kulo-ngam always loved Namn, but his not so dearly departed older brother cruelly intervened. As a result of their bitter love story, they had a son Lhamoklodan, who comes across as one of the harsher, more spiteful Hamlets ever seen on-screen. Conversely, the ethereally beautiful Osaluyang is one of the most heart-breaking Ophelias. She also reaches rare heights of madness in a role often required to discretely slip into the water off-screen or off-stage in many conventional productions.

In *Prince of the Himalayas*, Shakespeare's revenge story becomes a tragedy of forgiveness and a tale of hope for the tribal kingdom. The film goes beyond a simple 'Sinicization' or 'Tibetization' of *Hamlet*; it radically reinterprets Shakespeare's tragedy of blocked revenge. Because the ghost is unequivocally evil in this film, and he is not Lhamoklodan's (Hamlet) father, his call for vengeance is of little consequence, though it does pose a threat to the transcendent order and harmony of the world. His opponent, the Wolf Woman, is quite clear about this: 'Your thirst for vengeance will bring disaster and offend the spirit world.'⁵⁸⁶ Later on, she reminds the prince that 'the sins of the past generation will not cause you to seek revenge in

⁵⁸⁵ See 4.4.30 in *Hamlet*, when Hamlet encounters Fortinbras's army pursuing a small inconsequential territory, and in response gives the 'How all occasions do inform against me' soliloquy.

⁵⁸⁶ *Prince of the Himalayas*, dir. by Hu Xuehua (Shanghai: Hus Entertainment, 2006), DVD, 00:38:00, English subtitles.

the present,⁵⁸⁷ which echoes ‘The Third Noble Truth’ of Buddhist teachings: ‘when we let go of clinging, we are no longer bound to suffering.’ The film thus reinterprets Hamlet’s passivity as a positive model for political agency. Since the revenge command is based on false premises, it would have led him to kill his real father. Most of the ambivalences and the chaos in which Shakespeare’s play is so famously rich (leading scholars like John Dover Wilson to ask *What Happens in Hamlet?*) are elided, streamlined, or cleared up in this version, making it more easily consumable and also more suitable to the Chinese cultural and political ideal of harmony in the family, the state, and the cosmos.⁵⁸⁸

The challenge of borrowing foreign stories, however, goes beyond mere thematic modifications and plotline restructurings when Shakespeare’s text is transformed in the Chinese context. It demands localizing strategies for the filmmakers to re-create the originals and take them on a journey to the East. Let us look at a few examples of easternizing manoeuvres as seen in the two films in question. In East Asian cultures, the inner struggle, that is, a battle on the spiritual level, is more important than the fight against external forces. In light of this, both *Hamlet* films reflect Chinese philosophy and Confucian principles. For instance, in Chinese tradition, it is unthinkable that a son falls openly in love with his mother, or a man with his sister-in-law. As a result, dealing with the love relations between the male and female protagonists, the filmmakers have to adopt the motive of ‘eternal love’ from childhood on, which is common in classical Chinese literature. The love between Prince Wu Luan and Empress Wan, therefore, started from the time when they were students and received training with the ‘Sword of the Yue Maiden’ under the same master. Feng has chosen a woman as the leading character to tell the story from an unusual perspective—just like his predecessors did in the silent films. This also allows him to turn his attention to female beauty, one of the classic characteristics of Chinese culture. Moreover, the film elaborates on the tragic fate of female beauty, as in the long feudal society, women hardly ever gained power or got involved in political matters. In a male dominant world, Little Wan can only have a tragic end.

While the director of *The Banquet* has to deal with the Confucian philosophy,

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid., 01:19:38, English subtitles.

⁵⁸⁸ Cf. Wu Xiaohui (Anne), ‘The Rise of China’s Harmony-Oriented Diplomacy’, *Politika Annual Journal* (2007), 22-26.

Hu Xuehua has to handle the religious elements carefully in his easternizing of Shakespeare. Despite the director's claim that *Prince of the Himalayas* is set in a pre-Buddhist period when Bon, the indigenous shamanistic religion,⁵⁸⁹ prevailed, it is easy for audiences to find in the film either Buddhist elements or sublimations of Buddhist belief.⁵⁹⁰ From time to time, glimpses of monks, yaks and rotating drums, and shots of flags and trumpets, summon a reminiscent of Tibetan Buddhist traditions or, at least, reference a Tibetan cultural imaginary. The moment at which Lhamoklodan (Hamlet) meditates in the snow and ice, only to become frozen himself, both embroiders the play's discovery of a protagonist whose cold disposition is inseparable from his melancholy and stresses a search for inner accord.⁵⁹¹ Buddhism also accommodates an approach to the tragic ending and death different from what the Bard offers. Hu adds the Buddhist concept of afterlife to the story so that Lhamoklodan decides to die instead of obeying the will of the dead king. In return, the baby prince is born. This treatment is akin to a typical Eastern concept of tragedy: instead of ultimate death, we see rebirth, hope and the return of life. When Shakespeare's Hamlet dies, the curtain falls. But in the Tibetan adaptation, the prince lives on in his heir so that life is an endless circle, and love eternal. The film thus gives meaning to life in a utopian view that eternal life exists in the transmigration of love and passes that view to the audience through symbolic shooting of the unions of the landscape elements and of nature and the human body, and of body and soul. Even the mythical elements as in the figure of Wolf Woman serve a human cause. She heals the prince's wounds and helps him out of mental crisis with a portion of the love therapy. The Christian notions of love and forgiveness are *naturally* yet magically transplanted into the Tibetan soil. In this sense, the film gives a humanist edge to Tibetan Buddhism or its predecessor Bon. Emphasizing the power of love is what Chinese intellectuals would find in Shakespeare's humanism and would restore it to Chinese life upon closing of the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), during which humanist values were

⁵⁸⁹ Bon or Bön, also Bonism or Benism (Chinese: *Běnjiào* 苯教), is the indigenous religion of Tibet, pre-dating the introduction of Buddhism. It influenced Tibetan Buddhism and is still practiced as a minority religion.

⁵⁹⁰ See my interview to Sherwood in Appendix 1 at the end of the dissertation; '*Prince of the Himalayas*': a Sherwood Hu Film, publicity book (Los Angeles and Shanghai: Hus Entertainment/CineHYTE Films, 2006), p.36; John Powers, *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*, 2nd edition (Ithaca, NY and Boulder, CO: Snow Lion, 2007), pp.137, 497, 498.

⁵⁹¹ See Daryl W. Palmer, 'Hamlet's Northern Lineage: Masculinity, Climate and the Mechanician in Early Modern Britain', *Renaissance Drama*, 35 (2006), 16-18.

criticized and banished. Furthermore, the human sacrifice, though unavoidable, is worthwhile because it brings the spiritual growth and final redemption. In the Wolf Woman's words, the prince is 'doomed to face suffering and death' to find out the secrets of his fate. In facing his fate and rejecting the Ghost's teaching of hatred, he gets strength and becomes the real hero of the Himalayan epic, in which humanity regains its integrity in a fictional frame. The epical film's modernist search for humanist meanings ends up with a perfect circle starting from the 'to be or not to be' question. The reconstruct of a Tibetan utopia of love and forgiveness is a modernist illusion, magically woven into a filmic language through a lens of local landscape and culture.

5.3.2 Recreation of Shakespeare's Women

A notable feature of both films is that they give Gertrude and Ophelia, traditionally silenced women characters in *Hamlet*, a strong presence, though the centrality of the Gertrude figure in the narrative of *The Banquet* has been seen as problematic by some critics.⁵⁹² In the film, Empress Wan, a Gertrude with elements of Ophelia, but forged in the Lady Macbeth mode, reveals herself as the film's centre and commands it to follow her lead, as Amy Scott-Douglass and others observe in their essays.⁵⁹³ From the opening shots to the closing moments, Empress Wan figures prominently in her quest for control and power, which is codified carefully through the film's design. Both films reconfigure the Shakespearean family so as to highlight culture-specific questions about female agency. In *the Banquet*, Empress Wan (Gertrude) is involved in a love affair with her stepson, Wu Luan (Hamlet), despite her power-brokering marriage to Emperor Li (Claudius): the authority she wields stems from her combined roles as stepmother and ruler. Comparably desiring is Queen Nanm (Gertrude) in *Prince of the Himalayas*. She conducts an extra-marital relationship with her brother-in-law, latterly King Kulo-ngam (Claudius), as an escape from a loveless marriage to the tyrannical King Tsanpo (Old Hamlet). When she marries King Kulo-ngam (Claudius) after her husband's death, this is merely the continuation of a long-standing affair. Both films, then, consort with each other in

⁵⁹² Molly Hand, 'Review of *Ye Yan: The Banquet* (dir. by Feng Xiaogang)', *Shakespeare*, 4.4 (2008), 429-33 (pp. 430-31).

⁵⁹³ See Amy Scott-Douglass, 'Shakespeare: It's What's for Dinner', Hollifield, Scott, 'Woodcocks to Springes: Generic Disjunction in *The Banquet*', in *Asian Shakespeares on Screen: Two Films in Perspective*, special issue, ed. by Alexander C.Y. Huang, *Borrowers and Lenders: The Journal of Shakespeare and Appropriation*, 4.2 (Spring/Summer 2009). Available online: <<http://www.borrowers.uga.edu/>>.

situating the Gertrude figure at the centre and, in so doing, construct female sexuality as the lynchpin or underlying spur to the narrative.

Shakespeare has provided very little context for Gertrude. As Baldwin Maxwell summarizes the situation, Gertrude ‘appears in ten of the play’s twenty scenes, but in those ten scenes she speaks fewer lines than does Ophelia, who appears in only five [...] She speaks but one brief aside and never the concluding line of a scene’.⁵⁹⁴ Despite, or perhaps because of, her relative silence, she has traditionally fascinated and confused readers, audiences, and scholars. Gertrude has often been perceived as weak (‘Frailty, thy name is woman’) or conniving. Yoshiko Ueno asserts that Gertrude’s ‘reticence,’ which ‘does not allow her to disclose to us what she really thinks and feels,’ leads scholars and readers to presume she is a weak character.⁵⁹⁵ Akiko Kusunoki calls her ‘the most controversial’ of Shakespeare’s female characters, noting, ‘since the text leaves crucial aspects of her motivation undefined, critics tend to treat her not as an individual but as a mirror reflecting other characters’ inner states.’⁵⁹⁶ The role has been loathed by actors and critics alike since the 1800s, when ‘the wicked queen’ interpretation began to flourish. For centuries now, this simple-minded interpretation of Gertrude has reinforced cultural sexism, despite the fact that the Ghost tells Hamlet not to ‘let thy soul contrive against thy mother’⁵⁹⁷. In his reading of filmic adaptations of *Hamlet*, J. Anthony Burton notes the vanishing of Gertrude, which has become a popular tradition in Hollywood cinema. Surveying the film adaptations of Laurence Olivier (1948), Tony Richardson (1969), Rodney Bennett (1980), and Kenneth Branagh (1996), Burton identifies an Anglophone cinematic tradition of minimizing Gertrude to a structural device in order to emphasize the development of those characters who become the real focus of the drama: Hamlet and Claudius. More to the point, these adaptations suggest that Hamlet and Claudius are better suited to the filmic medium; as Burton concludes, ‘There is a fault line that separates stage performance from screen renditions, to which Gertrude’s character has proven especially vulnerable because of the extent to which her onstage movement helps define who she is and how she affects the action.

⁵⁹⁴ Baldwin Maxwell, ‘Hamlet’s Mother’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 15.2 (Spring 1964), 235-46 (p.236).

⁵⁹⁵ Yoshiko Ueno, ‘Three Gertrudes: Text and Subtext’, in *Hamlet and Japan*, ed. by Ueno (New York: AMS Press, 1995), p.156.

⁵⁹⁶ Akiko Kusunoki, ‘“Oh Most Pernicious Woman”’: Gertrude in the Light of Ideas on Remarriage in Early Seventeenth-Century England’, in *Hamlet and Japan*, ed. by Ueno, p.169.

⁵⁹⁷ William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, ed. by George Lyman Kittredge (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1939) 1.5.770-71.

The stage accommodates large movements across open space [...] The close-ups and camera techniques of film and video emphasize interior and psychological dimensions of character and relationship'.⁵⁹⁸ Hamlet and Claudius are men of thought and likewise translate well to film because film tends to privilege interiority; Gertrude is a woman of action who becomes lost in cinematic translation.

In *The Banquet*, however, we get a new enactment of the Gertrude figure. Remodelled as a villainous Claudius, Empress Wan is discovered as a provocative and scheming aspirant that places her, and not her male counterparts, at centre stage. She becomes a politically astute climber who realizes too late that her desire for power and control leaves a wide swath of destruction, killing her loved ones as well as her foes. While Shakespeare's Gertrude is reduced to inaction and textual marginalization, Empress Wan's actions drive *The Banquet's* plot; through her two-faced, poisonous plans, she functions as the dominant agent in the destruction of the entire court. First, Wan decides to marry the Emperor for political expediency and to protect Prince Wu Luan, as we find out when she meets the Prince upon his return. Wan tells him that she has made her face a mask to hide her real intentions from her new husband. She also sends protection for her stepson, Prince Wu Luan/Hamlet, when the Emperor sends him away with the Rosencrantz and Guildenstern analogues. She then decides to poison the Emperor for his murder of her previous husband. In this way, Wan's actions become the central source of the tragedy. Contests for privilege are at work in the scene where Empress Wan and Emperor Li play, half-threateningly, half-erotically, with each other's ties and titles: relational terms are bandied in tit-for-tat fashion, while the mutual insistence on the 'correct' forms of 'address' being employed ('Your Majesty' and 'Empress') suggests a jockeying for advantage:

EMPEROR LI. To call Your Emperor 'you' is not appropriate. The correct address is 'Your Majesty'.

EMPRESS WAN. It is hard for me to adapt so quickly, brother-in-law.

EMPEROR LI. Sister-in-law.

EMPRESS WAN. The correct address is 'Empress'. Your brother should not have trusted you.

EMPEROR LI. The death of the late Emperor had nothing to do with me.

⁵⁹⁸ J. Anthony Burton, 'The Lady Vanishes or, the Incredible Shrinking Gertrude', in *Acts of Criticism: Performance Matters in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries: Essays in Honour of James P. Lusardi*, ed. by Paul Nelsen and June Schlueter (Madison and Teaneck, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006), pp. 217-31 (p.229).

[...]

EMPRESS WAN. Is the Crown Prince still alive?

EMPEROR LI. Sister-in-law seems very concerned.

EMPRESS WAN. I am his stepmother after all.

EMPEROR LI. He is four years older than you are.

EMPRESS WAN. Brother-in-law is familiar with the way I remove my make-up.

EMPEROR LI. Not just your make up but also the way you enter your bath.

EMPRESS WAN. Will brother-in-law let the Prince go free?

EMPEROR LI. Will you let my hand go free?⁵⁹⁹

Wan's refusal to call Li by his title is saucy, and her reminder of his actual relation to her—that he is her brother-in-law—attempts to put him firmly in his place. Wan undermines Li's campaign by pointing out the speed of his usurpation. Just as the door to their bedroom is about to close, Li places his hand through the opening, calling to his "sister-in-law." The camera focuses on his upturned palm, and we see Wan place her hand in his, saying, 'The correct address is "Empress."' The scene is short, but richly dramatic. Their verbal sparring about proper forms of address shows each character's ambition and eagerness to claim what they see as their *rightful* position in the court. At the same time, as the accompanying dialogue reveals, union with Emperor Li is the price Empress Wan must pay to secure her own needs and requirements. When she asks, 'Will brother-in-law let the Prince go free?'⁶⁰⁰ Her question highlights not only Wu Luan's imprisonment but also her own. To effect release, Empress Wan barter in sexual favour. This quibbling about title highlights the sort of conflict Empress Wan may have experienced as she debated her position as Dowager Queen or Queen consort, and encourages the audience to admire Wan's cleverness as she negotiates how to maintain her position in the palace. When she eventually becomes the ruler of the kingdom herself, Empress Wan reflects on the 'power of nomination' as this is manifested in her titular trajectory: 'Little Wan...Empress...Her Majesty, the Emperor', she intones, tracing a historical journey from child to adult, from dependent to independent, from female to male.⁶⁰¹

The Empress/Gertrude character is, therefore, highlighted. Even the title refers to the banquet of the Empress's coronation ceremony. The purpose of the filmmakers,

⁵⁹⁹ *The Banquet*, DVD, 00:11:45, English subtitles.

⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 00:11:36, English subtitles.

⁶⁰¹ See Rebecca Chapman, 'Spectator Violence and Queenly Desire in *The Banquet*', *Borrowers and Lenders: The Journal of Shakespeare and Appropriation*, 4.2 (2009). Available online: <<http://www.borrowers.uga.edu/>>.

however, is not simply to create a gender-progressive film, but to promote its box office success with the star power of the actress Zhang Ziyi. If a filmmaker hires a leading world actress such as Zhang, she is unlikely to play a subordinate or supporting role. Zhang often plays independent and strong-willed characters and is clearly one of China's leading actresses. Zhang's glamour as the internationally-known star for her roles in award-winning films by Zhang Yimou and Ang Lee and, more recently, in *Memoir of a Geisha* is important to the box office success of the film. To highlight her role for the Japanese cinema market, the title of the film was even changed to '女帝 (Empress)' at its Japanese premiere. And its title for the US release on DVD, *Legend of the Black Scorpion*, identifies the empress with the venous scorpion, further testifying the key role of Wan in the film as well as the importance of her performer Zhang Ziyi to the film. Here another displacement takes place: the image of the performer displaces the ambitious empress in the film. Or, more exactly, the ambitious role has been created to give the actress more time and more room for performance. Modernist aesthetic concerns give way to face value of stars in postmodern time to follow the market rule. One wonders, therefore, how much of the script was rewritten to entice Zhang to take on the project. Certainly, the Empress/Gertrude character had to be made younger for the twenty-nine year old actress, making her Prince Wu Luan/Hamlet's stepmother because of the lack of an age difference between the two.

While making Empress Wan (Gertrude) the central character of the film, Prince Wu Luan (Hamlet) is marginalised. The cinematic narrative introduces Wu Luan as multiple, masked Hamlets in an outdoor theatre,⁶⁰² immediately establishing his liminal status — in a sense, he has been *eliminated* before the film begins and will be eliminated again before the sequence has concluded. Cementing him firmly among the supporting cast, the film never affords Wu Luan the sort of theatrical entrance— 'A little more than kin and less than kind' (*Hamlet*, 1.2.65)⁶⁰³ — one expects of a Hamlet figure. Instead, he is simply an escaping and weak-minded prince, 'a lonely musician, a product of warm hills and soft dreams'.⁶⁰⁴ What's more, Feng's film strips Wu Luan of many of Hamlet's memorable attributes. First, this film contains no Horatio, Rosencrantz, or Guildenstern. Wu Luan is essentially friendless in the

⁶⁰² *The Banquet*, DVD, clip from 00:01:42 to 00:02:05, English subtitles.

⁶⁰³ Shakespeare citations come from *The Norton Shakespeare*, 2nd edition.

⁶⁰⁴ Shi Zhikang, 'Comparative Studies on Characters in *Hamlet* and *The Banquet*', *Wen Jing Journal*, 3 (2007).

court and has no one to talk to except Empress Wan and Qing Nü. Second, there is no ghost, and so Wu Luan never receives an order to seek vengeance for his father's death. Third, Wu Luan does not deliver a single soliloquy. That hallmark of Hamlet's compelling interior life is completely absent from this film and is replaced with various shots of Wu Luan reclining by a fountain in the palace or standing before his father's armour. Without Hamlet's verbal cogitation, Wu Luan becomes an excessively lonesome, silent figure, and his passivity functions to underscore Empress Wan's activity. By focusing on the Empress Wan/Gertrude character without grounding it in feminist theory, *The Banquet's* analogies with Shakespeare's *Hamlet* problematize Empress Wan/Gertrude's situation without solving the character's problems. Prince Wu Luan/Hamlet and Emperor Li/Claudius are thus let off the hook because they have no real agency; only Empress Wan/Gertrude does.

Unique among *Hamlet* interpreters, Director Hu Xuehua offers a sympathetic portrait of the king's killer, his brother Kulo-ngam/Claudius (Dobrgyal), and Hamlet's mother Namn/Gertrude (Zomskyid) in *Prince of the Himalayas*, who are seen as victims rather than villains. Kulo-ngam is the man whom Namn truly loves, but his older brother cruelly intervened. He kills the king, not for the throne, but to protect his lover and their son. He suffers a lot mentally because of the guilt of murdering his brother and the secret about his son. As a thoughtful and responsible man, Kulo-ngam remains silent, enduring all the sufferings by himself. He is a good husband and father, and not a bad king. As the acutely conflicted Kulo-ngam, the Tibetan actor Dobrgyal gives the film its soul. His scenes with Zomskyid's Namn are achingly touching. The Himalayan prince Lhamoklodan (Purba Rgyal) has also undergone a major shift in that his quest turns out to be less to determine the killer and seek revenge than a search for his own identity. Purba Rgyal, trained as a singer and dancer but not an actor, while lacking any character-defining soliloquy, rises to the task and is an often mesmerizing presence. He attacks the role of the prince with such energy and abandon that he overcomes his lack of experience.

The figure of Ophelia in both Chinese rewritings of *Hamlet* signals a strong presence, even when she appears to depend on others for her thoughts like her Western counterpart. Both films align Ophelia with East Asian ideals of femininity. Hu Xuehua's *Prince of the Himalayas* offers a visual response to John Everett Millais's famous painting of the drowning Ophelia (1851-53). Tibetan actress Sonamdolgar as Odsaluyang (Ophelia) presents a feisty and assertive Ophelia who

links the secular with the sacred, and death with life. Ophelia is associated with water throughout the film, calling to mind the drenched and drowned Ophelias in Kenneth Branagh's and Michael Almereyda's film versions. Early on, we are shown a rather explicit, intimate scene between Prince Lhamoklodan and Odsaluyang in her hut by a stream, after which Ophelia becomes pregnant (the two are not married). In labour, Odsaluyang approaches the Namtso Lake, a sacred site to Tibetan pilgrims, in search of the prince, whom she loves, but also hates for killing her father. It seems that she walks into the lake to ease her pain, but the scene presents a haunting image of Ophelia's death that amounts to a visual citation of Millais's painting. Picking wild flowers and wearing a white garment with a floral wreath on her head, she lies down and floats on water, giving birth to her and Hamlet's child. She cuts its umbilical cord with the ivory-handled knife Hamlet has brought her from Persia. The camera pans over the water to give us a glimpse of the baby floating away from the mother. She dies after giving birth, 'sinking down to the river bed in deep sleep' where she 'meets her father and mother.'⁶⁰⁵ This scene is depicted in a painterly mode in Hu's film to focus attention on Ophelia's suffering. As Odsaluyang walks into the lake singing a song, the water runs red with her blood. The baby is carried by water to safety and rescued by the Wolf Woman who names him 'The Prince of the Himalayas'. As one of the most interesting departures from *Hamlet*, this scene hints at the possibility of a saintly Ophelia who, in her death, brings forth a new life and hope for the next generation. *Prince of the Himalayas* offers a courageous, independent Ophelia.

⁶⁰⁵ *Ximalaya wangzi* [Prince of the Himalayas], ed. by Pang Bei (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publisher, 2006), p.54.



Figure 20 Ophelia, a painting by British artist Sir John Everett Millais, completed between 1851 and 1852. It is held in the Tate Britain in London. It depicts Ophelia, a character from William Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*, singing before she drowns in a river in Denmark.



Figure 21 Sonamdolgar as Odsaluyang (Ophelia) in *Prince of the Himalayas* (dir. Hu Xuehua, Hus Entertainment, 2006). Having given birth to her and Lhamoklodan (Hamlet)'s baby, she dies in the lake.

A similarly innocent yet assertive Ophelia emerges from Feng Xiaogang's *The Banquet*. *The Banquet*'s Ophelia (Qing Nü, played by Zhou Xun) dominates many scenes with her songs and dance, and is not shy about expressing her affection for Prince Wu Luan (Hamlet) even when she is threatened by Empress Wan (Gertrude),

who is both the prince's stepmother and lover. Significantly, Qing Nü (Ophelia) does not go mad. While her songs allude to rivers and boating, and her intimate scene with Hamlet involves rain, Ophelia is not drowned in the end.

This bold cinematic re-imagination of *Hamlet* shifts the focus from the question of interiority—traditionally embodied by *Hamlet*—to an ambitious, articulate Gertrude (Empress Wan) and an assertive Ophelia (Qing Nü): both characters do not hesitate to express their love for the prince. Empress Wan is the prince's stepmother and she has kept her romantic relationship with him secret. Qing Nü's naïveté and purity make her a desirable yet unattainable figure of hope, in contrast to the scheming empress, and as an ideal contrast to China's post-socialist society that is driven by a new market economy that turns everything, including romance and love, into a commodity.⁶⁰⁶ Instead, she is innocent, passionate, and bold.

The Banquet turns Ophelia into a symbol of innocence in a court of violence and intrigue. Significantly, for a martial arts film, Qing Nü is the only character not versed in swordsmanship, and her only weapons are her perseverance in the face of insurmountable obstacles and headstrong adherence to her love for the prince. Her name, Qing Nü, derives from the goddess of snow in Chinese mythology, and her robes are usually white regardless of the occasion. This reinforces the concept of chastity, as snow is used as a trope for chaste women in traditional poetry.⁶⁰⁷ Qing Nü is uninterested in politics, and refuses to succumb to her father's advice to 'learn from the empress' and use marriage as a political stepping-stone. Empress Wan, by contrast, marries her brother-in-law in exchange for power and security after her husband is killed by a scorpion's sting.

Yet Qing Nü's innocence and dedication do not translate into childishness. In response to her brother's reminder that 'you are not in [the prince's] heart. Do not fool yourself,' Qing Nü indicates that she is fully aware of the situation, but she has 'promised to always wait for him.' She chooses to stay by his side and sing to him so that he will not be lonely. The consequences are painful. Jealous of Qing Nü's intimacy with the prince and her ability to offer unconditional love, Empress Wan orders her to be whipped. Ever defiant and refusing to be manipulated by anyone, Qing Nü almost gets her face branded by the Empress.

⁶⁰⁶ Cf. Jason McGrath, *Postsocialist Modernity: Chinese Cinema, Literature, and Criticism in the Market Age* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), pp.1-24.

⁶⁰⁷ *Ciyuan* (Chinese Dictionary of Etymology), Revised Edition, ed. by Shangwu yinshuguan Editorial Committee (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1997), p. 1823.

Qing Nü also publicly expresses her love for the prince. When Wu Luan is being sent by Emperor Li as a hostage to the Khitans, a nomadic people in northwestern China, Qing Nü petitions in front of the court to be allowed to go along, echoing Desdemona's insistence on accompanying Othello to Cyprus. Her passions are uncensored, and her reasons simple: so that the prince will not be lonely. Unlike Shakespeare's Ophelia Qing Nü does not have to go mad or speak allusively to express herself, though she sings on multiple occasions just like Ophelia does in *Hamlet*. Toward the end of the film at the banquet celebrating the coronation of the empress, she sings the 'Song of Yue', a song of solitude that the prince has taught her, and leads a group dance. She seems to be content to simply love the prince without seeking anything in return. Qing Nü's entrance takes Emperor Li and Empress Wan by surprise: her performance at the court commemorates her lover who has been presumed dead en route to the Khitans (although, unbeknownst to Qing Nü and everyone in the court, the prince has returned and is disguising himself as one of the masked dancers).



Figure 22 Qingnü/Ophelia (Zhou Xun) sings the 'Song of Yue' and leads a masked group dance commemorating her lover Prince Wu Luan who has been presumed dead in *The Banquet* (dir. Feng Xiaogang, Huayi Brothers, 2006).

Qing Nü's accidental death at the hands of the Empress has more in common with Shakespeare's Claudius or Gertrude than Ophelia: she drinks from a poisoned cup the Empress intends for the Emperor. Ever a saintly presence, Qing Nü addresses

her last words to the prince: ‘Do you still feel lonely?’ Mourning Qing Nü’s demise, the prince, a kung fu master, finally moves forward with his revenge plan. Ophelia’s fatal drop from the willow tree into the stream in *Hamlet* is thus replaced by Qing Nü’s selfless sacrifice and symbolic purging of the court’s collective sins in *The Banquet*. The Ophelia figure therefore represents ideal femininity in the face of a dysfunctional political structure.

5.3.3 *Hamlet* as a Martial Arts Epic

In *The Banquet*, it may come as a surprise for a Western audience to see how little friction there is in this unlikely translation of *Hamlet* into the martial arts genre. Alexander (now Alexa) Huang analyzes Feng’s film, noting its uniqueness in the way it blends several traditional genres: ‘Multiple slow-motion shots and fight sequences presented as stylized dance movements suggest a close affinity with other Chinese martial-arts films that have enjoyed popularity in the West but have been harshly criticized in the Chinese-speaking world.’⁶⁰⁸ The Chinese audience was familiar with the martial arts blockbusters popular around the same period such as Ang Lee’s *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000), Zhang Yimou’s *Hero* (2002), *House of Flying Daggers* (2004) and *The Curse of the Golden Flower* (2007). With perhaps the exception of the highly acclaimed *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (which received four Oscar awards), these Chinese martial arts epics churned out during the past decade tended to compete in terms of building the biggest sets and creating the grandest spectacle. In their eagerness to flaunt a newly-fledged confidence in the economic power and technical level of the Chinese filmmaking industry, these films often allowed lavish costumes and opulent designs to steal the show and upstage the human dimension. In *The Banquet*, Director Feng Xiaogang utilized flowing robes, an amazing colour palette, and excellent costume design to the best of his ability, and artistically extended action scenes with slow motion camera shots. At times, however, the extended shots could have been cut short. They seem to drag on and occasionally make members of the audience forget they are watching a *martial arts epic*. What distinguishes Feng’s film from this group of films is its use of masks as motifs and narrative devices. As a result, Feng’s film becomes a mix of *wuxia*, martial arts and what Huang calls ‘a mask theater infused with the supernatural; a type of martial-arts performance that gives primacy to visual

⁶⁰⁸ Huang, *Chinese Shakespeares: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange*, pp. 230-31.

articulation but does not rely on, as is the case with *nō* theatre⁶⁰⁹, demonstration of the spiritual states of the characters through subtle shadings of the masks.⁶¹⁰ And yet, even as it references and incorporates elements of these several genres, the film does not sit easily in any one category. Huang explains that critical response debated the film's 'dual identity,' as 'nearly all European judges found the film to be too Shakespearean in outlook to be a viable Chinese film to interest Western audiences. [...] Yet according to most Chinese critics, the film was a disappointing, indulgent costume epic aimed at a "completely non-Chinese audience."⁶¹¹ The Chinese audience's complaints (circulating on the Internet) concerned *The Banquet's* failure to meet the existing genre expectations for the martial arts movie. Some found the film's passive, lifeless protagonists too cowardly to fit the action hero role type. Others found the stately masked mime dance and overused slow-motion, anti-gravitational fight sequences out of tune with a genre that requires thrilling, fast-paced action. The film's preoccupation with aesthetics also mitigates the sense of real danger and strikes many martial arts film fans as being pretentious. Such feelings of incongruity may suggest an ill fit between the martial arts genre and the atmospheric elements Director Feng Xiaogang plays up to echo *Hamlet's* mood of melancholy ennui. Whether too Shakespearean or too Chinese — fascinatingly strange accusations—*The Banquet* does manage to remake a familiar story into a foreign one, allowing the viewer to experience *Hamlet* again, for the first time.

The opening takes place in a temple-like theatre in the remote Yue region of southern China,⁶¹² which is the retreat of the melancholic Prince Wu Luan where he seeks 'solace in the art of music and dance'.⁶¹³ 'In its circular shape the outdoor theatre resembles Shakespeare's Globe: from the start, then, *The Banquet* imagines

⁶⁰⁹ Noh theatre —Noh also spelled *nō*, meaning "talent" or "skill"—is a traditional Japanese musical drama involving 4-5 characters that lasts for 30-120 minutes. The performers, typically male, never rehearse as a group before the performance, resulting in a very fluid type of theatre. The main prop used is a fan, carried by all characters, although other small hand props are also seen from time to time. Rather than being actors or "representers" in the Western sense, Noh performers are simply storytellers who use their visual appearances and their movements to suggest the essence of their tale rather than to enact it. Little "happens" in a Noh drama, and the total effect is less that of a present action than of a simile or metaphor made visual. The educated spectators know the story's plot very well, so that what they appreciate are the symbols and subtle allusions to Japanese cultural history contained in the words and movements.

⁶¹⁰ Huang, *Chinese Shakespeares: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange*, pp. 230-31.

⁶¹¹ Huang, *Chinese Shakespeares: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange*, p. 234.

⁶¹² Huang, *Chinese Shakespeares: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange*, p. 231.

⁶¹³ *The Banquet*, DVD, 00:02:50, English subtitles.

itself as a reconstruction of Shakespeare that is for the world.’⁶¹⁴ The opening sequence shows Wu Luan practicing a mesmerizing song, acting through mime impressions of suffering and disappointments, suggesting theatre as recuperative and physicality as a way of coming to terms with romantic rejection. Simultaneously, the messengers sent by Empress Wan arrive with the news of the death of his father and his uncle’s ascension to the throne. Following the steps of the messengers, a group of assassins sent by the new emperor arrive at the theatre. The prince wears gauzy white linen and a white mask without any patterns. Several shots focus on his eyes. It is notable that other than the opening narration delivered in voiceover and the imperial decree read by the messenger, no verbal exchange takes place in the prolonged scene, which brings out visualisation by the use of colour symbolism and nonverbal representations of emotion. In contrast to the prince and his companions’ white masks and robes, symbolising purity, the assassins wear black armour and black iron masks with bold patterns, symbolising fierceness. An unnecessarily long and brutal fight sequence follows. The tranquil theatre surrounded by bamboo trees soon became a bloody space for martial arts and a highly theatricalised form of combat. The opening sequence not only serves as a prelude for the film’s martial arts genre, but also sets out the terms for Feng’s ‘reworking the cinematic image of the martial arts hero as a means of negotiating the balance between the feminine and masculine.’⁶¹⁵ A distinction is established between, on one side, melancholy romance and the arts, and on the other, political power and male, martial action. The soundscape reinforces this distinction, switching between a haunting, lyrical love song (the ‘Song of Yue’, composed, it turns out, by Wu Luan himself) and the pounding of hooves and the clatter of armour.

In Wu Luan’s first re-encounter with Empress Wan in the royal palace, the Empress playfully gets Wu Luan to open up his sword case and discovers a scroll on which is written the lyrics to the love song that had played in the opening sequence. With the scroll in hand, she initiates a truly balletic, aerial sword-play dance that is an extension of her graceful discipline. The dancing enables a moment of nostalgic

⁶¹⁴ Mark T. Burnet, *Shakespeare and World Cinema* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp.134-35.

⁶¹⁵ Yu Jin Ko, ‘Martial Arts and Masculine Identity in Feng Xiaogang’s *The Banquet*’, in *Asian Shakespeares on Screen: Two Films in Perspective*, special issue, ed. by Alexander C. Y. Huang, *Borrowers and Lenders*, 4.2 (Spring/Summer 2009). Available online: <<http://www.borrowers.uga.edu/>>.

reverie as the two perform the martial arts they learned together from their master in their much younger days and thus becomes a vehicle for emotional release that avoids sloppy brooding and excess in the manner of Wu Luan. With the dance, moreover, the Empress is firmly located in a line of female martial arts heroines that stretches back through not only the set of roles made famous by stars such as Lucy Liu and Michelle Yeoh, as well as Zhang Ziyi herself (particularly in *House of Flying Daggers*), but also extends to far earlier women warriors in the *wuxia* genre of film. These are characters who often become paradoxically hyper-feminised by their martial arts prowess and thereby even more erotically charged; importantly, however, the particular androgynous mix of sexy, stylized artistry and lethal force define them as women of extraordinary, sometimes supernatural, power who can outduel men.

The use of masks is omnipresent in the film. During one of their meetings, there arose a debate between Prince Wu Luan and Empress Wan about masks:

EMPRESS WAN. Why do you wear a mask when you perform?

PRINCE WU LUAN. It transports an actor to the highest state of his art. Without a mask, happiness, anger, sorrow and joy are simply written on his face, but with a mask, a great artist can convey to the audience the most complex and hidden emotions.

EMPRESS WAN. In that case, what do you see in my simple face?

PRINCE WU LUAN. Six parts arrogance, three parts disquiet and one part guilt towards your late husband.

EMPRESS WAN. You are wrong. It is disappointment [...] disappointment in you. I no longer look to you to fulfil my dreams [...] You are incapable of even the most basic play-acting. Your sorrow, anger, bitterness and uncertainty are there for all to see [...] You think hiding behind a mask can elevate your art. The highest level is to use your own face and turn it into a mask.⁶¹⁶

Wu Luan, in keeping with Chinese and Japanese theatrical traditions, proposes that masks bring out the best in a performer. Wan accuses him of being a poor actor, since he cannot conceal his emotions by turning his true face into a mask, as she has.

⁶¹⁶ *The Banquet*, DVD, clips from 00:55:08 to 00:55:38 and 00:56:29 to 00:56:56, English subtitles.

Indeed, her elusiveness is the expression of supreme artistry. It is clear that Empress Wan knows well how to survive deceitfully in the fierce palace struggle. On the contrary, as an introverted artist with a pessimistic and melancholic character, Wu Luan is too weak to take revenge, and is even suspicious of it. When dying in his lover's arms, his last words are: 'How good it is to die!' One might become tempted to say about Empress Wan what Cai Rong has said about the character Jen Yu played by Zhang Ziyi in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*: 'Unintelligible and elusive, illegitimate female desire is disorderly and violent both in its structural function in the film and in its ideological characteristics.'⁶¹⁷ I would say, however, that Feng Xiaogang has displaced Hamlet's famous complexity and illegibility onto the Empress and made her the greatest figure of intrigue in the drama. As a result, Wu Luan's emotional transparency appears all the purer and, paradoxically, provides an index of his underlying masculinity. The very element of Wu Luan that makes him appear unfit and naively emotional also makes him appear, in contrast to the chameleon eeriness of Empress Wan, the embodiment of the masculine virtue of integrity. In fact, through his single-minded devotion to the old Emperor, Wu Luan is linked to Governor Pei Hong, the man who is beaten to death for using the title Empress Dowager for the Empress, thereby implying that the Emperor is a usurper. The public and gruesome execution (alluded to briefly earlier) might easily be understood as an emblem for the death of integrity in the kingdom; in this light, Wu Luan is also a figure for a lost and essential masculine ideal.

The use of masks in *The Mousetrap* scene also adds theatricality to the film. A devoted performer of mask theatre, Wu Luan not only plans the dumb show dramatising the murder of his father to catch the conscience of Emperor Li, but also appears on stage as the drummer throughout the performance. The dumb show is a combination of Chinese operatic conventions and the mask theatre. The presence of a performer behind his mask intently observing his audience turns the play-within-a-play, a theatrical device that starts its career in the Renaissance, into a bold frame for the self-reflexivity of twenty-first-century cinema.

The theatricality comes to a head, and a climactic turning point of sorts is reached in the eponymous banquet scene. During the entertainment at the banquet, the Empress offers the Emperor a toast and hands him a cup of poisoned wine;

⁶¹⁷ Cai Rong, 'Gender Imaginations in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and the Wuxia World', *Positions*, 13.2 (Fall 2005), 441-71 (p.454).

however, at just the moment when he is about to take a drink, Qing Nü (Ophelia)—Minister Yin Taichang's (Polonius) daughter who has gone mad for love of Wu Luan—enters to announce that she and her fellow masked dancers will perform a love song in Wu Luan's honour (the 'Song of Yue', in fact, Wu Luan's very own song). The Emperor, believing that Wu Luan has been killed by assassins, offers the poisoned cup to Qing Nü as a token of his joining her in honouring Wu Luan. Qing Nü drinks the wine, then performs the song with other masked dancers, who are dressed as Wu Luan's fellow dancers had been at the beginning, but collapses and dies before the performance is finished. At this point, Wu Luan reveals himself to have been (presumably secretly) one of the dancers. He strips off his mask—and his 'antic disposition' (1. 5. 173)—to cradle his dying lover: in another gesture to Shakespeare's play, a celebratory banquet becomes an impromptu funeral.⁶¹⁸ A powerful distinction is drawn between the unwavering commitment of a lover and a context of court treachery: throughout, *The Banquet* suggests an intense evocation of drama as reparation and of the ways in which theatre and politics are intimately intertwined. After briefly mourning Qing Nü, Wu Luan unveils a sword, accuses the Emperor of regicide, and then fights his way past the imperial guards towards the Emperor with newfound determination and lethal ferocity. At that moment, Wu Luan appears to put on fully the mantle of the avenging hero; one expects that, in this version of the story, he may very well accomplish vengeance and restore true masculinity in the kingdom. However, the Emperor, who now understands that the poisoned cup had been prepared for him by the Empress, calls off the guards and asks Wu Luan, with deep admiration, whether he was saved from death by the 'tenderness' of 'women's hearts' or by the fact that 'a million calculations cannot compare with one pure heart.'⁶¹⁹ Then, turning his head upwards and asking the spirit of his brother whether he has protected his son to bring 'honour' back to the family, the Emperor drinks off the poisoned wine. In this sequence, what fully restores the vision of Wu Luan's masculinity is ultimately not his readiness to engage in mortal combat and avenge his father, but the purity of his heart. Purity accomplishes revenge by inspiring Wu Luan's uncle to perform a final act of honour by taking his own life. Purity enables the male communion of father, brother, and

⁶¹⁸ *Hamlet*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt and others (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 3.I.150.

⁶¹⁹ *The Banquet*, DVD, 01:57:07, English subtitles.

son and restores, for the moment, the possibility of dynastic wholeness. In the end, masculine virtue becomes realigned with the artistry of dance and theatre more than with mortal combat, and the elements that tend to become gendered feminine prove indispensable to defining the masculine. Just as quickly, however, things go tragically awry, as Minister Yin's son Yin Sun (Laertes) kills Wu Luan and is in turn killed by the Empress. In an unsettling coda, the Empress is shown mourning Wu Luan and the loss of her youth, symbolised in the loss of her name 'Little Wan'; but she quickly changes her demeanour as she tries on with great pleasure her new title of 'Her Majesty, the Emperor' while luxuriating sensuously in a long stream of silk that is the colour of 'the flame of desire,' suggesting that desire reaches its apex in reaching the height of power. Then, from somewhere in the palace, a sword flies out and pierces her though, while the love song 'The Song of Yue' composed by Wu Luan plays in the background. It is a haunting ending that provides a chilling, but also elegiac image of what it means to renounce the kind of purity that defined Wu Luan. The Empress may seduce herself into believing that with 'masculine' discipline she can reach the sublime state of being beyond caring about injured innocence, but as the song and its associations remind us, without a tender 'woman's heart' beneath the mask, she risks becoming as impersonal as the faceless source of the flying sword that kills her.

5.3.4 Visual and Acoustic Articulation

As far as the visual effect is concerned, both films appear very stylish. Presenting the Chinese story containing loosely Shakespearean plots, the filmmakers of *The Banquet* fill a two hour and ten minute filmic space with dazzling period landscape and architecture, stunningly choreographed martial arts, historical and cultural allusions, fascinating musical and melodramatic effects, technologically-treated lighting, and symbolic and sometimes ostentatious visual imagery. Various technically filmic strategies have been used to make a 'Chinese neo-classicist film' that the director proclaimed⁶²⁰ to achieve in making such a film of mixed-genres, mixed-sources, and mixed-media for mixed international audiences.

In the film, the palace enclosed with high and heavy walls and the ceremonies

⁶²⁰ At a press conference to launch *The Banquet*'s official website, Feng revealed his intention to restore 'neo-classicist style' of Chinese culture in the movie. See the report at <http://www.southcn.com/nfsq/ywhc/ss/200604270473.htm>. See the movie site at <http://www.yeyan.sina.com.cn/> and related topics at Sina.com: <http://ent.sina.com.cn/f/thebanquet/index.shtml>.

held in it show the worship of the royal power. A continuous emphasis on corridors and pathways (slow and stately indoors; slow-motion outdoors, as if natural movements were impeded by the centrality of the court) becomes one of the film's strongest leitmotifs. The cameras quite often shoot from a bird's eye view so that the people in the palace seem to live in a deep and cold well, though the decoration is elegant and luxurious. All this gives us an impressive imagination of ancient Chinese civilisation. The light effect is usually sombre and gloomy, evoking a rather depressing mood and creating a romantic, but tragic atmosphere.

The Banquet's visual attractiveness is also attributed to the use of three contrasting colours in costume design: red, black and white, with red signalling passion and desires, mostly associated with Empress Wan; white as the colour of death and mourning, associated with Wu Luan, symbolising the prince's purity; and black representing Emperor Li's evil character. Feng cleverly plays on the cultural double-voicedness of the colour white in the sumptuous opening scene of *The Banquet*. The extravagantly attired Little Wan is filmed from behind as she approaches the chamber where her dead husband's suit of armour is on display: the sequence recalls a similar back-view image of the protagonist in Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet* in 2007. Wan is dressed in elaborate white robes with a stunning, cathedral-length train. The camera tracks her gliding down the long corridor of an immense ebony black set—the single biggest stage ever constructed for use in a Chinese period film⁶²¹—which evokes a Chinese temple or palace. The colour connotations switch meaning, depending on whose eye is that of the beholder. Yet in this case, the colour-code switching is carefully premeditated, as the film is aimed at a global audience. To the Western eye the opening shot evokes a bride slowly walking down the aisle on her wedding day, and the camera is angled above her as it was above Princess Diana, or a royal bride being televised from above. Yet she is in fact in mourning, which is evidenced when she reaches her destination, the empty armour of her dead husband. To the Chinese eye the colour white is traditionally associated with death and mourning, and so she is dressed to mourn at her husband's monument. However, the more Western suggestion of a bridal gown is not entirely out of place, because Little Wan encounters Emperor Li and his marriage proposal in front of the armour. White also carries the symbolic suggestion of innocence and it ties Wan's

⁶²¹ This detail comes from Hong Kong cinema expert Bey Logan, who provided the audio commentary on the American release of the DVD, titled *Legend of the Black Scorpion*.

initial appearance to Wu Luan's, as both are clad all in white. But this sympathy of costume does not last. As we learn more about the Empress and her schemes slowly percolate, we see her in deep crimsons and vermilions. It is only when she robes herself in red that she becomes a Chinese bride, but also reveals herself as the scarlet woman. Finally, by the last scene she is draped in black, perhaps to signify that she has become an impure creature. These shifts in colour scheme create a visual crumb trail that allows the audience to follow Wan to her self-destruction. As all of the characters meet their various fates, only the Empress survives to the last. The closing scene is incredibly powerful as we get a glimpse of Wan in triumph. Gathering a bolt of bright red cloth in her arms—the same red cloth she admired early in the film and used in her coronation outfit; the same red cloth that was reportedly originally bought for Qing's wedding to Wu Luan—she contemplates her identity and her ambition in the film's only soliloquy:

When was it that I started to forget my name? Perhaps it was the day your father married me. You left and nobody used my name anymore. Gradually even I forgot what it was. Then your uncle married me ... and again I was called the Empress. But from now on, nobody will call me Empress anymore. Instead, they will call me Her Majesty, the Emperor. Do you know why I like this particular red? Because it is the color of the flame of desire. Yes ... Desire. How many lives have been consumed by this flame? Only I shall rise out of it like a phoenix.

Adorned in this auspicious colour, the Empress hereby details her own interpretation of and attraction to it—for her, red epitomizes 'the flame of desire'. It is the embodiment of her passionate and unsatisfied blood. Seeming to address the dead Wu Luan, Little Wan does not dwell on her grief. Instead, she returns to the theme of title and identity, embracing her future as 'Her Majesty, the Emperor': she has assumed male/patriarch status. Wan has obtained what she wants—the throne—but unfortunately, she has survived the coronation night calamity only to be assassinated by a weapon from an unseen assassin. As she smiles to take her victory and gathers the red cloth to her chest, the blade (which looks like the Sword of the Yue Maiden used by Prince Wu Luan) spears her through the back. Wan is killed at the height of her sense of self-knowledge and at the achievement of her goals. Cutting her down right as she asserts her ability to rise again like the phoenix startles both Wan and the audience. The film never reveals who killed her, but the commentary suggests that it

was Ling, one of her maids, who has been a silent witness to all of her schemes and all of her plots. Feng decided in the final cut of the film not to reveal the identity of the murderer, relishing instead the ambiguity and the sense that even Wan could not escape justice. There is also a sharper sense of tragedy at the close of this film because Wan does not have the opportunity, like Hamlet, to turn to a Horatio and ask that her story be told. She is, instead, cut off in the midst of telling her own story, and given no concluding praise from a conquering Fortinbras or a beloved friend.

Prince of the Himalayas takes us to an even more exotic environment. No previous Shakespeare film, with the possible exception of Kurosawa's *Ran*, makes as stunning use of its location setting. Instead of the state of Denmark, the story takes place in the kingdom of Jiabo located in the remote western highlands. We plunge into an archaic world, brought to life by Tibetan professional and non-professional actors in their own costume and language. Most of the film takes place outdoors with strong light, bright colours, wide views and angles. While Feng Xiaogang identifies *Zhōngguó* (Middle Kingdom, a traditional translation of 'China') with ancient civilisation, Hu Xuehua identifies Tibet with glorious nature. We witness not only its stunning sceneries such as clear mountain lakes, roaring streams and snow-covered landscapes surrounded by the looming Himalayas, but also its traditional rituals, for instance, the water burial of Odsaluyang/Ophelia. People seem to live there in harmony with nature. The contrast between the stark and often barren landscape and the exquisite costumes made for some awe-inspiring moments. The whole look of the film steered clear from the Tibetan view as we have seen it for a long time: no monks in crimson, purple and golden robes, but a bizarre mix of wolf skins, splendid silks, leather straps, snow leopard hides, wool, and deep coloured fabrics and jewellery. Together with the original Tibetan language, the movie became the fabled Shangri-La, but with tragedy at its core. Director Hu Xuehua's epic setting, a romantic rather than melancholic Hamlet, and details of the plot (as in Lhamoklodan/Hamlet and Odsaluyang/Ophelia's love-making and Lhamoklodan/Hamlet's relationship with Kulo-ngam/Claudius) all align his film with Branagh's version, though he is also clearly familiar with Olivier's and Kozintsev's versions as well. Hu's Lhamoklodan/Hamlet, like Kozintsev's, comes pounding home from school (in this case in Persia rather than Germany) to his father's funeral on a beautiful white horse, but Hu's Hamlet remains connected with that steed throughout the film so that one might be tempted to retitling the movie:

Hamlet on Horseback. Hu, born and raised in China but educated in the United States, and therefore comfortable working within both eastern and western traditions, retains the basic characters and plot outline of Shakespeare's play while embedding it within Tibetan culture. He brings a romantic cinematic energy to his camera work accomplished by tracking shots, overheads, quick cuts between long-shots and close-ups in capturing his Shakespearean material. He rearranges scenes, eliminates most of Hamlet's soliloquies, and radically shifts the lines lifted from the 'To be or not to be' soliloquy from the middle of Shakespeare's text to the end of his screenplay in making a movie as visually arresting as it is intelligent.

Music plays an important role in both films. Tan Dun, a musician who has a cross-cultural education and professional experience, is the composer of *The Banquet*'s score. The prince Wu Luan in the film is himself both a dancer and a singer. He especially favours the sad and sentimental 'Song of Yue' (*Yue Ren Song*), based on a love legend from ancient times. So does his lover Qing Nü, who expresses her feelings by singing the same song:

今夕何夕兮？
蹇洲中流，
今日何日兮？
得与王子同舟。
蒙羞被好兮，
不訾诟耻。
心几烦而不绝兮，
得知王子。
山中有木兮，
木有枝兮，
心悦君兮
君不知。
[What blessed night is this?
Drifting down the River Qian.
What auspicious day is this?
Dreaming beside my Prince.
Too bashful to stare,
A secret I can't share.
My heart fills with longing
To know you, dear Prince.
Trees live on mountains,
And branches live on trees;
My heart lives for your heart,

But you don't see me.]⁶²²

While the old *Yue Ren Song* had a happy ending, the Prince's is tragic. Its sorrowful melody, which is played on traditional Chinese instruments, echoes in the palace.

Like Ang Lee's homage to the *wuxia* tradition to conclude his *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000) with a modern love song in its final scene, Feng Xiaogang also uses a modern song with a popular melody as the closing theme to summarise the tragedies at the end of the film. In the final scene of *The Banquet*, the filmmakers sentimentalise the Empress once again as 'Little Wan'— the name that Prince Wu Luan/Hamlet called her when they were younger — by playing a happy song 'Only for Love'. As soon as she finishes speaking the last gloating word, she is stabbed in the back by an unseen assailant and dies. The sentimental song begins to play while Wan points directly into the camera lens at us, the audience. Written by Tan Dun, played by Lang Lang on the piano, sung by the young pop singer Zhang Liangying, the closing theme 'Only for Love' is a decidedly non-tenth century, piano and orchestra driven ballad accompanying the closing credits. The arrangement by Tan Dun (composer for both films) is rooted in *Crouching Tiger's* mournful score and, more significantly, the song appears over the film's final credit roll rather than accompanying its mystical final images. Reprised from the piano and strings version, 'Only for Love' underscores the bitter and strange Little Wan/Wu Luan reunion scene.⁶²³ It is a kind of aural synecdoche for the visual and narrative difficulties the film presents. The song is musically antithetical to the intricacies of an alternately eerie and robust score, creates an extreme disconnect between audience and the preceding narrative, and, crucially, appears to contradict the deliberate resolve of its central character. Could the Empress Wan, for all her subtle, controlled monstrosity, express Little Wan's regrets? In the vicinity of a small stone koi pond, upon which the camera fixes as the piano and chorus of 'Only for Love' summon us to emotional catharsis, Wan meets her end, recognizing her unseen assassin as she utters a final gasp. In *The Banquet's* final moments, as the camera pushes in to a single, unmanipulated shot of the koi pond, the murder weapon, familiar to us from earlier

⁶²² *The Banquet*, DVD, 01:42:10, English subtitles.

⁶²³ See *The Banquet*, DVD from 00:26:46 to 00:28:47 (reference only). This earlier sequence, with its wire-dance of erotic pursuit, restates the youthful passions of the Empress and Prince while denying the possibility of their rekindling.

in the film, enters the water.⁶²⁴ The camera holds for well over a minute and as the ballad continues, floating weeds, displaced by the knife, drift back to obscure the koi. The closing credits roll over the image of the koi pond for another ninety seconds before fading to black. Who could these koi be that they merit such visual emphasis, rivalling Prince Wu Luan for screen time?

The music for *Prince of the Himalayas* was written by He Xuntian, professor at the Shanghai Conservatory and a distinguished composer. He uses traditional Tibetan music from monasteries, evoking archaic and spiritual spheres. Set against a background of royal life in ancient Tibet, *Prince of the Himalayas* has more need for music than other films, as Tibetans are good singers and dancers. The long trumpets played by the lamas, the rotating drums with scriptures on them, the monks reciting scriptures collectively...the sounds used in the film are uniquely Tibetan. Such sounds are typical in such scenes as ‘The New King Ascending the Throne’, ‘Burial of Odsaluyang’ and ‘Duel between Lhamoklodan and Lessar’. The Tibetan music and sounds not only help accentuate the special background against which the story is set but also add to the enigma and sacredness of the life that the film depicts. Music also helps explain characters’ personalities and destinies. For instance, after she becomes mad, all the remarks of Odsaluyang are songs, including three long ones. Some enthusiasts have even called the theme song ‘Holy Incense’ with Buddhist incantations a ‘song from the heaven’.⁶²⁵ The text is deliberately simple and repetitive:

The people in Linguo are like a sea (Om Mani Peme Hung)
The people in Linguo come and go (Om Mani Peme Hung)
Where is my lover? I can not see him. (Om Mani Peme Hung)
Where is my lover? He is gone. (Om Mani Peme Hung)

The water sparkles
In the holy lake (Om Mani Peme Hung)
Is it holy light
That my lost lover has lit for me? (Om Mani Peme Hung)

The holy mountain
Is covered by clouds and fog (Om Mani Peme Hung)
Is it holy incense

⁶²⁴ Ibid.: Still of the ‘Sword of the Yue Maiden’ at 02:06:54, compare with still at 00:29:21; Clip from 02:06:45 to 02:07:11.

⁶²⁵ Wu Hui, ‘Shakespeare in Chinese Cinema’, *Multicultural Shakespeare: Translation, Appropriation and Performance*, vol. 10 (25), 2013, 71-81 (p. 79).

That my lost lover has lit for me? (Om Mani Peme Hung) ⁶²⁶

The music is lyrical and dynamic, particularly in the love and duel scenes. Besides weighty instruments, such as Tibetan drums and trombones, He Xuntian also uses electronic music, but based on ancient tunes that are consistent with the tone of the filmic moments. The music at the end of the film is mixed with lamas reciting scriptures, which adds to the somberness of the atmosphere. It is like a summons from the heaven, as the soul of Lhamoklodan is rising up into the sky and a new king of the Jiabo Kingdom is being born.

5.4 Coda

These three made-in-China movies, in their own ways, have come to join in the international game of adapting Shakespeare's stories. As one of the earliest Shakespeare adaptations in Chinese film history, *A Spray of Plum Blossoms* provides us with a rare glimpse into the *look* of adaptation films produced in the silent period in the 1930s, suggesting Chinese filmmakers' early attempt to join in the international film market. The two Chinese *Hamlet* films, produced in the new millennium, respond to the trend of globalisation by localising Shakespeare, telling their stories with great virtuosity and showing full mastery of film as a comprehensive, holistic medium. In return, their audiences take equal pleasure in receiving the films. Primarily both the filmmakers and the audiences may enjoy being attracted by something familiar (a piece of world literature). At the same time, both parties are exposed to something unfamiliar (remote cultures in contemporary cinema) that provides entertainment, inspiration and surprises. They are dealing with a dialectical relationship between the well known and the unknown, between repetition and creation, between fidelity and innovation. Since the films refer to an author that is known worldwide, the innovation they demonstrate seems to be checked against the traditional criterion of fidelity. From that perspective, all the three films examined in this chapter might seem to fall short of Shakespeare's literary genius and to abuse him for commercial purposes. Certainly, they do not show much fidelity to the author and his works. However, since the cinema is 'a

⁶²⁶ *Prince of the Himalayas*, dir. by Hu Xuehua (Shanghai: Hus Entertainment, 2006), DVD, 00:12:30, English subtitles.

product of the most sophisticated forms of industrial production'⁶²⁷ according to Frederic Jameson, it relies heavily on the market. The three movies are examples of the commercialisation and internationalisation of the Chinese cinema within a global commercial film market. For the Chinese film industry, making a Shakespeare film is obviously not about Shakespeare as cultural heritage. 'Shashibiya' (the Mandarin transliteration of 'Shakespeare') is a source for good stories and a repertoire of dramatic effects; just as Shakespeare and other Renaissance playwrights pilfered stories from all kinds of literary and historical source material in constructing their plays, the Shakespeare canon is now being reopened for a similar process of adaptation, exploitation, and revision in Asia and elsewhere. Not only is Shakespeare's story used and altered, but historical and cultural elements are exploited to produce a unique style of filmmaking, just as Akira Kurosawa's revolutionary use of Japanese landscape and costumes, or Kenneth Branagh's nineteenth century period setting, or Michael Almereyda's postmodern spin-off. Whether or not Chinese filmmakers are comparable with recognised Shakespeare adapters such as Kurosawa and Branagh, at least they provide more alternatives to the Hollywood-style filmmaking. The adaptations make a Chinese contribution to the global entertainment industry; they enrich and popularize Shakespeare's heritage. To attract both domestic and foreign viewers, they feature breath-taking landscapes, colourful cultural elements and exotic mysteries, catering to a mainstream audience with nostalgic or folkloristic curiosity. By successfully doing so, they once again prove Shakespeare's global status.

⁶²⁷ Frederic Jameson, *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System* (Indiana University Press, 1995), xiii.

Conclusion

This study has considered the ways in which Shakespeare's plays have been adapted in Mainland China, specifically in the contemporary era (i.e. since the 1980s). I have brought into dialogue translation theories, adaptation studies, Shakespeare scholarship, comparative literature, and film studies in order to examine the mechanisms of adapting Shakespeare into Chinese theatrical forms. The first chapter reviewed the contact of Shakespeare and China in the course of two centuries of cultural exchanges, in the hope of analysing the trend of interculturalism between Chinese and Western theatre in an era of increasing globalisation. Three genres of performances—*huaju* (spoken drama), *xiqu* (Chinese opera) and *dianying* (films) —were singled out in this study to discover key cultural and aesthetic moments of their encounter, influence, and reception. Nine productions involving Chinese adaptations of Shakespeare have been examined as products of this interculturalism.

In adapting Shakespeare to the Chinese stage, it is neither possible nor necessary to play Shakespeare as it was performed in Shakespeare's time, or as it is played in the contemporary Anglophone world. With regard to Shakespearean productions synthesized with target cultures, David Booth has demonstrated that:

The problem with thinking of the text as the sole source of inspiration is that it can become completely obsessive, leading to such meaningless objectives as trying to play the play as it was performed in Shakespeare's time, or in doing it in such and such a way because 'this is the way that Shakespeare intended it' – which is all a bit like playing the music of Mozart on original instruments, thinking that this is the route to an aesthetic experience. Such antiquarian approaches are probably worthwhile, but they are not of our time.⁶²⁸

Therefore, it is not necessary to restore Shakespeare to his own time. Shakespeare's plays reached out to local audiences only when they were modified in order to make them relevant to the cultural and ideological concerns of the new audiences that were

⁶²⁸ David Booth, 'The Practicalities of Preparing Shakespeare's Texts for the Stage: Observations in Relation to Theatre in Hong Kong 1981-1998', in *Shakespeare Global/Local: The Hong Kong Imaginary in Transcultural Production* (Anglo–Amerikanische Studien. Band 17), eds. by Kwok-kan Tam, Andrew Parkin and Terry Siu-han Yip (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002), pp.43-54 (p. 45).

far removed from Shakespeare's own. In fact, the great discrepancies between Chinese and English history and cultural development lend themselves to a Sinicized Shakespeare. The performances that I have discussed in this dissertation have shown that Shakespeare can be presented through different genres of Chinese theatre and cinema. Since the early twentieth century, adaptations and performances of Shakespearean plays have played an important role in the Chinese theatre. In those performances, Shakespeare's plays are translated, appropriated and staged, interweaving Chinese and Western performing cultures. In general, the adoption of Shakespeare, together with elements from Western theatrical traditions, often operates as an instrument to bring change in the aesthetic and socio-cultural functions of Chinese theatre. It promotes reforming, revitalising Chinese theatre and offers critiques of Chinese political and cultural lives. From an avant-garde stage production (Lin Zhaohua's *Coriolanus*) to a blockbuster aiming at international audiences (Feng Xiaogang's *The Banquet*), Shakespeare has served as artistic inspiration as well as a capitalist boost to profits. Despite the fact that these reincarnations of Shakespeare reiterate the specificity of local Shakespeares, they also strengthen the concept that these seemingly isolated examples of Chinese Shakespeares are part of a larger context of intercultural and globalized Shakespeares. Intercultural Shakespeare performances challenge old approaches to Shakespeare which 'start with the linguistic text, and in English', and by doing so, produce new approaches to Shakespeare that contest his dominating position in the global market.⁶²⁹ Intercultural performances create performance texts that can bring another dimension, or rather a different dramatic context to Shakespeare and his texts, through the use of *mise-en-scène*, foreign art forms, performance traditions, foreign languages, and even theatrical architecture. When Shakespeare travels to China, he had better become Sinified. To coin from the phrase: 'Do as the Chinese do.' It is also worthwhile to assimilate Shakespeare and his plays with Chinese social, political, cultural and theatrical conventions. Although China's historical link with Shakespeare is no more than two centuries old, Chinese Shakespeare is still as multi-faceted as the world's Shakespeare, because contemporary Chinese history is interwoven with ideological changes that fundamentally define the Chinese perception of the West that Shakespeare represents. This perception, as I illustrated

⁶²⁹ Dennis Kennedy and Yong Li Lan, eds. *Shakespeare in Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.20.

in Chapter One, has shifted according to ideological developments in China. At every stage of the development of Chinese Shakespeare, Shakespeare is treated as ‘a phenomenon rather than a man and his works, and almost necessarily [an allusion] to an icon, even an idol’.⁶³⁰ Shakespeare’s status as an inspiration for modernity in China, however, has always been challenged by the Sino-centric view of the world. During the New Cultural Movement, Shakespeare was hailed as one of the perfect models for the Chinese to follow, whereas the realism of Western theatre influenced Chinese cultural discourse as the formation of Chinese modernity began. Such a view of Shakespeare was mixed with the recognition of modernity, exemplified by the Chinese love for Realist theatre such as that of Ibsen. But this is the foundation of all discourses on Chinese Shakespeare: Shakespeare’s cultural capital is always understood with the modern side of the West, as opposed to anything traditional, even when Shakespeare is firmly set in the tradition of Western canons—Kennedy and Yong rightly observe that ‘in English *Hamlet* is a series of well-known quotations, in Chinese it is a new play’.⁶³¹ Everything non-Chinese is exotic, thus *new*, while posed against the millennia of Sino-centric history.

Two important trends can be concluded from my review of Chinese theatre’s reception of Shakespeare. First, interculturalism in Chinese theatre was the result of a continuing effort to acquire a foreign (especially Western) paradigm to reconstruct native traditions. Such a willing embrace of foreign elements characterized modern Chinese theatre. The earliest intercultural trend in China sought particularly to absorb the intellectual rigor and the techniques of representation found in Western theatre. Through intensive translation of European literary drama ranging from Shakespeare and Molière to Ibsen and Shaw, a whole new form of Chinese theatre—Spoken Drama—was created. Theatre, for many Chinese intellectuals of the time, was the most advanced form of literary expression responding to the social, cultural movement towards the modern, independent state. Although modern Chinese theatre was a one-direction import from the West and continued to rely on the playwriting and staging techniques of Euro-American theatre, it has started to incorporate elements from native traditions. The necessity of returning to the mythico-ritual roots of Chinese theatre has become increasingly important. The concurrent development

⁶³⁰ Dennis Kennedy and Yong LiLan, ‘Introduction: Why Shakespeare?’ in *Shakespeare in Asia*, eds. by Dennis Kennedy and Yong LiLan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 3.

⁶³¹ Dennis Kennedy and Yong LiLan, ‘Introduction: Why Shakespeare?’, p.3.

of interculturalism (receiving Western influence) and intraculturalism (seeking inspiration in native traditions and history) are believed to be a right direction towards a new Chinese theatre tradition that can retain cultural identity and provide a modern outlook and sensibility. Second, interculturalism within traditional Chinese opera occurred as an urgent attempt to regain vitality and relevance with contemporary society in the process of a large-scale social change. As seen in the three opera productions of *Macbeth*, Shakespeare has catalysed a transformation of Chinese dramatic idioms. While each experiment sought to express the essence of his drama — the *Shakespearean spirit* — the intercultural exercise eventually extended the expressive range of Chinese traditional opera and created the potential of hybrid forms. Philip Brockbank praised the Chinese Shakespeare Festival held in 1986, in which some productions were done in the style of classical Chinese opera:

I had expected an exciting and fresh experience of Chinese theatre, but had not anticipated what was for me a revelatory discovery of new truths about Shakespeare's art. I enjoyed what I have come to think of as a Shakespeare Renaissance in China, remarkable for its scale, plenitude, and variety, distinctively Chinese and yet lucidly in touch with the England of Elizabeth and James. It was like two great rivers, the one taking its course from the remote past of Europe, and the other from the still remoter past of Asia. Conventional Chinese theatre was apparently in need of the intimate attentiveness to life to be found in Shakespeare's plays, while the plays themselves are clarified by the energies and styles of an exotic, simultaneously courtly and popular tradition.⁶³²

However, since his introduction into China nearly a century ago, the Chinese have known Shakespeare more on page than on stage. His plays were more read than performed. The Chinese translators, with very few exceptions, had little practical experience with theatre; their intention was mainly to popularise Shakespeare with the general Chinese reader by rendering his dramatic poetry into clear, truthful, and elegant standard Chinese. The translations did not aim specifically at theatrical production. The earliest productions of Shakespeare focused primarily on the display of exotic scenery and characters. Later productions exhibited the Chinese enthusiasm for European realistic theatre combined with a taste for rich spectacle. During the 1950s and 60s, when Marxist-Maoist ideology predominated in the arts and literature, China produced a uniform interpretation and presentation of Shakespeare following

⁶³² J. Philip Brockbank, 'Shakespeare Renaissance in China', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 39 (Summer 1988), 195-204 (p.195).

Soviet paradigms. As a foreign tradition, Shakespeare in China was always susceptible to the change of political climate. His drama was obliterated from China for a dozen years during the Cultural Revolution, as it was considered ideologically poisonous to the reformed Chinese.

The avid re-introduction of Shakespeare into China and the attempt to adapt his drama into traditional Chinese theatre in the 1980s suggested a number of things. It revealed the pursuit of the Chinese to see his plays in their true artistic merit, rather than through an ideological prism. Further, it indicated a realisation that a certain degree of mixing native and foreign, traditional and modern, forms and languages, could best convey the essence of Shakespearean drama. The intercultural approach drew the source and target cultures closer to each other, and acknowledged both traditions in a metatheatrical way. No longer represented by actors wearing blond wigs and high prosthetic noses, Shakespearean heroes were now often re-set in a Chinese historical period singing familiar operatic arias. Whether this hybrid was called ‘the Sinicisation of Shakespeare’ or ‘the Shakespearisation in Chinese drama’, it established an active dynamic between native traditions and foreign paradigms.

Therefore, Pavis’s translation model that derived from communication theory, which I detailed in my Introduction, is especially relevant here. The Chinese adaptations of Shakespeare have embraced a larger purpose than a mere re-theatricalisation of their home tradition. Judging from the adaptations of Shakespeare in Chinese operas, there has been a clear desire to interpret, represent, and even rewrite Shakespeare, who is no longer an exotic figure of distant Renaissance England, nor the lofty cultural symbol established since the period of Western dominance in Asia, but rather a contemporary, who is understandable to the modern Chinese. There has also been an ambition to prove that the traditional Chinese forms and techniques are able to communicate the complex, subtle nuances of Shakespearean drama even to non-Chinese audiences. In other words, Shakespeare becomes a bridge for traditional Chinese theatre to reach unconventional performance settings and audiences, which can open rich possibilities for its future development.

In conclusion, Shakespeare performances in contemporary Mainland China are not only modern interpretations applying locality to Shakespeare’s text but also display a lively diversity of local cultural forms, such as Spoken Drama (David Tse’s Mandarin-English *King Lear*), Chinese operas (Hung Zuolin’s Kunju *Macbeth*) and

film adaptations (Hu Xuehua's Tibetan *Hamlet*), demonstrating a hybridity of all these influences. Throughout this study, I have aimed to bring to light the complicated resonances between performing Shakespeare's plays and the complexities of contemporary Chinese history. China has produced some extraordinary productions of Shakespeare drawing on a wide diversity of cultural traditions, each one of which exposes fault-lines in Chinese politics and identity. The nine productions examined in this dissertation testify to this diversity in contemporary China. Now Chinese Shakespeare deserves deeper interpretation as a unique case within intercultural Shakespeare performance studies.

Appendices

Appendix 1 An Interview with Sherwood Hu

附录 1 胡雪桦采访

时间：2014 年 7 月 11 日，星期五，
下午 2:30-4:00
采访人：唐仁芳
地点：上海戏剧学院 电影电视学院

唐：您 2006 年拍摄了根据《哈姆雷特》改编的电影《喜马拉雅王子》。您是怎么看待哈姆雷特这个人物形象的？

胡：简单地说，在我脑袋里想到哈姆雷特，就是劳伦斯·奥利弗。我最早看到的那个版本，就是 1948 年劳伦斯·奥利弗自导自演的黑白电影。至今我觉得那是拍的最好的《哈姆雷特》，把莎士比亚的精神很好地展现出来了。

唐：我们可以把刚才的问题和其他的《哈姆雷特》作品联系起来。比如说 1990 年林兆华导演的话剧版的《哈姆雷特》，他的作品想要表达的思想是：“人人都是哈姆雷特；哈姆雷特是我们当中的每一个人，任何一个人。”哈姆雷特是现代社会其中的一个悲剧人物。导演所探索的是现代社会人的生存困境。所以哈姆雷特实际上是现

Appendix 1 An Interview with Sherwood Hu

Time: 2:30-4:00 pm, Friday, 11 July 2014

Interviewer: Renfang Tang

Venue: School of Film and TV, Shanghai Theatre Academy, China

TANG: In 2006, you made the film *Prince of the Himalayas*, which was an adaptation of *Hamlet*. What do you think of the title character Hamlet in the play?

HU: Simply speaking, whenever I think of Hamlet in my head, it is Laurence Olivier's Hamlet. The earliest version I saw was the 1948 black-and-white film adaptation that Laurence Olivier directed and acted by himself. Until today I still believe that his adaptation was the best brought onto screen, which displayed *Hamlet's* essence perfectly.

TANG: We can relate the previous question with other adaptations of *Hamlet*. For example, Lin Zhaohua's 1990 *huaju* adaptation of *Hamlet* hoped to express the idea that "everyone is Hamlet, and Hamlet is everyone, anyone of us." And Hamlet was a tragic figure in modern society. The director explored the survival dilemma of modern people. Therefore, Hamlet is our contemporary; everyone in the modern society is Hamlet. In your film *Prince of the*

代的，现代社会中的每个人都是哈姆雷特。《喜马拉雅王子》这部电影中的哈姆雷特，您认为他的精神是什么？

胡：讲到林兆华的《哈姆雷特》，我看过那个版本，而且是我的朋友们出演的。那部戏，我觉得不是林兆华最好的戏。林兆华排过很多好戏，但那部戏，我有点坐不住。虽然这部戏在国外的反应，大家都觉得特别好。我从来没改编过莎士比亚，我就改编了《哈姆雷特》这部戏。我现在做的东西，我很怕是概念性的戏，就是一千个人有一千个理解的哈姆雷特。林兆华的观念就是，谁都是哈姆雷特。其实这个理念并不高深。《哈姆雷特》这个剧从结构上看不是莎士比亚最好的戏剧结构，但这个剧里面写的哈姆雷特是个特殊的人物，任何剧院在任何时候没戏演的时候，只要找个合适的演员来演哈姆雷特，这个戏都会成功。所以《哈姆雷特》可能是世界上演的最多的，也是改编最多的。我当时在拍《喜马拉雅王子》的时候，做了个统计。在我之前拍过电影《哈姆雷特》的有 39 个导演，我是第 40 个。《哈姆雷特》这个剧，这个人物，很精彩。为什么精彩？这个剧是在文艺复兴时期，莎士比亚写的。文

Himalayas, what do you think is Hamlet's essence?

HU: Talking about Lin Zhaohua's *Hamlet*, I have seen his production, and my friends have acted in it. I don't consider that production to be one of Lin's best works. Lin made many great shows, but I did not find myself enjoying his *Hamlet*. I know that his *Hamlet* was well received overseas. I have never made adaptations of Shakespeare before, but just *Hamlet*. In my work now, I dread to make conceptual plays, such as one with the idea that "a thousand people have a thousand understandings of Hamlet". Lin's idea is that everyone is Hamlet, but I don't think that's a very profound idea. Even though *Hamlet* isn't Shakespeare's best play, in terms of structure, Hamlet as a character is very special — whenever a theatre is lack of plays to show, as long as it can find a suitable actor to play Hamlet, it will make a success. So *Hamlet* may be the most performed and adapted play in the world. When I was making *Prince of the Himalayas*, I looked into some statistics. There had been 39 directors who made adaptations of *Hamlet* before me, and I was the fortieth. In *Hamlet*, both the play and the title character are magnificent. Why? Because it was written during Renaissance by William Shakespeare. Renaissance brought great innovations to humanity. Before Renaissance, the Theocracy God controls everything of the human

文艺复兴让人类社会的进程出现了巨大改变。在这之前是中世纪，神在掌管着人类社会的一切事务，称作“神权”。从神权到王权，再到人权的转变，是文艺复兴的最大宗旨，也就是说人觉醒了。人开始反对神，人开始反对王权，这就是文艺复兴。文艺复兴的精髓就是人的复兴。为什么哈姆雷特这么了不起，因为他是思想者，他在思考人类社会，他在思考王权、王室，他在思考神权。这就是为什么哈姆雷特这个人物在历史上让人如此恋恋不舍、让人反复揣摩。《哈姆雷特》剧的一个根本性的主题，是复仇。该剧原标题是《丹麦王子，哈姆雷特的悲剧》（*The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*），国内常用的中文译名是《王子复仇记》。为什么哈姆雷特在我的电影中变成了喜马拉雅王子，说藏语？我做这样的改编，一个很重要的原因就是我对哈姆雷特这个人物的偏爱，和最终我要散发的一个思想。哈姆雷特思考的一个很重要的问题，就是生存还是毁灭，这段独白很精彩。但是还有一段更精彩的独白，就是第一幕第五场结束时他跟霍拉旭说的那段：“这是一个颠倒混乱的时代，唉，倒霉的我却要负起重整乾坤的责任！”

world. The transformation from Theocracy to Monarchy and then to humanity is the spirit of Renaissance. Humanity awakens, and confronts deity and royalty. I consider the greatness of Hamlet as him being a thinker. He thinks of the human society, thinks of the Monarchy and royalty, and he thinks of Theocracy. This is why Hamlet is a figure in the history that attracts people to fathom. As a play, a profound theme of *Hamlet* is Revenge. Its full title, “*The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*,” is often translated as “The Revenge of a Prince” in Chinese. The reasons I decided to transform Hamlet into a prince of the Himalayas and let him speak Tibetan language are my favour of the character Hamlet and the idea I want to express. A very important question that Hamlet ponders is “to be or not to be”. This soliloquy in the original play is magnificent, but there’s another line that I think is even better: at the end of Act I, Scene V, Hamlet said to Horatio, “The time is out of joint; O cursed spite, / That ever I was born to set it right!”

唐：在西方,往往对戏剧和电影有着一一种政治的解读。因为莎士比亚的戏剧本身和政治、社会与历史是密切相关的,所以您的这部电影,也不是在真空里面的,有人会从政治这个角度去解读您的《喜马拉雅王子》,比如,电影的名字。听说当初您在申请电影的批文时,当初的剧名《西藏王》没有通过;即使现在的名字《喜马拉雅王子》,也曾经遇到过阻碍。还有,影片展示了西藏的历史、宗教、文化,于是,一些西方学者认为,您在电影里探索了西藏和藏族这个民族的身分特征。这在我们中国很多以前的作品中,不管是文学还是戏剧作品当中,都没有做过。西方观众从电影中看到的就是这些。还有拉摩洛丹(哈姆雷特)这个灵魂人物,一些西方人士把他和达赖喇嘛联系起来。这些,我有点困惑,因为我们知道,在中国不管是拍电影还是写书,都要应付审查制度这样一个问题,请您对此解释一下。

胡：这个问题,我在国外放电影的时候,也被问到过了:“你是不是有一些政治的意念和企图啊?”实际上,作为一个导演,也是生活在社会中的,哈姆雷特也是,不可能逃离这个社会存在。你所想的所有问题,如何与你的

TANG: In the West, there is often a political Interpretation towards plays and films. Shakespeare's plays are often closely related to the politics, the society and the history of the time. For your film, someone would also try to interpret it politically, not out of context. For example, the name of the film is *Prince of the Himalayas*. I have heard that the authorities did not approve the initial name of the film, *King of Tibet*, and the name *Prince of the Himalayas* used in the release had also met difficulties before its approval. Besides, this film shows Tibet's history, religions and culture, so some Western scholars believe that in your film, you have explored Tibet and the identity of Tibetan people. This has not happened for many of previous Chinese literatures and dramas. That's what the Western audience perceived from the film. And for the soul character of Lhamoklodan (Hamlet), many Westerners relate him with Dalai Lama. I am confused by all these, as we know that censorship imposed by Chinese Authorities on films and books are very strict. What do you think of these?

HU: Well, I was also asked about this question when I was doing screenings abroad. They asked me whether I have any political opinions or intents in the film. Actually, as a director who also lives in this society — as Hamlet does — the presence of the society is not ignorable. Every problem the director considers, and how they are

电影产生共鸣，你对世界一定有自己的看法。回到根本上来，当初我们拍这部戏的一个重要初衷，就是我已经超脱了西藏问题，也超出了一个简单的民族性的问题，因为我发现：我们现代社会有很多人，已经不讲信念了，不讲“人从哪儿来、到哪儿去”这样一个简单的哲学问题，所以人类社会就产生了很多杀戮。很多杀戮甚至和中世纪那种杀戮，比如十字军远征，是一样的，就是宗教之间的战争。宗教本来是好东西，不管是什么宗教，最终还是要讲真善美，讲宽恕，讲爱。但是为什么现代社会中一些人一是没有信仰，二是拿着宗教这个东西进行杀人？这个问题实在是超越西藏的。我本身也不是西藏人，当我把哈姆雷特和西藏嫁接的时候，实际上我最看重的是什么？是西藏文化和东方文化对现代人的一种启示。想想佛教的教义讲什么？是轮回，宽恕，“放下屠刀，立地成佛”，谁都可以有新的开始。所以，在这部电影里，我实际上把《哈姆雷特》里复仇的主题，做了一个解构，一个颠覆。这源自我小时候看到的劳伦斯·奥利弗的黑白电影，给我印象很深。但他的电影有一个情节让我从少年时就一直困惑，就是哈姆雷特的叔叔和他母亲

reflected in the film reveals his or her own view towards the world. Back to the basics, an important initiative of us making the film was detached from the issues of Tibet and the nationality of Tibetan people. It was the lack of faith in the society. We don't think of the philosophical question of "where are we from and where we are going" any more. The history of the society is filled with bloodsheds, many of which are no difference from religious wars from Medieval times, like The Crusades. Religion is a good thing. Every religion teaches truthfulness, kindness and forgiveness. But why are some people in the modern world lack of faith, and use religions to make killings? This question is far beyond Tibet. I am not a Tibetan myself. When I transplant *Hamlet* to the context of Tibet, what do I focus on? It's the inspirations brought by Tibetan culture and the Eastern culture as a whole, to modern people. Buddhism is about reincarnation and forgiveness. "A butcher becomes a Buddha the moment he drops his cleaver", and everyone can have a fresh start. In my film, I disintegrated and transformed the theme of revenge in *Hamlet*. The black-and-white Laurence Olivier film adaptation I saw when I was young had an influence on me. In my boyhood, I had been confused by a plot in the film: Hamlet's uncle and his mother hosted a ball and got married. Why? As my film is based on Tibet's history, I have to respect the Tibetan culture. So in Tibet's history, could such a marriage happen? After I finished the script, I

举行舞会结婚了，这是为什么？既然我的电影以西藏为背景，就得尊重西藏的文化。那么，在西藏历史上，会否发生这样的事情？因此，我写完这个剧本后，又请扎西达娃和多吉才郎两人跟我合作改编。我们研究西藏的历史文化后，认为此事是可能的：兄弟俩可以娶一个老婆。这部片子在拉萨放映，是2006年年底，当时一票难求，今天去买票，只能买到明、后天的，所以我们又紧急新增拷贝运到拉萨。我们的西藏演员打电话给我，说他们很兴奋，终于有一部正面反映他们灿烂文化的电影了。因为，在国外，如好莱坞拍的很多关于西藏的电影，其实没有关于西藏的实质内容，只是一个商业手段，是反华的，表现汉人对西藏的镇压。其演员全部是外国演员，基本没有西藏演员，语言也是英文。国内拍摄的关于西藏的电影，多数也是带有政治意识形态，没有藏族演员的表演，使用汉语和汉族演员。所以，当初决定拍这部电影时，我想一定要了解和尊重西藏的本土文化与宗教信仰，要在藏族地区拍，要使用藏族演员，要使用藏语。否则，我宁愿不拍。当初，制片人想请谢霆锋来演哈姆雷特，因为他有票房号召力，我没有同意。由他来主演

invited Tashi Dawa and Dorje Tsering to work with me. After researching Tibet's history and culture, we believed that this could possibly happen: brothers could marry the same wife. When the film was screened in Lhasa in late 2006, it was in huge demand. Tickets were always sold out for the day. Therefore, we shipped more copies to Lhasa in haste. Our Tibetan actors phoned me and said they were very excited that a film shedding a positive light on their magnificent culture was finally available. In the overseas market like Hollywood, most films about Tibet have very little to do with Tibet itself. They are often about the suppressions from the Han Chinese to Tibetan people, and were made for commercial interests. Most of the actors are foreign, with hardly any Tibetan actors, and speak English. Even most of the films made in Chinese domestic markets are of political ideologies, and use Han actors who speak Mandarin Chinese. When I decided to make *Prince of the Himalayas*, I was firm on acknowledging and respecting Tibet's culture and religions, filming in Tibet and using Tibetan actors who speak Tibetan language. Otherwise, I would have preferred not to make the film. The producers wanted to hire the famous Hong Kong actor Nicholas Tse for the role of Lhamoklodan (Hamlet), which they believed was good for box office revenues. But that was not what I wanted. At the depth of my heart, I thought of far more than revenues. Why is this film called *Prince of the Himalayas*? The mountains of the Himalayas

的话，虽然对票房有好处，但却不是我所想要的。因为，我内心深处思考的，不仅仅是票房。这个戏为什么叫《喜马拉雅王子》？喜马拉雅是一个山脉，它的周边有六个国家：不丹、锡金、尼泊尔、巴基斯坦、印度、中国。不是说那个时候还没有西藏，那时的西藏叫甲波，还是一个个部落和小国的形态。我对西藏文化不是很了解，但我一直在学习。我拜访了札达七世活佛，跟他聊天，他看完这个本子后，给我提出两点建议：“第一，故事背景要放在松赞干布统一西藏之前，即唐朝之前，那时还没有西藏。第二，电影里不出现藏传佛教，只出现西藏的原始教—苯教。因为，在松赞干布之前，藏传佛教还没出现在西藏。”巧合的是，电影开拍的地点阿坝，也正是苯教的发源地。活佛又给我们的“哈姆雷特”起了一个藏语名字：“拉摩洛丹”。

唐：这个藏语名字 Lhamoklodan 是因为听起来像 Hamlet，还是因为它里面有特殊的涵义？

胡：“拉摩洛丹”这个名字的涵义是“智者”。活佛找了一个差不多的音，同时又是藏语里的一个意思，是一个智者。

are surrounded by six countries: Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal, Pakistan, India and China. It is not that Tibet didn't exist back then, but it was called "bod chen po", a small state of tribes. I was not very familiar with the history of Tibet, but I have been learning. I visited the Living Buddha called the 7th Dazha Tulku, we chatted and he gave me two suggestions after reading my script. He said: "First, the story should be set before the time when Songtsän Gampo united Tibet and founded the Tibetan Empire. That's before the Tang Dynasty, and Tibet as a region did not exist back then. Second, don't talk about Tibetan Buddhism in the film, but the film can touch on Bon, the indigenous religion of Tibet. This is because Tibetan Buddhism emerged only after the unification of Tibet by Songtsän Gampo." In coincidence, the place where we opened our shooting was Ngawa, the location where Bon Religion was born. The Living Buddha also named the prince character in the film Lhamoklodan.

TANG: Is this because the Tibetan name Lhamoklodanin sounds like "Hamlet", or because it has some special meanings in the Tibetan language?

HU: "Lhamoklodan" means "wise man" in Tibetan. The Living Buddha found a name for us that both sounds similar to "Hamlet" and has the meaning of "wise man" in Tibetan language.

唐：除了这个电影版的《喜马拉雅王子》，后来您又排了一个舞台版的，而且还是让西藏演员演的。您认为舞台演出和电影区别是什么？

胡：其实两个戏的宗旨是一样的。对于这个戏，是我自己做了两个不同的版本，所以它们的内涵是一样的。要说区别是什么，电影更自由，它可以有特写，有全景，大全景，而舞台，基本就是全景。我们在演戏时有一个特点：因为是电影的原班演员，所以把电影的很多因素，包括电影里的一些段落，放进了舞台版本。现代话剧舞台和过去的戏曲舞台不一样在什么地方？它是个空台，上面没东西，但它又是召之即来，呼之即去，是自由的，舞台上可能是一个很小的空间，也可能是一个广袤的天地。让剧场里的观众可能有种全新的感受。用多媒体做戏剧，这一点实际上和以往的戏剧的做法不一样。国内用多媒体做戏剧，我是比较早的，其他人想超过我也挺难的，因为我本人就是做电影的。所以舞台版的《喜马拉雅王子》当时观众看完以后很震撼，就觉得完全空的一个舞台，还不完全是传统戏曲那种虚拟的，它有很实的场景，也可以把人的很大的特写搁在舞台上。这个戏我们演了两次，一次在大剧

TANG: Apart from this film version of *Prince of the Himalayas*, you have also produced a stage production, and used Tibetan actors. What do you think is the difference between the stage and the film adaptations?

HU: Actually, the essences of the two versions are the same. Because I made the two adaptations for this play myself, they contain the same spirits. To talk about the difference, I think that I have more freedom in the film, as we can have close-ups, panoramic shots and even large panoramic shots. But for the stage, the panoramic is pretty much the only scenography. There's something special about our stage production: we used the same actors from the film, so we could fit many elements from the film, and even dialogues into the stage production. What's different between the modern *huaaju* stage and the old *xiqu* stage? The stage is empty, with nothing on it. Things come when we want them to come, and go when we want them to go. It's free: it can be both a small space and a vast area presented on the stage. This can provide the audience with some kind of refreshing feelings. The use of multimedia techniques makes today's performances different from the operas before. I was one of the earliest persons in China to adopt multimedia in my productions. I guess it's quite hard for others to overtake me, as I am a filmmaker myself. So after the audience watched the stage version of *Prince of the Himalayas*, they were overwhelmed by a shocked feeling, because

院，一次在我们上海戏剧学院的剧院，反应都非常好。

唐：在前面和您短暂的交流中，您提到有意做一个不同的《哈姆雷特》。或者可能不是这个剧，是另外一部莎士比亚的戏剧。是不是这样？

胡：其实我有个想法，就是把《喜马拉雅王子》做成音乐剧。我已经做了电影版的《喜马拉雅王子》，电影已经成功了，舞台剧也成功了。国内很多人在搞原创音乐剧，但是不怎么成功。所以我想用西藏的音乐和舞蹈——藏族本来就是一个载歌载舞的民族——做一部这样的音乐剧，既有民族特色，同时又把《哈姆雷特》和西藏结合起来。我已经和我们电影的作曲家何俊田聊过这件事。

唐：您如何看待一些《哈姆雷特》的戏曲改编？您有没有兴趣用戏曲改编或导演一个莎剧？

胡：戏曲已经有很多人做过了，我如

they found the empty stage — not completely a virtual one like that of the traditional Chinese operas, could present very real scenes. We could also present close-ups of actors on the stage (with the use of multimedia). We gave two performances of the stage production, one at Beijing's National Centre for the Performing Arts, and the other at the theatre of Shanghai Theatre Academy. Both were well-perceived.

TANG: In our earlier short conversations you mentioned an intention to make a different adaptation of *Hamlet*, or a production of another Shakespearean play. Is this true?

HU: In fact, I have the thought of making *Prince of the Himalayas* into a musical. I have already made the film adaptation, which was successful, and so was the stage production. Many people tried to make original musicals in the domestic market, but have not been very successful so far. What I want to do is to use Tibet's music and dancing — Tibetan people are well-known for their traditional expertise in this — to make a musical. It would contain Tibetan people's traditional heritage and set *Hamlet's* story in Tibet. I have already talked with the film's composer He Juntian about this.

TANG: What do you think about opera adaptations of *Hamlet*? Will you be interested in making or directing an opera adaptation of a Shakespearean play?

HU: Many people have already made opera

果做，更愿意做音乐剧。因为实际上戏曲，不要说外国人，就连中国人现在都不太接受了。其实戏曲再不改革创新的话，基本就死定了。文革的样板戏，实际上对京戏是有推进的。但后来关掉了，重新又演老戏。京剧是国粹，也需要创新。有人说，看京戏也是练气，但观众不接受。1994年奥斯卡评委看《霸王别姬》后说：如果演员再唱这个调子的话，他们就听不下去了。所以，如果有合适的戏，我当然愿意做。但《哈姆雷特》的戏曲改编很多人都做过了，没什么意思。音乐剧青年人更能接受，出去演出观众也能接受，我觉得更合适、更有意思的是音乐剧。

唐：您和这部电影另外的两位主创人员，编剧扎西达娃和多吉才郎，您三位都在西方接受过电影专业的训练和教育。您还在美国先后取得了硕士和博士学位。您认为在西方接受专业教

adaptations of Shakespeare. If I want to make something, I would like it to be a musical. Because today not only foreigners, but also Chinese people are not very interested in operas any more. I don't think Chinese Opera has a future without some major innovations. The "Revolutionary Model Operas" made during the Cultural Revolution actually injected some new blood into Beijing Opera, but they were dropped afterwards, and the performances of old operas came back. Beijing Opera is a national heritage, but it is in need of innovation. Some people say that watching Beijing Opera helps them practise their *Qi*, but most audience disagree. When the film *Farewell My Concubine* was screened to the judges for the selection of Academy Awards in 1994, the judges said that they would have stopped watching if the actor continued to sing in the same tune of Beijing Opera. So, if something appropriate comes along, I'll be happy to produce an opera adaptation. But as many people have already made opera adaptations of *Hamlet*, I don't think another one will be meaningful. I think musicals are more appealing to young people, and acceptable to audiences. Therefore I believe that musicals are more appropriate and interesting to me.

TANG: Both you and the other two people who played key role in this film's production, screenwriters Tashi Dawa and Dorje Tsering, were all educated or trained in Film Studies abroad. You obtained a Master's Degree and a Doctorate in this subject in the United States. Do

育的经历，有助于您在国内的电影创作，帮助您拍出更好的作品吗？

胡：这是肯定的。即使没有出国学习经历，我可能也是不错的导演；但是如果没在国外接受高等教育，就不会有现在这个胡雪桦。我出国之前已经是上海人艺的导演了，是当时中国最年轻的导演。我21岁就在上海大剧院开始排戏了，演员都比我年龄大。现在在上海戏剧学院，不了解我的人都以我是个老头了。在国外的教育，让我眼界开阔，让我想问题不再简单局限于中国的角度和国内的一些观点，看到的世界不是天这么大，看到的是更大的宇宙。整个看问题的方式也发生了重大的变化：学会了从一个局部看到了全局，从一个国家看到了世界，从一个地球看到了宇宙。

唐：我们生活在西方文化的影响下，即文化全球化的环境之中，但是您的《喜马拉雅王子》电影，却把《哈姆雷特》地方化了、民族化，用藏族的语言和文化。这和冯小刚导演的《夜宴》是完全不同的路线。他的目标是国际观众，海外市场，强调国际化。您如何看待民族化，国际化的问题？或者说，您站在自己的文化里，怎样做到一种国际化？

you believe that the experiences of receiving professional education in the West are helpful to your filmmaking in the domestic film industry?

HU: Definitely. I may still be a good director without my experience studying abroad. However, if I had not obtained higher education abroad, I would not be the same person as I am now. I was already the youngest director working at the Shanghai People's Art Theatre in the country. I started directing plays at Shanghai Grand Theatre since I was 21, and every actor working with me at that time was older than me. Now I am working at Shanghai Theatre Academy, and people who do not know me well would think of me as an elderly man! Overseas educations have broadened my view and allowed me to think out of box when dealing with problems. The world became larger for me. The way I see problems has also changed: I can now see from a partial to the whole, see from a country to the world, and see from the Earth to the universe.

TANG: We live under the influence of Western culture, in a context of what we call "Cultural Globalisation". However, in your film *Prince of the Himalayas*, you have localised *Hamlet* towards Tibet and its people, using Tibetan people's language and culture. This is a completely different approach in comparison with Feng Xiaogang's *The Banquet*. His target was the international audience and market, therefore emphasizing internationalisation. What do you think of the problem between localisation and

胡: 其实, 我的电影就是国际化的。在我的电影里并没有说中国、美国, 西方、东方, 没有这个概念。我做的所有东西, 在我这里, 都得到了新的融合。比如《喜马拉雅王子》, 是西方的一个经典作品, 我把它搁到藏文化的背景里, 东方的背景里, 但实际上它散发的思想是全人类的, 是有普世价值的。就是说不管什么文化, 什么人, 不管是白人、黑人、黄种人, 实际上人是一样的。真正的国际化, 能够穿越, 能够让所有人都接受, 还是取决于作品反映的主题和人性是否客观存在, 是不是所有人都能接受。

《喜马拉雅王子》为什么能获大奖? 我颠覆、调整了莎士比亚的作品, 西方的观众为什么还接受? 因为我《哈姆雷特》重新解构时, 在尊重莎士比亚原作的精神之外, 还表达了新的思想。这个思想, 不仅仅是藏族的, 而且是中国的, 是亚洲的, 是全人类都能接受的。我的视野不是简单的东方、西方, 是全世界的观众都能接受。文化本身是有界限的, 怎样越过它? 一定要有一个宗教的理念, 却不是简单的喇嘛教或者基督教、天主教、伊斯兰教的概念, 而是宗教的精

internationalisation, or how do you internationalise your film by localising it to your culture?

HU: Actually, my film is already internationalised. I did not give a label to my film Chinese, American, Western and Eastern. There are no such concepts. Everything I made into the film are fused and reintegrated. Take *Prince of the Himalayas* for example, it is based on a classic Western play. I gave the story the background of Tibetan culture in the East. However, in fact, the ideas of the film are for the whole mankind, and are of universal value. So no matter what race and culture, Westerners, Africans or Asians, everyone can agree on the same matters. The true internationalisation is to deliver ideas that everyone can understand and agree with, which requires that the theme and the aspects of humanity reflected by the film conform to the values shared by mankind. Why did *Prince of the Himalayas* receive many prizes? Why do the Westerners agree with the ideas in the film after I have subverted and transformed Shakespeare's classic? Because when I reinterpreted Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, not only did I respect what Shakespeare wanted to express in his original play, but also I added new ideas to the film. These ideas are not just Tibetans', but are also embraced by people from China, from Asia and from the whole world. My understandings of internationalisation is not limited to what is from the East and what is from the West. I want my work to be accepted by audiences from all over

神：就是人要有爱，世界要有爱，要有宽恕。当然，东方的佛学里面还有轮回。为什么在我的电影里，不仅颠覆了人物，最后一幕还多出一个人物：小王子，电影名字里所指的喜马拉雅王子？我给电影增加了这个新生的小王子，是因为好的悲剧总是这样的，到最后是给人以希冀，给人以力量的。好的悲剧一定是要给人精神上的一种提炼，一种情感，一种思想，一种感悟。为什么莎士比亚了不起，因为他的悲剧的最后，还是让人有希冀。

唐：在我博士论文的第五章中，除了评论您的《喜马拉雅王子》，我还论述了冯小刚的《夜宴》，并对两部电影进行了比较。我的导师对我之前写的两稿不太满意，说我的文章说的全是好话，看不到电影的弱点，没有很多批判性的文字。他说：你看不到《夜宴》空洞无物、缺乏精神层面的东西吗？

胡：每个导演拍电影的出发点是不一样的。虽然冯小刚是有思想的导演，但他拍这部戏的目的就是票房，跟我拍这部戏的初衷是完全不一样的。我的导演父亲胡伟民生前最想拍的一部

the world. There are boundaries to cultures, and how do I cross them? There must be ideas of religion in the film. They do not simply refer to Lamaism (Tibetan Buddhism), Christianity, Catholics or Islam, but to the spirits of religions: benevolence, universal caring and forgiveness. Obviously, Eastern Buddhism also teaches people reincarnation. My film transformed some characters, but at the end of the film, an additional character was featured: the little prince, the titled prince in the film's name *Prince of the Himalayas*. I added the newly born prince to the film because good tragedies always give people hope and strength at the end. Good tragedies must provide people, in spirit, with refinement, sentiment and thoughts. This is why Shakespeare is so great: his tragedies always leave people with hope at the end.

TANG: In the fifth chapter of my dissertation, apart from your *Prince of the Himalayas*, I have also discussed Feng Xiaogang's *The Banquet*, and have compared the two films. My supervisor was not quite satisfied with my first two drafts. He was disappointed that my chapter was only praising the films, instead of criticising them. He said, "Could you not spot the inanity and the lack of spiritual essence in *The Banquet*?"

HU: Every director's initiative of making a film is different. Although Feng Xiaogang is a thoughtful director, the sole purpose of his making this film was for box office revenues. This is totally different from my initiatives of

戏就是《哈姆雷特》，但是他 56 岁就去世了，没拍成。实际上，作为一个知识分子，我父亲也是哈姆雷特，他在考虑生存还是毁灭这个问题。所以当时我就想，我要做这个戏，做舞台剧或者拍电影，我一定要对其有独特的理解。

唐：我的导师说：“看了《夜宴》之后，感到它只是一个空壳，没有内容。但是看了《喜马拉雅王子》之后，心被打动了。情感的体验是不一样的。”还有，西方观众从《喜马拉雅王子》中看到了一个不一样的中国。现在国人对西方的了解，远远多于西方人对中国的了解。我认为这部电影给如何看待中国文化这样一个问题提供了一个很好的答案。我们的中国文化，到底是否像一些西方人所理解的，是一个国家，一个文化，一个语言？《喜马拉雅王子》使我们看到了中国文化的多样性，语言的多样性。这是它吸引西方观众的原因之一。

胡：实际上，虽然这部片子里没有著名的演员，但是这部戏有三个大明星。一个是莎士比亚，一个是哈姆雷特，还有一个就是西藏。世界上可能没有比这更大的名气了。所以一开始的时候，我就说不要跟我讲明星的

making *Prince of the Himalayas*. A film that my late father Director Hu Weimin most wanted to make was *Hamlet*, but he passed away at 56, and was never able to make it. In fact, as an intellectual, my father is also Hamlet. He was thinking about the question of “to be or not to be”. So, from that time I thought that to make an adaptation of Hamlet, be it for stage or for screen, I must have unique understandings of it.

TANG: My supervisor said, “After watching *The Banquet*, I felt that it was just an empty shell, with nothing in it. However, after watching *Prince of the Himalayas*, I was moved. The emotional experiences were different.” In addition, from *Prince of the Himalayas*, the Western audience saw a different China. Today, we Chinese know far more about the West than the Westerners know about China. I believe that this film gives a very good answer to how to treat the Chinese culture. To the question what Chinese culture is like — is it one country, one culture and one language, as some Western people may think? — *Prince of the Himalayas* gives a different answer. Through this film, we see the diversity of Chinese cultures and languages. This is one of the reasons that the film attracts Western audience.

HU: In fact, even though this film does not feature any famous actors, it features three great stars: Shakespeare, Hamlet and Tibet. Nothing in the world is more famous than these three. So from the very beginning, I decided not to discuss about using famous actors, but to make the film

事，我们真要认认真真地做电影，要对西藏文化做一个很好的了解，一定要尊重当地的人、宗教和文化，这样做可以避免很多麻烦。实际上我们更着重的是什么？戏的内涵、人物，和我们真正要传达给观众的东西。一是对哈姆雷特、莎士比亚的理解，新的理解；二是对藏族，对藏族文化的理解；三是我胡雪桦是怎么理解莎士比亚和戏剧的，这三者缺一不可。一些评论家的评论使我感到很欣慰。《纽约时报》的一个评论员说：“Shakespeare is going to be surprised, yet pleased.”这说明什么？说明我们对这个戏的改编，是尊重原著的，我们对莎剧的精神内涵是牢牢地把握着的。该剧既是莎士比亚，又是西藏，又是我们创作人员对莎剧的一个新的解释。我们在国外放映时，观众有高中生，有老人，看完都很激动。在意大利放映时，一个高中生说：“我们老师一直让我们读莎士比亚，读《哈姆雷特》。你这个版本，我们觉得更能接受。”在洛杉矶放映后，有一个女观众说：“我参演了好几部电影，演过奥菲莉亚，演过葛楚德。但是你这个戏，让我真正地激动。”为什么？其实很简单。就是我给这个戏中的人物，从母亲，到奥菲莉亚，到叔叔，到国王，到哈姆雷特，注入了更多的人

with great care. We must understand the Tibetan culture well, respect local people and their religion and culture. This way would avoid us many problems. The things we were more concerned with were the meanings and characters of the film, and what we really wanted to deliver to the audience. First, new understandings of Shakespeare and Hamlet; second, understandings of Tibetan people and their culture; third, how I, as the director, understand Shakespeare and drama. None of these three was expandable. Some comments from the critics were quite comforting to me. A reviewer from the *New York Times* said, “Shakespeare is going to be surprised, yet pleased.” What does this mean? It means that the adaptation we made in the film was respectful to the original, and we had firmly grasped the essence of Shakespeare’s plays. This adaptation is Shakespearean, Tibetan, and a new interpretation of Shakespeare by our production team. When we were screening the film abroad, the audience, ranging from high school students to elderly people, were all excited by the film. During the screening in Italy, a high school student said: “Our teacher keeps making us read Shakespeare, including *Hamlet*. We think your film is more acceptable to us.” A female member of the audience in Los Angeles said, “I acted in several films, acted as Ophelia, acted as Gertrude, but it is your film that made me emotional.” Why is that? The answer is simple. I injected more humanities to the characters in the film: the Mother, Ophelia, the Uncle, the King and Hamlet.

性。本来原剧讲的就是复仇，何是复仇，为何复仇，如何复仇。但是在《喜马拉雅王子》电影中却突然出现这样的情节：王子所要复仇的这个人是他母亲的情人，最后这个情人，母亲不得不告诉哈姆雷特：“他是你的亲生父亲。”这个复仇一下子带上了一种强烈的感情色彩，不是理性的。这就是为什么人们说哈姆雷特这个人物有意思，他惆怅、忧郁。他是个哲人，他想周全才动手，最后是迫不得已才动手。这个电影有什么东西？除了考虑社会责任之外，哈姆雷特所要杀的这个人，还是他的亲生父亲。他该怎么办？他选择了把刀放下。所以这个戏在复仇的过程当中，营造了强烈的情感。本来的哈姆雷特形象只有一个层面，现在却有两个。《喜马拉雅王子》有三个时空：一个时空是过去时，是过去发生了什么事情；第二个时空是现在时空；还有一个时空是神和人、冥界和阳界之间的一个空间，就是死去的国王和狼婆，和拉摩洛丹（哈姆雷特）之间的时空。电影的结构不是平铺直续的，每一个时空之间是相互关联的。人物也比以前丰富。比如克劳盎（Claudius）这个人物，他多了一段情节，过去和娜姆（Gertrude）的一段情感，他是不得

The original play emphasized revenge: What is revenge? Why revenge? And how to? But in my film adaptation, the plot suddenly changed: the person that the prince wanted to revenge on is the lover of his mother, and his mother had to tell the prince that the person is his real father. The revenge is now strongly emotional, and is no longer out of reasons. This is why people say that this Hamlet character is interesting. He glooms; he worries; he is a philosopher. He wanted to take action when he was mentally prepared, but was forced to make move at the end. What is special in the film? Apart from the consideration of social responsibilities, our Hamlet has to think that his target is his real father. What does he do? He chose to put down the knife. Strong emotions were delivered during the course of this play. Originally, there was just one layer of Hamlet's character. Now there are two. There are three time frames in *Prince of the Himalayas*: what happened in the past; what is happening now; and what is happening across the boundaries of time, between the God and the people, between the underworld and the world of the living — interactions between the dead King, the Wolf Woman and Lhamoklodan (Hamlet). The time frames in the film are not laid straight and continuous, but are interconnected. The characters also gain more features. Take the character Kulo-ngam (Claudius) for example, he had the background of having been in a relationship with Nanm (Gertrude). He was forced to kill his brother, King Tsanpo. The way

己，才把哥哥，国王糅坤赞布，杀掉了。杀的方式又是完全藏族化的，不是过去在耳朵里滴一滴药死掉了，而是用了一只有毒的袖狗。这种狗又是神狗，一般人是得不到的。所以这个戏一开始是广袤的山脉，一个人抱一只狗往山上走。完了之后他说：“天神啊，原谅我吧。”接着就是一个预言，新王登基，血流成河。这是以前戏里完全没有的。

唐：《喜马拉雅王子》这部电影的风格，实际上类似于日本一些莎剧改编的电影，一个是《乱》，是《李尔王》的改编；还有一个是《蜘蛛巢城》，是《麦克白》的改编。这两部日本的莎剧改编，学者们视为成功的范例。其实《喜马拉雅王子》和它们有相似的地方。看了这个电影之后，观众会对电影里面的东西信以为真，它具有虚拟的真实性，当时人的生活、服饰、礼制似乎都是真实的，这一点非常好。您是怎么做到这种效果的？

胡：当我们在嫁接的时候，来不得半点的作假和马虎。你仔细去看，这里面所有的藏族元素都在，但是我们是做了很大的提升、提炼的。因为我们毕竟不是历史学家，也不是考古学家，我们是艺术家，我们是要拍一部

he killed his brother was more of a Tibetan way: a poisonous Tibetan Spaniel instead of a drop of poison into the ear. Poisonous Tibetan Spaniel is a legendary dog that is out of reach by the common people. So the beginning of the film was a man holding a dog walking in the hill. Afterwards he said: “God, please forgive me!” This is followed by a prophecy: a king is crowned amid bloodshed. This plot had been unseen in previous adaptations.

TANG: The style of *Prince of the Himalayas* is actually similar to some Japanese film adaptations of Shakespeare’s plays. One of them is *Ran*, an adaptation of *King Lear*; the other is *Throne of Blood*, an adaptation of *Macbeth*. Scholars see these two Japanese adaptations of Shakespeare as successful cases. Actually, *Prince of the Himalayas* shares some similarities with these adaptations. After seeing the film, the audience will believe in what happened in the film. It creates a virtualised reality. People’s lives, clothes and etiquettes look real. This was particularly impressive. How did you achieve this effect?

HU: When we were doing the adaptation, we were careful and tried to be truthful on every detail. If you look closely, every element of Tibet is in there, but we also did a lot of work to elevate and refine it. After all, we are not archaeologists, but artists. We were going to make a film. I repeatedly told our Director of Art that research

电影。我反复和我们的美术导演讲，一定要做研究，把它的要素提炼出来，但同时又必须是我们这个戏的特殊的东西，它的文化形态，它的色彩，它的服饰。基本上我们所看到的藏族服装都是农民服装，很少看到藏族的贵族服装，但我在国外看过。所以我说我们要研究这些东西，把藏族的元素拿来，创作时，永远记住，它不是一个镜子。我做东西的时候从来不是一对一的，因为不是拍纪录片；而是一个放大镜，你所要看到的东西，是提炼出来的，不是一比一的。所以拍这个戏，我做了很多研究，使这部电影西藏人看了以后觉得很西藏，外国人看了以后觉得很东方。但是不能说，我们完全是假的，捏造出来的真实。它确实是真实的，因为这个戏真正感染人的是整体性，整体的风格，包括对人物的塑造。比如说我刚才讲了两个人物，一个是母亲。这个人物比过去强多了，对不对？她有这么多的动作，行为，情感，对吧？第二个就是奥菲利亚这个人物，从开头到她在水里生孩子，也比过去丰富了。生孩子那一段，我当时看了英国画家 John Everett Millais 的一幅画，受到启发。那副画中，奥菲利亚躺在水里面，我基本上复制了这幅画，把

must be done to refine the cultural elements, but we also need to have special things for the film, the cultural forms, colours and costumes, etc. Most Tibetan clothes we saw were worn by the common people, not by the noble Tibetans. But I have seen some Tibetan noble wears abroad. So when I said that we need to research these Tibetan elements, it was not copying them from a mirror. We are not making a documentary, so things we make are not matching the relics one-by-one. Instead of a mirror, we use a *magnifying glass*. We consolidate and refine Tibetan characteristics from the relics we have seen. After a lot of research had been done, the Tibetan people who watched the film would feel that it is very Tibetan, and foreigners who watched the film would see it as Eastern. It can't be said that everything we made was fictional. They were real, because what made the film enjoyable was the integrity of its style and characters. Take the two female characters, Gertrude and Ophelia, for example, the character of Gertrude is much stronger than in previous adaptations, because she has so many actions, behaviours and emotions; the character of Ophelia is also livelier than before, from the beginning of the film to the time when she gave birth to the baby in the water. When writing the scene of birth, I was inspired by a painting of the British painter John Everett Millais. In that painting, Ophelia lies in water. I pretty much copied that painting, and visualised it. More importantly, I made Ophelia give birth in water. The human civilisation originated from the

它视觉化了。更重要的，我让奥菲莉亚在水里面生孩子。因为文化的起源是靠水。我们人类所有的文化都跟水是分不开的，人类也是从水里来的。母体就是在水里的人。所以我就让这个孩子在水里面出生。

唐：这部戏中您新加的狼婆这个人物我不是特别理解，希望您能解释一下。在哈姆雷特的原著中，只有老国王的鬼魂。您认为狼婆和老国王樾坤赞布的鬼魂，是对立面吗？

胡：他们两个一定是，一个是代表着正面的，一个是代表着暗面的。在那个世界，一个冥界，一个阳界，二者之间，有个可以沟通的人。狼婆是这样一个人，她像一个从历史、从天界走来的人。她有一个唱诗队跟着她。莎士比亚很喜欢用巫婆或者女巫，《麦克白》一开场就出现了女巫，所以莎士比亚的作品是允许做这个东西的。此外，在西藏，这种神界、灵界的东西随时会发生的。父亲的鬼魂是对哈姆雷特的召示，是神性时代人对神的意志不可抗拒的接受。而在电影中，父亲的鬼魂阴险毒辣，他让年轻王子把剑刺向自己的亲生父亲。对此我也做过很大一个考量，原剧中，两次出现过鬼魂：第一次是老国王的鬼魂出现在城堡上，告诉哈姆雷特他是

water. Our cultures have close ties with water, and human beings evolved from water life. That's the reason why I made the child to be born in the water.

TANG: I am a bit confused with the character the Wolf Woman that you added into the film. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, we only saw the ghost of the former king. Do you believe the Wolf Woman is the antagonist to the ghost of King Tsanpo?

HU: Definitely. One of them represents the bright side, and the other represents the dark side. In that universe, someone can commute in between the world of the living and the world of the dead. The Wolf Woman is such a person. She is like a figure from the history, from the heaven. She has a choir following her. Shakespeare likes to put witches in his plays. A witch appeared at the beginning of *Macbeth*. So Shakespeare allowed these things to appear in his works. On the other hand, Tibet has tales of things from the heaven or from the world of the dead. In the play, the ghost is an inspiration to Hamlet, and is the sign of unconditional acceptance to God's will at the time. In the film, the ghost is darker and sinister: he ordered the young prince to use his sword to stab his real father. I made careful considerations towards this. In the original play, ghost appeared twice. The first time was when the ghost of the king appeared in the castle, informing Hamlet that he had been murdered. The second appearance was

被谋杀的，第二次是在哈姆雷特母亲的房间里。在电影中，我把鬼魂这条线加强了，父亲的鬼魂出现了好几次，不是简单的两次。他跟狼婆有好几次面对面的抗争。为什么呢？因为在我们的世界里面永远是两种势力在抗争，用现在的话说，一个是正能量，一个是负能量；一个是阴面，一个是阳面。在中国文化中，就是阴阳之争，这个永远都在。东南亚文化中，印度尼西亚有一种舞蹈叫刀舞，人跳舞跳跳跳以后，进入一种境界，刀是插不进去的。演员自己就把刀往肚子里插，当然也是插不进去的，为什么？因为他的正能量和负能量产生了一种抗衡。我这个戏中，就是两种能量不断抗衡。一边是老国王的鬼魂在说：儿子，要替我复仇啊，把他给杀了；一边是狼婆说：哈姆雷特，我告诉你到底发生了什么事。完了狼婆开始制止老国王的鬼魂。最后有一场戏，就是鬼魂用它的能量，把狼婆冻住了。后来，拉摩洛丹（哈姆雷特）找到了狼婆，他不断念经。我就把“生存还是毁灭”这一段独白，让他在这时候说出来。拉摩洛丹（哈姆雷特）念这个经，把狼婆身上的冰雪全部融化了。所以，拉摩洛丹在狼婆的引导、呵护下，能够与冥界和灵界对话。那

in Hamlet's mother's chamber. In the film, I reinforced the plot of the ghost. The ghost appeared several times, not just twice. The ghost had several standoff encounters with the Wolf Woman. Why? Because in our world there are always two forces fighting against each other: the *positive energy* and the *negative energy*. One of them is from the bright side, and the other is from the dark side. This is consistent. In the cultures of South Eastern Asia, for example in Indonesia, there is a type of dance called Knife Dance. After dancing for a while, dancers reach a certain state that stabbing a knife towards their stomach will not penetrate their skin. Why is that? I'd say a balance is reached between his *positive energy* and *negative energy*. In my film, these two types of energy are contending. On one side is the ghost of the fallen king calling his son to revenge for him; on the other side is the Wolf Woman trying to tell Hamlet the truth. After that the Wolf Woman tried to stop the ghost. In another scene near the end, the ghost used his power to freeze the Wolf Woman. In the end, Lhamoklodan (Hamlet) found the Wolf Woman, and he started reciting scriptures. I put the monologue of "to be or not to be" in this scene. Lhamoklodan's recitation of scriptures melted the ice on the Wolf Woman's body. Thereafter, under the care and guidance of the Wolf Woman, Lhamoklodan could talk to the world of the dead. In another scene where Lhamoklodan's mother couldn't see the ghost of the fallen king, Lhamoklodan saw it. He said, "Didn't you see that? My father was just

场戏里，拉摩洛丹的母亲看不见鬼魂（老国王），拉摩洛丹却看见了。他说：“你没看见吗，我父亲刚刚才走”。因此，这个戏就很有意思了：阴阳两个世界都在抗争。这抗争来自多方面，除了一个进行时态“杀还是不杀”外，其他各种因素都在抗争。实际上，就是几种不同的能量、不同的人物都在斗争，都在相互钳制，相互推进，一直到剧情的最后。其中也包括狼婆，她从水中把小王子抱起来，在拉摩洛丹临死之前，狼婆说：“你睁开眼睛看一看，这是你的儿子，喜马拉雅王子。”拉摩洛丹临死之前把自己的儿子托起来了。

唐：您在《喜马拉雅王子》这部电影之中，没有采用像《夜宴》那样的全明星阵容，而是选了濮巴甲这个当时没有名气的藏族小伙子，他在演这部电影之前没有表演经验。今天，您如何看待您在八年前对演员的选择？在当时，您是否认为这是个冒险的事情？这部电影在2006年拍摄完成，到现在已经八年了，回顾这部电影走过的历程，您觉得，当初的选择对于它的票房，还有电影的商业回报有没有影响？

胡：我在拍任何电影的时候，首先想到的不是商业问题，这可能是我和其

gone.” This made the plot more interesting: there is a continuous battle between the world of the living and the world of the dead. This battle is in multiple aspects, including Lhamoklodan’s pending decision of “to kill or not to kill”. In fact, many different forces and characters are struggling, suppressing each other, and pushing each other forward, right until the end of the story. Finally, the Wolf Woman saved the young prince from the water. Before the death of Lhamoklodan, the Wolf Woman said to him: “Open your eyes, and see your son, the Prince of the Himalayas.” Before his death, Lhamoklodan held up his son.

TANG: You did not use an all-stars cast for *Prince of the Himalayas* as Feng Xiaogang did to his *The Banquet*. Instead, you used an unknown actor Purba Rgyal, who did not have any experience in acting until then. What did you think about your decision to use unknown actors eight years ago? Did you think it was a risk to do so at that time? This film was finished in 2006, which was eight years ago. Looking back on the course of making this film, do you think your decisions had effects on the film’s box office revenues and commercial interests?

HU: This may be the difference of me and other directors. When I made this film, the first thing I

他导演有点不一样的地方。因为我对电影的一个基本看法就是，如果你是一个直奔票房去的人时候，做的一定是烂作品；即使现在卖的很好的作品，也不一定能流传下去。但我可以讲，像《兰陵王》、《喜马拉雅王子》，是永远留下来的，所以纽约博物馆收藏这个电影。我拍的电影不多，但是我拍的电影就要能够留传下来的电影。所以我不是一开始就直奔票房去。奔票房去，我就会用谢霆锋。但我要做一个我想做的电影，也是有独创性的电影。

唐：您是否意识到，请一个新人来演哈姆雷特，等于是通过拍摄这部电影培养一个明星。一部电影的成功，和票房与商业价值肯定分不开的，而一个新人是没有票房号召力的。

胡：肯定是这样的。所以像我刚才讲的，如果这个片子讲明星的话，就是三大明星：哈姆雷特，莎士比亚，西藏。第二，不是所有导演都敢用新人的。而我从拍第一部戏开始，一直喜欢用新人。拍这部戏的时候，西藏演员都不出名，我是冒着很大风险的。当时，我想如果找不到合适的演员来演哈姆雷特，我就自己演。找到浦巴甲那天，好像是 2005 年 7 月 20 日或 21 日，我在日记中写道，“他可能就

thought about was not about commercial interests. My basic views towards filmmaking is that if you aim straight at box office revenues, you *will* make a bad film. Even the films that sell well now may not be remembered in the future. What I can say is that films like *Prince of Lan Ling* and *Prince of the Himalayas* will be remembered, which is also the reason that the New York City Museum collected this film. I did not make many films, and I hope every one I made will be remembered. So I did not aim at box office revenues in the first place. If I did, I would have used Xie Tingfeng for the line-up. I wanted to make a film that is special, and that I would enjoy making.

TANG: Did you realise that having a new actor play Hamlet implied that the film would groom a new star? A new actor may not have box office attraction that is critical to a film's commercial success.

HU: That's certainly true. Just like what I said, there are three stars to this film: Hamlet, Shakespeare and Tibet. Not every director would like to take the risk of using a new actor. I prefer to use new actors, ever since I made my first film. I did take a big risk when making this film, as most actors from Tibet were not famous. I thought that if I couldn't find a suitable actor to play Hamlet, I would act that role myself. I think it was either on July 20 or on July 21, 2005 when we found Purba Rgyal. I wrote in my diary, "He might just be the Hamlet we are looking for". But how could he act Hamlet? He didn't even know

是我们要找的哈姆雷特。”但是，怎么演呢？他不知道哈姆雷特是什么，连莎士比亚都没听说过。我就让这帮演员提前两个月到成都训练。他们早上六点钟就起床了，副导演带着跑步、压腿、练声。早饭后，开始给他们讲解莎士比亚、剧本和文艺复兴，下午开始演小品。训练了很长时间，才开始排戏。这部戏本来周期是 90 天，我拍了 72 天，虽然跑了西藏很多地方，却提前 18 天拍完。原因很简单，因为演员的戏都排练好了，没有给我造成任何麻烦。还有一点就是，在成都训练的这段时间，演员之间都有沟通、熟悉了。他们彼此之间产生了友情，这对后来的拍摄也起了很大的帮助，我不需要对演员的表演拍摄很长时间，主要精力在镜头上，跟天斗，跟路斗。那儿海拔很高，基本都在 3600 米、4200 米、4800 米，最高有 5000 米。到雪线之外的话，什么东西都没有了，我每天都感到头疼。尽管困难重重，我们还是提前完成了，原因就是合作得比较好。

唐：时间过得真快，都已经一个多小时了。今天胡教授回答了很多我感到困惑的问题，增加了我对这部电影的了解，非常感谢。我花了很多时间和精力去研究《哈姆雷特》的文本和这

what is *Hamlet*, and never heard of Shakespeare. So I had these actors come to Chengdu two months before filming. They woke up at six in the morning, and the associate director led them to do morning exercises and practise vocals. After breakfast, I taught them Shakespeare, the plays and The Renaissance. In the afternoon, we practised acting in sketches. After a long period of training, we started rehearsals for the film. Originally, we planned 90 days for the filming, but it took us only 72 days, despite going to multiple locations in Tibet to shoot. The reason was simple, because the actors had prepared well in rehearsals, so they did not cause any problems for me in the shooting. Also during the training in Chengdu, actors got to know each other, and they became friends. This had also helped the filming to go smoothly. I did not need to spend a lot of time telling the actors how to act, so I could focus on cameras, the weather and the road. In Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, the work was difficult at high altitudes of 3600 meters, 4200 meters or even 4800 meters and 5000 meters. At the altitudes above the snow line, nothing could be seen. I had headaches every day. Even though the situations were very difficult, we still finished the shooting ahead of the schedule, due to the reason that we cooperated well.

TANG: Time has passed quite quickly. It has been over one hour now. Today Professor Hu answered many questions that I was confused with, and I gained a lot of knowledge about this film. I am very grateful. I spent a lot of time and

部电影，希望能够把它介绍给西方的学术界，让更多的人去了解它。与舞台演出不同，一部成功的电影完成之后，是可以传世的。经典的作品永远都是经典，我认为这也是《喜马拉雅王子》具有的。祝愿这部电影可以流传久远。

effort in researching the Shakespearean play and the film of *Prince of the Himalayas*. I wish to introduce it to Western scholars and help more people to understand it. Different from stage performances, a successful film could be passed on for centuries after its release. Classic works will always be classic, and I hope *Prince of the Himalayas* will be one of them. I wish the film could spread afar and long into the future.

Appendix 2 A Select Chronology of Chinese Shakespeares

Year	Chinese Shakespeares
1839	First mention of Shakespeare in Chinese by Lin Zexu in <i>Annals of the Four Continents</i>
1894	Yan Fu discusses Shakespeare's characters in the preface to his translation of Thomas Huxley's <i>Evolution and Ethics</i>
1904	Lin Shu and Wei Yi rewrite the Lambs' <i>Tales from Shakespeare</i>
1907	<i>Huaju</i> (spoken drama) as a new theatre genre is born
1914	First Chinese- opera Shakespeare: Ya'an Chuanju Theatre's <i>Hamlet</i> (dir. By Wang Guoren)
1921	Tian Han translates <i>Hamlet</i> , the first Shakespearean play to be translated in its entirety into Chinese
1927	First Chinese cinematic Shakespeare: <i>The Woman Lawyer (The Merchant of Venice)</i> , dir. Qiu Yixiang (silent film)
1931	<i>A Spray of Plum Blossoms</i> , dir. Bu Wancang (silent film inspired by <i>The Two Gentlemen of Verona</i>)
1936	<i>The Tempest</i> , trans. Zhu Shenghao
1937	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i> , dir. Yu Shangyuan, Nanjing <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , dir. Zhang Min, Shanghai
1942	<i>Hamlet</i> , dir. Jiao Juyin, staged in a Confucian temple, Jiang'an
1944	Li Jianwu's <i>Wang Deming</i> , an adaptation of <i>Macbeth</i> , published
1957	<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i> , dir. Yevgeniya K. Lipkovskaya and Hu Dao, Shanghai
1960	<i>Hamlet</i> , dir. Jiao Juyin, Beijing
1961	Carbon- copy revival of Lipkovskaya's <i>Much Ado</i> , dir. Hu Dao, Dalian, Shenyang, and Shanghai
1966	All foreign writers banned in China
1967	Mainland Chinese writer Liang Shiqiu moves to Taiwan and publishes the first complete Chinese translation of Shakespeare's works (forty volumes)
1979	Carbon- copy revival of Lipkovskaya's <i>Much Ado</i> , dir. Hu Dao, Shanghai, and broadcast live by Shanghai Television

1981	<i>Measure for Measure</i> , dir. Toby Robertson, Beijing People's Art Theatre
1983	First Chinese-opera Shakespeare since the Cultural Revolution: <i>Othello</i> dir. Ma Yong'an, Beijing Experimental Jingju Theatre <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , dir. Tisa Chang, Pan Asian Repertory Theatre, New York
1984	Shakespeare Society of China founded
1986	First Shakespeare festival in Mainland China (Beijing and Shanghai, April 10-23) <i>Xieshou Ji</i> 血手记 [<i>The Story of Blood-Stained Hands</i>], dir. Huang Zuolin and Li Jiayao, Shanghai Kunju Theatre, Shanghai, Edinburgh, and London Wu Hsing-kuo's <i>Kingdom of Desire</i> (<i>Macbeth</i>), Contemporary Legend Theatre, Taiwan
1989	<i>Richard III</i> , dir. Peng Liqi, trans. Zhu Shenghao, Shanghai Theatre Academy
1994	Second Shakespeare festival in Mainland China (Shanghai)
1997	<i>LEAR</i> , dir. Ong Keng Sen, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Tokyo
2000	Wu Hsing-kuo's solo <i>Lear Is Here</i> premieres in the Théâtre de l'Odéon and the Théâtre du Soleil, Paris
2001	<i>Richard III</i> , dir. Lin Zhaohua, Berlin Asia Pacific Cultural Festival <i>Lady Macbeth</i> , solo chuanju performance by Tian Mansha, Hong Kong, Bremen (2001), Berlin (2006)
2002	<i>Search: Hamlet</i> , dir. Ong Keng Sen, Kronborg Castle, Denmark Royal Shakespeare Company's first touring production in China: <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> , dir. Loveday Ingram
2005	Shanghai Jingju Company's <i>Hamlet</i> tours to Denmark's Hamlet Summer festival <i>A Time to Love</i> , dir. Huo Jianqi (film) <i>As You Like It</i> , dir. Dennis Kennedy, Central Academy of Drama, Beijing
2006	<i>The Banquet</i> (Hamlet), dir. Feng Xiaogang (film, Mandarin) <i>The Prince of the Himalayas</i> (Hamlet), dir. Sherwood Hu (film, Tibetan) Mandarin-English <i>King Lear</i> , dir. David Tse, Shanghai,

	Chengdu, Stratford, London
2007	<p>Wu Hsing- kuo's <i>Lear Is Here</i> (2000) staged at the Lincoln Center Festival, New York, and in San Jose, California</p> <p>Stage production based on the 2006 film <i>Prince of the Himalayas</i>, Shanghai</p> <p><i>Coriolanus</i>, dir. Lin Zhaohua, Beijing People's Art Theatre Company</p>
2008	<p><i>Romeo and Zhu Yingtai</i>, dir. He Nian, Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre</p> <p><i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> (in Chinese), dir. Peter Lichtenfels, Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre</p> <p><i>Ming Dynasty (King Lear)</i>, dir. Tian Qinxin, the National Theatre of China</p>
2009	<i>The Two Gentlemen of Verona</i> , dir. Wang Hongyuan, Tainaner Ensemble
2011	<p><i>Bond (The Merchant of Venice)</i>, bangzi opera, Taiwan</p> <p><i>Love, Desire, Power</i>, dir. Robert Draffin and Gu Yi'an, Shanghai Theatre Academy</p>
2012	<p><i>Richard III (Li cha san shi)</i>, dir. Wang Xiaoying, National Theatre of China (Beijing); premiered at the London Globe during the 2012 Globe to Globe Festival</p> <p><i>Lear Dreaming</i>, dir. Ong Keng Sen, TheatreWorks</p>
2014	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , dir. Tian Qinxin, National Theatre of China
2015	<p>Wang Xiaoying's <i>Richard III</i> (2012) staged at Shakespeare's Globe, London, 20 July-25 July 2015; performed in Mandarin with scene synopses in English</p> <p><i>Macbeth</i> (in Cantonese), dir. Tang Shu-wing, Tang Shu-wing Theatre Studio; staged at Shakespeare's Globe, London, 7 August-23 August 2015</p>

Glossary

A Ying	阿英
<i>aizi bu</i>	矮子步
<i>Aosailuo</i>	《奥赛罗》
<i>bianlian</i>	变脸
<i>bo</i>	钹
Cao Shujun	曹树钧
Cao Weifeng	曹未风
Cao Yu	曹禺
Cha-guan	茶馆
<i>chengshihua</i>	程式化
<i>chou</i>	丑
<i>chuanju</i>	川剧
<i>chuanqi</i>	传奇
Chunliu She	春柳社
<i>da</i>	达
<i>dan</i>	旦
<i>di</i>	笛
<i>douran</i>	抖髯
Du Ge	杜戈
Fang Ping	方平
Feng Xiaogang	冯晓刚
Gao Xingjian	高行健
Ge Baoquan	戈宝全
Gui feng	闺疯
<i>guibu</i>	跪步
<i>Hamuleite</i>	《哈姆雷特》
<i>Heinu yu tian lu</i>	《黑奴吁天录》

Hu Xuehua (Sherwood Hu)	胡雪桦
<i>huaaju</i>	话剧
Huang Zuolin	黄佐临
Ji Zhenhua	计镇华
Jia huo	嫁祸
Jiang Qing	江青
Jiao Juyin	焦菊隐
Jin jue	晋爵
Jin Yan	金焰
<i>jing</i>	净
<i>jingju</i> (Peking Opera)	京剧
<i>kunju</i> (<i>kunqu</i>)	昆剧 (昆曲)
<i>laosheng</i>	老生
Li Jiayao	李家耀
Li Yu	李渔
Liang Qichao	梁启超
Liang Shiqiu	梁实秋
<i>liangxiang</i>	亮相
Lin Shu (Lin Qinnan)	林纾 (林琴南)
Lin Zhaohua	林兆华
Mao Zedong	毛泽东
Mei Lanfang	梅兰芳
Meng Xianqiang	孟宪强
Mi mou	密谋
<i>mo</i>	末
<i>mubiao</i>	幕表
<i>Mudan ting</i>	《牧丹亭》
<i>nian</i>	念
Ouyang Yuqian	欧阳予倩

Pu Cunxin	濮存昕
<i>Qi wang meng</i>	《岐王梦》
<i>qupai</i>	曲牌
<i>Rou quan</i>	肉券
Shashibya	莎士比亚
<i>Sha xiong duo sao</i>	《杀兄夺嫂》
Shaoxing	绍兴
<i>sheng</i>	生
<i>sheng</i>	笙
<i>shuaifa</i>	甩发
<i>shuixiu</i>	水袖
Sun Daolin	孙道临
Tang Xianzu	汤显祖
<i>taotie</i>	饕餮
The Peony Pavilion	《牡丹亭》
Tian Han	田汉
Tian Mansha	田蔓莎
Tie Shi	铁氏
<i>Wangzi fuchou ji</i>	《王子复仇记》
<i>Wenming xi</i>	文明戏
<i>Wu shi sheng fei</i>	《无事生非》
<i>xiao</i>	萧
<i>xiaoluo</i>	小锣
<i>xiaosheng</i>	小生
<i>xiqu</i>	戏曲
<i>Xie wai qi tan</i>	《懈外奇谈》
<i>xieyi</i>	写意
<i>xin</i>	信
<i>Xie shou ji</i>	《血手记》
<i>xu</i>	虚

Xu Banmei	徐半梅
Xu Qiping	徐企平
<i>ya</i>	雅
Yan Fu	严复
<i>Yingguo shiren yin bian yan yu</i>	《英国诗人吟边燕语》
Ying Ruocheng	英若诚
<i>yueju</i>	越剧
<i>yueju (Guangdong tune)</i>	粤剧
<i>zaju</i>	杂剧
Zhang Jingxian	张静娴
Zhang Xiao Yang	张晓阳
Zhang Yimou	张艺谋
Zhang Ziyi	章子怡
<i>zhe</i>	折
Zheng Shifeng	郑拾风
Zhu Shenghao	朱生豪
<i>zuo</i>	做

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