

Translated, Embodied, and Performed:  
The Language of Shakespeare's Heroines  
In Japanese

ABSTRACT (要約)

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Introduction

The present thesis deals with the issues raised when translating William Shakespeare (1564-1616)'s dramatic works into Japanese, with a special focus on the language of female characters. Translating gender poses a challenge for those who translate between English and Japanese, as the spoken Japanese language is more clearly defined by the speakers' social positions (including age, occupation and gender) and their relationships with the listeners. Thus, an awareness of the various gender identities of the characters in the source text, as well as how translation may represent gender issues in the context of the target text, is essential for a translator of Shakespeare into Japanese.

Despite the importance of gender in Shakespeare translation, however, it has not received due attention due to various factors both in the context of translation studies and Shakespeare studies. In the former discipline, for example, discussing theatre translation has been considered too complex because of the multiple agencies involved with the act of performing a translated text. In addition, feminist translation theory has mainly focused on translations between European languages. In Shakespeare studies, on the other hand, translation, both textual and performative, has long been considered marginal. Based on this awareness, the present thesis aims to offer relevant

analyses of how the language of Shakespeare's female characters have been translated into Japanese based on the textual and contextual evidences of both the source and the target texts. The thesis focuses on the Japanese translations of Shakespeare's plays which have been used in performances, including the works of Tsubouchi Shōyō (1859-1935), Fukuda Tsuneari (1912-94), Odashima Yūshi (1930-), Matsuoka Kazuko (1942-), and Kawai Shōichirō (1960-).

## Chapter I: Translating Juliet's Language in *Romeo and Juliet*

In the various translations of *Romeo and Juliet* (1596-97), it has been noted that the language of Juliet, the female protagonist, has been translated into a language that is emphatically "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 *onna kotoba* ("women's language") in Japanese, which consists of words (including personal pronouns), expressions, and grammatical structures that are strongly associated with femininity, in her translation of Juliet's speech, opting instead for a more gender-neutral style. Based on the historical development of *onna kotoba* as a linguistic resource and the theory of *onna kotoba as yakuwarigo* [role language], the first chapter of the thesis offers an attempt to analyse the various methods of translating Juliet's language in relation to both how the character is depicted in the source text and how the play has been received in Japan.

In the source text, the language of Juliet is characterised by extreme verbal competence, including the ability to navigate a conversation, use rhetorical devices, and articulate her desires, all of which helps her become an active agent in her love affair with Romeo than a passive object of love. Such

characteristics, strongly in contrast to the gender norms of Elizabethan and Jacobean England which praised silence as a feminine virtue, have nevertheless not been fully represented in the Japanese translations of the play. This may be due to the fact that Juliet has mainly been perceived in Japan as an innocent and well-born young lady, as well as the historical Japanese tendency to read the play as a romantic poem rather than as a dramatic script. The chapter traces the history of the Japanese reception of the play, including various translations and performances, noting a change in the image of both the play and its heroine in the 1960s, and analyses how it leads to the current situation in Japan, where multiple translations of Shakespeare coexist.

## Chapter II: Embodying a Modern Woman in Shakespeare: Meiji Productions and Translations of *The Merchant of Venice*

An important characteristic of theatre translation, which sets it apart from the translation of other genres of literature such as novels and poetry, is the fact that a dramatic text is written to be embodied by actors. In the case of Shakespeare, the female characters in the source text were meant to be performed by teenage “boy actors,” whereas the majority of Japanese translations of his plays would presuppose contemporary Japanese women in the same roles. Based on this understanding, the second chapter of the thesis attempts to illustrate, through the early performance history of Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* (1596-97) in Japan, the relationship between two different but intertwined phenomena in Meiji theatre: the introduction of Shakespeare’s works as part of the theatrical repertoire and the development of professional “actresses” (*joyū*). Both began as attempts to modernise the Japanese theatre and thus elevate its cultural status by making it more similar to Western drama, which was notably different from Japanese traditional drama

such as *kabuki* in its primacy of the spoken word over song and dance and the importance it placed on being “real” and “natural” on stage. Notable actors, directors and translators of the period, such as Kawakami Otojirō (1864-1911), Kawakami Sadayakko (1871-1946), Doi Shunsho (1869-1915), Tsubouchi Shōyō, and Ichikawa Sadanji II (1880-1940), produced the trial scene from *The Merchant of Venice* in Meiji Japan to varying degrees of success, each in an attempt to produce a “new” and “modern” Shakespearean production suitable for the new Japanese theatre. Towards the end of the Meiji era, however, the popularity of Shakespeare as a vehicle for the “new” and “modern” Japanese drama dwindled, while actresses came to be seen as absolutely necessary for the production of the “new social drama” such as the plays of Ibsen preferred by the younger advocates of *shingeki* [“new theatre”]. In the subsequent decades of Taishō and early Shōwa, Shakespeare was mainly appreciated in the study as a “classic” work of literature.

### Chapter III: Translating Rosalind’s Language in *As You Like It*

In post-WWII Japan, diverse translations and productions of Shakespeare began to emerge and coexist, partly as a result of the break away from the naturalistic view of theatre that dominated the Japanese stage in the first half of the twentieth century. Especially since the 1960s, textual and embodied performances of gender in Japanese Shakespeare have become more varied and multi-dimensional, transcending the dichotomy of the Japanese versus the Western, the old versus the new, and the performative versus the naturalistic. Such multiplicity of the performances of gender can be seen most clearly in the languages of cross-dressed female characters, and it is in this context that the third chapter of the thesis discusses *As You Like It* (1598-1600), which contains what is arguably Shakespeare’s most complex representation of gender in its

heroine, Rosalind. As Rosalind, a character that was in all probability played by a young boy in the play's earliest performances, disguises herself as a boy called Ganymede, who then assumes the persona of "Rosalind," a fictional female character invented for her interaction with her love interest, Orlando, the play thrives on the gender ambiguity of its heroine. When it is translated into Japanese, however, the target language allows for less room for such ambiguity. The chapter analyses various translation strategies adopted by the Japanese translators to negotiate between the source text and the target culture, especially in the context of performance, where the question of who embodies Rosalind is closely connected to the choices made by the translators.

## Conclusion

While translated Shakespeare is often considered secondary or marginal in the world of Shakespeare studies, the case studies presented in the thesis illustrate that it offers a rich potential to be more than an interesting appendix to the field. The importance of Shakespeare translation is steadily increasing both in practice and as a research topic, while the concept of gender and gendered language is also evolving continuously, opening up new spaces for the analysis and discussion of the role of gender in Shakespeare translation.