

Chan

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Presenter: Irene Chan

Department of English Language and Literature, National Chengchi University

Taipei, Taiwan

irenechan1041@gmail.com

Abstract

Cultural Reformation in Adaptations: Two Cases of Adapting Shakespeare's *Macbeth* into Chinese Opera

Cross-cultural adaptation of William Shakespeare's works has long been a delightful challenge for oriental theatre practitioners. Plays concerning politics, kingships, loyalty issues and supernatural interventions are particularly favoured by those who aim to assert there are certain "universal similarities" in Chinese and English cultures. *The Tragedy of Macbeth* contains all the elements stated above and is hence one of Shakespeare's most frequently adapted plays by eastern theatres. Some of the adaptations capture the Bard's spirit with precision as well as presenting what would have occurred had the story takes place in ancient eastern courts; some other adaptations are merely plagiarism of the original play. What are the elements that make a cross-cultural adaptation successful? How do Chinese theatres transform Renaissance English observation on political/spiritual conflict into a Chinese one? This essay will develop the research on the topic base on the analysis of two Chinese opera productions of *Macbeth*.

Keyword: Peking Opera, Cross- Cultural Practice, Kunqu, Macbeth, Shakespeare

I. *Macbeth* in Chinese opera

One may often use the terms "tradition" and "authentic" when analysing the "new productions" (*Xinbiangxi* 新編戲) in Chinese operas. Resources for *Xinbiangxi* can be divided into two major genres. One is to take Chinese history (e.g. the romance of three kingdoms 三國時代, 189A.D - 280 A.D) or famous literatures (e.g. *The Red Chamber's Dream* 紅樓夢) as materials to produce new scripts and repertoires. Another is, relatively dangerously, to import Western literary productions like Aeschylus's *Orestia* and Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris*, and design brand new costumes, gestures and singing styles. Greek tragedies and Shakespeare's plays had been the favourite resource for the *Xinbiangxi* as intercultural experiments (Fei, Sun 57) since Western dramas were introduced to the Chinese theatre in the early twentieth century. Up to date, there have been numerous *Xinbiangxi* productions based on the Western materials whether they are performed in Yu Opera, Hoklo Opera, Peking Opera, Kunqu and other type of Chinese regional operas, which also have received severe criticism that they "violate the old traditions of Operas". Supporters of *Xinbiangxi* argue that the only approach to effectively preserve traditional theatres must be the remake of the traditions (Pavis 63-64). The boundary of remaking traditional theatres through intercultural adaptations lies in the fact that Chinese operas, regardless of regional differences, are by nature theatres of common citizens and lack of rooms for profound ethical or political subtexts (Lei 228). *Xinbiangxi* with new costumes or spectacles may be attractive to the audiences' eyes when it is premiered, however; not many productions have survived the time and changing appetite of the audience, nonetheless, for some of these new productions merely imitate the Western stories without thoroughly examining the texts and adjust the western stories to Chinese cultural context. Contemporary Legend Theatre (CLT)'s *The Kingdom of Desire* 慾望城國 from Taiwan and Shanghai Kunqu Company's *The*

Story of Blood Stained Hands (*Xieshouji* 血手記)¹ are two *Xinbiangxi* taking resource from William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and both premiered in 1986. The two *Xinbiangxi* have their revivals and can still attract large audiences to the theatre after ten and more years. Similar to CLT's *The Kingdom of Desire*, Shanghai Kunqu Company was invited to several European countries to bring *The Story of Blood Stained Hands* onto European stages (Fei, Sun 69). Both productions have adapted scripts abiding by lyrical and musical rules of Chinese operas and contributed reformation of performance regulations in Chinese theatres although some critics argue that they are no more than narrow appropriations of Shakespeare's work (Cheng 184). This paper will be discussing the two *Xinbiangxi* in terms of role types, deleted plots and major themes exhibited in each production as a case study of oriental adaptation of Shakespeare.

II. General Tasks in Cross-Cultural Adaptations

Even if *Macbeth* is the shortest play of among Shakespeare's four greatest tragedies, to translate and transform it into a Chinese opera version suitable for live performances requires circumspect consideration on time management for the singing verses in Chinese operas are often long and slow. Presuming either *Macbeth* is driven by witchcraft or his greed for power, the three witches shall always be the representation or embodiment of the mystical force (Miola 239). The political situation and religious belief; that is, the features of Renaissance England, in the original texts have to be changed; too, so that the oriental audience would not be confused by the mixture of Chinese language and the "cultural blind spots" in Shakespearean quotations. The logical plot is still the most important factor in the

¹ The title of and lines in the Kunqu are translated by myself as well as the lines of the Peking Opera production. CLT has translated the title for the Peking Opera to English when it was premiered.

adaptation or it would maintain, otherwise, only aesthetic value but not the ontological essence in the original play (Fei, Sun 57). The scripts of *The Kingdom of Desire* and *The Story of Blood Stained Hands* have reach the literary and artistic requirement of Chinese operas, and yet some deeper layers of the play *Macbeth* seemed to be lost or rather changed through the language and culture barriers. The debate of courage, as one of the themes in original *Macbeth*, is weakened in the adaptations. Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Malcom and Macduff have all discussed their valour or bravery (Davis 249, 252), whereas the oriental *Macbeths* focus less on the manly bravery but more on their own self- justification and/or fate. I will later have more examples on how Shakespeare's complexities in plot or each character are somehow simplified on the Chinese stage.

Apart from challenges lying in simplifying the original plot, deleting the soliloquies establishing the characters' psychological evolvments or transferring Shakespeare's iambic pentameter to regulated *qupei* 曲牌 in Chinese operas, the most significant difficulty when it comes to adapt a Shakespeare's work into Chinese opera is the categorization of role types (hangdang 行當). Is *Macbeth*, for instance, villainous enough to be a painted face (Hualian 花臉) in white colour, which symbolizes evilness? Or should he be an old male (Laosheng 老生) or male warrior in full armour (ChangkaoWusheng 長靠武生) to show the audience his nobility and military accomplishments? Should Banquo also be a male warrior in full armour or would it better to make him a painted face of red colour to exhibit his loyalty to Duncan? Lady *Macbeth* may be a elegant high ranked lady, but her ambition and foul deeds would not allow her to be the major female (Qingyi 青衣) for a major female character should be a virtuous and dignified woman (Mackerras 34). Should Malcolm and Macduff be young males (Xiaosheng 小生) or male warriors (Wusheng 武生)? The truth is none of Shakespeare's characters can be categorized as a

single-dimensional role type in Chinese opera system. The practitioners would have to make choices other than simplifying by so weakening the personality traits of the characters.

It is not a surprise that practitioners have been trying to put new elements to the traditional theatre since the audience of Peking Opera has grown fewer year by year. Plainly believing in conventions is not sufficed for preservation of traditions. Intercultural adaptation is not only a theatrical experiment but the opportunity for critical reinventions for conventions (Pavis 64). Though *The Kingdom of Desire* is considered by some people to be the adaptation of the Japanese movie *Throne of Blood* directed by Akira Kurosawa, which is itself a successful adaptation of *Macbeth* (Diamond 119), for the CLT production is unmistakably similar to the movie in plot re-arrangements and changes on the roles (Cheng 31), the CLT production has achieved a reformation of the story-telling and performing skills of Peking Opera. The Kunqu version of *Macbeth*, *The Story of Blood Stained Hands*, unlike the CLT Peking Opera production, directly puts Shakespeare's play in a Chinese style of political/spiritual struggle. It seems to be a successful, despite controversial, case of *Xinbiangxi*, and yet some details in the adapted plots remain questionable, and will be discussed in the following.

III. From Renaissance English Play to Modern Peking Opera

The script of *The Kingdom of Desire* is written in rhyming poetic sentences fitting Peking Opera's music and can be singled out as a reading text. In the 1986 Peking Opera production, Macbeth and his wife become General and Lady Au Shu 敖叔. Banquo becomes General Meng Ting 孟庭. Both Au Shu and Meng Ting are male warriors in full armour, behaving in the combined performance of male warriors, old male and painted face (Zheng 265), and singing in the combined style of

male warrior and old male. His eventual violent death is implied with the vertical red mark (the *sky vein* 通天紋) in his clean face. The three witches become one mountain ghost 山鬼 that prophecies the two generals' upcoming fate and, later, Au Shu's doom. The time and place are set in the Warring States of ancient China (historically 476 B.C- 221 B.C). The characters are the citizens of the country Chi 薊國. It is a convenient choice that the three witches become one *mountain ghost* for the Chinese audience would have been familiar with the *Chu Ci* 楚辭 titled as the same term. The Warring States, similar to Scotland in Holinshed's *Chronicle*, was an era when several states fighting against each other in hope of taking the ruling power as the central monarch. Many details in Shakespeare's original texts were simplified or deleted concerning the time limit for performing regulations of Peking opera (and other Chinese operas with their own regulations) (Cheng 28). Nonetheless, the necessary simplification of Shakespeare's language makes the story not coherent enough in connecting the events and the consequences.

There are no characters corresponding to Macduff and his family in *The Kingdom of Desire*, so there is no necessity to prophecy a child not born by mother would revenge all the injustice in the end. Whereas the three witches warn Macbeth to be cautious of this strange child, the mountain ghost implies Au Shu only the moving forest would lead him to destruction. It is not sure who or what makes the tress walk, though, when Au Shu and his soldiers see the shadows of the moving branches creeping close. If one takes it as another trick of the mountain ghost, Au Shu's "cowardliness and ambition" (Freud 142) shall make him a fortune's fool. Under the spirit's ensorcellment, every man has lost the loyalty and conscience except for Meng Ting and his son, Meng Dun 孟登, portrayed as a young soldier in the production. While Au Shu hesitates to believe the mountain ghost's prophecy, Lady Au Shu persuades him with potential danger, "[T]he king will kill you first if Meng Ting tells

him about what you have heard in the forest (CLT 44),”and, “I believe Meng Ting has told the king about the prophecy (CLT 51),” and mocks the newly triumphed warrior, as that in Shakespeare’s original line, “live a coward in thine own esteem” (1.7.44). Au Shu murders the king of Chi out of self-protection, pride of a man and, finally, the desire of the throne. Meng Ting, as the matter of fact, remains his silence about the uncanny prophecy and loyalty to the king. In the CLT adaptation, the Mengs are assassinated only because Lady Au Shu was pregnant and her husband would not have the throne passed down to Meng Dun, a person who is not the heir of his own blood. Shakespeare has not made it clear if Macbeth has any, or any living children, the inheritance of his throne is the initial reason of Macbeth’s decision to kill Banquo. The Warring State background in *Kingdom of Desire* further sharpens the conflict on inheritance: Au Shu must have a son of his own to be the heir of Chi country in the era of hereditary monarchy.

Macbeth’s “evilness” comes from his lust for power (Knights 39). That very lust triggered by Lady Macbeth and expanded by Macbeth’s own conduct is not fully shown in *The Kingdom of Desire*. Macbeth refused the idea of murdering Duncan on the basis of their kinship and that “He [Duncan] hath honoured me of late, and I have bought golden opinions from all sorts of people” (1,7, 32-33), while having already implied his “black and deep desires” as he bids the stars to hide their fires (1, 5, 50). Au Shu, in the beginning of the Peking Opera, appears to be a conventional male warrior caring only for personal honour brought by keeping his lord and country safe (CLT 37, 43). The mountain ghost’s peculiar oracle is told to Lady Au Shu by the man himself instead of a letter. Within no more than three singing stanzas, Lady Au Shu has hatched the scheme to win the highest power over the king. Despite Au Shu’s direct refusal, “[W]hat heavy burden to rule such great country, I am not to wear the

royal crown by destiny” (52)², Lady Au Shu professes her politics in triggering Au Shu’s desire to prove himself to be a capable careerist (if one may call a usurper so). In this sense, it can be said that Lady Au Shu, rather than Au Shu’s personal ambition or the mountain ghost’s meddling, is the driving force to the plot. Her miscarriage, though, somewhat dims the initial cause for her suicide: that her psychological illness is the suffering from fear. Her death does not set off Au Shu’s gradual unfeelingness; neither. He says merely, “she is better dead than alive in pain” (CLT 86). It is a pardonable move to replace that twelve line long “she should have died hereafter” monologue with one spoken line to keep up with the hasty pace in a Peking Opera battlefield scene, but by this move Au Shu’s supposed desire for maintaining power and the following numbness after the series of killings becomes a desire only to grasp what he has in remain. The Lady’s death means nothing to Macbeth (Knights 56), to Au Shu; nonetheless, the death of his wife is a relief to both of them. Without an heir or any friend, Au Shu has nothing but a hollow crown, and, therefore, he fears nothing but failing the last war which will secure his throne or destroy him.

The character Meng Dun in fact serves as a combination of Banquo’s son, Macduff and Malcolm altogether. In the CLT production, the Prince of Chi Country has never been mentioned until four watchmen speak about him in Act II, scene 4 (CLT 71), and has not appeared previously at all. The conversation of the watchmen is a rearrangement of the conversations of the Rosse, Macduff and prince Malcolm in Act II, scene 4 and Act IV, scene 3 in the original texts. Lack of the lords Lennox, Rosse and other noblemen, the watchmen in *The Kingdom of Desire* function as these characters as well as a chorus foretelling the audience what may take place in the following hours. Meng Dun is the one who decides to find alliance from other

² The Chinese original lines, “江山浩瀚千斤擔/王帽龍袍無緣穿”. See the CLT official booklet script. English translation by myself.

countries to revenge for his father. Even though the mountain ghost guarantees Au Shu's glory unless the forest would move, there is no clear reason why the forest moves toward Au Shu's castle in the final scene, neither is there a clue for the sudden loss of loyalty of Au Shu's army. One may surmise that Meng Dun orders his army to cut the tree branches and take cover under them as what Macduff does in the original play, and that Meng Dun's order is not acted out for the audience to know as a traditional rule named sub-stage 暗場 in Peking Opera. Perhaps, otherwise, it is Au Shu's evil fate to encounter the mountain ghost and be enchanted by its false oracles, and the Chi army has long lost their trust and allegiance under the deranged-minded tyranny of the new king. The death of Macbeth is a scene of vengeful relief for the corrupted hero is punished for his foul deed. Au Shu's death scene, on the other hand, is a scene of irony for audiences how are familiar with the Peking Opera plays *Cutting the Grand Urn* 鋸大缸 and *Defending Against Slippery Carts* 挑滑車. Au Shu's falling from two-meter high stage technically resembles the falling of the she-devil Madame Wang 王大娘 as the heavenly army encircles her. Au Shu's last battle against his enemies also reminds the audience of Gao Chun 高寵, a loyal general serves the Song Dynasty and dies fighting the Jurchen. Though Au Shu's death results from his loss of loyalty for the king of Chi, the stunt design for his death scene triggers deeper irony in resembling the lonely, exhausted death of a general famous for his loyalty.

IV. The Kunqu Style of Hero-like Villain

The integration of characters occurs in the Kunqu production *The Story of Blood Stained Hands*. The plot in the Kunqu production is rather truthful to the original *Macbeth* than the Peking Opera production. In *The Story of Blood Stained Hands* Ma Pei (馬佩, Macbeth), characterized as a painted face in his prime, and his wife Lady Tieh (鐵氏, an ironic naming for the Kunqu's Lady Macbeth for the

Chinese character 鐵 means *iron*) have become a couple whose hearts are filled with eagerness to the throne along with the power of the king (Cheng 174). The time is, like the *The Kingdom of Desire*, set in the Warring States and yet the story takes place in the country Zheng 鄭國. The painted face Ma Pei has red as the major colour in his face to show his loyalty for the king in the beginning of the story and black and white eyebrows, which indicates his ill temper (black) and his cunning mind (white). The three witches become three “fairies 道姑” dressed in black Taoism frocks and have only Ma Pei see and talk to them on the Beach of Ghost Shadow 鬼影灘. The three witches, in the beginning of *Macbeth*, serve as a chorus by telling the play’s theme, “fair is foul and foul is fair.” Same function is seen in the three fairies of *The Story of Blood Stained Hands*. The fairies, following the Chinese theatrical convention of self-introduction, introduce themselves as three representatives of human’s endless lusts for immense fame, power and wealth meanwhile pointing out what can be concluded for Ma Pei’s life, “[I]t is yourself who brings your own luck and doom.”³ Abiding the convention, the chorus’ self-introduction in Kunqu also function as a brief of the male leading character’s life (Zhou 159), and by having the fairies stating the one-line summary for Ma Pei’s life, the Kunqu production implies its emphasis on Ma Pei’s own desire to be the king and how he leads himself to damnation with this foul mind instead of being tricked by evil spirits.

When the fairies appears, Ma Pei seems to be brought into a different dimension created by the mischievous fairies and hearing their prophecy while there are also the old General Du Ge (杜戈, Banquo), his son Du Ning 杜寧 and the young General Mei Yun (梅雲, Macduff), whose wife is sister to Lady Tieh, standing on the beach, waiting for the arrival of the king. Neither Du Ge nor Mei Yun see or hear the

³ The Chinese line, “吉凶禍福人自咎”, see the performance video recording by Shanghai Art Center, 2005

three fairies. Ma Pei is sent back to the “reality” when the king of Zheng arrives and rewards them for their contribution of defending the king against the rebellious army.

At first, Ma Pei is satisfied with his glorious new title “The Half King (Yizi Bingjian Wang 一字並肩王)”⁴ given by the king until Lady Tieh reminds him that the previous owner of the title is killed exactly by Ma Pei in the war he has lately won. Tieh’s ambition to be “the Queen of the King” but not “a queen of a half king” outplays her sanity and obedience a major female role should obtain. Ma Pei, recalling the fairies’ oracle that he shall be the majesty of the earthly world, immediately becomes the participant to murder the king. When Ma Pei is still thinking if he should really commit the murder, Tieh asks him to “give the honour of this action” to her so that she could be the executor of the plan. Though claiming, “[M]y heart is hard like iron”, Lady Tieh, just like Lady Macbeth, cannot bear to kill the sleeping king for he resembles her own father in sleep. Ma Pei eventually murders the king in the midnight, and kills the two guards whom Lady Tieh has drugged the last night when Du Ge comes to question about the murder in the morning.

It seems that Ma Pei has no proper reason to assassinate Du Ge and his son since none of them has seen the fairies (Cheng 181). The old general, however, is the aggregation character for all the noble lords in Shakespeare’s original text except for Macduff, and has unchangeable loyalty to the king. One can observe the character’s noble traits in his costumes and makeup: Du Ge’s grey long whiskers and the slightly dark-hued red (the colour is the symbol for age and loyalty in Chinese opera makeup) in his thinly painted face implies that he has experienced a long life and remained truthful to his country and lord. Ma Pei worries if Du Ge would soon find out, as he later does, the king’s death is a planned murder. Ma Pei kills Mei Yun’s wife later on

⁴ A fictional title for the court lord of highest estate and is allowed to walk beside the sovereign. The title is earliest seen in Chinese novel *The Romance of Sui and Tang Dynasties* 隋唐演義。

after the famous haunted banquet scene due to the same suspicion. On the other hand, by assisting Ma Pei killing the assassin who has taken the order to murder Du Ge, Mei Yun has become a part of the scheme without realising the truth till seeing Ma Pei turns lunatic in the banquet. At this point, Mei Yun's wife is commanded to stay in the palace to keep company with her sister Lady Tieh, who now is the Queen to the country. Along with the Prince of Zheng and Du Ning, Mei Yun escapes to another country, there they assemble a force, ready to go back and revenge. The sibling relationship between Lady Tieh and Mei Yun's wife seems unnecessary since Shakespeare's Lady Macduff is the most innocent victim in Macbeth's fanatic killings, and yet it is by killing his sister-in-law that makes Ma Pei a confirmed villain to Chinese audience: Mei Yun's wife is not a sacrificial noble female character, Ma Pei kills her out of his delusion of being betrayed.

In the start, Ma Pei hides his villainy beneath seemingly righteous orders forbidding his wife speaking about usurping, while Lady Tieh, repetitively claiming her starkness in heart and seduces Ma Pei to join the conspiracy. The original Lady Macbeth is tortured by that "smell of the blood" she cannot wash off, and Lady Tieh's mental collapse is in fact the tragedy of a usurper in a crisis of the relationship between his/her social and spiritual world (Drakakis 13). The Kunqu adaptation, different from the Peking Opera one, has a rather minor and somewhat unnecessary character: Lady Tieh has a parrot capable of uttering human tongues. It imitates Lady Tieh's voice and utters her scheme loud, and is thus killed by its owner. Lady Tieh does not reproduce Lady Macbeth's complacent fantasy of "unsexing" herself (1,5, 40). Rather than imitating the devil like what Lady Macbeth attempts to do on reading Macbeth's letter (Wills 83), Lady Tieh's ambition is base on her last-night dream about her husband's glory. The hollow dream defines not Ma Pei's hypocrite nature but Lady Tieh's personality as being more vain and desirous than her husband. Later,

her vanity is punished. When Lady Tieh is washing her hand in the chamber, the ghosts of her victims appear. The ghosts of the murdered king, Du Ge, Mei Yun's wife and the parrot may be Lady Tieh's delusional imagination or embodiment of her fear of "supernatural punishment" for her evildoing (Yang 235). One can also see the ghosts as Lady Tieh's inner struggle of conscience and desire, yet the Kunqu production does not offer enough room for her mental development from a convincingly daring murderess to a coward tortured by those who are already buried.

As Macbeth grows crueller with time and becomes willing to kill anyone he believes to be a threat, Lady Macbeth grows sicker and weaker. In both *The Kingdom of Desire* and *The Story of Blood Stained Hands* Lady Au Shu and Lady Tieh wash their hands alone in their chambers. Lady Au Shu would be attended on by her gentlewoman after Au Shu, again in full armour, visits the room to bid farewell yet sees her misery whereas Lady Tieh is all on her own. Her physician has long fled since he sensed the conspiracy on the night Ma Pei and Tieh planned to assassinate the late king. Meanwhile, the new king is fighting against the revenging army. Unlike Au Shu's being shoot at by arrows and fall from the castle wall, Ma Pei fights a duel with Du Ning, and is fatally stabbed by Mei Yun in the second duel. The person gives Ma Pei the final deadly strike is, oddly, the Prince although the fairies' prophecy has Mei Yun to be the executor of the king slayer. Still the justice on the measure "an eye for an eye" is practised in the Kunqu production. When each of the three leaders of the revenging army stabs Ma Pei in the end of the war and avenge for their wife's and fathers' death, Ma Pei, a daring and vicious painted face, trembles with despair of death and the upcoming vengeance for his evildoing as Mei Yun reveals himself to be the child born not by a mother. The groundbreaking scene for a painted face to publically show his angst is a reinvention for Chinese theatre conventions: a painted

face can be ill tempered, cunning, bold and even unstoppably fearless; he can also show the weak side of a mortal man, which was never seen in any painted face warriors, as Ma Pei does in his personal tragedy.

V. Conclusion: Innovation and Limitation for Cross-Cultural Adaptations

John Y. H Hu argues that Chinese theatre's adapting Shakespeare that such attempts are far from any possible success (Hu 95). From the analysis for two cases adapting *Macbeth* one understands there are indeed several theatrical barriers for Chinese operas to offer productions maintaining what Shakespeare explores in the characters' psychologies while re-arranging the Shakespearean language to suit the music systems requiring more strict lyrical rhythms and rhymes in Chinese operas. Macbeth's descending from dignity and his finding his hell in his life, in which his choices lead him to the loss of everything (Traversi 145) as well as Lady Macbeth's long-time cultural role as a "phallic woman" bending on political advantage (Garber 93) are lost in the adaptations. Rather a division than an adapted equivalent to Lady Macbeth, Lady Au Shu yields ambition to physical weakness of her sex, the miscarriage has beaten the woman before guilt or conscience catches her. Lady Tieh, weaker than Lady Au Shu, leads a hollow life destined to madness due to her illusion for fortune invented by a mere dream. Lack of sufficient room for them to speak out their gradual switches in minds, Lady Au Shu and Lady Tieh demonstrate new female role types no more than a gracious, calculating shrew. *The Story of Blood Stained Hands* presents an entirely sly Macbeth. The protagonists of the Kunqu production are two people blinded by their greed and have the retribution in return. The three fairies send the message to Ma Pei, and look and mock at his free-willed choices in the rest of the play. *The Kingdom of Desire* is a story of a man controlled by impulse and fate even though the play has been entitled with the word "desire". It is not because

Shakespeare's language is over extravagant to the Chinese theatre, but because that it is, by fact, nearly impossible for a theatre possessing (too) abundant stage scenarios and music to make extra space for that equally abundant story of a hero-like figure's downfall.

Still, the popularity of the adaptation cases justifies Shakespeare can undergo cultural refashioning and the adaptations are not prosaic translations but creative productions highlighting their cultural identities (Phillips 236) while reinforcing the exchangeability of men's mutual weakness in different societies. The Kunqu and Peking Opera adaptations of *Macbeth* in a way offer similar innovations for Chinese theatres: whereas traditional Chinese operas focus on noble deaths of patriotic people and lonely heroes, the deaths of the oriental Macbeths bring not tragic catharsis or moral lectures as those in traditional plays, but a sympathetic sense of a warrior and a gentlewoman's waste in lust. The breaking of role types from dimensional dignified/cunning or enduring/shrewd males and females are therefore indispensable revolutions in conventions when shaping the corrupted war hero and his more complex wife. Men's bravery, selfishness, dilemma between loyalty and grander wealth, the impulse of grasping glory and fear of mortality are all "common essence of humanity" (Pavis 156), and the two adaptations respectively emphasise on Macbeth's destruction set out from a man's need to prove himself a "true hero" (CLT 54) in Au Shu's sudden change of personality and demonstrates an undisguised thirst for fame and power through Ma Pei's confidence on the three fairies' prophecy of his sovereignty. Whereas the Kunqu's Macbeth is a "plain dealing villain," CLT's version of Macbeth is not entirely a wicked figure at the beginning, "but seems to be wicked because of the conventional moral standards" and yet "by the time goes he becomes less and less worth sympathy (Booth 180)". When it comes to intercultural adaptation, it is how one makes every single drama characteristic clear that is important, but not

how complete one copies the original text or any Western performance. By reforming the traits of the characters, the different themes about greed and vanity of each production are displayed clearly, and can always remind the audience of origin of the story while applauding for the spectacular performance of the Chinese theatre.

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Video Resources

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Appendix

i. Official Poster of *Kingdom of Desire*



ii. The mountain spirit



iii. Au Shu and Meng Dun awaiting for the king's reward for their victory



Chan

- iv. Au Shu, in prime minister's attire (the sky vein is more clear in this close-up)



- v. Lady Au Shu demands Au Shu of murdering the king



- vi. Lady Au Shu's hand washing scene



- vii. Au Shu being crowded by soldiers against him, standing alone on the high stage



- viii. Official stage photo of *The Story of Blood Stained Hands*



- ix. Ma Pei and the old general Du Ge (after the murder, corresponding to Act 2, Scene 3 in the original *Macbeth*)



- x. The three fairies (the two “dwarfs” are a division of the Chou role type)



- xi. Lady Tieh’s hand washing scene (without an actual bowl or bucket, the actress demonstrates the washing simply with hand gestures)



- xii. Ma Pei and Mei Yun’s fighting scene (now being a king, Ma Pei wears yellow full armour exhibiting his royalty)

