

Shakespeare in China

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Textual Notes

Due to the complexity of Chinese *pinyin* with four tones, I prefer to give the exact corresponding Chinese characters in the footnote, when Chinese names and phrases are mentioned for the first time in the dissertation, so as to help the Chinese to read them more fluently. I have used this method for those distinguished scholars in Chinese literary circles, Shakespearean studies in particular.

With regard to the Chinese authors mentioned in the dissertation, their names are given in the Chinese tradition, that is, family names come before given names. When listing the sources of the quotations from their works in the footnotes and bibliography, the westernized customs are adopted. For example, He Qixin for the Chinese Shakespearean scholar 何其辛 in the body of my work and Qixin He, *China's Shakespeare* in quotations. If the author has written his or her paper in Chinese or German, I have translated it into English giving a free translation; in the meantime, the original Chinese and/or German text is copied in the footnote. All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

In addition, all the quotations from Shakespeare's plays are taken from editions which are indicated in the footnote. For example, *Romeo and Juliet* is from William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, repr. ed. Jill L. Levenson (Oxford: University Press, 2004), and all the quotations from *Richard III* are from William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Richard III*, ed. John Jowett (Oxford: University Press, 2000).

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Introduction

William Shakespeare (1564-1616), a preeminent English poet and dramatist, came from Stratford-Upon-Avon, but did his writing in London. With his life's works he has contributed greatly to world literature with his 154 sonnets, 4 poems and some plays, which are generally classified as tragedy, comedy, and history plays. How many plays did he really write? Shakespeare is considered to have written in total 37 plays, all included in *Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, though during his lifetime only eighteen of his plays were published in the Quarto editions and later his two fellows John Heminge (1556-1630) and Henry Condell (?-1627) edited 36 plays (without *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*) in the First Folio in 1623. In respect of *Two Noble Kinsmen* and *Edward III*, many scholars have attributed them to him, regarding the first play as the result of cooperation between John Fletcher (1579-1625) and him; and the second either him as the sole author or as a collaborator. No matter how many plays he wrote, Shakespeare has exerted a great influence on world literature: some famous writers have taken Shakespeare's poems or quotations from his plays as titles for their works, for instance William Somerset Maugham's (1874-1965) *Cakes and Ale* (1930) from *Twelfth Night* or William Faulkner's (1897-1962) *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) from *Macbeth*. "In the history of English literature, Shakespeare's significance lies not only in his insights into humanity and in his unsurpassed achievements as a literary genius in revolutionizing the form of poetry and drama, but more importantly also in his position that provides, firstly, a transition from medieval to modern literature and, secondly, a milestone in the formation of English literature as a national literature."¹ Ironically, Shakespeare in his time was not as famous as after his death. From the eighteenth century onwards, critics and scholars in English-speaking countries began to assess him and his works in depth. Shakespearean studies have flourished and Shakespearean productions, which his friendly rival Ben

¹ Kwok-kan Tam, "Introduction: Universalism and Transnationalism in Shakespeare", in *Shakespeare Global/Local: The Hong Kong Imaginary in Transcultural Production*, eds. Kwok-kan Tam, Andrew Parkin, and Terry Siu-han Yip (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002), p. 2.

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Jonson so prophetically praised as “not of an age, but for all time”², have been performed on stage ever since. However, has Shakespeare been received with the same enthusiasm across the national and linguistic boundaries in China?

In “The Paradox of Shakespeare in China”, Murray J. Levith acknowledged that Shakespeare “is undoubtedly the most recognized and reputed foreign writer in China”, but at the same time he criticized the way the Chinese have taken up Shakespeare as follows:

The Chinese have mostly appropriated and adapted the playwright for their own purposes. They have dressed the Bard in various Chinese opera styles, forced him to be an apologist for Marxism-Leninism, celebrated his clunkers, neglected several of his masterpieces, excised sex, religion and contrary politics from his texts, added to them, and at times simplified, corrupted, or misunderstood his characters and themes.

Perhaps more than any other nation, China has used a great artist to forward its own ideology rather than meet him on his ground.³

Obviously, Levith objects to such sinicization of Shakespearean plays. His opinion is very blunt: a Chinese director or adaptor should indiscriminately follow the dramatic tradition of Shakespeare’s time, with the performer wearing Elizabethan costumes and using archaic language to a Chinese audience in the twenty-first century. Undoubtedly, however, even in England, there have been huge cultural changes from Shakespeare’s age to the present day. For example, the Royal Shakespeare Company attempted to modernize Shakespearean plays by bringing automobiles onto the stage of *Romeo and Juliet* in 1986.⁴ Yet, if English performances of Shakespeare’s plays do not need to change the original treatment, but so often do, then surely it is understandable if, in a totally foreign environment, for example, in China, a radical rearrangement is undertaken. Dennis Kennedy has come to the conclusion that “[t]he connections and cultural connotations that derive from playing

² Ben Jonson as quoted in Gusun Lu, “*Hamlet Across Space and Time*”, *Shakespeare Survey* 36 (1983), p. 53.

³ Murray J. Levith, “The Paradox of Shakespeare in China”, *The Shakespeare Newsletter* 48 (Summer 1998), p. 37 and p. 48.

⁴ Tam, “Introduction”, p. 7.

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Shakespeare in his own land and in his own tongue are simply not applicable in another country and in another language.”⁵ In addition, any literature is the production of a certain historical or social background and Shakespeare’s works are no exception.

In Shakespeare’s time, it was dangerous to question any royal legitimacy. Take Queen Elizabeth’s grandfather Henry Tudor and his succession to the throne for example. Historically speaking, Henry Tudor’s claim to the throne was tenuous at best. In his historical plays Shakespeare nevertheless followed the tradition of Tudor myth: demonizing Richard III and praising the arrival of Henry VII as the white knight sent by God. The more evil Richard III could be depicted, the more heroic Henry Tudor would seem. Is there no suspicion that Shakespeare was attempting to gain political favour from Queen Elizabeth? Another incident actually demonstrated the danger of portraying the usurpation of the monarch by a powerful noble: Shakespeare’s *Richard II*, in which Richard II was described to have been overthrown by Henry IV, was performed at the Globe on the eve of the Essex rebellion (1601). Afterwards, Shakespeare’s company was seriously investigated and some scenes were censored and removed from the play.⁶ From this incident, Shakespeare was aware of the danger of dabbling in politics even indirectly, via the theatre.

Similar conditions can be found in China, that is to say, under certain political and social circumstances, literature must serve politics. Kennedy contended 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.”⁷ So it follows that the Chinese have adapted Shakespeare’s plays to Chinese culture, for example, as in the words of Levith, by excising sex, religion and contrary politics from a Shakespearean text.

⁵ Dennis Kennedy, “Introduction: Shakespeare without his language”, in *Foreign Shakespeare*, ed. Dennis Kennedy (Cambridge: University Press, 1993), p. 3.

⁶ <http://www.mala.bc.ca/~johnstoi/eng366/roses.htm>

⁷ Kennedy, “Introduction”, p. 4.

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It is not my intention in this dissertation to question whether the phenomenon of sinicizing Shakespeare is right or not, which is arguably a necessary result of transferring to a different culture. What is important is to re-evaluate how the theatre practitioners have transformed Shakespeare on the Chinese stage and, simultaneously, to analyze the exact causes leading to the adaptations and rewritings.

Chapter 1 tells in detail the history of the Chinese reception of Shakespeare. China, an ancient country which is proud of her rich historical and cultural heritage, had to open her doors to the western world after the Opium War (1840-1842). Under the advocacy of “learning the advanced techniques of foreign countries in order to resist them”, the name of Shakespeare was introduced to China by some patriotic Chinese. Afterwards Shakespeare in China saw many complicated changes, from being regarded as a story-teller to being fully received as a seasoned playwright and poet, whose plays were rendered into the Chinese language and performed on the Chinese stage apart from the unfortunate halt during the period of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). At the very beginning of receiving the playwright, due to China’s socialist system and many years of absolute isolation from the outside, Chinese Shakespearean scholars and critics indiscriminately followed Western literary criticism, for instance, concentrating on the class characteristics of Russian proletarian literature in the 1950s. The open door policy during the 1980’s has brought relative freedom to Chinese writers and critics and they have re-evaluated Shakespeare and his works according to their own varied ideas. As a result, Shakespearean studies have been flourishing in China, as can be seen in published translations of Shakespeare’s plays, performing Shakespeare either in the form of spoken drama or traditional theatrical styles, hosting Shakespeare festivals, issuing Shakespearean criticism. As a matter of fact, the history of China’s reception of Shakespeare mirrors that of Chinese attitudes towards Western literature, trying to combine the original spirit in Western literature with the cultural tradition and contemporary situation in China.

In Chapter 1, the historical, political and social circumstances influencing China’s reception of Shakespeare are analyzed. Parallel to this run many literary influences and considerations: similarities between Shakespearean plays and the traditional Chinese

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theatre have contributed to the popularity of Shakespeare in China. Accordingly, Chapter 2 traces the striking similarities in terms of textual formation and theatrical techniques.

In the course of introducing and appreciating Shakespeare and his works, in spite of the striking similarities between his plays and Chinese literature, Chinese scholars had to face many problems, such as language, culture, dramatic styles and so forth. As a result, the scholars have tried to find out appropriate methods of translating and performing Shakespeare, whose work “is an inheritance that is thoroughly redefined by each culture that receives it.”⁸ First and foremost, Shakespeare should be rendered properly into the Chinese language, for good translations to some extent lead to good performances, as well as well-founded criticism based on the correct text: accordingly, Chapter 3 focuses on the Chinese translations of Shakespeare. On the whole, there are generally two methods of translating: literal translation and free translation, so it is with the Chinese translations of Shakespeare. Many translators tried both methods in rendering the dramatist; Bian Zhilin who adopted literal translation and Zhu Shenghao, free translation, afford good examples. With regard to literary form in rendering, three types – fiction, prose and verse – have been adopted in the history of China’s translation of Shakespeare. Moreover, four translators have made great contributions to the rendition of *Complete Plays of Shakespeare*, namely Cao Weifeng, Liang Shiqiu, Zhu Shenghao and Fang Ping.

Chapter 4 briefly analyzes the influential Chinese criticism of Shakespeare. At the very outset of Shakespearean criticism in China, the immature Shakespearean critics, lacking a system for approaching criticism of foreign works, introduced western critical essays on Shakespeare by directly translating or making comments on them, for example, that of Heinrich Heine (1797-1856) and Charles Lamb (1775-1834). Marxist Shakespearean criticism began in 1934 with Mao Dun’s *Shakespeare and Realism* and “Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*” in the following year, in which he contended that Shakespeare belonged to aristocracies inasmuch as he depicted the conflict between the old culture of aristocrat and the new of the bourgeois class. The 1950s saw Marxist Shakespearean criticism in its full bloom, resulting from the close relationship between China and her

⁸ Dennis Kennedy, “Afterword: Shakespearean Orientalism”, in *Foreign Shakespeare*, ed. Dennis Kennedy (Cambridge: University Press, 1993), p. 301.

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“Elder Brother”, the Soviet Union. More recently, comparative Shakespearean criticism has become popular in China, ranging from comparing plays, writers, to protagonists in the plays.

Chapter 5 discusses performances of Shakespeare on the Chinese stage either in the original form of drama – spoken drama, in Chinese terms – or in traditional Chinese operatic style, that is, *xiqu*. On the whole, the Chinese productions of Shakespeare can be, in the light of textual interpretations and theatrical techniques, roughly divided into three categories: the Western style, the Chinese style and a hybrid of the Western and the Chinese style. Regardless of which performance approach to Shakespeare is taken on the Chinese stage, all these Shakespearean versions are attempts to interpret and appreciate the playwright and his plays; and there are disadvantages as well as advantages in each category.

Finally, in order to illustrate how the Chinese have staged Shakespeare, Chapter 6 examines in detail three Chinese rewritings of Shakespearean plays, namely, the history play *Richard III*, the tragedy *Hamlet*, and the comedy *Much Ado About Nothing*. The analysis of these three performances shows that the theatrical practitioners have changed Shakespeare to a certain extent, whether by endowing his texts with new interpretations or by representing him via exotic dramatic techniques so as to cater for the Chinese spectators.

When performing Shakespeare, the question of whether to observe so-called authentic Shakespearean spirit in its original treatment or to rearrange a Shakespearean text from a cultural or political perspective in the target country continues to be a controversial issue amongst Shakespearean scholars around the world. On the stage, assimilating Shakespeare into Chinese social, political, cultural and theatrical conventions has become a noticeable trend, but this has had the advantage of introducing Shakespeare to more and more Chinese audiences by approaching his texts via new appreciations and interpretations. In fact, Shakespeare in China is totally a study of interculturalism by introducing the English playwright and poet to China, appreciating him against the cultural, political and social backgrounds in China, and demonstrating his works in theatrical methods with Chinese characteristics.

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1 The History of China's Reception of Shakespeare

Different from any other country with regard to importing Shakespeare, China “followed neither the nationalist model established in central Europe in the eighteenth century, nor the imperialist model of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Instead it followed almost directly the political condition and changing circumstances of the country.”⁹ Strictly speaking, the beginning of China's reception of Shakespeare was carried out under the threat of gunboat diplomacy from Great Britain, as Takeuchi Yoshimi contended: “The modern Orient was born only when it was invaded, defeated, and exploited by the West.”¹⁰ Over the course of more than one hundred years of exposure to the playwright, the Chinese have changed their attitudes towards him and his works, from rejecting him as a cultural agent of Western imperialism to welcoming him as a popular playwright and poet in the world and finally to integrating him and his works into Chinese culture, albeit influenced by certain historical factors, including politics, economy, culture, and society.

The whole process of acceptance can be divided into eight phases and will be analyzed in detail in the following parts. In fact, the flow-ebb-tide history of Shakespearean reception in China mirrors the development of Chinese attitudes in adapting Western culture to Chinese society and culture.

⁹ Kennedy, “Afterword”, p. 297.

¹⁰ Takeuchi Yoshimi as quoted in Alexander Cheng-Yuan Huang, *Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage 1839-2004: A History of Transcultural Performance* (Stanford University, Ph.D. dissertation, 2004), p. 104.

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1.1 Initial Phase (from Mid-19th Century to the Turn of 20th Century)

Meng Xianqiang has noted in *The Reception of Shakespeare in China: a Historical Overview*, “[t]he first man¹¹ who translated the name of Shakespeare into Chinese was Lin Zexu (1785-1850)¹², a politician and senior official (Governor of Hu-Guang province) in the late Qing dynasty (1640-1911).”¹³

Lin Zexu was a national hero in the Sino-British Opium War (1840-1842). Entrusted by the Emperor of the Qing dynasty, Lin went to Hunan and Guangdong provinces to ban the illegal British opium trade which not only cost China enormous sums of money but also brought harm to the health and moral quality of those Chinese who were addicted to the drug. In addition, after realizing the Qing government had completely isolated itself from the rest of the world, Lin organized his people to translate Western books and newspapers, in order to counteract the invasion of Western countries through acquiring a better understanding of their politics, history, geography and technology.¹⁴ At this time, however, Shakespeare appeared as one of the Elizabethan poets in Lin’s translation of

¹¹ The Chinese have different opinions about Shakespeare’s first appearance in Chinese history, for example, Li Ruru, a senior lecturer in Chinese at the University of Leeds, argues in “Shakespeare Translation in China” published in *Leeds East Asia Papers* 4 (1991) that “the first person to bring Shakespeare to China’s notice was the British missionary William Muirhead (Chinese name Mu Weilian), who, in 1856, with the help of a Chinese native speaker, published a modified translation of Thomas Milner’s *The History of England: From the Invasions of Julius Caesar to the Year A. D. 1852* into the Chinese *Da ying guo zhi* (*An Account of the Great British Empire*). Milner’s brief reference to Shakespeare (transliterated as *Shekesibi*), in his discussion of Elizabethan England, introduced the playwright’s name to the Chinese reading public.”

¹² 林则徐 Lin Zexu was a political and senior official in the late Qing dynasty and a national hero in the Opium War.

¹³ Xianqiang Meng, “The Reception of Shakespeare in China: a Historical Overview”, in *Shakespeare Global/Local: The Hong Kong Imaginary in Transcultural Production*, eds. Kwok-kan Tam, Andrew Parkin, and Terry Siu-hian Yip (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002), p. 116.

¹⁴ Minggao Tu, ed. [*Modern History of China*] 《中国近代史》 (Chongqing: South-West Normal University Press, 1989), pp. 12-15. The following historical facts during the period between 1840 and 1919 in China are taken from this teaching material, unless otherwise indicated.

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Hugh Murray's (1789-1845) *Cyclopedia of Geography* (1836), which was published in 1839 under the title *Annals of Four Continents (si zhou zhi)*¹⁵.

The Opium War forced China, a country with its own history of more than two thousand years of feudal society, to open her doors to the West. The War, followed by a series of unequal treaties between China and Western countries, marked China's great change from a feudal country to a semi-feudal and semi-colonial country in her history.

After the 1850s English and American missionaries came to China and many missionary schools were established as a way to introduce Western civilization to China. The name of Shakespeare was often mentioned as a great poet and dramatist of the Elizabethan age in regard to the translations of various books on culture, geography and history done by the missionaries.¹⁶

Having learned its lesson from being defeated in the Sino-British Opium War, the Qing government took measures to strengthen its military force, for example, by bringing several battleships from foreign countries and building factories producing weapons. In the meantime, the government sent groups of students and scholars to Europe and Japan to study science and technology. After coming back to China, these scholars with enlightened thought devoted their time to translating Western works of philosophy, ethics and economics. Yan Fu (1853-1921)¹⁷ was one of them: he had studied in England for a few years. In his 1895 translation of English philosophical, political and economic classics, Thomas Huxley's (1825-1895) *Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays* (1893) for instance, he mentioned Shakespeare's plays and characters. Instead of introducing the playwright and his works to China, Yan Fu's mention of Shakespeare was to illustrate Western ideas:

Shakespeare wrote a play recounting the murder of Caesar. When Antony delivers a speech to the citizens while showing the body of Caesar to the public, he uses logic to stir up the citizens cleverly because Brutus warned him that he would not be allowed

¹⁵ Meng, "The Reception of Shakespeare", p. 116. The original Chinese title is *si zhou zhi* / 《四洲志》.

¹⁶ Ruru Li, "Shakespeare Translation in China", *Leeds East Asia Papers* 4 (1991), p. 1.

¹⁷ 严复 Yan Fu was a Chinese scholar and translator in the late Qing dynasty, especially famous for his introducing the ideas of evolution.

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to redress a grievance for Caesar and blame the murderers. The citizens are greatly agitated by the speech and their resentment against Brutus and his comrades is running high. We should attribute Antony's success to the function of logic!¹⁸

During the initial phase, the Chinese knew nothing about Shakespeare other than his reputation as a poet and playwright in England. In a word, Shakespeare and his works were ignored at the very early stage in the history, regarded as “a cultural agent of Western imperialism”¹⁹. The main reasons can be summarised as follows: on the one hand, from the Chinese point of view, China's satisfactory system of self-sufficient feudalism was destroyed by the English invasion during the Opium War and the Chinese began to suffer humiliation from a series of unequal treaties afterwards. Accordingly, the patriotic Chinese strongly resisted the introduction of Western culture, regarding it as a cultural invasion following the military invasion; on the other hand, England was the first Western country to force China to open her doors to the West through importing illegal opium into China. Undoubtedly, as a result of having been invaded, and with the aim of “learning the advanced techniques of foreign countries in order to resist them”²⁰, as stated by Wei Yuan (1794-1857)²¹ in the late period of the Qing dynasty, the Chinese were only interested in learning from Westerners about their technology, economics and geography. The name of Shakespeare was introduced to China only among some translations of English history and geography. Consequently, the first reception phase of Shakespeare in China was completely outside the field of art and literature.

¹⁸ Yan Fu as quoted in Xiaoyang Zhang, *Shakespeare in China: A Comparative Study of Two Traditions and Cultures* (London: Associated University Presses, 1996), pp. 100-101.

¹⁹ Edward Berry, rev. of “‘Shakespeare East and West,’ eds. Minoru Fujita and Leonard Pronko. ‘Shakespeare in China: A Comparative Study of Two Traditions and Cultures,’ by Xiaoyang Zhang”, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 49 (Spring 1998), p. 227.

²⁰ Wei Yuan as quoted in Tu, ed. *Modern History of China*, p. 41. “师夷长技以制夷”

²¹ 魏源 Wei Yuan was the advocator of “learning the advanced techniques of foreign countries in order to resist them”.

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By the way, during the first phase of Shakespearean reception in China, the name of Shakespeare was transliterated in various ways, such as *Shashibia* by Lin Zexu, *Shekesibi* by William Muirhead (1822-1900), *Shaisibier* by Joseph Edkins (1823-1905), and *Shasipier* by Devello Z. Sheffield (1841-1913), an American priest. It was only in 1902 that Liang Qichao (1873-1929)²² fixed transliterating Shakespeare as *Shashibiya*²³ in his *On Poetry*, which was published in *New Citizens' Journal*.²⁴

1.2 Transitional Phase (from 1903 to 1920)

Some Chinese scholars²⁵ are of the opinion that the real acceptance of Shakespeare in China did not begin until the year 1903 when the first Chinese translation of Shakespeare was in print, for the previous references to Shakespeare by English and American missionaries as well as Chinese scholars simply introduced his name without describing his plays or poems in detail. They are not wrong in terms of art and literature, nevertheless, the name of Shakespeare became known to the Chinese during the Opium War, even though only to a small circle and accordingly, from the historical viewpoint it is reasonable to look back on the history of Shakespearean reception in China as from Lin Zexu's rendering Western military, technical and geographical works in the period of his banning British opium trade in Guangdong province.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Chinese intellectuals advocated studying Western culture in order to integrate "the Chinese philosophy of life and Western standards

²² 梁启超 Liang Qichao was a Chinese scholar, philosopher and reformer for the Hundred Day's Reform (*Wuxu Reform/戊戌变法*).

²³ 莎士比亚

²⁴ Xianqiang Meng, [*Shakespeare in China: A Brief History*] 《中国莎学简史》 (Changchun: Northeast Normal University Press, 1994), p. 6.

²⁵ He Qixin is one of them, sharing the opinion that the first translation of Shakespeare dated 1903 marked the beginning of Chinese reception of Shakespeare.

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of precision and efficiency”²⁶. Shakespeare gradually came to be known by more and more Chinese. During this period a number of Chinese scholars tried to translate his plays into Chinese and consequently the Chinese audience and reader had the opportunity to appreciate his works rather than only know his name.

Strictly speaking, during the early years of the twentieth century the Chinese reader did not have access to Shakespeare’s plays apart from through a collection of *Tales from Shakespeare* (1807) by Charles and Mary Lamb. Shakespeare was received at that time in China not as a poet or playwright but as a fiction writer and story-teller,²⁷ inasmuch as the translations gave some general ideas about plots, characters and themes. The first translation of this collection was published anonymously under the title of *Strange Tales from Overseas (hai wai qi tan)*²⁸ in 1903, but it included only ten of the tales and arranged them as ten chapters of a novel. One year later (1904), Lin Shu (1852-1924)²⁹, who was a famous writer and translator but had no knowledge of foreign languages at all, cooperated with Wei Yi, a translator and master of several foreign languages, in translating the complete *Tales from Shakespeare* into Chinese under the title *The Mysterious Stories of the English Poet (ying guo shi ren yin bian yan yu)*³⁰. Then in 1916 with the help of Chen Jialin, Lin Shu retold five of Shakespeare’s original plays, namely, *Richard II*, *Henry IV*, *Henry V*, *Henry VI* and *Julius Caesar*. Unfortunately, he translated these plays once again in classical Chinese prose instead of the form of drama. Lin’s *Mysterious Stories of the English Poet* offered scripts for new drama (*wen ming xi*)³¹ – the early drama in China and once popular in Shanghai at the beginning of the twentieth century.

²⁶ Ruru Li, “Shakespeare Translation”, p. 3.

²⁷ Meng, “The Reception of Shakespeare”, p. 117.

²⁸ 《海外奇谈》

²⁹ 林纾 Lin Shu was a distinguished writer and translator who had no knowledge of foreign languages.

³⁰ 《英国诗人吟边燕语》

³¹ 文明戏 *Wen ming xi* is the early spoken drama in China.

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Though not complete, the earliest Chinese rendition of a Shakespearean original play appeared about 1910. After watching Gounod's opera *Romeo and Juliet* in New York performed by Amelita Galli-Curci, Chang Chen-hsien claimed, Deng Yizhe was excited by the play and translated the balcony scene into a rhymed ballad. Unfortunately, "one who cannot read the original text can never understand what Deng says. One who can will discover, after taking all the trouble to trace a line by line comparison, that much of the translation does not make any sense at all."³²

During this period Western works were all translated into classical Chinese. "With the gradual introduction of Western science and art, Chinese intellectuals at the beginning of the twentieth century felt a pressing need to replace classical Chinese with the vernacular for general communication and even for intellectual discourse and literature."³³ The New Cultural Movement started in 1917 under the guidance of Hu Shi (1891-1962)³⁴, who promoted the use of vernacular and called for the total removal of the classical language. Resulting from this Literary Revolution, translations of Western works began to appear in modern Chinese language. Accompanied by other Western literature, parts of Shakespeare's plays were for the first time introduced in dramatic form to China.

1.3 Real Beginnings of Chinese Shakespeare (from 1921 to 1949)

In 1921 Tian Han (1898-1968)³⁵, a playwright and translator, ambitiously attempted to translate ten plays of Shakespeare within three or four years – in fact, he did the first complete Chinese translation of Shakespeare, that of *Hamlet*, which was published by the

³² Chen-hsien Chang, "Shakespeare in China", *Shakespeare Survey* 6 (1953), p. 114.

³³ Qixin He, "China's Shakespeare", *Shakespeare Quarterly* 37 (Summer 1986), p. 151.

³⁴ 胡适 Hu Shi was a Chinese essayist and philosopher. He is famous for his advocacy of vernacular Chinese in the New Cultural Movement.

³⁵ 田汉 Tian Han, a well-known playwright in China, took an active part in introducing the new drama form, spoken drama, from Japan to China. Besides, he is remembered for having written the national anthem of the People's Republic of China.

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China Publishing House in 1922, and afterwards of *Romeo and Juliet* in 1924. He was the first to translate a complete Shakespeare play in its original dramatic form into modern Chinese. Apart from Tian's renditions of Shakespeare before 1949, many scholars have been involved in translating Shakespearean dramas and sonnets into modern Chinese. Two of them are worth mentioning: one is Liang Shiqiu (1902-1987)³⁶ from Taiwan and the other is Zhu Shenghao (1912-1944)³⁷ from mainland China. They both have greatly contributed to the translation of the dramatist's complete plays.

Liang Shiqiu began his translation of Shakespeare in 1931 when he was on the mainland and translated eight of the dramatist's plays in this decade. He did not finish the rest until 1967, eighteen years after he moved to Taiwan. His translations of Shakespeare's complete plays were published by the Far East Publishing Company in Taiwan.³⁸ Zhu Shenghao, at the encouragement from his colleague Zhan Wenhui (1905-1973)³⁹ on the historical background that there had never been a translation of the complete works of a foreign writer, started in the year 1935 with his ambitious plan to finish translating Shakespeare's complete works within two years. Zhu first finished rendering *The Tempest* in 1936. His failure to carry out his plan on schedule resulted from two facts. On the one hand, his manuscripts were destroyed twice during the Japanese invasion and he had to retranslate them. On the other hand, unfortunately, he died of illness and from poverty at an early age of thirty-two after he had finished rendering thirty-one and a half of Shakespeare's plays. Twenty-seven of his translations were first published by the Shanghai World Publishing House in 1947.

³⁶ 梁实秋 Liang Shiqiu was a great translator from Taiwan in rendering Shakespeare's complete plays.

³⁷ 朱生豪 Zhu Shenghao was a great translator from mainland China and contributed to the rendition of Shakespeare's complete plays.

³⁸ Xiaoyang Zhang, *Shakespeare in China*, p. 106.

³⁹ 詹文滢 Zhan Wenhui took the job of being an editing director in the Shanghai World Publishing House after his Master-studies in America. Zhan has been working for the Kuomintang and left mainland for Taiwan when Shanghai was liberated by the Communist Party.

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Between 1921 and 1949 many Chinese scholars chose their favourite Shakespearean dramas to be translated and rendered the plays in their own style. As a result, there were several versions of the same play at the same time. Meanwhile, the scholars aimed to offer scripts for stage presentation. For example, in 1930 the Shanghai Drama Association – on the basis of the translation of Gu Zhongyi (1903-1965)⁴⁰ – performed *The Merchant of Venice*,⁴¹ the first performance of a full-length Shakespearean drama on the Chinese stage.⁴² During this phase the theatrical practitioners tried to perform Shakespeare's plays on the Chinese stage in the Western dramatic style, following the Western scenes and dressing up like Westerners with high noses and blue eyes. However, because most Shakespearean plays did not suit the taste and need of the time, the attempt to stage Shakespeare in China was not successful.

In terms of Shakespearean criticism, the relatively late introduction to, and appreciation of, Shakespeare in China compared to other countries in the world, resulted in a lack of Chinese critical works on Shakespeare. The Chinese Shakespearean scholars embarked on Shakespearean criticism by introducing Western criticism of Shakespeare in the 1930s. Between 1934 and 1936 six essays on Shakespeare and his works were printed in *Translations*, with *Today Shakespeare* by an Englishman, *Germans and Shakespeare* by Japanese, and the rest by the Soviet scholars.

Although academic scholars and students made a great effort to render his works into Chinese, which was positive inasmuch as Shakespeare was no longer on the margin, he was nevertheless still beyond the common Chinese reader, who was not enthusiastic about Western culture, because “anti-foreign feeling, constant warfare and momentous social

⁴⁰ 顾仲彝 Gu Zhongyi was an educationalist, dramatist, director and playwright.

⁴¹ Xiaoyang Zhang, *Shakespeare in China*, p. 105.

⁴² Qixin He, “China’s Shakespeare”, p. 151. Li Ruru agrees on He Qixin’s argument that *The Merchant of Venice* was the first Shakespearean play performed in the Chinese language. However, in “Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage in the 1990s” she notes that Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* was first professionally staged in Shanghai in 1913 – instead of 1930 – on the basis of an adaptation of Charles and Mary Lamb’s *Tales from Shakespeare* under the title *The Contract of Flesh (Rou quan)*. In a strict sense, the first authentic Chinese performance of Shakespeare should begin with the 1930 adaptation, for it was based on Shakespeare’s play-script.

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changes in the first half of this century diverted the attention of the Chinese people from even an introductory study of Shakespearean drama.”⁴³

1.4 Dawning of Chinese Shakespearean Criticism (in the 1950s)

After the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, the relationship between China and the Soviet Union as allies became much closer than before. Indiscriminately China followed her “Elder Brother”, the Soviet Union, in every aspect ranging from political and economic orders to cultural appreciations, for “the helpful lessons of foreign countries, especially the experiences of the Soviet Union, can serve as our guide”⁴⁴. Shakespeare was regarded as an important Western writer for Soviet critics and Soviet theatre; accordingly, more and more Chinese academics were encouraged to study Shakespeare and his works. Meanwhile Marx’s and Engels’s interest in Shakespearean works has particularly inspired Chinese Marxists to interpret the dramatist and his plays. In a letter to the German socialist Ferdinand Lassalle (1825-1862) dated May 18 of 1859, Engels championed Shakespeare:

The realistic should not be neglected in favor of the intellectual elements, not Shakespeare in favor of Schiller [...] What wonderfully distinctive character portraits are to be found during this period of the breakdown of feudalism – penniless ruling kings, impoverished hireling soldiers and adventurers of all sorts – a Falstaffian background that, in an historical play of *this* type, would be much more effective than in Shakespeare!⁴⁵

⁴³ Qixin He, “China’s Shakespeare”, p. 153.

⁴⁴ Zedong Mao, [Talks at the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Art] “在延安文艺座谈会上的讲话” (1942). (http://news.xinhuanet.com/mil/2007-11/24/content_7138256_2.htm) “外国的好经验,尤其是苏联的经验,也有指导我们的作用。”

⁴⁵ Engels as quoted in Alexander Huang, *Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage 1839-2004*, p. 134.

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Under such political and social circumstances, Chinese interest in Shakespeare and his plays was awakened and Shakespearean studies reached a boom for the first time in the 1950s in the fields of translating, performing, cinema and literary criticism.

In 1954, Zhu Shenghao's translations of Shakespeare were published in twelve volumes by the Beijing's Author's Press, and this time his complete translations of Shakespeare were included in this collection. The 1954 edition was reprinted in 1958 and 1962 respectively. At the same time other translators' renderings of Shakespeare also came into print, such as Cao Yu's (1910-1996)⁴⁶ *Romeo and Juliet* and Bian Zhilin's⁴⁷ *Hamlet*, and Fang Ping's⁴⁸ *Venus and Adonis*, all of which made a great contribution to Shakespearean studies and translations in China.

Meanwhile, the Chinese continued attempting to perform Shakespeare and his plays. Three institutions – the Central Academy of Drama in Beijing, the Shanghai Theater Academy, and the Beijing Film Academy – were set up to follow the Stanislavsky model and Soviet directors, Yevgeniya Konstantinovna Lipkovskaya (1902-1990) as an example, were invited by the Chinese Communist Party to work as drama teachers at these institutions. He Qixin has stated that in 1956 graduates of a Chinese actors' training school performed *Romeo and Juliet* in Beijing in the modern Chinese dramatic form – a form which resembles the Western-style drama and which was initiated by a group of Chinese students studying in Japan in 1907.⁴⁹ On the other hand, under the guidance of the Soviet

⁴⁶ 曹禺 Cao Yu was the leading playwright in Chinese modern spoken drama and President of the Chinese Shakespeare Society. His masterpieces are *Thunderstorm*, *Sunrise* and *The Family*.

⁴⁷ 卞之琳 Bian Zhilin was a famous representative in translating Shakespeare in literal translation.

⁴⁸ 方平 Fang Ping made contributions to Chinese Shakespearean studies with his translations of Shakespeare, his guidance in editing *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* in poetic form and his being appointed as a member of the Executive Committee of the International Shakespeare Association in 1996.

⁴⁹ Qinxin He, "China's Shakespeare", p. 153. According to Meng Xianqiang, the play was performed in 1956 at the Central Academy of Drama in Beijing established in 1950, with Dan Ni (丹尼) as director, cooperating with the Soviet director A. V. Raikov. This was the first Shakespearean performance after the foundation of the People's Republic of China. Probably, He Qixin confused the *Romeo and Juliet* performed also at the Central Academy of Drama in Beijing but with Zhang Qihong (张奇虹) as director in 1961 with the 1956 performance.

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experts in directing and acting, Stanislavsky's concept of "starting from the self of the actor" was theorized in demonstrating a realistic representation of life on the Chinese stage. For instance, while directing Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* in Shanghai in 1957, Lipkovskaya required her Chinese students to wear costumes in rehearsals, to write autobiographies of the characters and to ask themselves many "if" questions in order to strengthen their imagination that they lived in "Merry England" – words by Engels in his *The Conditions of the Working Class in England*, as Stanislavsky claimed: "If acts as a lever to lift the world of actuality into the realm of imagination"⁵⁰. During the 1950s, Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing*⁵¹ and *Twelfth Night*⁵² were frequently adapted for the Chinese stage on the basis of Zhu Shenghao's version.

Throughout the decade, film versions of Shakespeare's plays began to be shown in the cinema either with Chinese dubbing or captions. The earliest screened in China was the well-known film *Hamlet* with Laurence Olivier. Its Chinese title was *The Story of the Prince's Revenge (wang zi fu chou ji)*⁵³ and dubbed in 1958 on the basis of Bian Zhilin's translation. Sun Daolin (1921-2007)⁵⁴, who was good at English and a famous actor and director in China, gave the dubbing of the protagonist Hamlet. His familiarity with the English language and his perfect dubbing skills won him a good reputation and meanwhile attracted more and more Chinese audiences to watch the film.

This phase plays rather an important role in the history of Chinese reception of Shakespeare: the dawning of Chinese Shakespearean criticism began. In other words, in addition to translating and staging Shakespearean works, Chinese scholars began to state

⁵⁰ Stanislavski as quoted in Ruru Li, *Shashibiya: Staging Shakespeare in China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), p. 65.

⁵¹ Lipkovskaya's *Much Ado About Nothing*, after its premiere in Shanghai in June 1957, had more than twenty public performances in Shanghai and Beijing between August and September of that year.

⁵² In 1957, *Twelfth Night* was staged by the Film Actor Company in Shanghai with Ling Zihao (凌子浩) as director and by the Beijing Film Academy with the Soviet director Kazansky respectively.

⁵³ 《王子复仇记》

⁵⁴ 孙道林 Sun Daolin was a famous actor and director.

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their understanding of Shakespearean plays through critical essays in journals. As a result of the close political relationship between China and the Soviet Union and also the relatively late beginning of Shakespearean studies in China compared to other countries, Chinese Shakespearean scholars followed their elder brother's steps without any hesitation. Many Russian critical essays – two of them are worth mentioning for their high appearance in Chinese translations: *Shakespeare in the Soviet Union* by Mikhail Mikhailovich Morozov (1897-1952), published in China in 1953 with two Chinese translations: one by Wu Ningkun (1921-) ⁵⁵ and the other by Wu Yishan ⁵⁶, and Alexander Anikst's *Shakespeare and His Plays* published in China in 1957 – were translated into the Chinese language so that Chinese critics could appreciate Russian attitudes towards and opinions about Shakespeare and his plays, to the extent of being indispensable as reference books for teaching foreign literature and Shakespeare's plays at the department of the Chinese Language and Foreign Languages. Under the strong influence of established research paradigms from the Soviet Union – Marxist criticism of Shakespeare, the Chinese critics concentrated on discussing the historical background of Shakespearean works, social conflicts and class relationships expressed in them, regarding the plays as representatives of realism and approving Shakespeare's humanism in them. ⁵⁷ In point of fact, the popularization of analyzing Shakespeare and his works in China from the viewpoint of class was partially due to Mao Zedong's call "to never forget class struggle" in the 1950s, which was first mentioned in his *Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art*:

The workers of literature and art should learn from the society, that is to say, they should carry out research into every class in the society, into the relationship between them and their individual situation, into their appearance and psychology. Only after

⁵⁵ 巫宁坤 Wu Ningkun was also the author of *The Single Tear: A Family's Persecution, Love, and Endurance in Communist China*, in which Wu recalled his uncomfortable experience in China after giving up his promising academic career at the University of Chicago and returning to Beijing at the call of New China in 1951.

⁵⁶ 吴怡山 Wu Yishan translated Morozov's *Shakespeare in the Soviet Union* into Chinese with a new title [*Shakespeare on the Soviet Stage*] 《莎士比亚在苏联舞台上》.

⁵⁷ Meng, *A Brief History*, pp. 35-36.

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fully understanding all these, can our workers of literature and art have colourful content and correct direction.⁵⁸

No matter which social class William Shakespeare stood for – ironically, there was no working class or proletariat in Shakespeare’s time – and how Chinese scholars followed the established research paradigms in the Soviet Union, it was undeniable that Shakespearean criticism came into its own in China in the 1950s.

1.5 A Halt to Shakespearean Studies (during the Cultural Revolution of 1966 to 1976)

The period of the Cultural Revolution was a big disaster in Chinese history. Ultra-leftist radicals purified the Party by purging the so-called “bourgeois” and anti-socialist tendencies. They attacked all traditional values and strongly objected to foreign literature, considering that Western culture and bourgeois things could corrupt proletarian ideas and socialist ideology. Instead, the celebration and eulogy of workers, peasants and soldiers became the core idea in art and literature. The prevailing political instability had a great impact on Chinese economic growth, social stability, educational progress and diplomatic policy. China was once again shut off from the outside world and Shakespeare disappeared completely from the lips and pens of the Chinese.

Every day the Chinese were asked to recite and memorize *Quotations from Chairman Mao*, which were collected in a pocket-size book with a red plastic cover, known as “Little Red Book”. Almost every Chinese person had such a Red Book in his or her pocket. In addition, in bookstores and libraries *Quotations from Chairman Mao* and so-called new proletarian literature took the place of any other books and newspaper, including all foreign literature which was labelled as “feudal, bourgeois or revisionist” and was banned. Those scholars and teachers who had studied Western works were cruelly denounced in public by the Red Guards. The only plays performed on the stage were eight so-called

⁵⁸ Mao, [Introduction: Talks at the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Art] 引言: “在延安文艺座谈会上的讲话” (1942). (http://news.xinhuanet.com/mil/2007-11/24/content_7138256.htm) “文艺工作者要学习社会, 这就是说, 要研究社会上的各个阶级, 研究它们的相互关系和各自状况, 研究它们的面貌和它们的心理。只有把这些弄清楚了, 我们的文艺才能有丰富的内容和正确的方向。”

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“model dramas” (*yang ban xi*)⁵⁹, different from either typical Chinese theatre or Western dramatic style, to sing the praises of Chairman Mao and the “red” proletarian ideas. Without exception, under the propaganda that all literature and art should serve socialism and Chinese writers should address workers, peasants and soldiers, everything about Shakespeare and his works in China was completely removed from bookstores, libraries, stages, cinemas and any other public places,⁶⁰ although some Chinese intellectuals carried on reading Shakespeare in private. The boom of Chinese Shakespearean studies that had been awakened in the 1950s came regrettably to a halt.

1.6 Resuscitation of Shakespearean Studies (after the Cultural Revolution)

After the end of the disastrous Cultural Revolution in 1976, Shakespeare and his works came back to the Chinese along with other Western literature. Obviously, suffering from being banned as “feudal, bourgeois or revisionist” by the ultra-left members of the Chinese Communist Party during the Cultural Revolution for ten years, Shakespearean studies in China needed time to resuscitate themselves. During this period, the noticeable characteristic was that the strong influence of Marxist proletariat literary criticism upon interpretations and appreciations of the English playwright still dominated the Shakespeare scholarship in China.

In the late 1970s two great events encouraged Chinese scholars to take up Shakespearean studies again. One was the British Old Vic Company’s performances in China and the other was the publishing of *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*. This collection included a revised version of Zhu Shenghao’s complete translations of thirty-one plays together with renditions of the other six plays and was printed in 1978, a schedule originally for celebrating the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare’s birth in 1964, which was delayed by the Cultural Revolution. The revision was carried out by Fang Ping, Fang

⁵⁹ 样板戏 *Yang ban xi* was a special dramatic model during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).

⁶⁰ Oskar Weggel, *Geschichte Chinas im 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1989), pp. 246-305.

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Zhong⁶¹ and Wu Xinghua (1921-1966)⁶², following the principle of trying to preserve the characteristics of the original translation and improving the quality of the old version by correcting mistakes as carefully as possible and supplementing what had been deleted. In addition to Zhu Shenghao's complete rendition of Shakespeare, translations of history plays including that of *Henry V* by Fang Ping, *Henry VI* (part 1, 2, 3) by Zhang Yi (1901-1986)⁶³, *Henry VIII* by Yang Zhouhan⁶⁴ and *Richard III* by Fang Zhong were all added to *the Complete Works*, together with Yang Deyu's⁶⁵ *The Rape of Lucrece*, Zhang Guruo's (1903-1994)⁶⁶ *Venus and Adonis*, Huang Yushi's⁶⁷ *A Lover's Complaint* and Liang Zongdai's (1903-1983)⁶⁸ *The Sonnets*. The publishing of *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* marks the very beginning of Chinese translations of a foreign writer's complete works⁶⁹ and has had a great significance in the history of Chinese literature. One year later, the British Old Vic Company with Derek Jacobi brought Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

⁶¹ 方重 Pang Zhong was a Shakespearean scholar and translator.

⁶² 吴兴华 Wu Xinghua, wrongly labelled a Rightist during the Cultural Revolution, revised fifteen translations of Shakespeare done by Zhu Shenghao. Unfortunately, he failed to see the print of *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* due to his death in 1966.

⁶³ 章益 Zhang Yi was a psychologist and once the principal of Fudan University. During the disastrous Cultural Revolution, Zhang was wrongly labelled a Rightist. He translated the Scottish Novelist and Poet Walter Scott's (1771-1832) *Ivanhoe* (1819), cooperating with Liu Zunqi.

⁶⁴ 杨周翰 Yang Zhouhan was the vice president of the Chinese Shakespeare Society.

⁶⁵ 杨德豫 Yang Deyu was an editor in Foreign Literature, wrong labelled a Rightist in the period of the Cultural Revolution and banished to a labour camp.

⁶⁶ 张谷若 Zhang Guruo was a distinguished translator in China with his great renditions of Thomas Hardy's (1840-1928) *The Return of the Native* (1878), *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), *Jude the Obscure* (1895), of Charles Dickens' (1812-1870) *David Copperfield* (1849-1850) and *American Notes* (1842) as well as Henry Fielding's (1707-1754) *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* (1749).

⁶⁷ 黄雨石 Huang Yushi was an editor in English at the People Literature Press before his retirement.

⁶⁸ 梁宗岱 Liang Zongdai was a modern Chinese poet.

⁶⁹ Meng, *A Brief History*, p. 37, as well as Xiaoyang Zhang, *Shakespeare in China*, p. 107.

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to Chinese audiences. The performances were carried out in Beijing and Shanghai respectively. Unfortunately, many spectators could not understand English well and had to depend on the Chinese translation through earphones.

Much Ado About Nothing staged by the Shanghai Youth *Huaju* Theatre Company in 1978⁷⁰ was the beginning of Shakespearean performance in China after the Cultural Revolution, being called “a swallow informing the coming of spring”.⁷¹

At the same time, some critical essays on Shakespearean plays were published in many resumed and newly started journals. However, in the late 1970s Chinese Shakespearean critics were not able to cut out the influence of the Cultural Revolution’s class struggle and analysis, for “there was no official denouncement of this political upheaval and a number of political and ideological issues remained unresolved.”⁷² They still adhered to the Marxist approach and Mao Zedong’s political criteria for literary criticism, claiming that there was no literature that could climb above social classes and accordingly every author wrote for a particular class. For example, the aforementioned Yang Zhouhan held that the British playwright and poet Shakespeare was a bourgeois writer and “was writing for the emerging bourgeois class although he himself might not have been aware of this fact”⁷³.

⁷⁰ According to Alexander Cheng-Yuan Huang, the play was performed in 1979 instead of 1978, see his *Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage 1839-2004: A History of Transcultural Performance* (Stanford University, Ph.D. dissertation, 2004), p.125, which is different from Meng Xianqiang’s statement in *Shakespeare in China: A Brief History* (Changchun: Northwest Normal University Press, 1994), p. 41.

⁷¹ Meng, *A Brief History*, p. 41. “一只报春的燕子”

⁷² Qixin He, “China’s Shakespeare”, p. 156.

⁷³ Yang Zhouhan as quoted in Qixin He, “China’s Shakespeare”, p. 156.

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1.7 The Flowering of Shakespearean Studies (from the 1980s to the End of 20th Century)

After coming into power in 1981, Deng Xiaoping (1904-1997) advocated opening China's doors to the world and initiated economic reforms, pioneering socialism with Chinese characteristics by saying "regardless of whether it is a white or black cat, it is a good cat if it can succeed in catching mice". Consequently, the Chinese witnessed monumental social, economic and political changes, which simultaneously ensured immense enthusiasm in the Chinese reception of Shakespeare, finally bringing a promising flowering in the history of Chinese appreciation and interpretation of Shakespeare. Against a new historical, social and cultural background, Chinese scholars approached Shakespeare from the aspect of new ideologies, values and aesthetic tastes.

On the stage, Chinese directors and adaptors made great efforts to perform Shakespearean dramas either in English or Chinese in two forms: as spoken drama and/or as traditional Chinese theatre. Ying Ruocheng (1929-2003)⁷⁴, a well-known translator, actor and director, adapted and directed *Measure for Measure* with the help of the visiting director Toby Robertson, which was a successful adaptation of Shakespearean play on the Chinese stage. In the same year 1981, a group of students from Tibet performed *Romeo and Juliet* in the Tibetan language at the Shanghai Drama Institute in order to "broaden the horizon of the staging of Shakespeare in China"⁷⁵. Apart from the new dramatic form of spoken drama, during this period many Shakespearean plays were also adapted for the traditional Chinese stage, the Beijing opera of *Othello* in Beijing in 1983, for instance. What is more, Shakespeare was transplanted onto the Chinese stage in various traditional theatrical forms during the first Chinese Shakespeare Festival celebrated in 1986, ranging from Beijing opera, *kunju* opera, Shaoxing opera, *yueju* opera, to *huangmei* opera.

⁷⁴ 英若诚 Ying Ruocheng was a well-known translator, actor and director.

⁷⁵ Qixin He, "China's Shakespeare", p. 155.

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In the field of translating, many Chinese renditions of Shakespearean works came into print, for example, Bian Zhilin, Sun Dayu (1905-1997)⁷⁶ and Yang Lie⁷⁷ respectively published their poetic versions of Shakespeare's *Four Great Tragedies*. Even more popular was the introduction of Liang Shiqiu's *The Complete Plays of Shakespeare* to mainland China for the first time in 1996.⁷⁸ Two years later, experts on English literature and drama such as Qiu Kean, He Qixin, Shen Lin and Gu Zhengkun were invited to revise Zhu Shenghao's rendition of Shakespeare published in 1978 and then the Yilin Publishing House printed the revised version of *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* (supplement) with the help of Suo Tianzhang, Sun Fali, Liu Bingshan and Gu Zhengkun in retranslating and enlarging Shakespeare with the newly found *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and *Edward III*. So far the supplement collects the most complete works of Shakespeare in China.

Besides translating, Chinese academics have actively published their studies of, and research into Shakespeare, as Meng Xianqiang estimated that "during the last two decades, they produced five Shakespearean monographs, eighteen collections of essays on Shakespeare, and five various types of Shakespeare dictionaries",⁷⁹ for example, Fang Ping's *Making Friends with Shakespeare*,⁸⁰ including his seventeen essays on Shakespeare between the late 1970s and early 1980s. In these critical essays on Shakespeare and his works, "Chinese scholars have done [with] polemical discussions and challenged Russian and traditional Western critical assertions"⁸¹ so as to respond to Cao Yu's, the previous president of the Chinese Shakespeare Society, call for Shakespearean studies with Chinese characteristics. In his *Learning from Shakespeare* printed in the

⁷⁶ 孙大雨 Sun Dayu was a Chinese poet and translator, the first one to advocate five *dun*/顿 in translating Shakespeare's iambic pentameter.

⁷⁷ 杨烈 Yang Lie was a translator of Shakespeare.

⁷⁸ Meng, "The Reception of Shakespeare", p. 118.

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 120-121.

⁸⁰ 《和莎士比亚交朋友吧》 The book was published in Chengdu by the Sichuan People's Press in 1983.

⁸¹ Meng, "The Reception of Shakespeare", p. 121.

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People's Daily in 1983, Cao Yu remarked that “our studies of Shakespeare are conditioned differently from our Western counterparts. We have a long cultural tradition.... We approach Shakespeare and admire the ‘world giant’ with Chinese eyes of a new historical phase.”⁸² Subsequently, trying to establish a Chinese style of Shakespearean criticism, Shakespearean scholars and critics no longer followed the traditions of literary criticism of other countries, say, Russian Shakespearean criticism; what is more, instead of criticizing the playwright and his works from the political viewpoint of class struggle – Mao Zedong’s guidelines for art and literary criticism, they attempted to adopt an artistic approach to appreciate and interpret the humanistic ideas and aesthetic values in his plays and poems. Relatively freed from any political persecution, the Chinese academics increased their interest in the Shakespeare scholarship. Their enthusiasm and devotion were reflected in a series of significant events of Shakespearean studies in modern China.

The *Shakespeare Studies (shashibiya yan jiu)*⁸³, remarked He Qixin, was the first and, so far, the only Chinese journal devoted to a man of letters outside China and the first issue was published in March 1983.⁸⁴ In this journal Chinese scholars evaluated Shakespearean dramas from the aspect of humanism while maintaining a Chinese sensibility, that is, Shakespeare’s works are interpreted by the Chinese from the perspective of human nature and human rights embedded in the plays, closely combined with the social and political issues in contemporary China. Instead of analyzing the theme of Shakespearean dramas, the Chinese tend to appreciate characters with passion, awakening self-consciousness, desire for freedom and competitive individualism, which inspires the spirit of emancipation from spiritual fetters and demands human rights and dignity. Some radical Chinese critics relate particular social issues in Shakespeare’s dramas to those of contemporary China, for example, the power struggles in the playwright’s plays are used to mock the political situation in China.

⁸² Cao Yu as quoted in Meng, “The Reception of Shakespeare”, p. 120.

⁸³ 《莎士比亚研究》

⁸⁴ Qixin He, “China’s Shakespeare”, p. 155.

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In the following year 1984, the Chinese Shakespeare Society was founded in the Shanghai Theatre Academy and Cao Yu, a distinguished playwright, was elected president. The first decision made at the inaugural conference of the Society was to establish the journal *Shakespeare Studies* and to sponsor a Chinese Shakespeare Festival. Accordingly, in April of 1986, the first Shakespeare Festival was held simultaneously in Shanghai and Beijing. This was a significant event in the history of Chinese reception of Shakespeare, showing that Chinese Shakespearean studies had reached an unprecedented phase; what is more important, Shakespeare, who was previously rejected as a cultural agent of Western imperialism by the Chinese, began to be integrated into Chinese society and culture. At the Festival two dozen different companies staged twenty-five⁸⁵ plays by Shakespeare within fourteen days. Only two of them were in English⁸⁶ and the plays were performed either in spoken drama or in Chinese local style referred to as “Shakespeare in Chinese costumes”⁸⁷, ranging from Beijing opera, *kunju* opera, Shaoxing opera, *yueju* to *huangmei* opera. The success of the Festival attracted and encouraged Chinese enthusiasm for Shakespearean studies. In looking back on the Chinese Shakespeare Festival of 1986, Philip Brockbank called it a Shakespeare renaissance in China: while it was winter for Shakespeare in England it appeared to be spring in China.⁸⁸ After the first Festival, *Bloody Hands* (*xue*

⁸⁵ Concerning the number of Shakespearean performances during the first Chinese Shakespeare Festival (April 10-23), Meng Xianqiang gave twenty-five and Sun Fuliang twenty-nine, both different from the late president of the International Shakespeare Association J. Philip Brockbank’s twenty-eight. After my careful consulting the book *Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage* by Cao Shujun and Sun Fuliang, the fact is that there were eleven and fourteen Shakespearean plays performed respectively in Beijing and Shanghai besides three plays for exhibiting and one for broadcasting. Therefore, the number of twenty-five is the most reliable.

⁸⁶ *The Merchant of Venice* by the Arts Academy of Chinese People’s Army with He You as director and *Timon of Athens* by the Second Foreign Language Institute of Beijing.

⁸⁷ Fuliang Sun, “Shakespeare in China in the Twenty-First Century”, in *Shakespeare Global/Local: The Hong Kong Imaginary in Transcultural Production*, eds. Kwok-kan Tam, Andrew Parkin, and Terry Siu-hian Yip (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002), p. 127.

⁸⁸ J. Philip Brockbank, “Shakespeare Renaissance in China”, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 39 (Summer 1988), p. 195.

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shou ji)⁸⁹, the *kunju Macbeth*, was invited to attend the Edinburgh International Theatre Festival in 1987 and welcomed by the Western audience.

Chinese Shakespearean scholars have positively taken every opportunity to associate themselves with international Shakespearean studies and fortunately they have gained international recognition from the world of Shakespeare. In 1980 Lin Tongji (1906-1980)⁹⁰ of Fudan University attended the Nineteenth International Shakespeare Conference as the first Chinese scholar with his paper “Sullied is the Word: A Note in *Hamlet* Criticism”. Another example is that at the Twentieth International Shakespeare Conference (1982), Lu Gusun presented his own interpretation from the Chinese perspective in his paper “*Hamlet* Across Space and Time”, which was published in the *Shakespeare Survey*.

The flourishing reception of Shakespeare in China advanced steadily throughout the 1990s. In 1994, the Chinese Shakespeare Society held the 1994 Shanghai International Shakespeare Festival, attracting three drama companies from Germany, England and Scotland. In addition, the link between Chinese and international Shakespearean studies has been strengthened by China’s sending, for the first time, a delegation of twelve professors and scholars to the Sixth Congress of the International Shakespeare Association held in Los Angeles in 1996, and translator Fang Ping’s, as the first Chinese, being appointed as a member of the Executive Committee of this international organization. At the end of the twentieth century, the 1998 International Shakespeare Conference was co-organized by the Shanghai Theatre Academy and the Chinese Shakespeare Society in association with the Hong Kong Shakespeare Society and Australian Shakespeare Society. A promising new century of Chinese reception of Shakespeare had begun.

⁸⁹ 《血手记》 *Bloody Hands*, the Chinese adaptation of *Macbeth*, was staged in *kunju* opera by the Shanghai Kunju Opera Troupe at the first China Shakespeare Festival in Shanghai in 1986.

⁹⁰ 林同济 While in the USA collecting materials for the foundation of Shakespeare Library at Fudan University, Lin Tongji lectured about Shakespeare in China and unfortunately died of a heart-attack.

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1.8 A Promising Future of Chinese Shakespeare (the 21st Century)

Although since the two celebrations in the late twentieth century the Chinese Shakespeare Festival has not been carried out on schedule – originally planned once every four years, Shakespearean studies in China have made great contributions to translating, performing, teaching and criticism of Shakespeare, which can be seen in the reports of two important conferences: Forum of Chinese Shakespeare in Hangzhou in 2002 as well as Shakespeare and China: Retrospect and Prospect at Fudan University in 2004.

In 2000, a new translation of *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* in poetic form – the first time in the history of Shakespearean translation – was edited under Fang Ping's guidance. Besides, the Chinese received three versions of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* between 2003 and 2004, including Wang Yu's *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, Jin Fayan's *Collection of Shakespeare's Sonnets* and Ai Mei's *Sonnets*. In the meantime, many works on Shakespeare came into print, such as Liu Bingshan's *A Shakespeare Dictionary for Chinese Students* in 2001, Zhang Chong's *Topics on Shakespeare* in the year 2004 and others.

Even without the professional Shakespeare Festival, performances of Shakespeare have not stopped at universities – for instance, the Foreign Languages Institute of Shanghai held several Shakespeare Culture Festivals. The amateurish performances of Shakespeare have become popular among universities; for example, the first Competition of Shakespearean Performances at Chinese Universities was given in January of 2005, with more than twenty universities participating in the English contest, including Beijing University, Fudan University, Chinese University of Hong Kong, and Macao University.

What is most striking in this phase is the great development of Chinese Shakespeare criticism. Along with frequent cultural exchange between China and the West, literary and art theories in the West have brought to the Chinese new research approaches, broadening Chinese Shakespeare studies and particularly Shakespearean criticism. Among these various methods of researching Shakespeare and his plays, including image study, psychoanalysis, archetypal study, feminism study, religion study, anthropological study, post-colonialism, and deconstruction, cultural studies is the most popular in the Chinese

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criticism of Shakespeare. The playwright has been compared with Chinese and foreign writers in terms of writing style, theme, plot, characterization and structure. On the other hand, from the dramatic perspective, similarities and differences between Shakespeare's plays and Chinese dramas show the comprehensibility and compatibility of the two cultures, encouraging more adaptations and receptions of Shakespeare on the Chinese stage in the future.

2 Similarities between Shakespearean and Traditional Chinese Theatre

The history of the Chinese reception of Shakespeare outlined in the previous chapter has shown how Shakespeare was received mainly with the focus on the background of the political, economic and social influences in different periods, such as the call for learning from the West in order to resist the Western military invasion during the indigenous defensive period of the later Qing dynasty; and the strong interest in the dramatist and his plays under the great influence of the Soviet Union in the 1950s. It is understandable that in China, a vast land with a unique social and political system and a long historical development, everything has been heavily influenced by politics, and the acceptance of Shakespeare and his works has been no exception. Apart from the aforementioned political reasons, other factors only from the sphere of literature – similarities and parallels between his plays and the traditional theatre in particular – account for the popularity of the English playwright in China, which, similar to the political reasons, have greatly contributed to China's acceptance of him and his works.

These similarities and parallels between Shakespeare's plays and classical Chinese dramas can be definitely expressed from two fundamental aspects in theatre, that is to say, script and stage.

2.1 Script

2.1.1 Source

Generally speaking, an author draws his or her literary inspiration for his or her text from two sources: from life and/or from books. As for Shakespeare's collecting sources for his plots and characters, Li Wanjun commented: "Shakespeare can be said to be a talented 'stealer': he stole stories from historical materials at home, and also from those abroad by reading the translation; he stole his predecessor's and contemporary's novels, poems and

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dramas as well as the foreigner's novels, poems and dramas via the translation.”⁹¹ Probably the word “stealing” does not sound fair for Shakespeare, such a giant among writers in the world – nevertheless, Shakespeare's plays, in the light of the new literary approach of intertextuality, are no longer seen as based on a few borrowings, but are now seen as interventions in preexistent fields of textuality⁹². Nonetheless, no matter which word stealing or intervention is adopted for Shakespeare's sources, neither of them denies the truth – Shakespeare did take sources from others. For example, his main historical source for the tragedy *Macbeth* had been Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, which was first published in 1577. Simultaneously, Shakespeare made something new of his own in this play “in order to present James I's ancestors in a better light”⁹³. Exactly speaking, compared with Banquo in Holinshed's history as Macbeth's accomplice in the murder of King Duncan, this Banquo, the supposed ancestor of King James in the play, is described as the soul of honour and loyalty: “In the great hand of God I stand; and thence / Against the undivulged pretence I fight / Of treasonous malice”⁹⁴ (*Macbeth*, 2.3.128-129), as Li Wanjun remarked, “Shakespeare made creations in his stealing”⁹⁵.

⁹¹ Wanjun Li, [Shakespeare and Chinese Theatre from the Viewpoint of Comparative Literature] “比较文学视点下的莎士比亚与中国戏剧”, *Literary Review* 3 (1998), p. 81. “莎士比亚可谓‘偷’的天才，本国的历史书他‘偷’，外国的历史书通过看译本他也‘偷’；前人及同代人的小说、诗歌、剧本他‘偷’，外国人的小说、诗歌、剧本他通过看译本也‘偷’”。

⁹² Stephen J. Lynch, *Shakespearean Intertextuality: Studies in Selected Sources and Plays* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1998), p. 1.

⁹³ William Shakespeare, *Macbeth: Commentary, Complete Text, Glossary*, ed. Sidney Lamb (Lincoln, Nebraska: Cliff's Notes, 1966), pp. 15-16.

⁹⁴ All the quotations from *Macbeth* in this paper are from William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. Bernard Lott (London: Longmans, 1958), which is based on the First Folio.

⁹⁵ Wanjun Li, “Shakespeare and Chinese Theatre”, p. 81. “在‘偷’中进行再创造。”

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Likewise, many Chinese dramatists took their sources from books, and Tang Xianzu's masterpiece *The Peony Pavilion* is a case in point. Tang Xianzu (1550-1616)⁹⁶, a contemporary of Shakespeare but in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), has been called "the Shakespeare of China" by the Chinese. Some Chinese scholars⁹⁷ have studied Shakespeare and Tang and come to a conclusion: although in writing dramas Tang Xianzu and Shakespeare used different methods of verse and spoken drama respectively, there are some similarities between them from five perspectives. One of them is that they both borrowed themes from their predecessors' dramas. Tang Xianzu based his *Peony Pavilion* on a scene of "Du Liniang desires love and revives from death" from a vernacular story-telling script, taking over the plot and keeping the heroine's name.⁹⁸

2.1.2 Structure

Being accused of not following the traditional dramatic form of Aristotle in respect of the three unities of time, space and plot by those critics (for example, Voltaire), who believed that the necessity of observing the unities of time and place could ensure the supposed necessity of making the drama credible, Shakespeare wrote all his plays so that different actions combining a story may take place at different places very remote from each other within certain extending duration and continuance, ranging from several days, several months, to several years, excluding his *The Tempest* strictly limited to a single day's time,

⁹⁶ 汤显祖 Tang Xianzu – the Shakespeare of China – was a distinguished dramatist and poet in the Ming dynasty. His plays of *The Purple Hairpin*, *The Peony Pavilion* (his masterpiece), *Dream of Handan*, *Dream of Southern Bough*, were collected in *The Four Dreams* because of dreams' important roles in the plays.

⁹⁷ Peikai Zheng, [The Shakespeare of China]"中国的莎士比亚", in [*Colourful Peony Pavilion*] 《姹紫嫣红牡丹亭》, ed. Xianyong Bai (Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2005), as well as in the Internet: http://book.sina.com.cn/longbook/1087375177_peony/1.shtml. In "The Shakespeare of China", Peikai Zheng remarked that both Zhao Jingshen and Xu Shuofang had commented on the similarities between Tang Xianzu and Shakespeare with the same title "Tang Xianzu and Shakespeare" in 1946 and 1964, respectively. The similarities between Tang Xianzu and Shakespeare in the dissertation are based on Zhang Jingshen's research and will be explained in detail in Chapter 4 Shakespearean Criticism in China.

⁹⁸ <http://www.ykyz.net/yuwen/book4/guishu/xiangguang/guishuxg19-2.htm>

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a single setting of the island and a single plot line. With regard to the obligation of preserving narrow limitations of time and place in drama writing, Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), the distinguished English lexicographer and critic of English Literature, argued that since an audience, who can take the stage at one time for the palace of the Ptolemies, may take it in half an hour for the promontory of Actium. In addition, “his [Shakespearean] plan has commonly what Aristotle requires, a beginning, a middle, and an end; one event is concatenated with another, and the conclusion follow by easy consequence.”⁹⁹

It is known that Shakespeare usually let a chorus or an actor at the very beginning of the performance make a prologue to his audience to provide the listener with information about the background of the story, such as where the story takes place, who the principal characters are and what characteristics they have, sometimes even the ending of the story¹⁰⁰. Take *Romeo and Juliet* as an instance:

Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
From forth the fatal lions of these two foes
A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life;
Whole misadventured piteous overthrow
Doth with their death bury their parents' strife.
The fearful passage of their death-marked love,
And the continuance of their parents' rage –
Which, but their children's end naught could remove –
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
The which if you with patient ears attend,
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.

(*Romeo and Juliet*, Prologue)¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Samuel Johnson, “Preface To Shakespeare”, in *Johnson on Shakespeare*, ed. Walter Raleigh (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), p. 25.

¹⁰⁰ In Stanley S. Hussey's opinion the prologue or the chorus in Shakespeare's plays is usually used to describe public affairs; see his *The Literary Language of Shakespeare* (London: Longman, 1992), p. 166.

¹⁰¹ All the quotations from *Romeo and Juliet* in this paper are from William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, repr. ed. Jill L. Levenson (Oxford: University Press, 2004).

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From this chorus, the audience gets general information about the play: the story takes place between two noble households in the city of Verona. Resulting from ancient grudge to new violent and bloody conflict, two young lovers from these two feuding families sacrifice themselves and finally bring about reconciliation between the parents by killing themselves. Although the two-hour play has not begun, the audience is already informed by the Prologue that the young lovers Romeo and Juliet will die at the end of the play, inasmuch as they are star-crossed lovers and their death is preordained. Consequently, the spectator is eager to watch the play so as to understand how the love story will be developed within the next two hours on the stage.

Similar to Shakespeare's prologue or chorus, many Chinese playwrights adopt an introduction for their plays, normally consisting of two parts: the first is about the reason and background for creating the play and the second tells its main idea. Let's take Tang Xianzu's *The Peony Pavilion* once more as an example.

[蝶恋花]（未上）忙处抛人闲处住。百计思量，没个为欢处。白日消磨肠断句，世间只有情难诉。玉茗堂前朝后暮，红烛迎人，俊得江山助。但是相思莫相负，牡丹亭上三生路。[汉宫春] 杜宝黄堂，生丽娘小姐，爱踏春阳。感梦书生折柳，竟为情伤。写真留记，葬梅花道院凄凉。三年上，有梦梅柳子，于此赴高唐。果尔回生定配。赴临安取试，寇起淮阳。正把杜公围困，小姐惊惶。教柳郎行探，反遭疑激恼平章。风流况，施行正苦，报中状元郎。

(*The Peony Pavilion*, Introduction)¹⁰²

(Butterflies infatuated with flowers/*die lian hua*)¹⁰³ (Enter an aged actor) After resigning from the noisy officialdom [in 1598]¹⁰⁴, the dramatist [Tang Xianzu] lives in [his hometown Linchuan] a quiet place. Lots of consideration finds no place for happiness. Composing songs in the daytime to kill time, it is the most difficult to pour feelings and affection out on the world. From morning with the sunshine on the house

¹⁰² All the quotations from *The Peony Pavilion* in this paper are from Tang Xianzu, [*The Peony Pavilion*], 《牡丹亭》. (<http://www.yifan.net/yihe/novels/theatry/mdt/mdt.html>)

¹⁰³ The Chinese *die lian hua*/蝶恋花 here refers to the name of the tune to which poems or songs in theatre are composed.

¹⁰⁴ The words in the square bracket are all added by me according to the context of the original.

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named the White Camellia till night with the red candle burning, the dramatist devotes himself to writing the drama, which is made glorious by the beauty of rivers and mountains. Provided that there is in the heart longing for, instead of betraying, love, the love story [between Du Liniang and her dream lover Liu Mengmei] can happen in the Peony Pavilion¹⁰⁵. (Spring in the Palace/*han gong chun*)¹⁰⁶ Du Bao, the Governor [of Nan'an], has a daughter named Du Liniang, who loves going out for a walk in the garden. She dreams of playing willow together with a scholar next to the Peony Pavilion and feels sad at her fading youth and beauty. After making a portrait of her in order that she could leave her youth and beauty in the world forever, Du Liniang dies [of a broken heart] and is buried in the garden. Three years later, a scholar named Liu Mengmei comes to the garden and meets Du Liniang in his dreams. Afterwards, Du Liniang really comes back to the world of the living from the Netherworld and marries Liu Mengmei. The couple set off for Lin'an to take part in the national examination. At the news that bandits from Huaiyang have surrounded the mansion of Du Bao, who is now promoted to prime minister, worried Du Liniang sends her husband Liu Mengmei out for information. However, Du Bao does not believe Liu Mengmei, [for he thinks his daughter Du Liniang has already been dead for several years]. Furthermore, Du Bao is irritated by Liu Mengmei's recounting the love story between Du Liniang and him; therefore, he orders his men to torture Liu Mengmei, which is broken off by the announcement of the good news that Liu Mengmei has gained Number One Scholar in the national examination.

(My translation of Tang Xianzu's Introduction)¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ The Peony Pavilion is said to be the place for appointing an otherworldly marriage.

¹⁰⁶ The Chinese *han gong chun*/汉宫春 is also a name for a certain tonal pattern and rhyme scheme in the Chinese poetry and drama.

¹⁰⁷ Due to my unfamiliarity with the traditional classical Chinese language, sometimes I cannot definitely understand what Tang Xianzu's original text means. When this happens, I try to paraphrase Tang in order to give the full meaning.

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By comparison with Shakespeare's Prologue in *Romeo and Juliet*, Tang Xianzu's Introduction provides the audience with more detailed information, rather than only the story of his play. Exactly speaking, the historical and social background of Tang's composing the drama has also been delivered to the audience by this aged actor, the mouthpiece. Notwithstanding, Shakespeare and Tang Xianzu shared the essential similarity, that is to say, either prologue or introduction is applied to narrating the story.

Looking/watching through Tang Xianzu's *The Peony Pavilion*, the reader/audience can easily find that at the end of each chapter – equivalent to an act in Shakespeare's plays – there is a four-sentence poem, put together from four different poets in the Tang dynasty (618-907) and called entry/exit poem on the traditional Chinese stage. Although analysis shows that these lines have little relevance to the drama itself, they do play a role of transitional function, hinting to the actor off-stage and the spectator below the stage as well that the act is finished so that they should prepare for the next one.

By chance, there is such a similar structure to the Chinese entry/exit poem in the Shakespearean script. Like the bare traditional Chinese stage only with one desk and two chairs, the Elizabethan theatre fell greatly short of scenery and lighting, resulting in the unmarked division of act or scene. But to differentiate between changed scenes or acts, Shakespeare intentionally adopted a special structure at the end of act or scene. In other words, Shakespeare used rhymed lines such as rhymed couplets and rhymed verses at the end of scenes or acts, although he distinguished himself in adopting unrhymed iambic pentameter or blank verse for his poetic drama, and the dialogue between Benvolio and Romeo at the end of Act I Scene II in *Romeo and Juliet* is a good example.

Benvolio: Tut, you saw her fair, none else being by, [a]
Herself poised with herself in either eye; [a]
But in that crystal scales let there be weighed [b]
Your lady's love against some other maid [b]
That I will show you shining at this feast, [c]
And she shall scant show well that now show best. [c]

Romeo: I'll go along no such sight to be shown, [d]
But to rejoice in splendour of mine own. [d]

(*Romeo and Juliet*, 1.2.97-104)

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The square bracket added at the end of each line tells us that Shakespeare adopted the rhymed couplet – obviously on purpose – in this short conversation between Romeo and Benvolio. Similar to the Chinese entry/exit poem at the end of an act, these rhymed lines function as a transition, providing the actor off-stage and the audience as well with the information that a new scene begins and accordingly new characters will appear on the stage. By means of purposely rhymed lines, the audience and the actor can have enough time mentally to prepare for new actions.

2.1.3 Imperial Theme

As Zhang Xiaoyang has stated that “Shakespeare has been wholeheartedly accepted by the Chinese and that he functions as a major and indispensable figure in the cultural landscape of China”,¹⁰⁸ Chinese readers and audiences feel comfortable reading or watching Shakespeare’s works, for they are familiar with the themes in his plays. Consequently, it is easier for the Chinese to accept him and his plays than any other Western writer. The imperial theme in Shakespeare’s plays is an important example.

Firstly, in Shakespeare’s plays, his history plays in particular, the authority of kingship was based on a mandate from God and the idea that subjects should be loyal to the king, as King James I (1566-1625) wrote in his *Basilikon Doron* (1599), a manual on the duties of a king written during his reign as James VI of Scotland (1567-1603), that a good king “acknowledgeth himself ordained for his people, having received from God a burden of government, whereof he must be countable.”¹⁰⁹ Accordingly, before the murder in Shakespeare’s tragedy *Macbeth*, the main character Macbeth struggles between his moral loyalty to King Duncan and his personal desire for power by saying: “First, as I am his kinsman and his subject, / Strong both against the deed...- I have no spur / To prick the sides of my intent, but only / Vaulting ambition, which o’erleaps itself / And falls on the other-” (*Macbeth*, 1.7.13-28). In addition, Macduff’s “Most sacrilegious murder hath broke

¹⁰⁸ Xiaoyang Zhang, *Shakespeare in China*, p. 209.

¹⁰⁹ “Divine Right of Kings” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divine_Right_of_Kings)

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ope / The Lord's anointed temple, and stole thence / The life o' the building" (*Macbeth*, 2.3.63-63) also underlines the point that the king's body, which represents order, is a temple anointed by God. Likewise, in the light of Confucian morals, the Chinese thought that the emperor was given the power by Heaven and the subject had to be subordinate to him, the son of Heaven. The Emperor Qin Shihuang (259B.C.-210B.C.) was said to have words of "mandate from Heaven" (*shou ming yu tian*)¹¹⁰ engraved in his imperial seal made of jade. Accordingly, the old man's comment on the murder of Duncan in *Macbeth*: "T is unnatural, / Even like the deed that'd done" (*Macbeth*, 2.4.10-11) expresses the Chinese's aversion to murdering a king or an emperor. Furthermore, the Chinese believed that the defeat of an emperor proved that he was not worthy of the mandate from Heaven. For example, when crusading against Xia Jie¹¹¹, the last king of the Xia dynasty (2000B.C.-1600B.C.), Shang Tang (1675B.C.-1646B.C.)¹¹², the founder of the Shang dynasty (17th B.C.-1046B.C.), made an announcement to his tribe: "The sovereign of Xia is guilty and being afraid of Heaven, I dare not but punish him..."¹¹³ Consequently, the Chinese tradition of imperial succession has strengthened Shakespeare's Tudor myth, considering Henry Tudor as the white knight sent by God to save the people from the evil Richard III. As a result, Shakespeare's history plays were readily received by the Chinese.

Secondly, land was a very important symbol in Shakespearean plays and in ancient China as well. If a king or an emperor was defeated, he would give a handful of earth to the successful challenger, implying that the failed king/emperor abdicated to the winner. In ancient China and old England, the land belonged to emperor and king and accordingly he had an absolute right to anything in the land. Unquestionably, it is not surprising for a

¹¹⁰ “受命于天”

¹¹¹ 夏桀 Xia Jie was the last king of the Xia dynasty.

¹¹² 商汤 Shang Tang was the founder of the Shang dynasty.

¹¹³ [*Shang Shu: Speech of Tang*] 《尚书：汤誓》(<http://www.meet-greatwall.org/sjz/sj/ss/ss3.htm>) “夏氏有罪，予畏上帝，不敢不正。” *Shang Shu*, one of the thirteen Confucian classics and the earliest collection of historical documents in ancient China, records all important historical documents including geography, astronomy, philosophy, education, laws and regulations from the Yu dynasty, the Xia dynasty, the Shang dynasty to the Zhou dynasty.

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Chinese reader or audience to easily understand the following conversation between King Duncan and his general Banquo:

Duncan: Welcome hither:

I have begun to plant thee, and will labour
To make thee full of growing. [To BANQUO]– Noble Banquo,
That hast no less deserved, nor must be known
No less to have done so, let me infold thee,
And hold thee to my heart.

Banquo: There if I grow,
The harvest is your own.

(*Macbeth*, 1.4.27-33)

The explanation of this dialogue is that Duncan is honouring Banquo and giving him opportunity to prove his ability in the kingdom by drawing an analogy between the subject in his kingdom and the crop in the land.

Last but not least, the theme of cruel and bloody struggles for the throne in Shakespeare's royal families was also a familiar feature in Chinese history. No matter if in China or in England, the basic principle of succession was that the throne passed to the eldest son or, if he was no longer alive, to his eldest son. If there were no male heirs left in the branch of the family, the succession went to the male survivors of the next branch.

In Shakespeare's history play *Richard III*, malicious and deformed Richard decides to kill anyone who stands between him and the kingship. He has his elder brother Clarence executed and shifts the burden of guilt onto his sick elder brother King Edward. After the king's death, Richard kills the court noblemen who are loyal to the two young princes and has the relatives on the princes' mother's side arrested and executed. At the same time he imprisons the two princes in the Tower, and then he has them killed in order to become crowned king himself. Though young Elizabeth is his niece, this alliance would secure his claim to the throne and so he threatens Queen Elizabeth that he will marry her daughter young Elizabeth. In the end, Richard is defeated by Richmond who marries young Elizabeth and is crowned King Henry VII.

Similar internal conflicts within royal families in Shakespeare's works have often happened in the history of China, and the palace coup at the Xuanwu Gate in the Tang

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dynasty (618-907) is a case in point. Tai Zong, with the name of Li Shimin, was the second emperor of the Tang dynasty (618-907), under whose twenty-three years' rule the Tang Empire emerged as the most powerful and prosperous feudal empire in Chinese history, and has been considered to be one of the greatest of the Chinese emperors overseeing an era of peace and prosperity. In fact, Li Shimin was the second son to Li Yuan the duke of Tang, an administrator in Taiyuan of the Sui dynasty (581-617). Under his ambitious son Li Shimin's persuasion and with his assistance as well, Li Yuan staged a military coup against the Sui dynasty in 617 and declared himself emperor in the following year, thus establishing the Tang dynasty and naming himself Emperor Gao Zu. He had twenty-two sons in total and proclaimed that his eldest son Li Jiancheng, the destined heir, should be his successor, Li Shimin the second son was granted the title Prince of Qin and the fourth son Li Yuanji Prince of Qi, for the third son had died long before. Actually, of these three sons, the second son Li Shimin was the most ambitious and intelligent, who not only had persuaded his father to rebel against the Sui dynasty but also made the greatest contribution to the campaign to secure the empire for his father. However, his ability and ambition threatened and troubled his elder brother, Li Jiancheng, who was to be the next emperor. Consequently, Li Jiancheng conspired with his fourth brother, Prince of Qi, in order to get rid of Li Shimin, Prince of Qin. Unhappy with his father's incompetence on the throne and tired of the constant threats against him by his brothers, Li Shimin launched a palace coup at the Xuanwu Gate in 626, on which day Li Shimin killed both Li Jiancheng, the future emperor, and his fourth brother, Prince of Qi, and at the same time he forced his incompetent father to abdicate. As a result, Li Shimin became the crowned emperor and named himself Taizong.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Yongnian Huang, [*Tang Taizong — Li Shimin*] 《唐太宗李世民》 (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1987), pp. 7-43.

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2.2 Stage

The parallel of dramatic techniques on the stage is another fundamental factor strengthening the Chinese audience's enthusiastic response to the dramatist's works, namely, the methods and mediums used in performing Shakespearean plays, such as verbal image, supernatural elements, use of aside and soliloquy, free deployment of time and space and so forth, are similar to those on the traditional Chinese stage.

2.2.1 Verbal Image

In the Elizabethan theatre the actor was the centre of the stage against a background that did not contain as many elaborate sceneries and expressive lighting effects as those in modern theatre. On the other hand, the theatre company was at any moment ready for touring from private playhouses to public ones, and to the Court, and accordingly, costumes, portable properties and actors were of great importance for allowing them to stage a performance wherever they were. Apart from the bare physical conditions of the stage at Elizabethan times, Shakespeare's special style in providing stage-direction and implications of theatrical activity for the spectator and the actor adds to the difficulty in producing direct visual effects on the stage:

Various manuscript plays have survived from Shakespeare's day (though no more than a few hundred lines of an unperformed play in Shakespeare's handwriting – the collaborative *Sir Thomas More*) and, from these and from printed plays, we know this: few scenes would be marked with a description of the location of the action; act or scene divisions would not always be marked; essential entries and exits, or directions for stage business, stage properties or costume changes might also be missing, misplaced or inaccurate.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ John Russell Brown, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Style* (London: Heinemann, 1970), p. 11.

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Without such aids – scenery, properties and stage-directions – on the stage, on the one hand, Shakespeare appealed to his audiences to use their imagination, as the Chorus sings at the very beginning of Shakespeare’s history play *Henry V*:

Oh, pardon: since a crooked figure may
Attest in little place a million,
And let us, ciphers to this great account,
On your imaginary forces work.
Suppose within the girdle of these walls
Are now confined two mighty monarchies,
Whose high uprearèd and abutting fronts
The perilous narrow ocean parts asunder.
Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts.
Into a thousand parts divide one man,
And make imaginary puissance.
Think when we talk of horses, that you see them
Printing their proud hooves i’th’receiving earth,
For ‘tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings,
Carry them here and there; jumping o’er times,
Turning th’accomplishment of many years,
Into an hour-glass.

(*King Henry V*, Prologue, 15-31)¹¹⁶

On the other hand, the actor might have to take the responsibility for giving informative description of and comment on the stage, such as time, place, scenic atmosphere and so forth.¹¹⁷ For instance, although the bloody battle between Macbeth and Macdonwald is not performed before the audience, Macbeth’s courage on the battlefield is shown through the captain’s description: “For brave Macbeth (well he deserves that name) / Dismaying fortune, with his brandish’d steel, / Which smoked with bloody execution, / Like valour’s minion carved out his passage / Till he face the slave; / Which ne’er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him, / Till he unseam’d him from the nave to the chaps, / And fix’d his head upon our battlements.” (*Macbeth*, 1.2.16-23) Through such verbal image, combining spoken description and comment together with active imagination of the spectator, visual

¹¹⁶ All the quotations from *King Henry V* in this dissertation are from William Shakespeare, *King Henry V*, updated ed. Andrew Gurr (Cambridge: University Press, 2005).

¹¹⁷ John L. Styan, *Shakespeare’s Stagecraft*, repr. (Cambridge: University Press, 1979), p. 38.

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effects on the stage, fortunately, can be reinforced, further strengthening the effectiveness of the whole performance.

The verbal image adopted in the Shakespearean theatre often appears on the traditional Chinese stage, as Suo Tiangzhang has pointed out, when contrasting the traditional Chinese theatre with the English play:

The most important similarity between them lies in the application of actor's lines, for on both stages there are no lighting and scenery. To make up for the shortcoming, dramatic techniques, on the one hand, such as imagination and symbolism are adopted to substitute for such performances that cannot be staged with real scenery and actions; on the other hand, poetic sentences (colloquialism as well) are used to describe what cannot be expressed on the stage by making great efforts in ornamenting actor's lines. Thus, the actor's lines in Shakespeare's and his contemporary's plays are different from those in modern dramas, but similar to the Chinese Beijing and *kunju* opera in the following aspect that the character has to give both detailed descriptions of scenery and of internal thoughts and feelings.¹¹⁸

2.2.2 Supernatural Elements

As a Protestant of very strict faith, James I of England was of the opinion that witches and supernatural powers were used to judge faith and evil of human beings.¹¹⁹ James I has stated his beliefs in his three works, namely, *News from Scotland*, *Daemonologie* and *Basilikon Doron*, which had first been printed in Scotland and then reissued in London in 1603. "Perhaps the greatest of Shakespeare's compliments to his king resides in his basing

¹¹⁸ Suo Tianzhang as quoted in Liqin Chen, [*The Study of the Natural Scene Imago in the Drama of Tang Xianzu and Shakespeare*] 《汤显祖和莎士比亚戏剧文本中的自然场景意象研究》(Xiamen University, Ph.D. dissertation, 2006), p. 48. "最重要的一个共同点在于台词的应用。因为英国的舞台和中国的一样，没有灯光布景。为了弥补舞台之不足，只有一方面使用虚拟、象征性的手法表演一些不能用真景、真实的动作表演的一切，一方面在台词上狠下功夫，用生动的诗句（也用白话）来描写不能在台上体现的场景。这样，莎士比亚或他同时代的剧作家的台词就大不同于现代戏剧的台词。这和我们的京、昆剧是一样的。剧中人不仅要向观众交代场景，还要交代他们的内心思想活动。"

¹¹⁹ Lamb, *Macbeth*, p. 15.

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on much of the theme of the play [*Macbeth*] upon on the king's ideas",¹²⁰ inasmuch as King James, shortly after his ascending the throne, took Shakespeare and his companions under his personal patronage, changing their name from the Lord Chamberlain's Servants to the King's Servants. Furthermore, Shakespeare was influenced by the widespread obsession with the numberless superstitions in England, at which time every one believed that all supernatural elements were at work.

Hong Zengliu has written that there are direct or indirect descriptions of supernatural elements occurring in more than one quarter of Shakespearean plays¹²¹, such as the three witches in *Macbeth*, indicators of bad omens in *Macbeth*, devils in *Richard III*, ghosts in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and prophecies in *Macbeth* as well as *Julius Caesar*. Take the ghost in *Hamlet* as an instance.

The dead king in *Hamlet* tells his son the truth of his death: "Now, Hamlet, hear. / 'Tis given out that, sleeping in my orchard, / A serpent stung me – so the whole ear of Denmark / Is by a forgèd process of my death / Rankly abus'd – but know, thou noble youth, / The serpent that did sting thy father's life / Now wears his crown"¹²² (*Hamlet*, 1.5.34-40); at the same time, he urges his son to avenge him: "Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder." (*Hamlet*, 1.5.25)

Interestingly, the ghost as a vehicle for exposing the truth in plays has also been frequently used by Chinese playwrights. For instance, as a ghost, Du Liniang in Tang Xianzu's *Peony Pavilion* comes to her lover Liu Mengmei in his dreams and tells him of her lovesickness and death. Like the Elizabethans in Shakespeare's time, the Chinese people believed that these were created by Heaven, when facing the inexplicable supernatural phenomena.

¹²⁰ Lamb, *Macbeth*, p. 15.

¹²¹ Zengliu Hong, [Topics on Supernatural Elements in Shakespeare] "论莎士比亚戏剧中的超自然描写", *Foreign Literature Studies* 3 (1995), p. 61.

¹²² All the quotations from *Hamlet* in the dissertation are from William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, repr. ed. Harold Jenkins (London: Routledge, 1992), based primarily upon Q2. The editor said that "while following Q2's fuller version, I naturally include also anything preserved in F which I take to have been lost from Q2; but all words and phrases in F which I judge to be playhouse additions to the dialogue I omit."

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Of course, the reasons leading to both the English and the Chinese's strong belief in the supernatural are not the focus in the dissertation. Nevertheless, the unarguable fact that both dramatists were interested in adopting ghosts in their works strengthens the parallel between Shakespearean plays and the traditional Chinese dramas, which makes Shakespeare's works easily accepted by the Chinese audience.

2.2.3 Use of Aside or Soliloquy

Not only Shakespearean plays but also Chinese dramas employ the theatrical conventions of aside or soliloquy to establish direct communication with the audience. Compared to the aside, which is usually a short speech – sometimes only one line – made in the presence of other characters but with certainty not heard by them, a soliloquy is longer, or exactly speaking, a soliloquy is an extended speech under two circumstances: the speaker is either alone on the stage or he or she is temporarily apart from other characters, with the last situation similar to an aside. Through a soliloquy, the character directly tells his or her inner thoughts and feelings to the audience, in a word, what he or she speaks is the truth. The same is true of the aside, although, different from soliloquy, an aside is closely connected with the dialogue on the stage and gives comments on or contrasts with the dialogue made previously between the speaker and other characters on the stage.

In Shakespeare's time the stage stretched out into the center of the open theatre so that the audience could stand around the three sides. Sometimes an actor on the stage walked to the front of the stage and spoke to himself, keeping a distance from the other actors, so as to reveal to the audience his internal thoughts, represent his complex disposition and discuss philosophical ideas. Richard's soliloquy at the very outset of Shakespeare's history play *Richard III* helps to explain the function of this dramatic technique:

And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover
To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
I am determinèd to prove a villain,
And hate the idle pleasures of these days.
Plots have I laid inductions, dangerous,
By drunken prophecies, libels, and dreams,

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To set my brother Clarence and the King
In deadly hate the one against the other;
And if King Edward be as true and just
As I am subtle, false, and treacherous,
This day should Clarence closely be mew'd up
About a prophecy which says that 'G'
Of Edward's heirs the murderer shall be.
Dive, thoughts, down to my soul - here Clarence comes!
(*Richard III*.1.1.28-40)¹²³

Upon entering onto the stage, Richard reveals his private thoughts to the audience, showing his ambitious nature and his malicious plotting to get his hands on the throne by making mischief between his brother Clarence and brother King Edward.

By chance, the frequent use of asides and soliloquies in Shakespearean dramas enhances a sense of affinity for the Chinese audience because in the traditional Chinese theatre the performer often goes to one side of the stage and speaks to himself, or speaks to the audience, and in many cases sings songs about his real emotions and thoughts, which helps the audience to understand well the character and his situation and intentions at that moment; detailed examples will be explained in the Chinese comedy *Much Ado About Nothing* in Chapter 6.

2.2.4 Free Deployment of Time and Space

Both Shakespearean plays and Chinese dramas have a free deployment of time and space. On the traditional Chinese stage the actor or actress moves around the stage in certain stylized formations and then tells the audience directly that he or she has arrived at his or her intended destination, meaning he or she has already traveled a long way from one place to another. Though not exactly similar, this kind of Chinese theatrical performance is not unknown in Shakespearean plays.

Free from rigorous neoclassical dictates of the five-act structure developed by the ancient Roman dramatist Lucius Annaeus Seneca (4B.C.-65A.D.), in which Seneca

¹²³ All the quotations from *The Tragedy of King Richard III* are from William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Richard III*, ed. John Jowett (Oxford: University Press, 2000).

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divided his tragedies into five episodes separated by choruses to imply the end and beginning of the act, Shakespeare has frequently employed elastic dramatic techniques to indicate the shifts in time and space particularly in his romances, in which the duration of the story lasts for many years and the action often shifts from city to city. For example, in *The Merchant of Venice* the story takes place in two different cities, one in Venice and the other in Belmont. In this play acts are not explicitly divided like in many other Renaissance plays in Shakespeare's time and are performed without any interruption from beginning to end. Only through exits and entrances of characters on the stage the audience gets to know that time and space have shifted from Venice to Belmont or from Belmont to Venice. In conclusion, Shakespeare thought that scenes of a play were the most significant structural units from the viewpoint of the audience.

Although all these similarities and parallels between Shakespearean plays and traditional Chinese literature and theatrical conventions make the dramatist seem less alien to the Chinese reader and audience, nevertheless, it is undeniable that there are many great differences between Shakespearean and Chinese culture, which lead not only to the difficulty in rendering and performing his plays in the Chinese language but also, accordingly, to the fact that in certain circumstances the Chinese have to adapt his plays to the Chinese way on the Chinese stage to suit Chinese society and culture.

3 Shakespearean Translations in China

Since the first real beginning of rendering a Shakespearean play into modern vernacular Chinese by Tian Han with his *Hamlet* in the year 1921, many Chinese scholars have attempted to translate Shakespeare and his works. After the founding of the People's Republic of China in particular, apart from the ten-year Cultural Revolution between 1967 and 1977, translations along with performances and literary criticism continued to flourish. As far as *Hamlet* is concerned, Lu Gusun estimated that in post-1949 China "at least five translations have been added to the pre-1949 three, two of these five being attempts at a poetic rendering, and more than fifty monographs have been published."¹²⁴

The achievements of Shakespearean studies were great; nevertheless, apart from the intellectual challenge of translating, literary criticism and performing, Chinese scholars and critics have always searched for ways of improving the introduction and appreciation of Shakespeare and his works in the Chinese language. But first and foremost is the question of how to translate Shakespeare well, for "[a] translation is primarily for those readers who have no knowledge at all of the foreign language upon which the text is based."¹²⁵ Furthermore, translation is the fundamental element for Shakespearean criticism and performance.

Lin Shu noted the difference between translating and writing:

Translating is unlike writing. The writer can write about what he has seen or heard, either in vague expressions or in detailed descriptions, that is to say, he can write about whatever subject and in whatever manner he likes. However, when it comes to translating, the translator is confined to relating what has already been written about, how is it, then, possible for him to adulterate the translation with his own views? When religious inculcations are found in the original text, he must translate them; how

¹²⁴ Lu, "Hamlet Across Space and Time", p. 55.

¹²⁵ Chang, "Shakespeare in China", p. 115.

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can he purge his translation of that discourse just for taboo's sake? Hence, translation must be done exactly like what has been written in the original.¹²⁶

Accordingly, “Lin Shu tried his best to be faithful to the original both in content and style, and put the name of the original author on the front page of the translation, a rare occurrence among the Shanghai translators of his time.”¹²⁷

Lin Shu is quite right in preserving the originality; nevertheless, translation is a doubly difficult task, as the translator has to take into account not only the original author but also the target reader. In addition, Shakespeare is a supreme literary genius both in poetry and drama and his lines were “... so rich spun, and woven so fit. / As, since, she will vouchsafe no other Wit.”¹²⁸ The whole process of translating Shakespeare into the Chinese language has been one of pushing back boundaries.

3.1 Difficulties in Translating Shakespeare

“Translation is never a purely philological activity but a collusive re-creation in which cultural differences cling to grammar and syntax and history mediates the effect even of single words.” In addition, no two languages or parts of two languages are exactly identical. Inga-Stina Ewbank goes even further: “Translation, then, is only one form of rewriting, and needs to be thought about and studied as much. In cutting, suppressing, restructuring and adding, theatre directors and (we must admit) academic critics are, each in his or her way and for his or her particular purpose, translator/re-writers of Shakespeare.”¹²⁹ Having learned English against a background of Chinese culture, history and society, the Chinese translator comes across many problems in rendering Shakespearean works.

¹²⁶ Lin Shu as quoted in Shouyi Fan, “Highlights of Translation Studies in China Since the Mid-Nineteenth Century”, *Meta* XLIV 1 (1999), np.

¹²⁷ Lin Shu as quoted in Fan, “Highlights of Translation”, np.

¹²⁸ Ben Jonson as quoted in Ruru Li, “Shakespeare Translation”, p. 14.

¹²⁹ Inga-Stina Ewbank, “Shakespeare Translation as Cultural Exchange”, *Shakespeare Survey* 48 (1995), p. 6 and 7.

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3.1.1 Language Divergences

The Chinese language is different to the English language, which is based on the phonetic principle of spelling and pronunciation, whereas the Chinese language has no alphabet but characters of a monosyllabic nature, which look like a picture. For instance, the Chinese character 山 stands for mountain – of course, with the development of the society this character has already evolved into a rather simple modern word 山. With regard to rhythm within one sentence, in the English language system stress is of importance. In Shakespeare's *Sonnet 18* we have the stress on the second syllable: "So long | as men | can breathe | or eyes | can see / So long | lives this | and this | gives life | to thee", different from those four tones in Chinese, for example, Bái rì yī shān jìn, huáng hé rù hǎi liú.¹³⁰ The fundamentally different language systems lead to different systems of ideas and modes of thought. In short, the two languages differ greatly in the ways thoughts and emotions are expressed. "A word in any language is nothing but a cluster of connotative as well as denotative meanings which it has accumulated down the centuries since its birth."¹³¹ Therefore, it is impossible to translate English directly into Chinese.

Unfortunately, there was no standardized grammatical system in Shakespeare's English; moreover, Elizabethan English differs from present-day English in that, for instance, any irregularity whatever, whether in the formation of words or in the combination of words into sentences, is allowed. For example, almost any part of speech can be used as any other. An adjective can be used as a verb, "He will happy his friends"; as an adverb, "He has done it easy"; as a noun, "You can talk of 'fair' (instead of 'beauty')", and so on.

The great change of words in meaning and usage from Shakespeare's time also adds difficulty to the Chinese translation of the playwright. Take the word cousin as an example.

¹³⁰ These two sentences are the first part of a well-known poem *Mounting the Guanque Tower* by Wang Zihuan (688-742), a famous poet in the Tang dynasty (618-907). The original poem is as follows: "白日依山尽, 黄河入海流。欲穷千里目, 更上一层楼。"

¹³¹ Simon S. C. Chau, "The Nature and Limitations of Shakespeare Translation", *New Asian Academic Bulletin* (1978), p. 241.

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Nowadays, “cousin” means a child of one’s aunt or uncle. However, during the Renaissance it referred to a relative descended from a common ancestor. And then how many words did Shakespeare use in his works? “Some concordance puts Shakespeare’s vocabulary at 43,566 words. But anyway the consensus in Shakespeare’s vocabulary outnumbers the entire vocabulary of the Authorized Version of the Holy Bible, or the King James’ Version.”¹³²

Because of the great differences in languages, the basic step for Chinese translators to render Shakespeare is to carefully examine the meaning of the word in the text before they start translating his works: is there a fixed meaning? Or they must deduce its meaning from the context to catch its variable meaning, so that they can render one aspect of the Shakespearean culture into an equivalent or its approximation in Chinese culture, for “[a]bsolute equivalence in translating is never possible”¹³³.

3.1.2 Cultural Differences

Fu Lei (1908-1966)¹³⁴, a great Chinese translator, pointed out “differences between two languages in lexicon and syntactic structure, in grammar and idiomatic usage, in rhetorical devices and sayings – all these differences reflect dissimilarities in the modes of thinking of people of different nations, in the range of their perceptions, in their points of view, in their customs and habits, in their social backgrounds, and in their means of expression.”¹³⁵

As a good illustration of the cultural differences, Professor Chang Chen-hsien has taken Lady Macbeth’s words “Had he not resembled my father as he slept, I had done’t”

¹³² Gusun Lu, [*Ten Lectures on Shakespearean Studies*] 《莎士比亚研究十讲》 (Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 2005), p. 28.

¹³³ Eugene A. Nida as quoted in Xuanmin Luo, “Linguistic Contributions to the Development of Translation Studies in China”, *Meta* XLIV, 1 (1999), p. 102.

¹³⁴ 傅雷 Fu Lei was a famous Chinese translator.

¹³⁵ Fu Lei as quoted in Fan, “Highlights of Translation”, np.

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(*Macbeth*, 2.2.12-13) in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* as an example.¹³⁶ According to English culture, Lady Macbeth simply means that she thinks that King Duncan and her father are alike. But for a Chinese reader or spectator this sentence has a denotative and a connotative meaning as well. On the one hand, it explicitly states that Duncan does look like Lady Macbeth's father, but it implies, on the other hand, that Duncan's mother had an improper relationship with Lady Macbeth's father, which sounds totally absurd to the Western audience. In fact, whether the translator should render the sentence into Chinese literally or give a translation of the meaning, after considering the ideological divergences, makes great difference to the Chinese audience. Without question, when the literal translation of this sentence is printed or spoken on the Chinese stage, a misunderstanding of the original is not to be avoided.

Sexuality is another difficult theme in Shakespeare's plays when introducing the dramatist to the Chinese, as Lu Gusun told his students that "[s]ome people say Shakespeare is the best amorous teacher"¹³⁷. It is known that in ancient China a woman must consciously avoid being seen by men, staying in her boudoir all the time and obeying her father before marriage and her husband after marriage and her son after the death of her husband.¹³⁸ Even when a lady was sick and a doctor had to come into her chamber, she was not allowed to show her face to him. Instead, she only stretched her hand out to the doctor through a curtain because, according to the old rigid Chinese etiquette, women and men should be separated from each other and a woman's hand could not be touched by a man. Therefore, King Duncan's word to Lady Macbeth: "Give me your hand" (*Macbeth*, 1.6.28) has to be cut from the original on the traditional Chinese stage in order to avoid sexual associations.

When discussing the difference in culture, Lu Gusun gave an example from Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. When Antony decided to leave Egypt for Rome,

¹³⁶ Chang, "Shakespeare in China", p. 112.

¹³⁷ Lu, *Ten Lectures on Shakespearean Studies*, p. 22.

¹³⁸ Xinzhong Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism* (Cambridge: University Press, 2000), p. 183.

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Cleopatra was very disappointed and she remarked: “I would I had thy inches.”¹³⁹ (*Antony and Cleopatra*, 1.3.40) Lu explained that “[the word] ‘inches’ here is bald enough, meaning the male reproductive organ. In other words, Cleopatra wished she had been a man instead of a woman.” And Lu went on further, remarking that the Chinese translators “do not allow themselves to use bawdy language” and therefore translate the line into the Chinese as “我但愿长得跟你一样高”, which can be literally rendered back into English as follows: “I wish I were as tall as you.” This is “a downright misrendition through euphemizing”, said Lu Gusun.¹⁴⁰

Of course, since China opened her doors to the world, some typical Western ideas and customs have been introduced to the Chinese, for example, the kissing between two lovers, which frequently happens in the street in present-day China. If they acknowledge from the Chinese young people’s willingness to accept Western behaviours and thoughts, Chinese translators will have fewer and fewer limitations in rendering Shakespearean works, compared with those scholars and translators before the 1990s.

Shakespeare’s plays are full of information and can be called encyclopaedic, ranging from history, geography, politics and science, to culture including the Bible and mythology. Taking as an example the number of animals mentioned in his plays, there are at least 130.¹⁴¹ The encyclopaedic knowledge has once contributed to the doubt whether William Shakespeare, “an upstart Crow beautiful in our feather”¹⁴², himself wrote all these wonderful plays. Lu Gusun said then that some of Shakespeare’s plays have been attributed to Francis Bacon (1561-1626), to Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593), another famous playwright in Shakespeare’s time, to Ben Jonson (1572-1637), Shakespeare’s friend and rival as well, to the Earl of Oxford Edward de Vere (1550-1604), and even to

¹³⁹ The quotation from *Antony and Cleopatra* is from William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, updated ed. David Bevington (Oxford: University Press, 2005).

¹⁴⁰ Lu, *Ten Lectures on Shakespearean Studies*, pp. 21-22.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

¹⁴² Shakespeare was once satirized by Robert Greene (1558-1592) when he began with his playwriting in London.

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Queen Elizabeth. At last, Lu came up with a conclusion that Shakespeare collected his materials by reading variously.¹⁴³ Consequently, the Chinese translator has to read as variously as Shakespeare, for example, the English history at least from the Plantagenet (1216-1485) to the Tudor dynasties (1485-1603), to understand Shakespeare's history plays well, which is not simple at all. Likewise, the fact that Shakespeare took his stories from the Bible enhances the difficulty in making a Chinese translation, as He Xianglin pointed out: one of the reasons that the translator has failed to give a correct rendition is that the Book is completely unfamiliar to the Chinese. In *Twelfth Night*, Clown blames Malvolio for his ignorance by saying "there is no darkness but ignorance, in which thou art more puzzled than the Egyptians in the fog."¹⁴⁴ (*Twelfth Night*, 4.2.34-35) The fog, according to He Xianglin's knowledge, is quoted from Chapter 10 of EXODUS in the Old Testament: The Lord sends plague of locusts – This is followed by thick darkness in all Egypt for three days – Moses cast out from presence of Pharaoh. He Xianglin then suggested the word fog be translated into the Chinese word darkness; otherwise the literal translation by Zhu Shenghao needs a detailed explanation about the source of the story.¹⁴⁵

The poetic images chosen by Shakespeare and Chinese playwrights are different. Zhang Xiaoyang says, for instance, Shakespeare tended to use the sun as an image to describe love, whereas the Chinese prefer the moon connected with love and beauty:

This is a mellow moonlight night,
The shadows of flowers rest in the spring quiet;
Raising my head, I look at the bright moon
And hope I can meet the goddess in it.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Lu, *Ten Lectures on Shakespearean Studies*, pp. 30-33.

¹⁴⁴ The quotation from *Twelfth Night* is from William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, updated ed. Elizabeth Story Donno (Cambridge: University Press, 2006).

¹⁴⁵ Xianglin He, [Admiring, Questioning and Wishing] "赞赏、质疑和希望", in [A Collection of Essays on Shakespeare] 《莎士比亚研究文集》, ed. He Xianglin (Xi'an: Shanxi People's Press, 1982), pp. 307-308.

¹⁴⁶ "The Romance of the Western Chamber" in *Classical Chinese Comedies* as quoted in Xiaoyang Zhang, *Shakespeare in China*, p. 89. Here the goddess refers to Chang E, the goddess of the moon. Traditionally the Chinese compare beautiful women to the moon.

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By contrast, in *King Henry V*, the king prefers to use the sun to symbolize his love: “but a good heart, Kate, is the sun and the moon, or rather the sun and not the moon, for it shines bright and never changes, but keeps his course truly” (*King Henry V*, 5.2.152-5).

3.2 Methods of Rendering Shakespeare

Rendering is different from adapting in terms of the communicant; that is to say, readers and audiences, respectively. Normally, in the theatre, the word on the stage is spoken only once. If the audience does not catch it, he or she will miss the meaning of the word. In contrast, a reader can go back to the written translation again and again if he or she does not understand the text. As a result, rendering and adapting must have their own proper methods, for example, the dialogue on the stage should be colloquial and everyday, which can easily be understood by the audience. In regard to criteria for translating foreign works into the Chinese language, there have been heated arguments among scholars, translators and critics, and correspondingly Chinese translators have ventured on different techniques to render Shakespearean plays in proper ways.

3.2.1 Chinese Translation Theory

Yan Fu is said to be the first to put forward a translation theory with his three-character criteria. The Chinese have debated its practicability for almost a century; nevertheless this translation standard has been followed by many later translators in their renditions, consciously or unconsciously:

Translating is difficult in three aspects, namely, *xin* (faithfulness), *da* (readability), and *ya*¹⁴⁷ (refinement). To aspire to perfection in faithfulness is rather difficult. However, to make the translation faithful without being readable is equal to having no translation at all. Hence the relative importance of readability [...] [B]esides *xin* (faithfulness) and *da* (readability), one should also pay attention to *ya* (refinement). This is not only to let

¹⁴⁷ 信、达、雅

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the text reach a wider audience; as a matter of fact, the discourse is so profound and full of nuances of meaning, it can only be made readable with ease by using the lexicons and grammar of the pre-Han period of two millennia ago; whereas it is difficult to use the current vulgar tongue to produce a refined version.¹⁴⁸

Likewise, Lin Yutang (1895-1976)¹⁴⁹ also advocated three standards for translation – *zhong shi* (fidelity), *tong shun* (mellifluousness) and *mei*¹⁵⁰ (aesthetic quality), which is similar to Yan Fu's three-character translation criteria, although Lin thought that his *mei* (aesthetic quality) implied more than Yan Fu's *ya* (refinement)¹⁵¹. In Lin's opinion, these translation criteria stand for three responsibilities of the translator: fidelity/faithfulness emphasizes the translator's responsibility to the original author, mellifluousness/readability requires the translator's fluency in Chinese, his/her responsibility for his/her target reader, aesthetic quality/refinement is an artistic responsibility in terms of art.

With the development of translation studies in China, the introduction of western translation theories in particular, Yan Fu's three-character translation criteria have suffered from severe criticism: "Yan Fu has apparently done little to deserve the conspicuous, almost overblown, position he has been granted in the history of translation theory."¹⁵² Some translation critics condemned its vagueness and called for concrete theories through the studies of western linguistics. "The result is that the content of these three traditional

¹⁴⁸ Yan Fu as quoted in Fan, "Highlights of Translation", np.

¹⁴⁹ 林语堂 Lin Yutang was a famous Chinese writer, philosopher, translator and poet. In 1919, Lin moved with his wife to the United States to gain his doctoral degree in comparative literature. Unfortunately, one year later due to financial reasons he had to move to Le Creusot, France, to teach Chinese labourers there to read and write. In the year 1923 he completed his doctorate at Jena University in Leipzig, Germany, and then began his teaching at the University of Beijing until 1926. Lin wrote many English novels, such as *My Country and My People*, *The Importance of Living*, and *Moment in Peking* and others.

¹⁵⁰ 忠实、通顺、美

¹⁵¹ Fan, "Highlights of Translation", np.

¹⁵² Leo Tak-hung Chan, "What's Modern in Chinese Translation Theory? Lu Xun and the Debates on Literalism and Foreignization in the May Fourth Period", *TTR: Traduction, Terminologie, Redaction* 14.2 (2001), p. 199.

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criteria has been greatly enriched, especially by the effect equivalence theory, which in a broad sense means that the target language should be equivalent to the source language from a semantic, pragmatic, and stylistic point of view.”¹⁵³ For example, the linguistic approach to translation studies has become popular in the field of translation, as shown in Luo Xuanmin’s *Linguistic Contributions to the Development of Translation Studies in China*. When using the newly developed translation criteria¹⁵⁴ to construct a text in translation, the Chinese scholar adopts the traditional three-character criteria to evaluate and appreciate a text in translation.¹⁵⁵

3.2.2 Translating Methods

Generally speaking, there are two methods of translating: one is literal translation and the other is translation of sense. Literal translation requires the translator to keep loyal to the original work not only in content but also in style, while free translation emphasizes the importance of the target language. The debate about literal translation versus free translation in China peaked with the heated argument between Lu Xun (1881-1936)¹⁵⁶ and Liang Shiqiu (1902-1987).

Liang Shiqiu at one point accused Lu Xun of making hard translations, which were “next to literal translation. This fashion for literal translation should not be encouraged.”¹⁵⁷ Lu Xun took up Liang’s challenge in a sarcastic tone:

¹⁵³ Luo, “Linguistic Contributions to the Development”, p. 105.

¹⁵⁴ Luo introduced seven standards for rendering into the Chinese language, namely, intentionality, informativity, cohesion, coherence, situationality, intertextuality and acceptability. Due to my ignorance in the field of translation studies in China, I have to parrot the development of the Chinese translation studies from Luo’s article.

¹⁵⁵ Luo, “Linguistic Contributions to the Development”, p. 108.

¹⁵⁶ 鲁迅 Lu Xun (1881-1936) was an influential figure in the twentieth century Chinese literature and well-known as a short-story writer, essayist, critic and literary theorist.

¹⁵⁷ Liang Shiqiu as quoted in Fan, “Highlights of Translation”, np.

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Owing to my inadequacy as a translator and the limitations of the Chinese language, upon reading through my translation I find it obscure and uneven, and in many places very hard to understand. Yet if I were to cut the redundant phrases, it would lose its original flavour. As far as I am concerned, I must either go on producing these hard translations, or produce none at all. I can only hope readers will be willing to make the necessary mental effort to read it.¹⁵⁸

Then Liang made a counterattack:

With intelligibility as our prime criterion, there is no harm in changing the order of sentences, because “making a mental effort” is no fun, and it is doubtful whether “hard translation” can preserve “the essential style of the original.” Certainly, if “hard translation” could preserve the essential style of the original that would be a miracle, and we could not accuse the Chinese language of having “limitations.”¹⁵⁹

In fact the controversy between Lu Xun and Liang Shiqiu began from their different attitudes towards Rousseau (1712-1778), a Genevan philosopher of the Enlightenment. Once Liang Shiqiu wrote an article in which he attacked Rousseau on his viewpoint of female education, which aroused Lu Xun’s discontent inasmuch as he completely disagreed with Liang. Afterwards, Lu Xun strongly counterattacked Liang Shiqiu in an essay. From then on, their debates continued, ranging from literary criticism to political views and attitudes with Lu Xun as a great literary soldier of the proletariat – “Lu Xun is a key person in the Chinese cultural revolution. He is not only a great litterateur but also a great thinker and revolutionist”¹⁶⁰.

Explained from the perspective of Chinese translation theory, literal and free translation are very different from each other with literal translation staying true to the author and the source language – *xin* (faithfulness) – while free translation leans towards the reader and the target language – *da* (readability). In other words, the choice of sense

¹⁵⁸ Lu Xun as quoted in Fan, “Highlights of Translation”, np.

¹⁵⁹ Liang Shiqiu as quoted in Fan, “Highlights of Translation”, np.

¹⁶⁰ Mao Zhedong’s praise of Lu Xun in Chinese is as follows: 鲁迅是中国文化革命的主将,他不但是伟大的文学家, 而且也是伟大的思想家和伟大的革命家.

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and literal translation is decided by the respective goal. When the translator wants to simply introduce a foreign work, some stories and plots from the text for instance, to the ordinary reader, free translation is not a bad option to help the target reader understand the original well, because in this situation the content of the original is much more important than its style. The translating work here adheres to the opinion of similarity of spirit (*shen si*)¹⁶¹. By contrast, when the goal of rendering is to illustrate a foreign author, a well-known writer in particular, the original content and writing style including language, structure, rhetorical figures of speech and imagery both play a key role in translating, and therefore the method of literal translation is better, or the best, to preserve the original spirit. Only in this way can both the original works and the original writer be thoroughly appreciated by the Chinese reader, which is called similarity of spirit and form (*shen xing jie si*)¹⁶².

In practice, as far as translation ways of literal and free methods are concerned, neither of them is completely wrong, as Lin Yutang distinguished between these two methods of translation as follows:

“Translation by word” could be used where the translation was deemed correct from the context; and “translation by sentence” had to be used where “translation by word” could not render the “global meaning” of the sentence. The global meaning of a sentence could not be derived [from] a simple summation of the meanings of each and every individual words making up that sentence. It could only be derived after grasping the global idea of the sentence. If the translation happened to be a word-for-word match of the original sentence, so much the better. Otherwise, the meaning of certain individual words had to be ignored in order to catch the global meaning of the sentence.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ 神似

¹⁶² 神形皆似

¹⁶³ Lin Yutang as quoted in Fan, “Highlights of Translation”, np.

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3.2.2.1 Literal Translation in Rendering Shakespeare

Bian Zhilin (1910-2000) is a representative in adopted literal translation in rendering Shakespeare. He translated the original into the Chinese language according to his principle of *yibu yiqu*¹⁶⁴— the translator should render the original by imitating the author at every step from the number of lines, rhyme, to feet.

Bian's translation of *Hamlet* was published under the title *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* in 1956 by the Beijing Writer Press. When rendering the play into Chinese, Bian preserved the original mode by “following the distribution of verse and prose in the old version and keeping every variation in the verse”¹⁶⁵, as he wrote in his “Illustration to the Translation”: “The original prose was translated in vernacular Chinese prose and blank verse was in unrhymed poetic form with five-*dun*¹⁶⁶ [*dun* literally means a group of words] within a line. When there is rhyme in the original, correspondingly the translation is in verse as well.”¹⁶⁷ To illustrate how Bian Zhilin exercised literal translation in rendering the playwright and poet, let's take Hamlet's soliloquy in Act III Scene I for example.

Shakespeare's original soliloquy is:

To be, or not to be, that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them. To die — to sleep,
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks

¹⁶⁴ 亦步亦趋

¹⁶⁵ Bian Zhilin as quoted in Zhaoxiang Zhou, “Studies on Chinese Translations of *Hamlet*” (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1981), p. 217, as well as Meng, *A Brief History*, p. 113. The original Chinese is as follows: “译文中诗体与散文体的分配，都照原样，诗体中各种变化，也保持原状。”

¹⁶⁶ 顿

¹⁶⁷ Bian Zhilin as quoted in Zhou, *Studies on Chinese Translations of Hamlet*, p. 26. “用白话散文译原文散文，用每行五[顿]的无韵白话诗体来译原文无韵诗，原文有韵的地方也照样用韵。”

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That flesh is heir to. 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;
To sleep, perchance to dream — ay, there is the rub:
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause

(*Hamlet*, 3.1.56-68)

Bian Zhilin's Chinese translation is in verse as follows:

活下去还是不活：这是问题。
要做到高贵，究竟该忍气吞声
来容受狂暴的命运矢石交攻呢，
还是该挺身反抗无边的苦恼，
扫它个干净？死，就是睡眠 ——
就这样：而睡眠就等于了结了
心痛以及千百种身体要担负的
皮痛肉痛，那该是天大的好事，
正求之不得呀！死，就是睡眠；
睡眠，也许要做梦，这就麻烦了！
我们一旦摆脱了尘世的牵缠，
在死的睡眠里还会做些什么梦，
一想到就不能不踌躇。

(Bian Zhilin's Chinese translation)

This soliloquy is in blank verse – unrhymed iambic pentameter; that is to say, Shakespeare adopted ten syllables in a line and then these ten syllables were divided into five pairs called iambic feet. Generally speaking, the foot consists of two syllables with the stress on the second one. At the same time, the lines are unrhymed. Compared to the so-called syllable and foot in the English language system, there is no such equivalent in the Chinese language. Accordingly, Bian Zhilin tried to create his own *dun*, although the idea of adopting five-*dun* in accordance with Shakespeare's five pairs of foot was put forward by Sun Dayu¹⁶⁸. *Dun* normally consists of two or three Chinese words, forming one group. Look at the comparison between the original and the translation line by line:

¹⁶⁸ Zhili Sun, [1949-1966: *On Translations of British and American Literatures of the PRC*] 《1949-1966: 我国英美文学翻译概论》 (Nanjing: Yilin Press, 1996), p. 82.

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To be, or not to be --- that is the question: 活下去 还是 不活: 这是 问题。	[ti] ¹⁶⁹
Whether 'tis nob ler in the mind to suffer 要做到 高贵, 究竟该 忍气 吞声	[sheng]
The slings or arrows of out rageous fortune 来容受 狂暴的 命运 矢石 交攻呢,	[ni]
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles 还是该 挺身 反抗 无边的 苦恼,	[nao]
And by opposing end them. 扫它个 干净?	[jing]

Like Shakespeare's five pairs of iambic feet within a line, Bian Zhilin adopted five *dun* – five groups in each two or three Chinese characters are put together – in his translation and meanwhile gave no rhyme between lines (see the Chinese *pinyin* in the square bracket). In the meantime Bian closely followed Shakespeare in the number of lines and even the order of them. Notwithstanding, to avoid inaccuracy resulting from blind faithfulness to the original Europeanized structures and expressions, he rearranged these two sentences from “For in that sleep of death what dreams may come / When we have shuffled off this mortal coil ” into “Once we get rid of the mortal life (我们一旦摆脱了尘世的牵缠) / What we will dream of in the sleep of death (在死的睡眠里还会做些什么梦)”. Bian's attempt has been accepted by the circle of Shakespearean studies and his version is regarded as one of the best Chinese translations of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.¹⁷⁰ In theory, all that Bian Zhilin has done was to authenticate his principle of “seeking for similarity in spirit through preserving the original form” (*cunxing qiushen*)¹⁷¹.

3.2.2.2 Free translation in Rendering Shakespeare

From his translation experience in introducing Western philosophical works to modern China, Yan Fu suggested that the translator “grasp the global spirit of the discourse, let the

¹⁶⁹ The Chinese *pinyin* in the square bracket helps to show that the lines are not rhymed.

¹⁷⁰ Meng, *A Brief History*, p. 113.

¹⁷¹ 存形求神

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idea become part of your mind and then let the writing brush take care of itself. When it comes to an abstruse text, which cannot be understood all by itself, try to paraphrase it by adding explanatory remarks either afore or aft, to bring out its meaning.”¹⁷² In practice, the method of free translation is relatively popular in rendering Shakespeare into the Chinese language.

Zhu Shenghao (1912-1944) talked about his experience in his “Foreword” for the edition of *The Complete Theatrical Works of William Shakespeare*: “I will try to retain the spirit of the original as far as I possibly can; if this cannot be achieved, I will at least try to convey the intentions of the original, using fluent, plain Chinese; as to word-for-word ‘hard’ translations, I dare not venture to go along with.”¹⁷³

To make a clear contrast with Bian Zhilin’s literal translation, Zhu’s version of Hamlet’s soliloquy in Act III Scene I is also cited as example, which can be literally rendered back into English in the following way:

To live or to destroy, this is a question that is worth considering. Which behaviour is much nobler: to speechlessly suffer the outrageous slings and arrows of fortune or to bravely rebel against endless troubles in the world and end them through struggles? To die is to sleep and everything is over. If our heartache and other numberless shocks that our flesh body cannot escape can disappear from now in such a sleep, that is what we most welcome. To die is to sleep. Maybe we can still dream in the sleep. Ay, there is the rub: because when we get rid of the rotten human body, what we will dream of in the deathlike sleep makes us hesitate. (My translation of Zhu’s version)

生存还是毁灭，这是一个值得考虑的问题；默然忍受命运的暴虐的毒箭，或是挺身反抗人世的无涯的苦难，通过斗争把它们扫清，这两种行为，哪一种更高贵？死了；睡着了；什么都完了；要是在这一种睡眠之中，我们心头的创痛，以及其他无数血肉之躯所不能避免的打击，都可以从此消失，那正是我们求之不得的结局。死了；睡着了；睡着了也许还会做梦；嗯，阻碍就在这儿：因为当我们摆脱了这一具朽腐的皮囊以后，在那死的睡眠里，究竟将要做些什么梦，那不能不使我们踌躇顾虑。

(Zhu Shenghao’s Chinese translation)

¹⁷² Yan Fu as quoted in Fan, “Highlights of Translation”, np.

¹⁷³ Zhu Shenghao as quoted in Fan, “Highlights of Translation”, np.

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Comparing this with Shakespeare's blank verse and Bian Zhilin's literal translation in verse form, first of all, Zhu Shenghao did not arrange his version in lines; secondly, he added his explanatory remarks to the original text, such as the underlined words in the following sentences: "this is a question that is worth considering (这是一个值得考虑的问题)" and "Which behaviour is much nobler: to speechlessly suffer the outrageous slings and arrows of fortune or to bravely rebel against endless troubles in the world and end them through struggles? (默然忍受命运的暴虐的毒箭，或是挺身反抗人世的无涯的苦难，通过斗争把它们扫清，这两种行为，哪一种更高贵?)"; thirdly, Zhu reconstructed his sentences according to the Chinese syntax, for instance, "If our heartache and other numberless shocks that our flesh body cannot escape can disappear from now in such a sleep, that is what we most welcome (要是在这一种睡眠之中，我们心头的创痛，以及其他无数血肉之躯所不能避免的打击，都可以从此消失，那正是我们求之不得的结局), comparing with the original: "and by a sleep to say we end | The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks | That flesh is heir to: 'tis a consummation | Devoutly to be wish'd." (*Hamlet*, 3.1.61-4)

Though his translation of Shakespeare is not without errors¹⁷⁴, Zhu Shenghao's free translation is relatively faithful to the English text in similarity of spirit and is regarded as a good example of rendering Shakespeare:

Wherever the syntax of a sentence in the original text has been found to clash with the grammar of Chinese, I would always mull it over for hours and days until I came up with a version which was totally different in construction from the original, so much so that the intended message of the author had been brought to the foreground without being blurred by obscure Chinese.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ He Xianglin (1921-) has definitely pointed out in his edition of *A Collection of Essays on Shakespeare* that there are some mistakes in Zhu Shenghao's translation of Shakespeare, such as mistranslation and deletion from the original. Yang Guiqing wrote a book entitled *Discussions about Translations of Shakespearean Plays* to correct Zhu's mistakes. Meanwhile, from the viewpoint of translating method, Bian Zhilin, the translator of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in verse, criticised Zhu for his disloyalty to the original work and its author.

¹⁷⁵ Zhu Shenghao as quoted in Fan, "Highlights of Translation", np.

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Likewise, as a translator, Lin Yutang “maintained that the translator not only had to transfer the meaning of a sentence, but also the beyond-the-sentence meaning, or what he called the ‘feeling tone’”, for instance, the spirit, the implication, the style, and the sound.¹⁷⁶

3.3 Literary Form in Translating Shakespeare

Generally speaking, Shakespeare’s plays can be divided into two types according to the literary form, namely, prose and verse. Following the writing tradition in Elizabeth’s time, Shakespeare sometimes used verse in describing noble men in his plays, sometimes used prose for the uneducated servants, clown with crazy words and so on. At the same time, Shakespeare did not confine himself to the fashion, and he created his own style on the basis of the traditional writing. “Although most of Shakespearean plays are colloquial, very close to the folk say of the time, Elizabethan dramas were in essence full of poetry and the language was quite concise. Meanwhile, all these Shakespearean plays seldom stayed at the given division of language by switching from time to time between spoken language and strict verse.”¹⁷⁷ Accordingly, which literary form to adopt in rendering Shakespearean works is a big problem facing the Chinese translator. The history of Shakespearean translations in China has shown that three literary forms were adopted, namely, fiction, prose and verse.

¹⁷⁶ Lin Yutang as quoted in Fan, “Highlights of Translation”, np.

¹⁷⁷ Zhaoxiang Zhou, “Studies on Chinese Translations of *Hamlet*”, pp. 208-09. “虽然莎剧的剧文大多非常口语化，很接近当时一般俗语，但本质上伊利沙伯时代的剧本是诗句剧，剧文所用的语言或多或少都很凝练；同时这些剧文绝少持续停留在特定的语言层次上，而是有时像现实生活般异常接引口语，但忽而又会变成规律严谨的诗体。”

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3.3.1 Fiction Form

Studies of Chinese Shakespearean translations show that renditions at the very outset were mainly in the fictional form. *Strange Tales from Overseas* by an unknown translator (1903) and Lin Shu's *The Mysterious Stories of the English Poet* (1904) are the major representatives. In a strict sense, the first two are adaptations of Shakespeare rather than real translations, inasmuch as both of them give some general ideas about plots, characters and themes based on a collection of *Tales from Shakespeare* by Charles and Mary Lamb (1807). It is through these two adaptations that Chinese readers began to get to know Shakespeare's works.

Strange Tales from Overseas was the first translation of ten tales from this collection. These ten tales were arranged as ten chapters of a novel which was published by the Shanghai Dawen Press in 1903. The anonymous translator described his purpose in rendering these tales in the introduction, when writing about the author:

The book was written by the Englishman Shakespeare (1656-1616). He was extraordinarily good at poetry. His dramas became terribly fashionable and he was regarded as the greatest writer in England. Shakespeare's works were welcomed by the reader in France, Germany, Russia and Italy. In contrast to the situation in European countries, none of the Chinese people has ever really read his works, although later on, in particular the intellectual classes sang high praise of Shakespeare when talking about poetry and novels. Consequently, I earnestly translated the book, hoping to bring new splendour to the circle of fiction.¹⁷⁸

One year later, with the help of Wei Yi, a translator and master of several foreign languages, Lin Shu (1852-1924), without any foreign knowledge, finished rendering Lamb's whole collection and the book was published by the Commerce Publishing House.

¹⁷⁸ As quoted in Weimin Li, [*The History of Shakespearian Studies in China*] 《中国莎士比亚批评史》 (Beijing: China Drama Press, 2006), p. 309. “是书为英国索士比亚 (Shakespeare, 千五百六年生, 千六百一十六年卒) 所著。氏乃绝世名优, 长于诗词。其所编戏本小说, 风靡一时, 推为英国空前大家。译者遍法、德、俄、意, 几乎无人不读。而吾国近今学界, 言诗词小说者, 亦辄啧啧称索氏。然其书向未得读, 仆窃恨之, 因亟译述是编, 冀为小说界上, 增一异彩。”

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These two versions share many similarities: to begin with, the classical Chinese was used in the rendering; secondly the author's name – Shakespeare – appeared on the title page; last but not least, both of them have rewritten Shakespeare's plays in the fictional form with a new title to each play: "The title of the version is not the result of direct rendering of the original. The translator aimed at elegance by creating a new title for the old one."¹⁷⁹ Nevertheless, dealing with the title of the play, Lin Shu adopted only two Chinese characters while the first writer used eight ones (see the list below).

Original Title	Title in <i>Strange Tales</i>	My literal translation	Lin's Title	My literal translation
Hamlet	<i>Bao da chou Han Deli sha shu</i>	Hamlet Kills his Uncle to Revenge	<i>Gui zhao</i>	The Ghost's Call
King Lear			<i>Nü bian</i>	Changed Daughters
Macbeth			<i>Gu zheng</i>	Bewitched Regicide
Othello			<i>Hei mao</i>	The Black General
Merchant of Venice	<i>Yan Dunli jie zhai yue ge rou</i>	Antonio Borrows Loan by Contract of Flesh	<i>Rou quan</i>	Contract of Flesh
The Taming of the Shrew	<i>Bi Chuli xun fu e pi niang</i>	Petrucchio Tames his Shrewish Wife	<i>Xun han</i>	Taming the Shrew
The Comedy of Errors	<i>Cuo zhong cuo ai guo chu qi wen</i>	Errors in Errors Anecdote in the Ai Kingdom	<i>Luan wu</i>	Errors from the Twins
Romeo and Juliet			<i>Zhu qing</i>	The Casting of Love
Timon of Athens			<i>Chou jin</i>	Hating Gold
Pericles			<i>Shen he</i>	Providential Reunion
All's Well That Ends Well	<i>Ji shang ji qing qi tou jie zhi</i>	Wife Steals Ring as the Best Plan	<i>Yi xie</i>	Remedial Harmony
Measure for Measure	<i>Ku xin jiu di jian shou zhen cao</i>	Try to Save Brother by Holding Virtue,	<i>Yu pei</i>	Love Match in Prison

¹⁷⁹ Qing Wang, [The Influence of Target Culture on Translation: A Study of Early Shakespearean Translation in China] "目的语文化语境对翻译的影响: 莎士比亚作品在中国的早期译介", *Journal of Hunan University of Arts and Science* 4 (2006), p. 71. "译本的书名不是原本书名的译语。译者总是追求典雅, 另立新名。"

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Cymbeline	<i>Mao xian xun shi zhong xie kang li</i>	Adventuring to Look for the Lost and Finally Getting Married	<i>Huan zheng</i>	Ring Evidence
As You Like it			<i>Lin ji</i>	Getting together in the Woods
A Mid-summer Night's Dream			<i>Xian kuai</i>	Fairy Go-between
The Winter's Tale	<i>Huai du xin Li Ande qi qi</i>	Envious Leontes Deserts his Wife	<i>Zhu huan</i>	Returned Pearls
The Two Gentlemen of Verona	<i>Pu Lusa tan se bei liang peng</i>	Proteus Lusts after a Woman and Betrays the Loyal Friends	<i>Qing huo</i>	Seduced by Love
The Tempest			<i>Ju yin</i>	A Tempestuous Cause
Much Ado About Nothing			<i>Li hong</i>	Troubles at Wedding
Twelfth Night	<i>Wu Liwei cuo ai luan sheng nü</i>	Olivia Makes a Mistake by Falling in Love with the Twin Sister	<i>Hun gui</i>	Bewildered Marriage

Figure 3.3.1 Titles of translated Chinese plays from *Tales from Shakespeare*

What is more, the anonymous translator was the first to sinicize Shakespeare's works in rendering, for example, he gave a Chinese name of Han Deli to Hamlet in *Hamlet Kills His Uncle to Revenge (bao da chou He Deli sha shu)*¹⁸⁰.

Lin Shu's translation has greatly contributed to the development of Chinese Shakespearean studies: in the first place, his style of rendering Shakespeare in classical Chinese prose influenced many writers, most of whom have been famous in the history of Chinese literature. Tian Han is a good example and wrote at one point in his book *My Childhood*: "I've been unconsciously influenced by this book. I read *The Tempest*, *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet* in the originals when I grew up, but it seemed to me that Lin's way of telling these stories as fairy tales was more appealing."¹⁸¹ Secondly, Lin Shu's translations served as the stage scripts for the early Chinese Shakespearean performances

¹⁸⁰ 《报大仇韩德利杀叔》

¹⁸¹ Tian Han as quoted in Ruru Li, "Shakespeare Translation", p. 7.

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during the period between 1913 and 1918.¹⁸² Lin's way of rewriting Shakespeare can be shown through the comparison between Lamb's extract of *The Merchant of Venice* and Lin Shu's fictional translation with a new title *Contract of Flesh* in the classical Chinese style.

Shylock, the Jew, lived at Venice: he was a usurer, who had amassed an immense fortune by lending money at great interest to Christian merchants. Shylock, being a hard-hearted man, exacted the payment of the money he lent with such severity that he was much disliked by all good men, and particularly by Antonio, a young merchant of Venice; and Shylock as much hated Antonio, because he used to lend money to people in distress, and would never take any interest for the money he lent; therefore there was great enmity between this covetous Jew and the generous merchant Antonio.

(Lamb's *Merchant of Venice*)

Lin Shu's version in classical Chinese is literally translated back into English, which unfortunately cannot reflect his special rendering style.

Xie Luoke, a big-bellied Jewish merchant, amassed an immense fortune by lending money at great interest. Xie Luoke exacted the payment of the money he had lent without any delay and therefore many people hated him. Xie Luoke's enemy Antonio, a Roman, lived in Venice like Xie Luoke. Antonio was so generous and hospitable that he would lend money to people in distress. Xie Luoke thought Antonio's action was to spoil his trade and consequently hated him at heart.

(My translation of Lin Shu's Chinese version)¹⁸³

Although Hu Shi – the advocator of vernacular Chinese – denounced Lin Shu “as a great offender of Shakespeare for he had translated Shakespeare's dramas into classical Chinese in the fictional form”,¹⁸⁴ Lin's translation was highly praised by other scholars, Qian

¹⁸² Xiaoyang Zhang, *Shakespeare in China*, p. 104.

¹⁸³ 歇洛克者，犹太硕腹贾也，恒用母金取子，以居积得橐金无数。然如期要索，未偿假借，人多恨之。仇家曰安东尼，罗马人也，与歇洛克同客于微臬司。其人慷侠好友，有通缓急者，必释之金勿问。歇洛克以为相形以败其业，憎之次骨。

¹⁸⁴ Hu Shi as quoted in Weimin Li, *History of Shakespearean Studies*, p. 312. “林琴南把萧士比亚的戏曲，译成了记叙体的古文！这真是萧士比亚的大罪人。”

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Xuantong (1887-1939)¹⁸⁵ for example. Qian was a linguist and literary theoretian and he had such opinion of Lin Shu as follows:

Mr. Lin is a great literary giant of the time, good at rendering occidental novels in the spirit of novels fashionable in the Tang dynasty [– legend novels]. Though what he translates is from the Occidental, his wording is totally of Chinese style, which makes the reader forget that he is reading a western novel. How can an ordinary scholar hope for such achievements?¹⁸⁶

At Hu Shi's call for vernacular rather than classical Chinese in the Literary Revolution (1917), modern Chinese language became popular not only in creating new literary but also in rendering foreign works. Nevertheless, some scholars were still in favour of the traditional classical Chinese language, Shao Ting¹⁸⁷ for instance. Shao rendered Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in 1924 and one year later he cooperated with Xu Shaoshan in translating *Julius Caesar*.

3.3.2 Prose Form

When planning to organize a five-person group¹⁸⁸ to finish rendering Shakespeare's complete works within 5 or 10 years, Hu Shi (1891-1962) wrote in his letter to Liang Shiqiu in 1931: "I suggest that Yiduo and Zhimo attempt to translate Shakespeare in verse,

¹⁸⁵ 钱玄同 Qian Xuantong was a literary theoretian, philologist as well as a key figure in the New Cultural Movement (1917). He was the first to promote the abolition of Chinese characters. His son Qian Sanqiang, a distinguished nuclear physicist, contributed to the development of nuclear weapons in China.

¹⁸⁶ Qian Xuantong as quoted in Weimin Li, *History of Shakespearian Studies*, p. 311. "林先生为当代文豪。善能以唐代小说之神韵。译外洋小说。所叙者皆西人之事也。而用笔措词。全是国文风度。使阅者几忘其位西事也，是岂寻常文人所能企及？"

¹⁸⁷ 邵挺

¹⁸⁸ They were Chen Tongbo (陈通伯), Liang Shiqiu (梁实秋), Wen Yiduo (闻一多), Xu Zhimo (徐志摩) and Ye Gongchao (叶公超).

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meanwhile you and Tongbo try prose. Only after the experiment with the translating style we can make a decision: either only prose or both of them for Shakespearean plays.”¹⁸⁹

As a matter of fact, Chinese translators had already been rendering Shakespeare in prose form since Tian Han’s first complete translation of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (1921), for “[m]ost of the original was in blank verse... This kind of poetry did not strictly observe its original regularities in Shakespeare’s hands: there are another one or two syllables more than ten syllables. And each line does not mean the end of meaning and sometimes it takes several lines. In practice, all these made Shakespeare’s blank verse very close to prose.”¹⁹⁰ Consequently, “[e]ighty percent of the translations of Shakespeare in China now are in the vernacular Chinese prose style,”¹⁹¹ the case is true with Zhu Shenghao’s translation of *Hamlet*’s soliloquy in Act III Scene I¹⁹².

Likewise, Liang Shiqiu (1902-1987), the first Chinese who single-handedly rendered the complete plays, translated Shakespeare in the vernacular Chinese prose style, except that he also included rhymed couplets in his translations.¹⁹³ He finished the first eight plays in mainland China and continued his translation after he moved to Taiwan. In 1952 he wrote in his article entitled *On Translating Plays of Shakespeare*: “My translations were entirely in prose style. To be honest, I was not able to take the rhythms of Shakespeare’s poetry into account. I really felt that it was already difficult enough if I was able to express

¹⁸⁹ My own English translation of Hu Shi’s words in Weimin Li, *History of Shakespearean Studies*, p. 341. The original Chinese sentences are as follows: “我主张先由一多、志摩试译韵文体。另由你和通伯试译散文体。试验之后，我们才可以决定，或决定全用散文，或决定用两种文体。”

¹⁹⁰ Liang Shiqiu as quoted in Zhaoxiang Zhou, “Studies on Chinese Translations of *Hamlet*”, p. 216. 原文大部分是“无韵诗”……这种诗体到了莎士比亚手里已经不严格遵守其原有的规律了，往往于十音节之外再加上一两个音节，而且每行读起来并不全是自成起落，时常要好几行连贯下去，所以莎士比亚所使用的无韵诗实际已很接近散文。

¹⁹¹ Ruru Li, “Shakespeare Translation”, p. 15.

¹⁹² Please see the example above-discussed in *Free translation in Rendering Shakespeare*.

¹⁹³ Ruru Li, “Shakespeare Translation”, p. 15.

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the full and accurate meaning of the original.”¹⁹⁴ In what he says the difficulty in translating Shakespearean works into the Chinese language is clearly expressed. Nevertheless, Liang tried to catch Shakespeare’s poetic spirit:

I was somewhat enlightened by Percy Simpson’s *Shakespeare’s Punctuation*. It seems that Shakespeare did not use punctuation marks in the standard way but had a system of his own. His aim was to guide his actors and actresses in the recitation of their lines and enable them to reproduce these lines with the right cadence. I decided, therefore, to do my best in my translations to keep Shakespeare’s original punctuation system intact. The consequence is that with every line in the original text there will be a line of translation; in other words, I have taken sentences as my translation units. Of course, it will not be a literal translation, for word-for-word translation will result in total incomprehensibility; nor will it be a mere translation of meaning, for such a translation, eloquent and fluent as it is, will be too far removed from the tone and the rhythm of the original. I am not sure if the sentence-for-sentence approach I have adopted will be able to retain more or less the original rhythmic pattern.¹⁹⁵

Liang Shiqiu has made great efforts in preserving the original in verse form; nevertheless Chang Chen-hsien still thought that “[h]is style is less beautiful than Xu’s [Xu Zhimo]. These translations may help a Chinese student to read Shakespeare, but for those readers who know no English at all or for use on the stage, they are of little service.”¹⁹⁶ Obviously, in Chang’s opinion, it is better to translate Shakespeare in prose rather than verse. And his viewpoint is also shown in his comments on translators such as Deng Yizhe and Xu Zhimo, who tried to translate Shakespeare’s balcony scene in verse form.

¹⁹⁴ Liang Shiqiu as quoted in Ruru Li, “Shakespeare Translation”, pp. 15-16.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.16.

¹⁹⁶ Chang, “Shakespeare in China”, p. 116.

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3.3.3 Verse Form

As mentioned in the chapter on the history of China's reception of Shakespeare, Chang Chen-hsien claims that the earliest real Chinese translation of a Shakespearean play appeared about 1910 by Deng Yizhe, who rendered only the famous balcony scene in verse, a fashion characterized by strict rhymes and tonal patterns among the early writers. Before making a comparison between the original and the translation, it is necessary to quote Shakespeare's play:

But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?
It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.
Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
Who is already sick and pale with grief
That thou, her maid, art far more fair than she.
(Romeo and Juliet.2.1.45-9)

Chang then literally translated Deng's so-called "rhymed ballad" [a very popular form of entertainment, sung to the accompaniment of a very simple stringed instrument and of wooden sound boards which keep the beats of the rhythm] back into English:

Ah! Look, a high shoots [!, i.e. light] forth from that window!
That is the east.
June (Juliet)! You are the sun!
Good sun! Hurry up, in order to knock down this envious moon!
You just look at that pale long face of hers...
If you were her maid or girl-slave, I should break any intestines with anger.¹⁹⁷

Apparently, compared with the original, Deng's version does not make any sense due to different language systems: while the rhythm of Chinese verse is based on tone, while the English is on stress.¹⁹⁸ Therefore, rendering poetic English into Chinese does not simply mean a line by line translation from English into Chinese verse. The difficulty of rendering

¹⁹⁷ Chang, "Shakespeare in China", p. 114.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 114.

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Shakespeare into traditional Chinese verse style made Chinese translators look for other ways.

Xu Zhimo (1897-1931), a famous modern poet in Chinese literature, failed to translate the whole play *Romeo and Juliet* but he translated the balcony scene in 1920. Unlike Deng Yizhe, he rendered the scene into free verse, which is more colloquial and free from strict requirements in tone, number of words in each line and does not need a rigid rhyme scheme:

Ah soft! What light shines bright from yonder windows?
That is the east, Julieh (Juliet) is the eastern sun.
Arise, beautiful sun, and outshine quickly
That envious moon. Since you, being her maid,
Are far more beautiful than she, she is already completely pale with grief.¹⁹⁹

Though beautiful in terms of poetic style, Xu's version of the scene resulted from translating word by word into modern free verse and "can be appreciated only by himself and by a small number of readers. No Chinese scholar who cannot read English can really understand and appreciate it."²⁰⁰

Bian Zhilin can be said to have made great achievements in rendering Shakespeare's blank verse in free verse form (see the detailed description of his literal translation above). Although blank verse was used in most of Shakespeare's poetic dramas, rhyme often appeared from time to time between prose and blank verse, ranging in numbers of line from two or four to a dozen. Then how did Bian Zhilin translate Shakespeare's rhymed verse, apart from his free verse of Shakespeare's blank verse? Bian's rendition of the actor's prologue to "play in play" in Act III Scene II of *Hamlet* can help the reader once again appreciate his contribution in translating Shakespeare in poetic form.

For us | and for | our tra | gedy,
今晚 | 来献丑, | 上演 | 悲剧, [ju]
Here stoop | ing to | your cle | mency,
先向 | 各位 | 来把 | 躬一鞠, [ju]

¹⁹⁹ Chang, "Shakespeare in China", p. 115.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 115.

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We beg | your hear | ing pa | tiently.
请宽宏 | 大量, | 看到 | 结局。 [ju]
(*Hamlet*, 3.2.144-46)

In the original, there are four pairs of iambic feet within a line (see the division mark “|” in the original), and each line ends with the same syllable “y”. Likewise, Bian Zhilin adopted the four-*dun* method in his translation and each *dun* is made up of two or three Chinese characters. What is more, in the meantime, corresponding with Shakespeare’s rhyme of “y”, Bian gave the same rhyme of “ju” at each end of his translation (see the Chinese *pinyin* in the square bracket).

Bian’s success in rendering Shakespeare in verse has exerted great influence on Shakespearean translation; afterwards, more and more translations of Shakespeare began to appear in poetic form, such as Wu Xinghua’s *Henry IV* (1957) and Fang Zhong’s *Richard III* (1959).

3.4 Rendering *Complete Plays of Shakespeare*

The history of Chinese Shakespearean translations has witnessed the efforts made by four translators one after another in attempting to render the complete plays and they are Cao Weifeng, Liang Shiqiu, Zhu Shenghao, and Fang Ping. Regardless of the quality of their versions is good or not, they are really worth mentioning because they gave impetus to the development of Shakespearean studies in China.

3.4.1 Cao Weifeng

Strictly speaking, Cao Weifeng (1911-1963)²⁰¹ was the first Chinese translator who tried rendering the complete plays in poetic form.²⁰² Why he wanted to begin with Shakespeare

²⁰¹ 曹未风 Cai Weifeng was a translator.

²⁰² Meng, *A Brief History*, p. 102, as well as Zhili Sun, *1949-1966: On Translations*, p. 89.

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is unknown, the fact is that he did begin to translate the plays and the sonnets as early as in 1931.

Then, between 1942 and 1944 the Guiyang Wentong Publishing House printed his book entitled *The Complete Plays of Shakespeare*, including his eleven finished versions from 1935 to 1944, namely, *Julius Caesar* (1935), *The Tempest* (1942), *The Merchant of Venice* (1942), *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1943), *All's Well That Ends Well* (1943), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1943), *Romeo and Juliet* (1943), *King Lear* (1944), *Hamlet* (1944), *Macbeth* (1944), and *The Comedy of Errors* (1944). In 1946 only ten of the above-mentioned plays, according to Sun Zhili's statement, were recollected in a new book entitled *The Complete Shakespearean Works Translated by Cao*²⁰³ and published by the Shanghai Culture Cooperation Company, different from Zhou Zhaoxiang's statistics of eleven plays²⁰⁴. As a stern Shakespearean scholar, Cao Weifeng, after the foundation of the People's Republic of China, retranslated eight among the eleven plays except *The Tempest*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *King Lear*. Meanwhile he added four new versions, namely, *Twelfth Night*, *Othello*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, and *Much Ado About Nothing*, to his Shakespearean translation.

As far as literary form is concerned, Cao Weifeng adopted verse form, as Bian Zhilin did. But again unlike Bian, who followed Shakespeare in translating at every step from the original form to its rhythm and foot, Cao thought that observing the original form either of prose or verse was first and foremost of great importance and there was no need to preserve anything else due to the discrepancies between the Chinese and English language in terms of rhyme and foot.²⁰⁵ In theory, Cao put emphasis on the popularization of Shakespeare's works in the field of Chinese performance, hoping that the Chinese could really appreciate Shakespeare and his plays through his careful introduction onto the Chinese stage. Consequently, Cao's translation is full of colloquialism in order to sufficiently display Shakespeare's ingenious art in drama; at the same time, the spoken

²⁰³ Zhili Sun, *1949-1966: On Translations*, p. 86.

²⁰⁴ Zhaoxiang Zhou, "Studies on Chinese Translations of *Hamlet*", p. 24.

²⁰⁵ Zhili Sun, *1949-1966: On Translations*, p. 88.

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language is quite suitable for performance. The following translation from Hamlet's decision in Act V Scene II by Cao gives the reader a glimpse of his style:

If it be now, 'tis not to come; If it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all.

(*Hamlet*, 5.2.216-18)

Cao's version rendered back into English is as follows:

If it should be today, it will not come tomorrow;
If it is not tomorrow, it must be today,
If it is not today, it will come sooner or later: whenever, it is the same.

如果该是现在，就不会是未来；
如果不是未来，那么就是现在，
如果不是现在，它迟早还是要来的：什么时候都是一样；

(Cao's Chinese version)

3.4.2 Liang Shiqiu

Liang Shiqiu (1902-1987), the only Chinese who single-handedly finished rendering Shakespeare's complete dramas, began his translation in 1931 at Hu Shi's invitation of himself and four others to embark on the project of translating the complete plays. The retreat of the other four from the ambitious plan was due to different reasons, for example, Xu Zhimo died as a result of an air crash in the same year. When he was still in mainland China, Liang Shiqiu translated eight plays in this decade, namely, *The Merchant of Venice* (1936), *All's Well That Ends Well* (1936), *Macbeth* (1936), *King Lear* (1936), *Othello* (1936), *The Tempest* (1937), *Twelfth Night* (1938), and *Hamlet* (1938)²⁰⁶. He did not fulfil his dream of finishing his translations within five or ten years, or exactly speaking, Hu Shi's, until 1967, eighteen years after he moved to Taiwan. The same year saw the publication of his translations of Shakespeare's thirty-seven plays, which were printed by the Taipei Far East Publishing House. Unfortunately because of the bad relationship between the Chinese Communist Party and the Kuomintang, Liang Shiqiu's *The Complete*

²⁰⁶ In terms of publication date, Meng Xianqiang has different opinion from Zhou Zhaoxiang, and here all the years in the bracket follow Meng's.

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Plays of Shakespeare was introduced to mainland China for the first time as late as 1996.²⁰⁷

While Liang Shiqiu mainly translated the playwright's original blank verse and prose into vernacular Chinese prose, verse did appear in his rendition when Shakespeare let his actors speak in rhymed verse, as Zhou Zhaoxiang says of Liang: "The original blank verse and prose have been translated into vernacular Chinese prose, whereas rhyme and interlude all into verse."²⁰⁸ Take his translation of Shakespeare's rhymed couplets as an example.

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

我要有比这更确切的证据。
演戏是唯一的手段 [duan]
把国王的内心来试探。 [tan]
(Liang's Chinese translation)

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

3.4.3 Zhu Shenghao

Zhu Shenghao (1911-1944), the representative of translating Shakespeare in prose, started with his ambitious plan to finish rendering the complete plays within two years in 1935. Due to the Japanese invasion he failed to carry out his plan on schedule. Unfortunately he died of pulmonary tuberculosis at an early age of thirty-two after he had finished translating thirty-one and a half between 1935 and 1944. His early death resulted in

²⁰⁷ Meng, "The Reception of Shakespeare", p. 118.

²⁰⁸ Zhaoxiang Zhou, "Studies on Chinese Translations", p. 21. "用白话散文译原文的无韵诗和散文，但原文的押韵处和插曲等一律译做韵语。"

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publishing only twenty-seven of his translations under the title *The Complete Plays of Shakespeare* in three volumes by the Shanghai World Publishing House in 1947, which had originally planned to print his whole translations in four volumes.

The first volume is made up of nine comedies: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Tempest*, and *Winter's Tale*.

The second consists of eight tragedies: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Coriolanus*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*.

The last volume includes the rest that have not been collected in the first two volumes: *Love's Labours Lost*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Taming of the Shrew*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Timon of Athens*, *Cymbeline*, *Pericles*, and *Prince of Tyre*.

Zhu's versions of the history plays were excluded from the collection because he finished only four and a half rather than ten. This regrettable fact, fortunately, was compensated for with the publication of another collection under the same title *The Complete Plays of Shakespeare*, in which Zhu Shenghao's above-mentioned twenty-seven plays were collected together with Yu Erchang's (1904-1984)²⁰⁹ ten history plays. The book was published by the Taiwan World Publishing House in 1957.

What was of great significance for the history of Shakespearean translation in China, and Chinese literature in particular, was the publishing of *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* by the People's Literature Press in 1978, for this marked the very beginning of Chinese translations of a foreign writer's complete works²¹⁰. This collection included a revised version of Zhu Shenghao's complete renditions of thirty-one plays, together with translations of the other six plays and of all Shakespearean poetry.

²⁰⁹ 虞尔昌 Yu Erchang devoted himself to the teaching of English on the mainland and then in Taiwan. In his spare time, he kept on translating Shakespeare's history plays and sonnets, which made an important contribution to Shakespearean studies in China.

²¹⁰ Meng, *A Brief History*, p. 37, as well as Xiaoyang Zhang, *Shakespeare in China*, p. 107.

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3.4.4 Fang Ping

Unlike other Shakespearean translators, Fang Ping (1921-) has not majored in literature. As a result of his great interest in the playwright, Fang embarked on rendering his poetry, for example, *Venus and Adonis* (1952), in his spare time. Simultaneously, Fang Ping tried to translate Shakespeare's plays in verse in answer to Bian Zhilin's call, such as *Much Ado About Nothing* (1953), *The Merchant of Venice* (1954), *Henry V* (1955), and these two comic plays were, together with his later renditions of *The Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *The Tempest*, collected in *Shakespeare's Five Comedies* in 1979. One year before the publishing of his *Five Comedies*, Fang Ping took up revising Zhu Shenghao's rendition and added his *Henry V* to *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*. His plan to retranslate all of Shakespeare's plays in poetic form was spoiled by the breakout of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). In 2000, finally, Fang Ping realized his ambition by compiling *The New Complete Plays of Shakespeare*, in which he was a major translator and editor as well.

Including Fang Ping's twenty-one plays, one poem and three plays in cooperation, *The New Complete Plays of Shakespeare* was the first Chinese version in preserving the author's original form, that is to say, Shakespearean prose, blank verse, rhymed couplet, and rhymed verse reappear in corresponding prose, unrhymed verse, rhymed couplet, and rhymed verse in the Chinese translation.

Take the conversation between Antonio and Bassanio at the end of Act I Scene III in *The Merchant of Venice* as an example to illustrate how Fang Ping translated Shakespeare's rhymed couplet:

Antonio: Hi thee, gentle Jew.
 The Hebrew will turn Christian, he grows kind.
Bassanio: I like not fair terms and a villain's mind.
Antonio: Come on, in this there can be no dismay,
 My ships come home a month before the day.

(*The Merchant of Venice*, 1.3.170-74)²¹¹

²¹¹ The quotation from *The Merchant of Venice* is from William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, updated ed. M. M. Mahood (Cambridge: University Press, 2003).

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安东尼：这犹太人想做基督徒，心肠都变善。 [shan]

巴珊尼：我可不爱嘴面上甜，心里头奸。 [jian]

安东尼：来吧，这个呢，你不用把心事儿担， [dan]

我的船，准是早一个月就回家转。 [zhuan]

(Fang Ping's translation)

Normally, Shakespeare used rhymed couplets at the end of act or scene to warn the actor and the audience as well of the transition of scene or event, as is the case with the above-cited dialogue. Exactly speaking, these four cited sentences are made up of two rhymed couplets with the first rhyme “ind” and the second “ay”. As an exact adherent of Bian Zhilin in “seeking for similarity in spirit through preserving the original form” (*cun xing qiu shen*), Fang Ping followed Shakespeare's original structure by “putting literal translation at the first place and using free translation as necessary means of supplement”²¹². Therefore, first and foremost, Fang Ping rendered the four English sentences into four Chinese ones to gain the similarity in form through the number of lines; on the other hand, he put the same rhyme “an” at the end of each line in order to give the reader a strong impression that Shakespeare has used verse. But why Fang Ping did not adopt two rhymes for the four sentences, as Shakespeare did by using “ind” and “ay”, is still unclear.

²¹² Zhili Sun, 1949-1966: *on Translations*, p. 92. 把直译“放在第一位”，把意译作为“必要的补充手段”。

4 Shakespearean Criticism in China

In a broad sense, Chinese Shakespearean criticism began with the diaries of Guo Songtao (1818-1891)²¹³, the first Qing minister to be stationed in a western country, when he served as an ambassador to England and France between 1877 and 1879, although at that time the reader/audience in China had no access to real Shakespearean plays. In the diary Guo Songtao remarked: “Shakespeare was a contemporary dramatist of Bacon (1561-1626) two hundred years ago and was equally famous as Homer from Greece.” Another time, after watching a play performed by English actors, Guo wrote a comment in his diary about Shakespeare’s plays, stating that they focused on plots rather than show off.²¹⁴ Afterwards, many other scholars from the Chinese literary circle mentioned the playwright and poet in their articles from time to time, say, Lu Xun (1881-1936), the key person in advocating the modern cultural movement. Nevertheless, all these cannot be exactly regarded as true Shakespearean critics, inasmuch as the real beginning of Chinese reception of Shakespeare started with the first translation of a Shakespearean play in the original dramatic form in 1921, that of *Hamlet* by Tian Han (1898-1968). Consequently, this chapter will concentrate on analysing Chinese critical opinions of Shakespeare and his works produced after the year 1921.

At the very outset of Shakespearean criticism in China, the Chinese have not formed their own system for approaching criticism of foreign works, as a result of the long period of isolation from the world. The immature critical system in China’s Shakespearean studies was in great need of cultural nutrition from the outside and began by introducing western criticism of Shakespeare.

²¹³ 郭嵩焘 Guo Songtao was the first Qing ambassador to be stationed in a western country.

²¹⁴ Meng, *A Brief History*, pp. 224-225.

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4.1 Introducing Western Shakespearean Criticism

Western Shakespearean criticism was first introduced to the Chinese reader by Zhou Yueran (1885-1946)²¹⁵ in 1929 through his *Shakespeare*, in which Zhou mentioned Lafcadio Hearn's (1850-1904)²¹⁶ opinion of Shakespeare. Lafcadio Hearn concluded that there were three major differences between Shakespearean and other dramas. To begin with, Shakespeare's plays are full of life, that is to say, Shakespearean characters live more dynamically than those of other playwrights. Secondly, every single character in Shakespeare's drama has his or her individuality. They not only live, but also have a different life from each other. Thirdly, it is impossible to find any two characters alike in his works. Everyone, whoever they are, is a special creation.²¹⁷ Brief as the introduction was, from then on, Shakespearean interpretations and appreciations from the West became popular in Chinese studies of Shakespeare, either through making comments on, or through directly translating them into the Chinese language.

Zhang Yuanchang (1905-?)²¹⁸, in his "Shakespearean Studies" published in *Literature and Philosophy Quarterly* in 1933, introduced the Shakespearean criticism of the Romantics in England, such as Charles Lamb (1775-1834), William Hazlitt (1778-1830), Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), which "changed Shakespeare's literal reputation and established him once and for all a[s] the head of English drama or even as the leading dramatist of the world."²¹⁹

²¹⁵ 周越然

²¹⁶ Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904), a famous Japanese writer and translator, was born in Greece of an Irish father and a Greek mother. After getting Japanese citizenship in 1896, Lafcadio Hearn renamed himself as Koiyumi Yakumo.

²¹⁷ Meng, *A Brief History*, pp. 228-29.

²¹⁸ 张沅长

²¹⁹ Baran Rahman, *Early Nineteenth Century Shakespeare Criticism and its Influence on Later Approaches* (http://jmi.nic.in/Research/ab2002_english_barahrahman.htm)

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With regard to introducing western Shakespearean criticism, Liang Shiqiu has made a great effort. For example, in 1936 he wrote in the preface to his rendition of *The Merchant of Venice*:

Among all the evaluations of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, I thought the essay written by Heinrich Heine (1797-1856) from Germany was of the greatest profundity. He was a poet and sympathizer of revolution and as well as a Jew; therefore, his viewpoint of the play is worth introducing.²²⁰

Accordingly, Liang Shiqiu cited Heine paragraph by paragraph in giving detailed commentary on the play, finally composing sixty percent of his whole article.

On the other hand, Chinese scholars translated essays of Shakespearean criticism from Russia, Germany, England and Japan – of course, Japan belongs to the Eastern World. In the case of rendering these Shakespearean interpretations and appreciations, two absolutely different opinions about the playwright in the western literary circle were, of course, introduced to the Chinese reader.

In 1931 the Chinese translation of *Tolstoy's Essay on Shakespeare* was printed in *Literature Monthly*. Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910), a well-known Russian writer and philosopher with his great novels *War and Peace* (1864-1869) and *Anna Karenina* (1873-1876), was strongly against the English dramatist, and George Orwell assessed Tolstoy's dissatisfaction with Shakespeare as follows:

Tolstoy's main contention is that Shakespeare is a trivial, shallow writer, with no coherent philosophy, no thoughts or ideas worth bothering about, no interest in social or religious problems, no grasp of character or probability, and, in so far as he could be said to have a definable attitude at all, with a cynical, immoral, worldly outlook on life. He accuses him of patching his plays together without caring two pence for credibility, of dealing in fantastic fables and impossible situations, of making all his characters talk in an artificial flowery language completely unlike that of real life. He also accuses him of thrusting anything and everything into his plays — soliloquies, scraps

²²⁰ Liang Shiqiu as quoted in Meng, *A Brief History*, p. 231. “在批评《威尼斯商人》的文章里，我觉得最深刻的要算是德国海涅的一文。他是一个诗人而同时亦是革命主义的同情者，他又是一个犹太人，所以他的见解很值得介绍。”

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of ballads, discussions, vulgar jokes and so forth — without stopping to think whether they had anything to do with the plot, and also of taking for granted the immoral power politics and unjust social distinctions of the times he lived in. Briefly, he accuses [him] being a hasty, slovenly writer, a man of doubtful morals, and, above all, of not being a thinker.²²¹

Tolstoy's extreme hatred of Shakespeare is probably due to the over-adulation of the playwright at that time, which was first aroused by German critics, say, Lessing. In practice, the English dramatist's greatness was not recognized in his home country to the same extent as in Germany, and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781) was the first to discover the similarities between Shakespeare's non-classical artifice and Aristotle's (384-322B.C.) unities of plot and time and place. Lessing thought, "according to classical rules of determining things, Shakespeare is a greater tragic poet than Corneille".²²² Stemming from his rebellion against the strict limitations of classicism, Lessing admired Shakespeare greatly, boldly claiming that "[a]fter Sophocles' *Oedipus*, no piece on the world can have more power over our passions than *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Hamlet*."²²³ Lessing's high admiration of Shakespeare as a romantic drew the attention of his contemporaries. Afterwards, the appreciation of Shakespeare was brought to a climax in Germany by August Wilhelm von Schlegel (1767-1845), a German poet, through his explaining the structural unity of Shakespeare's plays. After having studied a couple of years in Germany, the English poet and critic Samuel Coleridge took up the Romantic School's positive opinion of Shakespeare there and introduced it to the English literary

²²¹ George Orwell, *Tolstoy and Shakespeare* (http://www.orwell.ru/library/reviews/tolstoy/english/e_tas)

²²² Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Briefe die neueste Literatur betreffend* 17 (1759), p. 101. (<http://www.ub.uni-bielefeld.de/diglib/aufkl/brieneulit/brieneulit.htm>) The original German is as follows: "Auch nach den Mustern der Alten die Sache zu entscheiden, ist Shakespeare ein weit größerer tragischer Dichter als Corneille." Pierre Corneille (1606-1684) was a French playwright, who was called the founder of French tragedy.

²²³ *Ibid.*, p. 101. "Nach dem *Oedipus* des Sophokles muss in der Welt kein Stück mehr Gewalt über unsere Leidenschaften haben, als *Othelle*, als *König Lear*, als *Hamlet*."

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world. Thanks to the passionate propaganda during the era of Romanticism, Shakespeare, step by step, became a literary saint without any fault in world literary circles.

The introduction of western Shakespearean criticism, including positive and negative opinions, made Chinese scholars of Shakespeare clearly realize that in terms of Shakespearean studies they should have their proper attitudes towards instead of indiscriminately following either of the two opinions of the playwright from abroad. In addition, different historical, cultural, and particularly political conditions in China resulted in the so-called sinicized Shakespearean studies, which neither completely canonize Shakespeare like the Romanticists did nor denounce Shakespeare, different from Leo Tolstoy and George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), two great representatives in depreciating the playwright. In conclusion, Shakespearean criticism in China belongs to, in essence, Marxist Shakespearean criticism.

4.2 Marxist Shakespearean Criticism

As a matter of fact, Marxist Shakespearean criticism in China originated from Mao Dun (1896-1981)²²⁴ and his *Shakespeare and Realism* (1934), in which he introduced for the first time Marx's and Engels's evaluations of Shakespeare to the Chinese reader, and meanwhile Mao was the first one to connect Shakespeare with realism.²²⁵ In the following year, Mao Dun published his "Shakespeare's *Hamlet*", in which he introduced the dramatist's life, divided his writing periods, and mentioned the play's plot. At the same time, Mao pointed out that Shakespeare belonged to the aristocracy, for his works depicted the conflict between the old culture of aristocrat and the new of the bourgeois class.²²⁶

²²⁴ 茅盾 Mao Dun was a well-known modern Chinese novelist, cultural critic, and journalist. His masterpiece, *Midnight*, was published in 1931 and translated into French and English.

²²⁵ Meng, *A Brief History*, p. 229.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 229-230.

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The 1950s saw Marxist Shakespearean criticism in its full bloom. In fact, the wealth of Marxist Shakespearean criticism in China was due to the close relationship between China and the Soviet Union as well as Marx's and Engel's great interest in the playwright.

In order to follow her "Elder Brother", the Soviet Union, China indiscriminately adopted the USSR's position in every respect, including political and economic orders as well as cultural appreciation, which had a close connection with politics. Particularly, the Soviet model of Shakespearean criticism exerted a great influence on Chinese scholars of Shakespearean studies. In the Soviet Union, Shakespeare was regarded as an important Western writer for the Soviet critic and Soviet theatre; accordingly, more and more Chinese academics were encouraged to study his works through translating Russian critical essays on him into the Chinese language so as to make response to the call of "firmly standing in the world camp of peace and democracy with the socialist USSR taking the head"²²⁷. As a result, these Chinese renditions of Russian Shakespearean criticism developed into compulsory reference books for teaching Foreign Literature and Shakespearean plays at the Department of Foreign Languages and Chinese Language respectively.²²⁸ Unfortunately, the only yardstick for judging the quality of a dissertation and the standpoint of the researcher became whether or not she/he had adopted the USSR Marxist criticism in Shakespearean studies as the guiding principle and method.²²⁹ Basing their works on the theory of Soviet criticism of Shakespeare, many Chinese scholars analysed Shakespeare's plays from such aspects as the historical and social backgrounds for creating these plays, the class struggle and social conflicts in them, always leading to the conclusion that Shakespearean plays belonged to realism rather than romanticism.

Simultaneously, Marx's great interest in the playwright's works has particularly inspired Chinese Marxists to interpret his plays from the perspective of capitalism and socialism. For instance, Marx frequently quoted from *Timon of Athens*, especially Timon's

²²⁷ As quoted in Weimin Li, *History of Shakespearean Studies*, pp. 358-9. "坚决站在以社会主义苏联为首的世界和平民主阵营里。"

²²⁸ Weimin Li, *History of Shakespearean Studies*, p. 360.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 359.

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condemnation of gold, in his economic and political works to discuss the essence of money and its function in a capitalist society. As a result, this idea has almost become a formula for the Chinese to follow in interpreting this play.²³⁰ For example, the question for whom Shakespeare was writing his plays was the typical aim of literary criticism in socialist countries, trying to classify everything from the point of view of class struggle.²³¹ Using the Marxist method of class analysis, Bian Zilin's comment in his essay on *Hamlet* is a case in point. Bian drew a conclusion: "Shakespeare had written for the people, not for the ruling class, and that Shakespeare opposed the feudal system in the early part of his career and exposed the evils of capitalism in the later part."²³² If Shakespeare had been the spokesman of the lower classes, however, who can deny Shakespeare's being a favourite of Queen Elizabeth (ruled 1558-1603) and James I (ruled 1603-1625)? Michael Mullin argued: "Despite one scheme after another to popularize Shakespeare among the working class, Shakespeare's plays are widely seen as somehow 'belonging' to upper-class culture."²³³

After the ending of the Cultural Revolution, Bian Zilin came to realize his mistake in analysing Shakespeare and his plays only from the point of view of class struggle and then admitted Shakespeare's great contributions to the literature of Romanticism, breaking away from the strong influence of the Soviet Marxist criticism of Shakespeare.

4.3 Comparative Shakespearean Criticism

As Shakespeare's plays were not really known to the Chinese, scholars in China compared him with successful Chinese writers. For example, Shakespeare was compared with Li Bai

²³⁰ Xiaoyang Zhang, *Shakespeare in China*, p. 237.

²³¹ Qixin He, "China's Shakespeare", pp. 153-154.

²³² Bian Zilin as quoted in Qixin He, "China's Shakespeare", p. 154.

²³³ Michael Mullin, "Shakespeare in Hong Kong: An International Perspective", in *Shakespeare Global/Local: The Hong Kong Imaginary in Transcultural Production*, eds. Kwok-kan Tam, Andrew Parkin, and Terry Siu-hian Yip (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002), p. 93.

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(701-762)²³⁴, a distinguished poet in the Tang dynasty (618-907), as follows: “Li Shi [Li Bai] portrayed himself in all his poems, but Shakespeare made pictures of dramatic personae in his plays”²³⁵, and his *Romeo and Juliet* with *Peacock Flying towards Southeast*, the first long narrative poem in Chinese literature: “As for reading *The Casting of Love* [Chinese adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*] it is like reading *Peacock Flying towards Southeast*. Feeling the atmosphere is full of remoteness and whisper, I have to sigh for the couple of Jiao Zhongqing and *Romeo and Juliet*.”²³⁶ Both comparisons appeared in Dong Run’s (1896-1988)²³⁷ “Talks on *Tales from Shakespeare*”, which were continuously published in *The Pacific* between 1917 and 1918.

Generally speaking, when a foreign work is matched to a native one, the common method is to adopt literary and cultural comparisons, so with Shakespeare and his works. “As among the works of nature no man can properly call a river deep or a mountain high, without the knowledge of many mountains, and many rivers; so in the productions of genius, nothing can be stiled excellent till it has been compared with other works of the

²³⁴ 李白 Li Bai, a distinguished poet in the Tang dynasty, greatly contributed to Chinese literature by composing more than 1,000 poems.

²³⁵ Dong Run as quoted in Meng, *A Brief History*, p. 227. “李氏（李白）诗歌全为自己写照，莎氏剧本则为剧中人物写照。”

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 227. “至于铸情记者，乃如读《孔雀东南飞》之篇。觉其文境绵邈幽咽，不得不为焦仲卿夫妇与罗密欧朱丽叶等放声一叹也。” *Peacock Flying towards Southeast* is the first long narrative poem in Chinese literature, based on a real tragic marriage during the period of Jiangan (196-219) in the East-Han dynasty (25-220). The couple of Jiao Zhongqing is the hero and heroine in the poem: Jiao Zhongqing is a junior official in the local office of Lujiang and his wife named Liu Lanzhi takes all household duties. Liu Lanzhi is clever and hardworking; nevertheless, she is cast off by Jiao Zhongqing’s mother. When leaving for her parental home, Lanzhi swears to Zhongqing that she will not remarry in order to wait for Zhongqing. However, when Lanzhi is forced to remarry by her parents and brother, she drowns herself before the wedding and Zhongqing hangs himself at the news of Lanzhi’s death. Afterwards, the two families decide to bury Zhongqing and Lanzhi in one tomb surrounding by pine and cypress and Chinese parasol trees. Among the trees there are two birds named mandarin duck, singing to the passer-by everyday.

²³⁷ 东润 Dong Run, also known as Zhu Dongrun, was a famous Chinese biographer, educationist and calligrapher.

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same kind.”²³⁸ In this chapter, the Chinese comparative Shakespearean criticism will be analysed from three aspects, namely, comparing plays, comparing writers, and comparing dramatis personae. Of course, in practice, the comparison is not only confined to the Chinese world and many characters from other foreign authors, such as Miguel de Cervantes’ (1547-1616) *Don Quixote*, have also been contrasted with Shakespeare’s protagonists by the Chinese. Here, examples for comparative Shakespearean criticism in China are selected only from those between Shakespeare and the Chinese.

4.3.1 Comparing Plays

Among comparative Shakespearean studies, comparing Shakespeare’s works with Chinese literature is commonly the first option, and moreover, owing to the tendency of analysing the playwright from the point of view of realism instead of romanticism, his tragedies have often been welcomed in studies of comparative literature, such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *Othello*.

Take *Romeo and Juliet*, a love tragedy, as an instance. The play has been compared with Tang Xianzu’s (1550-1616) *The Peony Pavilion* from the standpoint of desire for love, but with a small difference in the ending – a union in *Peony Pavilion*. As a gifted poet and playwright, Tang has left us his masterpiece *The Peony Pavilion*, a story about the love of Du Liniang and scholar Liu Mengmei: Du Liniang, daughter of the Governor of Nan’an in the Song dynasty (960-1279), has to stay in her chamber, learning sewing, embroidering and following social etiquette for a lady, which was a traditional lifestyle for a young lady in a rich family. One day, without permission from her parents and her private tutor, she goes to play in the garden with her maid. Facing the flourishing flowers, Du feels sad at her fading youth and beauty. After returning from the garden, she dreams of a secret meeting with a scholar next to the Peony Pavilion in the garden. Afterwards, she is haunted by her sweet memories of her dream lover and desires to meet such a scholar in real life. Unfortunately, the ethics of her time prevent her from pursuing her true love. As a result of

²³⁸ Johnson, “Preface To Shakespeare”, p. 10.

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her lovesickness, she becomes severely ill. Before her death she makes a portrait of herself in order that she can leave her youth and beauty in the world forever. She dies of a broken heart. At the same time a young scholar named Liu Mengmei has a similar dream of a young beautiful lady and their happy meeting in the garden. Three years later, Liu comes across the portrait of Du Liniang in the garden where Du is buried and has a strong feeling that he has met the lady in the portrait before. In the following days he sees Du Liniang in his dreams come to his bed and he falls in love with her. Du tells him of her love and death and finally asks him to dig up her grave the next morning. Because of Du Liniang's unflagging desire to seek her true love, she is allowed to come back to the world of the living from the Netherworld. Afterwards the couple live together happily. Including all of Shakespeare's genres of romance, history, comedy, tragedy and lyric poetry, the drama portrays the humanistic inhibition and the problems of romantic yearnings in a Chinese feudal society, where free thoughts were oppressed, which is in itself avant-garde through objecting to the strict feudal moralistic limitations and seeking individualism and freedom.

Romeo and Juliet was also compared with *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai*, a well-known Chinese folklore called oriental *Romeo and Juliet*, with *Peacock Flying towards Southeast*, and *The Sad Story of Lady Wang (jiao hong ji)*²³⁹ – one of the Ten Greatest Classical Chinese Tragedies²⁴⁰ and called the Chinese *Romeo and Juliet*, all these dramas sharing the similarity of burying the lovers together in a tomb after their death, with Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai becoming butterflies, Jiao Zhongqing and Liu Lanzhi in *Peacock* singing mandarin ducks, and the couple in *Sad Story* becoming immortal. In addition, the tragedy was compared with a love comedy *The Romance of the Western*

²³⁹ 《娇红记》 *Jiao hong ji* was written by Chenshun Meng, a dramatist in the Ming dynasty.

²⁴⁰ The Ten Major Classical Tragedies of China are: *The Injustice to Dou E (Dou E Yuan)*/《杜娥冤》, *Autumn in the Han Palace (Han Gong Qiu)*/《汉宫秋》, *The Orphan of the House of Zhao (Zhao Shi Gu Er)*/《赵氏孤儿》, *The Story of Pipa (Pipa Ji)*/《琵琶记》, *The Flag of Loyalty (Jing Zhong Qi)*/《精忠旗》, *The Sad Story of Lady Wang (Jiao Hong Ji)*/《娇红记》, *The Story of the Honest Subject (Qing Zhong Pu)*/《清忠谱》, *The Hall of Longevity (Chang Sheng Dian)*/《长生殿》, *The Fan of Peach Blossom (Tao Hua Shan)*/《桃花扇》, *The Tower of Lei Feng (Lei Feng Ta)*/《雷锋塔》. The English translation is taken from Zhang Xiaoyang.

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*Chamber (xi xiang ji)*²⁴¹, one of the Ten Greatest Classical Chinese Comedies²⁴². Most of these comparative studies were carried out on parallel levels, in other words, comparisons were based on similarities and differences between Shakespearean plays and Chinese literature, ranging from motif, plot arrangement, dramatic conflict, characterization, to artistic technique.

Meng Xianqiang remarks in *A Brief History* that in 1942 Guo Moruo (1892-1978)²⁴³ compared his history play *Qu Yuan* (1942) to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *King Lear* respectively, and it was the first time a Chinese author contrasted his own drama with Shakespeare.²⁴⁴

Qu Yuan (340B.C.-278B.C) was the first poet in Chinese literature and also a patriotic official from southern Chu during the Warring States Period (476B.C.-221B.C.). He advocated a policy of alliance with the other kingdoms against the hegemony of Qin. Unfortunately, his enthusiasm for maintaining his state's sovereignty was slandered by jealous and treacherous ministers and correspondingly he was banished from his country. In his exile, Qu Yuan expressed his strong love for and great concern about his country in *Tian Wen*, a long poem. Hearing of the capture of his country, he threw himself into the Miluo River in today's Hunan province on the fifth day of May of the Chinese lunar calendar. The day has afterwards become an anniversary of Qu Yuan's death, on which the Chinese eat *zong zi* – a kind of food with rice wrapped in bamboo leaf – and take part in dragon boat racing, known as the Dragon Boat Festival in the West.

²⁴¹ 《西厢记》*Xi xiang ji* was composed by Shifu Wang.

²⁴² The Ten Major Classical Comedies of China are: *Rescued by a Coquette (Jiu Feng Chen)*/《救风尘》, *The Romance of the Western Chamber (Xi Xiang Ji)*/《西厢记》, *A Slave to Money (Kan Qian Nu)*/《看钱奴》, *The Wolf in Mount Zhong Shan (Zhong Shan Lang)*/《中山狼》, *The Green Peony (Lü Mu Dan)*/《绿牡丹》, *Looking over the Wall (Qiang Tou Ma Shang)*/《墙头马上》, *Li Kui Carries Thorns (Li Kui Fu Jing)*/《李逵负荆》, *The Secluded Boudoir (You Gui Ji)*/《幽闺记》, *The Story of a Jade Hairpin (Yu Zan Ji)*/《玉簪记》, *The Errors of a Kite (Feng Zheng Wu)*/《风筝误》. The English translation is taken from Zhang Xiaoyang.

²⁴³ 郭沫若 Guo Moruo, a key person in the New Cultural Movement (1917), was not only a prolific writer in composing poetry, novels, and plays, but also an archaeologist and thinker. His history play *Qu Yuan*/《屈原》 was finished in 1942.

²⁴⁴ Meng, *A Brief History*, p. 240.

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Guo Moruo's *Qu Yuan*, a senior official in the State of Chu, suggests reforming politics from the inside and uniting the State of Qi to confront Qin on the outside, against the historical background of the Seven States during the Warring States Period. Although Qu Yuan is trusted by King Huai at the beginning, Queen Nan, who colludes with the Qin emissary Zhang Yi, suggests to King Huai that Qu Yuan wants to make the Palace an immoral place. Afterwards, King Huai imprisons Qu Yuan and soon Chu becomes subordinate to the strong Qin, casting the treaty of alliance between Chu and Qi aside. Simultaneously, Song Yu, one of Qu Yuan's students, surrenders to Queen Nan. After rescuing Chan Juan, a loyal maidservant to Qu Yuan, from the execution ordered by Queen Nan, the bodyguards in the Palace go to save Qu Yuan. Accidentally Chan Juan drinks the poisonous wine, actually arranged for Qu Yuan, and then dies. Having killed the accomplice and burned the hall, the guards follow Qu Yuan for the Han-North.

In comparing his *Qu Yuan* with *Hamlet*, Guo Moruo made a statement as follows:

In terms of character tragedy, *Qu Yuan* is similar to *Hamlet*. But the motifs and the protagonists' natures are quite different from each other – Hamlet pretended to be mad so as to struggle with his evil antagonists and finally perished together with him, whereas Qu Yuan, driven by his evil opponents almost to become really insane, had to ward himself off. With regard to the motif, the former is of more fortitude.²⁴⁵

4.3.2 Comparing Writers

In 1946, Zhao Jingshen published his *Tang Xianzu and Shakespeare*, which was claimed to be the first essay in China to compare an ancient Chinese dramatist with Shakespeare²⁴⁶. In

²⁴⁵ Guo Moruo as quoted in Meng, *A Brief History*, p. 240. “拿性格悲剧这一点来说, 要说象《罕默雷特》, 也有点象。然而主题和主人公的性格是完全不同的: 《罕默雷特》是佯狂向恶势力斗争, 而与恶势力同归于尽; 屈原是被恶势力逼到真狂的界限上而努力撑持着建设自己; 在主题上前者更坚毅。”

²⁴⁶ Meng, *A Brief History*, p. 241.

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the article, Zhao stated that Tang Xianzu was the Shakespeare of China by detailing their similarities from five aspects.²⁴⁷

First of all, they lived in the same period, Tang Xianzu from 1550 to 1616 and Shakespeare from 1564 to 1616, and by chance both of them died in 1616. Secondly, both of them attained revered positions in English and Chinese drama, respectively. When “Shakespeare is above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life”²⁴⁸, Tang was a famous dramatist in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) and nobody surpassed him in writing Chinese legend plays. Thirdly, they both borrowed themes from their predecessors.²⁴⁹ Fourthly, neither of them strictly followed traditional dramatic forms, for example, Shakespeare never observed the unities of time, place and plot. Likewise, Tang would not follow regularities in composing tunes. Lastly, their tragedies have the power to move the audience.

In the meantime, Shakespeare was compared with other well-known Chinese writers, such as Cao Xueqin (1724-1764)²⁵⁰, the Yuan dramatist Guan Hanqing²⁵¹, and Cao Yu (1910-1996), the modern oriental Shakespeare.

²⁴⁷ Zhao Jingshen’s argumentation for his conclusion that Tang Xianzu is the Shakespeare of China was disproved by Zhang Pei in his “Guan Hanqing and Shakespeare: Seeing about Comparison between Chinese and English Dramatic Traditions” in *East Collection* (2005).

²⁴⁸ Johnson, “Preface To Shakespeare”, p. 11.

²⁴⁹ With respect to their similarity in borrowing sources from others, please see the detailed discussion in Chapter 3.

²⁵⁰ 曹雪芹 Cao Xueqin’s sudden death left his posthumous novel *The Story of the Stone (hong lou meng)* 《红楼梦》 in a very advanced stage of completion with 80 chapters. It is said that Gao E/高鹗 continued Cao’s unfinished novel and published a 120-chapter version in 1791.

²⁵¹ 关汉卿 Guan Hanqing was regarded as one of the Four Great Yuan Playwrights. Throughout his lifetime, he produced more than 60 plays; unfortunately, only 14 of them survived, such as *The Injustice to Dou E* 《窦娥冤》, *Rescued by a Coquette* 《救风尘》 and others.

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4.3.3 Comparing Characters

With regard to Shakespeare's characters, the German scholar August Wilhelm von Schlegel (1767-1845) contended as follows:

Never, perhaps, was there so comprehensive a talent for the delineation of character as Shakespeare's. It not only grasps the diversities of rank, sex, and age, down to the dawning of infancy; not only do the king and the beggar, the hero and the pickpocket, the sage and the idiot speak and act with equal truth; not only does he transport himself to distant ages and foreign nations, and po[u]rtray in the most accurate manner, with only a few apparent violations of costume, the spirit of the ancient Romans, of the French in their wars with the English, of the English themselves during a great part of their history, of the Southern Europeans (in the serious part of many comedies), the cultivated society of that time, and the former rude and barbarous state of the North²⁵²

Schlegel is definitely right; every single character in Shakespeare is as vivid as persons in real life. Among Shakespeare's over one thousand characters, most have made unforgettable impressions on the audience, such as the miserly money lender Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*, Sir John Falstaff, a fat, vainglorious, and cowardly knight from *Henry IV* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and the brave, ambitious and self-doubting Macbeth. The characters with the highest frequency of appearance in Chinese comparative essays are Hamlet and Juliet.

Zhou Liuyan has done such analysis in her article entitled *Discussions on the Tragic Figures of Juliet and Du Liniang*. On the one hand, there are striking similarities between the heroine Du Liniang from *The Peony Pavilion* and Juliet from *Romeo and Juliet* in terms of development of character – obedience, disillusion, pursuit, resistance and death for love – and attitudes towards pure love; as well as reasons leading to such characterization: the authors' similar opinions about love, marriage and women against a similar social and historical background of the feudal society in the state of collapse. On

²⁵² Schlegel as quoted in William Hazlitt, *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (London: Macmillan, 1908), pp. xviii-xix.

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the other hand, resulting from a different personality and social and educational background, Juliet is unlike Du Liniang in pursuing love. While Juliet, living in a world full of humanism, bravely seeks her true love by saying to Romeo: “Three words, dear Romeo, and good night indeed. / If that thy bent of love be honourable, / Thy purpose marriage, send me word tomorrow, / By one that I’ll procure to come to thee, / Where and what time thou wilt perform the rite; / And all my fortunes at thy foot I’ll lay / And follow thee my lord throughout the world” (*Romeo and Juliet*, 2.1.185-91), Du Liniang desires for a go-between and her parents present at her wedding so as to authenticate her marriage with her dream lover Liu Mengmei.²⁵³

So far influential Shakespearean criticism in China has been analysed in detail, which does not mean to deny or exclude other critical opinions about Shakespeare. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, a great diversity of methods of researching Shakespeare and his plays have been used in China, such as image study, psychoanalysis, archetypal study, feminism study and so on. What is more, Christian Shakespearean criticism, studying the religious topics in Shakespeare, which was a taboo in previous Chinese Shakespearean translations and performances, consequently being excised from the texts by the translator or director, becomes a popular method of analysing the dramatist: “The Conflict between Christian Character and Christian Spirit: New Discussion on *The Merchant of Venice*”²⁵⁴ is a case in point. Although such methods of Shakespearean criticism make current Chinese studies of Shakespeare appear to be flourishing, we must take care not to follow them blindly: as Tan Yingzhou said, with so many critical opinions of Shakespeare, we still need time to prove their quality.²⁵⁵

²⁵³ Liuyan Zhou, [Discussions on Tragic Figure of Juliet and Du Liniang] “朱丽叶与杜丽娘悲剧形象异同论”, *Journal of Hunan Business College* 6 (1998), pp. 56-58.

²⁵⁴ Li Guanghua as quoted in Weimin Li, [Account of Chinese Shakespearean Studies at the End of the Twentieth Century] “二十世纪末中国莎学研究综述”, *Sichuan Drama* 5 (2001), p. 9.

²⁵⁵ Yingzhou Tan, [A Concise History of Shakespeare Criticism] 《莎评简史》 (Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 2005), p. 188.

5 Performing Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage

In reviewing the history of Chinese performances of Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* is the earliest production, however, in English by the students of the Foreign Language Department, Shanghai St. John College in 1902, with the aim of participating in a course of Shakespearean plays, learning the history of English literature and drama, and finally learning the language of English. Strictly speaking, this one cannot be said to be the first Chinese staging of the dramatist for two reasons: first and foremost, this was not in its original form; secondly, the purpose of performance was for practicing English language by the students rather than professionally transplanting Shakespeare, the distinguished English playwright, onto the Chinese stage.²⁵⁶

Similarly, more than twenty plays from Shakespeare based on Lin Shu's translation of Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* were adapted in the form of new drama, the early spoken drama in China which, on the basis of traditional Chinese opera, was searching for models from the Western theatre and the new theatre in Japan as well. *The Merchant of Venice* was the most popular among these performances and began with Zheng Zhengqiu's (1888-1935)²⁵⁷ *Contract of Flesh* in 1913, the first professional Shakespearean performance in China but once again not in Shakespeare's version. During this period, all these performances of Shakespeare shared three features: first of all, there were no translations of Shakespeare but only Lin Shu's 1904 renditions of Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* for the performances; meanwhile, the performers adopted a new title to each play different from Lin Shu's; secondly, all these Shakespeare performances were represented by means of *mu biao*²⁵⁸, that is to say, the actor had to

²⁵⁶ Shujun Cao and Fuliang Sun, [*Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage*] 《莎士比亚在中国舞台上》, repr. (Haerbin: Haerbin Press, 1994), p. 71.

²⁵⁷ 郑正秋 Zheng Zhengqiu was a dramatist and activist in the time of China's early spoken drama. Together with Zhang Sichuan, a director, Zheng Zhengqiu pioneered in writing play of family ethic.

²⁵⁸ 幕表 *Mu biao*, instead of script, supplied the actors only with plot outlines, on which they must improvise.

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improvise the dialogue on the basis of plot outlines, commenting on current affairs and the society and so forth. Thirdly, they adopted either the Western style – taking the original name of characters and places and wearing the Western costumes – or the Chinese style, in which everything has already been changed into the Chinese, for example, the Sichuan opera *Hamlet* entitled *Killing Elder Brother and Marring Sister-in-Law* (*sha xiong duo sao*), the earliest Shakespearean adaptation on the traditional Chinese stage, was produced by Wang Guoren in Ya'an Chuan Theatre Company of Sichuan.²⁵⁹

Although all these stagings were not authentic Shakespearean performances in terms of play-script, yet their historical significance cannot be denied, whether in respect of the history of the development of Chinese spoken drama or of the revolutionary rebellion against feudal autocracy. There is a well-known case of Gu Wuwei²⁶⁰ in the history of China's new drama. In the 1916 *Thief Usurping the State* (*qie guo zei*)²⁶¹, a Chinese adaptation of *Macbeth* performed by the Society of People's Call (*min ming she*)²⁶², the actor Gu Wuwei attacked Yuan Shikai (1859-1916)²⁶³, who had crowned himself Emperor of the Chinese Empire in December of 1915 and attempted to restore the imperial rule, by

²⁵⁹ Shujun Cao and Fuliang Sun, *Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage*, pp. 75-76 and p. 78, as well as Meng, *A Brief History*, p. 140.

²⁶⁰ 顾无为

²⁶¹ 《窃国贼》

²⁶² 民鸣社 The society was founded in Shanghai in 1914 to propagandize the form of new drama – *wen ming xi*, the early Chinese spoken drama.

²⁶³ 袁世凯 Yuan Shikai was a Chinese military official and politician during the late Qing dynasty and the early Republic of China. In 1882 Yuan rose to fame through his great battle achievements in the First Sino-Japanese War in Korea. It is said that in the 1898 Hundred Days' Reform, Yuan helped the Empress Dowager Cixi to stop the reform. But some scholars argued that Yuan could do nothing to change the situation since the Empress Cixi had already made her decision. In addition, Yuan transferred his great military force to put down the Boxer Rebellion. As a compromise between Sun Yat-sen, the revolutionary leader, and him, Yuan was granted the position of the President of the Republic after his forcing the child emperor Puyi (1906-1967) to abdicate in 1912. At the end of 1915 Yuan proclaimed his reign as Emperor of the Chinese Empire with the era name Hongxian to begin on January 1, 1916. Yuan's monarchism was rebelled against first by Cai E, Yunnan's military governor, followed by other provinces. Therefore, Yuan Shikai had to abandon his dream of being an Emperor in March 1916 and died of disease in the same year.

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using innuendos referring to current affairs. Gu was then put under arrest on the excuse that he had incited the people to rebel and disturbed the local peace with his performance and was finally sentenced to a death. Fortunately, he was set free because of the fall of Yuan's regime.

True Shakespearean performances did not begin in China until the first Chinese rendition of Shakespeare by Tian Han in its original dramatic form in 1921. Thereafter, Shakespeare appeared on the Chinese stage either in his mother tongue or in the Chinese language. The stagings of Shakespearean plays can be, with regard to the approach to performing the playwright, classified roughly into three categories. Why roughly? Strictly speaking, there is no longer a rigid division of performance techniques confined either to traditional Chinese opera or western spoken drama on the modern stage. The theatrical practitioners, ranging from adaptor, director, stage designer, lighting designer, to actor/actress, consciously or unconsciously assimilate artistic and dramatic styles from any other drama, opera, dance, or film for their purpose, for instance, the combination of *chuanju*²⁶⁴ masks and westernized dances in a traditional Beijing opera. In spite of this irrefutable fact, the assertion in the chapter is that Chinese performances of Shakespeare can be assigned to one of three clear categories: the first contains those stagings that preserve the original Shakespearean spirit, by employing the Western theatrical conventions including scenography, dressing, and dramatic techniques, which is 95 % of Shakespeare productions²⁶⁵. In the second group are those that sinicize the plays by transplanting Shakespeare into the Chinese culture and society, adopting the traditional Chinese operatic styles; and the third group comprises those that synthesize both Chinese and Western elements in terms of textual interpretations and theatrical techniques, a hybrid of the Western and the Chinese style.

²⁶⁴ 川剧 Sichuan opera is a local genre in Sichuan province.

²⁶⁵ Ruru Li and David Jiang, "The 1994 Shanghai International Shakespeare Festival: An Update on the Bard in Cathay", *Asian Theatre Journal* 14 (1997 Spring), p. 95.

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5.1 The Western Style

With regard to the Western style the Chinese director tries to maintain the original manner of the Shakespearean text by using straight translation in the form of spoken drama and preserving the plot and the scenes. In the meantime, Chinese performers still have the characters' original names, wear Western costumes and observe Western customs. Furthermore, Western scenery is transferred onto the Chinese stage. For example, the first real Chinese performance of a full-length Shakespearean drama, *The Merchant of Venice*, staged by the Shanghai Drama Association on the basis of Gu Zhongyi's translation in 1930, presents the spectator with a beautiful Italian picture full of fountain, garden, balcony, streets and bridges with the changeable lightings as the back setting, in which actors and actresses move around in elaborate western costumes.²⁶⁶ Such a production was originally regarded as an authentic Shakespearean performance. It has been said that the western-style performance was popular on the Chinese stage, before the first Chinese Shakespeare Festival in 1986 particularly, as Li Ruru remarked: "The majority of Shakespeare performances in China are in the mode of *huaju*²⁶⁷, or spoken drama, as borrowed from the Western dramatic tradition in which Shakespeare wrote and which he has so greatly influenced."²⁶⁸ In addition, before the 1994 Shanghai International Shakespeare Festival, Chinese directors and performers had attempted to wear wigs or dye their hair blonde so as to preserve the authenticity of Shakespeare as well as loyalty to the Western performing style. Li Ruru described the Chinese productions in the Western genre: "Performers were inclined to copy and further exaggerate gestures and body movements from Western actors, such as shrugging, kissing, wobbling their hips."²⁶⁹

²⁶⁶ Shujun Cao and Fuliang Sun, *Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage*, pp. 84-85.

²⁶⁷ 话剧 *Huaju* is the Chinese term for spoken drama.

²⁶⁸ Ruru Li, *Shashibiya*, p. 6.

²⁶⁹ Ruru Li and David Jiang, "The 1994 Shanghai", p. 95.

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Although performing Shakespeare's plays in the Western style has advantages in keeping their originality in terms of plot, dramatis personae, mise en scène and other theatrical techniques, as well as attracting young Chinese audiences through speaking a modern language within the Western settings, its existing problem cannot be ignored. Unfortunately neither Shakespeare nor his works are known to many Chinese spectators. Most theatregoers are, as Zhang Xiaoyang says, "people such as farmers and other uneducated people whose tastes are very conventional, certain characteristics of Shakespeare might be hard to appreciate. For example, the complex and morally ambiguous characters of Lear and Macbeth may be difficult for them to understand because they are used to enjoying characters having a simple and fixed morality and a single passion, as found in traditional Chinese drama."²⁷⁰ What is more, ironically surprising, Ji Zhenhua, the Chinese Macbeth in the *kunju* opera *Bloody Hands*, refused Alexander Huang's call interview, claiming there was nothing he could tell about his performance and interpretation of Macbeth inasmuch as he knew nothing about Shakespeare. Huang remarks: "Ji Zhenhua was not alone. Many Chinese directors who staged Shakespeare's plays and many Chinese actors who played Shakespearean characters shared similar feelings of disjunction."²⁷¹ Apparently, it is an urgent and necessary task for the Chinese to improve the progress of introducing Shakespeare to the wider Chinese population as soon as possible.

Some well-known Shakespeare scholars object to the indiscriminately blind imitation of the playwright; Trevor Nunn, a theatrical director and for 18 years head of the Royal Shakespeare Company, is a representative. During the performances of RSC in Tokyo in the early 1970s, he remarked to Tadashi Suzuki²⁷²:

Now that I have seen your *The Winter's Tale*, all Shakespeare performance by the Shinseki companies seem nothing but dull and shoddy imitations of the Western

²⁷⁰ Xiaoyang Zhang, *Shakespeare in China*, p. 233.

²⁷¹ Alexander Huang, *Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage 1839-2004*, p. 9.

²⁷² Tadashi Suzuki is a Japanese director and the founder and director of the Suzuki Company of Toga (SCOT).

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productions. Since such imitations can never surpass the originals, I think we have no choice but to start tackling Shakespeare with our unique Japanese theatre.²⁷³

Nunn has always insisted on his viewpoint that one may depart from the text or rather for a sub-text, which “throws open the gates of interpretation to all sorts of different approaches, dependent on virtually any factor: differing personalities of performers, historical revision, desired visual interpretation, and need for contemporary social comment.”²⁷⁴ Some conservative Chinese directors totally agree with the recognition of the futility of following Western production models, attempting to interpret Shakespeare and his plays in traditional Chinese theatre conventions.

5.2 The Chinese Style

The second method of presenting Shakespeare was to sinicize the English text, resetting the Western story against certain historical and social backgrounds in ancient China. At the same time, the characters have their Chinese names, wear traditional Chinese costumes and perform stylized theatrical movements on the stage: the original text is adapted or abridged completely into a traditional Chinese theatrical script and performed in the regional Chinese style. “They aim at modifying Shakespeare and his plays into what is more familiar to the Chinese audience.”²⁷⁵

“It is common practice in the contemporary theatre to commission new translations for new productions,” Dennis Kennedy has argued in his *Introduction: Shakespeare without his language*, “so that the language is not only colloquial but also becomes tied to the

²⁷³ John Gillies, “Shakespeare Localized: An Australian Looks at Asian Practice”, in *Shakespeare Global/Local: The Hong Kong Imaginary in Transcultural Production*, eds. Kwok-kan Tam, Andrew Parkin, and Terry Siu-hian Yip (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002), p. 106.

²⁷⁴ David Booth, “The Practicalities of Preparing Shakespeare’s Texts for the Stage: Observations in Relation to Theatre in Hong Kong 1981-1998”, in *Shakespeare Global/Local: The Hong Kong Imaginary in Transcultural Production*, eds. Kwok-kan Tam, Andrew Parkin, and Terry Siu-hian Yip (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002), p. 45.

²⁷⁵ Fuliang Sun, “Shakespeare in China”, p. 127.

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interpretation and the mise en scène of the particular performance. As a result many foreign performances of Shakespeare sound similar to performances of new plays.”²⁷⁶ This is certainly true of many Shakespearean productions in China, which employed various local operatic genres, which did not attract much attention until the 1986 Festival.

According to the estimation of theatrical scholars, there are more than 300 opera types on the traditional Chinese stage, most of them taking their name from the place of its origin, such as Henan opera, Sichuan opera, Shanxi opera, and so on. *Kunju*²⁷⁷ opera, an ancient theatrical genre from Jiangsu province, is supposed to be the oldest and is regarded as the forerunner of some other local operas such as Beijing opera, the biggest one, and Shaoxing opera. Though discernible from each other in terms of diverse local dialects and unique melody patterns, all these traditional Chinese operas share fundamental similarities which are significantly different from Western opera.²⁷⁸

Traditional Chinese theatre is actually a synthesis of mime, stylized acting, dancing, singing, dialogue, acrobatics, make-up, costumes and music to tell a story or depict different characters and their inner feelings. Take the simple action of beard-stroking for example. This symbolic gesture is used on the Chinese stage to show that the character is deep in thought. In the Chinese opera there are traditionally four main character-types, of course, different local theatrical genres divide these four main role types into further different subdivisions: *sheng* (male), *dan* (female), *jing* (painted face, male) and *chou*²⁷⁹ (clown, male or female), each with a specialized movement based on age, sex, personality and status in society. The facial make-up, called “a mirror of the soul” by the Chinese, is an important indicator of the character’s personality. Looking at various designs of lines

²⁷⁶ Kennedy, “Introduction”, p. 5.

²⁷⁷ 昆剧 *Kunju* opera is the oldest among all Chinese local theatrical types, originating from Jiangsu province.

²⁷⁸ Peide Zha and Jia Tian, “Shakespeare in Traditional Chinese Operas”, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 39 (Summer, 1988), p. 205.

²⁷⁹ 生、旦、淨、丑 Male, female, painted face and clown are fundamentally four character-types in the traditional Chinese theatre.

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and coloured patches painted on the face of a certain operatic character, the audience can instantly tell the personality of the character upon his or her appearance on the stage, namely he or she is good or bad, loyal or treacherous in the story. For example, the so-called “red face” means that this character is brave, upright and loyal. On the contrary, “white face” is a symbol of a total villain.

In the course of the theatrical development, some strong points of Chinese adaptations of Shakespearean plays have become more and more striking. “One of the advantages of using the Chinese style was that the central theme of the play could be more easily understood by the audience because it would tend to associate the story with numerous similar historical incidents.”²⁸⁰ Thus the great problem of understanding Shakespeare brought by imitating his plays in the Western style, as mentioned above, is readily resolved. On the other hand, Zhang Xiaoyang went further in that:

The production adopted the Chinese manner partly because it could give full play to the unique performing skill of traditional Chinese theatre and enable the performers to feel at ease in playing Shakespeare’s characters. But another reason may have been that the use of the Chinese manner helped to attract large audiences, which knew little about Shakespeare, in small towns and villages.²⁸¹

Wu Xingguo, the director of the Chinese adaptation of *Macbeth* entitled *The Kingdom of Desire* in the form of Beijing opera, stated that his purpose was not to perform Shakespeare but to revive Beijing opera using whatever could be adapted to expand the dimensions of the art form.²⁸² Like most other Chinese dramas, the Taiwanese adaptation envisions Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* from a historical, cultural and theatrical Chinese viewpoint, based on the Western story. “By using a foreign play the company would have

²⁸⁰ Xiaoyang Zhang, *Shakespeare in China*, p. 170.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

²⁸² Catherine Diamond, “*Kingdom of Desire: The Three Faces of Macbeth*”, *Asian Theatre Journal* (1994 Spring), p. 115.

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a somewhat neutral text on which it could write its own prescription for the future.”²⁸³ Therefore, the play embodies a total Chinese flavour with Chinese stories, characters, costumes and synthesis of singing, reciting, dancing and martial arts.

Against the background of the chaotic situation in the period of the Warring States (476-221 BC) in Chinese history, “when political intrigue and usurpation by murder were the norm often with a woman as the behind-the-scenes instigator”²⁸⁴ the Chinese protagonist Aoshu Zheng, different from his counterpart Macbeth who strives for power, has to murder his incompetent and oversuspicious king on the throne and has his sworn brother Meng Ting [Banquo] slain in order to protect him and his family from being framed by others and in the meantime fulfil the last prediction to become a king by the Mountain Spirit. In the light of the dramatic convention on the traditional Chinese stage, “the principal characters in Chinese tragedies are usually unflawed persons having no guilt, passion, or even extravagant hopes. It is the evil nature and injustice of the law or rigid moral doctrine that destroy them.”²⁸⁵ Exactly speaking, Aoshu Zheng’s tragedy of regicide and perfidy results from external causes. On the one hand, he is forced to commit crime step by step under vicious circumstances imposed by society and nature, such as the unstable social order, in which the slaughter of another for power frequently occurred during the Warring States period, Aoshu takes his wife’s words for granted, for if he does not strike first he might be struck down by others. Meanwhile, the late king’s imperfect characteristic of incompetence and oversensitivity as well as his wife’s pregnancy cause him to first strike for himself. On the other hand, the verification of mysterious prophecies by the Mountain Spirit – a representative of Shakespeare’s three Weird Sisters – convinces the fatalistic Chinese Macbeth that he is an anointed king and what he has to do is his destiny. Finally, unlike Macbeth, who is killed on the battlefield by Macduff, Aoshu Zheng is shot down from the rampart by his own men in a shower of arrows. Actually, in dealing with the death of Aoshu Zheng, the adaptor has applied the Chinese Confucian political

²⁸³ Diamond, “*Kingdom of Desire*”, p. 115.

²⁸⁴ Wu Xingguo as quoted in Diamond, “*Kingdom of Desire*”, pp. 116-117.

²⁸⁵ Xiaoyang Zhang, *Shakespeare in China*, p. 34.

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and moral doctrine. In ancient China, the official doctrine gave priority to the loyalty to the monarch, the most important virtue of the Confucian moral code when applied to the relationship between ruler and subject. If one disobeyed the social order by murdering one's king, the villainous crime was unforgivable and the regicide and usurper had to be killed by other people.²⁸⁶ Accordingly, Aoshu dies from being murdered by his men, as he has done to his ruler, in other words, Aoshu Zheng dies from his being a villain and regicide who has violated the moral discipline of loyalty to his ruler and of faith to his sworn brother. In the end he gets his punishment and deserves it. This achieves the moral purpose in traditional Chinese drama: everyone should be loyal and submissive to the emperor; otherwise he cannot escape his comeuppance. Structurally, Aoshu's death in a shower of arrows emphasizes once again the karma given at the very beginning of the play. The Beijing opera begins with an added chorus:

How regrettable that the people of this world
Cannot see through fame, fortune, and position;
In reality they are only like
The reflection of the moon in water, an illusion;
When you reach the abyss,
Plans and schemes only lead to downfall;
In the end, the waves still wash the sand;
All that remains are dry bones and empty sorrow.²⁸⁷

Actually, the prologue explicitly states the Buddhist moral doctrine of unavoidable revolution of karma and moralizes on relinquishing ambition and desire. There is a Chinese saying about the Buddhist karma: if one sows melon seeds, one harvests melon; and if one sows beans, one reaps beans. In other words, one is thus responsible for all the consequences of one's own psychological states and volitional actions, for instance, cruel ambition and excessive greed lead to nothing but the destruction of oneself.

²⁸⁶ Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism*, p. 213.

²⁸⁷ Catherine Diamond's translation of the Chinese sentences from the Beijing version: 叹世人看不透功名富贵，原都是水中迷梦一回。算心机临断崖前程自毁，到头来浪淘沙枯骨空悲 in Diamond, "Kingdom of Desire", p. 119.

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5.3 A Hybrid of the Western and the Chinese Style

A Chinese theatrical scholar has pointed out: “It is indeed a new theatrical exploration to adapt Shakespeare’s plays into traditional Chinese drama... As is known to all, Shakespearean drama is a bright pearl of Western culture and traditional Chinese drama is a treasure of Eastern art.” He went on to say, “[i]f we mix them together, it will not only make Shakespeare known to more Chinese audiences but also cause traditional Chinese drama to exert a widespread influence upon the theatrical circles of the world. Thus it is really a matter of great importance.”²⁸⁸

In fact, this style is a mixed adaptation in terms of interpretation and performance. On the one hand, when following the form of Western drama, the adaptor interprets Shakespearean plays from new perspectives against a contemporary social and cultural background in China. In the typical Chinese theatre, on the other hand, Western customs are adopted and combined with the stylized performance on the traditional Chinese stage. In short, there are two subdivisions according to the practical performing forms on the Chinese stage: one is produced as spoken drama, and the other as traditional Chinese drama.

5.3.1 Spoken Drama

The first bold attempts were *Othello* and *Macbeth* made by Li Jianwu (1906-82), a famous writer and playwright,²⁸⁹ although Meng Xianqiang stated that the six-act tragedy *Wang Deming* of Li Jianwu is a complete sinicization of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*.²⁹⁰ In terms of content, Li Jianwu changed everything of Shakespeare into a totally authentic Chinese story, happening at the beginning of the Five dynasties (907-960). However, all Chinese elements – Chinese characters, Chinese costumes and ancient Chinese settings and so forth

²⁸⁸ Zhang Anjian as quoted in Xiaoyang Zhang, *Shakespeare in China*, p. 134.

²⁸⁹ Ruru Li, “Shakespeare Translation”, p. 22.

²⁹⁰ Meng, *A Brief History*, p. 147.

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– in this rewritten play-script have been shown to the audience through the form of spoken drama, the fundamental performing technique in the West. Consequently, from this aspect, Li Jianwu's *Wang Deming* should be regarded as a mixture of a Chinese content and a Western form. In addition, after careful comparisons of Li Jianwu's descriptions with Shakespeare's original lines, Alexander Huang drew a conclusion: "Li considered himself to be writing a play inspired by *Macbeth* and not merely translating the play. From the passages quoted above, however, it is also clear that despite Li's intention to write a new play, he follows the original quite closely in some key scenes."²⁹¹ In 1945, Huang Zuolin (1906-1994), a dramatic director and a student of Bernard Shaw, directed Li's *Wang Deming* with a new title *Hero at Troubled Times (luan shi ying xiong)*²⁹² in Shanghai.

Following *Macbeth*, Li adapted *Othello* under the Chinese title *A shi na*²⁹³, a story occurring in the early Tang dynasty; it was published in 1947. Li said in his *Preface* to the adaptation:

The adaptor is already gratified if people can detect a certain flavour of Shakespeare in *Ashina*; but he will certainly not be surprised if people can find in it nothing like Shakespeare at all. This started as a presumption, so failure should be a due punishment. ... The adaptor wants *Ashina* to be hundred percent Chinese but he also hopes that Shakespeare will also share this hundred percent. ...²⁹⁴

Dennis Kennedy once argued: "Yet in China drama has always been assumed to concern the present,"²⁹⁵ for in the 1980s the Chinese were allowed to interpret Shakespeare from new ideological and aesthetical aspects. The production of *Hamlet* directed by Lin Zhaohua in Beijing is a case in point.

²⁹¹ Alexander Huang, *Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage 1839-2004*, p. 9.

²⁹² 《乱世英雄》

²⁹³ 《阿史那》

²⁹⁴ Li Jianwu as quoted in Ruru Li, "Shakespeare Translation", p. 22.

²⁹⁵ Kennedy, "Afterword", p. 299.

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Lin talked about his purpose in producing Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in an interview in 1997, eight years after its première: "I was always hoping to put *Hamlet* on the stage; I liked the loneliness of Hamlet. Moreover, during that period, people lost their vitality completely. Everybody now wanted to make money or to win prizes or lotteries. Only those who can think feel lonely." The lonely Chinese Hamlet of the 1990s, he explained, was "neither a prince who seeks revenge for the sake of justice nor a hero of humanism. What we are facing is ourselves. To face oneself is the most active and bravest attitude modern people can possibly assume."²⁹⁶ Unlike previous Shakespearean productions in revealing Renaissance values, this spoken drama tried to express contemporary concerns by seeking a new interpretation, in which the part of Hamlet was played by three actors in turn. For example, Hamlet's famous soliloquy "To be or not to be" was delivered by the three Hamlets, respectively, with each repeating the first line and then sharing the rest line by line. Through changing the role among the three Hamlets, the director Lin Zhaohua wanted to emphasize his theme that "everyone is Hamlet". In Lin's hand Hamlet has changed his identity from the Prince of Denmark avenging his father in the dilemma of humanity and cruel reality into a common Chinese person in the street, which will be analyzed in detail in Chapter 6.

5.3.2 Traditional Chinese Drama

The second subdivision in combining the Western manner with the Chinese one is set apart from the traditional Chinese style "by the fact that the whole opera resembles the original play in terms of plot, characterisation, and even sequences of scenes."²⁹⁷ In the meantime, similar to the pure Chinese style in staging of Shakespeare, the traditional Chinese opera preserves its salient theatrical characteristics different from any other local genre, sometimes with the character wearing a blonde wig, a prosthetic nose and blue eyes, as

²⁹⁶ Lin Zhaohua as quoted in Ruru Li, "Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage in the 1990s", *Shakespeare Quarterly* 50 (1999 Fall), p. 356.

²⁹⁷ Ruru Li, "Shakespeare Translation", p. 24.

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with the case of the *yueju* adaptation of *Twelfth Night* by the No.3 Company of Shanghai Yueju Theatre in which the director wanted to bring the true essence of Shakespeare's work home to the audience by means of local Chinese culture – here referred to the *yueju* local genre²⁹⁸; but sometimes, all Chinese performers wear Chinese costumes, and their names are changed into familiar Chinese ones. Take the 1986 *huangmei* adaptation of *Much Ado About Nothing* for example.

The Anhui Huangmei Opera Troupe's *Much Ado* was performed during the first Chinese Shakespeare Festival in Shanghai. "The story took place in the border region of China with the flavour of a minority ethnic life." Zha Peide pointed out, "[t]his treatment had the obvious advantage of retaining much of the original plot and text while reducing the sense of cultural discrepancy."²⁹⁹ On the other hand, wearing ancient Chinese costumes enabled the actors and actresses to feel at ease while playing Shakespeare's roles and make full use of the traditional *huangmei* opera techniques. For example, Benedick's bickering with Beatrice was demonstrated by employing a duet accompanied by dance, which is a great feature of *huangmei* opera.³⁰⁰ The production of *Much Ado About Nothing* was a success in combining Shakespeare's humanity and life with the rich artistic resources of *huangmei* opera, as Li Ruru remarked that "foreign audiences can recognize the characters of the original play at first glance without the benefit of translation, and can follow the scenes as the plot unfolds."³⁰¹ Chapter 6 will focus on discussing the combination of Chinese elements and the preserved Shakespearean spirit in the Chinese adaptation of *Much Ado About Nothing*.

The striking similarities between Shakespearean plays and the traditional Chinese theatre, which have already been analysed in Chapter 2, make it practical to reproduce Shakespeare's plays on the Chinese stage in a way that makes them accessible to a Chinese

²⁹⁸ Ruru Li, *Shashibiya*, p. 162.

²⁹⁹ Peide Zha and Jia Tian, "Shakespeare in Traditional", p. 206.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

³⁰¹ Ruru Li, "Chinese Traditional Theatre and Shakespeare", *Asian Theatre Journal* 5 (1988 Spring), p. 40.

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audience. Huang Zuolin once commented in “The Prospects of Shakespeare’s Plays on the Chinese Stage”:

There is no doubt that we shall make more contributions to the theatrical circles of the world if we perform Shakespeare’s plays by using some stage technique of traditional Chinese drama when we introduce the works of this great dramatic poet to Chinese audiences. And in the meantime we can make our brilliant theatrical tradition and consummate stage techniques known to countries all over the world.³⁰²

³⁰² Huang Zuolin as quoted in Xiaoyang Zhang, *Shakespeare in China*, p. 134.

6 Chinese Productions of Shakespeare

In respect of Chinese performances of Shakespeare, Murray J. Levith commented in his *Shakespeare in China*:

No one these days would argue with adapting Shakespeare to present (or future or past) worlds or cultures, or experimenting with various stage techniques. However, the Chinese have increasingly appropriated and expropriated Shakespeare, turning his plays into something radically different – for example, Beijing, *kunju*, *huangmei*, and *shaoxing* operas. This, of course, gives rise to the question of whether Shakespeare is a source or inspiration, rather than authentic ‘Shakespeare’?³⁰³

As early as spoken drama was first introduced into the Chinese theatre, the performers attempted to imitate Shakespeare in its original dramatic form, which did not of course deny adapting him in the Chinese way, for the English playwright was still unfamiliar to most Chinese audiences. For example, the first Chinese Shakespearean adaptation *Killing Elder Brother and Marring Sister-in-Law* from *Hamlet* was carried out in Sichuan opera. To escape from any political persecution in the 1950s, the Chinese were looking for a safe text in staging Shakespeare in its original. After the first China’s Shakespeare Festival (1986) the theatrical practitioners began to heatedly debate whether to preserve authentic Shakespeare or to blend Shakespearean spirit with Chinese characteristics, inasmuch as many performances either have sinicized Shakespeare in the theatrical traditions or have introduced Chinese culture or interpretation into Shakespeare’s text.

To illustrate how Shakespeare has been staged in the Chinese theatre and meanwhile to give an answer to Murray J. Levith’s question on Chinese performances of Shakespeare, three productions are selected in the light of generally accepted dividing category: history play, tragedy and comedy. They are the history play *King Richard III*, the tragedy *Hamlet* and the comedy *Much Ado About Nothing*, respectively.

³⁰³ Murray J. Levith, *Shakespeare in China* (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 136.

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6.1 The History Play *King Richard III*

The so-called history plays of Shakespeare dramatise the reign of the English kings, ranging from John, Richard II, the three successive Henrys – Henry IV, V and VI, Richard III to Henry VIII, and each is named after the monarch at the time. In addition, *Edward III*, an anonymous history play, has been increasingly attributed to Shakespeare, either as a sole author or as a collaborator.³⁰⁴ In Shakespeare's English history plays, the materials are drawn primarily from chronicles of English history, that of Holinshed in particular. Just as the dividing category "history play" literally implies, all these plays should be of factual history. Yet, there are many fictional episodes, for example in the case of *Richard III* where the ghost scene in the last act is a case in point. There are other plays of Shakespeare, in the meantime, which have not been included in the generic category of history play, for instance the tragedy *Julius Caesar* – the portrayal of a real historical figure in ancient Rome. Therefore, the criteria for distinguishing between Shakespeare's history plays and tragedies are not absolutely clear, as Samuel Johnson concluded that "[t]he players, who in their edition divided out author's works into comedies, histories, and tragedies, seem not to have distinguished the three kinds by any very exact or definite ideas."³⁰⁵

As a matter of fact, "[b]efore Shakespeare and Marlowe, 'history' was not a formal subdivision of dramatic writing in any recognized sense."³⁰⁶ As a genre, on the other hand, the English history play was not invented by Shakespeare.³⁰⁷ The title *The Tragedy of King Richard the Third* in the Stationers' Register of 1597 accounts for the circumstance in Shakespeare's time – a tragedy of a historical figure. Late in 1623, seven years after Shakespeare's death, his two fellow actors – John Heminge and Henry Condell – allotted ten Shakespeare plays under the category of history play in the Folio and placed them

³⁰⁴ Warren Chernaik, *The Cambridge Introduction to Shakespeare's History Plays* (Cambridge: University Press, 2007), p. 9.

³⁰⁵ Johnson, "Preface To Shakespeare", p. 17.

³⁰⁶ Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. John Jowett, p. 22.

³⁰⁷ Chernaik, *Cambridge Introduction*, p. 9.

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according to the chronology of English history instead of the order of their composition date.³⁰⁸ Accordingly, it is understandable that “[i]n more recent times, the play [*Richard III*] has often appealed as political tragedy to audiences with no particular interest in the events of English history.”³⁰⁹ The dissertation, nevertheless, follows the generally accepted convention of allotting Shakespeare’s *Richard III* into the dramatic genre of history play, which began with the First Folio in 1623.

6.1.1 The Shakespearean Text: General Remarks

6.1.1.1 The Date of Composition

As for the composition date of *Richard III*, there are different theses in different *Richard III*-editions. For instance, Antony Hammond in his Arden Shakespeare has the date of 1591³¹⁰, while the Cambridge version gives a composition date of 1592-3 for the play³¹¹ and the Oxford World’s Classics concludes that “[t]hese details highlight 1592, the year in which Pembroke’s Men was formed, as the most probable date of composition.”³¹² It is undeniable that it is rather difficult to place the history play at an exact time, and the course of dating, on the whole, is full of suppositions and conjectures.

The earliest composition date, remarks Janis Lull, would be the year 1588 on condition that Sidney Shanker is right in guessing that Shakespeare described Sir James Blunt in *Richard III* to compliment the Blunts of Stratford, whose family was not actually knighted

³⁰⁸ Elihu Pearlman, *William Shakespeare: the History Plays* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992), p.4, as well as Chernaik, *Cambridge Introduction*, p. 7.

³⁰⁹ Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. John Jowett, p. 22.

³¹⁰ William Shakespeare, *King Richard III*, repr. ed. Antony Hammond (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 54-61.

³¹¹ William Shakespeare, *King Richard III*, ed. Janis Lull (Cambridge: University Press, 1999), pp. 4-5.

³¹² Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. John Jowett, p. 7.

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until 1588.³¹³ As to this latest date, the publication suggests a probability of being not later than 1597, which was entered in the Stationers' Register (the business records of the London 'company' or guild of stationers) on 20 October 1597 by Andrew Wise as follows:

The Tragedy of / King Richard the third. / Containing, / His treacherous Plots against his brother Clarence: / the pittiefull murder of his innocent nephews: / his tyrannicall vsurpation: with the whole course / of his detested life, and most deserued death. / As it hath bene lately Acted by the / Right honourable the Lord Chamber- / laine his serunants.³¹⁴

Roughly speaking, Shakespeare finished his *Richard III* between 1588 and 1597. But it appears unlikely that Shakespeare, such a prolific playwright, spent almost ten years in writing the play, and therefore the time-span needs narrowing down.

It is well known that *Richard III* concludes Shakespeare's first tetralogy dramatising the English Wars of the Roses (1455-1489), as John Dover Wilson remarked: "Shakespeare had obviously begun *Richard III* in mind, if not on paper, when writing the soliloquy at *3 Henry VI*, 3.2.124ff";³¹⁵ and it is positively supposed to have been written and performed after *Henry VI, Part 3*. So it sounds more reasonable to start with the discussion of the dating of *3 Henry VI* before establishing the composition date for *Richard III*.

In his pamphlet *Greenes Groatsworth of Witte*, Robert Greene, who died in September of 1592 from "a banquet of Rhenish wine and pickled herring" called by Thomas Nashe, burlesqued a line "*Tygers hart wrapt in a Players hyde*" from Shakespeare's "O tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide" (*3 Henry VI, Part 3*, 1.4.137). The dying Greene's parody of Shakespeare indicates that the third part of *Henry VI* must have been staged before the closure of the London theatres on 23 June 1592 in view of the plague, inasmuch

³¹³ Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. Janis Lull, p. 5.

³¹⁴ William Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. John Dover Wilson (Cambridge: University Press, 1954), p. viii.

³¹⁵ John Dover Wilson as quoted in Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. Antony Hammond, p. 54.

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as afterwards the London acting company began to tour the provinces. The views³¹⁶ that *3 Henry VI* belongs to 1591 or early 1592 suggest that the earliest date of writing *Richard III* could not be the year 1591, as Antony Hammond supposed in his *Arden Shakespeare*, or rather during the period between 1592 and 1593, immediately after *3 Henry VI*.

Harold F. Brooks argues that Christopher Marlowe was indebted to Shakespeare in composing his *Edward II*, in which there are many echoes of *Richard III*. Antony Hammond agrees with Brooks although he acknowledges that “many of the echoes anyway are of phrases whose origins may be proverbial, or traceable to a common ancestor, or merely coincidental.”³¹⁷ If Brooks is right, Shakespeare’s *Richard III* could not have been completed in 1593 because as the penultimate play of Marlowe, who died in May 1593, *Edward II* seems likely to have been written in early 1592³¹⁸. In this way *Richard III* was definitely assumed to have been composed around 1592. So the Oxford World’s Classics’ conclusion of the year 1592 as the most probable composition date of *Richard III* is acceptable.

6.1.1.2 The Sources

The sources for the history play can be divided roughly into two main kinds, namely historical and literary material. The historical material, the primary source for the play, was derived from the factual chronicles of Edward Hall and Raphael Holinshed: “Shakespeare had both to hand, but that, as Begg has suggested, Hall was the primary source and Holinshed used chiefly for additional details.”³¹⁹ In the meantime, Hall’s *Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre and York* (1548) came from *History of Richard III* (1513) by Sir Thomas More (1478-1535). Holinshed’s *Chronicles of England*

³¹⁶ Gary Taylor as quoted in Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. John Jowett, p. 3.

³¹⁷ Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. Antony Hammond, p. 57.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

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(second edition, 1587) also consulted More's *History* via Hall's chronicle. In the final analysis, More's *History* should be regarded as the primary chronicle material for Shakespeare's *Richard III*. However, More has consulted Polydore Vergil (1470-1555)³²⁰. There is one point worth mentioning that More provided Shakespeare only with the rise of Richard to the throne, for More ends his *History* with Buckingham's flight. As for Richard's decline and final defeat at the Battle of Bosworth, Shakespeare derived sources from Hall and Holinshed. While mainly relying on More for the historical material, Shakespeare adopted his interpretation of Richard III – a witty villain, as Antony Hammond concludes:

[H]e is true to the tone of the book: his emphases are More's, though they are modified by the technique of dramatization. What this means in practice is (as Aristotle observed of poetic art) that Shakespeare universalizes the historical detail. He does not falsify, but he makes general what in More is sometimes more specific, by use of the materials available to the dramatist in the 1590s.³²¹

With regard to Shakespeare's literary material for the play, Harold Brooks has made exhaustive investigations and listed a wide range of dramatic influences from those, such as Lucius Annaeus Seneca (4BC-AD65)³²², the English dramatist Thomas Kyd (1558-1594), the English poet Edmund Spenser (1552-1599) and others.

In Shakespeare's *Richard III*, Clarence tells the Keeper of his frightful dreams:

What dreadful noise of waters in my ears;
What sights of ugly death within my eyes!
Methoughts I saw a thousand fearful wrecks;
Ten thousand men that fishes gnaw'd upon;
Wedges of gold, great anchors, heaps of pearl,
Inestimable stones, unvalu'd jewels,
All scatter'd in the bottom of the sea.
Some lay in dead men's skulls, and in the holes
Where eyes did once inhabit, there were crept –

³²⁰ Polydore Vergil was an English historian, offering primary sources for the Tudor period (1485-1503).

³²¹ Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. Antony Hammond, p. 75.

³²² Lucius Annaeus Seneca, known as Seneca, was a Roman philosopher and dramatist.

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As 'twere in scorn of eyes – reflecting germs,
That woo'd the slimy bottom of the deep,
And mock'd the dead bones that lay scatter'd by.

(*Richard III*, 1.4.22-33)

According to Brooks, the description of Hades full of treasure suggests an echo of the Cave of Mammon episode and the terrifying atmosphere in the dream owes to the visit of Guyon to the Bower of Bliss in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*,³²³ which was published first in three books in 1590 and later in six books in 1596. The ghost scene in Act V Scene III of *Richard III* is believed to have derived from the first scene of Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, the first revenge tragedy in English literature. Besides, there are many echoes in the play from Seneca. For example, the wailing Queens in Shakespeare find analogues in the Trojan women in Seneca's *Troades*, as Hammond summarizes that Shakespeare "seems to have found the situation of the women in defeated Troy and Ricardian England to have had elements in common"³²⁴. In addition, the wooing of Anne scene in *Richard III* is a parallel to that of Megara by Lycus in the *Hercules Furencs*, and the behaviour of offering sword is believed to derive from *Hippolytus*.³²⁵

The collection *Mirror for Magistrates* with materials culled from English history – in the form of a principled and didactic work rather than a chronicle – gave Shakespeare inspirations for composing *Richard III*, and the poems of Clarence, Richard III, Hastings and Buckingham in the collection have been selectively taken by Shakespeare for his passages. For example, Shakespeare did not follow More, Hall or Sackville who had emphasized Buckingham's motivation in the collection; rather he leaves Buckingham an enigma.³²⁶

While selectively borrowing historical and literal sources from classical and English works, Shakespeare adjusts "the facts of history in order to make a play more effective

³²³ Harold Brooks as quoted in Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. Antony Hammond, p. 80.

³²⁴ Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. Antony Hammond, p. 81.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

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dramatically, emphasizing a pattern or bringing out conflicts of character”³²⁷, of which the anachronism happening to the character Queen Margaret affords a good example.

According to the factual material in English history, Queen Margaret, widow of King Henry VI, in 1476 sailed back to France after the King of France paid a ransom to England and stayed there in Paris until her death in 1482, three years before Richard’s defeat at the battle of Bosworth. In contrast to English history, however, Margaret’s appearance in Shakespeare’s *Richard III* – a history play – has two denotations. On the one hand, Margaret functions, in the light of dramatic construction, as a connecting link between the preceding and the following events: she presents a reminder of former wars between the houses of York and Lancaster and meanwhile prophesies what will happen in the future; on the other hand, she helps Shakespeare explore the theme of historical determinism through her prophetic curses, take her curse on the Queen Elizabeth for instance:

Thyself, a queen, for me that was a queen,
Outlive thy glory like my wretched self:
Long may’st thou live to wail thy children’s death,
And see another, as I see thee now,
Deck’d in thy rights, as thou art stall’d in mine;
Long die thy happy days before thy death,
And after many lengthen’d hours of grief,
Die neither mother, wife, nor England’s Queen.

(*Richard III*, 1.3. 202-09)

In this respect, Janis Lull contends that “Margaret gives voice to the belief, encouraged by the growing Calvinism of the Elizabethan era, that individual historical events are determined by God, who often punishes evil with (apparent) evil.”³²⁸ Later in the play, the widowed Queen Elizabeth, after the death of her relatives, becomes a mother wailing for her young princes’ death in the Tower of London, as she says to Margaret “O, thou didst prophesy the time would come”. (*Richard III*, 4.4.79)

³²⁷ Chernaik, *Cambridge Introduction*, p. 12.

³²⁸ Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. Janis Lull, p. 6.

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6.1.1.3 Plot and Structure

There is only one plot without any sub-plot in the play, revolving round the title-role Richard III with his rise to and decline from the throne. “The action is closely centred on a single figure. Almost everyone relates directly to Richard. There is a single plot line, and it is his”,³²⁹ remarked John Jowett in his Oxford edition of *Richard III*.

Act I: on entering the stage, Richard delivers his famous soliloquy, from which his purpose is revealed: “And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover / To entertain these fair well-spoken days, / I am determined to prove a villain, / And hate the idle pleasures of these days.” (*Richard III*, 1.1.28-31) The very beginning of his villainy of usurping the throne is to drive a wedge between his two elder brothers, King Edward and Clarence, by spreading gossip, as Clarence recounts to Richard: “He [the King Edward] hearkens after prophecies and dreams, / And from the cross-row plucks the letter G; / And says a wizard told him that by ‘G’ / His issue disinherited should be. / And for my name of George begins with G, / It follows in his thought that I am he.” (*Richard III*, 1.1.54-9) As a result, Clarence is confined to the Tower of London by his elder brother Edward. The real talebearer Richard pretends that he will appeal to Edward to enfranchise Clarence, but, in private, has Clarence murdered in the Tower. Meanwhile, Richard succeeds in wooing Lady Anne, who was the wife of Prince Edward and daughter-in-law of Henry VI, both killed by Richard or with his cooperation. Obscure as his motive for pursuing Anne is, Richard definitely takes a further step to his villainous purpose. Facing the quarrelling Yorkists, the old Queen Margaret warns them against the malicious Richard, which falls on deaf ears, and then prophetically swears at her enemies.

Act II: Richard manages to pass off the blame for Clarence’s death onto the sick King Edward in order to accelerate his illness and death. After the King’s death from over-grief, Lord Buckingham suggests that the young Prince of Wales come back to London to be crowned. On the other hand, the Protector Richard and Buckingham send the Queen

³²⁹ Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. John Jowett, p. 74.

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Elizabeth's relatives – Rivers, Grey and Thomas Vaughan – to Pomfret as prisoners in order “to part the Queen's proud kindred from the Prince.” (*Richard III*, 2.3.150)

Act III: Richard sweeps aside all the obstacles on his way to become a crowned king. On the one hand, he keeps the Prince Edward of Wales as well as his younger brother the Duke of York in the Tower of London. On the other hand, he has Lord Hastings, who “will lose his head ere give consent / His master's child (as worshipfully he terms it) / Shall lose the royalty of England's throne” (*Richard III*, 3.4.38-40), and the Queen's kindred imprisoned in Pomfret executed. Afterwards, he instructs Buckingham to “[i]nfer the bastardy of Edward's children” and even “his own bastardy, /.../ And his resemblance, being not like the Duke.” (*Richard III*, 3.7.9-11) Richard has well prepared everything for his rise to the throne.

Act IV: Richard is crowned English king, thus coming to the peak of his fortunes. Yet malicious Richard does not stop his villainy at the point of his achievement of kingship. Instead, he has the young Princes killed. His Queen Anne is probably murdered by him, too, “for it stands me much upon / To stop all hopes whose growth may damage me. / I must be married to my brother's daughter, / Or else my kingdom stands on brittle glass.” (*Richard III*, 4.2.58-61) In fact, Richard's ascent to the throne implies the beginning of his decline: he loses his previous confidence in himself, recalling the prophecy that he would not live long after he saw “Richmond”. His refusal of Buckingham's demand of the earldom of Hereford isolates him utterly from the noblemen at court; even his mother the Duchess of York is no exception. Margaret, his antagonist, witnesses the fulfilment of her curses and prophecies: not only of the death of King Edward, Hastings, the Queen's faction, and the young Princes but of the decline of Queen Elizabeth and Buckingham. Richmond, a descendant of the Lancaster family, finally invades England to claim the crown, confederating with rebellions in England.

Act V: Buckingham, the former ally of Richard, is caught and executed by Richard III. On the eve of the battle in Bosworth, Richard has a terrifying dream, in which the ghosts of all those he has slain, including Prince Edward, Henry VI, Clarence, Rivers, Gery, Vaughan, Hastings, the two young Princes, Lady Anne and Buckingham, come to him and curse him, telling him that he will despair and die the next day. On the battlefield, Richard

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is killed by Richmond, who is then crowned King Henry VII via his marriage with the young Elizabeth, finally restoring England to peace in the reconciliation of the York and Lancaster family.

6.1.1.4 Stage History

“*Richard III*, which provides a star part actors still love to play, is one of the three or four Shakespeare plays most frequently performed today.”³³⁰ The history of its performance particularly in England is richly documented.

The earliest documented performance of *Richard III* occurred at the court of Charles I on 16 November 1633.³³¹ Fortunately, there were many allusions and anecdotes about the play before the first recorded performance at court, of which the diary of John Manningham (1588-1622)³³² is a case in point:

Upon a time when Burbage played Richard III there was a citizen grew so far in liking with him that before she went from the play she appointed him to come that night unto her by the name of Richard the Third. Shakespeare, overhearing their conclusion, went before, was entertained, and at his game ere Burbage came. Then message being brought that Richard the Third was at the door, Shakespeare caused return to be made that William the Conqueror was before Richard the Third. Shakespeare's name William.³³³

From this anecdote the reader can understand how popular and effective the actor Richard Burbage (1568-1619) – a famous star in Shakespeare's theatre company, the Lord

³³⁰ Chernaik, *Cambridge Introduction*, p. 10.

³³¹ Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. Antony Hammond, pp. 67-8.

³³² John Manningham was a British lawyer. His diary is considered to be an important source of literary and social history in the very early 17th century, in which references about Shakespeare, the death of Elizabeth and the accession of James I were recorded.

³³³ Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. John Jowett, p. 74.

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Chamberlain's men and later the King's men in 1603 when King James ascended the throne – in the *Richard III* play was at that time.

During the English Civil Wars (1642-1651) and the English Interregnum (1649-1660) the theatres remained closed and *Richard III* disappeared from the stage. When Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660, the theatres in London were reopened and it was performed by the King's Company under Thomas Killigrew, however, “the play probably did not please the new audiences as much as it had the old.”³³⁴ As a result, Shakespeare's play needed revising to appeal to the new taste at that time, and the playwright-actor Colley Cibber (1671-1757)³³⁵ made an adaptation of *Richard III* first seen at Drury Lane in 1699, which became “for a couple of centuries probably the most popular play on the English stage”³³⁶.

In Cibber's version of *Richard III*, many characters were excised entirely from the original, such as Clarence, simultaneously the two murderers, Edward IV, Margaret, and Hastings among others, as Hammond concludes: “Altogether the fifty-seven characters of Shakespeare's play are reduced to thirty-one, many of whom are now mute, or nearly so”³³⁷. In accordance with the eliminating of many characters from Shakespeare's text, Cibber shortened Shakespeare's 3,800 lines in the Folio to some 800 lines, combining this with about 200-line fragments from other plays and over 1,000 lines of his own, thus totalling some 2,050 lines in the adaptation. At the same time, he had Shakespeare's lines printed in italics. As a result, Cibber's adaptation focuses on the title role of Richard, who is speaking about forty percent of the lines, more than Shakespeare's only thirty percent of the whole play. Richard in the adaptation is correspondingly rather clear in motivations. Cibber's Richard, on the other hand, is “a good man turned to evil, and there is nothing left

³³⁴ Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. Janis Lull, p. 24.

³³⁵ Colley Cibber, an English playwright and actor-manager. In 1730 he was awarded Poet Laureate. His *Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* (1740) pioneered a British tradition of personal and anecdotal autobiography.

³³⁶ Stanley Wells as quoted in Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. John Jowett, p. 83.

³³⁷ Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. Antony Hammond, p. 68.

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of the ordained nemesis one finds in Shakespeare³³⁸, for the Queen Margaret, Richard's strongest adversary, has been omitted from the original. Apart from abridging Shakespeare, Cibber added a new Act I, partly drawn from *3 Henry VI*, retelling the imprisonment of Henry VI in the Tower of London and his murder by Richard.

Cibber's adaptation of *Richard III* as the basis for all performances survived through the whole 18th century save for that of David Garrick (1717-1779), who "revolutionized Shakespearian acting and launched one of the most famous careers in the history of English theatre with his Richard in Cibber's version"³³⁹ at the London theatre of Goodman's Fields in 1741 with his realistic staging instead of the bombastic style.

In the 19th century, the hegemony of Cibber's *Richard III* was challenged by some actor-managers by restoring parts of Shakespeare, and the first one was William Charles Macready (1793-1873). Unfortunately, his attempt in 1821 aiming "[t]o restore the character of Richard and the language of Shakespeare to the stage"³⁴⁰ was not a success. Macready could not do anything but return to Cibber's adaptation, retaining only the betrayal of Hastings from Shakespeare. In the same year, Cibber's script, together with the actor-manager tradition, was brought from England to America by Junius Brutus Booth (1796-1852), and there Edwin, Booth's son, wanted to produce Shakespeare's *Richard III* but proved fruitless. In contrast to the British and American stagings of *Richard III*, the theatres in Germany were loyal to Shakespeare, the Dresden Court Theatre in the 1850s on the basis of the Schlegel-Tieck translation of 1810 for instance³⁴¹. The tradition of appropriating Shakespeare continued in England, even the famous actor of the Victorian era, Henry Irving (1838-1905), who has been praised for "his victory at last overturned a two-hundred-year tradition of using Cibber's words in place of Shakespeare's"³⁴² with his

³³⁸ Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. Antony Hammond, p. 69.

³³⁹ Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. John Jowett, p. 87.

³⁴⁰ Macready as quoted in Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. John Jowett, p. 90.

³⁴¹ Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. John Jowett, p. 91.

³⁴² Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. Janis Lull, p. 26.

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1877 production, omitted and abridged lots of sections from the original text. Thus, Antony Hammond has criticised Irving's *Richard III*: "So despite Irving's preening in the preface on his 'successful restoration of the text', the work is just another arrogant actor's botch, save that the raw materials were all Shakespeare's rather than Cibber's."³⁴³

The early 20th century experienced not only traditional (Cibber's version was defended by Odell, for example, "Cibber's play – as a play – is better than Shakespeare's. It is nervous, unified, compact, where the original is sprawling, diffuse and aimless"³⁴⁴) but innovative performance of *Richard III* on the stage, and Laurence Olivier's film version in 1955 offers "a distillation of the whole theatrical history of the play" – a kind of dynamic museum of past interpretations³⁴⁵. Like other stagings of *Richard III* since 1700, Olivier's film abridged some parts from Shakespeare – the cutting of Margaret is a case in point – and transplanted some parts from *3 Henry VI* for *Richard*. Meanwhile, Olivier concentrated on the role of Richard in the same way as Cibber by rejecting the decline of Richard's power from the original, rather resolute: "Richard's himself again". Yet, Christopher Plummer's staging of *Richard III* at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, in 1961 marked the breaking with Olivier's presentation of Richard, which had been all the rage, but not in the theatrical convention. Plummer interpreted Shakespeare's *Richard* from the standpoint of psychology. The various interpretations of *Richard III* survived through the late 20th century and the early twenty-first century. For instance, Ian McKellen's Richard in his naval uniform in the film version, directed by Richard Loncraine in 1995, fights with Richmond in a heavy industrial plant, and jeeps are used for Richmond's chasing of Richard on the battlefield.

In looking back over the stage history of *Richard III*, Janis Lull sighs with emotion: "extreme adaptation has been the norm almost from the start". "While this tradition has developed Richard III as a peerless vehicle for a virtuoso actor, many playgoers who know

³⁴³ Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. Antony Hammond, p. 87.

³⁴⁴ Odell as quoted in Arthur Colby Sprague, *Shakespeare's Histories: Plays for the Stage* (London: The Society for Theatre Research, 1963), p. 123.

³⁴⁵ Hugh Richmond as quoted in Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. Janis Lull, p. 32.

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Shakespeare's script feel that they have yet to see a production of the whole play as he wrote it."³⁴⁶ Fortunately, the Chinese *Richard III* directed by Peng Liqi in 1986 can be praised for having done well, at least in the light of retaining Shakespeare's main characters.

6.1.2 The 1986 Chinese Version of *Richard III* – *li cha san shi*

To date there have been three Chinese performances of *Richard III* in total, all of which are in the form of spoken drama with the same title from the literal translation, *li cha san shi*³⁴⁷. The first was staged by the China Children's Art Theatre with Zhou Lai as director at the First Chinese Shakespeare Festival (1986).

As for the second production directed by Peng Liqi, the subject of analysis in the chapter, there needs some detailed explanations. First of all, few documents of this performance are available save for the following materials: there is a CD-video yet of not good quality; Li Ruru only listed it in the chronology of Chinese performances of Shakespeare in her *Shashibiya*³⁴⁸, and Cao Shujun and Sun Fuliang briefly mentioned the performance in *Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage*³⁴⁹. Secondly, they are, however, full of contradictions and disagreements in establishing the performance date and distinguishing the translation version for the script: Cao Shujun and Sun Fuliang recorded that some scenes from Peng Liqi's *Richard III* had been staged as a part of a joint performance before the scholars at the First Shakespeare Festival of China (1986), which denies Li Ruru's date of 1989. As a result, the dissertation situates Peng Liqi's version in 1986. Furthermore, Li's document shows that the performance was produced on the basis of Zhu Shenghao's translation, different from the video with Fang Zhong as translator. Nonetheless, they all

³⁴⁶ Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. Janis Lull, p. 41.

³⁴⁷ 《理查三世》

³⁴⁸ Ruru Li, *Shashibiya*, p. 238.

³⁴⁹ Shujun Cao and Fuliang Sun, *Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage*, pp. 240-1.

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agree with each other on one point, that is, the production was performed by the Shanghai Theatre Academy.

Shakespeare's *Richard III* was once again staged by Lin Zhaohua and his private Theatre Studio in 2001, completely different from the previous two which remain loyal to Shakespeare, mainly in thematic terms.

Lin's adaptation was made for the 2001 International Theatre Festival in Berlin, endowing the play with a new interpretation. According to the director, "that conspirators kill and harm others is not frightful. Instead, what is fearful is the people's response of insensibility and ignorance towards these conspiracies. This happens frequently in our daily life. You are unaware of those – maybe good friends or colleagues of you – who scheme on you, yet you treat them as your best friends. The insensate attitude towards intrigues actually helps extend them. In this sense, the victim is in fact the accomplice of the plotter."³⁵⁰ To visualize his understanding of Shakespeare, the director Lin Zhaohua adopted a special dramatic technique: the disharmony between performers' words and actions with the help of multimedia. While presenting the glamour of Shakespeare language by delivering his original text, the actors/actresses enacted some actions and gestures which were quite different from or even disloyal to the original context. For example, at the beginning of the production Richard conversed with Clarence about their brotherhood while they played the game of a glade catching chickens on stage. It was through the disagreement between words and actions of the performer that the sense of indifference to conspiracy has been completely emphasized.³⁵¹ Unfortunately, however, it has been reported that Lin's *Richard III* did not arouse resonance either from the German audience or the Chinese spectators.

³⁵⁰ Yujie Zhang, [Interview Notes on *Richard III*] “《查理三世》采访笔录”, *Drama- The Journal of the Central Academy of Drama* 2 (2003), p. 130. “阴谋者杀人、害人并不可怕，可怕的是人们对阴谋的麻痹感。我们生活当中就常有，可能你的好朋友、你的同事就在算计你，你还把人当作至交！生活中人们对阴谋的麻痹感实际上更加大了阴谋的扩张，在这个意义上说，这些受害者实质上是害人者的帮凶。”

³⁵¹ Yujie Zhang, “Interview Notes on *Richard III*”, p. 132.

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6.1.2.1 The Context of the 1986 Production

Roughly speaking, the 1986 production of *Richard III* is representative of performing Shakespeare on the Chinese stage in the Western style, which was the rage in the mid-twentieth century in China. The reasons for the popularity of the dramatic acting can be illuminated primarily from two perspectives, that is to say, the theatrical history of spoken drama and the social and political backgrounds in the 1980s.

The introduction of spoken drama – a Western theatrical convention – into China resulted from the reform in adopting new literary forms and values to instill progressive ideas in the people’s minds, as Liang Qichao (1873-1929) advocated in his article published in *New Novel*, a magazine involving the vernacular novel as well as drama created by Liang in 1902:

If you wish to reform the citizens of a country, you must first reform the popular literature of the country. To reform ethical standards, you must reform the popular literature; to reform religion, you must reform the popular literature; to reform the political system, you must reform the popular literature; to reform customs, you must reform the popular literature; to reform learning and improving technology, you must reform the popular literature; to reform people’s hearts and characters, you must reform the popular literature.³⁵²

Afterwards, the revolution in novel and theatre circles went forward through the late Qing dynasty (1644-1912). Two years later³⁵³, likewise, Chen Duxiu (1879-1942), a leading figure in the New Literary Movement (1917), underlined and analogized the function of theatre as “a big school for all the people under heaven; theatre workers are in fact influential teachers of the people.” He went further, “[s]ome concerned people are hoping

³⁵² Qichao Liang, “Popular Literature in Relation to the Masses”, in *Chinese Theories of Theater and Performance from Confucius to the Present*, ed. and trans. Faye Chunfang Fei (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1999), p.109.

³⁵³ Some scholars argued in “The General History of *Huaju* in China” that Chen Duxiu published his *On Theatre* in 1905 rather than 1904. Because the following paragraph is quoted from Fayer Chunfang Fei’s edition, the date of publishing the article therefore follows her document – 1904.

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to solve the problems by establishing schools, but they can only educate a limited number of students, and it takes time to see results. Some are promoting social reform by writing new novels or publishing their own newspapers, but they have no impact on the illiterate. Only the theatre, through reform, can excite and change the whole society – the deaf can see it, and the blind can hear it. There is no better vehicle for social reform than the theatre.” On the other hand, Chen insisted on adopting the Westernized theatrical techniques on the Chinese stage, inasmuch as “[i]t is very effective to have characters engage in debates or give speeches in order to expand the audience’s perspective. It pays to implement the latest devices of lighting, sound, electricity, and many other scientific breakthroughs.”³⁵⁴

At the call of the New Literary Movement, some theatrical practitioners, after returning to China from America, Europe, and Japan in particular, devoted themselves to the foundation of a new drama (*wen ming xi*), the early spoken drama which, on the basis of traditional Chinese opera, was searching for models from the Western theatre first landed in Shanghai together with the Opium War (1840-1842)³⁵⁵ and from the new theatre in Japan as well. One of them named Lu Jingruo (1885-1915)³⁵⁶ set up a theatre called the Spring Willow Theatre (*chun liu she*)³⁵⁷ in Shanghai in 1912, and lots of allegorical tragedies were staged to “rouse the spirit”.³⁵⁸ As mentioned in the chapter on performing Shakespeare on the Chinese stage, the so-called new drama was not totally new in spite of

³⁵⁴ Duxiu Chen, “On Theater”, in *Chinese Theories of Theater and Performance from Confucius to the Present*, ed. and trans. Faye Chunfang Fei (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1999), pp. 117, 120, 119.

³⁵⁵ “The General History of *Huaju* in China” [中国话剧通史], repr. ed. Yihong Ge (Beijing: Literary and Art Press, 1997), p. 6.

³⁵⁶ 陆镜若 Lu Jingruo was one of the founders of the early spoken drama in the Chinese history of theatre. Lu was a generalist in acting, directing, adapting as well as theatrical theory.

³⁵⁷ 春柳社 The theatre was set up by Lu Jingruo in Shanghai in 1912 so as to propagandize the newly introduced dramatic form.

³⁵⁸ Ouyang Yuqian as quoted in Alexander Huang, *Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage 1839-2004*, p. 70.

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its adopted exotic themes, plots and characters; or rather, it combined the formulized Chinese theatre with the Western naturalistic drama. It was in the 1920s that the modern Chinese theatrical form, spoken drama or generally called *huaju* in Chinese terms, came into shape, focusing on dialogue and speech.

In view of its realism and naturalism through reproducing gestures, expressions, movements, and events in daily life, the new staging convention in the form of spoken drama was enthusiastically welcomed by the Chinese theatrical reformers. At the same time, many foreign dramas, such as that of Ibsen, Schiller, Shaw, Shakespeare and Eugene O’Neil, to mention just a few, were translated into Chinese and performed in the Western style. As a result, the Chinese stage was greatly influenced by the foreign dramas in the Western style, as William Dolby remarked: “The very foreignness and novelty of *huaju* drama were to its advantage in an era when certain kinds of foreignness and newness were being widely viewed as the best or only way to [...] renovate China.”³⁵⁹

The great influence of the Western style upon the Chinese stage survived through the 1930s and 1940s despite there being continuous wars abroad and at home. With the help of the Russian Shakespearean scholars invited to China, spoken drama developed under the influence of the Stanislavski system with an emphasis on psychological realism. Yet, the disastrous Cultural Revolution of ten years (1966-1976) made everything stop on stage. In the 1980s, the Chinese theatres not only of modern spoken drama but of traditional conventions resuscitated after a two-decade disappearance from the stage. The Western style of performing Shakespeare, however, remained much more popular than the sinicized Shakespearean productions. Take the performances at the first China’s Shakespeare Festival (1986) for instance. Among twenty-five Chinese performances held simultaneously in Beijing and Shanghai from 10 to 23 April, only five were in the traditional Chinese theatre, including the *jingju Othello*, *kunju Macbeth*, *yueju Twelfth Night* and *The Winter’s Tale*, and *huangmeixi Much Ado About Nothing*; and the last play will be discussed in the ensuing corresponding part.

³⁵⁹ William Dolby as quoted in Alexander Huang, *Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage 1839-2004*, p. 74.

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In the light of loyalty to the original author and text as well, the Western style of staging Shakespeare has been considered an authentic dramatic technique in China. On the other hand, the tendency to imitate the English playwright in the form of spoken drama resulted from the social and political contexts at that time.

The 1980s was a transitional decade of importance in Chinese history. On the one hand, the theatrical participants did not get rid of the nightmarish fears of being crudely denounced as “feudal, bourgeois, revisionist” by the Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution and thus held a conservative attitude towards Shakespeare performances. Although, on the other hand, Deng Xiaoping’s policy of opening China’s doors more and more to Western technology and economic structures in particular encouraged some Shakespeare scholars to understand and interpret the playwright from new ideological and aesthetic aspects, the practice of Marxist Shakespearean criticism, for example, still dominated the Shakespeare scholarship in China, inasmuch as the people were at a loss to imagine what the society would become under the guidance of new leaders – maybe recurrence of another Cultural Revolution. “Indeed, the performance of Shakespeare, Brecht, and other foreign playwrights could be considered as an area of unofficial political discourse ‘directed against the previous [Mao] regime’.”³⁶⁰ In fact, the tendency to search for a safe text during the previous two decades had been brought unconsciously to the new era, as Li Ruru concluded:

Producing this Renaissance giant’s works became a way for Chinese artists to escape from the theater of propaganda and socialist realism. If attacked for producing the work of such a man, they could defend themselves with the fact that Marx and Engels praised Renaissance literature. Directors therefore strove to avoid linking the plays with any contemporary events. Instead, they sought to maintain or enhance the value of Renaissance literature and to explore solely the artistic aspect of the plays. Shakespearean drama became a haven and Shakespeare was thus treated as a sacred figure. This is why during China’s first Shakespeare Festival, in 1986, authenticity was still the only criterion used by scholars to judge productions, while practitioners

³⁶⁰ Alexander Huang, *Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage 1839-2004*, p.166.

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themselves would often claim loyalty to Shakespeare in order to protect their own work.³⁶¹

Peng Liqi's *Richard III* in 1986, a production staged by the Shanghai Theatre Academy against such a social and political background, helps elucidate the characteristics of performing Shakespeare on the Chinese stage in the Western style.

6.1.2.2 Western Elements in the Production

Similar to other Chinese performances of Shakespeare in the Western style, the 1986 version of *Richard III*, first and foremost, retains almost all the characters with their original names, original plot – the title-role Richard's rising to and falling from the throne – occurring in mediaeval England, as well as Shakespeare's Tudor myth: demonizing evil Richard III and praising heroic Henry VII as a white knight send by God. On the empty Chinese stage, like that in the Elizabethan theatre which would make little use of stage scenery and properties, a chair covered in red cloth symbolizes the throne, a bench is for Clarence to sleep on, and a table with chairs represents the council meeting, for "*Richard III* is not a play which depends heavily on properties."³⁶²

6.1.2.2.1 The Make-up and Costumes

As far as the Westernized Chinese acting of Shakespeare is concerned, Li Ruru has described the strong reaction of John Gillies, a professor then at La Trobe University in Australia: "John felt that it was old-fashioned; the over-acting as well as the wigs and prosthetic noses annoyed him on an aesthetic level."³⁶³ Abnormal or even absurd as it really seems in many ways to an authentic westerner, it is beyond any dispute that the

³⁶¹ Ruru Li, "Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage in the 1990s", pp. 365-366.

³⁶² Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. Antony Hammond, p. 65.

³⁶³ Ruru Li, *Shashibiya*, p. 70.

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Western style is, at least, an effective dramatic approach to performing Shakespeare in China under the circumstances that there are great discrepancies of culture and history between the Oriental and the Occidental.

To imitate Shakespeare, who wrote spoken drama, the fundamental choice for the Chinese performers in the Westerner style is to dress all of them up like real westerners. First and foremost, by making full use of facial cosmetics, they whiten their naturally yellow faces, paint eye-sockets in blue, artificially lengthen their eye-lashes, and put on prosthetic noses. At the same time, they wear wigs or sometimes dye their hair in blond colour.

In terms of attire, doublet and hose, the base on which all other articles of wear were superimposed, were masculine apparel in Mediaeval England,³⁶⁴ as a result Rosalind remarks when she disguises herself as a man: “What shall I do with my doublet and hose?” (*As You Like It*, 3.3.184)³⁶⁵ Therefore, every actor appears in doublet and hose on the Chinese stage although they were accustomed to wearing loose trousers in daily life in the 1980s. Besides, they have Shakespearean ruffs and cuffs, inasmuch as “[t]he variety known as the ‘ruff-band’ or ‘ruff’ was as characteristic a feature in the dress of both sexes under Elizabeth and James I as was the trunk-hose of male apparel or the farthingale of female.”³⁶⁶ In contrast to the traditional Chinese culture that relatives of the dead should be in white, “[i]n the Elizabethan theatre, royalty and high nobility looked the parts. Mourners would be marked out by black costumes.”³⁶⁷ Following the funeral convention in the West, the Chinese Margaret and Lady Anne, who are mourning for dead Henry VI and Edward Prince, dress in black.

³⁶⁴ F. M. Kelly, “Shakespearian Dress Notes-I: Doublet and Hose”, *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 29 (1916), p. 91.

³⁶⁵ The quotation from *As You Like It* is from William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, ed. Michael Hattaway (Cambridge: University Press, 2000).

³⁶⁶ F. M. Kelly, “Shakespearian Dress Notes-II: A.-Ruffs and Cuffs”, *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 29 (1916), p. 245.

³⁶⁷ Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. John Jowett, p. 79.



**Figure 6.1.2.1 the Chinese Margaret in black
and her Westernized make-up**

6.1.2.2.2 Theatrical Realism

The realistic movement in theatre began with Constantin Stanislavski (1863-1938) and his Moscow Arts Theatre in Russia in the late 19th century, pursuing a dramatic verisimilitude of daily life in theatrical texts and performances. Stanislavski's socialist and psychological realism exerted a great influence on Chinese performances of Shakespeare, particularly in the 1950s. Thereafter, Shakespearean scholars attempted to analyze Shakespeare's plays in the light of theatrical realism, against which John L. Styan strongly argued, inasmuch as he thought:

Unfruitful arguments also surround the degree of realism imposed upon a play by Shakespeare. He has many striking scenes that are basically realistic in conception, and many moments in which he supports the actor with realistic detail: he knows, after all, that an audience needs reassuring, especially in the more ritualistic plays, that there is a link with its own reality. Nevertheless, most of Shakespeare is unconcerned with

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such illusion... the truth is that down the years both the screen and the stage have sinned in smothering the empty Elizabethan space with realistic detail.³⁶⁸

What Styan says is partly right: there did not exist such a conception of theatrical realism in Shakespeare's time. Nevertheless, Shakespeare cared about the realistic response of his real spectators to his realistic players' performances on the stage. According to Robert E. Morsberger in *Swordplay and the Elizabethan and Jacobean Stage*, for example, "[t]o Shakespeare's audience, swordplay was a part of everyday life; all of the gentlemen carried swords and were skilled in their use and therefore demanded a high degree of accuracy in the stage duels they witnessed."³⁶⁹ If Shakespeare was not inclined to satisfy his spectators' demands, then, who would come to his theatre? And once again who would take the responsibility for the box-office failure? On the other hand, it is a worthwhile job to appreciate and evaluate Shakespeare and his plays in the light of theatrical realism, a newly developed literary criticism, through which Shakespearean scholars might learn more about Shakespeare and his special theatrical techniques.

The Chinese production of *Richard III* is also full of realistic details such as, for example, a wooden coffin which is carried half way across the stage during the funeral procession of Henry VI and then broken off by Richard's wooing Lady Anne, the daughter-in-law of Henry VI; burning candles in the scene of the murder of Clarence and in Richard's tent on the eve of the Bosworth Battle, and so forth. Let's take the final duel scene to exemplify the theatrical realism adopted in the 1986 Chinese version.

The stage direction of the duel between Richard and Richmond reads as follows: "Alarum. Enter King Richard and Richmond; they fight. Richard is slain, then, retreat being sounded, [exit Richmond; Richard's body is carried off]. Flourish. Enter Richmond, Stanley Earl of Derby bearing the crown, with other Lords [and Soldiers]." (*Richard III*, 5.5, stage direction) It is reported that in Shakespeare's time, "[t]he Globe's audience craved [for] violence and its playwrights fulfilled the need by adding many scenes that

³⁶⁸ John L. Styan, *Perspectives on Shakespeare in Performance* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), p. 96.

³⁶⁹ Robert E. Morsberger as quoted in Cesar Alexander Castillo, *Stage Fencing in Shakespeare's Time* (<http://www.shakespeare-online.com/essays/StageFencing.html>)

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were exceedingly 'action packed'. The actors in the sixteenth century would have to learn how to fight with rapiers and then apply it to the stage."³⁷⁰ As a result, scenes "of battle, of camp and march, and of personal combat occur most frequently in the chronicle plays, for all save *Henry VIII* have either civil or foreign wars"³⁷¹, and the history play *Richard III* is a case in point.

The small size of the professional stage whether in Shakespeare's time or in 20th century China prohibits the actors from vividly presenting a full stage army before the audience. Therefore, "Shakespeare is careful to suggest that it is offstage that the main body of an army is making its attack or going into retreat. The playwright fields only his protagonists as spokesmen and tokens of the progress of the fight."³⁷² The case is true of the fighting on the Chinese stage.

Whilst off-stage musical instruments imitate the clashing of swords among the sounds of drums, denoting a battle off stage, the Chinese Richard, together with Ratcliffe and a soldier, rushes to the stage full of smoke, shouting "Richmond, Richmond" as Shakespeare's Richard who is "searching for Richmond in the throat of death." (*Richard III*, 5.4.4-5) They encounter a group of Richmond's men. In the fight, Ratcliffe and Catesby are slain one by one. Afterwards, Richard directly confronts Richmond, and they are left alone on the stage, upon which corpses of soldiers are piled here and there. The sword-fighting between them lasts a couple of minutes and finally Richard is stabbed by Richmond from the back and then the front once again. Richard dies and Richmond therefore wins the battle, announcing: "victorious friends: / The day is ours; the bloody dog is dead." (*Richard III*, 5.5.1-2) In the end, Richmond is crowned English king.

³⁷⁰ Cesar Alexander Castillo, *Stage Fencing in Shakespeare's Time*.

³⁷¹ Frances Ann Shirley, *Shakespeare's Use of Off-Stage Sounds* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), p. 54.

³⁷² Styan, *Shakespeare's Stagecraft*, p. 119.

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Figure 6.1.2.2 the sword fighting between Richard on the left and Richmond on the right with the corpses lying on the stage

6.1.2.3 Alterations in the Production

As a whole, the principle of the 1986 Chinese production is to closely follow Shakespeare in every respect, ranging from *dramatis personae*, plot, theme, costumes, *mise en scène*, to the theatrical sequence, in order to present an authentic performance of Shakespeare in the method of spoken drama. Although the purpose is clear, it is undeniable that the director has made alterations in the Shakespearean text. First and foremost, he has cut some minor scenes from the original, as it is well-known that Shakespeare's play, in view of its length, is not suitable for a modern theatre any longer. At this point, Antony Hammond has once maintained:

The complete F text of the play is about 3600 dialogue lines long. While it is true that there is very little dumb-show or ceremonial action to delay the performance, and no music that requires appreciable time to perform, it would take at least two and three-quarter hours, and perhaps half an hour longer. There are sufficient surviving references to plays of the period taking three hours to perform to enable us to think that *Richard III*, while long, was not impossibly long.³⁷³

³⁷³ Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. Antony Hammond, p. 66.

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Accordingly, apart from cutting lines from time to time, the 1986 version reduces Shakespeare's 25 scenes of 5 acts to 19 scenes, abridging Act II Scene III, Act III Scene VI, Act IV Scene V and Act V Scene IV completely from the original text. As a result, the Chinese performance lasts about two and half hours on the stage.

In addition to the textual alterations, some changes are also made in theatrical terms. For example, instead of Shakespeare's simultaneous staging of Richard's and Richmond's preparations for the fighting on the eve of Bosworth Battle, the ghost scene in the Chinese version concentrates on Richard himself without Richmond on-stage, meanwhile the ghosts are reduced in numbers. The director, on the other hand, endows Shakespeare's spoken description with colourful dramatic techniques. Take the added prologue and the visualization of murder on-stage for instance.

6.1.2.3.1 The Added Prologue

Queen Margaret of the Lancaster family, a character of great importance in both dramatic structure and thematic deployment in Shakespeare's play, as remarked above, has been frequently abridged in the productions after Colley Cibber's adaptation published in 1700, of which Ian McKellen's film version directed by Richard Loncraine in 1995 affords a good example. The prophetic curse directed at Richard in Shakespeare's text therefore has to be transferred from the lip of Margaret to that of the Duchess of York, his mother. Unlike those aforementioned Shakespearean performances of Richard, the Chinese production in 1986 not only keeps Shakespeare's Margaret intact but superinduces her theatrical function by adding a new prologue to the original text.

In the added prologue, the Chinese Margaret plays the role of a narrator, introducing the main characters in the original one by one to the audience. The theatrical technique adopted by the Chinese director Peng Liqi anticipated, in the light of performance date, that in *Richard III* of a re-adapted *Wars of the Roses* trilogy, which was produced by the English Shakespeare Company and collected in Michael Bodganov's 1988-9 contemporary-style computer-age *English Stage Company* (1990). To modernize the settings and politics of Shakespeare's play, this English version began with a cocktail party,

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in which a presenter identified guests as the play's main figures to the audience.³⁷⁴ Similarly, the background music on the Chinese stage implies there is a get-together, for a ripple of laughter comes from noisy circumstances from time to time. Then, with the spotlight focusing on Margaret in black, she enters on the stage, which is as dark as night, with a crutch in her hand.

While wailing for her dead husband and young son, she swears at her adversaries, including the house of York, Queen Elizabeth and her faction, and the courtiers in high position. When Margaret mentions these characters, they appear on the stage with the spotlight on them, accompanied by music.

Henry, my husband, my king of the Lancaster family,

Thy widowed wife Margaret is calling for thy soul.

If thou enter heaven and meet with God,

Please appeal to God to execute the three brothers from the House of York

Who snatched thy kingdom and killed thee and the son.

(She moves on stage and turns her face half to the audience, half to the upper stage)

There is the eldest and crowned Edward *(who is drinking from a small bottle of wine)*

And two accomplices: the third Clarence and the crookbacked devil Gloucester.

(Three of them move close to a red chair, symbol of the throne)

All of you will slaughter against each other for the throne in the future,

As if you are not brothers by birth.

Your old mother will be full of much more distress, bewail and woe than I.

(Duchess of York with worried looks)

Queen Elizabeth, the widow having remarried Edward, together with

Thy brother Rivers and son Dorset from thine previous husband

Is enjoying your great promotions. *(Spotlight on three of them together)*

Thou will be neither wife or mother nor kindred soon.

(Spotlight moves from Elizabeth and her relatives to her two sons)

The high-ranking courtiers Buckingham, Hastings and Stanley *(one by one)*

³⁷⁴ Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. John Jowett, pp. 106 and 397, as well as the film version *Richard III*, produced by Richard Loncraine in 1995.

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Without exception will hate thee.

Poor Anne, my young daughter-in-law has become a widow. Wretched child!

(Mourning Lady Anne in black)

Thou should be on guard against your kind-heartedness and flabby will,

Not believe sweet words of the devil lest thou will be trapped. Oh, my poor child.

Richmond, Richmond, the descendant of the Lancaster family,

(Richmond comes to the red chair and puts his hand on it)

When will you come back from France to revenge our house?

Here the catty Gloucester comes, and withdraw thee, Margaret.

*(Li cha san shi, Prologue)*³⁷⁵

As a matter of fact, the 1986 version of *Richard III* adopts a traditional Chinese theatrical device which is called self-introduction or self-identification, through which the first character appearing on the stage is supposed not only to introduce himself or herself but also to give a brief introduction to the plots in the play. So from this Chinese Margaret's presentation, the audience gets to know the characters, their relationships and stories in the drama before the curtain rises. The dramatic technique is not actually alien to Shakespeare's spectators, inasmuch as Shakespeare usually let a chorus or actor speak for him in a prologue, intending to provide the listener with information about the background of the story, such as where the story takes place, who the principal characters are and what characteristics they have, sometimes even the ending of the story.

6.1.2.3.2 The Visualization of Murder On-stage

In Shakespeare's text the successive deaths of Clarence, Queen Elizabeth's kindred – Rivers, Grey and Vaughan, Hastings, two young Princes, Lady Anne and Buckingham are carried through off-stage. Only through verbal images rather than visual actions the spectator – with an active imagination – understands that they have already been killed.

³⁷⁵ All the translations from the 1986 Chinese performance of *Richard III* – *Li cha san shi* were made by myself according to the dialogue on the CD-video, unless otherwise indicated.

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The example is from Act IV Scene III, in which Tyrrel is recounting the whole process of slaying the two young Princes:

The tyrannous and bloody act is done;
The most arch deed of piteous massacre
That ever yet this land was guilty of.
...
Within their alabaster innocent arms;
Their lips were four red roses on a stalk,
And in their summer beauty kiss'd each other.
A book of prayers on their pillow lay,
...
...: 'We smothered
The most replenished sweet work of nature,
That from the prime creation e'er she fram'd.'

(*Richard III*, 4.3.1-19)

Of course, Shakespeare, as a distinguished playwright, “had the talent to exploit a ripe and evolving theatre in its own terms, and in discovering that what he had to say and the way in which the audience received it had to go together like flesh and blood”.³⁷⁶ However, such a stagecraft of aural effect had, to some extent, to depend on the active participation from his audiences, that is to say, they should closely follow the play and then give energetic illusion at Shakespeare’s orchestration of voice and sound. Unfortunately, watching a play – whether via a video at home or live performance in a theatre – indicates for a modern spectator that the visual effect plays a more important role than the aural effect. As a result, in contrast to Shakespeare’s spoken description, the director in the 1986 version visualized the deaths of Clarence and Buckingham on-stage.

In Scene 3 of the Chinese production, Clarence is stabbed by one of the two murderers sent by Richard III and immediately dies on the stage. Likewise, after having repented of his complot with Richard in usurping the England throne: “That high All-seer which I dallied with / Hath turn'd my feigned prayer on my head, / And given in earnest what I begg'd in jest. / Thus doth He force the swords of wicked men / To turn their own points in their masters' bosoms” (*Richard III*, 5.1.20-24), Buckingham is hanged by Richard’s men

³⁷⁶ Styan, *Shakespeare's Stagecraft*, p. 196.

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before the spectator. Although John L. Styan argues against using actions rather than speeches to perform Shakespeare, remarking that “[e]xcess of realism in modern Shakespearian production tends to destroy this aural shaping of the plays”³⁷⁷, these visualized actions on-stage, regardless of whether they are in theatrical or thematic terms, strongly impresses Richard’s bloodiness and cruelty on the audience.

On the whole, despite the alterations the 1986 Chinese production is regarded as an authentic performance of Shakespeare, inasmuch as the version, on the one hand, employed the Western theatrical traditions including *mise en scène*, costumes and theatrical techniques (see the detailed analysis above); on the other hand, the dividing category of performing Shakespeare on the Chinese stage – the Western style, the Chinese style and a hybrid of the Western and the Chinese style – is relatively rough in view of performing conventions confined neither to traditional Chinese theatre nor westernized spoken drama on the modern stage in present-day China. All in all, the 1986 production is a successful experiment of staging Shakespeare in the form of spoken drama by preserving the playwright primarily in the light of theme of Tudor myth, plot of Richard’s rising to and falling from the throne, principal characters, and dramatic sequences.

³⁷⁷ Styan, *Shakespeare’s Stagecraft*, p. 172.

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6.2 The Tragedy *Hamlet*

What is tragedy? Generally speaking, tragedy reflects the tragic and bitter aspect of life. However, “[a]s each age of history has its own fundamental beliefs and values, so each has its own idea as to what life’s greatest bitterness must be; hence, the definition of tragedy has had to be revised from time to time.”³⁷⁸ For example, tragedy meant, to the mediaeval mind, that a man in high degree was suddenly transferred from his glory to calamity by an unknown power. As for the tragedy of Shakespeare, although he, less like Aristotle in Greek or Corneille in French, did not have a fixed theory of tragedy, Andrew C. Bradley summarizes his conception of tragedy in the following way: A tragedy is a story of human actions producing exceptional calamity and ending in the death of a man with a high position in society.³⁷⁹ These human actions mainly refer to deeds and activities carried out by the hero in the story, as a result of his character/personality. *Hamlet*, one of the representatives of Shakespeare’s greatest tragedy, will be analysed in detail in this part.

6.2.1 The Shakespearean Text: General Remarks

6.2.1.1 The Date of Composition

When did Shakespeare write *Hamlet*? To answer this question, Shakespearean scholars have used any available information from which they hope to date the play, such as “[t]he various records of performances which exist, the printed editions which came out during Shakespeare’s career, and such unmistakable references to current events as may crop up

³⁷⁸ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet: Commentary, Complete Text, Glossary*, ed. Sidney Lamb (Lincoln: Cliff’s Notes, 1967), p. 16.

³⁷⁹ *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth*, ed. A. C. Bradley (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003), 3. ed., pp. 2-10.

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in the plays.”³⁸⁰ However, “[a] conflict of evidence³⁸¹ has made its precise date”, remarks Harold Jenkins, “like most other things about *Hamlet*, a problem; but certain limits are clear.”³⁸²

The play’s title was entered for the publication copyright in the Stationers’ Register in July of 1602 as follows:

James Roberts entered for his copy under the hands of Master Pasfield and Master Waterson Warden a book called *The Revenge of Hamlet Prince of Denmark* as it was lately acted by the Lord Chamberlain his servants.³⁸³

Accordingly, Shakespeare must have finished writing *Hamlet* before July 1602.

As for the limit to its early date, two material evidences show a possibility of being in 1599. First of all, the absence of *Hamlet* from Francis Meres’s *Palladis Tamia* (1598) – a compilation calling Shakespeare ‘the most excellent’ dramatist in both comedy and tragedy – suggests that at that time the play might not have come into being, for as one of Shakespeare’s greatest tragedies it could not be ignored by Francis Meres.³⁸⁴ Secondly, E. A. J. Honigmann rightly remarks that *Hamlet* was written later than *Julius Caesar*, one of Shakespeare’s few plays that can be dated with some confidence, namely, in the

³⁸⁰ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Sidney Lamb, p. 9.

³⁸¹ A good example is Gabriel Harvey’s marginal note in his copy of Speght’s Chaucer, which was published in 1598, “[t]he younger sort takes much delight in Shakespeares Venus, & Adonis: but his Lucrece, & his tragedies of Hamlet, Prince of Denmarke, haue it in them, to please the wiser sort” (*Marginalia*, ed. Moore Smith, p.232). Harvey signed his name in the copy with the date “1598”. If the date were unquestionable, Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* must have been produced before 1598. But his listing Spenser and Watson together with Shakespeare among “our flourishing metricians” is full of questions, for Spenser died in 1599 and Watson in 1592. Meanwhile, he mentioned “Owen’s new epigrams”, which were published in 1607. Accordingly, Philip Edwards in his edition *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* sums up that “[t]he sense of time is so confused in Harvey’s note that it is really of little use in trying to date *Hamlet*.”

³⁸² Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins, p. 1.

³⁸³ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Sidney Lamb, p. 14.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor argued in their 2006 Arden *Hamlet* that an accidental omission by Meres, although unlikely, is not inconceivable: he was not to know how important his list would be for future scholars.

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spring/summer of 1599, concluding from the exchange between Hamlet and Polonius just before the play-within-the play:³⁸⁵

Ham. – [To Polonius] My lord, you played once i'th' university, you say?

Pol. That did I, my lord, and was accounted a good actor.

Ham. What did you enact?

Pol. I did enact Julius Caesar. I was killed i'th' Capitol. Brutus killed me.

Ham. It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there.

(*Hamlet*, 3.2.97-105)

So the conclusion that *Hamlet* belongs to the years 1599 – 1602 is beyond any dispute. Nevertheless, the majority of modern scholars would like to fix a rather precise date for the writing of *Hamlet* around 1601, such as Harold Jenkins's firm assumption of 1601 as the date of its composition³⁸⁶ and Philip Edwards's a possible date of mid 1601 for the completion of the play³⁸⁷. Both of them contend that the theatre quarrel in *Hamlet* alluded to the 'war of the theatres' in London around 1601. Harold Jenkins remarks that the 'little eyases' who are 'now the fashion' and 'berattle the common stage' were universally recognized as a reference to the boy actors who from Michaelmas 1600 were established at the Blackfriars.³⁸⁸ The Chapel boys, says Philip Edwards, took the responsibility to perform Ben Jonson's *Poetaster* in 1601, probably in the spring, in which a professional player is made to say:

O, it will get us a huge deal of money, Captain, and we have need on't; for this winter has made us all poorer than so many starved snakes. Nobody comes at us, not a gentleman nor a – (3.4.327-30)³⁸⁹

³⁸⁵ E. A. J. Honigmann, "The Date of Hamlet", *Shakespeare Survey* 9 (1956), p. 29.

³⁸⁶ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins, p. 3.

³⁸⁷ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, updated ed. Philip Edwards (Cambridge: University Press, 2003), p. 8.

³⁸⁸ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins, p. 1.

³⁸⁹ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Philip Edwards, p. 4.

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Unfortunately, all these evidences cannot deny the fact that this theatre quarrel passage, present in the Folio text and the First Quarto, is absent from the text of the Second Quarto, which is said to be the good one, apparently based on Shakespeare's autograph, among the three versions of the play³⁹⁰. Although, on the other hand, there does exist the possibility of being inserted later,³⁹¹ or "a kind of afterthought before he submitted his manuscript to his colleagues"³⁹², yet the supposition is rather tentative without material evidences. Therefore, dating *Hamlet* around 1601 needs further examination. In conclusion, it is completely safe and reliable to date the composition of *Hamlet* between mid 1599 and early 1602.

6.2.1.2 The Sources

As to the sources of *Hamlet*, Geoffrey Bullough has carried out a detailed research, ranging from possible sources to various analogues, in his *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, from which the reader can get a rather comprehensive overview. However, not all his references help to positively affirm that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* must have a connection with his listed sources. The 'verbal parallel', for instance, in *Hamlet* of "no more like my father than I to Hercules" (*Hamlet*, 1.2.152-3) and later "An eye like Mars to threaten and command" in the closet scene (*Hamlet*, 3.4.57), to the Duke who was compared to Mars and Hercules in the Latin poem appended to the eulogy in *Elogia Virorum Bellica Virtute Illustrium* (1546) by Paolo Giovio's (1483-1552)³⁹³, does not suggest that Shakespeare might base his images directly on Giovio.³⁹⁴ Probably the

³⁹⁰ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins, p. 18.

³⁹¹ Lawrence as quoted in Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins, p. 2.

³⁹² Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Philip Edwards, p. 4.

³⁹³ Paolo Giovio was an Italian physician, historian and biographer.

³⁹⁴ Geoffrey Bullough remarks on page 34 in his *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* that the contrasting portraits used in *Hamlet* in III.4.53ff. may have been suggested by those in Giovio's book.

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playwright read similar descriptions somewhere, and then wrote them down in *Hamlet* from his unarguably great memory.

Based on Geoffrey Bullough's research, two sources are universally accepted as direct or indirect references for Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, namely the *Ur-Hamlet* and François de Belleforest's (1530-83) *Histoires Tragiques*, as Bullough points out, "it is as inconceivable that the *Ur-Hamlet* did not use Belleforest as it is that Shakespeare did not use the *Ur-Hamlet*."³⁹⁵

6.2.1.2.1 The *Ur-Hamlet* Play

Unfortunately, the so-called *Ur-Hamlet*, which is thought to be the immediate source of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*,³⁹⁶ is lost. The reader or spectator, therefore, is not in a position to decide how much Shakespeare derived from the *Ur-Hamlet* play. Is it therefore legitimate to assume that Shakespeare drew the source of his *Hamlet* from this *Ur-Hamlet* play? In answer to this question, Harold Jenkins makes a bold conjecture from circumstantial evidence that "[h]e [Shakespeare] cannot have been unfamiliar with a play which was acted at the Theatre and which probably therefore belonged to his own company"³⁹⁷. Whether or not Shakespeare used the *Ur-Hamlet*, the existence of the play, nevertheless, has been proved by a number of contemporary references.

As early as 1589 Thomas Nashe (1567-1601)³⁹⁸ sneered at a class of writers in his preface to *Menaphon* by Robert Greene (1558-1592)³⁹⁹:

³⁹⁵ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins, p. 96.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

³⁹⁸ Thomas Nashe, a graduate student from St John's College of Cambridge, was one of the "University Wits" and often attacked contemporary literature and writers; here his preface to Greene's *Menaphon* is a case in point.

³⁹⁹ Robert Greene was an English playwright, poet, pamphleteer, and prose writer. In his *Greene's Groats-Worth of Wit*, Greene satirized Shakespeare as "an upstart Crow beautiful in our feather".

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It is a common practise now a dayes amongst a sort of shifting companions, that runne through every Art and thrive by none, to leave the trade of *Noverint*, whereto they were borne, and busie themselves with the indevours of Art, that could scarcely Latinize their neck verse if they should have neede; yet English *Seneca* read by Candlelight yeelds many good sentences, as *Blood is a begger*, and so forth; and if you intreate him faire in a frostie morning, hee will afford you whole Hamlets, I should say handfulls of Tragicall speeches. But O grieffe! *Tempus edax rerum*, whats that will last alwaes? The Sea exhaled by droppes will in continuance bee drie, and *Seneca*, let blood line by line and page by page, at length must needes die to our Stage; which makes his famished followers to imitate the Kid in *Aesop*, who, enamoured with the Foxes newfangles, forsooke all hopes of life to leape into a newe occupation; and these men, renouncing all possibilities of credite or estimation, to intermeddle with Italian Translations: Wherein how poorely they have plodded, (as those that are neither provenzall men, nor are able to distinguish of Articles) let all indifferent Gentlemen that have travelled in that tongue discern by their two-pennie Pamphlets.⁴⁰⁰

Concerning the authorship of the play, although Nashe did not definitely point out that it was Thomas Kyd who had written this *Hamlet*, most critics contended that it alluded to Kyd, the author of *The Spanish Tragedy*, for he was a scrivener's son who never went to the University but loved the classics. He left the law for the theatre to take a new occupation.⁴⁰¹ It does not matter whose authorship Nashe was referring to in his preface, maybe Thomas Kyd or someone else, yet his mention of *Hamlet* shows that the play existed at that time.

In addition, Philip Henslowe's (1550-1616) diary shows there was a single performance at Newington Butts in June 1594. It is usually assumed that the play was the same as the *Hamlet* witnessed at the Theatre by Thomas Lodge (1558-1625).⁴⁰²

⁴⁰⁰ Nashe as quoted in *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* ed. Geoffrey Bullough (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), pp. 15-16.

⁴⁰¹ Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources*, p. 16.

⁴⁰² Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins, p. 83.

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Unfortunately, Henslowe's *Hamlet* is lacking in detailed evidence. In contrast, Thomas Lodge's description in 1596 in his *Wit's Misery* of a devil looking 'as pale as the Visard of the ghost which cried so miserably at the Theatre, like an oyster-wife, *Hamlet, revenge*'⁴⁰³ further verifies the play's performance.

6.2.1.2 Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques*

Geoffrey Bullough has remarked that "[h]e [Shakespeare] is less likely to have known Saxo's version of the Amleth story, though some scholars⁴⁰⁴ have seen traces of it in the play."⁴⁰⁵ The original play of *Hamlet*, he takes it still further, "was based on the French *novella*, and I see no proof that either Shakespeare or his predecessor used Saxo Grammaticus at all."⁴⁰⁶ Geoffrey Bullough is not alone in this regard. After having analysed the similarities between Shakespeare and Saxo in such incidents as Hamlet's being spied in the closet scene, Hamlet's saving himself by changing the letter for the English king, verbal parallels and so forth, Harold Jenkins shares Geoffrey Bullough's view, firmly stating:

All this [similarity] is not to imply that Shakespeare ever read Saxo. Direct indebtedness is improbable, and arguments in favour of it appear to be without substance. What made the story available to the Elizabethans was its retelling in their own day by the Frenchman Belleforest as the third story of the fifth series of his popular *Histoires Tragiques*.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰³ Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources*, p. 24.

⁴⁰⁴ Here, Geoffrey Bullough refers to John Dover Wilson, who thought that Saxo was behind the description of Polonius as a 'rash, intruding fool', and Gertrude's cry, 'O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain!'

⁴⁰⁵ Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources*, p. 7.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁴⁰⁷ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins, p. 89.

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Saxo Grammaticus (1150-1220), a Danish medieval historian, wrote the *Historiae Danicae* in Latin at the end of the twelfth century, and it was published in 1514. Saxo's story of Amleth contains two parts. In the first part, Amleth's father Horwendil is murdered by his uncle Fengo out of jealousy. The brother Fengo ascends the throne and marries his sister-in-law Gerutha. Amleth, the son of the late king, pretends to be mad in order to protect himself from suffering the same fate as his father. Yet his madness is suspected by his uncle, who appoints a young lady for a trap. The beautiful girl, a companion of Amleth's childhood, helps him avoid the trap. Then at the suggestion of a sceptical friend of Fengo, another test is put on Amleth when he converses with his mother in her chamber. Amleth kills the friend who hides under the quilt and dismembers his body. After hearing Amleth's telling of his father's murder and his pretence of being mad, Gerutha promises to help him in taking revenge upon his uncle. Amleth is sent to England with an escort of two retainers by his uncle, but saves himself by changing the letter for the English king and substituting the two companions' death for his. As Amleth devises, the English king gives his daughter to him for marriage. One year later, Amleth returns to Jutland in the middle of his funeral, which he has told his mother to stage before his leaving for England. Amleth makes the lords drunk at the funeral feast, and then sets fire to the hall. After having awakened Fengo, Amleth kills him with his own sword. Next day, Amleth makes a long oration to the people and is acclaimed King of Jutland.

While translating Saxo's *Historiae Danicae*, the French Belleforest moralized and modernized the story of Saxo's Amleth by "adding harangues, reflections, religious digressions, letters and poems, and displaying conventional prejudices against women and the pleasures of the senses."⁴⁰⁸ For example, Amleth's mother had committed adultery with his uncle before his father's murder by his uncle. Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques* was published during the course of 1559 and 1582, with his Hamlet-story first appearing in 1570. The English translation of *The Hystorie of Hamblet*, however, did not come to

⁴⁰⁸ Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources*, p. 10.

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England until 1608,⁴⁰⁹ by which time Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was already written, performed and published.

Accordingly, Bernard Lott says that “we must assume that Shakespeare got his story either from the original French or from the lost earlier play of Hamlet, which was itself based on the French version of the story”; for “Shakespeare, familiar with the Senecan style, and visualizing its potentialities as raw material capable of further refinement, must have cast around for a suitable plot on which to develop his approach.”⁴¹⁰

In conclusion, it is generally assumed that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* combines Belleforest's Hamlet story of a murdered father asking his son to take revenge on his brother with the ghost story from the lost *Ur-Hamlet* play.

6.2.1.3 Plot and Structure

Many Shakespearean scholars contend that the plot in *Hamlet* is a single one. They are completely right from the aspect of the revenge-plot involving Hamlet as well as in both Laertes' and young Fortinbras' case throughout the whole story. When the argument is correct, why did Shakespeare depict Ophelia in the play? Did he give Hamlet an opportunity, through Ophelia, to verify his feigned lunacy from disappointment in love? It is not so simple at all. Therefore, this dissertation takes another viewpoint that Shakespeare masterfully incorporates subplots into the main plot of Hamlet's revenge of his father's murder by dividing the plots into three: the revenge-plot of Hamlet as the main plot and the love-plot between Hamlet and Ophelia as well as the Norway plot as subplots.

The revenge-plot: two sentinels, Marcellus and Barnardo, see an apparition on their night guard and ask Horatio, a scholar, to speak to the ghost, who gets no reply from it. Then Horatio tells the Danish prince Hamlet of the ghost, who is in his father's form. The ghost recounts to Hamlet the murder by his uncle, the present king, and requires him to avenge the murder. In order to prove his uncle's guilt, Hamlet puts on a play entitled *The*

⁴⁰⁹ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins, p. 89.

⁴¹⁰ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Bernard Lott (London: Longman, 1987), p. xix.

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Murder of Gonzago with clear parallels to his father's murder before the King, the Queen and the courtiers. The King is agitated by the play and finally reveals that he murdered Old Hamlet, as Hamlet had intended: "The play's the thing / Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King." (*Hamlet*, 2.2.600-01) However, he gives up the opportunity to kill the King at prayer, for he thinks "A villain kills my father, and for that / I, his sole son, do this same villain send / To heaven. / Why, this is hire and salary, not revenge." (*Hamlet*, 3.3.76-79) Afterwards, Hamlet slays Polonius, who hides himself behind the arras in the Queen's chamber to hear the conversation between Hamlet and his mother, mistaking him for the King. From Hamlet's play, the King learns that the murder of Old Hamlet was known to Hamlet and accordingly sends him to England, where he is to have him executed. After having heard of his father's death, Laertes comes back from France and conspires with the King to kill Hamlet, who is returning from the sea voyage to Denmark. On the voyage, Hamlet secretly substitutes the letter from the King with another, which he himself writes and in which he orders the king of England to kill Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, his escorts. Then Hamlet is set free by the pirates, whom he promises rewards for sparing him. In the fencing match arranged by the King for Hamlet and Laertes, Hamlet stabs the King after the Queen's accidental death and forces him to drink the poisoned wine left by the Queen; meanwhile, Hamlet dies from the wound received from Laertes' poisoned sword, who dies from his own sword. In the end, Hamlet revenges his dead father.

The love-plot: Ophelia accepts a warning from her brother Laertes against Hamlet's love. In the meantime her father Polonius asks her to reject Hamlet. Consequently, Ophelia obeys her father and her brother by repelling Hamlet's visits and letters. And Ophelia's refusal, in Polonius' opinion, leads to Hamlet's madness. To test the essence of Hamlet's transformation, the King agrees with Polonius on setting up a meeting between Ophelia and Hamlet while both of them secretly stay behind an arras. However, Ophelia suffers great verbal humiliation from Hamlet, who asks her to go to a nunnery. From Hamlet's interview with Ophelia, the King is certain that Hamlet is not mad at all and determines on the spot to get rid of him by sending him to England. After the performance, Hamlet mistakes Polonius behind the arras for the King and slays him in the Queen's chamber. Hamlet's murdering of Polonius gives the King a perfect excuse for sending him to

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England, and there he is supposed to be killed. Polonius' death and Hamlet's leaving for England render Ophelia completely insane. Afterwards, she falls from a tree over the brook into the river and drowns there. At her funeral, Hamlet claims "I lov'd Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers / Could not with all their quantity of love / Make up my sum." (*Hamlet*, 5.1.264-66)

The Norway subplot: young Fortinbras, a hot-blooded man, is collecting an army in order to revenge his dead father, who had been killed by Old Hamlet in combat, by regaining his father's lost lands. Therefore, the King of Denmark sends Cornelius and Voltmand to the king of Norway, the uncle of the young Fortinbras, in order to require him to suppress his nephew. From the ambassadors back from Norway, the King of Denmark learns that young Fortinbras "[m]akes vow before his uncle never more / To give th'assay of arms against" Denmark (*Hamlet*, 2.2.70-71). On his way to England, Hamlet meets young Fortinbras' army, who is marching through Denmark to Poland. Hamlet praises young Fortinbras for his ambition. Just before Hamlet's death, it is announced that young Fortinbras is returning from conquering Poland. Hamlet prophesies that "th'election lights on Fortinbras" (*Hamlet*, 5.2.360-1) and then dies. Consequently, young Fortinbras regains the lands lost by his father.

The Norway subplot is closely knitted with the main plot throughout the whole play from beginning, middle to end. At the outset the previous combat between Denmark and Norway is described by Horatio, in which:

valiant Hamlet
(For so this side of our known world esteem'd him)
Did slay this Fortinbras, who by a seal'd compact
Well ratified by law and heraldry
Did forfeit, with his life, all those his lands
Which he stood seiz'd of to the conqueror;

(*Hamlet*, 1.1.87-92)

At the time young Fortinbras is collecting an army to attack Denmark in order to regain the lands lost by his father. Then, in the following scene in the presence of Hamlet, depressed at his father's death, the King of Denmark decides to send his ambassadors to Old Norway, uncle of young Fortinbras, to require him to stop his nephew's action.

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When Hamlet is confused at the Ghost's statement of his father's being murdered by his uncle, the King, and pretends to be insane, the ambassadors come back from Norway with good news that young Fortinbras promises never to take up arms against Denmark. To test whether the King is guilty of murder, Hamlet stages the play "*Murder of Gonzago*" before the King and the Queen, with the addition of a speech written by him on the basis of the Ghost's story. In the play-within-the-play scene, the King's unusual behaviour convinces Hamlet that the Ghost is right. Consequently, he determines to fulfil his duty of vengeance. However, his sparing of the King at prayer endangers his life, for the King sends him to England to be slain. On his way to England, Hamlet meets the army of Fortinbras on its march to Poland "for an eggshell" even at the risk of their "fortune, death and danger". At the sight of the valiant march, Hamlet feels ashamed for his inaction: "Rightly to be great / Is not to stir without great argument, / But greatly to find quarrel in a straw / When honour's at stake. How stand I then, / That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd, / Excitements of my reason and my blood, / And let all sleep" (*Hamlet*, 4.4.53-59).

At the end of the play, just before Hamlet dies, it is announced that Fortinbras is returning from conquering Poland. Hamlet names Fortinbras as his heir to Denmark and accordingly, Fortinbras realises his vengeance upon Hamlet.

6.2.1.4 Stage History

The recorded performances of *Hamlet* began with a staging on board the ship *Red Dragon* in 1607, according to the journal by Captain William Keeling (1578-1620) of the East Indian Company, who set out with his three ships – the *Consent*, the *Red Dragon* (captained by Keeling) and the *Hector* (captained by William Hawkins) – for the East Indies, but unfortunately the last two anchored off Sierra Leone due to storms:

1607 September 5th

I sent the interpreter according to his desire aboard the
Hector wher he booke fast and after came aboard me
where we gave the tragedie of Hamlett.

September 31

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I invited Captain Hawkins to a ffishe dinner and had
Hamlet acted aboard me w[hi]ch I p[er]mit to keepe my
people from idleness and unlawful games or sleepe.⁴¹¹

This evidence for *Hamlet*'s first performance has been accused of forgery, for it is generally assumed that the play should have already been staged before its first entry in the Stationers' Register in July 1602 "as it was lately acted by the Lord Chamberlain his servants". In addition, on the title page of the First Quarto it reads: "[a]s it hath beene diuerse times acted by his Highness ser- / uants in the Cittie of London: as also in the two V- / niuersities of Cambridge and Oxford and else-where"⁴¹². All these statements explicitly tell the reader that *Hamlet* has been acted in London, Cambridge and Oxford. However, on the one hand, all these supposed performances are lacking in material records, although 'young Hamlet' was positively referred to Richard Burbage, probably the first actor of the prince for the Lord Chamberlain's Men; on the other hand, Cambridge forbade professional performances from 1568 onwards, with companies being turned away in the 1590s and again in 1605-6, remarks Alan H. Nelson. Finally, he conjectures that "the title-page claim is fraudulent, a false claim by the publisher trying to sell his book"⁴¹³, so is the case with James Roberts's failure in printing the play although he got the permission from the Lord Chamberlain's men and entered for publication in the Stationers' Register in July 1602.

Apart from the *Hamlet* performance by William Keeling's crew off the coast of Africa in 1607, the play was acted once again outside the United Kingdom: an English troupe presented Shakespeare's *Hamlet – Tragoedia von Hamlet einen Printyen in Dennemarck* in German – at Dresden in 1626. Harold Jenkins asserts that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* probably reached Germany years earlier than 1626, "as happened with some other English plays,

⁴¹¹ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, eds. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor (London: the Arden Shakespeare, 2006), p.53-54.

⁴¹² Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins, pp. 13-4.

⁴¹³ Alan H. Nelson as quoted in Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, eds. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, p. 56.

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even before it had appeared in print.”⁴¹⁴ As for the German play *Der Bestrafte Brudermord* (as *Fratricide Punished* in English) dated “den 27. Oktober 1710”, Harold Jenkins believes that it “is substantially derived from the Shakespearean *Hamlet*”, which has been combined together “by a varied group of actors with experiences of different *Hamlets*”⁴¹⁵.

Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* was performed with Joseph Taylor playing the Danish prince at Court twice, before James I in 1619 and Charles I in 1637 respectively. In 1642, all theatres in London were closed down by the Puritan government, however, itinerant actors continued to stage pieces of plays and ‘The Grave Makers’ was one among them, based on Act 5 Scene I of *Hamlet*. Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* was not performed any longer until the year 1661.

On the Restoration stage *Hamlet* was allotted to the Duke’s Company under Sir William Davenant (1606-1668). With Thomas Betterton (1635-1710) playing the prince, Davenant’s *Hamlet* began to appear on the stage at Lincoln’s Inn Fields on August 24, 1661.⁴¹⁶ And Betterton kept on acting Hamlet for nearly fifty years from 1661 to 1709 when he was seventy-four years old. After having analysed the ‘Players’ Quartos’ of 1676, 1683, 1695 and 1703, Lukas Erne points out that during the Betterton period *Hamlet* was in two forms, the original authorial and the then theatrical text.⁴¹⁷ Davenant’s *Hamlet* was considerably shortened to approximately 2,800 lines: Voltemand, Cornelius and Reynaldo are not seen; Polonius’ advice to Laertes, most of Laertes’ advice to Ophelia, all of Hamlet’s advices to the players are all gone; the longer speeches except ‘To be or not to be’ are excised.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁴ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins, p. 112-3.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 116 and p. 122.

⁴¹⁶ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. John Dover Wilson (Cambridge: University Press, 1934), p. lxxii.

⁴¹⁷ Lukas Erne as quoted in Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, eds. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, p. 99.

⁴¹⁸ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, eds. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, p. 98-99, as well as John Dover Wilson, p. lxxiv.

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In the 18th century, after Betterton many actors took up the role of Hamlet at all three playhouses in London (Drury Lane, Lincoln's Inn Fields and Covent Garden), such as Robert Wilks, David Garrick, John Philip Kemble, to mention just a few. In 1772, David Garrick (1717-1779) at Drury Lane produced his own version of the tragedy, which survived only through the reports of others. "The text of *Hamlet* was left alone – except for cutting down – until the brief vogue of the version made by Garrick in his last years at Drury Lane"⁴¹⁹. In Garrick's version, the Gravediggers were cut out and Hamlet did not go to England, nor Laertes intrigued with the King against Hamlet. Hamlet and Laertes quarrelled in the King's presence, and, on the King's intervening, Hamlet fought and killed him. Laertes then wounded Hamlet mortally. The Queen went mad and died off stage. David Garrick's adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was welcomed by the audience and performed for the last time at Drury Lane in 1779.⁴²⁰

As a matter of fact, there was another adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, this time in Russian by Alexander Petrovitch Sumarokov (1718-1777), who opened a theatre at St. Petersburg in 1756. "It is interesting to notice that among the plays produced were an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, in which the original is very closely followed."⁴²¹ Sumarokov is said to have written this adaptation in the year 1748, much earlier than David Garrick.

In the following century, the English actor in the *Hamlet* performances went on to find his own staging "points" – "trademark pieces of stage 'business' invented by an actor and then, frequently, taken up and repeated by subsequent actors"⁴²², finally presenting an infinite variety of Hamlets on the English stage. For example, in his first performance in 1803, Charles Kemble (1775-1854) was different from other Hamlets in his being completely mad. Edmund Kean (1787-1833) threw more emphasis on Hamlet's gentleness

⁴¹⁹ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. John Dover Wilson, p.lxx.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.lxxxii-lxxxiii.

⁴²¹ <http://pages.unibas.ch/shine/translatorsrussian.htm>

⁴²² Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, eds. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, p. 95.

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by presenting an abiding passion for Ophelia without “the conventional coarseness and almost brutal ferocity”⁴²³ in the nunnery scene. On the other hand, none of them have made attempts to bring back the things that had been left out by their predecessors (Betterton for instance): there was no Fortinbras, no Ambassadors and no Reynaldo. The Dumb Show and the King’s prayer had not been seen in the theatre. In this regard, the American actor Edwin Booth (1833-1893) made an exception by “playing the most nearly complete version of any on the English-speaking stage”⁴²⁴. At the same time, the performance of *Hamlet* in the United States was positively influenced by the tours of the famous London actors, such as Charles Kemble, Edmund Kean and Junius Brutus Booth and others. Junius Brutus Booth’s immigrating to America brought the American stage a famous Hamlet of the above-mentioned Edwin Booth.

Although *Hamlet* did not suffer from many adaptations, excisions and cuts frequently appeared in the previous performances (see above). Around the transition between the 19th and the 20th century, it became clear that the British desired a complete Shakespearean version of *Hamlet*. Sir F. R. Benson (1858-1939) performed, at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford in 1899 and again in America in 1911, a composite text of Q2 and F1, which was the first in the performance history of *Hamlet*.⁴²⁵ The Old Vic Company followed this step and acted the full text of Q2 under Sir Philip Ben Greet (1857-1936) in 1916.⁴²⁶ In terms of demolishing traditions, Barry Jackson and H. K. Ayloff first costumed their Hamlet in modern dress at the Kingsway Theatre in 1925, a couple of months later than Arthur Hopkins’ *Hamlet* at London’s Haymarket Theatre with a new approach to interpretation of the play through designs rather than the star actor.⁴²⁷

⁴²³ Charles Lamb as quoted in Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. John Dover Wilson, p. lxxxviii. Charles Lamb strongly protested against the tradition of depicting Hamlet as a prince full of coarseness and almost brutal ferocity.

⁴²⁴ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. John Dover Wilson, p. xci.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xcvi.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xcvi.

⁴²⁷ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, eds. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, p. 109.

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“By the beginning of the twentieth century,” Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor point out, “the reading and, to a lesser extent, the performance of Shakespeare had become a global phenomenon.”⁴²⁸ Many non-English-speaking countries embarked on translating Shakespeare, reading Shakespeare and performing Shakespeare. The tragedy *Hamlet* became a favourite and China, likewise, has witnessed the development of performing Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* in the theatre.

6.2.2 The 1989 Adaptation of *Hamlet* – *Ha mu lai te*

The Chinese performances of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* began with the Jiang’an production directed by Jiao Juyin – based on Liang Shiqiu’s translation – in 1942, five years after the breakout of the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). Against the special political and social backgrounds, the staging of *Hamlet* by the National Drama School aimed to avoid the Hamlet tragedy, or rather to arouse a revolutionary spirit for fighting against the Japanese invasion among the Chinese people, as the director Jiao remarked: Hamlet “is a mirror and a lesson to us living in the time of Anti-Japanese War.” “The victory of the War depends on the concordant action of our whole nation, much more on our immediate action without hesitation.”⁴²⁹

The *Hamlet* play did not appear again on the Chinese stage until 1984 with a graduation performance at the Shanghai Theatre Academy. This performance was co-directed by Chen Mingzheng and An Zhenji on the basis of Zhu Shenghao’s version, modelling on Engels’s notion of a Renaissance giant. The director Chen Mingzheng understands, “[a]lthough [Hamlet] was limited by his own class divisions and historical

⁴²⁸ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, eds. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, p. 97.

⁴²⁹ Jiao Juyin as quoted in Meng, *A Brief History*, p. 242. “对于生活在抗战中的我们，是一面镜子，一个教训。” “抗战的胜利系于全国人民的和谐的行动，更系于毫不犹豫地马上去行动。”

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conditions, his ideal paralleled the people's will... But Hamlet neither trusted, nor relied on the masses, his failure was thus unavoidable.”⁴³⁰

In contrast with the 1942 Hamlet full of too much hesitation and the 1984 version of a Humanism hero, Lin Zhaohua's Hamlet in 1989 is “[e]veryone of us”, which will be analysed in detail in the following part. As a matter of fact, Lin was not alone in transfusing Shakespeare with a new modern interpretation, for afterwards other theatrical practitioners have attempted to innovate *Hamlet* on the stage, such as the parody *Shamlet* in Taiwan in 1992, the 2000 *Hamlet* by Xiong Yuanwei in Hong Kong and the adaptation “Who Killed the King?” directed by Gu Yian with Cao Lusheng as scriptwriter in Shanghai in 2000.⁴³¹ Facing the common feelings of insecurity and uncertainty in Hong Kong after its unification with mainland China in 1997, the director Xiong Yuanwei wanted to explore the foreignness and uncertainty via Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The live Cantonese performance of *Hamlet* is interwoven with several scenes from Laurence Olivier's 1948 film version. For example, at the beginning of the production the modern Hamlet is watching Olivier's English film *Hamlet*, together with Ophelia. Then Hamlet remarks: “The worst is that the tragedy written by Shakespeare four hundred years ago has already started around us!”⁴³² The director summarized his production: “I thus de-structured the original Hamlet, and made him into two[:] [a] “real” Hamlet and a Hamlet in image on the screen. By contrasting the two, we obtained the new interpretation of the character and the performance”⁴³³.

So far the Chinese *Hamlet* productions mentioned above have been performed in its original dramatic form. Meanwhile, the Chinese theatrical practitioners have presented the

⁴³⁰ Ruru Li, “*Hamlet* in China: Translation, Interpretation and Performance” (http://www.leoyan.com/global-language.com/enfolded/BIBL/___HamChi.htm)

⁴³¹ With regard to the dates of these performances, Alexander Huang in *Global Shakespeare: Asia / Pacific* (<http://www.personal.psu.edu/ach13/sia/Huang-Catalogue.pdf>) disagrees with Ruru Li in “*Hamlet* in China”. This dissertation correspondingly takes Li's material evidences as references.

⁴³² I have no access to the original script and therefore, I directly copy Ruru Li's translation of the text.

⁴³³ Xiong Yuanwei as quoted in Ruru Li, “*Hamlet* in China”.

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play through traditional theatrical conventions, and the sinicized *yueju* version is a case in point.

The *yueju* production with a Chinese title *Wang zi fu chou ji* (*The Prince's Revenge*) was staged for the 1994 Shanghai International Shakespeare Festival by the Shanghai Yueju Theatre with Su Leci as director. Similar to most other sinicized adaptations of Shakespeare, in the light of performing Shakespeare in the Chinese style, the *yueju Hamlet* transplants the story from Denmark to China, and the original text is adapted or abridged completely into a traditional Chinese theatrical script with a new idea: the *yueju* Hamlet in the end rescues his country and his people from being corrupted by his uncle at the cost of his death.

6.2.2.1 The Context of the 1989 Adaptation

The 1989 adaptation was retranslated by Li Jianming, based on English and German versions as well as Zhu Shenghao's translation, with Lin Zhaohua and Ren Ming as directors. The Chinese title of the production is *Ha mu lai te*, following Zhu's version.⁴³⁴

This Chinese adaptation was first performed in 1989, eight years after the return of Deng Xiaoping (1904-1997) to power. Afterwards, Deng advocated opening China's doors to the world and initiated economic reforms, pioneering socialism with Chinese characteristics by saying "regardless of whether it is a white or black cat, it is a good cat if it can succeed in catching mice". Consequently, the Chinese witnessed monumental social, economic and political changes, as Lin Zhaohua told Li Ruru in the 1997 interview: "There have been drastic cuts in government subsidies to the theatre since the start of the economic reforms."⁴³⁵ As a consequence of these new policies, the 1989 production was staged, unlike other Chinese Shakespearean productions, by a private Theatre Studio set up

⁴³⁴ As a whole, there are a dozen of Chinese versions of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Most of them transliterated the title of the tragedy but in various Chinese spellings, such as Tian Han's 哈孟雷特/*Ha meng lei te*, Liang Shiqiu's 汉姆莱特/*Han mu lai te* and Zhu Shenghao's 哈姆莱特/*Ha mu lai te* and so forth. Since the 1989 adaptation has consulted Zhu Shenghao's version, it is reasonable that it is entitled 哈姆莱特/*Ha mu lai te*.

⁴³⁵ Ruru Li, *Shashibiya*, p. 86.

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by and named after Lin Zhaohua. On the other hand, Lin acknowledged: “Something neither could be carried out in a theatre company nor it was possible. If I insisted on doing so, I would bring troubles to the company.” “The feeling is becoming stronger and stronger that it is rather difficult to perform some plays in the theatre company. Consequently, I created the Theatre Studio for myself.”⁴³⁶ And *Hamlet* was the first production presented by the Lin Zhaohua Theatre Studio. It was premiered at the Beijing People’s Art Theatre and then again at the Beijing Film Academy in 1990. Furthermore, Lin Zhaohua and his *Hamlet* were invited to perform in Japan in 1995.

Lin denies the reputation of “pioneer in the circle of theatre” that he has been given by the Chinese audiences. In his opinion, he does not have the courage to break away from the traditional theatrical conventions; rather he makes full use of them in his drama.⁴³⁷ With regard to his plays, in the form of Western spoken drama, Lin asserts: “Spoken drama in China has no tradition at all. Even if this form has tradition, it belongs to the foreigners, because spoken drama itself is a Western culture of arts... I think that we are qualified to talk about traditions only in terms of *xiqu*⁴³⁸ – traditional Chinese operatic theatre – in China, qualified to compare it with the tradition of theatrical culture in the West.”⁴³⁹ In practice, Lin Zhaohua adopts many conventions from the old Chinese stage. For example, visual imagination, a salient feature of the traditional theatre in China, has been employed for the 1989 *Hamlet* adaptation.

⁴³⁶ Wenguang Wu, [Long Interview: The Creating Career of Great Director Lin Zhaohua] “长篇访谈：戏剧大师林兆华的创作生涯” (<http://www.cheagle.com/fArticleView.exml?ArticleID=6390>). “有些东西是在剧院实现不了的，也不可能，如那样做我也会给剧院带来麻烦。” “我现在真是越来越觉得有些戏在内是很难实现了，所以才‘生出’工作室这样一个空间。”

⁴³⁷ [Lin Zhaohua: My Theatre is not of Vanguard] “林兆华：我的戏剧不先锋” (<http://www.directorchina.com/news/html/zhongguodaoyanku/theatrical/linzhaohua/2007/0104/2126.html>)

⁴³⁸ 戏曲 *Xiqu* is the traditional Chinese operatic theatre.

⁴³⁹ [Lin Zhaohua: Spoken Drama in China Needs to Create Its Own Genre] “林兆华：中国戏剧要创立自己的学派”。 “中国的戏剧根本就没有传统，有传统也是外国人的，因为戏剧本身就是西方艺术文化。我认为在中国只有戏曲才有资格说传统，才有资格与西方的戏剧文化传统相媲美。” (<http://www.directorchina.com/news/html/zhongguodaoyanku/theatrical/linzhaohua/2007/0104/2127.html>)

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In creating his experimental plays, Lin Zhaohua contends: “I have a rather simple motto, that is, to do whatever you want one by one. You can not exert an influence on politics and you can not have a hold on the circle of theatre with your plays, either. It is neither possible nor necessary.”⁴⁴⁰ In other words, Lin prefers to embody his innermost world via various theatrical methods rather than reflect political problems. Furthermore, he has no theatrical theory for his plays, rather inspiration or consciousness, and the case is also true of his *Hamlet* production:

What moved me to stage *Hamlet*? My profound understanding was that “everyone is Hamlet”. I did not put an emphasis on usurpation or revenge, for this happened everywhere, at every court and in every dynasty, at home and abroad. The main suffering of Hamlet is that he is full of thoughts. To me, every live and thoughtful man might have similar fate as that of Hamlet. When this idea – everyone is Hamlet – occurred to me, I knew clearly how to arrange this play.⁴⁴¹

Unfortunately, in reality there were few to think because “after 1989 people lost their vitality completely. Everybody now wanted to make money or to win prizes or lotteries.”⁴⁴²

6.2.2.2 Innovations in the Adaptation

Among the Chinese interpretations of Shakespearean works, Lin Zhaohua’s *Hamlet* has been praised as one of the most experimental plays full of avant-garde spirit. By transfusing completely new ideas to Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, Lin transplanted the tragedy from the Renaissance into present life, thus denying conventional understandings of the

⁴⁴⁰ Wu, *Long Interview*. “我有一个挺简单的信条，就是人想什么就一个一个地做去吧！你不可能影响政治，你也不可能用你这个东西来影响戏剧界，不可能也用不着。”

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, “触动我的是什么呢？我最深刻的体会就是‘人人是哈姆雷特’，我没强调“篡位复仇”，哪个宫廷哪个朝代都这样，国内国外都如此，哈姆雷特主要的痛苦是他有思想，而我觉得活着的有思想的人都可能面临哈姆雷特那样的命运，当我想到这里的时候我脑子有了“人人都是哈姆雷特”这个想法，我就知道该怎么去排这个戏了。”

⁴⁴² Lin Zhaohua as quoted in Ruru Li, *Shashibiya*, p. 86.

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play.⁴⁴³ The director's appropriation of the play can be elucidated mainly from three aspects, namely stage design, thematic structure and theatrical techniques.

6.2.2.2.1 The Mise en Scène

On the stage, the backdrop is made up of several pieces of shabby dark grey cloth, and the ground is also covered with the cloth in the same colour, both strongly impressing on the audience the feelings of decline and depression. Near the entrances to the stage, worn-out and out of date machines are piled up, which are glittering with red and green lights. Five ceiling fans above the stage centre are rotating from time to time. In terms of properties, there is none at all except an old-fashioned barber's chair symbolizing the royal throne of the King and the Queen. All in all, instead of the traditional scenery of a splendid Danish court, every object on the stage is so ugly, dirty and decadent that Denmark looks like a prison, as Hamlet tells Rosencrantz and Guildenstern: "A goodly one, in which there are many confines, wards, and dungeons, Denmark being one o'th' worst." (*Hamlet*, 2.2.245-7) In the light of the characteristics of the Absurd Theatre in the West, Lin Zhaohua's mise en scène symbolizes a modern society which is under the control of machines but completely devoid of vitality.⁴⁴⁴ Lin must have been influenced by Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* although he does not acknowledge that he belongs to any theatrical tradition. Of course, there is, on the other hand, a more mundane and seemingly undeniable reason for such a stage design: the director had limited finances at his Theatre Studio and therefore he had to make full use of whatever was available to reduce the budget. Owing to the small budget and the small experimental theatre as well, there were in total nine actors/actresses for the 1989 production, with one actor doubling several roles on the stage.

⁴⁴³ Weimin Li, [A Rotating Kaleidoscope: Awareness Feature of Vanguard through Metaphor – on Adaptation Drama of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* by Lin Zhaohua] “转动万花筒：在隐喻中看到了先锋性——论林兆华改编的莎士比亚戏剧《哈姆雷特》”，*Journal of Southwest University* (Humanities and Social Sciences Edition) 2(2007), np.

⁴⁴⁴ Lin Kehuan as quoted in Huhong Lai, [Discussion on Lin Zhaohua's Directing Arts] “试论林兆华的导演艺术”，*Theatre Arts* 6 (2001), p. 31.

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“On the Elizabethan stage the convention of the impenetrability of disguise frees the playwright from the need to make disguise convincing – all disguise is good disguise; a mere change of name or costume and a bit of false beard creates a different person. No thorough alteration is necessary or even desirable, because the character may want to shift back quickly to his original role.”⁴⁴⁵ The situation on Shakespeare’s stage is also the case of Lin Zhaohua’s *Hamlet* in Beijing. For example, at the news that the players arrive at court, the Chinese Guildenstern runs up to meet them. In a moment, when he comes back, he has changed himself into the role of the player who has a conversation with Hamlet on the stage. The Chinese actor switches his identity from the Guildenstern-role to the player-role without changing his costume – there is no need to make him up, say, with a bit of false beard.

In accordance with the austere stage design, costumes in the performance are rough in quality and crude in sewing. In addition, every actor/actress wears everyday clothes in neutral colour – the Queen is an exception: she puts on a red coat over her white gown. While the white colour symbolizes her pure soul, the red coat represents her remarriage. Correspondingly, everyone in the adaptation becomes ordinary, no matter who he is, a powerful king or a royal prince. In the meantime, everyone is struggling in this deserted city, unfortunately fruitlessly. As a matter of fact, by dressing his players in completely natural looking, Lin Zhaohua wanted to bring a new appearance to the Chinese theatre, which had been greatly influenced by the Soviet Shakespearean scholars who emphasized the realism in the theatre of 1950s China. Lin remarked in his program guideline:

Hamlet has left us for a long time. People have applauded him highly to the skies as if how noble he was inherently. They made him shout and cry in wig on the stage, finally attracting those vulgar spectators who were looking for fun. Today, we will call him back to us as one of our brothers or one of us.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴⁵ Maurice Charney, *How to Read Shakespeare* (New York: Lang, 1992), p.15.

⁴⁴⁶ Zhaohua Lin, [*Hamlet: Among Us*] “《哈姆雷特》：就在我们中间”。 “哈姆莱特离开我们已经太久了。人们把他悬挂在半空中，好像他生来多么高贵，让他像“一个披着满头假发的家伙在台上乱嚷乱叫，让那些只爱热闹的低级观众听了出神”。现在，我们要让他回到我们中间来，作为我们的兄弟和我们自己。” (http://culture.163.com/edit/000908/000908_41459.htm)

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6.2.2.2.2 The Play within the Play

There is a special dramatic technique adopted in the play-within-the-play scene, called “cinematic re-wind” by Li Ruru.⁴⁴⁷ From the appellation the reader can deduce that this means an episode has been rewound in the course of the play-within-the-play scene.

In the Chinese production, when Hamlet says “[t]his is one Lucianus, nephew to the King” (*Hamlet*, 3.2.239), the Lucianus actor appears on the stage. Delivering his lines “Thoughts black, hands apt, drugs fit...” (*Hamlet*, 3.2.249), the Lucianus actor does not go directly to the actor playing the Player King, lying on the ground, to poison him. Rather, he moves behind the King and simultaneously the King stands up from his throne and begins to perform what the Lucianus actor is speaking. The King tips the poison into the ear of the sleeping Player King and then he snatches the crown. The original text carries on. Hamlet explains: “A poisons him i’ th’ garden for his estate. The story is extant, and written in very choice Italian.” (*Hamlet*, 3.2.255-57) Suddenly, Ophelia shouts “The King rises.” Hamlet asks, “What, frightened with false fire?” and then Polonius gives a command: “Give o’er the play.” (*Hamlet*, 3.2.259, 260, 262) At this point, the three actors – Hamlet, the King and Polonius – move backwards to their previous position. The King repeats the poison episode again but this time without the Lucianus’s aside. At Polonius’s command to stop the play, the King drops the crown to the ground. Immediately, the Lucianus actor steps forward to reinstate his role. At the Queen’s enquiry “How fares my lord”, the King pauses for a few minutes and then shouts “Give me some light.” (*Hamlet*, 3.2.261, 263) Everyone is crying “lights, lights, lights”.

In contrast to Shakespeare’s Claudius, who reveals his conscience from his panic response “upon the talk of the poisoning” (*Hamlet*, 3.2.283), the Chinese Claudius visually betrays his crime by reproducing his murder of his brother, the Old King, before Hamlet, the Queen and all the courtiers.

⁴⁴⁷ Ruru Li, *Shashibiya*, p. 93. Owing to my ignorance in the field of drama and stage, I do not know how to name this special dramatic technique in the 1989 Chinese adaptation of *Hamlet*. Ruru Li’s word “cinematic re-wind” sounds reasonable and professional for me. Therefore, I copy this word in my dissertation.

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Figure 6.2.2.1 the play-within-the play with Lucianus standing behind the King

6.2.2.2.3 Thematic Rearrangement

As far as *Hamlet*-criticism is concerned, Philip Edwards remarks: “The play is so many-faceted and its afterlife has been so richly varied that it is becoming more and more difficult for interpreters to take it all in and make sense of it.”⁴⁴⁸ As early as the 18th century, the critics regarded *Hamlet* as a revenge play. Samuel Johnson criticised Hamlet for his failure to avenge his father’s murder, for he was “rather an instrument than an agent”⁴⁴⁹. The impotence of Hamlet was explained by Samuel Taylor Coleridge as an incapability of acting, resulting from his contemplation, different from A. W. Schlegel’s Hamlet as a doubter facing uncertain principles. In A. C. Bradley’s opinion, Shakespeare’s Hamlet is a noble young man, whose “true nature is blanketed by the melancholy ensuing from the death of his father and his mother’s remarriage.”⁴⁵⁰ Some critics in the twentieth century have considered *Hamlet* a religious play, based on the belief in Shakespeare’s time

⁴⁴⁸ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Philip Edwards, p. 81.

⁴⁴⁹ Samuel Johnson as quoted in Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Philip Edwards, p. 32.

⁴⁵⁰ A. C. Bradley as quoted in Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Philip Edwards, pp. 35-6.

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that the living and the dead might communicate with each other, whereas others emphasized the theme of remembering and forgetting, as the Ghost required Hamlet to “remember me”.

In respect of the varied themes of the original text, Lin Zhaohua contends in his *The Vitality of the Theatre* as follows:

As a director, there must be a second theme, apart from its first literary one, in every play and this one is mine. For example, when I stage Shakespearean dramas, I follow his original texts except for a little excision. But, at the same time, I intensively transfuse something belonging to me, my independent thoughts or independent state for instance, to the play. This is the director’s second theme.⁴⁵¹

6.2.2.2.3.1 Textual Structure

To impress his own interpretations of the original text on the spectator, in other words, his second theme, the director Lin has rearranged Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, first and foremost, in terms of textual structure.

The five-act arrangement is kept intact in the 1989 production although it is well known that like Shakespeare’s other plays, *Hamlet* itself has no act division at all, which was added to the text first in 1676⁴⁵² by later Shakespearean scholars. However, in contrast to the original text, each act in the adaptation begins with the Gravedigger and his companion. Consequently, the conversation between the two Gravediggers in Act V Scene I of Shakespeare’s play has to be divided into parts and correspondingly transferred to the beginning of each act in the Chinese performance.

At the opening scene of Act I, one of the two Gravediggers greets the other:

⁴⁵¹ Lin Zhaohua as quoted in Liangjie Qin, [On the Creation Practice of Contemporary Avant-garde Drama – Focusing on Meng Jinghui and Lin Zhaohua] “论当代先锋戏剧的创作实践——以孟京辉、林兆华为中心”, *Journal of Zhejiang Ocean University (Humanities Sciences)* 1 (2007), p. 28. “作为导演每排一部戏，都得有个第二个主题。这第二个主题是我的。第一主题是文学的。比如我排莎士比亚的剧可以不改他的台词，只作一点删节，可以按照他原来的台词去演。但我强烈地把我自己的一些东西，把我独立的一些思索独立的状态，放在这个戏当中。这是导演的第二主题。”

⁴⁵² Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Sidney Lamb, p. 17.

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Gravedigger A: Hi, let me ask you a question.

Gravedigger B: Go ahead.

Gravedigger A: Whose home do you think lasts the longest?

Gravedigger B: Eh. *(both laugh)*

Gravedigger A: You cannot answer, can you? Let me tell you, the homes of peasants and us grave-diggers.

Gravedigger B: Really?

Gravedigger A: Another question for you.

Gravedigger B: Go to.

Gravedigger A: What is he that builds things stronger than either the shipwright, the mason or the carpenter?

*(Ha mu lai te, Act I)*⁴⁵³

From now on, the dialogue roughly returns to the original and goes further till Gravedigger A's request: "fetch me a stoup of liquor" of Gravedigger B. Following it, Gravedigger B walks to the upper part of the stage, and meanwhile, the King, the Queen and Hamlet enter from different directions. The actor of Gravedigger B moves close by the King and then becomes Polonius. Immediately, the Chinese adaptation begins with Act I Scene II in the original text.

Similarly, the two Gravediggers appear again before the real beginning of Act II. They talk about the dead girl named Ophelia and discuss whether she committed suicide by drowning herself or whether she has been drowned.

Unlike the traditional theatrical convention of a prologue or chorus, Lin Zhaohua's *Hamlet* makes full use of repetition of the Gravedigger-scene before each act. On the stage, the two Gravediggers' topics are revolving round graves, skulls and death, through which the director gives prominence to one of his second themes: Death is everywhere. In the shadow of death, the tragic atmosphere in the performance is exaggerated; meanwhile, as Zhao Xiaoyang has remarked: "In Shakespearean tragedies the comic scenes seem to serve

⁴⁵³ All the translations from the Chinese *Hamlet* were made by me, unless otherwise indicated.

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as interludes or burlesques, but they actually closely contribute to the central theme of the play.”⁴⁵⁴ Shakespeare’s comic element in the Gravediggers’ conversation has been preserved in the scene:

Other. Marry, now I can tell.

Grave. To’t.

Other. Mass, I cannot tell.

Grave. Cudgel thy brains no more about it, for your dull ass will not mend his pace with beating.

(*Hamlet*, 5.1.53-57)

What is more important, on the other hand, the repetitive appearance of the Gravediggers on the stage with their repetitive topics on death underlines the fact that nothing happens to change the unavoidable fate of death under a hopeless circumstance. Although they attempt to rebel, Hamlet for his father’s death and his mother’s remarriage as well as the King for his crown, his own ambition and his queen, none of them escapes death in the end.

In terms of textual structure, the director has made another alteration in his production: this is, to move the prayer scene from Act III Scene III in the original text to Act IV of the 1989 Beijing version.

Having sent Hamlet together with his two companions off to England, the King reveals his plan to have Hamlet executed by the English king: “Till I know ‘tis done, / Howe’er my haps, my joys were ne’er begun”. (*Hamlet*, 4.3.70-71) After a little pause, the Chinese King in the adaptation takes up his speech by saying “O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven; / It hath the primal eldest curse upon’t – / A brother’s murder...” (*Hamlet*, 3.3.36-69). As a result, the Chinese Hamlet has no chance at all to hear about his uncle’s prayer.

The reason for such a transformation has never been commented on either by the director or any other theatrical scholars. But it is clear that the director has done it on purpose. Let’s make a brave conjecture: Hamlet in the Chinese production is not an indecisive prince any longer, in absolute opposition to the conventional idea of Hamlet’s

⁴⁵⁴ Xiaoyang Zhang, *Shakespeare in China*, p. 64.

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character of being irresolute. He does not take actions against the King because he has no opportunity to revenge his dead father. All the actions follow on directly from each other. When his suspicion of his uncle's murdering his father has been proved by the Mousetrap play, he is called in by his mother. In the chamber scene, he mistakes the hiding Polonius for the King and kills him, which gives the King the best excuse for sending him off to England. And Hamlet accepts the order and is prepared to leave for England. When he is back from his journey to England, he is challenged by Laertes and dies in the following duel as a consequence of the conspiracy between the King and Laertes.

6.2.2.2.3.2 Role-Transition

Lin Zhaohua's experimental plays have employed various staging techniques to reveal the director's inner thoughts or his second themes apart from the author's literary one. Sometimes, there exist great discrepancies between the adopted method and that required by the original text. *Three Sisters and Waiting for Godot* performed in 1998 by the Lin Zhaohua Theatre Studio is a case in point. In this production, Lin bravely combined these rather different plays in style into one. With regard to Shakespeare's tragedy *Hamlet*, Lin Zhaohua, likewise, adopted innovative theatrical techniques in emphasizing his own understandings of the world masterpiece.

One of the director's second themes "Everyone is Hamlet" has been realized, apart from through the changed structure, by using the dramatic technique of role-transition, which is frequently adopted in the Theatre of the Absurd. Role-transition is used, through exchanging roles between each other, to reflect various relations between human beings, human beings and things, and reality and illusion.

In this Chinese adaptation, role-switching happens primarily three times. First of all is the transition between the Hamlet actor and the King actor. In Act I of the 1989 version, after having comforted the mourning Hamlet over his father's death by saying "'tis a fault to heaven, / A fault against the dead, a fault to nature, / To reason most absurd, whose common theme / Is death of fathers, and who still hath cried / From the first corse till he that died today, / 'This must be so'" (*Hamlet*, 1.2.101-106), the King together with the

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Queen asks Hamlet to stay with them in Denmark. At Hamlet's "I shall in all my best obey you, madam", the King is very happy, for "'tis a loving and a fair reply." But, the King actor, all of a sudden, lowers his head and then gloomy colour spreads on his face. Simultaneously, the Hamlet actor takes up the speech, saying in a cheerful tone: "Madam, come. / This gentle and unforc'd accord of Hamlet / Sits smiling to my heart; in grace whereof / No jocund health that Denmark drinks today / But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell, / And the King's rouse the heaven shall bruit again, / Re-speaking earthly thunder. Come away." (*Hamlet*, 1.2.120-28) The King actor has been left alone on the stage and from this moment he becomes Hamlet, giving his first soliloquy of "Frailty, thy name is woman" (*Hamlet*, 1.2.146). And the King actor carries on the Hamlet role till the end of the scene. The role-change between the King actor and the Hamlet actor implies, on the one hand, that the characteristics of the King's evil, ambition, fratricide and incest might be a potential in Hamlet, the honest Danish Prince. On the other hand, the casualness of history has been strengthened: "Today you are a king and you might become a clown tomorrow; today you are Hamlet and you might become a king tomorrow. Since the circumstances are full of changes, the role-parts should be exchangeable, too."⁴⁵⁵

The second role-transition takes place in Act II of the Chinese version. This time, it is the Polonius actor who takes the place of the Hamlet role-part. Having noticed that one of the players is moved to tears by the story of the mobbed queen, Polonius wants to stop the temporary presentation.

Polonius: Look whe'er he has not turned his colour and has tears in's eyes. Prithee no more.

Hamlet: 'Tis well. I'll have thee speak out the rest of this soon.

(*Hamlet*, 2.2.515-18)

At this point, the standing Polonius actor on the Chinese stage begins to squat down and calls, immediately, in the identity of Hamlet: "Polonius?" With the answer of "my lord?" the Hamlet actor, who has been previously on his knees, stands up and then becomes

⁴⁵⁵ Lin Zhaohua as quoted in Qin, "On the Creation Practice of Contemporary Avant-garde Drama", p. 28. "你今天是国王明天可能就是小丑,你今天是哈姆莱特,明天也可能是国王。人的处境是经常变化的,所以角色也是置换的。"

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Polonius. Hereunto, the two actors have succeeded in exchanging the roles between them, and the Polonius actor, who is Hamlet at the moment, goes on: “let them be well used, for they are the abstract and brief chronicles of the time. After your death you were better have a bad epitaph than their ill report while you live.” (*Hamlet*, 2.2.519-22) When others leave the stage, Hamlet, in fact the previous Polonius actor, delivers the famous soliloquy “O what a rogue and peasant slave am I” (*Hamlet*, 2.2.544). Through this role-transition, the honest, righteous and noble Hamlet becomes the foolish and cunning Polonius.

The exchange of roles between Hamlet and the King or Hamlet and Polonius respectively foreshadows a significant meeting between the Hamlet actor, the King actor and the Polonius actor, occurring in Act III in the Chinese adaptation.

Entering from different directions, the three actors slowly come to the middle of the stage and then separate themselves in the form of a triangle. The famous soliloquy “To be or not to be” expressing the depression and hesitation of Shakespeare’s Hamlet is shared by these three Chinese actors Hamlet, the King and Polonius, simultaneously.

Hamlet: To be, or not to be

Polonius: To be, or not to be

King: To be, or not to be

Hamlet: That is the question

King: That is the question worth considering

Polonius: That is the question that must be considered

Hamlet: Whether ‘tis nobler in the mind to suffer

...

And by opposing end them.

Polonius: To die – to sleep

...

Devoutly to be wish’d.

King: To die, to sleep; / To sleep, perchance to dream

Hamlet: ay, there’s the rub: (*The actor turns back to face the audience*)

King: For in that sleep of death what dreams may come

...

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That makes calamity of so long life

Hamlet: For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,

...

With a bare bodkin?

King: To be, or not to be

Polonius: Not to be, or to be

Hamlet: Who would fardels bear (*the actor goes slowly to the front part of the stage*)

...

And lose the name of action.

King: That is the question worth considering

Polonius: That is the question that must be considered. (*The last two sentences are echoing the beginning*)

(*Ha mu lai te*, Act III)



Figure 6.2.2.2 The “To be or not to be” soliloquy is shared by
Hamlet, King and Polonius

At the call of Hamlet, Ophelia enters the stage and simultaneously, the King actor and the Polonius actor turn back slowly and go off the stage.

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The Hamlet situation of being in a dilemma as to whether to take arms against a sea of troubles or not is at the moment facing the evil King and the cunning Polonius as well. In the director's hand, by switching the Hamlet role among Hamlet, the King and Polonius, no matter you are a king, a prince or a courtier, no matter you are a good or bad person, no matter how you are righteous, treacherous or cunning, everyone of them is being tormented by the same question "To be or not to be" and their question is echoed by the other two. As a result, the sharing of the innermost thoughts of Shakespeare's Hamlet among these three actors embodies the director's second theme "Everyone is Hamlet":

Hamlet is one of us. In the street, we may pass him without knowing who he is. The thoughts that torture him also torture us everyday. The choice he needs to make is also the one we face every day. 'To be or not to be' is a question of philosophy, but is also a concrete matter, big or small, in our everyday life. 'To be or not to be': you can choose only one of these alternatives.⁴⁵⁶

Meanwhile, their questionings and echoings on the stage intensively evoke the spectator's introspection on life, encouraging the audience to face rather than escape reality, as the director conceptualizes his Hamlet:

The Hamlet, whom we are facing today, is neither a prince seeking vengeance for the sake of justice nor a hero of Humanism. Rather we must face ourselves. To face oneself is the most active, brave and heroic attitude of us in the modern time. We possess nothing except this.⁴⁵⁷

In the duel scene, there is another role-transition between Hamlet and the King, which confuses the audience at the first sight. The Queen drinks the poisonous wine that the King has prepared for Hamlet and dies. Hamlet is crying indignantly "O villainy! Ho! Let the door be lock'd. / Treachery! Seek it out." (*Hamlet*, 5.2.317-18) His voice is echoed by the

⁴⁵⁶ Lin, "Hamlet: Among Us". The English translation is cited from Ruru Li, "Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage in the 1990s", p. 356. "哈姆莱特是我们中间的一个, 在大街上我们也许会每天交错走过, 那些折磨他的思想每天也在折磨我们, 他面临的选择也是我们每天所要面临的。生存或者死亡是个哲学命题, 也是生活中每一件具体的大事和小事。或者不是, 你只能选择其中一种。"

⁴⁵⁷ Lin, "Hamlet: Among Us". "我们今天面对哈姆莱特, 不是面对为了正义复仇的王子, 也不是面对人文主义的英雄, 我们面对的是我们自己, 能够面对自己, 这是现代人所能具有的最积极, 最勇敢, 最豪迈的姿态。除此以外, 我们没有别的了。"

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King's with the same lines, both of them running around. At Laertes's revelation of the conspiracy with the King, Hamlet and the King run up to each other, both shouting "The point envenom'd too! Then, venom, to thy work." (*Hamlet*, 5.2.327) Then they stab each other. The water in the pipe between them bursts out from the holes, symbolizing the bleeding of the King. After Hamlet and the King stare at each other for a couple of minutes, the King dies from the wound received from Hamlet's rapier; however, on the stage, it is the Hamlet actor who is falling down to the ground while the King actor keeps standing. In the role-transition, the Hamlet actor dies as the King.



Figure 6.2.2.3 The duel between Hamlet and the King with the Hamlet actor on the left falling down to the ground as the King

In the 1989 adaptation, Hamlet dies, and dies from revenging his father against the King. In this way, the conventional idea of "justice overcomes villainy" is completely denied in Lin Zhaohua's *Hamlet*. What is more important, it is Hamlet's revenge that leads to his self-destruction, finally becoming a meaningless action.⁴⁵⁸ Does the director object to revenge? Or does he advocate the attitude of meekly accepting humiliation or awaiting one's doom? Although Lin Zhaohua modernizes Shakespeare's *Hamlet* by deconstructing

⁴⁵⁸ Qin, "On the Creation Practice of Contemporary Avant-garde Drama", p. 28.

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it according to his own “inspiration and consciousness”, unfortunately, his argument in the handling of the finale is far too weak to carry conviction.

In conclusion, as an example of experimental Shakespeare on the Chinese stage, Lin Zhaohua’s *Hamlet* is successful, in the light of performing Shakespeare in the form of a hybrid of the Western and the Chinese style. Shakespeare’s dramatic form – spoken drama, plots including both main plot and subplots, and most of his textual interpretations have been fully maintained in the Chinese adaptation. The director, on the other hand, has skilfully converted Shakespeare drama by transfusing his modern interpretations of Chinese society into its original themes. In his opinion, Lin Zhaohua, as a director, does not serve Shakespeare; or rather, he seeks for different commentaries on Shakespeare’s characters.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁹ Chi Zhang, [Interview with Lin Zhaohua] “林兆华访谈录”, *Drama Literature* 8 (2003), p. 8.

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6.3 The Comedy *Much Ado About Nothing*

“*Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like It*, and *Twelfth Night* are normally placed in contiguous years of composition (1598-1600)”, remarks George K. Hunter, “and are often taken together by criticism to represent the peak of Shakespeare’s achievement as a comic dramatist.”⁴⁶⁰ Professor Henry B. Charlton gives a detailed commentary on and explanation of Shakespeare’s later comedies in his study *Shakespearian Comedy*:

They are the consummation of a process of growth in the art of comedy.... With them, Shakespearian comedy realises its most perfect form, and therefore in them Shakespeare’s comic idea, his vision of the reach of human happiness in this world of men and women, is richer, deeper, more sustained, and more satisfying than in any other of his plays. They embody his surest clue to the secret of man’s common and abiding welfare. Being that, they are also, technically speaking, his happiest examples of the characteristically Elizabethan kind of romantic comedy, the plays in which he most fully satisfies the curiously Elizabethan aesthetic demand for a drama which would gratify both the romantic and the comic instincts of its audience.⁴⁶¹

Accordingly, as one of Shakespeare’s enduring plays on the stage, *Much Ado About Nothing* well represents Shakespeare’s mature dramatic techniques in comic style, ranging from theme, plot, structure, language, to characterization. In terms of comic effect, the audience give an understanding laugh at Shakespeare’s characters on the stage and their humorous language – malapropism adopted by the Constable Dogberry from time to time in the play for instance – which is completely different from his early comedies, in which the character’s unawareness of his situation on the stage is the only factor in the spectator’s laughter. In addition, themes and motifs in Shakespeare’s mature comedy easily arouse the

⁴⁶⁰ George K. Hunter, *William Shakespeare: The Later Comedies. A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Much Ado About Nothing, As You Like It, Twelfth Night*, repr. (London: Longmans, Green, 1969), p. 7. In this point, George K. Hunter goes on, some other Shakespearean scholars regard his comedy *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* as being in the same category as these three plays, considering *Midsummer Night’s Dream* also a great comic drama, but of a very different kind, and of a distinct date (1594/5).

⁴⁶¹ Henry B. Charlton, *Shakespearian Comedy* (London: Methuen, 1945), 3 ed., p. 266.

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audience's meditation on some serious topics from the comic atmosphere; take *Much Ado* as an example: the chaste Hero's suffering from humiliation is due to Don John's villainous trickery and Claudio's strong mistrust of women's sexuality as well, although the beloved come together in the end.

6.3.1 The Shakespearean Text: General Remarks

6.3.1.1 The Date of Composition

There have been many different opinions as to the date of the play. According to A. E. Brae's remark in his *Collier, Coleridge, and Shakespeare, Love's Labour's Won*, listed in *Palladis Tamia* (1598), refers to *Much Ado About Nothing*.⁴⁶² John Dover Wilson was of the opinion that there had been an old play with a Claudio-Hero-plot, which was supplemented by Shakespeare with the Benedick-Beatrice-plot.⁴⁶³ Nevertheless, critics could not show any specific evidence for their tenable assumption. The date of composition is presumed to have been late autumn 1598/early 1599.⁴⁶⁴ Two reasons are given for this.

First of all, the title of *Much Ado About Nothing* was not listed in Francis Meres's *Palladis Tamia*, which was entered in the *Stationers' Register* in September 1598. Concerning Shakespeare's comedy, *Palladis Tamia* listed 'his *Gentlemen of Verona*, his *Errors*, his *Loue labours lost*, his *Loue labours wonne*, his *Midsummers night dreame*, &

⁴⁶² William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*, updated ed. F. H. Mares (Cambridge: University Press, 2003), p. 10. The case was never more than speculative: Quiller-Couch wrote in 1923 that Bray's (sic) 'ingenious argument... serves sundry good by-purposes while missing to convince us on the main' (NS, p. viii). The discovery in 1953 of a list dating from 1603 of the stock of Christopher Hunt, a London bookseller, made the theory even less tenable, for the list includes *Love's Labour's Won* three years after the publication of *Much Ado About Nothing*.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 10. In this view the verse parts of the play belong to the earlier strata while the vigorous colloquial prose of Beatrice and Benedick represents the later work.

⁴⁶⁴ William Shakespeare *Much Ado About Nothing: A New Critical Edition*, ed. Holger Klein (Salzburg: Inst. f. Anglistik u. Amerikanistik, Univ. Salzburg, 1992), p. 12.

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his *Merchant of Venice*. "The omission might be accidental, but it creates a strong supposition that the play was not known when he [Francis Meres] compiled his list, and so suggests the middle or latter part of 1598 as the earliest likely date of composition."⁴⁶⁵

Secondly, the famous comic actor Will Kempe, who had acted as Dogberry in *Much Ado About Nothing*, on the other hand, was recorded to leave Shakespeare's company of actors, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, early in 1599.

Much Ado About Nothing was first documented under the date of 4 August 1600 in the Stationers' Register:

4. Augusti

As you like yt/a booke

HENRY the FFIFT/a booke

Euery man in his humour/a booke

*The Commedie of much A doo about nothing/a booke*⁴⁶⁶

All these plays listed here were to be staged. This entry was followed by another one on 23 August, assigning the right to print *Much Ado About Nothing* to Andrew Wise and William Aspley and at the same time the name of Shakespeare was mentioned as the author. Consequently, Valentine Sims printed the first and only Quarto of *Much Ado About Nothing* for Andrew Wise and William Aspley in the year 1600. Later on, the play was included in the Folio edition of Shakespeare's plays, which was published in 1623. Some changes were made to the text of the Quarto edition, as there were some disconcerting inconsistencies.⁴⁶⁷ R. A. Foakes sums up the inconsistencies and inadequacies in his Penguin edition:

They are in the main of three kinds. Firstly, the same character may be designated differently in different scenes, or even within a single scene.... Secondly, the stage

⁴⁶⁵ William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*, repr. ed. Arthur R. Humphreys (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 3.

⁴⁶⁶ Shakespeare, *Much Ado*, ed. Arthur R. Humphreys, p. 1.

⁴⁶⁷ William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*, repr. ed. R. A. Foakes (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986), pp. 167-69.

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directions are sometimes vague, or incomplete; occasionally more, at other times fewer, characters are named in an entry than have a part in a scene; and many exists are not given at all. Thirdly, a notable ghost-character appears in the entries to I.i and II.i, namely Leonato's wife ('Innogen'). She has no lines, and is not mentioned later in the play.⁴⁶⁸

6.3.1.2 The Sources

According to R. A. Foakes, "Shakespeare invented Benedick and Beatrice, but Claudio and Hero he borrowed from a tale with a very long history stretching back to an ancient Greek Romance."⁴⁶⁹ For example, Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirrhoe* in the fifth century tells the story of a lover who is misled by his rival into believing his chaste beloved unfaithful. This story is said to be the origin directly or indirectly for Matteo Bandello's *La prima parte de le novella* (1554),⁴⁷⁰ which was known to Shakespeare. As to the exact sources of the Claudio-Hero-plot of *Much Ado About Nothing*, Shakespearean scholars⁴⁷¹ concluded after plenty of examinations that two popular stories have directly related to the play: the twenty-second story of Bandello's *Novelle* and the fifth book of Lodovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, published in 1516 and then translated into English by Peter Beverly in 1566 and by John Harington once again in 1591.

⁴⁶⁸ Shakespeare, *Much Ado*, ed. R. A. Foakes, p. 168.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁴⁷⁰ Shakespeare, *Much Ado*, ed. F. H. Mares, p. 1.

⁴⁷¹ Geoffrey Bullough lists in his *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, together with relevant extracts, four sources of the Hero-Claudio story, namely Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, Matteo Bandello's *Novelle* and Anthony Munday's *Fedele and Fortunio*. Some other remark that Shakespeare took his sources from only Ariosto and Bandello; see William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*, repr. ed. Arthur R. Humphreys (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 5-14, as well as William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*, repr. ed. R. A. Foakes (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986), p. 14.

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The action of the twenty-second story in Bandello's *Novelle* takes place in Messina. While King Piero of Aragon arrives to take control of Sicily, his valiant and wealthy courtier Timbreo decides to marry Lionato's daughter Fenicia, who is from a rich ancestor, after his failure to seduce her. However, the expected marriage has been ruined by Girondo, a friend of Timbreo, who loves Fenicia secretly. Girondo deceives Timbreo into believing Fenicia dates with another man who is seen to climb into Lionato's mansion at night. Subsequently, Timbreo refuses the marriage, which breaks Fenicia's heart. Lionato determines to send his daughters Fenicia and her younger sister Belfiore to his brother's country villa to avoid the scandal. After the pretended funeral of Fenicia, not only Timbreo but also Girondo realize their mistake and crime respectively. Both of them ask Lionato for forgiveness and Lionato suggests that they come back to him when they consider marriage again. One year later, Timbreo follows Lionato's advice of marrying his niece, who is actually Fenicia. At the wedding banquet, all of Lionato's plans are revealed to Fenicia and Timbreo; and Girondo succeeds in asking Lionato for the hand of Belfiore, Fenicia's younger sister. In the end, the lovers enjoy their wedding.⁴⁷²

The fifth book of Aritosto's *Orlando Furioso*, another possible source, tells how brave Renaldo resolves to defend the Scottish princess Genevra, the heroine of the story, who was accused of failed chastity, after having learned the truth about her from Dalinda, her maid: Dalinda falls in love with Polynesso, Duke of Albany, who wants to marry Genevra. However, Genevra and noble Ariodante love each other and therefore the rejected Polynesso decides to take revenge on Genevra. Persuaded by Polynesso, Dalinda welcomes him in her mistress's dress at Genevra's window, while Ariodante and his brother Lurcanio are watching them. Consequently, Ariodante sends a peasant to say that he committed suicide by jumping into the sea and Lurcanio, Ariodante's brother, publicly humiliates Genevra for her infidelity. As a result, Genevra must be put to death, according to the Scottish law, unless some champion defends her. The play ends with Polynesso's

⁴⁷² Shakespeare, *Much Ado*, ed. F. H. Mares, pp. 1-2.

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confession before his death from Renaldo's fight and the unknown knight, taking up Lurcanio's challenge, proves to be Ariodante. All ends well.⁴⁷³

As concerning the source of Benedick-Beatrice-plot, although there is no specific evidence, parallels and hints can be found in some stories. Barbara Lewalski, for example, contends that *Much Ado About Nothing* owes a debt to the Neoplatonic love philosophy in Book 4 of Baldassare Castiglione's *The Courtier*, translated by Sir Thomas Hoby into English in 1561.⁴⁷⁴

Following the common literary fashion of describing the indictment and vindication of a chaste woman as a main plot in ancient Greek romance, Shakespeare created his *Much Ado About Nothing* by combining Bandello's *Novelle* with Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. Exactly speaking, Shakespeare "took some character-names, notably Don Pedro and Leonato, and the setting, Messina, from Bandello, together with the main outlines of the story."⁴⁷⁵ On the other hand, Shakespeare followed Ariosto in a maid's impersonating her mistress to realize the rival's intrigue against the hero as well as the faithful friend's corroborating witness. These two adopted stories were interlinked by Shakespeare's invention of the Constable Dogberry, who detects the wrong-doing by chance.

It is worth mentioning that Shakespeare departed purposefully from his sources, as Stephen J. Lynch said: "In his revisionary practices, Shakespeare borrows selectively and artfully from his source, but also reacts against his sources – often by developing and expanding upon contrary suggestions already present in his sources."⁴⁷⁶ For instance, the two half-brothers initiate the intrigues in the play simultaneously: good Don Pedro plans to unite the lovers Benedick-Beatrice and Claudio-Hero; bad Don John, by contrast,

⁴⁷³ Shakespeare, *Much Ado*, ed. F. H. Mares, pp. 2-3.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁴⁷⁵ Shakespeare, *Much Ado*, ed. R. A. Foakes, p. 14.

⁴⁷⁶ Stephen J. Lynch, *Shakespearean Intertextuality*, p. 2.

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conspires to mar the arranged marriage between Hero and Claudio.⁴⁷⁷ Shakespeare even excelled the classical comedy of intrigue in some respects. For example, Claudio's indifference to Friar Francis's suggestion of providential resolution by pretending Hero's death shows that "[m]ere disguise and deception cannot effect meaningful repentance in Messina nor reverse the tragic impetus of the action."⁴⁷⁸

6.3.1.3 Plot and Structure

In Arthur R. Humphreys's opinion, there are three plots: the serious plot of Claudio and Hero, the comic plot of Benedick and Beatrice, and the auxiliary plot of Dogberry and Verges.⁴⁷⁹ A different argument says that "the play has, if one wishes to preserve for the term 'plot' any precise meaning, only two: the Hero-Claudio plot and the Beatrice-Benedick plot. Dogberry, Verges, the Watch and the Sexton/Town Clerk are not active in a plot of their own but function as antagonists to Don John, Borachio and Conrad within the Hero-Claudio plot."⁴⁸⁰ And this remark finds its proof in the standard of classifying Shakespeare's comedies as follows:

In contrast to his early comedies, this group of comedies is characterized as Shakespeare's high comedy by a complicated structure, in which motive and scene pattern are varied. The story consists of two plots – romance as the main plot while

⁴⁷⁷ Robert S. Miola, *Shakespeare and Classical Comedy: The Influence of Plautus and Terence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 80.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

⁴⁷⁹ Shakespeare, *Much Ado*, ed. Arthur R. Humphreys, p. 60.

⁴⁸⁰ Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing: A New Critical Edition*, ed. Holger Klein, p. 18.

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comedy as the sub-plot. The love remains the central topic and the stage company is by high rank.⁴⁸¹

In conclusion, Shakespeare's five-act *Much Ado About Nothing* takes place in Messina with a main plot – the Claudio-Hero-plot – and one subplot – the Benedick-Beatrice-plot as well.

Act I: Prince Don Pedro of Aragon, together with his favourite soldiers Claudio, Benedick, and his bastard brother Don John as well, arrives at Leonato's house, Governor of Messina, after the victorious war against Don John, who rebelled against his lord and brother. While learning that Claudio falls in love with Leonato's daughter Hero, Don Pedro promises to woo Hero for Claudio, whereas villainous Don John plots to thwart the marriage because Claudio "hath all the glory of my overthrow" (*Much Ado About Nothing*, 1.3.63-64)⁴⁸².

Act II: at the masked ball Don Pedro succeeds in wooing Hero for Claudio and the wedding is arranged for Monday. In the meantime, Don Pedro plans to unite Benedick and Leonato's niece Beatrice by trapping both of them into believing that each of them falls in love with the other, although Beatrice and Benedick vow never to marry. Consequently, not only Benedick but also Beatrice takes the bait. In contrast to Don Pedro as a matchmaker, Don John the Bastard induces Don Pedro and Claudio to believe in Hero's "disloyalty". In fact, the supposed adultery of Hero has been plotted by Don John with his henchman Borachio to thwart the arranged marriage between Claudio and Hero. Exactly speaking, Borachio shows a play to Don Pedro and Claudio by courting his lover Margaret, one of Hero's waiting gentlewomen, by the name of Hero.

⁴⁸¹ Bettina Röhr, *Das Komische bei Shakespeare: Eine Analyse komischer Strukturen in 'As You Like It' sowie 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', 'Twelfth Night und Much Ado About Nothing'* (Berlin: Lang, 1997), p. 8. The original text is in German as follows: "Diese Komödien zeichnen sich im Gegensatz zur ersten Phase durch eine komplexere Struktur aus, in der Motive und Szenenmuster variiert werden. Die Haupthandlung trägt durchaus ernste Element (romantic plot), während die Nebenhandlung hauptsächlich der Belustigung dient (comic plot). Die Liebe bleibt das zentrale Thema und die Bühnengesellschaft ist von hohem Rang."

⁴⁸² All the quotations from *Much Ado About Nothing* are from William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*, ed. Sheldon P. Zitner (Oxford: University Press, 1993), which derives from the Folger Library copy of the Quarto.

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Act III: drunken Borachio tells Conrad about the conspiracy, which is overheard by the watchmen of Dogberry, the constable. The watchmen arrest Borachio and Conrad and then Dogberry reports his arrest to Leonato. Unfortunately, Leonato is in a hurry to leave for the wedding, allowing Dogberry himself to examine the suspicious Borachio and Conrad.

Act IV: at the wedding, Claudio publicly accuses Hero of disloyalty and infidelity. Hero falls to the ground at the sharp words by Claudio and Don Pedro as well as Don John. Believing in Hero's innocence, Friar Francis suggests that on the one hand Hero should be kept secret; on the other hand, the family should spread the false news that Hero died from Claudio's accusation so that the slander of Hero's so-called infidelity might be changed to remorse. Meanwhile, Beatrice and Benedick admit their love for each other on their own. Beatrice asks Benedick to kill Claudio to prove his love for her and Benedick is determined to challenge Claudio for his wronging Hero.

Act V: while on their way to Leonato's house, Dogberry, Borachio, Conrade and the watchmen meet Don Pedro and Claudio. Borachio confesses his wrongdoings to Hero, which makes Claudio realize that he misjudged Hero, an innocent girl. Even though Leonato knows the pretended death of Hero, he insists that Claudio mourn at her tomb to prove to the people of Messina that Hero died innocent. After his mourning at the tomb, as Leonato said, Claudio comes to Leonato's house to marry his niece, who is the real Hero but said to be the copy of the dead Hero. Benedick also gets permission from Leonato to marry Beatrice. During the dancing, the fleeing Don John is reported to have been captured. The play ends with happy marriages of the lovers.

The Hero-Claudio plot as the main plot and the Beatrice-Benedick plot as the subplot complement each other from the beginning to the end. At the same time, these two plots are practised by two tricksters: the good Don Pedro and the bad Don John respectively. These two innocent and malicious tricks are interlinked by the Constable Dogberry and his watchmen.

Initiating the courtship to Hero for Claudio, Don Pedro as a matchmaker also intrigues to unite Benedick and Beatrice; Don John as a match-breaker, on the other hand, wants to ruin the marriage of Claudio and Hero. All these intrigues have been carried out by

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misleading eavesdroppings. Don Pedro, with the help of Claudio and Hero, induces Benedick to believe that Beatrice falls in love with him and vice versa. Afterwards, Beatrice and Benedick really fall in love with each other. Meanwhile, Don John conspires with his henchman Borachio to deceive Claudio into believing in Hero's disloyalty by using impersonation tactics. The parallel intrigues of both Don Pedro and Don John come to a climax in the church scene. Claudio's public accusation of Hero's secret dating with another man shatters their arranged wedding and on the other hand, leads to Beatrice and Benedick's declaration of love. In other words, the wedding that separates Claudio and Hero unites Beatrice and Benedick. However, Hero's sufferings from Claudio's denunciation of infidelity cannot be ended until Dogberry's watchmen overhear Don John's conspiracy. As Robert S. Miola comments, "the late-arriving Dogberry lives apart from the main action of the play but holds the solution to its various difficulties; he possesses the significant information that restores identity, clarifies action, and unites the knots."⁴⁸³ In conclusion, without the intervention of Dogberry and his watchmen, of course, neither the marriage between Claudio and Hero or Benedick and Beatrice might have taken place.

6.3.1.4 Stage History

After *Much Ado About Nothing* had been printed in the Quarto in 1600, the play became popular, as one can see from the Quarto's title-page:

Much adoe about / Nothing. / As it hath been sundrie times publikely / acted by the right honourable, the Lord / Chamberlaine his seruants. / Written by William Shakespeare. / [Ornament] / LONDON / Printed by V[alentine]. S[immes]. for Andrew Wise, and / William Aspley. / 1600.⁴⁸⁴

In addition, its popularity can also be inferred from the numerous allusions and echoes in near-contemporary works. For example, *The Shakespeare Allusion Book* points to Thomas

⁴⁸³ Miola, *Shakespeare and Classical Comedy*, p. 93.

⁴⁸⁴ Shakespeare, *Much Ado*, ed. Arthur R. Humphreys, p. 2.

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Heywood's *The Fayre Myde of the Exchange* (1607) as apparently reflecting Benedick's saying 'I could not indure the carrier of her wit' (cf. *Much Ado*, II.i.257-8) and 'I am horribly in love with her' (cf. II.iii.226-7), and Dogberry's 'tis most tolerable and not to be endured' (cf. III.iii.36).⁴⁸⁵ Unfortunately, before the Restoration (1660) there was no specific evidence about its performance except the Lord Chamberlain's accounts at Court. The play was recorded in the list of fourteen performances for the marriage of Princess Elizabeth, daughter of James I, to the Elector Palatine, Prince Frederick of Bohemia, in May of 1613 and John Heminge (1556-1630) received £93.6s.8d. on behalf of the company. The mentioned John Heminge was paid another £40 for six additional performances including *Benedicte and Betteris*. Meanwhile, Charles I, who certainly watched the performances, took down the name of *Benedicte and Betteris* against the title of *Much Ado About Nothing* in his copy.⁴⁸⁶

The Restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660 brought the reopening of the theatres and the play has experienced several distinct performance stages.

First of all, *Much Ado Much Nothing*, as a quarry, has been adapted by being merged with Shakespeare's other plays, which was said to be a theatrical fashion during the Restoration period. Sir William Davenant, leader of the Duke of York's players, one of two companies which were granted performance licences, hybridised the play with *Measure for Measure* under the title of *The Law Against Lovers*, excising the Claudio-Hero-plot. Performed in February 1662, Davenant's play – "so it was considered by his contemporaries"⁴⁸⁷ – was in fact an amalgamation of the merry war between Benedick and Beatrice from *Much Ado About Nothing* as sub-plot and of the romantic story between Isabella and Angelo from *Measure for Measure*. Sir William Davenant was not alone in adapting Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* and was followed by other theatrical participants in the 18th century, especially at its beginning.

⁴⁸⁵ Shakespeare, *Much Ado*, ed. Arthur R. Humphreys, p. 34.

⁴⁸⁶ Shakespeare, *Much Ado*, ed. F. H. Mares, p. 10.

⁴⁸⁷ Shakespeare *Much Ado*, ed. Sheldon P. Zitner, p. 59.

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In 1723 Charles Johnson's *Love in a Forest* was played at Drury Lane, taking parts out of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Much Ado About Nothing* into *As You Like It*. It was in Drury Lane once again that in 1737 James Miller staged his adaptation *The Universal Passion*, mixing Molière's *Princesse d'Élide* with *Twelfth Night*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *Much Ado About Nothing*. The last of the eighteenth-century adaptations was Robert Jephson's *Law of Lombardy* in 1779.⁴⁸⁸

Secondly, the original *Much Ado About Nothing* was performed "without many liberties (beyond the expected cuts and gags) being taken with in"⁴⁸⁹. According to surviving documents the play was revived by John Rich at Lincoln's Inn Fields in February 1721 after not having been acted for thirty years. Rich's second staging at Covent Garden in 1737 was followed by other performances in 1739 and 1746 respectively. The real rise to prominence of *Much Ado About Nothing*, however, was brought by David Garrick acting as Benedick against his Beatrice played by Mrs Pritchard at Drury Lane in 1748. After Garrick, the play itself frequently appeared on the stage and many actors have played Benedick – John Philip Kemble, Charles Kemble, Henry Irving, to mention just a few. At the same time there were innumerable successful Beatrices, and Dorothea Jordan, Helen Faucit, and Ellen Terry were among them. Most of these Benedicks and Beatrices kept on taking their roles on the stage even till their retirement. Nonetheless, all the performances observed the principal theatrical tendency – paying attention to Beatrice and Benedick, with the humorous Dogberry in the second place.

Thirdly, the integrity of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* has become the main interest for the performance from the mid-19th century onwards. Charles Kean's farewell season production of 1858 made scenery become important on the stage. Irving's Lyceum performance in 1882 was similarly elaborate, with a cavernous church interior impressively recorded in the painting by Johnston Forbes-Robertson, Irving's Claudio.⁴⁹⁰ New theatrical methods were adopted to break away from the Victorian theatre of

⁴⁸⁸ Shakespeare *Much Ado*, ed. Sheldon P. Zitner, p.60.

⁴⁸⁹ Shakespeare, *Much Ado*, ed. F. H. Mares, p. 28.

⁴⁹⁰ Shakespeare, *Much Ado*, ed. Sheldon P. Zitner, p. 63.

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extensive cuts by William Poel, Gordon Graig and Harley Granville-Baker, although they had their own different ways from each other. “This theatrical grangerizing of *Much Ado* culminated in Beerbohm Tree’s 1905 production, which supplied ‘(all) the lovely things Shakespeare dispensed with’.”⁴⁹¹

Finally, the play has witnessed a variety of theatrical and academic interpretations, not only nationally but also internationally. Constantin Stanislavski (1863-1938) did not need scenery and costumes for a play, but a play for the scenery and costumes. In 1897, accordingly, he “thumbed through Shakespeare’ and hit on *Much Ado* as ‘a vehicle for medieval Italy’”⁴⁹². In 1972, for example, J. J. Antoon reset Shakespeare’s *Much Ado* with Sam Waterston as Benedick opposite Kathleen Widdowes in the American heartland before World War I, shortly after successful fighting against a Spanish enemy. As a result, the production was received with universal delight in Antoon’s historical and social transformations, whereas some reviewers criticised it for changing Don John into a complete Hitlerian villain. In contrast with other countries in performing or adapting Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing*, China was rather late due to certain historical and social reasons.

6.3.2 *Much Ado About Nothing* in the Huangmeixi Genre

Li Ruru’s statistics show there are about five performances of *Much Ado About Nothing* on the Chinese stage since Shakespearean plays began to be introduced to the Chinese spectator in 1930.⁴⁹³ After its first performance directed by the Soviet Shakespearean scholar Yevgeniya Konstantinovna Lipkovskaya in Shanghai in 1957, *Much Ado* was frequently revived especially during the period between 1957-1979, because, as Alexander Huang remarked, “the political upheavals and overt politicization of art sent theatre practitioners and their audiences on a search for safe texts that did not contain any political

⁴⁹¹ Shakespeare *Much Ado*, ed. Sheldon P. Zitner, p. 63.

⁴⁹² Ibid., p. 69.

⁴⁹³ Ruru Li, *Shashibiya*, pp. 231-240.

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messages that were in any way ambiguous.” The *Much Ado* comedy, by accident, “presented rural life with its strife over trivial matters and the merry wars between lovers. It also projected the bright aspect of social life and thus by extension fulfilled the requirement that the theatre serve an educational purpose.”⁴⁹⁴ Meanwhile, *Much Ado About Nothing* was of great importance in the history of performing Shakespeare, for it was the first Western classic that came back to the Shanghai stage after the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).⁴⁹⁵

Most of these Chinese performances were carried out in the western form – spoken drama – except the 1986 *Looking for Trouble (wu shi sheng fei)*⁴⁹⁶, which adapted Shakespeare’s play to a *huangmeixi*⁴⁹⁷ convention. In practice, this was the first time for the *huangmeixi* practitioners to introduce a Shakespearean play into their repertoire in the history of this regional genre.⁴⁹⁸

6.3.2.1 The *Huangmeixi* Genre

Huangmeixi, a regional opera with a relatively short history when compared with any other traditional genre such as *kunju* and Beijing opera, originated from a small county called Huangmei in Hubei province with the name of *huangmeidiao*⁴⁹⁹ (*huangmei* melody). In

⁴⁹⁴ Alexander Huang, *Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage 1839-2004*, p. 125 and p. 137.

⁴⁹⁵ Ruru Li, *Shashibiya*, p. 58.

⁴⁹⁶ 《无事生非》

⁴⁹⁷ 黄梅戏 *Huangmeixi* is a local theatrical genre. Its popularity around China is due to its beautiful melody and romantic story.

⁴⁹⁸ Zhi Jin, [Worrying Experiment: Thought Fragments on Adapting Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing* for the *Huangmeixi* Stage] “惶恐的探索：改编莎剧《无事生非》为黄梅戏的断想”, *Art of Huangmei Opera* 3(1986), p. 5, as well as Ruru Li, *Shashibiya*, p. 237.

⁴⁹⁹ 黄梅调 In terms of the origin of *huangmeixi*, there are different opinions: some remark that its source should be in Huangmei county in Hubei province, while others argue that it is based in Anqing city of Anhui province, gaining its name from the season of huangmei. After my own lots of research on the topic, I think the first conclusion sounds reasonable and therefore I take the first group’s viewpoint in this dissertation.

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1784 the county of Huangmei suffered from a disaster of drought and again flood in the following year, the residents there had to move to Anhui and Jiangxi provinces with their *huangmeidiao*. Between 1851 and 1861 *huangmeidiao* was fully developed into *huangmeixi* by adopting *caichadiao* (tea-picking melody) from Anhui and Jiangxi provinces, bordering on the three provinces, namely Hubei, Jiangxi and Anhui. In theory, *huangmeixi* in its early phase was only one type out of various entertainments for peasants, describing their daily life in earthy and folksy language. This original genre was not well-known until the opera *The Fairy Couple* (*tian xian pei*)⁵⁰⁰ had been filmed in 1955 in Anqing city of Anhui province, finally gaining its honourable position all over China as a provincial opera.⁵⁰¹ Due to its beautiful melody and folksy lyrics, the *huangmeixi* genre was regarded as the Chinese country music and some composers borrowed *huangmeixi* tunes as the basis for their pop music.⁵⁰² Nowadays the Anhuier are proud of their two “huangs”: the Huangshan Mountain and *huangmei* opera.⁵⁰³

6.3.2.2 The Chinese Adaptation *Looking for Trouble*

The production was performed by the Anhui Huangmeixi Troupe at the first China's Shakespeare Festival (1986) in Shanghai with Jin Zhi as adaptor and Jiang Weiguo and Sun Huairan as directors. After the Festival, Philip Brockbank wrote in his praising letter to the Troup: “I think that your performance is full of gladness, grace, humour, and edification.”⁵⁰⁴ What is more, it was reported that Queen Elizabeth had shown great interest in the *huangmeixi* adaptation after her watching the performance of Act 3 and 4

⁵⁰⁰ 《天仙配》

⁵⁰¹ Changan Wang, [Origin of *Huangmeixi* Opera] “黄梅戏源流”.
<<http://www.huangmeixi.cn/showart.asp?id=374>>

⁵⁰² Ruru Li, *Shashibiya*, p. 140.

⁵⁰³ [Introduction of *Huangmeixi* Opera] “黄梅戏介绍” <<http://www.huangmeixi.cn/showart.asp?id=13>>

⁵⁰⁴ Philip Brockbank as quoted in Wanshu Zhu, [*Looking for Trouble* III] “《无事生非》III”.
<<http://drama.anhuinews.com/system/2003/01/09/000215160.shtml>>

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when she made a visit to China in 1986. The actress Ma Lan, starring as Bicui in the *huangmeixi* version, won the 1986 Plum Blossom Prize for Best Actress.⁵⁰⁵

Following the original structure of two plots, the Shakespearean 5-act play is rearranged into 7 acts on the Chinese stage: Act 1 comes from the combination of Shakespeare's Scene 1, 2 and 3; Act 2 focuses on the masked ball from Scene 1 in Act 2; Act 3 combines Scene 3 in Act 2 with Scene 1 in Act 3, mainly presenting how Don Pedro tricks Beatrice and Benedick falling in love with each other; Act 4 develops itself on the original plot of Don John's conspiracy with his henchman Borachio to ruin the arranged wedding ceremony between Hero and Claudio; on the other hand, this conspiracy has been found out by Dogberry and the watchmen, similar to Act 3 Scene 3 in the original play; Act 5 follows Scene 4 and 5 in Act 3 as well as Scene 1 in Act 4, meanwhile adding much more details in the light of Chinese traditions to these original plots; Act 6 extends Act 4 Scene 2 to a typical Chinese theatrical performance; Act 7 is based on Act 5; however, many Chinese features have been adopted in the final scene. The love story happens at a border region in an unspecified dynasty in ancient China and all characters that are now in Chinese costumes are given Chinese names, which sound similar to the original ones in the first phonetic letter, Bicui for Beatrice, Bai Lidi for Benedick and Hailuo for Hero, to mention just a few.

This *huangmeixi* convention is another example of a hybrid type in performing Shakespeare on the Chinese stage, as Li Ruru tells in her book: "Jiang, the director of *Looking for Trouble*, not only described himself as a mediator between Shakespeare and *huangmeixi*, but also emphasized that 'the proportion of the two elements should be half and half'"⁵⁰⁶. Likewise, when talking about his ideas of transplanting Shakespeare's *Much Ado* onto the *huangmeixi* stage, the adaptor Jin Zhi remarked that this performance intended for mixed Chinese audiences – not only for the Shakespeare Festival and the spectators from big cities but also for those opera-lovers from rural areas. Jin said that he hoped to present a new form, different neither from the Western style adopted by the *Yueju*

⁵⁰⁵ Ruru Li, *Shashibiya*, p. 147.

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

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opera in the Festival nor from the completely sinicized operatic style, rather, faithful to Shakespeare as well as the Chinese opera.⁵⁰⁷ Accordingly, to illustrate how the Shakespearean play has been fully made use of on the traditional Chinese stage, the following part will analyse in detail the *huanmeixi* version from two aspects: the original Shakespearean spirit maintained in adapting spoken drama for the traditional Chinese performance as well as conventional Chinese theatrical elements adopted in reproducing Shakespeare, the distinguished western playwright and poet.

6.3.2.2.1 The Shakespearean Spirit Kept in the Adaptation

While the *huangmeixi* adaptor and the director kept Shakespeare's Claudio-Hero-plot and Benedick-Beatrice-plot within the original sequence of scenes, his combination of tragic and comic elements, with the purpose of maintaining "half Shakespeare" in adapting this comedy, they made every effort to solve great divergences encountered in the course of transplantation.

It is known that a character's peculiar personality comes from a special environment such as times, nationalities, regions and so on. In regard to the protagonist Beatrice in Shakespeare's play, a high-spirited lady, it is rather difficult to automatically transfer her from the Elizabethan theatre to the Chinese stage. As an audacious girl in the original play, she dares to directly discuss "husband" with Don Pedro, prince of Aragon: "I would rather have one of your father's getting. Hath your grace ne'er a brother like you? Your father got excellent husbands if a maid could come by them." (*Much Ado About Nothing*, 2.1.319-322) In addition, she often has verbal duels with Benedick in public and always triumphs over him in the witty competitions between them. Sometimes she completely flouts conventional ideas, especially those on the role of women. From her point of view, "Would it not grieve a woman to be overmastered with a piece of valiant dust, to make an account of her life to a clod of wayward marl?" (*Much Ado About Nothing*, 2.1.59-61) Consequently, she firmly opposes marriage by announcing that "I had rather hear my dog

⁵⁰⁷ Jin, "Worrying Experiment", p. 5.

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bark at a crow than a man swear he loves me.” (*Much Ado About Nothing*, 1.1.127-128) Unfortunately, for such a socially and intellectually unconstrained Beatrice no equivalent is possible to be found in the history of feudal China or traditional Chinese operas, resulting from the strict Confucian etiquettes.⁵⁰⁸ How dared a woman in ancient China speak loudly before an imperial general (here referring to Don Pedro)? What’s more, dared she openly express her dissatisfaction with the marital system by insisting on remaining unmarried for her whole life? This was not possible.

After having considered these great discrepancies between personality and environment, Beatrice’s original characterization of being audacious, straightforward, sharp, and cynical against a background of Chinese culture, history and society, the *huangmeixi* adaptor decided to reset the story at a remote border in ancient China without giving a specific period, “where Han mix with minority peoples. Many things unacceptable in mainstream China may happen here. In particular, women have fewer restrictive rules to which they must conform, and the relationship between a young man and a young woman can develop in more open circumstances.”⁵⁰⁹ In this way the invective and wit of Shakespeare’s dialogue that would not accord with modest Han practice was made credible.⁵¹⁰ On the other hand, the adaptor strengthened Beatrice’s remarkable individuality through Marquis Li’s (the Chinese Leonato) explanation to Marquis Tang Delong (Don Pedro) in the aria: “My niece was born in an open village at the border and therefore she is like a wild hawk. She has never been educated the etiquettes for a lady in the boudoir and consequently she forgives nobody with her sharp tongue. I will send her to the Capital for receiving the proprieties in the inner chamber of the Royal Palace.” And then he goes on saying, “Her parents died early and it is I who has spoiled her.”⁵¹¹

⁵⁰⁸ Please see the detailed cultural differences between China and the West in Chapter 3.

⁵⁰⁹ Ruru Li, *Shashibiya*, p.145.

⁵¹⁰ Faye Chunfang Fei as quoted in Levith, *Shakespeare in China*, p. 76.

⁵¹¹ All the translations from the Chinese *huangmeixi* adaptation of *Much Ado About Nothing* were rendered by me, unless otherwise indicated. “侄女生在边关野村，好似一只小山鹰。自幼未习闺门礼，唇枪舌剑不饶人。我要送她京都去，皇宫内院习礼情。” “父母早亡，是我把她给惯坏了。”

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(*Looking for Trouble*, Act 1) Under such adopted temporal and spatial circumstances, Bicui, the Chinese Beatrice, with her peculiar personality sounds reasonable on the Chinese stage and afterwards becomes acceptable for the Chinese audience.

The masked ball in the play is another problem that the Chinese theatrical practitioners must face when they tend to preserve the Shakespearean spirit in the adaptation. In the English text, the masked ball plays an important role, because Don Pedro with a mask on his face succeeds in paying court to Hero in the name of Claudio, although the reader/spectator cannot understand why Shakespeare did not make his protagonist Claudio woo Hero for himself. Anyway, there is no convention of a masked ball in China. Finally, the masque was situated in a Chinese border region in which many minorities as well as the Han live alongside with each other. There young women and men often dance hand in hand or sometimes with a mask on the face. The transformation, meanwhile, conforms to the social and historical backgrounds rearranged for the Chinese love story, as already analysed above. At the same time, the director has added a Chinese convention to the scene: the dance with traditional Chinese lantern-playing, which cushioned the odd atmosphere of the masked ball.

While analysing Shakespearean performances in the form of traditional Chinese operas at the first Shakespeare Festival (1986), Zha Peide and Tian Jia remarked that this *huangmeixi* adaptation of *Much Ado About Nothing* retained much of the original play's poetic quality as expressed in the brilliant dialogue.⁵¹² They are right in this point; more specifically, Shakespeare's original poetic quality was preserved against a Chinese cultural context. Beatrice's comment on marriage is a case point.

Beatrice tells Hero of marriage before the masked ball in the English text:

For hear me, Hero, wooing, wedding, and repenting is as a Scotch jig, a measure, and a cinquepace. The first suit is hot and hasty, like a Scotch jig and full as fantastical; the wedding mannerly modest, as a measure, full of state and ancientry. And then comes repentance, and with his bad legs falls into the cinquepace faster and faster till he sink into his grave. (*Much Ado About Nothing*, 2.1.71-77)

⁵¹² Peide Zha and Jia Tian, "Shakespeare in Traditional", p. 208.

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Shakespeare elucidated the different phases of marriage, namely wooing, wedding, and marriage life, through analogies to a Scotch jig with a fast rhythm, a measure with modest one and finally a cinquepace. Obviously, Shakespeare's figure of speech – simile of a Scotch jig, a measure and a cinquepace – is not familiar to the Chinese audience. Therefore, the *huangmeixi* screenwriter determined to adopt some typical Chinese expressions in Bicui's aria, meanwhile retaining Shakespeare's analogy of dance:

When you first meet with your beloved, your heart beats fast as if bumped by a deer and then your dance steps are out of order; longing to see him, you dance madly, only getting your clothes wet with sweat. When a go-between comes to you, you are breathless and flush with excitement; when you get married, you are so exhausted that it is difficult for you to move your legs. Afterwards music ends and there is no joy any more, you begin to regret for your whole life till you rest in your grave.⁵¹³ (*Looking for Trouble*, Act 2)

Last but not least, the character of Dogberry, who is recognized “as satiric commentary on the corruptions in Elizabethan local law-enforcement systems and as thematic commentary on the judicial or social systems”⁵¹⁴, also helps to illustrate how the Chinese have preserved the Shakespearean spirit in terms of language.

On the Chinese stage, Dogberry's denouncement on the English systems is changed into such a Chinese philosophy as follows:

Official's head is bald; both feet trample on the skin of watermelon; one can skin a mouse, but never touches a tiger; when the figure of Buddha is gilded, man has two skins: on the one hand he needs a fat belly; on the other hand he will never lose his face.⁵¹⁵ (*Looking for Trouble*, Act 4)

⁵¹³ “初相识鹿撞心头舞步乱，苦相思情急舞狂湿衣衫。托媒时气喘吁吁红晕泛，成婚时精疲力竭举步难。从此曲尽无欢乐，悔恨终身入暮眠。”

⁵¹⁴ Phoebe S. Spinrad, “Dogberry Hero: Shakespeare's Comic Constables in Their Communal Context”, *Studies in Philology* (Spring 1992), p. 161.

⁵¹⁵ “当差只留光头皮，双脚踩着西瓜皮。能剥老鼠皮，别摸老虎皮。佛面贴金皮，人顾两张皮。又要肥肚皮，莫要破脸皮。”

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As remarked before, the *huangmeixi* theatrical genre originally came from peasants' entertainments with folksy and vulgar language. Therefore, the *huangmeixi* adaptor made Du Bairu (Dogberry in the English text) fully exercise many Chinese proverbs and slang words by repeating the same word “*pi*”, English equivalent “skin”, at the end of each line, in order to truly express his social philosophy of being self-conceited, worldly-wise, and slick and sly – being a slippery fellow (bare head), you can bully your inferiors (skinning a mouse), but never get a rise out of your superiors (touching a tiger, the number one in the forest); reputation (face) is of very great importance and you should try not to lose your face while feeding yourself well (belly).

In addition, Shakespeare's Dogberry frequently confuses with numbering and adopts malapropism, and so with the Chinese Dogberry, Du Bairui. Before he begins to examine the suspected Kang Nande (Conrad) and Bao Xihao (Borachio), Du Bairui tells his partner Fei Jishi (Verges): “Today we will adopt the falsest method to make the truth come out in the wash.” (*Looking for Trouble*, Act 6) Here, Du Bairui interestingly mistakes a Chinese four-character-set phrase “*shui luo shi chu*” (literally meaning that water falls and then stone comes out) for “*shui chu shi luo*” (literally meaning that water comes out and then stone falls) and “the falsest method” should be “the rightest method” as well. Like Dogberry, “one of the most beloved characters in all of Shakespeare's works”⁵¹⁶, Du Bairui on the Chinese stage also keeps arousing the audience's laughter throughout his performance.

6.3.2.2 Traditional Chinese Elements in the Performance

Concerning the style of reproducing *Much Ado About Nothing*, the *huangmeixi* director Jiang Weiguo honestly commented: “Looking back, I think even then I knew I would be unable to present either an authentic Shakespeare play or a pure *huangmeixi* performance.” He went even further, “When I started to work on the play, I was not very sure what exactly I wanted it to look like on the stage. But I did know what I would not go for. I did

⁵¹⁶ “*Much Ado About Nothing*/Dogberry” <<http://allshakespeare.com/muchado/37142>>

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not want the future production to look Western.”⁵¹⁷ The director’s recalling of his past experiences tells us clearly that he did make an effort to cater for the Chinese audience, finally expanding the repertoire of the *huangmeixi* genre. But how has the director of the adaptation achieved his aim of maintaining Chinese cultural and theatrical traditions in performing Shakespeare?

6.3.2.2.1 Theatrical Conventions

As remarked before, traditional Chinese theatre has a history of more than 800 years with over 300 different local genres. Although each regional theatre has its own feature, they share some fundamental characteristics, as Wang Guowei (1877-1927)⁵¹⁸, a Chinese scholar, writer and poet, defined it: “this is a theatre with its ‘stories uttered in the form of song and dance’.”⁵¹⁹ In general, a traditional Chinese theatre owns three characteristics: synthesis of four performance skills of singing, reciting, dancing and martial arts (*zong he xing*), visual imagination (*xu ni xing*), and conventionalization (*cheng shi xing*)⁵²⁰.

As a director graduating from the Acting Department at the Shanghai Theatre Academe in 1964, Jiang Weiguo wanted to help the performers make full use of their traditional stage techniques rather than block their creativity or distort their skills, as he told the participators at their first meeting:

The unique skills of singing, reciting, acting and dancing of traditional Chinese theatre should not be thrown away. On the contrary, we must make use of them, further develop them and make them serve Shakespeare.... We would foster weakness and neglect the strengths of the performers if we were to ask them to ignore what they have

⁵¹⁷ Jiang Weiguo as quoted in Ruru Li, *Shashibiya*, p. 137.

⁵¹⁸ 王国维 Wang Guowei was a versatile Chinese scholar and made important contributions to literary theory, ancient history and philology.

⁵¹⁹ Wang Guowei as quoted in Ruru Li, *Shashibiya*, p. 112.

⁵²⁰ 综合性、虚拟性、程式性

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learned for decades and pick up so-called Westernized gestures or dances in a few weeks.⁵²¹

6.3.2.2.1.1 Characterization

Dramatis personae not only from the *huangmeixi* adaptation but also from the original are listed here to give the reader an intuitive and clear comparison.

Original	Adaptation
Don Pedro , Prince of Aragon	Tang Delong
Benedick , of Padua; a lord, companion of Don Pedro	Bai Lidi
Claudio , of Florence; a lord, companion of Don Pedro	Lou Di'ao
Balthasar , attendant on Don Pedro, a singer	
Don John , the bastard brother of Don Pedro	Tang Danjiang
Borachio , follower of Don John	Bao Xihao
Conrade , follower of Don John	Kang Nande
Leonato , Governor of Messina	Li Aiqiao
Hero , his daughter	Hailuo
Beatrice , an orphan, his niece	Bicui
Antonio , an old man, brother of Leonato	
Margaret , waiting-gentlewoman attendant on Hero	Maid Ma
Ursula , waiting-gentlewoman attendant on Hero	Mama Su
Friar Francis	
Dogberry , the Constable in charge of the Watch	Du Bairui
Verges , the Headborough, Dogberry's partner	Fei Jishi
A Sexton	Tang Delong in disguise
Watchmen	Watchmen
A Boy , serving Benedick	
Attendants and messengers	Soldiers and servants

⁵²¹ Jiang Weiguo as quoted in Ruru Li, *Shashibiya*, p. 137.

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On the Chinese stage, Ursula, one of Hero's two waiting gentlewomen, is now a middle-aged woman, called Mama Su, who brings Hailuo/Hero up. Other minor characters such as Balthasar, Antonio, and Friar Francis are eliminated from the original text due to, in cultural and theatrical terms, discrepancies between England and China.

It is known that traditional Chinese opera takes up lots of time for singing, recitation, dance including acrobatic arts, and other stylized movements, which leaves less time for the content of the story. The case is true of the *huangmeixi* genre, as Li Ruru contends: "A typical *huangmeixi* performance consists essentially of arias and dance, with the focus in this theatre being the performers and their skills, especially in singing. Plots and stories are important but are mainly expected to offer opportunities for displaying the performers' vocal and physical techniques."⁵²² Consequently, such minor characters as Leonato's brother Antonio, Balthasar, Don Pedro's musician, and others have to be left out from the Shakespearean text. On the other hand, the character of Friar Francis at the wedding scene is, in the light of Chinese culture, not suitable for the performance, inasmuch as there has never been a friar at a wedding ceremony in China. As a result, his role of advising Hero to pretend to be dead in order to test Claudio's true feelings is taken up by Bicui, Beatrice in the original text. Afterwards, it is Bicui once again who plans the mourning scene in the Chinese production. Substituting Bicui, the Chinese Beatrice, for Friar Francis not only makes the whole story sound more sinified against a Chinese background but also brings Beatrice's wisdom into prominence.

While excising some minor characters from Shakespeare's play, the *huangmeixi* scriptwriter, on the other hand, painstakingly portrayed Tang Delong, Shakespeare's Prince of Argon, Don Pedro.

Like Don Pedro, a gracious and victorious commander in the original text, Tang Delong remarks: "I, General, am always warm-hearted. To fight is essentially to gain peace. With the hands that I used to defeat my enemies on the battlefield, I would like to make matches under the moon."⁵²³ (*Looking for Trouble*, Act 1) He succeeds in proposing love

⁵²² Ruru Li, *Shashibiya*, p. 141.

⁵²³ “将军从来最善心，征战本来为和平。一双破阵杀敌手，也爱月下牵红绳。”

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to Hailuo/Hero for Lou Di'ao/Claudio. Yet, the recast of Don Pedro is quite different from Shakespeare's, primarily in two aspects.

First of all, in the English text Don Pedro is really trapped by his half-brother's story of Hero's disloyalty:

Why, then are you no maid. Leonato, / I am sorry you must hear. Upon mine honour, / Myself, my brother, and this grievèd Count / Did he see, hear her, at that hour last night/ Talk with a ruffian at her chamber window, / Who hath indeed, most like a liberal villain, / Confessed the vile encounters they have had / A thousand times in secret. (*Much Ado About Nothing*, 4.1.87-93)

And subsequently he supports Claudio's denunciation of Hero, "as I wooed for thee to obtain her, I will join with thee to disgrace her." (*Much Ado About Nothing*, 3.2.120-121)

In contrast to Don Pedro's gullibility, Dang Delong doubts the truth, when Tang Danjiang, Shakespeare's Don John, misleads him and Lou Di'ao into believing in Hailuo's lack of chastity. He sings: "Is it real? false? or just a play? Is it possible that I am deaf or giddy? Trouble arises without any reason. It is implausible, unintelligible and questionable."⁵²⁴

(*Looking for Trouble*, Act 4) Subsequently, the Chinese Don Pedro begins to worry about the consequence of Lou Di'ao's humiliating of Hailuo at the wedding scene by singing: "I do not know what he is going to do. I am so nervous that my clothes get wet by my cold sweat."⁵²⁵ (*Looking for Trouble*, Act 5)

Secondly, just when Tang Delong is on his way to the wedding ceremony, he meets Du Bairui (Dogberry) together with his partner and learns from them that two soldiers of his half brother have been caught. Tang Delong does not understand why the two soldiers have been considered as thieves, more specially, thieves who steal others' hearts in Du Bairui's words. At that time he has no time to think about it but hurries away to the wedding ceremony. After Lou Di'ao's denunciation of Hailuo, thoughtful Tang Delong decides to investigate the odd matter in person. Consequently, he comes to prison, disguising himself as a copyist, Shakespeare's Sexton. It is in there that Tang Delong

⁵²⁴ “是真？是假？还是戏？莫非我耳聋眼昏迷？无端是非凭空起，难信难解又可疑。”

⁵²⁵ “不知他葫芦里卖的什么药，急得我冷汗湿衣裳。”

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finally discovers his brother's villainous plot to sabotage the arranged marriage between Lou Di'ao and Hailuo.

In conclusion, in contrast to Don Pedro, who is gullible in the original text, Tang Delong is depicted by the Chinese adaptor as a thoughtful and cautious matchmaker. It is Tang Delong who wants to act as a go-between for Lou Di'ao and Hailuo. Meanwhile, it is Tang Delong once again who moves away the obstacle to their marriage by his personal investigation in prison. Consequently, the whole story of making a match sounds complete and convincing from the beginning to the end. However, in the Shakespearean text, "there is the devolution of Don Pedro. As the play opens he is a gracious and victorious commander. As the play closes, he is like Antonio at the end of *The Merchant of Venice*, an odd man out, the rather diminished object of Benedick's patronizing advice to get a wife, whatever the risks of being cuckolded."⁵²⁶ The transformation underwent in the *huangmeixi* production is completely based on the Chinese theatrical convention that "[t]raditionally the Chinese dramatist prefers a complete and symmetrical story, and almost all the plays have finished plots. On the contrary, a play with an incomplete story would be unacceptable to any Chinese audience"⁵²⁷, inasmuch as "[y]ou must tightly unify your play. You are a true master when you take care to weave all the loose ends, clues, hints, innuendos, and so on into a logical web."⁵²⁸

6.3.2.2.1.2 The Added Prologue

Compared with the original text, which begins directly with the official meeting between a Messenger and Leonato in Act 1 Scene 1, a prologue has been added to the Chinese production.

⁵²⁶ Shakespeare *Much Ado*, ed. Sheldon P. Zitner, p. 4.

⁵²⁷ Sun Qiang in the Internet interview with me about his adaptation [*General Ma Long*] 《马龙将军》 of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

⁵²⁸ Yaokang Ding, "Some Notes on Playwriting", in *Chinese Theories of Theater and Performance from Confucius to the Present*, ed. and trans. Faye Chunfang Fei (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1999), p. 76.

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Before the curtain rises, two actors of the recast Dogberry and Verges appear in front of the audience with percussion accompaniment. While the tall and thin Verges tries to stop the short and fat Dogberry from blowing a horn, they frolic with each other on the stage. When they come out once again, they bow to the audience, signalling that the play is going to begin. Immediately, a backstage chorus follows: “To celebrate the complete victory over the enemy at the border, dance and banquet are held to entertain honoured guests. Fights on the battlefield are finished, and now please listen to the interesting story about love.”⁵²⁹ (*Looking for Trouble*, Prologue)

In traditional Chinese literature a prologue illustrates the significance of the main story, serving as the cultural framework for the interpretation of the main story, from which the main action comes,⁵³⁰ and as with this added prologue on the *huangmeixi* stage. These two actors’ humorous performance before the curtain and the chorus as well are commentary on the events of the play – a love story, meanwhile a comedy, at the border after a victorious fighting on the battlefield, thus giving the audience a shortcut to the core of the new production.

6.3.2.2.1.3 Singing Arias

Zhang Xiaoyang remarks: “The love stories in Shakespeare comedies serve not only to create a delightful atmosphere and happy endings, but also describe vividly the psychological subtlety of the characters in love.”⁵³¹ This is the case with the protagonist Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing*. From his eavesdropping on the conversation between Don Pedro and Claudio, which is, in fact, a trap for him, Benedick learns that

⁵²⁹ “喜庆边关获全胜，妙舞盛宴迎贵宾。漫道战场烽火熄，且听情场传趣闻。”

⁵³⁰ Kwok-kan Tam, “A Translation of Culture: Macbeth in Cantonese Opera Style”, in *Shakespeare Global/Local: The Hong Kong Imaginary in Transcultural Production* (Anglo – Amerikanische Studien. Band 17). Eds. Kwok-kan Tam, Andrew Parkin, and Terry Siu-han Yip. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002, p. 16.

⁵³¹ Xiaoyang Zhang, *Shakespeare in China*, p. 46.

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Beatrice falls in love with him and then he employs a soliloquy to display his feelings to his spectators:

This can be no trick. The conference was sadly borne. They have the truth of this from Hero. They seem to pity the lady; it seems her affections have their full bent. Love me? Why, it must be requited. I hear how I am censured. They say I will bear myself proudly if I perceive the love come from her. They say too that she will rather die than give any sign of affection...No. The world must be peopled. When I said I would die a bachelor, I did not think I should live till I were married.

(*Much Ado About Nothing*, 2.3.218-241)

Here the soliloquy truly reveals Benedick's complex psychology. On the one hand, he is dubious of his eavesdropping that Beatrice is in love with him and cannot believe it; after all, Beatrice and he frequently quarrel with each other. On the other hand, he persuades himself to believe the news, for it is Hero, Beatrice's cousin as well as good friend, who tells on Beatrice's secret love for him. In addition, not only the white-bearded Leonato, Beatrice's uncle and guardian, but also Don Pedro and Claudio, Benedick's friends, feel sorry for Beatrice's supposed dotage on Benedick. Their pretended concerns for Beatrice make Benedick bite the hook by swearing "I will be horribly in love with her." At the same time, he has to face his oath that he would live a bachelor all his life – "Prove that ever I lose more blood with love than I will get again with drinking, pick out mine eyes with a ballad-maker's pen and hang me up at the door of a brothel house for the sign of blind Cupid." (*Much Ado About Nothing*, 1.1.240-244) Since the appetite alters for a man, Benedick thinks, he can also change his attitude from being against marriage to requiting Beatrice's love.

Nevertheless, such a psychological conflict through Shakespeare's soliloquy is not common on the traditional Chinese stage. The Chinese theatre, fundamentally performer-centred, requires the performers to showcase their emotions and internal thoughts substantially through singing (*chang*), reciting (*nian*), dancing (*zuo*) and stylized

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acrobatics (*da*)⁵³² rather than through such naturalistic theatrical techniques as adopted in spoken drama, say, Shakespeare's plays, as Zhuo Yan⁵³³ has emphasized the importance of tunes in his *Notes*:

My teacher, you are emphasizing the words of the lyrics, but in theatre it is the tunes of the music that is more important. Sometimes the words in a play may be rather crude, but they rise and fall in perfect cadence with the music tones...I didn't know that much about musical measure or rhythm, but what came into my ears went straight to touch my heart, taking over my whole being completely. Musical tunes in plays may commend small respect, but they affect people in subtle yet profound ways.⁵³⁴

As a result, in the light of traditional dramatic theory, Shakespeare's soliloquy has been adapted into a typical Chinese aria combined with monologue:

Bai Lidi: (*sings*) As if I were walking in the clouds,
Travelling in my dream.
Does Bicui love⁵³⁵ me?
Can flame meet oil?
There is something if I think about it carefully,
She shows her tenderness for me through her sharp tongue.

(*speaks*) No, no, no!

(*sings*) I have sworn in public,
I will turn into a bull if I am married.

⁵³² 唱、念、做、打

⁵³³ Zhuo Yan (?), a classical scholar, specialized in dramatic lyrics and songs.

⁵³⁴ Yan Zhuo, "Xiqingzhai Notes", in *Chinese Theories of Theater and Performance from Confucius to the Present*, ed. and trans. Faye Chunfang Fei (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1999), p. 123. Of course, Zhuo Yan's opinion is full of controversy in terms of importance of words and tunes in traditional Chinese theatre.

⁵³⁵ The original Chinese character “想” literally means “miss”, but I understand that translating the Chinese into the English word “love” sounds much better, because, normally speaking, the Chinese would like to use an implicit and euphemistic way rather than an explicit and direct one to express their emotions, which totally contradicts the European.

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(*speaks*) Haw!

(*sings*) Man must follow his luck,

Who can keep his oath at his heart?

There will be no offspring if a human being is merciless,

An old bull also gives birth to his young ones.

(*Looking for Trouble, Act 3*)⁵³⁶

In addition, Hailuo's intensive emotions before her wedding ceremony described in the *huangmeixi* version is another good example to illustrate the function of aria singing adopted from the Chinese theatrical tradition.

Although Shakespeare mentioned nothing about Hero's sentiments and feelings before her wedding except for her comments on her wedding gown together with her waiting gentlewoman Ursula, Li Ruru suggested that the adaptor wanted to keep Hailuo, the recast of Hero, still the heroine in the *huangmeixi* version by giving more chances for her to perform.⁵³⁷ Whatever the real reason for this transformation, the *huangmeixi* production achieves its theatrical goal – to externalize the heroine's internal thoughts through stylized singing and dance, one of the typical conventions on the traditional Chinese stage.

Alone in the garden, Hailuo gives an aria, while birds are chatting in the trees (of course, the birdcalls are made by musical instruments):

Man is intoxicated, so is the earth and heaven,

Purple mist flies along with the rosy clouds. (*happily brandishing her long sleeves*)

The soil in my hometown smells more fragrant and the forest looks more beautiful,

Rosy cheek and red flowers add splendour to each other.

The birds are singing on the branches (*whirling on the stage and looking up around*),

As if they were asking me when I would come back after my wedding. (*Her voice changes from bright to grave one*)

⁵³⁶ “白力荻：(唱)像在云中走，似在梦中游。碧翠真想我？火苗能碰油？细想也有意，她是唇枪舌剑送温柔。(夹白)不，不，不！我曾当众发誓咒，婚配要变老牯牛。(夹白)呃！人要随着时运走，谁把誓言记心头？人类无情要绝后，老牛也要生小牛。”

⁵³⁷ Ruru Li, *Shashibiya*, p. 141.

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I wish that my heart could be divided into petals like a flower,
Then I can bring some to him [the groom] (*in a shy voice*),
while leaving some to my father, my wet-nurse, and my sister,
In such a way I will accompany them forever.

(*Looking for Trouble*, Act 5)⁵³⁸

John L. Styan maintains: “It is orchestration of voice and sound which creates a scene’s aural image in the mind of the audience.”⁵³⁹ Hailuo’s singing, accompanied by her physical movements on the stage, reproduces before the audience an external announcement of her complex feelings: on the one hand she is reluctant to leave her natal family, but on the other hand she is excited about her wedding, which symbolizes the beginning of her new life.

There is a special type of aria singing in the *huangmeixi* genre, namely, *dui chang*⁵⁴⁰ in Chinese terms. As a typical feature of the regional theatre, *dui chang* happens between two persons when one is asking and the other is answering, both in the approach of singing. In the original text, Benedick and Beatrice often make verbal wars of wit. For instance, Beatrice says: “A bird of my tongue is better than a beast of yours”, and then Benedick responds: “I would my horse had the speed of your tongue, and so good a continuer.” (*Much Ado About Nothing*, 1.1.135-138) “Much has been said about their wit, and it is true that they are more consistently and outrageously crackles with repartee.”⁵⁴¹ To make full use of the *huangmeixi* theatrical technique of *dui chang* while preserving the original spirit, the adaptor amalgamated the discussion between Benedick and Claudio about their judgement on Hero with the “merry war” between Benedick and Beatrice into the dramatic feature of *dui chang*. This combination is shown through the alternating aria singings between Bai Lidi/Benedick and Bicui/Beatrice:

⁵³⁸ “人醉地醉天也醉，紫雾托着彩霞飞。故土更香林更美，赤颊红花两生辉。枝头鸟语声声翠，似问我嫁后何时归。但愿得心如花分千瓣，带给他，留给爹，赠乳娘，送姐姐，相伴永相随。”

⁵³⁹ Styan, *Shakespeare’s Stagecraft*, p. 142.

⁵⁴⁰ 对唱

⁵⁴¹ Shakespeare, *Much Ado*, ed. R. A. Foakes, p. 8.

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Bicui: She is an inch shorter than me.

Bai Lidi: Aiyaya, less than a three-inch nail.

Bicui: She is a little darker than me.

Bai Lidi: It is even more a lay of powder dredged on the donkey's dark dung.

Bicui: She is a bit better than me in arts.

Bai Lidi: It is still like patting a small fly.

Bicui: She is ten times more beautiful than me.

Bai Lidi: Ten times, ten times, still a Zhu Bajie⁵⁴² reviving from death.

(*Looking for Trouble*, Act 1)⁵⁴³

In order to take revenge on Bicui for her badinage at him, which is made when they has first met each other on the stage, Bai Lidi follows her example by reciting her mercurial repartee, but boggles at her last suddenly converted comparison “she is ten times more beautiful than me”. “Ten times, ten times”, he stammers, suggesting his embarrassment. As remarked above, the *huangmeixi* genre originated from entertainments among peasants and therefore the language is vulgar and earthy, which conforms, by accident, to John L. Styan’s comment that “[t]he toss of a word between Benedick and Beatrice, its catching and its rebound, demand the slippery turns of the colloquial.”⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴² The English name for Zhu Bajie is Pigsy, who is ugly, lazy and greedy in the well-known Chinese novel *Xiyouji*/西游记 (*Journey to the West*) written by Wu Cheng'en (1499-1582) in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644).

⁵⁴³ 碧翠：“他比我身矮一分”白立荻：“哎呀呀，不足一根三寸钉”碧：“她比我脸蛋黑一分”白：“那更是驴粪蛋上洒粉一层”碧：“她比我手艺强一分”白：“还是只能拍拍小苍蝇”碧：“她比我容貌美十分”白：“美十分美十分，也是猪八戒又还魂。”

⁵⁴⁴ Styan, *Shakespeare's Stagecraft*, p. 160.

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6.3.2.2.1.4 Visual Imagination

Although “Shakespeare inherited a lively tradition of using scenic emblems, which he used like other conventional equipment, both as adjuncts to acting and aids to the imagination”⁵⁴⁵, he regularly stressed the actuality of the play’s experience by naturalistic means. For example, he was content with verbal image. Claudius in *Hamlet* which was performed at afternoon on the Elizabethan stage cries: “Give me some light – away!” (*Hamlet* 3.2.263), giving the spectator the impression that the scene takes place at night. In terms of imagination, the traditional Chinese theatre shares the symbolic acting convention with Shakespeare’s plays, but the former rather prefers visual imagination to Shakespeare’s aural one, as Wang Jide (?- 1623)⁵⁴⁶ contended: “Drama imitates and describes events and situations in life; it should reveal character and values through natural and subtle means of action rather than relying on fancy words.”⁵⁴⁷

Visual imagination is one of the traditional Chinese theatre’s salient features. Concerning the approach to expressions, different from the Stanislavsky system of being real onstage from both external and internal acting and the Brechtian system of being good onstage through the actor’s rational performance with unrealistic internal action, the traditional Chinese theatre specializes in gaining its beauty by externalizing the character’s true internal thoughts and emotions through an unrealistic system of commonly recognized conventions, which come from and then refine on real life.⁵⁴⁸ More specially, visual imagination means that instead of properties, conventionalized movements such as convincing pantomime and posture help the Chinese performers conjure the spectator’s

⁵⁴⁵ Styan, *Shakespeare’s Stagecraft*, p. 32.

⁵⁴⁶ 王驥德 Wang Jide was a theorist on *Xiqu* in the late Ming dynasty (1368-1644).

⁵⁴⁷ Jide Wang, “*Qu Lü*”, in *Chinese Theories of Theater and Performance from Confucius to the Present*, ed. and trans. Faye Chunfang Fei (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1999), p. 62.

⁵⁴⁸ Huizhu Sun, “Aesthetics of Stanislavsky, Brecht, and Mei Lanfang”, in *Chinese Theories of Theater and Performance from Confucius to the Present*, ed. and trans. Faye Chunfang Fei (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1999), pp. 170-178.

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imagination of nonmaterial physical environment. In the *huangmeixi* production, the staging technique of visual imagination vividly demonstrates Lou Di'ao's and Hailuo's love, which springs from their eyes before the audience.

When Hailuo/Hero first meets Lou Di'ao/Claudio on the *huangmeixi* stage, they fix eyes on each other without any moving, as if an invisible string were fastening them together. After noticing their odd behaviours, Bicui/Beatrice begins to play a joke on them. She takes up the imagined "string" from Lou Di'ao's side straight to Hailuo's, draws the "string" to herself and consequently both Lou Di'ao and Hailuo fall in her direction, and then she pushes the "string", they fall in the other direction again. Bicui leads the "string" around on the stage, followed by Hailuo and Li Di'ao with the simultaneous step. Suddenly, Bicui cuts the "string", which brings Lou Di'ao and Hailuo back to reality from their amorous stare.



**Figure 6.3.2.1 an imaginary string played by Bicui
between Hailuo and Lou Di'ao**

6.3.2.2.1.5 Simultaneous Staging

John L. Styan remarked in *Shakespeare's Stagecraft* that the naturalistic stage does not easily permit the division of its acting space into separately significant areas. The space on

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the anti-illusionary platform, on the other hand, permitted double, treble and even quadruple grouping without trouble.⁵⁴⁹ Li Ruru contends that this conventional technique of double grouping on the Shakespearean stage is also adopted by the indigenous theatrical practitioners in China.⁵⁵⁰ Here, the term of double grouping literally means two different groups of actors/actresses are simultaneously onstage with a certain distance between them. The *huangmeixi* version of *Much Ado* affords a good example.

At the end of Act 1 on the Chinese stage, at Marquis Li/Leonato's call for the banquet, Tang Delong, the Chinese Don Pedro, and Lou Di'ao/Claudio are leaving, Bai Lidi, Shakespeare's Benedick, stops Marquis Li from following them for the feast and tells him in a low voice of the good news that Tang Delong is willing to make a match between Hailuo and Lou Di'ao. Simultaneously on the comparatively lower part of the stage, Tang Danjiang invited to the banquet is also told by his man Bao Xihao/Borachio about the same thing. Tang Danjiang is furious at the news, clenching his fists. By contrast, Marquis Li beams with smile. Furthermore, the sharp contrast of their different responses to the news is strengthened by a chorus offstage: "On the one hand there is happiness at getting a good son-in-law; on the other hand there is hatred for losing power and love⁵⁵¹. On the one side schemes are cleverly arranged to make a match; on the other side trickeries are thought hard out to take revenge on rivals."⁵⁵² (*Looking for Trouble*, Act 1)

⁵⁴⁹ Styan, *Shakespeare's Stagecraft*, p. 123.

⁵⁵⁰ Ruru Li, *Shashibiya*, pp. 201-204.

⁵⁵¹ At the beginning of the Chinese *Much Ado* Mama Su tells Hailuo, Bicui and Maid Ma that Tang Danjiang, the brother of Tang Delong from a different mother, wants to marry Hailuo. In the production, therefore, the Chinese Don John has his particular motive for preventing the intended match, different from Shakespeare's Don John, a born bastard, who has no personal interest in Claudio or Hero and will bear everything a grudge as a professed enemy of good.

⁵⁵² “一边是盼得佳婿心中喜，一边是丢权丧情恨在心。一边是巧作安排成美事，一边是苦思奸计制仇人。”

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**Figure 6.3.2.2 Two-fold grouping of Marquis Li/Leonato and Bi Lidi/Benedick,
Tang Danjiang/Don John and Bao Xihao/Borachio**

6.3.2.2.2.2 Cultural Conventions

Since Friar Francis and the original church wedding do not conform to traditional cultures in China, the bridal ceremony is carried out in the Chinese wedding custom, instead. Wearing a red wedding gown and a pair of red shoes, Hailuo “sits” in a red sedan chair, with her face covered by a red silk veil which is expected to be lifted by her groom. The bridal sedan chair, which symbolizes the transfer of the bride from her house to the groom’s, is always carried by four men, or eight when his family is wealthy, preceded by attendants with red lanterns in hands. Generally speaking, accompanying the bridal sedan chair, the attendants set off firecrackers all the way from the groom’s house to the bride’s and vice versa. The rich family can hire musicians to play the wedding music with gongs and drums, and sometimes even a “dancing” lion. Of course, on *the huangmeixi* stage these things sound impractical so that the wedding procession is performed across the stage with the accompaniment of musical instruments.

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Traditionally, the colour red is an integral part of the wedding custom in Chinese culture, for the colour is supposed to be a protective power against evil influence and symbolizes joy as well. The colour red is seen everywhere in the wedding ceremony – red dresses worn by the bride and the groom, red candles, red sedan chair and especially red Chinese character of “double happiness” (*shuang xi*) and so on. Nowadays, many young people in China follow the fashion to wear white wedding gowns at their wedding like the westerners.⁵⁵³ In fact, the colour white – the opposite of red – expresses sorrow, the white dress at the funeral for example.

Lifting the red veil over the bride’s head is another important part of the wedding culture in China. At the wedding ceremony held in front of the family altar, in order to show their thanks to their ancestors, the bride and the groom bow to heaven and earth, to the groom’s parents, and finally their bow to each other completes the marriage ceremony. The whole process is traditionally known as *bai tian di*⁵⁵⁴ in Chinese terms. In general, the bride remains covered with the veil until the groom lifts it after she is led by him with a red silk belt from the family altar into their bridal bedroom. The custom of lifting the veil varies with regions. For instance, the groom from Dongguang of Guangdong province gently hits the bride’s head with a folding fan three times and then lifts the veil with the fan. In the *huangmeixi* version, Lou Di’ao/Claudio follows the tradition in Liaoning province by lifting Hailuo’s veil with the beam of a steelyard.⁵⁵⁵ However, the utterly discomfited Lou Di’ao has no patience to wait until they are alone in their bedroom. Rather he tries to expose Hailuo immediately in the course of the wedding rituals in order to humiliate her in public, accusing her of disloyalty to him. “To lift the veil in order to expose the whore’s true colours”, he tries to uncover the veil with the beam of a steelyard, yet he hesitates for a moment, “[b]ut it looks like that dark clouds disappear and then the sun comes out.” He

⁵⁵³ It is said when Soony May-ling married Chiang Kai-shek in Shanghai in 1927, she wore a white wedding gown, with a bundle of carnation in her hand, which began to popularize the fashion of wearing a white wedding gown at the bridal ceremony.

⁵⁵⁴ 拜天地

⁵⁵⁵ [Chinese Folk Wedding Customs] “中国民间婚俗”
<http://www.china.com.cn/book/zhuanti/txt/2006-10/27/content_7285539.htm>

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loves pretty Hailuo deeply but he hates her for her infidelity simultaneously. Lou Di'ao is in deep psychological contradiction. At the third time he does lift the veil and throws it on the ground, singing “please look at the pretty but wicked bride”⁵⁵⁶ (*Looking for Trouble*, Act 5).

At Lou Di'ao's accusation, Marquis Li (Leonato) feels ashamed that his daughter makes the whole family disgraced, singing “Who can give me a sword? As an old shamefaced father, I will kill myself with the sword.”⁵⁵⁷ (*Looking for Trouble*, Act 5) Following this, he faints. In ancient China, “[i]f a female has erred and committed adultery, give her a knife and a rope and lock her up in the cowshed; let her kill herself. If her mother interferes, divorce her. If her father interferes, take him to the officials and have him exiled. Erase his name from the genealogy and cast him off from the ancestral shrine in life and death.”⁵⁵⁸ This shows that the penalty for adultery was terribly severe at that time. Consequently, to keep a good reputation was of great importance not only for the family but especially for a young girl, otherwise, as Hailuo/Hero sings in her arias: “Spit is more destructive than the water in the East Sea, and the tongue is heavier than a hammer”⁵⁵⁹, inasmuch as slander and gossip are deadly destructive.

After the *huangmeixi* performance, Zha Peide and Tian Jia contended in “Shakespeare in Traditional Chinese Operas” that “the production was, on the whole, a success. The adaptor and the director had realized their original goal – to combine the Shakespearean

⁵⁵⁶ “揭开盖头现出媚妇相”，“却好似乌云抹去见太阳”，“请看这奸恶的美娇娘”。

⁵⁵⁷ “谁人借我一把剑？无颜老父自剖胸膛。”

⁵⁵⁸ Jian Zang, “Women and the Transmission of Confucian Culture in Song China”, in *Women and Confucian Cultures in Premodern China, Korea, and Japan*, eds. Dorothy Ko, JaHyun Kim Haboush, and Joan R. Piggott (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), p. 138.

⁵⁵⁹ “唾沫赛过东海水，舌根重似千斤锤。”

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spirit with the rich artistic resources of *huangmei* opera.”⁵⁶⁰ Of course, in terms of mise en scène, the *huangmeixi* practitioners have made some innovations, the tree-design for instance. It was reported that the stage designer had transplanted real trees onto the *huangmeixi* stage to impress on the audience with a new theatrical technique: blending traditional conventions with modern dramatic styles. After the Shakespeare Festival (1986), this innovative scenery has met controversial criticism: some scholars praised it for its visual and thematical effect, whereas others criticized it for its being too realistic for a traditional theatre.

Anyway, the cross-cultural adapting of Shakespeare – the *huangmeixi* production for instance – is a worthwhile experiment in introducing Shakespeare to a wider Chinese audience as well as in enlarging the traditional Chinese theatrical repertory, as Philip Brockbank concludes: “It is a beguiling law of life that the more we imitate others the more confidently we find ourselves. In Shakespeare’s time the civilization of the Renaissance flourished in England because of its great ability to assimilate traditions very different from its own.”⁵⁶¹

⁵⁶⁰ Peide Zha and Jia Tian, “Shakespeare in Traditional Chinese Operas”, p. 208.

⁵⁶¹ Brockbank, “Shakespeare Renaissance in China”, p. 195.

Conclusion

In “The Paradox of Shakespeare in China” Murray J. Levith has criticized Meng Xianqiang’s call for Shakespearean studies with Chinese characteristics as “even more naïve and simplistic”⁵⁶². As a result, following Levith’s logic and deduction, Schiller’s “*unser Shakespeare*” – our Shakespeare in English – should have been denounced as naïve and simplistic as well, for it is well-known that Schiller wanted to appropriate Shakespeare to create a German form of literature and theatre. Schiller’s advocacy of so germanising Shakespeare was followed by German Shakespearean scholars of the nineteenth century, who held the opinion that “*unser Shakespeare*” was essentially German, even though he was born in Stratford and wrote in English.⁵⁶³

It is universally accepted that Shakespearean scholars, coming from such diverse social, political and cultural backgrounds, are bound to have different attitudes towards and interpretations of Shakespeare and his works. As a result, it is truly difficult to restore Shakespeare to his own time; and, in fact, the great discrepancies between Chinese and English history and cultural development lend themselves to a sinicized Shakespeare. In terms of performing Shakespeare on the Chinese stage in the aforementioned Western, Chinese style or a hybrid of the Western and the Chinese style, a fierce debate on which performance approach to Shakespeare is operable continues amongst Shakespearean scholars: some dramatic practitioners spare no effort to preserve so-called authentic Shakespearean spirit of the original text, whereas some innovative theatrical professionals attempt to endow Shakespearean performances with the traditional Chinese theatrical conventions or either new cultural or social interpretations. With regard to Shakespearean productions synthesized with target cultures, David Booth has demonstrated:

The problem with thinking of the text as the sole source of inspiration is that it can become completely obsessive, leading to such meaningless objectives as trying to play

⁵⁶² Levith, “The Paradox”, p. 46.

⁵⁶³ Mullin, “Shakespeare in Hong Kong”, p. 93.

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the play as it was performed in Shakespeare's time, or in doing it in such and such a way because "this is the way that Shakespeare intended it" – which is all a bit like playing the music of Mozart on original instruments, thinking that this is the route to an aesthetic experience. Such antiquarian approaches are probably worthwhile, but they are not of our time.⁵⁶⁴

Accordingly, it is absolutely worthwhile to assimilate Shakespeare and his plays with Chinese social, political, cultural and theatrical conventions. Philip Brockbank praised the Chinese Shakespeare Festival held in 1986, in which some productions were done in the style of classical Chinese opera:

I had expected an exciting and fresh experience of Chinese theatre, but had not anticipated what was for me a revelatory discovery of new truths about Shakespeare's art. I enjoyed what I have come to think of as a Shakespeare renaissance in China, remarkable for its scale, plenitude, and variety, distinctively Chinese and yet lucidly in touch with the England of Elizabeth and James. It was like two great rivers, the one taking its course from the remote past of Europe, and the other from the still remoter past of Asia. Conventional Chinese theatre was apparently in need of the intimate attentiveness to life to be found in Shakespeare's plays, while the plays themselves are clarified by the energies and styles of an exotic, simultaneously courtly and popular tradition.⁵⁶⁵

Certainly, blending Shakespeare and his plays either with the Chinese theatrical traditions or with modern ideas and values in China will be a promising intercultural exchange in the future.

⁵⁶⁴ Booth, "The Practicalities", p. 45.

⁵⁶⁵ Brockbank, "Shakespeare Renaissance", p. 195.

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Glossary

<i>a shi na</i>	《阿史那》	
Bai Lidi	白立荻	
Bai Pu	白朴	
bai tian di	拜天地	
<i>bao da chou Han Deli sha shu</i>	《报大仇韩德利杀叔》	<i>Hamlet Kills his Uncle to Revenge</i>
Bao Xihao	鲍西豪	
<i>Bi Chuli xun fu e pi niang</i>	《毕楚里驯服恶癖娘》	<i>Petrucchio Tames his Shrewish Wife</i>
Bi Cui	碧翠	
Bian Zhilin	卞之琳	
bo laoshu pi	剥老鼠皮	skinning a mouse
cai cha diao	采茶调	tea-picking melody
Cao Weifeng	曹未风	
Cao Xueqin	曹雪芹	
Cao Yu	曹禺	
chang	唱	singing
<i>chang sheng dian</i>	《长生殿》	<i>The Hall of Longevity</i>
Chen Duxiu	陈独秀	
Chen Tongbo	陈通伯	
cheng shi xing	程式性	conventionalization
chou	丑	clown role-type (male or female)
<i>chou Jin</i>	《仇金》	<i>Hating Gold</i>
chuan ju	川剧	a regional theatre in Sichuan
chun liu she	春柳社	a theatre set up for propagandizing the new drama
<i>cuo zhong cuo ai guo chu qi wen</i>	《错中错埃国出奇闻》	<i>Errors in Errors Anecdote in the Ai Kingdom</i>
cun xing qiu shen	存形求神	similarity in spirit through preserving the original form
da	达	readability
da	打	stylized acrobatics
<i>da ying guo zhi</i>	《大英国志》	<i>An account of the Great British Empire</i>
dan	旦	female role-type
Dan Ni	丹尼	
die lian hua	蝶恋花	name of tune
Dong Run	东润	
<i>Dou E yuan</i>	《窦娥冤》	<i>The Injustice to Dou E</i>

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Du Bairui	杜百瑞	
du pi	肚皮	belly
dui chang	对唱	a special singing in the <i>huangmei</i> opera
dun	顿	literal meaning of a group of words
Fang Ping	方平	
Fang Zhong	方重	
Fei Jishi	费吉时	
<i>feng zheng wu</i>	《风筝误》	<i>The Errors of a Kite</i>
Fu Lei	傅雷	
Gao E	高鹗	
Gu Wuwei	顾无为	
<i>gu zheng</i>	《蛊征》	<i>Bewitched Regicide</i>
Gu Zhongyi	顾仲彝	
Guan Hanqing	关汉卿	
guang tou pi	光头皮	bare head
<i>gui zhao</i>	《鬼诏》	<i>The Ghost's Call</i>
Guo Moruo	郭沫若	
Guo Songtao	郭嵩焘	
<i>ha meng lei te</i>	《哈孟雷特》	<i>Hamlet</i>
<i>ha mu lai te</i>	《哈姆莱特》	<i>Hamlet</i>
<i>hai wai qi tan</i>	《海外奇谈》	<i>Strange Tales from Overseas</i>
Hailuo	海萝	
han gong chun	汉宫春	name of tune
<i>hang gong qiu</i>	《汉宫秋》	<i>Autumn in the Han Palace</i>
<i>han mu lai te</i>	《哈姆莱特》	<i>Hamlet</i>
<i>hei mao</i>	《黑黉》	<i>The Black General</i>
<i>hong lou meng</i>	《红楼梦》	<i>The Story of the Stone</i>
Hu Shi	胡适	
hua ju	话剧	spoken drama
<i>huai du xin Li Ande qi qi</i>	《怀妒心李安德弃妻》	<i>Envious Leontes Deserts his Wife</i>
<i>huan zheng</i>	《环证》	<i>Ring Evidence</i>
huang mei diao	黄梅调	<i>huangmei</i> melody
huang mei xi	黄梅戏	a local theatre in Anhui province
Huang Yushi	黄雨石	
<i>hun gui</i>	《婚诡》	<i>Bewildered Marriage</i>
<i>ji shang ji qing qi tou jie zhi</i>	《记上记情妻偷戒指》	<i>Wife Steals Ring as the Best Plan</i>
<i>jiao hong ji</i>	《娇红记》	<i>The Sad Story of Lady Wang</i>
Jiao Zhongqing	焦仲卿	
jing	净	fainted face role-type

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jing ju	京剧	a regional theatre
<i>jing zhong qi</i>	《精忠旗》	<i>The Flag of Loyalty</i>
<i>jiu feng chen</i>	《救风尘》	<i>Rescued by a Coquette</i>
<i>ju yin</i>	《飓引》	<i>A Tempestuous Cause</i>
<i>kan qian nu</i>	《看钱奴》	<i>A Slave to Money</i>
Kang Nande	康南德	
<i>kong que dong nan fei</i>	《孔雀东南飞》	<i>Peacock Flying towards Southeast</i>
Koumingtang	国名党	
<i>ku xin jiu di jian shou zhen chao</i>	《苦心救弟坚守贞操》	<i>Try to Save Brother by Holding Virtue</i>
kun ju	昆剧	the oldest theatrical genre
<i>Lei Feng ta</i>	《雷锋塔》	<i>The Tower of Lei Feng</i>
Li Aiqiao	李爱樵	
Li Bai	李白	
<i>li cha san shi</i>	《理查三世》	<i>Richard III</i>
<i>li hong</i>	《礼哄》	<i>Troubles at Wedding</i>
Li Jianwu	李健吾	
<i>Li Kui fu jing</i>	《李逵负荆》	<i>Li Kui Carries Thorns</i>
lian pi	脸皮	face/reputation
Liang Qichao	梁启超	
<i>Liang Shanbo he Zhu Yingtai</i>	《梁山伯和祝英台》	<i>Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai</i>
Liang Shiqiu	梁实秋	
Liang Zongdai	梁宗岱	
<i>lin ji</i>	《林集》	<i>Getting together in the Woods</i>
Lin Shu	林纾	
Lin Tongji	林同济	
Lin Yutang	林语堂	
Lin Zexu	林则徐	
Ling Zihao	凌子浩	
Liu Lanzhi	刘兰芝	
Lou Di'ao	娄地鳌	
Lu Jingruo	陆镜若	
<i>lü mu dan</i>	《绿牡丹》	<i>The Green Peony</i>
Lu Xun	鲁迅	
<i>luan shi ying xiong</i>	《乱世英雄》	<i>Hero at Troubled Times</i>
<i>luan wu</i>	《李误》	<i>Errors from the Twins</i>
Ma Zhiyuan	马致远	
Maid Ma	马姑娘	
Mama Su	苏妈妈	
Mao Dun	茅盾	

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<p><i>mao xian xun shi zhong</i> <i>xie kang li</i></p>	<p>《冒险寻失终谐伉俪》</p>	<p><i>Adventuring to Look for the Lost and Finally Getting Married</i></p>
<p>mei Meng Chengshun min ming she</p>	<p>美 孟称舜 民鸣社</p>	<p>aesthetic quality a society founded in Shanghai to propagandize new drama</p>
<p>mo laohu pi mu biao</p>	<p>摸老虎皮 幕表</p>	<p>touching a tiger instead of script, supplying actors only with plot outlines</p>
<p>nian <i>nü bian</i> pi <i>pipa ji</i> <i>Pu Lusa tan se bei liang peng</i> Qian Xuanton <i>qiang tou ma shang</i> <i>qie guo zei</i> Qin Shihuang <i>qing huo</i> <i>qing zhong pu</i></p>	<p>念 《女变》 皮 《琵琶记》 《蒲鲁萨贪色背良朋》 钱玄同 《墙头马上》 《窃国贼》 秦始皇 《情感》 《清忠谱》</p>	<p>reciting <i>Changed Daughters</i> skin <i>The Story of Pipa</i> <i>Proteus Lusts after a Woman and Betrays the Loyal Friends</i> <i>Looking over the Wall</i> <i>Thief Usurping the State</i> <i>Seduced by Love</i> <i>The Story of the Honest Subject</i></p>
<p>Qu Yuan <i>rou quan</i> <i>sha xiong duo sao</i></p>	<p>屈原 《肉券》 《杀兄夺嫂》</p>	<p><i>Contract of Flesh</i> <i>Killing Elder Brother and Marrying Sister-in-Law</i></p>
<p>Shaisibier <i>shang shu</i></p>	<p>筛斯比尔 《尚书》</p>	<p>Shakespeare one of the earliest collection of historical documents</p>
<p>Shang Tang Shao Ting Shashibiya <i>Shashibiya yanjiu</i> Shasipier Shekesibi <i>shen he</i> shen si shen xing jie si sheng shou ming yu tian shuang xi shui chu shi luo</p>	<p>商汤 邵廷 莎士比亚 《莎士比亚研究》 沙斯皮耳 舌克斯毕 《神合》 神似 神形皆似 生 受命于天 双喜 水出石落</p>	<p>Shakespeare the <i>Shakespeare Studies</i> Shakespeare Shakespeare <i>Providential Reunion</i> similarity of spirit similarity of spirit and form male role-type mandate from Heaven double happiness literally meaning that water comes out and then stone falls</p>

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shui luo shi chu	水落石出	literally meaning that water falls and then stone comes out
<i>si zhou zhi</i>	《四洲志》	<i>Annals of Four Continents</i>
Sun Daolin	孙道临	
Sun Dayu	孙大雨	
Tang Danjiang	唐丹江	
Tang Delong	唐德隆	
Tang Xianzu	汤显祖	
<i>tao hua shan</i>	《桃花扇》	<i>The Fan of Peach Blossom</i>
Tian Han	田汉	
<i>tian wen</i>	《天问》	a long poem by Qu Yuan
<i>tian xian pei</i>	《天仙配》	<i>The Fairy Couple</i>
tong shun	通顺	mellifluous
<i>Wang Deming</i>	《王德明》	<i>Wang Deming</i>
Wang Guowei	王国维	
Wang Jide	王骥德	
Wang Shifu	王实甫	
Wang Zhihuan	王之涣	
<i>wang zi fou chou ji</i>	《王子复仇记》	<i>The Story of the Prince's Revenge</i>
Wei Yuan	魏源	
wen ming xi	文明戏	the earliest spoken drama in China
Wen Yiduo	闻一多	
<i>Wu Liwei cuo ai luan sheng nü</i>	《武力维错爱孪生女》	<i>Olivia Makes a Mistake by Falling in Love with the Twin Sister</i>
Wu Ningkun	巫宁坤	
<i>wu shi sheng fei</i>	《无事生非》	<i>Looking for Trouble</i>
Wu Xinghua	吴兴华	
wu xu bian fa	戊戌变法	Wuxu Reform
Wu Yishan	吴怡山	
xi qu	戏曲	traditional Chinese theatre
<i>xi xiang ji</i>	《西厢记》	<i>The Romance of the Western Chamber</i>
<i>xi you ji</i>	《西游记》	<i>Journey to the West</i>
Xia Jie	夏桀	
<i>xian kuai</i>	《仙猿》	<i>Fairy Go-between</i>
Xie Luoke	歇洛克	
xin	信	faithfulness
xu ni xing	虚拟性	visual imagination
Xu Zhimo	徐志摩	
<i>xue shou ji</i>	《血手记》	<i>Bloody Hands</i>
<i>xun han</i>	《驯悍》	<i>Taming the Shrew</i>

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ya	雅	refinement
<i>Yan Dunli jie zhai yue ge rou</i>	《燕蹲里借债约割肉》	<i>Antonio Borrows Loan by Contract of Flesh</i>
Yan Fu	严复	
yang ban xi	样板戏	a special model of drama
Yang Deyu	杨德豫	
Yang Lie	杨烈	
Yang Zhouhan	杨周翰	
Ye Gongchao	叶公超	
<i>yi xie</i>	《医谐》	<i>Remedial Harmony</i>
yibu yiqu	亦步亦趋	imitating the author at every step
<i>ying guo shi ren yin bian yan yu</i>	《英国诗人吟边燕语》	<i>The Mysterious Stories of the English Poet</i>
Ying Ruocheng	英若诚	
<i>you gui ji</i>	《幽闺记》	<i>The Secluded Boudoir</i>
Yu Erchang	虞尔昌	
<i>yu pei</i>	《狱配》	<i>Love Match in Prison</i>
<i>yu zan ji</i>	《玉簪记》	<i>The Story of a Jade Hairpin</i>
Yuan Shikai	袁世凯	
yue ju	越剧	a local theatre in Zhejiang
Zhan Wenhui	詹文浒	
Zhang Guruo	张谷若	
Zhang Qihong	张奇虹	
Zhang Yi	章益	
Zhang Yuanchang	张沅长	
Zhao Jingshen	赵景深	
<i>zhao shi gu er</i>	《赵氏孤儿》	<i>The Orphan of the House of Zhao</i>
Zheng Guangzu	郑光祖	
Zheng Zhengqiu	郑正秋	
<i>zhong shan lang</i>	《中山狼》	<i>The Wolf in Mount Zhong Shan</i>
zhong shi	忠实	fidelity
Zhou Yueran	周越然	
Zhu Bajie	猪八戒	
<i>zhu huan</i>	《珠还》	<i>Returned Pearls</i>
<i>zhu qing</i>	《铸情》	<i>The Casting of Love</i>
Zhu Shenghao	朱生豪	
zong he xing	综合性	synthesis of four performance skills
zong zi	粽子	food with rice wrapped in bamboo leaf
zuo	做	dancing

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Versicherung

Hiermit versichere ich, daß ich die vorliegende Doktorarbeit selbständig verfasst, keine anderen als die angegebenen Quellen benutzt und sie nicht bereits in derselben oder einer ähnlichen Fassung an einer anderen Fakultät oder in anderem Fachbereich zur Erlangung eines akademischen Grades eingereicht habe.

Niemand hat von mir unmittelbar oder mittelbar geldwerte Leistungen für Arbeiten erhalten, die im Zusammenhang mit dem Inhalt der vorgelegten Dissertation stehen.

Die Doktorarbeit wurde bisher weder im In- noch Ausland in gleicher oder ähnlicher Form einer anderen Prüfungsbehörde vorgelegt.

Dresden, den 23. April 2008

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Yanna Sun