INTERCULTURAL THEATRE:
TWO BEIJING OPERA ADAPTATIONS OF SHAKESPEARE

by

Wen-shan Shih

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
The Graduate Centre for Study of Drama
University of Toronto

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Wen-shan Shih, Ph.D.
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As major theories and praxis of theatrical interculturalism are disseminated from experiences in Euro-American theatre, contemporary Asian theatre is conscious of developing its own strategies and discourses on adapting foreign (particularly Western) theatrical elements into native traditions. Historically, intercultural theatre in Asia emerged as a result of Western dominance and Westernization which started in late nineteenth century. Since the nativist movement and nationalism spread in the 1970s, Asian artists have consciously used interculturalism to express their cultural subjectivity and to revitalize their declining traditions. Some even see it a vital means by which to take part in a larger, more universal "world culture."

Thus the seminal issue which defines the task and goal of Asian theatrical interculturalism is how to achieve the equilibrium between borrowing Western playwriting and staging techniques, which gives social significance to modern audience, and preserving Asian forms and aesthetics, which provides cultural roots and a sense of continuity with the past.

This thesis singles out two distinctive traditions--Beijing opera and Shakespearean drama--and examines their confrontation and reception. This process is surveyed from a historical angle, including: 1) the impact of Western cultural and theatrical models on China; 2) Beijing opera’s adaptation of specific Western dramaturgical elements under various social and political environments; 3) Shakespeare productively received as a literary, cultural,
and dramatic paradigm in China and Taiwan. Although the cross-cultural fertilization between the two proves to have been more sporadic than systematic, it indicates the beginning of a much more intense and sophisticated intercultural movement involving the adaptation of Western non-realistic theatre by Asian traditional forms.

Through adapting Shakespeare, Beijing opera in late-1980s Taiwan has moved towards three major directions: to a form which requires little "pre-knowledge" of artistic conventions in the audience; to a form which balances musical perfection with scenographic expression; and to a literary theatre which emphasizes structural tightness, character complexity, and relevant themes. These shifts, along with the opera's newly-gained international significance in world tours, have released Beijing opera from its artistic conventionalism and political propagandism, and opened a new vista for future development.
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A NOTE ON CHINESE ROMANIZATION

This thesis uses Hanyu Pinyin, the official romanization of Chinese in the People's Republic of China, as the standard transliteration of Chinese into English. Although it is not used in Taiwan, Pinyin's growing international recognition makes it a more popular form today. This is why it is used here. Except for a few commonly-used spellings such as Sun Yet-San and Taipei (rather than Sun Yixian and Taibei), Chinese names and terms are rendered in the system of Pinyin.

In Pinyin, consonants are usually pronounced as in English and vowels as in Spanish. But there are exceptions: [q] is pronounced very far forward in the mouth as [ch]; [x], pronounced [sy]; [c], pronounced [ts]; [z], pronounced [dz]; [s], pronounced [sz]; and [zhi], [chi], [shi], pronounced as if the supplementary [-i] is an [-r] (Chung 1992: xxi).
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CHAPTER ONE
EAST-WEST INTERCULTURAL THEATRE:
DEFINITION, HISTORY, AND METHODOLOGY

Interculturalism, an increasing global phenomenon, has opened new possibilities for contemporary theatre world-wide. In this century, the tendency to integrate elements from divergent cultural and theatrical traditions in theatre performance has given rise to a pluralistic development of practice, conception, and critical perspective. Because of the complexities involved in the transfer across cultural boundaries and theatre genres, the history of theatrical interculturalism is fraught with examples of misunderstanding. Some have blossomed into unexpected new approaches, greatly widening the range of theatrical presentation and cultural attitudes. Others, particularly seen in the intercultural cooperation involving the Western "first world" and the developing "third world" nations, have reflected the actual imbalance in economic and political relations which has historically evolved, and thus raise the issue of cultural exploitation or "imperialism" (cf. Marranca et al. 1991).

Contemporary theatrical interculturalism which involves East-West exchanges particularly encounters this ambivalent situation. The historical colonialism imposed on many areas in Asia by dominant Western powers still plays an important role in their theatre traditions. This cultural experience has also resulted in an intercultural theatre which is distinctively different from that in the West, in discourse as well as in practice. From an Asian perspective, it continues to be a challenging but necessary task to adopt elements from Western theatre/culture. But questions are often asked: How can Asian theatre preserve its ethnic uniqueness when it relies heavily on Western dramaturgy and
theatrical technology? Will continual adaptation of Western elements lead to reinvention of Asian theatre/culture or to its attrition and elimination? What kind of cultural convergence do we seek in promoting East-West intercultural theatre?

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This chapter will explore the usage of the term "interculturalism" as practice, world view, and critical perspective from an Asian, specially Chinese, theatrical point of view, and in the history where adaptation of Western cultural/theatrical traditions have continued in effect. There are three major sections. The study begins by finding a working definition of interculturalism and by clarifying other related usages, looking at the Asian contexts as well as its global implications. The next section involves a historical review of the East-West intercultural theatre, both synchronously and diachronously, giving concrete examples. The discussion illuminates the nature of cultural misunderstanding, appropriation, and potential convergence. The last part of the chapter seeks to
approach a methodological model of intercultural theatre involving Chinese traditional theatre as the receptive end of Western works.

1.1 Defining "Interculturalism"

The difficulty in defining interculturalism lies in the fact that there is not yet a strongly-defined theory of culture which can be commonly applied to divergent cultures and processes of exchange, and which can balance socio-historical and ideological factors with cultural, anthropological ones (Pavis 1992, 183). Thus, in approaching a possible definition, we need to clarify one of the key issues in interculturalism: the relation between theatre and culture. We begin by finding meanings of "culture" in the general sense of the word and its specific implications related to theatre.

In the English lexicon, the term "culture" has developed two major meanings. It describes "a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development" as well as the means of that process--"the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity" such as music, literature, and theatre (R. Williams 1983: 90). The complexity of the word is the result of two converging emphases in the history of its development: the one focuses on the "informing spirit" of cultural activities--an "idealist" emphasis on culture; the other takes a materialist interest in seeing cultural works as the products of a specific social order (R. Williams 1981: 11-12). Social systems theorists such as Max Weber and Clifford Geertz confirm the second definition, seeing culture as "a system of symbols" created, shared, and inherited by a society or a group; it reinforces a sense of identity among the members of the community and thus allows them to understand their relationship with the rest of the world (D. Taylor 1991: 61). In this regard, culture is a "given."

The two implications of culture are applicable to theatre, as it is both a mind-cultivating instrument and a product or manifestation of a particular socio-
historical condition. Theatre belongs not only to the conceptual framework of aesthetics but also to a larger cultural framework. It imparts a specific socio-political milieu, artistic sensibility, and set of ideological values to an audience with its unique forms of signification. But theatre also works beyond the reflection of reality; it is an actual productive force forging the culture and society encompassing it.

Thus theatrical signs can be understood as socio-cultural signs; the communicative powers and capacities of theatrical performance are closely aligned with its purposeful interaction with the spectators of a specific culture, who themselves are social players on that cultural setting.¹ To a great extent theatre offers, in each performative moment, a culture-in-the-making, or, as Zarrilli puts it, an "interculture" which weaves the cultural past into the present, and merges diverse cultural strains in our postmodern times (1992: 16). Theatre and all performance forms, in that sense, are the most "intercultural" among artistic genres, for they are constantly tested for their ability to translate and to encode issues of contemporary socio-cultural, ideological, and aesthetic relevance to their audiences.

Theatrical interculturalism, in this study, refers to the mode of theatrical performance that consciously or unconsciously adopts elements from distinctively foreign traditions. The foreign indicates the cultural entities which differ from one's own in geographical and/or temporal terms, and whose traditions and forms are unfamiliar or difficult to decipher by the native

¹Maria Shevtsova discusses the interaction between theatre and culture by extending Mikhail Bakhin's theory of signs (Marxism and the Philosophy of Language), which understands aesthetic work as a process of social signification purposefully communicating to a specific group of reader/audience (1993). It acknowledges the spectators as active participants of the sign process constituting theatrical performance, and, in turn, sees theatrical signs fundamentally as social signs responding to the socio-cultural space encompassing the aesthetic signification. In other words, "the 'outside' world is inside the theatre" (10).
audience. The foreign elements range from subject matter and textual material, cultural norms and symbols, manner of expression or style, and philosophical, ideological discourses. The term "interculturalism" is more adequate than other often used terms with the same roots (such as "transculturalism" or "multiculturalism") for articulating "the task of grasping the dialectic of exchange of civilities between cultures," as Pavis defines (1992: 2).

Therefore, in tackling the issue of theatrical interculturalism, we not only examine the process of acquisition of foreign materials—historically-specific symbols, discourses, and ideology—into the native context and the production of local meanings. We also look into the underlying perspective in an intercultural performance which can reflect a notion of culture and the value of confronting the culturally foreign. Whether it sees interculturalism as a way to reach reciprocity and understanding among divergent societies (cf. Shaked 1989), or to transcend cultural differences by producing a "world culture" (cf. Fischer-Lichte 1996), or to revitalize the native culture by productively receiving the foreign (cf. Fischer-Lichte 1990b), or, particularly for the historically colonized cultures, to confront the dominant colonial culture and to reconstruct one's repressed tradition (cf. Bharucha 1990), or to strategically politicize one's culture to gain self-empowerment (cf. D. Taylor 1991), 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, including conscious selection of foreign cultural symbols and techniques to construct a collective identity for the intended audience (cf. D. Taylor 1991: 61).

"Interculturalism," in this definition, has been an increasingly conscious practice in Euro-American, Asian, African, and Latin-American theatres since
the 1970s (Fischer-Lichte 1990a: 12). Contemporary avant-garde directors such as Jerzy Grotowski, Peter Brook, Eugenio Barba, Ariane Mnouchkine, Robert Wilson, Lee Breuer, Richard Schechner, Robert Lepage, Tadashi Suzuki, and Yukio Ninagawa have experimented with foreign materials and techniques. Some of them have even established a performance center, laboratory, or school, exploring intercultural methods or themes with artists of divergent cultural origins. Their productions often go on tour to major urban centers, targeting international reception. In addition to these often-called "transcultural" productions, there has been a growing number of intercultural experiments in regional theatres across the world, made for the local audience and set within the national communities. These experiments range from the faithful translation of a foreign play to radical rewritings of unfamiliar works into local cultural and theatrical settings, and from the borrowing of foreign theatrical techniques to the importing of an entire alien genre into the home tradition (Fischer-Lichte 1990a: 11-12). Furthermore, events such as the International Arts Festival, which first appeared in western Europe in the 1950s and since spread worldwide, have also enhanced the exchange of cultural artifacts from diversified traditions (Weber 1991: 27).

In the past two decades, interculturalism has been linked with a number of theatrical activities: theatre anthropology, people's theatre, postmodern theatre, avant-garde performance, and multicultural theatre (Marranca 1991: 12; Chaudhuri 1991: 195). Despite their different political, philosophical, and aesthetic positions and strategies, these activities share the desire to re-define the boundaries between actor and spectator, theatre and society, nature and culture, by taking a journey to the culturally foreign. Many of the involved

2According to Marranca, theatre anthropology seeks in non-Western ritual performances the new role of spectator-as-performer, and by performing foreign culture to refute the dualism of nature and culture (1991: 15-17); avant-garde theatre challenges the representationalism in conventional Western
"Interculturalists" have consciously incorporated the dynamics of culture and theatre into theatrical signification. The most distinguished of them base their creative process on a notion of culture: Brook's "universal theatre language" and his theatre of "the culture of links," Barba's "Eurasian theatre," Mnouchkine's "Oriental" theatre, Suzuki's theatre in which "Culture is the Body," Schechner's practice of "Culture of Choice," and Robert Wilson's theatre of "collage of cultures" (Weiler 1996: 112).

It is nevertheless too early to claim that interculturalism has become a global theatrical tradition, an aesthetic genre which has inherent structural regularity and linguistic-oriented texts to be replayed and reinterpreted, and able to bear systematic analysis. First of all, the term "interculturalism," unlike realism or expressionism in theatre, does not emerge from a particular theatrical or aesthetic tradition, nor does it indicate any specific artistic style or technique. As mentioned, it is a recent addition to theatrical vocabulary, grafted from a greater intellectual discourse: it is more productive to view it as a theoretical apparatus and critical perspective than as a style (Marranca 1991: 12). In this regard, the intercultural theatre often reveals discrepancies between theory and praxis, intention and result.

Perhaps the most problematic part of this trend to weld theatrical styles and forms from widely dissimilar cultures is the fact that the dominant intercultural discourses today are mainly disseminated from the Western, that is, Euro-American, experience. To a great degree, they cannot reflect the dramaturgy by introducing non-Western presentational techniques, downplaying the text in favor of spectacle (14); people's theatre attempts to work against the strict separation of performer and audience, the single authorship of the dramatic text, and theatre work as an aesthetic object to be viewed, by introducing techniques from non-Western conventions such as--as in a number of prominent performance groups in the 1960s--the "autobiography of performance, social criticism, and at times, audience participation" (14-15). Multicultural theatre deliberately juxtaposes expressions and behaviors of distant cultures on stage to enhance the awareness of cultural difference.
multilayered theatrical context in most of the Asian societies, nor deal with the
manners and the processes of interculturalism accumulated in their theatres.

This Western-initiated interculturalism, as Conceison comments,

\[\text{at its best is a reinforcement of international understanding and friendship, a celebration of common bonds of creativity; at its worst, it is a tangled web of false assumptions and distorted images, a reinforcement of the very hegemonic relationships it desires to eradicate.} \] (1995: 164)

At its worst, it smacks of the continuation of the West's appropriation of the other cultures for its own usage, making the latter silent partners deprived of their original contexts, a process described in Edward Said's postcolonial work \textit{Orientalism}.\(^3\)

Critics have asked many valuable questions about the theatrical interculturalism since the 1970s. Is theatre just catching a new trend, or is it consciously breaking into a new, promising movement? Does this trend help discover significant points of departure in unfamiliar expressive forms, or does it encourage a kind of cultural imperialism where an economically and politically advanced culture can shop around and acquire other cultures' products? As interculturalism is predominantly a discourse generated in the West, are the paradigms also applicable to the non-Western traditions? And if not, what is the cause for an Asian-oriented theatrical interculturalism?

To answer these questions, this thesis looks into the theatrical exchange which has taken place between the Eastern (Asian) and Western (Euro-American)

\(^3\)This is the core of controversy in the reception of \textit{Mahabharata} by Peter Brook, of which the performance in New York in Autumn 1987 was a case in point. Brook had intended to create a universal theatrical language out of the production to address audiences of divergent cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds; but the performance was understood by some critics as perpetrating a colonialist discourse, depriving Indian material of its spiritual context. See Carlson (1989: 52-53). Other critical opinions involve a skeptical question as to whether or not Brook, who, of British heritage, could possibly represent the sacred myth of India, a former British colony, without perpetuating the imperialist mentality. See also Gautam Dasgupta (1991: 75-82); Rutom Bharucha, "Peter Brook's \textit{Mahabharata}: A View from India," in his \textit{Theatre and the World}(1990: 94-120).
theatre traditions. This relationship provides a remarkable example of intercultural hybridization, partly because these are two large, widely distinctive cultures that seem at first glance incompatible. Notwithstanding, their relatively recent mutual contact and reception have resulted in (mis)understanding of the Other through which, paradoxically, a regeneration of Self was made possible in both traditions.

1.2 An Asian Perspective

Asian societies have experienced radical cultural discontinuity for the last 150 years, since the time of the historical colonization by Western powers and the subsequent modernization (or Westernization) of Asian culture, which intensified in the second world war (Gwanadawana 1977: 52). A large-scale cultural re-orientation has taken place, as the Asians started to adapt the technology, social systems, modes of life, and arts from the "advanced" West. The call for a "rational, scientific approach" brought about the gradual jettisoning of traditional Asian modes of production and value systems, particularly the "non-rational" and "non-progressive" elements such as religious ritualistic theatre. The "modern theatre," in contrast, was created as a complete break-away from the indigenous "traditional" forms, drawing inspiration and models primarily from Western theatre, particularly realistic drama.

The result of this intensive interculturalism in Asian contexts was the compression of a process of theatre that could have taken centuries to evolve into merely scores of years. The transcoding process involved distinctive examples of hybridization. The ideological, political repositioning of many intercultural works reflected complex and often contentious strains of socio-cultural forces. To this day, the theme of Asian intercultural theatre is not merely about what is "foreign" and what is the "own"; it is precisely about a balance among the foreign
(the Western), the self of the present (the modern Asian), and the self of the past (the traditional Asian).

While Asian traditional theatre experiences rapid decline, Asian modern theatre—the most innovative and energetic performance form in Asia today—continues to rely on imported ideas, playwriting techniques, and stagecraft from the West. Subsequently, the most crucial aesthetic problems have arisen: how to break away from the tyrannical hold of Western drama and re-assert native identity in theatrical expressions; and how to regain the previous broad audience of the traditional theatres. This is to ask for concrete strategies of utilizing foreign techniques and ideas without being swamped by them.

Two cultural attitudes in current Western discourses on interculturalism are relevant to the Asian context. The first one is celebratory. It argues that interculturalism contains an intrinsic function to promote cultural identity and understanding among divergent cultures, by theatrical means. Gershon Shaked, for instance, sees theatre as a strong vehicle in cultivating such understanding, a "gateway to cultural dialogue" (1989: 7). As a public, ceremonial setting where the audience collectively relates the representation of foreign culture/tradition to its extra-theatrical experience, theatre presents "a pluralistic option and creates inter-human relations of understanding the other" (24). Similar celebratory attitudes can be found in today's international arts and theatre festivals which openly acknowledge and include cultural and national differences. This view, however, is inadequate in addressing Asian experience because the exchange still cannot happen on truly equal, reciprocal terms. Even though colonial rule has ceased to exist, Western influence continues to bombard traditional Asian cultures through the media and economic presence. The irreversible, rapid process of Westernization in Asia is responsible for the attrition of its traditional genres.
The second cultural attitude, the more critical one, calls for attention to the issues of misrepresentation and appropriation of the foreign culture in intercultural exchanges. It regards theatrical interculturalism as a natural product of the postmodern, pluralistic conditions of, particularly, Western industrial society, in which an impetus to recognize the culturally different and to find alternatives to the dominant cultural hegemony has led artists to look to foreign cultures for inspiration. But the result of abandoning a unified perspective and cohesive critical stand, as seen in some Western avant-garde performances, is the seeming "equation" of all cultures--freely "quoting" and appropriating divergent cultural components without the need to acknowledge their historical, social specificities.

This intercultural practice, asserts Daryl Chin, strongly reflects the "purchasing power" of the "First World," which easily acquires the artifacts, forms, and images of the economically less privileged cultures but dismisses their proper contexts, and thus is no less exploitative than the historical Orientalism, in Edward Said's sense of the word (1991: 85-7). On the other hand, an equally uncritical attitude prevails, particularly in the "Third World" theatres' adoption of Western models, as Carl Weber claims, in which the foreign code is preserved in the indigenous structure without being analytically reassessed and dissected—with the result that the original Western ideology remains (1991: 35). To avoid this self-imposed Orientalism, Weber calls for a deconstructivist attitude towards the foreign, so as to dissolve and "transculturate" the foreign code into the inscription of the native context (34).

For the Asian theatre, these critical perspectives appear to reduce the intercultural totality into a dichotomy of the "native" and the "foreign," without addressing the dimension of the "traditional" and the Western-influenced

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4Thus one sees the clash of disparate forms in a performance like Lee Breuer's The Warrior Ant, where "a [Japanese puppet theatre] Bunraku master, a Turkish belly dancer, and rap singers" are simultaneously presented, "equated, rendered not so much equal as equally distracting" (Chin 1991: 88).
"modern" in the native context. As mentioned, Western dramaturgy and theatrical practice are now so much a part of Asia's theatrical heritage that it is difficult and unrewarding to clearly distinguish what is originally foreign and what is authentically indigenous. The insistence on "deconstructing" Western text/code may only lead to a self-conscious retreat from open absorption of contemporary Western theatrical innovation to a conservative preservation of "pure" indigenous traditions which would inevitably further the stagnation of Asian theatre. Thus the remedy for a disease may turn out to be the cause of another and more serious disease—perhaps even a terminal one.

Perhaps the notion of "cultural identity" is crucial in further defining interculturalism in relation to Asian theatre. David Laitin's observation of this particular aspect of culture in Hegemony and Culture, cited in Diane Taylor (1991), helps clarify this notion. Cultural identity, being a "given," can also be a political construct. It involves a conscious and active process of politicization and deployment of cultural symbols to become the source of the collective empowerment that is particularly useful in a historically colonized society's resistance to dominant cultural and political hegemony, as seen in contemporary Latin American theatre (61). In contemporary Asian theatre, where the struggle continues between the survival of its traditional genres (which provide cultural roots and a sense of continuity with the past), and the further subscription to Western models (which provide modern social relevance and adaptive norms), the productive notion of "cultural identity" is pivotal in finding the equilibrium. The perspective of an Asian interculturalism is ultimately concerned with how to achieve intelligibility and legitimacy through continuing its tradition in a modern society under strong Western influence. It is a task that amounts to the "reinvention of tradition" (Eric Hobsbawm). This task involves inventively and critically selecting Western elements and contextualizing the foreign and the
native theatrical norms. Moreover, it helps establish a dialectic relationship between the "modern" and the "traditional" in the native context, revealing a larger intercultural process on social-historical levels. This intercultural strategy seems able to maintain Asian cultural and political subjectivity in responding to Western influence. It is a route to return to Self by way of Other.

To discover the artistic/cultural elements or principles in the Western traditions which have been seen as complementary to the Asian, and vice versa, it is essential to turn to the dynamism between East and West—the historical background which has fostered theatrical exchanges between the two great civilizations.

1.3 East Versus West: A Cultural and Theatrical Axis

_Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet._

--Rudyard Kipling (1889)

Although the "East-West axis" carries a historical and somewhat pejorative connotation, it is a wide, generally-accepted distinction in the discussion of theatrical tradition and aesthetic paradigm. Geographically, in Kipling's times, West meant Europe and North America, and East meant not only Asia but everywhere non-West. Culturally, West was "modernity, wealth, and science"; East was "antiquity, poverty, and superstition" (Wise 1995: 56). In our context, Western/Occidental refers to the Euro-American; and Eastern/Oriental refers to the Asian, including South, South-Eastern, and Eastern Asia.

The dynamic relationship between East and West illuminates the topic of cultural Otherness, against which the Self is able to identify itself. The West, in its process of self-understanding and realization as a cultural construct, has deliberately invented the East, or Orient, to represent values and practices alien to its own. According to Said, "[A]s much as the West itself, the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given
it reality and presence in and for the West" (1978: 4-5). Said's Orient is the Middle East in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but his observation readily describes other Asian cultures in the Western perception, even in more recent times. Contemporary scholar Raymond Dawson also notes, the "polarity between Europe and Asia and between West and East is one of the important categories by means of which we think of the world and arrange our knowledge of it" (qtd. in L. Zhang 1988: 127).

The West not only consciously contrasted Asia to Europe as a cultural foil, but also subjected Asia to its all-knowing analysis without properly understanding it. Eurocentricism reveals itself in contradictory comments on Chinese culture. On the one hand, the Europeans found things Chinese satisfying to their intellectual fantasies and utopian idealizations during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, building a myth out of the remote land. Leibniz proposed an exchange between the Chinese and the European civilizations: "Chinese missionaries should be sent to us to teach us the aim and practice of natural theology as we send missionaries to them to instruct them on revealed theology" (qtd. in Reichwein 1968: 80-81). Confucius, whose political philosophy had been based on moral precepts, became "the patron saint of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment" (77). On the other hand, to the Europeans, the alien characteristics of Chinese culture, such as the non-alphabetical system of writing, demonstrated exotic, primitive, and ignorant qualities which had apparently made the nation stagnant and resistant to progress since ancient times (L. Zhang 1988: 116).

The West, the most important cultural reference for modern China, was also perceived with contradictions by the self-proclaimed "Middle Kingdom." With a predominantly land-based economy and self-sufficient national character, China had long disregarded the rest of the world by calling the non-Chinese "foreign
barbarians." It succumbed to Western powers in the mid-nineteenth century, when Great Britain first imposed an open-door policy towards China and soon other European countries and Japan followed suit. This painful and humiliating contact with the foreign greatly threatened China's national stability, military strength, and ultimately her sense of cultural and moral superiority. It also led to the emergence of a "modern" China--one which in just a few decades eagerly learned and adapted things Western in order to replace its traditional values and norms, which had lasted for thousands of years, for the latter seemed no longer able to guarantee the basic existence of China as a national entity under Western imperialism. In the next century, the Western-inspired forms of arts, music, theatre, and literature superseded traditional forms and became the forms of "modernity" in China. Zhang Longxi perceptively remarks that "the whole history of modern China has been a long record of the clashes between cultures of the East and the West, between tradition and modernity, and... the future of China depends on a successful reconciliation of the two" (1988: 125).

Since the initial contact between West and East, the interchange and mutual influence has become increasingly intense and complex. This process will be examined by a synchronous study of Western reception of Eastern theatre (1.3.1), followed by a synchronous and diachronous study of Chinese reception of Western theatre (1.3.2).

1.3.1 Western Reception of Eastern Theatre

The exchange of theatrical elements between East and West started as early as the sixteenth century. The history of this contact is full of misunderstanding and appropriation, as some critics observe (Pronko 1968; Cuadrado 1978; Gunawardana 1978; Brandon 1989). The earliest Western response to Asian theatre was prompted by an infatuation with exoticism on the one hand, and, on the
other, by a humanist and antiquarian understanding of it, as seen from its translation of and commentary on Asian plays.

Take the use of Chinese elements in European theatre, for example. Theatrical *chinoiserie*, or Chinese vogue, began in the late seventeenth century. The popular French court performances and Italian *commedia dell'arte* staged a great number of pseudo-Chinese plays which merged spectacle, masquerade, music, dance, and *commedia* acting with some kind of Chinese history, performed by professional actors, courtiers, and even the king.5 The Chinese vogue was widespread in European theatres during the eighteenth-century (Cuadrado 1978: 21-26). With the genuine Chinese dramatic forms entirely missing, these pseudo-Chinese theatricals reflected nothing but the contemporary European taste for theatrical extravaganza, exotic motifs, and quaint artifacts. The representation of fantastic palaces, beasts, and plants on the set, and of dramatic personages with exotic names, behaviors, and clothing speaking in unintelligible language, were rooted in the Western imagination of the East. This impetus for the cultural and theatrical "Other" persisted into our century, evidenced by such commercial successes as *Yellow Jacket, South Pacific, The King and I,* and *Miss Saigon,* and in the conscious twisting of this Orientalist tradition, as in David Henry Huang's *M. Butterfly.*

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5See Cuadrado (1978: 21-26). The oriental masquerades and balls were favorite pastimes in Louis XIV's court. He is reported to have appeared at a ball dressed in an attire "half Persian, half Chinese." He also attended *Les Chinois,* a five-act comedy staged by the *commedia dell'arte* troupe in 1698. The extravaganza *Le ROI de la Chine,* held in his court in 1700 and attended by fashionable courtiers and ladies, was even more celebratory, with the "King of China" carried in by thirty musicians all dressed in gorgeous Chinese costumes (21). Equally popular were the Chinese theatricals in public theatres, such as *Arlequin, Barbet, Pagode et Médecin,* a musical performed in Paris in 1723. In the final scene, set in the exterior of the Imperial Palace of Peking, the Chinese King pardoned his children in half French, half "Chinese" phrases: "Pardonaon, levaon, divertissaon, dansaon." The curtain fell as the performers revelled in dance (25).

6Some research shows, however, that the representation of the culturally unfamiliar should not be dismissed as merely an excuse for theatrical pomp and extravaganza. Paradoxically, it produced a kind of "alienation" effect much needed for the native society to gain a perspective of Self. Many of the European
Because Europe lacked real contact with Asian theatre, its earliest reception of Asian theatre marked the total assimilation and appropriation of the foreign into the native tradition. The first Chinese play translated into European languages, The Orphan of Chao (incompletely in 1731), is a case in point. Written in the thirteenth century, the Chinese play about loyalty and sacrifice in the face of political corruption and brutality was adapted by three European dramatists and staged in Vienna, Paris, and London respectively during the eighteenth century (Cuadrado 1978: 28-41; Hsia 1990: 194-5, 197, 200-201). Each adaptation was deeply colored by the socio-cultural values and aesthetic conventions of the day, which were inherited by the individual dramatist; the Chinese drama was merely the "raw material" to work on. Thus the Vienna version, written by Pietro Metastasio in 1752 for a court performance, became an Italian comedy of the dual discovery of identities. The French version, L'Orphelin de la Chine, by Voltaire for the Comédie Française in 1755, was greatly "improved," according to Aristotelian unities and the French neoclassical ideals of love and reason, and transformed into "a Confucian moral in five acts." And the English version, adapted by Arthur Murphy in 1756 for the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, was a sensational revenge tragedy featuring the uprising of rebels against the autocratic monarch. It is therefore predictable that, when the accurate French translation of the Chinese play by Stanislas Julien was available in 1834, it did not attract much attention in European theatrical circles because of its unfamiliar form (Cuadrado 1978: 40-1). The European reception of the Orphan suggests the first step of intercultural borrowing between unrelated theatrical traditions: the

chinoiserie plays presented the view from a "Chinese citizen" towards contemporary European fashions and institutions, distancing as well as humorously ridiculing the native society (Cuadrado 1978: 26). However, it seems that lacking substantial contact with Asia, Europe was not able to forge a productive East-West dynamism until this century.
foreign may be radically altered to become culturally, ideologically, and aesthetically relevant for the native reception.

Not surprisingly, the earliest Western commentaries on Asian theatre show omnipotent confidence in being able to explain, evaluate, and re-write the unfamiliar forms. Voltaire, though admiring the moral excellence of Chinese drama, was appalled by the lack of Aristotelian unities in it, and compared its structural irregularity to the "barbarous" dramaturgy of such English and Spanish tragedians of the sixteenth century as Shakespeare and Lope de Vega (Pronko 1968: 37). In the same authoritative manner, despite his secondhand knowledge of Chinese theatre, the French literary critic Ferdinand Brunetière (1894-1906) proclaimed in 1886 that the Eastern genre was still in its underdeveloped, infantile stage:

Between our theatre and the Chinese theatre the only real difference I find...is the difference between the mumbling of a baby and the words of a grown man. The Chinese theatre is of course the creation of a very ancient civilization, and as such, a civilization that is very advanced in many ways, but on many points it has remained in its infancy; or if you prefer, it was immobilized very early into rigid forms from which it has not succeeded in freeing itself.7

An even more contemptuous attitude is expressed by Georges Bousquet on the theatre of the Far East, which, he remarks, was still ignorant about the "simple, naked beauty of the Greeks," this being "a prerogative of the Aryan race," and which, as it lacked the ability to conceive a "superior world...[b]eyond daily triviality," could only create "formless exaggeration of reality" (qtd. and trans. in Pronko 1968: 119).

Until the late nineteenth century, Asian theatre had been seen only partially. It was dealt with as "dramatic literature," a subject which attempted to

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7Quoted and translated in Pronko (1968: 40). In places where the translator is not specified, the translation is mine.
understand the still little-known Oriental cultures. The task of translating and commenting on Asian drama was often undertaken by colonial administrators, missionaries, or expatriates who had no affiliation with theatre (Gunadawana 1977: 46; Brandon 1989: 28-30). An initial step toward a deeper understanding—and adaptation—of Asian theatre was not taken until the second decade of the twentieth century. Granted, it was at the time when the two hemispheres began their first intensive contact and confrontation. Yet the most immediate reason for the change of attitude came from the internal rupture of the Western cultural and artistic tradition in the wake of the arising modern age, a cultural and theatrical crisis which forced the West to look outward for possible alternatives.

The European avant-garde movement of the 1920s and 1930s called for "retheatricalization" of theatre, using German director Georg Fuchs's term, as it faced the ailing domestic tradition of realistic-illusionistic theatre of its bourgeois heritage (Fischer-Lichte 1990c: 176 nt). The artists rejected the literary theatre in search of new theatrical aesthetics and expressive forms from the wide vestiges of classical traditions, both Eastern and Western, and found inspiration in the unfamiliar forms of Asian traditions. The unexpected, shocking color symbolism, the spatial configuration, and the performative structure involving visual and verbal codes, particularly in East Asian theatre, became new artistic paradigms for the modernist staging and dramaturgy (Dolezelova-Velingerova 1990: 2). W. B. Yeats saw in Japanese Noh a form that compresses time and evokes mood. Max Reinhardt and Vsevelod Meyerhold both experimented with the use of hanamichi, the "flower path" in Japanese Kabuki. Meyerhold sought in Chinese and Japanese presentational theatre the heart of theatricality, which was lacking in the European naturalist tradition. Alexander Tairov produced Sakuntala, a play by Indian poet Kalidasa, that incorporated elements of costume and gestures from Indian theatre. Jacques Copeau, Jean-Louis Barrault, and Charles Dullin studied
and adopted Asian genres into their experimental theatre. Barrault, in particular, was inspired by the stylized, well-orchestrated battle scenes of Beijing opera when directing Shakespeare. Sergi Eisenstein associated the independent but concurrent use of sound and image in Kabuki acting with cinematic montage and close-ups. Even though these encounters and borrowings could best be described as accidental and superficial, fraught with misunderstanding, they marked a significant Asian influence on European theatrical modernism during the first fifty years of the century.

Most significantly, Asian theatre offered a specific aesthetic model which embodied the origin, the fundamental nature, and thus the primal magic of theatre. Its reception enlightened two of the most original theatre aesthetics in this century: Artaud's theatre of cruelty and Brecht's epic theatre. In 1931, Antonin Artaud saw Balinese dance theatre at the Exposition Coloniale in Paris and subsequently made numerous references to Balinese and Asian theatre in the essays of *The Theatre and Its Double* (1964). In the foreign performance he found a much desired theatrical archetype which deployed precise gestural symbols ("hieroglyphics") and which, unconfined by the dramatic language and psychological conflicts of European naturalistic dramas, conveyed a "metaphysical" quality, a poetry in space (55-56). Artaud interpreted the use of physical languages (vocal, gestural, spatial, and environmental) in the Balinese

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8Brandon, in his polemic essay on the Western reception of Asian theatre, points out that the encounter between East and West during the Asian tours was "complex and at the same time superficial" (1989: 30). Eurocentricism was seen in the Western artists who had little intention of studying or reproducing Asian genres per se even though they freely "used" Asian elements for creative material. The writings on Asian theatre, such as those by Artaud, Brecht, Yeats, and Eisenstein, showed misinterpretation and subjective assumption. This situation, an extension from the colonial era, could not make a balanced intercultural theatre, according to Brandon (30-32). For other critics, such as Blumenthal (1987) and Shaked (1989), such misunderstanding could be productive for cross-cultural feeding. Perhaps Dolezelova-Velingerova's semiotic analysis of the contact between distant cultures can best explain the "productive misunderstanding" of the modernist reception of Asian traditions (1991: 2).
spectacle in terms of his own theatre of cruelty. Although his interpretation of the Asian theatre was rhapsodic and impressionistic, it was perhaps the first European "vision" to point passionately to the direction of a participatory, total, and stylized theatre, as embodied in Asian theatre. Bertolt Brecht discovered a concrete model of a non-Aristotelian theatre in Asian theatre in general and in Beijing opera in particular. In Moscow in May of 1935, Brecht saw the famous Beijing opera actor, Mei Lanfang, demonstrate the acting of a female role in a dinner party "without special lighting and wearing a dinner jacket in an ordinary room full speicalists" including Craig, Piscator, Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, Eisenstein, Tairov, and Tretiakov (Brecht 1964: 94; Banu 1986: 53). The self-conscious use of artificiality of theatre and the externalization of emotions in the acting codes, acknowledged by both actors and spectators, led to Brecht's long-sought theory of *Verfremdungseffekt*. In his seminal essay "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting" published in 1936, Brecht subjectively but creatively interpreted the mode of acting in Beijing opera which later became a guideline for his epic theatre (Brecht 1964: 99).

Despite its periodical contact with Asian theatre, the West's attempt at further intercultural exchange was never seriously considered or consistently pursued in the first half of the century. Generally, Asian theatre was taken as a rich resource of theatre arts to be freely adopted and interpreted, but there was no immediate need to understand it on its own terms. Edward Gordon Craig's view of Indian theatre seems to represent this attitude. This respected actor, director, designer, and theatre reformer, who rebelled against fourth-wall realism, was the first European who systematically theorized about East-West intercultural theatre (Bharucha 1984: 2). Although his notion of theatre was one of the most radical and innovative in the Western context, his attitude toward interculturalism was limited.
Craig advocated a total theatre in which action, words, rhythm, line, and color can all be coordinated into an artistic whole. To reach this goal he called for an "Ubermarionette," or super puppet, the ideal actor as it has no human ego and can act, dance, and gesticulate in perfect symbolic forms. He envisioned the first home of his super puppet on "the banks of the Ganges" (Bharucha 1990: 20).

Ironically, he changed his views after reading an article by Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy about the rigorous training of the Indian actor in codified gesture and physical movements to achieve precision and flexibility not unlike a marionette's; it was published in *The Mask* (1913), a periodical on theatre that Craig himself edited. Craig distanced Indian theatre by eloquently mystifying it, and warned his Western colleagues that Western and Eastern theatres are too different to learn from each other, that Eastern theatre is too esoteric for the Westerners to learn:

> There is nothing for us to listen to, nothing for us yet. We Europeans and Americans are in the utmost need for we know very little... We are like fools beside wise men...standing by Asiatics...and we of the theatre hammering away like slaves, we are the most ignorant of all....

> Whenever you see an Indian work of art, tighten up the strings of your helmet. Admire it...Venerate it...but for your own sake don't absorb it.... They over there are wonderful, and we can know it, admit it, admire it, and goodnight. (1918-9: 31-2)

For the same reason, suggested Craig, it would seem equally pointless for the Asians to study European theatrical traditions. In "Japanese Artists in the West," Craig dismissed the effort that the Japanese made to learn the Occidental art. It would be futile to abandon one's own tradition in pursuit of another's—such an attempt would only "break up the unity for the sake of vanity"; and the fusion of East and West could, at best, produce an exotic but shallow hybrid, like the American pseudo-Chinese play, *The Yellow Jacket* (1913: 90-91). Perhaps Craig was too much a cultural traditionalist to move toward the productively intercultural. Even if he had romantic yearning for the foreign which could
truly transcend his home tradition, he did not encourage "borrowing" from unfamiliar cultures and traditions. Rather, the right path to self-revitalization would come from focusing on one's own tradition and rediscovering its lost poetry and magic (Bharucha 1984: 7).

World War II brought great change to the international order, which has since significantly enhanced the Western understanding of Asian culture, and thus changed the nature, mode, and attitude of the reception of its theatre. The most obvious was the academic inclusion of the study of Asian cultures, especially in the establishment of courses and programs on Asian theatre and international theatre conferences which brought divergent genres together (Brandon 1989: 35). The result was a more focused study of Asian theatre traditions by Western scholarship. Japanese Noh and Kabuki, Chinese music theatre of operatic singing, Indian Sanskrit drama and Kathakali theatre, and Indonesian Wayang Kulit theatre are not only "independent, powerful sources of theatrical knowledge and techniques," according to James Brandon, himself among the first Western theatre scholars to teach Asian theatre in the U. S. in early 1960s, but "may be better than Western theatre" (1989: 27, 34-5).

In staging practice, Asian theatre significantly met the demands of a new avant-garde aesthetic during the 1960s, as Western theatre was re-oriented from modernist, literary drama to performance art. Traditional Asian genres, which are non-mimetic and mostly rigidly codified, appeared to offer vital alternatives in staging, acting, and designing. Moreover, the study of the participatory and communal theatre and ritual performance by Western ethnographers and anthropologists sheds a new light on the application of Asian techniques in avant-garde performance (Gunawardana 1977: 49). Certain Asian performance components, such as audience participation, the emphasis on the actor's physical expressiveness rather than literary expressions, the bold use of convention and
symbolism, and the role of theatre as an integral part of the social and spiritual life of the community, were considered relevant to the West now. The Asian model pointed not so much to a specific performance form or style but towards the possibility of creating a total theatre, which deploys theatrical elements to establish a physical language in place of purely verbal expression as the primary means of communication; or it even pointed towards a "holy theatre," the kind of theatre which merges life and art, actor and spectator, theatre and commune into a quasi-religious rite, as Artaud had envisioned in his account of Balinese theatre (Pronko 1968: 182-185).

If the European modernist avant-garde was fascinated with various presentational forms of Asian theatre and sought to incorporate them, the postwar innovators actually visited Asia, studied Asian theatre systematically, and used the foreign techniques alongside their home traditions. Furthermore, as the West established itself as the new political, economic center of the world, there emerged a new kind of intercultural theatre which took on an "international" scope and a "cosmopolitan" character and which sought to command a theatrical language "universal" to all cultures and tongues. The most distinctive theatre "interculturalists" of the West today reflect these characteristics.

The Living Theatre and the Poor Theatre, two of the most radical experimental theatres of the 1960s, found in Asian theatre a valuable exemplar for their attempts to restore the actor's physical expressiveness as the primary source of theatricality. The Living Theatre's deliberate breakaway from the traditional modernist dramaturgy was manifested in its use of Eastern philosophy and what appeared to be Artaudian "cruelty techniques" to inspire a kind of ritualistic performance, as in its productions of Mysteries and Paradise Now (Cuadrado 1978: 80). The involvement of the audience, the bold use of body language and bare stage later became hallmarks of avant-garde theatre of the
time. What was most traditional and abstruse in the alien culture, such as the Chinese classic of divination *I-Ching* (The Book of Change, c. 1100 B.C.), actually became a creative point of departure. In *Paradise Now*, the actors "collectively" created a ritual structure along the line of the "chance techniques" which the composer John Cage had elaborated from his reading of the Chinese work (80-81). The free-spirited drawing of the foreign served to develop a deliberately unfamiliar theatre practice as a counter-tradition.

The Poor Theatre, a theatre aesthetic and practice established by the Polish director Jerzy Grotowski, also sought to abandon the trappings of the Western conventional theatre and to restore the resourcefulness of the actor. It was "poor" because the actor had no "plastic elements" of the stage to rely on but only himself as the core of artistic creation. As Grotowski states, "By his controlled use of gesture the actor transforms the floor into a sea, a table into a confessional, a piece of iron into an animate partner, etc." (qtd. in Cuadrado 1978: 82). Thus, it is no coincidence that Grotowski adopted the techniques from Beijing opera, Indian Kathakali, Japanese Noh, Balinese trance possession, Yoga and Tai-Chi exercise for his projects in the Polish Laboratory Theatre. However, far from trying to perfect virtuosity and authenticity in these foreign techniques, Grotowski was more interested in acquiring their principles and disciplines as preparatory materials for use by his actors (Bharucha 1990: 30). Moreover, his pursuit of foreign techniques was part of his fascination in discovering a "psycho-physiological" system of acting, which is not influenced by the social and cultural backgrounds of the actors and which, in other words, is universal and transcultural (Shevtsova 1993: 30-31). Grotowski's attitude towards Asian traditions was pragmatic, eclectic, and irreverent, in sharp contrast to his intercultural predecessors who distanced and mystified them, such as Craig, and who made exotic representation of them, such as Tairov and Reinhardt.
But Grotowski's confrontation with Asian acting techniques ultimately clashed with his fundamentally Western conception of role-playing. The "hieroglyphic signs of the oriental theatre," he observed, were "inflexible, like an alphabet," whereas the signs used in the Western theatre indicated a stronger correlation between the actor and the role; they were "the skeletal forms of human action, a crystallization of a role, an articulation of the particular psychophysiology of the actor" (Grotowski 1975: 24). In spite of admitting the incompatibility between the Western and Eastern acting systems, Grotowski was deeply inspired by the work ethic which he had observed in Asian actors. For him, the Asian actors did not master the skills in order to "gain" something for their individual beings, but to fulfill "life itself"; their acting was "a way of existence" (qtd. in Bharucha 1990: 32). It was an ethos he had strongly demanded of his actors throughout the years.

Sharing Grotowski's deep interest in seeking the common psychobiological principles of divergent acting systems, ex-colleague Eugenio Barba took over where Grotowski left off in his inquiry into Eastern theatre.9 Barba, director of the Odin Teatret in the International School of Theatre Anthropology (ISTA, founded 1979) in Denmark, is one of the first European directors to study Asian acting systematically in order to create a new acting vocabulary. Barba called his envisioned intercultural theatre the "Eurasian theatre" (31). The term did not signify the combination or synthesis of European and Asian traditions, but indicated a search for the common expressive principles among the widely divergent theatrical traditions. Barba saw Asian theatre from the perspective of

9Grotowski finally ended his search for a "holy theatre" as he moved beyond theatre to the study of rituals of various non-Western traditions and particularly a "pre-culture" at the source of these cultures. According to Richard Fowler and Georges Banu, his work is divided into four stages: Theatre of Performance (1959-1969); Theatre of Participation (1969-1975); Theatre of Sources (1976-1982); and Objective Drama (from 1983 onwards), and the latter is under development at the Centro di Lavoro di Jerzy Grotowski at Pontedera (Pavis 1996: 231).
tradition; in that dimension, theatre became transcultural, and every genre linked one with the other, identified as a "tradition of traditions" (34). The difference between Eastern and Western theatre was hard to erase or transcend, but through confrontation and exchange, there could emerge a "collective tradition" which went beyond ethnocentricity (34). Like Grotowski in the 1960s, Barba sought to uncover the innate mystery of mankind from the obscuring effect of civilization and culture. His work with international actors, therefore, stemmed from an attempt to discover the fundamental presentation of human behaviors. His research by means of "theatre anthropology" aimed to reach down to the common technical level of divergent acting traditions, known as "pre-expressivity": "analogous principles...born of similar physical conditions in different contexts" (34). In other words, these were presumably universal principles found in actors of all theatrical traditions.

Barba cut across the distinctions of genres and traditions to discover the "extra-daily" movements and gestures which deviated from human "daily" behaviors. He found the "laws" of such deviation in the non-mimetic Asian genres like Noh, Kabuki, Indian Odissi dance, Balinese Barong, martial arts, Beijing opera, and a few Western schools of non-naturalistic, non-psychological acting, such as from the Decroux school of Mime and Dario Fo, and categorizes them anatomically (Bharucha 1990: 70-2). At the "pre-expressive" level, Barba contends, performers interact with one another "beyond culture, history and style" and purely in corporal energy and rhythm (72). For many years he and his Odin Teatret worked with master actors from various Asian theatres. His actors

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10 Barba defines the usage of theatre anthropology as "...the study of the human being in an organized performance situation, during which daily body techniques are replaced by extra-daily techniques" (qtd. in Watson 1996: 224). Barba's vocabulary of "anthropology" was misleading; while traditionally it is a study of human behavior at the socio-cultural and physiological levels, Barba's theatre research only focused on the physiological aspects (224).
were uniquely bound together in an intense search for archetypal commonness in alterity--a kind of "Ur-theatre" (Shetsova 1993: 35).

Barba's research and adaptation of Asian traditions were considered the most conscious and extensive approach to the discovery of an intercultural actor in our contemporary theatre (Pavis 1996: 223). But one must ask if his approach can lead to new possibilities in the development of East-West intercultural theatre. In the ISTA, as divergent acting traditions are isolated from their individual cultural and historical contexts, sorted out and represented according to physiology in a laboratory-controlled performative environment, including the selection of an elite audience, much of the acting art seems to be situated outside the source of real life and becomes a form of biological mechanism, as his critics suggest (Bharucha 1990: 75; Shevtsova 1993: 28-35). Nonetheless, Barba's major contribution to contemporary intercultural theatre is largely to "inform" Western theatre through intense comparative cultural studies of performance traditions, and to test his findings with actors; as such, he has demonstrated rigor, intensity, and originality in his work (cf. Watson 1996). In contrast to Barba's theatre for exclusively elite, "insider" spectators, Peter Brook took a very different approach. In his theatre, the cultural, historical and ideological perspective of the Western adapter-director occupied the foreground in borrowing Asian tradition, and the reception targeted on the comprehension of a predominantly Western audience. His theatre combined commercial success and artistic excellence.

Brook's theatre company since 1970, the Paris-based International Centre of Theatre Research (CIRT), reflected much of his vision of theatre as intercultural (or, as some suggest, transcultural) communication. He acquired actors from Africa, Asia, Euro-America, the Caribbean, and Australia. In theatrical work, he kept receiving and reworking traditions from all over the world and searched for archetypal, universal theatrical expressions. Asian
elements made a considerable contribution to some of the Centre's work.

*Conference of the Birds* was based on a Sufi poem by the Persian mystic Farid Ud-din Attar, and used Balinese-style masks and a variety of puppets for the birds, manipulated in Asian fashion by visible handlers (Blumenthal 1987: 16). *The Mahabharata*, a twelve-hour (reduced to nine in its English version) mega-production based on the Hindu epic, involving ten years of preparation and thirty-five performers and musicians of eighteen nationalities, and staged in France, Germany, Greece, Spain, Switzerland, the U. S. A., Australia, Denmark, Scotland, and Japan between 1985 and 1988, has been by far the most publicized and critically claimed exemplum of East-West intercultural theatre.

Brook's *Mahabharata* did not attempt to duplicate what he and the actors had seen during their field trip to India—particularly the authentic performances of the episodes from the epic in various Indian regional theatres—but sought to capture the ambiance of India, the presence of the cultural Other, and to bring the understanding full circle to the familiar reality of today (D. Williams 1991). Brook reworked the complex, lengthy narrative poem of Sanskrit culture into a story-telling theatre of literary structure readily comprehensive to the Western audience. The new text traced the archetypal and mythical elements of the original work—the war between brothers which brings the world to the brink of total destruction—with Shakespearean characterization and themes and with Homeric structure (Dasgupa 1991: 78-80). Moreover, it was read as a contemporary fable, a "Doomsday Epic" about the disintegrated post-nuclear world, as some critics found it (D. Williams 1996: 70). The costume, music, and scenic design evoked the "taste" of India. But, instead of presenting ethnic exactitude, they acquired a universal, timeless feel. The representation of the Indian characters by the multicultural cast produced a "polyphonic, multitextual narrative voice" which brought a sense of heterogeneity to the performance (73).
On this level, it celebrated the difference, the cultural relativism, and the harmonious collaboration of divergent heritages in one theatre work. The *Mahabharata* could be seen as the quintessence of intercultural theatre in Brook's vision, that is, the use of theatre as "the culture of links" to establish communication and community:

It was by making the act of the theatre inseparable from the need to establish new relations with different people that the possibility of finding new cultural links appeared. (Brook 1996: 66)

Ironically, Brook's essentialist and universalist approach in adapting the foreign work gave rise to controversial opinions among the critics. The criticism and debate which *The Mahabharata* received provide a glimpse of the general issues that have arisen from East-West theatrical interculturalism. In the center of the controversy was the "universal culture" represented in the play. For some, it significantly leveled the socio-cultural reality involved in the original text and its interpretation; the "Indian-ness," therefore, simply lent an aesthetic façade, indicating a mystic, exotic otherness. As Carlson observes,

A potential Otherness of the Indian cultural is absorbed in the universal. For this purpose, the specificity of India itself is not important—China, Southeast Asia, Nigeria or American Indian myth and history could have served a similar purpose, since the ultimate goal is not to confront the alien element in these cultures but to utilize them as external markers to our own culture upon which to ground a final synthesis. (1990: 90)

Some found it an inadequate appropriation of India, reading it in a post-colonial context. Particularly on the issue of cultural representation, Brook was accused of being Orientalist, of violating the "ethic" of representing the cultural Other.11

This brings us to a key question in intercultural theatre: if it is not possible to come to a universalization of culture, can one talk about searching for the

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common essence of humanity? Can theatre fulfill the transcultural function Brook envisioned? Similar questions can be raised over works by such renowned directors as Mnouchkine, Wilson, and Schechner, whose adaptations of Asian elements were lesser in scope but no less original than Brook's.

To an extent, Brook, Barba, and Grotowski shared an interest in establishing a universal foundation for the theatre, despite their different approaches to the actual application. Grotowski saw universal principles embedded in the innermost core of an actor's physicality, and desired their realization in an Artaudian fashion. Barba, in an equally reclusive, hermit-like environment, scientifically analyzed the convergent patterns in diverse acting traditions and tested their validity and dynamism within the community of theatre. Brook, however, saw universality not only within the actor's body, but in the actual communication with spectators of divergent social-cultural backgrounds, enabled by performance processes. Instead of seeking to establish a universal performance system, he explored foreign techniques in relation to a particular production project. Brook's intercultural work was not designed to be laboratory-controlled. It acknowledged the extra-theatrical world where people of linguistic, racial, and cultural differences need mutual dialogue amongst themselves; and his theatre was designed to reflect and enhance such unification and understanding (Shevtsova 1993: 31-2). Grotowski, Barba, and Brook all used Asian forms as a significant point of departure for their theatre, and their common goal was to break from the psychological-illusionist tradition that followed Naturalism.

Perhaps we can generalize the way Western theatre incorporated Asian theatrical elements by distinguishing the fundamental aesthetic principles of Western theatre from those of Eastern theatre. In comparative terms, Asian theatre has been a theatre of "how" and Western theatre a theatre of "what." Asian theatre has focused vigorously on "how", or the expressivity of specific
acting and staging techniques. To be initiated into this theatre means to possess a great vocabulary of theatrical idioms and, for instance, to be able to distinguish the variation in the timbre of a vocal presentation or the slightest difference in the way a hand gesture is made from the conventional way. The performer takes the center of the stage. The "what"—the content of the drama, including themes, structure, and linguistic expression—has been largely a secondary consideration. Thus, the authors of most of the non-contemporary Beijing opera plays were anonymous. In contrast, Western theatre has long been a tradition shaped by the dramatist; the dramatic text occupies a prominent position in influencing the direction of the theatre aesthetics. The reason for this difference lies in the different definition and function of theatre in the two global cultures. But the trend is changing. Today the literary tradition of Western theatre is well-established, and the new avant-garde tries to break from the confines of that particular aesthetic structure and narratology. That is where the Asian lessons act as an exemplum; and moreover, that is why Western artists are so eager to acquire Asian techniques but not the socio-cultural contexts which have created them.12

But essentially, the "how" and "what" are often just two sides of the same coin. If Western artists continue to draw freely on Asian theatre as if from a catalogue of theatrical "how-tos," chances are that the borrowing will only stay on a formal or decorative level and lead to the "aestheticization of cultures and the de-historization of [the foreign] forms," as Marranca pertinently points out (1991: 21). In the old Chinese expression, "The outward appearance is similar but the intrinsic essence is missing" (xíng sì ér shèn bùsì). What is at stake is that the

12 Except, perhaps, for The Mahabharata. But Brook’s replacement of the specific religious discourse of the original text with a universalized humanist ideology has created ambivalent reactions among his critics. Besides, Brook’s refusal to clarify his production’s relationship to Hindu culture in India has done a disservice to his effort to bring the centerpiece of South and South-eastern Asian culture to the West. See D. Williams (1991: 24).
West may risk imposing itself again on other cultures, making them speak in the language of its familiar values and concepts. Interculturalism may no longer hold its ideal as a way to admit and validate the cultural Others, particularly those which have previously been ignored, suppressed, or distorted, by letting them into the artistic/theatrical domain (Chin 1991: 95). What is also at stake is the loss of a healthy East-West dynamic; a superficial amalgamation of foreign signs merely produces exotic "in-between," not genuine interculturalism but "intercultural-ness," in which the foreign is made to reinforce the ideology of the dominant culture.

1.3.2 Reception of Western Theatre in the East (Especially China)

When the Western innovators began to seek inspiration and principles in the Eastern theatrical tradition early this century, their Asian counterparts turned towards the opposite direction, searching for models and paradigms from Western theatre. Asian theatre interculturalism has shared the same goal with that of the West: to learn from the Other in order to meet the native needs and to regenerate its own traditions. But the standpoints of the two differ. To a great extent, Western culture evolved in an orderly, continual transition from a feudal, agricultural society through industrial, political revolutions into a modern civilization, during which process its cultural production was closely connected with its active social forces; the confrontation with the foreign never really threatened its cultural roots, but rather enriched and embellished its experience (Tatlow 1983: 208). Asia, on the contrary, received a traumatic impact in its encounter with the West; it suffered radical discontinuities with its traditions, and, over a century's time, still encounters clashes between modern and traditional norms. This is well reflected in its theatres.

As mentioned, the irreversible course of Westernization in Asian societies has resulted in a parallel development of its modern and traditional theatres. Both
are in problematic situations. Asian modern theatre has vigorously developed, but remains heavily dependent on feeding on Western theatre. The growing number of young Asians who have gone to the West to learn about dramatic art further reinforces the canon of Western dramaturgy. "Modern theatre" in Asia often has an "elite" connotation, attracting the young, the intellectuals, and the urban spectators. In contrast, the traditional theatre, which is part of the long-standing religious and popular traditions of Asian culture, is declining. With or without government intervention, this theatre is increasingly labeled "conventional," "outdated," "rural," or "feudal." Attempts to revive this tradition have been made since the postwar era, in keeping with the emergence of nationalism and nativist movements in various national contexts. Their approaches vary, ranging from constrictive "purist" traditionalism, which aims for preservation, to creative eclecticism, which seeks radical change and reinvention (Gunawadana 1977: 61-2). There is no single way of solving the predicament. It is commonly understood that more efforts must be made, and made sooner, because traditional theatre, like other native cultural forms, is disappearing far more rapidly than it can be restored.

The immediate intercultural context in today's Asian theatre, therefore, is the confrontation with tradition: the foremost problem is how to reconcile and possibly synthesize the past and the present, the traditional and the modern, the native and the foreign (Gunawadana 1977: 61). It has stimulated the impulse to create hybridization which has a modern outlook and sensibility, on the one hand, and cultural identity and continuity, on the other. We now delve into the Chinese context to study theatre interculturalism involving the adoption of Western theatre, along two analytical lines: the synchronous line which illustrates the native culture's response to the foreign; and the diachronic line
which analyzes the interaction between the native culture's past and present under the impact of foreign influence.

1.3.2.1 The First Western Impact on Chinese Theatre

The intensive reception of Western theatre and the ensuing inception of a modern Chinese theatre in China in early twentieth century were directly connected with a fundamental re-orientation of the concept of literature (Dolezelova-Velingerova, "Traditional Theatre" N.d: 14). This process was prompted by China's bitter confrontation with the West (and Japan) during the second half of the nineteenth century. China's loss of wealth and territories to the foreign powers brought about a deep national crisis and the politicians sought a pragmatic solution: use Western techniques but keep the essence of the Chinese. Looking for models in the West, the Chinese intellectuals discovered the high standing of fiction in Western literature, and introduced fiction—including the novel, short story, drama, and storyteller's narrative—as a seminal form of literature, one which could enhance mass literacy and popularize modern ideologies (14). Theatre was soon found as a vehicle for popular enlightenment, its significance equal, or even superior, to the school, the fiction, and the newspaper, in propagating new ideas and ideals (Eberstein 1988: 4-5). While a new drama based on Western models was being imported, Chinese traditional theatre of operatic singing, dance and acrobatic spectacle was under fierce attack by the reform-advocators as merely a popular pastime of the feudal age. Its formalized acting style and conventional moralism proved difficult to adapt to topical subjects and social issues.

The Western dramatic model was highly desirable because it provided two key concepts which were politically relevant in current China: reality and social concern. It was considered one of the art forms most adequate for expressing the emerging consciousness of modern China. As early as 1889, the students of
various middle schools in Shanghai run by Western missionaries began to borrow Western dramatic forms, which they had learned in English and French classes, to create plays with strong political messages. The student productions were important rehearsals for the later rise of a politically-motivated modern theatre in China (Ouyang 1985b: 48). Prior to China's political revolution to abolish its last monarch (in 1912), a number of radical Chinese literati adapted such renowned political incidents as the rebellion in Cuba against the Spanish, Poland's loss of national sovereignty, the Russian occupation of China's Heilongjiang, Chinese emigrants in America, Napoleon in captivity, Japanese heroes, Greek revolution, and the loss of Annan to the French into traditional dramatic forms (A-Ying 1961: 176-7). These plays presented a range of subject and theme unprecedented in Chinese drama. But they were not considered entirely foreign because they gave fresh insights to China's own political struggles. This trend of adapting international subject indicated an urgent demand for drama to acquire social relevance and to incorporate a valid world view into the native perspectives.

The earliest "straight" adaptations of Western works to the Chinese stage were politically as well as aesthetically motivated experiments. These productions prepared Chinese theatre to develop a representational dramaturgy. From 1906 to 1909, a group of overseas Chinese students in Tokyo staged Western works that had already been popular in China or Japan (Ouyang 1985a: 13). Their adaptations included La Dame aux Camélias, Uncle Tom's Cabin, and Victorien Sardou's La Tosca. They were enthusiastically received. The suffering from racial, gender, and class oppression and the unyielding desire for love and freedom dramatized in these plays were prevailing, palpable experiences of the common Chinese, and, when staged in a life-like, quasi-realistic style, greatly moved their first audiences, many of them Chinese. Brought back to China, this new form immediately inspired various experiments involving the fusion of the Western
and the native forms during the 1910s. It was called "Enlightened Theatre" (wénmíngxiāo), or simply "New Theatre" (xīnxiāo), indicating its modern— and Western—origin.

Ironically, the hybrid "Enlightened Theatre" turned out to be an irregular and crude form. Driven by callous commercialism, it arbitrarily replaced the codified non-realistic conventions of Chinese opera with the mimetic mode of Western theatre. The realism in acting often deteriorated into unrehearsed daily behavior or gimmick of sensationalism; rarely was there a prepared dramatic text, but rather only a skeletal outline of the plot, which relied on the actors to improvise the dialogue and even to supplement the plot (Hong 1961: 187-8). China was not ready to receive Western dramaturgy productively until a number of key conditions developed: a real understanding of what was needed in the native theatre; the participation of intellectuals in transferring and selecting Western traditions; and an overall socio-political condition which reinforced the value of cross-cultural adaptation.

The timing for such a radical move could not have been better than the May Fourth Movement (1918-1925), another and yet more intense and vehement cultural reform movement in the early decades of the century. Initially calling for China's "wholesale Westernization," this youth movement sought to abolish traditional Chinese culture and to thoroughly adopt "modern" (that is, Western)

13 Particularly in Shanghai's new theatres, the use of a representational acting style with modern dresses and realistic make-up on a proscenium stage equipped with curtains, three-dimensional sets, and real properties became familiar theatre practice. Still not entirely rid of traditional stylized acting routines, the actors now learned to speak in colloquial prose and perform in a fashionable mimicry of life. See Ouyang (1985b).

14 The May Fourth Movement was named after an incident which occurred on May 4, 1919. About 5,000 students gathered in Beijing in protest against the verdict of the Versailles Peace Conference in Paris which legitimized Japan's occupation of China's Shandong Province. The youth, including students and scholar-intellectuals, advocated thorough social reform to change the domestic feudalist system, a firm national resistance to foreign imperialism, and a radical literary revolution drawing on Western models. It is agreed by literary historians that May Fourth became a watershed of modern Chinese literature.
concepts, values, and expressive means. The enthused intellectuals saw in the late-nineteenth-century European realistic drama, particularly the social-problem plays of Ibsen and Shaw, an adequate model for modern China, and attempted to import the entire genre into China. The Western realistic model readily provided a socio-political function for Chinese theatre, one which was instrumental in staging political protests, establishing a new culture, and fostering an individualism which China now needed (Haiping Yang 1992: 57).

This form offered three non-indigenous artistic codes. First, the use of vernacular language in the form of spoken dialogue; second, a thematic relevance to contemporary life in the subject matter; and third, a life-like theatrical form which eliminated the kind of aesthetic distance maintained by the heavily stylized conventions of the traditional Chinese opera. Together, they gave rise to a representational theatre of social conviction, and in 1920s and 1930s it combated with the non-mimetic aesthetics of traditional opera in favor of a realistic dramatization of life.

This new genre, adapted from an alien culture and lacking any tradition whatsoever in China itself, was labelled "Spoken Drama" (huaju) in 1928 by the Harvard-educated dramatist-director Hong Shen. The term emphasized "dialogue"15 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 traditional opera. Contemporary theatre historian Ma Sen calls Spoken Drama "the First Wave from the West," seeing the native theatre's revolutionary transformation by way of receiving a foreign model a fascinating example of intercultural hybridization (1991b).

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15Shen Hong in "Discussion from the Chinese New Theatre to Spoken Drama" (1930) explains the term "Spoken Drama" as: "a dramatic genre which is composed by segments of speech exchanged among the dramatic characters (this kind of speech is called "dialogue" in dramatic jargon.)." Cited in Ma Sen (1991: 45).
Three distinctive aspects in the formation of Spoken Drama underline the fundamental change of the concept and aesthetics of theatre in the home tradition. First, theatre was included as a serious literary genre for the first time in China, rather than simply as a leisure entertainment. Due to the impulse of the May Fourth Movement, a great number of young Chinese writers tried their hand at writing Spoken Drama. Because many of them lacked experience with theatre, they learned their craft by rigorously translating Western plays, which resulted in the first large-scale, intensive activity in translating foreign literary works in China.\textsuperscript{16} They now familiarized themselves with a tightened dramatic structure, focused thematic concepts, and the overall humanist ideology prevailing in European realistic drama; and they adapted these intrinsic principles to domestic subjects. This marks a shift of paradigm in the Chinese conception of theatre: from an "actor's theatre," as in traditional opera, to a "playwright's theatre," one which bases itself primarily on a prepared dramatic text. This process reveals the fundamental difference between the Western reception of Chinese (and Asian) forms and the Chinese reception of Western drama. While the West focused primarily on the formalistic, technical aspects of Asian genres, the Chinese (and Asians) paid much attention to the thoughts and ideologies permeating Western plays.

In the 1930s, a number of original Spoken Drama plays proved of high artistic quality, and were successfully staged (Eberstein 1988: 33-34). Many of them evoke traces of Western classics, and yet they are unequivocally Chinese in

\textsuperscript{16}See Eberstein (1988: 11) and McDugall (1971: 9). A list of "100 contemporary famous plays" was published in New Youth, the leading journal of the reform movement, in October 1918, by theatre scholar Song Cunfang, including the works by 58 dramatists of 13 foreign countries. In eight years (1917-1924), according to Tian Qin's 1944 documentation, China had published at least 174 translations of foreign plays which were by more than 70 playwrights from 17 foreign countries (in Ma Sen 1991: 107). And in the following two decades (1918-1938), the majority of Chinese modern spoken productions were predominantly translations or adaptations of Western dramas (Eberstein 1988: 11).
characters, themes, feelings, and situations. The foreign genre finally took root in the receiving culture.

This intercultural process shows that the foreign tradition was adapted according not only to the aesthetic, but also to the socio-political imperatives of the native culture. Spoken Drama emerged as a political art; one of its perceived functions was a salvational mission to reveal social reality and to disseminate modern ideas. Its initial favorite models were the social-problem plays of the European naturalist theatre with their adamant belief in social change. The early Spoken Drama also resonated with the Western models in a pessimistic description of victims under corruptive social and political conditions and in a firmly rooted optimism about future improvements. To many Chinese writers, the form of Spoken Drama itself was a radical social and political statement. The People's Theatre Association, a significant amateur theatre organization which promoted Spoken Drama during the 1920s, summed up the idea and ideal of this new dramatic genre in its manifesto of 1921:

The times when people went to the theatre solely to pass time are over. For today's society the theatre is of great importance. On the one hand it is like a propeller pushing forward our society on the way to progress, on the other hand it uncovers the causes of social ills like X-rays. And it is also a completely unbiased mirror; the degree of development of a people is reflected in this great mirror with such utter nakedness that nothing remains hidden. (Qtd. and trans. in Eberstein 1988: 22)

17 For instance, the famous Spoken Drama play by Cao Yu, Thunderstorm (Leiyu, 1934), reminds one of Ibsen's Ghosts, Jean Racine's Phèdre et Hippolyte and Eugene O'Neill's Desire Under the Elms. See Joseph S. M. Lau, Tsao Yu, The Reluctant Disciple of Chekhov and O'Neill (Hong Kong, 1971). Also, his Peking Man (Beijingren, 1940) is described as Chekhovian in characterization and atmosphere by Ma Sen (1991: 176). Hong Shen's Zhao Yanwang (1922) calls into mind the plot, character, and mise en scène of O'Neill's Emperor Jones. See David Y. Chen, "Two Chinese Adaptations of Eugene O'Neill's 'The Emperor Jones'," Modern Drama 9.4 (1967): 431-439. And Xia Yan's Under a Shanghai Roof (Shanghai Wuyan Xia) describes the underprivileged household in Shanghai in a "slice of life" mode reminiscent of Gorky's The Lower Depths.
The tone and ideas strongly remind one of Emile Zola in "Naturalism in the Theatre" (1981), a centerpiece in the naturalist movement, in stressing the scientific, objective, and honest observation and portrayal of social reality.\[^{18}\]

Ibsen, perhaps the most mentioned Western dramatist in China during the May Fourth period, was inspiring to his first Chinese readers mainly because of his iconoclasm. His best-known characters, Nora and Dr. Stockmann, were transformed into the protagonists of a number of Spoken Drama plays written in the 1920s as symbols of women's emancipation and the individual's tragic struggle with society (Eberstein 1988: 19; Eide 1987: 143). His artistry, however, was rarely given systematic analysis.\[^{19}\] Likewise, Shaw was commonly perceived by the Chinese as a social critic, an even more didactic and pungent one than Ibsen—"a doctor who diagnosed the origin of an illness [of society and] wrote the prescriptions...using drama as his tool for implementing socialism," observes Zhang Jiazhu, a Chinese critic of the day (qtd. and trans. in Eide 1987: 147).

\[^{18}\]Zola's manifesto has a passage which may have inspired the Chinese artists, in particular the use of a "scientific" approach in dramatizing reality (that is, not to rely on artistic conventions):

I am waiting for someone to put a man of flesh and bones on the stage, taken from reality, scientifically analyzed and described without one lie. I am waiting for someone to rid us of fictitious characters, of these symbols of virtue and vice which have no worth as human data. I am waiting for the environment to determine the characters, and the characters to act according to the logic of facts combined with the logic of their own disposition....I am waiting,...until the playwrights return to the source of science and modern arts, to the study of nature, to the anatomy of man, to the painting of life in an exact reproduction more original and powerful than anyone has so far dared to risk on the boards" (1881).

\[^{19}\]Hu Shi, the first Chinese translator and adapter of Ibsen's A Doll's House, calls Ibsen a "realist" when defining Ibsen's significance to modern Chinese literature in his seminal essay "Ibsenism":

He has described the real conditions of the family and of society so that it has moved us. He demonstrates how the family and society have actually deteriorated to such an extent that every-body feels that there must be a reform. This is Ibsenism. (qtd. and trans. in Eide 165)

In his portrayal, Ibsen was more a reform-minded writer than a theatre artist, more a social thinker than a dramatist.
It should be noted that the realism which the Chinese avidly adopted from Western drama into Spoken Drama was primarily a social attitude, rather than an aesthetic principle.\(^{20}\) What the May Fourth Chinese intellectuals meant by "realism," observes McDugall, was "simply a lively, vigorous and plain style" combined with "a humanitarian and idealistic approach" which could critically examine contemporary social failures and assist their betterment (1971: 149). Specifically, it urged the artists and audiences to face truth and reality—the unhappy endings of the miserable stories of the common people, which had been largely underrepresented in traditional opera. According to the semiotic analysis of intercultural reception by Dolezelova-Velingerova, when two distant, mutually unfamiliar cultures encounter one another, they receive each other only in fragments and out of historical context (1990: 1). The Chinese did not see the effect of reality in European works as achieved by artistic language and devices, but valued it as a counter-traditional principle which would produce new expressions and concepts. Nevertheless, the European concept of reality was absorbed only partially; only the elements which were familiar to native expressions were filtered into the native system, such as the symbols which seemed identical in both the Chinese and Western cultures but in actuality signified quite differently in each culture's semiotic system.\(^{21}\) Ma Sen calls the hybrid form "pseudo-realist" as it is only disguised as realistic on the surface;

\(^{20}\) Cf. Ouyang Yuqian's definition of realism. Ouyang, a seasoned actor and playwright of both Spoken Drama and Beijing Opera, forcefully states: Realism is a direct attitude in describing social issues. Revolutionary China need not express itself with hypocrisy or concealment; it should examine various social problems straightforwardly.... Realism, in simple explanation, is the truthful portrayal of reality as if the reflected in the mirror. (qtd. in Hong 237; translation mine)

\(^{21}\) This way, according to Dolezelova-Velingerova, the Chinese realistic texts yield to decoding within both the Chinese and Western semiotic systems. "The different meanings are generated by the way readers decipher the texts: if they are familiar with the semiosis of Chinese cultural system, then the text is polysemic; if they are not, the text reveals only part of the message and appears as 'realistic'" (1990: 1).
structurally it conformed to the traditional concept of literature and is profoundly didactic and moralistic (1991a: 178-9).

The assertive, unambiguous style was greatly popularized in the 1940s during the war against Japanese invasion, as Spoken Drama became the most effective medium in eliciting patriotic, nationalist sentiment in street-theatre and on makeshift stages across the county. It was again used by left-wing artists to propagate socialist ideas during the 1930s and 1940s. Their familiarity with realism and its artistic effect prepared the Chinese artists to receive Stanislavsky, who was introduced in the late 1930s and was soon appropriated into the communist ideology of art (W. Sun 1987: 141). The Soviet artist's "System" was taught as the orthodoxy in the Lu Xun Art Institute in the Mao Zedong regime's base Yan'an, whereas Craig and Meyerhold, anti-realism innovators, were condemned as negative models. By the 1950s, Stanislavky's "four walls" aesthetic had prevailed on the modern Chinese stage and was well-rooted in dramatic pedagogy (141). Half a century after the Western realistic drama was transplanted into China, it became a native form with specific socio-cultural inscription.

However, there were problems which persisted even until the present. The ideological exactness associated with realism, on the one hand, hindered the development of Spoken Drama into a fully independent art form, and, on the other, prevented it from further interacting with other theatrical trends in the West, particularly the anti-realistic movements. The initial creative impulse upon receiving the foreign model dwindled into artistic formula and clichés through repeatedly serving political didacticism. Moreover, to this day Spoken Drama is still an artistically problematic genre. The difficulty in translating Western aesthetic principles organically into the native culture has not been solved. As with many other Western-inspired modern theatres in Asia, Spoken Drama lacks a
truly realistic mode of speech appropriate to contemporary themes. It is still wanting well-written, tightly-constructed play scripts. And most of all, the actors tend to deploy an overly extroverted, presentational style and stereotyped characterization (cf. Gunawardana 1977: 60).

1.3.2.2 The Second Impact on Chinese Theatre

From late 1970s throughout the 1980s, facing the increasingly limited and lethargic Spoken Drama, the theatre artists in Mainland China and particularly in Taiwan once more sought foreign models in Western theatre and created another active intercultural reception in Chinese theatre—"the Second Wave from the West," according to Ma Sen (1991b). In the post-Cultural Revolution period, when China re-opened to foreign influences, its theatre productively absorbed the modernist aesthetics of the Western theatre to redress the limitation of realistic Spoken Drama under Communist ideology. Theatre of the Absurd, Existentialist drama, Theatre of Cruelty, and Poor Theatre provided significant alternatives. Brecht and Meyerhold were particularly appreciated because their dramaturgy is antithetical to realism, and thus can open new avenues to new, or once suppressed, expressive forms and concepts (Tian Benxiang 1993: iv-v).

In Taiwan, the Second Western Wave went beyond modernism; the Euro-American avant-garde and postmodern theatre from the 1960s onwards became a vital source of intercultural adaptation. Spoken Drama, brought to Taiwan by the Nationalist government (KMT) after 1949, had become ossified artistically and ideologically by the 1960s. As Taiwan became an affluent economy and a democracy in the 1980s, there emerged a strong creative impulse for new theatrical expressions to meet the native demand. Alternative practices drew upon the anti-literary, anti-commercial, and collective trends in contemporary Western performances. The new theatrical trend even took on such imported nomenclature as "experimental," "avant-garde," and "little" theatre, and later
diverged into three directions: "postmodern," "political," and "environmental" theatres (Chung 1992: 139). For the local artists, the introduction of totally new foreign models would suit the current situations better than an effort to revive the problematic Spoken Drama. Some models of Western avant-garde theatre could stimulate and foster the spontaneous creativity of the native talents, rather than subjecting them to formal theatrical training, which was limited or inappropriate at the time. Many foreign techniques were actually the result of adoption or influence from Asian traditions and thus seemed strangely familiar to the Taiwanese artists. Furthermore, they exemplified a relatively inexpensive practice for the start-ups, as far as theatre venue, budgets, company management, and stage technology were involved. Most importantly, the foreign forms represented a radical originality in exploring new subjects of life and social reality which Spoken Drama had lost.

The absorption and re-invention of Western avant-garde acting, play-making, and theoretical concepts into the native context brought a sudden breakthrough in Taiwan's modern theatre. Nearly sixty years after Hong Shen, one of the first Chinese disciples studying theatre in the West to return to his native land, a number of young Taiwanese scholars also trod the same route and brought back knowledge of theatre arts to serve the native theatre. In 1978, an acting workshop was conducted by Dr. Wu Jingji, a psychologist who had joined New York's La Mama Experimental Theatre Club, using Off-Off Broadway acting techniques popular in the 1960s and -70s in Taiwan. He employed physical exercises (breathing, voice, movement, games) in a collective process of creating a performance. Rehearsals were turned into a stage narrative with simple, powerful theatricality. The result greatly enhanced the local artists' concept of theatre-making (Chung 1992: 31-47).
In late 1983, theatre professor Lai Sheng-chuan returned to Taiwan after getting his doctorate in Theatre from the University of California, Berkeley, introducing the method of improvisation from Shireen Strooker of Amsterdam Werkteater, an avant-garde theatre group maturing in the radical cultural milieu of the 1960s and early 1970s (Lai 1990: 137). Using improvisation as a tool in a process of collective creation, Lai and his performers workshopped personal experiences into freely-structured collage forms. In this way, the performers became "the medium and the material towards theatrical creation" (142), rather than serving as merely a mouthpiece of a fixed text, as were often the case in productions of Spoken Drama or translated Western plays. These techniques became major alternatives in creating plays in Taiwan's modern theatre, as they helped explore native consciousness and cultural reality theatrically.

In 1986, Chung Mingder returned to Taiwan after studying in New York University under Richard Schechner, and applied postmodernist aesthetics to Taiwan's modern theatre. A prolific writer and critic, Chung noted that contemporary Taiwan had been deeply exposed to Western late capitalism and thus had produced cultural expressions, theatrical and otherwise, which were highly reflective of the postmodern logic in Western culture (1989: 24). In Taiwan's flourishing "little theatre" performances of the late 1980s, Chung found a theatre aesthetics characteristically "postmodern," particularly in the use of "physical language" of the stage (theatre space, architecture, mise en scène, actor's body and stage effects) to undermine the literary language of the dramatic text, and in the adoption of an anti-narrative structure of image theatre to replace the narrative, literary tradition of Spoken Drama (Chung 1992: 19-37). Euro-American avant-garde theatre, including its political, postmodern and environmental theatre subdivisions, could provide concrete dramaturgical
strategies for Taiwan's theatre to stage new cultural inscription and political empowerment:

[Internally, experimentation with language of the Little Theatre in Taiwan might deconstruct mainstream capitalist ideology and re-write the Nationalists' myth of "Great China," and, externally, might disrupt the cultural dominance of Euro-American hegemony and perhaps find a place for "local narrative" or native "cultural performance" to grow. (1992: 176)]

As a result, in the late 1980s, Artaud, Grotowski, Schechner, the Living Theatre, Wilson, Pina Bausch, Lori Anderson, and other Western innovators of theatre, MTV and video arts became new inspirations for Taiwan's numerous little theatres, which emerged as a popular movement upon the annulling of the state's martial law and script censorship. Paradoxically, it was through the adoption of the Western avant-garde theatre, which had received influence from Asian traditional genres, that Taiwan's modern theatre could turn to focus on the actor again as the creative center. The shift from the script and its literary textuality (as in Spoken Drama), to the materialistic presence of actor's body (the gestural, vocal, kinetical, and musical) in relation to stage space, marked a return to the "actor's theatre"—the paradigm of Asian theatrical tradition—with a twist of Western avant-gardism.

1.3.2.3 "Interculturalism" vs. "Intraculturalism"

A significant correlative between the two "Western Waves" in Chinese theatre is the development of an "intra-cultural" dynamic within the native theatre, a tendency to re-establish a dialogue between the modern, Western-derived genre and the traditional, indigenous genre. Intraculturalism is perhaps the most distinctive result of the intercultural reception of Western theatre in Asia. Brandon and Pavis both use this term to refer to the search for native cultural past which has been repressed or denied (Brandon 1990: 95-6; Pavis 1996: 5-6). Interculturalism involves contacts with foreign entities outside the native,
across geographical distance and national borders, while intraculturalism involves a journey in time to the past, although it stays within the ethnic, racial boundaries. The search for the once "familiar" traditions represents a nativist effort to regain continuity in a changing culture, to find inspiration from the origin of the native culture. It also indicates a conscious counterbalance against the on-going, dominant foreign influence.

Throughout the century in which Chinese theatre encountered the Western influence, the attempt to synthesize the two remains the most crucial and challenging theme. One significant example is the "National Drama Movement" (guoju yundong), in 1926, that included a group of Beijing-based artists and scholars who were aware that the Western-derived modern theatre could never fully replace traditional Chinese theatre. They called for an organic synthesis of the two, following the example of the Irish Renaissance. In their vision, a Chinese "National Drama" should be able to bridge the modern and the traditional, the foreign and the indigenous, the elite and the popular genres; a new hybrid, it should contain native characteristics and yet have universal appeal (Hong 1961: 257-260). A well-argued theory, it was never substantially put into practice during the high time of the movement.

Similar attempts were made in the "nationalization" (minzuhua) of the Western-inspired Spoken Drama in China during the 1950s, aiming to broaden the audience to the masses, and in the "modernization of traditional opera" (xiqu xianandaihua) in the 1960s, aiming to adapt traditional theatre to modern, political themes. These efforts culminated in the radical amalgamation of Chinese Opera, the "well-made" play, and (Western) opera and ballet in the "model" plays during the Cultural Revolution. But here the intercultural and intracultural impulses were attuned mainly to political mechanism; they were successfully executed in a
given ideological context but suffered discontinuity after the political milieu changed in the late 1970s.

In the 1980s, as Western theatre resumed its input into China, the intra-cultural dynamic in Chinese theatre grew increasingly complex and productive. The foreign models not only continued to nurture its modern genres but also stimulated an intrinsic restructuring of the traditional ones. This can be seen in the enthusiastic reception of Brecht and Shakespeare. Both shared a non-illusionist, presentational mode with the Chinese tradition. The attempt to stage Shakespeare in traditional forms was not perceived as a possibility until the mid-1980s, and it has since considerably modernized and expanded the range of China's traditional opera (see Chapter 2). Brecht's theatre was a productive response to Chinese theatre and philosophy (cf. Tatlow 1977). The adaptation of Brecht into traditional Chinese opera epitomizes the incessant intercultural cross-feeding between East and West. Moreover, it indicates a conscious revival and re-evaluation of native aesthetics. One of the most acknowledged intercultural topics in China today is the use of Brechtian model in combination with traditional theatre aesthetics to develop a kind of "philosophical traditional theatre" which can retain the native conventions and acquire the conceptual rigor of the epic theatre. En route to the foreign, one comes back to Self and encounters the repressed and forgotten within.

Theatre in Taiwan provided a succinct example of the intertwining of interculturalism and intraculturalism. During the 1980s, with the increasing of the "native consciousness"—a strong sentiment which felt Taiwan as the domain of its cultural subjectivity as opposed to the periphery or descendent of Mainland

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22 On the topic of shifting Chinese tradition's alignment from Stanislavsky's method to Brecht's model, see W. H. Sun (1987). The original idea came from Huang Zuolin, once Deputy Head of the Shanghai People's Art Theatre and the often-called "Chinese Brecht." See Adrian Hsia, "Huang Zuolin's Ideal of Drama and Bertolt Brecht" (Tung et al. 1987: 151-162).
China, a quest for the "own" theatre was in demand. Many little theatre artists started to explore Taiwan's folk theatre, religious rituals and long-forgotten performance forms as a source of inspiration or raw materials. Traditional theatre artists, likewise, adopted modern subjects and staging techniques to revivify their rapidly declining art. The intraculturalism established a continuing dialogue among the Western (foreign), the modern Chinese (Western-inspired, semi-foreign), and the traditional Chinese (native but defamiliarized) genres. The traditional forms ultimately served as a measure for the modern in further absorbing new Western trends. As a result, all three genres moved closer to one another on the structural level, for the first time.

For instance, Taipei's theatre company, You Juchang (U Theatre), led by Liu Jingmin, one-time disciple of Grotowski, adopted his paratheatrical training methods in a series of outdoor performances to create a local version of "Poor Theatre" in the mid-1980s. The foreign techniques were modified to facilitate the search for the "roots" of Taiwan's theatre and rituals. The native tradition was thus placed in the structure of contemporary aesthetics, and therefore given modern signification and cultural reconsideration (Chung 1992: 196-211; V. Doran 1992: 66). In contrast, traditional Chinese theatre in Taiwan also reached for the Western tradition without seeking the mediation of the native modern theatre. The Contemporary Legend Theatre, a Beijing opera-based ensemble, first mounted Shakespeare on the Beijing opera stage and, greatly encouraged by the enthusiastic reception, produced Medea and Oresteia in semi-traditional and semi-modern, half-Eastern and half-Western forms. These productions pointed to a yet-to-happen, better-saturated hybridization of the foreign and the native expressions. Perhaps the most fundamental change of value in the traditional theatre, by the stimulation of the foreign, was the spirit of experimentation. The impulse for the artistically original and innovative, constrained by the theatrical
tradition itself and further curbed by the ideological shackles of the State's cultural policies during the cold war years, was finally being encouraged.

Ultimately, intraculturalism became the basis for further intercultural reception of Western theatre in the theatre of China and Taiwan. Today, Western realistic theatre is no longer deemed the only model for imitation and absorption, but rather a contrasting tradition for the native to approach with selectiveness and purpose. Intraculturalism—the journey within the home culture—gives the important sense of cultural subjectivity, ethnic identity, and artistic creativity with which the Chinese, and other Asians, can confront Western influence. Otherwise, an interculturalism initiated and dominated by the Western theoretical and practical pre-eminence may bring the Asian native traditions towards a postmodern multi-cultural muddle, or to uncritical uniformity. Both the intercultural and intracultural impulses in Asian theatre aim to reinvent the current theatrical traditions, each complementing the other. Brandon's observation of these two creative impulses in contemporary Japanese theatre can summarize this dynamic in all Asian theatre today:

As in a symbiosis, each feeds from and inspires the other. The goal of intercultural and intracultural performance is to produce, for the spectator, opportunities for perceiving new relationship between other and self, between foreign and familiar. (1990: 96)

1.4 Towards a Methodology of Asian Intercultural Theatre

From the critical review of the history of the East-West theatrical exchange, it is clear that interculturalism has different historical contexts for different cultures, and is also generically differentiated. Because a universal definition of interculturalism is unavailable, it is equally difficult to derive a global theory of theatrical interculturalism. As Pavis notes, there is no general theory of culture available to deal with cultural transfer, appropriation, rewriting, and reception that is comparable to the semiotic model of
inter textualit y (1992: 209). Fischer-Lichte likewise contests the current plausibility of a global theory of interculturalism (1990b: 284). However, it is important to propose a theory on East-West intercultural theatre, for two major reasons. First, it will help us understand the difference in the theatre-making process between these two traditions; second, it will help us find an analytical model for an intercultural exchange which involves a non-mimetic, presentational aesthetics, and pre-existing theatrical codes, such as in traditional Asian genres, and in which the reception of a performance does not rely entirely on the representation of a text.

If focus is made solely on two distinctive traditions—Chinese and Euro-American (and their cultural and aesthetic particularities), perhaps it can derive a set of principles which governs the dynamic and exchange between the two. Our inquiry involves the review of a number of methodological models: the theatre translation model, the productive reception model, and the comparative poetics model. The purpose of this review is to find an appropriate approach or direction to analyze two intercultural performances in Chapters 4 and 5.

1.4.1 Translation/Communication Model

Translation is probably the most basic approach to understanding intercultural theatre. It involves transferring a text cross-culturally and therefore demands consideration of the socio-cultural and dramaturgical aspects of a foreign tradition in the process of transfer. Link (1979), Zuber (1979), Chau (1980), and Pavis (1989; 1992) all tackle theatrical translation, seeing it as a hermeneutic act of communicating the source text to the target audience. All of them are aware that performability, rather than linguistic exactness, is the central concern of such translation. However, the first three develop their views from the established study of literary translation. Zuber, on translating modern drama into a different cultural setting, particularly stresses the importance of
fidelity to the author's intention embedded in the original text (1979: 93). Chau, in his study of Chinese translations of Shakespeare, acknowledges the double obstacle involved in translating drama for the stage: the cultural gaps exist not only between the original (Shakespeare's) and the receiving (contemporary Chinese) audience but also between the original and receiving theatrical traditions (1980: 246). Moreover, he argues, the translator can only control half of the translation act (that is, the text), and has to rely for the realization of the other half (the performance) on the producer and other theatre artists as well as the audience—the materialistic uncertainty of the one and the fickleness of the other adding more indeterminacy to the already difficult task (246-7). Link does not share Chau's ideal of dramatic translation as "total synonymity;" but gives it a wider perimeter by making distinctions among "translation" (verbal communication), "adaptation" (transposition into performance), and "interpretation" (rewriting, contemporization). However, his categorization completely excludes the translation of intercultural nature.

One needs to question whether it is productive, even if possible, to achieve Chau's ideal of a "perfect" act of translation, which claims that the Chinese spectator would respond to the translation the same way as the Globe audience to Shakespeare's original text, or Zuber's criterion of "propriety and authenticity," which dictates approximation to the intention of the original author in theatrical translation. Looking in the target theatre for the codes of signification, textual or performative, which are "equivalent" to those in the original text is itself problematic; more often than not they do not exist. As Kruger argues, translation for the theatre is necessarily an act of interpretation—by which she means "active intervention" by the translator—in a specific context rather than a "'faithful' reproduction of an original"; this point is made on the grounds that the notion of equivalence only deals with the unambiguous semantic invariants in
the transfer but does not tackle the other meaning-generating constituents, such as the theatrical, ideological, and socio-cultural elements (1986: 9-20). Further, she observes, translation is legitimately an "appropriation" of a source text by a target text in the process of domesticing the "foreignness" of the source (62); and the legitimation of such appropriation can be measured by how much the new text fits the specific target situation without seeming a translation—by "the degree of the invisibility of the act of appropriation" in the given receptive context (202). Recent translators/practitioners also emphasize the source text's potential for performance by allowing non-linguistic codes to inscribe the target mise en scène in theatrical translation. Thus, in many cases, at least in France, a translated text is the performance text of a given production; translation is mise en scène (Lieblein 1993: 77).

Pavis's theorization of intercultural theatre addresses both issues: appropriation of the source text and meaning-transference through extra-linguistic 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) and later elaborates it in Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture (1992). Pavis finds the correlation between the general conception of culture (a signifying, or modeling, system) and that of mise en scène (the stage enunciation of theatrical culture). He argues that the translation theory can provide a model of intertextuality in dealing with the semiotic process of cultural exchange and reconstruction in the context of receiving culture:

The relationship of this intercultural model to that of translation is 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. (1992: 209)
Pavis's theory adopts Kruger's source text/target text dynamic in theatrical translation, seeing translation as a rhetorical act rather than a search for equivalence. The exchange is 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 a message to the audience that deals with the spectator's reception (1989: 29). The need to predict the target audience's "hermeneutic competence" 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 jeu* of the source text to grasp the way the verbal text is orchestrated with the gestural and other theatrical codes ("language-body"), and subsequently seeks a matching *mise en jeu* in the target language before finally creating a verbalized target text (1992: 148-152). Thus Pavis makes a radical departure from traditional dramatic translation by qualifying performance as a vital component of translation. Theatrical translation involves not only transferring the "meanings" of words, but the bodies which speak them and the cultural, ideological context in which they are spoken. He quotes Brecht to illustrate "performance as a method of translation": "We were obliged to do what linguistically better equipped
translators ought to do: translate Gestus... for language is gestic" (1992: 153). He also cites the French director-translater Antoine Vitez, whose staging of Greek tragedies gave the foreign, ancient texts contemporary relevancy by presenting parallels in today's reality through *mise en scène*: "Ideally the translation should be able to command the *mise en scène*, not the reverse. Translation or *mise en scène*: the activity is the same; it is the art of selection among the hierarchy of signs" (146).

In his "Towards a Theory of Culture and *Mise en Scène*," the opening chapter of *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, Pavis elaborates his translation theory into a working model to systematize translation of theatrical material from one culture to another and, in later chapters, to analyze a number of significant postmodern attempts including Barba's *Dancing with Faust* (1987), Brook's *Mahabharata* (1986), and Mnouchkine's *L'Indiade* (1987), *Twelfth Night* (1984), and *Richard II* (1981). Pavis's model is that of an hourglass, in which the "grains" of the source culture pass through a series of filters-cultural, social, and aesthetic, and, falling from the upper chamber into the lower chamber, reconstitute the substance of the target culture (1992: 4-5). The model operates an intertextual analysis to trace the eleven steps of intercultural transfer. It compares and contrasts the source text's and target text's "artistic modeling" and "cultural modeling"—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 (13-20).
Pavis's model suggests that intercultural exchange is a negotiating process in which the "slippage" (1992: 14) between the foreign and one's own culture exists alongside with an conscious attempt at "fine-tuning," and the appropriation of the foreign joins hand-in-hand with a desire to communicate the exotic Other. Pavis stands with a relativistic and skeptical attitude towards the pan-culturalist perspective in today's Western interculturalism and other problematic issues. He does not see such a trend leading to a synthesized world culture, but rather to "a quest for foreign sensuality and for coded abstraction" (1992: 211). Still, he aspires to an intercultural theatre which searches for extra-European inspiration—Asian, African, and South American, so as to de-center ("des-orientation") the currently predominant Euro-centric intercultural practices (1996: 19).

Pavis's theory is valuable for East-West intercultural theatre in two ways. First, it preserves the foreign text's potential for performance. By focusing on the use of non-verbal theatrical signs, particularly the actor's body, as vehicle of transcoding, Pavis's theory implies that the "actor" is a primary translator for theatre, and thus suggests possible exchange of corporeal techniques and professional identity among actors of different cultures in intercultural translation (Pavis 1996: 15). Exchange on this level is particularly challenging and productive in today's East-West intercultural theatre; it deepens cultural and theatrical confrontation and confluence, and brings a greater possibility of hybridization (cf. Brandon 1989).

Second, the use of "reception-adapters" to facilitate the target audience's understanding of the foreign is not only a constructive but often necessary intervention in an intercultural translation (Pavis 1992: 203-4). Such devices were used in Mahabharata, in which two narrators re-told the unfamiliar Indian epic to the Western audience, or in L'Indiade, in which a commentator mediated between, and brought together, the world of dramatic/historical action set in
India, and the theatrical event participated in by the Paris audience. Though at risk of being ethnocentric, Pavis argues, this strategy makes the target tradition actively search for forms, themes, and dramaturgical devices comparable to those inscribed in the source text in order to enhance the translation, rather than merely duplicating the foreign theatrical forms indiscriminately. When the cultural distance is as wide as that between Eastern and Western theatre, such a conscious intervention seems particularly necessary in filling the historical, cultural "gaps" (Jauss) in the reception.

But Pavis's working model cannot address the entire range of the exchange between Eastern and Western theatre. Fundamentally, it is tailored for the audience of Western "straight" drama—that is, drama with dialogue, not opera, musical, or dance drama—to be at the receiving end of an intercultural performance, and is structured around the given of this theatre. Here the underlying dramaturgical assumption is that the text precedes and orchestrates the performance. The point of contact with the foreign, as shown in the series of concretizations of translation, is always the text; translation is above all the hermeneutic challenge for the target audience to make sense out of that text. If, however, the target audience is from a highly codified theatrical tradition such as Noh, Beijing opera, or Indian Kathakali theatre, the starting point for transcoding will not be the text, but the performative codification (gesture, movement, oral and instrumental music, choreography, and so on). All these genres are predominantly "actor's theatre" in which the text (verbal or written) does not come first; their "performance codes" precede (and dictate) any particular text or performance, just like commedia dell'arte, opera, and ballet in the West (Brandon 1989: 42). Thus, for instance, we see a totally different procedure and emphasis in the Kathakali theatre's translation of King Lear, in which Shakespeare's text is much altered and simplified to allow room for
inscribing a complex, elaborate performance script (Zarrilli 1992: 19-20). In other words, the translation happens simultaneously with the performance process, not before the performance.

We may debate whether or not the formula "Text -> Performance" is all that universal in Western straight drama, as there have been alternative forms in contemporary theatre since Craig and Artaud, who fervently assaulted the privilege of the logocentric dramaturgy. But there is no denying that the text provides not only an important point of departure for a performance, but also a whole structure of semiotic signification, as well as the page-stage dichotomy, in Western straight drama (cf. Rabkin 1983). Brandon's summary of three basic features in Western dramaturgy helps describe the kind of theatre Pavis's translation model can best apply:

1. first, that text exists separate from performance; second, that the written text—no matter now deconstructed or reconstructed—is the beginning source material of performance; and third, that the outside force (the director) is necessary in giving shape to an otherwise unknowable performance. (1989: 42)

Different from this hegemony, the aforementioned Asian genres are centered on the performer, who has the most knowledge of the text and performance techniques and who is in immediate contact with the audience. The Asian performer is in essence the intercultural translator. The different dramaturgical structure between Eastern and Western theatre explains the difference in the approach to theatrical translation.

A Western "straight" drama does not have the same strict codification of artistry as in most traditional Asian genres, ballet, or commedia dell'arte, which strongly defines and specifies the form and convention of the genres. Thus it has a great capacity to acquire formal elements eclectically from alien performative traditions without forsaking its thematic concepts. Such is the approach in Ariane Mnouchkine's Richard II (1981), which is dubbed by Kennedy as
"Shakespearean orientalism" (1993: 294-5). When the logocentric Western drama is welded with the formalistic elements of Asian theatre, the performance still contains Western narrative and ideology while the Asian signs are singled out, and, functioning aesthetically, present culturally exotic expressions. In contrast, traditional Asian dramatic texts are usually less structured and tend to invite "rewriting," as in the case of Brook's version of Mahabharata. Implicitly Pavis's translation model provides the Western adapter a perfect rationale to appropriate Asian texts and to adopt Asian techniques according to Western perspectives and needs, even to the point of subordinating Asian traditions into a silent partner of Western universalism. Little wonder that Pavis hails Brook's Mahabharata as a model of transcending cultural, linguistic differences, justifying its inscription of Western ideology/narratology into Indian subjectivity/form, which many critics (both Indian and Western) have criticized. Moreover, the notion of mise en scène as the center of Pavis's translation theory is problematic, for it originates from Western theatre and may not find an equivalent hierarchy and structure in traditional Asian theatre. In spite of this, Pavis still emphasizes that his hourglass model of intercultural transfer can be reversed, as the target culture turns itself into a source ready for a new transfer (1992: 5). Thus Pavis implies a reversible and symmetrical perspective and process between the source and target cultures, risking the loss of cultural particularity in favor of a universalism, as he himself admits in a later work (1996: 2).

Finally, Pavis's model is somewhat mechanical and limited when applied to an analysis of the Western reception of Asian theatre. It seems that this model is most feasible to well-controlled (that is, well-funded and publicized or box-office guaranteed) experiments of interculturalism such as those by Brook, Mnouchkine, Barba, and Wilson, which enjoy the privilege of laboratory-like conditions. But it cannot describe, let alone theorize, the kind of productive
encounter with Asian genres by Brecht and Artaud, whose reception of Chinese acting and Balinese dance theatre did not start with foreign scripts, and whose translation of the foreign elements was not entirely a "hermeneutic act" of communicating the foreign but a productive misunderstanding of it. In fact, Pavis himself also admits the semiotic theory as being too scientific and systematic a meta-theory to reflect the other significant aspects of theatre activities, particularly the cultural, ideological specificities of the traditions involved (1992: 75-98). The singular focus on mise en scène in his global translation model further precludes the often-existent contemporary tensions and historical contradictions among the cultures involved in the East-West exchange.

1.4.2 "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 analyzing various regional, historical examples of intercultural theatre from the perspective of reception. Her model is based on diachronous ("historical") and synchronous ("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 with foreign cultures (1990a: 17).

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 Self (the "Own") (1990b: 283). 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. By 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 the problem of the form (and, by extension, of the stagnant social milieu in People's Republic of China) (1990b: 281-3).

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 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. (1990b: 284)

To a great extent, Fischer-Lichte's model presents interculturalism not so much as a dialogue between a binary system of the source and the target, but as an 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, historical conditions; and the recourse to the foreign is motivated by an internal
aesthetic or/and 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 (1990b: 285). 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 (286). 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. 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 "the place of execution and instrument of such cultural change" (1990b: 287).

Fischer-Lichte brings our attention exclusively to the receiving tradition and sees intercultural theatre as a means to empower and revive an ailing or antiquated theatre/culture. She resolutely opposes the theoretical concept and 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" (1990b: 284). In reducing the dynamic of cultural Self and Other in favor of a single perspective of the Self, this intercultural hermeneutics runs the risk of

23 In her later article "Interculturalism in Contemporary Theatre" (1996), Fischer-Lichte points out a far more universal drive in reaching and acquiring the foreign: approximating a world culture. She argues that interculturalism primarily fulfills the functions within the home tradition, but "the intercultural in contemporary world theatre cannot exhaust itself through such culturally specific functions. It is aimed far more towards the idea of a future world culture-to-be" (38). In this regard, her later view of interculturalism is not too far from Pavis's. Intercultural theatre ultimately fulfills the demand for communication and mediation among divergent cultures, even to the point of creating a "universal language of theatre" (38).
being reductive and ethnocentric. When the foreign culture is considered on a par with the domestic and thus subject to appropriation, it is highly questionable 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, creating an "alienation effect," can help reveal what seems normal and natural in the home tradition as actually the "product of convention...[governed by] an ideological structure" (Tatlow 1990: 101). 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?

1.4.3 Comparative Models

The premise of this section is that the exchange between Eastern and Western theatre inevitably causes the encounter of their fundamental poetics. Poetics, the critical systems founded by gifted critics to define their literature, differ radically in various cultures because of the initial choice of exemplar genre--lyric, drama, or narrative--as the basis for critical conception. Over time, each tradition has developed a set of concepts and critical criteria of literature around its foundation genre, while overlooking other existing genres (Miner 1987: 123-4). In this study, we trace the originative poetics of the literary tradition in Eastern (Chinese) and Western culture and compare them in terms of generic formation and theatrical manifestation. The comparison can form feasible guidelines for analyzing the "hybridization" (Pavis) or "permanent dynamic" (Fischer-Lichte) occurring in the East-West intercultural theatre. Our study involves two aspects: comparative poetics and comparative performance aesthetics, two sides of the same coin.

According to Miner, the Western poetics is the only poetics deriving from an analysis of drama (1990: 24). Although Plato had discussed literature
systematically in his *Ion, Phaedrus* and *Republic*, it was *Poetics*, Aristotle's discourse on drama, that first defined literature as an autonomous entity.

Mimesis, the critical system which Aristotle established, has since become the critical paradigm of Western literature. It emphasizes representation, postulating that poetry imitates the world and provides universals of human expressions (Butcher 1932: 50). The spectator's pleasure comes from a conscious comparison of the poetry with the world and experience that is imitated (Chapter 4). Two significant implications are found in this poetics. One, it focuses on the aesthetic and logical grounds of poetry without taking direct account of ethical purposes (Butcher 1932: 225-6). Aristotle's theory seldom addresses the reception issue--the relationship of the poet and his work to the reader/audience. In other words, this poetics prioritizes aesthetic pleasure over moral teaching as the end of literature. Two, its emphasis on the inner structural relations of the dramatic work leads to a neglect of theatrical expression and convention. Aristotle places the importance of diction, song, spectacle and such performative aspects below the importance of those aspects related to the "art of poetry," including plot, character and thought (Chapter 6), implying that dramatic poetry can exist independently of theatrical presentation. Conceptually as well as practically, the dramatic medium ought to be rendered so transparent that it does not obstruct the spectator from being engaged to the artistic creation. This emphasis has significantly fostered the development of realism in Western arts.

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24 According to Miner, although Aristotle observes that tragedy evokes pity and fear and uses the term *katharsis* to suggest an "affective" function of poetic art and the response of the reader, he does not see the affective as an alternative to the mimetic poetics. Among a number of reasons, the view of philosophy over literature in the Academy (particularly held by his teacher, Plato) prevented Aristotle from further developing an affective poetic. Thus it was left for the Roman poet, Horace, to account for it. In his *Ars Poetica*, Horace acknowledges that poetry moves the reader by instructing and delighting him. The affectivism in Horatian poetics resembles that of the East Asian poetics. Historically speaking, Western poetics advocates that the purpose of literature is the Horatian teaching and delight, and its means is the Aristotelian mimesis (1990: 25-6).
In contrast, Asia (with the exception of India) has developed a lyric-based poetics which postulates no mimetic premises and even tends to question the idea of imitation. Miner calls the various Asian lyric-based poetics "affective-expressive," for they share the presumption of literary creation: "a poet is moved by experience or observation to give expression in words, and that expression is the cause of moving the listener or reader" (1990: 24-5).

Take Chinese poetics for further explanation. Lyric (shī) was the most prestigious genre in forming the definition of literature in China; drama did not fully develop until the thirteenth century and was highly influenced by lyricism. The earliest accounts of poetry clearly show that poetic expression is a moral issue, and is strongly associated with human emotion (Fan 1992: 83-4). Poetry is defined, according to the Classic of Documents (Shu Jing): "To verbalize the heart's wish or mind's intent" (shī yán zhī). Unlike Plato, who banishes poets from his ideal society, Confucius believes in the beneficial influence of poetry on the moral well-being of society. Confucius describes the ethical efficacy of poetry in the Documents of Rites as (Li Ji) "the warm glow and soft pliancy of life and the purity and simplicity of the soul" (wen-rou-dun-hou). It is very close to the Horatian "to teach and to delight," but it is more specific in terms of emotional impact. As a result, the purpose of poetic creation is not so much an autonomous aesthetic act as what will bring "moral influence" (fēng). The strong emphasis on affectivism in Chinese poetics led the much later developed dramatic genre to stress cultivation and morality.

25 Here we need to explain that the term shī in Chinese suggests a different generic nature from that of "poetry" or "lyric" in Western literature. The term "poetry" in Aristotle signifies an abstract notion of "making," and accommodates the two dominant Greek genres, drama and epic, drawing critical attention to the abstract principles of construction. Instead of being conceived as a critical terminology, the Chinese shī indicates an essential quality and nature of a natural-born art, and therefore can be absorbed by other genres such as prose, drama, and painting.

26 The moral emphasis of Chinese drama is manifested in a number of ways: a great proportion of plays are adopted from a corpus of historical subjects with
Affectivism in Chinese poetics leads to the distinctive development of theatrical expressions in Chinese drama, specifically in the prevalent use of music, dance, and spectacle in dramatic enactment to nurture emotional harmony and sensual pleasure in the audience. As mentioned, Aristotelian mimetic poetics places little emphasis on performance and audience, resulting in a playwright’s theatre with a strong focus on structure and philosophical concepts, as seen in Western "straight" drama. In contrast, Chinese drama seems much less analytical and structured, but it is profuse in emotional portrayal. Chinese drama can be described as an art which enacts the experience of the "heart" (qing, emotion or intent) in a lyrical framework (Fan 1992: 39-43). It does not intend to achieve formal mimesis but seeks to present what we may call the internal and imaginary verisimilitude.

Typically in Chinese traditional music drama, the dramatic action stops as the leading roles express in poetic language their inner experiences, such as yearning, lamentation, or sorrow over things past; these intense lyrical moments are amplified by the orchestration of music, dance and songs. The dramatic conflicts and climaxes, key elements in the plot of Aristotelian tragedy, often yield to the lyrical "retrospect" scenes and are only narrated rather than enacted. Therefore, the structure in Chinese drama does not necessarily build up from exposition to complication, crisis, and resolution, nor tightly weave action and characterization in a logistically progressive movement towards the climax. Instead, it obeys the emotional rhythm, concentrated on the scenes which are most pregnant with lyricism. Moreover, instead of developing a tragic aesthetics which seeks to evoke pity and fear in the spectator, as in high Greek drama, Chinese drama conventionally brings a play to happy ending. After

edifying themes; the roles are clearly categorized as evil and good, whose moral attributes are signified blatantly by make-up and costuming; and the insistence on poetic justice in the play often results in a happy ending.
experiencing emotional intensity in the course of the play, the audience is brought full circle to psychological reconciliation and emotional harmony.

Fundamentally, both the Western mimesis and the Chinese affective-expressive poetics reveal the interrelation of world, poet, and poetic work (Miner 1990: 11). The "world," or universe, is the natural or human environment outside the poet and poetic creation. Both the Western and Chinese poetics share the metaphysical presumption that the world is a real entity that can be understood and experienced through poetic creation (11). However, the "world" in the mimetic theory refers to the material world, the human society (as in Aristotle), or the conceptual and transcendental (as in Plato or the Romanticists); the mimetic poet seeks to represent the world as it appears to the "senses" (Butcher 1932: 127). In contrast, the Chinese poet pays much less attention to constructing an objective environment in which the dramatic event unfolds. Rather, the Chinese metaphysical concept of literature views poetic creation as manifestations of the cosmic "Tao"—a kind of collective spirit of the world or the totality of all beings (J. Liu 1975: 16; 1977: 3).

There are two Tao-related concepts from ancient Chinese philosophy which profoundly influence the lyric-based poetics—and ultimately the theatrical expressions. One is the notion of union with the cosmic Tao. Originally from the Taoist philosopher Zhuang Zu (Chuang Tzu, 369?-286? B.C.), it presumes that Tao can be reached through the union of subjective consciousness and objective reality, and that a simple self-oblivion or identifying oneself with things of the world can lead to an intuitive cognition of Tao (J. Liu 1975: 31). This view has developed a whole literary school which bases its critical criteria on the dynamics of the internal/subjective emotion and external/objective world.27 The

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27 The critic Ye Xie (1627-1703) clearly expresses the hermeneutics of poetic creation:

When a poet is touched by something and his inspiration rises, his ideas, words, and lines come out of the blue: they all come into being
dichotomy extends further to other dynamic opposites: I (wo) and object (wu); being (you) and non-being (wu); form (xing) and essence (shen); and words (yan) and meanings (yi). They are like yin and yang principles of cosmic Tao, complementary, inseparable, and even exchangeable (Yep 1983: 107). Their union is the basic principle of creation in the universe. A talented poet should grasp both of the opposite entities as nature in its totality. In their synthesis, art reveals the essence of things beyond their outward forms, and communicates profound meaning beyond expression of language.

As the subjective consciousness is dissolved into a higher cognition of Tao, language is recognized in its preconceptual and its paradoxical nature. The silent and wordless may have greater potential for connotation and poetic vision than words and concepts do. In the highest art where Tao is realized, one can "see the form out of the formless, hear the sound of the soundless" (Lan Fan 1992: 79). The Chinese hermeneutics of art was described by an early critic, Lu Ji (261-303 A.D.): "Tax non-being [or emptiness, xu-wu] to demand being [you]; knock on silence to seek sound" (qtd. and trans. in J. Liu 1975: 11). In theatre as well as fine arts and music, the emphasis is often not on the physical presence of artistry (language, form, color, or melody), but on what is often conceived in the bare, the empty, and the silent, for this is pregnant with meaning and lyric intensity. Theoretically, this paradoxical principle is shown in the contrast of motion and stillness, the concrete and the abstract, scarcity and plenty, being and nothingness, and sound.

[you] from nothingness [wu]. He takes them from his mind wherever he finds them, and he expresses them as "emotions" [qing], "scenes" [jing], and "events" [shi]. (qtd. and trans. in J. Liu 1977: 12) When the poet is moved by the external scenes to empathize with them and to capture the way of things intuitively, his poetry embodies the essence of things to be described, or Tao, rather than their particular outward forms.

28 These opposites are notions from early Chinese metaphysics, seeking to describe the principle of the creation of things in the universe and to detect the essence of things in its outward appearance. They have become critical criteria in literary and art criticism, and have influenced the development of traditional Chinese artistic practice. See Lan Fan (1992: 78-82; 212-214).
and silence. Their interaction and tension create what we loosely termed "stylization." Mei Lanfang observes this lyrical quality in comparing Chinese painting and histrionic art:

The painting is still; the play is in motion. The painting has form and composition to consider; the play has blocking and structure to attend to. The painter closely observes the landscape, people and natural objects in order to fill out the blank paper, whereas the actor seeks to express his art in a given dramatic situation within the cubic space of the stage. These are two different artistic forms, but both have to do with composition and structure. The relationship between the empty and the full, the simple and the complicated, and the abstract and the concrete, which every Chinese painting deals with, is also of great importance in a stage picture. This is an aesthetic taste and convention in our culture. (1954: 38)

A typical demonstration of this principle in Chinese theatre is the performer's frequent use of tableau in stillness (liangxiang) in a series of physical movements, accompanied with a moment of silence from the flow of music. This "motion-in-stillness" (along with the "silence-in-music") contains great lyrical intensity which is also shared by similar practices in other non-mimetic theatres such as Kabuki and Noh, where the pursuit of Tao is observed.

The other metaphysical concept embedded in the Chinese poetics is the unification of Heaven and Man, or the mutual empathy between nature and mankind, a thought widely advocated in various schools of philosophy in ancient China. In Taoism, this concept refers to the "returning to nature," and in Confucian philosophy, it indicates the correspondence between the moral decorum in human society and that in the universe--a microcosm organically and harmoniously related to a macrocosm; thus humanity is believed to reflect the regularity of the universe and vice versa. From this concept derives a "multi-perspectival" point-of-view particularly manifested in Chinese painting, which presents each unit of the overall picture equally and completely as if the viewer

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29 This unique humanist notion has been deep-rooted not only in Chinese art and philosophy but also in agriculture and medicine, seeing the organic, interrelated dynamics between the individual part and the whole (Fan 1992: 86 nt).
constantlj shifts his viewing position. For instance, in a typical landscape painting, one can see the house and the mountains behind the house and the river behind the mountains and the clouds behind the river, all in full view, each of which is a self-sufficient unit but is interrelated with the rest of the composition. In contrast, the Western scenic and fine arts has developed a realism-inspired "uni-perspectival" point-of-view, which foregrounds the dominant object and puts the rest in the background of the picture according to the laws of proportion and the logic of spatial organization.

Brecht, in comparing the use of perspective in traditional Chinese and Western paintings, points out the crucial difference. He comments that Western paintings tend to impose a single dominant perspective on the objects being portrayed, and thus "subjugate" the physical world, and particularly, its viewer into a passive role in perception and artistic imagination (Tatlow 1990: 125). Chinese paintings, he observes, do not constrain the viewer by representing the objects hierarchically, but render them in an order of interdependent correlation—a spatial order which is not an imposition. Under this multi-perspectival organization, the designs of a landscape painting contain a lot of freedom. The eye is able to go on a voyage of discovery. The things that are represented play the role of elements which can exist on their own and yet in the relationship which they form on the page they constitute a whole, if not an indivisible one. (qtd. in Tatlow 1990: 125)

These different perspectival principles are reflected in the different architectonic structure of scene-making in traditional Chinese and Western theatre (Lan Fan 1992: 460). In Chinese theatre, the multi-perspective is manifested in the episodic but continuous presentation of scenes; it enables the fluid transformation of temporal and spatial conditions on the stage, as one scene moves into the next without division (86). The viewing experience gives rise to a kind of hermeneutic freedom which recalls that of a Chinese painting. The stage
remains a dramatic void until the actor enters. The actor introduces the locale and time by vocal and gestural signs, and changes them accordingly; he "carries" the scene with him. When he exits, the stage becomes a neutral space again. The spectator exercises his imagination by creating the scene with the actor. The structure of a Chinese play is thus loose and episodic; each "scene" (between the actor's entrance and exit) belongs to a larger presentation but is essentially a self-sufficient unit. As a typical Chinese play has a single-plot structure focusing on one character, the aesthetic interest lies not in the plot or thematic ideas but in "how" the actors present the action. In comparison, the "scene" in Western theatre can be seen as a focal point to which converge dramatic events, characterization, and conflicts according to the law of probability and causality, just like the law of proportion regulating perspective painting.\(^3\) It sets a concrete physical environment before the players enter the scene. Its division is clear, often by way of curtains, blackouts, or change of scenic decor. Its development moves towards exposition, development, climax, resolution, and denouement of the action; each stage has a specific and distinctive rhythm. The significance of "scene" in Western theatre reveals a primary aesthetic interest in unfolding the plot, or the action being imitated from life--the "what" rather than the "how." The contrast of perspectival principles in Chinese and Western theatre confirms the traditionally recognized divergence between the "actor's theatre," a performance art, and the "playwright's theatre," a literary art.

Together, the three philosophical concepts (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. In criticism and in praxis it generates an aesthetic principle called "xie-yi," which, taken from the brushwork style of

\(^3\)This generalization can be dangerous. It specifically refers to the theatre traditions which follow Aristotelian poetics or the dramatic unities.
Chinese painting, literally means "writing meaning," or grasping the essential quality of the object rather than duplicating its outward appearance. This principle is responsible for Chinese theatre's heavy use of "xu-ni," or miming and gesticulating, to fictionalize the bare stage. It also accounts for the theatre's low demand for "iconic identity" (Keir Elam)—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 moon-lit 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 behaviors 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 affective-expressive poetics.

A significant development of this poetics is the high value of technical brilliance, including insistence on practice and use of models in acquiring artistry. This refers to the conventionalism of many Asian traditional theatres, in which the role categories, their specific acting and musical expressions, and the subjects, are all rigidly codified. Conventions are artistic codes regulated by the prevalent cultural and aesthetic principles of a society. They serve to reduce the

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31On the use of this term to describe the style of Chinese theatre, see Tatlow (1990: 106) and Huang Zuolin (1990: 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 "photographies"). 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 decor" (1990: 185-6).
otherwise arbitrary expression of life and permit the audience to contemplate the significance of the scene (Miner 1990: 44). 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" (qtd. in Tay 1990: 40). They are meant to prevent immediate recognition of the external world being portrayed. Dramatic conventions are particularly difficult to translate from culture to culture. Other literary genres have their specific rhetorical 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 (N. Frye 1957: 243-337).

These "rhythms" give a literary work translatability. With drama, a genre to be realized onstage through media other than verbal structure and one that has no specific controlling rhythm32, there is little universal code to rely on. Many first-time spectators of Noh drama or Beijing opera are frustrated with the heavy "make-up" (Miner) 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 conventionalism. In theatre and other visual arts, the dominant concern is not so much the originality of the subject as it is the overall quality of the performance; it should engage the whole consciousness of both the artist and the viewer in the creative process. The engagement is not through illusionism--art emulating reality and substituting for it--but through the candid use of artificial codes. Artistic conventions, when well performed, create in every nuance "the same

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32N. Frye (1957: 250). But 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.
distance from the actual; [and] the whole achieves a total unity of style" (Young 1930: 300). They present, as Miner pertinently remarks, the "virtual"—not the realistic, or real, or false (1990: 44); he quotes Japanese Noh master Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653-1724) 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. (1990: 45; emphasis added)

In the West, Aristotle's mimetic poetics, 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 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 seek to sustain illusion in a performance; it demands that the actor partake of the "public solitude" (Bernard Dort), talk and behave as if in a private domain, and it turns the spectator into a quasi-voyeur of an imaginary private life for a surrogate experience. On the other hand, the development of expressivism in Western theatre, which reached its prime in Romanticism, has led to the critical criterion of originality (Miner 1987: 125). This critical value has accounted for the incessant need for novelty and innovation in subject and form. To a great degree, it has also been the drive behind the attempt to acquire and assimilate alterity in the intercultural theatre.

The strong sense of conventionalism in Asian theatre used to make theatre an important integral part of the spiritual and social life of the community. Although nowadays conventions have frequently been blamed as the main obstacle in Asian theatre's adapting to the changing social reality, they remain
the powerful source of cultural identity and the celebration of magic of art. In recent years, originality and innovation have gradually become new criteria in some traditional Asian performances due to frequent encounters with the Western forms. This development creates great challenges to the established conventions, encouraging changes in artistic codes and experimentation with new structures.

1.5 Conclusion

In the beginning of the chapter, we questioned the validity of interculturalism in relation to the cultural autonomy and artistic creativity in contemporary Asian theatre. As interculturalism was disseminated and theorized from the West, it is important to have a clear purpose and method in establishing an Asian intercultural theatre. More importantly, we argue that, instead of rigorously defending its home tradition by setting up limits and boundaries, Asian theatre should openly, productively receive Western theatre traditions after thoroughly understanding them. The purpose of an Asian intercultural approach is not only to "sell" or "recycle" the native forms before they expire, nor to provide some kind of cultural showcase or tourist spectacle to whatever foreign markets exist. Rather, it is to rediscover a fresh, significant point of departure in living one's own origins and traditions. This is why many Asian intercultural works are politically-engaged, using interculturalism as an important performance strategy to represent cultural subjectivity, as opposed to an emphasis on formal, aesthetic experimentation which is often found in Western theatre involving Asian elements. So far a number of Western theatre artists, such as Barba, Brook, Wilson, and Schechner, have been consciously hosting East-West exchange on professional levels--through theatre projects, actor training, and academic discussion. It is time for similar programs and projects to be hosted by Asians inviting Western theatre artists' involvement, from the perspective and
method of traditional Asian theatre. With selective and cautious adaptation of Western elements, and with continuous exchange with Western theatrical circles, Asians can perhaps discover better options to revivify their national traditions and make them truly universal and contemporary.

An intercultural hermeneutics which we find from the history of encounter between Eastern and Western theatre is that the encounter involves a further understanding of the traditions at home. The positioning of the Other is a necessary act to identify and consolidate the Self as a cultural body, Foucault has told us. Behind the pursuit of the Other is the drive to change the deep structures of native culture and to discover alternatives. The European modernist avant-garde artists adapted a non-indigenous model from East Asian theatre to break away from their realistic drama. The Chinese and Japanese intellectuals, in contrast, saw in the realistic drama an ideal form to deal with modern themes and ideas, and thus imported the entire genre into their home cultures. Both endeavors transformed the practice as well as the conception of theatre.

Furthermore, the borrowed cultural/theatrical elements, when traveling back to their original tradition, have created new values or impacts which would not have been possible if they had never been adapted by the foreign. Brecht's epic theatre, which drew examples from Asian theatre aesthetics in the first half of this century, has become instrumental for traditional Chinese theatre's incorporation of modern staging techniques half a century later. As Tatlow puts it, the passage to the foreign can bring a critical assessment of what is regarded as "normality" in our cultural practice, and a chance to release what may have been "repressed" in the dominant cultural paradigms (1990: 128). Only then is

33 The Japanese director, Tadashi Suzuki, has hosted similar training projects involving Western actors and native Japanese actors. But his theatre is developed from modern concepts of theatre, not from traditional paradigms.
theatre interculturalism most meaningful and productive, its efficacy beyond mere aesthetic embellishment or exotic diversion.

In the next chapter, we examine the rise in importance of the innovation in Beijing opera in China and Taiwan during this century as the result of, and in reliance on, intercultural adaptation particularly from Western theatre. Chapter Three reviews a century of Chinese reception of Shakespeare, specifically in linguistic translation and theatrical presentation, as a manifestation of interculturalism effective in stimulating changes in indigenous culture/theatre. Chapters Four and Five give a critical study of two Shakespeare tragedies adapted to Beijing opera in 1986 and 1990, their particular socio-cultural environment, performance strategy, reception factors, and future prospects of Beijing opera using an intercultural approach.
CHAPTER TWO

TRADITION, REINVENTION, AND INTERCULTURAL POTENTIAL IN BEIJING OPERA

Beijing opera, the quintessential form of Chinese theatrical tradition, started to be portrayed as "sunset art" around 1980. Still highly visible and lively, and still hailed as a "national treasure" both in China and Taiwan, it was nevertheless long past its heyday and is experiencing a rapidly declining audience. Recent indexes showed that the majority of its audience was comprised of the older generation, and that the government-funded performances had greatly decreased in number in the past two decades (Meng 1988; K. Chou 1989; Wichmann 1990). Many articles, in discussing the future of this living art, gave out a "crisis" discourse, most of them unable to provide concrete solutions.

A "revitalization" discourse calling for the salvaging of Beijing opera, which emerged in the 1980s, further confirmed the general feeling of this crisis (Meng 1988: 9-10). Many different terms were used in discussing the issue, suggesting different methods, cultural attitudes, and aesthetic values involved in seeking the opera's survival.\textsuperscript{34} Despite the different approaches and focuses, the "revitalization" discourse pointed in two general directions: one, towards change and improvement from within the opera tradition; two, towards the creation of a new genre through hybridization with other theatre traditions outside the native Chinese theatre. The former one involved a milder process, based on the

\textsuperscript{34} Gaige, for instance, suggests change or reform in the genre's internal aesthetic structure and socio-cultural institution. Fuxing, emphasizing the authenticity of the art, calls for restoration and preservation rather than radical change. Chuangxin indicates innovation, with the connotation of re-creation of tradition to create originality. Also common is the use of xiandaihua, which literally means "modernization" and stresses the importance of updating the traditional form to meet the demands of the present times.
restructuring and refinement of the elements within the aesthetic tradition, including music, dramatic text, staging, spectator's viewing habits and so on, but keeping the core "spirit" of Beijing opera; modification would be made for the opera to remain palatable to the contemporary audience. The latter, a more radical approach, sought for non-indigenous models to complement, stimulate, and even subvert the native tradition in the hopes of growing a new creative impulse; it would go so far as to totally transform the genre into a new form. In general, the former, conservative approach was favored. The latter, "experimental" approach was often dismissed as a promotional gimmick designed for attracting non-initiates and foreign audiences; to some critics, it ran the risk of destroying the authentic opera tradition.

This chapter examines the making of Beijing opera theatre from 1790 to 1990 as a major aesthetic and socio-political institution in Chinese society, with a special focus on the attempts at its reform and revitalization in the course of its development. It hopes to answer the questions: what is Beijing opera's true "spirit"; what kind of native socio-cultural and artistic impulse has prompted this opera to adopt Western traditions; whether or not the intercultural approach is mainly for the "foreign market" (Reily 1997: 5)? Further, is it better for this theatre to retire to a dignified death, preserved in the museum and showcased for tourism, or to take on a new lease in life by transforming itself into a, perhaps, largely different form and style, drawing on non-indigenous dramaturgy? What other foreign traditions may be instrumental in Beijing opera's regeneration?

The approach to documenting the successive reform attempts in the shaping of Beijing opera is to cross-reference the cultural discourses on the revitalization of traditional Chinese culture, and to contrast the impact of the State's intervention on this theatre with the effort of the individual performers' private ventures in China and in Taiwan, respectively. Accordingly, attention
will be paid to Beijing opera as a system of artistic and socio-political codes, to identify its strength and weakness in signifying meanings in specific cultural, ideological environments. This study is composed of four parts. The first part outlines the genre's origin and tradition; the second part delineates its reform activities under various political banners; the third part is a critical study of three approaches in Beijing opera's adoption of Western dramaturgy; and the last part evaluates the potential and feasibility of an "intercultural Beijing opera."

2.1 Origin and Tradition

Beijing opera did not emerge until the last decade of the eighteenth century, and its development as a fully independent, influential genre only took place during the mid-nineteenth century. In other words, it is only two centuries old, which is relatively young if compared with other classic theatres such as Japanese Noh or Indian Sanskrit theatre. Nonetheless, its artistic origin is deeply rooted in the age-old performance tradition of China, and can be traced to as early as the eighth century A. D. It bears many conventions, from aesthetic to moral and philosophical.

"Beijing (Peking) opera" is the traditional translation of jingju, which literally means the "theatre of the capital city." Having little affinity with the European opera, Beijing opera is one of the 360-some forms of regional theatre in current Chinese areas (including Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong). All these regional genres share formalistic characteristics but are distinguished mainly by the melodic and percussive style as well as the linguistic dialect. Each genre originated from a certain geographical region, but some of them traveled and became influential, and were adapted into other areas. Beijing opera is one example of such theatrical hybridization. It is composed of elements from various melodic structures: qinqiang from the Shaanxi area, xipi from Hubei, yiyangquiang and erhuang from Jiangxi, and erhuang from Anhui--after
different traveling companies brought their local styles to the capital, Beijing, from the mid-1770s to 1830s, and created a significant integration of forms and styles (Mackerras 1972; Reily 1997: 13). It was immediately favored by the imperial court of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) and steadily developed, absorbing the northern linguistic and cultural modes, and became the artistically most mature and sophisticated genre by the 1860s.

The true spirit of Beijing opera was that of a mass theatre. It was the adaptability of the genre to the tastes of the times that made it the most eclectic, stage-worthy theatrical form of the existing genres. With its rich repertoire, wide variety of music patterns and elaborate performance techniques, and the competition among its distinctive troupes, Beijing opera replaced kunqu, a high-brow form favored by the literati and gentility since the mid-sixteenth century, as the most dominant theatre form in Beijing by the end of the eighteenth century. The four most prominent Beijing opera companies in the 1820s (three of them lasted until the end of the nineteenth century) created superior, sophisticated acrobatic techniques in military scenes (wuxi), which made their early audiences spellbound and subsequently became the hallmark of the genre— even until today. During the nineteenth century there were nine major xiuyuan, or theatres, in Beijing presenting this opera from morning to sunset, where the public enjoyed shows, met friends, drank tea, and talked business; going to the theatre was an integral part of social life. The number of public theatres increased to forty in the early twentieth century (Wen 1994: 206).

35Besides the commercial tea-house theatres which appeared, according to early documents, as early as 1671 in Beijing, there were also the temple theatres in religious sites, court theatres in the imperial and aristocratic families and theatres in the guilds. Beijing opera developed into a professional genre based on its artistic merit, as opposed to other types of theatres, particularly "folk forms," of which the function was primarily related to religious festivals and seasonal rituals. See Mackerras (1972), Chapter 7.
The Qing imperial court's readiness to abandon the aristocratic forms such as Kunqu to embrace Beijing theatre accounted for the prosperity of this mass drama. In addition to the court performers trained and supervised by its special bureau, the Manchu ruling class regularly summoned the best actors of the public theatres into the Forbidden City for court entertainment; this practice, which culminated during mid-1880 to 1910, significantly heightened the popular actors' social status which was based on artistic merit (Mackerras 1975: 79). Thus Beijing opera broke the class barriers between the court and the common populace, appealing to audiences of all social strata.

Beijing opera reached its prime in the 1920s and 1930s. A number of factors contributed to the flourishing: its major theatre companies established a standardized management system; theatre training schools were founded (Wen 1994: 190); female players and spectators were finally allowed into the public theatres: an increasing number of competent amateurs (piaoyao) joined the acting profession and brought in new creative energy (Mackerras 1975: 80); and the literati collaborated with renowned actors in creating new plays (cf. Wang Anqi 1996b: 62-73). Beijing opera entered the "age of stars," which signified the solid establishment of its tradition. The renowned actors developed their individual performance "schools" (liupaǐ)—acting styles marked by individual expressive techniques and melodic and vocal styles—passed their acting virtuosity down to their disciples, and created innovations and variations which, altogether, contributed to the variety of the tradition (Wichmann 1990: 147). Shanghai, the theatre Mecca in southeast China, imitated the form and sought to emulate Beijing's style by blending it with the local popular forms. Beijing opera was significantly transformed here. It was first performed in the large theatres modeled on the European style which could seat as many as four thousand viewers.

36 Until the Sino-Japanese War broke out in 1937.
(C. Xu 1991: 67). Scenery and stagecraft produced lavish spectacles—a common gimmick in the vigorous competition among theatres. Acting became more expressive and exaggerated. Shanghai's vital spirit created its brand of Beijing opera (haipai, or "Shanghai school"), giving a new dimension to the otherwise more reserved style of Beijing. From here, the genre further spread to central-south and southern China, such as Taiwan and Hong Kong (Dolby 1976: 178-180). By 1930, it was the most widespread popular theatre genre in China, and by the middle of the century it was recognized as the representative form of traditional Chinese theatre, the "national theatre" of China (Mackerras 1975: 35).

Beijing opera consists of the widest variety of theatrical ingredients a theatre can have—poetry, music, fine arts, acrobatics, dance and acting, with the actors as the creative center synthesizing all the elements. By comparison, playwrights, composers, or directors are of much less significance. In fact, traditionally Beijing opera plays are anonymously adapted or created by the actors, perhaps with the help from the literati, from popular novels, folklore, and earlier "literary" dramas; their plots are well-known and often simplistic, their dramatic structure loose and episodic. By strict Western standards, these plays present little literary value. Never reaching the kind of significance that "Sophocles or Shakespeare made in the West," comments Cheney in 1929, they are "little more than melodrama or hack journalistic plays" (120). It is important to note that the function of the play text in Beijing opera is for the performance; the text is but one of the many aspects which contribute to a total theatrical experience. As Brandon points out about traditional Asian plays, "there is little tendency to look first at a play in terms of its meaning. The theatrical art is regarded as a whole....Music, dance, elocution and spectacle may be appreciated for their own sake. Color, rhythm, harmony, and balance are legitimate concerns of artist and audience" (1972: 4-5).
As in all Asian traditional theatres, the aesthetic concern in Beijing opera goes beyond action and plot narrative, and focuses on a symbolic and lyric expression of the mental and emotional lives of the characters—the "miracle of moments" (Wichmann 1990: 146). There are three aesthetic principles that help shape the dramatic personages: synthesis (zonghe xing), which integrates and synchronizes the music, movement and speech with the dramatic situation on several levels mutually to reinforce all the performing aspects; convention (chengshi xing), in which the staging, role types and the acting codes, such as gestures and costumes, are all ascribed specific meanings by tradition and by Confucian values; and stylization (xiangzheng shoufa), which refers to the non-realistic style employed to represent things and behaviors in our real life in codified forms, both visual and aural, of which the aesthetic aim is always beauty (in Tung 1987: 185-188). Stylization is the root of Beijing opera's spirit, for it embodies the divergence between real life and artistic presentation; mimetic verisimilitude is by nature opposed to this spirit. Qi Rushan, scholar and Mei Lanfang's dramaturg, once famously described the stylization on Beijing opera stage: "No sound is not singing; no movement is not dancing" (1964: 18). The singing and dancing transform daily behavior into condensed gestural and vocal expressions. Reality is thus aestheticized.

What distinguishes Beijing opera from other traditional Asian theatre genres, besides formalistic aspects, is its secular and humanistic content. Unlike the Indian theatre and its affiliated traditions, which have a strong connection with religion and present a great number of supernatural beings, Beijing opera has severed itself from its religious origin and become secularized, performing largely human characters from familiar historical events (Yu Dagang 1987: 284). Replacing religious mysticism as the spiritual backbone of the theatre is a humanist-based Confucianism, which is simplified into a pragmatic set of ethic
rules; it advocates virtues applicable to human relationships, such as loyalty to
the ruler, filial piety to one's parents, brotherhood to friends, chastity in women;
and it praises patience, self-sacrifice, and perseverance against ambition,
disloyalty, greed and impiety. Moral didacticism expressed in the form of poetic
justice is incorporated as a dramatic convention and functions at a structural—
and therefore very meaningful—level. In Beijing opera's highly idealized world
of human relationships, characters are categorized into distinctive types
(hangdang) according to sex, general age, social status, and moral standing; these
types represent human beings of all kinds in a larger-than-life approach, and
each has its subtypes which portray more specific, complex characters and
temperaments. As its central characters are all human, Beijing opera presents a
relatively more "realistic" form than that of the religious dramas of Asia. Highly
colloquial speeches alternate with verses and songs, and music and dance
subordinating the linguistic expressions further clarify the verbal meanings (Yu
Dagang 1987: 285). The clarity of Beijing opera has made it a very popular art
appreciated not only by the elite class but also by the illiterate masses.

The term "opera" needs further qualification when we come to understand
Beijing opera as a system of performance. Unlike the Occidental opera, music in
Beijing opera is not the primary element in structuring the performative codes
and in determining the nature of the acting roles; it is not even composed for a
specific play but is often drawn from a repertoire of traditional tunes to suit the
specific type of the dramatic role and situation. More precisely, music in Beijing
opera is but one of the several dynamic stage "languages" which are enunciated
concomitantly during a performance and which are performed for their formal,
aesthetic values as well as for denotative meanings (Wichmann 1990: 146). The
"musical" language includes the xipi and erhuang melodic modes, both for song
and orchestral accompaniment; the "language of percussive patterns" (luogu
dian) conducts the rhythm of the scene and cues its emotive quality; the spoken language is Mandarin Chinese, the most influential dialect in China; the kinetic language is a highly complex set of conventional, stylized movements and gesticulations, sometimes incorporated with portable properties (Wichmann 1990: 146). There is also the language of fine arts which presents itself in color symbolism and patterns of make-up and costuming. The actor, who synthesizes these performative languages, performs in specific role types; different roles present different emphases in the stylized expressions of singing, recitation, acting, and acrobatics.

Not a realistic theatre of naturalism, Beijing opera is traditionally performed on a nearly bare stage furnished with no more than one table and two chairs. The flexible interchange of time and space in scene structure, the stylized, dance-like conventions of fictitious representation, and the non-illusionistic scenery are not characteristics attributed to this genre alone; they developed in the nanxi theatre of the twelfth century in southern China and became the fundamental principle of Chinese theatre. Therefore Beijing opera is a living tradition which continues a cultural form of the remote past.

2.2 Textual and Performative Innovation: Before 1970

In the course of Beijing opera's voluntary change37, various inventions and experiments occurred and left permanent marks within its performative structure. Indeed, change was a key factor for Beijing opera's immense popularity. Wichmann defines this change as "a process of interpretation, synthesis, and transmutation" (1990: 147). Originality was not about revolting against tradition for something completely novel; it was focused on how to adapt and blend other existent styles and forms to create "new" styles.

37 The term "voluntary change" is used to contrast the politically-ordained, and therefore ideologically involuntary, reform and re-creation of Beijing opera starting from the 1950s and culminating in the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).
Clearly, innovation was made according to the theatre's inner structural logic in combination with the requirements of the times. For instance, Mei Lanfang, the most accomplished female impersonator in Beijing opera by far, successfully combined a number of conventional role types into creating a new (sub)type in order to enlarge the physical and psychological range of the female role (dan). The new huashan subtype was a hybrid of qingyi (dignified lady), huadan (vivacious lady), and daomadan (blade-and-horse martial female role); it demands that the performer master singing, acting and a repertoire of kinetic techniques (Wichmann 1990: 147). But invention was often not just for demonstrating acting virtuosity; it suggests a cultural need as well. For example, qingyi, the refined lady, represents "rationality"—chastity, decorum, and refinement, as expressed by its performance techniques; it is the female ideal in traditional Chinese values. Huadan, the young, lively lady represents emotional impulse; her expression of individual freedom puts her morally and socially lower than the qingyi; but she is closer to life. And the combination of the two types in Mei Lanfang's huashan is a balance of the rational and emotional, the ideal and the realistic (Yu Dagang 1987: 333). In the times of a dawning women's consciousness, the portrayal of a complicated, multifaceted female personality must have been striking. Further, in their individual effort to create new plays and acting techniques during the 1920s, Mei and others totally subverted the traditional role hierarchy within the opera circle, replacing laosheng (middle-aged man) with dan (female) as the dominant role type with and thus greatly promoting the plays featuring female characters. These changes subsequently became valid pragmatic and semantic conventions overriding the old ones.

38 The "Four Major Renowned Dans" (si-da-ming-dan) elected by the enthusiastic Beijing opera fans in 1927 include Mei Lanfang, Shang Xiaoyun, Cheng Yanqiu, and Xun Huifang, all male actors acting in female roles. By 1933, each of them had performed up to forty new plays, which shows how much creative energy was in demand by their fans. Each of them has left a distinctive performance school
These innovations signified the result of a healthy dynamic between stage and auditorium, actor and spectator, theatre and social life in the development of Beijing opera. The actor-manager (such as Mei) was the creative authority in determining what to experiment, how to bring out his own technical strengths and to avoid his weaknesses in the productions, so as to adapt to the audience's changing taste and to the often heated commercial competition among players.

2.2.1 "Feudal Dross" in the Early Years of Modern China

Another type of change in Beijing opera is very different in nature, caused by what Fischer-Lichte would call "the overthrow of an era" (1990b: 285), that is, by the drastic shift of traditional culture and values. This type of change is often accompanied with a reformative intent, and can be highly intercultural when foreign elements are involved as a catalyst. The late years of the Qing rule saw a change of concept about theatre's social function. The confrontation with the Western powers resulted in the deterioration of China's Confucian ruling class and the rise of anti-Confucian rebellious movements. Theatre was re-defined as vital instrument to propagate particular political messages to the masses. The emergence of the Western-inspired Spoken drama, initially called "new theatre" (xinju), was a direct response to the call for a socially relevant art.

In contrast, the "old theatre" (jiuju), represented by Beijing opera particularly, became problematic in terms of its cultural and moral relevance. During the May Fourth period (1918-1925), when great efforts were made to modernize China, its traditional theatre was harshly criticized by the Western-
inspired reformers as outdated and uncivilized—a kind of feudal dross. Fu Si'nian, a leader and later the president of National Beijing University, fiercely advocated a theatre reform:

Old theatre is a reflection of the old society.... What kind of society is Chinese society? What kind of history is Chinese history? Its characters are tyrants, eunuchs, concubines, crafty courtiers, ambitious scoundrels, strategists, flatterers; its events are usurpation, contention of warlords, occupation, annexation, conspiracy, feasting, and homelessness—this is Chinese history. The wealthy oppress their neighbors; robbers harass the people; the common worship goes to money, power, official ranks; the general belief is in the supernatural, the exorcists, and the omens—this is Chinese society. The representation of the two despicable [cultural] products is Chinese theatre. (Qtd. in Hong 1961: 194-5)

Paradoxically, the strong condemnation of traditional theatre did a great service to Beijing opera, which had been dismissed as merely obscene and vulgar by the intellectual class. It was endowed with a new cultural significance; for the first time Beijing opera was seen as a product created from socio-historical processes, a form embodying the tradition and values of Chinese culture (Wang Anqi 1996b: 1-2). Behind the criticism was a new understanding of this popular form as a powerful and influential agent to influence the masses.

Although largely unaffected by the cultural dispute of new and old in the conservative circle of Beijing opera,39 a number of intellectual artists from the "old theatre" avidly responded to the call for reform in the hope of attaining social and political relevance on the traditional stage. Wang Xiaonon, a rare scholar-actor of the laosheng role, heralded the trend of adapting current political subjects in his plays to heighten the sentiment of patriotism; it is reported that his audience was moved to rage while watching his dramatizations

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39Song Chunfang, a scholar of Western drama, observes in 1922: "In recent years the new dramatists in our country have displayed a very constructive attitude and have readily taken up the doctrines of Europe and America... But even the immortal works of the great men of world literature, be they by Shaw or Ibsen, were not able to overcome the attractive power of Mei Lanfang and Tan Xinpei (1848-1919, a renowned actor for his singing and martial techniques, a favorite of the Dowager Xici and once called 'King of the actor' in Beijing)" (1923: 85).
of the fall of a nation (Hong 1961: 184-5). Tian Jiyun, another progressive actor, boldly presented his reformative ideas in the court performances and, undaunted by the order of the Empress Dowager to arrest him, continued to perform plays which promoted democratic revolution on the outskirts of Beijing before the toppling of the Qing Dynasty (Mackerras 1975: 48). Liang Qichao (1873-1929), a pioneer reformer, wrote an unfinished play called *New Rome* in traditional *chuanqi* form to enlighten his readers on China's liberation from the imperialist powers. In forty acts with a prologue, the play evokes the history of the Italian Risogrimoneno and its struggle for national independence—an apt parallel to contemporary China. The play was a curious hybrid of the native and foreign elements, apparently to help native readers become familiar with foreign subjects. Dante sings the prologue, dressed as an aged Taoist immortal and riding on a crane and joined by Shakespeare and Voltaire from a cloud; the tableau of the three represent the three chief values in modern Western civilization: nationalism, humanism, and rationalism (Yang Haiping 1992: 55). The three founding members of the Young Italy Society (whose effort helped unify Italy in 1860) are cast in familiar heroic images from the Chinese traditional theatre and quote Confucius. The play was never valued for its aesthetic achievement, but the use of interculturalism was significant. Its author found a link between art and socio-political efficacy in the Italian example, and wished to elucidate it to the Chinese reader through such an intercultural dramaturgy (Dolby 1976: 197-201).

Realism was soon found useful to enhance Beijing opera's topicality; it first appeared in the elements of staging only, and later was incorporated in the structure of the plays. Pan Yuechao, Xia brothers Yueshan and Yuejun, actor-managers of Shanghai's New Stage theatre and avid reformers of the traditional theatre, converted their venue into a "modern" one based on the architectural model of the Western stage. They were the first to use realistic scenery for
traditional performances and to produce traditional plays with current social themes, such as the harm caused by smoking opium (Mackerras 1975: 121-3). Wang Zhongsheng, a colleague of the aforementioned progressive actor Tian Jiyun, brought their drama of social themes to Shanghai and Tianjin, the two major theatre centers in China besides Beijing. His performances were said to go beyond Beijing opera convention: the musical accompaniment, which defined Beijing opera as a distinctive regional theatre, was abolished to give room for speech, and, accordingly, they resembled the Western-inspired spoken drama.40

Even the box-office stars felt the need to adapt to the new social demands, thus opening the trend of "creating new plays" (bian xinxi). Mei Lanfang first requested his scholarly friend Qi Rushan to adopt topical stories to his theatre and performed them in contemporary dress.41 Five of Mei's new plays took subjects from real incidents of the day, addressing the evil of prostitution, the harm of superstition and arranged marriages, women's low status in marriage, and the corruption of politics, respectively.42 The form was a hybrid, with actors in contemporary dress, acting in a way to a certain degree similar to daily behavior, and talking in new phrases such as "modern civilization," "law," and "freedom for marriage" on a stage with some realistic scenery (Mei 1954: 2: 69). The plays were

40Wang Zhongsheng was among the first leaders of the new Spoken Drama since its inception in 1907. He helped to found the Chunyang She (Spring-sun Society) in Shanghai to promote this form. He died a martyr in 1911, executed by the Qing rulers for his out-front revolutionary activities, just a few weeks before the Manchus were overthrown (Mackerras 1975: 48-9).
41According to Qi Rushan (1964: 78-86), he initiated the trend of creating new plays in Beijing opera circles. During the years from 1915 to 1928, he created forty-some new plays solely for Mei Lanfang, including some adaptations from old works. After Mei's success with new plays in the 1920s, other star performers also requested their scholarly friends to create new plays for them. According to Mackerras, such a practice was most common among the dan performers and thus eventually upgraded the status of dan as the primary role type in Beijing opera (1975:65-66).
42These shizhuang xinxi, or "new plays in contemporary dress," were created in the years after 1913, including Niehai Bolan (Surges of the Sea of Sin), Laoyu Yuanyang (Star-crossed Lovers in Prison), Huanhai Chao (Tides in the Sea of Politics), Deng Xiagu, Yi Lu Ma (A Thread of Hemp), and Tongnu Zhan She (Little Girl Killed the Snake). See Mei (1954: 2: 3-9, 65-78; 3: 172-177).
well received by Mei's audience, who are reported to have responded to the
homely subjects and their novel presentation with tears and applause (71).

Aesthetically, however, the earliest reform of Beijing opera faced
limitations in adapting modern subjects to its form. The genre's codified
expressive techniques could not adequately accommodate all the realistic details of
the modern subjects. The forced blending of the two only produced a total break-
down of the opera's conventions, as Mei Lanfang recalled:

First is the conflict between music and movement. In Beijing
opera...every gesticulation corresponds to the rhythm of music and
is presented in dance-like movement; thus a character can be
expressed according to the regulating conventions. But when
Beijing opera adopts modern dress, everything is reduced in scale
and becomes difficult to incorporate into the slow modes of the opera
music; operatic singing, naturally, concedes to dialogue. Likewise,
the conventional melodic styles and percussive patterns become
very awkward... [and] sometimes have to stop altogether. As a result,
without the orchestration of music, the actor's movements involving
hands, eyes, torso, steps, and vocal tones have nothing to rely on for
hymn control but are left to the actor himself. (1954: 3: 172)

In other words, Mei's reform fell short due to the fundamental incompatibility
between a realistic mode and a non-mimetic one. The arbitrary movement of
daily behavior in modern theatre to evoke a "slice-of-life" verisimilitude is alien
to Beijing opera's artistic principles. Mei's hesitation to continue portraying the
"young ladies and little girls" of the contemporary plays perhaps not only
stemmed, as he states, from his "getting old...[and] unsuitable" (3: 172), but from
an awareness that, as a male actor, ultimately he could not represent female
characters convincingly on a realistic stage.

The problematic in the earliest Beijing opera reform is distinctive. On the
one hand there was a traditional form highly popular at different audience levels
but strongly resistant to modernization; and on the other hand there was a
modernized form designed to transmit social, revolutionary content but
patronized almost only by the urban intelligentsia. On the one hand there was an
aesthetic principle reflecting art as pleasure, beauty and harmony. On the other there was a tendency to represent reality, including the dark side of it. The subsequent reformative activities in Beijing opera have been a tug-of-war between the two demands.

2.2.2. The Politicization of Theatre in Mainland China

Eberstein, in delineating the rise and fall of the traditional Chinese opera in the five decades after Western dramaturgy was actively introduced into China during the 1920s, observes that the subsequent reforms of the native theatre have always conformed to the immediate ideological demands of a given time (1982). There were two aspects in the process of the politicization of theatre: one aspect was the use of traditional opera as a form to promote national identity; the other aspect involved further experimentation with the opera to disseminate specific political messages. Together, they transformed Beijing opera from a mass drama to a cultural form highly saturated with political propaganda.

As early as the 1930s Chinese traditional opera was recognized by the leftist artists as a form inspiring national identity. As such, it was irreplaceable by the elitist Spoken Drama and a better instrument of popular education. Spoken Drama, originally a more effective vehicle of modern ideas, nevertheless failed to develop a "mass character." During the Sino-Japanese war (1937-1945), a score of opera troupes actively performed traditional plays with patriotic subjects in the hinterland to uplift anti-Japanese spirit. Some Spoken-Drama playwrights, such as Tian Han, also turned to the traditional forms. It was a propagandist triumph as the whole country shared the national crisis and responded readily to the patriotic message embedded in the performances.

Among all artistic forms, theatre was particularly favored by the Chinese Communists, for it had always been a popular art created for and enjoyed by the poorest sections of the country; it belonged to "the people's culture" and had great
potential in fostering mass movements. Conscious efforts to reform the traditional theatre started in the Communist-controlled areas during the 1940s, as the party urged its artists to study how to use "national forms" (minzu xingshi) to convey revolutionary and patriotic ideas. However, the profound gap between the grass-root forms and the lofty ideological substance was never resolved. The efforts were intensified in 1950s, as the newly established People's Republic of China (PRC) government launched a nation-wide "theatre reform." Systematic reform involved collecting, reassessing and rewriting old plays, imposing censorship on ideologically "harmful" and "reactionary" plays. All existing theatre companies were also nationalized and their actors re-educated. Beijing opera was particularly targeted for radical reform. "Contemporary plays" (xiangdaixi) were written, new plays set in the twentieth century which could reflect the class struggle between the masses of "workers, peasants and soldiers"...
and the capitalist bourgeoisie. They were hybrid forms of Spoken Drama and traditional opera, of which costume and stage movements were made more realistic and modern and certain "feudal" aspects were abandoned, such as the old role types, Confucian moralism, and certain acting techniques, such as the young male's falsetto voice and the practice of female impersonation by male actors.47

The systematic reform of Beijing opera culminated in the years during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). Under the increasing ideological restraints resulting from the political struggle of the party factions, an attempt to totally revolutionize the theatre eventually led to the abolition of the "pure" traditional opera by mid-1966. Under the charge of Jiang Qing, Mao's wife and an ex-actress, it was prevailingly believed that such an old feudal form could not contain progressive content, and a radical revolutionary form was advocated to replace it.48 Beijing opera, the only remaining traditional form, was radically dissected, its formal elements singled out and incorporated into ideologically correct subjects, characterization, and narratology. It was eventually made into one type of "model revolutionary play" (yangbanxi), the only theatre allowed in this era. By the end of 1966, professional theatres were virtually shut down, their artists forced to reform, and eight "models" were created to fit the official canon, among which five adopted formal elements of Beijing opera. By 1976, these eight works had expanded into eighteen, many of them variants of the original eight.

47Some productions of the "contemporary plays" widely deviated from the traditional models. The dominant style was realism, which abandoned the traditional costume and stylized gestures altogether, and only the language, the melodies and certain orchestral accompaniment still indicated the plays' traditional origin. See Mackerras (1975: 205).
48A pervasive view saw Beijing opera as "a product of the feudal period and expressive of emperors, kings, generals and ministers or scholars and beauties, all of whom belonged to the exploiting classes," and therefore it was incapable of representing the proletariat class. The state's mouthpiece Red Flag (Hongqi) newspaper concluded in 1964: "modern dramas must replace the old [drama] on the stage, and this is an irresistible historical impulse....We advocate the revolutionary modern drama which alone must occupy the major position on the stage" (qtd. in Mackerras 1975: 169).
For nearly a decade these "models" monopolized China's theatrical landscape, reducing the nine hundred million Chinese into one ideologically collective spectator.

These "model" Beijing opera productions were all based on pre-existing texts, from novels, films, or regional operas, and depicted the proletarian heroes and heroines in stereotyped situations such as class struggle or resistance wars against oppressive powers. Their dramatic structure was not much different from that of the well-made play, with distinctive emphases on the most heroic and positive aspects, including highlighting the class consciousness of the characters and the unambiguous contrast between the heroes and villains (McDougall 1984: 294). Beijing opera's conventional expressive techniques were thoroughly studied and re-processed for this demand, while Western theatrical elements were widely adapted. For example, new music modes were invented out of the traditional repertoire to suit the role of modern heroes in singing. Western musical instruments were employed on a large scale, among which piano was considered more expressive and forceful in expressing heroism than the Chinese instruments. Gesticulation, dance, acrobats, and costuming were also reinvented to create bold theatrical effects and spectacle. Among them, the workers' clenched-fist salute vividly recalled the international proletarian movement (McDougall 1984: 294-295). The mass scene seemed a legacy of Russian realistic theatre. On the whole, the "model" operas presented a quasi-realistic mode with ideologically explicit messages.

In many aspects, the "model" productions presented the most radical and creative effort ever made to reform this genre, made possible only by an artistic laboratory fully monitored and supported by the State. Contrived and stilted as their political themes may have appeared, they were not all disliked by the general public; in fact some of them were reported artistically gratifying and
have survived today (Zhou Lingfei 1992: 194). However, the "model" opera is a problematic cultural form. It was a product of specific socio-historical situations, under the demands of which its greatest function was to unify China under a single political view. But when the external demands no longer existed, as in the post-Revolution era, the form also lost much significance. Since China launched the open-door policy and partial free-market economy in the late 1970s, the kind of lab situation ideal for concentrated artistic experiment has no longer existed. The ideological connotation in the "model" plays and their association with the disastrous times of the Revolution have also incurred criticism and rejection of Beijing opera reform in that direction (Wichmann 1990: 149-150).

Reform of Beijing opera in China in the 1980s was not politically mandated but was rather a practical response to its diminishing appeal to the contemporary audience, according to Wichmann's field research (1990: 148). Although the genre was revived to its classical form after the Revolution, enjoying immediate popularity and widespread influence again, by the mid-1980s its audience was reduced and aging. Granted, after a decade of destructive severing from its traditional roots, this genre was not readily comprehensible and appreciable to the young generations, and there was no further political urgency to support it as the privileged "National Theatre." Besides, the government's introduction of free market competition into the performing arts sector to eliminate the state-run management system caused further downsizing of theatre troupes. Even worse, TV and film entered the public domain and replaced theatre as the major popular arts. To meet the new demands of the audience, the artists continued to experiment with form and style, seeking local changes in music, costume, lighting, and scenery. The more controversial strategy was the application of the Stanislavsky system in Beijing opera direction, to make its staging and acting "closer to life" (geng jiejin shenghuo). This has inevitably imposed incompatible
demands on the traditional actors (Wichmann 1990: 158). The difficulty to integrate realism into the non-mimetic Beijing opera conventions only repeated Mei Lanfang's problems in the 1920s.

The reform of Beijing opera in China in the late 1980s took three different directions in order to retain audiences of various levels, according to Wichmann's research. The first was to improve the overall quality and status of the tradition by enhancing its theory development, professionalism, audience education, and overall creative impetus; this could attract more educated and sophisticated audience, who appreciated the traditional art. The second was to incorporate popular innovations with traditional stagecraft; this might attract the general public--both the "semi-educated" urban audience and the "semi-literate" peasantry. The third was to create productions which contained more intellectual and philosophical substance, and expressed it through avant-garde theatrical forms; this could make Beijing opera an élite form, representative of "high" culture (1990: 165-166).

To a certain extent, these proposals were problematic, as Wichmann finds, but they nevertheless suggested the future development of Beijing opera. The opera might not be able to revive its popularity as an art for all classes, as in the past. But it could gradually diversify to reach particular audience groups. In other words, the future of Beijing opera depended on its pluralistic development. The history of Beijing opera proved its eclecticism, especially its intercultural potential—the capability to absorb foreign elements.

Pluralism seemed particularly feasible to reform a theatre which had been subject to single-minded political appropriation. For decades Beijing opera had served to implement the State's propaganda, and when finally freed from the external forces it basically had to "unlearn" the political signification imposed on its linguistic and performative structures. However, it was difficult to replace the
currently politicized form with its traditional form of the pre-Communist era, since the "feudalistic" Confucian values, deeply embedded in this earlier form, were no longer valid for many Chinese after years of fierce condemnation under Communist doctrine. Thus Beijing opera seemed to struggle for survival in a state of spiritual vacuum. The old plays and the "models" both lost much relevance to the contemporary audience. One gateway to regain élan vital was to reach out to non-traditional, non-indigenous forms and traditions. An apt example was the Shakespearean productions adapted to traditional opera styles in the 1986 International Shakespeare Festival in Beijing and Shanghai (See Chapter 3). The vivid, exuberant humanism in the Shakespearean texts was congenially embraced by the Chinese audience and artists; it met the strong native demand for returning to a theatre of humanity, a theatre about human beings. Therefore, the intercultural tendency in the future reform of Beijing opera may seem a great territory waiting for exploration.

2.2.3 Preservation of a "Cultural Symbol" in Taiwan

Beijing opera in Taiwan is the legitimate heir to that of Mainland China, for its performance system, organization of the troupe, and even audience groups were very similar. Four factors make up this genealogical relationship: 1) Beijing opera was directly transplanted into Taiwan by the Chinese artists who fled from the Communist regime to this island and was fostered by the Nationalist government's cultural policy as the privileged form; 2) the transmission of Beijing opera performance knowledge in Taiwan basically followed the traditional system established in Beijing and Shanghai; 3) the earliest groups of Beijing opera playwrights, critics, and audiences in Taiwan were from China, and they helped maintain much of the artistic environment and standard held in China; 4) the future development of Taiwan's Beijing opera anticipates re-
integration with that of China through increasing exchange and interaction, as
has started since the early 1990s.

Although Taiwan's Beijing opera was also highly politicized, its reform and
reinvention undertook a very different route from that of Mainland China.
Instead of radically altering its traditional form to express modern revolutionary
subjects, as in China, the effort made by Taiwan's government was to preserve and
to restore the "pure" tradition of this opera as the national treasure, intact with
the passage of time.

2.2.3.1 Immigrant Art Taking Root

Historical records show that Beijing opera was an immigrant art taking
root in Taiwan—the island southeast of China inhabited by the Chinese whose
ancestors had migrated since the seventeenth century and whose mother tongue
was the dialect, Taiwanese.49 As early as 1886, Beijing opera was introduced to the
Taiwanese by a touring troupe from Mainland China and subsequently became a
familiar art. Because its actors performed in Mandarin, the official language, this
genre soon attracted the Taiwanese elite class—the "high officials, eminent
personages, scholars and the gentry"—and was alternatively called "the capital's
theatre" (jingban) or "opera of the official language" (zhengyin)—names imbued
with respect (Lü Sushang 1961: 195-213). It enjoyed greater appreciation by the
upper-class Taiwanese after the island was ceded to Japanese colonialism (1895-
1945).50 From 1916 to 1924, theatre troupes were frequently sent from as far away

49 Taiwanese is a dialect most spoken in Taiwan. It derived from a number of
dialects used in south Fujian Province, an area where Taiwan's first Chinese
immigrants came from some three hundred years ago.
50 For example, the Taiwanese intermediary with the Japanese colonial
government, Gu Xianrong, regarded Beijing opera highly and frequently
provided private performances in order to cajole the Taiwanese intellectuals for
his political advantage. He took over a theatre from the Japanese and made it a
venue for Shanghai and Fuzhou troupes, and renamed it "Xinwutai" (New Stage,
1916-1923). The prestigious Lin family of Banqiao Township (in Taipei
Prefecture), also passionate about the opera, often summoned Beijing opera
as Shanghai and Fuzhou, and two venues were established in Taipei especially for this genre, often causing heated competition for audiences.\textsuperscript{51} Even the colonial government could not ignore its popularity and displayed it in official events in the years before Sino-Japanese War, for it understood this theatre's symbolic significance and promoted it to stabilize social order (Qiu Kunliang 1992: 165).

Though the dialect and music style used in Beijing opera were unfamiliar to the Taiwanese native ear, this theatre was similar to the local operas, albeit more sophisticated, in performance system and dramatic subjects. Therefore its interaction with the regional forms was only natural. Before 1937, Beijing opera was adopted by local professional and amateur troupes and was performed widely in religious festivals, private celebrations, and on the professional stage. The elaborate scenery, stage effects, and advanced acrobatic techniques especially characteristic in Shanghai style made a great impact here. Some touring actors remaining in Taiwan became acting coaches in the local troupes (Qiu Knurling 1992: 167). By World War II, Beijing opera had become a familiar genre in Taiwan, as it was gradually integrated into the cultural life of the masses.

However, it did not continue to develop in a spontaneous way in postwar Taiwan due to the change of political landscape. With the establishment of the Communist People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 and the exodus of the expelled Nationalist Government (KMT) and many Mainlanders to Taiwan, Beijing opera was systematically transplanted and fostered in the island under a regimental nationalist doctrine. Before further examining this development, an account of the political relationship between Taiwan and China seems called for. Both the troupes for public performances during festive times or celebrations (Qiu 1992: 163-5).

\textsuperscript{51}During this period of time, each year saw at least two Mainland Chinese Beijing opera troupes perform professionally. The year 1924 even saw five touring troupes. After this period, the emergence of silent film and the increasingly popular local Taiwanese theatre gezai xi lured away many of Beijing opera fans. See Lü Sushang (1961: 198-209).
PRC and KMT governments have claimed Taiwan as part of the Chinese territory, each assuming the sovereignty of the one and only "China." Taiwan's KMT considers itself as the direct, and therefore the legitimate, descendent of China's first democratic republic, established in 1912 as the Republic of China (ROC). But it has suffered setbacks since the 1970s when it lost most of its diplomatic relationships with foreign governments and its "Chinese" seat and the Security Council in the United Nations to the PRC government. Even so, the KMT government resolutely pursued and projected a Chinese identity in Taiwan in the three decades from 1950 to 1980, most obviously in its cultural policies.

Ten or so private professional Beijing opera troupes, mainly from China, enjoyed a short prosperity after the Second World War, but soon faced jeopardy and eventually disbanded in the early 1950s. Two key reasons accounted for this. First, the Beijing opera audience, most concentrated in Taipei, was not large enough to support that many troupes, in comparison with the broad market base in Shanghai, Beijing, and Tianjin and their surrounding areas. Second, the KMT government started to monopolize the genre for political purposes, recruiting players and musicians to its newly-founded, state-funded troupes with which the private troupes simply could not compete. In any case, the dissolving of private professional troupes marked the end of the stage in which Beijing opera grew in the spontaneous environment of popular life.52

2.2.3.2 Cultural Symbol and Defender of Nationalism

It may seem odd for a theatre to gain patronage from military forces, but that Taiwan's Beijing opera troupes and training schools were founded and sponsored by the Armed Forces was socially and politically pragmatic.53 The

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52 Lü Shshang observes that the taking off of the movie industry also halved Beijing opera's regular audience (1961: 222).
53 The Air Force first founded its Beijing opera troupe in 1950, followed by the Navy in 1954, and the Army in 1958. After 1967, many of them were ordered to disband and only the major three troupes (Air Force, Navy and Army) remained,
1950s was an era when Taiwan's situation seemed particularly bleak. The constant political threats from China, the conflicts within the island between the Taiwanese-born and the immigrant Mainlanders, and the lack of economic resources and international support, all made Taiwan extremely isolated. The government proclaimed martial law, allocating its strength mainly to military defense and patriotic propaganda. Theatre, particularly Beijing opera, was soon recruited as spiritual cheerleader and morale booster for the military troops, of whom many were Mainland-born and still had family ties there. The Beijing opera troupes, founded during the years between 1950 to 1961, provided the two million soldiers and high ranking officers a token of motherland, a form to nurture nostalgia. The monopolization of Beijing opera by the Armed Forces was to last until 1995.

Beijing opera performances not only provided psychological comfort for the men at arms, but soon incorporated propaganda of patriotism and nationalism, which the government now reinforced on the people in order to stabilize Taiwan and to prepare for regaining the territory lost to the Communist regime. The military Beijing opera troupes, along with other state-funded dramatic groups, formed a propagandist brigade performing "anti-Communist-and counter-Soviet drama" (fangongkang'e jiu)--plays which contained explicit patriotic messages or themes on the restoration of lost territories. The KMT government had recognized the political function of theatre mainly through its successful use of the art during Sino-Japanese War, and even more so, through the hard-learned lesson during the civil war (1948-1949) when it lost an ideological battle to the Chinese

Each having a training school. In 1985, the three schools merged into one, the Guoguang Theatre Arts Experiment School, which not only specializes in Beijing opera but also in spoken drama, music, dance and acrobatics. In 1995, the three existing military opera troupes were disbanded and all their members were re-appointed to Guoguang Opera Company, an affiliation of Guoguang Theatre Arts Experiment School, under the administration of the Ministry of Education. Thus the theatre's political career was over and it might finally have a new lease of life as an independent art. See Wen (1994: 219) and Li Xiaoti (1995: 30).
Communists who effectively utilized theatre to propagate socialist ideas (Jiao Tong 1990:62-63).

Among all theatre forms, Beijing opera was the only one privileged with generous support from the State in Taiwan, the reason being that, more than any other genres, it could bring to the audience a strong sense of Chinese consciousness (H. B. Zhang 1997: 118). The symbolic value of "Chineseness" in this genre was especially significant from a political perspective. In the 1960s as the Communists launched the Cultural Revolution to eliminate traditional culture in China, Taiwan's KMT government turned the island into a stronghold of Chinese cultural heritage, opting for a "Chinese Cultural Revival Movement." While the PRC regime turned Beijing opera into revolutionary "models," the KMT government counteracted it by pursuing preservation and restoration of a "pure" and "authentic" tradition. By officially designating Beijing opera as the "national theatre" (guoju), the KMT regime hoped to make a link between its self-claimed roles as the bearer of Chinese culture and as China's legitimate political ruler. In the same token, Beijing opera was transformed from a cultural symbol to an active defender of nationhood. "Nationalism," as Katherine Chou states, played a major role in the development of Taiwan's Beijing opera, systematically controlling the performance activities, audience groups, and the administration and management of the opera troupes, and the training schools (1989).

The military opera troupes were engaged in heavily-scheduled playing in order to popularize the "national theatre." A permanent venue was established in Taipei in 1965, at the "National Armed Forces Cultural Centre" (seating 1020); it provided over 250 performances a year to the general public. Prestigious performers routinely played for the troops in various military bases. Starting in 1967, the government regularly sent the opera troupes for international tours, mainly to "comfort the overseas Chinese and to prove to the world how the
Republic [of China] cherished the nation's cultural heritage" (K. Chou 1989: 22). Beijing Opera performances were daily aired on the radio, a popular entertainment for many. In the 1970s, Beijing opera was broadcast on the television at prime times without commercials. The opera troupes also performed routinely for the public schools; compulsory attendance was imposed on all pupils. Under the promotion by the central and local cultural agencies and semi-public organizations such as the Learned Society of Appreciation of Beijing Opera ("Guojuxinshangxuehui"), amateur troupes were formed and performed actively. In 1977, in Taipei alone, there were over two hundred plays performed by the amateur actors (piaoyou). Beijing opera amateur clubs (piaofang) were also established widely in educational institutes, communities, and workplaces (Wen 1994: 220). By 1980, it had firmly established its superior position in Taiwan's traditional culture.54 "National theatre" had replaced "Beijing opera" and become a more familiar usage for the general public.

2.2.3.3 Preservation Versus Reinvention

The State's intervention in Beijing opera in Taiwan involved three areas: theatre education, censorship, and competitions. The cultural policy supervising these areas prescribed strict outlines for preserving the theatre tradition; nevertheless, it created serious obstacles for genuine artistic reinvention. The genre became problematic culturally and artistically in the 1970s as Taiwan moved quickly into an industrialized, culturally pluralistic society. The expensive and extensive official support could not stop it from decline.

54 In comparison, the Taiwanese regional forms had been deliberately ignored, and often suppressed, until the 1980s. Scholar Yu Dagang and other critics had advocated during the 1970s that preservation of Beijing opera alone is not enough for preservation and expansion of Chinese traditional theatre; efforts should also be made on behalf of other genres such as local operas and puppet theatres. See Wen (1994: 219); H. B. Zhang (1997).
1/ Conservative Theatre Education: Beijing opera's training and education in Taiwan was geared to preserving the most "traditional," and thus most "authentic" and "orthodox," form of the theatre. In the training schools established during the 1950s and 1960s,55 much emphasis was placed on continuation of the artistic tradition brought from the Mainland, rather than on reinventing the opera in order for it to adapt to the living social, cultural, and linguistic environment in which it was now set. Even in the 1990s, the most prestigious institute, the National Fu-Hsing (Fu-Xing) Dramatic Arts Academy, still relies greatly upon the conventional method of oral transmission, and the instructors are mostly senior performers from its affiliated troupe instead of scholars who can transplant the performance knowledge into modern scientific pedagogy and make the training more effective and creative (Wang Shiyi 1990: 15). The current curriculum showed that an average student's eight years of training focused almost exclusively on performing Beijing opera and had little exposure to other theatre traditions, Chinese or foreign. The senior artists, teachers, and critics were much more preoccupied with "how they had done in Beijing's Fu-Lian-Cheng Training School"56 in transmitting performance knowledge to their disciples than willing to giving room to new artistic creation and experimentation.57

55See also Note 50. National Fu-Hsing Dramatic Arts Academy was originally founded as a private school in 1957 by a Beijing opera connoisseur and was taken over by the Ministry of Education in 1968. Heavily subsidized by the government, it has remained the major institute in training Beijing opera talents in Taiwan to this date. All the above programs required 8 to 10 years of training with internship. There are also traditional theatre programs available in the 3- and 4-year university's theatre departments. But the purpose of these programs is academic rather than professional training.
56See Wang Anqi (1996b: 91). Fu-Lian-Cheng was one of the oldest and most established Beijing opera training schools in Beijing, lasting from 1907 to 1946.
57According to K. Chou (1989: 85), senior Beijing opera artists in the military troupes have tried but failed in the sixties to make innovations. They were hesitant to experiment again and themselves became the hindrance for other reformative attempts.
2/ Strict Censorship: In the 1960s, the official Beijing opera troupes tried to broaden their performance repertoire by reviving old plays. But, in 1966, the Ministry of Education released a selective list of 500 plays qualified for performance, most of which were written before the 1920s and were ideologically "correct"—advocating Confucian virtues such as loyalty to the state or reunification of the nation (K. Chou 1989: 26). Newly written or adapted dramatic texts were subject to a strict censorship program under the pretext to "maintain the propriety of society," but in fact censorship was based on political scrutiny (Wang Anqi 1996b: 93). As a result, a number of new plays created in the mid-1960s were initially well received by the audience but were soon banned for petty ideological reasons. This emphasis continued into the 1980s, greatly impeding creativity in playwriting.

Furthermore, the administrators of the Armed Forces' troupes were military staff, who, in many cases, had little knowledge of theatre arts but commanded the actors to strictly follow the traditional style; innovation was strongly discouraged, if not totally disallowed (K. Chou 1989: 86). Accordingly, both the old and new generations of Beijing opera artists merely attempted to observe a tradition that had lost its original living environment. As time went on, its audience gradually felt, the theatre became a hollow form which only signified an imaginary motherland and an illusory nationhood.

58 According to Wang Anqi, two new productions, Hongmei Ge (Red Plum Pavilion) and Yuzan Ji (Tale of the Jade Hairpin), staged around 1966-7, initially created enthusiastic response from the audience, but were forbidden because the former production adapted a Mainland Chinese script and the latter adapted the acting style of a famous Mainland actor—and thus involved "Communist" elements (1996: 105 nt).

59 It is predictable that Beijing opera was turned into national tourism in the 1980s. According to K. Chou, National Fu-Hsing Dramatic Arts Academy received foreign guests and domestic visitors as often as twice a day (1989: 88-89). To celebrate its role as a tourist site, the school built a museum of Chinese opera on campus displaying wax statues of Beijing opera characters and models of the traditional stage. Propaganda was replaced by appropriation and exploitation; sacred tradition became a valuable commodity.
3/ Theatre Competitions: Although the government authorities also paid attention to the issue of creating new Beijing opera plays, its effort generally failed to stimulate original, long-lasting works. From 1951 to 1956, rich prizes were awarded to winners of the annual playwriting contest. Authorized by a special committee, the contests created tens of thousands of theatre and film scripts which were mostly crammed with patriotic themes and anti-Communist propaganda (Jiao Tong 1990: 57-69). Some renowned writers, such as Mei Lanfang's playwright-dramaturg Qi Rushan, were urged to enter the contest in order to lead the trend (Qi Rushan 1964: 39-55). However, the majority of the winning entries were forgotten soon as they had little literary or performative merit, and their blatant propaganda was generally felt outdated.

From 1965, the Ministry of Defense sponsored the "National Armed Forces Literary Oscar Award" (Guojun Jinxiang Jiang), an annual competition held among the state-owned Beijing opera troupes. For those aspiring playwrights, this was the only arena to realize their plays onstage by one of the best Beijing opera troupes and at the government's expense. Although the event was intended to encourage original Beijing opera plays, its tenet was clearly to "uplift the military morale," and therefore a heavy ideological demand was imposed on the participants—and the judges as well. Accordingly, most of the productions entering the competition drew heavily from the historical subjects about the restoration of the lost motherland, resistance against the invasion of foreign barbarians, and perseverance in toppling the tyrannical regime—plots which were supposed to remind the people of Taiwan of their political struggle with China.60 As a result, many texts were insipid with simplified, stilted

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60The rules for the opera contest demanded that each original play contain the "Twelve principles" ordained by the Nationalist doctrines, such as themes of "re-unification," "loyalty," and "anti-Communism." See K. Chou (1989: 28). In the 1960s most of the plays staged for the contest were old pieces which contained some historical themes of restoration of territory or throne from the rebels or barbarians. From the 1970s, however, in order to attract new audiences, the
characterization and exaggerated patriotic sentiments. Wang Anqi, a scholar of traditional Chinese theatre, a judge of the Beijing opera Oscar for four years and a four-time winner of the best playwright award, reflected on her experience in the competition as a tug of war between careful observance of the political agenda and fulfillment of her artistic creativity:

I can almost say that the competition was the only arena for original playwriting [for Beijing opera in Taiwan]....I was clearly aware of the presence of political censorship; I had to avoid not only the subjects about the fall of a nation, but also those personal sentiments that were irrelevant to the great patriotic love. A reflection of human existence such as "life as a dream" would be dismissed as a passive, senseless theme. (1995: 47)

The annual Beijing opera competition in Taiwan continued for three decades (1965-1995), and, especially in the first decade, it was considered a major cultural event and attracted great enthusiasm from opera fans all over the island, many of whom shared the patriotic spirit and political optimism of the plays and did not mind the artistic banality in many of the productions. In other words, under a special political circumstance like this, theatre was more than art; it served to unite the auditorium and the stage in a collective myth of nationalism, confirming a shared value and belief. It was socially and psychologically relevant. But, by 1980, the situation had changed.

On the whole, Beijing opera was admittedly declining by the late 1970s. The main reason was its distorted development in a political framework. When theatre is entwined with politics, its symbolic value exceeds its artistic totality and tends to re-define it. Outdated conventions were blindly followed in the name of tradition, and even artistic weaknesses were given absolute respect. In the decades after the troupes favored new plays. Each year there would be about seven new productions to enter in the contest. See Wang Anqi (1995).

61 It is reported that during the competition, as the actor sang on the stage "I have no regret over abandoning my family for the sake of my country," or "When is our country restored," the audience was often deeply touched with patriotic sentiment and new hope to regain China from the Communists. See Wang Anqi (1996b:92).
government sought to revitalize the national treasure, there had been little attempt to adapt it to the new social reality, to the literary heritage and historical subjects of Taiwan, or to the everyday life of the majority Taiwanese-speaking citizens (then 80% of the population, as opposed to the native Mandarin-speakers from China). One result of the political and cultural partiality was the widening of the already existent gaps between the traditional and modern, the Mandarin and the Taiwanese, and the Western and the native in Taiwan’s theatre experience, rather than the converging of them (Qiu Kunliang 1995: 95). In any case, it was strongly felt, over the 1970s, that the audience of Beijing opera was aging, while the postwar generations in general had little knowledge of it or interest in it, ardently embracing modern, Western-inspired forms. Even though some critics and supporters of Beijing opera who were aware of the crisis advocated a reform, their views were often focused on the moral and political implication of this theatre and failed to evaluate it as an organic system of aesthetic signification (Wang Anqi 1996: 93). Beijing opera thus became an emblem of a historical past, of collective nostalgia of a particular generation.

In drama scholar Perng Ching-Hsi's opinion, Beijing opera's honorific title, guoju, or national theatre, had served it badly over the decades, for the concept and ideology behind the name obstructed the healthy reform due in the course of its development (1987). The title not only unfairly raised the theatre above all the other Chinese regional forms which actually shared the same artistic roots, but also gave an illusion that it had reached perfection and needed no change. The misconceptions caused the opera to be cut off from a living environment which, in turn, would nourish and challenge it for further evolution. The result was a form "irrelevant" to the contemporary social context.

Perng joined the earlier critics in calling for a more sophisticated text that could balance the dramatic content with the opera's predominant theatrical
presentation. This meant tightening up the episodic structure, providing thematically more engaging messages, and delineating well-rounded characters.

In particular, Perng suggested an intercultural approach: turning to the foreign artistic tradition for inspiration. It might bring about "a conceptual breakthrough" (139) which Beijing opera urgently needed for revitalization:

Playwrights of the traditional theatre should be encouraged to find inspiration wherever they can. Ultimately it matters little whether that inspiration comes from China’s own masters of old...or from foreign writers.... Both will have to pass the test of relevance. (Perng 1987:137)

Conceptually and technically, this suggestion seemed a valid strategy to recapture the imagination of this generation, as seen in the 1980s.

2.3 Reinvention under a New Cultural Milieu: 1970s-1990

After the fervent nationalism dominating Taiwan's cold war era, the 1970s saw the dawning of a new Taiwanese cultural subjectivity. On the one hand, as the Communist PRC emerged as a major player in global politics, nudging Taiwan out of the United Nations in 1971 and severing Taiwan’s official relations with the U. S. in 1979, the island suddenly lost its international status as well as most of its diplomatic relationships. On the other hand, as the earlier dream of "Restoring the Mainland and Reuniting China" was somewhat disillusioned, the KMT government now focused on Taiwan's "Taiwanization" rather than seeing the island as a temporary military base for future confrontation with the PRC. Intensive industrialization and rapid economic growth transformed Taiwan into a regional "miracle"—affluent and democratic in the late 1980s. Awakening in the new political isolation, many intellectuals sought to define the island's problematic cultural roots in the context of a new national fervor. They questioned: How much "Chineseness" does Taiwan represent? And, if China ceased to be the motherland to which Taiwan had looked for identity and
inspiration, what kind of cultural framework could generate the island's subjectivity? (Lu Jianying 1995: 14)

A Nativist Consciousness Movement emerged as a result, igniting a series of heated debates over how to build a distinctive Taiwanese culture which based its "tradition" not on the intangible motherland but on the immediate cultural reality of Taiwan (H. B. Zhang 1997: 119). One of the most vital discourses during the time sought to reconcile (and synthesize) the dichotomy between tradition (the cultural past; "Chineseness") and modernity (the cultural here and now; "Taiwanessness"). In effect, the intellectual and artistic focus in Taiwan shifted from seeking the "legitimacy of tradition" to creating modernity in pluralism. Yu Dagang (1908-1977), a historian, cultural critic, and Beijing opera playwright, suggested a reformative effort be made to all regional forms to bring about a renaissance of Chinese traditional theatre (1987). In particular, he urged the artists of the traditional and modern genres to learn mutually and to discover the universality in each other, a method he found in the works of the American choreographer, Martha Graham, who synthesized various performance traditions and modernized American modern dance. Particularly relevant to Chinese theatre, Yu noted, Graham's dance language resembled some stylized movements in Beijing opera, which suggested an intercultural approach. But her creative borrowing of the foreign elements was solidly grounded on a consciousness of her cultural heritage (minzu yishi)—the ability to "listen to the footsteps of your ancestors," as she once said metaphorically; it allowed her art to go beyond its local significance and become universal (1987: 561-569).

Yu represented a traditionalist's mind with a modernist practice. He disapproved of the official attitude of blindly preserving Beijing opera without making efforts to re-develop it. He also cautioned against the slavish imitation of Western theatre by suggesting theatrical experiments which involved grafting
Beijing opera onto Taiwan's modern stage (K. Chou 1989: 52-53). His discourse involving intercultural and intra-cultural stances was highly influential in the 1970s among young budding artists of all genres. For example, his disciple (also Graham's), choreographer Lin Huaimin, adapted Beijing opera's stylized movements and traditional subjects to create a dance theatre, seeking to merge the distant cultural roots with the sensibility of modern society; his "Cloud Gate Dance Ensemble" claimed to make modern dance in which "Chinese Compose, Chinese Choreograph, and Chinese Dance for a Chinese Audience" (qtd. in K. Chou 1989: 43) and remained popular throughout the 1980s. Taipei's Lan Ling Theatre, led by Wu Jingji, sought to merge techniques adapted from Off-Off-Broadway and Beijing opera form to enact modern, familiar subjects. Its Heju xinpei (Heju's New Marriage, 1979), which transformed an old Beijing opera play into a contemporary urban sit-com about monetary powerplays, was an instant hit. Many young spectators for the first time discovered the spirit of Beijing opera as they saw a modern story represented by a symbolic acting style and in a fluid narrative across various zones of time and locale. The play kindled a bustling little theatre movement in Taiwan in the 1980s.

These successful productions combined two aspects that particularly appealed to the young, educated, urban audiences: first, they avoided political or moral didacticism; second, they focused on theatre as an artistic totality. The depoliticization of theatre and the re-focus on the inner structure of the stage art meant a departure from the State-controlled propagandist theatre. These influences finally created an impact on Beijing opera, perhaps the most enclosed and conservative theatre circle in Taiwan, and, from the late 1970s to early 1990s, three reformative attempts were made. They represented very different approaches in adapting elements particular from Western theatre, but the effort to revitalize Beijing opera remained central.
2.3.1 **Yayin Xiaoji: Seeking "Rebirth of Tradition"

The first distinctive reformative attempt was made by **Yayin Xiaoji**, or the "Little Troupe of Elegant Voices," founded by Beijing opera performer Guo Xiaozhuang in 1978-9. Guo shared the vision with her mentor, Yu Dagang, of resurrecting Beijing opera from the state of "dead antique preserved in a museum" (qtd. in K. Chou 1989: 65). From 1979 to 1993, **Yayin** had performed 17 times, giving in total 21 plays (some were reruns), including 7 newly created ones (others were revivals or adaptations from the traditional repertoire; Wen 1994: 239-241). Almost all the performances claimed box office success, appealing particularly to the post-war generations who had been reluctant to approach the traditional theatre. Guo Xiaozhuang's determination to upgrade Beijing opera's social image and artistic quality re-captured the imagination of new audiences.

One of **Yayin**'s most important strategies was to re-define the social image and artistic value of Beijing opera in contemporary Taiwan. In publicity its productions were labeled as "the Rebirth of Tradition" (qtd. in Wang Anqi 1991: 252) instead of "preservation" or "continuation" of tradition, as had been the tenet of the State's cultural policy. This attitude corresponded to the major cultural discourse in the 1970s, which advocated modernizing indigenous tradition by incorporating foreign (especially Western) forms and techniques. The concept of "rebirth" also struck a sympathetic chord with a society which now aggressively sought modernity and progress. Accordingly, Guo was hailed as a performer with vision and talent--an extra cultural layer on her theatrical persona which also helped her stand out among fellow performers.

2.3.1.1 Modern Venues

In 1977, Guo Xiaozhuang first staged Beijing opera in the grand, well-equipped, modern theatre space in the Dr. Sun Yet-sen Memorial Hall (seating 2572), which, by far the best venue in Taiwan, had only held modern
performances such as Western opera, dance, and classical music concerts. Yayin continued to return to this venue for its performances. Although too large a space for the intimate presentation of Beijing opera, the venue nevertheless boosted its artistic image and quality when incorporated with a spacious proscenium stage, advanced stage machinery, and an opulent auditorium. Guo's choice of venue was deliberate. She not only brought Beijing opera out from its humble home for a dozen years, the National Armed Forces Cultural Centre, into the central stage of Taiwan's élite arts, but she also successfully separated her "modern," "refined" Beijing opera theatre from the "conventional," "mass art" form which had been associated with the performances by the State-owned troupes (Wang Anqi 1996b: 94). From Yayin onwards, Beijing opera was included in the spectrum of Taiwan's contemporary arts, mixing equally and congenially with the other (particularly Western-influenced) performance forms.

2.3.1.2 Modernized Staging Techniques

Yayin was dedicated to refining Beijing opera's traditional staging routine to suit the modern audience's sensibility. This meant incorporating stage techniques adapted from modern theatre, and paying equal attention to each aspect of theatrical presentation. Yayin was the first to introduce the whole orchestra of traditional Chinese music (guoyue tuan) for accompaniment, which helped enhance the musical harmony that the modern audience would demand, and supplied background music for specific atmospheric effects of the scene. The orchestra, formerly situated on the stage in full view of the audience, was now

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62 The problem with a large venue like the one at Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Memorial Hall has to do with the weakened visual and acoustic effects during the performance. Moreover, the audiences in such a venue almost always remain quiet throughout the show, while, in a humbler and more intimate theatre, such as the permanent performance space for Taiwan's official opera troupes, the National Armed Forces Cultural Centre (seating 1020), they are freer with traditional viewing habits such as commenting, clapping hands, and exclaiming "Hao! Hao!" ("Bravo!"), as part of interaction with the actors.
moved into the orchestra pit as in the Western opera, so as to leave a complete stage for the *mise en scène*.

*Yayin* was also the first Beijing opera troupe to bring in various talents from modern performance genres. Renowned designers and composers were commissioned to create individual aspects of the production, invariably expanding the traditional expressions of Beijing opera.63 The participation of these "outsiders" broke the barriers between Beijing opera and other performance forms and initiated intra-cultural cooperation and interaction among various artistic genres in Taiwan (Wang Anqi 1996b: 94-95). More significantly, the cross-generic dynamic made the opera "impure," and thus suggested room for fundamental change—even into another genre (95).

It should be remembered, however, that *Yayin's* revitalization of Beijing opera was not motivated by a challenge against the established conventions and social function of the genre. Rather, it was meant to strengthen them through a different focus. The adaptation of non-traditional performance codes helped enhance the overall theatrical effect of the Beijing opera stage, and therefore bring a new highlight on acting—in this case, Guo Xiaozhuang's own acting for she always played the lead. Therefore, the reformative idea underlying the *Yayin* productions saw precedents in Mei Lanfang's newly-made plays—inventions designed around the leading performer. Like Mei, Guo also felt the withdrawal of the audience from the opera and was eager to reclaim them by changing the theatre form. Also like Mei, Guo always had the "final say" in every aspect of *Yayin's* productions, being the actor-manager who held the creative authority in this venture (Wang Anqi 1996b: 98).

63For example, front curtains were added to avoid the disruption of theatrical illusion caused by stagehands, as well as to provide variation to the actor's conventional entrance and exit; lighting was actively employed to produce desirable mood; and scenic experiments included the use of realistic properties and sometimes modernist, abstract patterns on the traditional plain backdrop. See Cheng Dayuan (1989: 51); K. Chou (1989: 65-68).
2.3.1.3 Newly-written Plays

Yayin's new plays were written by a number of reform-minded scholar-playwrights.64 Strictly speaking, these new plays were adaptations of existing historical or literary subjects. In contrast to the old plays, which were often constructed by the actors themselves, these new works were more refined in linguistic and literary quality. They were tightly constructed, with a more fluent, brisk rhythm which suited the modern age. Specifically, they focused on the action and dramatic structure rather than, as in the old pieces, on one particular aria or speech. Wang Anqi, a major playwright for Yayin since 1986, sees in these new plays a conscious shift from the traditional "lyric" form to the "dramatic" form (1996a: 18). This means the intensification of the dramatic action, instead of the main character's internal emotion, as the building block of a play's climax. Wang also sees that this "dramatic" re-emphasis will eventually give rise to an impulse towards realism, a representational aesthetics (18). One indication is that these new plays all had sophisticated characterization, as Perng Ching-Hsi points out; they all presented psychologically more complex and convincing characters than did the traditional pieces (1989, 137). Yayin's reform seems to have turned Beijing opera towards an Aristotelian model in which the "rounded" characters act in a well-knitted action through the crisis to the resolution of conflicts.

2.3.1.4 Private Venture

Perhaps Yayin's greatest impact was social; it set a successful example of running a private troupe in a state-monopolized market. Yayin was virtually a one-person troupe, with Guo as its founder, manager, producer, director, and

64 Among the famous ones, there are: Meng Yao, who adapted a thirteenth-century play into Do'e Yuan (Injustice to Do'e), Yu Dagang, who adapted a traditional piece into Wang Kui Fu Guiying (Wang Kui Betrayed Guiying, opened in 1977 in memory of the author), and Wang Anqi, who adapted the traditional repertoire Zai Sheng Yuan (Reincarnated Romance), Hongling Hen (Sorrow over the Red Silk), Kongque Dan (Princess Agai), and other works. See the record in Wen (1994: 239-241).
leading actor. She won great support from fellow artists with her campaign for reform, and was frequently "lent" the actors and musicians by the official opera troupes when she tried to mount a play. An ambassador of Beijing opera on campus, she lectured and demonstrated to students and, from their feedback, made more improvements to her productions. She toured to various towns away from the major urban centers, spreading the art to the rural areas where Beijing opera had been unfamiliar.

Yayin's success indicated a few directions for future private ventures. First, a mini-troupe did not have the financial liability of maintaining a resident company and theatre space. Guo recruited her actors from the Armed Forces' troupes through official application; their cooperation was based on a one-time contract. This way, she had little financial burden compared with what she would have had owning a full-fledged company. Also, profit from the performance went to the actor-manager; this was better than getting regular income from being employed by the official opera troupes (Wang Haibo 1993: 76-77). Second, the private troupe had the freedom to choose the playtext, time, and venue to perform. By contrast, the State-employed actors were subject to strict administration and tight performance schedules, not to mention censorship. Third, it became easier to get funding in the 1980s as the government established a preliminary committee to sponsor the modernization of traditional arts, providing grants for private artistic groups.65 Furthermore, the annual arts festivals on national and municipal levels, established in the late 1970s, opened the possibility for Beijing opera to perform in the same events with other modern genres, such as dance and Western opera, and to enjoy great exposure to the non-
traditional forms. In any case, following Yayin, a growing number of private Beijing opera troupes were founded in the 1980s; many of them were run by young, reform-minded actors and remained small-sized.66

2.3.1.5 Reception

Yayin was effective in reaching new audiences, especially the younger generation and the urban, educated middle class. In addition to its outstanding box office records, Yayin's popularity was proved by the fact that many young Taiwanese at that time regarded wearing the T-shirts printed with Yayin's logos fashionable (Wang Anqi 1996b: 97). To a great extent, this troupe succeeded in what Susan Bennet called the "outer frame" of theatre reception, for, as a cultural construct, it satisfied the audience's expectation and definition of a theatre event (1990: 54). But the "inner frame" of the audience's experience with Yayin--"the event itself and in particular the spectator's experience of a fictional stage world" (54)--has been largely controversial. Apart from the question about Guo Xiaozhuang's artistic ability as an all-around performer, one major criticism was concerned with the generic authenticity of the opera after modifications were made to suit contemporary taste. In Beijing opera's complexly layered performance languages, these critics argued, any element being altered may result in a total breakdown of the system. Some opponents found Yayin's new productions mere patchworks--fragmented theatrical codes adapted from disparate traditions without a hierarchy of organization. Others called them "Westernized Beijing operas," as one critic pungently says:

[Yayin's] extensive use of scenery, lighting, and sound effects merely distract the audience's attention from the actors' expressivity, and, in turn, reveal the impoverishment of the troupe's

66 According to Wang Haibo (1993: 76), the private troupe has been "a new entrepreneur" in Taiwan after the 1980s. From 1979 to 1993, at least 12 private traditional opera troupes have been established. Many of the founders were at the same time employed by the Armed Forces' troupes.
acting talent...In fact, its box office success only demonstrates that Taiwan's theatre audiences have been "Hollywood-ized." Rather than calling it Beijing opera, we should properly call Yayin's performance a "musical in period costumes. (Wong Jiaming 1989: 64)

Yayin's reform of Beijing opera, viewed from the vantage of the 1990s, seemed still needed a more organic, total design. The changes it brought about were limited to formal aspects, while the intrinsic structure of the genre, related to the themes and action of a play, was relatively untouched. Even in its highly praised dramatic texts there were pitfalls. At their best, the plays enhanced the completeness and complexity of the story narrative and gave a humanistic perspective which many old plays lacked. But they still insisted on the edifying function of theatre by presenting only the morally superior characters as the main subjects, and therefore were limited to presenting the conventional conflict between good and evil.67 Artistically, particularly with singing and recitation, they were no less conservative but far less refined than the old masterpieces, which had been perfected through the ages of craftsmanship. Besides, as its major playwright Wang Anqi admits, the attempt to balance the lyric and the narrative functions in the dramatic structure remained the major technical difficulty in playwriting for the traditional stage.68 To incorporate a non-mimetic aesthetics with elements from a realistic aesthetics, as Mei Lanfang sought, inevitably created a breach within the pragmatic, semantic and semiotic conventions of the former aesthetics.

67 In seeking to improve Taiwan's degraded moral condition by her theatre performance, Guo Xiaozhuang insisted on portraying only those characters that represent royalty, piety, wisdom, and determination, dismissing the roles of prostitute, supernatural demon, and "bad woman" (Wang Anqi 1996b: 99).
68 According to Wang Anqi, "how to control the quantity of lyric song passages so as to avoid impeding the plot from its fluidity of forwarding" is her major playwriting problem (1996a: 18). She was not alone; many new Beijing opera plays written in China and Taiwan under the influence of Western dramatic narrative have revealed the same problem. Often in these plays, notes Wang, lyricism is lost while only the skeleton of dramatic action is preserved; both the lyric and the dramatic functions are sacrificed (1996a: 22-30).
2.3.2. French *Chairs* Versus Chinese *Seats*

Taiwan in the 1980s continued economic development in domestic and international arenas, producing a wealthy and strong middle class which formed the base of Taiwan's social structure and prepared for the overall democratic movement in the latter half of the decade. However, it experienced a profound cultural maladjustment caused by the rapid industrialization, and much tradition was lost in this transitional process, including cultural forms and values particularly concerning human relationships. The sense of cultural dislocation was intensified by increasing social and psychological apprehension. While political instability in the island was kindled by the progress of democratization, Taiwan's relationship with Mainland China over the issue of political legitimacy was still very worrisome to most of its citizens. Other social issues concerning environmental conservation, social security, minority rights, housing, and gambling continued to emerge. All this created a stimulating and yet jarring cultural milieu which formed a new social background for artistic creation.

This cultural milieu in Taiwan started to encourage individualistic and pluralistic expressions—a breakaway from the collective nationalism of the 1970s and the propagandist patriotism of the 1960s. One indication was the establishment of the Council on Cultural Planning and Development in 1981 as an independent agent in regulating and assisting artistic and cultural activities and groups in Taiwan; Taiwan's cultural policy-making was finally released from the total control of political and military authorities. The private performing arts agent, New Aspect Promotion Corporation, established since 1978 to bring in renowned guest performers from outside the country to attend festival events, further signified the people's demand for a higher quality of cultural life, as well as society's readiness for unfamiliar artistic forms in the performing arts.
It is through this milieu that a Beijing opera adaptation of huangmiuju, or absurdist drama, could make its way into the spotlight. Wei Ziyun's adaptation of French playwright Eugene Ionesco's The Chairs to the Beijing opera was an experiment prepared especially for Ionesco's visit to the island in March, 1982. Performed in Taipei to small audiences, the production was made possible by the collaboration of Wei, a veteran Beijing opera playwright, a number of scholars of Western drama, and the actors and musicians "borrowed" from the Air Force's Da-peng Beijing opera troupe. The adaptation was regarded by many as a successful blending of the two highly incompatible traditions, and was particularly blessed by the author (Ionesco 1985: 112-3).

2.3.2.1 The Adapted Text

The adapter Wei Ziyun nearly abandoned the experiment due to the difficulty in transferring the original play to the Beijing opera stage after its being thrice removed: "from the West to the East; from a spoken drama to an opera; and from the contemporary to the classical Chinese" (1985a: 49). But he finally resolved to complete it as a "re-creation" rather than an imitation of the original (1985b: 23-28). Following the Chinese translations of the original play currently available to him, Wei transcribed the dialogue, line by line, into speeches and song passages according to Beijing opera conventions, including the rhythms of recitation and singing and stage directions. Once the text was ready, it was scored with percussive patterns to orchestrate such important moments as the entrance and exit of the roles and the specific rhythms of the scenes (Wei Ziyun 1985a: 51). The design of role categories, speeches and melodic styles, mise en scène, and even the theme of the adaptation were largely modeled on the conventions of an old Beijing opera play, Qingfeng Ting (Blue-wind Pavilion) (J. Hu 1985: 9-10). In the end, the actors were invited to test all the
notations of the new text; any line out of tune with Beijing opera's theatrical regularity was modified accordingly. The new play was named Xi, or Seats.

The adaptation of the play text offers an interesting glimpse into the process of a theatrical translation. In François Renault's words:

The translation is destined to be performed in a particular mise en scène and is linked to a particular stage production. The translation presupposes first of all the subordination of the mise en scène to the text, so that—at the moment of the mise en scène—the text is in its turn subordinated to theatre. (Qtd. in Pavis 1992: 146)

On the one hand, Ionesco's play has the symbolic nature shared by the traditional Chinese theatre. The nameless characters in a non-specific historical time and location on a nearly empty stage help represent the situation of man—of everyman—on the Chinese stage. The characters and setting of The Chairs were adroitly adapted to ancient China. "Seat," in the Chinese lexicon, indicates both a material object (chair) and, metaphorically, a "place" or "position" in society.69

The old couple in the adaptation are resolved to commit suicide because they suffer the lack of a significant "seat" in their entire life—a great shame in a culture which emphasizes the usefulness of an individual to the collective benefit of his society or, as in this play, to his emperor. On the other hand, the original play's existential connotation and its expressive form—the "farce tragique" (Ionesco), were largely transmuted by the moral signification underlying Beijing opera's expressive form; the adaptation lost Ionesco's great sense of absurdity and nihilism but offered a Confucian resolution (cf. Wei Ziyun 1985b: 27).

Particularly towards the end of the play, the old couple is rendered increasingly

69 According to the playwright Wei Ziyun, his personal view of life, found prominently in his adaptation of the French play, is Confucius' motto, "Fear not lacking a seat, but fear lacking a place to stand." (1985b: 27) The tragedy of the old man in the Seats is that he has never had a "place"—a position to establish great careers and to be known—in his whole life and thus seeks to create one before his suicide with his wife. Wei comments that Ionesco imparts in the chairs the meaning of "nothingness" of life, while he himself focuses on the importance of obtaining a "place" (seat) in our finite life (1985b: 25-6).
heroic as they impart a sublime sense of reconciliation with the finite quality of life. They embody a traditional Chinese value which sees merit in incessant effort to fulfill one's obligation, to claim a position ("seat") in life. Its ending is not bleak, as in the original, but invites sympathy and admiration for the Quixotic spirit of the hero and the heroine.

2.3.2.2 Performance Text

In the effort to "translate" the original mise en scène into Beijing opera, much focus was placed on the portrayal of the couple by the veteran performers Ma Yuanliang and Ha Yuanzhang in the respective roles of laosheng (old male) and of laodang (old female, usually played by male). Rather than portraying the farcified pettiness and grotesqueness seen in the original characters, the acting emphasized mutual love and dependency between the lonely old couple, which won the audience's approval (Mao 1985: 124). However, the original design, which involved the integration of Beijing opera's stylized movements with techniques from Western mime to create subtler, more expressive physical language for the portrayal of the non-traditional characters, did not materialize due to the time constraint (Huang Meixu 1985: 16).

There emerged in the production process two problems in staging, for the foreign codes, required by Ionesco's stage directions, could find no equivalent convention in Beijing opera. The first problem was the lighting effect. According to Ionesco's stage direction, lighting should increase intensity along the course of the play until it dazzles the audience in the ending. However, in Beijing opera's unadorned stage, lighting functions to maintain general visibility and is simply kept bright throughout the performance. As such, this particular theatrical effect--and dramatic dimension--was lost in Seats. The second problem was the mise en scène involving the chairs, which need to be moved onto the stage by the two actors in increasing speed until they fill in the whole space and
subsequently trap the two human beings at a distance. This *mise en scène* sequence reveals Ionesco's theme of the human mind being imprisoned by material objects. It was nevertheless incompatible with Beijing opera's conventional stage, which is kept nearly empty for economy in scene changes and for the symbolic use of space. During the rehearsal, the actors felt strongly that it was inadequate to fill the stage with realistic objects because the realism clashed with the stylization of the opera. Besides, Beijing opera actors' movements are always scored by music and choreographed according to their role types. In this case, having two elderly characters carry in a large number (at least fifty, demands Ionesco) of chairs in increasing speed would take too much running time, disturb their singing and recitation, and exhaust the actors (J. Hu 1985: 11-12). To accommodate both the source play and the target tradition, the *Seats* utilized only a dozen chairs. The compromise, however, failed to produce the original effect; even Ionesco expressed his dissatisfaction with it (Yang Ming 1985: 108). Apparently, the invention of new physical expression and lighting codes is required for any future experiment with intercultural Beijing opera.

2.3.2.3 Reception

Taipei's critics praised the Beijing opera adaptation of an absurdist play a "dialogue" between "East and West," between "modernity and tradition" (Gao Da 1985: 121). But exactly how the two cultures met and communicated was not easily agreed upon. Some contended that the metaphysical overtones of the original were so much diluted that the adaptation no longer reflected the tragic sense of alienation and nihilism; in other words, the essence of the absurdist drama was evacuated (cf. Liu Li 1985). Others argued that the adaptation was not entirely Beijing opera either, significantly deviating from its thematic and performative conventions (Mao 1985: 125). In a symbolic way, *Seats* represented an aesthetic middle ground between the foreign and the home culture, a form of a distinctive
"third culture" with which many of Taiwan's spectators viewed their too familiar native theatre from a new perspective.

Not surprisingly, the eclecticism of Beijing opera caught the attention of some reform-minded critics. John Y. Hu, the advisor to the production and a scholar of Western drama, saw a potential in the intercultural approach: "If Beijing opera's performative convention could eloquently express even an absurdist play, it must be able to express many other [non-Beijing opera] texts and stories. This realization is very important; it will bring the opera from its dead-end destiny as an antique to a brand-new territory" (1985: 12). Drama professor Huang Meixu took one step forward and argued that Beijing opera can create a most effective and authentic absurdist theatre if deliberately playing "against" its own theatrical conventions (1985: 20). Since the absurdist drama defines itself by revolting against the already established theatrical traditions, it is subversive in nature. And Beijing opera, a long-standing tradition itself, can achieve the same effect of "anti-theatre" (Ionesco) by metatheatrically subverting its own conventionality.

The Chinese adaptation of the absurdist play shed a new light on Beijing opera's reform which Yayin Xiaoji's performances had not. It sparked the possibility of creating a totally new performance genre, a hybrid of Chinese and Western theatre, of classical and modern staging. But behind the enthusiasm there seemed little hope to see the immediate exploration of such interculturalism because of the limited resources and freedom to make "alternative" Beijing opera in Taiwan. While envisioning future projects that involve Beijing opera adaptation of such world classics as Romeo and Juliet, King Lear, The Merchant of Venice, and even The Death of a Salesman, the adapter Wei Ziyun lamented that it would need "miracles" to bring the auspicious time, cultural milieu, and interdisciplinary talents together for a well-balanced blend of the two widely
separate traditions (1985b: 29). Just a few years later, such seemingly wishful thinking came true.

2.3.3. CLT: Wrestling with Western Classics

By the mid-1980s, the sudden budding of theatre and dance groups run by young artists—many amateurs and students and often on shoe-string budgets—gave rise to a variety of creative and often idiosyncratic performances in Taiwan.70 Most called their own works "experimental" or "little" theatre. Informal or makeshift revues were conveniently used; cafes, galleries, community centers, parks, construction sites, or the living room in an apartment, were converted into performance spaces. Theatre groups actively took part in political, environmental, and cultural issues; in their agitprop-type street performance and environmental theatre, the roles of performer and social player were often blurred. The "I have something to say" attitude of the little theatres during the period was fierce and courageous, and often crude in artistic expression. The social political message tended to surpass the artistic totality of the performances (V. Doran 1992: 66-67).

The exploration of stage art was fervent particularly in appropriating foreign techniques to local subject matter. From 1981 to 1984, the annual Experimental Theatre Festival, regarded as a cradle for artistic innovation, contributed, in total, 34 original theatre works to the public. Various dramatic techniques were first introduced to Taiwan's audience, such as theatre collective and improvisation techniques, experiments in language, and the synthesis of traditional stage with Western theatrical elements. Techniques inspired by film, Western mime, Brecht's epic theatre, and multimedia were also tested (Li Xiaoyang

70 According to a record released by the Taipei Juchang Lianyi Hui, ("Taipei Theatre Alliance"), an informal association established in 1987 to join the independent theatres in Taipei, there were at least 32 theatre groups active by the fall of 1987, which included traditional theatre, children's theatre, political theatre, and avant-garde theatre (Li Xiaoyang 1995: 54-55).
The term huaju, or "Spoken Drama," traditionally used to distinguish the Western-inspired modern theatre from the traditional opera form, was now dropped for its outdated aesthetic and ideological concepts. Instead, wutaiju, or "stage performance," became a term widely used for all the theatre works ranging from dialogue-based, well-made plays to musical theatre in the Broadway style and avant-garde performance art. Martha Graham's time was over; Pina Bausch, Jerzy Grotowski, and Robert Wilson were the new theatrical paradigms.

However, adaption of foreign subjects to local forms and techniques did not appear until mid-1980s, since Taiwan's traditional theatre circles reacted to the new theatre movement with greater caution, self-awareness, as well as resistance than the artists of the modern wutaiju genres did. But when it finally started—Beijing opera was the first to tackle theatrical interculturalism—it developed in three directions, which, to a certain extent, were more distinctive and far-reaching than the modern genres. First, private Beijing opera troupes were formed to offer innovative performances and to attract wider audiences; second, cross-generic and cross-cultural expressions entered the Beijing opera stage, revolting against the "pure" conventionality; and third, Beijing opera embarked on international festivals for world-wide recognition.

Taipei's Dangdai Chuanqi Juchang, or the "Contemporary Legend Theatre" (CLT), was founded in 1984 and was the first Beijing opera troupe to launch an all-new experiment involving foreign subjects. Its approach incorporated all three above-mentioned directions and could best represent the new trend.

2.3.3.1 Private Venture

Formed out of the personal conviction of a few Beijing opera actors and their friends, the CLT started with a broad but vague goal: "to revitalize our traditional theatre" (Lin Xiouwei 1990: 5). Wu Xingguo, then an actor employed by Lu-guang, the Army-sponsored Beijing opera troupe, and his wife, Lin Xiouwei, a
modern dancer, were the core of the troupe. Following Yayin's example, the troupe was established without permanent members, relying on Wu the actor-manager to find playwriting, acting, musical and design talents for each new production. In the ten years after its debut in 1986, it produced six new productions and another six reruns, with the support of government grants and fellow actors from the official opera troupes. Its approach much different from that taken by Yayin, the CLT turned to modern dance, theatre, and music in seeking an overhaul of the old conventions.

Wu Xingguo had a different artistic career from that of most other Beijing opera actors educated in Taiwan, for he was not "segregated" from other artistic genres in his training process as professional actor. Trained in Fu Hsing Dramatic Arts Academy in childhood and graduated with a degree in theatre from the Chinese Cultural University, he was a three-time winner of the best actor award in the Beijing opera competitions and was regarded as one of the best laosheng (men in singing role) in Taiwan. He participated in Lin Huaimin's Cloud Gate Dance Ensemble, starting with no knowledge in modern dance and later becoming one of its finest dancers. Even after establishing the CLT, he continued to join his wife's dance theatre to perform modern works, including touring to France in 1991 and 1992. The different artistic discipline and expressive energy in modern dance and the intercultural exposure during the tours inspired Wu to see the need for reinvention in a living theatre like Beijing opera (Wu 1990: 6).

Wu inherited the cultural discourse of modernity and tradition that was popular in Taiwan during the 1970s. Through choreographer Lin Huaimin he learned Martha Graham's creative method of integrating the art of different times and cultural origins. He was also inspired by the intercultural performances directed by Yukio Ninagawa, many of which grafted elements of Kabuki and Noh to Western classics such as Macbeth, Medea, and Oedipus and created a unique
hybridization of traditional Japanese aesthetics and Western tragic philosophy (Liu Yunfang 1987: 104). Therefore, Wu realized that innovation and tradition are dialectically related and connected, an interchangeable yin and yang in artistic creation (Wu Xingguo 1987: 51). In his blueprint for the CLT he ambitiously outlined a wide range of theatrical aims, bringing foreign and modern elements into the Beijing opera tradition: 1) to adapt Western dramas and theatre aesthetics; 2) to re-create ancient myths and legends; and 3) to draw on contemporary life experience (Kingdom of Desire 1990: 11). In their first ten years of development, Wu and his troupe followed the three aims and brought Beijing opera into a path never trodden before by any theatre group in Taiwan.

2.3.3.2 Cross-generic and Cross-cultural Performances

The CLT's first concrete project was the adaptation of Macbeth to Beijing opera in 1986 under the title Yuwang Chengguo, or The Kingdom of Desire. It was critically appreciated and was subsequently re-staged both in and outside Taiwan. Right after its debut, Wu Xingguo explained why he chose to adapt a foreign, famous work:

There will be a day when we will appear on foreign stages, and a familiar story will in itself be an additional attraction to Westerners. We want as many audiences as possible to develop an appreciation of the wonders of [Beijing opera]. (Qtd in Tseng Yung-Li 1987: 3)

The production received its highest acclaim when it was invited to stage in the International Theatre Festival at London's Royal National Theatre in 1990. The CLT's second adaptation of Shakespeare was based on Hamlet --Wangzi Fuchou Ji, or The Prince's Revenge; it opened in 1990. It sought to modernize Beijing opera with techniques taken from other forms, such as film and Western musical theatre. The production won mixed reviews for its hybrid nature. These two productions will be discussed in detail in Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis.
In the 1990s, the CLT produced two Beijing opera plays based on Chinese materials, before it took a great leap in adapting Greek classics. *Yinyang He* (1991), or *River between Life and Death*, and *Wuxian Jiangshan* (1992), or *Boundless Territory*, were both taken from traditional sources with romantic themes. The Greek plays *Medea* and *Orestia* were less wordy and literary than Shakespeare but allowed more room for the use of spectacle and for modern interpretations. Adapted into Chinese in 1993 and 1995 respectively, the source plays were largely transcribed into the target's contemporary cultural text, only preserving some of the original rhetoric and world view. The productions boldly wrenched codes from different artistic genres and cultural norms, presenting a distinctive postmodern style of pastiche. They also evoked a transcultural atmosphere not bound to any specific historical and geographical setting. The CLT refused to call its productions "Beijing opera," but instead, described them as "wutaiju," connoting "modern" stage performance. The artistic scope of the Greek adaptations went far beyond the Beijing opera tradition and therefore is not discussed in this thesis.\(^1\)

The CLT started with the goal of regenerating Beijing opera, but, in the process, saw that the tradition must inevitably be subverted. To many conservative minds, the CLT's approach, as well as its popularity with younger audiences, would endanger the national treasure.\(^2\) If we compare the CLT's and its two predecessors' experiments, we can see its progressiveness.

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\(^1\)They were *Loulan Nu* (The Lady of Loulan), based on *Medea*, and *Oureisitiya* (*Orestia*), produced in 1993 and 1995. The former was a cross-generic experiment, with a group of Beijing opera actors and a group of modern theatre actors interacting on the stage to represent the sexual struggle between Jason and Medea. The latter was an experiment with performance environment and with a contemporary social text. Directed by Richard Schechner, the founder of New York's Wooster Theatre in the 1960s and theorist of environmental theatre, the play was a postmodern hybrid on human civilization and sexuality. For details see K. Chou (1995: 22-28).

\(^2\)From the audience drawing power of the CLT production, critic Cheng Peikai worries that the Beijing opera tradition will eventually give in to the inter-
Yayin's approach was to graft Western-influenced dramaturgy to the Beijing opera stage in an extraneous way. Because the home tradition's conventions remained the core expressive structure, the foreign model was not genuinely contextualized or appropriated according to the codes inscribed in the native culture. It never really "dis-appeared" (C. Weber 1991: 34) in the adapted form or gained a new artistic identity. The adaptation of Ionesco's absurdist play, on the contrary, introduced an alien text and structure into the performance convention of Beijing opera. It created a middle ground where the foreign textuality and the home theatricality reached each other, and it gained something from each by forfeiting something else from each, a compromise in the process of theatre translation. The difference between Yayin's and the "absurdist" Beijing opera was caused, among other factors, by the intended audiences: Yayin targeted the young and middle class audiences who would appreciate refined traditional culture, and marketed the opera as a "high" culture; the "absurdist" Beijing opera was staged mainly for Ionesco himself, and was meant to test the cross-cultural expressivity of the opera's conventions.

The CLT was far more ambitious, because it tried to reach audiences high and low, educated and semi-illiterate, indigenous and international; it did not want Beijing opera to become a marginal art in contemporary Taiwan or, in that matter, in the whole world (Wang Anqi 1996b: 100). Therefore the CLT's artistic approach remained eclectic and adaptive. Its dramaturgy took off from Western texts, but kept no fidelity to them. The foreign texts and staging techniques were used in such a way as to stimulate the needed changes within Beijing opera. The texts were massively re-written. Foreign theatrical elements were boldly incorporated, sometimes to widen Beijing opera's formal perimeter, and other times, merely for the sake of novelty. The intercultural experiment can best be cultural trend in which the scenic novelty upstages the traditional center of Beijing opera art—acting virtuosity (1991).
seen as a process of "productive reception," in which the reception of the foreign serves to stimulate a new set of theatrical codes in the home tradition (Fischer-Lichte 1990b). Therefore, whether or not to faithfully translate Shakespeare and Elizabethan theatrical convention was not an issue of major concern. Rather, it was the problematic aspects perceived within the home tradition which determined what to appropriate of Shakespeare and other classics and how to do so. It is illuminating that the troupe chose an "anti-heroic" play like Macbeth for its debut. The dramaturgy of the play, from character type to thematic structure, sharply contrasted with that of a traditional Chinese play, thus presenting a counter-model to the familiar mode. It was in the unconventionality of the CLT's works that its subversive nature was deeply felt.

2.3.3.3 International Recognition

The international tour served two functions for Beijing opera. First, it helped strengthen and glorify the cultural, ethnic identity of the home genre; its "Chineseness" as well as its universal appeal were affirmed on an international level. More pragmatically, it was both a new artistic strategy and marketing strategy for Taiwan's theatre. Taiwanese merchandise had been globally circulated, but Taiwan's culture and art were still anonymous. The CLT's tour to London in 1990 was claimed as the first Chinese theatre troupe from Taiwan ever to perform commercially in the West, in sharp contrast to the State-subsidized international tours of the official opera troupes which targeted only overseas Chinese audiences. It was thus considered as much an artistic as cultural and national triumph.

In turn, the troupe at home was regarded as artistically worthy of the State's continuing funding and the theatre-goers' whole-hearted support. In 1992, the CLT was generously subsidized so that it could rent a permanent home in suburban Taipei, and later moved to an upgraded space downtown. The CLT's
productions almost always guaranteed box-office success. All its productions took place in grand venues, maintaining large-sized productions and budgets. Most advantageously, the troupe was able to contact theatre communities outside the country, keeping abreast with the intercultural trends in the world. Lin Xiuwei, now president of the CLT, envisioned the troupe as a national theatre representative with an international scope, "just like Comédie Française in France" (1993). Whether or not CLT's works can claim high art and popular art, national art and international art at the same time, is yet hard to decide, for Beijing opera has admittedly become a relatively marginal art in contemporary Taiwan. But undoubtedly, for the time being, foreign tours give Taiwan's traditional theatre a close contact with the outside world, which provides a refreshing input in the fields of performing techniques, theatre management, festival organization, and the much desired sense of world theatre community.

2.4. Conclusion

From the above-mentioned examples, we can draw three conclusions regarding Beijing opera's future. First, this genre proves versatile and eclectic in adapting elements from foreign traditions. Second, judging from box-office sales, there is a potentially wide audience base for Beijing opera plays that involve innovative ideas and non-traditional subjects. Third, as the values of originality and creativity prevail, the Beijing opera circle will eventually accept experiment and change on a greater scale. Presently, Beijing opera is standing at the

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73 According to the estimation of the troupe in "The CLT Domestic and Foreign Performances Record and Audience Count," all the 62 performances given by the CLT during the ten years from 1986 to 1996, including domestic and international shows, have enjoyed 80% to 100% of the seats sold out; some shows even sold "voluntary no-seat tickets."

74 Yukio Ninagawa, the Japanese director whose intercultural performances of Shakespeare were highly acclaimed in London and New York, has influenced Contemporary Legend Theatre's works. In 1992 Wu Xingguo and Lin Xiuwei stayed in New York to learn from Richard Schechner, director of the famous Dionysus 69, and later of the CLT's Orestia.
crossroads. In one direction, it remains a "straight" or "authentic" Beijing opera, purely formalistic, disregarding the changing times. And in the other direction, it grows diversified and "impure," drawing on other theatrical styles and concepts to meet the intellectual and aesthetic demands of the times. The former seeks to manifest the artistic finesse of the tradition; and the latter opts for a statement, philosophical or aesthetic, of the current socio-cultural reality. In principle, Beijing opera should be allowed to travel both ways. Convention and reinvention help form a healthy tension between tradition and modernity in which we find the totality of Chinese traditional theatre. Thus we reach the prospect of a future "intercultural Beijing opera."

The desire to create a Beijing opera incorporating Spoken Drama and Western opera was probably first voiced by Ouyang Yuqian, who wrote in 1959 that these genres can "mutually permeate and absorb from one another" as long as respect is paid to each unique "form, characteristic and regularity" (29). Stiffly grafting one genre onto another will not do, observed Ouyang; only a thorough understanding of all the genres involved will produce fruitful results (29). To a great extent, China's "model" opera was a concrete and systematic practice of this intercultural thesis. And over the years in various stages of Beijing opera's reform, it was frequently mentioned as a possibility.

Recently, Taiwanese theatre scholar Chung Mingder suggested a thorough "contact" between the traditional opera and the Western-inspired modern theatre in such aspects as actor training, rehearsal process, performance mode and audience response, in order to create "mutual absorption" of the two (1993: n. pag.). He complained that, while Taiwan's modern theatre always regards the traditional opera as a fund of stage techniques which help solve staging problems and give the Western-inspired forms a native flavor, the traditional opera in general only "keeps the modern theatre at a respectful distance." (1993: n. pag.)
Chung no doubt expected the traditional opera to gain intellectual strength, literary value, scientific techniques, and cultural and artistic pluralism, which he found inherent in modern theatre. But his view needs some modification, because, apart from the avant-garde little theatre, the dramaturgy of Taiwan's modern theatre is mainly based on a realistic-psychological theatre of illusion originating in Euro-American traditions. The pursuit of a marriage between this theatre and Chinese traditional opera would perhaps again put the latter's non-mimetic aesthetic principle at risk.

Perhaps lessons can be learned from earlier experiments with non-realistic models in European theatre during the first three decades of the twentieth century. In its quest to break the shackles of realism, the European avant-garde theatre sought non-mimetic models in popular traditions such as commedia dell'arte, Elizabethan theatre, the Spanish Siglo de Oro, and East Asian theatre, including Beijing opera (Fischer-Lichte 1990c: 161-2). The avant-garde example suggests that Beijing opera needs not seek realism as the only intercultural partner. Rather, it can explore other foreign traditions which also have a non-realistic aesthetic to enrich itself, such as Elizabethan theatre, the commedia dell'arte, the Brechtian theatre, Greek tragedy, and even some of the Absurdist drama such as Ionesco's Chairs.

Wary Chinese critics suspect that an intercultural Beijing opera will turn into a hodgepodge, post-modern collage which deconstructs itself; instead, they advocate a gradual moderation and improvement made within its tradition. However, their opinion is still based on the premise of formal purity and organic totality, a view that tends to see art as a finished product rather than as a developing process. Besides, they underestimate the communicative capability of the human agents in theatre, namely the players and the spectators. Contemporary intercultural productions reveal that during the performance, the
cultural and theatrical details involved are often worked out in constant interaction with the players and their rootedness in their own referential experience, and can be largely decoded by the audience who are the "empathetic collaborator" (Karen Gaylord) of the fictional stage world. Needless to say, the original tradition which loses its contours is subsequently transformed into a cohesive part of a new form in an intercultural performance; it is not "lost" but "found," indeed "rediscovered." Perhaps the most pragmatic concern regarding an intercultural Beijing opera is that it can provide new vitality to the genre, an open arena in which its artists, friends and foes, continue to contend and develop. Until then, one can claim that Beijing opera is truly the Chinese cultural legacy with a modern spirit.
CHAPTER THREE

SHAKESPEARE IN CHINA AND TAIWAN:
RECEPTION, TRANSLATION, AND APPROPRIATION

The reception of Shakespeare in the Chinese world\(^75\) has become a culturally and artistically significant subject in the recent decades. Since 1951 when Chang Chen-Hsien first wrote a thesis in English dedicated to this topic, there have been subsequent attempts to discover the paths of Shakespeare's entrance into China.\(^76\) During the 1980s, as comparative studies and reception theories became acknowledged critical methods for Chinese scholars, this subject has been explored as an example of Chinese-Western cultural influence and reception. Some of these studies chronicle the important events in which Shakespeare was brought to the attention of the Chinese; some focus on the issue

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\(^75\)It has to be stated that the reception of Shakespeare in China began many years earlier than the political disruption in 1949 between the People's Republic of China (PRC), under the Communist regime, and Taiwan (ROC), under the Nationalist government (KMT) rule. The reception of Shakespeare in Taiwan is little recorded. Since the Chinese rendering of Shakespeare has traditionally been in Mandarin Chinese, it is assumed that Shakespeare's influence on the Chinese culture in Taiwan virtually did not start until after 1949, when a large population of Mandarin-speaking Chinese fled China for the island, bringing in the knowledge of Shakespeare and enforcing Mandarin as the official language (by eliminating the use of Taiwanese, the spoken dialect, and Japanese, the colonial legacy before the end of World War II, in school, in workplace, and in public). For the convenience of discussion, the usage of "China" indicates the cultural China rather than the political China. When the study involves the period after 1949, the term "Mainland China" is used in contrast to Taiwan to suggest two separately developing geographical, cultural and socio-political entities.

of translation, with an emphasis on individual translators and their works; and some study the literary influence of Shakespeare on modern Chinese writers by drawing comparisons between the two.

However, little has been written about how the Chinese have transformed Shakespeare in the process of re-creating him in their own images. Although scholars and critics unanimously claim that Shakespeare's universality is beyond cultural, linguistic, and ideological boundaries, that Shakespeare is indeed a contemporary of the Chinese, Shakespeare was in fact adapted, transformed, and commented upon in China long before he was understood or even fully available in print or onstage. So the question is, what has made Shakespeare the "best known" foreign writer in modern China, as many assert? Why is the translation of Shakespeare's dramas into Chinese said to be a literary event unsurpassed by that of any other foreign works except for the Buddhist scriptures and the Bible (Li Shixue 1988: 97)?

Furthermore, China was not, like India, forced under colonialism to import 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 (Nouryeh 1993: 255). The introduction of Shakespeare into China occurred at the beginning of China's painful contact with the West; it was made possible through a handful of individuals, whose works were constantly abridged and obstructed by the severe wars and political upheavals. The Chinese reception of Shakespeare has been entwined with the social, cultural and political changes in China in the past century. All these aspects have inevitably left imprints on the Chinese conception and perception of Shakespeare, even until today.
This chapter examines the reception and transformation of Shakespeare in modern China as an example of theatre interculturalism. How has he been introduced, adapted, evaluated, and appropriated by the native culture? How has his art seized the Chinese imagination, inspiring changes on cultural and theatrical levels? To what specific aims have the Chinese adapted Shakespeare's plays onto their modern and traditional stage? This study makes use of the passing references made by the Chinese of the past century to Shakespeare and his plays, including articles published in newspapers and journals, translators' prefaces, critical essays, and production notes, in which the reception of Shakespeare is implied. His artistic influence can also be perceived from the modern Chinese literary works which echo themes or characters found in his plays. Special attention is also paid to the socio-cultural milieu and political environment in China's various historical stages which have left deep marks in the way Shakespeare was translated and acquired. Finally, this chapter argues the importance of the subjectivity of Chinese/Taiwanese theatre when it comes to adapt the Shakespearean canon, particularly on the traditional Chinese stage.

3.1 What's in a Name?

Shakespeare was initially introduced to China by Western missionaries around the mid-nineteenth century. The earliest record of his name in Chinese is found in the Chinese version of Thomas Milner's *History of Great Britain* (*Da Yin Guo Zhi*), translated by the English missionary William Muirhead and published in 1856, in which Shakespeare was mentioned, along with Sidney, Spenser, Bacon, and Hooker as a literary celebrity brought up in the unprecedentedly luxuriant culture of Elizabethan England. In another work published by an American

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missionary, Chevalier, *The History of the World* (*Wan Guo Tong Jian*, 1882), Shakespeare was called a "poet noted for his plays which express man's joys and sorrows with a penetration unequalled since Homer."\(^{78}\)

In the next twenty years Shakespeare's name appeared frequently in various works, almost all by European missionaries, and lauded with honorific descriptions (Ge 1964: 333; Zhang Xiao Yang 1996: 99-100). Among them probably the most pertinent comment was from *Si Xue Qi Meng Shiliu Zhong* (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. (Qtd. in Ge 1964: 333)

Shakespeare was in fact introduced with a great number of other Western writers and thinkers into China. From the 1850s onwards, after the defeating and humiliating confrontations with European imperialist powers, China was seized by a sudden recognition—and later on an avid worship—of Western culture. This resulted in the introduction of foreign technology as well as thoughts and ideas into tradition-bound China. In the 1860s the Qing imperial government established official institutions in charge of translation to make important Occidental works available in Chinese. Western literature began to be translated soon after. According to A-Ying, starting in 1870, some poems by Byron, Shelley, Goethe, and Heine were translated, and *Aesop's Fables* and *Arabian Nights* were the first foreign books rendered into Chinese, published in 1888 and 1900,

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respectively (1961: 1). But the real focus on translating Western literary works did not begin until the turn of the century, under the efforts of individual literati (Chau 1981: 3). Translations of works by Charles Dickens, Rider Haggard, Walter Scott, Victor Hugo, Leo Tolstoy, Washington Irving, and Harriet Beecher Stowe were soon available. Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Alexandre Dumas fils' *The Lady of the Caméllias* were first adapted to the stage in 1907 and created China's modern theatre—Spoken Drama, which subsequently prompted a great demand for the translation of Western plays. It was during such a surge of translation that Shakespeare's biographical details appeared with increasing frequency.79

The Western-influenced Chinese intellectuals first paid attention to Shakespeare at the turn of the century. Liang Qichao, who coined Shakespeare's Chinese name "Sha-shi-bi-ya," expressed his awe of the poet's creative scope in an article for a literary column in the magazine *Xin Min* (New People) in 1902: "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, only the voluminousness is overwhelmingly impressive" (qtd. in Ge 1964: 334). Yan Fu, a thinker and the translator of Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, also made passing references to Shakespeare's international reputation in his writing. In particular, Yan wrote in 1894 that Shakespeare's characters reflected common humanity: "We can identify ourselves with [Shakespeare's] characters not only in appearance and manner, but also in thought and emotion" (qtd. and trans. in Zhang Xiao Yang 1996: 101). Lu Xun, an influential writer-critic who earnestly exhorted China to learn from the West, mentioned Shakespeare and other literary

79According to Ge (1964: 333), the biographical details were given in the such articles as: "Biography of Shakespeare" ("Shi-ai-ku-pi-a Zhuan," *Dalu* Magazine, 1904), "Biography of Shakespeare" ("Ye-si-bi Zhuan," *Jin Shijie Liushi Mingren Hua Zhuan*, or Pictorial Biography of Sixty Renowned Figures in the Modern World, 1907), and "Biography of Shakespeare" (Sha-ke-pi-ya Zhuan, in *Shijie Mingren Zhuanlue*, or Short Biography of World Famous Figures, 1908). These articles provided short, sketchy information on Shakespeare's life and works.
masters as the foundations of European culture because the thoughts and sentiments in their works helped unify their nations (1907). According to Lu, a modern nation needed great literary works to maintain a balance between the value of science and that of emotion:

...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. (Qtd. and trans. in Zhang Xiao Yang 1996: 101-102)

Even though Shakespeare came to China at the "right psychological moment," as Wang Zuoliang comments a century later (1991: 208) indicating China's first opening up to receive Western cultural influence, yet for the first two decades in this century he remained a sonorous name with lofty epithets but without his art being understood by any. 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 intellectuals, many of whom lost faith in their own tradition, earnestly searched for such a model in foreign cultures.

3.1.1 The "Mystical Tales" of a Foreign Bard

Guo Songtao, China's first ambassador to Great Britain and France, recorded in his diary entry the experience of watching a Shakespeare play at the newly opened Lyceum Theatre in London. It was on 18 January 1879, a production of Hamlet with Henry Irving in the title role (Zhang Xiao Yang 1996: 100). Guo commented: "[The play] focused on the plot design, rather than on elaborate spectacle" (1984: 873). He had earlier learned that "the most famous [dramatist] was a certain Shakespeare, who was good at composing plays some two hundred years ago in England; his reputation was equal to that of Homer" (1984: 275). Guo was one of the first few Chinese to be able to see a Shakespearean production in
its original language and theatrical setting, but, in China, for quite some time to come, Shakespeare was only known from Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*.

Shakespeare's plays were first recognized and popularized through the translations—and modifications—of the *Tales*. The first version, *Exotic Tales from Overseas* (*Xei Wai Qi Tan*), was published in Shanghai in 1903. 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" (Ge 1964: 334). Unaware that the *Tales* were originally plays, this writer considered his translation able to "broaden the scope of Chinese novels" (Ge 1964: 334). This version was rendered in classical Chinese language and each title of the ten stories (out of the Lambs' twenty) followed the convention of traditional Chinese novels using a headline summarizing the subject of the story: *The Merchant of Venice*, for instance, was "Antonio Borrows Money by Making a Contract of Flesh"; *The Taming of Shrew*, "Pertruchio Tames the Woman with Habits of Jealousy"; and *Hamlet*, "Avenging the Murder Hamlet Kills his Uncle" (Ge 1964: 335). From its preface and the headlines given to the tales, the translator opted for a popular, entertaining version of the *Tales*.

Shakespeare was first genuinely popularized in China by another version of the Lambs' *Tales*. Lin Shu and Wei Yi's *The Delightful Narration of an English Poet* (*Yingguo Shiren Yin Bian Yan Yu*), first published in 1904. 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 the West is a truly modern civilization, it must have banned and burned such things so as not to confound the enlightenment of society. Yet as I have been told, the celebrities of the West all indulge in his poetry; every household recites it. Not getting enough of it, they use it as script to stage plays. Gentlemen and ladies all go to listen to them, sighing and weeping along. None, nevertheless, criticize the old concepts in his work, nor are exasperated by his bent for the mystical. (1933: 1-2)

Thus Lin gave each story a quaint, exotic title, as in the traditional Chuanqi story form. The Merchant of Venice was "A Bond of Flesh"; Romeo and Juliet, "The Forging of Love"; Hamlet, "The Ghost's Edict"; King Lear, "The Rebellion of Daughters"; and Othello, "The Dim-Sighted Negro" (1933: 3).

Interestingly, the fact that Lin Shu had no knowledge of any European language but managed nevertheless to "translate" over 180 Western works with the aid of interpreters (Wang Zuoliang 1991: 208) 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. Lin's works were very well received by the Chinese during China's first contact with Western literature. His translations of Dickens, Dumas fils, Balzac, Hugo, Scott, and Stowe soon found a wide readership (cf. A-Ying 1961: 2). A number of them were adapted into theatre. Lin's translation of the Tales was printed three times within two years of its first publication (A-Ying 1961: 2).81

Traditionally, the Chinese categorized all literary genres other than formal poetry and prose (essay) as indistinguishably Xiaoshuo (literally "small talk").

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80 Chuanqi, 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.
81 A number of scholars have quoted from the 1928 essay of "My Childhood" by Guo Moruo, an important literary figure in modern China, to emphasize the significance of Lin's version in popularization of Shakespeare's stories in China: "Unconsciously I was much influenced by [Lin's] translation. Later on I also read The Tempest, Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet and other Shakespeare's originals. But it was never surpassed by such an intimate experience as reading [Lin's] fairy tale narratives" (qtd. in Ge 1964: 336; Wang Zuoliang 1991: 164).
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 (Yuan Guoxing 1993: 92-3). 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. This also corresponds with the fact that Lin Shu's version soon became the promptbooks of the earliest adaptations of Shakespeare on the Chinese stage.

3.1.2 Stage Adaptations: Targeting Popular Taste for the Exotic

Before Shakespeare's dramas were introduced in their entirety to China, his dramatic stories had been staged in China's popular theatre mode, the "Enlightened Theatre" (wenmingxi). Shanghai, the origin of China's modern theatre movement, saw the first commercial stage adaptation of The Merchant of Venice in 1913; produced by a drama organization, the New People's Society (Xin Min She), and renamed A Bond of Flesh, it was based on Lin Shu's Tales and directed by Zheng Zhengqiu. By 1916, at least five productions had been staged based on Shakespeare's tales: The Nation-snatching Thief (Hamlet), The Lawyeress (The Merchant of Venice), The Black General (Othello), Sister Emperors (King

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82 About the origin and mode of the "Enlightened Theatre," see 1.3.2.1.
83 See Ouyang Yuqian (1985b: 70); Ge (1964: 336); Chau (1981: 11); Wang Yiqun (1987: 92). The Chinese title of this production varies according to different sources. Liang Shiqiu recalled an early adaptation of The Merchant as One Pound of Flesh [Yibang Rou] (1964). Wang Yiquan actually found a newspaper advertisement of the play, of which the title was A Bond of Flesh [Rou Quan]. This corresponded with Chu's discovery: "even the Chinese titles of the Shake spearean tales created by Lin Shu were generally used in the theatres of that time instead of their original titles" (1970: 160). The earliest record of adaptation of Shakespeare into the dramatic script, however, is actually Bao Tienxiao's Lawyeress, published by Chengdong Girls' School in 1911, also based on The Merchant (Chau 1981: 11 nt; Tian Benxiang 1993: 436).
Lear), and New Version of Peace-making between North and South (Macbeth). The Shanghai audience of the day swayed between socially-committed subjects and boulevard entertainment featuring sensational, intriguing plots and spectacular scenery (cf. Eberstein 1988: 13; Ouyang 1985b). The productions' promotion gimmicks in the newspapers suggest these adaptations highlighted the foreign novelty of the subjects and the sensationalism of the plots. The Lawyeress was thus described:

This is Shakespeare's famous play. [A man's] loan leads to the severing of his own flesh; a lady finds her way to be a lawyer. Both the language and the subject are excellent; the play brims with delicately interesting details.

The Black General sounded like a bad parody of Othello:

A handsome lady would not wed a gentle young man, bent on marrying the black-bearded, black-skinned Black General; it results in a complicated web of love and sin. The entertaining effect, among Shakespeare's plays, is ranked first.

The promotion for The Nation-Snatching Thief also opted for the sensational:

A courtier usurps his ruler of the throne, committing adultery with the queen; a younger brother steals his sister-in-law, burgling the entire nation. [The hero] cannot live under the same sky with his father's murderer, and worst of all, his mother weds that same murderer. He feigns insanity, putting on a show, in order to learn the truth from his mother. In the end none escape death--could it be more devastating?

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84 See Wang Yiqun (1987: 92). Zhang Xiao Yang's documentation is different. He records that between 1914 and 1915, Othello, Romeo and Juliet, and The Taming of Shrew were produced, and in 1916, Macbeth and Hamlet were adapted; these were all presented in modern Spoken Drama form (1996: 110). Also, Zhang records that in 1914, Hamlet was adapted into Sichuan opera, renamed "Murdering His Elder Brother and Marrying His Sister-in-Law; this seems to be the first record of Shakespeare being adapted into Chinese opera (143).

85 Qtd. in Wang Yiqun (1987: 93), from Min-guo Daily, May 25, July 17, and March 11, 1916, respectively. Wang notes that the plays were staged in Shanghai's Xiao Wutai [Laugh Stage], which catered to the popular taste of the urban audiences with detective plays (such as adaptations of Holmes), or family subjects of complicated and often melodramatic pathos.
The Enlightened Theatre was a new, popular mode which arbitrarily combined the realistic style learned from Western theatre and the stylized acting of the native tradition. It often allowed the actors to improvise the dialogue freely and to use popular gags and asides, while keeping some gestural, musical, and verbal conventions from the traditional opera so that the audience could easily decipher the action. Characters were performed in types with distinguishing details according to their personality.86 Men still played female roles.87 The set presented a general space rather than realistic locales (Wang Yiqun 1987: 93). Some features in this theatre were not entirely unlike those of the Elizabethan theatre, but its greatest difference from the latter was the lack of fixed scripts. The actors relied on just a simple plot outline, which specified the order of the characters' entrances; except for key phrases, they improvised most dialogues.

Although the sublime poetry and profound vision of life so characteristic of Shakespearean drama was unlikely to be found in these adaptations, the first Chinese audiences enjoyed the plays. It was not because they had deeply experienced the impact of Western values and thought—the majority of the Chinese of the day were still tradition-bound—but because they found in these tales understandable experience. Yu Weijie comments on how Shakespeare's plots arrested the Chinese imagination during the first three decades of this century, although the "familiarity" which the Chinese found could be superficial:

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86 According to Ouyang Yuqian (1985b: 95), the division of role types in the Enlightened Theatre was based on that of the traditional opera but was divided in much finer details according to the contemporary subjects. For instance, sheng (male) was sub-divided into eight types: the passionate, the serious, the poverty-stricken, the dashing and elegant, the pedantic, the sophisticated (sexually), the elderly, and the comic. And from dan (female) derived such sub-types as: the beautiful but pitiful, the lovely and innocent, the coquettish, the outgoing, the virgin, and the virago.

87 Male actors impersonating female roles on the modern Chinese stage were not abolished until 1920s, by the effort of Hong Shen, who studied theatre at Harvard University and returned China in 1922 before joining Shanghai Theatre Association. See Hong Shen (1961: 243).
the surface morality of Shakespeare's plays—the rise and fall of the
nobility, intricate ploys between lovers, coincidence and fate—was
readily accepted as good entertainment; the Elizabethan world
picture of the family, for example, complementing the Confucian
code of ethics and so on, but the deeper content of Shakespeare's
drama was missed. (1990: 162)

Maybe the Chinese audiences did not experience the "deeper content of
Shakespeare's drama," but they certainly saw relevance in them. Zheng
Zhengqiu's *The Nation-Snatching Thief (Hamlet)*, for example, was widely
believed to satirize Yuan Shikai (1859-1916), China's first president whose 1916
coup d'état to turn the republic back to monarchy in order for himself to be the
emperor failed. The Chinese theatre artists and audiences found not only the
pleasure of story narrative and theatrical entertainment in Shakespeare's tales,
but also valid social criticism.

It is worth mentioning that some Chinese artists were aware of the "deeper
content of Shakespeare's drama" at the time; and at least one of them made
conscious attempts to mount an "authentic" Shakespeare but failed. Lu Jingrui
(1885-1915), a pioneer in China's modern theatre, sought to introduce good
Western plays onto the Chinese stage between 1912 to 1915 in Shanghai. While
studying in Japan, he was associated with Chunliu She (Spring Willow Theatre),
an amateur group formed in 1907 by a few Chinese students in Tokyo which is
commonly acknowledged to have produced the first Chinese Spoken Drama. Lu
also studied theatre with an innovative Japanese actor in his acting school in
Tokyo, and joined the Literary Society of Waseda University to learn Western
drama under Tsubouchi Shoyo, the literary scholar, translator, and actor of

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88 See Ouyang (1985b: 75). However, Li Shixue's research finds that Zheng's satire
of Yuan Shikai in 1916 was based on *Macbeth* (1988: 101). He also cites Chen
Dingsha's 1983 statistics that before and around the May Fourth Movement in
1919, there were over 20 productions based on Shakespeare's dramatic tales,
presenting in total 13 or 14 of his plays (101).
89 On the biographical details and Lu Jingrui's leadership in Shanghai's Chunliu
Shakespeare. A radical intellectual group, the Literary Society (founded in 1906) had introduced and staged European plays such as Ibsen's and took on the first serious translation of Shakespeare in Japan (Arnott 1969: 227). Here Lu earned a solid apprenticeship of Shakespeare's theatre. Returning to Shanghai, Lu is said to have brought back Western masterpieces including *Othello* and *Hamlet* in an enthusiastic and idealistic attempt to introduce Shakespearean drama to the Chinese stage, following the approach of the Literary Society. He also formed a theatre company immediately to produce plays of literary seriousness and artistic value. The play he created is said to have Shakespearean resonance.  

Unfortunately the theatrical environment in Shanghai had never been ripe for his plans before his death in 1915 at the age of thirty.

The highly challenging theatrical environment at Shanghai at the time--financial pressure, fickle theatre-goers, and primitive staging facilities--was nevertheless reminiscent of that in the Elizabethan theatre. Lu and his members were required to mount a new play every two or three days, and the company was constantly touring in order to keep financial balance. But one major difference in Lu's effort was that the plays that he promoted had few cultural and theatrical traditions in Chinese society and could hardly be deciphered by the general audiences. The audiences preferred the eclectic hybrid style and entertaining approach in the Enlightened Theatre to a more "authentic" Western form. Ouyang Yuqian, member of Lu's theatre company, recalls that the formalistic exploration Lu sought in mounting Western masterpieces was considered avant-gardist "art for art's sake" and "could not relate...with the current social environment. Our

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90Lu Jingruo wrote only one play in his short life: *The Tale of the Family's Gratitude and Grudge* (*Jiating enyuan Ji*). A so-called family tragedy set in contemporary China, the play depicts a young man driven to death by the false accusation of his father's new wife. In one scene, the young man's fiancee, now maddened by his death, was searching for him in the night garden by the stream among the falling flowers, in a manner reminiscent of Ophelia (Tian Benxiang 1993: 71). The scene was reported as highly admired by the audience (Ouyang 1985a:36).
works failed to integrate with the social issues of the day and seemed too highbrow to be appreciated by the common audience" (1985a: 41).

Lu was at least ten years more advanced than the general environment would allow for transplanting the full-version of Shakespeare onto the Chinese stage. Before the modern theatre of Spoken Drama was established in the mid-twenties, Shakespeare's text-based, thematic-constructed dramaturgy, psychologically-motivated characters, and complex poetic language all seemed too alien to the Chinese actors and audience. Furthermore, almost all the Western dramas introduced to China during the time were popularized first through literary translation rather than performance; the familiarity with the dramatic text paved the way for the native audience to accept the foreign theatrical mode.

But performance undoubtedly enhances the appreciation of the dramatic text; this is essential in understanding an early attempt to transplant the theatrical effect in Shakespeare's drama onto the Chinese stage via his dramatic text. In 1910, Deng Yizhe (Teng I-che) was deeply impressed by a New York production of Gounod's opera *Romeo and Juliet*, which was performed by Amelita Galli-Curci, particularly the balcony scene, and subsequently translated the scene into Chinese (C. Chang 1953: 114). Deng rendered the source text into a native form, *tanci*, a "rhymed ballad" sung to the accompaniment of a stringed instrument. This was probably the earliest attempt to translate Shakespeare into Chinese word-by-word. But the effort to render the play into a narrative, storytelling form did not seem to work; there was no record that the translation was ever used in performance.

3.2 "The Giant of the European Renaissance"

The right time for introducing Shakespeare's dramatic art into China came with the May Fourth Movement (1918-1925), the comprehensive reform which created a renaissance in Chinese literature and art. It also ushered in an
unprecedentedly intercultural phase to China. Classical literature and theatre were denounced for their inadequacy to represent this new era. European literary works were quantitatively introduced and adapted as models, in an eclectic way, to regenerate the native culture. Shakespeare's drama was finally translated into Chinese along with modern works by Ibsen, Shaw, Hauptmann, Chekhov, Lady Gregory, Gorky, Galsworthy, Gogol, Turgenev, Maeterlinck, and Wilde. In fact, he was one of the only four pre-nineteenth-century Western literary figures who were acclaimed by the Chinese literati during the period.

Shakespeare's drama first saw its Chinese translation in full-length and in dramatic form in 1921 (published 1922)—Hamingleite (Hamlet), translated by Tian Han, whose rendition of Romeo and Juliet was published in 1924. Also available were the translation of Taming of Shrew by Cheng Guanyi in 1923; Hamlet by Shao Ting in 1924; Julius Caesar by Shao and Xu Shaoma in 1925; The Merchant of Venice by Zeng Guanxun in 1924, and As You Like It by Zhang Caizhen in 1926 (Chau 1981: 31). These efforts started the trend of Shakespeare translation in China which would culminate in the 1930s and 1940s.

The reception of Shakespeare during the May Fourth period was incorporated with a cultural discourse popular among the native elites. Consciously or not, many who promoted Westernization spoke of Shakespeare from a comparative cultural perspective. He was no more, as believed in earlier decades, an author of exotic, mystical subjects, but a "giant of the European Renaissance" (Tian Benxiang 1993: 439). Moreover, he was regarded as a paragon of national spirit and a cultural icon, from whom China should draw insight. Derived from this mindset were two ways of reception. One focused on the social

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91 Chu records that, by 1921, these dramatists' plays were already translated into Chinese (1970: 156-7).
92 The other three European writers who drew Chinese attention were Aristotle, Dante, and Goethe. See McDougall (1971: 256).
significance in his drama in relation to China; the other emphasized his romantic spirit, the expression of individuality and love in his plays.

3.2.1 Shakespeare's Social Significance

Many references to Shakespeare during China's literary and cultural reform movement focused on Shakespeare's social relevance to Chinese society rather than his artistic construction. The specific demands of the native society determined how Shakespeare was to be perceived and utilized. For example, Hu Shi, a major leader of China's literary revolution, considered Shakespeare's and Molière's works to be much more advanced than the classical Chinese drama in terms of artistic structure and expression (1918a: 157-8). Placing Shakespeare at the mid-point of the twenty-five centuries of European dramatic history from the Ancient Greek theatre to the modern realism of Ibsen and Shaw, Hu held an evolutionary theory which asserted that a specific era produces a specific literary genre corresponding to the cultural milieu of the time (1918b: 179-180). He saw Western theatre as "materials for direct comparison" with the Chinese theatre, believing it could stimulate the latter's primitive form to evolve (183). Inspired by one of Pertruchio's passages in Taming of Shrew, Hu quoted it in his personal journal and labelled it: "Shakespeare on Women's Status" (Li Shixue 1988: 105).

The scholar-activist of the new culture movement, Fu Si'nian, cited Shakespeare as a valuable example of public enlightenment when he talked about the much desired reform in the traditional Chinese opera. He wrote in 1918 that the speech "To bait fish withal..." from The Merchant of Venice is "so thorough in expressing the view of Man born equal, that it is the Doctrine of Social Contract before Rousseau. In our classical Chinese drama and Beijing opera, there is no [such elevated thought] comparable to this" (Fu 1952: 30).

Cai Yuanpei, President of Beijing University at the time, found Shakespeare a model for young Chinese writers to establish an indigenous literature that could
attain a status of world literature. He argued that the European Renaissance flourished after the literati had started to write in the vernacular, and the result was three hundred years of glorious national literatures. Shakespeare's works gave English literature such a strong identity that today, if talking about English literature, one could not avoid discussing Shakespeare. Although China's "Renaissance" had just started, Cai asserted, with efforts to emulate with the West, one day China's Shakespeare would be born (1940: 11).

3.2.2 Shakespeare's Romantic Spirit

The other way of receiving Shakespeare during the May Fourth era was found in the Chinese fascination with the romantic spirit in Shakespeare's drama. In an age that was intensively interested in such issues as women's emancipation and the pursuit of individual free will to love against the traditional modes of arranged marriage, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* was readily popular, side by side with a new worship of Ibsen's Nora in *The Doll's House*. These foreign models corresponded with the younger generations' growing sense of individualism and idealism, prompting numerous attempts to adapt them into the Chinese context. Nora was transformed in a dozen Chinese plays and produced a "Noraism" (Eberstein 1988: 19-20). As for those initiated in Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* was a bible of the newly discovered romantic love and love's language (cf. Xia 1981: 30; Xing 1930: 4).

One distinctive example is found in the popular romance such as Xu Zhenya's best seller *Yu Li Hun* (The Soul of Li Niang; pb. 1912). The story depicts the unfulfilled love between a widow and her young son's tutor under the suffocating morality of the day. Instead of communicating in conventional Chinese expressions of love, the parting lovers repeat Juliet's lines to Romeo, bidding him farewell ("let day in and let life out..." *Romeo and Juliet*, III. v). Shakespeare's characters parallel and reinforce the painful situation of the
Chinese lovers and their subsequent tragic ending. In another narrative work, *Orchid and Jasmine (Zhilan yu Muoli)*, Shakespeare's text is lavishly quoted and becomes a meta-language of love in a work about love. The following passage depicts the two lovers' first meeting:

...I still hoped to hear my beloved recite Juliet's sweet words of love, but she was already aware of being not alone [in the room], turning her head toward me. Our eyes met... I glanced at Romeo's speech with which he responds to Juliet's worry over his risky scaling the wall. I read:

"Alack, there is more peril in your eye,  
Than in twenty of their swords.  
Do you but look kind upon me, lady,  
And I am proof against their enmity,  
Better my life should by their hate,  
Than that hated life be prolonged,  
To live without your love."

Next was Juliet's line. I looked at my beloved, and she read accordingly:

"How came you into this place,  
And by whose direction?"

I only read half the line: "Love directed me," when she suddenly chuckled. I paused, watching her. Just like what was described in *The Tales from Shakespeare*, my sweet sister's face blushed. How lucky I was, that these rosy cheeks were not hidden in the darkness, but were visible to me. Not feeling anything unnaturally bashful now, she looked at me and said: "Brother Ming, the book is so full of love talk." We sat silently facing each other. We felt there was no slightest barrier between us.93

The romantic impact of *Romeo and Juliet* and the tragic theme of the wasteful death of the youth in *Hamlet* are detectable in the early Spoken Drama

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93Qtd. in Xia Zhiqing (1981: 30-31); translation mine except for the lines from *Romeo and Juliet* (II. ii. 71-80). These lines, however, are erroneously quoted from Shakespeare; perhaps Xia preserves them from the original text of *Orchid and Jasmine*. The correct lines are as follows (Arden edition):

Romeo. Alack, there lies more peril in thine eye  
Than twenty of their swords. Look thou but sweet  
And I am proof against their enmity.  
......  
My life were better ended by their hate  
Than death prorogued, wanting of thy love.  
Juliet. By whose direction found'st thou out this place?  
Romeo. By love, that first did prompt me to enquire.
plays, although, in most cases, Shakespeare was borrowed fragmentarily—a certain scene, character, theme, image, passage of speech—or the tragic mode was adapted. It is difficult to determine just how consciously the Chinese writers adapted Shakespeare, because, as mentioned before, many May-Fourth writers apprenticed to their dramatic craft by vigorously translating Western works, including Shakespeare (McDougal 1971: 9); and oftentimes the impact was indirect and subconscious.

Tian Han, the first Chinese translator of complete Hamlet and Romeo and Juliet, is said to have been influenced by Shakespeare's "romanticism" in creating the mood of "lyrical sentimentality" in his early plays (cf. Tian Benxing 1993: 161; Eberstein 1988: 21). Contemporary study of Tian Han's works also suggests that his dramatic techniques, especially in forging his characters' psychological states, in contrasting various characters to form a panorama of personalities, and in the use of asides, monologues and the verse form, were modeled on Shakespeare (Tian Benxiang 1993: 116-7). In his one-act The Tragedy on the Lake (Hu Shang de Beiju), a surrogate death—like Juliet's—finally comes true. The heroine, Ping Baiwei, long believed to have committed suicide in response to her father's disapproval of her love for a young poet, has since led a secluded life near her "grave" until, three years later, the poet happens to visit there. Realizing that he is already married despite his persistent love for her, Ping fires the pistol at herself, making her tragic death real. The climactic scene in which the two lovers encounter in an ominous, haunted cabin is said to resemble the tomb scene in Romeo and Juliet (Tian Benxiang 1993: 440).

In Linli (1925), a tragedy by a female playwright, Bai Wei, the death of the unrequited heroine Linli recalls Ophelia's death scene in its form and lyricism. Linli's death also occurs behind the scenes and is narrated by another character. It presents an other-worldly, lyrical quality. Linli "was dressed in a white silk
gown, decorated with roses around her body, and died in the fountain pool, which was in a ravine surrounded by hills" (Qtd. in Tian Benxiang 1993: 334). The poetic images here strongly echoes Gertrude's account of Ophelia's death in *Hamlet*.

A number of other Chinese playwrights during the 1920s and 1930s wrote tragedies of love by incorporating what seemed to be borrowings from *Romeo and Juliet* with indigenous sources. This is particularly significant because in Chinese theatre the "happy ending" had been conventionalized, and the "tragic" mode was unknown and had to be learned from the West. The theme of the youthful pursuit of love thwarted by long-standing social or familial traditions was especially deeply felt during the May-Fourth era, for until then, parents still had supreme power in their children's marriages. Shakespeare's star-crossed lovers provided a literary archetype which found parallels in Chinese traditions. His art directly spoke for the emerging consciousness of individualism in China.

Some May-Fourth intellectuals saw in Shakespeare the celebration of romantic individualism, joy of life, and pursuit of human passion; until today the view that Shakespeare represents the emancipation of man's inner nature and capability is still prevalent (see 3. 5). In 1920, deeply moved by the balcony scene of *Romeo and Juliet*, Xu Zhimuo, a Cambridge scholar and renowned poet, tried to translate this scene into modern free verse. His work is said to have achieved the

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94 According to Tian Benxiang (1993: 440-1), various May-Fourth writers dramatized the classic narrative poem of *Kongque Dongnan Fe* (*The Peacocks Flying East and South*), depicting a couple forced to separate due to the traditional moralism of filial piety), in the fashion of Shakespeare's tragedy of love. Such tragic situations continued even to this century when parents maintained the authority in determining their children's marriages. Tian cites Xiong Foxi's *Lanzhi yu Zhongqin* (*Lanzhi and Zhongqin*), Yuan Changying's *Kongque Dongnan Fe*, and Yang Yinshen's *Panshi yu Pucao* (*The Rock and The Rush Grass*) as examples.

95 Hu Shi denigrated the convention of a harmonious reunion in Chinese theatre as "superstition of happy ending" (*tuanyuan mixin*) and advocated the development of the "concept of tragedy" (*beiju de guannian*) by learning from Greek tragedies and modern social problem plays. See Hu (1918b). On the argument that Chinese theatre did not produce tragedy, see Qian Zhongshu, "Tragedy in Old Chinese Drama," *Tianxia* 1(Aug. 1935): 37-46.
best poetic effect in Chinese translation of Shakespeare so far, as Xu translated word by word from Shakespeare's text into a verse form which was not limited to the traditional Chinese prosodic rules (C. Chang 1953: 115). Xu never finished translating the whole play; his work could best be seen as a creative exercise to deliver what he had found as the essential spirit in Shakespeare—and in Western literature in general—passion. That quality, he observed, was strangely lacking in Chinese culture.

In a lecture initially addressed to the public in Beijing University in 1921, entitled "Art and Life," Xu described Shakespeare and other Western writers as artists of "cosmic character," who had the ability "to comprehend life as a whole" and to manifest a "consciousness of life" in their "medium of art" (qtd. in Lee 1973: 156-157). In contrast, he forcefully argued, the Chinese artists lacked such ability. Their artistic heritage had long reflected the qualities of "moderation, reasonableness and compromising spirit" to the point of "negation of life by smothering the divine flame of passion almost to extinction" (157). In other words, Xu's thesis polarized Shakespeare and the whole Western culture and the Chinese tradition: the one realized art through direct experience of life; and the other enjoyed no real art simply because little empirical knowledge of life was obtained. Xu Zhimuo discovered in Shakespeare and the Western tradition a foreign value which helped him revolt against what seemed to him a self-negating, convention-abiding character in his native culture.

Overall, Shakespeare's impact on the Chinese during the 1920s was significant but somewhat partial and superficial—an "Other" invented to address the imperatives of the Self. He was at the same time the classic giant of the Renaissance with contemporary social significance, the romanticist transcending all cultural and literary boundaries, and the advocator of human individualism and passion in whom the radical Chinese youth found a voice. But his dramatic
art was never understood in its entirety. Perhaps the fragmentary and limited nature of the Chinese reception of Shakespeare was caused by the native writers' preoccupation with art's socio-political purpose. Theatre was not a mirror held up to reflect Nature but to reveal social reality and, more important, to improve it. This utilitarian mindset narrowed their productive reception of Western drama; only the social-problem plays and the realistic form were considered effective in fulfilling social functions. In this regard, Shakespeare's relevance was far less than that of Ibsen and Shaw. Little wonder that Tian Han was dedicated to become a "budding Ibsen of China" (Tian Benxiang 1993: 164). And another talented and serious dramatist, Hong Shen, also resolved to become an Ibsen rather than "China's Shakespeare" (1961: 107-8).

Nevertheless, for some Chinese critics, Shakespeare's "typicality"--the universality of human nature--surpassed the "topicality"--the immediate social referentiality. They saw Shakespeare as an artistic alternative, disputing against the European problem plays as the sole model of modern Chinese drama. Zhang Jiazhu compares Shakespeare and Shaw in his article written in 1925, weighing both as the most renowned of their times and seeing them as representatives of different creative approaches. While Shaw wrote about the issues of his times, Shakespeare "depicted the subtlest and most elemental human sentiments such as jealousy, arrogance, avarice, suspicion, sorrow, greed, passion, and so on" (159). While Shaw's subject was the impact of the environment on man, Shakespeare's was human nature. Because human nature hardly changes, Shakespeare never attempted to preach, guide or even taunt his reader, as Shaw so anxiously tried to, through criticism and argumentation. Thus Shakespeare's drama, concluded Zhang, was more "profound," "far-reaching," "cosmic," and "subtle" (160) than Shaw's:

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96 Yu Weijie uses these two contrasting terms to describe Shakespeare's appeal to the Chinese during this century in his article (1990: 161-167).
...he is, in the present year of 1925, more refreshing than the articles published in the Beijing Morning News, and more contemporary to us. He is not limited by time and space; he is universal. Shaw argued all his life about the ideas of Man, whereas Shakespeare only described the life of Man. (1925: 164)

This view of Shakespeare became dominant in the 1930s and 1940s as Shakespeare's works were intensively translated into Chinese vernacular and were available for common readers.

3.3 Intensive Translation of Shakespeare: The Word

The greatest contribution of the May-Fourth period to the reception of Shakespeare was the establishment of the translational convention: his drama was translated as drama and into vernacular Chinese, instead of as a story narrative in classical literary Chinese, as in Lin Shu's Tales, or a popular performance genre, as in Deng Yizhe's tanci rendition of Romeo and Juliet. Thanks to China's rapidly developing familiarity with Western dramatic forms through rigorous translation, the awareness of Shakespeare's artistic form and poetic language increased and led to the intensive translation of his plays in the next decades.

It is worth comparing two contrasting approaches in Chinese Shakespeare translation in the early 1920s because, as Shakespearean drama had no equivalent form in Chinese tradition, the way the first translators rendered it reflected large issues of theatre interculturalism, such as cultural appropriation. The first approach was to preserve the foreignness of the source text, as demonstrated by Tian Han's translation of Hamlet in 1921; the second approach was to "smooth out" the difference between the source and the target tradition, as seen in Shao Ting's version of Hamlet in 1924.97

97 These two approaches, mentioned by Pavis (1989), are originally attitudes towards the foreign culture in an activity of intercultural translation. Here they are applied to a specific artistic form.
3.3.1 Preservation Versus Elimination of the Foreign

Tian Han's *Hamlet*, the first complete Shakespeare play translated into Chinese, preserved the original dramatic form and linguistic meanings.\(^9\) This work is 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 (C. Chang 1953: 115; Chau 1981: 355). In order to preserve the maximum meaning and formalistic character of the source text, Tian adapted 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* (Chau 1981: 356). Tian did not provide footnotes or references to help the first time Chinese reader cross the cultural gap embedded in the original (356). 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 (1953: 115).

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-to-word in his translation, presumably to acquire 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

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\(^9\) 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).
Hamlet must have made great appeal to the current readers as well; in ten years it had gone through seven reprints (Chau 1981: 34).

In sharp contrast, Shao Ting's Hamlet sought to pull the source text towards the target tradition, to completely "Sinicize" Shakespeare. This is manifested in a number of ways, according to Chau's study (1981: 366-380). First, its new title, Tale of Heavenly Vengeance (Tianchou Ji), smacked of the popular Chinese traditional novel, giving the reader a sense of familiarity. Second, the original text was rendered into classical literary Chinese and assimilated within native linguistic conventions, thus distorting Shakespeare's poetic language and imagery to a great extent. Besides, the target form suited reading rather than oral presentation, making Hamlet a closet play. But the most distinctive appropriation of the original text was the translator's painstaking notes, bracketed and interpolated between the lines, to guide the reader through the whole play.99 Shao's method was based on his belief in the didactic function of art. In the preface to his Chinese translation of Lord Chesterfield's Letter to His Son (published 1935), Shao mentioned: "As an actor, Shakespeare taught the world through drama" (qtd. in Chau 1981: 19). In many of his notes, Shao cited indigenous cultural, historical analogies to interpret or contrast the elements in the original text which might be unfamiliar to the Chinese reader. Therefore, although the translated play was still set in Denmark, it nevertheless appeared to be traditionally Chinese from its language to the overall moral values it represented. For instance, Shao footnoted Claudius at his entrance (I, ii) by drawing a parallel between him and a well-known Chinese emperor, Tang Taizong (627 - 649 A.D.):

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99Chau (1981: 367) observes that Shao's practice resembles the Chinese academic convention of making running comments on the upper margin of a printed page in a book (meipi); rather like footnoting, its purpose is to help the reader understanding the usually difficult classical literary texts (guwen ).
The Danish King can be compared with Emperor Taizong of Tang Dynasty, for Taizong killed his elder brother Yuanji and married his brother's concubine. It was an incestuous act, disturbing the ethical order. The two rulers bear similarities... The Danish King usurped the throne by murder, then laid his hands on his sister-in-law. His crime was even worse. (Qtd. in Chau 1981: 372)

In other interpolations, Shao transgressed the creative range of the translator by giving his subjective perspectives. For example, under Gertrude's speech to Hamlet, "cast thy nighted color off... all that lives must die,/ Passing through nature to eternity" (I, ii, 68-73), Shao commented: "These lines well represent Western women's psychology" (qtd. in Chau 1981: 371); and at the Prince's famous line, "Frailty, thy name is woman" (I, ii, 146), he wrote: "Western women do not declare chastity, easily becoming unfaithful. Few have the unwearied virtue of integrity like the [lasting fortitude of winter's] firs and cypress" (qtd. in Chau 1981: 372). Notes like these bordered on ethnocentricity, misleading the first Chinese readers of Western literature.

From today's perspective, Shao's effort to "Sinicize" Hamlet failed because many Elizabethan cultural elements in the source text simply lack the "equivalents" in Chinese traditions. His rendition of Hamlet may be valuable for a comparative cultural study of the initial contact between the Chinese and the Western culture; but it failed to communicate Shakespeare cross-culturally to the Chinese. Chang Chen-Hsien calls the translation "astonishingly bad" (1953: 115). Chau sees it as "conservative" because it applied a superficial make-up to transform Shakespeare into Chinese but could not provide authenticity either in relation to the source or for the target context (1981: 379). In comparison, Tian Han chose to distance his translation from the target point of view and to draw closer to that of the source; his approach soon became the standard approach for Shakespeare translation, as China was increasingly driven towards Westernization.
3.3.2 Systematic Translation of Shakespeare

Starting in 1930, a serious attempt to establish Shakespeare in the indigenous literary canon was made by a number of ambitious individuals, who set out to translate his complete works into Chinese; that attempt also sparked the beginning of Chinese Shakespeare scholarship. Yu Shangyuan, an American-educated theatre scholar and founder of Beijing Art Academy's drama department, first raised the awareness of China's need to introduce Shakespeare systematically in his article "Translating Shakespeare" (1931).

Yu had promoted a "National Theatre Movement" in Beijing in the 1920s, following the Irish example; his perspective on the future of Chinese theatre was always based on a dialectic relationship between the native traditions and the world theatre. In this article, Yu forcefully advocated the importance of translating Shakespeare into Chinese and of staging Shakespeare based on the translations. He perceived that Shakespeare translation would make a great impact on China's modern literature and theatre, as it had in other countries. In France it had stimulated a new poetic form, as seen in Hugo's lyrical poems; in Germany it had spurred the "Sturm und Drang" movement; and in Hungary the systematic translation of Shakespeare's complete works had resulted in great enhancement of the Hungarian national literature and culture. Yu particularly lauded Tsubouchi Shoyo's 43 years of individual effort in translating all Shakespeare's plays into Japanese, which, completed in 1928, brought Japan to join the European countries in consciously introducing Shakespeare into their literary canons. By the same token, the Chinese critic claimed, "What we need is simply to be able to directly read [Shakespeare's] drama; through translation everyone can read it, and through performance everyone can see it. It is an infinite source of treasure, resourceful and inexhaustible" (1931: 3).
Yu implied that Shakespeare translation could be a measure of the readiness of a particular native literature to enter world literature, because Shakespeare's oeuvre was the most influential and universal—"the world's second Bible" (1931: 3). Particularly inspiring, observed Yu, were the examples of Hungarian and German translations of Shakespeare. Since taking charge of the task in 1860, the Hungarian poet John Arany and his fellow translators spent 18 years to complete it, with support from many cultural institutions, media, and individuals. The German A. W. Schlegel also struggled to find the best linguistic form for rendering Shakespeare into German; his translation was not artistically inferior to the original. Thus the task of Shakespeare translation had to meet a series of hermeneutic and aesthetic demands—the thorough understanding of the original work and the transcription of it into the most suitable linguistic and artistic form in the native traditions—before finally being tested on the stage for the native audience. Furthermore, the translation was a joint effort of the cultural and economic resources, as in Hungary's case; had the rich and privileged lacked a great vision or financial means, the great project would not have been completed. In short, its realization relied on a whole society's conscious effort, a culture's collective vision. Thus, the task of translating Shakespeare would be crucial for the maturation of China's modern literature and theatre, which, until now, were still in an experimental stage:

Translating Shakespeare has a double advantage in that it is both poetry and drama. Because it is poetry, it creates a unique challenge in linguistic transcription; because it is drama, it can be read and performed everywhere after being translated. Moreover, the translation activity itself is a kind of education, a discipline. [It can test:] Is the vernacular Chinese sufficient for expressions? Has our modern poetry matured technically? Does the translator understand Shakespeare's creative intentions?... It is a measuring stick with which we can evaluate the strength and weakness of China's literary battalion, to see if they have already built up a new tradition. China's new poetry, new drama, and new literature may well be judged successful or not through the translation of Shakespeare. (1931:11)
In fact, Yu Shangyuan was not the only one to perceive the relationship between translating Shakespeare and Chinese literature attaining a status as world literature. Since 1918, Hu Shi had promoted the idea of the systematic translation of foreign literature, suggesting a committee be formed to select and translate the first-rank European works. Attention would be paid to genre as well as language style, according to Hu's guideline, so as not to repeat such literary "sins" as Lin Shu did in "translating Shakespearean dramas into story narratives in classical Chinese" (1918b: 158). But it was not until 1930, when Hu undertook the large-scale project of translating Western works in the National Commission of Translation and Compilation, that a blueprint was laid out for the translation of Shakespeare's complete works, under the funding of Zhonghua Education and Cultural Foundation (Liang 1964b: 33).

According to Hu's letters to Liang Shiqiu, whom Hu soon recruited with another four scholars to share the task, the project of Shakespeare translation would take five years to complete, with these five members as a committee responsible for translating, proof-reading, annotating, and polishing the Complete Works into modern Chinese (Liang 1964b). In this detailed plan, immediate attention was paid to the linguistic style. To find out which style would create the best result, Hu asked two of the five translators to try rendering Shakespeare into verse, and another two into prose. Hu also warned that the translation should never be replaced by paraphrase—that is, rewriting idiomatically the part in the original text that seemed difficult to translate into Chinese. Instead, thorough footnotes were required to assist the reader's

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100 In his seminal article "The Concept of Literary Evolution," Hu Shi provided a guideline for translating Western literary works:

China's first Collection of Western Literature should select first-class Western works, including 100 novels, 500 short stories, 300 dramas, and 50 essays.... The plays that are in vernacular verse form should be translated into [Chinese] vernacular prose; if translated into classical literary Chinese, they will lose the great qualities of the original. (1918b: 157-158)
comprehension (Liang 1964b: 34). Although Hu Shi is said to have had little knowledge of Shakespeare's dramatic art,\textsuperscript{101} he was far-sighted in understanding the significance of Shakespeare to Chinese literature, and in providing a pragmatic approach to the challenging task.

3.3.3 Shakespeare's Dedicated Translators

In the early 1930s, three Chinese started to translate Shakespeare's complete works: Liang Shiqiu (1901-1992), Cao Weifeng (1911-1963), and Zhu Shenghao (1912-1944). Although different in the degree of completeness, their translations were similar in three aspects. First, the work was done by their individual efforts with little or no governmental funding or institutional assistance; second, they translated Shakespeare primarily as literature, not for a specific theatre company or production; and third, they translated Shakespeare's poetic language into Chinese vernacular prose. And they shared the perspective of Yu Shangyuan and Hu Shi, genuinely believing in the good cause of Shakespeare translation.

Liang Shiqiu turned out to be the only one of the five translators recruited by Hu Shi to set out on the long and lonely journey of Shakespeare translation which would take the next four decades to complete.\textsuperscript{102} Starting in 1931, he set the pace of translating two of Shakespeare's plays per year, but soon the Sino-Japanese War interrupted his work and stopped the funding source. Nonetheless, between 1936 and 1939, he managed to translate eight plays and publish them in Hong Kong. Liang came to Taiwan as the Communist regime seized control of China and continued the project at what he called, "a snail's pace" (1964b: 33). In

\textsuperscript{101} See Liang (1966: 34).
\textsuperscript{102} According to Liang (1964b), the other four translators did not accomplish any work for various reasons, and all the Zhonghua Educational and Cultural Foundation's translation projects were forced to end as the war broke out in mid-1937. Therefore, Liang's translation of Shakespeare was an individual effort without any financial or institutional support.
1961, at the fourth centennial anniversary of Shakespeare's birthday, Taipei's Wensheng Bookstore published Liang's translation of 20 Shakespeare plays (Liang 1964b). In 1967, he finally finished the translation of all 37 of Shakespeare plays, publishing them through Taipei's Yuandong Bookstore in 40 volumes. To this date, Liang remains the only translator who has alone rendered the complete works of Shakespeare into Chinese.

Like many Chinese intellectuals of his generation, Liang Shiqiu had the advantage of standing between traditional Chinese culture and Western influence. He was a versatile scholar, refined essayist, active literary critic, seasoned translator, and one of the most renowned Chinese-English dictionary compilers. His first exposure to Shakespeare was through Lin Shu's translation of Tales from Shakespeare (Liang 1964a). And in Qinghua School during his teenage years, he started the formal study of Shakespeare, learning Julius Caesar, The Merchant of Venice, and Hamlet with an English teacher, Mr. Smith. He must have been aware of the issue of different versions in Shakespeare then, as he recalled the textbook The Complete Works of Shakespeare, an edition published for the students of Oxford and Cambridge, as an annotated and "purified" version (Chu 1970: 162). Liang studied English literature in the U. S. for three years, and his graduate study under Irving Babbitt at Harvard University is said to have had a great influence on his view of Shakespeare's humanism.

Because of his academic training, Liang consciously placed "fidelity" (xin) over "clarity" (da) and "elegance" (ya) as the top priority in his translation. He explained after the publication of his Complete Works in 1967: "My greatest hope is that my understanding of Shakespeare's English is not too poor, and that

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103 Apart from the 37 Shakespeare plays, Liang's translations of Shakespeare's poetry were published posthumously in 1969, in three volumes: Venus and Adonis, Lucrece and Sonnets (Li Shixue 1988: 96).
104 Xin, da, and ya is the three-rule principle of translation in China established by Yan Fu, the pioneer translator of Western works in the beginning of this century. See Chen Zuwen (1968: 68); Chau (1981: 385); Ye Shan (1968: 55).
my interpretation of his works does not mislead overly" (76). His translations were hailed as the "best human effort can reach to be faithful to the original meanings [in Shakespeare's works]" (Ye Shan 1968: 55). This is shown in a number of aspects. First, he was the first Chinese translator to state the importance of choosing a proper version of Shakespeare (Chau 1981: 381).

Second, he consistently provided concise footnotes in his translation, especially for the parts where literal translation could not convey the original meanings. These footnotes provided Liang's principles of translation, the meanings of specific terms or puns, scholarly interpretations, research references, cultural backgrounds, and theatrical conventions of the source texts; they are still the most reliable notes among Shakespeare's Chinese translations to date (Chau 1981: 383). Third, Liang's critical introduction to his translation was the most systematic among all the Chinese versions of Shakespeare (Chau 1981: 381). It further familiarized the reader with the edition and year the work was written, the sources of the dramatic story, the history of staging, and the critical opinions on the play (Liang 1966: 237-486). Although some of his critical opinions were not sufficiently updated, according to later criticism,105 he was the first Chinese translator to pay considerable attention to Shakespeare scholarship.

The second ambitious Chinese translator of Shakespeare was Cao Wei-feng, who, from 1931, sought to translate the complete works by his own efforts without any institutional assistance. Despite great difficulty, his Julius Caesar was published in 1935. Between 1942 and 1946, his translations of 11 Shakespeare plays were published by Gueiyang's Wentong Bookstore under the heading of The Complete Works of Shakespeare, and they were reprinted in Shanghai after the war under the heading of Cao's Translations of Shakespeare. They were re-edited

and published during the years between 1955 and 1962 in Shanghai, including 12 plays (Chau 1981: 24).

The third dedicated translator of Shakespeare in China, Zhu Shenghao, was a legend in the history of China's reception of Shakespeare. A young poet fresh out of the university working as editor in Shanghai's World Book Company, Zhu soon revealed his bent for literature and was urged by the director of the company, Jan Wenhu, to translate the complete works of Shakespeare. Starting in 1935, Zhu collected different editions of Shakespeare plays and reference works and set out the project and finished at least seven plays by the fall of 1937 (Zhu 1944: 580; Qingru 1946: 588). With the Japanese invasion of Shanghai, he was forced to escape with only an original Complete Works and the drafts of his translation, some of which, along with all of his reference works, were lost in the fire of war (Zhu 1944: 580). From 1939 to 1941, he lived amidst the dangers of war, working for a news agency, unable to concentrate on translating Shakespeare. Finally, in his hometown Jiaxing, he settled and resumed the work, under poor living conditions. In spite of declining health and a lack of reference works on Shakespeare, Zhu finished translating all the tragedies, tragicomedies, and some of the comedies and histories in two years. In 1944, tuberculosis and his rigorous working routine finally killed him at the age of thirty-two, leaving a total of 31 of Shakespeare plays rendered in elegant Chinese.106

The Chinese critics have credited Zhu Shenghao's translation of Shakespeare as by far one of the best in terms of linguistic refinement and theatrical actability (cf. Chu 1970: 173-174; Wang Zuoliang 1991: 166-167). It can be proved by the fact that Zhu's translation had the widest readership in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan during the 1950s and 1960s (Chau 1981: 23). In 1947, Zhu's translation of 27 Shakespearean plays was first published in three volumes by

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106See Qingru (1946: 589-591). He finished only half of the 32nd. The Shakespeare plays Zhu left untranslated were all histories (Chu 1970: 166).
Shanghai's World Book Company, and another four plays were published in 1954. In 1960, the first Chinese version of the complete Shakespeare was published by the World Book Company of Taipei, in four volumes; the first three volumes were the plays translated by Zhu, and the last volume, containing Shakespeare's ten histories, was by Yu Erchang, Zhu's university classmate and the Chinese translator of Lafcadio Hearn's Lecture on Shakespeare (Chu 1970: 173). Zhu's popularity was revealed by the numerous reprints. His translation of Hamlet was reprinted by at least five publishing companies for a total of 15 reprints between 1947 and 1974 (Chau 1981: 33-38), which roughly means that, during the three decades, every two years there appeared one edition. In 1978, after further revision, supplementation, and annotation by other scholars in Mainland China, Zhu's Complete Works of Shakespeare was published in 11 volumes, a standard collection to the date which provided a solid groundwork for future Chinese Shakespeare scholarship (Wang Zuoliang 1991: 166).

In addition to the three mentioned above, there were a number of other Chinese translators who participated in the intensive translation of Shakespeare during the 1930s, but most of them translated no more than one play, and the same play was sometimes repeatedly translated by different persons. Generally speaking, in the 1930s enthusiasm for Chinese translations of Shakespeare peaked, as did the subsequent quantity of translations. According to Tian Qjin's survey in 1944, among the total 387 foreign dramas translated and published in China during 1908 to 1938 (of which a small part were adaptations), Shakespeare's was ranked first in terms of the number of his works being rendered into

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Chinese—altogether twenty works, surpassing those whose appeal seemed stronger at the time such as Ibsen, Shaw, and Galsworthy.108

3.3.4 Seeking Balance Between "Sound" and "Sense"

All the Chinese translators mentioned appeared to have little knowledge and even less experience of the stage. Their translations focused on the literary and the linguistic—on the "words"—and were concerned about how to render Shakespeare's drama into a reliable, refined literary text in comprehensive vernacular Chinese. While the "meaning" or sense of the words became the primary concern, the theatrical quality was often lost. These translations were variously criticized as being "unplayable," lacking the kind of energy that Shakespeare's texts contained for theatrical enunciation (cf. Chau 1981: 355-422). Granted, Shakespeare was introduced into China in a challenging time. China's vernacular literature was recently established; Spoken Drama and realistic staging were still experimental; and the severe physical limitations imposed by the tumultuous years of the war greatly impeded the translators from testing their works onstage on a regular basis. Besides, virtually no Shakespeare productions from the West ever toured to China or were available in films. Thus the Chinese translators could hardly experience the theatrical quality of Shakespeare's poetic language.109

108 In Tian Qin's report, Chekhov ranked second highest, with 14 plays rendered into Chinese during the abovementioned period; Shaw and Galsworthy each had 12, and Ibsen had 9. Also, more French plays were rendered into Chinese than dramas of any other language, in total 132 works. Second highest in number was English drama, in total 127, of which Shakespeare's occupied about one sixth (1944: 105-7).

109 It is impossible to underestimate the effect of performance on the translators. The example of Deng Yijie, who saw the opera version of Romeo and Juliet and hastened home to render the balcony scene into Chinese, is a good example. Liang Shiqiu, who had the chance of studying in the U.S., had seen Walter Hampden play Hamlet and Warfield play The Merchant of Venice before he set out to translate Shakespeare. But that was all the theatrical experience he had; "I dared to translate Shakespeare [with so little training]. I really did not measure my own strength and could only offend the Bard" (1964b: 34).
Nevertheless, most of the Chinese translators were aware that Shakespeare's drama had been created for the stage. Many of them actually acknowledged the complex nature of the dramatic language in Shakespeare, and saw its theatrical potential. Liang Shiqiu reminded his reader that "drama is not only created for reading, but for enactment on the stage," urging the study of the history of staging Shakespeare in China (1964a). Zhu Shenghao took pains to incorporate the demands of theatrical enunciation into his practice of translation, constantly "assuming the role of actor" and reading out loud his translation in order to produce stageable texts.110

But as almost all the Chinese translations were not aimed for specific theatrical productions, the translators focused mostly on the balance between "sound" and "sense" in their works—how to preserve and convey both the poetic form of Shakespeare's blank verse and the meanings delivered by it. It helps to examine the individual approaches of Liang and Zhu, the two most acclaimed Chinese translators of Shakespeare to date, to reveal the nature and the limitations of Chinese translation of Shakespeare for the stage.

Liang adapted Chinese vernacular prose in the translation of most of Shakespeare's blank verse, following Tian Han's convention, for this form had far greater capacity than Chinese verse to adapt faithfully Shakespeare's meaning-laden poetry. He argued that it was a compromise in a dilemma between presenting the "sense" of the original text and keeping its "sound," the rhythmic, musical quality (1967: 35). He admitted that to "translate Shakespeare's blank

110 In his "Preface by the Translator to The Complete Works of Shakespeare" , Zhu Shenghao stated that he had always considered his translation from the perspective of a potential reader and actor:

After finishing translating one speech, I always assumed the role of reader to examine if there was any obscure, unclear language in my translation. I also assumed the role of actor to test if the tone of the speech was fluent, if the cadence was harmonious. Sometimes one word or line which did not work would take me a whole day to re-render" (1944: 581).
verse into Chinese free verse is an elevated ideal" which requires "a poet to fulfill, for he has the unique ability to maneuver the language"; and "Honestly, I could not attend to the cadence of the original text; in my opinion, to fully render the meanings of the original is a supremely difficult task" (1964b: 35). But Liang's prose lacked the tonal and musical variation in Shakespeare's blank verse, with the result that a character's voice was lost, as was the overall aesthetic effect made from alternating prose and verse in the original text (Chau 1981: 210).

To compensate for the lost rhythmic, musical quality of the blank verse, Liang consulted Percy Simpson's *Shakespearian Punctuation* (1911) and was inspired (1964b: 35-6). The book argues that Shakespeare's punctuation, though irregular, was designed especially to assist his actors' stage enunciation, and therefore was rich in tone and cadence. Liang hence sought to preserve the exact punctuation of the original text in his version, in the hopes of grasping the rhythmic flow of Shakespeare's poetry. It resulted in a "line-to-line" translation; each line of Shakespeare's text had a corresponding line in Liang's text, despite the fact that it was in Chinese prose. Besides, Liang argued, Shakespeare treated the blank verse less rigidly than his predecessors. Shakespeare often added one or two syllables to the standard ten-syllable line, and frequently used run-ons; thus his blank verse "was actually very close to prose." With this rationale, Liang hoped to "render Shakespeare with a sonorous, melodious Chinese vernacular prose, in which the rhythmic effect of Shakespeare's blank verse may somewhat be simulated" (1964b: 35).

At its best, Liang's prose was considered refined and succinct, able to reflect the tonal and syntactical effects of Shakespeare's poetic language (cf. Chau 1981: 385; Ye Shan 1968: 57). Most notably, his prose preserved Shakespeare's imagery. As imagery constructs the overall thematic and poetic structure of a play, Liang's version remained highly faithful to the original. In
comparison, some Chinese translators considered linguistic fluency and cultural familiarity more important and often sought idiomatic "equivalents" in popular, conventional Chinese expressions to render the unfamiliar images found in Shakespeare, leading to a distortion of the original.\footnote{See Chen Zuwen (1961: 60). For example, in translating Lear's speech "Man's life is cheap as beast's" (\textit{King Lear}, II, iv, 264), Liang kept the image of the beast in his version whereas Sun Dayu's \textit{Liye Wang} (1946) sought a conventional expression in Chinese: "Human life is as base as an ant's" (\textit{min jian ru yi}), opting for cultural, linguistic familiarity at the cost of the overall beast imagery in the original.}

But at its worst, Liang's version was too restrained and bookish to convey the literary luster and poetic spirit of Shakespeare's poetry and to adapt to the stage. His prose sometimes preserved too much English syntax to become comprehensible Chinese (such as the use of the passive voice, which is less common in Chinese), as a result of his rigidly following, line-by-line, the original text rather than re-creating it in the target language (cf. Chau 1981: 387; Chu 1970: 177-8; Ye Shan 1968: 59). This rhetorical disadvantage is said to have contributed partially to the failure of a 1942 production of \textit{Hamlet} in Chinese in Chongqing (Chau 1981: 387). At least it proved to be a lengthy stage version, taking the actors five hours to execute the play (from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m.).

Thus the general issues of the translation of poetry arise: if fidelity cannot apply to both "sound" and "sense," is the translation still faithful to the original? Can poetry really be translated at all, particularly great poetry like Shakespeare's? Liang Shiqiu's translation may not be inspiring, but as a reference work in understanding Shakespearean drama it is more than competent. While Liang reached "fidelity" and "clarity" in his translation of Shakespeare, Zhu Shenghao endeavored to convey "clarity" and particularly "elegance"—the poetic quality found in Shakespeare (Ye Shan 1970: 54).

Zhu Shenghao had been dissatisfied with his predecessors in Shakespeare translation who, in his opinion, were inadequate in their strict and stiff
representations of Shakespeare's poetry. "The result of being tied down to the petty syntactical rules is the total loss of the original works' poetic quintessence in the various Chinese renditions of Shakespeare; even worse, they tend to be abstruse and obscure, hard to read to the end" (1944: 580). Zhu's highest goal was to preserve this "poetic quintessence" (shenyun), followed by a faithful conveyance of the purport of the original with clear, fluent Chinese prose (1944: 581). Instead of making a word-to-word translation like Tian Han, or a line-by-line translation like Liang Shiqiu, Zhu preferred to re-create Shakespeare, where the syntactical gaps existed:

Whenever I encountered the situation where the syntax of the original is incompatible with that of Chinese, I would dwell on it over and over again, even ready to go so far as to re-structure the original, in order to fully reveal the author's intent. I never let his intent be buried in an obscure language. (1944: 581)

Zhu did what Liang would not: paraphrasing, summarizing, or even omitting the obscure language of the original; replacing complex imagery with clear, plain expressions in Chinese. He also tended to misinterpret Shakespeare's context, probably due to his haste in translation. His approach was criticized by later scholars as violating Shakespeare's organic use of imagery and poetic structure (Chau 1981: 394-8). Zhu did not live long enough to defend himself, but, if he had, he would probably argue in the same spirit as Dryden, paradoxically, did: "A Translator that would write with any force or spirit of an Original, must never dwell on the words of an author" (qtd. in Brower 1974: 3).

Nevertheless, Zhu won greater readership than any other Chinese translator of Shakespeare. His translations were also the most frequently adapted to the Chinese stage (Chu 1970: 173). The Chinese readers/audience enjoyed the clear plot and distinctive characters of Shakespeare's plays without suffering the complex poetic language and unfamiliar cultural details. Zhu's versions proved most comprehensive and artistic to the average Chinese reader who had little
knowledge of English. As scholar Chau lauds, "At least in one aspect [Zhu's] version is closer to Shakespeare than any other's: its wide appeal to the populace, which is an indispensable quality for any successful translation of Shakespeare" (1981:398).

From the late 1940s, because of the increasing understanding of Shakespeare, two Chinese translators attempted to render faithfully the sound and the sense of Shakespeare's text. Sun Dayu was the first one who consciously created a method to transfer the English iambic pentameter into Chinese modern vernacular verse. In his King Lear (1946, pub. 1948), Sun rendered each line of Shakespeare's blank verse into a corresponding Chinese line which consisted of five "phonic units" (yinzu), seeking to create a new verse form. Inventive though he was, Sun's work was less masterful than Bian Zhilin's Hamlet (1954, pub. 1956), which was generally recognized as the first successful Chinese translation of the poetic form in Shakespeare's drama (Chau 1981: 413-421; Wang Zuoliang 1991: 167).

Bian Zhilin (1910- ) expressed his intention to translate Hamlet in the preface of his translation: to "convey as much as possible the original purport of not only the content but also the expressive form" (qtd. in Chau 1981: 413). He re-created Shakespeare's blank verse into a Chinese blank verse (wuyun shi), a form he consistently used in his later rendition of Othello (1956), King Lear (1977), and Macbeth (1983). A competent scholar and translator of English literature as well as a renowned poet, Bian had the qualification which Liang Shiqiu had called

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112 In Sun's prosodic design, every "phonetic unit" consisted of a two- or three-syllable phrase, and five units constituted a line of approximately ten syllables, similar to the blank verse. The problem with Sun's design is that he often needed to supplement extra syllables to complete the syllables required by his design, and therefore tended to supply meanings that did not exist in Shakespeare's original. See Chen Zuwen (1968: 59); Wang Zuoliang (1991: 167).

113 In 1988, the four were compiled and published as Four Shakespearean Tragedies under the category of the Anthology of the Masterpiece in Foreign Literature by the People's Literature Press. See Wang Zuoliang (1991: 167).
for, the poet's "unique ability to maneuver the language," in translating Shakespeare's poetry into Chinese verse. His prosodic pattern was based on the English blank verse but modified according to the syntactic character of vernacular Chinese. In his invented form, each verse line contains five basic phonetic units; but unlike in the English blank verse in which the basic unit is a "foot," the unit in the Chinese form is what Bian called a *dun* (literally, this means "pause"). ¹¹ A *"dun"* is not determined by the number of syllables but has characteristically one strong beat. It is through the alternation of the strong (long) beats and the weak (short) beats that the rhythmic effect of Shakespeare's iambic pentameter is simulated in the target language (Chau 1981: 217). As it turned out, Bian's text closely followed every line of the Bard's blank verse, including the effect of enjambment (Bian 1983: 8). Even though Bian sought to imitate the poetic rhythm of the original, he kept an open attitude and left the result to be determined by his reader/spectator:

The translator is not sure if the blank verse can become a poetic genre in Chinese. In the translation [of Hamlet], it is tentatively used, based on the form of the original text. If the reader does not think it is verse, then consider it prose and apply the measure of prose to it. For the translator's minimum requirement is—whether in verse or prose—to correspond to the regularity of vernacular Chinese. (Qtd. in Chau 1981: 413)

Bian's experiment proved fruitful. It was considered elegant, faithful and, most notably, actable on the stage (cf. Wang Zuoliang 1991: 212; Chau 1981: 417). Unlike the Chinese prose translations of Shakespeare, Bian's verse translation rarely showed Westernized syntax, and it also preserved almost a hundred percent of the poetic imagery of the original (Chau 1981: 413). Moreover, his poetic

¹¹Bian's observation was sensible, because Chinese Mandarin is a mono-syllabic language and its rhythm of speech is determined by phrases that contain complete meanings rather than by phonetic measures. Normally a Chinese phrase (or word, composed by several characters to form a clear, self-contained meaning) consists of 2 to 3 syllables. Thus in Bian's translation, one verse line may contain 10 to 15 syllables, made into 5 units, each of which has a strong beat surrounded by weak beats.
scheme was methodically consistent, and therefore was easy for the actors to adapt in the performance. In 1958 and 1978, his version was satisfactorily dubbed into Laurence Olivier's film Hamlet, which was shown widely in China. It was again used in the simultaneous translation during the Old Vic's performances of the play in Beijing in 1979 (Bian 1983: 7; 23). Despite the fact that Bian's critical approach revealed a strong influence from the Communist propaganda, as manifested in the preface to his Hamlet (See 2.6), his translations revealed a scholar's faithful and careful rendition of the original sense of the words, and a poet's linguistic competence and sensitivity to convey the musical effect in Shakespeare's language. After Bian Zhilin, a number of Chinese translators also attempted to translate the meaning and the medium of Shakespeare's plays. 115

3.4 Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage: The Image

Shakespeare rendered only on the page would be Shakespeare half undiscovered. Once his translations in Chinese were widely available, theatre artists took on the challenge of staging them. The time was also ripe, for, during the 1930s, China's Spoken Drama started to gain acceptance as an indigenous form. In Shanghai, this genre gradually established its staging conventions by producing Western plays in translation, and the hybrid form fusing the traditional Chinese opera with Western techniques was replaced by a much more synchronized realistic style. 116 Once the number of artistically successful plays

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115For example, Wu Xinghua, Fang Ping, and Lin Tongji also translated Shakespeare into Chinese verse form (Wang Zuoliang 1990: 168).

116This included lessons learned from staging such Western plays (in Chinese) as Shaw's Mrs. Warren's Profession in 1920, an unsuccessful production, and the much better received adaptation of Oscar Wilde's Lady Windermere's Fan in 1924. Between 1920s and 1930 there were Galsworthy's The Struggle, Hauptmann's The Weavers, Gorky's The Lower Depths, Andreyev's The Waltz of Dogs, and Chekhov's Uncle Vanya, and, from 1932 to 1937, there were productions of Tieryakov's Roar! China, Gogol's Inspector General, and Tolstoy's Power of Darkness. After these attempts, the Chinese Spoken Drama gradually established its realistic convention which was modeled on European dramaturgy. See Hong Shen (1961: 210-212; 245-246); Wang Yiqun (1987: 93-4).
by native playwrights increased, competent professional theatre troupes and an urban-bred, middle class audience soon emerged (Eberstein 1988: 34).

Accordingly, this theatre and its realistic approach became the dominant form to perform the complete Chinese versions of Shakespeare plays.

The first "authentic" production of Shakespeare (which followed his text faithfully) was *The Merchant of Venice*, directed by Ying Yunwei and produced by the Shanghai Theatre Association (1923-33), one of the most enduring and successful Spoken Drama amateur groups of the time, in May and July of 1930 (Wang Yiqun 1987: 94; Li Shixue 1988: 102). The script was based on Gu Zhongyi's translation, which, according to an advertisement upon its publication, was "faithful and elegant, every line actable on the stage," and the realization of this translation resulted in a "complete Shakespeare production" which took half a year and a high budget, to "entirely simulate the sixteenth-century Italian costuming and scenery...truly unprecedented in Chinese theatre history." The production attempted to attain theatrical illusion, as the scene designer and carpenters produced a fountain, garden, balcony, street, and bridge on the set, matched by the players' elaborate costumes. This resulted in a spectacle which received an enthusiastic response from the audience (Wang Yiqun 1987: 94).

The same focus on elaborate spectacle was made in a bigger venture seven years later: the production of *Romeo and Juliet* by Shanghai Amateur Experimental Theatre Company in the Carlton Theatre, directed by Zhang Min and played by Zhao Dan (Romeo) and Yu Peishan (Juliet) (Wang Yiqun 1987: 94). The scene at Juliet's tomb is said to have been especially impressive to the audience. A high platform on the central stage, reached by a flight of stone steps, was where Juliet's coffin was placed. With the machinery attached to the platform, the

117This ad appears in the magazine *Xinyue* 3.1 (1930) 14, which says that Gu's translation of *The Merchant* was published by Shanghai's Xinyue Bookstore under the heading: "The Series of a Hundred Masterpieces in English Literature" (Yinwen Mingzhu Baizhong Congshu).
coffin could be elevated to reveal Juliet within. The black velvet backdrop and wings were in contrast with the light from the candles on the path in the tomb, creating a dignified, solemn atmosphere. The spectators were highly impressed by the novelty of the spectacle (Wang Yiqun 1987: 95).

The realistic approach was reflected in the rehearsal process of these Shakespeare productions. Unlike actors of earlier Spoken Drama, who had always improvised their speeches onstage, the actors of The Merchant strictly followed the translated script, memorizing their lines and attending scheduled rehearsals. The actors of Romeo and Juliet were coached by a Russian fencing master for two months, and in practicing stage combat, they often acted in such earnest as to actually injure one another (Wang Yiqun 1987: 94).

But theatrical realism was a problematic style for staging Shakespeare, in both scenery and acting. A critic of The Merchant dismissed the play as merely appealing to the audience sensational through spectacle; its true meaning was lost (cf. Liang Shiqiu 1934: 627). Although the players of Romeo and Juliet were famous movie actors, they seemed but amateurs on the stage, and, reportedly unable to deliver Shakespeare's poetic lines (in translation) with truthful emotion and distinctive psychological traits, remained mechanical and emotionless, as if "reciting from the ancient books," according to one reviewer (qtd. in Wang Yiqun 1987: 95). The reviewer also suggested that the directorial focus be laid on "the drama's content and the acting techniques" rather than on stage machinery, because merely seeking for elaborate scenic effects was "strenuous and vain" in producing Shakespeare (95; translation mine).

The earliest full-fledged Shakespearean productions in China reflected a misconception of the nature of Shakespeare performance. Indeed, little had been written in Chinese about staging Shakespeare in the West and the Chinese artists assumed the style of "rich theatre" was the normal style (Wang Yiqun 1987: 95-6).
This biased perception of Shakespeare performance during the 1930s can be detected in the words by Xiong Fosi, when he advocated a kind of "Economism" ("Danchun zhuyi") for the Chinese stage:

I think what can term our zeitgeist is the 'Era of Economy.' ... We need to study how to be economic in theatre arts, and how to accommodate the audience's demands for economy. First, the play ought to be short; second, the scene should change as little as possible; and third, the number of characters in the play should be small.... The reason why Shakespeare's plays are not suitable for our modern stage is not because his themes are outdated, but because they involve too many scene changes and dramatis personae. (1928: 17; translation mine)

Xiong also alleged that, in contrast to Shakespeare, Ibsen's realistic plays were popular with the modern audience because his plot was condensed, and scenery and dramatic characters were "simple" (1928: 17). Paradoxically, the relatively unadorned Elizabethan stage was regarded as more complicated to create than a naturalistic stage of the nineteenth century. Xiong was an influential dramatist, director, and theatre educator during the 1930s; his view on Shakespeare's inapplicability for the modern stage might represent a common view in China at the time.

Another reason which may have also caused reservations about staging Shakespeare in China was the high cost. The pursuit of elaborate scenic effects in producing Shakespeare (and other European "period" plays) to inspire realism and a touch of exotic wonder often led the theatre troupes to near bankruptcy.118 The Chinese theatre artists did not understand that a simple set and costume design can make an authentic Shakespeare production, so long as there are...

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118 According to the director of The Merchant, Ying Yunwei, the show was forced to close after a few performances due to financial pressure; and after the costly production, the Shanghai Theatre Association remained inactive for the next three years. At the same time as The Merchant opened in Shanghai, two other theatre companies also produced European plays with an emphasis on historical authenticity: Carmen by Nanguo She, led by Tian Han, and Cyrano de Bergerac, produced by Hong Shen in Fudan She. The elaborate staging and historically accurate costuming eventually dragged all three companies into financial devastation (1954: 5-6).
playable translations and competent actors who can portray the great characters behind Shakespeare's poetry.

This may explain why the later performances of Shakespeare in China were characteristically school productions, where scholarly resources and theatrical talents joined forces and commercial pressure was minimal. In 1935, the National Academy of Dramatic Arts was founded in Nanjing, headed by Yu Shangyuan, who had earlier written "Translating Shakespeare," and who strongly believed in the introduction of Western drama as a vital way to animate Chinese theatre. The institution soon became the pioneer trainer of professional theatre artists, staging translated European plays more systematically than the current amateur groups.¹¹⁹ It successively produced Shakespearean dramas: *The Merchant of Venice* (1937), *Othello* (1938), and *Hamlet* (1942), all based on Liang Shiqiu's translations (Liang 1964a). According to Liang, who saw Shakespeare performed in Chinese for the first time in the Academy's production of *The Merchant*, the actors were students from the first graduation class and made Shylock and Portia successful. Their modification of Liang's text to a more colloquial stage enunciation prompted him to realize that "my translation was still too literary, not fluent enough. The stage performance is a true test [of a translated text]" (1964a).

The production of *Hamlet* in 1942 by the same drama school called for greater critical attention. Directed by Jiao Juyin, the production was originally held in Jiangan, Sichuan, and then moved to Chongqing, Sichuan, the temporary capital during the Sino-Japanese War. Yu Shangyuan wrote in "The Significance

¹¹⁹ Soon after its establishment, the National Academy of Dramatic Arts at Nanjing produced Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*, John Galsworthy's *The Skin Game*, and Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. See R. Chu (163). The translator of *The Merchant* was Liang Shiqiu, instead of Gu Zhongyi, as Chu states. See also Liang (1964a) for the details of the production.
of Staging *Hamlet* that, aside from the theatrical challenges intrinsic to the tragedy, it provided a crucial social relevance for the Chinese during the War:

...Prince Hamlet rejects the manipulation of Fate, revolts against tyrannical suppression, and from the decadent, corruptive, licentious and pessimistic environment, strives for liberation. He represents the kind of progressive, revolutionary spirit. This spirit, when permeated and sublimated, is exactly what we Chinese people need during the war against Japanese invasion." (qtd. in Tian Benxiang 1993: 453)

Liang recalled, at the Guotai Theatre, where he saw the performance on a chilly December night, the house was full and none of the audience left during the show, despite its long running time (8 p.m. to 1 a.m.) and the unheated, drafty auditorium (1964a). The audience was a mixed crowd of old and young, soldiers and intellectuals, professionals and women with babies, reported Brooks Atkinson of *The New York Times* (1942). The style of the production appeared to have shifted from the historical spectacle to a more economic use of theatrical elements. According to the reporter, its style was "modern, with simple setting and in good taste...there are intelligent attempts at period design" (1942). Such included the design of the opening scene, where the shadow of medieval battlement was cast on the white backdrop with the use of rear lighting. But there was still an attempt made at creating illusion, most obviously in the use of stage effects to produce lightning, thunder, and the howling of the wind upon the Ghost's descending, and in the use of artificial noses on the actors, to simulate Western looks.120 This latter practice seemed also to carry a sense of moral

120The practice of simulating Western looks through make-up to play Western roles in Chinese productions would last into the 1980s. American playwright Arthur Miller recalled his 1978 trip to China and found this "cultural mimicry" prevailing: the Chinese actors "made up with chalk-white faces and heavily 'rounded' eyes, walking with heavy, almost loutish gait as they think Europeans and especially Russians do, and worst of all, wearing flaxen or very red-haired wigs that to us seemed to turn them into Halloween spooks" (1984: 5). In his experience as director of the Chinese production *Death of Salesman* (1983) in Beijing, Miller warned his actors against any attempt to make up or act like Americans by imitating actors in the films, but he was surprised to find how
caricature so typical in the use of make-up in traditional Chinese theatre, for, in Atkinson's report, Claudius was wearing a "monstrous, pendulous nose that would serve valiantly in a burlesque show" (1942). The use of Western classical music indiscriminately may have served to inspire a general atmosphere of European court setting. Hamlet was made "sincere and painstaking," as the American lauded; but, overall, the production was too different from the common staging practice in the West so that it was "not yet ready for Broadway" (1942).

For Hamlet's first Chinese spectators, the major problem of the tragedy seemed to lie in the cultural gaps between the Elizabethan English and the contemporary Chinese inherent in the play. Even though "the actors were outstanding, the audience was enthusiastic, and the director spared no effort," the reception of the play was negative, according to Chang Chen-hsien's research (qtd. in Chau 1981: 81). The audience could not decipher the overall meaning of the play or define each character's moral stance. They found it shocking to see the protagonist, a supposedly virtuous hero, treat his mother with incredible rudeness, which, in the native code of decorum, could only belong to a villain. Some spectators thus assumed that his filial offense accounted for Hamlet's death at the end. Equally challenging to the Chinese perception were the mixed codes between the morally virtuous and vicious in this play. Its characters were given endings that their behavior and actions could not justify. Ophelia's death was particularly baffling, for such a devoted daughter and lover was never given a bad ending in traditional Chinese theatre. They questioned the obvious lack of poetic justice, which failed to bring moral fairness to the play. Even more perplexed by the ending, the Chinese spectators were left to wonder what Shakespeare's intention would have been in having so many characters die onstage (Chau 1981: 81). As Shakespeare and Western drama in general were still

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strongly they attempted to create a foreign facade, to "Westernize" themselves, in assuming Western roles (1984: 5, 72, 182).
relatively unfamiliar to China's inland audiences such as those in Chongqing, the cultural contrast seemed particularly acute.\textsuperscript{121}

The tradition of producing Shakespeare by drama and language departments persisted, particularly in Taiwan after 1949. Shakespeare was presented in an educational theatre, targeting an audience which was partial to Western literature and arts. The first recorded performance of Shakespeare in Taiwan was the production of *Hamlet* by the eighth graduation class of the Department of Drama of the School for Political Officers in 1962 (S. Jiang 1966: 509; Chu 1970: 166). The same production was mounted in 1964, on the occasion of Shakespeare's fourth-centennial birthday. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Drama Department of the Chinese Cultural College (now University) in Taipei regularly produced Shakespeare in Chinese translation. Also, students of the English department in Taiwan's various universities had the penchant for performing Shakespeare in English as an extracurricular activity.

School productions produced an advantage and a disadvantage in the Chinese reception of Shakespeare. The advantage was mainly pedagogical, training young drama students to learn Shakespeare theatrically.\textsuperscript{122} The disadvantage, however, was that it limited Shakespeare's drama to a small audience, instead of popularizing it for the common people. Shakespeare became increasingly ensconced in academia, studied as a literary subject and treated as

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{121} Compared with the audiences in the coastal cities, such as Shanghai and Nanjing.
\item \textsuperscript{122} In the production of *Hamlet* in 1962, the students of the graduation class were recruited to collaborate under the supervision of the instructors: an adaptation team trimmed the play to an appropriate length; a direction team focused on the dramaturgy of the play and moved it from the page to the stage; a design team furnished the physical environment of the play; and the actors executed the enactment of the play. The process, according to a participant, was challenging because in dealing with Shakespeare's masterpiece the students felt "our age is really too young, like a baby starting to toddle" (Zhang Yuyi 1962: 619). A reviewer praised the school production as an unprecedented achievement: "In scene design and staging techniques, considering our nation's current limitation in human and material resources, it is a truly difficult task to present this mainstage show" (Lan Yu 1962).
\end{itemize}
closet drama. Thus Yao Yiwei, a theatre professor and scholar in Taiwan, wrote in 1959 promoting the staging of Shakespeare. Shakespeare was no longer a strange name for the Chinese, he observed, but remained an overwhelming name implying abstruseness and irrelevance to the average Chinese. This was the result of an imbalance in the reception of Shakespeare in China—literary rather than theatrical, élite rather than popular:

Our country has introduced Shakespeare's drama for quite a few decades, but until today it still stays in our post-secondary institutions. We can say that it has never once influenced our theatrical circle....I think today our study of Shakespeare remains linguistic, and the study of its literary and theatrical aspects are too little.... The best approach to learn Shakespeare is still through the stage. We can discover why his drama is for the stage. We will find that what we have failed to learn from literary study can be obtained from the stage! (1969: 136-8)

In Mainland China, in contrast, the recruitment of Stanislavsky specialists from Soviet Union greatly helped standardize and unify the acting, directorial and scenic art in staging Shakespeare (Wang Yiqun 1987: 96-8). Stanislavsky's acting method was widely introduced into Chinese drama schools and state-administered theatre companies, after his An Actor Prepares (1936) and Building a Character (1949) were translated into Chinese in 1956, and the Chinese version of his complete works was published in 1963. At this stage, Chinese productions of Shakespeare conformed to the Russian approach and style. Much Ado about Nothing, performed in Shanghai in 1957, was directed by a Russian theatre artist. The 1961 production of Romeo and Juliet in Beijing was directed by Zhang Qihong, a trainee in Moscow Art Theatre for six years. Twelfth Night, produced in 1962 by Shanghai Film School, was also under heavy Soviet influence (98).

Although Stanislavsky's method was developed out of staging realistic, psychological plays by Chekhov at the Moscow Art Theatre, it helped the Chinese productions of Shakespeare establish conventions of directing and acting. It particularly enhanced the Chinese actors' understanding and representation of
the culturally unfamiliar Shakespearean characters, because it systematically teaches an actor how to "live" on the stage convincingly and palpably. The vigorous physical, psychological and intellectual training of the Stanislavsky acting techniques remained a central and the only approach in performing Shakespeare in Mainland China (Wang Yiqun 1987: 97-8).

As a result, the typical Shakespearean productions in China during the 1950s were uniformly "traditional," similar to the style in Europe and U. S. in the late 1950s and the early 1960s, according to Daniel Yang (1987: 171). They were usually in a grand style, with type casting and period costuming, and with the actors all wearing wigs playing Western players playing Shakespearean characters. Other styles or concepts in creating Shakespeare onstage, as seen in some of the most celebrated Shakespearean productions made by Brook, Nunn, Hall, Papp, or Ciulei, were unheard of, and the Chinese theatre specialists never dreamed of staging Shakespeare in modern dress even into the 1980s (171).

3.5 Chinese Shakespeare Scholarship: Ideology or Art?

Although the first critique of Shakespeare in China appeared in 1918,123 the critical study of Shakespeare did not start until the translation of his plays was available. From 1918 to the late 1940s, critical essays on Shakespeare in China (not including translations) amounted to nearly a hundred, according to a study in 1986 (qtd. in Li Shixue 1988: 106). Uneven in quality, they largely reflected a reverential attitude towards a Renaissance literary giant.

The start of serious, systematic Shakespeare scholarship in China should be attributed to Liang Shiqiu, the first translator of Shakespeare's complete works. During the process of translation, Liang wrote more than a dozen articles on Shakespeare for his Chinese readers (Li Shixue 1988: 105-6; Tian Benxiang 1993:

123 According to Li Shixue (1988: 105), the first critical essay on Shakespeare's art is "On Shakespeare's Tales" (Shashi Yuefu Tan), published in Taipingyang Zazhi (Pacific Magazine) 1. 9 (1918).
Liang's earlier essays provided biographical details of Shakespeare and the historical, cultural background of the time his plays were written.\textsuperscript{124} Besides giving a critical introduction ("Preface") to each translated Shakespeare play, Liang wrote criticism on Shakespeare's individual plays.\textsuperscript{125} He introduced critical issues surrounding the dramatist and his works, including the editions, the authorship of the plays, and thematic analyses.\textsuperscript{126} Among them, "The Current Shakespeare Scholarship" (1936) was the most significant, the first conscious effort in China to keep abreast of the Shakespeare scholarship in the West (Li Shixue 1988: 106). In this article, Liang reviewed and commented on various critical issues and discoveries about Shakespeare from the eighteenth century onwards. Liang's thorough knowledge of Shakespeare made him a cautious and comprehensive translator and scholar. In concluding his analysis of the current development of criticism, Liang endorsed a "scientific, commonsensical and realistic" study of Shakespeare, as opposed to the romantic approach of the previous century up to A. C. Bradley:

> Our understanding of Shakespeare will gradually become realistic and pragmatic. Having fully received various scholars' critical contributions, we ought to see Shakespeare as a man of flesh and blood, someone born in a specific time and place, one that is comprehensible. (1978: 484)

Liang's critical method was based on a close reading of Shakespeare's texts and biographical details, and on a careful comparison of various scholarly opinions. Armed with this approach, Liang was able to guard Shakespeare against the ideological labeling imposed particularly by the Chinese leftist critics during

\textsuperscript{125} These include: "The Meaning of The Merchant of Venice" (1934), "The Destiny of Falstaff" (pub. 1963), and "In Defense of King Lear" (pub. 1963).
\textsuperscript{126} These include: "Is He Bacon or Shakespeare?" (1935), "The Current Shakespearean Scholarship" (1936), "Is Shakespeare a Poet or a Dramatist?" (1937), "The Mystery of Shakespeare" (pub. 1963), "The Editions of Shakespeare" (pub. 1963), and "The Thoughts in Shakespeare" (1959).
the 1930s. In "The Meaning of The Merchant of Venice" (1934), Liang rejected the narrow and distorted leftist reading of the play by including an account of the historical suppression of the Jews in the Christian society and by bringing the tragic consciousness to the foreground in the interpretation of the play. Shakespeare was "objective" in his portrayal of the relationship between Shylock and Antonio, Liang asserted: "He justly depicted the emotional response of both in the course of their conflict; he is not partial with a particular social class; he represents humanity" (1978: 631).

Liang Shiqiu took great pains to remind his reader that Shakespeare's main subject was "universal human nature" and "fundamental emotions of mankind" (1978: 619, 631, 660). This view was unanimously shared by Zhu Shenghao, another translator of Shakespeare. In Zhu's opinion, Shakespeare's art surpassed that of Homer, Dante, and Goethe—the three most "universal" poets in the world literature; he was widely adapted to the stage and the screen by various tongues because he adroitly portrayed "human nature identifiable by every man of all times...and so constant and universal that it touched the deepest human mind" (1944: 580). For Zhu and many other Chinese critics, the translation and introduction of Western literature had never been so urgent.

But this humanist view of Shakespeare soon encountered an opposing perspective which was based on Marxist-Leninist concepts. Starting in the 1930s, the leftist critics challenged Shakespeare's class consciousness by citing Leo Tolstoy's comment on him as a writer who "despised the people [and] the labor classes" (qtd. in Liang 1978: 661). Some of them suggested that Upton Sinclair's socialist work The Slaughterhouse was more enlightening than Hamlet, because, while Sinclair was regarded a spokesman of the proletariat, Shakespeare was that of the bourgeoisie and his works were counter-revolutionary.127 The debate over

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127 See Liang, "Literary Legacy," in Liang Shiqiu on Literature (1978: 421). Also, according to Liang, Sinclair was well-received by the Chinese youth during the
the value and function of literature in China then inevitably affected the reception of Shakespeare; much contemplation and discussion about Shakespeare's ideology started during the period.

The leftist critics imported Russian proletariat ideology into Chinese literature around 1930; many of them could not agree with Liang Shiqiu's emphasis on "human nature" as the proper subject of Shakespeare. Liang had studied under Irving Babbitt at Harvard and was therefore dismissed by his critics as a member of the "English-American school" and a bourgeois apologist for "human nature" (Tian Benxiang 1993: 446; Liang 1978: 487-494). Under Babbitt's influence, Liang strongly objected to the use of extrinsic discourse in literary interpretation, such as imposing so-called historical materialism on Shakespeare's text. He dismissed the leftists' constant obsession with classifying the artist's social status in order to judge the ideological appropriateness of his works (1978: 627). He defended Shakespeare's depiction of the mass as an unpredictable mob as just and truthful to human nature, and rejected the leftists' accusation of Shakespeare's lack of a progressive attitude toward the lower

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128 Babbitt advocated a classical humanism whose critical models ranged from Aristotle to Ben Jonson following Pope's motto, "The proper study of man is man." He rejected the new literary schools, since Romanticism, as heretics; Romanticism encouraged unlimited emotional pursuit and was regarded as destructive, while historical materialism negated human nature and was a pseudo-science. His works included New Laokoon (1910), The Masters of French Criticism (1912), Rousseau and Romanticism (1919), etc. Liang Shiqiu was influenced by Babbitt, particularly in the view of literature as expression of human nature, rather than as social weapon. This view was in sharp conflict with the Chinese leftist critics, who emerged around 1928 and launched a literary debate on the "Proletariat literary Movement" with Liang and others. See "On Mr. Babbitt and His Thoughts" and "Preface" in Liang Shiqiu on Literature (1978).
"proletariat" class (1978: 623). In contrast, the leftist writers contended that Shakespeare's description of the people as a force of blind, unreasonable violence, as in *Julius Caesar*, revealed a misconception of the nature of the masses and thus was politically regressive.129

The literary debate in the 1930s generally divided the later reception of Shakespeare in China into two distinctive directions in Mainland and Taiwan, respectively, owing to the political separation and hostility between the two after 1949. The Mainland Chinese Shakespeare scholarship followed the Marxist-Maoist doctrines and never separated Shakespeare's art from its ideological implications. In Taiwan, the general direction of Westernization in its society and culture helped academia follow closely the Shakespearean canon in the West.

3.5.1 Shakespeare Revised: Ideological Correctness

The incorporation of political ideology into the interpretation of Shakespeare's drama in China started in the late 1940s, as some translators of Shakespeare generated a practice of justifying Shakespeare's topicality by aligning his plays to the social, political struggles of the times. Yang Hui was the first to understand Shakespeare from a Marxist perspective in his rendition of *Timon of Athens* (1944) (Tian Benxiang 1993: 452). Yang was deeply moved by Timon's speech in which he curses the gold (in IV, iii), for it also spoke for the current China, where corruption, injustice, and money worship were rampant during the era of political upheavals. In addition, the socio-historical process and the struggle among the social classes represented in the play seemed a microcosm of China's own development. It was its relevance that prompted Yang to translate this less popular play. In "Why I Wanted to Translate *Timon of Athens*", Yang

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stated that the play "can be called very familiar to China. If performed on the Chinese stage, it will create great influence" (1987: 503-4).

Yang Hui's interpretation of Timon of Athens, as shown in his lengthy treatise-like preface to the translation, tended to blur the distinction between history and art. He regarded the play as a faithful reflection of the social-political conflicts during the changing era in post-Elizabethan England. The play was written around 1607, in a time not unlike contemporary China, when the old feudal system was abolished but a new system had yet to evolve, and traditional values such as morality, art, religion, and human relationship were abandoned and replaced by a new monetary value. Shakespeare, an observant thinker and progressive activist in his society, wielded his weapon, which was his art, to record the historical situation. "Almost like a philosopher, or a modern economist," Shakespeare questioned the trend towards money worship:

What is it that destroyed everything, dominated everything, and caused all the evils? Gold! ....[Shakespeare] employed the medium of drama to voice his indignation at the contemporary society; attacking it relentlessly; he was no more an artist of the stage, but an instigator toiling and soliciting at the crossroads; indeed, he was a warrior in the modern sense. (1987: 368)

Further, Yang defined the play's extra-theatrical function as "a philosophical treatise, or a political pamphlet," which meant less to entertain its Elizabethan audience than to assault them, as if "to strip the society of its clothes, to whip it fanatically--not just at its scars, but itself, for the entire society is a scar" (370).

Under this historical condition, Yang believed, pure aesthetics--such as had created high tragedy like Hamlet and King Lear--were insufficient to address the important issues of the times; rather, a play like Timon, which dramatized the dialectic forces in the socio-historical transformation, was in demand. Yang called this timely play the "tragedy of gold," because it vividly dramatized the evils and power of gold, culminating in Timon's speech in IV. iii (1987: 377). As
man utilized gold, gold in turn manipulated man and human relationships, destroying the traditional distinction between good and bad, right and wrong, beautiful and ugly. Gold was power, and it became a new moral norm in a capitalist society. Shakespeare condemned the destructive power of money through his depiction of Timon. Although Timon's attitudes and customs were conditioned by feudal values, he never fell into the new worship of gold. Dismissing Timon's misanthropy, Yang saw in him a positive moral model, one which could march into "a new enlightened era with his generosity and brotherhood" (1987: 377-383). By reading a socialist context into Shakespeare's play, Yang confirmed his belief in China's future communism.

From 1949 on, Shakespeare scholarship basically followed the Marxist-Maoist doctrine, defining Shakespeare according to his "social classification" and analyzing his drama from the angle of class struggle (Shen 1988: 25). In this development, Russian Shakespeare studies, particularly by Mikhail M. Morozov and Alexander Anikst, were heavily adapted (He 1986: 13). They lent a closely-knit ideological framework to China's reception of Shakespeare. Shakespeare was regarded as a "realistic" dramatist, who raised the mirror up to his contemporary life and faithfully depicted the social conflicts of his time. Whether his drama was set in Italy, Denmark, or ancient Scotland, it reflected the emerging the capitalist bourgeois class struggling with feudal Christianity in England. Furthermore, Shakespeare wrote for the people, the historically deprived and suppressed, and represented the intention of the people, particularly their hopes for liberation from class oppression.

These guidelines resulted in an intense focus on social significance in China's Shakespeare scholarship. Tragedy was re-defined as the "tragedy of society" rather than that of an individual character. Its protagonist was almost always interpreted as a hero among the people. The dramatic conflict only
happened between the hero and the injustice done to him and to his society; the image of "people" was painstakingly examined to reinstate its ideological signification (He 1986: 14-16). This new framework negated the critical approaches which had been established by the Western non-Maoist critics and which represented the "capitalist viewpoints" (Shen 1988: 28).

Bian Zhilin, who masterfully translated Hamlet in 1954, also had to conform to the official ideology in his view of Shakespeare. In the treatise-like preface to his Hamlet, Bian guided his readers to tread the complicated thought path of the play to reach a politically constructive conclusion—largely following Morozov's theory (Chau 1981, 422, nt 5). Bian rejected the approach involving character study, so popular among the Western critics, as "a dead end" to the understanding of Shakespeare, and offered a critical perspective based on the "method of dialectical and historical materialism" (qtd. and trans. in He 1986: 17). In the socialist view, Hamlet gave "a condensed summary of all the basic phenomena of the society at a particular historical period and a faithful reflection of the fundamental conflicts in the social life of the age" (in He 1986: 16). This specifically meant the ruling classes' exploitation of the have-nots. Bian foregrounded the class conflict in the play, seeing the Danish prince as a product of the intensified social conflict. Thus, according to Bian, a conventional revenge play was transformed by Shakespeare into "a profound social tragedy which can educate people, as it corresponds to Marx's and Engels' theories of artistic creation" (qtd. in Chau 1981: 409).

Although Bian's ideological concepts were rarely reflected in the text of his translation, they were explicit in his interpretation of the protagonist. Hamlet was defined as a young aristocrat who, in the course of the play, gains awareness of his responsibility for the society and his people; his "melancholy has a social context" (qtd. in Chau 1981: 409). His cry of "The time is out of joint" and
"Denmark's a prison" shows an apprehension of the social problems in his country (in addition to his own family troubles). His speech "To be or not to be" signifies "Hamlet's sadness and worry about not being able to redress social injustice at one strike." Moreover, after Hamlet meets the "common folks at the bottom of the social ladder" at the graveyard, their conversation "opens his eyes to the issue of life and death and stirs up in him greater indignation with the evils of the world" (qtd. and trans. in He 1986: 120). By Act IV, Hamlet's revenge was already charged with great class-consciousness, with the prince standing by the side of the humiliated and the suffering, ready to act to revolt against oppression. In the final scene, Hamlet died like a revolutionary martyr, bearing the need of the people to the last second of his life:

Hamlet's struggle is a success because he executes his vengeance and dispatches some of Claudius' accomplices; it is also a failure for he does not fulfill his social task but sacrifices his own life as well as those of a few hopeful figures. Yet, the struggle of the prince glows with lasting radiance of humanity, justice, and human ideals. (qtd. and trans. in He 1986: 120)

Stressing the impact of the masses on the enlightenment of the aristocrat Hamlet, Bian researched the "people" image and its dramatic function in the text. Hamlet relies on the common people for the truthful knowledge of life; the traveling players inspire him with "great vigor and humanistic spirit"; the pirates "generously" save his life; and the gravedigger enlightens him on the metaphysical issues of death (in He 120). Even Hamlet's hesitation to kill his uncle at prayer was interpreted as the hero's awareness that the timing for people to rebel against the tyrant king was not yet ripe. However, following Marxism, Bian concluded that the fact that Hamlet died with the evil ruler at the end proved the playwright's inability to solve the social conflict of his times. Conditioned by his own "class limitation," Shakespeare never endorsed a collective mass rebellion against political authority, despite his sympathy with the people. Therefore, Bian
maintained, the play ended in tragedy, as if determined by "Fate," but entirely in a social-historical context (Chau 1981: 409).

Bian's critical approach established the general principles for other Shakespearean critics in China during the 1950s; it reduced Shakespeare's characters into a dichotomy of "typicality": the aristocrat/capitalist vs. the people/lower class, the hero vs. the villain, and the ideologically correct (revolutionary) vs. wrong (anti-revolutionary) (He 1986: 114). Textual support for this ideological argument was sought in the individual lines of Shakespeare's plays in a rather fragmentary way (124). The less "typical" characters, such as Timon, who could not fit into any ideological stereotype, the critics attributed to Shakespeare's "artistic weakness" (123). This reading disintegrated the organic totality of Shakespeare's art, and was terribly reductive in interpreting the rich, distinctive and complex individuality which makes the great characters on the page and the stage.

Under the high-pressured political milieu, the Shakespeare canon in China became instrumental only for the party's ideological education of the masses—a traditional practice in any given ruling monarchy in Chinese history but never pushed more extremely than by the Communist regime during the 1950s and 1960s. Starting in 1966, as the Cultural Revolution swept across the land, China became totally isolated from any foreign influence and interaction. Shakespeare was banned, along with all the other Western works, by law; Chinese Shakespearean scholars, like all other intellectuals, were re-located to the countryside or the factories to be "re-educated." Only eight propagandist "model plays" occupied the stages, television, and movie screens throughout the country. For a dozen years (1966-1978), Shakespeare was completely obliterated from China; as He Qixin describes two decades later, his name "vanished from the lips of a population of nine hundred million people" (1986: 155).
3.5.2 Celebration of Shakespeare's Universal Humanism

Shakespeare did not return to China's literary canon until 1978. After the Cultural Revolution was over, he was greeted with enthusiasm and support from the official, academic, and theatrical circles. No longer treated as a literary giant of remote Renaissance England, as in the 1920s and 1930s, Shakespeare now served as a modern cultural paradigm for China; his profound, universally humanistic view of Man was openly acknowledged and celebrated, albeit still from a heavily socialist perspective.

The attempt to reinstate Shakespeare into the Chinese literary canon resulted in the institutionalization of Shakespeare scholarship and stage performance. According to Zhang Xiao Yang, after the academic degree system in China was reinstated in 1978, Shakespeare was the first Western literature speciality approved by the State Education Commission for graduate degrees (1996: 194). The study of Shakespeare was also quickly integrated into the curriculum of post-secondary education, which resulted in a new interest in performing Shakespeare plays in the universities (194-195). In 1984, the First Chinese Shakespeare Centre was established in Beijing, equipped with a theatre and a library; later that year, the Shakespeare Society of China was founded in Shanghai, chaired by Cao Yu, playwright and translator of Shakespeare (Wang Zuoliang 1991: 174, 217); the Society had issued the first Chinese journal ever dedicated to Shakespeare, *Shakespeare Studies* (*Shashibiya Yanju*), in 1983; and in late April of 1986 the first Shakespeare Festival in China was held in Beijing and Shanghai, claiming China's entrance into the international world of Shakespeare. The pace of the official effort to popularize Shakespeare in the decade after he re-entered China was unbelievably quick. It prompts the question, in the words of Chinese director, Hu Weimin, "Why did China stir up a surge of Shakespeare enthusiasm (Sha re)?" (1987: 125)
Three reasons arise from Hu's inquiry. First, in a socio-political sense Shakespeare was very close to China. China not long before had survived a feudal system and political turmoil; its people could strongly identify with the intense "reform consciousness" underlying Shakespeare's works. China had much in common with Elizabethan England, particularly in possessing a youthful, vigorous and radical cultural temperament. Such social milieu only was only produced in a society where transition was being made. Second, in a psychological sense, the Chinese, awakening from the collective peril of the Cultural Revolution, found themselves susceptible to the humanistic optimism in Shakespeare. The "glory of Man" expressed in his works could guide the once distorted ideological value of a social being back to the proper emphasis on individuality and humanity. Third, in a cultural and artistic sense, the Chinese had never been more eager to know and to contact the outside world again. In particular, Chinese theatre, after being sterile for a decade, needed to resume a dialogue with world theatre, to gain new insight and revitalization from cultural/theatrical others (Hu Weimin 1987: 125-6).

The Chinese Shakespeare scholars in the 1980s picked up where they had left off in the 1950s and 1960s, but their critical approach was still burdened with socio-political concerns. They produced, in total, 587 articles on Shakespeare in the decade after 1976, mostly holding a Marxist mirror towards the social, political, and economic backgrounds of the plays (Li Shixue 1988: 108). From 1980, some scholars started to adapt methods and concepts derived from comparative literature to Shakespeare studies. However, direct introduction of Euro-American Shakespeare criticism into China was still desirable, because, according to He Qixin, it would "broaden the intellectual horizon" of the Chinese scholars and could lead to a truly "Chinese-oriented interpretation of Shakespeare" (1986: 186). In other words, if diversified critical perspectives and methodologies were permitted
into the Chinese Shakespeare canon, Shakespeare could become genuinely productive to the indigenous society, giving rise to a new cultural, intellectual, and artistic discourse and to creative staging; he would be a "contemporary" to the Chinese in a pragmatic sense.

The effort to pluralize China's Shakespeare scholarship had been consciously made by the publication of *Shakespeare Studies*. Its first issue contains 21 articles (some of them were reprints from earlier years), reviewing the linguistic, literary, and performative aspects of Shakespeare's art. In the publisher's "Inaugural Observations," Cao Yu specified that this journal took a Marxist critical method but a Chinese cultural perspective, due to China's unique cultural, historical awareness. "Our Shakespeare scholarship has a dissimilar prerequisite from that of the West; we have a longer cultural tradition," alleged Cao, and, bearing this different cultural inheritance, "we perceive, study, and appreciate this world giant with Chinese eyes from a new historical era" (1983: 3). The journal particularly brought a focus to the reception and perception of Shakespeare in China, past and present. Thus Ge Baoquan's seminal article "Shakespeare's Works in China" (1964) was reprinted there. The first detailed research in Chinese on the translation and publication of Shakespeare's works in China, this article succeeded Chang Chen-hsien's critical study of the same subject in the University of Birmingham in 1951. It was followed and further developed by Simon Chau's thorough, substantial work, *A Critical Study of the Chinese Translations of Hamlet* (1981), He Qi-xin's study of the political and ideological mainstream in China's Shakespeare scholarship from 1949 to date, *Shakespeare Through Chinese Eyes* (1986), and a more updated *Shakespeare in China*, Zhang Xiao Yang's comprehensive study of Shakespeare's influence in China.

In the same issue, Yang Zhouhan reviewed the Marxist influence on China's reception of Shakespeare and cautioned against the extreme ideological
measures of the past: "Sometimes we were too eager to relate [literary criticism] to political issues, and turned out contrarily to be prejudiced" (1987: 58). He cited a typical example of reducing Shakespeare to the abstraction of class struggle: King Lear represented a dictator of feudalism; his two elder daughters stood for the "egoism" (lijì zhù yì) of capitalists; and the farmers and beggars in the play were always victims of economic exploitation and political expediency (58). Yang's criticism of the traditional practice implied that the future interpretation of Shakespeare plays should be based on a close study of their structural elements, instead of imposing existent political models on them.

Finally, four articles in the first issue of *Shakespeare Studies* were dedicated to the staging of Shakespearean dramas in China. To various degrees, they touched upon the issues of theatre interculturalism regarding the adaptation and appropriation of the source text for the target audience. These issues were further explored in *Shakespeare in China* (1987), a collection of 12 articles documenting and reflecting the productions in the first Chinese Shakespeare Festival. The critics were especially keen on the nature and praxis of "Sinicizing" Shakespeare, of rendering his plays in traditional Chinese theatrical forms and/or in Chinese cultural settings. We will discuss this aspect in detail in 3. 6.

3.5.3 Wanting a Cultural Subjectivity in Acquiring Shakespeare

In Taiwan, thanks to the faster pace of Westernization and a political system moving towards democracy and pluralism, Shakespeare scholarship tended to follow the Western canon. In the 1960s, while Liang Shiqiu continued translating Shakespeare's plays, he also edited *A Collection in Memory of Shakespeare's Fourth Centennial Birthday* (1966). The collection included original and translated articles that could reflect various dimensions of Shakespeare's works and their reception in China. Although today it has more historical than critical value, it was the first Chinese reference work solely
devoted to Shakespeare scholarship and a starting point for assimilating the local Shakespeare canon to that in the West (Li Shixue 1988: 107).

In the 1970s, a new generation of Shakespeare scholars emerged, who had journeyed to the West for academic apprenticeship, and who followed closely Western methodologies and critical conventions. *The Chinese and Foreign Literary (Zhongwai Wenxue)*, a major forum for literary criticism and critical theories since 1970s, published the largest quality of articles on Shakespeare among Taiwan's academic journals. Many of the articles focused on the interpretation of individual plays; the textual analyses dealt with characterization, themes, and imagery.130 The journal's 1983 special issue on "Shakespeare and the Renaissance" revealed the native interest in the more recent critical discourses in cultural theories, feminism, historiography, gender studies, genealogy, and parallel studies. The April issue of 1987 was dedicated to Shakespeare's 423rd birthday, containing a number of academic essays of a similar nature. In the meantime, Shakespeare became a requirement in most of the English programs in Taiwan's universities, and an area of focus for a fair number of graduate theses (Li Shixue 1988: 108).

Paradoxically, Shakespeare's work was regarded as an academic subject in literature and language departments, an artistic challenge for drama schools, and an élite art of somewhat abstruse antiquity for the educated and the literary; but it was not a particularly desirable cultural symbol or icon of humanism, as seen in Mainland China. The academic reverence which Shakespeare's art enjoyed in Taiwan did not attract substantial interest from the indigenous theatre circle. There had been no distinguished new translations nor experimental adaptation into popular artistic forms by the 1980s. The only Shakespeare productions were

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school productions. Although well made and open to the public, their purpose was pedagogical. Their style and interpretation seldom challenged the Western convention. When Taiwan's little theatre movement flourished during the mid-1980s due to a new influence from the Western theatre, general attention was paid to avant-garde artists like Artaud, Grotowski, Schechner, or Wilson; very few entertained the idea of popularizing Shakespeare. Why Shakespeare? What meaning would the Renaissance drama offer to a modern Chinese spectator in Taiwan? Would the Taiwanese celebrate the kind of "Shakespeare enthusiasm" or "Shakespeare Renaissance in China" (Brockbank), as the Mainland Chinese did in the 1980s?

There were two major problems in producing Shakespeare in Taiwan. The first was a very short Shakespeare tradition. Shakespeare was only introduced to Taiwan via China and was not seen onstage until the 1960s. The translations and the stage version of Shakespeare were rendered in a literary style which distanced itself from the average Taiwanese whose mother tongue was a colloquial dialect of no written form. Shakespeare productions had been aligned with the Spoken Drama theatre, which in Taiwan was increasingly rejected because of its propagandist content imposed by the Nationalist government during the 1950s. Shakespeare needed a new form in Taiwan in order to reach wider audiences.

The second problem seemed to be the theatre artists' lack of cultural subjectivity in performing Shakespeare—that is, they lacked the "perspective of the adapters" (Pavis) and a proper method for creating an intertextualization between Renaissance art and the modern Chinese culture in Taiwan. According to Wang Muolin, a theatre and cinema critic, contemporary Taiwan's actors "could memorize Shakespeare's lines but not interpret them, could imitate the

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131 There was no documentation about the Japanese ever introducing Shakespeare into Taiwan during the occupation period (1895-1945), although some Taiwanese elites who could read Japanese might study him through reading Tsubouchi Shoyo's translations and other critical works about Shakespearean drama.
appearance of the Western players but not express the physical and aesthetic
inheritance of the Chinese traditions" (1990: 257). Wang's observation suggested
that Taiwan's theatre had not found sufficient socio-cultural relevance in
adapting Shakespeare (or other Western works). This could also be attributed to
Taiwan's fragmentary social history. Politically, Taiwan had never been respected
as a truly self-governed autonomy internationally. But culturally it had been
imbued with Chinese, Japanese, and Western influences. As a result, its artistic
representations often revealed an indeterminate cultural subjectivity.

Wang Muolin cited examples of Shakespeare adaptation which expressed a
"modern" spirit, such as the works by Japan's Yukio Ninagawa, Germany's Heine
Müller, France's Mnouchkine and the East European artists, which adapted
Shakespeare's texts to an intercultural style to emphasize the interrelation of
cultures in the postmodern era (1990: 257). This aesthetic approach might be
what Taiwan's theatre artists should try, he suggested, by staging Shakespeare in
Chinese traditional performance forms so as to explore a new "theatrical organic"
(257). Wang's perspective was valuable since Taiwan's traditional theatre had
sought regeneration through intercultural means, and could find a kinship in the
Elizabethan theatre. But the intercultural exercise would best be nurtured under
two conditions. First, it required greater in-depth knowledge and skills of staging
Shakespeare plays. In a culture which lacked the Shakespeare tradition, the
experiment might result in a purely formal exercise, or in a kitsch representation
of spectacle as seen in the Shanghai productions of the 1930s, rather than truly

\[\text{132} \text{Taiwan was a Chinese vassal state before 1895, a Japanese colony from 1895 to}
\text{1945, and under the Nationalist (KMT) dominance from 1945 to 1987. Although the}
\text{KMT regime lifted martial law and allowed parties in opposition to share a large}
\text{number of seats in the Parliament in the late 1980s, Taiwan was still not regarded}
\text{as an independent nation by developed nations and in most of the international}
\text{organization, but treated as part of the PRC. The domestic situation was not}
\text{helpful, either; the indeterminate political and cultural status was reflected in}
\text{education. In the 1980s, pupils in public schools still studied China as their}
\text{homeland and Chinese history as their national history. "Taiwanese}
\text{consciousness" was not in full swing until well into the 90s.}\]
communicating Shakespeare's theatre poetry. Second, it required cooperation among Shakespearean scholars and domestic theatrical resources to discover a "reception adapter" (Pavis), which would enhance the communication of the unfamiliar elements in Shakespearean drama to the native audience.

To conclude, the choice of whether to join the world society of Shakespeare scholarship and neutralize the Chinese perspective (as in Taiwan), or to develop a specific Chinese-oriented Shakespeare criticism and performance strategy (attempted in the Mainland), would depend very much on how the Chinese could assert their own cultural heritage as a compatible partner in the dialogue with Shakespeare's tradition. This cultural and aesthetic deliberation was most distinctively reflected in the Shakespeare productions in Mainland China and Taiwan during the late 1980s.

3.6 "Shakespearization in Chinese Drama" Versus "Sinicization of Shakespeare"

The term "Shakespearization" was used invariably by the Chinese critics in their analyses of the modern Chinese drama of the 1930s and 1940s, to describe the dramaturgical emphasis on characterization and depiction of an individual's internal development. Some playwrights of the time are reported to have shifted their creative model from Schiller to Shakespeare, particularly in working on social propagandist themes. "Schillerization," by contrast, indicated a form in which the characters preach directly and didactically at the audience/reader to promote the idea of social reform; it was subsequently considered artistically inferior to "Shakespearization."133

133 See Tian Benxiang (1993: 448-455). Also, Fan Ping's "Cao Yu and Shakespeare" (Shakespeare Studies [China] 2(1984)) reports that Chinese Shakespeare scholars considered Cao Yu's widely-acclaimed play The Thunderstorm (Leiyu) as the first Spoken Drama play to shift from the model of Schiller to that of Shakespeare; and Cao's later plays also revealed similar influences from Shakespeare. Xia Yan is reported to have shifted from the model of Schiller to Shakespeare in his Under the Shanghai Roof (Shanghai Wuyan Xia) as it shows a new focus on
For instance, the critics often mentioned Guo Muoruo's poetic historical drama *Qu Yuan* as an example of "Shakespearization," because a climactic scene of the play shows striking dramaturgical similarity to the storm scene in *King Lear* (cf. M. Guo 1985: 22; Tian Benxiang 1993: 448; Zhang Xiao Yang 1996: 186). Both works depicted a stressed and suffering protagonist gesturing and soliloquizing fanatically at the thundering heaven; both revealed the human psyche interacting with Nature in poetic language. Some also read a Hamlet in the protagonist Qu Yuan's confrontation with the evil tyrannical power in near madness (Guo Muoruo 1985: 22). Although it is difficult to determine if "Shakespearization" was really a systematic creative scheme in modern Chinese drama, the term showed a critical awareness of the adaptation and transformation of Shakespeare into the home traditions.

While "Shakespearization of Chinese drama" was an effort to adapt Shakespeare the foreign model to expand the domestic literary and theatrical traditions, "Sinicization of Shakespeare" was a more recent attempt to re-discover this foreign model in domestic expressions; specifically it indicated the adaptation of Shakespeare to Chinese traditional dramatic forms. There was a fine line between the two trends and they overlapped in many technical dimensions, but "Sinicization of Shakespeare" appeared to involve a stronger sense of Chinese cultural subjectivity in approaching Shakespeare. "Shakespearization of Chinese drama" was called upon when Chinese Spoken Drama playwrights were eager to absorb Western influences often indiscriminately. "Sinicization of Shakespeare," in contrast, did not start until the 1980s, when China tried to recover from the devastating Cultural Revolution to regain her cultural identity, and when Shakespeare was found relevant and valuable for domestication. The two trends,
in fact, formed a continuum in which the Chinese reception of Shakespeare gradually shifted its focus: from the "intercultural" to the "intracultural."

Even though the first documented adaptation of Shakespeare into Chinese traditional opera appeared as early as 1914,134 this practice had been sporadic and the reception was difficult to determine. Shakespeare was primarily adapted as spoken drama and produced by artists who belonged to China's modern theatre even into the post-Cultural Revolution era. In 1978, Shanghai Youth Spoken Drama Company performed Much Ado About Nothing, re-opening Shakespearean production on the Chinese stage. For the following decade, China had produced at least one Shakespeare's play every year.135 Among them the first well-acclaimed one was The Merchant of Venice by Beijing's Youth Art Theatre in 1981, which toured the country and gave more than 200 performances (Shen 1988: 29).

Even Western artists were brought into China to demonstrate how Shakespeare was represented in his home culture. The year 1979 saw the Old Vic Company bring its Hamlet, with Derek Jacobi playing the lead; it used Bian Zhilin's version for simultaneous translation. This was the first "authentic" Shakespeare production ever shown live to the Chinese public (Wang Yiqun 1987: 99). Beijing People's Art Theatre staged Measure for Measure in 1981, which was translated by the renowned actor-translator Ying Ruocheng, directed by the British director Toby Robertson, and designed by Alan Barrett; it was acclaimed as having "achieved a level of excellence worthy of admiration and emulation anywhere in the world" (Wakeman 1982: 499). The same year Zhou Caiqin, a

134 Zhang Xiao Yang documents five traditional opera adaptations of Shakespeare. They were Ya An Sichuan Opera Troupe's Hamlet (1914), Shaoxing opera adaptation of Romeo and Juliet (1942), Shaoxing opera adaptation of King Lear (1945), Beijing opera adaptation of Romeo and Juliet (1948), and Shanghai Shaoxing Opera Troupe's Othello (1952) (1996: 143).
135 According to the statistics recorded in the Chinese Theatre Annual (1981), among the 2,524 plays staged in Mainland China in 1980, 2,209 were traditional theatre productions, 176 were Spoken Drama productions; and, among the 176, 22 were foreign plays, including Romeo and Juliet, The Merchant of Venice, and Macbeth, all in Chinese translation. See D. Yang (1987: 165-166).
theatre artist residing in England, was invited to direct *The Tempest* in Beijing's Central Drama Academy. In the meantime, scholars and teachers from the West were brought into China to instruct or direct Shakespeare in the university's language departments (Berry 1988; Wang Yiqun 1987: 99).

Interestingly, the exposure to foreign productions of Shakespeare ignited a new interest in staging Shakespeare in various types of Chinese traditional opera. The 1983 Beijing opera version of *Othello* by the Experimental Beijing Opera Troupe initiated the experimental trend (Barmé 1983: 114). It was created mainly to explore the compatibility of the traditional mode of Chinese music theatre with Shakespeare's dramaturgy. The play was cut down to seven scenes plus a prelude, in contrast to the five acts and fifteen scenes of the original. The actors' make-up and costumes were a blend of the Chinese and the sixteenth-century Elizabethan styles. They acted according to types, singing thirty arias, and speaking in a rather colloquial language. Othello's make-up was brown, and he wore a pair of thick-soled boots similar to those worn by Chinese opera actors (D. Yang 1987: 167). The production received contrasting comments. Cao Yu, President of the newly found Shakespeare Society of China, lauded it as "a daring experiment and a total success...a successful marriage of the two performing arts" (qtd. and trans. in D. Yang 1987: 167). For critic Barmé, however, the adaptation failed to serve Shakespeare or Beijing opera; its weak script, banal colloquialness, and misinterpretation betrayed Shakespeare's lofty poetry and resulted in "a sad mixture of both that can only please the avant-garde of kitsch culture.... At the moment all we have is an intriguing culture experiment" (1983: 117-118).

Besides Beijing opera *Othello*, there were other similar experiments being made around the same time, with encouraging results.\(^{136}\) Meanwhile, a debate

\(^{136}\)According to Zhang Xiao Yang, in 1983 *The Merchant of Venice* was adapted to Guangdong opera and starring the most renowned Guangdong opera performer Hong Xian Nu; and in 1985, *Romeo and Juliet* was adapted into Xiaoxing opera in
over whether this approach would be feasible and productive for Chinese traditional theatre or/and Shakespeare started, creating contrasting opinions (Zhang Xiao Yang 1996: 130-134).

3.6.1 Preserving "Shakespeare's Spirit"

The first distinctive and systematic effort made to create "Sinicization of Shakespeare" was seen in the first Chinese Shakespeare Festival in Shanghai and Beijing in 1986. The festival gave altogether twenty-eight performances of sixteen Shakespeare plays, among which five were adapted to traditional Chinese opera forms.\textsuperscript{137} The degree of intercultural synthesis in these productions purposefully varied in order to distinguish the results; some emphasized the "foreignness" of Shakespeare plays, some emphasized the total conversion of Shakespeare into the native forms, and others focused on the juxtaposition of the native and foreign both textually and theatrically (Li Ruru 1988: 38).

These five experiments led to new, challenging staging practices and critical exercises among Chinese theatre artists and critics. Receptions ranged from enthusiasm to negative rejection. According to Li Ruru's overview, the critical controversy was centered on the formal and cultural incompatibility between Shakespeare and the native traditions. Some academics found it blasphemous to reduce Shakespeare, who represented the humanism and progressive thinking of European Renaissance, into the traditional opera, a

\textsuperscript{137}The number of the performances in the first Shakespeare Festival in China varies in different critics' documents. According to Wang Zuoliang, there were 27 performances of 18 of Shakespeare plays (1991: 114). According to Huang Zuolin, there were 25 performances, 11 in Beijing and 14 in Shanghai (1986: 1). Li Ruru reports that 16 plays were produced on this occasion (1988: 38). In the review by Philip Brockbank, there were 28 productions, 12 in Beijing and 16 in Shanghai, of 16 Shakespeare plays (1988: 196). Brockbank lists all the titles and venues of these productions, so I follow his document. The five "indigenized" Shakespeare productions included Othello in Shanghai Opera (only 2 acts), Macbeth in Kunqu opera, Much Ado About Nothing in Huangmei opera, and The Winter's Tale and Twelfth Night in Yueju opera.
cultural product widely considered in Mainland China as reflecting a "feudal mentality"; other educational-minded scholars saw that the interculturalism helped enhance the "cultural awareness of the general public" (1988: 40).

One of the most challenging aesthetic problems, according to the artists involved in the adaptations, was the incompatibility of the native forms with the expression of "Shakespeare's spirit" (*Shashibiya jingshen*). In particular, the Chinese traditional role types were generally considered insufficient in expressing the defiant, rebellious individuality of Shakespearean characters, who "dare to defy fate and who possess the savage traits of those just entering civilization"; thus casting these characters into the native role types may particularly undermine the central theme in Shakespearean drama: the "praise for the awakening of the subjective consciousness of human nature" (Li Ruru 1988: 45). Accordingly, retaining a certain degree of "foreignness," or artistic alienation, in adapting Shakespeare to the traditional stage was believed to be a better way of preserving the spirit embodied in Shakespeare's works. Several directors chose to blend Western motifs with the native forms, rather than totally Sinicizing Shakespeare.

A significant question arose in the artistic process: what degree of "foreignness" would best serve the performance while not violating the aesthetic totality of the indigenous forms? The players of *Twelfth Night* appeared to be a cultural hybrid as they were dressed in Renaissance costumes and makeup on a stage reminiscent of the baroque style, but were singing and acting in Chinese operatic conventions. But hybridization was to a justifiable end, stated its director, Hu Weimin, for the "foreign codes" in the production worked exactly to convey a foreign message--humanism--a concept alien to the traditional Chinese stage. The juxtaposition (or clash) of two cultural and theatrical signs, believed Hu, conveyed yet another code: modernity. The intercultural mode opened up the
enclosed system of the traditional Chinese theatre for a dialogue (even a harmonious co-existence) with a foreign tradition (1987: 128-134).

The adapter of Much Ado About Nothing, on the other hand, adroitly retained the "foreignness" of Shakespeare's play by re-assigning the dramatic setting of the play to a third culture. The play was set in an ethnic minority tribe near the remote border of China in an unstated ancient time. The new setting suggested a society under Chinese influence but retaining a less-refined, "raw" cultural character of its own. Thus the open encounters between the ladies and the nobles (particularly between Beatrice and Benedict), which were perfectly normal for the Elizabethan audience but a taboo in the world of traditional Chinese drama, was allowed to exist as a unique social practice in the uninhibited border society. Without this extra dimension of foreignness, a carefree, outspoken and, "anti-revolutionary" character like Beatrice could never be made probable and convincing on the traditional Chinese stage (Jin Zhi 1987: 151-2).

The strategy of re-aligning the source play to a third culture to better express the Shakespearean spirit was also employed in a 1981 production, Romeo and Juliet, by the Tibetan students of Shanghai Drama Academy in Tibetan language, and presented to both the Chinese-speaking (in Beijing and Shanghai) and the Tibetan-speaking audience (in Lhasa). Although the adaptation was not re-set in Tibet, the ethnic features of the actors added a distinctive non-Chinese context to the play. The exotic looks and language aside, the actors had a revealing emotional quality of innocence and passion, which to Director Xu Qiping could best express the pure and unreserved love between Romeo and Juliet. According to Xu, the Tibetan cast eventually achieved a version closer to Shakespeare's original than their emotionally more reserved Chinese counterparts; they successfully represented the passionate love and rage of the southern Italian youth (1983: 291-5).
In the wake of the intercultural Shakespeare, many Chinese critics sought for the "lessons" learned from the experiments. First, they concluded, by means of various Chinese regional operas, Shakespeare could be effectively popularized. Once his plays were preserved in the indigenous repertoire, Shakespeare would, therefore, soon become a household name in China. Second, by means of Shakespeare, Chinese traditional theatre could break free from its ethnically bound conventions and reach an international audience. Critical opinions also claimed that the success of the Chinese-Shakespeare theatrical translation would rely very much on a thorough understanding of both traditions, of their difference and similarity, and their incompatibility and parallels. Third, the approach under the heading of "Sinicizing Shakespeare" or "indigenizing Shakespeare into Chinese opera" implied a rigid cultural attitude towards Shakespeare, and could actually sacrifice the essence of his art. Successful intercultural performances could not be achieved by prescribed formula but by experimenting from one production to another until the right chemistry between the two theatrical traditions was produced (cf. Shakespeare in China 1987).

After the disastrous political incident at Tiananmen Square in 1989,\textsuperscript{138} Chinese government halted China's exchange with the West; and the second International Chinese Shakespeare Festival, to be held in 1990, was canceled. Academic and theatrical activities involving Shakespeare did not resume until 1993, as Wuhan University hosted an international Shakespeare conference, and the following year saw the opening of the Shanghai International Shakespeare

\textsuperscript{138}The Tiananmen Square Incident, also called Tiananmen Massacre, started as a peaceful student demonstration involving many university students from all over the nation gathering in Tiananmen Square—the plaza in front of the Forbidden City where the PRC announced its establishment in 1949—to petition for the Communist government to reform itself into a democratic institution. On June 6, 1989, the government suddenly launched an attack on the students early in the morning and killed hundreds of them in their sleep. The aftermath of the incident was also grim, with many intellectuals being arrested and others fleeing overseas on permanent exile.
Festival, which produced ten Shakespeare plays.\textsuperscript{139} It showed that how much cultural exchange was still closely monitored by the government, and the reception of Shakespeare, even if it had achieved beneficial results to Chinese culture in general, was susceptible to the change of political climate. Zhang Xiao Yang in his 1996 work optimistically predicted that the interaction between Shakespeare and Chinese drama could contribute to the realization of a "world theatre" and a "world culture" (1996: 252). But until then, perhaps China still needed to open up more, at least ideologically, toward the exchange with the West.

Many Chinese Shakespearean scholars, including Zhang, saw Shakespeare as an "institution maker," who "provided an ideological foundation for the individualistic values and social ideals" to contemporary China (Zhang Xiao Yang 1996: 248). This attitude seemed to make little difference from that of the Chinese elites during the May-Fourth Movement (1919-1925), who perceived Shakespeare primarily as abstract values rather than an individual artist. The ideological frame which the Chinese still imposed on Shakespeare's works might eventually inhibit a true communication of Shakespeare's meanings, making him say what the Chinese thought he should be saying. This was where adaptation of Shakespeare to Chinese traditional theatre became helpful. The intercultural translation was a deconstruction process which required, in this case, rediscovery of Shakespeare within a Chinese frame of reference, and in Chinese expressive codes; this exercise could lead to new perspectives and self-awareness.

3.6.2 Shakespeare Adapted and Appropriated

In Taiwan, adaptation of Shakespeare into traditional Chinese themes or forms started in the early 1980s, in a sporadic fashion in comparison with the systematic experimentation in Mainland China's theatre circle. \textit{The Grudge Over Dividing Territory (Fen jiang hen)}, adapted from \textit{King Lear} and directed by Wang

\textsuperscript{139}Details of these two events, see Zhang Xiao Yang (1996: 249-250).
Shengshan in the Chinese Culture University in 1980, first adapted Shakespeare into a Chinese costume drama, to a warm reception from a small campus audience.

It was in the 1986 production of *Macbeth*, re-titled *The Kingdom of Desire*, that Shakespeare was first rendered into Beijing opera conventions to depict an ancient Chinese theme in Taiwan. In this production by Taipei's Contemporary Legend Theatre, Shakespeare's text was not followed with fidelity; only the skeleton of its plot was lifted out and filled in with Chinese flesh. Despite the alteration, the audiences went to the play expecting to see Shakespeare, and many reviewers treated it as a Shakespeare production. The theatre company claimed that its purpose in appropriating Shakespeare in form and content was to "break away from the decorum of traditional opera" and to "revamp the essence of Chinese performing arts altogether" (Wu 1990: 6); Shakespeare was very much treated as "raw" material for theatrical re-elaborations (See Ch. 4). Four years later, the CLT staged *The Prince's Revenge*, a Beijing opera play based on *Hamlet*, with the same approach (See Ch. 5). The two productions not only received enthusiastic and yet controversial responses from the audiences, but also started a continuous discussion among Taiwan's modern and traditional theatre circles about the nature, practice and critical evaluation of intercultural theatre.

The critical opinions related to the Beijing opera-Shakespeare productions, voiced by Taiwan's critics, in comparison with those raised in Mainland China, revealed a major difference in the reception of Shakespeare. The Taiwanese adaptations showed little reverence for Shakespeare's text; there seemed to be little attempt to preserve "Shakespeare's spirit," as most of the Mainland productions were geared to. It was a case of an indigenous tradition "productively receiving" (Fischer-Lichte) a foreign tradition in order to revitalize its own, as opposed to communicating and translating the foreign, as in the Mainland Chinese adaptations. In either case, Shakespeare actually gave rise to a new
consciousness of the indigenous traditions and their continuation. "Re-invention of tradition," one of the most significant themes in modern Chinese culture, was re-focused through Shakespeare. In other words, Shakespeare brought the Chinese to face themselves. Through the Other, one learns more about the Self.

3.7 Conclusion

A century of reception of Shakespeare by the Chinese, despite being uneven in various aspects, was very fruitful and significant; the foreign tradition directly contributed to the development of the native traditions of literature and theatre. Chau concluded in his 1981 work that Shakespeare was introduced into China "in the wrong times"—an era when China sought to become a modern state based on contemporary Western models and was particularly not interested in the archaic language and distanced cultural form of Shakespearean drama; thus Chau dismissed the attempt to adapt Shakespeare into the traditional Chinese theatre as "hardly practical" (Chau 1980: 248; 1981: 64). Only five years later, a "Shakespeare Renaissance" occurred in China that deserved cultural, theatrical and political-psychological analyses. Besides, adaptation of Shakespeare into traditional Chinese theatre actually became the festival's major theme. The same focus occurred simultaneously in Taiwan. Shakespeare has not only crossed cultural borders; he has also crossed back to the future.

The adaptation of Shakespeare into Chinese theatre may bring forth a number of healthy developments. First, it will increase the joint effort of theatrical and academic resources in producing Shakespeare plays for a Chinese audience who have little or no knowledge of English. Second, it will re-direct Chinese theatre towards pluralism and interculturalism, particularly when experiments with adapting Shakespeare to native theatre forms are attempted. Third, it will help broaden the knowledge of Shakespeare and, essentially, the
knowledge of literature and theatre for the Chinese; it can perhaps lead to a future study of Shakespeare from an East-West comparative perspective.

Shakespeare and Chinese traditional theatre may be able to create productive intercultural fertilization. Shakespearean drama reflects an "intimate attentiveness to life" (Brockbank 1988: 195) 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, Chinese traditional 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 (Brockbank 1988: 203). In addition, the ever-present socio-political focus in Chinese interpretation of Shakespeare will continually place the meanings of his plays in a larger social and cultural context and grant these classical texts a topicality that is often lost in the West (cf. Kennedy 1993: 297-300). As East 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" (1967: 115). While Shakespeare may discover a sense of congeniality in Chinese theatrical expressions, the Chinese can also find Shakespeare a true "contemporary."
CHAPTER FOUR

THE KINGDOM OF DESIRE: PRODUCTION AND RECEPTION OF A BEIJING OPERA MACBETH

The Kingdom of Desire\textsuperscript{140}, a Beijing opera adaptation of Macbeth, made its debut in Taipei Social Education Hall on December 10, 1986, as part of the year's Municipal Arts Festival. Performed to a solidly packed house, it received rave reviews which regarded it as "representing a new era for Taiwan" (qtd. in Kwan 1994). Overnight the young performers of the newly established troupe, the Contemporary Legend Theatre (CLT), were hailed as the new hope of Chinese theatre in their daring fusion of the traditional form with modern stage techniques and Shakespeare's time-proven drama. The production was considered Taiwan's best choice to embark on international tours, particularly after an invitation from the International Festival sponsored by the Royal National Theatre in 1988. After overcoming great difficulty in funding, it finally opened at London's Lyttleton Theatre on November 14, 1990. Certain modifications were made, including trimming the length of the play from 3.3 to 2.5 hours. The first Taiwanese theatre production to appear on a major Western stage in decades, it was celebrated by the media at home as a crusade to "bring the Chinese Macbeth to Shakespeare's native land." It then joined Seoul's Asian Pacific Theatre Festival in October 1991, and, two years later, toured Tokyo and Osaka through the effort of Japan's Ninagawa Theatre producer Tadao Nakane, thus becoming the first commercial theatre from Taiwan to perform in Japan and Korea. It was performed in Hong Kong and France in 1994, to good reviews and warm receptions. From 1986 to 1994, the Kingdom was staged 9 times, in domestic and

\textsuperscript{140}It is called Kingdom in the following text.
foreign venues, giving in total 34 performances to approximately 50,000 spectators (CLT, "Newskit"). The play has since become the most revised and refined work in the theatre company's repertoire (Wei Haimin 1996: 173).

The creation of Kingdom represented a unique intercultural association. Synchronously, it closed the gap between modern performance genres (wutaiju) and traditional opera theatre (xiqu). It also expanded the range of foreign adaptation in the native theatre—from the Western modernist and postmodernist works to the Renaissance Elizabethan. Diachronously, it corresponded with the global trend of interculturalism and the increasingly significant industry of "foreign Shakespeare" (Kennedy 1993). The production stood in the intersection of diversified theatrical and cultural traditions and succeeded in integrating them in a meaningful way.

Further, the performance history of the Kingdom revealed a distinctive intercultural politics. In its inception the CLT claimed to adapt Western drama to the foundation of Beijing opera in order to enrich the home genre. But after the international tours, its rhetoric changed from one-way adaptation to reciprocal absorption; the native and foreign were both foundation and inspiration to each other (Brennan 1994: 13). Although the play initially targeted Taiwan's reception, its later effort focused on reaching out to wider audiences, particularly the non-traditional Beijing opera spectators in non-Chinese cultures. Its international reception, in turn, brought new value to and perception of Beijing opera at home. Thus the play's intercultural politics was two-fold. One was the translation/adaptation of a foreign text into the indigenous form to reach new audiences at home; the other was the search for an even wider, international reception. The relationship of the two aims—each was the other's means—marked the purpose of the production for reception. This production can be described as
a process of "productive reception" of the foreign, to use Fischer-Lichte's understanding of intercultural performance (1990b).

This chapter examines the production of *Kingdom*, in an effort to explore broader implications of intercultural theatre from an Asian angle. There are two implicit questions: How did Shakespeare help revitalize Beijing opera, and to what extent did the Chinese adaptation communicate *Macbeth*? Pavis's translation model is helpful in answering these questions. Although theoretically it contradicts the perspective of Fischer-Lichte's "productive reception" model in that it implies that the end of an intercultural performance is to "communicate the foreign," yet both models foreground the needs of the home culture/tradition and thus converge in a similar focus on target reception.

This analysis contains two major parts. The first part concerns the production process. It focuses on the aesthetics of theatre, its inner structural relationships, generic appropriateness, and shifts of meaning from the original text to the new text. The second part deals with reception. Specifically, it compares the reception in Taipei (its primary target culture) with that in London (the source culture turned into a secondary target culture), in order to assess the communicability of meaning in intercultural performance in the differing "referential universe of the spectator" (Ubersfeld 1982: 131). It stresses the social, cultural implications of theatre, such as its function and institution in a particular society. This analysis makes use of the text of the production, video recording of the performance, para-theatrical materials such as program notes and promotion press releases, critical reviews, news reports, biographies, and personal interviews.

4.1 Adapter's Perspective: Why Shakespeare? Whose Shakespeare?

In his emotion-charged "manifesto" which appeared after the production of *Kingdom*, the director and leading actor, Wu Xingguo, gave his reason for
transforming Shakespeare into Beijing opera. To stop its audiences from drifting away, Beijing opera needed to "step out from its ancient time and space, communicate with new audiences and revive with a new visage through the modern actors' concept and practice" (1987: 50). Inspiring artists such as George Balanchine, Martha Graham, and Yukio Ninagawa had all succeeded in breathing new life into conventional forms and creating future traditions; they proved that "tradition is the root of modernity; modernity is the seed of tradition" (50). In the same spirit, the CLT adapted Shakespeare in order to induce, as Wu described in an interview, the birth of "a modern Chinese theatre" which unifies intellectual relevance and humanistic value in the modern era with Chinese cultural, artistic traditions-a theatre both universal and ethnically distinctive (He Xiaoming 1994).

Wu's loose terms "tradition" and "modernity" did not clearly explain why Shakespeare could be the "seed" to renew the home tradition, or in what sense the chronologically older Elizabethan theatre was more "modern" than Beijing opera, a tradition merely two centuries old. Besides, both were "classical" forms, as Wu also acknowledged, similar to each other in formal attributes, in the cultural, sociological settings where they developed, and in metatheatrical devices (1987: 50). So how was Shakespeare more "contemporary" than the home genre?

Wu did not directly answer the question, but pointed out three theatrical "idioms" in Macbeth that were alien to Beijing opera. These foreign codes could change the performance structure and codification of the opera and solve its aesthetic problems. The first one was Shakespeare's "in-depth portrayal of a criminal" as the center of dramatic interest, a rare subject in Chinese theatre (50). In contrast to the traditional Beijing opera protagonists who almost always reflect moral virtue, Macbeth appeared anti-heroic, neither loyal nor pious (buzhong buxiao). The introduction of this non-traditional character would inevitably subvert the thematic and aesthetic conventions of the opera, breaking
down its moralist confines. Furthermore, the complex psychology and powerful dramatic presentation of Shakespeare's characters could "humanize" the "flat" role types in Beijing opera (Lin Shuhui 1993: 11-12).

The second foreign idiom was the overall color symbolism in Macbeth, such as the recurrence of bloody hues and bursts of lightning from the dark, stifling atmosphere (Wu 1987: 50). It was a real challenge to use colors and lighting to "paint" the scene in Beijing opera. Traditionally, Chinese opera performed on a brightly-lit, nearly bare stage without change of lighting or scenery, partially to emphasize the rich-colored, embroidered costumes and the symbolism of the face painting. Macbeth offered a different approach to scenography in which the unified aural and visual codes helped establish the meanings of the play.

The third foreign idiom from Shakespeare concerned the core of Beijing opera—the acting convention. Wu pointed out that the characters in Macbeth inspired the Beijing opera performers to discover a new creative center (50). The Beijing opera actor was traditionally a technical actor. His training focused primarily on technical aspects, including physical and oral dimensions, which constituted the highly conventionalized form of role types. Only after mastering the techniques which demanded tremendous strength, precision, and expressiveness could the actor tackle the psychological aspects of a character. Besides, as the major roles in Beijing opera were already familiar to the audience, the actor had no immediate need to interpret them. However valuable and refined on its own terms, this acting convention was limited; the rigidity of its role category and the great technical demanded prevent its actor from becoming psychologically truthful and intellectually original characters. Wu Xingguo found an alternative in playing Shakespeare's complex, rounded characters, who cannot be easily adapted into Beijing opera role types. The Chinese actors needed to break down and re-structure the traditional acting codes in order to express the
inner reality and the subtle emotional nuances of these characters. Wu Xingguo maintained that an "empathic" approach be infused into Beijing opera's formalized acting style. Ensemble acting, which had traditionally been ignored in Beijing opera acting, was also stressed (Wu 1987: 50).

From Wu's observation, it was clear that Shakespeare's literary richness and complex characterizations served to enrich Beijing opera. Through adapting Shakespeare, the dramatic interest in the home genre could shift from the traditional presentation of a role type (what) to a thorough understanding and interpretation of the character (how). This "how" then commanded an organic, sophisticated use of theatrical languages including the verbal, visual, aural, and kinetic, to signify controlling themes and imagery for a performance, based on a dramatic text preceding the staging. In other words, Shakespeare was used as a touchstone for Beijing opera to communicate the tragic mode, the characters, the emotions, the psychological, and the philosophical substance within a non-indigenous narrative.

Besides aesthetic functions, there were socio-cultural aspects in Shakespeare which could spur the public's new interest in Beijing opera. Adapting Shakespeare is strategic. Because of the very foreignness of Shakespeare in Taiwan's Beijing opera circle, the adaptation of his works helped avoid the typical criticism laid by traditional critics on any invention based on existent Beijing opera repertoire (Wu 1992). Furthermore, Shakespeare signified high culture worldwide, guaranteeing literary values and artistic authenticity. His was probably the most intercultural theatre of all times (Kennedy 1993: 301). By means of Shakespeare, the non-traditional Beijing opera audiences, including Taiwan's younger generations and even non-Chinese spectators in other parts of the globe, may be lured into Beijing opera and find beauty and value in it. This reception strategy confirms what Shevtzova observes, that a Shakespearean
production, whether in his home or foreign culture, targets audiences ranging from those equipped with a certain "cultural baggage" to those who may be totally new to theatre (1993: 11). Indeed all paratheatrical materials of *Kingdom* stressed the foreign-domestic dichotomy. The program notes for its London tour even prints the scene breakdown of *Macbeth* and of the Chinese version, side by side, to remind the audience of the intercultural transfer (*Kingdom of Desire* 1990: 16-19).

In spite of all the publicity which exploited the value of Shakespeare to promote this production, the CLT did not intend to be faithful to *Macbeth* text. In his article written before the London, Wu Xingguo clearly stated that it was less essential to convey the "authentic spirit of Shakespeare" than to produce desirable changes in Beijing opera:

>[We want] to break away from the decorum of traditional opera by employing a Western theatrical form and re-vamp the essence of Chinese performing arts altogether.... Personally I don't mind at all if I am a good translator, as long as the experiment cuts the psychology of characters a little deeper, expands the theatrical tension a little further, pulls the Chinese-related colors and sounds together a little closer, and explores the potential of imagination for modern theatre a little harder. (1990b: 7-9)

This explained why the *Kingdom* was not a word-for-word translation of *Macbeth*, but a loose adaptation of the Macbeth story. In fact, it owed debt directly to Kurosawa's cinematic adaptation of Macbeth, *The Throne of Blood*, than to Shakespeare's dramatic text. We will return to this point shortly.

From a comparative perspective, *Macbeth* was an appropriate choice for adaptation into Chinese classical theatre. First of all, it is one of Shakespeare's shortest plays (Muir 1951: xxii). It presents less complicated dramatic action and stronger focus on the title character than other Shakespearean tragedies, leaving room for Chinese adapters to concentrate on rendering the central characters with Beijing opera codes. In addition, *Macbeth* is a history play and "history, with its recurrent theme of man in a position of power and responsibility" (M. Doran
is also a dominant theme in Chinese classical drama. Ambition and corruption, court intrigues, and military exploits are common subjects in Chinese "history plays." However, the historical details such as exact dates are not necessary background knowledge for understanding Macbeth; it is the psychological development that appeals (Goddard 1991: 239). Many Beijing opera plays are also quasi-historical, pure fiction attached to some historical incidents but lacking accuracy (Hsu Tao-ching 1985: 70). Therefore, the cultural transfer is feasible. This explains why Macbeth has been adapted into Chinese historical context in a number of Chinese plays, as Diamond points out (1994: 117).

Besides, Macbeth has strong moral connotations which are also found in Chinese theatre; this drama of "crime and punishment" can easily gain empathy in Chinese audiences. They may know nothing about the Scottish story before attending the play, but will probably agree with Samuel Johnson: "the courage of Macbeth preserves some esteem, yet every reader rejoices at his fall" (1991: 3).

Finally, Macbeth is a great acting play. It demands powerful histrionic skills and imagination to play the title role and his relationship with Lady Macbeth. One of the best English actresses in playing Lady Macbeth, Sarah Kemble Siddons (1755-1831), saw in the character a quality that "associated all the subjugating powers of intellect and all the charms and graces of personal beauty" (1970: 142). The challenge it brings to the Beijing opera acting was confirmed by Wei Haimin in her memoir; she played the Chinese equivalent of Lady Macbeth and spent four years in struggling to grasp the inner reality of the character (1996: 163-170).

4.2 Textual Re-elaboration of the Source Play

Based on the above factors, the CLT transposed Macbeth into an entirely Chinese opera, thrice removed from its original—linguistically, culturally, and aesthetically. The process of adaptation proved lengthy and exploratory. Li Huimin, an aspiring writer and Beijing opera admirer fresh from the university,
set out to re-write *Macbeth*. Basing her work on the most widely recognized Chinese translations by Liang Shiqiu and Zhu Shenghao, Li transformed Medieval Scotland into a Chinese setting in the *Period of Warring States*.

Macbeth became Aoshu Zheng, a general of a historically little-documented small state, Ji. This version failed to pass muster with her fellow artists—most of them professional Beijing opera actors. As Wu Xingguo recalled, it was considered "unplayable," like a modern Spoken Drama script with emphases on dialogue, plot, and themes rather than on Beijing opera's conventions of music and spectacle (1992). It then had to be "re-translated" into Beijing opera idioms through the actors' collaborative effort, including the creation of musical modes, metrical types, and costuming (Wei Haimin 1996: 159-160). The last step was what Pavis calls the "artistic modelization" which makes it possible to "concretize" the non-indigenous narrative of Shakespeare on Beijing opera stage.

"Translation for the page and translation for the stage are two different things," Michel Grivelet notes, "A translation for the theatre is immediately subordinated to the conception of the *mise en scène*" (qtd. in Lieblein 1993: 76). This was particularly true when *Macbeth* was adapted to a music theatre of operatic singing and acrobatic display. This led to a radical rewriting of *Macbeth*. The plot and characters are much simplified, and Shakespeare's poetic expression and imagery are largely dismissed. Paradoxically, the adapters believed that this would be the best way to bring Shakespeare's fable and theme alive on the Chinese stage (cf. Li Huimin 1995).

The Chinese adapters borrowed elements from contemporary adaptations of *Macbeth* and traditional Beijing opera plays, gaining practical knowledge in

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141 During China's *Zhan Guo Shidai*, or the *Period of Warring States* (475-221 B.C.), about 20 nation-states contended and were annexed into seven major powers which continued to fight for the hegemony until Qin emerged victorious to become the unchallenged ruler of the empire under the *Shi Huangdi* (First Emperor). See *Sanmin DaChidian* (Sanmin Lexicon Dictionary, Taipei: Sanmin, 1985).
textual appropriation, cultural encoding and staging techniques. The company had viewed at least five versions of *Macbeth* in the initial stage, mostly through videos available to them, to find creative inspiration (Tang 1986). The native sources came from the existent Beijing opera repertoire, such as *Fa Zidu* (Attack on Zidu), *Da Jinzhuan* (Hit the Golden Brick), *Tiao Huache* (Select Luxurious Carts), *Xie Shou Ji* (Blood-Stained Hands), *Li Chingzhao, Li huiniang* and *Hongling Hun* (Sorrow over the Red Silk).142 *Fa Zidu* was a striking parallel to the Macbeth-Banquo relationship in the original; it became a foundation for the psychological and artistic expression in the adaptation (Wu 1992; Li Huimin 1995).

But undoubtedly the most important secondary source in creating *Kingdom* was Akira Kurosawa's 1957 film, *The Throne of Blood*. Critics both in Taiwan and in the West have claimed that *Kingdom* was more an adaptation of *The Throne of Blood* than *Macbeth* as it followed closely the plot structure, treatment of characters, use of imagery, and worldview of the Japanese film (cf. Astington 1991: 26; Diamond 1994: 118-123; Shapiro N.d: 2). In fact, *The Throne of Blood* served as a convenient intermediary text for the CLT artists to recontextualize Shakespeare, because affinity in cultural values and aesthetic sensibility could be easily found between Japanese and Chinese traditional art (Kurosawa's film was strongly influenced by No theatre). As Diamond pertinently puts it, *Macbeth* "had already been filtered through an Asian perspective before being altered again" in *Kingdom* (1994: 118). As a result, the encounter of Beijing opera with its

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142 See Wu (1992), Li Huimin (1995b), Wei Haimin (1996: 160). The last three pieces were the main sources of the melodic and vocal styles for Lady Aoshu's sung passages in the *Kingdom*, arranged and synthesized by the actress Wei Haimin and her accompanist Wu Minsheng. *Fa Zidu* depicts the wrongful deed and consequent death of a historical figure, Zidu, who assassinates his military colleague, Kau Yingshu, in order to enjoy the fruit of a successful battle, and who, in the banquet celebrating his victory, suffers the hallucination of Kau Yingshu and becomes so maddened that he kills himself. *Xie Shou Ji* (Blood-Stained Hands) is a Kunju opera adaptation of *Macbeth*, appearing in the first Shakespeare Festival in China in 1986 and touring to the Edinburgh Festival in 1987 (See Ruru Li 1995).
primary source of adaptation (*Macbeth* and Elizabethan theatre traditions) became less significant.

For the CLT artists, nonetheless, the great indebtedness to Kurosawa's work did not seem to discount their originality. The famous film was only a start for their real creative work—a skeleton which required new flesh and blood to recreate its spirit and life, explained Wu Xingguo in an interview, because after all, Beijing opera is a very different artistic medium from film (1990). And in a performance form which often overlooks authorship and textual complexity and which focuses almost always on the actor's expressive skills, the approach of borrowing appeared legitimate to them. It reflected the traditional principles of creating new plays in Beijing opera: "interpretation, synthesis, and transmutation" of existing performance works (Wichmann 1990: 147). The adapter, Li Huimin, who had been an English major and an avid reader of Shakespeare, emphasized that she always returned to the basic themes and emotions in *Macbeth* as her primary source in creating *Kingdom* (1995).

The *Kingdom* could best be described as a "re-elaboration" of text, gesture, and choreography into a new frame, to use Pavis's term. Since music (orchestral and singing) and spectacle (choreographed acrobatic display and dance movements) were essential conventions in Beijing opera and took a great amount of performing time to unfold the story, the Chinese adaptation only preserved the most concentrated episodes of the original. This is where

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143 Pavis uses this "neutralized but somewhat insipid" term in order to "show that the cultural and theatrical traditions of the source culture are transformed by the needs of the target culture's theatrical and cultural tradition" (1992: 161).

144 For example, the performance rhythm of Beijing opera is much slower than that of a common Shakespeare performance so that, within a limited running time, it will be difficult to enact the full version of a Shakespeare text, unless conventional expressions through music and spectacle are diluted. On the other hand, if one intends to preserve Beijing opera's organic conventions and convey the best of its expression, Shakespeare's textuality may suffer changes or omission. Chau, in discussing the basic difficulties of staging Shakespeare in Chinese, admits that even if it is "meaningful and interesting" to make a literary
Kurosawa's film came in handy as it edited *Macbeth* into a more compact, manageable narrative structure. Following Kurosawa's plot design, *Kingdom* condenses *Macbeth* 's 26 scenes into the following 14 episodes.\(^{145}\) The numbers in brackets refer to the acts and scenes in *Macbeth* which are adapted or altered:

1. A Forest Mountain Spirit (I. i)
2. A Camp (I. ii)
3. Prophecy (I. iii)
4. Advancement (I. iv)
5. Plotting (I. v/vii)
6. Arrival of King of Ji (I. vi)
7. Murder (II. i)
8. Breaking a Horse (II. iv)
9. The Flight (III. iii)
10. Banquet (III. iv)
11. Night Watchmen (III. vi)
12. Hand-washing (V. i)
13. Another Prophecy (IV. i)
14. Betrayal and Death (V. v)

Like Kurosawa's film, *Kingdom* completely domesticates *Macbeth* so as to rediscover the structure of the play within a socially and historically familiar situation. It resets the Scottish tale in the third century B.C., as China was still in the era of Warring States before becoming a unified empire. Built into the historical setting are references to wars of feudal lords, warriorship (the code of honor, heroism, brotherhood, and the other side of the above—betrayal and usurpation), and the solidification of the throne through procreation. As is the case in Kurosawa's film version, the dramatic focus in *Kingdom* is only on the Macbeth and Lady Macbeth characters. The plot is simplified so as to closely follow them through their careers as usurper-murderers, while Malcolm, the Macduffs, and all references to the English court from the source text are all omitted. Other translation of Shakespeare into classical Chinese form, "it is hardly practical" to do so (1980: 248).

\(^{145}\)See Appendix 1 for the full text. The scene divisions here basically follow the first published script (Li Huimin 1987). Modifications were made in the program notes for the London tour (Yuwang Chengguo 1990) as well as in the English version of *Kingdom* (Li Huey Ming n.d.), perhaps because the division according to dramatic scene in a play is not a familiar mode in Beijing opera. The 1987 Chinese version appears to be more faithful to Beijing opera's tradition—episodes divided by the acting styles or staging techniques.
significant characters, such as King Duncan and Banquo appear only to support the plot. Scenes 6, 8 and 14 are undoubtedly adapted from Kurosawa's reinvention of Macbeth, in which the King's unannounced visit alarms Macbeth; Banquo's steed suddenly becomes wild, and his son sees it as a bad omen and they should not go to Macbeth's banquet; and Macbeth dies like a human pin cushion by the arrows of his own men. Also, Macbeth and Banquo's loss of direction in the forest, Lady Macbeth's pregnancy and miscarriage, the solo performance during the banquet, the unworthy character of the King, and the single witch, all bear the signature of Kurowasa.146

The title's catch-word, "desire" (yuwang), has the connotation of "ambition" in Chinese, which, according to the adapter, Li Huimin, is the "central idea and spirit of the original Macbeth... and what makes this play so universal in every culture, at all times" (1995). But Li's interpretation of "ambition" needs qualification. Kingdom follows The Throne of Blood in deploying a chorus song about human ambition before the dramatic action starts. While the voice in the film sings a Buddhist lament about vanity of human pride and fatal retribution of evil doers, the chorus in Kingdom further renounces all human desire and endeavor (Diamond 1994: 119). This Taoist-Buddhist prologue in Kingdom warns against mankind's aggressive quest for "fame, fortune and position," for they are merely illusion and only leads to futility:

In reality they are only like
The reflection of the moon in water, an illusion;
When you reach the abyss,
Plans and schemes only lead to downfall;
In the end, the waves still wash the sand;
All that remain are dry bones and empty sorrow.

146 A complete, detailed comparison between the Japanese film and the Chinese play, with references to Macbeth, can be found in Diamond (1994).
The uniquely Asian perspective framing the Chinese adaptation marks a clear shift from a Western understanding of Macbeth as a story about a hero brought down by the temptation of evil (Shapiro N.d: 3).

Although the Kingdom resembles The Throne of Blood on the plot level, yet each of its episodes can be viewed as a complete, independent theatrical performance as it is designed to focus on the acting or staging techniques of the major role(s), and only the straightforward plot keeps them related.

At the outset of the play, a "Mountain Spirit," the Chinese supernatural agency equivalent to the Weird Sisters, gives a customary introduction to the dramatic story. She recites a dingchang shi, a poem that sums up the setting of the play, introduces the fictional world and herself, and predicts the future events in relation to the protagonist. In sharp contrast to Shakespeare's equivocating witches, the Chinese supernatural uses a moralizing tone addressing the audiences on behalf of their understanding of the "lesson" of the play. She implies the reason why "a little sport" must play upon the ambitious Chinese general; her words strongly echo the chorus song prior to her entrance:

Everyday I quietly observe mankind struggle in restless commotion for fame and profit. But life, death, and even reincarnation have long been predetermined. Poor mankind, unable to read the mind of Heaven, barely realizes that all the wealth and glory, pride and ambition, will eventually disappear with death; only vanity is left. (Sc. 1)\textsuperscript{147}

The Chinese version of Macbeth, therefore, is an exemplum of excessive ambition that begets wars and wounds to the world and leads to self-destruction. The story-telling and moral authoritative voice of the Mountain Spirit resembles the God in Everyman, who stages a morality play to demonstrate Christian ideology. This

\textsuperscript{147}This passage is based on the uncut version of the play (1987). Cut after the CLT's first performances, perhaps due to the length of the running time, it is nevertheless significant and relevant to the overall reading of the play.
voice also distances the Macbeth story into the historical past, giving it an allegorical value.

Scenes 2 and 3 are dedicated to Beijing opera's "martial" mode (wuxi), and are designed to display kinetic dimensions of acting. In the military camp the King of Ji and his courtiers huddle in fear, waiting for the latest news from the battle, while one after another, with escalating speed and momentum, the Messengers enter in acrobatic flipping and rolling into the scene, reporting the victory of Aoshu Zheng's troops over the rebels. The spectacle externalizes the tense and urgent atmosphere of the battlefield, synchronizing visual and kinetic signs with punctuated rhythms. The military mood ushers in the first appearance of Aoshu, who is predominantly expressed by "martial" codes. He is on horseback, engaged with his troops in a military drill. The martial mode returns to create the climax of the play—the hero's downfall (Sc. 14).

The "civil" scene (wenxi) in Beijing opera demonstrates the actors' reciting, acting and especially singing skills. In the domestic setting of Scene 5, Lady Aoshu plots with her husband to murder King of Ji, who happens to arrive and to stay in their home for the night. Her calculated instigation and his hesitation, their debate and final commitment to the crime, are all conducted in an exchange of arias. The arias, or sung passages, have three functions in traditional Chinese theatre: To express, to describe, and to narrate (Li Ruru 1995: 45). And they give a lyrical quality and aesthetic distance to the otherwise intense and intimate dialogue between the couple. In contrast, the regicide is played in hushed silence by a lengthy sequence of pantomime. It depicts the bloody deed, which takes place behind the scenes, with great economy and imagination. The scene ends with a tableau of the couple huddling together like cornered animals, as the loud cries of murder erupt from backstage.
Musical lyricism is also elaborated in the character Meng Deng (Fleance). Singing an aria, he laments the murder of his father by Aoshu's man while the assassination is pantomimed in slow motion in the shadowy background (Sc. 9). Singing is also the major medium in the scene where the hallucinated Lady Aoshu washes her hands obsessively (Sc. 12). She sings her repentance and madness; her aria is fraught with imagery of nightly ghosts and vengeful spirits.

Beijing opera idioms economically portray some of the most memorable Shakespearean images. The ghost of Meng Ting (Banquo) is represented by an actor whose head is covered by a piece of black fabric—a conventional sign of the spirit returning from death to demand truth and justice. Scene 11 transforms Lenox's conversation with a lord in _Macbeth_ III. vi into a ghost-haunting gossip among four Night Watchmen. Represented by the "clown" type, these characters signify common people from the lower class in contrast to the highbrow protagonists. They converse in a colloquial, comical style, commenting on the dramatic action like a chorus from an ancient Greek drama.

Two images from _Macbeth_ that are elaborated by the superb cinematography in _The Throne of Blood_ are re-adapted into _Kingdom_. Through Beijing opera scenography and acting techniques, they participate in the narrative and the complex network of themes of the play. The first image is the forest. Originally Birnam Wood and only mentioned briefly in _Macbeth_, the forest becomes a physical presence in _Kingdom_. Aoshu Zheng first appears in the forest, bloodily victorious, and soon loses his way in it, circulating about, unable to get out of it. Here the forest works as a means of externalizing the protagonist's mental state, forming a murky area where desire and rationality collide. The encounter with the Mountain Spirit in the forest seems to Aoshu a "dream" in which "we saw things we longed to see" (Sc. 3). The sudden thunderstorm suggests a dramatic moment when one's subconscious is unleashed and moral
vigilance is off guard. "The forest is like a great labyrinth," says a courtier, guessing the still absent Meng Ting (Banquo) has "lost" his way to Aoshu's coronation banquet in the forest (Sc. 10). The play ends with the invasion of the forest, causing general confusion and fear among Aoshu's soldiers, who become mutinous and rise to kill him.

The other re-elaborated image is associated with the horse and horse-riding. It is originally a significant image in *Macbeth*, as Macbeth is a warrior and a horseman, and his thoughts are often pictured with metaphors of horses. Furthermore, horse-riding paints the play with a keen "sense of rushing, relentless and goaded motion," as Caroline Spurgeon describes it (1935: 20). This image is accentuated by the rapid riding of the messenger who reports the return of Macbeth to his wife (1. v.), implying the racing, heated intent of ambition in Macbeth "like a rider vaulting into the saddle with such energy that it 'o'erleaps itself,' and falls on the further side" (20). The horse is also a potent sign of nature. That Duncan's horse becomes out of control after his murder suggests the overthrow of the natural order by Macbeth's bloody deed. In the adaptation, the image of horse is physicalized onstage by Beijing opera acting (pantomime). Aoshu first appears on horseback, establishing his status and profession as a warrior. In the storm in the forest, his steed suddenly becomes frightened and uncontrollable as if it detects the supernatural presence of Mountain Spirit (Sc. 3). The new text also elaborates what the Old Man tells Ross in *Macbeth* II. iv. about the horses biting one another in an acrobatic scene, in which Meng Ting's grooms try to break his maddened horse (Sc. 8). The four actors' choreographed movements make the invisible animal and its wild madness vivid and palpable onstage. Meng Ting rides this same horse—despite his son's interpretation of its madness as an evil omen—and goes to his doom (Sc. 9). In a later episode, Aoshu rides in the storm to visit the Mountain Spirit after seeing his wife's failing
health. The sequence of actions shows the desperate Aoshu riding in jerky movement but hardly moving forward; the actor who mimes the riding remains on the same spot and seems confined by the ray of a spotlight from above. The image of horse-riding signifies a man trying in vain to escape his downfall.

Generally speaking, *Kingdom* turns out an unconventional Beijing opera script; it is not just an outline of a performance, but a complete text for reading. Its dialogues, sung passages, notes of melodic style, and the unusually detailed stage directions encode the psychology of the characters as well as the *mise en scène*. The new script moves Beijing opera towards a text-based performance.

4.2.1 Lady Aoshu: The Motive of the Play

The dramatic and theatrical centers of the new text are the principal characters, Aoshu Zheng and Lady Aoshu. Both deviate from the conventional Beijing opera role types because of the strong focus on their psychological complexities. A close examination of the two characters helps shed light on the ways Beijing opera can transform Shakespeare, as well as the ways Shakespeare can transform Beijing opera.

4.2.1.1 Characterization

Lady Aoshu enjoys a stronger motive and ambition for power than does her husband. She learns the prophecy of the Mountain Spirit only after Aoshu returns home—rather than through her husband's letter, as Lady Macbeth does,¹⁴⁸ and, immediately forming a well-conceived argument she leads him to the idea and then the act of regicide. At first, she greets the supernatural fortune-telling as an auspicious sign given "by the gods" to guarantee that Aoshu will be

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¹⁴⁸ In the original, uncut version (Li Huimin 1987), Lady Aoshu has known the prophecy before her husband's return. In the aria which she sings at her first appearance, she reveals a desire to urge her husband to pursue the throne. In the edited version, Lady Aoshu apparently has no idea about the prophecy until her husband tells her in person. This implies an even stronger intent for power in this character.
"the true dragon chosen by Heaven/ To rule over the rivers and mountains of our land" (Sc. 5).\textsuperscript{149} When this fails to move him, she interprets the prophecy as a source of danger for it may stir distrust and conspiracy in the court. Meng Ting (Banquo), Aoshu's brotherly comrade in life and death, will inform the King of Ji (Duncan) of it in order to protect his own line, and this will prompt the King to dispose of the whole Aoshu household for fear of usurpation. Lady Aoshu's cunning argument and persistent instigation are directly adapted from the cold-blooded Lady Asaji in Kurosawa's film.

It is worth noting that Macbeth's letter to his wife is omitted here. The letter suggests that Macbeth's bond with his wife is very strong, and, more significantly, that he has already harbored some guilty thoughts of ambition before meeting her in the play, which Lady Macbeth also shares with him in private. Without the letter, the adaptation establishes an image of a relatively innocent character corrupted by his ambitious wife, as is also the case in another Chinese opera adaptation of Macbeth, Blood-Stained Hands.\textsuperscript{150}

The King of Ji's unexpected arrival to join forces with Aoshu Zheng in order to subdue an alleged traitor provides Lady Aoshu with a further chance to elaborate her conspiracy theory—and to draw up a practical plan of murder (Sc. 6). This sequence is unmistakably Kurosawa's design. The lady suspects that the King's military move is a "trick" set up by himself and Meng Teng to prey on Aoshu, for the seeming royal trust is exactly to keep Aoshu unguarded (Sc. 7). In addition, she cites historical examples, even if the King spares his life now, loyalty to a tyrant will only be rewarded with a glorious death in battle, or, even worse, with the role of a pawn at his caprice: "Serving the king resembles

\textsuperscript{149}The dragon is the traditional Chinese symbol of kingship.

\textsuperscript{150}This Kunju opera rendition of Macbeth was first performed in China's first Shakespeare Festival in the spring of 1986, and went to Britain for the 1987 Edinburgh Festival. See Li Ruru (1995). There are a number of similarities between the Blood-Stained Hands and the Kingdom; among them, the shaping of an ambitious female character as the motive of the crimes is striking (1995: 47).
accompanying a tiger; / The one favored in the morning is only devoured at night" (Sc. 7).151 To be safe and safely thus, she concludes, the only way is to remove the King. Aoshu is greatly unsettled by her words, his faith in honor and loyalty poisoned.

Lady Aoshu then provides a Darwinian answer to the cyclical machinery of war and deposition that one calls history, in which only the strongest survive:

My lord, come and see the sun set and the moon rise, the cycle of the elements, and the autumn of the contest for supremacy among the powerful. The strongest alone will occupy the throne. (Sc. 7)

She even glosses over Aoshu's usurpation with a sense of moral responsibility: "a weak king is bound to be deposed by his subject" (Sc. 5). A valorous and power-possessing figure like Aoshu should indeed replace the incapable albeit lawful king, and "accept the homage of the feudal states. / This is the will of Heaven, and the people's good fortune" (Sc. 7). Her shrewd, manipulative discourse transforms an evil ambition into the legitimate act of a savior. Lady Aoshu finally gains full control of the situation by stressing the urgency of time and a practical plan for action, which allows no resistance from Aoshu. Diamond is right in describing that Lady Aoshu "plays as much upon her husband's fear as upon his ambition" (1994:120).

Lady Aoshu is portrayed as a beauteous, power-driven femme fatale, representing the fascinating myth of feminine power in the patriarchal history of Chinese politics.152 In a society where decorum requires a woman of gentility to make herself scarce from the king's presence during the royal visit to her

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151 This passage appears in the uncut version (Li Huimin 1987: 62).
152 The adapter, Li Huimin uses this convenient image to portray her as the projection of Aoshu Zheng's inner evil. The traditional power-hungry femme fatale also tends to displace her husband or son, the legitimate throne-holder, to become the real power-possessor. The prominent examples are seen in Empress Wu Zetian of Tang Dynasty and the Dowager Cixi of the Qing Dynasty. The portrayal and interpretation of these female political figures come mainly from a male-dominant, patriarchal perspective that is deep-rooted in Chinese historiography.
household (Sc. 6), all she can do to gain power is through her husband or son—we later learn that she is expecting. But Lady Aoshu's vision is far more masculine and rational, and she has no scruples about stepping across the traditional boundary that separates male and female. She drugs the King's bodyguards into a drunken slumber, and, with an inflexible will, she sends her husband in to finish off the King (Sc. 7). Moreover, she is deeply involved in the murder of Meng Ting and his son (Sc. 10). Compared with Lady Macbeth, who invokes the dark spirits to "unsex" herself and bestow her with "direst cruelty" (1. v), Lady Aoshu seems the very avatar of evil. Lady Macbeth is only cruel in rhetoric but not in action, Lady Aoshu actually kills. Impulsively she kills Ming Ting's assassin who has failed to murder Meng's son. It is later on, when she miscarries, that we see the effect of the inversion of her sex--sterility. Similar inversion is seen in Lady Macbeth, whose marriage to Macbeth is childless.

The amplification of the issue of procreation in the adaptation suggests a cultural reconsideration regarding the nature of ambition. Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth is praised by her husband as one who will "[b]ring forth men-children only" because her "undaunted mettle should compose/ Nothing but males" (1. vii. 73-75), while in the adaptation, Lady Aoshu is actually pregnant with Aoshu's heir. The Chinese adapters seem unable to justify Lady Aoshu's ambition as entirely self-serving, and thus provide a convenient motive for it. Now that her husband seizes power, what can be more urgent for Lady Aoshu than securing the throne for their unborn child? It is only natural that a mother's protective instinct prompts the ruthless killing. She has to reverse what the Mountain Spirit has predicted about Meng Ting's offspring becoming the successor of the throne; and, more urgently, she needs to forfeit Aoshu's promise to Meng Ting about naming his son the heir at his coronation party.
Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth dwindles into the world of insanity because she miscalculates evil's profound effect on her mind. In contrast, her Chinese counterpart becomes guilt-ridden and mad only after her miscarriage and failing health (Sc. 12). The loss of a baby is traditionally a maternal tragedy, and here it signifies more. It refers to Lady Aoshu's abortive political enterprise and her loss of innocence after the killing. She goes full circle rising and falling; in the end, realizing the price of evil, she hangs herself.

In the hand-washing scene, in which we last see her, Lady Aoshu describes her nightly torment by the horrible sights of the murdered King of Ji, Meng Ting, and his assassin. Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth is treated as a passive object of clinical observation and diagnosis by a doctor, in sleep-walking her language revealing a fragmented consciousness totally alienated from reality (V. i). But in the adaptation, Lady Aoshu maintains a subjective autonomy, disclosing her emotional and moral afflictions in great clarity; she offers an account of a guilty conscience which Aoshu fails to show in the play.

4.2.1.2 Theatrical Presentation

Lady Aoshu presented a challenge for Beijing opera's conventional dan (female) role in expressing the whole range of her physical, emotional, and aesthetic dimensions. The most problematic part in playing this character, recalled Wei Haimin, Taiwan's top dan actor who played Lady Aoshu in all the 34 performances of Kingdom, was that this was a "wicked woman"; Lady Aoshu's "intrinsic nature" was quite contrary to the virtuous qingyi (refined lady) type which Wei was specialized and whose techniques Wei primarily employed to play this Shakespearean character (1996: 161). This was not only an aesthetic task, but a socio-cultural one. Wei's Lady Aoshu enraged many of her fans, who reproached her for being so "self-destructive" as to ruin the exquisite, dignified image of her established theatrical personage (161-2).
Wei expressed Lady Aoshu by incorporating techniques from three Beijing opera role types. The qingyi techniques were mainly employed in singing and reciting; the huadan (vivacious female) techniques emphasized physical agility and vivacious facial expressions; and the poladan (ferocious female) techniques supplemented the role with a fierce temperament and tempestuous behavior associated with her lust for power. Astington observed, after watching the production in London, that Shakespeare served as the "middle ground between theatrical formalism and psychological realism" in this play (1991: 26). Lady Aoshu was a distinctive example of this performative "middle ground."

For Wei Haimin, the greatest difficulty in portraying Lady Aoshu was the lack of empathy with her character in the initial stage of the production. Although she mastered the acting codes required to play the part, yet, without experiencing the internal reality of the character, her Lady Aoshu seemed "so 'weak'; not weak in personality, but weak in being a convincing dramatis personae" (1996: 165). Unlike the conventional role-playing in Beijing opera, which mainly involved imitation of earlier models, enacting Lady Aoshu demanded a careful and thorough interpretation of her psychological development along the play in order to enliven and integrate the traditional expressive techniques. Wei found it tremendously rewarding to play this character because it "promoted" her artistic stance to that of a "creator" (167).

One finds that Wei's approach to Lady Aoshu echoed that of Sarah Kemble Siddons. Like Mrs. Siddons, Wei's Lady Aoshu was beautiful, feminine, and even fragile, but she also revealed calculating, passionate and ambitious qualities (cf. Siddons 1970: 142-145; Wei Haimin 1996: 158-177). Wei was cautious not to use the traditional appellation in categorizing Lady Aoshu as a "bad" type, but humanized her by studying reasons behind her behavior and speeches. Wei's method could be described as working "from within outward," an expression applied to Sarah
Siddons's acting by her biographer, Clement Parsons\textsuperscript{153}; it was contrary to the conventional Beijing opera acting which demanded the actor to acquire the outward form of a character before probing its inner reality.

Wei Haimin defined the "spine" of her character and emphasized it with distinctive gestures and movements. An intelligent and ambitious woman like Lady Aoshu in a patriarchal society can only pursue worldly advancement through her husband. In the play, Wei had a red, pointed ellipse between her eyebrows to signify Lady Aoshu's mettle and resolution (Tsing Yung-Li 1987: 4). She first appeared in her chamber waiting for Aoshu's return, singing an aria which marked her longing for his return and a concern for his safety in war (Sc. 5). The aria required exquisite singing techniques of qingyi. But instead of focusing solely on singing to express the aesthetic peak moment, as typically a qingyi usually would do,\textsuperscript{154} Wei incorporated strong, suggestive eye expressions and hand gestures to portray the upper-class lady's intense desire for victory and greater power. Together, her singing and gestural expressions created emotional subtext to Lady Aoshu's aria (1996: 175-7).

Yet unlike Mrs. Siddons, Wei relied little on inspiration, the spontaneous sensibility of the actor, in interpreting Lady Aoshu. She externalized her linguistic text, infusing the character with strong theatrical images. For instance, the adaptation omitted the visionary dagger which Macbeth sees and follows prior to his murder of Duncan; instead, it had Lady Aoshu throw a long, large sword right into Aoshu's hands, an act embodying her resolution and "undaunted mettle" (Sc. 7). Aoshu Zheng became merely an instrument of her


\textsuperscript{154}In singing a significant aria, a qingyi player is traditionally required to "sing while holding her belly"—demonstrating her singing expertise and avoiding substantial acting. This custom is made not only to become the image of a qingyi character—usually an upper-class, educated, and dignified female—but also to emphasize the aesthetic value of singing itself.
motive. In Shakespeare's original, Lady Macbeth flinches as she sees her husband's hands stained with Duncan's blood, urging him to "get some water,/ And wash this filthy witness from your hand" (II. ii. 45-46); later, as her hands likewise become bloody, she reassures him: "A little water clears us of this deed" (66). This sequence was re-elaborated in Kingdom to give an extra dimension of Lady Aoshu: a nurturer. She greeted the stiff and speechless Aoshu, who returned fresh from the horror of murder, supporting him into their chamber, locking the door (in pantomime), and, without a word, she fetched a golden water basin and a towel, starting to clean his hands gently almost like a mother comforting her over-frightened child. Then, bit by bit appeared on the white towel the shocking bloody red ("Wu Xingguo" 1994: 13). This image not only presented the fall of man in an intimate domestic setting, but also spoke eloquently of the woman's dominant position in this space and of the man's being led astray under her influence. Wei Haimin's Lady Aoshu nurtured deadly courage to kill and destroy.

Interestingly, the images of serpent and scorpion, which are originally associated with Macbeth, were physicalized here by Lady Aoshu. In Macbeth, just before ordering the murder of Banquo and Fleance, Macbeth confesses to his wife: "O! Full of scorpions is my mind" (III. ii. 36). This, along with other animal images, signifies the predatory and fierce nature of ambition (Spurgeon 1991: 20). Emphasizing the same images of "snakes and scorpions," the costume design of the Kingdom gave each of Lady Aoshu's costumes a long train in the back like a "big tail" (Wei Haimin 1996: 169). This unconventional costume impeded her leg movement so the actress had to give a forceful kick on the train whenever she walked. The kick increased leg room for movement, giving a sense of fierceness, and created a unique visual symbol for Lady Aoshu's character (169). Especially in the moment in which she thrust the sword into the assassin's chest (Sc. 10), with striking precision and speed, the red-clad Lady Aoshu extended her arm, and,
twisting her waist to make a flip of the "tail," and metamorphosed herself into an attacking scorpion.

But in the hand-washing scene, Lady Aoshu's theatrical image was associated with death and illness. She was outfitted in a white gown with an extra long train dragging across the stage (Sc. 12). As white is traditionally a funeral color, it suggested her declining physical and mental state. Visually, the unusually long train also presented an image of entanglement—a silkworm spitting white silk and wrapping itself eventually into a cocoon. This suggested that Lady Aoshu was trapped by her own ambitious design for the future, and yet her future was entirely botched. An alert spectator may even read the costume as a foreshadowing of her suicide—what else could one do with the long train? Indeed she was later reported to have hung herself "from the beam" (Sc. 14). Hanging is a conventional way of suicide in Beijing opera, but Lady Aoshu's death was made much more stylish and suggestive.

4.2.2 Aoshu Zheng: Acting Out a Traditional Hero's Latent Desire

The Chinese Macbeth, Aoshu Zheng, is portrayed as a "pillar of the state," the "man of high bearing, tirelessly serving his lord" (Sc. 5). He first appears a "virtuous" martial hero from Chinese traditional opera; in addition to possessing extraordinary prowess in battles, he is associated with loyalty (zhong) and courage (yong), two indispensable qualities for a larger-than-life hero in Chinese theatre. One has no reason to doubt his description of himself: "a loyal general, straightforward by nature, not a greedy ingrate turning on [sic] the favor of my King" (Sc. 5).

That is why the supernatural prophecy becomes particularly unsettling to him. Upon being hailed as the future king by the Mountain Spirit, Aoshu is immediately enraged by the implication of usurpation—the only means to become
a king without blood relations with the current ruler. When he breaks the news to his wife, rather miserably, it reveals not his but her aggressive ambition.

Aoshu's eventually succumbing to evil deeds is in fact firmly grounded in the purpose of self-preservation. According to his wife's rationale, he must strike first or else, he will fall prey to the other ambitious and become the victim of political power play. Murder is a defense mechanism rather than, as for Macbeth, the nearest route to seizing and securing power. Aoshu's attempt to assassinate Meng Ting and his son arises from a desire to protect his own bloodline. The motive is again related to the privileges of his family. It is thus logical that Aoshu dies at the hands of his followers, who are more ready to preserve their own lives than stand by him—a once disloyal subject himself.

One radical result of adapting Shakespeare's archetype into the Chinese context is the total absence of the diction of the original. Throughout the intense progress of his inner life, Shakespeare's Macbeth invites the audience into his most private thoughts by using unusually frequent asides and soliloquies. These devices not only reveal Macbeth's view directly to the audience, but also place the audience "in the position of experiencing, from a safe distance, Macbeth's traumas before he does," observes Hapgood (1988: 214-5). A. C. Bradley also marks that in the language of Macbeth there is "a peculiar compression, pregnancy, energy, even violence," which contributes the overall atmosphere of "unrelieved blackness" in the play (1960: 277, 280). Since these soliloquies are cut in the adaptation, Aoshu reveals little of his inner state; his diction merely reflects standard Confucian discourse on loyalty and brotherhood—a verbal convention in Beijing opera's virtuous types.

Consequently, it is unclear whether or not Aoshu has conceived any guilty ambition before meeting his wife. Comparing the artistic treatment of Macbeth with that of Aoshu, one finds that Shakespeare gives meticulous details of
Macbeth's vaulting ambition through dramatic asides, whereas Aoshu's lack of eloquence leaves great murkiness in our understanding of his moral character. Shakespeare reveals how Macbeth's imagination starts to yield to the "supernatural soliciting" in the "My thought, whose murther yet is but fantastical" speech, when his prophesied new honor is confirmed by Ross and Angus (I. iii. 127-142). Later his mind moves towards a murderous act, as shown in the "Stars, hide your fires! / Let not light see by black and deep desires" speech, when Macbeth discovers that Duncan settles the succession on Malcolm, an obstruction on which he "must fall down, or else o'erleap" (I. iv. 48-53). The adaptation replaces these monologues with a simple, clear stage business. Upon hearing his new title bestowed by the King of Ji, which indeed coincides with the supernatural oracle, the startling Aoshu suddenly falls on his rear to a loud percussive sound; this conventional movement indicates that the character experiences an internal surprise or shocking realization. While it conveniently and effectively communicates Aoshu's psychological state, this stage business does not represent the process of Macbeth's reaching a moral decision, as the original text does. Furthermore, since this code is traditionally associated with comic scenes, it aroused laughter during the performance, creating quite a different audience response and interpretation from what Macbeth does.155

Since Aoshu rarely exposes his latent desire for power, his guilty deeds become the result of external forces, the strongest of which is from his wife. One sees the overall enlargement of Lady Aoshu's dramatic function in the adaptation, particularly in the crucial scene of regicide. While she moves the dramatic action forward, Aoshu merely "acts upon" the situation prepared by her.

155 The adapters may have considered the scene in which Aoshu Zheng is given new honor as one which conveys a merry atmosphere, as is often the case in some traditional plays, rather than a scene which dramatically functions to foreshadow the future tragedy, as Macbeth I. iv. is. This artistic choice indicates that Beijing opera indeed focuses more on performative integrity than textual coherence.
This is reinforced theatrically. After Lady Aoshu exits to drug the King's guards into sleep, Aoshu is alone onstage, having a chance to reveal his inner feelings. Macbeth, in roughly the same moment, gives the speech of the imaginary dagger. In this crucial soliloquy, Macbeth evokes the power of the dark to carry his desire into full action; the poetic language strengthens his willing choice of a spiritual pact with Hell at the witness of Nature (II. ii. 33-64). In contrast, the Chinese regicide utters no words, and no visionary trance incites the imminent murder. His moral agony is solely expressed by a series of quick, exaggerated hand gestures. He ponders killing--by miming cutting the King's throat--and waved his head as if to negate the idea. Then he folds his hands together and makes a pious salute as if becoming again the loyal subject of the King. Fretted by his irresolution, he gulps down some wine trying to boost his courage. Lady Aoshu re-enters, and, seeing her stressed husband, humiliates his waning virility. Aoshu's ego is hurt; rage gives him the impetus he needs to execute the deed:

It took just one word to provoke the warrior's ire;  
A lust for blood wells up inside;  
The signs in the stars have been rearranged,  
Fate has altered its course.  
The hero now aspires to prevail over all under heaven;  
The golden dragon will mount a rainbow,  
His wings filling the skies! (Sc. 7)

At his exit, Aoshu's mental state is entirely physicalized in a gait which suggested a state of trance.

The lack of articulation in Aoshu suggests that he is not the master of his action, but a victim of it. The sense of his being "force" into one action after another action is strongly felt throughout the play. And as such, Aoshu appears merely a sport of fate, fatalistic and yet morally unaccountable. After the regicide, Aoshu is coerced by Meng Ting to make Meng's son his immediate successor, which subsequently requires him to plot their murder, for now his wife is expecting. Upon learning of her miscarriage and failing health, he
rushed to the forest to inquire the Mountain Spirit about the future, and gets an answer which subsequently brings about his own doom. Aoshu is a man of action, only in a literal sense. Instead of consciously rationalizing his ambition, pursuing its fulfillment by succumbing to dark forces, and all along believing his infallibility, as Macbeth does, the Chinese hero is driven by others' will or by circumstances until the moment the dramatic plot is concluded and he makes exit.

4.3 Cultural Modelization: Confucian and Taoist Rewriting

The major difference between Macbeth and Aoshu Zheng as a dramatic construct pivots on the perception of ambition based on different cultural precepts. The motivation for Macbeth's murder of Duncan is generally considered to arise from the evil side of his nature without further cause. Macbeth commits horrible crimes following this innate capacity for sin of his; it creates his individual essence but at the cost of severing himself from the fundamental structures of morality. In the end, Macbeth completely loses spiritual redemption. This Christian concept of Man, the key issue of tragedy, when translated into the Chinese context, is tempered by a social, ethical reconsideration.

Critic Chen Wenhua maintains that the failure to acknowledge the essence of human evil in rewriting the episode of Duncan's murder causes a misinterpretation of Shakespeare's play in Kingdom (1987). Since it permits a morally less accountable motive—self-defense and self-preservation—for Aoshu's usurpation and regicide, the Chinese adaptation diminishes the horror of the crimes, and makes the perpetrator seem less guilty. Once this morally ambiguous attitude is established, the interplay between guilt and fear, illusion and truth in Macbeth is lost in the rest of the rewriting (124). Aoshu's later mad demeanor, upon seeing Meng Ting's ghost at the banquet, thus loses the critical meaning of moral remorse and spiritual damnation, but merely signifies human fear of an avenging spirit. Moreover, Meng Ting's characterization diminishes Banquo's
original function as a symbol of innate conscience and as a thematic contrast to the sinful protagonist. Meng is no less ambitious than Aoshu—perhaps even pettier since he only seeks to enjoy the fruit of the Aoshu's toil. His ghost is not a symbol of Aoshu's haunting conscience, but of an unrest spirit returning to demand life. By the same token, the rewriting of Lady Macbeth in Lady Aoshu is problematic. The bloodstain she tries so madly to wash off from her hands seems related more directly to her killing of Meng Ting's assassin than to the murder of the King. Thus her obsessive hand-washing loses a larger symbolic meaning of purging the moral sin she has begotten. In other words, Kingdom adapts Macbeth's actions and characters only literally; their symbolism is not conveyed.

The ambivalent moral attitude towards human evil, as reflected in Kingdom's dealing with the motif of ambition, Chen argues, is attributed to the deep-set values in the indigenous (and overall Asian) cultural tradition (1987: 124). In Western art, the struggle between good and evil is often given polemic, profound expressions, whereas in Eastern art, this struggle in human nature is often suppressed; it is given a well-intentioned explanation or entirely negated. Chen considers the CLT's attempt to learn from Shakespeare the psychological complexity in dramatic characterization is somehow impeded by this cultural "barrier" (124). It is interesting to note that another Chinese adaptation of Macbeth, Blood-Stained Hands, reveals a similar "perspective of adapters" (Pavis). Its reviewer Li Ruru's explanation supports Chen's statement. "The method of depicting character in Chinese culture is in sharp contrast to the pursuit of individual interests in the West," Li writes,

The inward-looking culture of China focuses on collective responsibility and the relationship between individuals. What an individual thinks or feels is not really taken into account unless his or her actions have an impact upon others. The emphasis is on the harmony of the collective with little or no space left for the individual. (1995: 49)
Comparing *Kingdom* and *The Throne of Blood* with *Macbeth*, Diamond points out that the Asian heroes present a more "fatalistic" dimension than Shakespeare's original. This can be proved by the treatment of the supernatural prophecy in a literal, matter-of-fact manner in the Asian adaptations. There is no room for equivocation and mystery in the prophecy that are so crucial to reveal Macbeth's willing choice to be tempted. Without a self-motivated collaboration with the destiny pronounced by the witch's riddle, the fall of the Asian heroes becomes less tragic but more fatalistic (1994: 124-125). She cites David Dessert's observation on *The Throne of Blood* which reflects the shift of the idea of man in the Asian versions from Shakespeare's original:

On a narrative level, there is a de-emphasis of humanity via the removal of free will. If a fundamental paradox of Greek tragedy of the illusion of free will in a universe rule by fate, the fundamental problem with *Throne of Blood* is the total absence of even this illusion. (Qtd in Diamond 1994: 128)

The "slippage" (Pavis 1992: 14) in *Kingdom* is caused by cultural precepts that permeate the art form. As mentioned, traditional Chinese theatre has developed an important social function of mass education and moral cultivation. Most plays endorse good over evil; every subject from history to divinity is given an ethical interpretation (Hsu Tao-ching 1985: 71). Further, this didacticism is encoded in the performance system, including the role types, masks, color symbolism and dramatic structure (such as "poetic justice" and "happy ending"). This stronghold of traditional ideology, which for many has obstructed this theatre from adapting modern critical ideas, may prove the major obstacle in translating Shakespeare's non-moralistic treatment of human evil.

One way to tackle this "slippage" is to compare how "evil" is defined and treated in the source and the target text. Following the prevailing ideology in King James's reign--the Absolutist State and Reformation Christianity, Shakespeare's *Macbeth* justifies the deposition of a usurper-tyrant by contrasting
and opposing "good" and "evil" (Sinfield 1986: 68). This moral polarization is made relevant and persuasive for the Elizabethan audience as Shakespeare employs antithetical imagery of nature and supernature (67). A cluster of life images, such as feasting, planting, procreation, sleep, sexual nature, fellowship, and the serenity and beauty that Duncan and Banquo ironically perceive in Macbeth's castle, all combine to establish such positive ideals of natural law and ethical order. Corresponding with it is a human world where Duncan is the head of the family of Scotland surrounded by his warriors like the sun by the revolving stars. In contrast, evil is associated with the unnatural and supernatural, with the termination of life, with the disruption of the harmony and order of the universe, and with the inversion of sex. Shakespeare also associates human reason with nature and nature's order, as is manifested in the spiritual domain of man, in society, and in the universe; the violation of reason brings the world into the irrational terrain of darkness, even Hell (Fergusson 1957: 118).

Shakespeare depicts the human-solicited evil in the concrete images of the Weird Sisters and their magic, but through characterization he reveals most profoundly the effect of human evil's unnamed, mysterious power. His Macbeth excites the audience because the hero's intense temptation to commit murder is constantly challenged by the terrifying images conjured up by his own conscience, and this existential agony leads to a fascinating and yet awe-inspiring tug-of-war between decision-making and action-taking. Bradley's comment on this hero can best define what is "Macbeth-ian":

> What appalls him is always the image of his own guilty heart or bloody deed, or some image which derives from them its terror or gloom. These, when they arise, hold him spell-bound and possess him wholly, like a hypnotic trance which is at the same time the ecstasy of a poet. (1960: 296-297)

If Macbeth embodies the struggle between humanity's potential good and evil, Aoshu Zheng leaves his audience an impression of a hero from a social problem
play, who is at the same time a victim of the external forces of the milieu of his society and an enforcer of those forces.

*Kingdom* dramatizes "evil" more as a product of the environment than as an innate human potential. Aoshu's evil is socially motivated. The play reveals a morally sickened world; it opens with rebellion and ends with a mirrored image of killing. Although its characters' diction is fraught with the values of the "good old days," which stress a social and ethical order, individual virtues and obligations, brotherhood and comradeship, and practical wisdom in life, it is soon clear to the audience that these ancient, salient values have been abandoned for jungle laws. There is, in the Chinese adaptation, no "sainted" Duncan, nor Banquo with "royalty of nature," nor Malcom, Macduff, and the Siwards, who embody the suffering from the impact of evil. Instead, foiling Aoshu's moral universe are Meng Ting and the King of Ji, two morally obscure characters.

Meng Ting appears no less covetous for the throne than Aoshu. Shakespeare's Banquo remains indifferent to the Witches' prophecies (Bradley 1960: 288), but Meng bargains with Aoshu for his son to enjoy royal power in the future. On the stage, Meng and Aoshu are almost indistinguishable in appearance and language; they seem to suggest a common quality cultivated by the milieu of the warring era. This is why Lady Aoshu's conspiracy theory seems convincing, for, in a morally sick era, the best comrade betrays like a worst enemy. The King of Ji shifts his character according to the demands of the plot. A timid, indecisive ruler unable to fight or escape in the face of his rebels (Sc. 2), he winds up becoming a resolute, efficient commander of action with military bon sens. He secretly visits Aoshu's castle in order to raid some rebels and takes

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156This episode is not dramatized in the adaptation, only recounted by Meng Ting. In Scene 8, Meng forces his son Deng to join the coronation banquet so that Aoshu can publicly announce Deng as his immediate heir. Although Meng Ting's reason for doing so is not to "violate Heaven's will," there is the implication of an exchange with Aoshu for Meng Ting's silence about the prophecies and the regicide.
Aoshu completely by surprise (Sc. 5). This inconsistency in the character of the King, however faulty artistically, appears to support Lady Aoshu's observation that the caprice of the ruler subjugates the life of his followers. The audience may even become skeptical about the lawfulness of his kingship--has he also been a usurping tyrant, like Aoshu Zheng in the present?

Aoshu usurps his morally obscure feudal lord, murders his potential enemy, and ends up being killed by his own men. He is destroyed not at the hands of a specific person he has wronged, such as Macduff in the case of Macbeth or Meng Deng, who in Kingdom was leading the Yan troops to avenge his murdered father, but by an anonymous crowd. History repeats itself. Unlike the traditional Chinese plays which usually have a morally gratifying ending, this production darkly portrays a cyclical process of history in which killing recurs. The restoration of natural and ethical order, an inherited ideology in the Elizabethan times, is absent here. As a result, the moralizing tone which prevails the speeches in Kingdom is constantly contradicted, canceled, and made meaningless by the dramatic action; the alienation between rhetoric and action forms a major irony of the production.

Shakespeare's metaphysical evil is partially translated in the Kingdom as a subversive female force, one which represents subconscious, and often unwanted desire in a socially approved ethical order. It is reflected in the creation of the Mountain Spirit, a deviation from Shakespeare's witches. In Macbeth the evil is made palpable as it is first embodied in the Weird Sisters, who are "So wither'd and so wild in their attire,/ That look not like th' inhabitants o' th' earth" (1. iii. 40-41). Shakespeare drew his ideas of witchcraft from current popular books such as Reginald Scot's Discovery (1584) (Bradley 1960: 285). Presumably his Elizabethan audience was able to recognize the medieval concept of witches and share the belief that the witch obtained from evil spirits (such as Hecate in Macbeth)
supernatural powers. They would also understand that these powers work on Macbeth as merely an influence, a temptation, rather than a force driving him to his action; these powers correspond to his potential to sin and corruption (Bradley 1960: 286-7). The Chinese Mountain Spirit, however, is no equivalent to the English witch. She hardly suggests spiritual evil or religious profanity.

Originated in ancient Taoist literature, the shan'guei, or Mountain Spirit, is an allegorical figure living outside human civilization and is free of the "evil" caused by civilization. In Kingdom, she seems to represent a world antagonistic to the human society in which Aoshu and other warring lords reside. Accordingly, its prophecy bears a very different connotation.157

In the adaptation, the supernatural trick played on the protagonist is carried out through an implicit sexual seduction. Instead of being grotesque and deformed hags, like the Weird Sisters, the Mountain Spirit is unmistakably young and feminine, agile and potent (See Plate 1). Aoshu calls her "Young woman," and his encounter with her prophecy feels like a dream in which "we saw the things we longed to see" (Sc. 1). An evocative, seductive power is elicited from her, in the deep forest of a desolate mountain, unleashing and amplifying Aoshu's subconscious desire (Wu Xingguo 1992).

The dangerous female temptation is first personified in the Mountain Spirit and then embodied by Lady Aoshu. One sees the mirror image of the Mountain Spirit in Lady Aoshu; their resemblance is particularly striking in the hand-washing scene, when Lady Aoshu wears her hair loose and is dressed in a white, flowing robe. But Lady Aoshu represents a strong daily influence on the protagonist, a force working on him on a rational, conscious level. Her goading on Aoshu's manhood seems particularly humiliating for him, a virile, triumphant

157 Although Beijing opera shares with Shakespeare the popular belief in ghosts, spirits and deities, and has representations of such beings, the Mountain Spirit does not exist in this category (as Meng Ting's ghost does).
warrior. She is an inversion of the traditional paragon of virtuous and supportive wife, a combination of femme fatale and nagging spouse in one. Scott argues that the play should be renamed after the "Chinese Lady Macbeth" (1990), because she possesses an inner drive which moves forward the action of the play.

The dynamics among Aoshu, the Mountain Spirit, and Lady Aoshu are summed up in a short dance in the banquet scene (Sc. 10). The dance is performed when the party is awaiting the arrival of Meng Ting and his son, Deng. As the newly-crowned Aoshu is seated silent and saturnine—his mind is probably preoccupied with the assassination of the Mengs—it seems logical that a court entertainer is called to cheer up the mood. In the solo dance, the masked dancer changes her neutral-looking mask first to a male face, and then a female face. The three faces, associated with the Mountain Spirit, Aoshu, and Lady Aoshu, respectively, are said to represent the three forces within Aoshu—the divine order, his ethical self, and his subconscious desire (Wu Xingguo 1992). The three forces work together to make Aoshu rise to the throne, but also bring him to the abyss of guilty conscience. Furthermore, the mask is an apt metaphor for Aoshu's hypocrisy, because, since he committed murder, he has had to hide behind royal masks and luxurious imperial robes (cf. Lin Yingnan 1987: 122; Diamond 1994: 127). As the dancer moves in an increasingly frantic manner, and the masks are rapidly alternated; one mask is hidden behind another, and behind it, still the other. At one moment, Aoshu seems to feel that his guise is being exposed by the dance—like Claudius by Hamlet's Mousetrap—and abruptly stops the performance in rage.

The use of symbols in the adaptation to represent Macbeth's complex inner forces indicates that as a character, Aoshu is left with only one dimension—the Confucian decorum. He represents the ethical, moral façade of a public man, whose private thoughts and desires are usually kept inside. His attitude toward
the supernatural prophecy is rather insipid than inspired; the prophecy may
echo his latent ambition, but he would rather deny it. Displaying an indignant
attitude he refutes Lady Aoshu, who interprets the prophecy as the divine will:

You are wrong, My Lady. Upholding the nation and protecting our
ruler are the tasks of a faithful minister, things that must be done at
all cost to life and limb. How can you entertain the idea of usurping
the throne and betraying our country? (Sc. 5)

Aoshu's words are not to be taken as hypocritical here, judging from his role type
and language scheme. If Aoshu is represented in Beijing opera's bailian (white
face) type, which is a conventional mask of usurpers and traitors, his words will
be regarded as discreditable. But here he is represented by a "virtuous" type and
will be understood as such. He reiterates his role and obligation in Confucian
terminology as if struggling to adhere to a good old value against his own secret
desire and his wife's persistent instigation. His rhetoric is constantly made
annulled in meaning, which also makes him seem "unregenerate" and "less self-
aware," to use Diamond's words (1994: 125). Dramatically, the gap between Aoshu
words and his action seems to be filled by the Mountain Spirit and Lady Aoshu, the
two subversive female forces of the play.

Aoshu's second visit to the Mountain Spirit to inquire his future destiny
marks a striking difference in motive and urgency from Macbeth's. While
Macbeth seeks out the witches immediately after Fleance's flight, with a
particular concern for the future of the kingship, Aoshu does not pay the visit
until he witnesses his wife's failing health and the siege of his castle by the
enemy. It is for the preservation of life that he takes the last resort; personal
ambition is made secondary in importance. Theatrically, Aoshu's second
encounter with the supernatural resembles an eerie dream. The Mountain Spirit
is only heard as an echo; Aoshu is seen alone riding blindly in search of the
source of the voice (See Plate 5). The futility and despair in this stage image
evokes the atmosphere of a recurring nightmare, from which Aoshu never wakes up to the end of the play. After being admonished by the Mountain Spirit to be "merciless and unyielding, and kill to the end," Aoshu finally changes his rhetoric and becomes violently eloquent and highly imagistic:

Yes, I will stack [the enemy's] corpses and bones in a mountain that reaches to the sky, and make their blood flow in a river that will never run dry. I will slay them off their horses until they shriek like ghosts and howl like wolves; I will kill until the sky turns black, and the sun and stars drop from the heavens! (Sc. 13)

Ironically, the awakening of his eloquence leads to his doom. Aoshu boasts to his soldiers about the latest supernatural prophecy, which instructs that he is invincible unless the forest moves towards the capital. His wild confession seems untimely, for, immediately, the forest moves close and the fearful soldiers rise to shoot Aoshu. Framed in the Confucian rhetorical scheme and ideological field throughout most of the play, Aoshu dies as a victim of a cyclic historical process which he seems never able to comprehend or confront. His fall is more melodramatic and fatalistic than tragic, as one who is ambitious but fails to soar above the tricks of politics.

Where Confucianism cannot reach the somber solution and explanation of the existence of human ambition, Buddhism and Taoism arise for compensation. The play ends in the "theme music" which echoes the prologue chorus song. Its Buddhist-Taoist perspective frames the whole dramatic action, gently preaching that the world is the "reflection of the moon in water, an illusion."

4.4 Artistic Modelization: Aoshu Zheng's Three Roles

The re-elaboration of gesture and choreography in the production of Kingdom sought to expand Beijing opera expressions. The presentation of Aoshu Zheng was considered one of the most successful results in this experiment. Wu Xingguo, the director-actor, chose to tone down the highly identifiable acting
codes associated with conventional role types to preserve the complexity and ambiguity of the Shakespearean character. He draws techniques from three male types in Beijing opera to fulfill the Aoshu's character delineation.

Wu first represented Aoshu in the role of wusheng (martial role). The scarlet spear-shaped mark emblazoned on his forehead (yintang hong) signified this role type and the energy, spirit, courage, and beauty this type represents (Lin Jingru 1991: 27). He was dressed in kao, or armor, miming riding on horseback and conducting a martial drill with his followers, his valor and prowess fully displayed in heroic poses and martial techniques. Before his first line, the role already established this character's nature and stature. His given name, "Zheng," literally means "conquer," reinforcing the association with wars.

Wu Xingguo conveyed Aoshu's political ambition and scrupulous moral nature with the singing, reciting, and subtle acting techniques of laosheng (middle-aged male). Great vocal skills replaced acrobatics in the domestic scene to express the passion and agony of the character, specifically in Aoshu's debate with Lady Aoshu over usurpation (See Plate 2). The laosheng type represents a dignified character, usually of high social status or deserving of such; a scholar, statesman, or faithful retainer, he is educated in Confucian ethics and abides by traditional virtues. Traditionally in Beijing opera, in such character as Aoshu Zheng, who violates the moral, ethical order and is a treacherous Machiavellian, the bailian (white mask) type should be applied. Bailian allows the audience to identify him as a villain, for this mask suggests difficulty in detecting the real color of a cunning person.158 But Wu Xingguo avoided using this conventional

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158 Hsu Tao-Ching (1985: 162). Among Beijing opera masks, the white face means treachery; the red face indicates steadfastness and loyalty, the black face signifies uprightness, the yellow face means cunning, and the blue face means viciousness. The supernatural roles, such as deities and spirits, paint their faces in gold or silver. The use of masks in traditional Chinese theatre is related to the cultural code of behavior. In general, masks are used in characters who demonstrate one particular character trait most strongly, which makes them less
device in the *Kingdom* in order to make room for subtle revelation from acting, a way he believes to better connect with modern audience (Kwan 1994).

To express Aoshu's increasingly maddened and frantic temperament, Wu Xingguo drew upon the techniques of *da hualian* (great painted face). This role type represents men of great strength, violent disposition, or supernatural power, and specializes in singing and reciting techniques and some combat skills. Traditionally, this role wears distinctive make-up with bright or multicolored abstract designs which encode its personality.\(^{159}\) But in this production, the use of mask was entirely avoided.

Particularly in the ghost scene, Wu Xingguo portrayed Aoshu's reaction of disbelief, fear, and rage through distinctly exaggerated facial expressions and widened, unblinking eyes. His jerky physical movements and shaky delivery forsake the conventional beauty and harmony of Beijing opera stylization, presenting a realism which better conveys primal emotions. As Meng's ghost reappeared, Aoshu/Wu Xingguo staggered, retreated, apologized, and, turning steely again, drew his sword and pursued the ghost, all in a relatively naturalistic style (See Plate 3). A local critic, Lin Yingnan, complimented Wu's expressive presentation of Aoshu Zheng by asking in his review, "Has a Chinese Laurence Olivier emerged?" (1987: 122).

In corresponding to the realism in acting, the *mise en scène* of the sequence became atypical of Beijing opera. The guests, confounded at the sight of

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\(^{159}\)All the *hualian*, or *jing* (painted face) roles are characters whose personalities have developed one particular trait that makes them seem less moderate and reasonable than ordinary people; even in some "good" characters, when virtues are single-mindedly maintained, they may seem extreme. This character "flaw" is usually expressed not only through the pattern of the mask but also by acting (singing, reciting, and movement) and costuming. In general, a painted face is heavily dressed, with a weightier armor and head piece, a much larger beard piece, and thicker soles in their footwear, than those worn by the *laosheng* role. Thus their acting is also much larger and more exaggerated. See Sun Yicai (1991: 240-1).
Aoshu/Wu Xingguo brandishing a sword, fled around the stage, and Lady Aoshu/Wei Haimin, who desperately tried to conceal what her husband's behavior is revealing, stood between the maniac lord and the guests, changing her facial expressions from an apologetic grin to a warning stare (See Plate 3). This scene was repeatedly mentioned in London as successful perhaps owing to its relatively naturalistic acting. Aoshu's guilty despair is portrayed with verisimilitude and spontaneity, and the mise en scène expressing the guests' hysterical commotion verged on black humor.

The constant contradiction and disruption between the theatrical signifier and its signified, I find, created the most interesting reading of this intercultural performance. The acting types that Wu Xingguo employed to portray Aoshu usually represent only intrinsically deserving characters; all the external contours such as the gait, the appearance, the gestures, and the rhetoric signify such an intrinsic nature, and traditionally, this nature does not derive from the dramatic plot but is already understood by the audience before dramatic action starts. Incorporated into Shakespeare's story, particularly at the point when Aoshu Zheng undergoes his gradual downfall, the theatrical codes suddenly could not be read in the traditional fashion. The plot-line constantly undermined the meaning established by the actor's performance codes; the resulting impression was that Aoshu was merely playing a role that he could not handle very well, and that he was always on the verge of falling from this role. In order to assert his substance (as a heaven-ordained king and an invincible soldier), Aoshu tried desperately to "act it out." In the last scene, he "performed" hard--doing martial training, singing a marching song, boosting the morale of his men by boasting of himself as the one chosen by divine will--and yet, histrionics could not conceal Aoshu's inner hollowness.
In the meantime, the *mise en scène* turned significantly spectacular. The displacement of linguistic enunciation by musical, gestural, and kinetic codes as the means of signification was increasingly obvious toward the end. Upon hearing his wife's suicide, Aoshu/Wu Xingguo did not give a poetic summary of his direful existence as "a tale/ Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury" (*Macbeth* V. v. 26-7), but gave out a long, loud cry, his voice rising like an air-raid siren into the sky. And, immediately afterwards, he thrust his sword into the messenger's chest—as reward for his bringing in the sad news to "hurt our fighting morale" (Sc. 14). Aoshu's anguish is entirely physicalized. Even more deliberately theatrical was his death, which, in a wordless sequence lasting for seven minutes, marked a heroic exit and a spectacle. After being shot full of arrows like a pin cushion by his men, Aoshu/Wu Xingguo performed a back somersault while leaping from a 8-ft. high rampart to land on the stage, staggering among the horrified soldiers. He fell straight backward to die a classical death, his finger still pointing to the forest as if reproaching the tricky fate which had led him to this inglorious end, and his eyes staring as if unwilling to die (See Plate 6). While Macbeth expresses in his soliloquy an existential nihilism and profound spiritual loneliness before he emerges fearless with a soldier's courage to face his inevitable death, Aoshu confronted his agony and destiny through heavy "staginess." The final image of *Kingdom* was truly "full of sound and fury."

4.5 Other Performative Re-elaboration

The production of *Kingdom* avoided highlighting only the star actors, as the traditional Beijing opera performance often does, particularly those actors who are specialized in singing roles. Director Wu Xingguo was one of the first Beijing opera actor-managers in Taiwan to break the custom. He emphasized direction and ensemble acting in this production, with the hopes of moving
Chinese opera towards a new spectacle in which scenographic and musical expressions were organically synthesized.

**Ensemble Acting:** In *Kingdom*, even the least important roles, such as soldiers or messengers, played individual characters. Unlike the minor parts in the traditional performance, who merely stand sans expression throughout the scene like "living scene props," the *Kingdom* actors responded to what happened on the stage and to the relations among the characters. Sometimes they stripped away ready-made gestures or blocking patterns to form a strong dynamic onstage required by the play. Thus the mise en scène presented a bold visual effect which did not conform to the traditional criteria of beauty and symmetry, but displayed imbalance, contrast, and tension, and thus emphasized the physical and psychological conflict in the drama.

The most mentioned ensemble acting in *Kingdom* happened in the sequence of Aoshu's siege. The sharp contrast of Aoshu and his men, conveyed through visual images, narrated the last struggle of power in the story. During the siege, Aoshu climbed up the high battlement on stage right, alone and in command, while his men huddled together underneath on the stage left, in commotion and fear. Tension and contrast were built up between the high and low positions, between the individual and the mass. At Aoshu's desperate, provocative challenge, the hesitant soldiers rose in unison to rebel. Their fear and rage were palpable, as the first arrow was shot out across the stage, aiming at Aoshu but missing him, and was followed by a few and then a shower of them. Suddenly one arrow fatally hit the target--sticking through his neck--and the enraged Aoshu dropped from the battlement among his men, who, instead of striking him down and, as he had earlier provoked them to do, beheading him to soothe the enemies, looked horrified and guilt-ridden, backing off from the
stumbling, dying Aoshu. The ensemble acting created the image of wild animals trapped in a cage; they were frightened and yet dangerous.

The actors who played the soldiers are reported to have experienced difficulty learning untraditional blocking and more realistic acting in rehearsing this scene (Wu 1992; Ma Baoshan 1993). Conventionally, Beijing opera represents confusion and disorder (luan) in meticulously choreographed movements and blocking patterns; the stage picture always maintains order and stylization even in the fastest, most complex martial scenes. That is to say, disorder is not represented mimetically, but in stylization. The Kingdom actors had to "unlearn" what their bodies had previously memorized, so as to gain the realism and spontaneity required for their individual characterization and the collective mood of the dramatic moment. Likewise, new percussive notes were invented by dissecting and restructuring the conventionalized percussive patterns according to the specific "bits" of the dramatic action in the scene. The CLT's drummer was coaxed into finishing the experiment after he was greatly frustrated with the "deconstructive" practice. Since the play opened, the soldiers and grooms have been repeatedly complimented in reviews as integral parts of the play, providing superb energy and imagination to the performance (cf. Lin Yingnan 1987: 122; Huang Fumei 1994: 3; Diamond 1994: 126-127).

Non-Beijing Opera Elements: The use of non-conventional elements in this production was seen in costuming, set design, and the incorporation of modern dance movements; it contributed to a novelty which won praise (and criticism) to this production. The costuming no longer followed the modes of attire in the Ming and Qing dynasties, as was the convention in Beijing opera. Costume

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160 Wu Xingguo (1992). The drummer is conventionally the "conductor" of a Beijing opera performance as he leads both the strings and percussion instruments and mediates skillfully the interplay between the actors and the orchestra. There are numerous percussive patterns in Beijing opera, most of them conventionalized (cf. Sun Yicai 1987: 421-424).
designer, Lin Jingru, tailored historically more accurate garments but modified them according to theatrical needs and modern sensibility. She chose heavy fabric and harmonized color shades—from neutral black and brown to glowing orange and scarlet red—to replace the garish-colored, decoratively embroidered silky costumes of lighter weight used in the past (Lin Jingru 1991: 26). Most of the costumes were heavily padded in the shoulders, which made the actors slightly unnatural, tense, and pretentious. Aoshu's and Lady Aoshu's costumes in the coronation banquet have multiple layers of hems in the front; this design was meant to suggest that the treacherous characters sought concealment behind the wrappings and trappings of their attires (27). Diamond points out that influence from Japanese stage costume could be seen in this production, mentioning that the designer herself had studied at Tokyo University (1994: 126).

Perhaps the most controversial change from the traditional Beijing opera costume was the abandonment of water sleeves (shuixiu), especially in Lady Aoshu's hand-washing scene. Serving as extensions of the regular sleeves, the foot-long, silk-white secondary sleeves allow elaborate, stylized hand movements to express emotion and have long been incorporated into gestural conventions in Beijing opera.161 To many spectators' regret, the absence of this theatrical feature indicated a general preference for naturalism over stylization (Gu Cangwu 1994: 28). The same artistic choice was made to dismiss other conventional devices such as the fake beard (rankou) and stylized painted masks (lianpu).

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161 A water sleeve is a secondary sleeve extending from the sleeve of the costume, usually made from white silk. Its origin may have been for the physical extension of the actor, in order for the actor's stage presence to appear larger than life and thus more visible to the spectators in the back rows. Later they were incorporated into the opera's dance-movement and gesticulation and became conventionalized idioms. Qi Rushan records more than 70 gestures using water sleeves (1964). Cheng Yanqiu, renowned Beijing opera female impersonator who was best known for performing water sleeve techniques, is said to have had a repertoire of 70 some different gestures and movements with water sleeves (Hsu Tao-Ching 1985).
Adding a minimalist set to the traditional "one table, two chairs" stage in this production revealed an uneasy compromise between a symbolic scenic space and a stage calling for verisimilitude, to the mixed reception of its audience. To represent the forest, a bunch of irregular dark-green strips of canvas were hung above the stage to suggest the overwhelmingly dense arbors which, like fingers reaching down, seemed able to entangle the visitors. This set was made to evoke the environment and to speak of the theme of the play. The design resembled a modern painting with its abstract and rugged shapes. While it interested the local Beijing opera audience, it seemed stale to the Western eye. According to Astington, it revealed a stagy excessiveness which "reminded me of boring ballet sets from the nineteen fifties" (1991: 26). Since the forest was frequently mentioned in the speeches by the characters and expressed by pantomime (Aoshu's steed circling around in the woods), there seemed little need to create a concrete set to represent it, particularly if the set shows a different mode of stylization from the rest of the performance. The set in domestic scenes, however, greatly refined the conventional Beijing opera set. Instead of using the typical no-character red boxer table and chairs, the production employed quasi-antique furniture which created interesting visual lines and had a elegant, subdued color. 

Lighting also aimed for modern audience's taste by replacing the typical flat lighting in Beijing opera with one that suggested the mood of individual scenes; but the overall effect could have been made more subtle.162 The stage was characteristically dim throughout the play; while area lights were used to illuminate the main characters, the rest of the acting space faded into murk. In

162 According to Wu Xingguo, the original lighting designer, Zhou Kai, could have created a more subtle and original lighting design for Kingdom. Not long before the play was opened, as he was installing lighting equipments above the stage, Zhou accidentally fell and was instantly killed. Lin Kehua took over the design work in haste. The production was thus made in memory of Zhou and his devotion to Taiwan's experimental theatre (Wu Xingguo 1992; The Kingdom of Desire—Chinese Macbeth 1990: 44-45).
contrast, the use of spotlight which distinctively highlighted the supernatural scenes, such as the presence of the Mountain Spirit and Aoshu's riding to the forest for the second prophecy, appeared to Astington a device that "fluctuated between simplicity and rather dated extravagance" (1991: 26). Also, as Diamond points out, the special use of red lighting in the climactic moments of the play translated theatrically the frequently-used word "blood" in Macbeth, and helped suggest the gruesome ambiance of the drama (1994: 126).

The incorporation of modern dance elements, especially seen in the movements of the Mountain Spirit and of the Dancer in the banquet scene, achieved more satisfactory results. The deliberate use of different performance genre created distinct ruptures in Beijing opera's stylization—with justifiable reasons. Both the Mountain Spirit and the Dancer enjoyed an aesthetic license which allowed their representation to go beyond traditional dramaturgical boundaries. The Mountain Spirit was a supernatural being who also spoke for the tenor of the play; dramatically and theatrically she made a contrast to the human characters "within" the world of the play. The synthesis of Beijing opera's "ghost steps" (guibu) and Western modern dance in the Mountain Spirit's choreography successfully created an "otherworldly" quality to this character, according to Jeng Daiqiong (in Jiao Tong 1987: 117). The dance in the banquet also served a special dramatic function; it brought Aoshu and Lady Aoshu face to face with their deceptive masks and thus could be seen as a mini play-within-the-play. The dance was made distinctively unconventional to enhance the mirroring effect. Choreographed and performed by Lin Xiwei, the movements were volatile and spontaneous, sometimes angular and abrupt, in sharp contrast to the symmetrical, smoothly rounded form of Beijing opera. This bold incorporation of modern dance into Beijing opera performance structure without attempt for synthesis in Kingdom was frequently commended by local critics.
Musical Arrangement: Director Wu Xingguo commissioned a Beijing musician to compose new scores for Kingdom, hoping to make its musical expressions more pleasing to modern audience. He demanded that "even the dialogue be orchestrated with music to stress the mood" and that the invention of "prelude music" (xumu qu) and a "chorus song" (hechang qu) make the production "appear as complete as a Broadway musical" ("Wu Xingguo..." 1994: 13).

Most of the musical arrangement in Kingdom followed the approach of earlier Beijing opera reinvention in combining the traditional Beijing opera orchestra, which played conventionalized Beijing opera melodic and percussive patterns, and the guoyue orchestra, which played Chinese traditional (non-theatrical) music. This new orchestra not only accompanied the actors' singing and movements, but helped enhance the mood of the scenes. Western instruments, such as the cello, were sometimes used to create a more harmonious quality of sound. The orchestra was now seated in the pit so that the stage was reserved for acting and scenic design. From the orchestra pit the musicians could hardly see the performers; a modern conductor replaced the drummer to coordinate between stage and pit.

The result was controversial. Diamond observes that there was a tendency to reduce the artistic value of instrumental accompaniment in Taiwan's recent Beijing opera innovations. The musical expression yielded to other theatrical expressions, particularly the scenic. The removal of the orchestra from the stage hampered the actors and their musicians from interaction and greatly reduced the spontaneity of the performance. She suggests that the instrumental accompaniment "might as well be taped for the singers," because it created "bland performances" in which the musicians no longer needed to memorize the scores; they read musical notes and become more like "sound technicians" (1995: 285). Even worse was the readiness to use canned sound effects, such as thunder and
the neighing of the horses in *Kingdom*, which could actually be vividly produced by musical instruments. These "inventions" suggested a major problem in today's intercultural experiment involving Chinese opera: non-traditional elements were adapted but not necessarily integrated into the opera's conventional performance structure; they simply replaced the structure entirely when convenient (295).

In *Kingdom*'s musical arrangement, there was an attempt to reduce pure musical expression (both vocal and instrumental) to give room for visual expression. At least one critic, Zheng Peikai, was distressed by the implication that Beijing opera may eventually stop being a music theatre altogether (1991: 111-113). While music had been the chief reason for Beijing opera's vast popularity during its prime time, adapted from well-known contemporary tunes and melodies and gradually refined, it was no longer appealing to the modern ear. Inventing new music for Beijing opera had not proved easy, as its musical structure was largely conventionalized and was thoroughly integrated with acting movements. In recent years, thanks to the influence of modern, Western-inspired theatre performance, Chinese innovators had explored scenographic expressions in inventing Beijing opera. They found that visual signs were more adaptable to modern meanings, compared with music. Besides, Beijing opera's scenic structure was less rigid than its musical structure, allowing experimentation with non-conventional elements.

One finds a parallel development in European opera in the early 1980s. Opera director Ralf Langbacka observes that there was a tendency to shift from "opera concertante" to "music theatre," from an opera theatre in which the

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163 It is said that in the past, especially in Beijing, theatre-goers went to the Beijing opera theatre to "listen to," rather than to see, the performance. This description lends importance to the aural aspect over the visual aspect of the performance. It can further be evidenced by the fact that star performers made commercial records for a lucrative market in the first decades of this century. The amateur theatre circle (piaofang) first instructs its disciples how to sing. As in Western opera, singing in Beijing opera can be separate from the rest of the performance as an independent art.
primary artistic value is musical perfection, to a theatre of "totality" in which "the scenic expression is equal to and derives from the musical expression" (1981: 39). In many aspects Kingdom corresponded to this aesthetic shift of focus in European opera. It emphasized the actor-singer's physical and psychological expressions, not only the vocal ones; it stressed ensemble acting rather than the solo performances of the stars; it opted for a dramatic text, instead of a pre-understood story; and it insisted on the presentation of "credible" characters and action, rather than on the "peak moments," such as the big arias (39).

This shift of emphases in European opera arose from the impact of the spoken theatre and the move of theatre aesthetics towards realism, gradually taking over the "art value" of opera, according to Langbacka (40). Citing the example of Verdi's Macbeth, Berg's Wozzeck, and Mozart's Don Giovanni, he advises that opera directors return to their original texts—Shakespeare, Büchner, and the Don Juan archetype—to find the thematic concepts which govern the dramatic action, and from which the scenic and musical expression organically derive (55-57). Kingdom's dramaturgy represents a parallel development. It seems that the music theatre in both the East and the West was being transformed into one which demanded no pre-knowledge of the artistic convention in the audience, and one which became more realistic in the sense that the spectator could more easily find the socio-cultural relevance of the play.

4.6 Perception and Reception: In Taipei and London

Although Kingdom had originally targeted the Chinese audience in Taiwan, it played for audiences in five other locations since it opened in 1986. In each setting, the audience brought to the production particular cultural assumptions that belonged to that culture. But since the play was performed mostly in international theatre festivals—the "polyphonic meeting place" where artistic exchanges create cross-fertilization among different cultures and societies, and
where a foreign work "stimulates domestic artistic production, challenges it and gives it new impulses by confronting it with exotic innovations" (Laermans 1994: 4), its reception was also shaped by the underlying expectation of the festival audiences.

To examine the *Kingdom's* reception at home and in a foreign culture, it is helpful to draw from Susan Bennett two receptive "frames" involved in the audience's experience of theatre. The "outer frame" is associated with "theatre as a cultural construct through the idea of the theatrical event, the selection of material for production, and the audience's definition and expectation of a performance" (1990: 1-2). The "inner frame" is concerned with "the event itself and, in particular, the spectator's experience of a fictional stage world" (2). The two frames form a reciprocal relationship, as Bennett explains: "Cultural assumptions affect performances, and performances rewrite cultural assumptions" (2). The *Kingdom* performances on tour were set in a very different "outer frame" from its initial productions at home, for they were made for those who were more receptive to intercultural performances. It is particularly interesting to see how, in Taiwan, new "cultural assumptions" were attached to Beijing opera as a theatre form after the London tour. This section studies and contrasts the perception and reception of the play in Taipei and London, and asks how the production was received by the home audience in terms of its use of foreign material and its modification of the traditional theatre, and what responses this "foreign Shakespeare" stimulated when it traveled back to its source culture.

4.6.1 Taipei: Reception in the Target Culture

The "outer" receptive frame of the *Kingdom* was designed from the outset to differentiate the production from Taiwan's traditional Beijing opera performance. The CLT's choice of a Shakespeare play for adaptation indicated an attempt to
reach out to non-tradition opera audiences. The production opened in the annual Municipal Arts Festival of Taipei, an event widely regarded as a cultural showcase of Taiwan, which featured refined performances, usually glossing even the most rural, crude theatre forms with a modern look to attract urban and educated audiences. The messages from the play's paratheatrical materials (program, publicity, press kit) eloquently guaranteed it to be "different." Newspaper reports focused on the "youth" of the CLT performers (average age: 30) and their passionate, daring idealism in revitalizing Beijing opera; "tradition" and "reinvention" became the popular jargon of cultural dialectic in defining the production (cf. Tan Xiaohu 1986; Wang Wenguang 1986); "high art" was implied by the repetitive references to Shakespeare's masterpiece and the lengthy preparation of the CLT production team ("Newskit" N.d.: 15).

During the run, the play drew the interest of people from a wide age range, from different sub-cultural groups, and particularly from circles of the "modern" (Western-influenced) artistic genres, in sharp contrast to the homogeneous spectatorship (elderly male immigrants from Mainland China) of the traditional Beijing opera shows. Press reviews raved about the play, using such headlines as "Breathing a New Life into Our National Opera" (Wang Wenguang 1986); "At a Single Strike, The Kingdom of Desire Shakes Up Taipei's Artistic Circle" (24); "The Kingdom of Desire Is Not an Incidental Success" (Tang 1986: 9). One week after its opening, Taipei's theatre circle was still excited about it, holding a special panel to discuss its significance. Gong Min, a playwright and producer, saw the play as a "firm first step" of the young theatre company, and encouraged its artists "not to fear the pressure of criticism" but "to unite the theatre and academic circles" to strengthen the theatre rooted in Chinese tradition (qtd. in Tang 1986: 9). Film director Li Xing claimed it as "a most successful adaptation of a foreign play, a laudable innovation of Beijing opera,
and a state-of-the-art performance incorporating period costumes," seeing the future of Chinese theatre in it:

In the past thirty years our theatre has been left to survive by its own means. Now The Kingdom of Desire has finally performed the hope of our theatre's new life. The government and business industry should help our society foster these promising, creative young artists. This flick of fire should never be allowed to extinguish! (Qtd. in Tang 1986: 9).

Lin Weiyi, a young theatre director, called the play a "fruitful result of absorbing nutrition from Western modern theatre to strengthen the roots of [Chinese] tradition....Hopefully it not only resurrects Macbeth, but also revives Su Wu and Li Ling on our stage; not only Sinicizes Shakespeare, but also modernizes Guan Hanqing" (qtd. in Jiao Tong 1987: 116-117).164

The "inner frame" of the reception was designed to change the relationship among the semiotic codes within Beijing opera's performance system by borrowing foreign elements, including Shakespeare's narrative and other modern adaptations of Macbeth, in the hope that it could ultimately redirect the approach of communication between the stage and the auditorium. In other words, Beijing opera might reinvent itself by "de-familiarizing" its conventional subjects and staging practices. The immediate response to this reception strategy was positive. Some critics found this receptive approach laudable. Jiao Tong acclaimed the play as a herald of "moving our traditional theatre towards a modern performance system" (1987: 117). Lin Yingnan optimistically decided that from this production Chinese theatre embarked on a new stage: "Due to this unique experiment, our modern and traditional theatre will hitherto create possibilities of more complex, diversified and original expressions" (1987: 120).

Stanley A. Warren, a visiting professor in National Taiwan University, praised it

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164Su Wu and Li Ling are historical figures. Their stories may make good dramatization. Guan Hanqing was a distinguished dramatist in Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), who is claimed by some scholars as China's Shakespeare.
as "certainly both a magnificent effort to extend the boundaries of [Beijing] opera and a success in capturing the essence of Shakespeare's tragedy" (1987: 6).

After the initial enthusiasm subsided, mixed opinions arose, contesting the "appropriateness" of this production. From the reviews and criticisms of the play, one can distinguish four critical voices in its domestic reception. All four expressed concerns with the practice of intercultural theatre. As Zarrilli notes, an intercultural performance typically triggers discourses which are part of a continuing "internal cultural debate" within the target tradition (1992: 29). This case was no exception.

The first critical opinion questioned whether the adaptation could still be called a Shakespeare play. Coming mainly from the drama scholars whose approach was basically comparative in textual analysis, this critique attacked the loss of the linguistic, thematic, and philosophical richness of Shakespeare's text. One critic who strongly maintained this position is John Y. H. Hu, who taught Western theatre and once adapted Romeo and Juliet into Beijing opera. He evaluated the production as one which "can fill one evening with visual and aural pleasures, but can hardly, as Macbeth does, stimulate ideas and evoke profound, complex emotion" (1987: 77). Through textual comparison, he proved that Kingdom drastically "shrinks" from Macbeth in terms of psychological, ethical, and philosophical dimensions. Shakespeare's balanced thematic design (Macbeth vs. Banquo, Macbeth vs. Malcolm, Macbeth vs. Macduff, Scotland vs. England, etc.)

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165 John Y. H. Hu earned his Ph.D. in drama and comparative literature from Indiana University in 1969, and has taught at Michigan State University, the University of Hawaii, and Melbourne University. He has been the director of the National Theatre Hall in Taipei, and has taught in National Taiwan University for decades. A learned initiate of Beijing opera, he claims to have adapted Romeo and Juliet to the opera form but never dares to produce it due to the unlikelihood of preserving the essence of both home and foreign traditions (1993). Hu was once enthusiastic about adapting Western works into Beijing opera, as seen in his effort at producing Xi (Seats), the Beijing opera play adapted from Ionesco's Chairs (See Chapter 2). But he has since changed his mind about the approach, and is highly skeptical about intercultural theatre involving traditional Chinese theatre and Western classics such as Shakespeare. See also Hu (1987; 1990).
is impoverished by the single, and yet incoherent plot of the adaptation; Shakespeare's great vision of humanism is lost. The fundamental problem, Hu pointed out, is that the two theatre genres—one dialogue drama and the other musical drama—are essentially incompatible genres and cannot make a good adaptation from one to the other. The latter focuses on performative elements, including singing, reciting, gestural acting, and acrobatics, which are so time-consuming that eventually the plot, characterization, and thought of the former need to be cut down. Using a quantitative approach, he shows that the Chinese translation of *Macbeth* amounts to 35,000 to 40,000 character-words, in comparison with an average Beijing opera script which consists of merely 6,000 to 8,000 because of the need of room for musical and gestural expressions. Any adaptation of Shakespeare into Beijing opera, Hu concluded, faces the dilemma that arises between the performative and the dramatic (1987: 80-1).

Hu defined the *Kingdom* as a "straightforward adaptation," which closely follows Shakespeare's concept and spirit and can be immediately identified with *Macbeth*. Its approach is greatly different from the kind of rewriting in which the original becomes merely raw material for appropriation, as in the distinctive works by Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* and *Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth* (1992: 95-96). The latter approach is original and inventive, Hu argued. But the former approach is bound to fail because, as demonstrated in *Kingdom*, it only produces a lesser version which cannot fully communicate the meaning of the original, whether artistic or conceptual, and therefore is not authentic. Hu's analysis is confined to structural and semantic comparison, and does not explore the synergistic relationship with performance. Hu and others' reverential attitude towards Shakespeare's text seemed to rule out the possibility of welding Chinese traditional theatre and Shakespearean drama.
The second critical opinion involved questions regarding the generic "appropriateness" of the production. That critique mainly came from the opera circle which saw convention and tradition as guidelines for alteration of this genre. The die-hard Beijing opera critics asked in particular why Beijing opera needed to resort to foreign subjects, arguing that there were numerous historical materials from the native culture (since China had five thousand years of history) readily available for dramatization (Sun Yicai 1987: 268, 275). Furthermore, since fusion with Western drama required sacrifice of the native tradition in order to accommodate foreign elements (such as plot and characterization), the resulting changes would inevitably harm the essence of the home genre, particularly the singing (cf. Zheng Peikai 1991). Some traditionalists dismissed *Kingdom* as an attempt to "update" Beijing opera by merely dressing it in an unsuitable modern robe—an approach which only would further its decline (Sun Yicai 1991: 371). They accused the CLT's young actors of staging a revolution to "overthrow" the precious tradition rather than to improve it ("Wu Xingguo..." 1994: 13). What should be done, they maintained, was to look into the tradition itself for new possibilities. Since the earlier masters, such as Mei Lanfang, could change the form only after having reached individual artistic and cultural maturity, the CLT actors were indeed too "young" to have the artistic credentials for reform. This traditionalist view reminds one of Gordon Craig's attitude toward the "Oriental" theatre; Craig warned his young followers against learning from Indian theatre for fear that they might forsake their own theatre tradition.

While the first two attitudes reflected a negativity towards bold theatrical exchange among widely separate cultures and theatrical traditions, the third opinion opted for eclecticism. This critical opinion acknowledged that, in order to regenerate the declining home genre, a certain compromise was needed,
including distortion, omission, and even destruction of both the source and the
target traditions. Over-protection of cultural heritage would only hinder the once
lively and popular theatre forms from growing, and turn them into museum art.
This opinion considered it more significant for Beijing opera to be relevant to
modern audiences than to merely maintain an outmoded form.

The critics who were of this opinion expressed agreement with the
approach of welding West and East in *Kingdom*. In particular, dramatic tension
created by the plot of *Macbeth* was rarely found in the traditional stories of the
Beijing opera repertoire; the recreating of such tension in *Kingdom* had greatly
enriched the textual construction of the native theatre. Besides, focus on
characterization in the source play also contributed to ensemble acting in the
adaptation; even the minor roles displayed psychological believability and helped
build up a unified performance. The theatre scholar Ma Sen believed that
Shakespeare's rich literary narrative helped shift Beijing opera from an entirely
"actor's theatre" to a "playwright's theatre"; the revitalization of the native
tradition was like "an old tree that buds new offshoots" (1991: 243). The Chinese
theatre specialist Niu Chuanhai noted that the *Kingdom* actors proved to be both
"technical" and "experiential" actors, because they

have greater acting techniques than the average Spoken Drama
actor, deeper psychological understanding than the average Beijing
opera actor...and are better at thinking—one of the weakest aspects
of traditional Beijing opera [training]. They apparently try to
empathize [with their characters]. (Qtd. in Jiao Tong 1987: 119)

In his review of *Kingdom*, Warren praised the courage the artists had to
"tamper" with an authentic Shakespeare tragedy (1987: 6). He opposed the
negative views armed with "authenticity of Beijing opera" and "truthfulness to
Shakespeare," arguing that both positions were not substantial because change
and modification were necessary for any art form to evolve and develop,
particularly in a rapidly changing world (6-8). Warren saw that the Chinese
production was "following in the 'modern' tradition of staging Shakespeare" (9), and, after taking the challenge of translating a well-known world masterpiece with all its inherent nuances, it succeeded in expanding the parameters of Beijing opera's expression (8).

Basing his critique on the analysis of textuality of the *Kingdom* performance, Warren found that the production was able to communicate the tragic, passionate, and violent nature of *Macbeth* through Beijing opera's idioms. First of all, its omission and rearrangement of scenes from *Macbeth* as well as its dispensing with some of the native conventions were necessary to acquire a rapid, rhythmic momentum in *Kingdom*. The production preserved the fast-paced rhythm of Elizabethan theatre as it "moved on inexorably with incredible, increasing speed and with growing rhythmic intensity" (10). Furthermore, it was able to translate the key images of the original text theatrically, such as the bloody hands, darkness, and disease (10). Particularly, Warren observed, the way the Beijing opera actors externalize the emotional intensity of the action solves some of the ambiguity of the original text. The much debated ending of *Macbeth*--because of the incomplete stage directions--regarding whether the hero dies on- or off-stage, was translated theatrically and metaphorically in the acrobatic fall of Aoshu from a high platform: "a feat symbolic of Macbeth's fall from his temporary ill-gained greatness" (10). As the psychological and emotional values in the original, such as ambition, guilt, fear, and fall from grace, were all signified by the gestural language of Beijing opera, the tragic substance was retained. In all, Warren stated that this intercultural performance discovered a new aesthetic relevance in the old native tradition for its modern audience:

...the newly found integration of all the elements of stage production into a continuous, seamless, ever-growing, rhythmic sweep [...] for me, suddenly made possible a new use of the [Beijing] opera form in our contemporary world. (10)
While Warren saw in the Beijing opera play a quality which made Shakespeare fresh and vital, Taipei's local critics perceived in it a quality which could vaguely be called "modern"—implying the "Western" and "novel." Both in text and performance, the "modern" quality revivified the too predictable conventions of Beijing opera. These critics voiced a continuing discourse on the synthesis of the Chinese traditional with the Western, an on-going cultural issue since the early twentieth century.

Some commentators foresaw the emergence of new theatrical forms in the hybridization of the two, a "third" culture which could entirely transform, and give a new lease on life to, the declining Beijing opera tradition. They suggested that the Beijing opera circle explore new literary and performative languages and theories through intercultural and intergeneric practices. Lin Kai, an associate of the CLT and an avid Beijing opera fan, found that the refined and esoteric acting codes of Beijing opera were too "narrow" in application in today's global artistic economy; he called for absorption of modern performance aesthetic from contemporary dance and avant-garde theatre in order to broaden the expressive range of Beijing opera: "We don't know what we will come up with. It may not be called Beijing opera anymore; its transformation can be far greater" (qtd. in Jiao Tong 1987: 118). Niu Chuanhai thought Kingdom no longer represented Beijing opera; it was a modern performance experimental in nature, because "its dramatic and scenic structures break the conventions of Beijing opera" (qtd. in Jiao Tong 1987: 119). Wang Molin, a director and performance theorist, observed that in order for a Beijing opera-trained body to evoke Shakespearean tragic spirit, Chinese traditional theatre needed to incorporate

166 In her succinct comment on the experiments in Taiwan's Beijing opera in the 1990s, Diamond observes the vagueness in the aim and motive of the opera's innovation—for the sake of novelty: "It is becoming more incumbent on all the [Beijing opera] performers in Taiwan to offer something different either in the way of text or presentation to audiences that have become more 'Western' in their desire for novelty" (1995: 240).
modern performance discourse into its creative process (1990: 259-261). However, Wang did not give concrete ideas as to which concept of contemporary theatre could be integrated into the native tradition. Huang Meixu, a drama professor, was optimistic about a hybridized Beijing opera; he called it a "new national opera" (xin guoju):

Some people worry that it will no longer be our traditional national opera. I think if it can produce a new, popular national opera, why not give it a try? Beijing opera knocked out the refined literary drama of Kunqu to become China's national opera. Why can't other genres replace it? In actuality its conventional form has become too stagnant to adapt to modern life and spirit—can you stage a story of contemporary social problems with this form? So we should preserve its essence and inject it with new blood; perhaps it can resurrect. (1988: 43)

The fourth critical opinion reflected a meta-cultural perspective, advocating that an intercultural production should involve a conscious politicization of the cultural dynamics between source and target nations. In this case, the adapter's perspective should be that of the postcolonialist, in the sense that it could contextualize in the new text the historical relation between Great Britain and China, between the one's imperialism and the other's humiliating submission in relinquishing territories, indemnities, and national/cultural identity. Mainly expressed by Chung Mingder, a young theatre scholar and chronicler of Taiwan's little theatre movement (1992), this critical opinion tackled the larger issue of intercultural theatre in the postmodern era. Chung questioned the CLT's "politics of theatre," from its selection of Shakespeare to its production method and reception strategy, and argued that Kingdom's success was the result of a politically shrewd use of interculturalism rather than the result of genuine artistic virtue (1992: 284).

Chung observed that CLT's experiment functions on a superficial level of interculturalism. Although the total artistic effect of the Kingdom was influenced by modern staging techniques, the actor's training—the core of the performance
system—remained conventional. One further step required for Beijing opera to reach the modern audience's reality was for it to establish "mutual permeation between the operatic tradition and modern theatre, from transmission of acting knowledge to reception," for this was the ultimate goal of any intercultural performance to contextualize cultural and aesthetic codes from divergent traditions and social realities (1993: N. pag.).

Chung implied that the artistic and conceptual complacency in the CLT represented a deep-seated political conservatism. His criticism was based on an assumption that modern theatre, especially the little theatre developed in Taiwan in the 1980s, should take a thought-provoking, socio-politically-engaged role in fostering cultural change. In Taiwan, Beijing opera appeared less politically radical than other performance genres, particularly when it was appropriated by the official cultural policy as the "quintessential representation of Nationalist culture" (1992: 284). The CLT reinforced this conservatism rather than revolting against it. In its experimental production, the CLT avoided presenting a political perspective in favor of a purely culturalist and decorative transfer. Its uncritical promotion of Beijing opera's official status and its unconditional acceptance of Shakespeare as "the greatest dramatist of the world" without questioning the colonialist cultural ideology behind this claim clearly indicated the company's lack of political consciousness. Or, as Chung claimed, it was a compromise made in exchange for government funding and opportunities for foreign tours.

*The Kingdom of Desire*, by combining essences from both China and the West, was eminently acceptable to the Nationalist government who [sic] was looking for something resembling "Taiwan's Chinese National Theatre".... Though it has stretched jingju (Beijing opera), jingju-Shakespeare has been used by the Nationalist government as an example of its successful, if out of date, "Great China" policy, serving to distort to some extent the changing realities of Taiwan. (1992: 284)
In spite of the mixed reception, the Beijing opera adaptation of *Macbeth* gave rise to a new fervor in reinventing traditional opera in Taiwan. This enthusiasm is evidenced by the emergence of other performers who formed private troupes in order to perform "new Beijing opera," such as People's Big Troupe and New Generation Workshop, in the wake of CLT's successful production (Chung 1992: 282). Perhaps this intraculturalism, the search for a neglected, declining tradition for the continuity and renewal of the native culture,\(^{167}\) is the greatest inspiration which this Beijing opera production contributed to Taiwan's contemporary theatre.

4.6.2 London: Reception in the Source Culture

After seeing *Kingdom* in Taipei, the producer of Ninagawa Theatre, Tadao Nakane, recommended it to Thelma Holt, producer of the International Festival for the Royal National Theatre; in 1988, Holt flew to Taipei to see the production, liked it very much, and invited the troupe to London ("Newskit" N.d: 30; Diamond 1994: 127). During the following year, Taipei's media closely followed the CLT's efforts to garner funding from government cultural bureaus; media attention built up the importance of this cultural export. The London tour was a joint effort by nine official and private organizations.\(^{168}\) After overcoming the financial difficulty (it was finally granted over 500,000 Canadian dollars by Taiwan's government), the play opened at the Lyttleton Theatre on November 14, 1990. Taiwanese press instantly symbolized the event as a "cultural crusade," implying that the first "made-in-Taiwan" Shakespearean production captivated the audience in Shakespeare's motherland (Zhang Yuequi 1990).

\(^{167}\)On the issue of intraculturalism and its differentiation from interculturalism, see 1.3.2.3.

\(^{168}\)These organizations include, among other important ones, the Free Centre in London, which represents Taiwan, the Taiwanese Council for Cultural Planning and Development, the New Aspect Promotion Centre, and Nakane Kimio of the Yukio Ninagawa troupe, which staged a successful Japanese version of *Macbeth* in London in 1987.
The meaning of the tour was larger than a mere artistic event might convey for those Chinese involved in it—the sponsors, actors, and audience—many of whom took it as a national victory. This view was shaped by current sociopolitical and economic realities in the global culture; though Taiwanese merchandise was widely exported to the West, Taiwan was seldom mentioned in the world's marketplace of performing art. Therefore, the CLT's tour to the West was likened a cultural ambassador, and art was considered the most effective and lofty, but least propagandist, way to promote Taiwan ("Newskit" 22-3, 27). This speaks for the fact that in contemporary intercultural exchange, theatre represents a unique power which no commentary or analysis can convey. It is the ability to represent a culture theatrically, and hence a very specific use of theatricality, as is also found in the intercultural performances by Schechner, Barba, Brook, and Mnouchkine (Pavis 1992: 202).

The production attracted considerable attention and attendance in London as Shakespeare's familiar story played a significant intermediary role in promoting the unfamiliar form of Beijing opera. Its 4 performances claimed a seating rate of 90%, representing nearly 5,000 spectators ("The CLT Domestic and Foreign Performances Record and Audience Count" N. d.; N. pag.). During the run, the actors gave an additional lecture-demonstration to help interested audiences understand Beijing opera (Macaulay 1990). The reviewer of The Guardian, Kenneth Rea, commented on the production as "one of the best blends of Eastern and Western techniques that I have yet seen.... a well conceived innovation that combines the dazzle of Beijing opera with the strength of Western realism" (1990). On the closing night, the cast enjoyed a full ten-minute curtain call with a surprise shower of flower petals from above the stage—a tribute from the National Theatre—and many of them burst into tears (Minsheng Daily 19 Nov. 1990). The event also gained considerable media coverage, including reviews
from major British theatre press and interviews by the BBC and other broadcasters (Lianhe Daily, 15 Nov. 1990). The CLT's productive encounter with Western audience made a sharp contrast to that of Mei Lanfang, who, 55 years ago, was eager to perform on the English stage after a successful tour to Moscow and was coldly turned down because London's theatre managers did not think a foreign form with its remote stories could break even at the box office.

It is not surprising then that, in Shakespeare's home country, critiques focused on the production as a specific interpretation of Shakespeare rather than on Beijing opera per se. And yet few reviewers missed the characteristically Beijing opera elements such as the spectacular acrobatics and the stylized way of singing. Some British critics, such as Milton Shulman from The Evening Standard, revealed a strong culturally subjective view, describing the play as "an exotic experience unconnected with anything we can think of in Western theatre" (1990: 43). For Irving Wardle of The Independent, Beijing opera presented "disjoined, rambling displays of symbolic acrobatics," but the adaptation of Shakespeare offered "an exhilarating shock" because those traditional techniques could narrate a coherent dramatic action uninterrupted (1990: 24). Alastair Macaulay of The Financial Times informed his readers that the Beijing opera actors wore such thick boots that "they look as if they're standing on little boats," and confessed his failure to appreciate Beijing opera's singing style: "To my Western ears, this is ugly singing, its tone raw or shrill or harsh" (1990). Benedict Nightingale of The Times described his impression of Lady Aoshu's singing as that "of a killer mouse oddly turned into a distraught canary" (1990). Paul Taylor of The Independent claimed that the loud percussive notes of the production sounded "like someone losing their [sic] reason in a well-equipped kitchen," and "the crazed miaowings of the Lady Macbeth figure remind you of a cat that should be put out of its misery" (1990). These remarks are reminiscent of
the early Western Orientalists’ all-knowing comments on Asian theatre, describing it as an inscrutable, mysterious form subject to Western interpretation and evaluation (cf. Zarrilli 1992: 26-7).

Among praises and criticisms, there are four critical opinions that represented London's perception and reception of *Kingdom*. The first opinion stated that the theatrical conventions of Beijing opera were difficult for the untrained spectator to decipher immediately—and sometimes even hard to appreciate—and thus obstructed communication with an audience. Macaulay commented, "I recognize a different aesthetic here, but I don’t embrace it" (1990). Taylor further called it "an illuminating failure," because the hard-to-decode stylized gestures of Beijing opera, the unknown tongue of the speeches and songs, and a text which "literally disemboweled" the story of *Macbeth* were real tasks for English audiences’ hermeneutic capacity. Specifically, Taylor questioned the exact meanings of the actors' precise gestures and movements, in relation to the familiar story of Macbeth:

...the hands of this Lady Macbeth flutter madly at the end of extended arms. But does this indicate pain and dread, without any subconscious exposure of guilty-conscience? Or is this a conventional theatrical sign, the meaning of which an English audience simply does not know? And when Macbeth has to suppress the same gesture, when he receives the news of his wife's death, to what extent is this a recollection of her? (1990)

However, in groping for and guessing at the meanings throughout the play, Taylor admitted: "There is a kind of pleasure in puzzling over such communication problems" (1990), which seemed to exemplify the common response to an intercultural performance involving unfamiliar traditions.

The esoteric foreign form threatened to alienate or reverse the target audience’s participation, as could be read from the tongue-in-cheek review by Katie Kellaway of *The Observer*. She found it hard to see anything tragic in the play: "Indeed, I spent much of the evening giggling helplessly" (1990: 59). The
highly-technical aerial flips and leaps of the messengers were entirely "hilarious"; the movement which required the actor to stand on one leg before straightening the other reminded her of "a flamingo"; Macbeth appeared "suitably paranoid," while Lady Macbeth was "comic" from time to time. She concluded, "It's a production which, for all its veneer, is locked up like a lacquered, inlaid cabinet" (59). These comments revealed the spectator's inability to understand the theatrical signs interculturally and her subsequent disengagement from it. This seems particularly likely to happen to audience from a theatre culture which is deep-seated in logocentrism and relies heavily on the linguistic codes of a play.

Not surprisingly, some critics complained about the production not having English subtitles (captions)—an artistic choice made by the festival authority for all the foreign Shakespeare productions involved. As a result, the English critics were left to judge the play via the non-linguistic codes of Beijing opera. Astington found himself "dependent on theatrical language and deprived of language itself" (1991: 27). Shulman enjoyed the theatrical language of Kingdom in the light of martial art: "it is the ensemble movement of the high-kicking armies, acrobatic messengers, synchronized courtiers, that offers and [sic] exciting visual entertainment that has its own moments of brooding violence and emotional intensity that can be enjoyed without knowledge of either Shakespeare or Chinese" (1990: 43). Kellaway discovered that Macbeth's line describing "vaulting ambition which o'erleaps itself" was entirely physicalized by the actors "o'erleaping themselves," including a "wonderful cartwheeling messenger [who] arrives like a human airmail" and "bouncing soldiers [who] treat the ground as a trampoline" (1990: 59). Some critics actually expressed interest in seeing more productions of Shakespeare involving Beijing opera idioms. Astington suggested the CLT produce a King Lear in the style of Kurosawa's Ran (1991: 27). Macaulay
saw comic potential in Beijing opera, especially in its rhythm ("I kept hearing and seeing perky little metric patterns that sounded sheer music-hall") and hoped to see Beijing opera adaptations of *Twelfth Night*, *Tempest*, and *Midsummer Night's Dream* (1990).

The unfamiliarity of the theatrical convention inevitably affected the translation of Shakespeare. The second opinion reiterated that Shakespeare's psychological complexity and tragic substance were diluted in the adaptation, as a result of Beijing opera's emphasis on external signs, including spectacle and singing. *Kingdom* presented an "Oriental melodramatic emphasis," reported Irving Wardle of *The Independent*, which, in the end, "obliterates all trace of tragic psychology" (1990: 24). Rea thought that the foreign form tended to present the "decorative" when it needed to be "getting on the story" (1990). Nightingale described it as "far broader and more external than anything Shakespeare penned" (1990). Shulman stated that "the resultant atmosphere is not that of a complex psychological tragedy but of a simple spectacle of startling movement, gorgeous costumes, unfamiliar and regimented acting" (1990: 43).

It appears that many of the English critics were not accustomed to loud, gaudy, and spectacular productions of Shakespeare which externalized the character's inner state with stylized and often exaggerated movements; they preferred a Shakespeare of quieter mood and more subtle emotional revelation through linguistic and facial expressions. There is no absolute answer to whether the psychologically realistic form or the formalistic, non-mimetic form is a better agent to convey the human truth in Shakespeare. But it appears that Mnouchkine is one step further ahead of her Western theatre tradition in her experiments of "Asian Shakespeare" (1996: 95). Realism makes prosaic Shakespeare productions today, she notes (96). Shakespeare needs a "foreign
reference," a form which can metaphorically represent the spirit of Shakespeare, as found in Asian theatre:

What interests me in the Asian tradition is that the actor there is a creator of metaphor. His art consists of putting passion on display, of narrating the interior of the human being.... I sense that the goal of the [Asian] actor should be to open up a man like a grenade. Not so as to put his guts on display, but to depict them, to transform them into signs, forms, movements, rhythms. Whereas in the West actors are more often taught to grit their teeth and not show what's happening....

Why choose the approach of an Asian Shakespeare?... The reference to this great traditional form imposes rules for working: precision of gesture, cleaness of line, the meeting of an extreme truth and an extreme artifice within a kind of performance that might be called hyperrealist. (1996: 95)

Naturally, Kingdom's London performances stimulated a comparison with the English acting tradition of Shakespeare. The third critical opinion involved such a comparison; some of the comments were rather opinionated whereas others were thorough and insightful. Shulman found a subversive version of the "Oriental female submissiveness" in the Chinese representation of Lady Macbeth, a "Demonic force" behind the usurpation; he concluded: "This is a much fiercer Lady Macbeth than Shakespeare ever contemplated" (1990: 43). Rea perceived a "tragic lyricism" in Lady Aoshu, for the stylized form "leaves [her] wickedness framed within an almost coy sense of feminine grace," especially in the sleep-walking scene when she floated across the stage with long hair hanging down on her white, silky garment, "like a butterfly in its death throes" (1990). Jack Tinker of The Daily Mail called Lady Aoshu a "steely-souled butterfly" who sang and danced her lament "in a long trailing kimono of virginal white" (1990). These comments apparently elaborated on an Oriental woman stereotype drawn from Madame Butterfly. Kellaway wrote that Lady Aoshu "looks too exquisite for murder," but that in her dying scene she "resembles a distrait cabbage white" (1990: 59). Taylor considered Lady Aoshu an individual character rather than a role type in the "stunningly successful" banquet scene, in which she "tries to
save the situation with an embarrassment and mincing ingratitude that is as realistic as anything in an Ayckbourn" (1990).

Aoshu Zheng was described as an "imposing, martial figure" (Shulman 1990: 43), a "scowling Macbeth" (Nightingale 1990), a man with "permanently worried" looks who "dances his soliloquies, his fingers spread and flickering, to psyche himself up for the deed" (Kellaway 1990: 59). The most frequently mentioned action of the Chinese Macbeth was his backflip somersault down the high battlement, a spectacular "bravura death" (Rea 1990), a presentation of "athleticism" (Myerscough 1990: 21), or, a theatrical feat that belongs to a hero who "does not expire discreetly onstage" (Nightingale 1990). Astington argued that this acrobatic act had greater melodramatic than tragic impact for it appeared to "edge the symbolic language of the theatre dangerously near the ludicrous" (1991: 26); thus the "staginess" in the representation of Aoshu created "a far less lonely man than does Macbeth" (27).

Astington saw a different "rhythmic and dynamic" principle in Kingdom which lent a "cooler, more detached view of the tragic story than those resulting from a good English-language version of Macbeth, from Kurosawa's film, or from Verdi's opera" (1991: 26). He found this aesthetic especially pronounced in Beijing opera's musical expression, such as the "bland and unexciting" sung passages between Aoshu and his wife before the murder (26). It resulted in the "effect of suddenly placing the performer at a contemplative distance from his or her mental state," Astington explained, a phenomenon European opera never revealed even in the moments of focusing purely on the artistry of the form (26). Astington inferred that the theatrical language of Beijing opera kept its audience from proper psychological empathy. His remarks also corresponded with Brecht's observation of an "alienating effect" in Mei Lanfang's performance. But, while
Brecht regarded the aesthetic "otherness" of Beijing opera an appropriate model for Western theatre, Astington found it largely unappealing.

The fourth critical opinion discovered in the physical expressivity of the Beijing opera actor a reminiscence of those great Shakespearean actors and acting traditions in the past. Astington noted that the spectacle and acrobatic capability in Beijing opera "seemed to suggest lost Western theatrical language" (26). Nightingale generalized that "To be an actor in China is also to be a singer, dancer, gymnast, and for all I know, juggler and trapeze artist as well," and that the physical confidence of the Chinese actors could only be matched by Kean, Irving, Olivier, Kemble, Macready, and Gielgud (1990).

4.7 Conclusion

As illuminated from the production and reception of Kingdom of Desire, the productive encounter of two (or more) different theatre traditions created an enriching cultural experience. The domestication of a foreign and exotic work challenged the home tradition, giving it new impulses to expand and innovate. This "creative incompatibility" seemed able to accelerate the process of revitalizing and diversifying an inert cultural tradition.

In Kingdom, Shakespeare's Macbeth served an important function to popularize Beijing opera first to Taiwanese audience and then to audiences outside Taiwan. The literary richness and psychological complexity in Shakespeare's text helped bridge an antiquated form and modern sensibility. The Chinese adaptation turned out an untraditional Beijing opera text with strengthened thematic significance and compelling characters. Kingdom also demonstrated once again that Shakespeare plays can be made into representations of powerful and intellectually provocative visions of the present. The universality of Shakespeare plays, as Kennedy explains, "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" (1993: 301). Aoshu Zheng and Lady Aoshu did not seem at all foreign to the Chinese audience; in fact, they were the Macbeths displaced from Shakespeare's tale and rediscovered in the Chinese context.

Strictly speaking, *Kingdom* was not created from a dichotomous model of intercultural transfer such as Pavis's hourglass, in which a source text/culture is translated into a target performance. Instead, the adaptation was mediated by other versions of *Macbeth*, especially Kurosawa's *The Throne of Blood*. The film provided practical knowledge in textual translation, staging, and most important, an unmistakably Asian worldview; it could be seen as a "reception-adapter" (Pavis) which facilitated the target's audience's understanding of the foreign. The Japanese model of intercultural performance became significant to Taiwan's Beijing opera because it had produced works in which Japanese traditional theatre forms successfully and meaningfully adapted Western texts to address contemporary issues, and which still retained Japanese traditional aesthetics.

While the Japanese intercultural theatre involving traditional forms focused primarily on internationalization of Japanese aesthetics and thoughts (cf. Liu Yunfang 1987: 104), Taiwan's Beijing opera absorbing foreign influences was a direct response to a special socio-cultural situation at home. Out of political reasons, Beijing opera was imposed on Taiwan's public and was preserved as the holy shrine of "national treasure" for four decades. It stopped spontaneous development and was stuck with an ideologically conservative image. Foreign influences, be it Shakespeare or Kurosawa, therefore, seemed especially valuable as they forced the conventionalism in the domestic genre to break down and to restructure, allowing it room to explore new artistic and conceptual expressions. The CLT's adaptation of Shakespeare helped subvert the traditional conception of Beijing opera as an aesthetically gratifying legacy and let it re-emerge as a dangerously lively, creative art.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE PRINCE'S REVENGE: A CHINESE RESPONSE TO HAMLET

Four years after the opening of Kingdom of Desire in Taipei, the CLT staged another Beijing opera Shakespeare, The Prince’s Revenge (called Prince in the following passages), based on Hamlet. This second time around, the troupe took a bolder approach toward intercultural performance, and its ambition to create another international sensation can be detected from the larger scale of the production, as compared to Kingdom.

Produced by the National Theatre in Taipei, which owned the finest and most prestigious venue in Taiwan (seating 1,522), Prince was generously funded with five million Taiwanese Yuan (approximately $250,000 Canadian dollars), in contrast to Kingdom's much humbler production cost of less than 2 million Yuan ($100,000 CAD). Wang Anqi, an award-winning Beijing opera playwright and scholar of Chinese traditional drama, was invited to rewrite Hamlet into Beijing opera. In comparison, Li Huimin, who adapted Macbeth into Kingdom, was merely a university graduate and a novice of Beijing opera script-writing. Li Guangbo, an established composer in Mainland China, was commissioned to write the arias for Prince. Because of the grand style of the court scenes in the production, actors were "borrowed" from a number of state-owned Beijing opera troupes, with special permission from Taiwan’s Department of National Defense. Musicians were recruited from the Central Broadcasting Network’s Chinese Traditional Music Orchestra to support the conventional Beijing opera orchestra, and dancers were lent by Taipei Minzu Wutuan, a traditional dance company, to enhance the spectacles. The actors and dancers of Prince numbered 46, compared to the 26 in Kingdom (many playing double or triple roles); musicians numbered 30, making
it a large mainstage show. As the CLT was also preparing to bring *Kingdom* to London, *Prince'*s publicity became intensified. Five performances were all sold out in pre-sales. Local newspapers closely followed its production process, starting months prior to its opening on March 6, 1990.

Despite all favorable conditions for the production, its reception was much less enthusiastic than anticipated, and was clearly not as positive as *Kingdom*’s first reception. The play was never staged again. Even the CLT’s production team was puzzled by the result. Had the initial novelty of interculturalism faded out? *Was Hamlet* a more difficult play to translate on the Beijing opera stage than *Macbeth*? In this chapter I will suggest reasons for the less successful result by exploring different levels of cross-cultural translation and hybridization in Beijing opera Shakespeare. Other questions are also raised in light of intercultural theatre. *Was the CLT trapped between its lofty discourse of intercultural theatre and its practice of a commercially appealing, popular collage that merges signs from disparate cultures? Did the major problem of the play derive from the internal structure of the adaptation, a rupture between its dramatic text and performance context, a fusion which refuses to fuse?*

5.1 The Problematic Objectives of the Production

It is interesting to note that the CLT became eloquent in proposing an intercultural discourse after producing *Kingdom*. There appeared to be a methodical search for a theatrical formula in this discourse. *Prince* retained the mandate of *Kingdom* but aimed to proceed more boldly. It sought to absorb Western and Chinese elements to create new theatrical idioms which could produce a "third" genre. Wu Xingguo, the director and lead actor of the play, believed that this would liberate Chinese traditional theatre from its suffocating conventional trappings and its narrow "ethnic" tastes so as to keep abreast with the "world theatre" (1990a: 13). *Shakespeare* was a vital stimulus for developing
such a chemical change in Beijing opera. Whereas *Kingdom* initially aimed to revitalize Beijing opera for domestic spectators, *Prince* ambitiously targeted the non-specific "world" stage and "world" audiences.

Accordingly, Wu proposed a story of "Chinese Hamlet, not Shakespeare's Hamlet," but to express it with a bolder *mise en scène* which included techniques drawn from American musical theatre and modernist film ("as if watching a movie in a live theatre") (1990a: 13; 1992). While traditional Chinese aesthetic principle was preserved in the presentational style of acting, a realistic-inspired aesthetic was highlighted in its scenography, in its unreserved use of sound and lighting effects and scenic design to simulate the real environment and atmosphere of the action.

The adapter-playwright, Wang Anqi, endorses Wu's approach to Shakespeare. She believed that Shakespeare's work provides basic dramatic situations which can trigger responses in the home tradition and help create new concepts and forms. She intended to use Beijing opera as the "core" in the amalgamation of foreign and own; the goal was to invent "a new theatre genre":

> During the process of adapting the *Prince's Revenge*, I deeply realize that it involves not only literary translation and plot rewriting, but transmutation of the entire cultural background. The result of this transformation may no longer express Shakespeare's original meanings... but our intention is to borrow the structure of the story to explore how the Chinese may choose when facing the same situation [as Hamlet's]. Further, we want to use this experiment to test the possibility of creating a new genre.... Theatre history tells us that the emergence of a new genre requires a transitional stage. I believe that our trial and efforts today herald the evolution of future Chinese theatre. Adapting Shakespeare or other Western materials is merely a means of experimentation; only the Chinese context is the ultimate end. (Wang Anqi 1990a: 12)

Both Wang and Wu promoted a "new genre" based on a synthesis of Beijing opera and Shakespeare. However, whereas Wang saw the need to use Shakespeare to help re-structure the performative elements within the conventionality of Beijing opera, Wu attempted to create a decisive break away from Beijing opera
aesthetic by juxtaposing disparate elements from West-inspired modern performance genres. Wang defined Chinese cultural subjectivity as the core of the "new" genre, while Wu intended to invent a theatre that could be understood universally by all cultures. Their practice in the respective areas (the "page" versus the "stage") created very different implications in the final product. We will return to this point later.

It took Wang Anqi nearly a year to finish the dramatic text of *Prince*, as she later admitted, due to her difficulty in understanding the source text (1993). One of the most frequently translated and printed Shakespeare plays in Chinese, *Hamlet* was well known to the Chinese for its themes of incest and revenge. But, as a literary work, it was understood only by the academic circles of Western literature. The play had not been frequently produced in Taiwan either. Therefore, it was a great challenge for Wang and the CLT actors to tackle this unfamiliar play. Although the troupe invited a Shakespearean scholar and Beijing opera connoisseur, Gu Huaiqun, to give lectures on *Hamlet*, the actual process of adaptation was strenuous. Wang persisted for commendable reasons.

Wang's rationale was that Western drama, in addition to its conceptual and philosophical depth, provided a foreignness which would force the native players and spectators out of their familiar habits of experiencing theatre and thus to stimulate new meanings (1990a: 11-12). Her constructive view of the "alienation" effect of an intercultural work was reminiscent of Mnouchkine's in her "Oriental Shakespeare" productions, in which the European régisseur deployed a whole

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169 *Hamlet* was the first Shakespeare play to be translated into Chinese (by Tian Han, published 1922). According to Simon Chau, between 1922 and 1974 it enjoyed 44 re-prints of 6 translators' versions (some are pirated editions) in Mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong (1981: 33-38). It has been more of a closet play than a theatrical masterpiece. The well-known productions include its 1942 premiere in China's Chongqing and 1964 premiere in Taiwan's Taipei. There have been some university productions in Taiwan but no performances by professional theatre companies. Mainland China may have seen more productions of the play by educational as well as commercial theatres.
new set of theatrical idioms from Asian acting conventions to create fresh meanings out of the familiar Shakespeare plays for her Western audiences.

More significantly, the project was part of Wang's continuing effort to reform Taiwan's Beijing opera. As she noted elsewhere, the opera had received influences from Western dramaturgy since the 1970s and had produced three changes within its tradition which, she saw, could further foster development into a new genre. The first was the tendency to eliminate the opera's narrative conventions, such as the self-introductory speech by the player upon entering the scene and direct addresses to the audience during the action sequences; the second was the attempt to represent dramatic conflicts through dramatic action, rather than through pure narration or aria-singing; and the third was the representation of complex, multi-faceted human nature, rather than categorizing every character rigidly according to a stereotypical moral criterion (1991b: 253-7). According to Wang, who was also a theatre historian, the narrative mode in Chinese drama was a "generic vestige" from the story-telling tradition. This mode imparted a rhythm which contributed to a unique lyricism, particularly when a character delivered refined rhetoric to express his interior thoughts, to recollect the past, and to reflect on life in general. Despite the intrinsic virtues of this lyricism, a play loaded with a great number of narrative speeches and arias tended to be slow-paced in tempo, episodic in structure, and lacking the dramatic intensity which modern audiences demanded (254). Therefore, Wang asserted, a shift from the lyric, "reactive" mode to a dramatic, "active" mode was essential to reform Beijing opera.

When infused with this new dramaturgy, Beijing opera would be able to represent the "conflict, contradiction, and crisis" by action, vis-à-vis the spectator; it would create a dramatic immediacy which made the spectator first "deeply moved and shaken by the well-knit plot, and gradually grow detached,
cairn, and alienated from it; in short, he would have empathy within the world of
the play, and then reflections without it" (1991b: 254-5). This new dramaturgy
also sought to replace conventional role types with psychologically complex and
convincing characters. Contemporary Beijing opera playwrights could learn
through adapting Western drama the ability to create a truthful and exhaustive
anatomy and analysis of humanity as well as a non-judgmental representation of
Man as he is, rather than what he should be.

To a great extent, Wang's approach was a move away from the "epic," a
mode Brecht perceived in Beijing opera, towards the Aristotelian concept of the
"dramatic." She demanded to "show" rather than to "tell" the dramatic action, and
opted for a tightened causal relationship in plotting and character development.
She duly applied these dramaturgical elements in adapting Hamlet. Paradoxically,
Shakespeare's drama is often not Aristotelian, and Hamlet is particularly so.170
Wang's perspective of Shakespeare could be called a "misunderstanding," for she
seemed to regard him as exemplary of a generalized Western dramatic norm—one
which resembled the well-made structure in Ibsen's drama.171

A close reading of the new text is called for, with specific focus on
structural, psychological, moral, tragic and linguistic dimensions. The following

170 According to Calderwood, the Aristotelian concept of plot, or a "causal
progression toward an end," collapses in Hamlet. This play, being dominated by
Hamlet's consciousness and his verbal expression, presents a dramatic mode
which is "reactive, past-oriented," and which impedes the progression of his

171 Wang Anqi's attempt to change Shakespeare and bring him into line with her
understanding of "Western drama," i.e. making him more like Ibsen, was
understandable. For since early this century, traditional Chinese opera and
modern Spoken Drama had developed an "intracultural" dynamic which fostered
many creative impulses based on an attempt to synthesize the two. The realistic
mode was associated with better crafting of psychological motivation of the
characters, causal relationships of the scenes, and milieu of the play, and was
expressed by theatrical means such as dialogue, costumes, sets, and stage effects.
Because it relied less on acting conventions (Ibsen discarded asides, soliloquies,
and other nonrealistic devices), the realistic mode was much more adaptable to
new subjects and themes. It became the most popular mode in contemporary
Chinese theatre, film, and television in Mainland China and Taiwan.
is the outline of the adaptation. *Hamlet's* five acts, twenty scenes were re-written into ten episodes and three short scenes inserted in the beginning, middle, and near the end of the play:172

**Prologue: Beginning of Slaughter** Prince Gongsun Yu (*Hamlet*) is challenged by Prince Qiu Rong (*Fortinbras*) at the border. The Messenger reports the death of the King.

1. **Uncle? King? Father?** On returning to the court for his father's funeral, Prince Gongsun finds himself at the celebration of his mother's wedding to his uncle, who has just been enthroned.

2. **Autumn Mood** The dejected Prince encounters his betrothed, Xiao Xiang (Ophelia), who pledges her love for him. Her father, Prime Minister Xiao (Polonius) suddenly appears and forbids them to meet again.

3. **Ghostly Visitation? Hallucination?** The ghost of the old king reveals to the Prince the cause of his murder and demands revenge.

4. **Court Performance** The King sends for Jia Xing and Fei Li (Rosencrantz and Guildenstern) to spy on the Prince, who is mad now, during the court performance. The Prince selects a play, which portrays the poisoning of a king by his own brother, and the usurper's wooing of the queen. The King leaves the court in a rage.

5. **Moment of Repentance** The King decides to have the Prince murdered en route to a foreign country. Prime Minister Xiao volunteers to eavesdrop on the private conversation of the Queen and the Prince. Alone, the King confesses his crimes, but is even more resolute to get rid of his nephew.

6. **Killing by Mistake During Dispute** Under the Prince's prodding, the Queen confesses her misery and adultery in her first marriage. The Ghost

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172 Based on the original production text (Wang Anqi 1990b) and the published version (Wang Anqi 1991a: 222-248). Also, see Appendix 2 for the full text.
appears, urging the Prince to kill her. Torn between the two, the Prince mistakenly kills Xiao behind the paper screen, thinking it to be the King.

**Intermezzo: Continuing Slaughter.** Xiao Yi (Laertes), newly appointed to command at the border, is challenged by Qiu Rong. The Messenger reports the death of Prime Minister Xiao, his father.

7. **Maggots** Jia Xing and Fei Li, while escorting the Prince in exile, attempt to kill him in the wilderness, but are killed when Huo Xuguang (Horatio) comes to the Prince's rescue.

8. **Death of the Narcissus** The Queen laments her impurity as she hears the singing of Xiao Xiang, who is now mad. Xiao Yi returns to the court to avenge his father's death, and is talked into a plot to kill the Prince by the King. The Queen overhears their plot. Xiang drowns in the lake.

9. **Territory between the Quick and the Dead** At the graveyard, the Prince exchanges words with two gravediggers and learns about Xiang's death. Xiao Yi appears and the two fight. The King negotiates a future duel for them.

**Epilogue. End of Slaughter?** Qiu Rong and his troops invade the capital of Ding-An State (Denmark). In the meantime, the public combat was held in the court, in which the Prince and Xiao Yi hurt each other with the poisonous sword. The Queen knowingly drinks from the poisoned chalice. The Prince kills the King but dies himself shortly after. Qiu Rong arrives and becomes the new ruler.

5.2 **Structural Dimension: A "Linear" Narrative**

Like *Kingdom*, *Prince* displaces Shakespeare's tale to an entirely Chinese context to rediscover a new structure. It involved the following rewriting of *Hamlet*. The dramatic time is compressed from a 4-month period in the original to only a few days. Instead of setting the action one month after the old king's death, as does in *Hamlet*, *Prince* dramatizes the Prince's receiving his father's death back to back with his attendance of the royal wedding, thus highlighting
the Prince's immediate emotional shock. The old king's spirit does not delay like the ghost of the elder Hamlet\textsuperscript{173}, but reveals the truth of his murder to his son on the same wedding day, which causes the Prince's derangement. A faster, brisker pace takes place as the antagonist, the Uncle-King, takes an earlier initiative in preventing the Prince's revenge than Claudius does. He sends for the Prince's school fellows and orders the court performance to probe the Prince's mental condition and demands the Prince's death right after the play scene. The counteraction keeps the dramatic action moving quickly forward, its plot more "compact." Besides, in order for the action to progress in crescendo and end in climax, the mistaken killing of Prime Minister Xiao (Polonius) in the Queen's bed-chamber occurs at the end of the scene, instead of the beginning, as in *Hamlet*.

The attempt to eliminate the narrative mode in favor of a "dramatic" one is seen in the episodes which deliberately make the characters confront one another. Prime Minister Xiao interrupts his daughter Xiang (Ophelia) and the Prince at their rendezvous and bluntly refuses to give consent to their marriage, in contrast to the private instruction by Polonius to Ophelia against Hamlet's courtship in the source text. Also, instead of employing verbal account of a past incident in Hamlet's narrow escape on the way to England and his successful return to Denmark, *Prince* dramatizes the attempted assassination of the Prince by Jia Xing and Fei Li (Rosencrantz and Guildenstern) during his exile. This way a dramatic event is presented as one where time and action coincide and thus is supposedly more "dramatic" and less retroactive.

Finally, Fortinbras, who never encounters Hamlet in Shakespeare's design, is made into Qiu Rong, who challenges Prince Gongsun and Shao Yi in battles and

\textsuperscript{173}Old Hamlet's ghost does not come directly to Hamlet, as in the closet scene, but arrives gradually, first appearing twice to the soldiers and once again for the benefit of Horatio before encountering his son. The roundaboutness of the Ghost, observes J. L. Calderwood, corresponds with the nature of the revenge act in the play, that "for so long is not performed by Hamlet" (1985, 104).
is an outright threat to the whole nation. This direct confrontation is believed to help heighten the dramatic tension. To retain the Fortinbras subplot and to prevent it from distracting the main action (the Prince's revenge), the adapter inserts three scenes at the beginning ("Prologue"), middle("Intermezzo"), and end("Epilogue") of the play. These scenes are based on the convention of "juncture scene" (guochang) in Beijing opera, which connects and introduces major episodes. Together, they frame the main plot of the play and establish its central theme: war and vengeance. In each scene, Qiu Rong is depicted as a passionate avenger-son who wages war indefatigably; he is made into a symbol of abstract values, not a dramatic character, as his name denotes, "in honor of revenge." He repeats monotonously: "I can't live under the same heaven as my father's murderer! I must seek revenge!" There is a blind, mechanical quality in this part; his action suggests a cycle of retribution through war and violence.

A significant theme in Hamlet, delay, which exists on the structural level, is abandoned in the adaptation. The Chinese prince reveals no doubt about the validity of the Ghost's accusation, no trace of inaction, lapse in action, or lethargic melancholy. Prince Gongsun's action clearly follows external events and moves in a compact and rapid fashion. In comparison with the original, many external events are shaped and bent by Hamlet's character. One distinct example is Prince's playing down of the scene in which Hamlet encounters but lets go the chance to kill the praying Claudius by convincing himself that Claudius should be killed in a situation where his soul can be damned (III. iv. 94-5). The Chinese Prince never gets such a close chance, for apparently the King remains heavily guarded throughout the play. The Prince delivers only two short soliloquies (by singing arias), one in the end of the first scene, roughly at the

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174 The "Epilogue" (zhongmu) in Prince is actually a short transitional scene (guochang) attached to a regular scene (the tenth episode of the play). There is no scene division because the action is continuous.
same moment when Hamlet gives the first of his five soliloquies, and the other at the end of the play, just before his death, in which he laments rather than philosophizing. In-between, he is a resolute, well-motivated avenger, his action swift, responsive, and efficient. In this adaptation, Shakespeare's tragedy is transformed back into its prototype, a revenge play, as the title suggests.

The result of rewriting of Hamlet is a play which conforms to the "linear" structure commonly seen in traditional Chinese narratives, and which presents dramatic incidents in a chronological order, in a simple causal relationship, and without subplots. Each episode is an independent theatrical design and connects with the others only on the plot level. In Beijing opera, this structure is particularly tied to the performative demand. Each is given a subtitle to identify its central action or subject matter. Under such a structural scheme, this adaptation simply takes the contour of Hamlet's tragic plot but does without Shakespeare's complex architectonic structure.

Shakespeare designs and groups the episodes in Hamlet according to the thematic concepts contained in the dramatic action of the play. In this way, he transforms the primitive Danish story into a complex dramatic structure in which character relationships, verbal imagery, order of scenes, and subplots evolve from the major themes of the play. For instance, in Hamlet, Act I, the scene about

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175 Qiu Rong's episode is not integrated into the main plot, and remains separate from the dramatic action structurally throughout the play.
176 As evidence of each episode's relatively independent existence, a scene in Prince which Wang Anqi originally wrote about the Prince's ordering of the players to perform a specific piece for the court, an equivalent of the Mousetrap in Hamlet, is later completely cut by the director, possibly due to time constraints. Omission of the scene seems to affect only plotting (that is, the causal effect--Did the Prince write the inset play? The adaptation never explains.). In contrast, Shakespeare's every formal element, be it characterization, verbal image, or the order of scenes, is a significant part of the structural whole, and therefore contributes to the total meaning of the play. The difference in semiotic signification between the Chinese and Shakespeare's text is the difference between the "dramatic" and the "narrative." Further discussion of the structural difference between the traditional Chinese drama and the classical Western drama can be found in Lan Fan (1992).
Claudius is placed between two Ghost scenes, and the scene where Hamlet meets Claudius is placed close to with the scene where he encounters the Ghost. This design clearly forms a triangle of Uncle, Father, and Son on the thematic level, and Villain, Victim, and Avenger in the plot level (Jenkins 1982: 128). The rest of the play echoes and makes variations from this basic motif, particularly in the use of a play-within-the-play in the mid-point of the action. In addition, Shakespeare uses subplots as foils to the main plot, creating other sons whose revenge actions contrast with, and cut through, Hamlet's. Fortinbras reflects Hamlet in his being the son of a dead king and nephew of a reigning king. Laertes's revenge action further reverses Hamlet's role--into a father-killer, and thus the object of revenge. The irony of the two sons butchering each other further reveals the dual nature of revenge.

Hamlet appears to be much less compatible structurally to Beijing opera than do other Shakespeare plays, particularly Macbeth. Macbeth is more suitable for translating into Beijing opera's linear structure because it has a "classical simplicity of action" which focuses on "one single crucial choice" (Whitaker 1965: 183). In Hamlet, however, not only are there more events and characters crammed in its main plot, but also a subplot parallels the main plot in theme and events; these elements further complicate the structure and syntax of the play (183). This appears to explain why Hamlet has created greater difficulty in the intercultural adaptation than Macbeth.

5.3 Psychological Dimension: Lyrical Expression of "Heart"

In Prince, the aesthetic interest lies not so much in what the conflict is as in how the conflict impacts on a character emotionally. Hamlet's plot is only an agent for bringing out the emotional expressions of the Chinese characters. This aesthetic emphasis on "heart," characteristic of the Chinese lyric tradition, creates an extra dimension to the revenge story: the love motif. The world of the
play can be described as one of loss of love, in which the characters attempt to restore love without avail. The dramatic action closely follows the internal logic of the major characters and depicts their pursuit (or failure) of love in the course of the tragic sequence.

It is important to note that as a mental state, the "heart" (qing) is different from what is usually described in English as "psychological truth." It emphasizes the emotive aspect. Its expression is usually delivered in a self-reflective speech or aria about things from the past, often drawing an analogy from non-human objects or natural scenery which corresponds to the character's "mindscape" (cf. Lan Fan 1992: 39-43). Each stylized expression is a "lyrical peak" celebrating a moment of inner revelation. Shifting from one to another major character, including the Prince, Xiao Xiang, the Ghost, and the Queen, these emotive expressions echo, contrast, elaborate each other, and together they compose the poetic totality of the play.

The first two scenes depict the Prince's painful learning about the inconsistency of love. In the wedding of the Queen and his King-Uncle, the saddened Prince expresses a son's love and respect for his deceased father and laments the loss of family bond in his mother's hasty re-marriage. He does not directly protests the "frailty" of women, as Hamlet does. What he soliloquizes about is his being left alone to a lonely journey of life (See Plate 9). Love, and particularly family love, is dissipated and the child loses his shelter, his spiritual home. In the next scene the Prince renounces the prospect of marriage with his fiancee, Xiang, despite her tender and reassuring pledge of love (Sc. 2). The "Get thee to a nunnery" scene (Hamlet III. i) is translated musically, into a duet; Hamlet's intense, violent breakup with Ophelia is transformed by a lyric-based aesthetic principle and becomes highly stylized. The poetic expression in the arias draws on elements from nature. While Xiang evokes gusty autumn wind to
sweep away the "rueful things" on earth, the Prince sees in nature only destructive forces that bury and ruin lives. While she prays for the happy return of the spring sun and nature's rebirth after the severe winter, he perceives no such hope but only bleakness in the future. It is the Prince's "farewell to love" scene disguised in the harmony of the conventional setting (lovers' rendezvous; a love duet).

To a great extent, Xiang is in a much happier condition than is Ophelia in Hamlet in her relationship with the protagonist. The Prince has exchanged vows with her before going off to war against Qiu Rong, and their nuptials, blessed by their parents, will take place when he returns in victory (Sc. 2). Her forthright and passionate expression of love for him contributes a much brighter hue to the adaptation than the "much deceived" Ophelia does to Hamlet. Xiang comforts the dejected Prince by asserting that he still has her after his family is dissolved (Sc. 2). This character is in line with the renowned heroines in Chinese romantic drama of the Yuan and Ming Dynasties who are well-cultivated and chaste, and, seeing love as the primary and entire meaning of life (for the social and familial systems limit their opportunity to recognize other dimensions and values of life), are brave in pursuing their true love (cf. Li Yuanzhen 1981).

The rewriting of Ophelia in Prince is a cultural reconsideration. An upper-class young lady in ancient Chinese society, Xiang is unlikely to be able to meet a young man on a regular basis without a marriage engagement. Moreover, it can be considered indecent by the Chinese audience that a virgin is used as a sexual decoy by her elders, including her father, to test a mad young man and then is exposed under his violent emotional outburst and verbal assault as happens with Hamlet in III. i. Thus Hamlet's pungent remarks and profane language towards Ophelia are much softened in the adaptation.
Scenes 3 and 6 are antithetical; the old king's ghost and the Queen reveal their "hearts" respectively, each giving an individual version of why their marriage failed. The Ghost commands his son to avenge him, but one of his motives appears to be jealousy. Old Hamlet repeatedly reminds his son not to take action against Gertrude, but to "Leave her to heaven./ And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge/ To prick and sting her" (I. v. 86-7). This lenient attitude is greatly changed in the Chinese Ghost, who vehemently accuses the Queen of adultery and urges the Prince to slay her: "She lured the snake into the court to steal my crown; She marred her chastity by mating with a brother-in-law" (Sc. 6). But apparently he never loved, as the Prince later learns from the Queen; he was a bloodthirsty warlord preferring slaughter in battle over connubial bliss.

Focus on the lyrical self-reflection results in fuller depiction of the Queen than of Gertrude in Hamlet. To a great extent, the Queen, Murong Feng, is the center of the tragic action in the adaptation; her pursuit of love virtually causes all the other characters' death. Far different from the "very dull and very shallow" Gertrude (Bradley 1960: 135), who remains content with her life and ignorant of Claudius' crime, the Chinese Queen is a "fallen beauty" who could not stay entirely innocent of her first husband's murder and bears guilty feelings about it. Her beauty makes her and victimizes her. She is a trophy and pet to both of her husbands; the first one raped her and made her queen, while the second lusted as much for her as for the throne. She admits to having committed adultery in her marriage with the old king, an ethical violation of which Gertrude is not accused by Hamlet. It is likely that she has knowledge of the old king's murder. Interrogated by the Prince (See Plate 12), she sings a lengthy aria to reveal the "truth" of her first marriage—a lifeless and hypocritical one, for she was literally imprisoned in a luxurious but morbidly lonely palace until she generated illicit
love with her brother-in-law. She offers self-defense, rather than apology, which we often wish Gertrude would give when confronted by Hamlet.

The lyrical expression of "heart" is not only limited to verbal expressions. The dominant emotion of a scene forms a particular lyrical code utilizing the performative elements (rhetorical, musical, kinetic, and histrionic); the synthesis of these elements contributes to great lyrical intensity which is the aesthetic peak moment. This is seen in the theatrical translation of the scene in Hamlet in which, after the Danish Prince learns from the Ghost about the murder of his father he is brought to a near breaking-point, made apparent by his "wild and whirling words" to his friends and by the hysterical remarks about the "fellow in the cellargae" (I. v. 139; 158). The Beijing opera production treats this emotional shock as something which is beyond linguistic expression and which should be conveyed in kinetics. In Scene 3, in a long sequence of pantomime orchestrated by the percussive music in escalating rhythm, the Prince dances grotesque and epileptic-like movements drawn from Beijing opera conventions which depict the mingling of sorrow and rage, excitement and intoxication, and climax in a stiff fall on the back (jiangshi). Thus the character's emotional state and psychological transformation are entirely externalized and stylized. Only in the next scene, through the King, are we informed that the Prince has gone "mad."

When the lyrical moment progresses, the dramatic action is temporarily suspended, giving full stress on the inner experience of the character. The plot is but an external structure to unfold such subjective expression. When the Prince is told about Xiang's death by the Gravedigger, he bursts into singing an aria which echoes the narcissus image recurrent in Xiang's songs and evokes their love vows (Sc. 9). Only after the completion of this aria does Xiao Yi (Laertes) lunge at the Prince to avenge his sister, and thus the dramatic action resumes. In the same way, the Queen's final self-revelation (Sc. 10) freezes the heat and
commotion of the combat between the Prince and Xiao Yi. Not until she finishes the aria and dies does the lyrical timelessness break into the progression of plot, and Yi resumes his attack on the Prince.

In contrast to the poetic voice of the "lyrical I," the dramatic action of *Prince* is forwarded by those characters who unfold the plot, the "narrative we." In this play, the King, Prime Minister Xiao, Jia Xing and Fei Li, and Xiao Yi form this collective voice. Through dialogue or monologue they prepare the external situation (*jing*) for the expression of emotion (*qing*). The alternation of lyrical and narrative voices organizes the basic structure of the play. The spectator, therefore, is brought in and out of each subjective reality during the course of the play. As occurs in viewing a Chinese landscape painting, the spectator follows a multi-focal perspective and sees each object of the landscape equally and fully revealed, instead of seeing the objects positioned in a hierarchical relation through a focused, single perspective as in realistic painting.

*Hamlet* unfolds a very different epistemological process from the Chinese adaptation. To a great extent, the reality is constructed through one individual perspective—the hero’s; other characters of the play often appear as satellites in the formation of this reality, giving him raw materials to probe the riddles of human nature and behavioral range, or simply to confirm his view of them. The complex form and language of the play echo the complex thought process of the protagonist and the complex world of reality he perceives. As Maynard Mack

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177I borrow this concept and distinction from Sai-shing Yung (1990) in his semiotic study of Chinese Yuan Tsa-chu drama as a generically lyrical form. According to him, two types of languages function differently to achieve an ideal medium of lyrical expression. Quoting Ralph Freeman (*The Lyrical Novel*, 1961), the "lyrical progressions...[act] through variation and expansion of themes, changes in rhythm and elaboration of images to reach a point of greatest intensity at which the poet's vision is realized" (86).
declares, "the mystery at the heart of Hamlet" lies in "Hamlet's world," and the mood and tone of the whole play are formed through this character's vision:

Hamlet's world is pre-eminently in the interrogative mood. It reverberates with questions, anguished, meditative, alarmed. There are questions that in this play...mark the phrases and even the nuances of the action, helping to establish its peculiar baffled tone. There are other questions whose interrogations, innocent at first glance, are subsequently seen to have reached beyond their contexts and to point towards some pervasive inscrutability in Hamlet's world as a whole. (1968: 49)

In other words, the center of interest in Hamlet is first and foremost grounded in the psychological state of the hero. The Chinese adaptation, in contrast, takes interest in dramatizing how each major character balances his or her relationship to the others, how harmony is reached between individual desire and familial (or social) obligations.

5.4 Moral Dimension

The Chinese adaptation reflects an attempt to view the complicated and violent world of Shakespeare from a moralistic and edifying perspective. According to Wang Anqi, the adapter, the play is "a Chinese response to the moral dilemma of Hamlet" (1990a: 11). The moral universe of the play is clearly polarized between the virtuous and the vicious, as in traditional Chinese plays. The heroic Prince is on one end of the moral spectrum, the vicious King on the other, and the rest of the characters fall in between. All the characters (perhaps with the exception of Xiang) end in appropriate ways according to each individual's moral merit.

This modification is made to accommodate not only the native performance system, particularly the role types and their inherent moral nature, but also the precepts of humanity in traditional culture. The modification can be understood as necessary judging from the reception of the earliest production of Hamlet in China, in which the audience generally felt the play incomprehensible, and from
the opinion of Chinese translators of Shakespeare, who have found this tragedy particularly difficult in crossing cultural borders.

According to Chang Chen-Hsien, the 1942 production in Chongqing, Sichuan, based on a faithful translation of Shakespeare's text by Liang Shiqiu, greatly challenged the Chinese audience's sense of moral decorum (See 3. 4). Simon Chau also points out in his 1981 study on Chinese translations of Hamlet that the cultural gaps which the play may induce in an average Chinese reader can be greater than the linguistic gaps, especially the tragedy's lack of didacticism (75-203). In particular, the three Chinese traditional concepts of theatre seem altogether absent in Hamlet: moralization of the story, the exaltation of the hero, and an ending that endorses poetic justice (77). Under this view, Hamlet seems to philosophize rather than conveying particular moral message; it fails to portray the protagonist as an entirely virtuous figure; and it lacks a morally gratifying ending. There are other cultural barriers, including Hamlet's delay in revenge, suggesting his lack of filial piety and moral integrity; Hamlet's doubt about his father-ghost's words, offending the notion of filial piety; his savage treatment of Ophelia, violating the propriety between the two sexes; Gertrude's behavior in her marriage, revealing her lack of shame and proper womanhood; the villain Claudius, not being represented as a corrupt tyrant, but as a mature, seasoned politician; Polonius, a generally well-intentioned man and kind father, getting an ignominious death; and the demise of poor Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (77-79).

In Prince, Shakespeare's characters are turned into archetypes, larger-than-life figures with abstract values which help the audience distinguish the good from the villainous. The Prince, Gongsun Yu, is a paragon of society and a filial son of the family. He is spared the moral ambivalence and pathological problems often found in Hamlet, such as melancholy, suicidal desire, and the
tendency to procrastinate. Most unlike Hamlet, he does not possess a reflective personality and rarely engages in philosophizing; his language presents little interpretive difficulty. Cast in the traditional Beijing opera role of "young scholar-soldier" (wen-wu xiaosheng), the Prince represents all-round virtue: a heroic and courageous man who is prompt in action; a future ruler who is well-cultivated in the classics; a witty and young lover engaged in an amorous relationship (Wang Anqi 1993). Hamlet never appears to his audience according to Ophelia's description, "The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword" (III. i. 153); but we see such a image vividly represented in Prince Gongsun Yu.

Yet the Prince is morally more sophisticated than traditional Chinese heroes for he provides a "modern" reconsideration of the value of revenge (bao chou). A forgiving warrior, he understands, though does not accept, the cause of his enemy, perceiving the futility of blind return of violence for violence. In fighting Qiu Rong, he raises a rhetorical question: "Revenge seeking revenge--is there an end to it?" and answers it himself: "Let it be and be ever so free" ("Prologue"). This attitude may be considered cowardice in traditional context, but, to the modern audience, is moderate and correct, particularly in contemporary law-enforced society.

The King, conceived as a jing\textsuperscript{178} role, is rendered a much more simplified villain and yet a stronger antagonist, compared with his prototype, Claudius. Not a diplomatic and competent ruler or a loving husband, he is a rash usurper-tyrant motivated by greed and lust. A predator, the King is eager to orchestrate the Prince's death from the beginning. He retains the Prince in the court in order to keep a watchful eye on him (Sc. 1). Twice he impulsively contemplates executing the Prince right there in the court, only to be dissuaded by his prime minister

\textsuperscript{178}See Note 158. Jing generally depicts awe-inspiring characters, such as chiefs of bandits, spirits, obdurate judges, uncouth warriors, and cold-blooded officials. Traditionally, the face of a of jing player is heavily colored and patterned by ink, therefore the role is also called "painted face" (Hsu 1985: 43).
Like Claudius, he masterminds the single combat as a double-edged plot for killing both his instrument Xiao Yi and the Prince (Sc. 10). In addition, the court performance is his "Mousetrap" to reveal the truth of the Prince's madness, rather than his nephew's design to catch his conscience, although it ends up revealing his guilt (Scene 4). After the play-scene, the King retreats into a private room and immediately plots the death of the Prince with Prime Minister Xiao, Jia Xing, and Fei Li. Alone, he gives a monologue equivalent to Claudius's prayer to God. Although his self-reflection shows some repentance ("These hands of mine have been stained with my brother's blood, how can I smear them with my nephew's?"); it actually strengthens his resolution to prevent the slightest danger ("Raising a tiger at home, you end up ruining yourself.") (Sc. 5). Claudius' love for Gertrude is re-interpreted in the adaptation as hypocritical, based on a need for power and possession. It appears that the Chinese King married her for the throne, and he would sacrifice her, if need be, to protect his power position. Perhaps for the Chinese adapter, caring love and political savoir faire are incompatible features in a villainous figure, and should be edited out in order not to confuse the audience. The King dies from drinking the poisoned wine rather than by the sword, like Claudius. The King's end stresses the traditional "eye for eye" retribution, as the Prince claims,

You incestuous, lewd, murderous scoundrel, you murdered my parents with poison. Now I want you to taste the pain from the poison working inside your body and killing you! (Sc. 10)

Prime Minister Xiao belongs to the antagonist side counteracting the Prince's attempts at avenge; he, Jia Xing, and Fei Li form the "King's men" in the play. He is portrayed as a confidant to the King who lacks fatherly love and dedication to his duty, two qualities often perceived in Polonius. It is unclear if he was involved in the murder of the old king, but he has full knowledge of it and is aware of the King's desire to get rid of the Prince. Xiao may not have been
particularly loyal to the old king, judging by his flattering attitude towards the reigning King and by his insensitive reminding of the Prince to call the King "Father" at the royal wedding (Sc. 1). Although he does not employ his daughter to test the Prince's madness as Polonius does, Xiao has no hesitation in using her as an excuse to probe into the Prince's motive in offending the King. He tells the King that if he is found eavesdropping on the Queen's conference with the Prince, he will pretend to have been sent by Xiang to inquire upon the Prince's health. His hypocrisy wins great trust from the King. His rule of thumb is "if you want to play dark tricks, make sure to wear an honest face" (Sc. 5). Cast in the role of chou, the clown type, he expresses self-importance with banal commonsense. Because of his moral nature, he deserves an ignominious, and somewhat comical, death.

Jia Xing and Fei Li are shadow puppets manipulated by the King, and they are much more deeply involved in the King's crimes than Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in Hamlet. The Prince's friends from youth, they are believed by the King to be able to decode the Prince's lunatic behavior. In the original play, Hamlet asks Horatio to judge the "seeming" of the King by the King's response to The Murder of Gonzago. Here it is the King who commands Jia and Fei to keep an eye on the Prince during the court performance and to make a clinical diagnosis about his madness (Sc. 4). While Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are merely agents willing to bring Hamlet to the destination of death, Jia and Fei are the actual executors. They marshal him to another country and attempt to assassinate him on the way (Sc. 7). The Prince defends himself and kills the two, assisted by his friend Huo Xuguang (Horatio). This change makes poetic justice in the death of the two much more explicit than the original does. Jia Xing and Fei Li "reap what they have sown," as the Chinese audience would comment. Hamlet's callousness and indifference about their deaths ("They are not near my conscience, their
defeat/ Does by their own insinuation grow") is given a solid demonstration in the target play.

Xiao Yi (Laertes) has a number of similarities to the Prince; but he is basically a virtuous man led astray. Like brothers, they have known each other since childhood and are good partners in practicing fencing (Sc. 2). The King replaces the Prince with Yi to defend Qiu Rong. And, like the Prince, Yi receives news of his father's sudden death and rushes back to the capital, taking revenge to his own hands. While the Prince seeks to confront his enemy, Yi becomes the villain King's tool and ally, seeking to poison the Prince in their open contest. Yi is an avenger in his own right, but his means are clearly wrong. His revenge is tainted with the evil which he seeks to destroy, and he dies of his own device—poison—in the end.

The polarization of good and evil echoes the contrast of old and young in Prince. Authoritative oppression and manipulation of the innocent, idealistic youth by their elders is a familiar experience, particularly in the history of Chinese politics. In the play, the young Prince is asked to stay away from battles and, in the court, he encounters the corrupt politics and moral deceptiveness of his respected elders. The royal couple and Prime Minister Xiao soon reveal their hidden guilt. The King looks for chance to murder the Prince. The Queen begs her son to leave the past behind so as to maintain harmony. Prime Minister Xiao changes his colors like a chameleon; seeing the Prince bereft of the throne, he immediately forfeit the marriage engagement between his daughter and the Prince. Even the Ghost of the old king is revealed as a soul of sinning nature, having taken pleasure in slaughter during his life and crying for a bloody revenge on his wife after his death.

In contrast to the morally tainted elders, the Prince and a number of younger characters are portrayed as innocent and faithful, if not naive and
easily manipulated. Xiao Xiang remains a symbol of innocence. Her purity elicits a strong sense of shame from the Queen, which motivates the Queen's moral transformation. Also stressed in the play is the Prince's loyal friendship with Huo Xuguang. A royal sidekick to the Prince, Huo is not a scholar in philosophy like his original, Horatio, but a man of action and practical wisdom. He rescues the Prince from assassination by Jia Xing and Fei Li, and urges the Prince to strike back at the King. Together, they draft the letter to the King, warning him about their attempt at revenge, and, as action heroes, they travel back to the court side by side (Sc. 7). In the last scene, Huo draws the sword to prevent the King from escaping while the Prince forces the poisoned wine into the King's mouth. Finally, the Prince expires in Huo's arms (Sc. 10). Huo's risking his life to protect the Prince and fulfill the mission of revenge translates Horatio's desire to follow Hamlet to death at the end of Hamlet ("I am more an antique Roman than a Dane," V. ii. 3-46). Like a chivalric character from the traditional Chinese literature, Huo Xuguang places loyalty (zhong) and integrity (yi) before his own life—the highest form of friendship in the Chinese conception.

Having said that, the younger generation is easily victimized and corrupted by the elders. Xiao Yi's vengeance is exploited by the King as an instrument not only to kill the Prince but also to turn against himself. The scene where the two conspire to kill the Prince in the fencing contest simultaneously presents the death of his maddened sister, Xiang, in a pantomime. While the two men whisper to each other and gloat over their plot, Xiang is seen to drift to the river bank, which is represented by a long platform across the upstage, and jumps into the water below. The juxtaposition of evil and the death of the innocent vividly suggests that the virtuous maid is symbolically "poisoned" by treacherous politics, and that her naive brother is now being coerced into self-destruction. The play
conveys a great sense of loss of innocence. Huo Xuguang is silent at the end of the play, never meant to be the Prince's voice as Horatio is set up to be.

But Shakespeare's drama is not easy to adapt to strict moral didacticism. While the vicious characters all die ugly, humiliating deaths in the Chinese production (the realistic representation of struggling and screaming emphasizes their horrifying and yet comical ends), the death of the supposedly "good" characters, such as Xiang, the Prince, and the Queen, reflect an uneasy compromise between traditional Chinese values and Shakespeare's not moralized portrayal of human condition.179 Like Ophelia, the blameless Xiang dies an unjustified death. As her death may be intolerable to the audience of traditional opera, the production attempts to transcend it by theatrical means. The lyricism expressed in her death scene through music, costume, and spectacle gives an aesthetic distance to her actual suffering. She is dressed in a white gown with an extraordinarily long train dragging across the stage, carrying plenty of flowers and moving in deliberately slow motion. With her theme music played in the background, Xiang's fall into the water appears ritualistic. In Chinese traditional color symbolism, white indicates purity as well as death. Modern spectators may also associate a white gown with virginity and wedding. Therefore, the spectacle signifies that a chaste virgin is sent to wed death, a sacrifice which would bring redemption to the corrupt world. The Prince's last aria suggests that Xiang remains in his last vision ("Only the fallen narcissus, I want to follow you—"). It also implies a reunion of the two unfulfilled lovers in their next life—a common ending in traditional Chinese drama which functions to redress tragic endings. Thus Xiang's death is greatly sentimentalized; the aesthetic serves to compensate its lack of clear moralism.

179 According to Johnson, Shakespeare "seems to write without any moral purpose." Jenkins, qualifying Johnson's statement, maintains that Hamlet has an "implicit" moral which is "simple and profound" (1982: 159).
The Chinese Queen's death is given a moral value; it is reinterpreted as a voluntary choice, rather than the death in ignorance that Gertrude accidentally brings to herself.\textsuperscript{180} In her death scene, the Queen drinks the wine which is prepared by the King for the Prince, with knowledge that it is poisoned. This makes her death an unmistakable moral gesture—to mend her tainted chastity and to solicit forgiveness from her son. The moral elevation in this character reinforces the poetic justice of the play, and evokes the artistic effect of "tragic pathos" that is much needed to balance the bloody, horrifying end of the play. We will return to this later.

The Chinese Prince's death particularly shows the adapter's strenuous efforts to accommodate a nontraditional perspective of revenge. The role and function of avenger are revised in this character in the course of the play. The plot establishes early on the need for him to take justice into his own hands. His cause—based on the traditional Chinese value of "reciprocity" (bao)—is valid especially when it involves harm to his parents; there is virtually only one way to get even: to kill one's enemy.\textsuperscript{181} Qiu Rong represents this single-minded view as he tries to shed blood in order to avenge blood. Likewise, the Ghost commands the Prince to avenge his murder, appealing to a son's indebtedness to his parents. Fundamentally, avenging one's parents is a form of filial piety as parents are life-

\textsuperscript{180}Although some Western productions (including the Olivier film) show that Gertrude willingly drinks the poisoned wine, Shakespeare did not specify it in his text.

\textsuperscript{181}The concept of "reciprocity" is based on the Chinese value of relationships. According to Wei Zhengtong, the concept was a transformation of gratitude towards Nature (or Heaven) into concrete forms of return among human relationships. In Confucianist philosophy, among all kinds of relations, the relationship with one's parents is most primal. Therefore, revenge against the enemies of one's parents takes the severest measures. In avenging other relationships, such as those of brothers or neighbors, revenge takes milder forms. In Chinese popular literature and cinema depicting the chivalry and prowess of the ancient swordsmen (wuxia), revenge is a dominant subject from which the plot and characterization are constructed. See Gu Yujun et al (1990: 27).
givers and deserve the unconditional return of service even if they are morally defective.

But as the play proceeds, there is the reservation that private revenge is not legally permissible even if the avenger has good cause. Besides, it is difficult to justify the cause of vengeance because, from a modern epistemological perspective, truth is only partial; right and wrong, especially in moral issues, are often difficult to determine. This reservation is dramatized in the Prince's struggle between deciding to kill his mother for his father's sake or to forgive her. He concludes at the end that man can hardly judge the "right and wrong, love and hate" in others, and any such attempt is only presumptuous (Sc. 10). Therefore, a non-traditional moral concept following the Christian values of forgiveness and love, "repaying injury with kindness" (yi de bao yuan), comes to replace the traditional Confucian idea of "repaying injustice with justice" (yi zhi bao yuan), on which the traditional Chinese concept of revenge is based. The Prince forgives the Queen and Xiao Yi for what they have done, but resolutely kills the King to redress the injustice he has inflicted.

Hamlet's delay is radically modified to accommodate the moral adequacy of a "forgiving avenger" which Prince Gongsun represents. In Hamlet, the motif of delay is tied up with the structure of the play and brings forth an inevitability of events that lead to the tragic ending. In the adaptation, procrastination is not interpreted as an intrinsic quality of the hero because this would suggest the protagonist's neglect of filial piety and cowardice in his character. Rather, it is interpreted as a kind of hesitation, or moral scruple in the character, which is

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182 Confucius advocates the obligations to "repay injustice with justice" (yi zhi bao yuan) and to "repay kindness with kindness" (yi de bao de). Wei Zhengtong observes that Confucius did not encourage the lofty ideal of "repaying injury with kindness" because it is "not human," whereas to "repay injustice with justice" is more applicable in human society. Lin Yutang considers that the lofty ideal derives from a religious sentiment and therefore is beyond ordinary human nature. See Gu Yujun (1990: 5-7).
caused by his confrontation with contrasting perspectives about moral guiltiness and obligation of revenge.

After the play-scene, the Prince encounters his mother in her bedchamber, pressing her to confess her involvement in the murder of his father. The revelation of her willing adultery is not as shocking to him as her unfulfilled, life-in-hell marriage to her first husband. An orphan from childhood, she was abducted by the old king on the road. A Cinderella who suddenly becomes the princess of a royal palace purely because of her beauty, she nonetheless never enjoyed a happy-ever-after life, for her prince on the white horse was "addicted to bloody warfare." And then came the rescuer, her brother-in-law, whose "tender love saved me out of the dark hell pit" (Sc. 6). Her confession reveals the nature of her adultery, which derives more from emotional gratitude than from pure lust. The Queen pleads for her son's natural love and compassion against the judgment of moral absolutism. She begs forgiveness only from heaven, for she has never meant to harm the old king and therefore should not be accused of violating her womanhood, even if she knows how he died. The Prince sighs, "I thought I only needed to avenge the wronged and restore the heavens' justice. Why, this is the entangled net of grudge and gratitude, hate and love!" (Sc. 6) In the original text, Hamlet never overtly questions the rightness of revenge as such.

In contrast, the "divine justice," which the Ghost demands, particularly concerning the killing of the Queen, seems a private vendetta based on jealousy. Just as the Prince's resolution dwindles at his mother's words, the Ghost appears to whet his son's almost blunted purpose, reminding him of duty, justice, and retribution. Torn between his parents, the Prince now seems to lose his voice and can only repeat his father's words in accusing his mother. This scene presents the tug of war between the two values. In its climax, the three characters sing a
trio in which a sequence of accusation, confession and argumentation is expressed musically:

**Ghost [Sings]** She lured the snake into the court to steal my crown. She marred her chastity by mating with a brother-in-law.

**Gongsun [Sighs]** But—Ay!

**Queen** [Cannot see the Spirit. Sings] There is no other soul in the chamber. Most peculiarly he converses with vacant air. Staring, his eyes wide, he cries out in rage. This pathetic scene leaves my heart burnt, my heart burnt.

**Gongsun [Sings]** Confusion makes my mind perplexed and indecisive.

**Ghost [Sings]** Sacred spirits urge you to take action. [Sings with the Prince] Sacred spirits urge you to raise the killing knife!

**Queen [Sings]** Pray, do not exhaust your wits and weary your soul. Sweep away the past altogether from your memory.

**Gongsun [Sings]** You lured the snake into the court to steal the crown. You marred your chastity by mating with a brother-in-law!

**Queen [Sings]** I’ve never killed nor lost my proper womanhood, Wherefore do you torture me with these heartless words? Your father glorified himself with fame from the wars, And never cared for my lonely tears shed in the deep palace.

**Ghost [Sings]** Dressed in my blood-stained war robe I guarded my nation.

Glory and wealth, which one were you wanting?

**Queen [Sings]** Luxurious life is not the wonder drug to happiness.

**Ghost [Sings]** Lewd, evil desires blinded your heart.

**Queen [Sings]** Pity your mother, Son, show me your filial piety.

**Ghost [Sings]** Your father is still bound in hell with the wronged justice.

**Queen [Sings]** Cast away thy dark clouds— **Ghost [Sings]**

Burned by the hell flames—

**Queen [Sings]** Spring sunshine embraces— **Ghost [Sings]**

burnt and grilled—

**Queen [Sing together]** Only listen to Mother and drop your vengeance.

**Spirit** Only listen to Father and avenge soon. Avenge soon!.

**Gongsun** Enough!... [Ghost disappears.] [Sings] Confused, weeping, I feel the world is spinning, and the five viscera in my body are stirring.

**Queen** How is it with you, my son?

**Gongsun [Sings]** Passion and love sow the seed of sin. (Sc. 6)
In the end, the Prince suffers emotional derangement which finds willing relief as he thrusts his sword at the shadow behind the paper screen and mistakenly kills Prime Minister Xiao. The revenge act thus goes awry.

This episode changes the fundamental meaning of the source text. It reveals that the Ghost's account is biased in the sense that he did not give the full truth to his son before demanding the revenge against the Queen. It also makes the play-scene misfire thematically and dramaturgically. The loving couple of the Player King and Queen proves to be a false representation of the Prince's parents and therefore loses the mirror function instrumental to catching the conscience of the King. The episode changes the focus from the son-father-uncle dynamic in the source text into a focus on the triangular relationship of son-mother-father. Thus the adaptation is really about a mismatched marriage and its devastating impact on the child caught in-between. It is about a woman's seeking for a more gratifying sexual love within a predominantly patriarchal environment. More significantly, it is about a young man who feels lost when the myth of his parents' love is torn. Hamlet's conflict is ontological, rooted in the image and substance of Man which is represented and contrasted by his father and his uncle. Prince Gongsun's struggle is lodged in an ethical dilemma, as he asks himself what a son should do, caught between the opposite demands of his alienated parents, between love and duty, forgiveness and moral absolutism. The director Wu Xingguo, who also plays the Prince, sees the difference between Hamlet's conflict and Gongsun's as based upon the view of man in different cultural contexts. Hamlet reflects an individual's quest for meaning from God, while Prince Gongsun reflects an ethical balance within the society he inhabits:

The Western Hamlet reflects a religious connotation of self-redemption; his choice to live or not to live is the result of a conceptual exercise. But the Chinese Hamlet, who also faces the conflict between humanistic and ethical demands, reveals a scruple which is burdened by the "heart" (qing); his love for his mother, his
regret for his fiancée, his responsibility and honor as a son and a man, and his own forgiving nature are all at odds with one another. Thus I incorporate the motif of 'war' in the play, indicating the struggle between human relations, between family and state, and between love and hate, as "inevitable battles in man's existence." (1990a:13)

Hamlet's self-examination often reflects his parentage; he is both the descendant of a godlike father and the son of a mother who replaced Hyperion with the satyr. Prince Gongsun, too, reveals his nature as capable of forgiveness and love, but at the same time ruthless and vengeful, as when he kills Jia Xing, Fei Li, and the King without remorse. The Chinese Prince's hesitation does not lead to the tragic catastrophe dramatically, as Hamlet's delay does. Instead, it leads to a moral redemption which resolves the conflicts of the play. Therefore, the adaptation transforms a "flaw" in Hamlet into a morally productive quality in Prince Gongsun.

5.5 Tragic Pathos

Tragic pathos is fundamentally a "tragic sense of life." In Chinese theatre, this perception of the bitterness of life is often realized through a process of struggle between the virtuous and the vicious, the loyal and the treacherous, and the beautiful and the ugly in increasing frequency and intensity towards the end of a drama (Lan Fan 1992: 495). Pathos is not a generic characteristic; many traditional plays that involve pathos do not end in catastrophe, but in happy endings. Traditionally, tragic pathos creates a heart-wrenching effect as the audience sees the weak go through a personal plight caused by the injustice of society or the strong. Many tragic figures are women, from housewives to prostitutes, who are lower in social status and therefore are likely to engage the mass audience. As they persevere through suffering, their personal experiences arouse sympathy and admiration, instead of fear and awe, in the spectator. And with the emotional impact comes moral indignation and a cry for justice.
Melodramatic as some may call it following the Western definition of the tragic, pathos in Chinese theatre seeks first to move the audience emotionally in order to influence it morally (Lan Fan 1992: 495). In Prince, such tragic pathos is realized primarily by the Queen.

As the plot unfolds, it appears that, in her current marriage, the Queen is nothing more than a pet manipulated by the King. She is deceived by his acting, not knowing that his "concern" for her son comes from his desire to kill him. In a sense, she shares the misfortune with those tragic heroines in Chinese traditional drama who are victims of society (mainly in relation to men)—with one exception. She has committed adultery and incest and therefore is likely to lose the moral sympathy of the traditional spectator.

After her confrontation with the Prince, the Queen develops a new conscience which promotes her moral status and which prepares her to be the source of tragic pathos. She laments her impurity in comparison with the innocent, untainted Xiao Xiang, who resembles the narcissus standing firmly against the stream rather than the poplar flower drifting with the flow like herself. She denounces the King with a gesture when he approaches her, and overhears his plot with Xiao Yi about the murderous duel. Her moral elevation reaches its highest in the final scene, as she takes the poisoned wine intended for the Prince in order to "redeem" his love and forgiveness. "Let me drink it for you, my son," she says, "Now in this world only you and I are closest" (Sc. 10). It is also an act of withdrawal from the turmoil of life to enter into a realm of spiritual wholeness: "Ay, this life of mine can be summarized in one single word: love (qing). For it I've suffered. From this chalice, I hope to end the pain, and return to my purity and innocence" (Sc. 10). Before death, she repeatedly asks the Prince not to bear a grudge against her. Like many traditional Chinese heroines, she assumes all the blame to maintain the ultimate harmony in close relations.
Furthermore, her relinquishing of life can be seen as the result of her disillusionment about finding gratifying love in a male-dominant, corrupt world of the imperial family. Death is the only way out of such a futile pursuit.\textsuperscript{183} She chooses to end her life through the King's wine, as if to express that their union only poisons her in the end.

This tragic sense of life is echoed by the Prince's death shortly later, creating another peak moment of pathos. After Xiao Yi and the King are killed by poison, the Prince himself is now moribund. Unlike Hamlet, the Chinese Prince seldom reproaches himself throughout the play and has never lacked a "readiness" for the way life disposes of him. But his final words convey a clear sense of weariness and resignation, in sharp contrast with the solace Hamlet expresses upon facing death. Seeing it impossible to justify any moral accusation or to obtain a love which lasts, he sings of the limitation of man:

\begin{quote}
Gongsun [Sings]: ...Men are but grains of seed in the boundless sea. Their right and wrong, love and hate, who can judge? Only the fallen narcissus, I want to follow you—Where the heavenly wind blows, I will find a clean, quiet corner to rest myself. (Sc. 10)
\end{quote}

Especially in the last two lines, an almost escapist surrender of will and strength to a greater, unknown force of death is heard. He leaves no words for the nation to hear. But the rest is not silence. A total entropy is looming in the background as Qiu Rong surreptitiously breaks through the borders into the capital. While the King, Xiao Yi, and the Prince are locked in their private internecine struggle, the messenger twice reports Qiu's invasion but is ignored. In the final moment, the stage is covered with corpses, and the courtiers, including Huo Xuguang, quietly retreat from the dimmed, haunted court, while Qiu's troops rush in, swords brandished, silently seizing the throne like specially-trained \textit{ninjas}. The final

\textsuperscript{183}In a number of Chinese traditional plays, the female characters who seek happier sexual relationships outside their proper marriages are all portrayed as lewd, sensual or immoral, and they suffer death at men's hands.
image of the play is not of restored political and moral order, but of abhorrent, rampant vengeance.

5.6 Linguistic Dimension

Despite its being also a poetic drama, *Prince* reflects little similarity to the poetic language in *Hamlet*. The adapter Wang Anqi did not intend to translate Shakespeare's rhetoric into Beijing opera. And practically it is nearly impossible. While *Hamlet* is a speech drama, *Prince* belongs to music theatre; it is so much shorter than the original and a great number of its verse passages are meant to be sung rather than spoken. Wang's primary focus was to recreate refined language for Chinese theatre, because Beijing opera had long been criticized as a cruder form than its generic predecessors, the Chuanqi drama of the Ming Dynasty and the Kunqu drama of the early Qing Dynasty, due to its emphasis on performance. She strove to compose in *Prince* speeches and song passages that are literally evocative of the refined beauty of the Chinese poetic tradition. At the same time, Wang sought to translate the unfamiliar but essential imagery and motifs in Shakespeare into comprehensible, idiomatic Chinese expressions (1993).

The major characters of the play all have their unique rhetorical associations which help establish the individual musical and linguistic codes. Xiao Xiang is related to motifs from nature, particularly floral and water imagery, which signifies her purity. The only character in the play who has a "theme song," Xiang sings in praise of narcissus (*shuixian*—literally meaning "water fairy" in Chinese). Fresh and pure, it heralds the return of spring and represents fortitude to resist the bitter winter:

**Xiang [sings]:** Autumn water is their spirit and jade is their bone,
Snowy white they stand against the stormy wind.
When the world moves to the year's very end,
In bright moonshine and chilly frost, the narcissuses bloom.
Dust from thousands of years cannot stain them;
Dipped with the pure morning dews, they send off quiet fragrance. (Sc. 2)

The Prince echoes her a number of times, confirming the symbolism in her song. Water, another recurrent motif in Xiang's language, is an icon of cleansing and constancy. Her name itself recalls the Xiao and the Xiang, the most beautiful rivers in ancient Chinese mythology, where nymphs and fairies reside (Wang 1993). The Prince eulogizes the maid when learning of her death from the gravedigger: "You have drifted alone with the flowing water./ What a pure nymph you have truly been!" (Sc. 9) Through her figures of speech Xiang is purity and chastity personified, distinguished from other morally "tainted" characters.

If Xiang resembles the narcissus, the Queen is compared by the mad Prince to poplar blossoms, which drift with the flow and symbolize inconstancy particularly seen in women (Sc. 4). In reflection upon her suffering life from childhood to first marriage, the Queen sings of images of ice and snow. She seems to be subject to cold in a world without human warmth. A little flicker from the wedding tapers of her second marriage would suffice to warm her up, as implied in the inset play. The old king's Ghost, on the other hand, sings of his ordeal in the flames of purgatory. Fire imagery represents his unquenchable vengeance.

Classical literary works provide rhetorical references for the Prince. In commenting on women's inconstant love, the Prince alludes to the famous fable and dramatic piece by Taoist Zhuang Zhou, of a husband who fakes death to test his wife's chastity; it turns out she is seduced even before he gets buried. He also laments the extinction of such virtuous wives as Lady Mengjiang, who traveled thousands of miles to the Great Wall, where her husband was in forced labor on orders from the emperor, and, finding him dead, wailed until heaven was moved and toppled a portion of the wall; and another woman who waited for her husband's return in the hill until fossilized into stone; both legendary tales. Also,
the inset play takes the popular myth of Cowherd and the Weaving Maid to elaborate the idea of constant love, for the two stars—forever in love with each other—were allowed by heaven to meet only once a year. The poetic pleasure of the myth is the two lovers' undying passion for each other and their patient endurance till the very day of consummation. By contrast, "Love of the mortals only lasts for a wink of an eye," as the performer comments on the short-lived romance between the Player King and Queen, because the next moment he is poisoned and she embraces the killer.

Some of Prince Gongsun's "mad" rhetoric adapts Shakespeare's original diction directly. In the court, the Prince reduces his enemies to animals and announces that the whole court is "a prison" (Sc. 4). When asked by Jia Xing and Fei Li if he still recognizes them, he calls them "Pig-butchers" and "Murdering Dog-thieves," and says the court is full of "rats," including "a coward rat" (the King) and "a bunch of greedy rats" (his courtiers). The animal imagery here generally describes the King's "gang of scoundrels"; but it is not elaborated or developed in the rest of the play.

The Chinese context translates Hamlet's "the readiness is all" into a culturally permissible view towards death. The way in which Hamlet concludes is unusual in traditional Chinese drama, for both the virtuous and the evil perish on the same stage, and in the same way (poisoned). Hamlet's spirit triumphs at the end; he shows a composed, fortified calmness in light of the consequence of revenge action, death, as he says to Horatio, "We defy augury. There is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all" (V. ii, 215-8). C. S. Lewis considers this the moment when the once lost Prince again finds his way (qtd. in Knights 1964: 86). In the corrupt world of the Danish court, Hamlet dies with spiritual exultation.
The Chinese adaptation does not end with a "spirit-transcends-the-physical-death" victory, because mind-body duality is hardly a cultural theme. Instead, the play concludes with a total resignation to the Great Annihilation, accepting the ultimate overtaking of all human action and effort by nothingness. From the outset of the play, the Prince's action is charged with a Confucian spirit of exertion, in the vigorous redress of legal and ethical wrongdoing, in paying his dues to his parents, friends, and society, and in keeping his virtue and courage intact in the face of evil. But in the midst of his action, a Taoist and Buddhist awareness enters, calling for a quieting of effort, a tranquillity of will, and eventually the final rest--a return to Nature. There is a sense of relief and comfort in this eternal rest from the Buddhist view, which sees life not only as transient and fleeting, but also full of suffering due to attachment to lust, ambition, and hatred, and the craving for, the clinging to (cf. Soothill 1923).

The interface between action and inaction, between attachment and detachment, and variably between life and death, is clearly expressed by the Chinese Gravediggers (Sc. 9). Although they are cast in the chou (clown) type, they do not act comically nor speak in a crude way like the clowns in Hamlet V. i. Rather, they utter "profoundly ancient voices" about the themes of the play, as the stage direction indicates, and they look timeless, like hermits or even immortals from folklore, with their plain robes and white beards.

The sequence resembles a short philosophical dialogue which brings forth the major philosophical perspective of the play. On the imperfection of human existence, such as the short memory of man, evanescence of life, and uncontrollable will under the sway of fortune, they express a tragic awareness. Their didactic tone turns the often pungent quibbles on death by Shakespeare's fools into reconciliatory, commonsensical sayings. Hamlet's "the readiness is all" is reinterpreted here as a general attitude with which man braces himself up in
the cataclysmic experience of life. "The mind of Heaven is hard to probe; Nature is all indifferent"; "Once you've seen enough [of life's impermanence], and seen through it, you take it naturally." In particular, one Gravedigger speaks of an unfathomable fatalism which predetermines even a "sparrow's fall," quoting Hamlet's words. If death is to get us sooner or later, he asks, why does man still crave for external things such as fame and wealth? This Taoist-Buddhist "clown" suggests that human action and effort are futile and vain, and all ambitious expeditions and battles made by historical figures are forgotten after all. The other Gravedigger, disagreeing, asserts that despite human limitations, one needs to keep "struggling to achieve something, to create some contemporary legends, [so as to] develop culture and traditions." The philosophical message prepares Prince Gongsun (and his audience) for the violent final result of the play with a spiritual "readiness": life's greatest task should be faced with a Confucian endeavor conjoined with Taoist/Buddhist moral reconciliation.

5.7 A Performance Aiming for Spectacle

The performance of the Prince was characterized by unreserved theatricality, particularly in its acrobatic spectacle. Beijing opera is by nature a performance genre; its emphasis on the physical aspects of the theatre often suggests its reception as an entertainment of sensual pleasure. But to translate the pensive, metaphysical tragedy of Hamlet into a performance with vigorous martial acrobatics required an explanation. There were four major reasons, judging from the production process.

184 In a chapter subtitled "Sensuous and Intellectual Theatres: The Orient," Cheney sees the "sensuous enjoyments in life and in art" in the Eastern cultures that are often missing in the contemporary European-American culture. He suggests the introduction of the Eastern art may "awaken again our aesthetic sensibilities, to absorb the feel for imagery and color, and to express ourselves more fully in the richer overtones of dramatic performance" (1929: 104-5).
First, the choice was made to accommodate director-actor Wu Xingguo's acculturation as a wusheng (male martial role) actor, whose theatrical idioms were primarily kinetic. He externalized his character's imminent feelings and private thoughts, interpreting them physically. His histrionic specialty determined the transformation of Hamlet the thinker into a soldier (Wang 1993).

Second, eye-catching, ear-catching sensations were employed to accommodate the target venue of the production, the opulent, prestigious National Theatre in Taipei's Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Park. Resembling a Western opera house, the theatre had a proscenium stage that was wider and deeper (16mx14m) than the usual red-carpet stage of traditional opera, and even more so than the thrust platform stage of the Beijing opera tea-house theatre, where an intimate actor-audience relationship was integrated into the performance. For a house of over 1,500 spectators, a flow of audiovisual surprises seemed a logical choice to engage those in the last rows. Besides, there was a professional taboo in Beijing opera against leaving the scene too "cold," or too quiet; spectacle generally helped nurture the audience's enthusiasm.

The third reason considered the hermeneutic capability of the Chinese audience in following an unfamiliar text. The linguistic text by Wang Anqi was fraught with archaic literary allusions and poetic expressions, communicated musically, through stylized singing. It posed potential difficulty for the audience, who saw the play for the first time, to understand the arias particularly in the critical moments, such as when the Ghost recounted his murder and the Queen recalled her past. The solution was to let the non-verbal elements, such as lighting, sound, and other scenic effects, partake in the dramatic narrative. Thus spectacle could enhance the audience's comprehension of the play.

The last, and perhaps most important reason had to do with the director's attempt to reinvent Beijing opera by drawing elements from the modern Western
stage. Conventional staging of spectacle in Beijing opera was too "ethnic" and outdated, Wu Xingguo believed, to engage contemporary spectators emotionally and intellectually. Thus he sought to create a different theatrical narrative which could break away from Beijing opera's conventions. If there was anything comparable to his ideal of spectacle, it was the musical theatre in Broadway or the West End, in which spectacular stage pictures and mesmerizing musical numbers made plays easy to follow and enjoy for even the least initiated audience. In fact, there were some similarities between Beijing opera and the American musical. Both relied greatly on music to orchestrate the rhythm of the performance; both presented relatively simple plots and larger-than-life characters; and in both singing and choreographed dance formed essential modes of expression, occupying a large quantity of running time. But they were distinctively different in one respect. Whereas Beijing opera made no pretense to realism and pays little attention to the decor of the stage, the American musical often utilized elaborate scenic techniques to create grand, vivid theatrical illusions. The making of "atmosphere" or mood in the musical might help "enliven" Beijing opera's trite theatrical idioms, giving its "typed" scenes and roles empathic value and realistic details. Wu was impressed by how in Broadway productions the spectacle—scenery and audiovisual technical effects—could actively participate in the dramatic narrative.\(^\text{185}\)

Furthermore, the American musical epitomized professional excellence and commercial success in an age where other media such as cinema, TV and pop concert performances lured audience away from traditional theatre. Wu Xingguo was eager to re-popularize Beijing opera and made it again an institution of

\(^{185}\text{In an interview, Wu Xingguo highly praises the scenic effects of the musicals which he has seen in the West, such as Miss Saigon and Phantom of the Opera, and the managerial system behind these megaproductions (1992). His perception may have been a reaction to government-funded theatre system such as Taiwan's Beijing opera, within which little freedom in experimentation is allowed.}\)
public art—a lively cultural icon as it used to be several decades ago, and as the Elizabethan theatre once was. The American model could lend some insight as to how to turn government-subsidized, ideologically-shackled "national treasure" into compelling and competitive sub-culture again. Wu called the Prince production *xin wutaiju*, or "new stage performance," rather than Beijing opera, de-emphasizing the native tradition and its specific cultural, historical context.

The result was a high-tech spectacle mixing the conventionalized, symbolic style with the mimetic, atmospheric representation. It was still an unmistakably Beijing opera play due to the acting mode. But there were elements in the *mise en scène* that were distinctively foreign. Fast-paced changes of setting, heavy use of lighting and sound effects, and devices which created the effect of close-up, slow motion, fade-in and -out, and montage were borrowed directly from the American musical and film.

Take for example the production's opening scene, "Prologue." This scene, reminiscent of the usually brief, introductory prologue from a traditional play, had only ten short exchanges between the characters, including the Messenger's announcement of the old king's death. But in actual performance it lasted more than five minutes. This scene represented "an earth-shaking battle," according to the stage direction. Since the motif of war was central to the play, director Wu Xingguo intended to convey the intensity and scope of a battle in a stunning spectacle. As the house light dimmed, specially designed music of percussion and strings which might be described as "new age" gave rise to a grave atmosphere suggestive of remote northern China where civilization bordered the great desert. Increasingly loud drumming anticipated the battle. As the stage was gradually lit up in crimson rays that resembled sunrise, two groups of soldiers emerged from each side of the upstage platform and crept down a flight of steps in slow motion into stage center, their swords and armor glittering and banners waving. Then
each troop paced quickly in circles, side by side with one clockwise and the other counterclockwise, indicating two opponent troops were marching to the battlefield. Their generals—Prince Gongsun and Qiu Rong—appeared on the platform, each in fully-equipped martial attire gesticulating preparation for war. Once the two troops were in position at stage center in symmetric alignment, confronting each other, an outbreak of Beijing opera percussive music ignited a heated fight between them. Soldier to soldier and general to general, all were engaged in fast, well-orchestrated conventional stage combat. A sudden sound of gongs abruptly shifted intense fighting movements into slow-motion dance, completely transforming the rhythm of the scene and muffled the loud noise from striking weapons and cries from soldiers; only the visual images of killing were present. This created an effect that the war was suddenly viewed from a distance—both in time and space. The use of non-Beijing opera elements such as modern music, lighting, and the "slow motion" in acting gave an "epic" feel to the war setting, a universal, eternal representation of humans killing one another, whereas conventional acrobatic techniques, with their immediate impact via kinetic movements and sharp percussive cues gave a "close-up" of the war.

Spectacle was also employed wherever the theatrical structure allowed; the Ghost scenes, the play-scene, and the final combat between the Prince and Xiao Yi, all exploited lavish theatrical display. But the use of elements from the American musical created some problems. One of the problems was absence of cohesion between theatrical flamboyance and dramatic signification. The other problem remained how to integrate the foreign, often realistic signs and the native, formalistic signs into the dramatic and musical structures. The two were closely related. While realism helped enhance the atmosphere and particularly the lyrical quality of the scene, it easily clashed with the symbolism and stylization of Beijing opera convention. The ghost scenes were a case in point.
Scene 3, in which the old king's ghost first appeared, saw the attempt to create an awe-inspiring ambiance of the supernatural being by incorporating modern staging devices. A moment prior to the Ghost's entrance, the stage was dimly lit, as if in the night, and deafening thunder roared, giving an ominous atmosphere. The sentinels entered carrying lit lanterns, huddling together. A flash of lightning suddenly illuminated the high battlement and revealed the Ghost's towering figure in silhouette. Dry ice streamed down like a waterfall from where he stood, and, reflected by blue light, produced an eerie, otherworldly mood. But when the Ghost's face was lit up by a cluster of light and he began to sing, a jarring effect was created between the highlighted realism and the non-realistic representation of the character. As in Beijing opera convention, the Ghost's face was covered by a black piece of fabric signifying a wronged spirit returning from the Underworld. And, through the semi-transparent fabric one could see the painted face of a jing role and understand that this was a character of extraordinary or supernatural power. He sang as a jing with a deep, wide, sonorous voice similar to roaring thunder. But the beauty of the conventional vocal techniques fell short when his voice rang through a hidden microphone and became flat with a blurring mechanical quality. Moreover, the canned sound of thunder continued throughout the scene not only disrupted the Ghost's singing but also exposed the aesthetic incongruity.

The employment of high-tech in staging was also seen in the Ghost's exit. After giving command to the Prince, the Ghost disappeared through an electric trap-door at stage center. His descent into the "Underworld" through an invisible elevator took five rumbling seconds, a sort of deus ex machina in reverse. The bewildered Prince, witnessing his father's disappearing, made a hasty "hawk's turn" in the air only to land on the now closed trap-door, begging for his father's return. The whole sequence resembled a visitation made by an extraterrestrial
creature; it evoked awe but did not quite register the same portentous imperative Old Hamlet implores for the natural love of his son.

The second coming of the Ghost (Sc. 6) also incorporated realistic elements from modern staging, emphasizing spectacle. It appeared excessive where it involved stage machinery. During the argument between the Prince and the Queen in her chamber, the Ghost reappeared. He sang before making his entrance—a convention in Beijing opera to announce the coming of a character—his voice once again ringing tinnily through the microphone. The back wall (converted from the battlement) cracked open, and from the opening projected a glaring red light—the blaze and flame of the Underworld. The Ghost entered through the broken wall, continuing his aria, his pompous war robe glittering in the red light. This grand entrance disclosed not a phantom of humility and pensiveness like Old Hamlet (as seen in some Western productions), but a superhuman presence that seemed so powerful and steely he might make the audience wonder if he was not in fact capable of avenging himself without the help of his feckless son. Most difficult of all for the actress playing the Queen was to convince the audience that the Ghost was indeed invisible when his presence was so spectacularly substantial. The simple mysticism and human touch in Shakespeare's Ghost was quite lost. The cost of the Broadway-style gimmick was that the audience got distracted from the dramatic narrative itself. Equally absent was the powerful eloquence of Beijing opera acting, which might have been more effective and economical in translating the psychological dynamic among the three major characters in this scene.

The incorporation of realism in Prince's dramaturgy transgressed the rules dictating the Beijing opera symbolic and nearly empty stage. The stage was designed as an enclave, a framed proscenium with curtains and a partially transparent scrim; it receded from, rather than thrusting into, the auditorium.
The scrim created a cozy, private atmosphere to the action behind it, seen in the Queen's chamber and the King's study, and further helped maintain a theatrical illusion into which the spectator peeped. For the same purpose, the musicians were relegated from the stage into the orchestra pit.

Within the proscenium frame, lighting, sounds, and scenic properties were ready to take part in the total production, co-opting a great deal of aesthetic focus which used to belong to acting only. The motifs of the play were signified by the set. The backdrop of the stage was composed of massive sheets made of irregularly woven metallic wires, hanging overlapped above the stage. It expressionistically suggested the "nets" or "webs" of man's life, the complication and tangles of love and hate among the characters of the play (Zhang Yicheng 1993). However, as this scenic design belonged to a sign system totally alien to the Beijing opera symbolism, it created a magnificent visual composition but was not supported by acting codes and was unwieldy for the spectator to interpret.

The use of realistic set pieces to transformed an otherwise unadorned Beijing opera stage into specific locales also challenged the traditional acting. Thrones represented the court; a table with a lute on it represented a quiet corner in the garden; a bed indicated the chamber; and a tombstone specified the graveyard. The high platform (4m x 2.4m x 2.4m) on stage left suggested the battlement, where the Ghost first appeared, and the lake bank, from which Xiao Xiang fell. A paper screen in the Queen's chamber was torn up by the Prince's sword when he thrust it into the eavesdropping Prime Minister Xiao. These set pieces inevitably created unconventional movements for the Beijing opera players, who were trained to act on a nearly empty space but now needed to work around the furniture. One example was during the argument between the Prince and his mother in her bedchamber. The Prince abruptly brushed the Queen away, making her fall onto the bed. The blatantly realistic detail, hardly mediated
by Beijing opera's aesthetic principle into stylized expression, suddenly dissolved
the aesthetic distance intrinsic to this form and made the sequence oddly (and
embarrassingly) naturalistic. Some audience might even feel offended by the
missing of aesthetic as well as ethical decorum in this stage business. The use of
realism in Prince confirmed what Diamond observed a tendency in Taiwan's
recent Beijing opera productions: "to replace the symbolic and metonymic with
the actual when it is convenient or spectacular to do so" (1995: 251).

Costumes also displayed an eclecticism combining the native and the
foreign to create spectacular effect. They radically modified normative codes
prescribed by Beijing opera conventions, but remained descriptive of the roles'
status and profession. Taken freely from other Asian traditions such as Japanese
and Korean, the costumes had a general "Oriental" look but presented no
historical accuracy. Their style verged on kitsch, and gave a transcultural feel.
Their design featured exaggeration, making the players appeared larger than
life. The Prince wore an ostentatious headpiece reminiscent of a samurai helmet.
All major roles were dressed with broad shoulder pads that looked seemingly
futuristic. Some of the costumes were meant to be elaborate but created
unexpected reading. The Queen's opulent, plastic-like jewels made the luxury and
wealth of the court life seem meretricious; but the apparently artificial lilies Xiao
Xiang carried created an ironical counterpoint to her aria, which lauded the
purity and innocence of the floral world.

The costume designer attempted to incorporate psychological connotation
with traditional color symbolism in her designs. The Queen had three costume
changes during the play, from a bright orange-and-gold gown (imperial status;
nuptials following a funeral) in the opening scene, a red robe with circular
black-lined pattern (illicit passion with lurking danger) in the bedchamber, to a
brownish garment (fading of life; decay) in the end (Lin Jingru 1991: 27). Prince
Gongsun was dressed in a warring robe neatly woven with velvet and golden threads, which signified his royal status as well as the complicated, entangling emotions of his character (26). Xiao Xiang’s white robe in the drowning scene extended the entire width of the stage; visually it was like a flowing brook, evoking again the motif of water. This symbolism in costuming expanded the conventional dress codes in Beijing opera, and gave each character an individual image according to the dramatic action.

Masks, conventionally painted on the face to denote role type and its intrinsic moral state, were largely discarded in favor of natural expressions. This was an artistic decision made in hope of rendering the characters emotionally more palpable and psychologically more complex than the conventional types. This also suggested a degree closer to realism.

Music of this production juxtaposed mimetic and non-mimetic modes. Traditionally Beijing opera music accompaniment helped “narrate” the story by punctuating the rhythm of the performance and by closely reciprocating with the actor-singers. Music in Prince had another function: underlining the “mood” of the scene. Following the American musical or film, it featured a “theme music”--a leitmotif recurring in the performance and underlying the emotional tone of the story. As in Kingdom, this production employed two orchestras. A set of simple winds and strings and percussion accompanied the action of the play. Another composed of traditional Chinese and classical Western instruments was largely responsible for enhancing and sustaining the mood of each scene.

Blatant theatricality in Prince incidentally created new connotations to one of the most important motifs in the source play: theatre. Hamlet is a self-consciously theatrical play that has many references to art, acting and theatre, demanding an ironic awareness from the audience and an ability to distinguish between the truth of the dramatic fable and the artifice of the dramatic vehicle.
Prince also made references to theatre and play-acting, but it instead appeared to stress the power of theatricality to convert reality. In the first scene the Prince lamented that he went into a wrong performance in which his mother was not acting as a sorrowful widow, but as a cheerful bride, and the whole court was not dressed in the color of mourning but in celebratory costumes. The Queen then urged him to toast to his uncle, now king and his step-father; the toasting was theatrical, a social ritual made to acknowledge this new familial and political relationship. The Prince took the cue, raising his goblet, singing, "May my King-Father... drink this up" (Sc. 1). Promptly following the convention, the King imbibed the wine, but the Prince continued, "His (meaning the old king's) blessed soul return to the heavens!" (See Plate 8). His words made the King choke as if slapped on the face. The Prince's witty improvisation turned the new king's coronation-wedding into the old king's funeral, and expressed his bitterness towards the over-hurried, incestuous marriage.

Furthermore, theatre provided ideals and paragons for real life to imitate, rather than imitating action in real life. In the court Prime Minister Xiao told the Prince to learn from the roles of traditional Chinese plays because they advocated moral virtues and behavioral decency. "Wang Xiang Observes Filial Piety," the story the King ordered the players to enact, was about a young son's innocent, whole-hearted devotion to filial piety; he lay on the frozen lake in order to melt the ice and catch a carp for his ill father to eat.\textsuperscript{186} The Prince, however, preferred \textit{The Orphan of Chao}, a well-known drama of the Yuan dynasty in which the avenger was brought up by his royal parents' murderer-usurper and, upon learning the truth, killed his adopted father without any hesitation. Refusing to

\textsuperscript{186}See \textit{Twenty-Four Tales of Filial Piety}, a well-known collection of legendary tales which lauds traditional Chinese concepts and practices of filial piety. A great number of these tales are considered "foolish filial piety" (yuxiaop) by modern standards, because they advocate total sacrifice of one's life to fulfill the obligation, in many cases impractical or totally not applicable to our age, including the story of Wang Xiang.
play the role of a pious son like Wang Xiang, Prince Gongsun would rather learn from the Orphan of Chao, an avenger who obeys his calling in killing his "father"—or rather, father-murderer. The latter play clearly posed a threat to the King with its connotation of revenge and the parallel relationship between a son and a stepfather.

Finally, theatre was a sham; it covered up reality rather than revealing it. The King sent for the players to the court; through their performance he intended to pry into his nephew's alleged madness (Sc. 4). The Prince, in response, elaborated the role of a madman to confuse his enemy. In the sequence prior to the inset play, the protagonist and the antagonist both employed theatrical means, turning the court into an arena of acting. The fuss the Prince made in the court was virtually a performance-within-a-performance, probably the most "histrionic" sequence of the production, in the sense that role-playing was not only a vehicle for creating a reality, but was reality. Instead of appearing disheveled and distracted as a lunatic, the Prince wore an extra layer of make-up to accentuate his "madness": he was masked, dressed in a garish costume, a prop in his hand, fully equipped with theatrical trappings. The madness was not so much conveyed rhetorically, as in Hamlet, but physically. He transformed himself through a series of roles taken from the traditional Chinese theatre, as if falling out of his "proper role" (both the actor's acting role and the character's social role). His first stage business after removing his grotesque mask was alternating his facial expressions between flat gladness and indifferent sadness, as if some self-imposed masks have permanently stuck to his face. Borrowed probably from the French mime master Marcel Marceau, who toured Taiwan in the early 1980s, this stage business had a sense of Pirandellian anguish about it; the appearance, or the role, had become his inner substance, his authentic self.
Next, the Prince put on his mask and acted in a jesting way like a folklore deity, Pan Guan, a judge of the Underworld, dressed in a bright red official gown and holding a scroll in his hand to give the last account of the mortals (See Plate 11). In the long sequence of dance-pantomime, Jia Xing, Fei Li, and Prime Minister Xiao were ridiculed through slapstick. Jia and Fei were orchestrated by the Prince into a frantic comic skit, following Pan Guan's traditional dance steps. At the line "The court is a prison," the two fools tried to grab the Prince but only took off his theatrical robe, and accidentally wrapped it around Prime Minister Xiao like a straitjacket, literally materializing the line. The Prince then threw the scroll at them; they unrolled it and revealed a four-word motto: "Propriety, Integrity, Honesty, Sense of Shame" (li-yi-lian-chi), the four cardinal virtues in the Confucian discipline. Since every Taiwanese would learn this four-word slogan repeatedly throughout his middle school days, many audiences laughed at the Prince's banal way to mock the court. Next moment the Prince threw away the scroll as if to abandon the empty words.

As Xiao Xiang entered, the Prince immediately assumed the other theatrical make-up. He spoke in the manner of shulaibao, beating time and chanting speeches with a snappy, punctuated rhythm—a rhetoric which especially belonged to street entertainers or mendicants begging by commentating or satirizing the worldly matters. Alluding to a particular Chinese play, Zhuan Zhou Tests His Wife, the Prince sarcastically compared Xiao Xiang to Zhuan Zhou's wife, a popular symbol of woman's inconstant love. Zhuan's wife tried to fan the soil on the grave of her newly deceased husband (who had faked death) to make it dry so that she could remarry her new lover as soon as possible. Not only verbalizing

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187 Strictly speaking, the mask worn by the Prince is not exactly a Pan Guan mask, but its dark complexion and stern expression reminds one of the underworld deity.
his cynicism, the Prince also got physical by nudging and pulling Xiang around, and, grabbing her fan, mimed Zhuan's wife's urgent fanning (See Plate 10).

Madness was thus represented as deviation from the theatrical codes of a conventional acting role, and was recognized by the audiences (both the audience onstage as well as in the auditorium) as a betrayal of the social propriety inherent within roles. Here the Prince spoke in a colloquial dialect, as opposed to the formal accent of his proper sheng role. This signified his falling out of his role and becoming socially indecorous. His movement also lost the conventional dignity of a hero, appearing deliberately jocular and even clown-like. But the scene was not farcical; in fact it was seriously didactic. The madness of Hamlet was translated into a highly moralistic contest between the virtuous Prince and the hypocritical King. This was perhaps due to the fact that the Chinese clown (chou) is traditionally shielded by his role as a jester to reveal truth in the face of a monarch, just like the fool in King Lear. The theatrical make-up of a mad jester thus protected the frank Prince from being convicted of offense against royalty. In effect, the King read the Prince's message and was prompted into towering rage even before the inset play started, his guilty conscience well caught:

King [...] It is feigned madness and pretentious derangement; Every word contains an overtone.
Prime Minister Xiao [Sings] Pray you calmly observe his method during the play. (Sc. 4).

As the Prince's theatricalized madness forced the King out of his pharisaic posturing, it seemed dramatically redundant to have an inset play which fulfilled the same function. The play-within-a-play in Hamlet, including a dumb show and a playlet called "The Murder of Gonzago," is situated in the structural center and twice re-enacts the murder of the past and forecasts the future revenge. It is,

188 In "The Murder of Gonzago," the murderer of Gonzago is his nephew rather than his brother, as in the situation of Old Hamlet. This has two functions. On one hand it re-enacts what has happened to the old king, identifying the murder and incest; on the other hand, especially from Claudius's perspective, it suggests the
as John Dover Wilson notes, "the central point of *Hamlet*... Owing to its crucial character and its central position, [the inset play] is the point at which all the threads of the plot may be expected to meet" (1938: 140). The equivalent in the Chinese adaptation, "Candlelights Flickering Red," was not really the dramatic centerpiece of the whole story, and it focused more on incestuous adultery than murder. Because the Murderer was the King's brother, not his nephew, as in "Gonzago," the play did not project the second layer of meaning, which revealed the future revenge on the actual King undertaken by his nephew, the Prince.

In fact, the inset play provided a theatrical opportunity for spectacle. It was more a "spectacle-within-a-play" than a play-within-a-play; elaboration on performance inevitably reduced its dramatic function. The performance eclectically combined four disparate performance styles: story-telling, traditional and modern dance, and Western mime. A storyteller lead four chorus-musicians to narrate the plot. A group of dancers in colorful traditional Chinese costumes provided the atmosphere of the imperial harem. Together they held long, black pieces of satin to represent the setting of night. Four mime actors played a dumb show, wearing large, non-traditional masks which had crude, distinctive features as if drawn by children. The Player King and Queen acted in puppet-like movements, professing their mutual love in caricature. The Murderer was introduced into the scene by a *danse macabre*. Vividly borrowed from a European Medieval morality play was the hooded, skull-faced Death, holding a branch of leaves in his hands. The whole sequence was a clear deviation from Beijing opera. Granted, there was good reason to adopt a theatrical mode which could separate the inset play from the main dramatic action, and which could give a vivid image of the crime of murder, as the emblematic dumb-show did in *Hamlet*. However, the artistic design of the inset play in *Prince* was so overtly geared to assassination of a king by his nephew, in this case his murder by Hamlet the avenger.
spectacle that it nearly lost its function as a mirror image of the main action; its kernel meaning became blurred and out of focus. The audiences seemed so engrossed in the spectacle that they failed to attend to the reactions of the stage-audience, particularly the King’s immediate response to the revelation of murder in the inset play.\footnote{This observation derived from an observation of the inset play shown in the working video tape of the Prince production. During the sequence the camera had difficulty following the focus of the dramatic action, wavering between the spectacle of dance and musical accompaniment and the reactions of the stage-audience. This suggested a difficulty in the spectator as well due to the faulty artistic design of the inset play. Further confusion was created as it was never made clear if the inset play was a design by the Prince to test the King. The text tells us that the King orders the players to perform for the Prince, not the other way around.}

The same miscalculation happened in the last scene, where the combat between the Prince and Xiao Yi was used as the spectacle that would bring the play to a climax. Dramatic consistency was sacrificed to theatrical novelty in such choices as to involve three kinds of weapons during the combat: the halberd, the spear, and the sword, all major fighting props in Beijing opera’s martial scenes. Those spectators who were familiar with Hamlet might wonder whether Xiao Yi and the King had anointed all three weapons with poison prior to the contest (See Plate 7). Traditionally Beijing opera paid homage only to acting virtuosity; the final scene was clearly governed by this principle.

Prince Gongsun’s final "readiness" also followed a theatrical logic, conveyed by the code of role-playing. After having camouflaged himself as a court jester under an antic disposition and nearly killed on his exile, the Prince returned to the court in his proper role—a soldier, a man of arms. He was again dressed in a martial outfit, sword in hand, ready to enact his part, just as he first appeared in the play (we were not supposed to ask where he changed his attire after surviving the assassination in the wilderness). The martial combat also provided an exalted moment for the actor Wu Xingguo, who, like his character,
had fumbled through other areas of acting expertise along the course of the play. Here Wu finally embraced his authentic theatrical role, wusheng (martial role), a man of kinetic talent. The theatrical and dramatic rhythm finally coincided.

This theatrical logic legitimated some changes in the adaptation from the original. In Hamlet, Claudius dies before Hamlet and Laertes exchange forgiveness. In Prince, the order was reversed because the slaughtering of the arch-villain provided maximum satisfaction to the audience in moral and particularly in theatrical terms. The King's death was highly theatricalized; it verged between melodrama and farce. He cried for attendants to defend him, calling the Prince "madman," in consternation attempting to escape, and was finally flanked by the indignant Prince and Huo Xuguang. Arms held down, he was forced to swallow the poisoned wine and died shrieking like a butchered pig.

Spectacle governed the final image of the play. As the dying Prince sang his last aria, the stage floor was gradually covered in the shadow of a big cobweb, illuminated by lighting. All the dead bodies seemed caught in this net, with the King in the center, indicating the characters involved were entangled in their relationships, pursuits, and conflicts.

5.8 Reception and Prospect

The general response towards the production of Prince went from enthusiastic expectation to lukewarm reception and genuine disappointment. Yang Wanyun, a professor of English literature, explains the mixed reaction:

To those who only prefer Beijing opera or Shakespeare's drama, [the production] is a failure. The former regard it as losing the symbolic style and exquisite beauty of Beijing opera. The latter observe that it transforms the highly philosophical and intellectual action of Hamlet into Prince Gongsun Yu's dramatization of love and war. (1990)

But Yang considers its intercultural approach commendable because of the new vista it has opened up for the future. Indeed, the mere act of fusing the Chinese
tradition with a Western classic seemed to satisfy the hunger for "modernity" in many Taiwanese who still struggle to define themselves culturally. The play's five performances in Taipei drew about 7,500 spectators ("The CLT Domestic and Foreign Performances Record and Audience Count" N.d. N. pag.). But for some others, it was a highly controversial effort.

The reviews of the production were not as univocally positive and encouraging as those received by *The Kingdom of Desire*, the CLT's first intercultural production. Interestingly enough, as *Prince* had been labeled as a modern performance (*wutaiju*), it drew critical attention from various theatrical communities, which considered the play their area of expertise, including the artists from modern theatre, the academicians in Western drama, and the Beijing opera circle. Again, their opinions together reflected a continuing "internal cultural debate" (Zarrilli) in Taiwan in terms of how an artistic tradition can be modernized without losing its cultural identity.

5.8.1 Reception from Artists in Taiwan's Modern Theatre

Artists of Taiwan's modern *wutaiju* theatre had hoped to see the CLT bring traditional Chinese theatre out of its historical context and develop new theatrical language. However, some found it retrogressive from its earlier experiment with *Macbeth*. Although this production was more successful in making scenography an integral part of the total production, in comparison with the earlier Beijing opera experiments in which scenography was only a secondary adjunct to an acting-oriented performance, its acting still followed traditional codes.

Thus Wang Molin, who advocated an alternative theatre based on Taiwanese cultural subjectivity through physical training and political exercise, pointed out that the *Prince* fell back to the conventionality of Beijing opera rather than heading towards modern performance aesthetics (1990: 261). Chung Mingder, from an intercultural perspective, described the CLT's approach as "wrapping the
Chinese core with a Western form," which produced superficial cultural mixture instead of genuine hybridization (1993: N. pag.). A performance remained to be seen which could produce "mutual permeation" between Chinese traditional opera and modern theatre, including such aspects as actor training, production, and reception, one which Chung called the "contact of the third kind" (1993: N. pag.). Modern composer Xu Boyun described the merging of modern and traditional, native and foreign in *Prince* as "an alchemy that failed to transform" (qtd. in Liu Yunfang 1991: 102).

5.8.2 Reception from Drama Scholars

From Taiwan's academia, a number of critics remarked on the *Prince* as misrepresentation of Shakespeare due to inadequate translation of the source text. In a postmortem discussion held after the production, they pointed out the weaknesses in the adaptation in the aspects of characterization, dramatic conflict, and philosophical depth. It was found particularly disconcerting that Shakespeare's drama was sacrificed for the entertaining spectacle of Beijing opera. Some also complained that the CLT should have consulted Shakespearean scholars for a more "appropriate" interpretation of *Hamlet*.

Professor Gu Huaiqun, who actually gave lectures on *Hamlet* to the cast of the *Prince* prior to production, saw the major problem as the CLT's choice to adapt a difficult classic. Making the right choice is very critical in dramatic adaptation, Gu observed. Whereas *Macbeth* makes an excellent adaptation into Beijing opera because of its fast-paced plot and strong dramatic tension, *Hamlet* is artistically much more complex and culturally more alien for a satisfactory theatrical transfer. When the key concepts are missed from the source text, one can have two full hours of Beijing opera spectacle without conveying any essence of *Hamlet*. The *Prince*’s emphasis on "revenge," rather than on the conceptual and psychological process which leads to the act of revenge, results in a protagonist
who, as an individual, lacks conscious inner search (in Liu Yunfang 1991: 102). Actor Wu Xingguo spent all the while on the stage expressing the Prince's anguish and agony, but failed to represent his reasoning, dialectic arguing, and procrastination, and thus was unable to transform the character from the particular to the universal (102). Moreover, in a telephone interview, Gu disagreed with CLT's promoting the show in heavy association with Shakespeare. "It is obviously an open invitation for the spectator to compare the production with its source text," she argued, "When you have an audience with high expectations and cannot meet its horizon, it turns sour, unsatisfied" (1993).

Professor Gu's comments justify a point. In the world of increasing globalization, an intercultural performance cannot just appropriate the source text for the understanding of the target culture. It needs to strike a balance between appropriation for the target reception and understanding of the source culture. Particularly in this case, the intended target audience was not limited to traditional Beijing opera fans, and the source text was so famous; it was impossible not to communicate the source text. The reception of Prince proves that Fischer-Lichte's theory of "productive reception" is insufficient in intercultural theatre; to a certain degree it also involves translating and communicating the foreign, as Pavis's translation theory indicates.

Some scholar-critics regarded Shakespeare as among such sacred texts that any attempt to transfer them across linguistic, cultural and artistic borders is bound to be sacrilegious. The strongest voice expressing this view comes from John Y. Hu, who had previously criticized CLT's Kingdom of Desire and now again argued against the attempt to adapt Shakespearean plays into Chinese traditional opera. In an article published two years after the production, he systematically expounded his objection to this approach. The main "pitfall" in this cross-cultural adaptation, according to Hu, lies in the incompatibility of the two genres—one
musical drama and the other dialogue drama; they exclude rather than accommodate each other (1992: 95). To prove that Prince impoverishes Hamlet's textual richness, a simple, scientific calculation was again employed. Whereas a Chinese translation of Hamlet (by Liang Shiqiu) amounts to 100,000 character-words, the text of Prince has only 8,000 or so. Such a wide difference in quantity proves a "drastic shrinkage" of the meaning from the source text. He concluded matter-of-factly: "A pure and straightforward adaptation [of Shakespeare into Chinese opera] is impossible. Period" (103); any such effort only "approaches blasphemy" (94).

Hu's view of generic exclusiveness is based on the assumption that the text and the performance are two opposing entities in theatre; since Beijing opera is performance-oriented, it is bound to deplete the totality of a Shakespeare text. By this logic, his detailed textual comparison between Prince and Hamlet finds that themes, characterization, and causal relationships of dramatic episodes in the adaptation are over-simplified and deflated. The Chinese protagonist lacks a philosophical and artistic bent, a mere soldier capable of cruelty. Removing the delay motif not only takes away the complexity of the play but also jeopardizes the logical development of the key episodes. Without the Prince doubting the validity of the Ghost's words, the play-within-a-play loses its dramatic function and psychological urgency. In any case, the adaptation was a distorted mirror held against the sacred, untouchable original:

In comparison to the original play, the adaptation is an impoverishment of its rich and provocative ideas, a vulgarization of its vision, and consequently a leveling off of its powerful impact....[I] find the work lacked coherence, believability, and especially an elevated vision. (1992: 101)

In a personal interview, Hu confessed to have made the same intercultural attempt himself, adapting Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet into Beijing opera, but had not had the confidence to stage it (1993). Whether Hu's critical view was the
result of his personal playwriting experience or of his scholarly judgment, there was obviously a creative urge on his part to make Shakespeare accessible to Chinese audience. If Hu ever tried to stage his adaptation, perhaps he would change his view on transferring Shakespeare across linguistic, cultural and generic borders. Moreover, from the larger picture created by other Chinese endeavors during the 1986 International Shakespeare Festival in China, the advantage gained from this kind of exercise is a greater understanding of one's own theatrical and cultural traditions (cf. Li Ruru 1988). And that is the most significant aspect of Asian intercultural theatre; by way of the Other, one becomes more familiar with the Self.

That is also why Perng Ching-Hsi, a Taiwanese comparative drama scholar, sustained faith in the intercultural approach despite the often defective Chinese Shakespeare adaptations. According to Perng, the generic difference between the music theatre of Beijing opera and the dialogue drama of Elizabethan theatre inevitably creates a "textual loss" when the former adapts or translates the latter. However, this type of loss also happens in the European opera versions of Shakespeare, such as Verdi's Othello, where Shakespeare's textual richness is sacrificed in favor of musical expression required by the target genre. Such reduction is common within the Chinese theatre tradition. For example, the Beijing opera script Liuyue Xue (Snow in June), adapted from a celebrated Yuan play Tou-O Yuan (Injustice to Tou-O) of the thirteenth century, loses much of the literary sophistication of the source play due to the sheer emphasis on spectacle (Perng 1989: 132-4). Notwithstanding the textual loss, theatre artists have never been inhibited from transferring great dramatic stories, characters, or themes from other cultures or times into their own familiar forms.

Furthermore, suggested Perng, there may be more similarity between the Eastern and Western traditions than has been recognized, and that is worth our
effort to explore. The important theatrical factors which shaped Shakespeare's creations may have also dominated the production process of *Prince*. For example, Shakespeare created dramatic parts with particular actors in mind; Falstaff was written specifically for Kemp. The history of Beijing opera is similar. Mei Lanfang's playwrights wrote new roles for him according to his individual style and skills of acting; and Mei subsequently refined those roles and made them classical and conventionalized. Likewise, the adapter-playwright of *Prince*, Wang Anqi, tailored her characters for specific actors—the Prince for Wu Xingguo and the Queen for Wei Haimin—to suit their skills and stage images. As Wei Haimin was one of Taiwan's best *qingyi*, the chaste, virtuous lady whose special acting skill is singing, Wang was probably obliged to write more arias for her part to honor her vocal art, and to "restore" the moral status of the Queen in the play to become Wei's stage image of *qingyi* (1993). From the angle of comparative theatre, Perng pointed out a valid approach to explore intercultural performances that avoids prioritizing the dramatic text and the issue of "faithfulness" of the text altogether. Perng also objected to premature prescriptions imposed on intercultural adaptation. Even in adapting a classic, it is important to consider "modern human problems, and this means that the message of the script must relate to the here and now of life" (1989: 136).

5.8.3 Reception from the Beijing Opera Circle

From the Beijing opera circle, critics shied away from openly condemning *Prince*, because the production had been labelled as a modern performance (*wutaiju*) rather than as a "Beijing opera," and these critics would not trespass outside their artistic territory. However, one opera connoisseur wrote in the newspaper using a pseudonym, Qi Yu, challenging the camouflage of Beijing opera under a foreign story. "A 'new wave' Beijing opera is not necessarily a 'reformed' Beijing opera," he commented (1990). He deplored the disruption of
overall semiotic signification within the aesthetic structure of Beijing opera due to the alteration of one or another sign-vehicle under the pretext of "reforming" the traditional form. For example, water sleeves, one of the most expressive and communicative means for acting, were abolished in the production in favor of bare hands. Symbolism was replaced by realistic props and set pieces so that little was left to the audience's imagination. The use of a smoke machine in the Ghost scenes was no more innovative than the exquisite, imaginative and visually effective convention of the "ghost steps."190 Worse, smoke actually blocked the visibility of the actor's foot movement which was essential in the expression of the part.

Qj Yu's resistance to novelty represents a general fear of losing the "essence" of the home tradition. He argued that if introducing foreign elements into the opera can revitalize the tradition, the adaptation of La Dame aux Camélias into Chinese opera in the beginning of the century could have opened a new vista for the tradition; but that experiment only left a historical footnote. And the Communist "model" plays that introduced political ideological themes and modern dress into the traditional operatic forms during China's "Proletariat Cultural Revolution" should also have amended all the problems accompanying the tradition. They did not:

If the subject is not Chinese, and cannot convey the Chinese sentiments and human touches [in today's modernized Beijing opera], the audience will not be moved. After all that bustle and excitement in the performance, you really wonder if anything profound can be left in the spectator's mind. (Qj Yu 1990)

Even adapter-playwright Wang Anqi admitted gaps between the ideal of Beijing opera reform and the actual staging praxis. In Prince, she found, the

190 "Ghost steps" (gùibù) are a conventionalized set of movements for ghostly parts in traditional opera. The actor who performs a ghost usually moves swiftly about the stage in big circles; only the legs and feet are in motion while the upper body remains straight and stiff (Hsu Tao-Ching 1985).
choice of theatrical expression fell victim to self-serving "innovation" and turned out a disruption rather than expansion of the home tradition. Although this production changed the traditionally actor-based mode into a modern scenographical performance, fundamentally it still followed Beijing opera convention in its emphasis on spectacle, instead of striking a balance between staging and text. Take the example of the play-within-a-play, she noted. Because dramatically it conveyed a different level of reality from the main action of the play, it became the director's excuse for employing non-Beijing opera elements. The scene was a mixture of disparate styles and images, often mocked as a "cultural chopsuey"—not quite Chinese or Western, nor Japanese or Korean. It offended the general audience's sensitivity about consistent theatrical logic (1993). Furthermore, innovation for its own sake ironically resulted in deliberately dismissing existent signs, even if they were artistically appropriate and effective. When new theatrical idioms were not yet established, truncation of old conventions seemed particularly unwise. This is seen in the presentation of the Ghost. While Wang wrote it with the convention of "ghost steps" in mind, but the director chose to abandon it in favor of borrowing theatrical signs from modern theatre. They might seem "original" in Beijing opera staging, but artistically they were superfluous signs (in Liu Yunfang 1991: 102).

Zhong Chuanxin, a young hualian actor who led the Beijing opera troupe sponsored by the Fu-Hsing Beijing Opera Academy, refused direct comment on the intercultural approach of Prince. Instead, she mentioned the aesthetic direction of her troupe, which frequently toured the West on missions of cultural exchange. The Fu-Hsing troupe was engaged in re-interpreting old plays with modern values and relevance. But it never attempted to adapt Western works because, as Zhong explained, any attempt to reform Chinese opera should start from within the tradition itself. In any case, seeking new audiences should not
mean pandering to frivolous tastes for the merely foreign or exotic. Otherwise it might create an audience lacking imagination and patience to acquire the best parts of classical art, and the time-honored tradition would suffer vulgarization due to its need to be popularized (1993).

Zhong's Fu-Hsing troupe received generous government funding and posed as a "cultural showcase" under the official cultural policy. It was an institution in which Beijing opera's "essence" and honorific title, guoju (national theatre), could be idealistically maintained. But it was exactly such idealism and glory imposed on the opera that suffocated the healthy growth of the once lively theatrical genre. Little wonder that the private Beijing opera troupes in Taiwan have avoided using the same terminology to describe their performances.

Wei Haimin, who played the Queen in Prince and, earlier, Lady Aoshu in Kingdom, viewed Beijing opera translation of Shakespeare as a product in the unique cultural position of Taiwan. While the century-old Beijing opera tradition did not originate from this island, Taiwan had the advantage of drawing modern ideas and resources from other parts of the world to enrich this tradition, being a modern, affluent, and culturally hybridized society. In other words, Taiwan was the logical jumping-off place to stage intercultural performances using Beijing opera conventions, a crucible for welding art from East and West (1992).

5.9 Conclusion

The Prince's Revenge, displaced Shakespeare's Danish tale to an entirely Chinese social and historical environment to discover a culturally appropriate response to the issue of revenge. It was also an attempt to create a "third" theatre form by hybridizing Beijing opera staging and Western dramaturgy. Strictly speaking, this adaptation was a result of "intercultural misunderstanding" in receiving foreign traditions. It appears that the adapter-playwright had only a partial knowledge of Shakespeare, seeing his drama in the light of the European
realistic plays of Ibsen, and sought to tighten Hamlet's dramatic structure in the adaptation. Thus most of Hamlet's internal search was considered digressive and edited out, Hamlet was transformed into a primitive "revenge play" where a linear, causal progression dominated the action, and where the characters were unmistakably virtuous or vicious. A new focus on the expression of "heart," or pathos, created a lyricism very different from the intellectual foundation in the source play. From the lyric structure evolved the tragic center of the play around the Queen, and her fall was tied with the major theme of the play: the futile pursuit of love in a warring state.

The play was considered bland perhaps because it did not fulfill its thesis of discovering a distinctively Chinese perspective to Hamlet's situation. Prince Gongsun learned from the self-sacrificing Queen the dubious nature of revenge; he fulfilled his duty and died with a forgiving heart. But unlike Hamlet, who is the center of the tragic action, the Chinese Prince acted upon the external situations and the calls from the others, particularly the antagonist of the play, the villainous King. Although the Prince was portrayed a "forgiving avenger," he did not demonstrate a moral consciousness with which he reached the state of forgiveness. Rather, he was seen as a son torn between his alienated parents, between love and duty in ethical terms.

The use of elaborate scenography to enhance the overall aesthetic and interpretation in *The Prince's Revenge* demonstrated a direction towards which Taiwan's contemporary Beijing opera was developing. More than *The Kingdom of Desire*, it sought to shift a pure music theatre of operatic singing to a theatre of spectacle which mixed signs from the realistic theatre, modern performance genres, and film. It could be called a new "Chinese Musical," to distinguish itself from Chinese traditional opera. But this approach lead to transgression of the intrinsic rule which dictates the aesthetics of the home genre, namely, synthesis,
convention and stylization, and created a hybrid form which was less unified. The greatest problem seemed to come from the imposition of realism to the stylization of Beijing opera—the illusionism installed in the non-mimetic structure created a falsified representation of reality. This problem was also more serious in Prince than in Kingdom.

This production brought to light the major problem of the self-justified approach of "productive reception" in contemporary intercultural theatre; "communicating the foreign" should also be a priority in the adaptation process because of the target audience's expectation to capture the essence of the source play. To many Taiwanese spectators who expected to perceive a well-digested Shakespearean tragedy under Chinese costumes, Prince was disappointingly un-Hamlet-like. Thus cultural and artistic appropriation of a foreign text must be balanced between a proper understanding and translation of the foreign work and a native perspective and expression, particularly when the source is well-known to the target audience.

In the wake of Prince, critical voices from Taiwan's various theatre communities agreed that a Chinese traditional theatre with modern spirit had a long way to go. Theatre is not only about imitation of life and art, but also about memory and identity. The CLT's intercultural experiments were works of a highly self-reflective nature. They revealed the problematic discourse within the traditional Chinese theatre as to how tradition could be reinvented to meet largely Westernized modern society. The productions' use of elements from disparate theatrical traditions suggested a conscious struggle for balance between identity and alterity. Until a better synthesized "interculture" can be created in Taiwan, it appears, intercultural Beijing opera performances would continue to be "works-in-progress," growing towards a theatre of both universal expressions and cultural particulars.
CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION:

THE VALUE OF EAST-WEST INTERCULTURAL THEATRE

This thesis first reviews the contact of Asian, particularly Chinese, and Western theatre, in the hopes of analyzing the trend of interculturalism in theatre in the increasing globalization of this century, especially its impulse, pattern, and strategy. Two theatre traditions—Beijing opera and Shakespeare—are singled out in this study to discover key cultural and aesthetic moments of their encounter, influence, and reception. Finally, two productions involving Beijing opera adaptation of Shakespeare are examined as products of this interculturalism which was first conceived in China and later flourished in Taiwan.

The findings of this study are more complex than I have supposed. The route to the foreign is not always direct and obvious. There are misunderstanding and misinterpretation in perceiving and receiving unfamiliar cultures. There are also conflicting views about what the native Chinese/Taiwanese culture and theatre really needs in borrowing from Western traditions, and about how they can be incorporated into the native heritage. The complexity of this process is reflected in the two productions of Shakespeare, detailed in Chapters 4 and 5.

While intercultural theatre is still in its emergent, trial-and-error stage, it seems pointless to prescribe a specific formula for such a form because this only risks producing inhibition in practice and reduction in analysis. At this stage, it is important to encourage more actual exercise of cross-cultural collaboration, with plays created by artists and with materials from divergent cultures, and in an attempt to understand one another. We not only celebrate mega-productions led by star artists from advanced nations and made for spectators from metropolitan
centers, such as Brook's or Wilson's; we also relish modest works produced in economically less developed regions in Asia, with smaller funding and for more homogeneous communities. Through this first-hand contact and cooperation, I believe, a more mature East-West intercultural theatre—one that goes beyond cultural tourism or mere dressing-up of tradition—can emerge.

This thesis argues that theatre interculturalism responds to the movement of history, and brings positive influence to human civilization. It helps diversify the dominant pattern and ideology, allowing different voice and practice which belong to a particular community of people. In the perspective of a French Sinologist, Kristofer M. Schipper, the understanding of cultural "Other" is essential for maintaining a healthy world culture. He uses botany as an analogy:

Each culture is like a species of plant; it has strong points and weak points different from the others. The same kind of plant will weaken after a while if it's not cross-fertilized to improve the next generation. The botanists of the world keep a gene bank to preserve seeds that may or may not be needed now, because you never know what problems may come up with varieties that are flourishing now, and they might be needed later. (Qtd. and trans. in Li Guangzhen 1991:121)

Reviewing Chinese theatre's reception of Western influence during the twentieth century, I find three important trends. First, interculturalism in Chinese theatre was the result of a continuing effort to acquire a foreign (especially Western) paradigm to reconstruct the native traditions, which, under the forces of Western dominance and modernization, had appeared ossified and irrelevant. 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 writing for 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.

Second, although modern Chinese theatre was a one-way 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 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 which can retain cultural identity and provide a modern outlook and sensibility.

Third, interculturalism within traditional Chinese opera occurred as an urgent attempt to regain popularity and relevance in the process of a large-scale social change. Initially the elements of European realistic drama, such as the use of scenery, contemporary subjects, and an acting style closer to daily behavior, were adapted and performed side by side with Chinese symbolic staging and stylized acting. Later, it became apparent that this practice needs be undertaken with much selectivity and caution so as not to create a destructive effect on the already declining forms. Important strategies for intercultural adaptation have been laid out for theorization and debate. For now, it seems that those foreign models which have had cross-feeding experience with Asian traditions (such as such as Brecht, Meyerhold, and Yeats), or bear a similar quality worthy of emulation (such as Shakespeare, Greek tragedy, and Ionesco), are considered most likely to achieve a productive, long-lasting result.191

191 For one thing, the aforementioned Western traditions share with Chinese opera a presentational dramaturgy which can facilitate greater intercultural exchange between the two, than between modern realist drama and Chinese opera.
Since the 1980s, there has been an increasing desire in traditional Chinese (and Asian) theatre to go international—to bring the native forms onto the "world stage" for recognition and understanding by audiences outside Asia. Two contrasting arguments are in effect. One maintains a radical change in traditional forms to adapt to the current taste. Not only should their antiquated expressions be renewed, but they need to attend international events to explore new performance settings and audiences. The other discourse, in contrast, suggests that the most ethnically distinctive forms are also the most universal theatre ever. The often-cited example is the Balinese theatre, which never succumbs to foreign, especially Western, influence, but which still inspires and attracts spectators from all over the world. From the perspective of anthropology, these native genres are preserved to the best interest of the people sharing these traditions; they represent the culture's collective inheritance of myth.

Deliberately seeking an international stage and audience is not necessarily the best way to preserve the native traditions, this view contends; rather, it may permanently alter the traditions.

The two Beijing opera adaptations of Shakespeare in Taiwan is seen as convergence of the above-mentioned forces. They show the impulse to modernize the declining home form, the claims of tradition, as well as the effort to establish an alternative theatre aesthetics which can break the boundary between what has been called the modern (xiandai de) and the traditional (chuantong de) theatre, a split created since the invention of Chinese Spoken Drama.

From Beijing opera’s history of development, it is clear that change and innovation played a significant role in making this opera China's "national theatre." Intercultural experiments undertaken by a number of opera actors to advocate social, political ideas proved effective and powerful, as seen in Wang Xiaonong’s productions attacking the Qing monarchs, in Mei Lanfang’s adaptation
of newspaper stories to encourage social reform, and in the Communist invention of "model plays." A mass theatre, Beijing opera has a great political potential of which many Western-educated Chinese intellectuals of the early twentieth century were not aware. But once it was clear how dangerously influential theatre could be, Beijing opera was controlled, monopolized, and censored according to the dominant regime's ideological agenda. In Mainland China during the years of Cultural Revolution, the government used traditional opera to advocate Marxist ideas of class struggle. Beijing opera was welded with the formula found in melodrama of the West, and with the techniques drawn from symphonic music and classical ballet. The stylized acting movements, role-types, and music conventions of Beijing opera were radically dissected and reorganized into powerful semiotic signs which supported the orthodox political myths. In Taiwan, Beijing opera was preserved in the form and tradition that were found in Beijing during the 1920s. This form presumably helped establish its sponsor (the Nationalist government) as the defender and restorer of the nearly destroyed Chinese traditions under the Communist regime, and as the claimant of political, territorial legitimacy of the whole of China. The alienation of this genre from the current social reality in Taiwan led to the intellectual, emotional vacuum of its performance; its conventional texts and techniques stood for the glory of the past, the memory of a lost Motherland. Many considered this opera a museum art.

That is why it is so significant that during the 1980s when the political milieu started to change, experimentation with Beijing opera quickly emerged. Theatre then functioned not only as an artistic representation of an on-going social change; it fostered the change. In Taiwan, private troupes rather than state-owned troupes heralded the intercultural effort to modernize, refine, and redefine this tradition, bringing the opera into modern-equipped venues to meet new audiences. Whether it was to borrow Western staging techniques to create
unconventional scenography, as in the productions by Yayin Xiaoji, or to adapt Western dramatic texts to strengthen the intellectual content of the opera, as seen in Beijing opera adaptations of Ionesco, Shakespeare, and Greek drama, the intercultural approach allured urban, educated, middle-class audiences to watch traditional opera—for many it was the first time. In those experiments which used Western texts, both form and content from the foreign works were renegotiated with the native contexts, generating an intriguing reception experience which often involved two frames of cultural/theatrical references in one performance—foreign and domestic, modern and traditional.

Shakespeare has recently been discovered as perhaps the most compatible of the Western dramatic traditions with Chinese opera when it comes to intercultural exchange. The characteristics in Shakespeare's theatre, such as the dramatic form, which brings forth an nearly empty stage and presentational style, the keen interest in history in the narrative, which often results in a grand "epic" mode, and the depiction of the moral dimension in human relationships, can all find a kindred spirit in traditional Chinese drama. But the superb revelation of psychological truth, intensive interrogation of the meaning in human existence, and radical challenge to social conventions in Shakespeare plays remain invaluable knowledge for the Chinese to learn. As seen in the Beijing opera productions of Macbeth and Hamlet by Taipei's Contemporary Legend Theatre and other adaptations of Shakespeare in China's first International Shakespeare Festival, Shakespeare catalyzed transformation of Chinese dramatic idioms. While each experiment sought to express the essence of his drama, the "Shakespeare spirit," the intercultural exercise eventually extended the expressive range of Chinese traditional opera and created the potential of hybrid forms.
However, since his introduction into China nearly a century ago, Shakespeare has been better known as a literary giant than a theatre poet. His plays were more read than performed, and even when performed in earnest, they were not fully realized theatrically but seemed rather "bookish." His most devoted translators, with very few exceptions, had little practical experience with theatre; their intention was mainly to popularize Shakespeare with the general Chinese reader by rendering his dramatic poetry into clear, truthful, and elegant standard Chinese. The translations were not aimed at a specific 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 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 demand to see his plays in their true artistic merit, rather than through an ideological prism. Further, it indicated a realization that a certain degree of mixing native and foreign, traditional and modern, forms and language, could best convey the essence of Shakespeare drama. The intercultural approach pulled 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 fake noses, Shakespearean heroes were now often re-set in a Chinese historical period singing familiar operatic arias, or, in
some cases, songs adapted from European Renaissance music. Whether this hybrid was called "Sinicization of Shakespeare" or "Shakespearization in Chinese drama," it established an active dynamic between the native traditions and the foreign paradigms.

Therefore, Pavis's translation model derived from communication theory is especially relevant here. The Chinese adaptations of Shakespeare have embraced a larger purpose than a mere re-theatricalization of their home tradition. Judging from the adaptations of Shakespeare in Chinese operas produced in China and Taiwan, there has been a clear desire to "claim" the right 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 Western dominance in Asia, but a contemporary 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 audience. 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.

The two productions by Taiwan's Contemporary Legend Theatre which adapted Shakespeare into Beijing opera in 1986 and 1990 initially purported to productively receive the foreign in order to regenerate the native theatre. Shakespeare's dramatic texts were considered much superior dramaturgically and philosophically to Beijing opera and thus could stimulate a re-structuring of its expressive conventions. Macbeth, after adapted into a Chinese character in CLT's Kingdom of Desire, was widely regarded as a "disloyal and unpious" protagonist and an unconventional "anti-hero" by many Beijing opera fans. He revolted against the code of conduct or framework of beliefs that typically made sense of a
Beijing opera hero. The actor Wu Xingguo's convincing and moving portrayal of this character challenged the long-criticized moral didacticism in Beijing opera. Lady Macbeth, likewise, was not a typical virtuous lady from the nobility; in the adaptation, she was transformed into a power-hungry mastermind behind the scene—not the Eve tempted by the snake but the Snake itself. Onstage, the two characters emerged as a mixture of a number of conventional role types; their musical and physical expressions were also made much more complicated and with greater spontaneity. Realism became dominant wherever the actors could not rely on codified formalism.

After an unconventional rehearsal process which involved a great deal of improvisation and rewriting, Kingdom was considered a "breakthrough" in Beijing opera by Taiwan's critics. Traditional Beijing opera signs were superbly placed in a dramatic text strongly influenced by Kurosawa's The Throne of Blood, which had infused Shakespeare's original with a traditional Asian worldview. In the Chinese adaptation, the non-indigenous narrative (the fall of a hero) constantly undermined the meanings established by the traditional acting codes (of an intrinsically morally deserving protagonist). This created a strong sense of irony and a deconstructionist experience in the spectator. The plot constantly disrupted the heroic codes of the actor, with the result that Aoshu Zheng, the Chinese Macbeth, seemed to be merely playing an ill-fitting role as the king, and that he seemed to be constantly about to drop out from this role. The falseness of role-playing appropriately portrayed a usurper, to the Chinese spectator, and his spectacular downfall satisfactorily completed the morality play.

When Kingdom went on tour to London, Shakespeare's native land and the source culture, its intercultural significance was brought to full light. Shakespeare became a "reception adapter" for the Western audiences to decipher the seemingly esoteric theatre of Beijing opera. With a familiar story, they could
concentrate on the expressive interpretation by the Chinese actors. The viewing experience resembled the traditional spectatorship in Chinese theatre, where the stories and characters (the "what") are almost always familiar whereas the presentation, particularly through acting (the "how"), provides renewed meanings. Although the majority of London's critics found the play exotic, they made an attentive effort to decode the unfamiliar gestural language. Their response reconfirmed the fact that, like any classical art such as ballet and opera, Beijing opera demands an initiated audience, and that repeated viewing may help acquire the knowledge of the aesthetic form. Thus an intercultural hermeneutics emerged from the reception: when the target tradition is turned into a source to be received by its original source tradition, it may create a significant impact for both cultures. It is as if each steps back from its usual viewpoint and sees familiar things through the other's perspective; this can result in a new perspective of oneself, a perspective that involves a distance and a broader focus. In the end, there is a commonness found and celebrated between the two, a deeper understanding of the other and especially of one's own self.

Back in Taiwan, a deeper awareness of a play as dramatic structure which unifies action and weaves layers of themes and characterizations prompted another adaptation of Shakespeare, this time of the complex Hamlet. The Prince's Revenge, produced again by CLT in 1990, was a more ambitious intercultural project intended to overhaul the Chinese traditional form and its aesthetics by hybridizing it with signs from various modern performance genres, including film and the American musical. It enjoyed a larger funding and talents. However, lack of a thorough understanding of the original play resulted in a less successful work, compared with Kingdom.

It appeared that Hamlet's procrastination and his agony over delay, which are reflected in the complex dramatic structure of Hamlet, were especially
difficult to translate culturally and artistically into Beijing opera. *Prince* turned *Hamlet* into a primitive revenge play, with a linear narrative form laying out the key episodes from *Hamlet*, and with the protagonist, Prince Gongsun Yu, as an action hero counteracted by the vicious king and his predatory gang. The play also followed traditional Chinese aesthetics in focusing on lyrical presentation of the character's "heart." Thus the spectator heard all the major characters' inner voices, not just, as in *Hamlet*, mainly the protagonist's. The Queen's confession, in particular, set the tenor of the play. In response to revenge, she pleaded love and forgiveness. Her willing adultery and her knowledge of the old king's murder made her a morally fallen soul. It was her death, not the King's death, that the old king's ghost demanded from the Prince. The Prince, meanwhile, appeared as a child torn between two estranged parents, undecided in his agonizing attempt to reconcile his moral and emotional obligations. The Queen's voluntary death resolved all the conflicts; it also gave rise to a strong sense of pathos at the tragic ending of the play.

The Chinese director's main interest in using spectacular scenography to create an epic feel to the *Hamlet* story was also controversial. The production seemed less a dramatic play than an American-style musical. Critics complained that theatricalism greatly detracted from the emotional and philosophical "spine" which forms *Hamlet*'s internal nexus. The deliberate abandonment of some common but aesthetically economic and effective Beijing opera codes, in favor of more "modern," technically appealing expressions (such as dry ice), was also criticized as an arbitrary and banal choice.

The mixed reception of *Prince* indicated that a successful intercultural translation is a balancing act between productively receiving a foreign text/tradition and a considerably faithful communication of the spirit of this source, particularly when it is intended to be a close adaptation of the original. Missing
the essence of the foreign work, especially when the work is well-known, the intercultural work may fail to meet the audience's horizon of expectation. Merely transplanting staging or plot elements from foreign works into native forms for the sake of novelty also risks creating a work in which elements from disparate traditions refuse to fuse and never achieve artistic or conceptual unity.

Still, the two Beijing opera productions of Shakespeare have opened new avenues of praxis and analysis for future theatre performance. Kingdom's can be described as an "intercultural" dramaturgy; its adaptation of Shakespeare sought local and international recognition particularly to revamp the domestic form aesthetically and socially. Prince's can be specified as an "intracultural" dramaturgy; Shakespeare was used to help select conventional codes from the domestic form to hybridize with internationally popular elements (such as film and American musical) so that the domestic opera could become increasingly "universal." With the extra dimension of cross-cultural transfer, theatre is directly situated in a position of creating a more divergent and yet universal civilization, one that seeks to link human imagination, emotions, and ideas by different expressive means.
APPENDIX ONE:

THE KINGDOM OF DESIRE

By Li Huimin
Translated by Karen Steffen Chung

Scene 1 Forest Mountain Spirit

[Character: Mountain Spirit. After the chorus song the wind blows.]

Chorus
How regrettable that the people of this world
Cannot see through fame, fortune, and position;
In reality they are only like
The reflection of the moon in water, an illusion;
When you reach the abyss,
Plans and schemes only lead to downfall;
In the end, the waves still wash the sand;
All that remain are dry bones and empty sorrow.

Mountain Spirit (MS)
Mountain Sprites and water creatures show their form,
Concentrating their evil powers to poison the hearts of men.
Peace on earth is no joy for us;
Let the winds whip up the waves, and let there be havoc.

I am the Mountain Spirit. The state of Ji is fighting a civil war that is
about to end. When General Aoshu Zheng brings his troops back to
the palace tomorrow, he is certain to pass by this forest. So I think
I'll wait here until he comes by, and make a little sport of him. Look!
The wind and rain are fierce, and thunder and lightening fill the
sky. I will ride on the clouds and fog, drive the thunder and
lightening, and cross over on the light. That's what I'll do...that's
what I'll do...hee...

Scene 2 A Camp: The Drums and Horns of Battle Sound

[Characters: King of Ji; four Ministers—Min Ziyu, Wu Huai, Jiang Ji, and
Wei Zan; the Reconnaissance Soldier; four Eunuchs.

192 The translated text is modified from K. S. Chung's version (authorized by the
Contemporary Legend Theatre) in three ways. First is the division of scenes. The
14 scenes are based on the 1987 version of the Taipei performance. The use of
"acts" in Chung's English translation is dropped for it has created some confusion
and for it is not a familiar way in traditional Chinese theatre. The second change
is the addition of detailed stage directions from the Chinese version, which are
omitted in Chung's translation. The third modification is concerning the
translation of the characters' names; it is based on the Pinyin system rather than
the Wade-Giles system which Chung's version uses.
King of Ji and the Ministers are discussing in an urgent, quiet voice.)

Reconnaissance Soldier (RS)

Your Majesty, the rebels have captured three cities, and they will soon be pushing toward the capital.

King of Ji

Are Generals Aoshu Zheng and Meng Ting at the front?

RS

Both have left to meet the enemy.

King

How goes the battle? Quickly, report!

RS

Your Majesty, the enemy troops are descending like a tidal wave. I'm afraid our soldiers will have trouble resisting. What does Your Majesty suggest?

King

Return to your reconnaissance mission.

RS

As you command, Your Majesty.

King

Halt! That detestable Prime Minister Wei-lie! All this time I have treated him like a brother, and gave him full command over my troops. Who would have thought that he would turn an ingrate, collaborating with the barbarians to instigate a rebellion? Soon they will be encroaching on the capital. Ministers! Do we have enough rations in the city? Is our army ready?

Wu Huai

Your Majesty, there are only enough rations in the city to last 30 days. The Prime Minister took the best troops and generals out to battle. All that is left are 300 royal bodyguards, and some old and injured soldiers. We face certain defeat.

King

So you're saying we should just sit here with our hands tied until we're captured?

Jiang Ji

Your Majesty, in my humble opinion, you should flee to another principality for the time being, then round up some rescue troops. We'll stay in the capital and feign a surrender. In this way we could save the common people, and we would also be buying time. Once the rescue soldiers came, we could coordinate an attack from within and without the city. We would be certain to retake our territory.

King

Well, I...

Min Ziyu

Sir Jiang, how can you suggest such a weak-kneed plan? In my opinion, we must stand our ground in the capital and fight to our deaths before we surrender. We can't deflate our ministers' and troops' morale just because the enemy has the upper hand.

King

Well...

Jiang

You...hold your tongue. You go ahead and throw your own life to the dogs, but are you planning on taking our Lord and the people to the grave with you?

Min

You fear death.

Jiang

And you know no discretion in your quest for valor.

King

Ministers, stop your bickering. Oh, Heaven! What...what should we do?

Messenger

Your Majesty, the enemy has just retreated an arrow's shot.

King

[Surprised.] Are you sure?

Mes.

Certain, Your Majesty.

King

Get up, quickly and tell us about it!

Mes.

Your Majesty.

General Aoshu has killed the enemy general; He is fighting valiantly on the front line of battle. A host of cavalry soldiers cannot block his way; The troops of Wei-lie have fallen in body and spirit.

King

Return to reconnoiter further.
Mes. As you command, Your Majesty.
King General Aoshu is indeed courageous; he came like a gift from above; we must thank the Heavens for him!
Mes. Your Majesty, the rebel troops are fleeing to Xicheng, and the two generals are in hot pursuit of them.
King And two fine generals they are. Go back to reconnoiter.
Mes. As you command, Your Majesty...[Exits and immediately enters.] Your Majesty, General Aoshu has taken Xicheng. The rebel troops have cast off their armor and surrendered. Our troops have achieved a complete victory.
King That scoundrel Wei-lie!
Mes. The rebel Wei-lie saw that his golden moment had passed; he has slit his own throat and died.
King Ha, ha!...Arise! So this is what has come of his plot to usurp the throne. Send out an order for the two generals to return immediately to the court. I will reward them richly.

Scene 3 Meeting the Mountain Spirit: Prophecy

[Characters: 12 Soldiers; General Aoshu Zheng; General Meng Ting; and Mountain Spirit.]

Aoshu Zheng and Meng Ting
Men, we are returning to the court.

[Music of triumph. After a military drill, thunders break out.]

Aoshu Halt! This was a bright, sunny day. Why is it suddenly becoming overcast in this forest? There will probably be a downpour. General Meng, let's hasten to our destination. If you please! Men, proceed quickly... [Soldiers exit. Sounds of thundering and horse neighing.] Ah, heavy clouds are gathering and the horses neighing; this kind of weather must be some kind of bad omen.
Meng Why do you say that?
Aoshu This warrior horse has followed us gallantly into battle after battle; tell me why he is so skittish now.
Meng General, come and look. Those hoof prints are our own, from just a moment ago.
Aoshu Indeed they are. We have taken this road thousands of times before. How can we have ridden so long today, and still be where we started?
Meng Then let's try another road.
Aoshu As you say. If you please.

[Laughter from the Mountain Spirit: Ha, ha...]

Aoshu Whence comes this hysterical laughter? [More MS laughter is heard.] Who goes there?
Meng General, it must be a forest spirit making sport of us.
Aoshu What have we to fear of her? I'll take the lead. [MS laughter.] Who goes there? [Laughter stops.] Come out and show yourself!
MS [Sings] There are limits to all things in the world of men, with the changes of the fickle years. Who really will remain loyal to the
lord's commands until death, and sully the palace walls with the
touch of his mutilated corpse?
Aoshu
What is a maid doing here deep in this mountain forest?
Meng
Let's go ahead and find out.
Aoshu
Is this maid human or spirit, singing alone in this desolate
mountain?
MS
Hail, General! You have done a great deed in wiping out the rebels in
Xicheng today. You are to be congratulated!
Aoshu
How knows she of today's battle in Xicheng? Let us advance and get
an answer.
MS
Ay!
Aoshu
What kind of apparition are you that dares to make sport of us!
MS
Hail to you, Prime Minister of the land!
Aoshu
Hold your tongue! The Prime Minister Wei-lie plotted to usurp
the throne. He suffered a crushing defeat in battle with me, and has slit
his own throat. Why do you call his name?
MS
Do not be angered, General. Today when you return to the court, the
King of Ji is certain to name you prime minister. He will confer
upon you the name of Ping Yuan, and you will assume the rule of
Xicheng. You will dwell in wealth and high position.
Aoshu
What?
Meng
It will come to pass.
MS
There is something you do not know, General Meng. Today you will
be placed in charge of Dongcheng.
Aoshu
Nonsense! Wait for my arrow!... [MS disappears.] She's gone! She
must be a spirit!
Meng
General Aoshu, this place is bewitched. Let us not dally; let's find a
way out of here!
Aoshu
Wait a moment! Let's hear what the apparition has to say. You and I
are going to rule Xicheng and Dongcheng, and I will have the title of
prime minister. Something very strange is going on; let's go and ask
her just what the story is.
Meng
Well...all right. Let's go ahead.
MS
If you want to know about what is coming in the next world...you will
carry out your plans meticulously, but will end up with nothing.
[Laughs] General Aoshu, judging from the look of things now, you
have a winning hand. You will be lord of the state of Ji. Long live
the King of Ji! Long life to the King of Ji!
Aoshu
You impertinent ghouls, how dare you try to lure me into
disloyalty...wait for my sword!
Meng
Wait, General Aoshu, don't be so quick to anger. If you are truly
master of your spirit, you can just laugh it all off. Wait while I go
and find out just what she's talking about...Permit me to ask...since
you know what will come of him, can you tell me what my future will
be?
MS
Just now, between chaos and order, your future course has for the
most part been set. General Meng, your children and grandchildren
will occupy the throne of the state of Ji.
Meng
Ah. But what of me in this life?
MS
You have an inescapable fate; better you enjoy ill fortune than good.
[Disappears.]
Meng
General Aoshu! [Aoshu is talking to himself.] General Aoshu!
Aoshu
Ah, General Meng!
Meng
That spirit just predicted our destinies; it was just like a dream.
Aoshu: Yes, it was just like we saw the things we longed to see.
Meng: Ah?!
Aoshu: But no. General Meng, I don't think the words of that spirit are worth a second thought. It's getting late. Let's hurry back to the palace. [Turns back to pull his horse] It is:
Meng: Position and wealth are something everybody desires;
Aoshu: But turning on our Lord to win them would be unthinkable.

Scene 4  Advancement

[Characters: 4 Ministers, King of Ji, Attendants, 8 Eunuchs, Aoshu Zheng, Meng Ting.]

Group: His Majesty, the King of Ji. Long live the King!
King: Hail, Ministers.
Group: Long life to our Lord!
King: It was our excellent fortune in this rebellion to have the services of General Aoshu and General Meng, who are unsurpassed in bravery. They delivered us out of crisis; they are the pillars of the state of Ji, and ministers of great achievement. In today's morning court, I will reward them richly. Attendant!

Attendant: Yes.
King: Ask Generals Aoshu Zheng and Meng Ting to enter the court.
Attendant: As you command, Your Majesty. His Majesty requests Generals Aoshu and Meng to enter the court.
Aoshu, Meng: As you command, Your Majesty!

Aoshu: [Sings] We enter gallantly,
Befitting our rank and deeds.
Meng: [Sings] Onto great achievement is added title and fame.
Aoshu: [Sings] We released our enchanted arrows
From our precious carved bows;
Meng: [Sings] Exposed from our sheaths,
Our swords beamed brilliance.

Aoshu, Meng: [Sing] Out of the jaws of death
We return from the battlefield.
Having brought peace to the land,
We set up [sic] the routine of the court.
Hail, King! Long life to you!

King: Dear Generals, quickly, to your feet!
Aoshu, Meng: Long life to the King.

King: If you two Generals hadn't stepped in at the crucial moment and wiped out the rebel forces, I am afraid that our territory would by now be in their hands. Returning to the court from your victory I will reward you richly...Hear, General Meng: your quelling of his rebellion is unmatched in the world. For this, I confer on you the title of National Protector General, and award to you the city of Dongcheng!

Meng: I thank Your Majesty for your great favor!

King: Hear, General Aoshu [Sings]:
General Aoshu broke through the enemy lines,
Surging ahead in the name of his Lord
Without regard for personal safety.
I award you Prime Minister and the city of Xicheng;
Your sons and grandsons will fill the palace gates.
You wiped out the rebels and achieved total victory;
Your heroism is unmatched among men;
You will live in a golden palace
With carved pillars encircled by double phoenixes;
And the people will celebrate peace!

Aoshu
I thank Your Majesty for your great favor!

Scene 5  Aoshu Residence: Plotting

[Characters: Lady Aoshu; Ladies-in-Waiting; Aoshu Zheng.]

Lady Aoshu (LA) [Sings] My lord has fought wars
East and West for his country;
Struggling for supremacy and performing great deeds
Regardless of the bitter elements;
He now has the good fortune
Of being appointed Prime Minister,
Ever rising in position.
He has won the title he desired,
And will enjoy fame far and wide.

Attendant Milady, the General has been named Prime Minister, and is returning victoriously.
LA Hurry, let us go and meet him.
Attendant Yes, Milady, let us meet him.
Aoshu My Lady. [Enters and sits down.]
LA Sir Prime Minister... Congratulations, Sir Prime Minister, congratulations to you. What honor and glory your victorious return brings. This is truly a great joy to me!
Aoshu You flatter me!
LA You have return victoriously as Prime Minister; you should be happy. Why are you so melancholy?
Aoshu My Lady: [Sings]
This day of my victorious return,
As I hastened my horse through the forest,
I was startled by a sudden bolt of thunder.
A Mountain Spirit appeared
And spoke with a sharp tongue,
Talking up a ghoulish storm.

LA Just what did the Mountain Spirit say?
Aoshu [Sings] She said that when I returned to the court, I would be given charge of Xicheng.
LA In that case, the words of the Mountain Spirit were on the mark. What else did she say?
Aoshu [Sings] She said I would ascend to the throne of the state of Ji.
LA Ah! She said you would ascend to the throne of Ji?
Aoshu She did.
LA Then could it be...that this is the will of Heaven!
Aoshu [Sings] All the way back my disturbed mind kept returning to the words of that Mountain Spirit. Though hard to believe, they have indeed come true; I have the title as proof. But they unsettle me. I
have always been a loyal general, straightforward by nature, not a greedy ingrate turning on the favor of my King.

LA  
My lord:  
[Sings] I implore you not to be so hard on yourself.  
Moving up in the world and winning power  
Are reasonable things, not wrong.  
An omen was sent to you by the gods  
In the form of a spirit in the forest;  
You are the true dragon chosen by Heaven  
To rule over the rivers and mountains of our land.

Aoshu  
[Speaks] You are wrong, My Lady. Upholding the nation and protecting our ruler are the tasks of a faithful minister, things that must be done at all cost to life and limb. How can you entertain the idea of usurping the throne and betraying our country?...And all the more so now that I have today been awarded the high position of Prime Minister, something that anyone would envy. How can you be so ready to throw to the wind the position and fame we have worked so hard to gain?

LA  
[Speaks] I only fear that your title of Prime Minister will be a difficult one to hold; the wealth and splendor you will enjoy could be gone within days!

Aoshu  
What makes you say this, My Lady?

LA  
Let me ask you: when you met that Mountain Spirit in the forest, was anybody with you?

Aoshu  
Yes, General Meng Ting.

LA  
And let me ask you: did he also hear the Mountain Spirit's words?

Aoshu  
Of course he did. Why do you ask this?

LA  
If General Meng Ting were to tell the King the words of the Mountain Spirit in order to protect his own skin, then Sir Prime Minister, I doubt you would be able to escape your death!

Aoshu  
Hm... But Meng Ting and I have crossed the plains together for so many years; we are true friends to the end. Why would he want to betray me? He wouldn't do that!

LA  
You can know a man's face but not what is in his heart. I'll bet that the King of Ji has known about this thing for some time now, and is preparing to send in troops. When that happens we won't even have a chance to flee disaster.

Aoshu  
I don't believe it!

Attendant  
Let us go. Lord Prime Minister, Milady, something is amiss.

Aoshu  
What alarm you?

Attendant  
There is a great cavalry heading in our direction from several miles away.

Aoshu  
What kind of cavalry?

Attendant  
It is hard to recognize the banners; they seem to be preparing to launch a surprise attack!

Aoshu  
Command the officers on duty to put on their armor at once and ready their weapons for battle.

Attendant  
As you command!

A General  
Sir Prime Minister, Milady, a large cavalry of the King's is rapidly approaching; but I don't know what their mission is. [Aoshu is alarmed.]

LA  
What?!
Aoshu: Let me see! [Shocked, he gets up and walks out of the door to look out, his mind undecided and hesitant. Turning back, he hears some commotion.]
Attendant: The King has arrived.
Aoshu: [to LA] Make yourself scarce...

Scene 6 Arrival of King of Ji

[Enter four royal guards, Min Ziyu and King of Ji.]

Aoshu: I apologize for not being quick enough to meet your party, Your Majesty. Long life to the King!
King: At ease, Ministers. [An attendant brings in wine.]
Aoshu: Long live the King! And what mission brings the King here at this time?
King: There is something you do not know, dear Minister. I have just received a secret report that Earl Linjiang of Beicheng is plotting to usurp the throne. I have made this special trip to discuss the matter with you and lift this heavy burden from my soul.
Aoshu: Your Majesty, Earl Linjiang has always been loyal and true; he may not really be planning to rebel; perhaps Your Majesty should investigate the matter thoroughly before doing anything rash.
King: I have always been one to see through truth and lies; and there is now a secret report to back up what I know. Things having come this far you need not try to cover up for him.
Aoshu: I would not presume to do such a thing, Your Majesty. You have shown such great favor to me; I would have no reason to cover up for another. I am prepared to meet ten thousand deaths to serve my lord! [Lady Aoshu hides behind the screen overhearing.]
King: Truly a fine minister you are! I left the capital in haste, taking only a light carriage and a few necessities. Ostensibly, I have come to enjoy a hunt; in reality, however, I have come to use some of your men and horses. Tomorrow we will take the plank road across the Eastern River and attack Beicheng. The traitor will be caught totally unaware and is certain to launch an unprepared defense. You and your men will lure him into the forest, then you and General Meng will finish him off before he knows what has befallen him.
Aoshu: An excellent plan! All will be done according to your command... [King of Ji yawns.] Your Majesty, you must be exhausted after this long trip, and the hour is late. Please rest yourself.
King: Then I will trouble you to accommodate me.
Aoshu: If you please... Heh.. heh... ha, ha, ha...

Scene 7 Murder

[Re-enters Lady Aoshu.]

LA: Why do you laugh, Sir Prime Minister?
Aoshu: Eh...ha...I only laugh; you need not be so suspicious.
LA: Oh?
Aoshu: Do you know why the King has come?
LA: No, why?
Ostensibly, he has come for a hunt, but in fact he has come to use our cavalry to launch an attack on the traitor, Earl Linjiang of Beicheng. If he is about to take a traitor, why has General Meng not yet arrived?

General Meng and I will attack from two different sides; I will lead in front, and General Meng will come up from behind.

I only fear it is a trick.

I venture to say that General Meng has told the King the words of the Mountain Spirit. But because of your military prowess they cannot easily subdue you. So they concocted a plan to 'lure the tiger out of the mountain,' with the King coming here personally to win your confidence. Tomorrow when you are off to battle, Meng Ting's men will meet up with the King's men inside the city; and when that comes to pass, my dear Prime Minister, you won't even know by whose hand you will meet your end! Don't you see it?

Eh. When I hear her words, my spirit goes limp; And my body breaks out in a cold, fearful sweat; I panic and my thoughts are in disarray; How can I stave off the disaster about to befall me? My Lady! If what you say is true... what should we do?

My lord, come and see the sun set and the moon rise, the cycle of the elements, and the autumn of the contest for supremacy among the powerful. The strongest alone will occupy the throne. With your unmatched military might, your unrivaled resourcefulness, you should take first place among the thrones of Ji. And, tonight, if fate will have it so, you can protect the palace, become chief of the feudal lords, bring the rivers and mountains under your rule, and accept the homage of the feudal states. This is the will of Heaven, and the people's good fortune.

I was once a pillar, holding up the sky; A man of high bearing, tirelessly serving his lord. Who wouldn't want to wear The embroidered gown and pearled crown of a sovereign? My crime will be a heinous one, And my dream will end up in ashes. My armor has been soaked in the blood of a hundred wars, I now gladly accept the office of Prime Minister, Plots to usurp the throne usually end in failure; The crime of regicide would be a heavy one to bear. I only want to enjoy wealth and position, I don't want to become a broken corpse in Beicheng Mountain.

Whether it will be fortune or disaster is hard to say, Nobility and destruction are divided by a mere hair. Tomorrow when you go out to battle, You may be snared in a treacherous plot, And your heart pierced by countless arrows.

I go to battle out of loyal devotion, Not to send my soul needlessly to the netherworld, And not because I wish to spill blood on the battleground. How can I dodge this imminent danger?

To turn calamity into fortune, You must tonight take action to gain the upper hand. Opportunity knocks only once,
Offering you the nation on a platter.

Aoshu

The weight of the nation is heavy to bear;
It is not my fate to war the dragon robes.

LA

The weight of the nation is indeed heavy to bear,
But nothing is keeping it from your grasp.

Aoshu

The king's troops are posted at the gate;
How can you say that nothing is keeping it from my grasp?

LA

I will give them drugged wine;
They will fall into a drunken stupor
And be out like candles.

Aoshu

If the king is indeed a sea dragon incarnated,
I, as his minister, disgrace myself.

LA

But the sea dragon is away from the water,
Stranded on a shallow beach,
Where he will find it hard to escape the sword.

Aoshu

The blood that flows from the slain dragon
Will stain the Prime Minister's mansion
And bring about its occupant's end.
Once the sun is up, all will be known;
How can it be hidden?
How can this crime be concealed
From the tongues that would expose it?

LA

We can use the swords of the bodyguards,
And pin the crime on them.
The moon is high, none will see;
I will go now to set it up. [Picks up the wine jar and tries to leave.]

Aoshu

Where are you going?

LA

To subdue the guards with drugged wine, so we can carry out our plan.

Aoshu

You...you... you are really going ahead with it?

LA

Don't tell me you have regrets already?

Aoshu

But this is...usurpation of the throne!

LA

Are you afraid?

Aoshu

I...

LA

Humph! ...

[Brings the wine jar and exits. Aoshu watches her leave, dumbfounded and unable to decide to kill or not to kill the King. Lady Aoshu returns, back to back bumping to Aoshu. Both are startled.]

Sir Prime Minister, the king's bodyguards lie in a drugged slumber,
hurry and act!

Aoshu

I...ugh...

LA

Humph! You call yourself a man, a valiant general, but what are you really? Impotent and weak-kneed! It's enough that your hero's valor has shrunk back in fright; just never again mention this grandiose plan to be the highest ruler under Heaven, or we will be the laughingstock of the land! [trembling with anger.]

Aoshu

All right! [Sings]
It took just one word to provoke the warrior's ire;
A lust for blood wells up inside;
The sighs in the stars have been rearranged,
Fate has altered its course.
The hero now aspires to prevail over all under heaven;
The golden dragon will mount a rainbow,  
His wings filling the skies!

[Lady Aoshu places the sword in the hand of Aoshu. The nightwatcher’s gong is heard three times. Aoshu startles, raises the sword and exits. Lady Aoshu sees him leave, turning her back to the audience, visibly trembling. She moves to the table, leaning against it as if unable to support herself, her eyes looking towards the direction where Aoshu left. Suddenly an owl cries, she startles and falls into a chair.]

Voice from backstage The King has been assassinated! The King has been assassinated!

**Scene 8 Breaking a Horse**

[Characters: Four Grooms, Meng Ting, and Meng Deng.  
When the stage is lit, the Grooms are already in place. The horse neighing is mixed with the calling of the Grooms. The horses are struggling wildly. Meng Ting and Deng enter.]

Meng Ting (MT) I told you to prepare the horses, but a good part of the day is gone and they are still not ready!  
Groom I don’t know what is wrong, Milord. The horses are high-strung today and we cannot subdue them.  
MT Useless knave! Today the new King will ascend to the throne. You will see what you have coming if we are delayed.  
Meng Deng (MD) Father, this horse is usually tame and gentle with men; I don’t know why he is so wild and won’t calm down.  
MT Don’t worry son, you can leave that to the grooms. Groom!  
Groom Yes!  
MT Come and take this horse! [Mounts on the horseback. The jackdaws caw, and the horses neigh.]  
MD Father, the steed is kicking about wildly and is hard to subdue. I hear the jackdaws cawing eerily. Might this be an inauspicious omen?  
MT Birds cawing and horses neighing are everyday occurrences. Don’t worry, son.  
MD But, Father, this wild wind and skittishness of the horses are not at all usual. I have an uneasy feeling. If this is going to be a banquet celebration for the ministers, then why must I come along? There must be something going on.  
MT Well...all right then. As your father, I will tell you the truth. That day after Uncle Aoshu Zheng and I quelled the rebellion, we passed through a forest and ran into an apparition. She predicted that Aoshu would become king, and that my son would succeed him to the throne. So now he has invited the two of us to the banquet to show that after he will pass the throne to you once he dies. This is the will of Heaven. You need not say anything more about it. Father has already told you all there is to know, and now you must go, whether you want to or not. If you violate Heaven’s will, you will be unable to bear the consequences, so get on your horse and let’s take to the road.  
MD Father!
Go! On the King's orders, Meng Ting and his son must be disposed of.

Scene 9 The Flight

Meng Deng [Sings] Heartless sword descending through the air,
Sending souls to beyond the skies;
Father and son have you rent asunder,
Detestable Aoshu Zheng!
You have turned on your brother!
In order to usurp the throne,
You have killed my father.
I can only point to the capital and curse,
Grinding my teeth until my gums are torn.
My belly is in knots, a dam of tears about to break,
And rage fills my chest.
I am like a lamb away from its mother,
Powerless in the face of destiny;
I am like a fish that has just swallowed a hook,
A knife runs through my heart.
My fury reaches to the depths of the seas.
I will search to the ends of the earth,
I will rally relief troops,
And seize the traitor! [Exits]

Scene 10 Banquet

[Characters: Aoshu Zheng; Lady Aoshu; Meng Ting’s Ghost; 5 Ministers; Attendants.
A banquet, where music and dance are being held, is starting. Music and dance suddenly stops. The stage light spots on an empty seat, which belongs to Meng Ting. Aoshu Zheng and Lady Aoshu look at each other. The atmosphere becomes solemn and quiet. Lady Aoshu picks up the wine jar to serves wine for Aoshu, hinting him to break the frozen air.]

LA Ministers, today the King will ascend to the throne, thanks to your kind support. Your assistance will be crucial in the future management of the stage's affairs.
Ministers Congratulations to the King on your coronation! May the nation dwell in peace and safely!
Aoshu Gentlemen, if you please! [About to drink but stops when seeing the empty seat of Meng Ting; all the Ministers also look at the seat, unable to drink their wine. A moment of silence.]
LA All the ministers are here today for the King’s coronation. I only wonder why General Meng Ting did not make it.
Wu Huai Your Majesty, General Meng Ting must have had some business to attend to on the way. He would certainly not miss an occasion as important as your coronation. I hope you will forgive him.
Jiang Ji Your Majesty, the forest is like a great labyrinth. We sometimes lose our way in it ourselves, not to mention General Meng. Once he gets here we will penalize him in jest by having him drink three cups of wine to atone for his tardiness. [all laughs.]
Aoshu: Yes, three cups. He must drink down three cups!
[Drinks wine himself without toasting others. Suddenly sees Meng Ting's ghost. Greatly startled.]
Oh, Meng Ting... when did you get here? [The Ghost disappears.]
Don't... don't blame me! [All the Ministers are puzzled.]
LA: My King... my King... what is with you?
Aoshu: Meng Ting... has come; there he is.
LA: Where? I don't see him. My King, you must be drunk... [Aoshu raises his head and looks, and without seeing the Ghost, he is confused.]
Gentlemen, please excuse the King. He must have Meng Ting on his mind, and it is putting him in bad spirits. Don't let it interfere with your merrymaking. Come... if you please!
Ministers: If you please!
[All frozen; the stage light dims; and Meng Ting's Ghost re-enters.]
Aoshu: Ah, Meng Ting! You appear again! [The Ghost approaches him slowly.] Don't... Don't... blame me. It's not that I turned my back on our friendship. I did originally plan on passing the throne to your son after my death. But what could I do? My wife... she is with child. Don't... don't... come any closer or I'll... I'll... I'll... kill you! [Draws his sword, pushes the table away and leaps towards the Ghost, who darts to one side.]
LA: My King, my King, what is with you? Gentlemen, the King must be drunk. He'll be fine once he is sober.
Aoshu: If... if you don't leave, don't blame me for turning on a brother... I'll... I'll kill you!... You believe the words of the apparition, you wanted me to serve the land on a platter to your son. Heh, heh... Forget it!
[Saws the air with his sword. The Ministers are frightened and run around. Sweeps off the goblets from the table and continues to speak]
You want your descendants to have the title of king... so you think that I, Aoshu Zheng, will have no seed of my own?
[Dashes his sword towards the crowd. Suddenly sees the Ghost appear on the table, he climbs onto the table and shouts]
Meng Ting, I, Aoshu Zheng, have the strength to uproot mountains. I... am the true Son of Heaven. You can forget about seizing these rivers and mountains from me. I do not even fear that apparition, not to speak of you! Meng Ting!
[The Ghost disappears.]
All right, since you despise me, let us draw our swords and fight a duel to the death!
[Jumps from the table and trips. Falls on the floor. All are shocked.]
LA: Gentlemen! The King has since his youth suffered from fits of madness that recur whenever he has a few cups of wine. He will be fine once he's sober. I am sorry, Gentlemen, to have to conclude the
evening before you have drunk your fill. Let us choose another day to celebrate. [Keeps a forced smile.]

Ministers [Still frightened] Yes, let us do so.

LA Attendants, be gone! [To Aoshu] What kind of madness was that ruined our banquet?! [Startled by a shadow on the stage right.] Who goes there?

Assassin Your Majesty, Milady. The head.

Aoshu [Raises his head and stands up. Avoids seeing the head and waves his hand] Take yourself to receive your reward.

LA Wait a minute. [The Assassin is startled.] Where is the other head?

Assassin [Immediately kneels down] Your Majesty, the boy Meng Deng caught me off guard...and fled. I know my crime, I implore Your Majesty's and Milady's forgiveness!...

LA Worthless rogue! [Grabs Aoshu's sword and thrusts it hard into the Assassin.]

Aoshu My Lady! [Tries to stop but it is too late.]

Assassin You...you...you...! [Struggles and falls down, but still tries to reach Lady Aoshu, who retreats fearfully. Falls and dies.]

[Intense music corresponds to Lady's cry of "Blood! Blood!"]

Scene 11 Night Watchmen

[Characters: 4 Night Watchmen. On the dark stage only light can be seen from four lanterns.]

A Serving in the court is no easy job;
B Every night we live in fear of encountering a ghost.
C Everyone worries about becoming prey to harm;
D So we’d be better off making some arrangements for the future.
A Comrades, if you please!
All If you please!
A Does anyone have any fresh news?
B The old ones are not exciting enough?
C Exactly, not exciting enough? Do you mean more strange things happened?
A I have something to tell. I heard that this newly crowned King - I don’t know what brought it on - went mad right in the middle of a banquet he was giving in the golden palace!
D That’s not news, that’s old hat.
B I heard that on the same day General Meng Ting, as he was on his way to the banquet, was...
C They couldn’t even find his head. Uh! Macabre!
D The strange thing is that Meng Ting dies, but his son escaped to the state of Yen.
B Aren’t the Minister Min and his son in Yen now?
A That’s something you’ll have to ask me to find out.
All Tell us about it!
A The city has been buzzing with rumors that the late king died under rather suspicious circumstances. The state of Yen is now contacting the heads of other feudal states to plot a rebellion!
C Let me tell you... A few days ago, I saw an owl - an owl that usually feeds on rats - kill a powerful eagle. Nobody I tell believes me.
D That’s a little tough to swallow!
B Not a bit. Speaking of rats reminds of something else strange that happened.
A What?
B Yesterday evening when I was out on night watch duty, I saw hordes of rats banding together and heading out of the city. Now you tell me - what was the reason for that?
A It's a bad omen! I've heard old men say that the only time rats will leave a place in hordes is when a house is about to burn down!
A Ah!
D Then why don't we all get out of here?
A Ay...ay... come back here, come back here. You can't just run off at the drop of a hat. Our master the King runs a tight ship under martial rule. Leaving your post without permission would cost you your head!
B Right. Stay away from any harebrained ideas. Let's all just stick to our night watch and put on a brave front.
D What does such a big man have to fear?
B It's not that I'm afraid--but these days during my watch I keep hearing a woman's weeping, coming to my ears in muffled sobs. It's so eerie...and frightening!
C Ay! It must be a ghost!
A Don't talk nonsense. Let's just stay close together as we walk! If we run into a spirit we can all holler!
A Let's get moving!

Scene 12 Hand-Washing

[Characters: Lady Aoshu; Lady-in-Waiting; Aoshu Zheng; Attendants; Ministers. When the curtains open, Lady Aoshu are washing her hands behind the screen. The water basin is on a stand. She is mumbling.]

LA Blood...blood... [Rubs her hands, looks at them and rubs them hard.
Music starts. She sings:]
No matter how I try, I can't wash them clean;
The blood spots are still there...[Seems tired due to miscarriage.]
[Sings] If only I could divert a river
To wash off all traces of red.
They must be illusions
Born of a suspicious heart.
If it is all in my head.
And there is really nothing there,
Then why does a rotten stench
Plague my nostrils?
I can't stop
Because of the pain in my hands
And the tears I try to hold back.
They are like dots here and there
That are at first only imagined,
But then become real. [Waves her head and sighs, rubbing her hands hard in the water basin.]
[Speaks] I hoped that my life would be filled with flowers in bloom,
with nobility and splendor...who would have known...the child died in the womb, my dream has come to naught. A long night lies yet ahead. When, when will the dawn arrive?
[Sings] I am afraid to see
The cold dewdrops on the waterwheel
Drip into my dreams in the silent, heavy night;
I am afraid to listen
To the crows' cries in the night
Interspersed with the clangs of wind chimes.
I am afraid to hear
The drips of the water clock;
Each eerie drop wears away at my soul.
I am afraid to watch
The black shadows of the trees
Lengthen and constrict under the autumn window.
The souls of those who died unjustly come to demand blood.
Filled with wrath, their unblinking eyes like glassy globes...first is
the fierce assassin with unkempt hair; next is Men Tinge, gnashing
his teeth in rage over the wrong done to him. But worst of all is the
King of Ji, Ji Shen. I see him...tears streaming down his face, the
royal robes on his scored body soaked in blood, pointing an accusing
finger at me, his face a hideous sight...

[Her face becomes expressionless, like a sleep walker's. Her hands tremble,
wash and rub each other very hard. Too weak, she almost faints. Enters
the Lady-in-Waiting with Aoshu Zheng.]

Lady-in-Waiting and Aoshu My Lady, My Lady, what is with you?
LA [Raises her head, crying] Ay, my lord, pity us two for the unborn
child that has already died in the womb!
Aoshu My Lady, do not shed tears over that. What's done is done; why bring
it up now? Someday we will have a son to carry on our line.
LA I only fear that the days of she who is wife are numbered!
Aoshu Stop talking nonsense, and take care of your health. [Holds her
hands to comfort her. Lady Aoshu suddenly remembers and
starts to rub her hands again in the air.]
LA Ay...blood! Blood! Blood!
Lady-in-Waiting Uh... [Not knowing what to do, looks at Lady Aoshu and then
Aoshu Zheng, wiping tears from her own eyes.]
Aoshu My Lady! What... what's wrong with you?
LA Blood...
Aoshu My Lady! My Lady! My Lady! [Calls her loud and shakes her
shoulders. She calms down finally.]
LA Ay, my Prime Minister, look at the dark moon; I will drug the wine so
you can carry out your plan!
Aoshu My Lady! You! You! What kind of nonsense are you talking!
LA Humph! Well, are you going or not? Don't tell me a big strong man
like you is afraid!
Aoshu My Lady! Ay!
LA Well, are you going or not? [Grabs his hand and pulls him forward;
suddenly sees blood in his hands and tries to wash them. Aoshu
brushes her away.]
Attendant [Enters] Your Majesty, outside the palace the ministers report a
military emergency. Come and see.
Aoshu I know. Let them wait outside the palace. [Attendant exits.] Girl!
Lady-in-Waiting Yes, Your Majesty.
Aoshu Assist the mistress to the rear of the palace so she can rest. Take good care of her!
Lady-in-Waiting Yes, Your Majesty. [Supports Lady Aoshu to exit.]
Aoshu [Regrettable. Sitting down.] Ay! I, Aoshu Zheng, started out as a righteous and loyal general, but now am guilty of regicide and turning my back on what I know is right. Did Heaven really plan this fate for me? Heaven... Heaven... It looks as though I have indeed fallen victim to your plot. Ay... ay... ay... I won't believe it; I, Aoshu Zheng, lie at your feet, caught in your trap! [His fist hammering the table loud. Enters an Attendant.]
Attendant Your Majesty, the ministers have been waiting for some time now.
Aoshu Tell them I will receive them now.
Minister A Your Majesty, the state of Yen has mobilized a hundred thousand soldiers and they are advancing on us now. They have already surrounded Xicheng.
Aoshu Mm. So Xicheng is surrounded. What about Dongcheng?
Minister B Your Majesty, Meng Deng led a thousand cavalry to attack Dongcheng. The general in charge...
Aoshu What about him?
Minister B He... he opened the city gates and surrendered!
Aoshu Uh... he... so he surrendered too? The rebel deserves to die.
Minister C Your Majesty, we have just received a report that the troops of the rebel Min Ziyu are closing in on Beicheng; the situation is serious.
Minister D Your Majesty, the state of Yen has amassed a powerful army, and they will soon be heading towards the capital. The military situation is critical. We pray Your Majesty to devise a counterattack.
Aoshu All right, all right! Don't tell em the living daylights have been frightened out of all of you! Doesn't anyone have any ideas? You're just a bunch of ninnies who are afraid to die! [Anxiously. Suddenly a rain storm starts. Aoshu remembers the Mountain Spirit.] Come, come! Help make ready my horse! Hurry and make ready my horse! [Rides on the horse. All exit.]

Scene 13 Another Prophecy

[Aoshu rides his horse fast. Along the journey the shrieking laughter of the Mountain Spirit is heard.]

MS Ha, ha, ha, ha, hee, hee...
Aoshu [Anxiously shouts] Apparition of the forest! Where are you? Come out!
MS Hail, King! Long life to the King!
Aoshu Let me ask you, Spirit, will Meng Deng, son of Meng Ting, ascend to the throne and rule over Ji?
MS Keep a broad mind, my King. You now occupy the royal throne, and are ruler over all. What more could your heart desire?
Aoshu Hold your tongue! I am asking you, how long will I retain my rule over the land? What is my fate?
MS Your Majesty, hundreds of battles have proven you to be a general surpassed by none, and now you are ruler of the land. In this life you will be a peerless general undefeated in any battle, unless...
Aoshu Unless what?
MS Unless this forest moves toward the capital... Heh, heh, heh.
Aoshu This forest is filled with ancient, towering trees. Such a great, expansive forest—how could it move? Absurd! That's absurd! Then it looks as though my rule is rock-solid, and I don't have to worry about their approach.

MS Yes, Your Majesty. If you want to hold on to your rule, you must be merciless and unyielding, and kill to the very end. Kill until the plain is covered with corpses, and blood flows in a river! Kill until the plains are covered with corpses and blood flows in a river!

Aoshu Merciless and unyielding? Kill until the plains are covered with corpses and blood flows in a river?

MS Yes. You have said it. Kill until the plains are covered with corpses and blood flows in a river... do not allow a scrap of the armor of the Yen army to remain! Hee...

Aoshu Yes, I will stack their corpses and bones in a mountain that reaches to the sky, and make their blood flow in a river that will never run dry. I will slay them off their horses until they shriek like ghosts and howl like wolves; I will kill until the sky turns black, and the sun and stars drop from the heavens! Come, Yen army, Min Ziyu, Meng Deng, all of you, come! Heaven has ruled that you will become ghosts by my sword, unless, heh, heh, ha, ha... [Sings] Unless the forest moves itself, Unless it sprouts wings And flies to the city walls; There will be no "Splitting of the base rock of Mount Tai," Or other absurdities breeding doubt. And so, it seems, I am indeed The true ruler over all, by Heaven sent; I will be defeated in no battle, I am on a par with the gods; The mountains and rivers Are in the palm of my hand; What have I, who am unmatched on this earth, To fear from calvary troops Numbering in the thousands? [Laughs triumphantly] Ah! Ha, ha, ha... [Whips the horse and returns] Open the city gate!

Scene 14 Betrayal and Death

[When the second curtains open, the troops are in confusing commotion. Aoshu gets off the horse and asks one soldier]

Aoshu Why are you in such a panic?
Soldier A Your Majesty, the Yen army... the Yen army...
Aoshu What about the Yen army?
SA The Yen army...
Aoshu Let the Yen army drink your gall! [Pushes him away and grabs another soldier] Why are you so panicked?
Soldier B Your Majesty, tens of thousands of Yen soldiers are approaching the forest, and will soon be attacking the capital!
Aoshu You milk-livered wretch! Away with you! [Kicks Soldier B away; moves to the center and calls out] Soldiers! Men! Men! Don't be so
rash and alarmed! I have something to tell you... [All quiet down and listen]

Men! Though the Yen forces are approaching, we all know that the capital city is situated high above the surrounding land, and the enemy forces' movement are all within our grasp. Archer forces are waiting in ambush around the palace if the enemy attacks. A shower of arrows will knock the horses right out from under them, and they will flee in the chaos. Not to mention the thick forest that shields the palace with a natural labyrinth. Once the enemy forces enter it, they are certain to lose their way; then I will lead you out to advance and slay. That will spell certain doom for the Yen army! I am the true Son of Heaven, and have never been defeated in battle. If you don't believe me, then let me tell you something.

[The soldiers line up into two rows.]

I started out as a mere lead general of Dongcheng. On the road of my victorious return to the palace after quelling the rebellion, I crossed through the forest, and by chance saw an apparition in the mountain. It was she who said that I would someday first be named prime minister, then king. [Bragging]

As of now, every bit of what the spirit said has indeed come to pass. And just now, I again asked the spirit to tell me the outcome of this battle. She declared me a general among generals, and a great king on earth, and said that I will never lose a battle in this life.

Unless... ha, ha, ha... unless this forest moves toward the capital! Now, men, you tell me: how could the towering, ancient trees in this expansive forest move? How could they possibly move? Heh, heh...ha, ha...Ah! [Soldiers repeat: "Ha, ha!"] Ha, ha, ha...men, we must be tough and brave [Soldiers: "Tough and brave!"], rushing to the front, [Soldiers: "Rushing to the front!"] fighting to the death; level them to the ground; don't spare one piece of armor.

Crowd

Ah!... [Loud and pompous music plays, and all Soldiers sing while doing a military drill; Aoshu proudly sees the high morale among his troops.]

[Aoshu]: I command the troops to prepare for war; Herioc deeds will be rewarded; now do not tarry. [Triumphantly laughs. Suddenly the sky is filled with cawing crows; all Soldiers whisper to one another.]

Crowd

The sky is filled with cawing crows! Is this an omen of disaster?

Aoshu

Humph! Stop that drive! The mountain gods must have sent the birds to congratulate me! [A dry laugh.] Humph!

Messenger

[Enters] Your Majesty... Min Ziyu is leading the Yen army through the forest!

Aoshu

What is there to fear about that? Send in some more archers to protect the castle.

Messenger

As you command, Your Majesty.

Aoshu

[re-enters] Bad news, Your Majesty.

Messenger

Why are you so alarmed?!

Aoshu

Her Highness!
What about her?

Hurry and say it!

Her old malady has flared up again; she has hung herself from a beam.

She...she...has hung herself from a beam?!

Yes, Your Majesty!

[Trembling] Ay, she is dead... perhaps it is for the better... [Cries]
[Angrily looks at the Messenger] Who needs you to report bad news at a time like this? You will hurt our fighting morale.
[Draws his sword and kills the Messenger in rage.]

[Enters] Your Majesty... bad news!

Now what?

The forest...is moving!

What?!... How could that forest of old trees be moving? Nonsense!
[Kicks him away] Let me see!

[All are in commotion. Aoshu moves to the fortress while nudging the soldiers away. The wind blows hard now. The soldiers spread the message: "The forest is moving! The forest is moving!" Aoshu climbs up the fortress.]

The forest...the forest is indeed...moving! It cannot be!

[From whispering to shouting]

It cannot be! The forest! How...could the...forest... [Turns to see his troops, who are now in confusion.] Every man to his post! What are you doing there, just staring into space!! [All are quiet and not following the order.] Huh! [Angry] Why is no one moving? Do not tell me...that you...you!...you are going to present my head to the state of Yen!

[Shoo! The first arrow flies over the air.]

Traitors! Seize them!

[The second arrow is shot toward Aoshu from another direction.]

Ah!...

[One after another, the arrows are shot up the fortress. One of them pierces into Aoshu's body. He staggers and falls off the fortress; he struggles to stand up and walk, the Soldiers retreat from him, frightened. Finally Aoshu falls to the ground and dies. The "forest" rushes into the scene, waiving slowly. The laughter from the Mountain Spirit is heard with the theme music: "Ha, ha, ha..."]
APPENDIX TWO:

THE PRINCE'S REVENGE

By Wang Anqi
Translated by Wen-shan Shih

Prologue: Beginning of Slaughter

Gongsun Yu (Prince of Ding-An State), Qiu Rong (Prince of Bei-Ting State), and 16 soldiers.
With distant and slow-paced music, curtains open. Onstage many pairs of fighters are engaged in combat - in slow motion. An earth-shaking battle, signifying the never-ending human war, is happening. The stage is gradually lit up, and the fighting becomes fast-paced. Gongsun Yu and Qiu Rong are locked in vehement combat.

Gongsun: Qiu Rong, why are you launching a war at our border? Give me your reason!
Qiu: I can't live under the same heaven as my father's murderer! I must have revenge!
Gongsun: The feud which is a legacy from our fathers - how can I end it? How can I re-pay you? Merely blaming heavens and earth is vain.
Qiu: Your father robbed us of our land and killed my king-father. A real man could not bear such humiliation. You can't escape; beware of my spear!

[Two fight. Qiu Rong is defeated.]

Gongsun: Revenge seeking revenge - is there an end to it? Enough! Let it be and be ever so free, spacious as the sky and wide as the sea.

[Enter a Messenger.]

Messenger: Report! Your Highness, the king -
Gongsun: My king-father - what happened?
Messenger: He-- He-- He--
Gongsun: Speak! Speak! Speak!
Messenger: His majesty passed away!
Gongsun: Ah! My king-father... died? All troops return to the Capital!

[ Gongsun Yu rides towards the capital. Qiu Rong seizes the opportunity and escapes.]

193 The translation of this play, The Prince's Revenge (Wangzi Fuchou Ji), combines the original manuscript for the production (Wang Anqi 1990b) and the later published version (Wang Anqi 1991a). There are minor differences between the two versions.
Scene 1 Court - Uncle? King? Father?

Enter Queen, King, Huo Xuguang, Prime Minister Xiao, Xiao Yi, Jia Xing, Fei Li, Courtiers, Attendants, and Ladies-in-waiting.

Joy prevails in the imperial court. Courtiers assemble to meet the sovereign.

Backstage Announcement His Majesty arrives—

[Enter the King and the Queen, accompanied by her ladies-in-waiting into the court, and take the throne. They receive the formal greetings from all the ministers and courtiers.]

Couriers Long live our King and Queen!
King Ministers do without formalities! Ha-ha!
Courtiers Long live Your Majesty!

[Ladies-in-waiting dance.]

King Ha-ha!
Backstage Announcement His Highness the Prince returns to the court—

[Enter Gongun Yu.]

Queen O my son! My son - you are back! You've traveled all the way back!
King Why sure, our son is back from the border. You must have suffered hardships on the road.
PM Xiao Exactly! Come over to pay a courtesy to His Majesty.
Gongsun Uncle?
PM Xiao No more "Uncle"! From now on you should call him "King-father"!
Gongsun What? [Stunned.]
King Our son!
PM Xiao Your Highness came back at the right time. You see, our late king passed away, and his Majesty has just ascended to the throne. It's time for the whole nation to rejoice and celebrate with the heavens!
Gongsun How is it so?
PM Xiao All the country congratulates our new King and Queen, eternal couple of our prosperous land!
King Our son, we were saddened by your father's death. And yet how would the nation fare even a day without proper rule? The ministers elected ourselves to ascend to the throne. We hope you restrain grief and accept the changes.
All Your Majesty our sage!
King Our son has been attending warfare all these years. Your mother misses you and worries day and night. Since you are back stay with us in the court. As to the defense at the border, we assign Xiao Yi to take over.
PM Xiao My son, quick, show your gratitude to His Majesty!
Xiao Yi I will bear Your Majesty's honor!
King All ministers, we increase all your emoluments three ranks up!
All Long live Your Majesty and your glory!
King Ha-ha! Bring in the wine! [Sings] My wish is fulfilled—my heart so delighted!
[Sing] Happy and Peaceful is our nation; we celebrate—[speak] our King and Queen—[sing] live forever!

Queen My son, come, come to toast your father and drink up a full goblet. Show him filial piety. Attendants, fetch the wine!

[Gongsun Yu takes the goblet.]

Gongsun [Sings] May my King-father—
King [Delighted to hear the Prince call him father] Hmm—
Gongsun [Sings] drink this up—[Prime Minister Xiao offers the goblet to the King.]
King I'd surely drink it up! [Drinks.]
Gongsun [Sings] His blessed soul return to the heavens!
King What? Ai-ya!
PM Xiao Come, come, come! Let us all toast our Majesty and Queen! [All] Heaven bless our country with peace and prosperity, happiness and longevity!

[In music all move to the background. The Prince is singled out.]

Gongsun [Sings] This chalice of wine was meant to toast the dead in the grave. Who'd expect that, it is offered and consumed at a wedding banquet. I'd expected all the court to be clad in white lamenting in a funeral. For what reason do the red robes and red shoes fill the entire palace? I looked for a new widow wearing her deep sorrow to greet her son's return; Eyes to eyes looking through tears, we'd share the heart-broken mourning. She turns out to be joyous- a newlywed - her cheeks crimsoned by the burning wedding tapers. Now I find no kinsmen in this world with whom to share my heavy grief; Like sand lost in the sea I wander, looking for a place in which to entrust my heart's truth.

[Exit all. The scene shifts to the Floral Lake.]

Scene 2 Floral Lake - Autumn Mood

[Graceful like a divine beauty, Xiao Xiang plays the lute by the Floral Lake.]

Xiang [sings] Autumn water is their spirit, jade their bone,
Snowy white, they stand against the wind.
Whenever the season moves to the year's end,
In bright moonshine and chilly frost, the narcissuses bloom.
Dust from thousands of years cannot stain them;
Dipped with the pure morning dews, they send off quiet fragrance.

Gongsun Dust from thousands of years cannot stain them. Dust from thousands of years cannot stain them!

Xiang O Your Highness is back! Your Highness is back! When you left for the war, the willows nodded and swayed gently. Who'd expect you to return in the chilly gusts of autumn wind!

Gongsun Why yes. Today my homecoming is accompanied by winds of sorrow that chill my heart. I never imagined my father would suddenly die,
for no reason, and my uncle be my king-father. Even my mother, she.... [Sighs] That it should come to this! What more can you say?

Xiang

Still, you have me!

Gongsun

At my departure for the war, you and I got engaged beside the Floral Lake, witnessed by flowing water and falling flowers. I vowed: the day of my return in triumph is the day for our wedding to occur. Only in a few months, alas, things have entirely changed.

Xiang

Your Highness! [Sings] You need not mention our old-time vow, I'd be content only to give you my love and consolation. You see the waves in the Floral Lake so deep and blue,

Let's play the lute in the moonshine to rid you of grief.

Gongsun [Sings] The Floral Lake has a thousand fathoms,

But is not as deep as my sweet love's affections.

Alas, most crooked and hazardous are the ways of the world,

Even moonshine and lute songs cannot divert my weary heart!

Xiang [Sings] Although the earth is full of rueful things,

Let's pray to the autumn wind to sweep it clean!

Gongsun [Sings] The autumn wind blows, burying all the flowers.

While rustling leaves turn sallow and fall decayed!

Xiang [Sings] All decayed, the timely snow descends.

I would not let you alone tread your way in the cold.

Gongsun [Sings] Now I see merely desolate scenery in the future!

Xiang [Sings] I'd be with you to greet the spring sun of morrow!

Gongsun [Sing together] Nowhere can I find--

Xiang Till then we will see--[together]

The fair climate urging the flowers to bloom,

And the willows swaying most gently with the breeze.

[ Enter Prime Minister Xiao and Xiao Yi.]

PM Xiao, Yi Your Highness!

Xiang Father! Brother!

PM Xiao Xiang, your brother is assigned to the border. He is about to leave. Now come home with me to prepare for his departure.

Xiang [To Prince] Your Highness, come home with us!

PM Xiao His Highness is from the imperial family. Our humble dwelling cannot entertain him!

Xiang But Father, His Highness used to come to our home quite often!

Yi Right. His Highness frequented our house, chatting with Sister and practicing fencing with me. You even promised their marriage. How come today--?

PM Xiao Circumstances have changed. My dear children, His Highness is of the royal blood; how can we possibly match his status?

[To Xiang] Bear this clearly in your mind! Come, follow me home.

[To Prince] Your Highness, I humbly excuse myself. Xiang, Yi, come with me!

Yi All right. Xiao Yi has to excuse himself now. When I return from the war, allow me to practice fencing with Your Highness again.

[Xiao Xiang turns her head at the Prince while the three exit.]
Gongsun  Xiao Xiang! Xiao Xiang!... Prime Minister Xiao used to please me and cater to my humor. Why does he appear so indifferent to me today. Could it be...

Huo Xuguang  My lord! My lord!
Gongsun  Mr. Huo, why do you look so perplexed?
Huo  I just heard from our sentinels, that, these recent nights, during their patrolling there often blew a chilly gust of wind, cold to the bones, and then appeared a giant shadow lingering along the castle tower!
Gongsun  Could it be true? In the dark and bitter cold night, it may have been just shadows that caused the illusion.
Huo  Yes, I also speculated so. However, last night, as I was again informed of its re-appearance, I followed the sentinels to the castle tower, where dark shadows haunted. Suddenly a violent wind blew, and I seemed to hear the tinkling of armors and war boots, sounding like our late king's...
Gongsun  Is every word of yours true?
Huo  Absolutely!
Gongsun  Good. Tonight I will go and investigate it myself.

Scene 3  Castle Tower—Ghostly Visitation? Hallucination?

Enter the Sentinels 1, 2, and 3.

Sent. 1  Listen! Listen! What's the sound? What's the sound?

[grotesque sound effect with smoke and shadows]

Sent. 2  Yes, yes! It's the same sound we heard last night!
Sent. 3  Exactly - Look! it appears again!
Sent. 1  Who is it? [Turns and sees Prince and Huo Xuguang.]
Huo  Speak with respect. His Highness our Prince is here!
All  Salute!
Gongsun  At ease.
Huo  My lord, can you hear the tinkling of the armor and boots?
Sent. 1  Behold, the giant shadow is approaching us, just like...
Gongsun  My King-father!
Huo  What do you see, my lord?
Gongsun  My King-father! My king-father is summoning me! Let me go to him!
Huo  Wait! My lord, you shall not go! A dismal darkness is over there. Don't risk yourself by going alone. Let us protect you while you investigate further!
Gongsun  Be ruled! Withdraw yourselves immediately. Never make known what you saw tonight. Whoever disobeys my order will suffer capital punishment. [All exit except Prince.]
Gongsun  Father, Father, your son is here. If you really are my King-father, tonight make yourself known to me; you must have secrets to unfold. I will bear your words in my bosom.

[Ghost of the late king appears obscurely on the top of the tower.]

Ghost  [Crying] O my son! [Sings, his voice gradually clear as he gets
Every cry of yours causes a piece of my heart to break. I swallow down my tears with blood, drop by drop. They say a sudden illness killed me instantly. Who knows that behind it there was a foul scheme!

Gongsun Father!

Ghost [Speaks] Your father died with great injustice! [Sings] That night I had a cold, resting on my royal coach. At midnight I heard the bell ringing from the tower. Evening dews were chilly, the breezes gentle, our palace hushed. Suddenly, a red candlelight shone through the window screen. 'Tis the villain with a bowl of concoction, most courteously urging me to drink. Alas, too late, I realized, he had poisoned the soup - a knife behind his smile! I died instantly, my soul returning to the Underworld!

Gongsun Father, who is he?

Ghost [Sings] You ask me the usurper's name. He is your dear, dear uncle - My brother of close blood relations!

Gongsun Ai-ya! Uncle, a most wicked scoundrel! [Falling on his rear to demonstrate his surprise]

Ghost [Sings] My son, can you bear to see the villain seize power? Can you bear to see my spirit linger in the City of Wronged Souls? Can you bear to see the confusion of the right with the wrong? Can you bear to allow the incestuous villain confound moral? Can you bear to see the injustice remain unpurged? Can you bear to allow the injustice remain unpurged? [While singing, Ghost approaches Prince. Two demonstrate conventional gestures in opposite directions circling the stage.]

[Ghost withdraws. Realizing the truth, Prince is struck by a fit of indignation and grief, and runs down the tower. In vagueness he seems to see King and Queen. And in the distance, Qiu Rong cries, "I can't live under the same heaven as my father's murderer." Exhausted and confused, the Prince faints.]

Scene 4 Court Performance: "Candlelight Flickering Red"

Enter Jia Xing and Fei Li following Prime Minister Xiao.

PM Xiao Generals, for a long time you two have been friends with our Prince. This time His Majesty summoned you to the court, mainly to help find out whether the Prince is really mad or just jesting. In a moment, during the court performance, you two must observe him carefully.

Jia, Fei Yes, Sir.

[Enter Courtiers and Ladies-in-waiting surrounding King and Queen.]

King Prime Minister Xiao, have you prepared everything as we commanded?

PM Xiao All set. Now we just wait for His Highness to come.

King Summon our Prince to the court.
Queen: Hold on. Prime Minister Xiao, my son and Xiao Xiang have been affectionate for each other since childhood. Why don't you send for her to see the performance together? Maybe her company can alleviate the pain in his mind.

PM Xiao: Without Your Highness' reminding, His Majesty already considered that. I just sent for her from home. She will be here presently.

Queen: Your Majesty has been so concerned with my son - your humble wife is truly grateful to you.

King: Ah, our beloved Queen, do speak without formalities.... Ha, ha! A horse's strength is to be tested only when the way is long; a person's true virtue is revealed only in the long run. How can we have no care for our beloved Queen's son? Prime Minister Xiao, summon our Prince immediately.

PM Xiao: Yes, my lord. His Majesty commands His Highness the Prince to come to the court! [Enters the Prince, holding a "Book of Judgment".]

Gongsun: How many wronged ghosts wander in the Underworld?

Jia, Fei: What's this about? Your Highness still remembers us, your humble servants?

Gongsun: A butcher of pigs.

Jia: How come I became a butcher?

Gongsun: A murdering dog-thief!

Fei: I, a murderer?

Gongsun: If you've never killed, why are you in this prison?

Fei: What prison? This is the court of our capital.

Gongsun: The court - the court is the prison, the prison is the court. You are all jailed!

Jia, Fei: You must be joking, Your Highness.

Gongsun: Have you ever heard that we have lots of rats in this prison?

Jia, Fei: Rats! Where? Where?

Gongsun: A coward rat lives together with a bunch of greedy mice!

Jia, Fei: Where?

Gongsun: There, a gang of scoundrels!195

Jia: Ay, here we have only painted rafters and carved beams, most elegant and elaborate. It's impossible to have rats!

PM Xiao: Exactly! How can rats get in? Impossible!

Gongsun: Yes.... There are...

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194 In Chinese it is "Book of Life and Death," traditionally held by the judge in the Underworld to determine a person's length of life. In this scene it is opened to unfold the four Confucianist cardinal virtues in man, as the means to judge the people in the court. It seems that the Prince is raising a mirror at these characters, and the contradictory moral qualities in them brings a sense of irony to the scene.

195 In Chinese it is literally "herd of rats and gang of dogs." The phrase describes a group of rogues or mean fellows. The use of animal images to describe the human wickedness is strong in this scene.
Why yes, yes... there are... [Look at each other] Yes, look! [Look out at the auditorium] Rats everywhere... [point at PM Xiao.]

Ay, who are you pointing at? Your Highness, don't fuss. Please be seated. The performance will start soon. Our Chinese theatre can teach you all about loyalty, filial piety, integrity and justice, as well as the four cardinal virtues - propriety, righteousness, honesty, and shame. Watch carefully!

"Loyalty, filial piety, integrity, and justice," "propriety, righteousness, honesty, and shame." All nonsense, only empty words! [Throws away the Book of Judgment.]

[Enters Xiao Xiang.]

Your Highness!

[In hualian role's tone, as that of King] Ah, our beloved Queen, do without formalities, ha!

[In rhymes] The lady was born with a pretty face, just like a narcissus by the water grows. But what a pity--the narcissus is pure beyond comparison, whereas most women resemble poplar blossoms, carried by the water and drifting around. Is there another Lady Mengjiang, whose tears for her husband's death crumbled down the Great Wall? Is there another virtuous wife, who climbed up the hill to wait for her husband and metamorphosed into a rock? Don't you swear we'd be buried in the same tomb after death; Don't you mumble about being a chaste maid serving no other man just as a good horse refuses to bear a second master's saddle! All I fear is that, before the new grave earth dries, she'd come with a big rush-leaf fan, fanning, fanning, and fanning again, until the earth dries, so she can put on a new wedding gown, a new wedding gown!

[Sings in xiaosheng (young male) tone] Today, a wedlock is made again.

Ya! [Sings] It is feigned madness and pretentious derangement; every word contains an overtone. Let me grab the sword on my waist--

[Sings] Pray you calmly observe his method during the play. [Speaks to Prince] Your Highness, don't be rowdy any more. Take a seat to watch the show, please.

My son, His Majesty knew that theatre is your favorite pastime. So he sent for the best actors here today for your pleasure.

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There is a contradiction in the order of scenes. The Prince repeats the king's speech to the Queen, a conversation which takes place in his absence. But the real intention here is to portray the madness of the Prince through his role-playing. He shifts his manners from a theatrically hualian role (man with strong temper) to a rhythmical shuban role (story-telling), to finally a xiaosheng role (young man, usually lover). The madness is really heavily "made-up" by its conscious theatricality.

See the allusions to classical Chinese literature in 5.6.
King  Yes, we select the play "Wang Xiang Fulfills Filial Piety" to entertain our son.
Gongsun  Who cares for "Wang Xiang Fulfills Filial Piety"? I want "The Orphan of Chao."  
PM Xiao  Your Highness, our King and Queen are still newly-wed. That play contains too much bloodshed. Indecorous. Please select another play.
Gongsun  "The Candlelight Flickering Red"!
PM Xiao  What? "The Candlelight Flickering Red"?
Gongsun  The candlelight flickers red to congratulate the newlyweds!
PM Xiao  A good sign! It suits the present happy occasion. Command the players to play it immediately!
Attendant  Start the play!

[The Leader of the troupe plays the Storyteller, joined by the Chorus.]

Storytel.  [In verse] It was a play at the time,  
Now the play has come true.  
There is no audience around;  
Only characters are present.  
[In prose] The story belongs to the king from the previous dynasty.  
He fights many battles and quells numerous rebels. In his great effort, he finally ends the wars and unifies the whole nation. That's him.
Chorus  [Sings] Emperor just, ministers virtuous, the commons enjoy happiness and peace.  
Abundant harvest and good fortune are shared by all.
Storytel.  [In prose] It is the seventh day of the seventh moon, a festivity for lovers. The king and his queen visit the Imperial Lake.  
[Dancers enter] Setting up an altar, they pray to live together forever. And behold--
Chorus  [Sings] The Milky Way shines above the Earth,  
The Twin Stars reflect lovers' rosy cheeks.
Storytel.  The king is so delighted, that he bestows upon his queen a gold hair-pin box. He vows by the Twin Stars: [in verse] their love will outlast even heavens and earth--
Chorus  [Sings] The gold hair-pin box has tender threads of love.  
The Twin Stars weave a thousand rays of light.  
They bind the happy couple for hundred generations in love.
Storytel.  Pitiful! Most pitiful!
Chorus  What is pitiful?
Storytel.  Although the Cowherd and the Weaving Maid of the Twin Stars meet only once a year, they are as constant as heavens and earth. The love of the mortals only lasts for a wink of an eye.

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198 See Note 181. However, it is unclear whether this famous story of filial piety has ever been adapted into drama.
199 By Ji Junxiang in Yuan Dynasty (1280-1368 A.D.). The play depicts how the prince of the house of Chao was sheltered after a massacre during a coup d'état and eventually avenged his royal parents by killing his adopted father, who was the murderer-usurper.
200 The Twin Stars indicate the Cowherd and the Weaving Maid. According to Chinese folklore, they meet once a year on the seventh day of the seventh moon over a bridge across the Milky Way formed by sympathetic magpies.
Chorus [Sings] The heavenly rendezvous occurs year after year. The love of the morals only lasts for a wink of an eye, a wink of an eye.

Storytel. Back in the royal chamber, the king has a cold and is bedridden. One night, his brother comes to the palace and tells the queen that he will attend to the king. She returns to her chamber, but unable to rest, at midnight she rises to see the king. Alone, she passes by the Imperial Lake, and, bathed in the moonshine and night breezes, arrives at the king’s chamber. And look -

Chorus [Sings] A waning moon hanging in the sky, Red candlelight shining through the window screen.

[The following action is presented in mime. The queen and the king’s brother partake in illicit love. The king is poisoned, struggling until death. The players’ shadows are reflected on the window screens through the candlelight. King, who is seated in the audience, is shaken by rage.]

King Stop it! ...Fie! [Exits. Music and action are suddenly stopped. All are stunned as they see King leave in anger.]

Gongsun [In mad laughter] Ha ha....

[Blackout]

Scene 5 A Corner of the Court: Moment of Repentance

Enter King and Prime Minister Xiao.

King This is outrageous! Truly outrageous! He dares to humiliate me in public. How dare he!

PM Xiao Absolutely. In my humble opinion, his Highness pretended to be mad, and deliberately made fun of Your Majesty in front of the entire court.

King Since it has come to this, I cannot tolerate his mischief. I want you to have him immediately....[gesture of killing]

PM Xiao Wait a second! [Looks around] Your Majesty, the thing has already aroused suspicion in the court; we should not let out more traces. If we lay heavy hands on him here and now, we will surely provoke criticism. Let alone our Queen - she will not give in easily.

King But...hum, you sound sensible. In that case, I will send him to another country, under the pretext of his need to recuperate from poor health. Then we will see.

[Enter Jia Xing and Fei Li.]

Fei, Jia Your Majesty, our Queen, now in her chamber, has just sent for the Prince. We thought maybe something unusual is going on and came to report it.

King Oh! [Contemplates] Is that right? We are well-informed now. Thank you both. You may leave. If anything unruly happens, report us presently.

Fei, Jia Yes, my lord. [Exit.]
PM Xiao Would Your Majesty like to slip into the room, and listen to what they have to say?
King Not proper. If the Queen discovers me, she must think that I don't trust her.
PM Xiao I humbly propose to do the service!
King And if you are found?
PM Xiao I will say that my Xiao Xiang asked me to inquire the Prince's health.
King What a brilliant excuse!
PM Xiao Your Majesty over-praised me. This is called: pose an upright, honorable attitude, show lots of care and sincerity—Now your servant humbly excuses himself. Truth is, "if you want to play dark tricks, make sure to wear an honest face." Ha! [Exits.]

[Sighs] I planned to cover my dirty deeds from public knowledge, to get my beloved Sister-in-law and to get around with my nephew. Who expected Gongsun Yu would feign madness and see through my design? The old saying goes, "Raising a tiger at home, you end up ruining yourself." [Sighs] These hands of mine have been stained with my brother's blood, how can I smear them with my nephew's? But if I don't get rid of him now, I fear, my throne—and my Queen...will be gone instantaneously! Ai-ya! How?... Gongsun Yu, don't you blame your uncle for a foul play. In order to preserve myself, I'll take your life first—ho, ho, so that you won't see your day of revenge!

[During the King's soliloquy, the light is dimmed. The Prince wipes his sword on the up-stage platform. The King exits after his speech. Light goes up to turn the locale into the Queen's chamber. Prince now steps down the platform to meet Queen.]

Scene 6 Bedchamber: Killing by Mistake in a Dispute

Prince strolls indifferently in front of Queen.

Queen My son, what on earth did you have in mind? My son, why were you so rude, so inadequate? O my son, do you realize you have your king-father much offended?
Gongsun Do you realize you have my king-father much offended?
Queen Stop your idle tongue. I am speaking to you!
Gongsun Stop your idle tongue. I am speaking to you!
Queen Do you know where you are now?
Gongsun Do you know where you are now? This is my father's imperial bed! [Rises from the bed and sits by the dressing table, on which there is a mirror reflecting the sunset] Don't treat me like this. Have you forgotten your mother?
Queen Mother? Ah yes! You are my virtuous mother, the noble queen—you, you are your husband's brother's wife! [Sings] Your gunny garment has not yet been removed, your wedding gown is hastily put on; Undried is the earth that buried him, remarried are you to another man. Behold the blood-red waning sunset reflected in this

201 The gunny garment is traditionally to be worn by the close family members of the deceased for certain length of time.
clear mirror. Put your hand on your heart and ask your conscience for judgment.

Queen      You—you—speak no more! O my son— [Sings]
The son is born from his mother's flesh and blood; A thorn from his flesh pierces right into her heart. Even if she has all causes to be condemned sinful, This joint-heart of mother and son cannot be torn apart.

Gongsun    [Sings] Your son is also his father's flesh and blood, As dear and bound as from the core of his heart. Can I hear seeing his body torn and blood shed? Can I let him lie in unrest with great injustice? [Speaks] You—tell me how exactly my king-father died?

Queen      He—died of sudden illness.

Gongsun    Tell me again! [Sings] Perhaps you are forced to seal the truth? Reveal your innermost secrets to me. Perhaps my uncle...he—he—he— [Speaks] abuses you all along! [Sings] Let your son rid the villain for you. [Restores confidence in her. Speaks, with hope] Mother, be frank with your son.

Queen      What do you want me to say?

Gongsun    Just tell your son, that you know nothing about the evil conspiracy!

Gongsun    Tell me! I only need this confession.

Gongsun    Tell me that you know nothing, nothing. Say it! Say it!

Queen      [Turns away to the sky. Sings dryly] O Heavens forgive a wretched one like me!

Gongsun    [Sings] O Heavens - even lost its innocence for you! [Dejected.]

Queen      Ay! These words from my bosom are not supposed to be shared with you. Now that it has come to this, I care not for my shame. O my son—

Gongsun    [Sings] During my childhood, I lost both Father and Mother. Living alone on earth without any kinsmen to lean on. One day, as I returned from my parents' grave, heavy snow was falling. In a sudden noise of horse hoofs, I was captured by your father on horseback into the imperial palace, forced to wed him, to mate with him. A queen consort I was, its honor all for me to enjoy. Yet I swallowed but grievance and sorrow, to no one's sympathy. Alas, he was addicted to bloody warfare, O he was. I feared most to hear the cuckoo crying its blood out for the emptied nest. It turned the deep royal palace into a cold, dark limbo. I passed my life of ice and snow—a day seeming longer than a whole year. Finally, there was your uncle, who cherished me; his tender love saved me out of my dark hell pit.

Gongsun    [Sings] I thought I only needed to avenge the wronged and restore the heavens' justice. Why this is the entangled net of grudge and gratitude, hate and love!

[Speaks] Father! Instruct your son how to avenge you, how to cleanse your grievance?--

[Ghost of the late king appears from the flames.]
[Sings] In the purgatory I suffer flames and blazes;
At the court, the incestuous villain's laughter rings through the
nine layers of the heaven.
He plundered my life, stealing my crown—greatest sin it is,
What more reason do you need for revenge? Why still let the knave
enjoy a great time?

[Sings] 'Tis not your son's infirm mind delays the revenge;
But my dear mother's tears have stifled my raging fire.

[Sings] She lured the snake into the court to steal my crown;
she marred her chastity by mating with a brother-in-law.

[Sighs] But--Ay!
/[Cannot see the Spirit. Sings] There is no other soul in the
chamber.
Most peculiarly he converses with vacant air.
Staring, his eyes wide, he cries out in rage.
This pathetic scene leaves my heart burnt, my heart burnt.

[Sings] Confusion makes my mind perplexed and indecisive.

[Sings] Sacred spirits urge you to take action. [Sings with the
Prince] Sacred spirits urge you to raise the killing knife!

[Sings] Pray, do not exhaust your wits and weary your soul.
Sweep away the past altogether from your memory.

[Sings] You lured the snake into the court to steal the crown.
You marred your chastity by mating with a brother-in-law!

[Sings] I've never killed nor lost my proper womanhood.
Wherefore do you torture me with these heartless words?
Your father glorified himself with fame from the wars,
And never cared for my lonely tears shed in the deep palace.

[Sings] Dressed in my blood-stained war robe I guarded my
nation.
Glory and wealth, which one were you wanting?

[Sings] Luxurious life is not the wonder drug to happiness.

[Sings] Lewd, evil desires blinded your heart.

[Sings] Pity your mother, Son, show me your filial piety.

[Sings] Your father is still bound in hell with the wronged justice.

[Sings] Cast away thy dark clouds-- Ghost [Sings] Burned by the
hell flames--

[Sings] Spring sunshine embraces-- Ghost [Sings] burnt and
grilled--

[Sing together] Only listen to Mother and drop your vengeance.

Only listen to Father and avenge soon. Avenge soon!.

Enough!... [Ghost disappears.]

Confused, weeping, I feel the world is spinning, and the
five viscera in my body are stirring.

How is it with you, my son?

Passion and love sowed the seed of sin. [Sees a shadow behind
the paper screen. Speaks] Enough, enough, enough.

Raising my blood-thirsty sword, I will sweep off the lewd sin
to clean this world!

My son...

[The Prince perceives a person hiding behind the paper screen,
believing it to be the King. He thrusts his sword and kills him but only
kills the Prime Minister Xiao.]
Interlude: Continuing Slaughter

This scene is basically the same as the Prologue. Only Xiao Yi replaces the Prince to fight with Qiu Rong.

Yi Qiu Rong, why are you launching a war at our border? Give me your reason!
Qiu I can't live under the same heaven as my father's murderer! Let me get my revenge!

[They fight, only evenly matched. Enters a Messenger.]

Messen. Report! My lord, the Prime Minister...
Yi My father! What happened to him?
Messen. He was assassinated and died!
Yi What? Who killed him?
Messen. I have no information. I only know that he died in the court!
Yi Ah, villain king! Soldiers, return to the capital immediately!

[Exits Xiao Yi with his soldiers.]

Qiu Halt. I will seize the chance to invade their capital and revenge my father! Soldiers, follow me into their capital!

Scene 7 In the Wilderness: Maggots

Enter Jia Xing, Fei Li, and 8 Soldiers, who escort the Prince.

Gongsun Why do you surround me this closely? To force me into your trap?
Fei Trap? There's no trap!
Jia No, no trap. Even though Your Highness killed our Prime Minister and is now sent into exile, our Queen commanded us to escort you with greatest care. That's why we follow you at foot, Your Highness. If any disaster or accident befalls you on the road, we can't afford the blame--
Gongsun I am only afraid that you will engineer my death!
Jia, Fei What an idea! What an idea! How dare we?
Jia Ay, poor Prime Minister Xiao died a most obscure death!
Gongsun Prime Minister Xiao--is at supper.
Jia, Fei At supper?
Gongsun Not that he eats, but he is eaten by maggots. Ha...
[In verse] Most ironical are we mortals.
We fat all the stock and fowls, and butcher them for food.
We feed ourselves to full, in time for maggots to enjoy.
Truly absurd are we mortals! Ha.. ha!
Fei You murdered Prime Minister Xiao, but show no remorse. Still jesting insanity. Now it's your time for supper! Die under my knife!
Gongsun Hum! You two ungrateful knaves!
All Kill him!

[As Prince fights with the rest, Huo Xuguang comes to his rescue. Jia Xing and Fei Li are killed, and the rest flee away.]
Huo  Everything reveals our King's crimes. We should waste no time. Let's hurry back to the capital to take his life.

Gongsun  Halt. If we do it rashly, we may suffer his ambush again. I will send a letter of insult to him first, then we can slip into the court through the path by the graveyard.

Huo  So we can surprise him and break in any of his precautions.

Gongsun  Exactly. O King-father, King-father, you will see how your son avenge your death now!

Scene 8  Floral Lake: Death of the Narcissus

Enters Xiao Xiang absent-mindedly; flowers covering her hair.

Xiang  Year after year the autumn grass turns fresh on the paths, Day by day the setting sun glows red in the far, high sky. In nature's endless cycle flowers bloom and wither; Why is it only man who dies and never revives? [Speaks] Look, narcissuses, narcissuses are all blooming.

[Enter the Ladies-in-waiting leading the Queen and the King. The Queen approaches Xiang.]

Xiang  [Recites] Dust from a thousand years cannot stain them; Dipped with the pure morning dews, they send off quiet fragrance. [Music mode same as in Scene 2. Mood of reminiscence.]

Queen  [Sings] Hearing her profound words, I can't but feel remorse. How I envy her: a flower purified by water, untainted by mud, and immune from dust. Alas! Ensnared in the sea of love, I drift with the surging waves. When can I follow her, turning pure and virtuous again? [She sheds tears.]

King  My Beloved Queen, what is the matter?

[She turns away from him. Enter a Messenger.]

Messen.  Report—Your Majesty, Xiao Yi is bringing the troops back to our capital!

King  Ah? Is that so?

Yi  [From backstage] Villain king, repay you life! [Enters.]

King  What do you mean, General Xiao?

Yi  Let me ask you: where is my father?

King  Your father--died.

Yi  Who killed him?

King  [Looks at the Queen] Well...

Yi  You! You cruel, wicked ruler! [Wields the sword at the King.]

Queen  Halt! General Xiao, although your father died in the court, he was not killed by His Majesty.

Yi  Not by him? Who else could it be?

King  Since it has come to this, we have to tell you the truth. Your father was killed by--

Queen  Your Majesty!

King  Killed by the Prince!
Yi
Xiang
Yi
Xiang
Yi
Messen.
King
blessen.
King
Yi
Queen
Xiang
Queen
His Highness our Prince?
O Your Highness, Your Highness is back. Your Highness is back.
My dear sister?!
Look, Your Highness, all the narcissuses are blooming. All the narcissuses are blooming.
Dear sister—how did you become like this—
The day of your return in triumph, is the day for our wedding to occur.
O Dear sister, my dear sister! You villain king, pay with your own life! [Draws his sword. A Messenger enters.]
Report—the Bei-Ting Prince Qiu Rong is leading his troops charging at our capital!
Command General Li Yong to resist the enemy immediately!
Yes, Your Majesty.
[To Xiao Yi] Tuf! You left your position without permission. Now you have endangered our defense!
My father not yet revenged, I don't care for national defense!
General Xiao, his Majesty has already banished the Prince to a foreign country.
Your Highness, look, the willows are growing new sprouts, the narcissuses are blooming. The willows are growing new sprouts, the narcissuses are blooming... [Exits.]
Dear Xiang...

[King makes a gesture to her to follow Xiang. The Queen hesitates, but follows up with the Ladies-in-waiting. Presently she re-enters and hides behind the willows.]

General Xiao, we have already avenged your father's death!
How?
We sent Gongsun Yu to exile, and on the road we had him—

[Enters the Servant with a letter.]

Report—His Highness our Prince sent a letter to Your Majesty.
Ah?
Here it is.
Let us read it. [Reads] Thanks to thy special care, my life is well secured;
Jia Xing and Fei Li—their souls returned to the Underworld.
This letter sends my best regards to thee;
Thy favor I should return even to turn the world upside down.
[Speaks] Those two wine sacks and rice bags, good-for-nothing!
Once he returns, the Prince will make a hell out of here. How can we do?
When he comes back, will he dare to cut my throat?
General Xiao, it's not you that he wants killed.
Who then?
He wants our life!
Ah?
Once taking our life, he can ascend the throne. Ay, your poor father was loyal and honest, a generous man, and yet died under the Prince's sword. Your sister Xiang, intelligent and sensible, beautiful as a fairy, is now ruined. Gongsun Yu alone was responsible for all
this. And yet, it was also because of us that it happened. As the saying goes, "I had no intention to kill Boren, but Boren lost his life for me." So, as long as your grievance is not purged, our peace of mind cannot be restored either. Now Gongsun Yu is gloating over his deeds, and is coming back. If you seek revenge, we will support you with all our heart. What would you do to purge your hatred?

Yi
"The wronged seeks to correct the injustice; the creditors chase after the indebted." 'Tis no man if he leaves his father's murder unavenged! Gongsun Yu, you are most cruel and wicked—don't blame me for forsaking our brotherly love. Once you are back, I will chop you into a thousand pieces!

King
Hm... We have come up with a scheme.

Yi
What scheme?

King
A one-to-one single combat.

Yi
Single combat?

King
Lend me your ear. [Whispers.]

[Two whisper to each other. Meantime enters Xiao Xiang along the upstage platform, which indicates the bank of the Floral Lake, plucking the willow branches, and sings. Thus the stage is divided into two imagistic zones, which represent, respectively, purity and innocence, and bloody conspiracy.]

Xiang
[Sings] 'Tis hard to find a shelter in this dust-covered world. When its fragrance and beauty fade out the narcissus falls.

[Xiao Xiang falls into water.]

King
....Let's take his life in no time!

[The Queen appears from the willows, saddened. A Lady-in-waiting enters to inform her of Xiang's death. The King sees the Queen.]

King
Ah my beloved Queen!

Queen
Xiao Xiang fell into the water and drowned!

Yi
O Dear sister--

Scene 9 Graveyard: Territory between the Quick and the Dead

Grave.1
[Recites] The struggle between Chu and Han State, the dispute among the Three Kingdoms:

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202Chu and Han, two powerful states in ancient China, fought during the fourth century B.C. to dominate China after the powerful Chin Dynasty was overthrown by Chu's King Chu Pa Wang. Eventually Han's Liu Pang conquered Chu and established China's powerful Han Dynasty (206B.C.-219A.D.). The struggle between Chu and Han is a popular subject in theatre and literature.

203The Three Kingdoms—Wei, Shu, and Wu, existed in China simultaneously from 222-265 A.D. The struggle among the three powers created in the later times characters and stories that are pseudo-historical and legendary; it was one of the most celebrated sources of classical Chinese literature and theatre.
Every hero born to his times played his great part.  
Today's youth turned into tomorrow's old fellows.  
Mountains remained; men passed away.  [Sighs] Ay!

Grave. 2  What are you sighing about?
Grave. 1  From the moment man is born, he goes nowhere but runs towards 
this destination. Who can avoid it? Even a sparrow's death is 
predetermined, not to mention Man. He struggles for fame and 
fortune for his whole life, and at the end, his eyes staring blank, 
legs kicking stiff, he lies down just the same.

Gave. 2  You sound most true. The mind of Heavens is hard to probe, 
Nature is all indifferent. But on the other hand, if man lives without 
struggling to achieve something, to create some contemporary 
legends, how can we develop culture and traditions?

[ Enter Prince and  Huo Xuguang.]

Grave. 1  There is some sense in your reasoning too. Are you here to visit 
someone's grave, my lord?
Gongsun  Why yes. Which is Prime Minister Xiao's grave?
Grave. 1  There it is. The old fellow had been quite talkative before he came 
here. But now, ha ha, he utters no sound.
Grave. 2  Such is life--hard to predict. Once you've seen enough of it, and seen 
through it, you take it naturally.
Kong-sun  How long have you old gentlemen been digging graves here?
Grave. 2  It's been a long time. I remember since the old king died, and our 
late king reigned.
Grave. 1  Exactly! It was also the year when our prince was born.
Gongsun  Ah!
Grave. 1  Truly it is so: the left eye's tears are not dry yet, the right eye starts 
to laugh. You are at a loss between tears and laughter!
Grave. 2  In a twinkle of an eye, how many years have gone by!
Grave. 1  The kingship has changed hands thrice.
Grave. 2  The fellows sleeping in here--we know them all.
Grave. 1  Take this one for example. Lying in this pit is a widely 
acknowledged hero of our country. See, how ornamental and 
elaborate his grave is!
Grave. 2  If not so, how can the later generations remember him?
Grave. 1  Never mind the later generations. Even his own wife and children, 
within a few days, had completely forgot him. As is commonly said: 
Sorrow and happiness have no valid reason;
Grave. 2  Mourning turns to wild revel in an instant.
Grave. 1  No sooner has the dying man shut off his eyes, 
Grave. 2  Than his wife and children restore their joys.
Gongsun  Ay!  [Sings] Recall the palaces of Qin Dynasty and Han: 
They are all worn out into ruins. 
From the remains of broken tombstones and waning inscriptions, 
What heroes are still remembered from those days?
Grave. 1  O no! We've chatted too long! It's almost time; our Queen ordered us 
to plant flowers for our new comer, Lady Xiao.
Gongsun  Lady Xiao! Which Lady Xiao?
Grave. 2  The one who was just buried over the hill top. She was the Prime 
Minister's daughter, by the name of Xiao Xiang. She over-grieved 
over her father's death and, in a fit of madness, fell into water and 
drowned.
Gongsun

Ai-ya, dear Xiang! [Sings]
You promised to play the lute to divert my melancholy;
You promised to accompany me marching in the spring sunshine.
But my sword was drawn from the sheath, its blade shimmering steely chill;
I was preoccupied by restoring justice to this world.
Now the lute is silent and the lake freezing cold,
My lady has drifted alone with the flowing water.
What a pure water nymph you truly are! O Xiao Xiang!

Grave.1

My goodness! Our King is coming. Please, sir, move away! If you are seen loitering here, we'll be scolded! Ay, I have to ignore you now!

Gongsun [Speaks] O Father! [Sings]
Open your eyes and see this mundane world:
Look closely at your son's blood-stained hands!

Huo Your Highness, hurry, hide yourself. His majesty is coming!

Yi Gongsun Yu! Keep your bloody hands away from my sister's clean body! Now bear my sword!

King Halt! How dare you fight in the imperial graveyard?

Yi Have the gut to fight a one-to-one single combat with me?

Gongsun A single combat? [Huo Xuguang gestures "no" in secret.] I was the murderer of your father. A real man can never live under the same heaven as his father's murderer. I have no reason to turn down your challenge.

King Great! Tomorrow at high noon, we'll hold the combat in the court!

Epilogue: End of Slaughter?

Enter Qiu Rong and 8 Soldiers.

Guochang --(transition into another scene by actors passing the stage; translator's note): Qiu Rong leads his troops heading for the capital of Ding An.

Drum beats. Gongsun Yu and Xiao Yi take their positions.

King Today's single combat is to cease the feud between the two families.
We only testify which one is more able; no one should be hurt.
There will be three rounds. Whoever wins, we will bestow on him three goblets of royal wine. After the combat, you two have to rejoin your hands and forget the feud. Attendant, conduct the combat.

Attend. Start the combat! [Drum beats again.]

Queen My son! [King stops her.]

King My beloved Queen, it's starting!

Queen My son, take care! [They fight and Prince wins.]

King Halt! Ha ha, our son's martial art is excellent. He won the first round. Come, come, we bestow on you a goblet of royal wine. Let's celebrate.

[Enters a Messenger.]

Messen. Report— The army of Bei Ting State is charging at our capital!

King Ah? What happened to General Li Yong?

Messen. He has died defeated!

King Good-for-nothing! Command General Chang Wei to the war!
Messen. Yes, sir.
King Now conduct the second round.
Attend. Start the second round! [Drum beats. Prince wins again.]
King Ha ha—our son is really advanced in martial arts. He won consecutively. Come, come, come, don't refuse our warm-hearted invitation: drink this wine now!
Queen My son, let Mother drink it for you! [Drinks quickly.]
King My beloved Queen! [Cannot stop her.]
Queen I wish my son wins the combat.
King My beloved Queen, you— [Queen has drunk too fast that she coughs.]
Gongsun Mother?!
Queen I am all right, my son. Now in this world only you and I are closest. For my sake, take care of yourself.

[Enters a Messenger.]
Messen. Report—Qiu Rong's troops have laid siege to our capital.
Courtier Your Majesty, under such crisis circumstance, why don't we stop the combat?
King That is not of your concern. Command our imperial troops to resist the enemy immediately. Now conduct the third round.
Attend. Start the third round! [Drum beats.]

[The moment when the Prince's sword is pressing Xiao Yi, the Queen groans.]
Lady-in-waiting Her Majesty!
Gongsun Mother!
Queen My son... my son...
Gongsun What's the matter, Mother?
Queen The wine...
Gongsun What about it?
Queen Has poison in it!
King My beloved Queen!

[The King tries to hold the Queen, who brushes him away and suffers a fit of pain from the poison. The Prince comes to support her.]
Queen My son!
Gongsun Ay, this life of mine can be summarized in one single word: love. For it I've suffered. From this chalice, I hope to end the pain, and return to my purity and innocence. I have not lived up to you and your father, Son. ²⁰⁴
Gongsun Mother!

²⁰⁴In her published version, Wang Anqi rewrote this speech of the Queen:
Queen [Sings] Enormous regret and heavy remorse
  Are all dissolved into this chalice of wine.
  My whole life only suffered for love;
  My dear son blame not your mother—
Prince Mother, speak no more.
Queen [Sings] Shamefully, I have no face to meet my son's ancestors.
  [Dies as the poison works in her.]
Queen: You... don't you blame me!

Gongsun: Mother, speak no more.

Queen: You, you, you, don't blame...

Gongsun: Mother— [During their conversation, the King hints at Xiao Yi to attack. Yi wounds Prince with his sword.]

Yi: Ha ha... Gongsun Yu, Gongsun Yu! Even if you have heavenly genius, you cannot escape today's doom! Do you know that the sword's point is stained in poison which will cost your life instantly?

Ha ha...

Gongsun: You shameless villain!

[Outraged, the Prince thrusts his sword most fiercely at Xiao Yi, whose sword is knocked down on the ground. Meanwhile Prince feels the poison working inside his body, but bears the pain and grabs Xiao Yi's sword. He throws his own sword to Xiao. Both fight again. Yi is hurt by the poisonous sword, and, frightened, he begs help from King.]

Yi: Your Majesty! Your Majesty! Please give me the antidote! Save my life!

King: It is an extreme poison; it has no antidote. You will die for sure.

Yi: You— You— most cruel, evil king. Now I realize why you set up the scheme for our combat. You want us to finish each other, so that you can free yourself from all worries. Most wicked king, I wish I could... [Thrusts at King.]

King: At the moment of dying, you are still talkative. [Also draws, trying to kill. Prince knocks off his sword. Huo Xuguang supports the injured, groaning Xiao Yi.]

King: O

Yi: My Prince, you killed my father, so don't blame me for having slain you with the poisonous sword. Let us forgive each other like brothers, Your Highness. You and I... [Dies.]

Gongsun: Dear Brother Xiao— [Turns to King, staring at him angrily.]

King: A mad dog! How dare you kill us? Attendants! Come to defend your lord!

[Huo Xuguang draws, no one dares to approach.]

Gongsun: You incestuous, lewd, murderous scoundrel, you murdered both my parents with poison. Now I want you to taste the pain from the poison working inside your body and killing you!

[Forces him to drink the wine. King struggles for a while and dies. Meanwhile, the poison inside Prince is also working. Huo Xuguang comes to support him. On the backdrop there appear the images of Prime Minister Xiao. Xiao Xiang, Queen, Xiao Yi, King and the Ghost, characters who are involved in this tragic action. These images evolve as constellations. Qu Rong and his troops at the same time enter the court in slow motion.]

Gongsun: [Sings] Thunders, storms and gloomy clouds are cast away, Restoring the peaceful state: no sun, no rain, no sorrow, and no joy. Suddenly ho, the heaven is cast with the Milky Way, Stars twinkling, lamenting for the mortals,
Men are but grains of seed in the boundless sea.
Their right and wrong, love and hate, who can judge?
Only the fallen narcissuses, I want to follow you—
Where the heavenly wind blows, I will find a clean, quiet corner to rest myself.

[Dies. Corpses are lying all over the stage now. As Qiu Rong's troops march in. The soldiers freeze in the pose of victory.]

The End
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