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在當代戲曲中重探「孝」之文化意涵：

論豫莎劇《天問》

Reconsidering Filial Piety in Contemporary *Xiqu*:

Questioning Heaven, the Bangzi Opera King Lear

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摘要



《天問》作為豫莎劇三部曲的謝幕作，在改編自《李爾王》的戲曲作品中亦屬較新，相比《歧王夢》和《李爾在此》，學界目前對此劇的研究相對缺乏，而從既有論述中，則可見對劇中使用「孝」之概念的爭議。將《李爾王》中的「愛」(love)、「美德」(virtue)、「服侍」(service)等詞彙翻譯或改編為「孝」字，是否有淪於說教及扭曲原作之嫌？本文比較兩部文本後卻認為不然。首先，在莎士比亞時代的英國，個人自由主義僅在萌芽階段，在傳統君權與基督教的意識形態下，加上父家長對子女財務及婚姻的支配權，其社會價值觀與中國儒家的孝道文化其實相去不遠；呈現其時代限制，不必然等於向當代觀眾說教。其次，將上述詞彙翻為「孝」、「忠」等字眼，非《天問》或彭鏡禧的翻譯所獨有，而在中譯本中甚為常見，且考量戲曲精簡的古典語言風格，比起任何意識形態，貼近戲曲語言程式的需求，會是編劇團隊更主要的衡量標準。

在將《天問》與原作《李爾王》對照之餘，本文亦建立兩道框架，比較《天問》、《歧王夢》、《李爾在此》三部對於《李爾王》的戲曲改編：一是討論三作中對父母輩的刻畫，包含主角之於自身對小女兒的疏遠、同情心之缺乏、或威權式的統治是否帶有悔恨心情等；二是針對作品對不孝子女的塑造，比較三劇如何處理反派子女的行為動機，並從改編策略出發，討論原作中的瘋審橋段、私生子生平背景、及三角愛情是否被保留與或如何被改寫，及這些橋段的處理對於反派角色的觀感影響，並由此延伸討論，各部劇本對於傳統孝道的倫理價值，是否提供了觀者在當代將其重新審視的空間。

三部改編中，《天問》還原原作內涵的意圖最為堅定，其對於原作的詮釋，則貼近早期莎學學者的論述，即強調李爾的精神成長及救贖（而非否定其成長的虛無主義），並偏向對權力架構的重建和革新（而非對其顛覆）。在表演上，《天問》對於兩名長女與母親的衝突之刻畫，展現出了相當的立體度及可信度，而非



僅僅是對「不孝女」的妖魔化。然而，從幾則負評中可見，《天問》需在戲曲格律中取捨如此大部頭的原作，劇作家所欲呈現莎劇深度、打破傳統善惡二元對立之意圖，仍受到相當的限制，而主角邠赫拉最後扣題的段段「問蒼天」，反而招來認為她並未成長、在劇末仍要對觀眾說教的解讀。不過，末尾的幕後合唱，將氛圍導向沉靜的思索，收幕前一句後設性的「散場繼續說是非」，將全劇引向開放式的論辯：回顧來看，《天問》引發的對於「孝」的辯題，亦反映了「孝」內部既有的「互惠」及「權威」的二重性，及「傳統集體主義」價值觀與「當代個人主義」的並存及衝突。藉由對《天問》及《李爾王》的思索，除對於當代戲曲革新議題的進一步思考外，或許也能摸索出一條世代之間對話與和解的可能。

關鍵字：天問、李爾王、莎戲曲、莎士比亞、跨文化改編、孝道、豫劇

Abstract



As the third of the trilogy of Shakespeare *Bangzi* operas, *Questioning Heaven* is relatively new among the *xiqu* adaptations of *King Lear*. Compared to the earlier adaptations, *King Qi's Dream* and *Lear is Here*, there has been less research on the play, and the controversy over its use of filial piety could be seen in the existing discussions. Is the translation or adaptation of words such as “love,” “virtue,” and “service” in *King Lear* into *xiao* 孝 [filial piety] proper enough, or does such an adaptation thus fall into a didactic lecture or “twist” the play? After comparing the two texts, the author thinks otherwise. Firstly, in Shakespearean England, individualism was only in its infancy. Under the traditional ideology of monarchical power and Christianity, coupled with the dominance of parents over their children’s finances and marriages, the social environment was not that far removed from the Chinese feudal society. Presenting constraints from the period does not necessarily mean preaching values from that era to the contemporary audience. Secondly, the translation of the above words into *xiao* 孝 and *zhong* 忠 [loyalty] was not unique to *Questioning Heaven* or Perng Ching-Hsi's translations but quite common in other Mandarin translations of *King Lear*. Considering the concise classical language style in *xiqu*, the need to follow the language program of *xiqu* would be more important to the scriptwriting team than any ideology.

In addition to comparing *Questioning Heaven* with *King Lear*, I also establish two frameworks for the comparison with *King Qi's Dream* and *Lear is Here*: firstly, to discuss the portrayal of parenthood in these three works, including whether the protagonist’s estrangement from the youngest daughter, lack of sympathy, and authoritative rule is accompanied by a feeling of remorse; and secondly, to compare how these three plays portray the unfilial children, and how they deal with them.

Focusing on the portrayal of unfilial children in the works, I compare how the three plays deal with their behavioral motives, whether or how the mock trial scene is adapted, the background of the illegitimate son, and the love triangle, as well as how the treatment of these sequences affects the characterization of the antagonists. From this, I extend the discussion to see if these adaptations have provided the viewers with the reflective space to reexamine traditional filial piety in the contemporary world.

Among the three adaptations, *Questioning Heaven* is the most resolute in its intention to restore the messages in *King Lear*, with an interpretation closer to that of the early Shakespearean scholars, emphasizing Lear's spiritual growth and salvation (rather than the nihilism that denies his growth), and favoring the reconstruction and renewal of the power structure (rather than the subversion of it). In terms of performance, rather than a mere demonization of the "unfilial daughters," the portrayal of the conflict between the two elder daughters and their mother is quite convincing. Despite the playwrights' intent to showcase the depth in Shakespearean drama and break down traditional dichotomies of good and evil, some negative reviews indicate that the goal is only achieved partially. The adaptation must remove so much of the original work from the metrical framework of *xiqu*, making it difficult to present it in its fullest form. The protagonist, Bin Hela's final questioning passage has also led to an interpretation as a didactic lecture, reducing the demonstration of her spiritual growth. However, the chorus at the end of the play leads the atmosphere to quiet contemplation, and the meta-dramatical line "散場繼續說是非" [The audience could continue to discuss the play after they leave the theater] also leads the play to an open debate: In retrospect, the debate on filial piety triggered by *Questioning Heaven* also reflects the duality of reciprocity and authoritarianism within filial piety, as well as the co-existence of and conflict between the values of traditional collectivism and

contemporary individualism. Through the discussion of *Questioning Heaven* and *King Lear*, apart from the issue of innovation in contemporary *xiqu*, a re-evaluation for inter-generational dialogue and reconciliation may also be conducted.



Keywords: *Questioning Heaven*, *King Lear*, Shake-xiqu, global Shakespeare, transcultural adaptation, filial piety, *Bangzi* opera

Table of Contents



口試委員會審定書	i
Acknowledgements	ii
摘要	iii
Abstract.....	v
Table of Contents.....	viii
List of Tables	ix
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Historical Comparisons of Paternal Authority.....	24
Chapter 2: Love and Obedience: Lexical Analysis of Keywords and Themes	45
Chapter 3: Regretful Parents and Unfilial Children: Textual and Performance Analysis	77
Conclusion.....	107
Appendix: Performance Record of <i>Questioning Heaven</i>	113
Bibliography	115

List of Tables

Table 1: Comparison of <i>Lear</i> translations 1.1.43-44	51
Table 2: Comparison of parents' regrets in five texts	88
Table 3: Comparison of antagonists' characterization in five texts	98
Table 4: Different sets of dichotomies that parallel to each other:	111



Introduction¹



Questioning Heaven 天問, the Taiwanese *Bangzi* opera² adaptation of *King Lear*, premiered in 2015. This play is the third of a trilogy of Shakespeare *Bangzi* operas produced by Taiwan *Bangzi* Opera Company, following *Bond* (adapted from *The Merchant of Venice*) in 2009 and *Measure, Measure!* (adapted from *Measure for Measure*) in 2012. The script is co-written by Perng Ching-Hsi 彭鏡禧 and Chen Fang 陳芳, and the premiere is directed by Lu Po-Shen 呂柏伸. Perng is a prestigious translator and researcher of Shakespearean plays in Taiwan, while Chen is a famous scholar and writer on *xiqu* 戲曲 (Chinese opera) and transcultural theatre. In addition, Lu has abundant experience directing Shakespeare adaptations and a BA and Master degree in theatre in England.

While there have been several Mandarin translations of *Lear*, *Questioning Heaven* was first based on Perng's new translation of *Lear*, later published in 2016. During Perng's translation process, Chen also streamlined the Mandarin language. Next, Perng decided what scenes to keep and what to delete in adapting *Lear* to *Questioning Heaven*, and Chen rewrote the play into *xiqu* form in classical Mandarin for the *Bangzi* opera production. Chen sent her first draft to Perng to get feedback and revised it according to Perng's suggestions. After several rounds of discussion and sending the play back and forth between Chen and Perng, the draft was sent to the director Lu. Lu

¹ A few sections from the introduction chapter and chapter three are revised from my publication: Tsai, Ssu-Yun. "Presenting Shakespearean Complexity in Formalist Performances: *Questioning Heaven* and Transcultural *Xiqu* Adaptations." *Journal of Traditional Chinese Theater* 戲曲學報, vol. 28, 2023, pp. 167-204. doi:10.7020/JTCT.202306_(28).0006

² *Bangzi* opera 梆子戲, or *Yu* opera 豫劇, is a traditional form of Chinese opera originated in Henan 河南.

made further revisions during the rehearsals, and the script was changed drastically five times.

The main plot of *Questioning Heaven* is generally the same as *Lear*, though the setting is changed from ancient England to ancient China of no particular dynasty, and the protagonist is changed from a king to a queen, Bin Hela. While the audience outside of the *xiqu* circle may have expected a feminist revision of this iconic play due to such the change, the main reason for featuring the protagonist as a queen is to cast Wang Hai-Ling 王海玲. Famously called as The Queen of *Bangzi* Opera, Wang has long been the diva of the company. As she reached her 60s by then, this was a great time for her to try *Lear*, just as many famous actors did in the west, and this was an important reason that the playwright team chooses *Lear* for the third of the trilogy, as the playwright Chen told me in the interview on 23 June 2024.

As a relatively new play, *Questioning Heaven* has been discussed only in a few scholarly papers, including the ones written by the playwrights themselves, along with some online non-scholarly reviews, positive and negative ones both included. While the performance, music, and stage design are generally well-reviewed, the characterization, philosophical depth, and contemporary relevance of the adaptation received mixed review. Lin Wen-Ling 林雯玲 writes that *Questioning Heaven* overemphasizes the idea of filial piety and thus centering the play around Confucianism. For Lin, the “emotional intensity” depicted in *King Lear* is therefore “weakened” and “the protagonist’s revelation becomes limited” (95), and Huang Ting-Rung’s 黃婷容 online review echoes Lin’s opinion. On the other hand, Yu Yo-Ming 虞又銘 praises the political relevance of *Questioning Heaven* in contemporary Taiwan and disagrees with Lin’s criticism (120). Also, Yen and Meng praise that they see the universality of human nature in Shakespeare represented in the play, and Chen Yun-Fei 陳韻妃 and

Lee Jia-Lin 李佳霖 see that *Questioning Heaven* successfully demonstrates the essence in Shakespeare. Similarly, Lee Li-Xian 李俐賢 finds the play thought-provoking, and Floating Feather 羽毛飄飄 expresses the resonance she finds in the play that aligns with her real life experiences.

Seeking to follow Douglas Lanier's argument that goes beyond fidelity criticism, I aim to connect my research to the broader question: "How does this adaptation reshape or extend a collective conception of what constitutes the 'essential' [*King Lear*]?" instead of merely "How does this work match up with or deviate from the language of the Shakespearean text(s)" (33)? While the previous scholarship on Asian Shakespearean adaptations may not fully capture the Taiwanese context and the distinct aesthetics of *xiqu* genres, as will be discussed later in the review, I will explain how the Shakespearean canon is reshaped and extended in *Questioning Heaven*. While such an adaptation may not provide wholly innovative interpretations of *Lear* for scholars, it makes the play's profound and universal philosophical exploration of political and domestic authority, interpersonal relationships, and self-reflection accessible to common audiences—for whom early Shakespearean criticism is neither cliché nor well-known. Also, in the Taiwanese society, where traditional authoritarian domestic culture perdures more commonly and is facing the ongoing challenge nowadays, and where long-term care is becoming a widespread issue, I will argue that staging *Lear* in Taiwan has a different significance than anywhere in the West. By focusing on the text as an evolving, reinterpreted process rather than a static work, this thesis responds to criticisms of *Questioning Heaven* and other *xiqu* adaptations of *Lear*.

My discussion will center around the theme and word choice of filial piety in the play and reevaluate its relevance in the contemporary society, partly motivated by my experiences with my family, and partly motivated by the different opinions surrounding

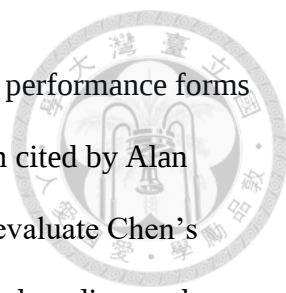


this issue in the scholarship. My stance is definitely be shaped by my subjectivity to some degree, despite the conscious effort to approach the analysis with academic rigor and objectivity. Some of my personal experiences should also be revealed in advance: first, in my initial encounter with the opera, I watched it with English subtitles at the York International Shakespeare Festival site, so my grasp of the repeated occurrence of the concept of filial piety was inevitably weaker than if I were to watch it with Chinese subtitles. When I revisited the opera with the script, my idea was already shaped by an initial fondness. Second, after I started my thesis project, during the spring semester of 2022, I audited the playwright Chen's course "Seminar on Cross-Cultural Drama," and I conducted an interview with her to obtain a deeper comprehension of her intentions then as a playwright after the semester ended. Following this, I worked closely with her as a research assistant for a year and a half. While this close association has provided valuable insights, it may also introduce a degree of bias that undoubtedly shaped my understanding and interpretation of *Questioning Heaven*.

Shake-Xiqu and Adaptation

Chen coined the term *Shake-xiqu* in her article "On Cross-cultural Adaptations: The Examples of "Shake-Xiqu" in 2008,³ a few months before the premiere of the first Shakespeare *Bangzi* opera *Bond*. To limit the scope of her discussion, she defines *Shake-xiqu* as traditional Chinese operas adapted from Shakespeare plays but still conform to rhetorical, musical, and performance forms of *xiqu* and have a complete plot, so experimental works such as *Lear is Here* 李爾在此 (2000) is not counted as *Shake-xiqu* and thus is excluded from her discussion (*Shake-xiqu* 16). By "complete,"

³ This article is also collected in the book *Shake-xiqu and Intercultural Theatre*.



she means that Shake-*xiqu* has to conform to rhetorical, musical, and performance forms of *xiqu* and have a complete plot. Chen's idea of Shake-*xiqu* has been cited by Alan Ying-Nan Lin, Lin Wen-Ling, Xie Xin-Wei, and others. While they evaluate Chen's play scripts on their artistic value in both positive and negative ways, they discuss the term Shake-*xiqu* generally in the same way Chen uses it. Some other examples of Shake-*xiqu* can be found in the Taiwan Shakespeare Database, established in 2015 by Beatrice Lei, a prestigious Shakespeare scholar in Taiwan, with recorded performances in their full version. In addition to Shakespeare performances in modern settings, the database also includes five Taiwanese operas, five *Jingjus* 京劇 (Beijing opera), and the *Bangzi* opera *Bond*.⁴

To classify Chinese and Taiwanese adaptations of western plays, Chi in 2008 and Alexander C. Y. Huang in 2009 introduced three categories: (1) to emphasize the universality of the play, using direct translation, (2) to “localize the plot, setting, and meanings of a play” and assimilate the play “into the fabric of local worldviews and representational practices,” and (3) to rewrite and deconstruct the play and focus on the various “determined localities” (Huang 16-17). While the two scholars make similar classifications, Huang's concern is the dynamic relationship between universalization and localization, and Chi's is about the extent of experimentation. According to Chen's observation in “Interpretation, Modern Sensibility and Authenticity in Shake-*xiqu*” in 2021, most existing Shake-*xiqu*s belong to the second mode, and *Questioning Heaven* is no exception. However, Chen argues that Chi is too quick to judge the second mode as “conservative” so that he ignores the challenges Shake-*xiqu* productions face in the

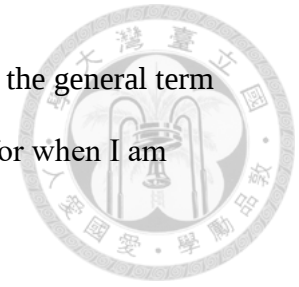
⁴ The database does not use Chen's term Shake-*xiqu*, and it still puts *Lear is Here* under the genre *Jingju*.

transformation of culture, language, and performance mode (Chi 57, Chen “Interpretation” 48).

On the other hand, as Glenn Jellenik defines adaptation as “the frank appropriation of a text that taps into a new (and usually broader) audience or commercial market,” (38) it can be seen that he treats adaptation and appropriation as the same thing. However, some scholars distinguish the two as different categories. For instance, Julie Sanders defines a text that “affects a more decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain” as “appropriation” rather than “adaptation” (26). She further categorizes appropriation into two sub-categories: “embedded texts” and “sustained appropriations” (26). In “embedded texts,” “encouraged interplay between appropriations and their sources” emerge as a “fundamental” aspect of “the reading or spectating experience, one productive of new meanings, applications, and resonance,” and *West Side Story*, which reworks *Romeo and Juliet* in a 1950s New York context, belongs to this category (Sanders 32). In contrast, in “sustained appropriations,” “the gesture towards the source text(s) can be wholly more shadowy,” and “this brings into play, sometimes in controversial ways, questions of intellectual property, proper acknowledgement, and, at its worse, the charge of plagiarism” (Sanders 32).

By Sanders’ categorization, *Questioning Heaven* is an appropriation with embedded texts rather than an adaptation, though I follow Jellenik’s usage of the terms to categorize the play under the broader term “adaptation.” Also, though the term global Shakespeare appropriation is commonly used in the field, outside the discipline of adaptation studies, the word appropriation usually carries a negative connotation, such as in the term cultural appropriation. Moreover, as Sanders has noted, the other category, sustained appropriation, can be controversial. Therefore, to avoid unnecessary

confusion, on the classification of *Questioning Heaven*, I mostly use the general term “adaptation” instead of “appropriation with embedded text” except for when I am quoting or paraphrasing works that use the term appropriation.



Adaptation Studies and Global Shakespeare

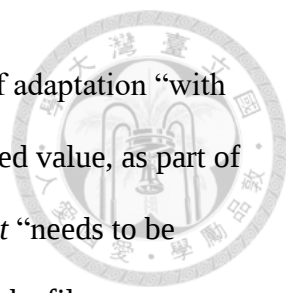
Among studies of contemporary Shakespeare productions and adaptation studies, the discussion around fidelity and innovation in relation to the original has been debated for decades, and this section will review such debate in order to provide a framework for better evaluating *Questioning Heaven* as an adaptation. In this research, Alexander Huang’s locality criticism, which compares the source text and the adapted work intertextually and contextually with the concerns of the localities, and David T. Johnson’s responses to the debate are the major approaches that have become my sources of inspiration.

Fidelity criticism or fidelity studies, meaning the judgment against adapted works based upon so-called faithfulness towards the source texts, has been rejected by the mainstream adaptation scholars, as Johnson observes. However, according to Johnson, in contrast to the opposing voices generally coming from research institutions, fidelity criticism is still commonly used by reviewers and scholars from teaching institutions. Hence, works done by “scholars practicing fidelity studies” have been “more widely diffused, among multiple voices,” while the rejection of fidelity studies has most come from “prominently established scholars” and “centered within a few key practitioners around whose work other writers might have rallied” (Johnson 93). Echoing Johnson’s observation, Chen the playwright specifically quotes Linda Hutcheon’s idea of “treating adaptations as adaptations” in 2006 to argue that fidelity criticism is inappropriate for adaptation criticism, and she sees that many Taiwanese critics still see fidelity as a

standard to judge adaptations as losing the rich meaning of originals (Chen “Preface” vi, “Language” 114, Hutcheon 6).

As a direct opposite of fidelity studies, Chi asserts that many Taiwanese Shakespeare adaptations tend to replicate Western humanist values without showing contemporary Taiwanese values so that the adaptations become meaningless (54). Against Chi, Chen argues that so-called Taiwanese values are conflicting in the society (“Interpretation” 53). For Chen, a respectful attitude towards canonical texts and interpretations can also show contemporary reflection on the universal values discussed in the original play (“Interpretation” 54). Hence Chen disagrees with both fidelity criticism and overemphasis on the necessity to innovate and deconstruct. How to judge an adaptation between the two extremes of fidelity and innovation remains to be answered. As Johnson also suggests, “an eradication of fidelity from our language *in toto*” is hardly possible, and fidelity studies “might still have a few lessons to impart” (95, 99).

Seeing the need to find a balance between the acceptance and rejection of fidelity criticism, Johnson thus introduces David L. Kranz’s comparative criticism, Colin MacCabe, Kathleen Murray, and Rick Warner’s systematic method, and Christine Geraghty’s belief studies as possible ways to solve the dilemma surrounding fidelity to an original text, and my approach to the case study of *Questioning Heaven* is inspired by all three of them. Kranz’s comparative criticism includes “analysis of cinematic, intertextual, and contextual elements relevant to interpretive arguments” and can be without “evaluation of the relative quality of an adaptation with respect to its source” (86, 85). That is, comparative criticism emphasizes the comparison between the adapted text and its source text over the evaluative impulse on the value of the adaptation. On the other hand, MacCabe, Murray, and Warner’s systematic method is “more



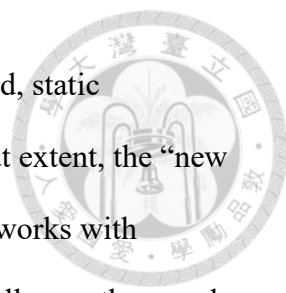
synchronic, less diachronic,” and they evaluate the “surplus value” of adaptation “with source and adaptation having value on their own *as well as* a combined value, as part of a *system*” (Johnson 96). For example, the film *To Have and Have Not* “needs to be thought of as a Warners picture [produced by Jack L. Warner], a Hawks film, a Hemingway adaptation, a Faulkner screenplay, a response to *Casablanca*, and a Bogart/Bacall vehicle simultaneously,” as a system that is influenced by the producer, director, source, screenwriter, previous films, actors, actresses, etc. altogether instead of an independent work (Murray 111). Lastly, Christine Geraghty’s belief studies emphasize fidelity “as part of the reception process” (3), and Geraghty notes Catherine Grant’s observation that adapted works make their audiences “*recall* the adapted work, or the cultural memory of it” (Grant 57; qtd. in Geraghty 3). That is, the memory of the source work has an influence on one’s belief system and thus one’s evaluation of the adapted work. As Johnson argues, humanities are to help us learn to “become conscious of, and critical of, one’s own beliefs, and where those beliefs come from, and where they are likely to lead, and in what ways they may be static or capable of change—and how one’s own beliefs meet the beliefs of others,” and the application of belief studies in adaptation studies can be situated in the larger question of the humanities (98).

Locality criticism, proposed in Huang’s *Chinese Shakespeares: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange*, can be possibly seen as a combination of Kranz’s comparative criticism and MacCabe, Murray, and Warner’s systematic method. Huang’s approach “examines the interplay between the locality where authenticity and intentionality [are] derived and the locality where differences emerge” (18), which echoes Kranz’s point to compare the “intertextual” and “contextual elements” (86). On the other hand, Huang’s method systematically analyzes the “shifting localities that cluster around the artists, their works, and their audiences” and “emphasizes the physical and geocultural

dimensions of the processes of rewriting” (17, 28). By focusing on the shifting localities and physical and geocultural dimensions, Huang sees the adapted work as a system that is influenced by various external factors just as MacCabe, Murray, and Warner do.

Not only Huang’s study on Chinese Shakespeare but also the studies of global Shakespeare adaptations can offer useful insights in the fidelity debate. To posit the scholarship of global Shakespeare in this debate, according to Douglas Lanier, the dynamics between the “ethical imperative of fidelity . . . to the Shakespearean text(s)” and the “variously constructed” idea of being “true” to Shakespeare can be observed since the professionalization of Shakespeare editing in the late nineteenth century (21-22). That is, with concerns of the reevaluation of “marginal features” such as “mismatched speech prefixes” during the editing process, the idea of a “single ideal script” has been challenged but is far from overthrown (Lanier 22). In a later era, “postmodern reconception of the relationship of originals and (re)productions” and the “accelerated transcoding of Shakespeare . . . to mass media, pop culture, and digital forms” incite “the rise in study of Shakespeare adaptations” (Lanier 22). Furthermore, Sujata Iyengar and Miriam Jacobson add that scholarship of 1990s which “grew largely out of the British cultural materialist school . . . and . . . an American- and multiculturally inflected feminism” have stimulated global Shakespeare studies to “venture beyond” fidelity criticism (1, 2, 2).

In the words of Jyotsna G. Singh and Abdulhamit Arvas, global Shakespeare productions have the potential to “create new interpretive possibilities within Shakespearian language and meaning” (186). Also, as Iyengar and Jacobson write, the field of Global Shakespeare Studies boasts a scholarly pedigree with *glocal* interests, in other words, the interests in the “regional or ethnic groups seeking to create a global, transnational, or transhistoric identity through Shakespeare” (3). In contrast to the

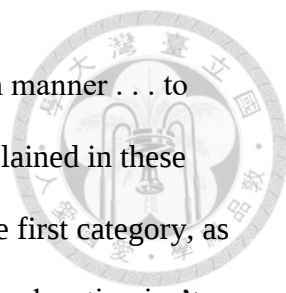


fidelity discourse that analyzes adaptations in relation to “an imagined, static Shakespearean text” or “an idealized Platonic performance” to a great extent, the “new appropriation studies” enable scholars to “investigate adaptations as works with inherent value and meaning, not merely as derivative works” and to allow authors and readers to “collaborate with Shakespeare” (Iyengar and Jacobson 2). As Sonia Massai suggests, “Shakespeare can best be understood as the sum of the critical and creative responses elicited by his work,” using Pierre Bourdieu’s notion that sees the producer of “a work of art” as “the field of production as a universe of belief” which produces its value as a “*fetish*” (Bourdieu 229; qtd. in Massai 6). For Massai, Bourdieu’s idea on the philosophical field that any field is a “historical product of the labour of successive philosophers” with their “commentary, discussion, critique and polemic” (Bourdieu 496; qtd. in Massai 6) is again useful for the Shakespearean field with all the scholarship, adaptations, and appropriations (6).

Similarly, Margaret Jane Kidnie indicates that “a play . . . is not an object at all, but rather a *dynamic process* that evolves over time in response to the needs and sensibilities of its users,” and “adaptation . . . is closely tied to how the work modifies over time and from one reception space to another” (2, 5, my emphasis). Kidnie further suggests that a text has a “potentially limitless” range of meanings and interpretations which can be “enacted, even discovered, in performance,” while those interpretations “cannot be integrated into a notational system” and thus can play no part in the conception of “the correct text or script” (20). Therefore, for Kidnie, to discuss the criticisms of an adaptive production pins down not the “essence” of the original, but rather “what prompted failures of recognition of the work among specific audiences at certain times” (65). Kidnie thus concludes that “one can only keep *relearning* (and so potentially renegotiating) what will *count for the moment* as its essential properties by

naming *supposed infringements* in its production instances” instead of seeing anything in the original as a stabilized and unchangeable property across time (149, my emphasis). In this thesis, I seek to build on Kidnie’s and Massai’s above arguments that see Shakespeare as a historical product and a dynamic process rather than a stabilized property. By focusing on the text as a process, I respond to Lin’s criticism against *Questioning Heaven* and other relevant criticism about other Chinese adaptations of *King Lear*.

As a subfield of Global Shakespeare Studies, according to Poonam Trivedi, Asian Shakespeare “received its first international academic attention at the 1991 World Congress in Tokyo” (4). It later “established itself as part of Shakespearean studies at the 1996 World Congress in Los Angeles,” where “a seminar on Japanese Shakespeare,” “presentations on Indian Shakespeare by well-known Indian director Habib Tanveer and the academic S. K Das,” and a proceeding on “Chinese Shakespeare by Li Ruru” were included (Trivedi 4). It should be noted that as Dennis Kennedy and Yong Li Lan indicate, while Shakespeare continues to be “valued for his linguistic virtues” (2), when his text is “aggressively transformed” into new languages in Asia and “radically unfamiliar performative mode[s],” something “essential in Shakespeare disappears” (3). Therefore, Kennedy and Yong start their questions from “why” is Shakespeare keeps being adapted in Asian countries in *Shakespeare in Asia: Contemporary Performance* (5). Kennedy and Lan thus propose three explanations for Asian adaptations: (1) national appropriation, in which a “nationalist agenda existed that found profit in the dramatist,” (2) colonial instigation, in which Shakespeare entered the country with colonial rule but continued after independence, with India as a representative case, and (3) intercultural revision, in which the difference between the Shakespearean material and the current context of performance is deliberately



highlighted and the Shakespeare play is “estranged . . . in a Brechtian manner . . . to create a new text” (7-10). However, not all cases can be properly explained in these generalized explanations. While many Shake-*xiqu*s may belong to the first category, as Kennedy and Lan describe the adaptations in mainland China, such explanation isn’t completely appropriate for the contemporary Taiwanese cases. Also, *xiqu*, with its distinct characteristics, may need a more specific approach different from what towards other genres. I shall propose a fourth category for the motivation of these Shake-*xiqu*s and call it *genre innovation*.

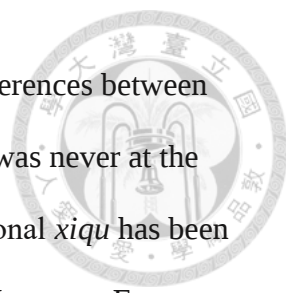
Xiqu, as a genre that is usually seen as to belong to the old tradition, has faced many challenges in contemporary society. In *Intercultural Aesthetics in Traditional Chinese Theatre: From 1978 to the Present*, published in 2020, Wei Feng summarizes a brief history of the contemporary development of *xiqu* in China and Taiwan based on his PhD thesis written from 2012 to 2016, and this book will be much reviewed in the body chapters. According to Feng, “as the margin to the Western-centric narrative of intercultural theatre, *xiqu*’s intercultural history remains largely undiscussed in Western academia,” while “despite many Chinese studies on [intercultural *xiqu*], they are equally ignorant of the Western discourse,” and “thus both discourses remain separate” (6). Therefore, Feng builds on both fields of scholarship and combines their insights to elaborate his discussion through “comparative studies” and “close analysis of performances,” investigating “how *xiqu* finds its own identity within modernity” and how such investigation reflects the social and political situations in China and Taiwan (29).

Shake-*Xiqu* and *Xiqu* Innovations: Breaking the Dichotomy between Black and White

For the *xiqu* artists, compared to many other Western plays, Shakespeare is considered more suitable for adaptation not only for his globally canonical status, but also for the relatively generic similarity to *xiqu*. Chinese scholars have discussed such similarity of the two genres in terms of structure, theme, and performance style.

Structurally, neither Shakespeare nor *xiqu* follows classical unities as many Western plays do: the time and space range widely in a single play in both Shakespeare and *xiqu*, and subplots are often included with the main plot, as He Hue-Bin 何輝斌 (35-37) and Huang Ke-Han 黃鈞涵 (31-32) explain. Further, both of them frequently mix tragic and comedic elements in the same play without strictly separating them apart (He 37). Thematically, Shakespearean works and many *xiqu* both take resources from folklore, thus including elements usually excluded from realistic works, such as ghosts and providential warnings, as Yeh Qing-Xin 葉慶新 (78-79) and Cao Shu-Jun 曹樹鈞 (90) indicate. In terms of performance, both genres include abundant asides, soliloquys, poetic expressions, formalistic and symbolic performances, and cross-dressing not only in the story but also in the acting (Yeh 79; Huang 32). For such reasons Shakespeare becomes a source for inspirations for modern *xiqu* artists to take from.

According to Han Si 韓絲, who introduces a brief history of Shake-*xiqu* in China, with a table listing Shake-*xiqu* works from the early 20th century to 2014, while Shake-*xiqu* has a history of nearly one hundred years, “most representative productions were presented after 1980” (46). In a way, the “model operas” in the 1960s do offer the insights of the possibilities of innovating traditional *xiqu* by mixing it with elements from modern dramas, despite the propagandistic nature of model operas (Han 46). On the other hand, according to Wei Feng, since the late 1970s, “*xiqu* in mainland China and Taiwan has faced common problems: . . . how to modernize the tradition and how to balance *xiqu*’s historical legacy and the diverse modern artistic forms” (22). Despite



this shared historical background, there are still many contextual differences between the mainland and Taiwan. As Feng observes, “*xiqu* on the mainland was never at the margin,” yet in Taiwan, except for the local Taiwanese opera, traditional *xiqu* has been sidelined from the political and artistic center since the 1990s (22). However, Feng comments that “such marginalization” might actually be a “blessing in disguise”: that is, “while the practitioners in the mainland have a huge burden of tradition and censorship that sometimes impedes innovation,” the Taiwanese counterparts have “fewer artistic restrictions on the other and can thus innovate more boldly and freely” despite the “limited governmental funds” (22).

In the adaptation of *Questioning Heaven* from *Lear*, the creative team demonstrates an insistence on producing a play nearer to their understanding of the original. While such a motivation may be traced back to Perng and Lu’s background in Shakespeare studies, Wang Hai-Ling, the actress who plays the adapted counterpart of Lear, has also stated her wish that *Questioning Heaven* could not only lead the audiences that are new to *Bangzi* opera to see the beauty of *xiqu* performance, but also lead the fans of *Bangzi* opera to see “the rich emotional twists in Shakespearean works” 莎士比亞作品中，人物多變的情感轉折. In Chung Pei-Chen’s 鍾佩真 interview with Chen and Perng on *Measure, Measure!*, the other *Bangzi* opera adaptation of Shakespeare they wrote, the two playwrights both mention their aim to present the “depth” 深度 of “existential discussions of the meaning of life” 探討生命的意義或價值 in their plays. Also, Perng argues that to write a play is to present certain messages, and most plays he has written in recent years are relevant to the theme of “forgiveness and empathy” 寬恕、諒解, including *Questioning Heaven* (Chung 107). For Perng, forgiveness and empathy are among the most important values that “contemporary Taiwan needs,” and he thus feels a moral mission to present these ideas (Chung 107). It can be thus inferred that the idea of

facilitating forgiveness and empathy between different generations is likely to be on Perng's mind when he adapts *Lear*, and such facilitation would definitely require a reevaluation of filial piety. In a way, Taiwan is re-interpreting Confucian values for contemporary society, and for Perng, the use of Shakespeare perfectly represents the admixture of Western and foreign ideals that comprise that 21st century society.

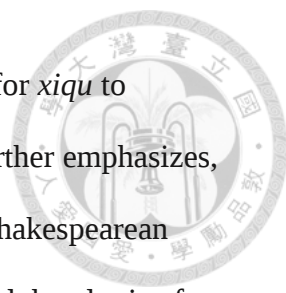
The complexity in Shakespeare's portrayal in *Lear* can hence offer insights for people in the society with different stances to gain better empathy and understanding towards each other. Unlike Shakespeare, just as Lei observes, in traditional *xiqu*, unfilial deeds are assumed to be frightening to the audiences, and other techniques such as comedy, scapegoating, or a grand reunion type of ending have to be used to soothe such shock. Therefore, the introduction of Shakespearean plays provides *xiqu* an opportunity to go beyond its traditional framework and acquire a new vision. As Perng explains it, the "depth" of Shakespeare's portrayal of human nature, interpersonal relationships, and the characters' reflections of themselves can offer new dramatic material not likely to be found in traditional plays, without discarding the values of traditional plays (Chung 112). By translating *Lear* before writing his adaptation, Perng gained a better understanding of the source text, so he can adapt the details at a level different from using others' translations (Chung 112).

In my understanding, what Perng means by "depth of Shakespeare" has several layers of implications. First, Shakespearean characters are usually multi-dimensional with complex motivations. That is, good characters also have some flaws, and even villains can be relatable. Different from morality plays or traditional *xiqu*, Shakespearean characters mostly seem more like real humans rather than symbols of good or evil. Therefore, Shakespeare's plays can offer some space for the audience to reflect on real life. In his tragedies, there are usually convoluted reasons joining together

to form a tragic result. Hence, the issues presented in his plays can usually be discussed from different angles.

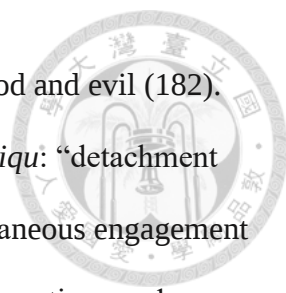
Such intent to depict the complexity in characters and morality echoes the literature on the innovations happening in the contemporary *xiqu* industry. As Zhao Shan-Lin 趙山林 indicates, in traditional *xiqu*, there is an “emotional preference of distinct dichotomy of good and evil,” and for Feng, such ideological strategy is the part in *xiqu* that is less “appealing” to the contemporary audiences (182). Feng further argues that in traditional Chinese theater, despite the existence of “alternative ideologies against Confucian codes” such as in Tang Xian-Zu’s 湯顯祖 works, the messages in even the plays that seek to highlight individual subjectivities tend to be “confined to the black-and-white binary” as well (53, 56). Feng argues that in those plays that “deeply explored characters’ emotional landscapes to reveal their individuality,” the “outspoken criticism of stale didactic ideas” still makes the emotions of characters represent those of the author (54, 55). Accordingly, “the alternative proposal to battle neo-Confucian norms with characters’ natural passions” becomes “yet another indicator of single voice,” and “the previous ideological and ethnic struggles simply shifted to one between didacticism and lyricism” (55, 56). Besides, as Feng argues, due to the traditional acting styles of *xiqu*, “unique conventions of acting schools could often overwhelm empathy” (18), and thus the actors “did not have to identify with characters to find the proper movement” as “the Stanislavsky system proposes” (17). Moreover, as Chen also observes, when rehearsing the old plays, the actors usually have models set by the predecessors to follow, but such convenience also becomes “burdens” that may impede innovation (*Lyricism* 57).

As the depth Pengl finds in Shakespeare without dichotomous simplicity may be exactly what he sees that traditional *xiqu* lacks, the attempt to produce transcultural



adaptations with Shakespearean narratives thus offers great chances for *xiqu* to challenge such ideological dichotomies and renew itself. As Chen further emphasizes, compared to the type characters in most traditional *xiqu* works, the Shakespearean characters are complicated and have different layers (Chung 108), and the plot is often full of “different kinds of conflicts that rarely happen in traditional plays” (Chen *Lyricism* 57). To perform such complexities, the Shake-*xiqu* actors need to go beyond the traditional training of the formalist skills for singing and movement, identifying emotions and intricate motivations that they may have never encountered before as part of their newly-created performance (Chen *Lyricism* 57). In order to achieve this goal, the actors would need to first build a deep understanding of the contextual elements relevant to the characters they play and secondly read the subtle emotions behind and between the characters’ lines (Chen *Lyricism* 57). That is, transcultural adaptations provide the space for innovation not only in a textual level but also in the training system of the actors.

As Chen further indicates, after “interpreting the characters on their own” without models to follow, the actors would have to “create their own movements” based on both their new interpretations and the old formalist training, discuss with the director, and vividly act out those emotions (Chen *Lyricism* 57). In terms of the performance with a vivid body language, old formalist training is not a burden, but a great tool to deliver the emotions of the characters aesthetically. That is, the innovation is to combine the complicated emotions and motivations in Shakespeare and the traditional formalist skills altogether in new works. As Feng also argues, “innovation and experimentation are by no means antagonistic to preservation,” and “existing tradition” is “reused to refashion modernity” and always “transforms through its assimilation of other sources” (242). For Feng, the aesthetics in *xiqu* are the “more enduring and appealing” factors in



contrast to the ideological preference of the distinct dichotomy of good and evil (182). As Zhao summarizes, there are three aesthetic criteria in traditional *xiqu*: “detachment from realism or fiction regarding the notion of artistic truth,” “simultaneous engagement with the plot and actors’ skills and techniques,” “recognition of conventions and general agreement” (155, trans. by Feng 182), and these are the criteria Feng finds worth keeping in *xiqu*. To innovate *xiqu* without losing its aesthetic merits, Feng thus argues that “the experimentation needs to be monitored by *xiqu* artists—or at least artists acquainted with *xiqu*—so that dialogue based on sufficient understanding of the self and the Other can eventuate” (182).

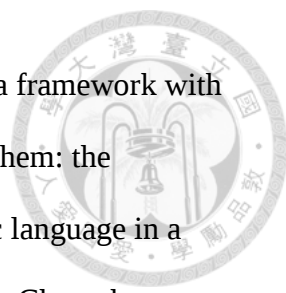
Lear Studies

In terms of the ethics of *King Lear*, Robert Ellrodt observes that there is a long-lived quarrel between “Christian interpretations based on the theme of ‘redemption’” and the interpretations of “religious skepticism” and “pessimism concerning the human condition” (6). Also, according to G. R. Hibbard, the redemptive reading prevailed before the 1950s and a great number of critics then “agree that Lear becomes a better man for his sufferings,” though powerful oppositions still existed (7). One representative example that belongs to the redemptive trend is A. C. Bradley, who describes “the effect of suffering in reviving the greatness and eliciting the sweetness of Lear’s nature” as the most “noble and beautiful” in literature and gives the play a new title *The Redemption of King Lear* (246). After the 1950s, according to Ellrodt, the redemptionist interpretation is generally replaced by an absurd vision of “the human condition” influenced by “Beckett’s theatre” in the scholarship (6), or in Hibbard’s words, a dwelling on “the poignantly human experience” (10). Similarly, Foakes notes that in the 1960s, critics “found confirmation of bleakness in their readings of the text”

and focused their discussion on “the indifference of the gods and the frailty of human life” (71).

A big distinction between the redemptive readings and the pessimist ones lies in the question: has Lear gained spiritual growth after his suffering? Being a paternal and governmental authority, Lear is corrupted by his power. To what extent has he realized the corruption in his mind and sought to redeem his faults? Stanley Cavell, a representative pessimist critic of *Lear*, famously comments, “[i]t is one thing, and tragic, that we can learn only through suffering. It is something else that we have nothing to learn from it” (314). According to Cavell, Lear is “reborn” only “into his old self”—from the beginning to the end, “Lear’s dominating motivation” is “to avoid being recognized,” and his improvement in this aspect is horribly limited (313, 252). For Cavell, no one can claim to know what would have “prevented” the tragedy, and no “answer” to such “question” is provided, as the play is haunted by a “radical contingency” just like many other tragedies (314). While I admit that Lear may not have gained enough insight with a true vision of himself, I maintain that he has grown spiritually in other aspects — as Enid Welsford, an earlier critic, remarks, during Lear’s suffering, he starts to learn “patience,” which is a “recognition of the fact of pain,” a “power to choose love when love is synonymous with suffering, and to abide by the choice knowing there will be no Divine Salvation from the consequences” (115). Aside from the redemptive and the nihilist, while the political debates on *Lear* and the later trend that to a certain degree reconcile different interpretations are topics more suitable to be discussed in the next chapter, I will move on to the methodology and chapter plan at this moment.

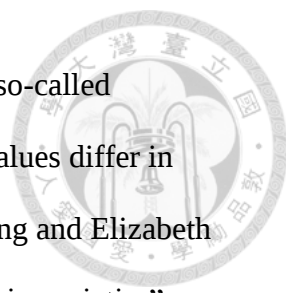
Methodology and Chapter Plan



While Chen has theorized Shakes-*xiqu* performance, providing a framework with five elements that influence the adaptation, I focus more on three of them: the transposition of cultural setting, the revision of plot, and the dramatic language in a Chinese script (*Shake-xiqu* 16). The other two elements mentioned by Chen, the features of different *xiqu* genres and the innovation of formats in *xiqu*, will be concerned in the thesis but not discussed in detail (*Shake-xiqu* 16). The discussion of the transposition of setting will start from the first chapter and extend to the end of the thesis, while the dramatic language in a Chinese script will be mainly discussed in chapter two, and the revision of plot will be mostly analyzed in chapter three.

On the transposition of cultural setting, I use Huang's locality criticism to re-evaluate *Questioning Heaven* in a comparative and systematic way, discussing the "the physical and geocultural dimensions" of Renaissance England and contemporary Taiwan in "the process of rewriting" in the adaptation from *Lear* to *Questioning Heaven* (Huang 28). In my study, Renaissance England is "the locality where authenticity and intentionality [are] derived" and contemporary Taiwan: "the locality where differences emerge" (Huang 17-18). With Kranz's comparative criticism in mind, in chapter one, I first examine the idea of paternal authority in the original *King Lear*, situated in the cultural context of Renaissance England. Using scholarship on literature from traditional Shakespeare studies and Renaissance social histories, I will elaborate on the historical and social context of *Lear*. A literature review of *Lear* scholarship will be included along with historical studies, and different trends of political and ethical interpretation of *Lear* will be discussed.

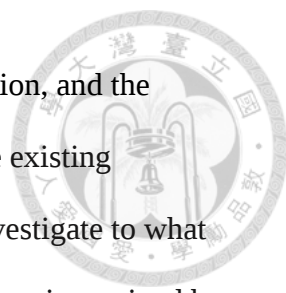
In this first chapter, I also trace how the idea of paternal authority evolves in Chinese history, especially concerning how it influences the genre *xiqu*, which was developed in Ming and Qing dynasty, and see how such a concept is handed down and



changed in contemporary Taiwanese society. It should be noted that so-called Taiwanese society is not a harmonious totality; instead, conflicting values differ in society among individuals and across generations. Just as Alexa Huang and Elizabeth Rivlin argue, using Kwame Anthony Appiah's idea of "dialogue within societies" (Appiah 254), intercultural Shakespeare may serve to generate "problems and solutions" for negotiations between "subcultures" in the society (16). In this research, I seek to explore the potential in *Questioning Heaven* to facilitate conversations about different ideas on paternal authority across the subcultures in Taiwanese society.

The second body chapter will compare *Questioning Heaven* with its source texts on the lexical level, discussing certain keywords in the two plays and *Questioning Heaven*'s interpretation of the ethics in *Lear*, covering all scenes in *Questioning Heaven*. RSC's (Royal Shakespeare Company) version of *Lear*, which is based on the Folio rather than the Quarto or the combined version, will be used as the source text. Perng's translation of this version, which *Questioning Heaven* is based on, will also be used as an important reference. The lexical analysis will start with the discussion on the usages of *xiao* 孝 (filial piety), *zhong* 忠 (loyalty), and *lun* 倫 (ethics) in *Questioning Heaven*, investigating how they are derived from words such as "love," "nature," and "service" in *Lear* and how these keywords are significant in each text, and the discussion of such significance will be based on the historical research done in chapter one. To compare the two texts from a more panoramic view, four other representative translations of *King Lear* will be incorporated into the research to explore different translation possibilities in Mandarin, including those done by Fang Ping 方平, Liang Shiqiu 梁實秋, Sun Dayu 孫大雨, and Zhu Shenghao 朱生豪.

Having established historical and lexical foundations in chapter one and two, in chapter three, I will perform a close-reading of *Questioning Heaven* with the following



themes: the redemption of the protagonist, her yet incomplete revelation, and the characterization of the unfilial children, meanwhile responding to the existing scholarship and audience reviews of *Questioning Heaven*. Thus, I investigate to what extent the playwrights' intention of presenting the depth of Shakespeare is received by the audience. Also, I seek to situate the play in the innovative trend of contemporary *xiqu* industry, comparing it with two other *xiqu* adaptations of *Lear*, *King Qi's Dream* 歧王夢 and *Lear is Here* 李爾在此, and one contemporary *xiqu* that shares a similar structure (though without taking inspiration from *Lear*), *Birthday Greeting* 五女拜壽.⁵ The discussion will mainly focus on the script. While I will sometimes include production, acting, and music in the discussion, the stage design and other aspects will not be discussed.

⁵ In this thesis, I seek to focus my discussion on the intersection of the two points: filial piety and *xiqu* innovation. Therefore, neither other non-*xiqu* *Lear* adaptations in the Asian world nor other innovative *xiqu* works less relevant with the issue of filial piety is covered in this research. On *Bond*, the first of the *Bangzi* Shake-*xiqu* trilogy and a form for early Shake-*xiqu* works in Taiwan from 1986 to 2001, see Xie Xin-Wei 謝馨緯. On other *Lear* adaptations in the Chinese world, see Deyi Zhang 張德怡 et al, and Zhang also includes a chapter on *Lear is Here*. While there is yet a *sisianzi* 絲弦戲 version of *Lear*, produced in 1994, it is a pity that I could neither access its script nor its performance. For the discussion of this production, see Feng et al.

Chapter 1

Historical Comparisons of Paternal Authority



Both Shakespeare's time and modern Taiwan are changing ages. Rising wealth in society in general and intensification of capitalist production become the breeding ground for individualism, challenging the morality of traditional society. If we see the conflicts in *Lear* as conflicts between old and new, such conflicts definitely occur in Taiwanese society as well. By staging *Lear* in 21st century Taiwan, not only the social changes of Elizabethan England are restaged but also contemporary issues are given space to be reevaluated. To address the backgrounds that set for *Lear* and *Questioning Heaven*, I investigate how paternal authority works ideologically and practically in Renaissance England and contemporary Taiwan respectively, and the ideological aspect will be traced back to their roots. In this chapter, I compare the "contextual elements relevant to interpretive arguments" in Kranz's sense of comparative criticism towards the adaptation (86), which also echoes to the discussion of "the physical and geocultural dimensions" of both backgrounds in Huang's sense of locality criticism (28). With such comparison, I will show how the feudal traditions in Shakespeare's society in fact share much similarities with feudal China.

In discussing Shakespeare's time, I first want to emphasize the coexistence of traditional thought and challenges to it in the society, instead of just focusing on the challenges. As R. Malcolm Smuts' notes in 2016, "historians now generally regard the English Reformation . . . as an extremely protracted process that continued well into the seventeenth century without ever completely obliterating all traces of medieval religion," and recent works has shown that the scholarship in the 1960s emphasizing "the speed and thoroughness Protestantism's triumph over an English Catholicism" may

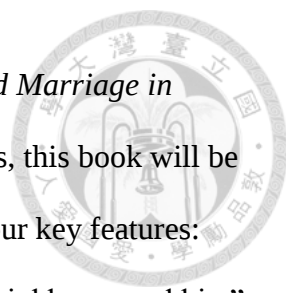
seem exaggerated (13). Nowadays, most historians hold a “growing awareness of the diversity of Elizabethan political thought” with concerns of “the continuing vitality of English Catholicism and the unsettling issue of the succession” (Smuts 5).

It seems no surprise that trends in historical studies of Shakespeare’s time parallel the interpretive trend of the politics of Shakespeare studies and *Lear* studies. As Smuts observes about the tension in scholarship between those who regard Shakespeare as “a ‘conservative’ representative of a Tudor worldview, or a writer precociously alert to newly ‘emergent’ radical forms of protest and ‘subversion,’” the “undermining of the old political history from both ends” makes it “more difficult to pigeonhole the Bard ideologically” (7). That is, as recent historical studies question both “the stability of the Elizabethan period” and the “‘revolutionary’ character of the seventeenth century” in Shakespeare’s age, it’s also harder to decide what political stance Shakespeare himself might have taken (Smuts 7). In this chapter, I’ll try to discuss both the traditional roots that influenced Shakespeare’s England and the radical discourses appearing afterwards, contextualizing the trends in *Lear* studies in the historical scholarship.

On the other hand, in terms of monarchy and Christian orthodoxy, in the 16th and early 17th century, England and China in fact shared a lot of similarities, though the propagandistic discourse about filial piety in ancient China was far more extreme than the Jacobean England. In this chapter, I will also explain how filial piety was connected to political propaganda in Chinese history and recent challenges against such ideology from the late Qing dynasty to contemporary Taiwan.

Paternal Authority in Renaissance England

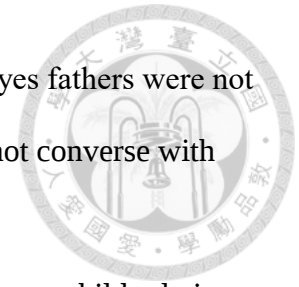
Lawrence Stone, the major advocate that opens up the field of the new social history, has systematically analyzed the developments and changes of family culture in



Shakespeare's time with quantitative methods in *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*. Published in 1977 and well-received by scholars, this book will be a main reference in this section. Stone defines modern family with four key features: "intensified affective bonding of the nuclear core at the expense of neighbours and kin," "a strong sense of individual autonomy and the right to personal freedom in the pursuit of happiness," "a weakening of the association of sexual pleasure with sin and guilt," and "a growing desire for physical privacy," but the time that they were "all well established" in the "key middle and upper sectors of English society" was by 1750, a time much later than Shakespeare's 1564-1616 (9). In Renaissance England, the society was still rather traditional, despite the fact that some changes were starting to develop. In the following passages, I will focus on parents' common lack of affective care for their children and the patriarchal authoritarian hierarchy in 16-17th century England.

As Stone indicates, relations between parents and children in the 16th century were usually "fairly remote," and "one reason for this was the very high infant and child mortality rates" (106). The high possibility of seeing one's children die young somehow "made it folly to invest too much emotional capital in such ephemeral beings," thus many fathers back then "seem to have looked on their infant children with much the same degree of affection which men today bestow on domestic pets" (Stone 106). From 1550-1629, according to Stone, about 25% of all English children "were dead before they reached the age of fifteen" (69-70). Conditions were even worse in the cities, possibly due to "contaminated water supplies" (67), and in London in 1764, 49% of all recorded children were "dead by the age of two" and 60% "by the age of five" (69). Stone hence hypothesizes that "the high gradient affect characteristic of modern Western societies is unlikely to develop on a mass scale before child and young adult mortality have declined and before child numbers have been reduced by contraception"

(83). As John Aubrey (1626-97) writes about his youth, “in those dayes fathers were not acquainted with their children,” and thus the fact that his father did not converse with him much was normal in the society.



Things could be worse than just remoteness. As Stone notes, parent-child relations then were “normally extremely formal, while obedience was often enforced with brutality” (112). In the 16th and 17th centuries, “deliberate breaking of the young child’s will” by “the harshest physical beating” and later “overwhelming psychological pressures” were thought to be “the key to successful child-rearing” (Stone 101). Roger Ascham’s famous account of Lady Jane Grey’s (1537-54) narration of her youth in their dialogue in 1550 could be seen as an example of such severity:

For when I am in presence either of father or mother, whether I speak, keep silence, fit, stand or go, eat, drink, be merry, or sad, be sowing, playing, dancing, or doing anything else, I must do it, as it were, in such weight, measure, and number, even so perfectly as God made the world, or else I am so *sharply taunted*, so *cruelly threatened*, yea presently, sometimes, with pinches, nips, and bobs, and *some ways, which I will not name for the honor I bear them*, so without measure disordered, that I think myself in *hell*, . . . ’

(222-23; spelling modernized)

As Stone sees it, moreover, “the Calvinist premise of Original Sin” further “gave fathers an added incentive to ensure the internalized submissiveness of their children” (Stone 151). Many children thus “grew up with a fear and even hatred of their parents,” particularly in the 17th century, “when the ideological underpinnings of repression were breaking down” (Stone 168). Aubrey’s record of Isaac Barrow (1630-77) may serve as an instance to this phenomenon, as Barrow had a father who was “so severe to him [that] he could not endure to live with him and so came to London and was apprentice

to a linnen-draper” (17). It is possible to interpret Goneril and Regan as the kind of children who hold hatreds and even vengeful thoughts towards their father.

However, not all children grew to resent their parents for their strictness. As Stone argues, “human beings - and especially-children - can adapt fairly easily to a very wide range of expectations, from the repressive to the permissive, so long as the rules are clearly understood and generally accepted” (173-74). As Linda Pollock also points out in her affect studies, under the moral system in early modern England, the “forged networks” “cemented bonds” between people with “a set of obligations” (443), but the obligated affect and response are not necessarily insincere but not less “valid” than “spontaneous” ones (444). According to Pollock, “the mingling of affect and obligation ensured that sentiment and morality in practice were also intertwined”, as could be seen in Maria Thynne’s (1578-1611) signature as “Your very loving and *obedient* daughter” to her mother-in-law (444, my emphasis). As Pollock further observes, “terms like loving duty or dutiful love were not oxymorons but fused concepts” back then, as Sir Francis Hastings commented on the obedience of his late wife in 1596 that “in all *lovinge dutie* and *dutifull love* shee yeilded herself to doe whatsoever I perswaded, and not to doe whatsoever I mislyked” (444, my emphasis).

With such mingling, “the deferential system” could provide “a comfortable framework for all social relationships” and “only cease to work harmoniously when the premises on which they are based come under challenge” (Stone 174). Stone further comments:

[P]atriarchy for its effective exercise depends not so much on raw power or legal authority, as on a *recognition* by all concerned of its legitimacy, hallowed by ancient tradition, *moral theology* and *political theory* . . . *Willing acceptance* of the legitimacy of the authority, together with a weakness of

competing foci of power, are the keys to the whole system. (151, my emphasis)



The above comment explains the reason for the authorities to use propaganda to have an easier rule over their subjects. In a speech in 1609, James I's that "Kings are . . . compared to fathers in families: for a King is truly *Parens patriae*, the politique father of his people" (307). In 1615, *God and the King* was published, in which the author⁶ argues that in the Fifth commandment, Honour thy Father and thy Mother, "Father and Mother" not only mean "our natural parents, but likewise all higher powers, and especially such as have Sovereign authority, as the Kings and Princes of the earth" (2; spelling modernized). As Sommerville notes, this book was ordered by James I to be "as a textbook for the instruction of the young in their political duties," thus widening the promotion of the authoritarian values it carries. It is understandable that the deliberate analogy of kings and fathers in propagandistic discourses and the power of fathers in domestic areas have a mutual effect on the reinforcement of both sides: it is the power of fathers that make such an analogy possible, and the analogy could further justify the rule of both kings and fathers.

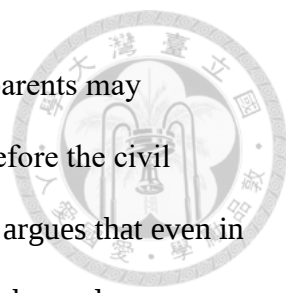
Recognition for legitimacy in society depends on not only moral discourse but also distribution of profits. As Stone notes, by "the convention of primogeniture, . . . both daughters and younger sons . . . were at the economic mercy of their father or elder brother" (87). Therefore, "there was a constant struggle to win the approval of, or establish some reciprocal claim upon, some individual - often an old man - who controlled the levers of power" in every family (Stone 90). Furthermore, as Stone remarks, with the dowry system, the head of the family has a great power "in

⁶ According to J P Sommerville, *God and the King* is sometimes ascribed to Richard Mocket, an English churchman and academic (12, 51).

controlling the marriages of his children, since he alone could provide the necessary portions for his daughters and guarantee the necessary jointures for his sons' widows" (90).

The laws for the distribution of property and land in the 16th century strengthened patriarchal authoritarian rule. Especially after the 1530s, the current head of the family could "dispose of the property as he chose" without constraint by laws" (Stone 156). As Sir William Holdsworth notes in *A History of English Law*, the "new modes of conveyance" at the time made it possible to "transfer an estate in the land without an actual livery of seisin [a legal conveyancing ceremony, delivered by the sheriff]," increasing the "powers of disposition" conferred upon the landowners (354-55). As Stone argues, this change of law endows the head of the family more capacity to "punish or reward his children or siblings" with his arrangements of properties, leading to the further "subordination of the children, including the heir, to the father" (156). It is in such a social environment that Goneril and Regan have to flatter their father for getting more lands and Cordelia could be deprived of all rights for upsetting her father with truthful words.

While complaints about strict parents could be seen sparsely in 16th-century diaries and memoirs, it was only in the late 17th century that direct criticism against patriarchal power appeared. As Stone indicates, the "practical need to remodel the political theory of state power" was urgent enough that traditional theories about patriarchal authority within the family were also challenged, and "moral theologians" were also "forced to modify their position" (240). For example, Bishop Fleetwood's doctrine in 1705 theorizes that "there is a Reciprocal duty obliging each Party" in every relationship (86), and "the Love, [Respect], the Service, and Obedience" of children are all founded on parental love and the "good" parents do for them, "according to their [Understanding]



and Ability” (88). Further, Fleetwood points out the possibility that parents may “abuse” their authority and children have rights to report the abuse before the civil magistrate or judge (68; spelling modernized). While Fleetwood still argues that even in such cases, “the Children are to ask for nothing but relief and ease to themselves; no hardship, penalty, or punishment, is to be fought for, to the Parent, by them; that would be impious cruelty indeed; no thought of revenge must come into their minds” (69-70; spelling modernized). While Fleetwood’s position might still seem conservative to the modern readers, his revised theory was already different from one-sided demands that only mandate the children’s duty to the parents.

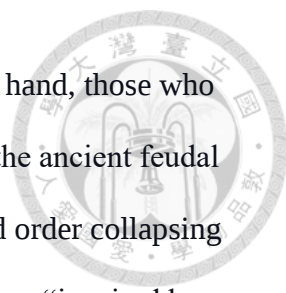
In a way, Shakespeare’s depiction of individual struggles and his characters’ pursuit of “authenticity and freedom” could be seen as “transcending” his time, being much beyond “merely as an accurate portrayer of external reality,” as Peter Holbrook sees it in *Shakespeare’s Individualism* (94, 97). Indeed, the more obvious challenges against hierarchy appeared decades after Shakespeare’s death in 1616. However, as Stone also notes, while the generation of children in the late 16th century were “the first to be exposed to the full pressure of Calvinist moral theology,” they were “also more numerous and better educated than ever before” with “wider” career opportunities in a “wealthier” society (217). Stone further makes an interesting remark, this generation were “also exposed to the love poetry and the plays of Shakespeare and others, which offered an alternative model to that of blind obedience to paternal dictates,” which he attributes to another reason that there are “signs in the early seventeenth century that some of these conflicts were rising to the surface” (217). That is, Shakespeare’s writings, or the mixture of conservative and subversive thoughts in his works, may both a cause and an effect of his time. His plays reflect the thoughts that existed in his society, and his selection of presentation in turn provoked more ideas in his audience.



***King Lear*: Representing The Conflicting Values in Shakespeare's England**

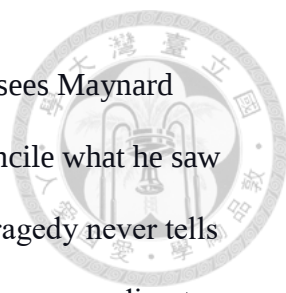
While Shakespeare's play often dramatizes the conflicts over different values, with his non-dichotomous characterization, it is hard, if not impossible, to discern the author's own stance on those issues. Therefore, it seems no surprise that scholarly opinions of his play vary widely, and scholarly interpretation of his plays is naturally influenced by the political, social, and cultural environment in which the scholar lives. According to Foakes, after the outbreak of the Second World War, different from the earlier scholarly and theatrical trend that either reinforce the sense that *Lear* is "far distanced in time" and "so monumental . . . as to transcend any immediate topical or political inquiry" or to "domesticate it as about the break-up of a family," serious attention was given to the "political chaos" in the play and Edmund, Goneril and Regan "began to be seen as precursors of the Machiavellian 'realpolitik' associated with fascism and Nazism" (69-70). Similarly, Ellrodt observes the gradual shift of the prevailing interpretation of *Lear* from the emphasis of "discords within a family" to the "political crisis" (7). In terms of the politics of the play, Ellrodt notes that the political and social topicality of *Lear* is "considered conservative by some" and "subversive by others" (12). A main divergence between the two interpretive approaches is to put more blame on Lear himself or the bad daughters and Edmund when discussing the cause of the tragic results.

For the scholars who consider *Lear* conservative, the villains represent "the individual appetites aroused by the Machiavellianism of the Renaissance" that destruct the "moral values such as loyalty, devotion, generosity" in the old society despite its feudalistic and "hierarchized" nature, represented by the good characters in the play (Ellrodt 12). John F. Danby, who will be introduced in more detail in the next chapter, is



one of the influential scholars of the conservative trend. On the other hand, those who consider the play subversive see the tragedy not as a “destruction of the ancient feudal order by new standards” but as “the disintegration of a superannuated order collapsing on account of its own contradictions” (Ellrodt 13). For them, who were “inspired by ‘cultural materialism’ in Great Britain” or “‘feminism’ in the United States” at the time, Cordelia’s attitude can be interpreted (or re-interpreted) as “a conscious attack on the patriarchal order” (Ellrodt 13). Echoing Ellrodt, Foakes explains that the Cold War leads the attention of the critics to “the tyranny and obsession with power of Lear himself” and “the similarity between his behavior and that of Goneril and Regan” (71). Annabel Patterson is one of the representative scholars of the later trend in the 1960s, who argues that the play “reveals the distinction between absolutist theory and its practice, which in King Lear is clearly ineffective” and even “the play includes a critique of the authoritarian, patriarchal and constitutionally absolutist theories of James himself” (107). For Patterson, while Lear has been made “his own most powerful social critic” that shows his concerns for the poor in the tempest scene, one of the motives for Shakespeare make the play retreat “finally into the domestic and familial as a shelter from sociopolitical awareness” may be to avoid censorship (116).

Censorship definitely influenced Shakespeare’s writing. As Greenblatt indicates, hundreds of heads of “gentlemen and nobles who suffered the fate of traitors” were “stuck on poles on the Great Stone Gate” and could be clearly seen by all visitors to London, one of them being Shakespeare’s distant kinsman, Edward Arden (173). Heeding such warnings, as Greenblatt speculates, Shakespeare would have “imbibed powerful lessons about danger and the need for discretion, concealment, and fiction,” and this might be the reason that there is no “direct access to his thoughts about politics or religion or art” or his “innermost thoughts” in his writings (173-74).



On the debate over different trends of readings of *Lear*, Foakes sees Maynard Mack's work as "the most subtle and comprehensive attempt to reconcile what he saw as two sentimental readings" (55). As Mack helpfully comments, "Tragedy never tells us what to think; it shows us what we are and may be" (117). Moreover, according to Mack, "We face the ending of [*Lear*] as we face our world, with whatever support we customarily derive from systems of belief or unbelief" (116). That is, the message in *Lear* only reflects how we see our world and what our belief systems are like, and thus the message contained in the tragedies is never fixed. Foakes further notes that in the 1980s, "deconstructive critics have found a radical instability in the play that permits no confidence in any particular reading" (71). While early critics often discuss *King Lear* based on a composite version combining Quarto and Folio texts, the revival of interest in the differences between different versions in this period reinforced the deconstructive trend that "denies external authority" for a correct interpretation (71).

On the other hand, Foakes also observes the critical developments in the 1980s that are "associated with new historicism in the United States and the related cultural materialism in Britain," which recognizes the "political and social tensions" and the "conflicting ideologies" presented in the play (67, 68). Following this trend, based on historical evidence, Judy Kronenfeld notes that both "'radical' and 'traditional' ideas have their basis in the common Renaissance Christian culture that frames the moral judgment of Shakespeare's characters in *Lear*," arguing that Shakespeare's politics cannot be "categorized in any easy way as 'right' or 'left' on a post-Civil War or modern political spectrum" (245, 246). Likewise, Richard A. Burt argues that "the politics of Stuart drama is reducible neither to opposition nor to orthodoxy" due to "the absence of a monopoly within the patronage market" and that the audience group was mixed, and the any play thus could not be "reducible to the intentions of an unfettered

subject” (334). As Jean E. Howard also argues, the playscripts themselves “embody social struggle, that they enact a contest . . . and a negotiation among competing ideological positions” with “potential consonance or conflict between dramatic fable and of the material conditions of its production” (40).

It is nearly impossible to confirm Shakespeare’s stance either in the debate between the conservative and subversive readings. As Ellrodt argues, the debates “will never be closed” because “the text is ‘open’ and interpretation evolves according to the beliefs or the mood, sometimes changeable, of the reader” (29). In general, the different trends of readings may not be against each other in their essence: it is just that they choose to focus on different aspects of the play. Both the corruption of Lear’s paternal authority, and the evilness of the villainous children are all depicted vividly in the play, but to focus on any of them will make one’s reading or watching experience highly different from one another. In later chapters, I will discuss the political and ethical position of *Questioning Heaven*’s interpretation of *Lear* as a contemporary *xiqu* adaptation. Before that, I will first discuss the two other backgrounds that *Questioning Heaven* is under influence of: traditional China and contemporary Taiwan. In the next section, I will elaborate on key developments of the Chinese idea of filial piety, especially about its early theorization in ancient times and revisions in contemporary scholarship. While I seek to contextualize the idea of filial piety in the history of Chinese patriarchal authority, I will also compare the Chinese context and the English one, observing their similarities and differences.

Paternal Authority in the Chinese Context

According to Liu Hai-Ou 劉海鷗, *li* 禮 [rite] in ancient China is a set of systemized rules “consciously established by the rulers,” being matured in the Zhou dynasty in the

1000s B.C (11-12). While filial piety as a moral code originated from the “emotional need” of both parents and children, and such a code does signify a turn from the barbaric society that discarded the old and weak to a “civilized” one, filial piety in the upper class of Zhou was less natural than “utilitarian” and “religious” (Liu 23-24). In the ruling class, filial piety became closely linked to the worship of ancestors and the succession of lands and properties, and separations between siblings in terms of their legitimacy and age had led to serious conflicts in families (Liu 26).

Around the 500s B.C., seeing the conflicts commonly happening in families, Confucius sought to provide a moral philosophy that naturalized filial piety, linking it to the core idea of “*ren* 仁” [benevolence] and “*ti* 悌” [treating one’s sibling properly], emphasizing the importance for siblings to love and respect each other (Liu 27, 30). Also, for Confucius, filial piety is “mutual care” between parents and children (Liu 28), and Confucius once defined filial piety as that “Parents are anxious lest their children should be sick 父母唯其疾之憂” (78), implying both children’s responsibility to stay healthy and parents’ nature to care for their children. Mencius, a later Confucian philosopher, born in 289 B.C., argues for the idea of an inherent nature to love one’s parents:

人之所不學而能者，其良能也；所不慮而知者，其良知也。孩提之童，無不知愛其親者；及其長也，無不知敬其兄也。親親，仁也；敬長，義也。無他，達之天下也。

The ability possessed by men without having been acquired by learning is intuitive ability, and the knowledge possessed by them without the exercise of thought is their *intuitive knowledge*. Children carried in the arms all know to love their parents, and when they are grown a little, they all know to love their elder brothers. *Filial affection for parents* is the working of benevolence.

Respect for elders is the working of righteousness. There is no other reason for those feelings - they belong to all under heaven. (608, my emphasis)

In another chapter, Mencius further argues 大孝終身慕父母 [But the man of great filial piety, to the end of his life, has his [love] towards his parents], linking filial affection to the term *xiao* 孝 [filial piety] (514). For Mencius, everyone in the world is born with the intuitive knowledge, 良知 *liangzhi*,⁷ with which the children know intuitively to love their parents. For the early Confucianists, filial piety is natural, affective, reciprocal, and important for the harmony in the society.

However, in later ages, especially after the cooperation between Confucianists and the ruling classes in Han and Song dynasties (202 B.C.-220 A.C., 960-1279 A.C.), filial piety became an ideology that “works for the authorities” (Liu 35). In 79 A.C., the three cardinal principles 三綱 *sangang* was officially established by the scholars gathered by the emperor: “The emperor is the principle of his subjects; the father is the principle of his children; the husband is the principle of his wives” 君為臣綱，父為子綱，夫為妻綱 (Ban para.1, my trans.). According to Xiao Chun-Zhong 肖群忠, in Han dynasty, filial piety became extremely partial that “parents’ power” and “children’s obligations” were much emphasized (73). Furthermore, while fathers could decide “how the properties are used,” “to whom the children could marry,” and even “the life and death of their children,” children were encouraged to “sacrifice their own health” and even “lives of themselves” and “their own wives and children” in order to perform filial piety (Xiao 74-77). For example, the story of Guo Ju burying his son alive in order to save food for his mother 郭巨埋子 *Guojumaizi* was much praised in Han dynasty (Xiao 76). On the other hand, filial piety was mystified as a code that follows cosmic rules.

⁷ If we read the composition of 良知 *liangzhi* as two independent characters, the word will be translated literally into “good knowledge.”

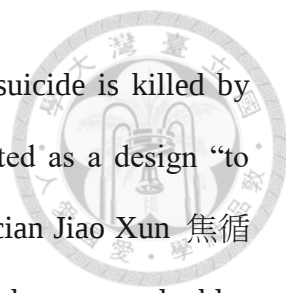
For instance, Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200) argues that “There is one rule in the cosmos 宇宙之間，一理而已” and that “the three cardinal principles 三綱” follows this rule (3376). While filial piety was not emphasized to this degree in every dynasty, and challenges against such a partial kind of filial piety did happen sparsely in Chinese history, in Ming and Qing dynasty (1368-1644, 1636-1912), the age *xiqu* flourished as a genre, filial piety was highly promoted by the authorities. According to Xiao, in the two dynasties, several records about governments rewarding people who “cut their own flesh” for the attempt to “heal the disease of their parents” can be found (112).

Though the English ruling class did not promote hierarchy in families to such extremes as the traditional Chinese government did, similarities can be seen in the two contexts. As Xiao observes, “filial piety” and “loyalty” share a “spiritual consistency,” and the extension of filial piety to the loyalty that benefits feudal order was thus easily acceptable by the people (97-98). Similarly, Kronenfeld comments on the society in Shakespeare’s age: “The emphasis on due hierarchy and service was one part propaganda; it did benefit the patriarchal, landed elite. But it also expressed the ethos of those who cast their lot with gentlemen -or even aspired to gentlemanly status themselves” (159). As Kronenfeld further notes, being a “servant” might be a “temporary calling,” as apprentices could become “masters” when they grew up and matured their skills, it was somehow reasonable for them to accept hierarchical values, since they could be benefited once their social rank changed (310). Such a mindset could be applied to family relationships in both English and Chinese contexts: when children became parents, they could enjoy the authority once imposed on themselves. Therefore, challenges against these feudal values are less likely to occur in a stable society but more likely to happen when social changes or crises are in view.

Filial Piety in Traditional *Xiqu*

Wei Feng's analysis greatly explains how *xiqu* as a genre has been under the influence of the culture that values filial piety since its development the Ming dynasty, when theater "naturally became a mouthpiece for the state and the literati to preach their ideologies" (53). Also, while theater has been seen as lowbrow for long, when "some literati became playwrights around the twelfth century," these literati sought to justify theater with "the orthodox Confucian moral teaching" (Feng 53). As Feng indicates, "three primary traditions intersected in *xiqu*: the didactic, the lyrical, and the ritualistic," and the didactic plays "often conveyed morals" from the Confucian codes: loyalty, filial piety, chastity, and righteousness 忠孝節義, the codes "advocated by most ruling classes and the Confucian literati" (53). In addition, according to Lei, in traditional Chinese theater, "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" ("Vision"253). That is, in the minds of the playwrights and audiences, those who transgress against the Confucian codes have to be punished in the play to make the story acceptable.

As Lei observes, while there is an "enormous repertoire of plays featuring filial children," such as *Maudgalyayana's Rescue of Mother from Hades* 目蓮救母, *The Lotus Lantern* 寶蓮燈, *The Injustice to Dou E* 寶娥冤, *The Story of the Pipa* 琵琶記, and *Mulan Joins the Army* 木蘭從軍, only a few counterexamples of the stories featuring unfilial children like *King Lear* exist (Lei "Vision" 255). Lei thus discusses *The Pavilion* 清風亭, *The Wall* 牆頭記, and *Birthday Greeting* 五女拜壽, and compares them with *King Lear* in her essay, identifying four techniques in the traditional plays used to "mitigate the shock of unfilial children": "(A) providential retaliation, (B) comedy and farce, (C) scapegoating, and (D) the 'grand reunion'" ("Vision" 278). That is, in *The*



Pavilion, the unfilial son who ignores his father and leads to his suicide is killed by heavenly-sent thunder, and such an ending is lauded and commented as a design “to stimulate horror and fear in the audience” 以悚懼觀 by the Confucian Jiao Xun 焦循 in Qing Dynasty. On the other hand, unlike the comedy in *King Lear* that even redoubles the pathos, in both *The Pavilion* and *The Wall*, with usages of “comic exaggeration, physical comedy, caricature, wordplay and parody,” the offenders of filial piety “generate more laughter and contempt than dread” (Lei “Vision” 258, 260). As for scapegoating, in *Birthday Greeting*, the real evil is “located outside the family” and ascribed to Yan Song 嚴嵩 (1480-1566), a notorious politician (Lei “Vision” 262). In the play, Yan is the real cause that ruins the fortune of the family, and though the unfilial daughter refuses to help her parents when they are under Yan’s prosecution, she still seems less cruel than Goneril and Regan, who leave *Lear* in the storm and cause his madness. Also, the end of *Birthday Greeting* is the traditional grand reunion 大團圓—the righteous are rewarded, and the unfilial are punished. According to Lei, as the play “employs a scapegoat to reduce its psychological impact” and “the final grand reunion further heals the wound,” the “unfilial transgression” in the play is lightened (“Vision” 264). In short, since in traditional society, filial piety is seen as an unbreakable code, when the offense against it is shown in a play, techniques to reduce the shock are nearly inevitably applied. Such usages thus risk becoming clichés and leading the theatrical depiction of family issues away from the common social reality.

Challenges to Traditions in Recent Centuries

Discourses that challenge the rigid idea of filial piety did exist in the past few centuries in China, but conservative and authoritative rules repeatedly came back to dominance. In late Ming dynasty, many Confucianists and *xiqu* playwrights stated the



importance of valuing the affective life of individuals, Wang Yang-Ming 王陽明, Li Zhou-Wu 李卓吾, and Tang Xian-Zu 湯顯祖 being some of the representatives. However, the strict censorship and the mass killing of dissidents in the Qing dynasty in the 1640s forced such a trend into silence, and propagandistic ideas about filial piety dominated again. In late Qing dynasty, not long before the defeat of Anglo-Chinese War in 1842, scholars in the government including Gong Zi-Zhen 龔自珍 and Wei Yuan 魏源 started to argue for a new set of ethics that allow more freedom for the ruled ones, and similar thoughts could be found in later advocates including Yan Fu 嚴復, Liang Qi-Chao 梁啟超, etc. However, relevant political reforms did not succeed in the Qing dynasty. Afterwards, despite the common discourse that argue against the patriarchal system for “fairness” between family members around the Revolution of 1911 that overthrows Qing dynasty, the “traditional feudal order” was soon established again by 袁世凱 as the new president (Liu 185, 181). Later, while the May Fourth Movement in 1919 brought great enlightenment to Chinese society, valuing the “freedom and development” of each individual without “being chained by the feudal family system,” even the strongest advocates for individualism then, including Lu Xun 魯迅 and Hu Shi 胡適, were still caught in the “dilemmas” between their ideals and the traditions in their family life (Liu 208, 234-243).

Taiwanese society has also been highly influenced by the Chinese culture of filial piety since when Taiwan was part of China in the Qing dynasty. After the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, KMT) lost the Civil War to the Communist Party and retreated to Taiwan in 1949, authoritative rule was established in Taiwan under martial law. In the 1960s, according to Bi-qi Beatrice Lei, “Chiang Kai-shek started the Chinese Cultural Renaissance, claiming cultural orthodoxy and, by extension, political orthodoxy,” and “moral reform based on Confucian ethics, with emphasis on the four

cardinal virtues (decorum, integrity, honesty, honor 禮義廉恥) and the eight virtues (loyalty, filial piety, charity, love, fidelity, justice, peace, equality 忠孝仁愛信義和平)* was a “principal part of the movement” (“Straight” 99, my emphasis and Chinese trans.). Further, these Confucian values were “ingrained in obligatory education” and related to the “militant” goal of recovering Mainland China (Lei “Straight” 99).

After martial law in Taiwan ended in 1987, censorship loosened. Capitalism, urbanization, the influence from the West, and the decline of birth rate have led more people to reconsider filial piety. Neither Taiwanese nor Chinese society has ever seemed to be as individualistic as 21st-century Western societies, and the debates around the relevance of filial piety are still in process in contemporary Taiwan. On the other hand, after the Cultural Revolution in China, in which all traditions were radically attacked and whoever was denounced as a traditionalist was ruthlessly punished or murdered, nowadays, reevaluations of filial piety that take more neutral stances also appear in the mainland Chinese scholarship.

Reconsidering Filial Piety: Staging *Lear* in Contemporary Taiwan

It’s hard to give an absolute answer for the degree of relevance of filial piety in the modern age, but some general thoughts with more balanced insights may be a good place to start. A helpful framework was provided in 2009 by Kuang-Hui Yeh and Olwen Bedford in the Dual Filial Piety Model, which divides the concept into two different parts: “reciprocal filial piety” and “authoritarian filial piety” (216). According to Yeh and Bedford, “reciprocal filial piety encompasses emotionally and spiritually attending to one’s parents out of gratitude for their efforts in having raised one, and physical and financial care for one’s parents as they age and when they die,” and this aspect of filial piety is generally positive (216). On the other hand, “authoritarian filial

piety entails suppressing one's own wishes and complying with one's parents' wishes because of their seniority in physical, financial or social terms, as well as continuing the family lineage and maintaining one's parents' reputation because of the force of role requirements," and this aspect of filial piety "accentuates hierarchy and submission," reflecting "the generally negative findings on filial piety" (Yeh and Bedford 216).

Xiao's idea, presented in 2002, shares similar insights with Yeh and Bedford. As Xiao argues that filial piety has a dual nature, divided into the "folk nature" 人民性 and the "feudal nature" 封建性 (337), this division echoes Yeh and Bedford's later classification of "reciprocal filial piety" and "authoritarian filial piety." On the positive features of filial piety, Xiao summarizes the scholarship and argues for the concept of "neo-filial piety in the modern age" 當代新孝道 as four principles: "equality" 平等性 and "reciprocity" 互益性 between family members and children's motivation as "affective" 感情性 (love rather than fear) and "voluntary" 自律性 (rather than obligated) (356).

Though these guidelines are rather reasonable, how they could be put to practice remains a complex issue and depends on specificities in each case. Even in the same area, each family differs from one another, affected not only by the class, educational background, race, and gender of each family member but also by individual characteristics and experiences. Therefore, while expansive studies could be helpful for solutions to family issues in general or understandings for the general social environment of a period, case studies of a specific family also have its significance. If such a study can be hard to conduct to real families due to private concerns, the fictional but canonical family of *Lear* alternatively acts as a worth discussing case without such misgivings. Moreover, with the openness of *Lear* that invites interpretations from

divergent political stances, the vivid conflicts in the play thus offer a great space for debates between different value systems.

What can the Renaissance *Lear* offer insights for the 21st-century Taiwanese audiences? Could a story written 400 years ago in a different cultural context be applied to us? As for the contextual difference, I seek to argue that the society in Shakespeare's age and our contemporary Taiwan share many similarities. While Western individualism is often termed as a contrast against traditional Asian authoritarian culture, as noted, in the age of Shakespeare, the so-called individualism in family structures was only at the very beginning of its development. Here I discuss individualism in terms of the first two of Stone's definition of modern family with four key features, as introduced earlier in this chapter: the idea of personal freedom in pursuing happiness and intensified affective bonding between parents and children. First, the remote relationship between family members and sometimes brutal treatment of parents to their children were still common in Shakespeare's time. Secondly, the propagandistic discourses for the authority, the dowry system, and the laws that bestows the landowner to distribute his property all contribute to solidify such a social structure. In this aspect, Shakespeare's society was not only still highly under the influence of medieval traditions but even more authoritarian than the medieval society to some degree, just as feudal Chinese traditions still influence Taiwan nowadays.

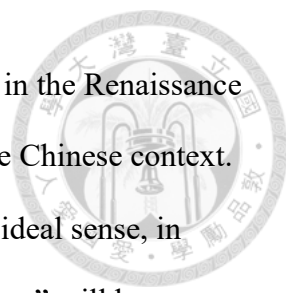
Chapter 2

Love and Obedience: Lexical Analysis of Keywords and Themes



As Lin Wen-Ling observes correctly, the words *xiao* 孝 [filial piety], *zhong* 忠 [loyalty], and *lun* 倫 [ethics] do occur many times in *Questioning Heaven*. In the whole play, *xiao* appears 29 times in total, and 16 of them can be traced to direct sources in *Lear*. Of the 16 attestations, 6 are directly derived from the word “love” in *Lear*, and 3 include the word “nature” as their sources. Other sources of the usages of *xiao* include “obedience,” “virtue,” “affection,” “kind,” “comfort,” “comfortable,” “duty,” “child-like office,” and “obligation.” The negative usages of *buxiao* 不孝 are derived from “monster” and “unkind.” In the case of *zhong*, the total is 13, and 9 of them have direct sources; sources as keywords in *Lear* include “allegiance,” “noble,” “serve,” “duty,” and “loyalty.” *Lun* has 6 appearances in total, and 3 sources can be found. Due to the complex feature of the character *lun* and also because the corresponding lines are mostly adapted with a larger extent, it is hard to locate a single word in each line as the source of this word.

In this chapter, I divide those keywords from the source text into five groups, discussing words with similar meanings or functions will be discussed in the same section. In each section, I close-read a few representative passages as examples and only read the other ones roughly to support my arguments. The division of section is inspired by the Dual Filial Piety Model: The first group of keywords include “love” and “affection,” which echo the emotional parts in reciprocal filial piety; the second include “kind,” “comfort,” and “comfortable,” which reflect certain performances expected. The third section, dedicated mostly into the single word “nature,” considers its complicated



implications in children's emotional affection towards their parents⁸ in the Renaissance English context and the corresponding ideas like *tianxing* 天性 in the Chinese context. The fourth section is on reciprocity (or mutual responsibilities) in an ideal sense, in which “duty,” “obligation,” “child-like office,” “serve,” and “allegiance” will be discussed along with “bond” and “service.” The fifth section is on authoritarian filial piety, where I discuss “obedience” and the unpleasant reality in the hierarchal society in both western and eastern contexts. To compare these words with a more comprehensive view, the translations done by Fang Ping 方平, Liang Shiqiu 梁實秋, Sun Dayu 孫大雨, and Zhu Shenghao 朱生豪 will also be discussed in this chapter, and relevant scholarship will be reviewed. At the end of the chapter, the issue of the naturalness of classical language that fits the *xiqu* genre will also be addressed in the discussion of adaptation and translation. Additionally, I will respond to existing criticisms regarding the word choice of *xiao* in Mandarin *Lear* translations.

Love and Affection: The Emotional Aspect

The passage where Bin Hela declares that she will divide the land is one representative example to show the adaptors' idea of filial piety that reflect the emotional aspect:

三嬌兒各自道良善孝順

賜恩惠、憑言語——朕絕不偏心。(7)

You loving daughters mine, now tell the world

⁸ Here, by complicated implications, I mean the relevant debates around the ideas of *natural affection* and *natural order* in 16-17th century England instead of the multiple meanings of the word. The neutral meaning of personality or the scientific usage of nature as the environment will not be included in the discussion.

How much you *love* me, and I shall allot
My land based on expressions of that *love*,
Impartial, in my own love to you all. (7, trans. by Perng, my emphasis)



The expression 良善孝順 *liangshan xiaoshun* literally means good and filial. If the two characters that compose the word 孝順 *xiaoshun* are to be discussed separately, 孝 *xiao* literally means filial, and 順 *shun* means obedient. The official translation translates 各自道良善孝順⁹ as “tell the world / How much you love me,” implying that to be “good and filial” is not different from to “love,” suggesting the emotional dimension of filial piety. After a few lines, Bin Hela declares again, “誰更孝順，就可以得到更多恩賜” [the more filial shall have more grace]. This time, the same term 孝順 *xiaoshun* is translated as filial. The above lines are adapted from the following part of *King Lear*:

Which of you shall we say doth *love* us most,
That we our largest bounty may extend
Where *nature* doth with *merit* challenge. (1.1.42-44, my emphasis)¹⁰

While “nature” and “merit” will be discussed in later sections, “love” is one other keyword that the usage of 孝順 [filial piety] in the selected passage is derived from. Perng’s (14), Fang’s (6), Liang’s (17), Sun’s (8), and Zhu’s (5) translations of “love” in the first line of the passage all include the character 愛 *ai* (love). Fang’s “愛得最貼心” means to love the most considerately. These lines that adapt or translate love as 孝 *xiao* and Perng’s decision to translate *xiao* back as love both suggest that love is part of filial piety, and this aspect is discussed in Yeh and Bedford’s Dual Filial Piety Model as a part

⁹ 道 means to say and 各自 means respectively.

¹⁰ All line numbers of *King Lear* in this essay are from the RSC edition, as this is the version Perng’s translation is based upon.

of “reciprocal filial piety,” which “encompasses emotionally and spiritually attending to one’s parents out of gratitude for their efforts in having raised one” (216).

In *Questioning Heaven*, there are other similar cases that adapt “love” as 孝 *xiao*: Du Xu’s “千言萬語訴不盡，孝順皇娘情意真 [My true *love* to your majesty, my mother] (7, 8)” is adapted from Goneril’s “A *love* that makes breath poor and speech unable: / Beyond all manner of so much I *love* you” (1.1.51-52). On the other hand, while Du Shao’s line “孝親還借東風送，上天直取明月星 [And if the Eastern winds would but assist, I’d even catch the moon and stars for you]” (8, 9) cannot be found direct source in Regan’s in *Lear*, the idea that adapts love as *xiao* is the same.¹¹ Likewise, Du Wei’s “[我]只能順乎良知來孝敬陛下 [I have no flowery words but *love* you with my conscience]” (9, 10) is adapted from Cordelia’s “I am sure, my *love*’s / More ponderous than my tongue” (1.1.69-70). In the same manner, Situ De’s “不善言辭，並非表示不孝 [Ineloquence does not mean lack of *filial affection*]” (11, 12) is adapted from Kent’s “Thy youngest daughter does not *love* thee least” (1.1.147). Also, when Bin Hela says to Du Xu, “你那五十人是她的雙分，你比她孝順兩倍 [Your fifty doubles five and twenty, and you are twice her *love*.]” (35, 42), these lines are adapted from what Lear says to Goneril “Thy fifty yet doth double five-and-twenty, / And thou art twice her *love*” (2.2.446-47).

On the other hand, there is one case in *Questioning Heaven* in which 孝 *xiao* is used to translate “affection,” and the adaptation follows the same logic as those from “love.” When Duanmu Meng says to his father, “或許大哥只是要試探我對您的孝心 [He may have written this to feel out my *affection* for you]” (18, 20), his line is adapted

¹¹ In *Lear*, Regan says, “I profess / Myself an enemy to all other joys / Which the most precious square of sense professes, / And find I am alone felicitate / In your dear highness’ love” (1.1.63-67). While Regan uses an exaggerating denial of other joys to emphasize how special her father is to her, Du Shao’s focus is on exaggerating the actions she is willing to do for her mother.

from Edmund's words to Gloucester "I dare pawn down my life for him, that he hath writ this to feel my *affection* to your honour" (1.2.71-72). While in this case, Perng translates "affection" as 感情 *ganqing* [love] (27), and Sun translates it as 愛敬 *aijing* [love and respect] (38), Fang (23), Liang (41), and Zhu (31) all translate it as 孝心 *xiaoxin* [the heart of filial piety], just the same as the word chosen to be used in *Questioning Heaven*.

The emotional aspect is sometimes shown in the language about the king and the subjects. For instance, Nangong Ao's line "端木大人忠心事主 [my lord, Duanmu, so *faithful*]" (49, 60, my emphasis) can be said to be adapted from Albany's mention about "the *love* [Gloucester] show'dst the king" (4.2.75). It is noteworthy that both Liang and Fang include the character *zhong* 忠 [loyalty] in their translations of this line: Liang (185) translates "love" as "忠誠" [loyalty and honesty] and Fang (127) as "忠心" [loyal heart]. On the other hand, Perng (102) translates "love" as "情義" [affection and justice], Sun (212) renders "love" here as "愛顧" [love and care] and Zhu (193) as "好意" [good intention].

Kind and Comfortable: The Expected Performance

When Bin Hela is disappointed with her eldest daughter and decides to turn to her second child, she says, "朕還有一個女兒。她一定會孝順朕 [I have another daughter. She will certainly *love* me]" (26, 31). While Perng translates the term 孝順 *xiaoshun* back as *love* just as many examples discussed in the previous section, the source text appears differently in this case. Here, Bin Hela's line is derived from Lear's claim, "I have another daughter, / Who, I am sure, is *kind and comfortable*" (1.4.254-55). This time, again, Fang (44), Liang (71), and Zhu (63) all translate "kind and comfortable" as 孝順 *xiaoshun* just as it is adapted in *Questioning Heaven*, while Perng translates it as

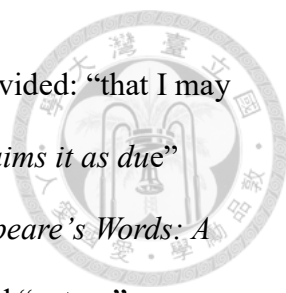
“有愛心，會安慰” [kind and good at comforting] (41) and Sun as “溫良體貼” [nice and caring] (68).

On the other hand, similarly, one of the usages of the negative term 不孝 *buxiao* in *Questioning Heaven* is adapted from the word “unkind” in *Lear*. When Bin Hela cries in the storm, “如非不孝之女，誰能這樣侮辱他、折磨他？[Who could have insulted, tortured him thus but his *unfilial* daughter?]” (41, 50), these lines are derived from Lear’s line, “Nothing could have subdued nature / To such a lowness but his *unkind* daughters” (3.4.62-63). Among the five translations, this time, only Zhu chooses 不孝 *buxiao* (145) as the translation of “unkind.” Perng (82) and Sun (156) both translate it as “狠心” [cruel], while Fang as “沒良心” [without conscience] (96), and Liang as “忤逆” [disobedient] (143).

While “love” and “affection” are the emotional aspects of filial piety, being “kind and comfortable” is related to children’s actions towards their parents. What exactly are the actions Bin Hela and Lear expect from their daughters will be further discussed in the next section.

Is Filial Piety Considered Human “Nature”?

In terms of Bin Hela’s line quoted in the beginning of the first section, there are different explanations about the lines in the source text, “That we our largest bounty may extend / Where *nature* doth with *merit* challenge” (1.1.42-44, my emphasis). In the Arden Edition of *Lear*, two interpretations by Steevens are provided: “Where the claims of merit are superadded to that of nature”; “nature = natural filial affection; but it means rather ‘parental affection,’ and *merit*, in the context, means ‘filial affection’” (Muir 6). In the Dover Edition, only Steevens’ first interpretation is kept, along with the additional line: “or where a superior degree of natural filial affection is joined to the

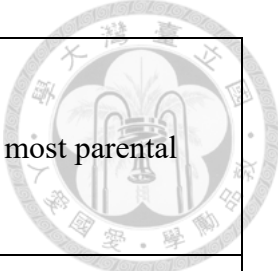


claim of other merits,” and a similar interpretation of Crosby’s is provided: “that I may extend my largest bounty where your natural affection *deservedly claims it as due*” (Furness 8-9). According to David Crystal and Ben Crystal’s *Shakespeare’s Words: A Glossary and Language Companion*, one of the meanings of the word “nature” means “natural affection” or “natural feelings” (293), “merit” can mean “reward,” “deserving,” or “meritorious service” (280). “Natural affection” can mean both parental and filial affection, and filial affection may be part of “meritorious service,” so both interpretations above are possible.

The two lines in the source text quoted before are translated in various ways by the translators, as shown in the following form.

Table 1: Comparison of Lear translations 1.1.43-44

<i>King</i>	That we our largest bounty may extend
<i>Lear</i>	Where nature doth with merit challenge. (1.1.43-44)
Perng	朕好把最豐厚的恩惠賜給 既良善又孝順的那一位。(14) I can give the biggest grace to the one who is <i>good and filial</i> .
Fang	誰的孝心最重，最值得眷寵， 她自會得到我最大的一份賞賜。(6) Who holds <i>the most filial affection</i> and who deserves the most parental love will get my largest reward.
Liang	哪個情愛最篤，最應邀賞，我便給予最大的賞賚。(17) To the one who <i>loves the most deeply</i> and deserves rewards the most, I will give the largest bounty.
Sun	如果誰 / 愛親的天性最合該消受親恩，



	那麼，我自會給予她最大的恩賜。(8) If whose <i>inherent nature to love her parents</i> deserves the most parental grace, I shall give her the largest reward.
Zhu	我要看看誰 最有孝心、最有賢德，我就給她最大的恩惠。(5) I'll see who has <i>the most filial affection and who is the morally best</i>, and I'll give her the biggest grace.

(my emphasis)

Sun's “親恩” [parental grace] (8) carries a stronger implication of parental affection, and Fang's “眷寵” [parental love] (6) and Perng and Zhu's 恩惠 [grace] (5) have a subtler implication of it. In Liang's translation, no connotation of parental affection seems to be implied. However, it's hard to ensure whether any of them interpret “nature” or “merit” in the source text as filial affection, since such distinction does not affect the meaning of the whole sentence.

As can be seen, Perng, Fang, and Zhu include the character 孝 *xiao* [filial piety], and both Perng and Zhu add the idea of goodness in their translations. Perng's translation “良善又孝順” (14) is nearly the same as the corresponding lines in *Questioning Heaven* “良善孝順” [good and filial] (7, 7), and this translation has a similar meaning with Zhu's “最有孝心、最有賢德” (5) [to have the most filial affection and to be the morally best]. Among the five versions, Sun's “愛親的天性” (8) [the inherent nature to love one's parents] may seem a translation with the most fidelity to the source text at the first sight, if “nature” is interpreted as filial affection in this line.

However, while the meaning of “nature” in the above quotation may be ambiguous, there are many other instances in *Lear* where “nature” clearly means parental affection and more that clearly mean filial affection. For instance, in “the king

falls from bias of nature; there's father against child" (1.2.88), "nature" means parental affection, while in "The offices of nature, bond of childhood" (2.2.356), it means filial affection. It is noteworthy that both examples are adapted in *Questioning Heaven*, with the keywords 倫 *lun* [ethics] and 孝 *xiao* [filial piety] appearing in the two cases respectively, and the two cases will be discussed in the following part of this section.

Duanmu Ge's "倫理乖違情義喪 [When love and morals hold no longer sway]" (38, 46)¹² corresponds to Gloucester's long sigh about the broken bonds between parents and children, as Lear banishes Cordelia and he thinks that Edgar wants to murder him. The line "the king falls from bias of nature" (1.2.88) means that Lear "loses his natural affection," as noted by the Crystals' *Glossary* (42). On the translation of "nature" in this line, Fang translates it as "天性" [the inherent nature] (24) and Perng as "本性" [the true nature] (27). Sun translates it as "本性底的慈愛" [the parental affection in his true nature] (40), and Liang does it as "常態" [the normal state] (43). On the other hand, Zhu translates the whole phrase as "不慈不愛" [without parental affection] (31), and in an earlier part of the translation of this passage of Gloucester's, Zhu uses this line "綱常 倫紀完全破滅" [the *ethical codes* are totally broken] (31), which also includes the keyword 倫 *lun* [ethics].

Before discussing the phrase "The offices of nature" (2.2.356) in the next section, I should situate the varied meanings of the word "nature" within the larger philosophical context of the Jacobean era, in which there was debate between an orthodox view of an ideal "Nature" to conform to versus a more individualistic, appetite-driven conception of "nature." Further, I will explore how Chinese philosophical concepts like *tianxing* 天

¹² This line is in the script book but not included in the performance.

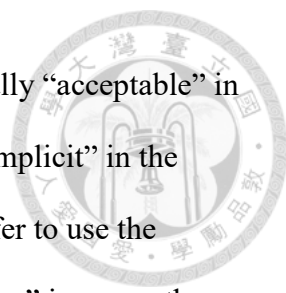
性 [the inherent nature] and *liangzhi* 良知 [intuitive knowledge] intersect with or diverge from the Western notion of “nature” in this context.

In the Jacobean context, as noted by the Crystals, in addition to “natural affection,” the word “nature” can also mean “natural order . . . way of the world” or “normal state [of mind and body]” (293). In the latter two meanings, a norm as a should-be is implied in the word “nature.” On the other hand, according to John F. Danby, natural affection also belongs to the should-be category from an orthodox point of view, as represented by the philosophy of Francis Bacon and Richard Hooker. As Danby argues, for these “orthodox” thinkers, the “bond” between parent and children is seen as both “duties” and “fulfillment of normal instincts” (129). For them, Nature is a “maximum” that man should try to attain, but man may fail to reach such an ideal if they don’t make enough effort or if the conditions they face are not proper enough for them to discipline themselves (Danby 28). Also, in *King Lear*, the good characters hold such a view that Nature is a “rational arrangement” to which people “must adjust [themselves],” an idea that “Shakespeare’s age inherited from the Middle Ages” (Danby 23, 20, 50). While Chung-Hsuan Tung indicates that Lear and Gloucester are “round characters” instead of simply good characters and a quick association of them with a “benignant nature” would be careless, he still agrees that Lear and Gloucester hold the orthodox view as Danby suggests (245, 246).

Nevertheless, in contrast to the orthodox view, there is another view of nature in the early 17th century, a time when the clash between “medieval vision” and “nascent capitalism” started to occur (Danby 52). For the villains in *King Lear*, nature is just a “self-running machine” in which “community becomes competition, and man a nexus of appetites” (Danby 36, 38). Thomas Hobbes, who wrote *Leviathan* in the 1640s, supported this school of view in a similar society to the 1600s, a society of just “a

slightly more developed form” of the new kind of economy (Danby 47). Echoing Danby, Raymond Williams also notes the overlap between the two meanings of nature in the 16th century, that is, “the inherent force which directs either the world or human beings or both,” a meaning that started to be taken in the 14th century, and “the material world itself, taken as including or not including human beings,” a meaning that gradually became into common use from 17th century (219).

Danby’s argument that associates Edmund with a view of nature as malignant is based mostly on Edmund’s first soliloquy: “Thou, nature, art my goddess: to thy law / My services are bound. Wherefore should I / Stand in the plague of custom and permit / The curiosity of nations to deprive me / For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines / Lag of a brother?” (1.2.1-6) As Danby points out, “the Nature Edmund addresses as Goddess” is familiar to a “post-Darwinian age,” as he sees custom as “a system of merely local and arbitrary peculiarities” instead of an order that we need to follow (32). For Edmund, “Reason” is not a “normative drive” but a “calculator of the means to satisfy the appetites with which we were born” (Danby 38) so that he calls out boldly, “Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land” (1.2.16), with the intention of using a faked letter to deceive his father, to use *reason* to fulfill his desire for the property. In *Questioning Heaven*, Edmund’s soliloquy is adapted thus by Perng and Chen: “名利並非天生有，只合巧手暗手里偷。貴賤不必分長幼，庶子奪權自籌謀。[Fame and fortune are not endowed at birth; You must with craftiness, deception, steal. Why should the younger be to baseness cast? The bastard has a way to power seize]” (16, 18), and his complaint about the discrimination against bastards is shifted from the beginning to the end of the scene. The term 巧手 *qiaoshou* [craftiness] implies the new idea of reason, and the mention of fame and fortune implies his desire and appetites.



However, as Danby also indicates, Edmund's view is not officially "acceptable" in Shakespeare's age even though similar ethical views were already "implicit" in the public back then (32). Therefore, in the non-private situation, it is safer to use the language that conforms to the traditional views, to use the term "nature" in a way the old society does. When Edmund betrays his father to tell Cornwall and Regan about Gloucester's plan to rescue Lear and thus leads to Gloucester's future punishment, he says, "I may be censured, that *nature* thus gives way to loyalty" (3.5.2, my emphasis). Here, nature means natural affection, but as noted before, such meaning also implies a norm that should be followed in the family relationship. Even in front of Regan, a daughter that seeks her father's death, Edmund still shows his concern that his action may be criticized due to its violation against the family norm, the traditional value.

This line of Edmund's is also adapted in *Questioning Heaven* as "大義滅親非所願，忠孝今朝難兩全。 [Ill fate to choose between family and state, not be faithful son and subject good]" (44, 54, my emphasis), which includes 忠 *zhong* [loyalty] and 孝 *xiao* [filial piety] in the second line in the expression, the two keywords that are the focus of this chapter. Regarding the translations of the source text, first, Perng (87) renders the conflict between "nature" and "loyalty" with the idiom "大義滅親" [to sacrifice one's family members for the sake of justice], using just the same phrase that appears in *Questioning Heaven*. In terms of "loyalty," Fang (102), Liang (151), and Zhu (155) all include the character 忠 *zhong*, while Sun (169) chooses the phrase "一心報主" [to dedicate to the lord wholeheartedly] to replace the usage of 忠 *zhong* in his translation. In terms of "nature," Liang (151) translates it here as "孝心" [the heart of filial piety], with the character 孝 *xiao* in the phrase. Zhu (155) translates it as "父子之情" [the affection between father and son] and Sun (169) as "父子底恩情" [the

gratitude between father and son]. On the other hand, Fang (102) uses the term “骨肉天性” [the inherent nature in bones and blood] to translate “nature.”

Fang’s choice of the translation 天性 *tianxing* [the inherent nature] is worth discussing, as this term appears several times in different translations of “nature,” and the complicated implication of *tianxing* in the Chinese context and *nature* in the Jacobean English context is also worth comparing. For example, as noted before, “nature” in this line “That we our largest bounty may extend / Where nature doth with merit challenge” (1.1.43-44) is translated by Sun as “愛親的天性” [the *inherent nature* to love one’s parents] (8, my emphasis). Also, “nature” in the line “the king falls from bias of nature” (1.2.88) is translated by Fang (24) again as “天性” *tianxing*.

It is noteworthy that the Jacobean orthodox view of nature seems similar to the idea in the Confucian classic *Zhongyong* 中庸 (*The Doctrine of the Mean* or *The State of Equilibrium and Harmony*):¹³

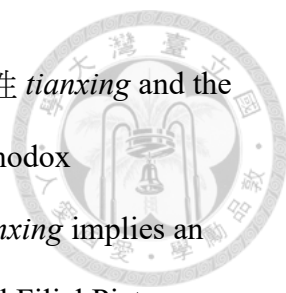
天命之謂性，率性之謂道，修道之謂教。

What Heaven has conferred is called The Nature; an accordance with this nature is called The Path of duty; the regulation of this path is called

Instruction. The path may not be left for an instant. (26)

While the Confucian sense of Heaven is different from the Western one, as Confucianism is much less religious than Christianity, the idea of Nature seems similar at first sight. *Zhongyong* states that man has the duty to follow the Nature and that man should be instructed to do so. Likewise, orthodox thinkers like Bacon and Hooker study Nature “in order to discover their duties” (Danby 20-21).

¹³ *Zhongyong* is originally a chapter in the *Classic of Rites* and is traditionally attributed to Zisi, the only grandson of Confucius. However, the true authorship of this text has been controversial since the 1700s in Chinese scholarship.



However, there is something different between the Chinese 天性 *tianxing* and the 16th-century orthodox English sense of nature. That is, unlike the orthodox philosophers, who believe nature is an ideal for humans to attain, *tianxing* implies an inherent rather than an acquired nature. In a similar sense, in the Dual Filial Piety Model, Yeh elaborates that reciprocal filial piety is “core filial piety 核心孝道” that is natural in human nature and less likely to change with the cultural transformation in contemporary society (127). In contrast, the children’s ideas about authoritarian filial piety are “shifting filial piety 變遷孝道” that is “constructed with political reasons” and more prone to change when the parental generation has less power and resources to exert over the lives of the younger generation (128, 117). According to Yeh, ideas about reciprocal filial piety are “voluntarily, trans-contextually, strongly, and universally” constructed, while ideas about authoritarian filial piety are relatively “passively, contextually specifically, weakly, and culturally specifically” constructed (118). That is, for Yeh, reciprocal filial piety is part of one’s inherent nature, while authoritarian filial piety is not.

The idea of an inherent nature to love one’s parents is similar to Mencius’ argument that the children know intuitively to love their parents, the intuitive knowledge, 良知 *liangzhi*, as mentioned in the previous chapter. To explain why such natural goodness in human mind disappear during one’s growth, he uses an analogy that compares the human mind to woods being cut down by people:

其所以放其良心者，亦猶斧斤之於木也，旦旦而伐之，可以為美乎？其日夜之所息，平旦之氣，其好惡與人相近也者幾希，則其旦晝之所為，有梏亡之矣。

The way in which a man loses his proper goodness of mind is like the way in which the trees are denuded by axes and bills. Hewn down day after day, can

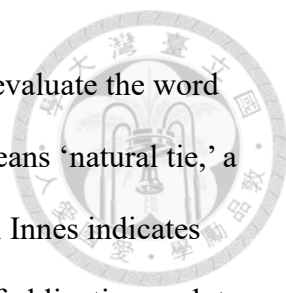
it - the mind - retain its beauty? But there is a development of its life day and night, and in the calm air of the morning, just between night and day, the mind feels in a degree those desires and aversions which are proper to humanity, but the feeling is not strong, and it is fettered and destroyed by what takes place during the day. (567)

That is, though man is born with 良知 *liangzhi*, man may grow to forget the knowledge due to a bad environment, as he argues in an earlier paragraph “凶歲，子弟多暴 [in bad years the most of [people] abandon themselves to evil]” (564).¹⁴ In this sense, Mencius points out the influence of “conditions” on man’s nature just as orthodox English, as Danby interprets (28).

It is noteworthy that in *Questioning Heaven*, Du Wei, the youngest daughter of the queen, uses this specific term 良知 *liangzhi* [intuitive knowledge] in her speech: “女兒……無法誇飾言語，只能順乎良知來孝敬陛下” (9, my emphasis) [I have no flowery words but love you with my *conscience*] (10, my emphasis). This time, Perng translates 良知 *liangzhi* as “conscience” and 孝敬 *xiaojing* to “love,” while *xiaojing* literally means to be filial and to venerate, implying to fulfill the parents’ needs. This line is derived from Cordelia’s response to Lear: “I love your majesty / According to my *bond*, no more nor less” (1.1.84-85, my emphasis). How “bond” is adapted to *liangzhi* is thus vital to comprehending the adaptation in the Chinese context.

Bond as a Natural Tie and Duty

¹⁴ 凶歲 implies the years with bad harvest or wars, so those who have to suffer from starvation often have to fight against one another for food resources.

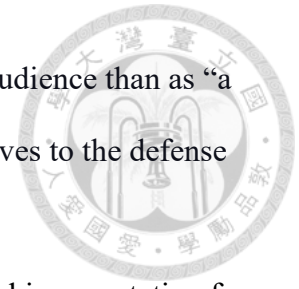


Before discussing the adaptation, the section will first briefly evaluate the word “bond” in the source text. Danby argues that for Cordelia, “‘bond’ means ‘natural tie,’ a duty willingly accepted and gladly carried out” (129). Similarly, Paul Innes indicates that the basic meaning of the term “bond” is derived from “a sense of obligation or duty, especially in residual feudalism,” and it “refers more specifically to a vow or tie that is personal, for example in love or marriage or the family” (56).

However, the conflicted situation in the Renaissance brings out the reason that Lear dislikes her answer: unlike the Middle Ages, for the 16th century and later, for the romantics, a bond can be “a potentially frigid thing” that only means “obligation to pay” (Danby 129). According to Danby (130), such double meaning of the word becomes the reason that Lear asks Cordelia to “mend [her] speech a little” (1.1.86) so that she might explain that she means to carry out the traditional natural bond gladly rather than to fulfill a mere obligation unwillingly.

On the other hand, Kathleen McLuskie sees Cordelia’s usage of “bond” as containing the potential for “subverting” its feudal and patriarchal meaning, as “her legal language suggests a preference for a limited, contractual relationship” (104). For McLuskie, such language introduces “a similar conflict into the question of obligations within the family” to “the conflict between the contractual model and the patriarchal model of subjects’ obligations to their king” (104). However, despite the potential for a contemporary reconstruction, as Judy Kronenfeld notes with a historicist approach, “even if Puritan thinking had begun to refigure the relationship of men to God as a ‘bond’ in a more contractual sense, the relationship between children and the parents hardly is an agreement between equals,” as can be seen in the strong Protestants such as John Dod and Robert Cleaver’s emphasis on children’s duty (100). Kronenfeld further expounds that it was more possible for *Lear* to be seen as “a critique of failures

of fatherly, kindly, and temperate kingship” by a contemporaneous audience than as “a critique of those aspects of the father-king analogy that lend themselves to the defense of patriarchal absolutism” (121).



When Lear curses Goneril in front of Regan and later expresses his expectation for Regan, the phrase “bond of childhood” is worth discussing with the lines before and after it. In these lines, “thou better know’st / The offices of nature, bond of childhood, / Effects of courtesy, dues of gratitude; / Thy half o’ the kingdom hast thou not forgot, / Wherein I thee endow’d” (2.2. 355-59, my emphasis), while these phrases indicate the things Lear assumes his daughter should keep in mind, there is ambiguity in the grammatical interdependencies across the four phrases. Each phrase can stand independently so that they be four different elements, or it may be that “bond of childhood” is in apposition to “the offices of nature,” and “dues of gratitude” is in apposition to “effects of courtesy.” Or, the latter three phrases can be in apposition to “the offices of nature.” If the final explanation is adopted, the term “nature” here could be seen as echoing more strongly to the Christian orthodox view discussed in the previous section: the “natural affection” that conforms to the norm of Nature, which is a “maximum” that man should try to attain (Crystals 293, Danby 28). On the other hand, “Dues of gratitude” is put at the final part right before the mentioning of Regan’s “half o’ the kingdom” that Lear “endow[s]” to her, and the implicit link between gratitude and the endowment of land is thus created.

“The offices of nature, bond of childhood” is the corresponding part that is adapted as “溫柔孝順 [tender, filial]” in *Questioning Heaven*, with the keyword *xiao* 孝 included in the phrase (33, 39). For Bin Hela, being “tender and filial 溫柔孝順” means that the child won’t “be grudge [her her] pleasures, cut off [her] train 剝奪[她]的享受，裁減[她]的隨屬” or “even shut [her] out 甚至把[她]關在門外” (33, 39). Also,

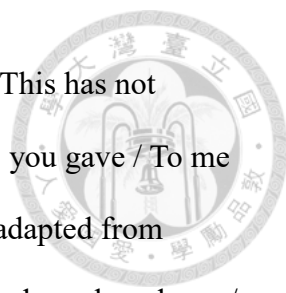
with such lines as, “你不會忘記是誰賜給你這大好江山的吧？[You won’t forget who gave you half of the kingdom, will you?]

” (33, 39), being given “half of the kingdom” sounds like an exchange that the child should pay off by fulfilling the mother’s need.

Everything Bin Hela asks for is requested by Lear in the source text, and by this standard, this passage is not adapted to a great extent. What should be noted is that those requirements are Bin Hela’s expectation for actions that accord to *xiao* 孝 [filial piety], and whether such requirement is reasonable or common in different societies is worth a second thought, which will be included in later discussions.

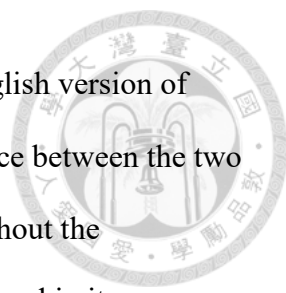
In terms of the Chinese translations of “The offices of nature, bond of childhood” (2.2.356), the translations are rather diverse. Zhu (113) translates it as “天倫的義務、兒女的責任” [the obligations in a family, the duties of children], and Perng (66) translates it similarly as “天倫的道理、子女的責任” [the principles in a family, the duties of children]. Sun’s translation (123) is also similar, as he does it as “親子間的義理，兒女底本責” [the principles between parents and children, the children]. However, Fang (75) renders it rather differently as “骨肉的天性，小輩的本分” [the inherent nature in bones and blood, the essential duties of the younger generation], and Liang (115) does it concisely as “人情孝道” [human sensibilities and filial piety]. Here, Fang’s *tianxing* 天性 echo to the previous passages that discuss the Chinese idea of filial affections as inherent. On the other hand, Liang’s *xiaodao* 孝道 [the principle of filial piety] includes the keyword *xiao* 孝 that is the focus of this chapter. Also, two translators translate “nature” as *tianlun* 天倫 [literally heaven’s ethics, usually referring to the family], which includes the keyword *lun* 倫 [ethics] that I aim to discuss in this thesis.

It is noteworthy that Du Wei uses the specific word *tianlun* 天倫 when she responds to her mother’s request to flatter her: “椿萱恩慈重，天倫古今同。回饋反躬



省，量力惟盡心。 [Parental love and care are boundless things— / This has not changed from first and never will. To give you back such kindness as you gave / To me and to my sisters, that’s my hope]” (9, 11). Here, Du Wei’s lines are adapted from Cordelia’s response to Lear: “Good my lord, / You have begot me, bred me, loved me: / I return those duties back as are right fit, / Obey you, love you and most honour you” (1.1.88-91). Her promise recalls the Fifth Commandment in the *Bible*: “Honour your father and your mother” (Exodus 20:12). By comparing the adaptation in *Questioning Heaven* and the source text, we can see that Du Wei and Cordelia’s idea of children’s duty is mostly reciprocal: they aim to return what they receive from their parents. Also, by the term *gugin* 古今, Du Wei means that such value of *tianlun* 天倫 is the same from the ancient to the contemporaneous, and Cordelia’s reference of the Fifth Commandment has a similar implication.

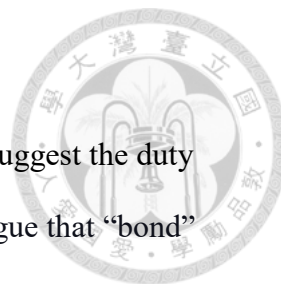
Back to the discussion on Lear’s “*bond* of childhood” (2.2. 356 my emphasis), we can see that all five translations imply the idea of duty in the word “bond” (責任, 本責, 本分, 孝道). In Cordelia’s “I love your majesty / According to my *bond*” (1.1.84-85, emphasis), similar phenomenon can be observed, as it is translated as 本分 (Perng 15), 本份 (Fang 8, Sun 12), 名份 (Zhu 9), and 義務 (Liang 21), while 名份 means title and duty, implying a legal sense and 義務 means obligation, which makes the two translations sound more frigid than 本分/本份. Interestingly, in *Questioning Heaven*, *liangzhi* 良知 [intuitive knowledge, conscience], the idea that can be traced back to Mencius, is chosen to adapt the word “bond” in Cordelia’s line. Compared to other translations noted above, *liangzhi* has a more moral and affective implication that is similar to Danby’s interpretation of “bond” as a “natural tie” (129), with concern of Mencius’ argument that connects one’s conscience to the instinct to love one’s parents.



While Perng translates 良知 *liangzhi* as “conscience” in the English version of *Questioning Heaven* for the western audience, there is still a difference between the two words. As Ni Liang-Kang points out, “conscience” is neutral and without the implication of moral judgment, while the Chinese 良知 *liangzhi* is good in its essence (sec.3). Therefore, in English, it is said that one has a good conscience or bad conscience, while in Chinese, it is said that one has *liangzhi* or not 有良知/沒良知 (Ni sec.3). Such difference echoes the different ideas of the orthodox English nature and the Chinese *tianxing* 天性 or *liangzhi*: while the orthodox believes nature as an ideal to attain, *tianxing* and *liangzhi* implies an inherent rather than an acquired nature.

On the other hand, it should be noted that as the potentially fiscal meaning behind the word “bond” seems to disappear in the adaptation to 良知 *liangzhi*, the reason for Lear’s dissatisfaction may also need to be reinterpreted.¹⁵ In *Questioning Heaven*, this passage can be seen as an interpretation of Lear’s anger, a passage that no corresponding text can be found in *King Lear*: “不孝女據理爭忤逆當前。信口開全不顧朕的顏面，朝會中那裡有皇室尊嚴” (10) [Willful, thankless thing, you do defy / in open court with total disregard / For majesty, and mock our dignity] (11). Here, the scene of an open court is emphasized, while in *King Lear*, the emphasis is on how Lear doesn’t see Cordelia as his daughter anymore. It can be seen that *Questioning Heaven* focuses on being disrespected “in open court” as the reason for the Empress’ rage.

¹⁵ It has to be admitted that various ways to interpret Lear’s motivation to banish Cordelia have been offered and discussed by different scholars. Stanley Cavell has listed several “traditional cruxes” in the play that are widely discussed, and Lear’s “motivation” in the first scene is one of them (250). Here, I only aim to discuss how *Questioning Heaven* adds this following passage to potentially give one interpretation without discussing or evaluating other interpretive possibilities.



Mutual Responsibilities in the Power Relationship

While in the above discussion, the word “bond” only seems to suggest the duty from the daughter’s side, Jonas A. Barish and Marshall Waingrow argue that “bond” actually suggests “reciprocity” (348). Barish and Waingrow identify “service” as a key theme in the play as “the formalization of relationships between individuals of different social or political rank” (348). According to Barish and Waingrow, ideal service “works two ways,” implying both “rights” and “duties” (348), but Lear only realizes the importance in the later part of the play (354).

The word “serve” is one of the keywords that is adapted as *zhong* 忠 in *Questioning Heaven*. For example, the source Sutu De’s phrase “在軒轅國繼續盡忠 [you can continue service in the land of Xuanyuan.]” (21, 25) is the lines Kent says to himself, “If thou canst *serve* where thou dost stand / condemned, / So may it come thy master whom thou lov’st, / Shall find thee full of labours” (1.4.5-7, my emphasis). In this case, all five translators include the word *zhong* in their translations. One other example is Duanmu Meng’s line “屬下必忠心事主，萬死不辭 [I shall serve you truly, even in the face of death]” (30, 36), which is adapted from what Edmund says to Cornwell, “I shall *serve* you, sir, truly, however else” (2.1.124, my emphasis). This time, Perng (51) and Zhu (83) include the word *zhong* in their translations while the other three do not.

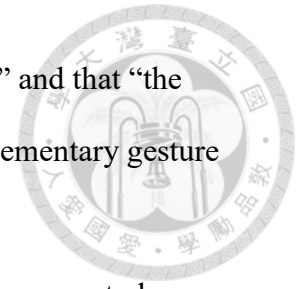
On the other hand, the word “duty” shares a similar function with the word “serve,” and “duty” is one other keyword that acts as the source text of the character *zhong* 忠 in *Questioning Heaven*. For instance, this line of Gloucester’s when he finds Lear in the storm, “my *duty* cannot suffer / T’obey in all your daughters’ hard commands” (3.4.122-23, my emphasis), is adapted as Duanmu Ge’s “老臣也不能昧著良心。無論如何，都要顧及忠義 [I have to keep my conscience and remain loyal and



righteous]" (42 ,51). As Du Wei turns Cordelia's bond into *liangzhi* 良知 [conscience; intuitive knowledge], Duanmu Ge turns Gloucester's duty into *liangxin* 良心 [conscience; intuitive morality]. Also, the word *zhongyi* 忠義 [loyal and righteous] is added into this line to elaborate Duanmu Ge's point about his duty. On the other hand, while the word "duty" in the source text can be translated more literally as "責任" (Perng 85), "職責" (Liang 147), or "本責" (Sun 164), Fang and Zhu chooses the words in a derivative sense just as *Questioning Heaven* does. Zhu specifically chooses *liangxin* "良心" (151), the same word used in *Questioning Heaven*, while Fang (99) translates "duty" as *zhongxin* "忠心" [loyal heart], sharing the same character and idea of loyalty in Duanmu Ge's line.

Though the above two cases only seem to show how Sutu De, Kent, Duanmu Ge, and Gloucester voluntarily serve their lord and perform their duties as subjects, the idea of mutual service and duty should still be discussed in the context of the whole play. As Barish and Waingrow suggest, Kent is the "touchstone for service throughout the play," and his "absolute loyalty to the truth" is placed over his loyalty to his master (349). Thus, as he "serves only the truth in Lear . . . and not the caprices of vanity or senility," his good service "therefore starts (in the play) with an act of disobedience" (Barish and Waingrow 349). On the other hand, according to Barish and Waingrow, the king is actually "a combination of both roles" as master and servant—he also has his duty as "the chief servant of the state;" therefore, his "failure to serve" is his failure to "rule" (353). By placing his personal wishes above the interest of the kingdom, the political unity of the state, Lear "proves himself a bad king" (Barish and Waingrow 353). Furthermore, as Barish and Waingrow argues, "the true and whole meaning of service" is to "[promote] concord between individuals of different rank" and thus "[minimize] distinctions of rank" (348). Near the end, when Lear kneels to Cordelia, he shows the

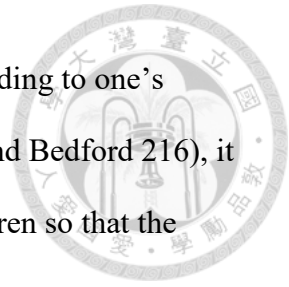
revelation that “self-effacement” is indispensable in “mutual service” and that “the gesture of humility on the part of one must be completed by a complementary gesture from the other” (Barish and Waingrow 355).



While the way Barish and Waingrow interpret Lear’s kneeling happens to be extremely similar to Chen and Perng’s interpretation written in the preface of *Questioning Heaven*, this part will be elaborated in later sections. In fact, in the Chinese context, the importance of mutual service is also suggested in the Confucian discourse. For instance, *Zuo Zhuan* (*The Commentary of Zuo*)¹⁶ quotes Yanzi to say, “君令而不違，臣恭而不貳，父慈而教，子孝而箴……禮之善物也。” [The king orders without violating the manners; the subjects respect the king without thinking of betrayal; the father acts kindly to teach the children; the children practice filial piety to advise their parents . . . That will be good manners.] (“Lord Zhao” 26, 516 BC., my trans.). That is, the king also has the responsibility to give reasonable orders, and the father needs to educate his children kindly as well. It can also be implied that Lear’s and Bin Hela’s orders for their children to flatter them and for subjects who speak the truth to be banished are against so-called manners in Yanzi’s sense. Moreover, the children are not expected to obey their fathers blindly – they have to advise the parents in a filial way if the parents make wrong decisions. The suggestion of “reciprocity” in the word “bond” also echoes “reciprocal filial piety” in the Dual Filial Piety Model. As

¹⁶ *Zuo Zhuan* (*The Zuo Tradition* or *The Commentary of Zuo*) is a Chinese narrative history and a commentary on Confucius’ *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋), the classic chronicle that records the history from 771-476 BC. The author was traditionally believed to be Zuo Qiuming 左丘明, a blind disciple of Confucius, though little evidence supports that this person actually exists. According to Burton Watson, *Zuo Zhuan* was canonized in the Han dynasty (202-9 BC.) as “an indispensable supplement to other attempts to decode the messages in Confucius’ *Annals*” (12). In 1584, *Zuo Zhuan* was selected as one of the thirteen Confucian classics.

“reciprocal filial piety encompasses emotionally and spiritually attending to one’s parents out of gratitude for their efforts in having raised one” (Yeh and Bedford 216), it is suggested that the parents have made an effort to care for the children so that the children show gratitude for them naturally without being forced.

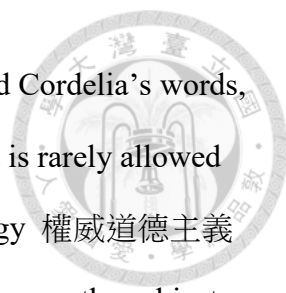


Obedience: The Unpleasant Reality

Despite the emphasis on mutuality and reciprocity in ideal service, in reality, the responsibility often lies on the children’s side or the servants’ side rather than on the parents’ or rulers’, and parents rarely expect their children to advise them even if they are wrong. Bin Hela and Lear in the first scenes serve as proper examples of such kind of authoritarian parents.

A great difference can be observed between the reciprocal filial piety Du Wei and Cordelia believe and the authoritarian filial piety Bin Hela and Lear expect from their children. When Du Wei says “回饋反躬省，量力惟盡心 [To give you back such kindness as you gave / To me and to my sisters, that’s my hope]” (9, 11), the Chinese text has strong connotation of her independent thinking and free will. First, “反躬省” literally means to think reflexively. Further, “量力” means to consider the limitation of one’s capability; that is, Du Wei will not make a promise that she cannot fulfill, and she will not try to go beyond her ability just to satisfy her mother. Similarly, Cordelia only seeks to return the duties “back as are right fit” (1.1.90), so her devotion for her mother is not infinite but only as “right fit”. Though she also promises to “obey,” “love” and “most honour” her father (1.1.90), it can be seen that her obedience does not include the unreasonable order to flatter in contradiction to her true feeling.¹⁷

¹⁷ While Yeh argues that the obligation to honour one’s parents is more a part of authoritarian filial piety than reciprocal, this part of discussion will be further studied in the next chapter.



While in reciprocal filial piety, which is implied in Du Wei's and Cordelia's words, the individuality of children is respected, such independent judgment is rarely allowed in the system of authoritarian filial piety. In the "authoritarian ideology 權威道德主義意識型態," only the authority has the power to judge right from wrong, so the subjects or the children often needs to obey their orders without a second thought (Yeh 117). As the authority owns the greater part of properties and material goods and holds the power to distribute them, the ruled ones have to obey them in exchange for the resources, and the ideology to follow blindly is often "internalized 內化" in their mind (Yeh 117). As authoritarian filial piety includes the actions to "[comply] with one's parents' wishes because of their seniority in . . . financial or social terms," Bin Hela's and Lear's expectation for their children to flatter them in exchange for land and power can be seen as part of such belief (Yeh and Bedford 216).

Therefore, the difference between the kind of gratitude Du Wei and Cordelia wish to show and the kind Bin Hela and Lear expect earlier in the plays can also be inferred. The word "ingratitude" appears in *Lear* three times, all in Lear's speech that condemns his daughters. On the other hand, the word "gratitude" appears once, which is in the line of the phrase "dues of gratitude," discussed in an earlier section (2.2.357). As mentioned before, this phrase about gratitude is put right before the mentioning of Regan's "half o' the kingdom" that Lear "endow[s]" to her (2.2.358, 359), implying an exchange of her obedience with the land and property. For Lear, his daughters should be grateful for the materials they receive from him so that they need to obey him blindly, while for Cordelia, she needs to be grateful for being raised up and loved so that she needs to obey him but only reasonably.

To extend the discussion of authoritarian ideology, the following part discusses the keywords "desert," "allegiance," "obedience," and "child-like office" that serve as

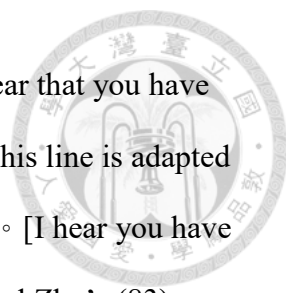


source texts of the characters *zhong* 忠 and *xiao* 孝 in *Questioning Heaven*. In *Questioning Heaven*, when Du Shao says “大姐的孝心，無人不知 [My sister’s filial piety is well known]” (32, 38), her line is adapted from Regan’s argument about Goneril when she talks to Lear: “I have hope / You less know how to value her *desert* / Than she to scant her duty” (2.2.310-12, my emphasis). Here, the word “desert” means “worth, merit, deserving,” as noted by the Crystals (21). Of course, Regan doesn’t seriously judge her sister’s worth based on how she treats her father, and she doesn’t believe in what she says, either. However, such language does subtly imply a sense that determines a child’s value mainly based on how they perform their roles as *children* instead of anything else. On the other hand, Fang’s (73) translation of this word “desert” is the same as the one chosen in *Questioning Heaven*: “孝心” [the heart of filial piety], while Zhu (111) chooses “苦心” [painstaking efforts], Perng (65) chooses “好意” [good will], Liang (113) uses “人品” [morality], and Sun (120) “品性底優良” [the goodness in her morality].

Also, in Bin Hela’s words to Situ De before she banishes him, “你自認是忠臣，膽敢指責朕的不是 [Ah, so you think you’re a loyal minister and dare to admonish us]” (11, 13), the character *zhong* 忠 stems from the word “allegiance” in Lear’s words to Kent: “[On] thine *allegiance* hear me! / That thou hast sought to make us break our vows, / Which we durst never yet, and with strained pride / To come betwixt our sentences and our power, / Which nor our nature nor our place can bear” (1.1.166-170, my emphasis). As the Crystals note, “allegiance” is the root of “allegiant,” which means “loyal” and “faithful” (14). Perng (18) translates this word as “效忠” [perform loyalty] and Liang (25) as “忠君之義” [the righteousness of being loyal to the king], both including the character *zhong* 忠 in their translations. On the other hand, Fang (12) translates it as “君臣的道理” [the principles of kings and subjects], Sun (19) as “君臣

間的道義心責” [the justice and mindful principles of kings and subjects], and Zhu (13) as “做臣子的道理” [the principles of being subjects]. Here, Lear calls out for Kent’s allegiance only to condemn him because of he speaks against the King’s wish, and thus the allegiance he expects is only in a context of authoritarian ideology.

The connection between authoritarian ideology in the political field and authoritarian filial piety, as elaborated in the previous chapter, is especially shown in Du Shao’s line to Duanmu Meng “本宮很欣賞你的孝心。孝子必是忠臣 [We appreciate your filial piety, A filial son makes a loyal official] (35-36). This line is adapted from Cornwall’s words to Edmund, “For you, Edmund, / Whose *virtue and obedience* doth this instant / So much commend itself, you shall be ours: / *Natures of such deep trust* we shall much need; / You we first seize on” (2.1.119-23, my emphasis). While the claim “a filial son makes a loyal official” makes sense also in the context of a reciprocal relationship, what Du Shao and Cornwall expect from their subjects is more likely to be blind loyalty and pure obedience without any disagreements, as also shown in the word “obedience” in the source text. For them, those who obey are those who has “natures” of “deep trust” (2.1.22). About the phrase “virtue and obedience,” Fang (56) translates it as “孝順和忠心” [filial piety and loyalty], including both *xiao* 孝 and *zhong* 忠 in the translation. On the other hand, Perng and Zhu only include the idea of filial piety in their translations, as Perng (50) translates it as “品德和孝道” [virtue and the principle of filial piety] and Zhu (83) as “深明大義的孝心” [filial piety with deep knowledge of justice]. Differently, Liang’s translation (87) is “忠誠” [loyalty and honesty], only including *zhong* 忠 in the text, while Sun’s (87) is “順從的德行” [the virtue of being obedient], which seems the closest to the source text and without any indication of filial piety or loyalty.



Another similar case is Cornwall's earlier words, "Edmund, I hear that you have shown your father / A *child-like office*" (2.1.110-11, my emphasis). This line is adapted in *Questioning Heaven* as Xiahou Kang's "本宮聽說你善盡了孝道。[I hear you have shown your father a child-like office]" (30, 35). Here, Liang's (87) and Zhu's (83) translation of "child-like office" is both the same as the word used in *Questioning Heaven*: "孝道" [the principle of filial piety], *xiaodao*. On the other hand, Perng (50) translates it as "人子之義" [the righteousness of being children], Fang (55) as 做孩子的本分 [the duty of being children], and Sun (87) as 為兒的愛敬 [the love and respect children should pay]. As argued in the previous paragraph, Cornwall's and Xiahou Kang's praise of the filial piety performed by Edmund and Duanmu Meng is likely to due to an expectation of the same kind of obedience under authoritative rules. While Lin questions that it seems strange that the two cruel characters specifically mention the idea of filial piety in the above-discussed passages due to the "linguistic habit 語境下的語言習慣" in a Confucian context (96), with such comparison between *Questioning Heaven* and its source text, it can be proved that the adaptation of this line has less to do with Confucian ethics and more to do with the source text.

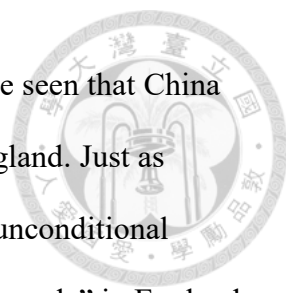
As the playwright Chen once shared, contemporary Taiwanese filial piety is still often practiced in its authoritarian aspect, and she sincerely hopes this can be changed. She mentioned that a relative even said that as to the term 孝順 *xiaoshun*, a child only needs to be 順 *shun* [obedient] without the need to perform 孝 *xiao* [filial piety]. Thinking of her personal experiences, she believes that parents should think about

reciprocity more, and she aims to follow this spirit starting from herself as a mother.¹⁸ What *Questioning Heaven* and *King Lear* promote is not unconditional obedience for children, and they are not plays designed to educate children. Rather, they warn the parents against false flattery and tyrannical authority and praise children and servants who are willing to speak the truth and to love. Based on Chen's view of traditional filial piety, it can be inferred that when using the words *xiao* 孝 [filial piety], *zhong* 忠 [loyalty], and *lun* 倫 [ethics] in *Questioning Heaven*, Perng and Chen do not aim to promote these ideas. In fact, when we trace other versions of Chinese translations, we could see that Liang, Fang, and Zhu use those characters more than Perng does.

Admittedly, before Lin, criticism against the usage of the idea of filial piety in early Mandarin *Lear* translations already existed. For example, Zhouhan Yang has compared Sun's and Zhu's works, arguing that Sun's awareness of "the non-Confucian character of Western ethics" is one of the reasons that his translation is superior to Zhu's, which barely shows the concern of the difference between Western and Eastern ethics (263). Similarly, Lee Wei-Min 李偉民 argues that Sun as a writer growing after May Fourth Movement is more aware of the "corruption" in traditional filial piety, and he thus consciously avoids using the character *xiao* in his translation of *Lear* ("Filial" 58). For Lee, Liang's 11 and Fang's 7 usages in their translation, though probably unconsciously, somehow become an advocacy of traditional filial piety ("Filial" 58).

While Yang does point out correctly that "the Confucian ethical code governing the parent-child relationship is far more stringent than that in the West" (258), some parts of Yang's and Lee's observation of the Chinese and English contexts may be

¹⁸ I really thank Prof. Chen that when I audited her class on transcultural theatre, she gave me a chance to present my thesis proposal, and I also incorporated the proposal of this thesis in the presentation. After my presentation, she offered some personal insights on contemporary filial piety, which I found very helpful.



reevaluated. Based on the discussion in these two chapters, it could be seen that China in the past few centuries do share similarities with Shakespeare's England. Just as Danby points out that by the sixteenth century, "the argument of the unconditional obedience becomes more and more an ideology" and "political propaganda" in England (51). Similarly, Kronenfeld indicates that "in Renaissance, the proper behavior of parents to children gets less attention than that of children to parents" (100). However, though Yang marks that compared to traditional China, "the Holy Roman Empire itself was but an empty frame, while within each feudal state, local nobilities enjoyed considerable independence, and allegiance of vassal to overlord was conditional" (258), the political system of Jacobean England is rather authoritarian and totalitarian. Likewise, Lee's observation of the Western emphasis on "freedom and fairness" ("Filial" 58) is modern invention but not of the age of Shakespeare. Further, while Lee duly observes the natural love Cordelia suggests in her language and in the Christian ideal ("Filial" 59), what Lear and the Jacobean parental rulers propose is nearer to the obedience under an authoritarian ideology. Such a distinction not only happens between early Confucianist ideals and post-Han society that shifted the core of filial piety from "morality" to "authority" (Yeh 108-9) but between ideal mutual service and the authoritarian reality in Shakespeare's England.

When Perng, Liang, Fang, and Zhu choose to translate the different word choices of "love," "nature," and "obedience" as the single word *xiao*, they possibly have the complexities in the idea of filial piety in their sub-consciousness with both its reciprocal and authoritarian sides. As demonstrated in the Dual Filial Piety Model, such a single character could cover multiple implications. What Lin, Yang, and Lee see in filial piety may be more on its authoritarian than the reciprocal aspect. Further, their idea of Shakespeare may be nearer to the modern impression of Western individualism than the

changing age in the Renaissance England that carries both feudal traditions and Jacobean authoritarian ideologies. Therefore, in their criticism, the differences between the Chinese and English contexts are seen, but the similarities are somehow neglected.

Indeed, when “affection,” “duty” and “obligation” are all translated as the same word *xiao* in Chinese, even though it may be inappropriate to argue that the different meanings are definitely lost in the translation, it is true that such a strategy sacrifices the precision different words carry in their original meaning. While *xiao* has complicated implications, readers may find it difficult to specify which aspect is emphasized in each line. However, in the linguistic context of *xiqu* adaptation instead of pure translation, more factors should be considered, including the naturalness of speech: on a stage where all characters speak classical Chinese rather than modern Chinese, it may seem unnatural to choose other words. That is, to replace *xiao* 孝 with *qinggan* 情感 or to choose *fushi* 服侍 over *jinzhong* 盡忠 will both make the phrasings sound too modern to match the formalized *xiqu* stage. Possibly, it is also due to such a concern that while Lee points out the “difference” between filial piety and love in his review of *King Qi’s Dream*, an earlier *Jingju Lear* adaptation, he does not criticize the usage of filial piety in the play but rather highly praise the whole production for the “intertextuality” it presents (“Rotating” 113, 119).

In a lexical sense, it may be barely possible to perform a family story in ancient China naturally without using those keywords, and such trigger is thus hardly possible to be completely avoided. Nevertheless, the issue around filial piety in the play is in no way limited to the lexical. In the next chapter, I will discuss the themes and characterization in *Questioning Heaven*, regarding the degree of revelation and redemption that happens in *Bin Hela* and *Lear* and the characterization of the unfilial children in the two plays. Also, I will compare these aspects of *Questioning Heaven*

with two other formalized Chinese *Lear* adaptations, *King Qi's Dream* and *Lear is Here*, to further situate *Questioning Heaven* among other attempts of contemporary *xiqu* innovation.



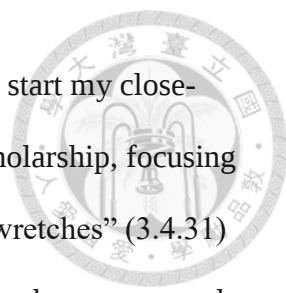
Chapter 3

Regretful Parents and Unfilial Children: Textual and Performance Analysis



Questioning Heaven is not the first *xiqu* adaptation of *King Lear*. To better situate and analyze the significance of this new adaptation, I will not only close-read the text and performance but also compare its adaptation strategy with the other two earlier *xiqu* adaptations, *King Qi's Dream* 歧王夢 and *Lear is Here* 李爾在此. While the playwright Chen states in the interview that she doesn't think that her writing is specifically influenced by any of the *Lear* adaptations, though she has watched several of them in the past, including the two *xiqu* ones mentioned above, the audiences of *Questioning Heaven* may have the previous works in their minds. As pointed out in Geraghty's belief studies, the memory of the source work has an influence on one's evaluation of the adapted work, and it is noteworthy that one's memory of a source work could also be shaped by an experience watching previous adaptations. To discuss the significance of *Questioning Heaven* in the context of *xiqu* innovation as a *Lear* adaptation, previous works could not be ignored in the analysis.

When discussing *King Qi's Dream* and *Lear is Here* with their source text, both Lei and Feng criticize *King Qi's Dream* as falling back to the traditional dichotomy in *xiqu* frameworks, making it a simple moral tale. Nevertheless, the two review *Lear is Here* in different ways. While Lei acclaims *Lear is Here* for its reconsideration of filial piety and innovative narrative, Feng criticizes the play for being overly contextually confined. Building on Lei's and Feng's studies, I will review their arguments, respond to them with my own thoughts and my close reading on *King Qi's Dream* and *Lear is Here*, and add *Questioning Heaven* to the comparative framework. Additionally, I will seek to reconcile their disagreements on *Lear is Here*.



Contextualizing *Questioning Heaven* with the two adaptations, I start my close-reading by aligning it as a redemptionist reading in the early *Lear* scholarship, focusing on the adaptation of the famous soliloquy starting with “poor naked wretches” (3.4.31) and the reconciliation with Cordelia. Following this, I build a framework to compare the existing or non-existing sources of Bin Hela’s regrets in *Questioning Heaven* and the corresponding ones in previous adaptations, including banishing the good daughter, lack of sympathy, and authoritarian rule or mistreatment of the elder daughters. The contemporary *xiqu* that shares a similar structure with *Lear*, *Birthday Greeting*, is also included in the comparative table. Though without taking inspiration from *Lear*, a comparison with this play is enlightening for demonstrating the complexities in filial piety.

The next section could be seen as a counterpoint of the previous one. While the previous section discusses more on Bin Hela’s redemption and spiritual growth, this section discusses her yet incomplete revelation. Lin’s arguments on the gap in the degree of revelation between Bin Hela and *Lear*, her criticism against the final aria, and the nihilist reading of *Lear* that prevailed in the 1960s will be reviewed. In the meantime, I will align *Questioning Heaven* with the conservative readings of *Lear* in early Shakespearean scholarship. Following this, I discuss the depiction of the unfilial children in *Questioning Heaven* and previous *xiqu* works, using another table to compare their strategy in adapting the mock trial, Edmund’s background story, and the love triangle between Edmund, Goneril, and Regan, as these factors will significantly change the audiences’ reception of the antagonists.

According to Perng and Chen, the strategy in all of the trilogy of Shakespeare *Bangzi* opera is to present the depth in Shakespeare as much as possible and go beyond the traditional dichotomic frameworks in *xiqu*. However, as Bi-Qi Beatrice Lei 雷碧琦

remarks, the “extra-theatrical materials,” such as the productive team’s official messages noted in pre-performance talks, “do not always conform to what takes place on stage” (“Straight” 91). That is, there can be an “enormous disparity” between “the declared purposes” of the productive teams, the “actual performance,” and “what the audience and critics perceive (reception)” (Lei “Straight” 91). Then, to what degree are the playwrights’ intended messages for *Questioning Heaven* received by the audience groups?

As Wei Feng 馮偉 points out, “audiences’ reception can hardly be generalized” despite the “shared history, culture, politics, social reality” in the audience group (188). As “variations in class, age, gender, education, taste, life experience, economic condition, and so on” are inevitably “irreconcilable,” it is “impossible to investigate each spectator’s individual response” (Feng 188). Therefore, with concerns about such limitations, I will select a few accessible reviews, both positive and negative, to bring about the discussion, without claiming the ability to posit a generalized reception of the play.

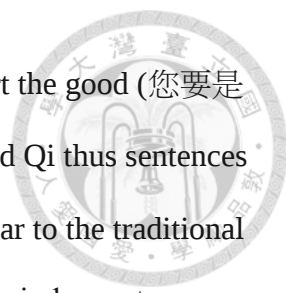
King Qi’s Dream: A Morally Dichotomous Depiction

King Qi’s Dream, the *Jingju* version of *Lear*, is produced in 1995 by Shanghai *Jingju* Theatre Company 上海京劇院 and scripted by Wang Lian 王煉 and Wang Yong-Shi 王涌石. As the director of *King Qi’s Dream*, Ouyang Ming 歐陽明 explains, the purpose of the team is to “transfigure Shakespeare’s drama into Chinese opera as much as possible” 使莎士比亞戲劇儘量地中國化、戲曲化 so that “those who do not know Shakespeare—the majority of Chinese folks—will take it to be a story from ancient China” (Lei “Vision” 264). It can be inferred that it is with this aim, *King Qi’s*

Dream is written in a way rather similar to a traditional *xiqu* story with moral didactics and a clear division of black from white.

The three villains in *King Qi's Dream* based on Edmund, Goneril, and Regan seem to perform their cruel deeds only out of ambition without any other motivation. As Lei also observes, the role of Edmund in this adaptation is “sizably expanded” but also “markedly flattened” (“Vision” 265). In *Lear*, Edmund’s motive is primarily due to his bastard origin, and the two daughters treat their father worse and worse after enduring him for a period of time or being upset with his hurtful words. Nonetheless, in *King Qi's Dream*, the bastard story is never mentioned and the Gloucester subplot is totally removed, and the two daughters abuse their father for barely any reason. For Lei, by removing the family background of villain and making him a pure outsider, he thus becomes a “scapegoat for the unfilial children” outside of the royal family, repeating the technique that is used in traditional ethical plays to mitigate the shock of unfiliality (“Vision” 265). Moreover, while in *Lear*, the two sisters only start to hate each other for Edmund’s love later in the play, in *King Qi's Dream*, they conspire for the land owned by one another from the very beginning. Edmund’s character is made more evil as well: while in *Lear*, he seems to love both sisters, in *King Qi's Dream*, he only pretends to love them and even actively seeks their death to acquire full power. In short, the three villains are further dehumanized in this adaptation.

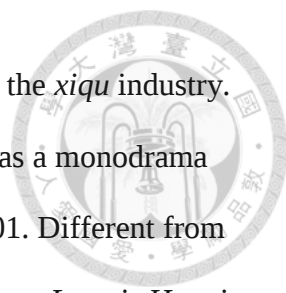
On the other hand, the mock trial that only appears in the Quarto version is adapted in *King Qi's Dream* with a distinct tone. While *Lear* hallucinates the trial of his two daughters in the original play, the surrounding characters lament his mental state, and such lament is the focus that defines the atmosphere of this scene. Nevertheless, in *King Qi's Dream*, Qi’s fool follows his fantasy to try the two sisters despite his aside comments on Qi’s mental state. When the youngest daughter speaks that the two do not



deserve death, the fool even argues that to exonerate the bad is to hurt the good (您要是寬恕了壞人，不就等於坑害了好人嗎?) (Wang and Wang 759), and Qi thus sentences them to death. As Feng observes, this scene is adapted in a way similar to the traditional *Gonganxi* 公案戲 (courtroom drama), “a type of play in which a fair judge restores justice to the virtuous and punishes the vicious” (65). Indeed, when the trial begins, the music is the same melody as the one used in *Gonganxi*. As Issei Tanaka notes, the nature of judges in courtroom dramas is “close to god” (133); therefore, Feng argues that in *King Qi’s Dream*, with the association of the king to the judge in a traditional sense, “audiences’ recognition of [Qi’s] weakness might be undermined because they are prone to take his words seriously” (65). As Feng concludes, while Shakespeare’s plays “question and highlight the ambiguities of morality” based on his “observation of contemporary reality,” and it is hard to assert that any of the characters is his ideal mouthpiece, in *King Qi’s Dream*, “the adaptors intervene by offering their judgements through the morally problematic *Lear*” (66). Hence, “such an imposition of the adaptors’ simplified conclusions deprives the audience of an independent agency to reflect,” and *Lear*’s trial thus becomes “a moral lesson to warn audiences of the consequences of impiety” (Feng 66). To summarize, while the audiences may identify with Edgar and Kent and mourn for *Lear*’s madness in *King Lear*, in *King Qi’s Dream*, Qi becomes a more godlike figure, and his strong hatred for his two daughters is more likely to represent the moral judgment of the adaptation authors against the unfilial children.

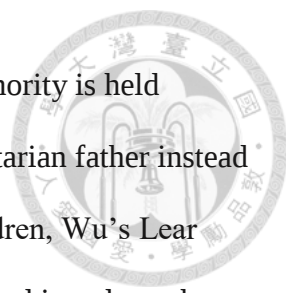
Lear is Here: A Semi-Autobiography in The Story of Lear

While *King Qi’s Dream* strives more to localize *Lear* in mainland China and is orientated toward local audiences, *Questioning Heaven* and *Lear is Here* are orientated



towards international audiences while aiming to refresh and innovate the *xiqu* industry. *Lear is Here*, produced by the Contemporary Legend Theatre (CLP) as a monodrama directed and performed by Wu Hsing-Kuo 吳興國, premiered in 2001. Different from *Questioning Heaven* and *King Qi's Dream* that present linear narratives, *Lear is Here* is an experimental collage of fragmented narratives from the perspectives of *Lear*'s ten different characters, all of which performed by Wu alone. As the official website of CLP introduces, from its establishment in 1986, the group has been considering "how to integrate this traditional performance form with modern theatre." As Ruru Li points out, with the "growing mood in Taiwan to assert a separate identity and formally declare independence from the mainland," the status and funding of *Jingju* have "become less assured," and this social background indirectly caused the financial crisis and the once disbandment of CLP for two years (182-83).

In the playbill of *Lear is Here*, the team also mentions the issue that "the old audiences are missing, and the new audiences lack interest in traditional theater" (52). As discussed before, the need in Taiwan for *xiqu* practitioners to innovate the genre, connect their plays to contemporary society, and attract new audiences is far more desperate than their Chinese counterparts. According to Wang An-Chi 王安祈, the reason that CLP draws from the Western canon for the materials of their new plays is to increase the philosophical depth that traditional *xiqu* usually lacks and to refresh the current *xiqu* performative system (100). While CLP is more radical in breaking the *xiqu* formats and Taiwan *Bangzi* Opera Company is resolute in preserving them, their adaptations of *Lear* do share a similar motivation for the marketing to new audiences and the philosophical innovation in *xiqu*, and hence sharing the theme of the reevaluation of traditional filial piety.



In *Lear is Here*, the single truth held by Lear as the paternal authority is held problematic, and the causes of the conflicts are shared by the authoritarian father instead of the disobedient children alone. After condemning the unfilial children, Wu's Lear subsequently reflects on his own fault, and such dynamics can be found in at least three scenes in the play. For example, in the first act, Wu sings, "People say paternal care will be repaid in three lives, yet all my daughters are thankless. Heavens, do open your eyes...Heavens... I've only got myself to blame and forgive myself not" 人道鞠勞三世報，偏偏女兒都不肖，蒼天睜眼來觀瞧.....蒼天爺呀.....這是我自作自受怎自饒(1). Seeing Wu "torn between self-pity and self-condemnation, transposing the accuser and the accused," Lei comments in a praising tone: "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" ("Vision" 275). Further, with the fool's voice, Wu jokes about Lear's pride or his own: "Master Lear has long held that he is the truth. Now that truth is a dog that must to kennel!" 我們家李爾王一直認為自己是唯一的真理，如今，真理都躲在狗洞裡了！ (8).

In addition to being an adaptation of *King Lear*, *Lear is Here* is also Wu's semi-autobiography. Besides the decline of the status of *Jingju* in Taiwan and the once disbandment of CLP, another important background of the play is Wu's relationship with Master Zhou Zhengrong 周正榮. As Li notes, for Wu, "whose father had died just three days after his birth," after he became a formal disciple of Zhou, their closeness was intensified by the way Wu saw Zhou as a "father figure" ("Who" 212).¹⁷ Nonetheless, Wu's innovative practice of introducing elements from "modern dance, spoken drama, and Western theater" to *Jingju* led Zhou to see him as a betrayer and "a selfish novelty seeker, wantonly attacking traditions that were fundamental to the traditional theater" (Li "Who" 211). Zhou finally expelled Wu from his school and

never acknowledged him again, and Zhou passed away during the rehearsal of *Lear is Here*.

For Wu, to perform *Lear is Here* is also to offer himself a place to “speak out” and “release” his “loneliness” (*Premiere Program* 23). It can be suggested that his loneliness is caused by both the lost status of *Jingju* in Taiwan and the break with Master Zhou. As Li points out, Wu’s adaptation of the Gloucester subplot also symbolizes Wu’s reconciliation with both Zhou and *Jingju*. At the end of Act 2 in *Lear is Here*, Wu adapts the end of this subplot with the following comment: “After this encounter [between Gloucester and Edgar], both father and son are reborn. This must be the most tender moment in *King Lear*” 經過這次重逢，父子又得到重生。這是李爾王劇中最溫馨的一刻吧！ (*Lear* 21). Such adaptation supposedly serves as a projection for Wu to compensate for the relationship with his late master. Nevertheless, it is also implied that the projection is only a projection, and what is lost in real life can never be regained. After the reunion in the Gloucester subplot, the next line is about Lear’s loneliness and madness: “But Lear is still a madman, roaming Here and there with a wreath on his head” 但李爾仍是個瘋子，頭戴枝環，四處遊蕩 (*Wu Lear* 21). In the same way that Gloucester's reunion contrasts with Lear’s unrecovered condition, it represents the contrast between ideals and the reality that remains unsettled.

In spite of Wu’s expectation to reach new audiences, as Li indicates, when she first saw *Lear is Here*, she regarded it “merely as Wu’s exercise in personal psychotherapy,” and she could in a way “sympathize with spectators who resented being forced to enter into an actor’s inner conflicts” (“Who” 215). Likewise, Feng criticizes even more harshly that the play becomes “so contextually confined” that one cannot interpret it “independently as a self-contained work” without referring to Wu’s personal life (77). Do Wu’s experimental techniques form a dialogue with Shakespeare? Or does he fail to

consider the audience without the knowledge of his background story and make his work way too egoistic, as Feng claims it?

Admittedly, some parts of *Lear is Here* may be incomprehensible to the audience without the knowledge of his life struggle: they may be a bit confused by the repetitive overemphasis on the identity of Wu's Lear that links him to Wu as an actor, his overly excessive loneliness expressed in the end, and the stress on Edgar's choice of not killing his father. In this sense, I agree with Feng to the extent that some parts of the play do make Wu seem a bit too much of an egoist. However, while the lines that merely translate *Lear* may be the parts most faithful to the source, such a modern translation lacks the beauty of classical Chinese language in the traditional theater and thus unfit for Wu's formalist performance.

Among all those emotions of different characters from *Lear* that are selected and emphasized in *Lear Is Here*, from my point of view, the most dramatically striking part lies in those scenes that perfectly combine Wu's emotions and those in *Lear* into one. The agony, loneliness, and regret *Lear* feels in the storm and the longing for reunion shared by Gloucester and Edgar all echo Wu's own sense of loss in the theatrical industry and his relationship with Master Zhou, and such a combination doubles the emotional power in his performance. Further, Wu's demonstration of the skills in traditional *xiqu* not only provides aesthetic spectacles but strengthens those emotions in a way more vivid. An audience doesn't have to know Wu's background story or the source text of *Lear* to appreciate his movements. Similarly, one does not have to know those backgrounds fully to find the sentiments Wu performs striking or identifiable, as the underlying theme of the reconsideration of filial piety, or more generally, generational conflicts in families, is universal.

Questioning Heaven: The Redemptionist Reading

Compared to the two adaptations discussed above, *Questioning Heaven* seeks to present the original *Lear* and demonstrate the key issues in *Lear* in a way that is more similar to Shakespeare's source text with a motive that is much more resolute. In interpreting *Lear*, Perng and Chen see Lear's revelation of his faults and his relearning of sympathy and pity as crucial points. Under the preface subtitle of the script book "Lear's three times of kneeling and his redemption 李爾的三跪與救贖," two playwrights write that the "core" of the play is Lear's "spiritual growth": while Lear "holds his power for too long" and thus becomes exceedingly "self-willed," he finally relearns patience in suffering and the importance of having "empathy" for others, thus finding the potential for "redemption and rebirth" (vii-viii). Perng and Chen subsequently quote Lear's sigh for the "poor naked wretches" (3.4.31) from the source text in the preface, and they adapt this part into a climax in *Questioning Heaven*:

Your ragged clothes do scarce your body hide.

Hungry and cold, there's nowhere you can turn.

Now I myself in awful straits do stand,

How I regret my negligence of you!

May rich now shake their superflux to them,

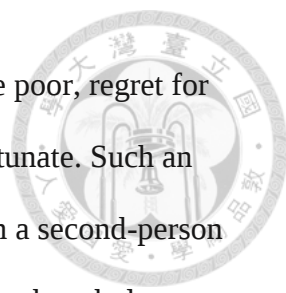
And show the heavens more just.

衣衫檻褸不蔽體，飢寒交迫無所依。

老身淪落一至此，愧悔昔日不自知。

寄語顯貴施賑濟，公道昭然本於茲。(49, 40-41)

Feeling the storm in person, Bin Hela (Lear) sings the passage quoted above after she lets the fool go under the shelter first, which shows that she finally starts to care about the feelings and states of others instead of just herself. Bin Hela's six lines in



Questioning Heaven can be divided into three parts: sympathy for the poor, regret for her past ignorance, and advocacy for all the rich to care for the unfortunate. Such an adaptation is mostly faithful to its source text except for shifting from a second-person perspective towards the poor to a third-person perspective and making the whole passage more concise to fit the time limit for the performance. Also, Perng and Chen's focus is near to the interpretation of Welsford, an early critic of *Lear*: for Welsford, “fellow-feeling” or “sympathy” is the key that distinguishes the good from the bad in the play (107-08), and “the poignant question” about Lear is not “Will he survive?” but rather “What will happen to his mind?” (111) That is, compared to the tragic end, Welsford puts more focus on Lear's spiritual growth as the key of the play just as Perng and Chen do.

Perng and Chen also comment that when Lear apologizes to Cordelia, he finally expresses his sense of guilt sincerely, and his soul is thus “purified” by the sufferings (viii). This part is adapted in *Questioning Heaven* and extended to a duet between Bin Hela and Du Wei, and the queen sings first: “Recall the day when I the empire split. You have full cause to hate me if you will. Regret and shame have struck me dumb and weak. A muddle-head, hopeless case am” 分疆之日堪回首？理應怨對如寇讎。滿腹愧疚難出口，老身懵懂萬事休。(62, 75). Before and during these lines, Bin Hela repetitively avoids her daughter's gaze, which indicates a great sense of shame. Compared to Lear in the source text, Bin Hela seems clearer in her state and less evasive, as she indicates the day she has banished her faithful child and her feelings of shame, while Lear only abstractly says that Cordelia should “have some cause” not to love him and that if she has “poison” for him, he “will drink it” (4.6.76-79).

In all adaptations of *Lear* discussed above and *Birthday Greeting*, the *xiqu* work that shares a similar structure and is thus worth comparing in the essay, the parents'

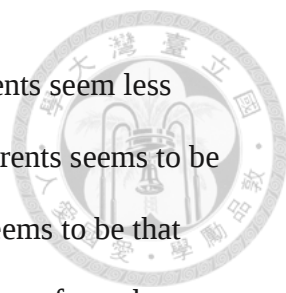
regrets about mistreatments towards their faithful children are all depicted with great length. However, there are other reasons for the regrets of the parents, as shown in the left side of the following table:



Table 2: Comparison of parents' regrets in five texts

	<i>King Lear</i>	<i>Questioning Heaven</i>	<i>Lear is Here</i>	<i>King Qi's Dream</i>	<i>Birthday Greetings</i>
Good daughter banished	V				
Lack of sympathy	V (but on the poor)		X		
Authoritarian rule or mistreatment of the elder daughters	X		Ambivalent	Only on the lack of "proper education" for them	

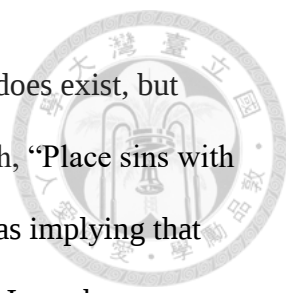
Among all adaptations, only *Questioning Heaven* has included the part on Lear's sympathy for the poor people. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that while Perng and Chen blame Lear's authoritarian rule for gradually twisting the minds of the two elder daughters, neither in *Lear* nor in *Questioning Heaven* has the protagonist reflected on this part. In the two plays, Lear and Bin Hela regret being fooled by loving flatteries, but they do not seem to ponder on why his daughters do not love him as he wishes. In *Lear is Here*, Wu's Lear reflects generally on the mistreatment of his children, but it remains unclear whether the two older daughters are also part of such regrets, as it is possible that he only means that he regrets banishing Cordelia. However, the signs of a corrupted authority in the three plays are clear enough for the audience to notice, whether the royal protagonist is aware of them or not.



Differently, in *King Qi's Dream* and *Birthday Greeting*, the parents seem less blameworthy. The reason that the daughters choose to betray their parents seems to be that they are spoiled. Therefore, one of the morals in the two plays seems to be that parents should not spoil their children. Such a message is much different from the one that warns parents against the abuse of their power, which is shown in the other two *Lear* adaptations. Generally speaking, both messages are right in their essence, as parents should neither spoil their children nor make themselves tyrants. However, though the righteousness of a given play's moral message is a matter of subjective interpretation, a greater degree of objectivity is possible in evaluating how convincing the plot and characters are, and this will be further explored in the next section.

The Incomplete Revelation

Despite the playwrights' intended redemptionist reading, it is noteworthy that a big part of Lin's criticism on *Questioning Heaven* is that Bin Hela's has less ethical revelation than *Lear*. According to Lin, Bin Hela reflects on her own faults much less than *Lear* does in the source text. As Lin observes (87), *Lear* admits his "sin" early in the storm scene with the famous quote "I am a man / More sinned against than sinning" (3.2.55-56), and he also implies that everyone sins by saying that "the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks" when the "sins" are placed "with gold" (4.5.165-66). In contrast, while Bin Hela does apologize to Du Wei at their reunion, this is the "only part" that she recognizes her fault, as Lin sees it (88). At the end of *Questioning Heaven*, Bin Hela sighs that "Since human love is only paper-thin, Behind your back by flatterers you're scorned 既知人情薄如紙，當面奉承暗裡譏" (84, 70), again blaming others without reflecting on herself, completely ignoring the care Duanmu Ge and Situ De do to her along the journey, which shows that her revelation is "limited" (88).



The gap in the degree of revelation between Bin Hela and Lear does exist, but possibly not as much as Lin argues. Though Lin interprets Lear's sigh, "Place sins with gold, / And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks" (4.5.165-66), as implying that everyone sins, I do not see such an implication in these lines. Rather, I see these expressions as Lear's one more attempt to universalize the issue to escape from the specific: this sins he has committed. On the other hand, while Lin criticizes Bin Hela's ignorance of Duanmu Ge and Situ De in the final aria, Lear is not much better in this respect. When Kent calls him, Lear first responds "Prithee, away," and subsequently curses everyone in the scene: "A plague upon you, murderers, traitors all!" (5.3.278, 280). After he finally recognizes Kent ("Are you not Kent?") when Kent seeks to tell him that Kent and Caius are the same person, who keeps serving Lear in disguise, Lear's response is an interruption: "I'll see that straight," meaning "I'll attend to that in a moment" (5.3.294, 300, footnote). While Kent does insist on finishing his explanation, and he finally gets one potentially positive response from Lear "You are welcome hither" (5.3.303), Albany comments later on Kent's efforts: "vain is it / That we present us to him" (5.3.308-9).

However, Lin's insights on Bin Hela's limitations and the reduction of affective power are indeed helpful, especially regarding the final aria. Here, to discuss the affects created by the original and the adaptation, we may compare the shifts of emotion expressed by their protagonists at the final scene first. In general, the emotion Lear expresses after his final entrance is a shift from anger to an anxiety for a silver lining of the movement of a feather, which in his mind potentially indicates Cordelia's breath. The moment before Lear's death, his focus is mainly on the faint or non-existent hope for Cordelia's survival. On the other hand, in Bin Hela's final aria, the mood has more shifts, as shown in the lyrics:



My tears fall down and the pains bite deep;
My calls my gentle daughter can't recall!
I seem to see her, kind and full of grace:
So straight she stood, like cypress or like pine.
But now she's cold as frost in withered death,
And leaving her mother in endless rue.

....

O heaven, when will we stop killing our kin?
How can the beanstalk bear to burn the bean?
O heaven, are not ethics life's cornerstone?
Foundations of our country turned to trash?
O heaven, where is justice in this world?
Is retribution mere fantastic talk?
O heaven, are there rules that govern life —
A momentary dream that none can trust?
Since human love is only paper-thin,
Behind your back by flatterers you're scorned.
With no reluctance this dull life I leave,
A carefree, unconstraining world to find.

撲簌簌悲從中來椎心泣，
聲聲喚喚不回朕的小嬌兒！
思往事彷彿溫柔亭亭立，
凜凜然松柏後凋歲寒姿；
凝神看冷若冰霜失生氣，
徒留下、老娘親、悔恨綿綿無絕期。



....

問蒼天骨肉相殘何時已？

煮豆怎忍燃豆萁？

問蒼天五倫莫非風雅體？

治國容廢萬世基？

問蒼天人間公義何處覓？

善惡報應豈無稽？

問蒼天因緣了斷生與死？

黃梁一夢惟存疑！

既知人情薄如紙，

當面奉承暗裡譏，

不堪留戀塵俗事，

另尋天地無所羈。(84, 69-70)

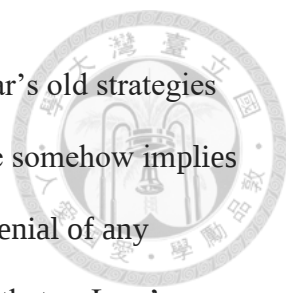
The aria could be divided into five parts: sorrow for Du Wei's death, recalling her beautiful lived image, sighing for sororal conflicts, anger for the lack of justice in the world, and the despair that causes her wish to leave the world. The main shift happens when the corpses of the two elder sisters are brought on stage in the middle, and at such sight, her mood shifts from mourning Du Wei to a sigh for family conflicts, and then to anger and despair. Although these shifts, combined with the actor's brilliant singing, are powerful on stage, the frequent changes within a short period make it harder for the audience to focus and identify with the character. Compared to the strategy that emphasizes Lear's sorrow and the feather in front of Cordelia's nose, the adaptation in *Questioning Heaven* may not be as affectively striking as in the source text. Lin finds that *Questioning Heaven* (a) "reduces the affective power 削弱情感強度," harshly commenting that the character in the adaptation (b) lacks reflective agency and (c)

“cease[s] to be human 不得為人” (82). According to Lin, as Bin Hela’s questions about justice and ethics are didactic, it seems that she is not allowed to mourn her daughter purely as a mother (85). While I agree with Lin’s first point on the reduction of affective power, as discussed above, the other two points need further evaluation.

Just as Lin argues, in questioning the injustice, Bin Hela seems to return to her old self, just as Heilman comments on Lear in an early scene, where his “faint flash of self-identification: ‘I did her wrong’” (1.5.17) provides “hardly a moment’s distraction” from his conflict with Goneril — he “passionately pursues” the “quarrel with others” but “hurries over” the “quarrel with [one]selves” (93). However, can limited self-reflection of a protagonist be used to indict the play as flawed?

It has to be noted that many Shakespeare scholars have doubts about whether Lear has truly learned anything from his suffering towards the end, as mentioned in the previous chapter. Cavell wittingly comments that Lear’s tragedy reminds us of the dark side of human nature, the common reluctance to really change oneself: “The cause of tragedy is that we would rather murder the world than permit it to expose us to change” (323). Also, similar to Lin’s remark on Bin Hela, Mickaël Popelard argues that when Lear “finally recovers from his bout of madness,” he “seems to have become oblivious again to the injustices suffered by the ‘poor naked wretches’ (3.4.31)” (136). Likewise, as Robert B. Heilman notes, despite Lear’s “acknowledgment that it is he who needs forgiveness,” even after that, “he cannot see that the death of Cordelia is due, ultimately, to the forces that he set in motion” (93, 97).

According to Heilman and Boose, Lear’s return to his old self can be further observed in his negation of Cordelia’s question “Shall we not see these daughters and these sisters?” and his subsequent wish to “sing[ing] like birds i’ th’ cage” with Cordelia (5.3.8, 10). As Heilman observes that Cordelia’s question “elicits Lear’s



quadruple ‘no!’” and “serves to recall but does nothing to correct Lear’s old strategies of possession and undaughtering of offspring” (315), Lear’s response somehow implies not only an escape from facing his two vengeful daughters but also denial of any potential wish Cordelia may want to express. Also, Boose points out that as Lear’s following fantasy of being along with Cordelia in the prison, “excluding any thought of Cordelia’s new life with France,” he extracts from Cordelia “the same price he demanded in the opening scene-that she love her father all” (335). Heilman thus comments that at the end of the play, Lear “has remained a father who fails to love his daughter enough to let go” (315).

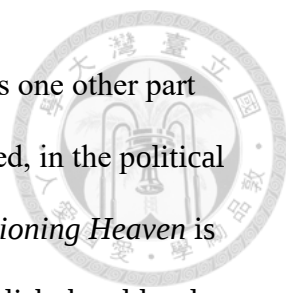
Possibly, the point is not whether the protagonists reflect on themselves, but whether the performance has enough affective power or philosophical depth. On the latter aspect, could the work potentially create the space that leads the audience to reflect on the issues represented in the tragedies? In my opinion, *Questioning Heaven* still succeeds in creating the space at the end of the whole play with a sense of openness. The final song is sung behind the scene, ending with this line: “散場繼續說是非” [The audience could continue to discuss the play after they leave the theater] (71, my trans.). *Shifei* 是非 literally means right and wrong, and this line thus implies that the audience could have their own answers for the moral of the tragedy and for how to judge each character of the story.

To respond to Lin’s harsh comment on the characterization, the playwright Chen explains that individualism widely influenced China in a much later age than the Western world, and *Questioning Heaven* is set in the traditional ancient China, so she naturally writes the characters in a way fitter for the *xiqu* stage (*Shake-xiqu* 258). Further, as Chen elaborates, when an author presents any idea in a play, it doesn’t necessarily mean that the author supports every aspect of them, and sometimes s/he

does so “in order to criticize or parody those ideas 正言若反” (*Shake-xiqu* 257).

Earlier in the preface of the script book, Perng and Chen explain that the adaptation of the final aria is written based on the traditional Chinese ethics of *zhengming* 正名 [the rectification of title], and this is indeed a “huge weight hardly bearable in Chinese culture 中國傳統文化中不能承受之「重」” (xi). As *zhengming* means the need for each member of the society to fulfill their duties so as to fit their role and title, in the idea of *zhengming*, a ruler also has the task to “overthrow the evil and re-establishing the order 撥亂反正” (Chen *Lyricism* 177), and Bin Hela thus has to question why *wulun* 五倫 [the five ethics] ceases to work in the society, as this term that includes the keyword *run* 倫, discussed in the previous chapter, is the order that rules the five interpersonal relationships in the traditional society: the emperor and subjects, father and son, husband and wife, brothers, and friends. It is out of the same reason that Gloucester’s wish to commit suicide at Dover is changed into Duanmu Ge’s decision to look for and keep serving his queen. In my interview with Chen, Chen further explains that traditional Chinese people usually only commit suicide when they are either ashamed of themselves or for martyrdom, but rarely to stop suffering. Therefore, if Duanmu Ge seeks suicide as Gloucester does, such adaptation will make him abnormal as a *xiqu* character, especially when he has yet another task unfulfilled: he has not cleared the grievance for his wrongly-accused elder son and reestablish the order.

When Chen discusses *Questioning Heaven* and *King Qi’s Dream*, observing the similarities between the two plays that focus on the ethics of filial piety and the rectification of title, seriously condemning the unfilial deeds, she meanwhile points out their change of focus from the original that puts more emphasis on Lear’s individual life journey and explores the subtleties in human mind (*Lyricism* 177-78). It is such a change that becomes the main target in Lin’s criticism. For Lin, that means reducing the

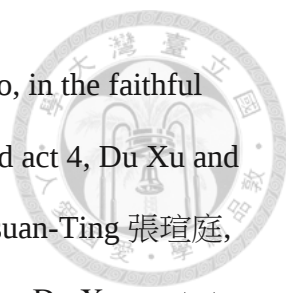


depth of *Lear*, and the adaptation of Gloucester's choice for suicide is one other part that she sees as making the character "cease to be human" (82). Indeed, in the political spectrum of the trend of *Lear* scholarship, the interpretation of *Questioning Heaven* is nearer to the conservative reading, which takes the side of the reestablish the old order rather than overthrowing it, as discussed in the first chapter, and Lin's criticism could be seen as one subversive reading against the conservative. However, just as other conservative interpreters in the scholarship such as Danby, the playwrights of *Questioning Heaven* are definitely aware of the problems with Lear's authoritarian power, and this will be discussed in the next section.

The Unfilial Children

As Brett Gamboa argues about *Lear* performances, "whatever the approach, each production must strike balances between Lear's majesty and dotage, suffering and tyranny, reason and lunacy" (2329). Without such balance, the conflict in the play is inevitably weakened by a too black-and-white morality. In terms of Lear's tyranny and dotage, reasonable resentment of the unfilial children is usually indicative of a corrupted authority. In the following section, I will discuss how *Questioning Heaven* depicts these children and compare it with *Lear is Here*, *King Qi's Dream*, and *Birthday Greeting*.

In the preface of the script of *Questioning Heaven*, Perng and Chen mention that they see traumatic memories as the reason behind the deeds of the villainous children, and the two bad daughters are thus offered much space to act out how they are traumatized by their mother (ix). In the first scene, Du Xu (Goneril) looks fearful when she is asked by Bin Hela (Lear) to sit on the chair to answer questions, which implies that she suffers stress under her mother's rule (8:05-27). In this arrangement, director Lu explains that the villains' childhood trauma is what he especially wants the actors to



keep in mind when they interpret the characters (3:09:58-10:33). Also, in the faithful adaptation of the quarrels between the daughters and Lear in act 3 and act 4, Du Xu and Du Shao (Regan), acted by Hsiao Yang-Ling 蕭楊玲 and Chang Hsuan-Ting 張瑄庭, both show vividly that they are hurt by Bin Hela (Lear)'s words. When Du Xu reacts to Bin Hela's curse that damns her offspring to be "cut" 斷子絕孫 (1:00:28-01:19; 31, 26) and when Du Shao speaks this line: "How could you say such things? So will you curse me in your rash mood" 您怎麼這般口不擇言？您發怒時也會如此咒罵我麼？ (1:15:28-33; 39, 33), their voices and gestures both express strong grief, and the meaning would be very different if the actors had reacted to Bin Hela coldly with contempt. As Perng and Chen interpret it, in the original, Lear clearly loves Cordelia more than the two elder daughters, and it is Lear's "paternal authority" and the "frigid system" that "twist" the minds of Goneril and Regan (ix). Even though such an interpretation doesn't seem to show on the script with detailed stage directions, with Lu's proper directing, there doesn't seem to be the necessity to put more details on the script itself. The lack of indications in script may be less of Perng or Chen's lack of awareness of the problems in traditional filial piety but more of their reliance on Lu's directing and the richness the performance could show.

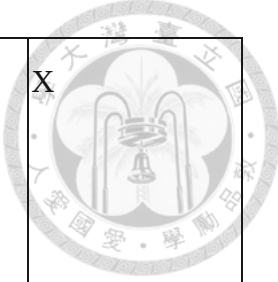
Similarly, for the two playwrights, Edmund's personality is "twisted" just like the sisters due to the unfair treatment he suffers as an illegitimate son (Perng and Chen "Preface" ix). Duanmu Meng (Edmund), played by Liu Chian-Hua 劉建華, speaks, "for I am but a bastard, and nobody would believe me" 他說，孩兒我只是一個雜種，沒有人會相信我 (34, 29). While he seeks to turn his father against his brother with the above line, his aggrieved voice invites the audience to guess that he might be using his true feelings in past experiences to make himself look more reliable (1:07:39-58). While Feng criticizes *King Qi's Dream* for flattening Edmund in the adaptation that

“his pretended love [to the sisters] aims directly at the control of their armies” (61), *Questioning Heaven* makes Duanmu Meng seem to love both sisters and hesitate just as Edmund does in *Lear*, and this line “Edmund I was contracted to them both, all three / Now marry in an instant” (5.3.230-31) is also kept in Perng and Chen’s adaptation: “by gods’ arrangement, we three are married in an instant” 這回蒼天安排咱仨個同時成親了 (82, 68).

In the following table, I aim to compare the villains’ characterization and the extent to which they can be blamed in the five plays. The symbol V indicates the existence of the corresponding design, while X indicates its non-existence. Δ means a sort of middle-ground.

Table 3: Comparison of antagonists’ characterization in five texts

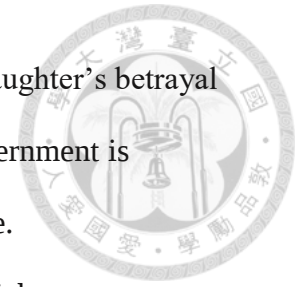
	<i>King Lear</i>	<i>Questioning Heaven</i>	<i>Lear is Here</i>	<i>King Qi’s Dream</i>	<i>Birthday Greeting</i>
Causes for the children’s cruel deeds that are relatable for the audience	V (The two elderly daughters seem to suffer from their fathers’ abuse and become unwilling to endure it anymore)		Δ (The two only appear in the love test)	X (The two mistreat their father without apparent sufficient cause)	Δ (A daughter betrays her parents after knowing that they are being persecuted by the government)



The tone created by the mock trial	A sense of irony and despair	A mixture of laughter and pity	X	A potential ideal of justice despite Qi's pitiful state	X
The bastard's background story	V			X (The correspondence of Edmund is not a bastard)	X (There is no correspondence of such a character)
The outsider's love	V (He seems to love both sisters)	X (The love triangle part is deleted)	X (He only pretends to love them)		

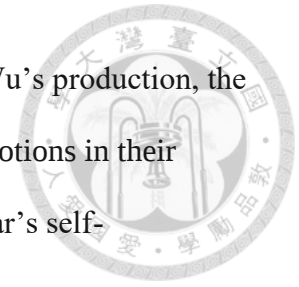
To start with, it may be assumed that the easier the audience can identify with the reasons behind the two sisters' deeds, the more Lear's tyranny and dotage can be felt. Also, the more one can understand a character's motivation, the more one can be immersed in the illusion that the character is *real*. For example, if the two elderly daughters have suffered from their parents' abuse, as suggested in *Questioning Heaven*, the audiences are less likely to judge them as flat villains that are evil just for the sake of being evil. Similarly, if the character corresponding to Edmund is kept with his bastard background story, the audience will understand more about the source of his ambition. Also, if he at least shows some love to the two sisters, he would seem less of a bloodless power seeker. In *King Qi's Dream*, all three villains perform cruel deeds purely out of ambition, while in *Lear is Here*, though the two elder daughters are not demonized as in *King Qi's Dream*, they are not given enough nuanced portrayal to become relatable,

either. On the other hand, in *Birthday Greeting*, the reason for the daughter's betrayal with the knowledge that her parents are being persecuted by the government is understandable, but still less relatable than having experienced abuse.



To what extent the antagonists' deeds can be justified is not a dichotomous question, but a spectrum with different factors. As Gamboa observes, in different productions, "Lear's knights can be decorous guests or hooligans" (2329), which affects the impression Lear and Goneril make on the audiences respectively. Likewise, Edmund's birth story can be "a source of anguish or a transparent excuse for villainy," and such difference is not only influenced by the acting of Edmund's actor alone but also by his father's and brother's attitude: when Gloucester discusses Edmund's bastardy, he may "charm or alienate audiences," and Edgar can be an "entitled favorite or a devoted father and son" (Gamboa 2329). In *Questioning Heaven*, the queen's knights are directed to be likable but noisy; the games they play with Bin Hela offer a chance for diva Wang to show off her martial skills, but such design also gives the impression that their bustles and shouts can sound extremely noisy to the hostess. Close-reading this scene, Yu also points out that by demonstrating how Bin Hela plays with her knights willfully and loudly on the stage, Du Xu's complaints of her mother are made reasonable (120). On the contrary, in *King Qi's Dream*, the eldest daughter, Chunying 春嬰, seeks to expel her father before the occurrence of any conflict, and she happily uses the friction between her servants and Qi's as an excuse to dismiss him (這回我可找到茬了[Now that I find an excuse])(745). On the other hand, Gloucester's discussion of Edmund's bastardy is deleted from the *Questioning Heaven*, while Duanmu Jia (Edgar) is portrayed as devoted, loyal, and kind-hearted. With such depictions, the two sisters in *Questioning Heaven* seem much more pitiful and relatable than the bastard. Alternatively, in *Lear is Here*, Gloucester's discussion of Edmund's

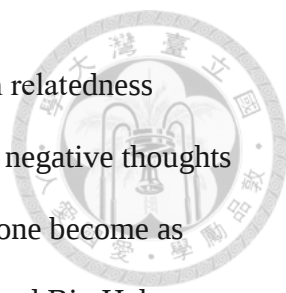
bastardy is deleted, and Edgar has no interaction with Edmund. In Wu's production, the goal is less to portray distinct characters than to highlight certain emotions in their storyline to echo Wu's life story, and the focus is thus mostly on Lear's self-condemnation.



In addition to the motivations of the sisters, the different tones created in the adaptations of the mock trial also contribute to the impressions that the king/queen and the two sisters make. In *Lear* and *Questioning Heaven*, despite their different tones, Lear and Bin Hela both show more of their lunacy in the mock trial scene. By contrast, in *King Qi's Dream*, Qi's arguments are often assented by the fool, as discussed in the previous section. Therefore, the extent that the sisters are blamed as evil or ones who deserve death is much stronger in *King Qi's Dream* than in *Lear* and *Questioning Heaven*, and the audiences can relate to them much less in *King Qi's Dream* than in the other two.

To make round characters, giving them relatable motivations is not the only way. As Gamboa notes, in recent *Lear* performances, directors increasingly take more “neutral positions, showing Lear's peremptory dismissals of Kent and Cordelia as more characteristic than anomalous, and letting Goneril and Regan act upon legitimate grievances” (2329). Gamboa further notes that such productions may moderate the two sisters' cruelty “by giving them distinct personalities, affections, and insecurities” (2329). With such depictions, the two will seem more human rather than bland symbols of evil, cruelty, and ingratitude. Following this trend, in *Questioning Heaven*, the actress plays Du Xu (Goneril) in a calm way, while Du Shao (Regan) is played as a more lively girl.

It has to be clarified that to relate to the villains is not to reverse the common judgment and to say that they are right to be cruel. Rather, these feelings often



contribute to arousing more pity and fear in one's mind. That is, such relatedness creates a sense that anyone can become a villain if ever overcome by negative thoughts such as anger, as to seek revenge in an excessive way may make anyone become as cruel as Goneril, Regan, and Edmund. Similarly, by relating to Lear and Bin Hela, one may be led to realize that the demands of unconditional obedience and flattery in authoritarian filial piety and parents' insistence on a dignified image may lead to tragic results. By contrast, if the line between good and bad or victims and perpetrators is clearly drawn, the space for reflection is reduced. In such a dichotomous depiction, the reason for Lear's suffering might be reduced to mere bad luck, unfortunate encounters with bad people, i.e., a single misstep of old age. Likewise, the reason for the unfilial children to become villains might also be reduced to inherent evil, which is less relatable for the audience.

Possibly, the space for different kinds of reevaluation is just what Perng seeks in the depth of Shakespeare's portrayal, as discussed in the introduction. That is, as clear-drawn lines can often be found in traditional *xiqu* works, adaptors like Perng, Chen, and Wu feel the need to innovate the genre and add in more polyvalence in their depictions. Thus, by pitying and fearing the tragic ends of the characters in the Aristotelian sense, the audiences may have more space to reflect on their own life experiences. In an online review written by the name Floating Feather 羽毛飄飄, the author shares that *Questioning Heaven* reminds her of her dementia grandmother's authoritarian rule over her aunt, so the plot is rather relatable for her. In another review, Lee Li-Xian 李俐賢 evaluates the play as thought-provoking and reflects on the faults of each character, such as Bin Hela's (Lear) and Du Wei's (Cordelia) ignorance of others' feelings, thoughts, and states, Duanmu Meng's (Edmund) exceeding desire for recognition, and the two sisters egotistic personalities that are developed under their mother's unfair

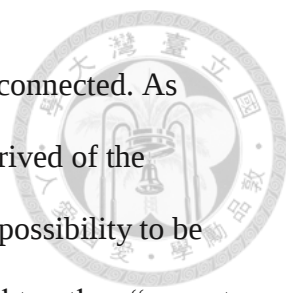
treatment. Likewise, Chen Yun-Fei 陳韻妃 praises *Questioning Heaven* for its non-dichotomous portrayal of human nature that combines both cultural specificity and universal experiences.



Challenges in *Xiqu* Adaptations

However, despite the playwrights' intention of adding Shakespeare's depth to *xiqu*, *Questioning Heaven* has its limitations. In addition to Lin's criticism, Huang Ting-Rung 黃婷容 also reviews that she sees the moral in *Questioning Heaven* as the traditional value of loyalty and filial piety, which is the same as the didactics in most *xiqu* works. For Huang, *Questioning Heaven* only uses the plot and characters in *Lear* to construct a space that is near to traditional Chinese society without seeking to show the essence of its source text, and the play thus fails to offer significance for the audience to reflect on the contemporary society 對於現代人對於當代的社會感知，並沒有辦法產生新的時空意義與內涵探問。

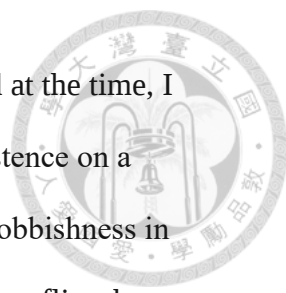
While the old morals have both values and limitations and thus cannot be easily termed as positive and negative, and it will be a bigger question on to what extent Confucianism and filial piety are outdated or still relevant in the contemporary society, what Lin and Huang mean is that the narrative and characters in *Questioning Heaven* fail to completely convince them. Similarly, in a personal conversation with a teacher, Virginia Lin, she shares that she finds it difficult to relate to either Bin Hela or Lear in most adaptations, and she thinks that Duanmu Meng (Edmund) is acted in a way that is obviously evil, which makes this character dull for her. As a *xiqu* lover herself, Virginia Lin tells that she loves *zhezixi* 折子戲, as the genre often highlights a character's emotional climax, and the audience could imagine their fuller emotional landscape with only a rough knowledge of the plotline of background story. However, for her, the



emotional transitions between scenes in *Questioning Heaven* feel disconnected. As noted, Lin Wen-Ling comments that Duanmu Ge (Gloucester) is deprived of the possibility to commit suicide, and Bin Hela (Lear) is deprived of the possibility to be fully immersed in sadness when facing the death of her beloved daughter, they “cease to be human” (80-85). While I disagree with such a harsh judgment, I could understand that for Lin, Duanmu Ge’s insistence to help his queen even during his blindness and Bin Hela’s later reaction that ponders on the unfairness in the world do not seem convincing and reasonable enough. Lin and Huang thus both believe that *Questioning Heaven* as a *xiqu* overwhelms its status as a Shakespeare adaptation.

Nevertheless, interestingly, Lee Li-Xian comments oppositely that *Questioning Heaven* is too faithful to the source text so that it has not shown enough of the special features in the *xiqu* genre. Also, to respond to Lin Wen-Ling’s disapproval on *Questioning Heaven*’s adaptation of Gloucester’s choice and Lear’s emotional expression and Virginia Lin’s criticism on the characterization of Duanmu Meng (Edmund), I have to say that when I watched the play, the actors’ performance somehow convinced me without triggering any sense of weirdness, and I found Duanmu Meng rather charming with his confidence to change his fate. Why can the same play be evaluated in such extremely different ways?

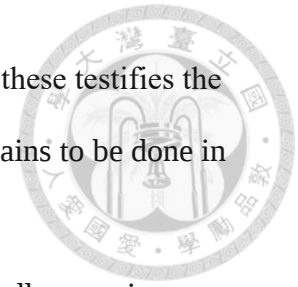
Despite the relatively greater degree of objectivity in evaluating how convincing the plot and characters are than how righteous a given play’s moral message is, subjective interpretation based on one’s personality and life experiences still matters to a certain extent. Some of my personal experiences may be a test case of this: I first read *Lear* when I had just graduated from high school; by the time, I could not relate to any of the characters in the play. For me at that age, this was just a wooden plot about the meanderings of a curmudgeon who could not distinguish flattery from true love. The



second time I read it was in my first semester of graduate school, and at the time, I could somehow understand Lear's needs for care and praise, his insistence on a dignified image, his sense of loss, and the fool's comments on the snobbishness in human nature. Yet, during my reading, I felt a slight discomfort: the conflicts between the two sisters and their father and the results they led seemed to imply that disobedience towards one's parents (such as cutting the number of soldiers) will necessarily mean evil. The third time I encountered this play was through the filmed performance of *Questioning Heaven*, and this was the time that I truly felt pity and fear for the unfilial sisters. Only at this time did I genuinely feel their fear for the authoritarian parent and the gradual enhancement in their cruel deeds, and I thus felt that their problem was not in the first disobedience about cutting Lear's soldiers but the abandonment of basic sympathy and the unwillingness to have better communications. For me, *Questioning Heaven* has not only offered great *xiqu* performances that are both visually stunning and affectively striking but also led me to have new reflections on *Lear* and my family life, as the conflicts shown in the play truly remind me of my relationship with my father.

Based on the above observation of difference audience feedbacks, it could be seen that to sense different details in a play, to relate to different characters, and to recall different personal experiences will all affect one's reception for a single production. When the same individual sees a work at different ages, the reaction could be totally different: with more life experiences accumulated, one could find identifications in distinct characters and notice different details. In seeing the idea of filial piety in *Questioning Heaven*, one could feel very differently depending on whether one hears such a word used in didactic contexts during one's growth. In seeing the *Bangzi* opera formats in the performance, whether the style of the music or movements cater to one's

taste will also influence one's response to the whole production. All these testifies the difficulty to theorize audience reception systematically, and this remains to be done in future research.



In addition to the subjectivity of each audience member, admittedly, certain formalist limitations do make *Questioning Heaven* less affectively convincing in some aspects than if it were a spoken drama. As Virginia Lin shares, according to her own taste, what she expects in a good play is a more sophisticated depiction of the affective world of the characters. However, to fit the numerous events in *Lear* in three hours and in *xiqu* format will almost mean a necessity to sacrifice the length for the characters' emotional landscapes and complexities in personalities, and she cannot help but lament for such a sacrifice. Just as Yao-Heng Hu 胡耀恆 points out in his analysis of CLP's *Jingju* adaptation of *Macbeth*, with the formalist performance in *xiqu* that relies on singing and dancing, it is barely possible to keep the "depth" in Shakespeare with its "psychological, ethical, and philosophical" dimensions in the *xiqu* adaptations (78-80). While to "judge such adaptations with the standard of spoken dramas" and criticize them as losing the essence of the source text may be unfair, as Hu explains, such comparison also indicates the systematic problems in many *xiqu* adaptations of Western works (78). This may be one reason that Perng and Chen's intention to represent the depth of Shakespeare is not received by all the audiences despite the playwrights' aims. It is possible that for Huang and Lin, *Questioning Heaven* has triggered their dislike of certain aspects in filial piety, while the depiction in the play has not offered enough signs to differentiate this adaptation from the traditional didactic plays. While how to better adapt a play transculturally depends more on the adaptation strategy, the differences in genres does posit a challenge to the adapters.

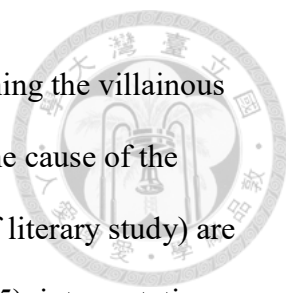
Conclusion



To conclude the thesis, I will first summarize the analyzed observations and seek to provide extended reflections, especially on the role of filial piety in the two plays and contemporary Taiwan. By situating *Questioning Heaven* in its three relevant historical contexts—Shakespeare’s England, China during the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1644, 1636-1912), and contemporary Taiwan—I have summarized the historical contexts and reviewed Lear scholarship in Chapter One. The complexities of these backgrounds reveal how parental authoritarian rules connect to loyalty in governmental ideology and how this ideology was challenged in later ages in both English and Chinese contexts.

In Chapter Two, a lexical comparison revealed the source words in Lear of keywords *xiao* 孝 [filial piety], *zhong* 忠 [loyalty], and *lun* 倫 [ethics] in *Questioning Heaven*, as well as other representative Mandarin translations of *Lear*. Utilizing the Dual Filial Piety Model, I discussed the complexity of filial piety in both its reciprocal and authoritarian aspects, as reflected in the different source words such as “love” or “obedience.” Although Chinese ideology for filial piety was practiced more extremely during the Ming and Qing dynasties, I concluded that the usages of *xiao*, *zhong*, and *lun* in *Questioning Heaven* do not twist the play into an advocacy of Confucianism. Instead, the polysemous nature of these words and the openness of the lyrics at the end of the play allow the audience to judge the characters based on their own standards.

The openness of *Lear* has allowed for various interpretive trends in scholarship since its inception. Earlier interpretations focused on Lear’s spiritual growth and redemption, while later trends highlighted the limitations of Lear’s revelation and his

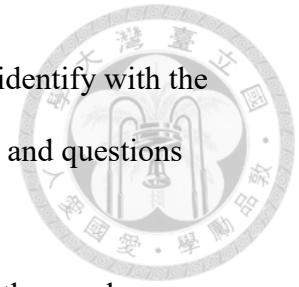


reversion to old behaviors. Political interpretations shifted from blaming the villainous children's individualism to harshly criticizing paternal authority as the cause of the tragic end. Just as Burts argues, "the Renaissance (and other fields of literary study) are always in the process of being rewritten, revised and reinvented" (345), interpretation and adaptation strategies of the same canonical work in different ages also reflect an ongoing negotiation between different perspectives. The recontextualization of *Lear* as a *Bangzi* opera revives essential ethical debates and provides unique insights into paternal and governmental authority within a different cultural system.

As an adaptation, *Questioning Heaven* aligns more with redemptionist and conservative readings in the scholarship. These philosophical thoughts, though not wholly innovative for the common Taiwanese audience, still find relevance in contemporary society. The playwrights of *Questioning Heaven* emphasize Lear's reflection on the "poor naked wretches" (3.4.31), a theme also stressed in the preface of the script book. While Chinese adaptations of *Lear* typically criticize unfilial deeds, playwrights like Wu, Perng, and Chen aim to present characters and values beyond a simple good-evil dichotomy. They seek to differentiate their works from traditional *xiqu* that advocate unquestioning filial piety, using various techniques to mitigate the shock of unfilial transgressions.

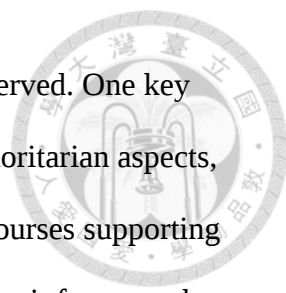
Compared to earlier adaptations, the creative team of *Questioning Heaven* shows more sympathy for the antagonists. As the plot progresses, the corruption of Bin Hela's authoritarian power and the selfishness and cruelty of Du Xu, Du Shao, and A-Meng are vividly portrayed. Both paternal repression and filial revenge are to be blamed, although not necessarily equally. To compare the characterizations in *Questioning Heaven* with earlier counterparts, I created two tables, tracking elements like Lear's soliloquy, the children's cruelty motives, and Edmund's background story. When self-reflective lines

and relatable motivations are included, audiences are more likely to identify with the characters despite their faults. This leads to philosophical reflections and questions about avoiding such tragedies in real life.



Questioning Heaven successfully portrays the conflict between the royal protagonist and the two older sisters with pathos, but it faces challenges as a formalist performance. Lin Wen-Ling criticizes Duanmu Ge's decision to serve the queen instead of committing suicide, the loss of affective power in the final scene, and Bin Hela's incomplete revelation. While I respect the localization strategy in the adaptation of Gloucester's suicide, I agree with Lin that more shifts in the queen's emotional expression could focus the effect better. Additionally, while the subversive reading that values individualism may not be more agreeable than the conservative one, it is understandable that Bin Hela's questioning of justice based on Confucian rectification may trigger audiences to question her self-reflection.

Lin's criticism of Bin Hela's revelation is relevant to the playwrights' goal of presenting Shakespeare's depth. The extent to which this goal is achieved, and whether the intended messages are fully expressed and received, are key questions. While standards for judging a play's success vary, the complexity of characterization and the philosophical impact on audiences should be considered. The formalist challenges in *Questioning Heaven* come to limit the characters' emotional depth compared to *Lear*. While *xiqu*'s lyrical performance can strengthen emotional climaxes, it could also challenge the presentation of detailed explanations of character motivations. Contemporary *xiqu* artists must balance formalist performance merits with storytelling to resonate more with audiences.



Throughout the thesis, various apparent dichotomies can be observed. One key dynamic lies in the idea of filial piety between its reciprocal and authoritarian aspects, forming the core of debates around its contemporary relevance. Discourses supporting its relevance often emphasize the reciprocal part, while those opposing it focus on the authoritarian aspect. Additionally, there is the external dynamic between family or society, encompassing filial piety as a whole versus personal freedom, or in other words, traditional order versus individualism. This dichotomy of values largely parallels the dichotomy between viewing filial piety through reciprocal or authoritarian lenses. Consequently, promoting filial piety as a whole often risks being perceived as ignoring its authoritarian component or its connection to the feudal system, while criticizing traditional filial piety risks being seen as disregarding its reciprocal value or as endorsing selfish radical individualism.

In discussing filial piety in the adaptation of *Lear* in *Questioning Heaven*, similar parallels to the above debates can be observed. Criticism of the usage of the keyword *xiao* or concepts related to filial piety in the adaptation often suggests skepticism about its contemporary relevance. Further, Lin Weng-Lin's criticism against Bin Hela's lack of spiritual revelation is the criticism against her self-reflection on her authoritarian rule. On the other hand, Lei's praise for *Lear is Here* has an equally great focus on the lines that express Lear's reflection on his authoritarian power over his children. Similarly, the redemptionist versus nihilist reading and the conservative versus subversive reading of *Lear* reflect similar expectations. The different sets of dichotomies can be summarized in the following table.

Table 4: Different sets of dichotomies that parallel to each other:

Aspect	Dichotomies	
Viewpoints towards the different aspects in filial piety	Reciprocal	Authoritarian
Attitudes towards filial piety as a whole	Promotion	Criticism
Preference towards the social system	Traditional order	Individualism
Readings of <i>Lear</i> in terms of politics	Conservative	Subversive
Readings of Lear's spiritual growth	Redemptionist	Nihilist

An audience's expectation of a play's moral message more often reflects one's expectation for the society one lives in, and these expectations are deeply influenced by one's social background, cultural traditions, and societal changes. While it is clear that an extreme stance of either side of these debates would be problematic, where is the exact balance? It is barely possible to provide an answer within a book or a play. If we first focus the discussion on the plot in *Lear* and *Questioning Heaven* to avoid the overly broad questions, we may ask this question: what could be done to avoid the tragedies if we were the characters? To debate which side should be blamed more for the tragic end is to debate which side has more responsibility to change oneself. Therefore, answers will differ when this question is asked from different perspectives at different time points. In terms of the beginning of the play, we all know the royal protagonist should not divide the kingdom based on flatteries, but what is the better way to fulfill his need to "shake all cares and business from [his] age" (1.1.30)? A discussion with his subjects is necessarily needed, and listening to the plain but faithful words is equally important. On the other hand, for Cordelia and Du Wei, do they have the duty to

speaking with more wisdom to be true without enraging their parents? The answer may be yes and no. If she does succeed in such a difficult task, the tragedy might have been avoided; however, it seems unreasonable to place such a burdensome responsibility on her.

In terms of when the kingdom is already divided, how could the parent and his/her two elder daughters reach a better consensus? As for the number of soldiers, compromises from all three ends are likely to be required, as neither cutting the soldiers without the royal protagonist's acceptance nor forcing the daughter to bear with the noises seem a good option. Admittedly, so-called communication could be extremely difficult, as during the process, emotions often overcome reason. On the other hand, as for Edmund and Duanmu Meng's situation as bastards, what is the middle way between accepting his fate and plotting for his brother's fortune? To answer this question will require a more detailed research of the property laws of Shakespeare's time and is beyond the scope of the thesis. The situations in *Lear* and *Questioning Heaven* are difficult enough to be fully discussed, and real-life ones are often more complicated. Different readings of *Lear* have persisted for four hundred years of discussion, and the complex, conflicted audience expectations of both Shakespearean England and twenty-first century Taiwan very likely reflect the need to mediate the dynamics with many layers in a changing society. This is why the canon is never outdated: it always calls for new answers from the audience in different ages to reflect those different problems in their life.

Appendix

Performance Record of *Questioning Heaven*



Premiere: 2015/11/27-29, 3 sessions

National Theater

Tickets sold (including VIP tickets): 4089

Audience number: 3462

2016/4/30, 1 session

Chiayi Performing Arts Center

Tickets sold (including VIP tickets): 883

Audience number: 707

2016/5/22

Taiwan Public Television, 2 showings

2017/9/3, 1 session

Chang'an Grand Theatre (in Beijing)

Audience number: about 800

2020/10/9-10, 2 sessions

National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts (Weiwuying)

Audience number: about 1176

2021/5/28 York International Shakespeare Festival

<https://web.archive.org/web/20210924121842/http://yorkshakes.co.uk/programme/questioning-heaven/>

The same version as the DVD ver., the recorded performance of the session on

2015/11/28, recorded by Taiwan Public Television

2022/11

Released on Taiwan Public Television OTT

<https://www.ptsplus.tv/season/bc7ffdf4-f0d0-46fd-9413-27cf413bcad4>

Provided by Taiwan Bangzi Opera Company

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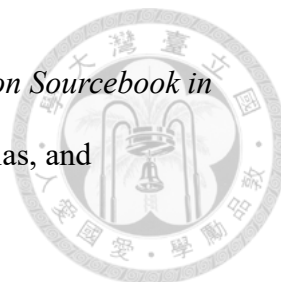
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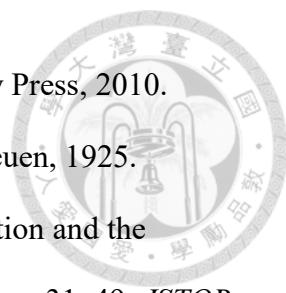
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