

# **Performing Shakespeare in Contemporary Taiwan**

**by**

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## Abstract

Since the 1980s, Taiwan has been subjected to heavy foreign and global influences, leading to a marked erosion of its traditional cultural forms. Indigenous traditions have had to struggle to hold their own and to strike out into new territory, adopt or adapt to Western models. For most theatres in Taiwan, Shakespeare has inevitably served as a model to be imitated and a touchstone of quality. Such Taiwanese Shakespeare performances prove to be much more than merely a combination of Shakespeare and Taiwan, constituting a new fusion which shows Taiwan as hospitable to foreign influences and unafraid to modify them for its own purposes.

Nonetheless, Shakespeare performances in contemporary Taiwan are not only a demonstration of hybridity of Westernisation but also Sinification influences. Since the 1945 Kuomintang (Chinese Nationalist Party, or KMT) takeover of Taiwan, the KMT's one-party state has established Chinese identity over a Taiwan identity by imposing cultural assimilation through such practices as the Mandarin-only policy during the Chinese Cultural Renaissance in Taiwan. Both Taiwan and Mainland China are on the margin of a "metropolitan bank of Shakespeare knowledge" (Orkin, 2005, p. 1), but it is this negotiation of identity that makes the Taiwanese interpretation of Shakespeare much different from that of a Mainlanders' approach, while they share certain commonalities that inextricably link them.

This study thus examines the interrelation between Taiwan and Mainland China operatic cultural forms and how negotiation of their different identities constitutes a singular different *Taiwanese Shakespeare* from *Chinese Shakespeare*. In recognising this, the core of this thesis rests on how Shakespeare plays speak insightfully to Taiwan society across historical, geographical, and cultural boundaries. Many Shakespeare plays powerfully echo the political turmoil of contemporary Taiwan society, but it is the negotiation of the political and cultural dependency that constitutes a distinct *Taiwanese Shakespeare* identity that is different from *Chinese Shakespeare*. This study therefore focuses on Shakespeare performances in contemporary Taiwan between 1986 and 2003, emphasising political context as key factor in adaptation, as Taiwan society transited from a military age to post-millennium democracy after martial law was lifted in 1987.

Chapter One, Wu Hsing-kuo's *Kingdom of Desire* (1986), a Peking Opera production of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, features a hybridised culture of Western text and Eastern theatre which situates Taiwanese Shakespeare in the context of the political upheaval of the 1980s. Chapter Two covers Huang Wushan's *Henry IV* (2001), a local Puppet-play theatre production in which Shakespeare was adapted to address KMT political suppression of local Taiwanese cultures. In Chapter Three, Lee Kuo-hsiu's *Shamlet* (1992) makes a parody of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, challenging playwright authority through subversion of Shakespeare's text, and taking on the role of authority in Shakespearean production. In Chapter Four, Liang Chi-min's musical production *Kiss Me Nana* (1998), proved a major encounter with Western influence, and I explore the Taiwanese adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* and its effects on Taiwanese audiences particularly with regard to Shakespeare's controversial representation of gender roles. In Chapter Five, the example of Wang Jiaming's *Titus Andronicus* (2003) – a clash of mixed Shakespeare, Taiwanese Little Theatre, and Brechtian theatre – is used to examine political and social contexts and impacts in post-millennial Taiwan.

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## Introduction

Ah, the magic wrought by words, dearest Willyum.  
No matter. Let me not confuse myself with you.  
Let me confess that we two must be twain,  
like the East and the West. 'Tis better to be vile than  
vile esteemed. I'll tell this story my way. My move.  
– Kaylan Ray<sup>1</sup>

### ***The Tempest: The Dilemma of Taiwan's Identity***

I celebrated the arrival of the New Year<sup>2</sup> in 2004 by watching Contemporary Legend Theatre's premiere of Wu Hsing-kuo's [吳興國] fourth Shakespeare adaptation, *The Tempest*, that evening at the National Theatre in Taipei. Like Wu's previous productions, *Kingdom of Desire* (based on *Macbeth*, 1986), *War and Eternity* (based on *Hamlet*, 1990), and *King Lear* (2000), *The Tempest* was a fusion of Shakespeare text and Peking Opera theatre. However this time there were more elements influencing this production, including Kunqu Opera [崑曲]<sup>3</sup>, and Taiwanese aboriginal music and dance. Further, Tsui Hark [徐克], a renowned and highly influential film director in Asia, was invited to direct his first-ever stage production, and brought cinematic effects to the production.

Earlier in 2004, Tsui Hark had drafted four different interpretations of *The Tempest* and posted them online for the public to vote their favourite choice. These four versions were *12 Chapters of the Magic Bible*, *The Isolated Island of Caliban*, *The Fantastic Voyage*, and *The Mysterious Magician*, with the promise that whichever version received the most votes would be staged in December.<sup>4</sup> Each version stresses a different focus on characters through their different approaches. *12 Chapters of the Magic Bible* was influenced by Peter Greenaway's *Prospero's Books* which had divided *The Tempest* into twelve chapters of a book, with Prospero recounting the plot in the first person. In *The Isolated Island of Caliban*, Caliban is the protagonist, while Prospero's knowledge and Alonso's power are merely mirages created by Caliban and Ariel. As for *The Mysterious Magician*, Prospero is narrator and reflection of the playwright himself, a reminder that all the world is a stage. *The Fantastic Voyage*, was the most challenging version for the actor, as Wu would perform the

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<sup>1</sup> Kalyan Ray. *Eastwords* (India: Penguin Books, 2004), 7.

<sup>2</sup> Owing to Western influence, New Year's Day (January 1) is celebrated as well as Chinese New Year and has been made a national holiday in Taiwan.

<sup>3</sup> A theatrical form that originated in Suzhou, Mainland China.

<sup>4</sup> *The Tempest*, from the Contemporary Legend Theatre programme, Taipei, 2004. The translation of each version's name was from the programme, and is the theatre company's own translation.

three main characters himself (Prospero, Alonso and Caliban) to see how three different forces – knowledge, power and nature – were merged and negotiated in the storm. The voting lasted for two months. I participated, choosing the version *The Fantastic Voyage*, and this version was also the audience favourite. However, in order to give other new Peking Opera actors more opportunities to perform on stage<sup>5</sup>, Tsui Kark came up with another version of *The Tempest* by combining features of them all, which later became part of Contemporary Legend Theatre's repertoire (premiering in 2004, with subsequent revivals in 2005, 2006, 2008, and 2009).

With this kind of intercultural adaptation, one might be tempted to ask what a 400-year-old Shakespearean play has to do with Taiwan, or the Taiwanese. But after watching Wu's version of *The Tempest* that night, I recognised its modern relevance to Taiwan's past and present political history,<sup>6</sup> because its plot raised audience awareness about conflict and tensions that had arisen between Taiwanese aboriginals and post-1949 Mainland Chinese immigrants in Taiwan. In the programme, Wu remarks that *The Tempest* was the first production of his theatre career that he had created and dedicated to Taiwan, an isolated island in the Pacific Ocean. In his view, the recent conflict, exclusion, oppression and division of each ethnic group in Taiwan have roots in the historical erosion of Taiwan's traditional cultural values.<sup>7</sup> Irrespective of Wu's interpretation on this connection, Shakespeare's *The Tempest* lends itself remarkably well to describing Taiwan's politics and history – an isolated island with a long history of foreign invaders.<sup>8</sup>

*The Tempest* is a play about the power struggle between coloniser, Prospero, and a local, Caliban. Prospero, played by Wu Hsing-kuo, wears a robe four feet long and five feet wide, stands on a rock in the centre of stage as a symbol of a lonely island, and holds his magical wand showing his paramount power as master of the island. To the Taiwan viewer, Prospero would represent the Kuomintang (KMT) government's political absolutism in post-

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<sup>5</sup> The consideration of "The Fantastic Voyage" was that the version chosen as the theatregoers' favourite, however the concept was abandoned because it was too experimental (one man alone as three characters) and small-scale. If there were budget restrictions, the vote would definitely have been taken into consideration as Wu alone accounted for three characters. In addition, the Contemporary Legend Theatre had recently acquired government funding for this new project (*The Tempest*) so they were able to recruit more actors, and they also took advantage of this opportunity to train more actors to carry on the Peking Opera tradition.

<sup>6</sup> For more details on Taiwan's political history, see Denny Roy, *Taiwan: A Political History* (London: Cornell University Press, 2003); an excellent book by Jonathan Manthorpe, *Forbidden Nation: A History of Taiwan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Gary Marvin Davison, *A Short History of Taiwan: The Case for Independence* (Westport: Praeger, 2003); Murray A. Rubinstein, ed., *Taiwan: A New History* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2007). I will be discussing this further, later in the chapter.

<sup>7</sup> *The Tempest*, programme of the Contemporary Legend Theatre, Taipei, 2004, from my own translation.

<sup>8</sup> For Taiwan's colonisation history, see Tonio Andrade, *How Taiwan Became Chinese: Dutch, Spanish, and Han Colonisation in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

WWII martial law, while Caliban embodies the aboriginal Taiwanese people, whose culture was suppressed by the government. Caliban, performed by Yang Chingming [楊敬明], belongs to the Paiwan Tribe, one of Taiwan's major aboriginal tribes, performs an aboriginal dance onstage, in an act of subverting Prospero's tyrannical influence. However, his resistance is in vain, implying the vulnerability of indigenous inhabitants. The whole production alludes to the past relationship between the indigenous inhabitants of Taiwan, Taiwanese who emigrated to Taiwan from southeast China during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and the Mainlanders who came to Taiwan with the defeated KMT after 1949. It is language that separates each of these groups – the Taiwanese speak the Taiwanese language (originating from the Hoklo language of southeast China), Mainlanders speak Mandarin and Taiwanese aborigines speak their own tribal languages.

Wu's *Tempest* deals with the negotiation of political forces in Taiwan (Taiwanese, Mainlander and aboriginal). Prospero is an outsider, Caliban an insider; Prospero is free, Caliban a slave. The relationship between Prospero and Caliban contains both conflict and compromise. In addition, instead of just Ariel, on the stage there are four other spirits (Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter) accompanying Ariel to assist Prospero in carrying out his authoritarian rule over Caliban. The character of Ariel seems to imply the role of the Taiwanese in the 228 Incident (or 228 Massacre), in which some Taiwanese people, in order to gain the KMT's trust and secure a good job or their personal safety, volunteered to assist the Mainlander regime while it was executing Taiwanese dissidents rebelling against unfair treatment and the new government's arbitrary rule after the February 28, 1947 incident. While watching *The Tempest* and observing the performance of Wu – who was born in Taiwan as the second generation of Mainlanders who fled to Taiwan with Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist armies – as a Taiwanese citizen, I came away with ambivalent feelings toward Mainland China that night. On one hand, the production reminded me of my own ethnic connection to Mainland China, but on the other it forced me to question my own identity and to consider whether I am Taiwanese, or Chinese, or both. Indeed, the ambiguity of Taiwan's identity as a country is still a contentious issue between Taiwan and Mainland China today.

*The Tempest* has long been associated with post-colonialism, and in this production Prospero and Caliban represent the colonial master and colonised slave respectively. Caliban claims that “This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother, / Which thou tak'st from me” (1.2.389-390). Taiwan, like England, is an isolated island, but instead of being colonial master, Taiwan's historical role is more like that of Caliban, with its long history of colonisation by outsiders such as the Dutch (who usurped British attempts to do so), Spanish

and Japanese. Notably, Taiwan was never directly colonised by the British, although of course Hong Kong was<sup>9</sup>. But instead of using Shakespeare's text as a form of resistance to the culturally hierarchical relationship between Shakespeare and Taiwan, Wu's *Tempest* is in fact more revealing about the implicit colonial relationship between Mainland China and Taiwan's indigenous population. In addition, this colonial relationship can be expanded to mark an internal conflict of identity between the Taiwanese people (Ariel), the aborigines (Caliban) and Mainlanders (Prospero). Those who originally emigrated from the Southeast China around the 17<sup>th</sup> century call themselves Taiwanese, and saw the new influx of Mainlanders (mostly from Northern China) as outsiders, intruders and colonisers. To distinguish themselves from the Mainlanders, the long-integrated Taiwanese referred to themselves as *Benshengren* [本省人] (local-province people), and called the new Mainlanders *Waishengren* [外省人] (external-province people). Furthermore, both types of Mainlanders spoke different languages as they came from two different parts of China and it was language which separated their identities though they came from the same country. Moreover, owing to the fact that Taiwan (formerly called Formosa) had been at one time a province of Mainland China, when the KMT took control of Taiwan after the Japanese in 1945, it was not immediately seen as a colonising, invading force. However, the KMT began to treat Taiwan as a colony by imposing the Mandarin language and Chinese culture through the educational system. Instead of treating Taiwan as a unique individual entity, KMT policy was to eliminate entirely the Taiwan identity by replacing it with a Chinese one. In other words, KMT strategy was to rewrite Taiwan as Chinese and to prepare Taiwan as a battle station to take back Mainland China.<sup>10</sup> It is important to understand the KMT was, in effect, a government in exile; as refugees from Communist China, they sought to preserve China's pre-Communist culture through their rule in Taiwan. Like Prospero's island city-state, the KMT sought to maintain Chinese traditions in Taiwan (even as they were being dismantled in China itself), at the expense of Taiwan's own cultural heritage.

Prospero's assimilation policy on Caliban struck me of KMT ruling influence in my earlier education at school. As Caliban tells us, Prospero used language to colonise: "You taught me language; and my profit on't / Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you / For learning me your language!" (1.2.423-425), and later, "I must obey; his art is of such power, /

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<sup>9</sup> Even Hong Kong was not really a true colony of the British as it was merely a territory leased to them, and returned to Mainland China in 1997.

<sup>10</sup> For further discussion on the issue of Taiwan's identity, see Melissa J. Brown, *Is Taiwan Chinese? The Impact of Culture, Power, and Migration on Changing Identities* (London: University of California Press, 2004); Hsueh Hua-yuan, Tai Pao-tsun, Chow Mei-li, *Is Taiwan Chinese? A History of Taiwan Nationality* (Tamsui: Taiwan Advocates, 2005).

It would control my dam's god, Setebos, / And make a vassal of him (1.2.434-436).” As Taiwanese is my mother tongue, I speak it at home with my family. However, throughout my school years, I grew up living under KMT martial law, when Mandarin was made the official national language in Taiwan, and speaking Taiwanese was forbidden at school.<sup>11</sup> Any pupil who violated the rule would either be fined or punished by having to carry a sign that read “I will not speak the Taiwanese language at school again.” Mandarin was the only language I learnt and spoke during my education, but when I went home, I had to switch from Mandarin to Taiwanese, as my parents still spoke it to me although they could also speak Mandarin (they too were compelled to learn Mandarin during their education). All subjects I learnt at school centred on Mainland China – Chinese literature, culture, history and geography. As a Taiwanese, it is embarrassing to acknowledge a better knowledge of Mainland China than of Taiwan itself, and even today my Taiwanese is not as fluent as Mandarin. There was a time when I only spoke Mandarin and seldom spoke Taiwanese at home, and furthermore, I used to despise people who spoke Taiwanese in public. I remember at university, there was a classmate from the south of Taiwan, who used to be laughed at as he delighted in talking to people in Taiwanese, even in the classroom or when others spoke to him in Mandarin. As most Mainlanders lived and had good jobs in the north of Taiwan, especially Taipei the political capital, and most native Taiwanese lived a rural life farming in the south, language became a way to separate their identities. Those who spoke Mandarin represented the civilised coloniser and the Taiwanese-speaking South represented an uncivilised element of the population. This explains why the KMT has always drawn more votes in the north while the opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) has more support in the south. In many regards, Mandarin came to represent a separate social status and was regarded as superior to the Taiwanese language and other indigenous dialects.

However, I never reflected upon the question of identity in my youth. Throughout the entire course of my education, I was taught that I was a Chinese citizen who lived in Taiwan, and according to the policy-makers' dream one day the KMT would take over Mainland China and the two would again be reunified, as one country. However, as I grew older, I gradually identified more as a Taiwanese person than Chinese. As far as I am concerned, I am only Chinese in terms of my ethnicity. Deep down, I still see myself as a Taiwanese since I was born in Taiwan, and speak Taiwanese; and in fact, my family has lived in Taiwan for

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<sup>11</sup> Only a few years ago did the Taiwanese language become a compulsory subject in elementary schools. As fewer and fewer Taiwanese fluently speak the language now, the importance of local dialect was finally taken into account by Taiwan policy-makers.

many generations. Mandarin is only a language for me in which to communicate, but it will never represent me as a person. Mandarin is the language the KMT imposed on Taiwan, but it can and will never represent the *nation* of Taiwan. Language, in a sense, became a vehicle for cultural domination and an instrument to impose identity differences between oppressors and oppressed.

Caliban, who learns Prospero's language and culture, also embodies the creation of a hybrid creature borne of dominance and socialisation, in Wu's production.<sup>12</sup> Hence, his *Tempest* presents a double hybrid engagement, not only with Shakespeare – a representation of Western canonical text – but also among different cultures in Taiwan, including Peking Opera, Kunqu Opera and Taiwanese aboriginal dance. However, such celebration of cultural hybridity marks a site of hierarchical conflict between different identities and different cultures. This fusion with Shakespeare highlights the dominance of Western influence in Taiwan, while other indigenous cultures (Kunqu Opera and Taiwanese aboriginal dance) were hybridised to become the backdrop of the national culture – Chinese culture, such as Peking Opera. These three different cultures were hybridised in the production: the character of Prospero was presented via Peking Opera, Ferdinand and Miranda in Kunqu Opera, and of course, Caliban through Taiwanese aboriginal dance.

As Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin argue, “‘difference’ is a category that should be neither erased nor valorised.”<sup>13</sup> Homi Bhabha introduced the notion of a “third space,” the “in-between” space between colonisers and colonised, which provides opportunities for negotiation by both sides.<sup>14</sup> In some ways, all cultures are somehow connected to each other, so to paraphrase Bhabha, there is not a single culture that is necessarily inferior to the original culture, as being the *original* one means being the one prior to it, in the sense of time. “All forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity,” as Bhabha puts it, and this cultural hybridity is the “third space” which “displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives...gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognisable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation.”<sup>15</sup> In other words, through its performance, Shakespeare functions as a catalyst for questioning the old structures of political authority in Taiwan. By fusion with Shakespeare, the function of

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<sup>12</sup> This thesis is based on the premise that Taiwan is an independent sovereign country. However, the debate of whether Taiwan is an independent country or part of Mainland China is not the focus of this study.

<sup>13</sup> Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin, “Introduction,” in *Post-colonial Shakespeare*, ed. Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin (London: Routledge, 1998), 6.

<sup>14</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 2, 53-6.

<sup>15</sup> Jonathan Rutherford, “The Third Space. Interview with Homi Bhabha,” in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 211.

the original text seems to locate such a “third space” in which Wu can deal with conflicts of cultural difference within Taiwan, opening up possibilities of dialogue and negotiation between all the hybridised cultures.

However, such a “third space” of cultural hybridity is followed immediately by another question: how do we define Taiwanese Shakespeare? The issue of Taiwanese people’s mixed identity raised in Wu’s *The Tempest* has implications for any attempt to define Taiwanese Shakespeare, since the nature of Taiwanese identity is so complex and contradictory. Wu is second-generation *Waishengren*; his mother came to Taiwan with the KMT in 1949, and married in Taiwan. Peking Opera, which Wu trained in, is not indigenous to Taiwanese culture; it is a Chinese tradition that originated in China and something imported to Taiwan by the KMT. Owing to Taiwan’s modernisation under Western influence,<sup>16</sup> as a Taiwanese, I probably know more Shakespeare than Peking Opera or Kunqu Opera. Peking Opera and Kunqu Opera were only popular for Mainlanders in Taiwan, as local Taiwanese were more familiar with other local theatres such as Puppet Play Theatre.<sup>17</sup> Although the KMT established specialised schools for Chinese opera – such as Peking Opera and Kunqu Opera – these Chinese cultural legacies were not really popular with Taiwanese and remained a marginal cultural form whose main function was to provide a nostalgic sense of pre-Communist Chinese culture for Mainlander troops and refugees on the island.<sup>18</sup> Hence, the question of Peking Opera’s relevance to Taiwanese people is almost as striking and problematic as the question of Shakespeare’s relevance, as they are both outside cultures. Taiwan not only stood in the marginalised corner of Shakespeare in a global sense, but also

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<sup>16</sup> For more discussion on Taiwan’s modernisation and the Taiwan-US relationship, see Peter C. Y. Chow, ed., *Taiwan’s Modernisation in Global Perspective* (London: Praeger, 2002); Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, *Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the United States, 1945-1992: Uncertain Friendships* (Oxford: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1994).

<sup>17</sup> In fact, there are other types of local operas in Taiwan that originated in Mainland China and were later introduced and localised in Taiwan. As Mo Guanghua states, Taiwanese local operas can be divided into two phases – before and after 1945, when Taiwan was occupied by the Kuomintang government. For operas that came to Taiwan before 1945, the most famous in Taiwan are Kejia Caichaxi [客家採茶戲] (Hakka Opera), Gezaixi [歌仔戲] (Taiwanese Opera), and Budaixi [布袋戲] (Puppet Play). For other local operas after 1945, Ping Ju (Peking Opera) is the most well-known in Taiwan. These local Taiwanese operas are to some extent all associated with Chinese cultures showing the strong influence of Sinification at that time in Taiwan. (Mo Guanghua [莫光華], *Taiwan Bentu Wenhua Lunji* [台灣本土文化論集] (The Collective Essays of the Local Cultures in Taiwan) (Taipei: Nantian [南天], 2004), 67-8.) However, as this thesis aims to explore both Sinification and Westernisation in Taiwan’s political context, Peking Opera and Puppet Play are the only two local Taiwanese operas that I will come back to discuss in my research, as Peking Opera and Puppet Play mark the difference in political identities between Mainlanders and Taiwanese in Taiwan. In addition, as there are other theatrical forms that demonstrate other hybrids of Westernisation, there is limited space to include other Taiwanese local operas in this thesis. For a detailed history of local operas in Taiwan, also see his other book: Mo Guanghua [莫光華], *Taiwan Ge Leixing Difang Xiqu* [台灣各類型地方戲曲] (Different Types of Local Operas in Taiwan) (Taipei: Nantian [南天], 1999).

<sup>18</sup> For further details on Peking Opera in Taiwan, refer to Chapter One.

on the margins of pre-Communist Chinese cultures. This helps to explain my sense of ambivalence while watching Wu's *Tempest*; the key question which struck me is: where do the Taiwanese stand in the play, since they are neither aborigines nor Mainlanders? If such a production is staged in Taiwan but through a theatrical form from Mainland China, is it still Taiwanese Shakespeare? Or is it Chinese Shakespeare?

In this thesis, I aim to explore the complexity of modern-day Taiwanese culture as mediated through productions of Shakespeare's plays that are a blend of Western and Eastern performance cultures. The ending of martial law in 1987 provides the key historical rupture in my study. At this point in time, a generation had grown up under KMT attempts to impose Chinese forms of culture and had acquired a hybridised cultural language through which to explore such vital questions of identity at a particularly acute moment in history. As Caliban puts it, having acquired language, he also acquires the means to resist control: "my profit on't", he boasts, "Is, I know how to curse!" (1.2.423-4).

## Methodology

In order to examine the cultural forces behind Shakespeare performance in contemporary Taiwan, I will follow Stephen Greenblatt's insistence that text (which can be understood broadly to include performance text, as William Worthen argues<sup>19</sup>) should be understood as "a part of the system of signs that constitutes a given culture."<sup>20</sup> "There is no such thing as a human nature independent of culture", writes Clifford Geertz,<sup>21</sup> meaning the interpretation of culture can be "self-referential."<sup>22</sup> In other words, the production of a Shakespeare play in Taiwan is not simply an act of producing Shakespeare's text, but also an attempt to establish a cultural negotiation between Shakespeare and Taiwan. Shakespeare's own role being similar to the way in which Britain colonised much of Asia cannot be ignored here, even though Britain itself never colonised Taiwan.

Because of the influence of his works in colonial history, Shakespeare is often regarded as a source of power and cultural authority, and linguistic hegemony through which the colonised in turn have challenged Shakespeare's authority. As Loomba and Orkin remark,

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<sup>19</sup> W. B. Worthen, *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>20</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 4.

<sup>21</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Culture* (London: Hutchinson, 1973), 49.

<sup>22</sup> The term 'self-referential' is used by Barbara Hodgdon to apply to Clifford Geertz's notion of 'thick description.' See Barbara Hodgdon, "Looking for Mr. Shakespeare After 'The Revolution': Robert Lepage's Intercultural Dream Machine," in *Shakespeare, Theory, and Performance*, ed. James C. Bulman (London: Routledge, 1996), 68.

“Colonial masters imposed their value system through Shakespeare, and in response colonised peoples often answered back in Shakespearean accents.”<sup>23</sup> However, not all Shakespearean global imprints can be attached to the British Empire’s expansion, and Taiwan is one example. Loomba and Orkin also stress that “there is no single ‘Shakespeare’ that is simply reproduced globally.”<sup>24</sup> So then, instead of employing Shakespeare as a form of resistance to the authority of a colonial administrator in a cultural and racial hierarchy, how do we interpret the phenomenon of Shakespeare performances in contemporary Taiwan?

Perhaps the question can be put differently by focusing on how performing Shakespeare may have helped to shape and form a distinctive Taiwanese Shakespeare, and in turn, a distinctive modern Taiwanese identity. As Terence Hawkes puts it, “implicitly and explicitly...all we can ever do is use Shakespeare as a powerful element in specific ideological strategies,”<sup>25</sup> and in some ways, Shakespeare’s plays in Taiwan have helped to locate the cultural position of Taiwan in relation to Shakespeare, to form and shape the Taiwanese culture which has been synthesised into Shakespeare’s text. Through struggle, encounter and cultural negotiation, Taiwan’s social and political contexts are generated through Shakespeare’s works, and, as Jonathan Dollimore notes:

A play by Shakespeare is related to the contexts of its production – to the economic and political system of Elizabethan and Jacobean England and to the particular institutions of cultural production (the court, patronage, theatre, education, the church). Moreover, the relevant history is not just that of four hundred years ago, for culture is made continuously and Shakespeare’s text is reconstructed, reappraised, reassigned all the time through diverse institutions in specific contexts. What the plays signify, how they signify, depends on the cultural field in which they are situated.<sup>26</sup>

Whenever it is hybridised, Shakespeare’s text not only connects to its own past, but also establishes its modern resonances within the present. Performance of Shakespeare’s work in contemporary Taiwan not only is significant in the Taiwanese context, but the same time can be turned around and rephrased as Taiwan making a significant impact as Shakespearean performance in the place where it is situated. My aim in this study is to offer a reading of cultural materialism or presentism in the modern context, within which Shakespeare productions are situated in Taiwan, so the whole process may reveal its involvement in

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<sup>23</sup> Loomba and Orkin, “Introduction,” 7.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>25</sup> Terence Hawkes, *Meaning by Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 1992), 3.

<sup>26</sup> Jonathan Dollimore, “Foreword to the First Edition: Cultural Materialism,” in *Political Shakespeare*, ed. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), viii.

postcolonial practices, providing a vision of where the Taiwanese were and where they want to be in the present.

During the last three decades, Shakespeare performances in Taiwan have powerfully echoed the most dynamic political changes, such as the ending of 38 years of martial law, the end of a one-party system and the change in ruling political parties. In many regards Shakespeare was political, and his texts still prove their validity nowadays in this respect. As Loomba and Orkin note, “Shakespeare is the site for colonial and post-colonial encounters, but these encounters cannot be understood without reference to specific social, political and institutional histories.”<sup>27</sup> The same understanding can also be applied to other sites of Shakespeare in the non-anglophone world. In Taiwan, the theatre movement was primarily centred around socio-political activities. Take the Contemporary Legend Theatre Company as example; it was established in 1986, one year before martial law ended, and so it witnessed – and participated in – a year of dramatic political transformation in Taiwan’s history. That year, theatre activities sprang up as the abolishment of martial law pointed toward the dawn of a new democratic age in Taiwan. Even Wu Hsing-kuo’s name has political implications, as it was given to him by one of his Peking Opera masters who fled to Taiwan with KMT troops. The literal meaning of *Hsing-kuo* reflects the anticipation of his masters – the last-generation Mainlanders in Taiwan – who hoped to “revive” (*hsing*) “the country” (*kuo*). Likewise, Shakespeare performances in contemporary Taiwan convey this sense of the “political unconscious,”<sup>28</sup> which is spoken through Shakespeare’s text.

Both Orkin and Loomba’s post-colonial reading, which deals with the issues of cultural difference and cultural hierarchy within Taiwanese cultures, and Bhabha’s notion of cultural hybridity underpin my approach to the study of the cultural context of Shakespeare in post-1986 Taiwan. I will also attend to the cultural politics of staging Shakespeare and will draw on insights from cultural materialism and presentism. According to Jonathan Dollimore, cultural materialism is defined as:

...a combination of historical context, theoretical method, political commitment and textual analysis [which] offers the strongest challenge and has already contributed substantial work. Historical context undermines the transcendent significance traditionally accorded to the literary text and allows us to recover its histories; theoretical method detaches the text from immanent criticism which seeks only to reproduce it in its own terms; socialist and feminist commitment confronts the

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<sup>27</sup> Loomba and Orkin, “Introduction,” 6.

<sup>28</sup> The term is borrowed from Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Methuen, 1983).

conservative categories in which most criticism has hitherto been conducted; textual analysis locates the critique of traditional approaches where it cannot be ignored.”<sup>29</sup>

Dollimore was referring to literary texts rather than acts of performance, but subsequent performance critics such as Barbara Hodgdon,<sup>30</sup> William B. Worthen,<sup>31</sup> Carol Chillington Rutter,<sup>32</sup> Robert Shaughnessy<sup>33</sup> and Bridget Escolme<sup>34</sup> have extended critical study of text to critical study of performance as an agent of participation in cultural politics. Worthen argues “the apparent changes of history are... merely metaphorical – Shakespeare in different clothes.”<sup>35</sup>

### Shakespeare in Asia

This thesis takes into account the considerable body of recent scholarship that has mapped the many different ways in which Shakespeare has been appropriated within different non-English speaking cultures. This “metropolitan bank of Shakespeare knowledge”<sup>36</sup> as Orkin puts it documents productions in places such as Germany,<sup>37</sup> Eastern Europe,<sup>38</sup> Africa,<sup>39</sup> China,<sup>40</sup> Japan,<sup>41</sup> Singapore,<sup>42</sup> Korea,<sup>43</sup> Hong Kong<sup>44</sup> and the rest of the world, demonstrating

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<sup>29</sup> Dollimore, “Foreword,” vii.

<sup>30</sup> Barbara Hodgdon, *The End Crowns All* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Barbara Hodgdon, *The Shakespeare Trade* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998).

<sup>31</sup> W. B. Worthen, *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); W. B. Worthen, *Shakespeare and the force of Modern Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,) 2003.

<sup>32</sup> Carol Chillington Rutter, *Enter the Body: Women and Representation on Shakespeare’s Stage* (London: Routledge, 2001); Carol Chillington Rutter, *Shakespeare and Childs Play: Performing Lost Boys on Stage and Screen* (London: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>33</sup> Robert Shaughnessy, *The Shakespeare Effect: A History of Twentieth-century Performance* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); Robert Shaughnessy, ed., *Shakespeare in Performance* (London: Macmillan Press, 2000); Robert Shaughnessy, “On Location,” in *A Companion to Shakespeare and Performance*, ed. Barbara Hodgdon and W. B. Worthen (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 79-100.

<sup>34</sup> Bridget Escolme, *Talking to the Audience: Shakespeare, Performance, Self* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>35</sup> Worthen, *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance*, 67.

<sup>36</sup> Martin Orkin, *Local Shakespeares: Proximations and Power* (London: Routledge), 1.

<sup>37</sup> Roger Paulin, *The Critical Reception of Shakespeare in Germany 1682-1914: Native Literature and Foreign Genius* (New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 2003).

<sup>38</sup> Zdeněk Stříbrný, *Shakespeare and Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Jan Kott, *Shakespeare our Contemporary*, trans. Boleslaw Taborski (London: Routledge, 1967); Alexander Shuranov and Boika Sololova, *Painting Shakespeare Red: An East-European Appropriation* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2001).

<sup>39</sup> Lemuel A. Johnson, *Shakespeare in Africa (and Other Venues): Import and the Appropriation of Culture* (Trenton: Africa World Press, Inc., 1998).

<sup>40</sup> Li Ruru, Shashibiya: *Staging Shakespeare in China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003); Li Ruru, “Negotiating Intercultural Spaces: *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Romeo and Juliet* on the Chinese Stage,” in *World-wide Shakespeares*, ed. Sonia Massai (London: Routledge, 2005), 40-6; Murray J. Levith, *Shakespeare in China* (London: Continuum, 2004); Zhang Xiaoyang, *Shakespeare in China: A Comparative Study of Two Traditions and Cultures* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996); Alexander C. Y. Huang, *Chinese Shakespeare: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

how it has been “saturated with Shakespeare.”<sup>45</sup> For some non-anglophone countries in Asia such as India and Hong Kong, Shakespeare was introduced as part of a process of British colonisation. However, there are many limitations to regarding Shakespeare’s success in these countries purely in terms of colonial assimilation. In some parts of Asia, “the playwright has featured in the construction, refashioning and articulation of a diverse range of other cultures and identities too.”<sup>46</sup> The difference between these two positions is the former presumes that Shakespeare was passively received as part of a political strategy, while the latter acknowledges the complicity of other cultures in appropriating and, indeed, refashioning Shakespeare. As James R. Brandon puts it, “In the early twentieth century, in Japan, Korea, and China, the attempt to ‘act European’ in order to perform Shakespeare was part of the larger movement to copy modern Western realistic acting.”<sup>47</sup> In other words, Shakespeare’s engagements in some parts of Asia were an act of mimicry, representing what Bhabha terms “an ironic compromise,”<sup>48</sup> a compromise between two identical authorities, the global and local. John Gillies takes the liberty of reducing Brandon’s three Shakespeares in Asia – canonical Shakespeare, localised Shakespeare and hybrid Shakespeare – into a binary but rather fundamental confrontation between ‘canonical’ and ‘localised’ Shakespeare,<sup>49</sup> while earlier scholarship on Asian Shakespeare paid more attention to the issue of authority between canonical icon and indigenous culture. As Mark Houllahan comments, “We often take the global to be the multinational and the corporate, blandly disseminating sameness throughout the world; and the local to be the heroic, small-scale attempts to sustain specific

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<sup>41</sup> Minami Ryuta, Ian Carruthers, and John Gillies, *Performing Shakespeare in Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Takashi Sassayama, J. R. Mulryne, and Margaret Shewring, eds., *Shakespeare and the Japanese Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Tetsuo Anzai, Soji Iwasaki, Holger Klein, and Peter Milward SJ, eds., *Shakespeare in Japan* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1999).

<sup>42</sup> Rustom Bharucha, “Consumed in Singapore: The Intercultural Spectacle of *Lear*,” *Theatre* 31.1 (Winter 2001): 107-127; Yong Li Lan, “Ong Keng Sen’s Desdemona, Ugliness, and the Intercultural Performative,” *Theatre Journal* 56.2 (May 2004): 251-273.

<sup>43</sup> Yeeyon Im, “The Location of Shakespeare in Korea: Lee Yountaek’s *Hamlet* and the Mirage of Interculturality,” *Theatre Journal* 60.2 (May 2008): 257-276; Jong-hwan Kim, “Shakespeare in a Korean Cultural Context,” *Asian Theatre Journal* 12, No.1 (Spring 1995): 37-49.

<sup>44</sup> Tam Kwok-kan, Andrew Parkin, and Terry Siu-han Yip, eds., *Shakespeare Global/Local: The Hong Kong Imaginary in Transcultural Production* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002).

<sup>45</sup> Michael Neill, “Writing away from the Centre,” in *Post-colonial Shakespeare*, ed., Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin (London: Routledge, 1998), 184.

<sup>46</sup> John J. Joughin, ed., *Shakespeare and National Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 1.

<sup>47</sup> James R. Brandon, “Some Shakespeare(s) in Some Asia(s),” *Asian Studies Review* 20.3 (1997): 8.

<sup>48</sup> Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 122.

<sup>49</sup> John Gillies, “Shakespeare Localised: An Australian Looks at Asian Practice,” in *Shakespeare Global/Local: The Hong Kong Imaginary in Transcultural Production*, ed. Kwok-kan Tam, Andrew Parkin, and Terry Siu-han Yip (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002), 101.

difference...<sup>50</sup> Sonia Massai observes the same tension between global and local, arguing the global should not be interpreted merely “in terms of a progressive cultural impoverishment and erasure of local differences.”<sup>51</sup> This is where Bhabha’s notions of a third space and hybridity become very important in understanding the complexity of cultural exchange, which underlies the self-fashioning of a distinctive Taiwanese Shakespeare.

The established concept of global Shakespeare is primarily understood from a Shakespeare-centred perspective. From a non-anglophone perspective, Shakespeare in a sense needs to be destroyed, reconciled, integrated, negotiated, reinterpreted, adapted, transformed, challenged, and transferred within different locations, various timeframes, and assorted cultures in order to be truly global. Shakespeare cannot become really global unless his work is re-dressed and localised within the local context in which he is adapted. Shakespeare is admittedly global, however it is not Shakespeare who owns an international passport, but those non-anglophone worlds grant access to him, to make Shakespeare’s works a global phenomenon. When Shakespeare was brought into Asian theatres and adapted into local contexts, it was each specific local culture that was the primary concern for the adaptor. For example, when Wu first produced Shakespeare through Peking Opera, it was the decline in Peking Opera that he was trying to save. In this case, Shakespeare was merely translated, shaped, modified and adapted to the needs and desires of adaptors to serve that purpose. As Rustom Bharucha explains, “Shakespeare is mobilised as a catalyst (literally, a foreign element), producing a countertext, or more precisely, a metatheatrical performative event where the dramatic text of Shakespeare as such is not the issue.”<sup>52</sup> A perfect example of this can be seen in what Japanese Shakespeare has achieved, in that “the more deeply localised Japanese Shakespeare productions of the 1980s and 1990s have become a medium for pan-Asian communication.”<sup>53</sup> Ong Ken Sen,<sup>54</sup> in his production of *Lear*, gathered “actors from five countries (China, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, and Japan) [and] attempted to create an ‘Asian Lear’ under a Singaporean director.” This kind of intercultural performance was not simply cultural exchange. Actors spoke their own mother tongue, and the actors of Non and

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<sup>50</sup> Mark Houlihan, “Hekepia? The Mana of the Maori Merchant,” in *World-wide Shakespeares: Local Appropriations in Film and Performance*, ed. Sonia Massai (London: Routledge, 2005), 141.

<sup>51</sup> Sonia Massai, ed., *World-wide Shakespeares: Local Appropriations in Film and Performance* (London: Routledge, 2005), 4.

<sup>52</sup> Bharucha, “Foreign Asia,” 1.

<sup>53</sup> Minami Ryuta, Ian Carruthers, John Gillies, ed., *Performing Shakespeare in Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 7.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

of Beijing Opera retained their own acting styles, thereby “intentionally creating ‘discords’ on various levels.” Ong Ken Sen explained his intention in the program of this performance:

In this production of *Lear*, I have attempted to search for a new world, a new Asia. This new Asia will continue to have a dialogue with the old, with traditions, with history. But its spirit should contain the youth and freshness that the present world so desperately needs as it progresses into the new millennium. Harmony is not what I seek but discord. A discord which will be symbolic of the complexity of the new millennium. There are no simple answers anymore. We have to deal with difference as we face the new millennium. We can no longer hold onto simple visions of the outside world and “the other.”<sup>55</sup>

In Ong Ken Sen’s notion of “a new Asia,” the individuality of each culture is stressed, rather than a hybridity or harmony of various cultures. As Kate Chedgzoy argues, “Shakespeare is not the exclusive possession of any one social group or cultural formation, but [he] has provided an enabling and empowering resource which has allowed ‘other’ voices to make themselves heard, to stake a claim to cultural centrality...”<sup>56</sup> Such a discord within various cultures deserves to be heard.

In contrast to Ong Ken Sen’s notion of “a new Asia,” Alexander C. Y. Huang also suggests a different “new Asian identity,” generated within the structure of Chinese Shakespeare, by narrowing it down to a more personal engagement with Shakespeare:

...performances that are framed by the artists’ autobiography and religious discourse. They signal the arrival of a new Asian identity in the global marketplace of cultures. The grand narrative of East meets West now coexists with an account of the living, contemporary directors’ personal engagement with Shakespeare, and with new but equally elusive categories such as “I” and “Shakespeare.”<sup>57</sup>

Other than Ong Ken Sen and Huang, other scholars offer their analysis specifically for Shakespeare in Asia such as John Gillies,<sup>58</sup> Dennis Kennedy and Yong Li Lan,<sup>59</sup> Minami

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>56</sup> Kate Chedgzoy, *Shakespeare’s Queer Children: Sexual Politics and Contemporary Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 2.

<sup>57</sup> Huang, *Chinese Shakespeare*, 20. Also see his other book: Alexander C. Y. Huang and Charles Stanley Ross, eds., *Shakespeare in Hollywood, Asia, and Cyberspace* (Purdue University Press, 2009).

<sup>58</sup> Other than his co-authored book with Minami Ryuta and Ian Carruthers focusing on Shakespeare performance in Japan (Minami Ryuta, Ian Carruthers and John Gillies, ed., *Performing Shakespeare in Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).) John Gillies also has two published articles contributed to Shakespeare on Asian stage. See John Gillies, “Shakespeare Localised: An Australian Looks at Asian Practice,” in *Shakespeare Global/Local*, ed. Kwok-kan Tam, Andrew Parkin, Terry Siu-han Yip (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002), 101-114; John Gillies, Ryuta Minami, Ruru Li, and Poonam Trivedi, “Shakespeare on the Stages of Asia,” in *Shakespeare on Stage*, ed. Stanley Wells and Sarah Stanton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 259-283.

Ryuta and Poonam Trivedi,<sup>60</sup> John Russell Brown,<sup>61</sup> Rustom Bharucha<sup>62</sup> and James R. Brandon,<sup>63</sup> each covers different parts of Asia in their studies. For example, Brown introduces new sites of Shakespeare in Japan, China, Korea, Thailand, India, and Indonesia (Bali), whereas Brandon focuses mainly on Japan, Korea and China with a small division introducing other parts of Asia such as Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Burma and also India. Bharucha on the other hand sets his ‘New Asian explorations of Shakespeare’ in the Newly Industrialising Economies (NIEs) of Southeast Asia (especially Singapore), embodying the hegemony that dominates “both the economy and the cultural capital of the entire Asia-Pacific region.”<sup>64</sup>

All of these studies assume there is such a thing as Asia. In truth, there is nothing in common for many parts of Asia, which is full of diverse cultures, religions and histories, which do not cohere into a singular unity. In this case, the construction of a *New Asia* identity is as problematic as usage of the term *Asia*. As Naoki Sakai points out, *Asia* as a term was “coined” *outside* Asia by Europeans to distinguish themselves from their Eastern *others*, and “its heteronymous origin is indubitably inscribed in the concept of Asia...in the service of the constitution of Europe’s self-representation as well as its distinction.”<sup>65</sup>

Shakespeare never went to Asia, but he refers to Asia several times: in *The Comedy of Errors*, Egeon says: “Roaming clean through the bounds of Asia, / And coasting homeward, came to Ephesus” (1.2.132-3); in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Benedick: “I will fetch you a tooth-picker now from the furthest inch of Asia...” (2.1.185); in *Henry IV Part Two*, Pistol: “These be good humours indeed. Shall pack-horses / And hollow pampered jades of Asia, / Which cannot go but thirty miles a day, / Compare with Caesar and with cannibals, / And Trojan Greeks?” (2.4.113-4), and in *Antony and Cleopatra*, quoth the Messenger: “This is

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<sup>59</sup> Dennis Kennedy and Yong Li Lan, eds., *Shakespeare in Asia: Contemporary Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>60</sup> Minami Ryuta and Poonam Trivedi, eds., *Re-playing Shakespeare in Asia* (London: Routledge, 2010). Also Ryuta’s another book: Minami Ryuta, ed., *Shakespearean Adaptations in East Asia: A Critical Anthology of Shakespearean Plays in China, Japan, Korea and Taiwan* (London: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>61</sup> John Russell Brown, *New Sites for Shakespeare: Theatre, the Audience and Asia* (London: Routledge, 1999).

<sup>62</sup> Rustom Bharucha, “Foreign Asia/ Foreign Shakespeare: Dissenting Notes on New Asian Interculturality, Postcoloniality, and Recolonisation,” *Theatre Journal* 56 (2004): 1-28; Rustom Bharucha, “Under the Sign of ‘Asia’: Rethinking ‘Creative Unity’ beyond the ‘Rebirth of Traditional Arts,’” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 2.1 (2001): 151-6.

<sup>63</sup> James R. Brandon, “Some Shakespeare(s) in Some Asia(s),” *Asian Studies Review* 20.3 (1997): 1-26; James R. Brandon, “Other Shakespeares in Asia: An Overview,” in *Re-playing Shakespeare in Asia*, ed. Minami Ryuta and Poonam Trivedi (London: Routledge, 2010), 21-40.

<sup>64</sup> See Bharucha, “Foreign Asia,” 1, 3; Rustom Bharucha, “Beyond the Box: Problematising the ‘New Asian Museum,’” *Third Text* 52 (Autumn 2000): 11-19.

<sup>65</sup> Naoki Sakai, “‘You Asians’ – On the Historical Role of the West and Asia Binary,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 99.4 (Fall 2000): 791.

stiff news – hath with his Parthian force / Extended Asia: from Euphrates” (1.2.91-2). For Shakespeare and his audience, Asia appears to be a strange, uncivilised, barbarian and mysterious place beyond their imagination, or as David Bevington puts it, “a world of unimaginable wealth, of cruelty and despotism, of idolatry, of credulous naivete, of military and sexual prowess, and above all of wonder,”<sup>66</sup> in which these speculations are based on the imagination of Europeans.

Sakai argues that “it is impossible to talk about Asia positively. Only as the negative of the West can one possibly address oneself as an Asian. Therefore to talk about Asia is invariably to talk about the West.”<sup>67</sup> Although today, most places like India, Singapore and Hong Kong are no longer British colonies, the term *Asia* is not necessarily subordinated to the superior dominance of Europe, either. It is time to talk about Asia positively by seeing Shakespeare from the perspective of the non-anglophone cultures as addressed by the narrator in Kalyan Ray’s *Eastwords*:

I, Sheikh Piru, bean-ribbed, straggle-bearded, far from any glittering court, will update you on some of the things you talked about. You are famous, English, immortal. You told your story. I stand on the margin of your story. Aha! But that puts *you* on the margin of my discourse. Marginality is in the eyes of the beholder, the holder of the book, plumchum, sweet Swan. All the world’s a reflection. Reflect on that Willybaba! This is my turn.<sup>68</sup>

Today, the dialogue between East and West should be reciprocal and even multi-dimensional. As Bhabha argues,

For me, ‘post-colonial studies’ implies a two-way exchange – it’s not just an outside culture being imposed upon a colonial culture, but also the way colonies, despite their disempowerment and disadvantage, respond to that outside culture, and in many cases translate its imposition into acts of social insurgency and forms of cultural innovation. Literature is the most sensitive record of these small, but enormously significant, acts of cultural survival.<sup>69</sup>

Nevertheless, during the process of two-way exchange, the local importance of Shakespeare needs to be stressed. When Shakespeare’s texts travel to a new place, they are often hybridised into the local cultures, and audiences are invited to engage with Shakespeare’s

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<sup>66</sup> David Bevington, “Imagining the East: Shakespeare’s Asia,” *NTU Studies in Language and Literature* 14 (Sep. 2005): 107.

<sup>67</sup> Sakai, ““You Asians,”” 793.

<sup>68</sup> Kalyan Ray, *Eastwords* (India: Penguin Books, 2004), 15.

<sup>69</sup> Jeff Makos, “Rethinking Experience of Countries with Colonial Past,” *The University of Chicago Chronicle* 14.12 (1995). See <http://chronicle.uchicago.edu/950216/bhabha.shtml> (accessed 29 November 2006).

knowledge from the text. Knowledge, as the case may be, can be exported, and the reverse should also be true that it could be “benignly imported.”<sup>70</sup> Hence, the relationship between Shakespeare’s reading and local knowledge is very much a two-way street; as Joughin suggests, “as we continue to appropriate Shakespeare, it’s worth remembering that Shakespeare also continues to appropriate us.”<sup>71</sup> In this regard, these local Shakespeare productions will in return bring “new sightings of the imaginative vision that created the plays,”<sup>72</sup> and new ways of interpretation in which “we have yet to catch up with him.”<sup>73</sup>

As a contribution to such two-way cultural exchanges, Huang has offered a site for Chinese Shakespeare, which includes reading cultural exchange in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, as these three locations all share similar cultures that are based on Confucian values. Even though these three share similar cultural roots, their historical development is diverse; Mainland China is ruled by Communists, Taiwan was ruled by the KMT, and Hong Kong was a colony of the British Empire until 1997. Language, religion and written characters also vary in these three places. Although the national language in Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan is Mandarin, most people in Hong Kong speak Cantonese and the Taiwanese speak Taiwanese language (originally from Fujian Province). In terms of Chinese characters, Taiwan and Hong Kong use the same version, which is *traditional* Chinese (used in Mainland China for centuries until Communist rule), while Mainland China uses a more recently *simplified* Chinese, a modified written form of traditional Chinese. Hence, as Orkin notes, “different locations cannot be homogenised.” For example, Peking Opera was imported from Mainland China to Taiwan, but as it has long been localised in Taiwan, and the Peking Opera found in Taiwan is already very different from its counterpart seen in Mainland China. By employing the term *local*, it does not have to be restricted within one country or culture. Orkin has asserted that:

By ‘local’ I mean here what characterises each reader who comes to the text, in terms of her or his place and time, what is within that place epistemologically current, the particular institutional position or struggles within which she or he is situated or with which she or he is actively engaged or, again, the particular knowledges and ideologies she or he exemplifies or legitimates.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Orkin, *Local Shakespeares*, 2.

<sup>71</sup> John J. Joughin, “Philosophical Shakespeares: An Introduction,” in *Philosophical Shakespeares*, ed. John J. Joughin (London: Routledge, 2000), 16.

<sup>72</sup> John Russell Brown, “Foreign Shakespeare and English-speaking Audiences,” in *Foreign Shakespeare*, ed. Dennis Kennedy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 34.

<sup>73</sup> Terry Eagleton, *William Shakespeare* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), ix-x.

<sup>74</sup> Orkin, *Local Shakespeares*, 2.

In other words, even if Wu is regarded as second-generation *Waishengren*, Wu's productions have carried the characteristics of Taiwanese culture in terms of his place and time in contemporary Taiwan. What matters is that moment – when – and that place *where* the performance of Shakespeare is created.

Wu has explained that: “when I first started the revolution of Peking Opera, I set my eyes on the West, and hoped to learn from the Western perspective in the course of my pilgrimage. But it turns out that I set out from East to West, turn around and came back to the East where I began.”<sup>75</sup>

Taiwanese Shakespeare is a collected history of hybridised cultural exchange, which is no more different from other places in Asia such as Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore etc., but its cultural engagement with Shakespeare is unique and singular. I would like to argue that Taiwan deserves to be approached as a unique site for Shakespeare's cultural afterlife and not subsumed within wider studies of *Asian Shakespeare*. Indeed, as we shall see, Taiwan's own construction in the modern period is unusually complex and buffeted by competing pressures from both East and West, past and present, considerations which deserve engagement in their own right. Far too often studies of Taiwanese Shakespearean performance are treated as part of Chinese or Asian Shakespeare studies, thereby eliding Taiwan's distinctive history, and unwittingly furthering the damaging notion that Taiwan is merely a subset of a larger cultural field, and by doing so silencing attempts to carve out its individual identity. This study aims to acknowledge Taiwan's unique history of Shakespearean performance.

### **Shakespeare in Taiwan**

Although Chinese Shakespeare has received more scholarly attention in recent years, Shakespeare performance in contemporary Taiwan tends to be approached as a subset of Chinese Shakespeare, a chapter in a book about Chinese theatre for example, rather than a subject worthy of research in its own right.<sup>76</sup> In Murray J. Levith's *Shakespeare in China*, Taiwan was put in a chapter, to make a parallel with Hong Kong in terms of its colonial heritage. In Huang's recent and acclaimed *Chinese Shakespeare: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange*, although he acknowledges that the context of Shakespeare staging in Taiwan “were and still are different” from those in Mainland China, yet he argues: “the linguistic

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<sup>75</sup> My own translation of *The Tempest*, from the Contemporary Legend Theatre programme, Taipei, 2004.

<sup>76</sup> Apart from the book mentioned earlier on Shakespeare in China, there are also few PhD theses focusing specifically on Shakespeare on the Chinese stage and interestingly, both authors are Taiwanese. Alexander C. Y. Huang, “Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage 1839-2004: A History of Transcultural Performance,” (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 2004); Wang Shuhua, “Politics into Play: Shakespeare in Twentieth-century China” (Ph.D. diss., Pennsylvania State University, 1993).

diversity of Taiwan...fosters distinctive views of ‘Shakespeare’ and what counts as ‘Chinese.’”<sup>77</sup>

I believe Shakespeare performances in contemporary Taiwan have not been explored in their own right, to the extent that they deserve. The only significant study so far dedicated to the development of Shakespeare studies and productions in Taiwan is by Chen Shufen;<sup>78</sup> however Chen focuses on how Shakespeare was received in Taiwan theatre during the 1950-1990 period. This project aims to further Chen’s line of study and offers a cultural political reading of Shakespeare’s engagement in modern contemporary Taiwan (1986-2003). I have selected five productions that seem to best represent the diversity and complexity of the cultural function of Shakespeare performance during this period. One of my aims will be to *locate* these productions in relation to the Shakespeare plays they adapt. A defining question for me is – why choose these plays, of all the plays that could be staged? Each one is one of the following: history plays which dramatise a nation divided; tragedies in which identity, language and even the body are damaged; or comedies in which the nature of gender politics is brought vividly to bear on Taiwan’s own culture and society. In addition, the choice in plays (*Kingdom of Desire*, *Henry IV*, *Shamlet*, *Kiss Me Nana*, and *Titus*) in this thesis embodies the hybridity of different cultural forms in Taiwan such as Peking Opera, Puppet Play, Musical, Metatheatrical parody and Little Theatre. Although not a main thread of this thesis, the question of play choice is important, because no choice is ever neutral, especially when the problems of Shakespeare’s England – an island state threatened with invasion and with a recent history of sharp changes of state leading to deep faultlines in national identity – have uncanny echoes with Taiwan’s own recent history.

There are many more other plays that also embody the cultural hybridity of Taiwan and are worth discussing in this thesis, but the choice of productions was nevertheless limited by their availability in the archives as most theatre company archives in Taiwan are not open to the public. Each theatre company collection also restricts examination of the productions. So in this case, newspaper reviews and scholarly journal articles were indispensable to construct the critics’ point of view in this thesis.

Most of the studies of productions here are based on my own experience in live theatre (*Kingdom of Desire*, *Lear is Here*, *The Tempest*, *Kiss Me Nana*, and *Shamlet*), and the rest are evaluated through first-hand visual material from the theatres, or artists (*Henry IV*),

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<sup>77</sup> Huang, *Chinese Shakespeare*, 9-10.

<sup>78</sup> Chen Shufen, “Shakespeare in Taiwan: Struggle for Cultural Independence from Mainland China and Euro-America” (Ph.D. diss., University of Manchester, 1999).

and the theatre's on-line database<sup>79</sup> (*Titus*) in Taiwan. I will read these performances through their political context and recreate a sense of what the historical past was behind these performances. Even though I grew up in this period (1980s – 2000s), I did not have the chance to see the original production or gain access to the original archive (particularly *Kingdom of Desire* premiered in 1986 and *Shamlet* premiered in 1992); it was the revival version I saw for these two particular productions. Hence, biographies of each production's director (Wu Hsing-kuo and Lee Kuo-hsiu), provided detailed information of the original production and another point of view for performance criticism, and therefore used as an important source of information in this thesis. Nevertheless, I have to acknowledge my own subjectivity as a Taiwanese who grew up in the world that this thesis attempts to sketch out. In talking about the audience, I recognise the difficulty in generalising about Taiwanese society. As Taiwanese scholars would likely be more familiar with the cultural form and cultural history discussed in this thesis, I have written this for primarily Western scholars and to that end have sought to introduce a sense of the complexity of Taiwan's recent history (in a necessarily simplified manner given the limitations of a thesis) which may be unfamiliar to many Western readers for whom Taiwan's history is just an footnote of Chinese history.

### **Shakespeare Translations/Adaptations in Taiwan**

When many spectators go to the theatre to watch an intercultural/crosscultural adaptation, one of their first thoughts is to compare it with the original text, and this is especially the case for those who know Shakespeare well. As Barbara Hodgdon points out, "...early twenty-first-century spectators, [...] want to see a textual (or literary) Shakespeare up there on the stage [and] have been trained to look for that text 'in' the present performance and [...] miss it when it's not there."<sup>80</sup> In other words, some aficionados are waiting, while watching, to tell the spectator sitting next to them, with relief, that "They've remained remarkably faithful to the text."<sup>81</sup> As such, when a production is called an adaptation, the tendency is to connect it to its source text, and, as Diamond argues, the word *adaptation* "presupposes a relationship between an original text and a derived text. Generally speaking, we consider a work an

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<sup>79</sup> "Electronic Theatre Intermix in Taiwan (ETI)" is an on-line database based on National Central University where more than one hundred performance tapes authorised by artists and performing groups are available to view on site for free. See [http://www.eti-tw.com/index\\_studio.html](http://www.eti-tw.com/index_studio.html) (accessed 06 June 2006).

<sup>80</sup> Barbara Hodgdon, "Afterword," in *World-Wide Shakespeares*, ed. Sonia Massai (London: Routledge, 2005), 158.

<sup>81</sup> Nick Downes, "Cartoon Image," *The New Yorker* November, 1, 1999, 101.

adaptation if it borrows from another complete and unique work by a known author.”<sup>82</sup> After all, when we call a work an adaptation, we already indicate its relationship to another work. In addition, if we know the prior work, we know there is a connection between the adaptation and its adapted text.

However, most Shakespeare adaptations in Taiwan did not use Shakespeare’s original plays as a main source for their adaptations; they rather use Mandarin translations as a reference for their production. For the Western audience, when they see an adaptation of Shakespeare’s play, they naturally connect it to Shakespeare’s original text. However, for the Taiwanese audience, actors and even directors, the only version they are familiar with is the translated version of Shakespeare’s plays. That is to say, when a Shakespeare adaptation is put on a Taiwan stage, it is already a second-hand production which has been filtered through many layers – such as translation and directors’/actors’ cultural interpretations – as Diamond argues that “the text had already been filtered through an Asian perspective before being altered once again.”<sup>83</sup>

Another concern raised with the issue of adaptation is when a Shakespeare play is adapted into local Taiwan cultural forms in Taiwanese language (Puppet Play for instance), it has to go through the filter of translation twice – the first filter happened when the source text is translated from Shakespeare’s English to Mandarin and the second filter is from Mandarin to Taiwanese. Hence, the connection between the adaptation and its original source text is even more distant and it requires more efforts in the process of the adaptation as sometimes there is difficulty for the Mandarin-speaking Taiwanese to appreciate the Taiwanese adaptation of Shakespeare plays.

The reason for this disconnect is that most Shakespeare translations were introduced from Mainland China to Taiwan and very few translations are translated by the Taiwanese. So far in Taiwan, the two most orthodox translations of Shakespeare’s complete works are those by Zhu Shenghao [朱生豪] and Liang Shiqiu [梁實秋]. Even so, these two versions are in Mandarin, and both Zhu and Liang are Mainlanders. Zhu started the translation process in Shanghai, China in 1935, and by 1944 had finished 31 plays. Unfortunately, he could not finish the rest of them, and died of tuberculosis in December that same year.<sup>84</sup> It was left to

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<sup>82</sup> Catherine Diamond, “The Role of Cross-Cultural Adaptation in the “Little Theatre” Movement in Taiwan” (Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 1993), 112.

<sup>83</sup> Catherine Diamond., “*Kingdom of Desire: The Three Faces of Macbeth*,” *Asian Theatre Journal* 11.1 (Spring 1994): 118.

<sup>84</sup> Perng Ching-hsi, *Perusing Shakespeare: A Collection of Essays* [細說莎士比亞論文集] (Taipei: NTU University Press, 2004), 287-291.

his friend Yu Erchang [虞爾昌] to continue Zhu's unfinished work in Taiwan, so the first complete volume of Shakespeare translations was published in Taipei in 1957. Liang's edition is the other well-known translator of Shakespeare's complete works; he began his work in 1936, and later came to Taiwan with the KMT, and finished translating 37 plays by 1967.<sup>85</sup> Zhu's and Liang's editions are the most well respected in the history of Shakespeare translation and most Shakespeare productions in Taiwan refer to these editions. Nonetheless, even though Zhu's and Liang's translations are the most acclaimed and frequently referred to in Taiwan, Zhu's and Liang's translation style was often criticised as *anachronistic*, as both translate Shakespeare's blank verse into Mandarin prose. When comparing the two, Zhu's translation is more fluent than Liang's; however, Liang's translation is much closer to Shakespeare's original text.

Subsequently, there have been other Shakespeare translation attempts published in Taiwan, and again these came from Mainland China, such as those by Sun Dayu [孫大雨] and Bian Zhilin [卞之琳].<sup>86</sup> Sun translated eight Shakespeare plays from 1931 to 1966: *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *The Tempest*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Merchant of Venice*. Bian, however, only translated four of Shakespeare's tragedies in 1956. Neither translations were published in Taiwan until very late, in 1999. Although Sun only managed to translate some of Shakespeare's works, his translation was different from Zhu and Liang, and demonstrated a big step forward as it attempted to translate Shakespeare's blank verse into a new Chinese poetic style, and Sun was the first to match iambic pentameter closely. He created a 'set theory' which combined two or three Chinese characters as a set, so that a whole sentence including five sets can be read like an iambic pentameter poem.<sup>87</sup> It was a great discovery for translation studies in both Mainland China and Taiwan. Since then, subsequent translators including Bian Zhilin (Mainland China), Lu Jianzhong [呂健忠] (Taiwan)<sup>88</sup> and Fang Ping [方平] (Mainland China) have all attempted to use this new form of Chinese poetry to present Shakespeare's drama using Sun's set theory as model.

Since the 1960s, Zhu's and Liang's translations have been frequently reprinted in Taiwan. However, apart from other translation versions that were introduced from Mainland China, there was no Shakespeare translation that was solely translated by Taiwanese in Taiwan until relatively recently. In 1999, there were Lu Jianzhong's *Macbeth*<sup>89</sup> and Yang

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 287-291.

<sup>86</sup> For discussion on the style of Bian's translation, see Perng Ching-hsi, *Perusing Shakespeare*, 318-321.

<sup>87</sup> William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, trans. Da-Yu Sun. (Taipei: Lianjing [聯經], 1999), vii.

<sup>88</sup> For discussion on the style of Lu's translation, see Perng Ching-hsi, *Perusing Shakespeare*, 315-317.

<sup>89</sup> William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, trans. Lu Jianzhong (Taipei: Shulin, 1999).

Mu's [楊牧] *The Tempest*.<sup>90</sup> In 2000, Lee Kuixian's [李魁賢]<sup>91</sup> *The Tempest* was the first and only Taiwanese translation of Shakespeare so far in history. In 2001, Perng Ching-hsi published his translation of *Hamlet*.<sup>92</sup>

In 2001, the first complete collection of Shakespeare translations in verse was published in Taiwan, *The Complete Works of New Shakespeare*. Again, it was a collective edition translated by Fang Ping, Wang Yiqun, Xuelan, Gu Zhengkun, Zhang Chong, Ruan Kun, Wu Xinghua, Tu Di and Tu An in Mainland China. Ping Fang was the main editor, who also employed set theory to translate blank verse into rhythmic Chinese poetry. It was also the first edition based on Riverside Shakespeare (1974).

Despite these advances in translating Shakespeare as verse<sup>93</sup>, most theatre directors still prefer Zhu's and Liang's prose-style translation because it is easier for actors and for audiences. This helps to explain why Zhu's and Liang's translation remained so popular and widely accepted among readers and theatre practitioners. All of the productions discussed in this thesis use Zhu's and Liang's translation as the basis for their texts (except where noted).

### **Summary of Each Chapter:**

Chapter One provides an opportunity to go into more detail about the general historical context of contemporary Taiwanese Shakespeare, and establishes the dynamic interrelation between theatrical forms and political power in Taiwan's context. I will also discuss the subject of national identity in relation to the struggle between the Taiwanese and Mainlanders. The focus for this discussion will be Wu Hsig-kuo's *Kingdom of Desire* (1986), which I consider to be one of the most significant Taiwanese Shakespeare productions in modern times. Staged on the eve of massive historical and political change in Taiwan, *Kingdom of Desire* fused *Macbeth* and Peking Opera in a way which posed a direct challenge to the cultural conservatism of the Peking Opera establishment. In so doing, Wu also exposed Peking Opera's role as an agent of colonisation, and offered a way forward for Peking Opera.

Chapter Two moves on to discuss Huang Wushan's *Henry IV* (2002), another hybrid of Shakespeare with a local Taiwanese folk tradition – Puppet Play. Unlike Peking Opera, which was protected and made the national opera in Taiwan, Puppet Play was suppressed and treated as an inferior cultural form under the KMT's Chinese Cultural Renaissance policy.

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<sup>90</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, trans. Yang Mu (Taipei: Hongfan [洪範], 1999).

<sup>91</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, trans. Lee Kuixian (Taipei: Guiguan [桂冠], 2000).

<sup>92</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, trans. Perng Ching-hsi (Taipei: Lianjing [聯經], 2001).

<sup>93</sup> Perng has often discussed debate on translation style through the example of his translation practices of Shakespeare's sonnets and *Hamlet*. See Perng, *Perusing Shakespeare*, 329-419.

Hence, through examining Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, I discuss how the identity of Taiwanese was elided and I will draw attention to the significance of Huang's cuts to the text. A more radical adaptation of Shakespeare provides the focus for Chapter Three, which discusses how Shakespeare's authorial authority was challenged through the subversion of his text in Lee Kuo-hsiu's *Shamlet* (1992). Here, adaptation becomes a political act which implicitly parallels the Taiwanese questioning of KMT political authority. By challenging Shakespeare's authority, Lee brings into question all forms of authority in Taiwanese society, including his own theatrical authority. In Chapter Four, I will explore how Taiwanese Shakespeare exposes gender politics through a study of an adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, Liang Chi-min's *Kiss Me Nana* (1997). Again, Taiwan's ethnic history is never far from view. As part of the minority group, the voice of the Taiwanese Katherina, Hao Lina, is also muted to obey the authority of Chinese Patriarchy. Chapter Five revisits all the issues that have been raised in prior chapters such as politics, identity, language, gender and authority. This chapter explores how Wang Jiaming's *Titus Andronicus* (2003) reflected the political context through mutilated bodies and violated identity.

Taken together, these productions offer a snapshot of Taiwanese Shakespeare from the eve of the end of martial law through a twenty-year period marked by a generation's attempts to come to terms with its past and to define its future.

## Textual Notes

All Shakespearean quotations are from the RSC Shakespeare: *William Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2008), if not, otherwise noted.

All citations from books, journals, magazines, and newspapers published in Chinese and all quotations from Chinese sources are based on my translation, unless otherwise indicated.

Throughout the thesis, the pinyin Romanisation system is adopted for Chinese and Taiwanese names and phrases, except in cases where the names are commonly known in Taiwan in the Wade-Giles Romanisation such as Peking (Opera), Chiang Kai-shek, or Lu Hsiu-lien or Taipei. In addition, Taiwanese and Chinese names are given following their respective conventions, with family names preceding given names.

## Chapter One: *Kingdom of Desire*

The more Chinese the performance is, the more Shakespearean it seems, for the Chinese theatre can enrich Shakespeare's plays by the energies and styles of an exotic, simultaneously courtly and popular tradition.

— Philip J. Brockbank<sup>1</sup>

...the history of [Shakespeare] performance is also the history of the text, and of our interpretation of it, and thereby of what we mean by Shakespeare.

— Stephen Orgel<sup>2</sup>

### 1.1 Introduction

*Kingdom of Desire*, the first operatic production of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in Taiwan, was premiered in Taipei in December 1986, and produced by the leading Peking Opera actor, Wu Hsing-kuo. Discussion in this chapter of *Kingdom of Desire* is pivotal to my thesis for three reasons. First, I use *Kingdom of Desire* as an opportunity to provide a more detailed analysis of the political situation of 1980's Taiwan, which also forms the historical context for my discussion of later productions from the same period. Secondly, the production was staged at a critical moment in Taiwanese history, when military rule that had been in place since 1949 came to an end. Although the production did not specifically refer to these actualities, *Macbeth* was nevertheless a provocative choice of play and I will be reading the performance in light of this. I will then extend this methodology to discussing the other productions in this thesis, all of which were performed in the years after the military dictatorship ended. Key words such as authority, identity, hegemony and patriarchy are central to discussion throughout this thesis. Third, as *Kingdom of Desire* is a hybrid cultural production between Shakespeare and Peking Opera, it serves as an apt example of a cross-cultural exchange between East and West for other traditional art forms such as the Puppet Play in Taiwan, which will be discussed later.

Although Shakespeare has been performed in different forms of Chinese opera in Mainland China since the early twentieth century,<sup>3</sup> it was not until December 1986 that the first operatic production of Shakespeare's play – *Kingdom of Desire* – was produced in

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<sup>1</sup> Philip J. Brockbank. "Shakespeare Renaissance in China," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 39.2 (summer 1988): 195-204.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Orgel, *Imagining Shakespeare: A History of Texts and Visions* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), xiv.

<sup>3</sup> Alexander C. Y. Huang, *Chinese Shakespeare: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 13.

Taiwan, a profound milestone in theatre. 1986 was also a critical moment in Taiwan's political history as the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) was established that year, marking the end of a one-party state created by the Kuomintang government (known as the Chinese Nationalist Party, or KMT). A few months after the production, in 1987, the KMT government abolished martial law, signifying the official end of Taiwan's military age and the beginning of a new democratic era.

In fact, the 1980s were a turning point for Taiwan as the transformation of political policies and rapid economic growth stirred up society in favour of making immediate changes. Under these circumstances, performers were encouraged to make changes in the theatre while many more opportunities were created for Shakespeare productions than ever before. Nevertheless, there were still obstacles coming from the older audiences before and after Wu produced and performed *Kingdom of Desire*. After all, it was Peking Opera, a long-standing tradition, which was about to be compromised, transformed and challenged. Although the history of Peking Opera is short in Taiwan, as it was imported from Mainland China by Mainlander refugees when the KMT retreated to Taiwan in 1949, Peking Opera really stood – and stands – for Chinese tradition, Chinese identity and Chinese authority, the national image that the KMT wished to retain, restore and recreate in Taiwan. In other words, Peking Opera in Taiwan, with its rigorous rule and strict stylised forms of singing, dancing, speaking and combat, represented an unbreakable, unshakable status in traditional opera's world. Hence, with harsh criticism from the audience alleging that Wu had destroyed the very tradition of Peking Opera, it seems it was more difficult for Wu to please the audience than to make the production of *Kingdom of Desire*. For this reason, the production evoked a series of debates on the issue of cultural hybridity between Shakespeare and Peking Opera, arguing whether Eastern tradition had been sacrificed to serve the Western culture or whether Western canon has been compromised for the sake of Eastern theatre.

## **1.2 Reception of *Kingdom of Desire* in Taiwan and London**

In December 1986, when The Contemporary Legend Theatre premiered its first operatic adaptation of *Kingdom of Desire* in Taipei, a great many audience members and critics rebuked both the production and its producer Wu, suggesting that he was destroyer of the

cherished institution of traditional Peking Opera.<sup>4</sup> The *Chinese Times* reviews commented at the time:

The premiere of *Kingdom of Desire* has shaken the whole of artistic society for two whole weeks. However, there are other reviews questioning the motif of *Kingdom of Desire*. Why choose Shakespeare? Why is *Kingdom of Desire* willing to sacrifice and ruin the purest of Peking Opera art by becoming an Occidentalist?<sup>5</sup>

There was even a joke after the premiere relating to the question of whether or not *Kingdom of Desire* was still Peking Opera:

At the premiere night of *Kingdom of Desire*, there were three people watching the performance together. After watching the first Act, the person sitting at the right-hand side said, "This is not Peking Opera". So, he left. Then, after the second Act, the person sitting at the left side said, "This is not a play." So he left too. Only the person sitting in the middle finished watching the whole performance without saying a word.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, the production generated extremely polarised receptions from both audience and critics. Some questioned whether it was Shakespeare, some said it was not Peking Opera, whilst others even criticised that it was neither Shakespeare nor Peking Opera. This production did not merely illustrate a conflict of opinions in the theatre but clearly indicates a struggle between Peking Opera and Shakespeare – a clash over safeguarding the traditional versus any reformation of Peking Opera, between the East and the West in 1980s Taiwanese society. Even though *Kingdom of Desire* was a significant landmark in terms of intercultural production in Taiwanese theatre's history of adapting Shakespeare, its reception was highly contentious among spectators. Is this Peking Opera? Is this Shakespeare? Is this even a play? What on earth is this *thing*? These were the most common questions asked by Taiwanese reviewers after the *Kingdom of Desire* premiere. In most Taiwanese newspaper reviews, *Kingdom of Desire* was regarded as a wild experiment carried out by a group of young people, with only a few considering the efforts in a positive light. One reviewer even made an excuse for the production's bold attempt, suggesting that after all, this was a young and ambitious

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<sup>4</sup> Translated from *The Tempest* programme by myself, which was the third operatic adaptation of Shakespeare by Contemporary Legend Theatre in 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Li Li-heng [李立亨], "Liang Chu Xi – Shi Wu Nian," [兩齣戲-十五年] (Two Plays – Fifteen Years), *Wen Hua Shi Chuang* [文化視窗] 39 (March 2002): 14-15.

<sup>6</sup> Lu Jianying [盧健英], *Juejing Mengya: Wu Xingguo De Dangdai Chuanqi* [絕境萌芽: 吳興國的當代傳奇] (The Contemporary Legend of Wu Hsing-kuo) (Taipei: Tian Xia Wen Hua [天下文化], 2006), 218.

group, they could be wrong, and could afford to be wrong; they were just trying to work hard for Peking Opera's future.<sup>7</sup>

Even if it was widely acknowledged that traditional and modern aspects of the play are two elements that could and would never come together, Wu and his young friends' bold attempt was enthusiastically encouraged by most reviewers. From a Taiwanese perspective, it is understandable that Peking Opera was in need of modernisation, but seen from a Western perspective it is a different story. While all Taiwan newspaper reviews were concerned with the dilemma of Peking Opera's transformation in the production, Western reviews instead focused on whether Shakespeare's tragic spirit still remained in the production.

When in 1990 Thelma Holt invited Contemporary Legend Theatre to perform *Kingdom of Desire* at the National Theatre in London, it received as much praise as criticism. Catherine Diamond summarised the British critics' reactions, stating that "... [it] was not only mixed but also revealed the perplexity of the Western observer encountering a wholly foreign theatre, even though, in this case, the attraction was its exotic interpretation of an English cultural icon."<sup>8</sup> After all, the Shakespeare elements were all the Western audience recognised in this production. Therefore, most Western critics focused largely on comparing Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Wu's *Kingdom of Desire*. In Irving Wardle's review in *The Independent* newspaper, he explained:

...it was a matter of seeing the plot of *Macbeth*, truncated and sometimes inexplicably altered, played with the Oriental melodramatic emphasis that obliterates all trace of tragic psychology ... unlike Ninigawa's cross-fertilisations of Western classics and Eastern stage-craft, this production seems strictly addressed to the home market.<sup>9</sup>

With regard to the reception by different cultures, there is a prominent difference in the perceived purpose of theatre between the East and West that is evident in the reviews. Eastern theatre pays more attention to the representation of the theatre itself, while Western theatre places more emphasis on the true expression of Shakespeare's characters, with content dictating form. After all, Peking Opera is an extremely stylised art form, so it is the singing and acrobatic parts of Peking Opera that most highly appreciated by the audience,

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<sup>7</sup> Tong-Xin [童心], "Guoju Ticai Fanxing Shaweng Mingju Chuchang," [國劇題材翻新/莎翁名劇出場] (The Renovation of Peking Opera's Subject Matter/The Entrance of Shakespeare's Famous Play) *Central Daily News* [中央日報], November 3, 1986. The review was provided by Contemporary Legend Theatre.

<sup>8</sup> Catherine Diamond., "Kingdom of Desire: The Three Faces of *Macbeth*," *Asian Theatre Journal* 11.1 (Spring 1994): 127.

<sup>9</sup> It was not that they could not accept an Oriental adaptation of Shakespeare at all. It was just a different level of acceptance. See Irving Wardle. "The Times They are Unchanging." *The Independent* (London), November 18, 1990.

rather than the spirit of the text. As a result of this, most Western reviews accused *Kingdom of Desire* of having entirely lost *Macbeth*'s tragic elements and were more concerned about Shakespearian influence still left in the production. Benedict Nightingale wrote in *The Times* that, "though *Kingdom of Desire* traces the rise and fall of an oriental *Macbeth*, it is far broader and more external than anything Shakespeare penned."<sup>10</sup> Alastair Macaulay lamented that *Kingdom of Desire* had lost Shakespeare's tragic spirit, asking, "Do the Taiwanese find this to be tragic drama? Shakespeare's play can of course be adapted and translated without losing a tragic core: see Verdi's opera or Kurosawa's film."<sup>11</sup> Kate Kellaway in *The Observer* also remarked that, "We can make out palm fronds and a witch (who seems to have lost her colleagues) ... There is nothing tragic about this *Macbeth*, or it's hard to see the tragedy."<sup>12</sup> Western reviewers perhaps over-simplified the art of the Peking Opera as a cultural form, since they lacked knowledge of such a completely different cultural aesthetic. "Aside from their general condescension, these critics mock their own ignorance...",<sup>13</sup> as Diamond puts it, it could be unfair for critics to make such a condemnation before having even a basic understanding of Peking Opera's stylised performance.

Further, one may question whether there is any trace of Shakespeare when one is watching any intercultural performance of Shakespeare. It is of course inevitable that some of Shakespeare's original flavour will be lost when his plays are performed across borders. Diamond concluded that "Macbeth is accruing his own Asian persona, and while one can peel back the various guises and masks, one does not necessarily find the Elizabethan character behind them."<sup>14</sup>

Is it really necessary to find Shakespeare's shadow in this form of cultural hybridity? When creating an adaptation, what percentage or part of Shakespeare should we retain, and what aspects of Peking Opera are we allowed to sacrifice for the sake of maintaining Shakespeare's tragic spirit? For the Taiwanese, Peking Opera was representative of traditions that could not be sacrificed. For the British, on the other hand, Shakespeare is also the ultimate cultural canon. This begs the question: if every intercultural production has to protect and retain both the adapted and adopted culture, what is the meaning and purpose of adapting Shakespeare in the first place?

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<sup>10</sup> Benedict Nightingale. "Macbeth as Martial Art," *The Times*, November 16, 1990.

<sup>11</sup> Alastair Macaulay. "The Kingdom of Desire." *Financial Times*, November 16, 1990.

<sup>12</sup> Kate Kellaway. "Hostages to Desire Draped in Red Velvet." *The Observer*, November 18, 1990.

<sup>13</sup> Diamond. "*Kingdom of Desire*," 129.

<sup>14</sup> Diamond. "*Kingdom of Desire*," 130.

Adapting Shakespeare into Peking Opera does not simply require a willingness to sacrifice one's own indigenous culture for the sake of global culture. Just as Peking Opera is seen as a traditional form of cultural representation in the Chinese world, Shakespeare is regarded as a canonical icon to the Western world. However, Taiwanese view Shakespeare as a far less traditional cultural form than Peking Opera, as to them his work symbolises modernity and global culture. This is the reason why most proponents of Peking Opera could not tolerate seeing Peking Opera being modernised in such a fashion. In this sense, the dilemma is not caused purely the conflict between Peking Opera and Shakespeare, but one that is between tradition and modernity, and between bastions of local and global culture.

### **1.3 Kingdom of Desire and Political Relevance**

*Kingdom of Desire* is significant for the choices made with adapting Shakespeare as well, for Wu could have chosen any Shakespeare play for this experiment with Peking Opera. That he chose a play like *Macbeth*, which is full of uncomfortable resonances with Taiwan's own recent history, deserves some explanation. In the following section, I explore some of these resonances, and this will mean a digression into Taiwanese history – but this digression will also set up key contexts for the following chapters.

*Macbeth* is a very appropriate play for Taiwanese audiences; however the potential for it to act as a political commentary on recent history made it a dangerous play to produce as well, since Chiang Kai-shek's reign in Taiwan can be seen as a real-life parallel to *Macbeth*. In *Macbeth*, the word *blood* appears 30 times – as *Macbeth* takes power, and rules his kingdom with *blood*, in a totalitarian way. Similarly, KMT's hegemonic power in Taiwan is associated with a bloody violence that affected the entire Taiwanese population, according to Tai Pao-tsun's introduction to that period of history. After taking Taiwan in 1945, the KMT was still deeply embroiled in a civil war with the communists in China. In order to meet the demands of the KMT's military expenses there, it appointed Chen Yi to ship enormous quantities of goods – such as rice, sugar and coal – across the Taiwan Strait to China. However, Chen Yi took advantage of this position by profiting greatly from it. He expropriated all the public and private corporations left by the Japanese and monopolised tobacco, alcohol, and camphor industries, running them all through one government bureau. Chen Yi's fraudulent pillaging of the island's economic and natural resources and an unlimited governmental overdraft finally resulted in severe inflation in Taiwan. Taiwan's economy plunged into near chaos, turning the KMT's expectations of taking back the motherland into a nightmare of despair for the Formosans. Unrest and turmoil spread

throughout Taiwanese society. Several confrontations ensued between police and civilians across Taiwan, with severe food shortages caused by the increasing price of rice and rapid inflation, mobilising the local population to revolt. On February 27<sup>th</sup>, 1947, an inspector from the Monopoly Bureau accidentally injured both a tobacco vendor on the street and a bystander. The next day, a large crowd of Taiwanese gathered and protested in front of the Monopoly Bureau, and were fired upon with machine guns by military policemen. Three were killed and many more injured during that infamous incident on February 28<sup>th</sup>. News of the incident rapidly spread as that day it was broadcast around the island, resulting in fights breaking out everywhere between civilians and the army. This incident developed into a kind of race riot as it caused conflict and hostilities to flare between Taiwanese and Mainlanders. The massacre that followed is referred to as the 228 Incident<sup>15</sup> [228 事件] (or the 228 Massacre), one of the most infamous episodes in recent Taiwanese history. The Taiwanese demanded political reforms to protect their freedom, human rights, autonomy and innovation in finance and the economy, and countermanding the police headquarters in Taiwan. Chen Yi pretended to agreement to these requests, but secretly made an exaggerated and groundless report about the uprising to the KMT in Mainland China. Consequently, KMT troops were sent to Taiwan who terrorised the population on a large scale. During the ten-day period of suppression from March 8<sup>th</sup> to March 18<sup>th</sup>, Taiwan experienced a bloody slaughter at the mercy of the KMT military. A great number of local Taiwanese intellectuals were arrested, radical publications were forfeited and banned, and every illegal (critical) organisation was wiped out. According to records, Chen Yi arrested and killed between 10,000 and 20,000 people within the next few months.<sup>16</sup> The aftermath of the 228 Incident saw the beginning of a horrific nightmare – the purging and execution of countless and uncounted Taiwanese.

Zheng Sijie concludes that the 228 Incident can be seen as the birth of the first real move toward a Taiwan independence movement, in a place with a long history of Taiwanese rebellions against outside regimes. Despite this, local Taiwanese had never openly looked upon Mainlanders as outsiders until the 228 Incident. After Japanese colonisation and before the 228 Incident, the KMT was actually accommodated and accepted by most Taiwanese. Some Taiwanese were even happy to embrace taking back the motherland before they realised the truth – i.e. that the Taiwanese were not considered equal by their new Chinese

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<sup>15</sup> This description of the 228 Incident was taken from Lee Ruby J.'s translation in Tai Pao-tsun's book. See Tai, *Jianming Taiwanshi*, 161. The KMT tried to minimise what was known about the cruelty, using '事件,' translated as incident, to refer to this massacre.

<sup>16</sup> The historic part here is summarised and translated by myself from Tai Pao-tsun's book. See Tai Tai, *Jianming Taiwanshi*, 165-6. For more history on this era, see Jonathan Manthorpe, *Forbidden Nation: A History of Taiwan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

rulers. Nonetheless, the Taiwanese still had faith in the KMT as part of the general Allied takeover of the island and believed that the situation could be reversed and improved. Taiwan people could have attempted to overthrow the government with violence, but instead they responded by listing 32 political demands, asking for Taiwan's autonomy and the protection of basic human rights, freedom of speech, and the right to publish and protest.<sup>17</sup>

However, the KMT rejected the request and conflict flared between Taiwanese and KMT and led to a tragedy in which the élite of nearly an entire generation were slaughtered. According to Tai's observation, this event caused a crisis in future Taiwanese leadership, but of course it secured KMT totalitarian rule over Taiwan for the following forty years.<sup>18</sup> Like the character Macbeth, in order to protect the *throne* of its totalitarian regime, the KMT used a massacre as warning to the Taiwanese people, and the crisis was the embodiment of the KMT-imposed national violence in the form of political absolutism in Taiwan at that time. As the KMT was still at war with Mainland Communists, it enacted the Temporary Provisions Effective During the Period of National Mobilisation for Suppression of the Communist Rebellion<sup>19</sup> (or "Mobilisation Law" in Lee Ruby J.'s term<sup>20</sup>), restricting basic human rights of Taiwanese such as freedom of speech, assembly, petition and affiliation. In other words, all of Taiwan was under the control of KMT military forces; it was the imposition of martial law. The KMT regarded Taiwanese dissenters as a threat to its regime so martial law was applied to suppress all resistance against the regime – for the same reason Macbeth wishes to have Banquo, Fleance, Malcolm and Macduff killed in order to prevent being overthrown. Like Macbeth's fall demonstrates, a totalitarian government will not last long. In 1987, martial law was finally abolished marking an end to the KMT regime, and the same year the truth of the 228 Incident was made public. A proposal of justice was first brought forward to the KMT at this time, although it was not until 1995 that then Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui [李登輝] made a public apology on the government's behalf to family of victims in the massacre.<sup>21</sup>

The consequences of the 228 Incident were twofold: not only was the White Terror era inflicted on the Taiwanese, but the xenophobic hatred the KMT evoked between the

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<sup>17</sup> Zheng, "228 De Lishi Yiyi," [228 的歷史意義] (The Historical Meaning of the 228 Incident) *South News* [南方快報] February 19, 2007, [http://w1.southnews.com.tw/snews/polit/specil\\_a/228/00/0006.htm](http://w1.southnews.com.tw/snews/polit/specil_a/228/00/0006.htm) (accessed 21 July 2008).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> The translation of this term was taken from Xue Hua-yuan [薛化元], "Dongyuan Kanluan Shiqi Linshi Tiaokuan" [動員戡亂時期臨時條款]. <http://taiwanpedia.culture.tw/web/content?ID=3860> (accessed 18 February 2008).

<sup>20</sup> Tai, *Jianming* Taiwanshi, 173.

<sup>21</sup> Tai, *Jianming* Taiwanshi, 170-1.

Taiwanese (the *Benshengren* [本省人] or local-province people) and the Mainlanders (known as the *Waishengren* [外省人], literally outside-province people)<sup>22</sup> intensified and lasted at least two generations. As a second-generation *Waishengren*, Wu Hsing-kuo understands the conflict between them and the *Benshengren* (original inhabitants); he wrote in his autobiography how his childhood reflected the hardship experienced by these people.<sup>23</sup> Wu was born in 1953, four years after the KMT escaped to Taiwan. Wu lost his father at the age of one, was sent to an orphanage by his mother when he was three and to the Fu-hsing Dramatic Arts Academy at twelve. Wu's mother, a daughter of a high official at the time, had fled alone to Taiwan with the defeated KMT, and was forced to seek shelter among her relatives. After arriving in Taiwan without family, she had to make a living to single-handedly raise her children. Under such destitution, she had no choice but to send Wu to the orphanage and operatic school, hoping he would have a promising career, since learning Peking Opera would perhaps protect his Chinese roots. Wu felt he spent a childhood "banished" from his own family, as he described in his autobiography.<sup>24</sup> Likewise, many *Waishengren* in Taiwan felt banished from their homeland, Mainland China, by fleeing to Taiwan. As mentioned, Peking Opera was the only entertainment to comfort them in the hardship and struggle in their new land; and so it was for Wu Hsing-kuo.

To some extent, when Wu modernised Peking Opera and put on his first production *Kingdom of Desire* in 1986, he was like most Taiwanese – looking forward to the coming of a democratic age. Peking Opera, like the KMT regime, represented an outside authority. For Wu, Peking Opera's traditional authority was to seem anachronistic and inflexible. For the Taiwanese, the regime stood for the same rigid authority, a political absolutism that could not be challenged. On one hand, Wu's break with Peking Opera tradition symbolised a resistance to its rigid cultural authority as well as to KMT political hegemony. On the other hand, since most Taiwanese are ethnic Chinese and Peking Opera a part of Chinese culture, Wu's objective in modernising it was not to eliminate its connection to Chinese roots or overthrow altogether the tradition, but to find a compromise within the conflict – between tradition and modernity, between absolutism and democracy and of course between Taiwan and the Mainland. Wu's dilemma of reforming Peking Opera was much like the predicament Taiwanese faced when they requested political reforms around 1986, as Wu was not only challenging the cultural tyranny of both Peking Opera and Shakespeare, but also that of the

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<sup>22</sup> Denny Roy, *Taiwan: A Political History* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2003), 6.

<sup>23</sup> Lu, *Juejing Mengya*, 82-97.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

KMT. In the production of *Kingdom of Desire*, when Wu stepped out onto an eight-foot-high rampart, any careless distraction or misstep would have led to his death when he jumped from it with a backward somersault. Likewise, any false step could backfire for Peking Opera and Wu might lose this opportunity and his motivation to save it from decline. At the same time, one could also trust that Wu had indeed re-learned and reinterpreted the Chinese culture's traditions and now understood there was still plenty of space for further innovation. This was a fresh start for both Peking Opera and Shakespeare – as it was for both Taiwanese and Mainlander.

#### 1.4 Peking Opera as an Invented Tradition

In the following section, I would like to establish the complexity and the dilemma of Peking Opera's role in Taiwanese culture to give some sense of *Kingdom of Desire*'s radicalism and also to understand political and military rule as context for analysing *Macbeth*. After all, it is vital to understand how Taiwanese have responded to powerful cultural and historical forces at a critical moment in their history. I want Western scholars in particular to have a deeper insight into the role of these traditional cultural forms in order to avoid the kind of romanticism that is sometimes applied to non-Western theatrical forms by Western observers. I wish to argue that these *traditional* performance styles are as often contested, invented and resisted as many Western cultural practices. Although this involves a lengthy digression from *Kingdom of Desire*, the full history of Peking Opera would take a PhD dissertation (at least) to properly delve into its idiosyncratic history. This discussion inevitably generalises and simplifies and should be regarded as a thumbnail sketch aimed at thickening our understanding of the context of *Kingdom of Desire*'s significant achievements.

Peking Opera is a Chinese tradition, whilst also being a Taiwanese one. In *Kingdom of Desire*, most reviewers claimed Shakespeare had been localised through the filter of Peking Opera tradition in Taiwan. However, Shakespeare could not be localised by Peking Opera unless it had been first localised and incorporated into Taiwanese culture. Peking Opera was first developed in China, but it was not officially disseminated – nor did it flourish in Taiwan – until the 1950s. Even if historical records mention the occasional performance of Peking Opera in Taiwan, it was not until 1949 that it truly became an institution there.<sup>25</sup> Strictly speaking, Peking Opera cannot be labelled a *local* Taiwanese tradition because it

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<sup>25</sup> For a detailed history of Peking Opera in Taiwan, see Yang Yun-yu [楊雲玉], *Taiwan Qingnian Zuqun Dui Chuantong Xiqu Jingju Yanchu Guanshang Xingwei Yanjiu* [台灣青年族群對傳統戲曲京劇演出觀賞行為研究] (A Study of Young Audiences' Appreciation Approaches to Peking Opera Performances in Taiwan) (Taipei: Show Information, 2006).

actually belonged to the traditions of pre-Communist China and the millions who fled to the island in 1949 with Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist army. Even though Taiwan was then renamed the Republic of China (R.O.C.), this does not mean the island fully inherited the Peking Opera tradition and claimed it as its own. Further, Peking Opera was used by the KMT as a political instrument to carry out its propaganda against the People's Republic of China (further details of which will be discussed in following sections). In other words, for the Taiwanese Peking Opera was not a *native* tradition but an aspect of a *foreign* culture, imposed on them by an outsiders' rule.

*Kingdom of Desire* was criticised for not being traditional Peking Opera because Wu modernised it and challenged its long-held traditional conventions. In truth, Wu modernised Peking Opera by basing it upon Western Shakespeare's text as well as traditionalised Shakespeare through the lens of Eastern Peking Opera theatre. When Contemporary Legend Theatre was founded by Wu in 1986, its name was suggested and inspired by a group of his friends who were passionate about the prospects and potential of Peking Opera. They use the term *contemporary* to connote "this moment, this generation we are living now"; the term *legend* for its meaning "the origin of Peking Opera – opera, since Yuan opera"; and *theatre* for being "a modern, multi-cultural performing space."<sup>26</sup> Of course, *Contemporary Legend* is an oxymoron, but Contemporary Legend Theatre took the name to represent the co-existence of modernity and tradition, side by side.

The terms tradition and modernity need to be understood from a Taiwanese perspective. Peking Opera stands for tradition and Shakespeare stands for modernity, with Shakespeare known as the most representative element of Western culture. In a way, Shakespeare represents Westernisation to the Taiwanese, in terms of theatrical form and dramaturgical style. This recognition goes back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when spoken drama was first introduced in China and its realism and naturalism influenced Chinese theatre.<sup>27</sup> Since that time, Chinese Peking Opera has adopted Western elements and, as Perng Ching-hsi notes, "many of those instruments used in Peking Opera today are of foreign origin, having been introduced into China at one time or another."<sup>28</sup> In other words, the modernisation of Peking Opera has been an ongoing process for nearly a century.

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<sup>26</sup> Lu, *Juejing Mengya*, 153.

<sup>27</sup> Constantine Tung and Colin Mackerra, eds., *Drama in the People's Republic of China*. (New York: State University of New York Press, 1987), 155.

<sup>28</sup> Perng Ching-hsi, "At the Crossroads: Peking Opera in Taiwan Today", *Asian Theatre Journal* 6.2 (1989): 130-1.

Modernity and tradition are two sides of the same coin: what is now called tradition was once regarded as modernity in its time. Arguably, Peking Opera now has been Westernised and modernised by Shakespeare, but the truth is Peking Opera's essence has modernised by itself. Taking account of Hobsbawm's argument that "'traditions' which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented,"<sup>29</sup> it appears that tradition and modernity simply keep changing sides. Peking Opera was actually invented over 200 years ago. Peking Opera first appeared around 1790, with the fusion of different operas and local accents in China. Understanding and perceptions concerning tradition/modernity are in a continually evolving, because creativity cannot live outside of tradition; it must be created on the foundations of pre-existing tradition. In this sense, today's creative interpretation may be tomorrow's tradition. One of the goals of Contemporary Legend Theatre is to discover an innovative performance style for contemporary Chinese Opera by breaking with the traditional regulations of Peking Opera.<sup>30</sup> The term *breaking the tradition* may seem like an inevitable trend today, but at the time when Peking Opera was regarded as the most unshakeable of cultural traditions, breaking the tradition was a rebellious, even radical act. That is why, when Wu first announced his plan to perform *Kingdom of Desire*, his predecessors, operatic actors, questioned his motive: "You are absolutely departing from the tradition and rebelling against orthodoxy. Have you learned the tradition thoroughly?"<sup>31</sup> However, whose tradition was Wu trying to break – China's or Taiwan's? The critical question lies in whether Peking Opera was seen as traditional local Taiwanese culture from the perspective of the Taiwanese.

The history of Peking Opera's first appearance in Taiwan dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century when it was first introduced by Liu Ming-chuan [劉銘傳], the First Governor of Taiwan during the 11<sup>th</sup> year of Guangxu during the Qing Dynasty (1885-1893), at a time when Formosa was still considered part of China's Fujian province. Even though Taiwan was later colonised by Japan (1895-1945), there are still performance records showing Peking Opera productions were invited from Shanghai to perform in Taiwan on more than one occasion during Japanese Colonial rule. In 1948, when the KMT escaped to Taiwan, many theatre troupes performing on the island at that time were forced to stay. Apart from the theatre troupes held up there, there were also many Peking Opera actors who fled there with the

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<sup>29</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1.

<sup>30</sup> Lu, *Juejing Mengya*, 69.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

KMT.<sup>32</sup> Subsequently, some actors were recruited from among the theatre companies into army theatre in order to entertain the troops, while some became teachers at the Fu-Hsing Dramatic Arts Academy, now known as the National Taiwan College of Performing Arts. The actors who remained not only cultivated Taiwanese fans of Peking Opera but also comforted nostalgic soldiers from Mainland China.

These actors, detained in Taiwan, had witnessed Peking Opera in China as a glorious tradition when they were young but did not have the chance to build their own legend and experience before they were forced to leave their homeland. These people inherited the traditional spirit of China's Peking Opera, with their every word and deed representing the traditions and regulations of Peking Opera of the day. They brought their legendary traditions to Taiwan, even though everything that related to the legend of Chinese Peking Opera had nothing to do with the Taiwanese people and land.<sup>33</sup> The so-called tradition of Peking Opera later cultivated in Taiwan was not actually a native tradition. In this sense, it was modified and localised into Taiwanese Peking Opera to accommodate the needs of a different generation and a different time. Hobsbawm's exploration of the role of invented traditions in Western history is helpful in this context:

'Invented tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past.<sup>34</sup>

In the same way, Peking Opera became a nostalgic icon to reconnect with the past for those who had left Mainland China, and for a variety of reasons had fled to Taiwan. The KMT made Peking Opera Taiwan's national opera because it represented a connection to an historical past that Mainlander refugees were attached to and wished to carry with them wherever they went.

As part of establishing its political authority, the KMT made Peking Opera the national opera in Taiwan, as being representative of its new 'national' culture. However, it was not specifically called *Kuo-ju* (national opera) [國劇] in Taiwan until later, when the KMT

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<sup>32</sup> "During the 'political immigration period' from 1948 to 1956, mass soldiers and civilians retreated to Taiwan following the KMT's defeat, resulting in the sudden increase of the Taiwan population, estimated at around 1.5 million immigrants" (from *The Mirror and the Window of Taiwan History*).

<sup>33</sup> Lu, *Juejing Mengya*, 77.

<sup>34</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1.

began using the term in order to distinguish it from the Communists' Beijing Opera.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, other than the name *Kuo-ju* (national opera), Peking Opera has been known by other names throughout history in both Mainland China and Taiwan, names all sharing a connection with Peking Opera's past and Mainland China; for example, Peking Opera (*Peking* was the Wade-Giles Romanised name used at the time in Taiwan for *Beijing*), Beijing Opera (the pinyin Romanised name in Mainland China), *Jing-ju* [京劇] (the Mandarin abbreviation for Beijing Opera, as it was later developed successfully in Beijing); and *Ping-ju* [平劇] (when Beijing was called Beiping).<sup>36</sup> It was not until the 1970s and the implementation of the KMT's Chinese Cultural Renaissance policy, that Peking Opera became commonly known as *Kuo-Ju* in Taiwan, a title which literally meant *national opera*, and meant to signify Taiwan's identity as a nation. Nevertheless, because of the provincialism of Taiwanese in Taiwan, the term *Kuo-Ju* has been used much less often than *Jing-Ju* (Peking Opera). Significantly, there has always been an orthodox concern about Taiwanese performing Peking Opera, because it was an art form that originated elsewhere.

After it was deemed the national opera, other local Taiwanese traditional cultures were suppressed by the government in order to make sure that Peking Opera was the only cultural image – Chinese – that stood out in Taiwan. It is inaccurate for Peking Opera to be granted the mantle of Taiwan's national opera since there were other local theatrical art forms, also imported from China and later incorporated into Taiwanese culture, that share similar features to Peking Opera. Perng lists these similarities:

(1) arias interspersed with prose dialogue; (2) pantomime, acrobatics, and stylised actions on stage; (3) colourful symbolism in costumes and facial make-up; (4) a simple yet symbolic set of props on an almost bare stage; (5) live and lively musical accompaniment.<sup>37</sup>

Many other local traditional theatrical forms in Taiwan, such as Taiwanese Opera (now together with Puppet Play as two of the most locally representative theatrical forms), also share the above features with Peking Opera. However, only Peking Opera was made national

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<sup>35</sup> Different authors tend to use different names for Peking Opera. In Alexander C. Y. Huang's *Chinese Shakespeare*, Huang adopted the abbreviated term 'jingju' to refer to both 'Peking Opera' and 'Beijing Opera,' while Catherine Diamond used the term 'Beijing Opera' in her journal article "Kingdom of Desire: The Three Faces of *Macbeth*." However, in order to demonstrate that it is Taiwan's Peking Opera I wish to discuss, I tend to use 'Peking Opera' (the general adopted Wade-Giles Romanised name used in Taiwan), rather than 'Beijing Opera' throughout the thesis. As I have mentioned before that Taiwan did not adopt a Pinyin Romanisation (Hanyu) system until very recently. Before then, Taiwan used the Wade-Giles Romanisation System. Thus, using 'Peking Opera' seems to be more appropriate than 'Beijing Opera' in this thesis.

<sup>36</sup> Yang, *Taiwan Qingnian*, 24.

<sup>37</sup> Perng, "At the Crossroads," 125.

opera because it was considered to reflect the most appropriate political image for the KMT as Peking Opera originated in Peking (Beijing), the capital of Mainland China, signifying the centre of orthodox political power. Besides Peking Opera, most of the local theatrical forms in Taiwan then were brought by immigrants from other regions of Southeast China. As a consequence of this, Peking Opera inevitably has been detrimental to the development of other local traditional theatres.

There are further reasons why the KMT was so eager to place Peking Opera above other theatrical forms, when they all shared the same origins and had similar characteristics. Nancy Guy suggests three political reasons the KMT gave Peking Opera such a venerable position, namely, for “asserting cultural superiority over the Taiwanese, for recovering the Chinese mainland, and for maintaining its status as the rightful governor of China, albeit in exile.”<sup>38</sup> Peking Opera, the most developed and orthodox traditional opera in Mainland China was the ideal choice to fulfil the KMT’s political needs. By crowning Peking Opera as Taiwan’s dominant opera, the KMT was protecting its own interests.

Apart from political reasons, entertaining the military was also viewed as a necessity, as the military’s full support helped Peking Opera achieve an unprecedented level of popularity there. The Army, Navy, Air Force and Combined Service Force all had their own theatres.<sup>39</sup> In prisons like the one on Green Island, Peking Opera was one of the few types of leisure activities in which prisoners could engage. From the time the KMT settled in Taiwan, military theatres gradually became the main performance groups promoting Peking Opera. According to historical records, there were seven main military theatres among the armed forces, with approximately 126 Peking Opera troupes or organisations in the Army.<sup>40</sup>

After Peking Opera gradually spread into all forms of Taiwanese theatre, it became a priority as a subject taught within the educational system, in order to root and impose the art form’s mores and sensibilities on the Taiwanese population. Nevertheless, the first Peking Opera School was neither built by the government nor the military, but by a former Peking Opera actor, Wang Zhen-zu [王振祖].<sup>41</sup> In order to cultivate a second generation of such actors in Taiwan, Wang built the Fu-hsing Dramatic Arts Academy in 1956, the first formal Peking

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<sup>38</sup> Nancy A. Guy, “Peking Opera as ‘National Opera’ in Taiwan: What’s in a Name?” *Asian Theatre Journal* 12.1 (1995): 90.

<sup>39</sup> Yang, *Taiwan Qingnian*, 70-1.

<sup>40</sup> Zhou Shi-wen [周世文], “Guo Jun 1950 Nian Hpu Yin Yue Fa Zhan Shi Gai Shu” [國軍 1950 年後音樂發展史概述] (Introduction to the History of the Musical Development of the National Military in Taiwan After 1950) (MA thesis, Soochow University, 2005), 74-75.

<sup>41</sup> Wang came to Taiwan in 1949.

Opera School in Taiwan.<sup>42</sup> Unlike the military theatres which controlled the mainstream market, the private Fu-hsing Dramatic Arts Academy received less support from the government and always ran on a tight budget. Wu, who entered this academy in 1965 at age 11, was part of this second generation; eight years of rigorous training there would turn him into a professional Peking Opera actor. It was not until 1968 that the private Fu-hsing Dramatic Arts Academy finally transformed into the national Fu-hsing Dramatic Arts Academy. In the following years, military theatres were also transformed into educational institutions. Wei Haimin, who played Lady Macbeth in the *Kingdom of Desire*, was admitted to the Xiao Hai-guang School of Opera (formerly the Hai-guang Theatre Troupe of the Navy) in 1969 when she was 10 years old.<sup>43</sup> Notably, it was not until 1972 that Peking Opera was first included as part of university education.<sup>44</sup>

The main purpose of the military theatres was to entertain the soldiers, so Peking Opera was supported by the government for political purposes from the time it was brought to the island. In 1965, the Armed Forces Golden Statue Awards for Literature and Arts were first held to promote such ambitions among soldiers (the awards have been continually granted every year since then). Peking Opera was one of the categories, with the aim of rewarding plays that are morale-building for the army while propagating the principle of restoring the Republic of China. Although Peking Opera was first used to serve political ends, politics did not hinder the art form from developing. The spirit of performing arts remained at its core, despite any political agenda, and with the full support of military and government, Peking Opera indeed continued developing further.<sup>45</sup>

In the 1970s, owing to enmity between the Republic of China (KMT administration in Taiwan) and the People's Republic of China (Communist-ruled China), Peking Opera received substantial financial support from the military and government. The KMT regime used Peking Opera as a political instrument to claim its legitimacy and as a means of contradicting the policy of China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, launched in 1966 by Mao Zedong, Chairman of China's Communist Party. The following year Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek countered this in Taiwan by announcing the official start of the Chinese Cultural Renaissance (also known as the Chinese Cultural Renaissance Movement). China's *Cultural Revolution* forced (pre-Communist) Chinese culture to be questioned, challenged and even suppressed and destroyed in many cases. The KMT chose an opposing stance – to

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<sup>42</sup> Yang, *Taiwan Qingnian*, 72.

<sup>43</sup> Lu, *Juejing Mengya*, 92.

<sup>44</sup> Yang, *Taiwan Qingnian*, 74.

<sup>45</sup> Yang, *Taiwan Qingnian*, 73.

actively protect Chinese cultural customs in Taiwan – as a way of defending the party’s orthodox position: representing the whole of China. On one side of the Strait, the Communist party was eagerly purging itself of all vestiges of traditional Chinese culture; on the other, the KMT took upon itself to defend and protect all aspects of Chinese culture. Consequently, Peking Opera in Taiwan actually harkens back to pre-1949 forms, preferably purified of any post-liberation mainland influences.

This cultural renaissance movement also pushed Peking Opera to its peak, placing it in an unshakeable position, making even harder its subsequent reformation. Perng notes that Peking Opera supporters, “in their complacency, have flattered themselves that Peking Opera is the perfect, most sophisticated form of theatre ever created.”<sup>46</sup> This explains why Wu’s first experimental production, *Kingdom of Desire*, received such a polarised reception at its premiere and why it was not viewed favourably by either his predecessors or his own Peking Opera master.

During this period of the KMT’s Chinese Cultural Renaissance, military theatres played an active role in the cultural preservation of Peking Opera. Due to the government’s full support and encouragement, there were more than ten theatres in the military; ever since that time, Peking Opera has been highly respected as *Kuo-Ju* in Taiwan. Peking Opera was first officially broadcast on television in the 1970s, enabling audiences outside Taipei to watch the performances, and the TV programs remain popular today. Nevertheless, an over-protective policy towards Peking Opera resulted in the decline of other such local theatres in Taiwan, and in 1969 Qi-lin Theatre, the last civic Peking Opera Theatre, was disbanded. Subsequently, the military gained control of every Peking Opera theatre in Taiwan.<sup>47</sup>

### **1.5 The Decline of Peking Opera as the National Opera of Taiwan**

Even though Peking Opera became national opera in Taiwan and was given full government and military support and protection, it still could not avoid a decline, leading to its subsequent reformation, as it searched or inspiration was sought from Western theatre, which will be discussed later.

The reasons for Peking Opera’s decline are numerous. Due to the KMT’s suppression and marginalisation of other local theatrical and art forms, it was even harder for Peking Opera to integrate into local cultures. Further, when Peking Opera became the national opera, the gap deepened between its nationalised identity and the local identity of other local

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<sup>46</sup> Perng, “At the Crossroads,” 129.

<sup>47</sup> Yang, *Taiwan Qingnian*, 73-4.

traditional opera art forms. Correspondingly, estrangement between Mainlander refugees and Taiwanese people intensified as a result of conflict over other national and local issues.

To many, therefore, Peking Opera as a *national* cultural icon in Taiwan represented a Chinese image that was imposed and superimposed on the Taiwanese people. Establishing it as the national opera and suppression of other local dramatic forms consequently was regarded as a source of disparagement of the Taiwanese national identity. The KMT is believed to have aimed to “rid the island of any sense of a separate Taiwanese identity ... [and to] disparage all things associated specifically with the Taiwan province.”<sup>48</sup> The KMT did not intend to erase all differences between foreign Mainlanders (*Waishengren*) and the local Taiwanese (*Benshengren*). But the government’s policy reinforced *Benshengren* opposition and antipathy towards the *Waishengren*, because the KMT-imposed national identity was never fully accepted as the national identity by the Taiwanese people. For them, the KMT regime was warily, covertly compared to other, previous colonisers of Taiwan, such as the Japanese (1895-1945), and the Dutch (1622-1662). They, too, had attempted to eliminate the voice and dissent of local inhabitants by *re-education* efforts intended to implant the coloniser’s culture. In *Kingdom of Desire*, Peking Opera was the KMT’s powerful means to rectify and remedy the previously existing identity of the Taiwanese. The KMT never regarded Taiwan as an independent country – far from it – but rather treated it as a colony, or military base by which it planned to retake the Mainland.

Between 1945 (after Japanese rule) and 1949 (when the KMT retreated to Taiwan), there was actually a time when other types of Taiwanese civic traditional operas were numerous and rather prosperous. As most of the civic operas derived from Mainland China, it is evident that Taiwan was actually a multicultural society where foreign cultures were welcomed to blend in. However, it was not until the KMT recognised Peking Opera as the only national opera that these civic operas began to disappear.<sup>49</sup> In addition, in 1971, the KMT started implementing a plan to make Mandarin the official language in Taiwan. Taiwanese-language television programmes were cut down to one hour per day, resulting in the rapid decline of traditional, local Taiwanese operatic forms.

With the onset of the Chinese Cultural Renaissance Movement in 1967, the KMT attempted to replace the whole of Taiwanese society with pre-communist Chinese culture. The Council of the Chinese Cultural Renaissance Movement was launched in the same year,

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<sup>48</sup> Guy, “Peking Opera,” 91.

<sup>49</sup> “Taiwan Chuantong Xiqu Fenghua - Taiwan De Ouxi,” [台灣傳統戲曲風華 - 傳統戲曲的回顧與省思] (The History of Taiwanese Traditional Operas – The Review and Reflection of Traditional Operas) [http://web.pu.edu.tw/~folkwtw/theater/theater\\_a15.htm](http://web.pu.edu.tw/~folkwtw/theater/theater_a15.htm) (Accessed 15 May 2009).

although its political purposes were more enhanced than its purported cultural purposes. As part of the suppression of movement, Taiwanese traditional cultures were more constrained than ever before, while the remaining Japanese influences were also erased entirely. Post-1949, the Mandarin-only movement was rigidly implemented in elementary schools, so that speaking other local Taiwanese languages, such as Taiwanese and Hakka, was strictly forbidden. A Mandarin Promotion Committee in 1946 abolished all Japanese publications and immediately banned use of the Japanese language. As a consequence, suddenly, the Taiwanese people were rendered illiterate. Later in 1956, speaking Taiwanese was absolutely forbidden in every school on the island, with the single language policy strictly enforced. The way in which the KMT treated the Taiwanese people, therefore, was little different from the Japanese government in terms of oppression of local languages and cultures. Furthermore, the way in which the KMT completely rejected the value of local cultures was akin to treating Taiwan as a colony. The KMT effectively transformed Taiwan into a metaphorical *backyard*, from which they could attempt to recover Chinese culture for themselves.<sup>50</sup>

Under the shadow of the KMT's four-decade-long White Terror period, Taiwan's own native cultures, arts and languages all became taboo, even dangerous subjects. Arts and culture were used as political and military tools to enforce ideological educational policies and propaganda, as part of governmental decrees. As a result, traditional operatic performances were comprehensively constrained by the government; civic operatic theatres were only allowed to perform under the aegis of Armed Forces Day's celebration, the remembrance of Dr. Sun Yat-sen's<sup>51</sup> birthday and such events. Over time, with the exception of Peking Opera, traditional operatic forms in Taiwan barely managed to survive, as being cut off from governmental cultural resources threatened their existence. Indeed, the government paid more attention to Mainland Chinese culture than Taiwan's, more to changing than preservation of local tradition, more to the West than native Taiwanese, and more to cities than towns. In many cases, traditional local Taiwanese cultures were completely obliterated, resulting in a widespread ignorance and disdain among the younger generation towards their own native traditional arts.

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<sup>50</sup> Tai Pao-tsun [戴寶村], *Jianming Taiwanshi* [簡明台灣史] (The Concise History of Taiwan) (Nantou: Taiwan Historica [國史館台灣文獻館], 2007), 180.

<sup>51</sup> Dr. Sun Yat-sen was regarded as the 'national father' of the Republic of China on Taiwan.

## 1.6 The Need for Reformation in Peking Opera

Over time, the inflexible and conservative performance style of Peking Opera became less and less appreciated by younger audiences. In the 1970s, there were two cultural mainstreams in Taiwanese society: the official orthodoxy primarily in favour of preserving pre-communist Chinese cultures, and another that favoured modernism and localism – largely supported by the significant number of intellectuals who had returned from study abroad.<sup>52</sup> The most groundbreaking productions were the Lan-ling Theatre Workshop's [蘭陵劇坊] *Ho-Chu's New Match* [荷珠新配] (1980)<sup>53</sup> and the Performance Workshop's *The Night We Became Hsiang-Sheng Comedians* (1985).<sup>54</sup> These two productions reflected the attitude of the second generation's rethinking of traditional art, through comedy. There was tragicomedy; tragedy within the comedy and comedy within the tragedy. Lan-ling Theatre Workshop's *Ho-Chu's New Match* in 1980 is often regarded as the beginning of the Little Theatre Movement in Taiwan, with young artists continuing to express their dissatisfaction with politics and society. There was rebellion and a sense of creativity through the art they presented.<sup>55</sup> At that time, the old, rigid world of Peking Opera was about to be shaken.<sup>56</sup>

Although Peking Opera fully developed under state protection and support, in the late 1970s it faced a crisis and the need for reform became apparent. There were many reasons that Peking Opera had to face the situation, such as the issue of low attendance of Mandarin performances (compared to other Taiwanese-language performances much more favoured by the Taiwanese), and the cliché-ridden texts of Chinese history and legend that were trite and overused in productions. However, the primary obstacle was still the generation gap, between the first generation of Mainlanders and the post-war generation of both Mainlander and Taiwanese. According to Peking Opera Scholar Wang An-qi [王安祈], the real concern about Peking Opera was not whether there would be actors carrying on the tradition, but whether there would be the audiences to sustain it.<sup>57</sup> For the first generation of soldiers from China, Peking Opera was the prevailing consolation and form of entertainment. However, 20 years later, most of these soldiers had either died or retired. This generation of soldiers, mostly Taiwan-born and with little appreciation for Peking Opera, were thus forced to watch it onstage every evening, as an additional obligation and part of their military duty. As Wu

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<sup>52</sup> Lu, *Juejing Mengya*, 118.

<sup>53</sup> Lan-Ling Theatre Workshop was the first Amateur Experimental Theatre in Taiwan.

<sup>54</sup> Both Workshops are private theatres. As they were regarded as experimental theatres, they were called workshops instead of theatres.

<sup>55</sup> For the history and development of Little Theatre Movement, refer to Chapter 4, *Titus Andronicus*.

<sup>56</sup> Lu, *Juejing Mengya*, 165-6.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

recalled, the new generation's lack of enthusiasm made watching it an unpleasant and unwelcome duty, and making performance a distinct chore for the actors.<sup>58</sup> Peking Opera, as a symbolic tradition, was inevitably ripe for change in order to accommodate this generational gap.

The concern about Peking Opera's decline was not only felt in Taiwan but in China. In order to make a change and fix the problem, during the Cross-Straits Peking Opera Exchange Conference [海峽兩岸京劇交流座談會會議] in Beijing [北京長安大戲院] in 2000, Wu Ruiquan [吳瑞泉] suggested three ways of developing a new direction for Peking Opera:

1. The encouragement of Peking Opera adaptations, directions and performances for children in order to foster an appreciation of new Peking Opera in younger audiences.
2. Retaining traditional classic performances to satisfy the demand by loyal middle-aged and elderly audiences.
3. Localisation of Peking Opera and innovative adaptation of play scripts that incorporate a modern meaning and spirit, in order to attract teens and educated audiences.<sup>59</sup>

So far, the National Taiwan College of Performing Arts has taken responsibility for fostering young Taiwan audiences and has produced several Children's Peking Opera plays for the public. Concerning the localisation of Peking Opera, the civic Contemporary Legend Theatre has taken on the challenge of creating contemporary Peking Opera plays for new such audiences.

However, in Taiwan there was not only concern about a generation gap causing Peking Opera's decline but also one of in ethnicity between Mainlanders and Taiwanese. In order to save it, Peking Opera had to be integrated, localised and accepted in Taiwan first, because of the increasing local consciousness in the 1980s with regard to Taiwan's identity in the international community. In the early 1980s, there were two significant events that changed Taiwan's international relationships: it was expelled from the United Nations in 1971 after the KMT refused to recognise the existence of the People's Republic of China and insisted that the Republic of China in Taiwan was the only legitimate government to represent China in the United Nations. Shortly thereafter, in 1972, a dispute arose with Japan over sovereignty of the Diao-Yu-Tai Islands. By that time, Taiwan had been ruled as a subordinate colony for several decades by the KMT administration. However, as time passed,

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>59</sup> "The Conference Record of Cross-Straits Peking Opera Exchange Conference." (Sep. 2000) [http://www.kk.gov.tw/onweb.jsp?webno=333333215&webitem\\_no=663](http://www.kk.gov.tw/onweb.jsp?webno=333333215&webitem_no=663) (accessed 17 February 2008).

the population's *Taiwan identity* began to re-awaken and the notion of Taiwan as an independent country became an extremely important and controversial issue for the public.

When the military theatre age ended in 1995, it was right at the time when tensions about the cross-strait relationship and the voice of localisation inside Taiwan were experiencing a watershed moment. The “Two Countries Discourse”<sup>60</sup> claimed by the first democratically elected president, Lee Teng-hui, in 1999, drew the threat of an attack by the People's Republic of China. Lee Teng-hui's discourse<sup>61</sup> deepened the chasm between Taiwanese local consciousness and KMT-promulgated Chinese consciousness. In this regard, Peking Opera became a highly visible target for blame, with the local Taiwanese legislator accusing the art form of being over-protected by the Chinese (referring to those who emigrated to Taiwan after 1945). Furthermore, native Taiwanese speakers (of Hoklo, the Minnan language of Fujian Province) often found it difficult to understand and fully appreciate the Beijing-accented Chinese used in Peking Opera. Many began demanding the localisation of Peking Opera. As compromise, the National Guoguang Opera Company, which had incorporated disbanded military theatres in 1995, started to produce plays based on important figures and stories to the Taiwanese, such as Matsu [媽祖] (the most popular folk deity in Taiwan, who originated in Fujian), Zheng Chenggong [鄭成功] (known in the West as Koxinga [國姓爺], a Chinese general who was sent to Formosa and “recovered” it from Dutch colonial occupation) and Liao Tianding [廖添丁] (Taiwan's own Robin Hood-type figure who was born in Taiwan).<sup>62</sup> Under the influence of localism, Peking Opera was no longer regarded as the only orthodox opera in Taiwan, but one of many ‘traditional’ operatic forms. The Fu-hsing Dramatic Arts Academy also realised that they needed to bend to public opinion and subsequently launched a new education scheme for Taiwanese Opera in 1994.

At the end of the 1980s, with a rise in Taiwan consciousness and encouragement for democratic politics, people began looking for answers from the traditional local Taiwanese operas, even though there had been a crisis surrounding passing on traditional opera legacies.

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<sup>60</sup> With regard to the translation of this discourse, there were disagreements between the governors in Taiwan. Instead of a “Two Countries Discourse,” some argued that it should be called “the discourse of two states in one nation,” meaning “one China, two states” or “two states in one nation.” After several discussions within the government, it was agreed that “two states in one nation” would be the most appropriate term to describe the cross-strait relationship. See Chen Yishen [陳儀深], “Cong Lianguolun Fengbo Kan Taiwan Jianli Xinguo De Chuqing,” [從兩國論風波看台灣建立新國的處境] (Looking at the Dilemma of Taiwan as a New Country from the Discourse of Two States Discussion) <http://taup.yam.org.tw/announce/9911/docs/03.html> (accessed 22 April 2009). However, here I would still like to use the term ‘country’ in contrast to the term ‘state’ to reflect my understanding of this discourse. In fact, using Google searches, two-thirds of references use the term ‘Two States Discourse’, while one-third of the references use the term ‘Two Countries Discourse’.

<sup>61</sup> Chen, “Cong Lianguolun,” (accessed 22 April 2009).

<sup>62</sup> Lu, *Juejing Mengya*, 203.

It was also as a consequence of the setback in Taiwan's international diplomatic relationships that the Taiwanese people began to reflect on, and rediscover, the essence of their own traditional cultures. As a result of this quest, Peking Opera became the primary cultural resource for many artistic groups in their assimilation of traditional cultures. People began to pay more attention to different kinds of traditional cultures and to other operatic music. Under these circumstances, a civic theatre – the Ya Yin Ensemble [雅音小集] – was founded by Kuo Hsiao-Chuang [郭小莊] in 1978.<sup>63</sup>

The Ya Yin Ensemble was the vanguard in Taiwan, breaking Peking Opera's deadlock in the late 1970s and halting a decline in popularity. There are two main reasons why the Ya Yin Ensemble was successful: first, Ya Yin was open to senior audiences *and* the younger generation; second, its adaptations of traditional plays were much easier to understand.<sup>64</sup> Modern theatre was infused into Peking Opera, something no one previously had the courage to attempt. The Ya Yin Ensemble made monotonous Peking Opera more accessible and more fashionable. The Ya Yin Ensemble's greatest contribution was to attract more Taiwanese from the younger generation to Peking Opera theatre. Even if the Ya Yin Ensemble revolted against the orthodox approach of traditional Peking Opera, it also transformed it – from a surviving tradition of the previous generation into a modern, contemporary and refined cultural art for the new one.<sup>65</sup>

Long before the Contemporary Legend Theatre opened, the Ya Yin Ensemble had broken new ground in modernising and introducing a new form of Peking Opera. Nevertheless, the Contemporary Legend Theatre was not merely following what the Ya Yin Ensemble had been doing – innovating Peking Opera itself. Instead, it was taking a step forward by reconsidering possibilities offered by a different style of performance used in contemporary Chinese Opera. For Wu, most importantly, it was the fact that Kuo had successfully brought audiences back to the traditional theatres; and to his surprise these were the same audiences who many years previously had lost interest in traditional Peking Opera. This re-kindled Wu's hopes about the prospects of Peking Opera.<sup>66</sup> However, bringing a younger audience back to the traditional theatre was not enough in and of itself; Wu had foreseen that the reform of Peking Opera was imperative, and it was at this point that the notion of the Contemporary Legend Theatre came to him.

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<sup>63</sup> Yang, *Taiwan Qingnian*, 75.

<sup>64</sup> Lu, *Juejing Mengya*, 139-40.

<sup>65</sup> Yang, *Taiwan Qingnian*, 75.

<sup>66</sup> Lu, *Juejing Mengya*, 69, 154.

The establishment of the Contemporary Legend Theatre (a civic theatre) in 1986 pursued the fusion of traditional and modern, as well as maintaining an open attitude and resolve to integrate theatrical art from East and West.<sup>67</sup> Like the Ya Yin Ensemble, the name *Wu Hsing-kuo* created strong controversy in the world of traditional Peking Opera, and Wu was recognised as a pioneer.

1986 was a landmark year in Taiwan's recent history, a watershed moment between the end of a martial era and the beginning of a new, more open phase in its history, a time between restraint and release, and between autocracy and democracy.<sup>68</sup> The most significant change in 1986 was the official creation of the Democratic Progress Party (DPP) as an opposition party under the silent acquiescence of Chiang Ching-kuo [蔣經國], the KMT leader, President of the R.O.C. and Chiang Kai-shek's son. It was the first time that a political party was allowed to form in opposition to the KMT, which had been a one-party state under martial law. The KMT permitted the coming of the democratic age. Although martial law was not lifted until 1987 (peacefully abolished by Chiang Ching-kuo who died soon after in 1988), 1986 was a significant year of freedom and innovation, and a symbol of the new democratic age. This situation is comparable to the denouement of *Macbeth* because in Taiwan, 1986 signified the end of autocracy, restraint, suppression and a life of effective imprisonment for the Taiwanese. Subsequently, Taiwan local theatres were revived, with Peking Opera the first of these to be affected. In the 1990s, many operatic theatre companies from Mainland China were given permission to visit and perform in Taiwan, which consequently caused a rapid depression in Taiwan's performance market. In addition, the government intended to share its cultural resources equally between different theatrical forms and pay attention to diverse kinds of art forms. Military theatre budgets were reduced significantly, with the theatres themselves finally disbanding in 1994 and incorporated into the National Guo-guang Opera Company in 1995, indicating the end of the military theatre age.<sup>69</sup>

As a consequence of the KMT's changeable policies over the years, the Taiwanese have created a unique form of Peking Opera, perhaps the closest to Chinese tradition while offering a localised version of performance in Taiwan – one that significantly differs from the native Peking Opera performed in Mainland China. The Contemporary Legend Theatre, for instance, was looking for a new generation of creativity and a breakthrough to change the

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<sup>67</sup> Yang, *Taiwan Qingnian*, 76.

<sup>68</sup> Lu, *Juejing Mengya*, 69, 165.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 177-8.

means of communication between Peking Opera and the wider world, something that was not until very recently a priority in Mainland China. In a way, the KMT's use of Peking Opera as an apparatus of propaganda control and its bias against other local Taiwanese cultures seem to have pushed both Peking Opera and local Taiwanese cultures to be self-supporting. Through the Contemporary Legend Theatre's first adaptation, *Kingdom of Desire*, Wu's achievement was not only known globally, but also successfully connected to the new young audience in Taiwan and reduced the gap between generations. Under the severe conditions of Peking Opera's poor market appeal, Wu became a pioneer of localising Peking Opera. *Kingdom of Desire* is a Peking Opera adaptation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, with Wu integrating the Western play's script with traditions of the Eastern stage. However, it is evident that Wu not only localised Shakespeare's work but also localised the staging of Peking Opera in Taiwan. The irony is that Wu could not have achieved this without the government's over-protective policy towards Peking Opera. Significant differences can be seen when comparing Peking Opera's development in Taiwan to that of China's. In 2001, the China Peking Opera Theatre bought the copyright to *Kingdom of Desire* for ¥400,000 RMB (around £40,000 now) to perform it at the Beijing Poly Theatre. It was the first time that Taiwan had exported Chinese-born Peking Opera back to Mainland China. In other words, even the most conservative Peking Opera, with its unshakable position in Mainland Chinese culture, had come to realise that they had to widen their performance path. Wu was invited to Beijing to personally direct *Kingdom of Desire*. Nevertheless, without having experienced the same dilemmas as the Taiwanese Peking Opera actors, the traditional Peking Opera actors in Mainland China could not comprehend how they were to leave behind all the traditional regulations, nor how this new style of Peking Opera could work in modern theatre.<sup>70</sup> The civic theatres in Taiwan had sensed a crisis in Peking Opera long before those in Mainland China.

Ironically, although Wu barely survived the oppression from the Taiwanese government's over-protective policies, his *Kingdom of Desire* made history as the first new Peking Opera to shake the tradition. Breaking from the orthodox Peking Opera from China, Wu's Contemporary Legend Theatre became the cradle for development of a unique Taiwanese Peking Opera. Through the adaptation of *Kingdom of Desire*, Wu hence proves to others the feasibility of combining the contemporary with legend, modernity with tradition and Peking Opera with Shakespeare.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 179.

### 1.7 Political Concept of Peking Opera in *Kingdom of Desire*

Wu recalls that when he first decided to experiment with modernising Peking Opera through Shakespeare, he felt like he'd been pushed to the edge of a cliff— just like the character Aoshu Zheng<sup>71</sup> in his *Kingdom of Desire*, who also stands on the edge of a chasm, facing the consequence of his actions.<sup>72</sup> *Kingdom of Desire* premiered in 1986, at a time of great political upheaval in Taiwan, when it was transforming from the military absolutism of KMT rule into a more democratic age. The 33-year-old Wu was also at the centre of a cultural transition from traditional Peking Opera to a more innovative one.

That year was a time of crisis, a liminal zone between tradition and modernity for Wu, and between a system of democracy and autocracy for the KMT government. Just one step further would be to enter a new age in which no one could predict the ensuing consequences; the same holds for the character of Aoshu Zheng who takes the first step toward taking over the throne by killing his king. Aoshu Zheng would never foresee his downfall – betrayal by his soldiers. The KMT would never foresee either how its first democratic move to lift martial law in 1987 would perhaps be the greatest threat to its political hegemony in Taiwan.

Wu's dilemma was to be haunted by his reformation of Peking Opera, an art form fettered by old conventions, long inscribed with the Chinese identity. Wu's modernising approach to Peking Opera was strongly opposed by the Peking Opera establishment, which was dominated by Mainlanders, and Peking Opera was so rigid an institution that it could not allow itself to be challenged. In *Kingdom of Desire*, the rigid conventions within Peking Opera not only provide a parallel for Macbeth's absolutism in Shakespeare's play, but draw a parallel with KMT autocracy at that time. Regardless of the lifting of martial law, the KMT, promulgating a Chinese identity as the national one, brooked no challenges by the Taiwanese. In the same way that Aoshu Zheng (Macbeth) reassures himself by thinking there is no way the forest could move, the establishment was convinced that Peking Opera traditions could and would not be changed.

Nevertheless, Peking Opera's deeply-rooted traditions and the KMT's 38-year-long hegemony were both shaken and subverted. Through Wu's innovation, reformation and during the struggle of Taiwanese public protests, the line, "the forest...the forest is indeed...moving" meant something serious in 1986 Taiwan, in both the theatre and in politics:

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<sup>71</sup> Aoshu, a counterpart of the role of Macbeth, performed by Wu Hsing-kuo.

<sup>72</sup> Lu, *Juejing Mengya*, 176.

Aoshu Zheng: The forest ... the forest is indeed ... moving! It cannot be! The forest is moving! It cannot be! The forest! How ... could the ... forest ... [Turns to see his troops, who are now in a state of confusion.] Every man to his post! What are you doing there, just staring into space!! [All are quiet and not following the orders.] Huh! Why is no one moving? Do not tell me ... that you ... you! ... you are going to present my head to the state of Yen! [Shoo! The first arrow flies through the air.] Traitors! Seize them! [The second arrow is shot towards Aoshu Zheng from another direction. One after another, the arrows are shot up at the fortress. One of them pierces Aoshu Zheng's body. He staggers and falls off the fortress; he is frightened. Finally Aoshu falls to the ground and dies. The 'forest' rushes into the scene, waiving slowly. The laughter from the Mountain Spirit is heard with the theme music.]<sup>73</sup>

With the roaring wind and shrill neighing of horses, Aoshu Zheng finally realises that the forest *is* moving, witnessing his imminent failure and the betrayal of his soldiers. At the end of *Kingdom of Desire*'s premiere, Peking Opera is also *shaking and moving*. The 10-kilogram helmet and armour, the costume that Wu wore onstage, seemed to represent the heavy burden and duty he carried to perpetuate Peking Opera tradition. The world of Peking Opera's tradition was then torn asunder when the arrows hit Aoshu Zheng's body and he fell over the cliff.

However, Wu Hsing-kuo is not the only person who saw the tradition of Peking Opera changing – so did other operatic actors who participated in this revolution, in which they practiced what Wu preached. They worked together with Wu, incorporating traditional Peking Opera characters (*Sheng, Dan, Jing* and *Chou*) into Shakespeare's characters; conversely, Shakespeare's characters were also modified to integrate with Peking Opera characters.

For the last two decades, Taiwanese society has been as isolated as its island, on the margins of world culture. In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, while Taiwan was deeply influenced by Western culture, it was powerless and unable to rebel against this hegemony. Peking Opera was one of the traditional cultures suffering greatly from the influence of Westernisation. As a consequence of its conservative regulations, Peking Opera was gradually moving from the centre to the margin, facing possibility of closure. Wu's priority was to push Peking Opera from the world margin back to the centre, or at least to push it away from the margins of society, to avoid risking its disappearing entirely.

To do this, Wu had to challenge two central cultures. One was ancient Chinese tradition, because Peking Opera was at least 200 years old and extremely resistant to change.

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<sup>73</sup> All citations of *Kingdom of Desire*, translated by Karen Steffen Chung, is provided by the Contemporary Legend Theatre with some changes of stage direction.

The other was the Western canonical dramatist William Shakespeare, with 400 years of history that had never before had an encounter with Peking Opera. No matter what the ending might be, the dialogue between Peking Opera and Shakespeare had begun.

When Wu borrowed material from the West, it was intended to be valued from a different angle, rather than a point for criticism as an Occidentalist. There are two purposes for the East-West dialogue, as Wang An-chi explains; to provoke or stimulate the present performance system by using novel Western materials, whilst strengthening the weaknesses of traditional opera by borrowing from the world's canons.<sup>74</sup> Peking Opera looks at itself through the lens of Shakespeare, and vice versa. When juxtaposed, they both expose their weaknesses to each other, which they are both incapable of seeing from their own perspective. For hundreds of years, Peking Opera relied on its singing, acting, dancing and acrobatic skills, but it could not engage with its audience simply by repeatedly performing the same moral stories from the previous 100 years. Furthermore, it takes a long time and sufficient exposure to appreciate the traditional skills of Peking Opera. Unfortunately, the younger generation rarely have enough leisure time or inclination to gain this level of experience.

It was evident that Peking Opera was in urgent need of good new plays. The key problem was that traditional operatic drama did not use a script as such. Most artists were illiterate, so the only way for them to learn the plays was orally, through memorisation. They either learnt the lyrics from their teachers through reciting the works or by improvising on stage knowing an outline of the plots. Such improvisation can be rather free and extemporaneous, but it can also be disorganised, resulting in a loose narrative structure. Insufficient stage experience by the actors can also result in chaos and confusion for audiences. At present, civic theatre troupes still perform with these improvised plays, while official theatres have been forced to provide scripts for theirs in order to obtain funding for public performances. Thus a lack of good scripts has been a particular predicament for all Taiwan operatic dramas. Also, the plots of most traditional operas are rather dull and foolish, filled with feudal thoughts about sexual discrimination, filial piety and blind loyalty, all values largely unacceptable to modern audiences. Even though the Ministry of Education, the National Culture and Arts Foundation, the Cultural Affairs Bureau and other organisations in Taiwan have held different competitions to find them, traditional operatic play scripts, good ones are still needed more than ever. One main obstacle is that due to the complicated application of operatic language, rhythmic lyrics and coordination of music,

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 70.

writing a traditional operatic script is far more difficult than say, writing a television script or for a contemporary play. For this reason, many operatic theatres in Taiwan have had to turn to China to purchase scripts, make adaptations or invite a playwright or director to the island to direct or present their productions;<sup>75</sup> then however, this would not be considered a *Taiwanese* production. In response, there has always been a tendency amongst some Taiwanese to create scripts for their own local plays. Wu made that first leap by borrowing one of Shakespeare's plays; though he had not studied the English version of the Shakespeare original, indirectly he learned it through Akira Kurosawa's Shakespearean film adaptation *Throne of Blood*.

In fact, Wu's first encounter with Shakespeare was rather accidental. Before the Contemporary Legend Theatre was founded, he'd spent a great deal of time considering how to match the stylistic language and forms of Peking Opera with the rhythms of modern life. A friend of Wu's, Hsu Poyun, introduced him to the work of the Ninagawa Theatre Company and its director, Akira Kurosawa.<sup>76</sup> Inspired, Wu also began mingling Eastern and Western traditions. Wu's wife, Lin Xiuwei [林秀偉], happened to watch an outdoor production by the Ninagawa Theatre Company when she was in New York, an adaptation of *Medea* that mixed elements of two Japanese traditions – Noh and Kabuki. This example made a strong impression on Wu and also gave him the confidence to combine Eastern traditional art with elements of the Western canon. Kurosawa's film adaptation of *Macbeth* in 1957 – *Throne of Blood* (also known as *Spider Web Castle*<sup>77</sup>) greatly influenced Wu's *Kingdom of Desire*, with Wu confessing that, as a result of “those innermost processes to represent power and desire through the symbolisation of the stage ... I have always kept in the shadow of Akira Kurosawa. ...”<sup>78</sup> Its influence on Wu can be seen especially in the storyline of *Kingdom of Desire* as its text is much closer to *Throne of Blood* than to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Diamond even argues that “*Kingdom of Desire* is not a Beijing opera of *Macbeth* but an adaptation of *Throne of Blood*.”<sup>79</sup> Nevertheless, regardless of textual similarities in these two

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<sup>75</sup>“Jiushisan Niandu Jiaoyubu Wenyi Chuangzuojiang <Chuantong Xiju Juben> Pingshen Ganyan,” [九十三年度教育部文藝創作獎「傳統戲劇劇本」評審感言] (The Referee Reflections of Traditional Opera Script in the Contest of the Ministry of Education, the National Culture and Arts Foundation, the Cultural Affairs Bureau, 2004) [http://web.pu.edu.tw/~folkwtw/theater/theater\\_h12.htm](http://web.pu.edu.tw/~folkwtw/theater/theater_h12.htm) (accessed 18 May 2009).

<sup>76</sup> Lu, *Juejing Mengya*, 65.

<sup>77</sup> *Throne of Blood* is the English title of the film. *Spider Web Castle* is the Chinese translated title because the moving forest is called the Spider Forest in the film to signify desire. Once someone falls into the trap of one's own desire, like an insect falling into a spider's web, they are doomed.

<sup>78</sup> Lu, *Juejing Mengya*, 172.

<sup>79</sup> Catherine Diamond, “*Kingdom of Desire: The Three Faces of Macbeth*,” *Asian Theatre Journal* 11.1 (Spring 1994): 118. Examples of similarities between *Kingdom of Desire* and *Throne of Blood* are: the character of Duncan in both adaptations is portrayed as a dubious tyrant; Macbeth does not kill Banquo out of fear but

adaptations, Kurosawa's work did inspire Wu to engage with Western material to reinterpret Peking Opera, a unique accomplishment in itself.

Afterwards, Wu started to dabble in different kinds of modern Eastern and Western art, studying the plays of Shakespeare, Beckett and Chekhov and observing different styles of film. "If Peking Opera could have an influence on Brecht, the German dramatist, and lead Brecht to discover the theatre of alienation ... then what could we bring into the theatre to transform Peking Opera?"<sup>80</sup> In 1984, two years before *Kingdom of Desire* was conceived, "to adapt Western canonical works" had become a mission for Wu and his Contemporary Legend Theatre.<sup>81</sup> After discussing with friends, Wu thought of a Chinese play in Peking Opera, *Fa Zi Du* [伐子都]<sup>82</sup> that had similarities with Shakespeare's *Macbeth*: both describe power and desire leading to the tragic fall of a nation, and they also exploit the appearance of a ghost to punish the moral conscience of the central character. In addition, *Fa Zi Du* is a warrior (martial) play and this happened to fit Wu's professional role on the Peking Opera stage, since he was professionally trained in the role of *Wu Sheng* (a male warrior). Thus, Eastern theatre and Western canon had their first amalgamation and this is how *Kingdom of Desire* came into being.

*Kingdom of Desire* was Wu's first attempt, and, tasked with the responsibility of carrying on the tradition of Peking Opera – as well as having to maintain a subtle balance between Peking Opera and Shakespeare – he did not make too many changes. Even though Wu was extremely cautious about which changes he did introduce, his innovations in Peking Opera were neither understood nor appreciated by the older audience. For example, Wei Haimin [魏海敏]<sup>83</sup> received a letter from an opera fan imploring her to leave Wu or it would destroy her future career.<sup>84</sup> It is not hard to understand such an anti-modernisation attitude, because a common Chinese proverb states that "the law of the ancestors cannot be changed [祖宗之法不可變]." To change or challenge traditions means challenging hegemony and betraying ancestors. For the Chinese people, betraying one's ancestors is the most

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because Lady Macbeth is pregnant; and the reason Lady Macbeth loses her mind is not because she involves in the murder of Duncan, but because she suffers the loss of her unborn baby.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>81</sup> Later in the introduction to the Contemporary Legend Theatre, it says: "to adapt Western canonical works with elements of traditional Chinese Opera, to fuse eastern and Western theatre art, and to strike a new path for traditional Chinese Opera – such features have become the troupe's hallmarks." See the *Kingdom of Desire* programme.

<sup>82</sup> *Fa Zi Du* is a play depicting the story of Zi Du, who out of jealousy murders his Commander in chief after the victory of battle. Similar to *Macbeth*'s plot, Zi Du is haunted by the victim's ghost, but ends up killing himself at the end. Most of the characters including Zi Du were all real figures in history (around 600 B.C.), but the story was simply invented and later used in the performance of Peking Opera.

<sup>83</sup> Wei Hai-min is a leading Peking Opera actress who cooperated many times with Wu.

<sup>84</sup> Lu, *Juejing Mengya*, 168.

unbearable and unthinkable thing to do. Some would rather Peking Opera be killed off than see it conquered by, or surrendered to, the Western canon. Traditionalists could not appreciate any opportunities presented by this dialogue between Shakespeare and Peking Opera. In his introduction to *The Contemporary Legend of Wu*, Hsu states:

An outstanding artist has to be able to forget his master, style, and skill, but cannot forget the soul. I look forward to seeing the Contemporary Legend Theatre get rid of the Peking Opera, modern dance, Shakespeare, singing arias, and the operatic style. Though I understand this could be difficult and possibly a disaster, I am sure it would be both a big loss and a big gain. I trust that the Contemporary Legend Theatre will have the chance to achieve it.<sup>85</sup>

Even if some like Hsu were encouraging, the first dialogue between Wu and Shakespeare still had to be negotiated very cautiously because at each step opposing voices were waiting to react. Wu had to sacrifice the traditional, find his way, and find the right balance. During the process, not only did Wu have his own doubts but also his other young performers – who were personally obligated to help Wu – were somewhat confused. In the first place, *Kingdom of Desire* was a voluntary experiment, and they did not know whether they would be paid for their work; nor were they sure about whether they would actually have a chance to perform it. Wu was thus caught between two camps: one condemned him for betraying tradition, while the other questioned his understanding of Shakespeare. After all, Wu had little prior knowledge or experience of Shakespeare. At the same time, the young actors had reservations about Wu's revolutionary creativity, and had to face stress emanating from their own theatres because they were still trying to make a living by performing in military theatres. These were the sensitive dilemmas testing their limits: "How far can this creativity go? Where is the line between tradition and modernity? Can it really be accepted by an older audience?"<sup>86</sup>

In traditional Peking Opera, small parts such as soldiers and walk-ons do not have a life onstage and are merely a living part of the set.<sup>87</sup> Everyone goes to the theatre to see the leading characters and for their particular individual skills. However, in *Kingdom of Desire*, each soldier has his own life and part in the play, carrying the same responsibility as the protagonist. This was the first revolutionary change in Wu's version, where every character is of equal status on the stage, whether a fool or a king.

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 158.

Wu wanted to make innovative changes to Peking Opera, but had no idea of how to achieve them. After all, it was a reconciliation of Shakespeare and Peking Opera, so no one – not Shakespearean scholars or experts of Peking Opera – could offer him any advice or suggestions; he was on his own. Importantly, Wu claimed that he was not trying to destroy Peking Opera but searching for new operatic devices.<sup>88</sup> Thus, he brought Peking Opera back to the centre of focus from its decline by infusing different modern elements such as modern dance, stage plays and even film.

Nonetheless, the biggest problem was still with the actors. Wu addressed the difficulties for the actors by asking them to rid themselves of all the traditions they had learnt over the years and to accept the idea of breaking with tradition.<sup>89</sup> After all, Peking Opera is an actor's theatre, the kind of art that mainly focuses on the actors' performances.

There is a Chinese saying that one minute of brilliance by an actor onstage requires ten years of hard work, in off-stage practice [台上一分鐘, 台下十年功]. From the age of around 10-12 years old (Wu entered Peking Opera school at 12 and Wei Haimin at 10), Peking Opera actors were trained under a strict physical regime lasting at least eight years. A well-rounded actor must be perfect at singing, dialogue, acting, martial arts, dancing and acrobatic movements before they are ever allowed to perform onstage. The training focuses on five areas: the *hands* (expression, symbolic gestures), the *eyes* (conveying feelings and emotions), *body movements* (actors' movements within the performance space), *footwork* (rhythmic walking and moving) and *style* (combining the above-mentioned areas to present a character). Due to this heavy and complicated training, these skills are learned through recitation, with students having to repeat and remember every word the teachers say. The whole process of training can be very torturous, with the use of corporal punishment a common occurrence. In any Peking Opera school, whether in Mainland China or Taiwan, corporal punishment became part of the regular routine and was an important part of disciplining the students; it was to show the absolute authority of the teacher, as father figure. During the day, students exercise their basic skills in the morning, learn the performance sentence by sentence through recitation during the afternoon, and perform in the evening (or study academic subjects if there are no performances). Normally, a typical schedule in the daily life of a student is shown in Table 1.

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 170.

Table 1<sup>90</sup>

6:00	<i>Tanzi</i> (carpet) skills (including training in four-directional somersaults, leaps, jumps, and falls). For safety reasons, these skills are practised on a soft carpet.
7:30	Breakfast
8:30	Basic training (leg and waist exercises)
10:30	<i>Bazi</i> (combat) skills (stage weapons including the broadsword, spear, sword, long-handled axe, hook, fork, etc.)
12:00	Lunch
13:30	Voice training (singing)
15:30	Literature and History Study
17:30	Dinner (prepare for evening performances or evening studies)
19:00	Evening classes (Maths, Health Education, Ethics, etc.)
21:00	Class dismissed
22:00	Bedtime

The basic skills are best taught and learnt before students reach the age of ten years, when they have more flexible bodies and stronger agility and adaptability. After around six months of training at the school, teachers have a basic understanding of every student's body, voice and potential, so they can divide them into different characters according to their voice, body, appearance and IQ.

In the Western classical canon, there is tragedy and comedy, but in Peking Opera there are only the differences between *Wen Xi* [文戲] and *Wu Xi* [武戲]. Any student with a good voice will be chosen to study mainly *Wen Xi* (literary drama – no action involved), and students with a strong physique will be asked to study *Wu-Xi* (combat drama, action-dominated). Then after approximately one year, students can start practising or performing small characters onstage.<sup>91</sup> Wu and Wei both started performing main roles after a mere three years in school. After the initial training period, the whole process of eight years of training, life in school is based on daily exercise and accumulation of performance experience on stage.

The National Taiwan College of Performing Arts is now the only Peking Opera School in Taiwan, providing a 12-year, integrated curriculum starting from the fifth grade in elementary school (2 years), and junior high school (3 years), to vocational high school (3 years) and college (4 years). The tuition fees paid by students (from elementary school to high school) are all covered by the government. Only college students need to pay for themselves, although the school also offers some funding for these students. Peking Opera

<sup>90</sup> This table was provided by The Contemporary Legend Theatre with small explanatory details.

<sup>91</sup> Gao Xin [高新], *Zhongguo Jingju Shuyao* [中國京劇述要] (The State of Chinese Peking Opera) (Shandong: Shandong University Press, 2002), 235-268.

education today is not much different from how it was in the past. The students enrol in the fifth grade of elementary school to learn each kind of basic skill, such as *Bazi* skills [把子功] and *Tanzi* skills [毯子功]. The basic skills are highly emphasised for young students, to ensure the development of a good body shape. The only significant change has been the abolishment of corporal punishment to adapt to present-day sensibilities on the subject. The school's corporal punishment policy is no longer carried out on the younger generation of pupils, even though most teachers worry their students may not learn to have self-discipline.

After two years of basic skills training in elementary school, the same policy as previously, students are divided into four groups by their teachers according to their talents or perceived potential. However, the school is no longer just a place for training Peking Opera actors but is now also active in the education of directors, lighting technicians or even stage managers, according to students' general interests.<sup>92</sup> As the National Taiwan College of Performing Arts is also included in the formal educational system, apart from an education in Peking Opera, students need to study other general subjects like any other student – Maths, Mandarin, English, Biology, Sociology, Geography, Health Education, Arts and Crafts, IT skills, etc. The following tables illustrate the weekly schedules of a Peking Opera student at the National Taiwan College of Performing Arts. Table 2 is the schedule for the fifth grade in Elementary School when the students enrol for their first year. It is clear from the table that basic Peking Opera skills are still learnt during the very early morning.

Table 2<sup>93</sup>

Weekly schedule of the fifth grade in Elementary School  
at National Taiwan College of Performing Arts

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
6:00	Tanzi skills	Tanzi skills	Tanzi skills	Tanzi skills	Flexible
7:00	Tanzi skills	Tanzi skills	Tanzi skills	Tanzi skills	Flexible
8:00	Mandarin	Basic skills	Mandarin	Bazi skills	Mandarin
9:00	Sociology	Basic skills	Maths	Bazi skills	Maths
10:00	Art and Craft	Basic skills	Dance	Bazi skills	ICT
11:00	Maths	Basic skills	Mandarin	Bazi skills	Health
12:00					
13:00	Basic skills	Synthesis counselling	Music	Mandarin	Basic skills
14:00	Basic skills	Maths	Class	English	Basic skills

<sup>92</sup> “The National Taiwan College of Performing Arts [國立台灣戲曲學院],” <http://chop.tcpa.edu.tw/onweb.jsp?webno=333333367> (accessed 9 May 2008).

<sup>93</sup> This is translated and quoted from The National Taiwan College of Performing Arts' website. See <http://chop.tcpa.edu.tw/onweb.jsp?webno=333333366> (accessed 9 May 2008)

			meeting		
15:00	Bazi skills	Music	Group activity	Science	Bazi skills
16:00	Bazi skills	Physical education	Group activity	Science	Bazi skills
17:00	Basic skills	English	Bazi skills	Sociology	
18:00	Basic skills	Sociology	Bazi skills	Flexible	

After two years of basic training, the students advance to junior high school. On top of the pressure of having to study more subjects, their class hours for basic training are extended to 9pm.

Table 3<sup>94</sup>

The weekly schedule for the first grade in the Junior High School at National Taiwan College of Performing Arts

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
7:00	Early Study				
8:00	Peking Opera character study	English	Peking Opera character study	Citizen	History
9:00		Art and Craft		Maths	Health
10:00		Mandarin		Geography	Maths
11:00		Mandarin		Synthesis counselling	Maths
12:00					
13:00	Mandarin	Bazi skills	Mandarin	Literature study	Basic skills
14:00	Mandarin	Bazi skills	Class meeting	Basic skills	Basic skills
15:00	English	Bazi skills	Group activity	Peking Opera character study	Character study
16:00	English	Bazi skills			
17:00	Physical Education	Biology	ICT skills	Peking Opera singing study	
18:00			Peking Opera movement study	Make-up study	
19:00	Flexible	Flexible	Tanzi skills	Tanzi skills	
20:00	Flexible	Flexible	Tanzi skills	Basic skills	

After a total of eight years of education at the school, the students are able to choose either to study further in college, to stay and work in the school's own theatre or switch to other performance-related careers.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

Peking Opera is a world with strict rules and firm standards. Peking Opera tradition is so rigid that no small movement can be neglected; there is no freedom at all. When students first enter Peking Opera school, according to the old rules they will be given a new name which will be used as their stage name. The real reason for this rule is lost; however, a possible explanation is that in the past, when operatic acting was regarded as a low and degrading profession, akin to the social status of begging, being given a new name would protect the actors' families from disgrace or provide the actor with a second life if relatives refused to admit them back into the family. In most cases, students had to pass an exam to be accepted into opera school, but occasionally students were sent by their parents due to the family's poor financial condition. Many years ago in Taiwan, in order to reduce the financial burden on the family, parents would often choose to send their children to opera school because it provided free board, lodging and education to students. Wu's and Wei Haimin's parents had to make this choice for their children. Another feature of the new names is that for each year's class, each student's last name will be the same, as a mark of kinship with fellow students. Taking Wu as an example, his original name was Wu Kuo-qiu. According to the rules at Fu-Hsing Dramatic Arts Academy, the new students for different years were named according to the order of "Fu Hsing Zhong Hua Wen Hua, Fa Yang Min Zu Lun Li Dao De [復興中華文化,發揚民族倫理道德]"<sup>95</sup> (literally meaning: to recover the Chinese culture, and increase the ethics and morals of the nation). Wu Kuo-Qiu [吳國秋] was a second year student after the school was founded, so his new name included the word 'Hsing'. This explains how he came to be called "Wu Hsing-kuo" afterwards and for the rest of his life. A similar case applies to the name of Wei Haimin, whose original name was Wei Min, but she was sent to the Xiao Hai-guang School of Opera, so her name was changed to show obedience. From day one, students were bound to obey every decision their teachers made for them, including the choice of their characters in future performances.

In Peking Opera school, there are many things about which students have no choice. When a student enrolls, they will leave their family and live in the school until completing their education. The only exception is a few days' annual vacation during the Chinese New Year. Their fellow students and teachers are like family, with the school regarded as another home. The teachers observe each student's character in their day-to-day life and choose characters for them after their first year in school. Although this system is autocratic, it is

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<sup>95</sup> Hsing is the Wade-Giles (romanisation pinyin). Others are hanyu pinyin. See Lu, *Juejing Mengya*, 92.

also very precise.<sup>96</sup> The characters/roles of Peking Opera are divided into four categories: *Sheng* [生], *Dan* [旦], *Jing* [淨] and *Chou* [丑].<sup>97</sup> Each character is decided according to sex, age, personality and social status. Strictly speaking, each actor is restricted to just one character, which is usually chosen and appointed by teachers according to looks, voice and talent. In Peking Opera, the four characters are categorised as either man, woman, young, old, handsome, ugly, good or evil. An audience can tell the difference between good and evil or hero and villain merely from the actors' decorative and exaggerated make-up. *Sheng* normally refers to male characters. Among *Sheng* characters, there are *Lao Sheng* [老生], *Xiao Sheng* [小生] and *Wu Sheng* [武生]. *Lao Sheng* is the male character who is typically educated, probably middle-aged, mature, calm and decent. *Lao Sheng*'s most recognisable feature is a beard. *Xiao Sheng* always portrays young men. *Wu Sheng* is a male warrior with excellent martial arts skills. *Dan* are female characters and divided into *Qing Yi* [青衣] (married women who are tender, staid and obedient), *Hua Dan* [花旦] (young women), *Dao Ma Dan* [刀馬旦] (married female warriors), *Wu Dan* [武旦] (female warriors), *Lao Dan* [老旦] (old women) and *Po La Dan* [潑辣旦] (shrewd women). The difference between *Dao Ma Dan* and *Wu Dan* is that *Dao Ma Dan* places more emphasis on acrobatic skills. Early in the history of Peking Opera, the *Dan* role was only performed by male actors, so the costumes and range of voices were shaped in light of the male actors' physiology. It was not until the 1930s (in Mainland China) that co-ed drama schools were first introduced, with female and male actors both formally allowed to perform together on stage. Nonetheless, after this change in practice, even though the role of *Dan* can be performed by female actors, from a professional point of view it is more difficult for the female actors to imitate male actors' singing and speaking voices. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the four most famous *Dan* actors – Mei Lanfang [梅蘭芳] (1894-1961), Shang Xiaoyun [尚小雲] (1900-1976), Cheng Yanqiu [程硯秋] (1904-1958) and Xun Huisheng [荀慧生] (1900-1968) – were all male.<sup>98</sup> The role of *Jing* (also called *Hua Lian* [花臉] – Painted Face), a major role in China's theatrical performing tradition, has the most colourful and exaggerated make-up of the four characters. In Peking Opera, a particular way of painting *Jing*'s face represents a particular identity of the character in the play: it may be a loyal, wicked or good man, a villain, a chivalrous hero, a politician, an adventurer or even non-human, such as supernatural beings or demons. Finally, the role of *Chou* is a typically

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 101-2.

<sup>97</sup> It used to be five categories: *Sheng*, *Dan*, *Jing*, *Mo* and *Chou*. But later on, *Mo* and *Sheng* were gradually mixed into one category, which has now developed into four characters.

<sup>98</sup> In Peking Opera, if a boy is assigned to a woman's character, he would play a woman's role for his entire performance life. So were these four *Dan* actors.

comic character, representing people who are foolish, clumsy or miserly.<sup>99</sup> In fact, there are many more roles than described here within the four characters, depending on their social status and personality. The most striking feature of these characters is that once the actor is made up, it is almost impossible for the audience to tell the actors' age and gender. The make-up of an actor is like the mask they wear onstage, and it is not the actor the audience sees but the character.

In order to create a new kind of Peking Opera, Wu had to destroy all these conservative regulations and remove the system of characters with *Sheng*, *Dan*, *Jing* and *Chou*. As Wu explained, "these characters and regulations need to be shattered and reshaped by the actors themselves."<sup>100</sup> Wu expected the actors to rid themselves of what they had been trained to do and break this ground by first forgetting their own designated characters. Wu's character had to integrate, overturning the rules governing the characters of *Wu Sheng*, *Lao Sheng* and *Hua Lian*. Ma Jialing is another example; Ma, who performed the witch in the first version of *Kingdom of Desire*, was originally trained as a *Wu Dan* (a female warrior). However, her skills as *Wu Dan* were totally useless in this production because Wu asked her to perform the role of an androgynous witch. Wu asked her to crook her back, but she was never taught how to be hunchbacked during her regulation training. In another example, Wei Haimin, who played the role of Lady Macbeth, is at the same time supposed to have the characteristics of nobility like a *Zheng Dan* (high-class, middle-aged woman), and cunning like a *Hua Dan* (a shrewd or vivacious young woman). Wu himself, who performed Aoshu Zheng (Macbeth), also mixed three different characters' features – *Wu Sheng*, *Lao Sheng* (elder) and *Jing* (also known as *Hua Lian*).

According to Wu, it is impossible to limit people to only one character because people are so complicated, and have various emotions and sensory pleasures. In addition, it is even more difficult to fit all of Shakespeare's characters into merely four categories. After all, actors are supposed to perform the characters, rather than have the characters fit the actors.<sup>101</sup> Another problem that occurred was the issue of gender. In school, boys and girls were trained separately. On the Peking Opera stage, men and women could not have any bodily contact and could only converse with their eyes.<sup>102</sup> Thus it makes for an awkward situation when Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are onstage together in the play (i.e. holding the knife together after Lady Macbeth returns from Duncan's chamber). Wu broke these rules and all

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<sup>99</sup>Gao, *Zhongguo Jingju Shuyao*, 235-268.

<sup>100</sup>Lu, *Juejing Mengya*, 169.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., 168-9.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 114.

boundaries regarding Peking Opera's character categories. He knew that before Peking Opera could be rebuilt, the actors would have to recreate themselves and cross their own boundaries. This was one of Peking Opera's traditions that had to be negotiated and sacrificed.<sup>103</sup>

### 1.8 Modernisation of Peking Opera in *Kingdom of Desire*

Though the history of Peking Opera in Taiwan is not long, the legacy it inherited from China is still profound and deep-rooted. It is difficult not only for a Westerner to appreciate the art and culture of Peking Opera, but also for the young generation of Taiwanese to understand it. After all, Peking Opera is a tradition, a combination of Chinese literature and art that has been passed down for hundreds of years in Chinese culture, and developed cumulatively generation after generation. In addition, Peking Opera has its whole system of stylised rules about the role, costumes, make-up, music, singing, speaking, movements (including walking, combating, dancing etc.) so that it is hard to watch any Peking Opera performance without needing an explanation of what is going on on the stage and an interpretation of what each movement or small gesture means. For that reason, in order to make it more accessible to the general public, Wu modernised Peking Opera by adapting the Western canon to it, which necessitated simplifying Peking Opera's complicated system of rules.

Having discussed that Peking Opera's roles were accommodated to Shakespeare's characters in *Macbeth*, but there are other rules of Peking Opera that were negotiated and simplified but still retained in *Kingdom of Desire*. Kao Xin maintains that Peking Opera is a collective art, a virtual/symbolised art and a stylised art,<sup>104</sup> so we now turn to discussing the integration of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Peking Opera in *Kingdom of Desire* in light of these three concepts.

Peking Opera is a collective art, which – in Kao's words – can be summarised in four areas: singing [唱], speaking [念], dancing [作] and acrobatics [打] from the angle of performance.<sup>105</sup> In terms of singing – singing defined as the aria/intonation for voices in Peking Opera – together with the song's lyrics are the most important part of Peking Opera music. According to the gender and age required for a role, there are two voices used in Peking Opera. One is *Zhen Sang* [真嗓] (real voice) (also called *Da Sang* [大嗓] or loud voice),

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<sup>103</sup> Not only the character categories but also the music, costumes and dance were negotiated in the dialogic process.

<sup>104</sup> Kao Xing [高新], *Zhongguo Jingju Shuyao* [中國京劇述要] (The Survey of Chinese Peking Opera) (Shandong: Shandong University Press [山東大學出版社], 2002), 42-72.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

a vocalisation that is closely used in daily life. The other is called *Jia Sang* [假嗓] (falsetto voice, also called *Xiao Sang* [小嗓] or small voice), which sounds sharp and high-pitched and rather unreal and different from the usual voice in the daily life. Normally, for middle-aged men's and elderly women's roles in Peking Opera, actors would sing in *Zhen Sang* (real voice), and young and middle-aged women would sing in *Jia Sang* (falsetto). For young men, they would sing in both real and falsetto voice. In this way, without knowing the character on stage, the audience could easily identify the age and gender of each role. So in *Kingdom of Desire*, General Aoshu Zheng (Macbeth) and General Meng Ting both sang in their real voice, but Lady Aoshu (Lady Macbeth) sang in *Jia Sang*, high-pitched falsetto voice. And the Mountain Spirit (witch) sang in both *Zhen Sang* and *Jia Sang* as her identity was rather mixed between male and female and there was seldom a role like the Mountain Spirit in Chinese Opera.

Like Western Opera, singing plays an important role in Peking Opera; a Chinese audience could tell a good actor from bad just from the singing. However, the Chinese opera style of singing has not always been well-received by Western viewers, such as M. de Burboulon, who in Leonard Pronko's quote describes how the Chinese singers "use a voice piercing beyond description. The effect of this shrill melody recalls the meowing of a cat whose larynx was particularly badly organised."<sup>106</sup> That could explain why Wei Haimin (Lady Macbeth) received a mixed reception from Taiwanese and Western audiences. In Taiwan, her singing is the most highly-praised and well-known amongst audiences. She is regarded as the most representative and major actress of Ching-yi and Hua-dan roles and has won several outstanding actress awards for her performances.<sup>107</sup> In *Kingdom of Desire's* performance, Wei's singing was not disappointing. However, the English critics seemed to dehumanise Wei's character as they compared her singing to animals – among them mouse, canary, and cats – and their impression of her singing was that it was like "a killer mouse oddly turned into distraught canary" (Nightingale 1990); "a miaowing cat in a Disney cartoon," which, "I began to wonder whether her husband hadn't murdered Duncan simply to get her to shut up a bit" (Spencer 1990); or "the crazed miaowings remind you of a cat that should be put out of its misery" (Taylor 1990).<sup>108</sup> The operatic singing style in the East is rather different from the West; so too was its reception and expectations. For Western

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<sup>106</sup> Leonard Pronko, *Theatre East and West: Perspectives toward a Total Theatre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 40.

<sup>107</sup> See the *Kingdom of Desire* programme.

<sup>108</sup> Catherine Diamond., "Kingdom of Desire: The Three Faces of *Macbeth*," *Asian Theatre Journal* 11.1 (Spring 1994): 129.

audiences, they definitely would require special knowledge of the Peking Opera tradition to appreciate this kind of special singing. Similarly, for Chinese audiences the combined singing style of the character Mountain Spirit (Witch) was not easily accepted either, as each actor/actress's singing style is usually specifically trained for years so it is fixed, with one voice only, and not something that changes. Both audiences in Taiwan and England looked forward to seeing elements they are familiar with, but what they saw was a hybrid production full of compromises, negotiations and sacrifices of both side's cultural traditions.

Apart from creating a new singing style for a new role (like Mountain Spirit), Wu basically retained the basic elements of Peking Opera in *Kingdom of Desire*. Song lyrics, like those for Peking Opera, are deeply influenced by Chinese Literature (especially poetry from the Tang Dynasty (AD 618-907) and poetry from the Sung Dynasty (AD 960-1279)), they normally appear in a dual, rhyming style (either two sentences or four sentences together as a pair). So at the beginning the *Kingdom of Desire*, there was a rhyming, four-sentence prologue chorus, which I have transliterated verbatim into Pinyin:

tan shi ren kan bu tou gong ming fu *gui*,<sup>109</sup> [嘆世人看不透功名富貴]  
yuan dou shi shui zhong mi meng yi *hui*. [原都是水中迷夢一回]  
Suan xin ji lin duan ya qian cheng zi *hui*, [算心機臨斷崖前程自毀]  
Dao tou lai lang tao sha ku gu kong *bei*. [到頭來浪滔沙骨空悲]

In Chinese, *gui* rhymes with *hui* and *bei*. However, when it is translated into English, it is hard to make it both rhyme and be in verse form. So translation of such lyrics is mostly paraphrased, as follows:

How regrettable that the people of this world  
Cannot see through fame, fortune, and position;  
In reality they are only like  
The reflection of the moon in water, an illusion;  
When you reach the abyss,  
Plans and schemes only lead to downfall;  
In the end, the waves still wash the sand;  
All that remain are dry bones and empty sorrow.<sup>110</sup>

Rhyme is another feature in Peking Opera, as it makes song lyrics easier for actors to sing and also for audiences to appreciate and comprehend.

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<sup>109</sup> *Italic* is used in these verses to indicate where the rhyme is in Chinese words unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>110</sup> All translation of *Kingdom of Desire* here, translated by Karen Steffen Chung, is provided by the Contemporary Legend Theatre.

When it comes to speaking, another basic element frequently used in Peking Opera (other than the dialogues) is *Yin Zi* [引子], means whenever main characters appear on the stage for the first time, they must first introduce themselves to the audience. The introduction is half-sung and half-spoken, half-prose and half-verse, to tell the audience their status, profession, character, experience, emotion, and situation or to express their interest and ambition.<sup>111</sup> For instance, in *Kingdom of Desire*, when Mountain Spirit first appeared on stage, a four-sentence rhymed verse was first spoken (*Shang Chang Shi* [上場詩]), and then a self-introduction was made, in prose:

shang jing shui guai xian shen ying [山精水怪現身影]  
ju du wei gu rao ren xin [聚毒為蠱擾人心]  
bu xi tian xia tai ping shi [不喜天下太平事]  
xing feng zuo lang wu an ning [興風作浪無安寧]

wu nai shan zhong gui mei shi ye, zhi yin ji guo yi chang nei luan,  
zhan huo ji jiang ping xi [吾乃山中鬼魅是也,只因薊國一場內亂,戰火即將平息]

Again, *ying* rhymes with *xin* and *ning* and translation is as follows:

Mountain Sprites and water creatures show their form,  
Concentrating their evil powers to poison the hearts of men.  
Peace on earth is no joy for us;  
Let the winds whip up the waves, and let there be havoc.

I am the Mountain Spirit. The state of Ji is fighting a civil war that is about to end.

As there was no programme available for early Peking Opera theatre productions, and the performers might improvise the story in the course of the performance, rhyming verse is essential when characters introduce themselves and explain what is happening on stage when they appear. Accordingly, there is also dual verse (*Xia Chang Dui* [下場對]) for characters to end the scene or to express their perspective when they exit the stage. So Mountain Spirit spoke before disappearing on stage (while Aoshu and Meng are still there): “ming shu you ding bu ke tao, you fu bur u wu fu kao (You have an inescapable fate; better you enjoy ill fortune than good.) [命數有定不可逃,有福不如無福高].” Here, *tao* rhymes with *kao*. Also, when Aoshu and Meng leave the stage in this scene, there is dual verse for both to express what is on their mind:

Meng: kao guan hou lu shui bu xiang, [高官厚祿誰不想]

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<sup>111</sup> Kao, *Zhongguo Jingju Shuyao*, 52-3.

(Position and wealth are something everybody desires,)  
Aoshu: qi ke mou cuan fu jun wang. [豈可謀篡負君王]  
(But turning on our Lord to win them would be unthinkable)

Though they are short, both Meng's and Aoshu's verses were similar to the soliloquy in Shakespeare's text, as they indicated the complexity of these characters' thoughts. Sometimes, these introductory verses might interrupt the flow of the performance, but in Chinese Peking Opera theatre it provides the alienation effect that Brecht refers to, so that audiences are continually reminded that they are in the middle of a performance. However, having such a prologue and epilogue for each character, in each scene, are unusual in Shakespeare plays, so in order to keep the performance smooth in *Kingdom of Desire*, (traditional Peking Opera performance can be divided into series and performed over several days, while modern theatre has an exact time schedule for each performance). There were few such introduction verses for other major roles (Lady Aoshu and King of Ji (Duncan) for instance), which might confuse audiences if they did not know the plot of *Macbeth* in advance. After all, *Kingdom of Desire* is an integration of Shakespeare's text and Peking Opera's theatre; hence the performance still closely follows *Macbeth*'s plot and only retains a few verses for characters that appear at the beginning, to follow Peking Opera tradition.

In Western classical theatre, it is acting ability that decides whether an actor is a *good* Macbeth or an actress a *good* Lady Macbeth. Through the art of acting, they are able to express various emotions of the different characters in the play. However, in Peking Opera theatre, roles are judged either on the basis of singing or dancing and acrobatic skills. If an actress is a *Zheng Dan* or a *Hua Dan* like Lady Aoshu, then it is the singing and the dancing (through body movement) that audiences are paying attention to. If an actor is a *Wu Sheng* like Aoshu, then it is more the acrobatic (and/or combat) skills that the audience is looking forward to, which I will explain further. What is meant by *dancing* here is a series of performing styles displayed through the actor's body movements (body language). Since Peking Opera roles are limited by costume and facial make-up, they normally express the character's specific emotions through a whole system of stylisation. Peking Opera's stylisation is extremely rigid as all its actors have to be trained continually and undergo essential training for individual parts of the body, such as the lower back, legs, hands, arms, head, and neck before they are allowed to perform on stage. How they walk, move a hand, or exercise expression in their eyes all represent different characters and their different expression of emotions. In *Kingdom of Desire*, Lady Aoshu was portrayed in a *Dan* role, so she was requested to walk in steady, modest and small steps, and her costume (dress) was

also designed for her to walk in small steps, which fulfilled the demands of traditional Chinese patriarchal society toward women (The costume for the role of *Wu Sheng* was designed for fast movements). Even Lady Aoshu's hairstyle was very old-fashioned, with the traditional bun/chignon (wig) used among Chinese women in ancient China. This is one reason why Peking Opera is regarded as the one performative style that embodies traditional Chinese culture, and it is always considered most appropriate to perform traditional historical topics.

Apart from body movement, there are also other props such as water sleeves [水袖] or beard [髯口] to help the actors to enhance the effect of their character's expressions. Normally, most Peking Opera costumes have water sleeves (white extended sleeves on both arms) and moving water sleeves are basic skills for the actors. Water sleeve skills have a very important function in Peking Opera performance. Through their different movements – such as shaking, raising, holding up, throwing, grabbing and tossing – actors are able to perform emotions of disguising something, sadness, happiness, romantic feeling, or anxiety. The beard offers similar functions for men (except young boys), as male actors will put on a false beard as part of their make-up, ranging from moustache to 30cm or so) and express their feelings through beard tossing and brushing. Nevertheless in *Kingdom of Desire*, the water sleeves skill was deleted (so that Lady Aoshu could only express her feelings through singing and dance movements). Likewise, Aoshu was portrayed as a character who is too young to have a beard. Although the King of Ji, Meng and other courtiers all had false beards, they did not show beard skills in this production. Wu did not explain fully why the water sleeve and beard skills were not adopted for the production. But I believe the reason he abandoned both was probably to simplify body movement for the modern audience, by replacing it with more singing and speaking.

In Peking Opera, dance movement plays an important role in the performance and actors always use it to convey the scenery to the audience before they actually speak. In addition, rarely are there any real props on stage for the audience to see and few sound effects for those invisible props, too. So, audiences have to use their imagination to build in their mind what it is onstage before the actors actually explain it. For example, in the beginning of Act I, Scene iii, eight soldiers (eight walk-ons represent hundreds and thousands of soldiers) first enter the stage showing their dance skills for nearly two minutes (all movements are identical) showing they are winning on the battlefield. Then, Aoshu (with his right hand on whip, left hand on bow) and Meng (with right hand on whip, left hand on sword) appear on the stage and stand in its centre (with soldiers in back) looking around, meaning both Aoshu

and Meng are riding the horse (whip represents horse, holding the whip in hand means riding it) and checking the situation nearby. Aoshu commands the soldiers to return to the palace. Aoshu and Meng lead the soldiers round the stage in circle, and at this time, their dance movements are slow and steady. But all of a sudden, a shriek pierces the air (as if the horse is startled), Aoshu, Meng and soldiers start walking unsteadily (representing the sudden change in weather which makes it difficult to move forward). Then Aoshu explains to the audience that the weather had suddenly changed from sunny to overcast, then to heavy rain and strong wind: “Halt! This was a bright, sunny day. Why is it suddenly becoming overcast in this forest? There will probably be a downpour... Ah, heavy clouds are gathering and the horses neighing...” So, both Aoshu and Meng wave the whip in the air, symbolising their swaying movement and being jolted on their horses. Then they decide to dismount to see what on earth is going on – by throwing away their whips and leaving them on the ground.

In *Macbeth*, the audience might learn the weather had changed through either sound effects (thunder – stage direction) or actors’ lines (Macbeth: “So foul and fair a day I have not seen” (1.3.39).). However, in *Kingdom of Desire*, the weather change is conveyed partly through music (sharp music to represent blowing wind), partly through actors’ body movements (somersaulting back and forth to represent strong blowing wind) and then through words (describing the changes in scenery). As there are few props to help with stage performances, Peking Opera can be a very representational art (using different elements to represent different scenes), but then it takes more effort to explain to the audience what it is occurring on stage, especially to the Western audience.

Sometimes, props can be very representational in Peking Opera performance, as well. Without basic knowledge of Peking Opera, it is much more difficult for amateur audiences to comprehend the art behind Peking Opera, and the audience has to rely mostly on the actors’ explanation for the action (the Western audience relies on the subtitles). Whips, one of the most representative props, are used in Peking Opera to represent the horse on stage, and there are different ways of using the whip during the performance (each method representing a different type of action). Take Act III, Scene i for example, when Meng’s servants are preparing the horse for Meng and his son (Meng Deng), to attend Aoshu’s enthronement. At the beginning of the scene, two stablemen enter with whips hanging at their waists (also representing horses), walk back and forth, and run unsteadily about, as if about to fall. The music sounds like a strong wind and frantic horse whinnying in the background; these two stablemen seemed to be unable to keep balance on their feet, which their movements show that they are dragging the horses, but the wind is so strong that they cannot subdue the beasts.

So the third stableman, with the same costume (whip at the waist), joins them in attempting to tame the horses by making the same movement (dancing, running, rolling, bending, backward and forward somersault). Then, with the quickening music and the horses' panicked neighing, the fourth stableman enters the stage to help, with two forward somersaults. Together, these four stablemen make pushing and dragging movements, showing they are trying to take the horses out of the stable, but fail to do so, because they all fall to the ground. Then finally, they take their whip from their waist, hold it in their hand, and then indicate exhaustion and relief through expressions (meaning the horses had been successfully bridled, and were ready for their masters). The background music also stops when the stablemen's movements stop. After a short pause, one of them mimes stroking the horse warily and tries to tie him up, using exceptional caution. But all of a sudden, the sharp music begins again, all four stablemen simultaneously somersault backward a few times, to show the horses are again out of control and the tension mounts again. Then, Meng and his son enter the stage falteringly, blaming the stablemen for the horses not being ready yet. This was the first time the four stablemen had spoken after nearly four minutes of physical gestures only, and one of them explains the situation to Meng (also to the audience): "I don't know what is wrong, Milord. The horses are high-strung today and we cannot subdue them." After speaking, the two stablemen cautiously take their whips to Meng and his son (one whip to Meng and the other to his son). Meng and his son first mime stroking the horses and then mount one by simply putting the string of the whip over their wrist (without showing the action of mounting the horse). The difference between leading a horse (stablemen) and riding a horse (Meng and his son) in Peking Opera theatre depends on whether they wind the whip around their wrist. The sharpened music starts again backstage after they take the whip, and prepare to set off. Meng and his son are soon walking madly back and forth (they both have the whip on their wrist, so it means the horses have gone wild again while they are riding).

Although Wu attempts to make *Kingdom of Desire* a modern performance of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, he still retains a lot of Peking Opera traditions in the performance. For instance, Wu employed a lot of dance movements to lay out the story. Sometimes, he also added Taiwanese religious belief to the story in order to make the dance movements meaningful, or to make sense of *Macbeth*'s text for the Taiwanese audiences. For example, in Act I Scene iii, when Aoshu mentions the sudden change of the weather, he also communicates to the audience that presumably, something bad is going to happen because of the sudden change in weather: "this kind of weather must be some kind of bad omen." Then, in order to avoid audience confusion, Meng asks Aoshu what he meant by bad omen. Aoshu

answers Meng's question as well as speaks to the audience's confusion, by explaining what the previous movements (startled horses) were about: "This warrior horse has followed us gallantly into battle after battle; tell me why he is so skittish now." In *Kingdom of Desire* if anything unusual happened it is presumably caused by the supernatural. And this kind of conjecture is part of Taiwanese superstition that any unusual signs such as a sudden change of weather or in animal behaviour that cannot be explained must be some kind of omen sent from the heaven. Another example is when Meng and Aoshu discover they are lost in the forest, and walking in circles:

Meng: General, come and look. Those hoof prints are our own, from just a moment ago.

Aoshu: Indeed they are. We have taken this road thousands of times before. How can we have ridden so long today, and still be where we started? (Act I, Scene iii)

This is known in Taiwan as *Gui Da Qiang* [鬼打牆], literally means the ghost builds a wall around you so you cannot get out, so you are actually walking in circles and whichever way you go, you will always be where you first start. On one hand, Wu wanted to explain to the audience the character of Mountain Ghost (as it was not a familiar character in Peking Opera); but on the other hand Wu was also attempting to simplify the cause of Macbeth's tragedy as having a supernatural cause.

Another example of suspecting an unusual sign to be an omen is when Meng and his son, Meng Ting, are invited to attend Aoshu's enthronement and lose control of the horses:

Meng Deng: Father, the steed is kicking about wildly and is hard to subdue. I hear the jackdaws cawing eerily. Might this be an inauspicious omen?

Meng Ting: Birds cawing and horses neighing are everyday occurrences. Don't worry, son.

Meng Deng: But, Father, this wild wind and skittishness of the horses are not at all usual. I have an uneasy feeling. If this is going to be a banquet celebration for the ministers, then why must I come along? There must be something going on.

However, Meng sees this sign differently, feeling joy in foreseeing his son gaining the throne after hearing Mountain Ghost's prediction, so that he ignores his son's warning. He tells his son that the Mountain Ghost's will is the will of the Heaven, and his succession to the throne is also that of Heaven's:

This is the will of Heaven. You need not say anything more about it...If you violate Heaven's will, you will be unable to bear the consequences, so get on your horse and let's take to the road.

Meng describes Mountain Ghost as *Shen Ling* [神靈] (*Shen* means deity and *Ling* means spirit), translated as an apparition in *Kingdom of Desire*'s script. This is why Meng also believed that the Mountain Ghost's prediction was a good omen, as he believed the Mountain Ghost was the ancestors' spirit sent from heaven.

A similar description of omen can also be found in *Macbeth* when the old man and Ross describe the unusual things that have happened before and after Duncan's murder:

Old Man: 'Tis unnatural,  
Even like the deed that's done. On Tuesday last,  
A falcon, tow'ring in her pride of place,  
Was by a mousing owl hawked at and killed.  
Ross: And Duncan's horses – a thing most strange and certain –  
Beauteous and swift, the minions of their race,  
Turned wild in nature, broke their stalls, flung out,  
Contending ainst obedience, as they would  
Make war with mankind.  
Old Man: 'Tis said they ate each other.  
Ross: They did so, to th'amazement of mine eyes  
That looked upon't. (2.4.12-23)

The sudden change of the animals' behaviour was used here as a bad omen to imply the suspicion of Duncan's murder and Macbeth's enthronement. In *Kingdom of Desire*, the suspicious omen of the late king's murder is told through the same story between four night watchmen: "Let me tell you... A few days ago, I saw an owl – an owl that usually feeds on rats – kill a powerful eagle. Nobody I tell believes me (Act IV, Scene i)." In order to demonstrate that the omen was foretelling something bad will happen, Wu again added a cultural belief that Taiwanese audiences were all very familiar with:

Watchman B: Yesterday evening when I was out on night watch duty, I saw hordes of rats banding together and heading out of the city. Now you tell me – what was the reason for that?  
Watchman A: It's a bad omen! I've heard old men say that the only time rats will leave a place in hordes is when a house is about to burn down!

Earthquakes occur frequently in Taiwan, and it is known that animals will leave a place when a very serious earthquake is coming, as they can detect danger better and earlier than humans. Surely, Watchman A's explanation was to imply that the new kingdom of Aoshu was about to fall because of the loss of the subjects' support.

As mentioned, for a role of *Wu Sheng* such as Wu Hsing-kuo would play, it was the acrobatic (combat) skills that the audiences would pay attention to and applaud for their skill. For a *Wu Sheng* who plays the main character, he normally has an exclusive acrobatic skill that was trained secretly for or he alone acquired, one that no other *Wu Sheng* actor is capable of doing. It is this exclusive acrobatic skill that makes him the lead actor. Wu's backward somersault from an eight-foot-high rampart in the production of *Kingdom of Desire*, for instance, was one example. This backward somersault might not greatly impress the Western audience, but it won a good deal of applause from the Taiwanese audience on every performance of *Kingdom of Desire* there, as anyone familiar with Wu's background would understand how difficult and dangerous it could be in a Peking Opera performance.

Apart from Wu's backward somersault, there are many other acrobatic skills in this production, as *Macbeth* has a lot of battle scenes. For instance, in Act I, Scene ii, when three messengers come in to report news from the frontlines, each enters with different acrobatic movements to demonstrate the different types of news (from defeat to victory). The first reporter enters from right stage with a flag; he falls to the ground. He struggles to rise and waves his flag three times. He makes a series of forward flips over and over, to the rhythm of the ongoing music. Watching their Peking Opera skills, especially when he lands firmly on the ground after several turns in the air, is rather breathtaking. Then, a voice shrieks: "Your Majesty!" the curtain rises, and the King and his ministers emerge from the back of the stage under the dim light. After another somersault, the messenger stands before the King and informs him of the first bad news. He is still lying on the ground, shivering and shouting himself hoarse. The king asks for more details about the war. After another turn, the messenger finishes his report and asks the king for advice and the messenger is commanded to return for more reconnaissance, even though he is breathless and walking unsteadily. While the King and his ministers are bickering, another messenger enters stage left with a flag and an even more skilful somersault routine. Again, he finishes right in the front of the King after the last somersault; at the exact same moment the music stops. This time, it is better news. The second messenger is not trembling as much as the first. He gives several stunning turns and a backward somersault after finishing the report. A third one enters from stage right with a flag and performs four backward somersaults. In the process of the third leaving stage right, the fourth messenger comes in immediately from stage left. Each of their acrobatic skills is better than the previous one's. The fourth lands on the ground with a beautiful handspring, showing that the battle was a complete victory. During the acrobatic movements, each move, each pause and each stop all coincides with the flow of music. For

example, a somersault must finish at the same time the music stops. Or the movement may quicken when the music does. In other words, music and actors' movements always happen at the same time, and the music is used to help us better understand the actors' movements.

Peking Opera is a symbolic art, so each movement signifies something different. As Kao indicates, the biggest difference between Peking Opera and other performance arts is that it makes demonstrates everything on stage, including characters (through make-up) is fake,<sup>112</sup> so in Peking Opera, there are few props used on stage except typical ones – maybe a table and two chairs – and without props, the actors' movements mean everything, including the change of time and space. For example, when an actor carries a book onto a bare stage, it means he is in a study or in a garden. If an actor carries a sword, spear or bow, then it means that person is on the battlefield. When an actor carries an oar, it means the stage has turned to a water surface, and the actor is above the water. Usually, in Peking Opera performance, the audiences have an extreme tacit understanding with the actors so they can read the action without the help of speech. For example, when a general brings four soldiers (representing hundreds and thousands of soldiers) and takes a turn around on stage, it can mean that they have walked from one place to another place (even thousands of miles between two places). Or when the actor lights a candle on stage, it indicates that it is night time. Then, when the candle is blown out, it means it is daytime, and another night has passed.<sup>113</sup>

Sometimes, the arrangement of table and chairs on stage can represent different settings. For example, when a chair is placed in front of a table, it is called *Da Zuo* [大座] (means big place); places such as a lobby or reception room are for people to host guests or work. So in *Kingdom of Desire* (Act I, Scene iv), when Aoshu and Meng return to court to report their victory to the King, there is only a table and chair on stage, and the King sits on the chair in back of the table with his ministers standing around him. When he summons Aoshu and Meng and gives them a reward, the arrangement of table and chair indicates the King and his ministers are in the King's workplace for this scene. In contrast to *Da Zuo*, there is *Xiao Zuo* [小座] (small place), when the chair is put in front of the table, which normally represents a study or other interior room at home. When there are one table and two chairs (one chair at one side of table) on stage, it becomes another place where family or friends are gathering for a chat. The two chairs are normally for elder members of a family; parents or grandparents. In terms of seating, there are also specific rules. The chair at the right side of the table (seen from the audience's perspective) is regarded as the seat for either

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<sup>112</sup> Kao, *Zhongguo Jingju Shuyao*, 57.

<sup>113</sup> Kao, *Zhongguo Jingju Shuyao*, 61.

the master of the house, or for the guest. The chair at the left side of the table is the secondary seat, for the lady of the house or the host. The seating arrangement conveys the traditional concepts of class in Chinese patriarchal society, where men are regarded as superior to women, and when there is a guest, the guest has higher priority than the host. Nevertheless, these are just basic seating rules, as tables and chairs can be adjusted to apply to different scenes and extended different meanings. For example, in *Kingdom of Desire* (Act II, Scene i and ii), at first, Aoshu sits in the chair on the right side of the table, and Lady Aoshu sits at the left, according to their position at home. Then, when the King (guest) visits Aoshu (host/courtier), Aoshu stands up to greet the King and showed him to the right chair of the table (primary seat) while he stands in front of the left chair (secondary seat); Lady Aoshu withdraws to the side of the stage (women were not allowed to join the conversation of men in ancient China). After the King leaves the stage to rest, Aoshu returns to sit in the right chair and Lady Aoshu returns to the left chair. Intriguingly, during the time when Aoshu is persuaded by Lady Aoshu to kill the King, and when Aoshu hesitates and cannot make up his mind whether he should murder the King, Aoshu moves to sit in the left chair and Lady Aoshu moves to stand in front of the right chair. The sudden change of their positions on stage seems to imply Lady Aoshu was the one who turns to the master in charge of the house, at that moment pushing Aoshu forward to usurp the throne (so it was Lady Aoshu who was on the initiative taking the sword to Aoshu and putting it firmly on his hand). After Aoshu finally makes up his mind, walking out of the room to take action, Lady Aoshu spontaneously sits in the right chair while awaiting Aoshu's return. After Aoshu murders the King and returns to the room, it is Lady Aoshu who takes Aoshu by the hand to sit in the right chair again. This signifies that Aoshu has proven to Lady Aoshu that he is capable of doing the deed and that she acknowledges that he is again the master of the house. In this scenario, Peking Opera traditions were not at all fixed, but appeared flexible according to the needs of the plot (though the adjustment was built upon the foundation of the tradition – one table and two chairs).

On one hand, performance of Peking Opera can be a stylised art. Every movement has its specific but fixed format, for movements like opening/closing the door, pushing out the window, mounting/dismounting a horse or rowing a boat all have basic formative rules. However, on the other hand the stylised movements of Peking Opera can also be extended variously to apply to different stories. Take Act II, Scene i, for example, where the movements for opening/closing the door between Aoshu and Lady Aoshu was different to when Aoshu opened and closed the door for Lady Aoshu when she went out to give the

King's guards drugged wine, and again when Lady Aoshu opened and closed the door for Aoshu when he went out to murder the King. This can prove to be a challenge or might sometimes cause confusion to the Western audience, as there are usually neither scripts nor stage direction here, and the Western observer might wonder what had happened or what the different movements actually meant at this point in the performance. For Taiwanese familiar with Peking Opera, it would not be difficult to understand the subtle difference in movements. As the extended movements were mostly based on the original rule of stylisation, a Taiwanese audience would naturally pay more attention to the actors' dancing, singing and acrobatic skills from which they could easily judge the actors' potential in Peking Opera's theatre. However, even if Wu had attempted to minimise the stylised tradition of Peking Opera in the production of *Kingdom of Desire*, without an understanding of Peking Opera, it would still be too much to absorb, especially for younger generations of Taiwanese who are new to the Peking Opera theatre.

In conclusion, producing *Kingdom of Desire* was a controversial move in the time of radical social and political upheaval in Taiwan. It was the time before martial law was lifted, when the KMT regime made Peking Opera the national opera, and the overprotective policy towards Peking Opera resulted in a rigid and inflexible traditional form that could not be appreciated by modern audiences. Conversely, it was also this pressure-filled time frame that pushed Wu to create *Kingdom of Desire*, when Peking Opera needed reformation to avoid decline. Each performance is shaped by the social and political context of its time. It was again the context that spurred Wu to create his third production, *Lear is Here*, produced in a transitional time for theatre in Taiwan. After martial law was abolished, the Taiwanese were requesting democratic reforms of the KMT government, and the position of Peking Opera as national opera was also gradually replaced by other local cultural forms, such as Puppet Play. Because of an imbalance in KMT financial support of Taiwan civic theatres, Wu was forced to close down his own theatre for nearly 3 years, but this also gave him the opportunity to look back the past of himself being a Peking Opera actor, to rethink the future for Peking Opera, and to keep on surviving in the Peking Opera theatre. In the age of *Kingdom of Desire*, Wu had his first revolution which was to modernise the tradition of Peking Opera; then, in the age of *Lear is Here*, Wu carried on his second revolution to refine the art of Peking Opera. Hence, as the epilogue of this chapter, *Lear is Here* will aid in briefly summarising the aftermath of Peking Opera's circumstance in Taiwan.

### 1.9 Coda: Personal Engagement of Peking Opera in Wu Hsing-kuo's *Lear is Here*

*Lear is Here* is Wu's third Shakespearean adaptation of Peking Opera. It was a small production staged three years after the closure of Contemporary Legend Theatre. Unlike the lavish production of *Kingdom of Desire*, however, *Lear is Here* has only one actor (Wu himself), due to the shortage of funding and actors. The basic members of the Contemporary Legend Theatre were just Wu and his wife; all the actors in *Kingdom of Desire* were actually borrowed from other theatres. Consequently, it transpired that Wu had no one to turn to while other theatres were busy with their own productions. It was even difficult to keep *Kingdom of Desire* in the repertoire, even though invitations from abroad arrived constantly. Wu had neither actors nor funding, which was why his friend, Lin Hwai-min [林懷民], felt both excited and worried after watching the production of *Kingdom of Desire* in 1986. After all, it was difficult to turn back from creating a large to a small production. Lin warned Wu that he would first have to build up his experience, step by step, especially when working in such a strict environment as Taiwan; society would not simply change because of Wu, even if he had already produced one outstanding production. Furthermore, the government would not simply grant Wu the required funding, even if he had been invited to tour around the world.<sup>114</sup> In Taiwan, every artist or every theatre has to be independent.

The production of *Lear is Here* reveals how the Taiwanese government's funding for performing arts at the time was far less than sufficient. In fact, in order to support performing arts groups, the Council for Cultural Affairs set up a funding project in 1992 called the International Performing Arts Groups Support Plan to help these groups maintain their survival, promote their professional creations and perform to standards that would allow them to live up to their development goals, stably.

The Council for Cultural Affairs (CCA), under the Executive Yuan of Taiwan, was founded in 1982, and is the primary central government agency in charge of cultural affairs. Between 1992 and 1997, the plan for funding International Performing Arts Groups was promoted and executed actively and successfully, supporting 45 groups and 125 performances. In 1998, the title of the plan was changed to the Outstanding Performing Groups Selection and Reward Plan in order to pay special attention to supporting outstanding performing arts groups in Taiwan. However, there were arguments about the way that funding was limited to the support of international or outstanding performances, so the name of the plan was amended to The Performing Arts Groups Developing Support Plan in

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<sup>114</sup> Lu, *Juejing Mengya*, 61-3.

2001.<sup>115</sup> Apart from the CCA, there was also the National Culture and Arts Foundation (NCAF) established in January 1996, which supports performing arts groups in Taiwan. Essentially, the NCAF's primary source of funding also comes from the Council for Cultural Affairs (CCA), providing nearly NTD\$6 billion for the NCAF's budget, in accordance with NCAF regulations. In addition, there were also individual donations from the public coming in to strengthen its promotional work.<sup>116</sup> The government was the primary sponsor for the selected performing groups.

According to records<sup>117</sup>, the government generously supported those selected performing arts groups by providing nearly one-half of their financial resources. But in fact, government funding could meet the demands of only a small number of performing arts groups, with around only 70 selected to receive funding. Due to shrinking of the market, an increasing number of performing arts groups relied on government funding to survive. In this way, the Performing Arts Groups Developing Support Plan became critical in deciding a theatre group's life or death. In contrast to official theatres' comparatively carefree budgets (NTD\$150 million (£3.2 million) for the national Kuo-guang Theatre alone), the remainder of civic performing arts groups (music, dance, modern drama and traditional drama) had to competitively share about NTD\$100 million (£2.1 million). According to the plan, there were four different budget categories to which each performing arts group could apply. These ranged from NTD\$1.2 million to NTD\$9.6 million. Each theatre could decide for itself which category they would like to apply for, but there were only two outcomes – either they were successful and granted a few million dollars or they failed and came away with nothing. Under such an uneven and inflexible funding scheme, those theatres that did not receive funding could barely survive the market pressures.<sup>118</sup>

Arguably, the support plan's judging system did not seem to be fair either, as judges lacked any professional knowledge about the performance groups' actual situation. Judges normally made decisions based on either theatre's performance proposals, videotapes or from their reported popularity. The so-called 'arts evaluation' turned out to be a composition and

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<sup>115</sup> Council for Cultural Affairs [文建會], The Performing Arts Groups Developing Support Plan, <http://event.cca.gov.tw/artsquery/doc/0906.doc> (accessed 9 May 2008).

<sup>116</sup> Introduction of NCAF, <http://www.ncafrog.org.tw/index-e.asp> (accessed 10 March 2008).

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> "Taiwan Chuantong Xiqu Fazhan De Kunjing" [台灣傳統戲曲發展的困境] (The Dilemma of the Taiwanese Traditional Opera's Development) [http://web.pu.edu.tw/~folktw/theater/theater\\_a16.htm](http://web.pu.edu.tw/~folktw/theater/theater_a16.htm) (accessed 15 May 2009).

photography competition.<sup>119</sup> The most fatal flaw in the government's support plan was that the budget did not cover the expenses of a theatre's production, hardware or equipment. The government needed to understand that it was inevitable for any arts group to want to improve their equipment, including stage, lighting, sound, costumes and scenery, and that it should come up with a more flexible plan for both the allocation and application of the budget.<sup>120</sup> In 1986, one day before the performance of *Kingdom of Desire*, the death of a lighting designer, Zhou Kai [周凱], who fell from an unequipped light frame, was a lamentable lesson to the performing arts profession in Taiwan. The government has since started to pay more attention to health and safety standards for theatre workers; however, each local cultural centre built by the government within Taiwan is a kind of theatre with obsolete and/or useless hardware. For theatre workers, local cultural centres in each Taiwanese city and county are the worst theatres for putting on performances. For example, the lighting is poor, the entrances to the backstage area are too narrow to get the props in, the wooden floors are rotten and there are no professionals managing these cultural centres.<sup>121</sup> The centres are sometimes even used for local residents' morning exercises or sporting activities.

In 1998, Wu announced the temporary closure of Contemporary Legend Theatre because of budgetary pressures. Wu did not give in, but simply could not keep going without sufficient financial support. Budget constraints hindered him from moving on, so not one production was staged for the following three years. The key problem was that without government funding, Wu could not develop another production on as large a scale as *Kingdom of Desire*. In 2000, Wu was invited by Ariane Mnouchkine to teach in France. During the lectures, Wu adapted *King Lear* and produced a solo play 25 minutes in length, which became Wu's third Shakespearean adaptation, *Lear is Here*. In the production of *Lear is Here*, Wu integrated a soliloquy of his own life with Lear's inward thoughts. Wu realised then that, even if there were no available funding, he could put on a production alone. As a result, the Contemporary Legend Theatre reopened at the end of 2000. With the support of the civic China Trust Cultural Foundation and the promotion of the foundation's own theatre, Novel Hall, *Lear is Here* was finally performed in 2001.<sup>122</sup> The return of Contemporary

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<sup>119</sup> "Pingshen Luanxiang Dagan" [評審亂象大觀] (The Overlooking of Referees' Chaos) *Liberty Times*, August 8, 2001, 40. [http://web.pu.edu.tw/~folktw/theater/theater\\_h05.htm](http://web.pu.edu.tw/~folktw/theater/theater_h05.htm) (accessed 18 May 2009).

<sup>120</sup> "Guojia Fuzhi Tuandui Zhenxuan Banfa Xingsi," [國家扶植團隊徵選辦法省思] (The Reflection of Recruiting National Supporting Group) *Liberty Times*, August 22, 2001, 40. [http://web.pu.edu.tw/~folktw/theater/theater\\_h06.htm](http://web.pu.edu.tw/~folktw/theater/theater_h06.htm) (accessed 19 May 2009).

<sup>121</sup> Lu, *Juejing Mengya*, 187.

<sup>122</sup> Please see *Lear is Here* programme.

Legend Theatre was similar to Wu's announcement in the play: "I am back! The decision is tougher than entering into some monastery!" (Act I).<sup>123</sup>

In *Lear is Here*, Wu looks back at himself and sees his reflection through different Shakespearean characters. In the following example, the first quotation is from Shakespeare's *King Lear* and the second from Wu's *Lear is Here*. Shakespeare's Lear gets lost in his own inner world, whilst Wu's Lear loses himself in his character. Both Lear were struggling with and confused by their identities. Wu took advantage of this point and found that it echoed his real life.

Lear: Doth any here know me? This is not Lear.  
Doth Lear Walk thus? Speak thus? Where are his eyes?  
Either his notion weakens, his discernings  
Are lethargied – Ha! Waking? 'tis not so.  
Who is it that can tell me who I am? (1.4, 226-230)

Wu: I am back!  
Who is he?  
Does anyone know him?  
This is not Lear.  
Then where is Lear?  
Is this Lear walking?  
Is this Lear speaking?  
Where are his eyes?<sup>124</sup>

Huang<sup>125</sup> has also argued for a "small-time (individual) Shakespeare" by addressing the point that "the play [*Lear is Here*] is a journey from the inner world of the lonely Lear, through a burst of multiple identities and characters, to the autobiographical, manifested by the lonely Wu." In 2006, Wu published his autobiography, *The Contemporary Legend of Wu*, with it being evident in this book that both his first production, *Kingdom of Desire*, and later production, *Lear is Here*, tell Wu's life story. Wu, a performer (narrator), projects himself as Shakespeare's characters (the Other), and starts a dialogue between himself as actor and Shakespeare. In addition, in his real life, Wu has to figure out first who he is by standing in the shoes of Shakespeare's characters. Wu dissolves himself into Shakespeare, into the characters, and also overlapped Shakespeare's characters with his own character. Nonetheless, the play is not merely a communication between Shakespeare and Wu. The

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<sup>123</sup> The English translation of the play's script was provided by the Contemporary Legend Theatre.

<sup>124</sup> All translation of Wu Hsing-kuo's *Lear is Hear* (2004) are translated and provided by the Contemporary Legend Theatre.

<sup>125</sup> Alexander C. Y. Huang, "Shakespeare, Performance, and Autobiographical Interventions," *Shakespeare Bulletin* 24.2 (2006): 35.

dialogue is not only between Shakespeare's characters and Wu (onstage), but also between Wu (onstage) and himself (real life). Even if this *other* is a parallel of *the self*, Wu in real life still examines himself and communicates with himself through the vision of Wu on the stage. As a result, through the process of dialogue on/off stage, Shakespeare supplements the vision of Wu onstage, with Wu onstage supplementing the vision of Wu in reality, while Wu in reality is supplementing the vision of Shakespeare.

This time, *Lear is Here* is not only a dialogue between Peking Opera and Shakespeare, but also between Wu and Shakespeare. Truly, *Lear is Here* is not performing the story of King Lear but of Wu himself. In saying "Why Lear? Who is Lear? ...Who am I?" (Act I), Wu is lost in his last triumph and cannot pull himself together; he *needed* to re-evaluate himself through the vision of Shakespeare. Even when there were no actors available and no budget to spare, he believed that he could still keep producing work himself, regardless of the fact that he is only one man, alone. Thus, the dialogic purpose of *Lear is Here* became communication between Wu and himself. Being more demanding than his previous production *Kingdom of Desire*, Wu must forget his characters from Peking Opera, forget himself and forget his past completely, before he can rediscover his self.

It was much more difficult for Wu to challenge both himself and his limits within the established traditions. In *Lear is Here*, Wu alone played ten characters – Lear, Goneril, Regan, Cordelia, Kent, Gloucester, Edmund, Edgar, the fool and, of course, Wu himself.<sup>126</sup> Wu used *Lao Sheng* (a middle-aged, mature and decent man) to perform King Lear, *Qing Yi* (a married woman, tender and obedient) for Goneril, *Po La Dan* (a shrewish woman) for Regan, *Ku Dan* (a miserable woman) for Cordelia, *Wu Er Hua* (a loyal man) for Kent, *Xiao Sheng* (a young man) for Edgar, *Wu Sheng* (a warrior) for Edmund, and finally *Chou* (a comic clown) for the fool. Again, he was faced with the same problems of Peking Opera's character regulations, since Wu trained as a *Wu Sheng*. The audience was already startled to see him challenge himself by playing *Lao Sheng* or *Xiao Sheng* well, but surely they could not expect him to play other female roles, such as *Zheng Dan*, *Hua Dan*, and *Chou Dan* as well as all the other characters together. Needless to say, it was a huge challenge for both Peking Opera and of course for Wu.

Wu seemed to become lost within all the characters he performed. In fact, Wu was also looking for himself among each of the ten characters. As Lear asks in the play, "Who is it that can tell me who I am? I want to know who I am!" (Act I), the question of "who am I?"

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<sup>126</sup> Lu, *Juejing Mengya*, 208.

is also a question that Wu asks himself. In terms of the play, is he Lear, Regan, Cordelia, Kent, Edgar, the fool or Wu himself? In terms of the performing arts, is he representing Peking Opera in the East or Shakespeare in the West? In terms of self-consciousness, this is the same issue that Taiwanese people have been debating for a long time: is he a Taiwanese or a Chinese person?

When *Lear is Here* was produced, Wu was looking for himself through the confession of facing his master, Zhou Zhengrong [周正榮]. Zhou was the most rigorous *Lao Sheng* actor among the first generation of Peking Opera actors who had fled to Taiwan with the KMT. Wu was his last disciple, known as the *closed-door disciple* [閉門弟子] in Peking Opera terminology, meaning that his master would not recruit any more disciples. In the world of Peking Opera, the relationship between master and his disciples is very subtle. A master is very different from a simple teacher in a formal Peking Opera school, and always plays an important role in their disciples' lives. Once the master-disciple relationship is established, there are rights and duties for each side, like father and son, meaning the disciple has a duty to respect the master as father, and the master has the right and duty to teach everything he knows to the disciple. Committing to the master-disciple relationship was a serious event in Peking Opera society. Wu became Zhou's last disciple in 1979 and, as far as Wu was concerned, the relationship was a lifetime commitment that would never be easily broken. Once Wu accepted the commitment, he had to shoulder the burden and pass on the tradition of Peking Opera, as in the claim of his destiny in *Lear is Here*:

I am Lear himself!  
Every inch a Lear!  
I have been Lear ever since I was a child.  
I am destined to be Lear.  
I am back! The show is about to begin! (Act I)

The father-and-son relationship of Edgar and Kent reminds Wu of his master Zhou, when they first met and began a master-disciple relationship. Zhou was like a father figure to Wu on his path to Peking Opera. Wu memorialised the moment through the words:

After this encounter, both father and son are reborn.  
This must be the tenderest moment in *King Lear*! (Act II)

However, six years later, Wu was the one to break the commitment to his master. Zhou wished Wu to retain the traditions of Peking Opera, while Wu was attempting to violate them. Ultimately, the six-year father-and-son relationship between Wu and Zhou was completely

renounced. Afterwards, Zhou denied their master-disciple relationship until he died and did not even attend the premiere of *Kingdom of Desire*. Wu's sorrow over losing his father – again – could be felt through Edgar's words in *Lear is Here*:

Step by step, I could know his heart.  
Call after all, I would burst my heart.  
Meeting with my father, acknowledge him I dare not.  
O you heavens, you play and trifle with the innocent. (Act II)

Two months before Zhou died in 2000, Wu had a nightmare. In the dream, he took away his father's sword and with the sword killed his father. Just as Macbeth killed Duncan with the trust that Duncan gave him, Wu betrayed the tradition Zhou had taught him and symbolically murdered Zhou – and Peking Opera tradition – with the sword Zhou had passed on to him.<sup>127</sup>

Even if Wu had respected its traditions, the world outside of Peking Opera did not need it, while at the same time, the world inside Peking Opera had constrained his ambition. Time had pushed Wu to the limits of his dilemma and onto the cliff's edge once again. Back in 1974, when Wu entered the Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan, it was the first time that he had contact with the modern stage. It was then that Wu realised it was an inevitable trend to fuse the spirit of modern stage into the tradition of Peking Opera.

Eventually, Wu chose neither film nor modern dance but kept working on the Peking Opera stage. Wu understood that Peking Opera was his destiny, a path he was meant to walk for the rest of his life. Rather than following his master's traditional path, however, Wu had to discover a new path for himself. Although he respected his master for safeguarding the traditional, he had no choice but to violate those same traditions. Wu grasped the once-in-a-lifetime chance to be a pioneer, and step out of the traditional life in which he had been brought up and educated for nearly 20 years. Without his courage to walk away from the traditional, the Contemporary Legend Theatre would not have come into existence.

Conversely, without the Peking Opera traditions in which he had been steeped since childhood, Wu could not have created *Kingdom of Desire* or *Lear is Here*. Without the traditions that had been passed on to him by his master, Wu would not be the same person he is today. Kent's dying speech reminds him of his master, Zhou:

Here, young man,  
This is my lifetime's saving,  
Well worth a poor man's taking.

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 126, 135.

Thank thee for bringing me hither. Let me hear thee going! (Act II)

The traditional formation given to Wu is the lifetime's saving that his master passed on to him, in the same way Kent gives it to Edgar. Wu took this lifetime's saving to turn against his master, as Wu needed to know how far he could go with the traditional and who he would become after walking away:

I want to know who I am!  
My kingdom, my wit and my power all abuse me!  
They want me to believe that I am of this place!  
I am back!  
I'm still I that was, I that am, and I that shall be! (Act I)

No matter how traditions have changed, Peking Opera's essence still remains the same. No matter how much Wu has *betrayed* tradition, he still has the blood of Peking Opera flowing through him. Wu cannot deny that he was born of tradition, in the same way that he cannot deny his ethnic Chinese consciousness, even though he was born in Taiwan. Although he was hesitant to bridge the chasm between modernity and tradition, he had no choice but to take that risk. It was always a dilemma for Wu when he was forced to choose to kill the traditional with the sword of tradition, similar to the vision in his dream where he murdered his master with his master's sword – the sword of – the man who had educated, inspired, cultivated and taught him to deeply appreciate Peking Opera.

During the dialogue, Wu loses himself again as he loses touch with reality. He does not know who he is, either onstage or in reality. He is Lear and the Fool at the same time. He is Edmund and Edgar. He is also Goneril, Regan and Cordelia. But who was the person behind all these characters? He fears having betrayed himself, as he has betrayed the conservative traditions of Peking Opera. He is never simply *Wu*.

Surprisingly, the result is successful; through this ten-character dialogue, Wu finds and is proud of being himself, and at last, he also proves to his audience the existence of his self. At the same time, Wu projects his character onto those of all Shakespeare's characters. He has reflected on himself in particular through the role of Lear:

I am back!  
I am still I that was, I that am, and I that shall be!  
I revert to my nature.  
This feat is nobler than entering into some monastery! (Act I)

Indeed, Wu is back as he was in reality; Wu was back in the theatre and back from working his way through his dilemma. As he says, this decision was even tougher than retiring from the world, but his is the spirit of an artist, who can look back at his life and re-invent himself. Clearly, Wu was able to achieve this dialogue between him and his self through this experience with Shakespeare. The story of *Lear is Here* is, to be exact, a narrative of Wu's life.

### 1.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed how national identity was constructed by the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) and partly established through making Peking Opera Taiwan's national opera. This strategy not only reaffirmed KMT authority in Taiwan by propagating a Chinese national identity, but also heightened tensions between Peking Opera and other local cultures as well as between Mainlanders and Taiwanese. After the KMT took over Taiwan from Japan's reign, it ruled Taiwan as a colony and was considered another foreign regime. The KMT forced Taiwanese to learn Mandarin, prohibited their mother tongue, and imposed the Chinese culture. In order to assimilate Taiwanese, local Taiwanese cultures were also suppressed. On the one hand, Wu Hsing-kuo's *Kingdom of Desire* depicted how Peking Opera represented the unchallengeable nature of the KMT's Chinese-only regime, as it protected Peking Opera and held it as superior to local Taiwanese traditions. On the other hand, Wu proved the success of modernising Peking Opera's theatrical tradition with Shakespeare's text as Vico Lee observes:

Wu proved to be way ahead of his times as the modernising of traditional performance genres and the blending of performance styles of different cultures have since not only been widely accepted but have even become the dominant trend in performance arts in the 1990s.<sup>128</sup>

In comparison with Peking Opera, the next chapter will discuss the theatrical history of the other local Taiwanese traditional form, Puppet Play, and its cultural engagement with Shakespeare to see how Taiwanese people's identity was missing and treated as something forbidden through the cultural form of Puppet Play in Huang Wushan's *Henry IV*.

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<sup>128</sup> Vico Lee, "Mixing up Chinese Opera." *Taipei Times* 29 August 2003, 18.  
<http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/feat/archives/2003/08/29/2003065745> (accessed Jan 2006).

## Chapter Two: *Henry IV*

Shakespeare is like the world, or life itself. Every historical period finds in him what it is looking for and what it wants to see...By discovering in Shakespeare's plays problems that are relevant to our own time, modern audiences often, unexpectedly, find themselves near to the Elizabethans; or at least are in the position to understand them well.

— Jan Kott<sup>1</sup>

After fully examining Shakespeare's political relevance in Wu Hsing-kuo's *Kingdom of Desire* in Chapter One, I will now discuss Huang Wushan's puppet-play adaptation of *Henry IV*, as it directly contrasts with Wu's operatic adaptation of *Macbeth*. Although Puppet Play and Peking Opera are both regarded as local traditional cultures in Taiwan, each represents a different identity in terms of origin and cultural implication; often Puppet Play refers to theatre describing the experience of the Taiwanese people, while Peking Opera refers to that of Mainlanders. In other words, Peking Opera expresses a form of national culture, and Puppet Play is perhaps the most representative form of local traditional theatre in Taiwan.

Before the hybridisation of global and local culture occurs, there is inevitable friction between national opera and local theatrical forms. First of all, both productions premiered in two different centuries, with Wu's *Kingdom of Desire* staged in 1986, one year before martial law was lifted in Taiwan, and Huang's *Henry IV* in 2002 – a much more liberal time in Taiwan's politics. Wu's *Kingdom of Desire* reflects a time of military rule in Taiwan while Huang's *Henry IV* responds to the post-military age, so in the course of this transformation both productions helped reshape the notion of nationhood in Taiwan. In many regards, both productions are connected and contrast with each other culturally and politically. The following will firstly discuss how *Henry IV* and Puppet Play responded to the political situation in Taiwan and conclude by providing a detailed comparison of Wu's *Kingdom of Desire* and Huang's *Henry IV* in the end.

### 2.1 Introduction

On May 17<sup>th</sup> 2002, Huang Wushan, leading director of Shan Wan Jan Puppet Theatre Troupe, premiered his graduation production *Henry IV* for his Masters degree at Taipei National

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<sup>1</sup> Jan Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (London: Methuen, 1964), 3.

University of the Arts (TNUA) [台北藝術大學]. Performed in Taiwanese, it was a puppet-play adaptation of Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, the first such adaptation in Taiwan. When it premiered, the audience at TNUA consisted of university students and teachers, and due to the stage limitations of Puppet Play, only 102 people were accommodated. A few days later, on May 26<sup>th</sup>, *Henry IV* was performed at the Taipei Festival of Traditional Arts [台北傳統藝術節] in a larger, public venue, Taipei Zhongshan Hall, seating 300. Such a big venue would normally be inappropriate for Puppet Play – the production had to be projected onto a cloth curtain to magnify the puppets' movements and make them visible to the entire audience. Most reviewers, such as Lee Yuling [李玉玲] and Ji Huiling [紀慧玲], focused on Huang's transformation from puppeteer trainee into puppet master, noting this was Huang's first self-produced production since he joined Wei Wan Jan Puppet Troupe, founded at Ju Guang Elementary School [莒光小學] in 1985 by Lee Tian-lu [李天祿], a widely known and well-respected puppeteer in Taiwan. Considerations about the hybridity of Shakespeare and Taiwanese puppet-play theatre was another focus of the review, with some critics such as Du Xiujuan [杜秀娟] and Lin Maoxian [林茂賢] believing that it was problematic for Puppet Play to be transformed, absorbed and presented in Shakespeare's early modern English text,<sup>2</sup> and especially to be performed in the (local) Taiwanese language. In fact, the issue of language was a central and most controversial theme in producing a hybrid of Western text and local Taiwanese culture, because under the Kuomintang (KMT) government, the Taiwanese language had been repressed and prohibited in Taiwan. Further, in many regards Huang's own transformation in his *Henry IV* production also epitomised the history of puppet play in Taiwan and how it was carried into the next generation without any support of the KMT. Hence this chapter will mainly focus on Huang's *Henry IV* and its political implications in Taiwan, exploring how the Taiwanese language and puppet-play theatre have been affected by the KMT's past influence.

Huang's *Henry IV* was chosen as the central focus in this thesis since it was performed in the form of Puppet Play, Taiwan's local art tradition. It is also the only production studied in this thesis that was performed in the Taiwanese language; all other productions discussed here were performed in Mandarin. This in itself is a reflection of the

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<sup>2</sup> For all the reviews, see Lee Yuling [李玉玲], "Budaixi Henglisishi, Jiang Minnanhua," [布袋戲亨利四世, 講閩南話] (Puppet-play *Henry IV* speaking Taiwanese) *United Daily News* [聯合報], 5 May 2002. Ji Huiling [紀慧玲], "Shibanian, Weiwannan Diyidai Zhuan Daren," [十八年, 微宛然第一代轉大人] (After 18 Years, the First Generation of Wei Wan Jan has Grown Up) *Min Sheng Daily News* [民生報], 30 May 2002. Du Xiujuan [杜秀娟], "Yiwanran, Henglisishi Zai Taiwan," [亦宛然, 亨利四式在台灣] (I Wan Jan: *Henry IV* in Taiwan) *The Liberty Times* [自由時報電子報], 26 May 2002. Lin Maoxian [林茂賢], "Zhengtuo Miwang Zhuan Daren," [掙脫迷惘轉大人] (I Wan Jan Puppet Troupe: *Henry IV*) *Performing Arts Reviews* [表演藝術] 115 (July 2002): 30-1.

Taiwanese language's marginalised position. It is important to bear in mind, however that compared to Peking Opera, Puppet Play can be seen as the cultural form most representative of the Taiwanese people.

All Peking Opera and Puppet Play are nowadays regarded as local forms of traditional culture in Taiwan. Both originated in Mainland China, although they came to Taiwan at different times. Puppet Play was brought to Taiwan by immigrants from Southeast China in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Peking Opera was brought by Mainland refugees and the KMT government-in-exile around 1949. Politically speaking, the relationship between Peking Opera and Puppet Play was much like the relationship between *Waishengren* (Mainlanders) and *Benshengren* (local people, the Taiwanese). Puppet Play was a much better expression of the political status and self-image of Taiwanese people. Later on, Puppet Play and Peking Opera were both extensively shaped or influenced by the political situation of the day; Puppet Play was often associated with the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP),<sup>3</sup> whilst Peking Opera was tied to the KMT. I have chosen to analyse Huang Wushan's *Henry IV* in this thesis to demonstrate Puppet Play's role in constructing a national identity of the Taiwanese people, as a contrast to Mainlanders' identity in Taiwan, represented by Peking Opera. The following section will discuss the modern political relevance of Shakespeare's *Henry IV* and Shakespeare's overall relevance in contemporary Taiwan.

## **2.2 The Modern Relevance of Shakespeare's *Henry IV* in Taiwan**

I would like to begin by highlighting three key words in *Henry IV Part One* which, in my view, resonate with the struggle for Taiwanese self-identity: counterfeit, map and Welsh. The KMT's orthodoxy in Taiwan was as problematic as the monarchy of King Henry IV; we can see this by exploring national identity as "counterfeit" in both Shakespeare's *Henry IV* and Huang's puppet-play production of *Henry IV*. The KMT's orthodoxy was relatively contentious, both as a regime in Taiwan and in Mainland China under the Cultural Revolution. After the KMT retreated to Taiwan in 1949, relations between Mainland China and the island had become a huge dilemma, both politically and with regard to their international relationships. One great point of contention was the division of territory by both Mainland China and Taiwan regimes. From the KMT perspective in exile, Mainland China was included in Taiwan's territory, whereas for the Communists Taiwan was geographically one of Mainland China's provinces. Even though people in both Mainland China and Taiwan

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<sup>3</sup> Hu Zhongxin [胡忠信], "Jingxi Yu Budaixi," [京戲與布袋戲] (Peking Opera and Puppet Play) <http://paper.wenweipo.com/2007/04/21/PL0704210005.htm> (accessed 21 April 2007).

could communicate in Mandarin (the official language in both places), the identity of Mainlanders in China, Mainlanders in Taiwan and the Taiwanese were all separate and distinct from one other.

In Shakespeare plays, the word *counterfeit* appears in many places with different meanings. For example, the word is associated with death in *Macbeth* when Macduff calls out, “Shake off this downy sleep, death’s counterfeit, / And look on death itself!” (2.3.74-5). In *Henry IV Part One*, the word *counterfeit* has another meaning, with both Falstaff and King Henry IV using the word to protect themselves from their death. Falstaff *counterfeits* his death during the battlefield: “I lie, I am no counterfeit: to die / is to be a counterfeit” (5.3.114-5), whereas Henry uses many counterfeit acts to avoid being found by the rebels. Nonetheless, the word *counterfeit* seems to indicate something else for Douglas when he encounters King Henry IV:

Douglas: Another king? They grow like Hydra’s heads.  
I am the Douglas, fatal to all those  
That wear those colours on them. What art thou,  
That counterfeit’st the person of a king?  
King Henry IV: The king himself, who, Douglas, grieves at heart  
So many of his shadows thou hast met  
And not the very king. I have two boys  
Seek Percy and thyself about the field:  
But, seeing thou fall’st on me so luckily,  
I will assay thee, so defend thyself.  
Douglas: I fear thou art another counterfeit,  
And yet, in faith, thou bear’st thee like a king.  
But mine I am sure thou art, whoe’er thou be,  
And thus I win thee. (5.3.25-38)

Douglas does not know King Henry IV in person, believing that Henry may be another counterfeit impostor. Yet Henry does not deny his true identity and chooses to encounter Douglas as himself. Regardless of Henry’s usurpation of Richard II’s throne, Henry faces Douglas as if he was the legitimate king. Douglas’ second use of the word *counterfeit* highlights doubts about the legitimacy of Henry’s power. However, even if Douglas calls Henry a counterfeit, Douglas identifies Henry’s effort by saying that “in faith, thou bear’st thee like a king”, or as Alexander Leggatt puts it, “one implication is that kingship now has to be earned; and the mastery of appearances is recognised by both Henry and his son as a

principal means of earning it.”<sup>4</sup> It appears that it is not legitimacy that is paramount but what Henry does to appear king-like that matters. On the other hand, it is a different matter when the word *counterfeit* is applied to Taiwan’s national identity, because the regime’s legitimacy was the only thing that could allow the KMT to claim its power in both Mainland China and Taiwan.

In Huang’s *Henry IV*, the word *counterfeit* was translated differently in Mandarin, with different meanings. In Falstaff’s soliloquy “I lie, I am no counterfeit...” (5.3.114), the word *counterfeit* was translated as *jia ban* [假扮] in Mandarin, meaning disguise. During Douglas’ encounter with King Henry IV (5.3.25-38), the first use of *counterfeit* was translated as *mao chong* [冒充], meaning false claim, with the second use of *counterfeit* translated as *jia* [假], false in Mandarin.<sup>5</sup> In either case, the equivalent Mandarin word for *counterfeit* was much closer to the meaning of fake, which strongly connotes that the national identity promulgated by the KMT was untenable, and acts as a subtle criticism of the way Peking Opera tradition tended to co-opt the national image of Taiwan.

By implication, the word *counterfeit* was connected to controversy surrounding the KMT’s legitimacy in Taiwan, and by extension, the Communist government in Mainland China. Each government called the other *counterfeit* and claimed to be the only rightful national government of China, even though both had gained claim to the position through usurpation as 1911 saw the end of monarchy. The KMT, also known as the Chinese Nationalist Party, was founded in 1894, with the aim of transitioning China from imperialism to a republican democracy – a republic with the form of democracy. The Chinese Communist Party, founded in 1921, initially cooperated with the KMT to quell civil war in Mainland China after dynastic imperial rule ended. Nonetheless in 1927, the Communists turned against and betrayed the KMT during a cooperative period and began fighting for control of Mainland China. Civil war ensued for two decades until the KMT was defeated and forced to flee to Taiwan in 1945. The Communists then built a regime (People’s Republic of China) in Mainland China, whilst the KMT has maintained its regime (Republic of China) in Taiwan. Later, international pressures further complicated the issue of each government’s political sovereignty.<sup>6</sup> After World War II, the Republic of China represented

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<sup>4</sup> Alexander Leggatt, *Shakespeare’s Political Drama: The History Plays and the Roman Plays* (London: Routledge, 1989), 78.

<sup>5</sup> Although the production was performed in Taiwanese, the translated script was written in half in Mandarin and half in Taiwanese (the transliteration of Mandarin can be read in both Mandarin and Taiwanese). In the above three cases, the translated words are closer to Mandarin. Hence, the Mandarin pronunciation is used here.

<sup>6</sup> Tai Pao-tsun [戴寶村], *Jianming Taiwanshi* [簡明台灣史] (The Concise History of Taiwan) (Nantou: Taiwan Historica [國史館台灣文獻館], 2007), 202-232.

Mainland China as one of the allied nations and retained the support of the United States (US). Until 1979, the Republic of China was the only legitimate regime the US recognised as China, when the US severed diplomatic ties with the Republic of China on Taiwan. The same year, the US instead established diplomatic ties with the People's Republic of China (PRC), taking the position that Taiwan was part of China to advance that relationship with the Mainland. With or without US recognition, however, it could not be denied that Mainland China and Taiwan were still ruled separately, by two regimes that outwardly appeared to be two individual countries, as Melissa J. Brown notes, "because the PRC does not control Taiwan...the PRC government cannot institute socio-political experiences which would reinforce the identity it has designated for Taiwan."<sup>7</sup>

With regard to the dubious legitimacy of both regimes in China and on Taiwan, the dispute actually derives from the fact that Taiwan was once considered part of Mainland China and included on the map of former Chinese rulers, before the Republic of China was founded. It was the new, political division of Mainland China and Taiwan on the map that divided the national identity of the former Republic of China into two ownerships. In Shakespeare's plays, such as *King Lear* and *King Henry IV Part One*, we see how maps serve in politics as a function of power, and national history is determined through mapping as a means of ownership. As Peter Holland points out, "...the making of maps was itself an assertion of a moment of history and the charting of histories, especially histories of ownership...the map...functions powerfully in relation to histories of mapping as well as histories of ownership."<sup>8</sup> In the very first scene of *King Lear*, Lear straightforwardly requests a map and divides it into three kingdoms for his daughters: "Give me the map there. Know that we have divided / In three our kingdom (1.1.28-29)." Through the division of the territory, Lear is transferring his power and giving his kingdom away. As ownership of the kingdom is renewed, however, political power naturally falls to being shared between Goneril and Regan, with Cordelia refusing to take her part. Yet the map in *King Lear* thus demonstrates possession of power translated to the ownership of territory. Also, in *Henry IV*, the map is used as an instrument to create a new political division in their rebel plan when Glendower makes a proposal to Mortimer and Hotspur to divide the kingdom in three, stating, "Come, here's the map: Shall we divide our right / According to our threefold order ta'en?" (3.1.69-70). In both *King Lear* and *Henry IV*, a map is requested onstage to divide kingdoms

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<sup>7</sup> Melissa J. Brown, *Is Taiwan Chinese?* (London: University of California Press, 2004), 245.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Holland, "Mapping Shakespeare's Britain," in *Shakespeare's Histories and Counter-Histories*, eds Dermot Cavanagh, Stuart Hampton-reeves and Stephen Longstaffe (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 201.

and distribute ownership; however, the mapping of territory foreshadows the approaching national chaos and political disorder in court in a later scene. In other words, the display of a map signals the site of future political upheaval in both plays.

Although mapping and the division of kingdoms play an important role in both *King Lear* and *King Henry IV Part One*, no real map is shown in either Wu's Peking Opera production *Lear is Here* (premiered in 2001) or Huang's puppet-play production *Henry IV* (2002). The identity issue of Hotspur's mocking of Glendower's Welsh was not mentioned in Huang's production, either. Huang's *Henry IV* was the only public production of the play in the history of Shakespeare performances in Taiwan.<sup>9</sup> Other than this, there was another student production of *Henry IV* staged by Huang's supervisor, Ma Tin-ni [馬汀尼] in 1992. Coincidentally, as Ma Tin-ni compressed the first and second parts of *Henry IV* into one production (reduced from 39 scenes to 15 scenes), the map scene (3.1) was entirely deleted from the production. The map was missing in the above three productions, which may suggest that the map – along with Taiwan's past history – was purposely hidden from audiences (both Mainlander and Taiwanese). After all, discussing the map of Taiwan would likely have to address past oppression by previous colonisers, including the KMT. From the Taiwanese perspective, it was hard to look back at the KMT's former suppression of the Taiwanese language and local Taiwanese cultures such as Puppet Play. The map was thus likely missing for a good reason in Huang's *Henry IV*; however without the map past history would remain invisible. The next section will discuss this missing history by examining the following three maps of Taiwan.

As Holland argues, mapping is “a marking of history as well as geography.”<sup>10</sup> A map is more than just a geographical borderline; it is a political act that marks out ownership and demonstrates the territory under control. Accordingly, since the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Taiwan was always being mapped and divided up as other countries' territory. Historically, Taiwan was first included on the map of Mainland China as a Yuan Dynasty territory in 1281. Then in 1624, the Netherlands occupied Taiwan and remapped Taiwan into its own territory. In 1683, the Netherlands was defeated and Taiwan returned to being a province under Mainland Chinese administration. As the map shows below, Taiwan was a part of Fujian Province in Mainland China until 1895, when Formosa (Taiwan) was ceded to Japan by the Qing Dynasty.

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<sup>9</sup> See the appendix for a full list of Shakespeare performances in Taiwan. The list excludes Shakespeare productions presented in colleges or universities.

<sup>10</sup> Holland, “Mapping Shakespeare's Britain,” 199.

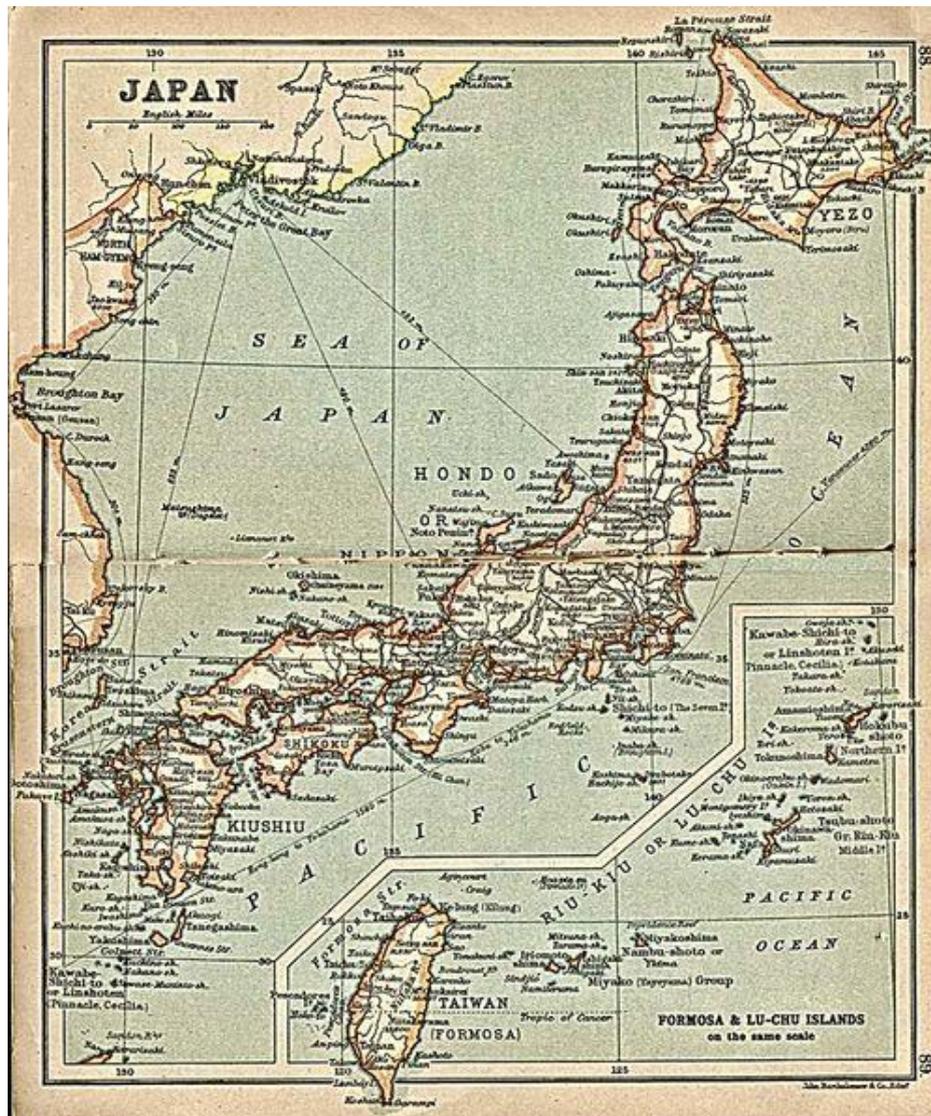
### Map 1: Taiwan in 1875

(Taiwan is the green island in the lower right corner)



The map below shows Japan in 1911, with Taiwan ceded as a part of Japan's territory. It was not until 1945 when Japan was defeated in World War II that Taiwan was returned to the Republic of China in Mainland China, which at the time was under control of Chiang Kai-shek and the KMT (the Qing Dynasty was overthrown by the Republic of China during the revolution in 1911).

Map 2: Taiwan in 1911



It became problematic to show Taiwan's remapping into the territory of Mainland China after 1945, as the Chinese civil war broke out between Nationalist armies and the Communists, and the KMT fled to Taiwan in 1949. Both KMT and Communists claimed that Taiwan was part of Mainland China's territory. However, even though the KMT and Communists used the same map, the mapping of Taiwan and Mainland China's boundaries was redefined in line with the political assertions of each regime. For example, the map below marks the different territories of the PRC and the ROC on Taiwan. Grey dotted lines are the political boundaries mapped by the ROC, with the formal name of each city in black text. Red solid lines represent boundaries drawn by the PRC, with names of cities in red text. White areas were territories claimed not by the PRC, but by the ROC.

Map 3: Claimed Territories by People’s Republic of China and Republic of China



As Holland eloquently states, “Maps encourage us to locate ourselves...”<sup>11</sup> Personally, when I see a map of East Asia, I see Taiwan as my motherland, not Mainland China. In this respect, a map encourages the Taiwanese to identify their own site of belonging (origin) and therefore mark out differences with Mainland Chinese heritage.

As previously mentioned, the map scene and Welsh language references were deleted from Huang’s production, although the issue of England and Wales still remained. This issue can also be considered a representation of the confrontational relationship between Mandarin and Taiwanese languages, because the differences originally resulted from ethnic conflict. In *Henry IV Part One*, language is brought up in relation to the map dispute between Hotspur, Glendower and Mortimer because Mortimer marries Owen, who speaks only Welsh, whilst Glendower speaks both English and Welsh, and Hotspur speaks no Welsh at all:

Mortimer: This is the deadly spite that angers me:  
 My wife can speak no English, I no Welsh. (3.1.193-4)  
 Mortimer: Till I have learned thy language, for thy tongue  
 Makes Welsh as sweet as ditties highly penned (3.1.207-8)  
 Hotspur: Now I perceive the devil understands Welsh (3.1.231)

<sup>11</sup> Holland, “Mapping Shakespeare’s Britain,” 215.

In the play, language is not only used for mutual communication but as an instrument to establish one's own ethnic superiority, such as when Hotspur cannot come to an agreement with Glendower over territory division. Hotspur claims he cannot understand Glendower's English and deliberately asks Glendower to repeat himself in Welsh:

Hotspur: I'll have it so. A little charge will do it.

Glendower: I'll not have it altered.

Hotspur: Will not you?

Glendower: No, nor you shall not.

Hotspur: Who shall say me nay?

Glendower: Why, that will I.

Hotspur: Let me not understand you, then. Speak it in Welsh.

Glendower: I can speak English, lord, as well as you. (3.1.114-121)

Compared to English, Welsh was considered an inferior language spoken by an *uncivilised* minority, which is why Hotspur mocks Glendower's English – to assert his dominance and social superiority in the argument.

Similarly, Taiwanese is often regarded as inferior to Mandarin. The Taiwanese language, also referred to as *Minnan hua* (the dialect of Minnan southern Fujian Province), was spoken by those who emigrated from southern China to Taiwan around the 17<sup>th</sup> century to find a better life. After almost 300 years the Taiwanese language has been localised, and is still very similar but not exactly the same as *Minnan hua* spoken today in southern Fujian Province. Furthermore, over the centuries, Taiwanese has been *hybridised* with other foreign languages, such as Japanese, Malay and Mandarin, and other local dialects in Taiwan such as Hakka and Pingpu aboriginal languages.<sup>12</sup> Like most other local dialects in Taiwan, Taiwanese was only spoken, but rarely written. Most of the population was illiterate and under the rule of first the Japanese and then Chinese governments, which left the Taiwanese language to develop independently from its written system and the changing official languages. As Wu Zaiye [吳在野] points out, text is an expression of language being highly civilised, with any language without text relatively lacking in cultural dignity.<sup>13</sup> For this reason, Taiwanese was always viewed as inferior by colonisers such as Japan. After 1949,

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<sup>12</sup> For more studies on Taiwanese language, See Wang Yude [王育德], *Taiwanyu Yanjiujuan* [台灣語研究卷] (The Collection of Research in Taiwanese Language) (Taipei: Qian Wei [前衛], 2002); Chen Yongbao [陳永寶], *Minnanyu Yu Kejiahua Zhi Huitong* [閩南語與客家話之會通] (The Research of Minnan language and Hakka) (Taipei: Rui Cheng [瑞成書局], 2004); Wang Huanan [王華南], *Aishuo Taiyu Wuqiannian* [愛說台語五千年] (Talking Taiwanese for 5000 Years) (Taipei, Xin Shi [信實], 2007).

<sup>13</sup> Wu Zaiye [吳再野], *Heluo Minnanyu Zonghengtan* [河洛閩南語縱橫談] (The Discourse of Holo Minnan Language) (Taipei: San Min [三民], 1999).

when it was evident that Taiwanese was spoken by the major ethnic group in Taiwan, the KMT still ignored this fact and made Mandarin the official language, although it was only spoken by the incoming minority – soldiers and refugees arriving around that time. Although Taiwan was returned to Mainland China as one of its provinces, the KMT regarded Taiwan as a colony and treated the Taiwanese people as uncivilised. Like its former coloniser, Japan, the KMT also forced the Taiwanese to learn to speak and write Mandarin for the purpose of assimilation. Taiwanese were prohibited from speaking not only their local dialects, such as Taiwanese and Hakka, but also Japanese, which the former coloniser had imposed for the same reason, for five decades.

As a means of political suppression, the KMT's colonial policy was to establish Mandarin's hegemony over other, local, Taiwanese dialects. The only language allowed to be spoken, written and learnt at school was Mandarin. Little by little, through policies such as educational inculcation, Formosans were taught that Taiwanese was inferior to Mandarin and that it would be embarrassing to speak Taiwanese in public, even though outside school, Taiwanese was the language spoken by the largest ethnic group. By inference, this would mean the Taiwanese people were an inferior minority. For this reason, the difference in ethnicity between Taiwanese (*Benshengren*, locals) and Taiwanese Mainlanders (*Waishengren*, outsiders) was constantly highlighted. The difference was clearly evident for nearly three decades, because very few *new Taiwanese* (Mainlanders) would be able to communicate with the Taiwanese people in Taiwanese. Ironically, the KMT also made English the second compulsory language in high school education, but it was not until 1993 that Taiwanese became available as an elective language course in elementary schools, and it wasn't until the year 2000 that Hakka and aboriginal languages were also included as elective courses. It was then that Taiwanese and other local dialects were truly considered *legitimised*, and began to have their own standard written text for reference, after a Mandarin Only policy had been in effect all those years. However, for those born before the 1990s, Taiwanese written text appears foreign to them, since they'd had no opportunity previously to learn how to read and write Taiwanese.

When it was performed in Taiwan, therefore, Shakespeare's *Henry IV* powerfully echoed the political issues of the day – the forbidden topic of Taiwan consciousness – Taiwanese national identity – and the KMT's propagation of Chinese orthodoxy compared to the Communist regime in Mainland China. Huang's choice of *Henry IV* also resonated for its counterfeit theme, as well as for the way it presented a cultural hybrid of Shakespeare and traditional local Taiwanese culture – Puppet Play. Since Puppet Play was performed in the

Taiwanese language and widely regarded as the most representative of local culture by Taiwanese, they were suppressed under the KMT regime, who saw it as a threat. Puppet Play was altered generation after generation because of the changing outside rulers, including the KMT. The next section will discuss how Puppet Play theatre in Taiwan interpreted and produced Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, and why Huang chose a play like *Henry IV* for his puppet-play production.

### 2.3 The Modernisation of Puppet Play in Taiwan

Puppet Play, known perhaps better known as the Hand Puppet Play [掌中戲], was chosen in 2005 by Taiwanese as the most representative local image of Taiwan in a promotional campaign conducted by the Taiwan Government Information Office (GIO).<sup>14</sup> Like Peking Opera, Puppet Play also originated in Mainland China and was later introduced to and rooted in Taiwan. The difference was that Puppet Play was brought to Taiwan by immigrants and performed in the Taiwanese language (local dialect); whilst Peking Opera was performed in Mandarin (the official, but not widely spoken language). In light of history, though both Puppet Play and Peking Opera share the same roots, they have had very different destinies in Taiwan. Puppet Play represents local Taiwanese culture, while Peking Opera became a nationalised cultural symbol of KMT control over the island. It was not until rather late in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that Puppet Play came to be recognised by the KMT as representative of local traditional culture in Taiwan.

Puppet Play originated in Fujian Province, and Zhangzhou, Quanzhou and Chaozhou areas of Guangdong (Canton) in Mainland China around the 17<sup>th</sup> century. There is no definitive source as to when exactly Puppet Play was brought into Taiwan, but it is believed to be around the 19<sup>th</sup> century that it began to be localised there.<sup>15</sup> Taiwan and Zhangzhou share a very similar language system, allowing Taiwanese people to naturally adopt Puppet Play over Mandarin-speaking Peking Opera. Also, the performance style and dialogue in Puppet Play are relatively plain and simple, so generally speaking, Puppet Play – which later became the primary entertainment of temple fairs around Taiwan – was more accessible to the Taiwanese public than the more genteel Peking Opera. After years of development today,

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<sup>14</sup> Chen Longting [陳龍廷], "Taiwan Budaixi De Koutou Wenxue Yanjiu" [台灣布袋系的口頭文學研究] (A Study of Oral Tradition in Taiwanese Puppet) (Ph.D. diss., National Cheng Kung University [成功大學], 2006), 6.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-26.

Puppet Play has become the most outstanding artistic representation of local Taiwanese culture.<sup>16</sup>

Puppet Play's development and evolution from Mainland China to Taiwan can be divided into eight stages: *Long-di Xi* [籠底戲], *Bei-guan Xi* [北管戲], *Gu-ce Xi* [古冊戲], *Jian-xia Xi* [劍俠戲], *Huang-ming-hua Movement* [皇民化運動], *Jin-Guang Puppet Play* [金光布袋戲], *Anti-communism Drama* [反共抗俄劇] and *Radio and Television Puppet Play* [廣播電視布袋戲]. *Long-di Xi* refers to the earlier stage of Puppet Play when family-inherited Puppet Play Troupes were invited from Mainland China to perform in Taiwan. *Bei-guan Xi* refers to the Guang-xu period during the Qing Dynasty when Puppet Play began to be localised in Taiwan. *Gu-ce Xi* means the Min-guo period (an early period in the Republic of China) when the stories of Puppet Play were mainly based on Chapter-novels and historical legends. *Jian-xia Xi* refers to the 1920s, when the stories mainly focused on chivalry and errandries. The *Huang-ming-hua Movement* (also called the The Kominka Movement or Japanese Movement) refers to the period during Japanese colonisation of Taiwan after the Sino-Japanese war outbreak in 1937, when Puppet Play became a political instrument of Japanese government propaganda. Puppet Play was allowed to be performed only in Japanese, which the Taiwanese found unacceptable. Although Puppet Play was suppressed during Japanese colonial rule, on the other hand, Puppet Play producers were inspired to improve costume, orchestra and setting elements in order to draw more audiences to the show.<sup>17</sup> In 1945, Japan surrendered in World War II and since that time, Puppet Play was freed from Japanese control and went back, flourishing, on the temple fair stage.<sup>18</sup> *Jin Guang Puppet Play* refers to Lee Tien-lu's 1948 show, *Three-hundred-year Qing-gong*, to start a series of Jin Guang Puppet Play. Unfortunately, after the KMT took over Taiwan, Puppet Play was again suppressed by the new government. In 1946, right after the 228 Incident, the KMT gave strict orders to stop Taiwanese from gathering in public. The 228 Incident increased conflict between locals and Mainlander outsider refugees, as the government seized the chance to stamp out dissent by restricting traditional, local Taiwanese cultural activities. At that time, Puppet Play was mostly performed outdoors, so the strict prohibition of public gatherings directly impacted Puppet Play performances, in fact they were facing extinction. Then after the artist Lv Sushang's [呂訴上] appeal, government orders loosened, allowing Puppet Play to be performed

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<sup>16</sup> Chen Junming [陳俊銘], "Zhuangjing Ziqiang Chubian Bujing De Taiwan Budaixi" [莊敬自強 處變不驚的台灣布袋戲] (Fearless and Courageous Puppet Play in Taiwan), <http://203.64.42.21/siathoan/TSE/forum/khoaNforum.asp?id=0706-03> (accessed 27 June 2007).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

in indoor theatres. The only condition was that Puppet Play had to offer propaganda for the KMT's anti-communist policy during the performance. Thus Puppetry was used to stage *Anti-communism Drama* starting in early 1951, when the KMT quickly began educating (and warning) all Taiwanese to oppose Mainland China's communists. Puppet Play was as a result modernised – and politicised – for a political purpose. For the KMT's Anti-communism Drama, onstage were Chinese puppets in hats with the KMT's national emblem on them (Figure 19 and 20)<sup>19</sup>; a Japanese puppet on whose hat was the Japanese national emblem (Figure 21, at left), and a Taiwanese puppet of the earlier Chinese immigrants (Figure 21, at right). Ironically, even though Puppet Play was not valued equally with Peking Opera under the KMT, in order to survive all local traditional operas in Taiwan such as Puppet Play had to sacrifice their time-honoured regulations and follow government-imposed ideology. As a result, the KMT flag was waved by an ancient soldier puppet, with the KMT badge on the puppet's head. No matter when or where the story was set; the unmistakable patriotic KMT insignia was mandatorily ever-present in every show.<sup>20</sup>

Only through negotiation and change could Puppet Play carry on performing under these conditions. Finally, Radio and Television Puppet Play saw its first radio broadcast in 1961 by Zheng Yixiong [鄭一雄], the owner of Bao Wu Zhou Puppet Play Troupe [寶五洲掌中劇團], providing a big boost to Puppet Play's popularity. Radio Puppet Play can be regarded as another form of storytelling, which was recorded in advance only by the professional puppeteers with proficient spoken skills. Through the charm of the puppeteer's voice, the radio audience would rely on the voice to imagine the play on a stage. Radio Puppet Play was often broadcast over the radio during the lunch break to provide entertainment for workers, including taxi drivers as they worked. The success of Radio Puppet Play was because it often performed as a series, so it engaged the audience's curiosity and made them look forward to listening until the last show.<sup>21</sup>

At the same time, Huang Junxiong [黃俊雄] produced the first Puppet Play film adaptation, *Journey to the West* [西遊記]. A year later, in 1962, the first Puppet Play, *Romance of Three Kingdoms* [三國演義] was broadcast on TV, beginning an era of televised Puppet Play. In 1970, Huang Junxiong's televised Puppet Play, *Yun-zhou Hero Shi Yan-wen* [雲洲大儒俠],

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<sup>19</sup> See the figures attached at the end of this chapter.

<sup>20</sup> Chen, "Zhuangjing Ziqiang," (accessed 27 June 2007).

<sup>21</sup> However, the lack of interaction between theatre and audience has always been an issue for Radio and Television Puppet Play. For more details and discussion on the matter, see Chen, Longting [陳龍廷], *Taiwan Budaixi Fazhanshi* [台灣布袋戲發展史] (The History of Puppet Play's Development in Taiwan) (Taipei: Avanguard [前衛], 2007), 225-255.

was a resounding success with Taiwanese audiences. *Yun-zhou Hero Shi Yanwen* broke a record with an over 90% audience rating, and Shi Yanwen [史艷文] became the most well-known figure in the history of Taiwanese televised Puppet Play.<sup>22</sup> However, this again attracted KMT attention. This time, the government did not overtly stop them from performing, but they demanded more publicised messages of patriotism. Thereafter would be seen examples such as a KMT representative who once walked onto the show with Shi Yanwen, awkwardly declaring “China is Strong” [中國強].

In Taiwan, any government orders, policy or alteration of government regulations could determine the destiny of any theatre. For example, in 1975 when the Mandarin Only policy was launched, Puppet Play was forced to leave the performance stage again, because the government accused it of hindering farmers from their daily work, and of holding back the goals of the movement.

Looking back at Taiwan’s colonial history, both Japan, and China’s KMT, suppressed local Taiwanese language and culture. But in particular, the KMT’s rule was the cruellest. After the KMT takeover, the government saw Taiwan as temporary shelter, or in other words a subordinate colony, but it never regarded Taiwan as equal to the motherland, Mainland China. From the KMT perspective, Taiwanese culture was always less important than Chinese culture. All the government wanted to do was de-Taiwanise and use Taiwan as a base to take back the Mainland China. The government did not care at all whether traditional local opera should be preserved or protected. This dilemma has resulted in an intriguing recent phenomenon, whereby the government does not really understand what theatres truly need, and with theatre operators and troupes not comprehending what the government is offering, either.

Puppet Play’s development underwent many ups and downs, with its subsistence relying on government policies and their intricacies. After the 228 Incident (see Chapter One), Puppet Play was only allowed to be performed in a theatre, so Puppet Play moved from small outdoor stages to bigger indoor theatres. In order to attract a larger audience and complement the audience’s visual needs, wooden puppets were enlarged so the audience could see them, with the setting, lighting and sound techniques all bigger and better than before. Even though Puppet Play was prohibited from being performed outdoors, Puppet Play remained popular in indoor theatres as well.<sup>23</sup> Afterwards, Puppet Play had no choice but to help the government with propaganda for the anti-communist political police, by

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<sup>22</sup> “Taiwan Chuantong,” (accessed 25 June 2009).

<sup>23</sup> “Taiwan Chuantong,” (accessed 25 June 2009).

always adding a patriotic figure onstage. Puppet Play successfully transformed itself to radio, film and television Puppet Play, and saw a peak in the television industry. However, due to the Mandarin-only policy, Puppet Play was once again affected by government interference. As a result, in order to survive, Puppet Play was performed to the public in Mandarin. Unfortunately, this did not prove successful because Mandarin was an unfamiliar language to older, local Taiwanese audiences.

Although Puppet Play had several times managed to survive government surveillance and interference, Puppet Play was still unavoidably on the decline. Up to the 1980s, there were only three indoor Puppet Play theatres left – Nan-xing Theatre [南興戲院] in Kaohsiung, Jia-le Theatre [佳樂戲院] and Hua-xing Theatre [華興戲院] in Taipei. Nowadays, these indoor Puppet Play are no longer seen – anywhere.

In recent years, as technology advanced, televised Puppet Play has gained young audiences in Taiwan because of the use of special sound and visual effects. In addition, Puppet Play's biggest breakthrough came when it transformed from temple fair entertainment to television, with the advantage of incorporating enhancements with modern high-tech effects. In Taiwan, though traditional local opera does possess appealing elements, it necessarily had to be modernised to accommodate changes in society and please the audience's changeable tastes and habits (e.g. of watching television). Compared with other traditional operas in Taiwan, Puppet Play has the largest audience and the most durable life. A television Puppet Play series called Pi-li Puppet Play [霹靂布袋戲],<sup>24</sup> for example, has caught the public's imagination through a combination of traditional expertise and modern technology, infusing it with new trends and energy from local performing artists. However, even though televised Puppet Play was once popular, Puppet Play is still in a state of decline because of a lack of innovative scripts and because singing, speaking and puppetry skills (such as hand-controlling) are no longer in such demand, or in some cases, required.<sup>25</sup> Though most Taiwanese may enjoy the new medium, it is being tested again as the 'Mandarin-speaking Movement' generation grows up. Now, due to the language gap, people from this generation often do not understand the dialogue and grow impatient with Puppet Play. In 2001, the Taiwanese government sensed an urgency to preserve the Taiwanese (mother tongue) and bring Taiwanese language education back into every primary school, but it is far too late to undo what the KMT accomplished by force. Speaking Taiwanese now has become a subject for school exams, and less reflective of spontaneous behaviour in daily life.

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<sup>24</sup> "Taiwan Chuantong," (accessed 25 June 2009).

<sup>25</sup> "Taiwan Chuantong," (accessed 25 June 2009).

Perhaps, Puppet Play will have to wait until the next generation to fully appreciate the language of its traditional art.

## **2.4 The Relevance of Shakespeare's *Henry IV* in Puppet Play Theatre**

### **2.4.1 The Notion of Counterfeit in Puppet Play**

Huang's initial reason for choosing *Henry IV* for his Puppet Play production was more personal than political because Ma Tin-ni (Huang's academic supervisor), who produced the first and second version of *Henry IV* in 1992, served as consultant for this production and shared her previous directing experience with Huang. As *Henry IV* was not a familiar play to most Taiwanese audiences, including fellow students at Huang's university, he expected his audience to focus more on the Puppet Play performance. Indeed, when Huang's *Henry IV* was later staged on a public stage, Taipei Zhongshan Hall for the Taipei Festival of Traditional Arts, the unfamiliarity of Shakespeare's text became an even greater advantage since his audience paid closer attention to the traditional art as Puppet Play.

Originally, Huang was going to choose *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for his adaptation because he believed the fairy characters in the play were much closer to the nature of puppets in terms of puppet size and their characteristically swift movements. But then, Huang was drawn to Falstaff's counterfeit speech about playing a dead man:

Counterfeit? I am no counterfeit; to die, is to be a counterfeit, for he is but the counterfeit of a man who hath not the life of a man. But to counterfeit dying, when a man thereby liveth, is to be no counterfeit, but the true and perfect image of life indeed. (5.3.114-117)

Huang at this point felt a subtle connection between puppet, puppeteer and character, inviting the question through this performance – was the puppet not a counterfeit as well?<sup>26</sup> There are numerous counterfeit aspects of such a performance. The puppeteer was real and the puppet itself, too; however the puppet could only be rendered living by the puppeteer because the art of puppetry relies mainly on the acting (voice and movement) of the puppeteer. The character of Falstaff was not real, but Falstaff was rendered as alive, through a puppet. In addition, with the small stage used in Puppet Play, it is certainly not as realistic as other theatrical approaches. The height and width of the Puppet Play stage is about 1.5-1.8 meters, with a depth of 60 centimetres, and a typical puppet only about 24-30 centimetres in height

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<sup>26</sup> Huang Wushan [黃武山], "Wo, Budaixi – Henglisishi" [我, 布袋戲 – 亨利四世] (I, Puppet Play – *Henry IV*) (MA thesis, Taipei National University of the Arts [國立台北藝術大學劇場藝術研究所], 2003), 48.

(See Figure 1).<sup>27</sup> Only two puppeteers are allowed onstage at the same time,<sup>28</sup> with at most 6 puppets onstage at any one time. For this reason, there were many scenes in *Henry IV* that were too difficult to present and had to be simplified, such as the battle scene. The scale of the auditorium was restricted as well. For example, when Huang's *Henry IV* premiered at TNUA, the audience was limited to 60 because of the small stage. Then, when Huang produced *Henry IV* later in Taipei Zhongshan Hall, since it was a large, 300-seat auditorium, he used a projector to enlarge the puppets' movements onto curtains. The theatrical effect of this Puppet Play was fundamentally different to a Puppet Play performance on a normal stage.

Finally, acting itself can also be considered *counterfeit*. No matter how well the actor plays on stage, it is still just a play, role-playing. Actors may play dead on stage, but they will still rise, alive, when they leave the stage. Such an issue of counterfeit is also discussed metatheatrically in Falstaff's speech when he stabs Hotspur and claims "a dead man cannot testify" against Falstaff's lie unless he is a counterfeit, when in fact Hotspur, the actor, proves the better counterfeit:

I am afraid of this gunpowder Percy, though he be dead. How, if he should counterfeit too and rise? I am afraid he would prove the better counterfeit: therefore I'll make him sure, yea, and I'll swear I killed him. Why may not he rise as well as I? (5.3.118-121)

As Falstaff is mocking the actor who plays Hotspur that "Why may not he rise as well as I", in fact the actor who plays Hotspur will rise, exit and even come alive for the curtain call afterwards. In this play within a play, the character of Hal is counterfeit as well, for he, like Falstaff, is always play-acting other character's roles in the play. He plays his father, his competitor Hotspur, Lady Percy, a criminal, a confessor, a rascal and loafer. Nonetheless, in terms of play-acting, the acting Hal totally outwits Falstaff and waits to outplay everybody who has ever wronged him. Through manipulating Falstaff in the operation, Hal's play-acting becomes a rehearsal for him to establish his political power and authority in the court. Hal uses the counterfeit in appearance, to manipulate his opponents and defenders, and employ his power. At the same time, the counterfeit nature of Hal and Falstaff's play-acting can be seen throughout the political history of Taiwan, with modern politicians manipulating

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<sup>27</sup> "Taiwan Chuantong Xiqu Fenghua - Taiwan De Ouxi" [台灣傳統戲曲風華－台灣的偶戲] (The History of Traditional Operas in Taiwan), [http://web.pu.edu.tw/~folktw/theater/theater\\_a14.htm](http://web.pu.edu.tw/~folktw/theater/theater_a14.htm) (accessed 25 June 2009).

<sup>28</sup> Normally, one is the principal performer and the other is the assistant for the principal performer. The principal performer is in charge of speaking dialogues and performing the main roles. The assistant is responsible for performing minor characters and assists the principal performer. For a more in-depth introduction to Puppet Play, see "Taiwan Chuantong Xiqu Fenghua - Taiwan De Ouxi" (accessed 25 June 2009).

and playing voters to win power in the political game. As previously established, the KMT made great efforts to suppress Taiwanese and Puppet Play, so the themes of manipulation and counterfeit politics in *Henry IV* had a particular resonance in contemporary Taiwan. As Stephen Greenblatt describes, Hal is a “‘juggler,’ a conniving hypocrite, and that the power he both serves and comes to embody is glorified usurpation and theft;”<sup>29</sup> the KMT regime also built upon the lie of “usurpation and theft” as a hypocritical, counterfeit authority in Taiwan. This counterfeit national identity is like the determination Hal shows in his soliloquy (1.2.132-154), in which he will “imitate the sun.” The KMT could only promise to do the same – to imitate and play at being the rightful regime – a performance of the counterfeit in Taiwan. Politics is all about play-acting; as Leggatt argues: “Hal can only promise to imitate it – to produce, as his father did, a good performance in the role of king.”<sup>30</sup> For the reasons above, *Henry IV* is the Shakespeare play that would most effectively draw this subtle correlation between Puppet Play and the word “counterfeit.”

#### 2.4.2 Generational Alternation in Puppet Play

Apart from Falstaff’s counterfeit soliloquy, Hal’s soliloquy about his reformation appealed to Huang in his choice of *Henry IV*,<sup>31</sup> because the speech reminded him of his own transformation from pupil to master puppeteer, and the reformation of Puppet Play under the KMT:

I know you all, and will awhile uphold  
 The unyoked humour of your idleness.  
 Yet herein will I imitate the sun,  
 Who doth permit the base contagious clouds  
 To smother up his beauty from the world,  
 That when he please again to be himself,  
 Being wanted, he may be more wondered at,  
 By breaking through the foul and ugly mists  
 Of vapours that did seem to strangle him.  
 If all the year were playing holidays,  
 To sport would be as tedious as to work;  
 But when they seldom come, they wished-for come,  
 And nothing pleaseth but rare accidents.  
 So, when this loose behaviour I throw off  
 And pay the debt I never promised,

<sup>29</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 41.

<sup>30</sup> Alexander Leggatt, *Shakespeare’s Political Drama: The History Plays and the Roman Plays* (London: Routledge, 1989), 89.

<sup>31</sup> For more detail on Huang’s early encounter with Puppet Play and his transformation from a pupil to a master, see Huang, “Wo, Budaixi – Henglisishi,” 1-14.

By how much better than my word I am,  
By so much shall I falsify men's hopes,  
And like bright metal on a sullen ground,  
My reformation, glittering o'er my fault,  
Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes  
Than that which hath no foil to set it off.  
I'll so offend, to make offence a skill,  
Redeeming time when men think least I will. (1.2.132-154)

Hal may be counterfeit, play-acting different roles in his life, but with this soliloquy he vows to reform, to change his image from the loose behaviour of youth to a goodly metal that will attract people's eyes. It was this process of Hal's self-recognition and reformation that attracted Huang to the play, because his production of *Henry IV* was the first time that Huang recognised himself and his own transformation, his mission of carrying on the tradition of Puppet Play. It was this soliloquy that also reminded the audience of Huang's self-growth in the profession of Puppet Play theatre, which explains why most reviews in Taiwan focused more attention on this – Huang's transformation from pupil to master puppeteer – than on the actual *Henry IV* production.<sup>32</sup>

Chapter One established the KMT's suppression of language and Taiwanese traditional cultural forms such as Puppet Play, and how these traditional cultures were positioned as inferior to the imposed new national culture (Peking Opera). The heritage and continuation of Puppet Play's legacy was hence a serious issue, sensitive, forbidden and contentious. Unlike Peking Opera, which was favoured, funded and protected by the government, Puppet Play received no such support and had to find a way to carry on the tradition by its own means. As also mentioned, Peking Opera had a public training school, founded by the government to cultivate the art form's successor, whilst Puppet Play could not even afford a proper school to pass on its traditional skills. For this reason, the only way for Puppet Play to cultivate new talent was through the most traditional and oldest method – a one-on-one tutorial system of teaching.

Fortunately, even though lacking political and financial support, Puppet Play was always well-received by the Taiwanese public. In addition, as a new appreciation for local artisan crafts grew in the 1980s, many schools started different societies specifically devoted to traditional Taiwanese arts and skills. Taking advantage of this boom, Li Tien-lu, the founder of the I Wan Jan Puppet Troupe [亦宛然掌中劇團], brought his sons and disciples to

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<sup>32</sup> For reviews on Huang Wushan's *Henry IV*, see Lin, "Zhengtuo Miwang Zhuan Daren," 30-1; Ji "Shibanian," 30 May 2002. Ji Huiling [紀慧玲], "Budaixi Shaju Hengli Sishi Jinwan Xianyan" [布袋戲莎劇亨利四式今晚獻演] (The Premiere of Puppe-play *Henry IV*), *Min Sheng Daily News* [民生報], 26 May 2002.

many schools to teach Puppet Play, spawning numerous splinter groups such as Zhong Wan Jan [中宛然] (Chinese Culture University [文化大學], founded in 1984), Wei Wan Jan [微宛然] (Ju Guang Elementary School [莒光國小], 1985), Qiao Wan Jan [巧宛然] (Ping Deng Elementary School [平等國小], 1988), Shao Wan Jan [少宛然] (Ge Zhi Junior High School [格致中學], 1991), Hong Wan Jan [宏宛然] (Ministry of Education [教育部藝生], 1994), Xi Tian She Puppet Play Troupe [西田社布袋戲劇團] (1990), Xue Wan Jan [學宛然] (San Zhi Elementary School [三芝國小], 1998) and Shan Wan Jan [山宛然] (Hakka Puppet Play [客家布袋戲], 2002).<sup>33</sup> Unlike other traditional Puppet Play Troupes in Taiwan, I Wan Jan was the only puppet troupe that was aware of the necessity of safeguarding Puppet Play's heritage and that did not insist on carrying on Puppet Play only through the traditional, family-based model. In order to pass on traditional skills, Li Tien-lu instead tried every opportunity to make Puppet Play popular again in Taiwan. However, due to subsequent changes in school policy and to the educational system, many of these traditional art and skill-based societies were forced to terminate, leading to Puppet Play having to find another path for the medium, which will be discussed later.

Due to this gap in Puppet Play education, seeing Huang, the first generation of Wei Wan Jan, produce his first show of *Henry IV* was a comfort to his fellow puppet masters and supporters. Nevertheless, there were burdens that came with carrying on the tradition of Puppet Play that Huang could never have anticipated as a student of the craft. Huang is the second-generation puppeteer of I Wan Jan (meaning remarkably lifelike) Puppet Theatre [亦宛然掌中劇團], founded by Lee Tien-lu [李天祿] in 1931. Huang, the disciple of Lee Chuan-Tsan [李傳燦],<sup>34</sup> started to learn Puppet Play in 1984 when he was 10. There were 15 members including Huang when Wei Wan Jan was founded at Ju Guang Elementary school in 1985. However, due to the college entrance examination distribution system in 1990, only 5 of those were able to remain at Wei Wan Jan and continue training in Puppet Play. After Huang finished his college studies, only 3 members of the first generation of Wei Wan Jan were left, with Huang one of the few insisting on carrying on the profession. It had been a long and difficult path to cultivate a successor after all these years in Taiwan and fortunately Huang was the one who managed to survive. Even though Huang toured Taiwan and abroad with other Puppet Play theatres for more than twenty years, it was not until the premiere of *Henry IV* that Huang first demonstrated his ability and determination to shape a career in Puppet

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<sup>33</sup> See I Wan Jan's website. <http://www.iwj-puppet.com/> (accessed July 2010).

<sup>34</sup> Lee Chuan-Tsan is the second son of Lee Tien-Lu, the founder of I Wan Jan Puppet Troupe.

Play; this is why reviews referred to his production as the fruitful outcome of the new generation of puppet masters.<sup>35</sup>

Hal's transformation speech as well as Falstaff's counterfeit implication therefore applies not only to the status of Puppet Play and the Taiwanese people in Taiwan, but also to Huang himself. Counterfeit in *Henry IV* has another meaning of disguised reality and recognition of one's true worth. Falstaff implies the word to both Hal and Falstaff himself: "Never call a true piece of gold a counterfeit: thou art essentially made, without seeming so (2.4.360-1)." Falstaff tries to remind Hal that he, Falstaff, is only pretending to be something he is not; and he, Hal, is also a pretender, but should not underestimate his own value either. In fact, in his earlier soliloquy (1.2.132-154), Hal already recognises his own true value as he makes the promise that one day, when the time is right, he will transform himself and shine over his fault from the rascal past.

For a long time, Taiwan had lived under foreign influences, of colonisers, of Westernisation. Then when the KMT took over Taiwan in 1945, the identity of Taiwan had been Chinese-ified – underwent a process of *Sinification*. As for Chinese cultures and Chinese images, as Alexander C. Y. Huang argues: "For historical reasons, Taiwan's cultural identity has been articulated in opposition to its Others, including the Dutch, the Japanese, and now the Chinese."<sup>36</sup>

It was not until 2000 – when the first Taiwanese political party, the DPP, won the presidential election and took over the executive – that the identity of Taiwan, as a separate entity, started to be recognised internationally. Before then, Puppet Play as well as the Taiwanese people and Taiwanese language had long been interpreted as inferior under the KMT's Mandarin-only assimilation policy. In order to survive, Puppet Play could only disguise itself under Chinese cover and wait to be recognised again. In the next section, I will discuss how Puppet Play found its own true value in its search for identity.

## 2.5 Huang Wushan's *Henry IV*

Both Wu's *Kingdom of Desire* and Huang's *Henry IV* are a cultural hybrid of Shakespeare plays and traditional Taiwanese theatre (*Kingdom of Desire*: Peking Opera and *Henry IV*: Puppet Play).<sup>37</sup> The intention of both directors in adapting Shakespeare into local Taiwanese

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<sup>35</sup> Lin, "Zhengtuo Miwang," 30-1.

<sup>36</sup> Alexander C.Y. Huang, *Chinese Shakespeare: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 217.

<sup>37</sup> Though there may be some ambiguities and different opinions about whether Peking Opera should be regarded as traditional local culture in Taiwan, as argued at the start of this chapter.

culture was to carry on the tradition and prevent it from degenerating. Nevertheless, each production received very different public receptions, with the adaptation approach for each production being very different as well. As mentioned in Chapter One, Wu was rebuked for modernising Peking Opera tradition in *Kingdom of Desire*, whilst Huang was encouraged by critics and Puppet Play supporters for his persistence in carrying on the tradition of Puppet Play.<sup>38</sup> Due to the KMT's long-term suppression of local culture, any attempt whether innovative or conservative was supported as long as it could give Puppet Play back some of the prosperity it had lost. All these different receptions are thus reflected in Huang's approach to *Henry IV*, in which he advanced Wu's adaptation strategy by completely westernising the puppets.

Unlike Wu's *Kingdom of Desire*, where the setting of *Macbeth* was transferred from England to a fictional dynasty in Mainland China, Huang's *Henry IV* kept the production in its original setting and retained Shakespeare's characters by painting the puppets to give them a Western appearance (see figure 5-8, 13-16). Wu Chinese-ified the characters by giving them Chinese names (Macbeth became Aoshu [敖叔征], names with no relevance to each other); whereas Huang transliterated the names (Henry became Heng-li [亨利], the Chinese equivalent for pronouncing 'Henry'). In fact, looking back at Peking Opera and Puppet Play in Taiwan, the former was employed as a political instrument by the KMT to assimilate and Chinese-ify the Taiwanese people, whereas Puppet Play went through a Japanisation process during Japanese rule and Sinification under the KMT. In other words, the Westernisation of Huang's *Henry IV* shows that Puppet Play may actually be more flexible at accommodating and interpreting foreign cultures, in this case Shakespeare's England and Wales.

Apart from the Westernisation of characters in Huang's *Henry IV*, Huang had to negotiate other areas of compromise during the adaptation process, such as the text, language and personality regarding each individual character. Unlike Wu, who endeavoured to maintain Peking Opera tradition as much as possible, Huang on the other hand altered many puppeteer traditions to accommodate Shakespeare's text. He also appropriated Puppet Play conventions in his *Henry IV* adaptation.

One of the first negotiations in Huang's *Henry IV* is in the text, because Puppet Play is a performing art that relies on improvisation, often *sans* script. Traditional Puppet Play does not have a written text because its stories and performances are mostly passed down

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<sup>38</sup> Similar reviews can be found in Lin, "Zhengtuo Miwang," 30-1; Ji, "Shibanian," 30 May 2002; Ji, "Budaixi," 26 May 2002.

orally by masters, and because no standard written text was available in the Taiwanese language due to the KMT's Mandarin-only Movement.

The repertoire of each Puppet Play theatre often comes from Chinese mythology, historical fiction or folk tales – such as *Journey to the West*, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and *The Tale of the White Serpent* – or local Taiwanese heroes, such as Liao Tian-ding. In this way, disciples can only learn the text by reciting what their masters tell them. So before a performance begins, normally the primary puppeteer will tell the secondary puppeteers the storyline so they know how to react during the performance, and the musicians will also know what piece of music they should play during the act. This kind of improvisational skill is based on long-term, cooperative relationships. The text may vary from time to time and between puppeteers, but the basic storyline always remains the same. The success of a Puppet Play performance depends on how the puppeteers improvise the stories they have memorised as disciples. They must familiarise themselves with a text long before making improvisations with it. However, there was no time for Huang to do the same type of improvisation with *Henry IV* because neither he nor his secondary puppeteer were very familiar with *Henry IV*'s story. In a compromise, *Henry IV* needed a text so that all participants would understand exactly what would happen for each act, even if they could improvise some of the text during the performance. With the help of colleagues and his master, Lee Chuan-Tsan, as well as referring to Liang Shiqiu's [梁實秋] Shakespearean translation and Ma Tin-ni's performance in 1992, Huang developed the initial script for his production. Though it was frequently altered after each rehearsal to turn the written text into coherent colloquial Taiwanese dialect before the performance-ready text was finalised, in terms of adaptability, Puppet Play would seem to be rather more flexible than Peking Opera in this aspect.

Traditional operatic drama such as Peking Opera did not have a script for the performance because they were also passed down orally. However, when Wu produced *Kingdom of Desire*, it was easy for him to produce a translated Mandarin script for performance because the available translated versions of Shakespeare's complete works were all in Mandarin. However, there were no Taiwanese translations of Shakespeare's works at all; making it much more difficult for Huang to translate the Mandarin translation version into Taiwanese (written text was not common at the time for Taiwanese). So Huang's performance text is in fact written half in Mandarin and half in transliterated Taiwanese (again, Taiwanese text can often be read as a different pronunciation of Mandarin characters). Since Puppet Play is more adaptable for making fast movements and short speeches,

Shakespeare’s long soliloquies thus became an additional challenge for Huang to overcome. As a result, Huang cut nearly half of the original text out, reducing it from 19 scenes (only *Henry IV Part One*) to 8 scenes, and simplified most of the language so audiences could more easily follow the plot.<sup>39</sup> There are some sentences that could easily cause confusion due to cultural differences; for example, “not so much as will serve to be prologue to an egg and butter (1.2.14),” “from praying to purse-taking (1.2.70),” or “let my girdle break (3.3.111).”

Sometimes, simplifying the text or changing sentence structure attempted to make it easier for puppeteers to deliver their speech along with the at times fast movements in the play. The dialogue was altered to be easier to present in Puppet Play. For example, Hal mocks Falstaff: “Unless hours were cups of sack and minutes capons and clocks the tongues of bawds and dials the signs of leaping-houses and the blessed sun himself a fair hot wench in flame-coloured taffeta... (2.1.5-7),” Huang simplifies this to “Time isn’t a beautiful woman, nor good aging wine, nor even gold or diamonds.”<sup>40</sup> Hal’s soliloquy is another example, with the original text of Shakespeare’s *Henry IV* (at left) and Huang’s simplified text (at right), presented below:

Figure 1.1

<p>I know you all, and will awhile uphold The unyoked humour of your idleness. Yet herein will I imitate the sun, Who doth permit the base contagious clouds To smother up his beauty from the world, That when he please again to be himself, Being wanted, he may be more wondered at, By breaking through the foul and ugly mists Of vapours that did seem to strangle him. If all the year were playing holidays, To sport would be as tedious as to work; But when they seldom come, they wished-for come, And nothing pleaseth but rare accidents. So, when this loose behaviour I throw off And pay the debt I never promised, By how much better than my word I am, By so much shall I falsify men's hopes, And like bright metal on a sullen ground, My reformation, glittering o'er my fault, Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes Than that which hath no foil to set it off.</p>	<p>For a while, a tedious playing with you Secretly I am like the sun in the sky Sometimes heavy clouds are to block its radiance Once layers of vast fog were pierced, the true self was shown People look up with surprise and admiration If it is holiday with drinking and fun for all the year round Wine would become tasteless and the day a boring day Only a temporary holiday would be expected Temporary debauchery, once turning back Turn away people’s view at an unexpected time Like the gold shining under the sun I, Hal, the son of Henry IV, the future protagonist Tomorrow, I will convince the father That I am indeed a pillar of this country</p>
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<sup>39</sup> Huang, “Wo, Budaixi – Henglisishi,” 44, 45.

<sup>40</sup> Translated by myself from Huang Wushan’s Taiwanese script. [時間不是美查某,也不是陳年老酒,更加不是黃金鑽石]

I'll so offend, to make offence a skill, Redeeming time when men think least I will. (1.2.132-154)	
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The above example shows how Huang cut and simplified Shakespeare's original text. However, it is difficult to translate the spirit of the Taiwanese language, because Taiwanese is rather more informal and closer to every-day speech. In addition, Huang uses a more literary form of Taiwanese to describe Hal's soliloquy, in order to emphasise his royal lineage.

Both Liang Shih-chiu's and Ma Tin-ni's translations are regarded as the imperfect version of Shakespeare's translation because they translated Shakespeare's (English) blank verse into plain (Mandarin) prose. This prose style was considered more appropriate for Puppet Play because the characteristics of the Taiwanese language – embodied in Puppet Play – could be best described as local, informal and civil. Nevertheless, in order to present an immediate contrast between Hal and Falstaff, Huang adopted two different styles; one is more literary and more poetic (for the court group), the other more unsophisticated, using daily slang (for the Inn group). Below is Huang's division of the two groups:

Figure 1.2

The Palace group	The Inn group
King Henry IV	Falstaff
Hal	Poins
Duke of Lancaster	Quickly
Earl of Westmoreland	Peto
Sir Walter Blunt	Bardolph
Earl of Northumberland	Kakala (character created by Lee Chuan-Tsan)
Earl of Worcester	
Henry Percy, Hotspur	
Earl of Douglas	
Sir Richard Vernon	

As most Taiwanese audiences are unfamiliar with the story of Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, using different language styles to distinguish two groups of people was Huang's way to allow the audience inside the plot more easily and quickly.<sup>41</sup> Also, Huang simplified the plotline by placing the main focus on the relationship between Hal and Falstaff and contrasting their characters. For this reason, the more literary Taiwanese language represents the authority of royalty and power in the court, whereas quotidian Taiwanese represents the ordinary and vulgar people in the inn.

<sup>41</sup> Huang, "Wo, Budaixi – Henglisishi," 29.

Nonetheless, Huang’s attempt did not exactly pay off. Even though Huang has made attempts to render the text fit for the production, Puppet Play style is somewhat inappropriate to use with genteel literary Taiwanese. As Lin observes, the audience still found it confusing, inarticulate and hard to catch up with the rapid-fire speeches and flurry of the puppets’ movements.<sup>42</sup> In terms of language adaptability, it proves more difficult to translate Shakespeare into Taiwanese than Mandarin.

Apart from text and language, Shakespeare’s complex characters were another cause for concern in this adaptation process. Externally, the characters in Huang’s *Henry IV* are Westernised figures from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, whilst internally these characters remain confined by Puppet Play conventions that dictate specific behaviour of individual characters.

As with Peking Opera’s strict rules about each character’s personality, characters in Puppet Play are divided into several categories, such as *Sheng* [生], *Dan* [旦], *Jing* [淨], *Mo* [末], *Chou* [丑], *Za* [雜] and so on, which are similar to Peking Opera’s character divisions, but actually more complicated and diverse. In Puppet Play, there are around 70-80 different types of puppet characters available<sup>43</sup> that make for a greater diversity of characters than in Peking Opera, in this sense making Puppet Play more adaptable to Shakespeare’s complex characters than Peking Opera. After all, it is much easier to shape the appearance of puppets than real operatic actors. Each character in the category has its own method of pronunciation, movement, costume, and facial makeup so the audience can distinguish the character’s age, sex, social status and personality from the others (cf. Peking Opera’s use of coloured facial make-up). In light of each character’s personality, the characters in *Henry IV* were divided into the following categories by Huang:

Figure 1.3<sup>44</sup>

	Character	Personality	Category
The Palace Group	King Henry IV	-Suspicious -Depressed -Noble Pharaoh	<i>Lao Sheng</i>
	Hal	-Debauchery -capacity for self-	<i>Wu Sheng</i>

<sup>42</sup> Lin, “Zhengtuo,” 30-1.

<sup>43</sup> For more discussion on Puppet Play characters, see Liu Huanyue [劉還月], *Fenghua Juedai Zhangzhongyi: Taiwan De Budaixi* [風華絕代掌中藝: 台灣的布袋戲] (Taiwan’s Puppet Play) (Taipei: Taiyuan [台原], 1993); Fu Jianyi [傅建益], *Zhangzhong Qiankun: Taiwan Yatai Budaixi Xianmao* [掌中乾坤: 台灣野台布袋戲現貌] (Puppet Play: The Current States of Outdoor Puppet Play in Taiwan) (Taipei: Shang Zhou [商周], 2000); Lv Lizheng [呂理政], *Budaixi Biji* [布袋戲筆記] (The Notes of Puppet Play). (Taipei: Taiwan Fengwu Zaizhishe [台灣風物雜誌社], 1991).

<sup>44</sup> Huang, “Wo, Budaixi – Henglisishi,” 32.

		examination -Trickery -Great wisdom and courage	
	Sir Walter Blunt	-Loyal veteran	<i>Wu Lao Sheng</i>
	Earl of Westmoreland	-Middle-aged -Positive	<i>Wu Sheng</i>
The Inn Group	Falstaff	-Boasting -The fat old knight -Debauchery	<i>San Hua</i>
	Poins	-Playboy	<i>Xiao Sheng</i>
	Bardolph	-Brandy nose	<i>Han Tong</i>
	Peto	-Speak indistinctly through having one or more front teeth missing	<i>Chou Tou</i>
	Quickly		<i>Nu Chou</i>
	Kakala (character created by Lee Chuan-Tsan)		<i>Que Zui</i>
The Rebel Camp	Earl of Northumberland	-Hesitant -Old earl	<i>Wen Jian</i>
	Earl of Worcester	-Typical betrayer	<i>Xie Mu</i>
	Henry Percy, Hotspur	-Honourable -Acute -Typical hero	<i>Wu Sheng</i>
	Earl of Douglas	-Ferocious -Strapping	<i>Hong Bei</i>
	Sir Richard Vernon	-Honest	<i>Bai Bei Zai</i>
	Lady Percy	-New era of woman	

As with Wu's Peking Opera adaptation, Huang's production encountered the problem of Shakespeare's characters being too complex to be divided and narrowed down into one single Puppet Play character. Puppet Play is like other traditional Chinese operas – the character must either be good or bad, with no character possessing a mixture of good and evil. This good/evil principle is typical of characters in most traditional Chinese operas, as a moral lesson that evil cannot prevail over good, so the villain must always be punished and defeated by the hero. *Au contraire*, Shakespeare's characters are multi-faceted, so it was a challenge for Wu and Huang to reduce Shakespeare's complex characters into one single category of character – and characters in both Peking Opera and Puppet Play must be very consistent throughout the production. The reason for this is historical, and tied to the difference in East-West theatre cultures; each actor would train for and represent one single character

throughout their entire life and career, whether it be men, women, old, young, evil or good characters. The same strict rule applies to Puppet Play, with each puppet painted or representing one single character. Nevertheless, since puppets are painted and can be reshaped, the conventions of Puppet Play are fairly adjustable. To overcome this dilemma, Wu asked the actors and actresses to rid themselves of their designated character's conventions and to try and absorb different categories of characters together in order to represent the complexity of Shakespeare's characters. This was his strategy for another of his operatic adaptations, *Lear is Here*, when he himself alone played the parts of ten different characters in one production (including old men, women, fool, warrior, politician and so on). However, Huang first had to make a decision about the most dominant personality for each character, simplify the complexity of Shakespeare's characters into one personality, and then use other devices – such as make-up and costume – to highlight the character's other personalities. Hal, for example, was the most complex character to define in Huang's production. Hal is an excellent Machiavellian, but at the same time a brave fighter on the battlefield. In this case, he could be classified as either *Wu Sheng* (male warrior) or *Wen Sheng* (male politician). Hal also has a characteristic of *Chou* (fool) because he is at one time a dissolute loafer, spending most of time having fun with friends at the inn. In considering Hal's most prominent characteristics, Huang decided to carve the puppet's face based on *Wu Sheng*'s character, but at the same time highlight *Wen Sheng*'s and *Chou*'s features through facial colour and costume.<sup>45</sup> It was only in this way that Hal's complex character could be presented by one puppet (see Figure 7). A similar treatment was applied to other characters as well (see Figure 5-8, 15-16).

## **2.6 Conclusion: Comparing *Kingdom of Desire* and *Henry IV***

In Chapter One and Two, I have argued how Shakespeare served as a powerful echo of Taiwan's politics through two very different productions – Wu's Peking Opera adaptation *Kingdom of Desire* (premiered in 1986) and Huang's Puppet Play adaptation of *Henry IV* (premiered in 2002). Firstly, I argue that both Peking Opera and the superimposed Chinese national identity under the KMT were re-invented, imposed and foreign phenomena in Taiwan, and in Wu's *Kingdom of Desire* production, Shakespeare was made to reflect upon particular national and political crises in Taiwan. Also, by interpreting for the stage, Shakespeare, as representative of British culture, Wu's adaptation managed to raise the

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 32, 33.

controversial issue of Peking Opera's invented identity and tradition as part of the KMT-imposed notion of national identity. Further, as an example of post-colonial cultural hegemony, Shakespeare has been appropriated in these adaptations as a means to review the state of political turmoil caused at that time by the KMT in Taiwan. In this chapter, I have moved into discussing the role and relevance of the counterfeit; confronting sensitive issues of national identity was the subtext of Huang's *Henry IV* through Falstaff's counterfeit soliloquy.

To demonstrate a parallel in the transition of Taiwan's politics from 1986 to 2002 (basically the time frame for the research in this whole thesis), and during the period from military rule to the post-military age, two operatic productions were juxtaposed and compared in this chapter. The inferior status of Taiwanese people, language and Puppet Play under past KMT suppression in Taiwan's history and the dubious legitimacy of the KMT regime were all implied in the missing map in Huang's production.

I conclude this chapter with a brief comparison of the historical and political context of the appearance of Wu's *Kingdom of Desire* and Huang's *Henry IV* productions. Wu's adaptation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, *Kingdom of Desire* premiered in 1986 (one year before martial law ended in Taiwan), with primary themes of political absolutism, power subversion, and self-undermining authority. In many ways, Wu's choice of *Macbeth* in his *Kingdom of Desire* production strongly paralleled the imposition of Martial Law in that period, as the play's dark representation of perils of regime change foreshadowed the turbulent and uncertain politics of Taiwan in 1986. The *Kingdom of Desire* production, through *Macbeth*, mirrored the political turmoil, disorder and chaos caused in Taiwan by the KMT at that time. In contrast to the uncertain politics as underlying theme in *Macbeth*, the notion of a consolidation of national sovereignty is reinforced in *Henry IV*; as Greenblatt remarks, "the authority that begins to solidify around the figure of Hal..."<sup>46</sup> After the KMT's long-term military rule, in 2000 the DPP, Taiwan's first local opposition political party, successfully took power, leading Taiwan to a more liberal age, which I will discuss more in Chapter Five. Huang's *Henry IV* (2002) embraced that new liberal "emergent authority"<sup>47</sup> of the post-military Taiwan.

Juxtaposing Wu's and Huang's hybrid productions not only highlights the political changes and transition during that particular time frame, but also reinforces the conflict and contrast between national and local forces at play in both Peking Opera and Puppet Play.

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<sup>46</sup> Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, 40.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

Importantly, the cultural images of both theatrical forms were associated with their corresponding political images. Whereas Peking Opera was part of a foreign traditional culture imposed as national and superior by the KMT military rule in Taiwan, Puppet Play is a more populist, local Taiwanese opera which has long suffered KMT suppression. Peking Opera and Puppet Play both originated from Mainland China, and came at different times in Taiwan's history, but external developments in Taiwan determined that they would evolve differently. Peking Opera was performed on an indoor professional stage, whereas Puppet Play was initially performed outdoors as part of temple fairs or carnivals, and later forcibly performed indoors for political reasons, a relationship between the two cultural forms that can be likened to the contrast between court and tavern in *Henry IV*. When the KMT deemed Peking Opera the national opera, the distinction between high culture (Peking Opera) and low culture (Puppet Play) was immediately imposed.

Both Peking Opera and Puppet Play were manipulated to serve the KMT's political interests, but tensions arose and were intensified by degrees under the KMT's anti-Communist cultural policies. Peking Opera became the national opera to promote Chinese culture, so that the KMT's hegemonic power, national authority and Chinese identity could be assured and superimposed in Taiwan. Puppet Play, on the other hand, was suppressed and used as propaganda to support this Chinese Cultural Renaissance policy. For the purpose of cultural assimilation, Peking Opera was protected to a certain extent, whereas Puppet Play – together with the Taiwanese people and language – was undermined and marginalised. Even though the Taiwanese language was included as an elective curriculum in schools by the time Huang presented his *Henry IV*, there would always still be a gap to fill, for that forbidden identity.

To sum up, Chapter One and Two established the dynamic interrelation between theatrical forms and political power within the Taiwan context. However, it is only through examination of Peking Opera's and Puppet Play's interactions with the Western canon – Shakespeare's plays themselves – that we have come to recognise the full impact of KMT political hegemony in Taiwan, and understand how political authority was both played out and challenged through these productions. Greenblatt states: "Shakespeare's plays are centrally, repeatedly concerned with the production and containment of subversion and disorder..."<sup>48</sup> So understanding the relationship between orthodoxy and subversion in Shakespeare's text will enable us to identify the site of authority in discussion of the other

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 40.

Shakespeare productions in this thesis. The next chapter will address how political authority in Taiwan was challenged through the subversion of Shakespeare's cultural authority in Lee Kuo-hsiu's *Shamlet*.

Figure 1: Puppet-play stage (with courtesy to Huang Wushan)



Figure 2: Hal and Hotspur



Figure 3: DM

壬午 2002 Taipei Traditional Arts Festival

第一齣 | 改編莎士比亞名劇的布袋戲

# 亨利四世在台灣

## Taiwan Puppet Show - Henry IV in Taiwan

演出時間：5/26 (日) Sun 7:30 pm  
演出地點：中山堂光復廳  
演出劇目：亨利四世劇集  
演出劇團：馬汀尼  
製作人：廖煥輝  
藝術指導：李傳燦  
執行製作/總務：許嘉珍  
導演/前場演員：黃武山  
舞台監督：陳威聰  
劇本改編：李傳燦、許正平  
劇本造型：李傳燦、賴世安、林朝暉  
服裝設計：李傳燦、程千恩、李景美貞  
燈光設計：江佑洋  
音效執行：蔡武貴  
前場演員：黃煥燦、吳榮高、潘莎路  
音樂設計/後場樂師：林永志  
後場樂師：吳威豪、張月娥、王祥亮、蔡武貴  
謝瓊其、莊傳慧、邵千鳳

中山堂位圖

票價：100 / 200 / 300 / 400 / 500 / 600 / 700 / 800 / 900 / 1000 / 1200 / 1500 / 2000 / 3000 / 4000 / 5000 / 6000 / 7000 / 8000 / 9000 / 10000 / 12000 / 15000 / 20000 / 30000 / 40000 / 50000 / 60000 / 70000 / 80000 / 90000 / 100000 / 120000 / 150000 / 200000 / 300000 / 400000 / 500000 / 600000 / 700000 / 800000 / 900000 / 1000000 / 1200000 / 1500000 / 2000000 / 3000000 / 4000000 / 5000000 / 6000000 / 7000000 / 8000000 / 9000000 / 10000000 / 12000000 / 15000000 / 20000000 / 30000000 / 40000000 / 50000000 / 60000000 / 70000000 / 80000000 / 90000000 / 100000000 / 120000000 / 150000000 / 200000000 / 300000000 / 400000000 / 500000000 / 600000000 / 700000000 / 800000000 / 900000000 / 1000000000 / 1200000000 / 1500000000 / 2000000000 / 3000000000 / 4000000000 / 5000000000 / 6000000000 / 7000000000 / 8000000000 / 9000000000 / 10000000000 / 12000000000 / 15000000000 / 20000000000 / 30000000000 / 40000000000 / 50000000000 / 60000000000 / 70000000000 / 80000000000 / 90000000000 / 100000000000 / 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Figure 5: Quickly



Figure 6: Hotspur



Figure 7: Hal



Figure 8: King Henry IV



Figure 9: Hat



Figure 10: Coloured puppet

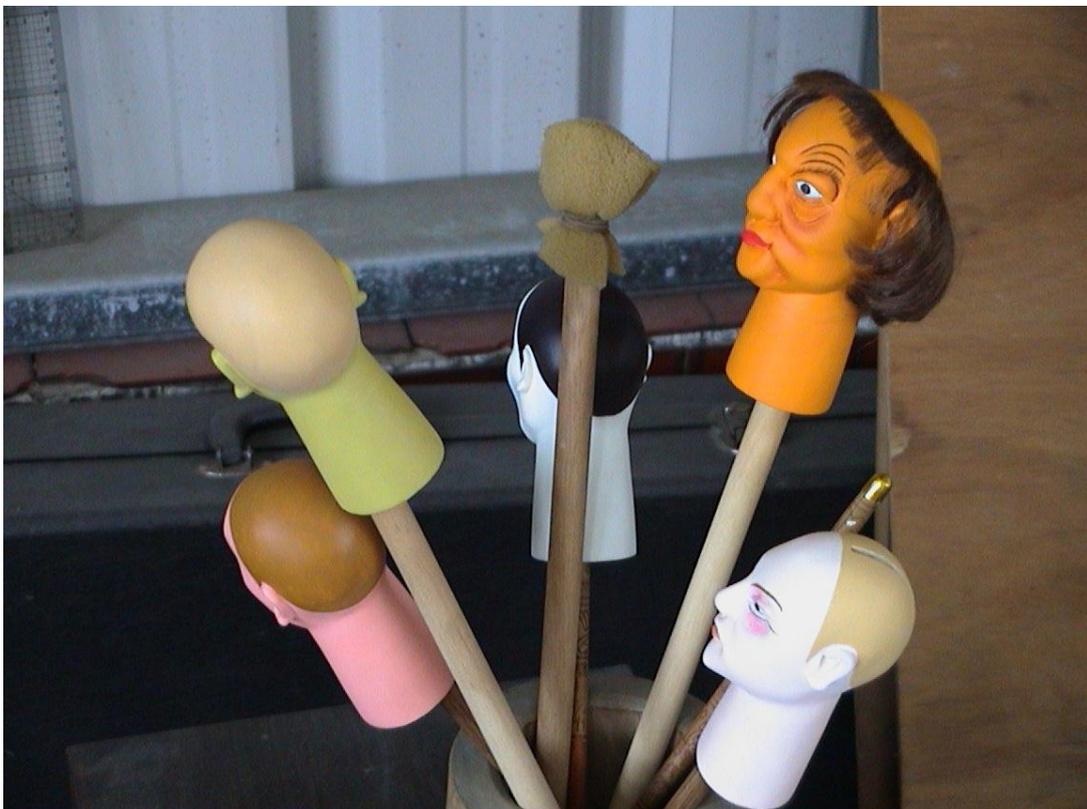


Figure 11: Costume of puppet



Figure 12: Crown



Figure 13: Falstaff, Poins and Hal (left to right)



Figure 14: King Henry IV and Hal



Figure 15: Soldier



Figure 16: Poins



Figure 17 and 18: Weapon and sword

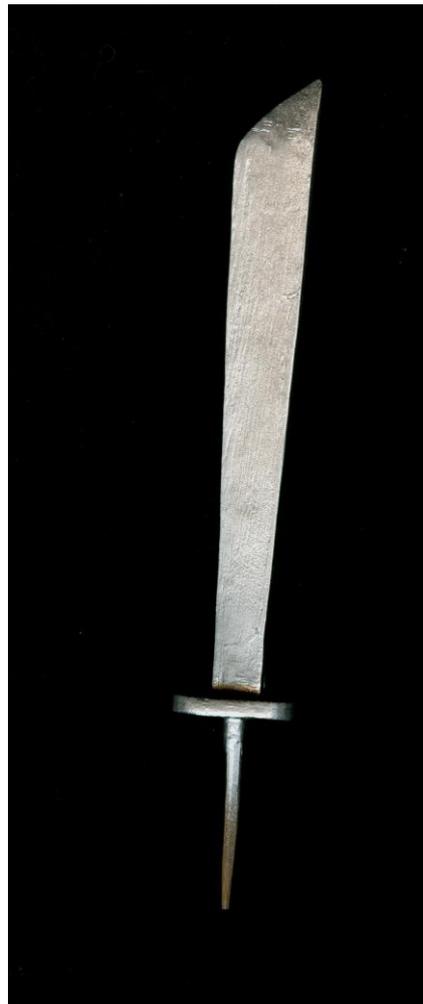
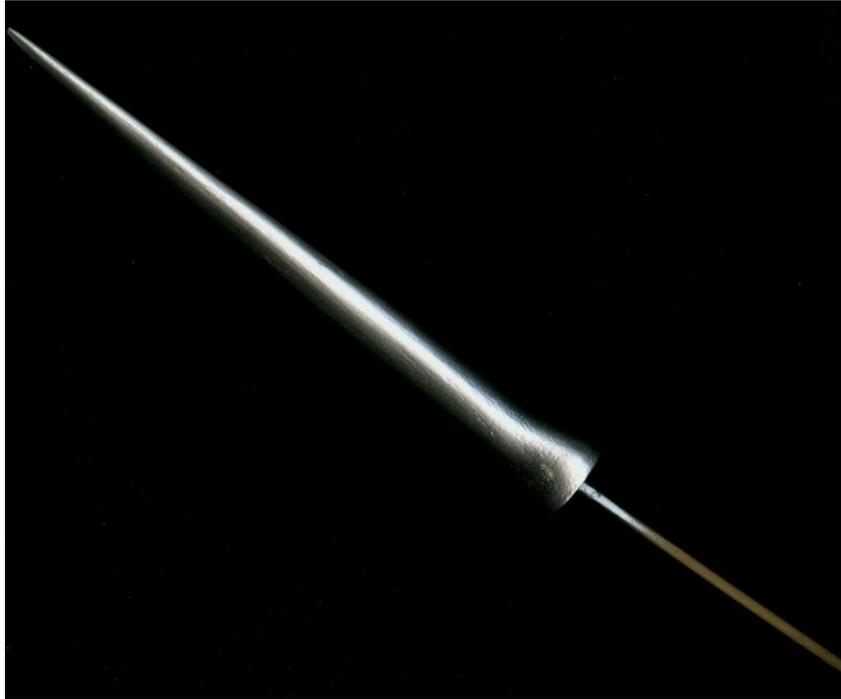


Figure 19: Puppets with KMT emblem



Figure 20: Puppets with KMT emblem



Figure 21: Japanese and Taiwanese puppets



## Chapter Three: *Shamlet*

### Challenges to Shakespeare's Text: Adaptations and Authenticity

After all, the work of other writers is one of a writer's main sources of input, so don't hesitate to use it; just because somebody else has an idea doesn't mean you can't take that idea and develop a new twist for it. Adaptations may become quite legitimate adoptions.

— William S. Burroughs<sup>1</sup>

Remember  
First to possess his books; for without them  
He's but a sot, as I am, nor hath not  
One spirit to command: they all do hate him  
As rootedly as I. Burn but his books.  
— *The Tempest* (3.2.75-79)

#### 3.1 Introduction

*Shamlet* [Sha-Mu-Lei-Te 莎姆雷特]<sup>2</sup> is one of the most well-known and oft-revived Taiwanese adaptations of Shakespeare. The play premiered in Taipei in 1992, was adapted and directed by Lee Kuo-hsiu, and staged by the Ping Fong Acting Troupe that Lee founded in 1986. *Shamlet* was later revived by the Modern People's Theatre at the second International Shakespeare Theatre Festival in Shanghai in 1994. It also toured to Toronto, Canada, in 1996 and was revived in Taiwan in 1995, 2000 and 2006. Apart from performances staged outside Taiwan, there were minor alterations between the first (1992)<sup>3</sup>, second (1995), third (2000) and fourth productions (2006) when they were revived and toured Taiwan.<sup>4</sup> As there was always a change of actors between productions, each production of Lee's *Shamlet* was unique,

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<sup>1</sup> This is quoted in Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (London: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Sha-Mu-Lei-Te [莎姆雷特] is the Chinese translation of *Shamlet*, the English title that appears on the programme. It is a combination of Shakespeare and Hamlet. "Sha" is also a commonly-used Chinese transliterated name for Shakespeare's surname. Normally, the full name of Shakespeare is translated as "Sha-Shi-Bi-Ya [莎士比亞]" in Mandarin or he is known as "Sha-Weng [莎翁]". (The term 'Weng' is used to show respect to elders).

<sup>3</sup> In this chapter, the first and the original version of *Shamlet* (1992) will be used predominantly for discussion because whilst the first may not be the definitive, its originality may help reveal the true initial adaptation prior to any reviews.

<sup>4</sup> This is mainly because of the high mobility of actors in Taiwan, meaning that the director, Lee, had to rewrite some characters' parts to accommodate the play with the newly-employed actors. For example, one foreigner, Christopher Downs, was recruited for the 2006 version of *Shamlet*. He happened to be the husband of an actress, and they were together invited to perform in the 2006 production. Downs, a reporter, TV presenter, writer and amateur actor, was living in Taiwan at that time.

especially as the actors played themselves for part of the play. In other words, each production should be seen as an adaptation of the original production.

In previous chapters, Shakespeare was shown to be appropriated as a hybrid language through which to address the political hegemony of the Kuomintang government (KMT) and local traditional forms through three productions: Wu Hsing-kuo's *Kingdom of Desire* and *Lear is Here* and Huang Wushan's *Henry IV*. To some extent, we have seen how both the KMT and Shakespeare represented *foreign* forces in Taiwan, and in the course of their engagement with Taiwan, a hierarchal relationship was immediately formed between indigenous and foreign cultural forms. When the KMT came to Taiwan and established its national authority, it treated the Taiwanese as a colonised subordinate, by imposing the superiority of Chinese identity over Taiwanese identity. Likewise, when Taiwanese directors such as Wu Hsing-kuo and Huang Wushan chose to adapt work from the Western canon, for instance Shakespeare adapted into Taiwanese traditional opera, the nuanced relationship between the original and its adaptation was also identified in terms of the hierarchal position of text. As Linda Hutcheon has argued, such an adaptation is often seen as "secondary and inferior."<sup>5</sup>

Unlike Wu Hsing-kuo's *Kingdom of Desire* and Huang Wushan's *Henry IV*, which faithfully followed Shakespeare's original text, Lee Kuo-hsiu's *Shamlet*, an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, was much more radical because he "deconstructs the [*Hamlet*] text", as Catherine Diamond puts it.<sup>6</sup> Lee's *Shamlet* premiered in 1992, only five years after the KMT lifted martial law and when Taiwan was in transition from an era of political absolutism to a much more democratic age. Even though martial law was abolished, the ruling KMT remained the only party with political power, as the creation of new political parties was forbidden. In March 1990, university students (the Wild Lily Student Movement [野百合學運]) protested in favour of democratic political reforms such as direct election of Taiwan's executive and the democratic election of legislative representatives. In 1991 and 1992, the students' concerns were answered with new, elected members of the Legislative Yuan (Taiwan's legislature). However, it was not until 1994 that Taiwan had the unprecedented opportunity of electing a Taiwan Provincial Governor (although the position was later abolished in 1997, in recognition of the fact Taiwan was no longer a province of Mainland China), and elect Taipei and Kaohsiung mayors (the only two municipalities

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<sup>5</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (London: Routledge, 2006), xii.

<sup>6</sup> Catherine Diamond, "Cross-Cultural Adaptation: The bridge or Breach in Taiwan Theatre," *Chungwai Literary Monthly* 23.7 (Dec. 1994): 19.

directly under the jurisdiction of the Central Government in Taiwan).<sup>7</sup> As the title *Shamlet* implies it was the *shaming* version of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*,<sup>8</sup> Lee's subversion of Shakespeare's text partly as a form of cultural resistance to Shakespeare's textual authority. But it was also designed to reflect an emerging resistance to the KMT's political authority during that period.

This chapter examines the way Lee subverted Shakespeare's textual authority and incorporated cultural and political nuances. As David McCandless puts it, "all productions are necessarily adaptations..."<sup>9</sup>, and Lee's *Shamlet* challenges the negative boundaries of adaptation while restoring the self-affirmation towards subordinated and inferior identity by establishing his directorial authority over Shakespeare's authority as playwright. However, as we shall see, Lee in the end challenges all forms of authority, including his own as director.

### 3.2 *Shamlet* and Postmodern Adaptation

*Shamlet*, presented by Ping Fong Acting Troupe, tells the story of a third-rate theatre company called the Fong Ping Theatre Company and how its players attempt to restore their fame after a previous unsuccessful performance performing Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Within the play, not only is the real theatre company's name only slightly altered, but so are the names of every actor. Lee uses word-play and anagrams as devices to connect the play onstage to life offstage. This is significant in the structure of *Shamlet*; Alexander C. Y. Huang considers how "Lee connected themes in *Hamlet* to his career as a playwright and a director. He envisioned the relationship among the actors and characters in Hamletian terms: miscommunication, non-communication, hesitation, and scepticism..."<sup>10</sup>

As actors and characters intertwine together on- and offstage, *Shamlet* to a certain degree mirrors *Hamlet*. The Ping Fong Acting Troupe in reality becomes the Fong Ping Theatre Company onstage; Lee Kuo-hsiu, the director of the Ping Fong Acting Troupe becomes Lee Hsiu-kuo, similarly for the director of Fong Ping Theatre within the play, and so on. This also infers that life is a kind of play, "All the world's a stage" – and vice versa. This is illustrated in one of the quotations Lee adopted from lines in *Hamlet*, where Hamlet asks Polonius to treat the players well:

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<sup>7</sup> Tai Pao-tsun [戴寶村], *Jianming Taiwanshi* [簡明台灣史] (The Concise History of Taiwan) (Nantou: Taiwan Historica [國史館台灣文獻館], 2007), 190.

<sup>8</sup> Translated from Ping Fong Acting Troupe's programme in 1992.

<sup>9</sup> David McCandless, *Gender and Performance in Shakespeare's Problem Comedies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 8.

<sup>10</sup> Alexander C. Y. Huang, "Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage 1839-2004: A History of Transcultural Performance" (Ph.D. diss., University of Stanford, 2004), 213-5.

Hamlet: ... Good my lord, will you see the players well bestowed? Do ye hear, let them be well used, for they are the abstracts and brief chronicles of the time... (2.2.462-464)

In *Shamlet*, Lee often calls himself *Xi Zi* [戲子] (actor), an inferior term used in the past to imply the lowly status of the profession. There used to be a saying, *Xi Zi Wu Yi* [戲子無義], meaning *Xi Zi* (does not have a sense of justice), suggesting he can play other people but he is not able to play himself. Hence in the above passage, the players is translated by Lee as *Xi Zi Ling Ren* [戲子伶人], whereby *Ling Ren* was another term used in the past mostly to refer to operatic actors. Notably, Lee did not use the modern generalised term *Yan Yuan* [演員] for the translation of *players* here. Instead, by using the older terms *Xi Zi* and *Ling Ren*, Lee intended to imply that these players were not merely players, as they carried the burden of making society see what is right and wrong.

Lee is extremely versatile: he is one of the few directors in Taiwan who can direct, adapt, write scripts and act. As he has said, the theatre itself is a precise metaphor or the epitome of the whole of society. In an interview, Lee observes: “The whole world is using Shakespeare, why can’t I? ... [His goal is to] find a productive way to articulate your true self through Shakespeare.”<sup>11</sup> By using the device of a play within a play to reflect the real life of the actors on the stage, Lee cleverly took advantage of *Hamlet* to criticise life and society in contemporary Taiwan. Lee also hoped that through his production, he could reflect the difficult conditions faced by Taiwan theatres and to invoke audience appreciation for theatre workers’ efforts. For instance, Hamlet tells Polonius to take good care of the players as they are “the abstracts and brief chronicles of the time” (2.2.464).

Of course, Shakespeare was himself a prolific adaptor. Many of his plays are reworkings of already existing plays, including *Hamlet* (although the original *Hamlet*, possibly written by Thomas Kyd<sup>12</sup>, is not extant). Stephen Orgel argues that, “What we have of the Shakespeare text, all we have ever had, is a set of versions with no original.”<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, Lee invokes Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* as a stable, fixed text to be subverted by his own adaptations (and adaptations of adaptations). He was not simply re-fashioning the text, but substantially reframing it in a way that deliberately aimed to question Shakespeare’s

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

<sup>12</sup> Harold Bloom, ed., *Bloom’s Shakespeare through the Ages: Hamlet* (New York: Bloom’s Literary Criticism, 2008), 41.

<sup>13</sup> Stephen Orgel, *Imagining Shakespeare: A History of Texts and Visions* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), xiv.

authority – and through this, question the nature of all authority (including theatrical authority).

Unlike Wu Hsing-kuo, who primarily focused on fusing Western plays (Shakespeare, Greek Tragedy, Chekhov and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*) into Peking Opera, Lee insists on using local actors and local texts. Most of the Ping Fong Acting Troupe's new repertoire consists of original plays. Nonetheless, Lee was also attracted by the imaginative possibilities of a free adaptation. However, by *adaptation*, he does not mean simply inscribing a Western text into an Eastern cultural background. He believes that "spin-offs and adaptations offer more exciting creative possibilities," and that "if one chooses to stage a translated foreign play and follow it line by line, one will be deprived of the opportunity to create and rewrite."<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, although *Shamlet* is often seen as Lee's adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Lee has insisted that his work has nothing to do with *Hamlet*, it is his own creation. For him, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is merely a pretext.<sup>15</sup> Admitting that *Shamlet* is an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* would imply that *Shamlet* exists in an inferior way to the derived text, in the hierarchal position of textual authority. If this is the case, then the fundamental question is: to what extent can a production be called an adaptation?

To pose the question "what is an adaptation?" is to question the fidelity of a production to its original text. When the word "authentic" is applied to a stage production, M. D. Friedman takes its definition to be "really proceeding from its reputed source" (OED A6), and to be "the text of the play."<sup>16</sup> Friedman explains that there are two senses of the "reputed source" of authority: the play's original staging and the author's intentions. However, as a basic standard of authenticity, either one has long been a controversial issue. William Worthen argues that, "no production speaks the text in an unmediated, or faithfully mediated, or unfaithfully mediated way. All productions betray the text, all texts betray the work."<sup>17</sup> There is no so-called "faithful" representation of an original work because it is impossible to recreate exactly the identical "theatrical conventions and dramatic environment" that existed during Shakespeare's time.<sup>18</sup> The truth is that all productions of Shakespeare's text are to some extent "'foreign' to Shakespeare's intentions."<sup>19</sup> This is a point of view which

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<sup>14</sup> Huang, "Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage," 214.

<sup>15</sup> Translated from the Ping Fong Acting Troupe's programme in 1992.

<sup>16</sup> M. D. Friedman, "In Defense of Authenticity," *Studies in Philology* 99 (2002): 34.

<sup>17</sup> W. B. Worthen, *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 21.

<sup>18</sup> Friedman, "In Defense of Authenticity," 35.

<sup>19</sup> John Russell Brown, "Foreign Shakespeare and English-speaking audience," in *Foreign Shakespeare*, ed. Dennis Kennedy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 25.

challenges the still-common tendency in culture to attribute authority to “the author’s intentions”. In other words, the closer a production is to the author’s intentions, the more authentic it must be.

However, what is any playwright’s original intended meaning? After all, we do not have the same standards and context as those during Shakespeare’s time, whether from the actors’, directors’ or audiences’ perspective. Certainly the standards of morality, society, culture and ideology have been continually changing throughout the centuries, with Orgel reminding us that “to ears trained in Renaissance England, Shakespeare sounded different, and that some verse sounded Shakespearean to those ears that does not sound Shakespearean to ours.”<sup>20</sup> Orgel continues to argue, “every word we possess by Shakespeare has been through some editorial process”<sup>21</sup>, with every edition of Shakespeare texts we now possess having already been filtered by editors’ preferences and choice of words. *Hamlet* is a case in point. There are three original texts, usually known as the first Quarto, second Quarto and the first Folio. Which can be said to possess the most authentic representation of Shakespeare’s intentions?

As for the issue of fidelity for an intercultural adaptation, it proves more difficult to retain with integrity the author’s intention and to retain the authenticity of an original text. As Peter Stein states, “the loss of value in a production is 85%, not to mention the previous loss in translation, already 50% of the original,”<sup>22</sup> suggesting that no staging of a Shakespearean text can be satisfactorily *authentic*. For an intercultural production, the first sense of authenticity has already been betrayed because it is even more difficult for non-Anglophone, non-Western theatres to faithfully restore the original staging of Shakespeare’s contemporaries. Regardless of author’s intention, the second sense of authenticity is also lost during the translation process. As in Patrice Pavis’ filter,<sup>23</sup> the process of producing an intercultural adaptation is like peeling an onion one layer at a time, and each time something is lost or replaced in that process. In addition, sometimes the production is not a direct adaptation of the original text but of a translated text, which may have been radically changed due to the limitations of the language of translation. For example, most of the intercultural adaptations in Taiwan have not been adapted directly from the original English text, but from

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<sup>20</sup> Stephen Orgel, “The Authentic Shakespeare,” *Representations*. 21 (1988): 4.

<sup>21</sup> Stephen Orgel, “Acting Scripts, Performing Texts,” in *Crisis in Editing: Texts of the English Renaissance*, ed. Randall McLeod (New York: AMS, 1994), 272.

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Dominique Goy-Blanquet, “Titus Resartus: Deborah Warner, Peter Stein and Daniel Mesguich Have a Cut at *Titus Andronicus*,” in *Foreign Shakespeare*, ed. Dennis Kennedy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 38.

<sup>23</sup> Patrice Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, trans. Loren Kruger (London: Routledge, 1995), 4-6.

a translated version.<sup>24</sup> Lee had not actually read *Hamlet* in English but instead referred to Franco Zeffirelli's film *Hamlet* (1990), and Liang Shiqiu's [梁實秋] and Zhu Shenghao's [朱生豪] translations – the two most acclaimed Mandarin translations of Shakespeare in Taiwan. Nonetheless, Lee argues he did not regret being unable to read *Hamlet* in the English original.<sup>25</sup> As mentioned in Chapters One and Two, both Wu Hsing-kuo and Huang Wushan also refer to Liang's and Zhu's Mandarin translations. To some extent, their versions are the closest and most authentic texts a Taiwanese director could access in Taiwan. Even though fragments of text are still essentially there, the spirit, language, characters and perhaps even the whole plot have been altered or completely rewritten in the translation process. In other words, the text in Shakespeare's play is unstable, as is the translated text. Apart from Liang's and Zhu's orthodox versions, there are many differently translated texts available: complete, simple, prose, poetic, children's and dramatic versions. What about these translated texts – do they represent the intention of the author, translator or director? For example, *Shamlet* stages the duel scene from *Hamlet* three times, each ending differently due to 'accidents' happening to the actors on stage. Lee wanted to make the point that the performance text can be just as unstable as the text. In this respect, it would be even more difficult to justify the authenticity of Shakespearean text in an intercultural production.

When a Shakespeare play is staged, in the reproduction process it is necessarily *filtered* through agents in that process – filters such as the translator, adaptor, director, actors and other modelling processes. Even if authenticity can be maintained through textual translation, it can also be affected ideologically through reinterpretation. Diamond argues that the moment an adaptor or director starts to adapt or translate the text, they have already taken the first step towards a cultural reinterpretation.<sup>26</sup> The cultural difference here is between the East and West, making it problematic to decide to what degree an author's intention must be or is ultimately preserved in an attempted authentic production; and this is up to individual interpretation, varying from case to case. In this regard, Friedman argues that performances are not supposed to be labelled as either "authentic" or "inauthentic," stating:

In the realm of performance choices, a production approaches authenticity to the degree that it abides by what the text demands or encourages and avoids what the text discourages or forbids. Conversely, the more a production ignores what the text

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<sup>24</sup> See Introduction of this thesis for a detailed discussion on the translation of Shakespeare in Taiwan.

<sup>25</sup> Huang, "Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage," 214.

<sup>26</sup> Diamond, "Cross-Cultural Adaptation," 21.

demands or encourages and employs choices that the text discourages or forbids, the further it moves toward an adaptation.<sup>27</sup>

According to Friedman, it is either a production *or* an adaptation. Nevertheless, when Friedman's theory is applied to Lee's *Shamlet*, it is a dilemma as to whether Lee's *Shamlet* can be considered a production or adaptation. In *Shamlet*, Lee conveys more of his own intentions than does Shakespeare, but to some degree the play pays attention to what Shakespeare's text encourages, by integrating Shakespeare's characteristics into his own character in the performance.

Lee's *Shamlet* can surely be deemed an adaptation, if, as McCandless asserts, "all productions are necessarily adaptations in the sense that they adapt to the stage a specific interpretation of the text – always a distortion – rather than the text itself."<sup>28</sup> According to McCandless, Shakespeare himself is an adaptor of his own works when he transforms his texts for the stage, so when it comes to defining an adaptation, its fidelity and relationship to the prior text should not be so hastily judged. Hutcheon posits that "...to be second is not to be secondary or inferior; likewise, to be first is not to be originary or authoritative."<sup>29</sup>

Shakespeare in contemporary Taiwan was not a forcefully imposed culture, so adapting it to the Taiwan audience is not the same as it would be in other post-colonial countries, a situation which Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin have observed, describing "colonial masters impos[ing] their value system through Shakespeare, [...] in response [to] colonised peoples often answer[ing] back in Shakespearean accents."<sup>30</sup> The presence of a Western text in a Taiwanese context is more complex, as Faye Chunfang Fei and William Huizhu Sun's argue in relation to China:

...without having been completely colonised as India was, oftentimes the modernising Chinese actively reach out to procure Western cultural products that they deem useful – in order to learn the Western ways to strengthen China in competition against Western powers, as well as to enrich Chinese people's cultural life.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Friedman, "In Defense of Authenticity," 50.

<sup>28</sup> David McCandless, *Gender and Performance in Shakespeare's Problem Comedies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 8.

<sup>29</sup> Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, xiii.

<sup>30</sup> Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin, "Introduction," in *Post-colonial Shakespeare*, ed. Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin (London: Routledge, 1998), 7.

<sup>31</sup> Faye Chunfang Fei and William Huizhu Sun, "Othello and Beijing Opera: Two Cases of Appropriation in Different Directions," in *Shakespeare Our Contemporary: Contexts, Intertexts & Perspectives*, ed. Zhang Chong (Shanghai: Fu-Dan University Press, 2005), 291.

Lee borrows Shakespeare's *Hamlet* merely as a pretext, an excuse for his own purposes, with the 'play within a play' structure intentionally serving his dramaturgical purpose. By using the original text as pretext, what the audience actually hears is not the story Shakespeare would like to be told, but they hear the points of view that the director and adaptor wish to address. What Lee wishes to stress is that it is not Shakespeare that predominates; it is the adaptation's playwright and director's production that should be recognised. So even if Lee's *Shamlet* is an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, it does not have an obligation to be faithful to Shakespeare.

### 3.3 Subverting *Hamlet*

Lee's *Shamlet* challenged Shakespeare's textual authority by subverting the text of *Hamlet*. Lee's closest Western precedent is probably Charles Marowitz, whose free and radical adaptation of Shakespeare in the 1960s foreshadowed Lee's work. As Marowitz noted, "...when they succeed, they [adaptations] are creations in their own right,"<sup>32</sup> likewise the right of adaptation vis-a-vis the original text is the issue Lee would like to address in *Shamlet*. Another source of inspiration for *Shamlet* is probably Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1966), as they both were adapted into a tragicomedy with characters who often confuse each other's names, and a play within a play with fragments of original scenes from *Hamlet*. Both *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* and *Shamlet* address in a metatheatrical context the issue of identity (particularly the interchangeable identity between actor and character) and the connection between real life and theatre stage. However, the former pays more attention to philosophical arguments such as randomness/probability, existentialism and determinism, while the latter focuses more on the social and political problems in contemporary Taiwan, such as the poor financial circumstance of theatre, and the international relationship of Taiwan.

Lee's strategy to demonstrate his ultimate authority as director begins through the subversion of Shakespeare's text. In Lee's *Shamlet*, only seven scenes from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (5.2, 1.5, 1.3, 4.5, 3.4, 3.2, and 5.1<sup>33</sup>) were actually adapted, and then they were continually repeated during the performance (5.2 is repeated three times). As John Russell Brown argues, "repetition I now saw as a means of drawing the audience in so that it would

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<sup>32</sup> Charles Marowitz, "Introduction," *The Marowitz Shakespeare* (New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1978), 25.

<sup>33</sup> This is the order of appearance in Lee's production.

participate in the play's action,"<sup>34</sup> with the purpose of repeated scenes in *Shamlet* being a way to optimise involvement of audience in the production processes itself.

There are ten acts in *Shamlet*. As it is a play within a play, these ten acts are a selection of scenes that the Fong Ping Theatre Company highlights (the theatre company within *Shamlet*).<sup>35</sup> The order of the ten acts is arranged according to the company's tour schedule, from the north of Taiwan to the south. Act One's set in Taipei, Acts Two to Six are in Taichung, Acts Seven and Eight are in Tainan, and Acts Nine and Ten in Kaohsiung. A comparison of acts and scenes between *Shamlet* and *Hamlet* is presented in the following table:

Figure A<sup>36</sup>

<i>Shamlet</i>			<i>Hamlet</i>	
Touring city	Act	Situation	Scene	Setting
Taipei	Prologue	Curtain fall		
	1	Public (I)	5.2	A hall in the castle.
Taichung	2	Rehearsal (I)	1.5	Another part of the platform.
	3		1.3	A room in Polonius' house.
	4		4.5	A room in the castle.
	5	Public (II)	5.2	A hall in the castle.
	6	Rehearsal (II)		
		Public (III)	3.4	The Queen's closet.
Interval				
Tainan	7	Public (IV)	3.2	A hall in the castle.
	8	Rehearsal (III)	5.1	A churchyard.
Kaohsiung	9	Rehearsal (IV)		
	10	Public (V)	5.2	A hall in the castle.
	Epilogue	Curtain fall		

Act One of *Shamlet* opens with the duelling scene from the last act (5.2) in *Hamlet*, and the curtain falling during the Fong Ping Theatre Company's Taipei tour. The backstage area of the theatre is turned into an imaginary auditorium, while the real audience sits in what has become the backstage area. Everything is turned upside-down, front becomes back, spectator becomes potential actor, and ending becomes the beginning. Everything is inverted from the very start of the play, a device that Lee uses to create a play within a play within a play.

<sup>34</sup> John Russell Brown, *New Sites for Shakespeare: Theatre, the Audience, and Asia* (London: Routledge, 1999), 11.

<sup>35</sup> Again, Fong Ping Theatre Company is the theatre company in the production of *Shamlet*, whereas Ping Fong Acting Troupe is the theatre company that presented *Shamlet*.

<sup>36</sup> Translated by myself from *Shamlet's* programme (1992).

The arrangement of scenes in *Shamlet* may seem without rhyme or reason to the audience – at first. From Act One to Act Ten, the achievement of the Fong Ping Theatre Company’s performance within the play *Shamlet* develops from perfect success to an irredeemable failure. Act One (the duel scene from *Hamlet*, Scene 5.2) is the most successful among the Fong Ping Theatre Company’s public performances of *Shamlet*. This duel scene is deliberately repeated in Acts Five and Ten. However, due to unexpected events, the Fong Ping Theatre Company’s public performance of this scene gets increasingly worse. The end of Act Ten (the last repetition of *Hamlet*’s 5.2) in *Shamlet* not only enacts the ending of *Hamlet*’s final scene but represents the end of the Fong Ping Theatre Company’s fame and reputation.

Lee’s intention is to challenge Shakespeare’s textual authority by beginning with the end (Scene 5.2) and putting his own work side-by-side with a fictional production that is striving to be textually faithful, in order to bring out this contrast more acutely for the audience. As Scene 5.2 from *Hamlet* is repeated three times in *Shamlet*, the duel scene (Act One in *Shamlet*) is a perfect reference for the audience to make a comparison with the later acts (Acts Five and Ten). Act One is an original sample of *Hamlet* for *Shamlet*. Then, when it comes to Act Five and Act Ten, due to the mistakes and incompetence of actors gradually happen on stage, Acts Five and Ten are not as original and complete as Act One.

Although Acts Five and Ten seem to be a total disaster for the theatre company (in *Shamlet*), in comparison to Act One Lee is trying to communicate to the audience that every *Shamlet* act is unique, and likewise, every revival of *Shamlet* is individual and authentic. Every comedy is in fact a tragedy, whilst every tragedy in the play is, in fact, a comedy. Although Acts Five and Ten are regarded as a failure for the Fong Ping Theatre Company, they were both great successes for Lee Kuo-hsiu.

Scripted improvisation, according to Huang<sup>37</sup>, is a strategy by which Lee demonstrates his authority as director, although this too is an authority that he will subvert, eventually. Scripted improvisation usually means lines that are improvised within the theatre onstage; however, these improvisations have already been written into the script of *Shamlet*. In other words, they are not the witty, improvised responses of the actors onstage but the scripted improvisations of the playwright, written in advance. With improvisation, there are an infinite number of unstable scripts available; however with scripted improvisation *Shamlet*’s script thus in a sense becomes authentic.

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<sup>37</sup> Alexander C. Y. Huang, “Impersonation, Autobiography, and Cross-cultural Adaptation: Lee Kuo-Hsiu’s *Shamlet*,” *Asian Theatre Journal* 22.1 (Spring 2005): 122.

In Act One, Horatio is played by Lee Hsiu-kuo, Shamlet (*Hamlet*'s counterpart) by Liu Renwei [劉仁偉] and Laertes by Lv Weikong [呂維孔]. Acts Two and Three retain the same arrangement, but in Act Four – due to the absence of Lv Weikong – Laertes is played by Lee Hsiu-kuo, with Horatio played by Liu Renwei and Shamlet played by Zeng Chengguo [曾城國]. As mentioned previously, Act Five is the second public performance of Scene 5.2 from *Hamlet* in which the arrangement of actors remains the same as in Act Four. However, due to insufficient rehearsal Horatio, Shamlet and Laertes keep forgetting their lines, with Laertes forgetting almost every one of them. As a result, Gertrude's maid has to prompt him by peeping at the notes in her hand. In a state of nerves, before Laertes and Shamlet's duel begins, the maid accidentally drops the notes and cannot prompt them in time for the subsequent scene. Laertes randomly picks up one page of notes and reads: "But, Prince Shamlet, you are going to die..." Unfortunately it is the wrong page, so Claudius *improvises* to correct Laertes' line by saying, "Laertes, the fight is not yet begun, do not speak too early. [*Bends down to sort out the notes and gives them to the maid.*] Let this woman finish the line for you." Without thinking, the maid looks at the lines at the top of the page and speaks Laertes' line of for him: "The point evenenomed too!" (5.2.266). Claudius improvises again and asks if anyone has heard what the maid just said; no one has. The maid finally finds the right lines and insists on finishing reading them. Laertes accidentally hits Shamlet during the first round of the duel, with Shamlet hinting to Claudius, "Lord, I – Shamlet – is not supposed to die so soon without a reason!" Gertrude, as a result, attempts to compress the whole plot, improvising, "I admit that I committed adultery with Claudius," before continuing to finish her lines: "The queen carouses to thy fortune, Hamlet (5.2.229)." Claudius stops her, "Gertrude, do not drink." Gertrude insists, as in the original script, "I will, my Lord; I pray you, pardon me" (5.2.232), though she forgets one small but important thing: the pearl has not yet been placed inside the cup. Gertrude is paralysed for a moment after Claudius reminds her of this oversight, but she improvises immediately to make up for her unintentional mistake by holding the glass in front of Claudius: "Yes, you should put it inside." Afterwards, Gertrude drinks the wine, repeats the line "The queen carouses to thy fortune, Hamlet" (5.2.232), and finally dies. Immediately, Claudius drinks the poisoned wine after her and also dies. Laertes spontaneously stabs himself with the poisoned sword, puts it into Shamlet's hands, and dies. The Fong Ping Theatre Company's public performance of *Hamlet* thus ends with Horatio's speech, "Prince, I think I will stay in this harsh world, and tell your story of revenge to the people, ah... [*Improvises*] but such a revenge, how am I supposed to speak and speak it clearly? Shamlet!"

The above examples demonstrate how Lee Kuo-hsiu tries to establish his authority as director over Shakespeare's authority in his production of *Shamlet*. As Lee writes, "Shakespeare is too grand, and I am not qualified enough to compete with him; the one thing I do have over him is that – I am still alive,"<sup>38</sup> with Lee doing everything he can to prove his own value as director or as adaptor of Shakespeare's work. Yet this is emphasised so excessively that Lee ironically subverts his own authority – even Lee and his theatre company cannot escape this deconstruction of identity and authority. At the beginning of each Act in *Shamlet*, before the spotlight goes on, there is always a screen on which a few lines are projected indicating the tour schedule, a headline from a review, or how many minutes of applause the audience gave for the previous performance, or even well-known quotes from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Shakespeare's name is written next to every quote; however, it is crossed out and replaced with the name of Lee Hsiu-kuo, as if to say, this is not Shakespeare's play, it has been taken over by Lee. In Act Nine, the troupe receives a letter of complaint from an audience member indicating a mistake in the play's title, *Shamlet*. Lee Kuo-hsiu indicates that the title "*Shamlet*" is actually a typo, but evidently he uses this mistake to reaffirm his position in relation to Shakespeare:

Yiling: Director, I received a letter from an audience member complaining about our play after our performance in Tainan City.

Hsiu-Kuo: The audience has an opinion?

Yiling: She said that Shakespeare wrote thirty-eight plays during his life, with none called *Shamlet*. It should be *Hamlet*.

Zongji: Doesn't this letter come a bit too late?! After we had so many nights.

Hsiu-Kuo: We should respect our adaptor. When I went to get the play from Lee Kuo-hsiu, I also argued with him. I said that it should be 'Ha' but not 'Sha,' but he insisted on using 'Sha' and not 'Ha.'

Zongji: Well, he phoned me and said it should be 'Ha' but not 'Sha.' It was his typo.

Hsiu-Kuo: His typo? When did he call you?

Zongji: This morning.

Hsiu-Kuo: This morning? And you are just telling me now? I am the director, and I am always the last one to know. Fine! Fine! Go and get a pen. Simply changing one word in the programme will do – Never mind! No one will buy our programme anyway.

(Act Nine)<sup>39</sup>

This passage prioritises the importance of *Shamlet*'s playwright, Lee himself. If he says it is *Shamlet*, instead of *Hamlet*, then we (the audience) are forced to respect that it is not called

<sup>38</sup> Lee Kuo-hsiu, *Shamuleite* [莎姆雷特] (*Shamlet*) (Taipei: INK [印刻], 2006), 8.

<sup>39</sup> All translations from Lee's *Shamlet* are my own if not otherwise noted. Lee Kuo-hsiu, *Shamuleite: Fuchou Xiju* [莎姆雷特復仇喜劇] (*Shamlet: A Revenge Comedy*) (Taipei: Shulin [書林], 1992), 119-120.

*Hamlet*, but indeed *Shamlet*. Lee is humourously exerting his authority over that of Shakespeare's by declaring since *he* is the one who is still alive and present, therefore he can do anything he wants with the production; it is his and he is claiming that *Shamlet* is now his own text. *Shamlet* provides an opportunity for him to refuse to serve the original text, or more precisely, to serve the will of Shakespeare. As in Act Nine, in a section of dialogue between Renwei and Jin Juanzhi [金娟智], Lee Kuo-hsiu expresses his point of view on the issue of invented script:

Renwei: I have written a song for you.

Juanzhi: Your sister has already given the lyrics to me.

Renwei: I imagine the relationship between you and Chenchen [Chengguo] as that between Hamlet and Ophelia on the stage.

Juanzhi: Our love has not yet been that dramatically tragic.

Renwei: So, I made it up. The play script is a fabrication, so are the lyrics –  
Can you sing it with me?

*[Liu Renwei starts to play guitar.]*

Juanzhi: Our life seems to be a fabrication too.

(Act Nine)

Lee believes he has every right to rewrite Shakespeare's text. By pointing out that his own play's script is a fabrication, Lee implies by inference that Shakespeare's text is also fabrication. Lee goes further and claims that life is also a fabrication. In very postmodern fashion, Lee has twisted Shakespeare's text inside his own text for *Shamlet* to blend theatre and reality like a hall of mirrors, to the point where the exposure of illusion seems to have no end.

### 3.4 *Shamlet* and Metatheatricity

As well as undermining Shakespeare's authority, Lee also undermined his own authority and that of his theatre company by constantly calling attention to weaknesses in the cast and problems within the theatre itself. Diamond argues that *Shamlet* not only deconstructs the text but completely transforms Shakespeare's tragedy *Hamlet* into a parody and satire – in this case, a self-referential parody.<sup>40</sup> By transforming *Hamlet*'s tragedy into a parody and a satire, Lee is not only bringing the actors' issues and experience into the theatre, but also highlighting contemporary theatre industry-related issues – such as equipment and day-to-day theatre maintenance – into the play itself.

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<sup>40</sup> Diamond, "Cross-Cultural Adaptation," 17, 19.

This self-referential parodising can be seen most prominently in Acts Two and Three, when ‘mechanical errors’ occur within the play create a lot of *Pyramus and Thisbe* style comedy. Due to a mechanical glitch, the ghost scene in the rehearsal within *Shamlet* turns into a nightmare for the theatre – but into comic irony for the real audience. In order to create an eerie effect, the ghost was to be attached to a steel rope so it could disappear into the air after finishing its last speech. However, in rehearsal the ghost gets caught in the rope and cannot immediately disappear. The ‘rehearsal’ continues anyway, ignoring the existence of the stranded ghost:

Horatio: My Lord! My Lord! My Lord! Is there anything wrong?

Shamlet: How strange!

Horatio: Say it, my lord!

Shamlet: Do not tell others what you saw tonight.

Horatio: I won’t tell. [*Improvises*] And I hope no one saw it, either!

Shamlet: Come! Swear by your conscience. Put your hand upon my sword.

[*Shamlet discovers that he carries a sheath without a sword inside.*]

(Act Two)

Although the *Shamlet* actors are rehearsing for their upcoming performance, they do not take it seriously and often improvise when the scene is not turning out as expected. As a result, the next actor often has no idea what the previous actor is referring to, and does not know how to respond (here Lee employs the device of scripted improvisation, as previously discussed). The scene moves to Polonius’ house in Act Three, while the ghost is still stranded onstage:

[*Ophelia turns around and falls to the ground, startled by the ghost.*]

Laertes: [*Improvises*] What happened? Ophelia?

.....

Laertes: ... Ophelia, go away [*asks the ghost to go away*]. You must keep in mind to never ever lend money to Shamlet...

Ophelia: What are you talking about?

.....

[*Enter Polonius.*]

Polonius: Go, tell those servants that Laertes is coming to them. [*Improvises*] Laertes, luckily you are still here – we don’t have any guests, do we?

Laertes: It is only me here. Father, do you see what else is in the house? Or what isn’t in this house?

Polonius: [*Improvises*] Obviously, it seems that we’ve got a ridiculous bronze statue here.

(Act Three)

The actors are forced to *improvise* due to scripted, unexpected mechanical errors. Sometimes, they do this in order to create an amusing effect, but occasionally the actors add their own life issues to the improvisation, such as when Laertes accidentally speaks to Ophelia that she must not lend money to Shamlet (because his concern is that she will never get the money back she lends to Shamlet as in *Hamlet* that Ophelia will never get back the love she gives to Hamlet), with Laertes' original line being "Be wary then: best safety lies in fear" (1.3.45).

Act Six turns from the farcical rehearsal scene into a public performance of *Hamlet*, Scene 3.4. The character of Shamlet is still played by Zeng Chengguo, while the characters of Polonius, Laertes and ghost of the King are all played by Lee Hsiu-guo. As Polonius, Lee Hsiu-guo first goes into Gertrude's closet (as in the script of *Hamlet*), hiding behind the curtain. Shamlet (Zeng Chengguo) comes in, discovers Polonius (Lee Hsiu-guo) and then stabs him. Polonius dies onstage behind the curtain. Lee Hsiu-guo then has to rush offstage and put on the ghost costume. As the ghost, Lee Hsiu-guo appears from above, but gets stuck again behind the curtain when he tries to exit. Lee is supposed to change his costume back to Polonius before Hamlet drags his body out, but he cannot move. Finally, the body Shamlet drags out is indeed Polonius, but he is still wearing the ghost's costume.

A stranded ghost is not the only mechanical (but manufactured) *glitch* that happens to the theatre company within the play *Shamlet*. Act Ten is another example of scripted improvisation caused by another technical error within the theatre. However, unlike Acts Eight and Nine, which are in the company's rehearsals, Act Ten is a public performance in which Fong Ping Theatre Company perform the duel scene from Scene 5.2 in *Hamlet* in front of the audience within the play. In this performance, the damage caused by mechanical errors and scripted improvisation is even more profound. In Act Ten at the beginning of the duel scene, the backdrop painted with colonnades is supposed to be lowered onto the stage, but gets stuck in the middle of it before suddenly, the backdrop of the painted forest (for the churchyard scene) is lowered instead. This scripted *accident* confounds every actor present in this play within a play. Claudius, played by Chen Zongji [陳宗繼], makes an impromptu announcement that he has just decided to change the duel venue, claiming that it will not be affected by where it is held. Gertrude, played by Liu Yiling [劉儀令], improvises too, expressing her agreement and explaining that Claudius is a nature lover. Thus, the backdrop crisis is temporarily solved and everyone agrees that the duel scene will be held in the woods. The problem is apparently fixed but then without notice and much to everybody's surprise, the original backdrop of the palace is lowered. At that moment, Osric (played by Guo Qianzi [郭乾子]) improvises to Claudius: "My Lord, I have good news for you, our royal palace has

just finished restoration in time for us to go back to continue the duel scene.” Here Claudius must announce again to the audience (both on- and offstage) that the duel scene will not be restricted by where it is held, whilst at the same time shouting to the technician to come down without making any more adjustments to the backdrop – which can be heard by all – the on- and offstage audience.

According to Huang, Lee wanted to subvert a dominant cultural icon like Shakespeare, and resist the “bardolatry” in the minds of the audience.<sup>41</sup> He achieved this in two ways, both using metatheatricity to call attention to – and lampoon – the pretensions of the text. On the one hand, Lee’s script called for actors to play themselves playing Shakespeare’s characters as a strategy for sending up Hamlet as a bastion of Western (or world) culture. However, Lee had a broader sense of anti-authoritarianism in mind, which included gestures towards wider Taiwanese politics and its crisis of identity – and metatheatrical strategies which called into question the authority of theatre itself. Unlike Brecht’s use of metatheatricity, in which theatrical illusion is used as a way of bolstering the actor’s authority to comment on social problems, Lee’s more anarchic approach often sends up the actors as well, robbing them (and himself) of any authority to preach to audiences.

This process started by playing with questions of genre. Lee calls *Shamlet* a “tearful comedy.”<sup>42</sup> A small line of text under the title of *Shamlet* says, “This is a revenge comedy which has nothing to do with *Hamlet*, but it has an affair with Shakespeare.”<sup>43</sup> By revenge here, it means a form of violence against the text. So this line with the term *revenge comedy* ostensibly denies *Shamlet*’s textual relationship with *Hamlet*, while suggesting a dramaturgical connection to Shakespeare (“an affair with Shakespeare”). The combination of tragedy and comedy clearly parallels a passage in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (and of course *Hamlet*). In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, in Egeus’ choice of play the love story of Pyramus and Thisbe is introduced as “A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus/ And his love Thisbe; very tragical mirth” (5.1.58-9), in which Theseus comments: “Merry and tragical? Tedious and brief?/ That is, hot ice and wondrous strange snow./ How shall we find the concord of this discord?” (5.1.60-2). The combination of mirth and tragedy may seem strange to Theseus but it demonstrates how actors are capable of creating an absurd amalgamation, even for amateur theatre like Bottom and Flute in the play within a play of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Polonius in *Hamlet* reinforces the same point:

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<sup>41</sup> Huang, “Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage,” 213.

<sup>42</sup> Translated by myself from the *Shamlet* programme.

<sup>43</sup> This is the small title appearing on the book cover under the title *Shamlet* (Shamuleite). Revenge Comedy is highlighted on the cover.

Polonius: The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlimited. Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light. For the law of writ and liberty, these are the only men. (2.2.351-355)

Lee's dramaturgic connection to Shakespeare again reinforces his claim of using Shakespeare merely as pretext, but not as a pre-text (a prior and/or adapted work). *Shamlet*, as a play within a play within a play, metatheatrically, interweaves a play within a play of the original *Hamlet*, with the character of *Hamlet* onstage as opposed to the actors' affairs of *Shamlet*'s offstage, *backstage* rehearsals in an onstage performance and an imaginary audience onstage, with a real audience offstage.

As far as Lee is concerned, the elements of comedy come from the dilemmas that arise from the characters' tragedy. Onstage, the actors are performing *Shamlet*, without knowing why they are performing it, whilst offstage, they are facing exactly the same dilemmas as the characters in the play. During their rehearsal, they blend the performance into their own lives, with their public performance worsening when they bring emotions onto the stage. The actors are supposed to communicate and deal with their personal affairs backstage, or outside the performance; however, they instead are using the theatre as an opportunity to vent their emotions onstage. *Shamlet* brings life and drama to the stage, aptly testifying to Shakespeare's words that "All the World's a stage, / And all the men and women merely players" (*As You Like It* 2.7.142).

The company's inward conflicts are revealed gradually through their rehearsals, and begin to emerge in Act Three. In Act Three the rehearsal of *Hamlet* (1.3) continues at the point where Laertes offers advice about Ophelia's relationship with Hamlet. However, after a few lines Ophelia has to run offstage, struck by a bout of severe diarrhoea. The ghost improvises Ophelia's lines for her whilst he is still stuck onstage. However, the rehearsal is forced to stop and in Ophelia's absence, the relationship between the remaining actors onstage starts to unravel. Two actors insult each other and demand the director make a judgement for them (this echoes Laertes' petition to Claudius to judge between him and Hamlet). Then, the actor who plays Laertes, Lv Weikong, apologises for having to leave the theatre, explaining that he is being sued for deception and will need to attend court the following day. As sensitive as his character Laertes, Lv weeps onstage for his friend's betrayal and for his ruined reputation.

Act Five in *Shamlet* is a rehearsal scene of *Hamlet*'s 4.5. The conspiracy between King Claudius and Laertes to kill Hamlet in *Hamlet* provides an opportunity for more disclosure of the actors' personal affairs to emerge. For example, in the midst of rehearsing this act, the actor Liu Youshan [劉又珊], who plays Ophelia, again suffers diarrhoea and rushes offstage. Chen Zongji then reports to the director that he believes there is a conspiracy behind this, saying he is investigating this suspicious circumstance. This is an echo of the intrigue involving Claudius and Laertes' plan to kill Hamlet; Chen indirectly implies that someone has been poisoning Liu to prevent her from playing Ophelia, in an attempt to replace her. The act starts with an argument between Jin Juazhi, who plays Gertrude, and Zeng Chengguo, who plays Shamlet. Jin accuses Zeng of not caring about her and driving her mad. Jin and Zeng's romantic relationship cleverly corresponds to the love scene in the play between Ophelia and Hamlet. Then the scene moves to Act Six, with Jin and Liu chatting in the backstage area. The actor Jin confesses that she can no longer tolerate performing on the same stage as Zeng. Jin feels it is disgusting to hear the lines Zeng speaks as Shamlet to his mother, while Jin and Zeng are performing *Hamlet*, Scene 3.4: "Nay, but to live / In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed, / Stewed in corruption, honeying and making love / Over the nasty sty" (3.4.91-4). Jin says these lines Shamlet says to his mother in the play are exactly what she would like to say to Zeng for his unfaithful heart.

The beginning of Act Eight is a rehearsal of *Hamlet* 5.1. It starts with Shamlet holding the skull of Yorick and telling Horatio how bad he feels about his old friend. Then Claudius, Gertrude, Laertes and the priest enter with the corpse of Ophelia. Laertes is supposed to fight Shamlet, but Lv Weikong collapses onstage after finishing the line:

O, treble woe  
 Fall ten times treble on that cursed head  
 Whose wicked deed thy most ingenious sense  
 Deprived thee of! – Hold off the earth awhile,  
 Till I have caught her once more in mine arms: (5.1.198-202)

When Lv speaks Laertes' line, Laertes' grief strikes him because he has just been betrayed by his own best friend and sued for his friend's betrayal. Because of Lv's subsequent collapse onstage, rehearsal is forced to stop, with everyone gathering around to comfort Lv. Lee Hsiunguo encourages Lv to be stronger and tells him to "let it go," saying that ultimately life is "just like the play we are performing" and whoever you are, you will one day die, he implies, and will become a skull in a putrid grave; as Hamlet tells Horatio: "To what base uses we

may return, Horatio! Why may not imagination / trace the noble dust of Alexander till he find it stopping a bung-hole?" (5.1.154-5).

Inwardly, *Shamlet* connects actors' lives and affairs offstage with the characters in the play taking place onstage. Like Lee Hsiu-kuo in the play, who tries to prove his talent to his wife, Lee Kuo-hsiu in real life is attempting to prove his ability to the audience. Outwardly, *Shamlet* reflects the reality of theatre life, while at the same time declaring the actors' attitudes towards politics by revealing the economic hardship of being an actor under in present-day Taiwan. The play within a play is accurately reflecting the current situation of an unequal supply of resources for the theatre according to different regions of Taiwan. Act One is performed in Taipei, the capital of Taiwan, where the most abundant resources are available and where the theatre company within the play has access to the most modern and fully equipped theatres. Then, from Act Two to Act Six, the play is performed at Taichung Zhongshan Hall, which has no proper theatre. Out of the Ten Acts of *Shamlet*, mechanical errors only happen in Taichung, where the government cares least about theatre and cultural activity. Three out of the five acts in Taichung (Acts Two, Three, and Six), either in rehearsal or during the public performance, all simulate technical problems onstage through the stranded ghost character. The wayward ghost either interrupts rehearsal or improvises to deliberately disrupt the other actors' performances.

Throughout *Shamlet*, Lee portrays frequent mechanical failures onstage as a way to indirectly criticise the lack of support for theatre culture in Taiwan – and, it follows to argue, that this actuality is something that should not be tolerated. In Taiwan, managing a theatre is always a risky business. The unpredictability of actors, mechanical failures and financial support are always major concerns. As Lee opines, "First, the high mobility of actors, and second, the theatre is easily dismissed (because it is amateur). There is no need to announce that a theatre is disbanded because no one would even care about the announcement."<sup>44</sup> Similar to the manager in *Shamlet*, who wants to sell the theatre over low profits, it is common to see actors leaving the theatre to pursue a better future elsewhere. Anxieties such as these expressed in the play are experienced by most theatre owners in Taiwan, including Wu Hsing-kuo's Contemporary Legend Theatre. Like Lee, Wu Hsing-kuo has held simultaneously the positions of recruiter, director, manager and actor in the Contemporary Legend Theatre. Due to serious financial problems, there are insufficient understudies and technicians for the theatre to function properly. There have been many cases of accidents

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<sup>44</sup> Li Liheng, *Oh! Lee Kuo-hsiu* [Oh! 李國修] (Oh! Lee Kuo-hsiu) (Taipei: Shi Bao [時報], 1998): 110.

happening to technicians, who have either been killed or seriously injured because of poor theatre equipment and long work hours. Like Wu Hsing-kuo, who announced his theatre's temporary closure in 2000, Lee also disbanded his theatre for a year in 2001 due to financial losses.

As well as using metatheatrical devices to look inwardly at the company's dynamics, Lee used this playful approach to the text to make political comments about Taiwan itself. When *Shamlet* premiered in 1992, the KMT authority was being openly challenged for the first time as the Taiwanese people were demanding freedom of speech. The question of whether Taiwan is an independent country or an outpost of pre-Communist China (or, indeed, of Communist China) was becoming more prominent. Lee's attitude emerged in scenes such as the following:

Gertrude: [*Improvises*] The person who just left, is that one of us Danes?

Horatio: [*Improvises*] I don't think so, Your Majesty. She looks like one of those Chinese from the East.

Gertrude: [*Improvises*] Then take no more notice of her. I do not allow foreigners to interfere in the internal affairs of our country.

King: [*Improvises*] You are absolutely right! Danish affairs should be resolved by us Danes!

(Act Ten)

Lee is communicating his opinion here that no matter what Taiwan's political future may hold, its affairs are internal, and should be resolved by the Taiwanese people. In addition, Lee's political attitude towards the ruling KMT's power is further revealed through the Player Queen character in Act Seven, when the Fong Ping Theatre Company is performing a play within a play of *Hamlet*: "Your Majesty, to be honest... it is all the same no matter who rules the kingdom. As long as we can perform, and make a living, then we are fine" (Act Seven). Lee's message here is that as long as the ruling government can provide a supportive environment for Taiwan theatres, and as long as theatre has freedom of speech to criticise the deeds of government, it matters not which political party is in power.

The question of identity is also implicit in the production's deliberately bewildering, even absurd, exchanges of identity. In the middle of the public Kaohsiung performance in Act Ten, Lv Weikong, who comes back from his lawsuit to play Laertes, suddenly collapses onstage again while speaking of his honour: "I am satisfied in nature, / Whose motive in this case should stir me most / To my revenge: but in my terms of honour" (5.2.174-176). He has *internalised* the words, and cannot proceed in the performance because of his best friend's betrayal and the lawsuit which has ruined his personal honour. Claudius must improvise

again to send Laertes offstage; however, the problem arises: who will play Laertes now? The Fong Ping Theatre Company does not have any understudies because the theatre is too small and cannot afford to recruit more actors. Again, Claudius has to improvise and announces that he would like to reveal a surprising secret – that the player who plays Shamlet is not Shamlet, but Laertes. Lee Hsiu-kuo, who originally played Shamlet, is in fact Laertes, while Liu Renwei, who originally played Horatio, is the real Shamlet. Lee Hsiu-kuo is forced to improvise, and mediates for Claudius: “—Ah? [*Improvises*] Ha! This is true. I have been disguised for so long in the court. My real identity is Laertes...”<sup>45</sup> After everything is settled, they encounter another problem: they need another Horatio because the actor who originally played him is now playing Shamlet. As a result, one of the soldiers is immediately appointed to play Horatio. When the performance is finally able to proceed, the actor, Lv, who left earlier due to the matter of his personal reputation, is back onstage in suit and tie. To everyone’s astonishment, Lv now claims he is Laertes and continues speaking his unfinished line: “Whose motive in this case should stir me most / To my revenge / I am satisfied” (5.2.174-6).<sup>46</sup> Everyone is dumbfounded, but in order to continue with the performance one of the soldiers onstage has to improvise to persuade Lv to leave: “My dear young friend, Laertes, the funeral of Ophelia is finished now so it is time for you to go home.” And Claudius also improvises to say: “he may not be Laertes now – this noble young man, are you fully recovered?” With Lv now back to play Laertes, Claudius again has to reshuffle the actors. He turns to Lee Hsiu-kuo for advice. Lee Hsiu-kuo then explains that everyone has double identities and in the daytime, people can be the noble Laertes, whilst at night he will turn into the hesitant Shamlet who only thinks of revenge. To conclude Lee Hsiu-kuo’s explanation, Claudius then makes the final announcement that Lv is the real Laertes; everyone is now back in their original position.

Lee even subverts his own position through this metatheatrical farce. In Act Four, while the actors within the play are dealing with their personal lives during rehearsals, Lee’s wife says to him: “Take it. The make-up removal oil you are looking for – Let me see whether you can actually remove the messy make-up from your face and find yourself again.”<sup>47</sup> She is in fact referring not only to Lee Kuo-hsiu’s experience but the whole theatre culture, the production, all the actors and even the theatre company (within and outside of the play). For example, in the exchange in Act Ten, the same question, “Who am I?” is repeated

<sup>45</sup> The translation of this passage from Lee’s *Shamlet* is my own. Lee Kuo-hsiu, *Shamuleite*, 135.

<sup>46</sup> The original text is “I am satisfied in nature, / Whose motive in this case should stir me most / To my revenge” (5.2.174-6). The order of lines has been changed.

<sup>47</sup> Lee, *Shamuleite*, 71.

over and over again, effectively reframing the opening line of Shakespeare's play: "Who's there?"

Qianzi: (*Improvises*) Please allow me to understand more? Who is Horatio now?

Chengguo: (*Improvises*) They've already known. Horatio is...

Hsiu-Kuo: (*Improvises*) Yes, Horatio is me.

Chengguo: (*Improvises*) So who am I?

Hsiu-Kuo: (*Improvises*) Who am I? Ha! What a philosophical question that is. Who am I? Everyone in the world tends to stand in front of a mirror asking the question, "Who am I?" in the middle of the night. Now, let me tell you who you are. You are the ghost of the King who is supposed to have disappeared a long time ago.

(Act Ten)

Interestingly, Lee here indirectly recalls a similar passage in Wu Hsing-kuo's *Lear is Here*, which likewise turned questions about national identity into very direct questions about personal identity:

Wu: I am back!

Who is he?

Does anyone know him?

This is not Lear.

Then where is Lear?

Is this Lear walking?

Is this Lear speaking?

Where are his eyes?

[...]

Is he confused?

Is he numb?

Is he awake?

Who can tell me who I am?

I want to make sure who I am.

I'm back! ... I have returned to my profession.<sup>48</sup>

*Lear is Here* is also a play within a play which uses metatheatricality to unseat Shakespeare and make his work Taiwanese, to instil it with a uniquely Taiwanese identity. Sometimes, Wu removes his entire Peking-opera outfit (including costume, beard, hair and boots) onstage in front of the audience, to reveal his own identity as an actor. In *Lear is Here*, there is only one man, Wu himself, playing ten characters in search of his own identity, through the character of Lear. However, in Lee's *Shamlet*, almost every actor, including Lee, performs at

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<sup>48</sup> The quote is taken from Wu Hsing-kuo's *Lear is Here* (2004), translated and provided by the Contemporary Legend Theatre.

least two or three characters. Lee is not only trying to reaffirm his own identity but he is attempting to subvert his own identity as both director and playwright in order to reverse Shakespeare's authority throughout the production, which is itself upside-down.

### 3.5 Conclusion

The opening scene of Lee's *Shamlet* is taken from *Hamlet*'s final scene (5.2), as the purpose of such a placement is to destroy the order of the original text's structure. The question that Lee Kuo-hsiu is raising throughout this production is "Why should a living Eastern director have to live in the shadow of a dead Western playwright?" In attempting to clarify the relationship between himself and Shakespeare, the director within the play Lee Hsiu-kuo says to his members in Act Nine that "the biggest dilemma of the Fong Ping Theatre Company at this moment is – we should not perform Shakespeare's text! What on earth has Shakespeare got to do with the Taiwanese people?" The truth is that Lee Kuo-hsiu is not performing Shakespeare's text at this point; instead, he is performing his own creation, his own text. In this relentless search for self-identity as director he is dramatising the process of his finding his own voice, mirroring the Taiwanese people's attempt to do the same.

With respect to his *affair* with Shakespeare, Lee has proven himself able to adapt, reshape and reinvent the text. As Lee Hsiu-kuo explains to the audience in *Shamlet*, to account for the confused mess of role exchanges in Act Ten, Lee reinterprets the "To be or not to be" quotation from *Hamlet*:

Hsiu-Kuo: (*improvises*) Please allow me to provide an explanation. Everyone has his or her place in this society. To be or not to be, that is the question. Let us all think about the question deeply. Your majesty, when you are in a prominent position like now, it does not mean that you are an elder who is worthy of respect. You may not be able to get approval from the people. And as for you, soldiers, women and children, who may be born as lowly, you may not be negated nor be spurned by the people. "To be or not to be" – affirmation or negation, this is a question worth pondering.

Lee is arguing here that no one should feel inferior or superior about one's identity. As Lee Hsiu-kuo argues in Act Nine, corresponding to Shakespeare's quotation in *Romeo and Juliet*: "What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet (2.2.1-2)." It goes to follow that irrespective of the play's title, actors' names or whether *Shamlet* is an adaptation, the point is not to question the definition of adaptation but to clarify that directors of intercultural Shakespeare adaptations can retain their integrity and do not have to live under the shadow of Shakespeare during the adaptation process.

## Chapter Four: *Kiss Me Nana*

### Gender politics in the Mandarin adaptation of '*The Taming of the Shrew*'

#### 4.1 Introduction

Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* is a play about gender relations and the oscillation of gender-based power through an account of one man's taming of a shrew within a patriarchal society. The play has experienced a very controversial reception throughout its recent performance history and appears to be a problematic play wherever and whenever it is staged throughout the world. When *The Taming of the Shrew* poses such a cultural challenge through its modern performances, it may seem less likely to capture a modern audience's attention, or, as Barbara Hodgdon feared, "...*Shrew*'s obsessive attempt to circumscribe woman's "place" has especially fatal attractions for late-twentieth-century feminist readers and spectators."<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, this was not the case in 1990s Taiwan, when Liang Chi-min [梁志民] produced two successive adaptations of *The Taming of the Shrew*, beginning with *The New Taming of the Shrew* (March, 1994), then *Kiss Me Nana* (1997, with later revivals in 1998 and 1999). Both of these productions toured several major Taiwanese cities, testament to the play's ongoing popularity even in contemporary Taiwan. Being the theatre company's most frequently revived production, the success of Liang's second adaptation, *Kiss Me Nana*, and especially its following revivals in 1998 and 1999 attracted more young audiences to the theatre than ever before. What could account for the success of this intercultural, Mandarin Chinese-language adaptation of a sixteenth-century play, which, as Diana E. Henderson argues, is "premised on the sale of women?"<sup>2</sup>

Part of the answer is that this play corresponds to concurrent concerns in Taiwan, at a time when the women's rights movement had begun to see progress. Soon after the 2000 presidential election, Taiwan saw its first ever female vice president, the Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) Annette Lu, who championed the passage of such landmark legislation as the 2001 Gender Equality in Employment Act. Hence, the dynamics of women's struggle against a patriarchal society in *The Taming of the Shrew*, in many ways appears familiar and relevant to the modern Taiwanese audience. As Chen Yueh-ying noted:

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<sup>1</sup> Barbara Hodgdon, "Katherina Bound; or, Play(K)ating the Strictures of Everyday Life," *PMLA* 107.3 (May, 1992): 538.

<sup>2</sup> Diana E. Henderson, "A Shrew for the Times," in *Much Ado About Nothing and The Taming of the Shrew*, ed. Marion Wynne-Davies (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 226.

Though patriarchal struggles in sixteenth-century London/England indeed might appear extremely parallel to those in today's Taipei/Taiwan, nevertheless, these characters, and the subjects raised, are outstandingly those familiar to citizens of Taipei/Taiwan.<sup>3</sup>

Taiwanese audiences felt a connection and resonated with the play, but such familiarity could also partially result from Liang Chi-min's Taiwanese interpretation of the play, tailor-made to capture their imaginations. As Nanette Jaynes remarked: "...the shrewishness of his Kate, known as Hao Lina (Nana) [郝麗娜]<sup>4</sup>, is uniquely Taiwanese...so tough and individualistic in other words, so unlike the conventional stereotype of the traditional, subservient young Taiwanese woman."<sup>5</sup>

With Liang's choices and methods of interpretation, which "humorously satirise social assumptions and stereotypes common in contemporary Taiwan"<sup>6</sup>, his adaptation at the same time made Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* more accessible to the Taiwanese, especially to the younger generation, by adopting Western elements and cultural influences in the production. At the same time, *Kiss Me Nana* bears the imprint of contemporary Taiwanese society, incorporating Taiwanese concepts of love, marriage and family.

After all, as Werner points out: "Ultimately, the more carefully one works through a critical reading of performed Shakespeare, the less likely it is that the performance will appear to assert the Bard's universality"<sup>7</sup>. Each production of the performed Shakespeare acts individually, within its specific cultural context, so for this reason the context of Taiwan will be the primary focus of this research. Further, the character of Nana (Katherina) is central to this chapter, which will examine how the Taiwanese Nana is distinctly different from Shakespeare's Katherina, how gender relations in Chinese patriarchal society differ from Shakespeare's British patriarchy, and how in the 1990s the status of Taiwanese women in particular had changed since Shakespeare's time.

The final focus of this chapter will be on the cultural negotiation by both main characters with regard to their exercise of power. After all, *The Taming of the Shrew* is not merely a play about gender relations; it is above all about the operation of power, which

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<sup>3</sup> Chen Yueh-ying, "Taming Taipei's Shrew: A Multi/Intercultural Study of Shakespeare's Katherina and the Godot Theatre's Nana," *Studies in English Language and Literature* 11 (2003): 53.

<sup>4</sup> Nana is the nickname of Hao Lina (Katherina). Sometimes, in the production, Nana is also called by her full name, Hao Lina. However, later in this chapter, I will discuss how Pan Dalong (Petruccio) redefines the name of Nana to Hao Lina. In order to avoid any confusion, I will use the full name, Hao Lina, to refer to the character, but will use the nickname, Nana, when Pan Dalong is involved in the conversation.

<sup>5</sup> Nanette Jaynes, "Celebrating with Godot," *Taiwan Review*, Jan. 9, 1999.

<http://taiwanreview.nat.gov.tw/site/Tr/fp.asp?xItem=1460&CtNode=128> (accessed 23 Aug 2009)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Sarah Werner, *Shakespeare and Feminist Performance: Ideology on Stage* (London: Routledge, 2001), 70.

reinforces the social hierarchy of its time. Liang Chi-min's adaptation *Kiss Me Nana*, on the other hand, not only demonstrates gender hierarchy oscillating within these two different cultures, but also how values of the dominant culture are employed, negotiated and imagined/expected through the process of adaptation.<sup>8</sup> It is this negotiation of power that has so fascinated spectators through the ages, and the adaptation of *Kiss Me Nana* provides the fusion of Western and Asian art forms and cultures, marked by a shared cultural hierarchy within this cultural negotiation.

As Werner notes, "for someone wishing to disrupt its patriarchal thrust, the structure of the play itself creates problems,"<sup>9</sup> so that any interpretational choice made by the director, Liang, more or less poses a threat to subvert Shakespeare's textual authority. In a way, the director has the power to make a series of choices to dominate the text in order to accommodate it within the local culture – choices of "restrict[ing] the range of options available to the actors...and cut[ting] off options for the audience..."<sup>10</sup> On one hand, the alternation of original text makes the director subject to the author. On the other, wielding the power of predominating over actors and audience puts the director in the patriarchal position, so because this theatrical hierarchy the identity of the director becomes equivocal. As Ric Knowles states: "The role of the director has not tended to be gendered female to the same degree as that of the translator, partly, one suspects, because of the hierarchical nature of the theatrical workplace, in which the function of the director has always been in part managerial and patriarchal."<sup>11</sup> Further, the question remains whether the director Liang "tames" the text as Petruchio tames Katherina in it, or accurately interprets the same, climactic "act of surrender" as in Katherina's submission speech.

#### **4.2 Gender Politics in the Context of Taiwan**

*The Taming of the Shrew* is a play about the operation of power in gender relations. First, it displays the power transaction between the classes, as demonstrated in the Induction where Christopher Sly, a tinker, is convincingly disguised as a noble lord. This exchange of identity represents the oscillation of class order. Second, the cross-dressed boy who plays Christopher Sly's submissive wife and delivers the final speech represents male controlling power, and shows the kind of behaviour men expect of the ideal woman.

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<sup>8</sup> This point will be further discussed, especially in the later section on cross-dressing – when Shakespeare's cross-dressing boy is replaced by the custom of Peking opera's cross-dressing girl.

<sup>9</sup> Werner, *Shakespeare and Feminist Performance*, 70.

<sup>10</sup> Ric Knowles, "Focus, Faithfulness, Shakespeare, and *The Shrew*: Directing as Translation as Resistance," in *Shakespeare and Canada* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2004), 78.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 76-7.

In recent years, there has been a lot of critical attention on Katherina's final submission speech.<sup>12</sup> However, whether Petruchio has tamed the shrewish Katherina or Katherina has cunningly tamed Petruchio's macho power is not the point: the real struggle in the play is between male dominance and female challenge. What is reflected in Liang's adaptation, *Kiss Me Nana*, is the restoration of order within the traditional hierarchy in Taiwan – culturally, traditionally, sexually and politically. In making parallels between power relations between two different cultures, as demonstrated in Liang's adaptation: Western culture is seen as a hegemonic authority compared to traditional Taiwanese culture, with the adaptation of the original text posing a threatening challenge to this cultural hierarchy. In addition, the negotiation of gender relations has been re-opened for exploration in the production, as it seems to have progressed over the decades in contemporary Taiwan.

Penny Gay has indicated: "In the four hundred years since Shakespeare wrote the play the patriarchal system has remained entrenched in our society, changing a little superficially, but in no way relinquishing its power."<sup>13</sup> Although Gay refers to British society, the power of the patriarchal system still dominates in most cultures in the modern age, including Chinese patriarchy. In Taiwan, the rule of Chinese patriarchy plays a very important role, signified by the values embodied in regulations under the Kuomintang government's (KMT) martial law, which was only lifted in 1987. However, little by little, the values from the martial law period have been replaced by those of a new democratic age. It is exactly this age, illustrating the transition and history of the struggles of its women's movement, which sets the scene in Liang's two adaptations in 1990s Taiwan, *The New Taming of the Shrew* and *Kiss Me Nana*.

In Taiwan, the women's movement did not start until the 1970s. It was the first time that the traditional belief under Chinese patriarchal society that "men are superior to women" was openly challenged and questioned.<sup>14</sup> Former Taiwan Vice President Annette Lu (2000-2008, Lu Hsiu-lien, [呂秀蓮], who published a landmark article, "A Review of Traditional Gender Relations" (1971) and a book, *The New Feminism* (1974), was the pioneer of Taiwan's first wave of the women's movement and the first to propagate feminism during the

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<sup>12</sup> For debates, see Lynda E. Boose, "Scolding Brides and Bridling Scolds: Taming the Woman's Unruly Member," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42.2 (Summer, 1991): 179-213, and Werner, *Shakespeare and Feminist Performance*, 74-77.

<sup>13</sup> Penny Gay, *As She Likes It: Shakespeare's Unruly Women* (London: Routledge, 1996), 86.

<sup>14</sup> Xie Wolong [謝臥龍], Luo Huiwen [駱慧文], and Wu Yaling [吳雅玲], "Cong Xingbie Pingdeng De Jiaoyu Guandian Lai Tantaogaoxiong Diqu Guoxiao Ketang Zhong Shisheng Hudong De Guanxi," [從性別平等的教育觀點來探討高雄地區國小課堂中師生互動的關係] (Examining the Interaction between Teachers and Students in the Elementary School of Kaohsiung from the Perspective of Gender Equality) *Educational Research and Information* [教育研究資訊] 7.1 (1999): 57-80.

KMT's martial law.<sup>15</sup> Lu's active participation in the women's movement began to attract intense KMT scrutiny and in 1976 Lu was forced to flee to America for two years.<sup>16</sup> Hence, the second wave of Taiwan's women's movement had to wait until 1982, when Li Yuanzhen [李元貞] founded *Awakening Magazine* to promote women's rights and bring gender issues to the attention of the Taiwan public.<sup>17</sup> *Awakening's* launch was momentous, as it was the first feminist magazine (apart from Lu Hisu-lien's article and book) to be published under martial law's oppressive conditions, signalling the slackening of KMT authority and the beginning of a new democratic age. Even though women in Taiwan had voting rights before martial law was lifted in 1987, few women actually participated in politics due to prevailing stereotypes, such as the view that women look after the house while men go to work. Even today, most female governmental officials in Taiwan are either single or divorced, illustrating how difficult and frustrating it still can be for politically active women to command full respect and support within a patriarchal society. Evidence of this imbalance in women's participation in politics was still seen in statistics of those elected in Taiwan's elections between 2001 and 2002: female members (20%) of legislator and councillor in Taiwan numbered far less than the male members (80%).<sup>18</sup>

Likewise, 400 years after Shakespeare wrote *The Taming of the Shrew*, gender inequality in Britain remains an issue. Even though the number of women in the Cabinet has increased, the low proportion of female members of Parliament still reflects male dominance in this modern society, mirroring the modern concern for this phenomenon of unequal gender relations.<sup>19</sup>

Despite the under-representation of Taiwanese women in politics, over the last decade women's roles within Chinese patriarchy have been redefined, as more and more Taiwanese women receive higher education, become independent and self-sufficient, work more part-time or full-time outside of the home, and cultivate careers. Especially after the lifting of

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<sup>15</sup> Yang Jiahui [楊嘉惠], "39 Nianqian Lv Xiulian Chuixiang Xinnvxing Zhuyi Haojiao," [39年前呂秀蓮吹響新女性主義號角] (39 Years Ago When Lu Hsiu-lien First Blew the Horn of New Feminism) *The Formosa Post* [玉山週報] 39 (12/03/2010). (<http://www.formosamedia.com.tw/?p=654>)

<sup>16</sup> Later, when Lu Hsiu-lien returned to Taiwan in 1978, she devoted herself mostly to the political movement instead of the women's movement. She was arrested for a speech she made on human rights, and for that she was prosecuted for "violent rebellion" by the Kuomintang government, and sentenced to 12 years of imprisonment.

<sup>17</sup> For further information, see the website of "Awakening Foundation" <http://www.awakening.org.tw/enhtml/about.asp?id=1&atype=1>. (accessed 10 May 2009).

<sup>18</sup> For the exact ratio of gender ratio of elect in the election between 2001 to 2002, see <http://www.dgbas.gov.tw/dgbas03/bs2/92chy/table/A203.xls> (Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, Executive Yuan, "Gender Indicator Statistical Information in Taiwan"), also available at [http://wrp.womenweb.org.tw/Page\\_Show.asp?Page\\_ID=149](http://wrp.womenweb.org.tw/Page_Show.asp?Page_ID=149).

<sup>19</sup> Wendy Stokes, *Women in Contemporary Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 141-147.

martial law, gender relations in Taiwan have seen some improvement as a result of this growth in Taiwanese women's financial independence; women's participation in the labour force continued to rise steadily in Taiwan between 1978 and 2001.<sup>20</sup> Women were for a long time limited by family bonds, and commitments, and constrained by Chinese patriarchy's gender stereotypes.<sup>21</sup> Hence, when in the 1980s women began to have the choice of working outside of the home, the consequent transformation of the family structure considerably altered the nature of gender relations.<sup>22</sup> One of the many reasons women left their households to join the workforce was that during the 1970s and 1980s, Taiwan was in the process of transforming from an agricultural to an industrial society, and the labour shortage created many career opportunities and life choices for women. After the 1990s, the fast-growing service sector attracted more people, especially women, into the labour market.<sup>23</sup> The 1987 abolition of martial law as well as these successive developments certainly were key factors in enabling women to pursue their new-found rights, accompanied by the gradual opening of the political and social environment, allowing discussion and debate of feminist issues to take place like never before.

As a consequence of the 1986-7 end of newspaper censorship, feminist literature began to appear in all kinds of newspapers and journals, with a new generation of women writers depicting the hardship of female protagonists within the contexts of marriage, the family and traditional society.<sup>24</sup> The public stereotype of gender relations did improve over those years, but the issue of gender equality itself was hardly seriously considered until the late 1990s. It was then that the Taiwanese Feminist Scholars Association was first established, and education in gender equality was actively promoted through relevant

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<sup>20</sup> The research data in "the report of human resources' survey" collected by the Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics (DGBAS) of the Executive Yuan in Taiwan in 2001 indicates that from 1978 to 2001, the female labour force participation in Taiwan rose from 39.1% to 46.1%. For more information, see the website of the DGBAS.

[http://win.dgbas.gov.tw/dgbas04/bc4/manpower/year/year\\_t1-t22.asp?table=1&ym=1&yearb=82&yeare=98](http://win.dgbas.gov.tw/dgbas04/bc4/manpower/year/year_t1-t22.asp?table=1&ym=1&yearb=82&yeare=98) (accessed 16 September 2009)

<sup>21</sup> Li Ta-cheng [李大正], Yang Ching-li [楊靜利], "Taiwan Funv Laodong Canyu Leixing Yu Lichen Zhi Bianqian," [台灣婦女勞動參與類型與歷程之變遷] (Transitional Patterns of Female Labor Force Participation in Taiwan) *Journal of Population Studies* [人口學刊] 28 (June 2004): 109-34.

<sup>22</sup> Liao Huiying [廖輝英], "Baling Niandai Nvxing Chuangzuo Yu Shehui Wenhua Zhi Guanxi," [八零年代女性創作與社會文化之關係] (The connection between Female Writing and Social Culture in the 1980s) *Wen-hsun (Literature Information) Journal* [文訊] 127 (1996):43.

<sup>23</sup> Li Cheng [李誠], ed., *Taiwan Renli Ziyuan Lunwenji* [台灣人力資源論文集] (*The Collection of Academic Papers on Human Resource in Taiwan*) (Taipei: Linking Books [聯經], 1975).

<sup>24</sup> Liao, "The connection between Female Writing," 43.

research and educational courses for the public.<sup>25</sup> In the last 20 years, many women's organisations have been established to protect women's rights against domestic violence for instance and within the wider society, namely The Women's Rights Promotion Committee of Taipei under the Executive Yuan in 1996, and The Gender Equality Education Committee in 1997. These were followed by key new legislation: the Gender Equality in Employment Act in 2002, and the Gender Equality Education Act, 2004. However, this progress came with great tumult during the 1990s – notably a public demonstration against sexual harassment in 1994, the murder of Peng Wanru<sup>26</sup> in 1996 and Bai Xiaoyan<sup>27</sup> in 1997 – described as an “ultimate sacrifice that has become the foundation of women's rights in Taiwan.”<sup>28</sup>

It is worth taking into account details of the two murders of Peng Wanru and Bai Xiaoyan in Taiwan, as these incidents illustrate the public's changing view of successful women. The highly publicised acts of violence against women were attributed to men's anger towards, and their desire to punish a living shrew, according to the values of traditional Taiwanese patriarchal society. Men in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* regard Katherina in a disdainful way and are eager to get rid of such a dangerous person, with Paola Dionisotti, an actress, for example expressing her feelings about playing Katherina: Katherina is seen as an embarrassment to her father and also by the public because she is a woman who is seen as a challenge to the patriarchal society.<sup>29</sup> A similar attitude could be applied to women who appear to be successful and shrewd in contemporary Taiwan, as these women can be viewed as a threat to male dominance. Peng Wanru was a living example; a leading feminist activist for women's rights in Taiwan, she died as a victim of rape, the most extreme form of male crime against women. Peng Wanru was a successful woman in both society and politics, not only a prominent leader in Taiwan's feminist movement but also director of the DPP's Women's Affairs Department. On the night of November 30, 1996, she disappeared after taking a taxi home alone and was found raped and dead three days later.

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<sup>25</sup> Su Qianling [蘇芊玲], “Taiwan Tuidong Liangxing Pingdeng Jiaoyu De Huigu Yu Qianzhan” [台灣推動兩性平等教育的回顧與前瞻] (The Reviews of Promoting Gender Equality Education in Taiwan) *Journal of Studies in Gender Equality Education* [兩性平等教育季刊] 14 (2001): 13-18.

<sup>26</sup> Melody Chen, “Lin Fangmei: First a Feminist and now a Diplomat,” *Taipei Times*, Sunday, May 16, 2004, 3. <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2004/05/16/2003155684/print> (accessed 5 July 2008).

<sup>27</sup> Bai Xiaoyan, the only daughter of the famous Taiwanese singer, Bai Bingbing. She was raped and murdered in an extremely brutal way. The primary murder suspect was later caught and given the death penalty. For more details of this incident and its impact on society and politics, see <http://issue.udn.com/FOCUSNEWS/WHITE/index.htm>.

<sup>28</sup> “Taiwan Human Rights Report 1997,” <http://www.tahr.org.tw/site/data/report97/eng97/e07.html>. (accessed 29 June 2010)

<sup>29</sup> Carol Chillington Rutter, *Clamorous Voices: Shakespeare's Women Today*, ed. Faith Evans (London: Routledge, 1989), 3.

The news of her unsolved murder<sup>30</sup> was shocking to the Taiwan public due to her reputation as a feminist leader and women's advocate. Had she not been the director of the DPP's Women's Affairs Department, her death likely would not have received such publicity. In any case, Taiwanese women soon vociferously demanded greater personal security and action. In memory of Peng and her contribution to women's rights and gender equality, a proposal was made by the organisation of Taiwan Women Camp Committee to establish Women's Rights Day (also called Wanru Memorial Day) on the last Sunday of every November.<sup>31</sup> One month after her death, the "Sexual Assaults Prevention Law" was passed in the Legislative Yuan (Legislature) in the capital Taipei, and the "Gender Equality Education Committee" was established under the Education Ministry in order to implement education for gender equality. However, also in 1997, the brutal murder of another well-known feminist's daughter, Bai Xiaoyan [白曉燕], again forced the public to take the issue of women's security more to task, as this murder was marked as one of the biggest criminal cases in Taiwan's history, and became the biggest security concern since KMT came to rule Taiwan in 1949. Bai Xiaoyan, only 17 years old, was kidnapped on her way to school, raped, tortured to death and her body was found dumped in the gutter.

Bai Xiaoyan's mother, Bai Bingbing [白冰冰] also was successful and independent; she was a single mother, and a well-known singer, actress, and influential TV presenter in Taiwan. Bai Xiaoyan's murder was suspected to be politically motivated because of her mother's public and political commitments. Bai Bingbing was an active KMT supporter and two years before her daughter was murdered, she had endorsed Vincent Siew, Siew Wan-chang [蕭萬長], the KMT candidate for legislature, in Jiayi County [嘉義縣], even making campaign appearances for him. Because of her influential support, Siew Wan-chang defeated his opponent and successfully won the election. Thus this case was heavily politicised by the media, with the KMT ruling power questioned and challenged by the opposition DPP. As a result of this criminal case, Lee Teng-hui [李登輝], then KMT president, made a public apology on the government's behalf, and reshuffled the Cabinet. This murder had a profound effect on both the government and public, which resulted in women's security being taken much more seriously. On account of this, Peng Wanru's and Bai Xiaoyan's deaths also sent out a warning signal, in the form of a threat of male violence towards highly successful women.

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<sup>30</sup> The suspect was never found.

<sup>31</sup> "In Memory of Peng Wanru," Taiwan Women Camp Committee (1996).  
<http://www.womenet.org.tw/peng/twcc.html> (accessed 17 July 2009).

It is not merely the issue of misogyny, but also that of domestic violence, that was reflected<sup>32</sup> in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* and was a serious concern in 1990s Taiwan society. One year after the 1998 launch of *Kiss Me Nana* was an important year for Taiwanese women, who finally gained legal protection from domestic violence, with the Domestic Violence Prevention Act. The same year saw the overturn of the Chinese patriarchal convention of married women necessarily taking their husband's family name. These events marked a milestone in the history of Taiwan's women's movement, for the first time breaking with traditional concepts of "no legal intervention in the family". This was momentous because the traditional Taiwanese family had always been regarded as a private sphere, protected from any state intrusion, a development in the history of the women's movement which brought to the attention of all in Taiwan the issue of gender equality.

To summarise, a comparing gender relations in Elizabethan England and contemporary Taiwan, it seems very little has changed in the way women who dare to challenge male's lead are punished with violence. For Peng Wanru and Bai Bingbing, they both represent a certain type of woman who are strong enough to be seen as a real threat to men's patriarchal position, and both victims after having crossed the line drawn and defined by patriarchy about entering politics. Women's demure obeisances are still demanded today, and overcoming their constant silencing – the loss of their voice and independence – remains an important issue. For millennia, Chinese literature may have propagated examples of women who donned men's clothes and entered male domains of authority, but they were ultimately respectful of Confucian patriarchal social mores, such as filial piety, a point we will now turn to for examination.

#### 4.2.1 Heroines in Chinese Literature

In Liang Chi-min's *Kiss Me Nana*, Nana is a uniquely *Taiwanese* Katherina – a combination of both rebellious shrew and obedient daughter, representing the Chinese Confucian influence on the women in Taiwan for the past 300 years.<sup>33</sup> Women in society at that time were in no position to challenge or subvert the traditions or power of patriarchy. Even though a woman's role has been redefined over the last decade, these centuries-old moral standards still deeply affect people's behaviour in contemporary Taiwanese society.

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<sup>32</sup> For more research on domestic violence in *The Taming of the Shrew*, see Emily Detmer, "Civilising Subordination: Domestic Violence and *The Taming of the Shrew*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 48 (1997): 273-94.

<sup>33</sup> Cheng Cheng-kung [鄭成功] (known as Koxinga in the West) took over Taiwan from the Dutch in 1662 during the reign of the Chinese Ming Dynasty, after which Chinese cultures including Confucianism gradually took root in Taiwan's society.

Heroines in the history of Chinese literature,<sup>34</sup> such as Mulan [花木蘭],<sup>35</sup> Zhu Yingtai [祝英台],<sup>36</sup> Mu Guiying [穆桂英],<sup>37</sup> often represent the feminist spirit of standing up for oneself against the power of patriarchy. These heroines often entered masculine roles; Mulan disguised herself as a man to join the army, Mu Guiying acted as one to enter the battlefield, and Zhu Yingtai – who was like a Chinese version of Yentl – also disguised herself as a man in order to attend school. However, these characters were not, and not thought of, as “shrewish” as Shakespeare’s Katherina. Their stories were not taught to honour their strength or bravery in attempting to break the rules of Chinese patriarchy. Instead, their stories inculcated the Confucian values of loyalty and filial piety: Mulan joined the army in order to take her sick father’s place (filial piety), and Mu Guiying’s mother-in-law requested that she served in the army to show loyalty to her country. The only example of a female character truly confronting patriarchal society was Zhu Yingtai, who refused to obey her parents’ choice of an arranged marriage and instead disguised herself as a man to enter a school and receive an education (not until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was women’s education considered important, with the first Women’s School built in Shanghai in 1897 by Jing Yuanshan [經元善])<sup>38</sup>. Zhu Yingtai, who brought shame to her own family, was a lesson against any woman defiling tradition by disobeying her parents or refusing an arranged marriage, as her story ended in both her and her lover’s tragic death. The story meant to reinforce Confucian values of Zhong [忠] (loyalty), Xiao [孝] (filial piety), Ren [仁] (benevolence), Yi [義] (justice), Li [禮] (courtesy), Zhi [智] (wisdom), and Xin [信] (faith), all fundamental bastions of Chinese patriarchal society.

#### 4.2.2 Comparing *The New Taming of the Shrew* and *Kiss Me Nana*

In many respects, *Kiss Me Nana* owes its success to the fusion of Western and Asian elements that debuted at that specific period of time in Taiwan; Penny Gay questions whether “*The Taming of the Shrew* would still be in the dramatic repertoire if it did not have the magic

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<sup>34</sup> After the Kuomintang government fled to Taiwan in 1949, the KMT devoted itself to maintaining the Chinese cultural legacy in Taiwan (which they brought from Mainland China). For that reason, as part of the policies for assimilation, all Taiwanese were forced to learn Mandarin, Chinese literature, history and geography in school. Chinese Literature (since ancient China around BC 1700) has occupied a large portion of the Taiwanese literature textbooks, and all Taiwanese, including myself, are more familiar with Chinese literature than with Taiwanese literature. Hence, by Chinese literature, here I refer to literature written in the period from ancient China to pre-communist times.

<sup>35</sup> *Mulan* was written at around the time, between 420 and 589 AD.

<sup>36</sup> The story of Zhu Yingtai was first found in a written text dating from 618 to 712 AD.

<sup>37</sup> The story of Mu Guiying was set between the years of 976 and 1085 AD.

<sup>38</sup> For more research on Chinese women’s education in the last year of Ching Dynasty, see Huang Qiwen [黃琦雯], “Qingmo Nvxue Yanjiu” [清末女學研究] (The Study of the Education for Women in the Last Year of Ching Dynasty). (MA thesis, Tamkang University [淡江大學], 2005).

name ‘Shakespeare’ attached to it”<sup>39</sup>. Part of *Kiss Me Nana*’s appeal may well be attributed to the name of Shakespeare, as it was advertised as an adaptation of Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*.

In truth, *Kiss Me Nana* was an adaptation of Liang Chi-min’s first adaptation, *The New Taming of the Shrew*, and not a direct adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Chen Qi [陳琪], producer of *Kiss Me Nana*, admitted in a review that the production of *Kiss Me Nana* was re-adapted from the structure of *The New Taming of the Shrew*.<sup>40</sup> In total, Liang Chi-min has four productions of two adaptations of *The Taming of the Shrew*. The first adaptation, *The New Taming of the Shrew*, was staged in 1994, and the second, *Kiss Me Nana*, was first staged in 1997 and revived twice (in 1998 and 1999), due to its increasing popularity.<sup>41</sup> Even though the last two productions were just revivals of *Kiss Me Nana*, different actresses and costumes were chosen to enact different scenarios and embody different facets of Katherina. Owing to the lack of archive materials for the latter two, and the limits of this chapter, the first version of *Kiss Me Nana*, and the only version I saw, will be the main focus of this chapter. In sum, the first version (1997) reinforces the picture of a transformation in gender relations since the early 1990s, and at the same time provides the audience with more insight into an original and authentic Taiwanese Katherina.

The two adaptations were presented in two different theatrical forms – *The New Taming of the Shrew* was presented in the form of a play, but *Kiss Me Nana* was produced as a musical (indicating its Western influence of *Kiss Me Kate*). These two adaptations share a rather similar plot, but their Mandarin titles suggest somewhat different interpretations of Katherina’s character and the state of gender relations at that time. The Mandarin title of *The New Taming of the Shrew* is *Xin Xun (Xun?) Han (Han?) Ji (Ji?)*, literally translated into English as *New Taming (Seeking?) Shrew (Man?) Notes (Strategy?)*.<sup>42</sup> For the Taiwanese audience, the title suggests an open-ended but ambivalent questioning of gender relations. The difference in Mandarin pronunciation of the words “tame” and “seek,” and “shrew” and “man” is rather small, the only difference being their Chinese character and tone (intonation). Taking advantage of these homonyms, Liang used the words to make a pun with the

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<sup>39</sup> Gay, *As She Likes It*, 86.

<sup>40</sup> Xu Huiling [許慧玲], “Guotuo Wenwo Ba Nana – Dang Dananren Aishang Danvren,” [果陀吻我吧娜娜 – 當大男人愛上大女人] (Godot Theatre’s *Kiss Me Nana*: When chauvinist falls in love with feminist) *Pam City Info Magazine* [Pam 城市情報雜誌] 21 (July 1997): 72.

<sup>41</sup> The increasing popularity is, in fact, more or less related to the abrupt death of a famous singer, Zhang Yushen [張雨生], who was responsible for conceiving the music for *Kiss Me Nana* and died during the performance tour in 1997.

<sup>42</sup> My own translation of *The New Taming of the Shrew* [新馴(尋)悍(漢?)記(計?)]. Although it is not the exact translation in Mandarin, it is the closest and the most appropriate one.

Mandarin title: “to tame the shrew or to tame the man” (is it the shrew who tames her husband or is it the husband who tames his shrewish wife?); as well as “to seek the shrew” (unlike Petruchio who comes to “wive it wealthily in Padua” (1.2.69). Another meaning connotes Pan Dalong’s [潘大龍] intention to wive a shrew who can match his character; or “to seek the man” (does Nana pretend to be a shrew in order to seek a man who can match or understand her, or was her purpose to find any man who could take her away from patriarchal society?).

*Kiss Me Nana*’s Mandarin title, *Wen Wo Ba Na Na* [吻我吧娜娜], delivers a completely different message than *The New Taming of the Shrew*. The title of *Wen Wo Ba Na Na* can be interpreted with two different meanings in light of the various possible intonations because *ba* [吧] can be understood as either a demand or a question. Hence, the title of *Kiss Me Nana* can be pronounced as the imperative, “Kiss Me! Nana! (Nana, you have to kiss me)”, evoking men’s power of command over women; or uttered as the more interrogative, “Kiss Me? Nana?” (Would you please kiss me, Nana?), with the latter interpretation offer women the choice to decide whether to accept or to refuse a man’s request for a kiss. In Liang’s first version of *Kiss Me Nana*, Nana is able to make choices and enjoys a certain freedom of speech, unlike Shakespeare’s Katherina, who is forced to make compromises under patriarchal pressures.

According to Fu Yuhui, “*Kiss Me Nana* not only transcends time and space, inclining to ambiguity, but also takes a step further to examine the gender relations and exploiting authority – to see if there would still be a confrontation or a compromise”<sup>43</sup>. After all, from the year of Liang’s first adaptation in 1994, until his second adaptation in 1997, the status of women’s rights and roles in Taiwanese society had changed greatly. As a result, the sense of gender equality is in many respects stronger and more convincing in the 1997 production of *Kiss Me Nana* than in *The New Taming of the Shrew* in 1994.

#### 4.2.3 Western Influences in/on *Kiss Me Nana*

The Mandarin title of *Kiss Me Nana* not only gives a hint of how Taiwan gender relations have developed over the years, but also suggests the enhanced influence of Western cultures<sup>44</sup>, as its title reminds the audience of another Western musical: *Kiss Me Kate*. Although Liang Chi-min’s production of *Kiss Me Nana* bears little resemblance to *Kiss Me Kate*, both are

<sup>43</sup> Fu Yuhui [傅裕惠], “Rang Shashibiya Jinqing Yaogun Fabiao,” [讓莎士比亞盡情搖滾發飆] (Let Shakespeare Rock and Roll) *Performing Art Journal* [表演藝術] 56 (August, 1997), p.8.

<sup>44</sup> The term “Western” normally denotes “American” culture to the Taiwanese people, as Taiwan has been hugely influenced and assisted by America since the 1960s.

presented in the same form, as musicals. With his background as an American graduate, Liang Chi-min may have been particularly influenced by Cole Porter's musical version of *Kiss Me Kate*, and Franco Zeffirelli's film adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*). Not only does the title suggest a strong nod to this particular Western musical, but elements of the whole production – including the costumes, settings, and music all reflect a strong sense of Western culture. The layout of the production and the actors' dress do appear very exotic and foreign to the Asian audience – not at all Taiwanese. In addition to this, the production was set in two imaginary Western cities: Miro City (Nana's city), and Dali (Pan Dalong's home city), named after two modern painters, both prodigious in their own right. Miro was named after the Spanish painter Joan Miro – whose birthday centenary happened to be celebrated in New York the same year that Liang Chi-min studied there in 1993 – and on account of this, the lighting, set design, and costumes all reflect Miro's influence.<sup>45</sup> The other city, Dali, is named after surrealist painter Salvador Dali. The light projection of bright red lips onto the stage, symbolising Nana's kiss, might well be an idea borrowed from Dali's work, "Red Lip Sofa," or even an allusion to the more contemporary Rolling Stones lip logo. The exotic setting is not only primarily of Western influence, but also reveals other functionalities. By setting the play in a surreal background, Liang succeeds in keeping the audience from falling into the trap of seeing the work through the lens of Taiwan's ideology. After all, the potential risk of being too real, too close to the current space and time would contradict the original text's ambiguous theme.<sup>46</sup> For the same reason, to distance the audience from their familiar world, setting the play in two imaginary Western cities seems to work well as it helps avoid generating feelings of empathy toward this production. For example, although I found the issue of gender relations generally holds a strong resonance in contemporary Taiwan, since the setting is ostensibly in the West, I am turned into an outsider looking in, and therefore able to watch the production through independent eyes, without being *subject* to it.

The integration of Western and Asian elements has long been the Godot Theatre Company's unique signature style. The Godot Theatre Company [果陀劇場]<sup>47</sup> was founded by Liang Chi-min in 1988 after he graduated from the National Taiwan College of Arts. After witnessing traditional theatre's decline, Liang's wished to bring new blood into Taiwanese theatre and for that reason he decided to take the name "Godot", from Samuel Beckett's play,

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<sup>45</sup> Jaynes, "Celebrating with Godot."

<sup>46</sup> Fu, p.9.

<sup>47</sup> In Mandarin, Godot is pronounced as "Guo-Tuo," and Guo [果] means fruit, Tuo [陀] means a (spinning) top in Mandarin. However, the choice of the translated word "果陀" is a random transliteration and the combination has no meaning at all.

*Waiting for Godot*, as the name of his theatre company. It was only one year after martial law was abolished that the Godot Theatre was founded; the Taiwanese theatre was now well on the path to regeneration, even looking forward to possibilities of expansion. Over the years, the Godot Theatre Company has particularly been known for adapting Western plays into musicals, such as *Dong Wu Yuan Gu Shi* [動物園故事] (based on Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story*), *Dan Shui Xiao Zhen* [淡水小鎮] (Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*), *Kai Cuo Men Zhong Men* [開錯門中門] (Alan Ayckbourn's *Communicating Doors*), *Da Bi Zi Qing Sheng* [大鼻子西哈諾] (Edmond Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*) and *Tian Shi Bu Ye Cheng* [天使不夜城] (Federico Fellini's film *Night of Cabiria*). The abovementioned choices of Western plays constituted a new field of the arts to the Taiwanese audience at that time.

Critics may fault with Liang Chi-min's adaptations for a lack of originality, and point out that he does not strive to conceive an original play of his own. Either Liang is incapable of taking on the role of playwright, they argue, or he prefers to take advantage of other playwrights' works. However, this criticism seems to be of little concern to Liang himself, as he stated in an interview that he did not believe there was any difference between an adaptation and an original text in terms of directing.<sup>48</sup> His interest as a director is to figure out how to counter the original text, and how to rediscover the unexplored meaning of a text in terms of style, content, meaning or skill for a new interpretation to be found through the chosen method of adaptation. Through his own adaptation, Liang devotes himself to exploring every possible interpretation of the original text. For him, an adaptation is always an original work.

#### 4.2.4 The Appropriation of Western Text

Rather than originality, Liang is more concerned with how to present the text to the Taiwanese audience, and how to accommodate the original text – to exclude or include it – within a Taiwanese cultural context. As most Taiwanese audiences are unfamiliar with Western texts, it has become extremely difficult for Liang to maintain a balance between the spirit of the Western text and Taiwan's cultural context. However, in order to make the text more accessible to the audience and decrease cultural distance between Western text and Taiwanese audience, Liang adopts the strategy of replacing the entire setting of the original text within a historical or cultural background that the Taiwanese audience will find easier to appreciate. Liang's method of adaptation is to: (1) adopt the original structure of the Western

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<sup>48</sup> Shi Fangling [石芳綾], "Ba Wutai Banshang Wangye De Daoyan Liang Zhimin" [把舞台搬上網頁的導演梁志民] (Liang Chi-min, the Director who Moves the Stage onto the Internet) *STB* [網路生活雜誌] 27 (1998): 50-52.

play script as the basis of his own adaptation; (2) delete any obscure or exotic dialogue with specific cultural references; and (3) rewrite the play with new dialogue that would resonate with the cultural experience of the Taiwanese audience.<sup>49</sup> In *The New Taming of the Shrew*, Liang kept the original text's basic structure, deleted any complicated speech or description (the Induction was cut; the character Gremio was removed), and simplified any incomprehensible allusions (Baptista's money offer for Petruchio to marry Katherina) that might overly confuse the Taiwanese audience. However, Liang's alteration of text triggered another issue. In his works, the loss of the original text's spirit posed a serious problem, as the unique cultural background of the original text was sacrificed for the sake of delivering a local cultural context during the process of adaptation. In addition, Liang has been accused by theatre critic Catherine Diamond of eliminating anything controversial or anything that would complicate the play, in order to create a more pleasant and simpler story.<sup>50</sup> In other words, the compromise of Liang's so-called adaptation strategy was virtually all one-sided.

Nevertheless, negotiation between two cultures has always been unavoidable in the course of intercultural adaptation. Despite all these drawbacks, Liang still successfully plays an important role in bridging the gap between Taiwanese audiences and Western texts. As Jaynes remarked when she examined Liang's adaptations: "The fascinating thing about the Godot Theatre's adaptations is that they are not just Taiwanese 'imitations' of Western plays, but rather original works that fuse Western and Asian theatre together, encouraging a new way of thinking for the modern audience in Taiwan". She further remarks:

The true beauty of the Godot Theatre's four adaptations<sup>51</sup> of *The Taming of the Shrew* certainly does not derive from the fact that they find their source in "Shakespeare" as an historical construct; rather, it is in the company's use of a "Shakespearean" plot to create a new art – one that fuses the classical and the modern, and the East and the West, in ways that fascinate at the same time they entertain modern, young audiences in Taiwan.<sup>52</sup>

In other words, Liang Chi-min's works connect Taiwanese people to the Western world, and most importantly attracts more people, especially young people, to the Taiwanese theatre.

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<sup>49</sup> Yang Renshu [楊任淑], "Guotuo Gewuju Zhi Yanjiu" [果陀歌舞劇之研究] (A Study of Godot Theatre's Musicals) (Ph.D. diss., National Cheng Kung University [成功大學], 2004), 59-60.

<sup>50</sup> For more discussion on Liang's adaptation strategies, see Catherine Diamond: "The Role of Cross-cultural Adaptation in the "Little Theatre" Movement in Taiwan" (Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 1993), 309-321.

<sup>51</sup> In fact, Liang Chi-min only has two adaptations of *The Taming of the Shrew*: *The New Taming of the Shrew* (1994), and *Kiss Me Nana* (1997, and revived in 1998, 1999). However, Nanette Jaynes sees the revivals of *Kiss Me Nana* in 1998 and 1999 as two separate and individual works. Hence, in Nanette Jaynes' view, the Godot Theatre Company has four adaptations in total of *The Taming of the Shrew*.

<sup>52</sup> Jaynes, "Celebrating with Godot."

Liang's adaptations not only make otherwise obscure and impenetrable Shakespearean works more accessible to the Taiwanese audience, but connect Taiwanese society to the Western world. These contributions have brought about the success of *Kiss Me Nana*, and the production has become the Godot Theatre Company's most frequently revived one. In 1997 it was awarded first place in the Taiwan Arts Awards – Performing Art Yearly Top 10 by the *China Times*, and was also recommended by *All Music Magazine* as the best musical in the last ten years in Taiwan.<sup>53</sup> In other words, *Kiss Me Nana*'s success surpassed all previous Godot Theatre Company's productions since the company was launched in 1988.

#### 4.2.5 Audience Appeal

*Kiss Me Nana*'s success is firstly attributed to the treatment of gender relations in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* that aptly correspond to Taiwanese society in the 1990s, and secondly, to its fusion of Western and Asian elements that attracted a larger audience to the theatre. Third, it is important to note that Liang Chi-min knew his market very well; the target audience of the Godot Theatre Company for *Kiss Me Nana* averaged around 30 years old. As Jaynes observed:

All of Godot Theatre's *The Taming of the Shrew* productions (the last three being titled *Kiss Me Nana*) are attempts to provoke the thinking, and to open a dialogue among young, educated audiences in Taiwan on the nature of male and female relationships, the influence of culture on those relationships, the role of marriage in the lives of individuals, and the degree of flexibility audience members have in constructing their own lives. Godot's targeted audiences for these productions are those between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-five, the ages in which Taiwanese young people are typically faced with the decision – if not the obligation – to marry.<sup>54</sup>

Likewise, Chen makes the same comment on Godot Theatre Company's target audience: "The target audience for *Kiss Me Nana* is under the age of thirty. Both visual and aural elements are aimed at young Taipeiian tastes."<sup>55</sup> Liang Chi-min himself was around 32 years of age when he produced *Kiss Me Nana* in 1997. Those under 30 in 1997 in Taiwan were born in the dogmatic martial law era (1949-1987), but grew up in the more liberal 1980s (and were only 20 when martial law was abolished). In 2010, these people are now around 40 years old, with many either holding major positions in companies or participating in politics, at times leading Taiwan away from the restrained past into a more liberal and democratic age,

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<sup>53</sup> Yang, "Guotuo Gewuju Zhi Yanjiu," 221.

<sup>54</sup> See Jaynes, "Celebrating with Godot."

<sup>55</sup> Chen, "Taming the Taipei Shrew," 52.

perhaps partly explaining the DPP's first presidential victory over the KMT in 2000. This age group was also the second generation of those following the KMT removal to Taiwan in 1949, or local Taiwanese who were suppressed under that KMT regime. Hence, *Kiss Me Nana* catered to and in many ways was a product of the generation gap between old and new values towards sexual morality and feminism. Liang knew very well what his audience really wanted at that time, especially those who were not being drawn to traditional theatres. As discussed in Chapter One on *Kingdom of Desire*, most Taiwanese teenagers have lost interest in traditional theatre, so blending in Western elements helped increase young people's engagement with this area of the arts. And, to help his audience to embrace the theatre, Liang employed many Western elements, both visually and aurally, to appeal to the audience's appreciation of the hybrid of East and West in the production.

In order to attract younger audiences to the theatre, Liang incorporated rock-and-roll music into the musical production *Kiss Me Nana*, the first Shakespearean musical adaptation in Taiwan to be infused with this form of Western music. This was part of an increasingly adopted strategy in Taiwanese theatre that has effectively helped bring it back to life, as Zhu Zhonekai [朱中愷] points out.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, rock-and-roll is a perfect example illustrating how Taiwanese young people have been deeply influenced by Western cultures, especially American. Since the 1950s, Taiwan has received substantial military and economic aid from the United States.<sup>57</sup> As a result, American culture was brought into Taiwan through different channels, such as magazines and radio, and deeply affected the way Taiwanese young people think and act. Rock-and-roll was one of several mass cultural phenomena to which Taiwanese youth were exposed, despite martial law, along with a certain extent of the counter-cultural movements of the Sixties. For most young people in Taiwan, rock music is associated with rebellion, revolution and opposition to state control, and stands for the freedom to break the boundaries of constraint and resistance toward authority.

More recently, rock was even used by the opposition DPP in a Taiwan presidential election campaign in 1995<sup>58</sup> in order to attract more young voters to fight against the KMT's one-party dictatorship, which had ruled Taiwan since 1945. Although the DPP lost the first democratic election, the combination of music and politics implied the Taiwanese people had

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<sup>56</sup> Zhu Zhonekai [朱中愷], "Yaogunba! Yaogun Gequ Ru Juchang" [搖滾吧! 搖滾歌曲入劇場] (Let us Rock! Rock-and-roll into the Theatre) *Performing Art Journal* [表演藝術] 56 (August, 1997), p.10-11.

<sup>57</sup> "Zhanhou Taiwan De Jingji Fazhan" [戰後台灣的經濟發展] (The Economic Development of Post-war Taiwan) <http://tw-history.educities.edu.tw/c0703.htm> (accessed 22 May 2009).

<sup>58</sup> Zhang Tiezhi [張鐵志], *Shengyin Yu Fennu: Yaogunyue Keneng Gaibian Shijie Ma?* [聲音與憤怒: 搖滾樂可能改變世界嗎?] (Sounds and Fury: Can Rock & Roll Change the World?) (Taipei: Cite Publishing Ltd. [城邦文化], 2007), 25.

learnt to speak for themselves and to fight for their freedom against a hierarchical authority. In 2000, after the DPP won the presidential election for the first time, the *Kiss Me Nana* production showed audiences Taiwanese society had transformed from its conservative post-martial law era and entered more liberal times. The use of rock music in the production of *Kiss Me Nana* was exactly the expression of that freedom, as Nana had long wanted to escape the constraints of a dominant patriarchy. The forward-looking spirit of this Taiwanese production was apparent from its curtain rising, as a rock version of Taiwan's (Republic of China) national anthem<sup>59</sup> played live to, and for, the audience.

I remember that feeling of astonishment when I heard this rock version of the national anthem played in the opening scene of *Kiss Me Nana* on the night of August 1, 1997. No doubt my surprise was shared with the rest of the audience, who did not seem to know the correct way to respond. Some members of the audience immediately stood up to show respect; it was instilled in them to do so. The remainder of the audience, including myself, were puzzled and did not know how to react, because this was such an unusual, unfamiliar version of the national anthem. The rock version of the national anthem also was reminiscent of Jimi Hendrix's 1969 Woodstock version of the "Star Spangled Banner", and the Sex Pistols' punk rock anthem "God Save the Queen" in 1977. The Godot Theatre Company's version of the national anthem<sup>60</sup>, like these other controversial versions of anthems, not only established a connection with aspects of popular Western culture, but called out to the spirit of rebellion in the younger generation at that specific time.

In *Kiss Me Nana*, the use of rock music also speaks in the language of gender relations. On the one hand, rock appeals to women's desire to revolt against suppression in a male-dominated society, while on the other the production's heavy-metal style and trumpets also symbolised Pan Dalong's dominant male role within that patriarchal society, emphasising the male lead's aggressive attitude. Although *Kiss Me Nana* included the theme from the film *Mission Impossible* to suggest that Dalong's search for Nana's kiss might end in failure, the other music in the production was instrumental in helping build tension in the hostility between the sexes.

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<sup>59</sup> The Republic of China's national anthem was created before the Kuomintang government fled to Taiwan in 1949. Its Constitution has carried the name of the Republic of China on Taiwan since then. When the Kuomintang government escaped to Taiwan, the ROC national anthem then became the Taiwanese people's national anthem.

<sup>60</sup> Ever since the rock-and-roll version of Taiwan's national anthem was played in the Godot Theatre Company production of *Kiss Me Nana* in 1997, playing the rock national anthem before the performance begins has become the company's trademark, signature style.

### 4.3 Gender Politics in the Play

When Gale Edwards directed *The Taming of the Shrew* for the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1995, Werner<sup>61</sup> concluded from John Peter's and Benedict Nightingale's reviews that "the way to make sense of Shakespeare's gender politics is to accommodate rather than challenge them." Although their reviews criticise the female director, Werner seems to concur with their statement, suggesting that "for someone wishing to disrupt its patriarchal thrust, the structure of the play itself creates problems."<sup>62</sup> In other words, Shakespeare's play had a misogynistic agenda and was not meant to be altered with the changing and liberalising times. However, when in 1994 Liang staged his first adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* in Taipei, his motive for approving Shakespeare's male chauvinism by putting on this performance is debatable, although he did believe the play's gender politics were already out-of-date. He defended himself by stating that his intention in adapting *The Taming of the Shrew* was neither to accommodate nor to challenge Shakespeare, but to examine the new gender relations of the contemporary age. Further, Liang's two intercultural adaptations, *The New Taming of the Shrew*, and *Kiss Me Nana*, had already challenged Shakespeare's universality with alterations and cuts in the text. As a director's interpretation of Katherina's final speech determines the tone of the play's production, Liang's altered submission speech (discussed below) for the Taiwanese Katherina in his two adaptations reveals some aspects of his attitude toward gender politics and represents the evolution of gender relations at that time in Taiwan.

In Liang's first adaptation, *The New Taming of the Shrew* (1994), he altered Katherina's final speech to be more open and encouraging, so that it might seem to be a warning for men:

They say we women are like water; but do not forget that the water that bears the boat is the same that swallows it up. The water cannot only be frozen, but also be boiled. We women can be like water, and filled every shape of container. When we change – please mind yourself – it can only be our appearance that has changed. And I hope that all the men here will keep that in mind.<sup>63</sup>

Evidently, Liang was trying to convey to his audience that Shakespeare's gender politics were out of date, because Taiwanese women were no longer so easily tamed. Women may be submissive, Nana says, but that may only be a mistaken judgment based on appearance.

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<sup>61</sup> Werner, *Shakespeare and Feminist Performance*, 89.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>63</sup> Translation from the Godot Theatre Company's *The New Taming of the Shrew* are my own if not otherwise noted.

Later, in the second adaptation, *Kiss Me Nana* (1997), Liang makes an even clearer stand on gender politics, as he reshaped the characters' personalities, expecting his adaptation could express the variety of contemporary gender relations. Hence Katherina's submission speech is replaced with a chorus from Dalong and Lina:

Dalong: Now I guess it is time for Nana and me to teach these male and female chauvinists some good ways to get along between husband and wife.

Dalong and Lina: If you treat me well, then I will treat you better. If you try to argue with me, then I will just scream even louder.

Dalong: There are always ways of getting along with each other.

...

Dalong: You can still be you.

Lina: I can still be me.

Dalong and Lina: Two big trees do not have to restrict each other's height.

Dalong: You can still understand me.

Lina: I can still understand you.

Dalong and Lina: The secret of negotiation is to keep it a secret.

It is not simply that the whole speech was cut and altered, but the play's whole focus switched from Katherina's monologue to Dalong and Lina speaking together. Shakespeare's Katherina, in her long, final speech, makes the point that what men want women to do after being tamed is – to be silent. In *Kiss Me Nana*, however, Lina speaks as an equal to Dalong, even expressing how she feels and her refusal to be submissive just to please men, as – just before the curtain falls – Lina actually refuses Pan Dalong's request for a kiss publicly, *in front of everyone*:

Pan Dalong: Kiss Me Nana! Kiss Me Nana!

Everyone: Kiss Me Nana! Kiss Me Nana!

Hao Lina: No!

Pan Dalong: What's wrong? You don't love me anymore? I thought we'd just come to an agreement, haven't we? Nana!

Lina: Dalong, I love you or I could love you. But it is never gonna be a love of 'I will do everything you ask me to do'. So if you wish to earn my truest kiss, I am sorry, you'll have to work a bit harder!

Dalong: Wow! Nana!

Tang Yuan: Well, it seems that the show is not over yet.

Lina has shown the audience her genuine affection, rather than just an ostensible, *show* of submission, in front of other men. Even if Lina shows no sign of being tamed into a silent and obedient woman, that capability of mutual communication makes her a very different shrew from Shakespeare's Katherina. As Jaynes remarks: "The shrewishness of his Kate, known as Hao Lina, is uniquely Taiwanese. The Godot production examines the question of

why Kate is so tough and individualistic; in other words, so unlike the conventional stereotype of the traditional, subservient young Taiwanese woman”.<sup>64</sup> We now turn to the many ways Hao Lina represents a different shrew and identity from Katherina as woman, daughter and wife.

### 4.3.1 Gender Power

A shrew is a small rodent; by comparing a woman to a shrew, the word is also used to debase one who is seen to be ill-tempered and scolds others. However, the words used to describe unruly women vary from Shakespeare’s time to today and from culture to culture. But in contemporary Taiwan, do we have the same standard of shrewishness as in Shakespeare’s time? In *The Taming of the Shrew*, many terms such as “devilish,” “shrewd,” “froward,” “scolding,” “wild-cat,” and “rascal,” are used to describe Katherina’s personality. A *shrew* in Shakespeare’s time denoted a woman with a bad temper, scolding language and mischievous behaviour – in other words, Katherina’s “shrewishness” is defined by her temper, language, and behaviour. But in Liang’s *Kiss Me Nana*, the definition seems to go even further, to take in several aspects such as Lina’s appearance:

There is a gal called Hao Lina. Everyone is afraid of her, due to her aggressive nature. She is over thirty, but not yet married. All day long, she just looks for someone to fight. She’s got thick eyebrows and big eyes and she speaks as rapidly as a machine gun. (No need to maintain [a machine gun] because it won’t break down.) She does not care about being beautiful. She is not tame. She knows nothing about Chinese virtues (San Cong Si De).<sup>65</sup> (She doesn’t even care about gossip) ... She has never been in love. She does not put on make-up, either. Her father is completely helpless... She is surly and bad-tempered. She has a high standard for the man she wants. She is very good at criticising men. (It is never easy to trick her into having sex) She is thick-skinned (shameless) and audacious. She does not worry about being alone all her life...<sup>66</sup>

The word for “gal” is used in Mandarin, “La Mei” (literally spicy beauty or something like hottie). The word “La Mei” (spicy girl) was a term originating in Japan and later commonly used in Taiwan to describe young girls in miniskirts, and the term “La Mei” had nothing to do

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<sup>64</sup> Jaynes, “Celebrating with Godot.”

<sup>65</sup> Generally, the Chinese virtues applied to women are called San Cong Si De [三從四德], The Three Obediences: “obey her father before marriage, her husband when married, and her sons in widowhood”, and the Four Virtues: morality, proper speech, modest manner and diligent work. This principle from the Confucian code was applied for hundreds of years to women in order to maintain stability and a dominant order within the patriarchal society. In a patriarchy, men are meant to be highly respected by women, and women are naturally treated as lower ranked beings. These ‘virtues’, in other words, are imperatives for women to obey their whole life, in terms of their morals, behaviour, and manner. See <http://baike.baidu.com/view/1451.htm>.

<sup>66</sup> Translations from the *Kiss Me Nana*’s songbook are my own if not otherwise noted.

with temper or speech, only with appearance. Nevertheless, throughout the whole production of *Kiss Me Nana*, there is not a single mention of the actual Chinese word for *shrew* used to describe Hao Lina, only the term similar to “gal.” Moreover, the title does not suggest that other people are calling Hao Lina a shrew. In Mandarin, the equivalent of the English word shrew is *hanfu*, [悍婦] a phrase composed of two characters. The closest literal meaning of *han* is fierce, while *fu* generally refers to women who are either married or old. In *Kiss Me Nana*, Hao Lina is not a shrew, a *hanfu*, but simply called a *gal*. There is no judgment inherent in this translation other than Hao Lina could be just about any gal in Taiwanese society. Moreover, the description of Nana’s age and marital status fits exactly with that of the Godot Theatre Company’s target audience (around 30), as if projecting gender relationships similarly experienced by the audience was a conscious decision by *Kiss Me Nana*’s director.

Nevertheless, Hao Lina has every “shrewish” feature of Shakespeare’s Katherina: irascible (bad-tempered), noisy (speaking like a machine gun), and aggressive (always looking for someone to fight). Furthermore, Hao Lina’s appearance is made shrewish to the ethnic Chinese perspective: thick eyebrows, big eyes, and no make-up. In Taiwan, thick eyebrows and big eyes are normally considered to be masculine characteristics, while women with no make-up or who do not ‘dress up’ are seen as unfeminine. Basically, this is still what Taiwanese men think of as a shrewish *gal*.

Overall, both Katherina and Hao Lina contradict social expectations of the ideal woman and violate the social norms and patriarchal values of their time. So what is the standard of an ideal woman, from the male point of view in both cultures? In the Induction<sup>67</sup> of *The Taming of the Shrew*, the lord gives instructions to his servants on how to act like a real woman:

With soft low tongue and lowly courtsy,  
And say, ‘What is’t your honour will command  
Wherein your lady and your humble wife  
May show her duty and make known her love?’  
And then with kind embracements, tempting kisses,  
And with declining head into his bosom (Induction, 110-115)

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<sup>67</sup> The Induction is cut from the production of *Kiss Me Nana* (which is also often cut in Western productions), and also in the following versions (It is also cut in Liang’s previous version, *The New Taming of the Shrew*). As the Induction helps to tell the audience what follows in the play, without it, the audience may find it difficult to follow. Nevertheless, in *Kiss Me Nana*, Liang Chi-min created a Western scene (in setting, music, costume, and style) to replace the Induction, giving the audience a preview of the confrontation in gender relations to come.

This describes the lord's perspective of how a woman should behave in the presence of a man: quietly, courteously, humbly, loyally and always submissively, which reflect exactly, as Maureen Quilligan notes, gender relations in Early Modern Europe:

The triple injunction to be 'Chaste, Silent, and Obedient' is the fundamental tenet for the social control of the female; sexual order is ensured by policing language. It would seem that a female body must be silent in order to be chaste.<sup>68</sup>

Later in the play, both Hortensio and Lucentio desire an ideal woman such as Bianca for her "gentler," "milder" (1.1.60) manner, and her "silence" and "sobriety" (1.1.70-1).

Nonetheless, when the standard is shifted to contemporary Taiwan, an ideal woman is expected not only to be inward (in temperament), but also outward (in appearance). In *Kiss Me Nana*, Hao Lisi [郝麗絲], who is Hao Lina's sister, fulfils the demands of that expectation: she is young (under 30), more feminine (tender and obedient), physically attractive (beautiful), and silent (soft-spoken). Although the standard for beauty may vary from time to time and from culture to culture, it appears that silence is a common trait that men seek in an ideal woman, e.g. Lucentio admires Bianca's silence: "But in the other's silence do I see / Maid's mild behaviour and sobriety" (1.1.70-1). On the other hand, loudness is one characteristic that defines a *shrew* – Katherina's language and speech that mark her as one. For instance, Hortensio mocks Katherina for being "renowned in Padua for her scolding tongue" (1.2.96). Karen Newman describes a shrew as a woman who uses language skilfully to fulfil her argument: "Her [Katherina's] shrewishness, always associated with women's revolt in words, testifies to her exclusion from social and political power. Bianca, by contrast, is throughout the play associated with silence."<sup>69</sup>

Indeed, in both Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* and Liang's *Kiss Me Nana*, the attempt to turn a shrew into a *silent*, ideal woman tells more about how men execute their own power through a war of words to conquer women, and this control over women's language becomes a key weapon for males to establish and maintain their own power and identity.

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<sup>68</sup> Maureen Quilligan, "Staging gender: William Shakespeare and Elizabeth Cary," in *Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, ed. J. Grantham Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 211.

<sup>69</sup> Karen Newman, "Renaissance Family Politics and Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*," in *Much Ado About Nothing and The Taming of the Shrew*, ed. Marion Wynne-Davies (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 152.

In both Western and Asian cultures, there is a saying that “Silence is golden, and speech is silver.” This proverb is especially adhered to within Chinese patriarchal society,<sup>70</sup> in which women should be seen and not heard, like children. Likewise, the whole process Katherina’s taming in Shakespeare’s *Shrew* aims to mute her voice, and silence her “scolding tongue.” She struggles mightily to retain that voice:

Why, sir, I trust I may have leave to speak;  
And speak I will; I am no child, no babe:  
Your betters have endured me say my mind,  
And if you cannot, best you stop your ears.  
My tongue will tell the anger of my heart,  
Or else my heart concealing it will break,  
And rather than it shall, I will be free  
Even to the uttermost, as I please, in words. (4.3.73-80)

This is the moment when Katherina reacts to Petruchio’s taming “lesson” after their marriage and declares her right to speak, though her efforts are in vain. Katherina’s power of “linguistic wilfulness”<sup>71</sup> is indeed diminished little by little by Petruchio, throughout the play, until her final speech. In Shakespeare’s play, the person who manages to speak holds the dominant power in the relationship. The distribution of power in the play is also reflected in the quantity of speech attributed to each character. Although Shakespeare’s play is about taming a “shrew”, actually it is less about taming her, and more about the tamer, Petruchio. Katherina “gets fewer lines than him, no soliloquies, few asides and little or no chance to explain her apparent change in temperament.”<sup>72</sup> Paola Dionisotti also detected the dilemma when she played Katherina in Michael Bogdanov’s RSC production in 1978:

I wanted the play to be about Kate and about a woman instinctively fighting sexism. But I don’t really think that’s what the play is about. It’s not the story of Kate: it’s the story of Petruchio. He gets the soliloquies, he gets the moments of change. All the crucial moments of the story for Kate, she’s off stage.<sup>73</sup>

Katherina’s silence is her tacit surrender to authority, and Petruchio is the one who dominates Katherina’s world in the play. Even Tranio delivers more lines than Katherina, who has

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<sup>70</sup> Like the Chinese literature I have explained in the earlier footnote, culturally speaking Taiwan culture is still regarded primarily as part of the Chinese ethnic and cultural legacy. Hence by Chinese patriarchy, I mean the legacy of Chinese patriarchal society that was brought to Taiwan and carried on by the Taiwanese population.

<sup>71</sup> Newman, “Renaissance Family Politics,” 152.

<sup>72</sup> Werner, *Shakespeare and Feminist Performance*, 70.

<sup>73</sup> Rutter, *Clamorous Voices*, 1.

fewer than half of Petruchio's. Evidently, Katherina loses her right to bawdy speech, or speaking out at all, as well as her unruly power.

In *Kiss Me Nana*, Hao Lina's "noise" (speaking like a machine gun) is an issue that irritates the dominant male suitors. But unlike Katharina, Hao Lina never submits to becoming silent. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Katherina delivers fewer and fewer lines, and after her long submission speech (5.2.148-191), she never speaks again. However, throughout the *Kiss Me Nana* production, Lina speaks and sings almost as much as Dalong. In fact, Hao Lina has her soliloquies and speaks whenever she chooses.

Language and control over it is an important instrument in gender politics. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Katherina's sharp tongue and harsh language are tamed and she is being taught to be mute in order to fulfil men's expectations. Petruchio surmises the best way to tame Katherina's shrewish nature is first to tame her language. In order to undermine Katherina's unbridled and outspoken nature, his plan is to confuse her language by either deliberately misinterpreting her words or by disrupting her speech:

Petruchio: Say that she rail, why then I'll tell her plain  
She sings as sweetly as a nightingale.  
Say that she frown, I'll say she looks as clear  
As morning roses newly washed with dew.  
Say she be mute and will not speak a word,  
Then I'll commend her volubility  
And say she uttereth piercing eloquence.  
If she do bid me pack, I'll give her thanks  
As though she bid me stay by her a week.  
If she deny to wed, I'll crave the day  
When I shall ask the banns, and when be married. (2.1.166-176)

Hence, in order to show Katherina his dominance and authority, it is Petruchio who takes the lead in speech, while taking away Katherina's power to speak:

Petruchio: But here she comes, and now, Petruchio, speak.  
Good morrow, Kate; for that's your name, I hear.  
Kate: Well have you heard, but something hard of hearing:  
They call me Katherine that do talk of me. (2.1.177-180)

However, in *Kiss Me Nana*, Lina refuses to be cowed, subverting the submissive posture of Katharina's entrance, and seizes the initiative to speak before Dalong:

Lina: I heard that there is a boring man wants to see me. Is that you?

Dalong: No, it is a smart man who admires you. Hello, Nana. I heard that is your nickname.

Lina: Humph! Nana? Stop talking nonsense. Isn't it your grandma who is called Nana! My name is Hao Lina.

Dalong: No! Your name should be Nana, adorable and lovely Nana. In fact, every beautiful thing in this world should be called Nana. Oh! Nana. Ever since I heard this name, I've imagined how good and true you are. I heard everyone is saying that uncle Hao has a beautiful daughter with a strong character. Everybody is praising your beauty and virtue. Come, kiss me Nana!<sup>74</sup>

In this conversation, Hao Lina refuses to be called/ named "Nana" by Pan Dalong, suggesting that she is not so easily tamed. Still, Pan Dalong persists, insisting on calling her "Nana". In a further step, Pan Dalong even redefines the name "Nana," suggesting that it means adorable, lovely and beautiful, indicating that Pan Dalong has the absolute power to call her anything he chooses and to turn her into the good-natured he wants her to be.

In terms of power, the names that Dalong and Lina call each other also reflect a negotiation of power, as with Petruchio and Katherina. As people refer to Katherina as a shrew to debase her, Petruchio calls Katherina "Kate" (2.1.185-195), which also uses the pun of animal imagery to suggest that he will tame her from being a wild cat (Gremio calls her a wildcat in 1.2.189) to a mild cat. Katherina counters this move by using animal imagery to compare Petruchio to a turtle (2.2.204) and a crab (2.1.223). In *Kiss Me Nana*, Lina also uses animal imagery to insult Dalong, likening him to a donkey (too stubborn and needing to be tamed). Lina refers to Dalong as a donkey to imply that she can ride him (tame and control him). Just as Petruchio calls Katherina "Kate," Dalong also attempts to tame Lina, and to establish his authority over her by changing her name to "Nana." What both Petruchio and Dalong attempt to do is to diminish the woman's power by giving them a new identity. As Tita French Baumlin argues, this "changes [Katherina's] sense of self, creating for her a new, more functional persona."<sup>75</sup>

However, Katherina's response to this is totally different from Lina's. Katherina does defend her own name, assaying the name was given to her by other people. In other words, Katherina has already lost her self-identity, with the name of Katherine being the identity given to her by others, similar to the identity of a shrew, by which she is known by all. In contrast, Lina answers Dalong by asserting that her name is not 'Nana,' the nickname he has given her, but Hao Lina. She has her own sense of self-identity, along with the power of

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<sup>74</sup> Translation from Liang Chi-min's *Kiss Me Nana* are my own if not otherwise noted.

<sup>75</sup> Tita French Baumlin, "Petruchio the Sophist and Language as Creation in *The Taming of the Shrew*". *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 29 (1989): 237.

subjective authority in this gender struggle, perhaps best shown in the passage when she counters Pan Dalong:

Pan Dalong: I am the eagle, and you will turn into a little white dove.  
Hao Lina: I am the eagle, not a little white dove.

However, both Katherina and Lina give up their objection after a while, accept the nicknames they are given and never mention their true names again throughout the play, effectively confirming that they have both agreed to be transformed and given another identity. Thus, in a sense, they both agree to be tamed. This may perhaps explain why, later in the play, Petruchio calls Katherina his “falcon” (4.1.161) and his hawk/hound (5.2.72) in public, suggesting that Petruchio has successfully tamed Katherina through this naming process.

Both Petruchio and Dalong give their wife a new identity by changing their names, suggesting from that point on that she is their possession. After Petruchio marries Katherina, he immediately announces that “I will be master of what is mine own” (3.2.218), implying that Katherina is now his property: “She is my goods, my chattels; she is my house, / My household-stuff, my field, my barn, / My horse, my ox, my ass, my anything, / And here she stands. Touch her whoever dare” (3.2.219-222).

In the Taiwanese version, before Dalong leaves Lina to prepare for their wedding, he gives her a second identity by addressing her as the future “Mrs. Pan,” directly demanding that she carries Dalong’s family name: “To be honest with you, no matter whether you consent or not, I must marry you and teach you how to be a good Mrs. Pan.” By calling Lina “Mrs. Pan,” Dalong has effectively announced that she is his property. Later, Dalong also suggests that as her master, she will always be obedient to him:

Dalong: I am your sun...I am your master, and you are my housekeeper. No more back-talk. Answer your call immediately... I am your master... Everybody recognises his or her own role... All right, let us cut the crap. You are my possession, my valuable deposit... I am your legal husband.

Explicitly, Dalong defines Lina’s subordinate relationship in the patriarchal hierarchy by referring to her as a subordinate, a member of his household staff. In fact, by agreeing to marry to him, she has also subconsciously approved of being a subject of Dalong, *her* husband, as “a good Mrs. Pan.”<sup>76</sup> By adopting Pan Dalong’s family name, Lina shows signs

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<sup>76</sup> As mentioned earlier in this chapter, it was not until 1998, one year after the launch of *Kiss Me Nana*, that women in Taiwan could choose for themselves whether to carry their husband’s family name. At first, few

of a negotiated concession to be tamed. Taking away Lina's identity literally means depriving her of power and denying her sense of self within society. Lina is no longer in a position to negotiate, as she has accepted the identity given her by Dalong. All her speeches in favour of freedom and free will suddenly seem a meaningless demonstration, a superficial protest against a patriarchal society.

Like the birdcage that hangs over the stage throughout the performance of *Kiss Me Nana*, Nana may speak as much as Dalong, and seem to be a free-willed, modern woman, but ultimately her behaviour is still constrained and she is shackled by a patriarchal society. As a woman living under patriarchal sovereignty, she is not entitled to have a sense of self-identity because women are only seen as the property of men (including her father). Obedience to male authority is women's only way to survive in Chinese patriarchal society.

#### 4.3.2 Family/Marriage

So far, it is clear that Hao Lina has struggled to negotiate her power share with Pan Dalong. However, as the game goes on, she shows she is not such a rebellious modern woman because she succumbs to marrying Dalong and takes his family name. Lina's feminist attempts to defy traditional values at the play's beginning now appear rather superficial. As Jaynes notes, the character of Hao Lina has not actually accentuated the features of the modern-age woman, but instead Hao Lina's behaviour has redefined women's role within the Confucian patriarchal system.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, Jaynes has overestimated Lina's capacity to fight the patriarchal system on behalf of all Taiwanese women. Instead, Lina's age reflects the average of most women in Taiwan (just over 30 years old<sup>78</sup>), showing the audience (of the same age) the dilemmas and struggles they face, caught between Eastern Confucian values and the Western image of gender equality. Importantly, the pressure of Chinese patriarchal constraints on Lina does not come from Dalong alone, but from her father, Uncle Hao (Baptista) [郝伯伯].

The birdcage in *Kiss Me Nana* is a constant visual reminder signifying the constant pressures and constraints of patriarchy on every woman in Asian society, embodied in the

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women really had the freedom or courage to defy their parents-in-law and husbands by keeping their own family names.

<sup>77</sup> Nanette Jaynes, "Taiwan Guotuo Juchang: Wenwo Ba Nana Zhong De Dianfu Fuquan Ningshi," "[台灣果陀劇場: 吻我吧娜娜中的顛覆父權凝視] (Taiwan Godot Theatre Company: the Subversion of Patriarchy in *Kiss Me Nana*) trans. Chen Sihong [陳思宏]. *Shakespeare in China – the International Conference on Shakespeare in Chinese Perspectives at Shanghai Theatre Academy* [莎士比亞在中國-演出與研究國際研討會] (Shanghai: September, 1998), 231.

<sup>78</sup> In the opening song, Lina is described as follows: "There is a gal called Hao Lina. Everyone is afraid of her, due to her aggressive nature. She is over thirty, but not yet married..."

rebellious Lina. Women's experience in contemporary Taiwan is by no means identical to that of women like Katherina during Shakespeare's time. What distinguish Lina from Katherina are the traditional Confucian virtues<sup>79</sup> revered specifically in Chinese patriarchal society. The birdcage suggests that she is confined within the values of that patriarchy, and her reactions are circumscribed within these traditional conventions. Lina's character parallels Katherina's with respect to their "shrewish" natures, but Lina's situation differs in that she experiences the moral restrictions placed on women over two millennia of Chinese patriarchal society – a dilemma that modern women face in contemporary Taiwan.

The way Hao Lina lives under the constraints of these distinctly Chinese social mores has made her a uniquely Taiwanese "shrew", since she possesses filial piety. Evidence of this can be seen in Lina's relationship with her sister, Hao Lisi. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, the reason Katherina ties Bianca's hand is for Katherina's own benefit. However, in *Kiss Me Nana*, Lina strikes Lisi for her *unsisterly* behaviour:

Lisi: My good sister, you don't look so happy, do you?

Lina: It's because I can't find a man who can truly appreciate my goodness. What about you? Are you happy?

Lisi: What is happiness? I don't really know! No matter what, I will do whatever other people ask me to do. Perhaps in this way, I can save a lot of effort, and get what I want even sooner – by taking advantage of every old and young man in the world.

Lina: That doesn't sound right coming from a person like you.

Lisi: Sister, are you really not going to marry? Bear in mind that our father will not bestow his property on an unmarried daughter.

Lina: Look at you. I can't even imagine how you dare to say that! And our father thought how filial you are. Now you say this to me. See if I dare to teach you a lesson. [follows Lisi and beats her].<sup>80</sup>

Lina is angry at Lisi's apparent lack of piety, but importantly, her beating is not seen as a violent act by the audience, but the *expected* response within that cultural context. Hao Lina's anger is reasonable to a Taiwanese audience. Just as in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Katherina and Bianca do not have a mother. But, Lina is responsible for her sister Lisi's behaviour, because according to Chinese social norms, in the absence of a mother the eldest sister must take over her role.<sup>81</sup> This passage shows how the value of filial piety is a deeply rooted motivational factor behind Lina's thoughts and behaviour. Even though Lina attempts

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<sup>79</sup> Virtues of loyalty [忠], filial piety [孝], benevolence [仁], justice [義], courtesy [禮], wisdom [智], and faith [信] were the fundamental criterions of the Chinese patriarchal society, mentioned earlier in this chapter.

<sup>80</sup> Translation from Liang Chi-min's *Kiss Me Nana*.

<sup>81</sup> There is a Chinese saying, Chang Jie Ru Mu [長姐如母], and tradition meaning that the eldest sister is like the mother of the household when their mother is not available.

to stand up against patriarchy, as a woman she still subconsciously fulfils her responsibilities as a daughter and elder sister.

The Taiwanese “shrew” not only fulfils her duty of filial piety, but proves her worth in her family as a wage-earner: she has a part-time job and a business of her own to relieve her father’s financial burden. Unlike Katherina, Lina is more capable of fitting into society and standing together with men as an equal, since she is an independent working woman. However, Lina is still the one whom her father is eager to marry off:

She is the treasure in your eyes, but I am your burden. Father, although I don’t work outside, I do have my own business. Why can’t I just live the rest of my life quietly? Why does a woman have to get married to prove her charm and her value?<sup>82</sup>

Like Katherina, Lina, who crosses the boundary of male authority, is an outcast of whom patriarchal society is eager to rid itself. Dalong and Petruchio are also social outsiders; as Paola Dionisotti observes:

They were really quite glad to see the back of both of them... He’s an outsider. She’s an outsider. And she’s a problem. It’s an embarrassment for Baptista to have that kind of daughter; a daughter who can run rings round people, and can do it in public. After they’re married, Baptista doesn’t give a damn how Kate is getting on with Petruchio. She is completely abandoned.<sup>83</sup>

Like Petruchio, Dalong is used to take away Hao Lina from a society which cannot tolerate someone with a rebellious character and who is likely to do harm to the moral conventions of patriarchy. Like Katherina, Lina is abandoned and marginalised within her society; she is treated as a piece of low-priced property that her father, for one, is eager to sell. Among the dominant males, “it was less the suitors than her father who made Kate wretched...”<sup>84</sup> So it is with Hao Lina’s father, who already thinks of her as a money-losing venture and tries to get rid of her so that he can marry Lisi off for a good price.

Women are seen as men’s property in *Kiss Me Nana*, and it is especially true in Chinese patriarchal society that a wife is seen as her husband’s property, as is his daughter. Elizabeth Sinn notes:

In China, the central tenet of patriarchy was that the male parent, as the head of a definite household, was the representative of the ‘family’, the principal organised expression of the Chinese State. His supremacy was enhanced by the necessity of

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<sup>82</sup> Translation from Liang Chi-min’s *Kiss Me Nana*.

<sup>83</sup> Rutter, *Clamorous Voices*, 3.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

continued sacrifices to the spirits of deceased ancestors. The patriarch was thus invested with a power over every member of his family, consisting of one or more wives, children, grandchildren, younger brothers, their wives and children and so forth, as well as of hired and purchased servants, every one of whom had a fixed relation to the 'family'... In a state thus based on patriarchy, the idea of personal liberty, of absolute rights possessed by every individual as conceived in the modern West, was entirely alien.<sup>85</sup>

Owing to this deep-rooted convention of women as men's property in Chinese culture, it is perfectly understandable why the modern Taiwanese audience would relate to Baptista's arranged marriage for his daughter. Even during 1980s Taiwan it was still quite normal and common for parents to decide who their children would marry, and give permission for it. Today, the decision to marry is no longer up to parents, although parents' decisions and demands still often dominate their children's lives, and marriages. Statistics show for those born between 1960 and 1965, 57% would make their own marriage choice but would also consider their parents' opinion. Only 32% would decide whom to marry by themselves without first consulting their parents.<sup>86</sup> Thus, parental influence is still very strong in this culture, and that is why at the end of the play Lisi and Lu Senxiu [路森修] both kneel in front of Lisi's father to ask his forgiveness for their elopement. Even in the modern age, marriage without parental permission would show extreme disrespect and disrupt order within a patriarchal society.

Because daughters have been widely regarded as property, Taiwanese audiences can easily understand why Baptista sees his daughters' marriages as a form of conducting a sort of business – for making profit and producing offspring. In the same way, Uncle Hao ignores Lina's and Lisi's protestations about marriage, his only intention being to get rid of Lina and then marry off the younger daughter for a good price. To Uncle Hao, Lina has lost her value in the marriage market:

Kouzi: This marriage is indeed fashionable. Has there been such a swift marriage like this one before?

Uncle Hao: To be honest, I am just a businessman right now. All I want is to get rid of the goods, without caring too much about the price. I don't even care if it is a money-losing venture. As long as Lina can get married, it is a good thing. Although this is hard to imagine...

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<sup>85</sup> Elizabeth Sinn, "Chinese Patriarchy and the Protection of Women in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Hong Kong," in *Women & Chinese Patriarchy: Submission, Servitude and Escape*, eds. Maria Jaschok and Suzanne Miers (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1994), 142.

<sup>86</sup> Arland Thornton, *Social Change and The Family in Taiwan* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994).

Uncle Hao: No matter who marries whom, as long as they get married, people can propagate, then civilisation will not perish...<sup>87</sup>

Uncle Hao does not care why Lina finally consents to get married; all he cares about is the outcome. He regards Lina's marriage as a financial transaction:

Uncle Hao: Nana does not have a good price in the market, but Lisi is totally different. I need to make a judgment according to the actual price of your offer. Anyone who is able to offer her the most abundant dowry can marry her at last.<sup>88</sup>

This explains how he makes a fortune by marrying his second daughter, Lisi, to Lu Senxiu. And, as Elizabeth Sinn points out:

Another feature of Chinese society, which had historically evolved from patriarchy, was that almost every social arrangement – betrothal, marriage, concubinage, adoption, servitude – was professedly based on a money bargain.<sup>89</sup>

Marriage is just one of the games designed for the benefit of male leaders within a patriarchy; for them, women are always their belongings, there to treat as pawns.

It is this kind of social pressure that makes Lina refuse to marry in the first place; she will not be treated as property, and besides, she is financially independent and does not need marriage to prove her self-worth. This latter reason is one of the primary reasons that have been suggested for Lina's resistance to marriage. In fact, today there are increasing numbers of Taiwanese women who are financially independent and who choose not to marry. Nevertheless, under Chinese patriarchal society, Lina bends to tradition, for the reason given by Rubie S. Watson:

In local society the presence of an adult daughter was inappropriate, inauspicious, even dangerous. The death of an unmarried daughter who was still living in her natal household caused great fear; such a death, it was believed, produced an extremely unsettled and dangerous ghost. Because the soul tablet of an unmarried daughter could not be placed on her father's domestic altar, unmarried women had to find their final resting place in the delta's Buddhist nunneries, vegetarian halls, or in the houses of spirit mediums or sworn sisters.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Translation from Liang Chi-min's *Kiss Me Nana*.

<sup>88</sup> Translation from Liang Chi-min's *Kiss Me Nana*.

<sup>89</sup> Sinn, "Chinese Patriarchy and the Protection of Women," 142.

<sup>90</sup> Rubie S. Watson, "Girls' Houses and Working Women: Expressive Culture in the Pearl River Delta, 1900-41," in *Women & Chinese Patriarchy: Submission, Servitude and Escape*, ed. Maria Jaschok & Suzanne Miers (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1994), 34.

Thus, the only way to secure a woman's final resting place was through marriage. In addition, only men are valuable in the family for carrying on the family name and honouring the ancestors' altar with the names of his offspring. For this reason, even though Nana contributes income to her family, her value to the family is still negligible.

From the Chinese patriarchal perspective, raising a daughter is of far less value than raising a son. Although marrying a daughter brings the family a dowry, in Chinese society, raising a daughter is seen as only raising a daughter-in-law for the future family-in-law; hence it is regarded as a money-losing business. As an unmarried daughter in a Chinese family, Nina ultimately has little choice but to surrender to the path of marriage.

Lina still fundamentally confines herself within the obligations of Chinese patriarchal society; though she initially refuses Dalong's proposal, she still looks forward to the *thought* of her marriage like other women might. Like Katherina, who shows great interest in her forthcoming marriage, Hao Lina's excitement about matrimony is evident, as her soliloquy song suggests:

I am going to marry; I am going to be his bride. You don't have to be surprised that I have my own new life. I am not a stupid woman, and I can tell that most men are not appropriate mates. Since I am smart and bold enough...Would it not be a pity if I give up this great opportunity.

...

I am pretty surprised that he is willing to be a fool from such a long way. He is not an ordinary man, as he can see that I surpass other women's souls. We both are well-matched so that we can spend our lives together...Let me decide the future.<sup>91</sup>

Zhang suggests that Lina is in a hurry to marry to Dalong due to the social pressure of that society, and her age.<sup>92</sup> Under the conditions of gender inequality in Taiwan at the time, Lina would stand little chance of making it alone in that society. The Gender Equality in Employment Act was passed later, in 2001, but before then women over 30 had no rights, particularly as workers. The first time women's employment equality rights became an issue in Taiwan was in June 1987, when 50 female employees of the National Dr. Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall in Taipei and the Kaohsiung Cultural Centre were forced to leave because they were either over 30, married or pregnant.<sup>93</sup> Such treatment was very common in Taiwan

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<sup>91</sup> Translation from *Kiss Me Nana's* songbook.

<sup>92</sup> Zhang, *Shengyin Yu Fennu*, 30.

<sup>93</sup> "The Act of Gender Equality in Employment was passed," <http://taiwan.yam.org.tw/womenweb/workright/index2.htm> (24 Feb. 2010)

at that time; once they were over 30, married or pregnant women automatically had to quit their jobs.<sup>94</sup>

Nevertheless, as the play's opening song suggests, Lina understands that marriage will provide the only means of escape for her: "Don't worry about women like Hao Lina who don't surrender easily. / Because they will surrender eventually when they get older." The limitations of women's biological clock are perhaps another reason pushing Lina into marriage – after all, a woman's age is a concern for male suitors, affecting whether they can bring offspring to honour the family.

All of these factors may well explain Lina's hurry to marry Dalong, and she takes the initiative in their wedding ceremony – symbolically holding his hand and walking toward the priest. Lina's action of taking *his* hand (an especially powerful and meaningful gesture to the Taiwanese audience) can also be understood as her initiative, as a feminist to take charge of her own marriage. By holding his hand, Lina is announcing to everyone that it is she, Hao Lina, who has decided to marry, instead of being ordered to do so by society. Later, Lina again shows her dominant position over Dalong, in a twist on the scene where Shakespeare's Petruchio teaches that Katharina "call the sun the moon" (4.3.1-23):

Lina: Dalong, look at that girl. Isn't she cute? Why don't you say hello to her?  
Dalong: Are you insane? What girl? He is an old man with grey hair.  
Lina: Well, you can make a joke, and I am not allowed to have a sense of humour? What? You are not going to say hello? Well, let's go home then.  
Dalong: Fine. Fine. I will go as you wish.<sup>95</sup>

In *The Taming of the Shrew*, "calling a moon a sun," and an old man a gentle mistress, is Petruchio's way of instructing Katherina to be submissive. However, Lina mocks Dalong's taming plan as a joke, and reverses the dominant/subordinate situation, as a subtle means of control. Later, when Dalong and Lina arrive at his house, he initially mirrors Petruchio's action towards Katherina by starving Hao Lina. Although he claims financial motivation (to save money), both Dalong and Petruchio's real purpose is to induce the woman's submission. Nevertheless, the more Dalong tortures Lina, the more she exacts her revenge, in the form of withholding sex:

Dalong: Don't eat too much before sleep! Come on, Nana. Let us go to bed now and get some sleep...

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<sup>94</sup> Granted, even after the Gender Equality in Employment Act was passed, discrimination against married or pregnant women may well still exist in different forms, which is another story.

<sup>95</sup> Translation from Liang Chi-min's *Kiss Me Nana*.

Lina: Wait! Where shall I sleep?

Dalong: Where will you sleep? Of course, you shall sleep next to me.

Lina: Well, my dear Mr. Pan. I don't think today is a good time for us to be so intimate. Oh? Didn't you just say that today is not the last day of our marriage, but just the first day? So good night.<sup>96</sup>

In the play's Taiwanese version, Lina's character is as powerful as Dalong's. It is not so much the case that Dalong *tames* Lina, but on the contrary, she occasionally takes control and even becomes the dominant partner, using similar methods to tame him. In other words, the tables are turned, and the *tamed* Taiwanese woman becomes the tamer.

Ultimately, though *Kiss Me Nana* is an adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*, the focus of *Kiss Me Nana* is not at all about the act of "shrew-taming" itself. As discussed earlier, the title *Kiss Me Nana* instead refers to Dalong's *quest* for Lina's kiss – her submission – which is not forthcoming in the Taiwanese version. This makes *Kiss Me Nana* overall seem more like a play about gender wars for the Taiwanese audience, *not* a Shakespearian tale of male conquest and women's inevitable silencing and submission.

If the war of words between Lina and Dalong early on in the play is designed to convey the ceaseless battle of the sexes, then the scene in the woods, which director Liang added to his adaptation, signifies a moment when both Lina and Dalong stop quarrelling because they have reached mutual understanding. In this scene, Lina and Dalong get lost and become separated, and their reunion at the end shows their growing dependence upon each other. This additional scene would seem to symbolise the mutual understanding between men and women and also softens tension in the gender wars; as a whole, Lina compromises far less than Katharina. The quest for gender equality which Lina has been pursuing all her life seems to have come true in the Taiwanese version. However, by the end of the play, Lina shows no difference from Dalong in confronting the hierarchy of Chinese patriarchy, and has shown no transformation in her personality throughout the play. This is purely a convenient, tidy ending to appeal to the Taiwanese audience, for there would have been no need for Dalong to have come such a long way to marry and tame her.

Even though laws on gender equality have been passed in Taiwan, can gender equality really exist, or be enforced in a Chinese patriarchal society? Despite all that has been done to improve gender equality in Taiwan over the last 30 years, the division of labour between the sexes and stereotypes of women's roles have remained almost unchanged.

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<sup>96</sup> Translation from Liang Chi-min's *Kiss Me Nana*.

Society now expects women to do all of the housework as well as earn a second household income. Compare this with Dalong's expectations of Lina:

Dalong [*talking to the servants*]: Bring me the wine and the meal quickly. Blast. Do I have to teach you everything? Hurry up! [*servants running*]

Dalong: Stop! [*servants all stop*]

Dalong: Good Nana. You will take good care of this household, right? Do you see that it is not so easy to manage such a big house?<sup>97</sup>

In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Petruchio does not mention anything of the sort to Katherina. Instead, he calls his servants names as a means to tame Katherina. He exerts control over his servants, as well as over Katherina. However, Liang has Dalong demonstrate her duty as a wife, by insulting his servants, inciting her to take over control of the household. Dalong does not show any intention to tame Lina by starving her; instead he starves her for ostensibly economic reasons:

Dalong: What is all this about? Although today is the first day of my marriage, it isn't the last day either. No need to be so extravagant. We will have to spend a lot more money in the future. Take it down! Take it down!

Nana: Did you hear what you just said? Didn't you tell my father that you are a wealthy man?

Dalong: Good Nana! I respect you as an independent woman. You must have your own interests and income.<sup>98</sup>

This scene indicates that although more and more men in Taiwan are becoming conscious about gender equality and are starting to share the housework with their wives, there is still a long way to go before women stand on level ground with men.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

In Elizabethan times, the character of Katherina in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* would be played by a cross-dressed boy. In Liang Chi-min's *Kiss Me Nana*, cross-dressing is still included in Liang's production, but it is not the role of Katherina that is played by a boy, but Kouzi (Tranio) – who is played by a woman. The significance of Liang's decision – asking a woman to play a man's role – can be interpreted as woman's movement being confined within man's dominant body. As *Kiss Me Nana* was directed by a male director, the production was presented from a male perspective, so that the gesture of asking an actress to

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<sup>97</sup> Translation from Liang Chi-min's *Kiss Me Nana*.

<sup>98</sup> Translation from Liang Chi-min's *Kiss Me Nana*.

cross-dress demonstrates the director's fundamental patriarchal dominance and power. Granted, within the theatrical hierarchy, the role of director can be either female or male. On one hand, in terms of actor-director relationship, the director's role can be considered part of a gendered male patriarchy, because of, as Knowles argues, "...the hierarchical nature of the theatrical workplace, in which the function of the director has always been in part managerial and patriarchal."<sup>99</sup> However, in the director-playwright relationship, the director's role immediate becomes subordinate to the playwright's, as I have shown in the last chapter: all production is inevitably adaptation and the word *adaptation* suggests its inferiority to the original text. Hence, in terms of gender politics in intercultural theatre, actor, director and playwright are all always placed within that hierarchy in which director Liang's strategy was to accentuate that cross-dressing relationship.

In the next chapter, I will revisit gender and party politics in Wang Jiaming's *Titus Andronicus* because in Wang's production, Lavinia is also portrayed as a shrewish character – when her tongue is cut out, her mutilation is symbolic punishment for her challenge to patriarchal society. Lavinia's mutilated body in that production signifies Wang's use of textual mutilation; likewise he aims for a form of cultural resistance to Shakespeare's textual authority, a powerful echo of similar themes seen in the *Shamlet* chapter, while also representing a dismemberment of KMT political authority – topics examined in both the *Kingdom of Desire* and *Henry IV* chapters in this thesis.

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<sup>99</sup> Knowles, *Shakespeare and Canada*, 76-77.

## Chapter Five: *Titus Andronicus*

We use them in order to generate meaning...  
Shakespeare doesn't mean: *we mean by Shakespeare.*  
— Terence Hawkes<sup>1</sup>

### 5.1 Introduction

Wang Jiaming, seasoned director of the Little Theatre in Taiwan and one of the chief directorial members of the acclaimed Shakespeare's Wild Sisters Group (founded in 1995), staged *Titus Andronicus* over the course of three days at the 2003 Shakespeare in Taipei festival in Taiwan. The production epitomises numerous elements addressed in this thesis, as all are Shakespeare performances by Taiwanese (*Kingdom of Desire*, *Shamlet*, *Kiss Me Nana* and *Henry IV*) and together these theatre companies (The Contemporary Legend Theatre, I Wan Jan Puppet Troupe, the Godot Theatre and Ping Fong Acting Troupe), have created a body of work that could surely provide a new paradigm for intercultural Shakespearean thought in post-millennial Taiwan.

Wang's Little Theatre developed a new theatrical tradition by combining traditional theatrical forms (Peking Opera and Puppet Play), with musicals and parody, and his *Titus Andronicus* displayed various themes examined in previous chapters, such as the politics of performance (*Kingdom of Desire*), the question of authority (*Shamlet*), the nature of language and identity (*Henry IV*) and the role of gender (*Kiss Me Nana*). Hence, this chapter explores the interrelationship between Wang's *Titus Andronicus* with previously discussed Shakespeare performances and their contexts.

*Titus Andronicus* was a bold, unconventional choice of play for a major Taiwanese festival, and Wang's production was controversial indeed. Over the centuries, *Titus Andronicus* has had a very uneven reception throughout its performance history, and its staging has presented serious challenges for generations of directors, actors and theatregoers. When performed on the modern stage, the decision of whether to stylise the shocking level of brutal violence has always been an inevitable dilemma for directors.<sup>2</sup> Coleridge, for example, called it a play which "obviously intended to excite vulgar audiences by its scenes of blood

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<sup>1</sup> Terence Hawkes, *Meaning by Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 1992) 3.

<sup>2</sup> For more discussion on this topic, see Dominique Goy-Blanquet, "Titus resartus: Deborah Warner, Peter Stein and Daniel Mesguich have a cut at *Titus Andronicus*," in *Foreign Shakespeare*, ed. Dennis Kennedy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 36-55, and Alan C. Dessen, *Titus Andronicus* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 24-50.

and horror – to our ears shocking and disgusting.”<sup>3</sup> Today we live in an era in which an astonishing amount of violence and bloody brutality is shown on television, in newspapers and magazines, so the dreadful scenes that appear in Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus* – rape, murder, mutilation and cannibalisation – were not wholly unfamiliar to Taiwanese audiences. Presenting “the succession of horrors” that befalls *Titus* “without relapsing into monotony or unintended farce”<sup>4</sup> is thus a major challenge for any director in any modern revival of this work, and in Wang’s case this is how this play must be presented to the Taiwanese audience. Drawing on his experience of Western avant-garde theatre, Wang used staging strategies influenced by Brecht’s alienation effect to present *Titus Andronicus*, in his use of an indifferent and cold tone to deal with gory violence and to desensitise the audience to it. Brecht in turn was very influenced by Asian theatre and developed his ‘alienation effect’ partly through the study of Chinese acting. Hence, by using Brecht’s concept, Wang’s production mixed Eastern and Western styles in complex ways; through his own hybridised interpretation of Shakespeare and Brecht, Wang was able to develop a distinctive style and approach for his *Titus Andronicus*.

*Titus Andronicus* is a provocative play with surprising relevance to Taiwan in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *Titus Andronicus* was chosen and staged for this reason. Wang could easily have chosen a better-known play, like other directors did for the Shakespeare in Taipei festival.<sup>5</sup> However, he purposely chose one unfamiliar to Taiwanese audiences. Wang deliberately chose to stage *Titus Andronicus* for its political relevance (Roman/Goths) and its representation of gender (Lavinia). As Alexander Leggatt notes, *Titus Andronicus*, “centres on an act of violation.”<sup>6</sup> The mutilated bodies in the play represent political mutilation, as if Roman society were literally devouring itself. The rape of Lavinia and the deprivation of her language also represent the invasion of national space and loss of identity.

In terms of political context, tensions over boundaries had increased significantly between Taiwan and Mainland China since 2000, when the opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) party won the executive in Taiwan’s first democratic elections too, the issue of Taiwan independence and whether it should adopt the same spelling system as

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas Middleton Raysor, ed., *Coleridge’s Shakespearean Criticism II* (London: Everyman’s Library, 1967), 27.

<sup>4</sup> Irving Wardle, *The Times*, 13 October, 1972, 15.

<sup>5</sup> Other directors at the Shakespeare in Taipei festival chose more common plays like *King Lear*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Macbeth*. As the festival was government funded, directors invited to attend could choose to stage any Shakespeare play they wished without having to be concerned about box-office returns.

<sup>6</sup> Alexander Leggatt, *Shakespeare’s Tragedies: Violation and Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1.

Mainland China had aroused heated debate at this time<sup>7</sup> (Mainland China and Taiwan share Mandarin as an official language – but with different Romanisation and writing system). As discussed previously, to the Taiwanese audience the KMT regime up until that point was associated with many acts of violation: the at times brutal suppression of the Taiwanese language, as well as an invasion, punishment, brutal crackdowns and being deprived of local cultural identity.

Wang was required to meet the Shakespeare in Taipei festival agenda, which centred on plays embodying four key words: local, plebeian, diverse and entertaining. But he chose instead to stage Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, a cruel play with excessive acts of violence and atrocity. In other words, Wang's production was itself an act of violation, because the original spirit of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* contradicts this objective in every way: it is Elizabethan, aristocratic, plain and shockingly violent. In terms of theatre, Wang's production also violated the concept of Brecht's alienation effect because he amended Shakespeare's original text and turned *Titus Andronicus* into a political parody. Hence, this chapter first examines the interrelationship and dynamics between the Shakespeare in Taipei festival, Shakespeare performances and Little Theatre in Taiwan, then looks at how Shakespeare was received locally by presenting a history of the Little Theatre in Taiwan; and finally, we will discuss the relevance of using "acts of violation" in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* to show how the play fit within the Taiwanese political context.

## 5.2 Shakespeare and the Little Theatre Movement in Taiwan

In 2003, a unique and so far never-repeated Shakespeare festival was held in Taipei. The "Shakespeare in Taipei" festival was funded by Taiwan's National Theatre at the National Chiang Kai-shek Cultural Centre, and was the vision of one man, Hung Hung, who is an acknowledged poet, director and editor of *Performing Arts Review* in Taiwan. For the festival, five Taipei theatre companies were invited to take part in the event: Wang Jiaming's Shakespeare's Wild Sisters Group, Wang Rongyu's Golden Bough Theatre [王榮裕/金枝演社], Lu Boshen's Tainan Jen Theatre [呂柏伸/台南人劇團], Craig Quintero's Riverbed Theatre [郭文泰/河床劇團]<sup>8</sup> and Fu Hongzheng's Off Performance Workshop [符宏征/外表坊時驗團/身聲演繹社] and BSun

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<sup>7</sup> The Democratic Progressive Party claims Taiwan's status as an independent country, while the Kuomintang Party has claimed it is not.

<sup>8</sup> Craig Quintero is an American born in Montana, USA. He first came to Taiwan to study Peking opera in 1992. He launched his Riverbed Theatre in Chicago in 1995 and his second Riverbed Theatre in Taipei, Taiwan, in 1998. His PhD dissertation was on the Little Theatre Movement in Taiwan (Craig Anthony Quintero, "Performing Culture/Cultural Performances: The Little Theatre Movement in Taiwan," (Ph.D diss., Northwestern University, 2000). He has lived in Taipei since 2002 and has been an active director in Taiwan

Son Theatre. These theatre companies were all acclaimed, locally based Little Theatre practitioners. The festival lasted one month, with each theatre company performing for three days in Taipei's National Theatre. As the festival was funded by the National Theatre, each director was tasked with staging one of Shakespeare's plays or anything that was related to Shakespeare the playwright. The host, Hung Hung, also set the theme "Shakespeare in Taipei" and expected the directors to appropriate and popularise Shakespeare's plays for the modern Taiwan audience (especially Taipei residents) by putting on a performance that was, as Hung Hung insisted, local, plebeian, diverse and entertaining.

Although these five theatre groups were invited as representatives of contemporary Little Theatre in Taipei, each had its own distinctive theatrical approach. Their productions were presented only to small audiences because the event was held in the National Theatre's Experimental Theatre, where the stage and auditorium were designed for small-scale performances with an audience of 120-150.

This was typical of Little Theatre, which might be compared to avant-garde or fringe theatre in the West. Little Theatre began in small spaces and was associated with experimentation and the blending of Eastern and Western styles. Today, Little Theatre is part of mainstream Taiwanese culture and many of the theatre companies discussed in this thesis had their roots in the Little Theatre movement (including the Contemporary Legend Theatre, the Godot Theatre, and the Ping Fong Acting Troupe). All of these productions exhibit a hybridity of Western and Eastern theatrical forms, a primary characteristic of the Little Theatre movement. For instance, *Kingdom of Desire* mixed *Macbeth* with Peking Opera; in *Shamlet*, Taiwanese theatre has been subverted through parody; and in *Kiss Me Nana*, Shakespeare and Taiwanese theatre were mediated by rock and Western popular influences. Wang's *Titus Andronicus* likewise adopted a Westernised approach to theatre, this time drawing heavily on Brechtian devices to ensure the political relevance of civil war in the play was clear to contemporary Taiwan audiences.

Shakespeare was an appropriate theme for a major Little Theatre festival such as this, as both had parallel and sometimes overlapping histories in contemporary Taiwanese culture. Little Theatre – and Shakespeare – were introduced from the West and later localised in Taiwan by its theatres. As Chung Ming-der notes, the Little Theatre Movement was impelled by the following social and political factors: (1) the decline of Spoken Drama; (2) the

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since then. His Mandarin is so fluent that his productions are presented in Mandarin and not English. For more information about the theatre and director, see "Craig Quintero," <http://taiwanpedia.culture.tw/web/content?ID=15312> (accessed August 2010).

influence of American, European and Japanese avant-garde theatres; (3) the accelerating pace of Taiwan's modernisation in the late 1970s; and (4) the coming of age of the post-war baby boomer generation.<sup>9</sup> Many of the same factors can be applied to explain the growth of interest in Shakespeare over the same period, who was used by that generation of theatre practitioners either to prevent the decline of local traditional theatre (Peking Opera and Puppet Play), or as an instrument to demonstrate contextual transition, both in politics and theatre.

Although it did not acquire the name 'Little Theatre' until the 1980s, the movement to integrate Western avant-garde theatre to create a new form of Taiwanese fringe can be traced back to the 1960s – around the same time that theatrical interest in Shakespeare's works also began to flourish in Taiwan. One major Taiwanese avant-garde figure in the 1960s was Li Mangui [李曼瑰], who studied at Yale and encountered radical new theatrical forms there, such as Poor Theatre, Environmental Theatre, and Political Theatre. Li was the first of many Taiwanese theatre practitioners who had studied in the West and brought back to Taiwan a new thinking about theatre. As Chung explains, the Little Theatre Movement was in part “a result of Taiwan's economic miracle,”<sup>10</sup> in that a whole generation were able to afford a Western education, which in turn had a massive impact on Taiwan's Westernisation towards the end of the twentieth century. These post-war generations began either teaching at university or practising concepts they adopted from Western theatre. In 1984, the term “Little Theatre” was coined by Ma Sen to describe the rise of theatre companies playing in apartments and basements during the Experimental Theatre Festival (1980-84) in Taipei. The term caught on and was frequently used in newspaper and magazine reviews to describe any experimental performances played in small theatres (or makeshift theatres). Although the term was used loosely by journalists, Chung has attempted to define Little Theatre – it is typically performed in a small space (less than 300 people, often less than 100); with a small budget (less than NTD\$50,000, around £1,000), and played by young amateur performers (mostly university students), with minimal publicity.<sup>11</sup> In terms of scale, the previously mentioned theatre companies all fit this description.

However, this definition soon became problematic as Little Theatres such as Ping Fong Acting Troupe and the Godot Theatre grew into larger-scale commercial theatre companies producing large-scale productions striving to appeal to larger audiences. Even

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<sup>9</sup> Chung Ming-der, “The Little Theatre Movement of Taiwan (1980-89): In Search of Alternative Aesthetics and Politics” (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1992), 13.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, x.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 338.

those companies that remained small, such as the Contemporary Legend Theatre, have become more commercially savvy; their production *Lear is Here*, a one-man production, was promoted through an ambitious publicity campaign and performed in theatres seating more than 1000. With no real culture of arts funding (which underpins much of Western experimental theatre), these small-scale theatre companies could not afford to support themselves merely by making small productions. Ping Fong Acting Troupe and the Godot Theatre grew into large-scale and commercial theatres<sup>12</sup> in order to solve their financial problems. The Contemporary Legend Theatre had a constant shortage of actors because they could not recruit long-term actors who solely belonged to the company, leading to the practice of always having to borrow actors from other theatre companies to stage a production.

The scale of these new theatre companies (which no longer fit the definition of Little Theatre) and the division of Little Theatre's phases were points of controversy, particularly for theatre scholars such as Chung Ming-der, Ma Sen, Jiao Tong, Wang Molin and Huang Meixu.<sup>13</sup> Chung defines Little Theatre as anti-commercial, experimental and non-mainstream. However, elsewhere, Chung argues that Little Theatre can be used to refer to any theatrical activity that is different from traditional opera and traditional spoken drama,

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<sup>12</sup> The concept of 'commercial theatre' in Taiwan was problematic as well. As Rong Shu-hua indicates, in practice, most Western commercial theatres are just like other industries aiming at making the most profit. Liang Chi-min also points out two fundamental elements of a commercial theatre; one, these commercial theatres are mostly profit-oriented. Second, they have to perform at least 200 days per year. However, in Taiwan there are no theatres that fit the above-mentioned descriptions or any 'big' theatres in Taiwan that can turn profits such as the West End or Broadway. For more discussion on Commercial Theatre in Taiwan, see Rong Shuhua [容淑華], "Taiwan You Shangye Juchang Ma? Taiwan Juchang Xiankuang Zhi Tanta," [台灣有商業劇場嗎? 台灣劇場現況之探討] (Is there any Commercial Theatre in Taiwan? Analysis of Current Theatre in Taiwan) in 1999 Xiandai Juchang Yantaohui Lunwenji- Zhuangye Juchang [1999 現代劇場研討會論文集-專業劇場] (1999 Contemporary Theatre Conference: Professional Theatre), ed. Liao Meiyu [廖美玉] (Taipei: Cultural Affairs Council [文建會], 1999), 37-49; Zheng Zhiwei [鄭志偉], "Taiwan Youmeiyou Shangye Juchang?" [台灣有沒有商業劇場?] (Is there Commercial Theatre in Taiwan at all?) *Performing Arts Reviews* [表演藝術] 40 (1996): 38-42.

<sup>13</sup> For the debate concerning how Little Theatre in Taiwan should be divided, see Chung Ming-der [鐘明德], *Zai Houxiandai Zhuyi De Zayin Zhong* [在後現代主義的雜音中] (The Noise among the Post-modernism) (Taipei: Shulin [書林], 1999), 2-3; Ma Sen [馬森], *Xichaoxia De Zhongguo Xiandai Xiju* [西潮下的中國現代戲劇] (The Chinese Modern Drama under the Western Wave) (Taipei: Shulin [書林], 1994), 272; Jiao Tong [焦桐], *Taiwan Wenxue De Jietou Yundong* [台灣文學的街頭運動] (The Street Movement of Taiwan Literature) (Taipei: China Times [時報], 1998), 205; Wang Molin [王墨林], *Dushi Juchang Yu Shenti* [都市劇場與身體] (Theatre and Body) (Taipei: Daw Shiang [稻鄉], 1990), 155; Wang Molin [王墨林], "Xiezai Yangpi Zhishang De Lishi-< Taiwan Xiaojuchang Yundongshi> De Li Shi Huan Shi" [寫在羊皮紙上的歷史-<台灣小劇場運動史>的歷史幻視] (The History written on the Parchment: The Historical Vision of Little Theatre Movement in Taiwan) *Performing Arts Review* [表演藝術] 82 (Oct, 1999): 59-60; and Huang Meixu [黃美序], "Taiwan Xiaojuchang Shihui" [台灣小劇場拾穗] (The Gathering of Little Theatre in Taiwan) *Chung Wai Literary* [中外文學] 23.7 (December, 1994): 61.

and possesses the characteristics of experimental or avant-garde theatre.<sup>14</sup> For this reason, many critics and performers prefer the more accurate term “Experimental Theatre” to “Little Theatre.”<sup>15</sup> According to the definition of Little Theatre Movement provided in *A Lexicon of Theatre Matters: Keywords of Theatre* in 2008, Geng Yiwei notes:

Chung Ming-der divided Little Theatre Movement in Taiwan into two generations by the year 1985. The first-generation, the experimental theatre, compromised the crossing influence between tradition and modernity, and local and foreign. The second-generation, the avant-garde theatre, replaced the dialogic language of spoken drama with theatrical language, replaced plot and character with anti-narrative structure, and replaced traditional proscenium stage with real environment. Literally speaking, the aesthetic characteristic of the second-generation was associated with political subversion and anti-system of that time. Chung Ming-der concluded that Little Theatre Movement was a rather successful ‘Taiwan experience’ in terms of Taiwanese-Western cultural exchange.<sup>16</sup>

According to Chung, the definition of Little Theatre is even more complicated. Basically, there are two ways to distinguish first-generation from second-generation Little Theatre – according to the year of establishment and according to the theatre company’s performance orientation. However, the debate about divisions in Little Theatre has never been settled conclusively, and in practice few theatre companies rigorously fit either definition.<sup>17</sup> To complicate matters, other critics have proposed different histories for Little Theatre. For instance, Ma Sen argues that the two phases of the Little Theatre should be divided as follows: 1980-1989 (the first generation), and 1989-present (the second generation). Although Chung’s division is now generally accepted, Ma Sen’s division seems to me more logical given the wider political context of the late 1980s following the end of martial law. One consequence of this political change was the lifting of censorship rules which enabled Little Theatre practitioners to stage more openly political, independent works.<sup>18</sup>

If we accept Ma’s view of the movement’s history, then Wu Hsing-kuo’s *The Contemporary Legend Theatre* (1986), Lee Kuo-hsiu’s *Ping Fong Acting Troupe* (1986), and Liang Chi-min’s *The Godot Theatre* (1988) all belong to first-generation Little Theatre, with

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<sup>14</sup> Chung Ming-der [鍾明德], *Jixu Qianwei: Xunzhao Zhengti Yishu He Dangdai Taibei Wenhua* [繼續前衛:尋找整體藝術和當代台北文化] (Continue to Be Avant-Garde: In Search of Total Art and Contemporary Taipei Culture) (Taipei: Shulin [書林], 1996), 162.

<sup>15</sup> Chung, “The Little Theatre Movement of Taiwan,” 8.

<sup>16</sup> See Geng Yiwei [耿一偉], *Juchangshi Tekan: Juchang Guanjianzi* [劇場事特刊:劇場關鍵字] (*A Lexicon of Theatre Matters: Keywords of Theatre*) (Taichung: White Elephant [白象文化], 2008), 21.

<sup>17</sup> Later, even Chung Ming-der himself changed the division of the Little Theatre Movement into 3 phases: 1980-1985 (first generation), 1986-1989 (second generation), and 1990-present (third generation).

<sup>18</sup> Chung, *Jixu Qianwei*, 104.

each one successively more experimental with the original texts. Wu Hsing-kuo indigenised *Macbeth* through Peking Opera, Lee Kuo-hsiu borrowed freely from *Hamlet* and Liang Chi-min devoted himself more to exploring diverse possibilities in the text by mixing different theatrical elements, such as music and dance. Wang's Shakespeare's Wild Sisters Group (1995) was less interested in textual experimentation and concentrated more on developing radical and political performance methods. In this way, Wang mixed distinctive features of both generations of Little Theatre, combining the movement's early avant-garde leanings with a second-generation interest in political theatre.

Wang's production was the most pointedly political contribution to the festival, although nearly all of the festival's productions were interested in exploring political anxiety in contemporary Taipei in particular. As Taiwan's political centre and cultural capital, Taipei is a city of opportunity for many Taiwanese, but rather than celebrate the city, these productions made performance choices which examined the darker side of its politics. None of the companies chose *safe* plays. Apart from Craig Quintero (who presented a new play based on an assemblage of Shakespearean texts), all directors chose to perform a Shakespeare work on the theme of the tragedy of civil war. Wang Rongyu chose *Romeo and Juliet*, Fu Hongzheng chose *King Lear* and Lu Boshen chose *Macbeth*. The Festival repertoire was striking and daring, but none more so than Wang, who not only decided to perform Shakespeare's most brutal play on civil war, but also opted (very much in the spirit of first generation Little Theatre) for one of the least well-known and least commercial of all Shakespeare plays.

Jonathan Dollimore argues that "a play by Shakespeare is related to the contexts of its production,"<sup>19</sup> and the same can be said of contemporary Shakespeare productions. The political backdrop to Shakespeare in Taipei helps contextualise these directorial choices. In 2003, there was a fierce debate between the two major political parties in Taiwan (KMT and DPP) over which Mandarin Chinese Romanisation system to adopt.<sup>20</sup> The DPP proposed a new spelling system to replace the old system – which was favoured by the KMT, used in Mainland China and largely employed around the world. But the real issue behind the debate was that the KMT was for the most part speaking for Mainlander Taiwanese and out of self-interest to protect the party's legitimacy in Taiwan, while the DPP represented local

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<sup>19</sup> Jonathan Dollimore, "Foreword to the First Edition: Cultural Materialism," in *Political Shakespeare*, ed. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), viii.

<sup>20</sup> For the debate, see Jiang Wenyu [江文瑜] and Huang Xuanfan [黃宣範], "Tongyong Pinyin Liyu Shijie Jiegui" [通用拼音利於世界接軌] (Tongyong Pinyin is Convenient for Communicating the World), *Liberty Times*, October 10, 2000. <http://abc.iis.sinica.edu.tw/tp/answertonine1.htm>. (accessed 15 March 2007).

Taiwanese and their interests. The central point of contention was really about the identity and relationship between Taiwanese and Mainland Chinese who were new to Taiwan; the KMT claimed Taiwan as Chinese while the DPP argued the Taiwanese were independent of Mainland China. The debate can be traced back to 2000, when the pro-independence DPP party's Chen Shui-bian [陳水扁] came to power, the first democratically elected president in Taiwan since the KMT took over in 1945. Tensions rose, as at any moment the situation could have potentially triggered a crisis or conflict in cross-strait relations. Though the DPP victory over the KMT represented the will of most Taiwanese supporters – who felt that Taiwan should stand as an independent country – there was a short time of panic in Taiwan after the elections because it was feared that any of Chen Shui-bian's radical comments concerning Taiwan's sovereignty and independence might immediately lead to war between Mainland China and Taiwan. In 2003, the cross-strait crisis became even more critical; every piece of legislation proposed in the Cabinet was related to the political tensions at that time.

In many regards, the Shakespeare productions presented at the Shakespeare in Taipei festival spoke in all earnestness to audiences at this politically acute moment. Leggatt argues that Shakespeare's tragedies all begin with an initial act of violation which leads to civil war. Arguably it was this sense of rupture or violation which inspired these companies to choose civil war tragedies as a way of responding to the cultural and political crisis of the age.<sup>21</sup> In *Romeo and Juliet*, Verona is a city divided by civil war between two noble families, the Capulets and Montagues. Romeo's kissing Juliet (1.5) is a violating act as he invades the boundary, and the denial of his own name (2.2) is a violation of his own identity. At the beginning of *Titus Andronicus*, Saturninus and Bassianus are fighting for the throne, and their fight might have turned into civil war if not for Marcus' arbitration. However, as feelings of revenge grow between Titus and Tamora-Saturninus, a potential civil war turns into national war when Titus sends Lucius to ask the Goths for help to invade Rome. In *Macbeth*, civil war is associated with treachery and murder when Duncan is betrayed – the first time by Thane of Cawdor, and the second time by Macbeth. In *King Lear*, civil war is already brewing when Lear decides to divide his kingdom (1.1). By looking to the past, these companies were able to address present-day political anxieties. Taiwan's recent history is full of anxiety over the island nation's political stability, when faced with the continual threat of invasion by a nearby dominant continent (much like the relationship between England and Europe in Shakespeare's time). *Titus Andronicus* is not only reminiscent of violations and

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<sup>21</sup> Leggatt chose seven of Shakespeare's tragedies: *Titus Andronicus*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Othello*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth*. Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Tragedies* (2006).

atrocities in Taiwan's modern history, but also reveals an act of violation in Taiwan's theatre movement. The play spoke directly and powerfully of contemporary violations in both Taiwanese politics and in Little Theatre itself. The next section will further detail the particular relevance and challenges of staging *Titus Andronicus* in Taiwan.

### 5.3 *Titus Andronicus* in Taiwan

*Titus Andronicus*, Shakespeare's first tragedy, is a political play brimming with excessively violent acts, including murder, rape, severed limbs, cannibalism and mutilation, all which seem designed to echo with political allusions to the Taiwanese audience. As in many Shakespeare plays, the human body is often used as a metaphor in politics to signify the state of a kingdom. The image of the body politic in *Titus Andronicus* is also used in many other tragedies – *Coriolanus*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth*. In *Coriolanus*, the kingdom is portrayed as a separated body part performing its own political functions: "The kingly crowned head, the vigilant eye, / The counsellor heart, the arm our soldier, / Our steed the leg, the tongue our trumpeter, / With other muniments and petty helps / In this our fabric, if that they –" (1.1.91-96). In *King Lear*, Lear imagines that his body is infected by his daughter whom he refers to as a disease: "But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter – / Or rather a disease that's in my flesh, / Which I must needs call mine: thou art a boil, / A plague-sore, or embossed carbuncle, / In my corrupted blood" (2.2.405-409). While Lear imagines that his body is tortured by disease, his kingdom is actually in a state of corruption caused by his two daughters, Goneril and Regan. The image of his diseased body turns out to be an appropriate metaphor for a plagued kingdom.

In *Macbeth*, when Lady Macbeth is ill and the doctor is called upon for a diagnosis, the state of Lady Macbeth's health signifies the precarious state of Macbeth's throne. Then, when Macbeth asks the doctor to cure her, it seems that he is also implicitly asking for advice to help ease the state of his kingdom: "Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased, / Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow, / Raze out the written troubles of the brain, / And with some sweet oblivious antidote / Cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff / Which weighs upon the heart?" (5.3.45-50). As in *Coriolanus*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth*, where the body is used as metaphor to refer to political dismemberment caused by civil turmoil and revolt, *Titus Andronicus* also begins with Lucius' request to mutilate the body of a prisoner of the Goths: "That we may hew his limbs, and on a pile / *Ad manes fratrum* sacrifice his flesh / Before this earthy prison of their bones" (1.1.97-9). Then, when Lucius has Titus' consent for his request, there is Lucius' act of mutilation offstage: "Away with him, and make a fire

straight, / And with our swords, upon a pile of wood / Let's hew his limbs till they be clean consumed" (1.1.127-9). This not only turns the play into a revenge tragedy (between Titus and Tamora) and a political battle (Titus and Lucius vs. Saturninus and Tamora), but also indicates the image of political mutilation suggested throughout the play – Rome is mutilated piece by piece, by its own hands and by the Goths.

The act of mutilation also reflects a transfer of political power, with the change in the parties causing a type of political mutilation. Titus lets Lucius mutilate Tamora's elder son when he believes that he has power to decide the next emperor. Tamora lets her two sons mutilate Lavinia after she marries the new emperor and has power back; then Titus mutilates Tamora's two sons and makes a meat pie out of them in order to show that he has again taken power back. The act of mutilation represents the fight for political power between Titus and Tamora.

This relationship between bodily and political mutilation created a strong resonance, in light of Taiwan's political history.<sup>22</sup> As we saw with *Kingdom of Desire*, contemporary Taiwanese Shakespeare performances are associated with the tumultuous politics of the time – namely, martial law that had lasted from Japanese colonial rule in 1945 to 1987. At first the Taiwanese people wholeheartedly welcomed the KMT's victory against Japan during World War II and their heroic return to power, but the Taiwanese could not have foretold their fate as a political victimisation, a cultural identity effectively dismembered under the KMT reign. Similarly, Titus, who has been away for years and finally returns glorious from the battlefield, knows nothing of his own people and current political situation. As Alan C. Dessen puts it, "He is a child in the ways of Rome, politically naïve...who has totally lost touch with current politics but rather lives by the old, traditional values (and hence appears to be an antique in the eyes of the 'new' Rome)."<sup>23</sup> The KMT was in the same situation as Titus because they knew nothing about Taiwan when they took it over after decades of Japanese rule. After all, Taiwan was ceded by China's former Qing Dynasty to Japan for 50 years (1895-1945). Hence, when the KMT first took power in Taiwan, conflict between the local Taiwanese and Mainland Chinese outsiders resulted in gory slaughter by KMT troops brought in from the Mainland (the 228 Massacre in 1947), and ensuing atrocities of vengeance that continued between them. After being defeated by the Communists and escaping to Taiwan in 1949, the KMT represented a political force of traditional and

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<sup>22</sup> For a detailed discussion on the political history here, see Tai Pao-tsun [戴寶村], *Jianming Taiwan Shi* [簡明台灣史] (The Concise History of Taiwan) (Nantou: Taiwan Historica [國史館台灣文獻館], 2007), 158-210.

<sup>23</sup> Alan C. Dessen, *Titus Andronicus* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 72.

conservative values from the Mainland China, when the Taiwanese people had anticipated and craved new, democratic changes after Japanese colonial rule. In Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, out of stubbornness Titus gives Lucius permission to mutilate Tamora's son; and it is his conservative decision to choose the elder Saturninus to be the new emperor and later to let Lucius bring the enemy (Goths) into Rome that cause the mutilation, destruction of his own nation. Similarly, in Taiwan the KMT was behind the slaughter and persecution of tens of thousands of innocent Taiwanese to assure its political power there, and it allowed hostilities to grow between Mainlanders and Taiwanese, effectively dismembering by splitting the national identity of Taiwan into two: Chinese and Taiwanese.

If, as Leggatt observes, *Titus Andronicus* is a political play that "centres on an act of violation,"<sup>24</sup> Wang's *Titus Andronicus* applied this concept of violation, in terms of identity and national space, to the status of Taiwanese politics at that time, and to the relationship between Mainland China and Taiwan. Perhaps the most violated body in the play is that of Lavinia, whose rape could also be interpreted as a violation with both gender and political implications. After Lavinia is raped by Tamora's sons, Demetrius and Chiron, she loses her tongue, her language and her identity. Leggatt argues that Lavinia has a double identity, "one named and one nameless."<sup>25</sup> This idea resonates strongly with Taiwan's historically split identity, one that is Chinese and the other (Taiwanese) that does not exist in the eyes of the Mainlanders' regime. The Taiwan consciousness issue arose with increasing cross-strait political tensions as the DPP came to power in 2000, and confrontation between Mainlanders and local Taiwanese was highlighted.

However, like Saturninus' new reign, the new DPP regime was unstable, indecisive and unreliable. Founded in 1986, the DPP party has always been representative of local Taiwanese, declaring that Taiwan is and is supposed to be an independent country. However, when the DPP took power, their standpoint became equivocal by necessity seen as inflammatory because any radical comments on that cross-strait relationship was feared to bring Taiwan closer to war with Mainland China. For a while, Taiwanese lived in fear of the possibility that Mainland China might attack Taiwan. The DPP eventually left office in 2008 following a spate of corruption scandals that dogged President Chen Shui-bian, and the KMT was restored to power.

However, *Titus* was staged in the middle of this period of political uncertainty and fears of invasion. This made it both an appropriate and extremely politically sensitive choice

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<sup>24</sup> Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Tragedies*, 1.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

of play. The violation of Lavinia's body, in particular the way she is deprived of language, would naturally suggest to the Taiwanese audience an uncomfortable allusion to the KMT's post-war attempts to suppress the Taiwanese language.

As we saw with *Henry IV*, its politics of language also cut to the heart of Taiwan's divided political identity. In Wang's version of *Titus Andronicus*, written language was presented as a political weapon in the contest between different Taiwanese histories. This helps to explain the intensity of the debate about pinyin systems, a contentious issue the production took head on in 2003. For Wang, *Titus Andronicus* was primarily an opportunity to confront the politics of language, as he made clear in his prologue:

[3 am. On the street in Taipei. The radio is playing a Taiwanese song.]  
Xiaoyin: Don't you know that I can't speak Taiwanese? It is such a shame. Don't you know that I can speak English, French, Japanese and a Taiwanese aboriginal language, but not the Taiwanese language? You have no idea that I am the only Tai-ke<sup>26</sup> in Taiwan who cannot speak Taiwanese. Let me tell you the distress of the people who cannot speak Taiwanese! ...the orphan of the Asians...the bastard [Xiaoyin starts to sing a song called "Can't Speak Taiwanese." ]<sup>27</sup>

At the time of Wang's production, language had become a vehicle for both political parties to declare their stance on the relationship with Mainland China. As Lavinia's rape represents the deprivation of power within a gender relationship, her loss of language and identity is also associated with her loss of power.<sup>28</sup> All but the most obtuse Taiwanese spectator would see the parallel between Lavinia and Taiwan's historical subjugations. One of this production's most powerful passages is in Act 2, when Demetrius and Chiron mock the mutilated Lavinia with these words: "So, now go tell, an if thy tongue can speak, / Who 'twas that cut thy tongue and ravished thee. / Write down thy mind, bewray thy meaning so, / An if thy stumps will let thee, play the scribe" (2.4.1-4). It was as if Wang wanted to say: whichever party holds power has the right to speak and mock the silence of the other – and to write history. Rather than take sides in this political struggle over language, Wang exposes the sickness at the heart of a politics which is constantly over-shadowed by an unresolved division over identity.

#### 5.4 Adapting *Titus Andronicus*

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<sup>26</sup> Tai-ke refers to the type of Taiwanese people who like to show off by only speaking Taiwanese, or to look down upon Taiwanese speakers as uncouth.

<sup>27</sup> Translations from Wang Jiaming's *Titus Andronicus* are my own if not otherwise noted.

<sup>28</sup> Four months after the KMT regained power from the DPP in 2008, the DPP's proposal for Tongyong Pinyin was dropped, with Hanyu Pinyin adopted as the standard system in Taiwan, starting 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2009.

As part of the second-generation of Little Theatre, Wang was freer to experiment in his *Titus Andronicus* than theatre companies operating under martial law, and this freedom manifested itself in Wang's exuberant theatricality, in the use of masks, music, body movement, puppetry and dance. For Wang's generation, having grown up under martial law, authority could now be challenged, either politically or culturally. The playwright's hegemonic position itself thus also became a target for attack, especially when the second-generation was obsessed with exploring the possibilities of the actors' body rather than the text. In terms of textual language, one of the most prominent characteristics of Little Theatre was the transition from drama-oriented to non-text-oriented (dramatic text to performance text) performance. By language, I mean the narrow sense of text, dialogue and narrative structure – the basic principles of traditional spoken drama. Anti-text resistance was triggered by the reaction of revolt and rebellion in society of that time. The hegemony of text was beginning to dissolve and the playwright's place was challenged and often replaced by the director, too. The text was relegated to the same level as other theatre elements, such as setting, props, lighting, actors and sound. Through subversion of the text, the performance itself becomes a text, too, or "performance text" which Barbara Hodgdon argues to be "an apparent oxymoron that freely acknowledges the perceived incompatibility between the (infinitely) flexible substate(s) of a Shakespearean play and the (relative) fixity of the term 'text.'"<sup>29</sup>

Wang broke the straight storyline of Shakespeare's original text into multi-narrative points of view. Recalling the device Akira Kurosawa used in his film *Rashomon*, Wang arranged four characters – Titus, Tamora, Lavinia and Aaron – and presented their viewpoint one by one during the first half of the performance. Apart from breaking with the original structure for creative purposes, Wang also cut out a large number of Western mythological and legendary allusions in order to make the text more accessible to the Taiwanese audience.

Still, the structure of Wang's adaptation closely follows Shakespeare's original text. The first half of Wang's adaptation is a rearrangement of Shakespeare's Act One to Act Three; the other half is selected from Acts Four and Five, but put in a much more coherent order. Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* has a linear narrative; Wang's *Titus* re-orders the narrative by letting characters present their own perspective of the story and repetitively

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<sup>29</sup> Barbara Hodgdon, *The End Crowns All: Closure and Contradiction in Shakespeare's History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 19. Also see Hodgdon's other articles. Barbara Hodgdon, "Katherina Bound; or, Play(K)ating the Strictures of Everyday Life." *PMLA* 107 (1992): 538-53; Barbara Hodgdon, "Looking for Mr. Shakespeare after 'The Revolution: Robert Lepage's Intercultural Dream Machine.'" In *Shakespeare, Theory, and Performance*, ed. James C. Bulman (London: Routledge, 1996), 68-91. For a discussion of Hodgdon's use of 'performance text,' see W. B. Worthen, *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 183-186.

reviews the story, one character at a time, during the play's first half. Wang divides Shakespeare's first three acts into four chapters: respectively, a chapter for Titus, Tamora, Lavinia and then Aaron.<sup>30</sup> In this way, it is left to the audience to decide who is telling the truth and who is to blame. Titus speaks first:

'Fate' is like the lines written in the palm  
Is the crossbreed of inborn and of acquired  
'History' instead only opens a door before one's eyes  
And this door is the way to the labyrinth  
...  
History, what kind of oracle you are giving me  
Or do you just fool around, only as dice in God's hand?

Everything happening in the play is a shock to Titus, from the death of his sons to the rape of his daughter. Wang had hoped to explain these events to the audience by blaming them on fate and history. Then, in the beginning of Tamora's chapter, she echoes Titus:

Tamora: 'Fate' is an addlebrained tour guide  
Often leads people to the deepest absurdity  
It took my eldest son to Heaven  
But then turns around, it guides to be the Queen of Rome  
'History' is a lawyer who justifies himself  
Fate needs history to defend the mess he has made  
Fate needs history to re-edit the problems he has committed  
Oh history, what on earth would you like us to see?  
Oh fate, is it the ironic humour of comedy or the everlasting immortality of tragedy  
you have written for us?

Through both Titus' and Tamora's definitions of fate and history, the director gives the audience the impression that "history and fate are like two sides of one coin, and all the appreciation is only a matter of heart."<sup>31</sup> It is also remarkable that this passage in Tamora's speech is a soliloquy, unlike Shakespeare's Tamora, who makes no soliloquy in the play at all. By now, it is rather evident that the issue is not a matter of who is telling the truth but a matter of who is the most wretched victim in this tragedy.

Then, the play flashes back to Lavinia's story in a similar way to Meguich in his production: "each scene was treated as a cinema shot...The 'editing' of these shots suggested

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<sup>30</sup> See the end of this chapter for a comparison of Wang's and Shakespeare's structures.

<sup>31</sup> Zhang Qiao-ming, "Shiou yeshi caooushi – Tamora yijiao gongzuo julu" [是偶,也是操偶師 – Tamora 一角工作紀錄] (Puppet and Puppeteer – The Daily Record of Performing Tamora in Titus) (MA thesis, Taipei National University of the Arts [國立台北藝術大學]), 36.

a series of variations on the first murder, in endless repetition.”<sup>32</sup> In order to emphasise the cruelty of Lavinia’s rape, Wang adds another scene showing Bassian and Lavinia’s romantic love, which was not in Shakespeare’s original text. Finally, in his section, Aaron speaks about being the villain of the play.

Even though rearranging the scenes appears at first to be a significant alteration, Wang cleverly includes every act and every scene in Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus*. Unlike Lee Kuo-hsiu’s *Shamlet*, which broke up the structure entirely and collaged Shakespeare’s text at will, Wang was, in his own way, still faithful to Shakespeare’s text, which he restructured but did not seek to parody. In *Titus Andronicus*, Shakespeare’s textual language is still there, but in an interpretation infused with references to Taiwan’s social and cultural experience.

### 5.5 Brechtian Influences

Wang’s *Titus Andronicus* created its own inter-cultural aesthetic by combining elements of traditional theatre, little theatre, avant-garde theatre, feminist theatre, political theatre and classical theatre. Above all, though, Wang was influenced by Brecht, and he turned to Brecht’s writings on the alienation effect to develop a Taiwanese Shakespeare that would underline *Titus Andronicus*’ political relevance for a post-martial law Taipei audience. In doing so, Wang was able to draw on a long-established Western tradition of Brechtian Shakespeare. This hybridisation was especially complex because Brecht himself drew upon aspects of both Elizabethan theatre and Chinese performance to develop a range of theatrical devices aimed at *defamiliarising* the audience and demystifying the nature of theatrical illusion. For example, Brecht wrote that Shakespeare’s theatre was “a theatre full of alienation effects,”<sup>33</sup> and that “traditional Chinese acting also knows the alienation effect, and applies it most subtly.”<sup>34</sup> Brecht argued that actors should draw attention to the artifice of theatre in order to break theatre’s spell and underline didactic messages about present-day social problems. Brecht did not necessarily see either Shakespeare or Chinese theatre as sharing his political position: in fact, he saw both as very much complicit with regimes in power. By employing aspects of Brecht with Taiwanese Shakespeare, Wang took this iconic Western avant-garde movement back to its roots in Chinese and Shakespeare performance, but in a way that was determined to exploit the radical potential of all three.

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<sup>32</sup> Goy-Banquet, “Titus resartus,” 52.

<sup>33</sup> Margot Heinemann, “How Brecht Read Shakespeare,” in *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism*, ed. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 232.

<sup>34</sup> John Willett, ed., *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic* (London: Methuen, 1978), 91.

Although *Titus* is, according to Harold Bloom, a proto-Brechtian play,<sup>35</sup> Wang substantially changed the text. In this way at least, Wang ignored Brecht's advice to respect the original text's structure. In Brecht's dialogue with Wekwerth, Brecht offers his opinion of adapting Shakespeare by using his *Coriolanus* production as example:

W. Can we amend Shakespeare?

B. I think we can amend Shakespeare if we can amend him. But we agreed to begin only by discussing changes of interpretation so as to prove the usefulness of our analytical method even without adding new text.

W. Could the First Citizen be Sicinius, the man the Senate has just appointed Tribune? He would then have been at the head of the revolt, and would hear of his appointment from Marcius's mouth.

B. That's a major intervention.

W. There wouldn't have to be any change in the text.

B. All the same. A character has a kind of specific weight in the story. Altering it might mean stimulating interest that would be impossible to satisfy later, and so on.<sup>36</sup>

Wang's *Titus Andronicus*, on the contrary, challenged Shakespeare's authority in an upstart way which echoed Wang's own attitude toward political authority, or indeed any kind of authority. In this sense, Wang rejected Brechtian didacticism, and instead used defamiliarisation devices to call attention to the poverty of all forms of authority. Through devices such as masks and puppetry, Wang hybridised theatre itself and in doing so attempted to reclaim the underlying Chinese origins of Brechtian theatre.<sup>37</sup>

Many Brechtian approaches to *Titus Andronicus* follow Gerald Freedman's 1967 example<sup>38</sup> to add a narrator who guides audience responses to the play. Wang also adds two narrators (Xiaoyin and the puppet Aunt Barbie<sup>39</sup>) to *walk* the audience through the play. Barbie is the hand-puppet narrator played by one of the actors. The director only uses the name "Barbie" for the puppet, not a real "Barbie doll." So it is just a normal puppet whose name is "Barbie" that is seen on stage. Xiaoyin, the other narrator, is the singer of the band in this production. Sometimes, narrators are observers offstage and at other times they join

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<sup>35</sup> Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (New York: Riverhead books, 1998), 79.

<sup>36</sup> In this dialogue, B is Brecht and W is W. Manfred Wekwerth. John Willett, ed., *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic* (London: Methuen, 1978), 259.

<sup>37</sup> Bertolt Brecht, "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting," in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. John Willett (London: Methuen, 2001), 91-99.

<sup>38</sup> For more discussion on Gerald Freedman's production, see Alan C. Dessen, *Titus Andronicus* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 24-50.

<sup>39</sup> In the 1960s, Taiwan was the first and biggest manufacturer of Barbie dolls in Southeast Asia. For 26 years, Barbie dolls were made in Taiwan. Hence, the use of a Barbie doll in this production not only implies that this production is made locally but also represents Taiwan's past economic glory, which corresponds to Titus' own glorious past. For more discussion on how the Barbie doll increased the growth of Taiwan's economy, see Zhang Qian-wei's article in *New Taiwan Magazine*: <http://www.newtaiwan.com.tw/bulletinview.jsp?bulletinid=84368> (accessed 10 April 2009).

the act by participating in Titus' revenge plan, for example, or acting as a time traveller to lead the audience into a journey through space and time, between Shakespeare's original text and Wang's adaptation, and between Rome and Taipei. In other words, the audience normally enters the play through the narrator's perspective, or indirectly through the perspective of director Wang himself. In terms of plot structure, although Wang keeps most of Shakespeare's original script, he reshuffles the text in his own interpretation of *Titus Andronicus*, to the audience *through* the narrators. Wang alters Shakespeare's text and rearranges the text into four sections: Titus, Tamora, Lavinia and Aaron (one section for each character). Wang chooses these four characters simply because at some point in this play they are all made victims of revenge: Titus loses his sons, Tamora loses her elder son, Lavinia is raped and mutilated and Aaron is killed because of his ethnicity. Even if the whole play is reshuffled in Wang's interpretation, the audience is supposed to keep an objective perspective while weighing each character's testimonies. However, sometimes the audience may only understand one single angle of the play through the narrators – through their interpretation – or through the subjective advocacy of the director.

Narrators have many identities within this production, audience being one of them. Taking Wang's prologue as example: the two narrators discuss Shakespeare's plays as if they are members of the offstage audience. Xiaoyin, one of the narrators, is a homeless character, who claims that he has heard of Shakespeare and his famous plays, like *Macbeth*, *King Lear* and *Romeo and Juliet*. However, he then confesses that he does not know who Titus is (the same question that puzzles most of the real audience):

Barbie: [*turns off the 'Shake Beer' music*]<sup>40</sup> So shall we talk about Shakespeare then? Let us talk about the beautiful Shakespeare.

Xiaoyin: No. I don't like the word 'beautiful.'

Barbie: What about Macbeth?

Xiaoyin: No. They can't even wash their hands off. No Macbeth.

Barbie: King Lear?

Xiaoyin: Nay, the daughter exposes her father's misdeed, and the father gives away the wrong prize. Don't wanna hear this one either.

Barbie: What about Romeo and Juliet? It has always been the young people's favourite.

Xiaoyin: No. A miserable love story where characters die selling drugs. I don't do drugs. Not that one.

Barbie: So Titus?

Xiaoyin: No...don't know that one. Who is he?

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<sup>40</sup> An English song sung by the narrator, Xiaoyin, who finishes drinking his beer as he brings up the subject of Shakespeare.

Barbie: Now, you don't know, eh. He is the one over there.<sup>41</sup>

Xiaoyin: He's already there?!

Barbie: He is a general from Rome, barely survived his battle.

Xiaoyin: He is handicapped.

Barbie: Alas. That is Titus' badge of honour for being loyal. If he could have predicted his own destiny, I assume that he would have rather died in battle.

Wang arranges the narrators to provide a brief introduction to Shakespeare's works for the audience because he understands that most Taiwanese either have not come across this play or maybe have only heard the name before. It is quite risky to put on a play that is unknown to most of the audience, but of course it is also an advantage because they have no previous productions to compare it with, leaving Wang free to be creative with his interpretation – and the role of the narrators in this production is to deliver that interpretation. Hence, another identity of a narrator is to serve as commentator who sometimes helps the audience understand the storyline or occasionally makes comments or criticises the plot and characters during the course of the production. For example, when the plot moves from the part of Titus to the part of Tamora, Xiaoyin interrupts and comments:

Xiaoyin: It is rather strange to watch this from Titus' memory.

Barbie: Well, she [Tamora] looks at the things from a different angle. This is another expectation.

Also, when Tamora is seen with Aaron by Lavinia and Bussian, Barbie comes out and asks to rewind the play and explain what has just happened for the audience. All of a sudden, the actors onstage rewind their movements. It is like watching a film – being free to stop or rewind or even fast forward the story – only the remote control is in the narrator's hand. The narrator sometimes also joins the play as a character in the production. Xiaoyin, for instance, is asked by Titus to send a message to Sarte (Saturninus) and sing a song for him as well. However, Xiaoyin, who plays the messenger for Titus, is hanged onstage by Sarte and never returns as a narrator. Xiaoyin packs his stuff and when leaving the stage asks Aunt Barbie, "Is this a dream?" Aunt Barbie answers: "Yes, and this is my dream now... So let me finish the rest of the story." The death of the narrator signifies that this production of *Titus Andronicus* is just another story told by narrators, another play on the stage with nothing being taken too seriously by the audience. For this reason, the narrators, who act like additional characters in the play, have their entrance and exit. As Aunt Barbie says:

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<sup>41</sup> Barbie points to Titus on stage.

It is hard to face the truest death  
The most illusional life is on the contrary enchanted  
He, is only a landloper of mine  
But only a minor walk-on character  
He has entrance to entertain you the audience  
Surely, he has his exeunt too to face the rule of this game  
Watch! Everyone! The story will never be halted because of death  
Death is but another character  
Thus, I have to ask you to continue playing your role as the audience  
And let me finish the story for you

This explains why Aunt Barbie also dies after her part of the story is finished – because the actor who plays Aunt Barbie takes the puppet off her hand and speaks to the audience to announce the end of the play.

Barbie: Like my long life, this long story ends here as well.  
The History and the Destiny will however continue dancing for a long time.  
*[The puppet dies. The puppeteer, Pei-Yu, exposes herself to the audience.]* Here, there will always be another performance in the National Experimental Theatre. And I assume that every audience will also have their own plan after leaving the theatre. Recently, there has been no wind, no rain and the weather is about 32 degrees centigrade. But it is quite cold indoors due to the air-conditioner. So do not forget to put on one more item of clothing when you go outside. *[Xiaoyin shows Pei-Yu the exit while the other two death messengers pass by.]*

The significance of a narrator's role, according to Brecht's alienation effect, is either to interrupt or interfere with the play so the audience can keep themselves at a distance and not empathise. Hence, during the course of *Titus*, the audience's consciousness is constantly interrupted, interfered with or even distracted by the narrators. Such interruptions and interference are common in Wang's production. For example, during the play's climax, Xiaoyin continuously interrupts the play and walks onto the stage to sing songs, with these songs habitually being completely irrelevant to the plot. All of these absurd and unreasonable behaviours by the narrators carry out Brecht's alienation effect by distancing the audience from throwing themselves into the plot too deeply, so they have the chance to think and digest the storyline from a more detached, impersonal perspective. The narrators help the audience break away from any empathy they may feel for the characters. Through the estrangement facilitated by Brechtian narrators, the sense of tragedy and shock of horrible gore in the original play is reduced to the extent where the audience's preconceived thoughts towards violence are replaced with an unusual feeling of cold but plain shock effect. The

audience faces the cold shock of violence that is different from what they normally would have seen or heard in real life.

The only drawback is that these modern parallels are *too real* for the audience and possibly bring too much sense of reality into the play. This is why Wang applies Brecht's alienation effect – to interweave reality and performance in the play, so the audience can keep its distance from the performance while they are situated within a series of real events around the world. For this reason, the actor who plays Aunt Barbie takes off her hand-puppet and speaks to the audience, announcing the end. The actor is revealing herself to the audience to remind the audience once again that this is nothing but a story performed onstage by actors. The narrator thus brings the audience back from Rome to Taipei and from ancient times to the year 2003. No matter what has happened in the play and no matter how violent and brutal it may be, the performance terminates at that moment.

In order to intensify the alienation effect, Wang also uses a cold and indifferent style of production to allow the audience to deal with emotions, the shock of violence and the tragic climax. As Wang has stated, he finds that the “indifference toward violence and the rationality of executing violence are far more gruesome and brutal than the violence itself.”<sup>42</sup> For this reason, there is no blood seen onstage and Wang does not even bother to use ribbons or anything as replacement. The blood is invisible, with the action of severing a hand, for instance, being invisible, too. Hence, in the scene when Aaron cuts Titus' hand, the actor who plays Aaron only pretends the action because he does not have a visible weapon such as a sword or dagger in his hand. The action of cutting off a hand, and the gore and blood are all left to the audience's imagination. Although the violence is only acted out, the actors still use a fake hand and severed heads but they are plain and white, without bloodstains. So when the messenger returns to Titus with one hand and two heads, the audience can clearly see they are fake and made from white stuffed cotton. By reducing the gory mutilation to the lowest degree of reality like this, Wang lets the theatrical aesthetics speak for the pretence of violence. On one hand, the violence that Wang presents is unreal, whilst on the other, *because* it is so unreal it creates a more shocking effect than actual violence, because this presentation of the violence is a surprise to the audience.

## 5.6 Masks and Puppets

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<sup>42</sup> Lai Yanxi [賴妍希], “Banyan Taitesi Jiazi Budaiban: Lavinia Yijia Xiangguan Shuoming” [扮演<泰特斯-夾子/布袋版> Lavinia 一角相關說明] (*Titus Andronicus: the Experience of acting Lavinia*) (MA Thesis, Taipei National University of the Arts [國立台北藝術大學], 2003), 22.

Masks and puppets are used in Wang's *Titus Andronicus* in a noticeably Brechtian way. Masks and puppets have long been used in local Taiwanese traditional operas such as Peking Opera (make-up masks) and Puppet Play (hand puppets) to distance the audience from the performance. As Gerald Freedman notes, "the choice of music, mask and chorus seemed inevitable ... to make the violence, gore and horror of this play more meaningful and emotional to a contemporary audience."<sup>43</sup> Wang employs devices such as masks, chorus (the narrator, Xiaoyin, often jumps onstage to sing), break-dance (actors' puppet-like movements) and costumes to help the audience deal with violence in this play. Wang further uses differently coloured costumes to represent each character's personality, a practice of Chinese theatre. For instance, Wang uses white for Titus and his family, red for Tamora and her sons, and black for Aaron. The colours are also emotive specifically for the ethnic Chinese audience: white represents Titus' glory, his pure patriotic honour and innocence. Red represents Tamora's anger and revenge. Black signifies Aaron's lack of moral consciousness (associated with a Mandarin phrase "black heart" that refers to people who are heartless and cold-blooded). In Shakespeare's original play, there is no excuse given for Aaron's villainous mind; however, in Wang's production, he is given the opportunity to deliver his defence, with the character portrayed more like the character of Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*, who also defends his immoral act as revenge towards the people who discriminated against his colour and ethnicity: "If you wrong us, shall we not revenge? (3.1.45)." The dialectic speech of Aaron is expanded as equally as other characters Titus, Tamora and Lavinia. Aaron speaks out about his motive and defends his acts:

Xiaoyin: That Aaron must be a bad guy!  
 Barbie: Mm, let us hear what he has to say about himself from his side.  
 Aaron: Who says one needs a motive to do bad things  
 Who says one needs a motive to kill a person  
 ...  
 Who classifies the black colour to the slaves  
 Please tell me why.  
 Is it because that I don't have hands, or feet or eyes?  
 Who classifies the black colour to the look of scorn  
 Please tell me why.  
 Is it because the white colour couldn't stand out without the backdrop of the black colour  
 Humph! Why would I still need a motive for my vengeance  
 Well, aren't these all in my skin

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<sup>43</sup> Gerald Freedman, "Introduction," in *Titus Andronicus*, ed. The Folio Society (London: The Folio Society, 1970), 3.

Wang has Aaron explain his behaviour to the audience and lets them judge Aaron's actions for themselves. Again, in order to avoid the audience being drawn too deeply into Aaron's emotional appeal – or any character's emotions for that matter – Wang uses mask and puppet-like movement as forms of the alienation effect.

Wang asks all his actors to wear a proper white mask, to make them look more like puppets; they may even become one, as these actors may turn into puppet-like actors with break-dance-like movements. Another function of the masks is that these actors' facial expressions are hidden so the characters' emotions are unseen by the audience and thus do not influence their judgement. As Lai Yanxi explains in her thesis, masks are used for aesthetic concerns (integral with puppet-like costumes and movements) and since the distance between Shakespeare and audience is already distant enough, the use of masks widens that distance even more. In a way, such a determined use of the alienation effect is also a means to more deeply involve the audience in the performance itself.<sup>44</sup> Because of the distance created between actors and audience, the audience is able to pay more attention to the text and production itself, not being distracted by the actors' emotions under the mask. For the audience, isolating themselves from the actors through the use of masks is an extremely new theatrical experience for them.

Puppet-like movement is also one of Wang's strategies to further enhance the alienation effect, because the use of puppets clearly reinforces that everything onstage is not reality and just a play. Wang adds a wedding scene for Sarte and Tamora, and in it each actor dances like a puppet in a mechanical break-dance motion. Not only in this wedding scene but during the entire production, the actors move and walk like puppets as well. The audience might find it funny and bizarre, but these puppet-like movements are intended to constantly remind them that they are just puppets on a stage and characters in the play, so that it will not be easy to get carried away by what is happening in front of them.

Besides the puppet-like actors and puppet narrator Barbie, Wang also uses hand puppets to reconstruct the dreadful scene of Lavinia's rape and mutilation that Shakespeare only tells through language. This scene is staged through a puppet play within the play and, as in Shakespeare's version delivered by Tamora and her two sons when Tamora goes to Titus and pretends to be the Goddess of Revenge and her sons to be *Killer* and *Rapist*.<sup>45</sup> Although in Shakespeare's text the language of this scene is gory, Wang uses hand puppets,

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<sup>44</sup> Lai, "Banyan Taitesi Jiazi Budaiban," 26.

<sup>45</sup> There are a lot of English words mixed in Wang's production. Wang uses the character's original English names in the production such as Sarte, Tamora, Aaron, Bussian, Lucius, etc. Hence, Killer and Rape are originally from Wang's script. They are not my translation.

making it less disturbing for the audience. During Tamora's and her sons' performance (Dick and Dio), they even undo the severed hand of Lavinia (puppet) to satirise Titus being too involved in their show:

Titus: Tear the devil of this Killer and Rape into pieces.

Dio: Mom! We are recognised by him again.

Tamora: Good General Titus, you got yourself too involved in this play again.

*[puts back the severed hand of puppet Lavinia]*

This is but just a stage play.

Besides, there are things far much crueller than this on the world stage.

Titus: I am terribly sorry that I am out of control again. Sorry!

Tamora: See! He even believes in puppets.

Dick: He is absolutely insane.

Reconstructing the scene of Lavinia's rape and mutilation is supposed to be dreadful, but using puppets seems to reduce the level of gore. Another function of Wang choosing to use puppets in this scene is perhaps an alienation effect that puppets could bring into the performance so the audience will not be drawn into this violent act too deeply, and would stay conscious about it. What Tamora says to Titus (he even believes in puppets) is in a way to remind the audience to try to keep an objective and clear mind, as Titus does, even if he pretends to be mad.

The image of puppets not only integrates with the masks, but also blurs the line between reality (people) and performance (puppet). To complement this strategy, the use of masks also offers an immediate transfer between different identities,<sup>46</sup> suggesting that the puppets with masks are just instruments used in the production and could be any character in the play, and that anyone could be behind the mask in real life. The puppets are unreal but intertwined with real actors behind the masks, which together create a fictional but also vivid world of violence. In order to stress that these puppets are just a medium to present the story and not real, Wang directs the actors to lie motionlessly in a scattered position onstage when the narrator announces to the audience that there will be a 10-minute intermission. The narrator, Xiaoyin, even goes up to the stage to examine each actor (puppet) to see where they were made, finding out the main characters' puppets were all made in the third world. Xiaoyin comments that puppets are used to take the audience away from the play, but he also suggests to the audience that these manufactured puppets are just tools to present the story in

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<sup>46</sup> The use of a mask also solves the actor shortage problem and reduces costs because there are many actors who can play more than one role or even cross-dress in Wang's production.

this particular production. Shi Li questioned the relationship between character/actor and director/playwright in his review:

Does the actor control the character or the other way round? Is it Shakespeare who controls the director or is it the director who has controlled Shakespeare? Or is it people who control the world or the people controlled by the world?<sup>47</sup>

Wang's use of puppets corresponds to his understanding of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*: that is, everything that happens to Titus comes down to his own destiny. If a director is manipulated and limited by the playwright's text, Titus himself is also like a puppet, manipulated by his destiny. Wang seems to be implying that in the real world, we – and everyone including the director, the actor and audience – are also akin to manipulate puppets. In terms of politics, we are all like Titus, being manipulated by the politician whoever holds governmental power. And Wang's use of puppets and masks in the way of a Brechtian alienation effect was to remind the audience that: a) it is just a play they are watching and at the same time, b) they should reflect on their own circumstance with critical minds.

### **5.7 *Titus Andronicus* and Violence**

In order to help the audience cope with the brutal violence in this production, Wang located it in a liminal zone between comedy and tragedy, adding comedy to reduce our sense of horror and tragedy. Unlike *Shamlet*'s comical tragedy, or tragic-comedy, Wang's *Titus Andronicus* is essentially more of a black comedy. For example, when the nurse carries Aaron's son to deliver Tamora's message, she puts him in a shopping basket. This scene is supposed to be very shocking to the audience because Tamora asks Aaron to kill their own son; but instead, Aaron's condemnation of the nurse's behaviour – putting his only son in a cheap shopping basket – illicit audience laughter: "You bitch. Black is also the colour that God chose with attentive care. How come white is carried so preciously with love, while black is carried so low-priced." Likewise, Titus' hand and his sons' two heads are also carried by the messenger in a shopping trolley. Another shocking scene-turned-comedic moment is when Titus reveals the truth – the pie he has is made from Dick's and Dio's meat, with Lucius telling Titus: "Dad, if you are going to make another human meat pie, next time please let me know before I eat it." After going through the feast (cannibalism and everyone killing each other), the

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<sup>47</sup> Shi Li [施立], "Yichang Geren Juchang Meixue Lixiang De Shijian?!" [一場個人劇場美學理想的實踐?評莎士比亞的姊妹們的劇團<泰特斯夾子/布袋版>] (An Application of a Personal Theatrical Aesthetics Ideal: Review of *Titus Andronicus* by Shakespeare's Wild Sisters Group) *Performing Arts Reviews* [表演藝術雜誌網路雜誌劇評] 125 (9 May 2003), <http://www.paol.ntch.edu.tw/e-mag-content.asp?id=1250651>.

audience may still be in shock trying to cope with what has just happened onstage, but Lucius' words dispel that tension. There are many similar scenes like this in Wang's production. For example, Dick and Dio discuss in detail about how to cook a good beef tongue stew (how long does it take to cook, what ingredients and procedure are needed, and the different ways of cooking beef tongue stew (Roman and French), all after they have raped Lavinia and cut out her tongue. Wang deliberately sets out to manipulate audience's response to the rape so that they will have to reflect on their own attitude toward rape and death. Lastly, the nurse's death scene is supposed to be sad because Aaron kills her to silence her, but instead the nurse is not totally dead and keeps talking until Aaron stabs her for the third time. When stabbed the first time, the nurse cries "Oh-yi, Oh-yi." Aaron's comments about the nurse's cry make the audience laugh instead: "I am so embarrassed for you that it takes you so long to die." After hearing this, the nurse rises from the floor and complains to the audience about why she is so unfortunate, leading Aaron to stab her again to make sure she is dead. Aaron tells Dick and Dio that the nurse must be killed in case she tells tales and allows the secret to be uncovered. Then to the audience's surprise, the nurse again rises from the floor and promises that she will not tell anyone. This time, Aaron, Dick and Dio all stab the nurse together,<sup>48</sup> with the nurse finally dying.

Wang replaced the arrow scene (4.3) with a modern press conference. In Wang's production, the press conference is held for characters to clarify their deeds and for the reporters to raise questions and clear up any misunderstanding or ambiguous incidents in the play on behalf of the audience members present, such as the truth about Quintus' and Martius' death, Titus' madness, the reason for Lucius' exile, the rumour about the Goths' attack and Tamora's personal, secret life. Taking advantage of Titus' arrow protest for his injustice in the original text, Wang also uses this setting to criticise and attack the current social, political and educational questions of the time in Taiwan. At the gathering, Tamora is questioned by one of the reporters, who says that her sons have been seen with nine girls in a motel in just one week. This question raises concern about Taiwanese teenagers today, about their sexual desire and how they are exposed to lots of gossip on TV about motel sex; at the same time they explain their desire to rape Lavinia in the play. Tamora denies the accusation of her sons being seen with the prostitutes and by avoiding this sensitive topic, she turns to criticise current educational reform in Taiwan because "most teenagers in Taiwan are far too busy attending different cram schools after their normal schools" to deal with the demanding

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<sup>48</sup> Still, there is no dagger or sword in this scene, so the action of stabbing is feigned.

standards of the multi-entrance exam in current Taiwan education system. Then, one of the reporters mentions that according to public opinion polls, Lucius has more support than Sarte. This is a jab at the way polls are constantly used in today's Taiwan newspapers and magazines to show the level of support for politicians and celebrities. Sometimes the abuse of public opinion polls can mislead and negatively affect public opinion. Wang uses this point in his production to criticise the Taiwan public's blindness because the governing ability of the ruling party has often been questioned when they lose their support in these public opinion polls.

Wang also includes other worldly concerns, such as the US-Iraq War and the FIFA World Cup to draw parallels between violence in our time and at the time of *Titus Andronicus*. For instance, when Tamora comes to Titus to ask him to stop Lucius' and the Goths' warring invasion, she introduces herself to Titus as the Goddess of Revenge:

Tamora: If there is anyone in the world who knows  
Every piece of hatred either profound, moderate or invisible  
That will be me, the Goddess of Revenge  
No matter it is for the justice, or for the petrol  
No matter it is for the love, or for the football  
In order to gain your trust, even though this is cruel to you  
We are going to review what happened in the crime scene that day

Tamora and her sons (Rape and Killer) then replay the scene to show Titus how Lavinia is raped and mutilated, through a puppet play within a play. Wang uses this passage to indicate to the audience that the violence of revenge is everywhere in the modern world. Even Aaron in the production has something to say in defence of his vengeance, as he is portrayed as a villain in this US-Iraq war:

Aaron: I can't compete with your sacred brutality  
Isn't it you who creates this vicious image for me  
.....  
The weapon in your home is to keep peace and justice  
While in my home, it is accused of producing chaos and destroying the order  
You lose a soldier, and then you go to the press to mourn for him/her  
We lose a bunch of people, and they say we deserve it.

Wang's production reminded his audiences that the violence in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* can and does happen anywhere in the world, and can occur at any time, even in modern-day Taiwan.

## 5.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, an analysis of Wang Jiaming's *Titus Andronicus* revisits the main theme of power, which is the unifying thread running through all the productions previously discussed in this thesis. Wang's production not only demonstrates a hybrid of Western and Eastern theatre, but also identifies the act of violation as symbolic of Taiwan's political context at the time. In the first part of this chapter, I discussed how Wang Jiaming employed Brecht's alienation effect to reflect a cultural exchange with Chinese Peking Opera theatre, synthesising theatrical elements employed previously such as masks, puppetry, parody and musical. Then, I discussed the play's textual relevance in post-millennial Taiwan in which Wang's mutilation of Shakespeare's text also posed a challenge of textual authenticity (examined in the *Shamlet* chapter). Politically, Wang's production reflected conflict at the time between the two main political parties in Taiwan, manifested in the production as the struggle between Titus and Tamora. Then, linguistic identity was addressed through Lavinia's mutilation, by which she also loses her identity, another important issue of the day in Taiwan. The issue of violated gender played itself through Lavinia's character, as she was cast as a *shrewish* character and ultimately rendered powerless in a patriarchal society, like Hao Lina in Liang Chi-min's *Kiss Me Nana* – both Lavinia and Hao Lina represent resistance by the minority against a patriarchal hegemony. All productions resonated with Taiwanese audiences because they have the underlying themes of resistance to some form of authority, and dismemberment, in some sense of the word, whether through oppression, loss of identity or language, or physical mutilation.

**Structure of Wang's *Titus Andronicus***

Part 1		
	Wang's scene	Shakespeare's scene
Prologue (narrator)	cannot speak Taiwanese	X
	Shake Beer	X
Act 1 Titus	Titus's memory	X
	Election (with narrator)	1.1
	Return	1.1
	Elect Saturninus	1.1
	Betray and escape	1.1
	Reversal	1.1
	comprise	1.1
	[Wedding] narrator	X
	Wedding (with narrator)	X
	Hunting	2.2
	Two sons were caught	2.3
	Intercession	3.1
	Down in the dumps (Lavinia)	3.1
	Cutting hands (narrator) conversation	3.1 X
Act 2 Tamora	Fate / history	X
	Gift	X
	Death of elder son	1.1
	Love of Saturninus	1.1
	Triple conversation (Tamora, Aaron, Saturninus)	X
	Desire soliloquy	X
	(narrator) conversation	X
	Forest love	2.3
	Humiliate	2.3
	Play back (narrator)	X
Act 3 Lavinia	Retort	2.3
	Awake	1.1
	Date	X
	Question	1.1
	Burial of Mutius	X
	Party (with narrator)	X
	Beauty	X
	Finish	2.4
wave	X	
	Motivation of jealousy	X

Act 4 Aaron	(with narrator)	
	Flower date	X
	Forest love	2.3
	Running 1	X
	Plan for Lavinia	2.1
	Running 2	X
	Trick	2.3
	Running 3	X
	Cutting hands	3.1
Running 4	X	
Act 5 Titus	Titus collapse	3.1
Ending of first half	narrator	X
Part 2		
	Wang's scene	Shakespeare's scene
Opening	narrator	X
Act 6 Life pieces	1-5	3.2
	6 (with narrator)	X
	7-9	4.1
	Aaron's son	4.2
Act 7 People's voice / living	Narrator 1	X
	Press conference	4.3
	messenger	4.3
	chatting	X
	Narrator 2	4.4
	Tamora's plan	4.4
	Death of messenger	X
Act 8	Exeunt of one narrator	X
	The other narrator	X
	Play within a play	X
	Aaron was caught I	5.1
	Death of rapists	5.2
	Aaron was caught II	5.1
Act 9 Dinner	Seating	5.3
	Eat	5.3
	Entertainment	5.3
	death	5.3
Ending Act 10	Lucius	5.3
	Playing mud	X
	Exeunt of the other narrator	X

## Conclusion

On the night of June 1<sup>st</sup> 2007, Lu Boshen's [呂柏伸] *Sonata of the Witches – The Macbeth Verses* [女巫奏鳴曲 - 馬克白詩篇] was staged at the Tainan Human Theatre Factory [台南人戲工場] in southern Taiwan. The production, performed entirely in hoklo, or Taiwanese, was a revival of Lu's previous *Macbeth* production from the 2003 Taipei Shakespeare Festival. Since 1987 when Lu launched Tainan Jen Theatre [台南人劇場, Tainan people's theatre], he has been experimenting with performing Western texts in Taiwanese; his repertoire includes *Antigone* (2001), *Macbeth* (2003), *Endgame* (2004), *Romeo and Juliet* (2004), *Hamlet* (2005), *Macbeth* (2007) and *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (2009).

Lu describes Shakespeare's plays as "like Greek tragedies" because they are all plays to be listened to, just as much as Chinese operas were traditionally, with the audience focusing on listening to the play rather than watching a spectacle.<sup>1</sup> For this reason, Lu hoped to provide aural theatre with an auditory experience of the literary Taiwanese language. Lu's *Sonata of the Witches – The Macbeth Verses* was translated into Taiwanese by Zhou Dingbang [周定邦], primarily from Lu Jianzhong's [呂健忠] Mandarin translation of *Macbeth*. Nonetheless, although Zhou's *Macbeth* was in keeping with the musical rhythm of literary Taiwanese while closely following Shakespeare's blank verse, it proved to be a rather exhausting challenge for the Taiwanese audience. In pre-show talk, in response to an audience complaint about the actors' articulation of Taiwanese, Lu answered that it was the audience who should be responsible if they have difficulty understanding Taiwanese, and that it had nothing to do with actors' Taiwanese diction.<sup>2</sup> In fact, most Taiwanese (myself included) grew up listening to Puppet Play broadcasts and have no problem understanding Taiwanese productions on the radio. But I also found Lu's production confusing, inarticulate and hard to catch up with

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<sup>1</sup> Ji Huiling [紀慧玲], "Makebai Jiang Taiyu/Gudian Youya Gaodengji: Tainanren Jutuan Lijian Shaju Wenzhi Fanfu Yixiang Yu Yinyun Zhimei," [馬克白講台語/古典優雅高等級:台南人劇團力薦莎劇文字繁複意象與音韻之美] (Macbeth Speaking Taiwanese: The Recommendation of Shakespeare's Subtle Texts and Beautiful Verse by Tainan Jen Theatre) *Min Sheng Daily* [民生報], May 22, 2003, A12.

<sup>2</sup> Liao Yu-ju [廖玉如], "Nvwu Yu Makebai Zhizheng-Shaju Yuandian Yu Lv Boshen <Nvwu Zoumingqu-Makebaishipian> Yinshen De Meixue Sikao," [女巫與馬克白之爭-莎劇原典與呂柏伸<女巫奏鳴曲-馬克白詩篇>引伸的美學思考] (The Battle Between the Witches and Macbeth – The Extended Aesthetics Study of Macbeth and Lu Bo-Shen's Sonata of the Witches – The Macbeth Verses) *Journal of Chinese Literature of National Cheng Kung University* [成大中文學報] 21 (July 2008): 189.

understanding most of the speeches. The main problem was the Taiwanese audience was unaccustomed to listening to a production with such literary Taiwanese; this also proved a challenge in Huang Wushan's Taiwanese-language *Henry IV* Puppet Play production (discussed in Chapter Two).

The Taiwanese language is closer to quotidian speech, so when Shakespeare plays are translated into Taiwanese it has in fact already been *filtered* through a double translation. In both Lu's and Huang's cases, they sought to translate the Mandarin version of Shakespeare's works first and then retranslate, again, into Taiwanese. This translation process also epitomises the nature of *Taiwanese Shakespeare*, as Shakespeare performance in contemporary Taiwan for the past three decades has reflected not only a strong influence of Westernisation but also a potential hybridity with Sinification, or Chinese-ification.

Most of Lu's productions were performed in only two cities, Taipei and Tainan, unlike most other theatre companies (Contemporary Legend Theatre, Ping Fong Acting Troupe and The Godot Theatre Company, cases examined in this thesis) that have toured major cities around Taiwan (such as Taipei, Taichung, Tainan and Kaohsiung) and abroad. Significantly, Tainan is the hometown of former Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian (DPP, 2000-2008) and where most Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) supporters are located. The Taipei area (northern Taiwan) is where KMT political power has been centralised and where most Mainlander veterans and refugees re-located in the past; in contrast, Tainan (southern Taiwan) is regarded as a concentration and centre of Taiwanese people who have been less influenced by the KMT's cultural assimilation policy. Hence, the difference between North and South Taiwan is strongly influenced not only by political party but also ethnicity and language. Granted, Lu's Tainan Jen Theatre is not the only theatre company in Taiwan performing in Taiwanese – there are other local Taiwanese operatic theatres – but being the only modern example of Little Theatre performing in Taiwanese in Tainan City necessarily has political implications.

In terms of adaptation, unlike Wu Hsing-kuo's version of *Macbeth* (*Kingdom of Desire*), Lu deleted half of Shakespeare's text and simplified the usurpation plot into a treatment of a power struggle between men and women. As the title *Sonata of the Witches – The Macbeth Verses* suggests, Lu mainly highlighted the relationship between

Macbeth and the witches, and emphasised the roles of the three witches in Macbeth's decisions by plot changes and simply putting the witches before Macbeth in the title. By comparison, in Lu's production there were only two actors and three actresses. The role of Lady Macbeth was performed in turn by one of the three witches, which intensifies the effect of the overwhelming manipulation of the three witches of Macbeth's actions in the production. As Fu Yuhui argues, the spirit of a political standard and search for moral order in *Macbeth* was transformed into a struggle between women and men in Lu's *Sonata of the Witches – The Macbeth Verses*,<sup>3</sup> with Lu employing stilts and light shadows to symbolise the changes and transfer of power between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. When Lady Macbeth is in control and dominating Macbeth's movement in the plan to murder Duncan, she takes the stilt from Macbeth, signifying her take-over of power in the relationship. Further, the shadow of Lady Macbeth swells in a threatening gesture, whereas the shadow of Macbeth shrinks in contrast.

As Lu's *Sonata of the Witches – The Macbeth Verses* premiered at the 2003 Festival of Shakespeare in Taipei, Lu's production – as well as Wang Jiaming's *Titus Andronicus* – addresses the same concern in a real-life fight over selecting the written language system for Taiwan. The stilts used in Lu's production represent the power of language because it becomes a symbol of power; whoever holds the stilt possesses control and power. Moreover, competition between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth plays just like the power struggle at the time between Taiwan's two major political parties (KMT and DPP). The negotiation of language in these works seems to conclude that whichever party is in power can design, decide and impose which language the Taiwanese people are going to speak and write.

As Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin state, “‘Shakespeare’ is a political issue,”<sup>4</sup> Shakespeare in contemporary Taiwan is likewise political. At some level, the issues of power, conflict, subversion, authority and social order that are problematical in Shakespeare's plays all resonate within the context of Taiwan's contemporary political history. Adaptations of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *Henry IV* disclose in detail how the

<sup>3</sup> Fu Yuhui [傅裕惠], “Zhezhen De Shi Shashibiya?! Tan Shashibiya Zai Taibei Yishujie,” [這真的是莎士比亞?! 談莎士比亞在台北藝術節] (Is this really Shakespeare?! Talking about the Festival of Shakespeare in Taipei) *Performing Arts Review* (May 2003): 43.

<sup>4</sup> Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin, “Introduction,” in *Post-colonial Shakespeare*, ed. Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin (London: Routledge, 1998), 19.

KMT's political history in Taiwan was present in Wu's and Huang's productions. The KMT's military absolutism was demonstrated in the politicisation of two competing traditional cultural forms – Peking Opera and Puppet Play – with Peking Opera protected and made the national opera in Taiwan, and Puppet Play suppressed along with other local Taiwanese traditional operas. Under KMT rule, freedom of speech in local operatic theatre was restricted and co-opted for propaganda purposes under the KMT's Anti-Communist policy, and to claim the legitimacy of its regime – both in Mainland China and Taiwan. The rigidly traditional nature of Peking Opera represented the KMT's unchallengeable hegemony in Taiwan. Nevertheless, by bringing Shakespeare into Peking Opera theatre, directors like Wu not only indigenised Shakespeare but also modernised Peking Opera. Wu's reformation of Peking Opera conventions in his *Kingdom of Desire* (1986) symbolised political resistance to the KMT's political absolutism under martial law (implemented between 1949 and 1987, the longest instance of martial law in history). As parallel to Wu's production, Huang Wushan's *Henry IV* (2002) depicted the darker side of history using elements of local Puppet Play – showing the Taiwanese people and language treated as inferior under the KMT's Chinese cultural assimilation policy. KMT 'colonisation' imposed a Chinese identity upon the Taiwanese people, entirely eliding their own local identity as Taiwanese. When Mandarin was made the official language in Taiwan and Peking Opera the national opera, the result was a suppression of using Taiwanese language in public and forcing the closure of many local, traditional operas. This overwhelming dominance over the identity of Taiwanese people was hinted at through strategies such as the missing map in Huang Wushan's *Henry IV*. In other words, in order to reveal Taiwan's true identity, one would have to peel off the imposed layer of Chineseness first.

As parallel to the KMT's political hegemony, the challenge posed to Shakespeare's cultural authority in these adaptations is evident in the way that Lee Kuo-hsiu establishes his directorial authority over the playwright's in his *Shamlet* (1992), by subverting Shakespeare's text as a form of cultural resistance. Lee has denied his textual connection to *Hamlet*, claiming to use Shakespeare merely as pretext, an excuse for his play-within-a-play-within-a-play. *Shamlet* and *Hamlet* can be compared to the relationship between Taiwanese culture and Chinese culture, where *Hamlet* represents the

authority of a canonical text, and *Shamlet* is seen as an inferior adaptation. Chinese artistic cultures were protected and established by the KMT as superior forms of cultural heritage in Taiwan, whereas local Taiwanese cultures were treated as inferior. After all, Taiwanese culture has been largely influenced, adopted and adapted by Chinese culture, making the relationship between both cultures almost inseparable. Lee used *Shamlet* to explore the nature of authority in contemporary Taiwan in a way which not only deconstructed cultural authority, but also sent up his own theatrical authority. Staged only four years after martial law was lifted, *Shamlet* revealed the depths of disillusionment with all forms of authority, all attempts to impose identity either on a society or onto the audience.

The question of gender politics as a challenge to authority in contemporary Taiwan emerges through the study of Liang Chi-min's production, *Kiss Me Nana* (1997), and the Taiwanese counterpart of Katherina, Hao Lina. In the process of indigenising Shakespeare in Taiwan, both the Elizabethan playwright and the KMT had come to represent a male patriarchal hegemony, where the director is subordinate to playwright – just as the Taiwanese are typed as inferior to the Chinese. Like Shakespeare's Katherina, Hao Lina is tamed to be silent and submissive to male dominance, embodying the vulnerability of women as they are turned into a minority group. This same theme of vulnerability runs through other chapters, both in politics and in theatre; or for example, how the Taiwanese language and culture were muted under Chinese assimilation policies. As a result, directors have sought to use Western texts to strengthen Taiwan theatre forms and often speak for themselves and the Taiwanese, through Shakespeare's tongue, as it were. Whereas Lee Kuo-hsiu's subversion of text signifies the societal undercurrents of cultural resistance, Lina, who represents the independent, modern Taiwanese woman, resists the constraints of male hegemony by confronting, challenging, and even overturning some aspects of patriarchal authority.

All topics discussed in previous chapters – politics, gender, language and authority – represent areas that have undergone major upheavals in a historical and political context, and help provide a focal point to explain why Shakespeare adaptations have resonated so strongly with audiences at the time. The clash of identities in Taiwan – between Taiwanese-speaking Taiwanese and Mandarin-speaking Mainlanders – has been

a burning issue throughout the island for a century or more. For instance, in Wang's production Lavinia is portrayed as a scolding character much like Katherina; when her tongue is cut out she loses both her language and identity – that is her punishment for her shrewish character. Lavinia's mutilation reflects Taiwan's past history of language and identity suppression in favour of an imposed Chinese language, culture and identity. Both the KMT and Chinese culture represent a dominant patriarchy where local Taiwanese are rendered into the vulnerable minority group. While Lee Kuo-hsiu challenges Shakespeare's textual authenticity, Wang Jiaming mutilates Shakespeare's text in his *Titus Andronicus*, perhaps representing a resistance to both cultural and political authority. Language becomes the symbol of political power and the means by which power is acquired, as in Lu's *Sonata of the Witches – The Macbeth Verses*.

Wang's production also tackles the conflicts of political identity in Taiwan. Understanding the political context of the times thus becomes key; for example, the DPP's challenge to KMT power in 2000 when it proposed a new spelling system to represent Taiwan (Tongyong Pinyin) to replace the KMT's old system (Chinese Zhuyin pinyin). Language, in many regards, became an instrument for both political parties to re-establish and reaffirm their power and legitimacy.

In conclusion, Shakespeare performances in contemporary Taiwan are not only modern interpretations applying a localised political relevance to Shakespeare's text but also display a lively diversity of different local cultural forms, such as Peking Opera (Wu Hsing-kuo's *Kingdom of Deisre*), Puppet Play (Huang Wushan's *Henry IV*), Spoken Drama (Lee Kuo-hsiu's *Shamlet*), Musicals (Liang Chi-min's *Kiss Me Nana*) and Little Theatre (Wang Jiaming's *Titus Andronicus*), demonstrating a potential for the hybridity of all these influences. Due to its colonial past, the Taiwan of today has become a multicultural country in which Shakespeare performances are flourishing and as diverse as other such productions in Asia, for instance in Japan and China. Throughout this study, I have aimed to bring to light the complicated resonances between staging of Shakespeare's plays and the complexities of contemporary Taiwanese history. The theatre practitioners and the audiences lived through and were shaped by a dynamic period in Taiwan's history which stretched from the bloody events of the late 1940s to the end of martial law in the 1980s. The crux of this study shows how contemporary Taiwan

has dealt with this legacy and used a Western dramatist as a much-needed vehicle for exploring questions of authority, language and identity in a country still deeply overshadowed by competing histories and invented traditions. In chronicling this context, I have had to create thumbnail sketches of complex historical forces to help Western scholars in particular gain some insight into the cultural context of Taiwanese Shakespeare. This has meant some simplification of historical contexts, each one of which could be the subject of a PhD dissertation in itself, and I hope that future studies might be able to go further in achieving a more nuanced sense of historical context of these cultural forms. I have also not investigated the question of the audience's role in as much detail as I hoped, as this is again an area of complexity that a single study can hardly do justice, and in future studies I would like to look more closely at the response of Taiwanese audiences. One of my broader aims has been to challenge pre-conceived notions of what Asian Shakespeare is. Work in this field has recently been advanced by the ground-breaking work of Alexander C. Y. Huang, whose recent, award-winning study of Chinese theatre has just been published. However, Taiwanese theatre continues to be approached, even by Huang (who is Taiwanese), as a sub-set of Chinese theatre. In this study, I have argued that 'Asian' and even 'Chinese' theatre are historically complex terms and that Taiwan's identity has been shaped by complex and competing forces. Yet modern Taiwanese responses to these forces have produced some extraordinary productions of Shakespeare drawing on a wide diversity of cultural traditions, each one of which exposes faultlines in Taiwanese politics and identity. The five productions examined in this thesis testify to this diversity in contemporary Taiwan. Now *Taiwanese Shakespeare* deserves deeper interpretation as a unique case within intercultural Shakespeare performance studies.

**Appendix: List of Shakespeare Performances in Taiwan**

Theatre Company	production		play	director	premiere	genre
	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>		<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	Wang Qi-mei	1986.10	Play
The Contemporary Legend Theatre	<i>The Kingdom of Desire</i>		<i>Macbeth</i>	Wu Hsing-kuo	1986.12	Peking Opera
The Contemporary Legend Theatre	<i>War and Eternity</i>		<i>Hamlet</i>	Wu Hsing-kuo	1990.03	Peking Opera
Ping-Fong Acting Troupe	<i>Shamlet</i>		<i>Hamlet</i>	Lee Kuo-hsiu	1992.04	Play
View and Vision Playhouse	<i>Shakespeare's Night</i>		<i>Hamlet + Macbeth + Othello</i>	Wang Xiao-di	1992.10	Play
The Godot Theatre	<i>The New Taming of the Shrew</i>		<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>	Liang Zhi-min	1994.03	Musical
Known Theatre	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>		<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	Chen Te-an	1996	Play
Hong Xiu-yu Taiwanese Opera Troupe	<i>Holy Sword Avenges Injustice</i>		<i>Hamlet</i>	Hong Xiu-yu	1997	Taiwanese Opera
The Godot Theatre	<i>Kiss Me, Nana</i>		<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>	Liang Zhi-min	1997.08	Musical
Known Theatre	<i>The Taming Show</i>		<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>	Chen Te-an	1997.10	Play
The Godot Theatre	<i>Rock Midsummer Night of the East</i>		<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	Liang Zhi-min	1999.07	Music
Critical Point Theatre Phenomenon	<i>Dong! When Shakespeare meets the Little Theatre</i>			Co-directors	1999.12	Play
Performance Workshop Taiwan	<i>Lear and the 37-Fold Practice of a Bodhisatva</i>		<i>King Lear</i>	Stan Lai	2000.03 (Hong Kong)	Play
Ming Hwa-yuan	<i>Cheng Yuan Zai Lai</i>		<i>Hamlet</i>	Chen Sheng-kuo	2001.02	Taiwanese Opera
Holo Taiwanese Opera Troupe	<i>Flower on the Other Shore</i>		<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Zhang Jian	2001.03	Taiwanese Opera
Off Performance Workshop	<i>Lear-ing —3 plays to do with Lear</i>	<i>When they are drumming</i>	<i>King Lear</i>	Fu Hong-zheng	2001.05	Play
		<i>Play Lear</i>	<i>King Lear</i>	Lee Chien-chang	2001.05	Play
		<i>Lear and the 37-Fold Practice of a</i>	<i>King Lear</i>	Stan Lai	2001.05 (Taipei)	Play

		<i>Bodhisatva</i>				
The Contemporary Legend Theatre	<i>King Lear</i>	<i>King Lear</i>	Wu Hsing-kuo	2001.07	Peking Opera	
I Wan Jan Puppet Troup	<i>Henry IV</i>	<i>Henry IV</i>	Huang Wu-shan	2002.05	Puppet play	
Dafen Musical Theater	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	Li Ming-ze	2002.08	Children Musical play	
The Theatre Group of Creative Society	<i>Mad Scenes</i>	<i>King Lear+ Hamlet+ Othello+ Macbeth</i>	Wei Ying-juan	2002.12	Play	
Holo Taiwanese Opera Troupe	<i>The Revenge of the Prince</i>	<i>Hamlet</i>	Liu Zhong-yuan	2003.05	TV Taiwanese Opera	
Golden Bough Theatre	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Wang Rong-yu	Shakespeare in Taipei 2003.05	O-pei-la	
Shakespeare's Wild Sisters Group	<i>Titus Andronicus</i>	<i>Titus Andronicus</i>	Wang Jia-ming	Shakespeare in Taipei 2003.05	Puppet play	
Tainan Jen Theatre	<i>Sonata of the Witches – The Macbethian Verses</i>	<i>Macbeth</i>	Lu Bo-shen	Shakespeare in Taipei 2003.05-6	Play Performed Taiwanese language	
Riverbed Theatre	<i>Beautiful Shakespeare</i>		Craig Quintero	Shakespeare in Taipei 2003.05	Play	
Off Performance Workshop and BSun Son Theatre	<i>Carnival in the Maze / Drumming with Lear: ultimate edition</i>	<i>King Lear</i>	Fu Hong-zheng	Shakespeare in Taipei 2003.05	Play	
Known Theatre	<i>Messland</i>	<i>Macbeth Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet</i>	Chen Te-an	2003.12	Play	
Into the Next Wave Theatre	<i>As Ants Nibble, Lady Macbeth Rhapsody</i>	<i>Macbeth</i>	Wu Kun-da	2004.01	Play	
The Contemporary Legend Theatre	<i>Romeo and Juliet (Solo : Experimenting Traditional Chinese Operas)</i>	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Huang Xiang-lian	2004.03	Taiwanese Opera	
Tainan Jen	<i>Shakespeare</i>	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Lu Bo-shen	2004.06-	Play Rock	

Theatre	<i>Unplugged I - Romeo and Juliet</i>				11	and roll
Golden Bough Theatre	<i>Yu-May and Ten-Lai</i>		<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Wang Rong-yu	2004.11	O-pei-la
The Contemporary Legend Theatre	<i>The Tempest</i>		<i>The Tempest</i>	Tsui Hark, Wu Hsing-kuo	2004.12-2005.01	Peking Opera
Ming Hwa-yuan	<i>Revenge of the Prince</i>		<i>Hamlet</i>	Chen Sheng-kuo	2005	Taiwanese Opera
The Party Theatre Group	<i>Dinner with Shakespeare</i>			Qiu An-chen	2005.04	Play punk
Golden Bough Theatre	<i>Hamlet No. 9</i>		<i>Hamlet</i>	Shi Dong-lin	2005.05	Peking Opera
Paper Windmill Theatre	<i>West Side Story of Chicken</i>		<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Li Yong-feng	2005.06	Children play
Tainan Jen Theatre	<i>Shakespeare Unplugged II – Hamlet</i>		<i>Hamlet</i>	Lu Bo-shen	2005.06	Play Blue jazz
Tainan Jen Theatre	<i>K24 (chaos)</i>		<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Cai Bo-zhang	2005.09-2006.01	Play
Nook Theatre	<i>Nook's Midsummer Night's Dream</i>		<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	Dan Tang-mo	2005.12	Play
Drama Club Theatre	2005 Playing with Classics Art Festival	<i>Twelfth Night</i>	<i>Twelfth Night</i>	Gu Xiang-ping	2005.12	Play
		<i>Nightmare</i>	<i>Macbeth</i>	Luo Qi-hong	2005.12	Play
		<i>King Lear's Game of Faking Death</i>	<i>King Lear</i>	Zhan Chun-hui	2005.12	Play
		<i>Black Hair, White Snow</i>	<i>Sonnet</i>	Lin Mu-rong	2005.12	Play
Ifkids Theatre	<i>To Bee or not to Bee</i>		<i>Hamlet</i>	Zhao Zi-qiang	2006.03-04	Children play
High Sun Taiwanese Opera	<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>		<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>	Jiang Jian-yuan	2006.11 2007.05	Taiwanese Opera
Drama Club Theatre	2006 Playing with Classics Art Festival	<i>Blood Wedding</i>	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Gao Wei-qi	2006.12	Play
		<i>ICE vs. FIRE</i>	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	Sheng Ke-cheng	2006.12	Play
		<i>The Club of Shakespeare's Wife</i>	<i>Othello</i>	Gu Xiang-ping	2006.12	Play
		<i>Puke's Christmas Party</i>	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	Rao Jun-song	2006.12	Play
Golden Bough Theatre	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>		<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	Shi Dong-lin	2007.09	O-pei-la
Tainan Jen	<i>Shakespeare</i>		<i>Macbeth</i>	Lu Bo-shen	2007.09	Play

Theatre	<i>Unplugged III – Macbeth</i>					
Drama Club Theatre	2007 Playing with Classics Art Festival	<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>	<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>	Gao Wei-qi	2007.11-12	Play
		<i>To be, or not to be, that is the Question.</i>	<i>Hamlet</i>	Jian Wei-zhi	2007.12	Play
		<i>A Second Chance</i>	<i>Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, Othello, Macbeth</i>	Gu Xiang-ping	2007.12	Play
		<i>Shakes is gone.</i>	<i>King Lear, Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Macbeth</i>	Yan Performing Arts Troupe	2007.12	Play
Shine-house Theatre	<i>As depressed as Hamlet</i>	<i>Hamlet</i>	Zhong Bo-yuan	2008.08	Play	
The Godot Theatre	<i>Othello</i>	<i>Othello</i>	Liang Zhi-min	2008.08-09	Play	
Tainan Jen Theatre	<i>Shakespeare Unplugged IV – The Two Gentlemen of Verona</i>	<i>The Two Gentlemen of Verona</i>	Wang Hong-yuan	2009.03	Play	

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