

**THE MAKING OF HONG KONG SHAKESPEARE:
POST-1997 ADAPTATIONS AND APPROPRIATIONS**

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ABSTRACT

2017 marked the 20th anniversary of Hong Kong's handover to China after 156 years of British colonial rule. As the ensuing chapters will show, the rapid socio-political changes which have overtaken Hong Kong during those two decades, and the question of how the city is now to view its cultural identity in relation both to its former colonial master and to the People's Republic into which it has officially been subsumed, are nowhere more richly reflected than in the Shakespearean productions staged by local repertory companies since the handover. Adopting a cultural materialist reading in this neocolonial context, my thesis examines post-1997 Hong Kong Shakespeare that comment variously on the identity of the city through staging sinicized, aestheticized and socio-politicised versions of the plays. My introduction contextualizes Hong Kong's position on the current intellectual map of Asian Shakespeare, arguing that Hong Kong Shakespeare should not be subsumed under the heading of Chinese Shakespeare. Chapter One discusses Richard Ho's *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, which though premièred in the colonial era was later tellingly restaged in Hong Kong and in England after the handover. Chapter Two analyses the configuration of China as an aesthetic metaphor in Tang Shu-wing's *Titus Andronicus 2.0* and *Macbeth*. Chapter Three discusses the emergence of a new Hong Kong identity in Hardy Tsoi's *Julius Caesar* and *Shamshui-po Lear*. Chapter Four establishes the necessity of considering Hong Kong's counter discourse to China's centrism in Jimmy Lee's *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*. Sandwiched between the colonial and the neocolonial, Hong Kong Shakespeare generates an independent narrative of its own through struggle and cultural negotiation.

DEDICATION



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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

I.	A Hong Kong-China match: The Articulation of Hong Kong's Identity -----	2
II.	Hong Kong Shakespeare is not Chinese Shakespeare -----	9
III.	Hong Kong Shakespeare: a missing piece in the map of Asian Shakespeare--- -----	37
IV.	Methodology -----	47
V.	Chapter Summaries -----	54

CHAPTER ONE

CONTESTING THE CONCEPT OF "CHINA": RICHARD HO'S *HAMLET*:

SWORD OF VENGEANCE IN NEOCOLONIAL HONG KONG

I.	Introduction -----	61
II.	Sinicized Shakespeare in a non-Hong Kong setting -----	68
III.	Re-staging the play in Mandarin: its significance in Hong Kong's neocolonial period -----	89
IV.	Conclusion -----	110

CHAPTER TWO

A SUBTLE CHALLENGE TO THE GOVERNMENT'S AUTHORITY:

TANG SHU-WING'S *TITUS ANDRONICUS 2.0* AND *MACBETH* IN POST-UMBRELLA MOVEMENT HONG KONG

I.	Introduction -----	113
II.	Tang Shu-wing's <i>Titus Andronicus 2.0</i> (2015): Aestheticized Shakespeare or Socio-politicized Shakespeare? -----	119
III.	Socio-politicized Shakespeare: Tang Shu-wing's <i>Macbeth</i> (2016) -----	150
IV.	Conclusion -----	168

CHAPTER THREE

APPROPRIATING SHAKESPEARE FOR THE CRITIQUE OF HONG KONG'S SOCIAL PROBLEMS: HARDY TSOI'S *JULIUS CAESAR* AND *SHAMSHUIPO LEAR*

I.	Introduction: Socio-politicized Shakespeare -----	171
II.	Mime in <i>Julius Caesar</i> (2012): Voices of the oppressed -----	174
III.	Absence of King Lear in <i>Shamshuipo Lear</i> (2015) -----	182
IV.	Homelessness as a metaphor in <i>Shamshuipo Lear</i> -----	207
V.	Conclusion -----	215

CHAPTER FOUR

APPROPRIATING SHAKESPEARE FOR COMMENTING ON HONG KONG- CHINA RELATIONS: JIMMY LEE'S *POST-THE TAMING OF THE SHREW*

I.	Introduction -----	217
II.	From Gender to Politics -----	227
III.	Open critique of the Hong Kong & PRC governments -----	254
IV.	Conclusion -----	268

CONCLUSION

I.	Disappearance of Hong Kong Shakespeare -----	271
II.	Should we accept, tame, or overthrow the neo-colonizer? -----	279
III.	Resurgence of Hong Kong Subjectivity -----	288

EPILOGUE -----	291
-----------------------	------------

APPENDIX 1: List of Shakespearean performances in post-1997 Hong Kong----	292
--	------------

APPENDIX 2: Interview transcripts excerpts

2.1 Interview transcript excerpt with Richard Ho -----	306
--	-----

2.2 Interview transcript excerpt with Tang Shu-wing -----	314
---	-----

2.3 Interview transcript excerpt with Hardy Tsoi -----	317
2.4 Interview transcript excerpt with Jimmy Lee -----	321
2.5 Interview transcript excerpt with Lee Heung-sing -----	330
2.6 Interview transcript excerpt with Michael Fung & Josephine To -----	334
2.7 Interview transcript excerpt with Bernice Chan -----	338
BIBLIOGRAPHY -----	341

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: Sincized setting in <i>Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance</i>	64
Figure 2: Display of acrobatics in the mousetrap scene	73
Figure 3: Ministers pledging loyalty to Liu Huan	79
Figure 4: Affections between Liu Huan and Queen Ma	88
Figure 5: A mainland born and bred actor starred as Liu Huan	95
Figure 6: Seven actors and a musician in <i>Titus Andronicus 2.0</i>	121
Figure 7: Physical energy of the actors	122
Figure 8: Using minimalism to express strong emotions	124
Figure 9: Symbolism of Lady Macbeth's red dress	155
Figure 10: Macbeth transits from modern Hong Kong to ancient China	159
Figure 11: Duncan and his followers against the backdrop of a highland	166
Figure 12: Assasination of Caesar	176
Figure 13: A muted protest under the Statue of Justice	178
Figure 14: A muted commemoration of the June Fourth Massacre	182
Figure 15: Homeless people in Hong Kong as the main characters in <i>Shamshuipo Lear</i>	187
Figure 16: Uncle Lee perceives himself as King Lear	191
Figure 17: Uncle Lee's estranged relationship with his son	193
Figure 18: Man Zyu's family eagerly bids her farewell after her wedding	226
Figure 19: Man Zyu saves the puppy from being eaten	231
Figure 20: A sadomaschistic version of Gam Zyu enjoys Man Zyu's beatings	235

Figure 21: Gam Zyu's materialism is emphasized	235
Figure 22: The superficiality and fakedness of Gam Zyu and Wang Song	237
Figure 23: The added art gallery scene	238
Figure 24: Another added conversation between Peter and Man Zyu on photographs	241
Figure 25: The inclusion of cell phones as tools of communication	247
Figure 26: The play ends with an offstage conversation between Peter and Man Zyu	252
Figure 27: Peter introduces the voting system in his family	264
Figure 28: A satirical scene of the free-to-air television license dispute in Hong Kong in 2013	267
Figure 29: The Ants' Children's Troupe in 1939, Hong Kong	291

INTRODUCTION

This is a thesis about the versions of Shakespeare which have been produced in Hong Kong since the former British colony was transferred back to China, in 1997.¹ As Tam Kwok-kan (譚國根) has rightly pointed out, the level of interest in Shakespeare among theatre practitioners in Hong Kong has not been affected by political change (viv). He also points out that Shakespeare has a special significance for Hong Kong theatre, where his work is not merely a symbol of Englishness (despite the colonial origins of his presence in local culture and local consciousness), but has also been incorporated into a distinct Hong Kong Chinese tradition (viv). As I will be showing, Shakespeare's plays have as a result been available to articulate a variety of perspectives on the fortunes and identity of Hong Kong during the two decades since the handover. In this introduction, I will first distinguish Hong Kong's cultural identity from that of mainland China. Subsequently I will highlight the differences between Hong Kong Shakespeare and mainland Shakespeare, and also the parallels between Hong Kong Shakespeare with Singaporean and Indian Shakespeare, cultural phenomena also spawned by the British colonial presence in Asia. Finally, I will explore six Shakespearean performances that span 38 years, from 1977 to 2015. My earliest example is Richard Ho Man-wui (何文匯)'s *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* (王子復仇記), which though premièred in the British colonial era was later restaged in Hong Kong and in England after the handover. The other examples that I shall explore include Tang Shu-wing (鄧樹榮)'s *Macbeth* (馬克白)

¹ I deal solely with productions and appropriations made in Hong Kong, excluding visits from touring companies.

and *Titus Andronicus 2.0* (泰特斯 2.0), Hardy Tsoi Shek-cheong (蔡錫昌)'s *Shamshuiipo Lear* (深水埗李爾王) and *Julius Caesar* (凱撒大帝), and Jimmy Lee Wai-cheung (李偉祥)'s *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* (現代馴悍記).

I. A Hong Kong-China Match: The Articulation of Hong Kong's Identity

Since the whole question of Hong Kong's cultural identity is of crucial importance to my argument, I would like to begin with an anecdote about a football match – a match that attracted the attention of many locals in the city, including myself, despite my not being a football fan and having rarely watched any football matches in my life. On the evening of November 17, 2015, I promptly returned home after work to watch a World Cup qualifier match between Hong Kong and the People's Republic of China that was broadcast live on television. As a local who was born and bred in Hong Kong, I showed my support to the Hong Kong team by wearing red on that day, which was synchronous with the thousands of fans at the Mong Kok Football Stadium, where some fans held a large banner in red, saying, "We are Hong Kong". Though the organizer of the match had forbidden fans to carry with them political slogans, some fans had brought large banners that had the individual characters for "Hong Kong", "is", "not", "China" imprinted on them, and combining these individually harmless characters together, they produced a slogan which represented a subversive stance in the society of Hong Kong. This viewpoint, widely shared within the Hong Kong community, contrasted sharply with the ideology upheld by the regime of the Hong Kong government, the Chief Executive of which was appointed by the government of the People's Republic of China

(PRC). When news reporters asked Leung Chun-ying (梁振英), Hong Kong's then Chief Executive, which team he would support, Leung evaded the question by saying, "It's a pity that I will be in Manila on that day, so I will not be able to see the match" (A. Wong, *my trans.*). Faced with the same question, Ko Wing-man (高永文), then Secretary for Food and Health, gave a "politically correct" answer, as he replied, "I am a Hong Konger and also a Chinese person, therefore I support both teams" (W.P. Wong, A8; *my trans.*).

It was a tough match for Hong Kong, as China proved to be a strong opponent, ranking 84th in the Federal of International Football Association (FIFA), whereas Hong Kong merely ranked 145th (A. Wong, *my trans.*). Therefore supporters of the Hong Kong team were thrilled when the match ended in a surprise tie of 0 to 0. Enthusiastic fans happily waved Hong Kong's officially obsolete colonial flag, adopted during the British colonial era. The Hong Kongers' celebration of the results of the football match reflected their identification with their past colonial history. By contrast, their contempt and utter rejection of their supposed motherland, China, had been displayed in their earlier booing of the Chinese national anthem before a World Cup qualifier match with Qatar, which led to the Hong Kong Football Association being fined HK\$40,000 (GBP £3520) by FIFA (AM730, "War"; *my trans.*). This was not just a football match between Hong Kong and China, but an incident, verging on a political demonstration, which illustrates the complex identity and sense of belonging of the Hong Kong people. Twenty years after Hong Kong's sovereignty was handed back to China in 1997, the identity of Hong Kong people is still in a troubling and even schizophrenic state, as suggested by Howard Choy Yuen-fung (蔡元豐) (65). In research conducted in 2015 by Breakthrough (突破), a non-government organization (NGO) in Hong Kong, a majority of Hong Kong young people,

aged between 14 to 29 years old, gave a high rating of 8 (out of 10) to their recognition of their identities as Hong Kongers (*AM730*, “Breakthrough”; *my trans.*). In contrast, in the young adults group (18 to 29 years old), they only gave a low rating of 5.2 (out of 10) to their recognition of their identities as Chinese, and the rating was even lower in the secondary school students group (14 to 17 years old), where a 3.8 mark was recorded (out of 10) (*AM730*, “Breakthrough”; *my trans.*). This survey exemplifies that Hong Kong young people perceive themselves as Hong Kongers more than as Chinese people. Furthermore, 70% of the young people thought that their identities as Hong Kongers were not well respected by the local government, and 90% of them held that the PRC government only placed emphasis on the factor of being Chinese (*AM730*, “Breakthrough”; *my trans.*). The Liaison Office of the Central People’s Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR)² had in the past, strongly criticized such research studies in Hong Kong, asserting that it is “unnecessary to separate the identities of Hong Kongers and Chinese people, or even to position them in confrontation” (*AM730*, “Breakthrough”; *my trans.*). Yet, Breakthrough’s Information and Research Manager, Chan King-chuen (陳競存), argues that the government’s emphasis on the Chinese identity over the Hong Konger identity, will only lead to the counter-effect of Hong Kong people’s resistance against the PRC government (*AM730*, “Breakthrough”; *my trans.*).

This context of political dissent and cultural uncertainty, I will be showing, provides a vital context in which to understand the directorial choices exhibited in the

² Hong Kong is also known as the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), as it maintains separate legal, judicial, and administrative systems from China after 1997.

Shakespearean performances that I am exploring in this thesis. This draws us to a point made in connection with Asian Shakespeare by Jessica Yeung Wai-yee (楊慧儀), who in considering the ideological aspects of Shakespearean production, argues that one should neither decontextualize a Shakespearean text from the context Shakespeare *wrote* in, nor the reading and interpretation of a Shakespearean text from the cultural, economic and political contexts that it is *read* in (25; *my italics*). In reading recent Hong Kong productions primarily from a political standpoint, this thesis takes its place in an important segment of theatre history. Bruno Latour, for instance, argues that although art is largely autonomous, it is also influenced by some social and political considerations (3). In *Theatre of the Oppressed*, Augusto Boal suggests that “all theatre is necessarily political, because all the activities of man are political and theatre is one of them” (44). In the British tradition, meanwhile, Alan Read also comments that good theatre is a theatre through which the social appears, and that while theatre has no direct political power, it does have ethical effect (53, 77).

Due to the British colonial legacy in Hong Kong, there are English productions of Shakespeare enacted by expatriate circles in the city, which is a distinguishing feature between the theatre arenas of Hong Kong and China. It is worth mentioning the Hong Kong Players, a notable expatriate theatre group, which was established in 1844 and is now the longest running community theatre group in Hong Kong (Hong Kong Players, “History”). The Hong Kong Players perform works from the mainstream canon of British and specifically English theatre (MacKenzie 204). Originally known as the Hong Kong Amateur Dramatic Society, it was renamed as the Hong Kong Stage Club in 1946, and after the end of World War II, the Stage Club and a military-based repertory group called

the Garrison Players co-mounted annual shows jointly. In 1991, the two societies merged to form the Hong Kong Players (Hong Kong Players, “History”), which shows a commitment to English amateur dramatics and which has been active in staging Shakespearean plays. For instance, David Booth directed *Hamlet* in 1988 and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in 1991 for the Hong Kong Stage Club (Booth 47-48). Since the 1997 handover, the Hong Kong Players have continued to stage Shakespeare or Shakespeare-related plays among other Western drama. In 2016, it staged *Seven Ages* by Kevin Tomlinson (Hong Kong Players, “Seven”), and it has also recruited actors with American and German accents for the production *I Hate Hamlet* by Paul Rudnick (Hong Kong Players, “Audition”). However, the works of the Hong Kong Players show little concern with the political implications of the 1997 handover for local people³ (MacKenzie 204), thus it is not in the interest of my thesis to study its productions. Apart from Hong Kong Players, Theatre Action is a theatre group formed in 1997 by Mike Ingham, an expatriate and a professor at Lingnan University of Hong Kong, to combine theatre research and practice (Theatre Action). Among other Western plays staged by Theatre Action, the works of Shakespeare often appear in its repertoire: for example, it performed *The Merchant of Venice* in 1994 and *Hamlet* in 2004 (Theatre Action). According to Dorothy Wong Wai-yi (黃偉儀), who has conducted extensive research on Shakespeare and theatre translation in Hong Kong (D. Wong, “Bio-note”),⁴ English productions of Shakespearean plays are regarded as models by local theatre practitioners for staging Cantonese plays in Hong Kong (67). The colonial government invited drama groups from England to perform Shakespeare in the Hong Kong Arts Festival in the

³ “Local people” refers to both Hong Kongers with Chinese descent, and also permanent, long-term expats living in Hong Kong.

⁴ Dorothy Wong is currently the treasurer of Hong Kong Shakespeare Society (D. Wong, “Bio-note”).

1970s (D. Wong, “Shakespeare” 67), implicitly holding up these “indigenous” productions from Shakespeare’s birthplace as models to local emulators. Carl Smith, who wrote an article on “The Hong Kong Amateur Dramatic Club and Its Predecessors”, argues that drama in colonial Hong Kong was mainly encouraged as a “wholesome diversion from the tedium of military life” (218). He also suggests that these dramatic activities not only brought cultural life and entertainment to the expatriates, but also a touch of British culture to the locals (Smith 218).

Despite my emphasis on home-made Hong Kong Shakespeare⁵ over these familiar expressions of cultural imperialism, I should emphasize that there are inter-exchanges between local theatre practitioners and expatriates involved in theatre making, and that the two communities are not in any way isolated from each other. There are, for instance, examples of expatriates serving as directors of Cantonese Shakespearean plays produced by local theatre companies. In 1980, Glen Walford directed *Romeo and Juliet* for the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre (香港話劇團), and in 1990, Chris Johnson directed *Two Gentlemen of Verona* for Chung Ying Theatre Company (中英劇團) (D. Wong, “Shakespeare” 68-69). Johnson chose a Chinese setting for his production (D. Wong, “Shakespeare” 68-69), perhaps hoping to bridge the distance between the local audience⁶ and a foreign play. The history of staging Shakespearean plays in Cantonese started in 1964, where there were parallel performances enacted in both Cantonese and English in the Second Shakespeare Festival in Hong Kong to commemorate Shakespeare’s 400th birthday. While a sinicized version of *The Merchant of Venice* was presented in

⁵ I define “home-made Hong Kong Shakespeare” as Cantonese productions staged by Hong Kong directors.

⁶ Here, I define “local audience” as Hong Kong people residing in Hong Kong.

Cantonese in ancient Chinese costumes, the Hong Kong Stage Club and the Garrison Players performed *Twelfth Night* in English (D. Wong, “Shakespeare” 65). However, as I have already suggested, the notion of cultural imperialism is evident behind many English productions of Shakespeare in Hong Kong. Mike Ingham compares the differences between staging *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in Hong Kong in 1992, and in Vietnam in 1993. In Hanoi, an interpreter gave a brief synopsis of each act in Vietnamese, but in supposedly bilingual Hong Kong, there were neither subtitles, nor any translation of the play into the dialect of the locals (Ingham, “Bottom” 30). Ingham thus argues that linguistic and cultural imperialism is deeply rooted in Hong Kong’s cultural policy, as Shakespeare’s supposed “universality” has often been used as an excuse to neglect the language needs of the local audience (Ingham, “Bottom” 30). When the Hong Kong Players staged *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in Hong Kong at Government House, the official residence of the colonial governors, the venue itself became one defining subtext of the performance (Booth qtd. in Ingham, “Bottom” 32), a late reassertion of the “dominance and exclusivity of British colonial culture just five years before the colony’s handover back to China” (Yong, “Shakespeare” 528). Ingham believes that local productions of Shakespeare, no matter whether in Cantonese or in English, need to take account of intercultural factors (“Bottom” 37). On a similar note, Tam Kwok-kan rightly points out that Shakespeare has to be localized even in English language productions, so that the Hong Kong audience can participate in the process of cultural and aesthetic negotiation (“Preface” x).

II. Hong Kong Shakespeare is not Chinese Shakespeare

The performance of Shakespeare – supposedly universal, but definitely British, according to those who first brought his work to Hong Kong⁷ – always involves a dialogue between the local and the global, and hence it is important to underline the local Hong Kong context in which these internationally-valued plays have been re-understood since 1997. Li Ru-ru (李玉茹) suggests that locality is a useful concept to help us understand what constitutes intercultural theatre, but she also warns that critical investigations of intercultural appropriations often ignore the dynamic nature of the negotiations within local audiences and communities that in practice constitute the local (“Negotiating” 40). Hence, it is important to understand the diverse and mutually dissonant social reality of Hong Kong before we start to analyse the city’s Shakespearean productions in the post-1997 period. According to Thomas Luk Yun-tong (陸潤棠), a well-known theatre academic in Hong Kong, there are notably three hallmarks of the Hong Kong version of post-colonial thinking, which are prominent in the city’s theatrical productions (“Post-Colonialism” 59). First, Hong Kong has adopted only a mild resistance stance against its ex-coloniser, and Hong Kong artists’ reactions towards British colonialism have never been violent. When local directors set out to explore Hong Kong identity through theatre performances, their tone is often non-combative and even reconciliatory (Luk, “Post-Colonialism” 58). Secondly, unlike India or Singapore, postcolonial Hong Kong is not equivalent to an independent country. Instead, supposed

⁷ Shakespeare was first brought to Hong Kong in 1867 as a theatre text to enrich the exile life of the small garrison in Hong Kong after the British government withdrew their military troops (D. Wong, “The Cooking” 293).

decolonization signals not the independence of a new state, but a reversion to Chinese rule, with British sovereignty merely replaced by Chinese sovereignty. This change of governance is widely perceived by the fearful Hong Kong people as a “transition from imperialism to neo-imperialism in the name of national unification” (Luk, “Post-Colonialism” 59). Third, there are mixed feelings of Hong Kong people towards the post-1997 era, “euphoric for some, ambivalent for most, and even mildly resistant from some quarters” (Luk, “Post-Colonialism” 59).

Before embarking on my argument about the important distinction to be drawn between Hong Kong Shakespeare and Chinese Shakespeare, it is of the utmost importance to highlight Hong Kong’s difference from Communist China. Even when the Hong Kong government is celebrating the 20th anniversary of the handover in 2017, if one asks any Hong Kong person, “Are you from China?”, most of the responses will be a firm and perhaps rather annoyed “*No, I’m not from China. I’m from Hong Kong*”. There is a need to emphasize the vast differences between Hong Kong and the remainder of China, and I shall first discuss the apparent ones.⁸ First of all, Hong Kong retains a different currency. We do not use the renminbi but the Hong Kong dollar, which is pegged to the US dollar under a linked exchange rate system to stabilise our currency. Unlike the US dollar, renminbi is not a free floating currency, and China has control over how much the currency fluctuates on a daily basis (Badkar, “5”). Second, unlike mainlanders who need to “climb over the state firewall” (翻墙) by using virtual private

⁸ It is also important to note that there are similarities between Hong Kongers and mainlanders. As asserted by Lau Chi-kuen, under British reign, Hong Kongers considered themselves as ethnically and emotionally Chinese. For instance, they shared close ties with their relatives in China, and they rejoiced when Chinese athletes beat foreigners in international competitions (2). Although some Hong Kongers acquired Western citizenship before the handover, they merely viewed foreign passports as travel documents and foreign nationalities as insurance policies, thus they remained Chinese at heart (C.K. Lau 6-7).

networks, Hong Kongers can freely access the world's information via sites such as Google and Facebook. Third, unlike mainland drivers who drive in the right-hand lane, Hong Kong drivers, like their former masters, continue to use the left lane. Fourth, Hong Kong does not implement China's one-child birth control policy, or the more relaxed version of that policy which has granted since 2013 that couples can have two children if one of them is a single child (BBC News, "China"). On the contrary, Hong Kong couples are free to have as many children as they like, without the fear of paying fines or even facing forced abortion. Fifth, while mainlanders write Chinese using simplified Chinese characters, Hong Kongers, like the Taiwanese, employ the traditional Chinese characters. Sixth, though different regions in China have different dialects, Mandarin holds sway in major Chinese cities apart from Hong Kong, where we converse in Cantonese. Furthermore, in terms of English ability, approximately 46% of Hong Kongers speak English (Moore, "Mandarin"), while merely 22% of mainlanders are rated as having basic or low proficiency in English (VoiceBoxer, "What"). This is probably attributed to the fact that Hong Kong had been a British colony for 150 years, whereas English education was only emphasized by the PRC government after the Open Door Policy in 1979 (VoiceBoxer, "What"). Hence, it is evident that we pay, browse, drive, write and speak differently from the mainlanders. The fact that these differences between the two places persist results from the implementation of the "one country, two systems" (一國兩制) model, formulated by Deng Xiao-ping (鄧小平), China's paramount leader in the 1980s, during his negotiation on the future of Hong Kong with the then British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. While China, despite its ever more flaunted consumerism and addiction to international brands (Olivier, "Why"), follows a nominally socialist

system, Hong Kong adheres to capitalism. Officially at least, Hong Kong is also guaranteed a high degree of political autonomy: as Chapter One, Article 5 of the Basic Law states: “The previous capitalist system and the way of life shall remain unchanged for 50 years” (Basic Law Promotion Steering Committee). Therefore, Hong Kong has an independent judiciary, and the rights of Hong Kong people are supposedly safeguarded by the Basic Law – rights such as freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom to demonstrate (Basic Law Promotion Steering Committee). In fact, Hong Kong is the *only* place in China where one can freely commemorate the June Fourth Tiananmen Massacre without being arrested or imprisoned by the state police.

But the supposed guarantee of the rights and freedoms of Hong Kong people by the Basic Law has not entirely removed fears and worries of local people facing a future under the PRC government. Howard Choy suggests that reunification with China was the political equivalent of a nervous breakdown for many Hong Kongers (53). After all, it was only in 1989 that the Hong Kong people witnessed on television the massacre of unarmed university students and civilians fighting for democracy in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, and to this day, I still remember the time when I, a primary school student, wore a small piece of black cloth over my school uniform to commemorate the innocent victims who had been slaughtered in the massacre. A sense of fear loomed over Hong Kong. One evening, my mother and some neighbours living next door panicked on hearing the sirens of an ambulance, for they mistook them for tanks coming from Beijing, the very tanks which rode over the bodies of civilians that they saw on television. Immensely worried at the imminent handover of Hong Kong to the PRC government, in the early 1990s a lot of Hong Kong people either secured foreign passports, or emigrated

overseas to other former British territories such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Some even secured nationality from a small island in the Pacific Ocean that was about to sink, thinking that residing there would be better than living under the communist regime of the PRC government.

In an attempt to pacify the fears of the Hong Kong community, the colonial government issued British National Overseas (BNO) passports to the Hong Kongers, which allowed them to retain some relationship with Britain after the handover, for example, they could enjoy consular protection as British nationals when travelling outside Hong Kong. However, the BNO passports did not guarantee Hong Kongers the right of abode in the United Kingdom. From 1987 to 1997, nearly 3.4 million Hong Kong people had successfully registered for BNO (J. Cheng 160), in which the total population in Hong Kong was around 6.5 million in 1997. Nevertheless, the period of relative peace and stability was merely short-lived. The disappearance of five shareholders of the “Causeway Bay Bookstore” (銅鑼灣書店) in Hong Kong that sold banned political books from China had once again sparked fears among the local community (*Ming Pao*, “Missing”; *my trans.*). Four of the shareholders disappeared from mid October 2015 onwards, but Li Bo (李波), who disappeared on 30 December, 2015, drew most of the media attention. There are two reasons for this. First, Li Bo disappeared in Hong Kong. His wife confirmed that his “Home Return Permit”, a travel permit for Hong Kong residents to enter mainland China, was still in his home. But strangely, she received a call from her husband in Shenzhen, China, saying that he was “under investigation”. This sparked worries that mainland Chinese state police had kidnapped Li Bo in Hong Kong, and if proven so, it was definitely a strong blow to the “one country, two systems” model.

Second, Li Bo is a British citizen and thus Britain's Foreign Secretary, Philip Hammond, had "urgently inquired" into Li's whereabouts. However, the Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi (王毅), asserted that Li was "first and foremost a Chinese citizen" (Siu, Lai and Ng). This incident led to a surge among Hong Kongers applying for or to extend the validity of their BNO passports. As Simon Shen Xu-hui (沈旭輝), a Hong Kong professor in International Relations, points out, BNO passports are regarded as the "last means of escape in case of the collapse of the 'one country, two systems', or the change of the political system in Hong Kong" (Ji, *my trans.*).

The performance of Shakespearean plays, like Hong Kong people's clinging to their BNO passports, can function as a means of resistance for local theatre practitioners facing political and social turmoil. In a chapter entitled "Politics and/on the Stage", Dennis Kennedy quotes an interesting statement from Heiner Muller, "A dictatorship is more colourful than a democracy for a dramatist. Shakespeare is unthinkable in a democracy" ("Politics" 107). He also asserts that Shakespeare in the Third World is different from that in the First World, where the former is "much more likely to reflect political thought and Brechtian methods" (Kennedy, "Shakespeare and" 63). I propose that the current situation of Hong Kong is gradually falling under the dictatorship of the PRC. While the Basic Law of Hong Kong states that Hong Kongers can vote for their Chief Executive, the National People's Congress Standing Committee of the PRC ruled on 31 August 2014 that Hong Kong voters could only choose from a list of two to three candidates after the full list had been screened by a Nominating Committee, which was made up of only 1200 people who were mainly pro-Beijing capitalists and politicians (Mitchell and Sevastopulo). Beijing's decision sparked fury among Hong Kong people,

and it was condemned by pro-democracy advocates as imposing a “fake election” and “sham democracy” in the city (Mitchell and Sevastopulo). This led to a civil disobedience movement called “Occupy Central”. It was also dubbed the “Umbrella Movement” by Western media due to the sea of yellow umbrellas depicted in photos, which served as shields to prevent the police’s firing of tear gas. Initiated by the jurist Benny Tai Yiu-ting (戴耀廷), sociologist Chan Kin-man (陳健民), and pastor Chu Yiu-ming (朱耀明) under the manifesto of bringing love and peace to Hong Kong (Occupy Central with Love and Peace, “Manifesto”), the Umbrella Movement began in Hong Kong on 28 September, 2014 (*South China Morning Post*, “Occupy”). For 79 days in total, large groups of people occupied key roads in the Central area of Hong Kong, and they threatened to paralyse the city’s business district to fight for the direct election of a Chief Executive in 2017 (Sung, “The Birth”). The movement ended on December 2014, but with little success. The Hong Kong government granted no policy concessions at all – as the 500,000 protestors, around 7% of the city’s population, were unable to apply pressure to the PRC government through hampering the local economy (Headley and Tanigawa-Lau, “Why”). Contrary to the protestors’ expectations, the Hong Kong economy was doing even better during the Umbrella Movement than a year before, with significantly higher tourist numbers and escalating retail sales, even though the protests mainly centred in retail areas (Headley and Tanigawa-Lau, “Why”).

As China scholar, Perry Link, observes, there is no real democracy in Hong Kong (Dominguez, “Analyst”), which contradicts China’s promise in the Sino-British Joint Declaration (中英聯合聲明) in 1984 that Hong Kong people shall possess a “high degree of autonomy” (Basic Law Promotion Steering Committee). In 2017, China’s Foreign

Ministry spokesman, Lu Kang (陸慷), even claimed that the Declaration was merely a “historical document” and “no longer [had] any practical significance” (Reuters, “China”). The neocolonial situation of Hong Kong fulfils Kennedy’s notion that a region with no real democracy may well turn to the adaptation of Shakespeare to reveal its socio-political problems. Though the tightening of censorship in neocolonial Hong Kong is detrimental to the freedoms of speech and expression, the city has nonetheless become a fertile ground for Shakespearean productions – even where implicit and explicit criticism of the post-1997 state of political life has had to be smuggled to audiences via government-funded theatre. With the exception of Jimmy Lee’s Big Stage Theatre Company (大舞臺), which enacted *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* (2015), all the other theatre companies that I am exploring in this thesis have obtained some means of funding from the Hong Kong government. For instance, Hardy Tsoi’s Prospects Theatre (新域劇團), which produced *Shamshuipo Lear* (2015), had a venue partnership with the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, and the Tang Shu-Wing Theatre Studio (鄧樹榮戲劇工作室), which produced *Titus Andronicus 2.0* (2015), was funded by the Arts Development Council (ADC). In my interview with Bernice Chan Kwok-wai (陳國慧), manager of the International Association of Theatre Critics (Hong Kong), she admits that “it is very difficult for any theatre company in Hong Kong to survive solely on income from the box office, thus they have to depend on various forms of government funding” (Telephone interview with B. Chan). Since most local repertory companies rely on government funding for survival, it is difficult for them to produce any new plays that would openly criticize the government. To illustrate this point further, let us take the

example of FM Theatre Power (好戲量), an independent theatre company in Hong Kong. In the past, FM Theatre Power had received three years of funding from the Arts Development Council (ADC), and the Education Bureau had also invited them to schools to conduct theatre education projects. However, ever since its support for the Umbrella Movement in 2014, all of a sudden it lost the new bid for funding from ADC in 2015. Making matters worse, FM Theatre Power also failed to secure venue bookings from the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, and its application for art education projects from the Education Bureau was also unsuccessful (*Apple Daily*, “FM Theatre”; *my trans.*). Faced with this underlying political agenda, it is much safer for theatre companies in Hong Kong to employ Shakespeare, a Western literary figure, to comment on the city’s political and social issues than to produce new work written explicitly about these issues. Shakespeare, comparable to the adoption of other Western status symbols like the Rolls Royce (A. Lee, “One” 197), is after all, a relatively safe source for adaptation. This is because adaptations of Shakespeare are nothing new in Hong Kong, given the vast amount of adaptations staged in the post-colonial period, as I shall discuss later. Therefore, Hong Kong directors who adapt Shakespeare can express their new ideas on a familiar backdrop, which do not appear controversial to the government. In this sense, Shakespeare serves as a safe stimulus or a springboard for the directors to criticize the problems of the Hong Kong society.⁹

During my research trips to the office of the International Association of Theatre Critics (IATC) in Wan Chai, Hong Kong, I had studied the *Hong Kong Drama Yearbook*

⁹ Shakespeare was considered a safe source of adaptation even during the British colonial reign of Hong Kong. Murray Levith notes that when there was increasing censorship of books and plays during the difficult political time in Hong Kong in the 1960s, antique Shakespeare, especially in English, was deemed relatively safe (96).

(香港戲劇年鑑) from various years, and I had also explored an online database called “art-mate” that houses extensive information of theatrical productions in Hong Kong from 2006 to the present.¹⁰ For theatre productions staged before 2006, I have consulted the “Hong Kong Theatre Database” (香港戲劇資料庫) hosted by Jessica Yeung, a professor at the Hong Kong Baptist University.¹¹ The “art-mate” database includes theatre productions staged by professional companies in Hong Kong, such as the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre and the Chung Ying Theatre Company. While the majority of performances included in the artmate database were performed in Cantonese, there were also some produced in English by expatriates from English-speaking theatre companies. In addition, drama productions performed by graduating students from the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts (HKAPA) (香港演藝學院) are also listed in the database, in which HKAPA is the only professional drama school in Hong Kong. Tam Kwok-kan indicates that Shakespeare is still the most quoted author from the Western traditions because of its humanity and the use of language (“Introduction” 4). Harold Bloom likewise suggests that education in the English-speaking world has been Shakespearean (13), and that the politics of the society “reflect the passions of *his* characters, and insofar as they themselves possess any social energies, their secret sense of the societal is oddly Shakespearean” (Bloom 13; *italics in the original*). I would argue that Shakespeare is integral to the construction of Hong Kong identity in the realm of theatre, as it is proven that Shakespeare is the most popular Western playwright among Hong Kong theatre practitioners. This is probably due to the Chinese literary tradition that assigns a high

¹⁰ For more information about the database, see <http://www.iatc.com.hk/drama2014>.

¹¹ For more information about the database, see http://arts.hkbu.edu.hk/~tran/tw/research/completed/research_cp_15drama.asp.

status to tragedy, which represents a “yearning for a better scheme of things ... and that the curtain does not fall on the main tragic event, but on the aftermath of [it]” (Z.S. Qian 86).¹² Though I am not implying that all Shakespearean plays are tragedies, most of the Shakespearean adaptations staged by Hong Kong directors in the post-handover period are tragedies, as I shall elaborate on later.

From 1997 until 2017, according to the artmate database, Shakespeare has been staged in Hong Kong by local theatre companies 73 times in two decades, as compared to 17 times for Bertolt Brecht, 12 times for Henrik Ibsen, 9 times for Samuel Beckett, and 4 times for Bernard Shaw. Of the 73 Shakespearean performances staged by Hong Kong theatre companies in the postcolonial period, the plays which exerted most popularity are as follows: *Hamlet* (staged 11 times), *Macbeth* (staged 8 times), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (staged 7 times), *The Taming of the Shrew* (staged 6 times), *Titus Andronicus*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Twelfth Night* (staged 4 times), and finally, *King Lear* and *Julius Caesar* (staged 3 times).¹³ In view of the above repertoire, Shakespeare's tragedies are more commonly favoured than his comedies by Hong Kong theatre practitioners. In addition, Shakespeare is a popular figure to a wide range of theatre makers from various backgrounds in Hong Kong. He does not only appeal to Cantonese-speaking repertory companies, but also to expatriates and to English-speaking theatre groups such as Bareknuckle Shakespeare and Seals Players, as 15 out of the 73 Shakespearean performances in the post-1997 period were staged in English. It would be unfair to say

¹² Cao Yu (曹禺), the 20th century Chinese dramatist, was renowned for writing tragedies that exposed the decadence of the feudal society in China. Some of the famous tragedies that he had written included *Thunderstorm* (雷雨) in 1934, and *Sunrise* (日出) in 1936, which revealed the contradictions between different classes in China (Lin, Jiang and Wang 482; *my trans.*).

¹³ See appendix 1 for the list of Hong Kong Shakespearean performances in the post-1997 period.

that all of the Shakespearan performances staged by Hong Kong directors are mimicry of the colonizers, as there are creative pieces done by small-scale and experimental theatres like Class 7A Drama Group (7A 班戲劇組), Perry Chiu Experimental Theatre (焦媛實驗劇團) and Big Stage Theatre. Apart from adults, students and young children also perform Shakespeare's plays, for example, drama students from the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts and primary school students from Shakespeare4All had actively staged various Shakespeare's plays in Cantonese and English respectively. In addition, the Chinese Universities Shakespeare Festival, which was organised by the Department of English of the Chinese University of Hong Kong from 2005 to 2014, brought together different Shakespearan excerpts performed in English by Chinese university students in Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and China (Chinese Universities Shakespeare Festival, "Mission"). In his book on *Popular Shakespeare in China: 1993-2008*, Li Jun has also documented the Chinese Universities Shakespeare Festival in terms of its educational function, platform for creativity, and influences within and beyond campuses (178-185).

Furthermore, Shakespeare's words have even transcended verbal language, as Hong Kong Society for the Deaf (香港聾人協進會) has adapted *Hamlet* into *A Modern Tale of Revenge* in September 2014, which showcased actors with hearing impairment and also those with no physical disabilities, and they acted using a combination of sign language, physical movement and Cantonese. Shakespeare has also inspired Hong Kong theatre practitioners to stage plays in different art forms, for instance, Utopia Cantonese Opera Workshop (桃花源粵劇工舍) adapted *Romeo and Juliet* into *Martyrdom* (殉情記), a Cantonese opera, in September 2013, Hong Kong 3 Arts Musical Institute (香港音樂劇

藝術學院) staged *Othello Rock n roll* as a musical in August 2007, and Joy with Theatre adapted part of *Twelfth Night* as a dance in April 2012. Needless to say, Shakespeare's name often appeared in different arts festivals in Hong Kong. Tang Shu-wing's *Titus Andronicus* was part of the 40th Hong Kong Arts Festival in 2012, and Shakespeare in the Port organized an "Evening with the Bard" in November 2014, which consisted of Shakespeare's monologues, sonnets and a one-act play in English, and was part of the Hong Kong People's Fringe Festival.¹⁴ The various performance modes of Shakespeare, in aspects of language, art form, background of the actors, exhibit Shakespeare's versatility in the neocolonial theatrical productions of Hong Kong.

Besides, it is important to distinguish Hong Kong Shakespeare from Chinese Shakespeare. As asserted by Judy Celine Ick, Asian Shakespeare calls to mind productions primarily from China, Japan, and India (205), and Southeast Asian Shakespeare are at times absent from the construct of Asian Shakespeare (206). For instance, while Google search produces 333 results for "Shakesepeare in China", it merely yields 36 hits for "Shakespeare in Hong Kong" (Ick 205). Whenever critics like Alexander Huang (黃詩芸)¹⁵ or Beatrice Lei (雷碧琦) elucidate the concept of "Chinese Shakespeare", I would wish to replace this term with "mainland Chinese Shakespeare" instead. This is because we first need to understand that Chinese cultural identity is, as asserted by Yong Li-lan, not singular but includes different localities such as mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, and overseas Chinese communities ("Ong" 251). Haun Saussy also expands the concept of "China" beyond that of a supposedly

¹⁴ For more details about the performances, refer to appendix 1.

¹⁵ Alexander Huang is known as Alexa Huang from 2015 onwards, and in this thesis, I have used the author's name attached to a specific publication, at time of the publication.

homogenous nation-state and describes it as an “international culture” (4). Therefore, when Poonam Trivedi claims that unlike the Indian experience, Shakespeare has been taken up voluntarily in China and Japan, on their own terms and not through direct political imposition (“You” 232), she has committed two major flaws in her argument. First, Trivedi does not mention that Hong Kong was part of China and was handed back to the PRC after 1997. Second, she is oblivious to the fact that Hong Kong and India had the same ex-coloniser, Britain, thus the two places share the same roots in their early inception of Shakespeare. Shakespeare came to both Hong Kong and India with colonialism. His arrival in India, admittedly, was somewhat earlier, where he was introduced in 1775 as “part of the entertainment apparatus of the trading enterprise, but stayed on ... in the colonial English language education policy” (Trivedi, “It” 47). His plays are known to have been first performed in English for the European traders in Calcutta and Bombay around 1775, but by the 1850s they were beginning to be performed in translation in Indian languages (Trivedi, “Multi-Shakespeare” 284). Similarly, Shakespeare was first introduced in Hong Kong to provide entertainment for the predominantly British expatriate population, with Talford’s popular burlesque *Shylock*, or *The Merchant of Venice Preserved* being the first Shakespearean performance in Hong Kong, in 1867 (D. Wong, “Shakespeare” 63).¹⁶ As in India, argued by Alexa Huang, Englishness was an “important element throughout the social structure” (Panja, Michiko, Huang and Yong 516) of Hong Kong during the colonial period. For instance,

¹⁶ This was performed in the form of a burlesque written by F. Talfourd. *China Mail* of 28 April 1871 gave a review of the re-run of this performance: “In the character of M Victor Dubois, Mr. Hockey has already won perennial laurels from the foreign residents in this Chinese land, and it is quite certain that, on the present occasion, he will be most ably supported by the rest of the company” (D. Wong, “Shakespeare” 63).

English literature was made a subject of study in Hong Kong's school system, and by 1882, students had to study Shakespeare for their exams (Panja, Michiko, Huang and Yong 516). As suggested by Dorothy Wong, the fervour for Shakespeare in Hong Kong was tied to economic gains received by the colonized ("Domination" 47). For instance, Hong Kongers' study of Shakespeare was rewarded by securing secondary posts in the bureaucracy and gaining economic benefits from the British (D. Wong, "Domination" 48). In contrast to Hong Kong people's close affinity with their former coloniser, they continuously distrust the "motherland" China. Thus even after 1997, Shakespeare possesses special significance for the inhabitants of Hong Kong. In *Chinese Shakespeares: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange*, Alexander Huang states that "except for Macao [and] Hong Kong ... China was never quite colonised by the Western powers in the twentieth century. In most places of the Chinese-speaking world, Shakespeare has rarely been resisted as a dominant figure of colonialism" ("Chinese" 26). And so, what if Shakespeare was a colonial symbol and an emblem of Englishness? It was not colonial symbols that were rejected in Hong Kong. On the contrary, the removal of such symbols after the handover in the government's attempt to decolonise the mentality of Hong Kongers, such as the demolition of Queen's Pier in 2008 (Lai, "Legco"), and the government's proposal to cover the British crown on Hong Kong's postboxes in 2015 (*The Guardian*, "Hong Kong"), led to protests and heated debates among the local community. Shakespeare, a British cultural symbol like the Queen's Pier or the British crown on Hong Kong's postboxes, contain special significance to Hong Kongers, as the locals have a strong sense of pride in the British legacy of Hong Kong.

Apart from India, the roots of Hong Kong Shakespeare also share resemblance with Singaporean Shakespeare, as Singapore, like Hong Kong, is also a former British colony. First of all, Hong Kong and Singapore are similar in many ways, in terms of their small size and their geographical proximity – the two places are connected to each other just a few hours by flight, and owe their status as present-day hubs of international capitalism to their establishment as defensible imperial ports. Nevertheless, the reception of Singaporean Shakespeare is different from that of Hong Kong Shakespeare. Though Singapore is a small country, it has four officially-adopted languages, and is founded on an ideal of multi-ethnicity and cultural equality, thus offering the vision of a mixed cultural world (Kennedy, “Foreword” 6). As for Hong Kong, the Basic Law states that both English and Chinese are official languages of the city, but Mandarin is fast growing as a new lingua franca since 1997 (*The Wall Street Journal*, “Mandarin”). It was reported that in 2012, 96% of Hong Kong residents spoke Cantonese, 48% of them said that they could speak Mandarin, narrowly surpassing 46% of Hong Kongers who could speak English (*The Wall Street Journal*, “Mandarin”). On the contrary, English is widely used in Singapore. Known as the “lion city”, Singapore consists of “overlapping histories of diaspora and British colonization that defines relationships of displacement to several cultural traditions, East and West” (Yong, “Ong” 264). Yong Li-lan, a professor at the National University of Singapore, argues that Shakespeare is “hardly foreign” in the country, since the “languages, customs, and cultural practices [in the country] all inhabit the condition of being abroad” (“Ong” 264). Though it is not to say that Shakespeare is familiar to most Singaporeans, they are more familiar with Shakespeare than with Asian performance traditions (Yong, “Ong” 268). On the other hand, Hong Kongers are

generally not very familiar with Shakespeare, especially beyond educated audiences in academic circles. Richard Ho, who first adapted *Hamlet* in 1977, tells me that Hong Kongers, even to this day, are only familiar with the names of a few Shakespearean plays. For example, they might not have read Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, but they have heard of *Vengeance of the Prince* (王子復仇記), which is the Chinese title given to Laurence Olivier's well-known film version of *Hamlet*, in 1948 (Personal interview with Ho). Hong Kong theatre directors are well aware of this phenomenon, and they have adopted various strategies to attract the local audience to come to watch Shakespearean plays. One such strategy is to create a sinicized version of Shakespeare, which is commonly employed by local and Western directors in Hong Kong.¹⁷ This approach is also adopted by Richard Ho's *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, and we shall further explore its configuration into the ancient period of China in Chapter One of this thesis. In the pre-1997 productions, Joanna Chan, who directed *Othello* for the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre, added oriental flavour to the play by choosing a Chinese setting (D. Wong, "Shakespeare" 68). Furthermore, Bernard Goss, who adapted *Twelfth Night* for the Chung Ying Theatre Company in 1986, transposed the setting of the play to Guangzhou in the Tang dynasty, as he identified this period in ancient Chinese history as comparable to that in Elizabethan England (D. Wong, "Shakespeare" 69). The approach of staging sinicized Shakespeare is also evident in the post-1997 Shakespearean productions in Hong Kong, as we shall further examine in Tang Shu-wing's *Macbeth* (2015) in Chapter Two. With different reasons from why Ho chose a sinicized setting for *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, Tang's *Macbeth* is only partly

¹⁷ I have earlier defined the sinicisation of a Shakespearean play as a production staged in Cantonese, and performed by actors dressed in ancient Chinese costumes, see pp. 7-8.

sinicized, as its main protagonists, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth return to the Hong Kong locale in the coda of the play.

On the other hand, theatre directors in Singapore seldom adopt the approach of sinicized Shakespeare, since China is both geographically and politically distant from Singapore, as compared to its counterpart, Hong Kong. Another interesting observation between the different performance strategies of the two regions, I propose, is that almost *all* the Hong Kong Shakespearean productions that I shall examine in this thesis reflect the social or political reality of Hong Kong, either directly or metaphorically. However, Shakespearean productions in Singapore do not solely reflect Singaporean identity but a collage of Asian identity, as exemplified in the productions of *Lear* (1997) and *Desdemona* (2000), staged by the Singaporean director, Ong Keng-sen. Perhaps this is because Hong Kong has not achieved the sort of independence that Singapore did in 1965, thus Hong Kong theatre directors are still very much fixated on the recurrent theme of the Hong Kong people's identity crisis in their productions. As asserted by Clayton MacKenzie, due to the question of 1997, Hong Kong theatre has "sought ways to identify itself as different – as being Hong Kong and not China" (213). Furthermore, the theatrical search for Hong Kong identity corresponds to the wider issues of cultural, societal, and political exploration of Hong Kong's position in the world (MacKenzie 214). On the contrary, given Singapore's independent status and its multiple cultures, Singaporean directors can broaden the themes in their plays to encompass different Asian performance styles, and to explore how the inauthenticity and displacement of Asian identity can be reconstructed (Yong, "Ong" 264). For instance, in Ong Keng-sen's *Lear*, each major character is played in a different Asian performance style and in the performer's own

language, with, for instance, Lear played by the Japanese *noh* actor, Naohiko Umewaka, and the Older Daughter, a combination of Goneril and Regan, played by the Peking opera actor, Jiang Qi-hu (Yong, “Shakespeare” 532). The political implications in Ong’s *Lear* reach well beyond Singapore, in contrast to those of the Hong Kong Shakespearean productions that I shall explore in this thesis, which are almost always related to the locale of performance in some ways. The conflict between the Japanese king and the Chinese daughter in Ong’s *Lear* is interpreted as the struggle for power between the two East Asian superpowers, juxtaposed against the weaker economies, which are represented by the passive Thai Younger Daughter and the subservient Indonesian retainers (Yong, “Shakespeare” 532). Likewise, Ong’s *Desdemona* showcases the plurality of Asia through diverse Asian performing arts, traditions, languages and cultures, such as bringing together traditional and contemporary practitioners from India, Korea, Myanmar, Indonesia and Singapore. Ong’s intention is “not to retell the story [of *Othello*], but to use it as the occasion for re-staging Asian interculturality” (Yong, “Shakespeare” 536).

After comparing Hong Kong Shakespeare with Indian and Singaporean Shakespeare, where all three regions are interrelated as former colonies of Britain, I shall now point out that the reception of Shakespeare in Hong Kong is entirely different from that in PRC China. Zhang Xiao-yang argues that China’s approach to Shakespeare is “shaped by the cultural, social, and historical contexts of modern and contemporary China” (211), such as the influences from Confucianism, Marxism, and humanism (Zhang 211). Meng Xian-qiang further classifies the reception of Shakespeare in China into five stages, in which the first stage from the mid-19th century to the early 20th century signifies a preparatory phase for the reception of Shakespeare (115). Lin Ze-xu (林則徐),

a senior official in the Qing dynasty (1644-1912), was the first man who translated Shakespeare's name into Chinese in 1839 (Huang, "Chinese" 7). In addition, the Chinese scholar, Yan Fu (嚴復), also mentioned the characters and plots of Shakespeare's plays in his translations of Western works of philosophy, ethics and economics (Meng 116), such as his translation of Thomas Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays* (1893) (Jun Li 5). Nevertheless, Yan's purpose was *not* simply to introduce Shakespeare as a great literary figure, but more importantly, through the translation of Shakespeare's works, he aimed to introduce some pioneering thoughts to criticize the feudal beliefs in China (Zhuang 77; *my trans.*). For instance, he employed the tragedy of *Hamlet* to critique the "Mandate of Heaven" (天命論), where traditional Chinese belief stated that the emperor was appointed by heaven and thus all subjects had to unquestionably submit to the emperor's authority – an ideology which corresponded closely and usefully, in his eyes, to the Elizabethan notion of the divine right of kings. Through introducing the text of *Hamlet*, Yan demonstrated to Chinese readers that the Mandate of Heaven could be challenged when the emperor was unjust or when he employed illegal ways to ascend to the throne. He further praised Hamlet as a "filial son" and a "righteous person", who assumed the responsibility of avenging his father's death by killing his uncle (Zhuang 77; *my trans.*). Through depicting Hamlet's boldness in overthrowing the corrupt ruler, the seeds of freedom and democracy were sown (Zhuang 77; *my trans.*). Though Hamlet dies after killing the king, which seemingly contradicts the triumphant pursuit of democracy, Yan uses this instance to attack another superstitious Chinese belief, namely that "doers of good actions would have good fortune, whereas doers of bad deeds would be subjected to punishment" (福善禍淫) (Zhuang 77; *my trans.*). This draws us to the primary

objective of introducing Shakespeare into China in the first phase, which aimed at learning foreign knowledge in order to resist foreign aggression (Meng 116). It also corresponded to the Self-Strengthening Movement (1861 – 1895) in China, which was a period of institutional reforms during the late Qing dynasty. The Chinese defeat in the First Opium War (1839 – 1842) had led to the Chinese’s awareness of the inadequacy of their military forces, as compared with modern Western arms (Leibo 61). With the pretext of learning the superior techniques of the “barbarians” in order to control them (T. L. Kennedy 22), the introduction of Shakespeare emphasized the messages learned from Shakespeare’s plays, instead of simply reading his plays as literary works, or performing them for the sole purpose of entertainment. In this sense, China’s initial reception of Shakespeare falls outside the field of art and literature (Meng 116).

While Shakespeare arrived in Hong Kong with British colonialism,¹⁸ he arrived in China when the country was in the grip of wars, revolutions, and a cultural movement that encouraged the educated to oppose native traditions (Lin, “Why” 109). Likewise, Li Ru-ru suggests that Shakespeare’s works have played important roles at critical periods in China, such as with the creation of the PRC in the 1910s, the Sino-Japanese War in the 1940s, and during the thaw that followed the Cultural Revolution in the 1980s (“Millennium” 170). Furthermore, Kennedy rightly argues that the reception of Shakespeare in China is marked by political exigency (“Shakespeare Worldwide” 262). He was ignored when Westerners were distrusted in the early twentieth century, became influential after the 1949 Communist Revolution due to his importance for Soviet critics,

¹⁸ Shakespeare did not exist in Hong Kong prior to British rule. According to Murray Levith, following the Treaty of Nanjing that ceded Hong Kong to Britain, Shakespeare was first imported to Hong Kong as a “literary comfort food” to satisfy the British expatriates’ hunger for home (93).

and was entirely erased during the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976 (Kennedy, “Shakespeare Worldwide” 262). As the reception of Shakespeare is complicated by the victory of communism and the PRC establishment in 1949, Shakespeare’s history in China is regarded as a history of assimilation with the PRC regime (Gillies, Minami, Li and Trivedi 266). Shakespeare, like other Western writers such as Ibsen, Shaw, Tolstoy, and Hugo were welcomed as a means to understand the West, to make China economically and politically stronger, and also to enrich the cultural life of its people (Fei and Sun 58). Till the present day, mainland critics have continued to use the ideological lens to evaluate the importance of Shakespeare in China. Shen Lin, head of theatre studies at China’s Central Academy of Drama (中央戲劇學院), suggests that “Shakespeare is ideological”, just like “everything in China is ideological” (qtd. in Dickson 361).¹⁹ He further explains that Shakespeare’s influence on modern Chinese intellectual or literary history is merely limited (S. Lin, “A Mirror” 109-110). Shakespeare is not as influential as Ibsen for China’s reform-minded writers, where they learned from Ibsen how to use the theatre to address social problems (S. Lin, “A Mirror” 110). Nor is Shakespeare as “useful” as Brecht for offering Chinese artists familiar with Stanislavskian acting a unique staging technique (S. Lin, “A Mirror” 110). Moreover, there is an association between mainland Chinese Shakespeare and progressive Chinese patriotism in PRC China (Gillies, Minami, Li and Trivedi 267). For example, *Hamlet* was staged in 1942 by Jiao Ju-yin (焦菊隱) in a Confucian temple in the Sichuan province

¹⁹ Apart from China, other countries had appropriated Shakespeare for ideological purposes as well. For example, Shakespeare’s plays are appropriated for political interpretation in Eastern Europe, as Zdenek Stribrny asserts that the plays are highly adaptable to any political system (1, 4). Moreover, the Nazis and Soviets had also politically appropriated Shakespeare to varying purposes (Shurbanov 16).

where the government had retreated from the advancing Japanese. Jiao saw in *Hamlet* a “mirror and a lesson for us Chinese”, where *Hamlet*’s delay in killing a praying Claudius was interpreted as a fatal decision (Gillies, Minami, Li and Trivedi 267). In other words, the staging of *Hamlet* aimed to encourage Chinese people to be strong and bold against foreign aggression. Furthermore, *Macbeth* was adapted under the title of the “Pretender to the Throne” in 1945, serving as a protest against China’s dictator, Yuan Shi-kai (袁世凱), who submitted to Japan’s Twenty-One Demands, thus endangering the country into becoming a Japanese ward (S. Lin, “A Mirror” 111). Staged during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937 – 1945), both *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* were mirrors reflecting China’s political reality, and they were also platforms for instilling patriotism among the Chinese people who suffered greatly from the Japanese invasion. Li Ru-ru proposes that Shakespeare is one of the few ideologically safe playwrights in China, and his works are conveniently absorbed into Chinese culture through ideological means (“Millennium” 172).²⁰ In a similar vein, Lee Chee-keng and Yong Li-lan argue that the “discourse of Shakespeare production in China is dominated by ideological rhetoric” (108). They further explicate that although mainland Shakespeare is now gradually moving away from state-sanctioned ideological imperatives, overtly non-ideological framing of such productions is itself a “reaction to politically driven approaches, aesthetics and grand narratives” (Lee and Yong 109). Furthermore, Shakespeare offers a vehicle for critique, or even resistance of the PRC, as I shall further discuss in Chapter Three of my thesis regarding Hong Kong Shakespeare.

²⁰ On the contrary, Hong Kong Shakespeare is seen as less ideological than mainland Shakespeare, which I shall further discuss in the later section of this introduction regarding the characteristics of Hong Kong Shakespeare.

Outside of the theatrical world, the ruling culture of China also exploits Shakespeare for political interests or for furthering diplomatic relations. This endorses Frank Lentricchia's argument that the "ruling culture does not define the whole of culture, though it tries to, and it is the task of the oppositional critic to re-read culture so as to amplify and strategically position the marginalized voices of the ruled, exploited, oppressed, and excluded" (15). Fu Ying (傅莹), who was the Chinese ambassador of Britain from 2007 to 2009, and is currently the vice-minister of China's Foreign Ministry, presented a luncheon speech at the Shakespeare Birthday Celebration in Stratford-upon-Avon on 24 April 2009:

Some years ago I was often involved in diplomatic negotiations. When we were locked in a stalemate and going nowhere, I often liked to quote from *Hamlet*, with a small adaptation though. Instead of "To be, or not to be, that is the question," I would say, "To move on or to fall back, that is the question".

(Fu 44)

Fu Ying also attempted to compare the greatness of English culture as exemplified by Shakespeare's works with the greatness of Chinese culture, when she brought up the Chinese playwright Tang Xian-zu (湯顯祖) at the same luncheon speech. She argues that Tang Xian-zu and Shakespeare passed away in the same year, and they also wrote *Romeo and Juliet* (1595) and *The Peony Pavilion* (牡丹亭) (1598) respectively at around the same time in the 16th century (Fu 44). According to Fu, Tang Xian-zu's *The Peony Pavilion* tells a similar story to *Romeo and Juliet*, where it "presents

a sweet and sorrowful legend of love that defies the limits of heaven and earth” (Fu 44).²¹ Her comparison between Chinese and Western drama serves as an instrument of soft power to promote China as a strong nation, one which is capable of producing great literary figures comparable to Britain’s Shakespeare. This incident is similar to the former premier of China, Wen Jia-bao (溫家寶)’s visit to Stratford-upon-Avon in 2011. Wen reminded his British counterparts that China had its own Shakespeare, as he emphasized, “The literary figures of China have produced a myriad of literary works, and reading these works will help one better understand the course of the development of our great nation” (Dickson 342).

Now comes the critical question of how do we define Hong Kong Shakespeare? First and foremost, Hong Kong Shakespeare shares a close affinity with Indian and Singapore Shakespeare, as all three strands of Shakespeare have sprouted from British colonialism. However, unlike India or Singapore, Hong Kong has not become an independent country after the end of British rule. As asserted by Thomas Luk, Hong Kong’s postcolonial phase is not a sudden arrival, but has emerged via a gradual and inevitable process (“Post-Colonialism” 58). Ever since the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984, Hong Kong theatre has started to experiment with issues ranging from identity, culture, ethnic, to post-colonialism (Luk, “Post-Colonialism” 58). In this sense, Hong Kong Shakespeare aligns as well with Taiwanese Shakespeare, since both locales of performance involve complex relationships with PRC China. While Hong Kong was colonized by Britain for more than 150 years after the signing of the Treaty of

²¹ *The Peony Pavilion* was staged by the Suzhou Kunqu Opera Theatre in Britain in 2008 and 2016, and it was highly praised by British critics as a “Chinese style of Shakespeare” (Phoenix Infonews, “Suzhou”; *my trans.*).

Nanjing in 1842, Taiwan also possesses a complicated relationship with the “motherland” across the strait, as it was colonised by Japan for 50 years (Panja, Michiko, Huang and Yong 516). Beatrice Lei suggests that Taiwan has been on the “periphery in political, economic, and cultural terms for centuries” due to its unique history and geography (“O Heavy” 311). Both Hong Kongers and the Taiwanese prefer identifying themselves with their own locales rather than with the broad category of “Chinese”. Alexander Huang affirms that “[since] the 1990s, both Taiwan and Hong Kong theatres have produced non-state-sponsored Shakespearean performances” (“Chinese” 198) that “provide useful contrasts to the history of Shakespeare in mainland China” (“Chinese” 198). Instead of focusing on national politics, artists instead “focus on the personal, if not autobiographical, mode of interpretation” (Huang, “Chinese” 197). For instance, Huang quotes two examples, both from Taiwanese directors, to exemplify how Taiwanese Shakespeare attempts to displace the national with the personal. While Stan Lai (賴聲川)’s *Lear and the 37 Fold Path of a Bodhisattva* (菩薩之三十七種修行之李爾王), commissioned in Hong Kong in 2000, introduces Tibetan themes that focus on cause and effect, Wu Hsing-kuo (吳興國)’s *Lear is Here* (李爾在此) in 2001 problematizes Wu’s estranged relationship with his Peking opera master (Huang, “Chinese” 220). This exemplifies that *King Lear* is often appropriated by Taiwanese directors to explore the identity crisis of the Taiwanese people. Nevertheless, Huang has not provided any examples about Hong Kong directors’ employment of Shakespeare’s *King Lear* to illustrate local subjectivity, and I shall supplement this gap by examining Hardy Tsoi’s *Shamshuipo Lear* in Chapter Three of my thesis.

For both Hong Kong and Taiwanese directors, the perceived fidelity to Shakespeare's text is not their major concern in staging Shakespeare. This is different from mainland Shakespeare, which views free translation as an irresponsible appropriation at the expense of the original's value (Fei and Sun 60). Unlike mainland Shakespeare, Hong Kong Shakespeare does not adopt such a utilitarian frame of mind. Li Ru-ru argues that it is only in China that Shakespeare is treated ideologically, not in Taiwan, and not yet in Hong Kong ("Millennium" 172). Therefore, I propose that the appropriation of Shakespeare in Hong Kong is somewhat progressive, moving beyond a desire for straightforward translations. Meanwhile, the political and economic systems of the two non-PRC locales encourage their theatre practitioners to be open to diverse approaches, and to Shakespearean performances seen in the West (R. Li, "Millennium" 173). Therefore, they are accustomed to the treatment of Shakespeare's texts using the techniques of postmodern pastiche, parody and collage (R. Li, "Millennium" 173). The appearance of Shakespeare at theatre festivals in Taiwan in the 1980s and 1990s differed from mainland China's post-revolutionary Shakespeare boom, which was initiated by government-sponsored Shakespeare festivals in 1986 and 1994. Alexa Huang records that the "Shakespeare in Taipei" festival focused more on creating a "platform for artistically innovative and commercially viable experimental works" (Panja, Michiko, Huang and Yong 516). She also notes that mainland Shakespeare and Taiwanese Shakespeare focus on different themes. While mainland directors adopt the strategies of universalization and localization in their adaptations of Shakespeare, Taiwanese directors take on a third strategy, which involves "pastiche, dramaturgical collage and extensive, deconstructive rewritings" (Panja, Michiko, Huang and Yong 514). For instance, Lee Kuo-hsiu (李國修)

transformed *Hamlet* from high tragedy into comic parody in his staging of *Shamlet* (莎姆雷特) in 1992.

Besides, both Hong Kong and Taiwanese Shakespeare possess “strong traditions of Shakespeare performances in one or more dialects” (Panja, Michiko, Huang and Yong 516). While Hong Kong people speak in a mixture of Cantonese and English, the Taiwanese converse in various dialects according to their different ethnicities, for example, people living in the southern part of Taiwan generally adopt the Minnan dialect (閩南語). Though there are different dialects in China as well, the theatrical productions in the PRC are predominately staged in Mandarin, which is the country’s official language under its state policy. On the other hand, Taiwan produces mainstream Shakespeare either entirely in a dialect, or in a mixture of Mandarin and local dialects, or in English. For instance, in *Yumei and Tianlai* (玉梅與天來), a bilingual Taiwanese-Mandarin *Romeo and Juliet* performed at the Shakespeare Taipei Festival in 2003, the different dialects uttered by the Montagues and the Capulets reflected the ethnic differences between the Taiwanese themselves and mainlanders from China (Panja, Michiko, Huang and Yong 515). This reflects the linguistic diversity of Taiwan, as it questions the much-contested “Chineseness” of the island’s identity (Panja, Michiko, Huang and Yong 516). Similarly, Hong Kong produces both Cantonese and English Shakespeare in aspects of modern drama and traditional Chinese opera, hence reflecting its association with “southern Chinese culture and the British legacy” (Panja, Michiko, Huang and Yong 516). The linguistic diversity of Hong Kong and Taiwanese Shakespeare has broadened the perception of “Shakespeare” and “China”, and in short, both strands of non-PRC Shakespeares provide a contrast to mainland Chinese artists’

imagination of China (Panja, Michiko, Huang and Yong 516). Due to the distinctiveness of Hong Kong Shakespeare that travels beyond 1997, I argue that it should not be subsumed under the broad category of mainland Chinese Shakespeare. In the following section, I shall take a closer examination of Hong Kong Shakespeare in terms of its early inception, and its course of development from the colonial period to the neocolonial era.

III. Hong Kong Shakespeare: a missing piece in the map of Asian Shakespeare

Several Shakespearean scholars have categorized the 21st century as a significant moment for Asian Shakespeare. Poonam Trivedi argues that the 21st century is the moment of Asia's resurgence ("Re-playing" 2), whereas Alexa Huang advocates the concept of "Asian Shakespeare 2.0", which she proclaims is more an attitude than a method (Huang, "Asian" 1). She further explains that "neither Asia nor Shakespeare has unified identities in any meaningful sense or even consolidated economic interests. Rather, they are defined by remarkable internal divisions and incongruities" (Huang, "Asian" 1). Dennis Kennedy illustrates that Asian Shakespeare speaks in many voices, accents, and contradictory performance styles ("Foreword" 12). He also suggests that Asian Shakespeare usages are parallel to European and American usages, and sometimes even in advance of them (Kennedy, "Foreword" 11). To call for increasing exchanges among Asian Shakespeareans, the Asian Shakespeare Association held an inaugural Asian Shakespeare Conference in Taipei in 2014 ("Asian Shakespeare Association"), which I have also attended. Asian Shakespeare is worth investigating into, as its roots travel back as early as the 19th century. Trivedi lists the first performances of

Shakespeare's plays by Asians in Asian languages: 1852 in India, 1885 in Japan, 1913 in China, 1949 in Taiwan ("Re-playing" 2). However, if Huang claims that Asia and Shakespeare do not have unified identities but are instead marked by internal incongruities (Huang, "Asian" 1), then where is Hong Kong's position in the map of Asian Shakespeare? It is puzzling why Hong Kong Shakespeare is absent from the discussion of Asian Shakespeare. The popular English burlesque *Shylock, or The Merchant of Venice Preserved* (by Thomas Talfourd) was staged in 1867 for British expatriates, and was later revived by the Hong Kong Amateur Dramatic Club in 1871 (Panja, Michiko, Huang and Yong 515). Even Shanghai, known to be the "most modern place in China" and the "cradle of the civilized drama movement" (Lee and Yong 107-108), only had its first Shakespeare performance, *The Merchant of Venice*, held in 1902 by students of St John's University (Lee and Yong 107-108), which is 35 years later than the performance of *Shylock* in Hong Kong.

Beatrice Lei suggests that Shakespeare's presence in Asia is often attributed to British colonization and Anglo-American cultural imperialism ("Paradox" 251). But this is not completely true in the context of Hong Kong, where British colonialism is not so much rejected as embraced. This distinctive psychological condition is noted by Tu Weiming (杜維明), "For the majority of Hong Kong residents, being Chinese as a British subject is ... arguably superior to being Chinese as a citizen of the People's Republic of China" (11). As I have mentioned earlier, Shakespeare is not merely confined to the entertainment for expatriates in Hong Kong. During the colonial era, three Shakespeare Festivals were organized by Hong Kongers from the 1950s to the 1980s (D. Wong, "Shakespeare" 68). This makes Hong Kong Shakespeare Festival preceding the

Shakespeare Festival in China by more than 30 years. While the Inaugural Shakespeare Festival was only held in Beijing and Shanghai in 1986;²² the First Shakespeare Festival was held in Hong Kong on 23 April 1954 by a Chinese drama group of the Sino-British Club, featuring a Cantonese Shakespeare play reading of *Romeo and Juliet* (D. Wong, “Shakespeare” 68). In the Second and Third Shakespeare Festivals, held in 1964 and 1984 respectively, Shakespeare’s plays were staged in a mixture of Cantonese and English. For example, to celebrate Shakespeare’s 400th birthday in the Second Shakespeare Festival in 1964, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Twelfth Night* were respectively staged in Cantonese and English. The third Shakespeare Festival in 1984 increased its repertoire to five performances. Besides again presenting *The Merchant of Venice* and *Twelfth Night*, parts of *Othello*, *Julius Caesar* and *Romeo and Juliet* were also staged, involving a total of eight drama groups and 18,600 participants (D. Wong, “Shakespeare” 68). Shakespeare drama was a “part of the repertoire of the Hong Kong Amateur Dramatic Club that was active in the 1860s and 1870s” (Panja, Michiko, Huang and Yong 516). The performance of Shakespeare by the club not only entertained British expatriates, but also brought a “touch of British culture to Hong Kong residents” (Panja, Michiko, Huang and Yong 516). Furthermore, the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre, established in 1977, regularly featured Shakespeare, with 11 plays performed in the 20 years up to the handover to China in 1997. Daniel Yang Shi-peng (楊世彭), its first artistic director, altogether directed six Shakespearean plays for the theatre company, including *The Merchant of Venice* in 1984, *Much Ado About Nothing* in 1990, and *King Lear* in 1993 among others (Yang, “Shakespeare” 80, 82). Yang categorises the

²² There were 28 productions in the repertoire of the Inaugural Shakespeare Festival in China (D. Wong, “Shakespeare” 64).

Shakespearean productions of the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre into three stages, namely early experimentations in the 1970s, more polished productions in the 1980s, and ambitious productions mounted by highly experienced theatre professionals, including himself, in the 1990s (“Shakespeare” 76).²³ In the first chapter of my thesis, I shall contest Yang’s assumption that Richard Ho’s *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* in 1977, the first play performed by the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre, is “of poor quality” due to extensive cuts (Yang, “Shakespeare” 76). Before taking up the position of an artistic director at the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre in 1983, Yang was a professor at the University of Colorado and a director of the Colorado Shakespeare Festival in America. He has an underlying belief that Westerners are more proficient than Chinese directors in the staging of Shakespeare. For example, when referring to Glen Watford and her British design colleagues’ production of *Romeo and Juliet* in 1980, he describes it as the “first example in the early history of the Repertory Theatre of a Shakespeare play being mounted by experienced professionals who really knew how to do the Bard’s works” (Yang, “Shakespeare” 77). Very often, he compares Hong Kong’s Shakespearean productions with the “standard” Western productions, and he also places priority on the perceived fidelity of the text. He dislikes Ho’s *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* partly because it is “quite different from the normal *Hamlet* productions that one sees on the English stage” (Yang, “Shakespeare” 76). He also has reservations about adapting

²³ According to Daniel Yang, the “early experimentations” of the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre in the 1970s included Richard Ho’s *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* (1977 & 1978), Chow Yung-ping’s *Macbeth* (1979), and Glen Watford’s *Romeo and Juliet* (1980). In addition, the “more polished productions” in the 1980s comprised of Daniel Yang’s *The Taming of the Shrew* (1982) and *The Merchant of Venice* (1984), Ying Ruo-cheng’s *Measure for Measure* (1986), Joanna Chan’s *Othello* (1986), and Cai Qin’s *Twelfth Night* (1988). Finally, the “ambitious productions” in the 1990s made up of Daniel Yang’s *Much Ado About Nothing* (1990), *King Lear* (1993), and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1997) (“Shakespeare” 76-83).

Western classics into the Chinese context, as he says, “[We] don’t force ourselves into doing this kind of thing just because we are a Chinese company residing in Hong Kong” (Yang, “The Hong” 195).

Daniel Yang, who was born in China, raised in Taiwan, and educated in America, served as the artistic director of the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre from 1983 to 1985, and subsequently from 1990 to 1995 (Yang, “The Hong” 191). In an interview with Samuel Leiter, editor of *Asian Theatre Journal* in 1993, Yang argued that the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre was not a very politically active theatre group due to the existence of censorship. For instance, he explained that if he were to do a play titled *Down with Deng Xiao-ping* (鄧小平),²⁴ the government would probably express concern (Yang, “The Hong” 200). Therefore, while there were plays that occasionally consisted of sensitive themes, most of the productions staged by the repertory group were apolitical. In my thesis, I very much wish to bring in socio-political Hong Kong productions of Shakespeare staged by local directors in the post-1997 period. To local directors bred and educated in Hong Kong like Hardy Tsoi and Jimmy Lee, Hong Kong is *not* just a temporary place or a stopover, but a place that they are very much concerned about. This has inspired them to respectively address their social and political concerns in the staging of Shakespearean plays like *Julius Caesar* (Chapter Three) and *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* (Chapter Four).

²⁴ Deng Xiao-ping was an influential political leader of the PRC from the late 1970s till his death in 1997. He had advocated the “one country, two systems” principle as the foundation of Hong Kong’s handover to China (Encyclopædia Britannica, “Deng”).

Furthermore, in spite of its vitality and its long history, it is rather disappointing to see Hong Kong Shakespeare still an orphaned child in the discourse of Asian Shakespeare. One of the few publications in this area is *Shakespeare Global/Local: The Hong Kong Imaginary in Transcultural Production*, a book written by Hong Kong scholars from 1997 to 1998, shortly after the handover of Hong Kong. Tam Kwok-kan, one of the editors of the book, argues that Shakespeare has transcended British heritage and has become part of the Hong Kong Chinese tradition (“Preface” viv). But Huang claims that Tam’s statement is only partly true, as she believes that Shakespeare “transcends his British heritage” because “Britain never colonised Hong Kong the way it did with India” (Panja, Michiko, Huang and Yong 517).²⁵ Quoting Mao Ze-dong (毛澤東)’s description of Hong Kong as a “semi-colony”, Huang argues that this unique historical backdrop informs Hong Kong’s performance culture in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Panja, Michiko, Huang and Yong 517). Another key researcher in Hong Kong Shakespeare is Adele Lee, whose research on “Teaching Shakespeare in Hong Kong” is part of the British Council’s “Shakespeare: A Worldwide Classroom” project (A. Lee, “Teaching”). Through workshops and online materials, she has worked with teachers, school curriculum designers and students in Hong Kong to explore in what ways the study of Shakespeare benefits students, how he is commonly taught, and what

²⁵ Camille Deprez has compared Hong Kong and Indian cinema in terms of their identity deconstruction and reconstruction in diaspora since the 1980s. I shall here highlight two comparisons that correspond to Hong Kong and India’s disparate post-colonial situations. First of all, the threat of the 1997 handover had “compelled many [Hong Kong] residents to join the ranks of the Chinese diaspora in Western countries” (Deprez 87). On the contrary, it is not because of political reality, but primarily economic reasons that many Indians had left for Africa, other parts of Asia at first, and the West later on (Deprez 87). Second, Hong Kongers and Indians hold differing perspectives towards the end of British colonial reign, as exemplified in Hong Kong and Indian films. Unlike Hong Kong films, Indian cinema is “not seized by fears of losing freedoms granted by British presence on its territory, but rather flaunts its pride over having won its independence” (Deprez 90) in 1947, where India emerged as an independent country (Deprez 90).

role Shakespeare plays in a new liberal arts education in Hong Kong (A. Lee, “Shakespeare and”). Rex Gibson argues that the study of Shakespeare should neither be ahistorical nor apolitical, with the focus limited to character, plot, and major themes, but it should take into account the social, political and cultural factors that have shaped Shakespeare (126). In line with Gibson’s assertion, Lee attempts to find out how the role and reception of Shakespeare has changed in the light of cultural, economic and political changes prompted by 1997 (A. Lee, “Shakespeare in”). However, she mainly focuses on the learning activities in Hong Kong classrooms, but not on any Hong Kong productions of Shakespeare. My research attempts to further her lines of study by offering a cultural and political reading of theatrical productions of Shakespeare’s plays in the neocolonial period of Hong Kong. It is indeed difficult to fit Hong Kong comfortably into the common strands of postcolonial studies, as the Hong Kong narrative neither follows Frantz Fanon’s discourse of describing colonialism as destructive and harmful to the mental health of the natives who were subjugated into colonies (250); nor does it comply with the studies of Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit who argue that Occidentalism is summoned to describe the hatred borne by the Orientals against the West (404). On the contrary, Howard Choy, a Hong Kong-bred academic, rightly proclaims that to many locals, the “postcolonial (re)turn is actually more a recolonization than a decolonization of the capitalist Cantonese city by the mainland Mandarin master” (53). He further quotes Michel Foucault’s saying, “One should totally and absolutely suspect anything that claims to be a return ... there is in fact no such thing as a return” (Choy 52).²⁶

²⁶ Lui Tai-lok argues that even after the handover, Hong Kongers were in a constant state of anxiety, and one of their greatest fears was that the existing institutional arrangements would be undermined with the onset of the communist style of social and political control after 1997 (90-91).

The post-1997 Hong Kong adaptation of Shakespearean plays, with specific reference to socio-political issues, is a topic that Asian Shakespeare scholarship has singularly failed to address. Hong Kong Shakespeare is often subsumed under the discourse of Chinese Shakespeare, against which I argue that Hong Kong Shakespeare is distinctive, should be viewed as a separate entity, and follows a narrative of its own. Otto Heim, a professor at the University of Hong Kong, has researched extensively in postcolonial writing, specifically in theatre and poetry (School of English, “Profile”). Heim distinguishes the function of Hong Kong Shakespeare from mainland Shakespeare, as he asserts that Hong Kong Shakespeare “[serves] to underline the identification of Western culture with Britishness and eventually to nurture the colony’s aspirations to metropolitan status” (“Introduction” xix). In contrast, mainland Shakespeare has traditionally been used to signify China’s relationship with the West, in terms of rivalry and recognition, thus Shakespeare in China serves as a “touching stone for the expression of Chinese cultural identity and political ideology” (Heim, “Introduction” xix). While Alexander Huang categorizes Hong Kong as one of the multiple ideological positions embodied by China, my endeavour is to distinguish them. The productions in my study thus embody a complicated relationship with China, either by viewing the “motherland” as a distant Other in Richard Ho’s *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, an absent yet powerful signifier in Hardy Tsoi’s *Shamshuipo Lear* and *Julius Caesar*, an aesthetic metaphor in Tang Shu-wing’s *Titus Andronicus 2.0*, or a satirical fable in Jimmy Lee’s *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*. Whereas James Brandon has categorised Asian Shakespeare into three main subsets – canonical Shakespeare, localized Shakespeare, and postmodern Shakespeare,²⁷ Shakespearean scholars have reservations about how far these

²⁷ According to James Brandon, canonical Shakespeare refers to “elite” or “high culture” Shakespeare that

classifications can be generalized (Gillies, Minami, Li and Trivedi 281). For instance, given the complexities of different countries in Asia, some critics disagree with the one-size-fits-all nature of Brandon's categories. Others argue that Brandon draws a close analogy between Chinese and Japanese Shakespeare, but due to political frictions of the two countries, it is faulty to push the analogy too far (Gillies, Minami, Li and Trivedi 266, 281). In addition, the implicit teleology of Brandon's thesis is contested by scholars, as they question how Asian Shakespeare can evolve from a localizing phase, to a canonical phase, and finally to an intercultural phase (Gillies, Minami, Li and Trivedi 280).

Recognizing the inadequacies of Brandon's categories, I propose that post-1997 Hong Kong Shakespeare corresponds to the political climate in the neocolonial period, the variously sinicizing, aestheticizing and explicitly socio-political productions of this time all commenting on aspects of Hong Kong's uneasy cultural and political circumstances. These features of local Shakespeares are not mutually exclusive; instead, they may overlap with each other. First of all, sinicized Shakespeare is represented by Richard Ho's *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, which is transposed to a particular period in ancient China. Second, aestheticized Shakespeare is signified by Tang Shu-wing's *Titus Andronicus 2.0*, since the content of Shakespeare's story is placed in a subservient position to its aesthetics of representation. Aestheticized Shakespeare is also one of the characteristics of Asian Shakespeare, as Kennedy and Yong argue that Asian performances tend to foreground the "embodied" or the "corporeal" over verbal

is translated from England, whereas localized Shakespeare attempts to hide foreign origins so that the audience are unaware that a "foreign" play is staged. In addition, postmodern or postcolonial Shakespeare is exhibited when Shakespeare's text is acknowledged on the one hand, and simultaneously the performance is also rooted in local culture and theatrical practices (3, 12, 18).

expression (“Introduction: Why” 17). Third, there are two further sub-categories of socio-politicized Shakespeare: one employing Shakespeare to reflect the livelihood of the lower and working classes in Hong Kong, and another appropriating Shakespeare to illustrate Hong Kong’s upper-middle classes trying to come to terms with the neocolonial government. The former subset of socio-politicised Shakespeare is represented by Hardy Tsoi’s *Shamshuiipo Lear*, in which the story of Hong Kong’s homeless characters superimposes upon the story of Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, and Tsoi appropriates the source text to comment on the poverty of Hong Kong. On the other hand, the latter subcategory of socio-politicised Shakespeare is signified by Jimmy Lee’s *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* and Tang Shu-wing’s *Macbeth*, whereby the educated classes of Hong Kong attempt to tame the uncivilized neo-coloniser and to continue their fight for democracy. Through analyzing the above post-1997 productions of Shakespeare, I wish to point out how Hong Kong’s social and political contexts are generated through Shakespeare’s works, and how the performance of Shakespeare generates a distinctive neocolonial Hong Kong identity. However, I must acknowledge certain limitations in my study. For instance, there are over 73 Shakespearean productions staged in post-1997 Hong Kong, but I am only able to examine 6 of such productions in detail in my thesis. Furthermore, I am *not* implying that all Hong Kong Shakespeare are socio-political in nature, as various directors of distinctive backgrounds have different artistic focuses in their productions.

IV. Methodology

My objective in this study is to offer a cultural materialist reading in the neocolonial context, within which Shakespeare productions are situated in Hong Kong. Jonathan Dollimore defines cultural materialism as “a combination of historical context, theoretical method, political commitment and textual analysis [which] offers the strongest challenge and has already contributed substantial work” (vii). While I realize that reading Hong Kong Shakespeare strictly in its Hong Kong context rather than in an internationally comparative one may seem reductive, that is, after all, the way in which most Hong Kong audiences read it themselves. It is also the interest of my thesis to focus on topical issues about Hong Kong Shakespeare. Furthermore, although some productions such as Tang Shu-wing’s *Titus Andronicus 2.0* and *Macbeth* might provide stimulating material in interculturalism and transculturalism,²⁸ my approach is to emphasize political context as a key factor in the adaptation or appropriation process of Shakespearean plays in Hong Kong. The performances echo the city’s political changes, for instance, from a colonial period in which Richard Ho’s *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* (1977) premiered, to a neocolonial period where Hardy Tsoi’s *Julius Caesar* (2012) and *Shamshuipo Lear* (2015) were staged, and after the pro-democracy Umbrella Movement, when Tang Shu-wing’s *Titus Andronicus 2.0* (2015), *Macbeth* (2015) and Jimmy Lee’s *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* (2015) were staged or restaged. Sandwiched between the colonial and the neocolonial, Hong Kong Shakespeare generates an independent narrative of its own through struggle and cultural negotiation. Dollimore further notes of the relationship between Shakespearean plays and the contexts of their production, “the relevant history is not just that of four hundred years old, for culture is made continuously and

²⁸ For more information about interculturalism in theatre, see Ric Knowles’s *Theatre and Interculturalism*.

Shakespeare's text is reconstructed, reappraised, reassigned all the time through diverse institutions in specific contexts. What the plays signify, how they signify, depends on the cultural field in which they are situated" (viii).

Moreover, I shall employ Homi Bhabha's notion of the "third space", which emerges from the process of cultural hybridity (Bhabha interviewed by Rutherford, "The third" 211). Bhabha asserts that hybridity is the "third space" that enables other positions to emerge, and one is not able to trace the two original moments from which the third emerges (Bhabha interviewed by Rutherford, "The third" 211). Likewise, the self-fashioning of a distinctive Hong Kong Shakespeare is influenced by both the ex-colonizer and the neo-colonizer, and thus the "third space" emerges as a result of cultural hybridity. Since Hong Kong was colonised by Britain for over a century, Shakespeare performances in Hong Kong exhibit a hybridity of Western and Chinese influences. As Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin argue, "Colonial masters imposed their value system through Shakespeare, and in response colonised peoples often answered back in Shakespearean accents" (7). As I have mentioned earlier, the development of Hong Kong Shakespeare parallels that of Indian Shakespeare, which is as Poonam Trivedi argues, fraught with ambiguities ("Relocating" 65). Dennis Kennedy also suggests that colonial authority is always ambiguous or double-edged ("Shakespeare Worldwide" 258). Shakespeare in India can either be upheld as a symbol of English superiority, or as an instigator of nationalism, as if the Indians had said, "We will learn your game of cricket and then beat you at it" ("Shakespeare Worldwide" 258). Similarly, Shakespeare in Hong Kong is also full of ambiguities and contradictions. In the colonial period, Shakespeare represented a symbol of Englishness, as Shakespearean plays were first performed for the expatriates in

Hong Kong, which reminded them of a distant home. At the same time, there were also Shakespearean plays performed in Cantonese, which is the dialect of Hong Kongers. These productions were mainly directed by two academics, namely Daniel Yang in the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre, and Vicki Ooi (黃清霞) in the Seals Players Foundation. Vicki Ooi and Jane Lai also founded the Hong Kong Shakespeare Society in the year of Hong Kong's handover in 1997 (K.M. Cheng 307). The Hong Kong Repertory Theatre was established in 1977, and up till 1997, it produced 159 plays, of which 82 were Western translated works, with 11 of them Shakespearean plays (Yang, "Shakespeare" 75). On the other hand, the Seals Players Foundation was founded in 1979 with the aim of promoting Western plays to the Hong Kong audience ("Seals"). A main characteristic of these productions is that they consider a faithful reproduction of Shakespeare's work as their main priority, which overrides any attempt to offer a commentary on the society of Hong Kong.

In the postcolonial era, Shakespeare continues its influence in Hong Kong and is employed as a means to improve students' English language standards, which are widely believed to have declined after 1997 (L.C.M. Lau, "A Fusion" 881). In 2003, Vicki Ooi started an arts education organization called Shakespeare4All that aims at training primary school students in Hong Kong to speak good English through the means of performing Shakespeare's plays ("Shakespeare4All"). On a university level, the Chinese Universities Shakespeare Festival (CUSF) began in 2005, which adopts the mission of promoting an appreciation for Shakespeare's works among university students in Hong Kong and China (Personal interview with Parker). I would argue that the setting up of Shakespeare4All and the CUSF partly resemble Hong Kongers' nostalgia for their

forsaken colonial identities. The Chinese Universities Shakespeare Festival, as suggested by Otto Heim, parallels the drama group called the “Masquers” which regularly performed Shakespearean plays in the colonial era, and was established by the British poet, Edmund Blunden, who chaired the English Department of the University of Hong Kong from 1953 to 1964 (xx). In other parts of Asia, such as Japan and Vietnam, the study of Shakespeare is too perceived as useful for the acquiring of functional English. For instance, Ken Chan and James Tink argue that the Ministry of Education in Japan consider that the study of Shakespeare can help Japanese students become global citizens by developing their knowledge of the English language, and also to increase their ability to interact with non-Japanese speakers (qtd. in Olive, “Shakespeare” 3). In addition, students in Vietnam believe that the learning of Shakespeare can enable them to acquire “moral values” and to know more about the “culture, literature and history of England” (Olive, “Perceptions” 80). Thus, Sarah Olive asserts that the Vietnamese students “[conceive] of Shakespeare as specifically English, as a form of linguistic, educational and cultural capital that would enable them to communicate transculturally” (“Perceptions” 80).

As my study aims to explore how Shakespearean adaptations and appropriations in Hong Kong directly or indirectly speak to Hong Kong society across historical and cultural boundaries, my primary concern is not with the faithful productions of Shakespeare by directors such as Daniel Yang and Vicki Ooi; but in particular, post-1997 productions that employ Shakespeare as a metaphor in commenting on the social and political issues that arose in neocolonial Hong Kong. This draws us to Homi Bhabha’s notion of mimicry, which reinforces the binary structure of signification under the

colonial and postcolonial circumstances (Massai 5). Bhabha asserts, “Mimicry is a sign of double articulation ... which ‘appropriates’ the ‘Other’ as it visualizes power” (“Of” 126). Loomba and Orkin also discuss the potential dangers of hybridity, which can enable postcolonial subjects to “subvert the binaries, oppositions and rigid demarcations imposed by colonial discourse” (66). The negotiation of such in-betweenness of identity, pulled by forces from former and current colonisers, deserves much exploration in carving the third space of cultural hybridity in Hong Kong Shakespeare.

The choice of my six Shakespearean productions in this thesis is based on the selection criteria to encompass various prominent Hong Kong playwrights and directors, and also a variety of theatre companies, either government-funded or self-financed. Some of the productions aim at local spectators only; hence they include lots of social and political contexts in Hong Kong that outsiders may not be able to comprehend fully. These productions include Hardy Tsoi’s *Shamshuipo Lear*, *Julius Caesar* and Jimmy Lee’s *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*. On the other hand, other productions such as Tang Shu Wing’s *Titus Andronicus 2.0*, *Macbeth* and Richard Ho’s *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* aim at both local and overseas spectatorship. Kennedy argues that foreign language productions of Shakespeare, while missing the full value of the verse, explore scenographic and physical modes more openly than their Anglophone counterparts, thus often redefining the meaning of the plays (“Introduction” 6). For instance, *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* transforms *Hamlet* through a sinicized setting in ancient China, and the ending of the play also displays an aestheticized sword fight between Liu Huan (劉桓) (Hamlet) and Li Ru Long (李如龍) (Laertes). Tang’s *Titus Andronicus 2.0* also incorporates non-verbal aspects of expression, such as the transposition of space, body

movement, facial expression, eye movement, breathing, sound, and the hitting of one's body (Tang, "The Presentation"; *my trans.*).²⁹ Like other interculturalists who adopt Indian techniques of yoga in their productions (Loomba 124), Tang employs deep breathing and the uttering of the "om" sound in depicting the aftermath of violence in the play. Furthermore, I have considered the year in which each production is staged when deciding upon my selection of Shakespearean performances in this study. With the exception of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* which has been staged in both the colonial and neo-colonial periods, all the other productions that I am exploring were enacted in the post-1997 period; and most of them are performed after a significant political movement in Hong Kong – the pro-democracy Umbrella Movement in 2014. Most of the studies of Shakespearean productions are based on my own experience of the live performances, while the rest are evaluated through video recordings of the performances provided by the directors. I have also conducted interviews with the four directors and three playwrights concerned in my study. In particular, I have interviewed Lee Heung-sing (李向昇), the main actor of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* in 2012, to record his perceptions towards the difference between his performances in Mandarin in the neocolonial period, and the première of the play in Cantonese in 1977. The textual references of the productions are based upon my translations of the unpublished scripts, which the directors have kindly lent me and have permitted my usage of in this thesis.

In theorizing whether my selected Shakespearean performances are adaptations or appropriations, Julie Sanders' theories will be adopted, as she argues that adaptation

²⁹ Recording of Tang Shu Wing's speech on "The Presentation of Classical Revenge" (復仇經典的演繹), delivered on September 3, 2015 at Hong Kong City Hall Theatre.

signals a relationship with the informing source text, whereas an appropriation indicates “a more decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain” (26). By Sanders’ definition, my first two chapters illustrate three adaptations of Shakespeare, including Ho’s *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, Tang’s *Titus Andronicus 2.0* and *Macbeth*. In contrast, Tsoi’s *Julius Caesar* and *Shamshuiipo Lear*, together with Lee’s *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*, have appropriated Shakespeare’s works to a new Hong Kong context. This indicates a postmodern tendency, as observed by Tom Hoenselaars, to make Shakespeare “fit” new cultural and political situations, which indicates a more liberated intercourse with canonical Shakespeare (8). On a similar note, Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier explain that the Latin word for adaptation is to fit to a new context, in which recontextualization is an important part of the process (3). Thus the adaptation of Shakespeare is to make it “fit” for new cultural contexts and different political ideologies from his age (Sanders 46). In the latter two chapters of my thesis, under the context of an increasingly censored theatrical environment, I will explore the unspeakable messages that Tsoi and Lee attempt to convey through the staging of Shakespeare. Moreover, I shall be employing Geoffrey Wagner’s two broad categories of adaptation throughout my analysis of Hong Kong Shakespeare. Wagner sees adaptations as engaged to different extents in transposition and in commentary (222-223). While transposition refers to a source text being transposed to a new medium, with the “minimum of apparent interference” (Wagner 222), commentary refers to an “original [being] taken and either purposely or inadvertently altered in some aspect” (Wagner 223), which is also called a “re-emphasis or re-structure” (Wagner 223). These terms are

particularly helpful in looking at the different changes to Shakespeare's texts made by different Hong Kong directors.

V. Chapter Summaries

Chapter One

The chapters in this thesis are arranged from the pro-China sinicization in Richard Ho's *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* to the most openly critical and direct form of socio-political critique in Jimmy Lee's *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* in order to showcase the varying responses of Hong Kongers in the face of encroachment from China. While the plays in my thesis are selected due to their socio-political themes that comment on post-97 Hong Kong, the progression from Ho to Lee is *not* simply tracing a narrative of an emergent Hong Kong identity that is defined by hostility to China. Instead, the discussion of the Shakespearean adaptations aim to illustrate that Hong Kong Shakespeare is an independent narrative and should not be subsumed under mainland Shakespeare. The plays in my thesis only represent the strand of Hong Kong Shakespeare that is socio-politicised, which signify the various strategies that the directors have adopted to deal with the neo-colonizer. Chapter One discusses Richard Ho's *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, which is adapted from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and is an interesting play in that its various stages of production have spanned from the colonial times to the neocolonial. It premiered in the Cantonese dialect in Hong Kong in 1977 and 1978, then it toured to Vancouver in 1980. After the handover of Hong Kong, *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* was restaged in England in 2009, employing a cast of professional actors from the Beijing

Repertory Theatre who spoke Mandarin, the official language of China. Finally, in 2010 and 2012, the play was staged in Hong Kong with university students who came from mainland China and who spoke Mandarin.

The change in the language of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* before and after 1997 reveals the complex linguistic situation in neocolonial Hong Kong, in which Cantonese and Mandarin compete for different definitions of prestige and privilege. The increasing ties between Hong Kong and China mean that the language of the new coloniser, Mandarin, gradually gains importance over the local Hong Kong dialect, Cantonese. This has led to resistance from those who seek to defend the right of self-expression in the city's linguistic heritage. As such, language becomes a vehicle for cultural domination to impose identity difference between the colonizer and the colonized.

First adapted and staged in the colonial era, *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* depicts China as the distant Other. The play is repositioned into the period of Five Dynasties, and Ten Kingdoms in ancient China, which was roughly in the tenth century. In the colonial era, Chinese history lessons taught in Hong Kong schools focused upon the history of ancient China rather than on the modern period, since it was deemed easier for British colonizers to control their colonised subjects if the more recent history of colonization was kept off the syllabus. Therefore, the displacement of China onto an ancient period in *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* denotes the psychology of Hong Kongers in the pre-1997 period. Ien Ang proposes a diasporic paradigm, in which Chineseness is an “open and indeterminate signifier whose meanings are constantly renegotiated and rearticulated” (287).

Chapter Two

Chapter Two analyses the configuration of China as an aesthetic metaphor in Tang Shu-wing's *Titus Andronicus 2.0* (2015). Tang's *Titus Andronicus* first premiered in Hong Kong in 2008, then it was staged at Shakespeare's Globe as part of the Globe to Globe Festival in 2012. Just as Julie Sanders regards adaptation as "frequently involved in offering commentary on a source text [partly by] voicing the silenced and marginalized" (18), Adele Lee interprets Tang's *Titus Andronicus* as a critique of Communist China, highlighting Hong Kong Chinese resistance to being absorbed by the mainland, during and ever since the 1997 handover ("Titus" 209). When the adaptation was restaged in 2009 as *Titus Andronicus 2.0*, it had also invited a political commentary on Hong Kong society, as the muted and mutilated Lavinia symbolizes the powerlessness of Hong Kong people facing the violence from the policemen in the Umbrella Movement in 2014. In many regards Shakespeare is political, as Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin note, "Shakespeare is the site for colonial and postcolonial encounters, but these encounters cannot be understood without reference to specific social, political and institutional histories" (7). Shakespeare performances in Hong Kong have powerfully echoed the dynamic political change, for example, the transfer of sovereignty and the fight for universal suffrage in the Umbrella Movement. The cross-border and transcultural journey of Tang's *Titus Andronicus* and *Titus Andronicus 2.0* alludes to the changing political climate of Hong Kong. *Titus Andronicus* was first staged in Hong Kong in 2008, and then it was restaged as *Titus Andronicus 2.0* in 2009. Subsequently, Tang staged *Titus Andronicus* in London in 2012, which was considerably changed from the première of the

production in 2008, and was influenced by *Titus Andronicus 2.0*. *Titus Andronicus 2.0* was again re-run in Hong Kong in 2015. Tang's latest Shakespearean play, *Macbeth*, which also explores themes of power and usurpation, premiered at London's Globe Theatre in the summer of 2015, before its restaging in Hong Kong in March 2016. The international touring of Tang's Shakespearean plays confirm Dennis Kennedy's creation of the term, the "Global Spectator", where he argues that nobody can own Shakespeare, not because his works are transcendent, but because they have reached a high level of global and varied acceptance that they can no longer be contained ("Shakespeare and" 64). He further contends that "Shakespeare is of course part of history in Great Britain and Ireland and North America and Australia too, and has often been made part of larger political and philosophic currents" (Kennedy, "Introduction" 4).

Chapter Three

Chapter Three discusses the emergence of a new Hong Kong identity in Hardy Tsoi's *Shamshuipo Lear*. The play is transported into Shamshuipo, one of the poorest districts in Hong Kong, and compares the predicaments of the homeless people in Hong Kong with that of King Lear. However, traces of Shakespeare's *King Lear* are largely absent in Tsoi's appropriation of Shakespeare's play, and this reminds me of Dennis Kennedy's argument of "Shakespeare without Shakespeare", which speaks to the "disappropriation – an appropriation in which Shakespeare virtually disappears" (qtd. in Trivedi, "Reading" 57).

Perhaps Tsoi's plays are more about Hong Kong than about Shakespeare. To Tsoi, Shakespeare is merely functional, as he appropriates Shakespeare's plays to illustrate the social and political problems of Hong Kong. This coincides with Kennedy's observation that Shakespeare's plays are often appropriated drastically to fit the distinct needs of disparate cultural circumstances ("Shakespeare Worldwide" 252). Again exploring the issue of Hong Kong's subjectivity, Tsoi's *Shamshuipo Lear* is inter-related to the ending of *Julius Caesar*, which was also directed by Tsoi earlier in 2012. Both plays illustrate Tsoi's constant attempts to appropriate Shakespeare in order to present the living circumstances of the poorest people situated at the bottom layer of Hong Kong society. While Tsoi has been involved in the making of Hong Kong theatre from the colonial era onwards, having been the arts administrator at the Chinese University of Hong Kong from 1981 to 2009, his primary concern has always been to reflect society through the means of theatre. Quoting Shakespeare's words, Tsoi believes that the function of theatre should be like "holding the mirror up to nature" (*StandNews*, "Shamshuipo"; *my trans.*). He further criticizes the colonial government of Hong Kong for adopting a conciliatory approach towards theatre, where the social function of Hong Kong theatre was minimized, but the entertainment and consumerism functions of theatre were maximized (*Zi*; *my trans.*). In fact, there has never been a very explicit cultural policy in Hong Kong, as the colonial government feared that a state policy would inevitably promote Chinese culture or national consciousness (Luk, "Post-Colonial" 151-152). The ending of Tsoi's *Julius Caesar* in 2012 is titled "la dolce vita", which satirizes the "good life" in contemporary Hong Kong. While the image of China is absent throughout the entire play, it appears as a powerful signifier in the ending, whereby muted characters gather to commemorate the

June Fourth Massacre in Tiananmen Square, Beijing in 1989,³⁰ and to protest against the neocolonial government on the first day of July, which marks the handover day of Hong Kong from Britain to China.³¹ By comparing similar social problems in Rome and that in postcolonial Hong Kong, the staging of *Shamshuipo Lear* and *Julius Caesar* have helped to shape and form a distinctive Hong Kong Shakespeare, and in turn, a unique Hong Kong identity.

Chapter Four

Finally, Chapter Four establishes the necessity of considering Hong Kong's counter discourse to China's centrism in Jimmy Lee's *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*. The play questions Shakespeare's surrogate parent, which bears the name of China. Deviating from the usual productions of *The Taming of the Shrew* that merely comment on gender politics, Lee's *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* comments on *both* gender and politics, as it appropriates the source text's central difficult marriage as an allegory for the Hong Kong-China relationship. It is intriguing to compare Tang's *Titus Andronicus 2.0* with Lee's *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*, since both comment on the political situation in Hong Kong in different ways, the former metaphorically, and the latter in direct confrontation. Unlike Tang Shu-wing Theatre Studio which relies heavily on

³⁰ On June 4, 1989, China's Communist Party unleashed the People's Liberation Army on pro-democracy protesters camped in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, which resulted in an unknown number of deaths, widely believed to be in the thousands. Until now, the Chinese government has refused to mark the occasion, and the mentioning of the massacre remains a taboo to people living in mainland China (Killalea, "Tiananmen").

³¹ This protest on the first of July has become an annual event since 2003, where half a million Hong Kong people protested against the government's planned implementation of Article 23 in the Basic Law, which if enacted, would largely circumscribe the freedoms of speech and demonstration in Hong Kong (*South China Morning Post*, "July").

government funding for its operation, Big Stage, the small-sized repertory company that Lee has established since 2009, receives no government subsidies at all. [REDACTED].

[REDACTED]. He also expresses that he is upset about the current political climate in Hong Kong, and that he intentionally appropriates Katherina the shrew as China, whereas Petruchio is allegorical of Hong Kong who has to tame the wealthy yet uncivilized present coloniser (Personal interview with J. Lee). Moreover, the characters of Katherina and Bianca in *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* take on the symbolic names of Man Zyu (文珠) and Gam Zyu (金珠) respectively, which rhyme with democracy and gold in Cantonese. Will Hong Kong people, embracing the economic benefits that China has endowed on us, sacrifice our fight for democracy and universal suffrage? This split identity of Hong Kongers is displayed in Lee's appropriation of Shakespeare's play, whereby humour is used as a passive means of resistance against the domineering China. There is a continuous process of an in-between mixture of colonialism, nationality and identity. It is in such a fragmented sense of identity that Hong Kong is transforming into a neocolonial city.

Chapter One

Contesting the concept of “China”:

Richard Ho’s *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* in neocolonial Hong Kong

I. Introduction

1977 was a significant year for Hong Kong theatre, as the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre (HKRT) (香港話劇團) was established, thus marking the professionalism of Hong Kong theatre in terms of system and performance (Fong, “Hong” 160; *my trans.*). Sponsored by the Urban Council of the colonial government in Hong Kong, the founding of the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre corresponded to the economic boom of the city during the 1970s and 80s, where local people’s educational levels were raised with the government’s implementation of a nine-year free and compulsory education programme in 1979 (P.K. Cheung, “China” 146; *my trans.*).³² In 1977, Richard Ho Man-wui (何文匯) also adapted *Hamlet* into *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* (王子復仇記), the first professional Shakespearean production performed in Cantonese, staged by the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre (D.S.P. Yang, “Shakespeare” 76). Between 30 December 1977 and 22 January 1978, *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* was staged in ten performances at the City Hall Theatre, the top theatre venue in the territory at that time (D.S.P. Yang, “Shakespeare” 76).

³² The Hong Kong Repertory Theatre remained government sponsored until 2001, when it changed into an independent-running company and was registered as a charitable organization (Fong, “Hong” 157).

Richard Ho, in the great tradition of the Shakespearean actor-manager, took on the roles of adaptor, director and principal actor for *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, in which he adapted Shakespeare's source text into an ancient period of China, namely that of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms era (五代十國) (907 – 979). His characters also acquire Chinese names, for instance, Hamlet becomes Liu Huan (劉桓), and Ophelia is renamed as Li Ru-fei (李如菲) (Ho 22). I argue that Ho's decision to offer a sinicized adaptation of *Hamlet* is related to his educational background and his professional career. Ho obtained his bachelor and master's degrees from the Arts Faculty at the University of Hong Kong in 1969 and 1972 respectively. He then continued to pursue his doctorate at the University of London (Ho n.p.; *my trans.*), where he wrote his dissertation on the poetry of the Tang dynasty in China (Personal interview with Ho). Upon graduation in 1975, Ho taught Chinese at the East Asian Department of the University of Wisconsin–Madison in America, and he later returned to Hong Kong in 1976 to teach at the Department of Chinese Language and Literature at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) (Ho 18), where he was also the Registrar at the university (D.S.P. Yang, “Shakespeare” 76). In 1987, Ho was awarded the role of Justice of the Peace by the colonial government for his significant contributions towards the society and his dedication towards community service (HKSAR government, “Justices”). His expertise in Chinese language and culture thus facilitated his adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* into the sinicized cultural context. I propose that this form of adaptation helped to bridge the distance between the Hong Kong audience and Shakespeare's works, at a time when a majority of Hong Kong people were not familiar with his plays.

Linda Hutcheon outlines two reasons why adapters choose to adapt a particular text: as a tribute to the Bard, or to supplant canonical cultural authority (93). However, I would argue that such Western theories of adaptation do not entirely fit the discussion of Hong Kong adaptations of Shakespeare (among others), because Hutcheon assumes an audience familiar with the works of Shakespeare, which is not true in the case of Hong Kong. In my interview with Ho, he explains that even now, the local audience is *not* familiar with Shakespeare's plays, just as was the case in the 1970s (Personal interview with Ho). In fact, all the four Hong Kong directors in my study are fully aware that their target audience is *not* familiar with Shakespearean plays; therefore all of them employ various methods in an attempt to bridge the gap between Shakespeare's works and their local audiences. In *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, the method Ho adopted was to recreate a Chinese cultural background for *Hamlet*, with which the local audience could resonate and identify. I argue this is quite unconventional during the colonial era of Hong Kong, a time when faithful translations of Western plays dominated Hong Kong's theatre scene (Fong, "Voices" 102; *my trans.*). Gilbert Fong Chee-fun (方梓勳) categorizes Hong Kong's staging of translated plays emerging from this period as the "voices of the colonised" (被殖民者的話語) (Fong, "Voices" 102; *my trans.*). He also cites Homi Bhabha's concept of "mimicry", as Hong Kong playwrights and directors in the colonial period attempted to mimic the content and style of Western plays (Fong, "Voices" 102; *my trans.*). Hence it was both a large and a necessary step for Ho to reject this dominant mode of mimicry for his sinicized adaptation of *Hamlet*, as he explains in his rationale:

I think that it is entirely impractical to stage a translated performance of *Hamlet*, not only will the lines be laughable, but also after the translation,

the scenes will become very boring to the audience. If Chinese people wear Danish clothing of the medieval times, and recite some translated lines that the audience cannot resonate with, then this staging cannot reflect the advantages of Shakespeare's works. Due to the unattractive lines [after translation], this will reflect that the [translator] is unaware of the "sense of time".

(Ho 15; *my trans.*)



Figure 1: Sinicized setting of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, photograph © Tam Kam-chi, Arts Centre of Dance and Martial Arts.

Richard Ho has stated explicitly that his adaptation of *Hamlet* is not merely a translation, yet Hong Kong scholars still tend to be ambiguous in classifying his

production. For example, Thomas Luk Yun-tong (陸潤棠) regards the production as “adaptation/translation” (“Adaptations” 9), and Shelby Chan Kar-yan (陳嘉恩) oscillates between the two terms when referring to *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* (“Identity” 14, 65, 78).³³ The reason for such inconsistencies when classifying Ho’s production may well be due to the difficulty in distinguishing adaptation from translation. Hugo Vandal-Sirois and Georges Bastin assert that “all translators do adaptation in their work” (21); and they further quote Yves Gambier’s argument that many translation procedures, such as omission and condensation, are adaptation (23). I, however, regard *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* as more of an adaptation than a translation. Ho first adapted *Hamlet* into a sinicized version in 1970, and he later revised it in 1977 for staging of the play (Personal interview with Ho). While Ho has consulted Shakespeare’s source text and other contemporary Chinese translations such as that of Liang Shi-qiu (梁實秋) (Personal interview with Ho), his role as an adapter overrides that of a translator. Katja Krebs argues that translation offers “sameness”, or striving for equivalence, which is distinct from adaptation (44). In other words, adaptation highlights difference. *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* aims not at “sameness” but difference from the source text, hinting that his play is not simply a mimicry of the coloniser’s productions. Like the Shakespearean productions of other Hong Kong theatre directors that I am discussing in this thesis, Ho’s adaptation of *Hamlet* intends to distinguish itself from British productions of the same play. At the outset, he changed the English title of *Hamlet* into *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, which distinguishes his adaptation from the theatre translations in Hong

³³ At times, Shelby Chan regards *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* as exemplifying “theatre translation” (“Identity” 14), but in other instances she classifies the production as the “first sinified drama adaptation in Hong Kong” (“Identity” 78).

Kong that conventionally employ the same English title as the source text (S. Chan, “Identity” 104 fn 3). Shelby Chan suggests that Ho’s renaming probably signifies a “self-proclaimed independence as a text in its own right” (S. Chan, “Identity” 104 fn 3). In Ho’s own words, he has, “in the name of adaptation, deleted and amended the source text to tighten the plot and to add a touch of Chineseness” (Ho 15; *my trans.*). This results in the performance being condensed from approximately four hours into two hours. Concurring with Mark Shuttleworth and Moira Cowie’s definition of adaptation, adapters make “considerable changes ... in order to make the text more suitable for a specific audience ... or for the particular purpose behind the translation” (3).

Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance is the *only* production in my study that has been staged in both the British colonial era and in the neocolonial period after 1997. In the post-1997 period, Hong Kong theatre practitioners showed a preference for staging Shakespeare’s tragedies rather than his comedies, with reasons I have outlined in the introduction.³⁴ Among the tragedies that were staged in Hong Kong during the neocolonial period, *Hamlet* proved to be the most frequently mounted, appearing 11 times under various local directors (Ho 26). Of these productions, *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* was the most popular choice among Hong Kong directors, and was staged five times in the post-handover period, as well as twice beforehand.³⁵ Additionally, it has also toured Vancouver, Canada, in 1980 and Stratford-upon-Avon, United Kingdom, in 2009. However, Hong Kong scholars have customarily focused on analyzing the productions of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* during the British colonial era, and there is a

³⁴ See my introduction, pp. 18-19 and also appendix 1.

³⁵ See appendix 1.

lack of critical attention given to the performances staged in the neocolonial period.³⁶ Daniel Yang Shi-pang (楊世彭), appointed as the first artistic director of the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre in 1983 (P.K. Cheung, “China” 146; *my trans.*), criticizes *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* for being unfaithful to Shakespeare’s source text. He deems that the “cutting was very extensive” (D.S.P. Yang, “Shakespeare” 276), and Ho’s adaptation was “quite different from traditional *Hamlet* productions one sees on the English stage” (D.S.P. Yang, “Shakespeare” 276). On the other hand, Shelby Chan does not think that “infidelity” to the source text is a problem for *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*. With a particular focus on the 1977 and 1978 versions, she draws the conclusion that *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* is a “unique adaptation of a cultural Britain to a cultural China, whereby the cultural includes the historical but shies away from the political, economic or geographical adaptation” (“Identity” 103). However, both Yang and Chan have ignored the performances of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* after 1997, which as I will show are markedly different from the earlier productions in terms of performance language and the cultural identity of the actors. Except for *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* in 2007 hosted by the Greater China Culture Global Association (大中華文化全球協會) (Ho 149; *my trans.*), which retained the performance language as Cantonese and starred local Cantonese television actors, all other productions in the neocolonial period have been staged in Mandarin and featured actors of mainland Chinese origin. This chapter will discuss the significance of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* in the context of the post-1997 period in Hong Kong, and I will also examine how his sinicized adaptation

³⁶ Due to the absence of video recordings for the *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* productions during the British colonial period, Hong Kong scholars can only rely on Ho’s script, performance reviews and other critical analysis, which may not be very comprehensive in leading to their conclusions.

influences our understanding of Hong Kong Shakespeare. As *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* is the *only* production in my study that traverses the British colonial period into the neocolonial period, analyzing the differences between productions in these two periods will help to illustrate the changing faces of Hong Kong Shakespeare. To achieve this goal, I have studied video recordings of the productions in 2009, 2010 and 2012. Furthermore, I have conducted interviews with the playwright, Richard Ho; the director of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* in 2010 and 2012, Hardy Tsoi Sik-cheong (蔡錫昌); and actor Lee Heung-sing (李向昇) in order to make sense of the changes made to the production in the neocolonial period.

II. Sinicized Shakespeare in a non-Hong Kong setting

To begin this section, I first wish to broaden James Brandon's discussion of Asian Shakespeare by incorporating post-1997 Shakespeare in Hong Kong, which does not fit neatly into the three categories that he has formulated for Asian Shakespeare, namely canonical Shakespeare, localized Shakespeare, and postmodern Shakespeare.³⁷ On the one hand, Brandon's categories are to some extent useful in that they help to distinguish canonical Shakespeare from non-canonical Shakespeare, as he asserts that the "canonical Shakespeare expresses the single view of the world that is European, specifically English" (9). On the other hand, Brandon has not justified his claim that the canonical Shakespeare reflects a particularly English world view. He also states that a canonical translation leads to a canonical performance (Brandon 7). I wish to put forward the notion that all the

³⁷ This is detailed in my introduction, p. 45.

Shakespearean productions that I am analyzing in my thesis derive from non-canonical translations, for they are either adaptations or appropriations of the source text. In addition, Brandon's category of localized Shakespeare is too narrow to align with Shakespearean productions that are situated in ancient China, such as Richard Ho's *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* and Tang Shu-wing's *Macbeth*. Brandon defines localized Shakespeare as hiding its foreign origins and transposing Shakespeare's stories into local settings (12). Nevertheless, Ho's transposition of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* into China's Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period, and Tang's transposition of *Macbeth* into a non-specific period in ancient China, do not align with Brandon's definition of localized Shakespeare. Like Alexander Huang, Brandon fails to acknowledge the disparity between Hong Kong and mainland Shakespeare, as he argues that the "canonical Shakespeare reached east Asia completely apart from the British colonial enterprise," and he also implies that China has never been colonised (5). In his article on "Some Shakespeare(s) in some Asia(s)", Brandon uses the word "Chinese" with reference to "Chinese Shakespeare" 16 times, while "Hong Kong" only appears twice, which indicates that he might have assimilated Hong Kong Shakespeare into Chinese Shakespeare. Furthermore, his article was published in 1997, the year when Hong Kong's sovereignty was returned to China after 156 years of British colonial rule. Therefore inevitably, Brandon *only* depicts Hong Kong Shakespeare in the colonial period, where he describes Hong Kong Shakespeare as "canonical" with reference solely to professional troupes from England performing Shakespeare with local British amateurs in Hong Kong (Brandon 3). This again returns to my argument that Hong Kong differs from China

politically, socially, and culturally,³⁸ and on a similar note, Hong Kong Shakespeare is aesthetically different from mainland Shakespeare.

The first category of sinicized Shakespeare is represented by *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, which is situated in the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period in ancient China, around the 10th century. Tu Wei-ming argues that China does not necessarily equate with the political authority of the PRC, as China can refer to political China, economic China and cultural China (27-28). Ho's choice of adapting *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* in 1977 into an ancient period in China, rather than situating it in a modern Chinese setting, is suggestive on two levels. First, it symbolizes the detachment of the colonised Hong Kong people towards the "motherland" China during the British colonial era. In this period, Chinese history lessons in Hong Kong schools focused upon the history of ancient China rather than the modern period.³⁹ Even till now, it is reported that Hong Kong students have poor knowledge of modern Chinese history, with some mistaking former PRC leader Mao Ze-dong as a woman in the Diploma of Secondary Education examination (*South China Morning Post*, "Hong").⁴⁰ Secondly, it symbolizes the affinity of Hong Kong theatre directors towards a cultural China for aesthetic considerations (S. Chan, "Equivocating" 428; *my trans.*). Chan argues that the configuration of China in *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* is merely for aesthetic purposes, which is manifested in the display of ancient Chinese costumes, the sword fighting, or the recital of classical Chinese poetry. It has little to do with the search for roots or with the

³⁸ See my introduction, pp. 10-12.

³⁹ See my introduction, p. 55.

⁴⁰ Due to Hong Kong students' poor knowledge of Chinese history, the Hong Kong government had decided to make Chinese history a compulsory subject for Form 1 to Form 3 secondary school students in 2018 (*South China Morning Post*, "Hong").

revival of Chineseness in a socio-political sense (S. Chan, “Equivocating” 428; *my trans.*). In the *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* productions of 2010 and 2012, which were both directed by Hardy Tsoi, the actors danced and engaged in acrobatics to celebrate the wedding of Liu Hong-xi (劉弘希) (Claudius) and Queen Ma (馬氏) (Gertrude) in act 1, scene 2, titled “Secrets in the Court” (牆茨中菁). This was a directorial decision added by Tsoi, which was non-existent in Ho’s text. It supplemented the dance performed by Li Ru-fei (李如菲) (Ophelia) in act 1, scene 3 of the production, which was an authorial decision added by Ho, as he felt that Ophelia did not play a major part in Shakespeare’s text, and that he would like to enhance her role in his adaptation (Personal interview with Ho). However, the dance that Li Ru-fei performed in the scene titled “Words of Advice at Parting” (臨別贈言) does not in any way correspond to the delivery of her lines in the conversation with her brother, Li Ru-long (李如龍). Therefore, the display of Chinese acrobatics and dance in *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* in the productions of 2010 and 2012 had become more of a visual spectacle than of substantial meaning. The intentional production of it is also self-orientalizing to fulfill Westerners’ cultural taste of theatrical productions. In 2009, The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, for the first time in history, invited the cultural department of the PRC to stage a Shakespearean play in Stratford-upon-Avon to celebrate the 445th anniversary of Shakespeare’s birth (*Apple Daily*, “Adapted”; *my trans.*). The PRC government chose *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* to be performed, an adaptation that had premièred more than 30 years ago in colonial Hong Kong (*Apple Daily*, “Adapted”; *my trans.*). There are profound implications as to why China chose a Hong Kong Shakespearean adaptation from 1977 to represent Chinese Shakespeare to the West, which I shall elaborate further in the next section. While the

image of ancient China as depicted in *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* resembled Hong Kong people's detachment from the "motherland" in the colonial era, on the other hand, it fulfilled Westerners' imagination of the Orient as it appropriated elements from ancient China. The staging of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* in 2009 at Stratford-upon-Avon by professional actors from the National Theatre Company of China further aestheticized the depiction of Chineseness by adding elements from Peking opera. This only appeared in the production in Stratford, and not in other *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* productions that took place in post-1997 Hong Kong. For example, in act 2, scene 4, titled "Indirect Accusations" (指桑罵槐), when Li Ru-fei returned to Liu Huan (Hamlet) the hairpin that he has earlier bestowed on her, she employed some stylized opera gestures when addressing him. Moreover, in act 2, scene 5, titled "Acting before the Emperor" (御前優孟), the actor who adopts the role of Liu Hong-xi (Claudius) in "The Mousetrap" scene had his face painted white, the white mask in Peking opera signifying the villain (Blundy, "Face"). The production also incorporated some Western actors from England into the staging of aestheticized Chineseness, which fostered the purpose of East-West cultural exchanges, as intended by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in inviting a Chinese delegation to celebrate Shakespeare's birthday in 2009 (*Apple Daily*, "Adapted"; *my trans.*). This was done by involving some Western actors in the Chinese dance just before The Mousetrap scene, which signifies the universal language of dance. The decorative additions of Chinese elements, namely the stylistic gestures and face painting from Peking opera, and the Chinese dance fulfilled Westerners' imagination of the Orient and aestheticized Chineseness.



Figure 2: Display of acrobatics in the ‘Mousetrap’ scene, photograph © Tam Kam-chi, Arts Centre of Dance & Martial Arts.

I propose that the setting of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period in *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* gestures towards an apolitical China, exotically distant from the political or communist China that Hong Kong people are much afraid of (S. Chan, “Equivocating” 423; *my trans.*). The cultural China in *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* manifests on four levels: the transposition of geographical locations, the depiction of time, the employment of Chinese historical or literary figures, and the insertion of classical Chinese poetry. First, Western geographical locations in the source text are transposed to places on the ancient Chinese map. For example, Liu Huan (劉桓) (Hamlet) is sent by his uncle, Liu Hong-xi (劉弘希) (Claudius) to the Tang Kingdom (唐國) instead of England in *Hamlet*. There are also some instances in the lines of *Hamlet*:

Sword of Vengeance that are almost identical with the source text, except for the transplantation of certain geographical names into ancient China. Let us consider the opening scene of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, where Hamlet's friend, Horatio, and Marcellus, a sentinel, converse about the appearance of the ghost:

Marcellus: Is it not like the king?

Horatio: As thou art to thyself.

Such was the very armour he had on

When he the ambitious *Norway* combated

So frowned he once, when in an angry parle

He smote the sledded *Polacks* on the ice.

'Tis strange.

(*Ham.* 1.1.57-63; *my italics*)⁴¹

Then let us compare these lines in the source text with the conversation between the military commander, Ma Wei (馬威), and the minister, He Su (賀素) in Ho's adaptation:

Ma Wei: Do you think he looks like the late emperor?

He Su: Exactly the same. The armour on him was definitely what the late emperor wore when he invaded the *Chu Kingdom* (楚國). The anger on

⁴¹ Quotations from *Hamlet* are taken from *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, edited by Stanley Wells, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

his face was the expression he had when he led a troop to conquer the city walls of the *Wu Yue* (吳越) states. How strange.

(Ho 26; *my trans. & italics*)⁴²

Ho's transposition of "Norway" into the "Chu Kingdom", and "Polacks" into the "city walls of the Wu Yue states", suggest that he aims to align his adaptation more with a cultural China than a cultural West. Shelby Chan asserts that Ho's borrowing of Chinese cultural elements has two implications. First, it exemplifies his sense of cultural pride that a Chinese historical background and its cultural elements can represent a Western classic work (S. Chan "Equivocating" 428; *my trans.*). Secondly, it shows his recognition of traditional Chinese culture and ethnicity (S. Chan, "Equivocating" 428; *my trans.*). For Hong Kong citizens before 1997, Chineseness was a "means by which they [could] avoid becoming completely immersed in a Western cultural citizenship" (S. Chan, "Identity" 126). Ho adapted the play in 1977, in a period before the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984 that sealed Hong Kong's fate after 1997. Therefore in the 1970s, Hong Kong people had strong feelings of uncertainty about the future of the city. Shelby Chan suggests that these feelings were negotiated through Hong Kong's imagined relationship with China, as signified by the sinicized setting in Ho's adaptation (S. Chan, "Identity" 126). Tam Kwok-kan points out that before the handover, Hong Kong people held a range of disparate attitudes towards the prospect of becoming part of the PRC in 1997 ("Foreword" xii; *my trans.*), which was manifested in Hong Kong plays

⁴² Quotations from *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* come from *Wangzi Fuchou Ji*, trans. (with introduction) Richard Ho (Hong Kong: Sun Ya Publications, 2012). All translations of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* from Chinese to English are done by myself, unless otherwise stated.

that centred on themes of the homeland or the revisiting of Chinese traditions (M.K. Cheung 4; *my trans.*). Though theatre practitioners in Hong Kong were unsettled about the future of the city, they expressed their fondness for the island through their works, by which they proclaimed that “Hong Kong is our hometown” (M.K. Cheung 4; *my trans.*). This further led to the birth of a modern identity as “Hong Kong-Chinese” (S. Chan, “Identity” 126) prior to the handover, which distinguished itself from the identity of the colonizer. Fong echoes Chan’s assertion by stating that Hong Kong theatre practitioners’ mimicry of the British coloniser in the colonial period produced plays that were “almost the same, but not quite”, a term borrowed from Homi Bhabha (“Voices” 101; *my trans.*). Bhabha proposes that the menace of mimicry lies in its double vision, for it discloses the ambivalence of the colonial discourse and also disrupts its authority (“The location” 88). In this sense, the ambivalent mimicry of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* empowers the play and distinguishes it from previous canonical Shakespearean productions in Hong Kong, such as those staged prior to 1997 by Vicki Ooi and Daniel Yang, who belong to Hong Kong’s academia. To name a few examples, Ooi adapted *King Lear* in 1981 (D. Yang, “King” 190), whereas Yang directed *The Taming of the Shrew* in 1982, *The Merchant of Venice* in 1984, *Much Ado About Nothing* in 1990, *King Lear* in 1993, and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in 1997 (D. Yang, “Shakespeare” 78-83). Chan argues that their productions draw on a “Cultural West”, as they attempted to mimic various aspects of a Shakespearean play staged in the West, such as the acting style, costumes, and stage design (“Identity” 205). Ooi also required her actors to “think, speak and act like Westerners when performing in a Western play” (qtd. in S. Chan, “Identity” 93). Coinciding with Brandon’s remark that scholars of a small, highly educated elite that

produce canonical Shakespeare in Asia tend to deride non-canonical Shakespeare (16), Daniel Yang comments that *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* is a “poor-quality” adaptation as it is unfaithful to the source text (“Shakespeare” 75-76). Furthermore, in response to my question about his perception of non-canonical Shakespeare at the 10th Chinese Drama Festival (第十屆華文戲劇節) in April 2016,⁴³ Yang replied, “I don’t think just because I am a Chinese, I need to direct plays with Chinese flavour. My Shakespearean productions tend to be faithful to the source text, perhaps because I am rather old-fashioned and traditional, and this may be also my pathetic side.”

Moreover, Ho transposes the calculation of time from the Western calendar into the ancient Chinese calendar in his adaptation. While Hamlet tells Horatio and other friends that he will meet them “[u]pon the platform ’twixt eleven and twelve” (*Ham.* 1.2.251), Liu Huan tells He Su (賀素) and other ministers that he will meet them in the hour of Zheng Chou (正丑) on the tower over the city gate (Ho 32). In the traditional Chinese calendar, the hour of “Chou” (丑時) refers to the timeframe between 1 am to 3 am (Hao, Sheng and Li 687; *my trans.*), which differs from the source text of “twixt eleven and twelve” (*Ham.* 1.2.251). In Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, there are a number of references made to the ghost’s appearance when the clock strikes twelve. For instance, when Hamlet asks Horatio about the time in act 1, scene 4, Horatio replies that it is just

⁴³ The 10th Chinese Drama Festival was held in Hong Kong from April 8 – 16, 2016, which consisted of an academic conference and a range of Chinese drama performances by repertory companies from Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and mainland China. The theme of the festival was “21st Century Chinese Theatre and World Stage” (廿一世紀華文戲劇與世界舞台), since 2016 marked an important year in the world’s theatre history, signifying the 400th anniversary of the deaths of William Shakespeare (1564 – 1616) and the Chinese playwright, Tang Xianzhu (湯顯祖) (1550 – 1616), and the 60th anniversary of the death of Bertolt Brecht (1898 – 1956). The academic conference of the 10th Chinese Drama Festival focused on discussions surrounding East-West theatrical exchanges, and the development of the world’s theatre history. For further reading, see <http://www.10cdf.org.hk/>.

before twelve (1.4.1). But when Liu Huan asks the military commander, Mo Qi (莫騏) about the time in the corresponding scene in *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* titled “An Exploration of the Gate Tower at Night” (夜探城樓), Mo replies, “it is already the hour of Zheng Chou” (Ho 35; *my trans.*). In Chinese literature, “Zheng Chou” is often associated with the cock’s crowing and the period just before dawn breaks (J. Z. Wang 215-216; *my trans.*). I posit that Liu Huan has a shorter meeting time with the ghost compared to his counterpart in the source text. This is because the ghosts in the two versions refer to different points of time to indicate their departure. In *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, the ghost tells Liu Huan, “No I must go; the sky in the east is turning white” (Ho 38; *my trans.*). However, in Shakespeare’s text, the ghost bids farewell to Hamlet in a different way, “Fare thee well at once / The glow-worm shows the matin to be near” (*Ham.* 1.5.88–89). Thompson and Taylor suggest that Shakespeare employs the word “matin” for its religious connotation, as it signifies a church service that takes place in the morning (218). It appears that Liu Huan meets the ghost at a later time than Hamlet, not at midnight but at 2 am, and the meeting finishes much earlier than Hamlet, for the morning church service will usually commence after the break of dawn. Due to the brevity of the meeting and the condensed lines of the conversation, Liu Huan, unlike Hamlet, does not have time to think twice of the validity of the ghost’s words. Shelby Chan argues that Ho’s Hamlet “appears only too ready to affirm that the [ghost] is his father” (“Identity” 120). Furthermore, Liu Huan plays a more dutiful son. First, he addresses the ghost respectfully instead of Hamlet’s domineering tone of “I will speak to thee” (1.4.44) (S. Chan, “Identity” 120). Secondly, when the ghost leaves, he runs towards his deceased father and passionately calls him “Father King” (父皇) twice (S.

Chan, “Identity” 120). Lawrence Wong considers that Liu Huan’s behaviour resembles the Chinese concept of filial piety, and Ho’s changes are in line with traditional Chinese beliefs about the afterlife (202-203). According to traditional Chinese beliefs, the deceased will return to the human world, and it is the “son’s duty to avenge the father’s wrongful death” (L. Wong 202-203). Both the place changes and temporal compression in *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* suggest that Ho is aligning his adaptation with a cultural China, and the notion of Chineseness is reinforced through fitting geographical and cultural circumstances in China.



Figure 3: Ministers pledging loyalty to Liu Huan, photograph © Tam Kam-chi, Arts Centre of Dance and Martial Arts.

Thirdly, the notion of Chineseness is exemplified in *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* by the playwright's reference to real historical figures in ancient China, which reinforces the authenticity of his adaptation. For instance, when Liu Hong-xi (劉弘希) (Claudius) praises Li Ru-long's (李如龍) (Laertes) military skills, he comments, "Minister Li is not only my Guan Yun-chang (關雲長), but also my Zhuge Kong-ming (諸葛孔明)" (Ho 29, 1.2; *my trans.*). Both Guan Yun-chang and Zhuge Kong-ming belong to the same period in ancient China, which is the Three Kingdoms 三國 (208 – 280). Guan Yun-chang, a famous warrior, was admired for his bravery and loyalty to the emperor, and together with Zhuge Kong-ming, an intelligent military adviser, they helped Liu Bei (劉備) to build his Shu Kingdom (蜀國) (Liu, Dong and Zhang 637-638; *my trans.*). In addition, the emperor Liu Hong-xi opens the duel of Liu Huan and Li Ru-long in the scene titled, "The Prince Ascends to Heaven" (太子歸天) by declaring, "The sovereign's worry is beyond words, it cannot be described even with the brush strokes of Xiang-ru (相如) and Zi-yun (子雲). One is my beloved son; another is my important minister, and I cannot bear to lose either" (Ho 73, 3.6; *my trans.*). Sima Xiang-ru (司馬相如) and Yang Zi-yun (揚子雲) were great literary figures in the Western Han dynasty (西漢) (BC 202–209) (Liu and Chi 812; *my trans.*). In *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, the emperor's reference to various authentic characters across different periods in ancient China serves not only to magnify the power of his kingly speech, but most importantly, to reinforce the authenticity of Ho's adaptation. In fact, Ho is not just rewriting Shakespeare's *Hamlet*; he is also fictionalizing the history of the emperor, Liu Hong-xi (劉弘熙), who is a historical figure in the Five Dynasties. Geoffrey Wagner's second category of adaptation is

commentary (223); and Julie Sanders take this concept further to refer to commenting on the politics of the source text, or the socio-political situation of the adapted text, or both, usually by means of alteration or addition (21).⁴⁴ Ho's transposition of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* into ancient China facilitates his commentary on the Five Dynasties, which parallels Denmark's political chaos in the source text. He explains that during this period, there were loose morals between the monarch and his subjects; and also between males and females. According to Ho, it was a period in ancient China where the story of *Hamlet* could have actually taken place (Ho 15; *my trans.*). His fictionalized account of Liu Hong-xi (劉弘希) is based on the real-life emperor Liu Hong-xi (劉弘熙) in Southern Han (南漢) (917–971), one of several political regimes during the turbulent period of the Five Dynasties. The fictionalized character adopts almost the same name as the historical figure, except for the last character of his name "Xi" that is written differently in Chinese, but it sounds exactly the same when spoken in both Cantonese and Mandarin. The historical character, Liu Hong-xi (劉弘熙), was the fourth son of Liu Long (劉龔), and he murdered his elder brother, Liu Hong-du (劉弘度), to ascend to the throne. His insecurities in assuming the role of emperor instigated him to later murder all of his 15 younger brothers. In addition, he ordered all his nieces to the court and made them his concubines (Ho 16; *my trans.*). The corrupt behaviour of Liu Hong-xi in ancient Chinese history provides a Chinese parallel to the fictionalized Claudius in Shakespeare's text, where Claudius murders his elder brother and marries his former sister-in-law. *Hamlet:*

⁴⁴ I first came across Geoffrey Wagner's three categories of adaptation from reading Julie Sanders' *Adaptation and Appropriation*. However, Sanders had mistakenly identified Wagner's categories as Deborah Cartmell's categories (20), which in fact Cartmell had quoted from Wagner in her book on *Adaptations: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text* (24).

Sword of Vengeance re-envisioning Liu Hong-xi in the body of a Western character, Claudius. I argue that the cruelty of the Chinese historical emperor is diminished in this fictionalized account, for there are no further elaborations of the “living hell” of punishments (Ho 16; *my trans.*) that Liu Hong-xi had aimed at his enemies when he reigned.

The fourth aspect of Chineseness that Ho has inserted into his adaptation is classical Chinese poetry, particularly when he deems certain scenes in the source text as not transferrable to the Chinese cultural context. This coincides with Julie Sanders’ definition of adaptation as the “updating or cultural relocating of a text to bring it into greater proximity to the cultural and temporal context of readers or audiences” (18). For instance, Ho deletes the gravediggers’ scene from the source text, as according to Chinese superstition, it is a taboo for any person to touch a skull. This makes it extremely inappropriate for Liu Huan, a prince from the upper class of society, to touch the skull with his bare hands, as opposed to his counterpart, Hamlet (Ho 16; *my trans.*). Ho thus replaces this scene with Liu Huan reciting the ancient Chinese poet, Yuan Ji (阮籍)’s *Lyric Poem* (詠懷詩) (Ho 16; *my trans.*), which emphasizes life’s temporality against the eternity of death:

Graves and tombs cover mountains and hills (丘墓蔽山崗),

Ten thousand generations share but the same moment (萬代同一時).

When thousands of years have gone past (千秋萬歲後),

Where go our honour and fame (榮名安所之)?

(Garlick 81)

Liu Huan's partial-recital of the four lines from *Lyric Poem* at the beginning of act 3, scene 5 titled, "Pu Guang Ancient Temple" (普光古寺) largely condensed the corresponding act 5, scene 1 in the source text.⁴⁵ The last two lines of the poem, "When thousands of years have gone past, where go our honour and fame?" (Garlick 81) summarize the essence of Hamlet's meeting with the gravediggers in Shakespeare's text, which reminds us that whatever fame and prosperity we enjoy in our lives, this will amount to nothing after our deaths. Liu Huan's partial-recital of the poem echoes Hamlet's remark when the gravedigger throws up a skull, "This fellow might be in's time / a great buyer of land, with his statues, his / recognizances, his fines, his double vouchers, his / recoveries ... The very conveyances of his lands / will hardly lie in this box; and must th'inheritor himself / have no more, ha?" (*Ham.* 5.1.100-103, 107-109). However, Harry Garlick argues that the deletion of the gravediggers' scene is unnecessary, given the "Cantonese penchant for humour" (81). Ho's insertion of classical Chinese poetry in *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* serves not only to condense his adaptation, but also demonstrates his mastery of Chinese literature. Besides citing Yuan Ji's poem, Ho also composed a classical Chinese poem and included it into his adaptation. In the source text, Polonius reads to the king and queen the letter that Hamlet has given to Ophelia, which affirms Polonius' assumed discovery of Hamlet's cause of madness (2.2). In *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, Li Bo (李博) recites to the royal couple the poem that Liu Huan has written to Li Ru-fei:

⁴⁵ In the *Hamlet* production of 2009 performed by actors from the National Theatre Company of China, the actor who played Hamlet sang the lines of the *Lyric Poem* instead of reciting them as in other productions.

Wanted to visit the mountain but I cannot see it clearly (欲探蓬山望未真),

The city is covered in rain and it makes people sad (滿城煙雨最愁人).

Hundreds of flower petals fall as the eastern wind blows weak

(百花殘落東風老),

Still in love with the waves and the dust on my socks (猶戀凌波襪上塵).

(Ho 43; *my trans.*)

Ho's poem reveals the subtlety of Chinese culture, where Liu Huan does not explicitly reveal his love for Li Ru-fei, but indirectly expresses his longing for nature, such as the mountain and the sea. The mountain in the poem represents the girl in Liu Huan's dreams, which he very much wishes to explore but cannot see clearly, signifying that Li Ru-fei might have maintained a distance from him. Liu Huan's poem creates a different persona from the Western version of Hamlet in the source text, where Hamlet boldly declares his love and addresses Ophelia directly by her name, "O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers. I have not / art to reckon my groans. But that I love thee best, O / most best, believe it" (*Ham.* 2.2.120-122). Lee Heung-sing remarks that he is conscious of playing Liu Huan in *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, and not Hamlet ("To"; *my trans.*). He asserts that though Liu Huan is based on the character, Hamlet, he adamantly believes that they belong to two different personalities due to differences in time and culture. The Chinese Hamlet possesses a Chinese style of reserve; no matter whether he is angry or sad. Thus Lee considers the challenge in his acting is to combine the Chinese form of

subtlety and the Western style of expressiveness in the depiction of Liu Huan (“To”; *my trans.*).

Apart from the treatment of his lover, Liu Huan also has a different relationship with his mother compared to Shakespeare’s text. Coinciding with Wagner’s category of commentary (223), Ho comments on the mother-son relationship by the alteration or addition of lines in his adaptation. Before his untimely death, Hamlet’s last line to his mother in the source text is: “Wretched Queen, adieu” (*Ham.* 5.2.285). However, in *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, Liu Huan shows more affection towards his mother by calling her “mother” instead of referring to her title, the queen. His last line to his mother is: “Mother, I now realize that you have indeed suffered much” (Ho 76; *my trans.*). In the production of 2009, Liu Huan also hugs his mother’s corpse when uttering the above line. In this sense, Liu Huan shows a newfound understanding for his mother, and this leads us to Ho’s rationalization of why Queen Ma marries her former brother-in-law, seemingly violating the moral code of chastity. There is a gap in Shakespeare’s source text that can be filled with the following interpretation. Ho recalls that when he oversaw the rehearsal of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* in Beijing in 2009, one of the production crew members interpreted the queen’s re-marriage as an attempt by a loving mother to protect her son’s right of succession, an explanation that touched the playwright himself (Ho 118; *my trans.*).

Viewed from this perspective, the Chinese mother in *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* is more protective of her son as compared to the source text. Like Queen Ma in Ho’s adaptation, there are numerous British productions of *Hamlet* that portray the Queen as having knowingly drunk the poison in order to save Hamlet. Such examples

include Eileen Herlie in Laurence Olivier’s film version of *Hamlet* in 1948 (Crowther, “Reviews”), and Penny Downie in Gregory Doran’s theatrical staging of *Hamlet* in 2010 (Loar, “Between”). In *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, Queen Ma takes on Claudius’s line from the source text. Instead of uttering Gertrude’s line, “I will, my lord, I pray you pardon me” (*Ham.* 5.2.244), Queen Ma in *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* reacts to the king’s forbidding her to drink from the cup by appropriating Claudius’ line in the source text, “My lord, it is too late” (Ho 74; *my trans.*).⁴⁶ This indicates that Queen Ma is fully aware of the poisoned cup, and significantly, she adds a line before she dies, “My son, I have just drunk a cup of poisoned wine on your behalf, I will now die to redeem my sins” (Ho 75; *my trans.*). In the source text, however, Gertrude merely says, “O my dear Hamlet, / The drink, the drink – I am poisoned” (*Ham.* 5.2.262-263). Although the Queen in Olivier’s *Hamlet* also knowingly drinks the poisoned cup, I posit two possible readings of Queen Ma’s motivation for doing so, which are different from her counterpart in Olivier’s film version. First, Ho’s adaptation does not contain any oedipal references as in Olivier’s *Hamlet*, where Hamlet and his mother kiss on the lips several times (Beradinelli, “Hamlet”). The body gestures that Queen Ma extend towards Liu Huan derive from the genuine affection that a mother has for her son. In the production of 2012, Queen Ma pulls Liu Huan towards her and holds his hands in their conversation in act 2, scene 7 titled, “Liu Huan Punishes his Mother” (劉桓罪母). At the end of the scene, when Liu Huan tells the Queen that he is leaving for the Tang kingdom, his mother displays signs of missing her son by patting him on the hair and face. The affections between Liu Huan and the Queen can also be depicted in Figure 4 below. Thus I perceive

⁴⁶ In the source text, Claudius exclaims, “It is the poisoned cup; it is too late” (5.2.245).

that Queen Ma intentionally drinks the poisoned cup as a mother's act of love to save her son's life, as does Penny Downie in Doran's *Hamlet* (Loar, "Between"). The second interpretation of why the Queen in *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* commits suicide is suggested by the last line before her death, as she confesses that she dies to "redeem [her] sins" (Ho 75; *my trans.*). While it is arguable in the West as to whether it is incestuous to marry the widow of one's brother, as Henry VIII had married Catherine of Aragon (BBC History, "Catherine"),⁴⁷ the Chinese moral code of feudalism sets a higher standard for married women, and it is considered proper for a married woman to remain a widow after her husband's death. During the Ming Dynasty (明朝) (1368–1644), the imperial court established "Statutes of Chastity" (貞節牌坊) for women who conformed to the standards of propriety (Qi, He and Zhang 241; *my trans.*). Set in this Chinese cultural environment, it is thus rather unconventional that Queen Ma chooses to marry her former brother-in-law in less than two months after her husband's death. The whole incident is too shameful for Liu Huan to recall in *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, thus he only refers to it indirectly by quoting the line "Stories of the inner hall, should not be told by day" (中冓之言，不可道也) from the Chinese classics, *The Book of Songs* (詩經) (Ho 17, 30; *my trans.*).⁴⁸ The original poem in *The Book of Songs* illustrates the poet's critique of incest committed in the imperial court, which indirectly satirizes the behaviour of Liu Huan's mother and his uncle (Ho 17; *my trans.*).

⁴⁷ However, in order to marry his mistress, Anne Boleyn, Henry VIII later annulled his marriage to Catherine in 1533, claiming that the marriage was "cursed as it went against the Biblical teaching that a man should never marry his brother's widow" (BBC History, "Catherine").

⁴⁸ The first few lines of the poem from "Yong Wind, Vines on the Wall" (鄘風·牆有茨) in *The Book of Songs* read, "The creepers on the wall, cannot be swept away. Stories of the inner hall, should not be told by day" (牆有茨，不可埽也；中冓之言，不可道也). The poet indirectly criticizes the ruler of committing lecherous affairs in the imperial court (Qian 243; *my trans.*).



Figure 4: Liu Huan and Queen Ma, photograph © Tam Kam-chi, Arts Centre of Dance and Martial Arts.

The four dimensions of cultural China embodied in *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*: the transposition of geographical locations, the depiction of time, the employment of

Chinese historical figures, and the insertion of classical Chinese poetry, do not specifically belong to the Hong Kong cultural context. However, to the Hong Kong audience that are not familiar with the works of Shakespeare, this sinicized adaptation is less remote to them than the source text situated in Denmark in the Middle Ages. It does not matter that there are few parallels between ancient China and 1970s Hong Kong, for Ho's sinicized adaptation of *Hamlet* has, as argued by Shelby Chan, set a precedent that Hong Kong adaptations of Shakespeare can incorporate a double alignment – to a cultural China and to a cultural West (“Identity” 127-128). This reflects the fluidity of Hong Kongers' identity, and the concept of the flexible transference of identity in Hong Kong Shakespeare will be further elucidated in Chapter Three of my thesis.

III. Re-staging the play in Mandarin: its significance in Hong Kong's neocolonial period

Linda Hutcheon argues that in various forms of adaptation, stories are retold in different ways in new material and cultural environments; and that in shifting cultures and languages, adaptations “make alterations that reveal much about the larger contexts of reception and production” (28). She further points out that the context of reception is as important as the context of creation when adapting a particular text (Hutcheon 149). *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* echoes Hutcheon's viewpoint, especially in its Mandarin production in neocolonial Hong Kong. *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* premiered in 1977 in Hong Kong's City Hall Theatre and was restaged in 1978. Subsequently in 1980, it was staged at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre in Vancouver. It is worth noting that Canada

had absorbed a large part of the Hong Kong diaspora since 1997, and in 2016, a peak of 1210 Hong Kongers had become Canadian permanent residents (Siu, “Number”). In all three productions during this colonial period of Hong Kong, Ho both directed the play and acted as the Chinese Hamlet, Liu Huan (Ho 125, 137; *my trans.*). After a gap of almost thirty years, the play was staged at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre in 2007. It was directed by Mak Chiu (麥秋), and starred some well-known Hong Kong television actors, such as Steven Ma Chun-wai (馬浚偉) and Sonija Kwok Sin-nei (郭羨妮) (Ho 149; *my trans.*). The involvement of local television celebrities in the production appealed to the wider population of Hong Kong (S. Chan, “Hong” 477), and signified the fusion of Hong Kong’s popular culture with highbrow Shakespearean plays. All these productions, whether staged locally or in the West, were performed by Hong Kong actors who spoke their lines in Cantonese, which is the language of Hong Kong people and it is commonly used in their daily life conversations in everyday Hong Kong.

From 2009 onwards, the language of performance in *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* shifted from Cantonese to Mandarin, which is the official language of China. Using the same script written by Ho, the play was staged in a ground-breaking attempt in Mandarin in 2009 by a group of mainland Chinese professional actors from the National Theatre Company of China. As I have elaborated in the previous section, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust invited China to stage a Shakespearean play to commemorate Shakespeare’s 445th birthday in 2009 (*Apple Daily*, “Adapted”; *my trans.*). Richard Ho explained that the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust’s invitation, extended to China for the first time, was probably related to the successful Olympics Games held by Beijing in 2008 (Personal interview with Ho). Directed by the Hong Kong director, Mak Chiu, who

had close connections with theatre practitioners from the National Theatre of China, *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* was performed at the Civic Hall of Stratford-upon-Avon, a year after the Beijing Olympic Games (Ho 151; *my trans.*).⁴⁹ The main reason why China chose a Hong Kong Shakespearean play of the colonial times to represent Chinese Shakespeare to the West is that the PRC's Cultural Department wanted to stage an adaptation, and not a translated play. Ho believes that if a translated play of *Hamlet* were to be staged by Chinese actors in Western costumes at Stratford, it could not represent China, and therefore had no meaning and impact to the performing of Chinese Shakespeare in the West. On the other hand, his adaptation of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, is related both to Shakespeare and to China. In this sense, the performance of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* in Stratford would not be staged under the shadow of Shakespeare, but it would be its own master as a Chinese history play (Personal interview with Ho). As a play that had been adapted in colonial Hong Kong since 1977, *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* exemplifies what Homi Bhabha argues as the "third space" in cultural hybridity. By emphasizing the play as being its own master and not Shakespeare's subservient, this has opened up a third space that has given rise to a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation (Bhabha interviewed by Rutherford, "The third" 211). Furthermore, the staging of the play in traditional Chinese dress, according to Ho, is visually attractive to both Western and Chinese audiences alike. As compared to a production staged in modern dress, a sinicized adaptation of *Hamlet* is more rare, more difficult to be performed, and also encompasses elements of sword

⁴⁹ In my interview with Ho, he expressed his dislike for the production directed by Mak Chiu in 2009. This is because in Mak's version, the deceased characters rose to life again in the last scene. Ho believed that this was redundant and that the performance could have ended better with a blackout after the deaths of Hamlet and the other characters.

fighting and dance, much like a variety show (Personal interview with Ho). As mentioned in the above, the emphasis on a visually attractive theatrical scene again signifies the self-orientalizing of Shakespeare that fulfils Westerners' taste of Hong Kong Shakespeare.

One may ask, didn't China have their own adaptations of Shakespeare? If so, why did the PRC choose to appropriate a Hong Kong Shakespearean play that had been written before the Chinese takeover of Hong Kong in 1997? I shall outline two reasons in the following section. First, Lau Wai-lam argues that Hong Kong Shakespeare has been more advanced than mainland Shakespeare for at least 30 years (27; *my trans.*). As mentioned in my introduction, Hong Kong Shakespeare has moved beyond the straightforward translations of mainland Shakespeare. While Richard Ho had adapted *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* in 1977, it was only in 2006 that the PRC film director, Feng Xiao-gang (馮小剛) adapted *Hamlet* into a sinicized Chinese setting as *The Banquet* (夜宴). Lau believes that Feng's *The Banquet* was inspired by Ho's adaptation in 1977, as both adaptations were transposed into the same ancient Chinese period, i.e. the turbulent Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms era (27; *my trans.*). Second, there are indeed other adaptations of *Hamlet* in China, for example, the prominent PRC director, Lin Zhao-hua, (林兆華) staged *Hamlet* in 1990, just a few months after the June Fourth massacre at the Tiananmen Square (Dickson 372). However, Lin's *Hamlet* was more experimental, where each actor played several roles, and Hamlet was depicted as an ordinary Beijing man in the late 20th century facing a crucial moment (Li, "Six" 125). As mentioned by Lee Heung-sing, China's authorities do not favour experimental adaptations (Personal interview with H.S. Lee). Besides, as Hong Kong had already been handed over to China, the PRC did not have any problem in choosing a Hong Kong

Shakespearean adaptation to represent Chinese Shakespeare to the West (Personal interview with Ho).

Bearing the reputation of having been staged by the National Theatre Company of China in Britain; *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* was restaged in Hong Kong subsequently in 2010 and 2012 (Personal interview with Ho). These revivals were enacted predominantly by a group of university students originating from mainland China, who were studying, at that time, at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Both productions were directed by Hardy Tsoi, who also directed *Shamshuipo Lear* (深水埗李爾王) and *Julius Caesar* (凱撒大帝).⁵⁰ With the shift of performance language from Cantonese into Mandarin, these three adaptations of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* largely excluded Hong Kong actors, who are less proficient in Mandarin compared to actors originating from mainland China. As depicted in Figure 5, Lee Heung-sing, who played the role of Hamlet in the productions of 2010 and 2012, came to Hong Kong from the Fujian (福建) province of China when he was eighteen to attend a local secondary school (Personal interview with H.S. Lee). According to Lee, most of his co-actors in the two Mandarin productions shared similar cultural backgrounds with himself, though most of them came to Hong Kong later than him for university education (Personal interview with H.S. Lee). The actors' cultural backgrounds justify the choice of performance language in the Mandarin productions of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*. As Hutcheon argues, there is a dialogue between the society in which both the adapted text and adaptation are produced, and that in which they are received (149). In the same light then, the shift of performance language in the play reveals the larger context of reception in the neocolonial period of

⁵⁰ I shall discuss Hardy Tsoi's *Shamshuipo Lear* and *Julius Caesar* in Chapter Three of my dissertation.

Hong Kong. Paradoxically, the Mandarin productions of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* in 2010 and 2012 arose from a group of mainland-born actors led by a Hong Kong-born and Western-trained director, Hardy Tsoi, which targeted a Cantonese-speaking Hong Kong audience.



Figure 5: Lee Heung-sing starring as Liu Huan, photograph © Tam Kam-chi, Arts Centre of Dance and Martial Arts.

The question then, comes as to why Ho chose to stage the play in Mandarin in Hong Kong in both 2010 and 2012. Though Tsoi directed both productions, it was Ho who decided that the performances were to be staged in Mandarin. This is probably due to the financial sponsorship that Ho had secured from the Cultural and Educational Association of the New Towns (CEANT) (新市鎮文化教育協會) to stage *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* in 2010, where Ho is still the current chairman of the association (CEANT, “Structure”, *my trans.*). In my interview with Ho, he explains that the purpose of changing the performance language of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* is to “promote Mandarin and Chinese culture” (推普弘文). This objective of “promoting Mandarin and Chinese culture” was also indicated in the promotional poster of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* in 2010 (Ho 152). The Cultural and Educational Association of the New Towns is a non-profit organization established in 1987 and funded by the Hong Kong government (CEANT, “Mission”, *my trans.*). In the past, it had organized various activities to promote Mandarin to Hong Kong students in the neo-colonial period, which aimed at enhancing civil education (CEANT, “Activities”, *my trans.*). Apart from restaging *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* in Mandarin in 2010, it had also held “Mandarin Speech Contests” annually for Hong Kong’s primary and secondary school students since 1998, and it had established a “Training Centre for the Mandarin Proficiency Test” in 2013 (CEANT, “Activities”, *my trans.*). I argue that the purpose of such Mandarin-related activities, including restaging *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* in Mandarin, aligns with the neocolonial government’s policy of forging a stronger identification among Hong Kong people with the “motherland”, China. In an interview with a reporter from

Sing Tao Daily, Ho discusses the significance of restaging *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* in Mandarin:

When using Mandarin to recite vernacular Chinese, it becomes smoother and has a lingering charm. Mandarin is “the language of a country” (一國之語), and its importance is easily observed. Though there is a lack of a Mandarin language environment in Hong Kong, through television, plays and other media, it is actually not difficult to learn Mandarin. It all depends on whether the next generation is able to make good use of their time and to work hard.

(*Sing Tao Daily*, “Chinese”; *my trans.*)

As illustrated in the above, Ho considers the Mandarin staging of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* to be serving both educational and aesthetic concerns. With the pretext of promoting “the language of a country”, he ignores the pragmatic reality of the play’s setting, which is situated in Guangzhou (廣州) in southern China, where people adopt the same language as in Hong Kong and converse in Cantonese. When the play toured Vancouver in 1980, Ho changed the Chinese title of his play from *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* (王子復仇記) to *The Palace of Xing Wang* (興王府). “Xing Wang” (興王) is the old name for Guangzhou, and the capital of the Southern Han dynasty (南漢) (Ho 10, 18; *my trans.*).⁵¹ I therefore disagree with Ho’s assumption that no matter whether *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* is staged in Cantonese or Mandarin, it will not affect the

⁵¹ Ho changed the Chinese title of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* because he was afraid that the Chinese target audience in Vancouver would mistake the play as a translated play starring actors in Western costumes, and would thus not be interested in watching it. He also changed the English title of the play to the *Sword of Vengeance* (10; *my trans.*).

meaning of the play. Based upon historical and cultural legacy, having actors in the play converse in Mandarin does not reflect the actual circumstances in China, since Mandarin is commonly adopted in the northern and southwestern parts of China instead. While Mandarin merely includes four intonations, Cantonese, consisting of nine intonations, has a much wider variety of sounds than Mandarin (Shu, “Speaking”; *my trans.*). Furthermore, since Cantonese retains the ancient Chinese pronunciations from the Tang and Song dynasties, it is more melodic to recite classical Chinese poems in Cantonese than in Mandarin (Shu, “Speaking”; *my trans.*). Since Ho’s adaptation consists of some classical Chinese poems, the actors’ recitation of the poems in Mandarin would result in the loss of certain southern Chinese flavour of the production.

Furthermore, Ho believes that staging the play in Mandarin is “even better” than staging it in Cantonese (Personal interview with Ho). Nevertheless, he views this issue simply from a linguistic angle. Since he wrote the play in vernacular Chinese, which can be directly spoken in Mandarin, the mainland Chinese actors need not convert the lines into colloquial speech (Personal interview with Ho). This is because vernacular Chinese is a written form of Chinese that is based on Mandarin. The vernacular language movement was championed by Chinese reformers like Hu Shi (胡適) in the 20th century, who promoted the vernacular through creating major works of literature that would appeal to the reading public (Gunn 38). Since Mandarin had the largest number of speakers, it was chosen as the basis for the new standard. While spoken Mandarin equals written vernacular Chinese, spoken Cantonese is widely different from written Chinese. Thus, if one’s mother tongue is Mandarin, he or she can directly read out the exact words in Ho’s script, without feeling that the language is too formal or detached from daily life

conversation. Conversely, if the actors' mother tongues are Cantonese, then they have to convert the vernacular Chinese in Ho's script into Cantonese when performing the play, as Cantonese is the daily speech adopted by Hong Kongers in their everyday lives. It is also significant to note that apart from Ho's play that was written in vernacular Chinese, the scripts of all other Shakespearean productions that I am analyzing in my thesis were written in Cantonese. Being a professor of Chinese, it is not surprising that Ho preferred adopting an elegant form of writing, which reflected his high academic status and social class. As an academic, he also intended to publish his script of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, and so again, using vernacular Chinese was deemed suitable to serve this purpose. Ho's script was twice published, both in 1979 and in 2012, in which the two versions consisted of the same play, only with different editions (Ho n.p.; *my trans.*). The other playwrights in my study, such as Hardy Tsoi, Michael Fung and Jimmy Lee mainly intended their scripts to be circulated among their actors, and not for the reading public. As a result, they chose to adopt the Cantonese speech in the writing of their plays. By doing so, their actors were able to recite their lines directly from the scripts, rendering it unnecessary to undergo a mental process of conversion from vernacular Chinese into Cantonese.

Furthermore, returning to Wagner's category of commentary in adaptation (223), the Mandarin version of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* provides indirect commentary on the neocolonial situation in Hong Kong by means of alteration. Academics and theatre practitioners in Hong Kong are well aware of the neocolonial situation in Hong Kong following the handover. Mark Bray and Ramsey Koo suggest that from the perspective of many Hong Kong citizens, the role of the UK was replaced by China (217). In addition,

Ania Loomba describes the postcolonial experience in Hong Kong as one “riddled with contradictions and qualifications” (12). In terms of cultural invasion, neocolonialism in Hong Kong is reflected by the government’s proposal in 2012 to introduce moral and national education courses in Hong Kong schools, which was criticized as a ploy to indoctrinate young people into unquestioning support of China’s Communist Party (*CBC News*, “Hong”). This led to widespread protest among students and the government was forced to abandon this initiative (*CBC News*, “Hong”). In addition, the neocolonial government has implemented a language policy that focuses on the teaching of Mandarin, which I shall further elucidate in the latter section regarding the promotion of China’s official language through the Mandarin staging of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*.

Theatre practitioners and critics in Hong Kong have expressed their opinions on the impact of neocolonial Hong Kong on the development of local theatre. For instance, in an article entitled, “Hong Kong Plays Under the Ghostly Influence of Colonialism” (在殖民地幽靈五指山下的香港舞台劇), Hardy Tsoi, director of the Mandarin productions of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, comments that many people who had no confidence in the handover would perceive post-1997 Hong Kong as another colonial era ruled by China (“Hong” 160; *my trans.*). To support his argument, Tsoi quotes the example that Tung Chee-hwa (董建華), the first Chief Executive of Hong Kong following the handover, strongly emphasized the importance of Chinese culture in Hong Kong’s development, which led many people to believe Tung was influenced by China (“Hong” 160; *my trans.*).⁵² Therefore Tsoi is skeptical of whether the political censorship which

⁵² When Tung Chee Hwa, the first Chief Executive of Hong Kong appointed members of the Cultural Committee, he said, “Hong Kong’s handover to China enables us to lay our foundation on Chinese culture,

existed in Hong Kong's theatre during the British colonial era would be lifted after the handover ("Hong" 160; *my trans.*).⁵³ According to Tsoi, the colonial government did not put any efforts in nurturing local Hong Kong culture, as its cultural policy was to promote British culture in the colony, and the colonizers were afraid that the rise of local consciousness would hamper their governance of Hong Kong ("Hong" 155, 157; *my trans.*). Thus the colonial education in Hong Kong focused on elitism, which aimed at nurturing elites to facilitate the colonizers to administer the city. There were no theatre courses in the primary and secondary school curriculum, and newly created plays by Hong Kong directors were often censored by the colonial government, including Tsoi's *I am a Hong Konger* in 1985 ("Hong" 155, 157; *my trans.*). In this sense, Hong Kong theatre has been continuously subjected to censorship, no matter in the colonial period or the neocolonial period. It is indeed interesting to ask why Tsoi, a director who is so obviously opposed to the handover to China, agreed to direct *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* twice in 2010 and 2012, a production that is deemed pro-Chinese and in Mandarin. From my observation, Tsoi views the Mandarin adaptation of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* quite differently from Ho. While Ho regards the Mandarin production as a means to forge a stronger identification of Hong Kong people with China, Tsoi considers it as an opportunity for mainland students in Hong Kong to express themselves through theatre (Personal interview with Tsoi). Tsoi is very much involved in community theatre, and in the past, his plays had incorporated various minority groups in Hong Kong, such as homeless people, prostitutes, and ethnic minorities in *Shamshuipo Lear*. He had also

and to absorb elements from Western culture. By adopting a liberal and an all-encompassing attitude, we can help develop a vibrant Hong Kong culture with distinctive characteristics" (Tsoi, "Hong" 160; *my trans.*).

⁵³ Tsoi explains that staging translated plays was the norm in Hong Kong in the 1960s and 1970s, because of the censorship of newly created plays by the British colonial government (Tsoi, "Hong" 155; *my trans.*).

depicted the lives of Hong Kong's new immigrants from China in *Story of the Northern District* (北區故事). Tsoi categorizes mainland students as belonging to one of the minority groups in Hong Kong, who do not have a lot of channels for engaging in theatre, as the theatre societies in the universities of Hong Kong mainly stage plays performed in Cantonese (Personal interview with Tsoi). He has a mission of promoting community theatre among the minority groups. He quotes Mok Chiu-yu (莫昭如), a pioneer in Hong Kong's community theatre, that the goal of community theatre has always been to serve the underprivileged and the deprived groups, like what Shakespeare, Ibsen, Shaw, and Brecht had done in the past (qtd. in Elements, "Some"). Therefore he perceives the involvement of mainland students, which he regards as one of the minority groups, in the performance of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* as a positive matter. Whereas Ho might be more concerned with promoting a stronger sense of Chinese identity to the audience through the Mandarin production, Tsoi focuses more on engaging and empowering his actors through their involvement in theatre performance.

Another Hong Kong theatre critic and professor of translation, Gilbert Fong, proposes that Hong Kong theatre is characterized by changing faces that transform according to the transition of time and period ("Further" 14; *my trans.*). The change of performance language in *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* during the neocolonial period of Hong Kong signifies a form of cultural encroachment, where Mandarin, the neocoloniser's language, is gradually replacing Cantonese as the dominant language of communication in Hong Kong. Fong also suggests that adaptation is the locale for power struggle, where the adapter chooses to align the adapted text with either the source culture or the target culture, depending on the strength and weakness of the two ("Further"

11; *my trans.*). I would take Fong's hypothesis a step further to suggest that the Mandarin adaptation of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* reflects the idea that the target culture of the production pertains to the neo-coloniser, and that the language and culture of the neo-coloniser gains supremacy over that of the colonised. In this sense, the Mandarin productions of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* are not very critical of the neocolonial situation in Hong Kong and are aligning themselves with a Chinese ideology. The replacement of Cantonese with Mandarin is a source of concern to many in Hong Kong, as exemplified through *Ten Years* (十年) in 2015, which won the "Best Film" award at the 35th annual Hong Kong Film Awards in 2016 (Lau and Leng, "Ten"). The film consists of five short stories that depict the directors' imagination of Hong Kong's future 10 years on, in 2025. One of the stories is titled "Dialect" (方言), and it foretells the marginalization of Cantonese in Hong Kong (W.P. Wong, "Ten"; *my trans.*). In 2025, Mandarin is made mandatory in the city; not only as a means of communication among local students, but even for taxi drivers who are obliged to pass the Mandarin proficiency test in order to obtain their driving licenses. *Ten Years* has been censored by mainland authorities, as China's state-run *Global Times Newspaper* (環球時報) condemns it to be "totally absurd" and "a virus of the mind" (*The Guardian*, "Hong"). The Hong Kong government, which appears to please the PRC regime, not only refused to sponsor *Ten Years*'s release at the New York Asian Film Festival in 2016, but also deleted the name of the film from its official press release about the films that were selected to be screened at the festival (*Apple Daily*, "Ten"; *my trans.*).⁵⁴ Though censored by Hong Kong and mainland authorities, *Ten Years* proved to be very popular among the local Hong Kong

⁵⁴ With the exception of *Ten Years*, the Hong Kong government sponsored nine other films that were chosen to be screened at the *New York Asian Film Festival* in 2016 (*Apply Daily*, "Ten"; *my trans.*).

audience, where thousands of Hong Kong people flocked to community screenings after its cinema release ended (*The Guardian*, “Hong”). While *Ten Years* criticizes Hong Kong’s neocolonial position, and strives to uphold the city’s distinctive cultural values, *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* proactively endeavours to fit into the new cultural environment of Hong Kong. Ho achieves this not only by changing the performance language of the play, but also by inviting mainland Chinese actors in place of Hong Kong actors to perform in the play at Stratford-upon-Avon, United Kingdom, in 2009, and subsequently in Hong Kong in 2010 and 2012.⁵⁵

Returning to Ho’s goal of enhancing Hong Kong students’ learning of Mandarin through watching productions of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, this coincides with the Hong Kong government’s language policy in the neocolonial period. As put forward by Bray and Koo, the official goal of the new regime of the Hong Kong government is that all students should be “biliterate and trilingual”, where the “biliterate side refers to literacy in English and Chinese; and the trilingual side means ability to speak in English, Cantonese and Mandarin” (225). In 1997, only one primary school among all government-funded and private-sector schools taught in Mandarin, whereas most schools in Hong Kong traditionally used Cantonese as their medium of instruction (Bray and Koo 224). By the academic year of 2003/04, six primary schools in the government-funded sector used Mandarin as the medium of instruction, and four private primary schools taught in Mandarin. At the secondary level, the first school to teach fully in Mandarin

⁵⁵ As noted on p. 97, Ho has the authority to decide on the performance language of the play in 2010, as the play was sponsored by the Cultural and Educational Association of the New Towns, where he acted as the chairman. The performance of the play in 2009 in the U.K. was also made possible through his personal connections with Mak Chiu, a prominent director in Hong Kong who is familiar with mainland Chinese theatre practitioners at the National Theatre of China.

opened in the academic year of 2002/03, and a further four schools used Mandarin in some subjects in addition to Chinese Language, Chinese Literature and Chinese History (Bray and Koo 224). Bill Ashcroft employs the term “post-colonial” to cover all aspects of the colonial process from the beginning of colonial contact (2). This implies that colonial transition in Hong Kong commenced earlier than the actual change of sovereignty in 1997 (Bray and Koo 217), dating back to 1984, when the Sino-British Joint Declaration (中英聯合聲明) was signed that decreed Hong Kong would be handed back to China. A year before the handover, the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) drafted an action plan to “raise language standards” in Hong Kong schools (GovHK, “SCOLAR”). The document noted that under current policy, Hong Kong schools were free to use either Cantonese or Mandarin to teach Chinese language, but it also authorized the view of the Curriculum Development Council that the long-term goal should be to use Mandarin (Bray and Koo 227). To support this goal, the government provided training for 2800 Mandarin teachers between 1997 and 2000, and with support from the government’s Language Fund, 400 teachers completed summer immersion programmes in mainland China between 2000 and 2002 (Bray and Koo 227). Michael Suen Ming-yeung (孫明揚), the former Secretary for Education in Hong Kong from 2007 to 2012, expresses the view that “although Hong Kong has been handed back to China, the hearts of Hong Kongers have not been returned to the motherland, as Hong Kongers continue to hold negative views towards mainland China” (Suen, “People’s”; *my trans.*). Suen also expresses regret that when he was the Secretary for Education from 2007 to 2012, he had failed to implement Chinese History as a compulsory subject in Hong Kong schools. He also suggests that under the “one

country, two systems” principle, Hong Kong people have overemphasized the “two systems” above the national unification of “one country” (*Ejinsight*, “Suen”; *my trans.*). In the last policy address given by the Chief Executive, Leung Chun-ying in January 2017, he announced that the Education Bureau would provide a one-off grant of HKD \$125 million (roughly equivalent to £13 million) to support the teaching of Chinese history (Cheung et al., “In”). The pro-Beijing legislators in Hong Kong even advocated Chinese history to be made compulsory in secondary schools, so as to “end Hong Kong youngsters’ identity crisis” (Cheung et al., “In”). The implementation of Chinese history and Mandarin in Hong Kong schools, and Ho’s proactive changing of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*’s performance language to the official language of China, both align with the neocolonial government’s policy of forging a stronger identification of Hong Kong people with the “motherland”, China.

How effective then, is the Mandarin staging of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* in serving the purpose of promoting Mandarin and Chinese culture in the short-term, and in strengthening national reunification in the long term? In my interview with Lee Heung-sing, the main actor in the Mandarin productions of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* in 2010 and 2012, he commented that if the play were to be restaged in Mandarin under current political circumstances in Hong Kong, it would probably not be received favourably (Personal interview with H. S. Lee). Lee also observes that the use of Mandarin has become a very sensitive political issue in recent years, and this matter has become more intense in current Hong Kong than in 2010 and 2012, when *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* was staged in Mandarin (Personal interview with H. S. Lee). In fact, the reviews of the Mandarin productions were more about the discussion of the actor’s display of Liu

Huan's complex emotions, whereas little is mentioned on the choice of performance language (H.S. Lee, "To"; *my trans.*).⁵⁶ I argue that the reason why Mandarin has grown politically sensitive is due to its association with the autocratic control of China towards Hong Kong, especially after Beijing's supposedly democratic model in 2014, allowing Hong Kong citizens a direct vote for their chief executive, but only consisting of pre-screened, pro-Beijing candidates.⁵⁷ Lee's opinion coincides with Jasper Tsang Yok-sing's (曾鈺成) view that the language policy of any region is attached to politics (Tsang, "Language"; *my trans.*).⁵⁸ Tsang continues to assert that in Hong Kong, any policy that is related to the respective status of Cantonese and Mandarin, and that of traditional and simplified Chinese characters, possesses a strong sense of political connotation. While traditional Chinese characters are widely used in Hong Kong and Taiwan, simplified Chinese characters are adopted in China. From 1949 to 1964, the PRC government had launched a series of character reforms to simplify the complicated strokes of traditional Chinese characters, which aimed at reducing the illiteracy rate of China and promoting economic development (Premaratne 426). Nonetheless, the people of Hong Kong and Taiwan have continued to use traditional Chinese characters, and in doing so they affirm their identities as distinctive from the PRC. As exemplified by Tsang, the Hong Kong government's language policy is extended to the core values of the "one country, two systems" principle, as guaranteed in the Basic Law of Hong Kong. While Mandarin and simplified Chinese characters belong to the realm of the "one country" principle,

⁵⁶ There are very few reviews about the Mandarin productions of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*. In a post-performance review written by H.S. Lee himself, he explained that he had spent a lot of time in investigating into Liu Huan's complex emotions. He wanted to depict Liu Huan in the reserved Chinese way of being both angry and depressed ("To"; *my trans.*).

⁵⁷ See pp. 14-15 of my introduction.

⁵⁸ Jasper Tsang Yok-sing was a legislative councillor of Hong Kong, and an advisor of the pro-Beijing political party, the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (Tsang, "Personal").

Cantonese and traditional Chinese characters pertain to the “two systems” principle (Tsang, “Language”; *my trans.*).

I believe that Lee’s prediction of a less favourable response to a Mandarin production of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* in present-day Hong Kong is also linked to the growing resistance of Hong Kong citizens towards the language and culture of the neocoloniser. As asserted by Bray and Koo, the continued use of traditional Chinese characters helps Hong Kong to “retain its identity within the framework of reunification” (226). When a local television company, Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB) changed the name of its channel from “HD Jade” (高清翡翠台) into “J5” in 2016, and started to broadcast Mandarin news reports supplemented with simplified Chinese characters during prime time viewing, it led to huge criticism from its Hong Kong audience, who mocked TVB as a “TV Channel for China, the Superpower” (強國台) (*AM730 Newspaper*, “J5”; *my trans.*).⁵⁹ In terms of education in Hong Kong, there was also strong criticism against the Education Bureau’s proposal in 2015 to require primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong to teach simplified Chinese characters, employ Mandarin to teach the Chinese subject, and to implement the national education subject (Eu, “Simplified”; *my trans.*).⁶⁰ Audrey Eu Yuet-mee (余若薇), founding leader of the pro-democracy Civic Party (公民黨) in Hong Kong, considers these government proposals as a measure to destroy the “two systems” principle as safeguarded by the Basic Law (Eu, “Simplified”; *my trans.*).

⁵⁹ Hong Kong people often use the term “Superpower” (強國) in a derogatory way to refer to mainland China.

⁶⁰ The Education Bureau’s proposals were listed in the document on the “Renewal of Chinese Language Education Curriculum (Primary 1 to Secondary 6)” (更新中國語文教育學習領域課程: 中一至中六) (Eu, “Simplified”; *my trans.*).

Therefore, as long as there is discontent among Hong Kong people towards the neocoloniser, any attempt to stage *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* in Mandarin in Hong Kong will probably not fulfil Ho's declared intentions. However, its Mandarin production may be better received if it were staged in mainland China instead. Under the political climate of contemporary Hong Kong, the playwright and director's intended messages, relating to the philosophy of life and the dilemma of one's choices, might be distorted when played to a local audience. I shall provide one example to illustrate my point. Ho has translated Shakespeare's famous line of "To be, or not to be; that is the question" (*Ham.* 3.1.58) to a more descriptive line of "To endure humiliation and continue living, or to commit suicide? To survive or to die, I cannot even make up my mind" (忍辱偷生還是一死了之? 一存一亡, 我竟然無法抉擇) (Ho 48; *my trans.*). Compared to the rather abstract notion of Shakespeare's original line, Ho's translation makes it easier for his Hong Kong audience to comprehend the play, as many may not be familiar with Shakespeare's works. Hardy Tsoi points out that Ho's translated line signifies the essence of the entire play, where transformation is the fundamental of life, and this connects with the philosophy of Shakespeare's play. Tsoi also hopes that his audience will not merely consider watching the adaptation for entertainment purposes, but also as an opportunity to reflect on the dilemma of life (*Sing Pao Daily*, "Chinese"; *my trans.*). After twice acting as Hamlet, Lee Heung-sing wrote an article titled "To be Liu Huan, Not to be Hamlet: My performance of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*" (To be 劉桓, Not to be Hamlet: 我演《王子復仇記》). In the article, Lee echoes Tsoi's viewpoint that there are many moments in life "to be or not to be", for instance, to make a decision or to continue pondering ("To"; *my trans.*). He also quotes Tsoi's saying that the tragedy of *Hamlet:*

Sword of Vengeance is a tragedy of hesitation, as the main protagonist thinks too much and this costs him his life (“To”; *my trans.*). This is a traditional view of the play perpetuated by Olivier’s film. However, the complexity of this philosophical statement was thwarted under the anti-government sentiments appearing in Hong Kong during the Occupy Central Movement in 2014. Yau Ching-yuen (游清源), the former deputy editor of the *Hong Kong Economic Journal*, has infused the famous line in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* with the political reality of Hong Kong. Yau asserts that the contemporary Hong Kong version of *Hamlet* has produced the key phrase of “To pro-occupy or to anti-occupy, that is the question” (“The”; *my trans.*). In other words, the philosophy of Ho’s translation is reduced to a simple paradox as to which camp Hong Kong citizens choose to side with: the pro-democracy “Yellow Ribbons” that support the Umbrella Movement, or the pro-government “Blue Ribbons” that oppose the Occupy Central Movement. This kind of reductive and binary thinking has been superimposed onto the sinicized adaptation of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* in the neocolonial period of Hong Kong.

IV. Conclusion

Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance stands out among other Hong Kong Shakespearean adaptations in the colonial period, as it is neither a canonical production nor a mimicry of Shakespearean productions staged in the West. By changing the English title of *Hamlet* into *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, Ho treats his adaptation as an independent text in its own right (S. Chan, “Identity” 104 fn 3). Ho’s decision *not* to adapt *Hamlet* into a Hong Kong setting, or into a modern period of China, signifies the complex psychology of

Hong Kongers living under the British reign. First, it suggests the detachment of Hong Kongers towards the “motherland” in the colonial period. Second, it depicts Hong Kongers’ prioritization of a cultural China over a political China, which is manifested on four levels as I have suggested in this chapter. Furthermore, Ho’s play also distinguishes itself from other Hong Kong Shakespearean adaptations in the neocolonial period, as it is the only play staged in Mandarin so far. His adaptation proved to be extremely popular among Hong Kong directors, as it was performed 7 times in pre-1997 and post-1997 Hong Kong, making it one of the very few productions that were staged in both the British colonial era and the neocolonial period. Although some critics have written about Ho’s play as staged in the colonial period, little critical attention has been given to *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* as staged in Mandarin after the PRC takeover of Hong Kong, and I argue that the afterlife of Ho’s adaptation is particularly significant to the analysis of Hong Kong Shakespeare. There are profound implications as to why China chose a Hong Kong Shakespearean adaptation of 1977 to represent Chinese Shakespeare to the West in 2009. To the PRC, as Hong Kong had already been handed over to China in 1997, Hong Kong Shakespeare was now regarded as part of Chinese Shakespeare. However, this goes in opposition to the psychology of many Hong Kongers, who strive to distinguish their local identity from the larger umbrella of the Chinese identity. I have also outlined in this chapter that Hong Kong Shakespeare is not mainland Shakespeare, as Hong Kong Shakespeare has been more advanced than mainland Shakespeare for at least 30 years (W.L. Lau 27; *my trans.*). Unlike mainland Shakespeare that focuses on ideological aspects, Hong Kong Shakespeare can creatively move beyond faithful interpretations of the source texts. The change of performance language from Cantonese

into Mandarin of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* in the post-1997 period suggests the supremacy of the neocoloniser's language, and this ultimately endangers the cultural identity of Hong Kong people. In the next chapter, I shall explore Tang Shu Wing's *Titus Andronicus 2.0* and *Macbeth*, and examine how these two adaptations of Shakespeare metaphorically comment on the socio-political situation of Hong Kong. While *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* proactively fits into the neocolonial paradigm of Hong Kong by surrendering its native language, Tang's adaptations of Shakespeare paradoxically employ the literary icon of the ex-coloniser to disrupt the authority of the neocoloniser.

Chapter Two

A Subtle Challenge to the Government's Authority:

Tang Shu Wing's *Titus Andronicus 2.0* and *Macbeth*

in post-Umbrella Movement Hong Kong

I. Introduction

If Richard Ho's *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* signifies a fairly safe representation of Shakespeare to the Hong Kong government in the neocolonial period, which internalizes China's cultural values, then Tang Shu-wing's (鄧樹榮) *Titus Andronicus 2.0* (泰特斯 2.0) (2015) and *Macbeth* (馬克白) (2016) offer a very different form of Hong Kong Shakespeare. Tang Shu-wing's productions of these two tragedies used adapted versions of Shakespeare's scripts, prepared with the respective aid of playwright Candice Chong Mui-ngam (莊梅岩) in *Titus Andronicus 2.0* and playwright Rupert Chan Kwan-yun (陳鈞潤) in *Macbeth*, under Tang's supervision. Though Tang Shu-wing's *Macbeth* is also situated in ancient China, like Ho's *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, it is not the most apparent exemplar of sinicized Shakespeare for two reasons. First, the main action of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* is firmly rooted in the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period in ancient China, and Ho provides a clear explanation of the parallels between the political turmoil of this dynastic period and that of the Danish court in the source text (Ho 15; *my trans.*). Unlike *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* where there is no time shift in the

play, Tang's *Macbeth* shifts from a present-day Hong Kong context in the prologue to the main action taking place in ancient China, and then returns to a contemporary Hong Kong context in the coda. The beginning and ending of Tang's production renders it largely different from Shakespeare's source text, and I shall discuss the significance of the prologue and coda in the next section of this chapter. Secondly, unlike *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, Tang's *Macbeth* does not specify which period of ancient China the play is transposed to. I perceive the transposition of Tang's *Macbeth* to ancient China without a specified period as a strategic way of avoiding censorship by the Hong Kong government. Censorship is prevalent in Hong Kong theatre, and although it also existed during the British colonial era (Tsoi, "Hong" 155; *my trans.*);⁶¹ its circumscription has tightened following the handover in 1997. In March 2016, Hong Kong's Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) requested a local theatre company "The Nonsensemakers" (糊塗戲班) to delete the word "national" (國立) from its performance booklet; the word "national" came from the resume of a member who graduated from the Taipei National University of the Arts (國立臺北藝術大學) (*Am730 Newspaper*, "Theatre"; *my trans.*). This controversy suggests that in the neocolonial period, the Hong Kong government abides by the ideology and policy of the PRC government, in which the latter does not consider Taiwan as a "nation". The Hong Kong government's handling of this incident had been criticized by Joseph Wong Wing-ping (王永平), former secretary for the civil service, as an infringement of the "one country, two systems" principle in Hong Kong (Liang, "Artists"). Candace Chong commented on the controversy, "Artists themselves start to worry, some things cannot be said, while some things need to be said with caution"

⁶¹ See Chapter One, pp. 100-101.

(Liang, “Artists”). Adele Lee in the “Shakespeare in Hong Kong” podcast (Grant) echoes this comment by asserting that the mainland is tightening its grip and that Hong Kong theatre practitioners are conscious that they are being watched and censored, which is one of the reasons for the perceived conservatism in Hong Kong theatre.⁶²

However, I disagree with Adele Lee’s remark that Hong Kong Shakespeare “only serves the purpose of entertainment” and “is not politically provocative” (Lee interviewed by Grant, “Shakespeare”). I would like to challenge her point of view with reference to Tang Shu-wing’s adaptations of *Macbeth* and *Titus Andronicus 2.0*. Tang’s *Macbeth*, together with Jimmy Lee Wai-cheung’s *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*,⁶³ offer a socio-politicised version of Shakespeare, whereby the directors’ commentary on the socio-political situation of Hong Kong takes precedence over their commentary on Shakespeare’s source texts. At this point, I wish to borrow Geoffrey Wagner’s three broad categories of adaptation, which are transposition, commentary and analogy (222-226). As mentioned in my introduction, transposition refers to a source text being transposed to a new medium with minimum interference (Wagner 222), whereas commentary refers to a source text being altered in some aspects (Wagner 223).⁶⁴ Finally, analogy refers to exploring analogous rhetorical techniques and attitudes between the source text and the adaptation (Wagner 226). The second category of “commentary” is

⁶² The “Shakespeare in Hong Kong” podcast was produced by the Folger Shakespeare Company in America, and its target audience were academics and students who are researching on Shakespeare. The purpose of the podcast was to explore how Shakespeare is stretched to tell a story of contemporary Hong Kong and colonialism in two important adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet—Crocodile River* and *Young Lovers*. The overall argument of Alexa Huang and Adele Lee was that Hong Kongers still clung onto British cultural heritage after 1997, and so the performance of Shakespeare acted as a means of resistance for them to rebel against China (Grant, “Shakespeare”).

⁶³ I shall discuss Jimmy Lee’s *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* in Chapter Four of my thesis.

⁶⁴ See my introduction, p. 54.

especially useful in my analysis of whether Hong Kong Shakespeare focuses on commenting on the politics of the source text, or the city's socio-political environment, or both. I would also like to emphasize that apart from Ho's *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, all the other Shakespearean productions that I am discussing in this thesis comment more on the socio-political situation of Hong Kong than on the source text.⁶⁵ Tang Shu-wing is especially interested in exploring Shakespeare's themes of usurpation and violence in Hong Kong after the handover, which is evident in his recurrent stagings of *Titus Andronicus* and *Macbeth* in Hong Kong and in other parts of the world. *Titus Andronicus 2.0* was first staged in 2009 in Hong Kong, and then re-run in 2015. Regarded as one of the most important events in contemporary Hong Kong theatre (W.P. Cheng, "The Aesthetics"; *my trans.*),⁶⁶ this adaptation originates from Tang's staging of *Titus Andronicus* (or the so-called *Titus 1.0*) in Hong Kong in 2008, a realist work enacted in spoken drama using Rupert Chan's translation of Shakespeare's source text (Choy, "Anti-drama"; *my trans.*).⁶⁷ This aesthetic choice itself placed the play at an intersection between East and West, since unlike Chinese opera, spoken drama has a shorter history and originates from the West (Latham 316). The first spoken drama in China was introduced by foreign missionaries and was performed in the late 19th century. In the 20th century, it was associated with the New Cultural Movement and the May 4th Literary Movement (Latham 316). Often inspired by socially motivated playwrights in the West,

⁶⁵ The aftermath of the staging of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, however, alludes to the neocolonial situation of Hong Kong, whereby Cantonese is gradually replaced by Mandarin in its social importance. See Chapter One, pp. 104-108.

⁶⁶ Recorded in Cheng Wai-pang (鄭威鵬)'s speech "The Aesthetics of Violence and Minimalism in *Titus 2.0*" ("Titus 2.0 的暴力及簡約美學") at the pre-performance talk of *Titus Andronicus 2.0* on September 6, 2015 at Hong Kong City Hall Theatre.

⁶⁷ Recorded in Howard Choy Yuen-fung (蔡元豐)'s speech "Anti-Drama: Searching for a Minimalism of Violence" ("反話劇：尋找暴力的最低極限") at the pre-performance talk of *Titus Andronicus 2.0* on September 5, 2015 at Hong Kong City Hall Theatre.

such as Henrik Ibsen and Anton Chekhov, young Chinese intellectuals wrote social realist dramas aimed at raising Chinese people's awareness to the injustices of the society (Latham 316). However, this form of imitation of Western psychological and social realism proved insufficient for Tang, who was dissatisfied by the reliance on spoken language in *Titus Andronicus* in 2008. In 2009 he abandoned the Western influence of spoken drama and reverted to a storytelling mode following the Chinese oral tradition, producing a new production which premiered in Hong Kong (Choy, "Anti-drama"; *my trans.*). The production has also travelled widely to different places such as Singapore in 2011 and Europe, Beijing and Taipei in 2012 (Tang Shu-Wing Theatre Studio, "Titus"). It is worth pointing out that Tang's productions, as compared to other productions that I am discussing in my thesis, are disproportionately well-known due to international viewing. For one thing, *Titus Andronicus* and *Titus Andronicus 2.0* are the *only* Hong Kong productions that can currently be found in the Asian Shakespeare Intercultural Archive (Asian Shakespeare Intercultural Archive, "Hong"). *Macbeth*, adapted and directed by Tang, is however excluded from the archive. Tang's *Macbeth* premiered in London in 2015 and was later reenacted in the 44th Hong Kong Arts Festival in 2016. In 2017, *Macbeth* also toured various countries in Europe, including Germany, Austria, Poland, Serbia, and Romania (Tang Shu-Wing Theatre Studio, "Macbeth"). In particular, the ambivalent transposition of *Macbeth* into ancient China (neither modern China nor contemporary Hong Kong) provides Tang with a safe distance via which to critique the politics of Hong Kong metaphorically. This fits into Wagner's category of transposition in his adaptation theory (222), as Sanders further explains the concept of transposition as relocating the source text in cultural, geographical and temporal terms (20).

Therefore, I do not entirely agree with Alexa Huang's assertion in Neva Grant's podcast that Hong Kong Shakespearean productions are "artistically innovative but apolitical" ("Shakespeare"). This is because I do not perceive that the notions of aesthetics and politics embedded in Hong Kong Shakespeare are mutually exclusive. Huang has particularly cited two Hong Kong Shakespearean productions to illustrate her argument that "although Hong Kong Shakespeare is apolitical, they offer some critique and are not all conservative" (Huang interviewed by Grant, "Shakespeare"). For instance, she asserts that *Hamlet-maxhine-hamlet-b* (2010), co-produced by Hong Kong On and On Theatre Workshop (前進進戲劇工作坊) and Taipei's Mobius Strip Theatre (莫比斯圓環創作公社), offers a critique of Hong Kong's material culture. This is represented by Ophelia clinging to an expensive handbag while floating in onstage streams. The striking image of Ophelia is represented in the poster of the play, with a Chinese tagline from Jean Baudrillard: "We live by object time; by this I mean we live by the pace of objects, live to their rhythm to their ceaseless succession" (Huang, "The Paradox" 93). Furthermore, Huang cites the example of *Titus Andronicus 2.0*, where the "actors in this black box production look and dress alike, indicating that the faces of evil are interchangeable" (Huang interviewed by Grant, "Shakespeare"). However, Huang has overlooked the most important political critique in Tang's production. At first glance, *Titus Andronicus 2.0* belongs to aestheticized Shakespeare, as the content of Shakespeare's story is subservient to its aesthetics of representation, whereby Tang employs the technique of minimalism in representing violence. However, a closer look at the production would invite a different reading, in which *Titus Andronicus 2.0* represents

socio-politicised Shakespeare under the guise of aestheticized Shakespeare, and I shall further this discussion in the following section.

II. Tang Shu-wing's *Titus Andronicus 2.0* (2015): Aestheticized Shakespeare or Socio-politicized Shakespeare?

For non-Hong Kong audiences who are not familiar with Hong Kong politics, the aestheticized aspects of Tang Shu-wing's productions seem more noticeable than the politicised metaphors. For instance, non-Hong Kong critics primarily commented on Tang's *Macbeth* as "visual" (Cheh, "Macbeth") and a "blend of East and West ideas" (Cheh, "Macbeth"),⁶⁸ while failing to identify the politics hidden in the play. At first glance, *Titus Andronicus 2.0* seems to fit into Brandon's category of "postmodern Shakespeare". Coinciding with Brandon's definition that postmodern Shakespeare simultaneously acknowledges Shakespeare's text and also instills local culture and theatrical practices (18), *Titus Andronicus 2.0* combines Shakespeare's story with the Chinese form of storytelling, and is adapted into a narrative form by Candace Chong Mui-ngam. The adaptation adjusts Shakespeare's script for a cast of two female and five male actors, who perform the 20 characters in the play, which is shown in Figure 6 below. Abiding by the aesthetics of minimalism, the actors in *Titus Andronicus 2.0* dress in black like the backstage crew and perform on a stage without any design, which makes it impossible for the audience to identify the context of the transposition. Its setting is like a "No Man's Land", which was the original name of the theatre troupe before it was

⁶⁸ Samantha Cheh comments that the "ideas of duality – Western and Eastern, old and new, good and bad – are in constant discussion throughout the production" ("Macbeth").

renamed as Tang Shu-wing Theatre Studio in 2009. The setting of *Titus Andronicus 2.0* is similar to the bare set of *Titus Andronicus* in 2008, which avoids all “cultural, historical or social reference” (Yong, “Tang” 116). Like the case of *Macbeth*, its setting is not situated in an easily identifiable time and space. However, it does not preclude it from commenting on the socio-political situation of Hong Kong. I believe that it is more accurate to regard *Titus Andronicus 2.0* as representing an aestheticized form of Shakespeare instead of fitting it into Brandon’s category of “postmodern Shakespeare”, since the cultural critic, Cheung Ping-kuen (張秉權) argues that *how* the story of *Titus Andronicus 2.0* is being told is more important than the content of the story itself (“Ways”; *my trans.*).⁶⁹ In this section, I shall focus on discussing Tang’s most recent Shakespearean production of *Titus Andronicus 2.0* in 2015, where there are implicit political overtones to the aesthetic choices of the production.

⁶⁹ Recorded in Cheung Ping-kuen (張秉權)’s speech “Ways of Using the Body to Tell a Story” (“用身體「講故事」的方法”) presented at the pre-performance talk of *Titus Andronicus 2.0* on September 5, 2015 at Hong Kong City Hall Theatre.

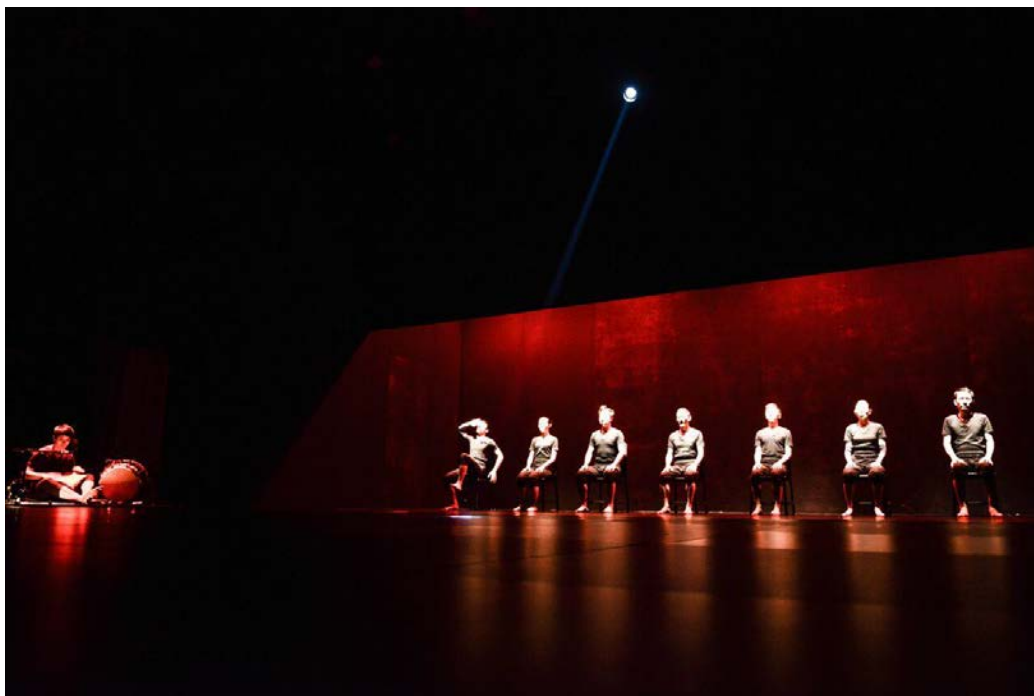


Figure 6: Seven actors and a musician in *Titus Andronicus 2.0*, photograph © Fung Wai-sun, Tang Shu-Wing Theatre Studio.

Viewed from the aesthetic angle, *Titus Andronicus 2.0* systematically explores the expression of pre-language, a term which refers to how people communicate before the emergence of verbal language (Tang, “The Presentation”; *my trans.*). According to Tang, there are “seven kinds of pre-language: the transposition of space, body movement, facial expression, eye movement, breathing, sound, and the hitting of one’s body” (“Reconstructing” 134; *my trans.*). As Hong Kong’s mainstream theatre is dominated by realism, Tang’s pre-language theatre presents a new and alternative mode of expression (Tang, “Reconstructing” 134; *my trans.*). Fung Wai-hang (馮蔚衡), assistant artistic director of the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre, suggests that the “exploration of pre-language in Tang’s productions has broadened the local audience’s perceptions of theatre” (Tang, “Reconstructing” 134; *my trans.*). She also argues that “in the past, the Hong

Kong audience had grown accustomed to watching realist plays, but now they have begun to accept different forms of expression in theatre. It is also hoped that non-language theatre and realist theatre can develop simultaneously, so as to enrich the cultural realm of Hong Kong” (Tang, “Reconstructing” 134; *my trans.*).



Figure 7: Physical energy of the actors, photograph © Fung Wai-sun, Tang Shu-Wing Theatre Studio.

One of the distinctive elements of *Titus Andronicus 2.0* is the insertion of yoga rituals into the production, breathing and sound being two elements of pre-language as defined by Tang. The practice of yoga is quite prevalent in the fast-paced city of Hong Kong where everyone is constantly in a rush, whether at work, commuting on public transport, or simply impatiently waiting one's turn to pay at the cashier in a supermarket. Many Hong Kong people of all ages turn to yoga to relieve stress from their daily lives. For instance, "laughter yoga" is popular with Hong Kong companies to soothe their stressed-out employees (Choi, "Hong"). Tang himself is a yoga practitioner, having studied yoga in India (Tang, "Why" 209; *my trans.*). As yoga teacher Sandy Ng points out, breathing is a crucial element in the practice of yoga, which enhances the prana, or the so-called life force of one's body (Personal interview with Ng).⁷⁰ In some intense scenes of *Titus Andronicus 2.0*, all the actors breathe heavily to heighten the serious atmosphere, breathing serving as one of the elements of pre-language. For instance, one of the actors, Leung Ka-wai (梁家維), narrates the last line of act 2, scene 1: "[Demetrius and Chiron] leave behind the most inconspicuous black slave, to continue plotting an even larger conspiracy" (Chong, "Titus" 6).⁷¹ The scene ends with all actors breathing heavily, which serves as a prelude for the evil to come. Moreover, the rape scene in act 2, scene 4 of *Titus Andronicus 2.0* is supplemented with heavy breathing of the two actors, Leung Ka-wai and Tang Chi-kin (鄧智堅) playing Demetrius and Chiron (Chong, "Titus" 14), which reinforces the violence and horror of the scene.

⁷⁰ Recorded in my interview with Sandy Ng Pui-ying (吳珮瑩), a yoga instructor at Yoga Prasada Hong Kong, July 2, 2016. Ng studied yoga in India before setting up her own yoga school in Hong Kong.

⁷¹ Quotations from Tang Shu-wing's *Titus Andronicus 2.0* come from *Titus Andronicus 2.0*, translated by Chong Mui-ngam, 2015. All translations in Tang's *Titus Andronicus 2.0* from Chinese to English are done by myself, unless otherwise stated.

Apart from training his actors in breathing techniques, Tang also employs the actors' bodies to depict strong emotions of the characters. He is a follower of Jerzy Grotowski's concept of the "poor theatre", in which the actors' bodies are the most important source of energy on stage (Tang, "Why" 208; *my trans.*). To enable the actors to express their energy unimpeded, Tang advocates a minimal stage design (Tang, "Why" 208; *my trans.*). Thus the stage of *Titus Andronicus 2.0* is bare except for some chairs, and the actors dress simply in black outfits like the backstage crew, as exemplified in Figure 8 below. At the end of act 3, scene 1, when Titus is deceived by Aaron and has his right hand chopped off, and the skulls of his sons Quintus and Martius are returned to him, all seven actors fall down one by one onto the floor (Chong, "Titus" 17), which represents the immense grief felt by Titus and his family members.



Figure 8: Using minimalism to express strong emotions, photograph © Fung Wai-sun, Tang Shu-Wing Theatre Studio.

Another yoga ritual that Tang employs in his production is the insertion of the “Om” sound at heightened moments of the play, signifying great tension and stress. The sound, usually uttered at the beginning or end of a yoga session, carries several meanings. “Om” comprises of three syllables: A, U, and M, which can represent the whole threefold experience of man, such as the physical plane, the mental plane, and the whole deep-sleep state (qtd. in Kumar et al., “Meditation”). Towards the end of act 3, scene 3 in *Titus Andronicus 2.0*,⁷² the actor Ng Wai-shek⁷³ narrates the incident where Lavinia reveals to her family that the villains who raped and disfigured her are Tamora’s sons, Demetrius and Chiron. As a third-person narrator, Ng continues:

Titus recalls his two innocent sons, Lucius who has been exiled, and [he also thinks about] the beasts who escaped the law. So he says he will fetch the bronze plates to carve [the beasts’] names with pointed steel. Marcus tells everyone to wait for the right opportunity to take revenge, but Titus immediately takes Marcus and Lavinia to the arsenal saying that he wants to choose a weapon, and he asks Marcus to give it to the queen’s two sons. Nobody knows why he does this. Marcus senses that his elder brother is turning weak and insane, and he prays to the gods for protection.

(Chong, “Titus” 20)

At this moment, all the actors end the scene by chanting “Om”. As “Om” represents the supreme consciousness (Kumar et al., “Meditation”), borrowing this yoga

⁷² The same scene appears in act 4, scene 1 of Shakespeare’s source text.

⁷³ Ng Wai-shek also played Macbeth in Tang’s *Macbeth* in 2016.

ritual signifies the characters' cleansing of their spirits in great distress. Furthermore, yoga teachings consider the "Om" sound to be the force behind all thoughts. Therefore, either chanting or thinking about "Om" is reported to produce a quiet mental state, which helps promote psychological and physiological wellbeing (Kumar et al., "Meditation"). Similarly, the actors' uttering of "Om" enables the audience to sense a larger connection between the distress experienced by Titus's family, and how Hong Kongers deal with pain and suffering in the aftermath of the Umbrella Movement. In contrast to the première of *Titus Andronicus 2.0* in 2009, there are newly added elements to the re-run of the play in 2015. For instance, Tang's adaptation in 2015 opened with audio news reports of violent events in Hong Kong and other parts of the world, in which a majority of the events happened after the Umbrella Movement in 2014. These included the shooting dead of an American news reporter, Alison Parker, on live television by her ex-colleague in 2015, massive explosions in Tianjin in China that killed over a hundred people in 2015, with the residents accusing the government of covering up the details, and the 2011 Amoy Garden murder case, the first time in the history of Hong Kong that a murderer was convicted with the victim's body yet to be found. Just before dimming the theatre lights, there was a broadcast on the controversy of the appointment process for the pro-vice chancellor position at the University of Hong Kong (HKU) in 2015, which was widely viewed as part of a Beijing-backed curtailing of academic freedom. Around 50 university students, deemed "violent" by university council members, protested and marched into the committee meeting in July 2015, when the university council delayed the appointment of the pro-vice chancellor until the new provost had been put in place (K. Cheng, "Explainer"). Though Tang explained that his recordings simply served to

“prepare the audience to watch the play and to connect present-day violence to that in Roman times” (Email interview with Tang), it is possible to read the insertion of these recordings as commenting on the circumscription of freedom and speech in Hong Kong.

Although Tang has repeatedly refrained from acknowledging it, there are subtle hints in his Shakespearean productions that reveal his concern for Hong Kong in the aftermath of the Umbrella Movement, whether it is Hong Kong people’s coping with violence, or the circumscription of academic freedom at university, the latter also relating to the Umbrella Movement. Since the moment that Johannes Chan Man-mun (陳文敏), a pro-democracy law scholar, was recommended for the University of Hong Kong’s pro-vice chancellor post by the search committee in December 2014, the pro-Beijing Hong Kong newspaper, *Wen Wei Bao* (文匯報), has published more than 300 articles attacking him for ties with the Umbrella Movement’s co-founder, Benny Tai Yiu-ting (戴耀廷), who worked as Chan’s subordinate (K. Cheng, “Explainer”). Chan’s appointment was delayed and eventually rejected, an outcome which many people in Hong Kong have linked to his pro-democracy stance and political interference from Beijing (K. Cheng, “Explainer”). Tang’s insertion of this news clip before the start of *Titus Andronicus 2.0* seems to suggest that violence can manifest itself in different forms in society. Violence does not only mean the physical forms of abuse such as murder and rape in Shakespeare’s source text, but also what many feel is the brutality of the neo-coloniser in restricting the freedoms of Hong Kong people.

The cultural critic Cheng Wai-pang (鄭威鵬) argues that the varying productions of *Titus Andronicus 2.0* staged respectively in 2009 and 2015 evoke different responses

from the Hong Kong audience (H. Wang, “Titus”; *my trans.*). In the production of 2009, the audience including himself thought that violence was a faraway subject. Nevertheless, when it came to its rerun in 2015, Hong Kongers had dealt with the trauma and pain after the Umbrella Movement (H. Wang, “Titus”; *my trans.*). Therefore, the uttering of the “Om” sound contains an added layer of meaning in the latest production of 2015. While the “Om” sound signifies pauses and contemplation of the violent events that happened in *Titus Andronicus 2.0* in 2009, with the main protagonists being Shakespeare’s characters, the main protagonists in the production of 2015 seem to voice the despair of Hong Kong people.

When I asked Tang why he chose to stage *Titus Andronicus*, which is not a very popular Shakespearean play among Hong Kong directors,⁷⁴ he answered, “A lot of people think that the violent scenes in the play will not appear in real life. But it has been proven that the violence in reality is not any less than the violence in the play” (Email interview with Tang). In Tang’s dialogue with the cultural critic Cheng Wai-pang on *Titus Andronicus 2.0*, both men discuss the relevance of the adaptation to contemporary Hong Kong. Cheng first comments that after the Umbrella Movement, Hong Kong people need to deal with a lot of hurt that has originated from violence. He also suggests that the violence in society is sometimes more exaggerated than that represented in theatre. In a similar vein, Ng Ka-hei (吳家禧), artistic director of Exploration Theatre (赫壘坊劇團), a local theatre company in Hong Kong, remarks that “while the Umbrella Movement is one of the significant moments in the history of Hong Kong, there are relatively few

⁷⁴ Tang Shu-wing is the only Hong Kong director who has staged *Titus Andronicus* in the city. Compared to *Hamlet*, the most popular Shakespearean play in Hong Kong which has been staged 11 times since 1997, *Titus Andronicus* has only been staged 4 times in the neocolonial period.

plays in our city that depict this social movement” (“From”; *my trans*).⁷⁵ In contrast, there were many plays before the handover of Hong Kong that illustrated Hong Kongers’ identity crisis, whereby 1997 marked the start of another important phase in the life of the former British colony (“From”; *my trans*).⁷⁶ The reason for this, according to Ng, might be that “theatre makers often like to present the extremity of life, but those things were already presented in the Umbrella Movement itself” (“From”; *my trans*). Among the many extreme examples in Occupy Central was the event in real life where a senior Hong Kong police officer, Franklin Chu King-wai (朱經緯), is seen beating unarmed civilians on the street, and Tang argues that this scene must be situated in a social context for it to generate meaning (H. Wang, “Titus”; *my trans*.). In other words, the social background is essential to the understanding of such violent incidents. Tang’s remark echoes the scenes in *Titus Andronicus 2.0* that must be read in connection to the socio-political environment of Hong Kong. The reviewers in Hong Kong watching Tang’s production would be familiar with the incidents of policemen using pepper spray and tear gas to disperse peaceful pro-democracy protestors in the Umbrella Movement (Sung, “The Birth”), and seven policemen in a back alley beating a protestor, Ken Tsang Kin-chiu (曾健超), a former member of the Civic Party (公民黨) (G. Lin, “Footage”). It is thus possible to interpret Tang’s choice of staging the violent play of *Titus Andronicus 2.0* as a visual sample of Hong Kong Shakespeare, which echoes what is widely perceived as the growing violence of Hong Kong in the neocolonial era. The Professional Commons and

⁷⁵ Recorded in Ng Ka-hei’s speech “From Pre-handover to Post-Umbrella: Writing of Hong Kong on the stage” (“從回歸前到雨傘後 — 舞台上的香港書寫”) presented on March 16, 2017 at the Hong Kong Baptist University.

⁷⁶ Such plays included Hardy Tsoi’s *I am a Hong Konger* (我係香港人) (1985), Ng Ka-hei’s *Sentiments of the Dragon Cannot Be Changed* (龍情化不開) (1996) and *A Tale of Three Cities* (楓葉·長城·老襯亭) (1996, 1997), among many others.

Hong Kong In-Media had compiled a comprehensive report on “Police Violence in the Umbrella Movement 2014-2015” (The Professional Commons and Hong Kong In-Media 12). The report indicates that in the Occupy Movement, Hong Kong police frequently applied force to drive away protestors, resulting in over 2,000 people who suffered physical or mental injuries (The Professional Commons and Hong Kong In-Media 9). This resonates with Tang’s view that “violence in reality is not any less than the violence in *Titus Andronicus 2.0*” (Email interview with Tang). Therefore, Tang’s production is a powerful representation of socio-politicised Shakespeare in the guise of aestheticised Shakespeare, as his play is deeply connected to the contemporary politics of Hong Kong society. Though he appears to favour aesthetics over the content of Shakespeare’s story, in reality he comments on the political situation of neocolonial Hong Kong through his representation of violence in the play. *Macbeth* and *Titus Andronicus 2.0* are more a critique of Hong Kong society than a tribute to Shakespeare, as Tang intentionally avoids the latter notion (“Shakespeare’s abstractness”; *my trans.*).⁷⁷ In his plenary speech titled “Shakespeare’s Abstractness and Actuality” (“莎士比亞的虛與實”) at the 10th Chinese Drama Festival, Tang remarked, “Shakespeare is too famous, to stage his play is like paying a tribute to him” (“Shakespeare’s abstractness”; *my trans.*). So what motivates Tang to stage Shakespearean plays that revolve around the issues of violence and usurpation? According to the cultural critic Cheung Ping-kuen, Tang adapts Shakespeare to express his views towards reality, so as to motivate his audience to question how to deal with violence in Hong Kong and in the world (“Ways”; *my trans.*). In a similar vein, Bernice Chan asserts that the aesthetics embedded in *Titus Andronicus 2.0* are *only* a

⁷⁷ From his plenary speech on April 10, 2016, where he spoke at the 10th Chinese Drama Festival held in Hong Kong.

metaphor that Tang employs to encourage the audience to reflect on the issue of violence under structures of authority (Telephone interview with B. Chan).

Moreover, Tang successfully connects the complex psychology of Shakespeare's characters to that of the people living in neocolonial Hong Kong after the Umbrella Movement. He playfully comments on Titus's play-acting at the beginning of act 4, scene 2.⁷⁸ In this scene, the actress Ivy Pang (彭珮嵐) first impersonates the lines of a despairing Titus: "The righteous goddess has already left the world, she has left. Let us all bring our weapons to cast our nets into the ocean; if we are lucky enough we can catch her at sea; but there is no righteousness in the sea and on the land alike" (Chong, "Titus" 23). At this particular moment, Pang suddenly inserts a personal remark about her acting career: "In 2004, I graduated from the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts, and I have been an actress for 11 years ..." (Chong, "Titus" 23). The line led to giggles from the audience, as some were puzzled why Pang suddenly inserted her acting experience here, seemingly totally irrelevant to the play. However, the insertion of this line shows that Pang is conscious of her play-acting as Titus, and in turn Titus is also play-acting in this scene. Titus's play-acting is a response to his great distress resulting from the tragic events that consecutively befall his family members. His two innocent sons, Martius and Quintus, are beheaded for murder that they have not committed; his only remaining son, Lucius, is banished; his beloved daughter, Lavinia, is raped and disfigured, and Titus

⁷⁸ This actually refers to act 4, scene 3 in the source text as Chong Mui-ngam, the translator-come-adaptor of *Titus Andronicus* 2.0, confuses the number of scenes in act 3. Overall, Chong is quite faithful in adapting the scenes from the source text, except that she seems to be confused that there are three scenes in act 3, while in reality there are only two scenes in the source text. Therefore, act 4, scene 1 in the source text becomes act 3, scene 3 in her adaptation, but the content of this particular scene is equivalent to that of the source text, in which Lavinia reveals to her family members the names of the villains who had raped and tortured her.

himself is tricked by Aaron and has lost his hand in a futile attempt to save his innocent sons. To seek revenge against the emperor, Titus shoots arrows into his court with letters to the gods attached to them. This, however, is only a symbolic gesture of revenge, as the real revenge comes in the next scene when Titus's son Lucius brings forth an army to usurp the emperor's reign. Pang's remark about her acting career is halted by her fellow actress Lai Yuk-ching tapping her on the shoulder, and Lai repeats Pang's previous lines before continuing to narrate the scene. The line "In 2004, I graduated from the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts, and I have been an actor for 11 years ..." is repeated at the close of the play, where all seven actors take turns to share with the audience their personal stories. Pang is the first person to address the audience, where she begins by telling them the physical injuries that she has suffered from being an actress for 11 years. She also talks about her boyfriend who helped her massage some parts of her body that were aching. She ends her sharing by saying, "I know, not everyone's partner will do that, so I feel very grateful that I have met this person!" (Chong, "Titus" 32). By arranging Pang to be the first actress to share her story, Tang seems to suggest that in the midst of staging this violent play, love and compassion still exist. When Pang suddenly inserts the line about her graduation from the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts in act 4, scene 2, Titus is arguably at his most distressed. Suppose that Lai did not stop Pang's sharing in this scene, and that Pang continued her story: perhaps her revelation of the love that her boyfriend showed her would bring some warmth to Titus. In a subtle way, I think that Tang tries to remind the audience that there is still some hope in this violent world, and he is not entirely pessimistic about the socio-political situation of neocolonial Hong Kong. It is possible to interpret the scene where Pang's boyfriend massages her wounds

after drama rehearsals as allegorical, which suggests that the wounds that Hong Kong people had suffered during the Umbrella Movement also need to be bandaged.

In addition, *Titus Andronicus 2.0* had been performed in China as well. For instance, it was performed in Beijing in the Third Beijing Nanluoguxiang Theatre Festival (南鑼鼓巷戲劇節) in 2012, in the same form as the production premièred in Hong Kong in 2009. Moreover, it travelled to the 12th Shanghai International Theatre Festival (上海當代戲劇節) in 2016 (Tang Shu-Wing Theatre Studio, “Titus”), and this time the show included audio recordings as in the rerun of the production in Hong Kong in 2015. Though the same news recordings were played in Cantonese before the opening of *Titus Andronicus 2.0* in Shanghai, critics in the PRC have seemed to downplay the significance of such recordings to the political significance of Tang’s adaptation. A reviewer in Shanghai wrote that “although the new clips in *Titus Andronicus 2.0* subtly reflected the production’s connection with contemporary politics, one would not have missed anything if he or she had come to the performance right after the prelude ended. To the ears of people who were unaware of Tang’s message, the news clips functioned only like background music” (Jingan Contemporary Theatre Hub, “Titus 2.0”; *my trans.*). Either the PRC critics were unaware of Hong Kong’s political environment in the aftermath of the Umbrella Movement, deemed to be “illegal” by Beijing; or the restrictive PRC government did not allow them to explicitly comment on the political aspects of Tang’s production, especially when the messages of *Titus Andronicus 2.0* seemed to criticize the Hong Kong government’s circumscription of freedom and speech.

Compared to the spoken drama form of *Titus Andronicus* in 2008 and 2012, *Titus Andronicus 2.0* of 2009 and 2015 are more politically driven, as the director employs the alienation effect in his adaptation to promote a sense of social awareness, so that the audience can clearly perceive the real world as reflected in his play. As reiterated by Howard Choy, Tang uses the “calmest way to represent violence” (“Anti-drama”; *my trans.*). Since the actors frequently switch between positions of the storyteller, the commenter and the character, it prevents the audience from forever identifying an individual character as either the victim or the villain. This echoes Alexa Huang’s observation in Neva Grant’s podcast that the forces of evil are interchangeable in Tang’s production of 2015, as the actors look and dress alike (“Shakespeare”). Furthermore, the interchangeability of the good and evil in *Titus Andronicus 2.0* corresponded to the real-life situation in Hong Kong, where the policemen and the triad members were perceived to be working side-by-side in attacking the protestors in the Umbrella Movement. In Evans Chan’s *Raise the Umbrellas*, a documentary on the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong, policemen were seen to be watching indifferently and doing nothing, while some members of the triad society brutally attacked a protestor. Another protestor spoke to the director in the documentary, “I was once assaulted by a man who claimed to be a triad member. But as he was harassing me, a police identification card fell off from his pocket” (Evans Chan, *Raise the Umbrellas*). The frequent shifts between the good and the evil; or between the narrator and the character in *Titus Andronicus 2.0* produce an alienation effect, where violence is viewed from a critical distance. This echoes Bertolt Brecht’s argument that the audience should be hindered from simply identifying with the characters in the play (Willet 91). Since the actors are not completely involved in play-

acting, but they also narrate and comment, this motivates the audience to rethink what violence is and how we can deal with it. Brecht argues that the onset of the alienation effect encourages the audience to keep a “keen eye for what is socially important” (Willet 95). Though *Titus Andronicus 2.0* and *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* belong to the same genre of Shakespearean tragedy, the audience in each play reacted very differently when witnessing violence on stage. As recounted by Lee Heung-sing, who acted as Liu Huan (Hamlet) in *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* in 2010 and 2012, the reviewers reacted anxiously to the sword fighting in the last scene of the play, which is titled “The Prince Ascends to Heaven” (“太子歸天”). When Liu Huan fell after being stabbed by Li Ru-long (Laertes)’s poisoned sword, Li Ru-long walked towards Liu Huan and wanted to seize the chance to slay his enemy. At this very moment, Liu Huan rose and stabbed Li Ru-long with his sword. In this important turning point in the sword fight, one of the audience members cried, “Oh dear!” (Lee, “The Lunatic”; *my trans.*). This reflected that the audience watching Ho’s production was highly absorbed in the acting of the play, to the point that they might mistake the fighting as real. On the contrary, in *Titus Andronicus 2.0*, the audience did not give such a direct response to the violence in the play. The minimal stage design and the interchangeability of the roles of actor and storyteller contributed to this alienation effect, where the audience was fully aware that the violence on stage was *not* real. This juxtaposes with the *real* violence that existed off stage, which they were reminded of by the audio news clips before the play began. Moreover, in *Titus Andronicus 2.0*, Tang three times inserts moments of complete silence either before or after the committing of violence, which accompany the suffering of the victims. For instance, act 2, scene 3 commences with 15 seconds of silence before the

actor, Chu Pak-hong (朱柏康), starts to narrate that Aaron is plotting the murder of Bassianus (Chong, “Titus” 9). Similarly, act 3, scene 1 of Tang’s adaptation begins with all actors resting on their chairs for 15 seconds of silence, which serves to prepare the audience for witnessing the suffering of Titus. In the same scene, the actor Tang Chi-kin sometimes narrates, while at other times he embodies Titus’s voice to plead in vain for the lives of his two sons, Martius and Quintus. To make matters worse, Marcus brings the disfigured Lavinia to Titus, and the actor Chu Pak-hong adopts the voice of Titus, declaring “If those who hurt her had killed her instantly, my heart would not be as painful as it is now. I feel like I am standing alone by myself against the rocks and surrounded by the sea. Watching the tide rising gradually, here I wait for a gigantic wave to swallow me to the heart of the sea” (Chong, “Titus” 16). In the first scene of Tang’s play, Titus has rejected the Roman crown and has emphasized that “he will be content if he can often see his beloved daughter, Lavinia” (Chong, “Titus” 2). We can imagine how heartbroken Titus is; now seeing Lavinia mutilated. At this point all the actors rest on their chairs for 20 seconds, which is the longest moment of silence in the production. The silence and pauses on stage allow the reviewers to reflect on the violence and suffering in the play, and to rethink about the actual violence in Hong Kong.

In addition, Tang allows his actors to disclose their private thoughts, which override the original speeches in the source text. This creates a critical distance for the audience to ponder on the significance of the play. The ending of *Titus Andronicus 2.0* is very different from the source text, as it does not end with Lucius’s speech on the disparate treatment of the deceased, including his family members, Titus and Lavinia,

and his enemy, Tamora. In Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, Lucius proclaims at the end of the play (in the Quarto text):

Some loving friends convey the Emperor hence,

And give him burial in his father's grave.

My father and Lavinia shall forthwith

Be closed in our household's monument.

As for that ravenous tiger, Tamora,

No funeral rite nor man in mourning weed,

No mournful bell shall ring her burial;

But throw her forth to beasts and birds of prey.

Her life was beastly and devoid of pity,

And being dead, let birds on her take pity.

(*Tit.* 5.3.190-199)⁷⁹

Lucius's speech provides closure to the play; he categorizes his father and sister as victims of violence, in contrast to which he describes Tamora as "beastly". However, Tang's adaptation puts the fate of Tamora and Aaron's child as the main focus in the ending. *Titus Andronicus 2.0* ends with a question that the actor Chu Pak-hong asks:

⁷⁹ Quotations from *Titus Andronicus* are taken from *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, edited by Stanley Wells, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

“Lucius then asks people to bring forth Aaron’s son. He looks at this little creature, and ponders, ‘If I raise this child up, is it really possible to bring a warning to people in the future?’” (Chong, “Titus” 31). The ending of *Titus Andronicus 2.0* continues the ambiguity of the source text, as the fate of the illegitimate child remains unclear. Will the Romans kill the child despite Lucius’s promise? Or will he grow up and continue the cycle of revenge? Lucius’s private thoughts to himself in *Titus Andronicus 2.0* provoke the audience to contemplate on the meaning of Tang’s adaptation. When Lucius ponders on whether it is possible to bring a warning to people in the future if he raises the illegitimate child, it is also uncertain what kind of warning he is considering. Is it a warning that one should never commit adultery? Or a warning that one should be compassionate and not seek revenge? Or that one should not wage war? While Tang’s adaptation begins with the line, “This is a story about revenge” (Chong, “Titus” 1), it concludes with an ambiguous warning message to the audience.

Moreover, Tang blurs the violence taking place on and off stage by drawing a very thin boundary between the first person mode of acting and the third person narrative of storytelling. Immediately after Lucius utters his private thoughts at the end of the play, all the actors throw their shirts onto the stage; then they walk towards different corners of the audience and begin telling their own stories. Among the seven personal stories of the actors, some of them took place in Hong Kong, others in Beijing and London. Three of them are about their experiences of being an actor, one about physical violence, two about facing abuse as a child and an adult respectively, and finally one story about compassion. For instance, actress Lai Yuk-ching (黎玉清) recalled her experience of

being detained at an airport in Europe.⁸⁰ When the immigration officer asked her what her occupation was, she replied that she was an actress. The officer then grew suspicious, and angrily shouted at her, “No acting here!” (Chong, “Titus” 33). The actor, Ng Wai-shek, described a similar experience of being discriminated against in Europe. He told the audience that in 1997, he was riding on an underground train in London, and he was rudely treated by a white, male passenger in the train compartment. The only person who showed him some sympathy was a black female passenger (Chong, “Titus” 32). On the other hand, actor Chu Pak-hong confessed his habit of biting his nails to the audience, which he developed after he had been punished and detained in a dark room by his kindergarten teacher in Hong Kong (Chong, “Titus” 32). The actor, Leung Ka-wai, remembered an emotional encounter with his drama teacher in Beijing. He said he had a habit of turning around after waving goodbye to a person. After he and his teacher bid farewell to each other, he walked on 20 metres, turned his head back, and saw his teacher still at the same spot where they had previously said goodbye. He then continued to walk on for another 20 metres, turned his head back again, and he saw his teacher still waving goodbye to him. Finally he decided not to turn his head anymore, because if he did so, he would definitely cry if he still saw his teacher in the far distance (Chong, “Titus” 34). Though the personal stories of the actors are not in any way related to Shakespeare’s source text, they seem to signify that violence and humanity co-exist in our daily lives. The actors’ calm reflection of their past experiences in some ways echoes Tang’s assertion of using the “calmest way to represent violence” in *Titus Andronicus 2.0* (Choy, “Anti-drama”; *my trans.*). After narrating their own stories, most of the actors concluded

⁸⁰ Lai Yuk-ching also played Man Zyu, the mainland Chinese version of Katherina, in Jimmy Lee’s *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*, which I shall discuss in Chapter Four of my thesis.

their speeches with a line that described their thoughts and feelings at that time, or a newfound understanding of themselves and the society around them. Viewed in retrospect, Lai said, “[The immigration officer] did not tell me why he detained me” (Chong, “Titus” 33). After being maltreated on an underground train in London, Ng ended his sharing by saying, “At that moment, I wanted to hit somebody” (Chong, “Titus” 32). Chu said, “My habit of biting my nails had not changed until two months ago” (Chong, “Titus” 32). By conveying their personal stories, the actors bring themselves closer to the audience, who are not simply watching a Shakespearean adaptation passively. Instead, the audience is assigned an active role to ask questions about how *Titus Andronicus 2.0* relates to societal events in Hong Kong and elsewhere, and also to their personal experiences, whether positive or negative. Bernice Chan points out that *Titus Andronicus 2.0* encourages the audience to reflect on the issue of violence in a global way (Telephone interview with B. Chan). The divergence of the actors’ stories also symbolises that each and every reviewer watching Tang’s play may walk away with a different meaning, which enriches Shakespeare’s source text. Though, as previously mentioned, Tang’s adaptation begins with the line “This is a story about revenge”, the play is *not* just about revenge. Instead, it encourages the audience to become more acutely aware of the violence and humanity that happen in everyday life. Tang once said, “Someone asked me why I’d chosen such a violent work to stage. I answered, violence is in our blood, it’s unavoidable, and so we might as well confront it head on. To consciously shut oneself up in a self-contained world of warmth and joy is to stunt your own growth” (Tang, “Shakespeare” 15). He seems to suggest that violence is unavoidable in society, but we can choose our own ways to deal with it. Perhaps Tang’s remedy for

the growing violence in neocolonial Hong Kong is to adopt an aestheticised perspective of viewing violence calmly at a distance, to analyse it, and to come to terms with it.

Although Tang's emphasis is on making a production which comments on the violent times in which he lives, his successive versions of *Titus Andronicus 2.0* do have incidental points to make about the differences between his values and those of the sixteenth century play. For instance, *Titus Andronicus 2.0* comments on Shakespeare's source text, most evidently in Tang's changing of the ending to reveal Lucius' private thoughts on whether raising Aaron's baby can provide a warning to people in the future. Tang's reason for adapting Shakespeare echoes Linda Hutcheon's suggested reasons of adaptation, which is to contest the aesthetic or political values of the adapted text (20). For instance, Tang comments on the ambiguity of the source text, as Shakespeare had not written about the fate of the illegitimate child. In addition, the actors in the play, who shift between positions of the storyteller, the character, and the commentator, frequently insert lines of commentary after narrating an incident, or after uttering the lines of a character. For instance, the first scene in the play signifies swift changes of the complex relationships between various characters. In the beginning, with Titus's support, Saturninus ascends to the throne of the Roman emperor. To return Titus's favour, Saturninus proclaims:

Titus Andronicus, for thy favours done

To us in our election this day

I give thee thanks in part of thy deserts,

And will with deeds requite thy gentleness.

And for an onset, Titus, to advance
Thy name and honourable family,
Lavinia will I make my empress,
Rome's royal mistress, mistress of my heart

(*Tit.* 1.1.234-241)

Nevertheless, things come to a complete turn when Saturninus's younger brother, Bassianus, insists that Lavinia is betrothed to him and takes her away with the aid of Lavinia's brothers. When Mutius intercedes on behalf of his fleeing sister, Titus strikes him down and kills him. Publicly humiliated by the loss of Lavinia, Saturninus announces that he will instead take Tamora as empress. Towards the end of this scene in *Titus Andronicus 2.0*, actress Ivy Pang comments on Saturninus's changing perception of Titus, which sows the seeds of tragedy for Titus's family. Pang comments, "Poor and innocent Titus, half an hour ago he was still the surrogate father of Saturninus, but now he has already become the emperor's eyesore" (Chong, "Titus" 3). The swift change of the actor's roles as the narrator, the commenter, and the actor signifies that evil is transferrable, and it prevents the audience from constantly identifying a single character as either the victim or the villain. Pang, who made the above comment, also acted as Tamora. In the opening scene of the play, Tamora is depicted as a sad and wounded mother, as the actor, Aska Leung narrates, "Tamora saw her son being dragged away, his body was dismembered, and in the midst of cheers, even his lungs were dug out and burned. When the soldiers announced that the ceremonial rites had come to an end, Tamora's tears had already dried up" (Chong, "Titus" 1).

While Shakespeare's source text simply closes the scene with Titus inviting the emperor and the new empress to hunt the following day, Tang's adaptation of this scene concludes with the actor Chu Pak-hong foretelling that disaster is imminent after a brief repose of peace: "Titus still hasn't realised that he has already sown the seeds of murder; in order to alleviate the atmosphere, he invites the king and queen to go hunting in the forest the following day" (Chong, "Titus" 4). Through the words of the narrator-cum-commentator, the audience is prepared to watch the horrific violence to come. As asserted by Cheung Ping-kuen, narration in the play can provide a distance to reduce the shock of violence, but at the same time it also intensifies the imagination of cruelty ("Review"). From a rather calm and distant perspective, Chu closes the scene by saying, "The sacrifice of Titus's twenty-second son is exchanged for a brief moment of peace, but it also conceals a more turbulent form of destructive power" (Chong, "Titus" 4).

Besides explaining the course of events in the play, Tang also displays sensitivity in conveying the psychology of his characters. He frequently inserts comments on their personality in the adaptation to present his characters as more vivid to the audience. For example, at the beginning of act 2, scene 2, the three actors simultaneously describe the emotional states of the two pairs of newlyweds and the villains, Demetrius and Chiron.

Wong Siu-fai: After a while Saturninus sleepily brings along Tamora.

Chu Pak-hong: Bassianus happily holds the hands of Lavinia.

Ng Wai-shek: Following behind are the sneaky Demetrius and Chiron.

(Chong, "Titus" 7)

Moreover, the script-writer Chong Mui-ngam expresses her sympathy to the characters when they undergo great loss and suffering, as she allows the actors to comment on Lavinia's loss of her husband. The distance between the script-writer and the characters is at times close when she inserts personal feelings towards them, other times distant when violent deeds are presented in a third person narrative. In contrast, the distance between Shakespeare and his characters in the source text remains relatively the same throughout the play. In act 2, scene 3, after Bassianus is murdered by Tamora's two sons, the actress Lai Yuk-ching comments, "Poor Lavinia became a widow after only one night of sleeping with her lover" (Chong, "Titus" 10). In addition, Chong Mui-ngam allows the actors to see through the deceptive appearances of other characters. At the end of act 2, scene 3, Titus's sons Martius and Quintus are imprisoned and awaiting execution after being wrongly accused by Aaron, Tamora's lover, of murdering Bassianus. Shakespeare's source text ends with Tamora's line addressed to Titus, "Andronicus, I will entreat the King / Fear not thy sons, they shall do well enough" (*Tit.* 2.3.304-305). Titus ignores Tamora's masked kindness and speaks to his son instead: "Come, Lucius, come, stay not to talk with them" (*Tit.* 2.3.306). Tang's adaptation explicitly unmasks the deception of Tamora, as the scene closes with the actor Ng Wai-shek's comment, "Before [Saturninus] leaves, Tamora cries crocodile tears and tells Titus that she will plead to the king [for his cause], but Titus has started to suspect her, and he does not have the slightest hope that she can help him" (Chong, "Titus" 13).

Among the Shakespearean adaptations staged by the four Hong Kong theatre directors that I am exploring, Tang's plays are the most widely travelled to other

countries.⁸¹ In particular, *Titus Andronicus 2.0* has been performed in London, Norway, Poland, Beijing, Shanghai, Taipei and Singapore. While Tang has been quite reticent in discussing the political dimensions of his plays in interviews, he has actually been more revealing in his written articles. In an article that discusses the touring performances of *Titus Andronicus 2.0*, Tang argues that there are a lot of political, economic, and societal factors involved in international cultural exchanges (“International” 240; *my trans.*). He particularly quotes a conversation he had with a Norwegian businessman after the performance of *Titus Andronicus 2.0* in Norway in 2012. The businessman remarked, “Cultural exchange is actually the best means of diplomacy, especially after Chinese-Norwegian relationships hit rock bottom due to the Liu Xiao-bo incident” (Tang, “International” 240; *my trans.*). This referred to Norway presenting the Nobel peace prize to the Chinese dissident, Liu Xiao-bo (劉曉波) in 2010, who was represented by an empty chair as he was in prison, and who remained a prisoner until his death in 2017 (Cain, “Authors”). After listening to the businessman’s remark, Tang reflected that “the mystery in the incident [recounted by the Norwegian businessman] has seemingly transcended art, but artists cannot refuse to ponder on it” (Tang, “International” 239; *my trans.*). Once again, Tang’s Shakespearean adaptations are more political than what the director had described them to be, as he says that there “no messages at all” in *Macbeth* (Tang, “Director’s” 12; *my trans.*). This suggests that the theatre practitioners in Hong Kong bear a heavy burden when presenting their plays as political. As Ng Ka-hei, a local playwright, explains, “Hong Kongers’ friend-foe dichotomy is too strong towards their perceptions of the Umbrella Movement, so I believe that most theatre makers in Hong

⁸¹ While Richard Ho’s *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* has travelled to Vancouver and Stratford-upon-Avon, the Shakespearean adaptations of Hardy Tsoi and Jimmy Lee have never travelled beyond Hong Kong.

Kong do not favour presenting such an emotional event on stage” (“From”, *my trans.*). Besides pondering on Hong Kong’s political issues, Tang also had the Western audience in mind as he sketched his productions. This is confirmed by the director in his plenary speech at the 10th Chinese Drama Festival: “Often the Western audience wants directors from other countries to add something distinctive from their own cultures to the staging of Shakespeare” (“Shakespeare’s abstractness”; *my trans.*).⁸² He also remarks that “if what you do is exactly the same as other people [in the West], then why do they invite you from far away?” (Tang, “International” 240; *my trans.*) Tang fulfils these expectations of his plays by inserting two Chinese theatrical elements into *Titus Andronicus 2.0*. First, as we have seen, he changes the performance mode of the play to a Chinese narrative form, which follows the tradition of “storytelling and ballad singing” (評彈說書). Originating in Suzhou (蘇州), this narrative form has become widely popular in the Jiangsu (江蘇) province of China (Gao 142; *my trans.*). The usual content of this ballad singing mode is the folklore of heroes, and the romance between the “gifted scholar and the beautiful lady” (才子佳人). It is typically performed by an actor and actress sitting together side by side, and they narrate the story to the audience with the accompaniment of Chinese musical instruments such as the three-string fiddle (三弦) and the pipa (琵琶) (Gao 142; *my trans.*). Tang subverts the tradition of the Chinese ballad singing form by changing its light-hearted content to the heavy subjects of revenge and violence in *Titus Andronicus 2.0*. The opening speech of his adaptation is uttered by the actor Ng Wai-shek who adopts the third-person narrative: “This is a story about revenge.

⁸² Recorded in his plenary speech titled “Shakespeare’s Abstractness and Actuality” on April 10, 2016 at the 10th Chinese Drama Festival held in Hong Kong.

The main character is General Titus, a brave warrior in ancient Rome. Originally he had 25 sons, but during a ten-year war, he lost 21 of them” (Chong, “Titus” 1). Subsequently Ng switches to the first person narrative, where he adapts Tamora’s lines from the source text (*Tit.* 1.1.105-118).⁸³ Adopting the tone of Tamora, who knows that her eldest son will soon become a sacrificial offering to the enemy, Ng says:

So the queen abandons her dignity, and kneels down in front of Titus. In anguish, she cries, “General! Please take pity on me! My son is like your son, who fights for his country. You love your son, how can I not love my own flesh and blood too? I will become your slave, and submit myself to the rule of Rome! You must follow the example of the gods, and learn how to be compassionate!

(Chong, “Titus” 1)

At the end of Ng’s speech, he reverts to the third person narrative, commenting, “The tears of this mother do not only fail to bring sympathy from the Romans, but they instigate more hatred, as the Romans remember the lives of their family members that have been killed by the cruel Goths, thus the feeling of revenge becomes out of control” (Chong, “Titus” 1). Throughout the performance, the actors frequently transition between positions of the narrator, the character and the commenter, which suggests the fluidness of their identities. Moreover, the music in *Titus Andronicus 2.0* is unlike the melodic sounds of the Chinese string instruments in the traditional ballad singing form, as it is

⁸³ Tamora’s lines in the source text are: “Victorious Titus, rue the tears I shed ... And if thy sons were ever dear to thee, / O, think my son to be as dear to me ... Captive to thee and to thy Roman yoke ... Wilt thou draw near the nature of the gods? / Draw near them then in being merciful” (*Tit.* 1.1.105, 107-108, 111, 117-118).

non-melodic and similar to the plain sounds of a yoga practice. For example, solemn music concludes the first scene of the play, when the actor Chu Pak-hong comments, “When everyone is still puzzled why Tamora has suddenly won the affection of the emperor, wedding music is already played. The sacrifice of Titus’s twenty-second son is exchanged for a brief moment of peace, but it also conceals a more turbulent form of destructive power” (Chong, “Titus” 4). At one point in Tang’s play, the musician transgresses his role and becomes one of the actors. At the end of act 5, scene 2, the musician screams after the actor Leung Ka-wai tells the audience that Titus is slowly cutting open the throats of Chiron and Demetrius, and preparing a cruel feast with their bodies (Chong, “Titus” 29). In short, Tang borrows and subverts the Chinese ballad singing tradition in staging *Titus Andronicus 2.0*, to the extent that the content and style of this traditional narrative form are no longer recognisable. This corresponds to Otto Heim’s remark that Tang’s adaptations represent “individual interpretations of Shakespeare that go beyond national stereotypes” (xxi). Although it is common for productions of Shakespeare to adopt Chinese opera conventions, the difference between Hong Kong Shakespeare and mainland Shakespeare is that the former is not as strongly circumscribed by authority and theatrical traditions as the latter.

In addition, Tang adopts a Chinese opera ritual but twists it to fit the structure of *Titus Andronicus 2.0*. In traditional Chinese opera performance, there is a stylised ritual called “Scene Setting” (定場白) or the “First Soliloquy”, whereby the opera character appears in front of the audience for the first time and introduces his name, place of birth, social background, his emotions, and the events taking place. This helps to prepare the audience for watching the play and helps them comprehend the story better (Q.S. Wang

323; *my trans.*). In act 2, scene 1 of *Titus Andronicus 2.0*, Tang employs this “Scene Setting” ritual by having actors Tang Chi-kin and Leung Ka-wai make self-references when addressing the audience as Demetrius and Chiron respectively. But the director also destabilises this ritual, as the two actors immediately change to the third person narrative of the commentator-cum-storyteller. This is further complicated by the addition of a third actor, Chu Pak-hong, who assumes the dual roles of both the storyteller and the character, Aaron:

Tang Chi-kin (actor): Second brother, Demetrius.

Leung Ka-wai (actor): Third brother, Chiron.

Tang & Leung (commenter): They have just escaped from the tiger’s mouth, but they have already started a dog-eat-dog fight.

Chu Pak-hong (storyteller): Aaron heard Demetrius screaming –

Tang (actor): You want her heart? Have you asked my sword yet?

Leung (storyteller & actor): Then the younger brother, refusing to admit being inferior, cries, “You think I will be scared of you, coward? You only know how to hurt a person by words!”

Chu (storyteller & actor): Aaron suppresses his anger, and advises the two princes earnestly, “Let’s go, princes, do not quarrel inside the imperial court. Have you thought that this will put our whole tribe to death?”

(Chong, “Titus” 5)

By subverting the Chinese opera ritual of “Scene Setting” and allowing his actors to frequently shift positions between the character and the storyteller-cum-commentator, Tang complicates the “alienation effect” in Chinese acting. For Brecht, the alienation effect states that the Chinese performer simply quotes the character he or she plays, and that the actor only needs a minimum of illusion (Willet 94). Since Brecht does not want the spectators to identify with the characters on stage, he employs the term “distance” to characterize the actors’ relationship to their roles, and the metaphor of decentring to clarify the spectators’ relationship to the events on stage (Willet 5). In *Titus Andronicus 2.0*, the actors do not only quote the character they play, but also at times transgress the actors’ roles and adopt the omnipotent viewpoint of the narrator. Therefore I would argue that the alienation effect in Tang’s production is more intensified than the alienation effect in traditional Chinese opera. By demarcating a large distance between the audience and the acting on stage, Tang provides ample space for the audience to reflect on the issue of violence in Hong Kong in the aftermath of the Umbrella Movement. While *Titus Andronicus 2.0* has a more abstract connection with the socio-political reality of Hong Kong, Tang’s *Macbeth* possesses a clear allusion to the Umbrella Movement in the employment of the umbrella symbol in the coda of the play.

III. Socio-politicized Shakespeare: Tang Shu-wing’s *Macbeth* (2016)

The Tang Shu-Wing Theatre Studio has received various forms of funding and sponsorship from the Hong Kong government, including the Springboard Grant under the Arts Capacity Development Funding Scheme (Tang Shu-Wing Theatre Studio, “About

Studio”). In particular, Tang’s *Macbeth* was co-commissioned by the Hong Kong Arts Festival and Shakespeare’s Globe, London in 2015 (44th Hong Kong Arts Festival n.p.). The Hong Kong Arts Festival is sponsored annually by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) of Hong Kong (44th Hong Kong Arts Festival 2), and it is running in its 46th year in 2018. It would be detrimental to Tang’s theatre company if his productions were overtly to assume a position that the government disagrees with. Nevertheless, this does not mean that Tang cannot challenge the Hong Kong government in a subtle way in his productions. The central distinguishing feature of Tang’s *Macbeth* is its self-positioning in relation to its social and political context in Hong Kong of 2015. I shall outline my three observations of the production in the following. First, there were some uneasy political circumstances in Hong Kong that drove Tang to adapt Shakespeare’s play. Speaking on his adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, Tang remarks, “When I started adapting this play, Hong Kong was experiencing one of its most difficult moments in history. My adaptation commenced in this gloomy context: a couple from the modern age stepped into ancient China through their dreams, and they became the protagonists of *Macbeth*’s cold and gloomy world” (Tang, “Tang” 16; *my trans.*). The première of *Macbeth* took place in August 2015 in London, only a year after the events of the Umbrella Movement. Both the PRC and Hong Kong governments condemned the movement, for instance, the PRC president Xi Jin-ping (习近平) called it “illegal” (Moore and Phillips, “Xi”), emphasizing that “law and order must be maintained” (Moore, “Xi”). In addition, Hong Kong’s then Chief Executive, Leung Chun-ying, urged the protestors to stop their activities, as “China [would] not compromise to the illegal threats of some people” (Mullen and Shoichet, “Hong”). When I asked Tang why he was

unwilling to specify what Hong Kong's "difficult moment in history" was as he was adapting *Macbeth*, he responded, "I'll answer you on a different occasion".⁸⁴ His reluctance to specify the political context of Hong Kong that inspired his adaptation corresponded to the ambivalent transposition that he chose for his production of *Macbeth*. I believe that was a strategic choice of Tang as his production was sponsored by the Arts Development Fund of the Home Affairs Bureau (Tang Shu-Wing Theatre Studio, "Macbeth").

Furthermore, Tang had strategically paved the way for the easy distribution and circulation of his play, considering that the Hong Kong government would most likely censor it if his adaptation of *Macbeth* had any direct mention of the "illegal" Umbrella Movement. Tang's treatment of the social movement in *Macbeth* aligned with that of most local theatre makers on the handling of political issues in their plays, where they mostly adopted a play-safe method. For instance, they employed an oblique approach by not explicitly mentioning the political event (Ng, "From"; my *trans.*). In Ng Ka-hei's own words, the Hong Kong directors "played edged balls", a colloquial phrase meaning that when one plays table tennis, he or she does not hit the main table but merely its angle (Ng, "From"; my *trans.*). While Ng agrees that a theatre maker must have his or her own stance in the midst of artistic creation, as an artistic director of a small theatre company, he will contemplate whether "he will be able to obtain the next government funding if he explicitly expresses his stance in the play?" ("From"; my *trans.*) As the production of artistic works in Hong Kong relies heavily on government subsidies, there can be

⁸⁴ I addressed the question to Tang Shu-wing at a plenary session titled "Shakespeare in China" (莎士比亞在中華) at the 10th Chinese Drama Festival.

disastrous results if the director's view in the play is strongly against the government's stance. In 2016, the public screening of Evans Chan's documentary about Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement, *Raise the Umbrellas* (撐傘) was cancelled by the Asia Society of Hong Kong (B. Chan, "Raise"). Though Chan attempted to make his documentary even-handed by including anti-Occupy Central protests and interview clips of Jasper Tsang from the pro-Beijing camp, it was still banned from screening at most commercial and government venues in Hong Kong (B. Chan, "Raise"). On the other hand, there was no problem with the circulation of Tang's *Macbeth*. It premiered at Shakespeare's Globe theatre, London, in 2015 before it was restaged in Hong Kong, in 2016, which reversed the usual pattern for a theatre production to be staged locally before travelling abroad (Telephone interview with B. Chan). As mentioned earlier by Tang, he had the Western audience in mind when he was sketching his productions. His production showcases a fusion of Asian physical theatre, such as Peking opera, Japanese kabuki and noh (Lo and Chan, "Battlefield"; *trans.*). For instance, the Suzuki method of acting is employed, whereby the actor concentrates on his or her body. While Lady Macbeth walks gradually from the far left corner of the stage to its far right corner, she bends her body low to her stomach as she utters the lines from the lower part of her abdomen, "Are you drunk? Where was your hope of wanting to climb higher? Or are you actually day-dreaming, and now that you are awake, you are so frightened by your desire that your face becomes pale and your lips become white" (Chan and Tang 13; *my trans.*).⁸⁵ The way in which Lady Macbeth walks and talks signifies strong physical energy, and her wearing of the red

⁸⁵ Quotations from Tang Shu Wing's *Macbeth* come from *Macbeth*, trans. Rupert Chan and Tang Shu Wing, 2016. All translations in Tang's *Macbeth* from Chinese to English are done by myself, unless otherwise stated.

dress, as portrayed in Figure 9 below, also highlights the fiery nature and cunningness of her character (Lo and Chan, “Battlefield”; *my trans.*).⁸⁶

⁸⁶ While the red colour symbolizes luck and prosperity in Chinese culture, it represents energy, passion, and danger in Western culture. When Lo Wai-luk asserts that Lady Macbeth’s wearing of the red dress highlights the fiery nature of her character (“Battlefield”, *my trans.*), he is analysing the symbolism of her costume from the Western audience’s point of view. This also highlights the element of fusion in Tang’s *Macbeth*, whereby both Western and Asian elements are incorporated into the performance.



Figure 9: Symbolism of Lady Macbeth's red dress, photograph © Fung Wai-sun, Tang Shu-Wing Theatre Studio.

Apart from borrowing the Japanese director, Tadashi Suzuki's method of acting, *Macbeth* also incorporates Peking opera's slow motion sword fight, which takes place between Macbeth and Macduff at the ending of the play. Lo Wai-luk and Natalie Chan argue that the graceful execution of the sword fight enables the audience to focus on the significance of the fighting, and not merely the fighting itself ("Battlefield"; *trans.*). Besides, a variety of musical instruments in Asia are played, such as the Chinese erhu/bowed string instrument (二胡) and flute (洞簫), the Japanese shakuhachi/vertical bamboo flute (尺八) and taiko/great drum (太鼓), and the Korean drum. All these musical instruments are played by the same musician and the music enhances the

suspense and facilitates the interludes between scenes (N. Chan, “Battlefield”; *my trans.*). As Tang originally intended this production for international viewing, he had in the above exhibited a fusion of Asian art forms for the consumption of Western audiences. In addition, the fact that *Macbeth* premiered at London’s Globe Theatre gave his production a prestigious status, which appealed to the local Hong Kong audience, taking into account their nostalgia for the colonial reign in the past. The restaging of the play in the 44th Hong Kong Arts Festival in 2016 was marketed as the “best version of *Macbeth*”, advertised by a quotation to this effect from Dominic Dromgoole, Artistic Director of Shakespeare’s Globe (Tang Shu Wing Theatre Studio, “Macbeth”). Bernice Chan suggests that this shows the interactive aspect of Tang’s production, where Hong Kong plays are not merely exported in a one-way circulation, but they are also imported from abroad for the consumption of the domestic market (Qu and B.K.W. Chan, “Retrospect”; *my trans.*).

The second way in which Tang’s *Macbeth* exemplifies socio-politicized Shakespeare is that its prologue and coda indirectly allude to his sympathy and support for the Umbrella Movement. In the prologue, the male and female protagonists, respectively played by Ng Wai-shek (吳偉碩) and Rosa Maria Valesco (韋羅莎), are dressed in modern attire. Through a dream, they journey from contemporary Hong Kong to ancient China, as depicted in Figure 10 below. The main act of the play portrays the couple as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. On the other hand, the coda of *Macbeth* echoes its prologue, which signifies that the play begins and ends in Hong Kong. Ng, the male protagonist, wakes up from his dream and returns to Hong Kong. The musician in the play then passes Ng a black umbrella. Anyone familiar with Hong Kong politics would immediately associate the black umbrella with the yellow umbrella, and its association

with the Occupy Central Movement in Hong Kong. Ng opens the umbrella and is joined by his wife, played by Valesco; then the pair walks towards the audience. Valesco disappears through a door and Ng, still clinging on to his umbrella, walks to the front of the stage and, hesitantly, jumps off as the lights dim. The symbol of the umbrella is the primary feature that links the prologue and coda to contemporary Hong Kong politics, as protestors of the Umbrella Movement were typically seen holding yellow umbrellas, which originally served as protection from the pepper spray used by the Hong Kong police (Sung, “The Birth”). One of the agonizing issues addressed in *Macbeth* is how should the subjects of a country behave under tyranny, and I shall later discuss Tang’s handling of the conversation between Malcolm and Macduff on the qualities that a king should possess (*Mac.* 4.3.68-114). The relationship between the prologue and coda suggests that Tang’s adaptation is a reflective piece. In his own words, Tang explains that it is “like looking at your own soul”, and taking a moment to “reflect on what you have done in the past and how to face the future” (Weng, “Shakespeare’s” 96; *my trans.*). The Umbrella Movement was such a large-scale event in Hong Kong that Tang, being a politically conscious theatre director, simply could not have ignored. In the 1990s like other theatre directors in Hong Kong at that time, Tang was interested in exploring the issues surrounding the 1997 handover (Lo 92; *my trans.*). Being a former law student at the University of Hong Kong, Tang remarked, “If it weren’t for 1997, I might still have been a lawyer” (Tian and Fong 129; *my trans.*).⁸⁷ A year before the handover, he set up a theatre company called “No Man’s Land” (無人地帶), a clear allusion to the work of British dramatist, Harold Pinter. Pinter was a prominent advocate for human rights on

⁸⁷ Tang Shu Wing was a law student who fell in love with theatre in his second year of university. He then pursued performing arts at the Universite Sorbonne Nouvelle in Paris (Jiang, “Backstage” 3).

behalf of political prisoners around the world (Harold Pinter, “Campaigning”), and the alignment of Tang’s theatre troupe with Pinter might have hinted at Tang’s social awareness in his creating of plays. Adele Lee asserts that the name “No Man’s Land” reflected the liminal status of the Hong Kong people who found themselves caught between two worlds (“Titus” 209). The company was renamed in 2009 as Tang Shu Wing Theatre Studio (鄧樹榮戲劇工作室). By 2009, Tang Shu-wing had achieved a celebrity status as a prominent theatre director in Hong Kong and in the international arena. Not only had his company acquired several large grants from the Hong Kong government, his productions had also frequently been invited to tour various arts festivals in Asia and Europe. Due to Tang’s status in the theatre world, renaming his theatre company under his name acted as a trademark of his productions. He positioned Tang Shu-Wing Theatre Studio as a centre for theatrical research and creation, where he envisioned physical theatre and minimalist aesthetics as the two new paths for Hong Kong theatre (Tang Shu-Wing Theatre Studio, “About Studio”). Often producing plays aimed at international viewing, he ambitiously conducted cultural exchanges so that the “theatre of Hong Kong would be given a proper place on the world stage” (Tang Shu-Wing Theatre Studio, “About Studio”).



Figure 10: Macbeth transitions from modern Hong Kong to ancient China, photograph © Fung Wai-sun, Tang Shu-Wing Theatre Studio.

In an article titled, “Why do I favour minimalism? (我為何傾向簡約主義),” Tang shows his admiration for the Russian theatre director, Vsevolod Meyerhold, and he compliments Meyerhold’s integrity as an artist, which is to have no fear of authority, not to drift with the tide, to be true to oneself and to adopt a liberal attitude (Tang, “Why” 209; *my trans.*). In 2001, Tang published *Analysis and Reflections of the Theories of Acting of Meyerhold, Life and Death Trilogy: a Theatrical Research* (Tang Shu Wing Theatre Studio, “About Artistic”), in which Tang critiques the Russian actor and theatre director, Konstantin Stanislavsky, whose actor-training methods were enforced as compulsory socialist-realist dogma under Stalin. Tang suggests that Stanislavsky adopted a play-safe attitude towards politics, and therefore he has reservations about Stanislavsky’s artistic integrity (Tang, “Why” 209; *my trans.*). I believe that Tang’s

perceptions of Meyerhold and Stanislavsky are very telling of his own philosophy. He is *not* a director that would abide by pre-imposed values of authority, and he is also not afraid to challenge the government's viewpoint in his plays.

The paradox is this: can Tang criticize the Hong Kong government in his adaptations of Shakespeare, and at the same time secure government funding to stage his plays? The answer is affirmative, as Tang cleverly inserts his negative commentary towards the Hong Kong government in a strategic way. Bernice Chan rightly argues that Tang's *Macbeth* echoes contemporary Hong Kong following the Umbrella Movement in 2014 ("Overview", *my trans.*).⁸⁸ Chan particularly refers to the coda of the play, where Macbeth and Lady Macbeth clutch onto the black umbrella upon waking up from their dreams ("Overview", *my trans.*). If Tang's *Macbeth* reminds us that this is a story of tyranny being retold, such that the audiences are motivated to think about the resonance of happenings in Hong Kong, then it is questionable whom Macbeth and Lady Macbeth resemble. Are they the villains or usurpers, who murder King Duncan in order to ascend to the throne? Or by clutching the black umbrella in the coda, are they the liberators who attempt to rescue Hong Kong people from the domineering control of the PRC regime?

I therefore posit two possible readings for Tang's subtle challenge to the Hong Kong government in *Macbeth*. First, there is a very interesting shift from Hong Kong in the prologue to ancient China in the main act of the play, where the Hong Kong couple murder the Chinese emperor and become the rulers. Do the actions of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth remind us of Hong Kong people's desire to be governed by themselves, as

⁸⁸ This viewpoint was recorded in Bernice Chan's plenary speech on the "Overview of Hong Kong Theatre's Current Situation" (香港劇場近況概觀) at the 10th Chinese Drama Festival.

evident in the “pro-Independence campaign” that some politicians have advocated in Hong Kong in recent years?⁸⁹ As Tang has explained, he was pondering on a “difficult moment in Hong Kong’s history” when adapting *Macbeth* (Tang, “Tang” 16; *my trans.*). By connecting Hong Kong’s fight for democracy with Shakespeare’s story of *Macbeth*, Tang draws parallels between the post-Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong and the dark world of *Macbeth*, where violence and mistrust between the government and the governed is evident in both the societies of Hong Kong and the fictional world of Shakespeare. Secondly, Tang emphasizes in the play that the main act materializes through a dream, meaning the couple has not really murdered the king and become rulers. There is a strong symbolic significance that Tang’s *Macbeth* does not end with Malcom’s speech of restoring justice and righteousness, where Malcom in the source text declares,

My thanes and kinsmen ...

What’s more to do

Which would be planted newly with the time,

As calling home our exiled friends abroad,

That fled the snares of watchful tyranny,

Producing forth the cruel ministers

Of this dead butcher and his fiend-like Queen.

⁸⁹ The Hong Kong government has tried to forestall the pro-Independence campaign in Hong Kong. For example, it prevented pro-Independence politicians from taking part in the Legislative Council elections in September 2016 by requiring all candidates to sign a new declaration form pledging allegiance to three Basic Law articles that made Independence calls unconstitutional (S. Lau, “Pro-independence”).

(*Mac.* 5.11.28, 30-35)⁹⁰

On the other hand, Tang's *Macbeth* ends with Macbeth waking up from his dream in the coda, which is politically suggestive on two levels.⁹¹ First, the subconscious desire of Hong Kong people to usurp the neo-coloniser, China, is only a dream, and this puts Tang's adaptation in a safe place. Secondly, depicting a black umbrella in the coda is symbolic. As suggested by Natalie Chan, the umbrella is a rich signifier that is explored by many critics after the Umbrella Movement (Lo and Chan, "Battlefield"; *my trans.*). She interprets that when Macbeth and Lady Macbeth put down the black umbrellas in the coda, this signifies Hong Kong people's leaving behind of a nightmare. This is because the Umbrella Movement was a nightmare in history, where there was a lot of violence and unjust events (Lo and Chan, "Battlefield"; *my trans.*). Nevertheless, I do not totally agree with Lo and Chan's assertion, since Macbeth does not put down the black umbrella in the coda, but he clutches on to it as he jumps off the stage before the lights in the theatre dim. The black colour symbolizes death and mourning in Chinese culture, and Chinese people often wear black to attend funerals. In this sense, I would argue that Macbeth's clutching of the black umbrella in the coda seems to suggest that the Umbrella Movement has not been entirely successful, and that true democracy is unlikely to be achieved in Hong Kong. My rather pessimistic reading of the coda is juxtaposed with Natalie Chan's somewhat optimistic reading, as Chan indicates that the umbrella is a practical tool for the protestors to resist the tear gas fired from the police (Lo and Chan,

⁹⁰ Quotations from *Macbeth* are taken from *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, edited by Stanley Wells, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁹¹ Western critics who are not familiar with the political situation of Hong Kong may not realize the significance of the dream in Tang's *Macbeth*. For instance, Howard Loxton claims that it is "not apparent" why the play has been framed as a dream. He also supposes that Tang's stylised production hardly needs a dream logic to the costume choices ("Macbeth").

“Battlefield”; *my trans.*). She questions whether Hong Kong people can one day do without the umbrellas in peaceful demonstrations, so there is a sense of hope embedded in the coda (Lo and Chan, “Battlefield”; *my trans.*). No matter which angle one reads the coda from, I believe that Tang is particularly strategic to insert the symbolism of the black umbrella in the coda of *Macbeth*, and not at the beginning or in the main act of the adaptation. The black umbrella has also not appeared in the 36 seconds YouTube preview of Tang’s *Macbeth*, as advertised by the government-run 44th Hong Kong Arts Festival (Hong Kong Arts Festival, “Tang”). Hardy Tsoi, director of *Shamshuipo Lear* and *Julius Caesar*, mentions that it is common practice for arts administrators of the Hong Kong government to watch rehearsals of the plays that they fund, most usually the beginning of the productions (Personal interview with Tsoi). Like Tsoi’s plays, Tang’s productions are also funded by the Hong Kong government and it is highly likely that the arts administrators would come to watch the rehearsals of Tang’s *Macbeth* as well. I suspect that this is one of the reasons why Tang frames the most politically sensitive part of the play in the coda of *Macbeth*.⁹²

Another way in which Tang’s *Macbeth* exemplifies socio-politicised Shakespeare is a memorable scene that attracted the Hong Kong reviewers’ attention. In Act 4, Scene 3, Malcolm and Macduff discuss the qualities that a king should possess. As Malcolm wants to test Macduff’s loyalty, he intentionally portrays himself as a “new tyrant” who commits all kinds of evil, which he is actually referring to the actions of the current ruler, Macbeth. In an exaggerated way, Malcolm exclaims, “I do not have any virtue that a king

⁹² Likewise, Hardy Tsoi also inserts commentary towards the Hong Kong government in the coda of *Julius Caesar* (2012), which includes some politically sensitive topics, such as protests against the government during the handover, and Hong Kong people’s annual commemorations of the June Fourth Massacre in Beijing in 1989. This will be further discussed in Chapter Three of my thesis.

should possess. No justice, integrity ... forgiveness, forbearance, love, meekness, piety, courage ... I have none of all those, instead I do all things evil. Once I take full control of power, I shall definitely disrupt the harmony in society and world peace” (Chan and Tang 43; *my trans.*). I argue that Malcolm’s depiction of himself as an autocratic ruler is reminiscent of Leung Chun-ying, the then largely unpopular Chief Executive of Hong Kong who was appointed by the PRC government in Beijing (Lau 15; *my trans.*). Leung earned the nickname of 689 among his critics, as he was elected with merely 689 votes in 2012 by China’s electoral committee that only consisted of 1200 people (*BBC News*, “Profile”). In Hong Kong, there were uncountable protests demanding for his resignation over his five years of governance. The lack of widespread legitimacy of Leung’s ascension of the Chief Executive of Hong Kong is also comparable to Macbeth’s rise as the king of Scotland, where Macbeth becomes king only because Duncan is mysteriously murdered, and Duncan’s two sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, have fled the country. Paradoxically, acting as Beijing’s puppet ruler of Hong Kong, Leung won compliments from the central government for his contribution to “social stability”, in terms of his crackdown of the Umbrella Movement and the pro-independence advocacy in the special administrative region. He had thus been nominated in March 2017 as the vice-chairman of China’s top political advisory body (Siu, Lam and Leung, “CY”). Nevertheless, comparable to Macbeth’s violation of peace in Scotland, Leung’s reign had in reality disrupted social harmony in Hong Kong, as both the society and political parties in Hong Kong had become increasingly divided during his office (Ng, “CY”).

Furthermore, the tone of the performance seemingly hints that Macbeth’s greed for power is comparable to that of Leung Chun-ying. In September 2015, Leung publicly

declared that as the Chief Executive, he had “special overriding power over the executive, legislature and judiciary in Hong Kong” (Zeng, “Hong”).⁹³ His statement was so controversial that even his own media officer was caught raising his eyebrows and tilting his head back in the video footage (Zeng, “Hong”). In addition, there were investigations of Leung’s suspected corruption of a deal of HK\$50 million (roughly equivalent to £5 million) with the Australian firm UGL (Siu, Lam and Leung, “CY”). In the “*Battlefield and Macbeth*” podcast, Lo Wai-luk asserts that Tang’s *Macbeth* describes the complex political environment of Hong Kong in the here and now. Depicted in Figure 11 below, the backdrop of the play exhibits the Chinese painting of a highland, a signifier representing that a person is at the peak of power (Lo and Chan, “Battlefield”; *my trans.*). Lo further remarks, “When one is at the climax of power, he or she will ponder on Shakespeare’s message in *Macbeth*” (“Battlefield”; *my trans.*). Natalie Chan echoes Lo’s viewpoint by suggesting that Macbeth’s frantic pursuit of power is comparable to the Hong Kong government’s style of governance, where it had excluded the opinions of dissidents (“Battlefield”; *my trans.*).

⁹³ Leung’s remark was a response to the Beijing liaison official, Zhang Xiao-ming (張曉明)’s statement that the Chief Executive in Hong Kong had transcendent power (Zeng, “Hong”).



Figure 11: Duncan and his followers against the backdrop of a highland, photograph © Fung Wai-sun, Tang Shu-Wing Theatre Studio.

Just like Macduff's eventual usurpation of the despotic ruler, Macbeth, Tang's *Macbeth* subtly represents Hong Kong people's subconscious desire to usurp its chief executive. Upon hearing Malcolm's "confession" of being a "new tyrant", Macduff cries in despair, "Scotland! Scotland" (Chan and Tang 43; *my trans.*). This is allegorical of Hong Kong people's desperate cries for the future of the city. When Malcolm asks Macduff if someone like him is fit to govern, Macduff exclaims, "Fit to govern? No, not to live" (Chan and Tang 43; *my trans.*). This is a particular moment in the adaptation when almost all the reviewers who attended *Macbeth's* première in Hong Kong laughed (L.C.M. Lau 15; *my trans.*).⁹⁴ But they did not laugh out of pure joy, but out of bitterness

⁹⁴ I attended *Macbeth's* première in Hong Kong, which was held in the City Hall Theatre on 16 March, 2016.

as they were reminded of Hong Kong's political stalemate from watching *Macbeth*. As Homi Bhabha argues, the menace of mimicry lies in its double vision, which discloses the ambivalence of the colonial discourse and simultaneously disrupts the authority of the coloniser ("The location" 88). In the same light then, Tang's *Macbeth* paradoxically employs the literary icon of the ex-coloniser to disrupt the authority of the neo-coloniser. However, the ambiguous positioning of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in the production – whether they are villains or liberators – makes it difficult for it to be decoded as an anti-government Shakespearean play.

As Tang adopts an ambivalent attitude as a strategy to avoid censorship, which gives him more flexibility and autonomy to comment on Hong Kong's current situation metaphorically, it is rather easy for Western reviewers, who are not very familiar with the ongoing political tides of Hong Kong, to overlook Tang's indirect political commentary of post-1997 Hong Kong in *Macbeth*. For instance, Sarah Hemming perceives *Macbeth* as a "scaled-down version of the play that [loses its] political context" (Hemming, "Macbeth").⁹⁵ In a similar vein, Samantha Cheh claims that the production politically resonates with the history of ancient China, where a "king anointed by external powers ... rings a bell with old ideas of Chinese power descending from the heavens" ("Macbeth"). She also compares the turbulent political history of ancient China to the feudal Scotland of Duncan (Cheh, "Macbeth"). Nevertheless, Tang's *Macbeth* is *not* so much about the director's commentary on ancient China than about his critique on post-1997 Hong Kong. It is indeed difficult to discern the "real" messages of *Macbeth*, when

⁹⁵ Sarah Hamming supposes that the "scaled-down version of the play means that you lose the political context, the sense of a war-torn country, an opportunist on the make and the sheer velocity of the escalation" ("Macbeth").

the director himself says that he is most afraid of people asking him what kinds of “messages” his plays express, because “really there is none.” (Tang, “Director’s” 12; *my trans.*).

IV. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have analysed Tang Shu-wing’s adaptations of *Titus Andronicus 2.0* and *Macbeth*, and I have demonstrated that Hong Kong Shakespearean adaptations in the post-1997 era are not apolitical, contrary to Alexa Huang’s assertion in the “Shakespeare in Hong Kong” podcast (Huang interviewed by Grant). Though working under the increasing confinement of censorship, Tang’s productions are still able to criticise the Hong Kong government in an allegorical way, marking them as “socio-politicised Shakespeare”. It is also because of the political environment in Hong Kong that Hong Kong theatre makers prefer to stage adaptations rather than newly created plays on political issues of the city. There are indeed parallels between the two Shakespearean adaptations of Tang. First, *Titus Andronicus 2.0* and *Macbeth* are respectively situated in a “no man’s land” and in an unknown ancient period of China. Second, both plays also end on an ambiguous note, where the audience is left to ponder on the messages of the director. While *Titus Andronicus 2.0* concludes with the uncertain fate of the illegitimate child, the coda of *Macbeth* finishes with Macbeth clinging onto the black umbrella and then jumping off the stage. The audience is left to decide whether Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are the villains/usurpers, or the liberators of Hong Kong people from the domineering PRC rule. Third, both plays appear to be aesthetically driven rather than politically driven at first sight. Whereas Tang has employed pre-

language, yoga rituals, breathing techniques in *Titus Andronicus 2.0*, he has presented a fusion of Asian physical theatre and musical instruments in *Macbeth*. Nevertheless, the “harmlessly” exotic elements are undercut by the political messages in the coda of *Macbeth*. It is thus through watching the entire plays and re-thinking about some particular moments in the productions that one notices the depth of the political dimensions. For instance, the broadcast of the audio news reports of violent events in Hong Kong in the opening of *Titus Andronicus 2.0* indirectly comments on the circumscription of academic freedom in post-1997 Hong Kong. On the other hand, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth’s clutching of the black umbrellas in the coda of *Macbeth* alludes to Tang’s perceptions of the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong. The slow motion of the sword fight in the play also encourages the audience to think deeply about its philosophical messages, such as the cruelty of war, and the production’s relevance to the political arena of Hong Kong in the aftermath of the Umbrella Movement. Nevertheless, Tang seems to offer two disparate views of the social movement in his two adaptations. The coda of *Macbeth* appears to suggest the failure of the movement, as the protagonists clutch onto the black umbrellas, which the symbolism of the black colour is often associated with deaths and funerals in Chinese culture. But the ending of *Titus Andronicus 2.0* seems to present hope to the audience, where the insertion of the actors’ personal stories illustrate that humanity and violence do exist simultaneously in the society. The inclusion of the Om yoga sound after stressful moments in the play also enables the cleansing of the actors’ spirits in distress, which is extended to the healing of Hong Kongers in the aftermath of the Umbrella Movement. The protestors in Occupy Central and the general Hong Kong population alike had suffered great pain, either

derived from the violence of the policemen/triad members, or from the phenomenon of being “unfriended” on Facebook due to the deep divide between the pro-democracy yellow ribbons camp versus the pro-government blue ribbons camp.

Subsequently, I will move beyond discussing Shakespeare’s adaptations in Hong Kong to analysing its appropriations in the neocolonial period, where Hardy Tsoi and Jimmy Lee present more explicit critique of the neo-coloniser in their theatrical stagings of Shakespeare. Abiding by Sanders’ definition, Hardy Tsoi’s *Shamshuipo Lear* and Jimmy Lee’s *Post-Taming of the Shrew* can stand alone as independent works by themselves, without the need for a strong Shakespearean connection (27), which are unlike *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, *Macbeth* and *Titus Andronicus 2.0*. With newly added characters and scenes in Tsoi and Lee’s appropriations, their works directly expose socio-political problems in Hong Kong in the neocolonial period. Corresponding with Adele Lee’s assertion, Shakespeare is employed by Hong Kong directors as a symbol of resistance against the neo-coloniser (Lee interviewed by Grant, “Shakespeare”).

Chapter Three

Appropriating Shakespeare for the Critique of

Hong Kong's Social Problems:

Hardy Tsoi's *Julius Caesar* and *Shamshuipo Lear*

I. Introduction: Socio-politicized Shakespeare

In the first two chapters, we have explored three Hong Kong adaptations of Shakespeare since the handover, where the directors have either transposed the play into a sinicized context, or adapted it to critique the political situation of Hong Kong. Both Richard Ho and Tang Shu-wing have been quite faithful in adapting Shakespeare's source texts, for they have mainly transposed the settings of their plays while keeping most of the lines and characters from the source texts. For sure, the audience of Richard Ho's *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, and Tang Shu-wing's *Macbeth* and *Titus Andronicus 2.0* can recognize these productions as derived from Shakespeare. In addition, these shows have been marketed as Shakespeare-authored cultural products and have travelled to Canada and Britain for the enjoyment of Western audiences. In my next two chapters, I will move beyond analyzing Hong Kong adaptations of Shakespeare, and will proceed to examine shows which move into the realm of Shakespearean appropriations. Julie Sanders defines an appropriation as being able to "stand alone in its own right, without the need of a source text connection" (27).

In terms of directing experience, Hardy Tsoi is very familiar with Shakespearean plays. Of the four Hong Kong directors that I am discussing in my thesis, Tsoi is the one who has staged the largest number of Shakespeare's plays since the handover.⁹⁶ Since 2010, Tsoi has embarked on what he called a "Shakespeare cycle" in his artistic productions (Chan, Lee and Tsoi, "Shakespeare's"; *my trans.*).⁹⁷ He has twice directed Richard Ho's *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, staged in Mandarin, in 2010 and 2012, and his own version of *Hamlet* set in Hong Kong, performed in Cantonese, in May 2012.⁹⁸ Unlike the sinicized adaptation of *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, Tsoi's Hong Kong version of *Hamlet* (2012) is adapted to a digital age where Hamlet and Horatio frequently employ video cameras to record their daily events. In the opening scene, Horatio holds a handheld video camera and films Hamlet cooking and playing with a sword. Then the recorded video images are instantly shown on television to the audience. The physical and virtual images in Tsoi's *Hamlet* again coexist in the scene where Hamlet reads the famous soliloquy of "To be or not to be...?", here translated as, approximately, "To suffer humiliation, or to take revenge? To live or to die ...?" At the same time, his soliloquy is immediately shown on television, so the audience see both Hamlets, live and on video. Tsoi explains that he adapted *Hamlet* into the cyberworld so as to draw the Shakespearean world a step closer to the young generation of Hong Kong (Tsoi, "What"; *my trans.*). Hamlet is depicted as a "poisonous youth" (毒男) (Tsoi, "What"; *my trans.*), a term that originated in Japanese culture to describe isolated youths who are more focused

⁹⁶ He has directed Shakespeare's plays seven times in post-1997 Hong Kong, see my appendix.

⁹⁷ Recorded in *Shamshuipo Lear's* post-performance talk titled "Shakespeare's Famous Characters: An Inspiration of People Facing Hopeless Situations" (由莎士比亞的名角帶來人逢絕境的啟示) on September 12, 2015 at Sai Wan Ho Civic Centre Theatre.

⁹⁸ In fact, Tsoi is the director in Hong Kong who has most frequently directed *Hamlet*, surpassing Tang Shu-wing who has directed the play twice, see appendix 1.

on computer games than on real-life interaction with human beings. The term “poisonous youth” has been extended to refer to Hong Kong youth of similar disposition and circumstances. Like the so-called “double loss youth” (雙失青年) in Hong Kong (not in education or employment) who stay at home all day to play computer games,⁹⁹ Hamlet also retreats from the world as he cannot face the tragedy of his family. In the dark living room of his home, the web camera becomes his God, the internet his salvation, and Horatio, his virtual friend on the internet, is his angel (Tsoi, “What”; *my trans.*).

Furthermore, Tsoi directed *Twelfth Night* (2011) and *Julius Caesar* (2012) for Hong Kong Theatre Works, and *Shamshuipo Lear* (2015) for Prospects Theatre. His Shakespearean productions differ from those of other Hong Kong directors in that they often emphasize social and educational purposes. The educational feature of Tsoi’s plays is particularly evident in his staging of *Romantic Shakespeare* (愛情莎翁) in 2011, which consisted of a combination of three Shakespearean plays: *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and *Twelfth Night*. Targeted at secondary school students, Tsoi implemented a rather lengthy question and answer session at the end of the play to examine students’ knowledge of Shakespearean plays in three aspects: theme and content, language, and the representation of theatre. Tsoi explains that he has three principles in staging theatre works: “First, for humanistic care; second, for reflection of the society, and third, for embodiment of the spirit of times. The essential life of theatre is to represent the value of mankind and also to arouse *social awareness*” (Zi, “Hardy”; *my*

⁹⁹ At the time when Tsoi staged *Hamlet* in 2012, the “double loss youth” in Hong Kong from the age group of 15 to 19 years old amounted to 15.3%, while those from 20 to 24 years old comprised of 10.3%. The total number of both groups added up to 36.7 thousand people, which was higher than the overall unemployment rate of 3.5% in Hong Kong (The Office Owl, “A Great”; *my trans.*).

trans. & italics). Of the seven Shakespearean plays that Tsoi has directed in post-1997 Hong Kong, I have chosen to discuss *Julius Caesar* (2012) and *Shamshuipo Lear* (2015) in particular due to their clear engagement with Hong Kong's socio-political situation in the neocolonial era.

II. Mime in *Julius Caesar* (2012): Voices of the Oppressed

First of all, there are ongoing theatrical productions in Hong Kong that directly depict political events on stage. For instance, in 2014, which marked the 25th anniversary commemorating the June Fourth Massacre in 1989, there were various plays in Hong Kong about Hong Kongers' reflections of the tragic event. The productions included Theatre Horizon (天邊外劇場)'s *The Square* (禁區廣場), Stage 64 (64 舞台)'s *Wang Dan* (王丹), and Sha Tin Theatre (沙田話劇團)'s *Rehabilitation of June Fourth* (平反六四).¹⁰⁰ It is perhaps important to note that Tsoi was the founder of Sha Tin Theatre. Tsoi has a history of rewriting Shakespeare for social and political purposes. In 2012, he directed *Julius Caesar* for Hong Kong Theatre Works, and this production was funded by the Hong Kong government's Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD). *Julius Caesar* is not regarded as a popular play among Hong Kong theatre directors, and it has only been staged twice during the post-1997 period, excluding Tsoi's production.¹⁰¹ Tsoi regards *Julius Caesar* as belonging to the sphere of serious theatre, which he considers that the Hong Kong audience generally lack appreciation of ("Julius Caesar Programme"

¹⁰⁰ Refer to <http://www.iatc.com.hk/drama2014>.

¹⁰¹ See appendix 1.

6; *my trans.*).¹⁰² He nonetheless chose to stage the play as a means of using the past to satirise the present and to express his concerns over Hong Kong society (“Julius Caesar Programme” 7; *my trans.*). The year 2012 in which Tsoi staged *Julius Caesar* was an important electoral year in Hong Kong, as both the elections for the Chief Executive and the Legislative Council took place. Tsoi asserts, “There is a certain amount of significance in my choice of staging *Julius Caesar* in the Year of Election in Hong Kong” (“Julius Caesar Programme” 6; *my trans.*). For example, he notes similarities between Roman society and Hong Kong society in the neo-colonial period, such as the parallels between the hierarchy of the Roman senators and that of the Hong Kong Legislative Council, and the way that Roman and Hong Kong citizens were treated by their governments, at times exploited and pacified to serve the political interests of stakeholders (“Julius Caesar Programme” 6; *my trans.*). After Caesar is assassinated, Anthony compels Brutus to step down by drawing support from the crowd. Anthony also announces to the Roman citizens that Caesar has granted each of them 75 drachmas in his will (*JC* 3.2.237), a gesture which Tsoi finds curiously comparable to the Hong Kong government’s granting of 6000 Hong Kong Dollars to every Hong Kong citizen in 2011 (“Julius Caesar Programme” 6; *my trans.*),¹⁰³ serving to pacify dissatisfaction with the government. From this perspective, Tsoi’s *Julius Caesar* fits itself into the social and political realms of Hong Kong Shakespeare.

¹⁰² Tsoi explains this phenomenon as attributable to the characteristics of Hong Kong theatre in the recent years, whereby its primary feature is to entertain instead of to educate. He perceives that this is related to the government’s funding system and the theatre companies’ market-dominated strategy (“Julius Caesar Programme” 6; *my trans.*).

¹⁰³ “Scheme 6000” was implemented by the Hong Kong government in 2011, resulting from Hong Kong people’s dissatisfaction with the government’s initial proposal to inject the equivalent sum of money into their mandatory provident funds for retirement (Joseph Li, “Road”).



Figure 12: Assassination of Caesar, photograph © Priman Lee, Hong Kong Theatre Works.

In addition, I would argue that the structure of Tsoi's *Julius Caesar* corresponds with Brandon's argument that some Asian Shakespearean productions embody a "mixture of canonical and localised aims" (18). From acts one to three, the play is situated in Rome and it follows the source text quite faithfully. The actors are dressed as Romans, for example, men wear short-sleeved tunics, and the action takes place in a setting rather similar to the colosseum in Rome, which is made of ancient pillars. Nevertheless, acts four and five of Shakespeare's text are entirely removed from Tsoi's production. He transposes the play from Rome to Hong Kong in a ten-minute mime that portrays the lives of Hong Kong citizens, as illustrated in Figure 13 below. The actors in the mime are dressed mainly in black, and their actions are accompanied by slow music being played on the harmonica. The mime partly depicts the daily routine of people from the lower classes in Hong Kong, whereby an elderly woman is seen pushing heavy cardboard boxes, a homeless man sleeps on the floor, and a street hawker is being chased

away by three men in black suits, who represent the government officials. I believe that the mime in *Julius Caesar* relates to the opening scene in the source text, which depicts the lives of commoners, such as the carpenter and the cobbler in Rome, and how poorly they were being treated by the tribunes. This reminds us of Sanders' remark that an appropriation stands alone in its own right, but still engages in dialogue with Shakespeare's source text (27, 60). Ironically titled *la dolce vita*, meaning "the good life" in Italian (*Our Radio*),¹⁰⁴ Tsoi's mime illustrates three social problems in Hong Kong: the hegemony of property developers, the wide disparity between rich and poor, and the difficulties in seeking employment ("Julius Caesar Programme" 6; *my trans.*). Under the silhouette of Hong Kong's high rises, also depicted in Figure 13, actors playing property agents post advertisements onto the Roman pillars that read "Open Day of Roman Garden". This symbolises Tsoi's critique of the collusion between large property developers and the government, which results in property price inflation beyond the purchasing power of most Hong Kongers.

¹⁰⁴ Tsoi borrows the phrase *la dolce vita* from the Italian film of the same title directed by Federico Fellini ("Julius Caesar Programme" 6; *my trans.*).



Figure 13: A muted protest under the Statue of Justice, photograph © Priman Lee, Hong Kong Theatre Works

On the one hand, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* primarily centres on the lives of the ruling class and their struggle for power, while the commoners in Rome only constitute minor roles in the play. Calphurnia, wife of Caesar, exclaims, "When beggars die there are no comets seen; / The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of / princes" (*JC* 2.2.30-32).¹⁰⁵ Calphurnia's remark reinforces the idea that the poor and the powerless are of no significance at all, whether living or dead. Contrastingly, Tsoi's *Julius Caesar* elevates the role of the commoners to the "fifth main character" ("Julius Caesar

¹⁰⁵ Quotations from *Julius Caesar* are taken from *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, edited by Stanley Wells, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Programme” 6; *my trans.*),¹⁰⁶ where the first part of his production depicts the lives of the aristocracy in Rome, and the second part illustrates the lives of commoners in Hong Kong. The non-Shakespearean part of the play added by the director highlights the poverty and social problems in Hong Kong, as I have outlined in the above. This parallels the social unrest in *Julius Ceasar*, whereby the commoners in both the societies of Hong Kong and Rome are mistreated and exploited by the government. By superimposing Hong Kong’s social and political reality onto Shakespeare’s play via the mime, Tsoi’s appropriation carries his play decisively away from the source text and makes it a new cultural product, fitting into Sanders’ categorization of an appropriation (26).

In the source text, Brutus recounts that Caesar’s ghost has repeatedly appeared to him in dreams which foreshadow his own death, and, ambiguously and silently, the ghost appears on stage the night before the defeat at Phillipi (*JC* 5.5.16-19). In Tsoi’s *Julius Caesar*, rather than appearing as an image of nemesis only to Brutus, Caesar’s ghost appears at the end of the mime, where he quietly observes the lives of ordinary Hong Kong citizens and the playback of significant socio-political events in Hong Kong during the neo-colonial era. By having a leader of Rome overlooking the contemporary situation of Hong Kong, Tsoi seems to suggest that the catastrophe of politics in the Roman Republic echoes or prefigures those of Hong Kong. He also argues that the senator Cicero makes the most profound remark of the whole play (“Julius Caesar Programme” 5; *my trans.*): “Indeed it is a strange-disposed time; / But men may construe things after their fashion, / Clean from the purpose of the things themselves” (*JC* 1.3.33-35). The absurdity of the neocolonial situation in Hong Kong is reflected by Tsoi’s critique of

¹⁰⁶ Tsoi asserts that there are five main characters in his production. In order of importance they are Caesar, Brutus, Cassius, Anthony and the commoners (“Julius Caesar Programme” 5; *my trans.*).

China's domineering economic and political influence in the territory. First of all, Tsoi depicts Hong Kong in the mime as distinct from China. For instance, as portrayed in Figure 14 below, actors dressed in black clothing hold candles to commemorate the June Fourth Massacre in Beijing in 1989, with an image of the Statue of Liberty in the background. As Hong Kong is the only city in China where commemorating the June Fourth Massacre is legal, the action in the mime signifies that freedom of speech and demonstration are widely embraced by Hong Kong people. Unfortunately, ever since the city's handover to China, freedoms previously enjoyed have gradually diminished.¹⁰⁷ This is symbolically represented in the opening of the mime, where the old Hong Kong Legislative Council building from the colonial era collapses into a pile of rubble. The Legislative Council is a place in Hong Kong where elected legislators by the people meet to enact, amend and repeal laws. It also symbolises the rule of law that Hong Kong upholds, and the common law system that Hong Kong practises, which is different from the civil law system in China with socialist roots. Therefore, the collapse of the Legislative Council building represents the loss of freedom of speech and demonstration in Hong Kong. In addition, a strong sense of irony is evident when a group of actors march to protest against the government, which takes place simultaneously with the fireworks to celebrate July 1, marking Hong Kong's handover to China on July 1, 1997.¹⁰⁸ But the protest is abruptly disrupted when two mainland Chinese tourists appear in the spotlight. Carrying lots of shopping bags, one of them shouts loudly in Mandarin,

¹⁰⁷ One such example is the diminishing press freedom in Hong Kong, where many local media outlets act more like government mouthpieces rather than independent watchdogs (SC Yeung, "HK").

¹⁰⁸ Since the large-scale protest in 2003 against the enactment of Article 23 in the Basic Law of Hong Kong, which would circumscribe freedom of speech upon effective legislation, there had been anti-government protests held on July 1 in Hong Kong every year. For more information, see "July 1 March" (*South China Morning Post*, "July").

“I love Hong Kong! I love shopping! Everything is so cheap”! The line in Mandarin breaks the silence of the protestors, who are now walking gradually behind the tourists and heading towards back stage. This is symbolic of the voices of the oppressed Hong Kongers that remain largely ignored by the Hong Kong government. As suggested by Ackbar Abbas, the 1997 handover does not signify Hong Kong’s liberation from colonial rule; instead, it indicates the city’s transition to another form of governance (2). This marks the double colonization of Hong Kong, as I have argued earlier.¹⁰⁹ On the one hand, the Hong Kong government welcomes economic gains derived from Chinese tourism. But on the other hand, it fails to effectively convey Hong Kong people’s quest for democracy and universal suffrage to China for fear of antagonising the neo-coloniser. Abbas further argues that as a result of efficient colonial management, the decadence of energy is channelled exclusively into economic interests, such that there is “almost no outlet for political idealism” (4-5). It is observed that a significant proportion of Hong Kongers are more concerned with speculation on the property or stock markets than about who wins the elections at the Legislative Council. While the mainland Chinese tourists are dressed in colourful outfits and appear in the spotlight, the silenced protestors’ black clothing almost reduces them to the appearance of the backstage crew. The contrast of colours, and of the loudness of fireworks celebrating July 1 and the silence of the anti-government march, signify that Hong Kongers’ quest for a spiritual home is thwarted by the intangible control of the authority.

¹⁰⁹ See my introduction, p. 50.



Figure 14: A muted commemoration of the June Fourth Massacre, photograph © Priman Lee, Hong Kong Theatre Works.

III. Absence of King Lear in *Shamshuipo Lear* (2015)

Shamshuipo Lear (深水埗李爾王) was co-written by Michael Fung Kin-sun (馮健新) and Hardy Tsoi, which resulted in a Shakespearean appropriation that is firmly rooted in the social reality of Hong Kong. The play is staged under a realistic backdrop, as illustrated in Figure 15 below; there are sofas, chairs and beds in the middle of the stage. This corresponds to the living conditions of the homeless people in Hong Kong, where they primarily gather in Shamshuipo, Yau Ma Tei and Kwun Tong. At first glance, *Shamshuipo Lear* appears to belong to Brandon's category of localized Shakespeare, since the play is situated in Hong Kong and the characters consist of Hong Kong people, which coincides with Brandon's definition of localized Shakespeare as stories transposed into local settings (12). By signaling in its title that it will be set in Shamshuipo (深水埗),

Shamshuipo Lear signifies for the first time in the theatre history of Hong Kong that a local context is brought to bear on *King Lear*. The production draws interesting parallels with several newly created plays staged in post-1997 Hong Kong that either illustrate local sentiments or reflect the social problems of the city, such as Hong Kong Repertory Theatre's *Sweet & Sour Hong Kong* (酸酸甜甜香港地) in 2003 and 2004, Theatredetour (另劇場)'s *Miss Hong Kong* (掛住香港) in 2014, and Dramusica Hong Kong (樂戲空間)'s *Our – Hong Kong style – Music – Theatre* (我們的一港式—音樂—劇場) in 2014.¹¹⁰

Shamshuipo, literally meaning “deep water bank”, was once the “site of British army barracks built on levelled and reclaimed land in the 1920s” (Ingham, “Hong” 189). It is now the poorest district in Hong Kong, which is primarily inhabited by new immigrants from China and ethnic minorities. Many impoverished residents in this area live in subdivided flats or worse still, “coffin homes”, with rows of wooden boxes crammed into tiny flats (Haas, “Hong”). The inclusion of a Hong Kong context distinguishes Tsoi's appropriation from the canonical *King Lear* productions staged by Vicki Ooi and Daniel Yang in Hong Kong during the British colonial era (D.S.P. Yang, “King” 190), where authenticity to Shakespeare's source text was a primary concern,¹¹¹ thus reflecting the mentality of the colonised people to mimic the literary works of the

¹¹⁰ Refer to <http://www.iatc.com.hk/drama2014> and <https://www.art-mate.net/>.

¹¹¹ Vicki Ooi's Seals Theatre Company (海豹劇團) staged the first Hong Kong production of *King Lear* in 1981, in which Ooi employed a faithful translation of the play by Jane Lai (D.S.P. Yang, “King” 190). Daniel Yang, who was the first artistic director of the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre, divided the theatre company's production of Shakespeare's plays into three categories, namely early experiments (1977 – 1980), more polished productions (1982 – 1988), and ambitious productions (1990 – 1997). Yang classified his directing of *King Lear* in 1993 into the third category of “ambitious production”. He argued that his translation of the play was extremely faithful to Shakespeare's text, and the scale of the production was “not far from a typical main house production at Stratford-upon-Avon” (“Shakespeare” 82-83). Also see p. 40, fn. 23.

coloniser (Bhabha, “The location” 85). However, Tsoi’s appropriation comments much more on Hong Kong’s social reality than on the source text, to the point that Shakespeare’s source text disappears in the midst of his commentary on poverty and political instability in Hong Kong. Michael Fung had conducted in-depth research about the problem of homelessness in Hong Kong in order to equip himself with background knowledge when writing the play (Personal interview with Fung).¹¹² For instance, he had interviewed Wong Hung (黃洪), a social work professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong on the problem of homelessness in the city, and he had also consulted Wong’s book on *The hope of poverty eradication: Examination of poverty problem in Hong Kong* (「無窮」的盼望: 香港貧窮問題探析). On a similar note, Tsoi spoke of the inter-relationship between *Julius Caesar* and *Shamshuipo Lear* in an interview (*Our Radio*). He affirmed that *Shamshuipo Lear* is a continuation of the mime in *Julius Caesar* where he depicts the poor and the homeless, thus showing his recurrent concern with problems of poverty and wealth inequality in Hong Kong. For example, as mentioned in section two of this chapter, there are scenes in the mime of *Julius Caesar* where an elderly woman pushes a trolley of used cardboard boxes, and a homeless man sleeps on a cardboard box. Furthermore, there is a direct reference to Shamshuipo in *Julius Caesar*. The characters in the mime buy and sell used materials in the Dawn Market (天光墟), an actual locality in Shamshuipo where the poor make a living by selling used materials early in the morning, just before government officers come and chase them away (Dawn Markets in Hong Kong, “Stand”). While Uncle Lee (李伯), the main protagonist in *Shamshuipo Lear* appropriates King Lear’s lines to criticise the government’s

¹¹² Recorded in my interview with Michael Fung Kin-sun, co-playwright of *Shamshuipo Lear*, August 16, 2015.

indifference towards the poor, *Julius Caesar* re-enacts the government's mistreatment of the poor in reality by portraying some men in suits chasing an elderly street hawker away.

Interestingly, Michael Fung honestly told me that he had not read Shakespeare's *King Lear* while preparing this script, though he knows the story well (Personal interview with Fung). Tsoi, who co-wrote and directed *Shamshuipo Lear*, admits that he was the one who had later added the lines of Shakespeare into the appropriation (Personal interview with Tsoi). There are two reasons why Tsoi chose to appropriate *King Lear*. He appropriated Shakespeare's source text *not* because of the reasons asserted by Hutcheon – to pay homage to, or to contest the aesthetic or political values of the adapted text (20). This again shows the limitation of Hutcheon's adaptation theories outside the Western cultural context. Knowing that the Hong Kong audience is mostly not familiar with Shakespearean plays, Tsoi appropriated *King Lear* in a manner whereby knowledge of the source text does not matter to the understanding of *Shamshuipo Lear* (Personal interview with Tsoi). His main purpose of appropriation deviated from Richard Ho's sinicized adaptation of Shakespeare. Whereas Ho sought to place Shakespeare into a more familiar Chinese cultural milieu in order to enhance his audience's understanding of Shakespeare's text, Tsoi simply appropriated particular motifs and concerns of *King Lear* so as to enable his audience to understand the social problems of Hong Kong. On a personal level, he appropriated Shakespeare's text to commemorate a friend, who lost his family business and later drank himself to death. His deceased friend thus served as a tragic prototype for the character of Uncle Lee in *Shamshuipo Lear* (Personal interview with Tsoi). This reminds us of Alexander Huang's argument that the notion of the "universality of Shakespeare" has become "retrograde", and that "Asian interpretations

for the stage [presents] the creativity of imaginative directors willing to create new hybrids of dramatic spectacle by combining the personal with the fictional” (“Shakespeare”).

Subsequently, on a societal level, Tsoi appropriated Shakespeare to critique the socio-political problems of Hong Kong, a tactic he believed was “more effective than writing a new play about the city” (Personal interview with Tsoi). I argue that Tsoi considered appropriating *King Lear* as “more effective” in terms of marketing appeal. As the homeless people of Hong Kong belong to a minority group, the subject matter of the play was not very appealing to the mostly affluent middle class audience, who were traditionally more concerned with escapism and cultural capital. According to the “Director’s Notes” of *Shamshuipo Lear*, there are fewer than 2,000 homeless people in a population of over 7 million in Hong Kong, thus the government does not consider the number as significant and refuses to set up any policy to help this group of people (“Shamshuipo Lear Programme” 3; *my trans.*). Similarly, Bernice Chan admits that like most people, she has never experienced the homeless situation, thus poverty to her and to many others in Hong Kong only exists in their imagination (Chan, Lee and Tsoi, “Shakespeare’s”; *my trans.*). Josephine To, producer of *Shamshuipo Lear*, tells me that she was worried that the show would attract small audiences because of the unfamiliar subject matter (Personal interview with To). By drawing parallels between *King Lear* and a homeless elderly man, Uncle Lee, Tsoi marketed *Shamshuipo Lear* as an appropriation of Shakespeare, which might help to increase the popularity of his production, since Shakespeare is the most often staged Western playwright in Hong Kong.¹¹³ Tsoi and

¹¹³ See my introduction, p. 18.

Fung also seemed eager to convince the audience that their play was somehow related to Shakespeare's *King Lear*, as they rather intentionally named three of their homeless characters as Uncle *Lee* (李伯), Wen *Yee-tak* (溫爾德), and *Wong Tong* (王童). The combination of the Chinese characters taken from each of their names is "Lee" (李), "Yee" (爾) and "Wong" (王), which amounted to the Chinese translation of *King Lear*, i.e. "Lee Yee Wong" (李爾王) (Personal interview with Fung). However, the more that the director and playwrights of *Shamshuipo Lear* tried to convince me that the play was based on *King Lear*, the more obvious was the fact that merely depicting Hong Kong's homeless people was unappealing to most Hong Kong audience, so there was a pragmatic need for their play to be connected to Shakespeare's authoritative text.



Figure 15: Homeless people in Hong Kong as the main characters in *Shamshuipo Lear*, photograph © Priman Lee, Prospects Theatre Company.

With several newly added characters and scenes, *Shamshuipo Lear* positions itself as an appropriation of Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Yet it was not a full-scale appropriation, as Tsoi merely extracted a few motifs and patterns from the source text and transplanted them onto a new text: if anything, it is a play almost about the absence of *King Lear*. Lee Heung-sing's analysis of *Shamshuipo Lear* supports my hypothesis, as Lee argues that the play is "not really about *King Lear*, but there are aspects derived from Shakespeare's source text" (Chan, Lee and Tsoi, "Shakespeare's"; *my trans.*). Bernice Chan echoes Lee's remark and calls it a "mix and match play" (Chan, Lee and Tsoi, "Shakespeare's"; *my trans.*), and the connection she attempts to establish between *Shamshuipo Lear* and *King Lear* is that the "characters in Tsoi's appropriation experience despondent situations like the characters in Shakespeare's source text" (Chan, Lee and Tsoi, "Shakespeare's"; *my trans. & italics*).¹¹⁴ In other words, Chan implies that the characters in *Shamshuipo Lear* are not identical to the characters in *King Lear*, and I would argue that the differences between both plays are larger than their similarities. This coincides with Sanders' assertion that appropriation signifies a "more decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain" (26), where Tsoi has transformed the tragedy of Lear into a satire about the predicaments of Hong Kong people. *Shamshuipo Lear*, through its very title, asks us to think about its characters and events in the light of Shakespeare's tragedy, while refraining from offering a re-enactment of that tragedy.

¹¹⁴ Bernice Chan suggests that similar to the homeless characters in *Shamshuipo Lear*, Shakespearean characters like Titus and Lear also experience despairing situations. For instance, Titus's daughter, Lavinia, is raped and disfigured, whereas Lear is betrayed by his two older daughters (Chan, Lee and Tsoi, "Shakespeare's"; *my trans.*).

Tsoi's new story about the survival of Hong Kong people is superimposed onto the source text to the extent that most of the main plots and subplots in *King Lear* are lost, such as the parallel parent-child relationships of Lear and his daughters, and Gloucester and his sons. In *Shamshuipo Lear*, the main plot is Uncle Lee's estranged relationship with his son, Jack. The two subplots are respectively the stories of other homeless characters, and Jack's relationship with his girlfriend-cum-social worker for the homeless, Kimmy/Miss Chan. There are only four instances in *Shamshuipo Lear* whereby Tsoi employs Shakespeare's elements. First, the main protagonist, a homeless elderly man called Uncle Lee, imagines himself as King Lear. In the opening scene titled "Mingling of good and evil in the street" (街頭龍蛇), Uncle Lee wears a paper crown and a toy trumpet is hung around his neck, which is illustrated in Figure 16 below. He walks unsteadily with a wine bottle in one of his hands. When Wong Tong, a homeless neighbour, greets him, "Uncle Lee, good morning!" (Tsoi and Fung, "Shamshuipo" 4),¹¹⁵ Uncle Lee replies:

No! I am King Lear! You have to call me king; I will announce a plan that has not been officially decreed ... Come, give me a map, I will divide my territories, as I am determined to cast away all the troubles of my worries from my old and feeble body. I will pass my lands to the young people, ha ha ha ...

(Tsoi and Fung, "Shamshuipo" 4)

¹¹⁵ Quotations from Hardy Tsoi's *Shamshuipo Lear* come from *Shamshuipo Lear*, Hardy Tsoi and Michael Fung, 2015. All translations in Tsoi's *Shamshuipo Lear* from Chinese to English are done by myself.

Uncle Lee's lines in the opening scene of Tsoi's play are appropriated from Lear's lines in act 1, scene 1 of *King Lear*, where Lear declares (in the Folio text):

Give me the map there. Know that we have divided

In three our kingdom, and 'tis our fast intent

To shake all cares and business from our age,

Conferring them on younger strengths while we

Unburdened crawl toward death.

(*Lr.* 1.1.37-41)¹¹⁶

Nevertheless, the social status of Uncle Lee is drastically different from that of Lear. While Lear is a real king who distributes his inheritance among his daughters and sons-in-law, Uncle Lee is only an imaginary king living in the slums of Shamshuipo, and he does not even have sufficient financial means to provide for himself. By depicting Uncle Lee as a drunkard and slightly detached from reality, Tsoi perhaps hints that Lear in the source text is also mad when he surrenders all his territories to his daughters. Kent tries unsuccessfully to forestall Lear's decision by advising him to "[r]eserve thy state, / And in thy best consideration check / This hideous rashness" (*Lr.* 1.1.149-151). Lear's division of his kingdom, according to one critic, reflects his "imagined expansion of his own territory – he would have three homes instead of one" (J.C.C. Yang, "A Search" 71). Unfortunately, his imagination is distorted, and in reality he has no home at all. It is

¹¹⁶ Quotations from *King Lear* are taken from *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, edited by Stanley Wells, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

ironic for Uncle Lee, a homeless character in *Shamshuipo Lear*, to want to distribute his “home” to other characters. This metaphorically alludes to the homelessness of Hong Kong people during the neo-colonial era, which I shall elaborate on in the latter part of this chapter.



Figure 16: Uncle Lee perceives himself as King Lear, photograph © Priman Lee, Prospects Theatre Company.

Second, Tsoi and Fung draw parallels between the despondent circumstances of Lear and Uncle Lee. While Lear is driven to madness by his two evil daughters, Uncle Lee is driven to insanity by his brothers’ deceit and his wife’s abandonment. Uncle Lee’s

past is retold by his homeless neighbour, Aunt Lan (蘭姑) in *Shamshuipo Lear*. Viewed as a comparable figure to Kent in the source text (Personal interview with Tsoi), Aunt Lan takes care of Uncle Lee and fills his empty wine bottles with water to prevent him from drinking himself to death. In Aunt Lan's recount, Uncle Lee used to run a family business. But his two younger brothers betrayed him and the business went bankrupt. His wife immediately divorced him and remarried a wealthy man, and these circumstances drove Uncle Lee to madness (Tsoi and Fung, "Shamshuipo" 12). His only son, Jack, remains filial and tries to search for his long-lost father after he returns to Hong Kong from his studies in Australia. Having obtained a doctorate in literature, Uncle Lee is familiar with Shakespeare's *King Lear*. In his disturbed mind, he imagines himself to be Lear, and other characters in his life as comparable to the fictional characters in Shakespeare's source text. Throughout the play, Uncle Lee believes that he is dying, as he tells Miss Chan, the social worker, "I think I'm like King Lear, I will die soon!" (Tsoi and Fung, "Shamshuipo" 18) He also imagines his son, Jack, as the faithful Cordelia, probably because both Jack and Cordelia show filial piety to their fathers, and they both attempt to rescue Uncle Lee and Lear from their destitute conditions. But because Uncle Lee perceives his son to be Cordelia, he also stubbornly thinks that Jack's fate will be identical to Cordelia's destiny, which makes him afraid to reunite with his long-lost son. He explains his fear to Miss Chan in scene 6 titled "Having a son and a father" (有仔有爸): "Cordelia, King Lear's youngest daughter, upon knowing that *her* father is bullied by *her* two elder sisters, sends a troop to rescue him. In the end *she* dies, I am afraid of dragging *him* along, *he ... he ... he* should stay away from me as far as possible to be safe!" (Tsoi and Fung, "Shamshuipo" 18; *my italics*) In the above lines, Uncle Lee first

uses the female pronoun “her” to refer to Cordelia, but he later changes to the male pronoun of “him” to refer to Jack. This shows that Uncle Lee is not only confused about his own identity, but also the identity of other characters in the play. Though Tsoi and Fung try to establish a relationship between Lear and Uncle Lee, the two characters are actually quite dissimilar in the first place. Rejected and expelled by his daughters, Goneril and Regan, Lear loses his own identity. Lear’s consciousness of losing his identity suggests that he is aware that he was a former king who gave everything to his daughters (*Lr.* 2.2.423),¹¹⁷ whereas Uncle Lee does not even know who he is until the very end of *Shamshuipo Lear*. To avoid confronting his painful past, Uncle Lee shields himself under a fictionalized armour of Lear, where he transplants all his unspeakable sorrows into the woes of another person.



Figure 17: Uncle Lee’s estranged relationship with his son, photograph © Priman Lee, Prospects Theatre Company.

¹¹⁷ When Goneril and Regan disallow Lear to keep his knights, Lear protests by saying, “I gave you all” (*Lr.* 2.2.423).

A third parallel between *Shamshuipo Lear* and Shakespeare's *King Lear* is that Uncle Lee utters Lear's lines from *King Lear* when he is mad. As his lines are spoken out of context, other characters of the play perceive him as insane. For example, in scene 10 titled "Submit Meekly to Maltreatment" (逆來順受), Uncle Lee is furious at his son for not telling him that he is dating Miss Chan, who has another role as a social worker for the homeless. All of a sudden, the weather turns bad and loud claps of thunder are heard. The sound drives Uncle Lee to substitute himself for Lear in the source text in which, before the storm, Lear has a heated argument with his two elder daughters about the reduction of his knights:

Uncle Lee: Is it I have to move again? Can I bring my knights too?

Aunt Lan: Thunder and lightning, it's going to pour soon! Let's go back inside!

Jack: Let's go back, daddy!

Uncle Lee: I will automatically reduce some people! How about keeping half of them? Let's keep 25?

Aunt Lan: Don't be so crazy! Be good!

Jack: Daddy!

Uncle Lee: I am most afraid of being deceived! Especially by women!
Your mother ... your mother! A thousand hissing devils with sizzling red pitchforks come up to you!

[A loud clap of thunder]

Uncle Lee: I'd rather have no shelter and endure the cold ... I'd rather suffer from hunger, I'd rather live on the streets ... Son, don't push me to madness, I won't bother you, we will not see each other again! If you are my flesh and blood, why not say that you're the bad tumour of my body ... But I will not curse you, and will leave you to be punished by heaven!

[Another thunderclap]

Jack: Daddy!

Aunt Lan: Why don't you come in? You can discuss that later!

Uncle Lee: Winds! Blow! Pouring rain like that of a waterfall, just come pouring! Sulphur and lightning, come burn my white hair! The roaring sounds of thunder, come shatter this earth that is overpopulated, don't let a seed of ungrateful person remain!¹¹⁸

Jack: There's no shelter here, you will be soaked!

Aunt Lan: Lee!

Uncle Lee: Wind, rain, thunder, lightning, all of you are not my children.

My brothers, my wife, I will not blame you. Therefore, do as you like,

¹¹⁸ Uncle Lee's lines bear similarities with the following lines of Lear in the source text: "Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage, blow, / ... You sulph'rous and thought-executing fires, / Vaunt-couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts, / Singe my white head; and thou all-shaking thunder, / Strike flat the thick rotundity o'th'world, / Crack nature's moulds, all germens spill at once / That makes ingrateful man" (*Lr.* 3.2.1, 4-9).

show me your mighty power! I stand here and am your slave. An old man who is pitiful, weak, and despised! I need to endure pain that people cannot bear; I will submit myself to oppression!¹¹⁹

(Tsoi and Fung, “Shamshuipo” 25)

In the above extract, it is uncertain whom Uncle Lee is reprimanding. If he is accusing his son of being “deceitful”, then Jack’s “deceit” of not telling his father of his girlfriend’s true identity seems too trivial a matter to deserve “punishment from heaven”, which Uncle Lee has angrily invoked. Therefore, it is highly likely that Uncle Lee has substituted himself for Lear and is in fact reprimanding Goneril and Regan. The lines uttered by Uncle Lee resemble Lear’s lines in the source text, in which Lear cries,

I prithee, *daughter*, do not make me mad.
I will not trouble thee, my child. Farewell.
We’ll no more meet, no more see one another.
But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter —
Or rather a disease that’s in my flesh,
Which I must needs call mine. Thou art a boil,
A plague-sore or embossed carbuncle
In my corrupted blood. But I’ll not chide thee ...
I do not bid the thunder-bearer shoot,
Nor tell tales of thee to high-judging Jove.

¹¹⁹ Uncle Lee’s lines are appropriated from the following lines of Lear in the source text: “Rumble thy bellyful; spit, fire; spout, rain / Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire are my daughters. / I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness / I never gave you kingdom, called you children / You owe me no subscription. Then let fall / Your horrible pleasure. Here I stand your slave, / A poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man, / But yet I call you servile ministers, / That will with two pernicious daughters join / Your high-engendered battles ’gainst a head / So old and white as this. O, ho, ’tis foul!” (*Lr.* 3.2.14-24).

(*Lr. 2.2.391-398,400-401; my italics*)

Nevertheless, I would argue that Uncle Lee's association with Lear falls short of reality, as he fails to distinguish Jack from the two evil daughters of Lear. Uncle Lee simply changes "I prithee, *daughter*, do not make me mad" (*Lr. 2.2.391; my italics*) into "Son, don't push me to madness" (Tsoi and Fung, "Shamshuipo" 25; *my italics*). Is Jack as "ungrateful" as Uncle Lee presumes? Not at all. He has continuously visited his father in the slums for almost four months, and he also makes plans for his father to move into his house (Tsoi and Fung, "Shamshuipo" 12, 38). Moreover, in the scene just before the storm, Uncle Lee and Lear are treated in disparate ways by their children. While Jack anxiously attempts to persuade his father to take shelter, Goneril and Regan simply do not care about their aged father soaking in heavy rain, with Goneril telling Gloucester, "My lord, entreat him by no means to stay" (*Lr. 2.2.471*). Regan goes even further and orders Gloucester to shut the doors, justifying her cruelty by saying that "O sir, to wilful men / The injuries that they themselves procure / Must be their schoolmasters" (*Lr. 2.2.474-476*). While Goneril and Regan's houses have become unattainable homes for Lear, Jack tries to provide his father with a comfortable home so that Uncle Lee does not have to live on the streets anymore. I believe that the "ungrateful" one is not Jack, but his father. In Shakespeare's text, Lear has good reason to accuse his daughters of being unthankful, having raised them and bestowed his kingdom upon them. In contrast, Uncle Lee admits to his son in an imaginary conversation in scene 8 titled "I am so ashamed" (我真慚愧) that he has not taken care of his son after his divorce from his wife (Tsoi and Fung, "Shamshuipo" 21). Though he has not fulfilled his responsibilities as a father, his son still takes care of him by visiting him regularly and helping him pack his living area

(Tsoi and Fung, “Shamshuipo” 17). It is puzzling why Uncle Lee thinks of Jack as “ungrateful” and appropriates Lear’s lines to reprimand his son in the scene before the storm, and this is one of the reasons why he is perceived by other characters as mad.¹²⁰

In short, Lear’s lines from the source text provide an ample source of invective for Uncle Lee when he speaks either in rage, or in madness. Whenever Uncle Lee is depicted as angry, irritated or drunk in *Shamshuipo Lear*, he repeats Lear’s curse, “May a thousand hissing devils with sizzling red pitchforks come up to you!” (Tsoi and Fung, “Shamshuipo” 4, 5, 25, 26). His line derives from Lear’s curse of Goneril and Regan in the source text: “To have a thousand with red burning spits / Come hissing in upon ’em!” (*Lr.* 3.6.15-16). Tsoi suggests that even if his audience has not read the story of *King Lear*, it does not affect their understanding of *Shamshuipo Lear* (Personal interview with Tsoi). My explanation for this is that Uncle Lee’s appropriation of Lear’s lines strips them from their context in Shakespeare’s text, rendering them meaningless. He has a habit of mixing Lear’s lines with his own, and whenever he utters Lear’s lines, other characters in the play naturally do not comprehend him and take him as insane. For example, in scene 13 titled “Creative Industry” (創意工業), he appropriates Lear’s lines to comment on the sexy clothing of Patsy, who works as a part-time fashion model:¹²¹

¹²⁰ Aunt Lan advises Uncle Lee to come back inside the sheltered area, and she says, “Don’t be so crazy! Be good!” (Tsoi and Fung, “Shamshuipo” 25).

¹²¹ There is a phenomenon in Hong Kong where tennage girls act as part-time fashion models. Without formal training in modelling, they are branded as “pseudo models” with their indecorous style. At times “pseudo models” are associated with prostitution, where lecherous men pay to take snapshots of them in private rooms (E. Yau, “Where”).

Uncle Lee: This lady, you are wearing such elegant clothing. If your purpose is to keep yourself warm, then it does not fit your needs ... Why did you dye your hair?

Patsy [*looking at the glamour photographer*] ¹²² : When did I camouflage¹²³ myself?

Uncle Lee: Garbage woman, I said why did you dye your hair to a colour that makes you look neither like a person nor a ghost?

Photographer A: Hehe! He has mistaken you for a different person.

Patsy: Old man, what you said was full of character ... Who are you?

Uncle Lee: I am King Lear; all of you have to call me king.

Photographer A: Wow, this is a piece of work; [*Putting their palms together*] [We] kowtow in salute to the king!

Uncle Lee [*sits upright like a king*]: Guard, no need to be over courteous.

Photographer B: You are a guard, hehe, salute to the king.

Uncle Lee: You have achieved a great accomplishment. Let me take a sip of wine, and I will award you according to your contributions in a while.

[*Lee drinks wine.*]

Photographer A: Haha, he is a complete fool!

¹²² “Glamour photographers” (“龍友”) is the closest word that I can think of when describing male photographers who like to take photos of young, sexy female models. They usually appear at Japanese animation exhibitions, where they like to take photos of young, sexy models dressed as cartoon characters.

¹²³ The Cantonese word for “dyeing colour” (“染色”) sounds similar to the word “camouflage” (“掩飾”).

Patsy: Hey, if you both are guards and generals, then aren't I Princess Frozen?

[The three burst into laughter.]

(Tsoi and Fung, "Shamshuipo" 27)

In the above scene, when Uncle Lee sees Patsy, the daughter of his homeless neighbour Wen Yee-tak, dressed as the sexy Japanese cartoon character Sailor Moon,¹²⁴ he questions her choice of clothing by appropriating Lear's lines,

Thou art a lady.

If only to go warm were gorgeous,

Why, nature needs not what thou, gorgeous, wear'st,

Which scarcely keeps thee warm.

(*Lr.* 2.2.441-444)

In act 2, scene 4 of *King Lear*, Lear argues with his two daughters about the retaining of his knights. Though he indirectly admits that keeping his followers is not a necessity, he asserts,

Our basest beggars

Are in the poorest things superfluous.

¹²⁴ Sailor Moon is a character in a Japanese anime cartoon which was extremely popular in the 1990s, and among young people in Hong Kong. Patsy in scene 13 of *Shamshuipo Lear* dresses in Sailor Moon's typical costume, with a large, red ribbon in her blouse that accompanies her short, blue skirt.

Allow not nature more than nature needs,

Man's life is cheap as beast's.

(*Lr.* 2.2.438-441)

To Lear, keeping the knights is an assertion of his power as a former king. To vent his frustrations against his daughters' suggestion of reducing his knights, Lear plays as a beggar, having earlier entreated Regan on his knees, "Dear daughter, I confess that I am old / Age is unnecessary. On my knees I beg / That you'll vouchsafe me raiment, bed, and food" (*Lr.* 2.2.327-329). Lear's misfortune is comparable to Uncle Lee's, as Uncle Lee is stripped of his former wealthy lifestyle after his family business goes bankrupt and he is reduced to living on the streets. But his mimicry of Lear by appropriating from Shakespeare's text is ridiculed by other characters, such as Patsy and the two glamour photographers in scene 13 of Tsoi's play. This brings to mind Homi Bhabha's remark on the relationship between mimicry and mockery: the "reforming, civilising mission is threatened by the displacing gaze of its disciplinary double" ("The location" 86). This doubleness, as asserted by Bhabha, is the ambivalence produced by mimicry, which is "almost the same, *but not quite*" ("The location" 86; *italics in the original*). While Uncle Lee pretends to be the king, he is certainly *not quite* a king, since he is living in dire poverty. Thus he is mocked as "a complete fool" (Tsoi and Fung, "Shamshuipo" 27) by the photographers, and they further make fun of him by bowing and saluting to the "king". I would like to argue that Tsoi's appropriation of Lear in his production is markedly different from the pre-1997 Hong Kong adaptations of *King Lear*, where Tsoi's predecessors placed emphasis on the faithfulness of their adaptations. Tsoi

places Uncle Lee (Lear) side by side with Patsy and the photographers, which seemingly transforms the tragedy of the source text into a farce. Beside a bin lorry, the photographers take photos of Patsy and Uncle Lee, who are labelled “beauty and the beast” (Tsoi and Fung, “Shamshuipo” 28). In other words, the role of Uncle Lee in this scene is subsidiary, as he merely serves as a foil to Patsy’s sexual appeal and to satisfy the photographers’ hunt for novel characters that can become the objects of their photos. Therefore, it is not difficult to tell that Lear’s lines and the source text are both marginalised in *Shamshuipo Lear*.

The figure of Lear is not only marginalised in Tsoi’s production, but also serves as a transient phase in the construction of Uncle Lee’s identity. From the moment Uncle Lee regains sanity at the end of the play, he rejects his earlier appropriation of Shakespeare’s protagonist and never quotes another line. At the beginning, when he had assumed the role of Lear in scene 3 titled “Searching a Thousand Miles for Father” (千里尋父), he had rejected Jack’s visit, muttering “When did I have a son called Lok Seng? Hehe! King Lear has three daughters ... Haha! How can I have a son?” (Tsoi and Fung, “Shamshuipo” 13).¹²⁵ But in the last scene of the play titled “An Evening of Paying Last Respects” (送終晚會), Uncle Lee reconciles with his son: “Jack, I am sorry, my eyes have been blurry. I have often thought that you were the honest Cordelia, ha-ha, I couldn’t tell the difference between a boy and a girl. You are Jack” (Tsoi and Fung, “Shamshuipo” 43). When Uncle Lee finally faces reality, he no longer identifies with Lear, and is able to break free from the fictionalised circumstances of Lear’s world in Shakespeare’s text. Just before the coda, the last lines of *Shamshuipo Lear* uttered by

¹²⁵ Lok Seng (樂生) is the Chinese name of Jack, who is Uncle Lee’s biological son.

Uncle Lee are: “Can you all hear the bells? New Year has come ... A new year starts all over again ... now I know who I really am, let us embrace a new beginning!” (Tsoi and Fung, “Shamshuipo” 45). Tsoi’s play ends with the main protagonist’s rediscovery of his identity, which is a crucial element in Hong Kong’s newly created plays. I would therefore argue that *Shamshuipo Lear* contains some characteristics of Hong Kong’s newly created plays, such as the affirmation of local values, language and people, which are suggestive of the construction of Hong Kong identity, as summarised by Shelby Chan (“Equivocating” 424).¹²⁶ Josephine To, producer of *Shamshuipo Lear*, tells me that to some extent, *Shamshuipo Lear* is a newly created play (Personal interview with To). Therefore, Shakespeare is merely appropriated by Tsoi as a tool to critique the social problems of Hong Kong. As Adele Lee points out in the “Shakespeare in Hong Kong” podcast, Hong Kong people have clung onto the British cultural heritage for fear of loss of freedom after 1997 (Lee interviewed by Grant). Hence, Shakespeare is something that Hong Kong directors hold onto as a protest against China, the neo-coloniser (Lee interviewed by Grant, “Shakespeare”).

Apart from Uncle Lee’s occasional appropriation of Lear’s lines, *Shamshuipo Lear* also exemplifies the indirect absorption of Shakespeare’s scenes. This echoes Robert Miola’s argument that appropriations can represent a range of relations ranging from “direct contact to indirect absorption” (7). In the last scene of the play, the homeless neighbours hold a farewell party-cum-rehearsal of a Buddhist funeral for Uncle Lee. Aunt Lan, as a protector of Uncle Lee resembling Kent in Shakespeare’s text, hopes that Uncle Lee will be awakened from his past and be reborn through the symbolic funeral

¹²⁶ In contrast, translated plays in Hong Kong tend to emphasize the concept of change (S. Chan, “Equivocating” 424; *my trans.*).

rites. Tsoi explains that this scene parallels the near-death experience of Gloucester, where Edgar leads his blinded father to jump from a “cliff” at Dover to cure his sorrow and encourage him to carry on living (Personal interview with Tsoi). Edgar says to himself in the source text, “Why I do trifle thus with his despair / Is done to cure it” (*Lr.* 4.5.32-33). Similarly, in *Shamshuipo Lear*, Uncle Lee’s neighbours think that the remedy for curing Uncle Lee’s despair is to encourage him to face death through a rehearsed funeral. In the last scene, Aunt Lan and Wen Yee-tak parallel Edgar’s role, as they employ traditional customs to pay “last respects” to Uncle Lee. Aunt Lan passes him a bowl of soba noodles, and Wen Yee-tak tells him, “After you have eaten it, bad luck will go away, and may all your wishes come true!” (Tsoi and Fung, “Shamshuipo” 42). Wen, pretending to be the funeral master of a Buddhist funeral, then asks Uncle Lee’s family and acquaintances to bid him farewell with their “last words”. Finally, Ah Sing (阿星), who is of South Asian descent, dresses in traditional Indian costume and dances around Uncle Lee.¹²⁷ Wen tells Uncle Lee, “Time is short! Drink the Meng Po Tea (孟婆茶) quickly,¹²⁸ and be on your way! Look! The King of Hell has already sent the underworld judge to take you away!” (Tsoi and Fung, “Shamshuipo” 43). Meanwhile, Uncle Lee sits on a revolving chair and is spun around by other people. He cries loudly and faints. When he wakes up, he mumbles, “You shouldn’t pull me out from the grave. You are a blessed soul, while I am tied to the wheels of fire, my tears burn me like melted lead” (Tsoi and

¹²⁷ “Ah Sing” is the typical name that Hong Kongers use to refer to people of South Asian descent in Hong Kong. This term has a slightly derogatory meaning, and it is uncertain whether “Ah Sing” is the real name of the character in Tsoi’s play or not.

¹²⁸ Traditional Chinese belief states that before the deceased reincarnate, they will first be forced to drink the Meng Po Tea, or so-called Oblivion Tea, so that they will forget about everything that happened to them in their former lives (Xu 731).

Fung, “Shamshuipo” 43). His lines are appropriated from Lear when he wakes up and sees Cordelia, the daughter that he has banished:

You do me wrong to take me out o’th’grave.

Thou art a soul in bliss, but I am bound

Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears

Do scald like molten lead.

(Lr. 4.6.38-41)

At this instance, Uncle Lee still misperceives himself as Lear and he further exclaims, “Cordelia, all I have left is you. Whoever wishes to separate us must take a firebrand from heaven, and chase us away like chasing foxes. Wipe away your tears ... Cordelia, my youngest daughter. I have died once! Now I am reborn” (Tsoi and Fung, “Shamshuipo” 43). His lines are appropriated from the last scene in Shakespeare’s source text, where Lear and Cordelia are imprisoned after being defeated by the army of Goneril and Regan. Lear tells Cordelia,

He that parts us shall bring a brand from heaven

And fire us hence like foxes. Wipe thine eyes.

The goodyear shall devour them, flesh and fell,

Ere they shall make us weep.

(Lr. 5.3.22-25)

The last scene of *Shamshuipo Lear* witnesses a creative fusion of Shakespeare with the transposed customs of distinctive cultures. For instance, there is an appropriation of Lear's lines and a transplantation of Shakespeare's scene. There is also a flexible transference of identity where Uncle Lee sometimes resembles Lear by speaking his lines, and at times Gloucester by undergoing a near-death experience. Furthermore, there is a conglomeration of the Japanese custom of eating soba noodles as a symbol of good luck on New Year's Eve, the Chinese superstition of drinking Meng Po Tea in the underworld, and the Indian custom of dance as performed by Ah Sing. This kind of hybridity is distinctive in Hong Kong Shakespeare, while it is not seen in Richard Ho's *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, or in Tang Shu Wing's *Macbeth* and *Titus Andronicus 2.0*. It corresponds to Bhabha's assertion that cultural hybridity results in "something different, something new and unrecognisable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation" (Bhabha interviewed by Rutherford, "The third" 211). Tsoi's entire production seems to suggest that there is no fixedness in anything, be it identity or home. I would interpret the hybridity and the flexible transference of identity in *Shamshuipo Lear* as symbolic of the fluid identity of Hong Kong people, in line with Gilbert Fong's observation that through its postcolonial drama, Hong Kong carves its own flexible hybrid identity between its two colonisers (qtd. in C. Chen 42). The fluid identity of Hong Kongers is exemplified by the insertion of Sam Hui Koon-kit (許冠傑)'s song, "Where can be home be?" (那裡是吳家) in the coda of the play, and I shall further elaborate on this in the following section on the predicaments of homelessness in *Shamshuipo Lear*.

IV. Homelessness as a metaphor in *Shamshuipo Lear*

I have suggested earlier that Uncle Lee's appropriation of Lear's lines is perceived as a sign of madness by other characters, as his lines are incongruent to the action taking place in Tsoi's production. Nevertheless, there is an instance in *Shamshuipo Lear* where Uncle Lee appropriates Lear's lines to criticise the Hong Kong government, which I would interpret as a feature of socio-politicised Shakespeare. In scene 6 of the play, a legislator leads a team from the Home Affairs Department to post notices of eviction, and workers encircle the area resided by the homeless with tape and metal barricades (Tsoi and Fung, "Shamshuipo" 17). At this point, Uncle Lee appropriates Lear's lines (*Lr.* 3.4.28-36) to accuse the government of indifference towards the social problem of poverty in Hong Kong.

Uncle Lee: We who are utterly poor, with only rags for clothes, suffering from this merciless storm, we have no roof above our heads, and facing hunger, just how can we survive? Sigh, *you* who only indulge in enjoyment, and do not care about the difficulties of ordinary citizens! *You* should experience hunger and coldness, and then *you* can learn how to become a human being!¹²⁹

Legislator: Old man, I am Legislator Fong, is there anything we can ...

Uncle Lee: I stand here, only as your slave, a pitiful, weak, powerless old man. But I still need to reproach you, you despicable accomplices, who

¹²⁹ Uncle Lee's lines are appropriated from Lear's: "Poor naked wretches, whereso'er you are, / That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm, / How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides, / Your looped and windowed raggedness, defend you / From seasons such as these? ... Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel, / That thou mayst shake the superflux to them / And show the heavens more just" (*Lr.* 3.4.28-36).

join my two evil daughters to oppose me, a white-haired old man. Ah!
How wicked!¹³⁰

(Tsoi and Fung, “Shamshuipo” 17; *my italics*)

In the source text, the word “thysself” in Lear’s exclamation of “Expose thysself to feel what wretches feel” (*Lr.* 3.4.34) refers to those who personify “pomp” in Lear’s preceding line, such as aristocrats, royalties and wealthy people in general.¹³¹ However, the word “you” in Uncle Lee’s uttering of “*You* should experience hunger and coldness, and then *you* can learn how to become a human being” specifically addresses the legislator who comes to supervise the demolition of the shelter area. Through borrowing Shakespeare’s lines, Tsoi wishes to arouse the audience’s concern for marginalised groups in society, as he believes that “theatre contains a kind of social responsibility” (Zi, “Hardy”; *my trans.*). This makes his style of staging Shakespeare worth noting. It is disparate from the dominant feature of theatre in Hong Kong during the British colonial period, when the social function of theatre was minimised and its entertainment function was maximised (Zi, “Hardy”; *my trans.*). It is also different from the early Shakespearean productions performed in English for expatriates in Hong Kong, where the British colonisers simply imported Shakespeare to make themselves feel at home (Grant, “Shakespeare”).

¹³⁰ There are two instances in *Shamshuipo Lear* where Uncle Lee appropriates the following lines from Lear: “Here I stand your slave, / A poor, infirm, weak and despised old man, / But yet I call you servile ministers, / That will with two pernicious daughters join / Your high-engendered battles ’gainst a head / So old and white as this. O, ho, ’tis foul!” (*Lr.* 3.2.19-24). The first instance is when Uncle Lee addresses the legislator in scene 6, and the second occurs just before the storm in scene 10. See same chapter, pp. 196-197.

¹³¹ Lear’s preceding line is: “Take physic, pomp” (*Lr.* 3.4.33).

I would further propose that *Shamshuiipo Lear* metaphorically comments on the homelessness of Hong Kong people during the neocolonial era. Not all the characters in the production are literally homeless; for example, Jack and his girlfriend Kimmy have material homes to return to. But in scene 12 titled “Discussing the Future” (商討未來), the young couple discuss Hong Kong’s social problems and they consider emigrating to Australia. Tsoi seems to suggest that people from almost all classes of Hong Kong society are dissatisfied with the present-day circumstances, the homeless complaining about the government’s indifference towards poverty, and educated young people feeling powerless in the midst of social and political friction.

Jack: If we settle daddy’s accounts, come with me to Sydney.

Chan: This matter isn’t so simple, Jack! I like you very much too ... But, Hong Kong is the city that I was born and raised in ... I’m not desperate to get married either, as we are both very young, and we’ve only been dating a little while.

Jack: It’s better if you follow me to Australia. The place is larger, and there’s also no pollution.

Chan: But Hong Kong is my home!

Jack: But this home is not going well! You see, the politics are messed up, and the rich and poor are ...

Chan: There’s wide disparity between the rich and the poor.

Jack: Exactly! Though you have a university degree, it's difficult to get a job, and the pay's little!

Chan: And you can't even afford to buy a flat!

Jack: So that's why ...

Chan: *[interrupting Jack]* I know you have very good living standards there, but I am not envious of you! You're right; Hong Kong isn't doing well in many aspects: it's difficult for young people to move upwards, we feel powerless in politics, people lose mutual trust, and the society is full of friction and negative emotions. Some say that times have chosen us, and we need to fight back ... But I think I have another role. My training is to become a social worker. During my internship here, I saw many things. This place is full of love, trust, friendship, and the building of networks. The most powerful weapon that kills the poor is alienation. The government has no policy to help the homeless, political parties even chase them away, and then exploit them further ...

Jack: ...

Chan: You were raised in Sydney, and may not have feelings for Hong Kong. But I am different!

(Tsoi and Fung, "Shamshuipo" 38-39)

In *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, Edward Said describes the condition and mentality of exiles, in which they are "cut off from their roots, their land, their past"

(140). He also distinguishes nationalisms from exiles, for he asserts that “nationalisms are about groups, but in a very acute sense exile is a solitude experienced outside the group” (140). While Said describes an exile as away from home, my argument is that it is possible to become an exile even though one is situated in one’s material home. Though Jack and Kimmy have material homes in Hong Kong, they both feel insecure about their spiritual homes. A spiritual home is far more complex in its construction than a material home, the latter simply meaning having a roof to live under. A spiritual home, however, encompasses more subjective elements, such as whether one’s personal values are aligned with societal values and the government’s rule, whether one can envision a long-term relationship with one’s home, or whether one feels happy and settled living at home. The above conversation between Jack and Kimmy represents the insecurities felt by Hong Kong’s young generation, who are faced with difficulties in social mobility, powerlessness in politics, loss of mutual trust, and a society full of friction and negative emotions. I believe that the estrangement of Hong Kongers, as felt by Jack and Kimmy in *Shamshuipo Lear*, is intensified during the neocolonial period in Hong Kong. The depiction of home as blurry and disappearing are again characteristics of Hong Kong’s newly created plays (S. Chan, “Equivocating” 424), hence I would define Tsoi’s *Shamshuipo Lear* as partly a production of socio-politicised Shakespeare, and partly a production about the homelessness of Hong Kong people. In the director’s own words, his production has a “mix and match flavour”, and he even admits that *Shamshuipo Lear* masquerades as a Shakespearean play (“Shamshuipo Lear Programme” 4; *my trans.*). With reference to socio-politicised Shakespeare, Tsoi gives a Chinese title to each of his 18 scenes in *Shamshuipo Lear*, and the titles are shown to the audience on the screen at

the beginning of each scene. The scene titles provide a condensed description of the action that is going to take place, which corresponds to Brecht's epic theatre, as the spectators are turned into observers instead of being completely involved in a stage situation in dramatic theatre (Willet 37). This is because the actors in the epic theatre detach themselves from the characters portrayed, thus the spectators are forced to look at the play's situation from an analytical perspective (Willet 176). By employing Brecht's strategy, Tsoi wants his audience to examine critically the social problems of Hong Kong, and he does not intend his production to purely serve the purpose of entertainment.

After Uncle Lee rejects his appropriation of *Lear* at the end of the play, Tsoi turns to appropriate from elements of Hong Kong popular culture, which is Sam Hui's song of "Where can my home be". Sam Hui, known as the "godfather of Cantonese pop", or the "Elvis Presley of Hong Kong" (Wright, "In"), represents the heyday of Hong Kong's popular culture from the 1970s to the 1990s. This period also corresponded to Hong Kong's phase of economic affluence, where the city proudly positioned itself as one of the four Asian dragons, together with Singapore, Taiwan, and Korea (Kwong, "Hong"). According to Liu Ching-chih (劉靖之), a Hong Kong professor of music, the lyrics of Canto-pop in this period, such as those sung by Sam Hui, often reflected Hong Kongers' "energy, confidence, hope and strong identity with the city" (qtd. in Kwong, "Hong"). In the epilogue of *Shamshuipo Lear*, Tsoi arranges for Aunt Lan, who used to work as a part-time singer in an old-style Chinese restaurant, to sing the following lines from Sam Hui's "Where can my home be":

Footsteps trodden everywhere, having witnessed the prosperity of foreign
countries (足跡遍天下，看透異國繁華)，

The utopia of peach blossoms is like a dream; still I cannot find my home
(桃源仙境似夢也，始終找不到吾家)

To live stably is like an illusion, clouds looming from afar,
(安居似虛話，遠處密罩雲霞)

When will the mist disappear one day, children and grandchildren
laughing under the sunset, (何時一朝見霧化，子孫歡笑艷陽下)

Ah ... Ten thousands lights shining through the high-rises ah ...
(啊.....萬千燈火透廣廈啊.....)

Where can my home be! (那裏是吾家)

(Tsoi and Fung, “Shamshuipo” 46)

Recorded in one of Sam Hui’s songs in the album of “Songs of Summer in 1979” (七九夏日之歌集) (Kkbox, “Sam”), the lyrics of “Where can my home be” emphasize the homelessness of Hong Kongers at a time when the future of Hong Kong was uncertain, for it was only in 1984 that the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration confirmed that Hong Kong’s sovereignty would be returned to China in 1997. The frustrations of Hong Kongers towards the future of the city are illustrated in the lines of “To live stably is like an illusion, clouds looming from afar” in the song. Furthermore, Aunt Lan’s singing in the epilogue of *Shamshuipo Lear* accompanies the departure of the homeless characters, where Uncle Lee, Wen Yee Tak and Wong Tong begin to pack their luggage and subsequently leave their temporary homes in Shamshuipo. Another level of

meaning brought by the insertion of this song in Tsoi's play is that it signifies Hong Kong people's nostalgia for the good old days in the colonial era, where the economy was strong and Canto-pop was in its golden age. The late Canto-pop lyricist James Wong Jim (黃霑) argues that the rise of Mandarin pop in China and Taiwan is one of the factors that led to the decline of Canto-pop in the late 1990s (Kwong, "Hong"). The departure of the homeless characters in *Shamshuipo Lear* symbolically suggests that there is no sense of homecoming for Hong Kongers, corresponding to their disillusionment in the search of a stable home as exhibited in the song. As argued by Shelby Chan, Hong Kong people are proud of their multiple identities and their adaptability to Chinese-Western cultures ("Equivocating" 422). For them, home is here and there, and seems to be everywhere and nowhere (S. Chan, "Equivocating" 422). To escape from the plight of 1997, many Hong Kongers had emigrated to Western countries, echoing the lyrics of Hui's song as their "footsteps had trodden everywhere", and they had "witnessed the prosperity of foreign countries" (Tsoi and Fung, "Shamshuipo" 46). Though enjoying freedom and democracy in the West, many complained of the difficulty in securing decent jobs, leading to a reflux of emigrants back to their material homes in Hong Kong in the 1990s.¹³² During the neocolonial period, the trend of emigration from Hong Kong has revived, especially in recent years when Hong Kong's freedom has been increasingly eroded by the mainland (Shi, "Number"). Many Hong Kongers find that Hong Kong does not feel like their home anymore. According to a survey in June 2016 conducted by the independent think tank, Civic Exchange, 42% of the Hong Kongers wanted to leave the city amidst its tensions

¹³² For instance, more than 65,000 Hong Kong residents who possess Canadian nationality had left Canada from 1998 onwards, and they returned to Hong Kong for securing better job prospects (Hopper, "Thousands").

with China. Furthermore, 70% of the respondents felt that Hong Kong had become “worse” or “much worse” to live in, with the “quality of government” as one of the utmost concerns (Shi, “Number”). Both Hong Kongers and the homeless characters in *Shamshuipo Lear* undergo a continuous process in search of their ideal homes. When Uncle Lee walks towards centre stage, he throws away his paper crown, symbolising that he is no longer King Lear, the illusion that he previously held on to. This reflects that the identity of Hong Kongers has always been floating, or “out of place”, as Said (143) suggested of the mentality of exiles. Uncle Lee’s appropriation and rejection of Shakespeare’s protagonist is circumstantial, which reflects that Hong Kongers do not pledge complete loyalty to the cultural symbols of the ex-coloniser.

V. Conclusion

Hardy Tsoi’s *Shamshuipo Lear* is more a new story about the survival of Hong Kong people in the neocolonial period than it is about Shakespeare’s *King Lear*. The stories of Hong Kong’s homeless and non-homeless characters superimpose upon the source text, reflecting the social problems of Hong Kong such as the wide disparity between rich and poor, the housing shortage, and the ignoring of Hong Kongers’ voices by the government. In terms of Geoffrey Wagner’s third category of adaptation – analogue – knowledge of the source text is not required but merely enriching in *Shamshuipo Lear*. This is because Tsoi has inserted lots of Hong Kong contexts that override the supremacy of the source text. For instance, he adds characters that are absent from *King Lear*, such as Jack and Kimmy, to illustrate Hong Kong people’s

homelessness in the neocolonial context. For financial and pragmatic concerns, Tsoi asserts, “No Hong Kong director will openly stage a play that directly criticises the Hong Kong government” (Personal interview with Tsoi). His adaptation of *Shamshuipo Lear* thus serves more as a critique of Hong Kong society than a tribute to Shakespeare. In addition, Tsoi highlights the distinctive element of hybridity in Hong Kong Shakespeare, which is displayed by the flexible transference of identity from both Lear and Gloucester to Uncle Lee. This again reflects the fluidity of Hong Kong identity, or in fact, Hong Kongers are forced to be fluid due to the changing times that are beyond their control. Just like employees who behave differently under a new boss, Hong Kongers have also responded in disparate ways when faced with different colonizers.

Through staging *Shamshuipo Lear*, Tsoi draws parallels between the protagonists in the source text and in his play to present to the audience a Hong Kong version of Lear in the slums of Shamshuipo. He aims to represent the resilience of tragic heroes. Although Lear dies, and the homeless people in *Shamshuipo Lear* remain homeless at the end of the play, their “self-reflective ability and their courage to endure dire circumstances signify the brightness of humanity” (*Our Radio*). However, Tsoi provides no solution to the predicaments of Hong Kong society. His characters in *Shamshuipo Lear* and *Julius Caesar* remain victimised through the entire play. In the last chapter, I shall examine Jimmy Lee’s appropriation of Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*, in which he advocates the taming of the neo-coloniser as a solution to the stalemate in Hong Kong.

Chapter Four

Appropriating Shakespeare for Commentary on

Hong Kong-China relations: Jimmy Lee's *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*

I. Introduction

Both Hardy Tsoi Sik Cheong's (蔡錫昌) *Shamshuipo Lear* (深水埗李爾王) (2015) and Jimmy Lee Wai Cheung's (李偉祥) *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* (現代馴悍記) (2015) belong to the category of appropriations of Shakespeare, as they "stand alone in [their] own right, without the need of a source text connection" (Sanders 27). In other words, the audience need not have read the source texts before they are able to appreciate the appropriations of Tsoi and Lee. Although both directors appropriate Shakespeare's plays to comment on the socio-political reality of post-1997 Hong Kong, they hold different views towards the neo-coloniser. While *Shamshuipo Lear* focuses on the protagonists' departure and their search for an ideal spiritual home, *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* advocates that Hong Kongers remain in their home, so as to confront and to tame the new colonizing power. The notion that this is to be a play about taming a barbarian is clearly signposted in the show's chief promotional poster. Man Zyu (Katherina) carries a rifle and stares sternly at the audience, whereas Peter (Petruccio) smiles and holds a wine bottle in one hand and two glasses in the other. The captions on the poster read "Barbarian in Power, Civilization at War" (野蠻當道，文明大戰), in which Man Zyu symbolizes the savage neo-coloniser, China, juxtaposing Peter as the

civilized Hong Kongers who are recolonised by China after 1997. The fact that Peter is depicted with wine glasses suggests that he intends to employ light-hearted means to tame his shrewish wife: metaphorically, it seems, by implication, China is to be civilized by some sort of urbane Hong Kong charm offensive. Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* has been staged 6 times since Hong Kong was handed over to China, thrice in English and thrice in Cantonese.¹³³ However, *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* marks the first time that a local director has appropriated Shakespeare's play to comment on *both* the gender relationship between Petruchio and Katherina, and also metaphorically the political relationship between Hong Kong and China. This is a rare phenomenon in my case studies, as most of the Hong Kong Shakespearean adaptations and appropriations that I have studied comment on the city's socio-political environment without engaging with issues raised directly in the source text. The play was written by Jimmy Lee and it was performed in a realistic play setting, where the actors are dressed in modern day attire. In addition, the language of performance was mainly in Cantonese, and the director has inserted a well-known Cantonese pop song of the 1990s, Yuen Fung-ying (袁鳳瑛)'s *A Moment of Romance* (天若有情) from a film of the same title, to depict the Chinese Petruchio arriving at his church wedding on a motorbike.¹³⁴ On the contrary, Mandarin is employed as a tool of communication when the setting is in China, and there are some lines spoken in Mandarin by mainland Chinese characters when the play opens in Beijing.

¹³³ See appendix 1.

¹³⁴ The film, *A Moment of Romance*, was a popular Hong Kong movie in 1990, which was about the romance of a triad member and a girl from a wealthy family (R. Chen, "A Moment"). The image of the male lead, Andy Lau Tak-wah (劉德華), riding on a motorbike at the end of the movie, was one of the most popular romantic images in Hong Kong cinema, and it was "parodied in countless Hong Kong films" (R. Chen, "A Moment").

There are three reasons why Lee chose to appropriate Shakespeare instead of writing a new play about the neo-colonial situation of Hong Kong. First, Lee has a personal relationship with *The Taming of the Shrew*, as he acted as Petruchio in 1990 when he was a student at the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts (“Facebook Page of Big Stage Theatre”; *my trans.*).¹³⁵ This coincides with Hutcheon’s assertion that adaptors have personal reasons for deciding to do an adaptation and in choosing a work to adapt (92). Second, Lee intentionally adapts Shakespeare because of Hong Kong’s British colonial legacy (Personal interview with J. Lee).¹³⁶ As Hutcheon argues, adaptors not only interpret the source text, they also take a position on it (92). In Lee’s appropriation, Peter, the Hong Kong version of Petruchio, is a divorcee whose ex-wife is a mainland Chinese woman. He is also dumped by his British girlfriend (who travels back to the UK after 1997), and later he meets and marries another mainland Chinese woman, Man Zyu (文珠). This metaphorically illustrates Hong Kong’s past relationship with Britain, the ex-coloniser, and its current relationship with China, in reality a neo-coloniser but in this scenario a voluntarily-chosen partner. Another promotional photo for the play depicts Shakespeare eating an egg tart, which is a popular Hong Kong snack for afternoon tea (“Post on the Facebook page of Big Stage Theatre”). This reminds us of the last colonial governor in Hong Kong, Chris Patten, who enjoyed eating egg tarts and is still loved and missed by many Hong Kongers. While in act 1, scene 2 of the source text, Petruchio has travelled from Verona to visit his friend Hortensio in Padua, Lee transposes the Italian setting in Shakespeare’s text to Hong Kong and China. Peter travels from Hong Kong to

¹³⁵ Jimmy Lee, “Facebook Page of Big Stage Theatre,” (2015). See <https://www.facebook.com/bigstagehk/>.

¹³⁶ Recorded in my interview with Jimmy Lee Wai-cheung, director and playwright of *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*, August 25, 2016.

Beijing to visit Mister Ho (何公子), where he reveals to his friend the main purpose of his visit:

Peter: [I wish to] find a lady from China, so that we can have exchanges between China and Hong Kong.

Mister Ho: Heh? What happen to your “Great Britain”?

Peter: Don’t mention it, [she is] heartless, and has already returned to Britain!

Mister Ho: Isn’t it better to find someone with whom you share the same language?

Peter: Yes, and it’s also best if she is from a wealthy family. Do you know anyone?

(J. Lee 9)¹³⁷

The allegory is hardly subtle, and reviewers of Lee’s play had no trouble in recognizing the relationship between Peter and his new Chinese wife as a wishful metaphor for the new relationship between Hong Kong and the PRC. One reviewer puts it, “Hong Kong is forced to divorce Britain, and remarries the rich but vulgar mainland Chinese tycoon” (Maralio, “Poking”; *my trans.*). This exemplifies Chapman Chen’s argument that postcolonial Hong Kong drama reflects “nostalgia for British colonial rule and a need to interrogate China as the second coloniser” (39). Chen further asserts that

¹³⁷ Quotations from Jimmy Lee’s *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* come from *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*, Jimmy Lee, 2015. All translations in Lee’s *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* from Chinese to English are done by myself.

postcolonial Hong Kong drama productions examine mainland Chinese imperialism much more intensely than they ever did British imperialism (44). Through appropriating Shakespeare's text, Lee questions whether it is possible in real life for a man to successfully tame a woman, and he extends it to whether a more civilized colonised can ever tame a backward coloniser (Personal interview with J. Lee). As Ackbar Abbas proposes, Hong Kong's transfer to China has an important historical twist: "[The] colonised state, while politically subordinate, is in many other crucial respects *not* in a dependent subaltern position [,] but is in fact more advanced – in terms of education, technology, access to international networks ... than the colonizing state" (5–6; *my italics*). In this case, the colonizer has more to learn from the colonized than the reverse. Abbas also points out that Hong Kong's distinctive neo-colonial situation is unprecedented in the history of colonialism (6).

Thirdly, Lee chose to appropriate *The Taming of the Shrew* because he was attracted to the word "shrew" in the title (Personal interview with J. Lee). "Shrew" in Chinese (兇悍) can also mean "fierce" or "ferocious". His treatment expands the idea of shrewishness from the female persona of Shakespeare's Katherina to the larger framework of post-1997 Hong Kong society. Lee spent roughly two years (from 2013 to 2015) writing *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*, and during that time he was upset about the ferocious situation in Hong Kong. He refers to Hong Kong as a "severely sick patient", and he compares the city to his gravely ill mother at the time of his writing the play ("Post on the Facebook page of Big Stage Theatre"; *my trans.*). He further shares his distress with his audience: "I watch Hong Kong growing unfamiliar day by day, like my gravely ill mother, or maybe it is Hong Kong that is gravely ill, and my mother more and

more unfamiliar ... [Well,] let's face it with a smile!" ("Post on the Facebook page of Big Stage Theatre"; *my trans.*) Lee is clearly disturbed by the course of Hong Kong's development, as I shall elaborate in what follows. While I am aware that what a director thinks his production means is not everything, I nonetheless argue that it is this disquiet which motivated him to stage such a topical Shakespearean appropriation, as he firmly believes that "Artists have the responsibility to reflect on the times of the society in their work" ("Post on the Facebook page of Big Stage Theatre"; *my trans.*). In my interview with Lee, he shared his worries about the changing face of Hong Kong society during the neocolonial period, such as the regression of law and order, the suppression of the freedom to demonstrate and to publish uncensored news, and increasing political interference from the Hong Kong government in all areas of civil society. He laments that the Hong Kong society is becoming more "ferocious" day by day, saying this motivated him to "do something for Hong Kong" (Personal interview with J. Lee) through staging an appropriation of Shakespeare:

The Department of Justice in Hong Kong executes law in a selective way; seven Hong Kong policemen beat up a supporter of the Umbrella Movement in a back alley; the editor-in-chief of *Ming Pao* newspaper, Kevin Lau, was brutally attacked by some mysterious people; the loose behaviour of the mainland Chinese tourists from the Individual Visit Scheme; the poor quality of new immigrants from China that undermines the overall quality of Hong Kong's citizens ... All these made me feel that

Hong Kong's environment is becoming more and more *ferocious*, and I am very upset by that.¹³⁸

(Personal interview with J. Lee; *my italics*)

Jimmy Lee is the *only* director in my four case studies who does not depend on Hong Kong government funding to run his theatre company, the Big Stage Theatre (大舞台劇團). He founded it in 2009, and it is currently registered as a non-profit organization (Big Stage Theatre, "About Company"). Lee raised the funds to stage *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* entirely by himself, and indeed there are pros and cons to producing plays in Hong Kong on this self-financed basis. Although there are specific reasons why Lee chose to appropriate Shakespeare, marketing *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* as a Shakespearean play was actually a burden for Lee. He described staging Shakespeare in Hong Kong without government sponsorship as a "game of death" ("Post on the Facebook page of Big Stage Theatre"; *my trans.*), as the survival of his theatre company depends heavily on the revenue from ticket sales, and Shakespeare, much as in nineteenth-century Britain, is felt to bring prestige but not profit. Lee found the 50% attendance rate for *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* disappointing, which led to a

¹³⁸ I shall elaborate on the details of some of the key events mentioned by Lee to give readers a better idea of what had been happening in neo-colonial Hong Kong. First, Ken Tsang Kin-chiu (曾健超), a Civic Party member (Cheng, "Seven"), was beaten by police officers in a back alley in 2014 (J. Ng, "A Season"). Second, Kevin Lau Chun-to (劉進圖), the former chief editor of a Hong Kong newspaper *Ming Pao*, was brutally attacked in broad daylight by two men in 2014, arousing fears that *Ming Pao's* independence was under threat, and motivating a protest calling for press freedom (BBC News, "Hong Kong"). Third, many Hong Kongers were concerned about the behaviour of some mainland visitors from the Individual Visit Scheme, in which the scheme had been implemented in Hong Kong since 2003. For example, large influx of mainland Chinese tourists bought a huge bulk of products from Hong Kong, which had led to the shortages of baby milk powder and other daily necessities. There had also been anger over mainland mothers coming to Hong Kong to give birth, and to obtain social welfare originally allocated to Hong Kong citizens only (*The Economist*, "The Last").

considerable amount of deficit of HK\$150,000¹³⁹ (Personal interview with J. Lee). Lee attributed the low attendance partly to the play's association with Shakespeare, which may to a certain extent have repelled local audience who might have felt that Shakespeare was reserved for elite sophisticates (Personal interview with J. Lee). He further explained that if he were to restage *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* in the future, he might retitle it *To Laugh or Be Square* (不笑不散) in order to attract a wider demographic of audience in Hong Kong (Personal interview with J. Lee). In other words, Lee attempts to elude the link between the source and target texts, which is a feature of appropriation as asserted by Hugo Vandal-Sirois and George L. Bastin (34). In doing so, he hopes to create a new product fully independent from its source, which is another characteristic of appropriation as defined by Julie Sanders (27). Indeed, one reviewer of *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* remarked that the play belongs to the genre of political comedy, which employs the thread of romance to discuss Hong Kong politics (Lebon, "Using"; *my trans.*). I would argue that the essence of the play has not been accurately reflected in its current title – *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*, as one may not be able to associate the gender politics of the source text with the intricate politics of Hong Kong just by reading the title.

Nevertheless, there is a positive side to Lee's production being self-financed. For example, *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* demonstrates boldness in criticizing Hong Kong's government policy with respect to current issues at the time when the play was produced in 2015, such as television licencing and political reform. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

¹³⁹ This amount is roughly equivalent to £13,400.

[REDACTED] (Personal interview with J. Lee).

His attitude is drastically different from the evasiveness of Tang Shu-wing. Instead of metaphorically alluding to the Umbrella Movement by having actors clutch black umbrellas as in the coda of Tang's *Macbeth*, Lee arranges for Peter to directly mention the protest in the play. Peter also uses this social movement as an excuse for insisting on leaving immediately after his wedding with Man Zyu, as depicted in Figure 18 below. He also strategically names the mainland version of Katherina as "Man Zyu" (文珠), which is a homophone for democracy (民主) in Cantonese. Therefore, Gwok Keong (Baptista)'s cries for "Man Zyu" would be interpreted as the Chinese people's demand for democracy from the central government, which again reflects Lee's support of the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong.

Peter: *(To Gwok Keong)* Father-in-law, this place is near Central. There is a protest today! If someone hears you shouting for your daughter, "Man Zyu, Man Zyu!", they might mistake you as shouting for "democracy, democracy!" Aren't you afraid that the spies will overhear your cries?

Gwok Keong: Yes, I'm scared, very scared indeed! *(To Man Zyu)* Man Zyu, quickly go! Follow your husband!

Man Zyu: Dad?

Peter: *(Dragging Man Zyu along, with Man Zyu struggling)* Ok! Everyone, we're leaving ... Man Zyu and I will fight our way out from Central and jump straight into bed!



Figure 18: Man Zyu’s family eagerly bids her farewell after her wedding, photograph © Big Stage Theatre.

In the source text, Petruchio threatens his guests with weapons if they forbid his departure with Katherina after their wedding. He calls out to his servant, Gremio, “Draw forth thy weapon, we are beset with thieves / Rescue thy mistress if thou be a man” (*Shr.* 3.3.108-109).¹⁴⁰ In Lee’s version, Peter merely employs a verbal threat, though it may be equally if not more powerful than Petruchio’s physical threat in the source text. He informs Gwok Keong (國強), the mainland Chinese version of Baptista that he and Man Zyu have to leave immediately after their wedding ceremony, which takes place at a church in Central. This is because Central is the main site of the 79-day Occupy Central movement (佔領中環運動) where protestors gathered to demand universal suffrage

¹⁴⁰ Quotations from *The Taming of the Shrew* are taken from *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, edited by Stanley Wells, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

(Barber, “79”). The above scene also satirizes the timid behaviour of Gwok Keong, who fears that his cries for his eldest daughter will be misinterpreted by China’s secret agents as his demand for democracy, and this might be viewed as a revolt against the communist regime. Therefore, Gwok Keong eagerly bids Man Zyu farewell after her wedding, as illustrated in Figure 18 above. A wider reading of this scene might be an assertion that there are many Gwok Keong figures in Hong Kong, who are reluctant to show support for the Umbrella Movement for fear of antagonizing the neo-coloniser. This scene in Lee’s play also echoes Linda Hutcheon’s view that there is a continuous dialogue between society and the appropriated text (149), and that appropriation engages in a larger social critique (94). In the following section, I shall discuss how *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* employs gender relationship as a metaphor to address the wider framework of Hong Kong’s socio-political context.

II. From Gender to Politics

First of all, the theme about the contest between genders is a popular subject in Hong Kong theatrical productions. For instance, PIP Group (PIP 劇團) has staged *Crazy Hong Kong Women and Mad Hong Kong Men* (港女發狂之港男發瘋) in 2009, and Winward Drama Company (風移劇團) has performed *Romantic Fantasies in Hong Kong* (講女。港愛) in 2014.¹⁴¹ Both productions are comedies that reveal the intricacies of love affairs between Hong Kong men and women. Returning to *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*, Lee perceives Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew* as a tragedy for women, as

¹⁴¹ Refer to <http://www.iatc.com.hk/drama2014> and <https://www.art-mate.net/>.

he argues that the play suggests inequality between the sexes, and it offers no room for the development of feminism (Personal interview with J. Lee). Through staging *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*, Lee raises the question of whether a man can successfully tame a woman in real life, or is it vice versa? (Personal interview with J. Lee) The question is particularly intriguing when Lee transposes the play from Italy to Hong Kong, as Hong Kong women are considered strong and independent. In particular, Hong Kong women earned the reputation of being ferocious when in 2013, a 20-year old Hong Kong girl ordered her boyfriend to kneel on the street, and slapped him for 14 times on the face to punish him for bringing another girl to his flat. The video of this assault was posted online, and it even attracted the attention of Western media (Gye, “A Cheater’s”). As asserted by Westwood, Ngo and Leung, who analyse the gender division of labour in Hong Kong, the society of Hong Kong is “heavily infused with Western influences, most obviously from the British but [also] from the United States and other parts of the world” (47). As a result, more “individualistic and independent values prevail” (Westwood, Ngo and Leung 48), such as people getting married later and divorces being more common (Westwood, Ngo and Leung 48). In addition, a significant proportion of Hong Kong females are highly educated and earn high incomes. There are high-ranking female officials in the Hong Kong government, such as Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor (林鄭月娥), the first female Chief Secretary of Hong Kong who has won the Chief Executive Election in March 2017. But in the past few years the derogatory term “leftover women” (剩女) has emerged in Hong Kong. It refers to women over 30 who are unmarried (Ku, “Leftover”), and there are several local melodramas and reality shows that depict the predicaments of unmarried, high-powered career women in Hong Kong who are seeking

marriage possibilities.¹⁴² Man Zyu, the Chinese Katherina in Lee's play, fits the leftover woman stereotype, which sharply contrasts with the ideal female prototype of the Chinese Bianca, Gam Zyu (金珠), who has lots of suitors like Mister Ho (何公子) and Boss Cheung (張老闆). However, it is important to point out that Lee does not represent Man Zyu in the same way that Shakespeare's male Italians represent Katherina, as a shrew who needs someone to correct her unfeminine behaviour.

Although *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* contains so much rewriting and new material that it is clearly an appropriation rather than a mere modernized translation, as compared to *Shamshuipo Lear* it contains more scenes that are appropriated directly from the source text. The six key surviving scenes are respectively the first meeting between Peter and Man Zyu; Man Zyu's beating of her younger sister; the post-wedding scene, with Peter's treatment of the servants and the tailors; the couple's discussion of the time of the day and the age of an old bystander (here, the postman); and Man Zyu's final monologue. However, as we shall see later, Man Zyu hands over the monologue to Peter, which highlights the satirical nature of the speech. Due to the juxtaposition of the source and target texts, Lee's play enables an ongoing experience of pleasure for the spectator, as argued by Sanders (24). For one thing, Man Zyu is introduced to the audience much earlier in Lee's play than in the source text. In the opening scene of *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*, which is set in Beijing, Man Zyu is seen swearing and shouting at Mister Ho and Boss Cheung, who are the mainland Chinese equivalents of Hortensio and Gremio.

¹⁴² Some few examples are the melodrama of *My Unfair Lady* (不懂撒嬌的女人) in 2017, and the reality show of *Bride Wannabees* (盛女愛作戰) in 2012, both produced by the Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB), and which proved to be immensely popular among the Hong Kong audience.

Man Zyu: *[turns and stares angrily at Mister Ho and Boss Cheung]* Fuck you! Are you a person or not? You want to eat a puppy too!

Mister Ho: I gave this dog to Gam Zyu, not you. Give it back!

Man Zyu: You have no humanity at all, get out!

[The tycoon, Gwok Keong, and his daughter, Gam Zyu rush onto stage.

Gam Zyu wears extravagant brand names from head to toe, and is very sexy.]

Gwok Keong: Man Zyu!

Gam Zyu: Sister, you don't eat dog meat, but there are people who do.

Give me back [the dog]!

Man Zyu: No! I want to save him!

(J. Lee 3)



Figure 19: Man Zyu saves the puppy from being eaten, photograph © Big Stage Theatre.

While Shakespeare gives no apparent reason for Katherina's bad temper, Man Zyu behaves shrewishly for a good reason. Lee depicts her as strong, independent, and possessing a critical mind. She believes that eating dog meat is wrong and cruel, and she is determined to save the puppy from being eaten, as depicted in Figure 19 above. Nevertheless, dog meat is still served in the restaurants in many parts of China. For instance, there is a large-scale "Dog Meat Festival" held annually in the southern Chinese city of Yulin (玉林), Guangxi (廣西) province. Though the festival has received widespread international condemnation, it has continued since 2009 (Henderson, "Yulin"). Man Zyu has a good reason for swearing at Gam Zyu's suitors, which is to protect the poor puppy from being slaughtered and eaten. Viewed from this perspective, Lee implies at the opening of the play that the problem of Man Zyu's shrewishness lies

not in herself, but in the mainland Chinese society. While Shakespeare depicts Katherina as trapped in rich, claustrophobic conformity (Schafer 51), Lee re-envisioned Man Zyu as stuck in mainland Chinese society with her name hinting at a suppressed cry for democracy. One reading of *The Taming of the Shrew* offered by modern productions seeking to palliate its apparent misogyny, as Elizabeth Schafer points out, is that Petruchio might be seen to offer Katherina the “chance of an escape to an alternative lifestyle, an escape from the stifling conventionality of her bourgeois, rage-inducing social environment” (49). The play’s Hong Kong derivative takes a very similar line, in that in *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*, Peter offers Man Zyu the chance, through marriage, to escape from the PRC’s communist regime and to reside in Hong Kong. When Peter proposes marriage to Man Zyu at their first meeting, he says, “Man Zyu, I am serious about you, let us get married tomorrow! It’s better to get married in Hong Kong, as it’s safer to give birth to babies here ... and [we] don’t have to rush around buying milk powder! So let us get married in Hong Kong then” (J. Lee 22)! Peter’s line refers to a real incident of the poisonous baby milk powder manufactured in China in 2008, which led to thousands of babies in China developing kidney stones (Ramzy and Yang, “Tainted”). Since 2008, many mainland residents had been crossing the border into Hong Kong to purchase large quantities of baby milk powder, leading to a shortage of such products in Hong Kong.¹⁴³ This angered Hong Kong parents and thus intensified the hostility between Hong Kong and China. Lee is extremely conscious of the neo-coloniser’s encroachment on Hong Kong’s values, as he says, “If Hong Kong loses its autonomy, then perhaps one day even the baby milk powder sold in our city will also be poisonous,

¹⁴³ Refer to p. 223, fn 138.

and there will no longer be a need for mainlanders to come to buy the genuine products in Hong Kong” (Personal interview with J. Lee).

In Shakespeare’s text, the comparison of the two sisters serves to juxtapose Katherina’s shrewishness with Bianca’s submissiveness. *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* takes up the contrast between the siblings for satirical ends, using the disparate personalities of Man Zyu and Gam Zyu to exemplify two types of mainlanders. According to the director, Man Zyu represents mainlanders who are more liberal-minded and have the potential to absorb Hong Kong’s core values such as freedom and democracy (Personal interview with J. Lee). Gam Zyu, whose name is a homophone for “gold” in Cantonese, represents mainlanders who are materialistic and decadent, and who can never be successfully tamed by Peter (Personal interview with J. Lee). When Peter and Man Zyu arrive at their new home after the wedding, Peter tells his newly wed wife that if he were given a choice between the two sisters, he would definitely not marry Gam Zyu, no matter how much money his father-in-law bestowed upon him (J. Lee 32). To emphasize the differences between Man Zyu and Gam Zyu, Lee has given them more lines than their counterparts in the source text. This makes Lee’s play distinctive from Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*, as Shakespeare has given far more lines to Petruchio than to the allegedly shrewish and talkative Katherina (Schafer 46), let alone to Bianca. Sarah Werner also points out that Shakespeare’s play is more about the tamer, Petruchio than about Katherina, as Katherina “gets fewer lines than him, no soliloquies, few asides and little or no chance to explain her apparent change in temperament” (70). In addition, Lee demonizes Gam Zyu by staging her deceitful and pretentious nature explicitly in *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*, which contrasts with Bianca in the source

text who is associated with silence until act three of the play, as we shall see later. In the scene where Man Zyu beats Gam Zyu, Gam Zyu embodies a sexualized image by her wearing of sadomasochistic clothes and handcuffs. Unlike Bianca in the source text, Gam Zyu cries in ecstasy when being beaten by her sister, which is illustrated in Figure 20 below. Lee further changes Gam Zyu's lines to make her appear more sexually aggressive. In Shakespeare's text, Katherina asks Bianca whether Hortensio is the suitor that she loves best. Bianca replies, "If you affect him, sister, here I swear / I'll plead for you myself but you shall have him" (*Shr.* 2.1.14–15). When Man Zyu, in contrast, asks Gam Zyu whether it is Mister Ho that she loves best among her suitors, Gam Zyu replies, "You like Mister Ho? I'll sleep with him tonight" (J. Lee 12)! The depiction of Gam Zyu in Lee's play parallels the dominant trend in modern Western productions of playing Bianca as a "scheming, manipulative, sometimes promiscuous, minx" (Schafer 36). Second, Gam Zyu displays her shrewishness in the scene where she attends tutorial lessons given by Mister Ho (何公子), Wang Song (王松) and a westerner named Foreign Devil (鬼佬), who are the Chinese counterparts of Hortensio, Lucentio and Tranio respectively. Even in front of the tutors, Gam Zyu eats watermelon seeds in a vulgar way. She raises one of her feet while eating, and spits the shells of the seeds to the floor. As suggested by Barbara Hodgdon (qtd. in Schafer 44), Bianca reveals her true temperament in the corresponding scene in act three of the source text, where she tells her tutors, "I am no breeching scholar in the schools / I'll not be tied to hours nor 'pointed times, / But learn my lessons as I please myself" (*Shr.* 3.1.18–20). But Gam Zyu reveals herself even more completely where she tells her tutors in Figure 21 below, "My main purpose in hiring you to teach me English is to help me buy brand-name products, so you only need

to teach me how to pronounce those brand names. For other things that are too difficult, I do not want to learn” (J. Lee 24).



Figure 20: A sadomasochistic portrayal of Gam Zyu who enjoys Man Zyu’s beatings, photograph © Big Stage Theatre.



Figure 21: Gam Zyu’s materialism is emphasized, photograph © Big Stage Theatre.

Furthermore, unlike his counterpart Lucentio, Wang Song, the husband that Gam Zyu has chosen for herself, never reveals his true identity to anyone except his wife. Right to the end of the play, Wang still assumes the fake ethnicity of a Westerner. He also professes a false educational background, as he lies that he has obtained five doctorates from Harvard University, when in fact he merely bought the certificates from the Chinese Taobao (淘寶) website.¹⁴⁴ Gam Zyu participates in her husband's deceit by encouraging Wang to bleach his hair blonde in Figure 22 below, and in another contemporary satirical twist on a detail from Shakespeare's original (the co-opting of the Pedant to impersonate Lucentio's father Vincentio), she pays people to act as his "American" parents.

Gam Zyu: I've promised my dad, we will go to America for our honeymoon; I will bring him to meet your parents!

Wang: Hah? Where on earth do I have parents in America?

Gam Zyu: So long as you pay someone, you can have as many parents as you like!

Wang: That's right! Ah, my domestic helpers are from America, they can pretend to be my parents, no problem!

Gam Zyu: With money, everything comes easily.

(J. Lee 57)

¹⁴⁴ Taobao, known as China's eBay, is the largest e-commerce platform in China. It has been criticized for selling fake and substandard products like Song's degrees. In a survey commissioned by China's Consumers' Association in 2015, more than 60 percent of *Taobao's* products failed to meet China's retail standards (A. Chen, "Taobao").



Figure 22: The superficiality and fakeness of Gam Zyu and Wang Song, photograph © Big Stage Theatre.

In *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*, Peter leads the audience to see through Gam Zyu's fakeness and materialism. He tells his wife,

Your sister is so fake ... When someone says "I love you", they are actually saying "I love money"; when someone says "I love my country", they are actually saying "I love corruption"; when someone says "this is true", they are actually saying "this is fake"! A lot of people are actors!

(J. Lee 50)

On the other hand, Peter is able to unearth Man Zyu's genuine character under her mask of shrewishness. In a newly-added art gallery scene, as depicted in Figure 23 and which I shall discuss later, Peter tells Man Zyu,

You're a Ferrari; you need to have good road conditions to suit your performance. Normal road conditions don't suit you. You are also a classic camera. On the surface you have no pixels, but actually you have the highest number of pixels. You are difficult to control; it's not easy for people to understand you immediately. But for people who understand you, they will know that you are a treasure.

(J. Lee 53)



Figure 23: The added art gallery scene, photograph © Big Stage Theatre.

Peter also shows insight into his wife's character as he tells her, in words which deliberately remind the audience of Man Zyu's opening quarrel with Gam Zyu, "I think that you have a pure nature, just like a puppy, but you live in a dog-eat-dog world ... I want to bring you away from this place" (J. Lee 54).

As compared to Baptista in the source text who merely views Katherina's problem as her inability to behave in such a way as to attract a husband, Gwok Keong has a different layer of perception towards Man Zyu. An unmarried adult daughter in traditional Chinese society is considered inappropriate, inauspicious, and even dangerous (Watson 34). Furthermore, the death of an unmarried daughter causes great fear to her natal household, as Chinese customs hold that such a death produces an extremely unsettled and dangerous ghost (Watson 34). But Gwok Keong is not merely troubled by Man Zyu's being unmarried. He worries that her character does not fit into the social reality of communist China, thus he wants to send her away by marrying her to Peter the Hong Konger (Personal interview with J. Lee). Guo tells Man Zyu, "Quickly, go. The further you go, the better" (J. Lee 13). According to the director of the play, Man Zyu symbolizes those mainlanders who have independent thinking skills, feel dissatisfied with China's corrupted system, and who want to leave the country (Personal interview with J. Lee). In the real world, there are actually many Man Zyus, and the number is growing day by day. It was reported by CNBC, an American news television channel, that 64 percent of Chinese millionaires have either emigrated or plan to emigrate. Their favourite destinations are America, followed by Europe, Canada, and Australia (Frank, "Rich").¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ Some of their reasons for leaving China are that they want to give their children better education, and to escape pollution and overcrowding in China (Frank, "Rich").

Concurring with Sanders' assertion that adapters characteristically comment on the source text via alteration and addition (21), Lee comments on the gender relationship in *The Taming of the Shrew* by adding two new scenes in his appropriation. One of them is a scene in an art gallery after Peter and Man Zyu's wedding, where the couple discuss Western paintings and gradually fall in love. While neither physical nor spiritual love between Petruchio and Katherina is evident in the source text, Lee makes it clear that Peter and Man Zyu's marriage is not merely a relationship of authority and submission, but also incorporates love and mutual understanding. In the source text, Petruchio tames his wife with force and coercion. Peter in *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*, however, does not merely tame his wife, but he also employs courtship skills. As early as in Peter's first meeting with Man Zyu, Lee adds lines in which the couple discusses photographs that Man Zyu has taken, which are hung around the living room for decoration, as exemplified in Figure 24 below. After they have settled in their new home in Hong Kong, Peter takes Man Zyu to visit the art gallery, since he knows that his wife likes photography, and he believes that paintings are the "origin of photography" (J. Lee 51). Peter courts his wife by describing Man Zyu as a piece of art: "When I have in mind light, lines, colour, composition, the painter's every stroke of emotion, I see art ... like when I look at you, I don't see ferociousness, but only frankness, sincerity, courage, beauty ... beauty, and beauty" (J. Lee 52)! Throughout the play, the director emphasizes the importance of communication between a married couple, which also exemplifies Lee's projection of the ideal relationship between the neo-coloniser and the colonised. On a personal level, Peter employs the discussion of art as a tactic to court Man Zyu, and Lee changes some of the lines in the source text to suit that purpose. For example, upon

realizing that Petruchio will act as Katherina’s suitor, Gremio asks Petruchio, “But will you woo this wildcat?” (*Ts.*1.2.194). But Boss Zhang’s (Gremio’s) question to Peter becomes: “Don’t Hong Kong people like to talk about civilization the most? I am afraid that you cannot communicate with her” (J. Lee 11). In Shakespeare’s text, Petruchio replies, “Think you a little din can daunt mine ears? / Have I not in my time heard lions roar?” (*Shr.* 1.2.198–199) However, in *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*, Peter’s response again stresses the importance of communication, not only between genders, but also metaphorically alluding to the political relationship between China and Hong Kong. Peter replies to Boss Zhang, “Civilization is about communication! When you communicate there will be some conflict. Conflict means adjustment, and adjustment means union” (J. Lee 11). Towards the end of the play, when Wang Song asks Peter what kind of medicine he has given to Man Zyu to make her so gentle and submissive, Peter replies, “It’s the medicine of civilization” (J. Lee 64).



Figure 24: Another added conversation between Peter and Man Zyu on photographs, photograph © Big Stage Theatre.

According to Robert Keatley, China has steadily eroded Hong Kong's freedoms since 1997, which includes the rule of law, academic freedom, press freedom and political autonomy (2016).¹⁴⁶ On their wedding night, Peter tells Man Zyu about his ex-wife, who is also a mainlander. He recalls his ex-wife's controlling attitude, which is symbolic of China's domineering presence in Hong Kong: "In the past she spoke Mandarin, I spoke Cantonese, we could be very harmonious together. But after I married her, she wanted to control everything; we no longer had mutual respect. She does not even like me to speak in Cantonese, and says I must speak in Mandarin. She also does not allow me to write in traditional Chinese characters,¹⁴⁷ and forbids me to go to church! She entirely ignores what I say, even for those things that are meant to be good for her" (J. Lee 37). Peter's taming of Man Zyu in the play is touchingly funny in part because it represents a wistful Hong Kong dream of how the relation with China ought to be in real life, but isn't – in practice, as Lee himself believes, the neo-coloniser is taming the colonised day by day. The play's outspokenness does, however, in itself represent a small victory for freedom of expression. One of the reviewers of *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* remarks that Lee has won a battle for Hong Kongers, at least on the stage (Maralio, "Poking"). Furthermore, the play at least articulates the possibility of a more equal, mutual understanding between Hong Kong and the mainland. Through Peter's successful

¹⁴⁶ The rule of law in Hong Kong is challenged by mainland authorities who crossed the border to kidnap Li Bo in December 2015, who is the owner of the Causeway Bay Bookstore that sells political books that are banned by China. Furthermore, academic freedom is under threat when law professor, Johannes Chan Man-mun, was declined a senior administrative post at the University of Hong Kong partly due to his close friendship with Benny Tai Yiu-ting, a law colleague who helped organize Occupy Central. In terms of press freedom, Hong Kong was ranked 70th among 180 countries in 2015 by the Reporters without Borders Press Freedom Index, which dropped sharply from 61st in 2014. Finally, political reform in Hong Kong has remained stagnant, in which the universal suffrage for Hong Kong's Chief Executive is limited to candidates who are approved by Beijing (Keatley, "Can").

¹⁴⁷ As mentioned on p. 11 of my introduction, and also on p. 107 of Chapter One, people in China use the simplified Chinese characters, whereas people in Hong Kong and Taiwan employ the traditional Chinese characters in their writing systems.

taming of Man Zyu, Lee hopes to demonstrate that it is possible to communicate with each other in a civil way and that the neo-coloniser need not coerce the colonised to blindly follow its rules (Personal interview with J. Lee). An example of mutual communication in *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* is Peter's debate with Man Zyu on the use of Cantonese and Mandarin in their first meeting, which is a new scene added by Lee:

Peter: Man Zyu, good morning, (*changes to English*) nice to meet you!

Man Zyu: (*in Mandarin*) You're a Chinese, why do you speak the language of birds?

Peter: Sorry Man Zyu, I didn't speak the language of birds ... What I spoke was the most recognized language in civilized countries – English.

Man Zyu: (*in Mandarin*) Chinese people should speak in Chinese!

Peter: The Cantonese dialect is Chinese!

Man Zyu: (*in Mandarin*) Rubbish, Mandarin is Chinese!

Peter: Mandarin originates from the Manchus,¹⁴⁸ thus a lot of its pronunciations do not belong to the Chinese people! But in the Tang dynasty, which was the most powerful dynasty in ancient China, people conversed in Cantonese. You'll know it when you recite a classical Tang poem ... How well it matches [with the Cantonese pronunciation]!

¹⁴⁸ The Manchus, who invaded China in 1644, conversed in a dialect close to modern day Mandarin (W.S. Liu 487).

Cantonese has nine sounds, and it is used to articulate the profoundness of Chinese. Isn't that more suitable [than Mandarin]?

Man Zyu: (*in Mandarin*) Is it so when you say so? Are you the leader?

Peter: Level tone (平), rising tone (上), falling tone (去), entering tone (入)—there are only four tones in Mandarin. Just as if a song only contains do, re, mi, fa, it will not have as many variations as a song that uses do, re, mi, fa, so, la, ti, do, and it will not be as melodic, will it?

Man Zyu: (*in Mandarin*) It's much more melodic to sing a song in Mandarin. How awful it is to sing in Cantonese! Also, do you know how difficult it is to compose the lyrics of the song in Cantonese? But it's much easier to compose a song in Mandarin!

Peter: Wow! You know how to compose lyrics too? How knowledgeable! Then you mustn't act like a village granny and give up a Chinese dialect that is more elaborate, just for the sake of convenience!

Man Zyu: (*in Mandarin*) Are you suggesting that we should abolish Mandarin and everyone should converse in Cantonese instead?

Peter: Not really. It is indeed easier to learn and to promote Mandarin ... you can speak in Mandarin, and I will speak in Cantonese. We can live in harmony! The most important aspects of culture are diversity and tolerance, aren't they?

(J. Lee 17)

Through this intellectual debate among the mainland-Hong Kong couple, each of them comes to understand more about the other's cultural background, and gradually they become more accommodating by stepping into each other's familiar territory. In the first meeting between Peter and Man Zyu, Man Zyu speaks almost entirely in Mandarin. But after she marries Peter and moves to Hong Kong, she begins to converse in both dialects and eventually, at the end of the play, she utters all her lines in Cantonese. The gradual change of Man Zyu's language signifies that she is slowly adapting to the society of Hong Kong. On the other hand, Peter also shows his tenderness towards his wife when he buys Man Zyu her favourite bouquet of lilies after their wedding night. Besides the added scene at the art gallery that displays the couple's spiritual love, Lee also adds some explicit love-making scenes, in which the silhouettes of the characters are visible on screens, to suggest that physical love between Peter and Man Zyu is present as well. The director of the play believes that with the rise of feminism in modern-day society, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for a woman to submit to her husband simply because of his forcefulness, as demonstrated by Petruchio in the source text (Personal interview with J. Lee). When the title of Lee's play is translated into English, it literally becomes *Modern Taming of the Shrew* (現代馴悍記), which suggests a modern interpretation of the battle of the sexes.¹⁴⁹ It is important to note that in present-day Hong Kong, it is a norm for both the wife and husband to work long hours due to the high living costs of the city. A lot of middle-class families thus employ domestic helpers from the Philippines or Indonesia to assist them with household chores (A. Cheung 475).

¹⁴⁹ The English title of Lee's play has contradictions to its Chinese title, as the English title reads *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*, whereas the Chinese title is literally translated as *Modern Taming of the Shrew*. Lee has no definite explanation for this discrepancy; he tells me that he thinks the word "post" is cool (Personal interview with J. Lee).

According to the Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department in 2001, at least one-fifth of households in Hong Kong that earned HKD\$40,000¹⁵⁰ or above had hired a domestic helper (A. Cheung 475). This social phenomenon is reflected in Peter and Man Zyu's household as well, in which Peter employs two domestic helpers, as I shall discuss in the last section of this chapter. Therefore, it is usually not the Hong Kong wife who is submissive, but the domestic helper who obeys the instructions of her mistress. As asserted by A. Cheung, married women in the household are now responsible for recruiting, training, and monitoring the work of a domestic helper, and thereby changing themselves into managers at home (A. Cheung 475). Lee believes that there are two elements to successfully transform a shrew into a cooperative wife in contemporary society: effective communication and love-making. He suggests that through the act of love-making, women undergo some physical changes and their personality shifts as well (Personal interview with J. Lee). This explains why there are added moments of love-making off-stage, where the couple's silhouettes are depicted in the dark, supplemented by their cries of ecstasy.

Another way in which Lee attempts to update Shakespeare's play to make it "relevant or easily comprehensible to new audiences and readerships" (Sanders 18) is his inclusion of modern technology, such as cell phones. In the gambling game, instead of asking a servant, Biondello, to call to each man's wife and see who is the most obedient by responding to her husband's call, the men in *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* turn on the speakers of their cell phones while calling their wives in Figure 25 below, so that the wives' responses can be clearly heard by everyone. Therefore the modernity of the play

¹⁵⁰ HKD\$40,000 is roughly equivalent to £3764.

includes the director's new concept of marriage, and the inclusion of modern technology also serves as a satiric depiction of consumerism. This reminds us of Sanders' assertion that Shakespeare has been a "particular focus, a beneficiary even, of these ... updatings" (19), as the appropriations of Shakespeare make him fit for new cultural contexts (46).



Figure 25: The inclusion of cell phones as tools of communication, photograph © Big Stage Theatre.

Furthermore, I would like to point out that a significant modern update in *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* is the drastic alteration of Katherina's submission speech, which is instead uttered by Peter in Lee's play. There has been huge debate about whether the tone of Katherina's speech is "ironic, sincere, angry, exhibitionist ... in love, masochistic, feminist, indulgent, threatening" (Schafer 34), or whether she just has her eyes on winning the gamble (Schafer 34). Many Western productions, accordingly, have in different ways undercut the explicit content of Katherina's final speech. For example, some Katherinas have performed it in an exaggerated, over-melodramatic or self-

consciously rhetorical style,¹⁵¹ while others have Katherina suppress her real sentiments to win the money (Schafer 35).¹⁵² But I would argue that Katherina's submission speech is most drastically altered in *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*, where it is Man Zyu who invites Peter to recite the speech. In the source text, it is Petruchio who orders Katherina to speak of women's duty to their husbands, as he says, "Katherine, I charge thee tell these headstrong women / What duty they do owe their lords and husbands" (*Shr.* 5.2.135–136). In Lee's play, however, Man Zyu tactfully asks Peter to utter Katherina's submission speech, as she says, "On the second day after I got married, my husband told me something that awakens me ... He said ... Why don't you say it? I want to listen to it again" (J. Lee 65). Peter and Man Zyu then raise their palms into the air, just like in the art gallery scene where Peter instructs his wife to feel with her palm whether the magnetic fields of certain things are genuine or fake. Their body gestures invite the audience to examine whether Peter's speech is sincere or not:

Peter: A real marriage includes love, respect, tolerance, concern for one another and honesty. [But even] without those elements, a woman should still call this person as her husband and cannot remarry; it's women's nature to obey!¹⁵³ They should not think of divorce! Because women have the least courage, and they are also the most tolerant! No matter how painful it is, women can still bear it, therefore, even if your husband ignores you, cheats on you ... rules you autocratically, has neither justice

¹⁵¹ An example of this type of Katherina is Josie Lawrence in 1995 (Schafer 35).

¹⁵² Examples of the money-minded Katherina are Stephen Unwin's 1998 production and Richard Rose's 1997 production (Schafer 35).

¹⁵³ According to traditional Chinese virtues, women are expected to comply with three forms of obedience (三從). When she is a young girl, she ought to obey her father (從父); when she is married, she should obey her husband (從夫); when she is old or widowed (從子), she need to obey her son (Du, "The Three").

nor righteousness, even when a husband becomes Caligula,¹⁵⁴ his wife should still submit to his autocratic reign! She shouldn't think of telling it to her relatives and friends, or colluding with external powers! In this life, women have no right to find new happiness or new hope! And in this life, none of you can overthrow "this husband"!

(J. Lee 65)

Unlike the ambiguous tone of Katherina's final speech in the source text, Peter delivers the above doctrine so melodramatically and with such exaggerated sentiments that it appears more like a self-parody, thus it is unlikely that the audience would take his speech seriously. After Peter finishes his speech, Man Zyu asks other people to raise their palms into the air to feel whether what he has said was true or not, as according to Man Zyu, the "magnetic fields of the genuine and the fake are different" (J. Lee 65). Man Zyu's father, Gwok Keong, is convinced of Man Zyu's transformation and happily orders his servants to discharge firecrackers as a celebration, but I would argue that Peter's speech includes both truth and sham. Though the director's focus in the play is more on politics than gender, it is apparent that Peter respects Man Zyu more than Petruchio respects Katherina. This is because Man Zyu has the power to request her husband to deliver the above speech, which shows that the relationship between them is more equal than that of Petruchio and Katherina. In his speech, Peter's opening line indicates what he thinks are the truly important elements of a marriage: "love, respect, tolerance, concern for one another and honesty" (J. Lee 65). This corresponds to the director's own beliefs, which is why he has added the art gallery and love making scenes in the play. I have also

¹⁵⁴ Caligula was the Roman emperor from 37 to 41AD. He is known as a particularly cruel and unpredictable leader (Biography.com, "Caligula").

discussed earlier that Jimmy Lee does not believe in women's total submission to their husbands in the contemporary society of Hong Kong.

Nevertheless, after the opening line, Peter does not seem to be talking about marital relationships, but more about the relationship between the neo-coloniser and the colonised. This is suggested by his reference to Caligula, who is known as Rome's most tyrannical emperor, which signifies the shift of Peter's speech from its focus on gender to politics. The last line of Peter's speech is as follows: "In this life, all of you cannot overthrow 'this husband'" (J. Lee 65). Lee puts "this husband" in quotation marks in his script, which probably suggests that Peter may actually be referring to something else metaphorically, most probably the neo-coloniser, China. When I discussed the in-depth meanings of the play with Lee, he sighed, "On the surface, *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* appears to be the taming of a woman (China as the neo-coloniser) by a man (Hong Kong as the colonised), but this relationship is inverted in reality" (Personal interview with J. Lee).

The feeling of helplessness towards the recolonization by China shared by Hong Kong people in the post-1997 period is reinforced at the end of Lee's play. Shakespeare's text ends with the couple walking offstage as Petruchio tells his wife, "Come, Kate, we'll to bed" (*Ts.* 5.2.189). However, Lee adds another scene where the couple converse in private, as highlighted in Figure 26 below.

Man Zyu: They thought what you said was real!

Peter: Absurd tales can only be told in absurd times!

Man Zyu: And [it's also a time to] fall in love absurdly!

Peter: (*embraces Man Zyu from behind*) to have an absurd ...

Man Zyu: (*presses her finger on Peter's lips*) There are many people here!

Peter: There are over billions of people here!

Man Zyu: Shall we go somewhere without any people?

Peter: To laugh or be square!

Man Zyu: What do you mean by that?

Peter: In this kind of environment, there's nothing we can do but laugh!

Man Zyu: Nothing we can do ... Do you mean we will not even do that?

Peter (*smiles slyly*): A rogue!

Man Zyu: A big, big, big rogue!

(J. Lee 66)



Figure 26: The play ends with an offstage conversation between Peter and Man Zyu, photograph © Big Stage Theatre.

The added private conversation between Peter and Man Zyu in *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* extends what many perceive as the fakeness of Katherina's submission speech in the source text, and it further alludes to the double impossibility of taming in both gender and political terms. Peter, who represents the mentality of Hong Kong people, knows all too well that China will continue to restrict the freedoms of Hong Kong people, and Hong Kongers can do little to forestall this from happening. Not long after the play's premiere, for instance, Anson Chan, former Chief Secretary of Hong Kong, organized a seminar titled "2047: Where are you going, Hong Kong?" in June 2017. The idea behind this seminar was that over the course of only 20 years since the handover in 1997, the practice of "one country, two systems" in Hong Kong had already fallen short of many people's expectations (Project Citizens Foundation, "Project"). 2047 marks the year when the 50 years of unchanged way of life promised under the Basic Law expires in Hong Kong. Sensing that the scopes for freedoms and pursuit

for democracy are being restricted day by day, Hong Kongers become increasingly worried about their future (Project Citizens Foundation, “Project”). This is reflected in one of Peter’s last lines, “In this kind of environment, there’s nothing we can do but laugh!” (J. Lee 96). Indeed, in *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*, laughter serves as a means of passive resistance, and a comic relief to release Hong Kong people’s tension from political circumstances over which they have no control. Before 1997, Hong Kongers were not given any right to decide the future of their city, and there was an analogy at that time comparing imminent communist reign to the threat of facing a rapist (H. Chow, “Hong”; *my trans.*). It was said in the pre-1997 period that if one resists the advances from a rapist, she would be wounded even more seriously (H. Chow, “Hong”; *my trans.*). As a political comedy, Lee’s appropriation of Shakespeare employs a soft means to exemplify Hong Kong people’s “resistance” against neocolonial reign. In the promotional poster of the play, Peter is depicted as holding wine glasses, and not any violent weapons to counteract a fierce-looking Man Zyu who is armed with a rifle. The final lines between Peter and Man Zyu highlight the idea that neocolonial Hong Kong is an absurd era, and there is nothing Hong Kongers can do but laugh, as Peter suggests. This corresponds to Lee’s remark that he would rename the title of the play as “To Laugh or Be Square” if there are possibilities of rerunning the production (Personal interview with J. Lee). The emphasis on laughter in Lee’s appropriation corresponds to Sigmund Freud’s theory of humour, where Freud asserts that there is something liberating about humour, as the humourist displays magnificent superiority over the real situation (162). He cites the example of a criminal, about to be executed, who exclaims, “It doesn’t worry me ... the world won’t come to an end because of it” (Freud 162). Freud suggests that the

criminal is able to display humour against the unkindness of real circumstances, which signifies the triumph of his ego (163). Therefore, humour is not resigned but rebellious (Freud 163). Applying Freud's theory on humour, *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* is a rebellious attempt by the director to try to overcome the heavy and unresolved political circumstances of Hong Kong. By ending the play light-heartedly as the couple teases each other about love-making, Lee attempts to liberate the Hong Kong audience from difficult socio-political circumstances, at least during the time of watching the production.

III. Open critique of the Hong Kong and PRC governments

Unlike *Shamshuipo Lear*, which indirectly criticizes the Hong Kong government by appropriating King Lear's lines, *Post-The Taming of Shrew* explicitly satirizes the government. As early as act one, the mainland Chinese billionaires refer derogatorily to the Hong Kong government as willing to sell itself for economic interests.

Boss Zhang: If I can find a good Western [tutor] in Hong Kong and introduce him to Gam Zyu, then I will have the opportunity [to court her].

Mister Ho: Most important of all is to help the mad chicken find a cock.

Boss Zhang: Which cock is willing to marry a bitch? She is so fierce, even to her dad!

Mister Ho: There are always people who are willing to become cocks for money ...

Boss Zhang: Even in Hong Kong too?

Mister Ho: Just look at its political leaders and you'll know!

Boss Zhang: That's right!

(J. Lee 6)

Lee's play was staged in 2015, a time when there was intense debate about political reform in Hong Kong. He thus included contemporary events into his play, so that the Hong Kong audience would find resonance when watching it (Personal interview with J. Lee). This concurs with Hutcheon's view that an appropriation is often "framed in a context—a time and a place, a society and a culture; it does not exist in a vacuum" (142). Boss Zhang and Mister Ho refer to the Hong Kong government as "cocks" (雞公) in the above dialogue, a term which metaphorically refers to pimps in Cantonese. As the cocks or pimps control the prostitutes and extract a percentage of the prostitutes' salaries for their own income, by describing Hong Kong's political leaders as "cocks", Lee seems to suggest that the local government is prostituting Hong Kong, as it blindly obeys the instructions of Beijing and ignores the locals' interests. One of the many examples is that the Hong Kong government continues to construct various white-elephant projects against the wishes of most Hong Kongers, which aim at a greater social and cultural integration between Hong Kong and China (Inmediahk, "SAR"; *my trans.*). For example, the ongoing construction of the multibillion-dollar Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge is an extremely controversial project that has already exceeded its original budget (C. Yau, "Minister"). Perhaps Lee aims to draw a parallel between the Hong Kong government and the unadapted Petruchio, whose actions are primarily driven by financial motivations. Lee's satire here involves sadly undeniable facts of post-handover Hong Kong's

economic situation, in which the local government has repeatedly proven itself willing to sacrifice democracy in return for economic benefits from China. For instance, it signed a Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) in 2003 (Trade and Industry Department, “Mainland”), which reinforces Hong Kong’s economic dependence on the mainland. This is perhaps comparable to Petruchio’s account of his purpose in visiting Padua, as he asserts, “I come to wive it wealthily in Padua; / If wealthily, then happily in Padua” (*Shr.* 1.2.74–75).

In addition, Gwok Keong, the mainland version of Baptista, exemplifies the autocratic PRC government. There are two allusions in the play highlighting this comparison. First, Gwok Keong’s name is a homophone for “strong country” (國強) when uttered in Cantonese, which symbolises China as a rising superpower. Like the PRC’s political leaders, Gwok Keong resides in Beijing, the capital of China. When the play opens in the streets of Beijing, Gwok Keong sternly tells his younger daughter’s suitors, “This is my decision, *the final word* (一錘定音)! In order to have Gam Zyu, Man Zyu must first get married, this is it! Listen to me” (J. Lee 4; *my italics*). “The final word” (一錘定音) is the exact phrase that Carrie Lam, Hong Kong’s “elected” Chief Executive in 2017, who was then the Chief Secretary for Administration in 2014, used when describing China’s domineering role in Hong Kong’s political reform. At a Basic Law seminar in Hong Kong in 2014, Rao Ge-ping (饒戈平), a professor at Peking University’s Law School, and a member of the Hong Kong Basic Law Committee, said that neither civil nomination nor civil recommendation is consistent with the Basic Law, and that only members of the committee are qualified to propose candidates for the Chief Executive of Hong Kong (K. Chan, “Civic”). Carrie Lam remarked after the seminar that

Rao had set the “final word for the nomination procedures” (一錘定音) (*Apple Daily*, “Lam”; *my trans.*) in Hong Kong. Her words were puzzling to the majority of Hong Kong people, as a public consultation on the political reforms was still in progress at the time, but it appeared that China had ended the discussion by setting out “the final word”.

In the government’s promotion of political reform in Hong Kong from 2014 to 2015, there were a series of propaganda initiatives, one of which was the slogan: “Each of us takes one step forward, so that we will not march on the spot” (一人一步，唔好原地踏步). Carrie Lam advocated the public’s support for political reform, arguing that it was better to grant Hong Kong citizens’ universal suffrage than to retain the existing situation, where the Chief Executive was elected by an electoral committee of only 1200 people (*Sing Tao Daily*, “Political”; *my trans.*). Nevertheless, pro-democracy politicians in Hong Kong rejected the government’s political reform proposal, criticizing it as “fake democracy” (假民主), as the eligibility of the candidates had to be pre-screened by Beijing (Sung, “The Birth”). As a supporter of the pan-democrats, Lee twists the government’s propaganda of political reform to poke fun at the authorities. He does it by expanding the scene in the source text where Petruchio and Katherina disagree about the time of day. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Petruchio is depicted as a rigid and autocratic husband, where he insists that “[i]t shall be what o’clock I say it is” (*Shr.* 4.3.193). There is entirely no room for negotiation or discussion between Katherina and Petruchio about the time of the day. To speed up the journey of returning home to her father, Katherina entirely submits to Petruchio’s thoughts, no matter how absurd it is, as she exclaims,

Then God be blessed, it is the blessed sun,

But sun it is not when you say it is not,
And the moon changes even as your mind.
What you will have it named, even that it is,
And so it shall be still for Katherine.

(*Shr.* 4.6.19-23)

On the contrary, in *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*, Peter is more liberal-minded and he actively negotiates with Man Zyu about the time of the day.

Peter: Darling, the noodles are cooked; it's just 3 pm, isn't it?

Man Zyu: (*in Cantonese*) Noon!

Peter: Isn't it 3 pm?

Man Zyu: (*in Cantonese*) Noon!

Peter: Why do you have to be so stubborn?

Man Zyu: (*in Cantonese*) Noon!

Peter: I said 3 and you said noon, each of us has different interpretations,
we can never discuss further ...

Man Zyu: (*in Cantonese*) Noon!

Peter: *Marriage is an art of compromise*, you have your opinion, and I have mine, you don't get to eat the noodles, and I feel upset when you are hungry ...

Man Zyu: (*in Cantonese*) Why should I compromise? My grandfather has never taught me to compromise!

Peter: *Each of us take one step forward, and we will not march on the spot.*
2 pm, okay?

Man Zyu: (*in Cantonese*) 1 pm!

Peter: 1:45!

Man Zyu: (*in Cantonese*) 1:30!

Peter: 1:38! A whole life of prosperity, okay?

Man Zyu: (*in Cantonese*) Okay! A whole life of prosperity!

(J. Lee 47; *my italics*)

In the actual political environment, Beijing's stance was adamant, as it rejected Hong Kong people's demand for real universal suffrage, insisting it would be inconsistent with the Basic Law (K. Chan, "Civic"). In the above conversation, Man Zyu represents the voice of Beijing as she repeatedly insists that the time of the day is noon. She also exclaims, "Why should I compromise? My grandfather has never taught me to compromise!" (J. Lee 47) Her usage of the term "grandfather" (阿爺) metaphorically alludes to the PRC government, as it often takes up the patriarchal title in Hong Kong

media. Peter, who symbolizes Hong Kong people's fight for democracy, does not give up and continues to negotiate. At the beginning, Peter claims it is now 3 pm, while Man Zyu argues that it is noon instead. The strategy in which Peter persuades his wife to agree that it is now afternoon and not noon is first to suggest to her that each of them should make some concessions. He appropriates the government's propaganda slogan of "Each of us takes one step forward, and we will not march on the spot" to counter-suggest to Man Zyu that it is 2 pm, which indicates his willingness to move closer to her suggested time of noon. Man Zyu does not surrender easily and counter-suggests that it is 1 pm. Though she has her own opinion, her willingness to state that it is 1 pm instead of her original assertion of noon suggests that she plays an active role in negotiations as well. Subsequently, Peter proposes to his wife that the pronunciation of 1:38 in Cantonese is a near-homophone of the phrase, "a whole life of prosperity" (一生發). As Chinese people favour lucky numbers, especially the number eight as it sounds similar to "prosperity", Man Zyu concedes to Peter's suggestion. Not only is marriage an "art of compromise" (J. Lee 47) as suggested by Peter, but so is politics. As politics and gender are inseparable in the play, Man Zyu's acceptance of the time proposed by Peter signifies a victory for Hong Kongers, as the scene metaphorically suggests that Hong Kong people can be successful in their negotiations, with China accepting their terms. Perhaps Lee wishes to suggest from this scene that Hong Kong politicians should not give up too easily. Instead, they should continuously negotiate with Beijing to grant Hong Kong people more concessions in political reform.

In addition to criticizing both the Hong Kong and PRC governments for failing to bring true democracy to Hong Kong, Lee has enhanced the roles of the servants and

given them more lines in *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*. Petruchio's male servants, Grumio and Curtis, are recast as a Filipino maid, Yong Yong, and an Indonesian maid, Faye Faye. The employment of female servants in Peter's household corresponds to the real-life situation where a lot of Hong Kong families employ domestic helpers, such that they amount to three to four percent of the city's population (HelperChoice, "Domestic"). Peter and his servants introduce a game of democracy to Man Zyu, where all of them have to vote every day for which food they will eat for dinner, as illustrated in Figure 27 below. Through the game, Peter aims to instill the values of democracy and equality in Man Zyu, which are values that Hong Kong people highly value. When Man Zyu questions Peter as to why they cannot make their own decision as the bosses of the house, Peter explains, "Because this is a democratic place, each one of us is equal. We respect each one's opinion. We believe only by doing so will there be true *harmony*" (J. Lee 34; *my italics*). His line apparently ridicules the PRC government for its attempt to "harmonize" the society by banning all opposition voices. Promoting harmony was a salient feature of state propaganda and censorship in the PRC at the time the play was written, and netizens poked fun at it by replacing the word "harmony" (和諧) with "river crab" (河蟹), which both words sound similar in Mandarin (Nordin and Richaud 1–2). When Man Zyu attempts to bribe the servants to vote for the food she prefers, the servants refuse by insisting that "Hong Kong has ICAC" (J. Lee 40). This refers to Hong Kong's Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), which was established by Governor Sir Murray MacLehose in 1974 (Hong Kong Independent Commission Against Corruption, "Brief"). As a by-product of former British colonialism in Hong Kong, ICAC's power and commitment to fighting corruption makes Hong Kong distinct from

China, which also demonstrates that Hong Kong has a better system of governance than the neo-coloniser.

When Man Zyu first arrives in her new home in Hong Kong, she appears backward in her understanding of democracy and a just society, as she has intended to bribe the servants to vote for the food that she likes. Nevertheless, as the play progresses, Man Zyu demonstrates the potential to absorb Peter's teachings, and she also alters her way of thinking to align with Hong Kong's core values. This is evident in the following dialogue of the Hong Kong-mainland couple.

Peter: Let us vote. I propose: sashimi!

Man Zyu (*in Mandarin*): I don't eat raw food!

Peter: Let's begin the vote. For those who agree to eat pickled peppers with frog, chilli fish head, and pan-seared green chilli pepper, please raise your hand.

(only Man Zyu raises her hand)

Peter: For those who agree to eat sashimi, please raise your hand.

(At first nobody raises his or hand. Faye Faye and Yong Yong look at Peter, when Peter raises his hand, they raise their hands too.)

Peter: Okay, the result of the vote is: sashimi is elected by a majority of votes!

(Faye Faye and Yong Yong clap in a mechanical way)

Wen Zhu (*in Cantonese*): Fake democracy!

Peter: Then what is real democracy?

Man Zyu (*in Cantonese*): They only raised their hands when they saw you raise yours, they were not sincere!

Peter: *Democracy needs to be carried out step-by-step. They are not ready, give them some time!*

Man Zyu (*in Cantonese*): *Black box politics!*

Peter: You object?

Man Zyu (*in Cantonese*): Object!

Peter: Then you still have some conscience.

(J. Lee 40-41; *my italics*)



Figure 27: Peter introduces the voting system in his family, photograph © Big Stage Theatre.

Man Zyu’s accusation that the voting system in their family is “fake democracy” reminds the audience of the government’s proposed political reform in 2014. As the PRC retained the right to disqualify any candidate whom it viewed as “not patriotic towards China”, the pan-democrats in Hong Kong severely criticized Beijing for launching “fake democracy”.¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, the reason why Man Zyu thinks that the result of the vote is unfair and unrepresentative is that she observes that the servants only vote for what their boss prefers, and not what they truly desire. This is because Faye Faye and Yong Yong merely raise their hands after Peter votes for sashimi, and when the results of the voting are announced, the servants clap mechanically with no sign of emotions on their faces.

¹⁵⁵ See my introduction, pp. 14-15.

This scene is very telling of the political reality in Hong Kong, where pro-China legislators tend to vote for the motion that their “boss”, China, prefers, and not in the interests of Hong Kong people. Satirically, Peter adopts Beijing’s tone in stating that “democracy needs to be carried out step-by-step” (J. Lee 41). This draws us to the then Chairman of the National People’s Congress in 2014, Zhang De-jiang (張德江)’s saying that the “development of democracy needs to be carried out step-by-step, and it should also correspond to the actual situation of [Hong Kong]” (*Ejinsight*, “Cheung”; *my trans.*). When Man Zyu in the play objects to the voting system set by Peter, calling it “black box politics” (J. Lee 41), she alludes (consciously or not) to the fact that there are still some Hong Kongers who are not susceptible to the power of Beijing, and who fight hard for a truly democratic society.

One final example of Lee’s critique of Hong Kong’s black box politics is re-enacted in the scene where Man Zyu and the maids discuss the available television channels in Hong Kong. Christine Loh indicates that the frequent accusations of black box politics in Hong Kong reveal that the locals “fear the high level of involvement of business elites within the power structure” (36). On her second day in her new home in Hong Kong, Man Zyu, as depicted in Figure 28 below, plays with the television remote control while asking the maids:

Man Zyu: Are there any channels from the Hunan province of China?

Faye Faye: No, only CNN, National Geographic and Discovery Channel.

Man Zyu: So are there any Chinese television networks?

Yong Yong: No, only CNN, National Geographic and Discovery Channel.

Man Zyu: Then does Hong Kong have any ... Hong Kong Television?

Faye Faye: *Hong Kong does not have any Hong Kong Television!*

Man Zyu: Why?

Yong Yong: It's still in a law suit!

Man Zyu: What?

Yong Yong: Using taxpayers' money!

Faye Faye: *We all cannot watch Hong Kong Television!*

(J. Lee 39; *my italics*)



Figure 28: A satirical scene of the free-to-air television license dispute in Hong Kong in 2013, photograph © Big Stage Theatre.

The above dialogue between Man Zyu and the maids refers to a dispute over free-to-air television licenses in 2013. In 2009, the Hong Kong government announced that more free-to-air television licenses would be granted to end the long-time hegemony of Television Broadcast Limited (TVB). Nevertheless, in 2013, the government rejected the license application of a popular network, HKTV, and it also refused to give any explanation to the public (Engel, “How”). It was widely suspected that the denial was because HKTV’s chairman, Ricky Wong Wai-kay (王維基) had pro-democracy affiliations, as he had enlisted support from Chan Kin-man (陳健民), one of the three advocates of the Umbrella Movement, to serve on HKTV’s Board of Directors (AM730, “Wong”; *my trans.*). As asserted by Cloud Yip, a Hong Kong reporter, the HKTV

incident had motivated thousands of protestors to the streets, and it planted the roots of the Umbrella Movement, as young people realised “being silent and ... nice [would] not make the government change its mind” (qtd. in Engel, “How”).

IV. Conclusion

Though Lee had intended to restage *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* in Hong Kong and also bring the production to China (Personal interview with J. Lee), his plan has not yet been realized. This contrasts strongly with the afterlife of Richard Ho’s *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, which, as I showed in Chapter One, has been repeatedly restaged in Hong Kong during the colonial and neocolonial periods, and which has also acted as an official exemplar of acceptable Hong Kong Shakespeare during its international touring. Lee’s play, with its explicit satire, could never have been funded by the local government in the same way, due to its inclusion of sensitive political events such as the Umbrella Movement and the HKTVM incident. *Post-Taming of the Shrew* stands apart from *Shamshuipo Lear* too. Although both Lee and Tsoi appropriated Shakespeare’s works to comment on the socio-political problems of Hong Kong after the handover, they adopted disparate strategies for dealing with the neo-coloniser. While the young couple in *Shamshuipo Lear* discusses leaving Hong Kong in search of a better home, Peter in *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* decides not only to stay behind, but also to step onto Beijing soil in search of business and marriage opportunities. Before meeting Mister Ho in Beijing, Peter self-mockingly calls himself a “Hong Kong Chank” (港燦), where “Ah Chank” (阿燦) is a derogatory term originally applied to mainlanders to ridicule their

backward tastes. The term “Ah Chank” was originated from the popular Hong Kong television drama, *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly* in 1979, where the character “Ah Chank” was a new immigrant from China and who acted like a country bumpkin (Ma, “From”; *my trans.*). Unlike the racist term “Chink” used in Anglophone nations, which discriminated against people who are ethnically Chinese; the term “Ah Chank” was employed by Hong Kongers to express anti-mainland Chinese sentiments in the 1970s, where local economy was growing strong and a large flock of mainlanders emigrated to Hong Kong (Ma, “From”; *my trans.*). Nevertheless, after the Asian financial crisis in 1997, Hong Kong’s status as the international financial centre was impeded. In contrast, China’s economy began to flourish, and this change of tide encouraged more Hong Kongers to look for employment opportunities in large mainland cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen (*Apple Daily*, “Encyclopedia”; *my trans.*). This phenomenon is exemplified in *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*, where Peter’s business trip to Beijing signifies that Hong Kongers, though somewhat unwillingly, need to rely on China economically in the neo-colonial period. Nevertheless, Peter does not totally bow to the neo-coloniser. Lee takes the gender relationship in the source text a step further to comment on Hong Kong’s political relationship with China, in which Peter’s successful taming of Man Zyu symbolizes the imagined victory of Hong Kongers. Moreover, in terms of textual reinvention, the new setting and the added scenes, lines and characters in Lee’s appropriation all serve as a critique of both the Hong Kong and PRC governments.

Finally, *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* incorporates elements from both Hong Kong’s newly created plays and translated plays. As summarized by Shelby Chan, newly created plays in Hong Kong generally affirm local values and culture (“Equivocating”

424; *my trans.*), which is evident in Peter's educating his mainland-bred wife about the superiority of traditional Chinese characters and the Cantonese dialect. But on the other hand, Lee's play is also characteristic of Hong Kong's translated plays, which often present the search for a new position or identity (S. Chan, "Equivocating" 424; *my trans.*). This is demonstrated in Peter's successful negotiations with Man Zyu, which encourage Hong Kongers to continuously negotiate with China and not to surrender easily in their fight for freedom and democracy.

Conclusion

I. Disappearance of Hong Kong Shakespeare

Which do you think is more susceptible of disappearing – the unique status of Hong Kong as a former British colony, or that of Hong Kong Shakespeare? While local football fans proclaimed Hong Kong independence in 2015, as discussed in my introduction, an anti-independence wave and a pro-Beijing stance almost immediately emerged in the city as counter forces. In April 2017, as if in direct reply to the Hong Kong fans’ banners two years earlier, mainland fans visiting the Mong Kok Stadium in Hong Kong raised a red banner bearing the words “Annihilate British Dogs, Wipe Out Hong Kong Independence” (殲英犬，滅港毒) (Tong, “Annihilate”). Both the ex-colonizer and the neo-colonizer adamantly insist that Hong Kong is an inseparable part of China. Carrie Lam, the new Chief Executive of Hong Kong who took office in 2017, proposes that the concept of Chineseness should be instilled in kindergarten children, and that Chinese history should be included as a compulsory subject in all secondary schools, so as to prevent the “pro-independence” concept from endangering the minds of young people (AM730, Zhang; *my trans.*). Hong Kong Shakespeare, like the political status of Hong Kong itself on the international stage, has long been in a limbo state. Comparing Hong Kong Shakespeare with that produced in other non-PRC or Chinese diasporic communities, there is much more writing on Singapore Shakespeare and Taiwanese Shakespeare than on Hong Kong Shakespeare. While Hong Kong Shakespeare has existed since 1867 when *Shylock*, or *The Merchant of Venice Preserved* was the colony’s

first ever Shakespearean performance, it is underrepresented in the discourse of Asian Shakespeare. As I have stated in Chapter Two, only two Hong Kong Shakespearean productions are recorded in the Asian Shakespeare Intercultural Archive (Asian Shakespeare Intercultural Archive, “Hong”).

So why is Hong Kong, a financial centre and an international city in Asia, silenced in the field of Shakespeare and ignored by Shakespearean scholars? I would perceive the status of Hong Kong Shakespeare as related to the ambiguous position of the city in political terms. Unlike Singapore, Hong Kong is not an independent country after the end of British colonial reign. In November 2016, two legislators who pledged allegiance to the “Hong Kong nation” by altering their oaths lost their seats and were expelled from the legislative council (S. Lau, “Explained”).¹⁵⁶ In July 2017, four more pro-democracy legislators were disqualified for their “insincerity” when taking the oath of office, meaning that the Hong Kong government had altogether silenced 180,000 voters who had elected the four legislators (Haas, “Hong”).¹⁵⁷ As the above incidents suggest, the topic of Hong Kong independence is an extremely sensitive one, and the Education Bureau of Hong Kong even warned local teachers not to advocate Hong Kong independence in schools, otherwise they might run the risk of losing their professional qualifications (C. Wong, “Hong”). Furthermore, unlike Taiwan which has its own elected president and its own national defence, the Chief Executive of Hong Kong is appointed by Beijing, and detachments of the People’s Liberation Army of the PRC have been

¹⁵⁶ The two legislators who lost their seats were Sixtus Baggio Leung Chung-hang (梁頌恒) and Yau Wai-ching (游蕙禎) from the political party, Youngspiration (青年新政). The lawyers in Hong Kong held a silent march in November 2016 to express their deep concerns towards Beijing interpretation of the Basic Law to resolve the oath-taking controversy, which would damage the judicial independence of the city. This was the third silent march held by the Hong Kong legal sector since 1997 (E. Ng, “Hong”).

¹⁵⁷ The four expelled lawmakers included Nathan Law Kwun-chung (羅冠聰), Lau Siu-lai (劉小麗), Edward Yiu Chung-yim (姚松炎) and Leung Kwok-hung (梁國雄).

stationed in Hong Kong since the handover, residing in former British barracks. Though the Basic Law guarantees that Hong Kong's economic and political systems shall remain for "50 years unchanged" after the handover, the recent happenings in the city made Hong Kongers fear that the city is losing its distinctiveness from China, and that it may be reduced to being just another city in the PRC, no more politically or culturally autonomous than Guangzhou or Shenzhen. But at least in terms of Shakespearean studies, I am still free to proclaim the separateness of Hong Kong Shakespeare from mainland Shakespeare, and also to assert that Hong Kong Shakespeare deserves to be considered alone, and not seen as attached to any strings. Many Hong Kongers remain nostalgic for the British colonial reign in Hong Kong. My reminiscences of Hong Kong as a former British colony include my experience of studying in an all-girls secondary school, which was founded by the British missionaries. Every morning, my classmates and I went to the hall for assembly with our hymn books, which included among its sacred songs the British national anthem. When Chris Patten, the last colonial governor of Hong Kong visited the city in 2014 and 2016, a crowd of Hong Kong people waited eagerly for him at the Hong Kong International Airport. While waving their Hong Kong colonial flags, the locals cried enthusiastically in English, "Please come back to Hong Kong! We need you!" (*Apple Daily*, "Chan"; *my trans.*). This deviates conspicuously from the locals' reception of the then National People's Congress chairman, Zhang De-jiang (張德江)'s visit to Hong Kong, also in the same year of 2016. Unlike Chris Patten who was warmly welcomed by locals at the airport, Zhang's visit was met with protestors demanding universal suffrage (*South China Morning Post*, "Smiles"). And unlike Patten who walked towards the crowd, during Zhang's visit, the police in Hong Kong turned Wan Chai, the

area around the hotel where Zhang stayed, into a fortress to prevent the protestors from embarrassing the state leader (*South China Morning Post*, “Smiles”). Similar to Hong Kong people’s reverence for Chris Patten, Shakespeare is one of the many British colonial symbols to which the locals cling. On the one hand, China’s political leaders emphasize that China has its own Shakespeare in the form of the great playwright, Tang Xian-zu of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), who died in 1616, the same year as Shakespeare.¹⁵⁸ Alexa Huang has argued, indeed, that China is using Shakespeare’s worldwide influence to promote its own playwright (*The Economist*, “Shashibiya”). The Chinese President Xi Jin-ping (习近平) depicted Tang as the “Shakespeare of the East” during his visit to Britain in 2015. Subsequently, the Ministry of Culture organised a Tang-themed exhibition in more than 20 countries, which compared his life and works to those of Shakespeare (*The Economist*, “Shashibiya”). The Fuzhou government of China, which is Tang’s birthplace, even presented to the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust a statute commemorating both playwrights in 2015, and it now stands in the garden at Shakespeare’s Birthplace (Woodings, “Tang”). In 2016, China went so far as to start building replicas of several iconic Shakespearean properties in Stratford-upon-Avon in the southern Chinese city of Fuzhou, and it is intended that it will become Stratford’s sister Shakespearean city. The village will be known as the “Three Masters” (三翁) to commemorate three famous writers in the East and West, namely Shakespeare, Tang Xian-zu, and Miguel de Cervantes (Eaves, “Shakespeare’s”).

¹⁵⁸ Chinese political leaders like Fu Ying and Wen Jia-bao emphasized to the Western world that China is capable of producing great literary figures like Shakespeare. Refer to my introduction, pp. 33-35.

On the other hand, Hong Kongers possess a stronger sense of their ownership of Shakespeare. In terms of fiction, Uncle Lee, the homeless protagonist in *Shamshuipo Lear*, keeps a copy of Shakespeare's *King Lear* among his meagre possessions, and he also identifies himself as Lear due to his despondent circumstances, which are comparable to Shakespeare's protagonist in the source text. In terms of the cultural scene in Hong Kong, elementary school students who enrolled in Shakespeare4All, a dramatic group established in 2003 under the leadership of a retired academic, Vicki Ooi, called themselves "Little Shakespeares" (小莎翁). Every year, the students give an annual performance of a Shakespearean play, which is delivered entirely in English ("Shakespeare4All"). As I have discussed in the introduction, Hong Kong Shakespeare moves beyond a desire for straightforward translations.¹⁵⁹ As early as 1977, Richard Ho naturalized *Hamlet* into a sinicized setting, where the actors of the production wore traditional Chinese clothing and recited classical Chinese poetry. This is opposed to the lasting trend of staging Shakespeare faithfully in the "original sauce" in China, as Li Ruru calls it (Dickson 368), where the mainland actors in *Much Ado About Nothing* in Shanghai in 1979 tried to erase every trace of their ethnic identity by putting on wigs and false noses (Dickson 402). Nonetheless, the most distinctive aspect of Hong Kong Shakespeare is that its practitioners have been consistently daring in using Shakespeare as part of a challenge to the ideology of the government. Having conducted interviews with notable mainland theatre directors of Shakespeare, Andrew Dickson concludes that it is taboo for mainland directors to discuss the politics of the PRC even when they are alluded to in their productions. Such examples include Tian Qin-xin (田沁鑫)'s *Romeo*

¹⁵⁹ Refer to my introduction, pp. 35-36.

and Juliet (2014), set in the Cultural Revolution; and Lin Zhao-hua (林兆華)'s *Hamlet*, staged just a few months after the Tiananmen Massacre in 1989 (372).¹⁶⁰ Dickson explains that making theatre in China involves delicate negotiations, especially given that most productions are exclusively state-funded (372). This results in mainland directors often pleading innocence when asked about the political implications of their productions, so as not to endanger their shows by being banned by the state. For instance, Lin Zhao-hua remarks that his *Hamlet* production in 1989 had “no relevance to contemporary events” (Dickson 372), and it was also “purely accidental” in *Richard III* of 2001 that the hero was in some respects similar to the then PRC premier, Jiang Ze-min (江澤民) (Dickson 372). In a similar vein, Tian Qin-xin asserts, “I’m not very interested in politics ... Setting a play in [the Cultural Revolution] isn’t a matter of politics” (372). She also added that the PRC government is “still reflecting on [the period and it doesn’t] like old wounds to be shown again to the rest of the world” (Dickson 372).

In contrast, the directors of Hong Kong Shakespeare are bold to include contemporary controversial events on stage. Indeed, a particular feature of Hong Kong Shakespeare is that they challenge the government’s status quo, either explicitly or implicitly. A memorable scene in Tang Shu-wing’s *Macbeth* lies in the coda of the play, when Macbeth and Lady Macbeth clutch onto black umbrellas, alluding to the recognized symbol of the yellow umbrella in the pro-universal suffrage movement in 2014. Moreover, the mime at the end of Hardy Tsoi’s *Julius Caesar* depicts scenes that cannot be depicted in mainland Shakespeare, such as the Hong Kong people’s commemoration of the June Fourth Massacre, and their protest against the neocolonial government on the

¹⁶⁰ See Chapter One, p. 92.

first of July, the day which officially commemorates the 1997 handover. Tsoi's *Shamshuipo Lear* goes even further to illustrate Hong Kong people's dissatisfaction towards China, as it depicts an ironic scene of the conversation between a homeless character and a prostitute while they are watching the fireworks on the first of October, the National Day of China. This celebration of national prosperity, as signified by the dazzling fireworks, is incongruent with the homelessness and poverty of the characters in the play. Therefore, *Shamshuipo Lear* is a satire to illustrate that China's national reunification has not had much impact on the personal happiness of Hong Kong's inhabitants. In other words, the construction of home, in the nation's terms, does not necessarily equate to the building of a home, on a personal level. All these scenes pertaining to Hong Kong Shakespeare in my case study apparently cannot appear in mainland Shakespeare without the scrutiny of the PRC authorities.

As Dennis Kennedy asserts, "All theatre touches on politics on some levels" ("Politics" 105), Hong Kong Shakespeare also makes its way to political discourse offstage. On the evening of 29th October 2016, I watched *Shake Shake Speare* (莎士對比亞), directed by Yuen Lap-fan (袁立勳) which was performed on six consecutive evenings. Every night before the play commenced, two guest speakers from prominent walks of society were invited on stage to recite Hamlet's line, "To be, or not to be – that is the question" (*Ham.* 3.1.55) in Cantonese and English respectively. The director's intention was to provoke the audience's thinking, as he believes that each of us is faced with some confrontations and hard choices in our lives (Yuen, "This"). On the night when I was watching the play, John Tsang Chun-wah (曾俊華), then Financial Secretary of Hong Kong, was invited to the stage, and he remarked, "Tonight, I should have recited

'To be, or not to be, that is the question,' but I believe that the audience would like to hear another version from me, which is *'To run, or not to run, that is the question'*” (my *trans & italics*). Tsang’s remark led to huge applause and loud bursts of laughter from the audience, which speaks to his popularity among Hong Kongers. This of course had to be understood in the context of contemporary Hong Kong politics. The Hong Kong media had been speculating for some time that Tsang would run for office for the next election of the Chief Executive, which was scheduled to be held in March 2017. If this was indeed true, it might have been possible that Tsang would replace the largely unpopular and hated Leung Chun-ying. It was largely against the wishes of the vast majority of Hong Kong people that Leung would even run for office for a second term. Unfortunately, for when at the time of my writing, Tsang had lost the election to Carrie Lam, who was not as popular as Tsang but who nevertheless won the favour of Beijing.

Furthermore, my case studies in this research have aimed to challenge the pre-conceived notions of Asian Shakespeare. I would like to put forth the notion that Hong Kong Shakespeare possesses only some of the characteristics of Asian Shakespeare, as critics suggest that Shakespeare’s language, which “prevails in English performances, loses its absolute dominance when translated, and other ‘corporeal’ elements such as sets, costumes, gestures, singing and dancing fill the gap” (Panja, Michiko, Huang and Yong 509). This concept applies to the aestheticized Shakespeare of Tang Shu-wing’s *Titus Andronicus 2.0*, which focuses on the seven aspects of pre-language, as stated in Chapter Two of my thesis. In particular, the insertion of the yoga ritual of breathing highlights the horror of the violence. The pauses in the production encourage the audience to take time to reflect on the violence in contemporary Hong Kong society, especially in the aftermath

of the Umbrella Movement. In this sense, the emphasis on corporeal elements helps *Titus Andronicus 2.0* to travel beyond linguistic boundaries, and hence to be invited for performance as far away as in Norway and Poland in 2012 alone (Tang Shu-Wing Theatre Studio, “Titus”). However, I wish to stress that *not* all Hong Kong Shakespearean productions emphasize the scenographic and physical elements of the spectacle, as there are different intercultural strategies adopted by Hong Kong directors, and foregrounding the physical over verbal expression (Kennedy and Yong 17) is merely one of them. For instance, Jimmy Lee rewrites the dialogues between Petruchio and Katherina in *The Taming of the Shrew* to bring out the contradictions between Hong Kong people and the neo-coloniser, thus verbal speech plays an integral part in Lee’s appropriation of *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*.

II. Should we accept, tame, or overthrow the neo-coloniser?

Among the six Shakespearean productions that I have analyzed in this thesis, it is apparent that they all carry some recurrent themes that Hong Kong theatre directors are keen on exploring, these being the depiction of Hong Kong’s socio-political problems, and the strategies which can be used by Hong Kong people to deal with the neo-coloniser. As I had demonstrated in Chapter Three, *Shamshuiipo Lear* illustrates the wide disparity between the rich and the poor, which is a result of the neocolonial government’s incompetent administration. *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*, *Macbeth* and *Titus Andronicus 2.0* all hint at China’s increasing encroachment towards Hong Kong by restricting the freedoms of Hong Kong people. Unlike the situation in India, Ireland or

other former British colonies, the change in sovereignty in Hong Kong has not prompted a backlash against everything colonial (A. Lee, "One" 196). On the contrary, Hong Kong people are afraid of being colonised again by China. Far from wanting to displace British colonialism, many Hong Kongers are anxious to assert Britishness as a sign of distinction from mainland China (Elaine Chan 272). On the other hand, the shift of performance language in *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* depicts the results of China's encroachment. As reflected in the adaptations and appropriations of Shakespeare's plays in Hong Kong that I have examined in this thesis, I propose four main strategies that the Hong Kong directors have adopted to deal with the PRC, from the mildest method of voluntary subjugation (*Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*), and the adoption of the lens of a passive onlooker (*Shamshuipo Lear* and *Julius Caesar*), to the method of appeasement (*Post-The Taming of the Shrew*), and finally the most radical means of usurpation (*Macbeth*).

First of all, I propose that the change of performance language from Cantonese into Mandarin in Richard Ho's *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* signifies Ho's voluntary subjugation to the dominant language discourse of the neo-coloniser. This was in fact a survival technique and also the reason why *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* was restaged several times after 1997, due to its adaptability to China's language policy in Hong Kong. With the overriding objective of promoting national unification at heart among Hong Kongers, the PRC has employed a variety of means such as promoting Mandarin in schools, organizing the Basic Law debate competitions, and sponsoring cultural exchanges of Hong Kong students to various places in China. Under the pretext of "promoting Mandarin and Chinese culture", Ho's play surrenders the native dialect of

Hong Kongers for the official language of the neo-coloniser, and it also replaces Hong Kong actors with mainland actors who are proficient in Mandarin.

Moreover, it is interesting to make a comparison between *Hamlet* as staged in Hong Kong and the *Hamlets* seen in the PRC. This draws us to Peter Brook's assertion, where he uses "fabric" to describe Shakespeare's works, which reaches us not as "a series of messages", but as "a series of impulses that can produce many understandings" (76). *Hamlet* has been the most frequently performed Shakespearean play in Hong Kong in the neocolonial period, as it has been staged 11 times since 1997. On the contrary, *Hamlet*'s public performance on the mainland ceased for decades after 1949, when the PRC was established (R. Li, "Six" 121). Li Ru-ru accounts for the long absence of *Hamlet* in the mainland, which is partly due to the implication of politics in the play, with frequent metaphors of doomsday, pestilence and prison that might appear as allusions to the "people's democratic dictatorship", a key concept in the communist ideology (R. Li, "Six" 121). As mentioned earlier, the mainland director, Lin Zhao-hua staged *Hamlet* in 1989, just a few months after the June Fourth massacre at Tiananmen Square.¹⁶¹ One of the similarities between Lin's *Hamlet* and Ho's *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* is that both productions attempt to shy away from political implications, but for disparate reasons. As observed by Andrew Dickson, it is impossible to get theatre directors in China to admit that there is a political dimension to their works, as they would rather keep the controversy on stage to avoid state censorship (372). Lin depicts Hamlet not as a Renaissance giant, but as an ordinary Beijing man in the late 20th century facing a crucial moment (R. Li, "Six" 125). Without any indications of time or space in the play, Hamlet

¹⁶¹ See Chapter Four, p. 276.

is characterized as “one of our brothers or one of ourselves” (R. Li, “Six” 126). On the other hand, *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* was first staged in 1977 during the colonial times of Hong Kong. To the majority of Hong Kongers in the 1970s, China was a faraway kingdom with no imminent threat. For it was only in 1984 that the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration confirmed Hong Kong’s sovereignty to be returned to the PRC. This was the historical background in Ho’s creation of a sinicized Shakespeare, which manifested in the form of an ancient China. According to Shelby Chan, the double alignment to a cultural China and a cultural West in *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* signifies a budding Hong Kong identity, which demonstrates a way to grow out of the hegemonies of Britain and China (“Identity” 218-219). By introducing the four dimensions of cultural China in Ho’s adaptation, as I have elaborated in Chapter One, this shows that the subjectivity of Hong Kong is not geopolitically centred. This is because traditional and cultural elements appear timeless and apolitical in the play, with which the Hong Kong audience has no difficulty at all in identifying (S. Chan, “Identity” 219). Furthermore, Shelby Chan proposes that feelings of uncertainty about the origin and future of Hong Kong are negotiated through abstraction and selective attachment (“Identity” 219). We witness a transformation of Hong Kong people’s feelings towards China, as represented in the Hong Kong adaptations of *Hamlet* from the British colonial era to the neocolonial period. While Ho’s sinicized adaptation of *Hamlet* signifies the distance from China felt by Hong Kongers in the colonial period, the joint production of *Hamlet, Hamlet* (2001) by the Hong Kong director, Hardy Tsoi, and mainland director, Xiong Yuan-wei, illustrates Hong Kong people’s anxieties towards China after the handover (R. Li, “Millennium” 174). This was a period where the honeymoon of

reunification with China had ended, and Hong Kong was faced with the problems of a declining economy and stricter ideological control (R. Li, "Shakespeare" 126). The main protagonist in *Hamlet*, *Hamlet* is faced with an uncertain destination, as the directors leave the audience to ponder whether he will live or die. Rescued by Horatio and Marcellus, Hamlet survives amid a storm of gunfire. It remains uncertain whether he will commit suicide to join the deceased parties (R. Li, "Shakespeare" 127). It is also ambivalent whether the show has finished or not at the end of the play, as the audience is caught between the end of the live performance on stage and the ongoing shadow performance on the screen (R. Li, "Shakespeare" 128). This draws us to the uncertainty of Hong Kong people towards the future of the city in the post-handover period. In addition, Li Ru-ru argues that it is ironic that Hong Kong and China need Shakespeare, a canonical figure of the old colonial culture, to facilitate communication with each other, even after Hong Kong's reunification with China (R. Li, "Millennium" 173).

Whereas *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* demonstrates to some extent, an acceptance of the neocolonial reign of Hong Kong, *Titus Andronicus 2.0* embodies a similar notion of acceptance through the manifestation of an aestheticized Shakespeare. Nevertheless, Tang's production does not signify a passive form of acceptance as in Ho's adaptation; instead, it indicates an awareness of pain and encourages the Hong Kong audience to ponder on the actions to be taken. The director of the play, Tang Shu-wing, has studied yoga in India, and he has incorporated the intercultural technique of yoga into his adaptation of Shakespeare. Through moments of breathing, and the actors' uttering of the Om yoga sound in the aftermath of the rape and murder scenes, it demonstrates that the actors are acutely aware of the pain inflicted, which also coincides with Howard

Choy's assertion that Tang uses the "calmest way to represent violence" ("Anti-drama"; *my trans.*). Prior to the opening of the play, the broadcast of news clips about real-life violent events also motivates the audience to connect the violence on-stage and that off-stage in contemporary Hong Kong. In my interview with Tang, he exclaims that the "violence in reality is not any less than the violence in the play." Moreover, Tang suggests that he perceives violence from a "subject of representation" to the "subject of investigation" in the variations of *Titus Andronicus* (qtd. in Yong, "Tang" 116).

Yong Li-lan reviewed the performance of Tang's *Titus Andronicus* staged at London's Globe in 2012, and she remarks on the distinctiveness of Hong Kong Shakespeare, suggesting that it was one of the very few productions at the Globe to Globe Festival that was not regarded by the performers as a national performance, since it was from Hong Kong, and staged in Cantonese (Yong, "Tang" 115-116). The performance of *Titus Andronicus* does not in any aspect represent the Shakespearean production of China, since *Richard III* by the National Theatre of China was also invited to be performed at the Globe, and the latter strenuously conveys a strong sense of Chinese cultural heritage through its elaborate costumes and sets. On the contrary, *Titus Andronicus* exhibits the politics of a historical relationship to Shakespeare in a former British colony through its minimalistic stage design and costumes (Yong, "Tang" 115-116). I concur with Heim's argument that Tang's *Titus Andronicus* resembles individual interpretations of Shakespeare that go beyond national stereotypes (xxi). This is because Tang "resisted putting on a cultural performance, defined by Milton Singer as an exhibition that manifests a cultural tradition to both those outside and inside it" (Yong, "Tang" 116). Tang only appropriates certain features of traditional Chinese theatre forms, such as

storytelling and ballad singing. He further mixes it with Brecht's alienation effect and the "tri-partition of the actor" as the person, the neutral actor, and the character, which is advocated by Gao Xing-jian (高行健), the Chinese Nobel Prize laureate for literature in 2000 (Yong, "Tang" 119). The pastiche approach of *Titus Andronicus*, which is not subsumed under a single dominant methodology, echoes my assertion that Hong Kong Shakespeare is not Chinese Shakespeare, which I have attempted to argue throughout my thesis.

Secondly, I would now like to move on to discuss the tactic of adopting the lens of a passive onlooker, as employed by Hardy Tsoi in both of his appropriations of Shakespeare's plays. In the ending of *Julius Caesar*, the ghost of Julius Caesar observes keenly but silently the absurdity of Hong Kong's socio-political environment after 1997. I propose that the real climax of *Julius Caesar* is postponed to the last ten minutes of the play, which is enacted in a mime whereby the actors represent the problems in neocolonial Hong Kong, such as the circumscription of freedom and speech, and the increasing number of protests against the government among many other problems.¹⁶² The ghost of Julius Caesar, leaning against one of the Roman pillars on stage, keenly watches the sufferings of the Hong Kongers. As Julius Caesar, the first emperor of Rome, is here dramatized by the British Empire's favourite playwright Shakespeare, I would interpret his presence as symbolizing the British legacy in Hong Kong. Though the

¹⁶² The mime is not written into the script of Tsoi's *Julius Caesar*, and neither are the recordings of violent events written in the script of Tang's *Titus Andronicus 2.0*. I would interpret that the avoidance of such sensitive scenes helps to prevent the plays from being censored by the government.

¹⁴⁵ According to the Hong Kong Immigration Department, 12,307 entry permits were processed under the admission scheme for mainland professionals in 2016, while 29,578 permits were granted to Chinese nationals under the capital investment entrant scheme in the same year (Lam, "Mainland").

former coloniser is aware of the problems in neocolonial Hong Kong, it cannot do anything as it is no longer the city's protector. On Chris Patten's recent visit to Hong Kong in November 2016, he said that it is "understandable that Hong Kong people are frustrated, as the colony was handed over by a democracy to a country that is non-democratic" (*Apple Daily*, "Mocking"; *my trans.*). However, he asserts that it should be Hong Kong people who take responsibility as the heroes of democracy, rather than an "ageing former colonial official like [himself]" (*Apple Daily*, "Mocking"; *my trans.*).

As I discussed in Chapter Three, Tsoi also depicts the problem of poverty in Hong Kong in *Shamshuipo Lear*, whereby the homeless people remain homeless throughout the play, and nothing changes from beginning to the end. The wide disparity between the rich and poor in Hong Kong has intensified since 1997. In 2017, the Gini-coefficient index, which reflects the income gap in Hong Kong, is measured to be 0.539, and this is the highest number recorded in 45 years (Shih, "Hong"; *my trans.*). With more mainlanders obtaining the right of abode in neocolonial Hong Kong, a large number of them are buying Hong Kong property,¹⁶³ leading to the rapid inflation of prices that go beyond the purchasing power of the local citizens. Tsoi has interviewed some real-life homeless people in Hong Kong, and he superimposes their stories into his source text – *King Lear*. However, Tsoi's appropriation of *King Lear* is not merely about the 2000 or so homeless people in Hong Kong; it metaphorically extends to the homeless sentiment shared by a lot

¹⁶³ Many mainlanders have obtained the right of abode in Hong Kong after living in the city for seven years. With Hong Kong citizenship, they would not need to pay extra stamp duties when purchasing property in Hong Kong, which has increased their incentives to invest in the property market (Lam, "Mainland"). In the second quarter of 2017, mainland buyers had accounted for 23.1% of the total transaction value of Hong Kong's primary market value. Furthermore, 29,578 permits were granted to Chinese nationals in 2016 under the capital investment entrant scheme (Lam, "Mainland").

of Hong Kongers in the neocolonial period, and especially after the pro-democracy Umbrella Movement in 2014. *King Lear* is a Shakespearean play that has often been appropriated by non-PRC directors to explore personal identity, such as Wu Hsing-kuo's *King Lear* in 2001, which discusses how Wu negotiates his complex identity as a Taiwanese person trained in Peking opera, where the latter is considered to be a national art of China. In the epilogue of *Shamshuipo Lear*, there is an ironic twist to the dominant discourse of the handover, which has been promoted by the PRC as Hong Kong's happy reunion with the motherland. Aunt Lan, one of the homeless characters, sings a few lines from the song "Where is Home", which was originally sung by the popular singer, Sam Hui, prior to 1997. The song "Where is Home" illustrates the dilemma of Hong Kongers who had emigrated prior to the handover. Unfortunately, living in the West is not as satisfying as one would have imagined, as many Hong Kongers are degraded from senior managerial positions to working in blue-collar jobs. On the other hand, staying in Hong Kong in the neocolonial period is not so satisfactory either. Jack and Kimmy, the young university graduates in *Shamshuipo Lear*, face the difficulties of finding a secure job and purchasing property in Hong Kong. Within 20 years after Hong Kong's handover, 1.5 million new immigrants from mainland China have settled in Hong Kong, putting much pressure on the government's allocation of housing, medical and educational resources (*Apple Daily*, "Hong"; *my trans.*). Some critics have asserted that the influx of mainlanders into Hong Kong is a strategy employed by the PRC to blur the distinctive identity of the Hong Kongers, so as to promote mainland culture in the city and to loosen Hong Kong's core values like freedom and democracy (*Apple Daily*, "Hong"; *my trans.*). As a result, not only the homeless people living on the streets in *Shamshuipo Lear* suffer

from displacement, but the locals in Hong Kong are also losing their familiar home. Hardy Tsoi, the director of *Shamshuipo Lear*, merely adopts the strategy of a passive onlooker; he displays the problems in the neocolonial period, but offers no solutions at all.

III. Resurgence of Hong Kong Subjectivity

Thirdly, I will discuss two politicised Shakespearean productions from Hong Kong, with specific reference to the strategies that the directors offered to solve the problems in the neocolonial period. Jimmy Lee in *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* advocates the appeasement strategy to deal with the neo-coloniser. While Hong Kong people have no voice in the Sino-British Joint Declaration and thus are powerless in deciding their own destiny, Lee reimagines a platform for discussion between Hong Kong and China, as exhibited in the relationship between Peter and Man Zyu in *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*. If we compare Lee's appropriation of *The Taming of the Shrew* to other non-PRC directors' adaptations of the same Shakespearean production, Lee's appropriation is drastically different from the Taiwanese adaptation, *Kiss Me Nana* in 1997 by Liang Chi-min (梁志民). *Kiss Me Nana* emphasizes the character of the strong woman, which becomes extremely popular in Taiwan's Shakespearean theatre in the 21st century (Lei, "Renegotiating" 354). This trend has also manifested in the expansion and empowerment of female roles in Taiwanese society (Lei, "Renegotiating" 354). On the other hand, *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* is more about the relationship between the colonised and the neo-coloniser. In the play, Peter suggests that marriage is itself an art of compromise, like the politics between Hong Kong and China. Unlike in Britain, where

The Taming of the Shrew is generally regarded as a problem comedy due to its underlying misogyny (Dickson 359), reviewers of *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* in Hong Kong show no such concerns. Instead, the tone of the show, as argued by Maralio, suggests a sense of excitement when Man Zyu is tamed by Peter (“Poking”), which metaphorically alludes to the battle won by the Hong Kong people in overcoming the political dominance of China. This is similar to the scenario in which Hong Kongers were delighted when the Hong Kong Football Team tied with the PRC team, as I have mentioned in the introduction, which signifies the assertion of the Hong Kong identity. As Elaine Chan puts it, Hong Kong equals Chineseness plus three more aspects of utmost importance to Hong Kongers: democracy, human rights, and the rule of law (281).

Nevertheless, the most radical means of dealing with the neo-coloniser lies in Tang Shu-wing’s *Macbeth*, which was staged in 2015 after the pro-democracy Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong. Tang’s production considers the neo-coloniser as a threat, and it embodies Hong Kong people’s subconscious desire to uproot the neocolonial government, and to usurp the largely hated Chief Executive, Leung Chun-ying. There are several ambiguities in the play hinting at the above. For instance, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are half-loyal and half-rebellious. The story of *Macbeth* is repositioned in a dream, whereby the protagonists murder Duncan and are later overthrown by Macduff. Macbeth’s murdering of Duncan seems to signify the Hong Kongers’ desire to overthrow the hereditary lineage of authority. This is because the Chief Executives in Hong Kong are appointed by the dictatorship of the PRC, and the freedom for Hong Kongers to elect their own leaders is still far away. Subsequently, when Macbeth and Lady Macbeth wake up from their dreams, they become defenders of democracy by clutching onto the black

umbrellas, which reminds us of the symbol of the Umbrella Movement. A wider reading of *Macbeth* might be a metaphoric illustration of Hong Kong people's desire to decide their own destiny, and their refusal to be subordinated under dictatorial authority. Just as Cecilia Pang points out, a post-1997 "cultural resurgence" is identified in Hong Kong theatre, where Hong Kongers are creating new forms of expression, and not simply copying Chinese or Anglo models (487-489).

To conclude, the six Shakespearean productions examined in my thesis reveal the complicated resonances between the staging of Shakespeare's plays and the complexities of Hong Kong society. According to Adele Lee, Hong Kongers are building an identity that is not simply defined in opposition to mainland China, or through straightforward identification with Britain ("One" 202). She also predicts that the hybridity in post-1997 Shakespearean productions will be evident in adaptations that are "neither traditionally Chinese, nor too close to Western cultural influences" (R. Li, "Negotiating" 45). As it is beyond the scope of this thesis to encompass all the post-1997 Shakespearean productions in Hong Kong, I would propose future studies to continue examining the politicised and socialised aspects of Hong Kong Shakespeare, as it is foreseeable that Shakespearean productions in Hong Kong would change according to the tide of politics. It would also be constructive to draw a comparison between pre-1997 and post-1997 Hong Kong Shakespeare. As a final point, Hong Kong's role in the evolution of neocolonial, transnational and intercultural Shakespeare deserves further exploration by Shakespearean scholars in the future.

Epilogue

I would like to credit my interest in theatre to my wonderful grandfather, Kwan Shek-hong, and my mother, Kwan Che-ying. My mother took my sister and I to watch a lot of plays when we were young, mostly productions staged by professional theatre companies in Hong Kong. I also remember my grandfather somewhat proudly showing me an old photo, in which he was the only kid wearing sunglasses and had one arm akimbo (the boy standing on the far right, below). This was 1939 in Hong Kong, when China was invaded by Japan in the Second World War. A group of children in Hong Kong had participated in the “Ants’ Children’s Troupe” (螞蟻兒童劇團) that staged patriotic and anti-Japanese plays to promote the fighting spirit of their fellow countrymen, as depicted in Figure 29 below. I remembered asking my grandfather, “Just how could little kids resist Japan’s invasion by acting in plays?” He replied, “That’s the energy of the ants. They are tiny, but when they cooperate together, they become powerful. Don’t look down upon the ants.” Perhaps the seeds of my interest in the political possibilities of the theatre were sown then.



Figure 29: The Ants’ Children’s Troupe in 1939, Hong Kong

Appendix 1

List of Shakespearean Performances in post-1997 Hong Kong¹⁶⁴

Production	Theatre Company	Playwright	Director	Dates	Venue
Dismemberment! Prince. Revenge	Tsuen Wan Youth Drama Society	Li Guo-xiu	Zhao Shi- liang	1997/8/29 – 30	Hong Kong Cultural Centre
King Lear: Experimental Shakespeare	Zuni Icosahedron	William Shakespeare	Danny Yung, Edward Yang, Meng Jing- hui, Stan Lai	2000/3/16 – 19	Auditorium, Kwai Tsing Theatre
A Midsummer Night's Dream	Hong Kong Repertory Theatre	William Shakespeare (Translator: Daniel Yang)	Daniel Yang	2000/7/1 – 8	Grand Theatre, Hong Kong Cultural Centre
Hamlet/Hamlet	Amity Drama Club, Sha Tin Theatre, The Fourth Line Theatre	William Shakespeare (Translator: Xiong Wei- yuan)	Xiong Wei-yuan	2000/1/21 – 24	Hong Kong Cultural Centre Theatre

¹⁶⁴ The productions that I have discussed in this thesis are highlighted in bold.

Lantern Festival (adapted from <i>Twelfth Night</i>)	Chung Ying Theatre Company	William Shakespeare (Translator: Rupert Chan)	Ko Tin- lung	2000/2/19 – 3/3	Cultural Activities Hall, Tuen Mun Town Hall Shatin Town Hall Auditorium Cultural Activities Hall, Tsuen Wan Town Hall
Tempest	Hong Kong Youth Arts Festival	?	?	2000/11/1 4 – 16	Shouson Theatre, Hong Kong Arts Centre
Macbeth	Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts	William Shakespeare (Translator: Anthony Chan)	David Pinner	2001/12/1 0 – 15	Experimental Theatre, Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts
Much Ado About Nothing	Hong Kong Movie & TV Theatrical Society	William Shakespeare (Translator: Rieko Yamazaki, Adaptor: Lo Wai-luk)	Lo Wai-luk	2001/2/8 – 15	Hong Kong City Hall Theatre

Hamlet	Theatre Department, Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts	William Shakespeare (Translator: Rupert Chan)	Tang Shu-wing	2006/1/16 – 21	Experimental Theatre, Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts
Romeo and Juliet <i>(in English)</i>	Bareknuckle Shakespeare	William Shakespeare (Adaptor: Jane Cooper)	Jane Cooper	2006/3/28 – 30	Fringe Club Theatre
As You Like It <i>(in English)</i>	Faust International Limited	William Shakespeare	Jessica Lefkow	2006/6/1 – 10	Shouson Theatre, Hong Kong Arts Centre
Hamlet	Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts	William Shakespeare (Translator: Rupert Chan)	Tang Shu-wing	2006/7/21 – 23	Hong Kong Cultural Centre Theatre
The Merchant of Venice	Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts	William Shakespeare (Translator: William Yip)	Peter Jordan	2007/7/20 – 22	Hong Kong Cultural Centre Theatre
Othello Rock n roll	Hong Kong 3 Arts Musical Institute	Lyn Hills	Chan Wing-chuen	2007/8/10 – 12	Hong Kong Cultural Centre Theatre
Romeo and Juliet <i>(in English)</i>	Shakespeare4All	William Shakespeare	Vicki Ooi	2007/10/27 – 28	Grand Theatre, Hong Kong Cultural Centre

Hamlet	Greater China Culture Global Association	William Shakespeare (Adaptor: Richard Ho)	James Mark	2007/11/2 2 – 25	Grand Theatre, Hong Kong Cultural Centre
Much Ado About Nothing (<i>in English</i>)	Bareknuckle Shakespeare	William Shakespeare	Jane Cooper	2006/11/2 3 – 25	Fringe Club Theatre
Othello	Seals Players	William Shakespeare (Translator: Jane Lai)	Vicki Ooi	2008/1/18 – 20	Hong Kong Cultural Centre Theatre
Titus Andronicus	No Man's Land	William Shakespeare (Translator: Rupert Chan)	Tang Shu-wing	2008/2/29 – 3/3	Auditorium, Kwai Tsing Theatre
A Midsummer Night's Dream	PIP Theatre	William Shakespeare (Literary adviser: Lin Ke-huan)	Yin Yong-pei	2008/4/18 –27	Shouson Theatre, Hong Kong Arts Centre
Shakespeare 24 – Lear's Daughters (<i>in English</i>)	Hong Kong Youth Arts Foundation	William Shakespeare (Adaptor: Lindsey McAlister)	Lindsey McAlister	2008/4/23	Lincoln House, Quarry Bay

Macbeth <i>(in English)</i>	Stylus Productions	William Shakespeare	Giles Burton	2008/4/30 – 5/4	Shouson Theatre, Hong Kong Arts Centre
The Taming of the Shrew <i>(in English)</i>	Shakespeare4All	William Shakespeare (Adaptor: Stephen Spurr)	Stephen Spurr & Vicki Ooi	2008/10/3 – 5	Auditorium, Kwai Tsing Theatre
A Midsummer Night's Dream	Chung Ying Theatre Company	William Shakespeare (Adaptor: Freddy Wong)	Freddy Wong	2009/5/1 - 3	Black Box Theatre House, Kwai Tsing Theatre
Square for Five	Crazy Stage	William Shakespeare (Adaptors: Lin Yan, He Ying-feng)	He Ying-feng	2009/6/18 – 21	Multimedia Theatre, HKICC Lee Shau Kee School of Creativity
Titus Andronicus 2.0	Tang Shu-wing Theatre Studio	William Shakespeare	Tang Shu-wing	2009/6/19 – 21	Hong Kong City Hall Theatre
Richard III	Hong Kong Repertory Theatre	William Shakespeare (Translator: Grace Liu)	Lam Lap-sam	2009/7/11 –21	Grand Theatre, Hong Kong Cultural Centre

Cruel Hamlet	Nga Yu Paradise	Lee Nga-yu	Lee Nga-yu	2009/7/29 – 8/1	Fringe Club Theatre
Twelfth Night	To Be Theatre	William Shakespeare (Adaptor: Fong Chun-kit)	Fong Chun-kit	2009/9/4 – 6	Black Box Theatre House, Kwai Tsing Theatre
Julius Caesar <i>(in English)</i>	Shakespeare4All	William Shakespeare	Stephen Spurr & Vicki Ooi	2009/10/3 – 4	Auditorium, Kwai Tsing Theatre
The Merchant of Venice <i>(in English)</i>	Stylus Theatre	William Shakespeare	Adam Harris	2009/11/1 – 14	Shouson Theatre, Hong Kong Arts Centre
The Taming of the Shrew	Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts	William Shakespeare (Adaptors: Fong Chun-kit, Zheng Guo-wei)	Fong Chun-kit	2010/4/26 – 5/1	Experimental Theatre, Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts
Twelfth Night <i>(Re-run)</i>	To Be Theatre	William Shakespeare (Adaptor: Fong Chun-kit)	Fong Chun-kit	2010/8/28 – 9/5	Black Box Theatre, Jockey Club Creative Arts Centre

The Merchant of Venice	Chung Ying Theatre Company	William Shakespeare (Translator: Rupert Chan)	Ko Tin-lung	2010/10/30 – 11/7	Auditorium, Kwai Tsing Theatre
Hamlet	Hong Kong Theatre Works	William Shakespeare (Translator: Richard Ho)	Hardy Tsoi (university group) Feng Zhao-zhang (secondary school group)	2010/11/27 – 29	Sir Run Run Shaw Hall, Chinese University of Hong Kong
A Midsummer Night's Dream	Joy with Theatre	William Shakespeare	Cai De-jun	2011/2/25 – 26	Hong Kong Cultural Centre Theatre
Romantic Shakespeare (includes <i>Romeo & Juliet</i> , <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , <i>Twelfth Night</i>)	Hong Kong Theatre Works	William Shakespeare	Hardy Tsoi	2011/3/3 – 18	Shatin Town Hall Auditorium
Twelfth Night	Hong Kong Theatre Works	William Shakespeare	Hardy Tsoi, Octavian Chan	2011/8/5 – 7	Hong Kong Cultural Centre Theatre

Hamlet <i>(Re-run)</i>	The Cultural & Educational Association of the New Towns, Kwai Chung & Tsing Yi District Culture & Arts Coordinating Association	William Shakespeare (Adaptor: Richard Ho)	Feng Zhao-zhang	2011/10/1 6	Auditorium, Kwai Tsing Theatre
A Midsummer Night's Dream <i>(in English)</i>	The Absolutely Fabulous Theatre Connection	William Shakespeare	Stephan Spurr	2011/12/1 5 – 17	San Wan Ho Civic Centre Theatre
Hamlet <i>(Re-run)</i>	Hong Kong Theatre Works	William Shakespeare (Adaptor: Richard Ho)	Hardy Tsoi	2012/2/4 – 5	Jockey Club Auditorium, Hong Kong Polytechnic University
Twelfth Night	Joy with Theatre	William Shakespeare (Dance choreographer: Voice)	Yuan Jie-lin (producer)	2012/4/20 – 22	Sheung Wan Civic Centre Theatre

Titus Andronicus <i>(part of the 40th Hong Kong Arts Festival 2012, Re-run)</i>	Tang Shu-wing Theatre Studio	William Shakespeare (Adaptor: Tang Shu-wing)	Tang Shu-wing	2012/4/20 – 21	Auditorium, Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts
The Tempest <i>(in English)</i>	Faust International Youth Theatre	William Shakespeare	Matthew Gregory	2012/4/26 – 28	McAulay Studio, Hong Kong Arts Centre
All's Well that Ends Well	Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts	William Shakespeare (Translator: all the actors)	Peter Jordan	2012/5/14 – 19	Experimental Theatre, Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts
King Lear <i>(Cantonese opera)</i>	Art of Cantonese Opera	William Shakespeare (Adaptors: Law Ka-ying, Qin Zhong-ying)	You Sheng-pu	2012/5/17	Hong Kong Cultural Centre Theatre
Hamlet	Hong Kong Theatre Works	William Shakespeare	Hardy Tsoi	2012/5/26 – 27	Auditorium, North District Town Hall

Julius Caesar	Hong Kong Theatre Works	William Shakespeare	Hardy Tsoi	2012/10/5 – 7	Auditorium, Tsuen Wan Town Hall
Macbeth in Macao	Class 7A Drama Group	William Shakespeare (Translator: Liang Cheng-qian)	Liang Cheng-qian	2012/10/6 – 7	Sai Wan Ho Civic Centre Theatre
The Merchant of Venice	Joy with Theatre	William Shakespeare (Translator: Ah Qu)	Cai De-jun	2013/6/14 – 16	Hong Kong Cultural Centre Theatre
Martyrdom <i>(Cantonese opera, adapted from Romeo and Juliet)</i>	Utopia Cantonese Opera Workshop	Cheung Kwan-hin	Rex Ng	2013/9/27 – 28	Ko Shan Theatre
Lady Macbeth	Perry Chiu Experimental Theatre	William Shakespeare (Adaptor: Zhong Qiu)	Perry Chiu	2014/3/20 – 29	Sheung Wan Civic Centre Theatre
Macbeth <i>(in English)</i>	Stylus Production	William Shakespeare	Adam Harris	2014/4/2 – 5	McAulay Studio, Hong Kong Arts Centre

The Taming of the Shrew <i>(in English)</i>	Shakespeare in the Port	William Shakespeare	Jonathan Brantley	2014/4/17 – 5/4	Cyberport Podium
The Tragedy of Miss Julius Caesar <i>(in English)</i>	Shakespeare in the Port	William Shakespeare	Hannah Lochhead	2014/4/18 – 5/3	Cyberport Podium
The Taming of the Shrew	Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts	William Shakespeare (Adaptor: Boaz Chow)	Ceri Sherlock, Hu Zhi-feng	2014/5/9 – 10	Opera House, Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts
The Taming of the Shrew <i>(in English)</i>	Shakespeare4A II	William Shakespeare	Vicki Ooi	2014/6/21 – 22	Loke Yew Hall, The University of Hong Kong
Ophelia	Error Box	William Shakespeare (Adaptor: Pisa Lee)	Pisa Lee	2014/7/30 – 8/2	Fringe Underground, Fringe Club

A Midsummer Night's Dream <i>(in English)</i>	The Absolutely Fabulous Theatre Connection	William Shakespeare	Shiona Carson	2014/9/13 – 14	San Wan Ho Civic Centre Theatre
A Modern Tale of Revenge <i>(adapted from Hamlet with the inclusion of sign language)</i>	Hong Kong Society for the Deaf	William Shakespeare	Zhao Jian-tang	2014/9/26 – 27	Black Box Theatre, Jockey Club Creative Arts Centre
Recycle of Words IV <i>(one of the four short plays included Macbeth 2.0, a 10 minute beta musical version)</i>	Class 7A Drama Group	William Shakespeare (Translator: Liang Cheng-qian)	Liang Cheng-qian	2014/12/27 – 28	Black Box Theatre House, Kwai Tsing Theatre
Post-The Taming of the Shrew	Big Stage Theatre	William Shakespeare	Jimmy Lee	2015/6/11 – 14	Hong Kong Cultural Centre Theatre

A Midsummer Night's Dream	North District Youth Drama Society	William Shakespeare (Adaptor: Leung Yeun-kwon)	Leung Yeun-kwon	2015/8/28 – 30	Auditorium, North District Town Hall
Titus Andronicus 2.0 <i>(Re-run)</i>	Tang Shu-wing Theatre Studio	William Shakespeare (Adaptor: Candace Chong)	Tang Shu-wing	2015/9/4 – 6	Hong Kong City Hall Theatre
Shamshuipo Lear	Prospects Theatre	William Shakespeare (Adaptors: Hardy Tsoi, Michael Fung)	Hardy Tsoi	2015/9/11 – 13	Sai Wan Ho Civic Centre Theatre
Macbeth	Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts	William Shakespeare (Translator: Chow Yung-ping)	Terence Chang	2016/3/14 – 19	Academy Studio Theatre
Macbeth <i>(opening play of the 10th Chinese Drama Festival)</i>	Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts	William Shakespeare (Translator: Chow Yung-ping)	Terence Chang	2016/4/13 – 14	Auditorium, Ko Shan Theatre

A Midsummer Night's Dream <i>(musical)</i>	Actors' Family	William Shakespeare (Adaptor: Pang Zhen-nan)	Pang Zhen-nan	2016/9/2 – 4	Hong Kong City Hall Theatre
A Midsummer Night's Dream	Dionysus Contemporary Theatre	William Shakespeare	Olivia Yan	2016/9/30 – 10/22	Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts
Twelfth Night <i>(in English)</i>	The Absolutely Fabulous Theatre Connection	William Shakespeare (Adaptor: Vicki Ooi)	Mel Hillyard, Vicki Ooi	2016/10/2 – 23	Kwai Tsing Theatre Auditorium
Shake Shake Speare	Sunbeam Chinese Opera Cultural Fund Limited	Yuen Lap-fan	Yuen Lap-fan	2016/10/27 – 11/1	Sunbeam Theatre
A Midsummer Night's Dream 2.0 <i>(musical, re-run)</i>	Actors' Family	William Shakespeare (Adaptor: Pang Zhen-nan)	Pang Zhen-nan	2017/8/18 – 20	Kwai Tsing Theatre Auditorium
Shakespeare's Villains Medley	Alice Theatre Laboratory	Chan Hang-fai	Chan Hang-fai, Leung Chi-chung	2018/2/9 – 10	Shatin Town Hall Auditorium

Appendix 2.1: Interview transcript excerpt with Richard Ho Man-wui¹⁶⁵

Date: 24th September 2015

Time: 1 – 3 pm

Venue: Sonata Restaurant, Rosedale Hotel

M = Miriam

R = Richard

M: Your adaptation, *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* was recurrently staged in Hong Kong and the West. Could you briefly talk about the different stagings in various periods?

R: Certainly. The adaptation was first staged in December 1977 and January 1978, in which I played the role of “Hamlet”, or the Chinese prince. In 1980, my play was staged at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre in Vancouver. The theatre had a seating capacity of 2,800, and the renowned actress, Gigi Wong Shuk-ye (黃淑儀), played the Chinese Ophelia. In 2007, 30 years after the adaptation had premièred, *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* was

¹⁶⁵ The interview with Richard Ho was conducted in Cantonese, which I had translated and transcribed it into English.

staged at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre. This time, it was directed by James Mak Chau (麥秋), a veteran stage director, and it starred two well-known Hong Kong television actors, Steven Ma Chun-wai (馬浚偉) and Sonia Kwok Sin-nei (郭羨妮). But the audience was treated to too much dead air during the blackouts in between scenes in this production. I used drum rolls and music to fill the dead air during those blackouts in my productions. James also used those in his Stratford production in 2009.

After the impressive Beijing Olympics in 2008, the United Kingdom invited China to stage a play in 2009 in Stratford-upon-Avon to celebrate the 445th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth, and my adaptation was staged there. The play was again directed by Mak Chau, who used professional actors from the National Theatre Company of China this time. This was the first time that the play was performed in Mandarin, or Putonghua. But I didn't really like the play's new ending created by Mak. In his version, the deceased characters, accompanied by some sort of Chinese angel, rose to life again in the last scene. I thought the performance could have ended better with a blackout right after the death of Hamlet, as in my early performances in 1977, 1978 and 1980, and in the performances directed by Hardy Tsoi Shek-cheung (蔡錫昌) in 2010 and 2012.

With its reputation of having been staged in Shakespeare's birthplace by the National Theatre Company of China, my *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* was subsequently restaged in Hong Kong in 2010 and 2012. Directed by Hardy Tsoi, both performances were also staged in Putonghua, with Lee Heung-sing (李向昇), now Dr. Lee, playing the role of the

prince. The production of 2012 was solely sponsored by Sun Hung Kai Properties. In this production, some of the actors were university and graduate students, and the rest semi-professional and professional actors.

M: In 2009, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust invited China to stage a Shakespearean play to commemorate Shakespeare's birthday. Why would China choose a Hong Kong adaptation of Shakespeare to represent Chinese Shakespeare to the West?

R: I believe it was due to the successful Olympic Games held in Beijing in 2008. The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, for the very first time in 2009, invited China to stage a Shakespearean play in the U.K. The Chinese authorities probably thought that if a Shakespearean play in translation had been enacted, there would have been little meaning to and impact on the Western world. This is because Chinese actors in Western costumes cannot really represent China and its culture. They wanted to stage a play that was related both to Shakespeare and to China. My adaptation was deemed suitable because the play is related to but not overshadowed by Shakespeare; instead, it is a Chinese historical play in its own right, relying partly on official history. My adaptation does have its unique features. For instance, quite a number of changes have been made to the plot of the play. One such example is that the queen knows that the wine is poisoned even before she drinks it. In general, traditional Chinese costumes are visually quite attractive on stage. Besides, as Hong Kong was already an integral part of China, the authorities did not have

any problem in choosing a Hong Kong Shakespearean adaptation to introduce the “Chinese Shakespeare” to the West.

M: Why do you think your adaptation of *Hamlet* was so frequently staged in Hong Kong and elsewhere?

R: Well, I think perhaps a sinicized adaptation has some appeal to the audience as compared to a translated version requiring Western dresses to be worn. A sinicized adaptation of *Hamlet* is relatively rare, and more difficult to be performed. It also includes elements such as acrobatics, dancing and sword-fighting, much like a variety show. And maybe because my adaptation has become more reputable since it was performed by the professional actors of the National Theatre Company of China. But I do admit there are limitations to my adaptation, as I have condensed Shakespeare’s text into a two-hour play, and so some of the core elements in the source text are gone.

M: Your adaptation had been staged in Hong Kong, Canada, and the U.K. Are there any differences in adapting the play to accommodate the taste of the audience from various cultural backgrounds?

R: No, the performances in the various places of the world were based on the same script. The only difference that I can think of is when the play was staged in Canada, I changed

the Chinese title of the play from *Wang Zi Fu Chou Ji* (王子復仇記) to *Xing Wang Fu* (興王府). “Xing Wang Fu”, the old name for Guangzhou, was the capital of the Southern Han dynasty (南漢), where the story of my adaptation happened. This is because if I had kept the original Chinese title, the Chinese audience in Vancouver would have thought that this was just another translated play, and would have had little interest to watch it.

M: Do you think Hong Kongers are familiar with Shakespeare’s plays?

R: No, even to this day, they are only familiar with the names of a few Shakespearean plays. For example, they might not have read Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, but many of them have heard of *Vengeance of the Prince* (王子復仇記), which is the Chinese title given to Laurence Oliver’s well-known film version of *Hamlet*, released in 1948.

M: I see. And may I ask when you adapted *Hamlet*; did you refer to Shakespeare’s source text, or to the Chinese translation of the play by Liang Shi-qiu (梁實秋), or both?

R: I first adapted *Hamlet* into a sinicized version in 1970, and revised it in 1977 for staging. I had consulted Shakespeare’s source text and other contemporary Chinese translations such as that of Liang Shi-qiu before I completed my adaptation.

M: Compared to Shakespeare’s source text, are there any changes that you had made to your adaptation?

R: Yes. I have significantly reduced the number of plot lines, such as deleting the graveyard scene where Hamlet holds a skull and delivers a soliloquy. I have enhanced the vividness of the queen’s character. Instead of mistakenly drinking the poisonous wine in the last scene of Shakespeare’s source text, the queen in my adaptation intentionally drinks the wine to redeem her sins. Furthermore, I felt that Ophelia did not play a major part in Shakespeare’s text, so I arranged for her to do more things in my adaptation. For example, at the beginning of the play, Li Ru-fei (Ophelia) performs a Chinese dance.

M: Why did you choose to adapt *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* into the period of “Five Dynasties, and Ten Kingdoms” in ancient China?

R: There are interesting parallels between the history of the Southern Han and the events that purportedly happened in Denmark in Hamlet’s time. For instance, Liu Hong-xi (劉弘熙) of the Southern Han murdered his elder brother in order to ascend the throne. Using historical figures and borrowing historical incidents have enhanced the credibility of the characters in my adaptation. And in the 1970s, it wasn’t because of any noble concept that I was motivated to transpose the adaptation into a Chinese context. I solely wanted to put the story in an ancient Chinese setting for the purpose of entertainment.

M: Your play was first staged in the Cantonese dialect in 1977, but after the handover of Hong Kong in 1997, it was restaged in Mandarin. Could you explain why is there such a change?

R: To be honest, back in 1977, I never thought of staging my adaptation in Mandarin. The purpose of changing the performance language of my adaptation after the handover was to “promote Mandarin and Chinese culture” (推普弘文). I think staging my play in Mandarin is even better than staging it in Cantonese. This is because I wrote the play in vernacular Chinese, which can be directly spoken in Mandarin, and the actors need not convert the lines into any dialect when the play is performed.

M: Did the change in performance language affect the play’s meaning?

R: No, not at all.

M: Could you tell me a bit about your educational background and your academic career?

R: Sure. I graduated from the University of Hong Kong in 1969 and left Hong Kong in 1971 to pursue my doctoral studies at the University of London, where I wrote my thesis

on the poetry of the Tang dynasty in China. I joined the University of Wisconsin - Madison in 1974 to teach Sinology and joined The Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1979 to teach Chinese, and became the university's Registrar in 1996. I retired from the university in 2004 to become the founding president of the Chinese University of Hong Kong – Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Community College. I retired from the community college in 2007 and have remained an honorary professor in the Department of Chinese Language and Literature of The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

M: Thank you very much for your time.

R: You are most welcome.

Appendix 2.2: Email interview transcript excerpt with Tang Shu-wing¹⁶⁶

Date: 25th Sept 2015

M = Miriam

T= Tang Shu-wing

M: Why did you choose to stage *Titus Andronicus*, a Shakespearean play which is very rarely staged by Hong Kong directors?

T: In the past, *Titus Andronicus* had seldom been staged, since a lot of people think that the violent scenes in the play will not appear in real life. But it has been proven that the violence in reality is not any less than the violence in the play, therefore an increasing number of people are now putting on this play. According to my knowledge, I am the first Hong Kong director who had staged *Titus Andronicus* in Hong Kong. There are many dramatic scenes in this production, when I was studying in Paris, I had seen a

¹⁶⁶ Initially, I had attempted to conduct a face-to-face interview with Tang Shu-wing, but I was told that he was extremely busy with the touring productions. Upon the suggestions of Tang's secretary, I had emailed Tang the interview questions in Chinese, and his secretary then sent me Tang's reply. In this transcript, I had translated Tang's responses from Chinese into English.

production of *Titus Andronicus*, but I didn't like it. From that time onwards, I had the idea of putting this play on stage via my own methods of storytelling.

M: In the play, Lavinia is raped, with her tongue and hands being chopped off. As this play was staged in Hong Kong, do you think that Lavinia's situation is comparable to that of the circumstances where Hong Kongers are situated in?

T: I never had this association in mind.

M: I had just seen your latest version, *Titus Andronicus 2.0*. In the opening of the play, there were audio broadcasts of the violent events that had happened in Hong Kong and America respectively. The final event was about the controversy of the appointment process for the pro-vice chancellor position at the University of Hong Kong in 2015. The recordings told of students marching into the meeting scene, and Arthur Lee Kwok-cheung (李國章), who was one of the university council members, protested, "If you want to maltreat the elderly people, I cannot stop you from doing so ..." May I ask why did you choose to illustrate this event at the beginning of your play?

T: All the news broadcasts at the opening of *Titus Andronicus 2.0* were extracted from recent news in Hong Kong and worldwide, in which they directly or indirectly consisted of physical or verbal violence. The use of these recordings served to prepare the audience to watch the play and to connect present-day violence to that in Roman times.

Appendix 2.3: Interview transcript except with Hardy Tsoi Shek-cheong¹⁶⁷

Date: 5th November 2015

Time: 12 – 1:30 pm

Venue: Prospects Theatre Company

M = Miriam

H = Hardy

M: Could you tell me about your experience in directing Shakespeare’s plays?

H: I had directed *Hamlet* for six times. Let me talk about some of these productions. In 2012, I had directed *Hamlet* for Hong Kong Theatre Works. The production portrayed Hamlet as a “poisonous youth” (毒男), who had his dark sides and hid himself in a basement. Then in 2010 and 2012, I had twice directed *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance*, which was an adaptation written by Richard Ho. The adaptation was set in ancient China and the play was performed in Mandarin. The actors were mainland Chinese students studying at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Performing the play in Mandarin sounded a bit foreign to Hong Kongers, as Mandarin was not their mother tongue.

¹⁶⁷ The interview with Hardy Tsoi was conducted in Cantonese, which I had translated and transcribed it into English.

However, I thought it was a good idea to give mainland students in Hong Kong an opportunity to express themselves through theatre, as the theatre societies in the universities of Hong Kong mainly staged plays performed in the Cantonese dialect.

M: Could you tell me why did you adapt Shakespeare's *King Lear* in 2015?

H: I think among the four tragedies of Shakespeare, the protagonist in *King Lear* faces the most despondent circumstances. Now, in modern day Hong Kong, what is worse than being forced to sleep on the streets? So that's why I compare Lear's situation to that of the homeless people in *Shamshuipo Lear*. In the past, I have adapted many translated plays from the West, such as *Death of a Salesman*, *Crucible*, and *Copenhagen*. But this time when adapting *King Lear*, I decided that I am not going to do a full-length play. There is a lot of room for exploring the issue of humanity in Shakespeare's play. The character, Uncle Lee, is actually based on a real-life character that I am acquainted with. One of my friends had a doctorate in biochemistry, instead of teaching in a university, he ran a family business, but unfortunately the business failed. He then tragically drank to his death, which was similar to the circumstances of Uncle Lee in my production. I had initially thought of adding a subtitle "in memory of XXX" in my production, but I later dropped the idea as I thought my friend's family may not like that.

M: Could you tell me why did you talk about Hong Kong's problems through appropriating Shakespeare, instead of writing a new play about Hong Kong?

H: Well, I think this is entirely the artist's choice, and no one can challenge it. The issue one may discuss is whether the production is effective or not. In *The Crucible*, Arthur Miller had borrowed the past (witch-hunt) to comment on the present (government's fear of communists); he was clever not to talk about his own story. Sometimes it's more effective to comment on something when you talk about it indirectly. And I doubt there is any Hong Kong director who will openly stage a play that directly criticises the Hong Kong government. At times, some arts administrators of the Hong Kong government may come to watch rehearsals of the plays that they fund, most usually the beginning of the productions. Therefore, I think appropriating Shakespeare to critique the socio-political problems of Hong Kong is more effective than writing a new play about the city. You will actually notice that there are some parallels between the plot in *Shamshuipo Lear* and the social reality of Hong Kong.

M: I had also talked to Michael Fung, the co-playwright of *Shamshuipo Lear*. He told me the he had not read Shakespeare's *King Lear*, though he knew the story well. Could you explain to me what are the cross-references between *Shamshuipo Lear* and Shakespeare's play?

H: As you know, Michael Fung and I co-wrote *Shamshuipo Lear*, and I was the one who had later added the lines of Lear into the production. When Uncle Lee is drunk, he mutters some lines from Lear. The near death experience and wake-up call of Uncle Lee parallels that of Gloucester's near-death experience. While Edgar leads Gloucester to

jump from a “cliff” at Dover to cure his sorrow and encourage him to carry on living, the homeless characters create a “funeral” for Uncle Lee to enable him to recognize his folly. Furthermore, Aunt Lan may be considered as a comparable figure to Kent, as she takes care of Uncle Lee and fills his empty wine bottles with water to prevent him from drinking himself to death.

M: Do you think the Hong Kong audience is familiar with *King Lear*? If not, why do you reference *King Lear* in your production?

H: Well, I don't think the Hong Kong audience is familiar with *King Lear*, so most of them may not be able to register Lear's lines in my production. But as long as they can get the gist, that's enough. I don't need them to understand everything. Certainly, if someone is interested to look at the original play of Shakespeare after watching my production, that's good. But as I said, they don't need to know Shakespeare's work in order to understand my production.

M: Thank you very much for your time.

H: You are most welcome.

Appendix 2.4: Interview transcript excerpt with Jimmy Lee Wai-cheung¹⁶⁸

Date: 25th August 2015

Time: 4:30 pm – 6 pm

Venue: Made in Hong Kong restaurant, Apm shopping mall

M = Miriam

J = Jimmy

M: First of all, why did you choose to adapt Shakespeare?

J: Well, more than twenty years ago, I had acted as Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew*, so I was familiar with the play, and I had the ability to adapt it. In the recent years, there were some problems in Hong Kong. I'd like to borrow a British playwright, Shakespeare, to talk about these problems. To me, Shakespeare is eternal and classic. Britain plays an important component in Hong Kong's relationship with China. In *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*, I had hinted upon Hong Kong's relationship with China by indicating that

¹⁶⁸ The interview with Jimmy Lee was conducted in Cantonese, which I had translated and transcribed it into English.

Petruchio's ex-girlfriend is a British person. I also wish to talk about two angles of "taming" in the production: can a man tame a woman, or can it be vice versa?

M: When did you write *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*?

J: I wrote the play after the Umbrella Movement. I had inserted some of Hong Kong's current affairs into the play, so that the audience could have a stronger resonance when watching it. For example, when the government was promoting political reform, Carrie Lam, then the Chief Secretary for administration in 2014, had uttered phrases like the PRC had "set the final word for the nomination procedures" of the Chief Executive in Hong Kong. I had inserted some of the government's language into my play.

M: What is your opinion towards the Umbrella Movement?

J: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I am skeptical of the integration between Hong Kong and China, just look at the explosion of the factories in Tianjin recently!¹⁶⁹ If Hong Kong has complete integration with China, then perhaps even the milk powder in Hong Kong would be poisonous, and no one would come to buy them here anymore.

M: Why did you choose to adapt *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* into a political allegory? In particular, why had you chosen a Shakespearean play to talk about the relationship between Hong Kong and China, instead of writing a new play?

J: I am captivated by the word “shrew” in Shakespeare’s play. In Chinese, the word “shrew” can mean “fierce” or “ferocious”. I feel that the Hong Kong society has become more and more ferocious day by day. For instance, the Department of Justice in Hong Kong executes law in a selective way; seven Hong Kong policemen beat up a supporter of the Umbrella Movement in a back alley; the editor-in-chief of *Ming Pao* newspaper, Kevin Lau, was brutally attacked by some mysterious people. We are also irritated by the loose behaviour of the mainland Chinese tourists from the Individual Visit Scheme, and the poor quality of new immigrants from China that undermines the overall quality of Hong Kong citizens ... All these made me feel that Hong Kong’s environment is becoming more and more ferocious, and I am very upset by that. I want to do something

¹⁶⁹ The 2015 warehouse explosion in Tianjin, killing 173 people, was one of the worst manmade disasters in Chinese history. It had also revealed the darker side of rapid urbanization, as residential areas were pushed closer to active chemical plants (*The Guardian*, “Too”).

about it, and [REDACTED] But there is really nothing you can do; therefore I hope that I can do something through theatre. It is really useless to reprimand the government, the only thing you can do is to laugh at the ridiculous circumstances.

M: At the end of the play, Peter says, “In these kinds of circumstances, there’s nothing you can do but laugh!” Do you think that Peter’s statement reflects the mentality of Hong Kongers? For example, in the face of political factors from China, do you think Hong Kongers are rather powerless?

J: Yes, there’s really nothing much you can do under the current political circumstances. I am a bit in-between the state of giving up and that of being a radical.

M: In the process of taming Man Zyu, Peter represents the personality of Hong Kong men, but why does he sometimes represent the stance of the government? For example, in a scene to ridicule the government’s refusal to issue the television license to Hong Kong Television Network Limited (HKTV), Peter says, “Democracy is a process. They are not ready, give them some time.”

J: Well, I have a lot of friends working in HKTV. The addition of this scene is to ridicule the government, and to provide some sort of “Chip Tsao (陶傑) style” of satire.¹⁷¹

M: At the end of the play, is it Peter or Man Zyu who is being tamed? Or, are both parties being tamed?

J: First, let me talk about the differences between Man Zyu, and her younger sister, Gam Zyu. Man Zyu, whose name is a homophone for “democracy” in Cantonese, represents the group of mainlanders who are more liberal-minded and have the potential to absorb Hong Kong’s core values such as freedom and democracy. They are disappointed towards the political system of China, thus they hope to leave their country. On the contrary, Gam Zyu, whose name is a homophone for “gold” in Cantonese, represents the group of mainlanders who are materialistic and decadent, and who can never be successfully tamed by Peter. Therefore, I prefer Man Zyu over Gam Zyu. Gwok Keong understands the differences between his two daughters, and therefore urges Man Zyu to leave China.

In my opinion, Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew* is a tragedy for women, as the play suggests inequality between the sexes and offers no room for the development of feminism. Through staging the adaptation, I’d like to raise the question of whether a man

¹⁷¹ Chip Tsao is a prominent columnist and writer in Hong Kong, who is famous for his sarcasm and wry sense of humour, especially when he is commenting on socio-political affairs (P. Chan, “A multitasking”).

can successfully tame a woman in real life, or is it vice versa? In particular, I have added two scenes to my adaptation to emphasize the presence of mutual understanding and physical love between Peter and Man Zyu. By doing so, I'd like to suggest that their relationship is not merely between a tamer and the tamed. One of the added scenes is situated in an art gallery, where the couple discusses Western paintings and they gradually fall in love. On the contrary, spiritual love between Petruchio and Katherina is absent in Shakespeare's play, as the two do not have any substantial communication at all. Furthermore, I have added some love-making scenes, in which the silhouettes of the characters are visible on screens, to suggest that physical love between Peter and Man Zyu is present as well. Through the act of love-making, I believe that women undergo some physical changes and their personality shifts too.

So returning to your question, at the end of the play, both Peter and Man Zyu are tamed by each other. It is my wish that Peter (representing Hong Kongers) can successfully tame Man Zyu (representing mainlanders). I hope that both Hong Kongers and mainlanders can communicate in a civilized way, and that the PRC will not blindly coerce Hong Kongers to follow their way of thinking. But in reality, I think that Peter (Hong Kongers) is being tamed by Man Zyu (mainlanders).

M: Could you talk about the differences between the staging of *The Taming of the Shrew* in 1990, and *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* in 2015? Were there any differences between the audience in the 1990s, and after the handover in 2015?

J: In 1990, I had acted as Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew*, and I was excited to act in a Shakespeare's play. I remembered there were a lot of lines and rhyming poems to memorize. I had translated the play by myself from English into Chinese. The play was staged by an amateur theatre company called Hok Yau Club Theatre Group (學友社劇組) in Ngau Chi Wan. The theatre group was later renamed as Ten Theatre (拾劇坊). We had much more audience in 1990 than in 2015. I had staged *Post-The Taming of the Shrew* for 6 times within 4 days. To my disappointment, the attendance rate was only 50%, which was contrary to my expectation of 80%. Though my adaptation had received good reviews, perhaps its association with Shakespeare sounded too sophisticated, and it may not be that attractive for the general audience. As my theatre company is self-financed, and I had not received any government subsidies, in total, I had lost HK\$150,000. If I were to restage the play in the future, maybe I should retitle the adaptation as *To Laugh or Be Square* (不笑不散), so as to attract more audience to come and watch it.

Another difference between the audience in 1990 and that in 2015 is that the former audience laughed wholeheartedly at the jokes in *The Taming of the Shrew*, whereas the latter audience laughed rather bitterly towards the comic elements in *Post-The Taming of the Shrew*. I think the more you understand the adaptation, and the more you are familiar with the situation in China, you would burst into louder bouts of laughter when watching my adaptation.

M: Finally, the Chinese title of your play is *Modern Taming of the Shrew* (《現代馴悍記》), but its English translation is *Post-Taming of the Shrew*. May I know if you had positioned your play in the modern times, or in the post-modern times?

J: Well, I thought the word “post” sounded cool. And through the discrepancy that you mentioned, I would like to create some sort of confusion or paradox for the audience to think about. In my adaptation, I had discussed at length the differences between the real and the fake. I do not think that Kathernia is sincere in the delivering of her monologue at the end of Shakespeare’s play. In addition, Man Zyu’s monologue suggests that we cannot merely believe in what other people say, instead, we need to think carefully by ourselves.

M: Are there any more Shakespearean productions that you may wish to adapt in the future?

J: I have considered adapting *Love Labour’s Lost*, which is not a very popular play of Shakespeare. I think I like adapting comedies in general.

M: Thank you very much for your time.

J: You are most welcome.

Appendix 2.5: Interview transcript excerpt with Lee Heung-sing¹⁷²

Date: 14th January 2016

Time: 3:30 – 5 pm

Venue: Pacific Coffee, Hong Kong Community College

M = Miriam

L= Lee Heung-sing

M: You had twice acted as Hamlet in the *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* productions directed by Hardy Tsoi in 2010 and 2012. Could you talk a bit about the use of Mandarin in the staging of both productions?

L: As far as I am concerned, there were no political considerations in the use of Mandarin for both productions at that time. Mandarin was chosen as the performance language simply because the production in 2010 was sponsored by the Cultural and Educational Association of the New Towns (CEANT), and one of the aims of the association was to “promote Mandarin and Chinese culture” (推普弘文). There are some advantages in

¹⁷² The interview with Lee Heung-sing was conducted in Cantonese, which I had translated and transcribed it into English.

using Mandarin to perform the play. For instance, the language in Richard Ho's script is very elegant, and the use of Mandarin in the performance can be closer to the written script. On the contrary, if we use Cantonese to perform the play, then some of the words in the original script will have to be changed to a colloquial form. However, considering that Mandarin has become a politicized problem in the recent years, I think that if the same production is staged in Mandarin now, it will not be very popular under present political circumstances.

M: In 2009, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust invited China to stage a Shakespearean play to commemorate Shakespeare's 445th birthday in 2009, and China chose Richard Ho's *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* to represent Chinese Shakespeare to the West. Do you have any idea why the PRC chose Ho's production, but not other *Hamlet* productions done by mainland directors, such as Lin Zhao-hua's *Hamlet*?

L: Well, I think that the PRC government may not favour experimental adaptations like that of Lin Zhao-hua's *Hamlet*. Furthermore, *Hamlet: Sword of Vengeance* is a sinicized adaptation, which can represent China and not merely Hong Kong.

M: You are now a full-time Chinese language teacher at a community college in Hong Kong. Could you comment on the use of Mandarin to teach Chinese in your school?

L: I teach a compulsory Chinese course titled “Chinese Communication for College Students” for year 1 associate degree students in my school. Though the school requires teachers to use Mandarin to teach this subject, I know that students have negative feelings towards the medium of instruction. They want us to teach in Cantonese instead, as they will feel more comfortable in listening to their mother tongue. Strictly speaking, I don’t think it is absolutely essential to use Mandarin to teach this subject. On the contrary, if Chinese language teachers cannot master Mandarin well, then it will create an adverse effect in the use of Mandarin to teach Chinese. So, I believe whether Chinese subjects should be taught in Cantonese or Mandarin depends very much on the language skills of the teachers.

M: Could you talk a little bit about your upbringing and your educational background?

L: I came to Hong Kong from the Fujian (福建) province of China when I was eighteen to attend a local secondary school called Fukien Secondary School (福建中學). Most of my co-actors in the two Mandarin productions shared similar cultural backgrounds with me, though most of them came to Hong Kong later than me for university education.

M: In terms of cultural identity, would you regard yourself as a “Chinese person”, a “mainlander”, or a “Hong Konger”?

L: I would say “yes” to a “Chinese person” and a “Hong Konger”. As for a “mainlander”, I feel a bit hesitant as I have been living in Hong Kong since I was in secondary school. My mode of living is very close to the Hong Kong style.

M: Thank you very much for your time.

L: You are most welcome.

Appendix 2.6: Interview transcript excerpt with Michael Fung & Josephine To¹⁷³

Date: 16th August 2015

Time: 4– 4:30 pm

Venue: 22 Degrees North Gallery, Shamshuipo

M = Miriam

MF= Michael Fung

J = Josephine To

**M: Michael, I understand that you and Hardy had co-written *Shamshuipo Lear*.
Could you tell me some challenges of adapting *King Lear*?**

MF: First of all, the subject matter of the homeless is a bit far-fetched from most of the audience, and there are very few people in Hong Kong who are concerned about the homeless people. Therefore, there are some risks to portray the main protagonists as the

¹⁷³ The short interview with Michael Fung and Josephine To was conducted after the sharing session on “An Extraordinary Home” cum guided walking tour of Shamshuipo, which was organized by Prospects Theatre to increase the general public’s awareness of poverty in Shamshuipo. While Fung is the co-playwright of *Shamshuipo Lear*, To is the producer of the play. I had translated and transcribed the interview into English.

homeless, as it may not attract the audience to come and watch our production. Before writing the play, I had conducted in-depth research about the problem of homelessness in Hong Kong. For instance, I had interviewed Wong Hung (黃洪), a social work professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong on the social problem of homelessness. I had also read his book – *The hope of poverty eradication: Examination of poverty problem in Hong Kong*.

M: Could you share with me how *Shamshuipo Lear* is comparable to Shakespeare’s *King Lear*?

MF: Well, though I had not read Shakespeare’s *King Lear* before, I know the story well. Lear is driven to the most despondent situation in the play, and his circumstances are similar to that of the poorest people in Hong Kong. Besides, both *Shamshuipo Lear* and *King Lear* have profound depictions of humanity. There are three male protagonists in the play: Uncle Lee (李伯), Wen Yee-tak (溫爾德), and Wong Tong (王童). The combination of the Chinese characters taken from each of their names is “Lee” (李), “Yee” (爾) and “Wong” (王), which amounts to the Chinese translation of King Lear, i.e. “Lee Yee Wong” (李爾王). Uncle Lee is the main protagonist in *Shamshuipo Lear*, his family business went bankrupt, and he is forced to live on the streets. Unable to accept reality, he becomes an alcoholic, eventually, he goes mad, and he mistakes himself as King Lear.

M: Could you tell me who your target audience in *Shamshuipo Lear* is?

MF: Sure. Part of our target audience is people working in non-government organizations (NGOs), which aim to help the poor people in Hong Kong. We also had a dress rehearsal for the homeless people.

M: Josephine, as the producer of the play, is there anything that you see as unique in the production?

J: To some extent, *Shamshuipo Lear* is a newly created play about the lives of the homeless. We had a very good stage designer, who repositioned the street scenes of Shamshuipo in the play. You can even see an ancestral memorial tablet on stage, which enables the homeless to worship their ancestors. And as Michael has just mentioned, few people in our society are concerned about the homeless, so I was worried that the show would attract small audiences because of the unfamiliar subject matter. In the play, you will see that there is strong bonding among the homeless characters, where they will look after each other. In reality, although some homeless people are later arranged to live in public housing estates, they return to live on the streets because they do not want to lose the relationship with their neighbours. In addition, they are not able to afford electricity and water expenses in the public estates. So the concept of “home” becomes very interesting here. Ironically, some homeless people feel more at home living on the streets than in government estates.

M: Thank you very much for both of your time.

MF & J: You are most welcome.

Appendix 2.7: Telephone interview transcript excerpt with

Bernice Chan Kwok-wai¹⁷⁴

Date: 7th January 2016

Time: 12 – 1 pm

M = Miriam

B= Bernice

M: Could you tell me about how do the theatre companies in Hong Kong obtain funding?

B: Certainly. Most theatre companies in Hong Kong acquire funding from two paths: revenue from productions and education (i.e. offering drama courses to schools and to the public). I would say that it is very difficult for any theatre company in Hong Kong to survive solely on income from the box office, thus they have to depend on various forms of government funding. Some examples of government funding include the Leisure and Cultural Services Department venue partnership, funding from the Arts Development

¹⁷⁴ Bernice Chan is currently manager of the International Association of Theatre Critics (Hong Kong). The interview with Chan was conducted in Cantonese, which I had translated and transcribed it into English.

Council (though it only sponsors administrative costs and not production costs), and the Arts Capacity Development Funding Scheme. Tang Shu-wing Theatre Studio has received funding from the Arts Capacity Development Funding Scheme. If you want to know more about the sources of funding of a particular play by a theatre company, you can look at the promotional leaflet of the play, where the sponsors are usually listed there.

M: Do you know what kind of criteria does the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC) employ to decide whether to fund or not to fund a particular theatre company? Does it have any political considerations in their judgment?

B: Every year, HKADC selects different reviewers to review the proposals submitted by various theatre companies in Hong Kong. I think they look at whether the company can be operated in a sustainable way, and whether the proposed ideas of the company match with Hong Kong's development. It's difficult to say whether HKADC has any political agenda.

M: You mentioned that Tang Shu-wing Theatre Studio has received funding from the Arts Capacity Development Funding Scheme. Do you think one of the reasons for this is because Tang Shu-wing produces plays that match with Hong Kong's development? Or could you comment on Tang's *Titus Andronicus 2.0* and *Macbeth*?

B: Well, I think *Titus Andronicus 2.0* encourages the audience to reflect on the issue of violence in a global way. The aesthetics embedded in *Titus Andronicus 2.0* are *only* a metaphor that Tang employs to encourage the audience to reflect on the issue of violence under structures of authority. And as you know, *Macbeth*'s première is in the U.K., which reflects that Tang positions his plays on a global perspective.

M: Thank you very much for your time.

B: You are most welcome.

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