

How Would Juliet Speak in Japanese? :  
The Language of Young Womanhood in  
Japanese Translations of *Romeo and Juliet*

SAKAI Moe

## Abstract

The present paper aims to analyze the relationship between gender and translation in the language of the heroine of William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Translating gender offers a challenge for those who translate between English and Japanese, as the latter is considered a more gender-conscious language than the former; what is generally called *onna kotoba* ("women's language") in Japanese consists of words (including personal pronouns), expressions, and grammatical structures that are strongly associated with femininity. In the various translations of *Romeo and Juliet*, it has been noted that the language of Juliet, the female protagonist, has been translated into a language that is too "feminine," overlooking the more complex and multidimensional nature of her character in the source text. Matsuoka Kazuko, the first woman translator of the play to have her translation used in stage productions, claims that she tried to avoid the overuse of the women's language when translating Juliet's speech, opting instead for a more gender-neutral style.

Contrary to the social and cultural climate of early modern England, which generally regarded silent or quiet women as virtuous and preferable to talkative ones, the role of Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* is characterized by extreme linguistic competence. She speaks almost as much as Romeo and is entrusted with multiple soliloquies throughout the play. On the other hand, Japanese translations of Juliet's language since the Meiji period have had the tendency to reduce her role to that of a well-born and demure young lady. This could have been caused by multiple factors, such as the Japanese tendency to see the play not as a tragedy but as a lyrical poem of love, the influence of the character-centered Shakespeare criticism imported from Victorian England, and the fact that the Japanese translators of Shakespeare have been overwhelmingly male. Comparison of Juliet's language in the source language and translations reveals that Matsuoka's translation stands out as the most gender-conscious; it also shows that the uncritical overuse of *onna kotoba* when translating Juliet's language is inappropriate both in terms of the translation's relationship to the source text and in terms of its role in the target culture. A gender-conscious approach to translating *Romeo and Juliet* enables the target text to represent not only the multidimensionality of Juliet's character but also the richness and variety of

female discourse, which goes beyond the boundaries of *onna kotoba* as an ideology of femininity.

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Matsuoka Kazuko (1942-), who is now very likely to become the first woman to translate all of Shakespeare's dramatic works into Japanese<sup>1</sup>, has stated that one of her main objectives when translating Shakespeare is to "get the women's language right" (my trans., Matsuoka, *Reading into Shakespeare*, 150). She recalls that she became aware of this responsibility when she was translating *Romeo and Juliet*; reviewing preceding translations, she finds that Juliet's language has been translated into a language that is "too polite and lady-like" (my trans., Matsuoka, "Translation," 214), which she suspects to be a result of the fact that the Japanese translators of the play have been overwhelmingly male. As a woman translating Shakespeare, she has been careful to "translate the words of his female characters sympathetically into the language of modern women, without making them too feminine through the uses of feminine suffixes and so on" (my trans., Matsuoka, "Shakespeare Seen through Translation," 214).

In fact, one element that strongly characterizes Matsuoka's translation of Shakespeare is the "women's language" (*onna kotoba*) or rather, the lack thereof; Shakespeare's female characters in Matsuoka's translations speak a markedly more neutral language than those of her predecessors or contemporaries, and the translator herself has admitted a number of times that her choice of the neutral language is a conscious attempt to do justice to her role as a woman translator. The question of gender often poses challenges to those who translate between English and Japanese, as Japanese is generally considered a more "gender-conscious" language than English (Kishi 76). In modern Japanese, certain words (including personal pronouns), expressions, and grammatical structures such as the use of verb suffixes are strongly associated with femininity. These linguistic elements make up what is

generally called the “women’s language” (*onna kotoba*), the overuse of which in fiction is often criticized from a realistic / naturalistic point of view (i.e. “No one talks like that anymore!”) as well as a feminist one. Indeed, *onna kotoba* is so different from the actual discourse of Japanese-speaking women that it can even be considered a kind of *yakuwarigo* [role language], a “virtual” or artificial language associated with certain character types or social groups<sup>2</sup>. *Yakuwarigo* plays an important role in literature, both original and translated, as it becomes a shorthand for character types, which may help the readers enjoy the fictional world and its characters by providing a framework for understanding them, while also possibly hindering their understanding by smoothing over individuality and creating prejudices (Chinami 74). *Onna kotoba* as a socially and culturally constructed language shares both the convenience and dangers of *yakuwarigo*, as it can be used to effectively articulate femininity while also possibly creating gender stereotypes.

The relationship between translation and gender has been, in fact, an important issue since the Meiji period, when Japanese translators started to work with Western literature after a long period of political and cultural isolation. In an essay published in 1933, Tsubouchi Shōyō recalls discussing with Futabatei Shimei in as early as 1886 “the pros and cons of the vernacular style” (trans. by Levy, 48). Futabatei showed Tsubouchi a scene from Gogol he had translated from Russian, in which a middle-class couple is debating; this became the subject of intense discussion. Futabatei’s translation was “in a rough style [...] without any honorifics on either side”; when Tsubouchi pointed out that the translation “does not sound middle-class,” Futabatei answered: “No, but the spouses in foreign countries are equals; therefore, if I don’t translate

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it this way, it would be far from the actuality.” Tsubouchi looks back from fifty years later:

Back then, the language of the middle class and above, especially of ladies, was full of honorifics and no use at all in translations. There were obstacles and difficulties that our writers, who are used to hearing and using the language of the female students [*jogakusei kotoba*], or rather, the modern women’s language [*onna kotoba*], could hardly even imagine. O how fortunate are our present-day writers! (my trans., Tsubouchi 418-19)

It is significant to note that, in “the absence of an even remotely gender-neutral conversational language in middle- and upper-class Tokyo Japanese, a situation that continues in a less extreme form to the present day” (Levy 48), Futabatei in 1886 chose to preserve the equal relationship between a man and his wife rather than the markers of their middle-class social status, reflecting “an acute sensitivity to gender differences *between* cultures”(48). It is also significant that Tsubouchi recalls the lack of “women’s language” available for use in translation in 1886, as opposed to the “present-day” (i.e. 1933) situation in which the writers can utilize *jogakusei kotoba* and *onna kotoba* as convenient linguistic resources for translating the language of Western women. As Tsubouchi observes, somewhere between 1886 and 1933 modern “women’s language” or *onna kotoba* emerged and was popularized among the Japanese speakers enough to be considered a useable linguistic resource. The discussion between the two great men of letters in Meiji Japan, both translators as well as writers, is also indicative of the fact

that translation played a major role in establishing *onna kotoba* as a cultural signifier for modern, Western, or “Westernesque” (Levy 4-7) women.

*Onna kotoba* as a linguistic resource, however, has become an increasingly problematic one since the Meiji era. Nakamura Momoko, one of the leading scholars in the study of Japanese women’s language, asserts that what began as a way for Meiji female students to form their own distinctive identity was later appropriated for the nationalization of Japanese womanhood, thus becoming in effect an ideology of femininity:

What the ideology of *onna kotoba* suppresses is not the *freedom* of women to open their mouths and speak. Rather, *onna kotoba* as a linguistic resource enables not only women but also various other speakers to articulate feminine qualities using that language. However, a linguistic ideology is structured in such a way that the speaker will voluntarily choose to speak in a certain way. [...] As *onna kotoba* became related to modesty and femininity, any woman, at any given time, became liable to be judged for her degree of femininity based on her linguistic habits. Thus, when a sexually harassed woman says, “*Nani sunda, konoyaro* [What are you doing, you bastard],” it will be the victimized woman and not her harasser whose character will be called into question. What determines feminine discourse here is the combination of a linguistic ideology (i.e. *onna kotoba*) and a gender ideology (femininity). (my trans., Nakamura, *Onna Kotoba ha Tsukurareru*, 321)

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According to Nakamura, one way to fight this linguistic/gender ideology of *onna kotoba* is to “keep emphasizing that the actual discourse of women is so rich that it overflows the categorical boundaries of *onna kotoba*” (*Onna Kotoba ha Tsukurareru*, 321-22). This richness and variety of the female speech, rather than unthinking overuse of *onna kotoba* or total elimination of it, can be a goal that a present-day translator working with Japanese may strive to attain in their work.

Acutely conscious of her own status as the first major female translator of Shakespeare, Matsuoka, as previously mentioned, is a translator aware of the dangers of *onna kotoba* as an ideology. She recalls that she became especially aware of this issue when she was translating *Romeo and Juliet* because it was a play about the younger generation, whose speech is more gender-neutral (Matsuoka, “Translation” 214); her translation of the play uses less *onna kotoba* than most of the earlier translations, and the characterization of Juliet and her relationship with other characters, especially her chosen partner Romeo, can be seen in a new light as a result. Thus the present paper is an attempt to analyse how the consciousness of gender can influence a Japanese translation of the play; with a special focus on the language of the heroine of the play, my aim is to consider the multifarious relationships between the ways in which Juliet speaks in Shakespeare’s source text, the ways in which she speaks in Japanese translations, and the ways in which young women speak (and are thought to speak) in the contexts of the target culture.

### **How Does Juliet Speak?: Women’s Language in Shakespeare**

The emphasis on the more gender-conscious nature of the modern Japanese language in this paper does not preclude the existence of a

women's language in English. In her seminal study of the women's language *Language and Woman's Place* (1975), linguist Robin Lakoff argues that modern women's language in English is symptomatic of women's subservient position in society, which can be observed "in the choice and frequency of lexical items; in the situations in which certain syntactic rules are performed; in intonational and other supersegmental patterns" (43). Lakoff, however, asserts that "there is no syntactic rule in English that only women may use" (47), which marks a great difference from Japanese. She argues that by choosing less forceful words and rising intonation, strategies employed by many English-speaking women, their language is made to sound "much more 'polite' than men's" and explains that "politeness involves an absence of a strong statement, and women's speech is devised to prevent the expression of strong statements" (50-51). For Lakoff, women's language in English is reflective of their weaker positions in modern society, where they are expected to be deferential to men.

Lakoff's argument that society defines how women are expected to speak seems to apply not only to the present but also to the past. Female speech was also one of the central concerns for Elizabethan dramatists as it was closely tied to the question of women's social and sexual agency. However, as Philip C. Kolin has noted in his introduction to *The Feminist Companion to Shakespeare*, "studies of women's distinctive language have focused on women's silence" (42). It has been established through the works of feminist scholarship that Shakespeare's contemporaries regarded silent women virtuous and preferable to talkative ones, who were considered shrewish and therefore undesirable, because they often saw women's tongues as dangerous and possibly subversive. On the other hand, the question of what women say or how

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they say it has not received as much attention as the question of whether they speak at all.

Despite the preference for silent women in early modern society, female characters did exist on stage and were given lines to speak. Douglas Bruster, who sees the theatrical “women’s language” in early modern drama as related to “certain assumptions regarding the gendered nature of speech, assumptions which often found expression in linguistic differences between female and male roles in Renaissance drama” (239), summarizes its characteristics as follows: 1) “female characters less frequently initiate dialogue, and likewise less frequently engage in certain kinds of powerful speech activities like *descriptio*”; 2) “they are more likely than male characters to employ pathopoetic utterances (such as ‘Alas!’ and ‘Ay me!’) traditionally connected with weakness”; 3) “they remain on the whole more reluctant to swear, and use milder oaths when they do”; 4) “they enjoy less metrical freedom than male characters”; 5) “they usually speak less than their male counterparts of equal social status” (239). In other words, the general tendencies of female characters’ speech on the early modern stage seem to conform to the societal expectations that women should be as quiet and unimposing as possible.

In contrast to the general social and cultural climate of the time, which clearly favoured quiet or silent women as the feminine ideal, it may be said that the role of Juliet is characterized by extreme verbal competence. Entrusted with 17.8% of all the speaking lines in the play, the role of Juliet is the second largest role in the play; the first is Romeo’s, who takes 19.5% of all the lines. The third most talkative character in the play, Friar Lawrence, falls well behind the couple with 11.4%. Compared with other titular couples – *Antony and Cleopatra* and

*Troilus and Cressida* – the line distribution between Romeo and Juliet is more even: Antony speaks 25.1% of all the lines in the play, which is significantly more than Cleopatra, who has 19.7%; there is an even greater gap between Troilus (15.5%) and Cressida (8.3%).

Analyzing Shakespeare's verse structure to find out if it is related to the individualization of his characters, Marina Tarlinskaja finds that Juliet tends to speak in longer utterances (38.3% of her speaking lines consists of 11 and more lines; 27.0% of 1-4 lines, and 34.7% of 5-10 lines) while Romeo is more prone to speak in medium-length utterances (39.0%) (152). In terms of verse structure, Romeo's lines are less "symmetrical" and rigid than Juliet's, demonstrating that "Romeo's part is definitely more decanonized than Juliet's who speaks in a more rigorous verse, strongly opposed to prose" (162). Tarlinskaja deduces that the characteristics of Juliet's speech point to her "spiritual maturity and willpower," as well as her "ability to think intelligently in highly dramatic circumstances" (162). Hunter and Lichtenfels go so far as to argue that Juliet's use of language would have been considered "masculine" in the social and cultural context of the play, as verbal and rhetorical competence "was supposed to be found and encouraged only in men" in early modern England, although "it is difficult to decide whether the text is self-consciously offering a different 'type' of woman that did not exist, whether it is constructing a woman who was just becoming possible at the time, or whether it is presenting a recognizable type that modern gender relations have obscured," a question further complicated by the fact that the role of Juliet was performed by a boy actor (134-35). Regardless of how Juliet's "masculinity" was perceived by the early modern audience, however, the relationship between Romeo and Juliet clearly offers a "challenge to conventional heterosexuality"

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(135), the fact that can be observed especially in Juliet's language<sup>3</sup>. Juliet's linguistic prowess makes her a more complex character than a mere stereotype of innocent girlhood.

On the other hand, Japanese translations of Juliet's language since the Meiji period have had the tendency to reduce her role to that of a well-born and demure young lady. This, in part, results from the particular ways in which *Romeo and Juliet* has been received in Japan. The following section attempts to briefly describe the history of the play's reception since the Meiji era and analyze the ways in which each translation of the play was born out of negotiation between Shakespeare and the Japanese perception of (especially young) womanhood.

### **How should Juliet speak?: a History of Japanese Translations of *Romeo and Juliet***

While *Romeo and Juliet* has always been popular reading in Japan since the Meiji era, research shows that it was not produced as frequently until the mid-1960s<sup>4</sup> (Sano 40). From the beginning of the Meiji to the pre-WWII era, there were five individual Japanese translations of the play published between 1886 and 1933; however, excluding adaptations, only Tsubouchi's translation of the play was recorded to have been used in actual performances (see Appendix). Most of the other early translations, including the first full Japanese translation of the play by Kawashima Keizo (1886), were not intended for performance. The first recorded performance of *Romeo and Juliet* in Japanese was in fact a modernized adaptation by Osanai Kaoru, set in contemporary Tokyo, which seems to have been received as "a Japanese work, rather than a foreign one" (my trans.; Sano 42)<sup>5</sup>; the criticism on the performance focused on whether the plot and the appearance of the

characters were believable as representing the lives of contemporary Japanese aristocrats. Although Osanai, who adapted the play, later translated *The Merchant of Venice* for Kabukiza and *Othello* for Tsukiji Shogekijo (Sano 42), his theatre company Jiyu Gekijo, which was to become the center of the Shingeki movement, was more interested in the naturalistic drama of such playwrights as Ibsen. None of the Shingeki companies attempted to produce *Romeo and Juliet* until after World War II.

Among the earlier translations, Tsubouchi's work stands out as the only translation not to use the vernacular style, opting for a more traditional style similar to that of bunraku or kabuki. Although Tsubouchi is often considered (rightly) as one of the driving forces for establishing the Shingeki and "reforming" the Japanese theatre, he is also notably different in his attitude towards drama from other Shingeki playwrights and directors, for whom the "reform" of the Japanese theatre was almost synonymous with modernization; for these men of theatre, Shakespeare was not modern enough and therefore unsuitable for their aim to create a new kind of drama in Japan (Levy 211-12). The uniqueness of Tsubouchi as a Meiji man of theatre lies in the fact that he appreciated both Shakespeare and the traditional Japanese theatre for the very reason that they were both not modern.

The early unpopularity of *Romeo and Juliet* on stage can also partly be explained by the fact that Shakespeare was introduced to Japan during the time of the Romantic and character-centered approach in Shakespearean criticism, in which the great tragic heroes with their tragic flaws were seen as the pinnacles of dramatic art. *Romeo and Juliet*, with an extremely young couple as its protagonists, was considered to lack the philosophical depth of plays such as *Hamlet* and

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*King Lear*. A.C. Bradley excluded the play from his famous selections of the four “great” tragedies of Shakespeare on the grounds that “it is an early work, and in some respects an immature one” (20). The Japanese readers, educated in the age of Bradleian character criticism, were unlikely to see *Romeo and Juliet* as one of Shakespeare’s greatest plays.

On the other hand, it was mainly for the quality of Shakespeare’s poetry that the play seems to have been appreciated by the early Japanese readers. Sano notes that in 1910, Kawada Jun, a tanka poet and businessperson, wrote an essay on reading *Romeo and Juliet* (in Tsubouchi’s translation) on a rainy autumn day. While Kawada prefers the double suicide narratives in kabuki to the tragic deaths of Romeo and Juliet, he appreciates the play when read as a “dramatic love poem” (my trans., quoted in Sano 43). Approximately forty years later, Mikami Isao (1907-97), who published the first translation of the play in post-war Japan, expresses a similar sentiment in the introduction to his translated edition; despite “the deep impression like that of an excellent love poem and lyrical poem” due to the “beauty of the strong love not even death can conquer, the love that shines even brighter because of death,” “we [i.e. the readers and/or the audience of the play] feel a kind of dissatisfaction when faced with the tragic deaths of the lovers” because “their deaths are meaningless, like modern deaths caused by traffic accidents” (my trans., Mikami 216). He concludes that “this play is a work that should be appreciated as a love poem rather than as a tragedy” because “as a piece of poetry to celebrate the passion of pure love, *Romeo and Juliet* is without doubt one of the great masterpieces in history” (218). That *Romeo and Juliet* makes up in its poetry what is lacking in its tragic potential seems to be the opinion shared by many of the early Japanese readers, critics, and even translators of the play from

the Meiji era to the early years of postwar Japan. It is no wonder, then, the play was not often selected for performance, if many indeed preferred to read it as a narrative poem of love<sup>6</sup>. Between 1950 and 1960 the play was performed three times at the most (see Appendix).

However, the Japanese reception of *Romeo and Juliet* underwent significant changes in the latter half of the 1960s. The popularity of *Romeo and Juliet* in production rose significantly after 1965, when Fukuda Tsuneari (1912-94) invited Michael Benthall, a former director of the Old Vic theatre in London, to Tokyo to direct the play performed in Fukuda's own Japanese translation. Although Benthall is now not remembered as a particularly innovative director of Shakespeare (Kishi and Bradshaw 45) in the way that Peter Brook was, for example, his work struck the Japanese audiences as something new and different from what they were used to seeing on stage. The reviewers of the production were both surprised and impressed by Benthall's direction that emphasized the speed of the action and his flexible attitude towards Shakespeare's text, which he cut and rearranged to clarify his interpretation of the play (Sano 45-46). It appears from contemporary accounts of the performance that Fukuda's translation strategy and Benthall's direction were a perfect match, resulting in an exciting performance which fulfilled Fukuda's purpose that "his actors as well as the Japanese audience [...] be familiar with the way Shakespeare is produced in his native England" (Kishi and Bradshaw 45).

Also culturally significant is the fact that Fukuda and Benthall's production of *Romeo and Juliet* falls between two famous film adaptations of the play – *West Side Story* (1961) and Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* (1968) –, both of which emphasize the youth of the main characters and, as a result, spoke powerfully to the young

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audiences, becoming part of the emergent “youth culture,” which “was beginning to become a powerful presence in Euro-American culture” (Hunter and Lichtenfels 23). Along with these films, Fukuda and Benthall’s stage version contributed to making the late 1960s a turning point in the Japanese reception of *Romeo and Juliet*; the play then began to be perceived less a “lyrical tragedy of love” (my trans.; Sano 46) than a tragedy of the young people taking action against the older generation and struggling against the suffocating realities of their lives. The audiences of the play now expected to see in Juliet not so much a “well-born” and submissive young lady as an energetic and independent teenager in love, someone they can empathize with as their “contemporary,” to use Jan Kott’s influential terminology.

Fukuda’s translation of the play for Benthall’s production is also unique in its own right. At least some of the “speed” that is mentioned in the reviews is a result of Fukuda’s translation, which can be characterized as performance-oriented: Fukuda was “a very meticulous translator who paid a lot of attention to what can happen when Japanese translations of Shakespeare are used for actual performances” (Kishi and Bradshaw 43). In terms of gender, Fukuda’s translation “sounds more neutral than the Japanese of other translators and so in a way it is closer to Shakespeare’s English” (Kishi and Bradshaw 44). This is not because Fukuda had a particularly feminist intention; his Juliet in the balcony scene, for example, calls Romeo with the honorific *sama*, suggesting that the translator probably did not envision their relationship to be a fundamentally equal one, as Matsuoka would point out thirty years later. However, for the sake of “speed and dynamism” (Kishi and Bradshaw 44) Fukuda omitted most of the personal pronouns and downplayed the differences between male and female speeches,

which resulted in giving his translation a clear-cut and gender-neutral impression.

The translation by Odashima Yuushi (1930-) in the 1970s can be seen as a logical consequence of the changes in the cultural and critical climate in the 60s. His contemporary and vernacular translations and the productions based on them, often described as “Shakespeare in jeans,” greatly popularized Shakespeare and brought him closer to the contemporary Japanese audience. In terms of Shakespeare’s language, Odashima is especially famous for translating his wordplay such as puns so that they may retain their comical energy in Japanese; he “tried to shorten whatever distance there was between Shakespeare and the Japanese,” selecting “vocabulary and expressions which are not too alien to his readers and audiences” (Kishi and Bradshaw 68).

Interestingly, Odashima’s translation has been used by both Shingeki companies and more large-scale productions (see Appendix). As Kishi and Bradshaw point out, “Deguchi Norio always used his translations when he directed Shakespeare with young audiences in mind” (68). Most notably, it was his translation that Ninagawa Yukio chose when he directed *Romeo and Juliet* for the Nissei Theatre in 1974, the production which marks his departure from the more intimate and avant-garde “underground” theatre and debut in the world of the large-scale commercial theatre. Odashima’s translation seems to have dominated the stage from the late 1970s to the early 1990s, while it is also noteworthy that some of the more traditional-minded directors such as Asari Keita and Bando Tamasaburo preferred Fukuda’s translation in this period. Odashima’s translation remains current in the twenty-first century theatre, used alongside the later translations.

From the late twentieth to the early twenty-first century, Matsuoka

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Kazuko and Kawai Shoichiro (1960-) translated *Romeo and Juliet* in 1996 and 2004, respectively. Both translations were products of the “cultural turn” in Shakespeare studies and translation in general in the sense that both translators are aware of their roles in their particular cultural contexts, and that each has a sense of purpose for what she/he wants to achieve by translating Shakespeare<sup>7</sup>. Matsuoka, as we have already seen, aims towards the translation that feels natural to modern Japanese audiences, especially with regards to the language of the female characters. Kawai, on the other hand, focuses on the rhythm of Shakespeare’s language and aims to reproduce the difference between prose and verse, for example, in his translation. Both translations, along with Odashima’s, remain current and are part of a wide variety of translations available to readers, actors and producers of the play.

### **How Does Juliet Speak in Japanese?: Translating Gender in Juliet’s Language**

Between the Meiji era and the early twenty-first century, not only the Japanese perception of *Romeo and Juliet* and of Shakespeare but also the language of Japanese women has undergone many changes. Matsuoka explains the rationale behind her translation of *Romeo and Juliet* as follows:

Perhaps fortunately for me, the Japanese language is increasingly becoming more unisex, especially among the younger generations. I expect that my more “neutral” translation of Shakespeare will not meet much resistance from actors, readers or audiences. I was especially careful with this issue when translating *Romeo and Juliet* because many of the

characters in the play are young people themselves. (my trans.,  
Matsuoka, “Shakespeare Seen through Translation” 214)

As Matsuoka states, compared to her predecessors’ works, her translation of *Romeo and Juliet* is more gender-neutral, using less *onna kotoba* than most of the other translations. The overuse of *onna kotoba* for translating Juliet’s language would result in reducing her role to a stereotype of conventional girlhood, when Shakespeare, as we have seen, depicts her as a more complex and multidimensional character.

As discussed earlier, one of the characteristics of Juliet’s language is that she tends to speak in long utterances such as soliloquies. Juliet has multiple soliloquies scattered throughout the play – in 2.2 (the balcony scene), 2.5 (when she waits for the return of her Nurse), 3.2 (when she anticipates the consummation of her marriage), and 4.3 (before she drinks the poison) –, which testifies to the confidence that the playwright placed on both the role and the actor. How a translator translates each of these soliloquies reveals much about how he/she perceives Juliet. Here we will focus on the soliloquy in 3.2, which is especially effective to see the complexity of Juliet’s role.

*Romeo and Juliet* is often considered an archetypal love story because of “its celebration of personal desire” (Davis 38); although the play “invents neither tragic nor personal notions of desire” but reinforces these ideas inherent in its direct source, Brooke, it “also develops and sharpens the connections among desire, the personal and the tragic” (Davis 43). In Juliet’s soliloquy in 3.2, in which she eagerly anticipates the consummation of her marriage to Romeo, she expresses her desire not only in an emotional but also in a physical sense. The soliloquy as a whole may be characterized as an epithalamium in the classical

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tradition (McCown 150-70). However, Shakespeare's point of departure from his classical sources is that he gives the epithalamium not to Romeo, the bridegroom by whom an epithalamium is usually spoken, but to Juliet, the bride who is expected "to weep profusely to demonstrate her modesty" (McCown 165) in the classical tradition. Contrary to what is expected of a bride in the conventions of the epithalamium, Juliet makes it clear that she, too, has desire, not only in the emotional but also in the sexual sense. While McCown hastens to add that the character as a whole is not to be judged as immodest, for "the shock of her admission of passionate love is carefully counter-poised with earlier expressions of maidenly modesty" (166), it should not be overlooked that Juliet fluently expresses her desire through her language.

As Bly notes, "Juliet's erotic epithalamium has distressed many critics, particularly those from the nineteenth century" (69), and this attitude seems to be shared by many of the Japanese translators. The word "unmanned" on line 14 is especially interesting in relation to translation. The word has a double meaning: in the literal sense, "unmanned" means not yet touched by a man; in a metaphorical sense, it is part of Juliet's conceit to compare herself to an untamed hawk. The difficulty in translating puns forces translators to prioritize one meaning over the other. Matsuoka points out that many of her (mostly male) predecessors have opted for prioritizing the metaphorical over the literal because they shy away from making Juliet use a direct expression of sexuality (Matsuoka, "Translation," 214-15): the word 「うぶな」 (literally, "naïve") is the usual choice for "unmanned," used by Tsubouchi, Mikami, Fukuda, and Odashima, with words and phrases such as 「羽ばたく」 ("fluttering," Tsubouchi, Fukuda and Odashima)

and 「人慣れぬ鷹のように」 (“like an untamed hawk,” Odashima) supplementing the metaphorical image of hunting. Matsuoka herself translates “unmanned blood” more literally as 「男を知らない血」 (“the blood that knows no man”). The translation of this soliloquy offers a challenge to Japanese translators as it forces them to come to terms with Juliet’s desire and sexuality; accepting this challenge results in a more accurate translation which reflects the depth and multidimensionality of Juliet’s role in the source text.

In addition to the soliloquies, Juliet’s character is also verbally expressed in relations to other characters, especially to Romeo. In Japanese, pronouns for both first and second persons depend on both the speaker’s identity (gender, age, origin, occupation etc.) and his/her relationship to the addressee. In 1.5, Juliet meets Romeo at a masked ball without any knowledge of his identity. Immediately attracted to each other, the couple shares their first kiss at the end of the fourteen-line exchange:

- ROMEO. If I profane with my unwortheist hand  
 This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this,  
 My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand  
 To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.
- JULIET. Good pilgrim, *you* do wrong *your* hands too much,  
 Which mannerly devotion shows in this,  
 For saints have hands that pilgrims’ hands do touch,  
 And palm to palm is holy palmers’ kiss.
- ROMEO. Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?
- JULIET. Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.
- ROMEO. O then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do:

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They pray, grant *thou*, lest faith turn to despair.

JULIET. Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.

ROMEO. Then move not while my prayer's effect I take.

Thus from my lips, by *thine*, my sin is purged.

JULIET. Then have my lips the sin that they have took.

ROMEO. Sin from my lips? O trespass sweetly urged!

Give me my sin again.

JULIET. *You* kiss by th'book. (1.5.92-109, emphases mine)

Their first conversation in this scene is formal and polite, with Juliet using the second-person pronoun “you” to refer to Romeo<sup>8</sup>. However, two scenes later, in the so-called balcony scene (2.2), it can be observed that Juliet has switched from “you” to “thou” both in her soliloquy (“O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art *thou* Romeo?” line 33) and in conversation with Romeo, showing that she now harbors a more intimate feeling towards him; as is often noted, she is the one who proposes marriage in this scene:

Three words, dear Romeo, and good night indeed.

If that *thy* bent of love be honourable,

*Thy* purpose marriage, send me word tomorrow,

By one that I'll procure to come to *thee*,

Where and what time *thou* wilt perform the rite,

And all my fortunes at *thy* foot I'll lay,

And follow *thee* my lord throughout the world. (2.2.142-48, emphases mine)

On the other hand, it is interesting that many Japanese translators

make this shift from the polite to the intimate take place much later in the play. In Act 3, scene 5, Romeo and Juliet have consummated their marriage after being married in a secret ceremony; between the wedding and their first night together, however, Romeo has killed Juliet's cousin Tybalt in a brawl and been sentenced to exile. In this scene, Juliet tries to persuade her husband to stay a little longer before leaving the city:

Wilt *thou* be gone? It is not yet near day:  
 It was the nightingale, and not the lark,  
 That pierced the fearful hollow of *thine* ear;  
 Nightly she sings on yond pomegranate tree.  
 Believe me, love, it was the nightingale. (3.5.1-5, emphases mine)

Kishi and Bradshaw outline the changes in Juliet's language as follows: in Act 1, scene 5 "they [Romeo and Juliet] are expected to speak and do speak formally, using polite verb suffixes" (75) because they have just met without knowing who they are; in Act 2, scene 2, formal and polite expressions are retained in the Japanese translation even though in the source text Juliet shifts from "you" to "thou" at this point, for "[a] shift to familiar verb suffixes at this stage would no doubt make them sound less than well-bred and alienate them from the Japanese audience" (75). However, in most translations Juliet seems to shift to a more familiar and intimate language in 3.5, after the newly married couple have consummated their marriage: "Even in Japanese, which in terms of ethical standards can be more prudish than English, it would be ridiculous for Romeo and Juliet to retain the polite style of speaking" (75) at this point when they are fully man and wife.

Figure 1: Translations of Juliet's lines addressed to Romeo in 1.5, 2.2, and 3.5

ST	“Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hands too much” (1.5.96)	“Three words, dear Romeo, and good night indeed. / If that thy bent of love be honourable, / Thy purpose marriage” (2.2.143-44)	“Wilt thou be gone? It is not yet near day” (3.5.1)
Tsubouchi (1933)	巡禮どの、(中略) 其様におっしゃって は、其お手に甚 い氣の毒	ロミオどの、もう三言だけ、それで今宵 は別れませう。これ、お前の心には 虚偽がなく、まこと夫婦にならう氣なら	い な 去うとや? 夜 はまだ明きやせ ぬのに
Mikami (1954)	巡礼さま、それ はお手があんまり かわいそう	ロミオさま、もうあとひと言だけ、それで ほんとうにさようならよ。／あなたの愛 のお気持ちが純粋で、／結婚がもとも とのお望みなら	もういらっしゃる の? まだ夜明け には間がありま すわ
Fukuda (1964)	巡礼のお方、それ はそのお手に対し て余りにすぎない お仕打ち	もう一言、ロミオ様、それだけ申し上げた ら本当に別れします。もしそのお気 持に偽りなく、結婚して下さいお積りなら	もうお帰りになる の? まだ朝には ならない
Odashima (1983)	巡礼様 その手に あまり ひどすぎる お仕打ち	ほんの一言で、ロミオ、今度こそお別 れします。／もしあなたの愛のお気持 がまことのものであり、結婚ということ を考えてくださるなら	もういらっしゃる の? 朝はまだ まだこなくてよ
Matsuoka (1996)	巡礼様、そうおっ しゃってはあなた の手がかわいそう	ロミオ、ほんの三言だけ、それで本当 におやすみ。／あなたの愛に偽りがな く／結婚を考えているのなら	もう行ってしま うの? まだ朝じゃ ないわ
Kawai (2004)	巡礼さん、それ はお手がかわいそ う	ほんの一言、ロミオ。そしたら本当に おやすみなさい。／もし、あなたの愛 が名誉を重んじるものであり、／結婚 を考えてくださるのなら	もう行ってしま うの? まだ夜は明 けていないわ

Comparing the translations of the three scenes in question (see Figure 1), it can be observed that most translations seem to subscribe to the pattern outlined by Kishi and Bradshaw, while Matsuoka's stands out as almost the only one that does not. Tsubouchi's translation, written not in the vernacular but in the language of the traditional Japanese theatre, as mentioned earlier, demonstrates a clear change between 2.2 and 3.5. In the three translations from the Showa era –

Mikami, Fukuda and Odashima – Juliet’s language still sounds rather formal and very feminine in 3.5, but it is subtly more familiar than her language in the balcony scene, where she speaks in a very formal tone as befits a young lady of high social status. Considering that the translations come from different historical moments, it is important to note that the actual discourse of Japanese women itself has undergone many changes in the years during the hundred-and-odd years from Tsubouchi to Matsuoka. In the research conducted in the 1990s, it was shown that the speaking habits of younger Japanese women, aged then between their late teens and early twenties, were “much less feminine than the styles of older women” (Okamoto 307) and that the young women only used *onna kotoba* when quoting the older generation such as their mothers or teachers (304). Juliet after marriage in the Showa translations still uses feminine honorifics such as 「いらっしやるの」 and 「お帰りになるの」 for “Wilt thou be gone?,” which seems reflective of how Japanese wives in the Showa era spoke to their husbands – or how they were thought to speak by men.

In Matsuoka’s translation, on the other hand, the shift from the polite to the familiar occurs between 1.5 and 2.2, which is a departure from the previous translations but in fact closer to Shakespeare’s source text. Matsuoka pays close attention to the difference between “thou” and “you” in the original text and tries to retain this difference as much as possible. In addition to being more accurate, Matsuoka’s translation is also more in keeping with the contemporary view of the play and its protagonists, which places less emphasis on the lovers’ “well-bred” social status than on their youth and independence, as discussed above.

Another feature of Matsuoka’s translation is its flexibility; she keeps revising her translations in rehearsals, even after the text is published

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(Komori, in Matsuoka, *Reading* 321). For example, she revised her translation of one of Juliet's lines in the balcony scene four years after its publication. The original translation for "thy purpose marriage" (2.2.142) was 「結婚を考えてくださるなら」 (literally, "if you would be so kind as to consider marrying me") in 1994. Matsuoka later explains that she was still under the influence of her predecessors at this point, although she was already aware of the fact that the relationship between Romeo and Juliet should be more equal in the balcony scene (Matsuoka, *Reading* 146); four years after the publication of her translation, when she was rehearsing the play with Ninagawa, she realized that she had made a mistake:

Still early in the rehearsals, I realized my mistake when I saw Aiko-san [actor Sato Aiko] standing. In a nutshell, it was that the phrase "if you would be so kind as to" simply did not suit her. Aiko-san is so dramatically tall and dignified, as you know, a typically "handsome" woman. When I was watching her on the balcony saying "if you would be so kind as to consider marrying me," it didn't suit her at all. Not only did it not suit her, but [...] Juliet is not deferential to Romeo in the original play, either; so there was nothing I could do but to revise my translation. (Matsuoka, *Reading* 146-48)

By looking at the character of Juliet being embodied in the person of the young Japanese actor, Matsuoka realized that she had made the same error as her predecessors by making Juliet's language more "feminine" and subservient than neutral. Her former translation was not only inconsistent with Juliet's character but also inaccurate because in the

source text Shakespeare does not make Juliet speak deferentially towards Romeo. Matsuoka, then, confessed to Ninagawa that she had made a mistake; she came up with several alternatives and ultimately asked Sato to choose one. Hence, the new translation of the line became the more neutral 「結婚を考えているのなら」(literally, “if you are thinking of marriage”).

This episode shows not only that Matsuoka is a collaborative translator ready to take hints from the directors and actors she works with but also that translating for theatre is inevitably connected to the question of embodiment. Dramatic roles are created to be performed through the concrete and individual bodies of the actors, rooted in the time and the space of the performance. Research has shown that Shakespeare wrote specifically for the actors in his company; when his plays are translated, the text is spoken not only in a different language but also by a completely different group of actors with their own social and cultural contexts. When Matsuoka says she aims to make the language of Shakespeare’s women more “natural” and “up-to-date,” she envisions her translation being spoken and embodied by contemporary Japanese women, whose more neutral speech reflects their positions in society, where they are more equal to their male counterparts compared to the women of previous generations. Thus, Matsuoka as a gender-conscious translator is thinking both in terms of the translation’s relationship to the source text and in terms of its role in the target culture; making Juliet’s language too “feminine” and deferential through the uncritical overuse of *onna kotoba* is inappropriate in both senses.

Nakamura points out that *onna kotoba* as a linguistic resource continues – and will probably continue – to be used in translations while

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the actual speaking habits of Japanese women have become increasingly neutral; she notes that in the Japanese subtitles of more recent films, *onna kotoba* is used to denote not only conventional femininity, characterized by deference and lack of strong statements, but also other traits such as toughness, assertiveness and even aggressiveness in female characters (*Translation*, 167-89). This expansion of what *onna kotoba* signifies in translation may be a reason that even a self-professedly gender-conscious translator like Matsuoka does not eliminate *onna kotoba* altogether from her translation of Juliet's language. However, as we have seen, her translation pays attention to the elements of Juliet's language that do not fit into the "feminine" stereotypes that have been unduly assigned to the character. Matsuoka's translation offers one possible answer to the question of how women's language can be translated in such a way as to reflect the variety and richness of female discourse.

Appendix: Translations and Productions of *Romeo and Juliet* in Japan

\*Excluding ballet and musical adaptations, student and other non-professional productions  
 Bold = published translations

1886	『春情浮世の夢』	河島敬蔵訳	耕文舎
1904	伊井容峰一座	小山内薫翻案	
1905	『ロメオ エンド ヂュリエット』	戸沢姑射訳	大日本図書
1910	『ロミオとヂュリエット』	坪内逍遙訳	早稲田大学出版部
1914	芸術クラブ?	坪内逍遙訳	* 初の上演
1915	『ロミオとジュリエット』	久米正雄訳	新潮社
1918	文芸座	坪内逍遙訳	
1933	『ロミオとジュリエット』	本多顕彰	小山書店
1933	『ローミオとジュリエット』	横山有策訳	新潮文庫

1949	『ロミオとジュリエット』	竹友藻風訳	大阪文庫
1950	宝塚歌劇星組	?	堀正旗改修演出、帝国劇場4月
1950	前進座	三神勲訳	土方与志演出、共立講堂5月
1951	『ロミオとジュリエット』	中野好夫訳	新潮文庫
1954	『ロミオとジュリエット』	三神勲訳	角川文庫
1960	舞芸座	三神勲訳	山川幸世・瓜生正美演出、俳優座劇場7月
1964	『ロミオとジュリエット』	福田恆存訳	新潮社
1965	雲	福田恆存訳	マイケル・ベントール演出、サンケイホール4月
1965	新劇会	三神勲訳	風間草演出
1966	『ロミオとジュリエット』	大山敏子訳	旺文社文庫
1970	雲	福田恆存訳	荒川哲生演出(M・ベントール演出による)朝日生命ホール、日経ホール9月~10月
1971	青年劇場	三神勲訳	瓜生正美演出、日本青年館ホール9月~10月
1972	文学座	小田島雄志訳	木村光一演出、文学座アトリエ
1973	『ロミオとジュリエット』	小田島雄志訳	『シェイクスピア全集1』白水社(のちに白水社Uボックス)
1974	東宝	小田島雄志訳	蛭川幸雄演出、日生劇場
1975	シェイクスピア・シアター	小田島雄志訳	出口典雄演出、ジャン・ジャン
1978	『ロミオとジュリエット』	木下順二訳	講談社
1979	宝塚歌劇星組	小田島雄志訳	柴田侑宏脚本・演出、宝塚バウホール1月
1979	宝塚歌劇月組	小田島雄志訳	柴田侑宏脚本・演出、宝塚バウホール4月
1979	東宝	小田島雄志訳	蛭川幸雄演出、帝国劇場8月
1979	『ロミオとジュリエット』	平井正穂訳	岩波文庫
1981	俳優座	小田島雄志訳	増見利清演出、俳優座劇場、東横劇場1月
1981	三越ロイヤル・シアター	小田島雄志訳	木村光一演出、三越ロイヤル・シアター10月
1983	東宝『ロミオとジュリエット'83』	小田島雄志訳	マイケル・ボグダノフ演出、帝国劇場6月
1984	板橋演劇センター	小田島雄志訳	遠藤栄蔵演出、板橋演劇センター

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1986	松竹	福田恆存訳	坂東玉三郎演出、サンシャイン劇場 9月
1986	四季	福田恆存訳	浅利慶太演出、青山劇場 11月
1988	松竹	福田恆存訳	坂東玉三郎演出、サンシャイン劇場 9月
1988	昴	福田恆存訳	村田元史・福田逸演出、東京グローブ座 11月
1990	宝塚歌劇月組	小田島雄志訳	柴田侑宏脚本・演出、宝塚バウホール 4月
1992	グローブ座カンパニー	小田島雄志訳	西川信廣演出、パナソニック・グローブ座 6月
1994	グローブ座カンパニー	松岡和子訳	ジョン・レタラック演出 パナソニック・グローブ座 1994年11月12-26日／盛岡劇場 1994年11月30日-12月1日／横浜ランドマークホール 1994年12月6-9日
1995	東京グローブ座 (子供のためのシェイクスピア)	松岡和子訳	加納幸和演出、パナソニック・グローブ座 7月27日-8月8日
1996	『ロミオとジュリエット』	松岡和子訳	ちくま文庫
1996	地人会	小田島雄志訳	木村光一演出
1998	劇団俳優座	松岡和子訳	宮崎真子演出、俳優座劇場 1998年1月8-18日
1998	シアターコクーン／ Bunkamura	小田島雄志訳	ノン・パディーリヤ演出、シアターコクーン 1998年1月9-25日
1998	彩の国シェイクスピア・ カンパニー	松岡和子訳	蜷川幸雄演出 彩の国さいたま芸術劇場大ホール 1月21日-2月1日／愛知厚生年金会館 2月5日-7日／シアター・ドラマシティ／2月13-22日／オーバード・ホール(富山)／2月25-26日
2004	東京グローブ座	河合祥一郎訳	鴻上尚史演出、東京グローブ座 1月15日-2月7日
2004	『新訳 ロミオとジュリエット』	河合祥一郎訳	角川文庫
2004-5	ホリプロ	松岡和子訳	蜷川幸雄演出 日生劇場 2004年12月4-28日／2005年1月7日-2月25日まで地方公演
2007	スタジオライブ	松岡和子訳	倉田淳演出、紀伊國屋ホール 5月21-28日
2008	調布市せんがわ劇場	小田島雄志訳	宮崎真子演出、調布市せんがわ劇場 8月9日-17日

2008	Maidenagoya production	小田島雄志訳	マイケル・ウォーカー演出、アトリエフォンテーヌ 12月6-7日* 「バイリンガル劇」
2009	劇団ひまわり	小田島雄志訳	ギー・ホーランド、石川豊演出 シアター代官山 9月12-13日
2012	ネルケプランニング 『ロミオ&ジュリエット』	松岡和子訳	ジョナサン・マンビイ演出、青木豪脚本 5月2-27日 赤坂ACTシアター (4月29日-5月1日プレビュー公演 / 5月31日-6月1日イオン化粧品シアター BRAVA!)
2012	静岡芸術劇場	河合祥一郎訳	オマール・ポラス演出、静岡芸術劇場 11月24-12月9日
2013	新宿梁山泊	小田島雄志訳	金守珍演出、芝居砦満天星 2月16-24日
2014	ホリプロ	松岡和子訳	蛭川幸雄演出、彩の国さいたま芸術劇場小ホール 8月7日-24日
2015	子供のためのシェイクスピア	小田島雄志訳	山崎清介演出、あうるすぽっと 7月16-21日
2016	東京芸術劇場	松岡和子訳	藤田貴大演出、東京芸術劇場プレイハウス 12月10-21日
2018	M&Oplays	松岡和子訳	宮藤官九郎演出 本多劇場 2018年11月20日-12月16日 / りゅーとびあ新潟市民芸術文化会館 12月19日 / サンケイホールブリーゼ 12月22-24日 / 刈谷市総合文化センター大ホール 12月26-27日

<sup>1</sup> As of today, Matsuoka has already translated and published thirty-one of Shakespeare's plays, leaving only six more to be translated. The Sainokuni Shakespeare Series website states that the series will include 37 plays, probably indicating their intention to produce the 36 plays included in the First Folio and *Pericles*. <https://saf.or.jp/arthall/stages/detail/7009>

<sup>2</sup> Satoshi Kinsui, who originated the study of the role language in Japanese, entitled his seminal study of the subject in 2003 *Virtual Japanese: The Mystery of the Role Language* (『バーチャル日本語 役割語の謎』).

<sup>3</sup> Hunter and Lichtenfels cite the example of Juliet's speech from 3.5, where she "reverses the conventions of Petrarchanism by seeing Romeo as at the bottom of a well – a vision usually reserved for the male lover" (136). Similarly, it is Juliet and not Romeo who

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speaks the “epithalamium” anticipating the consummation of marriage in 3.2, as will be discussed later in this paper.

- <sup>4</sup> For the purpose of the present study, the discussion will be limited to the translations recorded to have been used in stage productions. See the Appendix for other published translations of the play.
- <sup>5</sup> Although the adaptation was received favorably in general, Indra Levy suggests that Osanai may have been unhappy with his work: “his work on *Romeo and Juliet* had exposed the limits of his own abilities as a translator, since he chose to commission Mori Ogai for the translation of Free Theater scripts” (Levy 221).
- <sup>6</sup> Despite the translator’s misgivings about the play’s tragic qualities, Mikami’s translation of *Romeo and Juliet* was used several times in performance between 1950 and 1971 (see Appendix). The directors who worked with Mikami’s translation – Hijikata Yoshi, Uryu Masami, and Kazama Kaku – were mainly those associated with the Shingeki tradition.
- <sup>7</sup> Daniel Gallimore argues that Matsuoka’s work is in synchronization with what is commonly called the “cultural turn” in humanities in general, including both Shakespeare scholarship and translation studies because, far from trying to produce a definitive, “correct” translation of Shakespeare, she is conscious of the fact that her translation, too, is the product of a particular cultural moment as well as her own personal and sociocultural background as a woman who grew up in post-war Japan.
- <sup>8</sup> It is also worth noting that, while Juliet uses “you” to speak to Romeo, he addresses her with a more familiar alternative, “thou,” from the first time he lays eyes on her.

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