

Theatrical Changeability and Dramatic Adaptation: A Semiotic Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This essay explores the concept of "adaptation" in the dramatic arts, whether of one cultural form (e.g., Asian) to another or one dramatic form (e.g., film, theater) to another, or both. It explores "adaptability" in terms of the semiotic notions of "change" and "dynamism." The semiotic interpretation must always be aware of the specific dramatic form which is "signified" both in the "text" of the play and in the dramatic "presentation" – that is, aware of the intimate interplay of text and presentation.

KEY WORDS

text presentation

adaptation

semiotic signification

dramatic form

change

dynamism

Chinese drama

transcodification

I.

The creative phenomenon of adaptation appears more frequently in certain art forms and genres. The performing arts, e.g., theatre, dance, and music, produce a lot of adaptations. In the history of theatre and drama both East and West, adaptation (either trans-media or within a single medium) has been an integral phenomenon. Play-into-play adaptation is especially common in dramatic art as a means of production. Roman drama is essentially a series of adaptations from Greek drama — Titus Maccius Plautus (c. 254-184 B.C.) adapted solely from Greek plays; Lucius Annaeus Seneca (c. 3 B.C.-65 A.D.) exerted great influence upon Elizabethan drama, but his plays were again adaptations of Greek tragedy. That Shakespeare is a great adaptor is well known to scholars.¹ His works have in turn become the object of theatre adaptation in subsequent periods.² In the East, the practice of story-borrowing in Chinese drama has been a traditional practice ever since the Yüan (1271-1368) dynasty. The most exhaustive quantitative research hitherto on Chinese dramatic adaptations was done by the late Chinese scholar Chou I-pai 周貽白 in the late 1940s. He listed a total of 314 recurring dramatic “original stories”, many of which had been adapted more than once into more than one dramatic genre.³

In contrast, rewriting of previous works in the novel, i.e., novel-into-novel adaptation, has not been a prevalent creative method in the genre, whereas film adaptations of literary works and remakes of prior films need no additional figures here to show their prevalence. The driving forces behind adaptation are numerous: some are historical, some concern the traditions and conventions of certain national literatures, some arise from the unique properties of certain art forms and genres.

Oftentimes adaptations are prompted by specific reasons. The influx of film adaptations of literary works in postwar France was the result of an attempt to safeguard the quality of film art against the quantitative ideology of Hollywood's film industry,⁴ while adapted motion pictures from Hollywood have always been produced for a “notorious” reason: commercial exploitation of great literary works and famous writers.

In the study of Chinese drama, scholars have attributed the ultra-dominance of adaptation processing to the Chinese literary temperament which is said to be more interested in “how” to write than in “what” to write:

Few of the [Ming *ch'uan-ch'i* 明傳奇] playwrights were original. They were content to adapt and to combine what had been already in existence and in great esteem. . . . They strove for novelty in expression rather than originality in perception. In other words, they cared less about what they said than how they said it.⁵

Apart from the social, aesthetic, and historical reasons for the adaptations critics have indicated in different media and genres, may it not be that in the art of drama, the semiotic and discursive modes of this specific art form, which is typified by an intrinsic fluidity and mobility of the performance text, prompt adaptation as a major means of production?

The present essay is an attempt to account for this phenomenon of dramatic production in terms of that unique generic property inherent to dramatic art — that which Jindřich Honzl named *changeability* and *dynamism*, or the *transformability* and *transcodification* of the theatrical sign as defined in semiotic terms. This inherent nature of the art form leads to the “floating” and “incomplete” characteristics of the two dialectical texts, i.e., the performance and the dramatic text, of this specific double-articulating art form, resulting in an ever-renewing “processing” of the dramatic work.

II.

The unique generic nature of the art of drama has been lucidly expounded by Jiri Veltruský:

Drama is a work of literature in its own right; it does not need any thing but simple reading to enter the consciousness of the public. At the same time, it is a text that can, and mostly is intended to, be used as the verbal component of theatrical performance.⁶

There exists a creative interaction between the literary-dramatic text and its corresponding theatrical performance, and it is with an awareness of the double-articulation of the generic status of dramatic art — a double entity embodying literature the verbal art and theatre the performing art — that a reconsideration of the art of drama as not merely a literary genre for *reading*

but a more complex cultural event of multi-signifying systems has thrown new light on our understanding of the phenomenon of adaptation in this art form. The inherent potential conditions for change in the *texts* (both the performance text and dramatic text) arise from the high instability, heterogeneity and discontinuity of the spatio-temporal structure of the performance text (which is again in a complex dialectical relationship with the dramatic text). This can explain the prevalence of adaptations in the art of drama (and perhaps in other performing arts) in terms of form.

First and foremost, the theatrical sign is different from the linguistic sign, which constitutes the two genres of poetry and the novel in one very significant way: the theatrical sign is *dynamic* and *changeable*. Any theatrical sign can in principle stand for any signified class of phenomena. For instance, a table can be represented by an actor on his hands and legs; a city wall can be represented by a piece of cloth supported by two bamboo poles (as seen in the Peking Opera *K'ung-ch'eng-chi* 空城記 [*The Empty City Ruse*]). A classic metadramatic illustration of the mobility of the sign in the theatre has been pointed out by Keir Elam in *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*: in Act 2, Scene 3 of Shakespeare's *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the clown Launce is bewildered by the problem of assigning dramatis personae to his set of sign-vehicles (signifiers), and realizes that the sign-vehicles are interchangeable:

Nay, I'll show you the manner of it. This shoe is my father; no, this left shoe is my father: no, no, this left shoe is my mother; nay, that cannot be so neither: — yes, it is so; it is so; it hath the worser sole. This shoe, with the hole in, is my mother, and this my father. A vengeance on't! there 'tis: now, sir, this staff is my sister; for, look you, she is as white as lily and as small as a wand: this hat is Nan, our maid: I am the dog; no, the dog is himself; and I am the dog, — O! the dog is me and I am myself; ay, so, so.⁷

This quality of the theatrical sign which enhances the *generative capacity* of the sign-vehicle — using extraordinary economy of communicational means to generate a rich semantic structure in certain forms of theatre — has been characterized by Jiřdrıch Honzl as *dynamism* and *changeability* (“Dynamics of the Sign in the Theatre” [1940]). This changeability is “the special character of the theatrical sign whereby it changes its material and passes from one aspect into another, animates an inanimate thing, shifts from

an acoustical aspect to a visual one, and so on."⁸ While this is a universal feature of the theatrical sign, it is especially significant in the case of traditional non-illusionistic Oriental theatres, "where far more semantic scope is permitted to each stage item, on the basis of explicit conventions."⁹

The ultimate manifestation of this characteristic of the theatrical sign in the modern Chinese theatre is perhaps the *empty* dramatic time and locality on the traditional Chinese opera stage as exemplified by K'un Opera and Peking Opera. The stage itself, which is usually decorated with a table and two chairs in the centre, does not associate with any specific time and locality in the absence of actors. The abstract setting, i.e., the table and chairs, has no connection to the plot. Time and locality are specified by the actors after their entrance. The stage itself as a major stage item (sign-vehicle) in K'un Opera and Peking Opera has therefore an infinite number of meanings, waiting for assignment by the actors who are to come on stage, and the emptiness of time and locality is to be filled in by different contents scene for scene.¹⁰ The so-called "symbolic" characteristic of traditional Chinese opera has already been over-quoted, especially by drama critics of Mainland China, but what is to be stressed here is the non-fixed representational relations between the signifier and the referent on the Chinese stage.

This *transformability* in stage representation is also seen in the reciprocal substitution of sign-systems. For instance, the scenery is always "described" by verbal reference in the Chinese theatre. Honzl sees the changeability of the theatrical sign "which passes from material to material with a freedom unknown to any other art" as the essence and the unifying structural element of dramatic art; he claims that "we explain the changeability of dramatic structure through it."¹¹

This dynamism of the theatrical sign and the *transcodification*¹² of theatrical sign-system give the theatre the capability of keeping productions "fresh," renewing the style and technique of staging the dramatic text every now and then. Antonin Artaud asserts in his *Theatre and Its Double*:

. . . theatre is the only place in the world where a gesture, once made, is never repeated in the same way.¹³

The theatre as a performing art, for which the dramatic text is intended, is an art form of which the text is spatially and temporally heterogeneous and discontinuous due to the unevenness of multi-channel communication¹⁴ in the performance venue, whereas in the *printed* literary media of poetry

and novel, or painting, or film, the text is more homogeneous and continuous spatially and temporally, and hence more *fixed*. This generic property of the performing arts is the drive for adaptation inherent in the form.

The difference between the *printed* media and the *non-printed* media forms is again well illustrated in the instance of Laurence Olivier's film adaptation of *Richard III* (1955). Anthony Hammond praises Oliver's brilliant acting, but criticizes the film's adverse effects:

. . . our collective awareness of the play as performed will never be the same again. For a film is not strictly a performance of the play: in its very permanence its being exactly the same every time it is seen, it establishes a theatrical text for the play, much as an editor establishes a reading text. The influence of the film thus is of a different kind from that of any stage performance, however successful: the film is an experience which is repeatable. For this reason it is regrettable that Olivier elected to perform a bastardized text . . . ¹⁵

The bastardized text obviously refers to Colley Cibber's 1700 adaptation. The regrettable effect of the film, if any, is not the main concern here, but this instance has fully illustrated the generic characteristics of the theatre and its difference from the spatially and temporally *fixed* media forms, for instance, film. It is again important to notice here that Hammond draws a parallel between the "permanent" characteristics of film and the reading text as opposed to the "non-establishing" characteristic of the theatrical performance. As Stanley Wells remarks, "a play has no constant theatrical reality . . . in the theatre we can never see Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. We can see only a succession of approximations to it, each of them nearer to or further from some kind of ideal performance."¹⁶

Dramatic action as an invariably changeable phenomenon stands out distinctively, as Honzl sees it, as the rule and specific characteristic of the genre. It is therefore in a sense right to say that each production of a play is in a way an "adaptation." This intrinsic generic property in the art form is a potential for change and renewal of the text from time to time.

III.

Theatrical performance and the dramatic text interrelate and interplay

with each other they are not two separated, disparate structures. Since dramatic art is a double-entity of literary discourse and theatrical discourse, complications are brought about by the dialectical relation between the two. According to Veltruský, this dialectical tension is brought about by two invariably present and diametrically opposed sign systems in the theatre, i.e., language and acting. These two sign systems not only check but also enrich each other. Veltruský regards the relative weight of the two poles of this antinomy as variable: the dominance of either one is in inverse proportion to that of the other. If the linguistic sign prevails, the materiality of the sign created by the actor tends to be stripped away. If the linguistic sign is outweighed, its semantic potential dwindles. In the theatre, however, the actor's body (the material bearer of the meaning), because of its overwhelming physical presence, has an inclination to catch the spectator's attention at the expense of the linguistic text (the immaterial meanings). The sign created by the actor tends to predominate over the linguistic sign in theatrical performance.¹⁷ The dramatic text as an entity intended for performance and as one of the component signifying systems of the art of drama shares little of the privileged states which narrative and poetic texts enjoy. It is also susceptible to the kind of changes the theatrical sign experiences.

In terms of discourse, the dramatic text tells its story in a way quite different from narrative and poetic genres. The dramatic text is a series of speech acts, action performed through words. Dialogue – the prime manifestation of the dramatic text – “is immediate ‘spoken action’ rather than reference to, or representation of action . . . the oppositions which structure the drama are to be *acted out* in the communicational exchange, and not described at a narrative remove.”¹⁸ The dramatic text is never “complete” in itself in this sense – the play is moved along through illocutionary acts. The interpretive problem of distinguishing “sentence meaning” and “utterer’s meaning”¹⁹ is not only the audience’s, but also the reader’s. The dramatic text is a highly ambiguous, incomplete and unstable text waiting for the actor’s interpretation (by disambiguating or further ambiguating the illocutionary mode of the utterances through execution of paralinguistic elements, kinesic components and proxemic relations), and/or the reader’s “theatrical reading” (by an imaginative theatrical rendering of the dramatic text based on an acquired theatrical competence). The dramatic text is perhaps physically printed as the narrative or poetic text, but its semiotic and discursive mode is by no means “printed” as the narrative and poetic genres are.

The incompleteness and instability of the dramatic text further distinguish themselves when we examine the adaptation within the total reality of dramatic art, i.e., the theatre performance. The dramatic text, which is a literary-linguistic system, has been used as the leading object of study in dramatic adaptation studies in drama. Almost all adaptations, in whatever media, forms or genres, emerge through the textual strategies of "alterations, additions and subtractions",²⁰ and dramatic genres manifest themselves through a variety of media: opera, dance/ballet, television drama and film are in one way or another different forms of dramatic expression.²¹ Therefore the reworking of a dramatic text (or other literary texts) into an opera, a film or a different form of theatre (from the form of theatre the dramatic text historically belongs to) usually involves substantial changes in the literary-linguistic text.

The transformation of the literary-linguistic text is pushed to the extreme in the case of reworking from literature to dance – the transposition of the sign system of language into a signifying system of body-motion literally obliterates the linguistic text and hence results in a very different plot structure. The transposition of sign system(s) into one another often involved in the process of adaptation almost always brings up changes in the literary-linguistic text, due to the different strategies of discourse demanded by different forms and genres.

Since the linguistic text constitutes a vital system among the various constituent signifying systems of most of these dramatic art forms, and occupies a key position in theatrical signification, the linguistic text is the foremost criterion for defining, and the basis for scrutinising, adaptations. Thus when we speak of an adaptation, we usually refer to the changes in the literary-linguistic text, which in turn result in a different plot structure not without affinities with its precursor's. Literary-dramatic critics have found no difficulties in differentiating a theatre *production* from an adaptation. The linguistic text has served as the definite and reliable criterion for distinguishing an adaptation.

Because almost all productions of plays modify the text by cancelling and/or emending lines and words, Ruby Cohn suggests that these "reductions/emendations" should be considered "theatre history."²² To the literary critic, "alterations, additions and subtractions" of the precursor-text are a prerequisite for a text's being called an adaptation. However, in light of the modern critical awareness of theatrical systems and the transposition of sign system(s) into one another, the concept of adaptation evolves

beyond mere consideration of the literary-linguistic text to involve the total performance. Taking into account contemporary semiotic theories of theatre and drama, we are more aware of the significance of the interrelation between the dramatic text and performance text as well as the complexities of the role played by the linguistic text in the signification of performance.²³

It is possible that the performance text may transmit different semantic meanings from the dramatic text while giving more or less the same dramatic information — the sum of new knowledge concerning the fictional dramatic world given regarding the state of affairs referred to — or, in other words, utilizing the dramatic text without many “alterations, additions and subtractions.” Of course, different dramatic information (either manifested through the printed text or performance) always results in different semantic and critical interpretations of the drama. But in the theatre, the multi-systems of signification on which different informational levels work make dramatic information only one of the many levels of perceptual data on which the spectator bases his reading. Since signal-information in the theatre is an important source of semantic information, and the semantic value of signal-information is system-specific, i.e., cannot be transferred to other messages because its meaning is derived by the physical ostension of the message itself,²⁴ the semantic meaning of different stagings of the same play may differ radically from production to production. Furthermore, the playwright’s notes and remarks (or so-called stage directions) are eliminated in the theatre, the resulting gaps in the unity of the dramatic text being replenished by other systems of sign; linguistic meanings are transposed into other semiotic systems and significant modifications in the meanings themselves are inevitable during the process. A new shape is given to the entire semantic structure of the work.²⁵

In the case of staging classical dramatic texts through modern theatrical forms, or Occidental into Oriental and vice versa, “misreading” is inevitable. Different forms of theatrical presentation of a play, even though transmitting more or less the same dramatic information, may transform the play far beyond the original possibilities of the dramatic text into a radical reinterpretation, or misinterpretation, of it. These thus tend to deny the play its identity as a theatre rendition of the dramatic text, i.e., a mere theatre production. Peter Brook’s productions of *King Lear* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in 1962 and 1970 respectively are good examples of this kind of *theatrical* adaptation. The existential-absurdist interpretation of *Lear* and the toy-box setting of *Dream* have been noted by critics.²⁶ A critic in

The Times (August 29 1970) remarked on Brook's *Dream*:

How, beyond an identity of text, is Mr. Brook's production related to William Shakespeare's play?²⁷

The question was of course successfully answered and "the contradiction between the eccentric setting and performance, and the shrewd and thought-provoking ideas"²⁸ resolved. Brook's theatrical renditions of Shakespeare have been regarded as modern productions of the Bard rather than treated from the point of view of adaptation. In Cohn's *Modern Shakespeare Offshoots*, Brook's *Lear* was not included in her chapter on *Lear*.²⁹ In passing, Cohn mentions Brook's *Lear* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as "productions."³⁰ It has been a general tendency of literary-critics to take the dramatic text as the privileged object of study.

However, if the dramatic text is not the sole controlling agent in the production of meaning in the total context of dramatic art any more, and if the transposition of the linguistic sign into other systems inevitably modifies meanings, the 'novel' performance texts of Brook's creation should then be examined from a wider perspective. With the conception of adaptation in mind, the seemingly far-fetched treatment of the plays can easily be understood — Brook adapted Shakespeare for the modern theatre, not by modifying the linguistic sign system (the dramatic text), but by manipulating other theatrical systems, e.g.; the scenic system, the kinesic system, and speech acts, etc., which have outrivalled the linguistic system and rendered it *changeable* and *dynamic* in the production of meaning in dramatic art.

IV.

In comparing the *printed* media form, the film and novel with the theatre, Charles Eidsvik writes:

. . . the very basis of theater is *not* to fix the performance, not to print the performed play. Plays are renewed every night they are performed, and overhauled and updated every time a new performance goes on the boards. The reason Shakespeare still makes good theater is that performances are not fixed in one style forever, like novels frozen in their archaic stylizations. In performance, one can even overcome the handicap of Shakespeare's odd (to us) language. The business that Pound insisted is

the writer's — to make it new — is also the theatrician's No two performances are quite alike; no two productions are identical.³¹

A major generic property of the art of drama is to keep things unfixed, to keep every performance fresh. In short, *changeability* is the major characteristic of the form. The “floating” text is the characteristic semiotic and discursive mode of the form. Sometimes the changes are confined to style and techniques of staging, but sometimes the change outgrows the definition of theatre production through substantial “alterations, additions, and subtractions” to the dramatic text, or the employment of a radical form of theatre (as in Brook’s absurdist *King Lear* and circusy *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*). In these situations, a process which we call adaptation arises.

Drama as a performing art also depends very much on the time factor in the processing of adaptation. As Eidsvik says:

The production brings the present to the past. And so there is no such thing as archaic theater in the way printed forms such as books and films can be archaic. A ten-year-old film shows its age, frequently looking older than a fifty-year-old play in a fresh production. A time always has its own language, plays continually get fresh translations to keep them new. All plays are adaptations to time.³²

Often we find a dramatic adaptation made in subsequent periods generations away from the precursor-text. In the case of Shakespearean adaptations, the Restoration and 18th century adaptations were in a way prompted by an attempt to “update” Shakespeare for their contemporary audience. In the 20th century, “our contemporaries cherish Shakespeare for his relevance to us” or “remold him into relevance for us”³³ through adaptations. Ming playwrights updated the Yüan *tsa-chü* drama into the more aristocratic and “refined” genre of *ch’uan-ch’i* drama and most important, from the perspective of form, they adapted the *pei-ch’ü* 北曲 (the Northern musical genre) to the then-fashionable and prevalent *nan-ch’ü* 南曲 (the Southern musical genre).³⁴ “Plays are adaptations to time,” but adaptations are *plays* adapted to *time*. All these adaptations between East and West “misread” and update their precursors with a critical attitude not only in language, form, and style of performance, but also in terms of contemporary cultural bias.

Adaptations in drama have always been created for and by its characteristics of *staging*. This is not to propose dramatic adaptations as a separate class in drama taxonomy – an adapted play is not necessarily different from an “original” play – but dramatic adaptations are invariably validated by the very nature of the *performing* of dramatic art. As Cohn says: “the impetus to adaptations, as to reduction/emendation, is often a specific production.”³⁵ In turn, “every production of every play is in some very basic sense an adaptation.”³⁶ This very essential condition of the theatre leads to the hermeneutic principle of “the theatre of adaptation”:

... new production concepts lead to new playwriting, new playwriting suggests new ways to produce old plays.³⁷

The impetus to an adaptation is always a new production, and the *dynamism* of the theatre – which generates the drive to renew the production – is that generic element which promotes dramatic adaptations. Laurent Jenny in his article “The Strategy of Form” asks “whether it is not a given type of form which provokes intertextuality.”³⁸ The art of drama, which embodies both the theatre and the dramatic text, is a specific form that generates and embodies intertextuality – a type of intertextuality usually known as *adaptation* – due to its specific generic property of *changeability*.

Notes

1. Shakespeare has been studied as “a great dresser of plays” systematically and thoroughly in Juliusz Krzyzanowski’s *Shakespearean Modifications: Methodical Prolegomena* (Wroław, 1948). According to modern scholarship, only *The Tempest* and *Love’s Labour’s Lost* are Shakespeare’s own stories among his total dramatic works of 37 plays. See Robert Langbaum, “The Source of *The Tempest*,” in *The Tempest*, Signet Edition, ed. Robert Langbaum, (New York: New American Library, 1964), p. 125.
2. The heyday being the Restoration and the Augustan period, in the hands of his admirers such as William D’Avenant, John Dryden, David Garrick, and John Philip Kemble. See Hazelton Spencer, *Shakespeare Improved* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1927) and George C. Branam, *Eighteenth-Century Adaptations of Shakespearean Tragedy* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1956). The 20th century witnesses yet another resurgence of Shakespearean adaptations in a variety of art forms. Shakespeare has been adapted into film, television drama, dance, and most importantly, the modern theatre. For more details, see Ruby Cohn, *Modern Shakespeare Offshoots* (New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1976). The BBC presentation of *The Complete Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare* in the late

- 70s and early 80s has been the most ambitious project of putting Shakespeare on television. In the modern theatre, the British playwright Tom Stoppard German playwright-director Bertolt Brecht and Friedrich Dürrenmatt's dramaturgy character note of adaptation is aptly seen in their adaptations of Shakespeare, Molière, Strindberg and other master dramatists. See Richard Beckley, "Adaptation as a Feature of Brecht's Dramatic Technique," *German Life and Letters* 15:4 (1962), pp. 274-284; Enoch Brater, "Play Strindberg and the Theatre of Adaptation," *Comparative Drama* 16:1 (1982), pp. 12-25; Mark E. Cory, "Shakespeare and Dürrenmatt: From Tragedy to Tragicomedy," *Comparative Literature* 32:3 (1980), pp. 253-273; John Fuegi, "Whodunit: 'Brecht's' Adaptation of Molière's *Don Juan*," *Comparative Literature Studies* 11:2 (1974), pp. 159-172; C.J. Gianakaris, "Stoppard's Adaptations of Shakespeare: *Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth*," *Comparative Drama* 18:3 (1984), pp. 222-240; Goldsmith, Ulrich K. Goldsmith, "Brecht as Adaptor of Molière," in Jost, Francois (ed.), *Proceedings of The Fourth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1966), pp. 875-881; Jill L. Levenson, "'Hamlet Andante'/'Hamlet' Allegro: Tom Stoppard's Two Versions," *Shakespeare Survey* 36 (1983), pp. 21-28; C. Sharp, "Dürrenmatt's *Play Strindberg*," *Modern Drama* 13 (1970), pp. 276-283 and "Strindberg and Dürrenmatt: the Dynamics of Play," *Modern Language Quarterly* 38 (1977), pp. 292-303; Ulrich Weisstein, "Two Measures for One, Brecht's *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe* and its Shakespearean Model," *Germanic Review* 43:1 (1968), pp. 24-39. Shakespeare has also been adapted for different Chinese theatres: in the Shakespeare Festival of China 1986, more than ten Shakespearean plays were adapted into spoken drama as well as traditional Chinese operas. See the special section "Shakespeare in China" in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 39:2 (1988), pp. 195-204.
3. See his *Chung-kuo hsi-chü shih* 中國戲劇史 (*History of Chinese Drama*), 3 vols. (Shanghai: Chung-hua Book Co., 1953), pp. 765-787. Chou's research has given us concrete figures to support the general impression that adaptation was a major means of production in both classical and regional Chinese drama. Thirty years before Chou's work, Wang Kuo-wei 王國維 made a pioneering research in modern study of Chinese drama: his *Sung Yuan hsi-ch'ü k'ao* 宋元戲曲考 (*A Study of Sung and Yuan Drama*), published in 1912, tells of the practice of story-borrowing in *Yuan tsa-chü* 雜劇 and *nan-hsi* 南戲 in some detail. Masaru Aoki 青木正兒 has also investigated the overlapping in plots between *tsa-chü* and *nan-hsi* of Yuan. See his *Chung-guo chin-shih hsi-ch'ü shih* 中國近世戲曲史 (*History of Chinese Drama in Recent Centuries*), trans. Wang Ku-lu 王古魯 (Reprinted by Taipei: Commercial Press, 1965), pp. 42-45, 76-85.
 4. Andrew Dudley, "Ice and Irony: Delannoy's *La Symphonie Pastorale* (1946) from the novel by André Gide," in *Modern European Filmmakers and the Art of Adaptations*, eds. Andrew S. Horton and Joan Magretta (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co.), p. 7.
 5. John Hu, "Ming Dynasty Drama," in *Chinese Theatre: From Its Origins to the Present Day*, ed. Colin Mackerras (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press, 1983), p. 75. Kojiro Yoshikawa 吉村幸次郎 shares the same view, see his *Yuan tsa-chü yen-chiu* 元雜劇研究 (*Studies in Yuan Drama*), trans. Cheng Ch'ing-mao 鄭清茂 (Taipei: I-wen Book Co., 1960), pp. 188-190.
 6. Jirí Veltrusky, "Dramatic Text as a Component of Theatre," in *Semiotics of Art: Prague School Contributions*, eds. Ladislav Matejka and Irwin R. Titunik (Cam-

- bridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1976), p. 95.
7. See Keir Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* (London: Methuen, 1980), p. 14.
 8. Jiřndřich Honzl, "Dynamics of the Sign in the Theatre," in *Semiotics of Art: Prague School Contributions*, eds. Ladislav Matejka and Irwin R. Titunik (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1976), p. 85.
 9. *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, p. 13.
 10. In fact, this has been a distinguished characteristic of classical Chinese theatre. Using numerous examples from Ming plays, Wang An-ch'i 王安祈 points out in a detailed study the transformability in stage presentation in Ming *ch'uan-ch'i* theatre. See her *Ming-tai ch'uan-ch'i chih ch'ü-ch'ang chi ch'i i-shu* 明代傳奇之劇場及其藝術 (*The Ming ch'uan-ch'i Theatre and Its Art*) (Taipei: Hsueh-sheng Book Co., 1986), pp. 219-221, 326-330; 341-355. This theatrical property is still seen in today's K'un Opera – the direct descendant of Ming *ch'uan-ch'i* drama on the modern stage – performed after traditional style. Of all the six existing K'un Opera troupes in Mainland China, the Shanghai K'un Opera Troupe has been known for its incorporation of modern stage setting and lighting design while the Chiang-su Province K'un-ch'ü Company is noted for its traditional stage presentation.
 11. "Dynamics of the Sign in the Theatre," p. 86.
 12. "The mobility factor – as it were, the 'transformation rule' of stage representation – is dependent not only on the interchangeability of stage elements but still more on the reciprocal substitution of sign-systems or codes. The replacement, for example, of scenic indicators by gesture or verbal reference involves the process of *transcodification*: a given semantic unit (say, a 'door') is signified by the linguistic or gestural system rather than by the architectural or pictorial, as often occurs in mime." See *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, pp. 14-15.
 13. *The Theatre and Its Double*, trans. Victor Corti (London: John Calder, 1970), p. 56.
 14. "... the performance as an integrated ensemble unfolds along three spatial dimensions and a single temporal dimension . . . Each contributory message, however, has its own spatio-temporal make-up and will not necessarily operate in all the dimensions utilized in the performance as a whole." *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, p. 45.
 15. Anthony Hammond, "Introduction to *King Richard III*," in *Richard III*, Arden Edition, ed. Anthony Hammond (London: Methuen, 1981), pp. 71-72.
 16. Stanley Wells, *Literature and Drama: with Special Reference to Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), pp. 23-24.
 17. "Dramatic Text as a Component of Theatre," pp. 115-116.
 18. *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, p. 162.
 19. *Ibid.*, pp. 165-166.
 20. Terms used by Christopher Spencer in his *Five Restoration Adaptations of Shakespeare* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1965), p. 7. See also *Eighteenth-Century Adaptations of Shakespearean Tragedy* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1956), p. 179.
 21. Martin Esslin says "There is . . . one basic point of fundamental importance which has to be stressed because, although obvious it continues to be persistently overlooked, particularly by those who as critics and academic teachers of drama are the guardians of its tradition and lore: and that is the theatre – stage drama – is in the second half of the twentieth century, only one – and a relatively minor –

form of dramatic expression and that the mechanically reproduced drama of the mass media, the cinema, television and radio, different though it may be in some of its techniques, is also fundamentally drama and obeys the same basic principles of the psychology of perception and understanding from which all the techniques of dramatic communication derive." Martin Esslin, *An Anatomy of Drama* (London: Abacus, 1976), p. 12.

22. *Modern Shakespeare Offshoots*, p. 3.
23. The role played by the dramatic text in theatrical performance has not really been clarified. Sometimes its status is overemphasized and sometimes underestimated. Patrice Pavis, in discussing the relationship between text and performance, says, "All too often, textual semiology has been content to rescue the text from being considered as the fixed, central part of the final performance, or, on the other hand, the text has been trivialized and slotted into a place as just one system among many, without any consideration of its privileged position in the formation of meaning. The relationship between text and performance has been passing over in silence . . . or else grossly over-simplified." Pavis further suggests that "the recourse to a *spectacle text*, a sort of *score* where all the scenic systems of performance are articulated in space and time seems considerably preferable." See Patrice Pavis, *Language of the Stage: Essays in the Semiology of the Theatre* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982), pp. 18-19.
24. See *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, pp. 38-44.
25. "Dramatic Text as a Component of Theatre," p. 96.
26. For discussions see J.L. Styan, *The Shakespeare Revolution* (London, New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1977), pp. 217-231. See also Bernard Beckerman, "The Flower of Fancy, the Jerks of Invention, or, Directory Approaches to Shakespeare," in *Shakespeare 1971: Proceedings of the World Shakespeare Congress, Vancouver, August 1971*, eds. Clifford Leech and J.M.R. Margeson (Toronto & Buffalo: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1972), pp. 209-211.
27. Quoted in *The Shakespeare Revolution*, p. 230.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 230.
29. *Modern Shakespeare Offshoots*, pp. 232-266.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 292.
31. Charles Eidsvik, *Cineliteracy: Film Among the Arts* (New York: Random House, 1978), pp. 162-163.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
33. *Modern Shakespeare Offshoots*, p. ix.
34. From a musical point of view, the *ch'uan-ch'i* drama is more appropriate to be called *nan-pei-ch'ü* 南北曲 (Southern-Northern music drama) because of its mixed use of Southern and Northern tunes. See Yang Yin-liu 楊蔭瀏, *Chung-kuo ku-tai yin-yueh shih-kao* 中國古代音樂史稿 (*History of Ancient Chinese Music*), 2 vols. (Peking: Je-min yin-yueh ch'u-pan-she, 1981), pp. 856-859. Shen He 沈和, a Yüan playwright of the second period (1279-1340) (According to Yang's periodization, see *Chung-kuo ku-tai yin-yueh shih-kao*, p. 506.) was the first one to mix the Northern and Southern tunes in a play. According to Chung Suu-ch'eng's 鍾嗣誠 *Lu kuci pu* 錄鬼簿 (*A Register of Ghosts*), preface dated 1330, in *Chung-kuo ku-tien hsi-ch'ü lun-chu chi-ch'eng* 中國古典戲曲論著集成 (*A Collection of Writings on Traditional Chinese Drama*), ed. Chung-kuo hsi-ch'ü yen-chiu yüan (Peking: Chung-kuo hsi-ch'ü ch'u-pan-she, 1959), vol. 2, p. 121.
35. *Modern Shakespeare Offshoots*, p. 4.

36. "Play Strindberg and the Theatre of Adaptation," p. 24.
37. Ibid.
38. Laurent Jenny, "The Strategy of Form," in *French Literary Theory Today: A Reader*, ed. Tzvetan Todorov, (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982), p. 37.