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## Finding a Style for Presenting Shakespeare on the Japanese Stage

**Abstract:** Japanese productions of Shakespeare's plays are almost always discussed with exclusive focus upon their visual, musical and physical aspects without any due considerations to their verbal elements. Yet the translated texts in the vernacular, in which most of Japanese stage performances of Shakespeare are given, have played crucial part in understanding and analysing them as a whole. This paper aims to illuminate the importance of the verbal styles and phraseology of Shakespeare's translated texts by analysing Nakayashiki Norihito's all-female productions of *Hamlet* (2011) and *Macbeth* (2012) in the historical contexts of Japanese Shakespeare translation.

**Keywords:** translation, style, Japanese performance, all-female production, Ninagawa Yukio, Nakayashiki Norihito.

the signature of the Thing "Shakespeare":  
to authorize each one of the translations, to  
make them possible and intelligible without  
even being reduced to them.

### 1

'Foreign Shakespeare' or 'Shakespeare without English' has almost always been discussed as (or expected to be) something to be visually appreciated and not to be heard, because they are presented in 'foreign' languages. This attitude towards 'Foreign Shakespeares' automatically not only exempts scholars from discussing the translated text for performance but also allows them to concentrate upon the visual and musical aspects of the performance. Although foreign-language productions are generally admitted to 'have a more direct access to the power of the plays' and hence 'have an advantage of great significance in the theatre', it does not necessarily mean that 'they are especially

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noticeable in the visual aspects of productions' or that they 'have explored scenographic and physical modes'. This attitude naturally eliminates the possibility of analysing the verbal texts of such Shakespearean performances, thus shifting the foci of the academics away from linguistically intriguing but visually unobtrusive performances.<sup>1</sup> This paper aims to focus not upon the visual aspects but upon the verbal styles of two of the recent productions of Shakespeare in Japan, so as to illustrate the importance of verbal aspects of some 'visually stunning' foreign productions of Shakespeare.

This paper is bilateral: the first part provides a brief historical description of shifting yet consistent styles of Japanese translations of Shakespeare so as to show how the images of the Bard as literary giant have been re-confirmed by Shakespeare translations repeatedly revised in Japan. The latter part, on the other hand, illustrates how such an image is being theatrically and stylistically challenged by Nakayashiki Norihito's series of Shakespeare performances called "Nyotai [Female-Body] Shakespeare". Nakayashiki, a young playwright-director-actor, has so far produced seven of Shakespeare's plays, *Hamlet* (2011), *Macbeth* (2012), *Julius Caesar* (2013), *King Lear* (2013), *Romeo and Juliet* (2014), *Antony and Cleopatra* (2014), *Richard the Third* (2015) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2016). This paper primarily explores the first two of his Shakespeare productions, *Nosatsu Hamlet [Seductive Hamlet]* and *Zeccho Macbeth [Macbeth at the Climax]*, so as to illustrate how he 're-styles' or even 'de-styles' the conventional ideas of Shakespeare performance.

## 2

Shakespeare has been regarded as a sign of cultural sophistication since he was first introduced to Japan in the late 19th century. Along with his widely recognized literary values, the language of Shakespeare plays in Japanese translation has also been regarded as, or expected to be, 'poetic' or 'literary' at the least, whether on page or on stage. Whilst many of Japan's modern Shakespeare productions in the last few decades boasted their visual and/or physical versatility of their stage productions, they are almost always conservative in terms of their linguistic styles, and thus they, whether explicitly or implicitly, almost always re-affirm his conventional literary status as well as the set images and values of the Bard in Japanese translation.

Possessing something Shakespearean has been more than holding of cultural or fluid property. The Tokyo Globe, a modern theatre inspired by and

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<sup>1</sup> This is well illustrated by the popularity of Ninagawa's Shakespearean productions, which are almost always visually stunning, and a glance at the reviews of his Shakespeare productions, especially by English reviewers such as Michael Billington, will prove this. See Kishi and Minami.

based upon the original Globe in London, was built and opened as part of a high-rise blocks of flats in 1988, in the very middle of Japan's bubble economy, as if to camouflage the embarrassment of the developer's monetary desires in the redevelopment of the area. And naturally enough, having Shakespeare in translation has more than a socio-cultural significance. Takemura Satoru explains the significances of Tsubouchi Shoyo's translation of Shakespeare's whole canon in his *Nihon Eigaku Hattatsu-shi* (1933). Takemura write:

Among the first-rate or second-rate nations with an advanced culture in the world, there is no nation that does not have a complete works of Shakespeare in translation. I hear that there are more than ten versions of the complete works in translation in Germany, eight or nine in France and four or five in Russia, and that Spain, Italy, Holland, Poland, Sweden, Denmark and Hungary have more than a few versions of Shakespeare's complete works in their own languages. Only the second-rate or third-rate nations such as China and Turkey do not have one. . . . With the publication of Dr Tsubouchi's translation of Shakespeare's complete works, Japan has left the lower ranks of China and Turkey, and got on to equal terms with the Great Powers of the world. (Takemura 210)

As Takemura has succinctly remarked some 80 years ago, translating and possessing Shakespeare meant and still mean more than mere transference of the Bard's literary texts from Britain to Japan. It rather symbolises the nation's cultural, social and even political sophistication and high status in the world.

As if to reflect and correspond to such socio-cultural as well as political significances of possessing Shakespeare in the vernacular, the styles and phraseologies of Shakespeare translation are also expected to have something sophisticated and lofty, or to be free from vulgarity, frivolity or meanness. In other words, Shakespeare translations and hence their stage representations have been 'faithful' to and thus in the linguistic/stylistic confinements of the locally established images of this literary giant, though in the vernacular. The last few decades saw young Japanese writers and theatre practitioners attempt to liberate themselves from such 'confinements' by creating drastic adaptations and rewritings. Yet when they quote from or refer to Shakespearean lines in Japanese, the lofty or poetic stylistic hallmarks of "Shakespeareanness" in translation are almost always recognisable in one way or another as if intended to indicate the signature of Shakespeare as well as his presence in the vernacular.

This is well illustrated in Inoue Hisashi's *Tempo Juninen no Shakespeare* [Shakespeare in the 12<sup>th</sup> Year of the Tempo Era] (first performed in 1974), a musical comedy which refers to all of Shakespeare's plays in a parodic manner. Inoue, the playwright, seems to have expected its audiences to recognize Shakespearean quotations whenever some famous lines or phrases of Shakespeare plays are quoted in this musical comedy, because the Shakespearean words and phrases would sound stylistically conspicuous from

the other words and phrases in the comedy. In other words, Inoue made much of Shakespearean quotations, and thus illuminated the ambiguous but persistent stylistic features of ‘Shakespeare’ in Japanese translation.

Translators of Shakespeare’s plays have endeavoured to re-create or choose styles appropriate to those of the original plays in English, even though there is no finding any Japanese styles appropriate to their counterparts of early modern England when the source materials (Shakespeare’s plays) are geographically and temporally so far away from the target (the modern Japanese language). As David Bellos maintains, ‘the translation of style is an exercise in pastiche, the translator’s task being the choice of an existing style in the target culture to serve as a rough match for the “other”’ (Bellos 294). So it is a matter of choice, and few translators are likely to make the same choice. Notable is that the styles and phraseology of translation could differ from one translator to another though sharing some “Shakespeareanness”, and that this diversity has not only opened up possibilities for creating idiosyncratic Shakespearean performances but also emphasised the unstableness of Shakespearean texts in translation.

A style of translation defines an acting style, and hence either domesticates foreign plays audio-visually or makes them completely foreign to local/target audiences though in the vernacular. This holds too true for a history of Shakespeare performance in Japan, whilst most of other western plays have not raised such a question because they are not likely to have more than a few Japanese versions of the same play. The whole history of Shakespeare in Japan can be regarded as series of not-completely-successful attempts at finding a style for Shakespeare canon suitable for contemporary theatre practitioners and audiences. In some 150 years of Shakespeare reception, Japan has produced three complete works of Shakespeare in Japanese translation, with two more projects being carried out single-handedly. Each Shakespeare translation has its own style appropriate for some specific acting styles, reflecting the changing styles of ‘modern’ Japanese theatres. Or in other words, each translator has been required to differentiate their renderings from their predecessors both to meet the theatrical and commercial demands and to distinguish themselves as Shakespearean translator.

When Shakespeare’s plays were first translated into Japanese, the leading translator and Shakespearean, Tsubouchi Shoyo, tried to render Shakespeare’s plays in the manner of *kabuki* scripts, though he later revised them in a rather contemporary Japanese style in the first decades of the 20th century, still with some *kabuki*-ish flavours/expressions sprinkled over them.<sup>2</sup> This is in part

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<sup>2</sup> Interestingly enough, Tsubouchi remarked in 1916 that *kabuki* was more similar to Shakespeare plays than any other theatre form in the world. cf. ‘Why the Japanese Commemorate Shakespeare’, in *Collected Works of Tsubouchi Shōyō*, 12 vols., X (1977), p.755. Also noteworthy is his article of 1909 called ‘Chikamatsu vs.

because *kabuki* was the only popular and mainstream theatre form available and seemingly applicable to ‘realistic’ or western drama at that time. Yet the style of his translation did not go well with a western acting style expected of contemporary European plays. When Tsubouchi directed a partial production of *Hamlet* in his translation with actresses (instead of female impersonators) in female roles for the first time in 1907, an interesting ‘accident’ happened during its rehearsal: In preparation for this performance of *Hamlet*, two British lecturers in English at Waseda University instructed the actors in gestures and facial expressions, yet Tsubouchi, who attended the rehearsal three days before the first performance, thoroughly ‘corrected’ their gestures and expressions. This was partly because Tsubouchi found his interpretation as well as the style of his translation did not go well with the gestures and movements in which the lecturers instructed the actors. Here Kawatake Toshio was right in assuming that the *kabuki* style of Tsubouchi’s translation did not work with a kind of naturalistic acting style which the British teachers taught to the actors (Kawatake 288-94).

Without a proper style that could accommodate a western acting style, Tsubouchi chose to adopt *kabuki*-ish phraseology and style so as to invent a new style which might have, upon local audiences, the theatrical effects equivalent to the source/original counterparts. Tsubouchi’s decision was to be criticized in 1911 when he presented a full production of *Hamlet* in his translation. In his newspaper review of Tsubouchi’s *Hamlet* (1911), Natsume Soseki, a famous novelist and ex-professor of English at Tokyo Imperial University, maintained that the poetry and music of *noh* would be better suited for translating Shakespeare’s poetry into Japanese. Natsume held that since there was no way of translating the poetical and musical beauties of Shakespeare, Japanese translators should give up word-to-word translation of his plays and rather recreate or adapt Shakespeare’s play in *noh* and *kyogen* form.<sup>3</sup>

Japanese theatre practitioners including Tsubouchi did not follow Natsume’s suggestions. They created a new drama genre now known as *shingeki* (New Drama) and struggled to invent its own new, and hence sometimes a little awkward, linguistic style, which is often sarcastically called ‘translation style’.<sup>4</sup> As *shingeki* aimed primarily at introducing Western drama to Japan in replicative ways, they had to create a new dramatic language based upon the

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Shakespeare vs. Ibsen’, in which he enumerates eighteen similarities between Chikamatsu and Shakespeare. See ‘Chikamatsu vs. Shakespeare vs. Ibsen’ in *The Collected Works of Tsubouchi Shôyô*, X, pp.769-813.

<sup>3</sup> *The Asahi*, June 5 and 6, 1911.

<sup>4</sup> One of the notable examples is the introduction of matters as the subject of a sentence. The Japanese usually say, “Why did she do so?” and still seldom say “What made her do so?” with ‘what’ as a subject of a sentence. But *shingeki* plays in the “translation style” deliberately used that kind of sentence.

contemporary Japanese language which was also being on the make. This is because *shingeki* companies vigorously endeavoured to stage contemporary Western works of naturalism or expressionism in the same manner as they were produced in Europe. So as to replicate western plays on stage in Japanese, they needed a style that would match the western acting style including gestures and facial expressions.

Shakespeare, as an important part of *shingeki*'s repertoire, was translated by many scholars and theatre practitioners throughout the 20th century. Fukuda Tsuneari, another notable scholar-translator-director of Shakespeare, made a debut as a Shakespearean director by staging *Hamlet* in his translation in 1955. Fukuda actually attempted at making an impeccable Japanese copy of Michael Benthall's *Hamlet* at the Old Vic in 1953. In translating *Hamlet* into Japanese, Fukuda made every effort to replicate and hence accommodate the movements and tempo as well as the gestures and facial expressions of the 'original' fast-moving production. Fukuda's translation is often claimed to have its own style with masculine musicality and rhythm, assertive brevity and loftiness, and it is still used by some companies, even though Fukuda's translation, after sixty years since its first publication, has become a little too difficult and archaic for young audiences to follow.

Odashima Yushi is the second to single-handedly translate the complete Shakespeare canon into Japanese. Odashima supplied his translation of each Shakespeare's play to Deguchi Norio almost every month so that Deguchi's Shakespeare Theater Company could stage all of Shakespeare's plays in six years from 1975 to 1981. Odashima's crisp and plain style was welcomed by younger directors and actors in the 1980s, for they found Fukuda's renderings somewhat difficult to speak on stage and sounded a bit too lofty and outmoded to meet the demands of those younger theatre practitioners. Odashima's style went well with Deguchi's Shakespearean productions which were often called 'Shakespeare in jeans' because of their plain-speaking and energetic performance in jeans and T-shirts on a small empty stage. Hence Odashima's translation style changed the impressions of Shakespeare.

The changing styles of Shakespeare translation in Japan reflect the shifting ideas of dramatic and theatrical languages on the modern stage as well as the changing ideas of Shakespeare's plays. Ninagawa took advantage of the varying translation styles of Shakespeare in his 1988 *Hamlet*. In this production, Ninagawa adopted both Tsubouchi's and Odashima's versions of the play in a single production: the people spoke the lines taken from Tsubouchi's *kabuki*-ish, archaic and formal translation in Claudius' court, whilst people spoke the lines of Odashima's outside the court. Ninagawa's production with the two different translations to present the two different worlds in one play turned out to be of mediocre success, in part because the stylistic discrepancies between those two translations did not always sound so obvious as expected when spoken by the

actors on stage. Yet it can be safely said that this production demonstrated manipulation of differing styles of translation could be theatrically as well as dramatically effective in presenting Shakespeare plays in translation. This is obviously one of the advantages and possible attractions of foreign Shakespeare, or Shakespeare without English.

Yet what is more notable is that Shakespeare in translation, in whosever version it may be, still somehow conveys ‘Shakespeareanness’ through its styles, rhythms, or phraseology, in spite of each translator’s attempts at revising, renewing and excelling his or her preceding translators’ styles, phraseologies, and verbal images of Shakespeare’s plays in the vernacular. One of the most conspicuous elements is peerage. Since Japanese peerages such as ‘duke’ or ‘earl’ were newly invented in 1884 and abolished in 1947, such titles seldom appear in Japanese texts in general, and hence such titles that often appear in Shakespeare’s plays suggest foreignness or ‘Shakespeareanness’ to Japanese audiences and readers. Also, when rendering foreign literary texts into Japanese, the translated texts usually retain certain ‘foreignness’ in them, whether it is a translators’ intention or not. For example, if a subjective pronoun such as ‘I’, ‘we’ or ‘you’ in the original English texts remains in the Japanese versions, the translated texts could sound somewhat awkward, because such pronouns are often omitted in the Japanese. This linguistic feature sometimes works well in translation: when Macbeth, conspiring to kill Duncan, says to Lady Macbeth “Should we fail”, the “we” could be interpreted as either the ‘royal we’ or as a plural pronoun. In the Japanese version, a translator can simply omit this “we” from the translated text so that the interpretation of the translated text can be open to a director’s or actors’ discretions. Yet if the translator retained the pronoun, the sentence would not only reduces the number of possible interpretations but makes it sound somewhat strange as Japanese. Such verbal ‘Shakespeareanness’ in the translated texts can be distinctive even in the so-called ‘conversational’ or ‘colloquial’ translation of Shakespeare. But what if such verbal or stylistic Shakespeareanness is thoroughly denied in Shakespearean texts for performance, while following the plots rather faithfully?

### 3

Ninagawa never rewrites or changes translated texts of Shakespeare’s plays. This attitude towards Shakespeare’s translated texts is generally shared by many directors such as Deguchi Norio and others working on Shakespeare. They believe that each translator tries to retain something Shakespearean when rendering Shakespeare’s plays into Japanese dramatic and performable texts. Even Suzuki Tadashi, who is well known for his drastic editing or collaging Shakespeare’s texts in his *Lear* and *Macbeth*, does not change the wording of the

translated texts.<sup>5</sup> In many cases, translators of Shakespeare plays have been regarded as a substitute of the Bard's authority, whether those translators wanted to take such an authoritative positions or not.<sup>6</sup>

Nakayashiki, on the contrary, deliberately avoids adopting the conventional verbal styles and phraseologies established by the foregoing Japanese versions of Shakespeare's plays. In his scripts of *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, Nakayashiki has removed all the peerages, and also replaced 'koku'ou', the Japanese word for 'king', with the English word 'KING' as if to make fun of or show little respect to the 'superiors' in his Japanese versions. When Laertes says, "I came to Denmark, /To show my duty in your coronation" (*Hamlet* 1.2. 52-53), Laertes in Nakayashiki's version simply says, "I came home because Claudius-san becomes king". The 'san' is a suffix used as a fairly polite but friendly term of address, and it is inappropriate when addressing a king. The informal, or even rude, addressing to each other in Nakayashiki's script of *Hamlet* plainly shows the un-Shakespeareanness of his Shakespeare productions. And there are more unconventional and notable verbal features in his *Nyotai* [female-body] Shakespeare productions. The rest of the paper discusses *Noh-satsu Hamlet* [*Seductive Hamlet*] (2011) and *Zeccho Macbeth* [*Macbeth at the Climax*](2012) so as to demonstrate how the unconventional verbal styles of Nakabayashi's Shakespearean plays as well as the acting of his all-female troupe serve to create the sense of emotional alienation or detachment as well as discrepancies between the word and the body, and thus open up a new way of performing Shakespeare.

Female-Body *Shakespeare* is presented by the actresses of Nakayashiki's troupe, Kaki Kuu Kyaku.<sup>7</sup> An all-female production of Shakespeare is nothing new to Japanese theatregoers at the least. Takarazuka Revue Company, a one-hundred-year-old all-female company, has produced Shakespeare plays such as *Hamlet Romeo and Juliet*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Tempest* and others. Takarazuka Revue Company usually presents male-impersonators in leading roles with certain emphasis upon the imagined masculinity and manliness of the male

<sup>5</sup> Here I do not refer to the adaptations of Shakespeare in the 1980s and afterwards, as they completely change the character's names and sometimes even the plots. The two Shakespeare productions by Nakayashiki faithfully follows the plots of the plays and retains the characters' as well as place names.

<sup>6</sup> Matsuoka Kauzko, who has started rendering the complete Shakespeare canon into Japanese single-handedly, often attend directors' rehearsals when her translation is staged, and she sometimes revise her translation in the course of the rehearsals. Kawai Shoichiro, who has also begun the project to render all Shakespeare plays into Japanese, once worked with Nomura Mansai, a kyogen master, and get Nomura to read his translated texts aloud so as to make sure the translated texts 'flow' smoothly as texts. But these are still rather exceptional.

<sup>7</sup> "Kaki Kuu Kyaku" literally means 'a persimmon-eating guest', which is part of a well-known tongue twister.



characters while trying to delete femininity. In the Female-Body Shakespeare, on the other hand, the actresses do not necessarily hide or try to delete their physical or sometimes verbal and vocal femininity when playing male roles, though they are in men's clothes. This is one of the strategies that Nakayashiki adopts in his Female-Body Shakespeare in order to highlight the discrepancies between the physical presence of actresses in a male roles and the words they speak. Just as the Japanese word “*nyotai* [female body]” implies the sensual or even erotic aspects of female bodies, Nakayashiki does try not to conceal or deny but to emphasize the physical femininity or even sensuality of the players in some scenes. Nakayashiki deliberately emphasizes the apparent sensuality of his Shakespearean productions by adding somewhat provocative words to each title of the plays like *Nosatsu Hamlet* [*Seductive Hamlet*], *Zeccho Macbeth* [*Macbeth at the Climax*], *Hatsujo Julius Caesar* [*Sexually-Excited Julius Caesar*] and *Boso Juliet* [*Juliet on the Loose*]. Yet such emphasis of sensual or erotic impressions is rather limited to the titles. Nakayashiki's Shakespeare does not play much upon sensuality of the female players acting Shakespearean roles, whether male or female.

Nakayashiki sets *Hamlet* in a Japanese-style nightclub [Photos 1 and 2] and *Macbeth* in a mansion with the protagonist as a butler [Photo 3], although there are no verbal references to the settings in either production, as is often the case with modern-dress productions of Shakespeare in Anglophone countries.



Photo1. Gertrude, Claudius, Hamlet on the sofa.<sup>8</sup>  
Claudius as a guest being entertained by hostesses at  
a nightclub?



Photo 2. O, that this too  
too solid flesh would  
melt/ Thaw and resolve  
itself into a dew!

<sup>8</sup> <http://kaki-kuu-kyaku.com/hamlet/> Last accessed on 26 October, 2015.

But the settings that Nakayashiki chose for the plays seem to be deliberately irrelevant and iconoclastic, and it rather seems that the director-playwright attempted an experiment of actresses' various acting styles on the Shakespearean stage while referring to contemporary and popular Japanese imagination.<sup>9</sup> This is well illustrated by stylized movements, blaring bouncy music and dance. The acting styles show nothing of the conventional ideas of the past Shakespearean stages in Japan.

One of the remarkable things about his Shakespeare productions is the ways in which he adroitly presents the plays by detaching characters/actresses from their emotions through the uses of mismatching or unconventional verbal styles. Nakayashiki underlines these discrepancies by making stylistic changes to the lines they speak. The exchange at the very beginning of *Hamlet* goes as follows:

BERNARDO: Teme'e dareda konoyarou? (Hey, who are you, you bastard?)

[Who's there?]

FRANCISCO: Konoyarou wa teme'eda konoyorou. Nanottoke, kora.

(You are the fucking bastard. You tell me your name!)

[Nay, answer me: stand, and unfold yourself.]

BERNARDO: "Idai-naru denmaku oukoku ni eikouare! da Bakayarou

(Long live the King! You bastard)

[Long live the king!]

FRANCISCO: Teme'e Bernard ka konoyarou.

(Are you Bernardo, you bastard?)

[Bernardo?]

BERNARDO: Soudayo konoyarou

(Yes, you bastard.)

[He.]

FRANCISCO: Jikan pittarika, konoyarou.

(You've come on time, you bastard)

[You come most carefully upon your hour.]

(*Hamlet* 1.1. 1-6)<sup>10</sup>

'Teme'e' is a violent and rude word meaning 'you', and 'konoyarou' is an invective to be hurled at a person in front when quarrelling or starting to quarrel. Both words are usually uttered by young male thugs. The use of these words could give the audience a rough and wild impression of these two soldiers, but

<sup>9</sup> There are many *manga* graphic novels that feature hostesses in the nightlife business and 'butlers' or 'maids'. 'Maids' and 'butlers' are thoroughly recreated in the imagination of Japanese pop culture such as *manga* (graphic novels), *anime* (animation films) and computer games.

<sup>10</sup> I am grateful to Nakayashiki for providing me with the script for *Nousatsu Hamlet*. The sentences in parentheses are literal translation of the Japanese script and those in square brackets are the word taken from Shakespeare's text.

this almost unnecessary repetition of these words will rather appear to be making fun of exaggerated masculinity, specifically when they were spoken by actresses. This scene is usually and rightly expected to convey a tense and even nervous atmosphere with fear at the beginning of the play, while the phraseology of Nakayashiki's version rather shows detachment of the speakers from the action or situation of the play.



Photo 3: Macbeth as ‘a butler’<sup>11</sup>



Photo 4: Lady Macbeth as ‘a maid’

This psychological disengagement or sense of detachment becomes clearer in Hamlet's soliloquies. For example, “O, that this too too solid flesh would melt/ Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!” (*Hamlet* 1.2.129-30) becomes “Tokete kurene’ekana [I wish (my flesh) would melt]. Katteni tokechimaeyo [I wouldn’t care if my body should resolve itself]. Dorodorootte [Like goo]”. These sentences in Japanese sound very informal, nonchalant, slipshod, apathetic and irresponsible. The words rather shows Hamlet as one who is being too much overwhelmed by the situation and have thoroughly lost any enthusiasm at all. Such a verbal style as well as the frivolousness and pathetic impression the speeches would make are what few theatre-goers would expect of the prince. The verbal style not only betrays spectators’ expectations but also fails to go with an actress’s acting, thus illuminating discrepancies not only between the

<sup>11</sup> <http://kaki-kuu-kyaku.com/macbeth/> Last accessed on 26 October, 2015.

dramatic character and the verbal style but between the language and the physical presence of the speaker.

The disagreements and contradictions between the conventional images of the leading character and his verbal style are more conspicuous in *Macbeth at the Climax* (2012). In this production, Nakayashiki consistently uses a polite style known as *desu-masu* style in Japanese for the speeches of Macbeth, thus making him sound less masculine, less emotional, more courteous and even humble. Also Macbeth consistently calls himself “*watakushi*,” a very formal and gender-neutral pronoun, instead of using other masculine pronouns, even when he talks to Lady Macbeth. This choice of the polite style corresponds to the ways Nakayashiki presents Macbeth as a butler/manservant.<sup>12</sup>

Macbeth, in Nakayashiki’s production, always looks diffident and unsure of himself, and hence often falters, even though Nakayashiki’s text is mostly literally faithful to the original. Macbeth’s lack of self-confidence or lack of masculinity is verbally indicated in many ways. In a scene corresponding to Act One Scene Seven where Macbeth says, “If we should fail?” Nakayashiki’s script goes as “Moshi shikujittara, *watakushi* to *anata* wa ...” [If we should fail, I and you would ...].<sup>13</sup> In the Japanese language, personal pronouns are often omitted, and, as mentioned above, Japanese translators of Shakespeare plays in the past did not translate this ‘we’ into Japanese so that this “we” could be interpreted both ‘royal we’ and ‘Macbeth and Lady Macbeth’. But Nakayashiki, who consulted the original English text when preparing the script, deliberately translated this ‘we’ as “*watakushi* [I = Macbeth] and *anata* [you = Lady Macbeth] so as not only to highlight his dependence upon his wife but to show his polite or modest attitude to his wife with the use of the pronoun ‘watakushi’. Macbeth’s lack of self-confidence is also presented as his childishness by his use of baby talk in some scenes. When rendering the line “Mine eyes are made the fool o’th’ other senses, /Or else worth all the rest (*Macbeth* 2.1.44-45),” Nakayashiki uses the childish word ‘*omeme*’ for ‘eyes’. Also the lines ‘Ha, they pluck mine eyes. / ... /No, this my hand will rather/The multitudinous seas incarnadine,/Making the green one red’ (*Macbeth* 2.2.57-61) are translated with childish words such as ‘*omeme* [eyes]’ and ‘*otete* [hands]’. Nakayashiki verbally deletes masculine associations of the leading character in his production, though he does not necessarily add any femininity on to Macbeth. While de-masculinising Macbeth, the playwright lets the other male characters and Lady Macbeth speak in rough and rude manners, thus highlighting the disagreements and contradictions between the conventional images of the leading character and his verbal style.

<sup>12</sup> As the Photo 3 indicates, the images of ‘butler’ and ‘manservant’ in this production do not come directly from British or counterparts. As will be mentioned later, these images are based upon the ones circulating in Japanese pop culture such as manga, animation films and TV drama.

<sup>13</sup> I am grateful to Nakayashiki for providing me with the script for *Zeccho Macbeth*.

## 4

When asked why he decided to present all-female productions of Shakespeare, Nakayashiki always mentions Ninagawa's all-male Shakespeare productions and adds that trying to present something similar to the 'original' productions of Shakespeare's time will lead you nowhere as a modern Japanese theatre practitioner. Nakayashiki also remarks that all-male productions of Shakespeare in *kabuki* or *noh* acting ways might be of some meanings, but that he cannot understand why they have to exclude actresses, whose theatrical possibilities and potentials are not yet fully tapped or explored in Japan and other countries. In his *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, Nakayashiki did not try to find any Japanese stylistic equivalents to Shakespeare's at all. He rather denies the widely accepted stylistic associations of Shakespeare's texts in the vernacular and their performances. By denying the conventional stylistic features of Shakespeare in translation, Nakayashiki has opened up new possibilities for actresses on stage, and also denied conventional acting styles expected of Shakespeare performance in the past. Nakayashiki's further develops the re-/de-stylisation of scripts in his later Shakespearean performances, where he makes actresses present manga-like exaggerated and quick changes of emotions in serious scenes; he adopts mockingly over-stylised gestures and elocutions in male characters reminiscent of actors in the theatre for the masses; he makes actresses in male roles, in particular, to oscillate between femininity and masculinity in order to indicate their shilly-shallying. Nakayashiki deliberately tries not to 'suit the action to the word, the word to the action' through adroitly using the linguistically casual or even rude styles in his Shakespearean productions, which means that the conventional ways of analysing his productions in audio-visual terms as 'foreign Shakespeare' could result in misappreciation of his work. Nakayashiki's Shakespearean performance is a visually or scenographically intriguing physical theatre indeed, yet it is his stylistic experiments in his Shakespearean texts that need to be explicated to rewrite an idea of "Foreign Shakespeares".

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