ABSTRACT

The 20th century is an era when exchanges of culture occurred between Chinese theatrical culture and Western theatrical culture. Under the influence of modern Western theatre, a new form of composition designed for performance in the theater-"drama" was introduced to China in the early 20th century. At the same time, the special aesthetic quality of Chinese Opera (the indigenous Chinese theater) also made a great impact in the development of contemporary Western theater. After the Cultural Revolution when China adopted the open-door policy, she saw the reabsorption of western culture. However, since the contemporary Western theatre had already been influenced by Chinese Opera in the early 20th century, the above-mentioned retroflux can be understood as a result of interculturism.

This dissertation is to reevaluate the aesthetics and manifestations of the contemporary Chinese theatre within the context of cultural retroflux. Many scholars have worked on the contemporary Chinese theatre but they did not perceive the retroflux that occurred in terms of dramatic and aesthetic concepts. Various methodologies used in this dissertation include recent literary theories and theatrical theories.

It is shown that in order to break away from the conventional artistic expression, the contemporary Chinese theatre begins to attempt different kinds of theatrical techniques such as the description of immanent activities and the unrestrained transformation of time and space on stage, which are some of the distinguished features of Chinese Opera.

It is the conclusion of this dissertation that the above-mentioned retroflux resulted in the reevaluation of Chinese Opera on the part of the Chinese by looking back seriously at own theatrical culture, thereby leading to sharper focus on the dramatic quintessence.