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Daniel Gallimore*

Tsubouchi Shōyō and the Beauty of Shakespeare Translation in 1900s Japan

Abstract: In a recent study of Shakespeare translation in Japan, the translator and editor Ōba Kenji (14)¹ expresses his preference for the early against the later translations of Tsubouchi Shōyō (1859-1935),² a small group of basically experimental translations for stage performance published between the years 1906 and 1913; after 1913, Shōyō set about translating the rest of the plays, which he completed in 1927. Given Shōyō's position as the pioneer of Shakespeare translation, not to mention a dominant figure in the history of modern Japanese literature, Ōba's professional view offers insights into Shōyō's development that invite detailed analysis and comparison with his rhetorical theories. This article attempts to identify what Shōyō may have meant by translating Shakespeare into elegant or "beautiful" Japanese with reference to excerpts from two of his translations from the 1900s.

Keywords: Tsubouchi Shōyō; Ōba Kenji; rhetorical theory; the trial scene; Hamlet's fourth soliloquy; evanescence; archaism.

Tsubouchi Shōyō's early translations of the trial scene from *The Merchant of Venice* (1906) and of the whole of *Hamlet* (1909), *Romeo and Juliet* (1910), *Othello* (1911), *King Lear* (1912) and *Julius Caesar* (1913) belong to the end of the Meiji era (1868-1912), which was a period of modernization throughout Japanese society. Shōyō, as an academic, translator and dramatist, was central to the various projects to reform the traditional kabuki theatre and to develop a modern Japanese theatre influenced by Western models, but as a gradualist, and it

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¹ Ōba is an emeritus professor and former president of Meiji Gakuin University in Tokyo who has written widely in the field of Shakespearean drama. Since 2004, he has produced annotated parallel translations (*taiyaku*) of ten Shakespeare plays, including *The Merchant of Venice* and *Hamlet*, published by Kenkyūsha.

² Personal names are given in the Japanese order, with the family name first. This article also follows common Japanese practice of referring to a small number of the founding figures of modern Japanese literature by their pen names, in Tsubouchi's case as Shōyō.

is a sign of his gradualism that having initially translated *Julius Caesar* in the style of classical Japanese drama when he was just twenty-five, it took him a further two decades of dedicated research before he felt ready to translate Shakespeare in a format equivalent to the original texts and a language appropriate for performance by modern Japanese actors.

In the 1890s, Shōyō had published translations of the first scenes only of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, but these he regarded as academic and unsuited for performance, whereas his late Meiji translations were all done for the Bungei Kyōkai, Japan's first modern theatrical company which he helped to found in 1905. The Bungei Kyōkai staged Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and Sudermann's *Heimat* as well as a number of Shōyō's original works before its dissolution in 1913, and for all its limitations as a company with no native tradition of modern drama by which to judge itself, stimulated Shōyō in his ambition to translate Shakespeare for the bodies, voices and tastes of modern Japanese actors and audiences, and was thus an essential prelude to the final and longest phase in his translations, when he translated the plays in his idiosyncratic version of contemporary colloquial usage.

The very amateurishness of Shōyō's initial context for translating the plays may appeal to readers like Ōba (who know only too well that no translation can be ideal), because it exposes the newness and freshness of Shakespeare to the recipient culture, which are qualities that may be lost as translation is systematized through repetitive practice, and in that sense are clearer expressions of the translator's character and background. This is to say that if, in beginning to translate Shakespeare Shōyō discovered what was new, fresh and indeed embarrassing about Shakespeare, he may at the same time have started to lose what was most interesting about the English writer.³

An aesthetics of Shakespeare translation in late Meiji Japan

Shōyō's Shakespeare translations can be seen as extensions of what Irokawa Daikichi saw as the four defining elements of Meiji culture, namely (in Shōyō's terms) an interest in self and subjectivity derived from Shakespeare's Renaissance humanism, Shakespeare's inclusive or "democratic" range of characters and treatment of genres and origins in early modern British capitalism, and likewise "the nationalism" inherent in Shakespeare's position at the beginnings of British imperialism. Yet just as these elements are challenged in Shakespeare's dramas,

³ This kind of erasure is typical of the compromises that occurred throughout Japan's modernization. Shōyō marginalized significant chunks of pre-modern Japanese literature as he developed his literary theories, but that was a young man's public sense of the inferiority of his culture, whereas an erasure of translating style would occur for more personal reasons.

Meiji culture is rife with inconsistencies between tradition and modernity, above all between the traditional aesthetic of evanescence (*hakanasa*) and the positing of the emperor as the unchanging and permanent “essence of the nation” (Inouye 111) under the Meiji Constitution (1889) and Imperial Rescript on Education (1890).

These inconsistencies were gradually rationalized through the rise of imperialism in the first half of the 20th century and the revision of the emperor’s role after 1945, but in themselves seem as charming, fresh and dramatic as the tensions and contradictions that underscore both Shakespeare’s original texts and their reception in the early 20th century. The eventual maturity of Shakespeare in Japan might seem at odds with the plays’ poetic and dramatic qualities, and it is surely the latter to which Ōba is responding in preference to Shōyō’s later ideas of how Shakespeare should sound to a modern Japanese audience. Meiji culture is not only the era of self, democracy, capitalism and nationalism, but also the age in which these foreign ideologies jarred most dramatically with the context into which they were being transplanted.

As an example of such juxtapositions, we might consider the rhetoric of the Imperial Rescript on Education, which on the one hand urged the emperor’s subjects to advance “public good and promote common interests” and “always respect the Constitution and observe the law” and on the other to guard and “maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial Throne coeval with heaven and earth” (Tsunoda, de Bary, and Keene 140),⁴ but since (according to Irokawa) Shōyō “rejected the notion of the emperor as [...] a living god” (308), we can surmise that for an individual like Shōyō, steeped as he was in Japan’s traditional culture, the cult of the emperor contradicted fundamental native values of pragmatism and evanescence.

Just as Shōyō found in Shakespeare’s plays a less judgmental, more thoroughly artistic view of human affairs than the Confucian didacticism of Tokugawa literature, one of the problems of modernity was that it reified spiritual and aesthetic values such as evanescence. The modern practice of translating Shakespeare risked making a Bible out of the Bard, but at least the patina of evanescence could be maintained through stage performance and the promise of new translations. The scope of this article, however, is limited to what might be accounted the rhetorical beauty of those early translations, since Shōyō was always a stylist, who believed that drama fulfilled its ethical role through the power of beautiful language. The challenge of translating Shakespeare was to reproduce Shakespeare’s beautiful language in a satisfying blend of the classical and modern.

⁴ From the official translation of the document issued by the Japanese Ministry of Education in 1890.

Shōyō's achievement serendipitously answers a statement made in 1898 by George Bernard Shaw that

The foreigner can know nothing of Shakespeare's power over language. He can only judge him by his intellectual force and dramatic insight, quite apart from his beauty of expression. From such a test Ibsen comes out with a double first-class: Shakespeare comes out hardly anywhere. Our English deficiency in analytic power makes it extremely hard for us to understand how a man who is great in any respect can be insignificant in any other respect; and perhaps the average foreigner is not much cleverer. (Byrne 228)

By the time Shaw was writing, Shōyō already knew that Shakespeare had no ideas, or rather that his art lay in the intangible hiddenness of his ideas.⁵ The significance of Shōyō's late Meiji translations is that they represent a stage of transition during which he is perhaps coming to know something of "Shakespeare's power over language," and that this intellectual contest shows itself in certain stylistic traits expressive of his individuality. Once the battle has been won, then Shakespeare's language becomes known among his Japanese readers, or rather because it is actually Shōyō's Shakespeare, the focus of interest shifts from the mystery of Shōyō's individuality to that of Shakespeare.

Somewhat more than later translators, it seems to me that Shōyō is concerned with translating Shakespeare into "beautiful Japanese"; it was Shakespeare's language to which Shōyō responded above anything else, and as the first person to translate Shakespeare's Complete Works he no doubt felt a certain responsibility to do so "beautifully." Yet Shōyō was no aesthete, and argued throughout his long career against the notion of beauty as an abstract ideal. Beauty, for Shōyō, is always an emotional experience that resists analysis, and is therefore as grounded in reality as the human emotions. He writes that

Human beings are naturally moved to create art, and they make efforts to understand it as an expression of the human heart. But without realizing this principle, stupidly enough, they force their analyses on art, dissecting it with their intellect, a useless endeavour that fractures the meaning of art. (Tsubouchi 2002, 52)

Against Shōyō, one might argue that translation is itself an analytical process, or at least in sympathy with art, and that one of the reasons why his later translations lose their earlier force is that he has become increasingly detached from his initial

⁵ Shōyō maintained that the ideals or intentions of literary texts are essentially hidden and beyond logical analysis. This argument is apparent in his theory of rhetoric, and expressed most forcefully in his dispute with the writer Mori Ōgai starting in 1891 (*botsuri ronsō*, the so-called "hidden ideals" dispute).

emotional experience of reading Shakespeare. Yet if beauty, in this case rhetorical beauty, could not be analyzed, it could certainly be schematized and theorized. Shōyō does so at some length in his *Biji ronkō* (Theory of Rhetoric, 1893), which (as Tomasi explains) treats rhetoric as “a field of study concerned with the discernment of beauty in literature” rather than “a system of rules for composition” (77), adding that he

clearly located rhetoric between the fields of national language and logic on one side and aesthetics on the other, enhancing the status of the [new] discipline in the literary debates of the period.

For Shōyō, the writing skill was a natural consequence of the appreciation of rhetorical beauty, while authorial talent was as nebulous as the author’s hidden ideals, and could not therefore be imitated. In *Biji ronkō*, he categorizes literature as having “emotional style,” or “feeling power” (*jō*), which “appealed to the emotions by means of imagination through the channel of description” (Tomasi 76). This was in contrast to “the knowing power” (*chi*) and “willing power” (*i*) of non-literary texts (Tsubouchi 1977, 30). Literature did not serve a philosophical or persuasive function, but could convey a huge amount of information about “the human heart,” and could also convey the three virtues, or hidden ideals, of truth, goodness and beauty (what he calls “second nature”). Literature could not be philosophical or persuasive because to be so would be a betrayal of its inner truth or ideals, although—as with the two other discursive types—grammar and logic served to shape the cognition of meaning that was the aesthetic experience of literature. Just as writers were moved by the emotional force of other writers to create their own texts, so too was Shōyō moved by Shakespeare to rewrite Shakespeare in his own emotional style.

Shōyō theories also suggest the potential for a certain playfulness in Shakespeare translation, as the translator strives to preserve the illusion of hiddenness, the integrity of the source texts, whose ideals are dispersed among a range of characters and viewpoints. In his writings on Shakespeare, Shōyō seems at times to revel in Shakespeare’s rhetoric, and in the problem of rhetoric, without being able to say exactly what Shakespeare means. An essay Shōyō published in 1928 reveals how he remained faithful to his point of view throughout his career, and suggests in its diffuse, anecdotal style that Shakespeare’s diversity had become his own:

When Japanese scholars first translated Shakespeare, they were surprised to realize how often his diverse style occurred. It seemed to them that Shakespeare created texts rich with feeling, stridently saying the same thing again and again. That is how it seemed, although in the end it is a technique born from the necessity of drama. Lines which are written to be heard rather than read need to be repeated, so that skilled reciters and experienced actors are able to agree on

their meaning without being able to explain them. Composers such as Wagner work out their logic through the methodical repetition of lyrics. If you translate the same thing without varying the expression, then you may naturally come to feel that you are wasting something to the detriment of the original. (Gallimore 2010, 53-54)

Since this point is made in a paragraph about what he calls “those complicated soliloquies,” one cannot help feeling that what Shōyō understands Shakespeare to mean can all be boiled down to Hamlet’s fourth soliloquy, and that it certainly suits Shōyō’s theory of hidden ideals that “skilled reciters and experienced actors” should not feel the need to explain what Shakespeare means. Moreover, since he spent much of the latter part of his career busily reproducing the diversity of Shakespeare’s expression without varying his key theoretical viewpoint Shōyō may have come to waste some of his own originality: his initial sense that Shakespeare’s “emotional” language was indeed saying something true, good and beautiful might have been lost along the way.

The trial scene (1906): the rough with the smooth

Shōyō’s first experimental translation of the trial scene from *The Merchant of Venice* conveys this sense that Portia’s argument is also his own: that Portia’s rhetoric provokes a strong emotional response in the translator. Compared with the later standard version of 1914, the 1906 translation is more densely classical, as well as containing numerous stage directions absent from the English editions to which he referred, which were necessary to the actors of the Bungei Kyōkai as they staged the translation in 1905⁶ and would have helped readers to dramatize the scene in their minds. For example, when Portia starts to question Shylock by asking him his name, Shōyō inserts the direction *Pōshiya omoiire atte* (Tsubouchi 1997, 202), “Portia is lost in thought for a moment.” This registers the way that her succeeding comment, “Of a strange nature is the suit you follow” (4.1.173), does not seem to follow logically from the confirmation of his name, and that however carefully she may have planned her courtroom strategy, she must still adjust her strategy to the fiercely dramatic presence of Shylock in his gabardine and injured pride.

Quite apart from being a trope for how Shōyō may have had to adjust his literary reading of the play to the realities of stage performance by a group of semi-professional actors, the direction is a critical example of how Shōyō perceived Shakespearean drama to intersect with his native kabuki, since *omoiire* (or “reverie”) is a standard unscripted direction in kabuki that allows actors pause for thought or reflection in response to difficult or emotional situations. The

⁶ The translation was published the following year.

corollary of *omoiire* are the pithy rhetorical interjections that result from such a moment's thought, and these interjections may seem all the more effective in the context of Shōyō's somewhat classical or archaic style, not only as an imitation of the way that emotion is channeled through Shakespeare's prosody and rhetoric but also as a representation of Shōyō's own emotional response to the dialogue.

Portia's oration is not only a statement about "the quality of mercy" in a Christian society but also a dramatic response to Shylock's rhetorical question, "On what compulsion must I? Tell me that." (179) Portia's assertion may have been all the more striking to a non-Christian reader like Shōyō in its religious resonance, and in the blunt style of his translation indicates an instinctive, emotional response that puts Portia on the side of the universalists against Shylock's legalism. For Shōyō, mercy is a realistic alternative to Shylock's grotesque pursuit of a pound of Antonio's flesh (and a precept of Japanese Buddhism), and even if Shylock has the law on his side he would also appear to be forcing the pace of natural or poetic justice. Shylock asks "On what compulsion" "must" he "be merciful" to which Portia's reply is that he is the coercer, imposing his ideals on others.

For Shōyō, drama is a local expression of an emotional response to the unknown and unknowable, and if the unknowable cannot be rationalized, only conceived in irrational terms, Shylock would appear to be taking advantage of his actual strangeness as an alien in subjecting Antonio to an irrational demand. Yet Portia is able to diffuse Shylock's anger through her poetical formulation on "the quality of mercy," which removes Shylock's forced, reified ideals to their hidden, imagined position within Shōyō's theory of rhetoric and poetic drama. Let us see how the exchange develops through a critical comparison of the source text and the 1914 version.

Portia asks Antonio, "Do you confess the bond?" (176), to which he replies "I do." (177) Even in its legal usage, the word "confess" gives the bond a religious connotation, as if Antonio has been engaged in some illicit relationship with Shylock in addition to defaulting on the loan. The 1906 translation seems to dramatize this meaning (203):

[1906]

Pōshiya: Shōmon no omote wa mōtō mo sōi nai ka.

the face of the bond (i.e. what the bond says)—not the least—difference—is there [colloquial register]

Antonio: Sōi gozarimasenu.

difference—there is none [polite register]

The use of *omote* ("face") appears to inscribe the validity of Shylock's accusation on Antonio's face, which is a connection that Shōyō also makes with a direction he inserts after Antonio's reply: "Shylock now looks sternly at Antonio." (203)

The direction is missing from the later translation, which interprets the exchange in a straightforward contemporary style (Tsubouchi 1933b, 163):

[1914]
 Shōsho ni tai shite igi wa nai ka?
 With regard to the bond there is no different opinion?
 Gozarimasen.
 There isn't.

The earlier translation also renders Portia's rejoinder, "Then must the Jew be merciful." (178), in a more affective style (203):

[1906]
 Shikaran niwa Shairokku ni oite nasake wo kakeneba narumai zo yo.
 therefore [emphatic]—in Shylock—pity—must drive—[emphatic particles]

In contrast to Portia's previous hesitation (and to the later version), the particles *zo* and *yo* are highly emphatic (not to mention masculine), and the verb *kakeru* more assertive in its combination with *nasake* for "mercy"; the emphasis of the line is as much on "be" as "merciful". The use of *nasake* is also significant. *Nasake* simply means "compassion", even "emotion", and is thus a colloquial collocation for "mercy". Following his usual practice, Shōyō writes the word with the two characters *jihī*, the Buddhist term for "mercy",⁷ but glosses it phonetically as *nasake*, probably because *nasake* is a more naturally human attribute than *jihī*, and perhaps also because it rhymes with Shylock's *wake*, also pronounced with two short vowels and meaning "reason", which he uses twice in his retort (203):

[1906]
 To wa mata dō iu fugainai iriwake ga gozarimashite, wake wo okikase
 kudasarimase.
 as for—again—what kind of—pusillanimous—reason—is it—the reason—tell
 me—please [polite]

On what compulsion must I? Tell me that.

Shōyō, whose theory of hidden ideals would seem to question the fallibility of ultimate causes, might even be making a joke of the implied antagonism between reason and pity in the slight word play on Shylock's name and in *shikaran* ("therefore"). The later translation, if more concise, abstains from the connection (163):

⁷ The use of the two characters loosely combines Buddhist qualities of "love" (*ji*) and "compassion" (*hi*).

[1914]

Naran, to ossharu no wa, dō iu yondokoronai riyū ga gozarimashite?
that I must—you say—what kind of—compelling reason—is there?

The first line of Portia’s speech (180 is even more striking in the earlier version (203):

[1906]

Ā iya, nasake wa shiubeki mono dewa nai.
oh no—mercy—should be forced—[thing]—is not

The quality of mercy is not strained.

This comes across as a rather instinctive reading of the original: you cannot force people to show mercy (just as you cannot force modern Japanese to become Christians). By contrast, the 1914 translation aims to capture the metrical symmetry of Shakespeare’s line through the abstract verb *hodokosu*, “to exercise mercy.” This is a translation that chugs rhythmically:

[1914]

Jihi wa yondokoronaku hodokosubeki mono dewa nai.
mercy—with compulsion—ought to be exercised—[thing]—is not

In the earlier version, the verb *shiiru* (“to coerce”) may in its inflected form pun on “Jew” in its Sinicized Meiji reading (*Yūjin*). The focus of this translation, as I have suggested, is on the mystery of Shylock’s name as an expression of his Jewishness and an object of punning; in the later version, Portia just wants to know his name.

The later translation is the more coherent and speakable (if in its original historical context), but its very clarity exemplifies what Ōba dislikes about Shōyō’s later “contemporary-based” style (*gendaigo honi*), when he writes that (14)

[it] was certainly a change in direction, but I feel that in its vocabulary and rhythms it is lacking in freshness and vitality, smelling as it were like “dead fish”, and that Sōseki was right to declare that Tsubouchi fails both Shakespeare and his native language.⁸

Newness and freshness are topical values in Japanese culture, and one of the reasons why so many “new” Shakespeare translations were to appear in the 20th century after Shōyō, who himself criticizes both his own and other writers’

⁸ As my translation hints, Ōba’s language is idiomatic. What he literally writes is that Shōyō’s later style is like “a *kappa* [a mischievous, sometimes malevolent water sprite in Japanese folklore] come to ground smelling of mud”, suggesting perhaps that Shōyō’s style has “been places”.

styles for “smelling” (*kusai*) too much of whatever he disapproves. The novelist Natsume Sōseki’s review of Shōyō’s production of his translation of *Hamlet* for the Bungei Kyōkai in 1911, to which Ōba is referring, uses a similar metaphor of taste. Sōseki famously complained that Shōyō was too faithful to Shakespeare, using “not a single word or phrase to appeal to Japanese psychology or customs” (Gallimore 2010, 48):

The translation may be satisfactory in itself but to hope that it can satisfy a Japanese audience in the theatre is like offering someone with a sweet tooth French wine in place of Masamune saké. (48)

These viewpoints are personal expressions of the literary tastes of one of Japan’s most important modern writers (Sōseki) and a contemporary Shakespearean (Ōba). They provide critical alternatives to Tsubouchi’s rhetorical theory, as well as a sense of the broader issues of Shakespeare translation in Japan, although Ōba confuses the issue, because in this context he can only be referring to Shōyō’s 1909 translation of *Hamlet*, which, as I mention below, clearly belongs to his early period. Likewise, Sōseki complains of Shōyō’s failure to appeal to audiences in an era when the dominant theatrical genre was still kabuki, and yet Shōyō’s translations generally have been criticized for “smelling” too much of kabuki (Gallimore, 2011), while the stylistic mixing of his later translations (including kabuki) was a deliberate response to Shakespeare’s own stylistic mixing, his diverse range of characters and registers. Since Sōseki was himself a master of stylistic mixing, Shōyō may plausibly have been influenced by his contemporary, although it is more likely that he was simply following the tendency of assimilation (or homogenization) set by language reform, and of course assimilation is a mark of Shakespeare’s style as well. Nevertheless, the points about freshness and literalism are well taken when one considers the temptations Shōyō may have had to pursue archaism and contemporaneity for their own sakes, and even on occasion to buck the trend toward homogenization. This article, however, is concerned with evaluating his translations against Shōyō’s theories rather than the norms of his period.

Generalizations about style demand detailed textual analysis and support, but there is a middle ground to be followed between cumulative judgements that are not based on any recent experience of seeing Shōyō’s translations performed on stage (which were replaced in professional productions by more modern translations in the 1960s) and tiny details that may be barely audible. By examining whole scenes in translation, we may form a more nuanced impression of how the translation mediates between the poetry and drama of the original and of the story that the translation tells. Shōyō’s Shakespeare translations are said to be influenced by kabuki in their use of classical inflexions, seven-five syllabic meter, and *omoiire*, which all serve to punctuate the various narrative and

rhetorical shifts of the source text as Shōyō interprets them, and for someone as schooled as Shōyō in kabuki, *omoiire* must have seemed particularly effective at representing the impasse between speech and interiority.

Shōyō's initial problem when he translated *Julius Caesar* as a young man was that the narrative elements of the source were contained within the speech and dramaturgy rather than being sung or recited by professional musicians and narrators at the side of the stage, as was the practice in kabuki and the puppet theatre. The obvious solution was to translate the text as it was, and no doubt Shōyō felt that in smoothing over some of the rougher tendencies of his earlier style he was allowing the more salient features of the original plays to speak for themselves. Yet to the extent that a Shakespeare translation is a structured interpretation or narrative in itself, we might look for signs of the translator in the translation, in particular for those moments that Shōyō thought important enough to render "beautiful."

"To be, or not to be" (1909): characteristics of the Shōyō style

If the beauty of Shōyō's translations is to be assessed by their power of signification, then his most beautiful translation is surely that of Hamlet's fourth soliloquy, "To be, or not to be –that is the question" (3.1.55). This speech resounded with the plight of Shōyō and other "men of Meiji" as they sought to establish careers and reputations detached from the framework of the feudal society (Takahashi); their plight was dramatized quite literally in the theatre where actors were at first alienated by the experience of speaking on stage without musical accompaniment. Shōyō translated the play in 1909 for the 1911 production by the Bungei Kyōkai, and slightly revised his translation in 1933, which he also had recorded professionally in his own voice. The revisions are superficial, except for the first line, which he changed from *Nagaraeru ka, nagaraenu ka? Sore ga gimon ja* (Tsubouchi 1909, 110) to *Yo ni aru ka, yo ni aranu ka, sore ga gimon ja*. (Tsubouchi 1933a, 114) The 1909 version is more suggestive in its archaisms and open vowels of the mystery that Hamlet ponders, while the 1933 version emphasizes "decision" against "being", the choice that Hamlet faces between "being in the world" (*yo ni aru*) or out of it (*yo ni aranu*) in the literal and existential senses of the phrase.

The 1909 version seems to resonate more deeply with Shōyō's "hidden ideals", even with the hidden ideals of his classical tradition, whereas the beauty of the later version lies more simply in its musicality. Yet apart from the first line, the differences between the two are slight, suggesting that if the task of Shakespeare translation had become laborious for him in his later years, this speech was a touchstone of what he valued most about Shakespeare. As something of a set piece, the speech contains various features in Shōyō's 1909

version that may be useful for applying to his translating style as a whole; these are all features of modern Japanese characteristic of his early as well as late style. The first is his use of the rhythm of the Japanese sentence as an introverted response to the force of Shakespeare's rhetoric, as in the following lines (3.1.78-81):

(The undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveler returns) puzzles the will
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of.

Katsute hitori no ryōjin sura mo kaette konu kuni ga kokoromoto nai ni yotte,
shiranu kataku niyuku yori wa to genzai no ku wo shinobu de arō. (Tsubouchi
1909, 111)

The most striking phrase is *kokoromoto nai* for “puzzles the will” but literally meaning “baseless” or “without feeling”. Hamlet's sentence is a long and complex one, which Shōyō renders as a choice between a present world of feeling embedded in the language and the other of “the undiscovered country”, which he calls *kataku*, “the house of fire”, the hell in which his father is residing for a season. The latter is an overreading perhaps, but with the “k” alliteration recurring through the line (*katsute*, “formerly”, *kaette konu*, “does not return”, *kuni*, “country”, *kokoro*, “heart”, *kataku*, *yuki*, “go”, and finally *ku* for “pain” or “trouble”), Unable to organize the lines in the strident measures of Shakespeare's blank verse, Shōyō embeds the key metaphor in the fear and trembling of an alliterative sequence.

If ideals remain hidden or unstated because potentially perilous, then they might be something like “the house of fire” to which Shōyō refers. The line's beauty emerges, as it were, like a lotus flower between hidden perils and lived reality, the heartbeat of Shakespeare's rhetoric that Shōyō is called to render in the style of his native rhetoric, and Tsubouchi modulates his palette through pithy phrases such as *Mate shibashi!* (“Wait!”) and *Soko ni sawari ga aru wa* (111), “Ay, there's the rub”, where the extra particle *wa* contains some of the force of Hamlet's mysterious ‘rub’. The elegant, integrated style of the soliloquy contrasts with a jagged style that Shōyō adopts for the succeeding dialogue with Ophelia. This dialogue comes across as more polite and distant than in the original text, as if Shōyō's Hamlet has now projected his fear of the hidden onto Ophelia herself. In the following initial exchange (3.1.88-95), Hamlet's pithy style is differentiated from Ophelia's more elaborate speech in a way that contrasts with Shōyō's more integrated translating style in the soliloquy (112):

HAMLET
The fair Ophelia! Nymph, in thy orisons

Be all my sins remembered.
Ofiriya ja na! ... Nau, himegami, yo ga tsumi no shōmetsu wo mo inori
soeteta morei.

OPHELIA

Good my lord,
How does your honour for this many a day?
Mōshi gozen, kono jū wa ikaga wataraseraremasuru?

HAMLET

I humbly thank you, well.
Katajikenau ojaru. Tassha ja tassha ja.

OPHELIA

My lord, I have remembrances of yours
That I have longed long to redeliver.
I pray you now receive them.
Mōshi, okatami no tamamono wo ba, tō kara kaeshi mairashō to zonjite
orimashita. Ouketori kudasaremase.

HAMLET

No, not I. I never gave you aught.
Iya, yo wa ukenu, yo wa nanimo okoshita oboe wa nai.

The contrast between Hamlet's brusque diphthongs and colloquial inflexions (*morei, nai*) with Ophelia's elaborate endings (notably *wataraseraremasuru*) is as good an example as any of what might be meant by the freshness of Shōyō's early style, the sense of surprise which is also heard in the exclamatory particle *ja* that Shōyō uses throughout his translations. Shōyō translation dramatizes a particular awkwardness as the will to do something is confronted by the need to do nothing at all except return redundant presents.

One of the goal of language reform was to smooth the difference between registers so that the Hamlets of the world could speak freely to the Ophelias and the Gravediggers, and the particular context of this dialogue also points to one of the consequences of lowering sociolinguistic barriers: the danger, or at least the possibility of linguistic contamination. Ophelia wishes to formalize the end of the relationship by returning Hamlet's gifts to him (with all their emotional associations), and has been set up to do so by Claudius and Polonius to prevent the prince from further contaminating the court with his madness; we hear her holding onto her dignity with her polite style.

Eventually, the assimilation of registers will lead to the setting of new standards through the education system, and in translation through the emergence of a fluid, homogenous style. Yet, new standards imply an understanding and respect for the real social differences that remain and a clarity of mind that transcends those differences, but Shōyō's 1909 *Hamlet* has not (I would argue) reached that stage.

During this transitional period and up to 1945 and a little beyond, it was standard practice, which Shōyō follows, to insert *furigana* readings for Sino-Japanese characters (*kanji*) to enable semi-literate readers to grasp the meaning, and sometimes to offer alternative readings.⁹ For example, when Shakespeare's text refers to Mars, the Roman god of war, Shōyō may write the two *kanji gunjin* for "god of war" with the *furigana* reading *Māsu* above. Looking at the printed translation on the page (as when reading any Japanese text), one is aware of a contrast between the *kanji* pictograms that have to be learnt but are more versatile and economical than plain *kana* whose function is basically phonetic.

Having pondered the existential question in the opening line, Shōyō sets in motion Hamlet's cognitive journey of the mind, and by stating it through the concise signification of a series of *kanji* compounds (*jukugo*) gives it pace and movement. *Kana* and *kanji* work together to shape the flow and pace of the line (3.1.56-59); *kanji* words are shaded in the transcription below:

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them

Zanninna unmei no yadama wo, hitasura taeshinonde oru ga daijōbu no
kokorozashi
ka, aruiwa umi nasu kannan wo mukaeutte, tatakaute ne wo tatsu ga daijōbu ka?
(110)

Yet the end of resistance is the end of language, and Shōyō states this mutually destructive equilibrium in the next stage of the argument: "to die: to sleep – / No more" (59-60), *Shi wa ... nemuri ... ni suginu*. (110) Shōyō concisely renders Hamlet's association of the three ideas of death, sleep and contingency.

The trajectory of Hamlet's line flows naturally towards such moments, and in this example at least can hardly be said to betray either the poetry and drama of the source text or the poetics of Japanese (as Sōseki claimed), although the dialogue between Hamlet and Ophelia is less speakable. The frequent use of ellipsis, however, does hint at one limitation of the Shōyō style, which is that it is simply too meditative and slow,¹⁰ reaffirming the prince in his tragedy that he

⁹ *Furigana* are small-sized characters inserted about the logographic *kanji* that may be difficult for ordinary readers to read, usually in the syllabic *kana* script that indicates the phonetic reading. Its use was widespread in the Meiji era when education beyond elementary level was not compulsory, and would have enabled readers with only an elementary knowledge of *kanji* to read Shōyō's Shakespeare translations.

¹⁰ Shōyō's ellipses comprise five periods across the middle of the line rather than three along the bottom, and although they are used no more frequently than dashes or

does not have time to consider his situation properly. Yet Hamlet does decide to resist, and so creates a momentum that no amount of poetic hesitation can hold back.

Hamlet asks Ophelia whether she is beautiful *and* pure, and the same question might well be asked of Shōyō's translation. Hamlet considers whether it is better to accept life in its impurity ("the slings and arrows") or to seek a higher ideal. In Shōyō's version, Hamlet asks which of the two is "alright" (*daijōbu*), and as a definite echo of that word, the death in fighting or "consummation devoutly to be wished" becomes *daishūen*, or "great finality". Shōyō knows that for Shakespeare necessity is the mother of invention: that his diverse style is born from the need to reassert his dramatic viewpoint, whether to do with justice and mercy in its various guises in *The Merchant of Venice* or self-determination in *Hamlet*. One technique is to make connections across the text. Another is to step back from the idealized mediary position of Shakespeare's dramaturgy ("the house of fire", if ever there was one) and to resort to the specifics of his native culture in place of literalism. Thus, "the thousand natural shocks" become *senbyaku no kurushimi* ("a hundred thousand pains", if in Japanese a hundred thousand is the proverbially big number) and "so long life" becomes *ukiyo*, "the floating world" of traditional Japanese culture through which the sojourner is tossed and turned.

Shōyō's use of cultural referents is understandable here; there has to be a space for Shōyō within his native culture. This is a relatively minor detail, and yet it seems that when he came to stage the translation in 1911 production, he decided (against his initial intentions) to keep with native acting methods (Kobayashi), thus missing a unique opportunity to attempt an unprecedented Western style of Shakespeare production and so make a clean break with the Japanized adaptations that had dominated Shakespeare's reception since the 1870s.¹¹ It was not until Fukuda Tsuneari's "fast" *Hamlet* of 1955 and ensuing productions that Japanese audiences experienced anything like the Western style that Shōyō had originally conceived.

Shōyō's translation of Hamlet's fourth soliloquy reveals characteristics not only of his personal translating style but of how Shakespeare's language generally is received in Japan: the phonological compensations of the set speech, the stylistic mixing of dramatic dialogue, and the visual contrasts of *kanji* and *kana* evident on the printed page. To these could be added the remarkable idiomatic versatility of the modern language, and they are also of course the

colons in the English editions, they can be said to indicate a more definite pause. Shōyō is certainly wordier than later translators, and listening for example to the recording he made of the speech in 1933, one is aware of how the pauses indicated by ellipsis combine with the rhythms and vocabulary to reduce the pace.

¹¹ It was for such reasons that Kawatake Toshio, the leading historian of *Hamlet* in Japan, was reluctant to call him a true "modern" (Kawatake, 288).

characteristics of the numerous translators who succeeded Shōyō in the 20th century. Yet the point about beauty is Shōyō's own, does not necessarily imply Japanization, but is rather the unique critical perspective that Shōyō developed through his reading of Japanese and English literature in the 1880s.

Shōyō's quest for beauty did not, it should be insisted, extend much beyond the page to the theatre itself, and since it was his Shakespeare productions of the 1900s that provided the main point of reference for how Shakespeare could sound in modern Japanese, one can appreciate how his later translations may have become somewhat academic or repetitive in technique. Rather, his contribution lies in his instinctive feel for the sounds of Shakespeare's and his own language as the dual sights of aesthetic experience, and of the actor's voice in conveying that experience. Typically for his time, Shōyō seems to have had something of an inferiority complex with regard to Japanese physical stature, at least as far as the enactment of Shakespeare's "big" words was concerned,¹² and yet his approach to Shakespeare translation originated in the voice, specifically in the group he formed at Waseda University in the 1890s to read Shakespeare and native kabuki dramas aloud, whose members were to form the core of the Bungei Kyōkai. Shōyō was intensely aware of how Shakespeare sounded, quite apart from being a skilled reciter of his own translations. The greater challenge came in daring to extend the voice of Shakespeare beyond the larynx to the rest of the actors' bodies: to imagine that the actors' bodies and movements were indeed beautiful enough to convey Shōyō's beautiful Japanese.

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¹² One of Shōyō's slogans of the 1900s was his call for "physical change" (*nikutai hensen*) to the size and capability of Japanese bodies.

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