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Vision and Revision of Filial Piety: Analogues and Adaptations of *King Lear* in Chinese Opera

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I. Introduction

Many critics have found the cruelty in *King Lear* to be excessive. Dr. Johnson saw it as a play in which "the wicked prosper and the virtuous miscarry," presenting matters "too savage and shocking" and "too horrid" (221-22). Swinburne was struck by its pessimism: "Requital, redemption, amends, equity, explanation, pity and mercy, are words without a meaning here" (123). According to Bradley, the tragedy is "certainly the least popular of the famous four" (243) and "certainly the most terrible picture that Shakespeare painted of the world" (273). These and many other remarks explain why Nahum Tate's happy-ending version dominated the stage for over one hundred and fifty years following its 1681 premiere. For Chinese audiences, the tragedy of King Lear may appear yet more abominable. A strong moralizing tone characterizes traditional Chinese theatre (Hsü 71). Prescribed by the imperial authorities and expounded by scholars, the theatrical didacticism of the Ming 明 (1368-1644) and Qing 清 (1644-1911) dynasties left a permanent imprint (Cai 20-27; Lu 150-58; Tian I: 174-79). Popular theatre propagates conventional morality as well as official ideology (Mackerras and Wichmann 5). As a powerful medium of indoctrination and a "moral court" 道德法庭 of the masses (Zheng 378), classical drama invariably depicts the triumph of good over evil. Poetic justice not only serves the purposes of popular edification and political control but is also a crucial constituent of Chinese aesthetics—violation of it can be considered bad taste. The tragic injustice of *King Lear* brazenly enacts a bankruptcy of values that are central to Confucian teachings—filial piety, loyalty, and fraternal love—and the effects can be genuinely disturbing.

Behind any theatre which imports Shakespeare lies a unique cultural legacy, which the native practitioners inherit, embody and internalize, and choose to express

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or revise. A comparative study of analogues from the target theatre can hence provide a baseline against which to compare and contrast the adaptations. Can Shakespeare's bleakness be amended to fit traditional Chinese theatre's ethical and aesthetic traditions? Analogues in the repertoire of Chinese opera, indeed, provide distinct patterns for such alchemy. Consider the 1995 *Qiwang meng* 歧王夢 (*King Qi's Dream*) by the Shanghai Jingju yuan 上海京劇院 (the Shanghai Beijing Opera Troupe). Featuring the renowned actor Shang Changrong 尚長榮, the play shows significantly more affinity with Chinese opera than with Shakespeare. By contrast, Wu Hsing-kuo 吳興國 of Taiwan's Dangdai chuanqi juchang 當代傳奇劇場 (the Contemporary Legend Theatre) chose the unbeaten path. His 2001 *Lier zai ci* 李爾在此 (*Lear Is Here*), a solo performance in which he portrayed all ten roles, invokes Shakespeare to reconsider traditional principles in ethics as well as aesthetics. Both plays have markedly rewritten *King Lear*, yet embody striking differences in their attitudes about paternal-royal authority, about native theatre conventions, and about Shakespeare himself.

II. Ungrateful Children in Traditional Chinese Theatre

The centrality of filial piety in Chinese culture cannot be overemphasized. Its pictogram *xiao* 孝 depicts an elder supported by a child and is at least three thousand years old.[1] According to the *Hsiao King* 孝經 (*The Classic of Filial Piety*, c. third century BCE), filial piety is "the root of (all) virtue" 德之本 (1).[2] It extends from the domestic to the political sphere: "It commences with the service of parents; it proceeds to the service of the ruler" 夫孝，始於事親，中於事君 (1). Not merely a doctrine of interpersonal relationships, it indeed reflects the order of the universe: "filial piety is the constant (method) of Heaven, the righteousness of Earth, and the practical duty of Man" 夫孝，天之經也；地之義也；民之行也 (7). Universalized and mystified, filial piety and fraternal duty "reach to (and move) the spiritual intelligences and diffuse their light on all within the four seas" 孝悌之至，通於神明，光於四海，無所不通 (16). In ancient times when the ethical principle was observed, "all under heaven peace and harmony prevailed; disasters and calamities did not occur; misfortunes and rebellions did not arise" 天下和平，災害不生，禍亂不作 (8). This core Confucian value, championed by Daoism and Chinese Buddhism alike, impregnated the popular imagination and folklore. Tales from *Ershisi xiao* 二十四孝, twenty-four filial exemplars by the Yuan 元 dynasty scholar Guo Jujing 郭居敬 (1260-1368), were widely known. Vividly visualized, these and other hagiographic stories of filiality comprise a prime motif in painting, woodcuts, stone carving, and embroidery.

Absolute and all-inclusive, filial piety was a favorite subject in traditional theatre. Ren Xiaowen 任孝溫 identified numerous such dramatic texts from the Song

[1] Scholars disagree about whether the pictogram *xiao* occurs in the oracle bones, but it is generally accepted that it appeared around 1000 BCE (Chan and Tan 1, 10 n3).

[2] Trans. Legge; numbers in parentheses are chapter numbers of the original text.

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宋 dynasty (960-1279) onwards. Portrayed as either heroes or martyrs, the filial sons and daughters/daughters-in-law selflessly devote themselves to the service of their parents/in-laws, often at the risk of their own lives. Well-known examples are *Mulian jiu mu* 目蓮救母 (*Maudgalyayana's Rescue of Mother from Hades*), *Bao lian deng* 寶蓮燈 (*The Lotus Lantern*), *Dou E yuan* 竇娥冤 (*The Injustice to Dou E*), *Pipa ji* 琵琶記 (*The Story of the Pipa*), and *Mulan cong jun* 木蘭從軍 (*Mulan Joins the Army*). Religious or profane, these stories were recited and sung in diverse dialects and were dramatized in both national and regional theatres. Ren noticed the tendency to compound the theme of filial piety with *zhong* 忠 (loyalty), *jie* 節 (chastity), *yi* 義 (integrity) and *xian* 賢 (goodness) during the Ming dynasty, and attributed this to the tightened official control of the theatre by the Ming regimes (123-25).

In contrast to the enormous repertoire of plays featuring filial children, only a few counterexamples can be located. The Qing dynasty play *Qing feng ting* 清風亭 (*The Clear Breeze Pavilion*, hereafter *The Pavilion*), also known as *Tian lei bao* 天雷報 (*Heavenly Thunder's Retaliation*), illustrates a notorious transgressor.[3] Jibao 繼保, the son of a concubine, is discarded by his father's jealous wife immediately after his birth. Zhang Yuanxiu 張元秀 and his wife, a childless old couple who make a living by making tofu and straw sandals, find the baby boy. They name him Jibao and love him dearly as their own son. Thirteen years later, Jibao accidentally runs into his natural mother at the Clear Breeze Pavilion, who insists on having her son back. Compelled by natural motherhood and hoping for a better future for the boy, old Zhang reluctantly lets Jibao go. The loss, however, deprives the old couple of their joy, hope, and health. Everyday they pine for their boy, haunting the Clear Breeze Pavilion. Years go by, and finally good news comes: the young man wins the top place of the imperial examination, and will go by the Pavilion on his way to his new post. Overjoyed, the old couple hasten to meet him there. Jibao, however, vain and ungrateful, has always resented his humble background. Puffed up by his new government title, he openly renounces his foster parents, disdaining them as hoaxing beggars. When beseeched by his servant, he casts two hundred copper coins to be rid of them. Heartbroken, the old couple smash their heads into the column of the Pavilion. Showing no sign of remorse, the ungrateful son sneers at their "imposture" and resumes his journey.

In traditional Chinese theatre, the characters fall into distinct role types, each with well-defined personality and performance style. Old Zhang's role belongs to *shuaipai lao sheng* 衰派老生, an old man of either weak physical condition or emotional agitation (Wu Tongbin 115). His anguish, powerfully expressed through arias and astonishing physical movement, is the heart of the play. It is a demanding role, and many famous actors have undertaken it, including Tan Xinpei 譚鑫培 (1847-1917), Ma Lianliang 馬連良 (1900-1966), and Zhou Xinfang 周信芳

[3] The title exists in many regional genres as well, such as Chuan opera 川劇, Yu opera 豫劇 (Henan *bangzi* 河南梆子), Huai opera 淮劇, Han opera 漢劇, Jin opera 晉劇, Dian opera 滇劇, and Qinqiang opera 秦腔. My discussion is based on the Beijing opera version.

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(1895-1975). Without an ethical ending, however, the emotional affront would be unsufferable. The generally accepted source of the play is the concise account of Zhang Rengui 張仁龜 in volume eight of *Beimeng suoyan* 北夢瑣言 (*Miscellaneous Notes from Dreams of the North*) by Sun Guangxian 孫光憲 (c. 900-968). In the anecdote, the thankless son hangs himself. This mysterious suicide is then attributed to the ghost: "Zhang died forlorn and indignant, and must have appealed to Hades" 張處士悵恨而終，必有冥訴 (148).[4] On stage, the retaliation is dramatized and elaborated as a spectacle: heavenly-sent thunder, traditionally conceived to be the divine vehicle to smite unfilial children, strikes Jibao dead and avenges the wrong. Jiao Xun 焦循 (1763-1820) recollected seeing the *huabu* 花部 (the miscellaneous genre) play among an impassioned village audience. He lauded the play's emotional power and especially favored the modified ending which serves "to stimulate horror and fear in the audience" 以悚懼觀 (228).

This play, seen as a topical allegory, was a favorite of Cixi taihou 慈禧太后 (the Empress Dowager Cixi, 1835-1908). When her son the Emperor Tongzhi 同治皇帝 (1856-1875) died without a son, Cixi adopted her four-year-old nephew Guangxu 光緒 (1871-1908) and crowned him as a puppet emperor while remaining as regent. After he came of age, however, Guangxu strove for independence. Cixi saw his attempts to reform and modernize as unfilial and rebellious, and eventually put him under house arrest in 1898. Jibao must have reminded Cixi of her disobedient nephew, and the execution scene provided psychological as well as aesthetic pleasure. One month in spring 1900 alone, she saw the play four times and issued three decrees concerning its staging (Wang Zhengyao 194-96). She specifically commanded the addition of five *leigongs* 雷公 (gods of thunder), five *shandians* 閃電 (goddesses of lightning), along with *fengbo* 風伯 (spirit of wind), and *yushi* 雨師 (spirit of rain) to the cast, making the final retribution even more severe and spectacular. Punishment does not end with the transgressor's violent death. Cixi had his spirit flogged eighty times on stage, and decreed that he change his guise from *xiao sheng* 小生, the young male role type, to *xiao hualian* 小花臉, a petty and ridiculous clown with a white-painted nose.[5]

History largely judges Cixi to be a devious despot: illiterate, conservative, and tyrannical, she personifies the dark side of feudal China. Her enforcement of justice via providential intervention was opposed as superstitious. Zhou Xinfang, the proletarian- and revolutionary-minded actor of *Haipai* 海派 (Shanghai style) Beijing opera, expurgated the part of retribution.[6] In Zhou Xinfang's version, Jibao sneers at the deaths of the old couple:

> Laughable are the two doddering old wretches,
> Impostering official's relatives, disgraceful indeed.

[4] Unless otherwise noted, translation of the Chinese texts is by the author.

[5] See Zhou Mingtai, ed. vol. 3.

[6] See Shen for a comparison of Zhou Xinfang's earlier and later versions (260-64, 402).

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It was not in their luck to enjoy the copper coins.
From them one must learn the lesson against greed.
笑他二老心太偏，
冒認官親禮不端。
兩百銅錢無福受，
須知富貴不可攀。

After this taunt, he exits as if nothing happened, and the play ends with the villagers mourning over the old couple's corpses. The country folks denounce Jibao's heartlessness and agree to bury the dead at their own cost. Conforming to proletarian aesthetics (Wei 93), Zhou Xinfang's modification subtly shifts the dramatic conflict from an ethical issue to a social issue, lauding the humble old couple and the country folks' simplicity and goodness and condemning the ruling class's moral irresponsibility. The critique of morally corrupt literati and government officials comprises the "cognitive value" 認識價值 of the play (Qi 34). Zhou Xinfang would not chastise Jibao on the spot to satisfy the audience's psychological needs; rather, he deemed it better to "implant the audience's deep-seated abhorrence for people like Jibao" 讓人們留下對張繼保這類人的深刻仇恨的印象 (Zhou Xinfang, *Writings* 150), so as to motivate resistance in real life (Qu 344). Audiences who prefer to see the malady rectified—not just diagnosed—before the curtain falls, however, may not agree with the artist or the critics. Zhou Xinfang's anticlimactic ending has encountered disapproval since his time (Zhou Xinfang, *Writings* 109, 150). Failing to find emotional relief, a recent reviewer expressed strong dissatisfaction and advocated "It's better to strike and cleave Jibao with heavenly thunder!" 最好還是把他天打雷劈 (Yu 91).

In addition to intensifying the punishment, Cixi's stage direction also reduces the transgressor from a hateful villain to a laughable buffoon. Diminution of evildoers puts them on a lower moral level and makes them less threatening. Along these lines, *Qiang tou ji* 牆頭記 (*The Story of the Wall*, hereafter *The Wall*), a play based on a *liqu* 俚曲 (comic song) by Pu Songling 蒲松齡 (1640-1715), presents the unfilial sons as *xiao hualian*. The play was written by Sun Qiuchao 孫秋潮 (1920-1983) in Lu opera 呂劇 (Shandong *bangzi* 山東梆子), premiering in 1961 by the Shandongsheng Luju yuan 山東省呂劇院 (the Lu Opera Troupe of the Shandong Province).[7] In the play, the aged Zhang mujiang 張木匠 (Carpenter Zhang) divides all his assets between his two sons Daguai 大怪 and Erguai 二怪, who should take turns hosting him. Seen as a burden, the old man suffers abuse and scorn at each son's house. One cold winter morning, Daguai forces Old Zhang out of his house, but Erguai refuses to receive him. Unable to make his brother open the door and unwilling to take his father home, Daguai abandons the old man, leaving him freezing and starving on the wall of

[7] Known adaptations of the Lu opera exist in Yu opera, Ping opera 評劇, and Hebei *bangzi* 河北梆子.

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Erguai's house. Fortunately, Wang yinjiang 王銀匠 (Silversmith Wang) passes by and rescues him. Out of pity for his old friend Zhang, Wang devises an ingenious plan to trick the covetous sons into believing that their father actually has enormous savings hidden away. The hope of inheriting a fortune changes the sons' attitude, and they fight to serve, please, and honor the old man. Although Old Zhang well discerns their insincerity and grieves, he gets to be well nursed for the last three years of his life.

Pu's original tale, with its plot of deception and manipulation, amounts to a comedy of intrigue. Although the sinners get away temporarily, final retribution awaits: feeling deceived, Daguai, Erguai, and their wives bring the case to the local court and get corporeal punishment in return for their offence—the men are caned and the women suffer *zanxing* 拶刑, a traditional torture that compresses the fingers between wooden sticks. To a lesser degree than the thunderbolt in *The Pavilion*, this ending serves "to stimulate horror and fear" as well. To strengthen the comic effects, the playwright Sun changed the form of retaliation. In the Lu opera, the anguished Old Zhang mentions the wall and his friend Wang in his last words. Hoping to solve the mystery, the sons rush to Wang, who then misleads them to believe that their father hid his money in the wall. Trying to wreck the wall, the sons and daughters-in-law get trapped in the rubble. Only then does Wang reveal his stratagem and denounce their misconduct. Sans intervention from Providence or the authorities, the transgressors' disappointment and shame comprise their punishment, and this comic revenge is no less psychologically gratifying for the audience.

Throughout the play Old Zhang sings poignant arias that win the audience's wholehearted sympathy, but the pain of witnessing his suffering is constantly balanced by comedy—comic exaggeration, physical comedy, caricature, wordplay and parody. To Pu's comic tale the playwright added yet more humor, as when Zhang shivers and wails on the wall. Considering his old age and calamity, one might expect a pathetic scene not unlike Shakespeare's mad Lear howling in the storm. His old friend Wang, however, fails to recognize Old Zhang at first and mistakes him for a blanket hanging on the wall, thus turning the tragedy into burlesque.[8] Physical comedy even leavens the most doleful scene, as the sons frantically yank their dying father back and forth in a tug of war. In their race to find Wang, the two sons employ many acrobatic movements including *aizibu* 矮子步 (crouching steps), *qianmao* 前貓 (forward roll), and *puhu* 撲虎 (the forward leap, landing flat on the floor in the order of hands, stomach, legs, and feet). These acrobatic spectacles, executed to the accompaniment of accelerated percussive beats, excite the audience and lighten their mourning over Old Zhang's death.

Above all, the play's language stimulates laughter. Emotions tend to be expressed indirectly in Chinese culture, but the children in the play parade their dishonorable thoughts, and their shamelessness is not only absurd but funny. The

[8] In Pu's original, Wang also fails to recognize his friend at first (2455) but the blanket remark is the playwright's addition.

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play starts with Daguai's wife contemplating her wealth. The thought of the old man, however, casts a shadow over her bliss. Gnashing her teeth, she snorts: "The only discontent in my life is that my senile father-in-law, well over eighty, still won't die!" 可就有件事不如我的意啊：俺那個老公公，八十多了他還不死. Such barefaced acknowledgment of iniquity abounds in the play. The businessman Daguai boldly protests, "If not for money, why do people live?" 人不爲錢，活著幹啥哩. Erguai, a scholar well versed in the Confucian canon, is especially hilarious in his regular distortions of classical teachings.[9] In his first appearance, he sings an aria to introduce himself:

> Low is the earth and high is the sky;
> Between them live I, Zhang Erguai.
> People say that in books abundant riches lie—
> Studying can get you a position high,
> A position that can big cash supply.
> Worries for food or clothing, goodbye!
> Honoring your ancestors and descendants thereby,
> You would live happily like God in the sky.
>
> "If a man take no thought about what is distant,
> He will find sorrow near at hand."[10]
> One thing disturbs the peace of my mind:
> Papa, eighty-five, still has not his breath resigned!
> All day long he does me haunt and trouble find.
> Mencius, at eighty-four, had his soul to Heaven consigned;
> Confucius' lifespan was to seventy-three years confined.
> My father does not observe the rites sacred and refined.
> Why are you toward saintly death disinclined?
>
> 下有地來上有天，
> 張二怪我生在天地之間。
> 常言道，書中黃金千萬兩，
> 讀了詩書能做官，
> 做了高官能賺錢。
> 那麼不愁吃來不愁穿，
> 光宗耀祖代代傳，

[9] To cast Erguai as a Confucian scholar is also the playwright's design.

[10] *Confucian Analects*, XV.11, trans. Legge.

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就好像成了一座活神仙。
「人無遠慮，必有近憂。」
有一件事情我不大舒坦：
爹爹他八十五歲還不死！
成天價磨磨蹭蹭纏著俺。
孟夫子享年八十四，
孔夫子壽終七十三。
家父他不學這聖賢禮。
你爲何不死在這聖賢年？

Both Confucius and Mencius preach filial piety, but their age ironically serves the selfish son's purpose. Revealing Erguai's pretension and hypocrisy, this misinterpretation of classical texts is both ingenious and hilarious.

In their treatment of unfiliality, *The Pavilion* and *The Wall* employ humor to check the tragic sentiment, making the hideous theme admissible. Physical comedy abounds in *The Wall* with scenes bordering on slapstick; even in the more serious *The Pavilion*, the old couple's grumbling and blundering are grotesquely funny. These factors help dilute the somber mood and lift the audience's spirit. Although the wronged parties end up heartbroken and dead, on the whole these plays are not overly depressing. By comparison, Shakespeare's tragedy seems utterly abject. Various critics have, indeed, observed comic stuff in *King Lear*, and discussed influence by and confluence with tragic-comedy (Wickham), the comedy of the grotesque (Knight 160-76; Frye 237), the New Comedy (Miola), high comedy (Peck), and the divine comedy (Partee). In terms of structure, motifs, situations, characters, and plot devices, the tragedy bears a notable resemblance to Shakespeare's comedies (Snyder 140), especially *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* (Jones 171-89; Markels). Shakespeare's use of comedy, however, is not to thin out the tragic atmosphere, but "to shock and disturb" by inverting the audience's expectations (Miola 344). With comedy, "The pathos has not been minimized: it is redoubled" (Knight 175). It is Shakespeare's "most radical use" of comedy and he "develops a special, devastating tragic effect" (Snyder 137). Overall, Shakespeare presents a bleak universe in which, even amidst the comedy, one finds little consolation.

Shakespeare's dramatic personae are categorically distinct from their Chinese counterparts. Notably, the victims in the two Chinese analogues are all manual workers already living straitened lives even before their children's criminal acts. Materially, socially or politically, these tragic protagonists do not have much to lose in the first place, and the penury enforced upon them seems less disturbing. While lowborn, the offenders are also petty characters and they generate more laughter and contempt than dread. Jibao of *The Pavilion* ends up as a mandarin, but the audience has seen him first as a newborn baby and then as a mischievous boy trying to evade a spanking,

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and cannot take him too seriously. His willful disavowal of his foster parents seems an extension of his earlier childish behavior. The children in *The Wall* are small-minded penny-pinchers and money-grubbers. For example, to economize, Daguai explains how to dress a cheap catfish so it looks like a costly carp on the plate. His kind are ridiculous, not fiendish. By contrast, King Lear and Earl Gloucester fall from high, suffering the loss of enormous wealth, power, and dignity—prestige that their Chinese counterparts would never imagine possessing—and the fluctuation of their fortune seems more poignant. Precisely because of Lear's and Gloucester's eminence, their ambitious children actively prey on them and try to supplant them. The Chinese children, by contrast, lack strong incentives for violence against their parents; they renounce their parents merely to reduce overhead and embarrassment.

A more analogous situation occurs in the Yue opera 越劇 *Wu nu baishou* 五女拜壽 (*Birthday Greeting by Five Daughters*, hereafter *Birthday Greeting*), written by Gu Xidong 顧錫東 (1924-2003), which premiered in 1982. The play begins with a birthday celebration as the prospering Yang Jikang 楊繼康, Vice Minister of Revenue 戶部侍郎, and his wife happily receive their four daughters and four sons-in-law, each bearing sumptuous gifts, pledging filial piety, and beseeching the old couple to live with them after Yang's retirement. Only Sanchun 三春, their adopted daughter married to a poor scholar, comes empty-handed. Ridiculed by the snobbish maids, the poor couple try to defend their integrity, incidentally enraging the prejudiced mother, who then expels and disavows them. Yang's unexpected change of fortune then puts filiality to trial. After he loses his post and all his assets, the old couple travel far and wide but fail to find shelter or comfort at their "filial" daughters' houses. Freezing and starving, they almost pass out in the snow, but the honest Sanchun comes to rescue them in time. Ashamed, Mrs. Yang recants her earlier mistake.

The contrast between good and bad daughters, the performance of rhetoric, the renunciation of parent-daughter relation, the natural cruelty of the storm, and the reconciliation scene, all align *Birthday Greeting* to *King Lear*.[11] Their similar beginnings, however, lead to polarized outcomes. In the Chinese analogue, evil is significantly outnumbered by good. Of the five daughters, only the spoiled Shaungtao 雙桃, the second and Mrs. Yang's favorite, is comparable to Goneril and Regan—she flatters or disdains her parents, depending on their changing financial situation. Her husband and the husband of the eldest daughter also prize money and career opportunity above filial devotion. Such unethical behavior, however, is exceptional in the play. The kind-hearted first, fourth, and fifth daughters are only compelled to suffer

[11] Shakespeare may have been a direct influence, though Gu never acknowledged it. Hu discussed the two plays as sharing an "archetypal motif" 原型性的母題. The connection between the two plays was made explicit in a copyright lawsuit. Sued by Gu's widow and sons, the production team of the unauthorized television drama series *New Birthday Greeting by Five Daughters* claimed that their show was based on "cultural heritage" including *King Lear*, *Hsiao King*, *Twenty-Four Filial Exemplars*, *The Story of the Wall*, among others ("Birthday Greeting").

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their parents' exile, and the fourth and fifth sons-in-law, along with their parents, are also sympathetic figures—lacking only Sanchun and her husband's courage to defy political authority and stick to their morals. In addition, the maid Cuiyun 翠雲, later adopted to be the sixth daughter, faithfully serves the old couple during their adversity.

Unlike the unfilial children in *King Lear*, even callous Shuangtao does not actively seek to ruin her parents. Instead, the real evil is located outside the family. Weaving history into the fiction of Yang's family drama, the playwright ascribes all vileness to Yan Song 嚴嵩 (1480-1566), the Ming dynasty Prime Minister notorious for his corruption. As the ultimate persecutor, Yan drives the plot without appearing on stage. He beguiles the Emperor to execute righteous officials at court, including Sanchun's natural father and Yang's cousin. Yan directly causes Yang's downfall, and aggravates his misery by asking his in-laws to shun him. Yan's triumph, however, is only provisional. Historically the Inspector Zou Yinglong 鄒應龍 impeached Yan in 1562, after the old Prime Minister lost the Emperor's favor. In the play, Zou is fictionalized as Sanchun's husband. Born of humble origin, he studies hard to win first place in the imperial examination and becomes an imperial investigator. He pretends to befriend Yan, but secretly collects evidence of Yan's villainy and boldly ventures to appeal to the Emperor. The Emperor accepts Zou's petition, deposes Yan, and restores Yang to his former eminence. The play then ends with another birthday party.

The play is filled with heart-rending scenes, particularly between the aged parents and their virtuous children. Yang also sings several plaintive arias to vent his grief and indignation. Nevertheless, the final scene of joyful *da tuanyuan* 大團圓 (the grand reunion), a convention of Chinese melodrama, greatly reconciles the previous tragic tone. Chinese audiences would well know the proverbial "four joys": getting sweet rain after a long draught 久旱逢甘雨, encountering old friends in a foreign region 他鄉遇故知, enjoying a candle-lit wedding night 洞房花燭夜, and winning the imperial examination 金榜題名時. With a small variation—a reunion of family instead of friends—three of these four coincide in the last scene. Against the festive background music and the Yang couple's loud laughter, the offstage chorus sings:

> The constancy of evergreens is made known in winter;
> Unblemished virtue persists through misadventure.
> Reunited, family rejoices at birthday celebration,
> Affectionate and harmonious, grinning from ear to ear.
>
> 歲寒方知松柏健，
> 患難相守品德全。
> 壽堂重敘天倫樂，
> 情深和睦笑開顏。

Calamity, as it turns out, is only a trial of virtue, which is duly rewarded in the end, both in the private-familial and the public-political domains. Sanchun not only wins

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back her parents' love but is further honored when her husband Zou, once ridiculed as worthless, ends up as the hero of the play. His younger brother also passes the examination and becomes a *jinshi* 進士 (imperial scholar), and is matched to Cuiyun, the maid-turned-lady. Moral triumph, translated into sociopolitical and material success, is presented visually: at the final banquet scene, both the Zou brothers wear a richly embroidered *mang* 蟒 (ceremonial gown), an official's hat, and a *yudai* 玉帶 (jade belt), and their wives wear a beaded *fengguan* 鳳冠 (phoenix coronet).

King Lear is very much a dramatic materialization of Gloucester's foreshadowing remarks on the effects of the eclipses: "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" (I.ii.106-9).[12] It seems that such "[m]achinations, hollowness, treachery, and all ruinous disorders" (I.ii.112-13) would make good materials for a Chinese play—but only the first half of it. Like Lear, Yang has been brought to the edge of extinction. Unlike Lear, though, Yang regains everything he has lost—his position, his wealth, and even all his daughters, with the depraved Shuangtao being replaced by the unswerving Cuiyun. Structurally, the play differs remarkably from *King Lear*. Shakespeare's tragedy moves in a linear direction: Lear's status is highest at the beginning, and he falls all the way to meet his death. The Chinese playwright, by contrast, makes the wheel of fortune come full circle. The title of the play *Birthday Greeting by Five Daughters* points to both the beginning and the ending. With an envelope structure, the play suggests that filial piety, loyalty, and justice are the *changdao* 常道 (constant way), and any eclipses of these values only contingent and temporary.

Birthday Greeting has been tremendously popular since its 1982 premiere. It was made into an award-winning movie in 1984, then adopted by many regional theatres over the years, and in 2004 expanded into a television series of twenty-six episodes.[13] The play's original cast—the young and beautiful "Five Golden Flowers" 五朵金花—amplify its national popularity. For the play to thrive in other genres and media, however, credit must be given to its gripping plot, touching sentiment, and satisfying assertion of poetic justice. Rather than making the unfaithful children pay the price of unfiliality with their lives—as in *The Pavilion*—the playwright shifts the focus to rewarding the righteous. The light and comic punishment—public shaming and eviction from the birthday banquet—answers the demand of justice without spoiling the festive atmosphere of the grand reunion.

III. Confirming the Native Tradition: *King Qi's Dream*

King Qi's Dream is an ambitious project by the Shanghai Beijing Opera

[12] Citations of *King Lear* are from *The Riverside Shakespeare*.

[13] The title exists in Huangmei opera 黃梅戲, Yue opera 粵劇 (Cantonese opera), Gezai opera 歌仔戲 (Taiwanese opera), Xiang opera 蘑劇, Yang opera 揚劇, and Long opera 隴劇.

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Troupe. Zhou Xinfang, the founding director of the troupe, expressed a strong desire to transplant Shakespeare into Beijing opera (Xia 12), but his vision did not materialize for some thirty years. The story is moved to ancient China, in the Warring States period 戰國 (475-221 BCE), and the plot, characters, costumes, etc. are all Sinicized. Sinicization, indeed, is the declared intention of the two playwrights Wang Lian 王煉 and Wang Yongshi 王湧石, and the director Ouyang Ming 歐陽明. Ouyang said in an interview:

> Our purpose is to transfigure Shakespeare's drama into Chinese opera as much as possible, and our most difficult challenge is to Sinicize the play's content so it conforms to Chinese customs, aesthetics, etc. Our preliminary assumption is thus: those who know Shakespeare's drama will recognize its shadow in our production; those who do not know Shakespeare—the majority of Chinese folks—will take it to be a story from ancient China.
>
> 我們的目的就是要使莎士比亞戲劇儘量地中國化、戲曲化，而最難的就是在內容上如何中國化，包括中國式的生活習俗、審美觀念等。我們初步有這麼一種設想，就是讓懂莎劇的人從中看出莎劇的影子，更多不懂莎劇的中國老百姓覺得這是在講述古中國的一段故事。 (Xia 12)

How can this proposition be put into practice? As we have seen, beyond surface similarities, nearly insurmountable conflicts exist between Shakespeare's bleak *King Lear* and traditional Chinese opera's treatment of its themes. The confrontation of the two theatres seems antipodal—loyalty to the native tradition threatens to mar loyalty to the Bard.

For Chinese audiences, unfiliality must be purged and order must be restored. To the audience's gratification, *The Pavilion* employs thunderbolts to strike the sinner and right the wrong. This *deus ex machina*, however, is unavailable in the world of *King Lear*. Providence, if it exists, is at best indifferent to Lear's suffering. Lear even perceives the wind, rain, and thunder to be "servile ministers" that have joined his "two pernicious daughters" (III.ii.21-22). Gloucester also remarks: "As flies to wanton boys are we to th' gods;/They kill us for their sport" (IV.i.36-37). This despair is intrinsic to *King Lear*, and the invocation of Providence is antithetical. It is also important for Chinese audiences to be able to laugh at the villains while weeping for the victims, and to know that the damage done is inconsequential. This is the case with *The Wall*: the petty and comical villains' capacity for evil is limited, and their unfilial exploitation does not undermine society or its fundamental values. Lear's ruin, however, affects the entire state: the royal Lear's vicissitudes are necessarily tied to his people, and his personal tragedy induces war and political chaos. Of the three plays discussed above, *Birthday Greeting*, a play involving political intrigues and regal partiality, presents a situation most analogous to *King Lear*. Although *Birthday Greeting* stages unfilial transgression, it employs a scapegoat to reduce its psychological impact, and the final

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grand reunion further heals the wound. Interestingly, both these devices find their way into the Beijing opera adaptation of *King Lear*.

Coincidently, *King Qi's Dream* also begins with a birthday celebration. On his birthday, the old King Qi (Lear) unexpectedly announces his plan to divide his kingdom among his three daughters Chunying 春嬰 (Goneril), Xiaying 夏嬰 (Regan), and Xueying 雪嬰 (Cordelia). The adaptation retains the main plot of *King Lear* but, similar to *Birthday Greeting*, it relocates evil outside the victim's immediate family: Edmund, renamed Shangguan Meng 上官蒙, is metamorphosed into a prominent figure and the embodiment of evil. The role is sizably expanded, but also markedly flattened. As a hopeless, illegitimate son, Shakespeare's villain deserves some sympathy. Despite his overweening ambition and his antagonism towards Gloucester and Edgar, his feelings of envy, resentment, contempt, and his desperate need to be loved are not groundless. Precisely because he lacks recognition, he spares nothing to take Edgar's and later Gloucester's place. Furthermore, Edmund is not completely soulless—his conscience flashes the moment before his death. The adaptation, however, removes the entire subplot of Gloucester's family drama, leaving Edmund's Chinese counterpart with no excuse. Stripped of this original context, the fatherless and brotherless Shangguan pursues power single-mindedly and, by comparison, even the transgressions of the two proud daughters seem minor.

All adaptations of Shakespeare in Chinese opera involve considerable excision of minor characters, episodes, and lines—being a musical and physical theatre, Chinese opera simply cannot accommodate all Shakespearean materials within acceptable running time. By its nature this operatic theatre demands a more straightforward plot and fewer speaking roles. The effect of removing Gloucester and Edgar altogether, however, goes beyond economy. Indeed, this change is attuned to Chinese ethics, which prizes filial piety above all virtues. Like Yan in *Birthday Greeting*, Shangguan is presented as evil incarnate, thus serving as the scapegoat for the unfilial children. Approximating abstract Evil, Yan never appears in person; he is only spoken of by other dramatic personae. The transfiguration of Edmund follows the same direction. Shangguan's malice and cruelty are unconditional and absolute, devoid of ambiguity or sympathy. It is also significant that Shangguan, though an opportunist, liar, two-timer, traitor, usurper, and murderer, does not sin against filial piety. By removing Gloucester, the adaptation sidesteps any cumulative effect. King Qi's affliction is hence reduced to a unique case instead of a universal phenomenon.

Above all, irresistible physical attraction enables Shangguan to achieve his goals. His charm is so conspicuous that King Qi, spotting him in a crowd in the first scene, instantly marvels: "Who is that handsome young man just now kneeling in front of us?" 方才有位英俊少年跪在父王面前，他是何人. In Shakespeare's original, the affair between Edmund and Goneril is not revealed until act four, scene two, and his relationship with Regan still later. In the adaptation, the erotic triangle is moved to the foreground. Albany is turned into a pedant, and Cornwall a drunkard. Although the actors do not have their noses painted white, their acting style conforms to that

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of *xiao hualian*. Disappointed and disgusted by their clownish husbands, Chunying and Xiaying eagerly seek out alternatives and fight vigorously for Shangguan's favor. René Girard's theory of mimetic desire (7-17) is intensely at play in this triangular relationship. Taking full advantage of their jealousy, Shangguan treacherously plays one sister against the other. Shakespeare's two brief moments of flirtation in act four, scene two and act five, scene one are elaborately expanded with music and dance. Shangguan first protests to Chunying:

> At night, under the lamp forlorn,
> As if by turbulence I am tossed and torn.
> With tens of thousands of threads, Love does me chain,
> A love I must woefully contain.
> I'd die to savor every moment loving my Princess,
> Till eternity, allowing no recess.
>
> 到夜晚我對孤燈，
> 我胸中好似翻江倒海。
> 萬縷情絲只得苦苦往心裡埋。
> 恨不得與公主朝朝暮暮永歡愛，
> 地久天長時刻不離開。

Then, in the next scene, he exalts Xiaying's beauty at the expense of her sister, punning on their names—"The spring [chun] flower has already drooped, but the summer [xia] flower emits fragrance" 春天的花兒已然敗落，夏天的花兒吐露芬芳—and vows to love her only. Erotic rivalry extends to political conflict, and Shangguan is desirable precisely because he promises to fulfill the sisters' twofold desire. While Edmund waits for the triangle to resolve itself, Shangguan actively plots the deaths of the two sisters and their husbands alike. Dying, Chunying and Xiaying realize his treachery, and they reconcile and embrace each other, leaving their false lover as the only unrepentant sinner. He then entraps and imprisons King Qi and Xueying. After Baili Ze 百里澤 (France) and Kunfu 昆父 (Kent) both die in battle, Shangguan has nothing to fear and he crowns himself king.

As the adaptation evolves into a battle between good and evil, Cordelia's prominence also increases. Xueying's name (literally "snow baby") and her white attire both express her purity, and her survival has symbolic significance. In prison, King Qi humbly beseeches Shangguan:

> Spotless, guiltless and guileless is my daughter Xueying. Spare her life, so people will know that, in this sorrowful, lamentable, piteous and hateful world, though ugliness and evil proliferate, beautiful spring—the honesty and goodness that everybody yearns for—still persists!

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> 我兒雪嬰潔白無瑕、純眞坦蕩。留她在世，好讓世人知曉，在這可悲、可嘆、可憐、可恨的世界上，縱有千醜萬惡，也還有明媚春光，人人企盼的眞誠善良！

Xueying becomes Goodness personified, and this is precisely why Shangguan refuses to let her live. He laughs at King Qi's naïve request: "How can honesty and goodness be allowed in this muddled and chaotic world?" 在這不清不白的世界之上，豈能容納眞誠善良, and then promptly orders Xueying's death.

As Evil incarnate, Shangguan must be purged. In *The Pavilion*, Jibao's death is the climatic spectacle, and the same formula is applied in this adaptation. Without invoking supernatural forces, the playwrights have King Qi exact vengeance with his own hands. As the newly-crowned Shangguan struts around gloating, King Qi catches him by surprise. Putting his fetters around Shangguan's neck, the doddering old man uses his last strength to strangle his enemy. After a prolonged and violent struggle accompanied by clamorous percussive beats that help to excite and electrify the audience, Shangguan falls to the ground motionless. At this point, the audience applauds wildly. Clapping and shouting in mid-performance has long been the convention of traditional Chinese theatre. From a technical point of view, the acrobatic performance of *jiangshi* 僵屍 (falling on one's back without bending the spine or knees like a stiff corpse) by He Shu 何澍, the actor who plays Shangguan, is a deservedly acclaimed highlight. This aesthetic pleasure, however, is incomplete without the psychological gratification of watching evil defeated. The adaptation then further exploits Shangguan's death. "He is dead" 他死了, says King Qi, pointing to the corpse. "He is *dead*!" he repeats slowly with emphasis, and bursts into loud peals of triumphant laughter, evoking another wave of applause. The clapping audience heartily cheers with King Qi as well as cheering the actor Shang Changrong for his superb vocal technique.

The adaptation not only reduces the two elder daughters' culpability but also makes Lear and Cordelia more sensible and hence more sympathetic. To start with, King Qi's decision to divide the kingdom is not whimsical or irresponsible—he actually plans to observe how well the daughters can rule and then select the best one to succeed him in the future. Because he means to test his daughters as potential rulers, he does not just ask how much they love him but demands that they delineate their governing policies 治國方略 as well as proclaim their filial devotion 孝順之心. To this twofold question, Xueying's response is above reproach. By Chinese standards, the tongue-tied Cordelia cannot be blameless. She fails to put on the cheerful countenance prescribed by Confucius (*Confucian Analects* II.8). As the famous Lao Laizi 老萊子 (Old Master Lai) exemplifies, truly filial children would try to divine their parents' deep psychological need and satisfy it, however peculiar it may seem. Cordelia "has violated *li* [禮], the rituals which delineate civilized behavior" by refusing to perform (Wawrytko 397). By contrast, Xueying is more dutiful and courteous. "Paternal love

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and filial piety are natural” 父慈愛女孝順本屬天然, she answers, “I should always thank you for rearing me” 兒理當把養育恩情銘記心間. King Qi nods and smiles paternally. Only when she proceeds to challenge his political prudence does he become angry. Warning King Qi against danger of civil warfare and advising him to retract his allegations, Xueying’s behavior does not diverge from Confucian teachings: “when a case of unrighteous conduct is concerned, a son must by no means keep from remonstrating with his father” 當不義，則子不可以不諍於父 (*Hsiao King* 15). While Cordelia’s honesty is arguably flawed by her disrespectfulness, Xueying escapes such censure.

With Xueying as the paragon of virtue, *King Qi’s Dream* stands as a moral and moralistic tale, in which abstract concepts supersede individual affairs. Kept as a prisoner by Shangguan, King Qi laments his tremendous loss: “my massive dominion, my magnificent royal court, my lifetime achievement, and my great name in history” 泱泱國土、巍巍王朝、一生業績、千古英明. Seeing her aged father in shackles, Xueying also cannot help weeping. From a larger perspective, however, personal affliction can also be common good. In positive spirit, they comfort each other in a duet:

King Qi:	I’ll tell you tales from ancient dynasty,
Xueying:	Making sport of the petty villainy,
	Regarding officials, with backbone bent,
	Sink or swim on the political sea.
King Qi:	We’ll say that life sans apprehension
	Often gives rise to presumption,
	And that to rule out conceitedness,
	One must welcome remonstration.
	We’ll sigh how life resembles a dream—
	Awake, you realize the scheme.
King Qi and Xueying:	We’ll write a volume for future generations
	Entitled *King Qi’s Dream*.
歧王：	我爲兒講述那古老的故事，代代朝朝，
雪嬰：	將那些卑劣的小人盡情嘲笑，
	冷眼看眾廷臣他們沉浮宦海隨風折腰。
歧王：	說一說人處順境易狂傲；
	講一講常納忠言方能夠免矜驕；
	嘆一回人生如夢醒時曉；
歧王、雪嬰：	書一卷《歧王夢》留予後世傳抄。

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The aria is derived from Lear's speech in act five, scene three, but the explicit moralization is added. The father and daughter do not just chat and laugh to pass time and to console themselves; instead, they mean to instruct. Self-referential, the aria turns Shakespeare's tragedy into an *exemplum*. The suffering of King Qi and Xueying, however great, is redeemed and all becomes meaningful and worthwhile.

With the added moralizing dimension, even Xueying's death seems bearable. Shakespeare's Lear dies without any hope. Holding the dead Cordelia, he speaks his last words: "Thou'lt come no more,/Never, never, never, never, never!" (V.iii.308-9). By contrast, the ending of the adaptation is significantly more heartening. King Qi bewails Xueying's death, but also envisions reunion with her:

> Slow down your steps, Xueying!
> On your heels, Papa is following.
> Onto the other world we depart.
> Father and daughter our life restart.
>
> 雪嬰，停步慢行！
> 爲父隨你登程。
> 同往別一世界，
> 父女重度人生。

The play thus ends not with death but with rebirth, not with despair but with hope. The convention of the "grand reunion," though transformed, still figures. By reducing the psychological damage of tragedy, *King Qi's Dream* evinces unwavering loyalty to the native traditions, conforming to Chinese ethical and aesthetic principles alike. Only "Shakespeare's shadow" remains.

IV. Resistance, Revision, and Reflexivity: *Lear Is Here*

In all the four plays discussed above, some external force intervenes: the scapegoats Yan in *Birthday Greeting* and Shangguan in *King Qi's Dream* reduce the moral responsibility of the depraved children; vengeful Providence in *The Pavilion* and the clever Wang in *The Wall* retaliate in lieu of the wronged parents. These factors act to cushion the shock of unfiliality in order to appease the audience. Though disturbing, the disruption of the moral order makes the final resolution all the more enjoyable. Jiao's account of *The Pavilion* epitomizes the effect: "at first all of the audience gnashed their teeth in indignation, but then all greatly rejoiced" 其始無不切齒，既而無不大快 (229). Providing gratification as well as affirming ethical principles, these plays simultaneously fulfill the Horatian double purposes of amusement and instruction—indeed, these plays cannot have accomplished the one purpose without also accomplishing the other. In sharp contrast, Wu Hsing-kuo's *Lear Is Here* blazes a radically new path: it denies its audience consolation and challenges the very values

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that the theatre is supposed to preach. Above all the play is characterized by its reflexive attitude, questioning the very foundation of its own theatre.

Lear Is Here is clearly groundbreaking. In this three-act play, Wu Hsing-kuo enacts all ten roles—Lear and his three daughters, Gloucester and his two sons, the Fool, Kent, and himself. As a Shakespearean adaptation, it is devoid of a clear storyline, with the original structure disrupted and the episodes shuffled. Many of the original lines are preserved, but they are often reassigned to a different character or spoken in a different context. Fidelity to Shakespeare, it seems, is out of the question. If the play miscarries in Shakespearean terms, as Beijing opera, it is even more outrageous. Wu Hsing-kuo's formal training is in the *wu sheng* 武生 (martial male) and *lao sheng* 老生 (mature male) roles, and he has also occasionally played *da hualian* 大花臉 (great painted face) and *xiao hualian*. In this play, he experiments with both the *qingyi* 青衣 (singing female) and *huadan* 花旦 (vivacious female) roles.

Some of Wu Hsing-kuo's experiments were compromises prompted by practical concerns—he was short of money and personpower. More importantly, these and other formal innovations—the use of wire work and discordant music, for example—correspond to his revision of the Shakespearean themes and his resistance to his native theatre. Enacting multiple roles in one performance is not unprecedented: many masters in Beijing opera made their mark on this demanding task, and Wu Hsing-kuo himself had played four roles in *Fa Dongwu* 伐東吳 (*Conquering the Eastern Wu*) before. Challenging and sensational, such performances exhibit an actor's admirable versatility and endurance. Wu Hsing-kuo's practice in *Lear Is Here*, however, goes beyond the demonstration of his acting capacity. He empathizes with as well as criticizes all the characters for their vanity, ambition, discontent, self-righteousness, blindness, rebelliousness, ingratitude, and cynicism. By playing both the fathers and the children, both the protagonist and the chorus, both the actor and the acted, he spins out multiple perspectives in exploring the concepts of filial piety, loyalty, and justice.

An overarching ambivalence distinguishes *Lear Is Here* from the other plays discussed above. Upholding parental authority, the three Chinese analogues treat the wronged parents as innocent victims. With the exception of the snobbish mother in *Birthday Greeting*, none of these parents is truly culpable: they might be gullible and overindulging, but they clearly lack Lear's haughtiness, narcissism, and irascibility, and they rightly identify someone else as the cause of their adversity, admitting no grey area. *King Qi's Dream* also leans in this direction. Lacking insight about his daughters and subjects, King Qi is responsible for his own fall. He learns about his own guilt slowly and feels remorse, yet even he exclaims: "Everyone in this world has wronged me!" 世間萬物皆負我, echoing Lear in considering himself "a man/More sinn'd against than sinning" (III.ii.59-60). Only in *Lear Is Here* is the indictment of others counterbalanced and even outweighed by self-reproach.

The predominant image is a circular arrow. In Shakespeare's act one, scene one, the enraged Lear threatens Kent, "The bow is bent and drawn." Undaunted, Kent replies, "Let it fall rather, though the fork invade/The region of my heart" (I.i.143-45).

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This arrow is reoriented in the adaptation. In the first act, Wu Hsing-kuo's Lear madly runs and rambles around the stage, crying out against his ungrateful daughters:

> A lightning bolt from heaven
> Has the dreamer awaken.
> Unfilial children
> Raise wrath divine and human.
>
> 上天一聲雷，
> 驚醒懵懂人。
> 女兒不孝順，
> 天怒人怨恨。

With exaggerated slow motion, he mimes shooting an arrow and his eyes follow the movement of the imaginary arrow circling in the air several times. Unexpectedly, it flies toward his front and strikes hard his bosom. He painfully grunts before he collapses: "I bent the bow to shoot an arrow, which precisely hit my own heart" 彎弓放一箭，正中自心靈. Like this reflexive arrow, all Lear's railing eventually points to himself.

In the adaptation, there is no triumph of good over evil, nor even a battle between good and evil. Rather, the war is between the split selves. On the one hand, Lear feels terribly wronged by his daughters and subjects and taunted by the universe; on the other, he also perceives himself to be the worst sinner. The play starts with a distinctly Learian lament:

> Old and of no use, we are deserted by our children.
> Our entire wealth and nobility hence become barren.
> Isn't paternal care to be repaid over the periods three?[14]
> Alas, none of my daughters knows filial piety!
>
> 人老無用子不要，
> 縱有富貴也徒勞。
> 人說劬勞三世報，
> 偏偏女兒都不孝。

He proceeds to invoke the heavens, however, not to strike the ungrateful children but to regard his own folly:

> Heavens, open your eyes and mark! O Lord Heavens!

[14] Past, present, and future.

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Crushed by my own doing, I grant myself no pardons.

蒼天睜眼來觀瞧，蒼天啊！

這是我自作自受怎自饒？

As it turns out, his agony is caused by no external affliction, but by his self-realization. Because the problem lies within, no external help can avail. Consequently, of all the ten roles Wu Hsing-kuo plays, Liya 麗雅 (Cordelia) is the least important. Pressed to declare her love for her father, she stammers: "I . . . I . . . I have nothing to say" 我……我……我無有話講, her only line in the play. Banished, she never reappears. The innocence and goodness she embodies cannot redeem Lear from the mire he finds himself in.

Stung by Goneril's insult, Shakespeare's Lear poses a series of questions about his identity (I.iv.226-30). This Lear has not yet lost his mind—he apparently expects Goneril to call him father and king and to honor him accordingly. Wu Hsing-kuo's Lear asks the same questions, but they are no longer rhetorical and performative. Revived from the "death" inflicted by his own arrow, Wu Hsing-kuo strips himself of Lear's beard, wig, gown, and makeup, but he cannot remove the Lear within him.

Why Lear?
Who is Lear?
Anger, madness, pride, and willfulness are all my good friends!
I am Lear!
Every inch of me is Learian!
I have been Lear all my life!
I am predestined to be Lear!

爲什麼是李爾？

誰是李爾？

憤怒！瘋狂！驕傲！任性！他們都是我的好朋友！

我才是李爾！

我的每一吋肌膚都是李爾！

我從小就是李爾！

我命中是李爾！

Lear is defined not by his fortune or misfortune, but by his problematic personality. His daughters may break faith, his subjects may revolt, and even the wind and rain may act against him. All these external factors aggravate his pain, but absent his inherent flaws they would not shake him.

Wu Hsing-kuo's unique definition of Lear aligns the adapter-director-actor with the fictional character. They share identical flaws and suffer the same consequences—

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loneliness, betrayal, and abandonment. Lear is alone: he calls for his three daughters, his subjects and his one hundred knights to come to him, but nobody answers. Wu Hsing-kuo also speaks through Lear's mouth, futilely calling the names of the actors, musicians, and stage staff that have worked with him over the years. Lear's anguish thus annotates Wu Hsing-kuo's personal experience as a struggling artist. His frustration as a Beijing opera actor is palpable. For various reasons, the theatre that had once enjoyed royal patronage, national prestige, and government sponsorship, was helplessly under decline.[15] Unable to get resources, audience, and recognition, Wu Hsing-kuo was forced to disband his troupe in 1998, and his empathy toward Lear's fall is thus heartfelt.

Personal experience not only relates Wu Hsing-kuo to the wronged parents but also to the rebellious children. In an abstract sense, filial piety betokens respect for tradition, the fount of knowledge and wisdom (Nuyen 209). The compounding of a father figure and tradition is especially strong in the culture of Chinese opera. Performance styles and skills are handed down by oral transmission and demonstration, and genealogy accounts for one's identity—faithful imitation of the master is a prerequisite for artistic achievement.[16] To revitalize Beijing opera, Wu Hsing-kuo has introduced elements of Western drama, modern dance, and film since *Yuwang chengguo* 慾望城國 (*The Kingdom of Desire*), his adaptation of *Macbeth*, premiered in 1986.[17] Such daring innovation and self-expression are tantamount to a violation of filial piety, as aesthetics is often discussed in ethical terms.

Led by Wu Hsing-kuo's autobiographical note in the program, critics have proposed a personal approach, analyzing *Lear Is Here* as his "autobiography" (Huang 116) or even "psychotherapy" (Li 215). In addition to his dramatic profession, his early life as an orphan, his rigorous apprenticeship in school, and his strained relationship with his master and father-surrogate Zhou Zhengrong 周正榮 have all been minutely examined. Here I do not wish to dwell on such analyses; instead, I wish to contextualize the adaptation among other Chinese analogues. As victims of some external force, Wu Hsing-kuo, his Lear and his Gloucester are similar to the other wronged parents. But none of them is so acutely aware of being the agent of his own ruin. Lear confesses his anger, madness, pride, and willfulness from the outset, and Wu Hsing-kuo's self-accusation is even harsher. In Lear's voice, the character Wu Hsing-kuo sings a doleful aria in *fan erhuang* 反二黃 (reverse *erhuang*) in the third act, blaming the heavens, fate, and his daughters for his loss and pain. There is nothing

[15] Guy has discussed the rise and fall of Beijing opera; see especially 151-65 for its loss of status in contemporary Taiwan.

[16] To counteract China's fervor for innovation and revolution, strict adherence to tradition was especially emphasized in Taiwan as ruled by Chiang Kai-shek and his son (1949-1988), a phenomenon I discussed in "*Macbeth* in Chinese Opera."

[17] See my discussion of the various elements Wu Hsing-kuo incorporated in *The Kingdom of Desire* in "*Macbeth* in Chinese Opera."

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novel in this lament, as all the wronged parents express similar sentiments, bemoaning the bankruptcy of filial devotion, loyalty, and justice. What is striking is that his self-pity gives way to violent self-attack. He passionately calls for the wind, rain, thunder, and lightning to destroy him:

> Blow and deface me!
> Shatter my shame and dignity!
> Break my folly! Have no pity!
> Smash the egoistic me!
>
> 吹腫臉頰無顏面！
> 打破羞恥無自尊！
> 閃斷痴愚無人問！
> 擊碎自大妄爲人！

This severe self-condemnation invalidates his earlier complaint—he does not only deserve his ruin but also asks for it. Death alone, it seems, can redeem him. Though profound, this contrition is immediately superseded by venom. Embittered, he curses the sinners in most vehement terms:

> May the ungrateful children under heaven
> Go blind and deaf, arms missing and legs broken, afflicted by all diseases,
> Dead without a tomb, mutilated in a thousand places, and issueless!
>
> 叫那天下不孝人
> 眼瞎、耳聾、缺臂、斷腿、百病纏身，
> 死無下場、千瘡百孔、無子無孫！

His malice against others, expressed with ghastly images, turns out to be even more violent than his self-hatred. Yet, as a rule, he immediately reverses his position and questions the validity of his bloodlust:

> What, like an engine, wrench'd my frame of nature
> From the fix'd place; drew from my heart all love,
> And added to the gall?
>
> 是什麼酷虐的刑具
> 扭曲了我的天性？
> 是什麼苦澀的怨恨
> 抽乾了我心中的愛慈？

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In Shakespeare's original, these lines refer to Lear's cruel treatment of Cordelia (I.iv.268-70). Here, they come after cursing the ungrateful children. In Wu Hsing-kuo's interpretation, even "bad" children are entitled to love, mercy, and forgiveness because their parents are no moral betters. When the parents are at fault, unconditional demands for filial piety are out of the question. By analogy, loyalty is meaningless and the demand for justice is no longer just. Cold reasoning, however, is constantly overwhelmed by passion, ultimately leading to remorse. Wu Hsing-kuo is torn between self-pity and self-condemnation, transposing the accuser and the accused.

Imprisoned with Cordelia, Shakespeare's Lear remarks, "we'll wear out;/ In a wall'd prison, packs and sects of great ones,/That ebb and flow by th' moon" (V.iii.17-19). Wu Hsing-kuo also employs the same imagery, but he expands the prison walls to include the entire world:

> Palace or wilderness,
> Prosperity or wretchedness,
> They are nothing but prison wall.
> Solitary and silent, I watch the moon wane and grow, rise and fall.
>
> 是宮廷、是蔽野、
> 是繁華、是凋零，
> 無非囚牢與四壁。
> 孤寂無聲，冷眼看月昇沉圓缺。

Prison, as it turns out, is a mental space: Wu Hsing-kuo is his own jailor, and there is no exit. The play then ends with him suspended in the air by wire work like a lifeless puppet.

Shakespeare's tragedy ends with Edgar's remark: "Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say" (V.iii.325). Wu Hsing-kuo does not recite this line but, by turning against the conventions of the grand reunion and of poetic justice in Chinese opera, he has enacted it. In contrast to the other Chinese plays, *Lear Is Here* ends with a sense of hopelessness and despair—there is no retaliation of sinners, no reunion, no restoration of order, and no spiritual rebirth. Although the play does not end with multiple deaths as Shakespeare's original, the despondency it conveys rivals it. It is truly tragic that one cannot help pursuing things one no longer believes, while knowing its futility.

V. Conclusion: Filial Piety Reconsidered

Filial piety is a pillar of traditional Chinese culture. Theatre, a reflection of life and politics, has propagated this core value, either celebrating and rewarding filial children or punishing and ridiculing transgressors. When the offense seems too grave, as in Shakespeare's tragedy of King Lear, modifications are imperative. *King Qi's*

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Dream shifts the blame and downplays the children's sins. After enormous suffering, the aged father uproots evil and envisions new life. Although the moral system is temporarily upset, harmonious relations between father and children are reaffirmed in the end. For Wu Hsing-kuo, however, the notion of filial piety demands reconsideration. Is this traditional value, twenty-five hundred years after Confucius, still viable in contemporary society? Is challenging authority necessarily indefensible? Doesn't criticism of such behavior border on self-righteousness and cruelty? Aren't the qualities of vanity, ambition, and willfulness indeed common to the older and younger generations alike? Is not a comprised happy ending to generational conflict oversimplifying, wishful, and even hypocritical?

Wu Hsing-kuo does not answer these questions; instead, he dramatizes them. *Lear Is Here* is a breakthrough not only because he introduces foreign materials, disorganizes the narrative, and enacts multiple characters. More importantly, with these formalistic experiments, he explores very sensitive issues from oppositional angles. Chinese opera has long been used for propaganda and edification purposes. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, affected by ongoing political regeneration and changes in ethical codes, it has evolved into a powerful vehicle of inquiry, as the artist anatomizes himself, his theatre, his society, and the human experience alike.

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孝辨：《李爾王》的戲曲類比與改編

雷碧琦

上海京劇院的《歧王夢》與當代傳奇劇場的《李爾在此》均改編自莎士比亞的悲劇《李爾王》，但此兩齣戲對於「不孝」這個主題的處理方式迥異。孝爲儒家的核心思想，被視爲天經地義。傳統戲曲以風教爲先，「孝子劇」所在多有。儒家文化視不孝爲滔天大罪，必須審愼處理才能登上舞臺。由三齣與莎士比亞《李爾王》情節類似的戲曲劇目《清風亭》（又名《天雷報》）、《牆頭記》與《五女拜壽》中，可看見傳統劇場以（一）報應、（二）滑稽喜劇、（三）代罪羔羊、（四）大團圓等手法來處理此一尖銳題材，以減弱不孝所造成的衝擊。《歧王夢》的故事情節雖取自《李爾王》，但大量借用了戲曲處理不孝題材所使用的手段，將莎士比亞的悲劇轉化爲教忠教孝的中國戲曲。《李爾在此》則不同，透過多重觀點重新檢視忠、孝、公義等觀念，對傳統的倫理與美學原則都有相當的省思。

關鍵詞：莎士比亞　《李爾王》　《歧王夢》　《李爾在此》　孝　戲曲

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Vision and Revision of Filial Piety: Analogues and Adaptations of *King Lear* in Chinese Opera

Bi-qi Beatrice LEI

Although both *King Qi's Dream*, by the Shanghai Beijing Opera Troupe, and *Lear Is Here*, by the Contemporary Legend Theatre, are adaptations of Shakespeare's tragedy *King Lear*, their treatments of its theme of unfiliality differ. Filial piety is one of the core values of Confucianism. Traditional Chinese theatre has a strong moralizing tendency and many of its plays preach filial devotion. Transgression against filial piety is considered a fundamental sin in Confucian culture, and it demands sensitive handling when publicly staged. Analyzing three plays from traditional theatre's repertoire—*The Clear Breeze Pavilion* (also called *Heavenly Thunder's Retaliation*), *The Story of the Wall*, and *Birthday Greeting by Five Daughters*—I identify four techniques used to mitigate the shock of unfilial children: (A) providential retaliation, (B) comedy and farce, (C) scapegoating, and (D) the "grand reunion." While hewing to *King Lear*'s storyline, *King Qi's Dream* uses comparable tactics to transmute Shakespeare's tragedy into a didactic play of Chinese opera. Conversely, *Lear Is Here* employs multiple perspectives to recast the notions of filial piety, loyalty, and justice. In doing so, it challenges ethical and aesthetic traditions alike.

Keywords: Shakespeare　*King Lear*　*King Qi's Dream*　*Lear Is Here*　filial piety　Chinese opera

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