

Adaptations of Shakespeare to Chinese Theatre

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Abstract. In the 20th century, the adaptation of William Shakespeare's classic dramas onto the Chinese stage have attracted great interest. The study of such cross-cultural adaptations has positive significance not only for development of literary theory, literary criticism and literary history, but also in that it promotes unusual forms of innovation with regards to the study of performance in general. Chinese adaptations to performance and opera have allowed Chinese people to understand the essence of Shakespeare's plays, presented in a more forms, and as a consequence, such adaptations function as a bridge for Sino-foreign cross-cultural exchanges and interpretations. These paper traces a panorama of Shakespeare's adaptations onto the Chinese stage in the year that celebrates the 500 anniversary of his death.

Keywords: adaptation, Chinese opera, Shakespeare, traditional Chinese drama

INTRODUCTION

William Shakespeare is a major figure in Western culture and has also had a great impact in China. His works have been adapted to multitude of genres and media, translated, adapted to television and film, or used in the videogames industry in the Internet. The adaptation of Shakespeare's plays for the Chinese stage constitutes an interesting place to engage questions of cross-cultural epistemologies.

Shakespeare's plots have inspired incredible work in the literature, fiction, theater, and cinema of China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. From the novels of Lao She and Lin Shu to Lu Xun's and Feng Xiaogang's martial arts films, Soviet-Chinese theater, and Chinese opera. Adaptations of Shakespeare have yielded a rich trove of transnational cross cultural imagery. (Huang, 2009)

Zhang Xiao Yang refers to the general impact of Shakespeare on Chinese theatre and culture, and the convergence of Shakespearean and traditional Chinese drama on the Chinese stage. Each of these is treated

in rather problematic ways. He claims that Shakespeare not only has had “an impact on the formation and development of modern Chinese theatre,” but also that he “has entered into numerous domains of Chinese culture and exerted a widespread and profound influence upon them as well” (Yang, 1996: 13), becoming “the most important and authoritative dramatic form in Chinese cultural circles today” (129). Yang also asserts that “the impact [of Shakespeare] has brought the decline of traditional Chinese drama to the point where it could die out completely as a feeble and decaying art with unfashionable beauty or survive through reform at the risk of losing its own distinctiveness” (Zhang, 1996: 129).

This paper focuses on the differences between Chinese and Western drama and contextualizes them as forms of semiotic cultural translation. By looking at the differences and similarities between dramatic conventions in Shakespeare’s time and traditional Chinese drama, the paper explores the mechanisms of semiotic translation and adaptation between the two cultures. The main sources used are Xiao Yang Zhang’s (1996) *Shakespeare in China, A Comparative Study of Two Traditions and Cultures*, Murray Levith’s (2004) *Shakespeare in China*, and Alex Huang (2009) *Chinese Shakespeares*. In particular, the paper focuses on Shakespeare’s political tragedies exemplified in *Hamlet*, and its comparison to the Chinese political scene as recounted in *The Orphan of the House of Zhao* (Zhao Shi Gu Er).

EVOLUTION OF SHAKESPEAREAN STUDIES IN CHINA

The late Qing (1839-1910) and early Republican (1911-1930) fascination with Anglo-European ideas and products encouraged the first biographical sketches of William Shakespeare in China. In 1894, Yan Fu wrote in *The Evolution of Nature*, that Shakespeare was an English poet and playwright whose works would spread far and wide among readers all over the world. However, Shakespeare’s works did not appear in China, even in partial translation, until 1904, when Lin Shu and Wei Yi published their collaborative classical Chinese translation of Charles and Mary Lamb’s *Tales from Shakespeare*. The first complete translation of a Shakespearean play appeared in 1921 when Tian Han's *Hamlet* (Hameng-leite) was published. In the 1920s, following the translations of Tian han, seven

other translations of Shakespearean plays were published in China. By the 1930s, the Chinese fascination with Europe gave rise to the intensive translation of Western dramas, including the tragedies: *Mabeth* (three versions), *King Lear*, *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*; the comedies: *The Merchant of Venice* (three versions), *Twelfth Night* (two versions); and the romances: *The Tempest* (two versions). 1940s and 1950s even more sophisticated translations of Shakespeare's plays appeared, such as a version of *Romeo and Juliet* (1944) translated by Cao Yu, the leading figure in modern Chinese theatrical circles; a version of *Timon of Athens* (1944) translated by Yang Hui; Liu Wu Ji's translation of *Julius Caesar* (1944); Sun Da Yu's translation of *King Lear* (1948); Fang Ping's translations of *Much Ado About Nothing* (1953) and *Henry the Fifth* (1955); Bian Zhi Lin's translation of *Hamlet* (1956); Wu Xing Hua's translation of *Henry the Fourth* (1957); and Fang Zhong's translation of *Richard the Third* (1959).

However, despite all these translations, Shakespeare was still unknown in the Chinese stage. Lin Shu's translation not only influenced many modern Chinese writers, but it also served as the stage script for the first Shakespeare productions in China before the May Fourth Movement (1913-18). The earliest Shakespeare production with Chinese actors was held in 1902. It was a production of *The Merchant of Venice*, performed in English by the students of the Foreign Language Department, Shanghai St. John College. The main purpose of the performance was to promote the English study of the students, so it cannot be regarded as the first Shakespeare production in Chinese. The first one in Chinese was presented in 1913 by the New People's Society (Xin Min She), a dramatic organization in Shanghai. There were two Shakespearean productions in 1916: an adaptation of *Merchant* performed by the Yao Feng New Drama Troupe under the title *The Usurper of State Power*, and an adaptation of *Hamlet* called *The Instruction of Ghost*, presented by the Spring Willow Association. Before and during the May Fourth New Cultural Movement (1917-29), more Shakespeare productions appeared on the Chinese stage. A very successful one was *Romeo and Juliet* in 1937, performed by the Shanghai Practical Drama Company in the Carlton Theatre under the direction of Zhang Min. In 1943, the Shanghai Art Troupe staged *Three Daughters* edited by Gu Zhongyi according to Shakespeare's *King Lear* and to the Chinese traditional opera *The Story of Wong Bo-chuen*. In 1945, Kugan Troupe played *Deming Wang* adapted by Li Jianwu and based on Shakespearean *Macbeth* and Yuan Verse *The Orphan of Zhao*, renamed *Gone*

with the Hero. The adaptation of the two plays, mainly follows stage design, where Shakespearian characters are turned into their Chinese counterparts, and combining a Shakespearian plot with a Chinese narrative.

During the Cultural Revolution, both Western and Chinese cultural heritages were condemned as bourgeois and feudal. The Chinese translation of the complete works did not come true until 1978, including all thirty-seven plays and the poems. It was well received by Chinese readers and has been regarded as the most authoritative Chinese version of Shakespeare's works, even if the unique style of Shakespearean language had to be neglected in favor of content. Some scholars, like Prof. Sun Da Yu insisted that it was a pity to translate blank verse with prose because readers would lose the beauty of the plays as poetic drama. Thus, in his translation of *King Lear* Sun Da Yu tried to use a syllabic unit that he created to produce the effect of beat in Shakespeare's blank verse.

After the Cultural Revolution, China's first Shakespeare Festival, which was organized by The Research Society of China, the Chinese Dramatic Art Research Society, and the Beijing and Shanghai Drama Academies. It took place from 10 to 23 April 1986, and during this time more than two dozen versions of sixteen Shakespeare plays appeared in various stages. In addition, Shakespeare societies were founded in the mid-eighties. The first of these was the Shakespeare Society of Jilin Province in 1985. Professor Lin Tongji established a Shakespeare research library at Shanghai's Fudan University, and in 1984 Beijing's Central Academy of Drama created a special collection on Shakespeare materials for study in universities and drama schools. In 1993, Wuhan University sponsored the first International Conference on Shakespeare in China. The following year, Shakespeare Festival was held in Shanghai. Perhaps the most controversial of all Festival productions, however, was the first Taiwanese-PRC joint-venture offering, a play loosely based on *Hamlet* and titled *Shamlet*. In recent years, two feature films based on *Hamlet* have been produced: *The Banquet* (2006) and *The Prince of the Himalayas* (2006); the first one reinterpreted the structure of imperial China and emotions in *Hamlet*. *The prince of the Himalayas* was so popular in China that Mandarin-Tibetan huaju (spoken drama) stage versions based on the film, with the same cast and director, were staged in

Shanghai and Beijing, thus crossing cultural boundaries and creating a new space for ethnic minority performers.

CROSS-CULTURAL RECEPTION OF DRAMA

The analysis of drama concerns various elements, some of which have a subjective imprint (sender and receiver) while others can be considered more or less objective (the signs used, and the messages conveyed, the codes and languages, as well as the channel and context). There are also pragmatic elements (*processes of expression and reception*). Thus, first we must look at the *selection* of elements (characters, objects on stage, etc.), then their *organization* (*plot, story structure*) and final the *performance*. The levels of *content* and *expression* take the form of *beings* (characters) and *actions* (their ways of speaking and behavior) with relationships established between them in a concrete spatiotemporal context.

Theatre contains various semiotic languages in its processes of expression: gestures, *prosody*, *kinesics* and *proxemics*, spoken language, music, noise, the location of the objects on stage, and so on. Dramatic codes such as stage directions and feedback from the director, the audience and other actors, also modify the process of expression during the performance. This feature impacts upon the *cognitive, emotional and ideological perspectives*, and affects the phenomenon of audience *identification* with the characters, so intimately linked to *catharsis*.

At the level of *expression*, and with regards to Shakespeare, one of the most difficult problems to solve in translation/adaptation to another culture occurs with regards to converting blank verse, which needs to be changed into prose. With regards to the scenarios, different directors use different approaches, from modern metaphorical to more realistic treatment. But the primacy of the character/subject, expressed primarily through verbal expression (whether monologue or dialogue) is another important semantic aspect in drama, impacting on how the hero is viewed in Eastern and Western performance. Thus, a major factor that directly affects Shakespeare's reception in China is the country's long-standing Confucian cultural tradition.

The history of the production and reception of representations of Shakespeare and China has been regulated by ethical concerns and the belief that literature is capable of fostering an ethical responsibility in the reader. Founded by Confucius in the 5th century BCE and supplemented

with Taoism in the Han dynasty and Buddhism in the Song and Ming dynasties, Confucianism had been the ruling ideology in China for two thousand years until the New Cultural Movement in 1919. The influence of Confucianism on Chinese society is still present today, and it is, therefore, understandable that Chinese audiences and readers tend to interpret Shakespeare characters from this perspective. Of all Shakespeare's heroes, *Hamlet* is probably the most suitable one to be qualified as a Confucian exemplar, representing the uncertainty that Western society faced in a dislocated society of competitive individualism and lack of clear moral principles. To other scholars, however, particularly after 1919, *Hamlet* was a model to criticize Chinese Confucian feudalism.

In the original Elizabethan context, the downfall of the Shakespearean heroes stems from inner causes, generally related to a personal flaw like stubbornness, pride, or ambition because in Western Renaissance, conflict was viewed to stem from the conflict between individual desires and social order within a culture that views life as progress and regeneration, with an ability to constantly change and produce new ideas, the basic tenet behind the culture of 'modernity' which in the West emerged at this time. In traditional Chinese tragedy, however, tragic fate is most often created by external causes, such as social injustice, rigid morals, or unfair rulers. Opposite to the West, Chinese culture is a system of preservation, where the combination of Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism account for a tendency to contemplate life as a (Ying Yang) process which is, paradoxically, static. These differences demonstrate some of the main differences between Western and Chinese cultures, differences that, in many ways, have lasted only today.

Yet many broad-minded Chinese Shakespeare critics, directors, and performers advocate presenting Shakespeare's plays in the form of traditional Chinese drama. They hold that such an adaptation would be not only practicable but also successful. This is due to a series of striking similarities between Shakespearean and traditional Chinese dramatic techniques. For instance, both have a very free deployment of time and space, which also occurs in Chinese drama of the Yuan dynasty. There is also the double plot technique, which occurs in Yuan plays as well as in Shakespeare, with the examples explored in this volume *The Orphan of the House of Zhao* (see previous chapter) and *Hamlet*. Other similarities are the use of natural images, in Shakespeare, the word (embodiment of the

pastoral natural/utopian society versus the aristocratic corrupted world of industrialized cities), storms (representing changing moods and wild passions as well as moments of social crisis), and so on, and in Chinese plays mountains, rivers, and running water, all used with symbolic meanings.

Looking at the levels of *content* and *expression*, while Shakespeare's heroes are usually leaders or aristocrats with a high degree of freedom and personal will, Chinese characters come from lower social positions. The figures of power appear always backstage and serve only to justify manipulative actions. These differences in the social status of the protagonists in the plays of the two traditions is rooted in very different theatrical, literary, and cultural traditions. The origin of European literature can be traced back to Greek myth and epic, which depict the deeds of gods and noble heroes. On the other hand, Chinese drama developed gradually from lyric poetry such as the famous collection *The Book of Songs* (Shi Jing), establishing a tradition where the tragic mood was created by the suffering, sorrows and love misfortunes of female characters, generally from middle or lower classes, rather than male leaders and their power struggles. Thus, in Chinese classical tragedies, the fate of the protagonists clearly derives from pressures in their environment, generally a rigid community that represents the doctrine of Confucianism. This is also due to the fact that the golden age of traditional Chinese drama occurred in the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368), when cities were growing and the playwrights had to adapt to the taste of these urban audiences. To achieve this goal they often drew materials from the oral narratives and folktales of the Song dynasty that described the lives of ordinary people.

The main purpose of characterization in traditional Chinese drama is not the representation of strong feelings, although these may be also depicted, as is the case of revenge in *The Orphan of the House of Zhao*. Desires and passions were considered very dangerous because the wildly running of emotions would damage the group's moral order. This position complies with the general aesthetic principle of the beauty of balance and restraint. Unlike Shakespeare's heroes, the principal characters in traditional Chinese tragedies are clearly either positive (good – they respect tradition and law) or negative (bad – they have contempt for the law and behave wrongly). There is no room for

ambiguity and the protagonist always acts with clear moral or immoral intentions, never moved by personal desires, like Shakespeare's personae. By means of these explicit and stereotyped protagonists, Chinese dramatists are interested in presenting the outward form of a tragic conflict, based on Confucian ethical doctrines. Traditional Chinese tragedies have two major types of conflict. The first is a conflict between two social forces in which one strives for the realization of *ren* and the other disrupts it. *Ren* is an ultimate social ideal of Confucianism based on ancient Chinese patriarchal society. The good in *ren* is to maintain harmonious family relationships between father and son, husband and wife, elder brother and younger brother, and so forth. The relationship between emperor and subjects is also conceived of in terms of family relationships. Through the conflicts and the deaths of the chief characters, the authors of traditional Chinese tragedies reaffirm the supremacy of the existing feudal political system and the justification of the Confucian moral order. Politicians and officials (*sbi*) serve as representatives of Confucianism. A is not simply an official but is usually a Confucian scholar in his youth, an official serving the emperor, and poet or writer, serving as minister after passing the imperial examination. These characters stand both as defenders and as victims of the feudal political system where emperors trusted the corrupt officials who flattered them, relegating the decent *sbi* to a marginal position. Generally speaking, the chief characters of traditional Chinese tragedies can be divided into four types representing four virtues. The characters of the first type are loyal officials who personify *zhong* (loyalty to the monarch), the most important virtue of the Confucian moral code. In *The Orphan of the House of Zhao*, the treacherous general Tu An Jia is a leading evil force against *ren*, and he brings about massacres and disorder to the country.

In Shakespeare, the actions of heroes and heroines represent individualistic values of human dignity, rather than adherence to a social doctrine. For this reason, while Shakespeare concentrates more on inner and inward struggle in the hero's soul. In Chinese drama, however, the hero never intends to do something to change or improve the existing social structure. A striking difference is that while Shakespeare's tragedies end with the death of the protagonists, in traditional Chinese tragedy there is a happy ending with a *datuanyuan*, or 'big and happy

reunion' for a surviving hero. This reaffirms the supremacy and positive aspects of the good moral order. Another important difference is the fact that Chinese playwrights tend to use women as tragic protagonists. The Confucian aesthetic convention that feelings of sadness and suffering produce the emotions that the Chinese people appreciate most is strongly rooted in the plays, many of which focus on the suffering of a beautiful woman and the "beauty of gentle sadness, balance and restraint," a concept based on the Confucian philosophy of "the doctrine of the mean" that dominated many types of art in ancient China.

HAMLET IN CHINA

The first Chinese translation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, was published by the Chinese Publishing House in 1922. The translator was the celebrated modern Chinese playwright Tian Han (1898-1968), an ardent admirer of Shakespeare and one of the founders of modern Chinese theater. Tian Han studied in Japan and, having read Shakespeare, developed aspirations to study drama and take up dramatic writing as his profession. He made a great contribution to the translation of Shakespeare's works and the campaign to publicize the playwright in China. In his postscript to the translation Tian Han directly associated the play with great Confucian politician and poet Qu Yuan and his work *Lisao*. Besides his translation work, Tian Han also introduces some useful information about the staging of Shakespeare in the West by publishing an article on the evolution of Shakespeare in theater on the Western stage. Tian Han's plays, unlike those of traditional drama, were written in the form of spoken drama, representing the will of the people to examine their past Confucian culture and change it.

A radical adaptation of *Hamlet* to condemn the moral criticism practiced by Chinese scholars in the late 1930s and early 1940s is Lao She's *New Hamlet* (Xin Hamuliede 1936), the earliest Chinese parody of Hamlet-like postures, and also of the self-righteous moral criticism practiced by Chinese intellectuals of the time, confronting the 'old' and the 'new' in an age of pessimism and confusion, thus becoming a milestone for East Asian interpretation of Shakespeare. Caught between contending values, the image of the 'New Hamlet' served as a metaphor for Chinese culture, torn between the ideological choices of a Chinese traditions, emerging Communist causes, a Western worldview, and the

anxiety of cultural engulfment of Japan's invasion in the next decade, during the second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). This 'New Hamlet' is so preoccupied with all these different calls for action that he is paralyzed. Hamlet is also the inspiration for Lao She's play *Homecoming* (Guiqulaixi, 1942), originally entitled *Hamlet*, and which again embodies the problems of a hesitating modern China, in search of new modern identities, unable to fully incorporate Western modes of thinking. In his plays, Lao She reinvents vernacular language by using Beijing dialects and slang (only used in oral speech) in his writing, and by creating a tone which is both frivolous and serious, in a kind of humanizing satire. Bian Zhilin, another important scholar/translator of this period, uses Hamlet to express similar views. First, Bian Zhilin taught at the Lu Xun Arts and Literature Academy [Lu Xun yishu wenxue yuan] in Yenan, the Communist base, and later held a professorship at Nankai University, and in 1947 the British council offered a visiting scholar position at Oxford. When he returned to China he focused on Shakespeare at The Literary Research Institute to Study Chinese and Foreign Literature (established in 1953 by the Academy of Science). In 1956 he published a translation of *Hamlet*, which includes a detailed critical analysis, asserting that like in his contemporary China, Shakespeare wrote his plays during a transition period between the collapse of feudalism and the rise of capitalism in England. This, he contends, results in a contradiction between Renaissance humanism and the feudalistic monarchic system reflected in Hamlet.

As seen, Shakespeare's famous tragedy provided a ground for discussing history, identity problems, the search for meaning in modern life, the social order, and other issues in the several contemporary China. Another example is the absurdist worldview presented in the Taiwanese *avant-garde* play by Lee Kuo-Hsiu, *Shamuleite: yige fuchou xiju* (*Shamlet: A Revenge Comedy*), whose title recalls Henry fielding's 1741 satire on Samuel Richardson's novel *Pamela* [*Shamela: An Apology for the life of Mrs Shamela Andrews*]. *Shamlet* is a black comedy about a failing theatre company, which tries to stage *Hamlet* in the hope to have a successful production that will solve the company's financial difficulties. The play is loosely based on Shakespeare's, making a self-reflexive, narcissistic commentary on the absurdity of modern life with its lack of meaningful order and confused identities, a portrait of the adolescent turn in Chinese society. It was staged by the experimental company Pingfeng Acting Workshop (Pingfeng biaoyan ban, founded in 1986) and premiered

in Taipei in 1992. It was staged in Shanghai in 1994, and toured Taiwan between 1995 and 2000, with huge popularity. It was also performed in Canada in 1996. Alexa Huang (2014) has written about the intercultural features.¹ But what makes *Hamlet* so attractive to the Chinese imagination, both now and then?

As argued before, despite the struggle led by certain Chinese scholars in the 20th century, Confucian values are still much embedded in China's cultural life. The importance of family and community ties, and virtuous personal conduct are the features of Hamlet that are highly congruent with Confucianism. Hamlet's strong sense of political responsibility is also very close to Chinese audiences, who tend to explain Hamlet's melancholy as an anxiety (*younfen*) shared by all Confucian heroes and stemming from the difficult and frustrating situations they encounter in their service to their country. As explained above, in compliance with the Confucian ethical code demanding filial piety, unquestioning allegiance to the monarch. Family relationships are the basis of Confucian morality (in particular, see *Analects*: I, 9 regarding the funeral of a dead father), – the ones between father and son (*xiao*) and older and younger brother (*di*) being the most significant, and these relationships are, of course, central in Hamlet. However, according to Confucius, one must be quick to act because if one fails to carry out a resolution, he fails to keep his word (*xin*). In this sense, Hamlet's delay fails to put “words into action” (*Analects*, II.13).

Despite some aspects that would be far from the Confucian ethical code, such as Hamlet's mistreatment of Ophelia, his arranging the murders of Rosencranz and Guildenstern, his disrespectful behaviour toward his mother, or his impulsive killing of Polonius, the Confucian interpretation of *Hamlet* has, nonetheless, affected all stage representations of the play. In almost all productions the main character has been treated as a hero having the usual political spirit and enthusiasm of Confucianism. For example, during the Sino-Japanese War, the State Drama School presented a production of Hamlet in Jiangan and Chongqing city, Sichuan province (2-7 June 1942:9-19 December 1942), under the direction of the famous stage artist Jiao Ju Yin, with Hamlet played by Wen Xi Ying and Ophelia by Lu Shui. The production was an open-air performance in a Confucian temple. The stage context of this performance served to link the heroic sense of political duty to Chinese culture in a very clear way, thus encouraging Chinese people to be

concerned about the future of their country and to fight against Japanese invaders.

STAGING HAMLET IN A CONFUCIAN TEMPLE

Directed by Jiao Juyin (1905-1975) and staged in Jiang'an in rural Sichuan during the second Sino-Japanese War in June 1942, and later in Chongqing, the provincial capital, this production of *Hamlet* show the cross-cultural dialogue between two different cultures across time and space, as argued by Qingben Li and Jinghua Guo in their paper entitled "Rethinking the Relationship between China and the West" and in "Translation, Cross-cultural interpretation, and World Literatures" (2013). These works posit that there are at least two ways by which national literature can become 'world literature' and thus reach an international context: translation and crosscultural interpretation. Translation covers not only the conversion of language, but also the selection and variation of culture. In the context of modern Chinese literature, cross-cultural interpretation often emerges in the form of applying Western theories to explain Chinese texts in order to facilitate appreciation by Western audiences and to support the need of the internationalization of Chinese literature. Cross-cultural variation is not unidirectional, but multidirectional and thus cultural intersections take place across space and time thus facilitating the canonization of various literatures in world literature. Different from the selection mechanisms within national literatures, the selection processes in world literature and translated literature occurs across cultural and language barriers: "The foreign text is not so much communicated as inscribed with domestic intelligibilities and interests. The inscription begins with the very choice of a text for translation, always a very selective, densely motivated choice, and continues in the development of discursive strategies to translate it, always a choice of certain domestic discourses over others" (Venuti 468). This means that texts in translation always lose something with regard to source texts, but they also gain something, mainly the right to go beyond the boundaries of their own nationalities and to be read and understood in other national contexts. This also means that a national literature does not enter the literary territory of other nations instantly. As long as it is translated, there will certainly be problems regarding re-writing, variation, and misreading, and all forms of cultural variation: world literature is an

”an elliptical refraction of national literatures ... that gains in translation ... not a set canon of texts but a model of reading: a form of detached engagement with worlds beyond our own place and time” (Damrosch, 2003: 281). The so-called ”elliptical refraction” is different from simple reflection: if a person stands in front of an even mirror, then the image in the mirror is a simple reflection of this person's image, but if this person stands in front of an uneven mirror, the image will be deformed into an elliptical refraction. National literature and world literature enable such elliptical refractions rather than simple reflection and since world literature is related to both source and target literature, this refraction is ”double” in nature. An elliptical shape is formed in the overlapping dual zone of the source culture and the receiving culture: world Literature is produced in this middle ground associated with both cultures and not limited to any one part alone. Here, I argue that there is yet another way of reaching this international status and multiple refractions: using adaptation.

Lydia H. Liu re-examines the power relations between East and West with regard to European texts translated into non-European languages. She points out that translation should be understood as a brief expression of adaptation, diversion, and other trans-lingual practice: ”the terms traditional theorists of translation use to designate the language involved in translation, such as 'source' and 'target/receptor,' are not only inappropriate but misleading ... the idea of source language often relies on concepts of authenticity, origin, influence, and so on, and has the disadvantage of re-introducing the age-old problematic of translatability/untranslatability into the discussion. On the other hand, the notion of target language implies a teleological goal, a distance to be crossed in order to reach the plenitude of meaning; it thus misrepresents the ways in which the trope of equivalence is conceived in the host language, relegating its agency to second importance” (27). Further, Liu proposes to represent the relationship between translated text (target language) and original text (source language) by means of ”host language” and ”guest language” in order to emphasize that a non-European host language can be modified by the guest language in the process of translation, form a collusion relation with it, or encroach, replace, and even seize the authority of the guest language. This is a new idea in translation studies that emerges from the perspective of cross-cultural research and deconstruction – the terms ”host” and ”guest” make

reference to J. Hillis Miller who introduced a similar form of multidimensional dynamics for critical interpretation. The shortcomings of traditional translation theories pointed out by Liu also apply to the study of cross-cultural influences where she advocates the re-allocation of Sino-Western power dynamics.

Indeed, *Hamlet* is an important example of how Shakespeare's work can become part of other cultures, without losing its essential elements. The following lines discuss Jiao Juyin's production, staged in 1942, five years after the fall of Nanjing to the Japanese. Interestingly, the use of Shakespeare was intended to avoid government censorship, and this performance in particular had a fundamental educational purpose. Jiao's script followed Shakespeare's text, but the the mise-en-scene and director's approach suggest that the production was informed by the pre-1940s Chinese critical tradition of a Confucian Hamlet.

As mentioned, the play was staged at a Confucian temple in Sichuan province, where Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi, 1887-1975) and his elite followers, bankers, scholars, artists, etc., relocated after the Japanese invasion. Their moral was low, as their hometowns were now in Japanese occupation zone and there was great uncertainty in their lives. Theatre in the area became a symbol of the renewal of Chinese cultural life for the refugees. Jiao Juyin wanted to present Hamlet as a social symbol, resisting oppression and seeking liberation. He also wanted his production to have international impact, as well-staged Shakespeare's plays usually have. This performance was a crucial visibility mechanism destined to show the world the Chinese situation, and to enhance the moral of Chinese refugees. The Confucian temple also functioned as a symbol of a traditional Chinese gathering space; a historical landmark that stood during centuries, bearing the marks of wars and changing times. Regarded as a sacred site, the temple hosted *Hamlet* performance as if it were a ritual.

The stage was huge, with large black curtains hanging between the red pillars, forming a sort of labyrinth that helped dramatize the unknown dangers of the Danish court after being taken over by Hamlet's uncle. The actors moved in between the pillars, in a sort of hide-and-seek game that evidenced the dark and ambitious plots of some characters like Polonius or Claudius. The dim semi-open space created a sense of mystery welcoming to the ghost. As Hamlet retreated backstage, infuriated by Polonius, the shrine of Confucius became visible at the end of the corridor, intruding into the performance and creating a cross-

cultural doubling between two worlds. And Hamlet's inquiry, "To be, or not to be", resonated as a political echo of the Chinese situation in face of Japanese aggression, crossing the historical and cultural distance over Denmark in order to recreate a patriotic play, not in England, but in China. Jiao Juyin's Neo-Confucian message was clear, procrastination and inaction only lead to failure. He stressed these aspects in an essay written on December 12, 1942, before the revival of the production in a formal indoor theatre in Chongqing, the provincial capital of Sichuan and the temporary capital of China during the war. The production was possible with the support of the Ministry of Education's Wartime Social Education Campaign (Shehui jiaoyu kuoda xuanchuanzhou), which sought to revive patriotism. Again, the purpose was to give visibility to the Chinese situation and encourage support of China's Western allies.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite this rigid scheme, Shakespeare's works have achieved immense success and popularity with Chinese people. They provide examples not only of cross-cultural connection between Eastern and Western cultures, but also between ancient and modern perspectives. Many of Shakespeare's classics, such as *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet* have also been adapted for the Peking Opera, reflecting contemporary people's thinking and exploring them from different angles. Shakespeare, being a singular representative of the highest achievement within Western drama, is thus renovated and integrated into the cultural industry of China enjoyed by many Chinese Shakespearian enthusiasts.

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Note

¹<http://globalshakespeares.mit.edu/blog/2014/07/20/shamlet-shakespeare-as-palimpsest-by-alex-huang/>

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