

Re-orienting Shakespeare in Japan

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Mika Eglinton, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

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Abstract

This thesis investigates how Shakespearean plays, the so-called “centre of the western canon” and “global commodity of cultural-capital” are interculturally reconstructed in the sphere of “Asia,” particularly Japan, against the current socio-cultural contexts of a postmodern and globalised age. In particular, I analyse how Shakespeare’s characters are represented in relation to the ongoing dichotomies of East and West, Occidentalism and Orientalism, masculinity and femininity, to colonise and to be colonised, and tradition and contemporaneity.

What does “Shakespeare” signify and where does this cultural icon stand in “Asia”? How is his iconic status constructed, celebrated, received, criticised, accommodated and consumed in the context of Asian intercultural productions? How are Shakespeare’s “women” performed in contemporary Asian theatres? What is the definition of Asia itself and where and how does one situate it? From the Occidental, Euro-centralised viewpoint that is connected to male subjectivity, following Edward Said, “Oriental” tends to be seen as “the other” and also somewhat feminine. If that is so, then are Shakespearean women, as “the others” in Asia, marginalised and feminised in a doubly complicated sense? Furthermore, as Rustom Bharucha claims, “Asiacentricity is the other side of Eurocentricity”, then does this not mean that the re-colonization of Shakespeare also implies colonizing masculinity?

In order to re-examine and re-define these questions, I develop a series of case studies based on unique research material collated from cross-cultural, multi-lingual and inter-national collaborative performance projects. This includes works by the following directors and practitioners: Deguchi Norio, Ninagawa Yukio, Miyagi Satoshi, Noda Hideki, Yasuda Masahiro, Ong Keng Sen and Miyazawa Akio. For each case study, I expose and analyse a specific type of “re-orientation” of a Shakespeare play. By re-orientation I mean the adaptation and ownership of Shakespeares in local, non-English contexts and the exportation of the transformed Shakespeare back to its place of origin.

Through these case studies, I document and historicise the complexity of correlations and mutual influences between East and West, challenging ageing dichotomies based on the dominance of Western discourse and cultural hegemony, towards a re-orientation of Shakespeare in the 21st century.

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Notes

Regarding naming conventions, in this thesis I have maintained the order customary to the country or language concerned. For example, Japanese, Chinese and Korean names are romanized with the family name first followed without comma by given names, with the exception of citations.

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Table of Contents

	Page
Chapter 1	
Re-orienting Shakespeare in Asia	6
Chapter 2	
Orienting Shakespeare in Japan	35
Chapter 3	
Re-orienting/Dis-orienting Shakespeare: Occidentalism and Orientalism in the work of Ninagawa Yukio	59
Chapter 4	
Re-orienting Self: Autobiography and Mimicry Deguchi Norio and the Shakespeare Theatre	79
Chapter 5	
Ku Na'uka's Shakespearean Trilogy: Shakespearean Tragedy Re-oriented by Women as "the Other" in "Asia"	101
Chapter 6	
"Thou art translated": Re-mapping Noda Hideki and Miyagi Satoshi's <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> in Post-March 11 Japan	124
Chapter 7	
Performing Constraint through <i>Yojohan</i> : Yamanote Jijosha's <i>Titus Andronicus</i>	145
Chapter 8	
Performing "Women" in "Asia": Ong Keng Sen's <i>Lear</i> , <i>Desdemona</i> and <i>Search Hamlet</i>	164
Chapter 9	
Re-orienting or Exorcising Shakespeare's "Ghost" in Miyazawa Akio's <i>Cardenio</i>	189
Conclusion	213
Works Cited	219
List of Figures	233

Chapter 1

Re-orienting Shakespeare in Asia

1. Re-orienting Shakespeare

Shakespeare's plays have travelled further than the playwright himself could ever have envisaged. The points of contact between the plays and their interpreters form a constellation across time and place, marking moments of transformation in local performance cultures, whose practices re-orient the texts – adding new layers to their language, imagery and interpretation. Thus, when Shakespeare travels, his works form cultural and political connections along the lines that crisscross the plays from Elizabethan England to present day Japan, before and beyond. This is not to suggest an essential flattening out of history. Rather, by approaching Shakespeare as Dennis Kennedy and Yong Li Lan call “phenomena” (2010: 3) or, as what Marie Louise Pratt calls “contact zones,” that is, spaces where readers engage in a “radically heterogeneous” (1991: 39) web of historic, linguistic and cultural encounters, what emerges is a map of difference, in which cultural appropriation, negation and subjugation, but also hybridity, agency and resistance are the entangled peaks and contours that define the terrain.

Where does one locate “Asia” and the “Orient” within the context of Shakespeare today? Asia is widely seen as the world's largest and most populated continent, bordering with Europe, the world's second smallest continent, along contested and changing boundaries. The majority of Shakespeare's plays are set in “Europe.” However, defining the boundaries that constitute Europe, whether geographic, political, economic, cultural or philosophical, is as problematic in Shakespeare's plays and time as it is today. As Gayatri Spivak argues in her book *Other Asias*, “It is as impossible to fix the precise moment when ‘Europe’ became a proper name for a real and affective space as it is impossible to fix the moment when a ‘European’ first used the name ‘Asia.’” (2008: 209) To claim the names “Europe,” “Asia” or “Eurasia” as markers of identity is to claim them on divisive ground.

Shakespeare almost certainly never travelled to Asia save by book and imagination (Bevington 2010: 30). However, he is one of the most frequently performed playwrights across this continent, and his canonical status commands strong cultural and economic capital, particularly in Japan. What lies beneath this phenomenon? On the one hand, it points to an ongoing admiration for the western

literary canon, a public desire to consume Shakespeare's plays and experience his perceived greatness. On the other hand, it is a reminder of the ideological imposition of Japan's Meiji-era government, which was intent on importing and "Japanizing" the pinnacle of western culture. What is of particular interest to this thesis is how Shakespeare's imagined Asia has met with an imagined Europe to produce transformations, or what I will call and develop in more critical detail, "re-orientations."

I develop the notion of "re-orientation" as a means of thinking through the politics of identity in the construction of Asia(s) from the post-World War II era through to the new millennium. Re-orientation is the idea of return without origin or the re-inscription of identity in places where it was previously absent or denied. It is also a marker for the transit of Shakespeare as cultural commodity within the global marketplace. In an immediate sense, it plays on the word "orient," which in the wake of work by Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Rustom Bharucha, Homi Bhabha, Trinh Minh-ha and other key postcolonial thinkers has taken different turns, dropped and picked up baggage along its varying trajectories. The remit of this opening chapter is to explain the idea of re-orientation by historicizing the "Orient," both within modern academic discourses and in the work of Shakespeare. How do Shakespeare's plays disturb, displace or maintain borders and their territories in the spheres of Asia and the Orient and in contrast to Europe and the Occident? Where does Japan and Japanese Shakespeare, which is the primary focus of this thesis, stand within this changing geo-political sphere?

In using the term re-orientation as a diagnostic tool to critique Shakespeare's Western legacy from an Oriental perspective, I am aware of the risk of a "reverse colonial" discourse seeping into this writing. To avoid this, I try to emphasize the complexity of relationships at play in intercultural performance practices and discourses, rather than revert to old cultural binaries.

2. Re: Etymology

In order to explain the idea of re-orientation, I will begin by surveying the term's etymology. This will help unpack the range of meanings implied in my use of the term, and at the same time provide the ground for my discussion of re-orientation as a methodological approach to the analysis of Japanese Shakespeare. There are two

parts to the word re-orientation, the prefix “re” which I will address here, and the suffix “orient” which I discuss below in section four.

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) states that the original meaning of “re” in Latin is “back” or “backwards.”¹ However, given the large number of words formed by its use, the prefix has acquired various meanings, of which the following are the most pertinent to re-orientation: the first is “back from a point reached” or “back to the original place or position.” Shakespeare’s plays do travel, and do sometimes “return” in the form of “foreign Shakespeares” produced on “English soil,” but like all cultural objects, in passing through the hands of practitioners, they return always already transformed. In another sense, Shakespeare’s play texts function as fluid sign systems that undergo literal and symbolic shifts in reading, whether it is through translation, adaptation or the embodied memory of performance. This transformative capacity of the text in its relation to performance is implied in my use of the prefix “re.”

The second usage of “re” is the restoration of a previous state or condition in the sense of “again” or “anew.” This is the “re” of repetition, which I discuss in greater detail in relation to the ontology of performance in the next section. In general terms though, since re-orientation is concerned with the interplay between Shakespeare’s plays and theatre practitioners, it is a field that frequently involves repetition. Repetitions of language, movements, sounds, ideas and concepts are potentially already at work in performance, but these repetitions rarely function as closed loops; instead they tend to proceed through increment, slippage and mutation in passing from person to person, and through place and time.

The third usage implies the undoing of a previous action and brings “re” close to the prefix “un” as in unclose, unfix and unseal. This dynamic points to the deconstructive potential within re-orientation, which I explore in Chapter 8 on the end of millennium Shakespeare trilogy by Singaporean director, Ong Keng Sen. In that chapter, I question Ong’s use of narrative fragmentation as a disorientation strategy in response to the postmodern turn in cultural criticism. Re-orientation through deconstruction also appears in Chapter 9 in the analysis of playwright Miyazawa Akio’s adaptation of *Cardenio*, Shakespeare’s so-called “lost play.”

¹ All citations from the OED are taken from the *Oxford English Dictionary Second Edition on CD-ROM*. Vers. 4.0., published by Oxford University Press in 2009.

Miyazawa's response to the contested genealogy and authorship of the play was to construct a contemporary Japanese version of *Cardenio*, through a deconstruction of the symbolic spoken and visual languages that constitute the image of Shakespeare today.

In addition to these three layers of meaning, "re" also houses an important historic narrative that has a direct connection with Shakespeare's own use of language. The OED claims that the prefix "re" first appeared around 1200 in the *Ancren Riwle* (*Ancrene Wisse*), an anonymous manual for ascetic female monks, in which the words "recluse, recoil, record, relief, religion, and remission" occur. By the end of the 16th century, "re" was being used as "an ordinary English prefix, chiefly employed with words of Latin origin, but also freely prefixed to native verbs, a practice rare before this period." This usage is specific to Elizabethan writers. Shakespeare, for example, uses "recall, regret, relive, requicken, resend, respeak, restem, retell and reword." It is interesting to note that the use of "re" increased in Elizabethan England, an era that coincides with the expansion of the nation's colonial empire. Thus, there is the sense of language traveling from England as the emerging centre of a "new world," and returning from afar with stories to be "retold" and "recalled." This is the same "re" or repetition that we find at the root of the ontology of performance.

3. Re-orienting and Performance

Since re-orientation is a way of approaching and examining the transformations that Shakespearean works undergo in their negotiations with Asia, particularly Japan, through processes of translation, adaptation, inter/intra-cultural exchange, it is fundamentally concerned with performance praxis. In this sense, the prefix "re" in re-orient is linked to the "re" in the reproduction of action, or what Richard Schechner in his seminal book, *Between Theatre and Anthropology*, calls "restored behavior":

[Restored behavior is] used in all kinds of performances from shamanism and exorcism to trance, from ritual aesthetic dance and theater, from initiation rites to social dramas, from psychoanalysis to psychodrama and transactional analysis. In fact, restored behavior is the main characteristic of performance [...] performance means never for the first time. It means

for the second to the n th time. Performance is “twice-behaved behavior.”
(1985: 36)

The prefix “re” signifies the repetition of the past, not as facsimile, but as a form of re-inscription. In other words, it is through the repetition of what has come before that identity is inscribed in the present. Re-orientation is therefore a dialogue with the past, but also a rehearsal of future possibilities.

In the process of performing Shakespeare, the vocabularies of movement that actors draw on are part of what Diana Taylor has aptly described as a “repertoire.” In *The Archive and the Repertoire*, which draws on a legacy of critical inquiry into the relationship between body and text in performance that came to the fore in Shechner's work in the mid-1980s, but was extended into the 1990s through books such as Peggy Phelan's *Unmarked* (1993), and Rebecca Schneider's *The Explicit Body in Performance* (1997), Taylor posits the concept of “repertoire” against written or archival forms of memory in the following way:

The repertoire enacts embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing – in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge. [...] The repertoire requires presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by “being there,” being a part of the transmission. As opposed to the supposedly stable object in the archive, the actions that are the repertoire do not remain the same. (2003: 20)

In the case of Japanese Shakespeare, when actors, directors and playwrights engage with Shakespeare's plays, there is not only an archival re-orientation at work, which is a negotiation of the historical and cultural position of the text and its translations, but equally, and fundamental to performance, there is also an embodied re-orientation. That re-orientation may take n number of forms, and may involve for example, the positive adaptation of tradition, re-inscribing movements, songs, expressions and rhythms passed from one generation of practitioners to another, into a new performance. This is the case with Japanese traditional theatre, such as *noh*, *kyogen* and *kabuki*. In his “kyogenized” renditions of *The Comedy of Errors* (2001) and *Macbeth* (2010), the actor and director, Nomura Mansai, not only adapted

Shakespeare's texts to fit the specificity of his artistic vision at the time, but he also adapted his own traditional and formal *kyogen* acting techniques, including elements of voice, movement and costume to fit the productions. The work that emerged from these juxtapositions was like a palimpsest, a process of re-inscription, writing over without erasing what had come before.

At the same time, re-orientation as re-inscription can also involve a rejection of past repertoires, as in the case of the group of avant-garde theatre practitioners in the 1960s who formed Japan's *angura* (underground) theatre. This underground theatre movement, commonly known as *shogekijyo undo* (Little Theatre movement), was born out of a rejection of western imitation drama called *shingeki*, which literally means the "new theatre" or "new stage" movement. *Shogekijyo* was pioneered by directors such as Suzuki Tadashi, Ninagawa Yukio and Deguchi Norio, all of whose work is discussed in case studies in this thesis. Much of their theatre practice from the 1960s onwards involved experimenting with forms that reflected their individual readings of culture, but which also enabled them to express a modern Japanese theatre identity. The point here is that it is through the rejection of western imitation drama, the denial of stereotypical movements, costumes and sets based on a romanticised Japanese view of the West, that new vocabularies of movement and identity were produced. This negation of the repertoire is also a key part of the re-orienting process.

In both its positive and negative expressions, re-orientation as a type of re-performance implies a degree of agency on the part of the practitioner, which is to say, recognition of the context from which the behaviour one is reproducing derives. It may not be so clear as to be attributable to a specific time, place or person, but what is key is recognition of the space between the "behaved" and "twice-behaved." Taylor notes that etymologically the repertoire also refers to a treasury or an inventory, and that it can be read as "to find out" (2003: 20). As a form of discovery, performance practices are always a negotiation of memory and forgetfulness, the old and the new, of the circulation of actions, sounds, rhythms and words echoing through times and spaces. With re-orientation, there is a supplementary layer, which is the transformation of culture from one specific idiomatic context to another. This cultural codification plays an important role in the trajectory of Shakespeare from west to east. In my chapter on the work of Ninagawa Yukio, I question the extent to which re-orientation as embodied practice enables further discovery, inscription and

agency when it travels back to the “source,” which in the case of his adaptation of *Twelfth Night* at the Barbican Centre in London was strongly debated.

As I have outlined above, the prefix “re” when attached to the word “orient” produces a surplus of meaning. What I have tried to do thus far is to break that meaning into its respective linguistic layers, which include the idea of a return to origin, a repetition, and an undoing. I have pointed out that, in its application to Shakespeare in performance, the “re” in re-orientation echoes Schechner’s concept of performance as the “twice-behaved.” Moreover, in producing this excess meaning, the prefix “re” forms a rupture within the word “orient,” offering a glimpse of the word’s “unclean” epistemology. “Orient” has traditionally been used in juxtaposition to “occident” to signify a relationship of power in which orient/Asia was posited as marginal other to a dominant occident/Europe. However, the basis of that binary continues to be disrupted and displaced through the work of postcolonial thinkers writing from the 1970s onwards. I discuss key elements of that work in Section 6 below. I have also claimed that part of the process of the re-orientation of the works of Shakespeare in Japan, and this applies to other areas of “Asia” too, involves the re-inscription or re-writing of the “orient” from inside its shifting coordinates. In this regard, re-orientation as performance practice functions like a spinning top: it is an assemblage of “local” parts formed in response to the idea of a “global” whole, turning on an axis of time, and shaken by differentials of power that produce slippage and *dérive*.

How does re-inscription work in performance? Re-inscription is not a process of erasure or masking the past, nor is it an attempt to reclaim a centre ground that might have once been denied; it is a negotiation of east-west cultural history in relation to the changing topography of Asian performance today. In his book, *Writing Performative Shakespeares*, Rob Conkie describes performance as a form of “re-playing” or “re-presenting” the “world of the play.” The notion of “re-playing” shares some structural similarities with re-orientation, particularly in relation to the function of repetition in performance, and is useful in thinking about the process of re-inscription. Conkie defines “re-playing” as:

a renewing through citation and reiteration, and a metaphorization or “becoming” of the dramatic text. Further, re-playing assumes the pre-existence of verbal and physical discourses shared by the performers and

spectators, which in [the book] “re-playing Shakespeare,”² particularly, presumes the *recognition* of the dramatic/performative text and its cultural inscriptions. (2016: 2)

Conkie's insight is that through "re-playing," which is essentially the actor's repetition of "verbal and physical discourses" shared with an audience, what is at work is the "renewal" of previously established cultural codes. Repeition in performance is thus a mode of "writing" or "re-writing" of cultural discourse, validated by an audience who bear "witness" to the new code specific to each performance. The audience plays the role of "witness" in the sense that they observe or experience the renewed code at the point of its "disappearance," which as Peggy Phelan argues, is part of the ontology of performance (1993: 146).

The notion of "re-playing" or "re-inscription" through performance is an important part of the usage of "re" in re-orienting Shakespeare. Ultimately, in reading Japanese Shakespeare through the lens of re-orientation, I am engaged in a reading of the formation of cultural identity. Re-orientation is the adaptation, re-writing and ownership of Shakespeare in local, non-English contexts, which can lead to the exportation of the transformed "Bard" back to its place of origin thereby challenging old hegemonies; it can also lead to a radically deconstructed Shakespeare, without his language or narrative, almost unrecognizable as Shakespeare. I discuss the problem and potential of Shakespeare without his language in relation to *Cardenio* in Chapter 9.

4. Orient: Etymology

The second part of re-orientation is the suffix “orient,” which can be split into “Orient,” as geographical designation, and “orient” as a verb that denotes finding one’s position in relation to unfamiliar surroundings. The OED gives two general entries for the word “orient,” both of which are nominally geographic and both find their earliest records in 14th century England – most notably in Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales*. Both usages frame the orient from a Europe-centric perspective as a space beyond reach where celestial bodies rise and mythical wars are fought. The orient as land of the rising sun finds expression in Chaucer’s *The*

² Conkie is referring here to the book edited by Poonam Trivedi and Minami Ryuta entitled *Re-playing Shakespeare in Asia*. London: Routledge, 2010.

Knight's Tale in the following words: "firy Phebus riseth vp so brighte That al the Orient laugheth of the lighte" (line 636). In *The Monk's Tale*, on the other hand, Chaucer describes the conquests of the Persians, who "conquered manye regnes grete In the Orient" (line 324). Here the orient designates a loose grouping of countries situated to the east of the Roman Empire – a land of great wars. This archaic perception of the Orient as exotic other continues through to Shakespeare's time – and beyond – and surfaces in several of his works. Shakespeare's usage of the word "orient" functions at times interchangeably with the word "Asia," whose original use as a proper name is, as Spivak put it, "impossible to fix" (2008: 209).

As an aside, it is interesting to note that while the OED does feature the word Europe, it omits the word Asia. The OED website notes on the editorial policies for the third edition of the dictionary state that "proper names are not systematically covered by the dictionary, though many are entered because the terms themselves are used in extended or allusive meanings, or because they are in some way culturally significant."³ This omission can be read, somewhat speculatively, as an example of the ongoing difficulty to locate Asia today or to "fix" its coordinates. If this were indeed the case, it would be a moment of irony given the political uncertainty that troubles the borders of Europe at the time of writing.

In the next section, I analyse in greater detail the construction of the name "Asia" in Shakespeare's works, before discussing its relation to modern geo-politics and cultural identity.

5. Shakespeare's Orient and Asia

How are the words "orient" and "Asia" presented in the context of Shakespeare's work? Surveying the *Complete Concordance to Shakespeare*, compiled by John Bartlett, there are three key tendencies in the usage of these words. The first and most prevalent is the image of the orient as exotic jewel, particularly oriental pearls. Of the four occurrences of the word "orient" across Shakespeare's plays, three refer to oriental pearls and evoke a beautified, feminine image of Asia. For example, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Alexas describes the pearl offering she delivers from Antony to Cleopatra noting that, "He kissed the last of many double

³ <http://public.oed.com/the-oed-today/guide-to-the-third-edition-of-the-oed>

kisses, the oriental pearl” (1.2.105)⁴. In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, when Oberon describes Titania’s sadness after scolding her in the forest, he associates the oriental pearl with “dew” and “eyes,” turning the pearl into a teardrop:

And that same dew, which sometime on the buds
Was wont to swell like round and orient pearls,
Stood now within the pretty flowerets’ eyes
Like tears that did their own disgrace bewail. (4.2.52-55)

The oriental pearl as a metaphor for a female tear returns in *Richard III*, transformed this time into symbolic riches. When Richard asks the beleaguered Queen Elizabeth how to woo her daughter, young Elizabeth, he placates the Queen in a moment of profound agony with the promise of, “The Liquid drop of tears that you have shed shall come again transformed to Orient pearls” (4.4.322). Here the orient is a mixed symbol of feminine loss, mourning, wealth and happiness, but the emphasis is on the word “transformed” which implies a transposition of the exotic jewel over the Queen’s sorrow. The orient here is not only an object or accessory of beautification, but also the name for an affective state – a type of feminine emotion.

The orient-as-jewel trope also appears in *Henry IV Part II*, in which the word orient is substituted for “Asia” in a similar display of exoticism. In the play’s second act, Pistol fights with Hostess Quickly and Doll Tearsheet at the Boar’s Head Tavern, and launches the following tirade of abuse:

These be good humours, indeed! Shall packhorses,
And hollow pamper’d jades of Asia,
Which cannot go but thirty mile a day,
Compare with Caesars, and with Cannibals,
And Trojan Greeks?
Nay, rather damn them with King Cerberus,
And let the welkin roar. Shall we fall foul for toys? (2.4.159-64)

⁴ All citations from Shakespeare’s plays are, unless stated otherwise, from the first edition of *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (1988), edited by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor.

The speech is a parody of Tamburlaine's famous monologue in Christopher Marlowe's 1587 play *Tamburlaine the Great, Part II*. Tamburlaine is a King of Persia, loosely based on the life of the Central Asian emperor, Timur (Tamerlane/Timur the Lame). In Marlowe's play, he delivers a gloating victory speech before a group of defeated kings, two of which (Trebizon and Soria) he has forced to draw his chariot:

Holla, ye pamper'd jades of Asia!
What, can ye draw but twenty miles a-day,
And have so proud a chariot at your heels,
And such a coachman as great Tamburlaine,
But from Asphaltis, where I conquer'd you,
To Byron here, where thus I honour you?
The horse that guide the golden eye of heaven,
And blow the morning from their nostrils,
Making their fiery gait above the clouds,
Are not so honour'd in their governor
As you, ye slaves, in mighty Tamburlaine.
The headstrong jades of Thrace Alcides tam'd,
That King Aegeus fed with human flesh,
And made so wanton that they knew their strengths,
Were not subdu'd with valour more divine
Than you by this unconquer'd arm of mine. (4.3.1-16)

As Robert Logan points out, "In identifying himself with the warrior hero, Pistol comically inflates Marlowe's already excessive language, increasing the mileage from twenty to thirty, and in the end garbles the sense of Tamburlaine's sarcastic address to Trebizon and Soria, the two kingly "jades" drawing his chariot" (157). The word jade in Marlowe's usage has the double meaning of precious stone and horse of inferior breed. In both senses it is used to mock the kings' fallen status. With Shakespeare, the expression takes on two further meanings, including a slur aimed at Hostess Quickly and Doll Tearsheet since jade also refers in a derogatory sense to an impudent or flirtatious woman. By reusing Marlowe's line "pamper'd jades of Asia," Shakespeare amplifies the hyperbolic wordplay characteristic of Marlowe's writing,

but also reinforces the image of Asian exoticism prevalent at that time. Shakespeare was but one dramatist among many to mock Tamburlaine's speech. In his late 19th century edition of Marlowe's works, Scottish editor and historian Alexander Dyce includes a footnote demonstrating "the ridicule showered on this passage [Tamburlaine's speech] by a long series of poets" (1876: 64). Dyce provides a long list of references, but among the key plays he cites are Beaumont and Fletcher's bawdy comedy *The Coxcomb*, Fletcher's *Women Pleased*, and Chapman, Jonson, and Marston's *Eastward Ho* (Introduction xvii).

The second key usage of the terms orient and Asia is as a geographic marker of a diffuse boundary that positions the West against Asia as other. This is the case for example in Rumour's speech in the Induction scene to *Henry IV Part II*, where he declares "I, from the orient to the drooping west, / Making the wind my post-horse, still unfold / The acts commencèd on this ball of earth" (Prologue 3). Here the reference to orient is used to establish Rumour's attempt at conveying a worldview, dividing the world between East and West, and emphasizing his understanding of time with the sun setting in the West. However, he gives little insight into which "acts commencèd" in the East. Rather, Orient is used as a name for an empty space that merely outlines the contours of the West. A similar usage can be found in the first line of Sonnet 7, "Lo! In the orient when the gracious light. / Lifts up his burning head."

Asia is also used to connote the enigma of the distant and the unknown. In *The Comedy of Errors*, for instance, Egeon speaks of his search for his son, "Roaming clean through the bounds of Asia" (1.1.134) and Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing* says "Fetch you a toothpicker now from the furthest inch of Asia" (2.1.225-26). The discourse of the distant and unreachable land maintains Asia as a source of mysticism and ties in with early colonial discourses, which presented Asia as a hidden jewel, or as the dark and demonic other.

An exception to this tendency appears in *Antony and Cleopatra*, where a messenger reports to Antony on the advance of General Labienus' forces in "Asia." Here, references are made to extant place names that border the Euphrates River from Turkey to Syria:

Labienus – This is stiff news – hath, with his Parthian force
Extended Asia; from Euphrates

his conquering banner shook, from Syria
to Lydia and to Ionia (1.2.92-96)

Although the specific geographic and historic references in this depiction of Asia give a semblance of identity, these are still empty markers, devoid of any real subjectivity, and they remain places tied to narratives of war.

The tendency among English Renaissance playwrights to enumerate place names is what John Gillies in his book, *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference*, calls “the *semiosis* of desire.” Writing on the impact on Shakespeare’s works of the “new geography” that emerged in Elizabethan England through early colonial explorations in the Americas, the West Indies and beyond, Gillies argues that,

For perhaps the first time in the history of world cartography, world maps post-1492 began to privilege the unknown and unpossessed over the known and possessed. This is the *semiosis* of desire. Its symmetry notwithstanding, the Ortelian map draws the viewer’s gaze west rather than east. Why? Because the New World “beckons”, even in this apparently unpoeticised form. Its very emptiness, its nakedness perhaps (the relative absence of graphic density and verbal inscription) invites the eye to “rove” in the way that Donne imagines his hands roving over the continent of his mistress’s body. (1994: 62)

Gillies’ concept of the *semiosis* of desire could also be applied to the East, since large swathes of its territory were as naked and unknown as the Americas. In fact, the Ortelian world map published in 1570 shows Asia as a sprawling land mass, rival in proportion to the New World, extending from Turkey to Japan and incorporating “Tartalia” (central Asia stretching from the Caspian Sea to the Ural Mountains), “Natolia” (Asia Minor), “Arabia,” “China,” “India Orientalis” and “Iapan” along with “Mongol” and “Cathaio” which are (mis-) positioned in northern China. Alongside the Mercator map and other contemporaneous editions, this “poetic geography” (1994: 69) as Gillies calls it, fusing observed and imaginative landscapes, reflects the psyche of the era.

What these different uses of orient and Asia in Shakespeare's plays have in common is that they portray the orient as a symbolic space, whose exotic, effeminate and emotional otherness serves to reify the West as a rational, psychologically stable and male centred subject – and in doing so, it denies the possibility of an oriental subjectivity. This dichotomy highlights a tension in Elizabethan society, between the prospect of territorial expansion through the early colonial expeditions and the fear of what lies beyond Europe. To put it differently, the orient, which appears in Shakespeare as feminine other, a jewel to be “conquered” by a male-centred England, can be read as a way of “managing” or placating the emerging colonial psyche in its traumatic relationship with the subjugation of the other. The critique of this lasting tendency to exoticise Asia became a crucial object for postcolonial theoretical inquiry in the wake of colonial independence movements in the mid-20th century. Postcolonial studies paved the way for the deconstruction of this old East-West divide, which for so long had positioned Asia as either romanticised or demonised other.

6. Re-orienting and Orientalism

The notion of re-orientation is indebted to Edward Said's writings on the colonial and postcolonial position of the “orient” in his landmark work *Orientalism*. Said demonstrates that in order for the orient to be included as a subject for western Enlightenment thinking, it had to be depicted as the subordinate other. This was part of the logic that justified colonial expansion. Oriental exoticism was thus one of the strategies for the reproduction of the western masculine subject.

Scholars writing in the wake of Said have continued to build on his legacy, but not without critiquing its limitations. It is often pointed out that Said's “Orientalism” is largely confined to a study of the Middle East, leaving out other parts of Asia. To what extent does his theory apply to Japan and other countries in East Asia today? This question is difficult to answer for several reasons. The “Occident” has been historically constructed and validated through its juxtaposition to a subaltern Orient. However, in the late twentieth century, that binary logic had begun to change. In 1989, two years before the end of the Soviet Union, the psychoanalyst Felix Guattari wrote a prescient appraisal of the shifting geo-political landscape in an essay titled “The Three Ecologies.” He saw a new picture of global power emerging, caught on the one hand between rising nationalism and an increase

in divisions and boundaries, and on the other hand, “multipolar systems” or interconnected governance on matters of international importance (2008: 22). At the time of writing, Europe is locked in a process of restructuration. Britain voted to leave the European Union following a referendum in June 2016 and other EU member states such as Greece and Spain are struggling to maintain economic stability, and their futures hang in the balance. Against this backdrop, do Said’s arguments on cultural appropriation and the oppression of the oriental other as a means of defining Europe or the west as a dominant power still resonate in today’s geo-political landscape?

These questions are implied in the use of the suffix “orient” within the term “re-orienting Shakespeare” in that I am borrowing from Said’s thinking, but at the same time questioning its relationship to the notions of Asia and Orient in the present and from the particular cultural and historic perspective of Shakespeare in Japan. As explored in Chapter 4 on Deguchi Norio, the Japanese case does not follow the same oppressor/oppressed relationship that can be applied to analyses of the introduction of Shakespeare in former colonial territories such as India, where Shakespeare was used as a tool of edification, subjugation and change of cultural identity. In the case of Japan, it was the Japanese Meiji government towards the end of the 19th century that decided to import Shakespeare, to use his works to edify Japanese people in order to be culturally competitive with the west, and later to “own” Shakespeare in order to defend Japanese territory from western imperialism, but also to invade other Asian countries from the late nineteenth century onwards.

By the mid-1960s, echoing Jan Kott, Japanese theatre practitioners began claiming Shakespeare as their contemporary. By the mid-1980s, the first major Shakespearean production by a Japanese director – Ninagawa Yukio’s *Macbeth* (1985) – travelled to the west. The production was a turning point in Japanese Shakespeare, recognised as an iconic aesthetic achievement, but also marking the emergence of so-called “self-Orientalism”. This was a strategy that used oriental exoticism to attract both western and already highly westernized Japanese gazes, a way of rerouting or reselling the exotic as a form of cultural capital in an emerging global marketplace, but also a way of claiming back cultural identity. As Suematsu Michiko has pointed out, “Japanized Shakespeare has dominated productions that have travelled abroad; it appears that Japan feels obliged to exploit its ‘foreignness’ in order to sell its Shakespeare as an export commodity for the West” (2010: 162).

Re-orienting Shakespeare in this case involves shifting the power-relationship, the inscribing process inside Shakespeare as Orientalism, to Shakespeare recolonized by the orient.

7. After *Orientalism*

After the publication of *Orientalism*, Said continued to write about western misperceptions and misrepresentations of the Middle East, particularly with regard to the Palestine/Israel conflict. He also wrote extensively on the socio-cultural effects of globalization and on the changing geo-political landscape of postmodernity. As with *Orientalism*, that side of his writing owed much to readings of mid to late twentieth century continental philosophy, including the critique of Enlightenment thinking and its universalizing tendencies, as in the example of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's 1944 landmark essay, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*; the critique of institutional power and its relationship to subjectivity, epitomized by the work of Michel Foucault – particularly *Discipline and Punish* and the three volumes of *The History of Sexuality* - and also the critique of the male and euro-centred logic of western philosophy in the work of Jacques Derrida.

In Said's work, both as political activist and literary theorist, there is a recurring concern with subjectivity and the position of the other in the face of essentialist discourses and homogenizing power structures. In *The Legacy of Edward W. Said*, William Spanos characterizes Said's work as "decoloniz[ing] the being." Spanos argues that Said follows much of poststructuralism's concern with radical heterogeneity and liberating the agency of the subject from the bind of male western-centred logic, particularly with the rise of conservative neo-liberal economics:

Is not this the testimony of postmodern thought as a whole, insofar as it would decolonize the being – the "nothing" (Heidegger), the "*différance*" (Derrida), the "*différend*" (Lyotard), the "rhizome" (Deleuze and Guattari), and so on – that the imperial metaphysical logic of the West has colonized? Is this not also the testimony of Edward Said himself, whose lifelong project as someone out of place – a nobody, as he insistently notes [...] has been not only to disclose the plight of the deterritorialized of the earth but also, more recently, to render the very placelessness of these "denizens" as

a space of positive resistance against “citizenry” as that term is understood in the new, American global order? (224-25)

In the final chapter of *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), echoing Jean-Francois Lyotard’s argument in *The Postmodern Condition*, Said describes the shift from modernity to postmodernity in the mid to late 20th century as the “exhaustion of grand systems and total theories” into a “new period of vast uncertainty” and a “new map of the world, most of it almost frighteningly interdependent, most of it intellectually, philosophically, ethnically, and even imaginatively uncharted” (398). The magnitude of Said’s “new map of the world” doubles on the early colonial cartographers’ desire to fill the empty spaces of their “New World” with new names. However, Said describes a very different mapping dynamic, an unraveling of territory instead of its expansion.

The so-called US-Soviet “space race,” emblem of the Cold War battle for ideological domination, set in motion the development of satellite communication technology, including the launch of the Soviet Zenit satellite in 1962. This satellite mapping initiative was one of the first attempts at constructing a total worldview and seemed to foretell the onset of globalisation. According to Brian Harvey, “the aim of each mission was to cover an area equivalent to the United States, 10 million km². Each camera could take up to 1,500 frames” (110). This new technology promised the ultimate panoptic gaze, penetrating the micro level of territory. At the same time, by reaching the granular limits of territory and exhausting the reach of the authoritative gaze, the technology revealed something else: the possibility, if not the demand, for a new direction in mapping; a re-orientation of the two-dimensional topography of classical maps to concerns with the relationality of the people, places and cultures that populate them.

Culture has, to a large extent, always been agile, formed through transactions between peoples at a local level. However, the representation of that relationality is at the mercy of the technologies, ideas and power structures of the place and time of its production. In a lecture given at the Collège de France in 1976, a year after the publication of *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault spoke of the methodology that he developed in his famous analysis of power, upending classical top-down analyses of hegemony to a study of power in its relationships of parts-to-whole at a micro

level. The following passage from that lecture outlines his approach:

In the very first place, it seemed important to accept that the analysis in question should not concern itself with the regulated and legitimate forms of power in their central locations, with the general mechanisms through which they operate, and the continual effects of these. On the contrary, it should be concerned with power at its extremities, in its ultimate destinations, with those points where it becomes capillary, that is, in its more regional and local forms and institutions. (1980: 96)

Foucault's approach to the analysis of power had a profound impact on Said and indeed many scholars in postcolonial studies, since it paved the way for thinking about subjectivity through the body in its locality. Said's "new map of the world," which he qualified as "frighteningly interdependent" and "imaginatively uncharted," can be read as the unraveling of the all-encompassing, Western topography of the globe. This "new map" is one without fixed coordinates and in which expansion functions through an inward deconstructive dynamic as opposed to the outward penetrating inscription of colonial ideology. It is a map replete with re-orientations, of contact zones, such that Rumour's "orient to drooping west" in *Henry IV Part II* might also be read as "drooping west to orient."

The tension between local and global structures of power – particularly economic power – and its interface with people in everyday life has been an important subject of analysis in theatre studies in the latter half of the twentieth century. This tension also affects the ideas and practices of the theatre directors included in this thesis, but it is perhaps most visible in the aforementioned example of Ninagawa's debut on the world stage in the 1980s. The export of Ninagawa's Shakespeare coincided with the rapid rise of the Japanese economy and the emergence of a global Shakespeare market. Ninagawa's strategy of "self-Orientalism", using traditional Japanese iconography as a key selling point, appealed to both local and global audiences. If one reads this aspect of his work as a shallow, one-dimensional response to the demands of commodity-driven global capital, then it would perhaps tie in with Masao's claim, cited by Said, that "the new problematic for culture as corollary to the country's [Japan's] staggering financial resources, [is] an absolute disparity between the total novelty and global dominance

in the economic sphere, and the impoverishing retreat and dependence on the West in cultural discourse” (1994: 400). On the other hand, and as I argue in my chapter on Ninagawa, one can also read his self-orientalist strategy in a positive sense, in that it helped open Japanese Shakespeare up to younger audiences, and was crucial in illuminating commonalities between Elizabethan and Kabuki theatre histories. Ninagawa’s export of Shakespeare back to England is an example of the re-orientation of a traditional west-east relationship. It challenges the normative boundaries of that relationship, particularly on the question of cultural ownership, which under globalisation transformed traditional hierarchies in east-west geo-political power.

One of the key critiques of globalisation to emerge in the wake of Said’s *Orientalism* is Andre Gunder Frank’s book, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age*. In this ambitious re-writing of the history of capitalism from an oriental perspective, Gunder Frank uses the term “reorient” to question the “rise-of-the-west” narrative as the function of a western-designed system of global capital. He attempts to write an alternative history of modern economics (1400-1800) that challenges the dominant “Eurocentric historiography” on which “much of received ‘classical’ and ‘modern’ social theory is based” (1998: 3). In Frank’s work, as with other writers concerned with East-West relations, the notion of re-orientation operates on multiple levels. First, he uses it to allude to a methodological shift in the writing of history, moving from a “world-encompassing global perspective” to an analysis of “the structure and dynamic of the whole world economic system itself and not only the European (part of the) world economic system” (Preface xv). This move towards a non-Eurocentric reading of history goes in tandem with a re-orientation of the position of China in relation to the development of western hegemony through capitalism. For Frank, it is China’s economic centrality before the 1800s that allows for the “rise of the west,” since, as he claims, “Europe used its American money to muscle in on and benefit from Asian production, markets, trade – in a word, to profit from the predominant position of Asia in the world economy” (1998: 4).

Moreover, Frank argues that the “very search for [western] ‘hegemony’ in the early modern world economy or system is misplaced” due to the fact that “the economies of Asia were far more ‘advanced,’ and its Chinese Ming/Qing, Indian Mughal, and even Persian Safavid and Turkish Ottoman empires carried much greater political and even military weight than any or all of Europe” (1998: 5). This

historiographical re-orientation not only problematises the received narrative of western imperial power as emerging from a monolithic cultural centre, but it makes the current geo-political narrative of the rise of capitalism with “Asian values” or the “reawakening” of Asia – particularly China and India – more difficult to integrate into that narrative. Consequently, one of the core aims in Frank’s project is to rethink the emergence of western power in terms of a relationship of parts to a global whole, where the onus is on understanding the transversal, inter and intra-relationship between the geo-political constructs of “Europe,” “Asia,” “occident,” “orient,” “East” and “West.”

The common thread that emerged in postcolonial discourses after *Orientalism*, in parallel to postwar independence movements and influenced by postmodern theory, was the liberation of the “other,” that is to say, finding subjectivity and agency outside the traditional western-dominated subject. For Said, one of the greatest “intellectual and cultural challenges” was to “situate these [unique identities, histories, traditions] in a geography of other identities, peoples, cultures, and then to study how, despite their differences, they have always overlapped one another, through unhierarchical influence, crossing, incorporation, recollection, deliberate forgetfulness and of course conflict” (1998: 401). To what extent is the Orient or Asia being claimed back by Orientals or Asians themselves and in that sense, where, in this “new map” that Said describes, does Shakespeare stand? In the following section of this chapter, I will discuss the use of Asia and orient as markers of cultural and political identity.

8. “Other Asias”?

Many of the attempts at reclaiming Asia, as a name born in the west to designate a geographic and political space, have sought to dismantle the homogenising force of this name, working instead towards the description of Asia as a plurality of places, peoples and cultures, in which the name is understood as unifying only in its expression of difference. One can see this tendency at work in academic discourses in the new millennium, but also in the agendas of broader cultural institutions within Asia. As an example of the latter, in March 2008, Shaheen Merali and Wu Hung co-curated a major contemporary art exhibition at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (House of World Cultures) gallery in Berlin and later in February 2009 at the New Art Gallery in Warsaw titled “Re-Imagining Asia.” The exhibition

brought together works by 23 Asian artists representing a range of regions, traditions and practices. In an article cryptically titled “A Great Deal More But Nothing Much...” published in the exhibition catalogue, Merali echoed this regional approach to Asian plurality, while also calling for a new imaginative space to unify Asian identity, arguing that:

Instead of defining Asia in terms of static political geography or cultural/ethnic identity, the circuit of positions allows us to approach it from an artist’s point of view – as a place both real and imaginary, and as a collection of diverse cultural and aesthetic traditions. (2008: 24)

Another example can be seen in the manifesto of the Asian Arts Theatre opened in 2015, located in the city of Gwangju in South Korea. The inauguration program describes the theatre’s position within Asia in the following terms:

Asia is a region of dynamic changes overlapping with traditions. Asia is a way of thinking that challenges itself. It is a multidimensional concept that constantly calls for reworking, redefining, and revitalizing. Asia is a performative, organic framework for creativity. (2008: 24)

Both these examples make explicit reference to Asia as an interpersonal exchange of peoples within specific localities tied to a broader, Asian identity. Both discourses place emphasis on cultural diversity as a key driver of creativity and exchange. This new millennium vision of Asia, which seeks to transcend the conservative and contested boundaries of the past, has become a dominant position among cultural institutions, from funding bodies to performing arts festivals in Asia today.⁵ However, this new positivism belies a nexus of histories and ideologies – embodied and imagined – that challenge any construction of Asian identity. In what seems at times to be in almost diametric opposition to the centrality of the Western colonial subject, this emphasis on plurality risks repeating some of the schemas that have been so meticulously analyzed in postcolonial studies.

⁵ Regarding funding bodies, see for example, the Asia Center within The Japan Foundation and also The Saison Foundation. In terms of festivals, particularly in Japan, see for example Festival/Tokyo and the Tokyo Performing Arts Market.

Two prominent academic voices writing critically on this “new” geography in the wake of Said, both from Calcutta, India and both educated in the United States, are literary theorist Gayatri Spivak and theatre practitioner and theorist Rustom Bharucha. In *Other Asias*, Spivak approaches Asia as a complex web of “unevenly divided” political regions, religious belief systems and cultural practices. Her position, echoing Said, is to respect this plurality yet still dare to think of a unified identity.

The claim to the name [Asia] is unevenly divided, yet there is a regionalist claim. We must therefore attempt to think it as one continent in its plurality, rather than reduce it only to our own regional identity. A necessary impossibility, if you like. Or a perspective available only to the imagination, though not to the understanding, which must go by way of regional identity. (214)

Spivak's emphasis on the imagination as a transcendent space for a unified “Asian” identity, superimposed upon the everyday function of regional territorial boundaries, comes with multiple provisos and warnings. Indeed, her book can be read as a series of interrogations of “Asias” from the Middle to the Far East, questioning both the necessity and validity of a claim to a transcendent Asian unity in the light of the dangers of imperial impositions, but also in response to new regional nationalisms across the continent. In this regard, she claims the following: “I am speaking of an effort that must be renewed again and again, with no guarantees, in the name of Asia-s pluralized, where the naming names no real space [...] puts both diasporic hegemony and regionalist unilateralism with the Euro-US under erasure.” (235) Her warning, but also her desire, is that in thinking of an Asian subjectivity, the challenge is to think beyond any previous models of regional, national or international identity politics, and her preferred space for the execution of this task is, in the first instance, in the realm of imagination.

Whereas Spivak's discourse is invested in the conceptual framework of the constitution of Asia-s – though this does not mean she does not think pragmatically about implications at ground level – Rustom Bharucha's arguments draw more on his interpersonal experiences of theatre and cultural practice across Asia. Bharucha published a monograph two years prior to Spivak's *Other Asias*, exploring the

inter-Asian encounter in the early twentieth century between Indian poet and writer Rabindranath Tagore and Japanese art collector and curator Okakura Tenshin. *Another Asia*, as Bharucha writes, is based on the encounter between the two “luminaries” to “draw an intellectual history out of their affinities to Asia, complicated by the politics of nationalism, cosmopolitanism, and friendship” (2006, xv). Set against the volatile backdrop of the anti-British Swadeshi movement in Bengal, and Japanese imperialism of the late Meiji period, the book questions ideas of Asia through encounters between these two iconic figures. While Tagore stood for universal humanism, Okakura was branded an imperialist and even an “ultra-nationalist”. This was at a time when the lands of Asia were divided between imperialism and independence and thus the notion of a unified Asia had a more immanent resonance then than it does today (Eglinton 2008). In the first chapter titled “Asia,” Bharucha begins by asking “what is Asia” and cites Tagore’s question of whether a “continental mind of Asia” is possible. Although Bharucha does not call for the type of transcendent pan-Asian identity as Spivak does, his study of these two figures of modernity underlines splits and affinities across the continent:

“A continental mind of Asia?” Tagore’s construct has a different premise from the more banal proposition that I first faced in geography class in elementary school, when I encountered Asia as a continent, a mass of land, one among six, each of which had to be marked with a different colour. This land seemed to have no mind; it was a mere territory. Even at that level, Asia posed a problem because it was a hopelessly large continent that was almost impossible to map. (Bharucha 2006: 10)

Bharucha foregrounds this split between geography and mind, partly to show the historic lineage in thinking on the problem of Asian identity, and partly also to demonstrate the absence of narratives – particularly under colonialism – of Asia as anything other than an imagined land mass, a map filled with names and colours. Indeed, in an earlier essay from 1996 titled “Somebody’s Other,” which is part of Patrice Pavis’s *The Intercultural Performance Studies Reader*, Bharucha cites Said’s remark on the importance of “disorientations or direct encounters with the human” in the negotiation of cultural politics (Bharucha 2006: 197; Said 2003: 93). In *Orientalism*, Said warns against the danger of deriving a worldview from text or

more generally discourse without taking on board the complex issues that arise from direct or embodied encounters.

9. Re-orienting Intercultural Shakespeare

Having outlined some of the main concerns in the cultural politics of Asian identity after Said's *Orientalism*, in this section I will problematise the position of intercultural Shakespeare in Asia and think about the implications this has for the idea of re-orientation.

Bharucha has been one of the most polemical critics of Western intercultural theatre directors such as Antonin Artaud, Peter Brook, Eugenio Barba, Jerzy Grotowski and Ariane Mnouchkine. Artaud claimed that "all theatre is Oriental" (Mnouchkine 1996: 93; Mnouchkine qtd. in Williams 1999: 176), and each of these practitioners has used elements of Asian theatre – particularly traditional theatres – in their works.⁶ Much of Bharucha's criticism is aimed at the problem of cultural appropriation, utilizing traditional Asian performing arts to enrich their vocabularies and productions. As more and more non-western theatre directors began to adapt Shakespeare without his English language, particularly from the early 1990s onwards, Bharucha and indeed other cultural critics began to turn their focus away from previous Euro-centric criticisms, towards trends emerging in Asia. In his essay, "Foreign Asia/Foreign Shakespeare: Dissenting Notes on New Asian Interculturality, Postcoloniality and Re-colonization" in *Shakespeare in Asia*, echoing Dennis Kennedy's *Foreign Shakespeare*, Bharucha questions the vast and various relationships between Asia and Shakespeare by examining the following three sites: firstly, "New Asian explorations of Shakespeare" (2010: 253) through the work of Ong Keng Sen, Artistic Director of TheatreWorks in Singapore; secondly, the postcolonial reading of an adaptation of *Othello* in India using Kathakali; and thirdly the critique of English Shakespeare scholar, John Russell Brown, and his attempt at mapping new sites for Shakespeare in what Bharucha sees as "in essence a re-colonizing exercise" (253). Through these three sites, Bharucha updated his own discourse on foreign Shakespeare and prompted a new wave of enquiry that looked at Asian theatre from within Asia and in so doing also began to look back to the

⁶ For Bharucha's criticism against western theatre practitioners, see "Negotiating the 'River': Intercultural Interactions and Interventions." *TDR* 41 (1997), *Theatre and the World: Performance and the Politics of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1993 and *The Politics of Cultural Practice: Thinking through Theatre in an Age of Globalization*. London: Wesleyan UP, 2000.

“West.” Even though Bharucha has been involved in the study of this pan-Asian cultural “re-colonization,” he remains fiercely critical and clearly states that on the question of his “affinities to ‘Asia’” he stands “in India, where I am geographically located, and where I first studied [Shakespearean plays]” (255). This remark brings the problem of national identity back into question. Even though the borders of the vast Asian continent are diffuse and contested and its identity oscillates between an empty name and a plurality of regions, religions and cultures, it is still a land marked by borders with both material and affective reach. To the extent that identities still form from the cleavage or “othering” of people both near and far, then the potential for cultural appropriation within Asia, based on hegemonic groupings of cultures and languages – or what Bharucha calls “Asiaticity being the other side of the same coin as Eurocentricity” (255) – becomes a realistic object of enquiry. Furthermore, this also raises the question of gender, because as Said argues, Orientalism is connected to male subjectivity, and the “other” in orientalist viewpoints has tended to be seen as somewhat feminine. Therefore if, as Bharucha claims, Asiaticity is the other side of Eurocentricity, does this not mean that the re-colonization of Shakespeare also implies colonizing masculinity?

It will quickly become apparent to the reader that the case studies in this thesis, chapters 3 to 9, focus entirely on male directors. While there has been a slight increase in the number of women directors in Japan since the new millennium, late-nineteenth and twentieth century Japanese theatre – particularly productions of Shakespeare – were overwhelmingly male dominated. Women have had far more impact on the Japanese performance landscape as actors and playwrights, which is the case of Sadayakko, one of Japan’s earliest pioneering female Shakespearean actors, discussed in Chapter 2. Despite the preponderance of male directors of Shakespeare in Japan, the case studies reveal a clear shift in staging practices in relation to representations of gender and sexuality among the post-1968 generation of practitioners, of which Miyagi Satoshi is a strong example and is discussed in detail in Chapter 5. The notion of “colonizing masculinity” as a function of re-orienting Shakespeare can be seen in Miyagi’s directorial work of the 1990s millennium, in the division of actors voices and bodies, which opens a space for “troubling” gender.

10. Re-orienting Shakespeare Studies in “Asia”

In this final section, I want to address responses to the re-orientation of Shakespeare in the field of Shakespeare studies, partly to introduce some of the key texts that I draw on in subsequent chapters, but partly also to locate this thesis within the field.

Until the late 1960s, reading Shakespeare in performance had been regarded as a secondary object of study in the field of Shakespeare Studies, a pursuit better suited to journalism. However, as James Bulman argues in his book, *Shakespeare, Theory, and Performance*, the “turn” from page to stage can be traced back to works such as John Russell Brown’s *Free Shakespeare* (1974) and John Styan’s *Shakespeare Revolution: Criticism and Performance in the Twentieth Century* (1977). These so-called “revolutionaries” advocated performance-based Shakespearean criticism while still maintaining that Shakespeare was the main textual authority in the British stage tradition. Styan favoured a return to Shakespeare’s era of staging, bypassing the embellishments of the Victorian stage (Bulman 1996: 1).

Among the influences that prompted this change are innovations in film, theatre, and academic research. Postwar foreign language film versions of Shakespeare such as Kurosawa Akira’s adaptation of *Macbeth* in *Throne of Blood* (1957), and *King Lear* in *Ran* (1985), as well as Grigori Kozintsev’s Soviet Russian rendition of *Hamlet* (1964), were instrumental in raising the question of Shakespeare without his language. As Lei Jin points out, *Throne of Blood* was seen by many Western scholars and practitioners, including the British stage directors Peter Brook and Geoffrey Reeves, as a visual masterpiece and proof of the universal appeal and adaptability of Shakespeare’s works, yet it was not initially accepted as a Shakespeare film because it did not use the text (Jin 2004: 2). However, with the development of Translation Studies, and its corollary field, Adaptation Studies, the film is now read as a seminal work in the on-screen adaptation of Shakespeare. Stephen Prince, for example, describes Kurosawa’s accomplishment as having found “a kind of mirror universe in the period of turmoil, treachery, and succession battles that Shakespeare wrote about in *Macbeth*” (Prince 2014).

In the theatre domain, Jan Kott’s *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (1964) argued in favour of exploring Shakespeare’s plays in relation to a specific time, place and people, rather than treating them as blueprints for the study of Elizabethan stage history. Peter Brook’s four-part lecture series, *The Empty Space* (1968), was

influential in shaping a new generation of directors, stripping away the baggage of theatre practice and returning to the fundamentals of performance: body, space, community and experience. From the late 1960s into the 1970s, North American and European avant-garde theatre and performance art fed into the emergence of Performance Studies as a new interdisciplinary research paradigm bridging Theatre Studies with adjacent fields such as anthropology, linguistics, philosophy, psychology and gender studies. Although views differ on the origins and historical development of Performance Studies, Simon Shepherd and Mick Wallis, in their book *Drama/Theatre/Performance*, attribute a central role to Richard Schechner and Victor Turner in expanding the notion of performance to aspects of ritual in everyday life (102). They cite Philip Zarrilli's definition of Performance Studies research which is to "articulate both the 'deep structure' of meaning disclosed by instances of performance, and the 'processual means' of its coming to expression, whether it be for instance rite, festival or theatre" (103). Schechner's contribution to the field is particularly notable for his emphasis on interculturalism both in practice and theory as an "arena of struggle [where] cultures collide" (107).

Beyond the "revolutionary turn" in Shakespeare Studies, W.B. Worthen's two landmark publications, *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance* (1997) and *Shakespeare and the Force of Modern Performance* (2003), both influenced by scholarship in the field of Performance Studies, developed the concept of "dramatic performativity," which denied the textual authority of the Western canon and focused on the dynamism of the dramatic and the meanings generated in performance. This work was part of a growing interest in the relationship between local, regional, national and global Shakespeare, which was partly a response to the foundational work established in postcolonial and area studies, but partly also a result of the postmodern turn in philosophy and critical theory in response to globalization.

Reflecting these changes, and prompted by non-Western theatre directors' appropriations of Shakespeare, such as the early international works of Ninagawa and Suzuki, the 5th Shakespeare World Congress was held in Tokyo in 1991, and for the first time in the association's history it focused on Shakespeare in non-Anglophone spheres. This led to a raft of publications on local Shakespeare, and in the case of Japan it included *Shakespeare and the Japanese Stage* (1998), and *Performing Shakespeare in Japan* (2001). Dennis Kennedy captured this trend in foreign Shakespeare in his anthology by the same name, *Foreign Shakespeare* (1993),

which mapped out key histories, practices and problems within this performance paradigm. It also coincided with the emergence of international Shakespeare festivals in Japan, Poland and Romania.

Drawing on this momentum, scholars began to critique the global Shakespeare industry in relation to local sites, leading to several key publications in the new millennium. Among them, *World-Wide Shakespeares* (2005), edited by Sonia Massai, focused on global appropriations of Shakespeare in local contexts in order to “stretch, challenge and modify our sense of what ‘Shakespeare’ is” (6). Moreover, Martin Orkin in his book, *Local Shakespeares: Proximations and Power* (2005) after his influential anthology *Post-colonial Shakespeares* (1998), argued for an approach to Shakespeare through “local epistemology” that would “question the viability of any inflexible concept of ‘otherness’ whether racial, gendered or, indeed, scholarly” (26). This trend of Shakespeare and “hyper locality” was not limited to non-Anglophone Shakespeare; indeed, Britain’s most prestigious Shakespearean theatre company, the RSC, invited productions from all over the world to perform on its stages. In 2006, for example, the RSC produced the “Complete Works” series to showcase these local cultural practices, and it included Ninagawa’s rendition of *Titus Andronicus*. In the same year, the 8th Shakespeare World Congress in 2006 was held in Brisbane – the first time in the southern hemisphere – under the theme of “Shakespeare’s world/world Shakespeares.” In response to the so-called “war on terror,” and the US and UK led invasion of Iraq, the conference focused on Shakespeare in the Middle East.

Recently, as part of the 2012 London Cultural Olympiad, the World Shakespeare Festival was held four years before the celebrations of the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare’s death. In addition, the inauguration of the Asian Shakespeare Association was marked with a conference at the National Taiwan University in 2014 under the theme of “Shakespearean journeys.”

This thesis owes much to the legacy of these shifts, local and global, in Shakespeare Studies and aims to contribute to this historical trajectory. In this opening chapter, I have tried to contextualize and historicize the idea of re-orientation in relation to Shakespeare and his plays and language, but also in relation to Shakespeare’s changing position in the twentieth century following the rise of postcolonial theory. I have also tried to highlight some of the risks involved with re-orientation, particularly with regard to the repossession and re-colonizing of

texts and performance cultures. In the next chapter, I map the history of Japanese Shakespeare, focusing on the specific problems of re-orientation in Japan's relationship with the West and also with Asia. I then turn to a series of case studies that examine the works of a range of leading directors of Shakespeare in Japan. Moving from the postwar era to the new millennium, each case study picks up on a different thread of re-orientation in an attempt to locate "Japanese Shakespeare," its problems and accomplishments.

Chapter 2

Orienting Shakespeare in Japan

The reception and reconstruction of Shakespearean plays in Japan can be read, to echo Hamlet, as a “mirror up to nature” (3.1.19-30) of the construction of Japanese cultural identity, or so-called “Japaneseness,” in the process of modernization through westernization. Since the official opening up of the country to the West in 1858, the Meiji Government was keen to appropriate western culture and civilization, but it also strove to preserve (and sometimes reinvent) Japaneseness. As a result, Japan’s modern socio-political history is engendered by complex dichotomies of tradition and modernization, Orientalism and Occidentalism, and localization and globalization.

Similar divisions can be found in the history of Shakespeare on the Japanese stage, particularly since Shakespeare was viewed as the epitome of western civilization and the Japanese intelligentsia were keen to import, translate and adapt his works. As early as 1888, Japanese scholars had begun to use Shakespeare’s plays as a tool of edification, and a century later theatre scholars and practitioners felt they had accumulated enough literary knowledge and artistic practice to justify the phrase “Japanese Shakespeare” and to claim Shakespeare as a “Japanese contemporary.”

Since the late 1980s there have been several notable attempts at historicizing the reception and reconstruction of Shakespeare in Japan. Each account takes a different conceptual approach to the question of cultural identity. James Brandon, for example, observes four categories of Shakespeare in Japan: localized, canonical, postmodern and intercultural (1997: 1-26). Anzai Tetsuo on the other hand recognizes five stages: 1) *kabuki* adaptation in the Meiji era; 2) *shingeki* or the “New Theatre” or “New Stage” movement, which lasted until the end of the Second World War and in which Shakespeare’s plays were translated to be read more than staged; 3) the revival of *shingeki* led by Fukuda Tsuneari between the 1950s and 1970s; 4) the emergence of the *shogekijyo* (Little Theatre movement) in opposition to *shingeki* during the 1960s; 5) the opening of the Tokyo Globe Theatre in 1989 and the influx of international Shakespeare (Anzai 1989: 3-15, 2004: 297-328).

Murakami Takeshi divides the history into seven stages, and focuses on landmark translations and adaptations as his organizing criteria: 1) 1885-1905, *kabuki* adaptations; 2) 1906-1920, Tsubouchi Shoyo’s adaptations; 3) 1920-1960,

Tsubouchi's translations; 4) Fukuda Tsuneari's translations in the 1960s; 5) alternative translations to Fukuda in the 1970s; 6) 1975-1985, Odashima Yushi's translations; 7) alternative translations to Odashima from 1985 onwards (Murakami, 1995: 239-308). Finally, and most recently, in *A History of Japanese Theatre*, edited by Jonah Salz, Daniel Gallimore and Minami Ryuta also present seven stages in the reception of Shakespeare that mix the above criteria, while adding the category "prehistory," which refers to pre-Meiji-era plays that contain similar plot lines to some of Shakespeare's plays, particularly *Romeo and Juliet* (Salz, 2016: 484-96).

Drawing on these approaches, this chapter surveys the people, ideas and events involved in the construction of "Japanese Shakespeare" from the late nineteenth to the early twenty-first century. More specifically, by reading key changes in political, artistic and academic discourses on Shakespeare's cultural position in Japan, I try to demonstrate how Shakespeare was used as a political tool towards the construction of the modern Japanese nation state, and at the same time to show how his works functioned as a cultural vehicle to "orient" Japanese theatre practitioners in their search for a modern artistic identity.

Unlike the case of India mentioned in the previous chapter, Shakespeare was not imposed on Japan by a colonial power. Rather, his works were used "internally" as part of the ideological strategy of modernization through westernization, which ultimately emboldened the new Japanese nation-state to pursue its own imperial ambitions. Against this backdrop, what elements make a Shakespearean work "Japanese" from both "Western" and "Japanese" perspectives? Who and what were the people and events involved in the orientation of "Japanese Shakespeare"? Finally, my aim in re-reading the modern history of Japanese Shakespeare is to gain insight into the "orienting" processes that inform the works of the directors and their "re-orientations" discussed in the case studies of this thesis.

1. Shakespeare's Entry into Nineteenth Century "Japan"

As early as 1841, the name "Shakespeare" (pronounced "Sharkespeel") was mentioned in the Japanese translation of the Dutch translation of Lindley Murray's *English Grammar*, which was an English language education textbook. Up until that time, the Tokugawa clan had managed to maintain a hermetic society based on feudal structures and Confucian codes of moral conduct. Tokugawa established the throne of his regime in Edo (nowadays Tokyo) in 1603 and then in 1639 decreed a

law that forbade all contact with foreigners except for “non-Christian” Dutch and Chinese, since they were seen as lesser threats to the country (Arai, Ohba and Kawasaki, 628-32).

It was not until almost three centuries later that radical change to this *status quo* came about as a result of repercussions from the aggressive Western colonization of Southeast and East Asia. In 1858, under pressure from the American navy, the Shogun was forced to reopen Japan’s borders. By then, the warrior hegemony, dominated by the *samurai* class, had lost its former power and eventually in 1867 the fifteenth Shogun, Tokugawa Yoshinobu, returned the reins of government to the Emperor.

Following the *Meiji Ishin* (Restoration) in 1868, the Emperor’s full power was restored and the Meiji government laid down its plans for building a modern Japanese nation-state by imitating the model of Western imperialism. Thus ironically, Westerners, who had once been regarded as the “barbarians” to be repelled at all cost from the coasts of Japan had turned out to be the source of the “ideal” civilization. In order to maintain the independence of Japan in this age of imperialism, the Japanese government believed that there was no option but to choose the effective yet contradictory state strategy of westernization.

One of the Meiji government’s practical strategies for modernization was to import human resources; on the one hand Japanese intelligentsia were sent to the most influential western countries to gain knowledge and experience, and on the other hand westerners were brought to Japan to provide tangible instruction in a wide array of fields. For example, in 1873, the Briton James Summers was invited to teach English literature and logic at Kaisei School, renamed the Imperial University in 1886, Tokyo Imperial University in 1897 and the University of Tokyo in 1947 (Murakami, 1995: 245). After Summers, who is believed to be the first person to teach Shakespeare in Japan, an American scholar named William A. Houghton was invited to take the chair of the English department in 1877, the first of its kind in Japan. Among the students he taught was Tsubouchi Shoyo (1859-1935), who later became the first Japanese person to make a complete translation of the Shakespearean canon (Kawatake, 1972: 111-15).

Further evidence of the government’s strategy could be seen in the Western style buildings that were constructed for industrial, commercial, cultural and educational purposes. One of them was the Yokohama Gaiety Theatre opened in

1870. Lectures and short productions were held there exclusively for foreign residents but gradually it became a source for the dissemination of knowledge on popular western culture to Japanese people (Matsumoto, 1989: 57). In 1891, the Miln Theatre Company, led by the English Shakespearean actor George Crichton Miln, visited and performed seven complete Shakespearean productions in English for the first time in Japan. Tsubouchi himself saw the productions of *Hamlet* and *The Merchant of Venice* (Minami, 1998: 258-59).

Amongst the influx of western writing during this transitional period, the following indicative lines on “Money: Use and Abuse” became well known in 1871: “Neither a borrower, nor lender be; / For loan oft loses both itself and friend, / And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry” (*Hamlet*, 1. 3. 75-77). The book they originated from was titled *Self-help* by the Victorian moralist Samuel Smiles. It portrayed Shakespeare as a man of “self-help,” “a hard worker” who made his way in life from “a very humble rank” to a representative man of literature (Smiles, 1859: 8, 215). Responding to the Meiji ideologies of *Bunmei-kaika*, (western civilization and enlightenment) and *Wakon Yosai* (Japanese spirit and western knowledge), and also *Risshin-shusse* (to succeed in the world not according to one’s social rank at birth but according to one’s talent and prowess in work), this bestseller guidebook of *Eigaku* (English Education) induced a sense of diligence amongst the Japanese intelligentsia, and thus on a psychological level was a contributing factor to the construction of a new Japanese identity and nation state (Kawachi, 1995: 3 and Takahashi, 1995: 99).

Despite propagandist images like the pragmatic “self-made man,” there were apparent gaps between existing social classes. While the government elites, including nobles, merchants, and landowners, pursued the building of a westernized and wealthy country, the general public was left far behind, struggling to catch up with these rapid yet self-contradictory processes of nationalization and modernization. Resistance against what were often capricious government policies grew among the poorer classes and the demand for more liberal and democratic policies became predominant. In fact, riot and revolt among dissatisfied ex-*samurai*, intelligentsia and farmers continued to occur until the 1890s. For example, in order to arbitrate the last civil war in Japan, which broke out in Kyushu in 1877 and is referred to as the

*Seinan Sensou*⁷ (Satsuma Rebellion), the government foolishly over-printed money causing high inflation and further national instability.

Around the same time, in 1874, *Hamlet*'s famous soliloquy, "To be, or not to be, that is the question:" (3.1.58) was "performed" for the first time and an article was published in a monthly English journal based in Yokohama called *The Japan Punch*, written by Charles Wirgman, a cartoonist and correspondent for *The Illustrated London News*, and resident of Yokohama from 1861-91 (Figure 1).

The caricature portrays a *samurai* Hamlet in a *kimono*, pondering over the question on stage with two Japanese words vertically inserted to explain the setting (on the right: playhouse, on the left: Shakespeare) and a nonsensical Romanized translation, "Arimasu, arimasen, are wa nandesuka" which literally translates as "There is, there is not, what is that?" As this soliloquy goes on, the words sound more ambiguous and out of place, as if to ask "what do these lines mean?" "Do I know what I am saying?" It is not clear what kind of productions Wirgman witnessed nor what his intention was in writing the following caption in English: "Extract from the new Japanese Drama Hamurettu san, 'Danumarku no Kami,' proving the plagiarisms of English literature in the sixteenth century" (Takahashi, 1995: 100). Yet, from this cartoon of cross-cultural, cross-linguistic and cross-theatrical confusion, it is perhaps possible to read the dilemmas of the melancholic *samurai*-Hamlet as meaning: "To be westernized or not, that is the question."

Furthermore, the word "plagiarism" may have been chosen to satirically denounce several Japanese attempts to translate and appropriate the western cultural icon into Japanese style, mainly *kabuki*, as Takahashi Yasunari points out (1995: 100). Bibliographically speaking, what may have been plagiarized was not Shakespeare's verse, but the prose of an essayist from the age of the British Empire, Charles Lamb (1775-1834), who was a metropolitan officer for the East India Company. *Tales from Shakespeare*, co-written by Charles and his sister Mary Lamb, was far more prevalent than Shakespearean texts in Japan in the late nineteenth century, largely due to the fact that its prose form originally intended for a child audience made it easier to read for Japanese.

⁷ The rebellion occurred after the senior politician Takamori Saigo quit the Meiji government upon refusal of his ideas to colonize Korea. He rallied ex-*samurai* in his native Kagoshima to form a rebellion.

In addition, as Tsubouchi Shoyo and Kawatake Toshio discovered,⁸ there are many similarities between the Shakespearean and *kabuki* theatres in terms of history, style and content. Both theatres developed around the sixteenth century and were repressed by the authorities due to the subversive power of theatre as a threat to the socio-political *status-quo*; both exploited the usage of anachronism to blur “the membranous confines between fiction and reality” (Chikamatsu, 1959: 358), while directly speaking to the audience; both tended to mix comic and tragic modes; and they were both all-male theatres in which female roles were performed by men. In addition, some *kabuki* revenge plays share similar themes with their English counterparts. This is particularly the case of *Chuhsingura* by Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653-1724), a renowned *kabuki* playwright who made strong use of dramatic devices including murder, ghosts, suicide, pretend murder and fighting. The continuing popularity of *Hamlet* in Japan was partly due to the fact that the plot was already familiar in theme to Japanese people through *kabuki* plays.

The cultural amalgamation of Shakespeare, often viewed at that time as the centre of the western literary canon, was welcomed by news media and then popularized in theatres, amongst which only *kabuki* was thriving as a popular form at the time. The influence of Shakespeare’s plays on Japanese theatre practitioners and their insatiable desire for new sources was unprecedented, especially since *kabuki* playwrights have traditionally been good at plagiarizing and exploiting sources to create new stories that suit contemporary public tastes, just as Shakespeare himself once did. For example, in 1875, Kanagaki Robun tried to adapt and serialize Lamb’s *Hamlet* in the *Hiragana Eiri Shinbun* (Hiragana Illustrated News) under the title of *Seiyo Kabuki Hamlet* (Western *Kabuki* Hamlet). Due to unpopularity, it was discontinued after just three issues, yet his second attempt a decade later in 1886, *Seiyo Kabuki, Hamuretto Yamato Nishikie* (Western *Kabuki*, A Yamato Brocade Print of Hamlet) gained high esteem. The influential publication of *Shintaishi-sho* (An Anthology of New Poetry) in 1882 that included two translations of Hamlet’s famous soliloquy must have contributed to the success of *Yamato Nishikie*, the first completed adaptation of *Hamlet*. However, this was never read on stage until it was

⁸ For further comparisons of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and *kabuki*, see Kawatake’s indispensable study (1972). For the affinity between Shakespeare and Chikamatsu, “Chikamatsu versus Shakespeare versus Ibsen,” see *The Selected Works of Shoyo* vol. 10 (1927) 769-813.

produced at the Tokyo Globe Theatre in 1991, starring *kabuki* actor Ichikawa Somegoro VII who took the roles of both Hamlet and Ophelia.

2. “Half-civilized Japanese” trying to get out from Asia

The first Japanese staged adaptation of a Shakespearean play was *The Merchant of Venice*, titled *Sakuradoki Zeni no Yononaka* (*The Season of Cherry Blossom in the World of Money*), which originated from the following complicated process: based on Lamb’s story, Inoue Tsutomu published the translation, then an anonymous author adapted it as *Kyoniku no Kisho* (A Strange Litigation about the Chest) in 1877. A journalist named Udagawa Bunkai re-adapted it and serialized it in a newspaper, and that publication was immediately dramatized by Katsu Genzo for Nakamura Sojuro’s *kabuki* company in 1885 and was repeatedly performed to great acclaim.

Behind the success of this pioneering performance of Shakespeare in Japan was the *Engeki Kairyo Undo*, the theatre improvement campaign, which was part of the Meiji government’s cultural department called “The Society for Improvement of Theatre.” Founded in 1886, The Society’s main aim was to adopt the modern western style of national theatres, following the government’s belief that any sophisticated country should be equipped with the facilities to culturally entertain important overseas guests. To realize this aim, the policy makers commenced the campaign by raising the status of *kabuki* actors, who up until then were deemed as classless “beggars on the riverbank,” often living on the periphery of the city. They also put an end to the audiences’ “vulgar” manners, such as eating, drinking and chatting, and the “grotesqueness” of *kabuki* conventions. They proposed to replace *onnagata* (male actors playing female roles) with real actresses, also to eliminate *kurogo* (stagehands dressed in black, visible to the audience) as well as the traditional on-stage sound and musical accompaniment, since those simply did not fit to the standard of western contemporary theatres based on realism (Anzai 1999, Kawatake 1967, 1974 and Takahashi 1995). Theatres had to function as exhibition halls to show off Japanese sophistication and to attract western gazes. A clear example of this is the *Rokumeikan*, an opulent dance hall built in Tokyo in 1883 mostly for the purpose of holding extravagant evening parties frequented by dignitaries of national importance.

Under pressure from the campaign policies, playwrights had to make efforts to “improve” theatres, for fear of finding themselves out of work. In 1888, the Meiji Emperor even made official visits to see *kabuki* plays in a new *kabuki* theatre that was opened in Ginza. Compared to their despised position under the Tokugawa Regime (1600-1868), the position of *kabuki* actors was radically elevated under the Meiji government. Yet with over three centuries of living practice, the *kabuki* tradition could not be transformed overnight. *Sakuradoki Zeni no Yononaka* (hereafter *Zeni*) is an apt example of this transformation. The story-frame is an eclectic mix of Inoue’s translation of Lamb and an anonymous trial record of a murder case that occurred in Osaka at the end of the Tokugawa era. This story could have been mistaken for a typical *kabuki sewamono* (family strife story) comedy were it not for the prologue having been purposefully written in transgression of *kabuki* conventions (Kawatake, 1972: 336).

In the prologue, three contemporary students argue about how western and Asian literature can be read as a meta-theatrical caricature of the theatre improvement campaign, as well as the Japanese internalization of Eurocentricism. The first student named Wada is an advocate of westernization who has just bought a translation of *The Merchant of Venice*, the second named Nakamura has bought the trial record, and the third named Torida is the compromiser between the two. Agreeing to Nakamura’s opinion that western novels are superior to Chinese or Japanese novels in their high moral standards, yet inferior in entertainment value, Wada adds that unlike western civilized minds, Asian minds search for savage, superstitious and barbaric entertainment in novels. Wada then pushes his Eurocentric logic to its limit by saying that in order to fully civilize “Japan as half-civilized,” “English education is the shortest way.” As Yoshihara Yukari has shown, Wada is represented as “a typical case of Japanese Bardolatry” (Yoshihara, 21-32) in that he naively celebrates the universality of the Shakespeare’s works without being aware of British imperial and colonial histories that facilitated the spread of English language and literature worldwide. In contrast, Nakamura echoes the voice of the anti-western nationalists who praised Asian national traditions, without being aware that the notion of Asia itself was invented in Europe and made use of by Japanese nationalists and expansionists.

In order to settle the controversy between the Asian traditionalist and the Eurocentric reformer, Torida promises to write an eclectic play by adapting the

translation of Shakespeare and the trial record so that the audience would know *Zeni*'s motivation. He even jokes that this eclectic literary blend of western "high morals" and Asian "exciting entertainment" would beat the western standard. In terms of postcolonial readings, Wada's blend-and-improve strategy contains potential yet also danger, as Yoshihara points out here with critical acuity:

The adaptation's strategy can be regarded as an instance of resistance to Eurocentric logic. If the theatre-improvement campaign can be termed a submission to the cultural colonization of literary and stage works and to cultural Eurocentrism, the author seems to be trying to colonize, abduct and appropriate Shakespeare's original work by Japanizing and nationalizing it. However, this claim (voiced by Torida) that the main plot of *Zeni* would dialectically solve the opposition between western literature and Asian literature is discerning because of its ominous resemblance to Japan's colonial claims that it can transcend the limitations of western civilization and modernity, owing to its unique combination of modernization and Asianness. (26)

Zeni can be read as one of the first examples of a "Japanized" Shakespeare, in which the re-orientation of a traditional performance culture – in this case the transgression of *kabuki* conventions – is constitutive of and immanent in the "contact zone" that *The Merchant of Venice*, the Lamb adaption, the Meiji government political direction and the vision and responses of the artists involved represents. At the same time, taking the Japanese historical background into consideration, the strategy of *Zeni* can be read as a Japanese-made double-edged sword: by adapting and exploiting western logic, Japan started to self-fashion its image as the Great Japanese Empire that cut and carved neighbouring countries into her colonies. It is worth mentioning that the Japanese Imperial myth of *tenshi* (son of the *Shinto* gods) that portrayed Japan as the country of gods was established around the mid 1880s. After the Meiji Emperor gained full power in 1868, his cult image as the centre of the "holy" and "industrious" Japanese nation was built parallel to the infrastructure of Japanese modernization and nationalization. By the end of the Meiji era in 1912, Japan had colonized Taiwan, South Manchuria and Korea and had shown off her power with a victory over Russia in 1905.

There were numerous cases besides *Zeni*, in which translations and adaptations of Shakespeare were substantially linked to the transitions taking place in Japan's domestic administration. The second Japanese Shakespearean production of *Julius Caesar* is a notable example. In 1882, in the midst of political infighting and rioting over whether Japan should have a governing cabinet system within the Diet, the leader of the Liberal Party, Itagaki Taisuke was stabbed and in his wounded state allegedly cried out: "Even if I die, freedom won't." It is often pointed out that Kawashima Keizo and Tsubouchi Shoyo's first translations of *Julius Caesar* in 1883 and 1884 respectively were a response to this incident. The Tsubouchi translation in *maruhon* style (a traditional script used for *johruri* and *kabuki*), *Caesar Kidan: Jiyu no Tachi Nagori no Kireaji* (The Strange Story of Caesar: the Vestigial Sharpness of Liberty Sword) was partially performed for The Dramatic Company of Ii Yoho in 1901. The production was influenced by the Itagaki Taisuke incident, but also by the assassination of Hoshi Toru, Speaker of the House of Representatives, resulting in some of the play's political references being censored by the authorities (Arai, 2002: 641-42, Kawachi, 1995: 4-5, Kawatake, 1967: 382).

3. Otojiro and Sadayakko's Shinpa / New Wave

Caesar Kidan encouraged Kawakami Otojiro (1864-1911), known for his populist political theatre called *Oppekepe*, to establish the theatre genre called *shinpa*. *Shinpa*, which translates as "new school" or "new wave," was a transitional theatre form born out of the rejection of the themes and conventions of *kabuki*, also referred to as "*kyuuha*" ("old school"). *Shinpa* took a satirical approach to social conditions and its plays often contained propaganda drawing on patriotic events within the emerging Japanese Empire (Banham 2000: 565). However, it is difficult to establish a clear definition of *shinpa*, since Kawakami's intentions changed in response to the trends of the time and his economic and social position. In the political movements at the end of the 1890s Kawakami's stance was markedly anti-government; yet this changed once his plays that praised the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95) became great hits. One of the paradoxes of this "new wave" was the fact that the plays were performed in the Kabuki-za Theatre. Thus, in conquering the "old wave," his theatre became less political and more commercial.

Between 1899 and 1902, Kawakami and his wife, the trained *geisha* Sadayakko (1871-1946), along with a company of around twenty actors, undertook

two separate overseas tours. The first tour was to the United States in 1899, where the group focused on cities with large populations of Japanese immigrants: San Francisco, Seattle, Portland, Tacoma. The second tour was to Europe in 1900, with stops in London and Paris, where they attended the World Fair. The trips established the group as the first Japanese theatre company to perform in the West. The company's repertoire on the first tour included a medley of fight and dance scenes from well-known *kabuki* plays such as *Kojima Takanori* (The Royalist), *Musume Dojo-ji* (The Maiden at Dōjō-ji Temple) and *Saya'ate* (Striking Swords). Kawakami had initially intended to showcase his popular play *Nisshin Senso* about the Sino-Japanese war, but was told early on by an American promoter that the play would be of little interest to American audiences. In her study of Sadayakko in *Acting Like A Woman in Modern Japan*, comparative literature scholar Kano Ayako cites Sadayakko's recollection of the meeting from an interview in 1908:

I was told, "No, that just won't do. Americans don't know the difference between Japan and China – they think it's the same country. If you perform a play like that, nobody will come see it. And you've got to have an actress. You've got to have a woman." So there was nothing I could do; I had to become a performer and act. (85)

The anecdote reveals the difficulty in Sadayakko's acceptance of her fate to be thrust into the limelight as a woman actor. Not only did it break with the *kabuki* convention of an all-male cast, but as Kano points out, it framed Sadayakko as "an 'oriental' woman representing her nation in relation to the West" (85). Indeed, Sadayakko became one of the main "attractions" on both tours, finding fame in a pseudo-*kabuki* production that the company pieced together from parts of their repertoire, called *The Geisha and the Knight*. Sadayakko played the role of a *geisha*, who falls in love with a knight, but is later separated from him until her tragic death. The show was met with acclaim in the US and became a key part of the company's European tour too. (Downer 91).

These overseas tours had a strong impact on Kawakami Otojiro's approach to theatre. He was particularly marked by a production of *The Merchant of Venice* in London starring Henry Irving and Helen Terry. On return from his second trip to Europe in 1902, Kawakami chose to adapt Shakespeare's *Othello* as the first play to

showcase his new theatre style called *seigeki*, meaning “true drama” in the sense of “pure drama without singing or dancing, modeled after Western naturalism” (Wetmore *et al*, 29). He commissioned novelist and journalist Emi Suin (1869-1934) to write the adaptation. Emi changed the play’s setting from Cyprus to Japanese colonial Taiwan, and Othello was transformed from the Moor to a *burakumin* called Muro Washiro, a member of Japan’s outcast minority. In the adaptation, Washiro secretly marries Tomone (Desdemona) played by Sadayakko in a Christian ceremony reflecting the new religious freedom introduced in 1871. Kawakami explained that his reason for choosing *Othello* was partly due to the fact that its female characters are generally submissive and therefore it met the established hierarchical order of male-centered Japanese society at that time. At the same time, the choice reflected Kawakami’s new supportive stance towards the government and the nation in its pursuit of Empire. The Kawakami Troupe’s shift towards imperialist nationalism followed the success of their production depicting the Sino-Japanese War in 1894 and later the Russo-Japanese War. Sadayakko also followed this shift. As Kano Ayako points out, after returning to Japan to work on the “Legitimate Theatre,” she performed “the role of a modern girl supporting the modern masculine Japanese national subject, thereby contributing to the reproduction of imperialism” (78).

4. Tsubouchi Shoyo’s eclectic Shakespeare

Tsubouchi Shoyo, professor of Waseda University, was not impressed by Kawakami’s *seigeki* productions, viewing them as a step too far from the original plays. Consequently, he initiated a series of productions based on direct translations of Shakespeare’s plays with his counterparts at the *Bungei-kyokai*, the Literary Society, founded in 1906. By this time, the government-led theatre improvement campaign was over. As a result of the campaign, *kabuki*’s status radically shifted from popular entertainment to a traditional/quasi-archaic art form (Kawatake, 1967: 195-95). By now the notion of improvement through westernization had sunk in with theatre practitioners. The Literary Society was one such case which attempted to create a Japanese equivalent of contemporary western realist drama; although the leader Tsubouchi, who was well versed in Japanese traditional theatre, especially *kabuki*, as well as English literature, also included his own quirks. For example, the Society’s first attempt at *The Merchant of Venice* was full of *kabuki* conventions. Despite its eccentricity the production received greater acclaim than Kawakami’s

seigeki. For most of the audience at that time, this production still looked more “authentically western” though it would no doubt seem pseudo-western and amateurish by today’s standards.

In 1907, the Literary Society produced *Hamlet* using full western character names, costumes, and Hamlet’s famous soliloquy, which had never been heard on stage thus far due to its length, since long speeches were not traditionally used in Japanese performing arts and thus had been omitted in the past. On the other hand, Tsubouchi still gave the role of Gertrude to an *onnagata* and surprisingly refused the western style of acting.⁹ What he was aiming for was not a mere transplant of Shakespeare, rather he was eager to create a “Japanese *Hamlet*,” based on the belief that Shakespearean verse has affinities with the Japanese elocution in traditional theatres such as *kabuki* and *kyogen*.¹⁰ As a result, the actors’ voices and movements were purposely set in contrasting styles such as modern and archaic, naturalistic and formalized, vulgar and elegant whilst mixing elements of several theatre types. This amalgam of old and new styles was born from the double-edged Japanese political process of “modernization” which meant promoting “westernization” while striving to maintain the essence of “Japaneseness.”

In the Literary Society’s second attempt at *Hamlet* in 1911, staged in the brand new western-style Imperial Theatre, Tsubouchi revised the problems of the previous production by retranslating the text to sound less *kabuki*-like. He intentionally mimicked the use of Western staging conventions to the extent of abolishing the *onnagata* role and employing female performers such as Matsui Sumako (1886-1919) to play Ophelia. Critics including Natsume Soseki (1867-1916), who is considered to be the foremost representative modern novelist of Japan, were critical of the Tsubouchi rendition. Natsume visited England on a government scholarship in 1900 and took a dislike to its theatres, but during his stay he undertook private studies with the Shakespearean scholar, William James Craig, one of the editors of the Arden Shakespeare series. On his return home at the age of thirty-seven, while teaching English literature at Tokyo Imperial University, Natsume began writing novels incorporating Shakespearean themes and characters

⁹ See Takahashi (1995) 106. Tsubouchi himself asked two English people who had dramatic training to instruct the actors. When he saw the rehearsal just before the first night, he decided to change everything.

¹⁰ Tsubouchi, ‘*Hamlet ni tsuite*’ in May, Meiji 44 (About *Hamlet*), *Shoyo Zensyu* (1927): 662. For the first full translation of *Hamlet* and its performance, see Anzai (1989) and Arai (2002).

into many of his early works. For example, in his novel “Gubijinso,” the lead female character reads a passage from *Antony and Cleopatra* and self-identifies as a modern-day version of the Egyptian queen. Moreover, in a short story entitled “The Travel Sketch,” Natsume based the heroine on the character of Ophelia from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*; and he wrote an essay “On the Ghost in Macbeth.” He criticized Tsubouchi’s rendition for its failure to reproduce “that poetic beauty which Shakespeare created at the expense of realism,” and further argued that it failed to offer “the pleasure of seeing a lifelike portraiture of ordinary men and women” (Natsume 1996: 286). The audience on the other hand appreciated the new style of theatre and witnessed the start of a new trend in faithful translations with this highly acclaimed, sold-out production. After this triumph, the Society produced *The Merchant of Venice* and *Julius Caesar* using Tsubouchi’s translations and gained further positive reviews and commercial success.

Ironically, these successes revealed Shakespeare to be classic and old-fashioned, mostly due to Tsubouchi’s translation that employed some archaic *kabuki* elements. As a result, the audience who sought after modern theatre was alienated from these productions. Even the young practitioners within the Society, such as Shimamura Hougetsu (1871-1918) and Matsui Sumako, defied Tsubouchi and produced deft renditions of plays like *A Doll’s House* by Ibsen or works by Strindberg, Meyerhold and Chekhov. Gradually, the introduction of these new playwrights began to take precedence over Shakespeare in Japan. These plays were constructed in sharp contrast to the traditional drama forms and they were welcomed by audiences as *shingeki*, literally meaning “New Theatre” or “New Stage.”

Facing this paradigm shift, Tsubouchi felt his work no longer had the resonance it once had and soon after disbanded the Society, which coincided with the end of the Meiji Era. He decided to dedicate himself to the translation and study of Shakespeare and his versions continued to dominate the theatre landscape until around the 1960s, and some are still used today. In 1913, at the beginning of the Taisho Era (1912-26), Shimamura and Matsui founded a new company called *Geijutsuza* (Art Theatre). Based on Shimamura’s translations, they produced *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Macbeth*, yet the “upstart” leading actress, Matsui, who had previously played Ophelia and Nora under Tsubouchi, was not so well received this time. In 1919, Matsui committed suicide following the death of her lover Shimamura by Spanish flu, and the curtain of the short-lived *Geijutsuza* fell.

5. The rise of *shingeki* / New Theatre / New Stage

Osanai Kaoru (1881-1928), who founded the Tsukiji Little Theatre in 1924 after the disastrous Kanto Earthquake in 1923, was exclusively dedicated to *shingeki* with a repertoire based on a range of plays from Strindberg and Ibsen to German Expressionist drama as well as “non-Japanized” Shakespeare. He tried to imitate the productions of Stanislavski, based on the notes he took when he visited the Moscow Arts Theatre in 1912. In August 1924, the theatre magazine *Engeki Shincho* published an account of a round table discussion including Osanai and his collaborator and former pupil Hijikata Yoshi (1898-1959). Outlining the aims of his new theatre in manifesto form, Osanai argued for a new epoch in Japanese theatre:

The reason for Tsukiji Shogekijo using only Western plays for a certain period is not a love of novelty. It is not adulation of the West. It is not despair of Japanese plays.

Tsukiji Shogekijo is working hard to create a future dramatic art for future Japanese plays.

The problems of presentation involved in present-day Japanese plays – in particular, those of established playwrights – can be solved by the training in pictorial technique associated with *kabuki* and *shimpa*. The proof of this is surely in the fact that *kabuki* and *shimpa* actors who have a smattering of the new knowledge perform [such plays] without much difficulty and are even achieving great successes.

The future Japanese plays for which we are waiting and hoping must contain problems beyond the scope of *kabuki* and *shimpa*. For the sake of these future plays we must develop our new dramatic art. (Powell, 1975:76)

What is in evidence in this excerpt from Osanai’s opinion on the direction of Japanese theatre in the 1920s is the tension that exists between the nationalist drive to establish a theatre practice that draws on culture that is perceived to be Japanese (in this case *kabuki* – though only in terms of technique), and the fact that the very

quest for a new Japanese theatre is itself a byproduct of importing and imitating Western models of performance. As Kano Ayako points out, the translation of European plays by proponents of the New Theatre required “two kinds of allegiances from the translation: allegiance to the original text, and allegiance to the naturalness of the text as spoken on stage” (171). Indeed, it used to be customary for Japanese actors to disguise themselves as Caucasians with false noses, blue eye shadow, golden wigs and period costumes. Although these exotic camouflages were often too superficial to convince audiences of their intended realism, the convention was widely maintained until the 1960s. Today there are only a handful of companies that continue this practice, the most well known being the hundred-year-old, all-female Takarazuka Revue.

The elements of Western imitation acting that were not convincing are what Kano terms “peculiarities” and these include “peculiarities of Japanese language and physique [and] timeworn habits of the mind and the body” (171). However, the view amongst *shingeki* practitioners was that these “problems” could be overcome by education, training and technique. Osanai refers in the above excerpt, for example, to “problems of presentation” in Japanese plays, which is an allusion to the remains of “old Japanese theatre” that the New Stage was trying to leave behind. It is through these comparative processes, this mode of “orientation,” that the peculiarities of Japanese language and physique were “discovered as qualities particular and peculiar to Japan” and were later “made to serve as the basis of postmodern performance genres such as *buto* and underground theatre” (Kano 171). This cultural differentiation led to the enunciation of what is still today perceived as an essential split in East-West performance traditions: the division between Western theatre based on a tradition that favours text, language and rationality, and an Oriental tradition that favours the body, viscerality and emotion. This dichotomy continues to play a role in the development of acting techniques and staging conventions by contemporary Japanese directors such as Miyagi Satoshi and his company Ku Na’uka and Yasuda Masahiro and his company Yamanote Jijosha. The works of both directors are discussed in detail in Chapter 5 and Chapter 7 respectively.

The rise and fall of these theatrical movements developed in parallel to significant changes in Japanese political history: from the confused yet exciting period of experimentation in the Meiji Era (1868-1912), to the more modern, democratic and stable days of the brief Taisho Era (1912-1926); the calm before the

turbulent Showa Era (1926-1989). As a result of the modernization process, Japan was heading for both expansion and destruction. To push the parallel further, Hamlet's line "To be, or not to be, that is the question" (*Hamlet* 3.1.58), representing one's ego trapped in the critical situation of revenge, was originally written during the transitional period from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, but it found new resonance in Japanese translations as part of Japan's own period of transition.

Due to Japan's anti-western militaristic ideology, Shakespeare's position in Japan shifted from being at the centre of public stages to the inside of private studies until the end of WWII. In short, Shakespeare became a literary subject as opposed to grounds for practical dramatic experiment. *Hamlet* in particular was a creative resource for novelists. For example, Shiga Naoya (1883-1971) wrote *Claudius no Nikki* (Claudius's Diary) in 1912, Kobayashi Hideo (1902-1983) wrote *Ophelia Ibun* (Ophelia's Testament) in 1931 and Dazai Osamu (1909-1948) wrote *Shin Hamlet* (New Hamlet) in 1941. In addition to novels, numerous translations, annotated academic editions and essays were published. Among them, *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* in forty volumes by Tsubouchi Shoyo took up a monumental position in the Japanese literary landscape. After accomplishing his objective at the age of 69 in 1928, Tsubouchi continued to work and published a revised version in more colloquial form in 1933 (Murakami 1995: 263).

In honour of his achievement, the Tsubouchi Memorial Theatre Museum was opened at Waseda University in 1928 and the Shakespeare Society of Japan was established on the 23rd of April 1930. In his inaugural speech the President, Professor Ichikawa Sanki, set out the Society's ambitious aims, reflecting to some degree those of the honorary president Tsubouchi himself:

We should introduce to the world the study of Shakespeare by us Japanese, and try to show how we, from our own point of view, interpret or criticize his works, thus making clear to foreigners our mental peculiarities, and ultimately contributing our share to a better international cooperation of the East and the West.¹¹

Only half a century after introducing Shakespeare to Japan, and having used his

¹¹ Bulletin of the Shakespeare Association of Japan, 1, October 1930, p. 24. Translated by Eglinton.

plays as a vehicle of civilization and edification, Japanese scholars were exporting and sharing “our” contemporary Shakespeare with the world.

However, this ambitious aim was interrupted by the Second World War. After the Manchurian Incident in 1931, Japanese ultranationalists began to restrict democratic rights and censor freedom of speech and artistic expression, especially *Shingeki* (Zarrilli, McConachie, Williams and Sorgenfrei 430). It became almost impossible to talk openly about literature in the language of the “enemy” since the supremacy of the Emperor overtly denied western values. Due to the inherent western-inclination of *Shingeki*, many of the practitioners were politically left wing, and sometimes socialists and communists.

One such representative figure was Ito Kunio, known as Senda Koreya (1904-1994). As his autobiography, *Another History of Shingeki*, vividly records, Senda was born into a wealthy artistic family on the day Chekhov died and in his youth believed he was the reincarnation of the Russian playwright. In 1923, amid the chaotic aftermath of the Great Kanto earthquake, he was attacked by an anti-Korean nationalist mob in Sendagaya, Tokyo, after which he often referred to himself as “a Korean in Sendagaya.” Following his older brothers' artistic paths, the dancer-choreographer Ito Michio (1893-1961) and the set designer Ito Kisaku (1899-1967), Senda joined the Tsukiji Little Theatre, where he took on the roles of Antony in *Julius Caesar* and Antonio in *The Merchant of Venice*. This meant dropping out of German literature studies at Waseda University. In 1927, Senda travelled alone to Berlin, where he became involved in political activities as a member of the German Communist Party, while also creating underground theatre performances. By 1931, Berlin's "Golden Age of the 1920s" (Senda 1975: 133-221) had crumbled under the fear and gloom of the Great Depression and the rise of Nazism, and Senda decided to return to Japan via Moscow. He was arrested on arrival, the first in a series of bouts in prison due to political theatre activities with Shin Tsukiji Gekidan (New Tsukiji Theatre Company), founded in 1929 by Hijikata Yoshi, and Tokyo Engki Shudan (The Tokyo Theatre Group), founded in 1931 by Senda and his friends. Both theatre companies were associated with proletarian theatre movements and thus heavily censored by Japan's interwar militaristic regime (Senda 1970: 56, Sorgenfrei 130). In 1933, a young proletarian author called Kobayashi Takiji (1903-1933), best known for his short novel *Kanikosen* (Crab Cannery Ship), died as a result of violent torture by the Tokko (Secret) police. Senda,

who had translated Kobayashi's work on the description of torture into German, made his death-mask (Senda 1975: 272-74).

While in prison, Senda read Shakespeare and other authors from the western literary canon, and developed a self-proclaimed "Shakespeare Fever," as the following statement in *Teatro Pamphlet*, the programme for his 1937 production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* indicates:

One need not repeat how important it is to maintain the history of theatrical legacies for the future development of theatre...However, this does not mean we should confine that legacy to a museum. Rather, it should be the basis on which we build contemporary audiences, contemporary perspectives, and new artistic methods.

[...]

Shakespeare's plays are ideal models on which to found our contemporary popular theatre. Shakespeare's vivid language, dynamic scenes, lyrical poetry, and above all else, his realistic attitude, are what underpins our slogan: "Learn from Shakespeare." For those progressive Japanese theatre companies, still shackled by the influences of the psychological drama and naturalism, Shakespeare is the most powerful tonic. (Senda 1975: 336, translated by Eglinton)

In an attempt to live up to that slogan, in the midst of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1938, Senda took the title role of *Hamlet* in a production at the New Tsukiji Theatre and tried to break "the romantic melancholic Hamlet of the elder Tsubouchi and [...] recreate him as active and brisk" (Akimasa 188, qtd. in Kennedy and Rimer 59-60).

However, in 1942, fourteen *Shingeki* practitioners, including Senda who had publically advocated Marxist-socialist political views, were convicted of crimes against the state. Eventually all the detainees were forced to renounce their ideological beliefs (referred to as "tenko" in Japanese) and were released from prison (Pellegrini 108-120, Senda 1975: 308-15). Despite left-wing criticism for their failure to uphold their beliefs, during this period of "tenko" Senda managed to found the Haiyuza (Actors' Theatre Company) in 1944 (Sorgenfrei 126). The theatre remains active to date in the fashionable Roppongi area in Tokyo. In addition to

appearing in over fifty films between 1936 and 1970, Senda became known as an influential director and translator of the works of Brecht and Shakespeare.

6. Japan and its theatre movements after WWII

Japan rebuilt itself as a modern nation state after the war with rapidity yet not without widespread trauma. It did so against the backdrop of US military occupation and a booming munitions business that fed off the Korean War in the 1950s, as John Dower points out in his book *Embracing Defeat*:

On June 23, 1950, war erupted in neighboring Korea; and the United States, only four years after imposing its “peace constitution,” hastened to impose remilitarization on a reluctant nation even as its war-related purchases gave a transfusion to the country’s anemic economy...The conflict in Korea ushered in a new world; and for the first time since the surrender Japan, willing or not, was distinctly part of this world. (526)

Despite the country’s severe lack of infrastructure and materials during this period, *shingeki* re-started its theatre activities and new translations of Shakespeare were published by thirteen translators, most of whom did their work during the war (Murakami, 1995: 271).

One of them is Fukuda Tsuneari (1912-1994), a director of *Bungakuza* (The Literary Theatre Company) and a literary critic. He translated nineteen Shakespearean plays into contemporary Japanese, emphasizing the poetic drama of the works with dignified and rhetorical language, rather than the colloquial but archaic form used by Tsubouchi.¹² This was a provocative choice and signalled a shift in the postwar trajectory of *shingeki* away from Tsubouchi’s “old” tradition towards a more Western-oriented form. This meant a return to the occidentalist convention for *shingeki* actors to disguise themselves as Caucasians with false noses and blue eye shadow (Kishi and Bradshaw 29-52). Moreover, Fukuda openly admitted in his programme note, his rendition of *Hamlet* in 1955 was an imitation of Michael Benthall’s staging in 1954, which starred Richard Burton. Just as Osanai had done in Moscow, Fukuda went to the Old Vic and took detailed notes of the

¹² Concerning the analysis of Fukuda’s translation and direction of Shakespeare, see Nanba (1989) 85-132.

staging by mimicking the English model and reading Dover Wilson's interpretation of the tragedy (Takahashi 1995: 109). Despite this apparent "plagiarism," the production with the agile Akutagawa Hiroshi, the son of the novelist Akutagawa Ryunosuke in the title role, became a postwar legend.

It wasn't until the 1960s that a new generation of practitioners would challenge the tendency in *shingeki* to copy their western counterparts and brought about new movements such as *shogekijyo* (Little Theatre) and *angura* (underground theatre), exploring the body as a means of expression, and breaking away from the look-West syndrome and text-based traditions. These new movements were deeply connected to the anti-establishment student uprisings at the end of the 1960s, which itself was part of the broader international wave of anti-war and anti-racism activism that took place in 1968.

Japan's rapid economic growth in the 1970s led to an increase in productions of Shakespeare on Japanese stages. The new generation of directors and actors that emerged in the late 1960s were instrumental in making the plays accessible to a wider audience, partly due to the use of more contemporary translations and partly as a result of new approaches to *mise en scène*. In 1972, the Bungakuza launched an annual "Shakespeare Festival" inviting a range of overseas productions to Japan. Peter Brook's version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1973 was particularly influential among Japanese practitioners in its propagation of the "no originality" idea. Polish theatre scholar, Jan Kott, had written about this idea a decade earlier in his seminal book, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*. He claimed that postwar western theatre had displaced the notion of an original Shakespearean model that directors could adhere to faithfully, in favour of contemporary interpretations of his plays. Brook's *Dream* seemed to reinforce this claim from an English perspective.

Using Odashima Yushi's colloquial and fast-moving translations, full of Japanese puns, Deguchi Norio (1940-) launched "Shakespeare in Jeans," with the young actors of The Shakespeare Company on simple stages. Deguchi's work is examined in greater detail in Chapter 4. The company performed the whole of Shakespeare's canon within six years between 1975 and 1981. Moreover, Japanese Shakespeare gained an international reputation thanks to the worldwide success and influence of Kurosawa Akira's films such as *The Throne of Blood* in 1957, based on *Macbeth*, and the theatre productions of Ninagawa Yukio (1935-2016) and Suzuki Tadashi (1939-), who were exploring the possibilities of juxtaposing Shakespeare

with Japanese traditional cultures. Despite their contrasting approaches to Shakespeare's texts and to the identity of Japanese theatre, the “big two,” Ninagawa and Suzuki, were recognized internationally in the 1980s as Japan's foremost Shakespearean directors. A fuller discussion of their changing strategies of “self-Orientalism” vis-à-vis western gazes is presented in Chapter 3.

7. “Japanese Shakespeare”

At the peak of the economic boom in the new Heisei era (1989-), the Shakespeare Society of Japan demonstrated its achievements in scholarly criticism as well as in the promotion of theatre by hosting the 5th World Shakespeare Congress in Tokyo in 1991. About 60 years after his death, Ichikawa Sanki's ambitious aim – “to introduce to the world the study of Shakespeare by us Japanese” – was achieved to a certain degree through the Congress seminars held under the general theme of “Shakespeare and Cultural Traditions.” To celebrate the opening of the Congress, *Falstaff: The Braggart Samurai*, an adaptation of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, had a world premiere at the brand-new Tokyo Globe theatre, modeled on the second London Globe that was rebuilt in 1614. The production focused on the character of Falstaff and was adapted by Takahashi Yasunari, and directed and performed by *kyogen* actor Nomura Mansaku, starring his son Nomura Takeshi (who later earned the name Mansai) as *Taro-kaja*. Takahashi paraphrases his strategy of “Kyogenizing Shakespeare / Shakespeareanizing Kyogen” in the following way: “to transform the fertility of the Shakespearian forest into the simplicity of the Japanese garden” (Takahashi, 1998: 214). This can be read as an echo of the ambition of Tsubouchi and Ichikawa.

This new collaborative production between a scholar of English Literature and *kyogen* players was brought to the Japan Festival in London in the autumn of 1991. It played alongside a host of other eclectic productions based on Shakespeare with Japanese stages. One of the representatives was a production of a *bunraku* style adaptation of *Hamlet*, “A Yamato Brocade Print of Hamlet” by Kanagaki, first published in 1886 but never before performed. Ichikawa Somegoro V, a young yet charismatic *kabuki* actor, played both Ophelia and Hamlet as well as Fortinbras in this all-male company. English reviewers praised the production for its refreshing relocation of Shakespeare to Japanese traditional stages. On the other hand, they tended to be quite critical about the instances of mixing Shakespeare with punk rock

and pseudo-*kabuki*, as in the case of the production of *King Lear* directed by Terahara Takaaki, professionally known as J.A. Seazar, calling it “pure Japjunk” (Macaulay 1991). It is noteworthy that British critics rejected this “punk” rendition of *Lear*, while Japanese traditional relocations and other contemporary amalgams such as Ninagawa’s were praised.

Nevertheless, Tsubouchi’s hope that one day Westerners would take “Japanese Shakespeare” seriously was realized. “Japanese-made Shakespeare” established its position in the internationally expanding Shakespeare industry. This binary tendency between the “Westernization” of Japanese theatre and the “Japanization” of the Western canon continued to influence the development of modern Japanese culture throughout the years of rapid economic growth after the world war, and even began to be exported out of Japan to various Western countries. Nowadays, Japanese collaborations with Western theatre practitioners to perform Shakespeare in Japanese are no longer a novel phenomenon. In effect, the traditional forms used to produce Shakespearean plays in Japanese style are chopped up and emulsified to appeal to the audiences’ taste since oriental or “exotic” presentations are in fashion. Yet it is not only the Japanese who try to have a “Japanese-looking Shakespeare.” Examples of others can be found in the past three decades of RSC productions, from the opening of the Swan theatre in 1986 with *The Two Noble Kinsmen* using Japanese *kendo* wear to visualize the society of codes and honour, to *Coriolanus* in 2002 referring to Kurosawa’s films, *Seven Samurai* and *Ran*.¹³ Kenneth Branagh’s 2006 film adaptation of *As You Like It* was set in an imagined late 19th century European colony in Japan after the Meiji Restoration.

The history of the introduction of Shakespeare to Japan reveals two key pragmatic uses of the plays, their content and forms. On the one hand, on an administrative level, Shakespeare’s works were exploited for their didactic potential - as a means of learning about the West - but also as a vehicle for advancing an expansionist, and later imperialist nation building narrative. This was a re-orientation - almost a detournement - of the order of logic constructed within the British Empire, where Shakespeare’s plays became tools for edification and enlightenment. On the

¹³ See Brock. *Two Noble Kinsmen*, dir. Barry Kyle, des. Bob Crowley, RSC, the Swan, 1986. Other RSC examples productions are *Cymbeline*, dir. Adrian Noble, des. Anthony Ward, Royal Shakespeare Company, 1997 and *Coriolanus*, dir. David Farr, des. Ti Green, the Swan 2002.

other hand, the translators and adaptors involved in the production of Japanese Shakespeare exploited its potential for the subversion of government restrictions and directives. This tension between modernization versus tradition and westernization versus Japanization in the construction of cultural identity can be seen throughout twentieth century Japanese Shakespeare, and even today.

Chapter 3

Re-orienting/Dis-orienting Shakespeare

Occidentalism and Orientalism in the work of Ninagawa Yukio

The following chapters examine works by key directors in Japanese Shakespeare from the early 1970s to the new millennium. Each case study addresses a different aspect of the re-orientation of Shakespeare in “the Orient,” with a strong emphasis on Japan. As I discussed in Chapter 1, the tendency of Western theatre practitioners to appropriate Oriental performance traditions came to the fore in the 1960s and 70s, partly due to the development of postcolonial cultural studies, and partly also to the emphasis on intercultural theatre as a major dynamic in the field of performance studies. From a Japanese perspective, postwar theatre of the late 1960s was dominated on the one hand by traditional *kabuki* theatre, and on the other by a resurgence of *shingeki* – a performance style largely based on mimicking Western staging practices. A key example of this is Fukuda Tsuneari’s 1955 production of *Hamlet* discussed in Chapter 2. Going against this occidentalist practice, Ninagawa Yukio and Suzuki Tadashi began appropriating the Western canon, notably Shakespeare and Greek classics, blending their productions with elements of contemporary popular culture, as well as concepts and practices from traditional Japanese theatre. For Ninagawa, interculturalism became a cornerstone of his stage work, an artistic vehicle that would later enable him to “export” some of his productions back to the West.

Despite being widely praised in the international theatre community for their visionary work, both directors – but particularly Ninagawa – were also criticized for their strategies of appropriating the Western canon. As Dennis Kennedy argues, Ninagawa’s “intercultural approach might be called an Occidentalism, a declaration of interest from an outsider who feels at liberty to appropriate Europe the way that Europe has traditionally appropriated Japan” (Kennedy, 2001: 315). Furthermore, Ninagawa has also been criticized for a “self-orientalist” strategy that involves repackaging Japanese cultural tradition for export to the global theatre market.

Tracing Ninagawa’s artistic career, which spanned nearly half a century, this chapter analyzes the split within Ninagawa’s re-orientation of Shakespeare between an intercultural practice that tried to move away from fixed East-West cultural binaries and a strategy of cultural appropriation that in some ways maintained them.

Using Ninagawa's "kabukinized" adaptation of *Twelfth Night* (2005-2009) as the core case material, but also with reference to his other Shakespeare productions shown both in Japan and the United Kingdom, I examine the production's meta-theatrical commentary on East-West cultural politics, and address the critical responses to the London production, especially the claim by several British critics that *Twelfth Night* was a presentation of traditional *kabuki*. To what extent was Ninagawa's work a re-orientation or a dis-orientation of Shakespeare? How were these "re-orientations" received in Japan and in their transfer to British stages?

1. False Starts and Mixed Trajectories

Ninagawa's life in the theatre was influenced by the shifts and tensions in Japan's postwar transition to modernity. The international scope of his work, along with his desire to "conquer" the complete works of Shakespeare, and his incessant search for cultural identity, can be read as responses to the country's rapid economic rise in the 1970s and 80s against the backdrop of globalization.

Born in 1935, a decade before the end of WWII, in a militaristic and patriarchal Japan, he grew up in a relatively liberal working class neighbourhood in Kawaguchi City, near Tokyo. His father worked as a tailor, and his mother as a housewife. As an avid theatregoer, she often took Ninagawa to see *kabuki* plays and helped nurture his interest in visual arts. After completing his secondary education, Ninagawa applied to study painting at the Tokyo University of the Arts, but he failed the entrance examination. Instead, he joined the Seihai theatre company to gain some acting experience. As Ninagawa himself recalled in my interview,¹⁴ in the early 1960s, Western theatre was regarded as "the ideal model," and the Stanislavski system of acting was a key point of study for young actors, particularly the book *An Actor Prepares*. Actors who were able to "analyze and articulate subtext were regarded as good, and those who could not were dismissed." As a director, Ninagawa was determined to "take an alternative approach to Stanislavski" and wanted to "break with the Shingeki conventions of actors fashioning themselves as Caucasian by dyeing their hair and wearing fake noses." However, his knowledge of

¹⁴I conducted the interview with Ninagawa on the 20th April 2013 at Sainokuni Saitama Arts Theatre during the production run of *Henry IV* and rehearsals for *Crows! Our Guns are Loaded* at the Saitama Gold Theatre. Ninagawa set up the Saitama Gold Theatre in 2006 to work with actors aged 55 and older. Part of the interview was published in *A History of Japanese Theatre*, Cambridge UP, 2016: 532-35 as well as *Theatre Arts* 61 (2017): 50-55.

Stanislavski, particularly the technique of “affective memory,” proved helpful later on in his career when he worked with British actors on Shakespearean character motivation (Eglinton 2016: 533).

As part of the anti-establishment *shogekijo undo*, Ninagawa co-founded the Gendaijin Gekijo (Contemporary People’s Theatre) in 1967, directing plays by Shimizu Kunio that dealt with contemporary social struggles in Japan. This included a play called *Shinjo Afururu Keihakusa* (Sincere Frivolity) about the student uprisings at the University of Tokyo in 1968, which he staged in 1969. The company ceased operations in 1971, but in the following year Ninagawa established the Sakura-sha (Cherry Blossom Company), where he directed avant-garde plays by Kunio and others. A major turning point in his career came after watching Peter Brook’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* at the Nissei Theatre in Tokyo in 1973. The minimalist, white cube set design, paired with dynamic aerial performances from the actors, inspired Ninagawa to take risks in his approach to staging Shakespeare. By 1974, Ninagawa felt that his own theatre company had reached the limits of its potential. He disbanded the Sakura-sha and went in search of a new direction (Eglinton, 2016: 532). Ninagawa’s first Shakespeare production owes much to his encounter with the Toho Company producer Nakane Tadao. Nakane’s interest in producing large-scale theatre resonated with Ninagawa and they decided to collaborate on a production of *Romeo and Juliet*. According to Nakane, the choice of a Shakespeare play was a way of tapping into multiple artistic tendencies in the Tokyo theatre scene at the time:

Theatrical fashion at that time was quite different from what it is now. For example, while kabuki was appreciated for its style, and modern plays (shingeki) for their words, there were also underground theatre groups focusing on using the body for expressive rather than narrative purposes, and commercial plays which relied on the actors’ presentation of personality in the character role. All of these approaches existed, but almost without connection to each other. So I wondered if I could mix them together in the same production. (Nakane ctd. in “Interview with Ninagawa Yukio,” Minami *et al*, 2001: 210)

Nakane saw in Shakespeare the potential to amalgamate these different theatre forms into a new genre within *shogyo engeki* (commercial theatre). In a genealogical sense, *shogyo engeki* was a postwar offshoot of *shingeki*. While both forms maintained an emphasis on Western drama in translation, *shogyo* productions tended to be far greater in scale and popularity, thanks to their backing by the top two film production companies, Toho and Shochiku, who brought a range of star film actors to the stage. Compared to some of the more left-leaning *shingeki* and *shogekijyo* companies of the early 1970s, *shogyo engeki* companies were more conservative in their politics and profit-oriented in their aims. Ninagawa's *Romeo and Juliet* was produced by Toho at the 1300-seat Nissei Theatre in 1974. It included leading kabuki actor, Ichikawa Somegoro VI (later renamed as Matsumoto Koshiro XIX) and Nakano Yoshiko as the star-crossed lovers. Their short-lived romance was portrayed through high-speed movements, performed on a large-scale tower-like set, with a musical score based on Elton John's pop-music. This fast-paced production reflected Tokyo's changing skyline amid rapid economic growth, and proved that Japanese Shakespeare could be a form of popular entertainment for large audiences. Ninagawa and Nakane continued producing Western classics throughout the 1970s, including *King Lear* (1975), *Hamlet* (1978), and *Romeo and Juliet* (1979). Intriguingly, conscious Japonism and Orientalism were hardly recognizable in those early commercial productions, which were targeted for the domestic market. This changed, however, once Ninagawa began touring overseas. While a parallel can be drawn between Kawakami Otojiro (discussed in Chapter 2) and Ninagawa in terms of their overt use of Japonism to appeal to foreign audiences, in Ninagawa's case, which came more than half a century later, the thinking behind his cultural representations was far more self-critical and problematized than his forebear.

2. Ninagawa as an Icon of Japanese Shakespeare

From his debut in commercial theatre in 1974, Ninagawa was determined to popularize Shakespearean works in Japan by revealing the vulgarity and subversive energy in Shakespeare's texts, and by exploiting his poetic language and philosophical insight. Influenced by Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the *carnavalesque* developed in *Rabelais and His World*, and Antonin Artaud's *Theatre of Cruelty*, he intended to bring the grotesque violence but also bawdiness of Renaissance culture onto his stage (Ninagawa 1998: 28-29 in Brokering 2007: 372, Ninagawa 2001: 10).

His first production abroad was a highly kabukinized all-male production of Euripides's *Medea* in Italy and Greece in 1983 (premiered in Tokyo in 1978), which starred Mikijiro Hira as a modern *onnagata* Medea. Two years later, *Ninagawa Macbeth* (premiered in Tokyo in 1980) was invited to the Edinburgh Festival and was met with enthusiasm. In his obituary for Ninagawa, British theatre critic Michael Billington recalled the production as "love at first sight," praising it as a "thing of wonder and beauty" as opposed to the "Stygian gloom" that "we were used to seeing" (Billington, 2016). Ninagawa became one of the first Japanese directors to be recognized in "Shakespeare's own country" and to establish a significant foothold in the international Shakespeare industry. Today, Japanese overseas productions of Shakespeare and collaborations with international practitioners are no longer a novel phenomenon. Nevertheless, Ninagawa's highly visual, self-orientalist and commercial brand of Shakespeare is still one of the most widely recognized exports of Japanese Shakespeare, particularly in the United Kingdom.

Ninagawa's version of the Scottish play portrayed a *samurai* clan in the sixteenth century Azuchi Momoyama period (1569-1600) and impressed the audience with its visual splendor. The stage was filled with a giant replica of a *butsudan*, a Buddhist household shrine, designed by Kappa Senoo. Characteristic to all *butsudan* are two folding doors that reveal an inside space considered to be inhabited by the dead. On stage this translated into a proscenium structure, an immersive backdrop that stood as an interface between the spirit and living worlds of the play. This meta-theatrical frame enabled Ninagawa to merge the ghost theme in Shakespeare's play with an element of Japanese cultural and religious practice performed in everyday life. This opening vision came to Ninagawa whilst praying to his late father at a family shrine. Another powerful image present at both the beginning and the end of the production was falling cherry blossom. The image is a reference to the Japanese literary tradition of cherry blossom as a metaphor for the ephemerality of life, and also a marker of seasonal change. Ninagawa's production used falling cherry blossom in the final battle scene as a symbol of the protagonist's imminent death and a reminder of human fragility. The *butsudan* and the falling cherry blossom are examples of types of "Japanized" images that Ninagawa exploited throughout his career. In one sense, they evoke distant, formal, ritualized symbolic traditions and function as metaphoric spaces, but at the same time, with

reference to everyday, vernacular life, they make the plays more accessible to audiences with minimal knowledge of Shakespeare.

After the success of *Macbeth*, Ninagawa presented numerous “Japanized” or “orientalized” stagings of Shakespeare in the UK, such as *The Tempest* (at the RSC in 1992; premiered in 1987 in Tokyo); an English language production of *King Lear* (at the RSC and in Saitama in 1999) which used techniques from *noh* theatre; and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (at the Mermaid Theatre in London in 1996; premiered in 1987 in Tokyo) staged in a *zen* garden.

Ninagawa’s *King Lear*, which starred Nigel Hawthorne as the ageing king, was the director’s first encounter with major criticism. One of the main charges against the production in English, by both Western and Japanese critics, was the intense visual spectacle and obvious self-Orientalism, occasionally employed with seemingly little correlation to the thematic structure of the play. However, vehement criticism was often countered with unalloyed adulation by some British critics who, according to the Japanese Shakespeare scholar Kishi Tetsuo, had been hoodwinked by exoticism (1998: 122). Kishi goes as far as saying that Ninagawa’s “productions were well received outside Japan mainly because of their ‘Japaneseness’” (2005: 91).

While borrowing heavily from Japanese historical figures and traditional cultural forms, such as *samurai*, *butsudan* and cherry blossom for their visual and symbolic significance, Ninagawa was opposed to his work being labelled as “Eastern exoticism” or “Japonesque” in order to attract Western gazes. On several occasions, he stated that his use of Japanese cultural imagery was a device to familiarize contemporary Japanese audiences with Shakespeare who live in a highly Westernized modern society, yet remain rooted in a communal sense of Japanese tradition (Ninagawa 2001: 211). In an interview in 2002 for *The Japan Times*, for example, when asked about the criticism of his hybrid use of performance cultures, Ninagawa responded by saying,

I’ve had very little negative feedback from people involved in the traditional Japanese dramatic arts. On the other hand, a number of scholars of European and English theatre have labelled my work “Japonesque.” But from my point of view, the only reason I resort to Japanese or Japonesque modes of expression is because I want Japanese audiences to understand my work. (Nakamura 2002)

Ninagawa's initial intention may have been to familiarize domestic audiences with Shakespeare using Japanese iconography. However, in surveying his stage history, it is noticeable that the majority of his Japanized Shakespeare productions were created with overseas tours in mind, starting from *Macbeth*. Interestingly, his Japanized versions often included the meta-theatrical strategy of staging parts of the plays as though they were rehearsals. He would insert self-referential vignettes or commentaries at the beginning, middle or end of the production to remind audiences that the play was being performed in Japanese. Part of the reason for using this distancing effect was to offset the "feeling of embarrassment when foreign plays are performed by Japanese actors" (Ninagawa ctd. in Gallimore 2014). For Shoichiro Kawai, this sense of "embarrassment" is linked to the perception of "artificiality" or the "phoniness" of Japanese actors who perform Shakespeare, arguing that,

The Japanese with their Asian physiognomy have much difficulty in impersonating Caucasian characters in Shakespeare's plays and also because the historical and cultural gap of 400 years makes it difficult for us to reach the great stature of Shakespearian characters. (Kawai 273)

Ultimately, Ninagawa's meta-theatrical frames were a way of breaking the historical link with *shingeki*, drawing attention to the gaps between the portrayal of Western culture and the cultural specificity of the Japanese cast that *shingeki* had tried to erase. The eclectic Japanese imagery and use of distancing devices helped familiarize audiences with Shakespeare, but at the same time, defamiliarized them from *shingeki*'s occidentalist mimicry. A more detailed discussion of Ninagawa's "meta-theatrical" framing devices in relation to re-orienting Shakespeare is included in section 6 of this chapter.

By the new millennium, Ninagawa had cemented his position as an icon of Japanese Shakespeare nationally and internationally and took up the positions of artistic director of the Sainokuni Shakespeare Series and the Tokyu Bunkamura Theatre Cocoon, and he also became Associate Director of Shakespeare's Globe. From his rendition of *Macbeth* in 2001 to his version of *Twelfth Night* in 2005, the majority of his productions did not contain obvious Japanese elements. This five-year period of change coincided with his exploration of all-male Shakespeare

for the Sainokuni Series. Against the backdrop of Japan's long economic recession following the collapse of the "bubble economy" in the mid-nineties, this change in his work tied into an artistic trend in Japan towards simplicity. Furthermore, given the internationally renowned status he had acquired by this period, he no longer needed to use Japanese imagery to promote his productions overseas.

Ninagawa's 2006 production of *Twelfth Night*, with a cast of all-male kabuki actors, marked a return in his work to the juxtaposition of traditional and contemporary Japanese cultural forms. It can be read as an example of his inter/intracultural approach to Shakespeare. Ninagawa long shied away from directing traditional Japanese theatre, maintaining the belief that lay people should not dabble in those forms. For Ninagawa, who learnt Western dramaturgy in the Little Theatre and underground theatre movements of the 1960s onwards, the hereditary *kabuki* arts passed on from generation to generation were an untouchable entity. He regarded the creation of a *kabuki* play with its absent director figure, its numerous rules and complex jargon, as far too difficult. In fact, he found his first *kabuki* rehearsal more challenging than directing British actors, as he did with Alan Rickman in *Tango at the End of Winter* in 1991, Nigel Hawthorne in *King Lear* in 1999, and Michael Maloney in *Hamlet* in 2004. Despite his numerous reservations about stepping into the world of *kabuki*, Ninagawa had directed several *kabuki* actors in past productions, including Matsumoto Koushiro IX in *King Lear* and *Othello*, Ennosuke Ichikawa in *The Taming of Shrew* and Onoe Kikunosuke V in *The Oresteia*. It was the latter young *kabuki* star who wholeheartedly implored him to direct *Twelfth Night*, inspiring him to finally overcome his reluctance and "study abroad in the foreign world of Kabuki" (Ninagawa, 2005b).

3. The mirror relationship between *kabuki* and Shakespeare

On the surface, England's Shakespeare and Japan's *kabuki* may appear to be homogenous and unrelated, but the stage histories reveal a number of commonalities that were briefly mentioned in Chapter 2, but are worth exploring in greater detail here. Firstly, they were contemporaries and both theatres were developed for popular audiences. Just a few years after the 1602 production of *Twelfth Night* in Middle Temple Hall in London, which almost coincided with the first year of the Edo period (1603-1867), a Shinto nun by the name of Okuni opened a bawdy cabaret-type show on the dry riverbed of the Kamo River in Kyoto with a group of fellow nuns. Okuni

wore a loose *kimono* and pointed Western shoes, a rosary around her neck, and she sported a masculine hairstyle. She also wielded two *samurai* swords. The nun's hybrid mix of *samurai* and Christian fashion led to the birth of a new popular art form, named *kabuki*, and it quickly gained mass popularity.

However, this subversive cross-dressing show was regarded as a threat to public morality, and the Shogun finally banned the Okuni *kabuki* in 1629. Young boys then took over the female performer's roles, but before long those boys were regarded as a source of social disorder and equated with homosexuality and prostitution. In 1653, the Shogun put a ban on *kabuki* as a whole. A parallel can be drawn here with the oppressive Puritan dogma that forced London's Renaissance theatres to close in 1642. However, *kabuki* actors and audiences petitioned for its revival and urged the Shogun to lift the ban on the condition that only adult men should appear on stage. As a result, the new, all-male companies developed skills in song, dance, and playing the role of the *onnagata*, the impersonation of a woman (Kawatake, 1967; 1972; Takakuwa, 1998: 197-201).

Although *kabuki* playwrights were prohibited from making political references, they disguised their views and allegiances through metaphor and fiction. They excelled at plagiarizing and exploiting historic sources to create eventful stories that contained elements of comedy and tragedy, love and hate, loyalty and revenge to suit public tastes, just as Shakespeare himself once did. The intense theatricality of *kabuki* and Shakespeare was created on "the ambiguous boundary between social fact and literary invention" (Takakuwa 197) or as *kabuki* playwright Chikamatsu Monzaemon put it, on "the membranous confines between fiction and reality" (358).

In contrast to the Renaissance theatre, *kabuki* has survived great social and cultural upheaval, including the Meiji Restoration and the Second World War. The Meiji government brought in policies to "improve" the status of *kabuki* actors who for so long had been labeled as *kawaramono*, meaning classless beggars on the riverbank. In 1888, the Meiji Emperor even made official visits to see *kabuki* plays in a newly opened *kabuki* theatre in Ginza, Tokyo. On the other hand, some policies aimed to put an end to the *kabuki* conventions such as *onnagata* in order to fit to "the standard" of western contemporary theatre as they pictured it at the time. Nonetheless, with over three centuries of living practice, the tradition would not be transformed overnight.

Kabuki owes its survival, on the one hand to its tradition of *kata* or acting styles passed down from generation to generation, and on the other to its insatiable desire to keep up with the times. Not only have its practitioners been prolific in producing original plays, but they have also widely adapted plays from *bunraku*, *noh* and Western theatres. In 1885, a *kabuki* adaptation of *The Merchant of Venice* was performed under the title of *Sakuradoki Zeni no Yononaka*. In 1907, *kabuki* actors appeared in a *shinpa* version of *The Merchant of Venice*, and *shinpa* or “new school”, was a theatre genre born out of a rejection of traditional Japanese performing arts and particularly the old *kabuki*. Still today, *kabuki* actors like to take on new challenges, eager to update *kabuki* and perform extensively outside the traditional Japanese circuit. This is the case, for example, of the late actor Nakamura Kanzaburo VIII who worked with Kushida Kazuyoshi to create a new *kabuki* troupe called *Heisei Nakamura-za*. It is also the case of Nakamura Kankuro IX who starred in Noda Hideki’s version of the *shin kabuki* play *Togitatsu no utare (Revenge on Togitatsu)* at the Kabuki-za in Tokyo in 2001 (Cavaye, Griffith and Senda 241).

4. Performing Hybridity: between Inter and Intra-culturalism in *Twelfth Night*

One of the key achievements in Ninagawa’s later work was *Ninagawa Twelfth Night*, which was first performed in July 2005 at the Kabuki-za in Tokyo and then at the Hakata-za in Fukuoka the following month. After a sell-out success, the production was revived from June to July in 2007 in the same two *kabuki* theatres in Japan. This *kabuki* adaptation of *Twelfth Night* with a company of more than a hundred members travelled to London in March 2009 under the new title *Shochiku Grand Kabuki, Twelfth Night after William Shakespeare* as part of the Bite 2009 programme at the Barbican Theatre. This five-day London production was framed as part of a hundred and fifty-year friendship between the two nation states dating back to the 1860s, at the beginning of an unparalleled era of international socio-cultural exchange following the Meiji Restoration.

Ninagawa Twelfth Night took eight days of rehearsal to create, a relatively long period for the *kabuki* repertory tradition, which requires usually just a few days, but exceptionally short for Ninagawa who often spent a month creating a new piece. The actors read through the script and learnt lines at the end of May 2005; and just a week before the first night at the Hakata-za in Fukuoka on the 5th of June, they began walk-through style rehearsals. Ninagawa spoke of this time constraint in an interview

in 2005 saying: “I decided to join this existing kabuki world more or less on my own and to basically follow the traditional kabuki rules and just emboss it with my own taste.” (Ninagawa, 2005a) Part of transmitting his own taste involved bringing lighting designer, Harada Tamotsu, onboard from his production team to help with the creation of a world of mirrors.

On the opening night of *Ninagawa Twelfth Night*, the traditional tricolor *kabuki* curtain was drawn to the sound of wooden clappers and the audience was confronted by their own reflections in a wall of mirrors lining the stage. This was one of Ninagawa’s favourite devices to invite the audience to see the world as a stage. As the mirrors gradually became transparent, the audience witnessed cherry blossom and heard the sound of a harpsichord and boy sopranos in pseudo-Renaissance fashion singing the hymn, *Veni Veni Emmanuel*. Embedded within this scene was the reflection of the historic intercultural exchanges between Japan and the western Catholic mission in the 16th century, close to the time that Shakespeare began writing his plays. At the beginning of the second half, another reference to this historic time frame was made through Kikunousuke’s dance, wearing a *kimono* and wielding two *samurai* swords, recalling the image of Okuni mentioned earlier.

The script, written by *kabuki* playwright Imai Toyoshige and based on Odashima Yushi’s Japanese translation of *Twelfth Night*, turned out to be part adaptation and part invention. While it faithfully followed the Shakespearean plot, the locations and characters were all transposed to Japan. Young *samurai* Shiba Shuzennosuke (Sebastian) and twin sister Princess Biwa (Viola) are shipwrecked after a violent storm off the coast of the Kii Peninsula. Biwa reaches the beach alive and with the ship’s captain, she disguises herself as a male page called Shishimaru (Cesario), and begins to serve Oshino (Orsino), ruler of Kii Province. Oshino is desperately in love with Oribue (Olivia), a beautiful princess who keeps rejecting his advances. He sends Shishimaru to Oribue to persuade her to accept his love, but Oribue immediately falls in love with the handsome messenger. Meanwhile, Biwa-Shishimaru finds herself attracted to Oshino. Thus, the main plot of the play is formed by this complicated love triangle of Oshino, Oribue and Biwa.

The subplot also follows the Shakespearean model. At Princess Oribue’s mansion, Kanemichi (Sir Toby Belch), Eichiku (Sir Andrew Aguecheek) and the Clown Sutesuke (Feste) are in the middle of a *sake* drinking session. The maid Maa (Maria) appears and tells them the butler Maruo Bontayu (Malvolio) wants them to

leave. Maruo is snobbish and loud-mouthed, and is therefore detested by the others. Maa decides to trick him by sending him a fake love letter from Oribue. He is convinced that the letter is real and according to the suggestion, he appears before Oribue in yellow clothing from tip to toe. In the final scene of the play Shishimaru and Shuzennosuke find themselves together in the same place, both of them loved by Oribue, and the complex love triangle is finally resolved. The twins who have “one face, one voice, one habit, and two persons” fulfill their desire for an emotional reunion and the two couples end up holding a wedding ceremony in the denouement scene.

Added to the confusion plot of mistaken identity and sexuality in this fusion production, all the conventions of *kabuki* were used, including *onnagata*, *hanamichi* (walk-way through the audience), *mie* (lead actor poses at climactic moments) and *kakegoe* (appreciation calls to the actors from members of the audience). Kikunosuke willingly performed the three lead roles of Shiba Shuzennosuke, Princess Biwa and Shishimaru to show off his techniques and beauty. Trained in both male and female roles, Kikunosuke was well equipped to shift between the two genders, which requires many *hayagawari* (quick costume changes). His father, Kikugoro, the leader of the troupe took the unusual two roles of the clown Feste and the butler Maruo.

Despite some criticism of the clashing elements of Shakespearean language, *kabuki* conventions, Kikunosuke’s clumsy doubling in the denouement scene, and Kamejiro’s unconventional and realistic portrayal of Maa that broke the rules of *onnagata*, the sell out productions at Hakata-Za and later at Kabuki-Za were well received. Responding to popular demand, the production was revived at the same venues two years later in 2007 with only one scene cut and a handful of minor changes made. The critics recognized technical improvements such as scene changes as well as better individual acting and chemistry amongst actors. As a result, the revival was also met with great acclaim, this time satisfying both Ninagawa critics and *kabuki* aficionados. For example, Mizuraku Kiyoshi writing for the *kabuki* journal *Engeki-kai* noted the following:

Kabuki adaptations of Shakespeare have been staged since the Meiji era and Onoe Kikugoro’s company [led by Sadanji Kikugoro III] itself produced *The Merchant of Venice* shortly after the war [WWI], however I think this *Twelfth Night* is conceptually ahead of all its predecessors; it is particularly

apt at blending both Shakespearean language with the key stylistic traditions of *kabuki*, including *onnagata*. (2007: 117)

Furthermore, Ohara Yuu pointed out that:

Compared to the 2005 production, this version bore more resemblance to a *kabuki* play than it did to Shakespeare ... Ninagawa knows what the term *kabuku* means, that is to say he knows how to strike a balance between his *mise-en-scène* and the actor-centered *kabuki* tradition. Here, *kabuki* is not only being "Shakespeareanized," but Shakespeare is also being "kabukinized." (2007)

One of the aspects of the production most revered by Japanese critics was the use of mirrors. All through the play, mirrors were present on stage, reflecting the actors and scenery. They provided depth and perspective, and functioned as a symbol of the duality of the twins, the doubling of Malvolio and Feste (wisdom and foolery), reality and appearance, men and women, love and hate. The denouement scene was produced with a kaleidoscopic effect offering multiple angles to view traditional red bridges in a Japanese style garden and blurring the border between reality and its reflection.

The mirrors confused the visual senses and reflected the complex intercultural dynamics between *kabuki* and Shakespeare and Japanese intracultural exchanges between the traditional arts and contemporary staging techniques. What is real and what is reflection? Where does the reflected end and the reflection begin? This blurring of perception, which was brought into play at key stages during the performance, seemed to repeat elements of the set *ad infinitum*. This effect can be read on multiple levels. On one level, the mirrors blurred the boundary between conventional stylised *kabuki* acting techniques and Ninagawa's contemporary realism. The actors had to navigate between the different styles, performing "hybrid" roles, as lead actor Kikunosuke pointed out in an interview following the London production of the play. Commenting on his own technique, he noted that instead of presenting a clear *kabuki* division between male and female roles, what he experienced was a continuous emotional flow from one gender to the other:

In the first production [2005] it was difficult to differentiate between Shuzennosuke and Biwa, however in the second production [2007] I was able to change my emotions as if adjusting a volume dial...in the case of the London production [2009] where the language and culture is different from Japan, the conventional physicality and elocution of *kabuki* could be taken as mere actions and sounds. Therefore, I became more aware of my interior self as well as the *kata* [set movements] and dance pieces. (Eglinton 2009: 26)

In addition to troubling the border between tradition and contemporaneity, the mirrors produced a more complex *mise en abîme* effect: a sense of worlds within worlds or parallel versions of the play, in which one reading merged with another. This resonates with the intercultural exchange at work on Ninagawa's stage whereby the borders of mutual influence are seamless and continuous, both in a historic inter-textual sense between Shakespeare and *kabuki* but also in the crossing of acting styles, thus recalling Chikamatsu's "membranous confines between fiction and reality."

5. Confronting the critics: *kabukinized* Shakespeare in London

For the London production of *Twelfth Night*, presented under the new title *Shochiku Grand Kabuki, Twelfth Night after William Shakespeare*, Ninagawa's intention was to "revitalise the boldness of Shakespearean plays, which to him had been long forgotten in the UK, by using the irrational spirit of *kabuki*" (Eglinton, 2009: 26). While he had no intention of changing his basic directorial plan, this transposition of *Twelfth Night* onto the London stage presented a double challenge. Not only would he have to live up to his reputation as Japan's foremost Shakespearean director, operating outside his territory in *kabuki*, but also, time and spatial constraints meant that the Barbican Theatre could not facilitate the crucial *hanamichi* and struggled with the complex set changes that traditional *kabuki* venues are designed to deal with. This resulted in a much lengthier production, which the British critics construed as a poor technical decision. Furthermore, these technical upheavals required a change of acting so that the *mie* were naturally cut, particularly in the end scene in which Feste exits in song. At the Barbican, Feste's exit was made

into the wing in a much less dramatic manner, thus altering the meaning and intensity of the character.

The British critics were quick to point out *kabuki* conventions such as *onnagata*, costume and set, and this led to divided opinions as to the overall validity and impact of the production. On the one hand, some critics saw in *kabuki* the potential to unlock aspects of the Shakespearean text and to revitalise some of the lost English Renaissance conventions, such as the significance of an all male cast. On the other hand, other critics found the conventions to be restrictive and ultimately a disservice to the poetic language and story of Shakespeare's play. For example, in the case of the former, Donald Hutera for *The Times* wrote "kabuki lends the Shakespeare's themes of illusion, delusion and confusion an extra layer of artifice and poignancy." Regarding the cross-dressing convention, Dominic Cavendish argued in *The Telegraph* that "it's in the casting of Viola that the full, strange force of kabuki practice is felt and the choice of Shakespeare's play, with its tragicomic, cross-dressing confusions, earns its justifications." Negative views of the conventions are exemplified in Rhoda Koenig's commentary for *The Independent*, in which she made the following observations:

While Shakespearean fish, as Yeats said, "swam the sea, far away from land," Japanese ones seem never to have left the goldfish bowl. In adapting *Twelfth Night* to its own style, the Shochiku Grand Kabuki has produced a work which is, at first, charmingly quaint, but then becomes cloying and repetitive. Makeup, business, even stage names are handed down in Kabuki whose tradition-bound practices are antithetical to Shakespeare's scope and sweep, his moments that are unexpected and irrelevant and pierce the heart. Even the set is full-on cliché – a tea house, an arched bridge, and, of course, copious cherry blossoms. (2009)

There are two key elements to Koenig's criticism that urge reflection on the wider implications of the British critical reception and reading of Ninagawa's production; these include the perception and position of "tradition" in intercultural theatre practice, and cultural hegemony in the translation and re-orientation of the Shakespearean text. The sense of self-containment and confinement in Koenig's "fish bowl" analogy bears some similarity with Lyn Gardner's critical comment in

her review for *The Guardian* that “the evening doesn’t liberate Shakespeare but embalms him in an already mummified aesthetic” (2009). This allusion to the perceived rigidity of tradition within *kabuki* practice was shared across much of the British critical spectrum. On the one hand, it suggests that a foreign rendition of Shakespeare should “liberate” or “transform” the play from the context of an implied homogenous native land, to a “far away,” ritualised and imagined locus, but paradoxically it should do so without falling prey to the staid boundaries of tradition. On the other hand, it positions “tradition” as the antithesis of Shakespearean dramatic form, without taking into consideration the many breaks with tradition incurred through this collaboration with a non-traditional *kabuki* director, text and stage – and perhaps most importantly, without probing the limitations of “home-grown” traditions that permeate Shakespeare’s Globe and Stratford’s RSC. As W. B. Worthen points out, in the case of the Globe Theatre, London spectators’ notions of cultural superiority are heightened by the sense of Shakespearean ownership nostalgically fostered within the Globe Theatre (2003: 153-155).

The second strand to Koenig’s criticism is echoed in Dominic Cavendish’s approach to the production, which he described in the *Daily Telegraph* as “the most eye-catching international re-imagining of a Shakespeare text yet” amongst “all manner of weird and exotic Shakespeare productions at the Barbican since the sudden departure of the RSC in 2002” (2009). Aside from the deliberate flippancy of tone and the sardonic reference to exotic readings of “foreign” Shakespeare, Cavendish’s use of the prefix “re” in “re-imagining” the text, suggests a degree of removal from the “source,” a type of otherness that is echoed in Koenig’s invocation of Yeats, which holds the non-native language rendering of the text as a cultural subsidiary, and therefore confined to the layers of aesthetic “mummification” that Gardner referred to. By reducing the potential complexity of the piece through old-fashioned dichotomies and choosing to focus on the perceived strictures of *kabuki* tradition, the critics relegate Ninagawa’s production to cultural “other” and maintain the hegemony of the English Bard. Even if Koenig was genuine in her desire for a new approach to Shakespeare, the ground on which that newness might appear is always already caught in the shadow of the politics of originality, of the one, of Shakespeare as the quintessential English poet; which as a cultural construct is also subject to prior perceptions, even on home soil.

In contrast, in Louise Levene's experience of the production in a late review for the *Sunday Telegraph*, the hegemonic order was reversed. Levene noted that the audience was divided between Japanese speakers and non-Japanese speakers or an "intriguing mismatch between the laughter of the Japanese contingent and the native audience" (2009). While one might attribute this asynchronicity to the poor rendering of surtitles and aspects of Toyoshige Imai's geo-specific relocation of the play, Levene goes on to note that this "double translation radically alters the balance of power within the play so that the emphasis is on action rather than poetry." This momentary alteration in the balance of power from West to East by the removal of Shakespeare's poetic language and subsequent reading of physical language was a decisive factor in determining the position of the critics. As Levene points out:

Twelfth Night has polarised commentators ... straight critics, used to fripperies like pace, text and naturalism, have tended to give last week's premiere ... a lukewarm reception. Dance critics, weaned on a rarefied blend of abstraction, artifice and spectacle, find ancient Japanese theatrical conventions far easier to love. (2009)

While the critics were eager to pinpoint the restrictions of *kabuki* conventions, they were also unanimous in forgetting the all-important yet absent *hanamichi*, thus raising the question as to whether the critics really knew what *kabuki* conventions consist of. Another omission concerned the mirror effect. Whereas the use of mirrors was heralded in the two Japanese productions, UK critics fell curiously silent; and out of the ten reviews in the national press, only two mentioned the device. Ian Shuttleworth, writing for the *Financial Times*, read the mirrors as part of Ninagawa's "freedom and fluidity" with regards to *kabuki* conventions. Yet despite this insight his description of the mirrors was primarily concerned with aesthetics: "huge mirror walls [that] reflect graceful little bridges" (2009). Similarly, Lucy Powell in *Metro London* referred to a "stream of sumptuous visual tableaux: shimmering walls of mirrors play dizzying tricks with perspective" (2009). What belies this absence of recognition and surface reading of key staging devices, conventions and contraventions is partly a matter of the audience's linguistic and cultural alienation – in short, lost in translation; partly a symptom of Kishi's contention that the audience was "hoodwinked by exoticism" – lost in fascination; and partly also a conscious and

unconscious effort to sidestep the possibility of staging the complex historical interchange between Shakespeare, *kabuki* and its contemporary re-orientation – lost in Westernisation.

6. Shakespeare staged back

In this final section, I want to address the question of re-orienting Shakespeare and consider what light Ninagawa's production of *Twelfth Night* sheds on his own approach to re-orienting Shakespeare. On one level, Ninagawa's appropriations of cultural imagery and performance traditions from Asia and Europe reveal the overlaps between a Western text-based theatre tradition and an Asian body-based one. In staging these cultural tropes as part of an infinite mirroring of culture, rather than through the simple juxtaposition of difference, Ninagawa's adaptation functions as a form of syncretism. That is to say, the performance process itself, transforming Shakespeare into *kabuki* and *kabuki* into Shakespeare, is "the process by which previously distinct linguistic categories, and, by extension, cultural formations, merge into a single new form" (Ashcroft *et al* 2002:14). The new form is "not quite" *kabuki* and "not quite" Shakespeare; it is instead an overlapping, an imbrication, of cultural histories that find in *Twelfth Night* a "vehicle" for expression.

On another level, the "export" of the production from Japan to the UK, which was a key part of Ninagawa's artistic trajectory, can be read through the postcolonial strategy of "writing back." The notion of "writing back" to a colonial centre first appeared in a *London Times* newspaper article written by the novelist Salman Rushdie in 1982, entitled "The Empire Writes Back with a Vengeance." As Ashcroft *et al* explain in their book *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature*, writing back in Rushdie's sense is not simply a matter of affirming a new centre through nationalist assertion, but is more radical in that it questions "the base of European and British metaphysics, challenging the world-view that can polarize centre and periphery in the first place" (2002: 32). Although Ninagawa was not engaged in an overt critique of Shakespeare as the centre of the Western literary canon, towards the end of his career he did believe in the rise of Asian theatre against a European theatre that he saw as obsessed with psychological realism. In my interview, he stated that:

In the near future I suspect that Asian theatre will continue to emerge, as their wild, obscene and ritualistic power based on human physicality will gain attention in contrast to the more psychology-based theatres of Europe. Within the next five years, I really want to see the battle of the rationality of European theatre and the fecundity and physicality of Asian theatre (Eglinton 2016: 534).

From this perspective, Ninagawa's works were both an affirmation of the potential in Shakespeare to look at the intersections of culture anew, and also a way of channelling a sense of national pride common amongst his generation. His impetus to travel abroad in the case of *Twelfth Night*, not only to "kabukiland," but also to London, was a form of "staging back." As a visual artist, Ninagawa was not interested in simply repeating or re-emphasising old East-West cultural dichotomies, but saw the potential to inscribe new cultural expressions in the gaps that form between appropriated images. As the critic Levene pointed out, Ninagawa's emphasis on the poetic body in *Twelfth Night* unlocked a dimension of the play that she had not encountered before. In this sense, Ninagawa's re-orientation of Shakespeare produced a kind of "cultural elasticity" that was simply not possible 80 years previously at the time of Kawakami Otojiro's performance tour in Europe. The cultural codes in Kawakami's era were locked into nationalist and imperialist discourses. Ninagawa's work emerged in a period when the notion of "post-nation" and particularly "post-colonial nation" had become a political reality.

Part of the aim of this chapter is to argue that the re-orientation of Shakespeare in Ninagawa's work is a multi-faceted phenomenon, which includes a distinctive and innovative directorial style, and which has destabilised and disoriented the fixed East-West cultural binary. In staging Shakespeare back, Ninagawa tried to reflect the local audience on the stage using the mirror effect. It was a moment of temporary inscription of the audience into the production. The mirrors therefore, function as space for incorporating the other. They blur reality and appearance. Thinking through the politics of mirroring in writing, Trinh Minh Ha writes "In this encounter of I with I, the power of identification is often such that reality and appearance merge while the tool itself becomes invisible" (1989: 22) Ninagawa's meta-intercultural theatre is signalled in *Twelfth Night*, through the use of mirrors (a device used in several productions) and their *mise-en-abyme* effect,

repeating reflections seemingly *ad infinitum*. The device foregrounds the problematic of the quest for the essence of Shakespeare, which is that there is no tangible origin, and there is no clear border between East and West, Europe and Asia, Elizabethan and present day England; there is a series of parallel worlds in which possibilities for a past, present and future Shakespeare play out. In a sense this meta-intercultural frame is Ninagawa's way of foregrounding the tension between his search for a Shakespeare stripped of the *logos* that has over time latched onto the playwright's works, a return to a vulgar, more visceral experience, and at the same time a recognition of the fact that cultural essentialism has been exposed as illusory both through critical theory and performance praxis in the twentieth century.

Confronting audience members with a wall of mirrors was a way of symbolically incorporating them in his stage, and can be read as a comment on the meta-theatrical form of intercultural theatre. By looking at the mirrors, which reflect both the actors and the audience, Ninagawa was able to highlight, but also to entangle, the dichotomies that have for so long characterized West/East and East/West encounters in performance. Blending or capturing the audience in the mirrors that form part of the stage is a momentary inscription of the audience in the play that produces a continuation of the intercultural dynamic. At the same time as actors and audiences are blended, the approach blurs the border between performing and being performed or seeing and being seen. This can be read as a way of re-orienting the Western and Eastern subject. Whereas traditionally the Orient was the object to be looked at as somewhat feminine for a male Western gaze, by appropriating both *kabuki* and Shakespeare and showing it in London, using the technique of impersonification, the female role or *onnagata* which is similar to the use of boy actors performing women's roles in Shakespeare, Ninagawa was able to displace these old binaries.

Chapter 4
Re-orienting Self: Autobiography and Mimicry
Deguchi Norio and the Shakespeare Theatre

In the history of Japanese Shakespeare, the late Ninagawa Yukio (1935-2016) remains the most internationally recognized director and his legacy continues to influence contemporary practitioners today. Less well known internationally, but just as prolific and arguably as influential as Ninagawa, is the work of Deguchi Norio (1940-), the founder-director of the “Shakespeare Theatre,” which was the first Japanese theatre company whose *raison d’être* was to perform the complete works of Shakespeare. In May 1975 Deguchi began monthly productions in a small underground theatre called “JeanJean” in Shibuya - a young and trendy district in Tokyo. Gaining recognition and popularity for “Shakespeare in jeans and T-shirts,” the company completed Shakespeare’s entire thirty-seven works for the first time in Japan by June 1981.¹⁵

While this seminal “JeanJean” period set a precedent in Japanese theatre history, for Deguchi it represents just the first part of an ongoing journey spanning almost half a century. In 2006, the Shakespeare Theatre celebrated its thirtieth anniversary with revivals of two of its most representative productions, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *Twelfth Night* along with a new adaptation play titled *Shakespeare Rehearsal*. In the anniversary programme note, Deguchi explained how directing Shakespeare is a life-long pursuit full of potential, but also paradoxes:

After directing Shakespeare for thirty years, I have the impression that Shakespeare is getting into my “insides.” I don’t think this is because I’m doing something special, rather it has just happened to me. Even so, I cannot recite Shakespearean words from memory. I just feel my insides respond when I hear, see and read Shakespearean words. I respond to them viscerally. I consider this feeling to be a precious gift, though I still don’t know who the sender is. [...] My life hereafter exists solely to continue directing Shakespeare. I’m keen to just keep on going until I get

¹⁵ This record had been unchallenged until the Itabashi Theatre Centre, founded by Eizo Endo (born in 1950) in 1980, achieved the completion of Shakespeare’s works in 2016.

somewhere. But at the same time, I feel a sense of lacuna in this quest; that I will probably never get there. (Deguchi 2005: 2, Eglinton 2008: 57)

This note gives insight into Deguchi's personal devotion to Shakespeare, a quasi-spiritual journey that is defined as much by his admission of "lacunae" as by the milestones and accomplishments that his company has achieved over the years. It is a rare position in the Japanese theatre industry, given that theatre practitioners are increasingly under pressure to respond to the demands of national and global marketplaces, which tend to favour novelty and innovation over repetition and long-term devotion. This is not to detract from Deguchi's pioneering role in Japanese theatre, but to point out that his innovation is in his unwavering commitment to what he terms the "essence" of Shakespeare, which he has tried to harness through an acting style focused on voice and speech.

In 2015, a year before the worldwide celebrations for the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death, Deguchi and his company members commemorated the fortieth anniversary of the Shakespeare Theatre. The company decided to celebrate both events in 2016 with a revival of the thirtieth anniversary productions, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night*, as well as *Romeo and Juliet*; each one performed in JeanJean style. Once again, in his programme note, Deguchi reflected on his paradoxical relationship with Shakespeare, this time in relation to Shakespeare's contemporary status in Japanese theatre:

In terms of the number of productions, Japan is now one of the most Shakespeare-oriented countries. I often see other directors' productions of Shakespeare, each one taking a different angle. However, I always get a sense of stagnation. No matter how much we believe we are creating new work, it has already been done before. [...] I have also been struggling to create new and ambitious productions of Shakespeare, however I am aware that it not possible to reach Shakespeare. What I have learnt directing his plays for more than forty years, is recognition of this despair. [...] Shakespeare is standing before us, telling us to despair! Nevertheless, he continues to attract us with great intensity. I have fallen prey to this inevitable magnetism. I don't know why it is so magnetic. I have spent forty years looking for a reason. [...] In re-telling Shakespeare's stories, I

try to read into my own story, which is living in my unconscious mind.
(Deguchi, 2016, translated by Eglinton)

Similar to the thirtieth anniversary note, Deguchi emphasizes the tensions in his relationship with Shakespeare, this time highlighting Shakespeare's unreachable nature. The paradox that has marked much of Deguchi's career is the irresistible quality of this elusiveness. In trying to reach the “essence” of Shakespeare, which can be read in the context of Deguchi's work as the “innermost mind” of the playwright – his ideas, references and dramatic potential – Deguchi's spiritual journey is an attempt at identifying and naming the core of his own identity or essence through Shakespeare as his “Bible.” In this sense, Deguchi's re-orientation of Shakespeare is far more religious and autobiographical than that of most Japanese directors of Shakespeare.

In contrast to Ninagawa Yukio for example, who based much of his work on the adaptation of Japanese and non-Japanese performance styles and cultural traditions, Deguchi's productions are more inward-looking, they draw on personal anecdotes and experience, and they are framed in the modern Japanese linguistic idiom of Odashima Yushi's translations. Nevertheless, the effect of Shakespeare, his language and culture, still plays an important orienting role in Deguchi's autobiographical approach. Deguchi's personal and intimate embrace of Shakespeare demonstrates a type of “Bardolatry,” and hints at the generational psychology of postwar Japan and its position of defeat. This process of becoming other can be read as a continuation of the strategy of modernization through Westernization, but also as a sign of the re-orientation of national and also personal identity in postwar Japan.

The concept of “the desire of colonial mimicry” was developed by Homi Bhabha in identifying a profound split within the colonial subject in the process of mimicking colonial authority: “mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal” (Bhabha 1994: 475). Bhabha explains this desire of mimicry as a strategic object, which he calls “the metonymy of presence” (476):

In mimicry, the representation of identity and meaning is rearticulated not a harmonization or repression of difference, but a form of resemblance, that differs from or defends presence by displaying it in part, metonymically. Its threat, I would add, comes from the prodigious and

strategic production of conflictual, fantastic, discriminatory “identity effects” in the play of a power that is elusive because it hides no essence, no “itself.” (120)

Although Japan was not part of the British colonial empire and Shakespeare was not imposed on Japan, in this chapter I will argue that there is nonetheless a similar process of mimicry at work in Deguchi's desire for and devotion to Shakespeare. I will read Deguchi's work as a case of re-orienting self, or the construction of identity through an imagined West. How does Deguchi re-orient himself through Shakespeare, and how does that intimate and personal re-orientation play out in the wider context of Japanese Shakespeare? What representations of difference emerge and how does colonial discourse function in Deguchi's productions?

1. Deguchi's encounter with Shakespeare

Deguchi grew up in rural Shimane Prefecture, and his first encounter with theatre was as a student of the Department of English Literature at the University of Tokyo. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the institution was influential in the development of Shakespeare studies in Japan. In 1959, Deguchi was involved in left-wing political activities as part of student movements against the American military regime and the US-Japan Security Treaty, which were gaining momentum. Amid the growing counter-culture of the 1960s, *shingeki* was condemned as the epitome of the establishment and challenged by the emerging avant-garde *shogekijo undo* and *angura engeki*. Contesting the pseudo-western realism of *shingeki* as old-fashioned, these experimental and ideological initiatives created alternative performance methods and aesthetics, exploring unconventional theatre spaces such as deserted houses and outdoor tents. Among the leaders of this era were practitioners such as Kara Juro, Sato Makoto, Suzuki Tadashi and Ninagawa Yukio.

Five years later, Deguchi had become disillusioned with the student movement and sceptical of socialist theatre, and had begun to form a deeper connection with *shingeki*. In 1965, upon graduating from the University of Tokyo, he became an assistant director at the Bungaku-za, a prestigious *shingeki* company. Although he did not regard *shingeki* as the establishment, he remained dissatisfied with the orthodox Shakespeare productions of the 1950s and 1960s, particularly the

grand sets, period costumes, make-up designed to appear Caucasian, overacting and decorative proscenium arch theatres.

Deguchi's Shakespeare productions for the Bungaku-za were distinctive alternatives to the prevailing style. In 1968, he directed selected scenes from *Hamlet* for a trial production at the Bungaku-za's fifty-seat studio space, mixing the existing translation of Fukuda Tsuneari, a distinguished scholar and theatre practitioner, with a new translation by Odashima Yushi who worked as a dramaturg with the Bungakuza at that time. Due to limited financial means, the scenes were presented in an empty rehearsal room with a set consisting of just three boxes and some everyday clothes. This simple stage allowed for a powerful emphasis on language and actor presence, which became a leitmotif for Deguchi's directing style throughout what became known as the "JeanJean" era and beyond (Deguchi 1988: 94-122).

In 1971, Deguchi directed *Twelfth Night* for the Bungaku-za, which opened with a naked Orsino taking a bath. The image came from his experience and cultural observation that bathing for Japanese people tends to be a source of relief from personal problems. The script was changed to sound down-to-earth, employing fashionable TV idioms, slang and popular jokes. While the production followed the conventions of pseudo-Elizabethan costume, the bold visual and linguistic reframing of the play challenged the stereotype of antiquated Shakespeare in Japan and it appealed to a wide range of audiences (Kishi 2005: 92).

After directing a full version of *Hamlet* for the Shakespeare Festival at the Bungaku-za studio in 1972, Deguchi left the company due to an internal conflict. The young and self-assertive Deguchi then joined the Shiki, another mainstream theatre company where he directed *Much Ado About Nothing* in 1973. The following year, he directed *Tempo Jyu-ni Nen no Shakespeare (Shakespeare in The Twelfth Year of the Tempo)* written by Hisashi at the commercial Seibu Theatre, part of the Seibu-Saison Group (renamed the Parco Theatre in 1985). However, unsatisfied with his own directing, Deguchi decided to break from major cultural institutions and to restart from zero.

2. Shakespeare in "Jeans and T-shirts": the JeanJean Era

In April 1974, Deguchi opened a drama school in a tiny space in Ogikubo, Tokyo. It specialized in Shakespeare and was attended by approximately seventy inexperienced young actors. Given that the space measured only twenty square

metres, more attention had to be paid to elocution than movement. Subsequently, “speak then move” and “speed and flexibility” became the school’s mottos. In October of the same year, the chance arose to use the JeanJean space for free on the proviso that Deguchi would produce Shakespeare’s complete works on a monthly basis and integrate live popular music in the productions. With selected members of his drama school, Deguchi founded the Shakespeare Theatre and inaugurated the enterprise with a production of *Twelfth Night*, a play that he had already experienced and felt confident in directing.

Odashima Yushi’s translations of Shakespeare’s complete works, published between 1973 and 1980, coincided with the JeanJean era and were a significant influence on the acting style of the Shakespeare Theatre. In contrast to his predecessors who used Shakespeare for lofty literary appreciation and political propaganda, Odashima as a keen theatregoer tailored his new translations to audience-centered, entertaining performance. His clear, colloquial and contemporary style, exuberant in puns, wordplay and rhymes, made the texts more accessible and subsequently became the standard for Shakespeare productions in Japan by 1980, partly thanks to the popular JeanJean productions. Although Deguchi found Odashima’s translations over-simplified and weak at first, the style suited the speedy delivery and energetic movement of the young troupe. Deguchi eventually came to believe that Odashima’s rhythmical translation was the embodiment of the “Shakespearean spirit” in Japanese language. Just like his contemporary, Ninagawa, discussed in the previous chapter, Deguchi was reluctant to alter the translations, although occasional modifications and cuts were made to suit Japanese audiences and to reduce running times.

Working with a modest budget, Deguchi adopted an economical approach to productions: no set, no costumes. Paradoxically, this “Shakespeare in jeans and T-shirts,” which was born out of a lack of resources, proved to be abundant in creative potential. Deguchi insisted on the intensity and diversity of Shakespearean language as well as the simplicity and intimacy of space. In an article published in 1976 in the journal *Shingeki*, Deguchi reflected on his approach to staging Shakespeare in the following terms:

The real charm of Shakespeare’s plays is in the evolving diversity of linguistic images. Our fundamental aim, therefore, is to present the

maximum allure and energy of his words on stage. In order to realize this aim, we must avoid decorative elements by simplifying stage set and costumes as much as possible. [...] In order to express the magnetism of Shakespeare's words, his exquisite brushwork that fuses rhyming poems and daily prose, large-scale theatres, where actors strain their voices, are not appropriate. It is in the small theatres that Shakespearean worlds can best be expressed through words (1976: 73).

Deguchi developed his directing style in small rehearsal rooms and then applied it to the JeanJean stage: a black L-shaped laboratory with only a hundred and thirty seats. For *Twelfth Night*, a single chair was used on a bare stage and the ensemble of semi-professional actors, dressed in plain clothes, moved to the sound of live rock-and-roll music. The limited acting skills and the lack of star actors worked in the company's favour to familiarize young audiences with English Renaissance drama. The distinction between the passionate actors and lively spectators, which on the final night of a five-day run numbered two hundred and eighty, including standees, was often blurred. By bringing a sense of community and contemporaneity, the productions embodied ideas from Jan Kott's *Shakespeare is Our Contemporary* and Peter Brook's *The Empty Space*, books that were widely read at that time.

The company's productions also benefited from Deguchi's innovative reading and bold reframing of the texts. One of the most notable examples was *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, first performed in October 1975. Derived from Deguchi's personal belief that love affairs and alcohol are intrinsically connected, he converted the JeanJean stage into a modern bar called "The Forest of Athens" by using just tables and chairs. In front of the customer-spectators, the landlord (Oberon) causes a disturbance with his wife Titania. Later on in the play, the bartender (Puck) dances in rhythm to an intoxicating tune sung by the fairy-bargirls, whilst mixing the aphrodisiac cocktail named "love-in-idleness." By drinking the cocktail, the customer-actors are transformed into the characters of the play within the play. While two drunken male customers (Lysander and Demetrius) suddenly start pestering a girl (Helena), a worker (Bottom) enters under the scrutiny of the fairy-bargirls. The scene builds into a frenzy and becomes another layer in the overall meta-theatrical structure of the play (Deguchi 1988: 17-26).

While young audiences tended to praise the production, some of the more conservative critics complained about the actors' inaudible delivery, excessive and inexperienced acting, and odd textual interpretations. This divided reaction to the Shakespeare Theatre can be read as a reflection of changes in the contemporary Japanese economy and culture at the time. The fast-developing economy of the 1970s led to an influx of capital in the cultural industries in order to satisfy the intellectual and materialistic needs of a growing consumer base. For example, the department stores in Shibuya, such as the aforementioned Seibu and Tokyu chains, furnished theatres and museums, which particularly appealed to the younger generation. In contrast to previous generations, this urban youth neither rejected the so-called high arts nor indulged in political agitation, but veered towards affordable entertainment. Despite its relatively marginal position within the commercial Shibuya hub, the Shakespeare Theatre, along with its fashionable JeanJean venue, catered to a segment of that demand.

Riding on the unexpected wave of popularity of the first year, the company continued the monthly production marathon for a further six years. In parallel, in 1977 the company started organizing performances for high schools and other outreach events upon request. Since then, the company has continued to develop this education programme, providing opportunities for the actors to communicate with a wider array of audiences in non-theatrical spaces and to raise funds for the company as well.

During the JeanJean era, ten out of thirty-seven Shakespeare works were produced as Japanese premieres along with the rarely performed History plays. The *Henry VI* trilogy, performed in one day, won the Kinokuniya Prize for Drama in 1981. However, upon completion of the entire canon, ending with *Antony and Cleopatra* in May 1981, the company reached an inevitable point of change.

3. Inside the bubble: After the JeanJean Era

There were two key factors that led to the phasing out of the JeanJean era. Firstly, having completed Shakespeare's thirty-seven plays, Deguchi was contractually obliged to give up the JeanJean Theatre. This meant closing the doors on a venue that had played a crucial role in developing the JeanJean style. The theatre's constrained space helped Deguchi exploit actor-audience intimacy with an emphasis on voice and elocution, and its counter-culture connotation brought new

audiences to the theatre. Secondly, the combination of Deguchi's demanding training and minimal income resulted in actors rebelling against him. The majority left Deguchi, often setting up their own companies or joining other established theatres. While he dealt with this by recruiting young actors from his drama school and asking ex-members to do guest appearances, he had to radically revise his artistic approach. Thus, the Shakespeare Theatre began looking for new venues and hired several three hundred-seat black box theatres in Tokyo, such as the Haiyu-za in Roppongi and the Honda Gekijou in Shimokitazawa, all of which demanded a new directorial style.

Working by trial and error, Deguchi came to believe that his attempt at modernizing his plays in accordance with the atmosphere of the time had been too superficial to be close to the "essence" of Shakespeare's plays, which he found in the themes of "love and power." Moreover, he claimed that no other playwright depicted the destructive force of power relationships as well as Shakespeare had done. As a result, Deguchi rejected a political reading of Shakespeare from contemporary perspectives and treated the playwright as a classic author. He also started to believe in the paradox that as one draws nearer to the "essence" of Shakespeare, his works become updated and reflect the present day with more clarity, but never vice-versa (Deguchi 1999: 134-36).

The company's shift from everyday Shakespeare in a small theatre to Shakespeare as universal classic in middle-sized venues occurred around the time of Japan's economic bubble. In contrast to the 1970's, more capital was poured into constructing cultural institutions and a number of new theatres opened in cities across Japan, one of which was the Aoyama Enkei Gekijou, a 376-seat amphitheatre in central Tokyo. In 1985, Deguchi was invited to direct four Shakespeare plays to celebrate its opening. Rising to the occasion, he demonstrated a command of in-the-round space for the first time, exploiting the use of half-masks.

In the 1987 production of *Comedy of Errors*, all the characters wore *commedia dell'arte* half-masks, which made the confusion caused by the identical twin-brothers and their servants seem all the more inevitable. Imaginative props such as a white-painted basketball also became a prominent feature on stage. In the opening scene, the basketball was highlighted at centre stage and used as a point of focus for Egeon's explanation of his impasse to the Duke, becoming symbolic of his desperate search for order, harmony and peace. As the ball was bounced and passed among the characters, it represented money, time as a bald man, the locked gate, fat

Nell and a spinning globe. Drawing on his personal experience of playing basketball as a youth, Deguchi used the technique of offence and defense to form a rhythmic contrast between the movement and stillness of the characters on stage. For example, after a series of frantic chases involving the Antipholus twins, there was a moment of calm in which the Lady Abbess recognized her bound husband and removed his mask; as a result, other characters took off their masks to reveal the “true” faces/identities of the actors beneath. The dramatic shift from frenzy to calm and from masked to unmasked made the recognition of the long-lost family all the more powerful (Deguchi 1988: 48-51).

This engaging production was staged again at the Tokyo Globe, another newly opened theatre designed by the architect Arata Isozaki and modeled on Shakespeare’s second Globe Theatre with a thrust stage surrounded by three-story seating. Having begun as a by-product of land development driven by the “bubble economy,” this theatre radically changed postwar stagings of Shakespeare both in quality and quantity. It opened with five major British companies visiting in 1988 and continued to invite numerous overseas companies until its closure during the economic recession in 2002. The venue was taken over by a commercial entertainment company and reopened in 2004. According to Suematsu Michiko, in her essay on the Tokyo Globe, “Only the theatre’s name remains intact, since the artistic principles of the second Globe [2004 onwards] have been geared drastically toward populist commercialism, and Shakespeare occupies a minor part in its repertoire” (2006: 121).

Nevertheless, the influx of international Shakespeare productions during the nineties gave the impression to Japanese audiences that Britain no longer had a monopoly over Shakespeare’s works, and that any culture and language had the right to localise and make them their own. It also offered an opportunity for Japanese practitioners to reform their inferiority complex towards the authenticity of the western canon. As a result, Japanese-made and Japanized Shakespeare, which had been subject to the binary of East and West and the authority of English Shakespeare for a century, began to diversify and flourish in the 1990s with a sense of liberation. Shakespeare was to be interpreted by almost all Japanese theatre forms from traditional *kabuki*, *noh* and *kyogen* versions to postmodern adaptations (Suematsu, 2006: 125).

The Globe Theatre actively cooperated with several domestic companies

including the Shakespeare Theatre to produce a variety of plays and formed its own company called the Tokyo Globe Company in 1989. Its intercultural productions were promoted through collaborations with national and international directors and actors, pushing the boundaries of cultural negotiation and fusion. As one of its associate directors, Deguchi directed the company's first two productions in 1991, *Pericles* and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, using an amalgam of actors from genres such as *shingeki* and *shogekijou*, along with elaborate modern costumes.

4. Anti-Japanized Shakespeare

In my interview with Deguchi, the director voiced his skepticism about “Japanized” Shakespeare, that is, mixing modern Western staging practices with traditional Japanese theatre forms to produce an exotic or “Oriental” effect. Although he was aware that *kabuki* actors were historically the first to perform Shakespearean plays in Japan, he argued that the two approaches are culturally distant and thus should not be mixed. Furthermore, his focus since his earlier JeanJean productions has been on Shakespeare's language rather than visual artifice, making his primary goal as director to nurture the actors' elocution skills and to bring Odashima's translations alive in performance. Based on this vision, Deguchi wanted to train Shakespearean specialist-actors in Japan of the present time rather than assimilate techniques and conventions from existing Japanese theatres. He tried to persuade the Tokyo Globe Theatre to establish a Shakespeare academy for Japanese actors and tap into the funding that was usually allocated for inviting overseas companies and directors, but this ambition never came to fruition.

Nevertheless, his own drama school played a key role in nurturing Shakespearean specialist-actors to the extent that ex-company members promote his speech skills through their own work and teaching, and demonstrate its validity on a wide range of stages. Examples include the work of Kotaro Yoshida who founded the Rhyming Theatre Company in 1984 and subsequently gained attention as a Shakespearean actor in Japan and often appeared in both leading and supporting roles on Ninagawa's stage. Another example is Tsubouchi Shoyo Edo who founded the Tokyo Shakespeare Company in 1990 and has been adapting Shakespeare's plays from a female perspective ever since. More recently, Ryunosuke Kimura, another graduate of the University of Tokyo as well as the Shakespeare Theatre, established the Kakushinhan Theatre Company in 2012.

Despite Deguchi's rejection of Japanized Shakespeare as a form of exoticism, his Shakespeare productions performed solely in Japanese and in Japan cannot escape from aspects of Japanization and even Orientalism. The criteria of what constitutes the exotic or the “Oriental” is not confined to a time or place; it shifts in accordance with audience perceptions. For example, many of the references that inspire Deguchi's stagings of Shakespeare come from his childhood and adolescent years, growing up in a postwar, defeated Japan in which male authority was still a dominant social force. Therefore, what Deguchi himself might perceive as being anti-Japanized stage references may appear exotic and foreign to others, particularly younger audiences. This tension in Deguchi's directorial approach can be seen in his company's most representative works, three versions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that marked the end of Deguchi's activities at the Tokyo Globe Theatre. The “trilogy” was produced over the course of one month in commemoration of the Shakespeare Theatre Company's twentieth anniversary. These three productions, set in different contexts with almost the same cast of actors, allowed the company to assess its past and clear the way forward. In cross-referencing each other, the trilogy showed the trajectory of the director from an adventurous newcomer in the 1970s, to an experienced veteran in the 1990s.

5. Version one: Gender Politics in a bar

The first version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, set in a modern and elegant bar before opening hours, and reminiscent of the 1975 JeanJean production, opened with an invented prologue scene: wearing revealing black dresses, several bar-hostesses sat at a table fixing their makeup when a young bartender entered, absorbed in the reading of a script whilst practicing a dance. Soon after, a novice hostess in a demure white dress appeared and was mocked by her co-workers; she later changed into a black dress to become one of the fairies in Act Two Scene One. Bottom was played as a quiet construction worker in overalls while the other mechanicals' occupations were changed to fit a Japanese working context such as a newspaper deliveryman, a rice shop owner and a chef. Bottom sat alone at a table, in contrast to the rowdy group of mechanicals who received a warm greeting from the hostesses. As the bar became more and more lively, two young couples dressed like university students entered. One of the women clung to one of the men, but quite coldly, he pushed her to the floor. She rushed out in distress, the two men then

competed for the attention of the other woman. Suddenly a black clad man and woman, who appeared to be the owners of the bar, entered fighting; she accused him of being unfaithful but he attacked her back, both verbally and physically. Amid the mêlée, the bartender attempted to intervene but was sent flying and knocked unconscious over a table. A long silence ensued, during which the novice hostess crossed the room under a spotlight. She handed the awoken bartender his script, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and as he opened the text his dream began to unfold, starting with the bar owner speaking Theseus's lines. Taking their cue from the actor-bartender – who had become Puck and watched over the actors like an alcoholic stage manager – the young couple stood up from the table as Lysander and Hermia, and were summoned to kneel before Theseus. The Athenian courtiers were contrasted with the hostesses and male customers who continued serving and drinking while watching the other actors' actions until they performed their roles as fairies and mechanicals.

In this prologue scene, Deguchi provided a twisted contemporary analogy to the gender politics embedded in the Elizabethan text. The male control over women was emphasized in the hierarchical relationships between the hostesses and customers, which paralleled that of the owner/Theseus/Oberon and his wife/Hippolyta/Titania. In the frame of the bar, since a great deal of alcohol was being consumed on top of the aphrodisiac cocktail "love-in-idleness," male sexual aggressiveness became more vulgar. The mechanicals' rehearsal turned out to be like an obscene drinking party where the timid and isolated Bottom became drunk enough to take liberties with a hostess. The same misogynistic treatment was applied to the younger couples. Lysander took off his shirt and begged Hermia for sex. Demetrius humiliated Helena by pouring a drink on her head and undoing his trousers with the intention of raping her. In a later scene, both men again became naked and stalked Helena. While Hermia and Helena vehemently resisted this violence through their words and actions, the production overall showed few bonds between female characters, except for a noticeable scene where the female hostess-fairies sang a lullaby to the inebriated Titania and cast a sympathetic gaze at the reconciled couples. Consequently, in contrast to the bartender-Puck who exercised directorial control, the hostess-fairies tended to be passive and unperturbed, even when faced with animalistic intercourse between Titania and Bottom. The omnipresent yet wordless female workers blurred the border between the humans

and the fairies; reality and fantasy were presented as a sexual dream or the ambition of the actor-bartender who wanted to play the role of Puck. In the bar filled with disco music and lurid red lights, the drunken excess reached a climax with Oberon's last words and the hostesses' sexy dance. This wild denouement suddenly cut to a brief repetition of the prologue scene; in the darkness, the actor-barman woke up and was handed his script by the young hostess.

Despite Deguchi's aversion to reading Shakespeare in the context of Japanese politics, this meta-theatrical staging emphasized the male dominant reality of mid-1970s Japan. Rather than outing and attacking the biased gender-politics of the time, Deguchi turned the theme inwards, exploring and mirroring the gender dynamics within the company itself; allowing the actors to personalize their relationships with the gender relations amongst the characters. Positioning the politics of gender as part of the subtext of the play, rather than its principal context, is emblematic of Deguchi's approach to the political worlds within Shakespearean plays, in the sense that his direction tends to be guided by his search for the "essence" of Shakespeare.

6. Version two: Shakespeare as autobiography

The second version, first performed in 1990 to celebrate the opening of the Theatre Cocoon, a 747-seat theatre inside the Tokyu department store in Shibuya, was played out as the dream of a desperate theatre director. Set in an abandoned school in a remote village in postwar Japan, it is one of Deguchi's most personalized works to date. The play opened with a director, possibly an autobiographical allusion to Deguchi himself, dwelling over a set-design model box, while the figures of his wife and daughter were seen leaving for good in the distance. Doubly distressed by the lack of creativity in his work and discord with his family, the director laid down and then a boy suddenly appeared behind him. The boy was dressed in school uniform, plimsolls and a cap, with white wings sprouting from the schoolbag on his back. The boy walked around the man, hugged him and then led him running in a circle accompanied by Felliniesque festive music. After they exited, the boy returned to the centre stage bringing the man and his wife with him; when the man started speaking as Theseus, the world of Shakespeare's play began. Against the backdrop of a classroom with wooden desks and chairs and a white chalk circle on the ground, Theseus and Hippolyta were seen as white-winged schoolmaster-fairies. The boy

became Puck and his female schoolmates became fairies.

Reflecting Deguchi's nostalgia for his childhood and ambivalence toward the American occupation and modernization of Japan from the late 1940s onwards, there were several historical twists in the portrayal of the characters. Although sexual connotation was subtler than in the bar version, a meaningful discrepancy could be seen between the innocent and rural Puck and the westernised and urban fairies in middy blouses, mini-skirts and loud red stockings. For example, while Puck boyishly responded to his master Oberon's instruction to go in search of the "little western flower" and was reprimanded for his mischief, the fairies exhibited sexual playfulness in dancing to a swing tune. Their sexual promiscuity was particularly obvious when they entertained Bottom as an ass who was dressed as a *yamiya* (returnee war veterans working on the black market) and sang to the melody of "Aoi Sanmyaku" ("Green Mountains," the theme song of a 1949 film by the same name, based on Yojiro Ishizaka's popular adolescent novel). In this setting the fairies were associated with postwar prostitutes called *panpan*: women who worked primarily for the US occupying forces in Japan. The analogy was repeated in the mechanicals' interlude. Bottom as Pyramus had changed out of the *yamiya* outfit and was dressed as a GI; he sang a Rock and *enka* (Japanese popular ballad) style song for Flute-Thisbe who was dressed as a *panpan* girl in skimpy clothes.

After the whole cast performed a ring-dance to another carnival song and left the stage, the dream came to an end. As the music faded away, Puck led Oberon to the centre of a moon-like white-lined circle and they shook hands. The rapport between boy/director and fairy/wife ran parallel to that of Theseus/Oberon and Titania/Hippolyta who united at the end. The boy gently removed Oberon's wings and disappeared. The awoken director found himself sitting alone on stage and contemplated what he had seen. Suddenly, the whole cast ran to the circle, whooping and cheering and carrying the model box from the prologue scene. On the one hand, the inserted, quasi-autobiographical prologue and epilogue scenes can be read as the continuation of the director's nightmare in his constant struggle to bring the kaleidoscopic worlds of Shakespeare alive. On the other hand, it can also be read as the next cycle or stage of a spiritual journey of self-discovery and empowerment. The play ends with Puck's usual monologue, "If we shadows have offended," which in the context of this production read like an apology from Deguchi for indulging the audience in the production's overtly self-referential frame.

7. Version three: Half-masks

The final version was a recreation of the half-mask production at the Aoyama Enkei Gekijou in 1985. Instead of the devised frame and stage sets of the other two productions, this was played on a bare stage exploring the possibilities of masks and stylised movement. The three groups of characters were clearly differentiated by masks and stylish contemporary costumes: the Athenian lords wore modern suits and white masks, the fairies wore frilly dresses and black masks, and the mechanicals were dressed in working clothes without masks.

This production with choreographed group dances and synthesised songs for the fairies became part of the company's repertoire and has been frequently performed since then (see Minami, Carruthers and Gillies, 1998; Deguchi, 2000: 8-12; Suematsu, 2001: 109-10). It was shown in 2016 to celebrate the company's fortieth anniversary. While going back to the JeanJean era costume, jeans, T-shirts and black jackets for the young couples and the mechanicals, Deguchi staged the half-masked fairies as divine protectors or Japanese ancestors. For example, in the Epilogue, Puck scattered white ash from a white bottle, which resembled a cremation urn. The gesture was a clear reference to the departed. By using this device, Deguchi aimed to find the "essential" and "universal" common ground between Shakespeare and the actors in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in terms of "the human struggle to escape from the darkness of the mind." Deguchi further explained "the core of the Shakespearean experience plays out on a continuum between the past and present, and becomes a space for the continuation of one's own life and existence." (Deguchi 2016). The production attempt to use theatre as a place to rethink this quasi-spiritual dimension, which is all too easily lost in the spectacle of everyday life.

In each of the three productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Deguchi used personal experience and meta-theatrical frameworks to evoke particular Japanese socio-historical contexts, despite the fact that his intention was never to make the productions categorically or stereotypically Japanese. The first version used the familiar setting of a bar and its specific social hierarchies, divisions along gender lines; the second production drew on Deguchi's personal memory of postwar occupied Japan; and the third brought back the bare staging conventions of the JeanJean period mixed with masks. However, the border between Deguchi's localization of Shakespeare in the Japanese context and the Japanized Shakespeare

that he rejects remains contestable.

Shakespeare was becoming increasingly remote from our contemporary social reality. So I got the idea of pulling it back to our daily reality by returning Shakespeare to the level of my personal history. For me, making it “Japanese” is not the ultimate aim. The important thing is to find a place where the text and I can converge. I also know that you can’t cross borders by “Japanization.” “Making it Japanese” is already about marking a border where exoticism begins. But I think exoticism is partly due to the ignorance of other nations. If there were no such ignorance, mysteriousness would not exist. Once you know that, it becomes an ordinary matter. When people prostrated themselves before British productions, they were worshiping exoticism. Now we are used to seeing British companies, so there’s no longer anything mesmerizing about them. For that reason, I don’t think we should emphasize our “Japaneseness.” The images most people have of Japan at the present time derive from the period when we were an agricultural society: that is, old Japan, the “so-called Japan.”

However, today’s Japan is only partly traditional Japan. It is difficult to give an exact definition; nobody can say, “this is Japan.” But it is also true that if we presented Japan in all its ambiguity, foreigners would not understand. It means that “Japanese Shakespeare” production cannot be recognized unless we simplify our Japaneseness. I don’t think that is universalization; Japanization is simply a particularization (Deguchi 2001: 190).

These remarks make clear that Deguchi resists explicit and elaborate self-Japonism such as that found in some of the works of other representative Japanese directors including Ninagawa, Suzuki and Miyagi. On the other hand, it is still possible to see a peculiarity common to Deguchi and Ninagawa, because while remaining faithful to the text, both directors visually reframe Shakespeare in Japanese contexts, and both have been representative revisionists and popularizers of Shakespeare in urbanized Japan since the 1970s.

Deguchi’s indifference to exotic spectacle is related to his target audience. Directing Shakespeare solely for Japanese audiences, he does not have to overcome

language barriers by resorting to visual effects. In contrast to Ninagawa and Suzuki, who toured extensively overseas from the 1980s onwards, the Shakespeare Company had still not been seen abroad. Even if it were seen in England, Deguchi has speculated that his production in modern suits and dress would garner little attention because it avoids an expected Japanese spectacle. However, some audiences would recognize self-orientalist tendencies in some of Deguchi's productions, including the final version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

In addition to this aesthetic disparity, there is a financial disproportion between Deguchi and Ninagawa. Ninagawa left the low budget *angura engeki* for highly commercial theatre from 1974 onwards. In contrast, Deguchi has had far fewer resources and felt a sense of struggle as "a tiny penniless company" after he left mainstream theatre in 1974. Even after the Shakespeare Theatre started to receive funding, its survival has often been precarious; the actors have struggled with the upkeep of rehearsal space and have had to take on administrative duties while supporting their own lives through part-time jobs. One of the major financial upheavals was the "New Place" affair. The company opened its own hundred-seat theatre in Koenji, Tokyo in 1999 and produced a number of successful shows, including the award-winning *Hamlet* of 2001, but the architect's plans turned out to be in breach of local government construction laws; the quarrel turned into a court case and the theatre was forced to close after only a few years.

8. Deguchi and Mimicry: *Shakespeare Rehearsal*

When faced with financial pressure and periods of creative stagnation, particularly during the Japanese economic recession of the mid-nineties, it was Deguchi's constant and resolute quest for the "essence" of Shakespeare that has kept him and the Shakespeare Theatre going. Around the turn of the new millennium, the company entered a new cycle, which Deguchi has recognized as the most fruitful to date, with actors committed to training and development despite the uncertainty of the future.

Thanks to more stable arts funding after 2003, the Shakespeare Theatre began running yearly productions in the spring and autumn of two or three plays at the Haiyu-za Theatre in Tokyo. Although the theatre rarely runs at full capacity, the productions appeal to various age groups, ranging from Deguchi's loyal followers of

more than four decades to young students who encountered Shakespeare through the company's high school theatre-in-education programme.

The company started to produce non-Shakespearean works from 2002 with adaptations of the Japanese wartime novelist Dazai Osamu's *Shin Hamlet* (*New Hamlet*) and contemporary novelist Kiyoshi Shigematsu's *Ebisu-kun* (*Mr. Ebisu*). According to Deguchi, this new work offers actors a chance to rediscover both the uniqueness and universality of Shakespeare through different dramaturgical and narrative approaches (Deguchi 2006).

In October 2005, as part of a triple bill for its thirtieth anniversary, the Shakespeare Theatre produced another adaptation, *Shakespeare Rehearsal*, inspired by Fellini's film *Orchestra Rehearsal* and written by Deguchi himself. Highly meta-theatrical and based on actual events from the company's rehearsal process, this production portrayed the daily struggle and frustration of the actors as well as the ambition and failures of the director. The company's tense rehearsals were comically reproduced on stage incorporating many citations from Shakespeare's works. Anecdotes from company members were used to portray relationships between the director and actors; these included aspects of their personal lives such as love relationships, part-time jobs, and even excuses for leaving the company.

The performance began with a rehearsal of *Macbeth* Act One, Scene Four. Following the stage manager's call, the actors, wearing casual sports clothes, entered from the wings and Duncan called out: "Rippana miuchi wo motte ureshiizo" ("O worthiest cousin!"). The actor playing the role of Deguchi sat on a chair and repeatedly corrected Duncan's intonation. Although Duncan tried hard to suppress his rising intonation – this scene is based on a real rehearsal situation – he was unable to repeat after the director and conquer the subtle nuances of elocution. As the actor repeated the same line over and over again, the other actors became uncomfortable. The frustrated director made scathing remarks such as "O worthiest actor!" "How can you carry on like this after thirty years?" until he finally shouted "Stop! Have a break!" He then fell asleep and during this break, seven scenes unfolded. In the fifth scene titled "Reasons to Get Separated," three actors explained in monologues why they have to leave the company. The reasons they gave include the illness of a family member, a pregnancy and the uncertainty of the future.

For audience members who know how strict and sarcastic Deguchi can be during rehearsals and how many actors have quit the company as a result of this, this

self-parody production came as a surprise. Weaving together elements of reality, fiction, action and imitation, Deguchi's production exposed the pathos and absurdity of actors, who with neither experience nor money are still willing to tackle Shakespeare. The final scene of the play suggested that there would never be an end to the company's struggle. The director awoke to the stage manager's call "Tis time," which overlapped with the last scene of *The Winter's Tale*, and then the rehearsal of *Macbeth* began again. Despite his best efforts, Duncan still could not say "Rippana" and the director patiently responded by giving him "one more chance."

As mentioned above, in the company's daily rehearsals, Deguchi often demands the actors repeat Shakespeare's lines in Japanese exactly as he himself speaks them. In reality, the actors cannot duplicate Deguchi's speech without some changes to phrasing or intonation. In this sense, Deguchi is an authoritarian director who believes in his ability to correctly articulate Shakespeare's lines in Japanese. However, given that Shakespeare is always already "foreign" and "absent" to contemporary readers, and that there are numerous possible interpretations and articulations of Shakespeare's lines, the self-parody of Deguchi's dictatorship in the production exposes his directing as the fetishism of an imagined Shakespeare in Japanese.

Deguchi's demand on the actors to perform this impossible repetition resembles a type of mimicry widely discussed in the field of postcolonial theory, in which the "subaltern" or oppressed subject desires to speak in the place of the colonial "master" yet can never fully occupy that ground. Among the different analyses of this imbalance of power are Gayatri Spivak's argument, in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988), that the production of the "other" is linked to the affirmation of a hegemonic position; and Homi Bhabha's view, that "mimicry is always produced at the site of interdiction" and is therefore an ambivalent form of utterance in "that the fetishized colonial culture is potentially and strategically an insurgent counter-appeal" (Bhabha 1994: 122). How does this fetishization of Shakespeare as a colonial icon work in Deguchi's context?

Deguchi's theatre practice has often been influenced by personal experience and socio-political events that relate to himself and his actors, but unlike his late peer Ninagawa, he has never taken his productions overseas and has therefore not been part of the global export of Japanese Shakespeare. Instead, what characterizes his work is his unrelenting belief in Shakespeare's plays, which has helped cement the

company's credibility and survival. Deguchi's sober and even humble approach to the canon is a form of resistance against the profitable and consumerist Shakespeare industry in contemporary theatre.

However, this approach is not without contradiction. Deguchi is openly against self-Orientalism and Japonism, and even political theatre, and yet from the audience's perspective, his productions touch on all of these points. For example, he insists that his aim is to get as close as possible to what he understands as Shakespeare's "essence" or "universality," yet his work is culturally and linguistically rooted in Japan, often through intimate references to his own life. This tension between Deguchi's opposition to "Japanized Shakespeare" and his devotion to Shakespeare in Japanese through Odashima Yushi's translations hints at a "divided self," a type of postcolonial schizophrenia in his relationship to Shakespeare. The notion of a "split identity" is crucial to Bhabha's reading of the colonial subject's "lack" of agency:

What I have called its [the fetishized colonial culture] "identity-effects" are always crucially split. Under cover of camouflage, mimicry, like the fetish, is a part-object that radically revalues the normative knowledges of the priority of race, writing, history. For the fetish mimes the forms of authority at the point at which it deauthorizes them. Similarly, mimicry rearticulates presence in terms of its "otherness," that which it disavows. (1994: 122-23)

Even though Japan was not a British colony, Deguchi's relationship with Shakespeare functions in a similar way to the postcolonial subject that Bhabha describes here, in that his quest for the essence of Shakespeare is a type of paradoxical "mimicry" without origin. That is to say, Deguchi's fetishization of Shakespeare is an autobiographical construct; he mediates Shakespeare through his own autobiographical reality and then transfers this imagined Shakespeare in Japanese to his actors through a rigorous treatment of language that is finally embodied on stage.

Shakespeare Rehearsal repeatedly showed this aspect of mimicry through the actor desperately trying to mimic Deguchi's intonation and participate in the collective fetishization of Deguchi's style, which is itself based on the mimicry of a

former colonial culture. In Homi Bhabha's concept the ambivalence contained in the process of mimicry is a potential mode of resistance. As David Jefferess points out, "Bhabha constructs colonial power as a political and cultural structure in which subjects have varying experiences of empowerment/dominance and disempowerment/exploitation" (31).

The ambivalence in Deguchi's work is that, through the mimicry of Shakespeare as a mode of empowerment, he has been re-orienting himself but without a definite destination. As a result, in pursuing the "essence" of Shakespeare, but also recognizing the unattainability of this pursuit as a directorial "lacuna," Deguchi opens up a dimension in Japanese Shakespeare that can be called a "split" or "schizophrenic" type of re-orientation. This re-orientation plays out in an intimate, autobiographical and even religious sense, in that Deguchi channels his own personal identity – almost parasitically – through Shakespeare as a marker of universality and poetic greatness, while at the same time he is disavowed of this status, since Shakespeare is always already "other" and absent. Riding on these paradoxical wheels, Deguchi's journey of self-orientation continues without goal.

Chapter 5

Ku Na'uka's Shakespearean Trilogy:

Shakespearean Tragedy Re-oriented by Women in "Asia"

The generation of directors that followed Ninagawa Yukio, Suzuki Tadashi and Deguchi Norio came to the fore in post-1968 Japan, at the height of the country's economic boom, and in a world increasingly marked by the radical social and cultural changes of globalization. With greater access to international travel and collaboration than their forebears, they were influenced by trends in cultural theory and practice, particularly the postmodern turn in continental philosophy, art and performance. Postwar concerns with political governance, national identity and economic growth gave way to questions of power and discourse in the relationship between local and global cultures, and minority ethics related to subjects of race, gender, sexuality and disability.

Among those directors, the work of Miyagi Satoshi (1959-) stands out for its conceptual ingenuity, ambitious scale and intercultural vision. A member of the so-called P4 directors group, which includes Kano Yukikazu, Hirata Oriza and Yasuda Masahiro (see Chapter 7), Miyagi rose to prominence as the artistic director of the Ku Na'uka theatre company, which he founded in 1990 alongside fellow actors Micari, Abe Kazunori and Yoshiue Soichiro. The company produced a range of adaptations and reworkings of texts from both East and West, ending in 2007 with an adaptation of the *bunraku* play *Ohshu Adachigahara*. In early 2007, Ku Na'uka ceased ensemble work and entered a "period of solo activities" (Miyagi 2007). Miyagi believed the company had reached the limit of its potential and that it was time to change course. In April of that year, he became the artistic director of the Shizuoka Performing Arts Center (SPAC), taking over Suzuki Tadashi's position.

Since his tenure at SPAC, Miyagi has produced new works on an annual basis, making frequent international tours and curating SPAC's international performance program, including the World Theatre Festival Under Mt Fuji. The SPAC era marks a clean break from the unique style and method that Miyagi developed with Ku Na'uka. Chapter 6 addresses elements of this new trajectory through an analysis of Noda Hideki's adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Miyagi at SPAC shortly after the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and nuclear disaster. The present chapter is concerned with the Ku Na'uka period of Miyagi's

work, and more specifically with the Shakespearean trilogy, *Hamlet* (premiered in 1990), *Macbeth* (premiered 2001) and *Othello* (premiered 2005). Each of these productions uses Ku Na'uka's well-known speaker/mover performance method (see section 1.) to expose and subvert old cultural binaries in the meeting of east and west, Occidentalism and Orientalism, past and present, traditional and contemporary, male and female.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the directors included in these case studies are all male. This is a reflection of the male-dominated theatre landscape in Japan during the twentieth century. However, one of the characteristic elements of Miyagi Satoshi's directorial career during the Ku Na'uka period was his critical approach to staging female characters in Shakespeare. His long-term collaboration with lead actress, Micari, whose strong physical stage presence often brings questions of femininity to the fore of her roles, is partly responsible for this, but also by his own admission Miyagi has long been aware of his difficult relationship with women. In Shakespeare, he sees a complexity in the texts concerning women that continually demands a radical deconstruction of the gender biases at work in the texts.

Drawing on the Ku Na'uka trilogy as source material, I will examine the re-orientation of Shakespeare's women through Miyagi's directorial work. Using feminist and postcolonial theories, and with critical use of an extensive interview with Miyagi that I conducted in Tokyo in 2006,¹⁶ I analyse how gender division, femininity and masculinity are negotiated in the productions; and how Ophelia, Lady Macbeth and Desdemona, those somewhat victimised, demonised, or marginalized heroines, are represented in contrast to their title-role heroes.

1. Ku Na'uka's method

Ku Na'uka, which means "towards science" in Russian, was founded in Tokyo in 1990 by artistic director Miyagi Satoshi. In the same year, Mikhail Gorbachev received the Nobel Peace Prize, and as "an ironic homage" (Eglinton 2006a) to the last days of Soviet Communism, Miyagi used the title of the book by the German pioneer communist, Friedrich Engels, to name the company.

¹⁶ This interview with Miyagi Satoshi was conducted on 12 March 2006 in Nishi Sugamo, Tokyo. The translation is my own. Part of this interview was published in *Asian Theatre Journal*, vol. 28, no. 1 (Spring 2011) 234-43.

The company's name was also meant to mark a departure from Japanese theatrical trends. Post WWII Japanese theatre movements, particularly since the so-called *angura* or underground theatre movement of the 1960s, seemed to Miyagi preoccupied with the expression of physicality and emotion. In opposition to these traits, he wanted to develop a more scientific approach to theatre. In this sense, he was also sceptical of the contemporary *shogekijo undo* (Little Theatre movement), which culminated in the mid 1980s at the time of Japan's economic bubble and consumer fervour.

One of the most distinctive features of Ku Na'uka's productions is the division between "speakers" and "movers," between the aural and the visual, a concept that can be found in traditional Japanese performing arts such as *bunraku* and *noh*. Miyagi was intent on forming a company that could tour overseas and perform to worldwide audiences, and the division of speech and movement was a technique devised in order to transcend language barriers (Eglinton 2006a). By isolating the two mediums, the audience would be able to follow a non-linguistic, image-based narrative, in which the movers intensify the visual elements of the play and the speakers narrate the story in near-musical form.

In practice, the "logos" and "pathos" that is inherent to a character in classical texts from both the east and the west, and from ancient to modern, is divided between two or more actors, then occasionally united again. This division, dislocation, restriction, refinement and reunion in the relationship between words and bodies creates a dynamic that exposes meta-critical and meta-theoretical aspects of the play. This is particularly apparent in Ku Na'uka's new millennium productions of *Macbeth* and *Othello*, which will be discussed later.

By drawing on the techniques of Japanese performing arts, especially *bunraku*, *noh* and *kabuki*, Ku Na'uka redefined the traditional through integration with contemporary intercultural staging devices. For instance, a section of the company's actors was devoted to playing live electronic music on stage. Particularly noticeable was the mix of Asian and African percussion instruments, rhythms and sounds. Costumes also reflected this intercultural amalgam, with designs by Fukasawa Eri and others spanning historical periods and cultural traditions from Japan, to South East Asia, Europe and beyond. In addition to the sound and visual dimensions of the productions, performance spaces played a defining role in Ku Na'uka's works. While touring worldwide and performing in temples, castle grounds

and museum gardens, Ku Na'uka cultivated an awareness of spatial history and honed performed skills that would later prove invaluable in their own site-specific productions.

2. *Hamlet* in 1990: Encountering the Other

For their first production, staged in 1990 at the Aoyama Round Theatre in Tokyo, Ku Na'uka chose to work on *Hamlet*. Miyagi explained that in order to introduce the mover/speaker method without alienating the audience, it was necessary to find a story that the audience would be familiar with, and *Hamlet* was “one of the most famous stories in the world” (Eglinton 2006a). However, after the production Miyagi saw the choice as an error of judgment. Hamlet's existential equivocation in Act 3, Scene 1, “To be or not to be,” combined with his wavering intention towards Ophelia, made him an unfavourable character for the disunion of speech and movement. By contrast, the structures of plays in *bunraku*, for example, in which “one character carries only one intention per scene [...] such as ‘I want to take revenge on him,’” were far more fitting and formed the basis of text selection for the company's second production, *Salomé* by Oscar Wilde. For Miyagi, *Hamlet* stands on the border between early modern and modern drama, in the sense that the title-role hero is the first character in the history of early modern drama “who doesn't understand what to do.” As a result the production became overly explanatory: “one scene was dividing movement and speech, the other scene was explaining it.” It was domestic and Little Theatre-like, which the director had set out to avoid (Eglinton 2006a). It is also possible to read an ironic parallel between Hamlet's suspicion of revenge and Miyagi's own directorial indecision.

Despite the methodological shortcomings of this debut production, Miyagi's approach to the representation of class and gender in the play, set against the backdrop of Japan's peak bubble economy, merits discussion, since it represents a turning point in terms of his method. The production was staged in a court setting with clear social and linguistic class divisions that mirrored the English aristocracy's use of French as an official language, until the 14th century. During that period, royalty and nobility spoke a supposedly sophisticated “foreign” language, whereas the uneducated servants with their local vernacular could only speculate on the meaning of their masters' exchanges. Miyagi adopted this structure and positioned the servants in the play as constant observers of their suzerains' behaviour, calling on

them later to subvert class order in the scandalous court scene. In this double and inverted structure of *Hamlet*, while the masters are in control of their movement, the servants take over their speech.

For example, the wedding ceremony of Claudius and Gertrude was portrayed as a parody of the secularized, pseudo-Christian wedding parties that were popular in Japan in the 1980s. Male servants in white shirts, black trousers and black ties read out telegrams from Fortinbras and “Ros and Guil” in a tacky emcee caricature. Female servants in frilly black maid costumes spoke in shrill voices like cute *manga* characters, while the mover Claudius, played by Miyagi himself and dressed in black Chinese clothes with a purple hat, was perversely timid. In contrast, the mover Gertrude received a bold portrayal by Micari, Ku Na’uka’s leading actress, dressed in a crimson *kimono*. The wedding reception ended when the mover Hamlet in a frilly white shirt let off a party cracker to antagonize the new married couple. In the next scene, a clown called Yorick in a black and white lattice shirt with a false red nose and red shoes, directed the mover Hamlet to face the mover Ophelia, also played by Micari (Figure 2). Soon after, the mover Laertes entered in green stockings and Hamlet paired up with the clown. Exhibiting his incestuous desire towards Ophelia, the mover Laertes chained up his sister and suspended her in mid-air. In this inquisition and torture scene, which parallels Act 1, Scene 3 of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, the peeping servants function as speakers and commentators on the fate of this sexually “dangerous” sibling.

While cleaning, cooking or taking a rest, the servants fought over who gets to re-enact the “best roles”: Hamlet and Ophelia (Figure 3). They interpreted and inverted their relationships in the form of musicals or simplistic school plays. This series of backstage servant performances gradually encroached on the court. In the final scene the servants directed the sword fighting as popular entertainment, with the emcee commentating as if ringside at a wrestling match. Thus the tragedy of the royal family was turned into a thrilling spectacle and the servants urged Gertrude to drink from the poisoned cup. Faced with the murder of Claudius in slapstick comedy style, the servants were far from Shakespeare’s original “pale and tremble [...] mutes” (*Hamlet* 5.2.286). With feverish excitement, they crucified the mover Hamlet, whose voice was brashly dubbed by the emcee, “To tell my story” (5.2.301). The result of this bloody story was narrated not by Horatio or Fortinbras, who were absent in the

production, but instead by the servants in black and white uniforms holding up photographs of the deceased prince to dramatic effect.

The overt presence and empowerment of the servants, who are anonymous and speechless in the Shakespearean text, reflected Miyagi's views on Japanese society and mass culture towards the end of 1980s. During this period, around a hundred million Japanese started to feel a sense of belonging to the middle class and became less conscious about class differences compared to the prewar era. In this highly commercial and increasingly homogeneous social structure, people competed over trifling matters, including consumer brands and household wares, even to the point of denigrating the position of the Japanese imperial family (Duus, Whitney-Hall and Jansen 1989: 513-15).

In addition to these issues of class, this *Hamlet* shows a critical approach to gender roles. All the main male movers, Claudius, Hamlet and Laertes, displayed the desire to control a small confined world and little helpless creatures. The queasy Claudius, who almost worshipped his wife-queen rather than loving her, played obsessively with water in a small aquarium. Hamlet kept a mouse in the aquarium, filling it with water until near-drowning point. Laertes seemed more possessive of Ophelia than the absent Polonius in this production.

Describing "the biology of men" (Eglinton 2006a), Miyagi's directorial intention was for the two female characters, the movers Gertrude and Ophelia, to be played by Micari. At the beginning of the production, the dignified Queen was contrasted with the delicate daughter through the voice of a female servant speaking in a high-pitch tone. Yet as the production evolved, sporadic words flew out from the mouth of the mover Ophelia. She first narrated the murder of the lost Hamlet quoting the Ghost's lines in Act 1, Scene 5 that accused Claudius of pouring the "juice of cursed hebenon" (62) into his ears. After Hamlet peeped at the forbidden love scene between Gertrude and Claudius, the two women became united from Hamlet's perspective. Hamlet failed to take revenge on his mother on the bed and came to attack Ophelia by mixing the accusatory lines from Act 3, Scene 1, such as "Are you honest" (105), "I did love you once" (117), "Get thee to a nunnery" (139) as well as the lines from Act 3, Scene 4: "Look here upon this picture, and on this, / The counterfeit presentment of two brothers" (52-53). Due to Hamlet's misogyny, Ophelia and Gertrude were identified as "frail" women; and taking Hamlet's attack

passively, the mover Ophelia gradually started to lose herself and finally lapsed into death with Hamlet's letters in hand.

The regression of the mover Ophelia was observed by the speaker Ophelia played by one of the maids. In opposition to the passive and victimised mover Ophelia, the speaker Ophelia started to display agency. She voiced her feelings in contemporary and colloquial language. While the mover Ophelia was dismayed by the mover Hamlet's change, the speaker Ophelia indignantly yet contradictorily spoke out to the speaker Hamlet played by one of the male servants:

I wish you were useless so I could look down on you. But you're so not ordinary, you're special and that's why I like you. You have no idea how much I loved you. Perhaps I've had my revenge after all.¹⁷

After the speaker Hamlet left, the speaker Ophelia continued to read out Ophelia's longest lines from the Shakespearean text, as if holding Hamlet responsible for her madness and death: "O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown! ... T'have seen what I have seen, see what I see" (3.1.153-64). The speaker Ophelia then picked up the aquarium, which can be read as an analogy of the fate of the drowned girl. This image also added a sense of mourning to the speaker Ophelia's lines, as if it were Gertrude reporting Ophelia's "muddy death" (155) in Act 4, Scene 7. Although the female bond between Gertrude and Ophelia was hardly recognisable in Micari's dual role, sisterhood between the mover and the speaker Ophelia was noticeable.

In my interview with Miyagi, the director explained his intention behind the protesting speaker Ophelia. In addition to the socio-cultural restrictions of Renaissance England, Miyagi believed that Shakespeare as a male playwright had a radical inferiority complex in describing female characters and thus his description of Ophelia appears ambiguous. Through this ambiguity and uneasiness, Miyagi wanted to represent Ophelia in a divided way, not just as subordinate to the patriarchal system like the mover Ophelia, but as a challenger to male power like the speaker Ophelia.

¹⁷ If not otherwise noted, all quotations from Ku Na'uka's production Hamlet are from the videotaped performance at the Aoyama Round Theatre (Tokyo) on 13 October 1990 and are my translations.

Furthermore, Miyagi went on to say that as a man, women are the “other,” with whom he has felt most uncomfortable since childhood and thus he needed to encounter and confront them. Miyagi speculated that this uncomfortable feeling towards women as the unknowable other is a common trait in most of the canonical plays, which were written by male playwrights. In particular, plays by literary masters such as Euripides and Shakespeare are read as misogynistic by some critics and carry visceral masculine viewpoints towards women. Hence female characters who personify those male constructions and the contemporary actresses who play those roles can often look out of place and unruly. This unruliness is what Miyagi tries to reveal and feature on stage as a director: “How do female bodies written by male gazes and male hands revolt against and step out of these male frames?” (Eglinton 2006a)

After learning from *Hamlet*, Miyagi cautiously avoided the works of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Drawing on this initial experimentation with the mover/speaker technique, Ku Na’uka began to establish its method and put it to practice in numerous performances leading up to the year 2000. Among these were Puccini’s *Turandot*, Wilde’s *Salome*, Racine’s *Phèdre*, Euripides’ *Electra* and *Medea*, Kyouka Izumi’s *Tenshu Monogatari* (*The Tale of Castle Tower*) and Nanpoku Tsuruya’s *Sakurahime Azumabunsho* (*The Legend of Princess Sakura*). Female desires are central to all these plays and they drive the elements of time and plot on stage. The heroines of these plays can rely on their impulses and perspectives and they rarely hesitate about their decisions. This comes as a contrast to the male characters who need to justify their decisions through the construction of value systems.

It is easy to criticise Miyagi’s binomial viewpoint, which opposes male complicated desires to female simplistic desires, as essentialist. However, this is key to reading Ku Na’uka’s productions and their binomial strategies of the wordy and the wordless, the rulers and the ruled. This was particularly clear in Ku Na’uka’s site-specific reproduction of *Medea* in 2005 at the Tokyo National Museum. The building itself was erected during Japan’s nationwide reconstruction through westernisation after the Meiji Restoration. Set at the end of the 19th century, Ku Na’uka’s production of *Medea* presented male judges in western clothes who read out the *yoruri* (Japanese ballad drama) text of *Medea* in the style of light entertainment at a banquet in a Japanese traditional restaurant-hotel. The men chose

women as though they were puppets to physicalise the characters; thus one of the waitresses (played by Micari) was ordered to play the role of Medea and put on a Korean *chima jeogori* under her Japanese *kimono*. This gender and race hierarchy was maintained throughout the production, including in the play within a play sequence. At the top, the Japanese male judges represented *logos*, reason, power, language, knowledge, maturity, centrality; they became metaphors for ancient Greece as a democratic patriarchal nation. At the bottom were the Korean female servants who represented *pathos*, nature, poverty, body, illiteracy, immaturity and periphery; they too functioned on a metaphorical level as a mysterious matriarchal community Colchis in “Asia minor.” After Medea took her revenge on Jason in a Japanese high-officer’s uniform by killing their only son on stage and a judge raped a servant on the balcony, the female servants revolted against the male power and murdered all the judges.

Miyagi’s radical interpretation and directing seem to be based on a feminist approach, although Miyagi denied this in the interview. Miyagi’s style actually originates from a personal visceral feeling towards women: “the impossibility of understanding women,” as “other”. Moreover, Miyagi believes that humanity has little future if it simply goes on repeating the old male-dominated system under new guises. He is aware that his “directing and productions actually come from the negation of maleness by a man who knows maleness thoroughly.” Miyagi’s intention is to shape female objects that stand out from male constructions in order to carve out maleness in detail and then destroy it (Eglinton 2006a). His ideas on the position of women were further explored in Ku Na’uka’s second Shakespearean production, *Macbeth*.

3. Lady Macbeth inside Macbeth

After carefully avoiding the works of Shakespeare and his contemporaries for more than a decade, Ku Na’uka performed *Macbeth* in Toga Village, Toyama in May 2001. Having decided to direct the bloody, fast-paced Scottish tragedy, on the grounds that Macbeth’s desire is the most distinctively focused among Shakespearean characters, Miyagi remained puzzled by the role of Lady Macbeth. This male director, who is uncomfortable with female performers, assumes that male playwrights are generally uncomfortable with the portrayal of female characters. This means that female characters invoke the limits of male authors, as Miyagi

speculated that Shakespeare was not confident in his portrayal of Ophelia. Miyagi discerned an inferiority complex on the part of the male author towards certain female characters, and this served as a clue for him as a director to deconstruct the male construction within the play.

Lady Macbeth was an exception since Miyagi did not believe that Shakespeare felt uncomfortable with her. In addition, towards the end of the play, Lady Macbeth rather suddenly disappears, or loses her chance to appear on stage. After thinking about the enigmas of Lady Macbeth, he concluded that Lady Macbeth is Macbeth himself. She is not a real accomplice in Macbeth's treason; she only exists inside Macbeth's desire and is subsumed in the male-made construction. Hence, Miyagi decided that the actor Abe should perform all the movements and speeches of both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth for the Shin Toga Sanbo space: an innovative recreation of a traditional Japanese house with a steep rafter roof. As a dream vision of Macbeth dressed in red Japanese *samurai* armour with a sword, the mover Lady Macbeth stood like a Japanese doll in a see-through white *kimono* wearing a chastity belt underneath, along with a bride's hood, which is usually worn at a traditional Japanese wedding. It is worth mentioning that the mover Lady Macbeth was not performed by Micari, but by Yu Sakurachi. This was the first time that Micari did not take a central role in Ku Na'uka's stage history and it may suggest that Micari's physical presence would have been too strong to play the role as a shadow.

Miyagi also rendered the gender-role threatening witches, who ruin Macbeth, as a metaphor of aborted pre-sexed babies. He read the weird witches' prediction in Act 4, Scene 1, "The power of man, for none of woman born / Shall harm Macbeth" (95-96) and "Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be, until / Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill / Shall come against him" (108) as curses on profanities such as abortion, clone technology and environmental destruction (Miyagi 2001). The whole play *Macbeth* was reconstructed as the revenge of "unborn babies" and this was re-performed at the Shin Toga Sanbo Theatre as part of the Toga Spring Festival in 2002.

With the revival of *Macbeth* at the Café de la Dance in Paris in January 2004, the production had considerably changed in accordance with the new venue and a new audience. Audience members who understand Japanese can easily distinguish the lines of Macbeth from those of Lady Macbeth because the language is

gendered, with for example first person pronouns and the endings of lines. Yet for the majority of the non-Japanese speaking audience in Paris, this linguistic information would have gone unnoticed. Thus, Ku Na'uka had to make the structure and visual imagery much clearer. As a result, Abe concentrated solely on the movements and lines of Macbeth and all the other characters were physicalized and articulated by the female performers, who functioned both as a Greek chorus and as musicians behind a screen upstage. Along with the mover Lady Macbeth in the see-through *kimono* with the chastity belt, the speaker Lady Macbeth was on stage in a crested black *kimono* and *hakama*. All the male characters, Banquo, Macduff, Duncan, Malcolm and Lennox, were performed by female movers and speakers in the same crested black *kimonos* and *hakamas* as the speaker Lady Macbeth. By situating Abe's Macbeth in red in contrast to the female performers in black, Miyagi carved out Macbeth's maleness to then destroy it.

The director's note titled "Macbeth and Loneliness" was published in the programme when the Paris version of *Macbeth* was re-performed at the Suzunari Theatre, Tokyo in November 2004. Miyagi observes that men have always pursued wealth, power and name over the centuries. However, those values are not absolute but always evaluated in relative terms through juxtaposition to others; male histories have been constructed on male desires to know more than others and then be best among them. What happens then when a man's desires come true even after wrongdoings? In Miyagi's analysis only the sense of loneliness remains, which is the very essence of the play *Macbeth*. The director further questions the origin of male desire and loneliness in the moment of fertilization, when nearly a hundred million sperm compete over a single ovum. Thus in Miyagi's analysis, male desire to be the best and fittest is inherent to natural selection and competition for domination. Moreover, Miyagi wrote that male loneliness originates from the biological fact that men can only be participants in the reproduction process as outsiders, in contrast to women who own the womb to nurture a baby and give birth. This male loneliness is most noticeable in Macbeth's fear of Banquo, which is predicted by the witches in "Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none" (1.3.65). Miyagi read this issue as parallel to Macbeth who desires to overcome his fear and loneliness by killing. In order to criticise male human desire, Miyagi directed Abe's Macbeth as comically inflamed and ruined by the weird babies who wore crowns and masks of cloned sheep.

In effect, this new version of *Macbeth* was directed as a revenge play for anonymous people, not only unborn babies but also women and children who have been neglected in man-written history. On a stage covered with white windmills, the female performers entered in crested black *kimonos* and *hakama* suggesting the return of the dead and they began playing music resembling a turbulent wind that spun the windmill sails. According to Miyagi, the sea of the outcasts' blood avenges the male history; the sea of their blood sometimes forms the witches, other times Lady Macbeth and Banquo, so as to lead Macbeth to his final destruction (Miyagi 2004, Eglinton 2006a).

Lady Macbeth, as an ideal wife, was summoned when Macbeth read his own letter to her about the encounter with the witches (Figure 4). Macbeth's voice was gradually replaced by the speaker Lady Macbeth and then the mover Lady Macbeth appeared on stage. The reason why Lady Macbeth disappeared in the latter half was to signify that their revenge was to some extent achieved. After stirring up Macbeth's manliness in the banquet scene of Act 3, Scene 3, the mover Lady Macbeth's see-through *kimono* and chastity belt were taken off by the mover Banquo and she put on the crested black *kimono* and *hakama* like the other performers. Accordingly, in the hand-washing scene of Act 5, Scene 1, Abe's Macbeth physicalized Lady Macbeth. This cross-gender scene can be read in two ways: Lady Macbeth was the illusion of Macbeth, or Macbeth was possessed by her phantom. In the final scene, Macbeth emitted a death cry, surrounded by the crowned cloned sheep. The female performers changed into red *kimonos* in contrast to Macbeth's black armour, suggesting that the revenge of the outcasts had been realised. The relationship of the living and the dead, the winner and the loser, was reversed in a nod to the logic in "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" (1.1.10).

This cross-gender rendition of *Macbeth* functioned not only on the level of Buddhist retribution but also as a parody and criticism of male violence and bonds. For instance, the female movers showed the exclusive homo-social bonds between Duncan's men in the banquet scene at the beginning of the play; they exchanged cups of *sake*, passing them mouth-to-mouth as dance-like entertainment, accompanied by Korean shamanistic incidental music, called *sinawi*. The conversation between Macduff and Malcom in England in Act 4, Scene 3 was represented in Japanese *kodan* (storytelling with modulation) style sitting at small

desks with folding fans while Macbeth secretly observed their skills as an audience member.

This *Macbeth* remade for the Paris audience, using Asian elements such as Japanese warrior culture, Korean shamanistic music and Buddhist concepts, offers many angles to debate issues of Orientalism, interculturalism, cultural appropriation, authority and hybridity. Even in the current global performing arts circuit, when Japanese and/or non-western companies perform in Europe, these phenomena still present problems of critical concern; the west tends to look at the east with an exotic gaze and the east strategically appeals to it. For a nation to gauge its power and position in the world it must compare itself to both the global and local dominant power. As parts of the “East” or “Orient” grow in economic and political power, particularly China and India, there comes a parallel affirmation of cultural identity that is defined in relationship to other countries in the region - more so than to former and current western colonial powers. On the other hand, it remains contentious to define what Asia and Orientalism is, as well as Europe and Occidentalism. As an example of this, I, as a Japanese living in a highly westernised and modernised society in urban Japan, sometimes feel self-exoticism or reverse-Orientalism towards traditional Japanese arts such as *kimono*. In effect, there are numerous examples of “Japanese-made” Shakespeare exploiting Oriental exoticism, such as the works of Suzuki Tadashi and Ninagawa Yukio, to attract both domestic and international audiences and markets. Even though these directors would likely deny the use of exoticism, it seems almost inevitable that a type of Japanese Shakespeare that appropriates the western canon while exploiting Asian cultures as exotica in narcissistic, retrospective or innovative ways, would be labelled as such. Part of the reason is that if a Japanese theatre maker tries to adapt western work in a Japanese context, he or she will naturally employ elements of contemporary and traditional Japanese culture, since they are constitutive of the very environment in which the artist operates. Even though cultures are heterogenous, granular, fluid, evolving and potentially borderless, when placed in front of a market, particularly an international market, performance practices can be reduced to the confines of categories. Exoticism can therefore be seen as part of that categorization and marketing process, a process that favours cultural unity rather than the complexity of otherness.

Miyagi, who believes in the theatre as a tool for encountering the other and achieving mutual influences and transformation, stated in the interview that

“Orientalism and exoticism are already closed as understandable systems.” In order to open up the closed door, Ku Na’uka uses texts and themes which cannot be dismissed as predictable Oriental spectacle; this is part of the reason behind the choice of works from the western canon such as *Medea* and *Macbeth* in Paris. They also produced *The Tale of Nala*, the most representative part of the Indian epic *Mahabharata* for the opening of the Théâtre Claude Lévi-Strauss in association with the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris in October 2006. Miyagi, taking heed from Rustom Bharucha who criticized Peter Brook’s decontextualization of the Indian epic with regard to colonialism, cultural imperialism and Orientalism (Bharucha 1991; Eglinton 2003b), premiered *The Tale of Nala* at the Toyokan, part of the Tokyo National Museum in Ueno in 2003, revived it at the Jogu Jakarta Arts Festival in 2005, toured with the production in France in 2013. Miyagi was eventually invited by the Avignon Festival to “perform back” the Indian epic at the Carrière de Boulbon in 2015, which is where Brook’s *Mahabharata* opened in 1985.

Miyagi’s *Mahabharata* production was inspired by the socio-cultural trends of a Kyoto palace in the *Heian* Era (circa 794-1185) when people were strongly influenced by imagined Chinese and Indian cultures (Eglinton 2006a). Even with Miyagi’s awareness of the issues of cultural appropriation there are still questionable elements in his productions, for example to what extent was the traditional Korean music in the Japanese *Macbeth* and the Indian *rasa* in the Japanese *Mahabharata* appropriated in the Paris productions?

It is clear that Miyagi positively pursues cultural encounters and hybrids in theatre practice as per his statement that “in Japanese vessels, we channel content such as *Mahabharata* and Buddhism, whose origins are actually hard to define.” This directorial choice endorses Miyagi’s view that “cultures are always mobile and fluid, in the midst of their process;” thus there is no cultural authority or hierarchy between so-called originals and copies (Eglinton 2006a). Ku Na’uka’s eclectic methods, which amalgamate binary elements such as east and west, traditional and contemporary, and femininity and masculinity underwent further experimentation in their third Shakespearean production, based on *Othello*.

4. *Othello* re-enacted by Desdemona in Noh Dream Play

Ku Na’uka’s de Mugen-noh na Othello (Othello in the Sprit of Ku Na’uka’s Noh Dream Play) was performed at the Japanese garden of the Tokyo

National Museum in Ueno Park in November 2005. The *hashigakari*, a *noh* walkway, was installed against the backdrop of a teahouse surrounded by an autumn garden and pond, and emphasised the image of Cyprus as an island. As the title suggests, this *Othello* was not meant to be a *noh* play in a traditional and authentic sense. This production borrowed the essences and basic structures of *mugen-noh*, *noh* dream plays, yet did not follow all the conventions of *noh* plays (Miyagi 2005). Consequently, this production became an intercultural meeting point between Japanese theatre and the Shakespearean text, as well as an intersection between blackness and whiteness, tragedy and comedy, tradition and modernity, past and present, this world and the next world.

Miyagi had always felt that the original character of “chaste” Desdemona murdered by her husband as “a whore” was too idealistic, passive and even parasitic on her husband’s power, and this made him reluctant to direct *Othello*. Yet he found the possibility of directing the piece from the heroine’s perspective after reading an essay by a Japanese scholar of comparative literature, Sukehiro Hirakawa, and subsequently he asked Hirakawa to adapt the entire play (Miyagi 2005). In the essay, Hirakawa writes on the life and accomplishment of Arthur David Waley, a British scholar of Oriental classic literature who adapted John Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi* into a *noh* dream play around the 1910s. Hirakawa explains how Waley was influenced by other westerners fascinated by *noh* such as Ernest Fenellosa, Ezra Pound and William Butler Yeats and then developed his own technique, adapting English Renaissance plays. Following the example of Waley, Hirakawa partially adapts *Othello* into a *noh* dream play in his essay (2004: 190-256).

Traditional *noh* dream plays consist of two parts. In the first half called *maeba*, the *shite* or main character, enters with companions called *tsure*, in front of the *waki* or secondary actor, who is often a travelling monk with the function of mediator between the *shite* and the audience, the dead world and the living world. There is then a short *kyogen* performance, a comical and conversational interlude, between the more serious and musical *noh* scenes. In the latter half called the *nochiba*, the *shite* reveals the identity of the ghost and re-enacts the most critical and final moment in his or her life in front of the *waki*. By re-enacting and re-living the past in the present time, the ghost-*shite* achieves redemption and finally leaves this world. What the *shite* and the audience witness can be read as a mere dream vision of the *waki*, inspired by the memory of the land or a local tragic story.

In Hirakawa's adaptation, the *shite* is the ghost of Desdemona. Thus the tragedy of the interracial marriage emerges from the vision of the marginalized white Venetian wife and not that of the jealous husband, the "noble moor" or the Venetian senators. The choice of the *shite* fits three of the five categories of *noh* plays: beautiful women, madwomen, and supernatural beings. It is also suggested that these three categories mirror the images of the name Desdemona; its Greek etymology is "ill-fated" and anagrammatically her name contains the words "demon" and "dead."

The play is set in Cyprus under the control of Turkish Muslims, reflecting the shifting history of the fortress on the intersection between the Arab, African and European worlds. A female performer, Honda Maki, both verbally and physically played a Franciscan-like travelling monk from Venice. The cross-gendered male priest took the position of the *waki* and encountered a group of deserted Venetian women in white western dresses with black veils to hide their faces. These women functioned both as movers of the *tsure* as well as *hayashi*: musicians who sit at the back of the stage. The poor women have been abandoned by their fellow citizens and have survived as prostitutes and slaves under Turkish occupation.

In narrating their misery, one of them who had a black handkerchief "spotted with strawberries" (3.3.439-440) turned out to be the ghost of Desdemona. The *shite* sought the priest for her redemption, which is more of a Buddhist act than a Christian one: "How shameful. I am the soul of the noble Moor's wife. She that was once called Desdemona. Encountering you from Venice, I keenly realise that my love still ties my soul to this place. Pray for me. Oh pray for my release."¹⁸ The *maeba* ended with the *shite*'s *nanori*, the self-introduction of the ghost, and she exited through the *hashigakari*. The most notable part of the *maeba* was Mikari's physicalization of Desdemona, whose lines were mainly articulated by the *jiutai*, the seated chorus, at the side of the stage, including the speaker Desdemona played by Natsumi Sugiyama.

In this production, the *jiutai*, some dressed in mock Heian era Japanese costumes and some dressed as pseudo-astronauts made of transparent vinyl, functioned not only as a chorus to narrate the background of the story but also as amplifiers of the thoughts and emotions of each individual mover. The *jiutai* then

¹⁸ If not otherwise noted, all quotations from *Ku Na'uka's de Mugen-noh na Othello (Othello in the Sprit of Ku Na'uka's Noh Dream Play)* are from Sukehiro Hirakawa's unpublished play and are all my translations.

even performed the masked comical interlude known as *ai-kyogen* on the central stage, while the priest *waki* fell asleep. In contrast to the archaic and inflected recitation in the first half, the three scenes quoted from Odashima Yushi's modern Japanese translation, the Council Chamber in Act 1, Scene 3, the conspiracy between Iago and Roderigo in Act 2, Scene 1 and Iago's deception of Othello in Act 3, Scene 3 were comically portrayed. Except for Kato Yukio's Roderigo who functioned as one of the musicians, all the male characters, Othello (Abe Kazunori), Iago (Ohtaka Koichi), Brabantio (Yoshiue Shoichiro), Cassio (Daidomumon Yuya), wore masks made of plastic wood described as "artless and primitive" (Sekihara 2005) and moved around in a restless manner. Abe's Othello stood out among the skin colour masks partly because his own was black but also because his movement was overtly militaristic (Figure 5).

After the third *kyogen* scene, the *shite* in a black and white leper-like dress returned to the stage and faced the awoken *waki*. The *shite* showed an attitude of indignation towards the *waki* and *jiutai* who accused Desdemona of betraying the Christian Venetians in a conspiracy with the Black Muslim Moor and the Turks and also of committing adultery with Cassio. In Hirakawa's playtext, the contrast of colour, the vile black and the innocent white were verbally emphasised in their dispute, such as "A black ram and a white ewe are mixing." "The bed in spring is white / So am I / How can I betray them?" "No, no the world is suspicious / in the darkness suspicion raises demons." Some subtitles in cursive script were even projected onto a screen with the intention of doubling up for audiences who were not necessarily used to listening to archaic Japanese.

In order to disclose the bitter truth, in front of the *shite* and the *waki*, the most formidable moment, Othello's deception by Iago was revealed as the fourth *ai-kyogen* scene. As if the past were revived in the present, Iago and Othello, who had taken off the primitive masks, re-performed Act 3, Scene 3, which Desdemona in life had never known. Furthermore, Desdemona's most critical and yet closest moment to Othello, her own murder, was re-enacted by herself. Not only the movement and narration of Desdemona, but also that of Othello, were integrated into the body and tongue of Micari; her white hand wore Othello's black armour-clad hand and in a symbolic gesture she seemed to choke herself (Figure 6). While the *jiutai* sang "The chrysanthemum whiter than snow / The chrysanthemum whiter than snow / I hesitate for a while" quoted from Natsume Soseki's *haiku* on *Othello*:

“siragiku ni sibasi tamerau hasami kana” (a pair of scissors hesitates for a short while at the white chrysanthemum), Desdemona’s *hitamen*, literally meaning “a direct mask,” or a mask that resembles a white face, evoked a variety of emotions which shifted between disturbance and determination, grotesque and grace, sane and insane, and love and hate. The white hand and the black one fought, struggled and danced together. After a while, the white and black hands folded and overlapped and strangled the *shite*. As the border between the black man and the white woman dissolved, Desdemona’s hesitation and agony were resolved in the *jiutai* song, “The light of life is put out / and it’s gone / and it’s gone.” With the help of the monk’s prayer, Desdemona was released from this world and departed for the next.

As seen above, this *noh* dream play in Ku Na’uka’s style opened the possibility of defusing binaries such as black and white, masculinity and femininity, to murder and to be murdered, to forgive and to be forgiven, the east and the west, and tradition and contemporaneity. In addition, while deviating from *noh*’s prescribed system, this production redefined Ku Na’uka’s own method in practical terms. For example, to suit the acoustics and rhythms that a contemporary audience may be used to, the slow articulation and movement of *noh* was deformed and speeded up by the speakers and the musicians. The mixed use of Asian and African instruments, especially Indonesian *gamelan*, was effective in describing the pitches of the characters’ emotions, while avoiding the evocation of overt Japaneseness. The costumes were a mixture of pseudo-western, Islamic, African and Japanese styles, reflecting the melting pot of race and religion in Hirakawa’s version of the play: Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Shamanism.

Moreover, in the use of masks, norms were inverted. Makeup is usually not used in *noh* and the *shite* portraying supernatural beings such as ghosts and demons wear masks. In the case of *kyogen*, the use of masks is usually limited to the portrayal of demons and monsters. After trial and error, Miyagi made the decision to reverse the elements so that the ghost *shite* wore no mask while the *ai-kyogen* characters did wear masks in order to differentiate them from the *noh* scenes. This decision came from his realization that Ku Na’uka’s method consisting of movers, speakers and musicians is parallel to *noh*’s three elements of *shite*, *jiutai* and *hayashikata*. Both Ku Na’uka and *noh* have a similar approach to theatre: the suppression and abstraction of expressions as well as an inward view of the world (Eglinton 2006a).

5. *Othello* re-oriented through Desdemona in India and Korea

This intercultural *Othello* project fusing *noh-kyogen* with Shakespeare was controversial for traditional theatre goers and attended by more fringe-oriented audiences, but the production in Tokyo and at the 8th International Theatre Festival in New Delhi, held in January 2006, were well received, as the following review attests:

The Japanese director Miyagi Satoshi's version of Shakespeare's classic drama of intrigue, venality, love and suspicion, *Othello*, marked by the austere classicism of *Noh* and the modern sensibility of Samuel Beckett, was one of the highlights of the first week. The soul of Desdemona, strangled by Othello in a fit of jealous rage, wants release from her life as a wandering soul and seeks salvation. What a performance by Micari. She dons a dark glove on one hand (to denote Othello the Moor) and clasps it with her white hand. And in the interplay of the two hands is revealed the entire misfortune of Othello and Desdemona's love and final tragedy. (Nagpal 2006)

Miyagi claimed that this success came, to some extent, from Ku Na'uka's *Othello* having solved the Indian audience's ambivalence towards the ex-suzerain British Empire and the continuing allure of Shakespeare. The Indian audience, he observed, was critical of British colonialism, insisted on its cultural independence, yet could not reject Shakespearean works. Thus, Ku Na'uka's *Othello* without its "English" language but with a newfound "eastern spirit," presented an alternative Shakespearean play in which the east had exoticized the east (Eglinton 2006a). Moreover, Miyagi went as far as to claim that "Indians read the story as not inherent to the Japanese but universal to the East" (Eglinton 2006a). This statement evokes a sense of pan-Asianism, which is the idea that people of Asian origin share similar values and histories and thus should be united politically and/or culturally. However, in practice Miyagi tends to favour multi-culturalism and cultural-hybridity, and does not self-identify as an advocate of pan-Asianism. Thus, this intercultural *Othello* that repositioned "Shakespeare" in "India" functioned as a double-edged sword depending on the audience's point of view. On the one hand, with the economic rise of India, the position of "the Bard" as the symbol of the ex-western coloniser and

illuminator was weakened in the process of “re-appropriation” and transformation, while the representations of female characters and the geo-political sites of “Asia” and the image of the “Orient” were strengthened. On the other hand, the danger in prescribing a pan-Asianist universalism is that it can contribute to new forms of nationalism, that is to say, it risks reproducing the western hegemonic power structure that it seeks to displace.

In the wake of the production in New Delhi, Miyagi began to further question the binaries between indigenous culture and imported cultures, tradition and modernity, East and West and this was reflected in a programme note for the Asian Performing Arts Festival, Taipei 2006 entitled, “Tradition and Future:”

We should re-read the dynamics of “inter-Asian” cultural encounters and exchanges that have been refining mutual artistic practice. The aim is not to state that “these thoughts and these art forms originated from our country.” Instead, the aim is to expand our imagination, to revise the background of the encounters between one’s native culture and foreign cultures that led to the creation of a local art form (Miyagi 2006, translated by Eglinton).

Based on this idea and with the intention to “disband tradition as a cliché and to create new works for the future,” he produced a work-in-progress production simply titled *Othello* alongside the Korean director Lee Youn-Taek (1952-) and his theatre company, Street Theater Troupe, at the Sejong Centre, Seoul in October 2008. Miyagi, who was also the producer of the Asian Performing Arts Festival, asked Lee to re-direct the piece as part of the programme titled “Asian artists meet Asian artists.”

In February 2009, *Othello in Noh Style* was produced at the Tokyo Metropolitan Theater as part of the international theatre festival called Festival/Tokyo. Whereas Miyagi’s *Othello in the Spirit of a Noh Dream Play* drew on the stylistic and aesthetic framework of Japanese *noh*, Lee looked to Korean folklore and shamanistic song and dance called *Chohongut* for his recontextualization. Through the *mudang* as intermediary between the spirits, gods and the humans, *gut* rituals have been traditionally employed as collective prayers since ancient times. Aware of the danger of falling into universalism and sheer exotic spectacle, Lee pointed out: “Although the apparent style is different, this ritualistic

current is deeply rooted in both Japanese, Korean and English theatre. Whether Shakespearean drama, Japanese tradition, *gut* shamanism, they all originate from the same source, and thus there must be a way for them to communicate with each other” (Eglinton 2009a).

Lee valued Hirakawa’s *noh* adaptation as an original inter-textual and intercultural adaptation and set about rewriting the play to instil his own print by relocating it to parts of the ancient Asian world around the 3rd century. A commonality can be drawn here with Kawakami and Sadayakko’s [Emi Suuin] 1903 production of *Othello* in the directorial impetus to re-route Shakespeare to another part of East Asia. For Kawakami and Sadayakko, the relocation of the play to Taiwan, part of the Japanese Empire at that time, was a way of affirming Japan’s ascendancy as a colonial power in the world, a mirroring of Eurocentric hegemony and its objectification and subjugation of an oriental “other.” For Lee, the interest almost a hundred years later was in turning to the past to rethink the potential of intercultural encounters within an ancient Asian context. In Lee’s version, it is suggested that Desdemona is from a Korean locale, possibly Jeju Island, and Othello as a *samurai* wearing Japanese armour, called the “Black Sea Man”, is from the South of Japan, perhaps Okinawa, and Osman Turk is Han Chinese. In Hirakawa’s version of *Othello*, the story is narrated from the female perspective of Desdemona as *shite*; in Lee’s treatment, the female narrator role is even more prominent due to the female *mudang* as *waki*.

The five acts based on the style of *mugen-noh* unfolded on a stage replete with musical instruments, including a large drum, a marimba and a *koto* and overhung by numerous threads from the ceiling. Under a dark blue light, after the jingle of a bell, a female *mudang* as *waki* entered from stage right chanting in both Japanese and Korean languages: “Open the path in the sea / in this burning world / for the lost lives / for the people who were forced to die without rest and silence / burn the light of life.” “I have come all the way to this island of Himiko from far away, across the sea.”¹⁹ Then the spirit of Desdemona (Micari) who sought redemption due to her *han*, intense pain and grief in Korean, called from stage left in a white traditional Korean dress *chima jeogori* with a white handkerchief

¹⁹ If not otherwise noted, all quotations from *Othello in Noh Style* are from Lee’s unpublished adaptation on Hirakawa’s unpublished play and are all my translations.

embroidered with strawberries in her hand. At the rear, Othello (Abe) stood silently in *samurai* armor with a helmet with two large horns on his head. In front of the two women, the *mudang* and Desdemona, the Venetian scene of Act I was enacted as the first *ai-kyogen*, in which Brabantio (Yoshiue) appeals to the Duke of Venice learning that “his daughter will marry General Othello, a southern man.”

The second half began with the roaring sound of Desdemona's shouts of “How shameful!” in resistance to other actors who seemed to be trying to rape her, while accusing her of adultery. Due to this collective violence over a woman, Othello's violence against Desdemona and his male bond with Iago (Ohtaka) were amplified. In the second *ai-kyogen*, Iago's deception of Othello was set in a bath. A red-haired Iago tended to Othello, washing his back, which was covered with a large tattoo of a blue fish. After being grabbed by his genitals and kicked in his face until his nose bled, Iago cunningly gained control over Othello, who in anger demanded “the ocular proof” (3.2. 370). The two naked men dressed only in white loincloths in a tragi-comical scene were poignant symbols of the male bond and misogyny (Eglinton 2009b) (Figure 7).

In the final scene, Desdemona lay in bed in a white nightgown holding a white chrysanthemum. Behind, at centre stage, Othello entered dressed in armour and a helmet repeating “It is the cause” (5.2.1) – a line which resonated with the chorus and the *mudang*'s prayer. In contrast to these movements, Desdemona stood still reading Natsume Soseki's *haiku* on *Othello*, “siragiku ni sibasi tamerau hasami kana.” At that moment, Othello shouted and plucked the chrysanthemum from Desdemona's hand (Figure 8). Desdemona covered her face and the threads hanging from the ceiling fell to the ground, as did the chorus one after another. After this symbolic representation of Othello's murder of Desdemona, the *mudang* approached the deathbed accompanied by Korean shamanistic music called *sinawi*. Then Desdemona woke up and walked to the back of the stage with the *mudang*, against a projected image of dark blue sea water surrounding the peninsula and the southern island. Before long, Othello and Desdemona re-entered the stage hand in hand singing and walking with other characters in accordance with Korean festive music under the bright lighting.

The comical and cheerful ending of Lee's *Othello* radically differed from Shakespeare's gruesome and hopeless original and from Miyagi's tranquil and cathartic adaptation. In my interview in Seoul and post-performance talk in Tokyo,

Lee compared “Japanese lonely individualism” in *noh* with “Korean collectivism” in *gut*. He referred to Natsume Soseki’s *haiku* on *Othello* and his lecture given in 1914 titled “My Individualism,” as well as *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, a seminal study of Japan by American anthropologist Ruth Benedict first published in 1946, which was influential in shaping American ideas about Japanese shame culture during the occupation of Japan. Lee further mentioned that there is no absolute tragic space in the Korean collective psyche referred to as *han*. Lee’s understanding of the differences between the Japanese and Korean psyche are debatable and some audience members were uncomfortable with his festive ending. However, Lee’s *Othello* does boldly subvert Shakespeare’s tragedy as well as Miyagi’s adaptation beyond his expectations, by re-imagining the mixed-marriage, history, geography and colonialism in Asia and re-questioning the notions of tragedy and comedy, *han*, death, life and redemption.

While exposing differences in style, this Japanese-Korean collaboration of *Othello* in *noh* and *gut* styles recaptures the dynamics of “inter-Asian” cultural encounters through hybrid texts, further rewriting Shakespeare’s interracial marriage tragedy, Natsume Soseki’s *haiku* and essay. This intercultural collaboration can be read as an answer to the question, “Can intercultural Asian performance, by the simple fact of its non-Western origin, engage from a different position the difficulties posed by the imperialist foundations of Orientalism and colonialism?”, raised by Kennedy and Yong in *Shakespeare in Asia* (2010: 11). Miyagi and Lee achieved a “re-orientation” of *Othello* in an East-Asian context without falling prey to bardolatry, self-Orientalism or nationalism, or attempting to lay claim to original indigenous cultures. This collaboration re-enacted from female characters’ perspectives, which illuminated intersections between England, Japan and Korea, succeeded in expanding the paradigm of intercultural theatre and re-orientating Shakespeare production in Asia.

Chapter 6

“Thou art translated”: Re-mapping Noda Hideki and Miyagi Satoshi’s

***A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in Japan post-March 11 2017**

Ever since the first introduction of Shakespeare to a Japanese audience in the nineteenth century, his plays have functioned as what M. L. Pratt calls “contact zones,” that is, spaces where readers engage in a “radically heterogeneous” (39) web of historic, linguistic and cultural encounters. Contact zones are translingual interfaces between communities and their cultures; points of negotiation, misunderstanding and mutual transformation.

Over a century and a half, numerous Shakespearean productions and adaptations have been performed on Japanese stages and many have attempted to negotiate these cultural intersections. At the same time, in the context of Japan’s emergence as a nation state, following the Meiji Restoration, a new monolingualistic consciousness was fostered by the authorities. In the construction of this ideology, “internal differences were suppressed whilst difference from the outside world was highlighted in order to define, and thereby create, the idea of a Japanese nation” and a “unitary national language” (Heinrich 3-4). However illusory, linguistic and cultural homogeneity had a strong influence on socio-cultural spheres including the theatre.

Against this backdrop, much of Japanese Shakespeare has consisted of Japanese-language adaptations. There have been a limited number of exceptions; productions that have attempted to be multi-lingual, and that rethink the position of Japan and Asia from different geo-political perspectives. This is the case of Ong Keng Sen’s intercultural Shakespeare trilogy, *Lear* (premiered in Tokyo, Japan in 1997), *Desdemona* (premiered in Adelaide, Australia in 2000) and *Search Hamlet* (premiered in Helsingor, Denmark in 2002) which, inspired by the Singaporean director’s own multicultural background, was part of an experimental framework investigating the politics of cultural identity in a globalizing world.

While on one level, Japanese Shakespeare is ostensibly monolingual, on another level, as stated in Chapter 1, it is always already translingual, not only traversing time and space – Elizabethan England and modern Japan for instance – but moving intralinguistically between translation and adaptation.

In this chapter, I will explore the idea of the translingual, not from an overt multicultural perspective, but from what are purportedly monocultural productions. The case I will analyze is *A Midsummer Night's Dream* adapted and directed by Noda Hideki in August 1992 in Tokyo, at the end of Japan's "bubble" era; and later directed by Miyagi Satoshi for the Shizuoka Performing Arts Centre (SPAC) in a sell-out run that began in April 2011, one month after the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami. Due to popular demand, Miyagi revived the production at SPAC in January 2014.

Drawing on my experience as the surtitle translator of Noda's Japanese adaptation "back" into English for both SPAC productions, I will read Noda's version of Shakespeare's comedy as an example of translingual practice, examining the intralinguistic and intracultural relationship between Noda's text and Miyagi's revival. In what ways did Miyagi's reading of news media responses to the March 11 2011 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear catastrophe inflect Noda's adaption along socio-political lines? To what extent did Miyagi's scenic translation, with its costumes and set made of newspaper change Noda's play? What is lost and gained in processes of adaptation in the wake of an environmental catastrophe?

1. Noda Hideki

Noda was born in Nagasaki in 1955 and showed an interest in theatre from an early age. In 1976, while studying law at the University of Tokyo, he founded the theatre company Yume no Yuminsha (Dreaming Bohemian). This was part of the second wave in the so-called *shogekijyo undo* (Little Theatre Movement). Noda followed in the footsteps of the movement's political forerunners, Suzuki Tadashi and Ninagawa Yukio. With Yuminsha, Noda wrote, directed, and acted in high-speed, pun-driven, physical productions throughout the 1980s and early 90s. Among these was *Nokemono Kitarite* in 1982 (*The Advent of the Beast*), which earned him the prestigious Kishida Kunio Drama Award. He was invited to stage the play at the Edinburgh International Festival in 1987, marking his international debut.

Although the play was generally well received, critics noted difficulties of translation, particularly with regard to Noda's trademark wordplay, which was simultaneously translated as live commentary, saying it was "almost impossible [to understand] given the breakneck pace of both speech and action" (*The Scotsman*, 24 August 1987). Noda returned to the Edinburgh Festival with *Han Shin* (*Half God*,

1990), an adaptation of Moto Hagiwara's *manga*, which is a story about Siamese twin girls. Despite being at the height of its popularity, Noda decided to disband the troupe. This sudden shift coincided with the end of Japan's bubble economy and was motivated by Noda's desire to explore theatre beyond the limits of Japanese language, the Japanese theatre market, and the confines of the Yuminsha cast.

In the autumn of 1992, immediately after the production of *Zenda Jo no Toriko, Kokemusu Wareraga Eiji no Yoru* (*The Prisoner of Zenda Castle, The Night of Our Moss-covered Infancy*), Noda obtained a year-long Ministry of Culture scholarship to study drama in London. He attended several Theatre de Complicite workshops and developed a close relationship with director Simon McBurney. Consequently, he was able to expand his physical techniques to include Lecoq-based expression, drawing on *commedia dell'arte* and clowning. Upon returning to Japan in 1993, he formed a new theatre company called Noda Map in an attempt to re-map his theatrical direction.

Compared to the Yuminsha period, characterized by, and to an extent confined to, Japanese language and actors, Noda's subsequent work sought to expand his international profile. *Aka Oni* (*Red Demon*), Noda's first major international play, was performed in Japan and Thailand in 1999, before opening at London's Young Vic Theatre in 2003. Noda then began a long-term collaboration with Irish playwright and adapter Colin Teevan. Working in English rather than in translation, they co-wrote *The Bee*, Noda's first international hit, which premiered at London's Soho Theatre in 2006, and in 2008 *The Diver*, staged in Tokyo in Japanese and in London in English. From *The Bee* onwards, Noda's work became more politically driven and designed for small stages to enable international touring (Eglinton 2015).

2. Adapting *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Between 1986 and 1992, Noda produced four adaptations of Shakespeare. For Yuminsha, he directed *Richard III* (1990), reimagined as two rival *ikebana* (Japanese flower arrangement) families. For Toho, one of Japan's major commercial film and theatre companies, he directed *Twelfth Night* (1986) featuring Daichi Mao, a retired *otokoyaku*, or male impersonator at the Takarazuka Revue Company. In 1990, he staged *Much Ado About Nothing* set in a sumo wrestler family. The final installment in his Shakespeare series (to date) was *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,

which premiered at the Nissei Gekijyo, a major commercial theatre in Tokyo in 1992.

Among the four adaptations, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* marked the furthest departure from the original play and from the principal Japanese translations by Fukuda Tsuneari, Nakano Yoshio and Odashima Yushi. Noda reworked the play's central themes of love and sexual desire through food culture, transforming Shakespeare's Athenian court into a Japanese restaurant called "Hanakin", and relocating the forest to the foothills of Mt Fuji. He turned Demetrius and Lysander into two cooks called Demi and Lai, transformed Hermia into Tokitamago (whisked egg), daughter of the restaurant owner, and renamed Helena as Soboro (scrambled egg), daughter of one of the restaurant workers. While Oberon, Titania and Puck kept their original names, the fairies took on new pun-based names such as "Kinosei", which can be translated either as "tree fairy" or "because of your imagination". Moreover, the mechanicals' names were Japanized so that Bottom, for example, became Fukusuke, a shoe smith, and their professions were altered to match the restaurant setting.

In addition to the Japanization of the characters, Noda incorporated stories from other literary works including Johann Goethe's *Faust* and Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, inventing for instance a character called Mephisto who prompted, exposed, controlled and ate up people's oppressed desires and unspoken dreams. The invisible Mephisto intruded into Shakespeare's world and the world of the fairies disguised as an Indian changeling boy intent on causing destruction. He stole the role of Puck in Act 1 Scene 2 of Noda's version by locking Puck in a cage and declaring, "instead of my cousin, I will show a midsummer night's dream to human folk".²⁰ He presided over the confusing love game for Athenian couples, then later on directed the mechanical's rehearsals of *Alice in Wonderland* (Figure 11) as well as Bottom and Titania's love romp in the woods. Both Puck and Mephisto were aware of the meta-theatricality of their roles, which is evident in Act 1 Scene 14 of Noda's version when Puck remonstrated against Mephisto saying, "This is very bad. He stole my lines again, not only my lines, he stole my part".

²⁰ Translated by Eglinton and commissioned by SPAC for production surtitles in 2011 and 2014. The publication of this translation is forthcoming in the *Asian Intercultural Shakespeare Archive*, <http://a-s-i-a-web.org>. Hereafter, all quotations from Noda's version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are from my translation.

Noda conceived these thematic shifts whilst working on *Much Ado About Nothing* several years earlier. He wrote a memo in December 1989 in which his ideas for the adaptation were just beginning to surface: “What would it be like if I replace ‘to love’ and ‘to like’ with ‘to want to eat?’ To change the relationship between to love and to be loved into the relationship between to eat and to be eaten” (Hasebe 346, qtd. in Minami 149).

Noda’s freewheeling adaptation, with an all-star cast including Otake Shinobu as Soboro and Karasawa Toshiyuki as Demi, bears the influence of the last wave of Japan’s bubble economy. This was apparent in the production’s set design, which resembled an amusement park with bright lights, climbing frames and a giant chopping board revolving like a merry-go-round on stage. It also permeated the play’s language, with its exuberant puns and metaphors.

3. Creativity from constraint

Noda’s four adaptations of Shakespeare from the late 1980s to the early 1990s were characterized by radical textual alteration and the Japanization of characters and places. During that period, Noda believed that translation was quasi-impossible. In the case of Shakespeare, Noda said in an interview in 1996 “I think his word play is almost fatally lost in translation” (220). In the same interview, when asked about his own writing style and his relationship with Shakespeare in translation, he gave the following reply:

I read his [Shakespeare’s] works only in translation, and I first thought his plays were really good. But when I read his plays with the intention of staging them, I suddenly felt uneasy about his phraseology. This is probably because I have the rhythm of contemporary theatre in me. His similes and metaphors seemed to me beautiful and really absorbing when I just read them, yet when I re-read his plays for staging, they turn out to be different from the first impression I got from reading them (Noda 2001: 227).

Towards the end of the interview Noda further emphasized the difficulty of translation stating that,

If I am to honour the rhythm of Shakespeare's plays, I will think [*sic*] it necessary to rewrite his long lines. Since wordplays cannot be translated as they are, I will make a free translation of his plays according to my own interpretation" (Noda 2001: 228).

There are several key points that surface in these remarks concerning the relationship between translation, adaptation and Noda's cultural and linguistic contact with Shakespeare.

First, the influence of the *shogekijyo* approach to Shakespeare is apparent in the way Noda treats the text "not as canonical, but as a material resource to exploit" (Minami 146). This stands in stark contrast to the *shingeki* (new drama) tradition of imitating modern Western plays. Secondly, and as a corollary of this approach, Noda calls for a "free translation" to accommodate the problem of translating wordplay. However, Noda's desire for freedom is not merely a product of the *shogekijyo* attempt to displace Shakespeare as an icon of cultural imperialism, nor is it a quick fix to an idiomatic obstacle, it is also the consequence of an encounter with Shakespeare's language; a clash with the text as "contact zone," leading to an "uneasiness" with regard to Shakespeare's "phraseology." Here, Noda alludes to the constraint of preexisting forms and cultural coordinates embedded in the translation.

This notion of constraint can be separated into two strands. The first is an archival constraint, where texts function as maps of the shifting phraseologies and cultural traces that are inscribed through processes of translation and re-edition. Adaptation processes begin inside the confines of these cultural coordinates, before searching for ways to expand, displace or re-orient them. The second is the constraint of authority, which American literary critic Harold Bloom, writing in the context of psychoanalysis, terms the "anxiety of influence" (1973). Terry Eagleton notes how Bloom's literary theory, developed in the wake of Freud, "rewrites history in terms of the Oedipus complex. Poets live anxiously in the shadow of a 'strong' poet who came before them, as sons are oppressed by their fathers; and any particular poem can be read as an attempt to escape this 'anxiety of influence' by its systemic remoulding of a previous poem" (183).

This "remoulding" or re-orientation of the text is apparent in Noda's adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, both in the geographic shift from the

Athenian Court to the Japanese restaurant at the foot of Mt Fuji, but also in Noda's linguistic shift away from the standardized Japanese translation to what is almost a new dialect. The following scene from the second part of Noda's adaptation highlights the extent to which he departs from Odashima's translation - the most popular Japanese translation throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The scene corresponds to Act 3 Scene 1 in Shakespeare's version, in which Lysander awakes and falls in love with Helena (Figure 12):

DEMI: I'll jump into fire like *shabu shabu* (boiled pork) for my beautiful Soboro.

SOBORO: What's the matter Demi?

DEMI: Oh Soboro, compared to your beauty, caviar is mere deer droppings. Your lips are like ripe cherries seducing these lips to eat them up. Let me kiss your white hand that resembles a transparent fish. No, let me dance madly and eat your white fish.

Each line has been reworked and filled with culinary puns. As Noda himself pointed out, these puns are impossible to translate since the target language (in this case English) cannot accommodate the cultural references to Japanese traditional cuisine. However, even in Noda's Japanese, the sheer density of language, particularly colloquialisms, was difficult for Japanese-speaking audiences to grasp in its totality.

In an essay titled "The Search for a Native Language: Translation and Cultural Identity," translation studies theorist Annie Brisset claims that the elevation of dialect or vernacular language is a function in maintaining cultural identity through the act of translation: "translation becomes an act of reclaiming, or recentering of the identity, a re-territorializing operation" (346). Noda's vernacular is so highly personalized that it is as much an affirmation of personal identity as it is an attempt at constructing a new cultural identity, or a new Japanese Shakespeare. As I discuss later on, Miyagi referenced Noda's intense individualism in his production by associating the all-controlling character of Mephisto with Noda himself. Reminiscent of Shakespeare, Noda is known in Japan for his multi-disciplinary roles as playwright, director and actor.

On one level, for Noda to produce an adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that was “contemporary,” he found it is necessary to break with past linguistic and stylistic conventions and to be “free” to find a voice in the present. On another level, it was within these elements of constraint that new constraint was already anticipated. Thus, what Noda called a “free translation” was arguably a strategy he used to enable the act of adaptation and establish a new identity from inside old cultural and linguistic coordinates.

4. Between translation and adaptation

In his seminal essay, “The Task of the Translator,” Walter Benjamin raises the question of whether translation is an immanent function in a text:

The question of whether a work is translatable has a dual meaning. Either: Will an adequate translator ever be found among the totality of its readers? Or, more pertinently: Does its nature lend itself to translation and, therefore, in view of the significance of the mode, call for it? (2007: 71)

If, as Benjamin claims, the text already contains the seeds for its survival through translation – the text “calls” for translation – then to what extent does a text call for adaptation? In other words, is the adaptation process immanent in a text or is it something completely external to it, imposed and contrived? Does the adaptation presuppose the desire for a clean break with what has come before or is it part of the genealogy of the text?

If translation operates within the bounds of a text's linguistic structure, one could say that adaptation is a search for outbound connections, establishing communications across time, space and other mediums. In a lecture titled “What is the Creative Act?” Gilles Deleuze asked what it meant to have an idea in cinema as opposed to another medium. His response, in part, was that it means to think in terms of the capacities of that medium. A true idea in cinema is immanent in the attributes specific to cinema, which for Deleuze were “blocks of movement / duration” (314). This does not preclude likenesses and links to other media from forming within that specific idea and within that specific medium. On the contrary, just as the text demands to live on through translation, so too does the true medium-specific idea call for its survival through its adaptation to other media.

Noda's instinct in relation to adapting Shakespeare in the above remarks is to speak in terms of rhythm and sound. His interest is in the musicality and form of language, or what he calls "the rhythm of contemporary theatre." This dialogue with Shakespeare's text in translation is a translingual moment; an instance of communication based on a relationship of speaking and listening. In resisting the strictures of textual language, Noda's communication functions through what Probal Dasgupta calls a "Transcode." Approaching language as a "Transcode" is a "move from a grammar of language (viewed as a rigid Code which includes and excludes) to a Transcode of a speaking and listening dyad." Dasgupta claims that:

The advantage of such a move is that the listener is free to allow that the speaker may have arrived at her sentence this way or that way. Thus a listening Transcode can allow for one of many kinds of formation processes imagined as responsible for what has been produced. The various grammars thus become optional alternative ways to reach the outcome one is hearing. (2007: 70)

Noda's "contact" with Shakespeare in translation reveals a relationship fraught with tension. The encounter reinforces Noda's suspicion of the impossibility of translation and in the same move triggers an impulse for adaptation, suggesting that adaptation is the translingual double of translation. Noda's departure from Shakespeare's text and its translation takes form beyond the confines of the grammar of language – the in/exclusory code – in a transcoded speaking and listening process expressed through rhythm, sound and physicality. Analogously, it is like the character Fukusuke (Bottom) who finds himself "translated" into that "attractive ass" and dreams Bottom's bottomless dream.

5. Miyagi Satoshi, from Ku Na'uka to SPAC

If Noda's work during the 1990s was rooted in linguistic exploration, in the playfulness, foreignness and promiscuity of language, then Miyagi's work of the same period could be characterized by an interest in dramatic expression capable of transcending the barriers of language. As I discussed in the previous chapter, Miyagi founded the Ku Na'uka theatre company, which means "towards science" in Japanese, in Tokyo in 1990 and chose *Hamlet* as his debut production. One of the

defining features of the company that emerged early on was the division between “speakers” and “movers”, between body and voice. This concept, which can be found in traditional Japanese performing arts such as *bunraku* and *noh*, provided a means of framing and exploring the human condition, torn between thought and action through the acquisition of language. It is Miyagi’s belief that the very languages, which differentiate humans from animals, have made humans lonely creatures, locked in individual, mental prisons that consist of mere words.²¹

In 2007, Miyagi disbanded his company and took up the post of Artistic Director of SPAC, replacing Suzuki Tadashi. Although he continued to work with some of the actors from Ku Na’uka and retained some of the intercultural elements of their productions including music and costume, he left the speaker/mover device behind. Instead, he re-oriented his practice towards a renewed belief in the power of “poetic language”.

Miyagi’s concept of poetic language is tied to another concept he calls “weak theatre.” He posits both concepts in opposition to the male tendency to control language, the human body and mind, and nature. Instead, according to Miyagi, by reviving poetry, which eludes pragmatic individualistic control, all the actors at SPAC are asked to be aware of the vulnerability of their bodies on stage. This aesthetic is almost a reversal of Miyagi’s strategy with Ku Na’uka, where emphasis was placed on the presence of actors and intensity of language through the speaker/mover division. In an idealistic sense, for Miyagi, poetic language is like something that falls from the sky; it exists beyond the actor’s will and desire, but is nonetheless absorbed by the actor before he or she becomes aware of the poem itself.²² Miyagi began work on this new theatre aesthetic after his arrival at SPAC and it remains a work in progress.

6. The Power(lessness) of Theatre after Catastrophe

One of the reasons why Miyagi planned to direct Noda’s adaptation of *A Midsummer Nights’ Dream* as the opening show of SPAC’s first “World Theatre

²¹ For further background information and Miyagi’s directorial intentions, see Eglinton “Ku Na’uka’s *Hamlet* in Tokyo: An Interview with Satoshi Miyagi,” *Asian Theatre Journal*, vol. 28, no. 1 (Spring 2011), pp. 234-243.

²² For a full discussion of Miyagi’s revival of poetics and his concept of “weak theatre”, see Miyagi’s interview with Yasunori Nishikawa on the SPAC website: www.spac.or.jp/12_spring/miyagi_1.html.

Festival Shizuoka under Mt Fuji” is related to the power of poetry. For Miyagi, who has followed Noda’s work since his junior high school days (Noda is three years senior to Miyagi and both attended the same high school in Tokyo), Noda is one of the few contemporary playwrights capable of writing poetic plays. Miyagi wanted to create a festive musical play out of a Shakespearean comedy. Therefore, Noda’s adaptation of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* set near Mt Fuji seemed to be the perfect choice.

Miyagi had already programmed the production prior to the Tohoku earthquake of 11 March 2011, even though rehearsals began afterwards. Despite strong social and political pressure to cease artistic activities following the earthquake, Miyagi decided to proceed with the Festival. The earthquake and subsequent tsunami led to the meltdown of multiple reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant and changed the country’s socio-political situation. The event revealed a nation stretched to the limit of its resources and wary of the capacity of the market economy, the government and other authorities to ensure redevelopment. Amid growing public distrust of the mainstream media over misinformation related to government and corporate handling of the Fukushima nuclear incident, Miyagi addressed an audience at a press conference in April 2011 prior to the Festival, reaffirming his belief that “theatre gives audiences a chance to think about challenges in a calm and focused way.” His directorial task was not only to adapt an adaptation that would resonate with an audience in Shizuoka in 2011, but also in some way to respond to the earthquake and its aftermath, mindful of the ethical and political tensions it had produced.

As in the aftermath of past earthquakes of similar magnitude, the Tohoku disaster prompted a period of public self-restraint called *jishuku*, which involved reducing energy consumption following the closure of the country’s nuclear power plants. This also led to the closure of numerous theatre venues and cultural events across the country, responding in part to the call for energy preservation and heightened security measures, but also observing the general attitude of *jishuku* and the avoidance of all forms of entertainment. Therefore, at a political level, theatre was viewed as unnecessary in the immediate wake of the catastrophe.

While these periods of self-restraint can produce social cohesion through a concerted rebuilding effort, they can also function as a catalyst for the state to advance its own ideological agenda. In the wake of the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake,

for example, the government of the day seized the occasion to launch a “thrift and diligence campaign”, condemning luxury, excess and individualism, which according to Charles Schencking was an agenda that “remained ever-present throughout the interwar and wartime periods in Japan” (328).

At the same time, national crises present opportunities to re-evaluate the power of the arts. This is the case, for example, of Hijikata Yoshi’s construction of the Tsukiji Shogekijo in Tokyo, less than a year after the Kanto earthquake. In a roundtable discussion facilitated by the theatre magazine *Engeki Shincho*, Hijikata and his collaborator Osanai Kaoru declared that the reason for focusing initially on western drama in their new theatre programme was as a means of exploring possibilities for “a future dramatic art for future Japanese plays” (Powell 76). Similarly, the end of the Second World War opened the way for new modes of performance, including *ankoku butoh* and other counter-culture movements.

7. Adapting to Post-March 11: No contingency plan?

During the weeks following the earthquake, the minutiae of everyday life were seen in light of the disaster. In the context of Miyagi’s production, this led to further re-mapping of Noda’s text, and revealed a split in the adaptation process between intentionality and contingency. In this section, I will analyze elements of both re-mapping processes, starting with contingent change and ending with directorial change. Thus far, this chapter has focused on the intralinguistic workings of texts; on conscious decisions in processes of adaptation. The events of March 11 2011 present an “extralinguistic” force that imposes itself on the reading of the play. How was Noda’s text and Miyagi’s production affected by these events? What is lost and gained in processes of adaptation in the wake of an environmental catastrophe?

After the events, much of Noda’s text took on inflections beyond authorial or directorial control. For example, in the opening scene of the production at SPAC, the stark black stage was disturbed by the arrival of Soboro, the play’s heroine (played by Honda Maki) and Noda’s reworking of Helena in Shakespeare’s original. In her opening speech, which was part soliloquy and part invocation of the invisible forest-dwelling fairies under Oberon’s command, she questioned the human capacity to subsist in the face of the unknown: “Whenever something mysterious happens, people blame it on the night or they blame it on the summer [...] Or they think they’ve had a dream. But trust me, these mysteries are not imagined.”

Her solemn speech was quickly followed by a burst of drums from the live musical ensemble. Led by musical director Hiroko Tanakawa, the musicians play a central role in most of Miyagi's productions, fusing world music traditions to drive the atmospherics of the play. The drumbeat cued a sharp change in lighting states, from dark to bright white, revealing a newspaper-made forest that sprawled across the stage inhabited by newspaper-clad fairies (Figure 9).

Soboro's speech framed the play in an environmental register of language – heightened by Noda's relocation of the action to a forest near Mt Fuji – and this resonated with the unfolding ecological catastrophe in and around the Fukushima nuclear plant. In the post-March 11 context at SPAC, the Fairies were not only markers of the blurred boundary between the imagined and the real, but through their newspaper-clad bodies, they symbolized the dislocation between language and its referents; between government issued reports on environmental contamination and embodied experiences of radiation at ground level. Through their (in)visible presence, the fairies also alluded to language's capacity for forgetfulness. That is to say, despite being rooted in the logic of archival memory, language in its diverse modes of mediation can be used to fill a traumatic void and perpetuate a cycle of not-looking. The meta-theatrical device of newspaper costumes and sets foregrounded the powerlessness of language, revealing it as a filter or deferral mechanism that shields subjectivity from the traumatic core of human experience.

Similarly, many of Noda's wordplays took on sinister resonances in the production. For instance, in a climactic scene towards the end of the play, Mephisto sets the forest alight in an act of rage. He sees his act of arson as fulfilling a collective, unspoken desire for transgression. His lines present a moment in the play in which the border between the mythological and the everyday begins to blur:

MEPHISTO: As calls for the end of the world swell in number, it's my turn to take action. When you sail in a turbulent sea, all shaken up, you want to vomit. But you're too far out to turn back to land. You want to vomit and out of despair you wish the sea would swallow up the entire ship! These words, which you did not dare speak out, still reached me. I, Mephisto, will take action. I will grant your wish and let the sea swallow you up.

Noda's image of the "turbulent sea" that "swallow[s] up" its sailors, taps into existing fear that permeates Japanese literary and artistic history. It could, for example, be read as a reference to Hokusai Katsushika's famous woodblock painting, "The Great Wave off Kanagawa," which depicts a powerful sea engulfing a fleet of fishing boats full of prostrated fisherman against the backdrop of Mt Fuji. Most likely though, audiences at SPAC would have read the scene in relation to the tsunami of March 11.

These contingent inflections, born out of an ecological catastrophe, penetrate Noda's text in a way that seems to tie in with Miyagi's concept of poetic language as something that falls from the sky and lies beyond human will. At the same time, this exchange between text and contingent event cannot be reduced to the simplistic relationship of an imposition of meaning. Rather, the event is the trigger that awakens potentialities already contained within the text, but that are inaccessible, forgotten or overlooked in intentional readings.

In his discussion of the philosophical concept of difference, the anthropologist Gregory Bateson used the metaphor of the territory and the map to demonstrate how human perception of topology functions through "difference." For Bateson, what was inscribed on the map was not territory but difference: "be it a difference in altitude, a difference in vegetation, a difference in population structure, difference in surface, or whatever. Differences are the things that get onto a map" (457). Drawing on Bateson's logic, one could argue that what is inscribed in the text, or what gets into the play, is difference. However, difference can only be recognized as such to a community of readers able to locate its coordinates. Bateson explains the selection process of difference, which he re-terms as "information," in the following way:

Kant, in the *Critique of Judgment* [...] asserts that the most elementary aesthetic act is the selection of a fact. He argues that in a piece of chalk there are an infinite number of potential facts. The Ding an sich, the piece of chalk, can never enter into communication or mental process because of this infinitude. The sensory receptors cannot accept it; they filter it out. What they do is to select certain facts out of the piece of chalk, which then become, in modern terminology, information. I suggest that Kant's statement can be modified to say that there is an infinite number of

differences around and within the piece of chalk. [...] Of this infinitude, we select a very limited number, which become information. In fact, what we mean by information — the elementary unit of information — is a difference (459).

The tsunami that struck the east coast of Japan on March 11 2011 also contains an infinite number of facts around and within it, of which, Noda's character Mephisto is a tiny iteration. The same logic can be applied to Noda's language and its potentially infinite number of connections. Therefore, what appears on the surface to be a simplistic contingent encounter can be read as a dialogue of potentialities between a text and its others. What is important is how the text changes in relation to the event. These changes, which I address below, are part of the dynamic of re-orientation.

8. Re-mapping reality

The magnitude of the Tohoku disaster with its near-mythological scale seemed to tie into Miyagi's initial impetus in choosing to revive the play. In his director's note in the production programme, Miyagi wrote the following:

There are two types of theatre genre, the first deals with large philosophical questions, such as the meaning of death in relation to life. The second deals with real-size, everyday life. We can call the former tragedy and the latter comedy. In the case of Japanese traditional theatre, that might loosely translate as the relationship between *noh* as tragedy and *kyogen* as comedy. These two different genres have their own characteristics, however many theatre practitioners try to use both in one play. I believe that Shakespeare also had this kind of desire or ambition. For example, in the case of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, there are real-sized characters side by side with mythological figures. [...] Also, I believe Noda's adaptation [...] also tries to represent those two types of characters at the same time by mixing mythological language and everyday language in one play. (2011: 2)

Miyagi was able to shape parts of his production to reflect the fast-moving social and political situation. As mentioned earlier, he decided to construct the entire set and the fairies' costumes out of newspaper. This was widely seen as commentary on the

popular distrust of mainstream Japanese media in reporting on the nuclear disaster. For me, it was also a critique of the dislocation and forgetfulness of language. However, it is also possible to read the use of newspapers as an affirmation of language, both literal and metaphoric, along the lines of Titania's remark that "the words human folk swallow are not necessarily all rubbish."

Indeed, one of the central conceits in Noda's adaptation is the emphasis on the power of language. After Mephisto threatens to destroy the forest at the end of the play, Soboro responds calling on the power of words to prevent Mephisto's destructive drive. Soboro's words move Mephisto to tears, which damp out the fire:

SOBORO: The midsummer night forest was burning. The invisible lone monster whom nobody loved was called Mephisto [...] As he watched the forest burn he became very sad. After the forest had burnt down, he would have to live in the forest forever. As he thought about it, he shed tears in spite of himself. Like the tears shed by Freya, which became pure gold, beautiful tears poured from the eyes of Mephisto. Those tears began to relieve the forest.

At SPAC, the juxtaposition of a set entirely made of newspaper prints, dominated by slogans and letters, with a story that moves between mythological and everyday themes, seemed to heighten the ambivalent sense of the power and powerlessness of language. In the post-earthquake context, the idea of trusting rhetoric from authority figures was difficult for the public to accept. However, in Miyagi's production, the sense of human potential to reverse its destructive path was played out through the character of Mephisto.

In the final scene of the play, Mephisto turned into the image of Noda, the playwright-director himself. He appeared wearing reading glasses similar to those for which Noda has become known after he lost sight in his right eye, and he could also be seen taking notes during Soboro's speech on the power of language. In a conversation with Odashima Yushi, Miyagi pointed out that Mephisto, the darker playwright-director cousin of Puck, is the shadow of Noda himself. Miyagi argued that Noda's plays always portray characters who harbor intense disgust of the world and yet that disgust is the very reason of that character's genius and solitude.

Miyagi's production ended with an element of hope, suggesting that there is the potential to rebuild after destruction and there is potential in language to regain power and meaning. On a meta level, the production spoke also of the afterlife of a text, a life which evades control, which is subject to the contingent realities of nature, and which is caught between the desire for survival and the impossibility of translation alone being able to fulfill that survival.

9. Lost and Found in translation: Problems and Potentialities of Surtitles

In the final part of this chapter, I propose a return to the thread that prompted my initial interest in Noda's adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which was my English translation of his text to be projected in Miyagi's production as surtitles for non-Japanese speaking audiences. What was lost and found in the mediation of the translation as surtitles on stage?

Surtitles serve the obvious purpose of providing real-time translation for audiences unfamiliar with the language spoken on stage. In this functional sense, they are usually designed to be as inconspicuous as possible, not to detract from the performance. At the same time, in an ideal sense, they strive to be what Benjamin terms "transparent": "A real translation is transparent; it does not cover the original, does not black its light, but allows the pure language, as though reinforced by its own medium to shine upon the original all the more fully" (Benjamin 78).²³

However, when the medium that carries the translation – in this case a narrow digital display – is in its very design built for constriction, achieving transparency becomes an ever-distant prospect, and it renders surtitles a subordinate other to the main language(s) of the performance. This new element of constraint produces a number of deformations and transformations of the text that provide insight into translation and adaptation processes. In the first instance, and following Marvin Carlson's discussion of what he calls "side text" in his book on the semiotic function of heteroglossia in theatre, *Speaking in Tongues*, surtitles present the pragmatic problem of visual distraction. For Carlson, surtitles "are much more actively disruptive [than simultaneous translation devices], since they are directly competing

²³ For further insight into the difficulty of translating Noda's Shakespearean adaptations back into English, see Mika Eglinton, "Noda Hideki Junshoku Manatsu no Yoruno Yume no Honyaku (Fu)kanousei ni Tsuite ("On the (im)possibility of Translating Noda Hideki's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*"), Gekijou Bunka, Shizuoka: SPAC, 2011: 4-8. Regarding the complex relationship between a surtitle and its target audience, see also Kennedy (2009: 129-31).

with other stimuli to the visual channel, leaving unimpeded the auditory channel" (197).

A more fundamental problem with surtitles is what Carlson terms the "necessary selectivity" of this medium (*ibid.*). Carlson argues that while surtitles often aim to be "neutral" or unimpeding communication devices, the end result can often produce a diminutive experience for the target audience in that "a heavily edited selection of material [...] might very easily totally erase even some of the performers' key lines for those audience members (presumably a significant percentage of them) relying primarily upon this channel for the discursive text of the production" (198). Indeed, the question of "selectivity" became a major challenge to my role as dramaturg and translator on Miyagi's version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Working on the translation of Noda's adaptation back into English, it became apparent that there was no "call" for the text to be translated, since its excess of puns and wordplays restricted its translatability. All three texts: Shakespeare's play, Odashima's Japanese translation and Noda's Japanese adaptation are known for their abundance of wordplay and in the translation-adaptation process, from Odashima to Noda, the density of wordplay increased, and my translation could not keep up with its degree of proliferation.

Translating Noda's contemporary adaptation is one of the most difficult tasks I have undertaken to date. It highlighted the complexity of the translingual nature of translation and adaptation, moving between Shakespeare's Elizabethan English with its patchwork of linguistic registers and cultural references, to Odashima's early 1980s Japanese translation which attempted to capture that multiplicity through demotic speech, to Noda's radical culinary pun-based adaptation, back to "contemporary" English intended for an international, globalized, visiting audience at SPAC. In trying to negotiate this contact zone, through the translation process, I recognized a "gradation" of (un)translatability, which can be separated into three levels.

On the first level, translating Noda's adaptation is possible when he makes use of English sounds. For example, when he translates "Here comes Lysander" into Japanese, he writes "Lai san da", which repeats the sound of the English word "Lysander" and simultaneously conveys the meaning of the sentence.

On the second level, the reader can guess the meaning of Noda's puns from the context:

FAIRIES B: What are Kinosei?
SOBORO: They're fairies that live in the forest. Night Fairies,
 Summer Fairies and Tree Fairies, they all live in the
 forest.

As mentioned earlier, the word "Kinosei" was translated as "Tree Fairies", but in Japanese it also means "because of your imagination". From this, some non-Japanese speaking audience members can speculate that "sei" in "kinosei" is a marker for fairy. However, only audiences who understand both Japanese and English can access the second layer of the pun. Noda uses the same pun in his naming of other types of fairies in the play, including "Yorunosei" which was translated as "Night Fairies" but also means "because of the night" and "Natsunosei" which became "Summer Fairies" and also means "because it's summer."

In contrast to the two previous stages, which allowed non-Japanese speakers to access parts of Noda's language through sound and pattern recognition, the third stage becomes inaccessible or untranslatable due to multiple layers of puns with specific Japanese culinary references delivered in rapid succession. Noda's wordplay intensifies after Lai (Lysander) and Tokitamago (Hermia) elope to the Unknown Forest (Figure 10) under Mt Fuji – the place where all those who enter forget everything upon leaving. This made the translation even harder. For example, in the scene equivalent to Act 3 Scene 2 in Shakespeare's text, Demi (Demetrius) and Lai (Lysander) fight over Soboro (Helena):

DEMI: What's wrong with you? Fleeing to that forest with Tokitamago!
Talking of fleeing and forests, I will eat Soba.

Here, Noda plays with food based puns, *mori soba*, which is chilled soba served on a dish accompanied with dipping sauce, and *kake soba*, soba in a hot soup broth. At the same time, the word *mori* in Japanese also signifies forest and *kake* signifies fleeing. One of the consequences of this (in)translatability is that Noda's distinction between poetic, mythological language and everyday language valued by

Miyagi in his SPAC production, was lost in the surtitles. Despite these constraints, the surtitles still enabled non-Japanese speakers to access Noda's version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as evidenced in moments of laughter specific to that community of readers. In those moments, contact was established through the complex web of *inter*, *intra* and *translingual* dialogue, shifting, as we have seen, from Shakespeare to Odashima, to Noda and Miyagi, to the surtitles, the cast and the audience.

10. Re-mapping contact zones: "Thou art translated."

Throughout the three main strands of this chapter, which include Noda's adaptation process, Miyagi's post March 11 staging, and my translation of Noda's text back into English, I have tried to shed light on key translingual functions in adaptation practices.

I approached Noda's adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* from an intralinguistic and intracultural perspective, discovering at its centre a dialectics of constraint that gave him "freedom" to create. What Noda described as a search for "freedom" seems to me to be a function of the adaptation process itself. Where the text, following Benjamin, calls for translation to secure its survival in an interlinguistic operation, the adaptation functions translinguistically and is polysemous in its outbound connections across media.

In reading Miyagi's staging of Noda's play after the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami, it became apparent that there are at least two different approaches to reading texts as translingual contact zones. The first is to look at the internal workings of the text; at the sum of traces inscribed through processes of authorship, translation and re-edition. These are the coordinates that the adapter, translator, director, actor and reader engage with. These coordinates are the sum of recognizable differences relevant to the here and now. The second begins externally but engages in dialogue with the text's coordinates. This involves the ensemble of potential communications that surround a text and a contingent event. The event functions as the trigger that reawakens a dormant image or meaning in a text.

The final section reflected on my own personal experience of translating Noda's text and negotiating Miyagi's performance. There, the stringent limitations of technological media coupled with a labyrinth of wordplays revealed the way in

which a text continually operates within a tightly controlled matrix of potential readings.

All these processes pertain to re-mappings of the text, shifting its boundaries, and inbound and outbound connections. This re-mapping functions on multiple levels, including geographic, physical, psychological, as well as linguistic. In terms of geography, the tsunami and earthquake quite literally changed Japan's map, eroding part of the coastline and demolishing structures inland. In addition, the nuclear disaster led to the displacement of people in and around the Fukushima area. Indeed, at the time of writing, the nuclear zone remains inaccessible, a void on the map. This geographical re-mapping affected Miyagi's direction as well as the audience's interpretation of the production.

The physical and psychological re-mapping is connected to fear and speed, in the sense that the breakdown of the power plants unleashed radioactive particles whose trajectory and whereabouts were invisible to the human eye. Like the Fairies that inhabit the unknown forest, it permeates the landscape without revealing its presence. At the same time, the nuclear incident also brought forth connections with the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. The sense of fear or terror accompanying this nuclear event re-mapped the unconscious. As Paul Virilio points out in an interview titled "The Administration of Fear," "For someone like me who lived through the *Blitzkrieg* and the war of radio waves, it is clear that terror is not simply an emotional and psychological phenomenon but a physical one as well in the sense of physics and kinetics, a phenomenon related to what I call the 'acceleration of reality'" (21). Even though it would be impossible to draw this unconscious map, the differences that get into the production suggest points of change, which in turn suggests that the contact zone itself is being re-mapped.

Chapter 7

Performing Constraint through *Yojohan*: Yamanote Jijosha's *Titus Andronicus*

The end of the 20th century was marked by an increase in “foreign Shakespeare” (Kennedy 1993) that challenged the authority of the English Bard as cultural hegemon through textual and linguistic re-orientations at local levels. As part of this paradigm, the Tokyo based theatre company, Yamanote Jijosha, produced three radical adaptations of Shakespeare's Roman revenge tragedy, *Titus Andronicus*. The first was entitled *Impression: Titus Andronicus* and was staged in 1999 at Toga Sanbo, as part of the Toga Festival, Japan's first international theatre festival initiated by Suzuki Tadashi. It later transferred to a venue called Space Zero in Tokyo. The second adaptation, which kept Shakespeare's original title, was performed in 2005 and 2006 as part of a tour in Germany and Switzerland. The third was an extension of this production, revived in 2009 for the Sibiu International Theatre Festival and a tour in Romania.

This trilogy coincided with an international proliferation of productions of *Titus Andronicus* on stage and screen. From the mid-nineties onwards, *Titus Andronicus* has been staged more often than in any era since Shakespeare's day (Eglinton 2003a). Prominent examples include Julie Taymor's 1994 hard-hitting, realist stage production at Theatre for a New Audience, an off-Broadway venue in New York, which formed the basis for her Hollywood film adaptation of the play in 1999. In 1995, Gregory Doran directed a mixed-race production at the National Theatre in London and then at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg, South Africa. In 2006 Lucy Bailey staged the play at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London, and in the same year Ninagawa Yukio presented his Japanese-language version as part of the RSC's Complete Works series in Stratford-Upon-Avon.

The Yamanote Jijosha productions were attentive to *fin* and *début de siècle* anxieties in the international geo-political sphere. In particular, Artistic Director Yasuda Masahiro (1962-) pointed in his programme notes to Japan's socio-economic depression of the nineties, the so-called “lost decade” (Hayashi and Prescott, 2002: 206), arguing that it had given rise to what he termed “expressions of revenge.”

Yasuda cited the Sakakibara²⁴ killings in Kobe, the wave of indiscriminate poisoning of convenience store food, as well as the rise in Japan's suicide rate as examples of "human revenge [...] against civilization." His purpose was not to defend recourse to violence, but to approach these retaliatory acts as symptoms of the power structures that maintain social constraint and conformity (Yasuda 1999a). The echoes of revenge grew louder in the noughties with the Bush and Blair-led "War on Terror." In response, Yasuda's post-9/11 versions of *Titus Andronicus* integrated the theme of terrorism into the play's revenge cycle by turning Aaron into a militant fundamentalist figure whose demise is met with Islamophobic reprisals.

All three productions explored the aesthetic potential of constraint. Performing constraint is a core element of the company's acting style called *yojohan*. In the *Titus Andronicus* series, it defined the actors' movements on stage, informed the scenography and permeated the play's emotional fabric through the invented and continually present figure of Titus' wife. This isolated narrator figure, devoid of all agency other than the ability to observe and bear witness to the Roman and Gothic atrocities, functioned, according to Yasuda, "as a parallel to the gaze of people who witness revenge from afar and identify with those at the margins of contemporary society. Furthermore, the wife can function as witness to the fate of humanity" (Yasuda 1999a).

Drawing specifically on the Toga Village and Sibiu productions of Yamanote Jijosha's *Titus Andronicus*, this chapter will examine the relationship between the aesthetics of constraint and the politics of body, space and violence. How is this bloody Roman play, which includes decapitation, cannibalism and rape, represented through *yojohan*? Whose memory is on trial, through which sites is it mediated and to whom is it revealed? In what ways do these stagings afford us an understanding of Shakespeare as a re-oriented contemporary playwright in Japan?

1. Historical Background of The Yamanote Jijosha Theatre Company²⁵

²⁴ The term Sakakibara, whose Chinese characters connote rice wine, demons and roses, was used as a pseudonym by a teenager in claiming responsibility for the brutal murder of at least two children and the wounding of numerous others in the city of Kobe in 1997.

²⁵ Part of the research material on Yamanote Jijosha's history and practice used in this chapter is based on personal exchanges between Yasuda and Eglinton, and transcribed and translated by Eglinton. Among these were a series of conversations in Sibiu in May 2009 and Shizuoka in July 2009, email exchanges between 2009 and 2011, and a telephone interview in December 2011. Further material includes the company's own publications such as production programmes, the company

Yamanote Jijosha, which translates as The Yamanote Situation Company, was founded by Yasuda Masahiro alongside fellow Waseda University students in Tokyo in 1984. Yasuda's initial contact with theatre was as a high school student in Tokyo in 1977. He had embarked on a school project to direct *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and was inspired by his visit to a production of the play directed by Deguchi Norio (1940-) for the Shakespeare Theatre that same year. At university, Yasuda began working as an actor for Daisanbutai (The Third Stage), an up and coming theatre company led by Waseda graduate, Shoji Kokami (1958-). Parallel to this work, he started to put his own company together, emerging in 1984 at the height of the second wave of Japan's Little Theatre Movement.

As was discussed in Chapter 2, the Little Theatre movement or *shogekijo undo* gained momentum in the early 1960s as a counterpoint to *shingeki* (New Drama), a form of Western-imitation, realist drama that became part of mainstream Japanese theatre after World War II. Practitioners involved in the Little Theatre Movement, such as Shuji Terayama (1935-83), Ninagawa Yukio (1935-2016), Suzuki Tadashi (1939-) and Kara Juro (1940-), were resolute in breaking ties with modern realism and began to appropriate traditional Japanese performing arts as a means of forging alternative cultural identities. One of the principal differences between the two waves of the Little Theatre movement in the 1960s and 1980s was that the latter occurred during Japan's economic bubble, at a time when cultural subsidy from private sector companies was on the rise. The Saison Foundation was one such funding body to appear at that time and was part of an overall increase in opportunities for student actors to access the professional stage. This was the case, for example, of Yume no Yuminsha led by Noda Hideki (1955-) at the University of Tokyo; Kiki led by Koharu Kisaragi (1956-2000) of Tokyo Women's Christian University; and Dai San Erotica led by Kawamura Takeshi (1959-) of Meiji University.

Since Yamanote Jijosha's founding year in 1984 it is possible to chart four general stages of artistic development in the company's work. The stage between 1984-1988 was marked by fast-paced comedies written by Yasuda and co-playwright and co-director Narushi Ikeda (1962-). Typical of this period, the company produced

monograph *Yamanote Jijosha 1984-* (Tokyo: Yamanote Jijosha, 2004) and the company's website <<http://www.yamanote-j.org>>, accessed 1 September 2016.

its work in a large tent that belonged to Waseda University. It was run by volunteers and attended largely by student audiences numbering around 200-300 per performance.

In the second stage, between 1989-1994, the company became known for its work on devised plays without texts. During rehearsals, the actors would set up “situations” or basic narrative structures to facilitate free improvisation. They also used *monomane* or impersonation, a technique that they derived from Zeami’s treatises on *noh* to enable actor transformation by mimicking friends and acquaintances. The work during this period contained a number of meta-theatrical and self-referential stylistic elements designed to draw the audience’s attention to the literal limits of the theatre and thereby exposing the essence of fictional drama. The plays often used lavish costumes and sets in a reflection of bubble era exuberance, an era that was soon to end.

The third stage, 1994-1996, emerged during Japan’s mid-nineties economic crash and is noteworthy for a new technique known by the company as “hyper-collage.” Hyper-collage is the staging of simultaneous and non-linear narrative elements, including excerpts of texts, the use of multiple translations and devised scenes. Furthermore, the company began working on an actor training method that they later dubbed RPAM, an acronym that denotes the terms rhythm, play, action and movement. It was a type of choreography designed for actors lacking training in classical dance. Together with exercises in improvisation and impersonation, RPAM became a key component in the Yamanote Jijosha actor training method.

In 1995, Yamanote Jijosha was invited to the Toga Festival for the first time and presented *Natsu Yume Chan (Dear Summer Dream)*, an adaptation of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. In the same year, Yasuda formed an association with three fellow directors, a peer group that went by the name of P4. Members included Oriza Hirata (1962-) of Seinendan, Miyagi Satoshi of Ku Na’uka and Yukikazu Kano (1960-) of Hanagumi Shibai. Significantly, each of the three companies had already established their own acting styles, prompting Yasuda to rethink his own company’s performance praxis. This point is covered in greater detail further on. Part of the reason behind the formation of this group was that the four directors were asked jointly to run the Toga Festival at the request of Suzuki Tadashi. The purpose of the group was to create new forms of theatre that were company-driven, while still

retaining the distinctive influence of each of the directors. This led to a number of collaborations such as Yasuda's production of a play about a Japanese terrorist group called *Fairy Tale*, written by Hirata in 1997.

The most recent stage in Yamanote Jijosha's work began in 1997. It is defined by a combination of the work at the Toga Festival, the P4 collaborations and the company's accumulated experience with hyper-collage. It is also marked by a shift in programming that saw the company take on major plays from both the East and the West and tour overseas to international theatre festivals. Productions during this period include Euripides' *Trojan Women*, Sophocles' *Oedipus*, Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Chekhov's *The Seagull*, Chikamatsu Monzaemon's *Hangan*, Sosuke Namiki's *Sagi*, and *kabuki* and *noh* plays such as *Funa Benkei* and *Dojoji*.

Parallel to these developments and as mentioned earlier, Yasuda began to search for an alternative style of acting, influenced in part by his P4 peers, but partly also in response to a trip to the Avignon theatre festival in the summer of 1997, which brought him to the realization that the company's work, as it stood, would not be distinctive if it were presented in such an international forum.²⁶ In effect, the search for a new style not only led the company to explore territory outside the confines of Western realism, but it also prompted the director to question his cultural identity as a Japanese theatre practitioner.

Thus, the company set to work on the development of what Yasuda would initially refer to as *kata*, a term, which at that stage meant "isolating elements of physicality that belong to people in a given place and time" (Yasuda 1999b). The idea was to create a style that would reflect the densely populated and at times oppressive life in contemporary urban Japan rather than recycling old forms of *noh*, *kabuki* and *kyogen*, or Western realism. This led to the development of a distinctive style called *yojohan*. The principal characteristic of this style, which is constantly being renewed, is the confinement of the actor's movements to a space the size of a Japanese traditional tearoom.

2. *Yojohan* and Performing Constraint

In formalistic terms, *yojohan* is an element of aesthetic design in Japanese tea ceremony. It refers to a surface area of four and a half *tatami* mats and was famously

²⁶ Transcribed and translated from Eglinton's telephone interview with Yasuda, conducted on 21 December 2011.

used by the 16th century master of tea ceremony, Sen no Rikyū (1522-1591), in his formulation of an ascetic ceremonial space. By reducing the space to a bare minimum, tea ceremony participants were forced to leave their worldly goods outside. In its more recent etymological usage, *yojohan* connotes a cramped, modest, urban dwelling such as one might have expected to find in residential Tokyo during the 1970s and 1980s. Despite the fierce industrial development and economic expansion in postwar Japan, the experience of space in late capitalism was one of increasing confinement and anonymity.

Yasuda reads *yojohan* as a site of social constraint with several orders of expression: a physical order that defines movement, a psychological order that reflects a sense of “being caught between duty and desire” (Yasuda 2004: 25) and an historic order that relates to a perceived acuity of mind experienced in Japanese tea ceremony. Yasuda turns these constraints into mnemonic “rules” that shape the actor’s physical role in performance. When standing still for example, the actor is required to displace his or her centre of gravity, or when moving, the actor imagines walking along a narrow path. When the actor speaks, his or her movement should cease and strong emphasis is placed on the pronunciation of vowel sounds.

This embodiment of constraint was part of a vocabulary towards what Yasuda saw as the expression of a contemporary Japanese sense of self and place. It was a vocabulary that still resonated with the Little Theatre movement’s rejection of Western realist drama. *Yojohan* is not concerned with the development of a psycho-realist technique of acting that connects the actor’s conscious thoughts with the narrative of the play through behavioural intentionality. Rather, its purpose is to render the actor mirror-like, to displace the body from the order of the real so that it becomes both receptacle and reflection of the audience’s condition in the here and now. It draws its inspiration from *noh* and *kabuki* and is influenced by practitioners such as Yasuda’s mentor-figure from Waseda University, Suzuki Tadashi. Just as in *noh* and the Suzuki Method of actor training, much emphasis is placed on the act of walking and lowering the actor’s centre of gravity (see Allain 2003: 57-95).

The relationship between an internalized image of constraint and its external physical double is an area of study that Chinese-American geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (1930-) explores in detail in his book *Space and Place*. In an analysis of the body’s somatic experience of everyday space, he makes the following observation:

[...] walking is a skill, but if I can “see” myself walking and if I can hold that picture in mind so that I can analyze how I move and what path I am following, then I also have knowledge. That knowledge is transferable to another person through explicit instruction in words, with diagrams, and in general by showing how complex motion consists of parts that can be analyzed or imitated. (Tuan, 2001: 67-68)

Tuan’s distinction between *skill* and *knowledge* can be applied to the dynamics of *yojohan*. Navigating the confines of any modern city requires deftness of movement, but turning it into *kata*, that is, objectifying and aestheticizing the movement so that it becomes transferable and imitable, requires knowledge. The question of what constitutes *kata* as a form of embodied knowledge is an open and ongoing one. In his note entitled “On *Kata*,” Yasuda describes the need for the renegotiation of *kata* in a contemporary context in the following terms:

Willing or not Japanese performing artists have to adopt a certain stance on forms. Aside from *noh*, *kyogen* and *kabuki*, there was no notion in Japan of portraying real people on stage until the Meiji era. This can be explained by the influence of Japanese religious values, particularly the idea that the body is merely a receptacle for the soul. In other words, in order to portray a character (not necessarily a human being) the actor has to find a completely different gestural language from that of everyday life.

I believe that a Japanese sense of bodies or forms on stage, which has been handed down from generation to generation, still exists, no matter how Westernized Japan has become. (1999b)

Yasuda’s approach to *kata* is an attempt to distil the physical language of contemporary urban Japan. It is therefore constantly subject to revision as social structures and expressions of culture evolve. In this sense, the definition of *kata* becomes an oxymoron that goes against the term’s traditional meaning, which is a set of predetermined movements, refined and imparted to an apprentice by a master, as in the case of *kabuki* actor training.

A good example of this contemporary approach to *kata* is the company's appropriation of a game called *iraira bo*, taken from a popular 1990s TV show. *Iraira bo*, which literally translates as "irritating stick," required the game show participant to guide a metal loop around an electrified wire circuit without making contact. The tension in the game came from the player's extreme focus on maintaining this non-contact in order to avoid an electric shock and the end of the game. The company used the game's non-contact principle and applied it to an exercise in rehearsal whereby the actors would move together in a confined space, using their senses to avoid contact, and simulating the tension in being pushed and pulled.

In a serialized article published in the Yamanote Jijosha newsletter, core company actor, Yoshiro Yamamoto, chronicled his experience of working on *yojohan*. Reflecting on the *iraira bo* exercises in relation to his experience of walking in one of Tokyo's busiest commercial centres, Yamamoto made the following observation:

When you walk there's a sort of consciousness amongst bodies; each one reacts to another. In translating this experience for use on stage, the problem becomes how to reconcile the transition from the state of the body in its everyday form to a body that is self-conscious and readable in performance. (Yamamoto 2011)

Tuan's observation that the body operates on both somatic and psycho-somatic levels, in relation to a given context, is pertinent here. Whilst actor awareness in *yojohan* is rooted in the conditions of everyday movement, it also seeks to displace those conditions through the imposition of counter-intuitive restrictions. Yamamoto explains that "when walking the actor's focus should not be on the legs, but on the chest leading the movement. This helps solve the problem of self-consciousness."

A common approach to character portrayal in modern realist drama is to focus on those features of persona and physicality that define individuality. In contrast, Yamamoto claims that by working with a methodology of constraint, *yojohan* erases idiosyncrasies and renders the body more public: "by becoming a non-body, the body can become every-body." He likens the process to that of wearing a mask. The distancing effect of a mask abstracts the mimetic language of

realism. Thus, in order to play a character in a classic text, the Yamanote Jijosha actor seeks anonymity rather than peculiarity. In this configuration, the *yojohan* body becomes a medium of universal potentiality, capable – in theory – of expressing a plurality of emotional states.

Not without difficulty, the company spent the best part of a decade trying to achieve a high level of expressive quality through *yojohan*. Dance critic Akira Amagasaki argues that the technique in 1999 was still “flimsy” and that it was only in the company’s 2004 production of *Dojoji* at the Toga Festival that it started to show real potential. He notes, for example, how the actors’ bodies in *Dojoji* forged “a strong presence” capable of transforming the atmosphere of the show and that even minor eye movements became a “piece of dance” (Amagasaki 2004: 24).

Bearing these practical considerations of *yojohan* in mind, in the next two sections I will examine the application of *yojohan* in performance to the relationship between body, space and violence, drawing on two adaptations of Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus* as case material.

3. Impression: *Titus Andronicus* in 1999

At Space Zero, the stage opened with a wash of blue light against a cool, electronic ambient soundtrack. At centre stage was a rectangle of white light, roughly the size of a single *tatami* mat. Next to this sat Titus’ young wife in a plain blue dress. In front of her was a sunken-hearth fire filled with cool blue liquid instead of the passionate red blood described in Shakespeare’s text (Figures 13 and 14). This allegorical space served as a portal between the worlds of the living and the dead and each newly deceased character in the play would soak in the pool prior to leaving the stage. In addition to the fire with its shiny blue hanging pot, the stage was characterized by an assortment of traditional and contemporary objects including *shoji*-like screens, a TV, a refrigerator and a microwave oven (Figure 15). These markers of the real, which were rendered abstract against the stark minimalism of the stage and disconnected from their everyday functions, became empty signifiers, devices that hint at what Slavoj Žižek terms “the Real Thing,” but are ultimately facets of or “another name for the Void” (Žižek 2011).

In this hyperreal landscape, the actors were dressed predominantly in black with a mixture of Mandarin style black suit tops and black PVC outfits. The Goths wore brown trousers, the Romans were equipped with elements of armour, and

Saturninus' crown was replaced by a conical party hat in a move that both emphasized his childish nature and derided the imperial seat of power. The contrast between the blue stage lights and the actors' black suits and slicked back hair gave the production a futuristic feel. It stirred stylistic resonances with the science fiction film, *The Matrix*, released earlier the same year. However, if the production design seemed to cite the film's anaesthetised, bloodless virtual reality, it omitted the film's depictions of the painful corporeal reality that lies beneath. The layering of the real was an element of *mise-en-scène* that Yasuda pursued in the post-9/11 versions of *Titus Andronicus*. As I argue later on, it engendered a shift in the production of meaning in relation to the staging of violence.

One of the most outstanding features of Yamanote Jijosha's entire *Titus Andronicus* series was the intertextual reworking of Shakespeare's play. Yasuda combined elements from three Japanese translations of the play, including the work of Junji Kinoshita, Fukuda Tsuneari and Odashima Yushi, and intercut this text with devised scenes by the company. The lines for the invented character of Titus' wife were largely taken from Heiner Müller's postdramatic reworking of Shakespeare's text entitled *Anatomie of Titus: Fall of Rome*, as well as Albert Camus' *Caligula*.²⁷ This patchwork of texts, spaces and bodies, which fused the archaic linguistic registers of Kinoshita and Fukuda with the more contemporary colloquialisms of Odashima, created a sense of alienation from the cruel actions of the characters on stage.

The company refers to this intertextuality as "hyper-collage." The interstices between elements in the collage enabled Yasuda to draw out moments of insight and meta-commentary in areas of Shakespeare's largely patriarchal play that remain silent. An example of this could be seen in Act 4 Scene 3. The stage was split into two simultaneous scenes with Titus and his entourage stage left and Titus' wife and her daughter in a domestic relationship stage right. Clad in their black outfits, Titus and his kin advanced with undulating, giraffe-like movements and launched small firecrackers (arrows fired at Saturninus' palace) into the air that punctuated their speech. This combination of restricted movement and a stop-and-speak speech convention was the result of the company's early work on *yojohan*. Overhead, an

²⁷ Yasuda used Tatsuji Iwabuchi and Michiko Tanikawa's translation of Heiner Müller's *Anatomie of Titus: Fall of Rome* (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1992) and Moriaki Watanabe's translation of Albert Camus' *Caligula* (Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1996).

experimental musical composition could be heard, which consisted of light dissonant piano chords interspersed with a drum and bass rhythm. Lavinia sat beside Titus' wife and one of her sons at centre stage right, and the two women engaged in a fragmented conversation about daily matters, reminiscent of Hirata Oriza's so-called quiet plays. As mentioned previously, Hirata is one of the P4 directors and has collaborated with Yasuda on several occasions. According to Cavaye et al., Hirata's plays are known as "quiet plays," partly because the "actors speak almost in a whisper" and partly because Hirata himself "has said he aims to avoid producing plays that assert any doctrine, striving instead to create dramas that directly portray the world" (2004: 230).

Yasuda used this "quiet play" technique to replace Shakespeare's sinister "clown and pigeon" comedy scene, which appears in Act 4, Scene 3:

Lavinia:	It's raining. You should take your umbrella with you.
Titus' Wife:	(<i>To one of her sons.</i>) Do you know where you put it?
Son:	Sure.
Lavinia:	You're always leaving it outside the door.
Son:	Yeah...ok I better go now.
Lavinia:	When will we see you again? ²⁸

While the scene seemed to evoke a sense of an everyday relationship between mother, daughter and sons, its juxtaposition with the futuristic elements of the play instilled in it a dream-like quality; a sort of conversation amongst the dead. This notion of the spirit world, or "otherworldliness," was further compounded by the pervasive blue lighting scheme, which extended to the actor's bodies through pale blue stripes applied to their faces and chests.

If the term "hyper-collage" can be used to characterise the play's *mise-en-scène*, with its minimalist set, futuristic costumes, and fragmented text, then the term can also be applied to the production's thematic undercurrent; indeed, the two are interrelated. The basic premise of collage is to re-contextualize an object through calculated juxtaposition with other objects in order to establish new meaning. Appending the term "hyper" to the notion of collage implies a surplus of meaning.

²⁸ *Impression of Titus Andronicus*, translated by Eglinton.

One might conceive of such an excess as a bubble in which all signifiers point inwardly and stifle the potential for a progression of meaning until systematic collapse occurs. The thematic undercurrent in this production of *Titus Andronicus* can be read as such a bubble – a mirror of Japan’s market bubble of the late 1980s – in which the vengeful actions of the Romans and Goths bear little intersubjective relationality. Rather, expressions of revenge are directed, in accordance with Yasuda’s note, “against civilization,” that is, against the very system that maintains the bubble. And although the implosion of this system occurs in the final scene of the play through a series of mutual killings that leave only Lucius and Titus’ wife standing, the very last image is the silhouette of Saturninus’ crown/party hat, gently rising to suggest the ascendancy of a new bubble.

One of the outcomes of such a radical reworking of *Titus Andronicus* was a slippery two-step dance that both exercises and annuls the authority contained in Shakespeare’s name. In one direction, the production opened new cultural territories for the expression of a contemporary Japanese sense of self against the backdrop of the socio-political realities of the late 1990s. In this sense, *Titus Andronicus* became a medium through which the company could re-orient its practice, its politics and its relationship with Shakespeare as the quintessence of the Western canon. In another direction, however, the production’s very intertextuality and its break with translation orthodoxy thrust it into the “foreign Shakespeare” market and subjected it to the risk of becoming an exercise in “the strategic appropriation of cultural capital” using “Shakespeare’s authority and universality...to obtain a foothold in the profitable global Shakespeare industry” (Eglinton 2011: 335-36).

4. *Titus Andronicus* in 2005 and 2009

In Yamanote’s 2005 version of *Titus Andronicus*, Yasuda introduced *kimono* and other traditional Japanese cultural objects, and replaced Titus’ wife with a *noh*-like chorus (*jiutai*). I put to Yasuda in an interview that these changes demonstrated a degree of market-respondent self-Orientalism on his part in anticipation of the company’s overseas tours in Germany and Switzerland.

However, Yasuda countered this claim by stating that his intention was to emphasize, in visual terms, the production’s inherent cultural clashes. For example, the costume choice of *kimono* for the Romans and Western suits for the Goths symbolized the clash between Japanese and Western cultures during the Meiji era.

According to Yasuda, the idea of cultural clashes and the ensuing divisions they create still resonates in contemporary Japanese society. The intention behind the use of a *noh*-like chorus was to represent a type of group unconsciousness, rather than mediating the stage action through the singular voice of the invented character, Titus' wife.²⁹ In May 2009 Yamanote Jijosha presented their latest production of *Titus Andronicus* at the Sibiu International Theatre Festival. Among the principal differences with the 1999 production were changes to lighting and costume design. The all-pervasive blue in the early version gave way to a black and white schema, and costumes went from all black to a split between Romans in white *kimono* and Goths in black Western suits. Saturninus's party hat was replaced by a *tengu* mask in the form of a long-nosed goblin. Changes were made to actor performance techniques including *noh*-like vocalization and more sophisticated *yojohan* movements. Finally, a new thematic and political strand was introduced in response to the "War on Terror" in Iraq and Afghanistan, which turned the play into a story about the birth of a terrorist.

In the play's opening scene, Titus' ageing wife sat on the floor, with tied back grey hair, dressed in a black mourning *kimono* with a white family crest, giving the impression of just having witnessed the funeral of her entire family. The cast appeared in ghost-like fashion, their faces saturated with white light and their movements tempered by the tolling of a Buddhist bell, as if they had been called forth from the wife's memory. In this spiritual dimension, Titus' wife functioned like the *waki* in a *noh* play, at once the narrator of action in the present tense, but also a witness to the past ten years of war between the Romans and the Goths, driven by her power-hungry husband, Titus Andronicus. Only four out of her twenty sons survive the bloodshed and she stands to lose all of her family but two. This symbolic mourning of the past coupled with a deep sense of foreboding in the present was reflected in her opening lines, which were taken from Heiner Müller's text and arranged by Yasuda, as they were in the 1999 production:

A new victory has devastated Rome.

A new victory has devastated Rome.

Rome is waiting for prey,

²⁹ Transcribed and translated from Eglinton's telephone interview with Yasuda, conducted on 21st December 2011.

Looking for slaves for the slave market
and fresh whores for the human meat market.
Gold for the bank, weapons for the armoury.
At the victory parade, the people are cheering
and the children are singing.
A cortege of coffins leads the parade.
Inside lie the sons of the General.
His name is Titus Andronicus, my husband.³⁰

During the delivery of these lines, Titus stood behind his wife dressed in a *kimono* stained with white paint instead of blood, and the couple exchanged gazes.

Titus' wife's voice, using the basic principles of *noh* elocution, was significantly more stylised and lower in pitch than the 1999 production. While she kept her distance from the heinous actions on stage by performing a continuous series of everyday gestures, such as drinking tea, reading a newspaper, watching TV, folding washing, sprucing herself up and so on, there were moments when her gestures mirrored or connected with actions on stage. It was in these moments that aspects of her suppressed emotional complexity began to surface. For example, during Lavinia's rape scene, she stared at a blank TV screen, but when Lavinia cried out the word "mother" in Japanese, her gaze shifted to meet with her daughter and highlighted their filial bond. Another example occurred in the arrow-firing scene. As Titus unleashed his bow, she launched the pile of clothes she had been folding into the air.

These instances of connection between Roman and Gothic politics and the domestic sphere highlight the wife's function as mediator between two layers of reality. In the 1999 version, her function was restricted to narrator, whereas in 2009 she doubled as witness to the revenge antics perpetrated by family and foe around her. Through this act of witnessing, she bears the burden of war and pain precisely so that the other characters can perpetuate their symbolically violent, but largely inconsequential acts. In short, she became an emotional repository for the atrocities perpetrated in her husband's name.

³⁰ Müller, *Anatomie of Titus: Fall of Rome*, rearranged by Yasuda and translated by the author.

In all three iterations of the play, representations of violence were made abstract through the use of *yojohan*. Thus, the bloody actions of Titus and his entourage, including the rape and maiming of Lavinia, took on an aesthetic, mannequin-like plasticity. This impression was further corroborated by the substitution for blood of splashes of white paint, applied to cast member costumes prior to their entry on stage. By purifying the blood stains, removing all fetishistic gratification, blood and gore became symbols of the play's inner world and therefore a sign of multiple narrative layers at work. On one level, the omnipresence of the stains can be read as an allusion to the Buddhist cycle of suffering – the continuous flow between life and death – and this reading is connected to a series of other religious connotations in the production that I highlight further on. On another level, the stains become markers of the virtual world inhabited by the characters. Like photographic negatives, they function as shadowy doubles of the real thing. Whereas the connection between the real and the virtual in the 1999 production had been severed leaving a bubble-like stage full of empty signs, the 2009 version maintained the connection through the figure of Titus' wife.

Sexual behaviour was stylized too. Actors performed electrocution-like shaking motions at slight distances to each other, drawn in part from the *iraira bo* exercise mentioned earlier. The split between Chiron, Demetrius and their victim, Lavinia, transformed the sexual act from violent offence to caricature. *Yojohan* not only serves to create tension but can also unlock comic relief, such as the scene just before Lavinia gets her revenge on Chiron and Demetrius. She entered making a distressed bird-like noise in a white wedding *kimono* carrying an electric blender instead of a basin. When Titus said “Hark, villains, I will grind your bones to dust, / And with your blood and it I'll make a paste” (5.2.185-86),³¹ she turned on the blender which produced a whirring effect.

A further split occurred between caricature and realism. While the “softening” of violent acts made the play's bloody tragedy more bearable for the audience, the wife's realistic mediation of the violence through suppressed emotional states seemed all the more sinister. Yasuda shifted the site for the feminist critique of patriarchal power away from the play's male protagonists and onto the invented wife,

³¹ Alan Hughes, ed., *Titus Andronicus* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994). This edition is used throughout. The act and scene numbers are cited parenthetically in the text.

thereby enabling him to bring the constrained position of women in society to the fore.

Titus' wife's inability to affect the world of the Romans and Goths underlines her lack of agency. Her attitude can thus be read as a reflection of Buddhist resignation to human fate: the fate of her husband Titus, but also the symbolic fate of past generations of Japanese women treading the thin line between the duty to abide by patriarchal values and the desire for agency that testimony and witnessing permit. In opening up this quasi-testimonial space, the company was able to explore questions of morality in other elements of the play as well. In particular, it asked its audiences to reconsider their relationship with the motives and consequences of revenge against a backdrop of Western imperialism, and to do so through a female gaze operating outside the patriarchal norms of Shakespeare's play (Figure 16).

Although minor in terms of representation, Yasuda's intention was to make a connection between this revenge tragedy and the rise of terrorism through Aaron's character. The black Moor was played by a Japanese actor of slight build wearing a black leather suit and a hat impressed with white handprints. After Titus' wife delivered her last lines of the play, Aaron could be seen gradually rising under a red light to the intentionally blurred sounds of a Mahayana Buddhist *sutra* and a Muslim prayer:

The General's son removes the tablecloth,
Dishes and glasses tumble and fall and the cups jump.
There stands a black prince between blood and wine,
His funeral is accompanied by his father's laughter.
They are forbidden to enter their tomb without remembering their own death.
And the laughter of black men echoes in the distance.³²

Aaron is supposed to have been executed by the Romans as well as former Goth allies, although this is not clear in either Shakespeare's text or Müller's adaptation. Furthermore, his body is supposed to have been abandoned without formal burial. This dual function can be observed in the play's final scene. When Lucius condemns Aaron to death, he speaks of revenge in ambivalent terms: "Set him breast-deep in

³² Müller, *Anatomie of Titus: Fall of Rome*, rearranged by Yasuda and translated by Eglinton.

earth and famish him [...] For the offence he dies; this is our doom” (5.3.178, 181). Not only must Aaron pay for his ill-deeds with his life, he must also pay in his after-life through the denial of burial rites. The ultimate agent of revenge is therefore not death, which in this case is limited to the individual, but rather the denial of access to culture, which extends across members of a cultural group, fuelling future retaliatory acts. In this sense “doom” has the potential to visit both the avenged and the avenger. Yasuda used this ambivalent position to comment on current East-West politics. In his view, the torture, execution and deaths of Muslims, labelled as fundamentalist, spur an attitude of revenge (Yasuda 2009). This pattern could be seen at work in the capture, execution and sea-burial of the world’s most notorious terrorist, Osama Bin Laden. Thus, while one revenge cycle ended with the death of Titus Andronicus, narrated by his wife, another cycle was born with the rise of Aaron.

5. Re-orientation of Yamanote Jijosha’s Identity and Aesthetics

In Yamanote Jijosha’s monograph, the chapter on *yojohan* is entitled “Yojohan: Japan is Right There” (2004: 25). A more literal translation might read “*Yojohan* is Japan.” In both cases, the company is claiming to have created a performance style capable of expressing a sense of contemporary Japanese cultural identity. It is an expression of identity that does not simply rely on exotic clichés of Japan or self-Orientalism. The *Titus Andronicus* productions were not intended to impress a Western gaze, despite Yasuda’s view and my personal experience that international audiences in Japan, Switzerland, Germany and Romania were particularly intrigued by the elements of Japaneseness on stage. *Yojohan*’s emphasis on corporeality arms it with a degree of immediacy and truth that operate beyond the confines of theatre conventions. It purports to reverse the Orientalist process that Edward Said describes in *Orientalism* as “a tradition of thought, imagery, and a vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West” (Said 2003: 5). It does so by re-orienting the question of cultural identity through *yojohan*, which can be described as embodied language, or language as an embodied mode of performance, in which the body both receives and conveys culturally specific signs. In his chapter called “Orientalism Now,” Said discusses the linguistic construction of Orientalism, claiming that:

Its objective discoveries – the work of innumerable devoted scholars who edited texts and translated them, codified grammars, wrote dictionaries, reconstructed dead epochs, produced positivistically verifiable learning – are and always have been conditioned by the fact that its truths, like any truths delivered by language, are embodied in language [...] (Said 2003: 203)

Said borrows from Nietzsche to describe this embodiment of language. The description fits Yamanote's experimentation with its aesthetic of constraint. *Yojohan* has become for Yamanote Jijosha:

a mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms – in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are. (Nietzsche in Said 2003: 203)

At the same time, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that the *yojohan* form is relevant to a specific group of people. Its origins, as evidenced in actor Yoshiro Yamamoto's account, are rooted in a Tokyo-centric expression of identity. In being tied to a locale, it is difficult to accept the universalising tendency in the company's claim that "*Yojohan* is Japan" without glossing over the possibility for a radical shift in the effect and meaning that its application in non-urban contexts might produce. To finesse it in this way would be to fall into the same universalizing and culturally imperial trap that Yasuda's productions of *Titus Andronicus* seek to re-orient and displace.

The productions not only challenge Shakespearean authority through their textual adaptation, using hyper-collage to position texts, bodies and spaces at incongruous angles to form new meaning, they do it for the very purpose of rewriting the context in which they are formed. One of the main emergent properties of this re-orientation is the birth of Titus' wife. She could even be seen as a symptom of the need for a re-orientation since her character was always already part of the play, even though she never appeared in Shakespeare's original. Her absence is present in the genealogical link to other characters in the play. In other words, what is implicit in

the creation of the *Titus Andronicus* series, which applies to other “foreign Shakespeare” as well, is the search for a new contextual reality. Shifting the linguistic idiom of the play alone is not enough to quell concerns of the appropriation of Shakespeare’s authority and universality. Rather, the interest in foreign Shakespeare is in reworking the play in communication with its local habitat. In the case of Yamanote Jijosha, the context in which the company found itself at the beginning of its work on *yojohan* in the late 1990s was ready for a radical renegotiation. There is therefore a double re-orientation at work in the *Titus Andronicus* series: a re-orientation of the company’s own identity in response to Japan’s socio-political conditions, which is intimately connected with a re-orientation of the company’s approach to the practice of Shakespearean adaptation.

Chapter 8
Performing “Women” in “Asia”:
Ong Keng Sen’s *Lear*, *Desdemona* and *Search Hamlet*

Whereas the focus of the previous case studies was on works by theatre directors native to Japan, this chapter opens the discussion of re-orienting Shakespeare to a wider Asian context through the analysis of three productions by Singaporean director, Ong Keng Sen (1963-). The first two instalments of Ong’s turn of the millennium Shakespearean trilogy, *Lear* and *Desdemona*, were produced with a pan-Asian cast. However, the productions remained closely linked to Japan. A major element was the involvement of the Japanese feminist playwright Kishida Rio (1946-2003) in the textual adaptations of *King Lear* and *Othello*. Kishida was known for her feminist critique on Japanese patriarchal society. In addition, the rehearsals and initial productions took place in Japan and were heavily funded by Japanese arts subsidies. There is there a clear link between Ong’s work and Shakespeare in Japan. The third part of the trilogy, *Search Hamlet*, also employed an intercultural and pan-Asian cast, but was created in Denmark.

In reading Ong’s intercultural trilogy through the lens of re-orienting Shakespeare I want to question what Shakespeare signifies and where he stands in “Asia,” thus broadening my focus beyond Japan alone. How are his canonical plays and status as icon created, celebrated, received, criticized, accommodated and consumed in the context of Asian “intercultural” productions? How are Shakespearean tragedies, the so-called “centre of the [western] canon” (Bloom 1994: 43) and “global commodity of cultural capital” (Loon 2004: 121) “interculturally” reconstructed in the sphere of “Asia”, set against the contemporary socio-cultural contexts of a postmodern and globalised age?

The approach I propose to take here is the analysis of Shakespeare’s female characters and their representation in relation to the ongoing dichotomies of East and West, Occidentalism and Orientalism, masculinity and femininity, to colonize and to be colonized, and tradition and contemporaneity. How are Shakespeare’s “women” performed in contemporary “Asian” theatres? What is the definition of “Asia” itself and where and how does one situate it? As stated in Chapter 1, from the Occidental, Euro-centralized viewpoint that is connected to male subjectivity, following Edward Said, “Oriental” tends to be seen as “the other” and also somewhat feminine. If that

is so, then are Shakespearean women, as “the others” in Asia, marginalized and feminized in a doubly complicated sense? How does Ong represent these female characters inside the frame of a “New Asia” that his trilogy proposes? How do they negotiate both the prevailing patriarchy carved in Shakespeare’s texts and the male-centrism of “Old Asia” that still dominates social organisation and the sphere of cultural creation? Are they subjugated and marginalized, or subjective and subversive?

1. Approaching “Asia” through Shakespeare

In order to re-examine and re-define these questions and re-read such varied and diffuse relationships among “Women,” “Shakespeare” and “Asia,” I intend to use the cross-cultural, multi-lingual and trans-national collaborative projects, *Lear* (premiered in Tokyo, Japan in 1997), *Desdemona* (premiered at the Adelaide Festival, Australia in 2000) and then *Search Hamlet* (premiered at the Kronborg Castle, Helsingor, Denmark in 2002) as case studies. All three productions were directed by Ong Keng Sen, Artistic Director of TheatreWorks in Singapore since 1986, who according to the company’s website has been “an active contributor to the evolution of an Asian identity and aesthetic for contemporary performance in the 21st century.”

Born before the foundation of Singapore as an independent nation in 1965, Ong constantly queries what it means to be Singaporean in a multiracial city-state consisting of Chinese, Malay, Indians, Indonesians, Europeans and others and what it means to be “Asian” in a “globalizing” world. The mission of Singapore’s largest non-profit, English speaking theatre company is as follows:

What is Asian in this age of globalisation, internationalisation, modernisation and urbanisation? Its work exists on the tension between modernity and tradition, local and global. It hopes to rethink what is Western, what is Eastern, what is first world and what is third world: Do these dichotomies continue to make sense in the new millennium? Representing the continuum between tradition and contemporary, the work is unafraid to be exotic and yet conceptual. TheatreWorks’ aesthetics

projects the hybrid identity of modern Asia and embraces its multiple realities.³³

Based on the belief in hybridity and the juxtaposition of different cultures and art forms, which deconstruct the dichotomy between East and West, and the traditional and the technical, TheatreWorks has developed several landmark intercultural productions, which include the Shakespeare trilogy, as well as laboratory projects such as the Flying Circus Project (FCP, 1994-2013), and the Arts Network Asia (ANA 1999-2012) Program. While both projects promoted intercultural collaboration and the exchange of practice in both traditional and contemporary modes, the former focused on cultural negotiation looking at different creative strategies of individual artists, whereas the latter aimed to promote artistic exchanges that are primarily process-oriented, with a focus on Southeast Asia.

For the first two productions of the Shakespeare trilogy, *Lear* and *Desdemona*, Ong collaborated with the late Japanese playwright, Kishida Rio, who started her career in 1974 when she joined the Experimental Theatre Laboratory *Tenjo-Sajiki*, led by the renowned playwright and director Shuji Terayama (1935-1983). The collaboration between Kishida and Terayama, which continued until Terayama's death, resulted in a variety of works, including the plays *Shintokumaru*, *Lemming*, *Kusa Meikyu* (*Grass Labyrinth*), and *Saraba Hakobune* (*Farewell Ark*). Kishida has been praised for her plays that scrutinize gender issues from a feminist angle; plays in which daughters often commit patricide, thus suggesting the rejection of the Japanese emperor system and its patriarchal values. This is particularly the case for her play entitled *Ito Jigoku* (*Woven Hell*), which depicts the lives of women obscured in official Japanese history, and was awarded the Kishida Drama Prize in 1986.

Lear and *Desdemona* stand in stark opposition to each other, as Ong himself describes:

In this production of *Lear*, I have attempted to search for a new world, a new Asia. This new Asia will continue to have a dialogue with the old, with traditions, with history. But its spirit should contain the youth and freshness

³³ TheatreWorks Company Website.

that the present world so desperately needs as it progresses into the new millennium. Harmony is not what I seek but discord. (1997: 4-5)

Lear and *Desdemona* are as different as day and night, or light and shadow. *Desdemona* posed the question as to what contemporary Asia really is through an array of contradictions such as those found between male and female, Othello and Desdemona and in ethnicity and colonial rules versus decolonized nations. *Lear* showed a kind of harmony or sense of unification through reconstructing diverse aspects of Asian Arts whereas *Desdemona* required an iconoclastic and provocative directing style. (2001c: 8)

Ong's trilogy, which questioned the meanings of contemporary Asia, took different directions on the stage and incurred various reactions from critics and audiences while touring countries in East Asia, the South Pacific and Europe. I argue that these reactions and criticisms played a role in shaping and transforming the director's concepts and styles over the course of each new production – despite Ong's disavowal of this view in my interview with him. Ong spoke frankly of his limited foresight in directing *Lear*. He felt that his approach to the direction was predominantly concerned with aesthetics and that he was too young to fully appreciate the dangers of cultural essentialism and Orientalism (Eglinton 2005). Rustom Bharucha's criticism of TheatreWorks' productions from postcolonial and feminist perspectives played an influential role in shaping Ong's direction. Bharucha was invited to take part in the Flying Circus Project in 1998 as a dramaturg-consultant, yet he questioned and criticized Ong's production choices and *mise-en-scene* in his essays (2001, 2010).

1. *Lear* as “Old Asia” or Self-Orientalism

First, it is worth questioning why *King Lear* was chosen from among numerous other classic plays, and how it was reconstructed for this Asian production. Yuki Hata was the Performing Arts Coordinator of the Japan Foundation Asia Centre (JFAC), which is the funding body that supported the multi-million-yen inter-Asian enterprise. As the producer of *Lear*, she explained that the strategy was to use Shakespeare's “universality” as “a common denominator” in the sense that she wanted to use material that is known to every Asian. According to her article entitled

“Creating *Lear*,” Hata asked Ong to be the director, not based on their past international collaborations, but for the very reason that he was a young (33 years old at that time), Singaporean, from “a multiracial society where respective ethnic traditions are all enveloped by the culture of a mega urban society [...] which enhanced the meaning of this project” (Hata 1997: 14-15).

It was Ong’s specific choice to direct *King Lear*. Ong’s emphasis was not on the play’s “universality” but rather its “neutrality,” in the sense that most Asians know the story, yet no Asian can claim Shakespeare as their own heritage or possession. Ong drew from the play the idea that once patriarchal power is usurped by women, it becomes disordered and chaotic, and can only be restored through male power, and insisted on its reinterpretation from female perspectives (Ong 1997: 4-5). Thus Kishida, who had written several plays about acts of patricide that thwart patriarchal and imperial systems became involved in the project. She proposed to remove the word “King” from the original title to open the way for a “New Asian” (Kishida 1997: 6-7) version with no trace of Shakespearean lines, maintaining only the original framework. All the original characters became archetypal characters without names in Kishida’s sparse text. Lear became the Old Man, Goneril and Regan were combined into the Older Daughter, Cordelia became the Younger Daughter, Kent and Gloucester were merged into the Loyal Attendant, and Edmund became the Retainer. Among the newly invented female characters such as the Earth Mothers and Woman as a crown-commentator, the most notable invention was the so-called “Absent Mother” of the sisters, that is, the Old Man’s dead wife characterized as “a poor lowly spinner.” In addition, according to Ong’s conception, two sets of three “shadows” were introduced. The role of these characters was to follow in the steps of the Older Daughter and the Retainer. The Older Daughter’s shadows, named Ambition, Unpredictability, and Vanity, represented her inner self and were the only ones to speak.

In order to reinterpret *King Lear* according to “female principles,” Ong was intent on using cross-gender casting, which resulted in male actors playing Lear’s wife and his two daughters. At the same time, he wanted to create a highly-stylized piece. The formalistic *noh* style was chosen for the Old Man and Mother, who were both played by the *noh* actor Umewaka Naohiko, differentiated by the use of a mask. The flamboyant Beijing Opera style was used for the Older Daughter (Jiang Qihu), traditional Thai dance for the Younger Daughter (Peeramon Chomdhavat), the

Indonesian martial art form *pencak silat*, which was choreographed by Boi Sakti, was used for the Retainer (Abdul Gani Karim) and his shadows. The Singlish rapper Najip Ali was chosen for the role of the Fool, and the Woman was played by Japanese contemporary theatre actress, Katagiri Hairi. The latter pair were supposed to communicate between the real or modern world and the feudal *noh* dream world whence the ghosts of the king and daughters were summoned. Furthermore, the piece was accompanied by traditional and contemporary music, including Indonesian *gamelan* (Rahayu Supangah), Indonesian *Minangkabau* music (Pitermann), Japanese *biwa* (Junko Handa), and pop songs by Singaporean composer Mark Chan. The cast and musicians met during the first phase of the Flying Circus: South East Asian Laboratory (SEALab) in Singapore, which was curated by Ong and funded by JFAC in November of 1996. Much time was spent on improvisation to explore interaction among the eclectic disciplines of training, stylized bodies and movements (Hata 1997: 16-18).

Making mutual consultation a key point at every step, Hata, Ong and Kishida carefully sculpted the tragic tale of the Old King into an Asian story of patricide performed in six languages by a cast of twenty-five international actors and musicians. The audio-visual effect of juxtaposed traditions, costumes, music and styles made *Lear* an exotic, Oriental phantasmagoria or, to quote the title of Ricardo Saludo's article in *Asiaweek*, "The Ultimate Asian Tragedy." Saludo remarked that *Lear* was best suited to Singapore since "the city-state [had] just the right sensibility to lead [the project]" with its "amalgam of [...] cultures and languages" (Saludo 2006: 38-39). This view was consistent with the agenda of the Singapore Tourism Board, which according to William Peterson, had "undertaken an aggressive marketing campaign [to tout] Singapore as 'the New Asia'" (2003: 80). Writing on *Desdemona* as part of a State-sponsored proliferation of festivals in Singapore at the turn of the millennium – *Desdemona* was part of the Singapore Arts Festival 2000 – Peterson writes the following: "Singapore's festival strategy is part of its self-promotion as the embodiment of the 'New Asia,' which has come to mean an Asia that is prosperous, confident, affluent, modern, multicultural, culturally vibrant, open to the West but secure in its Asian identity" (2001: 161). While Ong's use of the term "New Asia" to frame the Shakespeare trilogy was not a repetition of the Tourism Board's market approach, since Ong was far more attentive to the pitfalls in

constructing a new cultural identity, his project was nevertheless subject to a critique of its relation to cultural capital.

While the production received much praise for its intercultural daring, it also provoked sharp criticism. As mentioned above, one of Ong's fiercest critics was Rustom Bharucha, who criticized the director's tendency towards the spectacle of "reverse orientalism" and "cultural essentialism" (2001: 108, 114) in an essay titled "Consumed in Singapore." Several reviewers, including Bharucha, felt uncomfortable with the production's implicit hierarchy of class and social position. Since it is possible to read that the Chinese Older Daughter usurps the throne of the Japanese King, the Southeast Asians such as the Thai Younger Daughter and the Indonesian soldiers are subservient to the Northeast Asians, who are more economically dominant in reality. There would have been a considerable change in values and reception of the performance if a *silat* martial artist had played the title role. However, *silat* was pre-defined as socio-culturally "lower" from the beginning in Ong's interpretation, in contrast to the "higher" positioned *noh* (Bharucha 2001: 115).

Using his multi-lingual strategy Ong defended the premise that "no one culture should be able to understand *Lear* in its entirety" and that "no one culture appropriates another" (Ong 1997: 4-5). If by the latter statement, Ong means that no one cultural representative can claim centrality or a superior hierarchical position in the production, then not only was there a hierarchy of culture and race at work in the power relations among characters, but there was also a tendency towards gender stereotyping and bias in the portrayal of the play's female characters, particularly in the use of cross-gender characterization.

For example, the malicious Older Daughter was presented as outspoken and powerful, claiming early on in the play "Words are weapons! They are the only means of survival!" And insisting that "Only the king's blood flows in my veins." Later on she rejects her mother and commits patricide in order to take the throne herself. In contrast, the Younger Daughter was presented as a quiet and innocent girl, who dances with the ghost of her tender Mother, indulging in fond childhood memories. After killing her sister, lover and father, the Older Daughter ends up in the arms of the wordless Absent Mother "who embraces all beings" (Programme 1997: 8-13). This simplified narrative, which omitted political contexts such as the divided kingdom, placed more emphasis on the polarization between the Older Daughter and

the Younger Daughter than the original English Renaissance text. While one was portrayed as an outspoken, ambitious and promiscuous vamp, the other was a quiet, obedient and vulnerable virgin.

As Jenny de Reuck remarks, it is clear that there is “the stark binarism of misogynist representation of the Older Daughter (imbued with patriarchal precepts of authority, power, oppression) and the Mother and Younger Daughter (valorised as the feminist sublime of redeemer and saviour)” in the constructions of female bodies. Furthermore, Yong Li Lan recognizes within the characters an alignment of “three intercultural binaries,” which include “speech v. silence, masculine v. feminine, and western (Shakespearean) verbal drama v. Asian dance theatre” (2010: 196). It is especially disappointing that the dual role, the Old Man/Absent Mother, was not fully exploited to allow the audience to understand the meaning behind the character or the possibilities of subverting the fixed dichotomy between masculinity and femininity. Rather, it promoted a male-oriented idealized Mother figure far from the original aim, which, as I have pointed out, was the re-interpretation of *King Lear* based on “female principles” (Hata 1997:16-17).

A prime example of suppressed female presence can be found in the play’s last scene. The ghost of the Mother stood with the Earth Mothers behind the Older Daughter in the now uninhabited kingdom while she murmured “Who’s behind me?” Kishida’s original idea was for the Mother to kill the Daughter as an act of Buddhist redemption. However, Ong opposed it, as that idea was “a very male thing” for him (Hata 1997:16-17). The irony here is that the male director persuaded his female collaborator not to finish the play with such a radical murder among women. Kishida’s text was thus censored and subjugated by Ong’s view of the gendered principles of *mise-en-scène* and to some extent rendered her invention, the Absent Mother, “absent” in a double sense.

A similar observation can be applied to other representations of the female characters in the play. The Woman, who was performed by Japanese contemporary theatre actress Katagiri, functioned as a Joker who kept questioning in Japanese “who are you?” and “who am I?” This worked well to comment on the traditional patriarchal world from the angle of modern stage values that are relatively free from gender restrictions. In contrast, the function of the Earth Mothers was unclear and their presence unheard. Compared to the three Shadows of the Older Daughter – Ambition, Unpredictability, and Vanity – who were given lines to articulate their

existence, the presence of the Earth Mothers played by six female actors was ambiguous and thus downstaged in the cross-gender spectacle.

A crucial question arises here: what position do female characters take in this production based on the concept of “a New Asia”? Bharucha acutely addresses this question in the following terms:

Do women matter at all in this reading of *Lear*? Or are they merely surrogates for the director’s persona, who would like to kill his father through the guise of a “woman” but who is not fully prepared to allow that “woman” to be adequately represented in her own right? [...] Ong as director has to assume responsibility for the ways in which women are marginalized in his production, even as they are metaphorized as icons of a future Asia. (2001: 121)

Despite the company’s intention to explore a radical feminist and postcolonial re-reading of *King Lear*, the strategy of patricide and the revival of the Absent Mother seemed to be stereotyped and subsumed in the internally contradictory concept of “a New Asia,” which was tantamount to the patriarchal “Old Asia.” This concept contains echoes of Orientalism, in the sense that it reinforces the exotic but dangerous stereotype of the other. The representation of women remained fixed in a set of socio-cultural features: somewhat exotic and somewhat foreign.

2. *Desdemona* as “New Asia” or Schizophrenic Postmodernity

After the praise and criticism of *Lear*, Ong’s direction for his second Shakespearean tragedy in Asia changed distinctively, as he points out in the following passage:

After *Lear*, I was dissatisfied with simply directing an Asian production that juxtaposed many different languages and many different traditional forms. I had to take a more critical reflexive look at the process that I was engaging in. How do I encourage the intercultural process to breathe, allowing the audience to peep through the seams of the new work? (2001a: 128)

Moving away from the exotic spectacle of *Lear*, *Desdemona* became a “cultural negotiation” and “a study of culture” (Hariki 2001: 9) stemming from the experience of the Flying Circus Project. Based on the achievements of this ambitious project organised by TheatreWorks to allow for the encounter and exchange among Asian artists through workshops and discussion, “with no view to an end-product or final presentation” (Ong 2001a: 126), *Desdemona* intended to reveal its creation process and conflicts among intercultural performers using Brechtian principles rather than to show a seamless complete product. Although it appeared as a sort of finished product in Adelaide and Singapore, its real objective was to show the endless nature of the process, as in the case of Munich’s open rehearsal and Fukuoka’s museum installation in 2001.

This experimental work deviated far from Shakespearean language and the narrative of an interracial marriage. In Kishida’s rewriting of *Desdemona*, the themes of love and death were extracted from Shakespeare’s text and the invention of “two dead mothers,” the mothers of Desdemona and Othello, were added “like a mosaic or jigsaw puzzle” (Kishida 2001: 5). Kishida’s construction of the voices of the subversive heroine who seeks identity, autonomy and revenge was deconstructed by Ong’s iconoclastic and idiosyncratic interpretation: “*Desdemona* is a dreamscape of discovering the She within the He, of discovering the other within the self, of discovering another culture within one’s culture” (*Desdemona* Programme 2000:4). In order to destroy the stereotypical “black machismo” (*Desdemona* Programme 2000:9) and represent the Moor’s inner conflict caused by the contradiction of mind and body, Ong created two Indian Othellos. These were played by a male *kudiyattam* performer, Madhu Margi, reciting his lines in Malayalam, a language that is no longer spoken; and a rare female *kathakali*-trained contemporary performer, Maya Rao. Shifting between male and female, the two Othellos stood on stage without granting each other recognition. *Desdemona* was played by Singaporean-Malaysian actress Claire Wong, and all the other collaborators, such as Burmese puppeteer (U Zaw Min), performers from Indonesia (Martinus Miroto), South Korea (Shin Chang Yool) and Singapore (Low Kee Hong), South Korean composer (Jang Jae Hyo), audio-visual artists from Singapore and Australia (Matthew Ngui) and South Korea (Park Hwa Young) were credited as “Zero.” The Zeros added complicated layers of code consisting of movement, vocal expressions, self-referential images, interview

excerpts, and live emails projected on stage. In his director's note in the programme, Ong described the idea of the Zero characters in the following terms:

What is zero, who is zero? Zero is the beginning, zero is the end, zero is negative space, zero is absence, zero is shadow, zero is the echo, zero is the reflection, zero is the trace, zero is the source, zero is the process... (Ong 2000: 11)

As Ong's note suggests, in front of "a process of reinvention" of "New Asia" through a bold "appropriation" (Ong 2000: 9) of Shakespeare, the audience witnessed a string of questions with no answers, as if all the signifiers were intended to continually circumvent their signifieds. The result on stage was a collection of undecipherable, floating visual images.

In effect, it was only in the programme that any sense of narrative was given. Without reference to both the "programme synopsis" and "scene synopsis" (*Desdemona* Programme 5-8), most of the audience could not understand what was happening on stage in traditional narrative terms. This crucial problem was pointed out by many reviewers. Among them, Robin Loon offered one of the most detailed attempts at decoding TheatreWork's intercultural productions of Shakespeare. Using the homonym triad "Sight/Site/Cite" to frame his analysis, Loon argues the following:

Desdemona continues the visualist patterning initiated by *Lear*. However, it suffers from too much juxtaposition of images and conventions that require specific sightings/sitings/citings. Modernity is constantly encroaching on the traditional, destabilising any secure reading of either. The attitude towards Shakespeare is antagonistic. It presents the audience with illusory links to Shakespeare and proceeds to negate those links, leaving the audience without a point from which to enter *Desdemona*'s narrative. The use of digital arts, installations and video art to provide metatextual commentaries is too disruptive, especially when the text which these conventions are meant to deconstruct is never fully stable or readable in the first place. The production is also far too dependent on paratexts such as the programme notes for clarification. The programme notes become the supplement that

takes over the centre and it dictates a monological reading of the performance to the audience. (Loon 2004: 233)

With the narrative of Shakespeare's *Othello* confined to fragments and with a stage devoid of readable signs, the programme's scene synopsis – entitled "Preshow" (*Desdemona* Programme 2000: 6) – became the principal means of orientation. If answers to questions immanent in the audience's disoriented experience of the production had already been anticipated prior to entering the theatre, was there anything else at work in this particular instance of re-orientation?

According to Helena Grehan, part of Ong's intention in *Desdemona* was to "shift the parameters of intercultural performance." However, the question still remains as to where those boundaries were shifted. Grehan's own view is that Ong devised a performance praxis that "complicate[d] the questions of positionality, location and subjectivity, and that this complication is achieved [...] through the use of a performance mode that (in rehearsal) was an inspiring integration of technology and tradition" (2000: 117). In my view, Ong's performance removed the inter-subjective boundaries in the relationship between audience and performer, out of which new meaning is typically created in a dialectical movement, into a type of "strange loop" in which the audience's agency was displaced by the scene synopsis. Douglas Hofstadter describes the structure of a strange loop as follows:

[...] an abstract loop in which, in the series of stages that constitute the cycling-around, there is a shift from one level of abstraction (or structure) to another, which feels like an upwards movement in a hierarchy, and yet somehow the successive "upward" shifts turn out to give rise to a closed cycle. (2008: 101)

This two-step, ascendant-descendant cycle was at work in the relationship between the secondary characters, who were all named zero, and the protagonists Desdemona and Othello, who were engaged in a patrilineal battle. The latter grouping was bound by the ascendant force of hierarchy while the former grouping became a descendant, nullifying force in the production – a zeroing out of the play's territory as invoked in the first note of the programme synopsis:

The performance begins with an anamorphic image which is installed on stage [...] Suddenly the four video screens, two onstage and two on the proscenium wall, are flooded with the figure, O. . . (2000: 6)

The question of subjectivity and its absent answer – whose “point of view” is responsible for the construction of meaning? Who owns that point of view? Who controls it? – helped perpetuate the “closed cycle” of the play and served as a meta-comment on the slippery task in *Lear* of formulating a “New Asia.”

In practical terms, the programme ended up performing the role of an essential guidebook for the audience’s “journey through difference in Asia, traditional arts, gender, ritual and contemporary art” (Ong 2000: 11). Reading the programme the audience came to know the following plot. Madhu’s Othello regards Desdemona as his sex slave whose purpose is to produce a male heir to the Kingdom. Haunted by his father, also called Othello, he longs for a male heir to perpetuate the patrilineage. Desdemona, whose name was secretly given to her by her mother, tells of her people being colonized by Othello’s patriarchal ancestors and deprived of their names. Desdemona hates Othello and challenges him and her predetermined role as a sex slave. In a scene performed by puppet dolls and animated by the Burmese puppeteer, the audience sees Desdemona’s dead mother tell her daughter, in an act of empowerment, that she will soon die. To Othello, who lacks memories of his mother, Desdemona’s female identity, which developed from her memories of her mother, becomes a threat. In killing her, Othello utters “In you, I do not exist.” Soon Desdemona returns as a ghost and takes revenge by possessing Othello and his male slave who was named “Sword” by Desdemona and transforms them into beautiful women. They kiss each other and Othello is killed by drinking poisonous saliva. Ultimately, her revenge is to force Othello to encounter the female within him (*Desdemona* Programme 2000: 7-10).

In addition to this plot explanation the synopsis also explains the intentions behind numerous visual images projected on multiple screens, which paralleled and/or deviated from this physical layer of the performance. The audio-visual artist, Ngui, documented the company’s work and revealed some of the intercultural tensions that occurred during the creation process. For example, when Desdemona wanted to speak to Othello on stage, the words “You do not speak my language and I do not speak yours” appeared on screen, pointing to the actress’s frustration about

miscommunication and misleading interpretation. The discordances of traditionally trained artists performing in high-tech modern theatres were also suggested. The Korean artist, Park, created “witty parallel texts highlighting the dilemmas of a fictional character called Mona” (*Desdemona* Programme 2000: 6) and used documentary video to expose systems that survey, control and confine women. For example, when *Desdemona* possessed Othello, Park inserted images of “bound feet” and letters written in red lipstick. Furthermore, the live e-mail to Mona from a Singaporean performer who played one of the “Zero” roles, Low Kee Hong, was projected onto the screen:

Some of these thoughts are the result of our previous experience, *Lear*, a larger intercultural product which toured Japan, Asia-Pacific, and Europe between 1997 and 1999. Some of our critics related to what they read as Singapore, though the money was provided by the Japan Foundation Asia Center, appropriating not only the various traditional Asian art forms but also a process of bastardizing Shakespeare. Some of these criticisms were perhaps misplaced in the sense that the actual intercultural process was not visible through the highly designed product. *Lear* in part was too airtight to really allow any extensive discourse on the intercultural process. What most saw onstage was a harmonious product that perhaps represents a false Asia.³⁴

Low even boldly questioned “Do we provide an instant Asian exotic tidbit for the festival market?” and “Are we simply pawns in Keng Sen’s game?” Since the projection was presented from the point of view of an actor it exposed part of the production’s critical stance.

As Ong declared, “[this production] is about a group of Asian artists looking at ourselves and rethinking the way in which Asia has been represented on the stage in the past.” Yet the director immediately added that this is only his view and other participants never reached a consensus on the purpose of this intercultural venture. “We have different approaches to art making, but our interests and opinions can intersect. It is at these intersections that *Desdemona* exists.” Ong wanted *Desdemona*

³⁴ This email was transcribed from a video recording of the *Desdemona* production published on the Asian Shakespeare Intercultural Archive website, <http://a-s-i-a-web.org>.

to be “a study of culture, hopefully a journey which is neither didactic nor academic” (Ong 2000: 11). I argue that it was not so much academic as it was didactic, in the sense that the programme actually functioned not only as a guidebook to indicate to the audience possible ways of reading the abstract chaos on stage, but also served as an authoritarian textbook to restrict their viewpoints, interpretation and even value judgments.

The character called Sword is a notable example of this. As many reviews pointed out, without reading the following passage from the synopsis, the audience could not have understood the intended theatrical device:

Desdemona imagines herself being stabbed by a sword. She reveals her desire to drink the poisonous saliva of the sword. The sword, her mother, [sic] Desdemona slowly fuse into a single passion. It is in this passion that Othello destroys her as he becomes overwhelmingly threatened by his female slave. (*Desdemona* Programme 2000: 8)

Whereas the synopsis paints a coherent picture of Desdemona’s subconscious desires faced with the prospect of death at the hands of Othello, her embodiment of this narrative on stage bore little correlation at all. Her slow ambulation across the space was performed within a shifting multi-media landscape and intercut with fragments of speech, all of which deconstructed the textual linearity of the programme.

Another example of this restriction could be seen in Rao’s shifting representation of gender roles. In scene 1, her presence on stage was framed by a series of rhetorical questions. “There is an old man (Maya Rao) on stage [...] in his dreams he is transformed into a beautiful young woman. Is he old Othello, Othello’s father or a symbol of the historical legacy of the kingdom of Othello? Who is the beautiful young woman? Is she Othello’s mother?” (*Desdemona* Programme 2000: 6) The readers of the programme would have been aware that these questions were rhetorical, since the programme contained the following statement: “In this production, gender is viewed as a continuum rather than as two polar opposites of male and female” (*Desdemona* Programme 2000: 11).

In addition to the programme notes, some scenes were accompanied by English subtitles based on Kishida’s fragmented text. For instance, Othello’s line in Sanskrit “Who am I, what am I since all my fathers before me were also Othello and

all my sons after me will also be Othello” (*Desdemona* Programme 2000: 6) was reminiscent of the Old Man in *Lear*. Like Lear, Othello also appeared to have lost his memory and sense of self-identity, as though he were confined to the frame of a *noh* dream play: “I was sleeping in the terror of a nightmare I cannot recall” (*Lear* Programme 1997: 8-9). In contrast to the male protagonists who are confined to patriarchal hierarchy and oppression, both the Older Daughter and Desdemona were given identities from the beginning.

However, Desdemona’s character never identified with the innocent Younger Daughter or the ambitious Older Daughter, who were imbued with patriarchal and Oriental stereotypes. Desdemona’s revenge against her husband-colonizer took the form of the patricide that the Older Daughter violently committed within the patriarchal frame. Desdemona imitated Othello and also the movement of a puppet. In doing so, she gained shamanic power to manipulate her revenge. The Burmese puppeteer who suggested the presence of Desdemona’s dead mother was also mock-manipulated by a stagehand. The strategy of mimicking and manipulating the other characters, as well as being mimicked and manipulated by them, formed a layer of complication that circumvented stereotypical portrayals of gender and race. In this process, the borders between traditional and contemporary art forms and between gender roles were relentlessly blurred and reinterpreted.

As a reflection on the earlier project *Lear*, *Desdemona* raised questions about a contemporary Asia and tried to represent those questions on stage. Desdemona’s murderous plot of transforming her tyrant husband into a woman subverted the fixed dichotomy between masculinity and femininity. The victimized wife achieved her subjectivity as the play’s title suggests and performed the act of revenge. In addition, the “Absent Mothers,” who were overwhelmed and marginalized by the Older Sister played by a male actor in *Lear*, were reincarnated in *Desdemona* and became a leitmotif. Thus, it is possible to read that Kishida’s iconoclastic re-writing of Shakespeare on “female principles” was realized to some extent in this second trial.

This theoretically engaged, but theatrically enigmatic work received far more criticism than *Lear*, as Ong expected: “Some people will be shocked and resistant, but through the one and a half hours that stance will change. And the last group will find it refreshing” (2001b: 5). After the premiere of *Desdemona*, which was in Adelaide as part of the Telstra Adelaide Festival, one of Australia’s most prominent theatre publications, *RealTime*, refused to write a review; a Singaporean arts

administrator attacked it as “the greatest piece of shit”; critics such as Grehan voiced concerns regarding “new kinds of cultural fusions in need of urgent justification and interrogation” (2001: 113) and “a pastiche of meaningless chatter” (2001: 124); and Bharucha commented that Kishida’s text, which was subsumed in multimedia and Asian performers was “glibly decontextualized within a fragmented ‘postmodern’ narrative” (2000: 125).

Addressing such criticisms, Ong responded by posing a question without a definite answer: “Who is the audience that we are playing to?” Admitting that “*Desdemona* was never meant to be an easy read,” he argued that the audience as well as the theatre organizers and critics were not ready for the work: “the parameters for intercultural performance themselves have yet to be developed” (Grehan, 2001: 118). He also pointed out the irony that if he had made *Desdemona* more accessible, with a simpler story-line and perhaps with exotic flavours like *Lear*, it would have been generally well received and consumed, though some would have objected to it. The expectation that “It’s fine when Pina Bausch or Richard Foreman is obscure but good Asian companies should provide an ethnic evening out” is still prevalent in Asian theatres, not to mention Western festival markets (2001a: 126-29). In such markets, the dichotomy of the West as the subject of the gaze and the rest as the object functions as a form of symbolic violence against the explorative freedom of Asian intercultural theatres in that the very division of West and East is itself arguably the fabrication of Western hegemony. By denying access to the illusions and expectations that took precedence with *Lear*, *Desdemona* as “a journey through differences in Asia” and “a process of reinvention” raised questions about the expression of a contemporary “Asia.” By “reinvention,” Ong was referring to a type of popular culture among “Asian” countries, the agency not only to reinvent themselves but also “to reinvent [the] worldviews of others” (2001a: 132).

In the case of *Lear*, going against Kishida’s radical feminist strategy of patricide and revival of the Absent Mother, Ong stereotyped and subsumed female representations in the male-dominated spectacle and self-contradicted concept of “a New Asia,” which actually ran parallel to “Orientalism.” In contrast, by challenging Orientalism, *Desdemona* created a subjective and subversive female protagonist. Ong’s statements on *Lear* that he was seeking “a New Asia,” and that “Harmony is not what I seek but discord” were realized in *Desdemona* by reinventing the other or female roles and thus ultimately striving to reinvent the audience’s viewpoint.

Between the two Asian epics of father-killer “in Old Asia” and husband-killer in “New Asia,” it is no coincidence that the female characters were represented differently; on the one hand subjugated to and on the other subversive of patriarchal norms. This view is further substantiated by Yong in the following analysis:

Finally, the implied violence and antagonism of its ugliness performed rejections that were disturbingly well-aligned along the familiar coordinates of East-West/feminine-masculine. If the performativity of the Asian intercultural in *LEAR* circulated the beauty of Asian theatre as the exotic, that of *Desdemona* enacted the Asian body as the anti-exotic self-rejection. (2004: 273)

Furthermore, it is possible to read the juxtaposition of different languages and traditions in *Lear* as a metaphor for Asian countries, whereas the mixture of multi-cultures and media in *Desdemona* is arguably more akin to Singapore, the city-state at the crossroads of people, cultures, languages, religions and traditions, immersed in high-tech postmodernity. It is also possible to describe *Desdemona* as a “culturally schizophrenic Singapore,” as Low’s live emails put it. Loon makes a similar observation on the relationship between this production and Asian identity:

[...] the rhizomatic textuality complicates any coherent vision of Asian and the Asian identity. Its radical heterogeneity, fragmentation and parallelism with *Othello* alienates the audience [...] The constant switching of forms, conventions, mediums and texts is schizophrenic. While this may make the statement that Asian identity is perhaps schizophrenic, it leaves the audience emotionally and critically disconnected from the whole struggle. (2004: 234)

While I agree with Loon’s analysis of the outcome of the schizo-economy of *Desdemona*, I think one can go further in the critique of the closure at work within the play’s total fragmentation, by resorting to precisely those terms that Deleuze and Guattari deploy in their description of rhizomatic structures in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Such structures “do not really break with dualism” so that while “unity is consistently thwarted and obstructed in the object [...] a new type of unity triumphs

in the subject” (1987: 6-7). What emerged from the array of juxtaposed media on stage in *Desdemona* was a “supplementary dimension to that of the texts” (1987: 6); a dimension of disorientation, as we have seen, which succeeded in foiling the Western gaze at an Asia as object, though it struggled under the guise of a “New Asia” to open the way for new cultural capital. In short, an old “unity continue[d] its labor” (1987: 6). It is this cycle of repetition that Ong has sought to break out of in attempting to (re)define and (re)present a contemporary “Asia” on stage. This is not only apparent in Ong’s deviations from Shakespeare’s texts but it is also part of his previous productions to the extent that his focus on Asia became a sort of “ghettoization of Asia” within himself. Accordingly, his coda to the Shakespearean trilogy was no longer an inter-Asian production, but it had become another re-orientation, back to the West.

3. Search: *Hamlet*, A Relentless Search for Identity

Ong’s final production in the Shakespearean trilogy was *Search: Hamlet*, performed at the Kronborg Castle in Denmark in 2002. Ong was no longer interested in working specifically with an intercultural Asian cast and playwright and neither was he entirely keen “on doing another Shakespeare” (Ong 2002: 18). If *Hamlet* were to be an option at all, it would only be on the basis that fellow theatre director and the project producer HC Gimbel would facilitate “a site-specific version at Kronborg, in its different rooms” (Ong 2002: 18). Where Singapore had served as a crossroads of Asian identities, the place for the affirmation of a *subject* called “New Asia” – de-centered though its cultural manifestations were in the *Lear* and *Desdemona* projects – the near-mythic Elsinore would become a spectral site in *Search: Hamlet*, a place of absence, or what historian Pierre Nora refers to as a *lieu de mémoire*: an historic site “less concerned with events and phenomena than with the manner by which those over time [have been] transformed into historical memory” (2010: VIII).

Spectres were at play on multiple levels in this production, not least in Ong’s crucial decision to give “birth to an absent Hamlet” (Ong 2002: 20) early in the planning phase, but also in the guise of the castle as one of the great fantasy objects in the domain of Shakespeare tourism. Sites like Elsinore and the *Casa di Giulietta* in Verona benefit from the global Shakespeare cultural industry by offering a taste of authenticity and the promise of becoming more intimate with the “aura” of

Shakespeare himself. However, such sites tend to exist at the fringes of cultural memory, caught in a liminal state of becoming historic. This is due to a large extent to the homogenizing effect of global tourism sites, in which historicity is a performance in the here and now in response to the demands of the market. Ong was conscious of the effect of globalization and questioned it in no uncertain terms: “Does Kronborg belong to Denmark or to the world? [...] Should globalization develop specificities to take into account different localities, different contexts, different individual circumstances?” (Ong 2002: 18)

Early on in the planning phase, Ong expressed the desire to “return to the symbol and metaphor of Hamlet, [to go back] to theatre as a search, as an enigma, as a mystery of life, as a place to ask questions rather than to receive trite answers” (Ong 2002: 18). These were some of the key conceptual concerns that fed into the rehearsal process and the creation of a play in two parts.

The first part consisted of a series of independent site-specific solo performances spread across eight separate locales inside the castle, including a chapel, a ballroom, a wine cellar and an organ room. Ong’s strategy was “to find out how individual artists responded to each room, how the characters they were playing came to life in different rooms, how much the music of the performance should be inspired by these atmospheres” (Ong 2002: 21). Audience members were able to choose two rooms to visit per performance. Each room was inhabited by a specific character devised in rehearsal by each artist. For example, in the Chapel, Carlotta Ikeda performed the role of a blind ghost in *butoh* style. Her intimate movements suggested a journey through embodied memories creating a site within a site. In the Organ Room, Ann Crosset, revealing her lean naked body, talked to the audience and to Antonius (Wahyudi Sutrisna) who sang and played Gamelan close by. The subject of her piece shifted between remarks about Denmark, thoughts on her friend-actor and comments on the rehearsal process of *Search: Hamlet*, as illustrated in the following lines from Crosset’s performance text:

Ann: There is no Hamlet in this production. You guys know that right? We are all playing secondary characters. Some might have a problem with that. Not me. I’m perfect for that part. I’m born for that. [...] I’m just not really interested in living up to that. So, on my own, I chose a secondary form of existence.

Crosset used direct address as a type of Brechtian distancing effect to transform the “passive” audience into “critical” observers of the characters. Indeed, *Search: Hamlet* contained numerous self-reflexive and meta-theatrical lines and personal and plural narratives prompting its audiences to reflect on the fictionality of the intercultural endeavor behind the production.

After the solo performances, a collective performance took place in the courtyard, followed by an interval. During the interval, a video work called “Search: Hamlet in China” by Wu Wenguang was screened. In the film the leitmotiv of Ong’s absent Hamlet in Elsinore was reproduced analogously in Beijing through an interview with a gay man punished by the State for engaging in toilet sex. Here, the taboo subject, homosexuality, which is by definition absent or repressed in China, collided with what Ong calls “the myth of Hamlet,” namely that “he’s not really an important prince but just a gay man caught for toilet sex” (*Search: Hamlet* Programme 46). Through these different approaches, the audience was invited to question who Hamlet might be at an individual level.

The second half of the production occupied the entire courtyard and made use of a cross-shaped *hanamichi*-like thrust stage, which was loosely adapted from the design of a *kabuki* stage, and protruded from the grandiose walls of the Renaissance era castle. Unlike the previous two productions, textual adaptation was not part of *Search: Hamlet*. Instead, the text was based on monologues in English that were improvised in rehearsal by two female performers: the aforementioned Ann Crosset, an American performer based in Denmark who played the role of Gilda Rosie Kranz III, and Swedish performer Charlotte Engelkes who functioned as a Storyteller. Crosset appeared in the second half as the fusion of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Through her frequent interactions with the other characters on stage and moments of direct address to the audience, Crosset, dressed in a silver jump suit, gave Rosencrantz and Guildenstern a far more prominent role than in Shakespeare’s original. The Danish pop singer Dicte took the role of Ophelia and composed and sang her lines. She portrayed Ophelia as a vulnerable and half-mad woman who laments her tragic demise.

Gertrude was played by a male Thai dancer (Pichet Klunchun) using a mixture of traditional Thai *khon* and contemporary dance forms. Indonesian actor I Wayan Dibia played Claudius and drew on the Balinese mask drama *topeng* in the

creation of his role. Japanese dancer Kota Yamazaki played the role of the Young Man, mixing *butoh* and Western dance forms. Malaysian female choreographer Aida Redza played the role of Laertes drawing on Southeast-Asian martial arts and the Paris-based Japanese *butoh* dancer, Carlotta Ikeda, played the role of the Ghost of Hamlet's father.

One of the few discernible cultural divisions in this cross-gender production was the split between the vocal Western and English speaking female trio and the non-vocal and thus more corporeal Asian quintet. While the three women's recourse to speech can be read as a challenge to the patriarchal norms at work in *Hamlet*, it must also be stressed that it gave them a more prominent position in the show as a whole. This endorses the observation of Kennedy and Yong that Asian productions tend to foreground the corporeal over the verbal (2010: 17), while English language Shakespeare tends to go the other way around.

Most prominent of all was the role of the Storyteller played by Engelkes. Often in the form of questions, her lines stirred the undercurrent of the play's search for a contemporary Hamlet:

Who can play Hamlet?

Anyone who is disappointed at his mother.

Anyone who feels the need to take action.

Anyone who chooses to walk around with heavy bitter thoughts.

Anyone who feels an outcast in his family;

Or theatre company.

[...]

Who can play Hamlet?

[...]

We are Hamlet.

Be Hamlet and then die.

I don't want to die at all.

Who can play Hamlet?

As the Storyteller delivered her lines, the cast appeared on stage walking in controlled *noh*-like fashion towards the cross-section of the *hanamichi*. After the

prologue sequence, the cast performed a series of five scenes, each with a title reminiscent of a *noh* play, in which the characters seemed to be summoned to the stage from the spirit world. Shakespeare's five-acts were replaced by the five-book structure of the *noh* drama: the Book of the Ghost (The Ghost), the Book of the Warrior (Laertes), the Book of the Young Girl (Ophelia), the Book of the Mad Woman (Gertrude) and the Book of the Demon (Claudius). In each scene the Storyteller functioned as the intermediary between the audience and characters on stage and was responsible for guiding the audience through the fragmented narrative of the play.

At certain moments, the Storyteller spoke as though she had momentarily become Hamlet and Gertrude, with lines such as "I was Hamlet" and "I am Mother;" reflecting Heiner Müller's *Hamlet Machine*. At other points, she accompanied her speech with elements of dance. An example of this appears in her Epilogue as follows:

I am not yet playing Hamlet.
I don't know where he is.
I don't know why everyone is looking for him.
He might be worth looking for
Or he might not be
[...]
I'm not looking
But I definitely exist.

In delivering this speech, the narrator stood at the end of the *hanamichi*, while the Young Man continued to dance on the cross-section of the stage. He stopped to look at her and they smiled at each other. At this point, the stage was plunged into darkness and a searchlight appeared and seemed to follow a person walking around the upper floor of the castle, as if illuminating the presence/absence of the ghostly Hamlet.

On one level the Storyteller functioned as the mediator between the characters and the audience, hinting at elements of meaning in a way that audiences in *Desdemona* were denied, and on another level she functioned as the mediator between the absent Hamlet and the potential birth of his contemporary double. Of all

the characters in the play, the Storyteller was the only one seemingly unrelated to Hamlet's story. And yet, what was staged was not a collective remembering or longing for Hamlet's return, but rather the unhinging of the characters from this pivotal figure. The question "who can play Hamlet?" is also implicitly the question "who cannot play Hamlet?", that is to say, it functioned as a mirror for Shakespeare's central existential equivocation: "To be or not to be."

It is the question of locating one's subjectivity, one's identity, in a world whose landmarks have begun to crumble, and this dilemma presented itself to all characters on stage and to the audience through the Storyteller as a Brechtian mediator. By constantly reminding the audience of the theatricality and fictionality of the production, Ong marked a break in this piece with the troublesome didacticism criticized in *Desdemona*. Rather than staging a particular theoretical posture, *Search: Hamlet* was a return to open questions: "Who's there?" (1.1.1), "who can play Hamlet" and "who am I?" Audience members were invited to question their own identities and re-orient their views on what an intercultural *Hamlet* might be, without becoming passive recipients of Oriental exoticism as seen in *Lear* or being subject to a political agenda on Asian identity as seen in *Desdemona*.

4. Re-orienting "Women" and "Asia"

Rather than attest to any mere continuity, whether along cultural, political or gender lines, the three case studies analyzed in this chapter expose three specific orientations of Shakespeare away from a canonical position. *Lear* demonstrated through the confluence of performance traditions from "Old Asia" the paradoxical presence of self-Orientalism, by maintaining traditional culture and gender hierarchies, partly the outcome of commercial pressure, partly the troubled politics of a city-state aiming to be the melting pot of Asia. *Desdemona* attempted to critique the stance adopted in *Lear* by revealing the intercultural creative process in the form of an open rehearsal. Its radical recourse to a schizophrenic postmodern fragmentation of *Othello* resulted in a flood of images, bodies and text, a chain of signifiers without signifieds. Searching for orientation, the audience was forced to resort to the authorial/authoritative programme notes for guidance. In the final instalment of the trilogy, *Search: Hamlet*, Ong left the Singaporean city-state behind and re-oriented his view back to the West. Unlike the previous two productions, this time he worked to bring out each performer's individual qualities with less emphasis

on cultural provenance or “Asianness.” Within the grand setting of Elsinore Castle, Ong created a cruciform catwalk, borrowing forms from a range of performance traditions to question in relentless fashion “who is Hamlet?” and “what does Hamlet mean in the here and now?”

Over the course of Ong’s trilogy the definition and treatment of “Asianness” underwent radical change. The plays were as much an investigation into the subjectship of Asia as they were an exploration of intercultural parameters and a staging of their limits. If the trilogy functioned as a deepening of Ong’s own understanding and negotiation of the complex matrix of intercultural praxis, it also revealed a progression in the representation of Shakespeare’s female characters in relation to the key dichotomies analyzed in this chapter. From the stark binarism of the powerful Older Daughter and the passive Younger Daughter in *Lear*, and the title-role heroine in *Desdemona* who gets revenge on her murderous husband by feminizing him, to a female Storyteller who reinvents Hamlet’s story from an array of viewpoints, women occupy increasingly subversive roles in Ong’s re-orientation of Shakespeare’s three tragedies, able to resist stereotypes of gender and Orientalism.

Chapter 9

Re-orienting Shakespeare's "Ghost" in Akio Miyazawa's *Cardenio*

In this final chapter, by reading Akio Miyazawa's adaptation of *Cardenio*, entitled *Motorcycle Don Quixote*, which was a re-imagining of a re-imagined play with almost zero trace of Shakespeare's language or voice, and no stable or verifiable text to work with, I am returning to one of the core questions of this thesis. Namely, how has Shakespeare's imagined Asia met with an imagined Europe to produce transformations, or re-orientations? Whereas in previous chapters I have tried to be as objective as possible in my treatment of case study material, in this chapter my involvement in the Cardenio Project as dramaturg and translator requires a change in discursive method. Therefore, I propose to approach this chapter as an account of practice as research in re-orienting Shakespeare. Having worked as a collaborator on the project, I am able to draw conclusions and give insights into how the processes of translation and adaptation affected the re-orientation of Shakespeare in *Motorcycle Don Quixote*.

Adapted by playwright and director Miyazawa Akio (1956-), the production was part of a larger project initiated by Shakespeare scholar Stephen Greenblatt (1943-) to examine the notion of "cultural mobility" through *Cardenio*, thought to be one of Shakespeare's lost plays. A version of the text edited by Brean Hammond and retitled *Double Falsehood* was "canonised" in the Arden Shakespeare series in 2010, and was used as the basis for Gregory Doran's production at the RSC in 2011. Following the Renaissance style of collaboration and adaptation, one that some scholars – including Greenblatt and Breen – believe Shakespeare and Fletcher to have used for *Cardenio*, Greenblatt and the playwright Charles Mee co-authored a contemporary version of the play. Their purpose, aside from a performance at the American Repertory Theatre in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in May 2008, was to migrate and evolve the text through adaptations by theatre companies operating in different geo-cultural locations. Japan was the first country to house the experiment and versions in Brazil, Croatia, Egypt, India, Poland, Serbia, South Africa, Spain and Turkey followed thereafter.

If Shakespeare's so-called innate greatness and universality comes from his language, what happens when the text is absent, the authorship and the editorship

are (con)fused, or when there is seemingly no place for appropriation? How does the notion of cultural mobility respond to the processes of adaptation and translation? This chapter reads these linguistic and cultural metamorphoses in the play and seeks a reappraisal of the terms adaptation, appropriation and collaboration in 21st century intercultural performance.

1. The Cardenio Project

Before entering into an analysis of the Japanese version of *Cardenio*, I first want to clarify the history of the play, since its intertextual genealogy is relatively complex. Secondly, I want to contextualize Miyazawa's work within the contemporary Japanese theatre landscape, because his work is underexposed in English-speaking theatre circles, largely due to the fact that his company rarely tours overseas. Miyazawa bears a resemblance in this regard to Deguchi Norio, discussed in Chapter 4.

In his introduction to *Double Falsehood*, Brean Hammond begins by addressing what he calls, "The *Double Falsehood* Enigma." This "enigma" revolves around a contested claim made by the 18th century English editor and playwright Lewis Theobald, that his play, *Double Falsehood*, was "Written Originally by W. Shakespeare" (Hammond 2010: 1). While Shakespeare and Fletcher's *The History of Cardenio* was entered in the Stationer's Register in 1653, and most modern scholars believe it to have been based on the plot of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605), the manuscript is presumed to have been lost and only fragmentary information remains. Theobald's tragicomedy, which shares the same Quixotian love-triangle plot as *Cardenio*, was well received by audiences at Drury Lane in December 1727, but was later criticised by his contemporaries, particularly his rival Alexander Pope, as a hoax. Still today, the validity of the "lost play" is a subject of contestation among scholars.³⁵ Cervantes' story revolves around a conventional love-triangle relationship, in which Cardenio goes insane because his fiancée Lucinda was taken from him by his best friend Fernando, though by the end Lucinda returns to him and Cardenio forgives his friend. Before this resolution takes place, another tragic love-triangle relationship is narrated by a priest in the form of a story within the story.

³⁵ For detailed accounts of "Cardenio," see Cummings (2003), Greenblatt (1997, 2010), Hamilton (1994) and Hammond (2010). Each of these accounts differs in its position on the validity of authorship and Theobald's claim to having owned and adapted his play from an original manuscript by Shakespeare and John Fletcher.

In this subplot, a man asks his friend to seduce his wife in order to test her virtues. Then the wife and the friend fall in love, deceive the husband, and the story ends tragically with the deaths of all three main characters.

Shifting forward to the new millennium, inspired by the phenomenon of Shakespeare's lost play, but not attempting to recreate it in an archaeological or genealogical sense, Greenblatt and Mee wrote their version of *Cardenio* in 2004, and gave it the subtitle: *Inspired by Shakespeare's Lost Play*. It is a high comedy set in the present day, featuring wealthy East Coast Americans who fly to Italy for a wedding in an Umbrian villa. The co-authors took Cervantes's love triangle story as their main plot: thus, the groom Anselmo asks his best man Will to seduce his bride Camilla. Then Will and Camilla end up falling in love, while Anselmo finds his true love in Susana. The love triangle develops during rehearsals for the wedding entertainment, in which the guests perform Shakespeare's lost play – now a mixture of the story by Cervantes and Theobald. As a result, technically speaking, the play was more inspired by Cervantes and Theobald than Shakespeare. According to Greenblatt the play's subtitle, "Inspired by Shakespeare's 'Lost Play,'" was meant to be "a playful and tantalizing allusion to Shakespeare." Following the Renaissance style of collaboration and adaptation, the co-authors "recycled Renaissance fragments" (Greenblatt 2005) in their "local habitation" (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* 5.1.17) marking the first practical step in Greenblatt's elaboration of "mobility" as a diagnostic term for use in the analysis of intercultural performance. Cultural mobility can also be understood as an actualization of Greenblatt's "desire to speak with the dead" (1988: 1, vii) in his earlier book *Shakespearean Negotiations*, which argued that art is the product of "collective negotiation and exchange" (1988: vii).

It was after having seen the late Takahashi Yasunari's *kyogen* adaptation of *Merry Wives of Windsor*, called *Kyogen of Errors* (2001), performed by the *kyogen* actor Nomura Mansai, that Greenblatt started to think about the concept of "cultural mobility." He viewed it as a condition of Shakespeare's own art, noting that the playwright rarely invented a plot out of his own imagination but preferred to appropriate other texts, often by writers who lived in very distant times, places, and cultures (Greenblatt 2005). Greenblatt described his initial rationale for the *Cardenio* Project in the book *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto*, which was one of the key

research outcomes of the project:

How can one do justice to theatrical mobility, that is, how can one get sufficiently close and inward with its processes? Several years ago I felt I had at least glimpsed a possibility when I first encountered the brilliant work of a contemporary American playwright, Charles Mee. Mee is a cunning recycler who is particularly gifted at registering the original charge of the material he has lifted while moving that material in new and unexpected directions [...] I explained [to Mee], I had been studying the creative mobilization of cultural materials in Shakespeare, but it was always at a 400-year distance. I wanted to be able to be close enough to track and understand every move, and I could only hope to do that with a living playwright, someone to whom I could ask questions and from whom I could get direct answers [...] I proposed that we write a modern version of Shakespeare's lost play, *Cardenio*. (2010: 77-78)

The next step in the project involved migrating the text to a new geo-cultural context: Japan. The *Cardenio* Project overall was supported by the Mellon Foundation and Harvard University, and the Japanese version was produced by Tadashi Uchino of the University of Tokyo with additional support from the Japan Arts Council. Uchino commissioned Miyazawa Akio to write a version of *Cardenio*, based on Miyazawa's experience of experimental appropriations and transformations of existing texts by authors such as Shakespeare and Falkner in the context of contemporary Japan. The play *Tokyo/Absence/Hamlet* (2005) is a prime example of his adaptation work.

2. Miyazawa Akio and Yuenchi-Saisei-Jigyoudan

Miyazawa was born in Shizuoka Prefecture in 1956 and entered Tama University of Fine Arts in the early 1980s. He left the university before graduating to pursue a career in television screenwriting. In 1985, he joined the performance group Radical Gaziberimba System (RGS) as a writer and producer. RGS was founded by two well-known screen actors, Naoto Takenaka and Seiko Ito, and included contributions from "performers actively involved in the medium of television"

(Hasebe 2001: 165). Among these was Miyazawa's contemporary, the playwright, actor and director, Ryo Iwamatsu. The group played a significant role within the Little Theatre movement in Japan, transforming conventional approaches to comedy. According to Mari Boyd, RGS "promoted a new intellectual humour in contrast to the humour based on wordplay and nonstop action prevalent in the 1980s and the harsh satirical humor of the decade before that" (Boyd 2007: 722). Hasebe goes further in his account of this era, arguing that "RGS's style of delivering a barrage of short intellectual jokes" was not only the "antithesis of the frenetic style of TV humor that held sway at the time, but it was an objection raised against the 70s style of cynical humor [...] which had conquered the entire Japanese theatrical world" (Hasebe 2001: 165). Miyazawa's involvement in RGS and its critical stance towards the media context from which its members emerged, informed the initial period of his own production company's work and made him something of a rarity amongst his stage peers, who in many cases rose up through university drama circles.

In 1990, Miyazawa established Yuenchi-Saisei-Jigyodan, which translates literally as Amusement Park Operations Renewal Troupe. He took on the roles of playwright and artistic director, assembling a new cast for each production. Still under the influence of RGS, Miyazawa's early works consisted largely of comedies set in absurd environments, often with scathing dialogue. However, in 1992, his work took on a new direction with a play called *Hinemi*, for which he was awarded the prestigious Kishida Drama Award. The play takes place in a fictional town called S City and focuses on the character Kenji, one of two brothers in the Satake family. As a boy, Kenji draws a map of an imaginary town called Hinemi on a piece of scrap paper and shows it to his uninterested elder brother Genichiro. The play shifts to Kenji's life as an adult and portrays him on a quest around the city in search of clues that will help complete his map of the lost town of Hinemi. He encounters a young girl, also named Hinemi, and begins to recall a story about two mythical rocks that mark the entrance of Hinemi Forest. As he tells the story he uncovers pieces of the puzzle and the play unfolds as a series of fantasy-based memories. This image of the lost town, which is a metaphor for absence or lack, can be read as a reflection of the moral dilemma in bubble-era Japan, caught between an indulgence in new-found wealth and worry about an impending economic crash. As has been discussed in previous chapters, this tension influenced the work of other directors, including Noda, Miyagi and Yasuda. For Miyazawa, absence became a characteristic associated with

his work, particularly in his adaptation of *Hamlet* and in his re-imagining of *Cardenio*.

After producing numerous works during the nineties and establishing himself as a leading figure in Japanese theatre, Miyazawa took a three-year break at the turn of the new millennium. In 2002, he embarked on a new period of work, still under the aegis of Yuenchi-Saisei-Jigyodan, this time taking a new “layered” approach to his creative methodology. This included experiments with mixed-media and adaptation techniques. Between 2002-03, he wrote and directed a play/video performance project called *Tokyo Body*. In an essay on Miyazawa’s work titled “Miyazawa Akio After 9/11: Physical Dementia and Undoing History in the ‘J’ Locality,” Tadashi Uchino notes how the attack on the Twin Towers in New York City prompted Miyazawa to go in search of “an alternative body”:

It was as if the collapsed towers symbolized the fragility of my notion of the idealized body: what was left was standing blankly, without any sense of rootedness. In order to try and reclaim a visceral body sustained through “dramatic language”, without going back to old theatrical forms, I went on a search for an alternative body, aware that the unrooted, blank body did exist in the past. (Miyazawa in Uchino 2009: 168)

Uchino describes this alternative body as a “self-injurious body”; the body of so-called “wrist cutters” (2009: 168) and takes his lead from an essay written in 2003 by theatre scholar Hidenaga Ootori who declared the arrival “after 1995” of “something beyond being dysfunctional has arrived [...] in Japan, bodies are behaving very strangely in the streets . . . And I would call these bodies ‘bodies of dementia’” (Ootori in Uchino 2009: 169). Miyazawa’s search for an alternative body, while primarily concerned with the body’s physical and metaphysical manifestations in space, and its construction, mediation and interpretation in performance, can also be seen as the search for an alternative *corpus* or textual body.

In 2005, along with *Tokyo/Absent/Hamlet*, Miyazawa also directed a series of contemporary *noh* plays at the Setagaya Public Theatre. In addition to writing and directing plays, he continued to write essays and publish novels, among which his novel *Search Engine System Crash* (2005) was nominated for the Akutagawa and Mishima literary prizes.

Positioning Miyazawa's new millennium work within the broader contemporary Japanese performance landscape is a difficult task, for the very reason that Miyazawa himself is continually changing his practice in response to social, political and theoretical developments. In an article mapping contemporary theatre culture in Japan titled "Mapping/Zapping 'J' Theatre," Uchino organized key proponents of Japan's contemporary theatre culture in the form of "a cognitive map." The map comprised four "planes" along two axes, as the following passage explains:

For the vertical axis, I put "Literary/Text" toward the top and "Performance/Body" toward the bottom [...] For the horizontal axis, I put "Real (Essentialist=Modern)" toward the right vector, and "Gadget (Relativist=Postmodern)" toward the left. (2006: 132)

In trying to place Miyazawa's work within this cognitive map, Uchino chose the "center ground," noting that "what is most interesting are those groups working at the borders of each axis [...] resisting in this way is Miyazawa Akio of Reviving Amusement Park Agency" (2006: 136).

Miyazawa's theatrical adaption of *Hamlet, Tokyo/Absence/Hamlet* (2004-2005), is an example of the "center ground" that Uchino describes. The performance was one of three artistic mediums that Miyazawa used to re-imagine the story of *Hamlet*, including a collection of short films called "Be Found Dead" and a novel originally titled *Absence*, but later changed to *Nowhere Man*. The narratives in the novel and the performance were both set in Kitakawabe, Saitama Prefecture, a town that once bordered Ibaraki, Gunma, and Tochigi prefectures and was located to the north of the Tone River³⁶. It is a place historically associated with outcast people, including a hidden Christian community. Both the novel and the play follow Shakespeare's basic plot combined with echoes of the incestuous and murderous family saga of William Faulkner's *Absalom! Absalom!* In Miyazawa's novel, Hamlet is renamed as Akihito Mure and his father Tojiro is recast as a construction company boss. Tojiro is murdered by his own younger brother, who tries to take over his company as well as his wife Mayumi. However, as both the novel and the play's

³⁶ Kitakawabe no longer exists today, because it was merged into the neighbouring city of Kazo in 2010.

titles suggest, the Hamlet (Akihito) goes missing in Tokyo and never appears on the page or stage.

The name Akihito is shared phonetically by Japan's current reigning Emperor, and it is possible to read the function of the absent Hamlet in Miyazawa's novel and play not only as the lack of a proper subject, but also as the designation of an empty space at the centre of contemporary Japan. That space is both the geographic site of the imperial Palace in central Tokyo and also a symbolic site of national identity, suggesting a leaderless and directionless society. In this sense, *Tokyo/Absence/Hamlet* functioned in a similar way to Ong Keng Sen's *Search: Hamlet* discussed in the previous chapter. By emphasizing the absence of the play's protagonist, both directors invited audiences to fill the "void" with their own projections of what a contemporary Hamlet might be.

"Presencing" the absence of a protagonist as a creative strategy marks a turn in the history of the re-orientation of Shakespeare in Japan. On one level, Miyazawa was responding to postmodern readings of cultural identity, particularly the critique of cultural essentialism, which is a discourse that attempts to lock the coordinates of the subject in immutable tradition. On another level, it signals new-found confidence in the cultural ownership of Shakespeare, since to stage absence, which is in a sense to stage not knowing, marks a degree of autonomy, risk and experimentation in the director's approach to this cultural icon. At the same time, local adaptations of Shakespeare like *Tokyo/Absence/Hamlet*, while heavily influenced by the specificity of place, language and contemporaneity, are also at the same time in negotiation with the economic and cultural forces of the global arts market. Even if a local Shakespeare production does not travel overseas, there is a sense in which localizing Shakespeare today is always already a process of globalizing him too. One of the ways in which the global market influences local productions is in the transfer and imposition of cultural codes or values, which might consist of ideas of economic viability, trends in aesthetic form and political subject matter, or questions of ethics and morality.

For example, Miyazawa's use of "absence" in his various works can be read as a response to anti-essentialist and anti-foundationalist ideas that are key to postmodern theory. His insistence on staging a "lack" of subjectivity within his characters risked becoming a cliché of postmodern performance. That is to say, by overemphasizing subjectivity as a "negative space" or "shadowy double", his

production work could have become an exercise in theoretical box-ticking, losing its foothold in political and social reality. His adaptation of *Cardenio* could easily have gone down this route, but to the surprise of some of his critics, including Greenblatt, Miyazawa chose to construct his version in the gritty reality of a working-class district in Yokohama. By doing so, he was able to resist the self-orientalist and traditional representation of Japan that other directors have sometimes used as a form of currency and expediency in intercultural projects, and he was also able to resist playing the market game.

3. Relocating *Cardenio* to Working Class Yokohama

Reading for and against the contested genealogy of the text, Miyazawa relocated the story of *Cardenio* to the context of contemporary urban Japan. His adaptation was not meant to be simply a foreign language production of the play by Greenblatt and Mee, because the purpose of the Cardenio Project was to see what happens to the material when it is transformed to fit the concerns and the theatrical conventions of a different culture and society. However, as I pointed out in my programme note as dramaturg, the “focus” of the project became Miyazawa’s critique of “cultural mobility,” which he read as a phenomenon of cultural misunderstanding, rather than an attempt to reconstitute Shakespeare’s lost play and its paradoxical “ambiguous or absent focus” (Eglinton 2006c).

After more than a year in development, Miyazawa’s radical transformation of *Cardenio*, entitled *Motor Cycle Don Quixote*, premiered at the Yokohama Redbrick Warehouse in May 2006. Before Miyazawa started adapting the play, I collated and translated its intricate intertextual history in my capacity as dramaturg and translator. Miyazawa then rearranged the material during the creative process so that all traces of individual input were no longer visible. This phenomenon of ambiguous authorship can be compared to the Renaissance mode of collaboration, which according to Hammond “offered the advantage that two writers could work concurrently from different source books” (2010: 126). In Miyazawa’s case, while sources were shared by both dramaturg and playwright, readings of the material were always translated, and thus transformed, between English and Japanese.

In addition to my role as dramaturg, I was also involved in translating Greenblatt and Mee’s play into Japanese for Miyazawa to read and adapt, and I translated Miyazawa’s Japanese text into English to be understood by Greenblatt

who flew to Japan in order to experience the cultural mobility of *Cardenio* in action. Miyazawa had never read nor seen Shakespearean works in English and preferred to read and quote Shakespeare from the archaic and ornate Japanese translations of Tsubouchi Shoyo and Aritsune Fukuda. He thus tried to recreate Shakespearean rhetoric in the play within the play section of *Motor Cycle Don Quixote* from a translated understanding of Shakespeare's stylistic conventions, particularly the use of iambic pentameter. He asked me if I could make the English translation of his text "sound Shakespearean" with an "archaic resonance" that corresponded to his imagined Shakespearean aesthetic.

Miyazawa's adaptation takes place in a motorcycle repair shop in Tsurumi, an industrial quarter of the city of Yokohama. The shop is occupied by its middle-aged owner Tadao, his younger second wife Machiko and his daughter Yuka from his first marriage (Figure 17). Yuka (whose name suggests "freedom and beauty") wants to become an actress and hopes to study acting in University – a plan to which Tadao is vehemently opposed. The garage is also frequented by a day-worker called Sakazaki and a young social dropout called Matsuura.

The main plot is once again based on a love-triangle relationship in which Tadao (whose name suggests "a man of faith") asks Hitoshi Sakazaki ("duty and compassion") to seduce Machiko ("the woman who knows the truth"). Machiko was once an actress and was traumatized during a production of *Cardenio*. While playing the role of Lucinda, she was betrayed by Kamiyama ("god's mountain"), the actor who played Fernando, prompting her to quit her acting career. Machiko was devastated by the event and met Tadao by chance. Although not stated outright in the play, it is suggested that Tadao saved her life.

The play opens several years after the couple's wedding. Tadao lives in fear of his wife because she always seems to be "absent," lost in a fictional world. The following lines from the play's first scene, titled "Morning," demonstrate the psychological tension between the couple³⁷:

³⁷ All the citations from the play text of Miyazawa's *Motorcycle Don Quixote*, were translated by Eglinton. Both the Japanese and English versions were published on "the Cardenio Project: An Experiment in Cultural Mobility" website, fas.harvard.edu/~cardenio/japan/resources/script.pdf. Page numbers from the English translation are shown in brackets hereafter.

TADAO: *(Avoiding Machiko)* Don't force yourself onto-

MACHIKO: You, it's you who is forcing yourself. But why? Are you feeling your age? Have you already lost interest in holding a woman?

TADAO: It's not like that.

MACHIKO: You feel useless as a man, do you?

TADAO: *(Insistently)* It's not like that, I said.

Machiko looks surprised to hear Tadao, her body stiffens. Tadao stares at her.

TADAO: I am forcing myself. You too. This is bad for our health.

MACHIKO: . . .

TADAO: Don't force yourself, it's . . .

MACHIKO: I'm not.

TADAO: That's fine.

MACHIKO: Do I look strange? Do I look different from other people?

TADAO: No. What I wanted to say . . .

MACHIKO: . . . I always feel vacant as though I'm sleeping. I'm not sure whether this world is real or not.

TADAO: Here is here, it's nothing like the other place. I am here for sure, but you aren't. That's how it must be.

MACHIKO: I am here.

TADAO: . . .

MACHIKO: . . . I, I exist here. But, I'm not so sure what here is.

TADAO: Here is my motorcycle shop. My shop in Tsurumi.

MACHIKO: *(I do know)* that.

TADAO: Then what is it that *(you don't know)*.

MACHIKO: Ah . . . *(I)* . . . where *(am I)* . . . my *(body)* . . . where *(is it)* . . . *(7)*

Machiko is much younger than Tadao, and as an actor, she is a stranger to Tadao's working class world. This scene reveals an existential malaise that affects both characters. Not only is Machiko estranged by Tadao's world, but she also feels cut off from her own milieu. Rather than console Machiko, Tadao amplifies her self-doubt through stubborn indifference to her psychological trauma. Tadao tries desperately to establish himself as self-aware and comfortable with his identity, insisting that he is at home in his motorcycle shop. However, as the play progresses, it becomes clear that Tadao uses Machiko to placate his own fear and anxiety in life. He tries to reinforce the idea that Machiko is lost and absent, while constantly reassuring himself of being present in a form of psychological compensation that covers up his own male impotence (Figure 19).

From scene 1 onwards, Tadao often recounts his "weird dreams" in which he appears as a Don Quixote type figure battling with windmills in a strange land: "A huge wing. Turning, spinning. I cut off one wing, but it kept turning; another wing came and I cut it off; then another and another turning, spinning" (15). In Scene 2, titled "Lost Play," the play shifts to a fragment of *Cardenio*, using a story within a story sequence to depict the encounter between a King (Fernando, played by Kamiyama) and a woman (Lucinda, played by Machiko). Dressed in theatrical period costumes, both characters speak in mock-Shakespearean language, while Tadao watches from the seat of his motorcycle, as though a member of the audience. The King asks the woman to marry him, but she refuses and out of revenge he threatens to imprison her. The woman then tries to flee the King at which point Tadao breaks into the play:

TADAO: Machiko!

Tadao runs to help Machiko.

TADAO: Are you hurt? Is your leg ok?

WOMAN: I don't know why I came back here. Maybe for his status. If I were married to him, I would be happy. Maybe I chose him. Love is such a thing, a fragile thing. Therefore I chose the King.

MAN: This is my art of coaxing. It's easy: fame, money and power.
[. . .]

TADAO: You'll be dumped, some day. Like rubbish, you'll be dumped. Why do you like that kind of guy?

WOMAN: I don't mind being dumped. Before you get dumped, you can be happier than you are now. (*Impulsively*)
Ouch! (19-20)

Tadao's relentless anxiety finally transforms him into the illusionistic Don Quixote figure that has haunted his dreams. One night, after suspecting an affair between Machiko and Sakazaki, he decides to leave home, and Sakazaki goes with him without explanation. In a reference to Don Quixote and Sancho Panza on their horses, as well as the two main characters in the American 1960s road movie *Easy Rider* and Che Guevara's *Motorcycle Diaries*, the men set off on their motorcycles to a carnival in the north of Japan. Three years later, early in the morning, they return to Tsurumi to find that Machiko has become independent and makes her own living and Yuka is pursuing a university acting course (Figure 20). While Tadao is eager to tell the story of his journey, insisting that the experience has changed him, Machiko heads off to work and has no time to listen to his tale. She replies with a quotation from Chekhov's *The Three Sisters* saying "we must work, we must work!" (Miyazawa 2006: 62)

Miyazawa describes the overall form of the production as "the transformation of streams of consciousness among Chekhovian-like characters and the catharsis in the reunification of a separated family" (Eglinton 2006b). The play's general state of flux entrains a string of unresolved or purposefully misunderstood plot lines, such as the source of Tadao's fear of female actresses, Machiko's relationship with Kamiyama, or Sakazaki's past, beyond the fleeting suggestion that he was involved in drug deals and in the sex industry trafficking women: "Do women and feed them dope. It's so easy, they can't live without dope. Their bodies will change just like that. After letting them play, I'll sell them off." (27)

The women are threatened by male selfishness and violence, bartered for among the men and constantly misread as ever performing "actresses" or forced prostitutes who are beautiful, enigmatic and yet dependent. Even at the end of the

play, Tadao, who has matured little after his three-year voyage, is still delusional and continues to believe that he has saved his fantasy wife “Lucinda” (Machiko). However, he is forced to face the fact that his attempt at constructing Machiko’s trauma is over, and that she has taken control of her own destiny:

TADAO: I’m home.
MACHIKO: Welcome back.
TADAO: What’s with your clothes? Is there a ceremony happening today?
MACHIKO: I’m off to work. I’m earning a living. I need to work to live.
TADAO: All is fine now. Lucinda was saved and relieved from the King’s hands. I did it. I knocked down the King. You follow what I am saying, right? So you’ve finally forgotten everything.
MACHIKO: I have to go otherwise I’ll be late.
TADAO: Even though I’ve just come home? Come, here, come on, come here.

Machiko moves to centre stage. When Tadao is about to hug her, she escapes from his embrace.

TADAO: What?
MACHIKO: I’m going to work.

Machiko starts walking away. (Miyazawa 2006: 65-66)

Tadao and Machiko are symbols of absence in *Motorcycle Don Quixote*. They are only able to “belong” to the gritty reality of present day Tsurumi after a radical deconstruction of the fictional characters and stories that haunt them throughout the play. In playing out their traumas, and in inhabiting their own emptiness, they – particularly Machiko – are able to assert their subjectivity and agency in the world. In this sense, it is possible to read the pair as an echo of Miyazawa’s own relationship with the fragmented *Cardenio* material. It is the play’s ontological

incompleteness that compensates for the lack of the real, but in working through these “ghostly” fragments, or “exorcising” the material and re-orienting it to a “local habitation and a name,” Miyazawa was able to find his story of *Cardenio*, there, somewhere in a working-class district in Yokohama.

4. Between translation and transformation

Working on this translation revealed the extent to which the construction of an imagined Shakespearean text is a process of continual negotiation and arrangement. As has already been stated, what motivated Greenblatt’s project was the genealogical uncertainty of the text, or the search for “a lost play.” The *Cardenio* Project was not an exercise in archival reconstitution; it was a license to invent. Project participants faced the improbable task of “rewriting” a play that may never have actually been written by Shakespeare. However, what resulted from this “originary problem” of *Cardenio* was a tendency by collaborators to reinstate the “organs” of a Shakespearean text, or the organizing principles of its “body,” rather than to sever them completely. What does this mean? In the final section of his 1947 radio play, *To Have Done with the Judgment of God*, Antonin Artaud uses the expression “a body without organs” as a metaphor to describe the way the body – and by extension subjectivity – is constructed and regulated through forms of social and institutional constraint³⁸:

When you will have made him [man] a body without organs,
then you will have delivered him from all his automatic reactions
and restored him to his true freedom.

Then you will teach him again to dance wrong side out
as in the frenzy of dance halls
and this wrong side out will be his real place.

Extending Artaud’s metaphor further, one could say that the “organs” of an imagined Shakespearean “body” such as *Cardenio* might include the sounds, rhythms and

³⁸ The expression “body without organs” was later used by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their critique of psychoanalysis in both *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980). Here, I refer to Artaud’s poetic usage of the term.

intonations in the language of the text, the scope of its geographic vision, the patterns of its logic, its orientations in terms of gender, race and sexuality, and the plot lines that constitute its narrative forms. These organizing principles, which have been so thoroughly examined in the case of Shakespeare's surviving plays – to the extent of forming a canonical currency – tended to fill in for the absent “body” of *Cardenio*.

Miyazawa's version, reproducing an archaic register of language and retaining the play within a play plot structure, contained ways in which the playwright/director responded to this “body without organs” problem. Greenblatt and Mee were more open about their appropriation strategy. They tried linking fragments of stories from Cervantes, Shakespeare and Fletcher, and Theobald by using different Shakespearean plot types as a “kind of toolkit, a set of master devices or programs” that included:

[The] displacement of the action to a “green world” (in our case, Umbria); the interplay of contrasting perspectives on the same central problem; certain types of characters performing certain set functions, such as provocation and satirical commentary; alternating rhythms of ensemble scenes and scenes focusing on intimate exchanges; structural equivalents in our own idiom of soliloquies, asides, and masques that Shakespeare's conventions provided him. (Greenblatt 2010: 85-86)

In both cases, there is a clear attempt to recreate the “body” or “essence” of a Shakespearean text from recognizable “parts.” This raises the question as to whether an adaptation of Shakespeare without a recognizable form can be called Shakespeare at all? In other words, where does Shakespeare begin and end? This problem of reconstituting the “body” of Shakespeare is entwined with the problem of giving that “body” a “voice.” How might the “ghost” of Shakespeare speak?

The gulf between the reading of a Renaissance text and its adaptation is fraught with problems of translation, historical accuracy and authorial authenticity. It becomes all the more challenging when working from an imagined Japanese Shakespeare, largely based on a modern Japanese translation of *Don Quixote*, towards a re-imagined Shakespeare in English. The process of translation from English to Japanese not only calls into play a cultural-historic transformation of one language into another, but in dealing with the recreation of an imagined Shakespeare,

whose authority/authenticity is ascribed to and inscribed in his language, it can also engender a transfer or deferral of power. This deferral can work both for and against artistic and collaborative agency: *for*, in the sense that removing the degree of expectation and urgency to honour the creative source can allow for a freer exploration; and *against*, in the sense that the surrogate language can operate at a degree of deference to or looking back at the source of power. However, in my experience of the project, the tensions or moments of misunderstanding that fermented in the interstices of cultural and linguistic translation and transformation tended to be points of creative potential or mobility rather than cultural atrophy.

An example of this is Miyazawa's initial difficulty in finding resonance in Greenblatt and Mee's story of American "yuppies" (Eglinton 2006b). As mentioned above, he chose to relocate their play to Tsurumi, an industrial district of Yokohama, transforming the melodramatic wedding event and the happy ending into a domestic affair of working-class Japanese characters in a drab motorcycle shop. In response to Miyazawa's production and my final report as dramaturg, Greenblatt gave an insightful comment on Miyazawa's choice of transformation in an exchange of emails:

[...] perhaps I said that I had not anticipated either that Miyazawa would locate the play in a motorcycle shop or that he would in effect conflate the figures of *Cardenio* and *Don Quixote*. In any case, I found the decisions interesting; I think of them as a kind of "mimetic negation" of what Charles Mee and I wrote. It is in this spirit that I understand your remark, otherwise rather strange, that Miyazawa could do nothing with our "yuppies" – strange both because very few of our characters (who include a high school Latin teacher and an actress) actually count as "young urban professionals" and because there is no dearth in Japan of young people who fall in love. (Greenblatt 2006)

Greenblatt's notion of "mimetic negation" hints at a key part of the process of adaptation – and also of re-orientation. I read it as a reference to the dialectical relationship at work between an adapter and the material to be adapted. It is through a critical reading of past material, a reading in which each historic fragment is sublated as part of a whole, that the adaptation emerges as something new in the

present. That is to say, the re-orientation of Shakespeare, or the return of his plays through time, culture, language, and imagination, is constructed as much through negative and “absent” transformations as it is through their positive and “present” counterparts. In the case of Miyazawa, not only did he negate part of the source material (Greenblatt and Mee’s adaptation), which as Greenblatt suggests was expected, but to a large extent he also negated the premise of “mimetic negation” itself. In effect, the majority of the source material that Greenblatt and Mee gave to project participants (including their version of the play) was absent in Miyazawa’s version, but so too were all traces of “Japaneseness” in the sense of traditional or exotic stereotypes. This too, as Greenblatt remarks in his reflective notes on the Japanese production, was unexpected:

I had ahead of time imagined something in the kabuki style or perhaps in the more farcical mode called kyogan [*sic*]. Conditioned perhaps by Gilbert and Sullivan as well as Roland Barthes, I expected lacquered fans, folding screens, and the delicate sound of the koto harp. What I saw instead was a play called *Motorcycle Don Quixote*, set in a grimy motorcycle repair shop in which the sounds of revving engines mingled with loud American rock music. Cultural projection is not a one-way street. (Greenblatt 2010: 91)

In my view, Greenblatt does not take the analysis of “mimetic negation” far enough. He saw it as an example of Miyazawa’s reading of cultural mobility as deliberate “misunderstanding, especially cross-cultural misunderstanding” (Greenblatt 2010: 91). While this assertion is true, it presupposes that Miyazawa was in full control of the cultural coordinates in his re-orientation of this “lost play.” Greenblatt recalled a conversation he had with Miyazawa in a public discussion after one of the productions, which suggests the complete opposite:

Miyazawa asked me what I made of all the American touches in his production – the rock music, the heavy allusions to *Easy Rider*, and so forth. I said that I regarded them as at once pervasive and superficial, since none of the depicted relationships seemed remotely conceivable to me as an American. [...] “I understand you,” Miyazawa said; “you expect that the wife should embrace her husband and welcome him home, as an American

woman would do. But Japanese people do not so easily hug and kiss one another.” I had, of course, thought something like the opposite: that no wife I could conceive of would, in those circumstances, welcome her husband back at all. On the stage of the darkened theatre in Yokohama, I felt I had been thoroughly initiated into the phenomenon of cultural mobility as misunderstanding. (Greenblatt 2010: 94-95)

The notion of “creative misunderstanding” was crucial to Miyazawa’s production. Miyazawa used it as a dramaturgical device to justify the juxtaposition of social realist and fantasy/dream-like narrative structures. It was also a way of avoiding the clichés that often occur in Shakespearean adaptation, which I described above using Artaud’s metaphor of the “body without organs.” Miyazawa explained his approach to misunderstanding in his Programme note stating “I rather hope that these misunderstandings can create a new movement in the scope of world theatre, clashing with different elements and making noise.” Miyazawa, who reads “universality in Shakespearean works” (Eglinton 2006b) interpreted Greenblatt’s concept of “cultural mobility” as the “cultural misunderstanding that is inevitable when different cultures meet.” He gave the example of the Japanese reception of western, especially North American, popular culture. The film *Easy Rider* and its American rock music soundtrack was accepted by audiences as merely something “cool” with little attention given to the film’s socio-political commentary on hippie culture and the Vietnam War.³⁹

Reading “cultural mobility” as deliberate “misunderstanding,” *Motor Cycle Don Quixote* demonstrated meta-theatrical and meta-cultural possibilities of de-canonising the dominant global image of exotic Japanese Shakespeare. As part of a chain with missing links, Miyazawa felt inspired to adapt the fragmented text to Tsurumi’s working-class factory district, a site that had until then been neglected in Japanese theatre. In the Americanised, globalised and also ordinary “local habitation” in Tsurumi, the twisted and fragmented images of *Don Quixote*, *Easy Rider* and the Chekhovian-like characters were metamorphosed into ordinary, life-sized contemporary “losers.” Shakespeare’s lost play was positioned alongside culturally diverse material from 1960s rock music and motor cycle subculture and gave little

³⁹ Miyazawa, Director’s Note in the programme of *Motor Cycle Don Quixote*.

impression of aspiring to authority and universality. The North American publicity campaign for *Easy Rider* ran with the catchphrase “a man went looking for America but couldn’t find it anywhere.” A similar leitmotif characterises the Cardenio Project. In this very “un-Shakespearean” play, Bardolatry, self-Orientalism and Japonism were hardly recognisable and neither was the text of Greenblatt and Mee.

This strategy of cross-cultural misreading points to two key dynamics at work in processes of re-orienting Shakespeare. On the one hand, re-orientation can be seen as the sum of marked and unmarked choices in transformations of Shakespearean material. The example here is Miyazawa’s “double negation” of Greenblatt’s material: the negation of source texts and the negation of the logic of mimetic negation itself. Both choices are marks of Miyazawa’s directorial intentionality. On the other hand, when the source material itself is absent or contested, re-orientation can also be seen as the sum of marked and unmarked choices in transformations of imagined material. This imagined material could be termed the “ghost of Shakespeare.” That “ghost” can also be re-oriented.

5. Cardenio as “airy nothing” in “local habitations”

The “local Shakespeares” that were produced as part of the Cardenio Project had the potential to subvert Shakespeare as an imperialistic cultural icon, while making theatre practitioners and audiences aware of their own differences and identities in their cultural locations. However, there were also potential risks involved, one of the main ones being the strategic appropriation of cultural capital, where Shakespeare’s authority and universality is used to obtain a foothold in the profitable global Shakespeare industry. As Barbara Hodgdon points out, the modes of “adaptation” and “appropriation” are “two extremely slippery labels” and thus the transplant of “globalised Shakespeare” onto localised soil breeds hybridity that can function as a double-edged sword: creative revision by an “adapter” or parasitic privatisation by an “appropriator” (Hodgdon 1998: 157). Indeed, Shakespeare continues to shift between these slippery labels. Even in a contemporary adaptation like Miyazawa’s *Motorcycle Don Quixote*, in which the text was fragmented, re-imagined and almost void of Shakespeare’s language, there is still a level of authority in the recognition of the “aura” or “ghost” of Shakespeare. This not only includes the status attributed to Shakespeare’s name, but also the narrative and linguistic tropes that are symbolic of Shakespeare’s works.

Theatre, and in particular theatre as adaptation, is a “hauntological” medium, in the sense that its characters are caught in a continuum between past and present, expressed through language in its archival form as text, but also in its embodied form as “repertoire” (Taylor 2003: 20). Time and again, the characters return to “haunt” the present. With each haunting, the point of origin from whence they came is ever more distant and diffuse. In *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine*, Marvin Carlson claims that “the simultaneous attraction to and fear of the dead, the need continually to rehearse and renegotiate the relationship with memory and the past, is nowhere more specifically expressed in human culture than in theatrical performance” (2001: 166-67). He goes as far as to say that “there appears to be something in the very nature of the theatrical experience itself that encourages [...] a simultaneous awareness of something previously experienced and of something being offered in the present that is both the same and different, which can only be fully appreciated by a kind of doubleness of perception in the audience” (2001: 51). Carlson makes a powerful case for understanding the ontological function of theatre as a process of “recycling” or “haunting,” be it through elements of dramaturgy such as the repetition of plots, characters and linguistic tropes, or through elements of *mise en scène*, from props to set design. One could add to this long list of hauntings, the figure of the playwright. In the case of Shakespeare, this figure is – even in the most radically deconstructed text like *Motorcycle Don Quixote* – an arch-spectre in terms of cultural influence. However, unlike the recycling of the material objects that Carlson describes, the ghost of the playwright – unless expressly staged as a character – does not return in any direct sense on stage. Given that Shakespeare's text was almost entirely cut out of Miyazawa's production, how can this “ghost” of Shakespeare be said to have returned? Jacques Derrida's concept of “hauntology,” developed in his book, *Spectres of Marx*, provides some ground to think through this process in further detail.

Hauntology is a conflation of the words haunt and ontology, and already its name signals the problem of who or what might occupy the ground of being, before ontology, which as Derrida says, is “conjured” into being. What, if anything, does the “ghost” contain of its originary form, given its liminal state between presence and absence, being and not-being? Language, and particularly writing, is one of the terrains on which Derrida's questioning of ghosts plays out. Writing, he notes, is haunted by the return of ghosts, be it political or historical figures such as Marx,

literary characters such as the ghost of Hamlet's father, Banquo or Caesar, or writing itself as a form of haunting, particularly in its journey through translation:

A striking diversity disperses across the centuries the translation of a masterpiece, a work of genius, a thing of the spirit which precisely seems to engineer itself [*s'ingénier*]. [...] The animated work becomes that thing, the Thing that, like an elusive spectre, *engineers* [*s'ingénie*] a habitation without proper inhabiting, call it a *haunting*, of both memory and translation. A masterpiece always moves, by definition, in the manner of a ghost. The thing [*chose*] haunts, for example, it causes, it inhabits without residing, without ever confining itself to the numerous versions of this passage, "The time is out of joint." (Derrida 1994: 20-21)

I read Derrida's notion of the "animated work" as a text that lives on through translation and adaptation. A text, such as a Shakespearean play, that has received sustained attention and interest over time is "animated" or kept alive and "dispersed" among the people who retell or "recycle" its story. Characters in adaptations like *Cardenio* are able to "inhabit" places like Tsurumi "without residing," precisely because as ghosts they appear to "be" in the present, but are neither present nor absent, instead, they are markers of repetition – of the desire to return to an origin ever distant and elusive.

Moreover, the process of adapting a play in the theatre can be described as a process of "cutting" and "transplanting," creating a collage of citations, which as Carlson points out, is a defining characteristic of postmodern theatre: "the postmodern theatre [...] is almost obsessed with citation, with gestural, physical, and textual material consciously recycled, often almost like pieces of a collage, into new combinations with little attempt to hide the fragmentary and 'quoted' nature of these pieces" (2001:14). In my view, it is precisely through staging the "cuts" in *Motorcycle Don Quixote* that the ghost of the playwright emerges and retains his influence. In other words, even though Shakespeare's language may have been absent, this "absence" was accentuated by the cuts that form the basis of the adaptation. An example of this kind of cut appears mid-way through Miyazawa's play when Tadao is suddenly transported from the garage in Tsurumi to a mythical Quixotesque land, where he plays the fantasy role of Don Quixote and Michiko becomes Lucinda in a

narrative structure partially taken from Cervantes/Theobald. It is from the juxtaposition of material fragments that the ghost of Shakespeare returns.

For Derrida, the figure of the ghost is one whose existence is engendered by the continual return, such as the ghost of Hamlet's father:

Hamlet already began with the expected return of the dead King. After the end of history, the spirit comes by *coming back* [revenant], it figures *both* a dead man who comes back and a ghost whose expected return repeats itself, again and again. [...] From what could be called the other time, from the other scene, from the eve of the play, the witnesses of history fear and hope for a return, then, “again” and “again,” a coming and going. (*Marcellus*: “What, ha’s this thing appear’d againe tonight?” Then: *Enter the Ghost, Exit the Ghost, Enter the Ghost, as before*). A question of repetition: a spectre is always a revenant. One cannot control its comings and goings because it *begins by coming back*. Think as well of Macbeth, and remember the spectre of Caesar. (10-11)

Building on Derrida’s notion of the *revenant*, one can read the role of Shakespeare in the Cardenio Project as the spectre that “begins by coming back,” the one who is always already present in his absence, but makes occasional appearances in the cuts and juxtapositions that form the fabric of the adaptation. The question that remains is in what form in *Motorcyle Don Quixote* does Shakespeare return? In my view, by displacing *Cardenio* as far as possible from any expected or clichéd reconstitution of Shakespeare's lost play, Miyazawa was attempting to reorient the ghost of Shakespeare. In what sense? It is interesting to note that Miyazawa did not choose to stage a dominant male double of Don Quixote, or to re-inscribe masculinity in this re-orientation of the play; rather he chose to stage male impotence in the form of Tadao’s absent subjectivity. In this sense, Tadao can be read as a symptom of the play’s contested genealogy, in which only the ghost of Shakespeare remains. The figure of the dominant male Renaissance author was displaced from the start of the Cardenio Project and it found expression in the staging of lack and absence, and in the removal of male ego from the play.

As I have tried to show, in the case of *Cardenio*, the “encounter” between an imagined Asia and an imagined Europe took the form of creative misunderstanding,

misconception and negation of the other, and illuminates how Shakespeare is constructed in contemporary performance. This transcultural Cardenio Project, mirroring Shakespearean adaptation and appropriation, inspired Miyazawa to invent stories in a particular cultural location: Tsurumi. Misunderstanding emerged as a creative tool rather than an obstacle hindering cultural exchange and was a direct response to the absence of textual and cultural stability/unity from both Greenblatt and Mee. Greenblatt's concept of cultural mobility as the "constitutive condition of culture" rather than a force of "disruption" is an attempt at breaking the "glacial weight of what appears bounded and static,"⁴⁰ including cultural locality. Constantly questioning what constitutes Shakespearean text, what is Shakespearean adaptation and appropriation, what is co-authorship and collaboration, suggests that the metamorphosis of "airy nothing" is to be continued in an increasing variety of "local habitations."

⁴⁰ Greenblatt, Post-performance talk at the Yokohama Redbrick Warehouse in May 2006 on 28 May 2006 and 2010.

Conclusion

This thesis has explored the trajectories of Shakespeare in Japan from the Meiji Restoration to the present day through a series of case studies of key works by prominent directors. Each production examined is part of what I have termed the re-orientation of Shakespeare in “the Orient,” and particularly Japan. I have used the term “re-orienting Shakespeare” to refer to the effects of cultural interplay in the historic transit of Shakespeare from West to East and East to West – from pre-WWII to the new millennium. In focusing on “Japanese Shakespeare” during this period, I have tried to chart the shift in the relationship between cultural identity, power and Shakespeare’s language; moving from the search for the “essence” of a “universalised” Shakespeare in the postwar period to experiments with Shakespeare’s “ghost” – or the absence and negation of Shakespeare’s language in the 21st century.

I examined directorial approaches to Shakespeare in productions by Ninagawa Yukio and Deguchi Norio, revealing a complicated mix of Occidentalism and self-Orientalism (Chapters 3 and 4). Both regarded Shakespeare as the centre of their visionary work, both directors – particularly Ninagawa – were also criticized the western canon and stayed relatively close to the text. Despite being widely praised for their strategies of Japanization appropriating the Western canon. Deguchi theoretically opposed Ninagawa’s mode of Japanization by trying to recreate the essence of Shakespeare in Japanese language. However, as I have shown, both relationships with Shakespeare are fraught with tensions, connected to the rapid postwar economic development of Japan and the wider development of globalization.

I also noted how Noda Hideki and Miyagi Satoshi, who belonged to the Little Theatre movement, used freer adaptations than Ninagawa and Deguchi (chapters 5 and 6). They were less reliant on close Japanese translations of the text, and both used the metaphors and wordplays in the original texts as points of departure for freewheeling, intercultural adaptations. For them, the text was not an inviolable literary archive, but material for exploitation. Yet, their visions of Shakespeare were still clearly located within the tradition established by the postwar generation, seen for example in the Japanization of their characters. Miyagi was interested in dramatic expression that was capable of transcending the barriers of language. This took on new force after the Tohoku earthquake on 11 March 2011.

Noda's search for creative freedom through adaptation became, in Miyagi's hands, a remapping of Shakespeare's text, operating on multiple levels, and shifting its boundaries and connections.

Another re-orientation of interest was the series of productions of *Titus Andronicus* by Yamanote Jijosha (chapter 7). From the same generation as Noda and Miyagi, Yasuda Masahiro challenged Shakespearean authority not only through textual adaptation, but also through an innovative approach to bodies and space called *yojohan*. In that chapter, I noted how, through the addition of the character of Titus' wife, Yasuda foregrounded the idea that this character was always already part of the play, even though she did not appear in Shakespeare's original. What was implicit in the *Titus Andronicus* series, which also applies to other "foreign Shakespeare," was a search for a new contextual reality. Shifting the linguistic idiom of the play alone was not enough for Yasuda to quell concerns about the appropriation of Shakespeare's authority. Rather, his interest was in devising a new aesthetics of the body in communication with its local habitat.

The re-orientation of Shakespeare in a wider Asian context was the theme of my examination of the work of Singaporean director Ong Keng Sen in chapter 8. Ong's radical approach took him far from Shakespeare's texts. Experimenting with the written adaptations of *Lear* and *Desdemona* by Japanese playwright Kishida Rio, and collecting and devising the texts for *Search: Hamlet*, he produced a trilogy of works that mixed multiple Asian performance traditions in an attempt to deconstruct phallogocentrism in the western literary tradition. His distinctive use of narrative fragmentation as a disorientation strategy was a response to the postmodern turn in cultural criticism of the 1980s and 90s. His trilogy can also be read as a critique of intercultural theatre established by practitioners such as Peter Brook, Eugenio Barba and Ariane Mnouchkine in the 1970s and 80s. Ong offered a profound examination of the subjectship of Asia against the backdrop of globalization, delivered via subversive female characterisations that resisted stereotypes of gender and Orientalism.

In the case of Miyazawa Akio and his adaptation of *Cardenio* (chapter 9), the Shakespearean text was replaced by a re-imagining of a lost but reimagined play, with no trace of Shakespeare's voice even as a guide. The project centred on Stephen Greenblatt's concept of "cultural mobility," approaching Shakespeare without text or authorial presence. Miyazawa relocated the story of *Cardenio* to a working-class

quarter in Yokohama, and transformed the tale into a gritty drama about the lives of characters in a motorcycle garage. Greenblatt described the piece as an exercise in “mimetic negation,” by which he meant that it illustrated the meta-theatrical and meta-cultural possibilities of de-canonising the dominant global image of exotic Japanese Shakespeare. It was a production “haunted” by the ghost of Shakespeare, rather than an adaptation of Shakespeare’s work.

As the case studies reveal, Shakespeare's language progressively disappears from the productions and adaptations discussed, until in the final example Shakespeare is “present” rather as a ghost than as an author. Directors born in prewar Japan, such as Ninagawa and Deguchi, were more deeply rooted in traditional Japanese aesthetics and saw Shakespeare as an inspirational “summit” to climb and to conquer. Subsequent generations freed themselves from their forebears’ insistence on strict adherence to text and traditional Japanese imagery and style. They experimented with intercultural readings of Shakespearean identity politics and drew ideas from the growing body of postmodern cultural criticism and its disruption of totalizing narratives and the legacies of western hegemonic power. As a result, Shakespeare's language began to disappear from productions in the late twentieth century, opening up space for processes of cultural re-inscription in the form of embodied aesthetics, textual fragmentation and disorientation, and the presencing of absent voices, particularly female characters, who had been written out of the plays in the original Elizabethan context.

Globalisation has changed the relations between west and east, the developed and the developing world. The rise of new economic powers in Asia has transformed geopolitical strategic relations. At the time of writing, western countries are engaged in struggles of state sovereignty and national identity through a reassertion of borders, increasingly policed and controlled in response to new waves of migration. As a result, East-West relations have once again been brought sharply into focus. The Orient, once the realm of discourse and imagination, a land beyond reach, depicted through names and exotic imagery, has taken corporeal form – becoming for some, a challenging and threatening presence. Furthermore, there is a certain irony that on the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare’s death, in a reversal of the narrative of the expansion of England prevalent in Shakespeare’s time, the British electorate voted to leave the European Union and adopt a more inward-facing,

defensive stance.

Where does Shakespeare stand in this age of re-orienting national borders in Europe and beyond? Instead of providing a coherent or authoritative map of Shakespeare's trajectories in Asia, which as I have argued is no longer possible in the wake of Said, the case studies in this thesis have focused on moments of encounter between Shakespeare and practitioners in Japan. Each case study has described a specific "re-orientation" of Shakespeare in the context of an unstable world map. It is in this specific context that I deployed the idea of "re-orientation" as a way of reading the politics of identity and representation in the production of Shakespeare in Asia, particularly in Japan. From the outset, my aim has been to try to understand the dynamics at work in the encounter between Shakespeare as cultural icon and representative western dramatist, and the practitioners that have received and adapted his works in their specific locations and historic contexts.

In a sense, I have been trying to follow Shakespeare's "journey." That journey began more than four hundred years ago in Elizabethan England, at a time of the West's colonial expansion into the world. Shakespeare himself may never have travelled to the "new world" or roamed "through the bounds of Asia" (1.1.134) like Egeon in search of his son in *The Comedy of Errors*. Shakespeare's Asia was an imagined frontier, an exotic land of "jade" and "pearls," devoid of real subjectivity. Centuries later, the phenomenon of Shakespeare made contact with Asia, and in the case of Japan, arrived during the Meiji Restoration, a period of modernization through the appropriation of Western cultural models. Shakespeare was received as representative of the pinnacle of a superior Western culture, under what one might call the gaze of Occidentalism.

This encounter, or mis-encounter, hints at a pattern in the transit of culture across borders, particularly when it concerns the transit of authority and power from one location to another. In her book on immigration and "refugeeism," *Elsewhere, Within Here*, filmmaker and postcolonial theorist Trinh Minh-ha makes an insightful observation on her experience of living at "borders," both geographic and metaphoric, which relates to this moment of contact between Shakespeare and Japan. Minh-ha writes:

Living at the borders means that one constantly treads the fine line between positioning and de-positioning. The fragile nature of the intervals in which

one thrives requires that, as a mediator-creator, one always travels transculturally while engaging in the local “habitus” (collective practices that link habit with inhabitation) of one’s immediate concern. A further challenge faced is that of assuming: assuming the presence of a no-presence, and vice-versa. (2011: 54)

The history of Shakespeare in Japan, and in other parts of Asia too, is in one regard a history of shifting the lines or borders that engender authority and ownership. Such borders or frontiers are rendered visible in moments of contact between cultures, and as Minh-ha puts it, they are based on a series of assumptions, that are both present and absent, imagined and real. The case studies in this thesis are full of references to this experience of transculturation. Each case study has revealed a specific artistic strategy for negotiating cultural difference. What each one has in common is an alertness to the complexities of the dramatic material and its histories, but also to the location and context in which it is being treated and reshaped.

In the same passage, Minh-ha draws another useful conclusion on cultural transit, when she writes:

One’s alertness to the complexities of a specific situation is always solicited as one can only effect a move by acknowledging, without occupying the center, one’s location(s) in the process of engendering meaning. Even when made visible and audible, such locations do not necessarily function as a means to install a (formerly denied or unexpressed) subjectivity. To the contrary, its inscription in the process tends above all to disturb one’s sense of identity. (2011: 54)

Contained in the idea of re-orientation is re-inscription of identity in places where it was formerly denied – the “writing back” of an imagined Asia to an imagined Europe. But, as Minh-ha points out, the process of inscription does not necessarily mean the re-occupation of a centre ground, a kind of reverse-Orientalism, but it “disturbs” or “disrupts” the assumptions of cultural identity. Moreover, one of the shared dynamics of re-orientation revealed in the case studies is that while each practitioner momentarily inhabits his locality, transforming Shakespeare in that time

and place, that inhabitation is temporary, and Shakespeare continues on a trajectory – now re-oriented – after the work is over.

The speed of re-orientation accelerated after the nineteenth century in Asia as a result of western colonialism and even further as a result of globalization, such that cultural negotiations at the local level are now always already tied into the global market. It is on this global plane that the possibility of Shakespeare's return from Asia back to his origin – as a de-centered, re-inscribed, re-embodied and re-oriented playwright – manifests itself. In the journey of re-orienting Shakespeare through his encounter with the Orient, a process that started from an Occidental desire for an imagined Orient and an Oriental desire for an imagined Occident, Shakespeare's works have now moved beyond this binary divide and have begun to travel back to the West, inscribed with new cultural coordinates, and open to new transformations as the West re-orient its own territories inside a new multi-polar map.

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List of Figures

Figure 1 The first "performance of "Hamlet's famous soliloquy in 1874, taken from *The Japan Punch*, written by Charles Wirgman

*Extract from the new Japanese Drama
Hamurete san, "Danumarku no Kami," proving
the plagiarisms of English literature of the 16th
Century*



*Arimas, arimasen, are wa nan deska : —
Moshi motto daijobu atama naka, itai arimas
Nawa mono to ha ichiban warui takusan ichiban;
Aruu ude torimas muko mendo koto umi,
Soshite, bobby itashimas o shimai? Shindanji, neru
Mada; - sorekara, neru de hanashi mo yoroshi
Kokoro itai to isen mainichi bonboty
Ushi ototsan arimas. sore wa dekimashita mono
Takusan skimashita, Shindanji; — neru; —
Neru! okata nise haikin; sayo ahira skoshi
serampan;
Kara ano shindanji no neru, nani nise haikin
dekimas
Kono nangei shindanji mono jiggy shimashita,
Skoshi mata singo :*

*Vos valete, et plaudite
Anata sayonara, soshite te ponpon.*

Figure 2 Ku Na'uka's *Hamlet* © Shigeru Kunita, courtesy of Aoyama Round Theatre



Figure 3 Ku Na'uka's *Hamlet* © Shigeru Kunita, courtesy of Aoyama Round Theatre

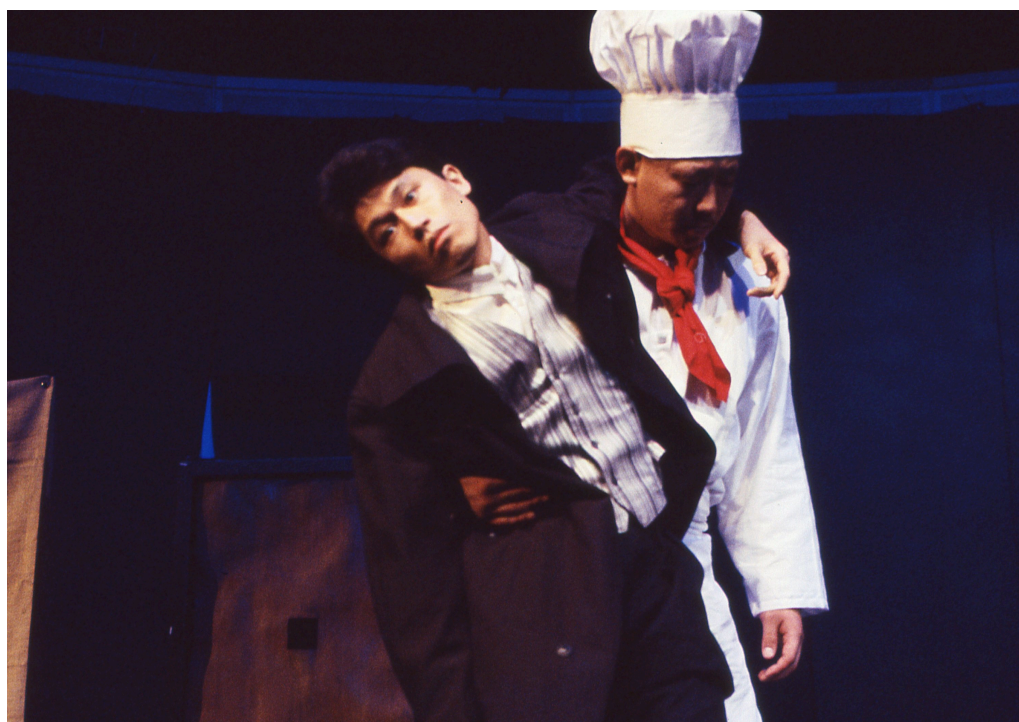


Figure 4 Poster of Ku Na'uka's *Macbeth* © Takuma Uchida



Figure 5 Ku Na'uka's *Othello in the Spirit of a Noh Dream Play* © Takuma Uchida



Figure 6 Ku Na'uka's *Othello* in the *Spirit of a Noh Dream Play* © Takuma Uchida



Figure 7 *Othello* in Noh Style © Lee Do-hee



Figure 8 *Othello in Not Style* © Lee Do-hee



Figure 9 *A Midsummer Night's Dream* © Koichi Miura, courtesy of SPAC



Figure 10 *A Midsummer Night's Dream* © Koichi Miura, courtesy of SPAC



Figure 11 *A Midsummer Night's Dream* © Koichi Miura, courtesy of SPAC



Figure 12 *A Midsummer Night's Dream* © Koichi Miura, courtesy of SPAC



Figure 13 *Titus Andronicus* © Yamanote Jijosha

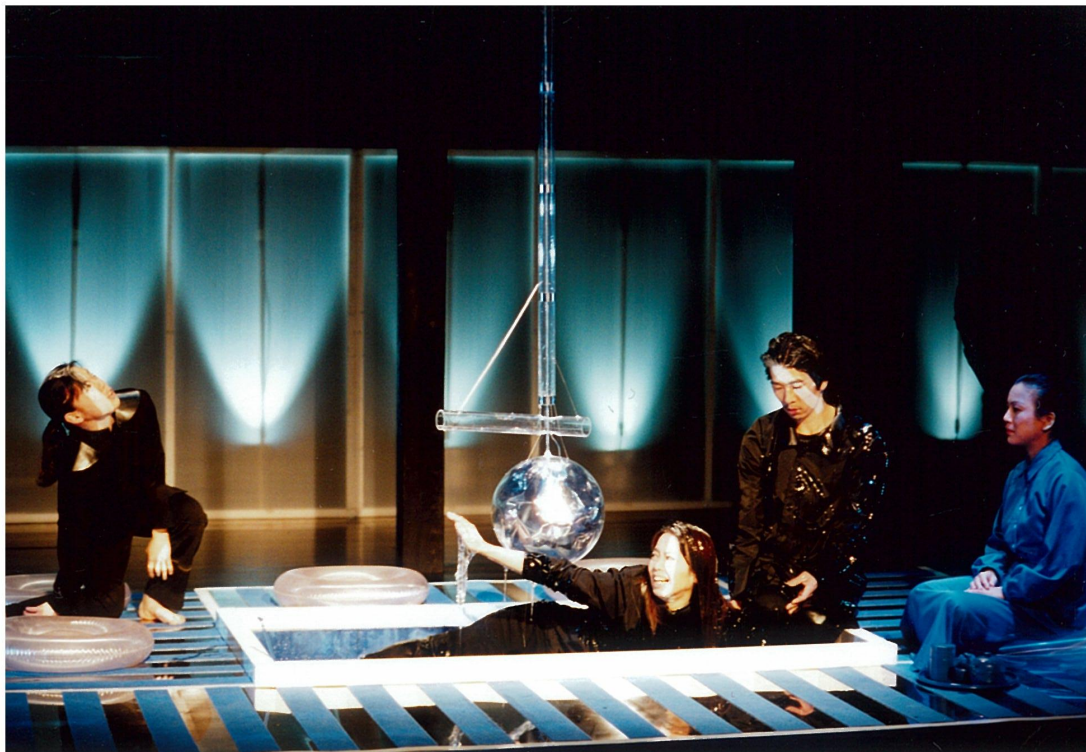


Figure 14 *Titus Andronicus* © Yamanote Jijosha



Figure 15 *Titus Andronicus* © Toshiyuki Hiramatsu, courtesy of Yamanote Jijosha



Figure 16 *Titus Andronicus* © Toshiyuki Hiramatsu, courtesy of Yamanote Jijosha



Figure 17 *Motorcycle Don Quixote* © Nobuhiko Hikichi, courtesy of u-ench.com

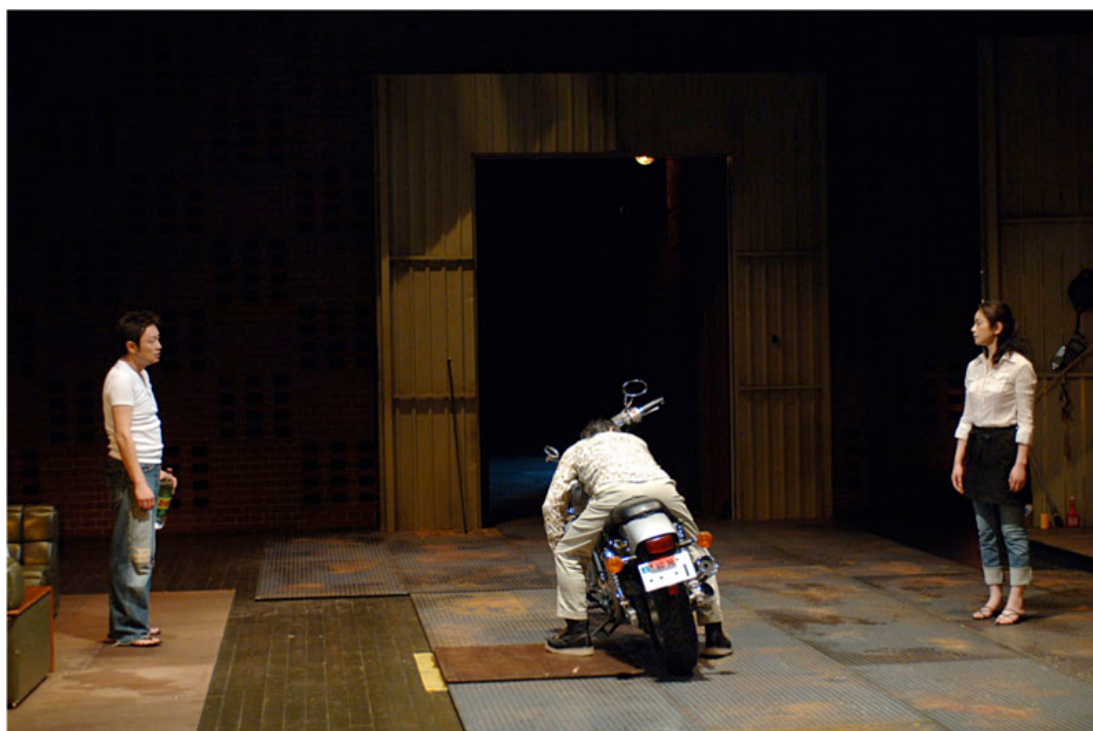


Figure 18 *Motorcycle Don Quixote* © Nobuhiko Hikichi, courtesy of u-ench.com



Figure 19 *Motorcycle Don Quixote* © Nobuhiko Hikichi, courtesy of u-ench.com



Figure 20 *Motorcycle Don Quixote* © Nobuhiko Hikichi, courtesy of u-ench.com

