

Integration, Challenge and Loss: The Localization of Shakespeare's Plays—A Case Study of Contemporary Legendary Theatre "The Revenge of the Prince"

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Abstract: Cross-cultural adaptation is the reproduction of classic works by creators in different periods and regions, which reflects the integration of different cultural demands. In the adaptation of Shakespeare's "Hamlet", "The Revenge of the Prince", a Peking Opera produced by Taiwan Contemporary Legend Theatre, has been optimized in terms of means of expression. However, due to the different cultural backgrounds and symbol systems of China and the West, some important characteristics of the original play are weakened in the presentation of conflicts and the portrayal of main characters. Therefore, opera adaptation is not only a simple transplant of the original work, but also an original creation full of innovative challenges.

Keywords: Shakespeare's "Hamlet"; Peking Opera "The Prince's Revenge"; Modernization; Cross-Cultural Adaptation

1. Introduction

So far, domestic scholars have accumulated some achievements in the study of localized adaptation of Shakespeare's plays. Many scholars hold a positive attitude toward the dialogue among civilizations in the localization of Shakespeare's plays, especially Mr. Li Weimin's demonstration of the Shaoxing Opera and Peking Opera "The Revenge of the Prince".^[1-2] Admirers believe that this is a good innovation, which expanded the performance of Peking Opera with the help of Shakespeare's classic play, and "The Revenge of the Prince" creates a script that reflects on human nature. Critics represented by Gong Baorong argue that Shakespeare's plays are not compatible with Chinese opera in terms of ethics and performance mode, which makes adaptation of Shakespeare's plays a thankless task.^[3] The author holds that there is some truth in this statement. The real introspective passages in "The Revenge of the Prince" reviewed by previous scholars are nothing more than a few monologues adapted from the original work. In fact, the monologues of the original work are not suitable for the stage of Shaoxing Opera or Peking Opera, and even the reserved paragraphs are somewhat inconsistent. However, "The Revenge of the Prince" has made great efforts in the fusion of the two cultures and the docking of the two performance ways.

As for Taiwan's contemporary Legend Theater, which adapts western classical dramas, it should not only consider the creation of modern theater art in stage vocabulary, but also examine the aesthetic attempts and artistic forms bearing innovation in the process of "localization" of western classical dramas and "modernization" of Chinese operas from a broader perspective. This paper mainly demonstrates the experimental significance of the adaptation of Shakespeare's Hamlet through the gain and loss of The Peking Opera "The Revenge of the Prince" starring Wu Xingguo.

2. Optimization of the adaptation of Peking Opera "The Revenge of the Prince"

The author believes that "The Revenge of the Prince" has absorbed the essence of the original work of "Hamlet", and has broken through the traditional mode of Peking Opera in terms of the stage performance which in means of "fusion of Chinese and Western, combination of the virtual and the real". In the stage presentation of "The Revenge of the Prince", we can find many innovations in stage performance means and breakthroughs in cross-cultural level. Among them, "ghost appears", "uncle pray" and "a play within a play" are the most representative stages. "The Revenge of the Prince" seldom breaks through the traditional ethical loyalty and filial piety in the theme, and complies with the traditional Performance norms of Peking Opera in the form of performance. Moreover, it incorporates

some western drama performance skills and introduces the concept of modern theater. Director Wu Xingguo uses various forms and methods to decompose, graft, collage and recombine traditional formulas, making an important step towards the exploration of stage plays in the new era.

2.1. On the presentation of "disordered structure"

In the "ghost appears" section of "The Revenge of the Prince", director Wu Xingguo transformed language into visual images, which concretely enriched the inner psychology of the characters in the play. This stage presentation with the help of film montage echoes the "disordered structure" proposed by the screenwriter Wang Anqi.

"Disorder" is the lyric structure proposed by Wang Anqi. Wang anqi's "disorderly structure" in the "freehand style" free space of the opera formula, so that the complex emotions of the characters have great tension under the modern montage techniques. In this play, the treatment of the inner emotions of the characters in the "ghost appears" contains the essence of Wang Anqi's "disordered structure".

As for the "ghost appearance", the ghost of Lao Wang appeared five times in the original "Hamlet", but twice in the Peking Opera version: In the third scene, the ghost of father Emperor complained bitterly of "injustice nowhere to stretch" and revealed his uncle's "insidious and shameless"; In scene six, the prince confronts his mother and urges Hamlet, "Why don't you take revenge and let the enemy go free?" In the stage of Chinese traditional opera, the ghost is a real person who participates in the plot, and the role and identity are quite important. However, this is not the case in western dramas. No matter the ghost in "Hamlet" or the ghost of Bancor in "Macbeth", they are both looming and looming, even making the audience question their existence on the basis of the psychological experience of horror. Therefore, the audience may also suspect that the ghost in "Hamlet" may be a psychological phantom of Hamlet after a sudden accident.

Thus, the Peking Opera "The Revenge of the Prince" still presents the ghost of Hamlet in the form of the entity of traditional Chinese ghost play, in order to confirm the view that good and evil are rewarded. In the first encounter with a ghost, Wang Anqi uses "disorderly" lyricism structure show ghost appearance and Gongsun Yu's heartbreak after learning the truth. By flashing the image of the queen mother on the right side of the stage, followed by the figure of the uncle on the left side of the stage, Gongsun Yu's heart is externalized with a small role: "Gongsun Yu, the enemy of killing your father is mortal, take your life". This kind of cinematography adaptation has replaced traditional opera's "bouncing step" or "shaking hair" and other presentation ways. On the basis of the freehand style of the original opera formula, the modern technique of "disordered structure" externalizes the complex psychological and emotional trend of the characters to a greater extent.

2.2. On the use of "drama within drama" technique

In the integration of localization, the presentation of "drama in drama" has an obvious localization transformation, which is also a highlight of the adaptation of this play. The fourth scene of the play is the use of "candle shadow shake red" to show the tragic death of the father "play" screen, and create a symbolic image: one is the life and death story of Tang Minghuang and Yang Guifei to symbolize the oath of father and mother, the other is a symbol of the father emperor was killed by his uncle sad appearance.

In terms of atmosphere creation, "drama within drama" is narrated in the third person from the perspective of storytellers. This scriptwriter presents the classical charm of Chinese characters. The atmosphere of joy in sorrow is created by reciting and the storyteller's introduction, which reflects the aesthetic tendency of Chinese traditional opera to integrate joy, anger, sorrow and joy into one furnace. In addition, the interludes of modern dance in the "play in play", which the prince used the exercise to mock his uncle for killing his brother and killing his wife, makes the performance of the play exotic and gloomy: the dancers dressed in black show a lot of modern dance elements and body movements such as waist twisting, belly retraction and big jump, accompanied by the storyteller's chanting of joy in sorrow.

2.3. On the integration of modern new elements

Singing, speaking, acting and fighting is not only an independent style of Chinese opera, but also an indispensable artistic content of contemporary legendary theatre in its works. The difference from the performance of traditional Peking Opera is to pursue a more natural form of expression, integrate into the characters, let the superb "technology" promote the emotions of actors and audiences, and make them

go deep into the soul of art in the combination of joy, anger, sorrow, joy, love and hate. In addition, "sitting in the theater watching movies" is also a problem put forward by director Wu Xingguo. In the freehand scenery, the rapid transformation of the environment, the highlighting of the characters' inner spiritual monologue and the tangled relationship between them, coupled with the slow motion processing, the extended lens style performance technique and the presentation of illusory close-up effects, all of these are the blueprints outlined by the play.

As for "uncle pray", its adaptation breaks through the minimalist form of the traditional play "one table and two chairs", integrating and reshaping it with the new element of "slow action". The play will directly use the Performing Arts Division for transition, which seems to be the same as the free transformation of time and space in traditional drama. In fact, it is a new design for the "new subject" of modern drama under the premise of "one scene, one time and space". For the use of stage design, the play did not follow the minimalist form of "one table and two chairs" of the traditional opera, but leaving a large space for the actors. Instead, it arranged a beautiful performance venue to achieve the effect of the combination of virtual and real. Because the traditional opera stage has no set lighting which is based on the principle of "empty stage and bright stage", the conversion of the scene has no fetters of changing the scene, and only takes the characters as the benchmark. As there is no set, the designated space of each place is completely defined by "actor's performance". There is a saying in Li yuan jargon that "the scene is on the actor" and "the scene comes from the body". The time and space within a scene can be freely extended or arbitrarily transformed. After the "opera reform", the qualitative nature of empty stage and bright stage has been transformed. When Wang Anqi is carrying out the adaptation work, "The most distressing thing is the moment when the uncle prays in the church and the prince wants to kill him or not to kill". The original work is based on religion. If the person in prayer is killed, he will go to heaven and be forgiven. Therefore, the prince hesitates and delays to take revenge. But there is no such religious meaning in Chinese culture. Even if the scene is changed to the temple and ancestral hall, it is impossible to arrange such a plot."^[4]

After a long time of thinking, Wang Anqi finally reached such a consensus with the director: there is no need to sing or speak, and the prince's hesitation is purely expressed by body movements. So while his uncle repented, the prince stood on the rear platform and did the action of "pulling the sword out of the scabbard, wiping the sharp sword, dancing the sword in slow motion, and finally returning the sword to the scabbard". At this time, there were only two light areas on the stage, bright on the uncle and dark on the prince on the high stage. When the uncle's repentance monologue was coming to an end, the prince silently stepped down from the high platform, then the light was on, and turned to the Queen Mother's bedroom to connect the next dispute between mother and son. The processing here is based on the movement of the prince's position. It can be seen that director Wu Xingguo did not ignore the internal principle of opera art, but contributed referential experience to the modernization of Peking Opera in the arrangement.

To sum up, contemporary legend has an obvious direction to the modernization of traditional opera, which is to create symbolic stage effects through modern theatrical processing methods of vision. Therefore, the author thinks that the experimental measures of "The Revenge of the Prince" have a new modern effect. The scriptwriter Wang Anqi's comment on contemporary legend theater is that it needs to "go out of decoration and create images" to highlight the symbolic meaning of stage form, which is also the vision of contemporary legend. The setting and props are not inevitable choices. The key is to highlight the symbolic meaning of the whole stage through the scheduling of all forms and play a role in the hearts of the characters. In this play, the use of skills is really a clever fusion of technology and character sentiment, content and form. Of course, the extensive theatrical stage performance capacity and the integration of Traditional Chinese culture greatly reduced the high humanistic spirit, speculation and doubt characteristics of the original play "Hamlet", which lost some of the original charm of Shakespeare's play, but this play shows a "disorderly structure" for the montage technique; The theme of the play is presented in the performance space of the transformation of time and space and the cutting of regions: although it is unavoidable in the adaptation, the awkwardness and contradiction presented after the fusion create the lyrical freehand brushwork effect of overlapping time and space.

3. Inadequate adaptation of Peking Opera "The Revenge of the Prince"

In the adaptation of The Peking Opera "The Revenge of the Prince", there are also many shortcomings, such as the weakening of conflicts and the localization of main characters. In the process of adaptation, "The Revenge of the Prince" filters the questions about complex human nature of the original work, which is ultimately caused by the cultural differences between China and the West.

3.1. *On the weakening of conflict*

After the adaptation, The Peking Opera "The Revenge of the Prince" weakens the emotional climax that the original opera is good at, and the plot climax of the whole play becomes gentle. In the process of adapting Shakespeare's plays into Chinese opera, the most important thing is that the playwright, director and actor should inject different meanings into the original plays according to the cultural circumstances of the adaptor. And the injection of such different connotations, there will be Hamlet in the face of the ghost of justice and filial piety can not be both awkward situation. The love clue of the original play is replaced in the play "Fake Madness", which shows the emotional expression of local feelings of the characters to a certain extent, but the supplementary explanation of "action" and "motivation" is weakened in the dialogue, so that the overall structure does not change greatly.

From the replacement of the love clue between Hamlet and Ophelia in the Peking Opera "The Revenge of the Prince", it can be seen that the cause and effect of the characters to this situation is not clearly explained, and the climax of the plot does not show the love line due to the lack of "sudden turn" of the plot. While all three of the original series' threads are involved, only one major thread runs through the show: the revenge of prince Gongsun Yu. The five main events involved in this thread -- the appearance of ghosts, the pretense of madness, the drama within drama and the repressed love for Ophelia -- are all evenly distributed, but none highlights the climax.

Although the Peking Opera "The Revenge of the Prince" can reflect the emotional climax with points, its overall structure does not change greatly due to the weakening of the dialogue conflict. The drama of "faking madness" makes Hamlet look very stupid, and the original calm and gloomy tragic atmosphere shows obvious comic color because of the form of "ShuBan" in the drama performance, which is very incongruous. The direct effect of Hamlet's pretending to be mad is his tolerance of Ophelia's love. However, after the adaptation, it is based on the Chinese traditional "unbreakable" love oath between the talented and the beautiful, which is completely not the beauty of Shakespeare's original tolerance-- Hamlet's crazy efforts to protect Ophelia, the values questioned by her mother's rapid remarriage, the indecisive Hamlet because of the great gap with the world, waiting for time which the poet's gloomy temperament made, "Death by Proxy". The reasons for Hamlet's "madness" in the original play were weakened, which made audiences confused and "silly."

After the adaptation, the change of the entry point of love makes the presentation of Hamlet's madness lack a gradual change process, the necessary plot supplement and character action, that is, the lack of mutual interaction "action" and "motive", replaced by a sudden "turning point". It is the lack of a definite transformation factor that gives the characters a hint of "silliness". The scriptwriter keeps love clues in the Shakespeare's original play. Although the plot has a point emotional climax, replacing a romantic story that is more in line with the aesthetic taste and habits of Chinese people, the overall grasp not only weakens the complex human shaping of Hamlet, but also loses the conflict of the plot and the attractive "sudden change" atmosphere.

3.2. *On the main character image flattening*

All the characters in The Peking Opera "The Revenge of the Prince" abide by the "Three cardinal guides and five Constant rules", and at the same time hope to break through such norms, which is quite contradictory. This tendency of the main characters to be flat and stereotyped is mainly reflected in the prince (Hamlet).

In the portrayal of Hamlet, the three plot clues of the original play are still in parallel after the deletion. Among them, the removal of small events in the clue separates the "motive" (reason) of Hamlet as Hamlet, thus making Hamlet not only perform the plot given to him by Shakespeare, but also have to complete the awkward situation that loyalty and righteousness cannot be achieved in the Context of Chinese culture.

In the plot of "the appearance of ghosts", the play reduces the portrayal of Hamlet's own characters, thus weakening the historical background and social background. The theme turns into revenge and redress of grievances, while the individuality of the characters is obviously reduced. In scene three, Hamlet says, "My father is calling me, waiting for me to go forward." But his attendants were very worried, and went with him to find out. Gongsun Yu shouts, "Do not run riot. No word of what has happened tonight will be leaked. Anyone who disobeys orders will be put to death." The anger of this dramatic transformation leaves the audience unable to find the cause of the emotional outburst.

However, the ghost appeared three times before meeting Hamlet for the first time In the original play, which give Hamlet a strong support from doubt life to "fake madness".^[4] For the suspicion of the ghost,

the original play until the third act, scene 2 of the play, Hamlet also asked Horatio to observe his uncle's expression to determine whether the ghost's words are true. After the ghost appeared three times, the original play allowed Hamlet to have a direct dialogue with the ghost in Act 1, Scene 5.

At the beginning, Gongsun Yu heard his father's call and immediately recognized the spirit of the dead. "There must be secrets to tell, and I will obey the father's instructions." The ghost does not have the magnanimity and "compassion" of the original play, the ghost who tried to comfort his wife became a ghost that accused the sinner and completely controlled the son's own hesitant desire for revenge.

The second ghost appeared in scene 6 during the argument with his mother, which corresponds to act 3, Scene 4. The image of Gongsun Yu is very contradictory, including the observance of "filial piety" and the condemnation of his mother's "promiscuous", which is different from the suspicion and blame throughout the original Hamlet. The plot arrangement here shows the contradiction and incompatibility of Wang Anqi's adaptation, which not only retains the essence of the original drama, but also incorporates Chinese traditional ethics.

When adapting famous foreign plays, scriptwriters often find it difficult to achieve the consistency of connotation, and sometimes contradict with the spirit of the original work, leading to the uncoordinated and unnatural actions of the main characters, thus appearing the phenomenon of "flat" characters. The reason lies in their highly different cultural backgrounds. In order to reflect the spirit of the original work, the adaptor will try to incorporate the adapted version into a virtual cultural background, for the portrayal of characters often have the above "dilemma", so that the audience is at a loss.

4. Inspiration from the localization and transplanted of Shakespeare's plays

Seen from the development of modern Chinese opera, the emergence of Shakespeare's plays in Peking Opera is not a temporary pursuit of novelty, but a search for greater artistic expression of Traditional Chinese culture, seeking for the exchange and integration of Chinese and foreign ideas, culture, drama concepts and performance methods. There are two tendencies: one is "drama with singing", the other is to pay more attention to the transformation of Shakespeare's play in the form of opera, both trying to combine the code of Shakespeare's play with the code of Traditional Chinese opera, so as to create a new artistic work. Through the Taiwan contemporary legend theater "The Revenge of the Prince" this special experimental opera, the creation and practice of contemporary opera should have important reference significance.

First of all, in terms of artistic techniques, whether it is the stage performance of "disorderly structure", "drama within a drama" and new elements, "The Revenge of the Prince" has both the characteristics of modernization and freehand style of opera itself. Among them, the most outstanding innovation of the performance program is the absorption of other arts according to the situation and the redesign of dance movements.

Indeed, the artistic technique of opera is freehand style, which is actually the virtualization of natural forms such as real objects and scenes, and its origin is objective life. However, the highly developed program has evolved into some fixed fragmentary symbols, which will make the audience unable to associate with the original state of life, and fail to generate long-term attraction for the audience, and fail to convey more valuable ideological connotations. Too much emphasis on the "freehand style" and neglect the performance of real life, can only bring the audience "spectacle" fuzzy feeling and difficult to produce deep spiritual resonance -- This is also the main reason why many classical operas suffer embarrassment at present. Scriptwriters should try to absorb the content that meets people's expectation, so as to carry out the modernization transformation under the opera itself.

Secondly, as for the character modeling, the main character Hamlet in "The Revenge of the Prince" is flat. Contemporary legend theater should present China's Hamlet instead of Shakespeare's Hamlet. Western Hamlet has the connotation of religious self-redemption, and the choice between life and death is rational. Under the same conflict between human and ethics, Chinese Hamlet's hesitation on human nature, his guilt for his girlfriend Ophelia (Xiao Xiang) and his responsibility for the last generation, his incapacitated values have been at war. Due to the transformation of The Chinese context, the adaptation weakened the conflict and abandoned the explanation of the cause and effect, and the results were often not convincing enough for the audience to understand.

Finally, it remains to be studied and discussed whether Shakespeare's plays should get rid of the traditional ethical values of loyalty and filial piety, whether they should be completely westernized in the writing of plays and literature, and whether "Shakespeare's plays" after such "modern transformation"

are desirable. But one thing is very clear, in the modern transformation of opera, any blind innovation that ignores the inherent laws of art and creation that deviates from the theme of The Times cannot stand the tests of history.

5. Conclusions

"The Prince's Revenge", which is performed "Hamlet" in the form of Peking Opera, can be said to be a relatively successful adaptation. Although there is a certain distance between the plot conflict and the ideological connotation of the main characters from the original work, the approach proposed by contemporary legend theater is still worth trying -- based on the performance of Chinese opera, using the concept of modern theater and borrowing the material of Western drama to stimulate and strengthen the ideological connotation. On the basis of recognizing the success of the adaptation, we should face up to its limitations and defects, and pay attention to the three-dimensional role shaping, the polyphony characteristics of plots and the diversity of thoughts within the scope of the capacity and expression of Peking Opera, so as to gradually create a new opera with its own national characteristics and Shakespeare's profound thoughts. In addition to the requirements for the adaptation of the script itself, we should also do more research on the cross-cultural characteristics of Chinese opera when carrying Shakespeare's plays, deepen the research on Chinese traditional opera culture, in order to arouse people's thinking on the development of Chinese opera under the background of globalization.

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