

Tsubouchi Shōyō and the Hidden Ideals Dispute :

An Annotated Translation of Three Texts

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The ‘hidden ideals’ dispute (*botsurisō ronsō*) was a debate carried out in the early 1890s between two of the leading intellectuals of the Meiji era, Tsubouchi Shōyō (1859-1935) and Mori Ōgai (1862-1922). Tsubouchi argued from an aesthetic viewpoint that great writers such as Shakespeare are able to conceal their ideals within the artifice of their literary works, whereas Mori (who was influenced by German idealism) insisted that literature could not function without its ideals being evident to readers. Tsubouchi had been studying Shakespeare since the mid-1880s, and the first essay translated below, in which he states his belief in the power of Shakespeare’s creativity, was an important contribution to the debate with Mori. The second essay, also published in 1891, hints at the panoramic view of the natural and human worlds that he found in Shakespeare, and at the dangers of trying to rationalize the writer’s imagination. Tsubouchi’s cautiousness is again evident in the third essay from the 1900s, where drawing on his experience of staging Shakespeare with Japanese actors he writes of the difficulty of finding a suitable style of Shakespeare translation. Tsubouchi set his sights high, but if the Shakespearean conflation of styles he mentions in the third essay is something like the place where all seasons are one that he mentions in

‘The Bottomless Lake’ his ambition makes sense at least in terms of his traditional culture. In any case, Tsubouchi never lost his interest in Shakespeare’s creativity, and in 1927 he was to complete the first Japanese translation of the Complete Works.

1. ‘Preface to a Commentary on *Macbeth*’
(*Waseda Bungaku*, October 1891)

Among the plays ascribed to Shakespeare’s authorship no more than about thirty-six can definitely be said to have been written by Shakespeare himself, and these were written between the years 1588 (when the writer was 24) and 1613. [. . .] There are four main periods in his career according to the development of his technique, dramatic structures and ideas.⁽¹⁾ The first period comprises his formative years, the tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet* and a number of what we might call light-hearted satirical comedies. The second period gives us his more spirited comedies and the history plays, the third his profound tragedies and the tragicomedies (cheerful on the surface and pitiless underneath), while the fourth is one of quiet dignity, characterized by a graceful and animating blend of tragic and comic elements. It goes without saying that the relative merits of Shakespeare’s ideas, technique and dramaturgy vary from period to period, which is why anyone approaching Shakespeare for the first time should read one or two works from each of the four periods.

Adopting a methodical approach, we should start with the plays of the third period as a preliminary to a discussion of the first and second periods. This is because the earlier plays use more euphonious effects and colloquial language which demand more explanation for people who do not know English. It is my intention that the commentary I provide here

might be of assistance to such people. The history plays of the second period – although not the comedies – can be of only limited interest to those unfamiliar with English history, requiring tedious explanatory notes besides being dramatically inferior to those of the third. In other words, since the main purpose of this commentary is to make the body of Shakespeare's works more widely known among Japanese people, it is only natural that their initial experience should be of Shakespeare at his most sublime, which is why I focus on *Macbeth*, the greatest of his four tragedies.⁽²⁾

There are those who argue that in order to achieve my purpose some kind of literal translation is preferable to tedious notes, although this is not something I can do with any degree of literary merit. For this reason, I mainly follow the diction of the original, explaining the sense and always trying to convey its poetic beauty. Readers unaware of the beauty of Shakespeare's English should of course turn directly to the original, leaving me only to clarify some of the expressions.

There are two principles to an effective commentary. One relates to the rhetoric, and is to comment on the meaning of words, grammar and so on as they appear in the source. This is critical commentary, expounding the author's intentions and his ideas as they are revealed in the original texts. When I set about my commentary on *Macbeth* I thought that I would be adopting only the second type of commentary, but on reflection decided that the first type was preferable. The second type – that of interpretation – can be an extremely profound and profitable method for the more perceptive readers, but for the less perceptive a little learning can be a dangerous thing, and for the inattentive can lead to undesirable errors. These tendencies are born no doubt from the remarkable resemblance of Shakespeare's works to nature itself: a thesis in itself

that I will develop a little in this essay.

To claim that the plays of Shakespeare resemble nature is not to suggest that the characters and situations are actually real. His plays exist in the hearts of readers, whose mysteries the plays enable readers to interpret; they treat on whatever is natural about the human endeavour. Looking objectively at the human heart, human nature is seen to incline naturally toward both the good and bad: the cantankerous old stepdame and the affectionate mother. Bitter and disappointed people will resent Shakespeare's creativity; they are such people who spurn nature and revile this suffering world. Talented people will oppose their attitude, regarding Shakespeare's creativity as being like the affectionate mother and this world a garden of delights. Yet, whatever people's feelings on the matter, it is their experience of suffering and joy that constitutes the two poles of our nature. One must first analyze his views on fate⁽³⁾ and then his Christian beliefs.

Western and Oriental traditions each have their own ways of looking at creativity, for creativity is greater than all the manifold perspectives of West and East: boundless indeed as the doctrine of 'consciousness only' taught by the Hossō sect.⁽⁴⁾ The Buddha tells us that the sound of the gong of the Jetavana monastery resounds with the echoes of nirvana but that in the twilight hour lovers hear nothing.⁽⁵⁾ The pessimist cannot perceive the truth of impermanence in the rapid blooming of the sāla flowers, while the young maiden who has never known sadness has not seen anything. No human being can know the goal of creativity, but we can at least greet the sadness of autumn with a melancholy heart and the birds and flowers of the spring with a glad one.

Creativity fulfils itself in an empty heart. Shakespeare's plays are very close to this meaning of creativity. Scholars, whether they happen to be of

refined aesthetic knowledge or more superficial in their outlook, reserve for Shakespeare a blind praise and adoration inspired by the sages of old. Shakespeare's works are magnanimous, gratifying all tastes ; they are as desirable to the ordinary man as the beauties of nature. The works of writers such as Byron and Swift, enjoyed by some and despised by others, are altogether different, a matter of personal taste, whereas Shakespeare's works may be compared to 'the face that launched a thousand ships', that is to say to the essence of creativity.⁽⁶⁾

From the previous generation of Japanese Shakespeareans there have come a hundred or so books and articles, some critical and others more interpretive, and in extreme cases, for example with regard to the character of Hamlet, the critics have been in complete disagreement.⁽⁷⁾ Just as it is difficult to define creativity, so too is there no fixed, unchanging Shakespeare, but whatever one's shade of opinion any interpretation of Shakespeare has to have its own rationale. With this in mind, there have been few critics since Johnson and Coleridge who have not mentioned the word 'nature' when writing about Shakespeare.⁽⁸⁾ I myself used the metaphor of a bottomless lake in a recent study on drama, and an essay by Dowden compares Shakespeare and Goethe to a great ocean.⁽⁹⁾ Although our intentions may have been rather different, I believe they were both founded on the same basic principle.

As Carlyle observed,⁽¹⁰⁾ Shakespeare was originally a stage hand at the Globe Theatre before turning to writing, and it was as a stage hand that he learned to become a poet of nature, no different from any popular writer in the real world, which is to say that in learning to win over the hearts of his audience he acquired an esoteric knowledge of human nature that is not dissimilar to his dramatic portrayals. He observes human beings in the fullness of his poetic understanding, and in his fair and

impartial style is able to portray human nature as it is without actually flattering his audience.

I would like to suggest that Shakespeare is our own Chikamatsu Monzaemon writ large.⁽¹¹⁾ There is no fundamental difference between the glittering jewel of true teaching and that of approbation, for if there were so then human behaviour would be without motive. Shakespeare's is the very jewel of nature; it is able to liberate nature's spirit, to stir the rustics, the maidens and Benka⁽¹²⁾ of old from their apathy, but though we may prize his jewel as highly as a castle, it is in itself no more than a rare stone, worth no more than any passing fad, for it is only human nature to inflate the values of the things we admire.

The works of Shakespeare are like a mirror reflecting the faces, that is to say ideals of all their many hundreds of readers. Gervinus found his philosophy in Shakespeare's works, as did Bräker, Bucknill, Moulton, Hudson and Dowden in more recent times;⁽¹³⁾ they all have been stunned in the realization that it is Shakespeare alone who is without ideals. There has never been as great a poet as Shakespeare, neither before nor since. No one approaches Shakespeare's creativity, which is as broad and deep as the ocean itself, a bottomless lake. It is truly remarkable how many readers have found their own ideals reflected in Shakespeare's works, and surely this is because they never seem to manifest any single big idea. Despite some private reservations, I have generally been in agreement with the critical consensus that Chikamatsu's domestic *sewamono*, plays such as *Ten no Amijima*, *Abura jigoku*, *Koi no tayori* and *Date some tazuna*, all of them embrace 'small ideals'.⁽¹⁴⁾ The theme of *Ten no Amijima*, as I noted in a study published this year, is comparable with *Romeo and Juliet* like that of a younger brother to his elder brother, and our beloved *Abura no jigoku* may be accounted even more profound than

The Tempest.⁽¹⁵⁾

Of course that is just the ideas, and as dramatic works of art the two writers are hardly the same. If Chikamatsu had been born in the Elizabethan age, writing his *sewamono* in English to be edited by Rowe, construed and extolled by Johnson and Pope, criticized and appraised by Coleridge and Hazlitt, annotated by Malone and Warburton, who would have formed an academic society for the study of Chikamatsu, before being catalogued by Abbott and Schmidt and brought to a yet wider public in Europe and America by the likes of Goethe and Lessing,⁽¹⁶⁾ if in other words he had approached Shakespeare's reputation, then we can suppose that he would have amounted to something rather more than a mere writer of Japanese puppet plays, and this is because, as with Shakespeare, of his *sewamono*'s remarkable capacity to portray nature as it is.

This is not to disparage Shakespeare by insinuating that he is no match for the puppet theatre, and nor is it to say his works are no more than some ordinary gemstone. There is no denying Shakespeare's uncommon brilliance, but since his works can only be evaluated as such within the hearts of readers, it is foolish to judge them according to the teachings of the ancients. If we are to appreciate Shakespeare, it is natural to praise his art for the way it animates the feelings of human beings and for the unprecedented singularity of his creativity, his figures of speech and his other devices, and yet as far as his ideas are concerned he cannot be regarded as some great philosopher. Rather, we can praise him only for his hidden ideals.

One cannot make something out of nothing. The Zen and other classics of old may have been praised as works of great ideals when in fact their ideals were hidden, and much the same may be said of works of small

ideals. The desires of an infant can be said to conceal both evil craving and healthy appetite. The sentiments of Onitsura's haiku, 'Autumn has come. My unfeeling heart.'⁽¹⁷⁾ are to be found hidden in the many strands of Eastern and Western philosophical thought just as much as they are in Buddhism. In the pen of the illustrious Macaulay, the momentary heroism of Kiuchi Sōgō would bear comparison with a Hampden or a Washington,⁽¹⁸⁾ and in the poems of Onitsura and the other haikuists, Kiuchi and the others require no footnotes. The infant who knows no language requires only that its interpreters listen with a sympathetic heart.

I suppose that if Shakespeare had written his tragedies in prose, as novels in other words, they would have been of lesser value, which is because it would have been harder for them to conceal their ideals.⁽¹⁹⁾ The tragedy of *King Lear*, for example, would be seen to have the same moralistic purpose as a Bakin novel, because Shakespeare never gives his own opinion in the play, and so its meaning can be deduced only from the surface details of the plot: interpret it as one will. To give an example from one of Bakin's novels, the characters of Mr and Mrs Hikiroku are depicted with great vigour and realism, but from the viewpoint of hidden ideals the story has a clear moralistic purpose.⁽²⁰⁾ The author is clearly visible within the story. Likewise, Bashō's famous 'frog' haiku has various interpretations but they all stem from the same author's point of view, and so too *The Tale of Genji*.⁽²¹⁾

Although the proof for my argument is still undeveloped, I can just about understand why it is that hidden ideals are not necessarily great ideals, and small ideals can sometimes appear as hidden. In any case, I am convinced of the futility of imposing ideals on those great works in which they are artfully hidden, and thus this commentary on *Macbeth*

seeks mainly to elucidate the superficial meanings of the text and not enlarge my own ‘ideas’. Nevertheless, where differing interpretations may be thought possible, I have as much as possible stated my own opinion rather than those of previous commentators. As for a complete interpretation, the individual reader must provide that himself. Those with a Japanese way of thinking will find Japan in the play of *Macbeth*. Those with a universal way of thinking will find the universe, and those with their eyes on eternity will find eternity. The poem of hidden ideals is as exhaustibly fascinating as the great and magnanimous ocean itself.

TEXT: “*Makubesu hyōshaku*’ no shogen’ (Preface to a Commentary on *Macbeth*).
In Shōyō Kyōkai, ed. *Shōyō senshū*, Vol.3 A. Tokyo: Daiichi Shobō,
1978. 161-9.

2. ‘The Bottomless Lake’ (*Yomiuri Shinbun*, New Year’s, 1891)

Last night I had a mysterious dream. It was of a place I knew not: a lake perhaps, or else a pond or a marsh, no more than a hundred yards in circumference ... or was it half a mile round or ten times that length? At any rate, it was the shape of a hen’s egg, having neither beginning nor end, and the mountains around it seemed to weather all four seasons at once, the scent of cherry blossom, peach and apricot vying with the red leaves of autumn. Peaks towered into the sky above. The water of eight thousand generations whirled into the abode of the dragon beneath.⁽²²⁾ Creaks and waterfalls reverberated with a sound like thunder. The hollows were shrouded in dense mist, and though they seemed narrow places of little depth extended many thousands of leagues into the earth, and were quite impenetrable.

A warm spring breeze rustled the tender branches of the willow trees as

though caressing the hair of a fair maiden, and turned the blossoms to crimson like the lips of an innocent girl. Here a white crane alighted on the plum tree, and the spirit of a great warrior passed beneath its moonlit branches. Here too could be seen the withered pampas of winter and a perilous log bridge, a place where ascetics smilingly brush off the cares of this world with the sleeve of the ten virtues:⁽²³⁾ a place for laughter babbling like the mountain brooks, a place for weeping at the sadness of things, the Pure Land,⁽²⁴⁾ golden flowers and leaves reflected in the water, the sands beneath the water, the trees of summer and fruits of autumn, casting their fiery glances through the foliage. All merged indefinitely into each other in this heavenly pleasure garden filled with gold-plumed singing birds, celestial flowers of a hundred different colours dancing like the gods. Below that a hermit's hut with its spiritual splendours, and a stream bearing the fading leaves of autumn in its train like a lone cloud, the heart of man in the cycle of nature. As the wind eased, the sensual figure of a beautiful woman emerged naked from her toilette of vernal rain and peonies. Such a changeable world of spirits this was, one aspect opening on to a hundred others and ten thousand more, spring to autumn, autumn to summer, summer winter. What a marvellous thing it is when laughter turns into anger, sadness joy, vulgarity refinement, the rough into the smooth.

Yonder stood a tall post that had been exposed to rain and dew for many a year, and on it could be traced these words: 'The bottomless pond, landmark of the literary world.' Whether this notice was erected many years ago by some functionary I did not know, and I stopped and stood in amazement. Dressed in clothes that might have been from any time or place appeared a man from I knew not where. He waved a fan in his right hand and in his left hand held a thick stick, which he tapped,

and called out to two others behind him, a father and son. The one was a follower of Confucius, and the other a Christian.⁽²⁵⁾ Presently the three became one, and standing by the roots of a pine tree, they admired the scene. Father and son lifted their hands in wonder, bathed in sunlight by this remarkable lake. The waves lapped softly, water fowl floated in harmony together, male and female dutifully at one, a crow rested on its withered branch,⁽²⁶⁾ all was as it should have been. This was a bewitching lake indeed, with its sapient mountains and benevolent plum trees. Gnarled pines and oak trees weathered the snows and frosts, and beyond them wove the willow trees. A single tree bespoke the virtues of moderation and discretion, while scattering maples revealed the essence of the ancient virtues, those which the heart has always treasured. Like the constant prayers of a monk on his way, the fall of the maple leaves told the emptiness of earthly existence. The sight of placid waters was an illusion; the abundant trees without number were comparable to the 84,000 cycles of reincarnation.⁽²⁷⁾ Here blossomed fruits of cherry, peach and apricot, their fruits ripening in the sun.

Never had there been such a garden, this place illuminated by the true light of the law of cause and effect, growth and decay, where no evil enters in; it was like the Sea of Bokkai or the third realm in the Buddhist law.⁽²⁸⁾ Looking at the foaming waters, I saw for myself the nothingness at the heart of all living things. The Christian gently calmed my anguish at this floating world, pointing to the fruits that ripened as the blossom fell; his eternal hope could be seen in the spring buds that would succeed to the falling leaves of autumn just as the flowing waters of the lake intimated the limitless blue expanse of the sea. The lake was a microcosm of earthly life, the sea a boundless heaven. The Christian cried out in his dread 'O Lord!', for the way to hell passes also to the gate of

heaven. This exquisite lake of the gods I intently admired was so shallow you could walk across it. Father, son and pilgrim sat together with their legs over a precipice deeper than one could have possibly imagined. One step after another they made their way together down the cliff into the dark and cruel abyss.

The place they descended was precipitous. On their heads they wore quaint old caps and on their bodies gorgeously crested robes. They grasped compasses in the palms of their hands, and – like Benkei of old – on their backs carried the seven tools and cloths for polishing metals.⁽²⁹⁾ Checking their watches, they looked back and forth. One looked to be a philosopher, skilled in knowing the difference between the self and other. Before him stretched the beautiful lake with its undulating mountains; behind him on the cliff arranged in a tidy row like the forty-seven symbols of the Japanese syllabary lowered terrifying boulders like snarling tigers. [. . .] The flowers of spring emitted lovely sounds, and gathered them in again in a single place beneath the gaze of autumn. There is no greater diversity within unity, nothing rarer nor more extraordinary: how true and auspicious this vision of water and flowers in the mountains. The water gushed forth like jewels from the waterfalls to the creeks and shoals beneath, changing like the snow. Leaves lay scattered recklessly about, their unsightliness vanished with the slightest touch of the white water, and beneath the crimson maples ambled deer, and wild boar seeking shade among the bush clover. So too might a troubled heart find repose among the bamboo.

Presently, there appeared someone from behind a tree: an old man white-browed and brimming with knowledge, who could read ten or more lines at a glance. Wearing a robe of Chinese vermilion and a splendid crown, he held a wooden scepter in his right hand, and in his left a wand,

and stood with one foot on the sand, the other on the leaves, white against black. Wanting to know this person better I come close: he seemed to me like the lake itself, its master indeed. The pine trees before him were truly the ancestors of Takasago.⁽³⁰⁾ The wild cherry trees looked as if they had somehow been transported from the southern side of the Nyoirindō Hall.⁽³¹⁾ The mountains to the west of the lake shone brightly, and I gazed enraptured at their shadows. Luminous grasses sprang from a single plant; the place was without weeds. I felt as if they too had been transplanted from the renowned Maple Bridge outside the castle walls.⁽³²⁾

Beside this lonely lake one evening came the great sage, who had but one sorrow. As the hour turned to four, his mind was suddenly disturbed. Here autumn was no different from summer or winter, even if there should happen to be no red leaves in the spring, and in the autumn cherry did not blossom. The confusion of season meant that time stood still in the hermit's hut, this lonely retreat where the heart knew no evil. The sage [. . .] stood above me, nodding at my words. I heard the inflections in his voice, wondrous to my ears. The white-browed scholar advanced unsteadily on his stick. Taking three steps, he faltered now and uttered a cry; the people behind him gasped in astonishment. There were sprites in the water, sprites too in the hermit's dwelling: fearful creatures from which one kept one's distance, tongues rolling in their heads, legs hollow, bodies deformed, they hid in the undergrowth.

[. . .]

A young man looked up from the shadows of the trees, smiled at what he saw, and walked slowly along the shore. He wore an embellished cap of such beauty that it would have outshone nature itself, and his clothes and shoes were of amazing artistry and beauty as well. He opened his mouth sweetly. Nothing is comparable to the exquisite beauty of nature. No

words are fit to praise it, and it would be foolish to try. If you wish to know the purpose of this pretty satire, just consider the simple idea at its heart, consider the magnificence of its structure, the limitless beauty of even just one portion of the learning contained therein, and abandon your prejudices and lies, your madness and your folly. Only the subtle majesty of a new dawn is worthy of such praise. Prejudice and folly are for the unenlightened. All are helpless in the face of such beauty; its force is auspicious even to the gods. To sing its praises again with fine words, dance more graciously than the rustling grass or the butterfly with its golden wings spread delicately against the snow, though one may carelessly mistake it for a flower that has fallen from one's cap. Do not be distracted by young men who flutter their eyebrows. We are all like butterflies in pursuit of the lovely spirit of a young girl. I ran and fell flat on my face, hurting my ankle, but got to my feet again with the aid of a branch, and then the figure of a man appeared in the rising mist.

A fearful spirit arose from its ancient abode in the lake, making me sweat terribly, and then its tragic countenance vanished. My eyes were aghast. I was dumbfounded. Such was the nature of its terrible beauty, which overwhelmed all who passed by. I saw a pond lined with exquisite pines, and there was Bashō's frog on the bank.⁽³³⁾ Someone was jumping in right now, followed by tens of thousands more. The legend had taken its full course, for only a lake with no bottom could hold so many thousands. It was a place famous for its remarkable beauty, unusually celebrated in the common mind. People revere this famous place as the lake without bottom; it is unique in history. There have been countless other bottomless lakes but this lake is the most beautiful under heaven. In England there is a great swamp that is comparable, and another such place in Germany. The swamp in England is called 'Shake-sphere', in

Germany *Gyōten*.⁽³⁴⁾ It is madness to lose yourself in these places. Take heed while you can, and value your independence. We need only look at all the people drowning in this lake to see how deadly it is. It is better to stay away, and so I wrenched myself apart from my dreams – the dreams of years ago – and awoke.

TEXT: ‘Bunkai meisho : soko shirazu no mizuumi’ (Landmarks of the Literary World: The Bottomless Lake). In Inagaki Tatsurō, ed. *Tsubouchi Shōyō shū*, Tokyo : Chikuma Shobō, 1969. 279-82.

3. ‘Performing *Hamlet* in Japan’ (*Shumi*, September 1907)

It is worth giving some consideration not only to *Hamlet* but also to how the works of any famous foreign playwright might be performed in Japan. If we are to stage in Japanese plays held to be exceptional in their original language, we must at first consider a suitable style of translation, whether this be the modern style of the Hongōza and Shintomiza theatres (which do not make the distinctions of traditional kabuki) or else the hybrid literary style popularized by Morita Shiken.⁽³⁵⁾ If, for example, we wish to capture something of the spirit of the past in translating plays from feudal times, then we will want to use language peculiar to that age, and likewise may adopt the style of the *Kojiki* to raise the spectre of the age of the gods.⁽³⁶⁾

Secondly, we need to consider how we interpret a play when it is finally brought to the stage. Should we heed the opinions of foreign scholars, or else take our cue from traditional theatrical practice, or indeed the techniques of our well-known contemporary actors? And so long as we do not mistake the author’s intention, then would it not be better to provide our own new and uniquely Japanese interpretations?

For example, there are numerous differences, both straightforward and more complex, between *Chūshingura* as it was originally written by Takeda Izumo and as it is performed nowadays.⁽³⁷⁾ In the characterization of Yuranosuke various discrepancies have emerged between the original text and the personal preferences of actors, which is why there is no single version of the play shared by the kabuki and puppet theatres, by actors of past and present, including those of today like Danjūrō, Sōjūrō, Danzō and Udanji.⁽³⁸⁾ Famous foreign dramas are psychologically more complex than our own, and their characters more difficult to interpret, so that a character as unique as Hamlet produces all the greater a variety of interpretations. Just as the opinions of scholars and theatre critics are not necessarily accurate and to the point, nor are the most popular actors necessarily faithful to a text.

The sensible way to proceed is first and foremost to imitate the best of the foreign actors as they perform a role like Hamlet with their refined technique and reference to the latest critical opinion, but if in the end our understanding is insufficient, or if we do understand in part but find it hard to gain the actors' cooperation, or rather if we do try to capture faithfully the hidden meaning of a foreign play and convey that to our own culture, and – setting fidelity as our standard – concentrate exclusively on reproducing the illusion of foreign acting styles, what in the end will we have achieved? If some famous British actor like Beerbohm Tree were to act Yuranosuke in the style of Danjūrō,⁽³⁹⁾ he would surely fail by a long shot. Would it not be better if, rather like *Madame Butterfly* and *The Darling of the Gods*,⁽⁴⁰⁾ he were to make his own interpretation of the role of Yuranosuke, although with some reference to the original kabuki meaning of course? For Japanese people the role is a comic one, and so if Takeda Izumo's play were to create the same impression among

foreigners as it does among us Japanese then it might be accounted some kind of success. Probably if Beerbohm Tree were to perform in the style of Danjūrō, then foreigners would find it different although not strange, and in fact be rather drawn to the performance. The issue of whether or not it is appropriate serves, at any rate, to illustrate my first question.

To return then to the question of how Japanese actors should perform Shakespeare's most controversial play, *Hamlet*, in Japan, I should now like to consider what approaches they have taken and the various styles of Shakespeare translation. I do not recall the exact details, but when I translated part of *The Merchant of Venice* for experimental production by the Bungei Kyōkai, although I had kept remnants of Shakespeare's original text, I was criticized for my conspicuous use of old Japanese language.⁽⁴¹⁾ I do not know why this should have been so, but it was probably to do with the largely old-fashioned or pre-Meiji style of my translation. Perhaps my critics felt that I should have adopted the Hongoza style or the hot-blooded style of the Iiza theatre for the more intimate moments.⁽⁴²⁾ If I had done so, then it would have been quite different from Shakespearean drama.

It does not need to be said that Shakespeare's plays for the most part are intricately rhythmical in their language, and that about 70% of the lines are written in wonderful unrhymed verse, which is more systematic in structure than the seven-five syllabic meter of Japanese prosody, and should never be translated in the unadulterated prose style of contemporary usage. If translated in prose, much of the feeling of the original will be lost due to the lack of poetic style, and in many places it will be quite impossible to harmonize the meaning with the literary form. Having said that, since Shakespeare's particular strength is to blend seven parts verse with three parts prose in his arbitrary manner and to

blend his historical and contemporary – what is more, his decidedly ‘plain’ contemporary – in his free and easy manner, a graceful classical style will be unsuited to this blending of the poetic with colloquial prose. Chikamatsu and Shakespeare share this interest in the plain style, which is evident when one compares them with the works of more academic writers who imitate classical styles. At the same time, the rhythms of Shakespeare are considerably loftier than those of Chikamatsu, more diverse and profound, and thus the language of Chikamatsu is insufficient in itself for translating Shakespeare. For an appropriate style we would have to go back as far as the *Taiheiki*, *Seisuiki* and *Heike monogatari*, but opting mainly for the historical styles of the Genroku and Kyōhō eras and traditional *kigeki* comedy, a hybridized version of the syllabic meter of Bunka and Bunsei era literature, together with that of Mokuami’s early dramas, would also be a good compromise.⁽⁴³⁾ Well, it would only be an imitation, and the Mokuami and Bakin styles by themselves would not do. Shakespeare’s speciality is to draw a thin line between the historical and contemporary, knitting together high and low into a single glorious epoch, which is one key as to why his plays have lasted to this day. He is different in this way from even the best of Ben Jonson.⁽⁴⁴⁾

The Elizabethan age is fundamentally similar to our own Genroku and Kyōhō eras in the way that the latter broke with the Momoyama culture of the previous century, and yet displays some of the qualities of the 10th century Heian era, being on the one hand extremely aristocratic and feudalistic but at the same time democratic in its openness to the wave of individualism known as the Renaissance. Generally speaking, the kings and queens of the 15th and 16th centuries were not as dignified in their displays of power as our own imperial household of today. Corresponding more with the Tokugawa shoguns, the fictional monarchs and princes in

Shakespeare's plays, such as the prince of Denmark and the ancient British kings of *King Lear* and *Macbeth*, are of a lower rank than Japanese emperors, somewhat comparable in other words to the lords of our feudal past, to the local *tandai* commissioners of Kyushu and the *kanrei* officials of Kanto.⁽⁴⁵⁾ When we consider how Hamlet's father sleeps in his orchard unattended by pages and courtiers, we realize the populism of Shakespeare's plays: that a frankly unrestrained domestic style might go well with the classical thoughts of Shakespeare's kings and queens. Moreover, where Shakespeare uses only colloquialisms, and as in the extreme case of *Hamlet* where one would suppose that his royals would not use such colloquial language even for the uninhibited Elizabethans, then a very classical and graceful style of translation is in the end inappropriate. In particular in the case of Hamlet, who changes in his 'antic disposition' from one moment to the next, his lines can only be translated by resorting to the kabuki style of Chikamatsu. I believe it is ultimately impossible to capture Hamlet's characteristic of detachment through the hybrid Shiken style or more generally in Meiji Japanese.

Shakespeare's rhetoric does seem somewhat similar in its ordinary rhythmicity to that of kabuki drama. The sound 'r' is pronounced with a rolled tongue so that a word like 'friend' when stressed at the end of a line comes out as *furiēnzū* in Japanese pronunciation. In Shakespeare, the syllables at the end of each line are stressed. Stresses in words such as 'myself' and 'my lord' indicate how these words were spoken long ago. The rules for saying Japanese words such as *konnitta* ('today') and *zenaku* ('good and evil') operate according to a similar principle found in the tradition of Noh chant whereby the beat is stressed.⁽⁴⁶⁾ I believe, therefore, that as times have moved on and rhetorical styles changed considerably through actors such as Henry Irving,⁽⁴⁷⁾ caution should be exercised with

the translation of original texts in the significance we attach to the meter and in what we do with the archaisms, and yet, to repeat my previous point, the seven-five syllabic meter of Bakin remains taboo, while the traditional narrative style is too verbose, and thus infeasible. The limp rhythms of seven-five meter are quite incapable of conveying the energy and crackle of the original text. Shakespeare's iambic pentameters, despite their formal qualities, can sound quite free and informal, even on occasion almost like prose, and in this respect inevitably remind me of Chikamatsu.

For these reasons, my translation of *Hamlet* is of course only a provisional attempt. As a version for stage performance, I have imitated so-called classical forms, or in Japanese terms the classicism of Noh drama against the romanticism of Chikamatsu.⁽⁴⁸⁾ It seemed only natural, therefore, to adopt first a mixture of Noh chant and other styles, but I ended up rather perplexed as I realized it would not do for my translation to have the sustained tense feeling of Noh chant. That was an aborted effort. My next concern was the little ditties Hamlet sings to himself, since I knew nothing about how they were meant to be sung. I guessed they could not be sung with the kind of feeling to which Japanese people are used from the Genroku kabuki, even less in the manner of *shintaiishi* (new-style poetry), and so I improvised with a kind of ballad in *kyōgen* style.⁽⁴⁹⁾ Ophelia's songs contain some vulgar lyrics, but their mood and melody were well suited to my improvised style.

At this level, translation style also relates to the actor's gestures and delivery, which is the great challenge of translating for Japanese actors. For Japanese actors to portray Westerners on stage, and not just Westerners but English people, and not just English people but the English of Elizabethan times, and not just Elizabethans but those of

Shakespeare's plays, and to portray such unique and yet diverse characters as Hamlet, Claudius and Polonius, each with their own authentic history, is without question intellectually infeasible, and yet quite apart from what Shakespeare scholars might say, if we are to grasp the bull by the horns and assert that human feelings are fundamentally alike, we should be able to find some ways of portraying these roles.

As I said to begin with, whether we should persist in our obeisance to existing theatrical models or else look for new styles and interpretations under the pretext of 'Shakespeare by and for by the Japanese people', 'that is the question'. I have been alone in favouring the second of these positions, and while my view is no doubt reflected in the performances of the Bungei Kyōkai, my reasons are rather complicated. If I were to explain what I have been saying with regard to my translating style in even twice the number of words, I suppose that it would make little sense to people without the requisite knowledge, and I would like to apologize here for this shortcoming. This is the view of myself and the Bungei Kyōkai, and since others are welcome to disagree with us, if at some point we are criticized, or else I am required to defend my company, then may the above arguments suffice. One point I would add is that the new styles and interpretations I have mentioned are certainly not intended for self-serving purposes, since my sole aspiration can only be to grasp the author's original intention. Not even the famous foreign actors can necessarily be said to be set solely on finding new interpretations. In the case of *Hamlet*, even the better known interpretations of the play have followed numerous directions since Goethe and Coleridge,⁽⁵⁰⁾ and when contemporary productions in Europe and North America add something to the text, and the differences between actors' interpretations are so extreme that they seem completely opposed to each other, there can be no

one with the author's authority to say which is exactly correct. That is something I would like readers to understand.

TEXT: 'Nihon de enzuru *Hamuretto*' (Performing *Hamlet* in Japan). In Sasaki Takashi, ed. *Sheikusupia kenkyū shiryō shūsei*, Vol.2. Tokyo: Nihon Tosho Centre, 1997. 196-202.

For the sake of economy, I have cut a few of the more repetitive sections of 'The Bottomless Lake' and some sentences in the first essay; these are marked with square brackets.

Notes

- (1) Tsubouchi's 'periodic' or biographical approach to the plays is probably derived from the Irish scholar Edward Dowden (1843-1913), whose *Shakspere: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1883, 1st ed. 1875) was the most influential work of Shakespeare scholarship in late 19th century Japan (and translated in 1893).
- (2) Tsubouchi published his commentary on the first two acts only of the play (for which this essay was the preface) in *Waseda Bungaku* in 1891, and published a translation of the first act of *Macbeth* in 1897. The fear Tsubouchi expresses in 'Soko shirazu no mizuumi' of losing oneself in the mind of a genius like Shakespeare, especially if done so for merely self-serving reasons (which might include one's ideological motives), is arguably akin to the plot of *Macbeth* where the protagonist loses himself to the supernatural world (the witches) in his thirst for power.
- (3) Tsubouchi's word for 'fate' is *shukumei*, a Buddhist term for the effect on the present of good and bad deeds in a person's previous life.
- (4) The Hossō school of Buddhism, which was introduced into Japan in the 7th century, teaches that all phenomena are phenomena of the mind.
- (5) This section refers to the famous opening of *The Tale of Heike* (completed before 1330): 'The sound of the Gion Shōja temple bells echoes the impermanence of all things; the colour of the sāla flowers reveals the truth that to flourish is to fall. The proud do not endure, like a passing dream on a night in spring; the mighty fall at last, to be no more than dust before the wind.' (trans. Helen McCullough) Gion is the Japanese name for the

Jetavana monastery in northern India, where the original Buddha preached frequently, and of a temple in Kyoto where the story begins. The briefly flowering sāla trees symbolize impermanence in Buddhism, and the tolls of temple bells the alternate states of nirvana and impermanence, which for Tsubouchi is a Shakespearean image of the whole of human life contained within a moment in time.

- (6) A quotation from Christopher Marlowe's play *Dr Faustus* (before 1592) in which Faustus summons the spirit of the legendary beauty Helen of Troy (13.89). The previous references are to the Romantic poet Lord Byron (1788-1824) and the satirist Jonathan Swift (1667-1745).
- (7) The number seems excessive, but *Hamlet* at least had been well known in Japan since 1871, with various adaptations and translations following, and the disagreement that Tsubouchi mentions probably refers to the differences of opinion cited in the essay on *Hamlet* translated below about whether Shakespeare should be interpreted according to Japanese or Western viewpoints.
- (8) Samuel Johnson (1709-84), lexicographer, critic, and Shakespeare editor, is representative of the 18th century neoclassical view of Shakespeare's genius as imitating nature, while Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), poet, philosopher, and Shakespeare critic, is representative of the early 19th century Romantic view of Shakespeare's genius as being an organic natural phenomenon in itself.
- (9) For Tsubouchi, Shakespeare's genius is represented by the sea – or lake – itself, while Dowden likens Shakespeare to a mariner who since 'he had sent down his plummet farther into the depths than other men, [. . .] knew better than others how fathomless for human thought those depths remain.' (Dowden, 35)
- (10) Philosopher Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) popularized the notion of Shakespeare as 'poet as hero' in his influential *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Hero in History* (1841).
- (11) Writer of *jōruri* puppet and kabuki plays (1653-1725), whom Tsubouchi was to call 'the Shakespeare of Japan'.
- (12) According to the legend, Benka lived in the 9th century kingdom of Chu in southern China, and had his left foot cut off when the king refused to believe that a valuable gem he had found in the mountains was real. When he presented a mere stone to the king's successor, he had his right foot cut off,

but when he polished the stone so that it became a gem and presented it to this king's successor, its worth was finally recognized, and later sold in exchange for fifteen castles.

- (13) Prominent Shakespeareans familiar to Tsubouchi: Georg Gottfried Gervinus (1805-71), German literary historian who wrote a commentary on Shakespeare; Ulrich Bräker (1735-98), Swiss autodidact who wrote commentaries on each of Shakespeare's plays; Sir John Bucknill (1817-97), eminent psychiatrist who wrote on Shakespeare's medical knowledge; Richard Green Moulton (1849-1924), American academic whose analytical approach to Shakespeare strongly influenced Tsubouchi; Henry Norman Hudson (1814-86), American scholar whose Shakespeare criticism was read by Emily Dickinson; and, lastly, Dowden.
- (14) *Sewamono* ('domestic tragedies') originally written by Chikamatsu for the *jōruri* puppet theatre (and later adapted for the kabuki): *Shinjū ten no Amijima* (The Love Suicides at Amijima, 1720), *Onnagoroshi abura no jigoku* (The Woman-Killer and the Hell of Oil, 1721), *Meido no hikyaku* (The Courier for Hell, 1711, which Tsubouchi apparently confuses with a later play by another playwright with the same plot, *Koi no tayori Yamato ōrai*), and the last probably referring to *Tamba Yosaku no machiyo no komurobushi* (The Night Song of Yosaku from Tamba, 1707).
- (15) Tsubouchi wrote frequently on both Chikamatsu and Shakespeare in *Waseda Bungaku*, and comparing the two writers is at pains to emphasize that Chikamatsu's plays contain situations and emotions that are not to be found in Shakespeare but which nevertheless contribute to the variety of human experience.
- (16) Key figures whom Tsubouchi encountered in his early Shakespeare studies: Nicholas Rowe (1674-1718), dramatist, poet laureate, and first recognized editor of Shakespeare's works; Johnson (see above); Alexander Pope (1688-1744), poet, translator, and Shakespeare editor; Coleridge (see above); William Hazlitt (1778-1830), drama critic and social commentator; Edmond Malone (1741-1812), Irish Shakespeare scholar and editor; William Warburton (1698-1779), churchman and Shakespeare editor; Edwin Abbott Abbott (1838-1926), author of *Shakespearian Grammar*; Alexander Schmidt (1816-87), compiler of *Shakespeare Lexicon*; Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), German writer and statesman influenced by Shakespeare and rivals Shakespeare in his own cultural influence; and, Gotthold Lessing

- (1729-81), German dramatist of the Enlightenment era who promoted Shakespeare's works.
- (17) Renowned haiku poet Uejima Onitsura (1661-1738). The original Japanese reads *Nande aki no kita tomo miezu kokoro kara*.
- (18) Affectionately known as Sōgo-sama (1605-53), Sakura (Kiuchi) Sōgorō was crucified together with his sons after appealing to the shogun above the head of his local lord against the heavy taxes his villagers were having to pay despite poor crops. No historical evidence has been found for the incident, so he may be only a legendary martyr. The works of the Whig historian Lord Macaulay (1800-59), who praised parliamentarian John Hampden (c. 1595-1643) as the originator of the English Revolution for his refusal to pay Charles I's ship tax in 1637, would have been known to Tsubouchi from his study of English history at the Imperial University.
- (19) According to this view, Shakespeare's plays are more open to critical interpretation than ordinary fiction because – with the possible exception of *Hamlet* – the details that might account for the underlying 'ideals' (i.e. thematic interpretations) of the plays and characters are skillfully subsumed by the overriding dramatic structures. For example, Lady Macbeth's admission that she has 'given suck' (1.7.54), or experienced motherhood, offers a critical insight into the person she has become but is only one of numerous such details and actions that drive the play's narrative. In Tsubouchi's view, that kind of psychological detail would be expounded at greater length within a novel.
- (20) Takizawa (or Kyokutei) Bakin (1767-1848), the best known of fiction writers from the late Edo era, whom Tsubouchi read as a child and later criticised in *Shōsetsu shinzui* (The Essence of the Novel, 1885) for his didacticism and lack of psychological depth. Mr and Mrs Hikiroku appear in Bakin's epic novel *Nansō satomi hakkenden* (The Eight Dog Chronicles, 1814-42).
- (21) Matsuo Bashō (1644-94), 'an ancient pond – a frog jumps in – the sound of water'. Bashō's 'frog' haiku and the 11th century *Tale of Genji* are both classic literary works that are mentioned frequently in Tsubouchi's comparative studies at this time.
- (22) A conventional description of the sea which Tsubouchi also uses in the prelude of *Shinkyoku Urashima* (1904). According to the legend, a terrifying dragon lived at the bottom of the sea, which suits Tsubouchi's metaphor in the debate on 'hidden ideals' of the dangers of penetrating too deeply a

writer's consciousness.

- (23) The *jittoku* ('ten' or 'many' virtues) was a sleeved garment worn by men in pre-modern times.
- (24) The Buddhist paradise.
- (25) Christianity was legalized in 1871 following the Meiji Restoration.
- (26) A likely reference to another popular haiku by Bashō: 'On a bare branch a crow is perched – autumn evening'.
- (27) In Buddhism, the soul passes through 84,000 cycles of reincarnation before reaching nirvana.
- (28) The Bokkai Sea on China's north-east coastline was traditionally believed to drain all the waters of the world. The third realm in Buddhist cosmology is that of formlessness (above the first of desire and second of form), just prior to nirvana.
- (29) Traditionally, seven tools are considered necessary for carrying out professional tasks, which nowadays might include such devices as the mobile phone. The 12th century warrior-monk Benkei, a hero of Noh and kabuki drama, is depicted carrying seven tools on his back (the axe, rake, sickle, mallet, saw, staff, and spear).
- (30) Pines symbolize long life in Japanese culture; the Noh drama *Takasago* features paired pine trees that symbolize the harmony and durability of the marital relationship.
- (31) The temple on Mt Yoshino, near Kyoto, famed for its cherry blossoms.
- (32) A bridge dating back to the Tang dynasty in the Chinese city of Suzhou.
- (33) See note 21. Tsubouchi is satirizing the young Japanese of the age who leapt at every new intellectual and cultural fashion being adopted from the West without considering the consequences.
- (34) Shakespeare and Goethe. *Gyōten* is an idiom meaning 'to take the world by surprise'.
- (35) Two Tokyo theatres that opened in 1873 and 1878 respectively, and representative of the early movement to modernize the Japanese theatre. Morita Shiken (1861-97), journalist and prolific translator of Jules Verne, advocated more meticulous standards of literary translation than had so far been practiced in Meiji Japan. This was hybrid in the sense that Morita believed it was possible to write translations that were both accurate and literary.
- (36) *Kojiki* (Records of Ancient Matters), the oldest chronicle of Japan's mythical

foundations, dating from the 8th century and written in Chinese characters.

- (37) *Kanadehon Chūshingura* (The Treasury of Loyal Retainers, 1748), the most popular of *jōruri* and kabuki plays, co-written by Takeda Izumo. Based on an actual incident in 1704, Yuranosuke is the leader of forty-seven samurai who avenge their master's wrongful forced suicide (hence the *Hamlet* connection), and is a comic role, for example, in the way that he successfully evades detection by the authorities.
- (38) Prominent kabuki actors of the time who had played Yuranosuke: Ichikawa Danjūrō IX (1838-1903), Sawamura Sōjūrō VII (1875-1949), Ichikawa Danzō VII (1836-1911), and Ichikawa Udanji I (1843-1916).
- (39) Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree (1852-1917), Shakespearean actor and theatre manager, particularly known as a character actor.
- (40) Puccini's opera *Madama Butterfly* (1904) was based on a play by David Belasco (1853-1931) and John Luther Long (1861-1927), *Madame Butterfly: A Tragedy of Japan*, which premiered in New York in 1900. In 1902, Belasco followed this up with another play on a Japanese theme, *The Darling of the Gods*.
- (41) Tsubouchi translated the trial scene only for performance by the Bungei Kyōkai (Literary Arts Association) at Tokyo's Kabukiza in November 1906. The Bungei Kyōkai was Japan's first modern stage company, founded by Tsubouchi in February 1906.
- (42) Ii Yōhō (1871-1938) was an actor in the *shinpa* ('new wave') theatre, a modern genre based on kabuki that emerged in the 1890s and considered melodramatic and sensational. Ii himself staged adaptations of both Shakespeare and Chikamatsu plays.
- (43) Tsubouchi envisages a subtle and rather academic blending of historical styles. *Taiheiki* is a historical epic from the late 14th century, and *Seisuiiki* an extended version of *Heiki monogatari* (*The Tale of Heike*) about the historical feud between the Taira and Minamoto clans for control of Japan at the end of the 12th century. The Genroku (1688-1704) and Kyōhō (1716-36) eras are associated with the rise of the *jōruri* and kabuki theatres in Edo and Osaka, and the Bunka (1804-18) and Bunsei (1818-30) with a similar development of the mercantile culture. Traditional drama is conventionally written in seven-five syllabic meter (*shichigochō*), notably narrative sections. Kawatake Mokuami (1816-93) was a kabuki dramatist who straddled the Tokugawa and Meiji eras, and was Tsubouchi's mentor in the kabuki world. In

combining these various styles, Tsubouchi hoped to imitate the conflation of historical, contemporary, poetic and colloquial perspectives he found in Shakespeare, although as he insinuates in the next paragraph the problem is that Shakespeare's stylistic changes occur more rapidly and smoothly than would be possible in traditional Japanese drama, which is more dependent on elaborate choreography and musical accompaniment.

- (44) The satirical urban comedies of Ben Jonson (1572-1637) may be considered narrower in range than Shakespearean drama, and Jonson would also be an example of those educated writers Tsubouchi mentions who imitate classical models.
- (45) *Tandai* were appointed in the 12th century as deputies to oversee the southwestern part of Japan. *Kanryō* (or *kanrei*) were given a similar role in the late 14th century in eastern Japan.
- (46) Tsubouchi is referring to the drop in pitch from high to low that frequently occurs in Japanese words and phrases (so-called pitch accent), which although different from English stress accent and largely irrelevant to Japanese poetics is nevertheless a type of accentuation. Noh chant (*utai*) is generally based on a seven-five (twelve) syllable count sung over an eight beat measure.
- (47) The acting style of Sir Henry Irving (1838-1905), whose celebrated Shylock influenced kabuki actor Ichikawa Sadanji II (1880-1940) in his interpretation of the role for the 1913 production by Matsui Shōyō (which used Tsubouchi's translation). Irving's style was characterized as psychologically more profound and less stylized than his Romantic predecessors.
- (48) Tsubouchi refers to Chikamatsu's 'romanticism' in other writings as well by which he means that (within the conventions of kabuki drama) the lovers and other lyrical characters in Chikamatsu's plays express themselves with greater individuality and intensity than in works by other traditional playwrights.
- (49) It is unclear what Tsubouchi means by Hamlet's 'ditties' since Hamlet never sings in the play, although given the comic streak to his character, the registers of traditional Japanese comedy (*kyōgen*) would contrast with more serious, lyrical registers. *Shintaishi* was a new style introduced in the 1880s that combined Western poetics with traditional syllabic meter, and was therefore similar to what Tsubouchi was attempting; his likely reason for rejecting it was that it was non-dramatic.

- (50) Dowden's influence is once again evident, because Dowden was a Goethian as well as Shakespearean, and from his reading of Dowden Tsubouchi would have been aware of the Romantic subjective view of Hamlet both in Goethe's novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) and in Coleridge's 'Lecture on Hamlet' (1818). Goethe and Coleridge identified with the prince, but as critics (including Tsubouchi) recognized the difficulty of stating Shakespeare's intentions with authority, the drift of 19th century criticism was towards objectivity.

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—文学部教授—