

# Private visions and public spaces ~ Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1920s Japan

Daniel Gallimore

## A new Dream

It is only within the last fifty years that Shakespeare has become widely accepted on the Japanese stage, but one harbinger of that increased acceptance may be a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Tokyo's Imperial Theatre in the summer of 1928.<sup>1)</sup> The *Dream* is now one of the most popular of Shakespeare's plays in Japan, but Japan's early Shakespeareans took their time in making this discovery, since both Shakespeare translation and performance in Japan date back to the 1880s and the play was not published in Japanese until 1915. One reason may be that the play doesn't seem to be about anything at all – it does not “treat on” anything except, possibly, marriage<sup>2)</sup> – and Shakespeare has always had an aphoristic or universal value in Japan.

Shakespeare was important as a writer who connected tradition with modernity and so cast his net around the whole of society. One of the most popular scenes in early 20th century Japan was the court scene in *The Merchant of Venice*, in which the humiliation of Shylock could be compared to the replacement of traditional Japanese mercantilism with modern capitalist practices imported from the ‘Christian’ West.<sup>3)</sup> The court scene also provided a model of drama as dialectic, and this model became increasingly relevant as Japan transformed itself into a participatory democracy. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has little to do with either the law or democracy,<sup>4)</sup> and yet (as I argue in this essay) like all of Shakespeare's plays it is inscribed with dialectal tensions, which Shakespeareans in 1920s Japan sought to interpret in their own way.

The most fundamental tension is between the public domain (*kō* 公 in Japanese) and the private (or *shi* 私). It is common for Japanologists to make a distinction between *honno* 本音, a person's real feelings with regard to a situation, and *tatema* 建前, the face or mask which protects a person's feelings or the feelings of the group to which the person belongs. This rather theatrical distinction is of course historically conditioned, and no more so than in the period of Japan's formation as a modern nation state, the 1860s through to 1945, but especially up to the 1910s. During the Meiji era (the reign of Emperor Meiji from 1868 to 1912), it is the public domain which prevails as the space that ambitious merchants and *samurai* need to master in order to succeed in

professional and political life. In literature, young prodigies such as Kitamura Tōkoku and Shimazaki Tōson momentarily dazzle their readerships, but either die young from suicide or tuberculosis or graduate into respectable realism.<sup>5)</sup> During the Meiji era, Japan cares intensely about its public image. Shakespeare is a writer whose all-embracing vision the writers of Meiji wish to emulate, in appearance if not in reality.

The focus changes, however, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Japan defeats China in 1895, taking Taiwan as its reward, defeats Russia in 1905, and finally annexes Korea in 1910. Japanese business benefits both from these successes and ordnance requisitions in World War I, and a sizable middle class emerges in the big cities with modern tastes and aspirations. This is where the focus shifts from public to private, where identity is achieved not through baronial displays of wealth and power but through an individual use of private space.<sup>6)</sup> A narrative such as Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's *Rashōmon* (1915) is just one example of how a complexity of individual viewpoints obfuscates the authority of the public domain.<sup>7)</sup> In the 1890s, literary taste is mediated through a handful of magazines such as *Waseda Bungaku* which were written and read by the same educated élite. In the 1920s, the élite was still an élite but a rather bigger one, and newer magazines that are still in print today, such as *Bungei Shunjū* and *Chūō Kōron*, enjoyed huge circulations. This was also the jazz age, when young women cut their hair short, danced the foxtrot, and altogether behaved like 'modern girls' (*moga*).

The emergence of private domains is related to a paternalistic strand in Japanese thought, whereby production is controlled by family hierarchies, and was no doubt successful for that reason, but it was ultimately constrained by a need for wider networks and by wider economic realities; the family itself was not enough. In 1927, Akutagawa committed suicide, exhausted by paranoia and a lack of public acclaim, and then in 1928 Japan was hit harder than were more mature economies by economic recession. The logical solution to this impasse was a submission to a postmodern domain in which public and private are contingent on each other, and which may be thought typical of postwar Japan.

If we combine the two words *kō* for 'public' and *shi* for 'private', we get the word *kōshi* 公私, meaning (for example) to act in both a public and a private capacity. Yet as is often the case in Japanese, this combination of sounds yields a sizable list of homophones, words which are pronounced the same but written with different characters. Here is an incomplete list: 'calf' 子牛, 'envoy' 行使, 'Confucius' 孔子, and 'lecturer' 講師. The inclusion of 'Confucius' in this list is particularly intriguing, since the teachings of the ancient Chinese sage, which have been so influential in Japanese culture, so often advocate a subordination of individual character to public duty, or rather to insist that the two roles are indivisible.

## A Confucian Dream

The character in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* who most seems to fit the Confucian mould is Theseus, as it is he who is responsible for putting human relations in their right and reasonable order. Theseus sustains the Confucian myth that benevolence underlies the natural human hierarchy. In Act 1, scene 1, he argues with Hermia to forfeit her love for Lysander in a style as typical of Confucian as of Elizabethan governance (1.1.46–9)<sup>8)</sup>:

What say you, Hermia? Be advised, fair maid.  
To you your father should be as a god,  
One that composed your beauties, yea, and one  
To whom you are but as a form in wax

He is an Appolonian character, for whom Hippolyta is the moon to his sun, and as befits the god of poetry he creates the opening, defining image of the play: the young man frustrated by age (1.1.36).<sup>9)</sup>

but O, methinks, how slow  
This old moon wanes! She lingers my desires  
Like to a stepdame or a dowager  
Long withering out a young man's revenue.

Having set the poetry in motion, at the end of the play he is dismayed to discover just how far is the reach of imagination (5.1.4–6).<sup>10)</sup>

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,  
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend  
More than cool reason ever comprehends.

The Confucian hierarchy is in fact far from certain. Theseus' authority rests on his role as the master of time, his prerogative to call an end to the three days of expectation and fulfillment which he himself has initiated.

We all know that those three days and nights have been telescoped into a single day and night and that the lovers' unearthly flights of imagination may pass for real. The play presents the public face of classical lovemaking and its private underside, fairy land and the goings on in the wood outside Athens. Theseus is the *kōshi* amidst all this, the duke whose personal desires become public policy. What the members of his court have to learn is to become less like him and, as it were, to speak with greater deference. Yet Theseus is not the central character of the play. That pivotal role belongs to Bottom, who is the only character to communicate with both fairy land and the real world. Bottom is a parody of the *kōshi* archetype because it is he who never leaves us in doubt as to his private intentions. It is his desire to play every part – the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, as it were – which parodies the claims of the *kōshi* archetype to see into the hearts of his subjects, and it is Bottom who insists on making public the hidden reality of the mechanicals' play within a play: that the lion is not really a lion, and so on (3.1.26–32).<sup>11)</sup>

In another play, Bottom would be leading the revolution against Theseus were it not for the fact that his energies are devoted so exclusively to “Pyramus and Thisbe”. He comes within an inch of reciting an epilogue that could just as well be an epilogue to the play as a whole, but Theseus knows better. Bottom is betrayed by his dramatic art, by the zeal with which he has put an end to himself as Pyramus, while all along harbouring a dream that “hath no bottom” (4.1.212).<sup>12)</sup> As the one, true *kōshi*, Theseus knows that however sincerely he tries to balance his public role with his private persona, to make them work in harmony, he cannot step outside the framework of public and private for any significant length of time. In fact, watching a play about just such an interplay

Pyramus and Thisbe kill themselves for a love which is forbidden by the city authorities – this is probably the closest Theseus can come to stepping out of line, and it is perhaps that amateur performance which teaches the lovers that there was something rather amateur about their performance in the woods. The delineation between amateur and professional is just another way of understanding the distinction between private and public.

What Theseus comes to understand is that if he can never fully detach himself from his public and private roles they must by default be mysterious in nature and purpose. This sense of mystery expresses itself in the play’s dreamlike quality: that it does not seem to be about anything at all. The inconsistencies in the plot, the elements of fantasy, the way the poetic symmetries point to elusive spiritual unities. The style of interpreting the *Dream* initiated by Jan Kott and Peter Brook in the 1960s replaced the harmless fantasy with a neurotic nightmare. Brook’s landmark production toured to Tokyo in 1973 where it affected the director Ninagawa Yukio among others, but I wish to refer here to an older style of interpreting the *Dream* in Japan which is still seen in contemporary performances.

## Translating the Dream

*A Midsummer Night’s Dream* was first translated into Japanese in 1915 by Tsubouchi Shōyō (1859–1935), the pioneer of Shakespeare studies and translation in Japan. It is possible that an amateur translation was made as early as 1885 but that translation was not published and the manuscript lost. The story of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* was known from the Lambs’ *Tales from Shakespeare*, which were published in Japanese in the 1890s together with various summary accounts of Shakespeare’s life and works. Interest in Shakespeare was limited to a handful of great plays: *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar* and *Othello* among the tragedies and *The Merchant of Venice* among the comedies. In 1912, the Allan Wilkie company on their tour of the Far East staged *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* at the Imperial Theatre but the *Dream* does not seem to have figured in the attempts of Japan’s Shakespeareans to graft the rhetoric and ideas of Shakespeare onto the newly emerging modern Japanese theatre. Tsubouchi Shōyō translated the *Dream* in the same year as *The Tempest*, which was his favourite Shakespeare play and which he took as a model for his approach to Shakespeare translation.

Tsubouchi undoubtedly knew more about Shakespeare than any other Japanese of his age. Shakespeare then as now was considered the greatest writer of a language which was the primary medium of contact with the outside world. At the same time, Tsubouchi's very public agenda for Shakespeare and theatrical reform, rooted as it was in the idealism of the 1880s,<sup>13</sup> had grown increasingly remote from the social realism of the younger generation. Tsubouchi was a realist too, but of an older, more sceptical caste. Moreover, the decade of Shakespeare in Japan was the 1900s, the last decade of the Meiji era, when Kawakami Otojirō and his wife the former geisha Sadayakko performed three of the great tragedies in the sentimental *shimpa* or 'new wave' style. That was in 1903, and then in 1911 there was the Tsubouchi *Hamlet*, which proved if nothing else that the Japanese could stage Shakespeare's longest play in their own language.<sup>14</sup> In the 1910s, with a new Emperor on the throne, interest shifted to contemporary writers like Tolstoy and Wedekind. The greatest hit of that decade was not a Shakespeare production but an adaptation of Tolstoy's novel *Resurrection* in 1915, which was directed by Tsubouchi's star pupil Shimamura Hōgetsu. A song was written for the heroine Katusha and later released as a gramophone record.

In the 1910s, Tsubouchi settled down to the business of translating Shakespeare, which he eventually completed in 1927. His idea was to produce scholarly editions with expanded stage directions that would be read among the new urban middle class and studied in the universities. He was generally happy for his translations to be performed, and in fact nineteen of them had been performed by the time of his death. The most productive venue was the Tsukiji Little Theatre, near the Ginza, where the director Osanai Kaoru (1881–1928), the so-called Stanislavsky of modern Japanese drama, staged short runs of the Tsubouchi translations amidst a diet of contemporary foreign and native plays. The production in 1928 of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was followed by another of *Uncle Vanya* and a play by one of the central figures of Taishō literature, Mushanokoji Saneatsu.

Throughout his career, Tsubouchi believed that Shakespeare was a writer whose genius cast a universal light on the moral and psychological dilemmas of humanity. At the same time, his writings on Shakespeare are studded with a sense of the elusiveness of Shakespeare,<sup>15</sup> in other words that Shakespeare was too remote in time and place for his meanings to be more than glimpsed by modern Japanese. He warned against trying even to understand Shakespeare, feeling that Shakespeare was a writer "without reason" and that trying to find that reason was a delusion and a hopeless cause. Shakespeare was a mystery and thus stood out from Tolstoy, Chekhov and the modern Japanese writers who were very much writers with reason. As I have argued, the rationale for the older generation of writers such as Tsubouchi tended to lie in the public domain. Tsubouchi's main aim was always to reform his national drama while the rationale for the younger generation lay in the private domain. When these two domains are crossed, the result is a very powerful mirror but one which is without reason. The onlooker sees only himself, and may well be

pleased with what he sees, but there is no further point of reference. That is the meaning of *kōshi*.

### An Imperial Dream

The 1928 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* offers one example of how Shakespeare's public and private roles overlap on the Japanese stage. It should be stressed that this was hardly a landmark production in the history of modern Japanese drama. The two landmark productions are the 1911 *Hamlet* and a production of *Hamlet* in 1955, in which Fukuda Tsuneari directed his own translation, which showed that Shakespeare could be made socially relevant. The significance of the 1928 Dream is as a fulfillment of the ambition of Tsubouchi to translate Shakespeare into Japanese,<sup>16)</sup> but an ambition which was to have quite obvious consequences for the role of Shakespeare in the modern Japanese theatre. These translations are inscribed with their translator's character: above all with Tsubouchi's determination to create a rhetorical framework that synergised the classical language of his upbringing in the 1860s with the language as it had developed by the time he came to translate the play in 1915. He believed that the relationship between modern Japan and its feudal past mirrored that between Japan and the age of Shakespeare, and although this comparison is not necessarily historical, the relationship between classical and contemporary is fundamental to Shakespeare's dramaturgy.

The texture of Tsubouchi's blend of archaism with contemporary language can be experienced in his translation of the example already quoted from Theseus' speech at the beginning of Act 5 (5.1.2 6):<sup>17)</sup>

I never may believe

These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,

Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend

More than cool reason ever comprehends.

The translation perfectly matches the counterpoint of argument and example which frames Theseus' speech in the original: *makoto to wa omowaren kurai da* 真とは思はれん位だ。<sup>18)</sup> The line is pithy and archaic in feel, constructed out of a series of three groups of five syllables each. *Makoto to wa omowaren kurai da*. Theseus is saying that it never used to be like this so why should we have to believe these young upstarts now? Tsubouchi then lapses into a sonorous, rhythmical style which is close in syntax and vocabulary to the Japanese of today.<sup>19)</sup>

*Washi wa ā iu kōtōna kwaidan ya tawai mo nai tsukuribanashi wo shinzuru koto wa dekin. Koibito ya kichigai wa, tsune ni nō ga niekaette ite, arimosen mono wo tsukuridasu chikara ga yoku hataraku node, hiyahiyakana risei no nomikomi enai yō na kotogara wo omoi tsuku.*

わしはあゝいふ荒唐な怪談や無稽い作り話を信ずることは出来ん。恋人や狂人は、常に脳が煮え返ってゐて、有りもせん物を造り出す力が善く働くので、冷々かな理性の

呑み込み得ないやうな事柄を思ひ附く。

In these longer sentences, the centre of gravity shifts elusively to the end of the sentence, giving the language its controlled, even mysterious character which may be thought typical of the Tsubouchi style. The next sentence, however, returns to the pithy, dismissive style of the first (5.1.78).<sup>20)</sup>

*Fūten kanja to jōjin to shijin to wa, sono kokoro wo kotogotoku sōzō de motte katame agete iru.*

瘋癲患者と情人と詩人とは、其心を悉く想像で以て固め上げてゐる。

The lunatic, the lover, and the poet

Are of imagination all compact.

So Theseus states his argument, and it is strikingly similar to Tsubouchi's view of Shakespeare as a writer whom we appreciate but do not seek to understand (the way of the madman, the lover and the poet). Tsubouchi did not attend the production, nor even mention it in his diary, the most likely reason being that at 69 he preferred the quiet of his seaside retirement villa to the Tokyo summer. He was also somewhat at the opposite end of the ideological spectrum from the company which chose to stage it, the Tsukiji Little Theatre, and their chief artistic director, Osanai Kaoru. While Tsubouchi preferred the 19<sup>th</sup> century declamatory style of acting, Osanai had studied in Moscow under Stanislavsky, and was committed to 'the method school' and to realism. Yet like Stanislavsky, Osanai respected Shakespeare, and evidently Tsubouchi as well.

At no doubt considerable expense, the Tsukiji company rented the Imperial Theatre, then Tokyo's largest and most modern theatre, where Tsubouchi had staged his *Hamlet* shortly after its opening in 1911. Tsukiji had its own so-called 'little' theatre (just off the Ginza), and had in fact recently moved to a new, but similarly diminutive venue just down the road equipped with proper heating for the winter and ventilation for summer, but went to the Imperial Theatre because it had a revolving theatre which was required for an ambitious set by their designer Yoshida Kenkichi. It was a major financial undertaking, directed by three of the biggest names in the modern theatre, Osanai Kaoru, Hijikata Yoshi and Aoyama Sugisaku, and accompanied by the famous Mendelssohn suite played by the Shin Nihon Kōkyō Gakudan, then Japan's most prestigious orchestra.

Tsukiji and the Imperial Theatre published their own monthly periodicals, both of which carried lengthy features on this new play. Given the interest in European rather than strictly British drama during the Taishō period, it is perhaps not surprising that in his article Osanai should refer to the 1905 production by Max Reinhardt and the original 1843 production by Ludwig Tieck for which the Mendelssohn overture was performed for the first time for King Friedrich-Wilhelm IV, although it is clear that Osanai preferred the magic of Mendelssohn to the darkness of Reinhardt.<sup>21)</sup> He agrees with William Hazlitt "that people who love poetry will not be satisfied",<sup>22)</sup> and insists instead



that the play has to be performed with “a superb spirit”, so that audiences might come away from the theatre feeling that “nothing is impossible” and that *hitoban no yume wo mita*: “tonight I saw a dream”.<sup>23)</sup>

Osanai recognises that this is a play in which nothing is hidden from view: “the poet has shown the miracle of appearance . . . elves, light, shadows, song, all are reality, if unlikely to be experienced again.”<sup>24)</sup> It goes without saying that the *Dream* has been “experienced again” many times on the Japanese stage. Osanai himself died shortly after the production at the age of 47, of illness no doubt exacerbated by his remarkable workload, but Hijikata revived the Tsubouchi *Dream* in 1946, again at the Imperial Theatre. It was one of several Shakespeare productions intended to raise Japanese spirits in the aftermath of defeat in the Asia-Pacific war. The uniqueness of Osanai’s *Dream* is surely the rarity value of the *kōshi* utopia, the public exposure of the private domain.<sup>25)</sup>

In this utopia it is obviously the courtly characters who lose out, and so it is significant that the production came less than two years after the death of the Taishō Emperor (also at age 47), who was known as an eccentric womaniser (if not certifiably mad) and his replacement by the highly strung Hirohito. In another article in the Tsukiji journal, the left-wing playwright Kubo Sakae writes that “Theseus and Hippolyta, Lysander and Demetrius are no more than mechanical puppets, Hermia and Helena mere toys.”<sup>26)</sup> This is the voice of Japanese Romanticism, as Kubo regarded the fairies and mechanicals as the chief focus of interest; the fairies are the result of Shakespeare’s “primitive natural craft”, the mechanicals “part of nature itself”.<sup>27)</sup> Yet it is another critic, Kōri Torahiko, who perhaps gets to the heart of what this play means in its Japanese context when he notes that “character is not traditionally regarded in Japanese drama”, that there is “a need to see everything in terms of conflict”.<sup>28)</sup> Kōri writes of “his pure respect for the way this play depicts feelings.”<sup>29)</sup>

If the play is lacking in feeling, that is because we are lacking in sensibility. [. . .] Words express feelings that already exist in things. Like the pain of a pin prick. words affect the human temperament with their mysterious magic power.<sup>30)</sup>

This is a Shintoite or animist theory of language, and one qualified by the Freudian ideas which were already well known in Japan: language merely articulates a spirit or consciousness that already exists, and has the power to raise that spirit.

### **A satirical Dream**

These comments touch on the general appeal of the play to a 1920s Japanese audience, but it is left to Tsubouchi to map out its specific appeal in his 23-page preface to the 1915 translation. He starts off by trying to date it, crediting the now discredited theory that it was written for an aristocratic marriage and arguing that “its sometimes childish spirit” and dependence on schoolbook rhetoric put it on the early side. In fact, he dates it at 1594, which is not far wrong.<sup>31)</sup> He next con-



siders the inconsistencies in the play's title.<sup>32)</sup> This is "a dream in which summer is seen at its most resplendent",<sup>33)</sup> and Japan has its own equivalent of 'midsummer madness', the *doiyō* or 'dog days' lasting from July 3<sup>rd</sup> to August 11<sup>th</sup>,<sup>34)</sup> which is the period when the 1928 production took place. Tsubouchi comments on the play's logic – it is "a natural comedy"<sup>35)</sup> – and goes on to make some valuable comparisons with traditional, or pre-modern Japanese literature. "The mixing of the fairy world and Greek legend is similar to the mixing of Shinto and Buddhism in the *jōrūrī* puppet drama",<sup>36)</sup> the most sublime example of the *kōshi* utopia to which I have been referring, the mixing of the way of the gods with the ultimate philosophy of life. There are only a handful of sites around Japan where Buddhist temples stood alongside Shinto shrines in the same compound, although the reason why Tsubouchi makes this point is to underline the Englishness of the play. He criticises Granville Barker's Orientalised production of 1914 "for not being English enough",<sup>37)</sup> for the production needs to be English in order to support all the play's other discrepancies.

At the end of his preface, Tsubouchi makes a few pertinent comments on translation.<sup>38)</sup> This is a richly rhetorical play but fortunately there are plentiful equivalents in Japanese, and indeed Tsubouchi chose to translate the mechanicals' speech in *inaka no kotoba* or rural dialect. Yet it is the penultimate and longest section of the preface which is of greatest interest.<sup>39)</sup> Uniquely among all the prefaces he wrote to his translations, Tsubouchi allows Puck to introduce himself in his own words. Puck says: "I mean the same in every language: trouble maker." "I am Nietzsche's 'super-man'". "I am Mephistopheles." "In Japan, we have *okitsunesan*, the fox deity who lures travelers into swamps."<sup>40)</sup> Finally, Tsubouchi admits in his own words that these *kappa* have "a satirical role in Japanese society".<sup>41)</sup> What is remarkable about Tsubouchi's *Dream*, remarkable for such a polarised society as Taishō and early Shōwa Japan, is that the satirists and the satirised are presented in a single vision.

Tsubouchi's need to find a universal voice for Shakespeare, one that embraces both the satirist and the satirised, is typical of his view of Shakespeare as a world writer but also sets him apart from a younger generation of Japanese writers, the modernists and proletarians, for whom literature was necessarily critical and exclusive. Japanese modernism had developed out of dissatisfaction with the discrepancies of the naturalist and realist movements of thirty years previous, and yet Tsubouchi never wholly rejects modernism just as he never fully accepts naturalism and realism. The naturalist and realist positions, their claims to speak from experience, preempt a degree of subjectivity with which Tsubouchi was never comfortable. Rather, Shakespeare's appeal to Tsubouchi is as a cocktail of naturalism and romanticism, realism and fantasy, the literal and figurative, that enables the writer to speak equally to modern Japanese as it does to Tsubouchi's *kabuki* heritage. In a distinctly culinary metaphor, Tsubouchi categorises Shakespeare's plays as a recipe of varying ingredients, noting for example in the preface to his translation of *Antony and Cleopatra* that "Shakespeare is in his element with these demi-gods, writing six parts romanticism

to four parts naturalism".<sup>42)</sup> In an essay published in 1909,<sup>43)</sup> Tsubouchi had criticised the early 18<sup>th</sup> century *kabuki* playwright Chikamatsu Monzaemon for erring on the side of incredibility, being seven parts fantasy to three parts reality compared to Shakespeare's more reasonable balance of six to four.

Shakespeare's sense of moderation appeals to a similarly conservative instinct in Tsubouchi, even though Tsubouchi seems about as interested in imperialism as he was in socialism, barely at all. At the same time as he was translating Shakespeare, he set about introducing the outdoor pageant to his hometown of Atami (a seaside and hot spring resort west of Tokyo) as a dramatic genre in which local people of all ages and abilities could participate and he was contributing to the movement in children's drama, writing plays himself and arguing that children should perform these plays at home for the cultural improvement of their parents. Both these projects were essentially conservative, maintaining and enriching existing social relations rather than usurping them. It is significant that Tsubouchi never apparently foresaw the possibility that tensions within the culture might lead to a displacement of the culture elsewhere, to imperialism, which is probably because he was himself an outsider to the Tokyo establishment. Coming from near Nagoya, the son of a local official of the discredited shogunate, his attraction to Shakespeare is in part a reaction against his natural preference for the literature of old Edo. No doubt Tsubouchi himself was six parts Edo to four parts Shakespeare.

According to the drama critic Asano Tokiichirō,<sup>44)</sup> the 1928 *Dream* was the most successful of Shakespeare productions of that generation, and from the description that emerges, it does seem to have been carried off with a singularity of purpose that was lacking in productions of the tragedies,<sup>45)</sup> as well as making effective use of the available technology. Another reason may have been the contribution of its women. The part of Hermia was played by the 19-year old Yamamoto Yasuei, who became a distinguished actress of the postwar period, and the part of Puck by Murase Sachiko, whose very last performance was as the grandmother in Kurosawa Akira's 1993 film about Nagasaki, *Rhapsody in August* (also starring Richard Gear). In his memoirs, Yoshida Kenkichi notes that by far the most memorable aspect of this production was Murase's performance "overflowing with a vitality" that put even Shakespeare to shame<sup>46)</sup> yet whether it did so or not, the appearance of a woman in this powerful mediatory role must have presented a radical image of women at a time when most were still tied to the Meiji ideal of the obedient housewife. Moreover, actresses such as Murase can only have advanced the intent of Tsubouchi and Osanai to create a private vision in a public space.

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All the references to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are to the Oxford Shakespeare edition, edited by Peter Holland, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

- 1) The first production was an amateur production by the Geijutsu Kyōkai in September 1923, which was directed by the translator's adopted son Tsubouchi Shikō. The significance of the 1928 production discussed in this article is its greater scale and the involvement of the guiding force in prewar modern Japanese drama, the Tsukiji Little Theatre.
- 2) When the mechanicals meet to rehearse their play for performance at Theseus' marriage, Bottom tells the play's director, Peter Quince, to "say what the play treats / on; then read the names of the actors; and so grow to a / point." (1.2.8–10).
- 3) See Kawachi and Kawato, pp. 163–70 and pp. 194–202, for accounts of this play's reception in Meiji Japan.
- 4) In the first scene Hermia is judged according to the ancient law of Athens for refusing to marry the man chosen by her father, but at the end of the play Theseus revokes the law and allows her to marry Lysander.
- 5) Kitamura, who attempted to reconcile eroticism with Christian love, committed suicide in 1894 aged 26. Shimazaki achieved fame in 1897 with his *Wakanashū*, arguably Japan's first collection of modern poetry, before becoming a novelist.
- 6) See Gerbert for a discussion of private space in Taishō literature.
- 7) Three conflicting accounts are given of the murder of a nobleman so that the reader is left questioning the legitimacy of truth.
- 8) Holland, p. 136.
- 9) Ibid., p. 132.
- 10) Ibid., pp. 230–1.
- 11) Concerned that the appearance of a lion in their play "Pyramus and Thisbe" might alarm the ladies of Theseus' court, the mechanicals write a prologue explaining that the lion is only an actor in disguise.
- 12) Holland, p. 228.
- 13) The 1880s was a period of political liberalism and relative openness to foreign models that gave way to the retrenchment of the 1890s.
- 14) See Powell for an account of this production.
- 15) Tsubouchi's approach to Shakespeare is rooted in his theory of 'hidden ideals' (*botsu risō*), propounded in a literary dispute with Mori Ōgai in the 1890s.
- 16) The production was billed to honour Tsubouchi's achievement.
- 17) Holland, pp. 230–1.
- 18) Tsubouchi, p. 144.
- 19) Ibid.
- 20) Ibid., p. 145.
- 21) Osanai, p. 3. The issue included photographs from the Reinhardt production.
- 22) In 1817, the Romantic critic William Hazlitt wrote an influential review of a contemporary London production, concluding that "The *Midsummer Night's Dream*, when acted, is converted from a delightful fiction into a dull pantomime. [. . .] Poetry and the stage do not agree well together. [. . .] That which was merely an airy shape, a dream, a passing thought, immediately becomes an unmanageable reality."
- 23) Osanai, p. 4.
- 24) Ibid., p. 5.

- 25) The production received further exposure when a studio recording by the cast was broadcast on Japanese radio on the evening of 3<sup>rd</sup> August, 1928.
- 26) Kubo, p. 13.
- 27) Ibid.
- 28) Kōri, p. 25.
- 29) Ibid., p. 26.
- 30) Ibid., p. 27.
- 31) Tsubouchi, p. 4. The play is now dated between mid-1594 and late 1596 but because of the play's references to the bad harvests of those years rather than to aristocratic marriages.
- 32) Midsummer was traditionally on June 21<sup>st</sup> and yet the events of the play clearly take place on the eve of May Day, when by tradition young lovers would escape to the woods for a night of merrymaking. There is also a reference to St Valentine's Day on February 14<sup>th</sup>. The discrepancy adds to the play's ephemerality, a point which Tsubouchi tried to replicate by translating the title exactly as *manatsu no yo no yume*, rather than as *natsu no yo no yume* ('A summer night's dream') as in later translations.
- 33) Tsubouchi, p. 7.
- 34) Ibid., p. 9.
- 35) Ibid., p. 10.
- 36) Ibid., pp. 11 2.
- 37) Ibid., pp. 22 3.
- 38) Ibid., pp. 14 21. "Pakku-kun no jijoden" ('Puck's life story').
- 39) Ibid., p. 14.
- 40) Ibid., p. 20.
- 41) Ibid., p. 21. There was much interest in native folklore at this time, for example the ethnological studies of Yanagita Kunio and then in 1927 with the publication of Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's *Kappa*, actually a stringent satire on modern Japanese society set in the mythical world of *kappa*. *Kappa* were green goblins who were believed to lead solitary travellers to their deaths in swamps and marshes.
- 42) Waseda University Press, 1915, p. 10.
- 43) Tsubouchi Shōyō, "Chikamatsu tai Shēkusupiya tai Ipusen" ('Chikamatsu, Shakespeare and Ibsen'), in Shōyō Kyōkai, ed., *Shōyō senshū X* ('Selected works of Tsubouchi Shōyō', vol. 10), pp. 769 813.
- 44) Asano could never forget Usuda Kenji as Snout surrounded by the other mechanicals in the bergo-mask at the end of the play. Asano, p. 257.
- 45) Asano felt that the comedies in this period were more successfully produced than the tragedies. Asano, p. 258.
- 46) Yoshida, p. 199.

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