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Shakespeare in Manga and Anime*

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Introduction

I regard Shakespeare in manga/anime as constituting what Douglas Lanier calls "Shakespearean rhizomatics"—"the aggregated web of cultural forces and productions that in some fashion lay claim to the label 'Shakespearean' but that has long exceeded the canon of plays and poems we have come to attribute to the pen of William Shakespeare" (27). I share Valerie M. Fazel and Louise Geddes's conviction that "the value of Shakespeare lies in its usability, in that the texts, as well as the myth of the man, can be broken down and reassembled by a body of users whose valuation of Shakespeare is unpredictable and often resistant to pre-conceived notions of cultural hegemony" (3-4). Manga/anime uses the cultural phenomenon known as "Shakespeare" in unpredictable ways which could be resistant to/subservient to the authority and cultural hegemony of Global Bard. As Stephen O'Neill writes about user agency of YouTube Shakespeare, manga/anime uses Shakespeare as "an open-source property exceeding any single ownership." Shakespearean texts, as being outside of copyright, function as "a freely available repository of stories" (134).

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Shakespeare in manga: earlier cases

Osamu Tezuka created his manga abridgement of *The Merchant of Venice* for educational purposes in 1959. The scenes are set in present-day Venice, with Portia as the only daughter of a "media tycoon who televises his dying moments" (Minami 813). It is intriguing that this manga was published in the same year as the first commercial television network for education was launched, when education was, as it were, made into commercial merchandise packaged for television broadcasting. "Robio and Robiette," an episode in *Astro Boy* in 1965, is a tragic love story between Robio, a robot, and Robiette, another robot. Tezuka created Robio and Robiette as robots with human shape and hearts, and minds more human than the humans; they fall in love with each other because they are equipped with mechanic hearts of the same design. While humans struggle with each other seeking dominance of the robotics industry, Robiette and Robio strive to use robotics for peace. We can sense Tezuka's criticism of Japanese society, which was undergoing rapid mechanization and industrialization.

There are some cases of Tezuka's manga adaptations with more distinctively Japanese elements. His *Vampires!* is an adaptation sampling *Richard III* and *Macbeth*: the protagonist named Makube persecutes a minority group (rumored to be vampires) who are driven out of their mountain village because of construction of a dam. In the *Hamlet* episode in *A Parrot with Rainbow Colored Feathers,* Tezuka sets the story in Japan in the 1970s, amidst a political bribery scandal: the protagonist, a Japanese actor performing Hamlet, adds some lines to refer to the Lockheed scandals of the 1970s, one of the biggest bribery scandals of twentieth-century Japan.

Even though these earlier manga Shakespeare adaptations were originally intended for local consumption, as manga has become a global media product, they are now part of the new global Shakespeare. Manga and anime, as forms of pop cultural Shakespeares, have attained a certain level of a global currency through Shakespeare. The fact that the animated version of "Robio and Robiette" was released with English voiceover in 1980[1] testifies to the global currency of Shakespeare in manga/anime. An anthology collecting Tezuka's Shakespeare-inspired works, *Tezuka Osamu Shakespeare Manga Theater*, was issued in 2017.

A remarkable case of localizing Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in the context of Cold War Asia is *Tomorrow's Joe*.[2] It has an episode about a South Korean boxer,

[1] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZWuSW8rh_s.
[2] Story by Asao Takamori and illustration by Tetsuya Chiba.

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Kim Yong-bi, who obsessively keeps on washing his hands, tormented by the illusion that they are stained with blood (15: 83-87). During the Korean War, he, as a small boy, is wandering alone in Kaesong City (then under control of the North Korean Army) at the war front. Trying to steal rations from a North Korean soldier, he kills the soldier, who turns out to be his father (16: 196-219). He is a Macbeth who is afflicted with the idea that "all great Neptune's ocean" will not wash King Duncan's blood clean from his hand (2.2.58f) and a Lady Macbeth who repeats the gesture of washing her hands tormented with a delusion that there is "the smell of the blood" (5.1.47) of King Duncan. Kim is convinced that he, who killed his father just for food, whose hands are "stained with his father's blood" (16: 37) will triumph over Joe, who, though growing up under harsh circumstances, is fortunate enough to have not experienced real hunger in affluent Japanese society. The episode shows Japan's guilty conscience as the former colonizer and as a country that achieved economic recovery by being a military and logistics base of the U.S. military at the time of the Korean War.

There are cases of manga translation of Shakespeare's works largely faithful to the original, including Kumi Morikawa's *Twelfth Night* and Yumiko Igarashi's *Romeo and Juliet*, both of them belonging to the Shojo manga (manga for girls) genre. They are strongly Japanese, in that they follow the conventions, grammar, and idioms of the genre they belong to, Shojo manga. One of the main features of Shojo manga is its focus on poetic depiction of the characters' heart and mind. In these instances, apparently faithful renderings of Shakespeare's original actually are assimilated to the local culture of Japanese Shojo manga.

What do Shakespeare's comedies and Shojo manga have in common?: gender bending. The Shojo manga convention of a girl in disguise as a boy dates back to Tezuka's *Princess Knight*, in which the princess (born with both a girl heart and a boy heart) disguises herself as a prince. While the manga challenges patriarchy and the straightjacket of gender roles as the plot develops by creating a princess who can perfectly perform the role of a prince, the denouement can be regarded as reaffirming and reinforcing the conventional understanding of gender roles, by having its protagonist happily return to the role of a girl waiting to become a happy wife to her prince.

Moto Hagio, one of the top artists in the Shojo manga genre, known for her works questioning conventional gender roles mostly in sci-fi settings, uses the convention of transvestism in Shakespeare in one episode in her masterpiece about a boy vampire, *The Poe Clan*. In one episode, Edgar, the boy vampire, is assigned to play the role of Rosalind (in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*) at a school festival. When Edgar performs the feminine role in Hagio's manga, the gender

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bending becomes twofold: Edgar performs the role of a girl (Rosalind) disguised as a boy. Doubtless, Hagio is conscious of Elizabethan stage convention, of boy actors performing female roles.

The use of Shakespearean gender bending in Shakespeare-related episodes in Yasuko Aoike's *Sons of Eve* can be both liberating and homophobically misogynistic. Biological sex is indeterminate in this slapstick space-opera manga, where the three principal characters are biologically male in their current lives, but when they are transported to sci-fi worlds, they can change their biological sex to female. In one episode of the manga, they encounter Shakespeare (the father), King Lear (the eldest son), Hamlet (the second son), and Romeo (the youngest son) who are a family belonging to the Sons of Eve tribe. When Hamlet realizes that Romeo, his younger brother, is his true love, he agonizes over it, saying, "O Romeo, why are you Romeo?" (4: 214). One of the principal characters (Virgil) undergoes a sex change against his will but decides to enjoy the occasion fully. He/she performs the part of Juliet as an elegant drag queen in a play-within-manga sequence against a younger, cute, and effeminate Romeo. Romeo swears his eternal love in Shakespeare's well-known phrase, "by yonder blessed moon" (2.1.149), and is gently scolded by his drag king/queen Virgil-Juliet that he should "swear not by the moon, the inconstant moon" (4: 74f). Fantasies of male homosexuality, offered for mostly heterosexual female readers and often stereotypical or potentially homophobic, are accompanied by misogyny. Their antagonists, an Amazonian tribe, attempt to abduct the Sons of Eve for procreation or sheer promiscuity. In another episode, Lady Macbeth appears as a gorgeously sexy, bloodthirsty nymphomaniac (5: 83).

Angry Ophelias in Japan

Soseki Natsume (1867-1916), regarded as a national novelist, was cognizant of the Victorian fascination with Ophelia, who is described by Bram Dijkstra as "the later nineteenth-century's all-time favorite example of love-crazed self-sacrificial madness" (42). In his novel *Kusamakura*, Natsume combines the Victorian image of Ophelia with Japanese legends of female ghosts who drown themselves for love.

The unnamed protagonist, an artist, attempts to draw the mysterious hostess of his hotel, O-Nami, as an Ophelia in the style of John Everett Millais's painting *Ophelia*. The artist learns about O-Nami's tempestuous life, including the forced separation from her lover, an unhappy marriage for money, and divorce.

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In spite of her sad life, O-Nami is a highly intellectual, independent-minded, and rebellious woman—a character that contrasts sharply with Shakespeare's Ophelia or Victorian Ophelia, generally portrayed as a fragile and powerless female victim. Nevertheless, Natsume's protagonist seeks to contain O-Nami in Ophelia's image—an elegant, refined, and beautiful corpse. The narrator immediately learns, however, that O-Nami is actually quite different from Ophelia.

O-Nami even ridicules the narrator's fascination with Ophelia when she suggests to the narrator that she might commit suicide soon. She asks the narrator, "Please paint a beautiful picture of me floating there—not lying there suffering, but drifting peacefully off to the other world" in the fashion of Millais's Ophelia (103). At first, the narrator takes her words literally, believing she desires suicide, but he realizes he is being mocked when she grins and says, "Aha, that surprised you, didn't it!" She is savvy and intelligent enough to mock the narrator's infatuation with the idea that there is "something inherently aesthetic about a figure drifting or sunk" (78). O-Nami is thus quite unlike Ophelia: she is independent, intelligent, and angry.

Hideo Kobayashi's "Ophelia's Literary Remains" centers on Ophelia's letter to Hamlet written just before her suicide. Kobayashi's phantom Ophelia condemns Hamlet for his ill treatment of her, saying: "You said to me, 'Go to the nunnery,' but it's you that should die [. . .] . You said 'To be, or not to be, that is a question.' How wonderful, how splendid! What are you waiting for? Just go ahead and solve the problem" (708).

Shohei Ooka created in 1955 his *Hamlet's Diary*, in which Denmark is under Norway's military occupation, as an allegory of Japan under occupation by the Allied Powers after its defeat in the Second World War (356). In the 1989 final edition, Hamlet dreams of Ophelia after her suicide. Hamlet acts in a plainly misogynistic way, treating her like a simple-minded nuisance. He tries to dismiss her by saying "You annoy me. You even contradict me? I, who have great ambition, have no time to listen to foolish words from a drowned girl. Dream or ghost, vanish!" (341). But she does not vanish: instead, she looks steadfastly at him, sadly, but accusingly. Kobayashi's and Ooka's Ophelias are the predecessors of a series of postmodern, angry Ophelias.

Post-modern supernatural Ophelias

Ophelia has come to be akin to Japanese female ghosts, for whom David Kalat coins the term "dead wet girls" (13). One prominent example of dead wet girls is O-Iwa, in the classic *Horror Tale of Yotsuya* (from the sixteenth and

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seventeenth centuries), who is poisoned, killed, and dumped into a river by her husband. She returns as a vengeful ghost. Powerless and victimized in her life, O-Iwa achieves empowerment after her tragic death.

Among postmodern "dead wet girls" in Japanese horror films based on vengeful ghosts of feudal Japan, Sadako in *Ringu*, directed by Hideo Nakata, stands out. She is represented as a combination of Ophelia and revengeful female ghosts of the feudal era. Like O-Iwa, Sadako is thrown into a well and returns as a vengeful ghost, crawling with her face covered with her iconic long, straight, black hair, reminiscent of Ophelia's long hair.

Norihiro Yagi's manga *Claymore* (manga 2001–14; anime 2007) has a character called "Ophelia, the blood-soaked warrior," who transforms into a water dragon (6: 136). The Ophelia of *Claymore* in her monstrous state—fierce, vile, and venomous—is a direct opposite of the conventional image of Ophelia—overprotected, delicate, and obedient. In flashbacks of her brother's death, however, Ophelia appears as a stereotypically powerless and vulnerable girl in need of protection, while her brother is overprotective of her, just like Laertes is of his sister. The final sequence shows Ophelia returning to her human form, floating in the water. With her long hair flowing over the water, she is strongly reminiscent of Millais's Ophelia (8: 35). She shows calm satisfaction at the hope that she will be able to meet her brother after death.

In the animated series *Romeo × Juliet*, directed by Fumitoshi Oizaki, Ophelia is a protectress of the tree of life, who tells Juliet that "when Escalus's (tree of life) life runs out . . . [t]his world will be destroyed" (Beckwitt). The tree of life needs human sacrifice for its renewal. If it is not offered, Escalus dies, and Neo Verona will fall and be destroyed. *Romeo × Juliet* endows Ophelia with the power of plants and trees because of the original Ophelia's association with flowers. When the ritual is accomplished, Ophelia dies like an old sapless tree.

When creating *Ponyo*, Hayao Miyazaki was inspired by Millais's *Ophelia* and O-Nami in Natsume's *Kusamakura*. Miyazaki visited Tate Britain to see Millais's *Ophelia* before creating *Ponyo*. Instead of repeating the stereotypical image of Ophelia as an exquisite but powerless maiden, however, Miyazaki transforms Ophelia into the powerful, gigantic sea goddess Granmamare, mother of Ponyo.

Yana Toboso's *Black Butler*, a manga/animation set in Victorian England, parodies Ophelia's fetishised image as a dedicated lover and beautiful corpse, by presenting an episode in which a male grim reaper figure, Grell, performs the part of Ophelia. This Ophelia falls in love with every handsome man around her, including her father. When Polonius punches her stomach and kicks her into the river, the floating corpse looks slightly like Millais's Ophelia. This Ophelia, however, does not remain dead. When Laertes and Hamlet fight, she

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comes back to life, riding on a fancy gondola and singing, "Do not fight over me," in karaoke.

Eiji Otsuka's novel *Zero* and a movie based on it are set in a Catholic girls' school in the Japanese countryside. The school is haunted by the beautiful ghosts of drowned girls. Allusions to Millais's *Ophelia* are deliberate: a large replica of Millais's painting is displayed on the wall of the school principal's room, the girls sing a version of Ophelia's song "By his cockle hat and staff" (*Hamlet* 4.5.25), and they are repeatedly compared with Millais's Ophelia for their innocence, beauty, and troubled adolescence. In one fantasy sequence, a girl dying in water is shown exactly in the manner of Millais's painting, floating down a stream in a white smock surrounded with flowers.

A recent instance of Ophelia in contemporary Japanese pop culture is a backstroke champion. She appears in a short animated film entitled "Ophelia, Not Yet" by Ryo Inoue. This Ophelia is sane enough to know that her abusive boyfriend, Hamlet, does not deserve her, and she determines to live on:

> My garments were pulling me down deep under the water. Suddenly I remembered, I am a national backstroke champion, am I not? [. . .] Not yet, not yet, it is not time for a watery death [. . .] My abusive boyfriend told me "Go to a nunnery" [. . .] Dolphins and swordfishes are your friends. Almost native to that element, you can go anywhere in backstroke. Ophelia, Ophelia, don't give up, not yet.

Shakespeare purists might argue that these Ophelias misappropriate the Bard's text. I would argue that these angry Ophelias give the original character the chance to come back to raise an enraged, dissident voice against those who turn her into little more than a beautiful corpse.

Shakespeare as fans recreate him

If you are inspired by Andrew James Hartley's "Ren Fest Shakespeare: The Cosplay Bard," you might want to google the search words "Shakespeare" and "cosplay" (costume playing of anime/manga characters). Then you would probably find images of people who impersonate or "cosplay" "Caster of Red William Shakespeare" (henceforth Caster),[3] a character in the light novel and anime titled *Fate/Apocrypha*.[4] These people would be holding a First Folio and a pen.

Caster has a very loose connection with the Bard or Shakespearean texts, except for the facts that he is a playwright figure with a folio and a pen, and he

[3] See https://worldcosplay.net/character/62771. Last accessed 18 Nov. 2018.

[4] Novel written by Yuichiro Higashide and illustrated by Ototsugu Konoe.

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has the propensity to quote Shakespearean lines, but rather randomly and out of context. Caster is interpreted, commented on, and recreated by fan participatory activities including cosplay and fan commentaries.

As AniNews explains in "Caster of Red: SHAKESPEARE Explained," viewed 206,512 times as of November 16, 2019, Caster usually just witnesses and documents fights so that he can later create a play based on them. He quotes and recites lines from his own works, sometimes quite out of context (as in the case of his first appearance, when he cites Richard III's "A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!"). With his First Folio, he can cast a spell on his opponent, which makes him or her re-experience the most traumatic occurrence in their past life. He uses "shadow actors" (wooden puppets) which follow the script he writes, and he uses the spell, King's Men, to summon "shadow actors."

What is fascinating about phenomena surrounding Caster is the fact that fans (mostly of manga/anime, not of Shakespeare) actively attempt to recycle, recreate, and renovate the significance of Shakespeare. On the Internet, we can find dedicated fans explaining, annotating, and analyzing *Fate/Apocrypha*. One example is "Type-Moon Wiki: Caster of Red"[5] on FANDOM. Its Japanese version[6] annotates and explains from which of Shakespeare's works Caster's words come, and how Caster's quotes are appropriate or inappropriate. In one instance, it cites Caster's words to Joan of Arc ("There are more things in heaven and earth, Joan of Arc, than are dreamt of in your philosophy") both in English and Japanese. It explains that Caster's quote is from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, although Horatio is replaced with Joan. In this instance, Shakespeare as a person and his works are a copyright-free matrix, from which fans are entitled to freely cite, recreate, and recycle.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have attempted to study the ways in which Shakespeare is being used and recycled in Japan. Shakespeare purists might argue that these instances do not deserve to be recognized as coming from Shakespeare. Conversely, manga/anime/cosplay purists might be enraged at me, a Shakespeare scholar, if they understand that I am treating these cases of manga/anime/cosplay Shake-

[5] http://typemoon.wikia.com/wiki/Caster_of_Red. Last accessed 24 Dec. 2018.

[6] https://typemoon.wiki.cre.jp/wiki/%E3%82%A6%E3%82%A3%E3%83%AA%E3%82%A2%E3%83%A0%E3%83%BB%E3%82%B7%E3%82%A7%E3%82%A4%E3%82%AF%E3%82%B9%E3%83%94%E3%82%A2#Fate.2FApocrypha_2. Last accessed 28 Dec. 2018.

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speares as mere secondary, inferior, or bastardized imitations of Shakespeare. My argument is that if we believe that Shakespeare in his afterlife can have some contemporary significance, we need to know the ways in which popular culture is paying homage to Shakespeare, by making use of him as a copyright-free information source.

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