

Shoyo, Soseki, and Shakespeare: Translations of Three Key Texts

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Introduction

In prewar Japan, there were only two writers whose deaths were honoured with the reading of a citation in the National Diet, namely Natsume Sōseki in 1916 and Tsubouchi Shōyō in 1935. Sōseki was just eight years younger than Shōyō but did not come into his own as a writer until the 1900s, whereas Shōyō started young, producing his seminal critical treatise *Shōsetsu shinzui* ('The essence of the novel') in 1885, when just 26. The two belong to different generations of Meiji culture, and do not seem to have had much to do with each other. Sōseki taught at the Imperial University of Tokyo before becoming a novelist full-time in 1907, whereas Shōyō (although a graduate of the Imperial University) spent his career at Waseda, a private university. Shōyō's theories are rooted in the liberal politics of the 1880s, while Sōseki is a product of the conservative retrenchment of the 1890s. Shōyō tends to emphasise universality, Sōseki uniqueness.

Their difference of perspective comes to a head in the late spring of 1911 when Sōseki reviewed Shōyō's production of his own translation of *Hamlet*, which was being presented at the new Imperial Theatre by the company he had founded in 1905, the Bungei Kyōkai (Literary Arts Association). This was in fact the first time for any Shakespeare play to appear in a complete and unadapted translation on the Japanese stage, a landmark in the history of Shakespeare in Japan, but although Sōseki is generous in his praise for Shōyō's efforts, he is critical of the production's artistic merits. Sōseki had himself studied Shakespeare in London under W.J. Craig, the first general editor of the Arden Shakespeare, and published an innovative essay on the supernatural in *Macbeth* arguing for the application of modern scientific criteria above cultural differences. This approach is very different from Shōyō's, who is fascinated by the echoes Shakespeare raises in his native culture, often irrespective of historical context.

Sōseki probably found Shakespeare irrelevant to his needs as a modern novelist, but is nevertheless beguiled by what he calls the writer's 'elegant mystique', which as the review makes clear is derived from Shakespeare's poetic vision. According to Sōseki, Shōyō's excessively 'faithful' or literal translation lacks this mystique as it fails to respond to Shakespeare's poetry in its fullness and to render that response in a suitable Japanese style.

Although we do not know how Shōyō responded to this stinging review, the likelihood is that he

would have agreed. He struggled to the end of his life to find a style of Shakespeare translation that suited both the original and contemporary Japanese, but without apparently admitting victory in his search. The section that appears below from *Shēkusupiya kenkyū shiori* (A Shakespeare primer), which was published alongside his translation of the Complete Works in 1928, is Shōyō's most comprehensive statement on Shakespeare translation, covering both the history of his translating style and the major technical issues. He stresses two points in particular: first, the inadequacy of contemporary Japanese against the wealth of Shakespeare's vocabulary, and secondly, the need to convey the warmth (*jōmi*) and rhythm (*chōmi*) of the original in what was Shōyō's ultimate objective, stage performance.

If Shōyō's translations do lack 'mystique', then this may be because he and Sōseki were looking for different qualities. Shōyō is fascinated by Shakespeare's capacity to communicate across time and space, although this seems typical both of Shōyō's rhetoric and the rhetoric of Meiji ideology. This rhetoric points to elusive spiritual unities, which in Meiji ideology are bound up with the person of the Emperor himself and depend on hierarchical contrasts between 'noble' and 'vulgar', 'polite' and 'candid', 'urban' and 'rustic', and so on. It is a myth which Shōyō never seeks to denaturalise, probably because for him nature was also forbidden territory. In his famous debate of the 1890s with Mori Ōgai regarding *botsu risō* ('hidden ideals'), Shōyō warned against the dangers of 'knowing' nature, and since Shakespeare was the great poet of nature, of Shakespeare too. No doubt Shōyō was a conservative, with a genuine terror of losing his identity to either the proletariat or powerful natural emotion.

Sōseki too would agree with much of the above, but on the condition that the translator make the effort to tune Shakespeare's subtle rhythms to the sensibilities of modern Japanese. Recognitions of cultural similarity can not be assumed until the translation has been fully apprehended in all its phonological complexity, and in stage performance that implies a degree of correspondence between the rhythms of the text and the physical movements of the actors. Sōseki found both to be lacking in the performance he reviewed.

Sōseki's review points to the general criticism that has been made of Shōyō's translations: that in responding too earnestly to Shakespeare's spirituality, they become mere musical nonsense. In his musical drama *Shinkyoku Urashima*, we have a text that is Shōyō's own and in which he mixes a range of styles in a technique similar to his Shakespeare translations. The play has never been performed in its entirety; the Bungei Kyōkai staged the fourth scene of the first act at the Hongōza in November 1907, and the Kyōgenza company staged the middle act only at the Imperial Theatre in February 1914. The play made too many demands on actors and designers for a complete performance to be possible. In the translation that follows, the words of the two protagonists Urashima and Otohime are spoken or chanted partly by themselves and partly by an accompanying chorus.

Nevertheless, the 1907 performance was admired for its visual and poetic beauty by Ueda Bin among others, whose translation of French symbolist poetry, *Kaichōon* ('Sound of the waves'), was published in 1905. Shōyō's text adapts the popular Japanese legend of Urashima Tarō. Urashima is accidentally separated from his parents, but saved from suicide by a turtle who takes him across the sea

to an island where he encounters the beautiful princess Otohime, daughter of the Dragon King. She takes him to her father's palace at the bottom of the sea, where he lives out a life of unimagined luxury for a period of three years, at the end of which he receives a box of treasure from the princess and is told to return to his home. The turtle takes him back there, only for him to discover that 3,000 human years have passed in his absence and his parents are long gone.

Shinkyoku Urashima is a dramatic poem about the sea, employing its movements and imagery in the language and rhythms of the text and choreography, since this was also one of Shōyō's many dance dramas. In becoming enthralled to each other, like two waves that meet and then part, Urashima and Otohime gravitate naturally to its depths, whence begins Urashima's tragedy. As such, the drama is a brilliant poetic statement of Shōyō's philosophy of *botsu risō*, articulated in writings such as 'Soko shirazu no mizuumi' ('The bottomless lake', 1894), as it is in succumbing (albeit through no fault of his own) to the mysteries of the ocean that Urashima becomes detached from human time. Shōyō's message is that art points to mysteries beyond rational experience. Sōseki probably agrees, but insists that those mysteries be mediated through the rationality of language.

Given the combined length of the three pieces, I have not included additional notes, but hope that readers will read the translations as an integrated narrative. I have glossed obscurities in brackets where possible and provided translations of Japanese phrases, but have omitted the final sentence of the section on 'Free translation' in the third piece (p. 275 in the source) on the grounds of excessive obscurity.

① Act One, Scene Four from Tsubouchi Shōyō's *Shinkyoku Urashima* (1904)

The storm has past, and there is complete calm. The melancholy roar of breaking waves is heard far off, accompanied by a chorus of SEAMEN.

SEAMEN (singing an *oiwake* or traditional folk song)

I know not whence I come, nor whither I am going.

I am but a little boat, cast adrift on the waves.

URASHIMA *hangs his head in desolation, but is gradually entranced by the song, raising his head in contemplation.*

URASHIMA

My soul goes out, and my body is but an empty form.

CHORUS (in the *itchō* style with accompanying drum beats)

That which has passed is like the dissipating foam. That which is to come is like the mirages shimmering for a moment above the water. How did I come to be here?

Where am I going, and what am I to do? I am a child doomed to wander forever as in a dream, this long night by the sea of life and death.

Singing this song, he rises and advances enraptured toward the waves. The stage turns halfway round, taking with it the fishing boat and the windblown pine trees, which disappear into obscurity. The entire

stage is now occupied by beach, two or three large rocks in the centre and at the back a stretch of sea, on which URASHIMA now looks admiringly.

URASHIMA

When the sea is calm, a little child can sleep on a narrow board, but when the tempest blows the stars tremble in the firmament above.

CHORUS

The great ocean without bourn is nature's tomb.

URASHIMA

Man and beast, rivers and mountains, all go on to their end.

CHORUS

All fall away. Things visible, all break apart, eternal mystery.

URASHIMA

What is this mysterious place where the dead go? Receive one more drop in your breast.

URASHIMA *strides toward the sea, but stops suddenly, smiling sadly to himself.*

Out of the water was I born, with the body of a fish. I can swim as well as they, and could never drown. What must I do?

He pauses for an anxious moment.

Now I remember...

He gets up slowly, and removes a dagger from his bamboo basket.

CHORUS

My spirit will return to the crucible of nature in which it was forged. That illusion nature, whose existence we can never grasp.

Just as URASHIMA is about to put the dagger to his throat, a poor YOUNG GIRL in rustic garb emerges from behind the rocks and charges up to URASHIMA, stopping his hand. Her face glistens virginally; she is about seventeen years of age. Her hair is parted in the middle and bundled on top in the traditional age-maki style. Her simple attire is all of a piece, her wild hair and long sleeves fluttering in the breeze. She embraces URASHIMA, kisses his face, and looks up at his eyes. She is as fresh as the full moon set over countless ocean waves. He looks at her in astonishment.

URASHIMA

Who are you?

The YOUNG GIRL (who is OTOHIME) takes URASHIMA by the hand.

OTOHIME

Do not be afraid. I am not a ghost. My boat was wrecked in the storm, but being able to swim I have landed happily on this beach.

CHORUS (in epic *nagauta* style)

The moon sunk beneath the waves and buried in the pitch black of night. This heart of mine is sunk in shadow and no longer able to lead me.

During the song, OTOHIME gets up from URASHIMA's side. URASHIMA, dagger still in hand, gazes

ecstatically at OTOHIME. He lets his dagger drop suddenly, unable to detach his eyes from her. She dances.

CHORUS (*itchō*)

Is this a dream? Whence comes this spirit?

URASHIMA *stands and dances with OTOHIME, from whom the outer layer of her garments slips to the ground to reveal a yet more beautiful layer, and so the melody changes again.*

CHORUS (*nagauta*)

Is this the place in which I can put my trust? Is this a dream or reality? On an isle beyond the waves lives my beloved father whom I left long ago. My mother also, in her anguish her breast shakes like the breeze in the pines on the wild shore.

URASHIMA *continues to dance with her, as in a dream.*

OTOHIME

Let me take you to my country.

URASHIMA

To your country?

He looks longingly at her.

CHORUS (*nagauta* for URASHIMA)

I felt as though my life had ended before I met you.

CHORUS (*nagauta* for OTOHIME)

Our hearts will never be parted! For like the pair of mandarin ducks of yore on the rushing water, we will ever seek to be united.

CHORUS (*nagauta* for URASHIMA)

No matter that with you I shall wander like a wild bird!...

CHORUS (for BOTH)

Let us exchange the pledge of many generations, two birds that can never be separated.

They stop their dance amid a blaze of colour.

URASHIMA

Where are you heading?

OTOHIME

To a place I know.

URASHIMA

And where would that be?

OTOHIME

At the bottom of the sea.

URASHIMA

What did you say?

URASHIMA *is startled.* OTOHIME *speaks again.*

OTOHIME

I am not of the human race.

She rises slowly.

CHORUS (in *utai* style)

My mother is the goddess who lives at the bottom of the sea.

She dances around trippingly.

URASHIMA

You are a sea nymph?

OTOHIME *is rapt in meditation on her past.*

CHORUS (*nagauta*)

On spring mornings, the ocean stretches to the beyond the colour of emerald.

You can see into its very depths, there where the heavenly arch is reflected in the gates of the dragon's sacred lair. Clouds float in the firmament, stained with the desires of the denizens of the sea who gaze up from afar. Desiring myself to visit the land of men, I left that palace bangled with sea plants, and in the shape of a tortoise, I climbed to the surface of the waves. I had not received my father's permission.

As the tale is narrated, OTOHIME casts off her clothes, changing into a glistening white robe for the next song. It is a fine garment, threaded with gold and silver and patterned with the fruits of the sea. The only colour to stand out is the vermillion of her sash, the other colours being somewhat paler. Her hairpiece emits a golden gleam. All kinds of agate, pearl and tortoiseshell shine from her breast, hands and neck. Her long black hair falls to the ground, her chest and arms open like pearls, pristine as a goddess. The sash of cloth of gold hovers in the air, giving her the gold and silver scales of a white fish with tail and fins, a truly succulent image. This nymph of the sea now dances in imitation of a tortoise who swims to the surface of the sea and, finding the beach, looks up at the sky and the mountains and rivers.

CHORUS

In this instant, the sky in the west burns like a pure jewel, and soon the heavens will be streaked with coral, gold and silver. Even the gods will nod amazed at the purple train of sunset.

URASHIMA *rises, and the couple dance harmonious measures.*

CHORUS (*nagauta* for URASHIMA)

The fishermen's children delight to seize a sleeping turtle.

The couple dance a figure showing the rescue of the turtle.

CHORUS (*nagauta* for OTOHIME)

How happy I am. I am rescued, and may return to the eightfold cranny.

My gratitude will extend for a thousand generations.

CHORUS (*nagauta* for URASHIMA)

Such joy to contemplate once more this vision so wonderful.

CHORUS (*nagauta* for BOTH)

Such is our ecstasy that we no longer know whether it is dream or reality.

CHORUS

No longer a dream, we will pledge ourselves to one another, living together in the land of eternal youth.

The two embrace each other, and dance around in frenzied delight.

URASHIMA

The phantom has not appeared. You and I, two become one.

At this point, URASHIMA suddenly casts aside his garments, and changes into a gleaming white robe just as OTOHIME is wearing. His hair falls away, his head adorned with a golden band encrusted with jewels. Like two birds in a nest, or rather sacred winged fish, they dance in time with each other, their figures barely touching. The stage becomes dim as before, a light flickers above the sea, lightning perhaps or white moonlight.

CHORUS

You and I are waves. We are male and female, and like male and female in this world we are parted and then joined together again, parted and then joined.

CHORUS (for OTOHIME)

We will never be parted. Follow me to the land of eternal youth.

CHORUS (for URASHIMA)

Lead me there, oh my joy!

CHORUS (for BOTH)

We will still be happy even in our ignorance. The great sea that knows no bounds.

We two pass through the hub of pleasure, we open ourselves up and we overflow.

We soak ourselves in the eightfold lake, the sky overflowing. We bathe ourselves in the sky overflowing.

To the accompaniment of this gracious melody, the two dance together to the back of the stage. The stage revolves. Their shadows float dreamlike across the sea and they appear far away outside the walls of the Dragon King. It is against this backdrop that the curtain descends. A moment later the liquid tones of gagaku music recreate the gentle lapping of waves.

TEXT: *Shōyō senshū* (Selected works of Tsubouchi Shōyō), Vol. III, ed. Shōyō Kyōkai, Tokyo: Dai-ichi Shobō, 1977, pp. 34-46. First published by Waseda University Press, November 1904. I am also indebted to the French translation by Shōyō's pupil Yoshie Takamatsu, Paris: Pierre Roger, 1922.

②Natsume Sōseki, 'Dr Tsubouchi and *Hamlet*' (1911)

The week-long production of *Hamlet* is a colourful addition to the literary world, attracting wide artistic interest. I received an invitation, and went to see it, but due to some slight problem had to arrive and leave early. It is to my regret, therefore, that both my eyes and ears were deprived of the spectacle unfolding itself, although the impression which I took home with me of what I did see of this lengthy work was certainly a vivid one. A number of points raised themselves which would be difficult to

broach directly with either Dr Tsubouchi or his actors, and so during the performance at least I restrained myself. My publication of them now is no more than a pitiful attempt to give substance to my respect for the enthusiasm of Dr Tsubouchi and the efforts of his actors.

Hamlet is a play written about three hundred years ago in England. It is unrhymed, written in so-called blank verse with five beats to the line. Based on their awareness of these superficial features, one can well expect the minds of modern Japanese audiences with regard to this play, whether appreciative or critical, to be made up before reading it. What I mean to say is that rather than reading *Hamlet* with a belief bordering on superstition that its concerns are closely bound up with the realities of modern Japan, I prefer to take a more critical stance.

Perhaps I can make myself clearer by way of alluding to a few facts. If one were to ask the several thousand people who saw the production whether they had enjoyed it so much that they had lost all thought of themselves and become completely absorbed in the action, then there probably would not be even one who could say that they had. I have no doubt in my mind that there was such a discrepancy of interest between the play and the audiences.

If I were asked by Dr Tsubouchi to explain this difference, I would want to respond that it is England, three hundred years of history, and a torrent of unfamiliar poetic language which come between ourselves and the play. I would state unflinchingly that a man called Shakespeare was standing up there and ruining all our pleasure. If the gap between *Hamlet* and a Japanese audience is to be properly closed, we should not need England or three hundred years of history or the poetic language or all those troublesome adjectives. *Hamlet* by itself is enough.

Dr Tsubouchi's translation comes across as a model of fidelity and respect for the original text. It is hard to imagine the pains of translation unless one has experienced them for oneself, and in that respect I have a deep regard for what Dr Tsubouchi has done. Yet it is to my profound disappointment that it is precisely because the Doctor is so faithful to Shakespeare that he ends up being unfaithful to his audience. He uses not a single word or phrase to appeal to Japanese psychology or customs. To the very last, his distorted Japanese follows Shakespeare to the word; the contradictions are painful to behold. This translation has no room for the basic qualities of Shakespearean drama. In daring to translate the play, it is almost as if he has turned his nose up at us Japanese. The translation itself may be satisfactory but to hope that he can satisfy a Japanese audience in the theatre is like offering a sweet tooth French wine in place of sweet Masamune saké. Rather than being a faithful translator of Shakespeare, the Doctor should choose between giving up the idea of staging his translation, or, if he is to go ahead with the performance, of being unfaithful.

To compare Shakespeare's works with a mirror reflecting the works of nature, unconditionally accepting the judgment of Westerners, is to relegate our own tastes and is thus a disgrace and mutual loss. I feel, indeed I would insist, that to put it around that Shakespeare is some kind of authority on reality is a considerable lie. There might be some impartial purpose in the linking of paragraphs to reveal the causes and effects of joy and anger but for such expressions to be cloaked in joy and anger is repulsive, unnatural, outrageous. Such an idea has never been used as a vehicle of mutual understand-

ing by either the Japanese of today or the English people of today or of Shakespeare's times.

Once one realises that in actual fact this unnatural and reckless way of thinking, which has only the slightest human connection with the Japanese people, is none other than Shakespeare's poetic vision and thus a skilled form of expression that lifts the commonplace and conventional to another world, then this so-called Shakespearean drama, quite apart from stimulating audiences away from the impartial vicissitudes of dramaturgy creates a unique kind of poetic country, and unless one is a native of that country, one is denied the right to savour its pleasures; that is the particular challenge of Shakespearean drama.

If you are the kind of person who just goes along with the story, as anyone can do, but ignore the poetry, or else are unwilling to make the effort to understand Shakespeare's poetry, then you will incur nought but frustration and mental conflict. We must be ruthless with ourselves in this regard. Yet Dr Tsubouchi and his actors would probably regard as childish the interest that their audience has in Shakespeare's capricious powers of poetic expression. This is a point that I should particularly like to emphasize.

In my own experience (but together with European critics), Shakespeare creates a poetic world which is out of the ordinary in character. The way to appreciate this world is through years of study gradually to become conscious of the natural state that lies behind it. We are so far removed in time and place that our hearts can never beat as one with Shakespeare. If we spend enough time looking at the words on the page, then their hidden meaning will reveal itself in all its depth and fullness. Even in the case of a simple *haiku*, experience teaches us that if we read it in the same cursory fashion as we look at advertisements then neither our minds nor our hearts can share in the riches that reward a thorough reading. When I attended a performance of Shakespeare in England, the speed of the dialogue was faster even than a steam train running through Hakone. Even for English people of today who have received a normal education, it is often the case that Shakespeare's words appear too poetic and lacking in sense when uttered on stage. If as a result people are unable to enjoy those rhythms that emerge from the particular arrangement of accents in recitation, I think that most of them will not bear sitting long hours in the theatre. Shakespeare was a poet, and poets steal fire from heaven, but even more than that, we have to become aware of the magical force of these words to appeal to audiences with rhythms that transcend common sense. This is to say that the lines in Shakespeare's plays should be accepted as music than can hold an audience's interest just as the *nō* and *utai*. If we neglect this point, then we can only end up destroying both the words 'as they brush the treetops with mountain mist' and the rhythms of the everyday language.

Shakespeare's plays are nowadays frequently played in Western countries, and the critics there always complain that their actors do not understand the poetry and utter it in a haphazard manner no different from prose, ruining its natural beauty. This criticism is even leveled at real poetry arranged in metrical form. Dr Tsubouchi's *Hamlet*, even through simple intonation, does not reproduce the poetic beauty that Shakespeare achieves in compensation for his distance from reality, and so we cannot be seduced by its elegant mystique; nor does it enable us to be fascinated by the sight of ordinary hu-

man beings acting on a stage.

Tokyo Nichinichi Shimbun, 5th to 6th June, 1911

TEXT: Etō Jun and Yoshida Seiichi, ed., *Natsume Sōseki zenshū* (Complete works of Natsume Sōseki), Vol. 8, Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1974, pp. 289-92.

③ Tsubouchi Shōyō, ‘On my Shakespeare translations’ from *Shēkusupiya kenkyū shiori* (1928)

1. My five periods

My first attempt at translating Shakespeare was in 1882, when I was still a student and translated *Julius Caesar*. Since that time, my approach to Shakespeare translation has passed through at least five stages. The translation of *Julius Caesar* was produced in *jorūri* format under the title *Jiyū no tachi nagori no kireaji* (‘Sword for freedom’), the style being liberally mixed with the syllabic rhythms of the *jorūri*. It was slovenly in the extreme, although this first period in my development was not untypical of translators of the day. I next sought a platform for addressing contemporary youth through my lectures on literature, published in the journal *Waseda Bungaku* in 1895 and 1896. I tried to make my translations as literal as possible, adding scholarly notes and writing in prose, but just as during this period of revival in Japanese literature I was fastidious in my use of vocabulary, so too was I restricted in my use of Japanese grammar, so that without hardly realising it I tended towards an ornate style. My vocabulary was cramped, losing the warmth and style of the original poetry, and even as plain writing it tended to sound quite peculiar. This was the second period in my development as a Shakespeare translator.

The next stage was marked by experiment in live production of Shakespeare, when in 1908 and 1909 the Bungei Kyōkai staged my translation of the first two acts only of *Hamlet*. Since Shakespeare’s original was intended first and foremost for stage production, it seemed expedient to do likewise, and I myself learnt much from the experience. My goal in studying Shakespeare had been the reform of Japanese drama, but when I came to direct *Hamlet* a powerful awareness of what Shakespeare meant gradually dawned on me. It was with only a rather vague idea of what lay ahead that I started to translate the play. Things are different now: I could not have hoped for the rise of *shimpa* and the free and natural rhetoric of the *shingeki*. The language of my *Hamlet* was inevitably touched by the *kabuki* and seven-five syllabic meter of traditional Japanese poetics.

At around this time, I translated *Macbeth* in the excessively literary style of my second period. The late Lafcadio Hearn once told me that ‘Nowadays one would expect to translate Shakespeare in colloquial style’, hinting that I should abandon my literary style, but because I was preoccupied with staging Shakespeare, I did not take Hearn’s advice kindly. Even after I started to translate the Complete Works, working on such plays as *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello*, I could not abandon the literary approach. These translations represent the mixed style of my fourth period. This is to say that by

following the original in its blend of formal poetry, poetic prose and colloquial language, I hoped to convey its warmth and rhythm. This method relied on guesswork, but could produce some interesting results. A smooth coordination of literary and colloquial language was necessary, and while I adopted literary language which was comparatively modern, for the colloquial I used language that was as old as possible: in other words, language from *kabuki* and the Edo period, which was criticised (no doubt rightly) for smelling too much of *kabuki*, and I myself was dissatisfied.

When I came to translate *King Lear*, I toned down the literary element, bringing the colloquial a notch closer to contemporary usage. Translating *Julius Caesar* I again tried to make it more colloquial. The secondary purpose of all these translations was performance by the Bungei Kyōkai, and so I tried to retain something of the special vocabulary of the original, the balance of high and low, the candour, the urgency of rhythm, all necessary for effective stage performance. When we staged *Julius Caesar*, I realized the truth of Hearn's advice, and changed my approach to translation accordingly. This is how I came to enter the fifth period of my translating career: translating in the contemporary language, although I did continue to develop even after that.

My translations of *The Merchant of Venice*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Tempest* and *Macbeth* are all early translations of my fifth period. The translations are strikingly rhythmical, and in place; where they are not, where structures are controlled more by grammar, I interspersed a literary style, and so achieved the mixed style typical of my fourth period. I thus became conscious of what I had been trying to do previously. One point was that Shakespeare has always been a world poet, and another that a relatively contemporary style was best for translating foreign literature. If you translate in literary language, with all its distinct associations, then it becomes difficult to understand, sounds too Japanese, positively ancient in fact, which is not the case if you translate in contemporary style. I feel that those famous old words which can be difficult even for English people to understand, expressed in complex, sometimes fearfully concise archaisms, richly metaphorical and bound up in old grammar, move me mysteriously and speak directly to my heart, and I believe that in the mouth of a Portia or Cleopatra, a Stephano or Bottom, Macbeth or Lady Macbeth, they are to be heard in the Japan of today. When all is said and done, it is the warmth of the language that matters, its mysterious vitality and relevance. The natural and contemporary feel of contemporary colloquial language recalls the unchanging naturalness of Shakespeare's works.

Yet in the case of Shakespeare, even contemporary translations require a little qualification. For a contemporary language comprising six or seven parts the styles of inner and suburban Tokyo is weak in vocabulary, not up to the task. One is troubled by downtown slang such as *oike* ('pond') and *oashi* ('*sen* coin'), which are derived from Edo usage and the language of the wet nurse but are completely redundant in Shakespeare. It is meaningless for Shakespeare to resound with the strains of Edo, Meiji, Taishō or Shōwa Japan, or the Yamanote suburbs of Tokyo, or the Ginza nightlife. Even in contemporary translation, it is hard enough to speak the language of even one section of one's audience.

I first translated in a free and capricious style, then my mind became set on stage performance and my style shifted toward Japanese usage, until finally 'warmth' (*jōmi*) and 'rhythm' (*chōmi*) became

the two poles of my translation, and I became set with a contemporary style a little removed from ordinary colloquial. I believed for a long time that the most faithful translation was a literal one, taking it for granted that to confuse one style with another, whatever the linguistic differences, would be imprudent. Literal translations, where the language fluctuates because of the importance of rhythm in verse plays, may tend to verbosity, and warmth will supersede rhythm. Well-polished lyrical verse is something special, but with the translation of lines written for the more crucial parameters of the stage one must use one's imagination. There is absolutely no point in attempting to translate metaphors and idioms in the style of the original. Metaphors like 'an iron will' and 'a face as fair as a flower' and the synecdoches one often finds in dialect, like *oshaku* ('ladle') and *omakomo* ('grass'), can often harm the overall warmth and rhythm. For example, 'Good morning, sir' means something quite different in English to how we translate it in Japanese, *Ohayō*. Some people have translated it literally as *Kōchō, kimi yo* ('good' + 'morning' + 'you'), which sounds rather strange.

The particular strength of Shakespeare's writing is the way that through its special qualities and rhythms the reader experiences directly the feeling and personality of the characters. What the translator needs to give greatest attention to is to convey the lofty flavour of the words, that distinction between high and low, the exchange of intelligent minds, the reality of good and evil, the sense of urgency. One has to translate for the stage (and without any additional explanation) the folly and solemnity, the negative capability and the chivalry, the politeness and the candour, the passionate and the cool, the long and the short, the tender and the blatant, city and country; a verse translation will pay even more heed to these differences than a literal one. Shakespeare's best known sayings become almost proverbial in the mouths of actors, or rather his proverbs become living speech. The same thing may be said in an abstract way, a concrete way, or metaphorically. In translation this may become repetitive, verbose, or even redundant in part. If you translate in a universal colloquial style that elides classical, contemporary, refined and popular, then you will surely not fail. The wordplay of Shakespeare's comedies may be broadly contained within colloquial language, since homophones in Japanese are more common than in English. Sometimes one can even produce a smoother translation than the original.

2. Preparatory advice

In a volume entitled *Saō gisaku shū* (Shakespeare translations), I translated twenty of the plays from *Hamlet* to *Cymbeline*, and these translations are representative of the approach that I take to translating Shakespeare. Then, in the winter of 1925, Waseda University Press decided to bring out my translation of the Complete Works. What follows constitutes the main part of my memories of how I translated the first twenty works; they explain my approach to translating Shakespeare, and so may be of some use to future translators. Of course, I have only included those points which seem most memorable.

(1) The major characteristic of Shakespearean drama is the striking wealth of its vocabulary, which is multifarious and autonomous in nature. As I have repeatedly mentioned, the number of words

he uses amounts to 150,000, including everything from classical archaisms to the popular language of the Elizabethan age, slang, dialect, foreign words, and neologisms. His language corresponds to every type of class and character of man. The same content may vary in style of expression according to person, time, circumstances and temperament. The way that Shakespeare's characters speak depends on class, character, occupation, upbringing, locality, sexuality and age. He can be frighteningly funny and frighteningly direct. He has a courteous side to him as well, and also an artlessness. He can be both articulate and inarticulate. Gentle yet intrusive, noble yet intimate, valiant, magnanimous, flippant, sincere and natural. Shakespeare's pen delves into the heart of all things, and yet he is also skilled at mixing these styles, at weaving them together poetically, musically and mellifluously, above all in a way that is pleasing to be heard. Strangely enough, when some clumsy character is made to speak awkwardly in prose or slang, the sounds that result are not unpleasant but serve as a kind of musical accompaniment. Shakespeare when he is being rough and vulgar is never discordant. People who appreciate *share* (i.e. wordplay) in Japanese can never tire of Shakespeare's wordplay, which flows smoothly and rhythmically, and is particularly suited in fact to stage performance.

(2) The next feature of Shakespearean drama, and this is not uncommon among classical playwrights, is the care with which he arranges dialogue for the stage. He will give the first half of a line of blank verse to one character and the second half to that character's respondent, or else he will break the rhythm with an interjection, or will share out a line among three or four characters, taking care not to break the pace for even a moment; these are all typical features of his mature works. If the translator does not allow space for breathing, then the actor will stumble over his breathing. In this and other respects, one must be relatively faithful to the original, such is the extent of his *karma*! The relations between subject and predicate, main clause and subordinate clause, should be left just as they are, keeping the pauses of the original. English conjunctions such as 'for', 'since' and 'because' precede clauses, but if you try that in Japanese, where the sentence order is opposite, the language sounds stilted. If you reverse the normal sentence order and say *hayaku motte kite kure, mizu wo!* ('Bring me some water quickly!'), then it feels rather nervous and disjointed, but if you say it the other way round, putting *hayaku* first and *mizu* after, then it sounds much more relaxed.

(3) The third feature of Shakespeare's plays are those complicated soliloquies. They are more than isolated speeches but serve a rhetorical function within the rest of the play. To apply Macaulay's distinction, the same content may be expressed abstractly or in an immediate concrete way, or to bring out the jargon, or else emphasizing the metaphors. The same thought or feeling is subject to diverse interpretations. When Japanese scholars first translated Shakespeare, they were surprised to discover this diverse style occurring so frequently. It seemed 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 will be 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 your expression, then

you may naturally feel you are wasting something and so harming the original. This is a particularly important point when translating Shakespeare with his rich vocabulary and universal rhetoric.

(4) Phrases that come at the end of a scene are aphoristic or proverbial. They foreground popular sayings, and it goes without saying that their translation is not as straightforward as might be imagined. Things can get a bit wild with all those long speeches and subtle witticisms. All kinds of metaphorical language may be used to simplify rather than ornament the language. You do not always have to translate metaphors using *yō ni* or *gotoku* ('like', 'such as').

(5) Another point to beware of when translating Shakespeare is the treatment of pronouns and adjectives. You can omit seven out of ten pronouns when you translate into Japanese, and should always be economical with the *kanji*. For example, the word 'true' can be translated using two characters – *shinjitsu* – but there's a problem with 'faithful'. Unless you keep a mind to it, then your translation may get too verbose. You should translate 'true' as *chū* and 'faithful' as *shin*. If you translate Shakespeare only into the everyday language peculiar to the colloquial, you will be unable to render adjectives in any memorable way. You will either compress their meaning, or else there is the danger you will translate into tedious long speeches. Another troublesome matter is what to do with polite language. If someone says in the original 'sir' or 'your majesty' or 'your highness' or 'my lord', there is only this troublesome distinction to be made between 'you' and 'thou', and just as in *kambun*, you cannot make any serious changes to the word endings. Even with kings and princesses, it is usually not impolite to call out 'O King!', and of course you can adopt this appellation when reporting news. The correct Japanese would be *Ō yo, yurushite kure* ('Forgive me, your majesty') and one can also say *ima hime ga dekakete iru* ('The princess has gone out') when things are not looking so good. Adjectives such as 'dear', 'fair', 'sweet', 'good', 'gentle' and 'gracious' are polite words, rhythmically bisyllabic, that may be used. They would be rather strange in a literal translation, and so it is better to adopt some kind of standard.

There are a number of examples with pronouns. There is no correct translation for 'my father', 'my brother', 'your father' or 'your sister', which are all prefixed with pronouns. The first two would be *chichi ga* and *ani ga*; the others would be *goshinpu* or *otōsan*, and *oimōtosan* or *omeigo*. This is to say that in Shakespeare translation one must first consider vocabulary and usage, and for this reason contemporary Japanese is just inadequate. To rely on the languages of the Yamanote, Tokyo suburbs and Ginza nightlife is terribly limiting; one must create a style that is liberally mixed with local dialect and includes slang words from Tokyo and its environs, such as *subarashii* ('wonderful'), *suteki* ('nice') and *hitokko* ('single child'). It should be a colloquial style that makes sense not only to the translator himself but also to the people who know him. Just as Shakespeare uses archaisms, foreign words, slang and dialect as the situation demands, the translator should do likewise: the refined and vulgar language of the ancients, the language of Confucianism and the Chinese classics, of the Tōhoku and Kyushu, the language of Akinari, Bakin, Saikaku and Chikamatsu, these should all be exploited in an approximation of the refined and vulgar tongue. If one does not, then one cannot hope to capture even one ten-thousandth of Shakespeare's original spirit.

You obviously can't use the standard Japanese used in primary and middle schools. Despite those arguments for simplifying the language by reducing the number of Sino-Japanese characters, you would soon realize their literary impracticability if you tried to translate just one of Shakespeare's plays. To put something into contemporary Japanese is not the same as using that impoverished language which is daily spoken by a comparatively large number of people today or the standardized Japanese authorized by the officials of the Ministry of Education and educationists for use in textbooks. If contemporary, or colloquial, Japanese grammar is to be legislated, spoken and understood by others, then it will be no match for the classical. A language which is limited to colloquial usage should be used for translating Shakespeare into Japanese. Unless one does so, one will be unable to capture the remarkable creativity of Shakespeare's language.

3. Stage directions

With regard to stage directions, there are a number of conditions of which the reader should be especially wary. As I have often noted, the division of scenes and even acts is often unclear in Shakespeare's plays, and of course detailed stage directions entirely absent. In recent years, as a result of advances in theatrical standards, capital letters, parentheses, italics and other punctuation marks have been applied to the Quarto and Folio texts, and even stage directions have been identified with greater certainty. Yet since the subject is still under research, any claims that the stage directions of today, as they have passed down with some additions and deletions since the days of Nicholas Rowe, represent Shakespeare's original intention remain in doubt. The addition of detailed directions to those already in use (such as may be of general use to the reader) will probably be severely criticized by specialists for their audacity. Yet for readers new to Shakespeare, the question of whether stage directions are to be used at all, and their level of detail, is a serious matter. For scholars dependent on existing editions, the questions of to whom are speeches addressed, how the speeches should be spoken and with what degree of emotion, are frequently ambiguous and often impossible to answer. When I tried to translate *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* for the first time, there were numerous points which puzzled me. The various commentaries available based their opinions on reviews of live productions of Shakespeare and on actors' autobiographies. Presuming that these notes could be translated, I planned to devise my own commentary, and included detailed and unprecedented stage directions: what Johnson might have called 'a necessary evil'. If I am to be accused of anything, then the fault lies mainly with these stage directions, but for scholars new to the field they are indispensable. What I regret is that before completing these translations, I did not have access to the then unpublished Nonesuch edition, whose stage directions are invaluable.

If, while translating, I had been able to obtain a copy of Harrison's *New Reader's Shakespeare*, then I would have saved myself quite a lot of trouble, but I had almost completed it when I saw a copy in Maruzen bookshop. Harrison's directions are comparatively detailed compared to previous editions; they are not exactly minute, but they do seem to differ in both approach and purpose from mine. One suspects that they are mainly derived from recent stage performances. In any case, my stage directions

have nothing whatsoever to do with Harrison's.

4. Colloquial and Contemporary Language

Colloquial language is not the same as contemporary language. The contemporary language as it is spoken is the language of one's inferiors, and its generic boundaries are predictably narrower than the colloquial. Contemporary Japanese is confined to the large urban areas, for example to the everyday conversation of lower and middle class Tokyoites, popular novels, newspapers and magazines, and textbooks prescribed by the Ministry of Education. In the new Shōwa era, proletarian language has been widely accepted, slang is popular, even in mainstream society; other words have disappeared, double consonants are prevalent, the value of words has declined, as has correct usage quite markedly. It is impossible to translate great foreign literature using only contemporary Japanese. A writer like Shakespeare, with his wealth of vocabulary and lucid style unmatched in English literature before or since, can simply not be translated into the Tokyo dialect of today, even allowing for slang. (There are two or three brave souls who have tried, but to look at their translations, Ophelia and Juliet sound like bar girls and students, and Portia, Lady Macbeth and Gertrude like the proprietresses of a tea shop or inn. They speak a vulgar language associated with the mistresses of company men).

Yet even this contemporary language may become less narrow-minded and richer in vocabulary. This is to say that just as lower and middle class speech adopt trend words, so too will local dialect be affected by leakage. Therefore, if one is to add to what is broadly defined as a contemporary style a language that is prescribed by the rules of the colloquial (whether it is in current use or not), but a Japanese that is influenced by contemporary and classical alike, by vulgar and refined language, by internal and external influences, then Japanese vocabulary will no longer be impoverished. Of course, one can include words which have entered the language through translation since the Taishō era, while dialect words and slang have already received general admittance. Japanese grammar has changed considerably since medieval times. Translators can use words whose historical changes have become widely accepted. In translation I sometimes intersperse Japanese words with foreign ones. Translating in this way, the Japanese becomes more flexible and pliant than I had expected. The vocabulary may not be listed in dictionaries like *Gensen* or *Kokugo jiten* or *Daigenkai*, but it is rich and broad.

This style may not be suitable to the translation of other foreign literature but I believe it is most appropriate for Shakespeare. As in the original, where the noble characters use archaisms, classicisms, foreign and translated words, and the lower classes use everyday language, slang and dialect words, as well as inventing words, everything is done in its own way. From the point of view of his freedom of expression, Shakespeare is like the ancient goddess Marishiten. His style is like that female buddha in its solemnity and subtlety. Its divine power has a mysterious sacred virtue that may take many forms. Neither sun, moon nor heaven can see it, nor could any man ever do so. Sometimes it has three faces, sometimes six or eight pairs of hands; it can fight with all kinds of weapons at once; it can hunt the boar, joust with sword, pike, bar and mallet, unleash the bow from its quiver, start a fire, flail a rope. Against this monster, we Japanese are armed only with our classical language of old. It is

the height of madness to suppose that our impoverished contemporary language can do battle with this monster, for to do so is to deny his classical appeal, is inartistic and realistic. In the case of colloquial translations of Shakespeare, one cannot rely on mere vulgarity. Where the original is difficult to understand but mellifluous, where there are several words that resist even close reading, you will sometimes have to resort to awkward *kango* and invented words. The most important thing is not to popularise Shakespeare. One should first seek to translate with a feel for character and what it will look and sound like on stage. Like the recitations of Takemoto *gidayū* in *yorūri*, there are many lines which do not make sense on hearing but do communicate mood. If one is to suggest the feelings of a scene and truly tell the story, there will be those difficult words and phrases that serve to make the audience laugh and cry. Wherever and whenever, dramatic speech is always like that.

5. Notes on the revised edition

(1) Pronunciation

The pronunciation of English in Shakespeare's day was very different from either modern or recent times, and so there is a special way of speaking Shakespeare's language on stage. I have tried to honour this tendency in both my early translations and the latter twenty volumes, but in the *Gisaku shū* (containing the first twenty translations) there are mistakes in the pronunciation. By applying Irving's rules on Shakespearean pronunciation, I have tried as much as possible to rectify the errors. Even today we cannot always be sure of the pronunciation, although I have received some assistance from a professor at Tokyo University, and since Japanese pronunciation is rarely strictly consistent with the original, I have revised as best I can, knowing that a completely accurate transcription is not possible. To take a couple of examples, Lucio, Lucilius and Lucius become Ryūshiyo, Ryūshiriyasu and Ryūshiyasu, Lucentio and Luciana, Rūchenshiō and Rūshiyāna; it's a problem! The maid Maria in *Love's Labours Lost* is Mariya, but the housekeeper Maria in *Twelfth Night* is Maraiya. Caius in *Julius Caesar* is always Keiyasu, but Dr Caius in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is pronounced Kīzu. What is one to do with all Shakespeare's French words? Anthony and Antony are pronounced the same despite different spelling, as do Calpurnia and Calphurnia. Asia in Shakespeare is Ēsha or Ēshiya, and Rōm a and Rūmu both seem to be possible for Rome. There's no end to these examples. Most nouns were pronounced very differently from today. For example, 'sleep' was pronounced 'slip', 'sheep' 'ship', and 'on' 'one'.

Shakespeare's spelling is extremely complicated. It has long been said that Shakespeare's name can be spelt in twenty different ways, possibly even forty; English spelling is much more troublesome than our way of writing with *kana*, and sometimes one has one's doubts. For example, the name of the greatest actor of Shakespeare's day was usually spelt Burbage, but Burbadge was also possible, and I have also seen Bourbage in an old book. The adjective 'sultry' is spelt 'soultry' in the Folio edition, which sounds quite different. There are countless other examples.

The example of 'sultry' reminds me of the confusion I have had with words that end *ri*, *ni* and *ii*. For readers familiar with the pronunciation of the English names, the pronunciation of Henry, Gurney,

Ketley and Wolsey as Henri, Gāni, Ketori and Ūruji, makes no difference, but for people with no knowledge of English the orthography would seem to be rather misleading. It is strange when *ji* is like the suffix *-ji* meaning 'temple', and *tori* means 'bird'. So I changed them to Henrī, Gānī and Uruji. In words like *aisu kurī* ('ice cream') and *hankachi* ('handkerchief'), we Japanese have the bad habit of removing the ending of the loan word.

In the case of foreign place names and also Biblical names, I have sometimes followed Shakespeare's own practice and adopted the pronunciation most familiar to a native, Japanese audience. I have rendered the names of characters as accurately as possible but in the translations themselves and in the titles I have sometimes tried the old familiar pronunciations. Thus *Jūriyasu Shizā* becomes *Juriasu Shizā*, *Rōmiō* to *Dyūrietto* becomes *Romio* to *Jurietto*.

(2) 'You' and 'thou'

Abbott, in his *Shakespeare Dictionary*, gives numerous examples of Shakespeare's usage of these two pronouns. I cannot improve on his explanation of 'thou' as the form used for superiors, equals, inferiors, and for sub-humans, such as dogs. The rules are quite complicated. One can give a number of examples of its use toward inferiors, but those instances (for example, in colloquial translation) are rather perplexing. The use of the vocative in Japanese has decreased over time, until we are just about left with *omae*, *kisama*, *anta* and *anata*. At the time of the Meiji Restoration, *sono moto*, *sono hō* and *kikō* could still be heard, but no more. To give a couple of examples, Claudius in *Hamlet* addresses Laertes with 'you' and 'thou' in the same speech. Falstaff first calls Hotspur's corpse 'sirrah' (*kora*, *kisama*) and then 'you'. Both *anta* and *anata* seem to lack something as translations of this particular 'you'. I cannot bring to mind any more good examples, and must leave it to the next opportunity; this is just one of those points which you have to be aware of when translating Shakespeare. Contemporary translations often ignore this distinction between 'you' and 'thou'. We often use *kimi* or *kisama* wrongly instead of *anta* or *anata*.

(3) Lower class speech

Many contemporary translations have tended to ignore the language of the lower classes, dishing out phrases such as *kō shite okure* and *ā shite okure* (i.e. 'please do it') irrespective of class. *Kō shiro* and *ā shiro* belong to the Tokyo lower and middle classes, and have been widely adopted as slang by upper-class women. Kings, princes, dukes, counts and marquises, men and children, all sound the same in these translations. Especially when young Japanese use polite language, they forget those mysterious qualities of gentleness and pliancy which cannot be found in foreign languages. I'm thinking of usages like the polite prefix *o* and the suffix *-mase*, as in *asobase*, which soften the verb. Phrases such as *nande o-okori asobasu no desu ka?* ('Why are you angry?') and *dōshite o-waraware ni naru no desu ka?* ('Why do you laugh?'), *o-kimono* and *o-obi*, are strung together with all kinds of colloquial verbiage. If one is translating plays from a feudal age, it is inappropriate for noblemen to speak with the rough tongue of the people. Between *asobase* and the *o* prefix, one finds a *suteki* and a *subarashii*, a *chippoke* ('tiny'), an

icchatta ('said') and a *nani nani shiteru wa yo* ('doing something'), a real linguistic cocktail. This is women's language, of course, and class discrimination will be especially high among women. As I've written before, the language of those who wait on the nobility, such as Juliet's nurse, and Mistress Quickly in *King Henry IV* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* should be inferior. Japanese contains numerous pronouns with which to refer to oneself and to others. It's extremely complicated! It has long been assumed that the pronouns that refer to oneself all begin with *wa*, whereas those referring to others start with *ka* or *na*, but in translating classical texts there are several strange and interesting nuances to be observed. If I were to give some examples, you might well understand them, but I am in the middle of revising my early translations, the weather is far too hot, and so I apologise for leaving this argument incomplete.

(4) Selecting vocabulary

In a word, I believe that the vocabulary of old Japan is poor, and that both Japanese vocabulary and grammar are in need of revision. One cannot afford to absolve responsibility for such a great role on those reckless people who freely confuse ancient words like *namida gumashii* ('crying') and *hitozuma* ('wife') and *shijima* ('quietness') with the language of the café and of local dialect. Such people interfere too much with old Japanese. If we go back a hundred, two or even, three hundred years, we can find plenty of appropriate words so I don't think it's reasonable to try to make up something new which is impure, unpalatable, unintelligible and corrupt. I think we should experiment with words that are less corrupt. In his translation of Shelley's autobiography, Simonzi notes that the poet uses the whole breadth of the English language. If one is to make such exhaustive use of the Japanese language – from the *Kojiki* to the *Nihon Shoki* to *Shukushi* to the *Manyō*, the literatures of the Heian, Kamakura and Muromachi eras right through to the three centuries of the Edo era, and the few decades of Meiji – that would be quite a trawl. There are so many words whose orthography has changed, and then words such as *keibetsu* ('contempt'), *sekihai* ('narrow defeat') and *renkō* ('lead away') which have remained unchanged, that it would be gentlemanly to give them the role for the time being. It's not just the words. 'Which' clauses such as *nani nani wo nashi eta* ('did something'), *nani nani no hoka no nanimono demo arienai* ('cannot do anything else') and *nan to nan no nani nani de attarō koto yo* ('would be a bit of this and that') have become generalised in modern usage; I hate to mention that these are the language of greater Japan. They resemble (only superficially) phrases such as *samui desu* ('it's cold'), *karai desu* ('it's spicy') and *iku desu* ('I'm going') found in the styles of modern writers like Tayama Katai, Inoue Masao and Ōtsuji Shirō, which makes them all the more indigestible. It is only a short step from *Shikari, heika* ('Yes, your majesty') and *Iya, heika* ('No, your majesty') and *Kōchō, kimi yo*, to a corrupted language. That is where mistakes creep into translation: through imitation. It is not just incorrect Japanese but also makes for incorrect translation.

(5) Free translation

Literal translation is the most faithful style of translation, but as a result is lacking in warmth and

rhythm; often the blend of meter and rhythm is unavoidably awkward, and the translation becomes a little strange and comical. When you translate *haiku* and *tanka* poetry into foreign languages, a literal use of the original form may be thought expedient, but translating foreign literature into Japanese is something else. If the translation is too direct – apart, that is, from bilingual translation – then it will be unintelligible without notes. In dramatic poetry, where the emphasis is on feeling, warmth and individual character, then one will try to recreate the speech of a person, scene or dramatic moment. For example, a direct translation of ‘Yes, your majesty’ would be *Sayō desu, heika*, whereas the correct Japanese is *Sayō de gozaimasu*. Polite verb forms such as *gozaimasu* and *asobase* carry the same semantic weight as ‘highness’, ‘my lord’ and ‘sir’. It is the same with Ophelia saying ‘Aye, my lord’ and ‘There, my lord’ to Hamlet, but when we think of the petite and reticent Ophelia, Japanese equivalents such as *Yoroshū gozarimasu* and *Sō ouketori kudasaremase* are quite wrong. How about *Hai, dōzo* or *Sa, dōzo*? ‘My lord’ is not the same as *dōzo*, but it does express a similar level of politeness. Another example is when Polonius approaches Hamlet in his books, and asks what he is looking at, to which Hamlet replies ‘Words, words, words.’ The direct translation is *Kotoba, kotoba, kotoba*, but that lacks the necessary connotation. *Monku, monku, monku* sounds better, and is easier to understand when spoken on stage.

Translating similes, metaphors, metonyms and synecdoche as they are sounds most unnatural, and often interferes with the sense of the original. The metaphors of Chinese poetry, English poetry and above all anything classical do not necessarily represent the writer’s original ideas. There are many hackneyed examples like ‘iron will’, ‘a face as fair as a flower’ and ‘a back bent like a willow’. We will sound ridiculous if we make ourselves slaves to these expressions. The language of drama is primarily intended for the ear; it is unreasonable to apply the same criteria as the translation of lyric poetry, which is read by the eye, and of novels.

Translating songs is something else too. Rather than treating each separate phrase as it comes, it is more effective to aim for a unity of harmony and rhythm. The old folk song should sound like an old folk song, the children’s song like a children’s song, the dirge like a dirge, the song of congratulation like a song of congratulation, the jig like a jig, and ideally jazz like jazz. It would be strange to translate the song in Ophelia’s mad scene in high flown language or in a mixture of the ornate and vulgar.

The purpose of dramatic translation is to convey the style (*iki*) of the original in the words spoken by the actors, which means that sometimes one has to discard verbosity, cliché and painful metaphors.

(6) Economy of meaning and rhythm above verbosity

Shakespeare is admired for the unprecedented wealth of his vocabulary. In the present century, when a noisy debate on what is and is not canonical has arisen, it is difficult to tell whether this wealth of vocabulary is really Shakespeare’s. If Shakespeare’s works were written by seven or more other people, or if they were the joint work of three or four, or else corrected by seven or eight, then perhaps Shakespeare’s actual contribution is only 50% or less. My view of this matter is not wholly serious. When it comes to the wealth of Shakespeare’s vocabulary, particularly with regard to translation,

what one should note are the gradations of rhythm and meaning hidden in Shakespeare's plays, the nuances, the universality and compactness of those delicate transpositions. Readers are impressed by the vibrancy of those distinctions in rhythm and movement between each kind of character – king, prince and nobleman, religious and fools of every class – to every kind of merchant, artisan, servant, man, woman, old and young. Male and female of every class and character are powerfully expressed. With a writer as well known as Shakespeare, there were at least some thirty or forty court intellectuals who could have helped him. There is an insubstantial theory that one of these was the female novelist Mary, Countess of Pembroke: the Murasaki Shikibu of Elizabethan times.

Since even women's expressions carry some universal weight in the way they are conceived and as women write them, distinctions between high and low, intelligent and stupid, old and young will be written very differently by people depending on whether they are provincials, foreigners, madmen or fools. Indeed the character of people is not only a matter of the language they use. Degrees of feeling are expressed through subtle linguistic nuances. The familiarity and respect which other people show us is registered through their language. The language of every character is vital, and if properly respected, even stage directions are unnecessary; psychological modulations are easily grasped, as if you were looking at them face to face.

That is only if you can read the original well enough. Reference to other Japanese translations is not helpful in this regard. It has been said that a certain German translation of Shakespeare is better than the original, but I have no doubt that it is completely different. It is rather like the box in the tale of Urashima Tarō. Once Urashima opens it his spirit vanishes in a puff of smoke.

If in this sense the true value of Shakespeare is difficult to convey even in languages which have a common root such as French or German, then the amateur efforts at translation in the early Meiji era would have been impossible. One is all the more surprised at the way that such people have translated Shakespeare with our compressed writing system, our mass culture, with our far from standardized spoken language, with the various obscurities surrounding Japanese names, with foreign loan words. I would wish to request reformers of our language that they take into serious consideration the complicated demands of Shakespeare translation when they discuss such issues as limiting the use of Sino-Japanese characters, standardizing the language, reforming punctuation and so on, and that afterwards they publish their findings.

TEXT: *Shōyō senshū* (Selected works of Tsubouchi Shōyō), Add. Vol. V, ed. Shōyō Kyōkai, Tokyo: Daiichi Shobō, 1978, pp. 254-77. First published by Waseda University Press, December 1928.