



**SOUTHAMPTON UNIVERSITY**

**SHAKESPEARE AND TRADITIONAL CHINESE DRAMA:  
SHAKESPEARE IN CHINESE CULTURE  
--- A COMPARATIVE STUDY IN CULTURAL MATERIALISM**

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ABSTRACT

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Ever since Shakespeare was introduced into China at the beginning of this century, he has exerted a persuasive influence upon Chinese theatre and culture. During the process of transplanting into Chinese culture, the dramatist has also undergone some transformations, with his works interpreted and reshaped by the Chinese from the perspective of their own cultural tradition. This thesis is an attempt to explore systematically and deeply the nature and significance of the interaction between Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama and that between the dramatist and Chinese culture.

The first part of the thesis is a brief parallel study of Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama, discovering some basic differences and similarities between the two types of drama in tragedy, comedy and general artistic characteristics such as the mixture of tragedy and comedy, deployment of time and space, characterization, poetic qualities and the use of imagery, etc, and tracing the differences back to the related cultural contexts. This parallel study serves as a basis to develop the central argument of the thesis.

Part II examines the nature and significance of the interaction between Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama, beginning with a brief survey of the introduction of Shakespeare into modern China and looking particularly at the impact of Shakespeare upon traditional Chinese drama in academic, theatrical and literary circles and the consequences of such an impact. This part also investigates the metamorphoses of Shakespeare on the Chinese stage and discusses the achievements of some Shakespeare productions presented in the form of traditional Chinese drama. Other transformations of Shakespeare's plays on the Chinese stage and the significance of all these sinicized Shakespeare productions are also examined.

Part III explores the interaction between Shakespeare and Chinese culture, discovering the widespread and profound influence of the dramatist on Chinese culture in many aspects and the use of Shakespeare in the country as a means of constructing cultural meaning. It also analyzes what factors operate culturally, socially and historically in the process of the assimilation of Shakespeare and explores the multiple perspectives of the Chinese on the dramatist which form the general Chinese vision of Shakespeare.

## CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	i
Editorial Note	ii
Introduction	iii
<b>Part I</b>	
Chapter 1: Tragedy and Comedy: the Culturally Produced Difference and Similarity	1
Chapter 2: General Artistic Characteristics and the Related Cultural Contexts	58
<b>Part II</b>	
Chapter 3: The Impact of Shakespeare Upon Traditional Chinese Drama: Shakespeare in Modern China	100
Chapter 4: The Metamorphoses of Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage: the Convergence of Shakespeare and Traditional Chinese Drama	146
<b>Part III</b>	
Chapter 5: Looking Beyond the Interaction Between Shakespeare and Traditional Chinese Drama: Shakespeare in the Cultural Landscape of China	198
Chapter 6: The Multiple Perspective of the Chinese on Shakespeare: Confucianism, Marxism and Humanism	245
Conclusion	298
Bibliography	303

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### **Editorial Note**

All references to Shakespeare are to Peter Alexander's edition of The Complete Works of Shakespeare (London, 1988). All quotations from traditional Chinese drama are taken from Wang Ji Si, ed., The Ten Great Classical Chinese Tragedies (Zhongguo Shi Da Gudian Beiju Ji) (Shanghai, 1983) and The Ten Great Classical Chinese Comedies (Zhongguo Shi Da Gudian Xiju Ji) (Shanghai, 1983). All books, journals, magazines and newspapers published in China are in Chinese, so all quotations from Chinese drama and all Chinese references are my translations, unless otherwise indicated. Chinese names are spelled according to the Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet worked out by the Chinese government in 1958.

## INTRODUCTION

As a 'cultural hero', Shakespeare has not only been a major figure in Anglo-American culture, but also produced a great impact on many alien cultures all over the world. The exploration of the interaction between Shakespeare and alien cultures has consequently formed and will continue to form an important part of Shakespeare studies.

Ever since the dramatist was introduced into China at the beginning of this century, he has exerted a tremendous influence upon Chinese theatre and culture. The Shakespeare industry in China has rapidly flourished since the New Cultural Movement in 1919, with his works largely read, interpreted and performed by the people. The enthusiasm of the Chinese for the playwright has constantly run high, particularly after the Cultural Revolution. Westerners can hardly realize how ardently Shakespeare is admired and worshipped by the Chinese people. In literary and artistic circles, he is regarded as the god of art. For the reading public, his writing is received as well as Mao Ze Dong's book in the Cultural Revolution.

The reason why Shakespeare occupies so high a position in the cultural landscape of China is evident. On one hand, Shakespeare has greatly affected traditional Chinese drama and infused new blood into the old dramatic tradition. Helping to form a new dramatic concept, he has also produced an impact on the formation and development of modern Chinese theatre which is centred on the practice of spoken drama. On the other hand, Shakespeare has entered into numerous domains of Chinese culture and exerted a widespread and profound influence upon them. In a sense, as an 'institution maker', Shakespeare has made a great contribution to the constitution of the 'New Culture' of China (the culture in modern and contemporary China which is a combination of traditional Chinese culture and some elements of Western culture) and has permeated Chinese life like no other great Western cultural figure.

During the process of transplanting into Chinese culture, Shakespeare has inevitably undergone some transformations, because

the problem of the transference of plays from culture to culture is seen not just as a question of transplanting the text, but of conveying its meaning and adapting it to its new cultural environment so as to create new meanings.<sup>1</sup>

It is obvious that in order to adapt himself to the cultural environment of China, Shakespeare has presented a different appearance to the Chinese. His works have been interpreted and reshaped by the people from the perspective of their cultural tradition. It can be said that a 'Chinese Shakespeare' has been created during the process of Shakespeare's reception in China.

Therefore, it might justly be said that the study of the interaction between Shakespeare and Chinese culture should form an important part of Shakespeare studies. It provides a valuable perspective from which to consider the nature and implication of the 'universal appeal' of the dramatist, allowing for the striking cultural discrepancy between Western and Eastern culture. The distinctive interpretation of Shakespeare by the Chinese will make the Shakespeare 'industry' more varied and diverse. Yet it is a pity that Shakespearean practice in China is still so little known to the West, with only a few articles published in the West to give simple accounts of some activities concerning Shakespeare criticism and production in the country.<sup>2</sup> The nature and significance of the interaction between Shakespeare and Chinese theatre and that between Shakespeare and Chinese

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<sup>1</sup>. Hanna Scolnicov, 'Introduction', The Play Out of Context, ed. by Hanna Scolnicov and Peter Holland (Cambridge, 1989), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>. See Qi Xin He, 'China's Shakespeare', Shakespeare Quarterly, 37 (1986), 149-59.

Philip Brockbank, 'Shakespeare Renaissance in China', Shakespeare Quarterly, 39 (1988), 195-204.

Pei De Zha and Jia Tian, 'Shakespeare in Traditional Chinese Operas', Shakespeare Quarterly, 39 (1988), 204-11.

culture have not been examined comprehensively and profoundly in either Chinese or Western academic circles.

Thus this thesis is an attempt to fill this gap; to explore the nature and significance of the interaction between Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama and the interaction between the dramatist and Chinese culture. The thesis begins with a brief parallel study of Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama, discovering some basic differences and similarities between the two types of drama in tragedy, comedy and general artistic characteristics, and tracing them to the related cultural contexts. This parallel study serves as a basis to develop the central argument of the thesis. The following influential study seeks to demonstrate the great impact of Shakespeare upon traditional Chinese drama along with the introduction of the dramatist into the country and to show how the Chinese dramatic tradition in turn enriches Shakespeare production in China and causes a fascinating transformation of Shakespeare's plays on the Chinese stage. The thesis then discusses how Shakespeare's influence extends to modern Chinese theatre and many other cultural fields such as education, entertainment, literature and art, politics, customs, etc, forming a complex institutional reality. The use of Shakespeare as a means of constructing cultural meaning is to be seen clearly here. Finally, the thesis reveals what factors operate culturally, socially and historically in the process of the assimilation of Shakespeare by Chinese culture and presents an account of the multiple perspectives of the Chinese on the dramatist which greatly affect the interpretation and reproduction of Shakespeare by the people and contribute to the formation of the general Chinese vision of Shakespeare.

The interaction between Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama well reflects the nature of the exchange between Western theatre and oriental theatre in the twentieth century and forms a substantial part of the intercultural tendency of the post-modern theatre. This tendency, as some critics have pointed out, demonstrates that realism-oriented Western theatre shows an interest in the 'distancing sense' and stylized techniques of oriental theatre, while the non-realistic oriental theatre largely studies the realistic dramatic concept and technique of

Western theatre.<sup>3</sup> The interaction between Shakespeare and Chinese culture, in a sense, represents in microcosm the relationship between Western culture and Chinese culture. There has been prevalent a wrong argument in China, shaped by the changing economic and political contexts, that the two great cultural traditions conflict with each other. Some radical intellectuals maintain that the Chinese people should completely abandon their cultural tradition and replace it with Western culture. Conversely, some conservative politicians try to resist the 'invasion' of Western culture, fearing they may lose a long-standing cultural tradition, as well as their power. Admittedly, the introduction of Western culture into the country, in the short term, has indeed caused a certain degree of crisis in conventional culture, as we see the initial influence of Shakespeare on traditional Chinese drama in the thesis. But, in the long term, Chinese culture will benefit from the impact and enliven itself through absorbing the strong points of Western culture, as we demonstrate in the thesis. We therefore can say that the two great cultures in fact complement each other.

The present study is undertaken in the light of cultural materialism. This is not merely because the topic is based on cultural studies. It is mainly because the principal ideas of the thesis are closely related to relevant cultural contexts: the different characteristics of Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama are traced back to their cultural circumstances which help to explain the formation of such differences; the interaction between Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama is also considered against the social and cultural backgrounds of the country, as it is far more than an interaction between two types of drama. What is more important, the reception, interpretation and reconstruction of Shakespeare by the Chinese cannot be accurately and deeply examined without relating them to the cultural context of China, because

Shakespeare's text is reconstructed, reappraised,

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<sup>3</sup>. Yu Yi, 'The Exchange between Oriental Theatre and Western Theatre', The Selection of Comparative Drama, ed. by Xia Xie Shi and Lu Run Tang (Beijing, 1988), pp. 118-48.

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>4</sup>

The Chinese perception of Shakespeare is by no means a simple, monochromatic and frozen vision conjured up by the 'universal appeal' of the dramatist or any 'authentic interpretation'. On the contrary, it is a complex, colourful and changeable vision made by the changing social, cultural and historical contexts of China.

The first part of this thesis gives an account of the difference and similarity between Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama in many aspects and analyzes the reasons by tracing them back to the relevant cultural circumstances; earlier parallel studies of Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama in China normally tended to describe only some superficial differences and similarities between individual Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese plays, and rarely explored the cause in their cultural traditions.<sup>5</sup> In the parallel study of this part, emphasis is placed on traditional Chinese drama and its cultural context, in order to clarify the

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<sup>4</sup>. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, 'Foreword, Cultural Materialism', Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism, ed. by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Manchester, 1985), p. viii.

<sup>5</sup>. See Chen Xing He, 'Hamlet and The Orphan of the House Zhao', Journal of Nanjing Teachers College. 2 (1983), 22-7.

Chen Sou Zhu, 'The Peony Pavilion and Romeo and Juliet', Tang Xian Zu Studies: A Selection (Beijing, 1984), pp. 224-54.

Ye Xiao Fan, 'The Sad Story of Lady Wang and Romeo and Juliet', A Selection of Comparative Literature (Tianjing, 1984), pp. 107-25.

Fang Ping, 'Cleopatra and Lady Yang in The Hall of Longevity', Literature and Art Studies, 2 (1985), 116-24.

Hong Xin, 'Othello and The Story of a Jade Hairpin', Theatre World, 3 (1986), 86-7.

Xu Hao Yu, 'Macbeth and The Orphan of the House Zhao', Chinese Literature Studies, 1 (1988), 56-61.

(All these articles are only available in Chinese)

discussion of Shakespeare's experience in China in the following parts. Chapter 1 deals with the difference and similarity between the two types of drama in tragedy and comedy against their cultural backgrounds, with special attention to the tragic concepts and comic patterns which will be related frequently to the argument in Part II and Part III. Chapter 2 discovers the difference and similarity between Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama in some general artistic characteristics such as the mixture of tragedy and comedy, deployment of time and space, characterization, poetic quality and the use of imagery, etc. The relevant cultural circumstances are also analyzed.

Part II examines the nature and significance of the interaction between Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama. Chapter 3 begins with a brief survey of the introduction of Shakespeare into modern China including translation and performance, looking particularly at the impact of the dramatist on traditional Chinese drama in academic, theatrical and literary circles and the consequences of such an impact. Chapter 4 investigates the possibility and advantages of performing Shakespeare's plays in the form of traditional Chinese drama and discusses the achievements of some Shakespeare productions presented in the major types of traditional Chinese drama such as Beijing opera, Kunju opera, Shaoxing opera and Huangmei opera; it also looks at other metamorphoses of Shakespeare's plays on the Chinese stage and pays special attention to the significance of all these sinicized Shakespeare productions to both Shakespearean theatre and traditional Chinese drama in contemporary China.

Part III explores the interaction between Shakespeare and Chinese culture. Chapter 5 discovers the widespread and profound influence of the dramatist on Chinese culture and shows how his plays flourish and function in varied and diverse cultural forms. This chapter also discusses the operation of Shakespeare as a cultural phenomenon in the customs and daily life of the Chinese and the use of the dramatist in the country as a means of constructing cultural meaning. Chapter 6 analyzes what factors operate culturally, socially and historically in the process of the assimilation of Shakespeare by Chinese culture and explores the multiple

perspectives of the Chinese on the dramatist, showing how greatly they affect the interpretation of Shakespeare by the people and considering the different function of these perspectives in the formation of the general Chinese vision of Shakespeare.

## **Chapter 1. Tragedy and Comedy: Culturally Produced Difference and Similarity**

One feature of the new interest in comparative literature in the last two decades has been the examination of the distinctions of literary works belonging to the same genre but from different literary traditions. Such research, in a sense, serves as an easy way to understand the features of alien cultures because, generally, literary characteristics are culturally produced, and the parallel study of different literary traditions helps to explain the interaction between them. Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama, as the representatives of two great dramatic traditions, come to the audience with their extraordinary fascinations. Although they share some common features as the same genre of art, there are many striking differences between them and a study of the nature of these differences will be essential as a first step towards understanding the interaction between the two types of drama in modern China. The differences and affinities between Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama can be clearly seen in their tragedies and comedies. Shakespeare's tragic concept differs evidently from that of traditional Chinese drama, though both command pity and sympathy; his comic concept is roughly akin to that of traditional Chinese drama, though their different comic patterns interestingly display the influence of their cultural circumstances.

This chapter, therefore, aims first to draw a comparison between Shakespearean and traditional Chinese tragedy, discussing in particular tragic elements such as theme, the treatment of characters, conflict, ending, etc, and examining the difference in concept between the two tragedies, and then to explore the cultural context which has shaped such a difference. The chapter also deals with the difference and similarity between Shakespearean and traditional Chinese comedy in some fundamental comic elements, such as classification, central theme, characters, comic patterns, etc, and then analyzes the comic concept which

Shakespeare and traditional Chinese dramatists followed, and finally explores the connections between these two types of comedy and their theatrical and cultural conventions. Emphasis will be laid on the discussion of the tragic concepts and comic patterns of Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama which greatly concern the argument in the later chapters.

The archetype of tragedy is usually related to the suffering and death of a protagonist. But the particular themes of tragedies vary with different plays and practically we find difficulty in grouping Shakespeare's tragedies according to theme, as some Shakespeare critics pointed out.<sup>1</sup> For the convenience of the present study, I simply classify Shakespeare's tragedies into three categories according to their subject matter: love tragedies, political tragedies, and the combination of these two categories, e.g. Antony and Cleopatra. The classification of traditional Chinese tragedy can follow this pattern too. In the ten best known traditional Chinese tragedies, which were generally accepted as the 'ten great classical Chinese tragedies' by Chinese theatrical circles in the last decade,<sup>2</sup> there are more love tragedies and fewer political tragedies than in Shakespeare's tragedies. We can see a fair number of love-political tragedies in the traditional Chinese dramatic heritage and three of them are included in the 'ten great classical Chinese tragedies'.

Shakespearean political tragedies are linked by the theme of the struggle for power in a royal family or among the leading figures in the political arena, while the majority of traditional Chinese political tragedies recount the conflict between virtuous ministers and treacherous ministers, as in The Flag of Loyalty (Jing Zhong Qi), The Story of the Honest Subjects (Qing Zhong Pu) and The Orphan of the House Zhao (Zhao Shi Gu Er). The last one, The Orphan of the House Zhao, was introduced to Europe in the eighteenth century and adapted by French, English and other European playwrights. In 1759, an English adaptation of this famous classical

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<sup>1</sup>. Dieter Mehl, Shakespeare's Tragedies: An Introduction, (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 8-9.

<sup>2</sup>. See The Ten Great Classical Chinese Tragedies (Zhong Guo Shi Da Gu Dian Bei Ju), ed. by Wang Ji Si (Shanghai, 1983), later cited as ZGSDGDBJJ.

Chinese tragedy by Arthur Murphy was presented at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, with the principal character played by David Garrick.<sup>3</sup> Like Voltaire, Murphy adapted the play by changing some characters and plots to suit national taste. And one of his main aims was, as he stated in the added prologue, to introduce Confucian morals and the related exotic setting to the audience.<sup>4</sup> Some traditional Chinese political tragedies have justice or law as their central theme, for instance, the well known Yuan play The Injustice to Dou E, in which Dou E, the heroine, was executed on an unjust charge. This theme seems to be rather similar to one encountered in Shakespeare's 'problem plays'.

It is not easy to find a formula for the theme of Shakespearean love tragedies, but it is much easier to generalize about the theme of traditional Chinese love tragedies. They are all concerned with the conflict between the lovers and feudal ethics. In most cases, like Romeo and Juliet, the tragic fate of the lovers derives clearly enough from the pressure in their environment and the tragic impediments are the parents, as well as some immoral suitors, and beyond them, the rigid community, representative of the doctrine of Confucianism.<sup>5</sup> In ancient China, freedom of marriage was inconceivable and the younger generation had no choice but accepted the decision of the old generation. There are three love tragedies in the 'ten great classical Chinese tragedies': The Sad Story of Lady Wang (Jiao Hong Ji), which has been called the 'Chinese Romeo and Juliet', The Story of a Pipa (Pipa Ji) and The Tower of Lei Fen (Lei Fen Ta).

The themes of traditional Chinese love-political tragedies are more complex

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<sup>3</sup>. Highfill, Philip H., and Kalman A. Burnim, and Edward A. Langhans, A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers and Other Stage Personnel in London 1660-1800, 14 vols (Illinois, 1984), IV, p. 31, X, p. 395.

<sup>4</sup>. Arthur Murphy, 'The Orphan of China: A Tragedy', The British Drama: A Collection of the Most Esteemed Tragedies, Comedies, Operas and Farces in the English Language (London, 1974), p. 1394.

<sup>5</sup>. The original thought of Confucius was quite humane and benevolent. Yet more and more strict moral principles were added to it by later thinkers due to the need of the feudal rulers to strengthen their absolute monarchy.

than those in Shakespeare's tragedies. These plays deal with not only the incompatibility of the desire for love and the desire for power, as in Antony and Cleopatra, but also how the pleasures of love are destroyed by the great turbulence in Chinese history. Thus in the plays, the lovers encounter desperate situations caused by domestic troubles and foreign invasions, for instance, in Autumn in the Han Palace (Han Gong Qu) and The Fan of Peach Blossom (Tao Hua Shan). The Hall of Longevity (Chang Sheng Dian) parallels Antony and Cleopatra in this category of traditional Chinese tragedy, with a sad story about Emperor Tang Ming and his favourite concubine Lady Yang. In the play, the more they wallow in their love pleasure, the more the Emperor neglects his office duty, which eventually results in an armed rebellion. On the way of escape from the calamity, Emperor Tang Ming has to issue, with great reluctance, an order to execute Lady Yang, so as to calm down the soldiers whose resentment against her is running high. With evident cultural bias, the thematic treatment of this play differs from that of Antony and Cleopatra. The author's marvellous illustration of this popular historical event in the Tang Dynasty,<sup>6</sup> more or less, embodies a conventional Chinese political idea that beautiful women are the root of social upheaval. In fact, Hong Sheng, the playwright, has transcended this traditional dramatic motif and made his play rather complex and ambiguous.

A striking contrast between Shakespeare's tragedy and traditional Chinese tragedy is to be found in the treatment of the protagonists. In Shakespearean tragedies, the chief characters are mainly great heroes of high degree: kings, princes or the leaders of states. They need not obey anybody or follow any conventional moral doctrine. They are their own masters and can exercise great freedom in their choice. So they are the least liable to become victims of other people's will. By contrast, traditional Chinese tragedy is concerned with people in relatively lower social positions, often with subjects in political tragedies, as Zhou Shun Chang in The Story of the Honest Subjects and Yue Fei in The Flag of Loyalty, or even with

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<sup>6</sup>. In 755 A.D. An Lu Shan, a general, launched an armed rebellion against Emperor Tang Ming and occupied the capital Chang An. But the rebellion was quickly put down.

ordinary people in the love tragedies, as Zhao Wu Niang in The Story of a Pipa and Lady Wang in The sad story of Lady Wang. Therefore, the principal characters of traditional Chinese tragedies are those who cannot decide their own actions. They are not the rulers but the ruled. They have to submit to the authority of a monarch or comply with the moral doctrine of Confucianism. So they are very liable to become victims of other people's will. There are paramount rulers , normally emperors, existing in the plots of some traditional Chinese tragedies. But, they can hardly be seen as the leading or significant characters in the plays because they normally do not appear on the stage and serve only as backstage manipulators and arbitrators, a little bit like the kings in Moliére's comedies. Their decrees are announced by courtiers at times, particularly in the final scenes of these plays. A few traditional Chinese love-political tragedies are exceptions in this aspect. In The Autumn in the Han Palace, the main plot is concerned with the love between Emperor Han Yuan and his concubine Wang Zhao Jun against the political setting of a threat of foreign invasion. In The Hall of Longevity, as I have described before, Emperor Tang Ming and his favourite concubine Lady Yang might be seen as the two leading characters in the play. But I would argue that the real protagonists in these two plays are the two ladies, Wang Zhao Jun and lady Yang, but not the two emperors, for the following reasons. Firstly, the characters who suffer most from the calamities in these two tragedies are the two ladies but not their lovers. Secondly , the characters who are destroyed by the calamities are the two ladies, whereas Emperor Han Yuan and Emperor Tang Ming survive the disasters.

Another interesting phenomenon in the comparison between Shakespeare's tragedies and traditional Chinese tragedies in their treatment of the protagonists is: Shakespeare's tragedy is a world of men and traditional Chinese tragedy is mainly a world of women. As everyone knows, almost all the principal characters in Shakespeare's tragedies are men, such as Hamlet, Macbeth, King Lear, Othello, Caesar, Timon, etc. On the contrary, in the majority of the most remarkable traditional Chinese tragedies, the leading characters are women. Of the 'ten great classical Chinese tragedies', seven plays have women as principal characters, such as Dou E in The Injustice to Dou E, Wang Jiao Niang in The Sad Story of Lady

Wang, Zhao Wu Niang in The story of a Pipa, Bai Niang Zi in The Tower of Lei Fen, Li Xian Jun in The Fan of Peach Blossom, and as well as Lady Yang and Wang Zhao Jun. The tragic effects of Shakespeare's tragedies are mainly produced by the destruction of the male protagonists, but the suffering and destruction of the women in major traditional Chinese tragedies produce the main tragic tones in the plays and appeal strongly to common human sympathy and pity.

The difference between Shakespeare's tragedy and traditional Chinese tragedy in the social status of the protagonists is rooted in the two 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. Tragedy as a dramatic genre also emerged soon after this heroic time, and the tragic playwrights took stories from Greek myth and Homeric epic for their subject matter. The traditional Western concept of tragedy has been shaped since then. It may be stated as 'Great people are engaged in great events, both appropriate to the noble genre of tragedy'.<sup>7</sup> Elizabethan dramatist inherited the theatrical convention of tragedy largely from their Greek and Roman professional predecessors. So, we can take it for granted that Shakespeare has great heroes as his tragic protagonists although he presents more common humanity through his noble protagonists.

By contrast, classical Chinese literature developed in a different order, beginning with lyric poetry rather than any narrative literary form.<sup>8</sup> These lyric poems, such as those in the famous collection of poems, The Book of Songs (Shi Jing), represent mainly the thoughts and feelings of ordinary people with little supernatural element and more realistic reflection. Thus, at the very beginning of Chinese culture, a Chinese literary tradition was established without giving priority to great heroes. It is commonly said by Chinese scholars that Confucianism tends

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<sup>7</sup>. Geoffrey Brereton, Principles of Tragedy (London, 1968), p. 17.

<sup>8</sup>. Some Chinese scholars argued that there are some epics in early Chinese poetry, such as 'Sheng Ming', 'Gong Liu' in The Book of Songs (Shi Jing). But, generally, these poems are too short and simple to be classified as epics.

to exclude supernatural things, so that myth has had very little influence on classical Chinese literature.

To a certain extent, most well known traditional Chinese tragedies are more like classical Chinese poems brought bodily upon the stage in two major themes: the complaints of Shi (educated officials in or out office) about the frustrations in their political careers, and the sorrows of Qie (concubines, or ladies from the middle or lower classes) over their misfortunes in seeking love. So it is easier to understand why traditional Chinese tragedies rarely have paramount rulers as protagonists, and why subjects (commissioned Shi) and women (Qie) come much into these plays as leading characters.

A minor factor which affects the social status of the protagonists in traditional Chinese tragedies is that the golden age of traditional Chinese drama is in the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368 A.D) when more and more townspeople arose as a social class in big cities. The playwrights of the Yuan Dynasty had to suit their theatrical style to the taste of ordinary urban audiences. To achieve this professional goal, they often drew materials from the oral narratives and folktales of the Song Dynasty which described the life of ordinary people. This is partly the reason for the lower social stratum of the protagonists in traditional Chinese tragedies. More indirect reasons for the lower degree of the principal characters in traditional Chinese tragedies are to be found in the deep structure of Chinese culture. I shall return to this subject later.

In his Poetics, Aristotle emphasizes that the protagonist of a tragedy must not be perfect and faultless. He must be a man between the two extremes of good and evil. This means that we can always see some moral weakness or defect in the character of a tragic protagonist. In this aspect of tragedy, Shakespeare seems to follow Aristotle strictly. It is fair to suppose that the notion of a 'tragic flaw' is in accordance with Shakespeare's idea of human nature, which can be seen, for example, in the passage of Hamlet's criticism of the bad custom of Denmark (1. 4. 23-37). In Shakespearean tragedies, we can hardly find a perfect principal character.

Even Hamlet, the embodiment of the humanistic ideal of Shakespeare, does not behave as firmly and resolutely as a noble hero in the face of his unshirkable duty of revenge. Filled with disgust of the world and life, and indulging in his endless meditations on the philosophical meaning of existence and death, his soul is wrecked by his own hesitation (But this is ironically the very reason we like him). There are also apparent defects in the chief characters of other Shakespearean tragedies, for instance, the wilfulness of King Lear, the self-deception and jealousy of Othello, the ambition of Macbeth, the arrogance of Coriolanus, etc.

Coming back to traditional Chinese tragedies, we find, surprisingly, that the formula of a 'tragic flaw' cannot be applied to their protagonists because the major characters of traditional Chinese tragedies are almost perfect in terms of either morality or aesthetics. We see practically no obvious weak points in their natures which may bring about their destructions. In traditional Chinese tragedies, all the male principal characters are virtuous and loyal officials. They are always concerned about their monarch, their country and their people, but seldom about themselves. For instance, Zhou Shun Chang, the hero in The Story of the Honest Subject, was an honest and upright senior official. He still concerned himself closely with the desperate situation at the court after he was ousted from his post by a corrupt minister. He was very poor although he had been in office for ten years, for he had never accepted a bribe or even a gift from a friend. His English counterparts can be found in Shakespearean tragedies and historical plays, such as Kent in King Lear, and the Duke of Gloucester in Henry the Sixth. The female leading characters in traditional Chinese tragedies are as sweet-natured and lovely as the leading women in Shakespearean comedies. Unfortunately, what life repays them for their virtues is not happiness but suffering and death.

Serving as an ambiguous dramatic personage, the imperial concubine Lady Yang in The Hall of Longevity may invite some doubt about the perfection of the protagonists in traditional Chinese tragedies. In the play, seemingly, Lady Yang is presented to us as both the root of Anshi Rebellion and an unswervingly loyal love. In fact, it is unfair to put the blame on her, considering that she is a victim of the

corrupt feudal political system and the scapegoat of Emperor Tang Ming. In order to vindicate the absolute authority of monarchy, conventional Chinese political ideas tend to shift the faults of the paramount rulers onto their subjects and court ladies. Emperor Tang Ming makes every effort to please Lady Yang, including appointing her relatives to high positions which evokes strong resentment in the court. But the more he gives her, the greater the danger he puts her in, and this eventually leads to the destruction of his love. The situation demonstrates that: 'Everywhere in this tragic world, man's thought, translated into act, is transformed into the opposite of itself'.<sup>9</sup> As Shakespeare did in Antony and Cleopatra, Hong Sheng, the author of this play, also presents public responsibility as the opposite of love. Without evident errors, Lady Yang stands, in the mind of Chinese people, mainly as an embodiment of a traditional Chinese common saying that "Beautiful women are born unlucky",<sup>10</sup> and her misfortune and death appeal strongly to the sympathy and pity of the Chinese.

It is easy to note that the principal characters of traditional Chinese tragedies come to us with clear and static moral keynotes. As 'positive characters', they must appeal to respect and sympathy, or as 'negative' characters, to hatred and contempt. People have rarely found it difficult to pass a moral judgement on a character in traditional Chinese tragedies. By contrast, the characters in Shakespearean tragedy appear to be more morally ambiguous and variable. We can find so many paradoxes in the traits of Shakespearean tragic characters that we don't know how to evaluate them properly. For example, Edmund is presented to us both as a sinister villain and a dynamic young man. Although generally we dislike him, we still find a little sympathy for him in our hearts. As for King Lear, Othello, Macbeth and most other major characters in Shakespearean tragedies, they also evoke complex and ambiguous responses in an audience. It might justly be said that Shakespeare understands so very much more of human nature than we do. There is no doubt

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<sup>9</sup>. A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy (London, 1905), p. 28.

<sup>10</sup>. Like Helen in ancient Greece, Lady Yang was praised by the Chinese as one of the 'four most beautiful women' in Chinese history.

that his characters are more true to nature than those in traditional Chinese drama. To some extent, as we analyzed before, Lady Yang and Emperor Tang Ming in The Hall of Longevity appear to be slightly similar to Shakespearean characters, with paradoxes in their natures. But this feature in the play is not represented as clearly as in Shakespearean tragedies.

Dwelling on his notion of conflict, Hegel opened up a new field to explore the essence of tragedy. Some later theories of tragedy, including that of Engels, have either been directly derived from or have leaned heavily upon the Hegelian account. As Hegel's English disciple, Bradley applied this notion of conflict to the analysis of Shakespearean tragedy. The tragic theories of Hegel and his followers were attacked by some modern dramatic critics. Dissatisfied with the Hegelian historical approach to tragedy, they think that Hegel and his followers overemphasize the attempt to find the 'real presence' of the character and the author's mind.<sup>11</sup>

In terms of the history of literary criticism, the Hegelian notion of conflict indeed led to a critical formulism in most socialist countries, especially in China during the 1960s and 1970s, characterized by commenting on literary works in the light of vulgar sociology and the principles of class struggle. In spite of these negative influences, we have to recognize that the notion of conflict is a valuable perspective from which to view tragedy, and that all tragedies indeed contain conflicts in different forms.

There are numerous and apparent conflicts in Shakespearean tragedies. It seems that Shakespeare always represents them in a dialectical way without describing them statically and superficially. In his tragedy, the general ethical tendency is obvious. However, he is not satisfied with a mere moral approach which tends to divide the two antagonistic sides of a conflict into 'good' and 'evil' according to the provisional moral doctrine. Examining carefully the motives of both sides' actions,

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<sup>11</sup>. See John Drakakis, 'Introduction', Alternative Shakespeare, ed. by John Drakakis (London, 1985), pp. 6-9.

he seems to identify them with the relevant socio-political circumstances and show the historical justification of both sides.

In Hamlet, we see neither a play with bloody revenge as its theme nor a play centered on moral struggle between a usurper and a hero who consciously defends a monarchy. What impresses us most about the conflict in the play is a strong scepticism caused by the striking contrast between humanistic ideals and cruel reality, which extends to the meditation on the general human condition and the meaning of life. About Caesar and Brutus, it is also difficult for us to judge the rights and wrongs of them in terms of morality.

By contrast with the conflicts in Shakespearean tragedies, the conflicts in traditional Chinese tragedies appear to be explicit and stereotyped. The traditional Chinese dramatists are more interested in presenting the outer shape of a tragic conflict. They believe that the ultimate power in the tragic world is a moral order and tend to divide the two forces in a conflict into 'good' and 'evil'. The moral order presented by traditional Chinese tragic dramatists is not a universal one, as in Shakespearean mature tragedies, but a peculiar one formed by Chinese cultural conventions and based on Confucian ethical doctrines.

There are two major types of conflict in traditional Chinese tragedies. The first is a conflict between two social forces; one strives for the realization of 'Ren', the other disrupts it. 'Ren' is an ultimate social ideal of Confucianism based on Chinese patriarchal society in ancient times. The main idea of 'Ren' is to maintain harmonious relations in a big family between father and son, husband and wife, elder brother and younger brother, etc. With the lapse of time, the authority of father and husband and the obedience of son and wife are more and more emphasized. Confucianism extends this family harmony to the entire empire. Since the relationship between colleagues or between friends is comparable to that between brothers, while the relationship between emperor and subject is analogous to that between benevolent father and filial son, the whole social order is conceived of in terms of family relationships. Thus different moral rules ('Li') are set for

different people to observe, e.g. 'Zhong' (Loyalty) for subject, 'Xiao' (Filial Piety) for son, 'Jie' (Chastity) for wife, 'Yi' (Loyalty to Friends) for anybody. 'Li' serves only as a means to the ends of 'Ren'. But in the later dynasties in Chinese history, 'Li' was carried to extremes and became more and more strict and rigid. This actually violates the original spirit of 'Ren'. Thus we have the second type of conflict in traditional Chinese tragedies: the conflict between 'Ren' and 'Later Li'.

Basically, the first type of conflict is mainly presented in traditional Chinese political tragedies. For instance, in The Orphan of House Zhao, the treacherous general Tu An Jia is a leading figure of evil force against 'Ren', and he brings about massacre and disorder to the country. The opposite force is composed of loyal subjects: Zhao Dun, Gong Sun Chu Jiu, etc, who follow 'Li' and fight for 'Ren'. The second type of conflict, the conflict between 'Ren' and 'Later Li', is mostly showed in traditional Chinese love tragedies. In these plays, the young lovers strive for the freedom to choose their spouses and the parents persist in the rigid principle that the marriage of young people must be arranged by the old generation.

Consequently, we might notice another difference in tragic conflict between Shakespearean tragedies and traditional Chinese tragedies. Shakespeare mainly presents a conflict between an individual will and a social order. The hero in his tragedy acts with personal desire or passion, but for a less apparent moral purpose. Yet, in traditional Chinese tragedy, we always see a conflict between two moral tendencies. The principal character always acts with clear moral intentions. In The Injustice to Dou E, confronted with the threat of Zhang Lur, a villain who forces Dou E to marry him, the heroine's first response is not to reprimand him for his wickedness, but to express her moral faith:

A good horse does not change its saddle,  
A chaste lady will never remarry,  
I would die rather than marry you,  
I shall go to the court with you.

(ZGSDGDBJJ, Act IV. 'Qiao Pair'. p. 24.)

Through the conflicts and the destructions of the chief characters, the authors of traditional Chinese tragedies tend to reaffirm the supremacy of the existing feudal political system and the justification of Confucian moral order. However, in Shakespearean tragedies, particularly in his 'great tragedies', we feel that the playwright has no much interest in affirming a particular political system or peculiar moral doctrine, but tends to affirm a universal justice, the dignity of humankind and the value of life. As Dorothea Krook remarks,

By being reconciled to the suffering as necessary, we reaffirm the supremacy of the universal moral order, and by this act of recognition and submission to the universal moral order, which the reaffirmation of its supremacy implies, we express and affirm the dignity of man and the value of human life.<sup>12</sup>

The reason why Hamlet revenges his father's death on Claudius is not that he conscientiously defends a hereditary monarchical system, but that his father, as a perfect model of human being, is murdered by a base person, and that he must bring the disjointed justice back to its course.

In a conflict as presented by traditional Chinese tragedy, the dividing line between the two antagonistic groups is clear and firm. In most cases, a group cannot change into the reverse. In accordance with both traditional Chinese moral ideas and aesthetic standards, a good man always does good works and a bad man does evil deeds. If a playwright changes a positive hero into a villain, or a villain becomes a virtuous person, then he will violate the principle that 'Good will be rewarded with good and evil with evil' and his play will lose its moralizing function. Normally, a character like Macbeth was not accessible to an audience in ancient China.

In tragic conflict, the heroes in Shakespearean tragedies are active. They always take the initiative in their action because they have great freedom to make their own choice. By contrast, the leading characters in traditional Chinese tragedies are

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<sup>12</sup>. Dorothea Krook, Elements of Tragedy (New Haven, 1969), p. 15.

passive and inactive in their confrontation with the opposite force, due to their subordinate status; as a Chinese scholar said: 'The characters of traditional Chinese tragedies, in most cases, are forced to act. They never intend to do something to change or improve the existing social structure.'<sup>13</sup>

In Hamlet, after the Prince of Denmark is aware of the truth of his father's death, in spite of mental reservations, he still takes a series of actions (pretending to be mad, arranging a play to verify the story of the ghost, killing Polonius) which arouse the suspicion of Claudius, who then plots against Hamlet's life. It can be said that in tragic conflict, Shakespeare's heroes are normally in 'offensive' positions, while the principal characters in traditional Chinese tragedies are in 'defensive' positions. Generally, the heroes and heroines in traditional Chinese tragedies rarely overstep their own social place in order to act. They keep themselves as subjects and wives very strictly to their social positions, which are set by the feudal society. They refuse to react ... until the evil forces attack them fiercely.

In traditional Chinese political tragedies, as in The Flag of Loyalty, The Story of the Honest Subject and The Orphan of House Zhao, we see first the full antics of the corrupt ministers (deceiving the emperors, holding great power in their hands, framing faithful officials) and then the loyal subjects begin their reactions by exposing the plots of the corrupt ministers, risking their lives to persuade the emperors to punish the corrupt ministers, etc. In traditional Chinese love tragedies, as in The Sad Story of Lady Wang, the chief characters dare not disobey their parents' will or directly reject the suitors chosen by their parents, and have to exercise patience; as a result, they suffer from strain and eventually die of despair. They do not act as bravely as Romeo and Juliet. Lady Bai, in The Tower of Lei Fei, may be singled out as a different heroine. Like the heroines in Shakespearean comedies, she is more active and fearless than other heroines in traditional Chinese tragedies because she belongs to an exceptional category: a supernatural snake.

<sup>13</sup>. Cheng Chao Xiang, 'Tragic Protagonist', Journal of Beijing University, 5 (1987), 73-81 (p. 81).

It is commonly said by critics that the general development of tragic drama has been from the outer manner of man to the inner world of human nature. In Shakespearean tragedy, inward conflict is, probably, the main method used to illustrate the inner world of man. It contributes largely to the dramatic merit of Shakespearean tragedy. The playwright concentrates more on inward conflict than outward conflict because the former delineates the predicament of mankind and the essence of life more subtly than the latter. Seeing Shakespearean tragedies, we are always electrified by the inward struggle in the hero's soul. Hamlet, King Lear, Othello, Macbeth and other great heroes are all torn, shaken and driven by the conflict between their personal passions and impersonal principles.

By contrast, the inner conflict in traditional Chinese tragedy is not as deep or wide as that in Shakespearean tragedy, due to the theatrical conventions in ancient China. The classical Chinese playwrights usually did not write long soliloquies in their works. So there is not much space for a hero to pour out his innermost thought and feeling. Normally, inner conflict in traditional Chinese tragedy is limited to the direct reaction of a hero to the predicament that he encounters, and is not to be extended to the wide range of problems such as profound philosophy, human condition, mystery of the universe, meaning of life and death, etc, which Shakespeare's heroes confront. For example, in Act III of The Injustice to Dou E, after Dou E has been condemned to die, her heart is torn by the wrongful treatment and the threat of death. The inner conflict produced by this situation is simply a hatred for the unjust law and a complaint that even Heaven and Earth do not uphold justice:<sup>14</sup>

The sun and the moon hang highly in the sky,  
 The gods and the ghosts control life and death of man.  
 Heaven and Earth should distinguish between good and evil,  
 But they confuse virtuous person with villain:  
 Why good people are always poor and short lived,  
 And vile creature are rich and have long life.  
 O, Heaven and Earth also fear the strong and oppress the weak,

<sup>14</sup>. In ancient China, people believed that Nature can respond to man's behaviour and uphold justice if some injustice occurs in human society.

They only push the boats floating with the current.  
 O,Earth, you should not be called Earth  
 if you fail to discriminate between good and evil.  
 O,Heaven, you are called Heaven in vain  
 when you mistake the sage and the fool!  
 Ah, only forsake me alone with tears in my eyes.

(ZGSDGDBJJ. Act III. 'Gun Xiu Qiu'. p. 19.)

It is all because officials don't care for justice,  
 People in turn dare not to speak out.

(Ibid, 'Yi Sha'. p. 22.)

In some plays, the playwright deliberately avoids delineating the possible inner conflict, in order to highlight the courage and moral steadfastness of the chief characters. In The Story of the Honest Subject, at the very moment when Zhou Shun Chang, the leading character in the play, is to be arrested by the corrupt minister, he still looks calm and fearless although all his family are steeped in great sadness. His strong moral fibre suggests the character of Titus Andronicus who also shows an unhesitating suppression of personal desire and all the softer emotions.

In The Orphan of House Zhao, which, like Hamlet, has revenge as its central theme, when the orphan is grown up and aware of the truth that the whole household of the Zhao family had been killed by the corrupt minister Tu An Jia and that his foster father is none other than his personal enemy Tu An Jia, he, unlike the Prince of Denmark, decides to avenge himself immediately without delay:

I'm burning with anger after  
 The whole truth has come out,  
 I must capture that vicious old man,  
 And force him to pay with his life,  
 For the murder of the honest officials,  
 And the massacre of the whole family!

(ZGSDGDBJJ, Act IV. 'Pu Tan Le'. p. 90.)

By common sense, it is assumed that there must be some hesitation in the orphan's soul because the corrupt minister Tu An Jia is both his enemy and the benefactor who brought him up. But the playwright would let his hero redress the injustice

firmly and quickly, at the expense of the possible marvellous illustration of the inner struggle in the hero's heart, which may be more attractive to both the Elizabethan and the modern Chinese audiences.

The dramatists of traditional Chinese tragedy, however, are good at depicting a great range of feelings in exquisite verse, giving an audience entry into a hero's innermost thought and moving them deeply. We can find this quality everywhere in the plays. Some of these feelings may belong to genuine inner conflict, particularly those which are produced by the struggle between two spiritual forces, such as a heroine's frustration whether follow her parents' will or chose her lover on her own. The majority of these feelings may not be pure inner conflict when they come from single desire such as the sorrow of a lady on missing her departed lover. Generally speaking, the description of feeling in traditional Chinese tragedy is gentle and sentimental, and not as strong and vigorous as that in Shakespearean tragedy.

People often take it for granted that a tragedy must have a tragic ending. But traditional Chinese tragedy is out of the ordinary with its 'happy ending'. Shakespearean tragedy and other Western tragedy usually ends with the destruction of the hero and his enemy. In traditional Chinese tragedies, after the suffering and destruction of a principal character, there is always a happy event serving as the final ending of the play. These happy endings can be grouped into three types.

First, in political tragedies, at the end of the plays, there are some enlightened emperors or upright officials to punish the corrupt ministers or villains and announce the chief characters' rehabilitations, as in The Story of the Honest Subject, The Flag of Loyalty, and The Injustice to Dou E, etc. Second, in love tragedies, or love-political tragedies, the lovers reunite in fairyland or in dreamland at the end of the plays, as in The Sad Story of Lady Whang, The Hall of Longevity and Autumn in the Han Palace, etc. Finally, in some political tragedies and love tragedies, a later generation descended from the tragic characters takes revenge on the enemies or strives for the liberation and rehabilitation of the characters as in

### The Orphan of House Zhao, The Tower of Lei Fei, etc.

Obviously, the happy ending in traditional Chinese tragedy performs, at least, two functions. The first is to punish the evil force and, accordingly, to reaffirm the supremacy of the moral order. In traditional Chinese tragedy, as we discussed before, the positive moral force is not strong enough to resist the evil force; it cannot wipe out the evil force while being itself destroyed by the opposite side, as occurs in Shakespearean tragedy. This task has to be left to a more powerful defender of moral order to fulfil. The second function of the happy ending is to give the principal characters opportunities to realize their aspirations which have not come true during their life time. It seems that the first function of the happy ending in traditional Chinese tragedy is a logical consequence produced by the fundamental principle of these plays that in any case evil must be punished. The second function looks to be a product of wishful thinking. Yet it shows clearly enough its connection with the Chinese cultural tradition. We shall discuss it later in this chapter.

To some extent, the aims of the happy ending in traditional Chinese tragedy share a common ground with 'Poetic Justice' in seventeenth-century Europe. The latter emphasizes that prosperity and adversity are distributed in proportion to the merits of heroes in literary works. But the happy ending by no means changes the tragic essence of traditional Chinese tragedies. In the plays, after all, the suffering and death of the characters are accomplished facts and the basic elements of tragedy are present in all of them, yielding an essentially tragic vision. Admittedly, however, the happy ending has an evident function of tragic relief to weaken the tragic atmosphere at the end of the plays, in order to comfort the audience.

It is a dubious enterprise to explore the source of tragedy, for a tragic calamity is brought about by jointly so many elements. But we may roughly classify all the possible sources of tragedy into two main categories: internal cause and external cause. Internal cause includes all the personal elements of a protagonist: his weakness, guilt, passion, self-will or blindness in the face of his future. External cause comprises more things than internal cause, coming from the outer world of

a play. It can be some exceptional villainy or criminality, such as is shown by Iago, Claudius, and Edmund in Shakespearean tragedies. It can also be some problems from social circumstances: inhuman law, rigid moral doctrine or even outdated conventions. There is no doubt that all tragedies are brought about by both internal causes and external causes, and none by a single cause. Yet a particular play may be based more on one or other of them. Generally speaking, the tragic fact in Shakespearean tragedy is mainly produced by internal cause, that is, by the hero's mistake or guilt, a flaw in his nature, or by the stubbornness and blindness of his will to transcend his limit, as Nietzsche remarked:

Man's aspiration to transcend his limit entails sacrilege and suffering, being at bottom an attempt to reimpose the original unity of life. The cost of that heroic effort is the annihilation of the individual hero: he suffers the primordial contradiction in his own person.<sup>15</sup>

In traditional Chinese tragedy, on the contrary, the tragic fate is mostly created by external cause. As I discussed before, the principal characters in traditional Chinese tragedies are normally perfect persons without guilt, passion or even extravagant hopes. It is the evil force and injustice of the law, or rigid moral doctrine that destroy them. Therefore, we may think that, in a sense, Shakespearean tragic heroes deserve their catastrophe, but the protagonists in traditional Chinese tragedies do not. Thus it can be said that Shakespearean tragedy is 'a tragedy of the individual' and traditional Chinese tragedy is 'a tragedy of society'.

From this brief comparison of Shakespearean tragedy and traditional Chinese tragedy in theme, treatment of protagonist, conflict, ending and tragic cause, it becomes clear that there are striking differences between the two forms of tragedy in terms of tragic concept, although both imply disaster, suffering and death. For the convenience of the present comparison, we may simply summarize

<sup>15</sup>. M. S. Silk and J. P. Stern, Nietzsche on Tragedy (Cambridge, 1981),

Shakespearean tragedy as: a story of a great man in high degree but with an apparent weakness in his character; driven by his will, desire or passion, and suffering from an exceptional calamity which eventually leads to his destruction.

Correspondingly, we can summarize traditional Chinese tragedy as: a story of an innocent and perfect woman or man in a subordinate position, who fails to defend the moral order or her or his basic personal happiness, suffering from a disaster, and destroyed by the external force of society. Being the same dramatic genre, why do they come to us with such different characteristics? I should like now to discuss this further, together with other related tragic elements, from the angle of cultural tradition.

Philosophy is the foundation of all sorts of culture because every culture must interpret the phenomena of nature, history, and human society. When philosophical ideas come into a tragedy, they would influence some tragic element of the play. It cannot be denied that in most tragedies, more or less, people can see the process of history, the predicament of mankind and the interpretation of such a predicament. In Greek tragedies, the tragic fact that the heroes struggle bravely with a mysterious 'fate' shows that with low cognitive ability of mankind at that time, the ancient Greeks were unable to explain the natural and man-made calamities which they encountered and had to attribute these calamities to gods' will. In Shakespearean tragedies, 'we find practically no trace of fatalism in its more primitive, crude and obvious form',<sup>16</sup> because the cognitive ability of the people in the period of Renaissance has been improved and they have recognized that the predicament and the disaster of human beings derive mainly from the action of man, and from the conflict between men, and that between an individual's personal desire and the moral order. Chinese culture is celebrated for its early-maturing rationalism. The ancient Chinese philosophers pay great attention to the secular world and ignore the divine world. Thus, in traditional Chinese tragedy, we see clearly the connection between the tragic end of a hero and its source, without

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<sup>16</sup>. A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy (London, 1905), p. 29.

misgiving caused by any mysterious supernatural elements.

Traditional Chinese philosophy provides us with a more convincing interpretation of the happy ending in traditional Chinese tragedies. Unlike the Greek philosophers who centre their studies on the origin of the universe and "thing-in-itself", classical Chinese philosophers concentrate on the relations between things, conceiving 'Yin' and 'Yang' as the paramount antithesis of the universe, and five elements (metal, wood, water, fire and earth) as the main pattern of the relationship between things.<sup>17</sup> According to the Yin and Yang principle, there is a corresponding relationship between nature and human, like the macrocosmic and microcosmic relationship in the Middle Ages and the age of Shakespeare. Therefore, just like the cycle of nature, human society moves in the same way: a decline must be followed by new prosperity, disaster by good fortune, etc, with the perception that both nature and human history move in endless cycles. Thus, the ancient Chinese take all the changing phenomena for granted.

Naturally, this mode of thinking would have a great influence upon the creative works of traditional Chinese tragic dramatists. It is assumed that the dramatists would not stop at the moment that a protagonist has suffered or has been destroyed by evil forces; they must show the whole cycle and tend to repay some good fortune to the protagonist for his misfortune, even if by wishful thinking. Consequently, almost all the traditional Chinese tragedies come to us with happy endings, and this pattern derives obviously from the traditional Chinese notion of cyclical recurrence. In traditional Chinese tragedy, there is an exposure of the contradictions in reality, but it is at last concealed by a happy ending which still leaves room for confidence, hope, and optimism over the existing political system and moral order.

By contrast, in Shakespearean tragedy, we see the much fuller exposure and

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<sup>17</sup>. The five elements were successfully used in traditional Chinese medicine to explain various physiological and pathological phenomena, although it seems to be farfetched to use them to interpret some other phenomena in the physical world, especially in human society.

criticism of a wide range of problems of his age and of the general human condition, and we rarely find any largely idealized or deified political system, although Tillyard thought that he had found them in Shakespearean historical plays. Unlike traditional Chinese tragedy, Shakespearean tragedy arouses, in our mind, doubts, scruples, hopelessness, sometime even pessimism and nothingness. This is basically in tune with the contradiction in the philosophy of this age:

Shakespeare's drama reflects conflict between traditional views, as in Aquinas, for whom value may be present and bound up in the object, and newer views of such figures as Bruno, with his aesthetic relativism, and Hobbes, with his notion of value as relative to a market-situation.<sup>18</sup>

Shakespearean tragedy represents the general trend of his age in which more and more people criticize conventional ideas and establish new ideological and value systems. To some extent, Shakespearean tragedy and traditional Chinese tragedy show us one of the main differences between Western culture since the Renaissance and traditional Chinese culture. That is, from the European Renaissance, Western culture has become a dynamic culture, or a 'culture of regeneration', with the ability constantly to produce new things opposite to the old ones. Correspondingly, traditional Chinese tragedy shows clearly that while being unique and rich, Chinese culture had become a static and closed system or a 'culture of preservation' since Buddhism was mingled with Confucianism and Taoism during the Song and Ming Dynasties (about 1000-1400 A.D.). It tended to maintain and defend old ideas and principles, and not to engender new things, as some Chinese scholars pointed out.<sup>19</sup> Traditional Chinese philosophical and political ideas also account for the general tendency of traditional Chinese tragedy to portray subjects and women but not rulers. In ancient China, an emperor has absolute power and divine right, which is based on Confucian ethics and strengthen by the philosophy of Taoism. It is

<sup>18</sup> . W. R. Elton, 'Shakespeare and the Thought of his Age', The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare Studies, ed. by Stanley Wells (Cambridge, 1986), p. 28.

<sup>19</sup> . Liu Zai Fu, 'On Literary Studies', Wen Hui Monthly, 2 ( 1988 ), 2-7.

impossible for traditional Chinese tragic dramatists to present largely the suffering and destruction of emperors, for this would go against both public opinion and the authority of the monarchy. During some periods in Chinese history, e.g. in the Ming Dynasty, special laws were made to prohibit players from acting emperors or speaking any lines in a play to blaspheme emperors. The offenders would be punished seriously, and might even be put to death.<sup>20</sup>

In comparison, Shakespearean tragedy comes to us with a different social and ideological background. In history, England, as well as most other European countries, was not a country with a fully developed centrally controlled political system strictly ruled by a monarch. The relationship between a ruler and his subjects was relatively loose. Unlike Chinese subjects, English subjects were not taught to obey their kings unconditionally. Besides, as a dominant religion in England and Europe, Christianity did not emphasize greatly the authority of secular power. Thus, it can be said that in Western history, the supremacy and divine right of kingship were not largely affirmed and deeply reinforced by philosophical, religious and political ideas.<sup>21</sup> Consequently, it became possible to take mostly the sufferings and the destructions of kings as subject matter, or even to present more corrupt and cruel rulers and less enlightened kings, as Shakespeare did in his tragedies and histories.

Conventional Chinese political ideas and social institutions can help us account for the representation of subjects (officials) and women in traditional Chinese tragedy. As we discussed above, in ancient China, the social positions of a subject, a son and a wife, particularly the positions of a subject and a wife, are subordinate and unstable. It is mostly emphasized that the good relationships between ruler and subject and between husband and wife mainly depend on the behaviour of subject and wife, but not on ruler and husband. A subject and a wife must make every

<sup>20</sup>. Wu Guo Qin, The History of Traditional Chinese Drama (Shanghai, 1980), p. 168.

<sup>21</sup>. There are some exceptions in this respect; for instance, Thomas Hobbes, the English political philosopher, advocated an absolute sovereign.

effort to maintain an harmonious relationship with his ruler and her husband through strict observance of Confucian ethics (Li) --- the absolute submission and loyalty of a subject and the absolute submission and chastity of a wife. The process of seeking and maintaining good relationships with ruler and husband is often full of hardship and suffering and liable to result in misfortune. Therefore, it is inevitable for subjects and wives to act tragic roles on the historical stage.

'Shi' (Confucian politicians and officials) are a very special social class in Chinese history, serving as the representative of Confucianism. In a sense, one cannot understand Chinese culture well without some knowledge of 'Shi'. It is difficult to find its English or European counterpart in Western history because it was produced by a unique examination system in ancient China to select civil officials according to the ability of a candidate but not to his family status. A 'Shi' is not simply an official. In fact, he is normally a trinity of a Confucian scholar, an official and a poet (writer). His experience can be roughly divided into three periods: first, as a student or scholar studying classical learning, especially that of Confucius, and practising writing poems and articles; second, as an official, after passing the imperial examination, serving the emperor in government at different levels, sometimes up to a minister, sometimes down to junior official; third, as a poet or writer, engaging in literary creative works, particularly when he is relegated to a lower position, or ousted from his post, or framed by a corrupt minister.

In Chinese history, 'Shi' stand as both the defender and the sacrifice of the feudal political system in the minds of Chinese people because their official careers are full of frustrations. As a rule, the emperors tend to trust the corrupt officials who always flatter them, and don't like the upright officials who give frank and honest advice. The position of a faithful official, therefore, is quite unstable. It is very likely for him, at any time, to be treated wrongly by his superior or the emperor, and sometimes, even to be executed by a corrupt courtier through the order issued by the emperor, just as we see in traditional Chinese political tragedies, as in The Flag of Loyalty, and The Story of the Honest Subject, etc. Being poets and writers, at the same time, 'Shi' express largely their indignation and complaints

directly in poems, and indirectly in drama and novel. But their resentment, no matter how high, never goes beyond the limit to question the supremacy of the emperor. They never intend to rebel against the emperor, as some subjects in Shakespearean tragedies and histories do, even if they know the emperor is wrong, because the conventional Confucian and Taoist principles ask them to be loyal to the emperor unconditionally. Alternatively, they divert their indignation onto the corrupt courtiers and believe that it is the corrupt courtiers who deceive the emperor and bring about the chaos in the court and society, and that the main or only root of their misfortune is the corrupt subjects but not the emperor. This also partly leads to the stereotyped conflict in traditional Chinese political tragedy and the happy endings in some tragedies.

Thus, at least two evident facts partly account for the appearance of officials (subjects) as protagonists in traditional Chinese tragedies: their liability to meeting with misfortune and their status as writers. By their writers' status, I don't mean that any writer necessarily describes his own experience or his social class in his works. But it is a natural inclination for him to depict what is familiar to him and those whom he knows very well. Shakespeare, of course, is one of a few great writers whose creative activities are not limited by personal experience.

The reason why women are largely presented as protagonists in traditional Chinese tragedies is partly that their social position is, to some extent, the lowest in the society. They have no personal freedom at all and are totally the appendages of men. According to Confucian ethics, a woman must follow the principle of 'the three obedience and the four virtues'. The so called 'three obedience' are that a woman must obey her father before marriage, obey her husband after marriage and follow her son after the death of her husband. The last one means she must live together with her son and not remarry after her husband dies. The 'four virtues' are set for a married woman. When she comes into her husband's big family after marriage, she must look after her parents- in-law carefully, serve her husband with all her heart, have a good relationship with her sister-in-law , and get on well with neighbours. She is the person who works hardest in the family, and also the person

blamed most in the family, as in the situation of Zhao Wu Hiang in The Story of a Pipa. Besides the hard time of a woman in her husband's family, she is likely to be cast off by her husband or by her parents-in-law through her husband if they don't like her. Some poorer women have to be prostitutes and meet with more misfortune. So, prostitutes also come to appear in traditional Chinese tragedies, e.g. Li Xian Jun in The Fan of Peach Blossom, Du Shi Niang in Du Shi Niang, etc. Traditional Chinese tragedy very typically reflects the miserable reality of women in ancient China. Although women in Elizabethan age were also submissive and powerless, as some critics pointed out,<sup>22</sup> yet comparatively speaking, their situation was better than that of women in ancient China. At least Elizabethan women had fewer spiritual fetters imposed on them than their Chinese counterparts. It can be said that traditional Chinese tragedy, like the rest of traditional Chinese literature, displays an evident tendency to support feminist ideas, describing the oppression of women by a cruel patriarchal society and showing great sympathy for them. The reason is partly that ancient Chinese women suffered from physical and mental oppression, as we discussed above, and many inhuman customs, e.g. foot-binding. But the reason seems also to be that the multi-status of classical Chinese dramatists and writers made them intentionally express their grievances caused by their submissive position and frustration in the political arena through the description of the similar situation of women. There is no doubt that Shakespeare's plays also represent some feminist ideas, especially in the comedies, though critics have argued whether and how the dramatist views society from a feminist perspective.<sup>23</sup> In comparison, the feminist tendency in traditional Chinese tragedy seems to show a closer connection with its cultural circumstances.

Every culture has its own religion and moral doctrines, which are enormously influential in moulding its tragic concept. In the light of religion and ethics, we can further analyze some aspects of the difference in tragic concept between

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<sup>22</sup>. Catherine Belsey, 'Disrupting Difference: Meaning and Gender in the Comedies' Alternative Shakespeare, ed. by John Drakakis (London, 1985), pp. 167-77.

<sup>23</sup>. See Hugh Grady, The Modernist Shakespeare (Oxford, 1991), pp. 235-45.

Shakespearean and traditional Chinese tragedy, for instance, the reason for the 'tragic flaw' of the protagonists in Shakespeare's tragedies and the perfection of the principal characters in traditional Chinese tragedies. It is commonly said that Shakespeare inherited the cultural traditions of Greece, Rome and Christianity, mingling them with the newly-rising humanism of his age. In accordance with the religious faith of the ancient Greeks and Romans, the gods are perfect and mighty. They dominate the fate of humankind. Correspondingly, man is imperfect and weak, and constantly punished by the gods for his crimes and mistakes, as in Greek and Roman tragedies. The Christian concept of Original Sin makes it more clear that man is born sinful and that people can only get happiness in their next life by atonement for their sins. As for humanism, it tends to interpret good and evil in terms of human nature, and advocates that man is not perfect but has potential tendencies toward both good and evil. Therefore, it is easier for us to understand why there are, more or less, some flaws or frailties in the traits of the protagonists in Shakespearean tragedy although they are great heroes and generally appeal to our respect. The main purpose of the notion of human defect in Greek religion and Christianity seems to be to intimidate or teach uncivilized people, and make them recognize their limit and become humble and modest.

By contrast, Chinese culture, even in its early stage, appears with more rational thoughts and a less theological bias. It uses the reasonable way rather than the religious way to let people realize why they should follow moral principle and that both individual and society will benefit from the courtesy and good behaviour of men. Confucianism holds that man is basically born good. There is no notion that God is perfect and man is sinful in Confucian ethics because Confucius does not measure man's behaviour in the light of divine nature when he lays down his moral doctrine. Unlike the philosophy in ancient Europe, the kernel of Confucianism is how to become a perfect and virtuous person. To achieve this goal, a man should first cultivate his moral character, and then administer his family affairs and make all the members of his family live together in perfect harmony, then finally, serve the monarch, manage state affairs and bring about great order across the land. To be a virtuous lady, as we discussed before, a woman must observe "the three

obediences and the four virtues". Of these virtues, the most important one is her chastity and fidelity to her husband. Having Yin and Yang as an archetype of antithesis in the universe, the ancient Chinese see good and evil as an antithesis in human society and take the existence of them for granted. Thus, a positive leading character in tragedy and other works, must be a person of the highest virtue, striving after the social ideal of Confucianism or against the evil force. Accordingly, the perfection of their moral nature arouses deep respect and their suffering and destruction evoke sympathy in the mind of an audience. Then, people may consciously or unconsciously model themselves on the virtuous characters. In such a way, consequently, traditional Chinese tragedy can well teach people which was the prime goal that classical Chinese dramatists intended to achieve.

The cultural elements discussed so far are only secondary and external influences upon the tragic concept of Shakespeare and the ancient Chinese dramatists. The major and internal influence upon the tragic concepts of both should be aesthetic ideas which serve as fundamental criteria to judge the artistic merits of literary works. It is evident that aesthetic standards vary with different cultures and that different aesthetic canons of tragedy are to be found in Shakespearean tragedy and traditional Chinese tragedy. When we enjoy Shakespearean tragedy and traditional Chinese tragedy, we feel that both are beautiful and impressive. Yet the emotional effects they bring about are apparently different. Generally, the tragic effect of Shakespearean tragedy, caused by the suffering and death of the great figures, is to arouse fear, shock, depression, sublimity and mystery, and some pity in our hearts. While the tragic effect of traditional Chinese tragedy, produced by the suffering and destruction of the virtuous, decent and weak characters, evokes respect, love, sorrow and great sympathy and pity. Influenced by Greek, Roman and Spanish tragedies, which pay great attention to horror and fear, Shakespeare in his tragedies heightens the climate of death and horror and includes a lot of sensational scenes to shock his audience. But, compared with traditional Chinese tragedy, the tragic effect to arouse sympathy and pity in Shakespearean tragedy looks a little weak. By the Chinese aesthetic canon, this is not merely because all the protagonists in Shakespearean

tragedies are strong, independent, self-confident and self-contained persons who demand no protection from others and require no sympathy and pity until they suffer a lot and are destroyed at the end of the plays. It is mainly because the sufferings and destructions of Shakespearean tragic protagonists partly derive from their own defects and errors. In a sense, they deserve their tragic fates, which accordingly weakens the appeal of the tragedies to our sympathy and pity. Only a few of the protagonists in Shakespearean tragedies who have no obvious errors may earn sympathy and pity from a Chinese audience, such as Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, etc.

In comparison, the traditional Chinese tragic dramatists rarely play up horror and death and never write terrific and thrilling scenes. They concentrate instead on the effect of sympathy and pity. According to the aesthetic standard of the ancient Chinese, only a virtuous person, but not a defective one, can command the respect of people, and a weak person but not a strong one can earn sympathy and pity from people. Therefore, in their tragedies, the traditional Chinese dramatists create tragic characters with inner virtue and a beautiful appearance to win the admiration and respect of an audience. Consequently, the suffering and destruction of these characters would naturally appeal to the great sympathy and pity of an audience unconditionally.

There are so many sad events in human life. Which is to be regarded as one possessing aesthetic value and to be selected as the basic tragic sense in tragedy? Traditional Western culture and traditional Chinese culture approach this question in different ways. From the origin of Western culture --- Greek myth and epic --- the Western people tend to choose the suffering and destruction of a great personage or the destruction of something great and extraordinary as the fundamental tragic sense in literary works, including tragedy itself. It is not a common tragic sense caused by ordinary social life. It is a sense of sadness throbbing with sublimity, strength and vigour; as a Shakespearean scholar says:

As a rule, to be properly called tragedy, the disaster

has to have an element of heroic pathos or some sensational and astounding quality.<sup>24</sup>.

This basic tragic sense, through medieval heroic epics, Christian romance, e.g. the stories of King Arthur, and the works of early Elizabethan dramatists, is handed down to Shakespeare. Retaining it as his major tragic sense, Shakespeare adds to it the great agony caused by the split of human nature and the consciousness of the general predicament of the human condition. Thus he makes his tragedy unique and rank as the greatest tragedy in the world on the assumption that

Any great tragedy touches on the fundamental questions of the ultimate cause of human suffering, the origin and nature of evil in man, and the existence of a destructive or benevolent fate. It is an expression of a universal desire to come to terms with these disturbing uncertainties.<sup>25</sup>

Bearing some resemblance to the tragic sense in modern Western drama and novel, e.g. in Ibsen's plays or in Thomas Hardy's novels, the essential tragic sense of the ancient Chinese, at the very beginning of Chinese culture, was a sad feeling caused by the tragic or sorrowful events occurring in the life of ordinary people, such as the parting of friends, homesickness, misfortune in love affair, the suffering and death of a beautiful woman forsaken by her husband, chaos of war, etc.<sup>26</sup> Yet ancient Chinese people did not choose all the sad events indiscriminately. They chose them by two standards: value and beauty. So, briefly, it can be said that the fundamental tragic sense in early Chinese culture is a feeling caused by the loss and destruction of somebody or something valuable and beautiful. This is a sadness mingled with sentiment and softness, serving as the major emotional tone

<sup>24</sup>. Dieter Mehl, Shakespeare's Tragedies: A Introduction (Cambridge, 1986), p. 1.

<sup>25</sup>. Ibid, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup>. See pre-Qin literature, e.g. The Book of Songs, and Li Sao by the great Chinese poet Qu Yuan.

throughout Chinese poetry and gradually permeating into Chinese drama and novel, and even affecting Chinese music.<sup>27</sup> To be sure, there is no lack of vigorous elements in Chinese literature during some periods in Chinese history, as in the poetry in Jian An Period, the Tang Dynasty and the South Song Dynasty,<sup>28</sup> but these elements are presented to us mainly as heroism and patriotism, and not as tragic feelings. Therefore, the distinction and uniqueness of Chinese literature are largely based on this gentle, sentimental feeling of sadness. And almost all the masterpieces of Chinese poetry, novel and drama, especially tragedy, are imbued with this gentle and sentimental sadness, e.g. the oft-quoted and widely loved ancient poem 'A Spring Moonlight Night on the River' ('Chun Jiang Hua Yue Yie', by Zhang Ruo Xu, and the great novel The Dream of the Red Mansion (Hong Lou Meng)) and, of course, most traditional Chinese tragedies. This aesthetic convention may help to explain, from another angle, why the Chinese playwrights tend largely to take women as tragic protagonists. Through the suffering and destruction of a beautiful woman, the play would produce the very gentle and sentimental tragic sense which Chinese people appreciate most.

Behind this 'beauty of gentle sadness' was the general Chinese aesthetic principle 'the beauty of balance and restraint', based on the Confucian philosophy of 'the doctrine of the mean' and dominating all kinds of art in ancient China. It is, therefore, easier to understand why the tragic feeling in traditional Chinese tragedy was never presented as strongly as that in Shakespearean tragedy. By the principle of the 'beauty of balance and restraint', all the feeling and emotion presented in works of art must be kept in a moderate degree and never be carried to an extreme (e.g. too strong), otherwise the beauty of the works would be damaged. Confucian aesthetic theory advocated that man's feeling was 'generated by disposition and

<sup>27</sup>. One can evidently appreciate this gentle sadness when listening to traditional Chinese music, for instance, the famous Kanton music.

<sup>28</sup>. See History of Chinese Literature, ed. by the Literature Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Science, 3 vols (Beijing, 1978). I, pp. 186-202, and II, pp. 320-334, pp. 617-632.

controlled by moral sense'.<sup>29</sup> So, a remarkable Chinese artist always keeps a good balance of emotion and reason in his works.

The 'beauty of balance and restraint' might serve as the immediate aesthetic background of the happy endings of traditional Chinese tragedies. In order to avoid too strong a tragic impact upon an audience, on the assumption that this would damage the play's dramatic merit and violate the principle of the 'beauty of balance and restraint', the ancient Chinese tragic playwrights managed to create final happy endings to moderate tragic feelings. The principle of the 'beauty of balance and restraint' can also be used to explain why in traditional Chinese tragedy there are few presentations of abnormal conditions of mind, which are often presented in Shakespearean tragedies, such as the insanity of Ophelia, the madness of king Lear, or the hallucination of Macbeth and his wife's somnambulism. In traditional Chinese tragedies, all the feelings and emotions are so carefully controlled that the characters can hardly have mental disorders.

From this brief comparison of Shakespearean tragedy and traditional Chinese tragedy, we have seen clearly the striking difference between the two tragedies in particular tragic elements and basic tragic concept, and their connections with the Western culture and Eastern culture. Comparatively speaking, we find more profound philosophical thoughts in Shakespearean tragedy than in traditional Chinese tragedy and more clear moral purpose in the latter than in the former. Having said this, one must add that generally the strong moral sense in traditional Chinese tragedy does not damage its dramatic merit, due to the fact that one cannot divorce moral from aesthetic in literary works, and that all the remarkable traditional Chinese tragedies come to us with relatively less moralization. In terms of aesthetics, Shakespeare represents a sadness mingled with sublimity and vigour, as Schopenhauer said: 'Our pleasure in tragedy belongs not to the faculty of beauty,

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<sup>29</sup>. Chai Zhong Xiang, The Highlights of Classical Chinese Dramatic Theory (Beijing, 1988), p. 30.

but to that of sublimity',<sup>30</sup> while traditional Chinese tragedy presents a sadness mixed with beauty and gentleness. Therefore, the main tragic spirit of the two tragedies may be summarized as: the destruction of greatness and the destruction of beauty.

The tragic concept of classical Chinese dramatists obviously differs from that of Aristotle because he thought that the downfall of a virtuous character would not raise terror or sympathy. However, the logic of the Chinese seems not completely to contradict that of Aristotle since they use the happy ending as a remedy for the undeserved misfortune of the protagonist. Although the tragic concepts of Shakespeare and traditional Chinese playwrights are different, there are still some parallels between the two forms of tragedy. For instance, Hamlet is, to some extent, similar to a traditional Chinese political tragedy and Romeo and Juliet is akin to a traditional Chinese love tragedy. A more interesting parallel is to be found between traditional Chinese tragedy and the English sentimental melodrama of defeat in the eighteenth century because they resemble each other in many aspects. The sentimental melodrama of defeat presents innocent and perfect protagonists (often women) whose downfall is caused by undeserved misfortune and external forces. The drama is based on an optimistic faith in human nature and has an explicit aim of moralizing too. When compared with tragedy, the emotional effect of the drama also has an affinity with that of traditional Chinese tragedy,

a tragic hero's fall releases complex feelings: pity touched by fear and awe, admiration tempered by moral reservations or even qualified by irony and laughter . . . melodramas of defeat are simpler and more immediately appealing. For the spectacle of totally unmerited misfortune our tears flow freely and our admiration knows no bounds. After all, such feelings cost us nothing and attest the sensibility and moral beauty of our souls.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup>. M. S. Silk and J. P. Stern, Nietzsche on Tragedy (Cambridge, 1981), p. 327.

<sup>31</sup>. James. L. Smith, Melodrama (London, 1973), pp. 64-5.

It can be said that this account of the distinction between tragedy and the sentimental melodrama of defeat helps us to understand the difference between Shakespeare's tragedies and traditional Chinese tragedies.

Despite the striking contrast between Shakespearean tragedy and traditional Chinese tragedy, a confluence of the two tragedies can be faintly seen in that both suggest a tendency to renounce the world. In Shakespearean tragedy, it is presented directly and explicitly, as in Hamlet, Macbeth, Timon, etc, and it seems to be produced by the tragic fact of the human condition. In traditional Chinese tragedies, mainly in the later tragedies of the Qing Dynasty, this tendency is represented indirectly and implicitly, as in The Hall of Longevity, The Fan of Peach Blossom, and the tragedies adapted from the great novel The Dream of the Red Mansion, and still with the distinctive tone of gentle sadness caused by the disillusion with the mortal world which derives from the spirit of Taoism. Some beautiful images are mostly used to poeticize this idea of resignation, such as 'life is a dream', etc.

We have seen a striking contrast between Shakespearean tragedy and traditional Chinese tragedy, but we shall see a similarity between Shakespearean comedy and traditional Chinese comedy because the major comic elements of these two dramatic forms bear a strong resemblance to each other. Having said this, we must add that the two traditions, in fact, reach the same goal by different routes. That is, although the basic comic concepts of Shakespearean comedy and traditional Chinese comedy are similar, the particular comic patterns, which are deeply affected by their cultural surroundings, are different.

Generally speaking, most Shakespeare critics tend to classify Shakespearean comedies into three categories: romantic comedy, problem comedy and tragicomedy (romance). Among them, romantic comedy has been seen as the main label of Shakespearean comedies because they exhibit evidently the major characteristics of Shakespearean comedies.

Traditional Chinese comedies are normally classified according to two general

standards: to lash vice, folly or foolish behaviour, or to describe the achievement of happiness or admire virtuous action. By the first standard we have satirical comedy and by the second we have 'praiseful comedy' (Some Chinese scholars also call it 'humorous comedy' or 'lyrical comedy').<sup>32</sup> Practically, it is difficult to draw a clear distinction between satirical comedy and praiseful comedy. Hence we also see a fair number of traditional Chinese comedies with both veins. The majority of traditional Chinese comedies belong to praiseful comedy. The satirical comedies only occupy a small proportion of traditional Chinese comedies and most of them are presented with less dramatic skill. In The Ten Great Classical Chinese Comedies, which is the most authoritative collection of traditional Chinese comedies published in the last decade, there are seven praiseful comedies: The Romance of the Western Chamber, Li Kui Carries Thorns, Looking Over the Wall, The Secluded Boudoir, The Story of a Jade Hairpin, The Green Peony, and The Errors of a Kite. Two of them, The Green Peony, and The Errors of a Kite, in fact, are type of combinations of praiseful comedy and satirical comedy. There are three satirical comedies in this collection: A Slave to Money, Rescued by a Coquette and The Wolf in Mount Zhong Shan.

Compared with Shakespearean comedies, we find that the general characteristics of traditional Chinese praiseful comedies are very similar to those of Shakespearean romantic comedies. They share many comic elements, such as theme, characterization, atmosphere, pattern and ending. It is interesting that most traditional Chinese praiseful comedies were also called 'romances' by ancient Chinese dramatists. There are some parallel between those Chinese comedies with mixed style of satire and extolment and certain Shakespearean romantic comedies, e.g. Love's Labour's Lost, The Merchant of Venice and Twelfth Night. We can even see some 'problem comedies' in traditional Chinese comedies. But unfortunately they are ruled out of the category of comedy by modern Chinese scholars owing to the fact that the general climate in these plays is too serious to amuse audiences although most of them have happy endings. For the above reasons, the present

<sup>32</sup>. Wang Ji Si, 'Preface', The Ten Great Classical Chinese Comedies, ed. by Wang Ji Si (Shanghai, 1982), pp. 13-5.

comparison between Shakespearean comedy and traditional Chinese comedy will centre on Shakespearean romantic comedies and traditional Chinese praiseful comedies.

It is commonly admitted by Shakespeare critics that the major themes of Shakespearean comedy are love and friendship. In comparison, the major theme of traditional Chinese comedy has some affinity with that of Shakespearean comedy. Almost all the Chinese praiseful comedies are concerned with love and marriage, and some of them, with friendship. Shakespearean comedy and traditional Chinese comedy are also linked by some minor themes, such as family relationship, money, corrupt practice and other social problems, which are largely presented in Shakespeare's problem comedies and traditional Chinese satirical comedies.

The theme of love runs through Shakespearean comedies, either his early and mature romantic comedies or his problem plays and romances, combined, in some plays, with other themes. Against a great variety of setting, Shakespeare's young lovers strive for their ideal love, overcoming every impediment they are faced with because 'the course of true love never did run smooth, and in the romantic comedy, though seldom in real jeopardy, it has amusing or touching impediments to surmount'.<sup>33</sup> The love devices in Shakespearean comedies serve not only as a method to create delightful atmosphere and produce happy endings in the plays, but also as a mode to describe vividly the subtlety of the lover's psychology, and to explore a wide range of problems relating to love and marriage.

Unlike Shakespearean love comedies, from which one can hardly extract a formula to apply equally to them all, traditional Chinese love comedies come to us with a clear pattern, showing their connection with the conventional ideas of love, marriage and happiness in ancient China, and with various Chinese cultural bias. Most of them are presented in a similar way: a young gifted Confucian scholar (normally with lower social status) meets a beautiful lady (normally from a wealthy

<sup>33</sup>. 'Introduction', The Arden Shakespeare: Much Ado about Nothing, ed. by A. R. Humphreys (London, 1981), p. 68.

family or a great house) by chance. They fall in love at first sight. But unfortunately they are kept from each other by some social barriers: the difference in social status, parental opposition, and sometimes, the prior claims of a rival, etc. The lovers, therefore, have to be engaged to each other secretly. When their love affair is exposed to the parent, a compromise is made that the young man will be allowed to marry the lady on condition that he must pass the imperial examination to become a high ranking official. It should be remembered that in ancient China, only men were eligible to attend the imperial examination. Although some women in wealthy families also received education, it was mainly for enhancing their accomplishments. Then the young man goes to the capital to attend the imperial examination. The comedy ends with the return of the young man with a title of Zhuang Yuan (the first on the list of the examination result) and a new official position, as well as the happy wedding of the hero and heroine. The famous Yuan play The Romance of the Western Chamber is the most typical comedy with such a pattern. This basic pattern, obviously, has something in common with those of Greek New Comedy and the comedies of Plautus and Terence. It also suggests, in some respects, the plot of some Shakespearean comedies, e.g. A Midsummer Night's Dream and The Merry Wives of Windsor, in which the lovers marry the partners of their choice against their parents' will.

The plots of some traditional Chinese love comedies are slightly different from the above pattern. In The Secluded Boudoir, the love between Jiang Shi Long and Wang Rui Lan, the hero and the heroine in the play, does not take place in the garden of a house or a monastery, but when they are in flight from the chaos of a war. In a turbulence caused by a foreign invasion, Jiang Shi Long is separated from his sister, and Wang Rui Lan, whose father is a defence minister in the court, is separated from her mother. In a wilderness, Jian Shi Long comes across Wang Rui Lan. The latter asks the former to take her with him on the way to escape in spite of her shyness to ask a strange young man to do so because it is very dangerous for a beautiful lady to go alone. To avoid suspicion from others, she has to agree that they will pretend to be a couple. This plot device is interesting enough and, just as the audience expects, it brings about a series of dramatic situations. The rest of the

story bears a resemblance to the general formula of traditional Chinese love comedies. After many setbacks, Jiang Shi Long passes the imperial examination, winning the title of Zhuang Yuan, and obtains a high ranking appointment, and the play ends with the reunion of the families and the formal wedding of the hero and the heroine. This love theme mingled with the separation and reunion of a family seems to be a universal comic device and, of course, has an affinity with some Shakespearean comedies, for instance, The Comedy of Errors, Twelfth Night, and most of the romances. Two other popular traditional Chinese love comedies, The Green Peony and The Errors of a Kite, also feature unique plots. In The Green Peony, the action of the lovers is played out before a social setting related to the literary creation of the Confucian scholars. It is not easy to find its parallel in Shakespearean comedies, for the main action in this play is closely concerned with Chinese cultural tradition.

The claim for free choice in marriage has been more emphasized in traditional Chinese love comedies than in Shakespearean comedies owing to the fact that, as we discussed before in this chapter, women in ancient China were firmly fettered by a feudal ethical code and controlled by their parents. Thus, the strong voice to shake off the bounds of old customs of marriage resounds through these plays. In The Romance of the Western Chamber, although Ying Ying's mother dislikes Zhang Sheng because of his low social status, Ying Ying still secretly marries him. In Looking over the Wall, Li Qian Jin elopes with her lover Pei Shao Jun and secretly lives together with him for seven years in Pei's house. When Pei's father learns the truth and scolds her, she bravely argues with him in justification of her action. At the ends of all these plays, the heroes and the heroines express their common aspiration: 'We wish all the lovers in this world may marry their beloved' (e.g. The Romance of the Western Chamber, ZGSDGDXJJ, Act V. Scene 4. 'Qing Jiang Yin'. p. 157).

The condition of an ideal partner concerns not only the general assumption of love, but also particular social circumstances and cultural bias. In Shakespeare's comedy, influenced by romantic atmosphere, it seems that the playwright does not

put more emphasis upon objective condition of the lovers, such as wealth and family background, but stresses the subjective items such as looks, manner, virtue, etc. This general tendency is, more or less, in harmony with ideas of love current during the Renaissance. Similar to Shakespeare's mode, the Chinese playwrights largely describe the heroines in traditional Chinese love comedies in terms of their beauty and sweet nature; as to the heroes, the dramatists would demonstrate mostly their literary talent rather than present their comprehensive virtue and accomplishment as Shakespeare does in his comedies. In Looking over the Wall, at the very beginning when minister Pei appears on stage, he talks about the talent of his son Pei Shao Jun, the hero in the play:

My son Shao Jun is a rare genius. He could speak at the age of three and read when he was five. He wrote very well when he was only seven years old. At the age of ten, he was able to compose a poem impromptu.

(ZGGDGDXJJ, Act I. p. 35)

In The Romance of Western Chamber, Zhang Sheng, the hero in the play, writes a lot of poems to Ying Ying, the heroine, to express his deep affection for her and eventually wins her love. In The Green Peony, the two heroes Xie Ying and Gu Chan marry their beloved ladies and defeat their rivals, the two ignorant dandies, also by their outstanding literary talents. Some evident reasons related to cultural convention and social background may help to explain this general tendency to stress the literary talent of the heroes in traditional Chinese love comedies. Traditionally, classical, mainly Confucian, learning (including literature, history and philosophy) was always held in high esteem by the Chinese. Practically, only by possessing great literary talent could a young man pass the imperial examination and obtain a high official position in ancient China. Thus literary talent was regarded as the most important factor to evaluate a young man.

It is commonly admitted that Shakespeare exhibits, in his comedies, a great variety of love patterns, such as falling in love at first sight (As You Like It), love triangle (The Two Gentlemen of Verona), winning love by struggle and wit (The Merchant of Venice and All's Well that Ends Well), obtaining love by chance

(Twelfth Night), etc, which are in tone with Shakespeare's romantic vein and the general literary and dramatic tendency during the Renaissance. In traditional Chinese comedies, we find fewer patterns than in Shakespearean comedies. Yet Chinese comedies have their own distinctive love patterns. In most of these plays, falling in love at first sight is used as the main love pattern, as in The Romance of the Western Chamber, Looking Over the Wall, and The Story of a Jade Hairpin, etc. In some traditional Chinese love comedies, we see other two love patterns: the affection between the two lovers is bred by their mutual experience in adversity (The Secluded Boudoir) and the affection bred first by creative literary activity (The Green Peony and The Errors of a Kite). These two love patterns command scholarly interest not only because of their particularity in dramatic plot, but also because of their close connection with the Chinese historical and cultural backgrounds. In The Secluded Boudoir, Jiang Shi Long and Wang Rui Lan fall in love during their experience of fleeing from the turmoil of war. This setting is concerned with a very typical fact in Chinese history for the chaos of war and famine are two main disasters occurring frequently in Chinese history. In The Green Peony, the affection of the two heroines Sheng Wanr and Che Jing Fang for the two heroes Xie Ying and Gu Can is first produced by their appreciating the literary talent of the two heroes before they meet them. Similar to Shakespeare's logic in judgement of a person, especially a lover, the ancient Chinese believed that a person with outstanding talent and high virtue must, at the same time, have a handsome and attractive manner, which was based on an ideal aesthetic assumption that beauty is always associated with intelligence and virtue, and ugliness with foolishness and vileness. Thus, this love pattern can be singled out as the most typical pattern in traditional Chinese love comedies; it bears the evident imprint of Chinese cultural bias, and it is difficult to find its parallel in Shakespearean comedies.

Another divergent feature between Shakespearean comedies and traditional Chinese comedies is that the positions of man and woman in love affairs in the former are slightly different from those in the latter. In Shakespearean comedies, both heroes and heroines are active in the process of seeking love. Many of the

heroines even take the initiative in love affairs, such as Viola in Twelfth Night, Rosalind in As You Like It, and Helena in All's Well That Ends Well. By contrast, the active role in love is normally played by young men rather than by ladies in traditional Chinese comedies. In most of these plays, it is the hero who takes the initiative in wooing his love and the heroine is generally passive. The reason is, as we discussed before, that women in ancient China were kept in their houses and had no opportunity to participate in social intercourse. On the contrary, Chinese men possessed absolute freedom in all social activities.

The love patterns in Shakespeare's comedies and traditional Chinese love comedies are also influenced by marriage relations. It looks as if the male and female in Shakespearean comedies are almost equal in love affairs and marriage and only in a few plays are the love patterns linked by male supremacy, as in The Taming of the Shrew and The Comedy of Errors. Yet in traditional Chinese love comedies, although the relations of love and marriage are highly idealized, we can still find the imprint of male domination. In most of these plays, when the lovers meet each other secretly, particularly before they decide to make love, the heroine always expresses her concern that her lover may forsake her after his passion is satisfied. Then the hero must swear to be loyal to her forever. In The Romance of the Western Chamber, after many setbacks, Ying Ying eventually promises to meet Zhang Sheng secretly in the garden. Before they go to bed, she says:

I shall give you tonight  
 My precious virgin body,  
 I'll commit my whole life to your care.  
 Don't abandon me someday later  
 And leave me to sigh away time lonely.

(ZGSDGDBJ. 4. 1. P. 126)

When Zhang Sheng passes the imperial examination, wins the title of Zhuang Yuan and waits for the emperor's appointment in the capital, Ying Ying asks his servant boy to send him something special to remind him of his oath. All these examples reflect the lower social place of ancient Chinese women and the fact that they are

viewed only as appendages to men.

Friendship is another important central theme in both Shakespearean comedies and traditional Chinese comedies. In his comedies, Shakespeare extols true friendship and lashes disloyalty. Antonio in The Merchant of Venice is a typical honest friend because he not only generously helps his friend with money but also risks his life to help Bassanio to seek love and happiness. It is very interesting that his action bears a resemblance to an old Chinese saying to define the highest level of friendship: 'To help your friends, you must be brave enough to stab your chest with a knife'. Shakespeare also criticizes disloyal behaviour. In The Two Gentlemen of Verona, to meet selfish desire, Proteus commits double treachery: he is disloyal to both his friend Valentine and his love Julia. Friendship ('Yi') is also represented in traditional Chinese comedies. In The Romance of the Western Chamber, Du Jun Shi, who is a good friend of Zhang Sheng, the hero in the play, passes the imperial military examination and becomes a general. When Zhang Sheng and his beloved lady Ying Ying are threatened by a rebellious general who intends to take Ying Ying by force, Du Jun Shi leads his troop right away to rescue his friend and meantime to help to bring about the marriage of Zhang Sheng and Ying Ying because when the monastery is surrounded by the troop of the rebellious general, Ying Ying's mother promises that anybody who has a stratagem to repulse the rebels can marry Ying Ying, and it is Zhang Sheng who sends a letter to his friend, general Du, to ask him to come to the rescue. A similar sub-theme of friendship is to be found in The Secluded Boudoir. In the play, Jiang Shi Long, the hero, risks his life to save a young warrior Tuo Man Xing Fu and then they become sworn brothers. Later on in the play, Tuo Man Xing Fu also saves Jiang Shi Long and his love Wang Rui Lan from execution. At the end of the play, both Jiang Shi Long and Tuo Man Xin Fu pass the imperial examinations and marry their beloved ladies.

Much of the fascination of Shakespearean comedies and traditional Chinese comedies stems from characterization. In Shakespearean comedies, although his complex devices of plot attract the attention of an audience, what impresses us most

is the colourfulness and subtlety of his comic characters:

Less satiric than Jonson or Moliére, less continuously witty than Congreve, less cerebral than Shaw, less funny than many lesser writers, Shakespeare presents us with a variety of lively and attractive characters, with whom audiences become friends and he invests them with the riches of his poetry.<sup>34</sup>

In traditional Chinese comedies, the heroes and heroines who are held up to our admiration are not mainly the models of morality. They are vividly portrayed young men and women with a more flexible moral sense and more personal desire. Minor characters are also life-like people with a variety of traits, even if some of them are only lightly sketched.

When we contrasted Shakespearean tragedy with traditional Chinese tragedy, we found that one of the main differences between the two types of tragedy in the treatment of protagonists is that their leading characters have different social status. But the social standings of the characters in Shakespeare's comedies and traditional Chinese comedies are quite similar. In his comedies, Shakespeare represents, mainly, the love affairs and friendships of young aristocrats, the business and domestic affairs of the middle class, and the daily life of working people. Similar to Shakespearean comedies, traditional Chinese comedies do not, normally, illustrate political struggle in the court, which is one of the central themes of traditional Chinese tragedies, and we, therefore, rarely see high ranking officials, e.g. ministers, taken as leading characters in the comedies. Most of them serve only as supporting roles and chiefly as rigid parents opposing the free choice of the younger generation in love affairs and insisting on family status in marriage, such as Minister Pei in Looking Over the Wall, Minister Wang in The Secluded Boudoir, and Prime Minister Cui's wife in The Romance of the Western Chamber. Thus we can roughly say that traditional Chinese comedies mainly present two groups of characters: the young men and women from the middle and upper class (landlords

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<sup>34</sup>. Kenneth Muir, Shakespeare's Comic Sequence (Liverpool, 1979), p. 51.

and officials), and ordinary people of all sorts: servants, porters, quacks, pedants, shopowners, monks, nuns, match makers, soldiers, outlaws, prostitutes, etc. Most of the comedies centre on the love affairs and friendship of the young men and women of the middle and upper classes, interwoven with the daily life of ordinary people.

When we compared Shakespearean tragic protagonists with the protagonists in traditional Chinese tragedies, we found an interesting phenomenon: that Shakespeare's tragedy is a world of men while traditional Chinese tragedy is a world of women. More interestingly, we see an opposite situation in the comedies. As many critics have pointed out, in his comedies Shakespeare shows favour towards his female characters; or as some feminist critics maintained, Shakespeare privileged the masculine Self in tragedy and the female Other in comedy.<sup>35</sup> This assumption can be roughly used, in reverse order, to define gender and genre in traditional Chinese drama, for the tragedies are mainly built around the female Other, as we discussed in the earlier pages, and the comedies around the masculine Self. A masculine predominance can be clearly seen in traditional Chinese comedy. First, in most of the comedies, it is the men who take the initiative in love affairs: they make every effort to get in touch with their beloved ladies and actively woo them. When the ladies flinch from the opposition of parents and other obstacles, it is the men who try to persuade and encourage the ladies to make their own choices, and, at the ends of these plays, it is also the men who pass the imperial examination by their erudition and talent, thereby meeting the requirement of the parents about social status and eventually winning their beloved ladies. Second, traditional Chinese comedies, particularly love comedies, in fact, indicate a way for men to seek their happiness and depict how the young Confucian scholars obtain their bliss because by an old Chinese saying, the happiest moments of a man's life are the night in the bridal chamber and the day when he sees his name on the results list of the imperial examination. So basically it can be said that traditional Chinese comedy is a world of men. Having said this, we must add that there are a few exceptions. For instance, in Looking over the Wall, Li Qian Jin, the heroine,

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<sup>35</sup>. David M. Bergeron and Geraldo U. De Sousa, Shakespeare: A Study and Research Guide (Kansas, 1987), pp. 140-1.

looks more brave and decisive than the hero Pei Shao Jun in their love affairs. The privilege of the masculine Self in the comedies, however, by no means signifies that feminist ideas are defied. Women in the plays are actually the cooperators of men and serve as the embodiment of beauty and goodness. In this sense, we may explain the situation of gender in traditional Chinese drama in the light of aesthetics. In the first section of this chapter, we described the aesthetic archetype of traditional Chinese tragedy as the destruction of beauty, or beauty lost. And it is probably not far-fetched to say that the aesthetic archetype of traditional Chinese comedy is beauty regained. By 'beauty regained' I mean the dramatists in these plays mainly present the process of seeking beauty. While deplorable, therefore, it is understandable that the classical Chinese dramatists put the emphases on the seeker (the men) and not on the object of search (the ladies).

There is an evident pattern of the constitution of comic characters in traditional Chinese comedies. Traditionally, 'gifted scholars and beautiful ladies' are the main characters of the comedies. But besides the hero and the heroine, we also see, in most comedies, a conservative and rigid parent serving as the embodiment of an old ethical code (such as Ying Ying's mother in The Romance of the Western Chamber and Defence Minister Wang in The Secluded Boudoir); a warm and resourceful servant (such as Hong Niang in The Romance of the Western Chamber and the servant of Han Shi Xun in The Errors of a Kite); a foolish rival, normally a playboy from a great house (such as Zheng Yuan in The Romance of the Western Chamber and Wang Gong Zi in The Story of a Jade Hairpin); and other low life people, whose function is mainly to create a funny and laughable atmosphere in the plays (e.g. the quack Weng Tai Yi in The Secluded Boudoir). It seems that this basic character pattern in traditional Chinese comedies is very similar to that in Roman comedies and French neo-classical comedies, but not obviously similar to that in Shakespeare's comedies because it is very difficult to extract a formula of character constitution from his comedies. But, there is still a certain resemblance between the character patterns of the two comedies.

Besides the young lovers, we can also see, in Shakespeare's comedies, the

parents, some of them rigid and some quite open-minded, the foolish rivals (e.g. Sir Andrew in Twelfth Night and the suitors to Portia in The Merchant of Venice), the servants helping the lovers in their love affairs. We even find the English counterpart of Hong Niang, the waiting-girl to Ying Ying in The Romance of the Western Chamber, in The Two Gentlemen of Verona, and the scene in which Lucetta delivers the love letter of Proteus to Julia suggests the very dramatic scene in which Hong Niang passes the love poems of Zhang Sheng onto Ying Ying and the latter always pretends to be angry and blames Hong Niang. In Shakespearean comedies, we also find a great many characters belonging to low life who create a very amusing and funny climate for the audience. It might justly be said that the constitution of characters in Shakespeare's comedies is more complex than in traditional Chinese comedies for Shakespeare presents more characters with distinctive traits than classical Chinese comic dramatists. For instance, we can hardly see, in traditional Chinese comedies, any clowns like those in Shakespeare's comedies, although one of the major types of role in traditional Chinese comedies has been called 'chou' (clown or fool). The so called 'chou' in traditional Chinese drama is either a negative character or a low life character whose main function is to create a funny and amusing climate. Yet Shakespeare's clown is not only a joke-maker but often a critic. We can also see other special characters whom we cannot find in traditional Chinese comedies, such as a degenerate knight (Falstaff), some odd people, e.g. a melancholy person (Jaques in As You Like It), and the fairies (in A Midsummer Night's Dream). This difference in character type is caused partly by social and cultural structure and partly by literary and dramatic convention.

Unlike the characters in traditional Chinese tragedies, who tend to be perfect and simple, the characters in the comedies seem not to be so perfect while being more colourful. Basically, the Chinese comic characters are not highly idealized as the tragic characters are. They are like real people and come to us with a more human touch. This change in characterization is brought about by certain evident factors. First, in traditional Chinese tragedies, the men as the executors of Confucian social ideals are largely prettified. Yet in the comedies, the men's activities are mainly concerned with their private life and with their efforts to seek

their personal happiness rather than to undertake their social and political responsibilities. Thus they may behave as ordinary people do and also show some weak points in their traits or occasionally do ridiculous things. Second, the main purpose of traditional Chinese comedy is to delight but not to teach. Therefore, the Chinese dramatists felt free to create a brisk climate of life instead of a serious atmosphere of morality and to portray a variety of characters without limitation of moral standards. For the above-mentioned reasons, it is not difficult for us to understand why the characters in traditional Chinese comedies are colourful and life-like.

As an anthropological critic and a systems-builder, Northrop Frye gave an important impetus to post-war Shakespeare criticism. From his structuralist viewpoint, Frye thinks that all comedies, as well as Shakespeare's comedies and romances, are in fact self-contained conventions and structures rather than mirrors of life.<sup>36</sup> It seems that Frye runs to other extreme opposite Bradley's approach, which concentrated on character and life-like reality. Presumably, we feel that the dramatic merit of a great comic playwright is not based on how well he uses appropriate archetypal structures and conventions in his works, for even the most mediocre writer can easily employ these conventions. Accordingly, there can be no doubt that Shakespeare's universal appeal does not mainly derive from his use of conventions.

However, there is always a grain of truth in an extreme opinion. As an important approach to the study of Shakespearean comedies, Frye's criticism evidently complements that of the Coleridge-Bradley tradition since it is difficult to divorce reality of life from convention in all works of literature and art. This chapter, in a sense, need pay attention to Frye's idea because the present comparison has been based on cultural surroundings, and normally archetypal structures stem from cultural traditions. We can also see certain comic structures in traditional Chinese comedies. These structures show clearly enough their close

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<sup>36</sup>. Northrop Frye, A Natural Perspective (New York, 1965), p. 46.

connection with the long-standing Chinese culture. But it should be pointed out that the conventions and structures in traditional Chinese comedies can hardly be traced back to primitive Chinese myth because, as we have mentioned before, the Confucian scholars tend to ignore supernatural things and hence primitive Chinese legend and myth were not well collected, collated and preserved. Most of them have been lost. What we have today are only some fragments, which don't stand comparison with Greek and Roman myths. But we can definitely say that the archetypal structures in traditional Chinese comedies have been mainly shaped by Chinese feudal culture since the Spring and Autumn Period (770 B. C.). In comparison, some structures in traditional Chinese comedies have affinities with those in Shakespearean comedies and some are different. Both similarity and difference in this comparison can be explained by cultural surroundings.

In A Natural Perspective, according to some primitive and religious rituals, Frye divides the general structure of Shakespeare's comedies into three phases:

This structure, then, normally begins with an anticomic society . . . It often takes the form of a harsh or irrational law . . . Most of these irrational laws are preoccupied with trying to regulate the sexual drive, and so work counter to the wishes of the hero and the heroine . . .

The second period of confusion and sexual licence is a phase that we may call the phase of temporarily lost identity . . . most frequently a loss of sexual identity.

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The third and final phase is the phase of the discovery of identity. This may take many forms, but we may generalize them as social (A identified with B) and individual (A identified as himself).<sup>37</sup>

In comparison, the general structure of traditional Chinese comedy is similar to the above structure outlined by Frye. In most of the comedies, we see also an anticomic society and an irrational law (feudal ethic code), and this irrational law is mainly preoccupied with trying to regulate the sexual drive, serving as an obstacle

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<sup>37</sup>. Ibid, pp. 73-8.

to the just desire of the hero and the heroine. For example, although the heroes and the heroines love each other deeply, they are still prohibited from marriage by an old law that any marriage without the consent of the parents is illegal. In Looking over the Wall, even though Pei Shao Jun and Li Qian Jin have been secretly married for seven years and have two children, Pei's father still roughly breaks up them when he knows the truth.

In the structure of traditional Chinese comedies, we can rarely find a phase like the second phase of Shakespearean comic structure --- the phase of temporarily lost identity. Or we may say that there is only a faint shadow of this phase in the structure of traditional Chinese comedies, for the classical Chinese seldom used the device of disguise. Probably, the only example of using disguise is a popular classical Chinese tragedy Liang Shan Po and Zhu Ying Tai, in which Zhu Ying Tai, the heroine, disguises herself as a boy to study in a private school and falls in love with her classmate Liang Shan Po. There is, indeed, a device of identity confusion in the structure of traditional Chinese comedy. But normally it is presented in a different way. In some of the plays, the heroes and the heroines don't know their real identities until the end of the plays. For instance, in Looking over the Wall, the secret marriage of Pei Shao Jun and Li Qian Jing is regarded by others, and even by themselves, as an illegal one. But, in fact, they were already engaged to be married by their parents some years ago. Sometimes, the confusion of identity is caused by mistake and misunderstanding. For example, in The Green Peony and The Errors of a Kite, there are so many confusions of identity among the heroes and the heroines that they don't know who are their beloved young men or ladies. We may call this period of the structure of traditional Chinese comedies a phase of change of social status, for in most of the comedies the parents always ask the young man to pass the imperial examination and to get an official appointment as a decisive condition to marry the lady. This is obviously a key point to lead the comic drive to the final happy ending.

The parallel of the third phase, the phase of the discovery of identity, can easily be found in the structure of traditional Chinese comedies. At the ends of these

plays, the lovers are finally united and some characters come to discover their real identities. The outer phase of the happy endings of these comedies looks like the duplicate of the endings of Shakespeare's comedies. At the end of most traditional Chinese comedies, we often see a joyous wedding, and a jubilant banquet to celebrate the formal marriage of the lovers, as well as the reunion of a family. This is a typical festive scene and behind it a new society --- a peaceful, happy and harmonious society --- emerges. In most cases, the young lovers and their friends are also reconciled with the anticomeric force, including their parents and the immoral rival, just like the last phase of Shakespearean comic structure. But, there are some exceptions in the pattern of Shakespeare's comedy, like Shylock, Jaques, Don John and Malvolio. In The Romance of the Western Chamber, the stupid rival Zheng Yuan is not only defeated by the hero Zhang Sheng and his friends, but also commits suicide. In The Story of a Jade Hairpin, the immoral rival Wang Ren is heavily punished for his vice.

While seeing the above similarity between the two comic structures, we might notice some differences between them. First, at the beginning of most traditional Chinese comedies, besides the irrational law, there is also another factor serving as an important anticomeric force --- a social turbulence or a chaos of war. In The Romance of the Western Chamber, a rebellious troop robs people of their money and takes women by force. In The Peony Pavilion, The Story of a Jade Hairpin, The Secluded Boudoir, and many other plays, the characters and the society are faced with the threat of foreign invasion. Compared to the second phase of the structure of Shakespearean comedies, as we pointed out before, traditional Chinese comedies tend to present a change of social status instead of lost identity. Obviously, there are some differences in comic ending between Shakespeare's comedy and traditional Chinese comedy though the outer phase of their endings look similar. We have noticed that both of them have wedding, family reunion and reconciliation of the opposed comic forces. But in the endings of traditional Chinese comedies we see something which we can hardly find in the endings of Shakespearean comedies. First, after passing the imperial examination, all the heroes have their social status upgraded to suit the family status of the heroines or just to satisfy the value

standard of the Chinese audience. Second, the new harmonious society appearing at the end of the plays is also marked by the termination of the turbulence or the chaos of war. Third, there is often an imperial edict announced to reward the hero and the heroine or other concerned characters, and this heightens the happy atmosphere of the wedding and banquet.

The structure of traditional Chinese comedies can also be traced back to the ancient rituals and cultural conventions of China. In primitive Chinese society, people often celebrated their harvest and hunting gains with festive singing and dancing. This may be regarded as the earliest ritual form to which traditional Chinese comedy seems to have some generic relation. Later in Chinese slave society, there were performances of singing and dancing for special occasions such as weddings or celebrating the victories of war, and these also affected the structure of traditional Chinese comedies. The rituals and social conventions of Chinese feudal society have left their most evident mark on the structure of traditional Chinese comedies. During the long years of this historical period, people, especially those who belonged to the court, local government or a wealthy house, would always hold a ceremony or give a banquet to celebrate some special happy event such as a wedding, passing the imperial examination and getting an official position, rendering outstanding service in a war, and in particular receiving an award and honour from the emperor. This tendency has gradually shaped the basic conventions of traditional Chinese comedy and ultimate goals which the plays were expected to achieve. By contrast with the structure of Shakespeare's comedies, which Frye maintained has evolved from religious rituals and myths, it can be said that the structure of traditional Chinese comedy mainly derives from secular social and political practice.

The cycle of nature and a movement from death to rebirth is considered by Frye as one of the major conventions of Shakespeare's comedies, which is typically expressed in Shakespeare's romances.<sup>38</sup> Roughly, this pattern can also be applied

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<sup>38</sup>. Ibid, p. 119-22.

to traditional Chinese comedy though it is not presented as overtly as in Shakespearean comedy. Looking back to the history of Chinese literature, the classical Chinese writers often related spring to birth and hope, and autumn and winter to death and hopelessness. In most traditional Chinese comedies, it is difficult for us to find an evident movement from birth to death and back again to rebirth. Yet it is very interesting that we can see a complete movement of this pattern in most traditional Chinese tragedies. We once mentioned, in this chapter, that almost all of traditional Chinese tragedies have happy endings, and in most cases, the heroes or heroines revive and become celestial being or spirits, a spiritual development which bears some resemblance to Christianity. A single example of this pattern in traditional Chinese comedies is to be found in The Peony Pavilion, in which Du Li Niang, the heroine, dies of longing for her lover Liu Meng Mei whom she meets in her dream, and she revives after death when Liu Meng Mei digs up her grave and opens her coffin. This may be odd to Elizabethan audiences since there is no parallel to this plot in Shakespearean romances. This play should be classified into the genre of tragi-comedy and, by an interesting coincidence, it also belongs to the romance of traditional Chinese drama. The key point behind the death and rebirth of Du Li Niang is that the feudal ethical code makes people die and natural emotion and desire let people revive, which was used by Tang Xiang Zu, the author, to criticize the rigid Confucian scholars in the Ming and Qing Dynasties who pushed the Confucian ethics to an extreme, and to emphasize the justification of human nature. Thus the use of this death-rebirth pattern in The Peony Pavilion shows us clearly a Chinese cultural bias, compared to the same pattern in Shakespeare's comedies which embodies more universal meanings.<sup>39</sup>

The presentation of the cycle of nature in traditional Chinese comedies is

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<sup>39</sup>. Tang Xian Zu (1550-1616), the author of The Peony Pavilion and one of the greatest Chinese dramatists, is often related by Chinese critics to Shakespeare, which is partly due to their remarkable dramatic merits, and partly due to the interesting fact that they were contemporaries and died in the same year. With an evident romantic vein, his four major plays, including The Peony Pavilion, are called the 'four dreams' because each of them has some scenes of dream. The Peony of Pavilion, together with Macbeth, was performed by a Chinese drama company at the Edinburgh Festival, 1987. We'll give an account of this event in Chapter 4.

worth notice because there is a unique pattern of seasonal change in the plays. Unlike the cycle of nature in Shakespeare's comedy, which serves as an invisible superstructure, the change of season in traditional Chinese comedy is mainly designed to support the comic action of the plays. For instance, in The Romance of the Western Chamber, The Secluded Boudoir, The Story of a Jade Hairpin and other famous traditional Chinese comedies, when the lovers are in an awkward predicament, the action is always played out against a seasonal setting of autumn or winter; while there must be a radiant and enchanting spring scene to heighten the delightful atmosphere when all the anticomical barriers are overcome and the lovers are finally united. This pattern evidently stems from Chinese literary tradition, especially from classical Chinese poetry because ancient Chinese poets tend to express their particular emotions through depicting seasonal scenes: autumn and winter are normally related to melancholy and sadness, and spring with joy and delight. It seems that the main difference between Shakespeare's comedy and traditional Chinese comedy in the use of the pattern of the cycle of nature is that in the former, this pattern is used to represent more philosophical meanings and in the latter it mainly serves the expression of emotion.

There is, as some critics pointed out, a unique structure in some Shakespearean comedies which show us a forest scene or 'green world'. Coincidentally, there is also a small 'green world' --- not a dense forest but an exquisite garden --- in most traditional Chinese comedies, as in The Romance of the Western Chamber, Looking over the Wall, The Peony Pavilion, The Story of a Jade Hairpin, etc. The garden is the main place where the comic action takes place in these plays. It is in this garden that the hero and the heroine meet each other and enjoy the pleasure of love. It is in this garden that the lovers unburden themselves of their grievances to each other for their secret marriage is opposed by the parents. And it is also in this garden that the lovers are finally united and the whole family enjoys the festive celebration after the hero passes the imperial examination and becomes a high ranking official. This garden scene is indeed a typical convention of traditional Chinese comedy, showing clearly enough its close connection with Chinese cultural tradition. In ancient China, most wealthy families had an exquisite garden

characterized by traditional Chinese gardening and architecture. It was an ideal place for members of the family, particularly the ladies, to relax, play and enjoy the beautiful sight of many man-made things: rockery, pool, corridor, pavilion, etc. Since the young ladies were kept inside the house all the year round, this garden became the only place for them to act freely and to enjoy themselves. In the history of Chinese literature and art, this garden scene has been serving as one of the major symbolic conventions in many masterpieces, as well as in comedy. Thus, it is easier to understand why this garden setting, like Shakespeare's forest world, appears most in traditional Chinese comedies as one of the most important comic structures.

Both the forest world in Shakespeare's comedy and the garden world in traditional Chinese comedy come to the audience not as simple settings but as something with profoundly symbolic meanings. In Shakespearean comedies, the forest world seems to be an embodiment of natural society in contrast to the grim outside society. Such a contrast between the green world or natural society and the courtly or sophisticated world should be taken as one of the most distinctive conventions of Shakespeare's comedy. This tendency of cherishing a pastoral or natural world descended from the courtly love tradition which runs through the history of European literature. It is also a reflection of social reality since Europe began to enter a kind of early industrial civilization during the Renaissance and people might be more and more baffled by the fact that man's perfect nature is spoiled by corrupt society. The green world of Shakespeare's comedy seems to be suggestive of a Utopia --- an embodiment of the social ideal produced by the above historical situation.

Compared with Shakespeare's forest world, the garden in traditional Chinese comedies might be understood from a different point of view, for it stems from different cultural surroundings. Yet, seemingly, the function and symbolic meaning of the garden bear a resemblance to those of the green world in Shakespeare's comedies. The garden normally serves as a symbol of a secluded earthly paradise in contrast with the harsh social unrest outside it. It is a free and happy paradise where everybody has a right to make his own choice. It is a harmonious paradise,

in which people have good and equal relations between them. It is a peaceful paradise against the turbulent society outside. In a sense, it looks like a 'Garden of Eden' in Chinese culture. Different from the forest world in Shakespeare's comedies, the garden in traditional Chinese comedies is not designed to present a striking contrast between the natural society and the sophisticated material world because during that time, the Chinese did not perceive the separation of human society from nature, as ancient China retained its natural economy and feudal political system and was still long way from an industrialized or business society. Thus, the main purpose of the garden is, probably, to represent an ideal and proper place for the Chinese where the principle of life is in keeping with the basic and rational demand of human nature, and meantime, without violation of the conventional ethical code. Such a purpose was evidently based on the general ideological tendency to change the rigid feudal ethics and leave more room for personal will during the Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties.

Unlike Jonson, Shakespeare is outstanding in an English tradition of comedy which runs from Chaucer to Bernard Shaw and shows less didactic purpose in his comedies than the former or most other English comic writers. However it might justly be said that Shakespeare mingles moral instruction with delight so perfectly that his comedy is seemingly written for an entertainment industry. In a sense, we may say that the main purpose of Shakespeare's comedy is to represent life, particularly the happy side of life, with his poetic imagination.

We have mentioned before that classical Chinese playwrights have less purpose to teach in their comedies than in their tragedies, although theoretically the moralizing of comedy was still emphasized by some Chinese critics, e.g. the famous classical dramatic critic and writer Li Yu, the author of The Errors of a Kite. But practically, like Shakespeare, classical Chinese comic writers often mingle moral instruction with delight, and sometimes, even tend to exhibit an anti-feudal morality feeling, just as Tang Xiang Zu did in his play The Peony Pavilion. This is the very reason why so many brilliant traditional Chinese comedies were attacked by orthodox Chinese critics who believed that the first and most important purpose of

drama was to propagate the Confucian ethical code. There was a heated argument in the history of traditional Chinese dramatic criticism about which is better, The Secluded Burdoir or The Story of a Pipa. It in fact reflected the conflict between the critics who emphasized moralizing and the critics who favoured the representation of emotion.<sup>40</sup> Generally, like Shakespeare's comedy, the main purpose of traditional Chinese comedy is to represent the emotions, aspirations and ideals of the ancient Chinese. It demonstrates an obvious tendency to reflect life itself and is not designed mainly as a moral textbook.

In the history of comic criticism, satire has been regarded as an indispensable part of the comic concept. The European comedy features a satiric tradition which runs from Aristophanes, through Jonson and Molière, to Bernard Shaw. The satiric element of traditional Chinese comedy can also be traced back to the early Can Jun Play in the Tang Dynasty. The original purpose of these plays was to satirize the corruption of the officials. There were only two actors in it. Compared with most other European comic writers, Shakespeare seems to be unusual in this connection because we rarely see satiric elements in Shakespeare's comedies. Similar to European comedy, we can also see two parallel lines in the Chinese comic tradition: the satiric comedy and the romantic comedy (praiseful comedy). In the early stage of traditional Chinese comedy, the satiric tradition played a leading role in theatrical activities for we see more satiric comedies in the Tang, Song and Yuan Dynasties, e.g. the Yuan plays A Slave to Money and Rescued by a Coquette. From

<sup>40</sup>. The argument was undertaken mainly in the Ming Dynasty. Almost all the critics who insisted on moralization, such as the well-known critic and playwright Wang Shi Zhen (1526-1590), thought that The Story of a Pipa was much better than The Secluded Boudoir because the former was written for enhancing decency and the latter for presenting passion. In this argument, The Romance of the Western Chamber was also criticized by the orthodox critics as a poor play to represent lasciviousness. Yet more broad-minded critics and writers believed that The Secluded Boudoir and The Romance of the Western Chamber were better than The Story of a Pipa. For example, the famous thinker and writer Li Zhi (1527-1602), who initiated a literary movement to emphasize emotion in dramatic creation, thought that The Secluded Boudoir and The Romance of the Western Chamber were full of real feelings and emotions, hence they were more moving than The Story of a Pipa because the latter was affected and distorted by the feudal ethical code and had not as much real emotion as the first two. For the detail of the argument, see Cai Zhong Xiang, The Highlights of Classical Chinese Dramatic Theory (Beijing, 1988), pp. 25-35.

the Ming Dynasty, the form of traditional Chinese drama was changed from short 'Zaju' into long 'Romance' and subsequently the praiseful comedy became more and more dominant along with the arising of more narrative elements in the plays. Today it is commonly admitted by the Chinese dramatic critics that the typical traditional Chinese comedy is praiseful comedy, not satiric comedy. Thus we may say that the general attitude of classical Chinese comic writers toward satiric elements in comedy has an affinity with that of Shakespeare. Let's take The Green Peony and The Errors of a Kite as examples; we feel that the satiric elements in the two plays are so soft that they should not be called real satiric comedies like those of Molière. Although we laugh at the absurdity of the immoral rivals in these plays, we forgive them at last. It seems that both Shakespearean comedy and traditional Chinese comedy have the same purpose of laughter: we are invited to laugh when the principal characters are in absurd situations or do ridiculous things. This is a friendly laughter. We are also asked to laugh when some minor characters whom we don't like show their weaknesses and follies. This may be an unfriendly laughter, but in most cases it tends to be a remedy but not a whip.

Generally speaking, the comic concepts of Shakespearean comedy and traditional Chinese comedy are similar in most aspects. Both are designed mainly to delight or to create life-like characters and to represent life with poetic imagination, but not especially to teach. Both aim to admire virtues and wisdom, presenting a bright and optimistic view of life, but not mainly to satirize. Both are intended to represent the realization of personal happiness and the harmonious order of society. And both, with their unique devices of the Utopian forest and the Paradise garden, set up for mankind brilliant and lofty social ideals.

## Chapter 2. General Artistic Characteristics and the Related Cultural Context

We have discussed, through the brief comparisons in the first chapter, the differences and similarities between Shakespearean drama and traditional Chinese drama in tragedy and comedy, and explored the related social and cultural backgrounds which help to shape these features of the two dramas. Such discussions have laid a foundation for further exploration of the two dramas and a consideration of their general artistic characteristics, because the main characteristics of both Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama are mostly represented in their tragedies and comedies. The comparison between the general artistic characteristics of the two dramas will provide us with a wider field of vision to see even more clearly the distinctions of Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama, which may pave the way for our fully understanding of the discussion of the interaction between Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama in the later chapters. This chapter therefore begins with the discussion of the difference and similarity of general artistic characteristics between Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama, looking particularly at the mixture of tragedy and comedy, the structure of plot, deployment of time and space, characterization and the use of imagery, with special attention to the general artistic tendency of the two dramas and their related theatrical and cultural traditions.

The feature of mixing comic and tragic scenes, while serving as one of the main characteristics of Shakespeare's works and being so often debated by Shakespeare critics, is also a distinctive characteristic of traditional Chinese drama, which evoked controversies among modern Chinese dramatic critics when they tried to classify traditional Chinese drama by Western criteria of tragedy and comedy. Hence, this characteristic which the two dramas share deserves more consideration. Through careful examination, we shall find, under the seeming similarity between the two

dramas in this aspect, a lot of subtle differences concerning the function and related theatrical and philosophical tradition of this feature between Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama.

The mixture of tragedy and comedy is a typical and important factor in Shakespeare's plays. In almost any of his plays we can see, more and less, this mingled mode. Admittedly, the predominant atmosphere of Shakespearean tragedy is one of sadness, but it is sometimes suspended by comic scenes. In Shakespeare's comedies, there are also some tragic scenes and elements mingled. By contrast with Shakespeare's plays, the mingled mode of traditional Chinese drama is more evident. As we pointed out in the first chapter, the comic element is so strong in traditional Chinese tragedies that most of the plays end with happy events although the general atmospheres are sad and sorrowful. The mixture of tragedy and comedy in traditional Chinese tragedy is represented not only at the end of the plays, but also, like Shakespearean tragedy, during the process of the plot. Hence, besides the happy endings, there are often comic scenes and characters mingled in traditional Chinese tragedies. For instance, in The Story of a Pipa, the famous tragedy of the Yuan dynasty, we can see several comic scenes interwoven with the tragic scenes. Just after the sad scene 11, in which the heroine Zhao Wu Niang and her parents-in-law have suffered a lot from a famine since her husband Cai Bo Jie left for the Capital to attend the imperial examination, the audience's attention is rapidly shifted to a comic scene, in which the Prime Minister Niu asks a woman matchmaker to go to talk with Cai Bo Jie and let him marry Niu's daughter after Cai Bo Jie has passed the imperial exam and won the title of Zhuang Yuan. The woman matchmaker is a very funny character, with an axe and a balance in her hand, which she uses as her business sign. When Prime Minister Niu asks her why she takes these two things with her, she explains that because an old saying says: 'You need an axe to cut firewood, and a matchmaker to find a wife', so she takes an axe as one of her business signs. The balance, she says, is used to weight up the conditions of man and woman in order to make all the prospective marriages firm. Both the language and action of the woman matchmaker are very laughable, which, together with the happy atmosphere of the whole scene, is explicitly contrasted with

the tragic mood in the preceding scene.

Like Shakespeare, traditional Chinese dramatists sometimes mix joy and sorrow in a single scene, just like the churchyard scene in Hamlet. A typical example will be found in scene 17 of The Story of a Pipa, in which some local officials provide relief grain to the people in the disaster area who suffer from the terrible famine, including the heroine Zhao Wu Niang. The basic mood of this scene is serious and sorrowful because it depicts the corruption of the officials and the miserable situation of the poor people. It also describes how Zhao Wu Niang is bullied and treated high-handedly by the officer taking care of the relief grain, and how she is so agonized that she attempts to commit suicide. But the scene is closely mingled with a comic element. The speech and actions of the corrupt officials are foolish and ridiculous. Except the heroine, the poor people themselves also look funny and amusing although they are in miserable circumstances. This scene can be associated with a very ludicrous scene in Shakespeare's King Henry the Fourth (Part II. 3. 2.), in which Falstaff recruits soldiers for the war. Both are presented in comic mode but contain real seriousness and a tragic undertone.

In traditional Chinese comedies, we can also find tragic scenes. As we discussed in the first chapter, some tragic themes of traditional Chinese tragedies reappear in the comedies. In many traditional Chinese comedies, such as The Romance of the Western Chamber, The Secluded Boudoir, The Story of a Jade Hairpin, and The Errors of a Kite, we can see great social turbulence and chaos of war, which is a common theme in traditional Chinese tragedies. The scattering and separation of a family serves as an important device in both Shakespearean comedies and traditional Chinese comedies. Yet it shows a more explicitly tragic tone in the latter than in the former, since it is also one of the main themes of traditional Chinese comedies. In A Slave to Money, a famous traditional Chinese comedy which can be seen as the Chinese counterpart of Molière's The Miser, the poor couple Zhou Rong Zu and his wife, suffering from hunger and cold, have no alternative but to sell their son to the rich miser Jia Ren. It is really a sad scene to make the audience shed tears for the miserable circumstances of the poor couple. In The

Secluded Boudoir and The Story of a Jade Hairpin, there are also some tragic scenes of family separation caused by the chaos of war.

The mixture of tragedy and comedy of both Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama is of great importance to their dramatic merits. Yet this mingled mode existed for many years before it came to be properly understood by critics. In the history of European drama, the mingled mode of Shakespeare's plays was lamented and blamed by many critics, most particularly neo-classicists, who thought that the mixture of grief and joy might produce distraction of attention and inconsistency of mood. The mingled mode of traditional Chinese drama has also been misunderstood and criticized by both Western and Chinese scholars. Some Western critics doubt whether the optimistic philosophy of the Chinese can produce real tragedy and whether traditional Chinese drama contains real tragedy since all the tragic plays are so explicitly and greatly mixed with comic elements.<sup>1</sup> In China, many modern critics lamented the obscure distinction between the tragedy and comedy in traditional Chinese drama, which had taxed the ingenuity of the critics to classify the plays. Some young scholars in contemporary China complained that Chinese civilization had failed to produce genuine tragedy and comedy. I will deal with this issue in detail in Chapter 3.

Seemingly the mixture of tragedy and comedy in Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama may cause inconsistency of dramatic mood. Yet through careful examination, we find that it won't damage the general dramatic effect of the two dramas, particularly Shakespeare's plays, as tragedy or comedy. And furthermore this mingled mode in both Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama demonstrates a special artistic function and purpose. In Shakespearean tragedies, the comic scenes seem to serve as comic interludes or burlesques. But actually they serve closely the central theme or atmosphere of the play. In Hamlet, the churchyard scene is not a simple comic interlude. It deals with some profound philosophy and voices eternal truths of death and life, though they are presented

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<sup>1</sup>. Karl Jaspers, Tragedy Is Not Enough, trans. by Harald A. T. Reiche, Harry T. Moore and Karl W. Deutsch (Archon Books, 1969), pp. 32-3.

in an ironical way. Thus the implication of this scene will enhance the central theme of this great tragedy. The function of the porter scene in Macbeth is also not limited to a comic interlude.

One of the major functions of the mingled mode has been considered as 'comic relief'. This term may be more suitable for traditional Chinese drama than for Shakespeare, considering the happy ending of the Chinese tragedy. However, the comic scenes in Shakespearean tragedies sometimes indeed function as comic relief, but more complicatedly. The mixture of sorrow and joy of Shakespeare's plays is more subtle and complex, which is consistent with the complicated structure of man's psychology. When Dr. Johnson vindicated Shakespeare logically and psychologically, he also pointed out that the mingled mode of the playwright represented the complex change and movement of passion in life.<sup>2</sup> The most important function of the mixture of tragedy and comedy in Shakespeare's plays is, perhaps, that this mode would serve as an ideal method to exhibit the process of social life, since life is never constituted by one single happy or sad event. It contains a variety of events that come to us with different emotions. In fact, the mingled mode demonstrates the dialectical movement of the two sides of life.

Compared with the function of the mingled mode in Shakespeare's plays, the mingled mode in traditional Chinese drama exhibits a similar yet still a slightly different function. The main function or purpose of the mixture of tragedy and comedy in traditional Chinese drama is to produce special emotions. Normally, traditional Chinese plays are designed to create two types of emotion: amusing and moving. In the tragedies, the comic scenes, looking like a comic interlude or burlesque, aim to produce amusing and funny effects. In the comedies, the sorrowful and sad scenes are used to move the audience and to evoke sympathetic feelings. The comic elements in traditional Chinese tragedies function more obviously as 'comic relief', considering the happy endings of these plays. But sometimes this function is so strong that it would weaken the principal tragic

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<sup>2</sup>. Samuel Johnson, 'Preface to Shakespeare', Shakespeare Criticism: A Selection, ed. by D. Nichol Smith (Oxford, 1926), p. 98.

atmosphere of the plays and make them more like tragi-comedies, although as a whole they should be kept in the category of tragedy. Similar to Shakespeare's mingled mode, one of the main purpose of the mixture of tragedy and comedy in traditional Chinese drama is to represent social life. Classical Chinese dramatists believed that life itself is a mixture of happy and sad events. For an individual, his or her experience might vary from sorrow to joy. For a society, the social life is constituted by the gain and happiness of some people and the loss and misfortune of other people. Therefore, as a stage presentation of life, a play must imitate both happy and sorrowful phases of life, and employ the mingled mode to fulfil such a task.

The distinction of the mixture of comedy and tragedy in both Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama can be traced back to their dramatic traditions and cultural backgrounds. Seemingly, Shakespeare's mingled mode is in contradiction with the academic tradition of his age, yet the connection of his mode with the popular theatrical tradition can be easily found because it was a popular theatrical convention in Elizabethan age as Sidney described in his 'An Apology for Poetry'.<sup>3</sup> Shakespeare's unique characterization serves as another main factor to impel him to use the mingled mode, because he intends to present a wide range of characters and his plays are always divided between serious and funny characters. The most important reason for Shakespeare to use the mingled purpose in his plays, perhaps, is that his dramatic concept differs from those of his professional predecessors and successors. Shakespeare sees his drama as a mirror of Nature, but not merely a means to moralize or to please. For him, the world is a big stage and a stage is a miniature world, just as Antonio says in The Merchant of Venice:

I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano ---  
 A stage, where every man must play a part,  
 And mine a sad one.

(1. 1. 77-9)

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<sup>3</sup>. Philip Sidney, 'An Apology for Poetry', Elizabethan Critical Essays, ed. by G. Gregory Smith, 2 vols (Oxford, 1904), I, p. 199.

Thus it is assumed that the mingled mode is the most suitable way to realize Shakespeare's theatrical creative ideas and to depict colourful and complex Nature.

The mixture of tragedy and comedy in traditional Chinese drama can be more easily explained than that in Shakespeare's plays because it apparently shows its connection with classical Chinese theatrical tradition, dramatic concept and cultural background. Unlike Western drama, traditional Chinese drama made no distinction between comedy and tragedy. Although there exist general tragic and comic senses in traditional Chinese drama and other literary works, one cannot find such genres as tragedy or comedy in the traditional Chinese dramatic heritage. The classification of the two genres, actually, was formulated by some modern Chinese critics in the light of Western dramatic principle. Therefore it is easier to understand why traditional Chinese dramatists so largely mixed comic elements with tragic elements in their works, since they had no rules to observe at all and would incur no blame for their mingled style. The characterization of traditional Chinese drama is another factor to affect the use of a mixed mode in the plays. The characters in traditional Chinese drama, as we remarked in the first chapter, tend to be types. Traditionally there are always four or five types of role in a play. One of them is a comic character (Chou). The function of this role is to produce a funny and amusing atmosphere by impromptu comic gestures, remarks and tricks. This explains why even in the most serious traditional Chinese plays there are often some comic characters and scenes.

The mingled mode in traditional Chinese drama can be traced back directly to the general creative principle of classical Chinese dramatists. By the principle, one should not separate tragic events from happy events or grief from joy. The best plays are those in which different emotions are mingled subtly. In The Fan of Peach Blossom, through the speech of a character in the Prologue, the author expresses his idea about the expected emotional effect of the play:

This production will please you as well as grieve you.  
Sometimes you will be made to laugh, and sometimes

you'll shed sad tears.

(ZGSDGDBJJ, Prologue. p. 779)

When <sup>he</sup> discussed dramatic concepts in his book On Drama, the famous classical Chinese playwright and critic Li Yu<sup>4</sup> pointed out that in order to avoid pedantic and stale moralization in stage presentation, a writer must 'mingle seriousness with levity, sorrow with joy'.<sup>5</sup>

There are some more profound reasons for classical Chinese playwrights to use the mingled mode in their works, which can be found in the deep structure of traditional Chinese culture. For example, traditional Chinese philosophy advocates a dialectical relationship between things. Hence, good fortune may bring about disaster, disaster may be followed by good fortune. When joy runs to an extreme it will produce sadness, while sadness often contains a potential joy. This might greatly influence the dramatic concept of traditional Chinese playwrights and make them keep tragic and comic elements together. Traditional Chinese aesthetic ideas, as we mentioned in the first chapter, also contribute to the use of the mingled mode in traditional Chinese drama. 'The beauty of balance', which serves as the fundamental aesthetic idea in ancient China, asks Chinese writers to restrain their emotional representation. This may help to explain the use of the mixed mode, particularly the 'comic relief' in traditional Chinese drama.

It seems that the mingled mode in Shakespeare's plays shows a more philosophical purpose while the mingled mode in traditional Chinese drama shows a more emotional purpose. Some profound meanings can always be found through particular use of the mingled mode in Shakespeare's plays. In traditional Chinese drama, however, sometimes we feel that certain mixed scenes are out of keeping with either the themes or moods presented. They are designed specially for certain

<sup>4</sup>. Li Yu (1611-1680), a well-known dramatist and critic in the Qing Dynasty, who was noted for his comedy The Errors of a Kite and his book On Drama which was the most influential writing on theatrical theory in ancient China. He was also a supervisor of a private drama company.

<sup>5</sup>. Li Yu, On Drama (Li Li Weng Qu Hua) (Changsha, 1980), p. 42.

roles, particularly for the comic role (Chou). For example, in The Hall of Longevity. There is a comic scene after the death of Lady Yang, in which Emperor Tang Ming decide to dig up Lady Yang's body and bury her formally. After receiving the imperial decree, a local official recruits four hundred women for the grave-digging work. After finding that one of the women is a disguised man, the official decides to check the rest by touching their bodies. This is really a little obscene compared with the solemn mood generated by the central theme of the play. On the other hand, however, some ideas may be drawn from this example. It shows clearly how Chinese dramatic conventions function in arranging comic scenes and characters in every play. It can also be assumed that, just like Shakespeare's works, traditional Chinese drama suits both refined and popular taste. Like Shakespeare, the classical Chinese dramatists did not avoid sexual matters and their explicit description.

Plot-making has been regarded as an important technique to build a play for almost all playwrights must tell stories in dramatic form, though a few modern Western dramatists indeed created some stage productions which did not tell stories, as Samuel Beckett and other playwrights of Absurd Drama have done. Shakespeare frequently prefers a double plot, which contains more incidents and events than a single plot, and is hence suitable for representing his vast artistic world. Typical examples of his double plots can be found in many of his popular plays, such as King Lear, Twelfth Night, or the two parts of Henry IV. It can be said that Shakespeare uses double plots with high proficiency and great variety. One of the main kinds of double plot in Shakespeare's plays is the 'parallel double plot'. In some of Shakespeare's plays, the subplot almost exactly parallels the main plot. The two plots are closely interrelated throughout and the two sets of characters parallel and reflect each other, as we see in King Lear. Another main pattern of double plot in Shakespeare's works may be called 'contrast double plot', in which the main plot and subplot form a delightful contrast. Because each plot has opposite feature set against each other, such a contrast often produces a special aesthetic effect. A typical example of 'contrast double plot' can be found in the two parts of Henry IV, in which the courtly life and low life contrast finely with each other. Generally, most of the plots in Shakespeare's plays are tightly knit, particularly in

his tragedies. Occasionally, Shakespeare uses an episodic plot characterized by a series of loosely related incidents, as in the three parts of Henry VI or Love's Labour's Lost.

When we turn to traditional Chinese drama, we find that the plays in the early and middle periods of traditional Chinese drama (mainly during the Yuan Dynasty) tend to use a single plot while the plays in the later periods (the Ming and Qing Dynasties) tend to use a double plot. In most of Yuan plays (the plays of the Yuan Dynasty represent the golden age of traditional Chinese drama), the stories are normally simple and a single plot is accordingly used, as in the major tragedies: The Injustice to Dou E, Autumn in the Han Palace, and The Orphan of the House Zhao, and in the major comedies: Looking Over the Wall, The Romance of the Western Chamber, A Slave to Money, etc. It seems that the main reason for the Yuan playwrights to employ a single plot in their works is that normally Yuan plays are much shorter than Ming and Qing plays and have only a few events to include. Roughly, a typical Yuan play is only one-fourth the length of a Shakespearean play.

Similar to Shakespeare's plays, the later traditional Chinese plays (during the Ming and Qing Dynasties) use a double plot as their main pattern. As we mentioned before, the plays written in this period have been called 'romances' by both ancient and modern Chinese critics because they are much longer than Yuan plays and their stories are more complex than the latter. Thus the double plot seems to be an ideal pattern for them as it may provide more spatial representation and contain more groups of characters. A double plot is employed in most famous Ming and Qing plays, as in the tragedies: The Flag of Loyalty, The Story of Lady Wang, The Story of the Honest Subject, The Fan of Peach Blossom, etc. and in comedies such as The Story of a Jade Hairpin and The Errors of a Kite. However, the patterns of double plot in traditional Chinese drama are different from those in Shakespeare's plays. For example, we can hardly find any parallel double plots, as that in King Lear, in traditional Chinese plays. It is also difficult to see an example of contrast double plot in the Chinese plays. The plot in The Story of a Pipa may be called a contrast double plot because the sad main plot, which

recounts the suffering of the heroine Zhao Wu Niang in the famine, and the happy subplot, in which the hero Cai Bo Jie passes the imperial examination, obtains a high ranking position and marries the daughter of the Prime Minister, form a striking contrast in mood. The principal pattern of a double plot in traditional Chinese plays is designed in this way: normally the main plot describes the actions of the leading characters and the subplot provides the related social and historical background. Take The Errors of a Kite, for example. In the play, the main plot recounts the love story of the principal characters while the subplot illustrates the turmoil of a war caused by a tribal invasion. The two plots are related sometimes, particularly at the beginning and at the end.

Shakespeare displays his superb technique in plot-making when he uses a multiple plot or a quadruple plot in some plays. We are always surprised that in A Midsummer-Night's Dream Shakespeare can interrelate four plots so harmoniously and shows us such a fantastic world. Yet in traditional Chinese drama we rarely see an example of multiple plot, although the later plays contain many different stories. The plot of The Fan of Peach Blossom is seemingly like a multiple plot but actually it is, in the strict sense, a double plot. On the other hand, the plot in this play is not knit as tightly as that in A Midsummer-Night's Dream. There are more plays having episodic plots in traditional Chinese plays than in Shakespeare's plays. Influenced by the narrative literary tradition in the Song and Ming Dynasties, especially the historical novels, the later classical Chinese dramatists tend to use episodic plots in many works, generally following a natural chronological order to recount historical events, just as Shakespeare does in the three parts of Henry VI.

Traditionally, the Chinese like a complete story, hence almost all the traditional Chinese plays are fully complete stories. A play with an incomplete story, like Shakespeare's Love's Labour's Lost, would be unacceptable to an ancient Chinese audience. Comparing the plot design of traditional Chinese plays with that of Shakespeare's plays, some Chinese critics think that Shakespeare sometimes uses 'closed plot' which classical Chinese playwrights never used. The so called 'closed plot', means a play which starts from the middle of the story or even a point very

near the end of an event. If a play begins from the very beginning of an event, it should be called an 'open plot'. Almost all the traditional Chinese plays belong to 'open plot', and so do most of Shakespeare's plays. But Shakespeare also employs 'closed plot' in a few plays, such as Hamlet and The Tempest.<sup>6</sup> Compare, for example, Hamlet and the famous Yuan tragedy The Orphan of the House Zhao. Both plays recount a story of revenge. As a play using an 'open plot', The Orphan of the House Zhao starts from the very beginning of the event, presenting how the corrupt general Tu An Jia plots to frame the virtuous minister Zhao Dun and massacre the whole household of Zhao. The climax of the play is not based on the revenge itself but on the brave action of the honest officials and the friends of the House of Zhao who protect the orphan of the Zhao House from the massacre. Actually, the revenge of the orphan on his enemy serves only as the resolution of the play. As a play with a 'closed plot', Hamlet, however, starts from the revenge itself, leaving all the previous events to be recounted in narrative. This contrast shows that the plot of Hamlet is more tight and concentrated, whereas the plot of The Orphan of the House Zhao, as a whole, tends to be episodic and a little bit loose.

There is a striking similarity between Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama in dramatic techniques. That is, both have a very free deployment of time and space. There is no fixed time limit in Shakespeare's plays because his plays are usually much longer than twenty four hours. Sometimes the events in his plays last for many years, particularly in his romances. For example, in The Winter's Tale, the duration of the plot is sixteen years. In his plays, the place for the character to act often shifts from city to city, and even from country to country.

Like Shakespeare, traditional Chinese playwrights always felt free to decide the duration of their works. In traditional Chinese drama, there are very few plays that take place within twenty four hours. The plots in most of the plays normally

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<sup>6</sup>. Ma Shuo Rong, 'An Artistic Comparison Between Shakespeare and Traditional Chinese Drama', Shakespeare Studies, ed. by Shakespeare Society of China, 2 (1985), 232-42 (p. 238).

proceed for several days, weeks, or months, and sometimes even for many years. For example, in many short Yuan plays, the events last as long as those in Shakespeare's romances. In The Injustice to Dou E, there is an interval of thirteen years between the prologue and Act I, and another interval of three years between Act III and Act IV. In the well-known tragedy The Orphan of the House Zhao, the orphan is only a newborn baby in the first three Acts, yet in the fourth Act he has already grown up (twenty years old) and is ready to be informed of the truth to avenge himself on his enemy. The deployment of place in traditional Chinese drama is also absolutely free. In some plays, as in The Green Peony, The Injustice to Dou E, and The Romance of the Western Chamber (basically), the stories indeed proceed in the same place. But in most of the plays, such as The Hall of Longevity, Autumn in the Han Palace, The Secluded Boudoir, etc. the events occur in two, three or several different places.

We have discussed briefly, in the first chapter, some distinctions between the tragic and comic characters in Shakespeare's plays and those in traditional Chinese drama. However, it will still be useful to deal further with concepts of characterization in the two dramas because the comparison in this aspect will show even more clearly the differences between Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama.

To readers and audiences all over the world, Shakespeare's name is always associated with his famous characters such as Hamlet, King Lear, Othello, Romeo and Juliet, Timon, Falstaff, Shylock, etc. Thus we can say that Shakespeare has made great contribution to the character gallery of world literature. In contrast, it seems that traditional Chinese drama offered fewer immortal characters at world level although traditional Chinese novel offered more. This is not merely because the methods of characterization in Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama are different. It is mainly because Shakespeare approaches humanity in a different way than classical Chinese playwrights do. As most of the critics in old and modern times agreed, Shakespeare was interested mainly in representing general human nature, while simultaneously portraying characters of peculiar community,

nation or age.

Yet unlike Shakespeare, traditional Chinese dramatists did not concentrate on general human nature. They normally paid special attention to the moral and social sides of their characters. Like ancient Greek and neo-classical French writers, they tended to idealize and beautify the characters in their works. Just as we discussed in the first chapter, Shakespeare's characters are rarely perfect persons. Like people in real life, they show us virtues as well as weak points. Yet in traditional Chinese drama, the two opposing tendencies of man are presented separately. The positive characters are always perfect and the negative characters are totally vicious. Both of them do not look like real people in social life. It can be said that Shakespeare does not depict his characters without moral elements. But to represent moral principle is not his main purpose. In traditional Chinese drama, however, the moral elements of the characters are largely emphasized and heightened. So most of the characters tend to be moral types, as we pointed out in the first chapter, such as loyal subjects, patriotic generals, dutiful sons, chaste wives, faithful friends, etc.

In Shakespeare's plays, we find quite often admiration for the nobility of humanity. The best example can be taken from Hamlet:

What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason!  
how infinite in faculties! in form and moving, how  
express and admirable! in action, how like an angel! in  
apprehension, how like a god! the beauty of the world!  
the paragon of animals!

(2. 2. 300-305)

But in traditional Chinese drama, we rarely see a passage in praise of abstract and common humanity. What we find often is the admiration of some moral principle which contributed to the peace and harmony of the ancient Chinese society. These lines are usually written in beautiful verse and appear mostly in prologues and epilogues to the plays. For example, in the famous Yuan play The Story of a Pipa, the prologue and epilogue are used to praise the piety and faithfulness of the hero Cai Bo Jie and the heroine Zhao Wu Niang, which are regarded as the fundamental

virtues to keep a better relationship in a family and maintain harmonious order in a state.

Admittedly, classical Chinese playwrights followed the general rule of dramatic creation. They tried to mix beauty with goodness. Yet moral principles may vary with time and nation, and sometimes traditional Chinese plays may not be very easily to be understood by a person with a different cultural background. Some moral doctrines in the plays could be strange to a western audience, such as 'Yu Zhong' --- stubborn loyalty to a fatuous and self-indulgent ruler, as in The Flag of Loyalty; or 'Shou Jie' --- a woman preserves her chastity after the death of her husband and never remarries, as in The Injustice to Dou E. This will form a barrier for an audience with an alien culture and prevent them from identifying with the characters of traditional Chinese plays. Sometimes, even for the modern Chinese, it is also difficult to understand the outworn feudal ethical code in traditional Chinese drama because great changes in moral principle have taken place in modern China.

The colourfulness and complexity of Shakespearean characters provide one of the major artistic distinctions of his plays. By contrast, the characters of traditional Chinese drama are relatively monochromatic and simple. It can be said that the protagonists of traditional Chinese drama are mainly types standing for certain social classes in ancient Chinese society. They have something in common with the dramatis personae in the plays of French neo-classicist playwrights in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. That is to say, unlike Shakespearean characters, the nature of a principal character in traditional Chinese drama usually consists of merely a single trait or passion. The characterization of traditional Chinese drama is based not on naturalism but on the presentation of the moral principle of Confucianism, which is the core of Chinese culture.

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 when applied to the relationship between ruler and subject. Yue Fei, the patriotic general in The Flag of Loyalty is such a type. He fights a great many of bloody battles for the sake of rescuing the two emperors Song Hui Zong and Song Qin Zong, who are captured by an invading minority nation. At the very moment when he is to be murdered by the traitorous prime minister Qin Hui, he cries not over his own life but over the two emperors.

The characters of the second type are sons and daughters who embody 'Xiao' (filial piety), a fundamental virtue of Chinese moral convention concerning the relationship between parents and their children. Zhao Wu Niang, the heroine in The Story of a Pipa, is a typical character of this category. In the play, after her husband goes to the capital to attend the imperial examination, Zhao Wu Niang suffers hardship to support her parents-in-law:

Since the departure of my husband,  
A famine has hit this region,  
Selling my clothes and ornaments  
To support my parents-in-law,  
I have left nothing.

(ZGSDGDBJJ, scene 20. 'Po Xing' p. 164)

I have made a plain meal,  
To allay their hunger,  
I myself have to eat husk and bran,  
To maintain my feeble life.

(Ibid, p. 165.)

After the death of her parents-in-law, she cuts off her hair to sell because she has no money for the funeral arrangements. Without tools or help from others, she makes a grave for her parent-in-law with her bare, bloody hands. This moving story is a faithful reflection of the primacy that the Chinese placed on filial piety.

The third typical characters are ladies serving as an embodiment of 'Jie', (Chastity). In ancient China, a wife was asked to be not only loyal to her husband but also loyal to his spirit after he died, and remained a widow for the rest of her

life (Shou Jie). Lady Wang in The Sad Story of Lady Wang is a typical embodiment of chastity. In the play, like Romeo and Juliet, Lady Wang and her cousin Shen Chun love each other deeply. When they enter into an engagement with each other secretly, and Shen Chun worries about the possible disagreement of Lady Wang's parents, Lady Wang promises:

Provided we are unshakable and firm,  
Our wish will surely come true,  
If we fail to marry at last,  
I shall repay your love with my life.

(ZGSDGDBJJ, Scene 10, 'Cu Pao Ying' p. 376.)

Considering that Shen Chun is a poor relative, Lady Wang's father forces her to marry a dandy from a great house. To fulfil her promise, Lady Wang resists this unreasonable marriage with her death. Her lover Shen Chun commits suicide too.

The last type 'Yi', meaning literally 'One's loyalty towards one's friends', is a more comprehensive virtue in ancient China, found and practised in all social situations by people of all walks of life, even by people as different as officials and outlaws. This virtue is largely extolled in the famous Yuan play The Orphan of House Zhao. The herb doctor Cheng Ying in this play is a typical character with such a virtue. As a guest financially supported by House Zhao, Ching Ying is grateful to the family of Zhao. When the household of Zhao is massacred by the corrupt minister, he risk his life to rescue the only orphan of the Zhao family and even sacrifices his own son to save the orphan.

As we discussed above, most principal characters of traditional Chinese drama are mainly moral types rather than individuals of passionate humanity, who are a feature of Shakespeare's characters. In the chief characters of traditional Chinese drama, it is difficult to distinguish those who belong to the same type because of the similarity of them. However, it is much easier to differentiate between Shakespearean characters who belong to the same species, because each character still possesses his own particular personality besides the common leading quality that marks the species. For example, the 'treacherous man', such as Claudius,

Macbeth, Edmund and Iago, can be seen as one of the major types in Shakespeare's characters. The desire for power is their common leading trait, but in addition, we find easily many other different qualities in their individual natures.

There are few highly individualized characters in traditional Chinese drama. For instance, we can see some characters similar to Falstaff in certain Chinese plays, who are the playboys living a dissipated life, such as Zhou She in Rescued by a Coquette and Qi You Xian in The Errors of a Kite, but they only possess one side of Falstaff's trait and are mainly held up to our ridicule. Yet Falstaff is different. While being laughed at by us, he also evokes in us the emotions of wonder, admiration, delight and exaltation, which was partly the reason why Hegel, in his Aesthetik, selects Falstaff as an example of Shakespeare's power.<sup>7</sup> Let's take Shylock as another example, A similar character can be found in a traditional Chinese comedy, A Slave to Money. The chief character, Jia Ren, is a miser. His stinginess is exaggeratedly and fully presented by the playwright. By comparison with Shylock, Jia Ren is, like Harpagon in Molière's comedy, only a simple miser, although his leading passion is vividly portrayed. Whereas Shylock is much more than a miser because he arouses in us ambiguous emotions as father, victim, or jew.

The character types in traditional Chinese plays are also influenced by Chinese literary tradition. For example, honest subjects are principal characters in the classical Chinese historical novel, as in The History of Three Kingdom (San Guo Zhi) and The Biography of the North Song Dynasty (Bei Song Shi Zhan). Confucian scholars also appear frequently in many genres of classical Chinese literature. Outlaws, as one of the main types in traditional Chinese plays, e.g. Li Kui in Li Kui Carries Thorns, are vividly described by classical Chinese novelists, as Luo Guan Zhong did in his well-known fiction Water Margin (Shui Hu Zhan). Thus it is commonly said by modern Chinese scholars that the characterization and themes of traditional Chinese drama were greatly influenced by classical Chinese

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<sup>7</sup>. Hegel, Aesthetik, trans. by Zhu Guang Qian, 3 vols (Beijing, 1980), III, p. 334.

novels (especially the works during the Song and Yuan Dynasties).<sup>8</sup> As some Western critics have pointed out, Shakespeare's characters were sometimes directly associated with the old types from English and European literary traditions, such as the old morality villain, the adventurous knight and the sighing lover, etc.<sup>9</sup> But in his works, Shakespeare always tried to develop these old types and not, at the same time, to limit himself to them. By contrast, classical Chinese playwrights were keen on depicting certain types they inherited from the literary tradition, and did not intend to extend the range of the types.

The moral-orientation of the characterization of traditional Chinese drama leads to a lack of psychological character types. In traditional Chinese plays, one can hardly find any melancholy character like Jaques in As You Like It, or a misanthrope like Apemantus in Timon of Athens. Generally speaking, classical Chinese dramatists had no interests in describing very odd or peculiar types of humanity to which Shakespeare paid great attention. In the eyes of classical Chinese playwrights, not all the qualities in humanity are worth depicting, only those that have aesthetic and moral values. Yet Shakespeare sees beauty in humanity itself, and in the wide variety of human personality. Thus we can find so many vivid description of various types of character. For instance, in The Merchant of Venice, we read:

Now, by two-headed Janus,  
 Nature hath fram'd strange fellows in her time:  
 Some that will evermore peep through their eyes,  
 And laugh like parrots at a bag-piper;  
 And other of such vinegar aspect  
 That they'll not show their teeth in way of smile  
 Though Nestor swear the jest be laughable.

(1. 1. 50-6)

And another interesting type of man, described in the same play:

<sup>8</sup>. See Cai Zhong Xiang, The Highlights of Classical Chinese Dramatic Theory (Beijing, 1988), p. 43.

<sup>9</sup>. Roland Mushat Frye, Shakespeare the Art of the Dramatist (London, 1982), p. 228.

There are a sort of men whose visages  
 Do cream and mantle like a standing pond,  
 And do a wilful stillness entertain,  
 With purpose to be dress'd in an opinion  
 Of wisdom, gravity, profound conceit;  
 As who should say 'I am Sir Oracle,  
 And when I ope my lips let no dog bark'.  
 O my Antonio, I do know of these  
 That therefore only are reputed wise  
 For saying nothing; when, I am very sure,  
 If they should speak, would almost damn those ears  
 Which, hearing them, would call their brothers fools.

(1. 1. 88-99)

In Hamlet, the hero vividly describes the traits of a minor character, Osric:

'A did comply, sir, with his dug before 'a suck'd it. Thus has he, and many more of the same bevy, that I know the drossy age dotes on, only got the tune of the time and outward habit of encounter --- a kind of yesty collection, which carries them through and through the most fann'd and winnowed opinions; and do but blow them to their trial, the bubbles are out.'

(5. 2. 182-188)

Yet in traditional Chinese drama, we rarely see this sort of description. What we see most are passages which tell the stories or express the emotions of the characters.

As many Shakespeare critics pointed out, particularly early ones like John Dryden, Shakespeare was good at presenting the passions of man, such as love, hatred, anger, jealousy, honour, ambition, revenge, etc. There can be no doubt that this is one of the main features of Shakespeare's characters, especially those in his tragedies and histories. Most of the famous characters of Shakespeare are associated with certain kinds of passions, e.g. Macbeth with ambition, Othello with jealousy, Antony and Cleopatra with love, etc. The significance of Shakespeare's presentation of the passions concerns at least two aspects of his art. Firstly, the opportunity to illustrate a variety of strong feelings would leave more room for

Shakespeare to give full play to his poetic talent, since feeling and emotion are the main food of poetry. Secondly, the representation of passions can be used to explore deeply the motives of the characters' action in human nature and so help us to interpret the plays.

In comparison, the main purpose of the characterization of traditional Chinese drama is not the representation of strong passions --- although there are some passions depicted in some of the plays, such as jealousy in The Hall of Longevity and The Sad Story of Lady Wang (In both plays the jealous characters are heroines, but not heroes like Othello); revenge in The Orphan of the House Zhao; ambition in The Story of the Honest Subjects; and mostly, love in many of the plays. But as a passion, love in traditional Chinese drama is not represented as strongly as in Shakespeare's plays. In most cases, it appears as a refined and restrained feeling instead of a deep, strong and uncontrollable feeling. As for other passions, traditional Chinese playwrights only sketched them slightly and never focused their attention on them.

Passions were ignored by classical Chinese dramatists on at least two counts. Firstly, the ancient Chinese tended to explain the motives of man's action in the light of ethics. They believed that man's behaviour stems mainly from his moral principles, but not from his instinctive desires. For them, it was very dangerous if a society did not restrain personal passion because wildly running passions would damage the moral order of a society. By the later Confucian ethical code (mainly during the Song and Ming Dynasties), man's passions and desires are an inevitable cause of social evil and crime. Thus a playwright would be blamed if he delineated much passion in his works. For instance, Wang Shi Pu, was seriously criticized for describing sexual love in his masterpiece, The Romance of the Western Chamber. Shakespeare's presentation of the passions can be associated directly with his age, considering that many historians have seen Elizabethan age as a period marked by the liberation of individuality. Personal will and desire were largely praised in literary works during this period of the Renaissance. Yet we see a different situation in ancient China where people always gave priority to collectivism, and

individualism was rarely encouraged by ancient Chinese rulers and scholars. The second reason for traditional Chinese dramatists not to pay attention to the presentation of the passions is that in the light of literary tradition, the ancient Chinese writers were inclined to depict refined and restrained feelings in order to comply with the general aesthetic principle of 'The Beauty of Balance' as we discussed in the first chapter.

We have mentioned before that Shakespeare's characters are complex and the characters of traditional Chinese plays are comparatively simple. The main reason is that Shakespeare aimed to explore the depth and whole range of man's inner world, while classical Chinese playwrights generally rested content with the description of man's outer actions and certain emotions. Shakespeare's special methods of revelation of man's inner world (such as self-consciousness, double nature, multi-consciousness, abnormal mentality) existed for many years before they came properly to be understood. The results of modern psychological research have proved the justification of these methods, as J. I. M. Stewart says:

And is it not significant, too, that Freud vindicated Shakespeare, whose works he had abundantly studied, as a psychologist of genius? . . . the late Professor C. H. Herford, remarked that modern psychology, by its disclosure of such phenomena as those of dual and multiple personality, might unexpectedly illuminate the vexed problem of an apparent inconsistency in Shakespeare.<sup>10</sup>

In traditional Chinese drama, however, one can rarely see similar methods of revelation of the character's inner world. There is no description of self-consciousness or self-knowledge, in which a character examines and understands himself independently. There is no revelation of cynical self-awareness, like that in Hamlet, because scepticism has always been excluded by traditional Chinese ideas and the Chinese people in old times were unable to transcend their great and

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<sup>10</sup>. J. I. M. Stewart, 'Shakespeare's Men and Their Morals', Shakespeare Criticism 1935-1960, ed. by Anne Ridler (Oxford, 1970), p. 290.

closed ideological system. Although Taoism maintained resignation from the world, it never served as a critical force to the orthodox Chinese ideology. We can find, in Shakespeare's plays, a lot of examples of double nature, such as Edmund in King Lear. These characters often represent their double nature through self-revelation. Occasionally, self-revelation can be seen in traditional Chinese plays. For example, some villains tell us of their plots to frame innocent persons. But normally such self-revelations are not as complex as those in Shakespeare's plays. They are only simple statements of villainy. Here is the soliloquy of Mao Yan Shou, the corrupt minister in Autumn in the Han Palace:

Large pieces of gold I hoard and idolize;  
 Seas of blood or royal commands cannot me jeopardize.  
 I want to be rich when still alive,  
 And mind not people's curses after my demise. . . .  
 Truly it is said:  
 He with only a little hatred is no man;  
 he with but a little venom is no real wight.<sup>11</sup>

(ZGSDGDBJJ, Act I. p. 42)

In this typical self-revelation of a villain in traditional Chinese plays, we cannot see the double moral self-consciousness of the character, which we find quite often in the self-revelations of Shakespeare's characters such as in the soliloquies of Macbeth or of Claudius in Hamlet. Generally a double consciousness or a double nature was not suitable for the psychological habit and literary taste of the ancient Chinese. To them, a good man is different from an evil man just as white is different from black. Yet Shakespeare tells us that all men are almost the same and everyone has two tendencies to become a virtuous man or a vicious man dependent on particular circumstances.

Abnormal mentality, such as insanity, somnambulism, etc, can scarcely be found in traditional Chinese plays. This is not difficult to understand, considering that proper behaviour and restrained emotion in ancient Chinese society are so well

<sup>11</sup>. The translation of this passage comes from Chung Wen Shih, The Golden Age of Chinese Drama: Yuan Tsa-chu (Princeton, 1976), pp. 20-1.

defined that there is little room for morbid action and abnormal psychology. Although sometimes the characters in traditional Chinese plays, particularly in the tragedies, are frustrated and upset by some exceptional disasters, they still keep sane and never lose their reason. There are great many dreams which are enacted in traditional Chinese plays. All of them are reflections of normal psychological activities and in most cases represent the strong desires and feelings of the characters, e.g. Zhang Sheng's affection for Ying Ying in The Romance of the Western Chamber, Zhou Shun Chang's hatred for the corrupt minister in The Story of the Honest Subjects, and Jia Ren's desire for richness in A Slave to Money, etc.

This brief comparison between Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama suggests that the characterization of traditional Chinese drama may not well satisfy Western audiences since many Western dramatists, including Shakespeare, emphasize complex psychological depth in character portrayal, in the belief that the many-sided attributes of the subject are necessary to round out their characters and to make them seem real. Yet the characterization of traditional Chinese drama has its own distinctive dramatic merit in terms of aesthetics, considering that traditional Chinese drama and Shakespeare's plays belong to different modes of dramatic art. A similar example can be taken from the literary works of ancient Greece. The characterization in Greek myth, drama and epic seems to be simple in the light of modern literary standards. But these works still come to us with great fascination today. The main means of character portrayal of traditional Chinese drama can be associated with the skill of traditional Chinese brush painting. In traditional Chinese brush painting, simple strokes and light colours (in most cases only black ink) are used, but vivid expressions and bold outlines are produced. Like their dramatists, classical Chinese brush painters did not concentrate on the detail of what they depicted. They tried to make everything in their pictures alike in spirit. This is also the principle observed by traditional Chinese playwrights in their character portrayal. Generally, complex, ambiguous, grotesque and very odd persons are excluded by traditional Chinese plays because they are not suitable for the taste of the ancient Chinese. It can be said that the characters of both Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama are presented with their evident social and cultural

vestiges. But Shakespeare's characters have more comprehensively historical, social and psychological contexts. So we may feel that Shakespeare's characters not only please us but also impel us to think, while the characters of traditional Chinese drama mainly appeal to us aesthetically, and morally to the ancient Chinese as well.

In any comparison between Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama, there is one aspect that constantly commands scholarly interest. That is, both are examples of poetic drama, and both show great richness in poetic presentation and the use of imagery. It is evident that Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama are not only expressed in poetry, but actually conceived in terms of poetry. It can be assumed that both would lose their brilliant artistic fascination if they did not come to us with such poetic qualities.

In his plays, Shakespeare, like other Elizabethan dramatists, mainly used blank verse which allows considerable variation and has been used by most major English poets to suit their different ends. In addition, Shakespeare also used other forms of verse, such as sonnets, couplets, etc. and prose. These different forms are designed for different characters or moods in his plays. For example, in A Midsummer Night's Dream, the duke and the young lovers normally speak in blank verse, the fairies use couplets or other forms of verse, whereas Bottom and his fellows speak in prose unless they act their roles in the play-within-the-play.

Similar to Shakespeare's plays, the text of traditional Chinese drama consists of two parts: verse (Qu) and prose (Bai). The verse is mainly used to express emotion or to depict scenery, and the prose, to recount stories or to develop dialogue. It seems that most classical Chinese playwrights concentrated on the verse, so that the prose is frequently interspersed with short poems. Traditional Chinese drama epitomizes Chinese poetic tradition, for we can see almost every form of classical Chinese poetry in the drama: Wu Yan Shi --- five characters poem , with five Chinese characters to each line, without strict tonal patterns or rhyme schemes; Qi Yan Shi --- Seven characters poem, with seven Chinese characters to each line, without strict tonal patterns or rhyme; Jue Ju --- a poem of four lines, each

containing five or seven Chinese characters, with a strict tonal pattern and rhyme scheme; Pian Wun --- rhythmical prose, a little bit like Shakespeare's blank verse, characterized by parallelism and ornativeness; Ci --- a poem written to certain tunes with strict tonal patterns and rhyme schemes, in fixed numbers of lines of unequal length, etc.

All of the conventional poetic devices of the long Chinese literary tradition, such as imagery, parallelism, symbolism, etc., are used with ingenuity, endowing many traditional Chinese plays with an extraordinary richness of texture. The aesthetic values of Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama don't rely on their poetic forms but mainly on their unique poetic flavours. It can be said that the poetic flavours of Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama are the most beautiful poetic representations in world literature. Yet there is a striking difference between these two poetic flavours. Poetic imagery, because of its unique and profound effect in both Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama, is the focus here for discussing the difference between the two poetic representations.

Many books and papers discuss the function of imagery in Shakespeare's plays. For example, Caroline F. E. Spurgeon, the pioneer in this research field, points out that the poetic imagery in Shakespeare's plays can create atmosphere and underline themes or to heighten and develop emotion in Shakespeare's tragedies.<sup>12</sup> The imagery in Shakespeare's plays is also used as a means of characterization, as Wolfgang Clemen says when he deals with Richard II:

Imagery becomes the characteristic manner of expression of the chief character. To talk in similes, to make use of metaphors, is indeed a natural quality of the king's mind and temperament.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup>. Caroline F. E. Spurgeon, 'Leading Motives in the Imagery of Shakespeare's Tragedies', Shakespeare Criticism 1910-1935, ed. by Anne Ridler (London, 1962), p. 18.

<sup>13</sup>. Wolfgang H. Clemen, The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery (London, 1953), pp. 54-5.

Poetic imagery is also largely employed in traditional Chinese drama, playing a leading role in contributing to the brilliant richness of the poetic flavour. The main function of poetic imagery in traditional Chinese drama has an affinity with that in Shakespeare's plays, as Chung Wen Shih declares:

Poetic eloquence is the strength of Yuan drama, . . . the dramatists used images not merely to add to the richness of poetic quality, but also to serve several other dramatic purposes: to create scenery, reflect and intensify emotions, strengthen characterization, and support the themes of the plays. In all these roles the poetic images function naturally and organically.<sup>14</sup>

Although the chief functions of poetic imagery in Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama are almost the same, the way it is employed is quite different, from which we can see the apparent influences of the two literary and cultural traditions. The first and the most evident difference is that Shakespeare very comprehensively chooses his images while classical Chinese dramatists very strictly select theirs. The range of imagery in Shakespeare's plays is very wide whereas it is very narrow in traditional Chinese drama. Shakespeare has a universal mind and he can see the subtle interrelations between things which we can hardly see. So it seems that everything in this world can be included in his vast kingdom of imagery, even those things which seemingly have no poetic value at all. In comparison, classical Chinese playwrights are so deeply steeped in traditional Chinese poetry that they only choose what traditional poetic taste favours.

The animal images used in traditional Chinese drama and Shakespeare's plays will be a good example to illustrate such a difference. In traditional Chinese plays, we find far fewer animal images than in Shakespeare's works. Normally, only very limited types of animals, which possess conventional symbolic meanings, can be used as poetic images in traditional Chinese plays. For instance, in many of the love tragedies and comedies, the playwrights use 'mandarin ducks' (a brilliantly coloured

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<sup>14</sup>. Chung Wen Shih, The Golden Age of Chinese Drama: Yuan Tsa-Chu (Princeton, 1976), pp. 159-160.

duck, native to China, the male and the female always live together) as the symbol of marital fidelity, as in The Romance of the Western Chamber and The Sad Story of Lady Wang. Similarly, the 'butterfly' is employed as the symbol of an affectionate couple in many traditional Chinese plays. 'Fish and water' are also taken as a metaphor to describe the intimate relationship between the lovers, as in The Romance of the Western Chamber. Traditionally, the 'wild goose', a migratory bird, is connected with lovesickness and homesickness, as, for example, in 'Yan Ge Xing', the famous lyrical poem of the Jian An poet, Cao Zhi. It is used very frequently in many traditional Chinese plays. The full title of the well-known love-political tragedy Autumn in the Han Palace is 'The Han Yuan Emperor was awakened by a lonely wild goose at an autumn night in the Han Palace'. Besides these animal images associated with man's emotions, another main type of animal imagery is that connected with a threat to society. Almost all the corrupt subjects in traditional Chinese drama are likened to 'tigers' and 'wolves', as in The Flag of Loyalty and The Story of the Honest Subjects.

By contrast, Shakespeare uses many more kinds of animal as poetic images than classical Chinese dramatists. Shakespeare seems to be an animal expert and familiar with the habits and characteristics of many animals. Hence he can accommodate them properly into his metaphorical vision. Wild animals, such as lions, bears, wolves, and foxes, are frequently used in Shakespeare's plays as the symbols of human vices, as we see in his early Henry VI plays, King Lear and other tragedies. In Timon of Athens, a wild animal world is taken as an analogy of human society (4. 3. 325-345). When Shakespeare chooses his poetic images, he shows a special interest in some domestic animals, such as sheep, horses, dogs and pigs, which are rarely used by classical Chinese playwrights as poetic images. Shakespeare's England had a tradition of husbandry, so it is easy to understand Shakespeare's interest in domestic animals. In Shakespeare's plays, these domestic animals are also associated with some qualities of human nature. For instance, a dog is often likened to a flatterer, as some critics pointed out.<sup>15</sup> Many reptiles, amphibians and

<sup>15</sup>. Edward A. Armstrong, Shakespeare's Imagination (London, 1979), p. 168.

poisonous insects are allowed to enter Shakespeare's poetic world, which would surprise classical Chinese dramatists. In Timon, we read:

That nature, being sick of man's unkindness, . . .  
 Engenders the black toad and adder blue,  
 The gilded newt and eyeless venom'd worm,  
 With all th'abhorred births below crisp heaven.

(4. 3. 175, 180-82)

In Richard II, we find similar images of 'spiders that suck up thy venom', 'heavy-gaited toads' and 'a lurking adder' (3. 2. 14-15,19). The animal images in Shakespeare's plays not only serve as symbols with moral sense, but also describe a variety of human nature. For example, we read in As You Like It:

I will be more jealous of thee than a Barbary cockpigeon over his hen, more clamorous than a parrot against rain, more new fangled than an ape, more giddy in my desires than a monkey. . . . I will laugh like a hyen, and that when thou art inclin'd to sleep.

(4. 1. 134-9)

Generally classical Chinese playwrights tend to choose beautiful and graceful subjects as the poetic images in their works, but Shakespeare is not confined by this principle. In traditional Chinese plays, most of the images appeal to a sense of beauty and are worth being included by painters. We see, in many of the plays, flowers, willows, poplars, grass, birds, butterflies, fish, pools, gardens, rivers, bridges, boats, mountains, the sun, the moon, stars, wind, rain, clouds, etc --- images which please both the eye and the mind. There can be no doubt that many of the poetic images in Shakespeare's plays are also beautiful. But Shakespeare is so large-minded that he frequently uses something very odd, rough and rude to common poetic sense. In Hamlet, we see some disgusting images such as 'maggots' and 'carrion' (2. 2. 180). Even in the comedies, we can find such images, for instance, 'worm's meat' and 'tar' in As You Like It (3. 2. 58-9). It should be pointed out that in Shakespeare's plays, this kind of imagery is indispensable to achieve special effects in describing character and creating atmosphere. In Henry IV, we read:

... a tun of man is thy companion. Why dost thou converse with that trunk of humours, that bolting-hutch of beastliness, that stuff'd cloak-bag of guts, that roasted Manningtree ox with the pudding in his belly?

(Part I. 2. 4. 434-9)

The tendency of classical Chinese playwrights to use beautiful and graceful poetic images is so strong that they can fill their description with such images even when they write of embarrassing subjects, such as sexual intercourse. For instance, in The Romance of the Western Chamber, we read:

Spring is here and flowers flaunt their beauty;  
Her willow-like waist is supple.  
The heart of the flower is now gently plucked,  
And the dewdrops make the peony unfold.

(ZGSDGDXJJ, Act I, 'Sheng Hu lu', p. 126)

I am like a fish delighting in water,  
Or a butterfly gathering the sweet nectar of a bud.  
Half pushed back and half welcomed,  
I am filled with surprise and love.<sup>16</sup>

(Ibid, p. 126)

In comparison, Shakespeare uses bold and straightforward images to describe this matter. For instance, the passage in Othello:

Even now, now, very now, an old black ram  
is tupping your white ewe.

(1. 1. 89-90)

For that I do suspect the lustful Moor  
Hath leap'd into my seat;

(2. 1. 289-290)

Traditionally, Chinese writers used a very beautiful and implicit image of 'cloud and rain' as the symbol of making love, which is employed in many traditional Chinese plays as well.

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<sup>16</sup>. The translation of these passages comes from Chung Wen Shih, The Golden Age of Chinese Drama: Yuan Ts'a-chu (Princeton, 1976), p. 135.

In general, then, classical Chinese dramatists normally favour soft, tender and delicate poetic images, whereas Shakespeare uses more gigantic, strong, vigorous, violent and disruptive images in his works. In his tragedies, there are a lot of gigantic and violent images to create tragic atmosphere. Even in his historical plays and comedies, it is not difficult to find this type of imagery. For example, in King John, we are impressed with such images: 'Neptune's arms', 'earthquake of nobility', 'tempest of the soul', 'the vaulty top of heaven', 'burning meteors', 'storm', 'the giant world' etc. (5. 2. 34-57). We can see this bias of Shakespeare in favour of strong and vigorous images even in his description of love affairs. Chinese playwrights use delicate and tender images of 'mandarin duck', 'fish and water', 'delicate flower', 'supple willow', 'gentle sigh' and 'red tears' etc. But in Twelfth Night we read 'groans that thunder love', 'sighs of fire'(1, 5. 240), 'as hungry as the sea' (2. 4. 99). In Romeo and Juliet, we read:

My bounty is as boundless as the sea,  
My love as deep; the more I give to thee,  
The more I have, for both are infinite.

(2. 2. 133-5)

In Shakespeare's plays, we can see many symbolic images which vividly illustrate abstract things. For instance, to interpret the function and structure of a state, the playwright uses 'the honey bees' in Henry V (1. 1. 187-204), 'belly and other organs of the body' in Coriolanus (1. 1. 94-161) and 'the garden' in Richard II (3. 4. 29-66). In traditional Chinese plays, however, we can hardly find such an employment of imagery because normally classical Chinese dramatists did not try to represent abstract philosophical concepts in their poetry. For instance, classical Chinese dramatists are skilled in describing the sorrow and pleasure of lovers, but they seldom directly discuss what is love and the quality of love. Yet in Shakespeare's plays, there are a great many of such discussions utilising poetic images. In Romeo and Juliet, we read:

Why then, O brawling love! O loving hate!  
O anything, of nothing first create!  
O heavy lightness! serious vanity!  
Mis-shapen chaos of well-seeming forms!

Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire,  
sick health!  
Still-waking sleep, that is not what it is!  
This love feel I, that feel no love in this.

(1. 1. 174-180)

Love is a smoke rais'd with the fume of sighs;  
Being purg'd, a fire sparkling in lovers' eyes;  
Being vex'd, a sea nourish'd with loving tears.  
What is it else? A madness most discreet,  
A choking gall, and a preserving sweet.

(Ibid, 188-192)

Both the idea and the images in these passages would sound odd to the ancient Chinese for they never understand love in such ambiguous and complex ways.

It is quite clear that the uses of poetic imagery in both Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama are deeply affected by their cultural surroundings, because we can find many distinctive images derived from their cultural circumstances in the two dramas, as these few selected examples will suffice to show. In Shakespeare's plays, the sea-ship-navigation image-cluster is largely used while in traditional Chinese plays we frequently see the image cluster of mountain-river-running water. The sea-ship-navigation image-cluster in Shakespeare's plays is not only used to depict marine settings but is also associated with many symbolic meanings. We have pointed that the sea is sometimes taken by the playwright as the symbol of passion, e.g. love in Twelfth Night (1. 1. 9-14). In As You Like It, Jaques says:

Why, who cries out on pride  
That can therein tax any private party?  
Doth it not flow as hugely as the sea,  
Till that the wearer's very means do ebb?

(2. 7. 70-3)

Many more images connected with ships and navigation are to be found in Shakespeare's plays. In The Merchant of Venice, we read:

How like a younker or a prodigal  
The scarfed bark puts from her native bay,

Hugg'd and embraced by the strumpet wind;  
 How like the prodigal doth she return,  
 With over-weather'd ribs and ragged sails,  
 Lean, rent, and beggar'd by the strumpet wind!

(2. 6. 14-9)

At the end of King John, an image of a broken ship is used as the symbol of the dying king (5. 7. 52-6).

In traditional Chinese plays, the images of mountain, river or running water usually have fixed symbolic meanings. The mountain symbolizes an insurmountable barrier which separates two lovers or a person from his family. The river and running water stand for the endless sorrow of parting or separation of the characters from their spouses or families. Here is a passage from The Romance of the Western Chamber:

How hard a separation is in our life,  
 I lament that you have trudged lonely  
 Over the mountains stretching thousands of miles.

(ZGSDGDXJJ, Act IV. Scene IV. 'Ze Gui ling', p. 138)

In The Sad Story of Lady Wang, the heroine says to her lover, as they are separated by her parents:

It's hard to tell my sorrow of parting,  
 I regret that we'll be separated by Heaven,  
 with thousands of peaks and mountains.

(ZGSDGDBJJ, Scene 15. 'Zao Luo Pao'. p. 387)

In the same play, we find an image of running water:

The torrent of Qu Tang Gorge surges forward,  
 How much sorrow gone with it since time immemorial.

(Ibid, Scene 45. p. 469)

It is apparent that these two image clusters in Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama stem from different geographical circumstances and

cultural backgrounds. England is a country noted for its long navigation tradition. So it is easy to understand why the sea, ships and navigation eventually became traditional poetic images in English literature and affected the imagery use of Shakespeare. By contrast, China is mainly a large landlocked and mountainous country. Chinese civilization originated from the Yellow River Basin. Thus mountains and rivers were closely associated with the cultural thinking of the ancient Chinese. For example, because of the difficulty of travel in ancient China, the mountain was regarded as a practical, as well as a symbolic, barrier between people far away from their homes and their families. Gradually, it became a conventional poetic image in classical Chinese poetry and drama, as the famous Tang poet Wang Bo writes in his 'The Pavilion of Tengwang':

The mountain is difficult to surmount,  
Who pities the traveller losing his way;  
Meeting by chance like patches of drifting duckweed,  
We are all strangers in this distant land.<sup>17</sup>

The image of river or running water is also easily seen in classical Chinese poetry. Let's take a few lines from the well-known poem 'Yu Mei Ren' written by Nan Tang Emperor and poet Li Yu:

I wonder how you feel your sorrow?  
It's just like a spring river flowing east.<sup>18</sup>

In both Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama, there are two opposing images, the sun and the moon, which are most noticeable. This is not merely because the image of the sun is frequently used in Shakespeare's plays while the image of the moon is largely employed in traditional Chinese drama; it is mainly because these two images are profoundly associated with Western culture and traditional Chinese culture. Let the fact be first stated, and then examined.

<sup>17</sup>. Wang Bo, 'The Pavilion of Tengwang', Classical Chinese Literary Works, ed. by Zhu Dong Run (Shanghai, 1980), p. 257.

<sup>18</sup>. Li Yu, 'Yu Mei Ren', Selection of Classical Chinese Poems, ed. by Li Geng and Feng Yuan Jun, 4 vols (Beijing, 1979), II, p. 562.

In Shakespeare's plays, the image of the sun serves many functions as simile, metaphor, and symbol. We find that in the histories, the sun is often likened to the monarch. In Henry IV, Part I, when the king teaches the Prince of Wales how to keep the true majesty of a king, he says of Richard dismissively:

So, when he had occasion to be seen,  
 He was but as the cuckoo is in June,  
 Heard, not regarded, seen, but with such eyes  
 As, sick and blunted with community,  
 Afford no extraordinary gaze,  
 Such as is bent on sun-like majesty  
 When it shines seldom in admiring eyes;

(3. 2. 74-80)

In Richard II, the king is often likened to the sun:

See, see, king Richard doth himself appear,  
 As doth the blushing discontented sun  
 From out the fiery portal of the east,  
 When he perceives the envious clouds are bent  
 To dim his glory and to stain the track  
 Of his bright passage to the occident.

(3. 3. 62-7)

Besides serving as the symbol of power and authority, the sun is also used as a symbol of greatness and glory. In Henry VIII, we read:

I have touch'd the highest point of all my greatness  
 And from that full meridian of my glory  
 I haste now to my setting. I shall fall  
 Like a bright exhalation in the evening,  
 And no man see me more.

(3. 2. 223-7)

Many other symbolic meanings of the sun are to be found in Shakespeare's plays and the sun is even associated with tender and emotional matters such as love and beauty, which we'll discuss later.

By contrast, the moon has been largely employed by classical Chinese dramatists as an important poetic image. In some of the plays, particularly in the love tragedies

and comedies, the moon is used to create atmosphere. Many of the significant actions of these plays occur in moonlit scenes, as in The Hall of Longevity, Autumn in the Han Palace, The Romance of the Western Chamber, The Secluded Boudoir, etc. In certain plays, the moon serves as a recurrent image to underline the theme or mood of the plays, as in The Hall of Longevity and The Romance of the Western Chamber, etc. Probably, The Romance of the Western chamber is the play in which the use of this device is most noticeable. In the play, reference to the moon occurs more than fifty times. Because of its power to evoke rich conventional associations, the moon, as a recurrent image, diffuses a romantic atmosphere throughout this poetic drama. Waiting anxiously for Ying Ying, Zhang Sheng sings:

Where are the coloured clouds,  
The watery moonlight floods the terrace . . .  
The moon moves the shadows of flowers  
I wonder whether the lady of jade is coming.

(ZGSDGDXJJ. Act IV, Scene I. 'Hun Jiang Long'. p. 124)

In the play, the moon is also connected with love and beauty. To express his affection to Ying Ying, Zhang Sheng recites:

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

(Ibid. Act I. Scene III. following 'Xian Tao Hong'. p. 79)

Here 'the goddess' means Chang E, the goddess of the moon. She is a heroine in Chinese legend, who swallowed an elixir stolen from her husband and flew to the moon. Traditionally, the Chinese always compare beautiful women to the moon, but rarely to the sun.

By contrast, Shakespeare often prefers the sun to the moon in dealing with love and beauty. In King Henry V, the King would use the sun to symbolize his love rather than use the moon:

But a good heart, Kate, is the sun and the moon; or,  
rather, the sun, and not the moon --- for it shines bright  
and never changes, but keeps his course truly.

(5. 2. 152-5)

In Romeo and Juliet, describing the beauty of Juliet, the hero also shows a preference for the sun.

But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks?  
It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.  
Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,  
Who is already sick and pale with grief  
That thou her maid art far more fair than she.  
Be not her maid, since she is envious;  
Her vestal livery is but sick and green,  
And none but fools do wear it; cast it off.

(2. 2. 2-9)

It seems that A Midsummer Night's Dream is an exception in this aspect. In the play, the moon serves as an pervasive symbol to create romantic atmosphere while paradoxically remaining a symbol of chastity (and frigidity as well) (1. 1. 73-5).

The bias of Shakespeare to use the sun as poetic image can be connected with Western culture. Traditionally, Apollo as a god of many aspects, is not only a symbol of light, power, reason and beauty, but also associated with medicine, the care of animals, the maintenance of society, and furthermore, with prophecy, morality, music and poetry. Thus it is understandable that the sun has become an important conventional poetic image in Western poetry and drama. The spirit of Apollo also greatly evoked the creative inspirations of Western writers and artists and permeated through many kinds of art. In comparison, the moon seems to be frequently associated with lunacy and inconstant love although it originally stands for virginity and childbirth. The use of the moon as poetic image in traditional Chinese drama stems from Chinese culture more directly and explicitly. In remote antiquity, primitive Chinese society also practised the sun worship at the outset. But moon worship gradually took a dominant position along with the appearance of more and more folk legends associated with the moon. It has largely influenced the

spiritual activities and social customs of the Chinese. For example, the Mid-autumn Festival was set for family reunion. During the festival, all the members of a family sit together, eat special moon cake and admire the full moon. As a symbol of beauty, purity, solitude and loftiness, the moon has been a favourite of classical Chinese poets. It is traditionally associated with all the major themes of classical Chinese poetry, such as love, lovesickness and homesickness. The moon has not only provided inspiration for classical Chinese poets and dramatists but also greatly affected other forms of Chinese art. For instance, much popular traditional Chinese music is associated with the moon. Just look at the titles of some favourite music of the Chinese: 'The River in a Spring Moonlit Night' (Chun Jiang Hua Yue Ye), 'The Moon is Mirrored on the Two Springs' (Er Quan Ying Yue), 'The Moon Floods the Han Palace in Autumn' (Han Gong Qiu Yue), 'The Coloured Clouds Run After the Moon' (Cai Yun Zhui Yue), 'The Moon is Mirrored on the Calm Lake in Autumn' (Pin Hu Qiu Yue), etc.

I was, as other Chinese scholars were, attempting to summarize the essential characteristics of Western culture and Chinese culture with the antithesis of the sun and the moon.<sup>19</sup> Obviously this assumption is too broad to be rigorously applied, and may not stand close scrutiny. But to some extent, the spirits of the sun and the moon indeed represent many obvious and important features of the two cultures, particularly their literature, art and national identity --- for instance, the generally bold, strong, enthusiastic, vigorous, active, aggressive tendency of Western culture and the generally restrained, tender, passive, conservative, dependent tendency of Chinese culture. And this contrast is given weight by the imagery use in both Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama.

From this brief survey of the use of poetic imagery in Shakespeare's drama and traditional Chinese drama, it will be seen that there are some evident differences in poetic presentation between the two dramas. Firstly, the poetic language in traditional Chinese drama is mainly employed to describe scenery and express

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<sup>19</sup>. I am indebted here to a lecture given by Professor Han Jin Tai at Beijing Language Institute, in June, 1987.

emotion while in Shakespeare's plays it has more functions. Besides description of scenery and expression of emotion, it is also used, in Shakespeare's plays, to portray character, to represent thoughts and to embody abstract concepts. Secondly, poetic representation in traditional Chinese drama is implicit, refined and restrained, whereas it is explicit, and straightforward in Shakespeare's plays. The figurative language in traditional Chinese drama normally produces a feeling of gentleness, delicacy, gracefulness, and in Shakespeare's plays it makes us feel strong, forceful, vigorous and impassioned. In addition to the poetic flavour, there are some other differences in the languages between Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama. For instance, Shakespeare's plays are interspersed everywhere with philosophical ideas and 'golden sayings' which we seldom see in traditional Chinese plays. The humorous style of Shakespeare's language is unique, and it is just what traditional Chinese drama lacks.

The foregoing pages have shown the differences and similarities in general artistic characteristics between Shakespeare's drama and traditional Chinese drama. To understand fully the aesthetic qualities of the two dramas, a summarized conclusion is needed. Yet it would be difficult to label the two dramas as any fixed style. The reason is partly that Shakespeare's works are a mixture of many artistic styles and it is inappropriate and narrow to classify him definitely by a single style. Also, literary terms in West and East are different and it is not easy to find some common terms to define the principal aesthetic qualities of Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama. So my purpose here is not to give a precise definition to each of them. I shall limit myself to a brief discussion of the primary aesthetic tendencies which emerge as salient and conspicuous by a contrast between Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama.

The contrast between Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama shows that the former mainly exhibits an aesthetic tendency of romanticism and the latter shows a tendency of classicism. The two terms should be understood in the light of Western literary theory and the sense of the definitions commonly accepted by Western critics. So by the 'classic tendency' of traditional Chinese drama, I mean

that there are some principles, ideas and styles evidently shared by traditional Chinese dramatists and writers in ancient Greece and Rome and during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe and England.

Generally, romantic writers manifested an emancipation of emotion from the trammels of reason, literary rules, or social conventions. They asked a full expression of feelings and emotions without restraint. But classic authors normally showed an inclination towards emotional restraint and tried to keep a balance between emotion and reason in their works. There is no doubt that these two principles can be applied to Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama respectively. From our previous discussions concerning the tragedies, the characterizations and the poetic presentations of the two dramas, it is clear that Shakespeare followed the romantic principle in this aspect and that traditional Chinese dramatists displayed a style similar to that of European classic writers.

In characterization, many romantic writers tended to create complex and sometimes morally imperfect characters, which was one of the principal means of character portrayal in Shakespeare's plays. By contrast, classic writers favoured one-sided or 'single passion' characters. The protagonists in their works are usually perfect persons of strong moral fibre, who can be associated with the characters in traditional Chinese plays, especially in the tragedies. The character portrayal of romanticism was also characterized by the exploration of man's inner world and by revelation of inner conflict in his mind. But classic writers did not emphasize a full representation of man's inner world and they always tried to make their characters keep a balance in their mind between reason and emotion, between personal will and social responsibility. These two opposing methods undoubtedly can be applied to Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama respectively, as we discussed in their characterizations.

It is well known that Shakespeare focused his attention on individuality, which was a prevailing tendency of romanticism. In classicism, however, emphasis was placed on what men possess in common, particularly on their moral sense and

consciousness of their own limit actions. Discussing these two principles T. E. Hulme says:

The root of all romanticism is that man feels the individual is an infinite reservoir; and if you can so rearrange society by the destruction of oppressive order then these possibilities will have a chance and you will get progress. . . . One can define the classical quite clearly as the exact opposite to this. Man is an extraordinary fixed and limited animal whose nature is absolutely constant. It is only by tradition and organization that anything decent can be got out of him.<sup>20</sup>

Judged by the above statement, traditional Chinese drama can be seen as an exact copy of classicism in this aspect, because Chinese dramatists always viewed man in the light of the society and not of the individual. In their works, as we pointed out before, they often made the characters reconcile their personal will with the moral order. This principle evidently stems from the collectivism of Confucianism.

The method of antithesis was commonly used by romantic writers, and Shakespeare as well, as Schlegel points out:

[Romantic drama] delights in indissoluble mixtures; all contrarieties: nature and art, poetry and prose, seriousness and mirth, recollection and anticipation, spirituality and sensuality, terrestrial and celestial, life and death, are by it blended together in the most intimate combination.<sup>21</sup>

Classic writers normally did not employ such a method. In traditional Chinese drama, there is no use of it, particularly in character portrayal. Like European classic authors, traditional Chinese dramatists did not intend to set antitheses

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<sup>20</sup>. Peter Jones, 'Introduction', Imagist Poetry, ed. by Peter Jones (London, 1972), p. 29.

<sup>21</sup>. Quoted by Arthur M. Eastman, A Short History of Shakespearean Criticism (New York, 1974), p. 40.

between beauty and ugliness, and between good and evil. The classic ideal demands the utmost finish, correction, stylistic decorum, graceful expression, and harmony and balance of form. These are also the principles and ideals which traditional Chinese dramatists followed and tried to achieve. For instance, in the use of poetic imagery in traditional Chinese plays, we can find an evident tendency to observe these principles. By contrast, the romantic ideal is the ideal of literary geniuses, demanding innovation instead of traditionalism, without regard to classical precedent and rules. This is so obvious in Shakespeare's case that it needs no further discussion.

Having demonstrated that Shakespeare mainly displays a romantic tendency and traditional Chinese drama manifests a classic style, we must add that there are some other features making the two dramas a little bit different from 'pure' romanticism and classicism. Besides a romantic tendency, Shakespeare also comes to us with an explicit realistic vein, as a critic points out: 'Shakespeare achieves through realism the effect of the Romantic sublime, as described specifically by Kant'.<sup>22</sup> Traditional Chinese drama, while exhibiting a prevailing tendency similar to European classicism, also manifests a deep and strong inclination of sentimentalism. The foregoing discussion of the general aesthetic qualities of Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama will be indispensable to an understanding of the impact of Shakespeare's works upon traditional Chinese drama in modern China, which we shall undertake in the next chapter.

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<sup>22</sup>. L. Mackinnon, Shakespeare the Aesthete (London, 1988), Preface, p. ix.

### **Chapter 3. The Impact of Shakespeare Upon Traditional Chinese Drama: Shakespeare in Modern China**

In the last two chapters, we have undertaken a comparison between Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama. In the next two chapters, however, we shall make an influential study of the two types of drama. It was a pity that Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama had no opportunity to interchange with each other four hundred years ago, owing to the difficulty of communication, although the golden age of classical Chinese drama (the Yuan Dynasty) was three hundred years earlier than Elizabethan age, and many important classical Chinese playwrights lived at the same time as Shakespeare. Yet since Shakespeare was introduced into China at the beginning of the present century, his works have made a great impact upon traditional Chinese drama, modern Chinese theatre and the whole of cultural life in modern(1900-1980) and contemporary (1980-present) China. Meanwhile the dramatic technique of traditional Chinese drama also largely affected the stage presentation of Shakespeare in modern and contemporary China. Thus the present study will concentrate on the interaction of Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama, particularly the influence of the former upon the latter, in the twentieth century.

This chapter, therefore, begins with a brief survey of the introduction of Shakespeare into modern China including translation and performance, looking particularly at the impact of Shakespeare upon traditional Chinese drama and the consequences of such an impact.

The introduction of Shakespeare into China occurred along with a great change in social and political circumstances in modern China at the beginning of this century. Although the trade exchange between China and Western countries took place two thousand years ago through the famous Silk Road, the formal cultural

interchange had not been undertaken until the trade wars between China and some Western countries happened in the middle of nineteenth century. The wars ended with the establishment of a series of concessions in some coastal cities of China, such as Hong Kong, Shanghai, Tianjing and Qingdao. Meantime, many missionary schools were set up in big cities in China. All this served as an available channel to introduce Western civilization. During this period and afterwards, particularly at the end of nineteenth century and the beginning of this century, the élite of China, recognizing the backwardness of China compared with the West, inaugurated several initiatives to learn modern science and technology, as well as social ideology, from the West. The earliest initiative was started by some ministers in the Qing government. This Westernization Movement (Yang Wu Yun Dong, 1860-1890) aimed mainly to introduce Western technology and science, to improve the industry of China. Since then, more and more Chinese students and scholars travelled to the Western countries and brought back new knowledge and Western culture. The interest of the Chinese in the West gradually extended to social and political ideas, which accelerated the overthrow of the last feudal empire in Chinese history in 1911. After that, in 1919, a great upsurge was initiated by Chinese intellectuals. It had a more radical goal: to criticize thoroughly traditional Chinese culture centred on Confucianism on the assumption that traditional Chinese culture, serving as a vehicle for a feudalistic ideology, had become a barrier to the development of China in modern world. This movement also aimed to study and accept Western culture, which was regarded as a powerful ideological weapon to destroy the deep-rooted feudalism in China, and to build a new democratic and prosperous China. This great movement was called the May Fourth New Culture Movement. Considering the above historical background, it is understandable that Western culture was largely introduced into China during this period. It was just in these initiatives that Shakespeare came step by step to Chinese scholars, readers and audiences.

In Chapter 1, it was pointed out that the literary tradition was emphasized in Chinese culture because literature in ancient China served not only as a sort of entertainment or personal accomplishment but also as a means for an individual to

achieve high social status. It was therefore natural for the Chinese to pay great attention to Western literature when so many aspects of Western culture were introduced into China. According to the records, Shakespeare was one of the first Western writers who were introduced into modern China. At the outset, because of the language barrier and the difficulty of translation, Shakespeare was known by the Chinese not through his works but through allusions and brief remarks in books and writings by foreigners and Chinese scholars.

It is not surprising that the earliest introduction of Shakespeare was undertaken by English and American missionaries. In 1856, Shanghai Mohai Academy published Thomas Milner's The History of Great Britain, translated by an English missionary, William Muirhead. The book included a brief reference to Shakespeare:

Shakespeare was a well-known public figure in Elizabethan age. His brilliant works represent both beauty and virtue. No one has outshone him so far.<sup>1</sup>

An American missionary, Chevalier, published The History of the World in 1882, which also mentioned Shakespeare. We can find more reference to Shakespeare in a later book, The Highlight of Western History, edited and translated by an English missionary, A. Joseph. In the book, we read:

The most famous English poet was Shakespeare. In his poems and plays, he vividly depicts man's joy and sorrow. He has seen much of the world and been steeped in literary and dramatic techniques. So he is good at portraying the wide variety of personality: good and evil, great and mean.<sup>2</sup>

By the beginning of <sup>the</sup> twentieth century, Shakespeare was mentioned more frequently in the books edited and translated by foreign missionaries or scholars,

3. <sup>1</sup>. Quoted in 'Shakespeare's Plays in China', The Drama, April 1954, p.

<sup>2</sup>. Quoted in Cao Wei Feng, 'Shakespeare in China', Literature and Art, monthly, April, 1954, p. 7.

and published in China. For instance, there was a passage in a Concise Encyclopedia edited by the English missionary, Timonthy Lee, in 1903: 'Shakespeare . . . has been called the king of poetry. He was also a famous dramatist'.<sup>3</sup> In the same year, The Biography of the Well-known figures in East and West, published in Shanghai, says: 'Shakespeare was the greatest poet in England'(p. 516). Another book The Famous Foreign Personages of Past Ages, published also in Shanghai, says: 'Shakespeare, the English playwright, often mocked and criticized the monarch and ministers. Thus he can be called a foreign Player Meng'(p. 516). Player Meng was a very famous and perhaps the earliest actor in Chinese history. He served as a clown in the court during the pre-Qin period (475-221 B.C). There are some stories to recount how he mocks and criticizes the wrong behaviour of the king through his speech and performance. In 1940, the English missionary John Leith published The Short History of the World. A reference of Shakespeare can be found in the book, 'Shakespeare was a celebrated poet. His poems are beautiful and brilliant. His works have been read with admiration by people and no other English writers can outshine him'(p. 517). In the next few years, there were many biographical books published. Shakespeare was included in all of these books, for example, in The Sixty Famous Figures in Modern World in 1907, and The Biography of the Celebrated Personages in the World in 1908, etc(p.517).

The first Chinese who mentioned Shakespeare was a diplomat, Guo Song Tao. He was the minister to Great Britain in the 1870s. During his tenure of office, he not only investigated Western science and technology but also acquainted himself with Western literature. In his diary he mentioned Shakespeare three times. On August 11, 1877, Mr. Guo was invited to visit an exhibition of English printing machines. Many well-known literary works were on display at the exhibition, including Shakespeare's works. In his diary, Mr. Guo writes:

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<sup>3</sup>. Quoted in Zhang Si Yang, Xu Bin and Zhang Xiao Yang, The General Survey of Shakespeare (Beijing, 1989), p. 516. Further references to this paragraph are given after quotations.

Among all the books on display, Shakespeare's was the most well-known. He was an outstanding English playwright about two hundred years ago, enjoying equal popularity with the Greek writer Homer.<sup>4</sup>

One year later, Mr. Guo mentioned Shakespeare again in his diary. It was on September 26, 1878, when Mr Guo met and talked with a German diplomat, a Japanese diplomat and an English official. The English official played a joke on the German diplomat with a sentence, 'Sorrow makes fat', which he said came from Shakespeare's plays.<sup>5</sup> In fact, the sentence was summarised from a passage of Falstaff in Henry IV, part one, 'A plague of sighing and grief! it blows a man up like a bladder' (2. 4. 322-3). The third time Mr. Guo mentioned Shakespeare in his diary was on January 18, 1879 when he was invited to see a Shakespeare production. He says in his diary:

In the evening, I was invited to go to London Lyceum Theatre to see a Shakespeare production. Emphasis was placed on the lively and attractive plot design of the play, and not on florid language and ornate style.<sup>6</sup>

Here Mr Guo did not give the details of the play, a production of Hamlet with Henry Irving in the leading role.

At the end of the nineteenth century and the very beginning of the twentieth, Shakespeare's works began to attract the attention of more and more Chinese scholars. In 1894, in The Evolution of Nature, the influential Chinese scholar Yan Fu talks of Shakespeare: 'Shakespeare, the English poet and playwright whose works spread far and wide among the readers all over the world'.<sup>7</sup> Yan Fu also

<sup>4</sup>. The Diary of Guo Song Tao, ed. by the Hunan People's Press, 3 vols (Hunan, 1982), III, pp. 267-8.

<sup>5</sup>. Ibid. p. 641.

<sup>6</sup>. Ibid., p. 743.

<sup>7</sup>. Yan Fu, The Evolution of Nature (Beijing, 1971), p. 57.

noticed particular characteristics of Shakespeare's works, e.g. his common humanity. He says:

Shakespeare's characters look very similar to people living today. We can identify ourselves with his characters not only in appearance and manner, but also in thought and emotion.<sup>8</sup>

Fourteen years later, Mr. Yan mentioned Shakespeare once more in another book. This time his main purpose was not to comment on Shakespeare directly. He just took Antony's speech in Julius Caesar (3. 2. 73-107) as an example to explain the function of logic in argument:

Shakespeare wrote a play recounting the murder of Caesar. When Antony delivers a speech to the citizens while showing the body of Caesar to the public, he uses logical method to stir up the citizens cleverly because Brutus warned him that he would not be allowed to redress a grievance for Caesar and blame the murderers. The citizens are greatly agitated by the speech and their resentment against Brutus and his comrades is running high. We should attribute Antony's success to the function of logic!<sup>9</sup>

In 1902, a leading Chinese politician and scholar Liang Qi Chao wrote an article for a literary column in a monthly journal Xin Min. In the article he mentioned Shakespeare and other Western writers. He says:

Homer, the Greek poet, was the greatest poet in ancient times . . . as for later poets, such as Shakespeare, Milton, Tennyson, their poems usually contain several thousand lines. How great! just the sublime style is brilliant enough to overwhelm you, so you even need not comment on the language of their

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<sup>8</sup>. Ibid, p. 57.

<sup>9</sup>. Yang Fu, An Elementary Introduction to Logic (Beijing, 1981), p. 56.

poems any more.<sup>10</sup>

His chosen characters with which to write Shakespeare's name has been commonly used in China although the translations of others are better than his for pronunciation. This may be partly due to his higher fame in both the political arena and academic circles. He was one of the leaders of a famous political movement, the Reform Movement, in 1898. Similar to the Glorious Revolution of England, this political movement aimed to change China into a country with a combination of monarchy and parliamentary democracy. But it failed to fulfil its goal because of the powerful resistance of the monarchy.

A very effective introduction of Shakespeare in China was undertaken by the greatest modern Chinese writer, Lu Xun. Early in 1907, when Lu Xun studied in Japan, he wrote three influential articles on science, literature and culture. In all of them Shakespeare was briefly dealt with. In his On The Function of Poetry (Mo Luo Shi Li Shuc), Lu Xun paid high tribute to Shakespeare. After quoting some passages of Thomas Carlyle, discussing Dante and Shakespeare in On Heroes, Hero-worship and the Heroic in History, Lu Xun said that both Dante and Shakespeare were indeed heroes as poets because they conveyed the voice of a nation. The thoughts and feelings they represented in their works would help to unite a nation and unify a country. Then Lu Xun came to the conclusion that a nation must have great writers like Dante and Shakespeare, if it wanted to survive in the modern world.<sup>11</sup> In his article 'The History of Science', Lu Xun discussed the different functions of scientific knowledge, and emotion as conveyed by literary works. He maintained that people must not have the greatest esteem for knowledge and look down on emotion, because that would damage the meaning of science. He says:

Therefore, who a society needs is not only Newton but

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<sup>10</sup>. Liang Qi Chao, 'Yin Bing Room's Notes on Poetry', Xin Min Monthly, 5 (1902), p. 8.

<sup>11</sup>. The Complete Works of Lu Xun, 30 vols (Beijing, 1981), I, p. 64.

also Shakespeare . . . a writer like Shakespeare can make people have sound and perfect human nature and avoid odd and partial humanity, and make them the very persons a modern civilized society needs.<sup>12</sup>

In the third article 'On Cultural Bias', Lu Xun used the speech of Antony in Julius Caesar to support his philosophical viewpoint. During this period, Lun Xun was so greatly influenced by Nietzsche's theory of 'will to power' and 'superman' that he held that the peace of the world was entirely dependent on political supermen. In the article, he regretted that the Roman citizens were very unreliable because they were always chopping and changing. Then in the light of this, Lu Xun maintained a political principle that one should 'Never tell truth to the masses and never tell state affairs to the masses'.<sup>13</sup>

In this early stage of the reception of Shakespeare by the Chinese, the references to Shakespeare made by both foreigners and Chinese scholars served as an effective means to make Shakespeare known to the Chinese, though these introductions were generally discursive and simple, without demonstrating Shakespeare's works in detail. Owing to their efforts, Shakespeare was known to more and more Chinese people. Therefore there was an increasing demand to read his works. Some Chinese scholars began to try to translate Shakespeare's works into Chinese, which would serve as a more effective means to make the Chinese really know the playwright.

The first Chinese translation of Shakespeare was none of the various editions but Charles and Mary Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare. It was published by Shanghai Da Wen Press in 1903, with the title of The Strange Tales from Overseas, but with no acknowledged translator. It was a translation into classical Chinese and included ten stories from Lamb's book. Each story was given a title in the pattern of a classical Chinese novel and the names of the characters were made similar to

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<sup>12</sup>. Ibid, p. 35.

<sup>13</sup>. Ibid, p. 52.

Chinese names. The titles of the ten stories are: 'To Avenge, Hamlet kills his Uncle' (Hamlet), 'Proteus is Being Lecherous to betray his honest friend' (The Two Gentlemen of Verona), 'Antonio Contracts a Loan with His Flesh' (The Merchant of Venice), 'Olivia Has made a mistake to Love a Twin Sister' (Twelfth Night), 'Petruchio Tames the Lady with a Bad Temper' (The Taming of the Shrew), 'Error in Error. There is a Fantastic Story in Ephesus' (The Comedy of Errors), 'Trick in trick, the Wife Gets the Ring' (All's Well that Ends Well), 'Take a Risk to Look for Her Husband and the Couple reunite at Last' (Cymbeline), 'Takes Pains to Save Her Brother and Still Maintains her virginity' (Measure for Measure) and 'Jealous Leontes Wrongs His Wife' (The Winter's Tale). In the preface of the book, there is a brief statement to introduce Shakespeare:

This book was written by the English writer Shakespeare. Shakespeare was an unrivalled dramatist in the world. He was good at writing poetry. His dramatic stories are very popular in the world and he has been regarded as the greatest English writer. His works have been translated in many languages, such as French, German, Russian, Italian, etc, and well received by numerous readers. As for the academic and literary circles in our country, there are also so many poetic and fictional critics who highly praise Shakespeare. But it is a pity that we have not read his works up to now. Therefore I have translated his works into Chinese and offer it to our readers. Meantime, it will be added to our literary circles as a wonder with radiant splendour.<sup>14</sup>

In the next year, a complete translation of Lamb's book was published by the famous Commercial Press in Shanghai, with the title of The Mysterious Stories of the English Poet. The translators are the well-known scholar Lin Shu and his collaborator Wei Yi. It is interesting that the chief translator, Lin Shu, did not know English at all. His collaborator interpreted the stories first, then he wrote and polished them. By this unusual method, he published more than one hundred and seventy 'translations' of European and American novels, and all these books were

<sup>14</sup>. 'Preface' The Strange Tales from Overseas (Shanghai, 1903), p. 1.

very influential in Chinese literary circles. The Mysterious Stories of the English Poet contained twenty stories. Lin Shu called it 'a novel of gods and spirits'. He gave each story a title with the style of classical Chinese short stories. For instance, the title of The Merchant of Venice was 'The Bond of Flesh'. the title of Romeo and Juliet was 'Moulding Love', the title of Hamlet was 'The Instruction of the Ghost'. etc. In the preface of the book, the translators briefly stated the significance of Shakespeare to world culture. They say:

Shakespearean poetic works have been read by numerous families in the world. When they are presented in the theatre to gentlemen and ladies, the audience are always deeply moved.<sup>15</sup>

These two translations of Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare can be seen as the first stage by which Shakespeare's works came to be known to the Chinese. At this stage, what the Chinese knew about Shakespeare's works was not their characteristics as drama and poetry, but their features as narrative literature, because the translations only presented a broad outline of the plot, the character and the themes of the chosen plays. Simple as these translations were, they made a great contribution to the initial reputation of Shakespeare in China. Of the two translations, Lin Shu's book was more influential. Many famous modern Chinese dramatists knew of Shakespeare, at first, through Lin's translation. The great master of modern Chinese literature, Guo Mo Ruo, looked back upon the deep impression made by The Mysterious Stories of the English Poet in his book, My Childhood. In the book he says:

The fictions translated by Lin Shu were very popular at that time. I liked to read them too . . . Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare was translated by Lin Shu with the title of The Mysterious Stories from the English Poet. It gave me a great pleasure and imperceptibly

<sup>15</sup>. Lin Shu, 'Preface', The Mysterious Stories of the English Poet (Shanghai, 1904), p. 1.

influenced me a lot.<sup>16</sup>

Lin Shu's translation not only largely influenced many modern Chinese writers, but also served as the stage script for the first Shakespeare productions in China before the May Fourth Movement (1913-1918). We shall discuss it in detail on a later page.

The translations of Shakespeare's plays themselves did not appear until the May Fourth New Culture Movement took place. Along with the introduction of a large quantity of Western and Russian literary works during the movement, the demand of the Chinese to see the true colour of Shakespeare's works as drama became stronger and stronger. Eventually, the first Chinese translation of Shakespeare, the translation of Hamlet, was published by the Chinese Publishing House in 1922. The translator was the celebrated modern Chinese playwright Tian Han, who was an ardent admirer of Shakespeare. The translation was of great importance because it was done not only in the complete dramatic form Shakespeare used, but also in modern Chinese which was a very convenient medium for Chinese people to receive Shakespeare's works and grasp the aesthetic charm of the playwright. During that historical period, the classical Chinese language had not been suitable for modern social communication. So one of the main goals of the May Fourth New Culture Movement was to replace classical Chinese with modern Chinese (vernacular). Two years later, Tian Han finished his translation of Romeo and Juliet, which was also published by the Chinese Publishing House.

In the 1920s, following the translations of Tian Han, seven other translations of particular plays by Shakespeare were published in China. They were: Cheng Kou Yi's The Taming of the Shrew in 1923, Zeng Guang Xun's The Merchant of the Venice in 1924, Shao Ting's Hamlet in 1924, a translation of Julius Caesar by Shao Ting and Xu Shao Shan in 1925, Zhang Cai Zhen's As You Like It in 1927, Zheng Yi Zhe's Romeo and Juliet in 1928 and Liao Lan Hui's The Merry Wives of Winsor

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<sup>16</sup>. Guo Mo Ruo, 'My Childhood', The Complete Works of Guo Mo Ruo, 15 vols (Sichuan, 1982), I, p. 118.

in 1929.

In the 1930s, there were more and more translations of Shakespeare's plays published in China, including the tragedies: Macbeth (three versions), King Lear, Othello, Hamlet, Julius Caesar; the comedies: The Merchant of Venice (three versions), Twelfth Night (two versions); the romances: The Tempest (two versions). It seems that the translators worked separately without unified arrangement and always chose the plays they liked. That was the reason why some of the most popular of Shakespeare's plays could be found in several Chinese versions at the same time. Admittedly, each of these versions has its own feature. The choices of the translators was obviously affected by the social background and the taste at that time. For instance, the theme of Macbeth attracted the attention from the Chinese more than those of King Lear and Othello because during the 1920s and 1930s, there were many wars among Chinese warlords, and each of the warlords tried to usurp the state power and to become a new emperor. Generally speaking, the quality of the translations in the 1930s was higher than that of earlier translations, which was mainly due to the increasing demand for the stage presentation of Shakespeare in China during this period. Most of these translations were written for the drama companies which intended to present Shakespeare's plays. For instance, Gu Zhong Yi's translation of The Merchant of Venice was completed for performance by Shanghai Drama Association in May, 1930. During 1940s and 1950s, there were even more excellent translations of Shakespeare's plays published in China, 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, and 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 King Henry the Fifth (1955), Bian Zhi Lin's translation of Hamlet (1956), Wu Xing Hua's translation of King Henry the Fourth (1957) and Fang Zhong's translation of King Richard the Third (1959).

Shakespeare's dramatic achievement could not be fully appreciated by the Chinese until his Complete Works have been translated. So, early in the 1930s, a

special translating association, founded by Chinese Education and Culture Trust, planned to translate and publish the Complete Works of Shakespeare. Some well-known Chinese scholars were invited by the association to undertake this task. But the association failed to achieve its goal at that time, owing to social and financial problems. However, there were three noted Chinese translators worth mentioning here, who made great contribution to the translation of Shakespeare's Complete Works.

The first translator was Cao Wei Feng. He began his work in 1930 and planned to translate all the works of Shakespeare. But his work advanced at a slow pace because of the hard living and working conditions then prevalent. He finished the translations of only eleven Shakespearean plays. In 1943, his translations were published by Gui Yang Wen Tong Press, with the title of The Complete Works of Shakespeare. Three years later, the Shanghai Cultural Co-operation Ltd reprinted nine of Mr. Cao's translations and published, together with a new translation of his, a book still with the title of The Complete Works of Shakespeare. It should be pointed out that although Mr. Cao actually did not achieve his goal to translate all the plays of Shakespeare, his translations were influential in China.

The second translator who aimed to translate all of Shakespeare's plays was the famous Chinese scholar, Professor Liang Shi Qiu. He was the chief translator invited by the association to undertake the translation of the complete works of Shakespeare in the 1930s and was the only one who finished the translations of all of Shakespeare's works in China. Yet his translating work lasted for almost thirty years. During the 1930s he translated only eight plays and he did not finish all the plays until 1967, eighteen years after he went to Taiwan with the defeated National Party. His translation of the Complete Works of Shakespeare was published by the Far East Publishing Company in Taiwan. Unfortunately, owing to the political and cultural separation of Taiwan from the mainland of China for forty years, Professor Liang's translation has been unknown to the people in the mainland of China.

Zhu Sheng Hao, the third person to undertake the translation of the complete

works of Shakespeare, was a remarkable genius. He has been commonly praised by the Chinese as the greatest Chinese translator of Shakespeare. In the early years, when he studied in middle school, he was very fond of Shakespeare. After becoming an editor in the Shanghai World Book Shop, he became even more interested in Shakespeare's works. Encouraged by his colleagues and his brother, he worked out a great scheme to translate all the plays of Shakespeare. He started his work in 1935 and kept up a plan of completing about three plays each year until 1944, when he died of both illness and overwork, leaving only six and a half plays unfinished. In 1947, the greater part of his translations were published by the Shanghai World Book Shop in three volumes, including twenty seven plays, with the title of The Complete Works of Shakespeare. In 1945, all of his translations were published by the Beijing Writer Press in twelve volumes, including thirty one plays. Zhu Sheng Hao's translations of Shakespeare's plays were commonly accepted as the best Chinese versions of Shakespeare's plays by both academic circles and the reading public of China because the translator exerted his utmost effort to convey the spirit and charm of Shakespeare in easy and smooth Chinese. He took his translating work very seriously. Sometimes in order to find a suitable word, he racked his brains for several days. His excellent mastery of both English and Chinese, profound literary accomplishment and hard work brought about his success. It is not an exaggeration to conclude that the popularity of Shakespeare in China should be, to a great degree, attributed to the contribution of Zhu Sheng Hao.

The translating work of Zhu Sheng Hao laid a foundation for the publication of a real Chinese version of the Complete Works of Shakespeare. There was a chance for Chinese readers to have a translation of the Complete Works in 1964 when Chinese Shakespeare scholars and translators cheerfully celebrated the 400th anniversary of the birth of Shakespeare. To show their great respect for the English playwright, the editors of the People's Literature Press in Beijing planned to publish a genuine Chinese version of the Complete Works of Shakespeare. The book would be based on Zhu Sheng Hao's translation. The press asked some well-known Shakespeare scholars and translators to check Mr. Zhu's translations against the old and new Oxford editions and to translate the six historical plays and the poems

which Zhu Sheng Hao had no time to complete before his death. But the great scheme was disrupted by the great turbulence brought about by the Cultural Revolution, during which both Western and Chinese cultural heritages were condemned as bourgeois and feudal rubbish. The wish of the Chinese to have a real Chinese translation of the Complete Works of Shakespeare at last came true in 1978, when the disaster of the Cultural Revolution ended and the Chinese people saw a bright future in their life. The People's Literature Press eventually fulfilled its plan of 1964 and published a brilliant translation of the Complete Works of Shakespeare in eleven volumes, including all the 37 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. This was the first time for the Chinese to have a translation of a foreign writer's Complete Works.

The extent to which literary works are accessible to foreign readers is largely dependent on the quality of the translation available. Because of the difference between two languages, it is very easy for a literary work to lose its artistic charm during the process of translation. For example, when classical Chinese poems are translated into English, we can no longer see the subtle aesthetic effect produced by the uniqueness of the Chinese language, although the general meaning and emotion can be conveyed. Shakespeare's works are probably one of the most difficult Western literary works for the Chinese to translate. It was really hard to represent completely the glamour of Shakespeare in Chinese owing to the striking difference between English and Chinese, though Chinese is a very rich language and the Chinese lack no genres of literature. Most of the early Chinese translations of Shakespeare's plays were word-for-word translations which overemphasized the correctness of particular words but neglected the unique style of Shakespearean language. Yet most successful translations of Shakespeare's plays, e.g. Zhu Sheng Hao's translations, were based on the idea of expressing the spirit of the original. These translation aimed first fully represent the spirit and charm of Shakespeare. One of the difficult points in the translation of Shakespeare's works was Shakespeare's 'golden apple'--- the pun. It not only vexed Dr. Johnson but also frustrated many Chinese translators. In traditional Chinese drama, although there

are examples of witty dialogue, e.g. the dialogue between Jiang Shi Long and the waiter in Zhao Shang Public House in The Secluded Boudoir, we seldom see the use of puns except in the poems by which the lover expresses his affection for his beloved in some comedies. However, some Chinese translators, especially Zhu Sheng Hao, solved this problem very well, which could be a great help for Chinese readers to appreciate the humorous style of Shakespearean language. For instance, in The Merry Wives of Windsor, Falstaff makes a pun to complain his bad luck:

Mistress Ford! I have had ford enough; I was thrown  
into the ford; I have my belly full of ford.

(3. 5. 31-2)

It is very difficult to find a double meaning Chinese word to render this pun into Chinese. Yet Zhu Sheng Hao cleverly used homophones instead. For 'Ford' as an English name in the first sentence, Mr Zhu used a two-Chinese character word 'Fu De'; for 'ford' in the next three sentences, he used another two-Chinese word 'Fu De'. Both of them have the same sound but are different in writing. Interestingly, the first 'Fu De' correctly represents the sound of the English name 'Ford', and the second 'Fu De' means, in Chinese, to float on water or to steep in water. So, this translation can be instantly recognized by the Chinese as a funny pun and achieves an amusing effect.

The most difficult aspect in the translation of Shakespeare's plays is how to represent Shakespeare's blank verse in Chinese, an issue energetically argued by Chinese scholars and translators. The key point is: we cannot find an exact corresponding form in either traditional Chinese drama or classical Chinese poetry, though there is a similar poetic form, Pian Wen, in classical Chinese poetry, as we mentioned in the last chapter. Pian Wen can be seen as a type of unrhymed verse, but it is not a right form to present blank verse in the Chinese translation because it uses parallelism and ornateness, and usually contains not more than seven Chinese characters in each line (roughly equal to three and half beats in English verse). In translation, if each line must have five beats, then ten Chinese characters are needed. But it would be very dull to Chinese readers if there are many such

lines to be read, for the Chinese are accustomed to traditional poetic rhythm patterns of five or seven characters in each line.

There are two different responses to this problem. One emphasizes poetic flavour in translation. The other sticks to poetic form. The representative translators of the first tendency are Professor Liang Shi Qiu and Mr. Zhu Sheng Hao. Professor Liang maintains that to translate Shakespearean blank verse, it is better for the translator to use smooth prose because it's very difficult or almost impossible find an alternative poetic form.<sup>17</sup> The typical translator of the second tendency is professor Sun Da Yu. He insisted that since Shakespeare's works were poetic drama, it was a pity to translate Shakespeare's blank verse with prose because we would lose the beauty of Shakespeare's plays as poetic drama.<sup>18</sup> In his translation of King Lear, he tried to use a 'unit of syllable' which he created to produce the effect of a beat in Shakespeare's blank verse. Each 'unit of syllable' contains two or three Chinese characters and the number of characters in each line varies from twelve to fourteen. Professor Sun's method can be seen as a valuable tentative practice in the translation of Shakespeare's blank verse into Chinese.

It seems that each of the two responses has its own advantage. Practically, the Chinese reader prefers the former to the latter because the prose mode, particularly that in Zhu Sheng Hao's translation, can fully represent the poetic flavour of Shakespeare's plays although it does not comply with the rhythmical pattern of the blank verse. In fact, in a broad sense, Zhu Sheng Hao's prose should be regarded as prose poetry for it still has a free tonal and rhythmical pattern and is suitable for recitation on stage. The poetic mode, however, has not so far provided very successful examples to render the blank verse. It is intended to imitate the form of blank verse in Chinese. But most of such 'Chinese blank verse' seems to suit neither the aesthetic taste of the Chinese nor the free, bold and smooth style of

<sup>17</sup>. Qiu Ke An, 'The Translating Technique in the translation of Shakespeare's plays', People's Daily, overseas edition, 13 June 1991, p. 7.

<sup>18</sup>. Sun Da Yu, 'Preface to the translation of King Lear', King Lear, Chinese version (Shanghai, 1948), pp. 2-4.

Shakespearean language. In recent years, some Chinese Shakespeare scholars have appealed to carry on the effort to translate Shakespeare's blank verse with poetic form. Professor Qiu Ke An held that Chinese Shakespeare scholars, translators and readers should not be satisfied with prose versions of Shakespeare's plays. It would be better for the Chinese people to have another translation of the Complete Works of Shakespeare in entirely poetic form.<sup>19</sup> It is quite clear that the problem was caused by the cultural gap. Yet it won't affect the appreciation and reception of Shakespeare in China, because Zhu Sheng Hao's translation is brilliant enough to convey fully the subtlety and fascination of Shakespeare's works. Mr Zhu's translation is so well suited to the taste of the Chinese that many Chinese readers and audiences say that Mr Zhu has polished Shakespeare's plays as Chinese literature. During the process of translation, Shakespeare's works were affected, more or less, by traditional Chinese drama and other literary genres. For instance, when Yang Lie translated Macbeth, he used a form of verse, Chang Duan Ju, which was most employed in traditional Chinese drama. In Zhu Sheng Hao's translation, we can also find many forms borrowed from traditional Chinese drama. For example, he translated the two songs in As You Like It (IV. 2. and V. 3.) with the form of Qi Yan Shi (seven characters poem) which serves as one of the main poetic forms in traditional Chinese drama. In the early translation of Shakespeare's works, especially in the translation of Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare, the translators, as we discussed before, used the form of the classical Chinese novel.

As a great dramatist, Shakespeare is eternal not only in the book but also on the stage. So the stage presentation of Shakespeare has served as another channel for the Chinese to know the achievement of the playwright. It has also served as an important medium through which Shakespeare strongly influenced traditional Chinese drama and theatrical practice in modern China. The staging of Shakespeare in modern China can be roughly divided into four periods. The first period (1913-1929) was a tentative one for the Chinese to perform Shakespeare's plays. The second period (1930-1949) was a period characterized by a formal and serious

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<sup>19</sup>. See above, note 17.

practice to present Shakespeare's plays. The third period (1949-1966) can be seen as a period during which all the stage representations of Shakespeare in China were greatly influenced by the acting method of Stanislavsky. The fourth period (1978-1990) marked the maturity of the theatrical practice of Chinese players in presenting Shakespeare's plays.

The earliest Shakespeare production acted by the Chinese appeared in 1902. This 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 on Chinese stage. The first Shakespeare production in Chinese was presented in 1913 by the New People's Society (Xin Min She), a dramatic organization in Shanghai. The production had an alternative title, The Bond of Flesh, because it was based on the story from Lin Shu's translation of Tales from Shakespeare. In 1914 and 1915, another drama company, the Spring Willow Association, presented two tragedies, Othello and Falling in Love (Romeo and Juliet) and one comedy, The Taming of the Shrew. There were two Shakespeare productions performed in 1916. They were: an adaptation of Macbeth, performed by Yao Feng New Drama Troupe, with the title of The Usurper of State Power, and an adaptation of Hamlet, with the title of The Instruction of the Ghost, presented by the Spring Willow Association. Before and during the May Fourth New Cultural Movement (1917-1929), more Shakespeare productions were presented on the Chinese stage. As all of them used the stories from Lin Shu's translation of Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare, they often had alternative titles to suit the taste of Chinese audiences. For instance, we see Filial Piety in Mind and in Words (King Lear), A Hatred for Gold (Timon of Athens), The Twin Brother and Sister (Twelfth Night), The Opposed Mates Become a Happy Couple (Much Ado About Nothing), The Cousins (As You Like It), The Daughter of the Doctor (All's Well that Ends Well), The Confusion Caused by the Twin (The Comedy of Errors), The Duke of Vienna (Measure for Measure), A Dream of Summer's Night (A Midsummer Night's Dream), The Seduction of Love (The Two Gentlemen of Verona), The Story of a Statue (The Winter's Tale), The

Favour and Enmity of a Ring (Cymbeline), Tempest the Matchmaker (Tempest), The Story of a Sunken Pearl (Pericles, Prince of Tyre).<sup>20</sup>

It is evident that the early stage presentations of stories from Shakespeare's plays in China cannot, in a strict sense, be seen as the real performance of Shakespeare's plays. It was just a tentative practice. The simple and informal way of the performance during this period was partly due to the lack of genuine Chinese versions of Shakespeare's plays and partly due to the unformed method of modern Chinese drama. The modern Chinese drama was a new and exotic type of drama in China, based on Western spoken drama. During its early stage, it was called 'civilized drama' by the Chinese and apparently included some elements of traditional Chinese drama, for instance, stereotyped roles, stylized movement, etc. To attract more audiences, the theatre which presented 'civilized drama' must change its programme everyday. There was not even time for the troupe to ask a playwright to write a script for the performance and there was even no time to have a rehearsal. So a very simple performing method of 'plot outline' was commonly used. Before the performance, the actors got some papers with the plot outline of the play, and then, they gave an impromptu performance on the stage according to the outline. All the 'Shakespeare' productions during this period were given in this way. It was a pity that what the Chinese audience saw was only the rough plots of Shakespeare's plays and they had no opportunity to enjoy the beautiful lines of Shakespeare's plays. Yet these productions still made their contribution to the popularity of Shakespeare in China.

The first genuine Shakespeare production on the Chinese stage did not appear until 1930. In that year, a production of The Merchant of Venice was presented by the Shanghai Theatre Society in Shanghai Central Hall. The play was directed by Yang Yun Wei, Yu You Yun acted Portia, Cheng Xiao Mo acted Antonio and Shen Tong acted Shylock. It was the first time the Chinese saw a real stage representation of a play by Shakespeare, given in a mature form of modern spoken

<sup>20</sup>. Cao Shu Jun and Shun Fu Liang, Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage (Harbin, 1989), p. 77.

drama and with the original text of Shakespeare. Professor Gu Zhong Yi of Fudan University translated the play into Chinese for the performance(Cao Shu Jun and Sun Fu Liang, pp. 86-7). The second successful Shakespeare production formally presented in China was Romeo and Juliet in 1937. It was performed by the Shanghai Practical Drama Company in the Carlton Theatre, under the direction of Zhang Min. The well-known actor Zhao Dan played the part of Romeo and the famous actress Yu Pei Shan played Juliet(Cao Shu Jun and Sun Fu Liang, pp. 91-2). The production used a Chinese version of Romeo and Juliet, translated by the celebrated dramatist Tian Han. Since then and in the 1940s, more formal and serious performances of Shakespeare's plays appeared on the Chinese stage, although all the cultural life of China was disrupted by the turbulence caused by the anti-Japanese War. Some of these productions were very influential, particularly the three productions presented by the State Drama School, including a production of The Merchant of Venice in 1937 in Nanjing, the capital of China at that time, a production of Othello in Chongqing in 1938 when the school had to move to the inland area due to the urgent situation of the war, and a production of Hamlet in 1942, which toured some cities in Sichuan Province. In 1944, a production of Romeo and Juliet caused a sensation in Chongqing city, the rear bastion during the war. The play was presented by the Divine Eager Drama Company and directed by Zhang Jun Xiang, an important figure in modern Chinese theatrical circles. the well-known actor Lin Yan, who was called 'the movie emperor', was cast for the part of Romeo, and the well-known actress Bai Yang as Juliet. The production used a version in poetic form, translated by Cao Yu, the leading dramatist in modern China. The performance was praised as the best stage representation of Shakespeare's plays in China up to then.<sup>21</sup>

Affected by the general trend of modern Chinese drama in the 1930s and 1940s, the staging of Shakespeare in this period exhibited a tendency to get rid of the influence of the stylized performance of traditional Chinese drama and to become more realistic. Most of the Shakespeare productions in this period were intended

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<sup>21</sup>. Cao Wei Feng, 'Shakespeare in China', Literature and Art Monthly, 4 (1954), p. 12.

to create a visual reality on the stage. The performers tried to act as they would do in real life. For example, in preparation for a Romeo and Juliet in 1937, the actors and actresses of the Shanghai Practical Drama Company rehearsed many times. In order to make the fight scenes true to life, the company engaged a Russian fencing master for two months to teach the actors to fight with swords. So when the play was performed, the audience were surprised at the fencing skills of the actors and the fight between the characters of the two houses looked like a real one. The set designs of the Shakespeare productions in this period also aimed to produce the illusion of a real environment on the stage. The audience often saw the delicate stage devices of house, street, garden, fountain, etc, which made audiences feel as if they were participating in a real event. Another apparent trend of the Shakespeare productions of this period was that special attention was commonly focused on the use of costume. The players were often gorgeously dressed and richly ornamented. Some dramatic critics felt that the directors of the productions overemphasized the showiness of the setting and costume and neglected the technique of acting because the acting of the performers were unsatisfactory. Sometimes the players just dully read the lines on the stage and failed to present the emotion of the characters.<sup>22</sup> This was mainly due to the fact that most of the actors and actresses lacked sufficient formal training and performance experience.

The staging of Shakespeare on the Chinese stage in the third period (1949-1966) can be associated with the prosperity of modern Chinese drama after the founding of the People's Republic of China. Because of the stable social order, the cultural life and literary creative work were rich and brisk, in spite of the strong influence of the political ideology of the Chinese Communist Party. The exotic Western spoken drama, which was called 'modern drama' in China, was commonly accepted as another important dramatic form besides traditional Chinese drama. At that time, almost every province and big city set up a modern drama company while having a troupe performing traditional Chinese drama. There were about one hundred and sixty modern drama companies and twenty thousand professional

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<sup>22</sup>. Guan Cha Jia, 'The Column of Theatrical Criticism', Da Gong Newspaper, 9 June 1937, p. 3.

dramatic workers in China up to 1966.<sup>23</sup> Thus the performance of Shakespeare's plays was promoted by the general improvement in theatrical activity of modern drama in China. Shakespeare's plays were frequently staged during this period, particularly in Beijing and Shanghai, the two cultural centres in modern China. Some of the Shakespeare productions of this period are worth mentioning here. In 1956, the Chinese Central Drama Academy presented Romeo and Juliet. The play was directed by two dramatic experts from the Soviet Union Lekov and Danny. Ji Qi Ming was cast for the part of Romeo and Tian Hua for Juliet. Zhu Sheng Hao's translation was used for the performance. It was the first time for Beijing people to see a Shakespeare production on stage. Premier Zhou Enlai attended the performance. In the same year, the Shanghai Drama Institute presented Much Ado About Nothing, directed by a woman stage expert from the Soviet Union, Y. K. Lepkovskaya. It seemed that Twelfth Night was a favourite with Chinese performers because there were four productions of the play in the 1950s and 1960s, separately presented by Beijing Film Institute in 1957, Shanghai Drama Company of Film Actors in 1957, Shanghai Film Drama Troupe in 1959 and Shanghai Film School in 1962.<sup>24</sup>

The performance of Shakespeare's plays in this period was evidently influenced by Stanislavsky's innovative style of naturalistic production, owing to the close relation between China and Soviet Union at that time. Soviet dramatic experts were invited to instruct Chinese actors and many Chinese dramatic workers were also sent to the Soviet Union to study modern drama. In nearly all the performances of Shakespeare's plays on the Chinese stage during this period, the acting method of Stanislavsky was employed as a basic principle.<sup>25</sup> The Chinese directors aimed to transcend the limit of creating a visual reality and to seek a further reality of character and psychology. The actor was asked to understand fully the thought and

<sup>23</sup>. Zhang He, Modern Drama in China (Jilin, 1979), p. 45.

<sup>24</sup>. Li Hong, Modern Drama Studies (Changchun, 1980), p. 88.

<sup>25</sup>. Wang Yi Qun, 'The Development of the Theatrical Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage', Shakespeare in China, ed. by the Shakespeare Association of China (Shanghai, 1987), p. 96.

emotion of the character and completely identify himself with the character he played. By this acting method, the actor tried not only to imitate the outer manner of the character, but also to create the personality of the character. A typical example is the performance of the famous actress Zhu Xi Juan when she played the part of Beatrice in Much Ado About Nothing in Shanghai in 1961. She followed the principle of Stanislavsky and intended to 'become' Beatrice both on stage and in daily life. In the church scene, she was surprised that Claudio blamed Hero for her lack of chastity and then she was very angry because she felt that somebody was plotting against Hero. Seeing that Benedick looked blank, she believed that he had had no hand in the plot. So when Hero swooned, she couldn't help stretching out her hand toward Benedick and cried: 'Help her! Benedick!'. Here Zhu Xi Juan identified so closely with Beatrice that she acted by the logic of Beatrice's personality and did not follow the lines.<sup>26</sup>

The Great Cultural Revolution, a nightmare for most Chinese people, made China a waste land of cultural life for thirteen years and almost kept the stage empty for that time except for the performance of the eight 'Revolutionary Model Plays' which served the political ambition of Mao's wife. The death of Chairman Mao and the fall of the Gang of Four indicated the beginning of a new era, marked by comparative political and ideological tolerance and a cultural Renaissance. The period from 1978-1988 can be seen as a golden age for the stage presentation of Shakespeare, during which the Chinese dramatic workers gradually evolved a style of their own and successfully created a Chinese Shakespeare on the stage. There were so many Shakespeare productions on the Chinese stage in this period that it is difficult to discuss them in detail one by one. Let's just mention those which evoked nationwide repercussions. From 1980 to 1985, about ten Shakespeare productions in China were well received by Chinese audiences and commonly praised by the dramatic critics, including a production of The Merchant of Venice, presented by the Chinese Youth Arts Troupe, 3-13 September 1980, a production of Macbeth performed by the Central Drama Academy, 3-8 January 1980, a

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<sup>26</sup>. Ibid. pp. 97-8.

production of Measure for Measure cooperatively presented by the English director Toby Robertson and the Beijing People's Arts Troupe, 2 April-30 May 1981, a production of Romeo and Juliet performed by the Shanghai Drama Institute, 5-15 April 1981, a production of The Tempest presented by Shanghai Drama Institute, 5-12 January 1982, a production of Antony and Cleopatra presented by Shanghai Youth Arts company, 27 April-27 May 1984, a production of The Winter's Tale by the Shanghai Drama Institute, 1-7 December 1984, and a production of Othello by Guangdong People's Arts Company, 25-27 September 1984. All of these productions achieved remarkable dramatic effects and attracted much larger audiences than before. In this period, theatrical activity to present Shakespeare's plays was no longer limited to Beijing and Shanghai. It rapidly expanded to other provinces and even to some very remote areas. For example, in January 1982 the Tibetan Drama Troupe presented Romeo and Juliet in Tibet; this was the highest stage in the world for Shakespeare's plays to be presented, because Tibet has been called 'the roof of the world'.

The Inaugural Chinese Shakespeare Festival, which was held in April 1986, represented a peak for Shakespearean drama on the Chinese stage. The festival was really an exceptionally grand occasion for the Chinese and remarkable not only for its scale and variety, but also for the achievement of the Chinese dramatic workers in creating a distinctively Chinese Shakespeare on the stage. The festival began simultaneously in Beijing and Shanghai on 10 April and ended on 23rd April; this might have made it difficult for any passionate audience to see all twenty eight productions, of which sixteen were in Shanghai and twelve were in Beijing, with one hundred and two performances altogether. Twenty three different companies at a dozen theatres performed eighteen different plays of Shakespeare, attracting an audience of more than one hundred thousand. We can find no precedent for such activity in the history of Shakespeare production, which was the reason why the late professor Philip Brockbank called it 'a Shakespeare Renaissance in China'.<sup>27</sup> The twenty eight productions included three productions of Othello (by Beijing Railway

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<sup>27</sup>. Philip Brockbank, 'Shakespeare Renaissance in China', Shakespeare Quarterly, 39 (1988), p. 195.

Drama Troupe, Experimental Beijing Opera Troupe and Mongolia class of Shanghai Drama Institute), three productions of King Lear (by Central Drama Academy, Tianjing People's Arts Theatre and Liaoning People's Arts Theatre), a production of Macbeth (by Shanghai Kun Qu Troup), two productions of Timon of Athens (by North China Drama Society of Beijing Teacher's University and Second Foreign Language Institute of Beijing, in English), a production of Titus Andronicus (by Shanghai Drama Institute), a production of Antony and Cleopatra (by Shanghai Youth Spoken Drama Troupe), two productions of The Merchant of Venice (by China Youth Arts Theatre and Arts Academy of Chinese People's Army, in English), two productions of The Merry Wives of Windsor (by the Central Experimental Theatre and Wuhan Spoken Drama Troup), two productions of The Taming of the Shrew (by Shanghai People's Arts Theatre and Shanxi Spoken Drama Troupe), two productions of Twelfth Night (by North China Drama Society of Beijing Teacher's University and Shanghai Shao Xing Opera Troupe), a production of Love's Labour's Lost (by Jiangsu Drama Troupe), a production of All's Well that Ends Well (by Xian Drama Troupe), a production of Much Ado About Nothing (by Anhui Huangmeixi Troupe), a production of A Midsummer Night's Dream (by China Coal Miners' Drama Troupe), two productions of Richard III (by China Children's Arts Theatre and Shandong Spoken Drama Troupe) and a production of The Winter's Tale (by Zhejiang Shaoxing Opera Troupe). So, up to then (1986), twenty three plays of Shakespeare had been staged in China and there were only fourteen which Chinese audiences did not see on the stage, including two tragedies Julius Caesar and Coriolanus, two comedies The Two Gentlemen of Verona and Troilus and Cressida, one romance Pericles and nine historical plays, except Richard III.

The Inaugural Chinese Shakespeare Festival can be seen as a milestone in the history of Shakespeare production in China. It marked the full maturity of the Chinese performers to present Shakespeare's plays because they were already able to have their own interpretations on the stage. At the festival, the staging of some unusual plays, such as Titus Andronicus and Timon of Athens which are rarely presented on the Western stage, displayed the ambitions of Chinese directors. For

example, Xu Qi Pin, the director of Titus Andronicus by the Shanghai Drama Institute, intended to interpret this bloody revenge tragedy as a political tragedy from the perspective of Chinese culture. The two productions of Timon of Athens were deliberately designed to represent conventional moral concepts and a serious social problem in contemporary China --- the prevalent money worship in the society since the beginning of the Economic Reform. I will discuss the significance of these three productions in detail in Chapter 6. When I attended the festival, I felt, generally, that some of the directors, e.g. Xu Qi Pin, who directed Titus Andronicus, tried to distil the theme of the plays. Some of them intended to interpret the characters from a new angle. Some productions were designed to heighten the romantic atmosphere of Shakespeare with oriental aesthetic qualities. The festival demonstrated that the Chinese stage representation of Shakespeare had entered a period of a variety of artistic style. It seemed to me that the method of Stanislavsky was no longer a dominant one for the Chinese directors and actors to follow. They had many choices, to give a full function for their talents. For example, some of the productions were evidently influenced by the principles of Brecht, some of them showed an inclination to be 'modernized', e.g. to use modern costumes, props and language, and more importantly, some of the productions were presented in the form of traditional Chinese drama, with brilliantly combined beauty of the two types of drama. We shall discuss this in detail in the next chapter.

The foregoing pages have shown how Shakespeare survives the process of transplanting into Chinese culture, which will contribute to a deeper understanding of the increasing reputation of Shakespeare in modern China and the impact of Shakespeare upon traditional Chinese drama. Along with the expansion of Shakespeare's reputation in Chinese culture, the English playwright and traditional Chinese drama will inevitably affect each other. It is a natural inclination for the Chinese to compare Shakespeare with traditional Chinese drama and to decide which suits their taste better. The historical facts have shown that since Shakespeare was introduced into China, traditional Chinese drama has been dealt a hard blow by the great English playwright, as well as by other Western dramatists, e.g. Ibsen. Shakespeare has greatly influenced the conventional dramatic concepts of the

Chinese and helped them to have new dramatic ideas. It was Shakespeare, together with other Western dramatists, who ended the situation in which traditional Chinese drama monopolized the Chinese stage for more than one thousand years. In theatrical and academic circles, and among all the educated Chinese people, he has been regarded as the King of drama and the top representative of Western culture.

The initial impact of Shakespeare upon traditional Chinese drama occurred when the May Fourth New Cultural Movement was in full swing in 1919. During this movement, Western culture was largely introduced as a powerful weapon to criticize the outworn Chinese feudalistic culture. So most of the traditional literary genres were attacked, particularly traditional Chinese drama which was seen as an important vehicle for spreading feudal poison. In the movement, the magazine New Youth, which was the main propaganda instrument of the Radical of the movement, published special issues to initiate a debate on the reform in conventional Chinese theatre. After comparing traditional Chinese drama with the works of Shakespeare and other Western playwrights, many proponents of the movement held that traditional Chinese drama was a backward and outmoded type of drama and no longer suited the taste and needs of the changing society of modern China. By contrast with Shakespeare, traditional Chinese drama was criticized by the Chinese scholars in many aspects. The following selected examples will suffice to show the evidence for this view.

The Chinese critics maintained that Shakespeare reflected real life in his works although the atmosphere and plot of his plays looked more romantic. Admittedly, Shakespeare used old stories and annals as the plots of his plays, but he truly represented the thought and emotion of his contemporaries and the people of modern times. By contrast, Chinese critics complained that traditional Chinese drama failed to reflect the reality of modern Chinese society. What traditional Chinese drama described were very old stories and events in ancient China, which were largely idealized to serve feudal politics. The emotions and thoughts of the characters in traditional Chinese drama were quite different from those of modern Chinese people. Therefore it was difficult for modern Chinese audiences to identify

themselves with the characters in traditional Chinese drama. The Chinese critics were disgusted most with the strong moralizing purpose of traditional Chinese drama. As I have discussed in an earlier chapter, traditional Chinese drama exhibited an apparent inclination to teach the Confucian ethical code, which was regarded as a yoke to human nature by modern Chinese people. By comparison, Shakespeare largely represented the ideal of humanism, as the greatest modern Chinese dramatist Cao Yu says:

In his works, Shakespeare sings the praise of the universe and humanity. He delineates subtly the mystery of human nature and eternal philosophy of life, and represents the essence of humanism.<sup>28</sup>

As an opposing doctrine to Confucianism, humanism was associated by Chinese scholars with the liberty of individuality and the prosperity of Western countries in modern times. The failure of traditional Chinese drama to present general human nature was also considered by the Chinese critics as one of the main causes of the backwardness of traditional Chinese drama. Yet Shakespeare fully represented general humanity in his works, which resulted in the universal appeal of his plays, as the influential Chinese Shakespeare critic and translator Professor Liang Shi Qiu said in 1929:

People always wonder why nowadays Iliad is still commonly read and Shakespeare's plays are still mostly staged. The reason is that both of them represent general humanity which serves as the foundation of all great literary works.<sup>29</sup>

One of the main elements which Chinese scholars complained about in traditional Chinese drama was the so-called 'fraudulent nature' of the drama. The

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<sup>28</sup>. Cao Shu Jun and Sun Fu Liang, Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage (Harbin, 1989), p. 59.

<sup>29</sup>. Men Xian Qiang, Shakespeare Criticism in China (Jilin, 1991), pp. 16-7.

scholars held that Shakespeare and other Western dramatists, e.g. Ibsen and Bernard Shaw, revealed conflicts between different social forces and exposed social problems and contradictions in their works. But traditional Chinese drama was normally intended to present, at last, a false picture of peace and harmony and concealed serious social problems and contradictions. So traditional Chinese drama belonged to a literature of deception. The great modern Chinese writer Lu Xun once criticized traditional Chinese drama for covering up the serious problem of marriage in ancient and modern China. Lu Xun maintained that, bound by the feudal ethical code, young people in China had no freedom to find their mates by themselves. All marriages were absolutely decided by parents and matchmakers. This marriage mode ruined the happiness and life of numerous young people. Yet traditional Chinese drama ignored this problem and tried to conceal it. He says:

As everyone knows, although the action of the lovers to engage with each other on their own has been praised in conventional drama and novel (the action is of course only limited to the young men who can pass the imperial examination and win the title of Zhuang Yuan), but in fact it cannot be tolerated by people in reality and the marriage is bound to be ruined . . . traditional drama often uses a pattern that 'the gifted scholar passes the imperial examination and his marriage is arranged by the emperor' which is used to compromise on the problem caused by the principle of the parents' decision. Then seemingly the unreasonable marriage system is no longer problematic, and the key point to solve the problem now becomes whether the young man can pass the imperial examination, but not whether the marriage system itself is reasonable or not.<sup>30</sup>

Thus Lu Xun thought that it was a false solution for the problem and would not work in reality. So,

this pattern of traditional drama is designed to deceive

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<sup>30</sup>. Lu Xun, Complete Works of Lu Xun, 30 vols (Beijing, 1980), I, 5, p. 328.

the readers and audiences and to make them believe that the society is really a bright one and that if there is a misfortune happened to somebody, it is his own fault.<sup>31</sup>

In the first chapter, we pointed out that the tragic concept of traditional Chinese drama differed from that of Shakespeare. Traditional Chinese tragedy always ends with a happy event which serves the purpose of 'tragic relief' but damages, more or less, the tragic effect of the play. So this was another main aspect in which modern Chinese critics lamented traditional Chinese drama. Compared with Shakespeare's tragedy, traditional Chinese drama was claimed to show no real tragic ideas, as the leading figure of the May Fourth New Cultural Movement Dr Hu Shi Zhi says:

What traditional Chinese literature lacks most is a tragic concept. In the works of conventional drama, as well as fiction, we always see a happy ending . . . Yet Western literature has had very profound tragic idea since ancient Greece.<sup>32</sup>

The famous modern Chinese playwright and Shakespeare translator Tian Han also held that Shakespeare's tragedy was genuine tragedy which could specially arouse sympathy in Chinese readers and audiences. He thought that Shakespeare provided a better pattern of tragedy than traditional Chinese drama, with which Chinese writers could represent the sharp contradiction between Chinese people and the dying feudal system. In the preface to his translation of Hamlet, he says:

Hamlet is a very stirring and moving tragedy of Shakespeare. Now we have a lot of young people of the Hamlet type. What will they think about their society after reading this great tragedy?<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup>. Ibid. p. 329.

<sup>32</sup>. Hu Shi Zhi, 'The Evolution of Literature and Drama Reform', New Youth, 5 (1918), p. 24.

<sup>33</sup>. Tian Han, 'Preface to the Translation of Hamlet', Hamlet, trans. by Tian Han (Shanghai, 1926), p. 1.

In the light of performance, Shakespearean drama basically belongs to a realistic style, although the playwright uses poetic language and some techniques to appeal to the imagination of an audience. By contrast, traditional Chinese drama exhibits an obviously stylized and non-realistic tendency, characterized by stylized movements, symbolic gestures and a multi-mode performance including speech, acting, singing, dancing, acrobatics, etc. That is why traditional Chinese drama was often called 'opera' by foreigners. But actually it is quite different from Western opera and should still be classified as a type of drama. Along with the elapse of time, more and more emphasis has been laid on the stage techniques of traditional Chinese drama, the performers have neglected to improve the literary content of the drama. Therefore, traditional Chinese drama attracts an audience mainly by the techniques of performance and not by its literary qualities, such as profound themes, exciting plots, vivid characterizations, moving emotions, special atmosphere, etc, which are the main source of the artistic fascination of Shakespeare's works. Thus during the May Fourth New Cultural Movement, comparing traditional Chinese drama with Shakespeare's plays, some Chinese scholars criticized traditional Chinese drama for its lack of literary merit and realistic orientation. Qian Xuan Tong, one of the leaders of the movement, criticized traditional Chinese drama, with special attention to Beijing Opera (one of the main types of traditional Chinese drama) in this way:

Referring to Beijing Opera, we can hardly find any social ideals in the plays and the texts are often badly written. Do not take it for granted that because Beijing opera is a type of drama, so it has literary value. As for traditional Chinese drama, it just emphasizes the skill of singing and the audience often don't care about the libretto at all. In addition, the types of facial make up look absurd and the stage equipment is very simple, and neither of them is good enough to move an audience. The production on the stage should be an imitation of men and events in reality. From the old saying 'the costume of player Meng', we understand that when an actor plays the ancients, he should do it as player Meng vividly imitated the appearance and manner of the late Prime Minister Sun Shu Ao. If an actor does not care about whether his performance is

really like the role he plays, that would go against the purpose of theatre. But why do the players of today pay no attention to this principle?<sup>34</sup>

Player Meng was a clown in the pre-Qin period. One day he wore the clothes of the late Prime Minister Sun Shu Ao and went to see the king. He acted so well that the king thought the dead Prime Minister had revived. In later years, people used 'the costume of Player Meng' to imply high skill of acting and theatrical activity.

There were other critics who complained about the formulistic and stereotyped tendency of traditional Chinese drama. For instance, the pattern of 'the lovers are engaged to each other secretly in the garden' and 'the poor scholar passes the imperial examination at last' was indiscriminately used in many plays, which made the audience fed up.

The initial impact of Shakespeare upon traditional Chinese drama during the May Fourth New Cultural Movement and afterwards resulted in the gradual decline of traditional Chinese drama in Chinese academic and theatrical circles. Most of the Chinese critics held that Shakespeare was superior to traditional Chinese drama in the light of either literature or theatre. But admittedly the former was still regarded as an élite form, owing to the scarcity of performances of Shakespeare in this period and the lack of excellent translations available for the reading public, and the latter still held the majority of Chinese audiences and served as the main entertainment for ordinary people. It is easy to see that when the early twentieth century Chinese scholars criticized traditional Chinese drama after comparing it with the works of Shakespeare and other Western playwrights, they showed an obvious prejudice against traditional Chinese drama, caused by a readiness to abandon conventional Chinese culture and accept Western culture entirely and uncritically. So when they related traditional Chinese drama to Shakespeare's plays, they paid special attention to the social function of drama as a means of reflecting social problems and to impel people to improve society. But they neglected to

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<sup>34</sup>. Qian Xuan Tong, Chinese New Literature (Hong Kong, 1963), pp. 79-80.

evaluate the two types of drama from an objectively aesthetic point of view, which in fact affected a deep understanding of Shakespeare. For instance, some Left-wing critics emphasized Ibsen and Chekhov more than Shakespeare, because these nineteenth-century realistic dramatists more directly served the purpose of taking drama as a powerful weapon for social struggle. Nonetheless, the initial impact of Shakespeare upon traditional Chinese drama indeed demonstrated some basic difference between the two forms and let the Chinese see clearly some weak points of traditional Chinese drama against the distinction of Shakespeare's plays from the standpoint of the modern theatre.

In the 1930s and 1940s, Shakespeare was continually pounding at traditional Chinese drama along with the presentation of more Shakespeare productions on the Chinese stage and the publication of more excellent translations of Shakespeare's plays for Chinese readers. Accordingly, traditional Chinese drama had to make more room for Shakespeare on the stage, and lost more Chinese readers who were attracted by the English playwright. The basic attitude of the Chinese communists towards literature and art was a mixture of political propaganda for revolution and puritanism, which might have become a barrier to the further spread of Shakespeare's reputation in China. Fortunately, the favour Marx himself showed towards Shakespeare and the preference of the Soviet Union for the playwright decided the 'legitimate' position of Shakespeare in the proletarian culture of China after the establishment of the People's Republic of China. So even the top leaders of the Party and government also showed their interest in Shakespeare. For instance, Premier Zhou Enlai attended a performance of Romeo and Juliet presented by the Central Drama Academy in 1956. Ironically, the leaders were also disgusted with the feudal ideology in traditional Chinese drama. In the 1950s, some Chinese plays, which represented horror, superstition or pornography, such as The Chopped Coffin, The Man Who Killed his Son and Lady Huang Travels the Hell, were banned from performance by the government.<sup>35</sup> So in this period of stern politics, Shakespeare still had a higher standing in Chinese cultural circles.

<sup>35</sup>. Wu Guo Qin, The History of Traditional Chinese Drama (Shanghai, 1980), p. 167.

The greatest impact of Shakespeare on traditional Chinese drama occurred at the end of the 1970s when China at last extricated herself from the crisis of the Cultural Revolution, and throughout the past decade during which great changes have taken place in many aspects of Chinese society. Casting off the ultra-Left trend of thought in the Chinese Communist Party and Stalinism, China reopened her gate to the West. The Chinese set up a new initiative in studying Western culture thoroughly and deeply, without the political prejudice caused by the antagonism between China and Western capitalist countries in modern history. As an icon of Western culture, Shakespeare naturally once more attracted special attention from the Chinese. The social and aesthetic value of Shakespeare's works was even more fully appreciated by Chinese audiences and readers. The playwright has been regarded as the highest authority in dramatic art since then. During this period, traditional Chinese culture was being heavily pounded by Western culture. Many kinds of traditional Chinese art lost their previous fascinations for the Chinese, especially for young people. We see an obvious decline in traditional Chinese drama too: audiences have become markedly smaller and the average audience age has become increasingly older. It is evident that the impact of Shakespeare on traditional Chinese drama is one of the main causes of the decline of the latter in the past decade. This impact can be seen clearly in academic, theatrical and literary circles.

Since the outset of the Reform of China in 1978, Shakespeare studies have flourished rapidly in Chinese academic circles. The number of published writings on Shakespeare has increased sharply. There were about one thousand one hundred and fifteen articles dealing with Shakespeare in various aspects, published in China from 1978 to 1988, which is almost four times as many as in the period from 1918 to 1978.<sup>36</sup> Some of the articles compare Shakespeare with traditional Chinese drama. Like their predecessors in the May Fourth New Cultural Movement, the more the critics appreciate the dramatic merits of Shakespeare's plays, the more they find the weaknesses of traditional Chinese drama. But unlike their

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<sup>36</sup>. Meng Xian Qiang, Shakespeare Criticism in China (Jilin, 1991), p. 44.

predecessors sixty years ago, the critics of the new generation approach Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama not only politically but also aesthetically. While affirming the distinction of traditional Chinese drama, they maintain that because the aesthetic taste of contemporary Chinese has changed as the age has changed, traditional Chinese drama no longer suits the taste of Chinese people very well, and that Shakespeare's works, with their unique charm and universal appeal, more suit the artistic taste of the audiences and readers of contemporary China than traditional Chinese drama. These few selected examples which follow will suffice to show the evidence for this view.

In his book, the young critic Zhang Fa points out that the main purpose of Shakespearean tragedy, as well as other Western tragedies, is to expose the social problems of the existing system or to show the weakness of humanity. The failure and destruction of the protagonist in Shakespearean tragedy mainly derive from the strong will of the hero to clarify the truth of his situation:

Hamlet intends to clarify the truth of his father's death. Yet he demonstrates his own weakness when he undertakes the task to avenge . . . He also realizes the contradiction between his responsibility to revenge and his character, and is baffled by the attitude of man towards this reversed world. All of these bring about his destruction . . . the tragic protagonist clearly exhibits a complex quality to transcend the simple division of good and evil, to transcend the provisional social institution or even to transcend culture itself.<sup>37</sup>

But, comparing Shakespeare's plays with traditional Chinese drama, Zhang Fa holds that traditional Chinese drama, particularly political tragedy, represents an opposite tragic idea:

The presentation of the faithful ministers who fight with treacherous ministers has been based on the

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<sup>37</sup>. Zhang Fa, Chinese Culture and Tragic Concept (Beijing, 1989), pp. 120-1.

qualities of stability, patience and preservation of Chinese culture. It aims to neither thoroughly examine the existing social system and ideology nor show a transcending spirit through the complexity of the protagonist. It is designed mainly to sacramentalise the existing system and ideology and to portray the characters by the simple division of good and evil . . . It cannot be said that the classical Chinese playwrights do not see the serious problem in reality. But they always tend to reassure themselves and the people with conventionally political idea and the strong rationalism of Chinese culture.<sup>38</sup>

Here Mr Zhang Fa in fact has expressed a common feeling of many Chinese audiences and readers that they have grown weary of the stereotyped pattern of traditional Chinese drama while being strongly attracted by the variety and complexity of Shakespeare's plays.

The reasons for the increasing popularity of Shakespeare and the decline of traditional Chinese drama in contemporary China have been the focus for comparing Shakespeare with traditional Chinese drama. The Chinese critics dealt with it in many aspects, e.g. theme, characterization, stage technique, etc. After attending the Inaugural Chinese Shakespeare Festival, a Chinese critic wrote an article discussing the impact of Shakespeare upon traditional Chinese drama. He considered that one of the main causes of the rise of Shakespeare and the fall of traditional Chinese drama was that the richness and colourfulness of the presentation of individuality in Shakespeare's plays appealed to Chinese audiences and readers more than the stereotyped characterization in traditional Chinese drama. He says:

One of the important characteristics of Shakespeare's plays is that the portrayal of individuality is greatly emphasized which would provide a vast field for using the actor's talent to play the role. We can hardly see stereotyped characters in Shakespeare's plays. Every actor can have different interpretation of Hamlet,

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<sup>38</sup>. Ibid, p. 121.

Othello and Shylock . . . By contrast, the fatal weakness of traditional Chinese drama is to neglect the portrayal of individuality. The actors lack the consciousness to 'recreate' the roles they play. What they do on the stage is only to present the plot and not to represent the personality of the characters. They usually treat the role with the same method which inevitably leads to a stereotyped orientation. That is strikingly contrasted with the variety and richness of the portrayal of personality in Shakespeare's plays. So we have drawn a good lesson from the impact of Shakespeare upon traditional Chinese drama.<sup>39</sup>

The discussion in Chinese academic circles shows us a general trend in contemporary China: that the dramatic concepts of Shakespeare have replaced traditional Chinese dramatic concepts and become the leading dramatic idea for all theatrical activities.

The impact of Shakespeare upon traditional Chinese drama can be seen more clearly in Chinese theatrical circles, for in the last decade the staging of traditional Chinese drama rapidly declined as the performance of Shakespeare's plays increasingly flourished. Admittedly, other reasons such as the popularity of television also functioned to affect the staging of traditional Chinese drama. Yet there is no doubt that the sharply growing Shakespeare productions on the Chinese stage serve as an important factor to bring about the decline of traditional Chinese drama. In the past, when traditional Chinese drama was staged, the theatre was always filled to capacity. But today if you go to a theatre where a traditional Chinese play is performed, you'll find numerous seats unoccupied and the average age of the audience is almost up to sixty. The performers of traditional Chinese drama in many cities, especially big cities, have frequently complained that they lost a lot of money from the performance. Particular plays now can not maintain even a short run: after three or four days, there is no audience at all.<sup>40</sup> In January 1986,

<sup>39</sup>. Ding Jia Sheng, 'Thinking Deeply of the Impact', Shakespeare in China, ed. by the Shakespeare Association of China (Shanghai, 1987), pp. 87-8.

<sup>40</sup>. Personal interview with the performers of Beijing Opera from five cities in a symposium held in Beijing in 4 May 1987.

a well-known actress of Beijing Opera was on tour in Shanghai. She gave fifteen performances altogether with several different productions. Unfortunately the average occupation of the seats was only thirty percent.<sup>41</sup> In China, drama companies at all levels are subsidized by the government. In fact, in the 1950s and 1960s, the performance of traditional Chinese drama always made a great deal of profit. But in 1980s, most troupes of traditional Chinese drama had to depend for their theatrical activities on government subsidies. Sometime the subsidy was not enough to maintain regular performances. So, in recent years, some troupes have tried to get commercial sponsors as well.

By contrast with the depressing state of traditional Chinese drama, the stage presentation of Shakespeare's plays present a flourishing scene. Whenever a Shakespearean play was performed, the production always drew large audiences for extended runs. For instance, when the Beijing People's Art Theatre presented Measure for Measure in April 1980, the play ran for forty seven performances to capacity audiences. The production of The Merchant of Venice, presented by the Chinese Youth Art Theatre, ran almost for two years from 3 September 1980 to 13 August 1982, with a rare record of two hundred performances, etc. When the Inaugural Chinese Shakespeare Festival was held in April 1986, before the beginning of each performance, there were always some people standing in the front of the theatre, anxiously waiting for returned tickets, because all the tickets were already sold out in advance. In March 1986, I attended a production of The Merry Wives of Windsor at Beijing Haidan Theatre. The play was performed by the Central Experimental Theatre. The theatre was filled to capacity and many of the audience looked students. After the performance, I talked with several students of Qinghua University, a top university of science and technology in China. They told me that they enjoyed the play very much because they liked Western literature and Shakespeare was their favourite. The reason they gave was that Shakespeare vividly delineated the beauty of life and the beauty of humanity, although his plays were set in a totally alien culture. They said that they were very excited when they knew

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<sup>41</sup>. See above, note 39, pp, 89-90.

the play was to be performed in public and they booked group tickets in advance because all the students of their department were keen to see the play. When I asked them whether they often went to see traditional Chinese theatre, especially Beijing opera since it was very convenient to see Beijing opera in the capital, the students shook their heads and gave a negative answer. A tall young man smiled and said:

Yes, we know it is a cultural treasure, but it does not suit our taste. I once went to the theatre and tried to appreciate traditional drama. But I only stayed there for twenty minutes and then left the theatre because I could not understand what the players sang and said. The stereotyped characters were boring and I was unable to find anything exciting which I strongly feel from Shakespeare's characterization. Besides, the tempo of traditional drama is too slow to suit the fast pace of contemporary social life.<sup>42</sup>

In the past, Shakespeare's plays were believed to attract specially a highly educated élite audience in China. But it is quite clear that today they have taken away from traditional Chinese drama more and more intermediate or semieducated urban audiences, and even poorly educated peasant audiences. One day during the Inaugural Chinese Shakespeare Festival in 1986, waiting outside the Cultural Palace of the Nationalities for the performance of The Merchant of Venice by China Youth Art Theatre, I saw a young man looking carefully at the poster of the play. I came up and talked with him. He told me that he was a farmer in a village of Anhui Province and has travelled a long way to Beijing specially to attend the festival at his own expense. I was surprised at his keenness on Shakespeare, because at that time it was very difficult for a person living in the countryside to travel several thousand kilometres to the Capital at his own expense, considering the lower income of most Chinese peasants and the high cost of transportation and accommodation in Beijing. But the reason seems also to be that as a poorly educated farmer he could show such an interest in the English playwright. He told

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<sup>42</sup>. Personal interview, 18 March 1986, written up from notes, 24 April 1986.

me that after graduation from elementary school, he had been working in the fields. Two years ago he had an opportunity to read Shakespeare's plays and was attracted strongly by Shakespeare at once. Since then he had yearned to see a performance of Shakespeare's plays. 'The Inaugural Chinese Shakespeare Festival is a rare chance for me' he said, 'because you can see so many productions in just two weeks. It's worth spending my savings to see these fantastic plays'. He admitted that he liked traditional Chinese drama, but he liked Shakespeare more. 'I am greatly attracted by Shakespeare's rich and colourful characterization, and 'golden sayings' of philosophy of life, which you can hardly find in traditional Chinese drama.' His remarks are suggestive of a poem, 'An Address to Shakespeare', by the Scottish poet William McGonagall, though it is a bad poem characterized by naive sincerity:

Immortal! William Shakespeare, there's none can you excel,  
 You have drawn out your characters remarkably well,  
 Which is delightful for to see enacted upon the stage ---  
 For instance, the love-sick Romeo, or Othello, in a rage;  
 His writings are a treasure, which the world cannot repay,  
 He was the greatest poet of the past or of the present day --- . . .  
 His language is spoken in the Church and by the Advocate at the bar,  
 Here and there and everywhere throughout the world afar;  
 His writings abound with gospel truths, moral and sublime,  
 And I'm sure in my opinion they are surpassing fine; . . .  
 Immortal! Bard of Avon, your writings are divine,  
 And will live in the memories of your admirers until the end of time; . . .<sup>43</sup>

So, it seems that Shakespeare's works are also well received and commonly praised by the poorly educated people all over the world.

The assumption that Shakespeare has won more and more intermediate and low level audiences has been proved by many facts. On an academic discussion about Shakespeare in China during the Inaugural Chinese Shakespeare Festival in Beijing, the speech of a Mr Tong, the official of a cultural centre in Liangshan Prefecture, Sichuan Province, evoked strong responses among the participants. Mr Tong told

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<sup>43</sup>. More Poetic Gems : Selected From the Works of William McGonagall, ed. by James L. Smith (Dundee, 1962), pp. 52-3.

the participants how Shakespeare was well received by the people in Liangshan which was a very remote mountain area in Southwest China. He said that a few years ago the library of the cultural centre bought some copies of Shakespeare's plays. These copies were frequently borrowed by the local residents. Most of them were farmers. Inspired by the increasing interests of the residents in Shakespeare, the amateur troupe organized by the cultural centre performed a production of Much Ado About Nothing which drew large audiences. Mr Tong said that he was very pleased to let the Shakespeare scholars know that Shakespeare's plays were not only commonly and highly appreciated by the audiences and readers in big cities, but also well received by the people living in countryside and remote areas. When Professor Zhang Si Yang, the vice-chairman of the Shakespeare Association of China, asked Mr Tong whether the local residents of Liangshan had any difficulty in understanding Shakespeare's plays, Mr Tong said:

Not at all! When the play was performed, many of the audience were poorly educated and even illiterate farmers. But it seemed that all of them understand the production very well. Yes, after the performance, some young men told me that the exotic atmosphere of the plays struck them as new. Yet they liked it very much. There were no strange customs or moral doctrines in the play, so they were able to identify themselves with the characters. For them, Shakespeare's plays sometimes were even easier to understand than traditional Chinese drama. For example, a young man told me that when he saw the famous classical Chinese tragedy The Injustice to Dou E, he could not understand why Dou E must be loyal to her dead husband and not remarry although she was only seventeen years old.<sup>44</sup>

It is not difficult for us to understand why Shakespeare's works have appealed to more and more low level Chinese audiences, considering that in the Elizabethan age Shakespeare's plays were written for both aristocracy and townspeople. In his plays, Shakespeare represents common humanity which is easily accepted by people

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<sup>44</sup>. Speech of Mr Tong at the academic discussion held in the Central Drama Academy, Beijing, on 18 April 1986, written up from my notes.

with any levels of education and any different cultural background --- although it has been believed that people with lower level education, particularly peasants, generally tend to be conservative and to stick to the conventional institutions and culture.

The literary circle is another important area in which Shakespeare has had a great impact upon traditional Chinese drama, since Shakespeare's plays serve not only as a top form of drama to please Chinese audiences on the stage but also as reading material with high literary value for the vast reading public in China. There can be no doubt that in contemporary China, Shakespeare has more readers than audiences, for the theatrical activity is often limited by finance and facility, and Shakespeare has many more Chinese readers than traditional Chinese drama according to reliable information. In the past decade, Shakespeare's works, including his Complete Works, particular plays, and poems have been largely published in China. The publication of these books totalled up to three million copies which is almost five times as much as that in the period from 1949 to 1977. Particular editions were often published in incredibly large numbers. For example, the second edition of Zhu Sheng Hao's Complete Works of Shakespeare in 1988 amounts to one million copies. Fang Ping's translation of Five Comedies of Shakespeare was published in one hundred thousand copies. Tu An's Shakespeare's Sonnets was published in three hundred fifty thousand copies.<sup>45</sup> By contrast, traditional Chinese plays were just published in smaller amounts at the same period. The total amount of the published traditional plays is only about two hundred thousand copies which is much less than that of Shakespeare's plays published in this period.<sup>46</sup>

Along with the sharply increasing publication of Shakespeare's works in China in the past decade, Shakespeare has won even more Chinese readers than ever before. In fact, there has been a 'Shakespeare craze' in contemporary China since

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<sup>45</sup>. Meng Xian Qiang, Shakespeare Criticism in China (Jilin, 1991), p. 39.

<sup>46</sup>. The Publication Reference Material, ed. by Huang Yue Hua (Changchun, 1990), p. 55.

1986, aroused by the Inaugural Chinese Shakespeare Festival. Since then, his works have been so commonly read at different levels that reading his works has become a fashion. In recent years, there are numerous 'literary Salons' set up everywhere in China and it is a shame that a person goes to a salon without a knowledge of Shakespeare because Shakespeare has been one of the major topics of the salon. There are also many reading groups of Shakespeare's works in Chinese universities and colleges. The students sit together to discuss particular Shakespeare plays or to recite some beautiful lines chosen from the plays. A friend of mine living in Changchun city in Northeast China, wrote to me in 1988 and told me that there was a long queue at the gate of the central bookshop of the city at early morning (5:00 am) one day before the shop opened, because a new edition of Zhu Sheng Hao's Complete Works of Shakespeare would be sold on that day. Among these ardent Shakespeare enthusiasts, there were students, clerks, workers, engineers, and soldiers. My friend was very disappointed, for the books were already sold out when he came to the counter. But fortunately he bought a copy at last through the 'back door' (an unhealthy way to get something). The shop often kept a small amount of best sellers for the friends and relatives of the assistants.

In contrast with the mania among the Chinese public to read Shakespeare's works, traditional Chinese plays have been given the cold shoulder by Chinese readers. There are fewer and fewer Chinese people reading the plays in recent years, except for scholars and students who take the drama as a research field. Most of the devotees of traditional Chinese drama are old people, who normally appreciate the plays by attendance at the performance to enjoy the stage techniques and not by reading them to understand the literary merits. As for other people, particularly the young people, they feel that the literary value of Shakespeare's plays is much higher than that of traditional Chinese drama. As we pointed out in the second chapter, the major distinction of traditional Chinese drama is its poetic flavour which is different from that of Shakespeare. Yet most Chinese readers prefer Shakespeare's poetic quality to that of traditional Chinese drama because the vigorous and impassioned poetic presentation of Shakespeare more suits the taste of contemporary Chinese than the sentimental and restrained poetic style of

traditional Chinese drama. It is not a joke that Shakespeare helps many Chinese young men to win the affections of their girlfriends because the young men often use the beautiful lines concerning love in Shakespeare's plays which they believe express their own passions very well. In addition, the 'golden sayings' of the philosophy of life in Shakespeare's plays also strongly attract the attentions of Chinese readers while in traditional Chinese drama there are only some outmoded epigrams suitable for the old feudal Chinese society. The humorous style of Shakespeare is another aspect of his art which Chinese readers prefer to traditional Chinese drama.

The consequences of the impact of Shakespeare upon traditional Chinese drama in modern and contemporary China are evident. Firstly, Shakespeare has replaced traditional Chinese drama and become the most important and authoritative dramatic form in Chinese cultural circles. Secondly, the dramatic concept of Shakespeare has become a prevalent and dominant one in Chinese theatrical circles and affected, directly or indirectly, all theatrical activities in contemporary China. Thirdly, the impact has brought about the decline of traditional Chinese drama and put it in a dilemma as to whether to die, as some Chinese critics assumed, as a feeble and decaying art with its unfashionable beauty, or survive through a reform at the risk of losing its own distinctiveness. There are indications that some players of traditional Chinese drama try to suit their performance to the taste of contemporary Chinese with new methods which are apparently influenced by Shakespeare's dramatic ideas, e.g. to have a genuine tragic end instead of a conventional happy ending (The Inspector General Returns to His Native Place by the Yangzhou Opera Company, 1-28 May 1992), to speed up the tempo of the performance, to use realistic acting sometimes, to express the true feelings of the character, to represent individuality, etc. There is a hope that the wheel of fashion may turn back. Seeing that traditional Chinese drama still keeps its vitality in overseas Chinese societies such as Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore, we may expect that when the changing age turns China into a society with a pluralistic artistic taste, traditional Chinese drama would regain its prime place in Chinese cultural life and please, together with Shakespeare, Chinese audiences and readers.

Admittedly, as a powerful national art-form of long standing, traditional Chinese drama has its own artistic charm. Its unique stage techniques still exhibit great vitality on the Chinese stage and influence other theatrical activities of modern Chinese theatre. Shakespeare production in China is also largely affected by the stagecraft of traditional Chinese drama, which will be the central topic of the next chapter.

## **Chapter 4. The Metamorphoses of Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage: the Convergence of Shakespeare and Traditional Chinese Drama**

In the history of Shakespearean theatre, the plays have been performed in a wide variety of forms, particularly when they appear on the foreign stage. In most cases, the foreign performers tend, consciously or unconsciously, to interpret Shakespeare's plays from the perspective of their own culture or to use indigenous dramatic conventions to add alien colour to the productions. Looking back on Shakespearean theatre in China, we can see the same phenomenon. Besides the orthodox productions, which maintain the original manners of the plays by using the form of spoken drama, Western costumes and settings, etc, there have been numerous Shakespeare productions which were intended to create 'sinicized' versions of Shakespeare's plays on the stage in various possible ways. Of all these attempts, traditional Chinese drama was the major form employed by Chinese directors and players to present sinicized Shakespeare productions. As we have pointed out in the last chapter, Shakespeare has had a great impact on traditional Chinese drama in modern and contemporary China. Nonetheless, as a type of drama with long-standing traditions and unique aesthetic qualities, traditional Chinese drama has also largely affected Shakespearean theatre in China, particularly during the 1980s, because it is an ideal form for Chinese directors and performers to present genuine sinicized Shakespeare productions.

This chapter, therefore, is an attempt to discuss the different attitudes of the Chinese towards the adaptation of Shakespeare's plays into traditional Chinese dramas and to investigate the possibility and advantages of performing Shakespeare's plays in the form of traditional Chinese drama. It also deals with the achievements of some Shakespeare productions presented in the major types of traditional Chinese drama such as Beijing opera, Kunju opera, Shaoxing opera and Huangmei opera, looking also at other metamorphoses of Shakespeare's plays on

the Chinese stage, and paying special attention to the significance of all these sinicized Shakespeare productions to both Shakespeare theatre and traditional Chinese theatre in contemporary China.

There has been some debate whether Shakespeare's plays should be adapted into traditional Chinese drama. The uncertainty derives first from ordinary Chinese audiences. It may not be easy for the playgoers of traditional Chinese drama to appreciate a production in which the players wear western costumes but act and sing in the pattern of traditional Chinese drama. The Chinese audience of Shakespeare may feel it is ridiculous to see Hamlet or Macbeth acting with Chinese stylized movements and symbolic gestures on the stage. It seems that the fans of both Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama have been accustomed to the distinctive performing patterns and styles of the two types of drama. There was a gardening expert who was a Shakespeare fan as well. When he knew that there would be a forthcoming trial performance of a Shakespearean play in the form of traditional Chinese drama, he resolutely opposed it. He held that Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama were two totally different types of drama, and that it was inappropriate to mingle Shakespeare's plays with traditional Chinese drama.<sup>1</sup>

Some Chinese Shakespeare scholars and critics also tend to be highly conservative on this issue. Favouring Shakespeare, they worry that a production might lose the fascination of Shakespeare if it is adapted into traditional Chinese drama, and that such an adaptation would distort the true features of Shakespeare because it is very difficult to retain all the distinctions of Shakespeare's plays when they are adapted into alien dramas. Some young radical scholars also argue that since the historical facts have proved that traditional Chinese drama is a declining and 'backward' type of drama, it would degrade Shakespeare's plays rather than

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<sup>1</sup>. Cao Shu Jun and Sun Fu Liang, Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage (Harbin, 1989), p. 190.

enhance and polish them.<sup>2</sup> A compromise attitude is to be found among other Chinese Shakespeare scholars. They believe that conditions are not ripe for the presentation of Shakespeare's plays in the form of traditional Chinese drama because there are still a lot of ordinary Chinese people who do not know Shakespeare's works. So it would be better if we first present Shakespeare's plays in conventional productions and then, when the plays are familiar, in different productions in traditional Chinese style. So at present Shakespeare's plays should be staged mainly in the form of spoken drama.

The adaptation of Shakespeare's plays into traditional Chinese drama also makes the performers feel embarrassed. Normally when a Shakespearean play is adapted into traditional Chinese drama, the performance is undertaken not by spoken drama actors but by traditional Chinese drama actors. Their training usually takes a very long time, sometimes even more than ten years, given privately by senior actors, based on repertoire and conventional stage techniques. Thus it is very difficult to ask the performers to act in a play with totally different content and style which their teachers never taught them before. The obstruction sometimes comes directly from the leaders of some troupes of traditional Chinese drama. They said: 'Our conventional theatre has already lost more and more audiences. If we employ it to perform Shakespeare's plays, the production might be 'neither fish nor fowl', which would make the situation of our conventional theatre even worse and damage the intact theatrical tradition.'<sup>3</sup>

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 the adaptation of Shakespeare's plays into traditional Chinese drama would be not only practicable but also successful. They also believe that it could be

<sup>2</sup>. Wen Yan, 'Why let Shakespeare wear Chinese costume?', Beijing Evening Papers, 18 April 1986, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>. Huang Zu Ling, 'The Prospects of the Shakespeare's plays on the Chinese Stage --- a Speech at the Seminar of China's First Shakespeare Festival', Shakespeare in China, ed. by the Shakespeare Association of China (Shanghai, 1987), p. 13.

a very beneficial theatrical activity for both Shakespeare's theatre and traditional Chinese theatre in contemporary China, as the celebrated director and Shakespeare expert Huang Zuo Lin has pointed out:

We can find a lot of common characteristics in Shakespeare's drama and traditional Chinese drama. We can also see some strong points in each which the two types of drama may learn from each other. There is no doubt that we shall make more contributions to the theatrical circles of the world if we perform Shakespeare's plays by the employment of some stage techniques of traditional Chinese drama when we introduce the works of this great dramatic poet to the Chinese audience. And meantime we can make our brilliant theatrical tradition and consummate stage techniques known to the countries all over the world.<sup>4</sup>

Some critics emphasize the significance of the adaptation of Shakespeare's plays into traditional Chinese drama in the light of the combination of Western and Eastern culture:

It is indeed a new theatrical exploration to adapt Shakespeare's plays into traditional Chinese drama . . . As is known to all, Shakespearean drama is a bright pearl of Western culture and traditional Chinese drama is a treasure of Eastern art. If we mix them together, it will not only make Shakespeare known to more Chinese audiences but also make traditional Chinese drama exert a widespread influence upon the theatrical circles of the world. Thus it is really a matter of great importance.<sup>5</sup>

Referring to the suitability of such adaptations for the taste of Chinese

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<sup>4</sup>. Ibid. p. 14.

<sup>5</sup>. Zhang An Jian, 'The Treasure Shakespeare Has Left Us --- A reflection on China's first Shakespeare Festival', Shakespeare's Triple Play --- Research, Performance and Teaching, ed. by Zhang Si Yang, Men Xian Qiang and Xu Bin (Jilin, 1988), p. 218.

audiences, the critics who favour them don't think it is difficult for Chinese audiences to get used to the new mingled style in view of the rapidly changing artistic taste in contemporary China. As a matter of fact, China now is in a transition from single aesthetic taste to multi-aesthetic taste. So a Shakespearean play in Chinese style will be compatible with the taste of Chinese audience, considering that the presentation of Shakespeare's plays with alien manners has been a fashionable method on the modern Western stage. As a Chinese Shakespeare scholar pointed out:

Seeing the actor wearing ancient Chinese costume to perform Shakespeare's plays, some people feel that it looks like a square peg in a round hole. Actually, to wear different costume is merely a matter of form. While performing Shakespeare's plays, since the English actors can wear Cossack uniform and modern German steel helmet, the American players can wear Indian clothes, the Canadian performers can wear Eskimo clothes, why cannot Chinese performers put on ancient Chinese costume? There can be no doubt that so long as we maintain the Shakespearean spirit well, the adaptation of Shakespeare's plays into traditional Chinese drama will further prove the universal appeal of Shakespeare and add extraordinary splendour to Shakespeare theatre of the world.<sup>6</sup>

Reviewing the history of modern Chinese theatre, we can also argue that the adaptation of Shakespeare's plays into traditional Chinese drama is feasible, because numerous excellent works of modern Chinese spoken drama have been adapted into traditional Chinese drama. For instance, Guo Mo Ruo's historical plays Hu Fu, Wu Ze Tian and Cai Wen Ji were adapted into Beijing opera, Kunju opera and Shaoxing opera. Cao Yu's The Thunder Rain, The Sunrise and The Open Field were adapted into Shaoxing opera, Pinju opera and Hainan opera respectively. Yang Han Sheng's Spring and Autumn in Heaven was adapted into Beijing opera, his Greenwood Hero was adapted into Sichuan opera, etc. Thus,

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<sup>6</sup>. Lu Gu Shun, 'Reflections after the Curtainfall', Shakespeare in China, ed. by the Shakespeare Association of China (Shanghai, 1987), p. 35.

since modern Chinese spoken drama can be adapted into traditional Chinese drama, why not Shakespeare's plays? Furthermore, the modern Chinese theatre has already shown the practicability of adapting Western stories into traditional Chinese drama. For example, there were two Beijing operas adapted by Xia Yue Ren, Napoleon (1910, Shanghai) and Mrs Warren's Profession (Shanghai, 1911). Robin Hood was adapted into Beijing opera by Zhang Chun Hua (1928, Beijing). Oscar Wilde's Lady Windermere's Fan was adapted into Shanghai opera (1924, Shanghai) and well received by the audience. So it should not be problematic for the Chinese performers to present Shakespeare's plays in the form of traditional Chinese drama. In addition, there are more advantages to adapt Shakespeare's plays than other Western writers' works because it is commonly said by Chinese critics that there exist many similarities between Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama as far as their theatrical concepts are concerned. The first two chapters dealt with the similarities between Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama as literature. The similarities between the two types of drama in the light of stagecraft are discussed briefly below.

As we pointed out in Chapter 2, as poetic drama, both Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama mainly use poetic language but not the ordinary language of daily life which has been employed by other types of drama. In most cases, the texts of Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama are recited by the actors, and sometimes sung by them, particularly in traditional Chinese drama. So when Shakespeare's plays are adapted into traditional Chinese drama, the performers will easily appreciate the lyrical style of Shakespeare and have no difficulty in using his poetic language. The free employment of time and space on the stage is to be found in both Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama. Both can have very long spans of plot and frequent changes of place. Structurally, both Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama use an 'open' structure in most cases but rarely use a 'closed' one. Both adopt many-scenes and several-acts and suggest the possibility that the story of the plays might be continued. Therefore it is easier for the Chinese adaptors and directors to rearrange the structure of their sinicized Shakespeare productions.

There is a principal theatrical concept which Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama have in common. Traditional Chinese drama is based on the concept of 'supposition', rather than on that of 'verisimilitude' which is characteristic of the main trend of Western theatre since 1800. It seems that Shakespeare also follows the principle of 'supposition', to transcend the limit of the stage. Neither intend to create an illusion of reality but instead attempt to affect an audience with fictitious scenes and events. For instance, Shakespeare frequently invokes the audience's imagination to visualize a scene or an event which cannot be easily presented on the stage. This is most explicitly stated in several chorus speeches. In Henry V we read:

... But pardon, gentles all,  
 The flat unraised spirits that hath dar'd  
 On this unworthy scaffold to bring forth  
 So great an object. Can this cockpit hold  
 The vastyfieldsof France? Or may we cram  
 Within this wooden O the very casques  
 That did affright the air at Agincourt?  
 O, pardon! since a crooked figure may  
 Attest in little place a million;  
 And let us, ciphers to this great accompt,  
 On your imaginary forces work.  
 Suppose within the girdle of these walls  
 Are now confin'd two mighty monarchies,  
 Whose high upreared and abutting fronts  
 The perilous narrow ocean parts asunder.  
 Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts:  
 Into a thousand parts divide one man,  
 And make imaginary puissance;  
 Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them  
 Printing their proud hoofs i'th' receiving earth;  
 For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings,  
 Carry them here and there, jumping o'er times,  
 Turning th'accomplishment of many years  
 Into an hour-glass; for the which supply,  
 Admit me Chorus to this history.

(Prologue, 8-32)

Serving as a method to appeal to the imagination of an audience, the concept also leads to great freedom in handling stage space and time, as we read in the speech of Gower in Pericles:

Thus time we waste, and longest leagues make short;  
 Sail seas in cockles, have an wish but for't;  
 Making, to take our imagination,  
 From bourn to bourn, region to region.  
 By you being pardon'd, we commit no crime  
 To use one language in each several clime  
 Where our scenes seem to live. I do beseech you  
 To learn of me, who stand i'th' gaps to teach you  
 The stages of our story . . .  
 . . . While our scene must play  
 His daughter's woe and heavy well-a-day  
 In her unholy service. Patience, then,  
 And think you now are all in Mytilen.

(4. 4. 1-9, 48-51)

When we turn to traditional Chinese drama, we find that the concept of 'supposition' runs through every aspects of its stagecraft. Similar to the function of the chorus in Shakespeare's plays, the chorus (called 'Fu Mo' --- a supporting male role) in the prologue of traditional Chinese drama is designed to tell the place or time of the story, or to describe the surroundings of the scene. For example, in The Tower of Lei Feng, the chorus first recites a poem to depict the beautiful scenery of West Lake of Hangzhou which is the setting of the play. Then he talks with an actor who remains backstage about the title, author and other related information of the play. Finally, he gives the gist of the story with a longer poem. The performing skills of traditional Chinese drama also highly appeal to the imagination of the audience. For instance, when the characters, by the plot, need to travel a long way to another place, the actors just walk around the stage twice with very beautiful stylized movements and say 'Oh, here we are', the audience then accordingly suppose that the characters have arrived at their destination. In Shakespeare's plays, the same technique is also employed, as in Romeo and Juliet, Act I, Scene IV. To imitate the action of climbing over a wall, the actor just jumps over a table, and the audience then accepts that he has climbed the wall. The concept of 'supposition' of traditional Chinese drama clearly creates an effect of 'alienation' which is very similar to the 'distancing' technique of Brecht. Or rather we would say that Brecht's method was greatly influenced by the alienation effect of traditional Chinese drama, since he attended a performance by the famous Beijing opera actor Mei Lan Fang in Moscow in 1935 and wrote an article which

discussed the characteristics of traditional Chinese drama the next year.<sup>7</sup> In many aspects, traditional Chinese drama indeed tries to avoid an illusion of reality and let the audience know clearly that this is a performance. For instance, the stage workers often change the props in the presence of the audience. During the performance, the stage assistant goes up on the stage to operate a special stage device, e.g. to make 'raging flames'. The actors' make up is unique and beautiful, yet too exaggerated to resemble real people.

The supposition concept of traditional Chinese drama can also be seen in the symbolic acting which is also often employed by Shakespeare. When Shakespeare presented vast scenes such as a war or a gathering of citizens, he did not use great many actors to cram the stage. He usually employed a symbolic method: a general with a standard-bearer stands for a troop (Antony and Cleopatra, Act III, Scene VIII, IX and X); several people talking with one another on the stage represent a gathering of many citizens (Julius Caesar, Act I, Scene I). In the performance of traditional Chinese drama, symbolic acting has also been largely used in a similar way. For instance, a few groups of 'Longtao' (a group containing a general and some soldiers) can stand for thousands upon thousands of horses and soldiers and the fight between them symbolize a great war. Sometimes, if a scene of a play is set at night, the actor will move in a symbolic way as if they are groping their way in the dark although the stage is bright. The use of torches and lanterns in Shakespeare's plays seems to be able to achieve the similar effect (Romeo and Juliet, Act V, Scene III, 120-6). The pattern of make-up of traditional Chinese drama is also highly symbolic according to the types of character. For example, a red make-up stands for loyalty and bravery, e.g. the make-up of Guan Gong, a valiant general in the plays adapted from the famous classical Chinese novel The Romance of the Three Kingdoms. A black make-up usually symbolizes uprightness, e.g. the make-up of Bao Gong, a wise and just judge in the plays, e.g. The Dream of a Butterfly, of complicated legal cases. A white make-up often represents treacherousness, so almost all the treacherous characters are made up with white,

<sup>7</sup>. Brecht on theatre, ed. by John Willett (New York, 1964), p. 91-7.

e.g. Qin Hui in The Flag of Loyalty.

In the use of sets and props, both Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama tend to be simple and allusive. Yet the simple stage properties may signify many things and occasions. Both of them rarely if ever use scenery, which is very convenient for the free change of space and time through the speech of the actor. Shakespeare normally only uses some tables and chairs or perhaps a bed as props. On the stage of traditional Chinese drama, the most conventional props are one table and two chairs, and sometimes there are fewer or more tables and chairs as required. In some of the plays, the table and chairs are covered with cloth according to the story. If an emperor appears on the stage, the table and chairs will be covered with yellow cloth depicting an embroidered dragon. If a high ranking official or a county magistrate is to come on the stage, the table and chair will be covered with red cloth which is the symbol of power. There are almost twenty special ways to arrange these tables and chairs on the stage in accordance with particular scenes and settings, e.g. a private house, a banquet, a hotel, a restaurant, an official hall, a law court, etc. Two tables put together with a chair on them are used as a tall ship with several decks, a reviewing stand for a general or a hillside. Although the sets and props of Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama are very simple, the costumes of both are gorgeous and tastefully made, and are also intended to produce special visual and symbolic effects, as we see the symbolic costuming at the coronation of the Kings (Henry IV, Part II, Act V, Scene V and Richard III, Act IV, Scene II). In traditional Chinese drama, the costumes not only help to create beautiful images on the stage but also provide opportunity for the actors to show special performing skills. For example, to swing the long sleeves is a very complicated technique, used to represent the emotion and disposition of the characters. A warrior in traditional Chinese plays always wears a helmet with long pheasant tail feathers which will show his power, grandeur and high position. To play the feathers is also an important technique, showing how the character copes with different situations. All these skills take very long time to practise and exercise and contribute crucially to the theatrical achievement of a performer. So it seems that both Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama try to make the audience

concentrate on the performers but not on other supporting stage elements.

One of the most evident theatrical conventions which Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama have in common is the device of prologue and epilogue. A prologue is frequently used in Shakespeare's plays, e.g. in Romeo and Juliet, the second part of Henry IV, Henry V, Henry VIII, Troilus and Cressida, etc. The prologue in Shakespeare's plays is normally presented by a chorus. But sometimes Shakespeare uses other interesting and symbolic methods to present it. For instance, in the second part of Henry IV, the position of the chorus is taken by a personified Rumour. In The Winter's Tale, a personified Time goes up on the stage to present the prologue to Act IV. The function of the prologue in Shakespeare's plays is to introduce the setting of the play and the principal characters and briefly give the gist of the story. In some of the plays, e. g. in The Winter's Tale and Pericles, the chorus works to connect two acts between which there is a long period of time elapsed, and to provide a psychological transition for the audience to accept the unrealistic development of the plot. Epilogues are also used by Shakespeare in his plays. In some, the epilogue is undertaken by the chorus, as in the second part of Henry IV, Henry V and Henry VIII. But in other cases, the epilogue is spoken by a character in the play in different mode. At the end of The Tempest, Prospero recites a rhymed epilogue. In Twelfth Night, the epilogue is a song sung by the clown. In Henry IV, Part II, the epilogue is spoken by a dancer. As You Like It ends with a speech by Rosalind. If Shakespeare's prologues serve as a guide to bring the audience into the plays, then his epilogues take the audience out of the performance. The epilogue provides an opportunity for the actors at the end of the play to address the audience and to invite their applause, as a response to the performance. The epilogues of Shakespeare's plays can also be seen as a final unit to sum up the theme of the play, provide further information concerning the future of the chief characters, as in the second part of Henry IV, or to predict the forthcoming historical events as in Henry V.

Similar to Shakespeare's plays, traditional Chinese drama also largely uses prologues and epilogues, but in a slight different way. In some traditional Chinese

plays, particularly in Yuan plays, the prologue is formed by an additional short unit before the regular acts. It is called a 'wedge' (Xiezi) by the Chinese dramatists. Different from Shakespeare's prologue, this sort of prologue in traditional Chinese drama is presented by several main characters of the play, providing important background information and outlining the possible development of the plot, as we see in The Romance of the Western Chamber, The Orphan of the House Zhao, Autumn in the Han Palace and A Slave to Money. In later traditional Chinese plays, especially in Ming and Qing plays, the prologue is greatly simplified and looks similar to that in Shakespeare's plays. It is presented by an actor like the chorus in Shakespeare's plays, called 'Fu Mo', a supporting male actor. The form of this kind of prologue in traditional Chinese drama also becomes very simple. As a rule, after coming on the stage, the Fu Mo first recites a poem related to the relevant background information or the setting of the story. Then he talks with an actor who remains backstage about the play to be performed. Finally he would recite a longer poem recounting the plot, plus a very short poem summarizing the theme and gist of the play. This pattern of prologue can be found in many famous Ming and Qing plays, as in The Fan of Peach Blossom, The Hall of Longevity, The Story of the Honest Subjects, The Tower of Lei Feng, etc. There is also a clear pattern for the epilogue of traditional Chinese drama, which, unlike the epilogue of Shakespeare's plays, is only presented by the characters of the play, but not by the chorus (Fu Mo). Influenced by the happy ending of traditional Chinese drama, the main purpose of the epilogue is to heighten the jubilant atmosphere caused by the happy events at the end of the play. So the epilogue in most cases is formed by the poems and songs recited and sung by the hero and heroine, together with other characters at the wedding or banquet.

Monologues, soliloquies and asides are largely used in both Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama, through which the two types of drama try to establish direct communication with the audience. Shakespeare's plays are noted for their long and brilliant soliloquies which serve as a very effective method to reveal the character's innermost feelings, to represent the complex disposition of the characters and to discuss profound philosophical ideas. The aside in Shakespeare's

plays is also frequently used to express the real thought and feeling of the character and his response to the action of other characters. Compared with Shakespeare's plays, traditional Chinese drama uses more monologues and fewer soliloquies because in most cases the character would talk to the audience rather than to himself. Normally, the characters of traditional Chinese drama rarely use soliloquies in Shakespeare's sense, for there are no complex natures and strong inner conflicts to present in traditional Chinese drama. Monologues are sometimes used by the Chinese actors to express their thoughts and emotions. In such cases they are written in poetry recited or sung by the actors and are shorter than those in Shakespeare's plays. In traditional Chinese drama we can see a lot of explanatory monologues which provide objective information about the character himself and openly acquaint the audience with his background and intentions. Generally speaking, traditional Chinese drama attempts to establish a more direct contact with the audience than Shakespeare's plays. This can be proved by another device of straightforward exposition of the character in traditional Chinese drama, called self-introduction or self-identification (*Zi Bao Jia Men*). In traditional Chinese drama, when a character comes on the stage, he would generally announce his identity, stating who he is and why he conducts himself as he does and giving further background and facts about himself, as in the play-within-the-play in A Midsummer Night's Dream (Act V, Scene I, 216-52). For example, in Looking Over the Wall, after entering, the hero Pei Shao Jun introduces himself to the audience: 'My name is Pei Shao Jun, son of the Minister of Works. I was able to speak well at the age of three, to read at five, to write well at seven, and compose an extempore poem at ten. And I have both talent and good looks, so the people of the capital call me 'handsome boy'. I'm seventeen years old now but still single. What I like is to read poetry and books. I've never associated with women so far.' Then he explains that the purpose he comes to Luoyang City is to buy exotic flowers and rare plants for the emperor. By this self-introduction, the audience is acquainted with the identity and the main background of the hero, and could predict the possible development of the plot.

Having briefly discussed the common features of Shakespeare's plays and

traditional Chinese drama in stage techniques, we find that there indeed exist some advantages for Chinese actors to perform Shakespeare's plays in the form of traditional Chinese drama because these common features will help to pave the way for the work of adaptation. The Chinese adaptors, directors and players will have no difficulty in finding corresponding devices to represent particular stage technique of Shakespeare's plays.

Besides the common ground of stagecraft which Shakespearean drama and traditional Chinese drama share, traditional Chinese drama also possesses its own unique stage techniques. To be sure, the content and some dramatic concepts of traditional Chinese drama are outmoded or out of fashion, yet its distinctive stage techniques still demonstrate extraordinary artistic charm. There is no doubt that these techniques will contribute to the sinicization of Shakespeare's plays.

One of the most evident performing skill of traditional Chinese drama is the employment of a whole set of stylized movements. These movements derive from the actions of daily life but have gradually become graceful dance movements through a long process of refinement and beautification. They are used extensively to present many actions on the stage: to open and shut doors, to drink, to write, to walk, to run, to go upstairs and downstairs, etc. On the Western stage, it is difficult for the performer to imitate the action of riding a horse, and it would be awkward to bring a real horse on the stage. But for traditional Chinese theatre, it's very easy to cope with this problem. With a horsewhip in his hand, a player represents vividly the action of horse riding with beautiful and smooth movements which please the eye and look true to life as well. When it's necessary to imitate the action of paddling a boat, the player will perform with graceful movement as if he is really rowing a boat. There are also performing patterns in traditional Chinese theatre to present feelings and emotions such as sorrow, joy, crying, laughing, excitement and hesitation, by a set of stylized movements, e.g. to swing hair and sleeves, to spread a cloak, to pace up and down with dance movements, etc. An excessive employment of these patterns may slow down the tempo of the play and accordingly make the audience feel bored. But a proper use of them would add seasoning to the

performance. Thus when Shakespeare's plays are presented in the form of traditional Chinese drama, these patterns will be ideally suitable for representing the characters with various passions and inner conflicts. Nowadays the special Chinese martial art of Kung Fu is well known to the Westerners through Kung Fu movies. In traditional Chinese theatre, the acrobatic fighting, which has evolved from Kung Fu, is also largely used to present fighting scenes. It is a consummate skill characterized by the mixture of dance and acrobatics, enabling the players to handle the fights expertly and efficiently with perfect timing and perfect body control. So, if we employ this skill to present the combat scenes in Shakespeare's plays, the performance will surely achieve an effect with extraordinary splendour. The use of Chinese percussion instruments to accompany the fighting scene in Shakespeare's plays will also achieve a good effect. The orchestra of traditional Chinese theatre can also make a contribution to the adaptation of Shakespeare's plays into traditional Chinese drama. The Chinese instruments can effectively present the music, especially fanfare, flourish and trumpets to advance, etc. In addition, there are numerous unique stage techniques which will meet special needs of presenting Shakespeare's plays. For instance, to present a god descending to the world, a performer comes on the stage, waving gently a horsetail whisk to create a lithe and floating carriage as if he is crossing a cloud. There are also effective methods to present ghosts, thunder, and flame. The symbolic make-up of traditional Chinese theatre can be used for certain characters of Shakespeare's plays, e.g. Othello, Caliban, the clowns, etc. It should be pointed out that particular types of traditional Chinese drama often have their own special techniques though they share the stagecraft we have shown above generally. According to incomplete statistics, more than three hundred types of traditional Chinese drama now exist in various parts of China. But only about twenty of them are major types with nationwide influence, such as Beijing opera, Kunju opera, Shaoxing opera, Huangmeixi opera, Guangdong opera, Sichuan opera, Henan opera, etc. The main difference between them lies in their use of unique melody patterns and diverse local dialects.

From this brief discussion, it will be seen that the adaptation of Shakespeare's plays into traditional Chinese drama is possible and practicable. The theatrical

practice in this aspect so far has proved that the endeavour is indeed fruitful, particularly in the last decade. Looking back to the Shakespearean theatre in modern China, spoken drama has been the dominant form to present Shakespeare's plays. Nevertheless, some Chinese performers began to adapt Shakespeare's plays into various types of traditional Chinese drama as early as the very beginning of Shakespearean theatre in China. As we have pointed out in the last chapter, the first Chinese Shakespeare production, which was presented as spoken drama, appeared on the stage in 1913. The next year, in Sichuan Province, Ya An Sichuan Opera Troupe played Hamlet in the form of Sichuan opera. The play was adapted by Mr Wang Guo Ren with a title in Chinese style: Murdering His Elder Brother and Marrying His Sister-in-Law. The play was performed in some areas of Sichuan Province and well received by the audience. It is rumoured that there were also other Shakespeare productions presented as Guangdong opera and Shaanxi opera at that time, but no detailed references are available. Shaoxing opera is one of the major types of traditional Chinese drama and very popular in Shanghai and Zhejiang Province. Since Shanghai has been an important cultural centre in modern China and a place where Shakespeare's plays have been largely performed, as we mentioned in the previous pages, it is understandable that there have been many Shakespeare productions adapted into Shaoxing opera in this district. Early in the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s, some performers of Shaoxing opera tried to present Shakespeare's plays in this type of traditional Chinese drama. In 1942, the celebrated Shaoxing opera performer Yuan Xue Fen, who created a new school of the performing skill of Shaoxing opera, presented a production of Romeo and Juliet in Shaoxing opera at Shanghai Da Lai Theatre. The title was changed into Affection and Hatred. Three years later, another Shaoxing opera troupe, led by Fu Jin Xiang, performed a production of King Lear adapted into Shaoxing opera at Shanghai Long Men Grand Theatre, with a title of The Filial Piety of the Daughter. After liberation, in 1952 a production of Othello was adapted and performed by Shanghai Shaoxing Opera Troupe in Shanghai. Beijing opera, as the most representative type of traditional Chinese drama, was also used to present Shakespeare's plays before the establishment of the People's Republic of China. In 1948, a Beijing opera production of Everlasting Love was performed in Beijing, adapted from Romeo and

Juliet under the well-known director Jiao Ju Yin.

With the new upsurge to assimilate Western culture and present Shakespeare's plays in the 1980s, there are more and more Shakespeare plays adapted into various types of traditional Chinese drama. Shakespeare scholars, directors and the performers of traditional Chinese drama have explored this valuable theatrical field more earnestly than ever before. Numerous Shakespeare productions acted as traditional Chinese drama were very successful and evoked nationwide repercussions. For instance, in 1983 the Experimental Beijing Opera Troupe performed a production of Othello, recreated in a convincingly Shakespearean Chinese tradition. The play caused a sensation in the capital. Later in the same year, in Guangzhou city, a production of The Merchant of Venice was presented by the Experimental Guangdong Opera Troupe, under the famous director Zhang Qi Hong and the Guangdong opera performer Hong Xian Nu. The play was well received by the audience, having a run of twenty five performances. In 1985, Shanghai Hong Kou Shaoxing Opera Troupe presented a play Everlasting Love, adapted from Romeo and Juliet, under the direction of Xie Hong Ling and Zhou Zhi Gang. The structure of the original play was adapted into nine scenes and each was given a title to display the content of it. The play was also well received by the audience, having a very long run of three years with more than two hundred performances.

In the Inaugural Chinese Shakespeare Festival, four of the plays on show were adaptations into different types of traditional Chinese drama.<sup>8</sup> They were: a production of Macbeth with a title of Bloody Hands, adapted into Kunju opera by the Shanghai Kunju Troupe; a production of Twelfth Night, adapted into Shaoxing opera, presented by Shanghai Shaoxing Opera Troupe; a production of The Winter's Tale, also adapted into Shaoxing opera, presented by Hangzhou Shaoxing Opera Troupe and a production of Much Ado About Nothing, adapted into Huangmei opera, presented by Anhui Huangmei Opera Troupe. All these

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<sup>8</sup>. The information given here is based on my personal experience.

productions were highly praised by both Shakespeare scholars and the artists of traditional Chinese drama for their success in combining Shakespearean plays with traditional Chinese drama. They were regarded as the genuine sinicized Shakespearean plays, mixing the fascination of Shakespeare and the charm of traditional Chinese theatre. After the festival, the play Bloody Hands in Kunju opera was invited to play at Edinburgh in 1987 and was well received by the audience. The achievement of the Chinese performers to adapt Shakespearean plays into traditional Chinese drama for the Inaugural Chinese Shakespeare Festival inspired them to explore further this fruitful field and recreate more Shakespearean plays in the manner of traditional Chinese drama. In 1987, the Henan Opera Troupe of Zhou Kou Prefecture, Henan Province, presented a Henan opera Romeo and Juliet. The success which Chinese players achieved also evoked a strong repercussion in overseas Chinese communities. In January 1989, Shanghai Hong Kou Shaoxing Opera Troupe was invited to visit Hong Kong to perform a Romeo and Juliet in the second Kui Qing Art Festival and aroused great interest among the audience of Hong Kong.

The Shakespeare productions adapted into traditional Chinese drama have shown a wide range of variation and each has its own distinction although they are all intended to follow the common principle to maintain the fundamental Shakespearean spirit while interpreting the plays from the perspective of Chinese culture and performing the plays in the manner of Chinese theatrical tradition. It would be difficult to discuss all of them in detail one by one. The following a few selected examples will suffice to demonstrate a wide variety of the approaches to the adaptation.

There have been two major methods for Chinese performers to adapt Shakespeare's plays into traditional Chinese drama. One is called 'Chinese manner'. The other is called 'Western manner'. The so-called 'Chinese manner' means the adaptor changes all the characters, places, times, and customs of Shakespeare's plays into Chinese style. The original texts are sinicized. The stories are reset in ancient China. The characters have Chinese names, wear Chinese costumes and

follow Chinese customs. In a sense, this method would produce thoroughly sinicised Shakespeare productions. The 'Western manner' tries to keep most of the original texts, plots, scenes, and lines of Shakespearean plays. The outward appearance of such a production would look like a Western play. The characters still have their original names, wear Western costumes and observe Western customs. Yet they speak, sing, and act in the patterns of traditional Chinese theatre. It seems that each method has its own strong points. A production in the 'Chinese manner' can be easily accepted by an audience to whom Shakespeare is little known, and there is no need for them to take pains to understand alien customs, although there are no very odd customs in Shakespearean plays. But this approach may risk offending Shakespeare scholars and devotees because it would make the production a completely Chinese play and obscure the glamour of Shakespeare. The key point, as adaptors and directors have realized, lies in keeping the balance between Shakespearean spirit and sinicized methods. The 'Western manner' has an obvious advantage of being faithful to the spirit and original manners of Shakespeare's plays, for it can avoid the loss of the artistic charm of Shakespeare. But the main problem involved in this method is how to make the audience accept the unconcealed exotic flavour through the acting, singing, movements and other performing patterns typical of traditional Chinese drama because such a mixture may cause a feeling of disharmony at the outset and it will take time for the audience to get used to this mixed performing mode. There is no doubt that both approaches can bring about successful productions through careful adaptation and representation.

Beijing opera has been the most popular and representative type of traditional Chinese drama in modern China, noted for its beautiful music and rich stage techniques. It possesses all the performing patterns and stagecraft we mentioned in the previous pages. Of all the Beijing opera Shakespearean plays presented in modern China, the production of Othello, presented by the Experimental Beijing opera Troupe, can be seen as the most successful example. The play was premiered in Beijing on 23 May, 1983 and then toured Shanghai and other cities with more than twenty performances. It was on show again in the Inaugural Chinese

Shakespeare Festival in Beijing. As the first Shakespeare production presented in the form of traditional Chinese drama after Deng Xiao Ping's 'Open Door Policy', it caused a sensation throughout the country and aroused great interest among Western experts working in the capital. To present the play, the Experimental Beijing Opera Troupe invited the famous dramatic critic Weng O Hong as literary adviser. The play was textually adapted by Shao Hong Cao, Zheng Bi Xian and Lu Xing Cai, under the direction of Zheng Bi Xian, with Zhang Yun Xi as specially invited performing instructor and Huang Bo Shou as specially invited dancing instructor. The play had a strong cast that included several famous names. Ma Yong An played the part of Othello, Li Ya Lan played the role of Desdemona. The rest roles were: Iago, Lian Hong Xian; Cassio, Wang Yong Quan; Emilia, Cheng Duan; Brabantio, Xuan De Hua and the duke, Lu Dong Lai.

The production of Othello acted as Beijing opera belongs to the 'Western manner'. So the major task of the adaptors, director, and performers was to keep the essence of the play while adapting it into the patterns of Beijing opera. The major plots and scenes were kept and the characters were given their original names. Structurally, traditional Chinese drama tends to centre each scene of a play on a sub-theme, presented by a title. The adaptors followed this theatrical convention and rearranged the play into seven scenes plus a prologue. The title of the prologue was 'Under the Triumph Arch'. The titles of the other scenes were: 'The Tender Affection', 'Follow You Forever', 'The Bright Pearl of the Island', 'Honey Mouthed and Dagger-Hearted', 'The Bloody Setting Sun', 'Humiliation and Injustice' and 'The Eternal Regret'. These titles were designed to give a clue to the development and the ending of the story. A common difficulty which all the Chinese adaptors would encounter is how to adapt the lines of Shakespeare's plays into the textual pattern of traditional Chinese drama, although most Chinese translations of Shakespearean plays were carefully written in Chinese literary mode. To solve this problem, Mr Shao Hong Chao, the chief adaptor of the play, used a bold method to cut down. In the text of Beijing opera Othello, for the spoken parts, Mr Shao tried to keep most of the original lines or just slightly rewrote them for the translation had already been written in smooth Chinese prose and could be basically

suitable for the pattern of dialogue and monologue of Beijing opera. For the singing parts, however, Mr Shao had to simplify and largely rewrite the lines to suit the special forms of verse for the melody, particularly when he dealt with the long soliloquies of the characters. To explain his method, Mr Shao said: 'Some Shakespeare scholars blame me for my bold cutting. They believe that Shakespeare's work is the Bible in the art world and any small change in the texts will be wrong. But I don't agree with them. I would argue that the adaptation work does not mean that we must adhere to every word and sentence of the text. The crux of the adaptation lies in conveying the spirit and flavour of Shakespeare's plays, but not in retaining all the particular lines and scenes.'<sup>9</sup> In fact, through the performing practice, the script of Beijing opera Othello was accepted by the audience and theatrical circles as a better version to represent the basic features and poetic flavour of the original play while remaining suitable for the textual pattern and melody of Beijing opera. In order to make the audience easily understand the libretto, captions were shown on the front wall of the theatre when the play was performed because the playgoers of Beijing opera were normally familiar with the libretto of all the Beijing opera repertoire but might have a difficulty in understanding the singing content of a new play.

It would tax the ingenuity of the director of Beijing opera Othello to present the characters with the role types of Beijing opera. Similar to other types of traditional Chinese drama, Beijing opera has four major character-types of Sheng, Dan, Jing and Chou, each with a different code of behaviour based on sex, age, personality and social status, exhibiting a strong influence of Chinese social and cultural background. Thus it would be difficult for the director to apply the character-types of Beijing opera to the presentation of Shakespearean characters for two obvious reasons. On one hand, Shakespearean characters come to us with apparent exotic manners different from that of the ancient Chinese. On the other hand, as we have commented in the previous chapters, Shakespeare's characters are more complex and various than those of traditional Chinese drama, and it is not easy to group

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<sup>9</sup>. Personal interview with Mr Shao Hong Chao at the Institute of Traditional Chinese Drama in Beijing on 25 January, 1984.

them into simple moral and social types. It is evident that a mechanical application of the character-types of Beijing opera to the characters of Shakespeare's plays will lead to an incompatibility. Nonetheless, the director and performers of the Experimental Beijing Opera Troupe achieved a reconciliation of the use of character-types with the presentation of the complex characterization of Shakespeare. In the play, Othello was treated as a type of Jing (also called Hua Lian, meaning a coloured face because the type wore coloured make up) and acted by an excellent Jing actor Ma Yong An. As luck would have it, the characteristics of the type of Jing almost exactly suit Othello's case. Generally, Jing stands for a male character with a bold, heroic and forthright personality in high social position such as a general, a minister, a judge, etc. All the stylized techniques of Jing would work to represent his personality and social status. A Jing character often has a make-up painted with dark or red colour and it is just right for Othello's racial distinction. In the play, Desdemona was treated as a type of Dan which was used to present the female roles in Beijing opera. There are more than ten sub-types of Dan according to personality and social status. Precisely speaking, Desdemona in this play was acted as a Zheng Dan (the leading female role in a play, with many virtues, graceful manner and beauty). So there were no problem with the treatment of Desdemona as a Zheng Dan type of Beijing opera. A flexible employment of the character-types of Beijing opera can be found in the treatment of Iago. As a sinister and treacherous character, it was supposed, before the performance, that Iago would be acted as a Jia Zi Hua Jian (a sub-type of Jing) or a Chou type (a clown or a stupid or nasty role) because conventionally these two types were used to present a treacherous role such as a corrupt minister at court or a vicious official in local government. But, when the play was performed in public, the audience surprisedly found that Iago was being acted by a Lao Sheng actor (a sub-type of Sheng). For those who were familiar with Shakespearean characterization, this arrangement was a really ingenious treatment. The type of Lao Sheng in Beijing opera was normally employed to present a middle-aged or older character with morally positive qualities, e.g. a faithful official. Obviously, the director felt that if she present Iago as a Jia Zi Hua Jian or a Chou, it would bring about a morally superficial and one-sided character because, judging by the special make-up of the

two types, the audience would recognize Iago was a simply villain immediately he appeared on the stage. This would contradict with the original character of Iago. So the advantage of presenting Iago as a Lao Sheng was that at the outset the audience would regard him as an honest and sincere person, judging by his make up and appearance, but gradually they were to see other side of this role --- his vicious and nasty mind through his speech and action. This treatment completely breaks through the conventional principle of the character-type use in Beijing opera. Yet it suits well the taste of modern Chinese audiences and conforms to the characterization of Shakespeare. It can be seen as an innovation in theatrical practice of Beijing opera and a typical example of the influence of Shakespeare upon traditional Chinese drama. In the play, there was a sophisticated comedy set up about the laughable suitor Roderigo for the director evidently treated him as a comic character, although he ended up being murdered. Roderigo was acted by an actor of Chou type which conventionally stood for a clown or a stupid and laughable character. Thus this was basically a practicable treatment.

The performers of the Beijing opera Othello successfully employed conventionally stylized movements to represent the dispositions of the characters, particularly Ma Yong An who played the part of Othello. He vividly showed us a powerful, bold and forthright image of a heroic warrior in his black velvet cloak and with his bright sword. He also impressively represented the emotions and the sharp inner conflict of the role with a set of stylized movements, e.g. to laugh in a special pattern of Huan Lian, to play with his cloak, to move his head and body rapidly in pace with the rhythm of drum and gong, etc. Yet Mr Ma Yong An did not limit himself to the performing patterns of Beijing opera. For example, to display the physical characteristics of Othello as a black man, Mr Ma sometimes looked sideways or showed the whites of his eyes, which was completely against the performing rule of Beijing opera, particularly when the role was a positive character.<sup>10</sup> In his music, also, the play made some innovations. For instance, as

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<sup>10</sup>. Speech of Mr Ma Yong An at the seminar held in Central Drama Academy in Beijing on 20 April, 1986 during the Inaugural Chinese Shakespeare Festival.

a role of Jing type, Othello should not sing the melody of Nan Bang Zi which was designed for other types. But in the play, in order to express his feeling of immeasurable joy after winning the affection of Desdemona, he had a duet with Desdemona in the melody of Nan Bang Zi, which heightened the happy atmosphere at that moment. The acting of Jiang Hong Xang who played the role of Iago also broke through the type rule. As a Lao Sheng type, he was expected to act with a slightly bending shoulder. But this would conflict with Iago's manner. So Mr Jiang abandoned the conventional rule, acting with a natural posture, which produced an apparent exotic style. As in other Beijing operas, Othello did not use a complex setting. Simply, a cyclorama was erected at the back of the stage, with blue light shone upon it and occasionally with red light or light of other colours. Basically it can be seen as a neutral setting with symbolic meaning: sea, the sky, the sun, etc. The achievement of Beijing opera Othello has proved that a Shakespeare production in traditional Chinese theatre with a 'Western manner' can be well received by the Chinese audience. Although at the outset the audience is surprised by novelty, they are able to get used to it very soon. The achievement has also convincingly proved that the employment of conventional performing techniques in presenting Shakespearean plays can obtain an unexpectedly wonderful effect which combines the artistic qualities of both Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama. Thinking of the theatrical practice of the Beijing opera Othello, many Chinese adaptors, directors and performers realized that a flexible use of the performing patterns of traditional Chinese drama would serve as a very critical factor to achieve the desired results.

Another remarkable Shakespeare production acted as traditional Chinese drama in 'Western manner' was the Shaoxing opera Twelfth Night, presented by Shanghai Shaoxing Opera Troupe during the Inaugural Chinese Shakespeare Festival in April 1986. The play was directed by the famous director Hu Wei Min of Shanghai Youth Spoken Drama Troupe, who had directed productions Romeo and Juliet and Antony and Cleopatra, and performed by a young and strong cast. It received most of the critical attention from theatrical and academic circles during the festival. Shanghai Shaoxing Opera Troupe took a unique way to adapt this Shakespearean

comedy. Similar to the Beijing opera Othello, the Shaoxing opera Twelfth Night retained most of the plot details and cultural background of the original play. The characters still wore Western costumes and had their original names. The use of the 'Western manner' was decided by the director Hu Wei Min after careful consideration. He held that both the 'Western manner' and the 'Chinese manner' were viable to present Shakespearean plays and that the choice should be made according to each particular play. He chose the 'Western manner' because he believed that this method would be better to present the theme of Twelfth Night. Seemingly, Twelfth Night was simply a love comedy like that of traditional Chinese drama. But in fact it evidently displayed a rich vein of humanism and competitive individualism which were, as we discussed in earlier chapters, exactly what traditional Chinese drama lacked. Thus Mr Hu Wei Min felt that for his Shaoxing opera Twelfth Night, there would be a discrepancy if the players wore ancient Chinese costume while acting in the mode of Western humanism during Renaissance. So he decided to use a 'Western manner' style.<sup>11</sup> The general principle of the adaptation of Twelfth Night was 'Chinese-Shaoxing opera-Shakespeare', which meant the production was intended to create a Shakespearean play with Chinese style and Shaoxing opera flavour. It would make the Chinese audience see it as a traditional Chinese play and a Shaoxing opera. It would also make both Western and Chinese audiences admit that it was a Shakespearean play as well. The adaptor and director of the play tried to find a basic point on which all the work would be centred. They set up a trinity of Shakespearean flavour, Shaoxing opera flavour and poetic flavour.

The Shakespearean flavour, they believed, was not only the outward exotic flavour of Shakespeare's plays. It lay mainly in the ideological and emotional spirit of Shakespeare, for example, the celebration of individuality, the affirmation of the freedom to seek one's love and happiness, the strong romantic vein, etc. The flavour of Shaoxing opera obviously meant the artistic distinction of this type of traditional

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<sup>11</sup>. Hu Wei Min, 'Notes on Directing Twelfth Night in the Form of Shaoxing Opera', Shakespeare in China, ed. by Shakespeare Association of China (Shanghai, 1987), p. 128.

Chinese drama. In the big family of traditional Chinese drama, Shaoxing opera was an up-and-coming youngster. It appeared in an embryonic form in 1906 in the countryside of Shaoxing prefecture of Zhejiang Province and flourished in 1930s in East China around Shanghai and Zhejiang. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the theatrical activity of Shaoxing opera developed rapidly and enjoyed a large audience all over the country. More than twenty provinces, including Taiwan, have set up their own professional Shaoxing opera troupes. In Zhejiang Province alone, there are about seventy professional Shaoxing opera troupes. The rapid popularity of Shaoxing opera was due to its unique performing style, while sharing some common stagecraft with other types of traditional Chinese drama. Shaoxing opera is noted for its graceful acting, refined singing and elegant dancing; the performance pleases the audience with its extraordinary lyrical atmosphere. The stage design of Shaoxing opera is often bright-coloured and soft. The charm of this opera-type mainly derives from its beautiful and sweet music. In comparison, the music of Beijing opera is loud, sonorous and a little bit noisy. During the development of Shaoxing opera, there have evolved several schools, differentiated chiefly through various styles of singing. Conventionally, all the roles in Shaoxing opera are acted by women, which helps to shape the gentle and lyrical style of the type of opera. Since 1950s, male players have also been used for the performance sometimes. The exquisite and graceful flavour of Shaoxing opera is especially suited for the performance of romantic love stories. This was one of the main reasons for the troupe to select Twelfth Night to perform at the festival, as the director Hu Wei Min said that it would be an embarrassing task to adapt the solemn and stirring King Lear or the serious and tragic Coriolanus into Shaoxing opera, since the gentle and lyrical style of the opera-type was evidently not suited for the two Shakespearean tragedies.<sup>12</sup> Thus the graceful and sweet flavour of Shaoxing opera was to be mingled with a Shakespearean flavour in the production. The third line to which the director paid his special attention was the poetic flavour, which the production was expected to represent fully. As we pointed out in Chapter 2, both Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama are poetic drama and

<sup>12</sup>. Hu Wei Min, 'The combination of Chinese Theatre and Western Theatre', Wen Hui Newspaper, 20 April 1986, p. 2.

imbued with poetic flavour, which the director intended to represent in the production through the stagecraft of Shaoxing opera, including performing skill, music and stage design. It can be said that the achievement of the Shaoxing opera Twelfth Night derived mainly from the mixture of the above three flavours.

The adaptation of the text of Twelfth Night was undertaken carefully and creatively by the adaptor Zhou Shui He and director Hu Wei Min. Since the play aimed to achieve an effect in 'Western manner', it evaded the thorny problem of cultural discrepancy and accordingly made the script closer to the original text of the comedy. As we saw in the festival, the two main areas of the play --- the elegant love story of the young aristocratic men and women and the mischief trick of the low life --- were well kept. The five major love plots: Olivia and Orsino, Olivia and Viola, Orsino and Viola, Malvolio and Olivia, Sir Andrew and Olivia were also well retained. In order to make the audience, especially the playgoers of Shaoxing opera, easily understand the development of the character's passions, the adaptor and director showed their originality by adding some scenes to the original text. Shakespeare does not tell us clearly why Viola suddenly decides to go to the Duke's palace and serve him by disguising herself as a servant, and try to marry him. It looks as if there is no sufficient reason for Viola to show such an interest in the duke because she has never seen him. There exist elsewhere in Shakespeare's plays errors in logic although in most cases they don't run counter to the logic of art. Yet the Chinese audience, particularly those who know little about Shakespeare, may misunderstand the action of Viola and regard her as an ambitious and snobbish woman, judging by the conventional attitude of the Chinese towards love and marriage. So the adaptor created an extra scene in which Viola meets with Orsino and falls in love at first sight and then after she knows what happens between Orsino and Olivia from the captain, she decides to serve the duke by disguising herself as a servant. This extra scene was heightened by beautiful music, played by both Chinese and Western instruments, and warm-coloured lighting, like a musical prelude. This added scene paved the way for the logical development of the character's passion in the play. Another additional scene also provided an interesting treatment. In the scene the clown is asked by Olivia to imitate her voice

to sing a love song under the duke's window. Her real intention is to show her affection for Viola. Dramatically, the duke and Viola have very different reactions to the clown's singing. The duke feels infatuated and flattered for he thinks that Olivia still yearns for love while Viola feels very frustrated because she knows clearly that Olivia has mistaken her for a man and deeply fallen in love with her. It was obvious that the adaptor and director intended to enhance the emotional line of the play and created more opportunities to give full play to the lyrical flavour of Shaoxing opera through this novel treatment.

Like the adaptor of Beijing opera Othello, the adaptor of Shaoxing opera Twelfth Night was also faced with the hard task of adapting the original lines into the textual pattern of Shaoxing opera and in most cases he had to simplify the long monologues and soliloquies. Similarly, the adaptor followed the principle of representing the main ideas and flavours of particular passages while adapting them into the relevant verse form of Shaoxing opera. For example, in Twelfth Night, we read a passage written in prose from the letter which Mavolio finds in the garden and believes it is a letter from his lady to show her affection for him:

If this fall into thy hand, revolve. In my stars I am above thee; but be not afraid of greatness. Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon'em. Thy Fates open their hands; . . . Go to, thou art made, if thou desir'st to be so; if not, let me see thee a steward still, the fellow of servants, and not worthy to touch Fortune's fingers. Farewell. She that would alter service with thee,

The Fortunate - Unhappy

(2. 5. 126-141)

To adapt this passage into the libretto form of Shaoxing opera, the adaptor simplified and rewrote it as rhymed verse.<sup>13</sup> It can be roughly translated as follows:

Humble as you are and great I am,

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<sup>13</sup>. The Chinese version of this play was kindly provided by Mr Zhou Shui He, the adaptor of the play.

But be not afraid of greatness.  
 Some are born great,  
 Some achieve greatness,  
 Some have greatness thrust upon them,  
 Don't decline your Fortune,  
 Cast thy humble slough,  
 Be confident to take your new position.  
 Be opposite with a kinsman,  
 And surly with servants.  
 Let thy tongue tang arguments of state,  
 And be reserved and arrogant.  
 Wear your fine yellow stockings,  
 And fasten crosswise your garters.  
 If you desire to be great,  
 Do go and touch Fortune's fingers.

A common problem which the Chinese directors encounter when they adapt Shakespearean plays into certain types of traditional Chinese drama is the lower cultural qualities of the performers because most performers of traditional Chinese drama are poorly educated or semieducated. Their skill could be superb, but their general cultural and artistic accomplishments are comparatively poor because of their narrow professional training. When Mr Hu Wei Min directed Shaoxing opera Twelfth Night, he had recognized that this was a serious barrier for the play to be successfully presented. The cast from Shanghai Shaoxing Opera Troupe were young and semieducated. Most of them graduated from elementary school or junior middle school and only a few of them had read some Shakespearean plays though many of them knew the name of the English playwright. So, besides the rehearsal itself, Mr Hu adopted some effective measures to enhance the cultural quality of the players and acquaint them with Shakespeare. For instance, all the performers were asked to read Shakespeare's plays, Shakespeare criticism and Shakespeare's biography, and then to talk about what they had gained from the reading at seminars. Celebrated Shakespeare scholars were invited to give lectures about Shakespearean art and theatre and make reference to material from Twelfth Night. A special 'Shakespeare Night' party was held, attended by Shakespeare critics and translators, postgraduate students of English literature, and performers with experience of presenting Shakespeare's plays from other spoken drama troupes. At the party, Shakespearean sonnets and brilliant soliloquies from his plays were

recited in both English and Chinese. Some scenes from Romeo and Juliet and Antony and Cleopatra were performed, both under the direction of Mr Hu. The singing of Elizabethan folk songs and the performance of a rehearsed fragment from the Shaoxing opera Twelfth Night heightened the lively atmosphere of the party. Mr Hu also took other measures to give the cast more knowledge of Shakespearean theatre and Elizabethan customs, e.g. to watch videos of Shakespearean production, to see photographs of Shakespeare's theatre, and to see films adapted from Shakespeare's plays. To imitate well the manners of the characters, the performers learned classical Western dance and court etiquette, etc. All these measures were undertaken to improve the players' cultural quality, to give them more knowledge of Shakespeare's theatre, to remove their sense of mystery about the English playwright, and furthermore, to give them full confidence to act the roles of the play.

The performance of the Shaoxing opera Twelfth Night demonstrably mingled the stage technique of traditional Chinese theatre and that of Western theatre because of the employment of the 'Western manner' in the play. Compared with the Beijing opera Othello, more Western methods were used in this production to mix with the performing patterns of Shaoxing opera. In the play, there were two scenes in which a fight with swords took place. In the fighting, we saw a wonderful combination of orthodox French swordsmanship and the acrobatic fighting skill of traditional Chinese theatre. From the fights between Sir Toby and Antonio, Antonio and the officer, Toby and Sebastian, the audience could find both swordplay of Zoro style and the movements of Xuanzi, Danti, Bengzi, Lunbei, Aizibu, Zuibu and other fighting patterns of traditional Chinese theatre. The two styles were merged so smoothly that a layman was unable to distinguish one from the other. There was no doubt that it was a rare chance for both Chinese and Western audiences to see such exciting fighting. The movements of social etiquette were also acted in a mingled mode. When the characters saluted, played with their cloaks and twirled their hats, the audience felt that the movements were made seemingly in Western style. Carefully examining, we found that they were tinged with some stylized movements of Sheng or Dan character-types of traditional Chinese theatre, e. g.

Yunshou, Yaozi, etc, which made the carriage of the characters look more easy and beautiful. As in the performance of Beijing opera Othello, the Shaoxing opera Twelfth Night used the performing patterns of different character-types flexibly and creatively. A typical example could be found in the acting of the well-known actor Shi Ji Xua who played the part of Malvolio in the play. To represent the different expression and bearing of Malvolio in different situations, Mr Shi employed the multiple performing patterns of different types of traditional Chinese theatre such as Lao Sheng, Hua Lian (Jing), Xiao Sheng, Chou, etc. When Malvolio assumed great airs before other servants, Mr Shi used the movements of Lao Sheng and Hua Lian (the same type as Othello to be acted in Beijing opera Othello). When the character was reading the love letter from 'Olivia' in high spirits, the actor employed the performing pattern of Xiao Sheng to represent his manner of getting dizzy with success. The stylized movements of Chou were used by Mr Shi when Malvolio affectedly paid court to Olivia. This employment of the multiple stylized movements of different character-types contributed to a vivid representation of the character of Malvolio. To display an explicit Western flavour, the players also adopted some Western dancing movements. For instance, in the scene of the garden trick, Malvolio came onto the stage with a ballet step. While imagining that he had become Count Malvolio and showed his greatness to the servants and Sir Toby, he moved with a waltz step, as well as the stylized movements of Wu Sheng. When he went off stage, he moved with the step of an English folk dance. Yet all these movements were mixed so smoothly that they vividly represented the character of Malvolio and heightened the cheerful atmosphere of the play.

One of the great distinctions of the Shaoxing opera Twelfth Night was an innovation in music. Traditionally, there are several schools in Shaoxing opera differentiated by the style of music and each school is named after its originator, e.g. the Yuan School (Yuan Xue Fen), the Lu School (Lu Ru Ying), the Fan School (Fan Rui Juan), the Xu School (Xu Yu Lan), etc. Normally a Shaoxing opera player follows only one school. Yet the director Hu Wei Min felt that a mechanical application of the music patterns of a certain school to the performance might be inadequate for the presentation of the complicated characters of the play. So the

bounds of different schools of singing were broken, and richer and multiple music patterns were composed for particular characters. The actress who played the part of Viola usually followed the Lu School, but her music was mingled with the music of other schools, in order to make the tune stronger to suit her disguised identity as a young man. Some Western music elements were also used to express her emotions in particular situations. Another good example to mix different music school in the play was the singing of Malvolio acted by Shi Ji Hua. Basically following the Fan School, Mr Shi incorporated the singing pattern of the Xu School and even the melodies from Beijing opera, Sichuan opera and Hebei Banzi opera. To represent the laugh of Malvolio when he had his head turned by success, Mr Shi used the method of sound production of Western singing to mingle with his falsetto to produce a wonderful effect.

Of all the sinicized Shakespeare productions with 'Chinese manner', the Kunju opera Macbeth (Bloody Hands) was one of the most successful. It was premiered in Shanghai during the Inaugural Chinese Shakespeare Festival in 1986, arousing great interest among Shakespeare critics, artists of traditional Chinese drama and audiences. It was brought to London and Edinburgh in the autumn of 1987 and caused a sensation among English audiences. This much abbreviated Macbeth of Kunju version was adapted by Zheng Shi Feng and presented by the Shanghai Kunju Opera Troupe under the direction of Li Jia Yao, Shen Bin and Zhang Min Lai. The famous theatrical artist Huang Zuo Lin, who once studied Shakespeare in Cambridge for a M.A. degree in the 1930s, was invited as special artistic instructor. The part of Macbeth (with a Chinese name Ma Pei in the play) was cast to Ji Zhen Hua; Lady Macbeth (with a Chinese name Tie Shi) was acted by Zhang Jin Xian; King Duncan (becoming King Zheng in the play) was played by Shen Xiao Ming and Banquo (with a Chinese name Du Ge) by Fang Yang.

Of various types of traditional Chinese drama, Kunju opera is assumed to be a very old one and is regarded as the forerunner of some major types of traditional Chinese drama such as Beijing opera and Shaoxing opera. Kunju began to flourish in the sixteenth century in the area now called Jiangsu Province and then spread

rapidly to a large part of the country and became the chief type of traditional Chinese drama. But it gradually declined at the end of the Qing Dynasty and lost its dominant position. In modern China, theatrical circles attached great importance to Kunju again owing to the unique stage technique of the old opera-type. Kunju is seen by many Chinese as the culmination of Chinese theatre tradition, but close to Shakespeare, like Beijing opera and Shaoxing opera, in maintaining continuity of action and in abstaining from lavish scenery and decoration. The fascination of Kunju opera stems mainly from its rich performing skill and beautiful music. The rules of stylized movements of different character-types and the form of libretto in Kunju opera are more strict than those in Beijing opera and Shaoxing opera. The language of Kunju opera is often refined and elegant.

As a consummate type of traditional Chinese drama, Kunju opera was thought to be an ideal form to present Shakespeare's plays, so the performers of Shanghai Kunju Opera Troupe tried to achieve this goal. Unlike the adaptors and directors of the Beijing opera Othello and Shaoxing opera Twelfth Night, the adaptor and directors of the Kunju opera Macbeth intended to produce an out-and-out sinicized Shakespeare production. Their adapting work began with changing the title of the play to BloodyHands which signified the theme of the play and came to the audience with a Chinese style, for the Chinese normally prefer titles to indicate a theme rather than show a name. The main plot was retained but the story was reset in ancient China and the names of the characters were all sinicized. General Macbeth became General Ma Pei, who served under a Chinese King Zheng. Lady Macbeth now became a Chinese Lady Tie Shi who helped her husband Ma Pei assassinate King Zheng when the king stayed at the couple's house. The plot was still almost the same as that of the original text. Yet the Chinese audience would accept it as a genuine Chinese historical play because there were numerous incidents similar to the assassination among members of a royal family in Chinese history. For those who knew Shakespeare, the play would still be received as the Shakespearean Scottish tragedy essentially, through the outward Chinese style. So the adaptor and directors were not shy to acknowledge that they had caught the spirit of this great tragedy while making it accessible to Chinese Kunju lovers. Since

the story became a Chinese one, the actors and actresses all wore costumes of ancient China and observed the etiquette of the Chinese royal court. According to the convention of Chinese theatre, the five acts of the original play were rearranged by the adaptor into nine scenes, as the adaptor of Beijing opera Othello did, and each scene was given a title. The titles read as follows: 'Promotion to a Higher Rank', 'Conspiracy', 'Shift the Accusation onto Others', 'The Assassination of Du Ge (Banquo)', 'The Disturbed Banquet', 'The Isolated Dictator', 'To Consult the Witches', 'The Madness of Lady Tie Shi (Lady Macbeth)' and 'Blood Must Atone for Blood'. A royal doctor was devised to function like a chorus to connect these scenes. The lines of the original play were adapted into the pattern of singing and speech of Kunju opera with exquisite diction and a strong Chinese flavour. The Kunju version of Macbeth can be seen as a successful adaption with the 'Chinese manner' on the whole. Some Chinese Shakespeare scholars expressed their regret over the omission of the Porter's monologue which, they believed, was indispensable to the tragedy. This viewpoint was obviously influenced by De Quincey who had investigated the profound philosophical meaning behind the scene. Yet it would be a knotty problem for the adaptor to tackle, for at least two reasons. Firstly, the adaptor would have difficulty in adapting the monologue of the porter into a new one for his Chinese counterpart in ancient China unless he completely rewrote it. Secondly, the adaptor must cut down the porter's dialogue with Macduff because of the explicit sexual content of the dialogue. In fact, references to sexual matters are not avoided in traditional Chinese drama, as we discussed in Chapter 2. On the contrary, they have been used as a seasoning in the plays, presented, in most cases, implicitly and poetically. The thorny problem also did not derive from the translation, because all the sexual descriptions and references in Shakespearean plays had been well kept by the Chinese translators. The crux of the matter was that direct and explicit descriptions of sex on the stage or in the movies had been taboo in contemporary China since the government began to 'clean up' all sorts of public entertainment in the 1950s. So it was evident that the adaptor and director did not want to stir up trouble although they knew clearly that in recent years the attitude of the Chinese towards sex had become more flexible and that there were increasingly pornographic elements in contemporary Chinese literary works,

especially fiction.

Different from the Beijing opera Othello and Shaoxing opera Twelfth Night, in which Western performing skills were also used to produce a Western flavour, the Kunju opera Macbeth must rely on conventional stage techniques of Chinese theatre since it aimed to achieve an effect of the 'Chinese manner' as an entirely sinicized Shakespeare production. During the performance of this Kunju version of Macbeth, the audience indeed got a panoramic view of the whole set of performing skills of traditional Chinese theatre while being asked to appreciate the spirit and humanistic ideal of Shakespeare. Considering that Macbeth was not simply an ambitious and corrupt general like those in traditional Chinese drama, Ji Zhen Hua, who played the role, used many typical Kunju performing patterns to represent the two sides of Macbeth's character. All the stylized movements and gestures he employed helped to delineate the inner conflict of the protagonist. For example, when Macbeth was in great anxiety and horror, the beads and cotton balls on his helmet were quivering unceasingly. This was a special skill used to show the inner conflict of a character. The actress who played the role of Lady Macbeth (lady Tie Shi in the production), also did her best to represent the disposition of the lady, using a variety of performing skills of a Dan type of Kunju opera. This could be particularly seen in the scene of 'The Madness of Lady Tie Shi', in which the actress broke through the strict bounds of the character-types of Kunju opera, incorporating ingeniously the performing patterns of Gui Men Dan, Xua Dan and Po La Dan and portraying most vividly the outer beauty, inner cruelty and madness of the character. The three witches, important to the revelation of Macbeth's ambition, were difficult for the performers because there is no appropriate character-type in Kunju opera for them. So in the play the director had to use three men disguised as women, acting as a mixed type of Xiao Gui (elf) and Cai Dan (a female clown) and walking Ai Zi Bu (dwarf-gait). This treatment brought about a better effect to create an atmosphere of supernatural mystery.

To intensify the horrible atmosphere and the supernatural element in the play, a scene was added, in which the ghosts of the murdered King Zheng (King

Duncan), Du Ge (Banquo), Lady Mei (Lady Macduff) and a green parrot (which was Lady Macbeth's pet but killed by her for its divulgence of their plot) went up on the stage one by one to haunt Lady Tie Shi (Lady Macbeth). the ghosts spat streams of fire from time to time to show their indignation. This fire-spitting skill is a unique one in traditional Chinese theatre. It was largely used to produce a special atmosphere for the performance of a ghost or spirit, especially in some 'ghost plays', e.g. the well-known Kunju opera Li Hui Niang in which a corrupt minister kills his concubine Li Hui Niang and attempts to murder her lover. When the ghost of Li Hui Niang comes to rescue her lover, she spits streams of fire in various shapes at the murderer. There are two methods to produce the effect of fire-spitting. In one case, the player keeps a special paper bag containing colophony powder in his mouth. When he gives a puff to a torch, the colophony powder will be blown out and fire. In the other case, the performer keeps a small container with burning straw paper pieces in his mouth. The container has some small hole on it. When the performer puffs, the sparks will be blown out and looks a stream of fire. This unique skill has evolved from the acrobatics in the 'Variety Plays' of the Han Dynasty which was a dramatic genre regarded as the embryonic form of traditional Chinese drama. The use of this special skill added an extraordinary flavour to the performance of Kunju opera Macbeth. Other conventional performing skills were also most employed in the play to represent the emotions of inner conflicts of the characters, such as to swing the hair, to play with artificial whiskers and beads, to change face, etc. As the 'darkest' of Shakespearean tragedies, most scenes of Macbeth take place in dark places or at night, but Kunju opera is conventionally presented under bright spotlights with little variation. After full consideration, the director decided to retain the traditional bright-light performance so as to keep the flavour of Kunju. Yet the technique of light-shifting was used at times to heighten the thrilling atmosphere of the play.

As in the Beijing opera Othello and Shaoxing opera Twelfth Night, many of the monologues and soliloquies in the Kunju opera Macbeth were sung, rather than recited by the performers, accompanied by a Kunju orchestra. To reinforce the tragic mood of the play, the composer innovated in the music of Kunju, breaking

the limit of the strict pattern of Kunju melody. It seemed that the slow rhythm of the tunes of kunju was suitable for the representation of the fluctuation of the characters' emotions. But the tunes of Beijing opera were also adopted to make the rhythm of the production change to suit different situations. Some Western instruments such as an electronic piano, electronic bass, etc and the percussion instrument of Sichuan opera were used to enrich the music of the play. The drum and gong played an important part in representing the psychological rhythm of the characters.

It might be interesting to know the response of English critics to this sinicized Shakespeare production because such a response often serves as an important criterion for judging the achievement of a Shakespeare production in an alien manner. In August 1987, the Kunju opera Macbeth, together with a Kunju opera The Peony Pavilion presented by the same troupe, was invited to play at Edinburgh. It was really an extraordinary event not only because it was the first time for a Chinese drama company to present Macbeth at its home, but also because the plays of the two great dramatists and contemporaries, Shakespeare and Tan Xian Zu, were on show at the same festival. Beyond the expectations of the Chinese players who worried whether the exotic style of the Kunju opera Macbeth was accessible to British audiences, the play received much acclaim from the audience and was highly praised by British critics:

Several scholarly, imaginative and highly experienced men of the theatre collaborated in making the Kunju Macbeth, performed by the Shanghai Kunju Company, a triumphant success; fascinating, exciting, moving, and amazingly true to Shakespeare, the exotic style of the production notwithstanding.<sup>14</sup>

It seems that the unique techniques of Kunju opera was not difficult to be understood by the audience, and some affinities between Shakespeare and Chinese

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<sup>14</sup>. Fernau Hall, Daily Telegraph, 28 August 1987, in 'Edinburgh International Festival Supplement 1987', London Theatre Record, 13-26 August 1987, p. 33.

theatre were also recognized by them:

The words are recited or sung in a stylised but expressive way, accompanied by the richly varied melodies played by the Kunju orchestra, and European spectators have no trouble in understanding the Chinese conventions . . . Elizabethan actors made great use of stylised gestures, and it is likely that Shakespeare would have found much that was comprehensible in this production. Indeed, his play comes to life with extraordinary vitality, done in the Kunju manner with gorgeous costumes on a nearly-bare stage.<sup>15</sup>

From the response of the audience, we feel that they were satisfied with the artistic fusion of Kunju style and Shakespeare's spirit in the production, as another British critic comments:

The Kunju Macbeth was certainly closely related to Shakespeare's Macbeth; but there were as many changes as retentions, making "Adapted from Shakespeare's Macbeth by Zheng Shi Feng" an appropriate credit. Here were three witches whose acrobatic skill made them astonishing creatures indeed. Here was a striking onstage murder of Duncan. Here was a spectacular sleepwalking dance drama of Lady Macbeth confronted by the ghosts of Duncan, Banquo, and Lady Macduff. . . Here was language with image and metaphor adapted to the sensibilities of another culture and with rhythms and sonorities derived from Kunju tradition. Here were bold gestural depictions of trust, duplicity, violence, ambition, accusation, fear, grief, confusion, triumph. Here was a visual and sonoral realization of Macbeth performed in Scotland by a company steeped in Chinese traditions, vividly demonstrating the universality of Shakespeare and of the art of Kunju theatre.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>. Alfred Weiss, 'The Edinburgh Festival, 1987', Shakespeare Quarterly, 39 (1988), 83-9 (p. 85).

The Peony Pavilion also impressed the audience with its stunning visual impact, as a British critic comments:

This Chinese company may have appeared at the tail-end of the Festival, but they have brought with them a rare treat for theatre-goers. While the symbolism which dominates their ritualistic drama is lost on much of the audience, Westerners cannot fail to be impressed by the stunning visual impact.<sup>17</sup>

The relevant background of the playwright was also mentioned and the central theme of the play was well appreciated by the critic:

The Peony Pavilion is one of the classics of Kunju theatre, written by a contemporary of Shakespeare when the art form was in its heyday. A resurgence of interest can largely be attributed to Hua Wen Yi, who plays the lead as well as being director of the company, having repaired the damage inflicted by the Cultural Revolution.

The story is of teenage love which descends into the Underworld when the young princess dies of a broken heart, barred by her father from seeing the handsome scholar she had met in her dreams. One of the joys of the play is that of seeing the discretion with which the playwright Tang Xian Zu depicts a girl discovering her sexuality.<sup>18</sup>

As an engrossing Shakespeare production on show during the Inaugural Chinese Shakespeare Festival, the Huangmei opera Much Ado About Nothing was another good example of adapting Shakespeare's plays into a traditional Chinese drama with a 'Chinese manner'. the play was presented by Anhui Huangmei Opera Troupe under the direction of Jiang Wei Guo and Sun Huai Ren. The celebrated Shakespeare scholar professor Zhang Jun Chuan was invited as special literary

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<sup>17</sup>. Anonymous, Scotsman, 29 August 1987, in 'Edinburgh International Festival Supplement 1987', London Theatre Record, 13-26 August 1987, p. 34.

<sup>18</sup>. Ibid, p. 34.

advisor. The cast included: Ma Lan (Beatrice), Wu Gong (Hero), Huang Xin De (Benedick), Jiang Jian Guo (Claudio), Wang Shao Fang (Don Pedro), Li Ji Min (Don John), Chen Xiao Cheng (Leonato), Huang Zong Yi (Dogberry), etc. The play was premiered in Shanghai during the Festival in 1986, drawing large audiences, and then toured Beijing in September in the same year, evoking strong reactions in the theatrical circles of the capital.

Huangmei opera is another major type of traditional Chinese drama. It took shape at the end of <sup>the</sup> nineteenth century in An Qing area of Anhui Province and flourished in the 1950s, becoming a major local opera-type in Anhui Province. Since then Huangmei opera has gradually won a nation-wide reputation. There are more than fifty professional Huangmei opera troupes in the country and most of them are in south China, including Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao. The opera-type is noted for its beautiful tunes and exquisite performances. The duet 'The couple Returning Home' from the Huangmei opera The Fairy Couple is known to the whole country.

As a Shakespeare production adapted into traditional Chinese drama with the 'Chinese manner', every aspects of Huangmei opera Much Ado About Nothing had been sinicized, as in the Kunju opera Macbeth. The players wore ancient Chinese costumes and their names were changed into familiar Chinese names. According to the adaptor Jin Zhi, the reason the production adopted the 'Chinese manner' was partly that the employment of such a method could give full play to the unique performing skill of Huangmei opera and enable the performers to feel at ease in playing Shakespeare's characters. But the reason seemed also to be that the use of the 'Chinese manner' had an evident advantage in making the play attract large audiences, who knew little about Shakespeare, in small towns and the countryside, after being performed at the Festival and in the big cities.<sup>19</sup> But the adaptor and directors did not intend to sinicize the Shakespearean comedy completely. Their

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<sup>19</sup>. Jin Zhi, 'An Experiment with Misgivings --- Thought Related to the Adapting of Much Ado About Nothing to the Form of Huangmei Opera', Shakespeare in China, ed. by the Shakespeare Association of China (Shanghai, 1987), p. 147.

aim was to use the theatrical form of Huangmei opera to present Shakespeare's ideas and artistry --- the beauty and greatness of humanity, the common ideal of mankind, a wide variety of characterization and his beautiful language. The play would not be recreated as a 'pure Chinese play', though it would come to the audience with a 'Chinese manner'. It was designed to make the audience feel clearly that it was a Shakespearean play in the form of Huangmei opera. The adaptor and director believed that the theme and story of the comedy would not be unfamiliar to the Chinese audience living in modern times. The anti-ascetic idea and the desire for personal happiness and freedom displayed in the twists and turns of the love plots could also be easily understood by Huangmei opera fans.

Yet the adapting work turned out not to be plain sailing. Compared with Macbeth, Much Ado About Nothing was more difficult to adapt because the original play contains so many Western customs such as the masquerade, the Christian wedding, the free social contact between men and women, etc. A mechanical adaptation would inevitably result in cultural discrepancy and the audience might have felt it odd to see such alien customs against a Chinese cultural background. The cultural discrepancy also raised an obstacle to the treatment of character in the Huangmei opera Much Ado About Nothing. For instance, in ancient China it was impossible to find ... a bold and audacious girl like Beatrice, who displays complete freedom of action in dealing with her personal affairs and in her social manner. To be sure, similar characters could be found in traditional Chinese drama, e.g. Li Qian Jin in Looking Over the Wall, who has the courage to elope with her lover and argue with the awe-inspiring minister to defend her brave behaviour against a feudal ethical code. But obvious differences between Beatrice and Li Qian Jin can be easily seen in their dispositions. The former sometimes is so audacious and sharp as to engage in a battle of words with young men while the latter always treat men politely and gently, which is regarded by the ancient Chinese as one of the major virtues of a woman, unless she complains about the injustice done to her. Beatrice tries to oppose conventional institutions by remaining single but Li Qian Jin, as well as all ancient Chinese women, never conceives such an idea for it is entirely incredible to the Chinese mind. More cultural discrepancies are to

be found in the behaviour of the characters. For example, the marriage of Beatrice and Benedick is actually brought about by the trap designed by the elders, which could never happen in ancient China owing to the fact that the old men were decision-makers in all domestic affairs and need not rack their brains to work out such a trap.

Thus the adaptor recognized that a direct transplantation of the story into ancient feudal China would be troublesome. An alternative way was adopted to solve the problem. The play was reset in ancient China without mentioning any definite dynasty, in the border region of China where a small minority kingdom lived in a free and brisk mode. In Chinese history, the national minorities were less influenced by the feudal ideology and fully retained their own institutions. Their customs had something in common with Western ones: the free contact between men and women, the free method to find a mate, the party similar to a Western masquerade, etc. This treatment exhibited an evident advantage of retaining most details of the original plot while reducing the cultural discrepancy. As an integral part of the play, the masquerade scene was kept by the adaptor, but sinicized by an added traditional Chinese lantern-playing dance, which was wonderfully mingled with the Chinese minority flavour of the scene. To avoid apparent cultural discrepancy, the church and Friar Francis had to be removed from the wedding scene.

As in the three operatic versions of Shakespeare's plays we discussed above, the adaptor of the Huangmei opera Much Ado About Nothing rearranged the structure of the play into seven scenes to suit the structural pattern of Huangmei opera. The first scene basically contains the plot of Act One of the original text. The second scene is an adaptation from the masquerade scene in Act Two. The third scene combines the content of Act Two, Scene III and that of Act Three, Scene I, centred on the 'love trap'. The fourth scene concentrates on the plot of Don John, containing mainly the story from Act three, Scene III. The main event in the fifth scene is the unexpected turn of the wedding, as well as the 'death' of Hero, from Act Three, Scene IV and Act Four, Scene I. The sixth scene is adapted from Act

Four, Scene I, concentrating on the interrogation at the jail. The last scene is basically adapted Act Five. As in other Shakespeare productions adapted into traditional Chinese drama, the adaptor of Huangmei opera Much Ado About Nothing spent a lot of care in adapting the original lines into the textual pattern of Huangmei opera. The work had been done in three modes: firstly, to keep the original lines, especially for the language of Dogberry and his followers; secondly, to grasp the main ideas of the lines and reorganize them in the verse form of Huangmei opera without impairing the play as a whole. Most of the monologues and soliloquies were rewritten in this way. But the adaptor retained much of the poetic quality of the original play; thirdly, to reinforce the emotional atmosphere, the adaptor also composed some new lines. For example, the song sung by Hero to express her joy before the wedding in scene V, the song representing her great sorrow caused by the injustice to her in scene VII and the song sung by eight girls at the grave scene were all the creation of the adaptor. These new lines were smoothly mingled with the original lines, with a strong flavour of Huangmei opera, as well as the poetic quality of Shakespeare.

The director and players showed much originality in performing the play. They racked their brains to find corresponding Chinese modes to replace any particular scene which showed a visibly Western cultural vein. For instance, as we mentioned above, a traditional Chinese lantern-playing dance was designed as the setting of the masquerade, which achieved the same funny effect as the original scene. Since the church and Friar Francis were removed from the play to avoid cultural discrepancy, the adaptor replaced the original Christian wedding with a conventional Chinese wedding containing many typical rites of ancient Chinese society. Yet the treatment provided an ideal setting for the original plot to take place. In this unique scene, a traditional performing pattern was well employed to heighten the mixed joyful and sorrowful atmosphere, e.g. to unveil the bride's face by taking off the scarf which covers the bride's head, etc. Solo, duet and chorus were used to express the different feelings of the characters. What we need to explain a little is that in the scene, it was Beatrice who made the suggestion that Hero should 'die to live' in instead of Friar Francis in the original play. The additional advantage of this

arrangement, the adaptor believed, was to create one more opportunity to display Beatrice's resolute and resourceful character.<sup>20</sup> The treatment of scene VII also demonstrated the creative spirit of the adaptor and director. The central incident of this last scene was Claudio's obsequies at Hero's 'grave'. To reinforce the grievous mood of the scene, the whole setting was designed in white. The 'grave' was made up of eight girls in white, wearing veils. The 'grave' surprisingly split apart after Claudio's repentance, and the girls, Hero included, sang and danced around Claudio. Then the atmosphere rapidly changed into a happy one. Claudio had his new choice, which turned out to be his reunion with Hero. This unique treatment gave full play to the dancing and singing skill of Huangmei opera which made the scene look beautiful and lyrical and brim over with a fairy-tale atmosphere.

Another wonderful transformation of the original play could be found in the performance of Constable Dogberry and the watch. To sinicize this group of characters, the adaptor changed them into their Chinese counterparts. Dogberry became a typical city guards officer. With a Chinese name Du Bai Rui, Dogberry was acted as a Chou type, for the performing pattern of this type was well suited to the manner and disposition of the constable. Wearing an eccentric costume, the city guards officer set the audience roaring with laughter as soon as he came on the stage. His appearance was really an odd one. An ox horn hung from his neck, a black gauze cap with only one wing sat on his head (a special cap for ancient Chinese official but always with a pair of wings), and his costume was only half of an official uniform. By the conventional performing pattern, he made a self-introduction to announce his identity: 'My name is Du Bai Rui, a city guards officer without rank. My single cap wing always shivers with wind, no matter what the wind direction is.' Then he had an disorderly dialogue with the guards and a funny dancing chorus with them. When he gave his admonitory talk to the guards, he asked them to take off their hats together with him, which made him expose his bare head to the public. Swaying his head, he recited a piece of doggerel to make fun of his bare head. The scene looked funny and comic with a strong Chinese

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<sup>20</sup>. Ibid, p. 153.

flavour. Behind the performance, however, we still could see clearly that foolish, and conceited constable Dogberry. As in other Shakespeare productions adapted into traditional Chinese drama, Huangmei opera Much Ado About Nothing largely used conventional stylized movements and symbolic gestures which strongly appealed to the imagination of the audience. There is a special performing skill to represent the infatuated psychology of lovers who fall in love at first sight. When they look fixedly at each other's face, it seems that they are connected by an invisible string. If somebody else pluck this invisible string, then the lovers will move correspondingly. Such a performance can be seen in Sichuan opera The Palace of King Fan and The White Snake Lady (The Tower of Lei Feng) and Shaoxing opera A Dream of the Red Mansion. In Huangmei opera Much Ado About Nothing, this exaggerated movement was used to depict the love between Claudio and Hero when they first met. In the scene, when they looked at each other, their eyes seemed to be tied by an invisible string of love. Noticing this situation, Beatrice naughtily plucked this imaginary string and led the lovers around the stage, accompanied by beautiful music. Other traditional performing techniques of Huangmei opera were fully used by the players. For instance, Huangmei opera is noted for its constant use of duet accompanied by dance, which was well suited for the expression of the word battle between Beatrice and Benedick. The stylized movements of 'drunken gait', 'turning' and 'leg-sweeping' vividly delineated Benedick's ecstasy at the news that Beatrice was in love with him.

When the adaptor, director and players were rehearsing the production, they were afraid that it would not look a typical Huangmei opera; but once it was shown in public, they feared that it would not be received as a Shakespearean play. However the production turned out to be a successful one. The adaptor and director had eventually achieved their original goal --- to merge the spirit of Shakespeare and the artistic charm of Huangmei opera.

From this brief survey of the selected Shakespeare productions adapted into some major types of traditional Chinese drama, it is clear how productively Shakespearean drama and traditional Chinese drama have been mingled with each

other on the contemporary Chinese stage. We have noted that the two types of drama have also benefited from each other: Shakespeare's plays have brought new vitality to the sluggish traditional Chinese drama and aroused the sense of innovation in the performers of traditional Chinese drama. Meanwhile, traditional Chinese drama, with its unique stage techniques, has added an extraordinary splendour to Shakespearean theatre in modern and contemporary China. As a form of drama with a long-standing tradition, traditional Chinese drama still greatly influences all the theatrical activities in today's China, directly and indirectly. So it has been used not only as a complete form for the adaptation of Shakespeare's plays but also as a supporting method to perform Shakespearean plays by other approaches. Indeed, the most important dramatic form employed by Chinese directors and players to present Shakespearean drama has been the spoken drama which was introduced from the West at the beginning of the twentieth century and has become another major type of drama since then in China besides traditional Chinese drama. Yet in many influential Shakespeare productions presented in spoken drama, we can see a constant use of the stagecraft of traditional Chinese theatre. It will be useful to discuss some good examples of this approach.

The production of The Merchant of Venice, presented by China Youth Art Theatre in the 1980s, had a very long run of two years with more than two hundred performances altogether. It was highly praised by Shakespeare scholars, dramatic critics and audiences as one of the best Shakespeare productions on the modern Chinese stage. Being basically performed in spoken drama, the production came to the audience with an apparent vein of traditional Chinese theatre. The director Zhang Qi Hong, who was trained at the Moscow Art Theatre for six years, said that she did not intend to follow any English or Russian pattern of Shakespearean theatre. The play would be treated in a Chinese style. By this, she meant that the players would adopt some performing skill of traditional Chinese theatre while using the stage techniques of spoken drama.<sup>21</sup> The performance was mingled, with

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<sup>21</sup>. Speech of Mrs Zhang Qi Hong at the seminar held in Central Drama Academy in Beijing, on 15 April 1986, during the Inaugural Chinese Shakespeare Festival.

some performing methods of traditional Chinese praiseful comedy. Against the symbolic setting of Venice upon water, the characters used very graceful stylized movements to 'row a boat', at which the Western Shakespeare scholar gasped with admiration:

It was a specifically Chinese kinetic skill, however, that accented the graceful but precarious movement of wits upon water by evoking a gondola in the opening scene. In the manner of an episode in Beijing opera, gondolier and courtiers bobbed, swayed, and flourished on what became an almost audibly lapping canal, distantly echoing the notion of Antonio's mind 'tossing on the ocean' and the 'roaring waters' of Salerio's apprehensive imagination.<sup>22</sup>

An originality was the appearance of an ancient Chinese moneylender on the stage. This image was designed to embody the psychology of Shylock. When he desperately lamented over his lost money and was angered at his daughter's action, a phantom ancient Chinese moneylender, as an image in his imagination, came on the stage, talking with him about their mutual business in both Venice and China and expressing sympathy for him. It seemed that this interesting treatment, or the Chinese theatrical joke, as the late Professor Brockbank called it, was much enjoyed by the Chinese audience. It obviously served the director's purpose to deal with the play as a money comedy, which could avoid both the thorny problem of offending Jews and the difficulty of the Chinese audience in understanding the complex relationship between Jews and Christians in history. As stagecraft, such a treatment was able to embody logically the inner suffering of Shylock and to represent his isolation in the society when most of the people around him are his enemies. Another evident advantage of this device was that it could create a common ground which the Shakespearean comedy and traditional Chinese drama shared because this added scene reminded the audience of the moneylenders in traditional Chinese drama, e. g. Cai Po in The Injustice to Dou E, who is mother-in-law to the wronged

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<sup>22</sup>. Philip Brockbank, 'Shakespeare Renaissance in China', Shakespeare Quarterly, 39 (1988), 195-204 (p. 197).

heroine Dou E, and probably more greedy than her Jewish counterpart. She lends some money to Dou Tian Zhang, father to Dou E, and just one year later, the amount is doubled. Dou Tian Zhang cannot repay it and has to pay the debt by giving his daughter to the lender, which serves as the root cause of the tragedy. At the seminar, when I asked Mrs Zhang Qi Hong whether she had some historical reference to back such a treatment, her answer was in the affirmative. She told me that by the historical records, the Jewish and Chinese businessmen indeed had trade contact in old times. Many Jewish businessmen once visited China during the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127 A. D.) and Chinese businessmen also travelled to Venice. So she held that the treatment was by no means without foundation and Shylock should have some common language with his Chinese counterpart.<sup>23</sup> As a dramatic effect, the added scene helped to reinforce the romantic atmosphere of the play. But some people disagreed with the director about the treatment. They felt that it was 'to draw a snake and add feet to it', meaning to gild the lily, or ruin the effect by adding something superfluous. They also expressed their dissatisfaction that the rich Jew was simplified as a miser similar to a type-character in traditional Chinese drama.<sup>24</sup> The treatment of the casket-choosing scene also displayed the ingenuity of the director. In the scenes, the caskets were held by three girls in different costumes. When the wooing procedure took place, the three girls were constantly dancing gracefully in different styles to suit the qualities of the caskets. The suitors sometimes joined the girls when they tried to make the decision. This arrangement created an extraordinary lyrical atmosphere for the performance, which was manifestly influenced by the characteristic of traditional Chinese theatre to frequently employ dancing to enrich the power of representation.

One of the most engrossing items during the Inaugural Chinese Shakespeare Festival in Beijing was the production of A Midsummer Night's Dream, presented by China Coal Miner's Drama Troupe, under the direction of Xong Yuan Wei. The

<sup>23</sup>. Interview with Mrs Zhang Qi Hong at the seminar held in Central Drama Academy in Beijing on 15 April 1986 during the Festival.

<sup>24</sup>. Speech of a teacher of Beijing Foreign Language Institute at the seminar held in Central Drama Academy in Beijing, on 17 April 1986.

play was acted as spoken drama, but visibly mixed with stage techniques of traditional Chinese theatre, characterized by a lyrical and romantic atmosphere and an oriental flavour; as the director Xong declared in his program notes, his intention was to present 'a Chinese midsummer night's dream of the eighties' in such a way that foreigners would suppose it Chinese and the Chinese would take it to be new. Giving the gist of the story, Mr Xong wrote that the young men and women leave the city for the natural forest for the sake of love while the workmen leave it for the sake of art. The program says: 'Although the tranquillity of the fairy and natural worlds, like that of the human world, is flawed, all discords are to be resolved into an harmonious nocturne that may be found only in a dream.' Finally the director wrote that the artistic goal he intended to achieve was 'to use Eastern aesthetic taste and modern rhythms to realize Shakespeare's lyrical sentiments and make of them a flowing poem for the stage'.

All the stage designs worked to embody the director's idea. Eleven thick ropes were respectively hung over the stage in several groups, with many thin ropes vertically hung, forming an image of a forest, accompanied by lighting with much variation. Obviously, this setting served the director's purpose to create a symbolic and abstract space for the imagination to compose a 'flowing poem' on the stage. The performing skills of traditional Chinese drama were used at times to enhance the symbolic and imaginative climate of the play. The confusions in the wood gave considerable scope for the employment of stylized movements and the symbolic gestures of traditional Chinese theatre. Using these performing techniques, the players vividly represented the action of groping forward in the dark and fog, fighting the wind and sleeping on their feet, etc, which produced a fantastic effect.

Another interesting treatment conducted by the director was the sinicization of the craftsmen. In the play, Bottom and his partner all became their Chinese counterparts. Wearing the clothes of modern Beijing workmen, they spoke a Beijing dialect (slightly different from Mandarin Chinese) to suit their status. They acted with apparent stylized movements of the Wen Chou type (a subtype of Chou) of traditional Chinese drama, which was suitable for the manner of lower class people.

But they still kept their original names and followed the original lines of the text. Occasionally, fashionable terms used in contemporary China were heard to reinforce the comic atmosphere of the dialogue, e.g. 'to have your wages raised', which raised a laugh among the audience. It seemed that Mr Xong was keen to interpose some novel references into the play. The most noticeable example was the substitution of a digital watch for the 'little changeling boy'. Such a treatment looked a little incompatible with the context of the plot. Yet it was enjoyed by the audience while being criticized by some Shakespeare scholar as a 'cheap theatrical joke'.<sup>25</sup>

There has been a popular mode for Chinese players to present Shakespearean plays in the form of spoken drama. The play acted in such a mode basically uses the performing skills of spoken drama, but the story is sinicized, as in the productions adapted into traditional Chinese drama with the 'Chinese manner'. So the play seems to be outwardly an ancient Chinese play. The adaptor and director using this mode, of course, have to solve the same problem of cultural discrepancy, as those who adapted Shakespeare's plays into traditional Chinese drama with the 'Chinese manner'. The two typical examples of this mode are the production of King Lear, by Central Drama Academy and the production of All's Well that Ends Well, by Xi An Spoken Drama Troupe, which were respectively presented in Beijing and Shanghai in 1986 during the Festival.

With a Chinese title King Li Ya, the Central Beijing Drama Academy's production took place against a setting of a solemn and splendid ancient Chinese court, with symmetrical ornament and a central and high throne on a raked platform. The characters wore gorgeous ancient Chinese costumes and observed the etiquette of the Chinese royal court. The play convincingly asked the audience to believe that it was a stirring tragedy happened in the long history of Chinese feudal society. However, for those who knew Shakespeare's works, they felt that it was the great Shakespearean tragedy that was being performed on the stage as soon as they

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<sup>25</sup>. Speech of Mr Zhang Li Wei at the seminar held in Central Drama Academy in Beijing, on 14 April 1986.

were brought into the story, although at the very outset they received it as a Chinese historical play. According to Mr Jin Nai Qian, who acted King Lear in the play, one of the advantages of the employment of Chinese style was that the central theme of the play could be more easily understood by the audience because they would tend to associate the story with numerous similar historical facts. In Chinese history, the emperors often encountered the same problem of how to invest their successors with hereditary titles and territories, which frequently resulted in the bloody wars between the successors. Being praised by the audience for his successful performance, Mr Jin admitted that it was a very hard work to act Shakespearean tragic protagonists. On the stage, Mr Jin believed, one must exhaust one's energy to act King Lear because the performing mode of spoken drama normally asked the actor to identify himself with the role he was acting.<sup>26</sup> It seemed that the influence of traditional Chinese drama upon Shakespeare theatre in China was so all-pervasive that even in King Li Ya, presented in the pure form of spoken drama, we could still find the deployment of the techniques of traditional Chinese theatre. The acting of the fool was undertaken evidently in the performing mode of the character-types of Wen Chou and Wu Chou. The conventional movements he used included 'dwarf-gait', 'tiger-leap', 'somersault-turning', etc.

The 'modernization' of Shakespeare's plays has been a very popular mode in Western Shakespearean theatre since the twenties of this century. Yet it sounds quite new to the Chinese audience. Generally speaking, Chinese Shakespeare scholars tend to be conservative, opposed to any attempt to seek novelty. But most Chinese directors seem to have a good appetite for something new and unusual. So in the last decade, the modernizing mode has gradually been accepted by Chinese directors, players and audiences as a practicable method to stage Shakespeare's plays. Yet up to now we have not seen any completely modernized Shakespeare production on Chinese stage, like the production of The Comedy of Errors by Royal Shakespeare Company in 1990 or the production of Twelfth Night by English Shakespeare Company in 1992. The only examples of this mode available for

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<sup>26</sup>. Speech of Mr Jin Nai Qian at the seminar held in Central Drama Academy in Beijing on 19 April 1986, during the Festival.

discussion are two partly modernized Shakespeare productions: a Love's Labour's Lost by Jiangsu Spoken Drama troupe and The Taming of the Shrew by Shanghai People's Art theatre. Both were presented in Shanghai during the festival. In these two productions, modernizing treatments were mingled with orthodox method, for the directors did not want to go too far as to transform the plays completely.

Xong Guo Dong, the director of the production of Love's Labour's Lost maintained that the employment of modernizing method --- such as to wear modern costume, to speak modern language and to use modern props --- could help the audience, especially young audiences, appreciate the play and make the story closer to their taste. However he tried to avoid modernizing the play simply and outwardly. He used this mode to serve the play's central theme. The production aimed to demonstrate how man frees himself from asceticism. It was designed as a process of the evolution of the times.<sup>27</sup> The play began with a sight of medieval life in Europe. The costumes, props and etiquette all belonged to medieval fashion. The rhythm of the action was slow and the atmosphere depressing. Then along with the development of the plot, the costumes, props and etiquette changed gradually according to each particular age (about one century later each Act) and became more and more modern. Accordingly, the rhythm became faster and faster and the atmosphere, brisker and brisker. When the play ended, what the audience saw on the stage was a vivid scene of modern life. The characters wore Western suits and jackets, miniskirts, carrying fashionable hand bags and tape recorders. The scene was accompanied by pop music and the boom of an aeroplane. Some modern references and language were also used to suit this modern background, such as 'to make a phone call', 'registered letter', 'to take a photograph', and other special terms used in contemporary China. The play displayed an optimistic attitude towards social progress. To establish a close contact with the audience, the performance took place on an extended stage. The whole theatre was decorated as a royal park which made the audience feel as if they were participating. To achieve

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<sup>27</sup>. Xong Guo Dong, 'Performing Shakespearean plays with Modern manner', The Bulletin of the Inaugural Chinese Shakespeare Festival (Shanghai, 1986), No 2, p. 2.

a 'distancing effect', during the performance, the players sometimes invited the audience to dance with them or presented a magic show among the audience, which enlivened the atmosphere and was enjoyed by the audience. But certain critics felt that these 'distancing' techniques could weaken the performance proper. Nevertheless the production was praised, on the whole, for its profound ideas and novel style.

Having shown the convergence of Shakespearean plays and traditional Chinese drama and some other main metamorphoses of Shakespeare on the Chinese stage, we can see how magnificent the spectacle is when the two long-standing theatrical traditions mix together, like the confluence of two great rivers. This also convincingly exhibits how Chinese dramatic workers have largely and creatively enriched Shakespearean theatre in China, based on Chinese theatrical tradition while flexibly adopting other modes of Western theatre. The significance of such a convergence is profound and lasting. It helps to vitalize traditional Chinese drama and brings about a great advance in contemporary Chinese theatre. Meanwhile it contributes to the further popularity of Shakespeare in China, through the variety of Shakespeare's plays on the Chinese stage. In a sense, the mixture of Shakespearean plays and traditional Chinese drama could be seen as a convergence of the two cultural traditions because Shakespeare has become a major figure in the cultural landscape of China and entered into every aspect of the culture, which will be the central topic of the next chapter.

## **Chapter 5. Looking Beyond the Interaction Between Shakespeare and Traditional Chinese Drama: Shakespeare in the Cultural Landscape of China**

The study undertaken in the last part has shown the general process of the reception of Shakespeare by the Chinese and the interaction between Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama. A dialectical relationship has been found in the interaction. On one hand, Shakespeare has had a great impact upon traditional Chinese drama, replaced its authoritative central position in modern and contemporary China, and infused new blood into the old Chinese dramatic tradition through joint theatrical activities. On the other hand, traditional Chinese drama has also contributed to the wide variety of Shakespeare productions on the Chinese stage. The significance of the Shakespeare industry in China, however, is not confined to theatrical and literary circles. In fact, Shakespeare has entered into every domain of Chinese culture and exerted a tremendous influence upon it. From the National Youth Intelligence Competition questions to the wedding gift, from the design of the commemorative gold coin issued by the Central Bank of China to advertisements in local newspapers, Shakespeare has permeated Chinese life like no other great Western cultural figure before and since. In a sense, Shakespeare has become a Chinese institution, and with his wide popularity has entered the consciousness of many Chinese people, who may not have even read his plays.

As in Japan and other Asian countries, the existing culture in contemporary China is a double one, characterized by the mixture of traditional and Western culture. What impresses foreign tourists most when they visit China, is always the conspicuously mingled cultural framework: traditional Chinese architecture and modern Western buildings, Chinese food and Western food, Chinese clothes and Western clothes, Chinese folk song and pop music, Chinese dance and Western ballet, etc, are all accommodated simultaneously into one hybrid culture. The

Western part of this mingled culture has been more emphasized by the Chinese than the indigenous traditions because the former is often associated with the prosperity and progress of the country, and the latter with the past and identity of the nation. So it is understandable that Shakespeare, as a 'hero' of Western culture, has been a major figure in the cultural landscape of modern and contemporary China, and that every expression of interest in the English playwright is interpreted as a manifest sign of cultural advancement.

This chapter is therefore an attempt to investigate the widespread and profound influence of Shakespeare upon modern and contemporary Chinese culture, to demonstrate how the plays and their legendary author flourish and function in varied and diverse cultural forms such as theatre and education, entertainment and artistic creation, academic activity and literary criticism, politics and ideology, etc. This chapter also discusses the operation of Shakespeare as a cultural phenomenon in the customs and daily life of the Chinese, recognizing Shakespeare wherever and whenever that authorial construction is visible, in forms as diverse as newspaper advertisements, intelligence contests on TV programs, evening parties or wedding ceremonies. We shall then see how Shakespeare is used in China as a means of constructing cultural meaning and contributes greatly to the construction of the 'New Culture' of China (the culture of China since 1919, characterized by a combination of traditional Chinese culture and some elements of Western culture).

As one of the important domains of Chinese culture, theatrical practice of modern and contemporary China is most directly and evidently influenced by Shakespeare. Besides Shakespearean production and the theatrical activities linking Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama, the whole modern and contemporary Chinese theatre shows clearly enough its connection with Shakespeare and his plays. From dramatic creation to theatrical training, from direction to performance, almost every aspect of theatrical practice bears the imprint of the great English playwright. From the works of many modern Chinese dramatists, we can find apparent Shakespearean veins. Shakespeare is often associated with the great figures in modern Chinese theatre, and my discussion will now centre on the most important

of them: Tian Han, Cao Yu and Guo Mo Ruo.

As one of the founders of modern Chinese theatre, Tian Han (1898-1968) was a very influential figure in Chinese cultural circles. His works, unlike those of traditional Chinese drama, were written in the form of spoken drama, and represented the turbulent reality of modern China, which strongly aroused the consciousness of the people to examine their morbid society. There can be no doubt that his interest in drama and his ambition to become a dramatist stemmed directly from the inspiration of Shakespeare; as we mentioned in Chapter 3, he made a great contribution to the translation of Shakespeare's works and the campaign to publicise the playwright in China. He was the first Chinese translator who properly translated a particular Shakespearean play (Hamlet) in its original dramatic form. He also published a translation of Romeo and Juliet. In his youth, he was fond of Shakespeare's plays. When he studied in Japan, he read many of Shakespeare's plays and developed aspirations to study drama and take up dramatic writing as his profession. Besides translation work, Tian Han also introduced some useful information about the staging of Shakespeare in the West by publishing an article on the evolution of Shakespeare theatre on the Western stage.<sup>1</sup> In 1935 he was put into jail by the ruling National Party because he led the Left-Wing Cultural and Dramatic Movement, advocating resistance against the invasion of Japan. It was Shakespeare's works that accompanied him to spend the wearing time in the jail. He took an English edition of the Complete Works of Shakespeare. Each day he sat on the floor of his cell, reading the texts aloud for hours and hours without tiredness.

Being such an admirer of Shakespeare, Tian Han was naturally inclined to follow his artistic mode, and Shakespeare's influence on Tian Han's drama can be found in many aspects. First and foremost, he described the miserable life of the people and revealed serious social problems in tragedies of a Shakespearean pattern, e.g. with an 'unhappy' ending, unlike conventional Chinese tragedy. Most

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<sup>1</sup>. Tian Han, 'The Evolution of Shakespearean Theatre in the West', Nanguo Monthly, 4 (1929), pp. 26-35.

of his successful and influential plays are tragedies, such as The Night in a Cafe, The Night of Tiger Hunting, The Tragedy on the Lake, The Return to the South, The View of a Village on the Edge of a River, The Death of a famous Player. When he worked as an editor for a publishing house, he once had a scheme to translate ten plays of Shakespeare. Of these, only three were comedies and romance (A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Merchant of Venice and The Tempest), and all the rest were tragedies. Like many Chinese intellectuals, Tian Han lamented the lack of a real tragic sense in traditional Chinese drama. The pattern of a 'happy ending' in the drama served to alleviate the social contradictions and supported the interest of the ruling class. By contrast, Shakespearean tragedy, he believed, profoundly exposed social problems and aroused the consciousness of the people to examine their society. As we mentioned in the fourth chapter, in his preface to the translation of Hamlet, Tian Han asked Chinese readers, particularly the young, to associate the play with the seamy side of modern China. Shakespearean tragedies inspired Tian Han to represent the suffering and struggle of Chinese people in a true tragic form. For instance, in The Night in a Cafe and The Night of Tiger Hunting, he deeply illustrated how young Chinese men and women suffered from the unreasonable feudal marriage system, which resulted in numerous tragedies like Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. In The Night of Tiger Hunting, the leading characters, Han Da Sha and Lian Gu, are ordinary young man and woman in the countryside who are confronted with the powerful feudal force. It is quite clear that the situation will inevitably lead to a tragic end owing to the great disparity of strength between the lovers and the representative character of the feudal political force. Yet the lovers dare to fight with their enemies to seek freedom of marriage. The author abandoned the outmoded pattern of the 'happy ending' and gave no false remedy for the problem, in order to reinforce the tragic conflict in the play, help the audience realize the gravity of the problem and furthermore, spur them to reform society.

The early works of Tian Han are imbued with a romantic atmosphere, obviously influenced by Shakespearean style. In The Night of Tiger Hunting, The Return to the South and The Tragedy on the Lake, this romantic atmosphere is represented

by various means of artistic expression. For example, in The Night of Tiger Hunting, a romantic story of tiger hunting is mixed with the realistic description of the suffering and struggle of the Chinese farmers. The play is marked by a noticeable local colour of the mountain area in Hunan Province, which contributes to its romantic atmosphere. Moreover Shakespeare's plays are characterized by lengthy eloquent and poetic soliloquies and monologues serving the description of scenes, statement of sayings and revelation of the inner conflict of characters. In his works, Tian Han often adopted this technique. For example, in The Night of Tiger Hunting, The Tragedy on the Lake, and The Return to the South, there are many long monologues and soliloquies in which the characters reveal their emotions and express their resentment at the dark society and their will to win a happy new life.

Like other modern Chinese writers, Tian Han was dissatisfied with the simple and morality-oriented characterization of traditional Chinese drama. By contrast, he showed great interest in the richness and variety of Shakespearean character portrayal, and in his plays he intentionally followed Shakespeare's method; most of his characters are vividly portrayed with distinctive personality. They come to the audience and readers as individuals rather than moral types. Lian Gu, the heroine in The Night of Tiger Hunting is such a character. In the play, the author successfully depicted Lian Gu's personality of gentleness, honesty, courage and insight, creating a new image of the younger generation in the rural areas of modern China. Tian Han's skill in portraying individualized characters was more mature when he wrote his three act play, The Death of a Famous Player. Almost every role in the play is vividly delineated as an individualized character. The hero Liu Zhen Sheng, a well-known Beijing opera player, is an experienced actor with superb skill. He devotes all his life to his career while being an honest, upright and brave man who dares to resist the oppression of evil forces. Like the players in ancient China, the performers in modern China, especially before the 1940s, had low social status, like prostitutes. They were often bullied by the upper class and hooligans. As the antithesis of Liu Zhen Sheng, Lord Yang was also vividly created by the author as a figure representative of evil local gentry, with a nasty, mean and cruel personality. The disposition of Liu Feng Xiang, the apprentice to Liu Zhen

Sheng, is suggestive of the technique of Shakespeare to create double nature characters. He is a pure and innocent young man, but there is other side of his character --- weakness and vanity. So at last he took to evil ways, corrupted by the lure of Lord Yang. It is evident that Tian Han had completely extricated himself from the conventional mode of characterization, since his characters were not simply portrayed as moral types. Unlike Zhou Shun Chang, Yu Fei and other heroes in traditional Chinese drama, Liu Zhen Sheng's courage to fight against evil forces does not stem from any specific conventional moral doctrine, such as loyalty and filial piety. On the contrary, his action is backed by a sense of general social justice: equality, freedom, etc. It seems that Tian Han paid special attention to general human nature and emphasised the multi-faceted qualities of his characters, following Shakespeare's mode of characterization.

Tian Han also employed Shakespearean techniques to unfold the plot, play up the surroundings in which the characters act and heighten atmosphere. The atmosphere of his play is often largely heightened to produce audience involvement, as we have seen in The Night of Tiger Hunting. Shakespeare's device of a 'play-within-the-play' was well used by Tian Han, in The Death of a Famous Player, where it is designed not only to describe the professional activity of the leading role but also to enhance his disposition. In the play-within-the-play, Liu Zhen Sheng, the principal character, is playing the hero of the greenwood who fights against the decayed feudal system, while in the play he also acts as a hero to resist the oppression of evil forces. The plots in both the play and the play-within-the-play are skilfully interwoven to produce stirring scenes and reinforce the tragic mood.

The relationship between Shakespeare and the great modern Chinese dramatist Cao Yu can be clearly seen from the two major posts which the latter holds. He is both the president of the Dramatists Association of China and the president of the Shakespeare Association of China. Cao Yu's dramatic achievement constitutes both the peak and the heart of modern Chinese theatre. His three representative plays The Thunderstorm, The Sunrise and The Open Country, are known to almost every household. His election as the president of the Shakespeare Association of China

is not only because he has enjoyed high prestige in Chinese theatrical circles, but also because he has made a great contribution to the Shakespeare industry in China. He taught Shakespeare in some universities in the 1930s and 1940s and actively took part in Shakespeare theatre when he worked in National Drama School during the anti-Japanese War. His translation of Romeo and Juliet has been accepted as one of the best translations of Shakespeare's plays in China, and is characterized by its smooth poetic language and suitability for stage representation.

Like Tian Han, Cao Yu admired Shakespeare's works early, when he was a student in middle school. He first read Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare, translated by Lin Shu, then The Merchant of Venice and other plays. He even bought a gramophone record of Ellen Terry's Romeo and Juliet with money saved from his maintenance, listening to it again and again, intoxicated with the sweet recitation of the actress and the beautiful imaginative illusion created by the lines. After entering Qing Hua University to study Western literature, he had more opportunities to read Shakespeare's plays in English. The more he read, the more he admired the uniqueness of Shakespearean art. He specially liked Shakespeare's 'great tragedies' and Julius Caesar. He felt that the remarkableness of Shakespeare's works derived not only from their profound philosophy but also from their artistic appeal.<sup>2</sup> Asked who was his favourite of all the dramatists he had known, he answered without hesitation: 'Shakespeare, of course'. Then he said: 'Like Leonardo da Vinci, Shakespeare is a great genius and a miracle of mankind.'<sup>3</sup> Thus it is understandable why he praised the great English writer highly in his speech at the opening ceremony of the Inaugural Chinese Shakespeare Festival in 1986.

Shakespeare's works inspired Cao Yu to take up dramatic writing and influenced many aspects of his work. Cao Yu himself admitted that he had learned

<sup>2</sup>. All the biographical information in this paragraph derives from Cao Shu Jun, The Biograph of Cao Yu (Beijing, 1989), pp. 35-9.

<sup>3</sup>. Li Zi Po, 'Cao Yu's Talk about Drama', Short Play Writing, 11 (1981), p. 53.

a lot from Shakespeare. In his article, he says:

Shakespeare's plays are so great and profound that they are as miraculous as the universe. I once learned some techniques from Ibsen, yet I learned more from Shakespeare. His works exhibit the richness and variation of humanity, exquisite structure, beautiful poetic flavour, humanistic enthusiasm and a fertile imagination. No genius can bear comparison with him.<sup>4</sup>

In Cao Yu's works, characterization, plot design, structure and language all show Shakespeare's influence.

What attracted Cao Yu most in Shakespeare's plays was the complexity and colourfulness of Shakespeare's characterization which was also the major technique he intended to follow in his dramatic writings, as he told the young Chinese dramatists: 'The most important technique of Shakespeare we should learn is his brilliant characterization'.<sup>5</sup> As we pointed out earlier, modern Chinese writers were dissatisfied with the characterization of traditional Chinese drama because it was simple and morality-oriented and unable to portray the characters typical in the reality of modern China. Cao Yu aimed to counteract the weakness of traditional literature by employing the Shakespearean mode of characterization. He achieved his goal perfectly. Most of his characters, particularly in his masterpiece The Thunderstorm, are highly individualized with colourful and complex qualities.

If The Thunderstorm can be seen as the monument of a remarkable genius, it is also the genius of a remarkable age. The play reflects the social life of the Chinese in transition from the collapse of the feudal system to the establishment of an industrialized country, during which great changes had taken place in every aspect of the society. Through the sad story of a family, Cao Yu mirrors the crises

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<sup>4</sup>. Cao Yu, 'Talking with the Playwrights about Reading and Writing', Play Writing, 10 (1982), p. 5.

<sup>5</sup>. Ibid, p. 6.

of the dying Chinese feudal system. He also writes a 'Shakespearean' tragedy, without the artificial happy ending of conventional Chinese drama. There are eight roles in The Thunderstorm, each with a distinctive character composed of complicated qualities, shaped by general humanity, conventional institutions, the changing times, social status, age, sex, personal disposition, etc. Although the play displays a clearly political and moral programme, the characters are not portrayed by the simple division of good and evil. As in Shakespearean tragedy, they act in accordance with the logic of their passions but not with particular moral doctrine. Zhou Pu Yuan, the leading character, is a representative of the Chinese patriarchal system. As the head of a family in traditional Chinese drama, he would be a highly praised character with many virtues, since the whole Confucian ideological system is based on a patriarchal-feudal society. But in this play, he is portrayed as a complex role similar to the characters of Shakespearean tragedies; his vice and weakness are emphasized. With selfishness and callousness, he forsakes Lu Ma, the woman who lives with him, and leaves her in a dreadful plight. Driven to despair, she intends to commit suicide, but is rescued by a man. Zhou Pu Yuan is also an imperious and despotic husband and father, requiring his wife and children to submit to his will absolutely. Yet as a normal person, he has a clear awareness of what he has done, like Macbeth and Claudius. To show his repentance for his cruelty to Lu Ma, whom he believes has committed suicide, he keeps the room in which he lived with her untouched for many years. This may be regarded as a hypocritical action, yet is true to human nature. Although he always treats his children sternly to maintain his authority in his family, he also displays his affection for them, and finally commits suicide when he is informed that his errors caused their death.

His wife, Fan Yi, is also vividly portrayed as a typical character produced by the changing society in which the feudal family relationship is breaking up. She comes to the audience as a representative of modern Chinese women who rebel against the harsh rule of Chinese patriarchy. She suggests both Ibsen's Nora in A Doll's House and Shakespearean women who interrogate or challenge the dominant position of men, such as Adriana, Beatrice and Katherina. She does not resign

herself to the control of Zhou Pu Yuan and claims equality between the sexes. Her more bold action is to seek true love by falling in love with her stepson Zhou Ping, which would be regarded by the apologists for feudal ethics as the worst offence.

It is clear, from the above examples, that in his character portrayal, Cao Yu follows the Shakespearean mode, that is, to create characters with the passion and will which all mankind share. Like Shakespeare also, the playwright closely associates the passions of his characters with the historical context and political system. The characters should not be completely blamed for the dying moral order and the self-destructive contradictions of the divided society; obviously, The Thunderstorm can be seen as an individual tragedy in the Bradleian mould, but it can also be regarded as a social tragedy. Indeed, almost all the techniques of Shakespearean characterization are deployed in this Chinese masterpiece: the revelation of the inner world of the character, the complex disposition of the role, double nature, the changeability of the nature of a role, the contrast between characters, etc.

Cao Yu also painstakingly arranges his plot design on Shakespearean models. The Thunderstorm has a familiar double plot structure which is manifestly different from the structural patterns of traditional Chinese drama. It consists of two parallel plots, one centred on Zhou Pu Yuan's family and the other on Lu Gui's family, and both are carefully interrelated. This structure reminds us right away of the plot in Hamlet and King Lear although the social status of the two families in Cao Yu's play is much lower than that in the Shakespearean tragedies.

As we discussed in the second chapter, the mixture of tragedy and comedy was employed by both Shakespearean plays and traditional Chinese drama, but in different ways. In Cao Yu's works, this mingled mode frequently produces a specific stage effect. And in most cases, we find a striking similarity between Cao Yu's mingled mode and that of Shakespeare. In The Thunderstorm, Cao Yu skilfully mixes comic elements with the basic tragic mood. For instance, Lu Gui, the head of the second family in the play, is a laughable and funny character having

something in common with Polonius in Hamlet. Although he is just an ordinary person with lower social status, he always puffs himself up before lower class people while currying favour with the powerful and acting servilely. His scenes display a strong comic flavour. Another comic character in this tragedy is Zhou Chong, the youngest son to Zhou Pu Yuan. He is an innocent, simple and rather childish young man. Whenever he comes on the stage, the atmosphere is enlivened. Some happy scenes in which the lovers show their affection for each other are also designed to form a sharp contrast with the serious and depressing atmosphere of the play. The mingled mode in Cao Yu's plays evidently does not derive from traditional Chinese drama for it is not used in conventional patterns. Unlike classical Chinese dramatists, Cao Yu does not employ a final 'happy ending' to relieve the tragic feeling in his tragedy. In addition, the comic characters in his tragedy are not used to produce an easy comic mood by making impromptu comic gestures and remarks. The mingled mode of Cao Yu has an affinity with that of Shakespeare because the comic scenes in his tragedy are closely related to the development of the plot, serving the central theme. Being typical characters of different social classes, the comic characters in his tragedy also have their own importance. Furthermore, as in Shakespeare, the main function of the mingled mode in these plays is to represent the general process of life, in which joy and sorrow are intermingled.

Many of Shakespeare's other dramatic skills are used to enhance Cao Yu's plays. He admired Shakespeare's technique to begin and end a play and asked other Chinese dramatists to imitate it. He thought that Romeo and Juliet had a very good beginning, full of action. The fight between the two families strongly attracts the attention of the audience and asks them to get involved in the story at once. The first scene of Hamlet was also highly appreciated by Cao Yu. It was, he believed, a very exciting and thrilling beginning, characterized by a wonderful mixture of unfolding the plot and telling the previous story.<sup>6</sup> In his works, Cao Yu successfully used this technique. For example, the first scene of The Thunderstorm is a very attractive one, in which Lu Gui tells his daughter a story about a ghost. Similar to

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<sup>6</sup>. Ibid, p. 7.

Shakespeare's method, it is a very dramatic scene which simultaneously states the previous story of the plot. Cao Yu also paid special attention to the ending of Shakespeare's plays. He particularly liked the ingenious treatment of Othello's suicide because it was a logical result, conforming to the law of life and aesthetics and to the character of the hero. Inspired by the skill of Shakespeare, Cao Yu declared he would not start writing a play until he had fully worked out its ending.<sup>7</sup> Cao Yu's dramatic writing was also greatly affected by the style of Shakespeare's language. When we read the lines of Cao Yu's plays, we are often enchanted by the wide variations of his lively, eloquent and individualized language. He used both graceful and vulgar styles according to the status of the characters. Pun, metaphor, slang, simile and proverb can all be found in his texts. He is rightly regarded as a master of language.

From the above discussion, we can conclude that although Cao Yu's dramatic creation was also influenced by other foreign dramatists such as Ibsen, Chekhov, O'Neill, Galsworthy and Wilde, there is no doubt that he has benefited most from Shakespeare and that Shakespeare's art has made the greatest contribution to the achievement of Cao Yu as a great modern Chinese dramatist.

Shakespeare's impact on the modern Chinese theatre is also to be found in the creation of historical plays. Generally speaking, modern Chinese drama can be classified into two categories according to its subject matter. Real incidents and events are taken by the dramatists to reflect realistic social life while historical figures, stories and events are also used to reproduce life in ancient China. But unlike traditional Chinese drama, which can be regarded by modern Chinese people as historical drama in a broad sense, modern Chinese historical plays are not simply intended to represent the past of the Chinese. With their clear political bias, they use the past to disparage the present.

The dramatic works of Guo Mo Ruo represent the creation of modern Chinese

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<sup>7</sup>. Ibid, p. 9.

historical drama at its height. As a giant of modern Chinese culture, Guo Mo Ruo was a versatile writer and scholar. His six historical plays caused a sensation throughout the country in the 1940s during the Anti-Japanese War, with their brilliant artistic charm and immense patriotic zeal. Shakespeare has influenced Guo Mo Ruo's historical plays; this was not only found by the later scholars through careful studies, but also pointed out by his contemporaries. It seemed no accident that like the works of Tian Han and Cao Yu, Guo Mo Ruo's dramatic creation was also largely affected by Shakespeare's plays, for the Chinese dramatist was an ardent admirer of Shakespeare when he was very young. In My Childhood, Guo Mo Ruo recollected that Lin Shu's translation of Tales from Shakespeare was one of his most loved books, giving him great pleasure and inspiring him a lot.<sup>8</sup> When he studied at the Imperial University of Tokyo, Japan, he read many of Shakespeare's plays, including Hamlet, King Lear, The Tempest and Romeo and Juliet, which greatly influenced his own later plays. It was quite clear that Shakespearean tragic concepts were adopted by Guo Mo Ruo in his historical plays because most of the plays are historical tragedies and display the vigorous and solemn style of Shakespearean tragedy. In his discussion about the spirit of tragedy, he held that tragedy was more instructive than comedy. The essence of tragedy, he argued, was the conflict between the new social force and the old one. The value of tragedy was to turn grief into strength, not simply to appeal to sympathy and pity.<sup>9</sup> Obviously, his understanding of this tragic concept was based on Shakespearean tragedy rather than on traditional Chinese drama, though there is also a touch of Hegelianism and Marxism in his approach.

The Chinese Cherry Bush (Tang Li Zhi Hua) is one of the most influential historical plays of Guo Mo Ruo, drawing its material from a tragic and heroic story in Chinese history during pre-Qin period. In the play, the hero Nie Zheng assassinates a tyrant, King Xia Lei. But before the hero commits suicide, he

<sup>8</sup>. Guo Mo Ruo, 'My Childhood', The Collected Works of Guo Mo Ruo, 8 vols (Beijing, 1957), VI, p. 114.

<sup>9</sup>. Guo Mo Ruo, 'From Hu Fu to the Essence of Tragedy', Guo Mo Ruo on Literary Creation (Shanghai, 1983), p. 19.

mutilates his face in order not to get his twin sister Nie Ying into trouble. After he dies, his body is displayed by the court in public to let people identify him. There is a thrilling scene in the play. The time is near daybreak with cockcrow heard at times. But it is still dark. Two soldiers are guarding a platform with Nie Yin's body on it. They talk about the body and ghost, frightened by the terrifying atmosphere. Suddenly they see, in the dark, a figure approaching, with the same appearance that the dead man has. The soldiers run away in great fear for they think it is the ghost of the hero. This scene can be associated with the first scene in Hamlet. The two scenes resemble each other; since both have a fearful atmosphere, sensational effect, immediate audience involvement, etc. The scene in Hamlet functions to unfold the story while the scene in The Chinese Cherry Bush paves the way for the play to reach its climax. From the character of Nie Zheng, the hero in the play, we notice something in common with the disposition of Brutus in Julius Caesar. Both fight heroically against dictators and die a heroic death. In his later articles, Guo Mo Ruo frankly admitted that it was Shakespeare's works which inspired him to write this historical play and his other plays.<sup>10</sup>

The most typical example of Shakespeare's influence upon Guo Mo Ruo's historical plays can be found in his other very famous historical tragedy, Qu Yuan, which caused a sensation throughout the country when it was performed in public during the Anti-Japanese War. The play was characterized by tremendous momentum, stirring and solemn atmosphere and intense emotion. It is a political tragedy, different from that of traditional Chinese drama. Qu Yuan, the hero, was a great classical Chinese poet and politician, whose tragic story is known to every household in China. He was a faithful and upright minister and a great patriot, serving King Chu during the pre-Qin period. Yet he was framed by some treacherous subjects and wronged by the King. Sent into exile, he lived a miserable life. At last he threw himself into a river to commit suicide when his country was subjugated by another powerful state. There has been a specific festival --- the Dragon Boat Festival --- for the Chinese to cherish the memory of this great poet

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<sup>10</sup>. Guo Mo Ruo, 'How Did I Write The Chinese Cherry Bush', The Selection of Guo Mo Ruo's Plays (Beijing, 1958), p. 36.

and patriot. Based on this historical story, the play was largely enhanced by the playwright to represent the spirit and ideology of the new age. Unlike the heroes in traditional Chinese political tragedies, Qu Yuan was not portrayed by Guo Mo Ruo as an honest subject eager to defend the feudal system. He comes to the audience as a great champion to fight for justice against evil forces, and as a great patriot to defend state sovereignty. Obviously, the hero was an embodiment of the 'anger of the age', strongly voicing the aspirations of the Chinese people to fight against the forces of darkness and the invasion of Japan.

Although the play deals with a genuine Chinese story, its artistic style, characterization and tragic atmosphere are so similar to that of Shakespearean tragedies that many Chinese scholars and critics felt that the play exhibited an evident Shakespearean style as soon as it was performed. Some of them even directly pointed out that Qu Yuan bore a strong resemblance to Hamlet.<sup>11</sup> The events in which Qu Yuan gets involved are different from those in which Hamlet participates. But the two characters are similar, particularly in their common quality as a rebel challenging the seamy side of society and a misanthrope detesting the world and its ways. Lengthy soliloquies and monologues are largely used in the play, which is also working to display a Shakespearean style.

In Act V of Qu Yuan, there was a scene, with the title of 'Ode to Thunder and Lightning', specially evoked strong repercussions among the audience. In the scene, filled with grief and indignation, the hero excitedly walks in a thunderstorm, shouting to the storm, thunder and lightning to express his grievance. Many Chinese critics immediately perceived the influence of King Lear. The famous poet Xu Chi wrote a letter to the playwright to point out the similarity between Qu Yuan and King Lear while praising the achievement of the play.<sup>12</sup> The scene of 'Ode to Thunder and Lightning' in Qu Yuan indeed has something in common with the

<sup>11</sup>. The Collected Works of Guo Mo Ro, 8 vols (Beijing, 1957), III, pp. 317-8.

<sup>12</sup>. Ibid, pp. 319-22.

scene of the heath in King Lear, in which King Lear, facing the storm, angrily curses his daughters' ingratitude and the evil world. Admittedly, the concrete contents of the two scene are different. Yet we feel that the central theme and expressive mode of them are similar, particularly when we read the lines in 'Ode to the Thunder and Lightning' that Qu Yuan shouts to thunder and lightning and asks them to destroy this evil world with their great power. This stirring scene has made the greatest contribution to the success of Qu Yuan, serving as a vehicle for spreading political ideas and expressing the 'anger of the age'. In fact, some years later, Guo Mo Ruo himself also admitted that he drew great inspiration from King Lear when he wrote the scene,<sup>13</sup> though he seemed to be reluctant to admit it at that time.

In 1937, the president of the National Drama School, Mr Yu Shang Yuan, who was a famous dramatic artist and educationist, explained, in an article, why the first graduating class of his school would perform a Shakespearean production in public. He held that it was of great significance to use Shakespeare's plays for drama training because they had been universally accepted as one of the most important theatrical activities in the world, and even as the highest standard of stage representation.<sup>14</sup> Just as Mr Yu Shang Yuan recognized, Shakespearean drama has played an important role in drama training, and greatly influenced the creative work of the modern Chinese theatre. In all of the drama schools and institutes in modern and contemporary China, Shakespearean works have been extensively used as teaching material in class and as the subject for staging practice, and have helped to develop a new team of theatrical workers and artists.

The National Drama School in Nanjing was set up in 1935 as the first spoken drama school in modern China.

The president Yu Shang Yuan was a very bright and broad-minded

<sup>13</sup>. Huang Shi Mo, Guo Mo Ruo's Qu Yuan (Sichuan, 1981), p. 128.

<sup>14</sup>. Yu Shang Yuan, 'Why Should We Stage Shakespeare's Plays', Zhongyang Daily, 18 June 1937, p. 4.

dramatic artist and educator, who, as we mentioned above, had a clear aim to use Shakespeare as both a means and a standard for the training of his school. So the school made it a rule that every graduating class must have a Shakespearean play as its graduation performance in public. During the Anti-Japanese War, the graduating students of the school successively presented The Merchant of Venice, Othello, and Hamlet. All of them received much acclaim from the audience. The performances served not only to demonstrate the acting skill of the students, but also as tests of their ability to undertake other stage work. The students realized that it was not an easy matter to play a role in Shakespeare's plays. So they went all out to fulfil the task, using all the knowledge they learned from the training and giving full play to their performing skill. For instance, Miss Yie Zi, who played Portia in the inaugural graduation performance of The Merchant of Venice, excellently represented the character of the heroine in different situations, displaying her remarkable acting talent. Her performance was highly praised by the audience and critics, and she was immediately employed as a professional actress by two well-known drama companies, the Shanghai Experimental Drama Troupe and the Wu Han Angry Tide Drama Troupe. The second graduation performance of the school, a production of Othello, repeated the same story, enjoying a highly successful season at Guo Tai Theatre in Chongqing City. Most of the roles were well acted by the students. Miss Ling Guan Ru, who played Desdemona, and other students were invited to work in the Shanghai Drama Company. The graduation performance also provided a good opportunity for the students to undertake other stage work. Take the inaugural graduation performance, for example; besides acting, the graduates did all the stage work including set design, costumes, make-up, lighting, etc and fully displayed their originality. The students also took an active part in the propaganda campaign for the performance, publishing many articles in national and local newspapers to introduce Shakespeare's works and the significance of the performance.

After the foundation of the People's Republic of China, Shakespeare and his plays were more emphasized by the drama schools and institutes than ever before. In state drama institutes and most provincial drama schools, Shakespeare has been

a required course in the curriculum. In courses on the Analysis of Play Texts, there are many selected Shakespeare's plays, particularly his most popular plays such as Hamlet, Othello, Romeo and Juliet, The Merchant of Venice, etc, for students to analyze. In courses on the Study of Writers and Their Works, Shakespeare and his plays are a specific topic. In courses on the History of Foreign Drama, Shakespeare occupies a whole section. The students are frequently taught and they themselves also recognize that as tomorrow's dramatic workers, they must have sufficient knowledge of Shakespeare, no matter what job they will take up, whether as a writer, a director, a player or a stage designer, because Shakespearean works have been universally regarded as the greatest achievement of world theatre and the knowledge of his plays at least should be the fundamental accomplishment of a dramatic worker.

Shakespeare has been the most frequently selected dissertation topic of the students, especially those of the Departments of Dramatic Literature in major drama institutes. For example, just after the collapse of the Gang of Four and the end of the Cultural Revolution, the students of the Department of Dramatic literature at Shanghai Drama Institute, set off an upsurge to study Shakespeare, writing a lot of papers on Shakespeare. In his dissertation 'On the Relationship between Renaissance Drama and the Enlightenment Drama', Liu Yong highly admired Shakespeare's achievement and criticized the foolish and ridiculous attitude of the Gang of Four towards Shakespeare and Western culture. Wu Hui chose Othello as his topic. Through the analysis of the social and historical context of the play, he came to the conclusion that Shakespeare's plays are indeed a mirror of social life, profoundly instructing us while pleasing us.<sup>15</sup>

In the teaching of directing, acting and stage design, Shakespeare's plays are also largely used for teaching practice and graduation performance, which greatly contributes to the improvement of the students' ability to analyze and appreciate dramatic works and their specific skill to direct, act or design. Take the Shanghai

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<sup>15</sup>. Cao Shu Jun and Sun Fu Liang, Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage (Harbin, 1989), pp. 174-5.

Drama Institute, for example. In the last three decades, one third of its graduation performances are Shakespeare's plays, including Hamlet, King Lear, Othello, Romeo and Juliet, Titus Andronicus, Much Ado About Nothing, The Merchant of Venice, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Winter's Tale, etc. Meantime, many more excerpts from Shakespeare's plays are used in teaching demonstrations. The Central Drama Academy also heavily uses Shakespeare's plays as practice performance and graduation performance. Many of them draw large audiences, such as Macbeth in 1981 and The Tempest in 1982.

Many film stars and celebrated actors owe their achievements to their training in Shakespeare as students. Zhu Yang Ping, a telefilm star, is noted for his successful performance in a series telefilm, Wu Song. According to Zhu Yan Ping, his remarkable performing skill mainly derives from his training at the Shanghai Drama Institute, particularly from his acting practice in Shakespeare plays. In a programme of optional acting practice, he chose the fifth act of Othello because it was especially difficult to act the role of Othello at the climax of the play. Putting in a lot of work, he at last vividly portrayed a heroic Moor with a complex character on the stage, through which his acting skill was greatly enhanced.<sup>16</sup>

Another moving story is related to the experience of the well-known actor Zhu Yi, who successfully played the role of Othello in a production by the Guangdong Drama Company at Guangdong Art Festival in 1984. Early in the 1960s, when Zhu Yi studied at the Shanghai Drama Institute, he was an admirer of Shakespeare after attending a Shakespeare course, and showed a special interest in Othello. He fostered an aspiration to act the hero some day on the stage. To achieve his goal, he grasped every opportunity to gain more references. When a Russian film Othello was shown, he saw it again and again, with more than ten performances altogether. One day, taking some food with him, he even stayed in the cinema all the day to see four performances continuously. He also never let slip any reference concerning black people. It was obvious that his ambition was disrupted by the Cultural

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<sup>16</sup>. Zhu Yan Ping, 'How I Acted Wu Song', Television and Film Weekly, 21 (1987), p. 4.

Revolution. Fortunately, twenty years later, his wish at last came true. In 1984, he successfully played the role in a production by Guangdong Drama Company at Guangdong Art Festival and made a stir in the audience and the theatrical circles.<sup>17</sup>

Students of directing and stage design benefit from Shakespeare too. In 1980, a directing class for advanced studies at the Shanghai Drama Institute took King Lear as its teaching practice which helped greatly to improve the students' ability to direct a play. The teaching of stage design also frequently uses Shakespeare plays as design practice. At the Shanghai Drama Institute, a teacher asked every student in his class to make a set design for King Lear independently. Then they discussed and commented on each design model and chose the best one. In 1984, the class of stage design of the Central Drama Academy collectively created a set design for Hamlet with extraordinary distinction. It was highly praised by the senior designer and other theatrical artists. Both the teacher and students felt that Shakespeare's work was the best item for the teaching practice of stage design because Shakespearean plays left a wide scope for imagination and creativity.<sup>18</sup>

It is hard to reckon how widespread and profound Shakespeare's influence on modern Chinese theatre is, besides his great impact upon traditional Chinese drama. Every expression of interest in Shakespeare in theatrical activity will be interpreted as an unambiguous sign of theatrical advancement. There can be no doubt that Shakespearean dramatic ideas have been prevalent and dominant in contemporary Chinese theatrical circles, affecting greatly both stage representation and dramatic criticism. In theatrical circles, the highest standard to measure the artistic level of a director is whether or not he can direct a Shakespearean play. Almost all of the famous directors in contemporary China have experience of directing Shakespeare's plays. For instance, the most authoritative director and

<sup>17</sup>. Wang Ling, 'A Moving Story about Zhu Yi', Guangdong Daily, 26 September 1984, p. 4.

<sup>18</sup>. Theatre Research Reference Material, ed. by Huang Yue Qin (Changchun, 1986), pp. 15-6.

theatrical artist Huang Zuo Ling, who started his profession soon after finishing his Shakespeare study at Cambridge, has directed numerous Shakespearean plays in his long stage career, including Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet, etc. Ying Ruo Cheng, the famous director and actor of the Beijing People's Art Theatre, is noted for his production of Measure for Measure and his translations of several of Shakespeare's plays. There are also many other celebrated names associated with Shakespeare. Zhang Qi Hong, the director of the China Youth Drama theatre, directed many of Shakespeare's plays, including a very influential production of The Merchant of Venice. Hu Wei Min, the director of the Shanghai Youth Spoken Drama Troupe, directed Romeo and Juliet, Antony and Cleopatra and the beautiful Shaoxing opera version of Twelfth Night. Nearly all of the directors working in the state level drama companies have experience of presenting Shakespeare's plays. For instance, the director of the Central Experimental Drama Theatre, Mr Yang Zong Jing, once directed a production of The Merry Wives of Windsor. The director of the China Railways Drama Troupe, Mrs Cheng Ping, directed a moving and stirring Othello. The director of China Coal Miners' Drama Troupe, Mr Xiong Yuan Wei, directed a flowing and poetic A Midsummer Night's Dream, etc. To Chinese actors and actresses, it is a great honour to play a role in Shakespeare's plays. Most of the well-known Chinese performers have acted in Shakespearean productions. Some famous example are Zhao Dan's Romeo, Jin Yan's Romeo, Da Shi Chang's Feste, Qiao Qi's Don Pedro, Bai Yang's Juliet, Tian Hua's Juliet, Sha Li's Olivia, etc.

In modern and contemporary China, Shakespeare's art has been commonly accepted as a fundamental principle in dramatic criticism, particularly since the end of the Cultural Revolution. In the 1960s and during the Cultural Revolution, so-called class struggle theory was the only safe principle in literary and dramatic criticism, which made all literary and dramatic works material for political propaganda. So after this period, the value of Shakespeare has been more deeply appreciated by the theatrical workers and used as the most authoritative critical standard in every aspect of dramatic criticism. In the middle of the 1980s, there was a lively discussion in theatrical circles about the crucial problem of dramatic creation at that time. Some critics thought that most of the dramatic works created

in that period failed to express the true feelings and emotions of human nature and still exhibited an inclination to portray the characters as political types. Yet other critics held that the major problem was the lack of a philosophy of life in the works. Manifestly, both approaches were viewing from the standpoint of Shakespeare's art.<sup>19</sup>

It was quite understandable that Shakespeare has permeated the education of contemporary China since the knowledge of his works is interpreted as an evidence of cultural maturity and advancement by the Chinese although China has her own early-maturing and splendid civilization. There is a section on European Renaissance in the textbook in world history of junior middle school, in which Shakespeare is introduced as one of the greatest figures during the Renaissance. An account of his life and theatrical achievement is given, with his popular plays mentioned. Generally speaking, traditional Chinese literature, particularly traditional Chinese poetry, and the works of modern Chinese writers have stood for so long at the centre of the language and literature programme in the curriculum of elementary and secondary schools, because Chinese is a difficult language and it takes a very long time to learn it. Yet a few outstanding Western writers are carefully selected to give impressionable Chinese pupils of middle school age a taste of Western culture. The names of such a list change according to the political climate. but it seems that Shakespeare has occupied a stable place on the list. His plays in translation are required reading in senior middle school classes and The Merchant of Venice is included in the syllabus of the second grade of senior middle schools. This means that each year more than five million Chinese teenagers study the popular Shakespeare comedy seriously. As a rule, the teacher will provide the student with more knowledge about Shakespeare's life and major achievement, and the student will then also show a greater enthusiasm for reading more of Shakespeare's plays. A teacher at the Fourth Middle School of Beijing, who was my student when I taught for the Beijing Open University, told me that her students

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<sup>19</sup>. See Chen Gong Min, 'What's Wrong with the Current Dramatic Creation', Selection of Drama Studies, ed. by Huang Yue Qin (Jilin, 1984), pp. 44-9. and Jiao Zu 'Where Is Our Theatre Going?', Drama studies, 4 (1985), 5-11.

sometimes even asked her to recommend some Shakespearean tragedies for they have already been familiar with the titles of the great tragedies of Shakespeare through the public media such as newspapers and television. While doubting whether the students could understand Shakespearean tragedies, she recommended Hamlet, King Lear and Macbeth. She said that it seemed that her students were able to grasp the moral of the tragedies though it was a little difficult for them to analyze deeply the characters and historical context.<sup>20</sup> As Shakespeare is taught in middle school, the knowledge of his life and works is set by the State Education Commission as an item in the Qualification Examination for the middle school teachers who teach language and literature. The examination is designed for those who have not obtained B. A. degree in higher education, for all the language and literature B. A. degree holders have already taken a Shakespeare course in universities and colleges.

In Chinese universities and colleges, Shakespeare has been more profoundly taught. In the Chinese Department, English Department, Foreign Language Department, and Language and Literature Department of most national and provincial universities, Shakespeare is a required course. The students of a Chinese department or a Language and Literature department will be trained as writers, editors, critics, or scholars undertaking research into language and literature (mainly Chinese language and literature). But the Chinese higher education authority clearly recognizes that students cannot be competent at their jobs in the near future without adequate knowledge of Western literature, particularly that of Shakespeare, since the dramatist's works have been universally accepted as the highest achievement of world literature. Students must not isolate themselves from the outside world and the cultural reality of contemporary China, for Western culture is so prevalent in China that nobody can ignore its existence and influence. Thus a one-year Western literature course is arranged for the students, in which Shakespeare occupies the longest section. During their last year, students will be offered a specific optional course of Shakespeare, in which they'll learn more of the

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<sup>20</sup>. Personal interview with Mrs Li in September 1985 in Beijing.

English dramatist and his works. In most cases, this optional course would become a required course because the students always show immense enthusiasm for Shakespeare and none want to miss it. In 1988, Professor Meng Xian Qiang, the general secretary of the Shakespeare Society of Jilin Province, told me that when he offered an optional Shakespeare course in the Chinese Department at Northeast Teachers' University, all the students of the fourth year enroled in his course without exception. By contrast, only one third of the students enroled in the optional course on traditional Chinese drama, offered by the same department. Professor Meng even felt a little compunction when the professor who taught the course of traditional Chinese drama, half jokingly said to him: 'Please tell Shakespeare, don't try to win the students away from my course. I don't understand these young people. They should pay special attention to our own cultural tradition because they'll teach and research Chinese literature rather than Western literature. Why do they show such an interest in Western literature and culture?' Both Professor Meng and I understood that what the professor complained of was a fact that nobody could deny, and it was also a trend that nobody could reverse. So Professor Meng gave a sophisticated answer: 'I think Shakespeare can probably provide one more way to approach traditional Chinese drama for the students'<sup>21</sup>

My own teaching experience repeats a similar story. When I offered an optional Shakespeare course for fourth year student in the Department of Language and Literature at Beijing Language Institute, all the students enroled in my course and showed an extraordinary enthusiasm for Shakespeare and his plays. During the course, I organized a seminar to discuss the character of Hamlet. I expected poor results because I knew clearly that Chinese students had been trained as stereotyped thinkers, influenced by both conventional culture and Marxism-Maoism, although there had been a strong call for reform in the education system since the 1980s. Yet the discussion turned out to be an successful one, with a full display of original views and independent thoughts of my students. Almost every participant described his or her own Hamlet. Their understanding of the hero was so often

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<sup>21</sup>. Personal letter from Professor Meng Xian Qiang of 5 October 1988.

associated with the social reality of contemporary China that I had to guide the discussion carefully through the problematic political issues because it seemed to be impossible to confine the seminar to the limit of a pure literary discussion.

In the English department or foreign language department of Chinese universities, Shakespeare is more emphasized by the education authority because such knowledge will directly concern the future of the student. Even if the students don't undertake, after graduation, literary teaching or research work, they still should possess some basic knowledge of the great writer otherwise they may feel embarrassed when in social contact with Westerners. So, Shakespeare has been a regular part of the curriculum of these departments. In some there is a course in Western literature in translation, including the longest section on Shakespeare. It aims to give students some general knowledge of Western literature, especially English, French and German literature. In most departments, however, Shakespeare is directly taught in English by either Chinese professors or foreign experts from Britain, America or other English-speaking countries. Courses in the departments of key national and provincial universities are normally undertaken by foreign experts simply because the universities can afford it. But at the very beginning of their work, the foreign experts may not appreciate the teaching mode of their Chinese colleagues or the learning method of the students, although the experts have absolute freedom to offer their course in any way they like. In his article, the Canadian Professor Edward Berry gave an account of his interesting experience in teaching Shakespeare in 1987 in a provincial university in China. He described both his achievement and problems in his teaching and expressed his concern about the possible political influence upon Shakespeare studies in China.<sup>22</sup> Generally, if the course is offered by a foreign expert, it will centre on the individual plays. If a Chinese scholar offers the course, he will tend to concentrate on wider topics such as Shakespeare's life, the social and historical background of Shakespearean plays, the ideology in Shakespeare, the aesthetics of Shakespeare, Shakespeare criticism, etc. The reason many Chinese critics and scholars turn away from textual research

<sup>22</sup>. Edward Berry, 'Teaching Shakespeare in China', Shakespeare Quarterly, 39 (1988), 212-6.

in the 1980s is that, on one hand, they grow weary of traditional pedantic textual criticism, and on the other hand, they believe that it would be more profitable to encompass large issues within the whole corpus in literary criticism and research. This current trend has inevitably affected both Shakespeare teaching and Shakespeare studies in contemporary China. In art institutes and colleges, Shakespeare has been an indispensable programme in the curriculum because it has been admitted that Shakespeare's art is not only an important accomplishment for a modern artist but also a productive inspiration for many sorts of artistic creation. Thus in all the national music institutions, fine arts institutes, dancing colleges, film institutes, broadcasting institutes and in most provincial art colleges, Shakespeare is taught as either a required course or an optional course. The students naturally pay special attention to the great English writer and often approach his works in various ways. Shakespeare's reputation even attracts students who study science and technology. In most national universities, there are numerous optional courses open to all students, no matter what their subject of study because the higher education authority encourage the students to have a wider range of knowledge. Among these courses, Shakespeare has been one of the most popular, drawing a lot of students from the faculties of science and technology, who recognize that Shakespeare is an indispensable part of the intellectual baggage of an educated person in modern society.

After the academic degree system was resumed by Chinese government in 1978, Shakespeare was the first speciality of Western literature studies approved by the State Education Commission to award M.A and Ph.D degrees. At first, only some authoritative Shakespeare scholars were entitle to enrol postgraduate students owing to the high academic standard set up by the State Education Commission. Ph.D students in Shakespeare Studies were recruited by Professor Cheng Jia at Nanjing University, Professor Sun Jia Xiu at the Central Drama Academy and Professor Wang Zuo Liang at Beijing Foreign Studies University. M.A students in Shakespeare Studies were recruited by Professor Zhang Jun Chuan at Hangzhou University, Professor Zhang Si Yang at Jilin University and Professor Shui Tian

Tong at Lan Zhou University, etc.<sup>23</sup> Since the middle of the 1980s, more and more Chinese scholars have been entitled to award higher degrees in Shakespeare studies. In recent years, almost all national universities and most provincial universities enrol postgraduate students in Shakespeare, who will obtain Their M.A or Ph.D degrees after finishing a three-year research course. Shakespeare has also entered into the curriculum of Chinese adult education. Each year, there are about six hundred thousand people studying in evening colleges and TV universities (similar to the Open University in Britain). Shakespeare is a major course on the syllabus for the language and literature speciality of all these adult education institutions. One of the examination questions for the students of language and literature speciality of National Television University was 'How do you understand the character of Hamlet?'. According to Professor Tao De Zhen at Beijing Teacher's University, who was in charge of the programme of the National Television University, the students' understanding of this question was even deeper than that of the undergraduates in universities, because most students of the National TV University were in their thirties or forties and had seen much of the world.<sup>24</sup> In China, a student who has no time to enrol with the course of adult education can still obtain a degree through taking the State Self-Education Examination. Each year there are several million people taking this examination. Those who intend to get a degree in Chinese Language and Literature must learn, on their own, some knowledge of Shakespeare who forms an important part of the examination.

The impact of Shakespeare upon Chinese education is also to be found in widespread Shakespeare productions in universities and institutions by students in a lively dramatic form of 'campus drama'. In the last decade, there were numerous Shakespeare productions presented in English by the students in English departments of some universities. These performances served evidently a double

<sup>23</sup>. 'Programme of Foreign Literature Studies', Postgraduate Studies in Chinese Universities from 1979-1984, ed. by the State Education Commission (Beijing, 1985), pp. 108-115.

<sup>24</sup>. Personal interview with Professor Tao De Zhen in February 1987 at his home on the campus of Beijing Teacher's University.

purpose: to enhance the students' mastery of the English language and to give all the students a taste of English culture. In November 1980, the students of the English Department at Shanghai Foreign Language Institute, presented A Midsummer Night's Dream in English, under the direction of an American expert Dr Smith, giving five performances altogether. On 22 April 1985, to commemorate the 421th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth, the drama group of the English Department at Fudan University, performed Act IV and Act V of The Merchant of Venice, at the celebration organized by the Shakespeare Association of China. The same group also presented Much Ado About Nothing in English at the University Hall during the Inaugural Chinese Shakespeare Festival in April 1986 (not included in the programme of the festival). The performance of Shakespeare plays in Chinese by student drama groups has been even better received by Chinese students. In April 1986, the Student Drama Society of the Chinese Department at Nanjing University presented The Taming of the Shrew, which received much acclaim from both the students and citizens. Generally speaking, as an amateur theatrical activity, the 'campus Shakespeare production' by Chinese students is not good enough for commercial performance, compared with those of British students. Some British 'campus Shakespeare' productions impress me with their skilful performance, bright style and original interpretation, e.g. a production of Henry V presented by Southampton University Players at the Nuffield Theatre on 17 January 1989 and a production of A Midsummer Night's Dream by Southampton University Theatre Group at the Nuffield Theatre on 7 March 1992. It seemed to me that these performances were by no means inferior to some professional performances. Admittedly, only a few Chinese student drama companies demonstrated their potentialities when they presented Shakespeare's plays on formal occasions. For instance, a very good student drama group, the North China Drama Society of Beijing Teacher's University, presented, at the same time, Twelfth Night (all women) and Timon of Athens at the Inaugural Chinese Shakespeare Festival in April 1986. The performances were satisfying and commonly praised by the audience and theatrical circles. The players, like those of other student drama groups, tried to display a refined classical style, whereas their British counterparts tend to combine high classical standards with a challenging contemporary approach

to Shakespeare.

In China, Shakespeare's works are enjoyed not only as theatre but also as many other forms of entertainment, in which no Western writers can bear comparison with him. Ballet has been regarded as a highbrow art in China and serves as one of the main forms of entertainment in big cities. In the 1980s, a version of Romeo and Juliet was frequently performed as a ballet in China. For example, in October 1984, to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Shanghai Ballet Company presented Romeo and Juliet in Shanghai, with Romeo acted by the famous ballet dancer Shi Hui and Juliet by the famous dancer Wang Qi Feng. The performance was a great success. In September 1990, at the festival of the 11th Asian Games in Beijing, the opening programme was a ballet Romeo and Juliet performed by the Central Ballet Company. About five billion Chinese people saw it on television. The performance was satisfying and spectacular against the dominantly national style of the festival.<sup>25</sup>

In recent years, some opera troupes in China have tried to adapt Shakespeare plays into opera. So-called 'opera troupes' in China mean those performing companies presenting music plays in a Western style, but the music is often mixed with Chinese folk songs or modern compositions. Early in April 1986 when I attended a conference in Beijing, a director of the Central Opera Theatre, who showed an interest in my speech at the conference about the relationship between changing artistic taste and the staging of Shakespeare in contemporary China, told me that he hoped to adapt Shakespeare's plays into opera someday. It seemed that his wish had at last come true when I read in a major Chinese daily newspaper at the very beginning of 1992 that the Central Opera Theatre presented The Taming of the Shrew in Beijing in January 1992 and received much acclaim from the audience and the cultural circles of the capital. After seeing the opera, He Jing Zhi, the Minister of Culture, said that the performance was successful and fascinating. He held that Shakespeare's humanism was still of great importance to today's

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<sup>25</sup>. Shan San Ya, 'Special Report on the Art Festival of the 11th Asian Games', Guangming Daily, 1 October 1990, p. 4.

China, and he was glad that Chinese theatrical artists had tried to interpret Shakespeare from their own perspectives but not rigidly adhered to the text.<sup>26</sup> Shakespeare's plays were even presented as puppet show by Chinese puppeteers. On 23 April 1986, at Shanghai Fenglei Theatre, the Shanghai Puppet Play Company presented a puppet show of The Twin Brother and Sister (Twelfth Night), which was enjoyed by the audience, particularly by the children.

As modern means of communication and forms of entertainment, film and television have played an increasingly important role in Chinese cultural life. Both are very effective channels through which Shakespeare exerts his influence on Chinese culture. Early in the 1950s, Shakespeare began to enter Chinese cinemas, and then appeared on the TV screen in the 1980s when most Chinese families had a colour or monochrome TV set. The earliest Shakespeare film showed throughout the country from 1958 was Laurence Olivier's Hamlet, electrifying millions upon millions of Chinese audiences. I can still clearly recall how I was shocked by the ghost scene and moved by the solemn atmosphere of the film when I first saw it thirty years ago. The film was excellently dubbed with two attractive titles: The Ghost Travels West (part one) and The Revenge of the Prince (part two). In the 1960s, more Shakespearean films were showed in China, including several Russian productions such as Othello, Twelfth Night and Romeo and Juliet. In the 1980s, Shakespeare's plays began to appear on the Chinese TV screen. At first in April 1986, the Central Television Station dubbed and broadcast Romeo and Juliet by B.B.C, under the supervision of the Number one Chinese Shakespeare scholar Professor Sun Jia Xiu of the Central Drama Academy. The B.B.C's The Tempest and Henry IV (two parts) followed in the latter half of the year. Julius Caesar by B.B.C was broadcast in 1987 and more B.B.C titles were in preparation. Performances of Shakespeare's plays in theatres and other occasions were also frequently telecast live. TV broadcasting has made the greatest contribution to the popularity of Shakespeare in China because there are probably more than six billion

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<sup>26</sup>. 'The News of Art' Guang Ming Daily, 5 January 1992, p. 2.

TV viewers in China according to the official statistics.<sup>27</sup>

As one of the major social media, radio broadcasting in China still has a great many listeners. It seems that the editors and producers of Chinese radio broadcasting service are keen to invite Shakespeare to enrich their programmes for it is assumed that it would be a great pleasure to appreciate the beautiful lines of Shakespeare's text, recited by actors in radio. In April 1986, the Shanghai People's Broadcasting Station broadcast a radio production of Macbeth, in four parts. The play was characterized by vivid monologues and dialogues, wonderful sound effects and rich music. The station received many letters from ardent listeners to show their great interest in the play.<sup>28</sup> On 3 December 1986, the Shanghai People's Broadcasting Station produced A Midsummer Night's Dream in four parts, under the direction of the famous stage artist Huang Zuo Lin. The directors and producers of Jilin People's Broadcasting Station displayed much originality in adapting all thirty seven of Shakespeare's plays into a series of radio programmes, with the co-operation of the Shakespeare Society of Jilin Province. Many well-known dubbing actors and actresses from Changchun Film Studio, a state film studio, took part in the work. The general title of the programme was 'the Stories and Scenes from Shakespeare's Plays', including forty two parts (thirty seven plays plus several parts of general introduction to Shakespeare) and each part contained a short statement of the story and some of the best scenes or passages of the play. The programme was broadcast one part per week, lasting almost a whole year. According to a local newspaper, the programme has been broadcast three times since 1988.<sup>29</sup> This programme was highly praised by both Chinese scholars and radio listeners because it was an easy and convenient way to have a glance at Shakespeare' dramatic treasure and to appreciate the cream of the plays. To meet

<sup>27</sup>. 'The Figures of the Living Condition of the Chinese in the Past Decade', People's Daily, 14 February 1991, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup>. Zhang Jun Chuan, 'The First Attempt --- Notes at the Symposium on the Radio Play Macbeth', Shakespeare in China, ed. by the Shakespeare Association of China (Shanghai, 1987), p. 170.

<sup>29</sup>. Jilin Radio and Television Weekly, 20 January 1992, p. 2.

the increasing demand of the Chinese to enjoy the beautiful language of Shakespeare, the Chinese Phonograph and Tape Company produced 'The Highlights of Shakespeare's Best Known Plays' in two tapes in 1986, selecting the brilliant passages, dialogues and monologues from some best known Shakespeare's plays including Hamlet, King Lear, Othello, Romeo and Juliet, Twelfth Night, etc. A lot of famous Chinese actors such as Sun Dao Lin, Qiao Zhen, Qiao Qi, Zhu Yi, participated in the recording work. The Tape sold very well on the market.

Shakespeare also finds his place in the music world of the Chinese. In 1960, the Chinese Music Publishing House published The Collection of the Best Known Foreign Songs, including two songs from Shakespeare: 'Cuckoo' (the song of 'Spring' at the end of Love's Labour's Lost) by the British composer Thomas Arne and 'Hark, Hark! the Lark' (the song in Act II, scene 2 of Cymbeline) by Schubert. During the dark years of the Cultural Revolution, the songs of this collection secretly spread far and wide among school leavers who were forced to leave cities and work in the countryside. Many of my friends at that time liked the two songs of Shakespeare, particularly the 'Cuckoo' by Arne.

It is hard for Westerners to recognize how high is the prestige that Shakespeare enjoys in the literary and art circles of China, and how greatly and widely Shakespeare has influenced literary and artistic creation in contemporary China, quite apart from the theatrical activities discussed above. In China, one can easily notice the remarks on or references to Shakespeare by Chinese writers and artists anywhere and at any time. For example, in a conference on poetic creation in China, the famous Chinese poet Ai Qing said: '... As for Shakespeare, he is such a writer that he cannot write without thinking in terms of images. His works radiate with the eternal light of imagination'.<sup>30</sup> On the evening of 5 May 1990, there was a programme on the Central Television Station, in which the presenter interviewed a famous pop star, Miss Cheng Fang Yuan. Miss Cheng was asked many questions concerning her career, personal experience and hobby. Asked who was her favourite

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<sup>30</sup>. Wang Qiang, 'Report on the Conference on Poetic Creation' Literature and Art Monthly, (1980), p. 17.

writer, she answered: 'Shakespeare'. Then she told the presenter that besides those characteristics of Shakespeare which were commonly enjoyed by people, she was particularly interested in Shakespeare's representation of the psychology of women.<sup>31</sup> Shakespeare is also admired by Chinese painters. To show his great esteem for Shakespeare, the famous painter Cao Wen Han created, in 1983, an engraved portrait of Shakespeare against a setting of the fencing scene in Hamlet, which was printed on the front covers of many Shakespeare journals in China and Japan. In his article to discuss his intention and process of creating the portrait, Mr Cao said:

As a Chinese painter, I have admired Shakespeare for a long time. Shakespeare provides me precious nourishment for my mind. I have obtained a great inspiration and artistic treat from his works. It is not of importance whether the portrait is successful or not. What really matters is that it demonstrates the active participation of Chinese painters in the Shakespeare industry of China although the participation is not as noticeable as that of literary critics. It also shows clearly how widespread and popular Shakespeare's influence upon Chinese culture is.<sup>32</sup>

The high prestige which Shakespeare enjoys in Chinese literary and art circles can also be proved by numerous great occasions. For example, on the evening of 31 December 1987, there was a new year celebration organized by Beijing literary and art circles, which was televised live by the Central Television Station to viewers throughout the country. Watching the programme with my family, I saw many well-known writers, directors, actors, film producers, pop stars, etc, appearing on the screen, talking about their work in the past year or presenting impromptu performances. It seemed that the most interesting item in the celebration was a special 'programme' arranged at the end of the party. The host told all the

<sup>31</sup>. An eyewitness report by my previous colleague Xu Bin, the lecturer at Jilin University.

<sup>32</sup>. Cao Wen Han, 'A note About the Creation of Shakespeare's Portrait', Shakespeare's Triple Play --- Research, Performance and Teaching, ed. by Zhang Si Yang (Jilin, 1987), p. 257.

participants that he felt great honoured to introduce a distinguished guest to them. The guest would be familiar to all of them although they have never met him before. No sooner had the guest come in than I recognized that he was 'Shakespeare', acted by a Chinese player. The writers and artists greeted the greatest English writer with warm applause. Then 'Shakespeare' addressed his Chinese counterparts, as well as Chinese TV viewers. He said that there was no national boundary to literature and art. Both Western culture and Eastern culture were the common treasure of mankind. He expressed his admiration for the long-standing Chinese culture. He told the Chinese writers and artists that he was very pleased to know that they were creating their new literature and art while showing their interest in Western literature and art. It looked as if 'Shakespeare' knew contemporary Chinese literature and art very well because he congratulated his Chinese counterparts on their achievements in the past year which, he believed, exhibited a vigorous spirit of the times. His speech was punctuated by the participants with warm applause. Seemingly, this novel device was used to enliven the atmosphere of the celebration, but there was something unusual behind it. If the organizers of the celebration follow the old routine, they should invite a high ranking official of the Party or government who was in charge of cultural establishments, to attend the occasion and to comment on the achievement of the literary and art circles; or at least, a famous classical Chinese 'writer' should be invited to address his successors. It sounded as though Shakespeare was considered by the organizers as the most suitable person having authority to evaluate the achievement of Chinese writers and artists, which provides strong evidence that Shakespeare has been regarded as the god of art by Chinese writers and artists.

Examining literary and artistic creation in contemporary China, we can see clearly the widespread and profound influence of Shakespeare, directly or indirectly, upon many major genres of literature and art such as fiction, poetry, film, TV film, etc. The following selected examples will suffice to show this phenomenon. The creation of the novel in contemporary China has been taken by Chinese critics as the top achievement of the 'Literature of the New Period' (1978-1988), for its profound theme, vivid characterization and varied style. Compared with the classical

and modern Chinese novel, the novel of this period shows a quite different tendency. As some critics pointed out, most novelists in this period tried to portray complex characters with multiple qualities, and were obviously dissatisfied with the moral type orientation of classical Chinese literature and the social class type orientation of the 'Socialist Literature' (1949-1978). The novelists paid special attention to psychological description in their works and tended to discuss the question of a philosophy of life through their characters.<sup>33</sup> All these characteristics exhibit a clear influence of Shakespeare because Shakespeare's literary techniques have been regarded as the highest by Chinese novelists and followed quite often by them. Many Chinese novelists talked about how they had benefited from Shakespeare's techniques, especially his characterization and psychological description.<sup>34</sup> The most important aspect, in which Shakespeare's impact on the novel creation is to be found, is the representation of the central theme. Almost all the novel works during this time concentrate on delineating general human nature and the celebration of individuality instead of reflecting the class struggle and proletarian revolution which was the central theme of Chinese literature from 1949 to 1978. The typical novel representing the new theme is Zhang Xin Xin's Man, Oh, Man (Ren A Ren).

The poets of contemporary China also benefit from Shakespeare. Shakespeare has been seen by Chinese poets as one of the greatest poets in the world. His unique poetic style and techniques have been eagerly followed by contemporary Chinese poets. The poetic creation in the period of 'New Literature' (1978-1988) showed an artistic tendency different from that of both classical Chinese poetry and the poetry of 'Socialist Literature' (1949-1978). The poems of this period represent the anxiety, enthusiasm and voice of the times, more directly than other literary genres and exhibit an apparent influence of Shakespearean poetic style. It is evident that many poets tend to adopt the explicit, straightforward and bold poetic

<sup>33</sup>. Xong Zhong Wu, 'The Artistic Tendency of the Contemporary Novel', Literature Criticism, 3 (1986), 124-33 (pp. 126-8).

<sup>34</sup>. Wen Jie, 'My Creative Experience', The Discussion of Creative Writing by the Young Novelists, ed. by Huang Yue Qin (Jilin, 1988), pp. 22-4.

representation associated with Shakespeare. The traditional restrained and refined poetic style seems to be out of favour. Thus the poems in this period impress readers with their strong, vigorous and impassioned style instead of a feeling of gentleness, delicacy and gracefulness which traditional Chinese poetry and drama try to achieve, as we discussed in Chapter 2. The famous young poet and critic Xu Jing said that to Chinese poetic circles Shakespeare was like a fresh air. Shakespeare's poems were full of vitality, enthusiasm and imagination and had been the model of his poetic creation.<sup>35</sup> In the employment of imagery, contemporary Chinese poets seem to prefer the Shakespearean mode to that of traditional Chinese drama and poetry. In the poems by some famous young poets such as Bei Dao, Mang Ke, Xu Jin Ya and Wang Xiao Ni, the poetic images are very widely chosen and are no longer limited to the narrow range of images used in traditional Chinese drama and poetry. The images in their works are often gigantic, vigorous, disruptive and even odd, but sometimes very wonderful and witty. Following another Shakespearean mode, the poets begin to use symbolic images to illustrate abstract things such as 'political power', 'democracy', 'ambition', 'faith', 'wish', 'love', 'youth', etc, which can hardly be found in traditional Chinese drama and poetry.

Sensitive to the changes in both politics and literature and art, film and telefilm function as important media in the cultural life in contemporary China. It seems that Shakespeare has exerted an influence on the production of film and telefilm in China in the last decade. Many films reflecting social life during the Cultural Revolution have no happy ending in the mode of traditional Chinese drama, or 'bright ending' of the mode of 'Socialist Literature'. It can be assumed that this tendency was affected by Shakespeare's tragic concept. In A Narrow Lane (1985), by Shanghai Film Studio, starring Guo Kai Min and Zhang Yu, a young man and a girl suffer a lot in the turbulence of the Cultural Revolution. The girl disguises herself as a boy to avoid being bullied because her parents are treated as counter-revolutionaries during the movement. They help and care for each other like real brothers. The young man is only aware of the identity of the girl very late in the

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<sup>35</sup>. Xu Jing, 'The Tendency of the Contemporary Poetry', Baihua Monthly,  
4 (1987), p. 42.

story. But the film ends without the reunion and marriage of the hero and heroine. Assuming that the audience must expect a happy ending, the director of the film makes an apology, at the end of the film, to the audience for his unusual treatment. He says that events in real life do not always result in happy endings, and it would be better if the audience could conceive different endings on their own. The influence of Shakespeare upon the characterization of contemporary Chinese film was more evident. The characters in the film come to the audience with wide variations and cannot be simply classified by any fixed moral or political standards. Other features such as double nature, variable disposition, and psychological description make many of the characters suggestive of Shakespearean characters. One typical example can be found in The Demon and the Angel made by the Zhu Jiang Film Studio in 1988. The chief character in the film is a burglar, who one day meets a girl studying at a fine arts college and immediately falls in love. The girl is also attracted by his sophisticated manner. Since then the man has been in a dilemma as to whether to stop his criminal offence and live with the girl as an innocent person, or continue his evil business to get more money; inevitably, he suffers from a sharp inner conflict. At the end of the film, the man is sent to prison and the girl is forced to work in a remote island. The delineation of the chief characters' inner world strongly suggests that of Macbeth though the two heroes are driven by different passions. The portrayal of such a character's double nature can hardly be found in previous Chinese literature, including traditional Chinese drama, because it might arouse an ambiguous moral response, which would run counter to the principle of both traditional Chinese literature and socialist Chinese literature.

It seemed to be a fashion to discuss philosophical questions in the films of the last decade in China. But we can often smell out a Shakespearean style behind the dialogues. For example, at the beginning of The Demon and the Angel, when the young man first meets the girl at an underground railway station, he talks on and on about the meaning of life in a flow of eloquence, which makes one feel that a Shakespearean character is reciting some lengthy monologue. Sometimes the screen writers simply use quotations from Shakespeare's plays. In The Unbridled Passions (just the title is apparent enough to show the influence of Shakespeare), made by

the Zhu Jiang Film Studio in 1989, when the heroine tries to commit suicide on the seashore after being raped by her boyfriend's father, she hears a deep voice from behind the rocks reciting:

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

(Hamlet, 3. 1. 56-61)

Then the speaker, a handsome young man who is the hero of the film, comes up to comfort the girl. He is a wronged and insulted person too. They decide to seek their interest and happiness jointly. But, like Edmund and other bastards in Shakespeare's plays, they try to combat poison with poison, which at last brings about their tragic end. Generally speaking, this tendency to discuss the philosophy of life in the film is welcomed by Chinese audiences. But sometimes the screenwriters do not use this technique as naturally and properly as Shakespeare does, and the philosophical dialogue in some productions seems a little dull and farfetched.

In contemporary China, Shakespeare's works serve not only as a top model for literary and artistic creation, but also as the highest standard for literary criticism, with the dramatist's position as the representative of durable literary value. Shakespeare's increasing reputation in Chinese academic circles partly stems from the expansion of Shakespeare studies as an academic specialization because the dramatist defines a field for a wide range of research and critical writing. As we mentioned in chapter 3, there are numerous articles and books dealing with Shakespeare published in the last decade, and, as we stated in the previous pages in this chapter, there is also a massive and well qualified team of Shakespeare scholars throughout the country. In addition, a nationwide Shakespeare association -- the Shakespeare Association of China --- was founded in 1984 by well-known Chinese Shakespeare scholars, translators and directors, with the distinguished Chinese dramatist Cao Yu as president and the Shanghai Drama Institute as its

headquarters. The association successfully held the very influential Inaugural Chinese Shakespeare Festival in 1986. Meantime, some provincial Shakespeare associations were set up one after another. The Shakespeare Society of Jilin Province was established in 1985, with Professor Zhang Si Yang of Jilin University as president; among its many activities were to hold an exhibition of Shakespeare's life and works, to translate a documentary film Shakespeare's Hometown and other Shakespeare telefilms, to produce Shakespeare radio plays, etc. In 1989, the Shakespeare scholars in Tianjing, which is the third biggest city in China, founded the Shakespeare Association of Tianjing City. The famous expert of foreign literary studies, professor Zhu Wei Zhi was elected as president. According to Professor Zhang Si Yang, more provincial Shakespeare Associations are in preparations in China.<sup>36</sup> Specific Shakespeare research institutions were also established. In 1985, the Central Drama Academy set up a Shakespeare Centre to improve Shakespeare studies and collect reference material relating to Shakespeare theatre and studies. In the same year, Fudan University established a Shakespeare library which would serve Shakespeare studies in the country by collecting reference material in both English and Chinese. Shakespeare journals are also published in China, including Shakespeare Studies by the Shakespeare Association of China, Journal of the Jilin Shakespeare Society by the Shakespeare Society of Jilin Province and Shakespeare Studies (in English), a local journal compiled by members of the English Department at Fudan University.

Along with the sharp expansion of Shakespeare's studies, Shakespeare's art has been commonly accepted by Chinese critics as a fundamental principle for literary criticism and theory. In fact, in contemporary China, Shakespeare's artistic method has replaced the principle of both traditional Chinese literature and socialist literature, and become a dominant literary principle. In theatrical criticism, as we discussed in the earlier pages of this chapter, Shakespearean dramatic concepts have been used by Chinese critics as the highest standard to comment on dramatic

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<sup>36</sup>. Zhang Si Yang, 'The News of Shakespeare Studies', Shakespeare in Our Times: A Selection of Shakespeare Criticism, ed. by Zhang Si Yang and Meng Xian Qiang (Jilin, 1990)), p. 218.

works. In addition, Shakespeare's artistic idea has been largely employed by Chinese critics and scholars in every aspect of literary theory, literature criticism, and academic argument. For instance, in the early 1980s, there was an academic discussion in the field of literary theory about the principle and standard of characterization in literary creation. The individualized mode of character portrayal was considered as the most mature technique of characterization and Shakespeare was taken as the representative of this mode.<sup>37</sup> Professor Liu Zai Fu, the director of the Literature Institution of the Chinese Academy of Social Science, is a radical and leading figure in Chinese literary circles, who was often attacked by the conservative literary school who adhere to the orthodox literary theory of Marxism-Maoism. In his influential book The Constitution of the Nature of Literary Characters, Professor Liu deals with a variety of modes of characterization and shows an evident tendency to favour the Shakespearean mode of character portrayal, with numerous references to the dramatist in his book.<sup>38</sup> In the last decade, some modern Western literary theories were introduced into China, such as structuralism, post-structuralism, deconstruction, semiotics, psychological criticism, aesthetics of reception, feminism, etc. Yet most of them were taken by Chinese scholars and critics only as useful knowledge but not as practical principle in literary criticism. It seems that sometimes Chinese critics show more interest in the Shakespearean references related to these new literary theories than in the theories themselves. For example, Shakespeare's concern with subconsciousness and abnormal psychology which were associated with Freudian theory are quite often taken by Chinese critics as evidence of the necessity for Chinese writers to improve their representation of psychology in various forms, and the standard for such representations. Ernest Jones' book on Hamlet's "Oedipus complex" was particularly discussed by Chinese critics, though they generally did not agree with the author

37. Fan Hong, 'The Evolution of Characterization from Moral Type to Individualization', Jiang Hai Forum, 5 (1981), p. 17.

38. Liu Zai Fu, The Constitution of the Nature of Literary characters (Shanghai, 1986), pp. 2-3, 28-30, 87, 134-5.

whose opinion was opposed to the psychological habit of the Chinese.<sup>39</sup> In China, Northrop Frye's anthropological criticism was always associated with Shakespeare's works, and was often used to enhance the artistic merit of Shakespeare and strengthen the authoritative position of his works as a major standard for literary criticism rather than spur Chinese critics on to practice Frye's theory in literary criticism.<sup>40</sup>

Shakespeare has not only made a notable impact on Chinese education and cultural life but also been taken up in the politics of modern and contemporary China. During the period of the Democratic Revolution (1911-1949), Shakespeare's works were sometimes used by the Chinese as a powerful weapon to fight against feudal dictatorship. One typical example is the political event in 1915. In that year, the chief warlord Yuan Shi Kai attempted to restore autocratic monarchy which had been overthrown by the Xin Hai Revolution led by Sun Zhong Shan in 1911. But after that, China was ruled by the warlords. As the most powerful warlord, Yuan Shi Kai tried to usurp the state power and become a new emperor. His plot incurred the wrath of the people throughout the country. Chinese intellectuals used every practical means of propaganda to expose Yuan Shi Kai's plot. Shakespeare's plays were also used by Chinese dramatic workers to satirize and attack the warlord's ambition. In 1916 the Yao Feng New Drama Company adapted and performed Macbeth in Shanghai, with the title of The Arch Usurper, attacking Yuan Shi Kai by innuendo. In the same year, in Qian Kun Theatre, Shanghai, the Dao Drama Troupe presented a production of Hamlet, with the title of The Treacherous Lord Who Disturbs the Country. The play was also intended to expose Yuan Shi Kai's ambition to restore autocratic monarchy. The most sensational political event at that time was caused by the performance of Macbeth by the Min Meng Drama Company in Shanghai. In the play, the famous actor Gu Wu Wei fiercely condemned monarchy, attacking Yuan Shi Kai by innuendo with freezing

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<sup>39</sup>. Lan Ren Zhe, 'The Main Methods of Contemporary Literary Criticism', Literary Theory Studies, 3 (1982), 144-54.

<sup>40</sup>. Zhang Long Xi, 'The Revival of the Gods', Reading, 4 (1984), 36-41.

irony and burning satire, which brought the house down. Yuan Shi Kai flew into a rage from shame when he was informed of the performance, giving an order then to arrest the actor. Mr Gu Wu Wei was arrested soon by the Shanghai Garrison Headquarters, accused of disturbing public order and agitating people under the pretext of performance. The Garrison Headquarters sentenced Mr Gu to death without trial. Fortunately the sudden downfall and death of Yuan Shi Kai relieved Mr Gu from death.<sup>41</sup> This political incident, however, left a striking mark on the process of the Chinese to strive for democracy, and meantime, demonstrated how Shakespeare got involved in the politics and social progress of China.

Contemporary China also sees the participation of Shakespeare in politics. The significance of many cultural activities concerning Shakespeare often goes beyond the scope of culture, having political colours. For instance, the influential Inaugural Chinese Shakespeare Festival was not only a cultural occasion but also a political activity because it declared that China would put further into effect the policy to absorb Western culture and return to world cultural life. The attendance of both Chinese and British high ranking officials at the festival, together with the congratulatory letter from Mrs Thatcher, bestowed a diplomatic significance on the festival, contributing to the improvement and reinforcement of Sino-British relationships. Another event important to international relationships and politics was the visit of Hu Yao Bang, the general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, to Stratford-Upon-Avon during his state visit to the United Kingdom in June 1986. It was quite unusual for Hu Yao Bang to visit the hometown of Shakespeare because there was no precedent for Chinese leaders to visit the properties of a foreign writer and pay tribute to the writer. The visit of Hu Yao Bang to Stratford, together with the pictures in which he talked with local residents and tourists on the river bank, was front page news with bold headlines in all the official newspapers in China. According to the reports, during his visit to Stratford, Mr Hu told his English hosts that Shakespeare belonged not only to Britain but also to the world. Chinese people had cheerfully shared Shakespearean works with the British and the

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<sup>41</sup>. Cao Shu Jun and Sun Fu Liang, Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage (Haerbin, 1989), pp. 80-1.

people all over the world.<sup>42</sup> It is evident that Mr Hu's visit to Stratford was of political importance. His visit as leader of the Chinese Communist Party and the leading figure in the reform group, helped to set up a better international image of China, declaring that China would firmly carry out its 'open door' policy by learning both advanced Western technology and Western cultural heritage. Personally, I don't think Mr Hu had an extensive knowledge of Shakespeare. But his attitude towards Western culture and ideology was commonly praised by Chinese intellectuals and strongly opposed by the powerful conservative group in the leadership, which was one of the major reasons why he was ousted from his post by the conservative group in 1987. Then his sudden death in 1989 functioned as an incident that touched off the political event on Tian An Men Square which shook the world. As a matter of fact, Shakespeare has deeply impacted upon the constitution of the new ideology of the Chinese, which serves as a crucial factor to bring about the rapid social changes in contemporary China. I will discuss this in the next chapter.

The fact that Shakespeare exists in China as a complex institutional reality can be shown in his influence on varied and diverse cultural production and many domains of social practice. One of the most noticeable phenomena of the existence of Shakespeare in Chinese life is the frequent quotation of sayings, epigrams and maxims from Shakespearean texts in publications, lectures, TV and radio programmes, and on many public and private occasions. It is a fashion to use Shakespearean quotations to enhance your article or speech, to express your opinion or emotion, and to show your erudition, which ironically brings back to the Chinese mind the compulsory use of Mao's quotations on both private and public occasions during the Cultural Revolution. Even in articles dealing with serious matters, carried by official magazines or newspapers, we can often find Shakespearean quotations. In 1989, an article in People's Daily, the most authoritative newspaper in China, criticizes the new Chinese businessmen in Shakespearean terms:

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<sup>42</sup>. 'The News Report', People's Daily, 12 June 1986, p. 1.

Lacking the psychology to be the rich, the private businessmen in contemporary China now land in a predicament as to how deal with their wealth and social status, which can be associated with what Shakespeare describes:

He shall but bear them as the ass bears gold,  
To groan and sweat under the business, . . .

(Julius Caesar, 4. 1. 21-2)

The incompatibility of their wealth with their psychology has resulted in an abnormal psychology for them.<sup>43</sup>

Shakespeare also contributes to the campaign against corruption in China in the 1980s. In 1985, a special report was carried by a provincial official newspaper Liaoning Daily, stating a shocking story about a corrupt official who not only used his power to make money illegally but also raped several women who entreated him for help. Under the title of the article, a quotation from Shakespeare's plays was used, printed with eye-catching boldface type: 'Hence shall we see, If power change purpose, what our seemers be.' (Measure for Measure, 1. 3. 53-4) --- William Shakespeare<sup>44</sup> The author indeed used the quotation very properly because the offence of the official was similar to and more serious than that of Angelo. Many magazines and newspapers in China have a special column to introduce well-known sayings of famous persons. Shakespeare's quotations appear mostly in the columns. For instance, in 1986, seven of the twelve issues of The Youth Digest, a very influential magazine in China with several million readers, carried Shakespearean quotations about love, life, ethics, reason, emotion, human nature, etc in the column of 'The Well-Known Sayings of Eminent Persons'. Caused by this fashion, it is understandable that there are so many books published in China in recent years, collecting 'golden sayings' from Shakespeare works, including The Witty Remarks of Shakespeare by the Gansu People's Press in 1986 and One Hundred Brilliant

<sup>43</sup>. Xie De Hui, 'Money, the Desperate Beast', People's Daily, 27 February 1989, p. 7.

<sup>44</sup>. Jing Zhong. 'What Happened in the Dark', Liaoning Daily, 3 July 1987, p. 2.

Passages from Shakespearean Works by the Chinese External Translation Publishing Ltd in 1988, etc. All of these books are best-sellers in the market.

The 1980s saw the prevalence of various forms of contest on T.V. in China. One well-known nationwide contest was the May Fourth Youth Intelligence Contest held by the Central Television Station yearly. The participants must have extensive knowledge to win. The final normally took place in the evening of 4th May. I saw the final of 1987. There were four contestants, ranging, in age, from seventeen to thirty, with different educational backgrounds. After drawing a question Label, Zhao Zhong Xiang, the famous presenter of the Central Television station, asked a young man, 'What are the great tragedies of Shakespeare?' The young man responded to the question very quickly without hesitation: 'They are Hamlet, King Lear, Othello and Macbeth.' The audience congratulated him with applause, and the scoreboard showed a full mark for his answer. Watching this scene, I felt excited, naturally, as a Shakespeare scholar. But what really matters was the selection of Shakespearean knowledge for the final because the questions concerning literature and art formed only a very small part of the whole set of questions and there were only a few writers, including Chinese writers, included. It convincingly proved the high position of the dramatist in Chinese cultural life.

The most typical example of the combination of financial value and cultural value of Shakespeare could be the issue of Shakespeare's commemorative golden coin in China. In 1990, to celebrate the achievement of world culture, the Bank of China issued a set of golden coins to commemorate five great figures in world culture, including Xuan Yuan Shi (the forefather of the Chinese in legend, who invented crop-growing and silkworm-raising), Homer, Shakespeare, Goethe and Edison. The nomination was made obviously from the perspective of the Chinese. Actually, the influences of Homer and Goethe on Chinese culture are much less than that of Shakespeare. As for Edison, Chinese people would benefit from him materially rather than culturally.

Probably the most interesting example of the influence of Shakespeare upon

Chinese culture and social practice is the employment of the dramatist in advertisements. Last year, Professor Zhang Si Yang, the vice-president of the Shakespeare Association of China, sent me a cutting from a local Chinese journal. It was an advertisement to sell wedding dresses, and the text read as follows:

**'Wedding Dress --- the Best Choice  
for a Modern Bride'**

Shakespeare said, Neither borrow a wedding dress from others, nor lend your wedding dress to others, only by wearing your own wedding dress can you have a happy life.

It is really a pity that a modern bride goes to her wedding without a wedding dress. Changchun Fashionable Dress Factory is a state level factory to specifically make wedding dresses.

Then came details of the product and service, address and telephone number, etc. The advertisement sounds a very funny and clever device, relating Shakespeare to dress-making production, and instantly recognisable as a transformation of Polonius' lines 'Neither a borrower nor a lender be' (Hamlet, 1. 3. 75); Polonius' precepts for his son have aroused great interest among the Chinese and been taken as a motto by many young people. Shakespeare may blame the copy writer for such a distortion, but he may, at the same time, admire his resourcefulness to take advantage of his reputation to make money. Here Shakespeare's cultural value and his commercial value are mixed to produce a special cultural product that will help to form an institutional reality of Shakespeare in China.

In China, Shakespeare even contributes to the construction of new social customs. Along with rapid changes in every respect of the society, many traditional customs become quickly outmoded. For instance, the old wedding ceremony is both overelaborate and costly. So, many young people tend to have a simple wedding ceremony in good taste. Beijing first saw the vogue of the 'Tea Party' wedding with a poetry reading or performance presenting by the bride and groom. The love poetry from Shakespearean works can often be heard at these new-style weddings.

I myself experienced two such cases in 1987 and 1988 when my wife and I attended our friends' weddings. Coincidentally, Shakespeare's sonnet 116 was recited at both weddings. A more interesting piece of information was provided by The Youth in 1990 that in Guangzhou City, it was a fashion for the guest to present the Complete Works of Shakespeare (in translation, eleven volumes by the People's Literature Press) to the bride and groom as a wedding gift instead of giving them money.<sup>45</sup> The information must have heartened Chinese scholars and cultural workers because Guangzhou has been regarded as an area with a strong climate of commercialism and materialism.

From this brief survey of the widespread and profound influence of Shakespeare upon Chinese culture and the existence of a culturally produced 'Shakespeare phenomenon' in Chinese life, it will be seen that Shakespeare has been cheerfully and thoroughly received by the Chinese and functions as a major and indispensable figure in the cultural landscape of China. It seems that Shakespeare's reception in China has furnished fresh evidence to indicate his universal appeal and importance as a writer 'not of an age but for all time', as Ben Jonson wrote, considering that the Chinese cultural tradition differs completely from that of the West. Yet the worldwide appreciation of Shakespeare by no means implies that every nation approaches Shakespeare in the same way and enjoys his works for the same reason. So I shall, in the next chapter, deal with the general perspective of the Chinese on Shakespeare and try to describe a Chinese vision of the dramatist.

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<sup>45</sup>. Han Xing, 'A New Habit of Marriage in Guangzhou', The Youth, 5 (1990), p. 16.

## **Chapter 6. The Multiple Perspective of the Chinese on Shakespeare: Confucianism, Marxism and Humanism**

Alien cultures have different visions of Shakespeare and every nation has its own cultural and social perspective with which to view the dramatist, besides the common artistic taste of mankind. The reception of Shakespeare in China can be seen as one proof of such an assumption because of the striking discrepancy between Chinese and Western culture. Whenever a play is transferred to an alien culture, the cultural discrepancy often displays a dual nature. It could be a barrier to the understanding of the play, or reveal elements which other cultures have never seen before. In China, Shakespeare is thought a lucky foreign writer because it seems that Chinese culture generally does not present difficulties to the reception of Shakespeare in the country. We should bear in mind that the process of Shakespeare's reception in China coincided with the process of the assimilation of Western culture by Chinese culture. Modern and contemporary Chinese culture (called "New Culture" in China) is actually a mixture of Western culture and traditional Chinese culture, and the former is often seen by the Chinese to be higher than the latter, as we discussed at the beginning of Chapter 5. We should also remember that the modern Chinese education system was established with the help of Western missionaries and intellectuals, which resulted in the Western orientation of modern Chinese education. Accordingly, most educated Chinese are well acquainted with Western civilization. Even the poorly educated and illiterate Chinese acquire a sense of Western culture through many of today's media. Thus it is assumed that Shakespeare's plays should not be distant and strange to the people because they will have no difficulties in understanding their cultural context and references.

This view suggests that the Chinese approach Shakespeare in a way similar to

that of Westerners. Some Chinese Shakespeare scholars indeed maintain that the dominant perspective of the Chinese on the dramatist has something in common with Western appreciation of Shakespeare, and that, affected by the progressive Westernization in many phases of Chinese culture and society, the Chinese interpret Shakespeare's works in the light of Western values, conceptions and beliefs instead of Chinese ideology and institutions.<sup>1</sup> Such a view can be supported by the superficial tendency of the Shakespeare industry in China, in which Chinese critics and scholars often pay attention to what their Western counterparts have also emphasized.

Yet I would argue that the actual perspective of the Chinese on Shakespeare is far from a single unified West-oriented vision. On the contrary, it is, from a materialist position, a multiple, complex and variable perspective, mingled with varied and diverse ideologies and tastes shaped by the cultural, social and historical contexts of modern and contemporary China. The West-oriented perception is just a part of this multiple perspective and cannot, in any case, be taken as the exclusive collective taste of the Chinese. Firstly, traditional Chinese culture, which is centred on Confucianism, still largely functions in the social and cultural practice of the Chinese today although it has lost its absolutely dominant position. Undoubtedly, it has deeply and greatly affected the interpretation of Shakespeare by Chinese people, serving as one of the major perspectives of the Chinese on the dramatist. Then again, power struggle ran through the history of modern China, so Chinese cultural life was inevitably influenced by a political and ideological context. Marxism, which has been the dominant ideology in China for more than forty years, has impacted directly and explicitly upon the response of the Chinese to Shakespeare's plays and will still exert its influence on Shakespeare production and study in contemporary China even if popular interest in it has subsided. Finally, humanism appears to be a typical Western ideology and has been regarded by Chinese scholars as the core value of Shakespeare. Many Chinese people also tend to view Shakespeare from the standpoint of humanism, which can be seen as a

<sup>1</sup>. Zhang He, 'What Should We Learn from Shakespeare?', Literature and Art, 3 (1985), p. 18.

West-oriented perspective. But in fact, the understanding and use of the term often exhibit a strong Chinese colour affected by the changing social and political context. Thus it can be said that there exist at least three major perspectives of the Chinese on Shakespeare. This chapter is, therefore, meant to analyze what factors operate culturally, socially and historically in the process of the assimilation of Shakespeare by Chinese culture, to present an account of the multiple perspectives of the Chinese on the dramatist in the light of cultural materialism, and to see how greatly they affect the interpretation of Shakespeare by the people. Finally I shall consider the different functions of these perspectives in the formation of the general Chinese vision of Shakespeare.

The first major factor which directly affects Shakespeare's reception in China is the country's long-standing cultural tradition. It is easier to find, through careful examination, that the appreciation of Shakespeare by the Chinese often shows evident influence of conventional Chinese ideology, especially Confucianism, aesthetic theory and literary bias.

Founded by Confucius in the fifth century BC 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. Since then, it has been seriously criticized by Chinese revolutionaries and radical intellectuals as a spiritual shackles to the people and an obstacle to the progress of society. When China became a socialist country in 1949, Confucianism was also claimed as the poison of feudalism and its major classics were discarded from the school textbook. The prevailing Westernization of modern China served as another important factor to bring about the decline of Confucianism. Thus in the mind of many Chinese people, especially young people, and some Westerners, it seems that Confucianism has been abandoned by the Chinese as a backward and decadent ideology. The discussion in my previous chapters e.g. Chapter 3 and Chapter 5 can also be taken to demonstrate the decline of interest of the Chinese in Confucianism: one of the major reasons why many Chinese people don't like traditional Chinese drama is that it often comes to the

audience as a vehicle for spreading Confucian moral doctrine. Yet all these are only superficial phenomena. In today's China, Confucianism, in fact, still affects deeply and comprehensively the thought and behaviour of the people. What the Chinese dislike and try to get rid of is just the dross of Confucianism, particularly its ethical code which was emphasized and dogmatized by politicians and scholars in the Song and Ming Dynasties. But the essence of Confucianism has been retained in the deep structure of Chinese culture and continues to function in all phases of social practice and to govern the action of the people. Even those who think they have completely extricated themselves from the influence of Confucianism, sometimes still act by the principle of Confucianism unconsciously. For example, many radical young people who are eager to follow the idea of Western democracy believe that they have broken completely with conventional Chinese ideology. But in fact, their spirit of great dedication is an essential principle of Confucianism. In a sense, Confucianism has formed a fundamental part of the national identity of the Chinese. In recent years, more and more Chinese intellectuals have recognized that the main doctrines of Confucianism, such as the strong sense of responsibility for one's family, active participation in political affairs, great dedication to the country and people, and the emphasis on altruism and collectivism, modesty and thoughtfulness, etc, could contribute to a prosperous and democratic society, especially in view of the success of Japan, which used to be a country with Confucianism as its dominant ideology.

The influence of Confucianism on the perspective of the Chinese on Shakespeare can be easily found in the reading, translation, criticism and production of his plays in China. Chinese people tend, quite often, to interpret the characters and themes of Shakespeare's plays in terms of Confucian ideology. As I discussed in Part 1, by the doctrine of Confucianism, a man should first cultivate his moral character and manage his household well, then take an active part in political affairs to build a peaceful and harmonious society. In any case, he must give priority to public and collective interests, above his personal interests. A Confucian politician is, accordingly, asked to have keen political insight to perceive social problems and the courage to expose and criticize these problems. Meanwhile he

must not seek his own momentary ease, on the contrary, he should bravely and uncompromisingly struggle with evil forces, upholding justice and reversing the reversal of the society. If necessary he would even lay down his life to eliminate corruption and to achieve the great order of the country. Along with the evolution of history, these qualities of a Confucian politician have gradually become a conventional yardstick for the Chinese to judge and evaluate historical figures, particularly positive and heroic figures. These qualities have also largely affected the creative work of Chinese writers when they express their thoughts and emotions or portray heroic and progressive characters in their works. Thus one of the main themes of Chinese poetry is the expression of the political faith and aspiration of Confucian scholars and politicians, as in the poems of Qu Yuan, Chen Zi Ang, Wang Bo, Li Bai, Du Pu, Bai Ju Yi, Liu Zong Yuan, Su Shi, etc. In Chinese fiction and drama, the protagonists commonly admired and praised by the Chinese are also heroes with the political spirit of Confucianism, e.g. Zhou Shun Chang in The Story of the Honest Subjects and Yue Fei in The Flag of Loyalty whom we discussed in previous chapters. It is admitted that some qualities of these heroes could be difficult for today's Chinese to understand, for example, the absolute loyalty to the monarchy which was largely emphasized by the later Chinese emperors in order to strengthen their rule. Yet the main principles of Confucian politics shown in the heroes, such as courage to expose and criticize social problems, active participation in political affairs, dedication to the progress and prosperity of the country, etc, remain an important part of the values of the Chinese and still deeply affect literary creation and appreciation in modern China. It is, therefore, understandable that Chinese audiences and readers tend to interpret Shakespeare's characters from the political perspective of Confucianism. The interpretation of Hamlet seems to be a typical example of such a tendency, from which we can perceive an obvious influence of the political ideas of Confucianism. In the history of Shakespeare criticism, there are varied and diverse interpretations of the character of Hamlet. It can be said that the Chinese now have added a "Confucian Hamlet" to Shakespeare criticism for the Prince of Denmark has been regarded by the Chinese as a hero with the spirit of Confucianism and is often associated with the great Chinese politicians in Chinese history who devoted all their lives to the country.

Among all the morally positive heroes in Shakespeare's plays, Hamlet is probably the most suitable person to be qualified as a 'Confucian hero and politician'. Unlike Lear or Macbeth, he is, after all, morally perfect, with a noble mind. Again, like Chinese Confucian heroes, Hamlet does not limit himself to his personal misfortune, and never drifts with the tide of corruption or drags out an ignoble existence. He sees clearly and criticizes fiercely the corruption in the court and the seamy side of society. In the Chinese view, Hamlet also has a strong sense of political responsibility, fighting against evil forces, as he says: 'The time is out of joint, . . . I was born to set it right!' (1. 5. 189-190). This is almost the copy of the political motto of Chinese Confucian heroes that 'Everybody has a share of responsibility for the fate of his country'. When Chinese audiences and readers associate Hamlet with Confucian political principles, they often concentrate so much on the positive qualities in Hamlet's character that they ignore or forgive his weaknesses of hesitation and vacillation, which are not well in line with the character of a Confucian politician. What is more interesting, the Chinese tend to explain Hamlet's melancholy in the light of 'Youfen' (worry and anxiety). This is a common quality shared by all Confucian politicians and heroes, and stems from the difficult and frustrating situations they encounter. It can be that they find no way to dedicate themselves to the service of their country or complain about the hardship in their career, especially when they are wronged by their emperors or framed by treacherous officials. It can also be that they worry about the serious situation of the country. Therefore they feel worried, anxious, melancholy and even indignant. Hamlet's melancholy seems to have an affinity with the "Youfen" psychology of Chinese Confucian heroes because it obviously derives from the contradiction between his moral and political ideal and the corrupt reality, and from the fact that many mean persons secretly scheme against him. So to the Chinese mind, the psychological state of Hamlet is almost a duplicate of that of Confucian politician.

The perception of Hamlet outlined above can be easily seen in the reading, criticism and production of the play in China. For example, early in the 1920s, when the famous dramatist Tian Han published his translation of Hamlet, he directly

associated the play with the great Confucian politician and poet Qu Yuan in the postscript of the book:

As a solemn and stirring tragedy, Hamlet is the best of Shakespeare's great tragedies. When we read the soliloquies of Hamlet, we feel that it looks as if we are reading Qu Yuan's Lisao.<sup>2</sup>

Lisao, the masterpiece of Qu Yuan, is a long poem, in which the author describes his misfortunes in the political arena and castigates the corrupt court. Expressing his great concern and anxiety about the future of his country, Qu Yuan conveys his lofty social and political ideals. In Chinese history, Qu Yuan has been regarded as the earliest and one of the most influential Confucian politicians and poets. His Lisao has greatly influenced the writing of the later Confucian writers. It is evident that Tian Han identifies the Prince of Denmark with Qu Yuan. For him, Hamlet represents the same political idea and principle as Confucianism does, which has been admired and needed by the Chinese.

This 'Confucian Hamlet' interpretation, in fact, has been a prevailing tendency in Shakespeare criticism in China. In the 1950s, a famous Shakespeare scholar and translator, Bian Zhi Lin, published two articles, dealing with the central theme of Hamlet and the character of the Prince of Denmark. Almost all the aspects he emphasized were Confucian in political principle and spirit, although some points were discussed under the label of Marxism. For instance, Mr Bian pointed out that one of the fine qualities of Hamlet is that he had a keen insight into serious social issues, so he properly compared Denmark to a prison.<sup>3</sup> Mr Bian highly praised Hamlet's great concern about the future and destiny of his country and his endeavour to 'Shangxia er qousuo' (which roughly means to seek truth or to find a

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<sup>2</sup>. Cao Shu Jun and Sun Fu Liang, Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage (Harbin, 1989), p. 49.

<sup>3</sup>. Bian Zhi Lin, 'Preface to the Translation of Hamlet', Shakespeare Criticism in China, ed. by Meng Xian Qiang (Jilin, 1991), p. 124-5.

way to achieve political goals).<sup>4</sup> This phrase is a quotation from Qu Yuan's Lisao which we mentioned above. It is, therefore, obvious here that Mr Bian associated Hamlet's character with Confucian political principles. In his other article, Mr Bian argued that Hamlet was not a coward to evade struggle; on the contrary, he was a hero with great courage to fight with his enemy. The hesitation of Hamlet was not a weakness of character. It stemmed from the process of seeking truth, because it took a long time for one to seek truth to save his country. Mr Bian also argued that Hamlet's melancholy derived mainly from his great concern and anxiety about the future of his country, but not from his personal passions.<sup>5</sup> Thus, behind the argument of Bian Zhi Lin, we can perceive the apparent influence of the notion of 'Youfen' --- one of the main qualities of Confucian politicians and heroes mentioned earlier in the present chapter.

The discussion of Hamlet's character by Professor Zhang Si Yang, one of the leading Chinese Shakespeare scholars, is another good example to show the influence of Confucian political ideas on the interpretation of Hamlet. Like Mr Bian, Professor Zhang emphasized the positive qualities in Hamlet's character which were identical with the political ideas and principles of Confucianism. For instance, he held that Hamlet had a keen insight into injustice and evil in reality, and that the prince was a man with great courage to fight against the evil force because the leading quality in his character was active, positive and dynamic, rather than passive, negative and weak.<sup>6</sup> In his book, Professor Zhang paid special attention to the analysis of Hamlet's melancholy. He disagreed with the opinion that Hamlet's melancholy stemmed from his pessimism and nihilism, maintaining that although personal misfortune functioned as an important reason for his melancholy, the quality actually came mainly from his strong sense of political responsibility and his worry and anxiety about a time so 'out of joint', otherwise he could be content

<sup>4</sup>. Ibid, p. 127.

<sup>5</sup>. Bian Zhi Lin, 'Shakespeare's Great Tragedy Hamlet', Literary Studies, 2 (1956), p. 73-5.

<sup>6</sup>. Zhang Si Yang, Xu Bin and Zhang Xiao Yang, The General Survey of Shakespeare, 2 vols (Beijing, 1989), I, p. 361-3.

with temporary ease and comfort, waiting for his succession to the throne which his uncle had promised.<sup>7</sup> It is clear that Professor Zhang also approached this issue in terms of psychological complexes conventional to Confucian politicians. He even uses some special phrases which have been employed by the Chinese to describe the character of Confucian politicians, such as 'Youguoyouumin' (be concerned about one's country and people), etc.<sup>8</sup>

The Confucian interpretation of Hamlet has also largely affected the stage representation of the play in China. In almost all productions, the Prince of Denmark has been treated as a positive hero with the conventional political spirit and enthusiasm of Confucianism. For example, during the anti-Japanese War, the State Drama School presented a production of Hamlet in Jiangan and Chongqing City, Sichuan Province (June 2-7, 1942; December 9-19, 1942), under the direction of a famous stage artist Jiao Ju Yin, with Hamlet played by Wen Xi Ying and Ophelia by Lu Shui. The production was actually an open-air performance because the players had to use a temple as their temporary theatre. Yet the great hall of the temple was an ideal place to be designed as the chamber of a king's palace, with an explicit Chinese style. The actor who played Hamlet, displayed the manner and spirit of Confucian heroes and politicians, aiming to highlight Hamlet's strong sense of political duty and his heroism to struggle against evil forces, against a gloomy and depressing atmosphere produced by the setting. This 'Confucian treatment' obviously served to encourage Chinese people to be concerned about the future of their country and to fight against Japanese invaders.<sup>9</sup> Later productions of Hamlet in China exhibited the same tendency, stressing the 'Confucian spirit' in Hamlet's character, e.g. the production by the Henan Drama Company in June 1984, under Tong Shou Ze and the production by Shanghai Drama Institute in July 1984, under

<sup>7</sup>. Ibid, p. 359.

<sup>8</sup>. Ibid, p. 360.

<sup>9</sup>. Cao Shu Jun and Sun fu Liang, Shakespeare on the Chinese Stage (Harbin, 1989), p. 102-5.

Cheng Ming Zheng and An Zhen Ji.<sup>10</sup> It is interesting that on the Chinese stage, there is not only a 'Confucian Hamlet', but also a 'Hamlet's Confucius'. In Chapter 5, when we discussed the influence of Shakespeare on the modern Chinese theatre, we pointed out the similarity between Guo Mo Ruo's Qu Yuan and Shakespearean tragedies. Besides the influence of King Lear on a particular scene of Qu Yuan, the treatment of Qu Yuan, the hero and great Confucian politician, bore a strong resemblance to Hamlet, which was pointed out by many of the author's contemporaries.<sup>11</sup> It is understandable that Guo Mo Ruo modelled Qu Yuan on Hamlet because both of them represent political ideals favoured by Confucianism. For Mr Guo, the only available literary forms concerning Qu Yuan were historical biography and Qu Yuan's poetry. So when he determined to embody Qu Yuan's story on the stage, it was natural for him to use the dramatic technique of Hamlet because of the similarity in character between the two heroes.

Chinese understanding of the central themes of Shakespeare's plays is also deeply affected by Confucian political and moral doctrines. For instance, the perception of King Lear by the Chinese exhibits quite often such an influence. By any Confucian moral and political standard, Lear is far from a perfect hero with Confucian spirit. So Chinese audiences usually focus their attention more on the social significance of the play than on the character of the protagonist. In a sense, the gloomy picture of great disorder shown by the play mirrors the social upheaval in Chinese history, which is just what Confucianism strongly opposes and tries to avoid. In fact, all the Confucian moral and political doctrines serve to maintain the order and harmony of a hierarchy and patriarchal society, asking people to observe the principle of degree and order, an idea very similar to that described by Ulysses in Troilus and Cressida (1. 3. 83-124). As we discussed in Chapter 1, Confucianism requires people to honour their political and family duties: an emperor must be enlightened and benevolent, a subject must be faithful and virtuous, a father must show kindness and affection to his children, a child must show filial obedience to

<sup>10</sup>. Ibid, p. 234.

<sup>11</sup>. The Selection of Guo Mo Ruo (Beijing, 1957), p. 319-322.

his father, a wife must be chaste and a friend, devoted. Among all these duties, the family duties are particularly emphasized, and any dereliction would be seriously condemned by Confucianism. In modern China, although many people view differently the relationship between an emperor and his subjects, the strong sense of family duty and family values still greatly affects the thought and action of the people. Thus for the Chinese, King Lear is a gloomy and shocking tragedy in which Confucian political and moral principles are thoroughly violated. It could be seen as a great tragedy of Confucian social ideals, serving as a negative example from which the Chinese would draw a good lesson. Lear neglects his duties as both a king and a father. Goneril and Regan neglect their triple duties as subjects, daughters and wives. Edmund frames his brother and informs against his father. Only Cordelia, Edgar and Kent are qualified as the representative figures to fight for justice and duty, and to defend the order and degree of society. Chinese audiences, therefore, tend to associate the central theme of King Lear with fundamental Confucian political and moral ideas. One of the reasons why the play shocks the Chinese is that there are very few classical Chinese literary works describing the action of a son against his father or the hatred and plotting among brothers, although there are many literary works recounting the high treason of vicious subjects against their emperors, as in the traditional Chinese tragedies The Flag of Loyalty and The Story of the Honest Subjects. Yet the dereliction of family duties can now be understood by Chinese people, for since China was dominated by the rigid political policy of Mao Ze Dong and money worship spread through society, similar phenomena cease to be rare.

This Confucian approach to King Lear is easily seen in the translation, criticism and production of the play in China. For instance, in Zhu Sheng Hao's translation, which is the best one in China, numerous terms and phrases of Confucian politics and ethics are used to translate particular lines. The typical example is Gloucester's speech to describe the disorder of the country:

Love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide; in cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond crack'd 'twixt son and father.

This villain of mine comes under the prediction: there's son against father. The King falls from bias of nature: there's father against child. We have seen the best of our time: machinations, hollowness, treachery, and all ruinous disorders, follow us disquietly to our graves.

(1. 2. 99-107)

In his translation of this passage, Mr Zhu uses many conventional sentences and phrases which are employed frequently in Confucian classics, e.g. 'Fu Bu Fu, Zi bu zi' (means a father does not behave like a father and a son does not behave like a son), 'gangchang lunji wanquan pohuai' (means degree and virtues are abandoned and moral principles are violated), 'Niqin Fanshang' (means to act against one's father and rebel against the monarch), 'Bu ci bu ai' (means a father does not show kindness and affection to his children).<sup>12</sup> It is quite clear that Mr Zhu interpreted King Lear from the perspective of Confucianism when he translated the play into Chinese. Accordingly, his translation comes to Chinese readers with a rich Confucian vein which will affect Chinese perception of the play.

The Confucian approach to King Lear can also be found in Shakespeare criticism in China. Dealing with the central theme of King Lear in his article, Xu Bin, a young Chinese Shakespeare scholar, says:

King Lear shows us a miserable world in which truth and falsehood are confused, right and wrong are misjudged. At court, the King neglects his duty and subjects commit treason against the King. In families, the father does not behave like a father, the son does not behave like a son; wife and husband fall out; brothers act against each other. Degree and virtue are abandoned; moral principles are violated. People are obsessed with the desire for power and gain. Peace and order are disrupted . . . It is a great social tragedy.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup>. King Lear, The Complete Works of Shakespeare, translated by Zhu Sheng Hao, 11 vols (Beijing, 1978), IX, p. 163-4.

<sup>13</sup>. Xu Bin, 'On King Lear', Selection of Shakespeare Criticism, ed. by Zhang Si Yang (Jilin, 1989), p. 432-3.

In Xu Bin's remarks, specific terms and phrases of Confucian politics are again employed, which evidently displays his Confucian vision of the play.

The staging of King Lear in China demonstrates the same tendency to add Confucian colour to the play. For instance, 1986 saw three productions of King Lear presented at the Inaugural Chinese Shakespeare Festival, with one performed by the Liaonin People's Art Theatre of Shanghai and the other two by the Central Drama Academy and Tianjing People's Art Theatre in Beijing. All of them showed in varying degrees a Confucian treatment of the theme, particular the Sinicized version by the Central Drama Academy. When I saw the production, my feeling at times was that I was watching a tragic event which had happened in Chinese history at times, from which Confucius and his followers conceived of their basic political and moral ideas to avoid this great chaos and to strengthen the order and degree of the society. The emphasis on disorder and abnormal relationships in both political and family life, and the typical Chinese historical context created by the Chinese style in setting, costume and other cultural references, all helped to form the Confucian vision of this great tragedy. Many of my colleagues and students shared this perception with me, and my assumption was soon confirmed by Professor Sun Jia Xiu, the adaptor and literary advisor of the production. She said that the production aimed to expose the seamy side of feudal Chinese society through transferring the great Shakespearean tragedy into Chinese culture, which would inevitably make the production concerned with Confucianism, although the director and adaptor hoped that the audience could view the play from a contemporary perspective as well.<sup>14</sup>

The production of Titus Andronicus presented by Shanghai Drama Institute provides another good example of the influence of Confucian political ideas on the treatment of Shakespearean themes in China. It was performed at the opening ceremony of the Inaugural Chinese Shakespeare Festival in Shanghai, electrifying the audience with its power and grandeur, and was highly praised by Chinese critics

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<sup>14</sup>. Personal interview with Professor Sun Jia Xiu at the Central Drama Academy in June 1986.

and scholars. As one of the unusual plays of Shakespeare, Titus Andronicus seems to be rarely presented on the Western stage. Mr Xu Qi Ping, the director of the play, chose this unusual play because he believed he could enliven a bloody, jumbled, Roman tragedy and give it new social and historical meaning through an original treatment which turned out in essence to be a Confucian approach, although Mr Xu did not point this out directly. Thus the production demonstrated a shocking and horrible picture of human violence. The audience, therefore, was asked to condemn the violence and brutality and to recognize that we must end man's history of killing each other and strive for a lasting peace. Behind this thematic treatment, we see a strong influence of Confucian politics. As we discussed in chapter 1, the ultimate political and moral principle is 'Ren' (roughly means friendly and harmonious relations between people), which should be applied to all respects of social life. In a family, the members must care for each other, must love and help each other. In state affairs, the monarch or leader must carry out the policy of benevolence and show goodwill to other countries. So hatred, violence, killing and harsh government run completely counter to Confucian tenets. The main idea of Mr Xu was obviously based on this fundamental Confucian doctrine.

It seemed that every technique and device employed by the director served this original treatment of the central theme, particularly in the added prologue and the last act of the play. In order to convey his interpretation with a strong stage image, Mr Xu designed an added prologue, which showed the audience a shocking scene of a bloody battlefield. The field was cluttered with dead bodies and dyed with blood. Kneeling down before his dead son, Titus stared at the body. After he stood up, his four surviving sons and some soldiers came slowly on the stage with heavy steps, carrying three bodies. Titus then followed them. At the same time, the audience heard an offstage conversation chosen deliberately by the director from the text:

Tit. What dost thou strike at, Marcus, with thy knife?  
 Marc. At that I have kill'd, my lord ---a fly.  
 Tit. Out on thee, murderer, thou kill'st my heart!  
 Mine eyes are cloy'd with view of tyranny;

A deed of death done on the innocent  
 Becomes not Titus' brother. Get thee gone;  
 I see thou art not for my company.  
 Marc. Alas, my lord, I have but kill'd a fly.  
 Tit. 'but'! How if that fly had a father and mother?  
 How would he hang his slender gilded wings  
 And buzz lamenting doings in the air!  
 Poor harmless fly,  
 That with his pretty buzzing melody  
 Came here to make us merry!  
 And thou hast kill'd him.

(3. 2. 52-65)

The conversation was then followed by a knell. As an unusual device, these offstage voices, which strongly condemned violence and killing, explicitly served the Confucian approach of the director, bringing out directly the central theme of the production. At the end of the play, we saw the same stress on Confucian interpretation of the theme: after Romans had cheered Lucius, young Lucius came up to the bloody bodies. Kneeling down before Titus Andronicus, he stares at his grandfather. Facing the audience, he slowly raised his head, thinking painfully. The stage lights began to dim. Meanwhile an offstage voice was heard:

How if that fly had a father and mother?  
 How would he hang his slender gilded wings  
 And buzz lamenting doing in the air!  
 Poor harmless fly,  
 That with his pretty buzzing melody  
 Came here to make us marry!  
 And thou hast kill'd him.

(3. 2. 60-5)

Then the second half of the last line 'kill'd him' was repeated continuously, and the voice became weaker and weaker, and at last completely disappeared. The idea behind this device was: the younger generation queried this bloody story; would the history of human violence continue?<sup>15</sup> The 'fly scene' itself was also played in the production. Both the prologue and the ending of the play were intended to arouse the enthusiasm of the audience for the eternal peace and harmony of the world,

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<sup>15</sup>. Xu Qi Ping, 'The Choice of Director', Shakespeare in China, ed. by the Shakespeare Association of China (Shanghai, 1987), p. 112-7.

which is the political ideal of Confucianism. Also worth mentioning is the treatment of Titus Andronicus in the production. Judging by his moral character, the Roman warrior is more like a Confucian hero than the Prince of Denmark. To a modern Chinese audience, certain qualities of Titus Andronicus could be weaknesses, e.g. his stubborn loyalty to the Emperor. Yet this weakness makes him more resemble Confucian heroes in Chinese history because most of them show an evident stubborn loyalty to their emperors even when they are wronged by the emperors, such as Yue Fei in The Flag of Loyalty and Zhou Shun Chang in The Story of the Honest Subjects. In Mr Xu's production, all the qualities of the protagonist which would be favoured by Confucianism, such as his tenacity, courage, strong moral fibre, loyalty, sense of duty, great dedication, etc, were strongly emphasized.

In contemporary China, the Chinese tend to appreciate literary works in terms of ethics and politics because of the influence of traditional literature and changing social circumstances. Although some outmoded moral doctrines of Confucianism, such as stubborn loyalty to one's ruler, stubborn filial piety to one's parents, rigid moral principle for women, etc, have been abandoned by the people, the main moral principles of Confucianism are retained by the Chinese and still deeply affect their thought and behaviour. For instance, the principle of 'Ren' (benevolent or harmonious relationship between men) remains the ultimate moral ideal for the Chinese. It applies not only to family relations, as we discussed in Chapter 1, but also to all social relations too. 'Yi' (loyalty to one's friend) is one of the major Confucian moral principles to achieve 'Ren'. It aims to establish honest and trustful relations between men and is mostly emphasized by the society. The Confucian ethical code stresses 'Yi' and underestimates 'Li' (personal profit or gains) and strongly condemns actions to betray one's friend or harm others to benefit oneself. So, traditionally the Chinese is a nation despising commercial activity and commercialism, though this view has changed since the economic reform began ten years ago. There is even an old Chinese saying that 'No merchants are honest' or 'All merchants are unscrupulous'. This moral tendency often influences the Chinese appreciation of literary works, including Shakespeare's plays.

The interpretation of The Merchant of Venice may be taken as a typical example to demonstrate such an influence. The play has been the most popular Shakespearean comedy in China, mainly due to its interesting and romantic plot and extraordinary artistic charm. Yet there is no doubt that another prime reason is that the moral of the play is compatible with the conventional moral principles of the Chinese, particularly the notion of the relation between 'Yi' (loyalty to one's friend) and 'Li' (personal profit or gains). This may help to explain why the scene of the Court of Justice (Act 4, Scene 1) was chosen and included in the Language and Literature textbook for the pupils of Chinese middle schools. In the scene, the confrontation between the Jew and the Christians forms a striking moral contrast. Antonio, Bassanio, Portia and their friends represent benevolence, mercy, loyalty, faithfulness, kindness; by contrast, Shylock stands for greed, cruelty, selfishness. This moral contrast can be easily understood by Chinese pupils, and it is often interpreted by teachers in the light of the Confucian moral pattern of 'Yi' and 'Li'. In the eyes of Chinese teachers and pupils, Antonio is the embodiment of 'Yi', who not only finds it a pleasure to help others, but also has the courage to sacrifice himself for his friend's interest, which would be highly praised by the Chinese. In a sense, it can be said that the essence of this Confucian moral concept is altruism. Antonio, in fact, has been regarded as an altruistic hero by Chinese pupils. By contrast, Shylock who is intent on nothing but profit is seen in Chinese classrooms as the incarnation of 'Li'. For his own gains, he is willing to harm, or even destroy others. As an out-and-out egoist, he represents the spirit of extreme commercialism which Chinese people detest. In their teaching, Chinese teachers usually summarize the theme of the play in this way, emphasizing the moral contrast between 'Yi' and 'Li' and ignoring the complex historical context of the relationship between the Jews and Christians.<sup>16</sup> There are two reasons for this: On one hand, the relevant religious knowledge is not easily understood by Chinese pupils, on the other hand, the Chinese tend to see Shylock as a literary figure and rarely associate him with the prejudice and discrimination against the Jews. Although ordinary Chinese people

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<sup>16</sup>. Personal interview with the teachers from twenty middle schools in North-East China, at a conference held in Changchun Teacher's College, Changchun City in July 1986.

have very limited knowledge of the history of the Jews, most of them feel sympathy and show respect for the nation because they know that the Jews are very intelligent people (at least everybody knows Karl Marx was a Jew) and that Hitler killed six million Jews during the Second World War.

This Confucian moral approach to The Merchant of Venice can also be found in the production of the play given by the Chinese Youth Art Theatre in 1980, which we mentioned in Chapter 4. The director obviously tried to represent a confrontation between 'Yi' and 'Li'. Shylock was presented as a genuinely unscrupulous merchant and a greedy money lender. In order to reinforce this impression on the audience, the director added an ancient Chinese money lender to the plot as Shylock's Chinese counterpart. In China, as the embodiment of 'Li', money lenders used to be mostly despised and hated by the people because their business philosophy ran completely counter to the moral doctrine of Confucianism. Like Antonio, the Chinese lend money to help others, particularly their friends, but not to make interest or profit. There is even a custom in China that if you lend money to your friend, you should neither directly ask for the money back nor hint to your friend that he owes you money, otherwise you will be seen as a person who overestimates 'Li' and underestimate 'Yi'. Thus Shylock would be surely accepted by the audience as a negative moral type condemned by Confucian moral concepts, while Antonio would be admired by them as the model of 'Yi'.

The influence of the Confucian moral principle of 'Yi' and 'Li' on the Chinese interpretation of Shakespeare's plays can also be found in the enthusiasm of the Chinese for Timon of Athens. In Western countries, the play seems to be an unusual play, which is rarely presented on the stage. But in China it has been a popular Shakespearean tragedy for both readers and audiences, because the play provides another example of the moral pattern of 'Yi' and 'Li'. There were two Timon of Athens on show at the Inaugural Chinese Shakespeare Festival, presented by the North China Drama Society of Beijing Teacher's University and the Second Foreign Language Institute of Beijing (in English). Both tried to present a striking contrast between 'Yi' and 'Li', with Timon portrayed as a noble-minded hero who

found it a pleasure to help others generously, and the flattering Athenian lords and other Athenians presented as base and ungrateful people, bent solely on profit. There was no doubt that the audience, influenced by the treatment of the two productions, would associate Timon with the Chinese moral heroes who functioned as the embodiment of 'Yi', just as they did with Antonio in The Merchant of Venice. The audience showed special interest, as many Chinese readers did, in Timon's curse of gold (4. 3. 26-43) because it vividly represented the conventional attitude of the Chinese towards money and profit, having an affinity with an old Chinese saying that 'You can even hire a ghost to serve you if you have plenty of money'. In fact, this famous soliloquy of Timon, together with the soliloquy of the Bastard commenting on the function of 'commodity' (2. 1. 561-598) in King John, are quoted frequently by Chinese magazines and newspapers.<sup>17</sup> Yet generally the Chinese would disagree with Timon's curse of the whole human race and his pessimistic attitude towards the future, although admiring his condemnation of the negative function of money. By the theory of Confucianism, the prime moral tendency of mankind is good-oriented, which can be achieved through moralizing.

There are many other similar ideas which make Shakespeare's works accessible to the Chinese. For example, it is not difficult to find that the social ideal in Shakespeare's plays, more or less, has something in common with that of conventional Chinese ideology, particularly Confucianism and Taoism. In The Tempest, Gonzalo describes a Utopian community --- his commonwealth of the island, which he supposes to 'excel the golden age'(2. 1. 141-161). It is interesting that Gonzalo's ideal society looks very similar to that of Confucius in many aspects. Confucius once talked with his followers about an ideal community which he believed was the golden age of China in the past.<sup>18</sup> Both Gonzalo's community and Confucius's are more natural than a modern sophisticated society, emphasizing public interest and welfare and enjoying equality, peace and harmony. What is more

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17. 'The Column of the Famous Quotations', Jilin Youth, 9 (1985), p. 22.

18. 'Lunyu: Datong', The Classical Chinese, ed. by Wang Li, 4 vols (Beijing, 1978), i, p. 193.

interesting, the Chinese notice that Gonzalo's Utopia bears some analogy with the social ideal of Taoism. As the second important traditional Chinese ideology, Taoism advocates conforming to nature and letting things take their own course. Thus it favours a more natural and primitive society without man-made things, just like Gonzalo's description:

I th' commonwealth I would by contraries  
 Execute all things; for no kind of traffic  
 Would I admit; . . .  
 And use of service, none; contract, succession,  
 Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;  
 No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil; . . .  
 All things in common nature should produce  
 Without sweat or endeavour. . . .  
 . . . but nature should bring forth,  
 Of it own kind, all foison, all abundance,  
 To feed my innocent people.

(2. 1. 141-158)

Zhuang Zi, one of the major founders of Taoism, even advocates that the most ideal society is one without ruler, which is also in accordance with Gonzalo's idea: 'No name of magistrate' (2. 1. 143) and 'No sovereignty' (2. 1. 150).

The 'green world' in Shakespearean comedies, particularly the forest world in As You Like It, is often associated by Chinese people with the social ideal of Confucianism. In the forest world in As You Like It, the relationship between men is almost a duplicate of that in the ideal society of Confucius. Confucius favours harmonious relations between rulers and subjects, between family members, between friends and between all men with different social status, emphasizing that people should respect others' parents as they respect their own parents and love others' children as they love their own children.<sup>19</sup> In Arden, the Duke treats his subjects as friends and Orlando looks after Adam very carefully as if the old servant is his father. To show her love for Rosalind, Celia willingly gives up her wealth and rank. So, following the moral principle which Confucianism also highly favours, most people in this Utopia are devoted to others without any thought of self. The

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<sup>19</sup>. Ibid, p. 193.

pastoral atmosphere of the play strengthens the connection between the green world and the Confucian social ideal, because many well-known Confucian politicians wrote pastoral poetry after being ousted from their posts and retiring in their native place. For instance, Tao Yuan Ming, a great classical Chinese poet, composed a lot of beautiful pastoral poems and prose after he resigned office and lived in the countryside as a farmer. In his very influential prose, together with a poem, 'Taohua Yuan Ji' ('The Land of Peach Blossoms'), he describes a fictitious land of peace, away from the turmoil of the world, where people live a happy and peaceful pastoral life. This haven of peace can be seen as the Chinese counterpart of the forest world in As You Like It. In a sense, the Confucian social ideal is better represented in the green world of As You Like It than in the garden world of traditional Chinese drama. As we discussed in Chapter 1, the garden scene, as one of the major patterns of traditional Chinese comedies, mainly serves as a paradise for the lovers. It does not reflect the relations between men in a society as widely as the forest world in As You Like It does.

The traditional perspective of the Chinese on Shakespeare is also affected by the historical context of China and the Confucian historical concept. This is particularly evident when Shakespeare's histories are interpreted. Generally speaking, the Chinese have no difficulty in understanding the incidents and events in Shakespeare's histories because of the similarity between English feudal society and the vast Chinese feudal society which lasted for more than two thousand years. Chinese readers and audiences tend to associate many typical historical and political phenomena in the plays with events in the history of China. For instance, the cruel and bloody power struggle for the throne in Shakespeare's royal families is also to be found in Chinese history. In the Tang Dynasty, in order to succeed to the throne, Prince Li Shi Min killed his two brothers and forced his father to abdicate, becoming Emperor Tang Tai Zong. During the period of Wudai, Prince Zhu You Gui even killed his father to succeed to the throne. Yet he himself later was killed by his brother Zhu You Zhen. 'When treacherous officials are in power, faithful subjects suffer' was one of the main reasons for the fall of an emperor's reign in the history of China and has been one of the major subjects of Chinese literature.

There are similar events in Shakespearean histories, such as the plot in King Henry VI where Queen Margaret colludes with the Duke of Suffolk, Cardinal Beaufort and the Duke of Buckingham to frame the loyal and virtuous Protector, Gloucester. This is, as we analyzed in Chapter 1, the central theme of many Chinese political tragedies. After being arrested, Gloucester warns:

Ah, gracious lord, these days are dangerous!  
Virtue is chok'd with foul ambition,  
And charity chas'd hence by rancour's hand;  
Foul subornation is predominant,  
And equity exil'd your Highness' land.

(Part II, 3. 1. 141-6)

This passage suggests immediately Zhou Shun Chang's condemnation of the conspiracy and savagery of the corrupt officials in The Story of the Honest Subjects (ZGSDGDBJJ, Scene 1, p. 510).

Some peculiarities of the Chinese historical context might encourage the Chinese to focus their attention on certain descriptions in Shakespearean historical plays. For example, they would show special interest in the peasant uprising in King Henry VI but wonder why the playwright depicts the event in a satirical tone and why the rebels reconcile with the monarchy so easily, because in China the rebellious peasant has been a force not to be ignored.<sup>20</sup> In Chinese history, there were numerous peasant uprisings which overthrew old dynasties and established new reigns. Again, the Patriotic enthusiasm displayed in Shakespeare's histories would particularly find an echo in the hearts of Chinese people, for China suffered invasion by foreign countries or other nationalities, even if the people built the Great Wall to defend themselves. The country was completely conquered and ruled by uncivilized tribes for more than four hundred years. So patriotism has been one of the major themes of traditional Chinese literature, including traditional Chinese drama, as in Autumn in the Han Palace, The Flag of Loyalty and The Fan of Peach Blossom. We should remember too that many other plays, including comedies, have

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<sup>20</sup>. A discussion of Shakespearean histories in a conference held by Shakespeare society of Jilin Province in Changchun City in July 1986.

foreign invasions as the sub-plots or settings of the stories. Thus all the exciting and stirring passages concerning patriotism in Shakespeare's histories, such as the praise of England by Gaunt in King Richard II (2. 1. 40-58), the Bastard's pledge to defend England in King John (5. 7. 112-8) and the King's speech before the battle at Agincourt in King Henry V (4. 3. 19-67), are enjoyed by the Chinese and quoted frequently in newspapers, magazines and books.<sup>21</sup>

For Chinese audiences and readers, the fascination of Shakespearean histories stems mainly from the vivid portrayal of different types of king. Although there are simple descriptions of the achievement of Chinese kings and emperors in historical records and annals, Chinese people rarely see excellent characterizations of the monarchy in conventional literary works, due to the reasons we analyzed in Chapter 1. So Shakespeare's histories provide a rare chance for the Chinese to appreciate the character of a feudal ruler literarily, giving them a insight into the ruler's inner world. Chinese people normally tend to apply the character patterns of Chinese rulers, which were formed by both historical facts and the ideas of Confucian scholars, to those in Shakespeare. For example, King Henry the Sixth is regarded by the Chinese as a weak and incompetent king like Emperor Li Hou Zhu in post-Tang Period, who had no ability to be an emperor, but had great talent as an outstanding poet. King Henry the Sixth can also be associated with Emperor Guang Xu in the Qing Dynasty who, totally controlled by his aunt Queen Ci Xi, was only a political puppet. King Richard the Second would make the Chinese people recall some fatuous and self-indulgent emperors in their history, such as Emperor Sui Yang who was the last emperor of the Sui Dynasty. Again, it is not difficult for Chinese audiences to find a Chinese counterpart of King Richard the Third, e.g. King Shang Zhou who was a very cruel tyrant in the Shang Dynasty. Ambiguity is to be found in the attitude of the people towards a certain type of monarchs, e.g. King Henry the Fourth and King Henry the Eighth, who are very similar to some Chinese rulers called 'Jianxong'. The ruler with this quality normally has a double character. Politically, they are strong, competent and sometimes iron-handed, but

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<sup>21</sup> . 'The Quotations of the Famous Figures in World Culture', Cultural Life, 3 (1985), pp. 30-1.

morally, they are unscrupulous and treacherous. The Chinese needed such strong rulers to maintain the order of the vast kingdom, but they did not like the immorality of the rulers, for Confucianism held that an ideal ruler must be perfect both politically and morally. Political trickery is completely incompatible with the political doctrine of Confucianism. The character of King Henry the Eighth obviously has something in common with that of Chinese rulers of 'Jianxong'. One day in Autumn 1987, after class, one of my students of the Television University told me that he felt that King Henry the Eighth was an English Cao Cao. I of course agreed with him because Cao Cao was a typical Chinese king of 'Jianxong' in the Three Kingdom Period, and one of the protagonists in the famous historical novel The Romance of Three Kingdoms, who was known to every household in the country. It has been argued that King Henry the Fifth is Shakespeare's ideal monarch. Coincidentally, the King is, to a great extent, accessible to the Chinese as an enlightened ruler whom Confucianism favours. The character of King Henry the Fifth, in a sense, is in harmony with the qualities of a competent monarch which Confucianism claims, especially the combination of political competence and virtue. This view is evident in Shakespeare criticism in China. Professor Zhang Si Yang analyzed the nature of King Henry the Fifth in terms of a Confucian political idea, using some specific phrases which have been employed to described a Chinese ruler.<sup>22</sup> King Henry the Fifth would be popular with ordinary Chinese people because 'a good emperor' used to be the ultimate political aspiration of Chinese farmers, and served as a key point to assure them of a peaceful life. Although autocratic monarchy was overturned at the beginning of this century in China, many Chinese people are still accustomed to power politics or authoritative rule, which helps to explain why Mao Ze Dong was fanatically worshipped by the people during the Cultural Revolution and why most Chinese people today still place hopes on Deng Xiao Ping.

Another important reason for the assimilation of Shakespeare by Chinese culture is probably that the Chinese have perceived a hidden combination of

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<sup>22</sup>. Zhang Si Yang, Xu Bin and Zhang Xiao Yang, The General Survey of Shakespeare, 2 vols (Beijing, 1989), I, p. 118.

Confucianism and Taoism in Shakespeare's plays. As everybody knows, Confucianism is the leading ideology in traditional Chinese culture. Yet in many aspects of the culture, e.g. philosophy, politics, ethics, literature and arts, a joint influence of Confucianism and Taoism can be seen. That is the phenomenon by which 'Confucianism and Taoism complement each other' in traditional Chinese culture. Generally Confucianism and Taoism display different attitudes towards life. The former asks people to participate actively in world affairs, to strive for both personal happiness and public interests, particularly to build a better political system and a harmonious moral order, whereas the latter asks people to stand aloof from world affairs, to follow the course of nature and do nothing for social and personal benefit. Both outlooks can be seen in Shakespeare's plays. The thoughts and actions of many characters display an active and positive attitude to life. Some exert themselves in the struggle for love, wealth and status. Others devote themselves to public interest. But there is also a negative attitude to life in Shakespeare's plays, which is suggestive of the Taoistic philosophy of life, as I mentioned in Chapter 1. Tired of the sufferings of life, some characters are disillusioned with the mortal world and try to renounce it, e.g. Timon and Jaques, just as Hou Fang Yu and Li Xiang Jun do at the end of The Fan of Peach Blossom. Passages concerning the illusory essence of life and the idea of resignation from the world are to be found in Shakespeare's works. Most of them sound quite Taoistic to the Chinese mind. For instance, a passage from Timon of Athens:

Hoy-day, what a sweep of vanity comes this way!  
 They dance? They are mad women.  
 Like madness is the glory of this life,  
 As this pomp shows to a little oil and root.  
 We make ourselves fools to disport ourselves,

(1. 2. 126-130)

and another from Macbeth:

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
 Creeps in this petty pace from day to day  
 To the last syllable of recorded time,  
 And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
 The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,  
 That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
 And then is heard no more; it is a tale  
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
 Signifying nothing.

(5. 5. 19-28)

In Chinese history, numerous cultural figures and politicians exhibit both tendencies, as do some characters of Shakespeare. In a sense, Hamlet can be such a person. In the early pages of this chapter, we discussed the 'Confucian quality' of Hamlet. In fact, the Prince of Denmark also shows a 'Taoistic outlook' on life, in his tiredness with the hardship of life and his disillusionment with the mortal world. So, I assume that the 'combination of Confucianism and Taoism' could be a very practical mode for Chinese audiences to interpret the 'mystery' of Hamlet's character. The political career of Confucian politicians often displays a 'double track'. That is, when they achieve their political ambitions, they follow the principle of Confucianism, taking an active part in social activity and state affairs. But when they suffer setbacks, and are framed by treacherous subjects or wronged by emperors, they comfort themselves with Taoism, withdrawing from society and living in solitude. Some may go back to society again if the political situation becomes favourable to them. Such a cultural convention provides a pattern which Chinese audiences perceive in Shakespeare's plays. The 'court-forest-court' plot in As You Like It seems to be a typical example. Belarius' case in Cymbeline can also be received in this pattern. We are conscious of the 'combination of Confucianism and Taoism' in many other aspects of Shakespeare's plays. Confucianism emphasizes, as we pointed out before, harmony between men while Taoism stresses man's harmony with the universe. Shakespeare's plays display both inclinations. The different attitude of Confucianism and Taoism towards human civilization can also be found in Shakespeare's plays. Confucianism believes that mankind can benefit from civilization, whereas Taoism rejects all traditional values and institutions. The praise of mankind and its creative achievement is often taken as evidence of humanism in Shakespeare's works. But the condemnation of man's values and institutions by the misanthropists in Shakespeare's plays, e.g. Timon and Jaques also stir up our feelings strongly. For Chinese audiences, this contrast in Shakespeare's

plays is even more striking than that in traditional Chinese literature.

When transferred into Chinese culture, Shakespeare's plays are not only interpreted in terms of conventional ideology, but also appreciated from the perspective of conventional aesthetic taste, particularly literary and theatrical bias. In contemporary China, conventional taste of literature and art has, as we mentioned in Chapter 3 and Chapter 5, lost its exclusive place since Western literature and art were introduced into the country. But it still deeply affects the literary and artistic creation and appreciation of the people, particularly in rural areas. Literary and theatrical conventions sometimes make Chinese audiences see Shakespeare's plays through 'coloured spectacles' or focus their attention on points which Westerners usually ignore. For instance, the Chinese perception of Shakespearean tragedy often shows some influence of the traditional Chinese tragic concept and the sentimentalism of Chinese literature. Earlier in Chapter 3 and Chapter 5, we analyzed how Shakespeare had influenced traditional Chinese drama and brought about a great change in conventional Chinese dramatic concepts. Some aspects of traditional Chinese drama were seriously criticized by Chinese dramatists and scholars, such as the happy ending of Chinese tragedies, the moral orientation, and the simplicity of characterization, etc. However, many elements of Chinese dramatic convention are still evident in modern Chinese taste. In Chapter 1, we pointed out that the protagonists in most popular Chinese tragedies were women, which demonstrated an evident tendency of feminism in the Chinese literary tradition and that the 'destruction of beauty' was the fundamental tragic concept of traditional Chinese drama, shaped by the social context of ancient China and the prevalent sentimentalism of Chinese literature. This tragic concept remains an important part in the literary and theatrical taste of the Chinese today. In contemporary China, tragic literary works with women as protagonists always attract public attention. We should remember how the sad story of Zhang Zhi Xin, an ordinary Chinese woman who was brutally tortured and executed by the Gang of Four only for her disagreement with the policy of the Cultural Revolution, caused a sensation throughout the country and aroused the righteous indignation of the people in 1980. The enthusiasm of the Chinese for Thomas Hardy's works,

especially his Tess of the D'Urbervilles and The Return of the Native also illustrates the influence of the notion of the 'destruction of beauty' in contemporary Chinese taste.

This conventional aesthetic concept inevitably affects the interpretation of Shakespeare's tragedy. Generally, Chinese audiences pay more attention to the heroines than to the heroes in the tragedies, and show them more sympathy, especially when the heroine is a perfect woman and the hero an imperfect man. Here we see another traditional influence, in the idea that a tragic protagonist must be a perfect person, as we discussed in Chapter 1. Although contemporary Chinese audiences have a deeper understanding of the complexity of human nature than the ancient Chinese, and no more like dull moral stereotypes in literary works, they still tend to regard characters whose leading qualities are virtuous as positive heroes in tragedy or other literary genres. Therefore, these two conventional tragic concepts encourage Chinese audiences to feel less pity for King Lear than for Cordelia, allowing for his wilfulness and folly which is the root of the play's great disorder and the destruction of both Cordelia and himself. Othello seems to be a more typical example of this view. For Chinese audiences, Desdemona is really the principal character in the tragedy. As a perfect woman, she possesses all the virtues which will be praised by Chinese aesthetic and moral standards: beauty, chastity, courage, dedication to love, etc. With all these virtues, like the heroines in traditional Chinese tragedies, Desdemona will definitely win the admiration and respect of Chinese audiences. Accordingly, her suffering and death will appeal to their great sympathy and pity. By contrast, it is very difficult for Othello to win sympathy and pity from a Chinese audience because he is the murderer of Desdemona. The Chinese cannot tolerate the fact that he is so credulous and jealous that he brutally kills his innocent wife, who has given her all to him, without verification of her infidelity. Although Iago operates as an important factor to cause the tragedy, Othello is the author of his misfortune and Desdemona's. The reason for the enthusiasm of some Chinese actors and scholars for the Moor is that the complexity of Othello's character is worth representing and discussing. It does not mean that Othello is perceived commonly as a positive tragic hero by Chinese

people. Both classical and modern Chinese playwrights would have taken Desdemona as the principal character if they had had the opportunity to write the play.

This account of the influence of the traditional Chinese tragic concept on the interpretation of *Othello* can be illustrated by theatrical and academic practice in contemporary China. The production of *Othello* by the China Railway Drama Troupe, which was on show in April 1986 in Beijing during the Inaugural Chinese Shakespeare Festival, received much acclaim from the audience and critics for its marvellous performance and depressing tragic mood. When I saw the play, my feeling, as well as that of my colleagues, was that the holiness and purity of Desdemona were greatly emphasised by the gloomy atmosphere of the play, like sunshine against shadows. By contrast, the initial heroic image of Othello was maintained only a very short time; his behaviour then became more and more crude, brutal and unbearable, like a devil against the image of hell which formed the lower part of the setting. My view was confirmed by the speech of Chen Ping, the director of the production, a very bright and dynamic middle-aged expert, who argued that the production was intended to give prominence to the holy and perfect image of Desdemona, highlighting her virtues and dedication to love. In a sense, Desdemona was an embodiment of high ideals. If the Moor were a ship on the sea, Desdemona was a lighthouse. If the former were the moon, the latter was the sun. Mrs Chen Ping told the participants at the conference that the directing plan was, to some extent, the collective result of the troupe, because many of her colleagues shared her ideas. When she asked the actors and actresses to give their own opinions of the treatment of *Othello*, all agreed that the Moor could not be treated as a positive tragic hero because he could not be forgiven for his guilt. He himself was the main source of the tragedy, not Iago, whose plot served only as a trigger to bring about the sad ending. Asked to explain the symbolic meaning of the setting, Mrs Chen Ping said that the main frame, which was a huge globe, stood for heaven and earth, while the lower part of the setting, including stage itself and its extending parts, represented hell. The main idea behind the design was to show the process of Othello's degeneration, demonstrating how the evil element in Othello's nature

was brought out by Iago, which made the Moor himself become a devil to destroy the beautiful, good and ideal.<sup>23</sup> The response of the audience to the play was undoubtedly in line with the director's interpretation. The production was taken mainly as a tragedy of Desdemona and a tragedy of the 'destruction of beauty' and its aesthetic ideal. Accordingly the audience felt much sympathy for Desdemona and very little for the Moor. Besides discussions and remarks about the production, a noticeable fact also confirmed the response: Miss Liang Dan Ni, the actress who played Desdemona, was selected as the only representative of all the players who attended the festival to make a speech at the closing ceremony. The production was also the only one to be invited to perform in Shanghai after the festival.

The rich vein of feminism in traditional Chinese literature often influences the interpretation of Shakespeare in Chinese culture. As we see in traditional Chinese drama, women are always depicted as the embodiment of beauty and virtue, or the victims of social injustice. Chinese writers rarely portray sinister and vicious women in their works. So Goneril and Regan, and particularly Lady Macbeth, would make a Chinese audience feel uncomfortable although they can understand their passionately. It can be assumed therefore that the reception of The Taming of the Shrew in China will be problematic because the description of subduing women through torment and humiliation runs counter to the conventional common sense of the Chinese. I suspect that the director of any production of The Taming of the Shrew in the country would, more or less, have to make some alterations to accommodate the taste of Chinese audiences. The production by the Shanghai People's Art Theatre, presented in April 1986 in Shanghai, under an English visiting director Bernard Goss, supports this assumption. Although we are not sure whether Mr Goss intended to satisfy Chinese audiences, his interpretation indeed suited their taste. Katherina was not played as a shrew, but as a rebel against a restrictive society. The relationship between Katherina and Petruchio was not conqueror and conquered, but two cooperators. They needed each other, striving for a happy marriage and a happy life jointly. This unusual treatment was a considerable accomplishment, and

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<sup>23</sup>. Speech by Mrs Cheng Ping at the conference held at the Central Drama Academy on 21 April 1986, in Beijing.

the play was well received by both theatrical circles and the audience. The effect which the production achieved relied mainly, as some critics pointed out, on its compatibility with conventional Chinese taste.<sup>24</sup>

The aesthetic idea of Taoism has greatly influenced traditional Chinese literature and art, especially painting and poetry. The Taoistic aesthetic idea rejects utilitarianism and moralizing and emphasizes intuition and imagination in literary and artistic creation. A Midsummer Night's Dream by the China Coal Miners' Drama Troupe in April 1986 under Xiong Yuan Wei is a good example of the function of the aesthetic idea of Taoism in the Chinese interpretation of Shakespeare's works. In chapter 4, we analyzed briefly how this production employed the stage technique of traditional Chinese drama to create an oriental style. In fact, this 'Eastern aesthetic taste' (a phrase in the program notes of the production), which the director tried to achieve, largely represented the aesthetic concept of Taoism. Such a treatment obviously depends on elements in the play which could be linked with Taoistic literary and artistic works. The first and foremost element is the fairyland atmosphere of the play, which is one of the major characteristics of the literary and artistic works of Taoism. The second important element is the dreamland atmosphere of the play which is also a main feature of Taoistic literature and art, formed by the philosophical notion of Taoism that 'Life is a dream'. It is obvious that these elements are favourable to an interpretation with Taoistic aesthetic colouring. In the production by the China Coal Miners' Drama Troupe, many stage techniques were employed to achieve the effect of Taoistic aesthetics. The setting, which was an image of the wood formed by hung ropes, seemed to create a floating space. The changeable lighting further added a dreamlike and illusory colour to the space. The stylized movements of the players, lyrical music, and lithe and graceful dancing helped to produce the beauty and feeling which fairyland and dreamland specially had. All these worked to create a symbolic and illusory world, full of imagination and mystery, whose beauty could

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<sup>24</sup>. Zhang An Jian, 'The Treasure Shakespeare Has left Us --- A reflection on the Inaugural Chinese Shakespeare Festival'. Shakespeare's Triple Play, ed. by Jilin Shakespeare Society (Changchun, 1988). p. 213.

only be perceived by intuition, not described by words. Such an effect was precisely the ultimate aesthetic standard of Taoism.

Traditional Chinese theatrical concepts provide another reason for the enthusiasm of the Chinese for Shakespeare's plays. As we discussed in previous chapters, traditional Chinese drama is a genre mixing many kinds of art: music, dance, acrobatics, the fine arts, poetry, etc. So, aesthetically, many Chinese people like a mixed mode drama more than a purely spoken drama, although they understand the moral and political importance of the latter. Shakespeare's plays possess the characteristics of both genres, which provides one more reason why enthusiasm for the dramatist constantly runs high in China while the interest in Ibsen and Chekhov has subsided since the 1950s. However, for some Chinese people such as farmers and other uneducated people whose taste are totally convention-oriented, the appreciation of certain characteristics of Shakespeare could be problematic. For example, the complex and morally ambiguous characters of Shakespeare, e.g. Lear, Macbeth, King Richard the Second, etc, may be a little difficult for them to understand because they are used to enjoying the simple and fixed morality of characters with a single passion in traditional Chinese drama, which we have analyzed in earlier chapters. The description of the inner world of the characters in Shakespeare's plays may seem tedious, for the psychological description in traditional Chinese drama is different. These people, of course, may also feel uncomfortable with Shakespearean tragedy, compared with the happy ending of traditional Chinese tragedy. Some Western cultural references in Shakespeare's plays may prove difficult for the people to understand. For instance, bastards in Shakespeare are portrayed as important characters, normally conspirators and careerists. But there are very few bastards represented in Chinese literature, owing to the different literary conventions and marriage system in ancient China. Curiously the bastards in Shakespeare's plays are often associated by the people with the eunuchs in traditional Chinese drama, such as Wei Zhong Xian in The Story of the Honest Subjects, because there is a striking similarity between them in character. Considering the similarity between Shakespeare's plays and traditional Chinese drama, which we discussed in detail in Part 1, there are also

many characteristics of Shakespeare's art which are completely accessible to the convention-dominated Chinese people. For example, Shakespearean comedies can be very easily understood because the comic concept of Shakespeare has sufficient affinities with that of traditional Chinese drama. Besides, his mingled mode, complicated and interesting plot, free employment of space and time, etc, are all to be fully appreciated by them.

It should be pointed out that, in the light of traditional Chinese literature, the enthusiasm of the Chinese for the dramatist has clear links with the long-standing Chinese poetic tradition. In ancient China, the function and significance of poetry was far beyond that of a genre of literature. It was concerned with many aspects of social practices, such as education, politics and institutions, serving as an important part of Confucian culture. The founders of Confucianism, including Confucius himself, saw poetry as an effective medium to teach people. One of the major Confucian classics, The Book of Songs, is a collection of poems. Confucian scholars and politicians also largely used poetry to express their political aspirations and misfortunes. Ancient China was a kingdom of poetry, with numerous brilliant poetic works and famous poets including many great names such as Li Po, Du Pu and Bai Ju Yi. Traditional Chinese poetry is rightly taken as the crown of Chinese literary achievement and her poets rank among the great poets of world literature. Poetic training was very popular in ancient China and was one of the essential features of traditional Chinese humanistic education. For the ancient Chinese, poetry was not only a necessary accomplishment for an educated man but also an important means to seek higher social status through passing the imperial examination, where skill at poetic composition was a major requirement. In the Tang Dynasty, this skill served as a decisive standard to pass the imperial examination.<sup>25</sup> Most Chinese emperors and kings were good poets, such as Cao Cao, Li Yu and many emperors of the Tang Dynasty. This long-standing poetic tradition has been carried forward by the modern Chinese. In China today, children start their poetic training very early at elementary schools, and it's quite common

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<sup>25</sup>. The History of Chinese Literature, ed. by the Literature Institution, the Chinese Academy of Social Science, 3 vols (Beijing, 1979), II, pp. 322-3.

to see little child of from three to five years old reciting from memory twenty or thirty, sometime even fifty classical Chinese poems. Even poorly educated people still show great interest in poetry and have some basic knowledge of classical poetry. It is a habit for the Chinese to compose a poem at the end of a speech, or a letter. Numerous Chinese leaders of the Party and government can write poems. Mao Ze Dong, the late head of the Party, was an outstanding poet although many Chinese people have a different attitude towards his political career. His reputation as a poet derived mainly from his brilliant representation of the thought and emotion of modern Chinese revolutionaries in the form of classical Chinese poetry, with a free and bold style.

The poetic orientation of the Chinese has greatly influenced other forms of the culture, e.g. traditional Chinese drama, so that people are highly sensitive to poetry and have a good taste to appreciate poetry. This obviously serves as a natural access to the poetic quality of Shakespeare works. Generally speaking, at first, the Chinese tend to approach the English dramatist through the poetry and greatly admire his beautiful and lyrical language. As I mentioned in chapter 3, the early Chinese Shakespeare scholars often paid their attention to the poetic quality of Shakespeare's works, such as the comment of Liang Qi Chao. The famous Chinese scholar Zhu Dong Run, Professor of Fudan University, has compared Shakespeare with the greatest classical Chinese poet Li Po, and analyzed the similarity and difference between them.<sup>26</sup> Thus similar to European romantic Shakespeare critics, the Chinese, particularly those who adhere to the literary tradition, admire Shakespeare mainly for his poetic characteristics, enjoying his beautiful figurative language and wonderful images, though Shakespeare displays different poetic styles, as I pointed out in chapter 2. This is why the famous director and actor Yin Ruo Cheng reminded his players to pay special attention to acting when they rehearsed a Shakespearean play because Mr Ying knew clearly that Chinese performers were easily intoxicated with the poetic flavour and lyrical atmosphere of Shakespeare's

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<sup>26</sup>. Zhu Dong Run, 'Talks on Shakespeare's Poetic Quality', Shakespeare Criticism in China, ed. by Meng Xian Qiang (Jilin, 1991), pp. 54-5.

plays and neglected the acting.<sup>27</sup> So in contemporary China, most Chinese people are still inclined to appreciate Shakespeare's plays in terms of poetry and literature instead of in terms of the stage. The reason is partly that the performance of Shakespeare's plays is often limited by financial constraints and theatrical facilities. But the reason seems also to be that many Chinese people have an opinion similar to that of Charles Lamb: that the performance may spoil or reduce the fascination of Shakespeare's imagination and poetic flavour because an audience's attention is often attracted by some non-essential elements such as settings, props, movements, gestures, etc, and they are easily confined to a single interpretation of the play. This, however, by no means implies that the Chinese do not like the stage representations of Shakespeare.

There are also some minor factors in traditional Chinese culture which affect Shakespeare's reception in China. For instance, the Chinese are keen on a practical philosophy of life but not on any abstract and profound philosophy like nineteenth century German philosophy. This tendency can be seen in the short philosophical poems of ancient China and the 'citizen' short stories in the Ming and Qing dynasties. The precepts in these works mainly contain the principles of Taoism and Buddhism and the practical maxims of townspeople. The habit is inherited by the modern Chinese, although most of the precepts are no longer well suited to contemporary social practice. This may help to explain why the Chinese are spellbound by Shakespearean 'golden sayings'. Chinese culture, which is based on Confucianism, is characterized by its strong secularism. The Chinese have never taken any religion seriously, including Buddhism. Generally speaking, they don't like literary works with a strong religious colour. But Shakespeare is completely accessible to them although some of his plays come to us against a Christian background. By contrast, the works of Dante, Milton and Goethe are too difficult to be understood by ordinary Chinese people owing to the complex religious contexts of these works.

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<sup>27</sup>. This reference was provided by Mr Bao Guo An, a teacher at the Central Drama Academy, in his speech on the staging of Macbeth, in the conference held on 21 April 1986 in Beijing.

As the dominating ideology in China since 1949, Marxism has greatly influenced the social and cultural practice of the Chinese. It seemed no accident that the socialist revolution in China took place under the guidance of Marxism-Leninism because there are elements in common with the principle of Marxism in Chinese culture, especially in Confucianism, such as the active participation in state affairs and social practice, the similar moral and social ideal, etc. The 1950s and 1960s saw a deep imprint of Marxism on Shakespeare's reception in China. The function of Marxism in moulding China's appreciation of Shakespeare displays a dual nature. On one hand, Marx asks his followers to inherit all of world culture including bourgeois culture while building up a new proletarian culture, and his literary theory provides one more perspective for the Chinese on Shakespeare's works. But on the other hand, it confines the people to a single and fixed angle from which to view the dramatist. In fact, Marx himself tends to approach Shakespeare literarily and artistically, but his successors, especially his Russian successors, often interpret the playwright historically and politically to illustrate the Marxist theory of dialectical materialism and historical materialism. The Chinese appreciation of Shakespeare from 1949 to 1978 was mainly influenced by Russian Shakespeare studies, as can be easily found in Shakespeare criticism in China during this period. Like their Russian counterparts, the Chinese Shakespeare critics maintain that Shakespeare's works show the process of social development from feudalism to capitalism, regarding the dramatist as a representative of progressive social forces and humanism. So, they concentrate their research on the social and political significance of Shakespeare's works, dealing with his realism, optimism, affinity to the people, description of class struggle, etc.

For many Chinese critics, Shakespeare's works are a good figurative demonstration of Marxist historical materialism. Thus, there has been a prevailing tendency in Chinese Shakespeare studies to link Shakespeare's plays with their Elizabethan and Jacobean historical context. Dealing with the political ideas in Shakespeare's histories, Professor Chen Jia held that in the plays Shakespeare gave a panorama of the class and political struggle in English history. Shakespeare represented mainly the bloody power struggle in royal families and between the

monarchy and aristocracy which was the most typical political conflict in a feudal society. By Marxist theory, however, working people are the real motive force of history. So Professor Chen Jia, like many other Chinese Shakespeare scholars, paid special attention in his article to the function of the working class in the political struggle. He maintained that although the farmers and citizens in Shakespeare's histories in most cases did not operate as an independent force, their participation was often an important factor in the struggle. Sometimes they even had encouragement to fight directly with the ruling class, as Shakespeare described in King Henry VI, Part 2. Influenced by Marxism, Chinese critics during this period believed that all writers wrote for a particular social class. So they tended to label a writer as one belonging to a particular social class. In his article, Professor Chen Jia also tries to determine the class status of Shakespeare. He thought that basically Shakespeare was a bourgeois writer. Because the bourgeoisie was a progressive class when capitalism was in the ascendant, Shakespeare should be regarded as a progressive playwright. In his historical plays, Shakespeare saw and described political events from a bourgeois standpoint, as well as that of the working class because the interests of bourgeoisie were basically coincident with those of the working class during that historical period.<sup>28</sup>

Using Marxist method of class analysis, some Chinese critics held that Shakespeare described in his works the conflict between the declining feudal system and the ascendant bourgeois force. Zhu Wei Zhi summarized the theme of The Merchant of Venice as a conflict between the rising bourgeois ideology and old feudal ideology. The conflict was shown in different aspects of social practice in the play. Shakespeare first represented the confrontation between old usury, with Shylock as its representative, and the new commercialism, with Antonio as its representative. The latter was obviously depicted as the embodiment of a progressive social and economic force. The conflict between the old and new ideology was also to be seen in the play's marriage system. Portia and Jessica tried to marry partners of their own choice, which was contrary to the arranged marriage

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<sup>28</sup>. Chen Jia, 'The Political Ideas of Shakespeare in His Histories', Journal of Nanjing University, 4 (1956), 150-170.

of feudalism. Mr Zhu believed that the defeat of Shylock was, in a sense, the defeat of the outmoded feudal law. The victory of Portia over Shylock was actually won with the help of the new bourgeois law.<sup>29</sup> Some Chinese scholars maintained that Shakespeare was not limited by his class status as a bourgeois writer because he often exposed and criticized the negative side of capitalism. Li Fu Ning held that As You Like It deliberately used the device of the forest world to form a striking contrast between the harmonious golden age of mankind and a malicious capitalist society. The moral principle and values followed by the characters admitted to the forest world, especially Orlando, Adam and Celia, completely contradicted that of bourgeoisie which was based on gain and money. The negative characters in the play such as Duke Frederick and Oliver showed, to some extent, the aspiring mind and ambition of the bourgeoisie, ignoring the interests of others.<sup>30</sup>

The special interest of Marx in Timon of Athens has particularly affected the interpretation of Shakespeare's plays by Chinese critics. In his economic and political works, Marx frequently used quotations from Timon of Athens, especially Timon's condemnation of gold (4. 3. 26-43)<sup>31</sup> to discuss the essence of money and its function in a capitalist society. This has almost become a formula in China for interpreting Timon of Athens and other plays relating to money worship. For example, Dai Xin Dong argued that Shakespeare revealed the basic drive of capitalism through Timon's soliloquies. The play demonstrated that in capitalist society man was enslaved to money and money became god. The desperate desire for money was the root of all evil in capitalist society. So Shakespeare in fact represented the essence of capitalism through his play while Marx expounded it through philosophical theory.<sup>32</sup> The studies of Shakespeare's philosophical ideas

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<sup>29</sup>. Zhu Wei Zhi, 'On the Merchant of Venice', Foreign Literature Studies, 1 (1978), 19-28.

<sup>30</sup>. Li Fu Ning, 'Shakespeare's As You Like It', Journal of Beijing University, 4 (1956), p. 51-6.

<sup>31</sup>. Karl Marx, Das Capital, Chinese translation (Beijing, 1975), p. 152.

<sup>32</sup>. Dai Xin Dong, 'The Description of Gold: Shakespeare's Timon of Athens', Journal of North-East Normal University, 1 (1981), 32-5.

in China, ranging from studies of Shakespeare's concept of nature to his views of history, are also greatly affected by Marxist philosophy, especially his materialism and dialectics. In 1986, a young Chinese Shakespeare scholar, Zhang Yang, wrote three articles to discuss systematically the philosophical ideas in Shakespeare's plays. He held that the philosophical concepts in Shakespeare's plays had an affinity to those of Marx. For instance, through careful examination of the 'golden sayings' in Shakespeare's texts, Mr Zhang maintained that almost all the laws of Marxist dialectics were to be found in Shakespeare's works. The law of the unity of opposites was represented in Shakespeare's works, for the description of numerous opposite things was commonly taken as one of the notable characteristics of Shakespearean art. The transformation of a contradiction was vividly expressed by Shakespearean sayings, e.g. a passage from Romeo and Juliet:

Nor aught so good but, strain'd from that far use,  
Revolts from true birth, stumbling on abuse:  
Virtue itself turns vice, being misapplied,  
And vice sometime's by action dignified.

(2, 3. 19-22)

The law of the negation of negation could also be found in Shakespeare's works, as in his sonnets:

When I have seen the hungry ocean gain  
Advantage on the kingdom of the shore,  
And the firm soil win of the wat'ry main,  
Increasing store with loss, and loss with store;

(64. 5-8)

By Mr Zhang, other laws of Marxist dialects such as the law of quantitative change and qualitative change, the law of appearance and essence, and the law of cause and effect, etc, were all wonderfully represented by Shakespeare in his beautiful language.<sup>33</sup>

Artistically, Marxism has also exerted an influence on the Chinese perception

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<sup>33</sup>. Zhang Yang, 'Shakespeare and the Concept of Nature During the Renaissance', Journal of Jilin University, 1 (1986), 53-60.

of the dramatist. In Chapter 3, we mentioned the Russian orientation of Shakespeare production in China during the 1950s and 1960s, which was actually a Marxist approach to Shakespeare's plays. Marxist literary assessment is based on the criterion of verisimilitude. The Shakespeare productions in China during this period were obviously made on this principle because all of them tried to achieve truthfulness of a visual and psychological reality through naturalistic performance, as we discussed in chapter 3. Engels' theory of literary typification was largely used by Chinese Shakespeare scholars to analyze Shakespeare's characters. Following Engels' theory, they tried to find how Shakespeare truthfully reproduced 'typical characters under typical circumstances', which was actually an endeavour to relate the qualities of Shakespeare's characters to the relevant social contexts which shaped such qualities.<sup>34</sup> Both Marx and Engels highly praised Shakespeare's artistic mode and were dissatisfied with that of Schiller because they held that a moral and political tendency should not be explicitly explained by the author; on the contrary, it had to be naturally evident from the situation and action.<sup>35</sup> As this synthesis of Shakespearean mode and Schillerian mode functioned to reconcile great art with revolutionary commitment, it has had a great impact not only on Shakespeare criticism and Western literary studies in China, but also on all literary and artistic practice in the country. It is obvious that this notion is by no means an original literary concept. Yet it reminds communist writers not to achieve political significance at the expense of artistic merit and urges revolutionary critics to pay attention to literary values while emphasizing ideological values. It has provided one more angle for Chinese Shakespeare scholars to view the literary merits of Shakespeare works and has been a common topic for them. According to the bibliography attached to Shakespeare Criticism in China (Beijing, 1991), there were twenty five articles published on the implication and significance of 'Shakespearean mode and Schillerian mode' from 1980 to 1984. The use and explanation of this

<sup>34</sup>. Wan Ying Hua, 'The Typical Characters and Typical Circumstances: Shakespearean Tragedies', Journal of Hangzhou Teacher's College, 1 (1980), 51-5.

<sup>35</sup>. The Literary and Artistic theory of Marx and Engels, ed. by the Translation Department of The Works of Marx and Engels (Beijing, 1958), p. 145-7.

notion, in fact, reflects the debate in China over the priority between political propaganda and artistic value. Whenever the political situation becomes tense, the former would be greatly emphasized, and when the political climate were secure, the latter would be cheerfully taken. This helps to explain why there were so many articles written on this topic at the beginning of the 1980s, when China saw comparative political tolerance, under Deng Xiao Ping's 'Open Door' policy.

It seems that the omnipresence and omnipotence of Shakespeare made him easily adapt to the taste of the proletarian revolutionaries even if he wrote mainly for the aristocracy and bourgeoisie. In a broad sense, it might justly be said that Marxism has contributed to the reception of Shakespeare by the Chinese. Marx's comment on both the ideological and aesthetic value of Shakespeare, in fact, provided a political umbrella for the dramatist in the closed socialist state which was antagonistic to the West during the 1950s and 1960s. Yet the political climate became more and more unfavourable to the existence of Shakespeare in China after the country broke away from the Soviet Union in the late 1950s and the ideas and principles of Mao Ze Dong (called 'Mao Ze Dong thought' in China) were taken as the political and cultural guidelines for the Chinese. By Mao's literary theory, all literary and artistic activities should first serve the revolution and comply with the political principle of the Party. This seriously fettered the practice of literary criticism including Shakespeare studies and ran, at last, to the extremity of negating all Western culture during the Cultural Revolution.

China saw the decline of Marxism-Mao Ze Dong Thought and the new enthusiasm for Western culture in the 1980s, caused by the disaster of the Cultural Revolution, although Marxism and Mao Ze Dong Thought were still claimed by the new leaders as the dominant ideology in the country. The Chinese then were able to approach Shakespeare in any way they liked, gaining their freedom from the dogmatic interpretation of Shakespeare's works. Yet the philosophical method of Marxism seemed to continue to have a strong influence on the Chinese appreciation of Shakespeare, and was still used by Chinese critics and scholars to evaluate and analyze Shakespeare's works, although their conclusions could be quite different

from those of the criticism in the 1950s and 1960s. For instance, a fair proportion of the books and articles on Shakespeare in the last decade have associated Shakespeare's works with the present situation of China, comparing the corrupt practice and money worship in contemporary China with what Shakespeare described in his works.<sup>36</sup> In all these researches, the historically and socially analytical method of Marx was commonly employed. One reason for this continuation of Marxist influence on Shakespeare studies in China is partly that the impact of Marxism on the Chinese is so deep that some principles of Marxism, particularly his dialectic materialism and historical materialism, have become the thinking mode of the people. But another seems to be that the Marxist analytical method is well suited for the political orientation of literary creation and criticism in modern and contemporary China, which stems mainly from the continuous social turbulence and political movement in the country in this period. That also helps to explain the pronounced political colour of Chinese interpretations of Shakespeare's works.

The third perspective of the Chinese is humanism, which is closely linked with the great changes in China after the Cultural Revolution, particularly the change in the existing ideology of the country. One cannot understand the immense enthusiasm that the Chinese show for Shakespeare in the 1980s without the awareness of the great changes in contemporary China which call for new ideology, values and aesthetic taste. Shakespeare, with his omnipotence, satisfies once more all these new needs of the people. At the end of the 1970s, frustrated by the disaster of the Cultural Revolution, many Chinese people were extremely disappointed in the previous political and economic policy carried out by the ultra-'Left' line of the Party, suspecting the practicability of the political Utopia of both Marx and Mao Ze dong. There was a prevalent 'conviction crisis' among the people. Recognizing the seriousness of the situation, Deng Xiao Ping, who was regarded as a saviour by the Chinese at that time, decided to implement an 'open door' policy and initiate economic reform. So the 1980s saw a series of radical social

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<sup>36</sup>. Zhang Si Yang, Xu Bin and Zhang Xiao Yang, The Study of Shakespeare's Plays (Changchun, 1991), pp. 1-12.

transformations in China: the increasing demand for democracy, the boom in market economy, the rise of a cultural 'Renaissance', and meantime, a continuous struggle in the leadership between the reform group and the 'hard line' conservative group. This is an age of comparative political and religious tolerance, an age of comparative social contentment with economic prosperity, and improvement in living standards, and an age of comparative intellectual liberty with a boom in cultural undertakings. This is also an age of dreams, enthusiasm, adventure, competition, patriotism, and meanwhile, of great potential crisis caused by the contradiction between the economic basis and the social superstructure. What is more important, a striking similarity is to be found in many aspects between contemporary China and the Elizabethan age, which I dealt with in an article published in China three years ago.<sup>37</sup> Contemporary China can bear comparison with the Elizabethan age because Chinese society today in fact is in transition from a feudal system (though it is called a socialist system) to a modern industrialized society. Many Chinese scholars share this view with me. For instance, the famous writer and political dissenter Liu Bin Yan wrote, in his article, 'In some respects of social life, we are experiencing a radical change similar to that of the transition period in Europe from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance'.<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately, this passage was particularly criticized by the conservative leaders because they were thinking that Liu Bin Yan deliberately compared China to an inferior social stage.

For the above reason, it is understandable why the Chinese show such an enthusiasm for Shakespeare. They see his works as a mirror of their own times, from which they can find almost all the features of their own society: the struggle between old and new social forces, the corruption of political power, the temptation of money, the conflict and compromise between personal passion and moral order, the emergence of new ideology and values, etc. Thus Chinese audiences and readers feel it is easy for them to identify with the characters of Shakespeare's plays,

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<sup>37</sup>. Zhang Xiao Yang, 'The Staging of Shakespeare and the Artistic Taste of Our times', Foreign Literature Studies, 1 (1989), 28-38.

<sup>38</sup>. Li Yi, 'Interview with Liu Bin Yan', The 1990s, 5 (1988), p. 25.

understanding their thoughts and sharing the joys and sorrows of them.

It is noticeable that the old ideology and values system are no longer suited to our changing society and accordingly the constitution of a new ideology and values system are desperately needed. As in Europe during the Renaissance, humanism has been adopted by the Chinese as the kernel of their new ideology, and the principles concerned as the basis of their new values. The Chinese interpretation of humanism seems to be a compounded one, mingled with the European definition in several centuries. The Chinese understand humanism as an ideological principle which concentrates on individual rights, needs, demands, desires and creative potentialities. To be precise, for the Chinese, humanism implies human rights and competitive individualism which, they believe, can be found in neither traditional Chinese culture nor Marxism because both emphasize collectivism instead of individualism. Marxism sees private ownership, which is based on individual desire, as the root of all evil. Confucius also asks the Chinese to restrain their personal desire and adapt to a moral order. The understanding of humanism by the Chinese is affected not only by Western values, but also by the social and political contexts of China. During the notorious Cultural Revolution, human rights were wantonly trampled on, millions died of persecution and all rational individual demands were claimed as 'bourgeois ideology', which made China an autocratic and poor country. So it is quite clear why the Chinese have strongly called for humanism after the nightmare of dictatorship and asceticism. For them, humanism is no longer a remote trend of thought in Western history or an ideology specially belonging to the bourgeoisie. It is the very ideology they desperately need, to develop their country and enliven their culture.

The Chinese are extremely excited when they find in Shakespeare's works the very spirit of the times they need. For them, Shakespeare serves as an important vehicle for spreading humanism. From Shakespeare's plays, the Chinese see the celebration of individuality, the awakening of self-consciousness, competitive individualism, the moral principle against obscurantism, the idea of freedom, equality and universal love, etc. All these, actually, will function as the basic

ideology and values for a prosperous bourgeois society or a democratic industrialized country, which has been proved by historical facts. In terms of ideology, Shakespeare seems also to cater particularly for Chinese young people. There has been a widespread 'anti-tradition' attitude among them, fostered by the serious social problems in China and disappointment at Marxism-Maoism and some outmoded tenets in traditional ideology. Thus young people often show their interest in scepticism in Shakespeare's plays, especially in his tragedies. Hamlet has been their hero, both to represent such scepticism and to examine thoroughly the dislocated and morbid society. The changes in ideology and values also help to explain, from another angle, why the Chinese favour the 'golden sayings' of Shakespeare because they find in them a lot of useful and practical principles of life suitable for the new times.

The changing ideology, institutions and modes of life all bring about a sharp change in aesthetic taste in contemporary China, which makes the Chinese enjoy Shakespeare's art even more. Influenced by the spirit of the times and the faster rhythm of life, contemporary Chinese tend to appreciate literary and artistic works in a strong, vigorous and impassioned style, with vitality, enthusiasm, variation and fast rhythms. It seems that the traditional aesthetic ideal of the 'Beauty of balance' is out of favour and many Chinese people, especially young people and intellectuals, have grown weary of the endless sentimentalism of traditional Chinese literature and the political propaganda and formulism of socialist Chinese literature. The new taste is also characterized by an immediate and direct interest in human nature itself, affected by the central position of humanism in the ideological framework. The theory of human nature was seriously criticized in the 1960s and during the Cultural Revolution as bourgeois literary theory, and replaced with the proletarian theory of class analysis and class struggle. The new interest in human nature results in an enthusiasm of the Chinese for the beauty of humanity, the inner world of mankind and complex and varied personality instead of simple moral and class type of character, which helps to explain why Chinese Shakespeare scholars show great interest in the analysis of Shakespeare's characters although it is not a fashionable topic now for their Western counterparts. The new taste also prefers unflinching

tragic ideas to glossing over reality, asking for a full representation of emotion without restraint and a true reflection of life without tedious moralizing. It is evident that Shakespeare can satisfy all these needs of the new artistic taste in contemporary China because the Chinese find all these characteristics in Shakespeare's works rather than in traditional or socialist Chinese literature. Thus we can further understand the phenomenon of the 'Shakespeare craze' in contemporary China. Shakespeare gives Chinese people not only spiritual strength but also the great pleasure they need.

The influence of the humanist approach on the reception of Shakespeare by the Chinese can be clearly seen in Shakespeare criticism and production in the last decade. It is easy to see that the main concern of the Shakespeare industry in China during this period is humanism in the Chinese sense, with Shakespeare's works viewed and interpreted in the perspective of human nature and human rights, with the combination of the social and political issues in contemporary China. Meanwhile, the appreciation of Shakespeare's art is affected by the new aesthetic taste of the Chinese. In the 1950s and 1960s, humanism was occasionally mentioned in Chinese interpretations of Shakespeare's works. But it was only regarded as an ideology in the early stage of capitalism and never linked with the social context of China. By comparison, humanism has not only become a prime topic of Shakespeare criticism in China, but is also largely related to social and political circumstances by Chinese critics since 1978. In an article, Yuan Kun comprehensively discussed the historical and immediate significance of Shakespeare's humanism. He held that Shakespeare represented in his works a humanism which was a prevailing and progressive ideology during the Renaissance and showed how the characters used humanism as an ideological weapon to fight against feudalism. He also believed that humanism in Shakespeare's plays was not a backward and outmoded bourgeois idea, as condemned by the Gang of Four in the Cultural Revolution. It was actually of great significance to social practice in post-Cultural Revolution China, because Chinese people need humanism to sweep

away feudalism under the cover of socialism.<sup>39</sup> In a selection of Shakespeare criticism edited by the Shakespeare Society of Jilin Province, there is an article written by three postgraduate students of Jilin University, dealing with their understanding of Shakespeare's dramatic merits. It is evident that they concentrated on the representation of humanism in Shakespeare's works, highly praising Shakespeare's revelation of human nature and the roots of good and evil.<sup>40</sup> Discussing the practical significance of Shakespeare's humanistic ideal to Chinese society, they said:

Shakespeare tells us that the emancipation of individuality is of great importance to the progress of a modern society. Any restriction of the rational demand and right of man will hamper the initiative and creativity of people.... Shakespeare also tells us that the progress of social development is never a smooth one, as we see in his tragedies. It would be specially realized by Chinese people who just experienced the disaster of the Cultural Revolution.<sup>41</sup>

The humanist perspective of the Chinese on Shakespeare is characterized by an endeavour to relate particular social issues in Shakespeare's plays to those of contemporary China. For example, there are numerous critics paying special attention to the power struggle in Shakespeare's plays and applying it to the political issues of China. The reason for this tendency is that there is a common disappointment among Chinese people at the existing political system and that they are trying to work out why communist leaders, including Mao Ze Dong himself, who have been claimed as the great liberators of the people, can be politically degenerate. Many Chinese intellectuals believe that Shakespeare gives a good answer to this question because he clearly demonstrates in his plays that an

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<sup>39</sup>. Yuan Kun, 'On Shakespeare's Humanism', Foreign Literature Studies, 2 (1979), 124-8.

<sup>40</sup>. Feng Gang, Liu Yan Bing and Li Li, 'Our Understanding of Shakespeare's Plays', Shakespeare's Triple Plays, ed. by the Shakespeare Society of Jilin Province (Changchun, 1988), pp. 276-8.

<sup>41</sup>. Ibid, pp. 279-280.

autocratic political system must lead to corruption and oppression and that the passion for power is a fundamental source of disorder in society.<sup>42</sup> It should be pointed out that such discussions must be undertaken carefully and indirectly, for there is a changeable limit of tolerance available to those who criticize the existing political policy, particularly the leadership of the Party. Great concerns about human rights in China are often to be found in humanist approaches to Shakespeare, since his works are regarded by the Chinese as an important vehicle for spreading the humanist values of freedom, equality and universal love. I was most impressed by the warm and penetrating speech by a Chinese scholar, Ding Tao, when I attended a conference in Beijing during the Inaugural Chinese Shakespeare Festival. His central topic was how to stage Shakespeare's plays from the standpoint of our own age, with emphasis on the significance of Shakespeare's humanism to contemporary China. He maintained that Shakespeare's plays showed us how mankind was released from the ideological shackles of the Middle Ages, and that we Chinese now also face an arduous task to emancipate ourselves from outmoded spiritual fetters and to vindicate human rights and dignity. Thus he believed that to present Shakespeare's plays was, in a sense, to present our own times.<sup>43</sup> More examples to associate Shakespeare's works with the social context of China can be seen in readings and discussions by the people in informal occasions. For instance, many Chinese readers share an opinion that Shakespeare's sonnet 66 ('Tir'd with all these, for restful death I cry:') vividly mirrors the Cultural Revolution. Iago and Edmund are also frequently associated with the political speculators, careerists, social climbers, informers and villains during and after the Cultural Revolution.

Shakespeare production in China since 1978 also tends to approach the dramatist in a humanist way. It seems that there has been a generally recognized unwritten principle in Chinese theatrical circles since the 1980s that a successful

<sup>42</sup>. c. f. Zhang Yang, 'Shakespeare's Historical Concept', Journal of Liaoning University, 5 (1988), 9-15.

<sup>43</sup>. Speech by Ding Tao at a conference held in the Central Drama Academy, Beijing, on 17 April 1986.

Shakespeare production must be one that well represents the 'original intention' of the dramatist, and that this 'original intention' is, in fact, commonly explained as his humanist idea. Thus in order to receive much acclaim from the audience and critics, Chinese directors make every effort to embody this idea, which turns out to be a mixture of Western values and the elements of Chinese understanding shaped by the social and political contexts of contemporary China. Meantime, a combination of this approach and other interpretations is welcome, and variation of stage technique is largely encouraged, as we discussed in Chapter 5 and the present chapter. As a modernized Shakespeare production, Love's Labour's Lost by the Jiangsu Spoken Drama Troupe in April 1986, displayed a visible humanist vein with a warm and bright atmosphere, arousing specially favourable reactions from young Chinese audiences. As Mr Xong Guo Dong, the director, admitted in his article, he saw the theme of the play as the liberation of human nature from unreasonable spiritual shackles. So he aimed to present a 'comedy of emancipation', with humanist thought and emotion. The treatment of the theme was centred on how the characters free themselves from asceticism whose absurdity, Mr Xong believed, was not exaggerated by the dramatist, because the asceticism imposed on the Chinese people during the Cultural Revolution was much more preposterous than that in this play.<sup>44</sup> Some sinicized Shakespeare productions in the 1980s also exhibit a tendency to convey same humanist idea. For example, the Shaoxing opera Twelfth Night by the Shanghai Shaoxing Opera Troupe in April 1986, was made to represent the Chinese understanding of humanism. By the director Hu Mei Min, Chinese audiences would specially favour humanism in Shakespeare's plays due to their sad experience in the Cultural Revolution. Talking about his intention to mingle Shakespeare's style and the Chinese style in the production, Mr Xong pointed out that the first and foremost aspect of Shakespearean style was his humanism and the production accordingly must fully represent his affirmation of human value and dignity, his praise of human nature and his celebration of

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<sup>44</sup>. Xong Guo Dong, 'The Conception of the Direction of Love's Labour's Lost', Shakespeare in China, ed. by Shakespeare Association of China (Shanghai, 1987), pp. 142-2.

individuality.<sup>45</sup>

It is often held that Shakespeare has presented a different appearance to every age, which displays the double implications of Ben Jonson's prediction, as a Western critic says:

When Ben Jonson said of Shakespeare that 'he was not of an age but for all time,' he could not have realised the double implications of his words. While Jonson's lines were written in praise of Shakespeare's timeless appeal, they can also be seen to describe an ongoing process of literary and cultural appropriation in which each new generation attempts to redefine Shakespeare's genius in contemporary terms, projecting its desires and anxieties onto his work.<sup>46</sup>

This view can be proved even by the short history of the reception of the dramatist in China. We have seen that the Chinese have different visions of Shakespeare in different historical periods, influenced by different social and political contexts. The Confucian perspective lets the Chinese people see mainly the similarity between Shakespeare's works and a Chinese cultural tradition, finding many open approaches to Shakespeare's thoughts and art. Viewing from the Confucian perspective, the Chinese tend to pay attention to what their cultural tradition also emphasized, such as public values, moral and political duties, the maintenance of order and harmony in a society, etc. Traditional aesthetic taste and literary bias enable the people to bestow different colours on Shakespeare's plays. A Marxist approach helps the country to accept the dramatist in a stern political climate, offering the people a philosophical and social analytical method to evaluate his works. The Chinese are inclined to appreciate Shakespeare's plays in the light

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<sup>45</sup> . Hu Mei Min, 'Notes on Directing Twelfth Night in the Form of Shaoxing Opera', Shakespeare in China, ed. by Shakespeare Association of China (Shanghai, 1987), p. 133.

<sup>46</sup> . Jean I. Marsden, 'Introduction', The Appropriation of Shakespeare: Post-Renaissance Reconstructions of the Works and the Myth, ed. by Jean I. Marsden (London, 1991), p. 1.

of English and European historical contexts, influenced by Marxist dialectic materialism and historical materialism. Contributing to a deeper understanding and warmer reception of Shakespeare by the Chinese, humanist approaches spur the people on to find in Shakespeare's plays what their traditional culture lacks. From a humanist perspective, Shakespeare's world is closely connected by the people with their own experiences, desires and anxieties, and the social and political contexts of China. The dramatist is therefore regarded by the people as their contemporary and a great figure to enlighten them, and his drama is accordingly seen as a mirror of their changing society. Humanist ideas in Shakespeare's plays, such as liberal and competitive individualism, the celebration of human nature and rights, freedom, equality, etc, are taken as a powerful ideological weapon to carry out social reform and to enliven cultural practice in many respects. This approach has, in fact, paved the way for Shakespeare's participation in the institution-making in contemporary China, which we discussed in Chapter 5.

In practical reading, criticism and production of Shakespeare, however, these three major approaches are often mingled together, although any one particular approach will be given as a label. In a single Shakespeare production in China, two or three different perspectives could be smoothly mixed together, especially when the play is performed in Chinese style, as we analyzed in Chapter 5. It is easier to find different approaches in the same piece of writing. For example, when Zhang Yang dealt with Shakespeare's historical concept, he associated Shakespeare's idea with the political situation in China in terms of humanism. Yet the method of analysis he used was Marxist historical materialism. It is also very common for the three approaches to overlap in the same person's mind. When a Chinese, particularly a Chinese intellectual, saw a production of Timon of Athens, his immediate reaction could be linked with the prevailing money worship in contemporary China. Marx's condemnation of the negative function of money would further reinforce his initial impression. But in the deep structure of his consciousness, the conventional moral principle of 'Yi' and 'Li' would operate too. Hamlet is another play which is likely to arouse multiple responses among Chinese audiences. It can be said that these three approaches serve together as the most

important catalyst for the thorough assimilation of Shakespeare by Chinese culture, and contribute to the formation of the general Chinese vision of Shakespeare.

## Conclusion

The impact of Shakespeare upon Chinese culture and the assimilation of the dramatist by the culture we have discussed so far in Part III will contribute to a deeper understanding of what we discussed in Part I and Part II, because it has provided a broad social and cultural background for the further examination of the interaction between Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama. Viewing against this background, we can see even more clearly the different position and function of the two types of drama in the cultural landscape of China, and fully understand the vigorous growth of Shakespeare and the decline of traditional Chinese drama. The main reason for such a situation is, as we analyzed in Part III, that Shakespeare, as a 'institution maker', has provided individualistic values and social ideals for the changing Chinese society as its desperately needed ideological basis to build up its new political economy. By contrast, the conventional ideology and values system carried by traditional Chinese drama are not, at least in the short term, well suited for the social practice of the Chinese to establish a modern developed country because some outmoded doctrines of Confucianism would function as a barrier to the development of China into an open and mobile society. The Cultural Revolution made China a grim society, with estrangement and caution between people. It is the universal love in Shakespeare's works that operates as a remedy to reconcile the conflicts in the fractured and divided society. It seems that neither family love in traditional Chinese drama nor class love in socialist literature can fulfil this task.

Artistically, Shakespeare caters for the new prevailing aesthetic taste, while traditional Chinese drama is cold shouldered. So it is not difficult for us to understand why the Chinese prefer the real tragic ending of Shakespearean tragedies to the happy ending of traditional Chinese tragedies. Although the patterns of the 'Forest Utopia' in Shakespeare's comedy and the 'Garden Paradise' in traditional Chinese comedy bear some analogy to each other, as we pointed out in chapter 1, the Chinese feel that the former is more familiar to them than the

latter because the 'Forest Utopia' device can be directly associated with the reality of China and the social practice of the people, whereas for them the 'Paradise Garden' is only an embodiment of the remote past. The favour that the Chinese show to other characteristics of Shakespeare, such as characterization, poetic style, romantic vein, etc, which we dealt with in Chapter 2, also accounts for his vigour and the decline of traditional Chinese drama, for the corresponding characteristics of traditional Chinese drama have fallen out of favour.

Looking back on the process of Shakespeare's impact on traditional Chinese drama and culture, it is clear that the interaction between Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama has been greatly affected by the political situation, or, precisely, by the attitude of the political and cultural élite towards Western culture, as we see in the May Fourth New Cultural Movement, the Cultural Revolution and the Reform Movement since 1980. Even during the present Reform Movement, which saw a sharp expansion of Shakespeare's reputation in China, the interaction between Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama is still affected by the political struggle between the reform line and the conservative line. The latter has strongly opposed the influence of the West and the increasing demand of democracy, in the name of 'Anti-bourgeois liberalization'. It seemed no accident that the influential Inaugural Chinese Shakespeare Festival was held in 1986, because in that year the reform line prevailed over the conservative line and Chinese intellectuals got much more freedom than ever before. A dramatic situation occurred after the political event at Tian An Meng Square in 1989. To resist the influence of the West, the Chinese government has launched a campaign to carry forward traditional Chinese culture. Accordingly, funded by the government, the theatrical activity of traditional Chinese drama is enlivened, with festivals and contests held and TV programmes arranged by the cultural authority. Admittedly, it can be a helpful action to vitalize traditional Chinese drama, but the evident political purpose behind it may arouse the aversion of the people, which would be harmful to the improvement of the drama. By contrast, the large-scale activity concerning Shakespeare is affected by the political climate. The second Chinese Shakespeare Festival, which was planned to take place in April 1990, has been postponed for two years, owing to the lack of

support from the government, because it is impossible to hold any large-scale cultural activity in China without official help. Yet, there is no doubt that the position of Shakespeare in the cultural landscape of China is unalterable for the dramatist has now been rooted so deeply in Chinese culture. At present, however, the signs are encouraging. With a new upsurge in economic reform, a brisk political climate has appeared since the summer of 1992. Inspired by this good situation, Chinese Shakespeare scholars and theatrical workers are beginning to prepare further large-scale activities. As I have been informed by the Shakespeare Association of China so far, a specific Shakespeare festival will be held in 1993 in Anhui Province, with all the productions presented in the form of traditional Chinese drama; the Second Chinese Shakespeare Festival will be held in 1994 in Shanghai, more than ten Chinese drama companies will play at the festival, and ten foreign drama companies will be invited to perform on the occasion. In addition, a large-scale conference on Shakespeare studies will be held in Wuhan in 1993. The Shakespeare Association of China has also applied to the International Shakespeare Association to hold the Sixth International Shakespeare Conference. So, the future in China is promising for the further development of Shakespearean production, study and appreciation.

It seems that we should reach a conclusion without political bias on the significance of the interaction between Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama and that between him and traditional Chinese culture. It can be said that Shakespeare functions as a really effective impetus to the vitalization of traditional Chinese drama because he helps the Chinese to examine the weakness of their dramatic tradition and makes them recognize that the fundamental way out for traditional Chinese drama lies in the improvement and development of itself through learning the good qualities of other dramatic traditions while retaining its own distinction. Actually, the achievement of Shakespeare should also be attributed to his wonderful mixture of different cultural traditions. As we stated in chapter 4, traditional Chinese drama has learned a lot from Shakespeare, which was highly praised by Chinese theatrical circles as a substantial step by the former to achieve a new life. The significance of the interaction between Shakespeare and Chinese

culture is also evident. On one hand, the dramatist has greatly influenced the constitution of the new ideology in China, providing powerful ideological weapons and new values for the people and helping to generate a new culture and literature in the country. On the other hand, the cheerful assimilation of Shakespeare by Chinese culture serves as one more indication to his universal appeal and compatibility with alien cultures.

It is clear that the significance of the interaction between Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama is not limited to theatrical circles. The relationship between the two types of drama, in fact, reflects the interaction between two great cultural traditions. Like traditional Chinese drama, the whole Chinese cultural tradition, to a certain extent, has also been faced with a crisis since the very beginning of the present century. But as those with breadth of vision pointed out, Chinese culture would develop and regenerate itself through an exchange with Western culture. The interaction between Shakespeare and traditional Chinese culture has proved this point. The real crisis actually comes from isolation from the outside world but not from any influence of other cultural traditions. It is wrong to think of Western culture as conflicting with Chinese culture. From a long-term point of view, the two cultural traditions would complement each other, as we have seen in the process of the assimilation of Shakespeare by Chinese culture. The prosperity of Japan serves as a good example to mingle Western culture and its own cultural tradition which has been seen as a transformation of Chinese culture. In recent years, some Chinese scholars have predicted that the future of the world will rely on the renaissance of Chinese culture because they think Western culture has reached its peak and shown some sign of crisis.<sup>47</sup> It is difficult for us, at this stage, to foresee whether the prediction will come true. But what we can say is that the cultural gap between the two great cultural traditions will be gradually bridged with the closer and more frequent exchange between them and that the combination of the two great cultural traditions will make a great contribution to the material and cultural prosperity of the world.

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<sup>47</sup>. Liang Shu Ming, 'Chinese culture and Western culture', Wenhui Newspaper, 1 April 1985, p. 4.

Discussing the intercultural tendency of post-modern theatre, a Western critic supposed that a 'world theatre' and a 'world culture' were likely to appear in the future:

It may well be that this type of interculturality reflects a general development in the culture of post-modern societies (and even in some societies in the Third World): one can observe a certain tendency of different cultures to merge into one world-culture. Whether such a world-culture will in fact arise and what it will look like is, for the time being, impossible to predict. Perhaps the search for a universal theatrical language in post-modern theatre indicates that the theatre has already passed into this new era.<sup>48</sup>

It seems that the interaction between Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama should be included in the intercultural tendency of post-modern theatre. If the prediction comes true, undoubtedly, the cooperation of Shakespeare and traditional Chinese drama will contribute to the establishment of a 'world theatre', and the interaction between Shakespeare and Chinese culture will correspondingly contribute to the constitution of a 'world culture'.

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48. Erika Fischer-Lichte, 'Intercultural Aspects in Post-Modern Theatre: a Japanese Version of Chekhov's Three Sisters', The Play out of Context, ed. by Hanna Scolnicov and Peter Holland (Cambridge, 1989), p. 184.

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