# EMBODYING DIALOGUE: HYBRIDITY AND IDENTITY IN JAPANESE SHAKESPEARE PRODUCTIONS

by

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A thesis submitted to The University of Birmingham for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

The Shakespeare Institute
College of Arts and Law
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June 2018

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines and re-evaluates the contemporary performance of Shakespeare in Japan, taking the impact of social and political developments into account. The first part discusses the changing status of Shakespeare in Japan and corresponding representations of the theatrical past onstage. Two different responses to *The Merchant of Venice* are used to demonstrate this change, one from a British director and one from a Japanese one. The second chapter expands on this changing status to discuss the ways recent productions have responded to social issues and anxieties, particularly to perceived issues amongst the younger generations. The remainder of the thesis analyses the later stages of Ninagawa Yukio's career and his Shakespeare productions with his two companies, Saitama Next Theatre and Saitama Gold Theatre. This thesis concludes that through the depiction of hybridity, contemporary performances of Shakespeare are part of an ongoing dialogue between Japanese and British theatre, and through the detailed study of never or rarely examined productions defamiliarises the existing narrative of intercultural Shakespeare in Japan.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I am humbled and grateful to find myself with a dizzying number of people to thank for their help, generosity and kindness, and more than I can name individually here.

With eternal thanks and gratitude to Matsuoka Kazuko. I could not have asked for a better teacher or friend in Tokyo.

Special thanks to my supervisors Michael Dobson and Ewan Fernie, and to everyone at the Shakespeare Institute for their support and friendship.

To Midlands3Cities for funding my research and allowing me to undertake this work

To everyone at Sai-no-kuni Saitama Arts Theatre, including but by no means limited to Watanabe Hiroshi, Yoshida Kōtarō, Inoue Sonsho, Fujiwara Tatsuya, Yokota Eiji, Kakizawa Hayato and all the staff and cast of *Timon of Athens*. To the members of Saitama Next and Saitama Gold, who have continued to push (and sometimes shove) me forward, whether it be in a rehearsal room in Saitama, the National Theatre in Craiova or a kebab shop in Farringdon. Thanks also to Nozoe Seiji, Ukegawa Sachiko, to the staff in the library, and to Kajiyama Yuzo from HoriPro. I have been overwhelmed by the kindness, welcome and support I have received from you all.

To everyone at Shakespeare's Globe past and present, above all to Patrick Spottiswoode and the Library & Archives staff.

To Waseda University for their support, help, and friendship, particularly Tetsuhito Motoyama, Yu Umemiya, Graham Law and Adrian Pinnington.

To the International Theatre Institute, Phillip Breen, Paddy Cunneen, Ruth Hall, Max Jones, Otake Shinobu, Kitamura Kazuki and the rest of the *Street Car Named Desire* cast and company, Gekidan AUN, Shimodate Kazumi and the Sendai Shakespeare Company, Aoki Go, D-Boys, the *Shakespeare in Love* company and Shiki, Nakamura Kyozo, Munakata Kuniyoshi, Aki Isoda, Kakushinhan, Kawai Shoichiro and the Shakespeare Society of Japan, Atsuto Suzuki, Kumiko Hilberdink-Sakamoto, Minami Ryuta, Yoshihara Yukari, Hanako Endo, Igarashi Hiroshisa, Daniel Gallimore and Sarah Olive.

To my friends and family on both sides of the world, and above all to my parents.

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# INTRODUCTION

Shakespeare has an undeniable presence within the Japanese theatre world, but the nature of his position is less clear, as is evident in the common response from Japanese artists, directors and producers to the adaptation of Shakespeare in Japan, particularly when that work is then taken to Britain: as director Ninagawa Yukio once said, 'it's kind of like a British company staging *Chūshingura* at the Kabuki-za'.[1] *Chūshingura* (*The Treasury of Loyal Retainers*) refers to the fictionalised accounts based on the historical events of the 'forty-seven *rōnin*', of which the *Kanadehon Chūshingura* (1748) is one of the most famous and is arguably one of the most well-known plays in the *bunraku* and *kabuki* repertory. The Kabuki-za is the main venue for kabuki in Tokyo, which despite not being one of Japan's six national theatres (the National Theatre which specialises in traditional theatre, the National Engei Hall, the National Noh Theatre, the National Bunraku Theatre, the National Theatre Okinawa and the New National Theatre, specialising in modern theatre), is a highly prestigious venue and almost acts as a non-national National Theatre. Saeki Junko has even described the *Chūshingura* as Japan's 'National Drama'.[2] Therefore, although Shakespeare's plays are highly present in Japanese theatre the space they occupy is ambiguous, and this has been reflected in the wide range of responses that vary from the canonical (reflecting both western and Japanese nineteenth-century theatre practices), to the irreverent (for example an all-female *Romeo and Juliet* performed by low-level idol singers set in the pro-wrestling world, intermixed with references to horror film *The Ring* (1998) and popular *anime* series), and everything in between.

[1] Takahashi Yutaka, 'Developments in Japan and Overseas: Ninagawa Yukio: From 1960s Theatre Artist to Global Star', trans. by William Andrews, *Theatre Yearbook: Theatre in Japan*, (Tokyo: International Theatre Institute, 2017), pp. 160-70 (p. 168).
[2] Saeki Junko, 'Gender Construction and *Chūshingura* as a Japanese National Legend', in *Revenge Drama in European Renaissance and Japanese Theatre: From 'Hamlet' to 'Madame Butterfly'*, ed. by Kevin J. Wetmore (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 237-43 (p. 237).

Susan Bennett inverts Margot Heinemann's theory that Shakespeare is '*there*, deeply embedded in the culture, the language, the media and the educational system of Britain' to add that Shakespeare also has a 'global there-ness', a 'there-ness' which is clearly manifest in Japan.[3] In 2017 in the Kanto region, which incorporates the Greater Tokyo area and surrounding prefectures such as Saitama and Chiba, there were approximately 125 productions of Shakespeare, not including ballets, operas, non-Japanese language productions, lectures and other events.[4] Despite suggestions from some critics that the 'volume of new productions has shrunk from the height of the Shakespeare boom', a period in the 1980s to the 1990s in which the adaptation of Shakespeare seemed to dramatically increase, it is clear that the number of performances has risen over the past two decades, reaching an average of one hundred productions per annum in recent years.[5] This number is made all the more compelling when it is compared with Ishihara Kosai and Hirokawa Osamu's study on Shakespearean performance in Japan from 2001 to 2010, in which they write that in the 1980s the annual average was around twenty to thirty productions, reaching sixty to seventy in the 1990s.[6] Further supporting the idea of Shakespeare's 'there-ness' in Japan, Kawai Shoichiro writes that 'Tokyo is alive with Shakespeare productions', citing the example of 2007 when there was 'roughly one new Japanese production a week', although even then the total number of performances listed by Kawai was only fifty-two.[7]

[3] Margot Heinemann, 'How Brecht Read Shakespeare', in *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism*, ed. by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 202-30 (p. 204); Susan Bennett, *Performing Nostalgia: Shifting Shakespeare and the Contemporary Past* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 27.
[4] My own statistics.
[5] Daniel Gallimore and Minami Ryuta, 'Seven Stages of Shakespeare Reception', in *A History of Japanese Theatre*, ed. by Jonah Salz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 484-96 (p. 494).
[6] Ishihara Kosai and Hirokawa Osamu, 'A Survey of Shakespearean Performances in Japan from 2001-2010', *Komazawa University Foreign Language Studies*, 16 (2014), 1-44 (1).
[7] Kawai Shoichiro, 'More Japanized, Casual and Transgender Shakespeares', *Shakespeare Survey*, 62 (2009), 261-72 (261).

Japanese Shakespeare has also achieved a global 'there-ness' through the high-profile work of directors such as Ninagawa and Suzuki Tadashi, whose work has been seen across the globe and who are often included in contemporary English-language studies on Shakespeare in performance: for example, Ninagawa's 2004 production of *Titus Andronicus* was included in the performance history overview of *Titus Andronicus (Shakespeare in Performance)* (2013) by Michael D. Freidman, thereby including it within the English-language Shakespeare 'canon'.[8] Although this has allowed other perspectives and performance traditions to enter the anglophone narrative of Shakespeare's after-lives, supporting Craig Dionne and Parmita Kapadia's theory that Shakespeare's plays can no longer 'signify an exclusively British, or even Western, identity: instead they function as sites of contest reflecting a manifold of cultures', it has also resulted in what has been described as an over-familiarity with global Shakespeare.[9] Alexa Huang and Charles Ross, for example, write that intercultural Shakespeare has 'evolved from something that is unfamiliar to something that is familiarly known on stages and screens big and small – something that now needs to be defamiliarised again'.[10]

The following study is an attempt to defamiliarise Japanese performance as one of the 'usual suspects' of intercultural discourse, and to investigate the developments in the performance trends that have occurred since the earlier, main studies on the subject were published. The key texts of the field, namely *Shakespeare and the Japanese Stage* (1998), *Performing Shakespeare in Japan* (2001) and *Shakespeare in Japan* (2005), provide invaluable insights into the subject but now require updating to more accurately reflect current

[8] Michael D. Friedman and Alan C. Dessen, *Titus Andronicus (Shakespeare in Performance MUP)*, 2nd edn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).
[9] Craig Dionne and Parmita Kapadia, 'Introduction', in *Native Shakespeares: Indigenous Appropriations on a Global Stage*, ed. by Craig Dionne and Parmita Kapadia (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 1-15 (p. 6).
[10] Alexa C.Y. Huang and Charles S. Ross, 'Introduction to *Shakespeare in Hollywood, Asia and Cyberspace*', in *Shakespeare in Hollywood, Asia and Cyberspace*, ed. by Alexa C.Y. Huang and Charles S. Ross (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2009), pp. 1-14 (p. 12).

performance trends. While there are numerous studies published each year which have done much to renew the debate, it remains the case that many return to the same case studies introduced in these three texts, or to productions from the 1990s to early 2000s. For example, even in Alexa Huang's detailed chapter on Ninagawa in *Great Shakespeareans Volume XVIII: Hall, Brook, Ninagawa, Lepage* published in 2013, a significant amount of time is dedicated to *NINAGAWA Macbeth* (first performed in 1980): despite that production's influence on later performance trends and importance in the reception history of Shakespeare in Japan, much has changed in the period between its premiere and 2017 revival.[11] This study therefore aims to introduce and re-introduce different perspectives on popular artists working with Shakespeare in Japan, and on rarely or never studied companies and productions. In this way, I hope to address the gap in the literature that has often failed to go beyond familiar perspectives and productions. By using both Japanese and English sources, I also aim to connect the two studies which have tended to move separately: a great deal of Japanese resources have yet to be translated into English, particularly those on more recent productions and the words of the artists themselves, and as a result the English-language literature has on occasion fallen behind that of the Japanese.

Anzai Tetsuo has tried to destabilise the notion of 'Japanese Shakespeare', writing that in order to discuss the subject in 'any meaningful way, we have first of all to pause and try to answer the question, what do we really mean by the epithet 'Japanese'?', and warning that it is impossible to establish 'any distinctively Japanese features shared in common by all Japanese productions of Shakespeare'.[12] In a similar vein, performance theorist Anan Nobuko

[11] Alexa C.Y. Huang, 'Yukio Ninagawa', in *Great Shakespeareans Volume XVIII: Hall, Brook, Ninagawa, Lepage*, ed. by Peter Holland (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 79-112.
[12] Anzai Tetsuo, 'What Do we Mean by 'Japanese' Shakespeare?', in *Performing Shakespeare in Japan*, ed. by Minami Ryuta, Ian Carruthers and John Gillies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 17-20 (p. 17).

has warned against the simplified use of the term 'Japanese' to describe artists and audiences in Japan, 'because they may possibly include such foreign nationals or Japanese nationals of foreign descent'.[13] She clarifies that she uses the term ''the Japanese' in order to refer to those who are acculturated into what is generally imagined as Japanese culture', which is also the sense in which I will be employing the term, with the acknowledgement that this group includes foreign nationals who may be choosing to 'pass as Japanese in order to avoid ethnic discrimination', amongst others.[14] In terms of Anzai's criticism, whilst I agree that his is a crucial viewpoint to prevent the simplification of a topic that is complex, complicated and paradoxical, in this thesis I will be focusing on trends which I view as present in and crucial to contemporary Japanese performance. I do not think that these productions are in any way indicative of all performance styles present in contemporary Japan, and it is vital to note that for every production which fits the theories presented here, there are of course others which do not. This variety is in itself indicative of the changes in Shakespeare's position since the plays were first introduced in Japan over a century ago, and the ever-shifting ground of contemporary performance trends in modern-day Japan.

It must also be noted that the following will, like many of the published studies, focus on trends within Tokyo and its surrounding areas. The bias towards the Tokyo region comes largely from the fact that, as Annegret Bergman writes, ninety per cent of 'all theatre companies are located in Tokyo and sixty-seventy per cent of all theatre performances are given there', although the Japanese Association of Theatre cites the number of performances produced in Tokyo as 'more than seventy-nine per cent of all performances in Japan'.[15]

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[13] Anan Nobuko, *Contemporary Japanese Women's Theatre and Visual Arts: Performing Girls' Aesthetics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 14.
[14] Ibid., p. 13.
[15] Annegret Bergman, 'Art Tower Mito – A Culture Facility Concept off the Beaten Track in Japan', in *Enacting Culture: Japanese Theater in Historical and Modern Contexts*, ed. by Barbara Geilhorn and others (Bobingen:

Greater Tokyo is one of the most highly populated metropolitan areas in the world, and it is also 'oversaturated with immense number[s] of cultural attractions, such as, to mention a few from its unfathomable list: 150,150 restaurants, 688 art galleries' and '24,575 theatre performances annually'.[16] This density has unavoidably tipped the balance in favour of Tokyo's performance trends, but it is of course true that trends in Tokyo are not indicative of other regions: for example, from 2004 to 2011 Niigata (on the north-west coast of Japan) was home to the 'Ryutopia Noh Shakespeare Series', directed by Kurita Yoshihiro, an experimental series of productions that blended different performance genres, from the modern to the traditional, with a *Noh* stage. One of the company's most representative productions was the 2006 *Hamlet*, in which the character of Hamlet sat motionless at the front of the stage for the entirety of the performance, thereby skilfully combining the concepts of '*mugen Noh*' (dream plays) with Shakespeare's text. Likewise, Okinawa-based film *A Midsummer Okinawan Dream* (directed by Nakae Yuji, 2009) mixed the plot from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with Okinawan folklore (replacing Oberon with the *kijimun* spirit of Majiru) and deeply reflected the lifestyle of a small island far removed from Tokyo.

One notable exception to this Tokyo-bias is the work of Suzuki's Company of Toga (SCOT), which is based in the remote location of Toga, Toyama prefecture; however, prior to this, Suzuki (who was born in Shizuoka, a prefecture close to Tokyo) was famous for his work in Tokyo, including that with the Waseda Shogekijo company. Even large urban centres such as Osaka (Kansai region), the second largest metropolitan area in Japan, rarely enters discussions on contemporary Shakespearean performance, even though historically it was the

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IUDICIUM Verlag, 2012), pp. 276-92 (p. 277); Japanese Association of Theatre, 'Annual Report Appendix' (2013), trans. by Iwaki Kyoko, 'Interlude: Tokyo: World Theatre Capital', in *A History of Japanese Theatre*, ed. by Salz, pp. 349-53 (p. 352).

[16] Iwaki Kyoko, 'The Politics of the Senses: Takayama Akira's Atomised Theatre After Fukushima', in *Fukushima and the Arts: Negotiating Nuclear Disaster*, ed. by Barbara Geilhorn and Kristina Iwata-Weickgenannt (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 199-220 (p. 202).

location of the first Japanese-language adaptation of Shakespeare in Japan (*A Time of Cherry Blossoms, Money Makes the World Go Round*, 1885 at the Ebisu-za). Other large cities such as Kyoto, Kobe and Nagoya are also rarely included in studies, often only intersecting when companies such as Kyoto-based Chiten (*Coriolanus*, 2012, *Romeo and Juliet*, 2017) or Osaka-based Kodomo-kyojin (*Macbeth*, 2017) tour productions nationally and internationally. While these companies are of interest and worth further study, due to the constraints of space and time this present discussion will focus mostly on productions from the Kanto area. However, what is worth noting from the above is that, as Anzai suggested, the term 'Japanese Shakespeare' is often used to mean Tokyo, or metropolitan, Shakespeare.

**Locating Local and Global Shakespeares in Japan: Defining the Key Terms**

Interest in the global performance of Shakespeare has grown considerably during the past two decades, and the availability of and ease of access to information and online performance archives has meant that the field has been able to significantly widen its outlook. Much of the initial research on the topic was centred on Europe and America, but there have been an increasing number of studies covering a broader range of areas, including Japan, Singapore and South Africa, for example. These more general studies include Dennis Kennedy's *Foreign Shakespeare: Contemporary Performance* (2004) and Sonia Massai's *World-Wide Shakespeares* (2005). 'Global Shakespeare' here, as in the majority of the literature cited, refers to the performance of Shakespeare in non-anglophone (non-English speaking) regions, and is the common term used for the worldwide performance of Shakespeare's texts. A related term is 'local Shakespeare', which refers to 'localised' stagings, in terms of setting and/or performance method, and productions which are closely connected to the performing country's social, political and cultural context. The spread of these terms has allowed for the 'pluralisation' of Shakespeare, 'looking beyond the national Bard and pursuing alternative

readings of the monolithic 'Shakespeare'', and for the investigation of the ways Shakespeare can act as a 'site of contest for those people who seek to express their own identities, in complicated ways, with, next to, and against British literary traditions'.[17] The term 'Shakespeares' has become a common feature of these debates, reflecting the concept that there is more than one way to understand and perform Shakespeare, thereby highlighting the impossibility of a single 'authentic' interpretation. However, as Kumiko Hilberdink-Sakamoto writes, there are 'so many Shakespeares in the world, but the important fact is that not all Shakespeares are equal'.[18]

Owing in part to the international fame of artists such as Ninagawa, Suzuki and Nomura Mansai, Japanese productions of Shakespeare have become a large feature of the study on global and intercultural Shakespeares. Some critics, such as Judy Celine Ick, have even criticised the attention given to countries such as Japan, China and India in intercultural studies, which has seen artists in countries such as the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia being marginalised in favour of the 'big hitters'.[19] While it is regrettably the case that the performance histories of some regions have yet to receive much critical attention, in the case of Japan the extensive amount of research corresponds to the large number of performances held domestically each year, and the presence of both large and small Japanese companies on the international touring circuit.

Many of the studies in the past two decades have been on the translation of Shakespeare into Japanese, and the changes in translation styles. For example, Kishi Tetsuo's

[17] Kumiko Hilberdink-Sakamoto, ''Why Shakespeare in Japan?': Resituating the Japanese Shakespeare', in *Shakespeare Without English: The Reception of Shakespeare Non-anglophone Countries*, ed. by Sukanta Chaudhuri and Chee Seng Lim (Delhi: Pearson Education India, 2006), pp. 67-85 (p. 67); Dionne and Kapadia, p. 2.
[18] Hilberdink-Sakamoto, p. 67.
[19] Judy Celine Ick, 'The Augmentation of the Indies: An Archipelagic Approach to Asian and Global Shakespeare', in *Shakespeare's Asian Journeys: Critical Encounters, Cultural Geographies, and the Politics of Travel*, ed. by Bi-qi Beatrice Lei, Judy Celine Ick and Poonam Trivedi (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 19-36.

‘“Bless Thee! Thou Art Translated!”: Shakespeare in Japan’ (1988), Daniel Gallimore’s *Sounding Like Shakespeare: Rhythm, Rhyme and Word Play in Japanese Translations of ‘A Midsummer Night’s Dream’* (2001) and Friedrike Von Schwerin-High’s *Shakespeare, Reception and Translation: Germany and Japan* (2004) demonstrate the continuing engagement with Shakespeare and translation. There are also numerous studies on the early translation and adaptation of Shakespeare in nineteenth-century to early twentieth-century Japan, such as Fuhara Yoshiaki’s ‘The *Caesar Kidan* – The Earliest Japanese Translation of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* and its Performance’ (1964) and Takahashi Yasunari’s ‘*Hamlet* and the Anxiety of Modern Japan’ (1996), ground which is also covered by *Performing Shakespeare in Japan* and *Shakespeare and the Japanese Stage*. Other trends in the field include in-depth studies on influential directors such as Ninagawa and Deguchi Norio, as well as a small number of articles on lesser-known companies such as Kaki Kuu Kyaku (who run an all-female Shakespeare series under the name of ‘Nyotai’, or ‘female body’), Ryutopia or Yamanote Jijosha, for example.[20]

There are a number of studies on Ninagawa himself, including Arthur Horowitz’s *Prospero’s ‘True Preservers’: Peter Brook, Yukio Ninagawa and Giorgio Strehler - Twentieth-Century Directors Approach Shakespeare’s ‘The Tempest’* (2004), Kawai Shoichiro’s chapter in *The Routledge Companion to Directors’ Shakespeare* (2008) and Huang’s in *Great Shakespeareans*, in addition to numerous other articles, reviews and interviews. Ninagawa features heavily in this present study, but I focus on his later career which has rarely been discussed in any significant detail in either English or Japanese: I will be looking in particular detail at the two companies he created at Sai-no-kuni Saitama Arts Theatre, Saitama Next Theatre and Saitama Gold Theatre, who have yet to be included in any

[20] See for example, Minami Ryuta, ‘Finding a Style for Presenting Shakespeare on the Japanese Stage’, *Multicultural Shakespeare: Translation, Appropriation and Performance*, 14.29 (2016), 29-42.

major study in English. Other companies discussed here, such as Kakushinhan, Underground Airport and Mum&Gypsy have only been written about briefly in English in places such as the *Japan Times* and database *Performing Arts Network Japan* (performingarts.jp), and have yet to be compared with wider trends in the adaptation of Shakespeare in Japan. A number of collaborations between British and Japanese artists are discussed throughout this study (most notably Gregory Doran's 2007 production of *The Merchant of Venice*), and the influence and ongoing exchanges between the Japanese and British theatre worlds, besides the interaction between concepts of 'Britain's Shakesepeare' and 'Japan's Shakespeare' (and thereby Japan's relationship with the 'west') are also examined.

**The Place of Hybridity and Identity in Theatre**

A crucial framework for this study is the theory of hybrid theatre, and the interrelated concept of interculturalism. Interculturalism has become a contested term, and numerous models of how intercultural theatre operates have been put forward by different theorists. In its simplest sense, I will be using intercultural to refer to performances which consciously mix elements from different cultures; this mixing occurs to different degrees, arises from different motivations and has different results in each particular performance, but ultimately I agree with Ric Knowles's proposal that the intercultural is a useful term because it 'evokes the possibility of interaction across a multiplicity of cultural positionings, avoiding binary codings'.[21] I will be using intercultural in line with Knowles's idea, as an example of performance which embodies interaction across 'cultural positionings', although there are other terms which could be used such as cross-cultural or transcultural: I will be using the term intercultural because I view it as offering more potential for a two-way dialogue between cultures.

[21] Ric Knowles, *Theatre & Interculturalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 4.

It is essential to acknowledge that for many critics both the term and the practice of interculturalism have been regarded as problematic, and there have been many issues in the course of the term's usage. It has been seen variously as contributing to the erasure of difference, as an excuse for merely aesthetic appropriation and exploitation, and as the subject-matter of a critical field dominated by western scholars. It is certainly true that much of the literature on intercultural theatre is from critics based in the west, and often focuses on performances by western artists, and so to counter this I will also be referring to work by non-anglophone theorists such as Uchino Tadashi, Anan Nobuko and Noda Manabu. Peter Brook and Ariane Mnouchkine have been two of the key figures in the western-centric trend in intercultural studies, and they have also been seen as figureheads of the exploitative thread of intercultural theatre, tied to imperialism and exoticism. Rustam Bharucha has voiced a well-known argument against interculturalism, stating that it should be a ''two-way street', based on a mutual reciprocity of needs', but that due to western domination the two-way street 'could be more accurately described as a 'dead-end''.[22] Although Bharucha is not alone in this criticism, and while it is essential to always be aware of the politics of the 'delicate enterprise' of intercultural theatre, as Daryl Chin terms it, there have been some who have argued against the rejection of the form.[23] Jacqueline Lo and Helen Gilbert, for example, point out that the criticisms against interculturalism 'risk instigating a kind of paralysis insofar as they suggest that virtually no form of theatrical exchange can be ethical'.[24]

Of the various theoretical models proposed for intercultural exchange, it should be acknowledged that each has its own drawbacks and each, in its own way, establishes binary

[22] Rustam Bharucha, *Theatre and the World: Performance and the Politics of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 2.
[23] Daryl Chin, 'Interculturalism, Postmodernism, Pluralism', in *Interculturalism and Performance: Writings from PAJ*, ed. by Bonnie Marranca and Gautam Dasgupta (New York: PAJ Publications, 1991), pp. 83-95 (p. 94).
[24] Jacqueline Lo and Helen Gilbert, 'Toward a Topography of Cross-Cultural Theatre Praxis', *TDR*, 24.3 (2002), 31-53 (41).

divisions between cultures. Many recent studies have warned against the universalist tendencies embedded within these models, and the argument is succinctly explained by Knowles, who writes that 'what is needed now',

> is a model of scholarly praxis that is humble before the dizzying multiplicities of its objects of study, that is cognisant of the researcher's own positioning and the process of scholarship as itself necessarily intercultural performance, and that it does its homework in terms of attempting to understand cultural and performance forms in situ.[25]

Before turning to more recent proposals for intercultural theatre, it is first necessary to consider the main theoretical models that have been developed in the field, starting with Patrice Pavis. Pavis's hourglass model (1992) was one of the earliest and most well-known of the theories, although it has since been widely criticised. In Pavis's theory, the upper part of the hourglass is the source culture and the lower is the target culture, and the desired elements of the source culture (which need to be 'sufficiently fine') flow down into the target culture through the funnel, and the hourglass model is therefore designed to reflect on the 'intercultural transfer' between these two elements.[26] While Pavis suggests that the 'hourglass is designed to be turned upside-down', allowing culture to 'flow indefinitely' from one area to another, this model ultimately only allows for exchange in one direction.[27] The exchange moves from the 'source' (usually non-western) to the 'target' (usually the west), with the participating cultures therefore split between being the source and target, with no possibility of both feeding into the source or both being the target culture. It is impossible to develop a theory of mutual exchange, benefit or communication using such a system, as Knowles

[25] Knowles, pp. 60-61.
[26] Patrice Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 5.
[27] Ibid.

demonstrates when he writes that 'in its unidirectionality, [it] does not sound terribly *inter*cultural'.[28] In *The Routledge Dictionary of Performance and Contemporary Theatre* (2016), Pavis questioned whether intercultural theatre 'still exists', stating that there has been a 'big move away from the intercultural experiments of the 1980s' by artists such as Brook and Mnouchkine, and that there is 'no longer any debate, as formerly, about the legitimacy of intercultural experiences'.[29] Although concluding that it still exists but in a variety of different forms (including 'syncretic theatre', 'multicultural theatre' and others which he groups under the heading 'globalised theatre'), Pavis's question seems to still rely on the same out-dated ideas of interculturalism that he used in 1992.[30] Performance theorist Uchino Tadashi has tellingly described Pavis's work as being 'obviously eurocentric' and 'neo-colonial', which is arguably still visible in his 2016 writing on the intercultural.[31]

Marvin Carlson has proposed a different model, based on seven-steps which depict the 'possible relationships between the culturally familiar and the culturally foreign'.[32] Carlson's model is particularly useful in that it describes the various levels of engagement that can take place, starting with the superficial (i.e. when some unfamiliar elements are incorporated into the production, and 'the audience can be interested, entertained, stimulated, but they are not challenged by the foreign material') and ending with 'an entire performance from another culture is imported or recreated, with no attempt to accommodate it with the familiar'.[33] Unlike the hourglass, Carlson's theory acknowledges that different types and levels of

[28] Knowles, p. 25.
[29] Patrice Pavis, *The Routledge Dictionary of Performance and Contemporary Theatre*, trans. by Andrew Brown (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 104.
[30] Ibid., pp. 107-08.
[31] Uchino Tadashi, *Crucible Bodies: Postwar Japanese Performance from Brecht to the New Millennium* (London: Seagull Books, 2009), p. 191.
[32] Marvin Carlson, 'Peter Brook's *The Mahabharata* and Ariane Mnouchkine's *L'Indiade* as Examples of Contemporary Cross-Cultural Theatre', in *The Dramatic Touch of Difference: Theatre, Own and Foreign*, ed. by Erika Fischer-Lichte, Josephine Riley and Michael Gissenwehrer (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 1990), pp. 49-56 (p. 50).
[33] Ibid.

intercultural exchange that can take place, but it again separates the cultures into the familiar and foreign with no middle ground between them. The fourth step in his model is when 'the foreign and familiar create a new blend, which is then assimilated into the tradition, becoming familiar'.[34] I agree with Julie Holledge and Joanne Tompkins, however, when they write that a successful intercultural performance does 'not necessarily have to coincide' with this step, as the 'foreign' culture does not have to become assimilated in order for the performance to be considered a success.[35] I would argue that there is still space for unfamiliarity between the cultures and its audiences, without the two having to be split into the familiar/foreign, or own/other, and that is a crucial part of the concept of hybridity which I will discuss later.

Holledge and Tompkins have argued against using a single model of interculturalism, as such a model would 'risk assuming too many similarities among cultures and theatrical practices'.[36] For them, intercultural theatre is often inextricable from the global market and the financial support it receives, and they further argue that it is impossible to develop a definitive model because each particular performance is dependent on its production context: who is involved, where it takes place, the individual cultures involved and how it is supported.[37] Their stance has been criticised by Lo and Gilbert, however, who write that working on a case by case basis fails to 'engage with the 'big picture'', and runs the risk of 'consolidating the ideological premises of interculturalism as a western dominated form of knowledge production'.[38] Despite this, their discussion on intercultural theatre is useful because it emphasises the importance of context, and for their reminder that 'much like a chemical explosion generated by two otherwise non-reactive substances, the nature of

[34] Ibid.
[35] Julie Holledge and Joanne Tompkins, *Women's Intercultural Performance* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 8-9.
[36] Ibid., p. 3.
[37] Ibid., p. 4.
[38] Lo and Gilbert, 37.

interculturalism is such that collaborations may not work despite all the best intentions and good planning'.[39]

Li Ruru and Jonathan Pitches suggested the 'Shaker' model as an alternative to the hourglass, which like Lo and Gilbert's is a kind of 'toppled' hourglass.[40] In this system, the play being produced is in the centre with the two participating cultures at either end. Their concept is also depicted as layers, starting with intracultural exchange, then inter-methodological exchange, and then collective skills intercultural exchange. The authors acknowledge that like other methodologies, it 'suffers from the same tendency to shore up cultural binaries', creating the image of 'two distinct and homogenous cultures, separated by a creative project and 'unified', simply (if not simplistically) through work on that project'.[41] Furthermore, they add a similar warning to those voiced by Holledge and Tompkins, stating that 'each intercultural project must define itself on its own terms, naturally resisting any linear models of communication and instead negotiating the layers of cultural complexity uniquely each time'.[42]

I will broadly follow the system proposed by Lo and Gilbert in response to Pavis's hourglass, which allows for 'traffic in both directions'.[43] They propose a continuum of intercultural theatre, with a 'collaborative mode of exchange' situated at one end and 'imperialistic' at the other, with all intercultural exchanges taking place between these two poles.[44] Therefore, although their model is as reliant on a two-way flow between cultures as the other models, it is perhaps the most useful as both participating cultures are viewed as

[39] Holledge and Tompkins, p. 4.
[40] Li Ruru and Jonathan Pitches, 'The End of the Hour-Glass: Alternative Conceptions of Intercultural Exchange Between European and Chinese Operatic Forms', *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 32.2 (2012), 121-37 (125).
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid., 134.
[43] Knowles, p. 26; Lo and Gilbert, 45.
[44] Lo and Gilbert, 38.

sources and the audience is 'positioned along a continuum between them into which both feed'.[45] Unlike other models, and in particular Pavis's hourglass model, if the exchange is between west-east, the western artist is not necessarily depicted as dominating the exchange, offering a more level-ground for the artists to collaborate on: this is particularly important because, as Chin argues, 'interculturalism hinges on the questions of autonomy and empowerment'.[46] In addition to allowing for a more two-way exchange to take place, since both cultures act as sources in this model, it also acknowledges that intercultural theatre is neither static nor independent of its performance context. The 'target culture', or the audience, is positioned somewhere between the two source cultures, and it too can move along the continuum. Their system is extremely useful because not only does it acknowledge that the position of the audience might change at any point in the process, they also stress that both participating cultures 'undergo a similar process of filtration and hybridisation, however differently experienced', even if the target culture is very closely aligned to one of the participating groups.[47] When discussing collaborative or exchanged theatre, this refusal to place the cultures within a hierarchy is extremely important, as will be seen in British-Japanese collaborations such as Doran's *Merchant of Venice*.

They suggest that the most collaborative projects 'emphasise the processes and politics of exchange rather than the theatrical product', while those at the imperialistic end of the continuum are more focused on creating a spectacle for the consumption of the 'dominant culture'.[48] Crucially, they also argue that in collaborative projects the aim is 'not to produce a harmonious experience', but to 'explore the fullness of cultural exchange in all its

[45] Ibid.
[46] Chin, p. 94.
[47] Lo and Gilbert, 45.
[48] Ibid., 39.

contradictions and convergences for all parties'.[49] Unlike both the hourglass model and Carlson's seven steps, this is the only system which allows for the difficulties inherent in intercultural theatre for the artists and which furthermore problematises the notion that the end result must be 'harmonious' for the project to be a success. It also acknowledges the different types of interculturalism, and the corresponding different experiences of agency or appropriation. For Lo and Gilbert theatre that is close to the imperialistic end of the continuum is generally western-based, driven by the perceived need to revitalise the theatre by accessing non-western forms, and which tend to be unequal in terms of agency; whereas at the other end are productions that are 'more collaborative/negotiated'.[50]

Lo and Gilbert are a useful starting point for considering the term *hybridity*, as they argue that intercultural theatre should 'draw our attention to the hyphenated third space separating and connecting different people'.[51] They also refer to Ferdinand Ortiz's concept of *transculturation*, which they suggest goes beyond 'a model of easy fusion to account for both acquisition and loss at the same time', as in this theory both interacting cultures lose some elements but ultimately are engaged in creating a 'third system'.[52] The 'third space' is a crucial part of Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity, which he suggests produces a 'third space which enables other positions to emerge', displacing existing histories and setting up new 'structures of authority'.[53] He has further written that hybridity can create a place where 'difference is neither One nor the Other but something else besides, in-between', and I will be arguing in this thesis that hybridity offers a way for artists from different cultures to negotiate their identities, producing a form that is not based on the binary of Self/Other, own/foreign or

[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid., p. 44.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid., 39.
[53] Homi K. Bhabha, 'The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha', in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. by Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), pp. 207-21 (p. 211).

east/west.[54] Hybridity therefore creates the potential to deconstruct cultural perceptions and perceived hierarchies, as well as offering artists and audiences different perspectives on their identities. Anan has written that 'no matter how hard one tries to mark the difference between the Self and the Other, the latter always melancholically haunts the former', and so I suggest that hybrid, intercultural work is a means of addressing this issue, particularly in the productions Ninagawa directed late in his career.[55] Christopher Balme argues that exoticism in the arts leads to cultural elements meaning 'little else than their alterity', and so I wish to investigate how hybridity in the theatre can contest this fixed sense of 'ours' and 'theirs', and what purposes it is used for.[56]

As with interculturalism, hybridity is a contested term and as Marwan Kraidy defines it, it is a 'risky notion' which 'comes without guarantees'.[57] Many theorists have noted how the foundations of hybrid theory lie in the 'anthropological and biological discourses of conquest and colonisation', but in its potential as a 'disruptive democratic discourse of cultural citizenship', hybridity is 'distinctly anti-imperial and antiauthoritarian', in addition to evoking 'all those ways' in which the vocabulary of imperialism was 'challenged and undermined'.[58] Pnina Werbner has also argued that hybridity is 'celebrated as powerfully interruptive and yet theorised as commonplace and pervasive', and describes the need to create a 'broader theoretical framework which aims to resolve the puzzle of how cultural

[54] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 313.
[55] Anan Nobuko, 'The Takarazuka Revue's *Wind in the Dream*: (De-) Nationalisation of Japanese Women', in *Theatre and National Identity*, ed. by Nadine Holdsworth (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 181-99 (p. 182).
[56] Christopher B. Balme, *Decolonising the Stage: Theatrical Syncretism and Post-Colonial Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), p. 5.
[57] Marwan M. Kraidy, *Hybridity, or the Cultural Logic of Globalisation* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005), p. vi.
[58] May Joseph and Jennifer Natalya Fink, *Performing Hybridity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 1; Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 173.

hybridity manages to be both transgressive and normal, and why it is experienced as dangerous, difficult or revitalising despite its quotidian normalcy'.[59]

The importance of the hybrid to this present study lies in its ability to facilitate an 'active exchange that leads to the mutual transformation of both sides', and to suggest the 'dynamic and positional nature of identity'.[60] As translator Matsuoka Kazuko has suggested, the act first of translating Shakespeare into Japanese, and then staging that translation with Japanese actors, inevitably creates 'cultural hybrids', an idea that is evocative of Beverley Curran's statement that translation is a 'process involving multiple languages speaking to each other and pluralised authenticities'.[61] The emergence of hybridity, and of different forms of hybridity even within a single performance, can therefore be 'subversive in its ability to posit different ways of knowing the world', questioning boundaries and differences that have been 'naturalised' over time.[62] Hybridity can therefore be used to question and problematise essentialisms, although as with intercultural theory there is a risk of falling into universalising or utopianism. The crucial part of hybridity, whether it occurs between artists of different nationalities or not, is that for it to remain a 'productive form', the interacting cultures 'must generate an energy that is almost chemical in its recombinative effects', the result of which is not necessarily a harmonious or seamless blend of cultures but one that may reveal 'areas of conflict' in which 'cultural tensions would not be hidden nor difference naturalised'.[63] As

[59] Pnina Werbner, 'Introduction: The Dialectics of Cultural Hybridity', in *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multicultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, ed. by Pnina Werbner and Tariq Modood (London: Zed Books, 1997), pp. 1-26 (pp. 1, 4).
[60] Kraidy, p. 148; Hazel Easthope, 'Fixed Identities in a Mobile World? The Relationship between Mobility, Place and Identity', *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 16.1 (2009), 61-82 (68).
[61] Matsuoka Kazuko, 'Shakespeare and Translation' (lecture), Kyoto Sangyo University (4 December 2016); Beverley Curran, *Theatre Translation Theory and Performance in Contemporary Japan: Native Voices, Foreign Bodies* (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 1.
[62] William Peterson, 'Consuming the Asian Other in Singapore: Interculturalism in TheatreWorks' *Desdemona*', *Theatre Research International*, 28.1 (2003), 79-95 (80); Joel Kuortti and Jopi Nyman, *Reconstructing Hybridity: Post-Colonial Studies in Transition* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), p. 1.
[63] Holledge and Tompkins, p. 120; Lo and Gilbert, 41, 48.

Yong Li Lan writes, culture is 'sustained *by and as performance*', so these hybridised productions offer a chance of experimenting with different styles of 'culture' in which the 'qualities of two or more cultures mix and merge as cultural signifiers jump from one body to another'.[64] Knowles writes that these hybrid performances do not function 'merely as sites of semiotic intersection', but as sites for the 'construction of new, hybrid and diasporic identities', which are the kind of hybrid identities I will be investigating in this thesis.[65]

As this thesis will discuss, while Ninagawa is well known for his work on hybrid theatre, the later stage of his career was also marked by a move into intergenerational theatre. Intergenerational theatre, or intergenerationality, has been described as the 'interactions between generations – themselves products of particular times, spaces and culture – that have significant effects on a whole range of social issues'.[66] This shift can be traced in his work with his theatre company Saitama Gold Theatre, which he established for actors over the age of fifty-five, and this company's later collaborations with Saitama Next Theatre (established by Ninagawa for younger actors). The performance of *Richard II* (2015) produced by these two companies offers a clear case study on the possibilities of intergenerational theatre. By working with senior actors, Ninagawa also began working with issues to do with the older generation and their representation in both art and society. Gerontology, sometimes referred to as modern age studies, 'continually returns' to the 'questions of meaning: what does it *mean* to be old? To the old person? To others?'.[67] Michael Mangan argues that theatre is

[64] Yong Li Lan, 'Shakespeare and the Fiction of the Intercultural', in *The Blackwell Companion to Shakespeare and Performance*, ed. by Barbara Hodgdon and W.B. Worthen (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 527-49 (p. 532); Holledge and Tompkins, p. 113.
[65] Knowles, p. 59.
[66] Peter Hopkins and others, 'Mapping Intergenerationalities: The Formation of Youthful Religiosities', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 36 (2010), 314-27 (314).
[67] Michael Mangan, *Staging Ageing: Theatre, Performance and the Narrative of Decline* (Bristol: Intellect, 2013), p. 18.

> more inextricably bound up with age ideology than is the case with most art forms. The primary medium of theatrical performance, after all, is the human body. And the human body is always of a specific age – whether that be old or young. The specificity of that age becomes part of the meaning of the theatrical experience as whole.[68]

He goes on to discuss how performance can also 'critique and subvert hegemony as well as comply with it', which is reminiscent of Jen Harvie's development of the theory of 'chrononormativity'.[69]

Elizabeth Freeman defines 'chrononormatives' as 'manipulations of time' that 'convert historically specific regimes of asymmetrical power into seemingly ordinary bodily tempos and routines', and Harvie has expanded this into a discussion of the 'chrononormative' as the ''generational warfare' attributed to relations between so-called baby boomers (born between the mid-1940s and mid-'60s) and Millennials (born between 1980 and 2000), and the 'age crisis' attributed to an increasingly ageing population'.[70] She argues that neither this generational warfare nor the age crisis are 'necessarily true', and that intergenerational theatre can 'stage intergenerational relations, old age, history, and time as more complex, dynamic, and non-linear than the chrononormative binary categorisation that 'generation war' relies on'.[71] As with his work on intercultural theatre then, Ninagawa's development into intergenerational theatre is also a way of challenging binaries and of creating new kinds of representation.

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[68] Ibid., pp. 8-9.
[69] Ibid., p. 9.
[70] Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 3; Jen Harvie, *QUORUM Postgraduate Drama Seminar: Jen Harvie – Wednesday 11 October 2017* (2017) < http://www.blogs.sed.qmul.ac.uk/event/quorum-postgraduate-drama-seminar-jen-harvie-wednesday-11-october-2017> [accessed 10 September 2018].
[71] Harvie.

Before considering how developments in Japan have affected the theatre, the intersection between hybrid theatre and postcolonial theatre should be acknowledged. Hybridity is closely related to postcolonial theory, but the application of postcolonialism to Japan's experience with the west is complicated by the country's own status as a colonial power, making it both coloniser and 'colonised'. Postcolonialism can add usefully to analysis on 'agency, hybridity and authenticity, issues that lie at the heart of intercultural praxis', but as Japan was never directly colonised by a western power it has been argued that postcolonial theory 'cannot simply be stretched to fit the Japanese' experience.[72] Similarly, Jonah Salz has suggested that Okinawa, which was historically an independent region from Japan, is the only place in Japan where a 'postcolonial perspective is appropriate' (although this theory arguably excludes the Ainu experience in Hokkaido).[73] However, as Hilberdink-Sakamoto argues, Japanese performances of western texts, 'though not a product of colonialism' can be political because Japan has historically been the west's 'Oriental 'other', while the Occidental has already claimed identification with the 'self''.[74] English writers of the nineteenth-century referred to Japan in terms reminiscent of colonialism, with Osman Edwards's 1901 study on Japanese theatre stating that '[c]loser intercourse and wider education will cause wisdom to spread down from the rulers to the ruled', a clear statement of the west's assumed superiority in its relationship with Japan during this period.[75] However, as noted above Japan's own experience as a coloniser complicates this notion, and Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei has eloquently outlined the paradoxes inherent in the country's historical development since it first re-opened to the west in 1853:

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[72] Lo and Gilbert, 44; John Gillies and others, 'Shakespeare on the Stages of Asia', in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Stage*, ed. by Stanley Wells and Sarah Stanton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 259-83 (p. 259).
[73] Jonah Salz, 'Editor's Introduction', in *A History of Japanese Theatre*, ed. by Salz, pp. xxxiv-xli (p. xxxvii).
[74] Hilberdink-Sakamoto, p. 71.
[75] Osman Edwards, *Japanese Plays and Playfellows* (London: William Heinemann, 1901), p. 30.

> The nation is not really Western, though it is Westernised. It is not really postcolonial, because the seven year American occupation was the only moment of colonisation in its history. It is not really a territory or possession of the US, though by law it must allow American military installations and America is legally obliged to protect it. […]. It is no longer an imperial power, yet it remains a dominant cultural and economic force in Asia. Most tellingly, both Japanese and non-Japanese continue to feel conflicted over the nation's status in relation to the Second World War. Should its legacy (and warning) be as the world's only victim of atomic attacks, or as the brutal victimiser of the rest of Asia?[76]

**Shakespeare in Post-'3.11' Japan**

The role that theatre can play in 'nation work', in helping to perform, question or reject concepts of national and individual identity and cultural representation, is important in the following discussion.[77] The idea of what the 'nation' is in Japan has been constantly and rapidly changing over the past century, often closely intersecting with its relationship with the west and with 'larger perceptions' and the 'geopolitical positioning of Japan'.[78] As will be developed in the following chapters, Japanese society has undergone enormous changes since the mid-nineteenth-century, and developments in the theatre have consistently reflected these shifts. A key event in the recent past that has affected the image of Japan both domestically and internationally is the crash of the 'bubble economy' (1986-1991), following the so-called 'miracle' recovery of the economy after World War Two. It has been argued by some critics, including J.R. Mulryne, that it was only after Japan became an international economic power

[76] Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei, 'Countering 'Theoretical Imperialism': Some Possibilities from Japan', *Theatre Research International*, 32.3 (2007), 312-24 (314-15).
[77] Kristin Surak, *Making Tea, Making Japan: Cultural Nationalism in Practice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), p.3.
[78] David Jortner, 'English Language Scholarship: A Critical Overview', in *A History of Japanese Theatre*, ed. by Salz, pp. 463-79 (p. 463).

that it 'gained once more the confidence to embrace and incorporate' traditional theatre into contemporary performance, but since the crash Japan has transitioned from an 'economic superpower' to 'what power'.[79] In Uchino's influential study on contemporary performance, he argues that it is necessary to 'understand the sociopolitical actualities' of Japanese society 'in order to grasp what [is] happening with these younger artists. Or, to put it another way, much of today's Japanese performing arts need to be analysed in terms of the social, economic and political actualities of globalisations'.[80] Much of the following discussion will consider the impact, or the perceived impact, of developments in Japanese society on the performance of Japanese artists: in particular, on those of the younger generation, who have been described as the 'Lost Generation' following the economic downturn.

In the period covered by the major studies on Shakespearean performance in Japan, Japanese society faced several serious challenges including the bursting of the bubble, the Great Hanshin Earthquake (1995) and the Aum Shinrikyo terrorist attack on the Tokyo metro (1995). Although these events have maintained a degree of influence, particularly on older artists, they have been superseded by more recent developments: the rise of global terrorism, environmental and political crises, and the so-called 'demographic time bomb' of an ageing population and declining birth-rate. Perhaps most significant of all was the triple-disaster which occurred on 11 March 2011, when 'Japan moved eight feet closer to North America, the earth's axis shifted, and the world turned upside down for 128 million Japanese'.[81] While there have been many serious earthquakes in recent Japanese history, what made the Great East Japan Earthquake, also known as 3.11, so devastating was the combination of the largest recorded earthquake (9.0 magnitude), the 3.5 to 9.3 metre tsunami which wiped out much of

[79] J.R. Mulryne, 'Introduction', in *Shakespeare and the Japanese Stage*, ed. by Takashi Sasayama, J.R. Mulryne and Margaret Shewring (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 1-11 (p. 4); Reinhard Drifte, *Japan's Foreign Policy: From Economic Superpower to What Power?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998).
[80] Uchino, p. 131.
[81] Richard J. Samuels, *3.11: Disaster and Change in Japan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), p. ix.

the Tohoku coastline, and the ensuing nuclear crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. As Barbara Geilhorn and Kristina Iwata-Weickgenannt write, the facts of the disaster are 'dizzying' in their scale: '*souteigai*, or 'exceeding all expectations', was one of the most frequently repeated adjectives used to describe the quake and tsunami, both of which were classified as occurring once in a thousand years'.[82] Not only did the disaster cause a massive loss of life, the destruction of 500 km of the coastline, and significant damage to regional economies, the nuclear dimension of the crisis also created a deep and long-lasting sense of anxiety and uncertainty. As a response to the social upheaval artists have been seeking means of expression, both for the disaster itself (as Mark Cody Poulton suggests, the theatre has played a role in 'mourning' for the dead of 3.11), and for its ongoing effects.[83] In this thesis I will be arguing that 3.11 has been an extremely significant event in the Japanese theatre world, with a traceable impact on Shakespearean performance. Given that responses to disaster are a form of 'understanding' created by a community, the theatrical responses to 3.11 reveal the narratives being constructed and deconstructed in contemporary Japan.[84]

Before discussing the performances that have been responding to 3.11, it is first necessary to unpack in more detail the disaster itself, and to consider the ongoing effect it has had on Japanese society. In this 'unprecedented' disaster, the tsunami which hit much of the north-eastern coast of Japan covered an area 'equivalent to ninety per cent of central Tokyo'.[85] Nearly 19,000 people were killed in the disaster, with the majority of casualties occurring in the tsunami rather than the initial earthquake. Given the stricter building standards following the Hanshin earthquake, 'the overall damage caused by this largest quake

[82] Barbara Geilhorn and Kristina Iwata-Weickgenannt, 'Negotiating Nuclear Disaster: An Introduction', in *Fukushima and the Arts*, ed. by Geilhorn and Iwata-Weickgenannt, pp. 1-20 (p. 1).
[83] Mark Cody Poulton, 'Antigone in Japan: Some Responses to 3.11 at Festival/Tokyo 2012', in *Fukushima and the Arts*, ed. by Geilhorn and Iwata-Weickgenannt, pp. 127-43.
[84] Gennifer Weisenfeld, *Imagining Disaster: Tokyo and the Visual Culture of Japan's Great Earthquake of 1923* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2012).
[85] Samuels, p. 3.

ever recorded in Japanese history was remarkably small', with many buildings remaining standing after the quake.[86] However, 'within minutes', the tsunami destroyed a huge area of land, completely flattening many of the settlements in its path.[87] Estimates of the cost of the earthquake and tsunami vary from 16.9 trillion to 50 trillion yen, prior to the addition of costs from the reactor incident.[88] Following damage received in the tsunami, the Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant went into meltdown, making 3.11 a triple disaster. The nuclear incident added a new dimension to the crisis, and has been referred to as the 'Fukushima' disaster due to its ongoing nature, separating it from the initial damage caused by the earthquake and tsunami of '3.11'.[89] Some have criticised the term '3.11' itself as a politicised term which aims to circumscribe the disaster's effects to a 'limited and closed time and place', allowing the government to push for a narrative of reconstruction which confirms 'everything is under control for the coming [2020] Olympics'.[90] However, as Christophe Thouny suggests, the term 'post-3.11' implies that with the disaster 'something has radically changed', and that from this there is 'no return to the idealised past of postwar Japan'.[91] Additionally, using only the term 'Fukushima' undermines the importance (socially, psychologically and visually) of the earthquake and tsunami themselves.

Poulton writes that 3.11 is 'surely the most recorded disaster in world history to date, its images engraved on us to an extent that other catastrophes, like the December 26, 2004 Southeast Asian tsunami [...] are not'.[92] In her study of the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake which flattened much of Tokyo and the surrounding regions, Gennifer Weisenfeld writes that

[86] Geilhorn and Iwata-Weickgenannt, p. 1.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Samuels, p. 6.
[89] Geilhorn and Iwata-Weickgenannt, pp. 1-20.
[90] Christophe Thouny, 'Planetary Atmospheres of Fukushima: Introduction', in *Planetary Atmospheres and Urban Society After Fukushima*, ed. by Christophe Thouny and Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 1-18 (pp. 2, 7).
[91] Ibid., p. 12.
[92] Poulton, 'Antigone in Japan', p. 132.

both the 1923 and 2011 earthquakes produced 'a torrent of images that saturated the visual field'.[93] She describes how images of the disaster were used to construct 'the earthquake as a national event, rather than simply a local tragedy, that demanded solidarity from all Japanese people', a trend which was repeated after 3.11, with an ever more expanded global reach through advances in technology.[94] She adds that the 'compelling visual lexicon of disaster is enduring and undeniable'.[95] Takayama Akira, director of theatre company Port B who have staged a number of responses to the disaster, reflects a similar opinion when he states,

> Since the catastrophe, I have had many opportunities to see press photographs, but I always feel full of regret somehow. The landscape reflected there has absolutely no connection with me and yet there is a sense that it has become part of me. There is no way that I have ever entered the Fukushima exclusion zone but after one and a half years, the landscape of that place has woven itself up inside me.[96]

The prevalence of these visuals and memories will be evident in later discussions of post-3.11 theatre, particularly in Ninagawa's *Hamlet* (2012) and Fujita Takahiro's *Romeo and Juliet* (2016). The use of memories of destruction in performance should be understood in line with Weisenfeld's argument that the 'visual culture of disaster can produce an exploitative aesthetics of horror and spectacle that transforms viewers into unwitting voyeurs. At the same time, people can use images to reclaim disaster sites for social and political purposes'.[97]

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[93] Weisenfeld, p. 11.
[94] Ibid., p. 20.
[95] Ibid., p. 12.
[96] William Andrews, *Going Beyond the Heap of Broken Images: Kein Licht II* (2012) <https://tokyostages.wordpress.com/2012/12/10> [accessed 10 February 2017].
[97] Weisenfeld, p. 20.

However, while the visual impact of the earthquake and tsunami were 'massive, immediate and undeniable', that of 'Fukushima' was 'limited at best'.[98] The invisibility of radiation, and an ensuing sense of its pervasiveness, was a lead cause of anxiety. Furthermore, although the damage and loss of life from the earthquake and tsunami were immediate, Fukushima 'unfolds over time'.[99] The fear of radiation sickness and the after-effects of being exposed to radiation is something that is expected in the future, leaving the 'terror of 'Fukushima'' to emerge in 'the realm of imagination'.[100] As Iwaki Kyoko writes, Fukushima cannot be seen as a 'one-off disaster that has already finished and is in the past', but as an ongoing problem, and one that is exacerbated by distrust of the official narrative of safety.[101] Critics such as Osawa Masachi and Thouny have argued that the Fukushima crisis has inaugurated 'a new temporality that radically disrupts our sense of linear time [...] nuclear time emerges as an ongoing everyday eventfulness that keeps redefining our very ground of experience'.[102] Additionally, the man-made element of this disaster has led to accusations of hubris, and unease at the failure of technology that many people had taken for granted.[103] Although the earthquake was also felt strongly in Tokyo, it is Fukushima that played the largest part in creating a psychological disaster for the residents of Tokyo. Kitamura Saeko writes that,

> The impalpability of radiation also makes it difficult to determine who the victims are. Who counts as affected by the nuclear accidents, and how can the boundaries of affected areas and the extent of risks posed to people's health be determined? Such

[98] Geilhorn and Iwata-Weickgenannt, p. 3.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Iwaki Kyoko, 'The Politics of the Senses', p. 202.
[102] Thouny, p. 6.
[103] Weisenfeld, p. 12.

ambiguity of boundaries, paired with the impalpable nature of nuclear contamination, causes great unease.[104]

The disaster revealed existing regional disparities within Japan, leading Kawanishi Hidemichi to term Tohoku Tokyo's nuclear power 'colony'.[105] Historically, the Tohoku region has been economically deprived, and Rachel DiNitto, amongst others, has argued that 3.11 'washed away any 'veneer of prosperity' in Tohoku and laid bare its subordinate status to Tokyo'.[106] Following the large-scale evacuation of residents due to the nuclear crisis, the 'spaces of Tohoku' were transformed, remapped to 'the concentric circles of disaster zones, evacuation zones, and exclusion zones, and redefining them along new vectors of tidal waves, aftershocks, radiation exposure, and debris fields'.[107] Some critics have noted how the evacuees from the 'no-go' radiation zones have faced difficulties in integrating into society, often being 'shunned' due to the stigma of radiation.[108] Their ongoing experience has been likened to that of the *hibakusha*, the survivors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombs. The difficulties of the victims of the disaster have brought into question narratives of community and togetherness, splitting the idea of trauma into individual versus communal (or 'national'). Scott Aalgaard suggests that for this reason Tohoku is now 'a potential hotbed for unpredictable becoming' since the 'violence of the upheavals has shaken the dust off of assumptions concerning the nature of things like 'community', 'belonging', and 'Japan'', creating the possibility for 'radical rearrangement and redefinition'.[109]

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[104] Kitamura Saeko, 'Uncanny Anxiety: Literature After Fukushima', in *Fukushima and the Arts*, ed. by Geilhorn and Iwata-Weickgenannt, pp. 74-89 (p. 75).
[105] Kawanishi Hidemichi, *'Tohoku' o yomu* (Reading 'Tohoku') (Akita: Mumyōsha Shuppan, 2011), p. 20.
[106] Rachel DiNitto, 'Literature Maps Disaster: The Contending Narratives of 3.11 Fiction', in *Fukushima and the Arts*, ed. by Geilhorn and Iwata-Weickgenannt, pp. 21-38 (p. 22).
[107] Ibid., p. 21.
[108] Poulton, 'Antigone in Japan', p. 138.
[109] Scott W. Aalgaard, 'Summertime Blues: Musical Critique in the Aftermath of Japan's 'Dark Spring'', in *Fukushima and the Arts*, ed. by Geilhorn and Iwata-Weickgenannt, pp. 39-57 (p. 40).

The disaster created a profound sense of grief and anger, particularly amongst the forced evacuees of Tohoku, and signalled not only a 'crisis in nuclear technology but a crisis of trust in society at large'.[110] A perceived 'apathy' towards political demonstration and change demonstrated by many in Japanese society has been noted by a significant number of critics, with Iwaki for example suggesting that political 'apathy has been pervasive in Japan without much improvement for decades'.[111] The extent of the protests and anger following Fukushima has divided critics, with some suggesting that the response was 'significantly slim compared to the massiveness' of the event, whilst others have noted the large public demonstrations that broke out afterwards, comparing them to the movements of the 1960s.[112] However, in terms of the theatre's response to the disaster, critics have noted that in the initial post-disaster period an 'air or mood' (*kūki*) of restraint prevailed.[113] Despite this initial restraint, I argue that the theatre has responded, both directly and indirectly, to the disaster and the political situation that helped to bring it about.

3.11 has significant links with the narratives of destruction at the end of the Second World War, including the fire-bombing of Tokyo and the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, with Pablo Figueroa writing for example that the disaster is 'haunted by memories of devastation after the atomic bombings'.[114] The similarities between the destruction of the Tohoku region, and the bombed-out cities from the end of the war has made society's memories of postwar Japan powerful in the aftermath of the disaster. Geilhorn and Iwata-Weickgenannt have written that the comparisons being made between 3.11 and the 'country's defeat in World War Two' are extremely important because they suggest a

[110] Pablo Figueroa, 'Subversion and Nostalgia in Art Photography of the Fukushima Nuclear Disaster', in *Fukushima and the Arts*, ed. by Geilhorn and Iwata-Weickgenannt, pp. 58-73 (p. 71).
[111] Iwaki, 'The Politics of the Senses', p. 199.
[112] Ibid.; Poulton.
[113] Iwaki, p. 207.
[114] Figueroa, p. 59.

potential 'historical turning point', quoting Takashi Mikuriya to suggest that 3.11 will 'finally put an end to *sengo*', or the 'postwar' period.[115] Harry Harootunian has described 'Japan's long postwar', but following the disaster there is a chance for 'the beginning of a new paradigm'.[116] This new period has been termed '*saigo*' by Takashi, meaning 'after the catastrophe'.[117] Jonathan Abel similarly suggests that the 'decade-long phenomenon of Cool Japan may have come to an abrupt end on 11 March 2011. Or perhaps it just turned in a new direction'.[118] Although in the immediate aftermath of the disaster there was talk of a new post-3.11 generation, who would be 'more politically engaged' and 'socially-minded', some critics voiced hesitancy over the impact the disaster would have.[119] I agree with Poulton's suggestion that while it is too early to see the 'long-term effects', it is possible to 'sketch out some patterns that have emerged around contemporary artists' response to the disaster'.[120]

I suggest that post-3.11 theatre Japan marks a new stage in the theatre scene, and corresponds to the fact that the disaster narrative is still under construction, meaning that it is up to artists to question, address and perhaps try to heal anxieties and pain. I argue that contemporary artists are operating from a society that has suffered from feelings of paralysis and mistrust following the enormous scale of both the natural and man-made disasters, with the awareness that not only domestically, but also globally, the idea of 'Japan' has undergone a status shift in the 'global imaginary'.[121] The exported 'Cool Japan' is now overlaid with images of 'the hot, radioactive reality of post-disaster Japan'.[122] Further, the 'surfeit of voices

[115] Geilhorn and Iwata-Weickgenannt, p. 6.
[116] Harry D. Harootunian, 'Japan's Long Postwar: The Trick of Memory and the Ruse of History', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 99.4 (2000), 715-39; Geilhorn and Iwata-Weickgenannt, p. 6.
[117] Geilhorn and Iwata-Weickgenannt, p. 3.
[118] Jonathan E. Abel, 'Can Cool Japan Save Post-Disaster Japan? On the Possibilities of a Cool Japanology', *International Journal of Japanese Sociology*, 20 (2011), 59-72 (59).
[119] For example, see Samuels.
[120] Poulton, 'Antigone in Japan', p. 129.
[121] Abel, 59.
[122] Ibid.

and images' that emerged in the aftermath have caused a corresponding surge in performances reflecting and responding to the disaster.[123] For example, in Miyagi Satoshi's 2011 staging of Noda Hideki's adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which is set in a forest at the base of Mt. Fuji, 3.11 was present as an 'extralinguistic' force which imposed 'itself on the reading of the play', with the fairies wearing costumes made out of newspapers which symbolised the 'dislocation between language and its referents; between government issued reports on environmental contamination and embodied experiences of radiation at ground level'.[124] Poulton suggests that the Kanto Earthquake 'gave birth to modern drama (*shingeki*) with the building of the Tsukiji Little Theatre', and that the bombing of cities 'spurred radical experiments in underground theatre'.[125] Weisenfeld similarly suggests that 'disaster has been a generative force in Japanese culture', adding that the 1923 quake was used as a metaphor for the 'ruptures and dislocations of modernisation', with 'the shock of the quake' becoming 'the shock of the modern'.[126] The post-3.11 productions discussed in this thesis are examples of contemporary practitioners responding to a new 'shock of the modern', one which neither the government nor society has yet to 'come to terms with' in a disaster which 'continues to burn in the afterlife of nuclear contamination'.[127]

Poulton has also suggested the importance of theatre in Japan as a means of mourning the dead, tracing the history of performance back to its origin in 'the pacification of spirits'.[128] His concept that 'the membrane dividing the living from the dead' in Japan as something

[123] Poulton, 'Antigone in Japan', p. 132.
[124] Mika Eglinton, '"Thou art translated": Remapping Hideki Noda and Satoshi Miyagi's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Post-March 11 Japan', *Multicultural Shakespeare: Translation, Appropriation and Performance*, 14.1 (2016), 51-72 (61, 62).
[125] Poulton, 'Antigone in Japan', p. 129.
[126] Weisenfeld, pp. 33, 21.
[127] Poulton, 'Antigone in Japan', p. 141.
[128] Ibid.

'permeable' is crucial in his analysis of the role theatre played in response to the disaster.[129] He suggests that the Japanese public have been haunted by questions of how to commemorate the dead, and this permeable membrane between the living and the dead has been a noticeable trend in post-disaster theatre, as will be evident in the case studies discussed in this thesis, as for example in the mixing of the living and the dead, and the past and the present, in Ninagawa's *Hamlet*.[130] Fujita's *Romeo and Juliet* further demonstrated the haunting of the tsunami on the public imagination, reflecting the unease and grief of the audience through simple images which powerfully suggested post-disaster Tohoku. These productions reveal that '3.11' and the anxiety of radiation are strongly present in the theatre's imagining of contemporary Japan. As Poulton suggests,

> the pervasive presence of radiation in the soil, the water table, the sea, the air, seems to mock the distinction between the living and 'dead' matter, the afterlife of uranium, plutonium, and cesium extending far beyond the mortality of any of the humans or animals who were effected.[131]

However, there is also a space for hope within these representations of the disaster, as Henry Johnson and Jerry C. Jaffe suggest when they state that as 'the present overtakes the past, we re-write the past, we write the present and imagine the future'.[132] Post-3.11 theatre is therefore a space for both addressing the painful past and criticising the events that led to it, as well as for debating the future of society.

As mentioned previously, the majority of productions discussed in this thesis are from the Kanto area, which encompasses seven prefectures: Tokyo, Saitama, Kanagawa, Gunma,

[129] Ibid., p. 127.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid., p. 139.
[132] Henry Johnson and Jerry C. Jaffe, 'Introduction', in *Performing Japan: Contemporary Expressions of Cultural Identity*, ed. by Henry Johnson and Jerry C. Jaffe (Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2008), pp. 1-10 (p. 2).

Tochigi, Ibaraki and Chiba. This lack of representation from artists active in the Tohoku region stems partly from the Tokyo-bias displayed within the Japanese theatre world, but is also due to the fact that there are few groups active in the region who have consistently engaged with Shakespeare. A notable exception is the Shakespeare Company Japan which is based in Sendai (Tohoku), which was founded in 1992 by Shimodate Kazumi. The company have consistently presented adaptations of Shakespeare in an amalgamation of dialects from the region (known as '*Tohoku-ben*'), using local settings and historical events to adapt the plays. Following the earthquake, the company has been creating new productions which it tours to areas affected by the disaster, providing disaster relief performances to help entertain survivors and evacuees. The crucial aspect of these new productions is that they have been rewritten to include 'happy endings'. Shimodate states that his inspiration came from a conversation with a Sendai resident, who told him to return to making theatre and to 'make them short and funny, and don't have anyone die'.[133] Since then, the company has performed a new version of *Romeo and Juliet* and *King Lear*, set in the region and using the community's familiar everyday dialects, and toured them to areas hit by the tsunami. The Shakespeare Company has therefore been doing valuable community work, using Shakespeare as a starting-point to bring laughter to the disaster-hit regions. Another noteworthy non-Kanto example is that of the Iwaki Alios theatre in Fukushima prefecture, which annually holds a performance with Iwaki citizens called 'Shakespeare Made In

[133] Rick Westhead, 'Japan's Tsunami Recovery Includes Laughing at *King Lear*', *Star*, (8 February 2014) <https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2014/02/08/japans_tsunami_recovery_includes_laughing_at_king_lear.html> [accessed 12 March 2018].

Iwaki'.[134] Following 3.11, those involved in the project travelled to Fukushima to present play-readings to the evacuees who were temporarily based in the theatre itself.[135]

In his 2012 *Cymbeline*, Ninagawa made a rare intervention into the Shakespearean text, changing the cedar tree in the play's final scene to a pine tree. This pine tree had strong connections to the so-called 'Miracle Pine', a pine tree which was left standing in Rikuzen Takata, one of the towns destroyed by the tsunami. The pine came to be seen as a symbol of hope, and its inclusion in the final scene of *Cymbeline* in which children who were thought to be dead are returned, and 'peace and plenty' (5.5.457) is promised for the future, was received as both a powerful symbol and a 'kitsch icon' for hope.[136] However, as Noda Manabu argues, Ninagawa's pine is also interwoven with a reference to Noh, where the back of the stage is painted with a pine tree, and most importantly to the Noh play *Matsukaze* ('Wind in the Pines/Pining Wind'), a play about two ghosts who cannot find rest because of the 'eternal limbo of waiting for the unattainable' that they are in, in which a small pine tree is always used on the stage.[137] Noda writes that the second meaning of this pine tree, then, is the 'lingering, Beckettian after-end in the form [...] imploding the longing for any imminent closure. It appears that we will have to keep on fabricating many different ends in our unending process of ending'.[138]

These are just a small number of the wide-ranging responses the disaster has inspired, but as I will develop throughout this thesis the sense of anxiety created by 3.11 and by the

[134] Masaki Hiroyuki, 'Theatres Shaken by the 3/11 Quake in Japan', *Critical Stages/Scènes Critiques*, 6 (2012) <http://www.critical-stages.org/6/theatres-shaken-by-the-311-quake-in-japan> [accessed 12 July 2017].
[135] Ibid.
[136] William Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, 3rd series, ed. by Valerie Wayne (London: Bloomsbury, Arden Shakespeare, 2017), p. 375; Noda Manabu, 'Trying to Give Shape to an Unending End: Post-3/11 Theatre in Tokyo', *Critical Stages/Scènes Critiques*, 6 (2012) <http://www.critical-stages.org/6/trying-to-give-shape-to-an-unending-end-post-311-theatre-in-tokyo> [accessed 12 July 2017].
[137] Noda, 'Trying to Give Shape'.
[138] Ibid.

issues of demographics have been strongly reflected in the contemporary theatre, which has used, amongst others, Shakespeare's plays as a vehicle to address concerns for the future. Minami Ryuta describes the Japanese theatre as being 'haunted' by Shakespeare, and it is certainly true that Shakespeare seems to have a hyper-visibility and is returned to again and again by artists and audiences.[139] Perhaps one of the crucial reasons for this repeated return to Shakespeare lies in the multitude of different translations of the plays that are available, the 'unprecedented availability' of which has highlighted the 'instability of Shakespeare's texts in Japanese' encouraging artists to adapt, and re-adapt, the plays.[140] Elizabeth Klett writes that using the prefix 're-' indicates the 'distinction between performing an action again' and 'performing it with a difference', and this is an idea I will expand on in the next chapter: that, based on the history of interactions between Japanese Shakespeares and British Shakespeares, Japanese artists are, to borrow Daniel Gallimore's words, 'returning a product of Anglophone culture, with a difference'.[141]

This thesis begins with a discussion of the changing position of 'canonical', or *shingeki* ('New Drama'), Shakespeare, taking the example of two previously 'western-authentic' sites (Shakespeare Country Park and the Tokyo Globe) as examples of the shift in attitudes. The first chapter concludes with a discussion on two different approaches to staging *The Merchant of Venice* as further evidence of these developments. The second chapter then introduces the concept of the 'superflat' and applies it to the contemporary performance by young artists, building on the move from restrictive authenticity to freedom to interpret the plays in any style discussed in the previous chapter. The superflat is introduced through an

[139] Minami Ryuta, '"What, has this thing appear'd again tonight?": Re-Playing Shakespeares on the Japanese Stage', in *Re-Playing Shakespeare in Asia*, ed. by Poonam Trivedi and Minami Ryuta (New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 76-96.
[140] Gallimore and Minami, p. 494.
[141] Elizabeth Klett, *Cross-Gender Shakespeare and English National Identity: Wearing the Codpiece* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 7; Daniel Gallimore, 'Shakespeare's History Plays in Japan', in *Shakespeare's History Plays: Performance, Translation and Adaptation in Britain and Abroad*, ed. by Ton Hoenselaars (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 92-107 (p. 98).

analysis of Ninagawa's 2015 production of *Hamlet*, which notably employed the concept in its depiction of Fortinbras, using the more familiar work of Ninagawa before considering productions by three less well-known companies (Mum&Gypsy, Kakushinhan and Underground Airport) that are also related to the superflat.

The next chapter then goes back to Ninagawa, and discusses his 2012 adaptation of *Hamlet* with Saitama Next Theatre; rather than group Ninagawa's *Hamlet*s together, and indeed rather than arrange the studies chronologically (moving from Ninagawa into the post-Ninagawa work of the younger generation of artists), this thesis instead first introduces the superflat through case studies of relevant companies before concentrating on Ninagawa as one of the best examples of the intertwining of all these related theories and practices. This then leads to the final chapter, which is a study of his 2015 production of *Richard II*, which was described as his 'masterpiece' by numerous critics: the previous chapters having provided a solid foundation to examine this production in depth, and helping to reveal what it was exactly that made this such a successful and noteworthy performance.

In a note on terminology, for clarity's sake in this thesis Japanese names are written surname first, for example Ninagawa Yukio rather than Yukio Ninagawa. I will also be using 'west' and 'east' rather than 'West/East', to avoid what I see as an inherent essentialism and hierarchy embedded in these terms. Throughout this thesis I cite numerous sources from Japanese, and when no translator is listed the translation into English has been undertaken by me.

## CHAPTER ONE

### The Journey from Shakespeare Country Park to Johnny's Tokyo Globe: the Changing Spaces of Cultural Performance

Within the last twenty years in Japan 'Shakespeare' has become something so large and diffuse that it is difficult to follow every manifestation across different media. Not only are Shakespeare's works hyper-present within contemporary Japanese theatre, there are also references to and traces of them in television, literature, manga, anime, video games, advertising, comedy, music, fashion, art, pro-wrestling, hotel and bar names, gardens, and exhibitions. Even the briefest overview of the current manifestations of Shakespeare within Japan reveals the impossibility of neat categorisation, and as the situation stands, current references to, uses and appropriations of 'Shakespeare' are not bound to either so-called elite high culture or popular low culture, literature or performance, reverent or irreverent, amateur or professional, Japanese or English. Instead, Shakespeare often falls somewhere in-between these categories. Based on Minami's theory, Shakespeare's reception in Japan has been described as a journey from 'a bound book (the First Folio)' to a 'readily available and ever-growing virtual 'database' which, like Wikipedia or YouTube, is open to anyone to contribute, comment, and re-create'.[1] This idea is readily apparent, and what can be understood from the cacophony of responses is that Shakespeare, in contemporary Japan, is by no means untouchable and neither is it seen as a key to unlocking an ideal, imagined, west.

The performance of Shakespeare in Japan has undergone several stages reflecting different developments in society, and reoccurring themes within clusters of Shakespeare produced in particular phases of these developments are a good indicator of the issues or

[1] Bi-qi Beatrice Lei, 'Shakespeare's Asian Journeys: An Introduction', in *Shakespeare's Asian Journeys*, ed. by Lei, Ick and Trivedi, pp. 1-15 (p. 14).

anxieties that were current at the time. Gallimore and Minami refer to 'seven stages' in Shakespeare's reception in Japan, which they describe as reflecting 'not only the development of modern Japanese theatre but the country's shifting relationships with the imagined West'.[2] Their theory builds on Anzai's earlier notion of four stages: Meiji adaptation, *shingeki* (when Shakespeare was 'more read than staged'), Fukuda Tsuneari's productions (1955-1970), and *shogekijo* or the Little Theatre Movement.[3] *Shogekijo* refers to the avant-garde movement that first appeared in the 1960s, also known as the Underground Theatre Movement, which rejected the established norms of *shingeki*. Anzai later added a fifth stage which was marked by the opening of the Tokyo Globe in 1989.[4] Murakami Takeshi offers a different model based on translation style, dividing it into 'adaptations (1885-1905)', 'adaptations and Tsubouchi Shoyo's translations' (1906-1920), Tsubouchi (1920s-1960), Fukuda (1960s), 'rival translations I' (1970-1974), and Odashima Yushi (1975-1985), then delineating a more miscellaneous, implicitly post-modern phase, 'rival translations II' from 1985 onwards.[5] In Gallimore and Minami's view, the seven stages are,

(1) 'Prehistory'
(2) Kabuki adaptations
(3) *Shinpa* adaptations
(4) Early *shingeki* translations
(5) Mature *shingeki* replication of British productions
(6) Little Theatre adaptations in contemporary style
(7) Reinvention [6]

[2] Gallimore and Minami, 'Seven Stages', p. 484.
[3] Ibid., p. 485; Anzai Tetsuo, 'A Century of Shakespeare in Japan; A Brief Historical Survey', in *Shakespeare in Japan*, ed. by Anzai Tetsuo and others (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, 1999), pp. 3-12.
[4] Gallimore and Minami, p. 485.
[5] Murakami Takeshi, 'Shakespeare and *Hamlet* in Japan: a Chronological Overview', in *Hamlet and Japan*, ed. by Ueno Yoshiko (New York: AMS Press, 1995), pp. 239-304 (p. 240).
[6] Gallimore and Minami, pp. 485-86.

Although, as they themselves admit, there are overlaps and similarities between some of the stages, as a general guide this schema provides a useful shorthand by which to mark changing performance trends from the late nineteenth through the early twenty-first centuries.[7] The majority of productions discussed in this thesis fall into the seventh category, in which performances tend to display an 'experimental, even radical, interpretation and internationalisation of 'Japanese' Shakespeare''.[8]

The first stage, 'prehistory', is limited to inferred but undocumented interactions between Japanese theatre and Shakespeare in the period prior to the officially recognised 'introduction' of the plays. Proponents of this theory often cite the similarity between the plot and characters of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and Chikamatsu Hanji's play *Imoseyama Onna Teikin* (1771) as an example, which details a tragic love story between the children of two rival families.[9] However, critics such as James Brandon have argued against this theory, stating that it is 'extremely improbable that playwrights before 1868 knew of Shakespeare's plays'.[10] The second stage, in the aftermath of Japan 'opening' to the west, marks the early adaptations of Shakespeare into the existing Japanese theatre form of kabuki: the first ever Japanese-language adaptation of Shakespeare was a kabuki version of *The Merchant of Venice* in 1885, discussed in more detail later. Although there were significant overlaps between the two, 'kabukified' Shakespeare was gradually replaced by experiments in the new genre of *shinpa*, which freely mixed elements from kabuki and contemporary western theatre and for much of its early history used only male performers. *Shinpa* (also known as '*shimpa*', and translated as 'New School') was a new form of performance which arose in the late 1880s

[7] Ibid., p. 486.
[8] Ibid., p. 490.
[9] For example, see Sakai Satoshi, 'Shakespeare in Japan – With Special Reference to *Romeo and Juliet* on the Stage' (*Nihon ni okeru sheikusupia – romio to jurietto jyoenshi wo megutte*), *Journal of Tokyo Kasei Gakuin University*, 23 (1983), 73-82.
[10] James R. Brandon, 'Some Considerations of Shakespeare in Kabuki', *Theatre Symposium*, 6 (1998), 7-18 (11).

and which has been described as developing for the 'half-Westernised, half-traditional urban middle class' and which was a 'transitional theatre whose rationale for existence was the rejection of 'old' values'.[11] Gradually the *shinpa* movement lost momentum to the other new theatre movement of *shingeki* ('New Theatre'), which advocated more western-style realism and, when using western plays, faithfulness to the text over localisation and adaptation. The *angura* period (1960s-1970s) marked the start of a new direction for Shakespeare in Japan, as artists struggled against the realist confines of *shingeki* and the prioritisation of the text over the bodies of the actors. A number of influential contemporary artists had a background in the *angura* movement, including Suzuki Tadashi and Ninagawa Yukio. Following the new liberation of the *angura* period, but also reflecting the growing Japanese economy and corresponding growth in confidence in terms of appropriation and performance, in addition to influential visits from overseas companies (particularly Peter Brook's Royal Shakespeare Company 1973 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), artists in the seventh stage adapted Shakespeare more freely, often localising elements to Japan through setting or by the invocation of traditional theatre genres.[12] Such a thing would have been unimaginable during the height of the *shingeki* period, which dictated that Shakespeare should be staged according to the same realist conventions appropriate to other western dramatists imported at the same time, such as Ibsen, and, complete with prosthetics, make-up and wigs, aspired to replicate an imagined 'western Shakespeare'.

The 'reinvention' stage has itself arguably been through different periods, particularly given the economic crash following the 'bubble' bursting in 1991. It also contains a multitude of different response tactics, some of which fall closer to the earlier *shingeki* period than the

[11] James R. Brandon and Martin Banham, *The Cambridge Guide to Asian Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 153.
[12] Mulryne, p. 9.

*shogekijo* or reinvention ones. However, as Gallimore and Minami write, in this stage Shakespeare is 'no longer sacred'.[13] Although as Richard J. Samuels proposes it is still unclear whether the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011 will be a 'punctuation mark or merely a historical parenthesis', as I suggested in the introduction it is tempting to suggest that following the disaster Japanese theatre has entered a new stage, that of post-Fukushima, as the threads of anxiety surrounding the natural disaster and man-made crisis run deep through the contemporary theatre scene.[14] I will discuss post-Fukushima theatre in a later chapter, but it is worth mentioning that current Shakespearean performance has become deeply entrenched in reflecting contemporary Japanese society; having arguably been through the 'reinvention' stage, Shakespeare is now a 'database' which can be used in any way and for whatever purpose an artist desires.

Tangible reminders of these changing attitudes and what can be understood about corresponding attitudes to and representations of the west in Japan around the turn of the twenty-first century are the fate of buildings in Japan which were once explicitly tied to Shakespeare. The two most significant examples are the Maruyama Shakespeare Country Park (opened 1997, closed 2017) and the Panasonic Tokyo Globe (opened 1988, closed 2002). Both have undergone significant changes since their initial set-up, and have moved beyond the original purposes they were created for. Once visible centres for 'official' (or canonical) discourse on Shakespeare, the two have been adapted to meet different community and commercial needs, and these changes usefully illustrate how far Japan has moved from an earlier belief that 'real' Shakespeare could be attained only through the direct replication of the west. Both Shakespeare Country Park and the Tokyo Globe originally offered what W.B. Worthen describes as the characteristics of 'history-performance venues': 'a participatory

[13] Gallimore and Minami, p. 491.
[14] Richard J. Samuels, *3.11: Disaster and Change in Japan* (London: Cornell University Press, 2013), p. xi.

*experience* of the past in a mode of performance designed to be pervasive, incorporating the audience in a virtual society, a landscape, an engulfing atmosphere'.[15] However, Worthen also describes Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London in terms of the 'sort of authentic, sort of theme park, tourist dependent, mediated, a Polonian early-modern-modernist-postmodern event', and there are significant elements of this in both of the following projects.[16]

Shakespeare Country Park, now known as Rosemary Garden, was a park which opened in 1997 in Maruyama, a small village in Chiba (fifty miles from Tokyo but positioned along a tourist route around the coast). Maruyama's main feature was its so-called 'authentic' representation of Shakespeare's home town Stratford-upon-Avon, in practice less an attempt to reconstruct the town itself than to claim to evoke it via an assembly of large-scale replicas of buildings from the Elizabethan and Jacobean period. It also had various elements representing an 'authentic Elizabethan landscaped environment', including a formal knot garden, a physic garden, orchard, windmill, village green, duck pond, stocks and a maypole.[17] The project was funded by the local government and private donations as part of developments to 'revitalise country locations', and reportedly cost 3.5 million pounds.[18] It was designed by British architect Julian Bicknell and the timberwork was provided by British-based Border Oak, in consultation with John Ronayne, who was closely involved in the construction of Shakespeare's Globe in London.[19]

[15] W.B. Worthen, 'Reconstructing the Globe: Constructing Ourselves', *Shakespeare Survey*, 52 (1999), 33-45 (35).
[16] Ibid., 45.
[17] Philip Seargeant, *Idea of English in Japan: Ideology and the Evolution of a Global Language* (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2009), p. 70.
[18] Joy Hendry, 'Cultural Display in Museums and Theme Parks: A Deconstruction of Western Hegemony', *The Annual of Texts by Foreign Guest Professors*, 4 (2010), 61-78 (61).
[19] Ibid., 71.

The park featured replicas Shakespeare's birthplace, Mary Arden's home and 'conjectural recreations of the original Stratford Market Cross and New Place'.[20] The buildings were 'made from oak timbers shipped from England, and constructed using traditional methods', and indeed the park imported so much English oak that it delayed the construction of Shakespeare's Globe in London.[21] It also had the distinction of being the 'only reconstruction in the world' of New Place, the house where Shakespeare died and which had been completely rebuilt and then later demolished in 1759. Inside the replica New Place, sitting at a desk, was an animatronic model of Shakespeare who spoke to visitors, as well as large alabaster models of characters from the plays.[22] The Birthplace featured a bed 'of the type in which young William might have been born' with 'linen and lace made specially in England', as well as models of Shakespeare and members of his family: his father making gloves, Anne Hathaway and their children, and Shakespeare himself 'gazing down the road' towards London.[23] There was also a tea room and souvenir shop, as well as a small indoor theatre, which sat one hundred people and was occasionally used for small performances of Shakespeare, in addition to concerts.

While the park noted in publicity material that the buildings were 'copies' of the originals, there was a clear drive towards replicating them with as much 'authenticity' as possible, down to the imported oak, traditional building methods (the architects report that no nails were used) and the gardens planted with flowers and herbs from the Elizabethan

[20] Julian Bicknell Associates, *Shakespeare Country Park, Maruyama, Chiba Prefecture, Japan* (n.d.) <http://www.julianbicknell.co.uk/view-shakespearecountrypark_maruyama_chibaprefecture_japan.php> [accessed 15 June 2015].
[21] (n.a.), 'Shakespeare-upon-Tokyo: a Shakespeare Theme Park in Japan', *Telegraph*, (14 January 2012) <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/picturegalleries/9010462/Stratford-upon-Tokyo-a-Shakespeare-theme-park-in-Japan.html?image=1> [accessed 20 June 2015].
[22] Hendry, 61.
[23] Ibid.

period.[24] However, as one reporter noted, the buildings had to be 'designed to be earthquake proof', revealing that as with the construction of the Tokyo Globe, 'absolute' authenticity was not the end goal of the project.[25] But as Worthen suggests in relation to Shakespeare's Globe, 'the much-heralded commitment to accuracy of building practices and materials is critical to the rhetoric [...] it appears to substantiate the practices and materials of the performance, ours as well as the actors'', adding that this is 'even despite alterations in location', and so it is evident that the Shakespeare Country Park also tried to substantiate its existence, and the experience of the visitors, through a discourse of the 'real'.[26] This links to Joy Hendry's suggestion that the park created a sense of 'hyperreality' since the Birthplace, for example, is a recreation of how the building would have been in 1587, rather than its current incarnation in Stratford-upon-Avon: the aim was to recreate the house as Shakespeare experienced it, rather than a historical monument.[27] Maruyama's construction was part of a wider trend of 'theme parks' opened across Japan which rebuilt famous global sites and which, unlike the English-definition of the term, included 'no rides' and mostly attracted adult visitors.[28] Known as *gaikoku mura* ('foreign villages'), other examples include Huis ten Bosch, a Dutch-themed park, and the reconstructed Dejima island in Nagasaki.[29] Mostly constructed during the economic boom of the 'bubble' period, these sites act simultaneously as museums, parks, and tourist spots, often providing a 'sanitised' or cheaper version of overseas travel.[30]

Philip Seargeant suggests that the intention behind these parks is 'always to fulfil an educational brief and offer an authentic cultural experience, yet at the same time the lack of

[24] Ibid., 71.
[25] (n.a.), 'Japanese Theme for the Bard of Avon', *Daily Mail*, (14 April 1997) <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-110883159.html> [accessed 20 June 2015].
[26] Worthen, 45.
[27] Hendry, 72.
[28] Ibid., 62.
[29] Dejima was a man-made island in Nagasaki which during the isolationist period from 1633 -1853 was the only place Europeans were allowed to trade with Japan.
[30] Hendry, 65.

any traditional or historical relevance for the locations in which they are built makes them rootless and two-dimensional'.[31] The idea of the 'two-dimensional' will be essential in later discussion on contemporary performance, but for now it should be noted that this concept of the two-dimensional, or the superficial, is present even in the discussion of these supposed authentic sites. The museum sections of the park closed down in 2017, although the park remains open and the original buildings are still there. What is revealing about the un-mooring of Maruyama from its overt connection to Shakespeare is the implications it suggests of changing attitudes towards the 'really real', really 'authentic' Shakespeare, and that it is no longer needed to validate Japanese interpretations or representations.[32] The Tokyo Globe is perhaps the most emblematic of the change, particularly since it was once described as 'monument to Japanese Shakespeare'.[33]

Originally called the Panasonic Tokyo Globe, the theatre opened in the then quiet Tokyo neighbourhood of Shin-Okubo in 1988 as a new centre for Shakespearean performance in Japan, and in its prime it hosted both famous international companies and experimental Japanese productions. As Dennis Normile suggests however, it 'emerged somewhat by happenstance', since its construction was part of a deal made to acquire some land formerly owned by the Tokyo Government.[34] Given the requirement to include a cultural facility in their plans, the developers (a consortium of sixty-six real estate firms) settled on the Tokyo Globe, citing the absence of 'thrust stages' in Tokyo as inspiration.[35] It was part of a complex which included apartments, 'an Italian-style piazza', a small open air amphitheatre, and a bar

[31] Seargeant, p. 71.
[32] Marcela Kostihova, 'The Really Real, Authentic, Original Shakespeare', *Multicultural Shakespeare: Translation, Appropriation and Performance*, 13.28 (2016), 11-23.
[33] Mulryne, p. 6.
[34] Dennis Normile, 'Globe's Sound and Fury Strut Tokyo Stage', *Japan Economic Journal*, (29 October 1988), p. 8.
[35] Ibid.

called The Globe Tavern.[36] However, the land the theatre was built on was 'fabulously expensive', and the thrust stage, which extended 'right out into the middle of a round theatre', was seen as a 'considerable drawback in economic terms' due to the reduction in audience capacity.[37] As Michael Pennington writes regarding the theatre's expensive opening season, numerous overseas companies were invited to appear 'in a theatre holding 650 only', with deflated seat prices set at 'half the going rate in Tokyo. Recoupment was clearly out of the question: prestige and profile were all'.[38] As with Maruyama, the Tokyo Globe was also a product of the 'bubble' economy which allowed the construction of multiple theatres over a short period of time, and a number of critics, Susan Chira among them, have described the project in terms of 'vanity' or as something symbolic of the period when Japan 'vaulted to the top in trade and finance'.[39]

Designed by Isozaki Arata under consultation with a number of Japanese Shakespeareans, the Tokyo Globe was intended to be a recreation of the second Globe Theatre, and Tamura Seiya, the theatre's senior manager, stressed the importance of it being 'a recreation, not a reproduction'.[40] The designers opted for the 1614 incarnation of the theatre, the version which was rebuilt by Shakespeare's company following the destruction of the first Globe in a fire in 1613, citing Sam Wanamaker's planned reconstruction in London of the earlier Globe as a reason.[41] Although construction began after Wanamaker had begun work on Shakespeare's Globe, it was completed long before the London theatre was, which

[36] Michael Bogdanov and Michael Pennington, *The English Shakespeare Company: The Story of the Wars of the Roses, 1986-89* (London: Nick Hern Books, 1991), p. 135.
[37] Fujita Minoru and Isozaki Arata, *The GLOBE: A Shakespearean Scholar Talks with the Architect of the Tokyo Globe* (Tokyo: Shinjuku-Nishitoyama Development Co. Ltd and the Tokyo Globe Theatre, 1988), p. 47.
[38] Bogdanov and Pennington, p. 136.
[39] Susan Chira, 'Shakespeare in Tokyo', *New York Times*, (30 May 1988) <http://www.nytimes.com/1988/05/31/theatre/shakespeare-in-tokyo.html> [accessed 15 February 2018].
[40] Normile.
[41] Stuart Varnam-Atkin, 'Tokyo's "Fayrest that Ever Was"', *Japan Times*, (11 December 2013) <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2013/12/11/stage/tokyos-fayrest-that-ever-was/#.WpD9UMnqZnE> [accessed 10 February 2016].

opened in 1997. One of the main advisers on the project, Fujita Minoru, along with Isozaki, claimed that the architecture was based on Frances Yates's concept that the original Globe was symbolically designed to be a 'theatre of the world', its form influenced by Vitruvian architecture and the Renaissance conception of the cosmos.[42] Despite this, the Tokyo theatre has been described as a 'modernised Globe' (or a 'concreted O', rather than a wooden one), since unlike Wanamaker's Globe in London or the makers of Maruyama it incorporated no traditional materials or construction techniques.[43]

The design also featured elements not found in the original, including a roof, cushioned seats where the yard would have been, a lighting rig and an exterior which instead of being half-timbered had a pink finish, variously described as 'salmon' or 'pastel'.[44] The theatre's designers argued that these features made the theatre more practical for contemporary Tokyo, citing things such as the theatre's nearness to a train station and Tokyo's rainy season, but this also resulted in the theatre being called an ''imaginary' reproduction', or a 'fairyland'.[45] Similar to Maruyama's decision to base the Birthplace on how it would have been when Shakespeare was alive, the designers of the Tokyo Globe emphasised that their restoration of the stage configuration used in Shakespeare's time would restore the feelings that audiences would have experienced in the original building.[46] Perhaps this, like Maruyama, made it another 'hyperreal' two-dimensional construction. In his discussion on the London Globe, Worthen writes that what the Globe 'is said to restore is how Shakespeare's plays 'worked'', creating an experience that can 'come into visibility only in

[42] Frances A. Yates, *Theatre of the World* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969); Fujita Minoru, 'Introduction', in *Transvestism and The Onnagata Traditions in Shakespeare and Kabuki*, ed. by Fujita Minoru and Michael Shapiro (Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2006), pp. vii-xi (p. x).
[43] Normile; Kimie Imura Lawlor, 'Shakespeare in Japan – in the Page, on the Stage' (essay), (1992), p. 42, accessed at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre Library & Archives.
[44] Chira; Normile.
[45] Isozaki Arata, *Introduction to the ACM Theatre – by Arata Isozaki* (1989) <http://www.arttowermito.or.jp/Tower/isozaki3.html> [accessed 10 January 2015]; Normile.
[46] Fujita and Isozaki.

this kind of space, in this kind of relationship', but he notes that 'we don't need Tudor timbers to frame this relationship: surely reinforced concrete would work just as well'.[47] In this sense, the Tokyo Globe was, similar to its London manifestation, 'sort of authentic, sort of theme park'.[48]

With the thrust stage the theatre sat 650, but the stage was made moveable so that the theatre could seat an extra fifty people.[49] However, critics soon noted some practical difficulties with the design, with Suematsu Michiko for example writing that it was not 'physically audience-friendly' and that some seats had restricted views, a problem addressed by the removal of several columns.[50] Pennington also describes how all the seats, 'while naturally angled towards the stage, somehow faced away from its focal point', and he notes that the building was not 'user-friendly' for actors either.[51] However, he adds that for 'all its technical shortcomings, the Globe was putting us in touch with a certain magic'.[52] The theatre opened with a three month long festival which included performances of *The Wars of the Roses* by the English Shakespeare Company, workshops by the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), three productions from the National Theatre of Great Britain, and two productions by Ingmar Bergman.[53] It continued to invite international companies in the following years, and was occasionally a site for British-Japanese exchange through the import of British directors. Suematsu describes the theatre as one of the crucial sites in the development of Japanese Shakespeare, writing that since it 'sanctioned theatrical experiments related to Shakespeare' it

[47] Worthen, 45.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Fujita and Isozaki, p. 78.
[50] Suematsu Michiko, 'The Tokyo Globe Years, 1988-2002', in *Shakespeare in Hollywood, Asia and Cyberspace*, ed. by Huang and Ross, pp. 121-28 (p. 127).
[51] Bogdanov and Pennington, p. 137.
[52] Ibid., p. 140.
[53] The Tokyo Globe, The Tokyo Globe Opening Festival (programme), (Tokyo: The Tokyo Globe, 1988).

consequently 'changed the way of understanding and performing Shakespeare in Japan'.[54] Important Japanese productions included *The Braggart Samurai*, a *kyogen* adaptation of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1991), and *Tempesuto Arashi Nochi Hare*, a *bunraku* adaptation of *The Tempest* (1992). In 1989 it also created its own company, the Tokyo Globe Company. As demonstrated by Anzai suggesting that the opening of the Globe was important enough to mark a new phase in Japanese performance, the Tokyo Globe was a key site during the 1990s for experimentation and international exchange.

However, despite its influence, the theatre struggled with attendance rates and faced severe financial difficulties and managerial crises. Having been built on extremely expensive land during the boom period, following the economic downturn the theatre's fate was sealed: after losing the prefix 'Panasonic' from its name in 1998 in an attempt to attract other investors, the Tokyo Globe finally closed down in 2002.[55] It was bought in 2004 by idol entertainment management agency Johnny's Production Co., also known as Johnny's. Johnny's are the organisation behind many of the biggest boy-band acts and male idols in Japan since the 1960s, including SMAP and 'countless other pretty-boy pop acts'.[56] The two-dimensional or superflat discourse that I will go into in more detail later has revealing links with the handing-over of a once Shakespeare-centric venue to an idol factory. And as Suematsu suggests 'the closure of the Tokyo Globe' and its re-opening by Johnny's, 'one of the biggest show business enterprises in the country', is symbolic.[57] She adds that, a theatre

[54] Suematsu, p. 121.
[55] Varnam-Atkin.
[56] Tanaka Nobuko, 'Nothing Lost in Johnny's *R+J* Translation', *Japan Times*, (28 January 2004) <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2004/01/28/stage/nothing-lost-in-johnnys-rj-translation/#.WpEC5MnqZnE> [accessed 20 January 2016].
[57] Suematsu Michiko, 'Import/export: Japanizing Shakespeare', in *Shakespeare in Asia: Contemporary Performance*, ed. by Dennis Kennedy and Li Lan Yong (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 155-69 (p. 166).

'noted for illustrious overseas Shakespeare productions [...] was transformed into a venue for musicals starring pop idols'.[58]

Described as a 'shock acquisition' that represented a 'bizarre marriage of the highbrow and the populist', the new Globe celebrated its reopening by staging a production of *Romeo and Juliet* in 2004.[59] Directed by Kokami Shoji and using a new translation by Kawai Shoichiro, the production starred one of the company's idols, Higashiyama Noriyuki, as Romeo. Although Tanaka Nobuko writes that Kokami made 'no concessions' to the 'populist audience', she notes that the audience mostly comprised of women who seemed to be fans of the actors, with some mentioning repeat viewings.[60] This production has close links to the trend of 'superflat' or 'tacky' Shakespeares in Japan discussed in the next chapter, particularly in its connections to criticisms of commercial productions and celebrity actors. However, Tanaka describes Higashiyama's Romeo as one of the production's highlights, a clear contrast with the often dismissive discourse on idols in Shakespeare.[61] The Tokyo Globe has staged some further Shakespeare plays since this initial production, and it has also invited other companies to perform there (including the Shakespeare for Children Company which started out in the old theatre), but the theatre more often stages commercial plays, musicals and concerts starring members of the company. The most recent Shakespeare productions there include *Macbeth* (2016, starring Johnny's idol Maruyama Ryuhei), *Shakespeare Among the Plum Blossoms* (2017, a dance concert only very loosely connected to Shakespeare), *The Rose and the Swan* (2018, a newly written play about Christopher Marlowe and Shakespeare) and the musical *Only You – My Romeo and Juliet* (2018). As Kawai says, the theatre has been 'lacklustre in its support for Shakespeare production under a new managing company more

[58] Ibid., pp. 166-67.
[59] Tanaka.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.

interested in young pop stars', and Suematsu further suggests that only 'the theatre's name' has remained intact while its 'artistic principles' have wholly changed; it should also be noted that the thrust stage has been permanently removed to increase audience capacity.[62]

The argument I am making here is that 'authentic' or *shingeki*-style Shakespeare no longer has a significant place in contemporary Japan. It might reappear at certain times, sometimes unknowingly as in Gregory Doran's *The Merchant of Venice* (2007) or knowingly, as in Ninagawa's production of the same play (2013), but it has lost its central place within the theatre scene. The erosion of what could be seen as *shingeki*'s need for authenticity is confirmed by the closure of two sites that were modelled on the 'hyperreal' originals, both within the past sixteen years. These sites which were once described as reverent 'recreations' of the British originals, have been repurposed for new communities and perhaps also for more commercially-driven endeavours. Although Suematsu decries the loss of the Globe as a blow to the 'intercultural experiments' that it was nurturing, it is perhaps also possible to see its change in a more positive light, marking the increased confidence of artists who do not need an 'authentic' theatre space to license their performances.[63] In addition, Suematsu notes that the old Globe often had an 'elitist and unfriendly' atmosphere, which suggests that many of these 'radical' productions might have been performed in an echo chamber.[64] Furthermore, the subsequent decrease in tours by 'illustrious overseas companies' that made up a significant part of the theatre's repertory is also not a wholly negative development, and it reflects a wider trend of rejecting western Shakespeare as the 'really real' of performance: as

[62] Kawai, 'More Japanized', 263; Suematsu, 'The Tokyo Globe Years', p. 121
[63] Suematsu, 'Import/Export', p. 167.
[64] Suematsu, 'The Tokyo Globe Years', p. 127.

Ninagawa said, '[t]hese days I am seldom impressed or shocked by the theatre I see overseas, and have no desire to imitate it'. [65]

A revealing example of this changing approach to the imaginary-authentic is in a documentary accompanying all-male 'idol' group D-Boys's production of *The Merchant of Venice* (2013). In the documentary, three of the actors state that they have travelled to Stratford-upon-Avon to learn more about Shakespeare: however, the tell-tale 'village green' of Maruyama Country Park gives away their actual location.[66] In this strange incident, the 'hyperreality' of the old Maruyama and the imagined reality of Stratford-upon-Avon become intertwined, and the Japanese appropriation of Stratford is deemed authentic enough for the purpose of the documentary.[67] Likewise, in the same company's 2016 *As You Like It*, although the actors wore generalised (if unspecified) 'western historical' costumes and occasionally wigs, the impression of 'Europe' crumbled instantly when Orlando wrote Rosalind's name on a wall using the Japanese alphabet of *katakana* which is used largely for spelling foreign words (*rozarindo*, ロザリンド) and then shouted 'it's in *katakana*!'.[68] The joke disrupted the illusion of authenticity and drew attention to the context of the performance, and the Japanese actors who were performing it, as well as mocking the mimicry.

The following discussion will consider the weakening of the imagined authentic Shakespeare in contemporary Japan, using two productions of *The Merchant of Venice* as case studies, since they offer examples of very different responses. The first, directed by current RSC artistic director Gregory Doran, suggests in particular the weakening of western authority in regards to Shakespeare due to the indifferent and occasionally puzzled audience

[65] Quoted by Mika Eglinton, 'Interlude: Asian Energy Versus European Rationality: Interview with Ninagawa Yukio', in *A History of Japanese Theatre*, ed. by Salz, pp. 532-35 (p. 534).
[66] *The Merchant of Venice*, dir. by Aoki Go (Pony Canyon, 2011).
[67] At the very end of the documentary's 'Stratford' segment, they reveal that they were actually in Maruyama.
[68] D-Boys, *As You Like It* (performance), dir. by Aoki Go (Honda Theatre, Tokyo, 2016).

reaction it received. Although it reached a high-point during the Tokyo Globe years, the trend of inviting British directors to Japan to direct a Japanese cast first became noticeable in the 1970s: during the prime period for this kind of collaboration, directors such as Giles Block, Adrian Noble, Terence Knapp and Michael Pennington all worked in numerous theatres across Tokyo. Since 2000, the trend has continued in productions such as Jonathan Kent's *Hamlet* with Nomura Mansai (2003), John Caird (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2007 and 2009, *Hamlet*, 2017) and Jonathan Munby (*Romeo and Juliet*, 2012), for example.

Productions in the 1980s or 1990s by western directors were often advertised as being directed by someone from 'the home of Shakespeare', or using the word '*honba*' (本場) in reference to the director or production itself.[69] *Honba*, meaning 'home', 'centre' or 'authentic' is still occasionally used in reference to tours to Britain (for example, Ninagawa's 2015 *Hamlet* was described as 'going to the *honba* of Shakespeare, England'), but it is used less often with productions themselves, either to describe western ones as the 'authentic' version, or to make a negative comparison with Japanese productions.[70] With the weakening interest in importing or copying wholesale the idea of 'British Shakespeare' and the supposed authenticity it represents, Doran's production was received less as a taste of the 'real' then as a slightly flat performance, which furthermore was criticised for not adapting to its Tokyo performance context. Ninagawa's production, on the other hand, is emblematic of the disinterest in recent years in the *shingeki* tradition of locating 'realism' within 'westernism', with Ninagawa using kabuki and *shingeki* as a means of staging both the religious conflict in the play, and the conflict created between the different theatre types in Japan's modernisation.

[69] For example, see the Royal Shakespeare Company, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*/*The Winter's Tale* (Nissay Theatre, programme, 1970).
[70] Kimata Fuyu, *Why Does Ninagawa Make his Actors Undress? An Interview with Uchida Kenshi about 'Richard II'* (*Ninagawa Yukio ha naze haiyu wo nugaseru no ka. Richado nisei shuen, shinei Uchida Kenshi ni kiku*) (2015) <http://www.excite.co.jp/News/reviewmov/20150402/E1427912988961.html> [accessed 4 May 2016].

The representation of 'otherness' in both of these productions is intriguing, with the 'other' being presented as racially different in Doran's production, and stylistically in Ninagawa's.

## Staging the Hybrid Body and the Past in *The Merchant of Venice*: Two Different Approaches

In *The Haunted Stage*, Marvin Carlson suggests that the theatre is 'haunted' by its past, and argues that theatre 'is a cultural activity deeply involved with memory and haunted by repetition'.[71] Willmar Sauter adds that 'nobody can escape' the performance history of classical plays, 'not even those who have never seen an earlier production. In that sense, the stage is really 'haunted' by preceding events' which he suggests undermines Peggy Phelan's 'contention that performance is ephemeral'.[72] This concept of 'ghosting', or the idea of the theatrical past repeatedly returning to the contemporary stage, is particularly layered when it comes to the reception of English drama in non-anglophone regions, since the past which is 'returning' is not necessarily one where the text, artists and audiences are equal. And of all of Shakespeare's plays *The Merchant of Venice* has a particularly long and complex history in Japan, beginning with the first ever Japanese-language adaptation of Shakespeare in 1885. Staged in Osaka, this kabuki version of *The Merchant of Venice* was called *Sakuradoki Zeni no Yononaka* (*A Time of Cherry Blossoms, Money Makes The World Go Round*) and localised the story to contemporary Japan. Adapting the plot from the Lambs' *Tales From Shakespeare*, rather than the play itself, Udagawa Bunkai set the story in Osaka in around 1854, the year

[71] Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), p. 11.
[72] Willmar Sauter, 'Cyclic Perseverance and Linear Mobility of Theatrical Events', in *Representing the Past: Essays in Performance Historiography*, ed. by Charlotte Canning and Thomas Postlewait (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2010), pp. 117-41 (p. 120).

Japan opened to the west, and used it to reflect the period's preoccupations and anxieties.[73] It was then adapted from Udagawa's novel into a stage play, making it 'four removes' from the original Shakespearean text.[74]

With the introduction of western-style capitalism into the country following the Meiji Restoration, ideas about monetary values and business were changing rapidly; previous generations had seen engaging in business as beneath the upper classes, but new debates about the possible advantages of capitalism for the emerging nation-state of Japan were in circulation around this time.[75] These ideas, and the anxieties surrounding them, were addressed through the characters Shōtarō (Bassanio) and Gohei (Shylock), who respectively symbolised the new spirit of 'industriousness' in the period, and the dangers and greed capitalism could bring.[76] Although *Sakuradoki* was restaged multiple times during the years 1885 to 1893, this style of 'kabukified' localised production eventually gave way to the more translation-based *shingeki* during the early 1900s.[77] As Brandon argues, although a small number of kabuki actors were in Shakespeare productions from '1905-1925', unlike the 1880-1890s when they had 'tried to subsume their adapted Shakespeare into Japanese patterns of kabuki performance', these later actors instead tried to 'submerge kabuki in the European world of Shakespearean drama and theatre'.[78]

*Shinpa*, which fell somewhere in-between kabuki and *shingeki* in terms of style and which also eventually gave way to the more westernised *shingeki*, also carried out a number

[73] Yoshihara Yukari, 'Japan as "Half-Civilised": An Early Japanese Adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and Japan's Construction of its National Image in the Late Nineteenth Century', in *Performing Shakespeare in Japan*, ed. Minami, Carruthers and Gillies, p. 21-32 (p. 22).
[74] Brandon, 11.
[75] Yoshihara, p. 21.
[76] Ibid., p. 30.
[77] Todd A. Borlik, 'A Season in Intercultural Limbo: Ninagawa Yukio's *Doctor Faustus*, Theatre Cocoon, Tokyo', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 62.3 (2011), 444-56 (445).
[78] Brandon, 13-14.

of important experimental productions during the early 1900s, and it is striking that the first Japanese production of Shakespeare staged overseas was the *shinpa* 1900 *Merchant of Venice* by the Kawakami Theatre Troupe. Led by actor-director Kawakami Otojirō (1864-1911), the company toured Europe and North America during 1899 to 1902 to study western theatre and to introduce 'Japanese' theatre to the west, although the term is used lightly given their penchant for 'extravagant shows full of bloody-samurai and love-crazed geishas' based loosely on existing kabuki plays.[79] While in Boston in 1900, the company saw Ellen Terry and Henry Irving's *Merchant of Venice*, and inspired by what they had seen decided to stage the trial scene themselves, although they localised it to contemporary Hokkaido. Although this can be called the first 'Japanese Shakespeare' in the west, Kawakami admitted in his diaries that they had used 'nonsense Japanese' in the scene, content that the audience would not understand what they were saying.[80] Based on their joke on the audience, Yoshihara Yukari describes this event as a 'travesty' and 'sacrilegious'.[81] The company became infamous in Japan for exploiting western audience expectations of exoticism, as in their kabuki pastiche *The Geisha and the Knight* for example, which featured an ever-increasing amount of characters committing *hara-kiri* in response to audience demand.[82] Their parody *Merchant* could therefore be seen as a means of regaining some agency through subverting audience expectations of a faithful Shakespeare performance. Playwright and comedian Mitani Koki based his 2007 play *The Fearless Kawakami Otojirō Troupe* on this episode of early intercultural exchange, eventually 'restaging' the 1900 trial scene which quickly

[79] Yoshihara Yukari, 'Kawakami Otojirō's Trip to the West and Taiwan at the Turn of the Twentieth Century', in *Asian Crossings: Travel Writing on China, Japan and Southeast Asia*, ed. Steve Clark and Paul Smethurst (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008), pp. 149-62 (p. 155)
[80] Ibid., p. 156
[81] Yoshihara Yukari, 'Tacky 'Shakespeares' in Japan', *Multicultural Shakespeare: Translation, Appropriation and Performance*, 10.25 (2013), 60-73 (62).
[82] Yoshihara, 'Kawakami Otojirō's Trip to the West', p. 155.

descends into farce (however, Irving has been watching from the audience, and he enthusiastically applauds the actors at the end).

The Kawakami troupe staged the trial scene of *Merchant* in 1903 when they returned to Japan, although this time not 'imitating the gestures of Irving and Terry and mouthing gibberish to suit the action'.[83] These early *shinpa* productions gradually gave way to the more westernised and translation-based style of *shingeki*, but despite the changing performance trends *The Merchant of Venice* remained a popular play in Japan and was, and is, frequently performed. For example, in comparison to *Richard II*, for which Matsuoka lists five significant Japanese productions for 1945-2015, she lists thirty-seven for *Merchant* from 1945-2002, and Kawachi Yoshiko has suggested that until 1945 it was the most frequently performed of Shakespeare's plays.[84] The following will be a comparison of two recent productions which represent opposing performance tactics. The first is Gregory Doran's unsuccessful intercultural production (2007), which replicated the hierarchy embedded in *shingeki* by denying the performance's hybrid context, engaged in racial discrimination through its depiction of 'Otherness', and revealed some of the issues in collaborative intercultural theatre. The other is Ninagawa's 2013 production, which successfully addressed the present hybrid-state of Japanese theatre created by the adoption of western theatre in the nineteenth-century, and thereby also staged the contemporary 'dilemma' of performing Shakespeare in Japanese.

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[83] Indra Levy, *Sirens of Western Shore: The Westernesque Femme Fatale, Translation, and Vernacular Style in Modern Japanese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p. 208.

[84] Matsuoka Kazuko, *Richard II* (Tokyo: Chikumashobo, 2015), pp. 225-27; Matsuoka Kazuko, *The Merchant of Venice* (Tokyo: Chikumashobo, 2002), pp. 206-12; Kawachi Yoshiko, '*The Merchant of Venice* and Japanese Culture', in *Japanese Studies in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, ed. by Kawachi Yoshiko (London: Associated University Presses, 1998), pp. 46-69 (p. 51).
Using Sasaki Takashi's *Shakespeare in Japan Performance Chronology* (*Nihon ni okeru sheikusupia nenyou*) (Tokyo: Taikido, 2015), I counted an additional twenty-nine significant performances from 2003-2014.

**Gregory Doran's Intercultural Limbo**

Gregory Doran directed *The Merchant of Venice* with a Japanese cast in 2007, in a production produced by HoriPro and Thelma Holt, and performed at the Galaxy Theatre in Tokyo for six weeks. Prior to this, Doran had brought his RSC productions of *Macbeth* (2000), *Othello* (2004) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2005) to Japan. The translation was by Kawai Shoichiro, which was published to mark the release of Michael Radford's film version of *The Merchant of Venice* (2004), and the set design was by Michael Vale.[85] It featured many notable actors, particularly Ichimura Masachika as Shylock (who played Richard in *Richard III*, directed by Ninagawa, 1999), Fujiwara Tatsuya as Bassanio (cast as Hamlet twice by Ninagawa, 2003 and 2015) and Yokota Eiji as Lorenzo (who acted in many Sai-no-kuni Shakespeare Series productions, including as Bassanio in the 2013 *Merchant*).[86] In the Japanese promotional materials, the cast were referred to as a company 'representative' of contemporary Japanese theatre, implying a certain level of expectation for the production, thereby making the production's failure all the more disappointing.[87] In contrast to the sense of expectancy shown prior to the show opening (for example, Tanaka writes that one of the 'world's foremost directors of Shakespeare, one of Japan's most outstanding' Shakespearean translators, and 'a star-studded Japanese cast' have 'teamed up to bring *The Merchant of Venice* to Tokyo'), the production received mixed reviews.[88]

[85] HoriPro, *The Merchant of Venice* (programme), (Tokyo: HoriPro Inc, 2007).
[86] These actors continue to be closely involved with Ninagawa's legacy, with Ichimura starring as Macbeth in *NINAGAWA Macbeth* (2017), and Fujiwara and Yokota co-starring in *Timon of Athens* (2017).
[87] HoriPro, *The Merchant of Venice* (programme).
[88] Tanaka Nobuko, '*Merchant* For Modern Times: Drama's Collaborators Contend that Tokyo is the New 'Venice'', *Japan Times*, (6 September 2007) <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2007/09/06/stage/merchant-for-modern-times/#.WnPeg66WbIU> [accessed 15 January 2018].

Hamana Emi describes intercultural theatre as a 'creative practice born from the reciprocal interaction' of cultures.[89] 'Reciprocal' is an important word in her evaluation, and is one which potentially reveals the flaws in this Anglo-Japanese production: she goes on to say that when these cultures meet, 'they begin to change', but that in collaborative projects it is 'not certain that the results will be good [...] they have to first ensure that both cultures are equally involved' and then there is the possibility that 'something new will be created'.[90] In the recording of the performance and in the commentary left by the audience, there is a sense of unevenness and dislocation between the two interacting cultures: namely, the overwhelming sense seems to have been of the domination of the anglophone 'RSC Shakespeare' style represented by Doran, at the expense of both the cast and the audience.[91] The production was set in a pseudo-Victorian/Edwardian period which seemed almost deliberately to avoid any reference to the Japanese context, be it historical or contemporary. I have already sketched out the fluctuating states of exchange and concepts of modernity that existed during the nineteenth-century in Japan, but there was little sense of the period's upheaval in this depiction. In fact, one reviewer even described it as a 'very Doran-like atmosphere', thereby implying the production missed making the most out of its hybrid potential and instead 'recycled' the already-familiar elements of 'RSC-style' Shakespeare.[92] The cast were all dressed in western-style period costumes, reminiscent of Brandon's criticism that *shingeki* used ''authentic' settings and costumes', which 'cried out England, Italy, Scotland, Denmark, Greece – never Japan', which is arguably also the case here.[93] Brandon further adds that, in *shingeki*, characters 'moved and spoke as if they were

[89] Hamana Emi, *Connecting Cultures: From Shakespeare to Contemporary Asian Theatre* (*Bunka to bunka o tsunagu*), (Tokyo: Tsukuba University Press, 2012), p. 1.
[90] Ibid., pp.1, 9.
[91] Gregory Doran, (email to author, 18 March 2018).
[92] Takano Shinobu, *HoriPro 'The Merchant of Venice' 08/17-09/30 Tennozu Galaxy Theatre* (*Horipuro uenisu no shounin 08/17-09/30 tennozu gingeki*) (2007) <www.shinobu-review.jp/mt/archives/2007/0905102845.html> [accessed 22 January 2018].
[93] Brandon, 13.

Europeans motivated by Judeo-Christian beliefs, not as Japanese motivated by Buddhist-Shinto beliefs [...]. These productions attempted to 'replicate' British Shakespeare of the period', and that they 'denied' Japan through their design and performance.[94] With Bharucha's comment that it is 'at the level of interactions that the human dimensions of interculturalism are, at once, most potent and problematic', and also with Brandon's conclusion that in *shingeki* 'Japanese bodies were put to the service of an *English* Shakespeare' in mind, it is possible to argue that this *Merchant*'s failure lay in an issue of communication, which resulted in the actors 'replicating' Doran's '*English* Shakespeare'.[95]

During the pre-show, actors in *Commedia dell'arte*-style masks and costumes mingled around the lobby and auditorium, suggesting Venice during the Carnival period. This evolved into a visual gag in which three actors wearing masks and dressed as sixteenth-century Venetian courtesans with the front panel of their skirts missing, reminiscent of Pietro Bertelli's engravings from the 1580s, unmasked to reveal Antonio, Salerio and Solanio. In the following scenes, the setting was established as the nineteenth- or early twentieth-century, with the majority of the Christian characters in suits. The concept of staging *Merchant* set in the nineteenth-century was popularised by Jonathan Miller in his 1970 production at the National Theatre of Great Britain, in which he used the setting as a 'thematic conception that coloured the entire production' depicting the 'mercantile era' of the 1890s and revealing the 'base motives behind affected manners'.[96] Although in this sense Doran's production is 'ghosted' by the memory of Laurence Olivier's Victorian Shylock, it is also ghosted by what is not represented: namely, the turmoil of Japan during the same period when it was facing its own changes in attitudes towards money and business.

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[94] Ibid.
[95] Bharucha, p. 84; Brandon, 14.
[96] Samuel L. Leiter, *Shakespeare Around the Globe: A Guide To Notable Postwar Revivals* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), p. 437.

Doran stated that he was aware that *Merchant* was 'the first, or one of the first' of Shakespeare's plays to be performed in Japan, and that he considered staging both a contemporary and a 'kabuki version' of the trial scene in response to its history, but he himself described his production setting as 'Victorian/Edwardian Venetian'.[97] In Satya P. Mohanty's writing on the depiction of 'history', he asks,

> How do we negotiate between my history and yours? How would it be possible for us to recover our commonality, not the ambiguous imperialist-humanist myth of those shared human (and indeed almost divine) attributes that are supposed to distinguish us absolutely from animals but, more significant, the imbrications of our various pasts and presents, the ineluctable relationships of shared and contested meanings, values and material resources? It is necessary to assert our dense peculiarities, our lived and imagined differences [...].[98]

I would argue that the failure of Doran's *Merchant* lay in its refusal to engage more significantly with the potentials for 'shared and contested meanings' and values between the depicted Venetian society, inferred English society and the Japanese past. Mohanty further questions whether we can 'afford to leave untheorised the question of how our differences are intertwined and, indeed, hierarchically organised? Could we, in other words, afford to have entirely different histories, to see ourselves living [...] in entirely heterogeneous and discrete spaces?'.[99] Doran's Venice depicted a heterogeneous space, one which had little to do with Japan, and which therefore also ignored Mohanty's warning of the hierarchical structure of history and difference. Due to its layered and influential past in Japan, the stage history of

[97] Gregory Doran, (email to the author, 18 March 2018).
[98] Satya P. Mohanty, *Literary Theory and the Claims of History: Postmodernism, Objectivity, Multicultural Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 130.
[99] Ibid.

*Merchant* was present through its very absence, thereby drawing more attention to this 'hierarchical' representation of the past that implied, presumably unintentionally, that the western past was more interesting or more valid to be used when staging Shakespeare. Using Bert States's theory of the 'ghost of the self', Ashley Thorpe suggests that 'to a certain extent, we remain aware that an actor onstage is *performing*, and there is a 'real' actor underneath the makeup'.[100] In the same way, the audience at this Anglo-Japanese collaboration would have been aware of the presence of the Japanese actors in this depiction of 'Venice', and some would presumably be aware of the missing presence of the Meiji period.

Doran said he originally wanted to stage *Measure for Measure* in Tokyo, which he had not directed before, but he 'realised that as his Japanese is very limited, it would be too time-consuming to explore that work with Japanese actors and it would be better to do something he had done before'.[101] He spoke about wanting to depict the play's theme of discrimination, not only against the Jewish characters but also against the lower classes, women, the disabled and homosexuals.[102] He particularly focused on the homosexual element, explicitly casting Antonio and Bassanio as lovers and describing the Tokyo production as a 'chance to finish the work he left undone' the last time he directed the play.[103] He directed *Merchant* at the RSC in 1997, using sixteenth-century costumes and setting it in the 'Venice of Shakespeare's day'.[104] In the programme for the 2007 production, Doran states the following in regards to his decision to emphasise the theme of prejudice in the production,

[100] Ashley Thorpe, 'Casting Matters: Colour Trouble in the RSC's *The Orphan of Zhao*', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 24.4 (2014), 436-51 (439).
[101] Tanaka, '*Merchant* For Modern Times'.
[102] HoriPro, *The Merchant of Venice* (programme).
[103] Ibid.
[104] James Treadwell, *Spectator* (20 December 1997), quoted by Ralph Berry, '*The Merchant of Venice*', in *Shakespeare in Performance: A Collection of Essays*, ed. by Frank Occhiogrosso (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003), pp. 47-57 (p. 55).

> Another reason why I feel strongly that this work should be staged in Japan is based on something I personally experienced when I came to Japan with *Othello* in 2003. I had a conversation with a man in the audience and asked him, "Since there are few black actors in Japan, if you set *Othello* in contemporary Japan, what kind of racial discrimination do you think would be applicable?"[105]

He then describes how the man answered that *Othello* is hard to stage in Japan because 'Japanese people don't have any racial discrimination', to which he replied that he thinks 'a society without racism is impossible'.[106] He describes finding the man's attitude towards racism in Japan deeply interesting, and that it was an impetus for exploring the idea of prejudice within *Merchant*.[107] Despite this worthy intent, given that the depiction of race in this production was extremely insensitive and based on cultural stereotypes, and the intention behind these representations was unclear, the result however was more than questionable.

Shylock was represented as 'Other' in the performance through the dark clothes and skullcap he wore, in contrast to the Christian characters who wore lighter costumes. However, the sense of 'Otherness' was represented more in the depiction of the suitors than in that of Shylock, with Doran stating that the 'challenge of directing' *Merchant* in the west is that 'it is a play hi-jacked by history, in which it is hard to consider Shylock, without the intervening dark cloud of the Holocaust. In Japan this was much less of an issue'.[108] Both the Prince of Aragon and the Prince of Morocco were played by Fujiwara (Bassanio), although it was initially unclear whether this was intended to be Bassanio in disguise, or whether it was a

[105] HoriPro, *The Merchant of Venice* (programme).
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Doran, (email to the author, 18 March 2018).

visual gag and a kind of 'fan-service' by casting the popular actor in numerous roles.[109] As Aragon, he was given a Matador costume, false moustache, grey wig and a mouthpiece that gave him a speech impediment to suggest he had lost his teeth.[110] As he left, having failed the test, he tapped the correct casket, dropped the cane he had been using to support himself and ran offstage. It was only at this point that it became clear this was supposed to be Bassanio in disguise, although as one reviewer notes it was difficult to believe that Portia would 'fall for this kind of disguise', or that she would let him carry on with the performance if she saw through it, and concludes 'I understand Bassanio even less than before'.[111]

Doran said that he had considered having Bassanio disguise himself as the other suitors in his RSC production, citing the amount of money he borrows from Antonio as a suggestion that he is going to 'try to encounter the heiress more than once'.[112] However, he did not use the tactic in his previous production, having decided it would disrupt the 'fairy tale aspect of the casket plot', adding that it was perhaps 'in danger of making Portia look silly', but concluded that when he used it in Japan it created an opportunity to listen 'more attentively as Bassanio slowly realised' the meaning of the lead casket, thereby giving place to a speech 'which can seem an afterthought, but which is crucial to notions of value in the play'.[113] However, based on the written responses to the production it seems as though many were puzzled by the casting, and whatever it was intended to reveal about Bassanio and Portia's characters, as well as the wider prejudices of their society, seemingly failed to transmit to the audience.

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[109] (n.a.), *Things I Didn't Understand About 'The Merchant of Venice' 1: Bassanio* (*Yoku wakaranai uenisu no shounin sono hitotsu: Bassanio*) (2007) <http://hatsune-cho.cocolog-nifty.com/blog/2007/09/1_26b3.html> [accessed 21 January 2018].
[110] Perhaps another reference to the Miller *Merchant*, in which Aragon was 'a doddering octogenarian' (Leiter, *Shakespeare Around the Globe*, p. 437).
[111] (n.a.), *Things I Didn't Understand*.
[112] Doran, (email to the author, 18 March 2018).
[113] Ibid.

The grotesqueness of the portrayal of the suitors was taken to an extreme level in the scene with Morocco, due to the character being played in blackface. He was given an Afro wig and was followed by two servants in cartoon-like 'Arabian' clothes who prostrated themselves on the ground behind him in a melodramatic fashion. Portia and her followers reacted with visible nervousness and disdain to the suitor's theatrics, which was presumably supposed to represent their racism and reflect Portia's line that 'Let all of his complexion choose me so' (2.7.79).[114] However, since this scene came before the 'reveal' that it was Bassanio, it read extremely uncomfortably, and, although presumably a hint at Bassanio's imposture, having failed the casket test the Prince took Portia's hand and held it against his face while she watched with barely disguised disgust [Fig. 1]. As he exited, she held her hand away from herself and looked at it in horror, revealing to the audience that the black paint had transferred onto her hand. Read from the disguise angle, this would perhaps be her discovering Bassanio's imposture, but this was not at all obvious to me the first time I saw it; instead, when I saw the recording of the production for the first time I saw this as a 'joke' reference to the blackface.

[Image redacted]

Fig. 1 - The Prince of Morocco and Portia

[114] William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, 3rd edn, ed. by John Drakakis (London: Bloomsbury, Arden Shakespeare, 2011), p. 268.

It is impossible to deny that blackface is a feature of contemporary Japanese media, albeit an increasingly controversial one, and that it is therefore credible that Doran's use of it was a criticism of the practice.[115] And in the interest of fairness, it should also be noted that blackface appeared in some of Ninagawa's productions in the Sai-no-kuni Series, including *Othello* (2007) and his *Merchant of Venice*. It is extremely regrettable that the practice is still in use in Japan, but its appearance in Ninagawa's productions was not used in concert with racially stereotyped behaviours, nor were these characters represented as figures of mockery, and in the version of Matsuoka Kazuko's *Merchant* translation used in performance, there was no reference to 'complexion'.[116] While it is the case that blackface is used in contemporary Japanese theatre (including in a *Merchant of Venice* performed in February 2018), it is undeniably also true that its use is taboo in British theatre. The question therefore remains as to why a British director, one who in 2012 directed an all-black *Julius Caesar* (which despite its own problematic issues of representation and power did not resort to using actors in blackface to depict 'contemporary Africa'), would use the practice at all.[117] Blackface finally fell out of favour in British theatre in the late 1980s, and given the outcry against 'yellowface' in regards to the casting policy for the RSC's *The Orphan of Zhao* (2012), it is not difficult to imagine the reception having Bassanio in blackface would have received had it been staged in the Royal Shakespeare Theatre.[118] Ania Loomba suggests that 'traditions of blacking up in Renaissance England are often unyoked from the traditions of blackface minstrelsy' in the United States, which is possibly an attitude that allowed Doran to state that having Bassanio in disguise 'has the advantage of giving Bassanio two wonderful

[115] See for example, BBC, *Japanese TV Show Featuring Blackface Actor Sparks Anger* (2018) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-42561815> [accessed 10 January 2018].
[116] Saitama Arts Theatre, *The Merchant of Venice* (performance), dir. by Ninagawa Yukio (Saitama Arts Theatre, Saitama, 2013).
[117] Royal Shakespeare Company, *Gregory Doran Production 2012* (2012) <http://www.rsc.org.uk/julius-caesar/past-productions/gregory-doran-production-2012> [accessed 27 February 2018].
[118] See for example *Contemporary Theatre Journal*, 24.4 (2014), which is dedicated to the issue.

opportunities to create different characters: the ancient Spanish Grandee, and the black background [*sic*] braggart warrior', adding that 'and there were not many black actors available in Tokyo!'.[119]

Even accepting that the mockery is supposed to be Bassanio's, and is thereby intended to reveal his ignorance to the audience, the politics and agency of such a move are extremely questionable, particularly given that stereotypes are used to 'perpetuate an artificial sense of difference between 'self' and 'other''.[120] In this context, it is difficult to unravel who is 'other' to who, whether the audience was supposed to see 'otherness' in the depiction of blackness, or whether the other is the actors and audience themselves, in a presumed culture of permissiveness for this kind of depiction of race. If Doran wanted to raise awareness in Japan about the use of blackface, there were other ways of accomplishing this without engaging in the practice itself and thereby propagating its use. It also makes the already precarious issue of hierarchy within a British director-Japanese cast company more difficult, particularly given the suggestion that this was something Doran could only do in Japan: the awareness of the improbability of Doran having actors at the RSC use blackface makes it harder to square its inclusion in his Tokyo production. Reviewers also responded with some bemusement to the suitor scenes, with many noting their unease at the depiction of Morocco, writing for example that it was 'extreme racial discrimination'.[121] Another wrote that they were 'stunned' by the scene, and that although they read in the programme that Doran wanted to highlight prejudice, watching the scene they wondered if it was being presented 'as a gag'.[122] However, others

[119] Ania Loomba, 'Foreword', in *Colorbind Shakespeare: New Perspectives on Race and Performance*, ed. by Ayanna Thompson (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. xiii-xvii (p. xiv).
[120] Sander L. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 18.
[121] (n.a.), *Fun 'Merchant of Venice'* (*Uenisu no shounin, tanoshii*) (2007) <http://blog.goo.ne.jp/kurumin7/e/b9d720e6387cc32aee3d8bb5fa0f1045> [accessed 22 January 2018].
[122] (n.a.), *2007/10/6 'The Merchant of Venice'* (*2007nen 10gatsu roku uenisu no shounin*) (2007) <blog.livedoor.jp/kyara_iz/archives/50721475.html> [accessed 22 January 2018].

noted the 'ironic' use of racism to address the issues in the play's society.[123] There are other methods Doran could have used to represent race and racism, and it would surely have been preferable to present an alternative to blackface rather than use a misleading inclusion of it.

As I mentioned previously, in addition to the voiced confusion over the meaning of Bassanio/Morocco, the production received a fairly lukewarm response, further underlining the issues with this collaboration. For example, one writer concluded their review with 'I couldn't empathise with any of the characters', and that they were not 'very impressed with the production, but I guess it was entertaining enough'.[124] In a more critical response, one wrote that 'the overall harmony of the design wasn't good' and that the acting was 'disjointed', adding that they felt a sense of discomfort with the actors performing *Merchant* in Japanese ('there's a big incongruity when it's done by the Japanese in Japanese').[125] Crucially, they locate their sense of unease as a response to Doran's direction, saying, 'I wonder if it's because Doran just imported what he does with the RSC as is? If so, it's natural that it wouldn't work'.[126] I have already spoken about the production's failure to engage with its performance context and its decision to locate itself almost outside of the stage history of this play in Japan, and comments such as this reveal that the audience felt a similar sense of discomfort. In repressing any reference to the performers or the context, the production restaged the *shingeki* tradition, with the actors 'serving' the vision of the British director. Despite its presumably good intentions, this *Merchant* is a clear example of what can go

[123] Saitama Arts Theatre, *The Merchant of Venice* (programme), (Saitama: Saitama Arts Foundation, 2013).
[124] (n.a.), *I Went To Watch Fujiwara Tatsuya in 'The Merchant of Venice'* (*Fujiwara Tatsuya shutsuen uenisu no shounin wo mitekita*) (2007) <http://berangkat8.exblog.jp/6246404/> [accessed 22 January 2018].
[125] Takano, *HoriPro 'The Merchant of Venice'*.
[126] Ibid.

wrong in collaborative intercultural theatre, when theatre becomes a 'dead end' rather than a 'two-way street' due to the domination of a western artist in the exchange.[127]

In interviews, Doran expressed views that would suggest he did want to reflect Tokyo within the production, but the extent to which he achieved this is debatable. For example, he stated that 'I think Tokyo is a parallel to this Venetian merchant's story, and Japan is opening to the world as Venice was in those days'.[128] However, with all references to Tokyo and the presence of the Japanese actors doing the performing suppressed, this production in no obvious way engaged with its cultural context and instead 'flattened' the actors to two-dimensional reproductions of RSC actors. Bi-qi Beatrice Lei has suggested that in the process of making intercultural theatre 'there are sharp turns and speed bumps along the way, and even pitfalls and dead ends', and the issues in this production amply demonstrate the pitfalls that, despite intentions, hybrid theatre can fall into.[129] In *Native Shakespeares*, Craig Dionne and Parmita Kapadia suggest that one of the advantages of intercultural Shakespeare is its potential to 'decentre, if not erase, his British birth-right', and to shatter 'the universalist interpretation that privileges western experience as primary'.[130] However, this production ultimately seemed to privilege the 'western experience' in its disregard for the possibilities of interaction and exchange, and in its reproduction of the kind of performance that dominated the *shingeki* era. This is in marked contrast to Ninagawa's production of the same play, which questioned the inheritance of *shingeki* traditions in contemporary theatre, and the current conditions of performance in Japan, through deliberate evocations of *shingeki* and Japan's theatrical past.

[127] Bharucha, p. 2.
[128] Tanaka, '*Merchant* For Modern Times'.
[129] Lei, p. 14.
[130] Dionne and Kapadia, p. 6.

**Ninagawa's *Shingeki*-Hell Vision of Venice**

Ninagawa's 2013 production of *The Merchant of Venice* was the twenty-eighth in the Sai-no-kuni Shakespeare Series, and it is worth considering in more detail because of the way it staged the division between *kyūgeki* ('old theatre', pre-Meiji Restoration) and *shingeki*, and the gap this has created in the theatre and the bodies themselves of Japanese actors. It also thereby staged the history and difficulties of performing Shakespeare in contemporary Japan, and questioned the legacy of *Merchant* performances. Part of the All-Male Shakespeare Series at Saitama, its cast was drawn from contemporary theatre with the exception of Shylock, who was played by famous kabuki actor Ichikawa Ennosuke. Ninagawa had previously expressed a dislike of the play, and in the programme writes that Ichikawa, who had worked with him in the *Kabuki Twelfth Night* (2005) and the all-male *The Taming of the Shrew* (2010), convinced him to stage it.[131]

In *Shrew*, Ichikawa had played Katherine, performing in western-style clothes but using techniques from kabuki such as the *mie* (a technique whereby an actor holds a pose for a few seconds to mark an important moment and express a strong emotion) and the speaking-pattern of an *onnagata* (the highly stylised female impersonators in kabuki). He was again the only actor in *Merchant* to use kabuki, although the effect was amplified since it served to stylistically divide him from the Christian characters, who used modern realist, or *shingeki*, style. The Christians were mostly dressed in minutely-detailed sixteenth-century clothing, a rare occurrence within Ninagawa's work, which was typically defined by the 'long skirt of no particular national identity' which became the 'basic costume design in Ninagawa's later Shakespeare productions' which through its placeless-ness refused to concretely signal one

[131] Saitama, *The Merchant of Venice* (programme).

location or another.[132] Although some wore large robes which were reminiscent of other Sai-no-kuni productions, such as Antonio [see Fig. 2], others wore doublets and trousers, and all wore jewellery and crucifixes. In addition, Portia wore a realistic blonde wig, something extremely rare in Ninagawa's productions as even though actors often dyed their hair or wore wigs, this was usually brown or obviously bleached blonde hair. The blonde wig in particular was striking given Ninagawa's previous comments about *shingeki* theatre, such as his statement that he 'grew up in the time when it was normal to wear, in translated theatre, blonde wigs and fake noses', which led him to ask, 'how can we show any originality through mimicry?'.[133]

The Christian characters' outfits signalled that they were historical western characters, and therefore through both visuals and acting style they were connected to the *shingeki* tradition of presenting 'authentic western' Shakespeare. As Akishima Yuriko writes, 'it seems like the kind of orthodox British performance that we rarely see these days'.[134] However, as Lei suggests, ''straight' Shakespeare – productions textually faithful to the source materials, in early modern setting and costumes – can be 'crooked' in extra-theatrical representations', which Ninagawa here achieved through the representation of Shylock.[135] The use of 'Elizabethanism' here, in comparison to Ninagawa's more typical style, is striking and reminiscent of Douglas Lanier's comment that 'Elizabethanism has become a chosen *style* that signifies an alternative to, escape from, or critique of modernity', although the modernity

[132] Kawai Shoichiro, 'Ninagawa Yukio', in *The Routledge Companion to Director's Shakespeare*, ed. John Russell Brown (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 269-83 (p. 278).
[133] Ninagawa Yukio, *The Power of Theatre* (*Engeki no chikara*), (Tokyo: Nikkei Publishing, 2013), p. 98.
[134] Akishima Yuriko, *Ninagawa and Shakespeare* (*Ninagawa to Sheikusupia*) (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2015), p. 151.
[135] Lei, p. 8.

being criticised here is not necessarily the contemporary state of modernity, but the previous *shingeki* form.[136]

In contrast to the light colours worn by the Christians, Shylock and the other Jewish characters were in darker colours and were less easy to place as sixteenth-century Europeans, thereby helping to visualise their outcast status. Akishima writes that visually Shylock appeared as though he was from 'a different world', an impression which was only emphasised by the difference in his movement and speaking styles to the others.[137] He also wore heavy stage make-up, arguably making his appearance closer to that of other kabuki actors who had played Shylock: for example to Ichikawa Sadanji II (1880-1940), who played Shylock in a version of the trial scene staged at the Meiji-za in 1908. Ichikawa had expressed his interest in the play due to its history with kabuki, and so these parallels are a deliberate means of connecting previous productions with the present.[138]

[Image redacted]

Fig. 2 - Ichikawa Ennosuke (Shylock) and Takahashi Katsumi (Antonio)

[136] Douglas Lanier, *Shakespeare and Modern Popular Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 161.
[137] Akishima, p. 152.
[138] Fukahori Etsuko, 'Staging Cultural and Theatrical Heterogeneity: Yukio Ninagawa's 2013 Production of *The Merchant of Venice*', *The Kwassui Review, Faculty of Humanities*, 57 (2014), 13-22 (14).

Ichikawa performed using kabuki techniques, and unprompted the audience occasionally responded as they would at a kabuki performance: following moments of high skill or technique, members of the audience called out 'Omodaka-ya', his *yagō* (kabuki guild name), or 'Ennosuke', in a practice known as *kakegoe*.[139] The most notable moment of this was in the wordless epilogue, during which Shylock appeared alone onstage wearing the crucifix he had been given; he ripped it off and then held it up in stop-motion, 'as though he was going to throw [it] against the floor'.[140] He held this pose for a few moments as the lights dimmed, before exiting slowly through the auditorium; as he moved, members of the audience called out *kakegoe*.[141] There was an enormous difference between his final exit, and his departure just before the interval at the end of 3.1, in which he left through the central archway to the back of the stage in the darkness, laughing loudly, and his fully-lit, silent, exit through the middle of the audience in his final scene. He also used *mie* to express Shylock's moments of high emotion, for example at the conclusion of his 'Hath not a Jew eyes' speech.[142] In kabuki historian Kawatake Toshio's opinion, a *mie* is 'impossible' in 'western realistic theatre', making its inclusion even starker in contrast to the 'realistic' Christians.[143] Ichikawa said that he 'understood why kabuki actors picked this work from Shakespeare's repertory', arguing that in its message about revenge and morality it resembles kabuki and was therefore a good starting place for the adaptation of Shakespeare.[144] This comment also further underlines Ichikawa's awareness of the play's past with kabuki.

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[139] Ibid., 21.
[140] Ibid.
[141] This scene has interesting links with the end of Act IV in the 2017 production of *Timon of Athens*, in which Kōtarō Yoshida as Timon took off the crucifix he was wearing, sometimes spat on it, and threw it against the set before leaving through the audience. During rehearsals for this scene in the theatre, following his exit he sat at the back of the auditorium and shouted *kakegoe* for the other actors onstage.
[142] Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, p. 284
[143] Kawatake Toshio, *Kabuki: Baroque Fusion of the Arts*, trans. by Frank Hoff and Jean Connell Hoff (Tokyo: LTCB International Library, 2004), pp. 113-14.
[144]Saitama, *The Merchant of Venice* (programme).

Matsuoka writes that 'one of the reasons this play is difficult for the Japanese to understand is because of the anti-Semitism underlying the Christian society'.[145] Ninagawa responded to this issue by embodying the conflict onstage through the confrontation of traditional and modern theatre, dramatising the conflict between the religions in a way easily accessible to the audience. As Fukahori Etsuko suggests, because the two styles were not integrated, Ninagawa made 'the most of a sense of incongruity created by the uncompromised use of each style'.[146] Jessica and Tubal were not played by other kabuki actors, although visually their costumes resembled Shylock: Jessica, in particular, was portrayed by an acting style very similar to that of the other cross-dressed actors, particularly Portia. Matsuoka adds that Ninagawa presented Shylock 'as an alien' in the play's society, and that he thereby depicted the 'social dynamics' of this alien fighting against the repression of society.[147] Other characters, such as Solanio and Salerio ('I never heard a passion so confused, so strange, outrageous and variable', 2.8.12), mocked Shylock through imitating kabuki *kata* (traditional gestures and movements used in kabuki) and pulling exaggerated expressions to suggest *mie*.[148] Through creating a conflict between the stylistic kabuki actor and the realist *shingeki* actors, Ninagawa clarified the issues of prejudice and repression, alongside staging the history of Shakespearean reception in Japan and the gradual repression of tradition following the rise of *shingeki*.

Ninagawa played with memories of *shingeki* through the costumes, set and acting style used by the Christian characters. Akishima also connected the design to *shingeki*, writing that the 'exquisite period clothing of the men, Portia's blonde hair and frilly dresses, the solemn and old stone set, are a parody of western civilisation as seen from the present age

[145] Ibid.
[146] Fukahori, 20.
[147] Saitama, *The Merchant of Venice* (programme).
[148] Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, p. 269.

or the east'.[149] The set closely resembled the Teatro Olimpico, a sixteenth-century theatre in Vicenza, Italy, with Venice being represented by three archways opening onto street perspectives used in the Olimpico.[150] For scenes in Belmont, the doors were closed and chandeliers brought down. The stage floor, usually painted black at Ninagawa's base theatre in Saitama, also used wooden planks, clearly signifying that this was a stage set in a tactic that was again unfamiliar from most of Ninagawa's work. Unlike other Ninagawa productions, and as will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, there was no pre-show or obvious device to introduce the actors. Instead, following some choral music, Antonio came on through the central door and began to speak. This also implied *shingeki*'s performance history since there was no acknowledgment of the actors' pretence, and instead the play simply began. As described above, however, this illusion was shattered by the entrance of Shylock, who defied the realist tendencies of *shingeki* and who, played by a well-known kabuki actor, reminded the audience of the other traditions excluded from the stage in realist theatre.

The choice of the Teatro Olimpico over a reproduction of an English theatre such as the Globe is also note-worthy, especially considering Ninagawa used this tactic to great effect in Hisashi Inoue's *Shakespeare in the Twelfth Year of the Tempo Era* (2005). That production began with an accurate reconstruction of the stage of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London, which was then invaded by Japanese workers who dismantled it, leaving only the pillars from the balcony.[151] Inoue's play moves elements from the plots of all of Shakespeare's plays to the world of the mafia in *Tempo* era Japan (1841), and so this technique was an extremely effective way of demolishing the notion of an 'authentic' Shakespeare setting before the audience's eyes. Instead, the Olimpico suggests the occasional confusion in *shingeki* about

[149] Akishima, p. 154.
[150] Fukahori, 16.
[151] Senda Akihiko, *Ninagawa Yukio's Theatre World* (*Enshutsuka Ninagawa Yukio no engekikai*) (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbun Publications, 2010), p. 320.

which ‘authentic’ image to use: the stage as it would have been in Shakespeare’s time, a reflection of nineteenth-century western staging practices, or the reality of the period the play was set in. Ninagawa opted for a recreation of an Italian theatre that existed at the time the drama is set, and thereby perhaps also suggested the limits of mimesis which denied the English/Shakespearean origin of the drama and said ‘we are Italians’. However, the set also simultaneously seemed to dwarf the company, perhaps implying the weight and difficulty of the theatrical inheritance.

It is also worth noting that the Olimpico is the contact point of an early encounter between Japanese and European theatre, as the Tensho Embassy visited the Olimpico and watched a performance in 1585.[152] The Tensho Embassy were a group of young Japanese Catholics who toured Europe during 1582-1590 to learn about European culture, and their visit to the theatre is documented in a mural in the theatre dating from 1595. The educational aspect of their tour parallels the later ‘study tours’ to the west taken by Japanese artists, including those made by Kawakami Otojirō and his company. Much as the Kawakamis exhibited their ‘Japanese-ness’ onstage in the west, and then their ‘western-ness’ on their return to Japan, the Tensho delegates were ‘representations of Japan’ in Europe and upon their return, ‘dressed in the European clothes given them by Gregory XIII, they portrayed Europe’.[153] Although they were the first learning tour that went to Europe, they were also the last until the 1871-1873 Iwakura Mission, which left Japan following the end of the isolationist *sakoku* period. The Olimpico therefore has explicit connections to both the ‘real thing’ of western theatre as it was historically witnessed by the Japanese, and contact between Japan and the theatrical culture of the west throughout the past centuries.

[152] Fernando Rigon, *It Teatro Olimpico di Vicenza* (Milano: Electa, 1989), p. 49.
[153] Derek Massarella, ‘The Japanese Embassy to Europe (1582-1590)’, *The Journal of the Hakluyt Society* (2013) <http://www.hakluyt.com/journal_index.htm> [accessed 14 March 2015].

In these explicit references to history, Ninagawa staged ‘‘the metadrama’ of his own intercultural theatre’, as Todd Borlik writes concerning Ninagawa’s 2010 production of Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*.[154] In that production Ninagawa pitted the ‘modern’ Faustus against the *ukiyo-e* world of the demons, thereby revealing the ‘current predicament of Japanese theatre, torn between Eastern and Western prototypes’.[155] By revealing the intercultural dilemma of contemporary actors through the explicit conflict of old/new represented in *Merchant*, Ninagawa set out to expose, ‘rather than conceal, the cultural fault lines that persist in modern Japan and in the global mise-en-scene of late capitalist society’.[156] In her 2017 play *Shylock in Hell* (*Naraku no Shyrokku*), Tsutsumi Harue addressed a similar issue through a depiction of Ichikawa Sadanji’s attempt to stage *Merchant* at the Meiji-za, and the resistance he faced from the audience, staff and other actors; in the play’s conclusion, he is ultimately unable to break absolutely with the traditions of the past. The mix of styles used in both these examples reflects the Meiji period's ‘disjointed’ nature, ‘in which no one clearly understood the direction of the future’.[157] Mulryne suggests that due to the ‘cultural fracture’ created by *shingeki*’s break with the past, as a genre it produced a ‘sense of unrooted superficiality’ in performance.[158] He adds that this had led to an ‘enduring ideological divide that has vexed and preoccupied the country in its search for a permanent and persuasive self-image’.[159] Although the audience were not invited to side with either Shylock and the old theatre, or the Christians and the modern, Ninagawa revealed the problems caused by the

[154] Borlik, 454.
[155] Ibid., 445.
[156] Ibid., 446.
[157] Kathy Foley, ‘Shakespeare-Asian Theatre Fusions: Globe-“alization” of Naked Masks (Bangkok), Shadowlight (San Francisco), and Setagaya Public Theatre (Tokyo)’, *Asian Theatre Journal* 28.1 (2011), 7-43 (32).
[158] J.R. Mulryne, ‘The Perils and Profits of Interculturalism and the Theatre Art of Tadashi Suzuki’, in *Shakespeare and the Japanese Stage*, ed. by Sasayama, Mulryne and Shewring, pp. 71-93 (p. 82).
[159] Ibid.

wholesale rejection or repression of either, and thereby represented the state of contemporary theatre as it stands to the audience.

Michel de Certeau's notion of the 'return of the repressed' is perhaps enlightening in what was taking place in both Ninagawa's, and under the edges of Doran's, productions of *The Merchant of Venice*. He writes that 'shards' of the past come back 'despite everything, on the edges of the discourse or in its rifts and crannies' as ''resistances', 'survivals', or delays'.[160] Ninagawa's *Merchant* is arguably, in Huang's terms, an 'extended fragmentary quotation – a quotation with typos', in what at first appears to be a sincere take on *shingeki* realism, but which instead undermines, questions and challenges through its slippages.[161] Tompkins suggests that performance can 'manipulate the borders of geography, history and subjectivity', meaning that 'history itself does not hold the power, but rather the *performance* of history is the dominant factor in the iteration of the past'.[162] In restaging the history of Japanese theatre's modernisation, Ninagawa held the theatrical past up for re-examination, questioning the troubled history of reception through a familiar, if difficult, play. By apparently following the example of *shingeki*, which as a genre has been called a '*reductio ad absurdum* of the categorical imperative of modernisation-as-westernisation', but subverting it through the evident divide created by the kabuki-style Shylock, Ninagawa also staged the post-*angura* age's conviction that there is 'no model to be copied, no original to be faithfully reproduced'.[163] On the other hand, through its nineteenth-century European setting, Doran's production revealed the difficulties that can occur when a director, particularly a western one,

[160] Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. by Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 4.
[161] Alexa C.Y. Huang, 'Impersonation, Autobiography, and Cross-Cultural Adaptation: Lee Kuo-Hsiu's *Shamlet*', *Asian Theatre Journal*, 22.1 (2005), 122-37 (126).
[162] Joanne Tompkins, 'Performing History's Unsettlement', in *Critical Theory and Performance: Revised and Enlarged Edition*, ed. by Janelle G. Reinelt and Joseph R. Roach (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), pp. 71-82 (p. 73).
[163] Watanabe Emiko, 'Ninagawa's *Macbeth*: A Japanese Interpretation of a Shakespeare Play', *Bulletin of College of Foreign Studies, Yokohama*, 26 (2003), 81-97 (82).

tries to replicate western performance styles without proper consideration. It has been suggested that setting Shakespeare's plays 'in another period' can be a way of smoothing out 'the awkward differences between two historical periods – Shakespeare's and our own – by imposing another that we think we already understand'.[164] However, what Doran's move to an imaginary Venice revealed was that he knew little about either contemporary or nineteenth-century Japan. These two case studies have revealed the changing position of presumed authenticity and the west in contemporary Japanese Shakespeare, but they represent only a small part of current performance trends. The response of one actor to a question posed in the programme to Ninagawa's *Merchant of Venice* is a good link between these productions to the themes of the following discussion. When asked, 'what is your number one treasure?', actor Kenshi Uchida, who will be a significant presence in the next chapters, answered: 'Disgust. I have it in my hands while I'm alive'.[165]

[164] Bridget Escolme, 'Costume', in *Shakespeare and the Making of Theatre*, ed. by Stuart Hampton-Reeves and Bridget Escolme (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 128-45 (p. 136).
[165] Saitama, *The Merchant of Venice* (programme).

## CHAPTER TWO

### Superflat in *Cool Japan*: All the Youth are Junk Anyway

> The body in Japanese theatre presents a Foucaludian history of the country's modernisation: alienation from its native roots; the experience of western cultural hegemony and its own imperial experiments, war, devastation, and defeat.[1]

While there are many frameworks which can be used to trace Shakespearean reception and performance in Japan, a reoccurring theme throughout much of the critical debate and audience response is that of the physicality of the performers. This occurs through references to the nationality of the actor, the perceived race of their character, costuming decisions and their body itself and its place within wider social discourses. As the above quote by Poulton implies, and as was suggested in the previous chapter, representations of the body in Japanese theatre are indicative of wider social, cultural and historical trends. The notion of the body and its representation within culture in Japan has played an important part in the construction of 'Japanese-ness' throughout history, while the close connection between the nation and the body is expressed in the word *kokutai* (国体: system of government, or national identity), which can be read as 'the body as nation' since its characters mean 'country-body'.[2] In the postwar period in particular, the body became a crucial site for debate and memory since the nation's memories were 'discursively constructed through body tropes', as 'in the immediate aftermath of the war, many Japanese discovered their bodies as the entities that survived destruction and thus embodied historical continuity'.[3] The body has therefore been one of the central sites for the representation and construction of what constitutes 'Japan' at a given

[1] Mark Cody Poulton, 'Contemporary Theatre', in *A History of Japanese Theatre*, ed. by Salz, pp. 326-48 (p. 339).
[2] Douglas N. Slaymaker, *The Body in Postwar Japanese Fiction* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 10.
[3] Igarashi Yoshikuni, *Bodies of Memory: Narratives of War in Postwar Japanese Culture, 1945-1970* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 5.

moment, and much as the body became the centre of the 'reconfiguration of Japan's national image' following the war, contemporary uses and representations of bodies can reveal the ideas of Japan being created now.[4]

As already explored in the previous chapter, Shakespeare and the notion of the body and how it is represented has a particularly burdened history in Japan owing to the nature of Shakespeare's reception in the nineteenth-century. In line with the so-called 'Meiji Project', which led to the development of *shingeki*, modernisation was adopted across a wide range of areas including technology, politics and art. The form of modernity adopted by Japan during this period was a kind of westernisation, with western theories, fashions and technologies often replacing the existing modes, with the aim of staging a new, 'modern' and developed nation in an attempt to prevent western colonialism.[5] With the influx of ideas that came with the end of Japan's closed-country policy (roughly 1633-1853), intellectuals and artists saw a need to modernise Japan's theatre so that it was closer to theatre in the west, partly with the aim of using it as a soft-power cultural ambassador and evidence of Japan's development. As the theatre turned towards the *shingeki*-style, with the increased importance of the translated text in performance, the Japanese body became something to be masked when playing a western role. This embarrassment manifested in the wigs, make-up and prosthetic noses described previously, and also in calls for the abandoning of familiar stylistic elements such as *kata* (the gestures inherited from traditional theatre): director Osanai Kaoru (1881-1928) suggested that to be successful in performing a western play, actors would have to 'learn to talk, not sing, walk, not dance'.[6]

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[4] Ibid., p. 13.
[5] Yoshihara, 'Japan as "Half-Civilised"', p. 21.
[6] Paraphrased from Poulton's translation ('Move, don't dance! Talk, don't sing!'). Mark Cody Poulton, *A Beggar's Art: Scripting Modernity in Japanese Drama, 1900-1930* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010), p. vii.

Uchino writes that in *shingeki* and the traditions inherited from it, the 'Japanese body' is 'something to be denied and annihilated'.[7] Tetsuo Kishi and Graham Bradshaw describe the early Shakespeare adaptations as 'simplistic and superficial' due to their attempts to appear 'more Caucasian'.[8] Furthermore, they call it a 'ludicrous custom', stating that 'even if they did look Caucasian (which was highly unlikely), they spoke Japanese throughout the performance'.[9] This comment should however be read in the context of Kishi and Bradshaw's study, which has little positive to say about the majority of contemporary Japanese performance, arguably stemming from a distrust of infidelities to the Shakespearean text and context. For example, they state that they do not agree with Terence Hawkes's idea of Shakespeare's plays as an 'endlessly 'chaotic site' for endlessly proliferating interpretations, none of which can be regarded as more authentic or authoritative than others', but instead that they think 'some interpretations, productions and translations are demonstrably better than others'.[10] It goes to stand therefore that they would be similarly dismissive of 'inauthentic' attempts at replicating the western body as they are of 'inauthentic' texts.[11]

More revealing are critics such as Uchino and Anan Nobuko who have written about the marginalisation of Japanese bodies in *shingeki*, with Uchino arguing that although the genre aspired to a 'transparent representation' of western bodies,

> the here and now in the performance space was represented by the 'Japanese body' which was aspiring to the transparent representation of the 'westerner's' body and was

[7] Uchino, p. 126.
[8] Tetsuo Kishi and Graham Bradshaw, *Shakespeare in Japan* (London: Continuum, 2005), p. 29.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid., p. ix.
[11] Ibid., p. 80.

thus necessarily an unsaid manifestation of the notion of the 'morbid negation of the body'.[12]

He concludes that the reality of the actor's 'Japanese body' was 'undeniably visible in the performing space', and Anan adds that *shingeki*'s attempts paradoxically 'ended up exhibiting the Japanese bodies whilst marginalising them'.[13] Regardless of these reservations, the trend of visually attempting to deny the Japanese actor's body was still present until the early 1980s, and as was demonstrated in the case study of Ninagawa's *Merchant of Venice*, it has undeniably left a deep sense of anxiety in the contemporary theatre.[14]

It was against this history of repression that the *angura* ('underground') artists of the late 1960s fought against by insisting on a return to the Japanese body. Anan writes that *angura* 'negotiated and reclaimed Japanese bodies' from the marginalisation of *shingeki* through a 'struggle with language-oriented theatre', or in other words by resisting and altering the translation-based drama of the *shingeki* era.[15] Poulton has also written that the 'physicality of the performer' became, and remains, a central concern in the theatre during this period, particularly for its role in the 'reappraising of Japanese identity'.[16] For example, artists such as Hijikata Tatsumi, one of the originators of dance-form *butoh*, stepped away from the 'western styles of dance' which predominated during the previous period because he felt that 'the Japanese body was not made for such movement, that the imported forms did not fit the substance of Japanese life'.[17]

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[12] Uchino, p. 126.
[13] Ibid.; Anan Nobuko, 'Two-Dimensional Imagination in Contemporary Japanese Women's Performance', *TDR*, 55.4 (2011), 96-112 (97).
[14] Yoshihara, 'Tacky 'Shakespeares'', 86.
[15] Anan, 'Two-Dimensional Imagination', 97.
[16] Poulton, 'Contemporary Theatre', p. 339.
[17] Vicki Sanders, 'Dancing the Dark Soul of Japan: an Aesthetic Analysis of *Buto*', *Asian Theatre Journal*, 5.2 (1998), 148-63 (152).

There has been a degree of nativism in this discourse which implies that there is a prior 'Japanese body' type to return to, or that 'the Japanese physique and movement possessed distinctive qualities', stemming from lifestyle and agricultural techniques such as paddy farming.[18] As Christine Yano's discussion on the everyday physical choices people make between 'western' or 'Japanese' objects implies, 'whole fields of cultural production – from clothes to food to toilets – have become dichotomised as Japanese (*wa*-) or Western (*yo*-)', at least to a certain extent 'defining difference' between the two.[19] She adds that choosing between these two, for example staying in a western-style hotel over a Japanese *ryokan* (inn), or using a western-style toilet instead of a Japanese one are 'not neutral' choices, but 'strategic assertions and practices of identity' which act as a 'small bodily signifier of one's choices, both to oneself and to others'.[20] An example of one of these signifiers in performance is Suzuki Tadashi's use of a 'squatting' sitting posture, which Senda Akihiko argues through its 'very appearance' onstage in translated drama (for example, *King Lear* 1984) produces a 'rival model' which deliberately questions 'at the most basic level our methods of ingesting 'modern culture''.[21] This idea of physical choices creating or representing a desired form of identity is reminiscent of Jen Harvie's idea that 'national identities are neither biologically nor territorially given' but that they are instead 'creatively produced or staged'.[22] The point where these two 'separate' identities overlap and intersect is arguably therefore the hybrid-state, which can represent the sense of ''in-betweenness' as a position, being between positions'.[23]

[18] Poulton, 'Contemporary Theatre', p. 339.
[19] Christine R. Yano, *Tears of Longing: Nostalgia and the Nation in Japanese Popular Song* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Centre, 2002), p. 13.
[20] Ibid., p. 14.
[21] Senda Akihiko, *The Voyage of Contemporary Japanese Theatre*, trans. by J. Thomas Rimer (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), p. 52.
[22] Jen Harvie, *Staging the Nation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 2.
[23] Ien Ang, 'Out of Bounds: Inauthentic Spaces and the Production of Identities', in *Foreign Dialogues: Memories, Translations, Conversations*, ed. by Mary Zournazi (Sydney: Pluto Press, 1998), pp. 153-67 (p. 160).

Encouraged by tours during the 1970s and 1980s from foreign companies such as the RSC which confirmed the 'invalidity' of *shingeki*'s practices, and which Minami argues freed artists from the 'anxieties of the authenticity and universality of English Shakespeare', the *angura* movement's desire to address the gap between the character and the body performing the role has remained influential.[24] Recognising that following the *shingeki* convention of actors 'fashioning themselves as Caucasian' would be 'fundamentally dishonest, even slavish', artists in the *angura* and post-*angura* movements have been experimenting with different ways of using the presence and physicality of the actors onstage.[25] Borlik has argued that in Ninagawa's productions this stance acts as a 'bulwark against Anglophone cultural imperialism'.[26] In a similar vein, Kurita Yoshihiro, who led the Ryutopia Noh Shakespeare Series, argued that since Shakespeare's plays come from a 'different cultural' background they are almost 'impossible' for Japanese actors to perform straight, and that he therefore wanted to produce work that takes 'advantage of Japanese aesthetics and makes the best use of the Japanese actors' way of moving'.[27]

However, while I agree that in comparison to the *shingeki* era artists have become freer to present Shakespeare's plays as they want, I disagree with Takahashi Yasunari when he suggests that there are many young directors working in contemporary Japan who are 'completely free from the anxiety of influence'.[28] While examples of minutely replicating certain western productions, as Fukuda Tsuneari did by taking close notes on the 1954 Michael Benthall *Hamlet* at the Old Vic, which then influenced his own Tokyo production in 1955, have become rarer (although Huang notes a *shingeki Hamlet* in 2010 which attempted

[24] Minami, 'Re-Playing Shakespeares on the Japanese Stage', p. 77.
[25] Eglinton, 'Interlude: Asian Energy', p. 532; Borlik, 454.
[26] Borlik, 454.
[27] Tomoe Kishi, ''Filtrated' Shakespeare? – A Review of the Ryutopia Theatre Group's *The Winter's Tale* in the Noh-style', *Showa University of Music*, 28 (2009), 84-94 (88).
[28] Takahashi Yasunari, '*Hamlet* and the Anxiety of Modern Japan', *Shakespeare Survey*, 48 (1995), 99-112 (109).

to replicate Peter Hall's 1965 production with the RSC), as I suggested earlier there is still an element of anxiety at the idea of Japanese actors performing Shakespeare.[29] It is this anxiety that has led (and leads) to the inclusion of devices in performance which are used to address what is perceived as a gap between the Japanese actors and the western characters, such as Ninagawa's regular use of conceptual frameworks or even Deguchi Norio's contemporary-dressed 'Shakespeare in jeans' in the 1970-80s.[30] Discussing his motivation for his style of directing Shakespeare, Ninagawa said that it was because of the 'transparent phoniness of the attempt to mimic the outward form of foreigners', adding that just 'seeing people wearing tights and blonde wigs on stage fills me with a sense of embarrassment, which alone is enough to alienate me from the theatre altogether'.[31] As a result, he frequently incorporated metatheatrical elements which subverted the 'tradition of performing Shakespeare in Japan' by 'drawing attention to the reality of the Japanese actors'.[32]

Of course, while Ninagawa was not the only artist who added a pre-show to his productions as a framing device, his creative means of making the audience aware of the metatheatricality of the event, and thereby revealing that 'it was not English actors but Japanese actors who were performing a Shakespearean' play, deserves further attention.[33] One of the frameworks he often used was to create a 'backstage' area on the stage, incorporating dressing rooms into the set. For example, *Hamlet* (2012) featured a clear acrylic floor which revealed the actors' preparing at their dressing tables at the start of the production, and then tidying up again at the end, a technique he had also used in the 1998 *Hamlet* which had dressing rooms set up at the back of the stage. Jon Brokering writes that by 'framing *Hamlet*

[29] Huang, 'Yukio Ninagawa', p. 99.
[30] Minami Ryuta, Ian Carruthers and John Gillies, 'Introduction', in *Performing Shakespeare in Japan*, ed. by Minami, Carruthers and Gillies, pp. 1-16 (p. 11).
[31] Jon M. Brokering, 'Ninagawa Yukio's Intercultural *Hamlet*: Parsing Japanese Iconography', *Asian Theatre Journal*, 24.2 (2007), 370-97 (374-75).
[32] Ibid., 375.
[33] Kawai, 'Ninagawa Yukio', p. 277.

with backstage activity', Ninagawa was aiming to 'eliminate the artificiality of Japanese actors performing in non-Japanese roles'.[34] Within these backstage settings, Ninagawa would have actors and stage crew ostensibly 'warm up' onstage before the show started, whilst backstage announcements were played through speakers. On several occasions, such as *Titus Andronicus* (2006) which was performed at the RSC, and in his 1999 production of *The Tempest* (staged in London at the Barbican in 1992), Ninagawa himself appeared during these warm-up sessions. These tactics were described by one critic as a 'conceptual frame' which provided a 'bridge between the two cultures of Japan and Britain'.[35] The first post-Ninagawa production in the Sai-no-kuni Shakespeare Series (*Timon of Athens*, 2017), used the same framing device, although in rehearsals assistant director Inoue Sonsho emphasised that it was crucial to Ninagawa's concept of the device that the company was 'acting' at preparing rather than actually doing it.[36]

These examples of metatheatrical frames are revealing of the ongoing anxieties about performing Shakespeare, stemming from the bodies of the actors themselves and the history of repression in *shingeki*. However, these elements form part of the wider intercultural responses emerging in contemporary performance, undermining the idea of the status of English Shakespeare and rejecting the *shingeki* tradition of hiding the actors. Translator Matsuoka Kazuko, among others, has described how the actors become 'cultural hybrids' when performing in Shakespeare, citing Japanese actors playing a European character and speaking in Japanese as producing this hybridity.[37] As José Esteban Muñoz suggests, hybridity can be used as a paradigm which helps 'account for the complexities and

[34] Brokering, 373.
[35] Gemma Miller, '*Hamlet*, Ninagawa Company (Barbican Theatre)', *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 33.3 (2015), 512-16 (513).
[36] *Timon of Athens* rehearsals, Sai-no-kuni Saitama Arts Theatre, 14 December 2017.
[37] Matsuoka Kazuko, Shakespeare and Translation (roundtable), World Shakespeare Congress, 2 August 2016.

impossibilities of identity' produced in the globalised world.[38] Furthermore, Rob Conkie has argued that if 'authenticity is the preserve of binarism, then hybridity is its decomposition'.[39] In this case, these contemporary deconstructions of the authenticity myth are another way of challenging the *shingeki* movement and the binarism of the east/west, pre-modern/modern, us/them discourse. Seeing that the younger generation have been at the centre of many recent trends and developments within Shakespearean performance, and given that the bodies of the young and what they choose to do with them have become a critical site of debate and anxiety within Japanese society, this is a revealing reference point to examine contemporary theatre practices. Focusing on the young will also allow for deeper comparison in the following chapters with the idea of the 'postwar' body represented by the older generation of actors, with those of the 'two-dimensional' young.

**The Herbivore Fortinbras as a Mirror of the Times**

Ninagawa's eighth production of *Hamlet* (2015) is an example of the anxieties about the young informing performance, as well as a response to the reception history of Shakespeare in Japan, and it sheds light on many of the theories discussed in this chapter. Freddie Rokem suggests that *Hamlet*'s repeated appearances on the stage reflects a sense of 'unfinished business from the past' manifesting in actors 'continuously performing a return of the repressed', a concept which is fascinating in light of the way Ninagawa manipulated this *Hamlet* to reflect these anxieties.[40] While the majority of the cast were familiar veteran actors from the Ninagawa Company, particularly Fujiwara Tatsuya as Hamlet (who had previously played *Hamlet* in 2003, and Mark Antony in *Julius Caesar* in 2014) and Mikijiro Hira as

[38] José Esteban Muñoz, 'The Autoethnographic Performance: Reading Richard Fung's Queer Hybridity', in *Performing Hybridity*, ed. by Joseph and Fink, pp. 112-30 (p. 114).
[39] Rob Conkie, *The Globe Theatre Project: Shakespeare and Authenticity* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2006), p. 150.
[40] Freddie Rokem, *Performing History: Theatrical Representations of the Past in Contemporary Theatre* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000), p. xi.

Claudius (Macbeth in *NINAGAWA Macbeth* 1980), Ninagawa cast Uchida Kenshi (born 1987), an actor from his young theatre company Saitama Next Theatre, as Fortinbras. Uchida, who would play the title role in *Richard II* shortly after and to similar effect, spoke in a barely-audible whisper, moved slowly and often stared at the floor as he spoke. He wore blue *hakama* (traditional formal clothing resembling a wide pleated skirt) and an open white shirt, later appearing shirtless during his invasion of Elsinore, revealing the thin figure that Ninagawa once described as reminding him of the postwar period [Fig. 3].[41] Ninagawa wrote that as he was watching Uchida, 'I suddenly remembered myself on the day we lost, when I was in primary school. At that time, we were all starving'.[42] I will discuss the interaction between the postwar and the contemporary young later, but it is important to acknowledge for now that depictions of the two often overlap; and it is particularly striking that Ninagawa chose to use this image of defeated and starved bodies as the victor of Elsinore, collapsing the space between defeat/victory.

[Image redacted]

Fig. 3 – Uchida Kenshi as Fortinbras (2015)

[41] Kimata, *Why Does Ninagawa*.
[42] Ninagawa Yukio, 'Ninagawa: Director's Monologue' (*Enshutsuka no hitorigoto: Ninagawa*) in *Ninagawa Yukio: The Director Who Kept Fighting* (*Ninagawa Yukio: sekai de tatakaitsuzuketa enshutsuka*), ed. by Kawade Editorial Department (Tokyo: Kawade, 2016), pp. 1-26 (p. 12).

Uchida's thinness and his quiet, disengaged performance are closely related to the negative discourse surrounding the contemporary younger generation in Japan. The young have been criticised in various ways, most notably through the use of terms such as 'herbivores', 'anonymous' and 'pale'. These concepts, which require further unpacking, are in my view essential to contemporary Japanese performance, and they reflect the pressures and debates in society to which performers have been responding. In his discussion of this *Hamlet*, Kawai explicitly makes a connection between Uchida's Fortinbras and what he terms 'today's herbivorous boys', who he describes as having 'no desires and ambitions'.[43] The so-called phenomenon of 'grass-eating' or 'herbivorous' young men is closely connected to the debate about the 'weakness' of the current younger generation. *Sōshokukei danshi* (草食系男子), or the herbivores, is used to refer to contemporary young men who are 'named for their lack of interest in sex and their preference for quieter, less competitive lives'.[44] The term was coined by Fukasawa Maki in 2006, and has since then become part of a 'national debate' on the young, particularly because of their potential link to the declining birth rate and also to 'anaemic consumption'.[45] Their perceived disinterest in consumption (partly related to their 'low levels of income', and partly as a rejection of the previous generation's lifestyle), and lack of interest in 'committed relationships', embody 'two of Japan's biggest problems': the stagnating economy and falling birth-rate.[46] Grass-eaters are also seen as being less 'competitively minded about their jobs' than older generations, less interested in relationships

[43] Kawai Shoichiro, 'Some Japanese Shakespeare Productions in 2014-15', *Multicultural Shakespeare: Translation, Appropriation and Performance*, 14.29 (2016), 13-28 (25).
[44]Alexandra Harney, *The Herbivore's Dilemma* (2009) <http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/foreigners/2009/06/the_herbivores_dilemma.html> [accessed 10 June 2017].
[45] Ibid.
[46] Steven Chen, 'The Rise of *Sōshokukei Danshi* Masculinity and Consumption in Contemporary Japan', in *Gender, Culture, and Consumer Behaviour*, ed. by Cele Otnes and Linda Tuncay-Zayer (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 285-310 (p. 287).

or marriage, 'fashion conscious' and as people who 'eat sparingly'.[47] They have even been described by one writer as being 'too physically tired'.[48] Although as Raluca Nicolae notes much of the *sōshokukei* discourse has been constructed in the media, the so-called rise of the 'grass-eaters' is undeniably linked to the younger generation's 'disillusionment' with the economy as they attempt to 'make sense of profound social disruption rooted in economic changes'.[49] In a survey conducted in 2010, sixty one per cent of single men in their twenties and seventy per cent in their thirties considered themselves *sōshokukei*, in comparison to *nikushokukei* (or, carnivores).[50]

Ninagawa also drew this connection, describing Uchida's appearance as 'representative of contemporary youths who are becoming herbivores'.[51] As Fortinbras, his inwardness and quietness reflected many of the characteristics associated with herbivores, and Kimata Fuyu noted that Uchida was not a 'dashing prince of the next generation' there to save the day, but that he was 'introverted' and 'something never seen before' in *Hamlet*.[52] Despite his quiet speaking style, his lack of expression and disconnectedness from the events around him (including during the final scene the sound of distant gunshots, overlaid with Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No. 3 Largo*), his appearance created a distinct sense of unease. There are arguably some links between Uchida's Fortinbras and the Fortinbras in Ninagawa's 2012 production of *Hamlet*, performed by Saitama Next Theatre. In this version, Fortinbras, who was played by one of the company's youngest actors, was also extremely thin, pale and

[47] Otake Tomoko, 'Blurring the Boundaries', *Japan Times*, (10 May 2009) <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/life/2009/05/10/general/blurring-the-boundaries> [accessed 10 June 2017].
[48] Ibid.
[49] Raluca Nicolae, '*Sōshoku(kei) Danshi*: the (Un)gendered Questions on Contemporary Japan', *Romanian Economic and Business Review*, 9.3 (2014), 66-81 (77); David McNeill, 'Japan's Generation XX', *Independent*, (13 June 2009) <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/japans-generation-xx-1704155.html> [accessed 12 June 2017].
[50] Harney.
[51] Kimata, *Why Does Ninagawa*.
[52] Ibid.

shirtless; he also wore exaggeratedly large chains around his neck to enhance the sense of his physical smallness, which contrasted with the extent of power he and his large army had.

However, the difference between these two depictions of Fortinbras was in the levels of energy: the 2012 Fortinbras was loud and violent, whereas Uchida was quiet, crouched down and picked flowers during his first scene and delegated violence to others. In comparison to the 2012 Fortinbras's *coup*, which had been a massacre of all the remaining courtiers, Uchida's Fortinbras took control with seemingly very little excitement or action, with violence mostly suggested through the soundtrack and sense of threat created by the soldiers and his own stillness. While he therefore stood for a new generation that was stepping in to take control, it was possible to perceive a lack of interest or joy in it, perhaps reflecting the 'too tired' and superficially empty youth, or their failure at expressing themselves. It is interesting to note however that in the media the herbivores are depicted as lacking a 'constant 'hunger' that makes them climb the walls of society higher and higher', an idea arguably upended by Ninagawa here, although it was not replaced by the image of an active and energetic youth.[53] His whispering also suggested the burdens created by contemporary society on the current younger generation, and the corresponding 'lack of appetite' for life among this group.[54] Uchida stated in an interview that during rehearsals he at first spoke 'formally and clearly', but as the rehearsals progressed the style began to change, reflecting on the idea that it was the circumstances that were making him fight and 'in reality', Fortinbras might 'not want to go to war'.[55] However, despite this seeming 'feeble'-ness, in Kawai's terms, this

[53] Nicolae, 78.
[54] Kimata, *Why Does Ninagawa*.
[55] Kimata Fuyu (Interviewer), *A Life-Changing Encounter with Ninagawa Yukio: Listening to Kenshi Uchida Part 2* (*Ninagawa Yukio to no deai ga jinsei o kaeta. Uchida Kenshi ni kiku 2*) (2015) <https://news.ameba.jp/entry/20150403-310> [accessed 10 May 2017].

Fortinbras still seemed able to wield his own power and the end of the production left no doubt that there had been a regime change in Denmark.[56]

The key to understanding this herbivore Fortinbras perhaps lies in the impact his arrival had on the rest of the production, and in the sense that the *sōshokukei* have not been universally condemned. Some critics have sought the origins of the 'grass-eaters' in the economic downturn, with Otake Tomoko for example suggesting that this generation has only known an economy 'in constant decline' and that they have 'grown up never knowing what it is like to live in good economic times', unlike the previous postwar regeneration and 'bubble' generations (1980s).[57] For this reason, they have often been described as the 'Lost Generation' who have missed the economic miracles of the past and have been born into a society with a stagnating economy, loss of job security and a rapidly ageing older generation to support.[58] With the economic downturn and subsequent changes in employment and lifestyles, the previous forms of ideal 'masculinity' (the macho and hard-working salaryman) and 'femininity' (housewives dependent on their spouse) are no longer a viable option for many of the younger generation.[59] As the life-time job security that upheld the salaryman culture of the 1950-80s has begun to vanish, and economic insecurity has become a regular feature of many people's lives, the framework which supported these ideals have also disappeared. The herbivores can therefore be seen as a reaction against traditional gender roles and the 'rampant consumerism' of the previous generations.[60] Justin Charlebois describes the appearance of *sōshokukei* as potentially undermining the 'force of salaryman discourse', and

[56] Kawai, 'Some Japanese Shakespeare Productions', 25.
[57] Otake.
[58] Ian Rowley and Kenji Hall, *Japan's Lost Generation* (2007) <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2007-05-17/japans-lost-generationbusinessweek-business-news-stock-market-and-financial-advice> [accessed 15 June 2017].
[59] Justin Charlebois, 'Herbivore Masculinity: Opposition or Accommodation to Hegemonic Masculinity', in *The Routledge International Handbook on Race, Class and Gender*, ed. by Shirley A. Jackson (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 117-27.
[60] Otake.

that they are examples of 'oppositional forms of masculinity', implying that they represent alternatives to a simplistic and one-sided interpretation of gender.[61] Rather than simply representing a passive and lost group, the herbivores could be seen as a form of protest and strength, in that they reject the previous expectations laid on them. By behaving in ways that do not comply with existing ideas, the grass-eaters are in a way protesting against the 'older generations, patriarchal values and devouring consumerism'.[62]

These potential positive readings of Uchida's depiction of Fortinbras can be seen in the reception to the production, with Borlik describing the character's arrival almost as a sense of relief, writing that when 'the soft-spoken' Fortinbras 'burst onto a stage that had been dominated for three hours by red lights and roaring, the coolness and relief it brought to the eyes and ears reinforced the sense of catharsis'.[63] Uchida's Fortinbras, then, was in direct contrast with the rest of the company, enforcing the sense of upheaval and change that his take-over of Denmark implies. His age was noted by many reviewers, with comparisons being drawn between him and the majority of the previous court (although in practice Uchida is only five years younger than Fujiwara who was playing Hamlet). For Stephen Purcell, the age difference implied that the 'old era had died, and a new one was being ushered in'.[64] Kevin Quarmby even suggested that Uchida's 'youthful appearance and dangerous delivery suggest that even Hamlet would have been too old to assume responsibility. […] Perhaps this celebration of youthful power is what the 2015 octogenarian Ninagawa intends ultimately to

[61] Justin Charlebois, 'The Shifting Gender Landscape of Japanese Society', in *Intercultural Communication in Japan: Theorising Homogenizing Discourse*, ed. by Satoshi Toyosaki and Shinsuke Eguichi (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 55-69 (p. 58); Charlebois, 'Herbivore Masculinity', p. 117.
[62] Nicolae, 78.
[63] Todd A. Borlik, 'Review of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (directed by Yukio Ninagawa) at the Barbican Centre, London, 21-24 May 2015', *Shakespeare*, 12.1 (2016), 78-80 (79).
[64] Stephen Purcell, 'Shakespeare Performance in England (and Wales), 2015', *Shakespeare Survey*, 69 (2016), 394-431 (415).

achieve'.[65] This is striking given the negative ideas in Japan surrounding the young generation which has taken the form of a 'cultural panic […] which becomes manifest in public discourse', with the 'alleged passivity and escapism of the youth' raising the question of 'just what may be wrong with this generation' for a number of observers.[66]

Additionally, his appearance in a production which was self-described as being a Meiji-era rehearsal of the play powerfully brought contemporary society into the production. Before the production began, a surtitle was displayed over the stage stating that the setting was 'a poor quarter of Japan in the nineteenth century, when *Hamlet* was first introduced to Japan. Now in the twenty-first century, we Japanese begin our *Hamlet*'.[67] The set was made of dilapidated two-storey wooden houses, gathered around a central courtyard and with a balcony running around the sides of the buildings. Claudius's court, which was closely associated with the colour red through costumes and lighting, wore forms of nineteenth-century style costume with the royal family in particular wearing extravagant crowns, although the male cast all wore *hakama*, as was typical for Ninagawa's Shakespeare productions. Amanda Rogers has suggested that costuming draws audience attention to the 'sartorial surface of the body', thereby revealing the 'tension between the clothing and the actors' bodies that lay 'beyond' them'.[68] With this in mind, following the elaborate and covered-up outfits worn by the other characters, Uchida's nakedness came as a shock. If the other characters, swathed in layers of clothing, buttoned-up, were hiding their bodies under their costumes (and thereby, following the *shingeki* rule, their 'Japanese-ness'), Uchida's appearance further differentiated him from the others.

[65]Kevin Quarmby, '*Hamlet'* (2015) <http://quarmby.biz/reviews/BigQReviews_Hamlet_Ninagawa.htm> [accessed 1 July 2017].
[66] Ronald Saladin, 'Between *Gyaro-o* and *Sōshokukei Danshi*: the Body Discourses in Lifestyle Magazines for Young Japanese Men', *Contemporary Japan*, 27.1 (2015), 53-79 (57).
[67] *Hamlet*, dir. by Ninagawa Yukio (HoriPro, 2015).
[68] Amanda Rogers, 'Asian Mutations: Yellowface from *More Light* to the Royal Shakespeare Company's *The Orphan of Zhao*', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 24.4 (2014), 452-66 (465).

Besides representing the contemporary young, he also thereby reflected the move from repression to the liberation of Japanese bodies within the theatre. Ninagawa stated that he wanted to mix the 'theme of how *Hamlet* was received in Japan' with contemporary ideas of the play, adding that the production aimed to depict the impact of Shakespeare and examined 'how Japan has evolved into what it is today'.[69] Uchida can therefore be seen as representing the contemporary, post-Meiji and post-*shingeki* era actors who have broken free from the traditions and constraints of *shingeki*; this would also fit in with the difference in acting styles between Uchida and the rest of the cast. In this analysis, the old court, embodying the tradition of hiding the reality of the performer's body, was confronted by and ultimately lost to the stripped-bare, toned-down and different 'new' court. As Yong Li Lan suggests, the production historicised 'naturalism's regime in Japan', which asks the audience (particularly when it was taken to London in May 2015) to see 'the foreignness of a naturalistic *Hamlet*'.[70] Although Ninagawa explored the legacy of *shingeki* in a similar way in his *Merchant of Venice*, the predominance of *Hamlet* on the Japanese stage added extra depth to his questioning: as Matsuoka has suggested, the play has had a particular relevance for contemporary society in which people have the 'sense of never being able to wield any real authority', rendering them in a 'state of 'perpetual youth' […]. We see ourselves in Shakespeare's image of a thirty year-old 'eternal' prince'.[71]

What is notable about the responses by reviewers to the London production is that a lack of familiarity with the development of Japanese theatre and contemporary social anxieties meant that a number of critics misread the presence of the *shingeki* elements within

[69] Peter Aspden, 'Yukio Ninagawa Conquers Elsinore', *Financial Times*, (2 May 2015) <https://www.ft.com/content/09496510-ed87-11e4-987e-00144feab7de?mhq5j=e1> [accessed 30 June 2015].
[70] Yong Li Lan, 'Interacting with Naturalism: East Asian Shakespeare Performance', in *The Shakespearean World*, ed. by Jill L. Levenson and Robert Ormsby (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 135-53 (pp. 151-52).
[71] Matsuoka Kazuko, 'Metamorphosis of *Hamlet* in Tokyo', in *Hamlet and Japan*, ed. by Ueno, pp. 227-38 (p. 233).

the performance. For example, Andrew Cowie wrote that although he admired 'small, unfamiliar touches like the cast bowing to acknowledge the audience before the play begins', he was 'mainly struck by how Western it was'.[72] He also conspicuously adds that due to the 'decline' in Ninagawa's '*japonisme*', he is unsure 'what an English-speaking audience' will 'get' from the production, as, 'stripped of its oriental exoticism, this is a very conservative production' that pays too much respect to 'western performance traditions'.[73] Kevin Quarmby likewise wrote that it was 'not so much a Japanese production as a western production performed in Japanese, with stylised oriental-inspired costuming', adding that the 'most notable feature' was the 'youthfulness of Fortinbras'.[74] What I have suggested as the production's subversion against enforced notions of authenticity and realism, and the perceived limits of mimesis a Japanese company can achieve, was overlooked in the search for political meaning in the wrong places, resulting in the production being accused of 'conservatism'.[75] The complaints that this *Hamlet* was too western ('an accomplished rendition of a European standard, as performed by Japanese actors with an oriental dusting of confectioner's sugar') ignored the production's premise of presenting the reception of *Hamlet* in Japan, and its subsequent over-turning by later generations.[76]

Despite this, a number of the reviews for the London run of *Hamlet* corresponded to the idea of the 'anonymous' or 'pale' youth, reflecting the idea of the 'superflat' or 'two-dimensional' in Japanese theatre. The superflat is a highly revealing theory for analysing contemporary Japanese theatre, described by the term's originator Murakami Takashi as denoting 'a flattened surface, the working environment of computer graphics, flat panel

[72] Andrew Cowie, '*Hamlet' (Ninagawa) @ Barbican, London, 2015* (2015) <http://bloggingshakespeare.com/reviewing-shakespeare/hamlet-ninagawa-barbican-london-2015> [accessed 3 March 2018].
[73] Ibid.
[74] Quarmby.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.

monitors', or the 'flat reality when pop fizzled; a flattened, self-mocking culture'.[77] Anan has expanded on this theory to describe this super-flatness as something that has neither 'depth nor hidden truth beneath the two-dimensional surface'.[78] In the 'Superflat Manifesto', Murakami defines both visual art and society in Japan as being 'superflat', stating that society, 'customs, art, culture: all are extremely two-dimensional'.[79] His theory is built on the *ukiyo-e* style which began during the seventeenth century, and using this as a basis he argues that in Japanese art 'surface prevails and the distinction between commercial art, fine art, and entertainment are fused'.[80]

One of the most well-known contemporary sites of this superflatness is the art of manga and anime, which have become synonymous with contemporary Japanese culture, making it perhaps therefore unsurprising that at least three separate reviews described Uchida in terms of a 'Manga Fortinbras'. Jane Shilling in *The Telegraph*, for example, wrote that in a 'moment of engaging anachronism, Kenshi Uchida makes a bare-chested appearance as Manga Fortinbras'.[81] Likewise, Fujiwara's Hamlet was also described in terms of popular culture, with Jingjie Cheng writing that he reminded her of 'an anime character', adding that with his 'curly, unkempt hair and black, billowing robes complete with a silver chain around his neck, it is easy for us non-Japanese to associate everything on stage with what is familiarly 'Japanese' to us'.[82] Others referenced musicians ('sickly palloured [*sic*] and limp-postured, looking like one of the Ramones') and idols ('lit from behind and bathed in dry ice,

[77] Murakami Takashi, *Little Boy: The Arts of Japan's Exploding Subculture*, trans. by Office Miyazaki Inc. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), pp. 154-55.
[78] Anan, *Contemporary Japanese Women's Theatre*, p. 156.
[79] Murakami Takashi, *Superflat* (Tokyo: Madra, 2000), p. 5.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Jane Shilling, 'Ninagawa Company's *Hamlet*, Barbican, Review: 'Moments of Revelation'', *Telegraph*, (22 May 2015) <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/theatre-reviews/11619191/Ninagawa-Companys-Hamlet-Barbican-review-moments-of-revelation.html> [accessed 10 June 2015].
[82] Jingie Cheng, *Ninagawa 'Hamlet' Shows a New Bard* (2015) <http://felixonline.co.uk/articles/2015-5-27-ninagawas-hamlet-shows-a-new-bard> [accessed 10 April 2018].

Uchida was more boy band than leader of men'). [83] Quarmby's description of Uchida's 'skeletally immature torso defiantly twisted as he gazes disdainfully and nonchalantly at the carnage below' also expresses a sense of the herbivores, unable to respond to the world, their thinness and contempt for the previous generations.[84]

The description of Uchida (and, to a certain extent Fujiwara Tatsuya) in terms reminiscent of the superflat suggests its embededdness within contemporary performance, and similarly the mixed responses to its inclusion in this *Hamlet* is an example of the multi-layered way that artists have been using a sense of flatness within performance. Although the superflat is not exclusively used to describe the young, it has many links to the previously mentioned notions of 'paleness', 'lack of ambition' and 'anonymity' among the younger generation. The fact that reviewers in London responded using terms similar to these concepts is also significant in light of Iwabuchi Koichi's claim that a form of 'techno-Orientalism' has replaced prior exoticising images of Japan in western discourse, with 'Japanese hyper-real culture' such as anime and manga replacing tropes such as 'geisha' or 'samurai', although through this stereotyping the west 'maintains its cultural and moral excellence by depicting a de-humanised picture of a technology-soaked Japanese society'.[85] However, in David Morley and Kevin Robins's depiction of 'techno-Orientalism' which sees the Japanese as 'cyborgs and replicants', there is again a sense of the superflat and its interrelated theories.[86] I will therefore expand further on these concepts in the following sections, and use them to consider the performance tactics contemporary artists have been employing.

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[83] Rebecca Skyes, *Ninagawa Company's 'Hamlet' (Barbican)* (2015) <http://www.ldncard.com/blog/Ninagawa-hamlet-barbican/0234> [accessed 10 March 2017].
[84] Quarmby.
[85] Iwabuchi Koichi, ''Soft' Nationalism and Narcissism: Japanese Popular Culture Goes Global', *Asian Studies Review*, 26.4 (2002), 447-69 (450).
[86] David Morley and Kevin Robins, *Spaces of Identity: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes, and Cultural Boundaries* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 175.

**The Superflat, Two-Dimensional Theatre**

Murakami, a contemporary visual artist, writes that the superflat is a 'sensibility that has continued to contribute to the construction of Japanese culture as a worldview, demonstrating that it is an original concept that links the past with the present and the future'.[87] He describes Japan as a 'monotonous ruins of a nation-state, which arrived on the heels of an American puppet government', adding that 'those who inhabit this vacant crucible spin in endless, inarticulate circles'.[88] For Murakami, Japan is the home of the 'Little Boy', named after the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, where the Japanese are infantilised by the hierarchy which places the west at the top.[89] In Murakami's theory, the superflat is a continuation of the 'flattened' art forms such as *ukiyo-e*, as well as an embodiment of the 'shallow emptiness of Japanese consumer culture'.[90] As Fran Lloyd writes, the superflat is a 'form of artistic expression' in which 'surface prevails and the distinctions between commercial art, fine art, and entertainment are fused'.[91] However, Murakami uses the superflat to denote a trend that is unique to Japan and as a means of challenging the western hegemony, taking 'Japan's Little Boy status as a badge of honour'.[92]

As such, the ethnocentricity and nationalism inherent in Murakami's theory has been decried by a number of critics, particularly by Anan and Uchino Tadashi. In her study of contemporary female performance, Anan re-examines Murakami's take on superflatness, and her expansion of the theory is crucial to the present study as she considers it from a feminist standpoint. She addresses his omission of women within 'Little Boy Japan', and describes

[87] Murakami, *Superflat*, p. 5.
[88] Murakami, *Little Boy*, p. 101.
[89] Anan, *Contemporary Japanese Women's Theatre*, p. 16.
[90] Hunter Drohojowska-Philp, *Superflat* (2001) <http://www.artnet.com/Magazine/features/drohojowska-philp/drohojowska-philp1-18-01.asp> [accessed 10 May 2016].
[91] Fran Lloyd, 'Strategic Interventions in Contemporary Japanese Art', in *Consuming Bodies: Sex and Contemporary Japanese Art*, ed. by Fran Lloyd (London: Reaktion Books, 2002), pp. 69-108 (p. 71).
[92] Anan, *Contemporary Japanese Women's Theatre*, p. 159.

how his 'nationalist sentiments resonate with the reactionary politics of the Japanese government'.[93] She adds the concept of 'two-dimensionality' to the theory of superflatness, suggesting that the two-dimensional does not necessarily have to be a 'cool and uniquely Japanese aesthetic soaked in masculinist nationalism. On the contrary, it is reminiscent of girls' aesthetics' valorisation of two-dimensionality as a way to reject being materialised'.[94] For Anan, superflatness or two-dimensionality is a means of releasing 'physical bodies from historically charged' gender norms, and a 'strategy to reject essentialised Japanese womanhood'.[95] Uchino also criticises Murakami's theory, whilst altering and building it into his own work to refer to the younger generations of artists who 'desperately try to put their 'thin' and 'flat' bodies (which may 'run away' if left alone) into an aesthetic frame, in order to contain and tame them'.[96] In spite of the issues with Murakami's theory, the superflat is a useful reference point for contemporary theatre and one which has arguably been extremely visible within performance itself.

Uchino has also introduced the concept of ''J' performance', with the 'J' representing 'Japan as Junk', and the 'junk bodies' of the performers, writing that while the performers are 'physically present', they are 'burdened with nothing'.[97] In *Crucible Bodies: Postwar Japanese Performance from Brecht to the New Millennium* (2009), Uchino writes that Japanese performance has been dominated by these 'junk bodies' since the 1990s, and that they produce an 'untrained, undisciplined, a loose kind of body-in-performance', often taking inspiration from sub-cultural elements such as manga and anime.[98] He adds that in 'J-performance' the 'notion of 'art' is always-already elusive' and that in comparison to notions

[93] Ibid., p. 158.
[94] Ibid., pp. 159-60.
[95] Anan, 'Two-Dimensional Imagination', 98.
[96] Uchino, p. 130.
[97] Ibid., p. 128.
[98] Ibid., p. 118.

of high art these productions lack 'value as either economic or cultural capital' meaning that they can 'appear to be 'artistic garbage''.[99] For Uchino, 'junk body-ness' marks in particular the gap between language and body in performance, where 'at the peripheral of theatrical culture', the 'notion of the character as a linguistically constructed whole does not function at all'.[100] He writes that 'J theatres' are closely connected to popular cultural elements such as manga, anime and video games ('they are self-admittedly subcultural'), but that they are also

> extremely sensitive to their immediate environments and contexts, wherein, as mass media proclaims, 'the Japanese society is terribly sick'. In other words, J theatre performances have a certain degree of resonance with the sensibilities and psyche of the youth who sometimes withdraw from society to a pathological degree.[101]

His theory also suggests that these 'junk bodies' are engaged in issues such as the 'politics of representation', although he adds that they are often 'unconscious of the political implications of what they are doing'.[102] Anan has likewise built on the junk theory, by suggesting that while contemporary young performers are 'neither the representation of text nor the metaphor of anything', their 'superflatness or junkness' can 'function (un)consciously as a strategy of resistance, but without the direct confrontation with authority exhibited by the *angura* generation'.[103]

A further related term is Sakurai Keisuke's *kodomo shintai*, or 'child bodies' in contemporary Japanese dance, although his theory has come under much criticism for its ethnocentography and misogyny.[104] The term has been used to describe the 'appearance of

[99] Ibid., p. 162.
[100] Ibid., p. 126.
[101] Ibid., p. 163.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Anan, 'Two-Dimensional Imagination', 98.
[104] For example, see Anan, *Contemporary Japanese Women's Theatre*, p. 167.

waif-like and infantile 'child bodies'' on stage, or the 'childlike and flattened-out, two-dimensional figures' in contemporary performance, and to corresponding ideas of the superficiality of contemporary youth culture.[105] Uchino and Anan have re-examined this theory, with Uchino in particular writing that the interest in the term does not lie in 'its pronouncements of 'Japanese cool'' but instead in its 'failure as another form of post-World War Two Japanese junk – this time, the junk body – which betrays and exhibits the postmodern rupture between language and the body by using super-flat surfaces on which diverse simulacra are projected'.[106] Furthermore, other critics have suggested that *kodomo shintai* 'deploys a cartoon-like abstraction of reality' implied by the superflat, and that it is 'superficial, two-dimensional and postmodern'.[107] The appearance of these flattened bodies onstage has been linked to the political and economic situation, connecting the theory to that of the grass-eaters, emerging both as deliberate and unconscious responses to the situation, although Anan suggests that two-dimensional performers 'often seem to be unconscious of the political nature of their works'.[108] But when Uchino writes that in Tokyo, where you can

> observe and sense this particular kind of 'junk body-ness' on every corner of every street, I wonder what kind of body movements can be induced if we gave any of those bodies the lines from ancient Greek drama, written centuries ago, to speak,

there are obvious links between this discourse of 'junkness' or 'flatness' with that of the pale, anonymous and ambitionless 'grass-eaters'.[109]

[105] Denise Varney and others, *Theatre and Performance in the Asia-Pacific: Regional Modernities in the Global Era* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 118.
[106] Uchino, p. 133.
[107] Varney, p. 118.
[108] Anan, 'Two-Dimensional Imagination', 98.
[109] Uchino, p. 120.

Furthermore, the idea of the anonymous, disposable youth is a trope which has repeatedly appeared in commentary on Japanese theatre, with one feature of their 'anonymity' emerging in their supposed similarity. Often directed against idols, this criticism of anonymity has also been applied to the younger generation of actors as a whole. Ninagawa was frequently criticised for using idol actors, with Poulton for example writing that he depended for his 'popularity, and even artistic survival, on casting major celebrities, singers and actors from television and cinema'.[110] However, as Fujita Hiroshi has suggested, it can be 'extremely difficult to draw a clean line between commercial theatre and non-commercial theatre' within the contemporary Japanese theatre scene, and Ninagawa himself openly acknowledged his use of these *ikemen* ('handsome') idol stars, stating that, 'young men with almost the same face and same hair appeared. It's mysterious the way they all resembled each other'.[111] He added that, however, 'these cyborg-, mannequin-like youth, all of them rehearsed seriously', and many of the criticisms of Ninagawa's use of popular stars are undermined by the way he used his two companies Saitama Next and Saitama Gold Theatre to reject this trend.[112] Ninagawa's use of the term 'cyborg' is striking in light of the previous comments on the strategy of 'techno-Orientalism' to de-humanise, and the concept that Japan is, based on Roland Barthes, the 'Empire of Signs' where 'spectacular economic development, together with the techno-digital revolution and pervasive consumerism, has transformed it into an exemplar of the unreal, a society of endless floating signs, of simulation and pastiche'.[113] The term 'pale' has also often been used for the younger generation of actors, with the implication that the young have been unable to compete with the stronger, more skilled and more driven older generation. Within Japan, I would argue that many of these

[110] Poulton, 'Contemporary Theatre', p. 326.
[111] Ninagawa, 'Ninagawa: Director's Monologue', p. 18.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Fran Lloyd, 'Introduction: Critical Reflections', in *Consuming Bodies: Sex and Contemporary Japanese Art*, ed. by Lloyd, pp. 9-22 (p. 9).

criticisms are closely related to a perceived sense of superficiality, a sense that the young inhabit 'junk bodies' which are unable to express themselves. It is clear that there is a correlation between the terminology used to describe the 'superflat', 'super pale', emotionless, ambitionless, herbivore and two-dimensional young actors.

What is clear from these concepts is that the bodies of the young and what they choose to do with them have become a focal point of contemporary anxiety, an anxiety which artists have been responding to and challenging in recent performances. One trend within recent independent theatre has been the undermining of this image of 'cyborg' youths by employing actors with a range of physicalities and background to destabilise the sense of anonymity or similarity, and another trend has been the deliberate use of 'superflatness' within performance to question contemporary society. I will therefore be looking at how contemporary directors have been effectively using their performers' junk bodies to create new meanings, liberating them from this 'junk' discourse through parodying and repurposing it, and further how they have appropriated Shakespeare within this strategy. Miyazawa Akio, who created *Tokyo/Absence/Hamlet* (2004), a loose adaptation of *Hamlet* set in Saitama Prefecture which incorporated elements of 'junk' daily life in regards to the young characters, stated that he discovered 'there are those anonymous young actors, with full passion for expression, wondering how to forge their inner energy to exterior forms. By borrowing some time from them, can I not discover a different theatrical style?'[114] Super-flatness has appeared in various ways in contemporary theatre, and although it is a noticeable trend which has played a role in re-considering how young performers can use physicality to express themselves, it should be noted that 'J' performance is not necessarily limited to the young. Nor has it solely been applied to the contemporary young generation, as is suggested by Shozo Uesugi's *Broken*

[114] Quoted by Uchino, p. 178.

*Hamlet* (1992), which presented a 'caricature of a contemporary Japanese youngster who never becomes mature, nor can he take any positive action', bringing 'to light in a tragicomic perspective the helplessness of contemporary Japanese youths'.[115] Given the 3.11 disaster and the subsequent debate on a change in society ('a new generation of Japanese, the '3.11 Generation', would find fresh motivation and stimulate a new national resolve […] a cohort for which national reconstruction is the new national anthem'), and the intersecting issues of ageing population, declining birth-rate and economic decline, however, it is worth examining how recent performances have engaged with and overturned the image of the superflat.[116]

***Romeo and Juliet* (Mum&Gypsy, Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre 2016)**

*Romeo and Juliet* was the first Shakespeare production by director Fujita Takahiro and his company Mum&Gypsy, which he started in 2007 during his time in Obirin University (Tokyo). Mum&Gypsy have become known for their use of 'refrains', or scenes, dialogue and movements that are repeatedly performed, and their use of music and the physicality of the actors. Fujita (born 1985) is one of the so-called 'zero generation', artists who emerged after 2000 who share 'the social/economic background of the so-called 'lost twenty years'', beginning with the economic collapse in 1990.[117] The company's previous productions (for example, *K on the Shores of Midnight*, 2011, *Il Mio Tempo*, 2017) have largely been based on scripts written by Fujita himself, and a common theme across them is the idea of youth and experience. As Senda Akihiko writes, Fujita has 'pioneered a new form of theatre that takes memories as expressions of a person's inner world and depicts them from different angles in

[115] Senda Akihiko, 'The Rebirth of Shakespeare in Japan: From the 1960s to the 1990s', trans. by Minami Ryuta, in *Shakespeare and the Japanese Stage*, ed. by Sasayama, Mulryne and Shewring, pp. 15-37 (p. 30).
[116] Samuels, p. xii.
[117] Senda Akihiko, *Artist Interview: Revealing the Inner World of Young Women, with Scenes Repeated as Refrains* (2011) <http://www.performingarts.jp/E/art_interview/1111/1.html> [accessed 1 July 2017].

repeated scenes that take on the feeling of refrains'.[118] In *Romeo and Juliet*, which was performed at the 800 seat Playhouse in the Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre, Fujita employed the performance vocabulary established by his company to stage one of Shakespeare's most well-known plays in Japan. He employed repetition, a constantly moving and evolving set (a series of three to four walls that the actors pushed into different configurations, rarely stopping) and a disjointed text to express the 'junkness' of contemporary society.

The majority of the cast were women, including Aoyagi Izumi as Romeo, with only Tybalt given as a speaking-role to a male actor. The male actors were largely responsible for moving the walls, and each had an identical costume and hairstyle which largely hid their faces, an effect that was particularly noticeable given the high-visibility of the female members of the company. In her discussion on *Cross-Gender Shakespeare and English National Identity: Wearing the Codpiece* (2009), Elizabeth Klett uses the term 'cross-gender' to refer to women cast in male roles, writing that the phrase implies a 'fluid movement across a number of spectrum of gender identities, permitting qualities of masculinity and femininity to be in play simultaneously'.[119] Klett defines this act of cross-casting as a means of revealing that 'it is possible to cite gender differently: to put gender in quotation marks'.[120] Stephanie Tillotson, however, suggests that the phenomenon includes a 'multiplicity of practices and purposes', from all-female productions, switching the genders of characters or gender-blind casting.[121] Fujita's female cast was more in line with the idea of 're-gendering' than the other, perhaps more politically motivated, forms. For example, gender blind casting asks the audience to 'disregard the sex of the actor playing the part, whatever traditionally the gender

[118] Ibid.
[119] Klett, p. 4.
[120] Ibid., p. 7.
[121] Stephanie Tillotson, 'Fiona, Phyllida and the 'F'-Word: the Theatrical Practice(s) of Women Playing the Male Roles in Shakespeare', *Exchanges: the Warwick Research Journal*, 1.2 (2014), 260-78 (263).

of the role may be', with Fiona Shaw as Richard in *Richard II* often cited as an example of this type of casting.[122] However, Fujita emphasised that in his production Romeo was a woman, and not a female actor playing a man, and this was arguably emphasised in the performance by dressing Romeo in a stereotypically 'feminine' style which matched those of the other female characters.[123]

Although all-male casts have been a common feature in Japanese productions of Shakespeare, across numerous genres (for example, in the traditional theatre Nomura Mansai's 2001 adaptation of *The Comedy of Errors* (*The Kyogen of Errors*) used an all-male cast, and the All Male Shakespeare Series started by Ninagawa in 2004 was billed as a way of staging the 'plays as they were originally performed'), all-female productions have been rarer.[124] This is a common feature across Japan and Britain, with Tillotson for example suggesting that all-male productions have become 'almost commonplace' in the west, while all-female casts have been less present because they are seen as 'lacking in justification'.[125] There have been a number of high-profile cross-cast productions, such as former-Takarazuka star Asami Rei appearing as Hamlet in a production directed by Giles Block (1995), but until fairly recently the performance of all-female casts was left largely to the theatre genre of Takarazuka. Takarazuka is an all-female revue company established in 1913 that creates popular musical adaptations of famous plays, films and novels, and which has adapted many Shakespeare productions over the years (including *Rome at Dawn*, 2006, an adaptation of *Julius Caesar*, *Falstaff*, 2016, a mixture of *Romeo and Juliet* with the character of Falstaff). However, a noticeable addition to the trend of all-female performance has been the Nyotai

[122] Tillotson, 266.
[123] Tokunaga Kyōko, '*Romeo and Juliet': Talk with Fujita Takahiro, Aoyagi Izumi and Toyoda Eri* (*Romio to jurietto: Fujita Takahiro (Mamutojipshii) x Aoyagi Izumi x Toyoda Eri teidan*) (2016) <https://www.honeyee.com/art-culture/161207_mum_gypsy_romeo_and_juliet> [accessed 1 July 2017].
[124] Saitama Arts Theatre, *About Us* (n.d.) <http://www.saf.or.jp/en/about/> [accessed 25 January 2017].
[125] Tillotson, 263.

Shakespeare Series ('Female Body'), started in 2011 by male director Nakayashiki Hirohito, which are often set in the contemporary entertainment districts to 'anatomise maladies in Japanese society', particularly the 'exploitation of the young workforce', and which combine 'tacky campiness with a critique of the world where everything is commodified'.[126]

Fujita stated that since the events of *Romeo and Juliet* were the result of 'the actions of 'juveniles'', he cast Romeo as a woman because he did not want to 'portray a sexual love story between a man and a woman'.[127] He added that, 'romantic fantasies and love-jealousy conflicts often happen in girls' schools, and youth's reckless behaviour can be seen much more clearly without Romeo and Juliet's sexual relationship'.[128] Even if this was his intention, this meaning did not necessarily transmit to the audience since the setting was fairly elusive, sometimes resembling a school but by no means fixed to this concept, meaning that the age and nature of the characters' relationship was not bound to any single interpretation. The childishness of the characters was suggested, however, through a costume design which arguably gave the impression of *kodomo shintai*. The female characters all wore oversized dresses which hid their bodies and made them seem smaller and younger, enforcing Donatella Barbieri's theory that costume 'shapes the performers and determines how they are perceived when they set foot onstage' [see Fig. 4].[129] It is possible that Fujita used *kodomo shintai* to further his attempt to desexualise the characters, an impression supported by his comments on the play as a series of events which lead to the destruction of 'a pure girl's world'.[130]

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[126] Yoshihara, 'Tacky 'Shakespeares'', 88-89.
[127] Tanaka Nobuko, 'Spirit of Ninagawa and Shakespeare Strong in Takahiro Fujita's Daring Take on *Romeo and Juliet*', *Japan Times*, (22 November 2016) <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2016/11/22/stage/ninagawa-glistens-daring-new-romeo-juliet> [accessed 5 January 2017].
[128] Ibid.
[129] Donatella Barbieri, 'Performativity and the Historical Body: Detecting Performance through the Archived Costume', *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 33.3 (2013), 281-301 (283).
[130] Tanaka, 'Spirit of Ninagawa'.

The dresses were designed by the director of fashion-brand Double Maison, and subsequently went on display at a shop in Kobe. There were several links between the design, popular culture and youth street fashion, such as the Gothic Lolita movement, a subculture fashion genre combining neo-Victorian and Rococo-style elements. Anan has connected this movement with what she terms 'girlie culture' in contemporary Japan, writing that through this kind of cultural production, girls can

> enact their dream of eternity – eternal childhood (Lolita) and life (Gothic) in 'somewhere else' both in time and space. They carry with them the non-Japanese space whose temporalities do not synchronise with that of the contemporary Japanese cities in which they stroll. [131]

Descriptions of the Gothic Lolita movement have often relied on the imagery of 'dolls', and so it is revealing of this production's implied references to the genre that one reviewer described the female characters as looking like human 'dolls'.[132] In these childlike costumes there was also an element of the two-dimensional, with adult women being 'flattened' to the image of 'eternal childhood'. Anan's concept of the 'somewhere else' is also revealing, because the production's costumes failed to signify any one period, being both a mix of Victorian-era and futuristic designer fashion. Part of Fujita's hybridisation strategy could, therefore, have been to tap into this contemporary popular culture that is both placeless and Japanese, thereby creating a setting that is simultaneously nowhere (the imagined, romanticised west signified through the neo-Victorian outfits) and Japan.

[131] Anan, *Contemporary Japanese Women's Theatre*, p. 26.
[132] Takano Shinobu, *Metropolitan Theatre: 'Romeo and Juliet'* (*Tokyo geijutsugekijo romio to jurietto 12/10-21 Tokyo geijutsugekijo pureihausu*) (2016) <http://shinobutakano.com/2016/12/14/3954> [accessed 10 July 2017].

[Image redacted]

Fig. 4 – Juliet, the Nurse and Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet* (2016)

The production's timeline was abstracted and distorted, beginning with the deaths of Romeo and Juliet before going back through the earlier scenes, although many parts and lines were repeated to form a refrain.[133] Fujita said that he decided to start at the end and then 'trace things back' as a way of examining the origins of the tragedy, inspired by seeing people crying at the end of Ninagawa's 2014 all-male production, 'even though they'd definitely known' about the characters' deaths.[134] Fujita therefore started with the deaths of Romeo and Juliet as a means of examining 'why the tragedy came about', since the majority of the audience already knew what was going to happen from the start.[135] Yoshihara has suggested that '[a]lmost every Japanese person would understand the term *romijuri*', which is a shortened form of the Japanese-transliterated title *Romio to Jurietto*, whether they have read the play or not, since it has become 'an overall term to describe a tear-jerking love tragedy

[133] Senda, *Artist Interview: Revealing the Inner World*.
[134] Tanaka, 'Spirit of Ninagawa and Shakespeare'.
[135] Ibid.

without specific reference' to Shakespeare.[136] In light of this, Fujita's desire to 'broaden fixed ideas audiences may have about Shakespeare' is revealing, particularly given that *Romeo and Juliet* has become a well-known part of both popular culture and in the theatre itself.[137] The first performance in Japan was in 1904, and it has consistently remained one of Shakespeare's most performed plays in Japan. In 2011, there were twenty-three productions in the Kanto region alone, and it has also been adapted numerous times into other mediums, such as manga, anime (*Romeo X Juliet*, 2007), television (*Romeo and Juliet: Crossing Paths*, 2007) and even into the plot line for a gambling machine (*pachinko*) based on the anime *Romeo X Juliet* in 2009.[138] As such, the story of *Romeo and Juliet* and its offshoot genre of *romijuri* can be seen as part of the trend of popular culture in Japan making Shakespeare 'tacky, trashy, sleazy and gaudy, as well as cute and queer'.[139]

Thus, the presumed audience familiarity allowed the company to divide the story and to compress it into a performance that lasted one and a half hours, in a way that would be difficult for audience comprehension in a less performed play such as *Timon of Athens*. From 2000-2010, Kosai Ishihara and Hirokawa Osamu state that there were 114 productions of *Romeo and Juliet*, making it the most popular of Shakespeare's plays (they add that *Hamlet* was performed 113 times and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* 102).[140] The rich performance and adaptation history of *Romeo and Juliet* allowed Fujita to play with memories of famous productions and different incarnations of the story, including two-dimensional ones from popular culture. For example, Fujita's insistence on the framework of school-girls is closely related to one common trend in *romijuri* manga, which is the high-school performance of

[136] Yoshihara, 'Tacky 'Shakespeares'', 92.
[137] Tanaka, 'Spirit of Ninagawa'.
[138] Yoshihara, 'Tacky 'Shakespeares'', 93.
[139] Ibid., 84.
[140] Ishihara and Hirokawa, 2.

*Romeo and Juliet* as a means of introducing the two main characters in a romance.[141] Fujita thus interwove references to the play's performance history and place in Japanese popular culture into his de- and re-constructed adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*, and Mum&Gypsy's tactic of using refrains worked particularly well with the distorted timeline, playing on expectations of a familiar story and expected linear structure, thereby allowing different narratives and themes to emerge.

Throughout the performance, Aoyagi as Romeo repeated the line 'what did I do yesterday? What did I think about yesterday?', tying in with Fujita's desire to emphasise the speed of the events which he thought were the result of the 'impulsive actions' of the young.[142] This line could therefore be one way of suggesting the speed at which events overtook the characters, but it also reflects the criticisms of the young, as perhaps an example of the youth who think of nothing and do nothing, although in this case they are violently confronted with reality. Another repeated section was Romeo and Mercutio's conversation about dreaming, beginning with 'I dreamt a dream tonight' (1.4.49).[143] This repetition again suggested a sense of disconnection with reality, and was interspersed with Romeo's later line 'I dreamt my lady came and found me dead' (5.1.6), endlessly tying the current action back to the first scene in which the characters had died.[144] Aoyagi delivered the majority of her lines in a monotone, with little expression, often facing out to the audience and rarely directly addressing the other characters onstage. The actors shifted the walls around her, forming new landscapes and creating a constantly moving backdrop. Another characteristic of Mum&Gypsy's work is the relentless and repeated gestures that characters undertake, often

[141] Yoshihara, 'Tacky 'Shakespeares'', 92.
[142] Tanaka, 'Spirit of Ninagawa'.
[143] William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. by René Weiss, 3rd series (London: Bloomsbury, Arden Shakespeare, 2012), p. 161.
[144] Ibid., p. 313.

resulting in characters being physically picked up and forced to move from one spot to another by the other actors, implying a lack of control. The actors repeated the same fragmented scenes and pieces of dialogue, with the meaning gradually becoming clearer as the story began to unfold. While the performance was therefore initially meaningless, as a collection of cannibalised lines and repeated gestures against a location-less and unstable background, meaning accumulated in response to the repetition. Therefore, although the production began with superflat, meaningless bodies performing obscure actions, layers of meaning were gradually revealed; and thus the bodies the audience might initially have interpreted as junk became active agents of their own meaning. In this way Fujita seemed to be suggesting that even if contemporary actors are superflat or speak in monotones, meaning can still be created through them.

The production also addressed fears surrounding the young by referencing the issue of violence and crime amongst the younger generation. Fujita said that,

> in Japan there have recently been several grisly killings of teenagers by teenagers, and TV commentators are unanimous in saying they can't understand it. So with this play, I wanted to explore complex sudden impulses such as those that teenagers can have.[145]

This was expressed through the violence committed by the characters against each other, leading one commentator to write that Romeo's fight with Tybalt reminded them of a 'modern youth-style lynching'.[146] These anxieties were also addressed through a character called Hiyo, added by Fujita to the story, who is implied to have killed herself, perhaps because of bullying. She appeared in a number of scenes and spoke in regular, conversational Japanese rather than the translated Shakespearean lines, separating her story from the text,

[145] Tanaka, 'Spirit of Ninagawa'.
[146] (n.a.), *Takahiro Fujita: 'Romeo and Juliet' (Shakespeare)* (*Takahiro Fujita romio to jurietto (sheikusupia gensaku)*) (2016) <http://rokushin.blog.so-net.ne.jp/2016-12-23> [accessed 10 July 2017].

before exiting through the audience to commit suicide.[147] Bullying and suicide have frequently been seen as epidemic amongst the youth in Japan, forming part of what Uchino describes as 'Japan's contemporary performance culture as symptoms of a 'sick', 'psychologising' society as its inhabitants are living in the 'Age of Impossibility''.[148] By adding a Japanese character within the universe he had created for the play, Fujita helped tie the play to the contemporary audience's lives, whilst simultaneously connecting the story to the suggested school setting and at the same destroying the pseudo-Victorian/dream-west location through the physical presence of a contemporary Japanese teenager. Some reviewers suggested that the story was potentially being dreamt by Hiyo, hence its disconnected nature and the repetition of lines about dreaming, but Fujita did not give any clear sign that this was the case, instead interweaving a 'deep chain of images' with 'no particular emphasis' on any one in particular.[149]

Given these elements of violence and bullying, it is also worth nothing that Fujita has expressly spoken of the inspiration he took from Ninagawa, stating that he had never thought of doing a Shakespeare play before he started working with Ninagawa.[150] There are several links between this *Romeo and Juliet* and Ninagawa's 2014 production, which was part of the Ninagawa x Shakespeare Legend series held at Sai-no-kuni Saitama Arts Theatre to commemorate the achievements of the Sai-no-kuni Shakespeare Series, and to revisit some of the plays outside of the series itself. Ninagawa's production was staged in the Adaptable Theatre at Saitama by an all-male cast featuring regular Ninagawa Company collaborators such as Tsukikawa Yūki (for example, *The Taming of the Shrew* 2010 and *Troilus and*

[147] (n.a.), '*Romeo and Juliet', Mum&Gypsy* (*Romio to Jurietto, Mamutojipshii*) (2016) <http://haruharuy.exblog.jp/amp/27317259> [accessed 10 July 2017].
[148] Uchino, p. 167.
[149] (n.a.), *Takahiro Fujita: 'Romeo and Juliet' (Shakespeare)*.
[150] Tanaka, 'Spirit of Ninagawa'.

*Cressida* 2012), 'idol' actor Masaki Suda (aged twenty-one at the time) and members of Saitama Next Theatre. Although Fujita's *Romeo and Juliet* was not quite 'all-female', it was certainly a counter-point to Ninagawa's all-male production, and there was a similar emphasis on the youth of the characters driving the story. Ninagawa's production also highlighted the idea of youth violence and bullying, with a silent character who represented one of the lowest-levels in the society appearing on a penny farthing and circling the stage, who was physically attacked and mocked by characters from both the Montagues and the Capulets. In the final scene, following the Prince of Verona's declaration of peace and tragedy ('A glooming peace this morning with it brings', 5.3.305), the character walked down through the audience before massacring those left onstage with a machine gun. Fujita thereby referenced this image of the bullied, violent and pathological youth in his own added character.[151]

Fujita had said that he did not want to 'limit' the story to any historical period, but that he wanted to convey a sense of the sixteenth-century whilst also explicitly 'drawing' the contemporary moment. [152] The present that Fujita drew through this production was sharply connected to audience memories of the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami, using the disaster partly as a reference point and a method of drawing the audience into a familiar story told in an unfamiliar landscape, and as a strong reminder of the contemporary society outside of the auditorium. Towards the end of the play, the constantly shifting set of walls were moved aside, and it was revealed that the back of the stage was covered in piles of debris such as broken chairs, desks, bicycles, ladders and even a wheelchair (an image that was powerfully connected to Ninagawa during the final stage of his career). Taking its cue from the line, ''Tis since the earthquake now eleven years' (1.3.24), this set was arguably the

[151] Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, p. 338
[152] Mochizuki Lisa, *Mum&Gypsy* (*Mamutojipshii*) (2016) <http://ananweb.jp/anan/topics-anan/83313> [accessed 10 July 2017].

landscape of 'only debris' of the Tohoku region following the disaster.[153] Accepting the idea of 'eleven years' since the earthquake, the setting would be 2022, eleven years on since 3.11. Since the debris was hidden for much of the performance, the connection between the play and the disaster was not immediately clear, but as with other elements of the production it gradually gained force.

As in a number of other post-3.11 Shakespearean productions, Fujita's direction did not explicitly reference the disaster itself but instead implied it and drew elements of it into the design. This is symbolic of the absence-presence of the events both in society and on the stage, but it was also an effective means of urging the audience to consider the impact of the disaster on contemporary Japanese society. One critic wrote as a result that Fujita's reference to 3.11 'forcibly linked' the play to contemporary society, which made them feel 'uneasy' to be reminded of reality in such a way.[154] In reflecting both 3.11 society and anxieties for the future, the characters could be seen as spirits of the dead, or a warning from the future, as a jolt to the 'emptiness at the core of contemporary youth culture' and consumerist society.[155] At the end of the production, the characters all gathered at the back of the stage and called out to Romeo and Juliet, leaving the question of where they were calling from, and what they were asking of the two characters. I discussed previously the role post-3.11 theatre has had in mourning for the dead, and this production seems particularly reflective of Iwaki Kyoko's statement that theatre has been encouraging the 'post-Fukushima public to listen to the deceased'.[156] The non-linear story is also reminiscent of the disruption caused by the intervention of 'nuclear time' into Japanese society, which questions how people can 'learn to

[153] Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, p. 150; Saitama Arts Theatre, *Hamlet* (programme), (Saitama: Saitama Arts Foundation, 2015).
[154] (n.a.), *Mum&Gypsy, 'Romeo and Juliet'* (*Mamutojipshii, Romio to Jurietto*) (2016) <http://d.hatena.ne.jp/alf1969j/touch/20161214/1481682378> [accessed 10 July 2017].
[155] Midori Matsui, 'Murakami Takashi; Nihilist Agonistes', in Murakami Takashi 'Which is Tomorrow? Fall in Love', exhibition catalogue, SCAI The Bathhouse, Tokyo (Tokyo, 1994), p. 34.
[156] Iwaki, p. 217.

dwell in these contaminated atmospheres of Fukushima Japan, how can we inhabit this nuclear time without falling for a discourse of security, risk and containment', as was suggested by the debris which infringed on the story.[157] In this possible vision of Japan's future, although it was muddied through its references to somewhere-nowhere, Fujita drew a society that was stuck somewhere between the present and the past, with visual reminders of catastrophe haunting the edges of reality, and bodies that repeated lines that only gained meaning if the audience were prepared to listen to them.

### *Macbeth* (Kakushinhan, Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre 2017)

Kakushinhan Theatre Company, whose name they translate in English as 'Convinced Criminals', is a young company set up in 2012 by director Kimura Ryunosuke, who have specialised in the performance of Shakespeare. Although the group was not initially started with the intention of being a 'Shakespeare' company, they have staged seventeen Shakespeare productions, including *Titus Andronicus* (2017), *Richard III* (2016) and *Othello* (2015). Their first performance was *Hamlet x Shibuya: Light, was Our Revenge Tarnished?* (2012), an adaptation of *Hamlet* written and directed by Kimura, in which Elsinore Castle was moved to a love hotel in Shibuya, one of the largest entrainment districts in central Tokyo.[158] The production responded to a terrorist incident in 2008 in Tokyo, in which a man drove a truck into pedestrians at a crossing in the Akihabara district before attacking people with a knife, killing seven people. In this adaptation, the character of Hamlet is split into two men, one who drove the truck, and another who lost his partner in the incident. Following their second production, *Romeo and Juliet on the Seashore* (2012), the company have used Matsuoka

[157] Thouny, p. 7.
[158] Kakushinhan, *Company* (2017) <http://kakushinhan.org/company> [accessed 20 June 2017].

Kazuko's translations, although they often insert scenes and additional dialogue as part of their reworkings of the plays.

As a direct response to 3.11, Kimura stated that he and several actors founded Kakushinhan 'in order to grasp the here and now', and as a result the company have been closely involved in criticising the perceived mindlessness of contemporary society.[159] Explaining why they have used Shakespeare's plays, Kimura said that in his 'generation, many people's values have changed unexpectedly due to terrorism or disasters, such as 3.11, and I think Shakespeare – not Greek mythology or Chekhov – is most suitable to reflect the fragile state of that world', adding that his priority is to 'make contemporary theatre for today's audiences – especially those of my own generation'.[160] Kakushinhan have been invested in creating work for and about contemporary Tokyo, with Kimura suggesting that he finds 'little difficulty in transporting the Elizabethan English plays to present-day Tokyo'.[161] As a result, elements of daily life and popular culture appear frequently in their productions, reflecting Uchino's comment that the 'frames of reference' of 'J theatres […] are deeply subsumed in the sub-cultural genres of manga, anime, computer games, midnight TV programmes, B grade movies'.[162] The company, and Kimura in particular, have frequently voiced the level of influence Ninagawa has had on their work, an influence which is easily traceable in their productions. However, Kimura suggested that at first he was unsure about Ninagawa's adaptation techniques, citing the *butsudan* in *NINAGAWA Macbeth* in particular, until he read a comment by literary critic Kobayashi Hideo that he 'borrowed others' text and

[159] Mika Eglinton, 'Young Dramatists Mark the Bard's Anniversary in Style', *Japan Times*, (26 April 2016) <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2016/04/26/stage/young-dramatists-mark-bards-anniversary-style> [accessed 12 May 2016].
[160] Tanaka Nobuko, 'Kimura's Crazed *Macbeth* for Today', *Japan Times*, (24 January 2017) <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2017/01/24/stage/kimuras-crazed-macbeth-today/#.WJHRUPl9603> [accessed 27 January 2017].
[161] Eglinton, 'Young Dramatists'.
[162] Uchino, p. 162.

used it to present his own views', from which point onwards he felt free to adapt the plays as he liked.[163]

Despite not appearing in critics' Tokunaga Kyōko and Sasama Atsushi's article on 'post-Ninagawa' Japanese theatre, in which they describe the current leaders of the scene and suggest who could be the inheritors of Ninagawa's legacy, Kakushinhan are arguably another of 'Ninagawa's successors', particularly due to both personal and stylistic connections with the Sai-no-kuni Shakespeare Series.[164] References to Ninagawa are common in their productions, and in their *Macbeth* (2017) which I will discuss in this section, the company repeatedly parodied and updated *NINAGAWA Macbeth* throughout, suggesting both the influence of Ninagawa and that the history of Shakespeare performance in Japan also forms its own kind of 'database' for artists to draw on.[165] They also arguably 'updated' the productions to reflect the 'junkness' of society, with, for example, bits of white plastic falling to the stage instead of cherry blossoms during Macbeth's death scene. Yoshihara describes the contemporary combination of 'reverence and irreverence' used to adapt Shakespeare in Japan, which seeks to 'destabilise the presupposed notion that 'Shakespeare' is the dominant, central, hegemonic icon' through juxtaposition with 'other cultural artefacts, which are presumed to be of minimal capitalist and cultural value', and as will be demonstrated her theory has close links with Kakushinhan's performance tactics.[166]

*Macbeth*, their thirteenth Shakespeare production, is a good example of the way the company has responded to the issues discussed in this chapter. In Kimura's opinion, there are 'strong affinities' between Shakespeare's 'big narratives and the minutiae of everyday life',

[163] Tanaka, 'Kimura's Crazed *Macbeth*'.
[164] Tokunaga Kyōko and Sasama Atsushi, 'The Contemporary Theatre Scene, 2016' (*Engeki shin no genzaichi nizeroichiroku*), *Higeki-kigeki*, 785.3 (2017), 36-43 (37).
[165] Minami Ryuta, '"The very basics for all of us": Fragments of Shakespeare in Japanese *Anime* and *Manga*', in *Shakespeare's Asian Journeys*, ed. by Lei, Ick and Trivedi, pp. 239-54 (p. 245).
[166] Yoshihara, 'Tacky 'Shakespeares'', 84.

and this led to the company's tactics of combining the global and intercultural with the everyday.[167] But the production also emphasised the supernatural element of the play, and the eruption of the unseen into the world was one of its focus points. Hecate (Iwasaki Yudai) was cast as an M.C., and all of the actors aside from Macbeth (Yamato Kochi) and Lady Macbeth (Maimi) also played the witches. Unlike Fujita's *Romeo and Juliet*, Kimura's direction followed the story through its original timeline, although both the supernatural and the everyday intruded repeatedly on the narrative, often taking the story into bizarre or grotesque situations. It opened with a video locating the production in both 'Scotland/Tokyo' and '1606/2021', although there were no further visual ties to the seventeenth-century and the imagery was mostly based very clearly in contemporary (or nearly contemporary) Tokyo. However, the production's interculturality was acknowledged through elements such as having a weather forecast for Scotland broadcast at the back of the stage, before a breaking news ticker said in Japanese that Duncan had been killed.

This move is symbolic of the humorous approach the company took to using hybridity within the production, another example of which is the addition of misheard phrases in English which were projected on the back of the stage. This visual and linguistic gag was repeated throughout the production, often used when the witches appeared. For example, as the witches left the stage in a cloud of smoke, a message in English was displayed: 'you get mock'n mock'n touching a girl', which then became *katakana*, 'ユーゲッモークモークタッチンアガール', and then again in *kanji* characters, clarifying the meaning, '湯気もくもくたちあがる'. This is read as *yuugetsu mokumoku tachiagaru*, meaning 'rising smoke'.[168] A similar joke was made by Iwasaki (Hecate), a bilingual actor who grew up in America, who

[167] Eglinton, 'Young Dramatists'.
[168] *Macbeth* (2017), dir. by Kimura Ryunosuke (Metropolitan Theatre, January 2017).

delivered nonsense lines in English such as 'Major Touch', which then became the Japanese *majou-tachi*, or 'the witches'. These additions are reminiscent of Charles Wirgman's deliberately bad 1874 translation of 'to be or not to be' into Japanese (which translated back into English could be read as, 'It is, it isn't, what is it?'), again suggesting the intertextuality of their references.[169]

The opening video stated that the setting was '2021 Tokyo', a move which came from anticipation of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. All of the characters wore leotards, tracksuits and leggings, and the production seemed to parody an over-masculinised sports culture, with the programme suggesting that Macbeth had been a champion in the Olympics.[170] As with Saitama Gold Theatre's *Romeo and Juliet* which is discussed in the next chapter, Kakushinhan used the Olympics as a starting point to re-evaluate the representation of contemporary Japan and to project anxieties about the future onto the text. These anxieties were present most heavily through the production's parody of consumerism in daily life, but it was also implied by the projection of a red light onto the stage during the final scene, with the now deceased Macbeths standing in the middle of it. It looked both like the *hinomaru*, the Japanese flag, or given the positions the other characters moved into, like a pool of blood seen from above. This was an extremely effective tactic of questioning the nationalism inherent in the 'nation building' and 'national pride' discourse of the Olympics.

The company have also spoken about their productions as using the concept of 'Cool Japan', and this is another example of them subverting the image: 'Cool Japan' refers to the cultural slogan the Japanese government implemented around 2005, based on Douglas

[169] My translation, *Hamlet & Japan* (programme), (London: Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, 2016).
[170] Kakushinhan, *Macbeth* (programme), (Tokyo: Kakushinhan Theatre Company, 2017).

McGray's 2002 article 'Japan's Gross National Cool'.[171] Taking inspiration from the 'Cool Britannia' campaign (1996-), Cool Japan focuses on the export of 'popular culture and youth phenomena', with 'Cool' implying 'youthfulness, authenticity, trendiness and creativity'.[172] The slogan has been described as a 'conscious effort to influence the social imaginary' of Japan, both domestically and internationally, introduced during a period when the country was facing 'deflation, an ageing society, and youth problems' such as the rise of *hikikomori*, or people who withdraw entirely from society.[173] Kakushinhan's use of popular culture references the 'Cool Japan' brand, but their position within the violent and dystopian society represented in *Macbeth* reminds the audience of the problematic nature of the term. Following the Great East Japan Earthquake, Jonathan Abel has suggested that the 'decade-long phenomenon of Cool Japan may have come to an abrupt end on 11 March 2011', and Casey Brienza has likewise suggested that,

> By the end of 2011, there was open discussion of abject policy failure: Cool Japan was at best a flash in the pan and at worst a tall tale […] to make the Japanese feel good about themselves. Now the party is over, and there is nothing left to do but to pick up the pieces and move on.[174]

Kakushinhan's use of the Japanese flag during the violent upheaval at the end of the play [for example, see Fig. 5] could therefore be a depiction of the failure of the policy, and their suggestion of the 'junkness' of contemporary society is another example of this.

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[171] Douglas McGray, 'Japan's Gross National Cool', *Foreign Policy*, 130 (2002), 44-54.
[172] Katja Valaskivi, 'A Brand New Future? Cool Japan and the Social Imaginary of the Branded Nation', *Japan Forum*, 25.4 (2013), 485-504 (492).
[173] Ibid., 486-88.
[174] Abel, 59; Casey Brienza, 'Did Manga Conquer America? Implications for the Cultural Policy of 'Cool Japan'', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 20.4 (2014), 383-98 (386-87).

[Image redacted]

Fig. 5 – Kakushinhan *Macbeth*, Act 5

As another 'zero generation' company, and because of their adaptation techniques, Kakushinhan is particularly relevant to the arguments about the junk bodies of the younger generation of performers. The 'junk' bodies of the young were presented through the identical white costumes worn by all the characters apart from the Macbeths, who instead wore black and red [Fig. 5]. Only certain characters, such as Macduff's son, were given any identifying features (here, a primary school child's hat), although these were unstable signifiers given the number of actors who played multiple roles. In their shortened adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (*Pocket Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2017: their 'Pocket' series features condensed versions of the plays, much like the Pocket Propeller series), they took this anonymising tactic further by having every actor in a full-body suit, beginning with even their faces covered and only later adding small details to distinguish characters. The company often employs nudity, and grotesque and bizarre depictions of the characters, with Banquo appearing wearing only a jock-strap for example during his assassination in 3.3. The same actor who played Banquo (Shirakura Yūji) also played Tamora in the company's later 2017 production of *Titus Andronicus*, frequently appearing wearing only a neon-coloured bikini and high-heels. However, the company is notable for the way they subvert the representation

of bodies in the mainstream media, employing actors with a diverse range of body types and backgrounds, and by presenting 'grotesque' bodies as in the scene with Banquo. Therefore even if the actors have been assigned 'junk' bodies by society, Kakushinhan are unwilling to replicate the cloned, two-dimensional bodies familiar from popular discourse; Lady Macbeth is another good example of their rejection of stereotypical images, with the actor appearing first with a shaved head which she hid during scenes with the court with increasingly extravagant wigs. They thereby not only parodied the idea of only *ikemen* idol-actors appearing on the stage, they also subverted the concept of 'elegance' required by *shingeki* Shakespeare (as one critic wrote, 'I don't need one hundred per cent elegance in Shakespeare, but performing in their underpants, it was a bit disgusting').[175]

Further undermining the idea of 'high-culture' Shakespeare, the production also featured many elements of daily life such as convenience stores, high schools and popular culture. Banquo's ghost, for example, appeared wearing the uniform of a high-school girl, an iconic cultural reference for 'Japan' both domestically and internationally, and further signalling the instability of gender and performance within the company's productions. Parodying the image of the technology-addicted youth, Banquo, half of his face covered in blood, sat playing with his mobile phone during Macbeth's panicked lines ('Thou canst not say I did it', 3.4.48), before referencing the hit animated film *Kimi No Na Wa* (*Your Name*, 2017), by asking Macbeth, 'your name is?' (*kimi no na wa*?).[176] Kimura also referenced the long-running anime series *Sazae-san*, with actors solemnly singing its theme tune during Macbeth's coronation scene. *Sazae-san* is based on a comic strip by Hasegawa Machiko that ran from 1946-1974, following the daily life of housewife Isono Sazae and her family, and the

[175] (n.a.), *Kakushinhan* '*Macbeth*' (*Kakushinhan makubesu*) (2017) <http://blog.livedoor.jp/ciao_waki/archives/52034393.html> [accessed 30 June 2017].
[176] William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. by Sandra Clark and Pamela Mason, 3rd series (London: Bloomsbury, Arden Shakespeare, 2015), p. 221.

anime has been running since 1969. The early comics were fairly liberal, with Sazae attending events on equality, for example, but over time the anime has become viewed increasingly as conservative, particularly since the characters never age and the time period never changes, so it seems to present an 'idealised and nostalgic image of what families were or should be'.[177]

Due to its long run, many people grew up watching it or are at least aware of it, meaning that its opening song is instantly familiar to most: 'a stray cat stole a fish, the cheerful Sazae-san is chasing it barefoot [...] *rurururururu* the weather is good again today'.[178] By singing this during a supposedly serious scene, Kakushinhan mocked the ridiculousness of the Macbeths' quest for power through dislocation and a cultural reference that many of the reviewers mentioned finding humorous. It also parodied the seriousness of lavish *shingeki*-style productions which would require crowns, thrones and solemnity. The absurdity of the contrast between the 'cheerful Sazae-san' and Lady Macbeth furthermore added both irony and pathos to the scene, suggesting the corruption of the Macbeths and their inability to return to innocence. Lady Macbeth's shaved hair also represented a challenge to the repressive type of femininity presented in *Sazae-san*, and played with memories of the earlier more liberal comic which depicted protests against female inequality.

Kakushinhan have argued that Matsuoka's translations, which they now use for every production, 'vividly reflect the contemporary Japanese ethos and its language from a female perspective', and this is reflected on an emphasis they often place on the female characters.[179] Having joked that their *Macbeth* should have been renamed '*Mr and Mrs Macbeth*', the company gave Lady Macbeth an additional scene following her final lines in 5.1 so that the

[177] William Lee, 'From *Sazae-san* to *Crayon Shin-chan*: Family Anime, Social Change, and Nostalgia in Japan', in *Japan Pop!: Inside the World of Japanese Popular Culture*, ed. by Timothy J. Craig (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 186-203 (p. 192).
[178] Cezary Jan Strusiewicz, *The Abduction of Sazae-san* (2017) <https://metropolisjapan.com/abduction-sazae-san> [accessed 10 September 2017].
[179] Eglinton, 'Young Dramatists'.

audience witnessed the moments leading up to her death. As Macbeth sat alone onstage in the trolley which represented his throne, Lady Macbeth appeared in the auditorium and at first recited, and then later shouted, the lyrics to the song *Reflections* (2014) by popular singer Mr. Children. She slowly exited through the audience, holding her hand aloft and shouting along to the song, making the lyrics into new lines for Lady Macbeth, and mixing the familiar pop song with the powerful image of Lady Macbeth's emotional despair created a striking effect and gave the character more agency, in addition to creating a vivid sense of thematic dissonance. Although in general the reviewers who mentioned the Sazae-san scene found it humorous, the Mr. Children song received harsher criticism, with a number of responses suggesting that there was no connection between the play, the song and the seriousness of Lady Macbeth's death.[180] Although one response saw it as an attempt at an alienation effect, they argued that hearing a 'usually nice song' in this supposedly sad context, 'felt ridiculous', and they questioned whether 'this was really a criticism of contemporary culture'.[181] However, one critic who had disliked much of the performance stated that they found this scene 'beautiful, sorrowful. I was thrilled', although they added that they did not 'understand why it was done'.[182]

Consumer culture was also parodied through the reproduction of elements of it in unlikely places: for example, instant noodle cups ('King Noodle') were used instead of crowns by the procession of kings shown to Macbeth in 3.5. Hecate also used a noodle cup as a cauldron during this scene, with the witches pulling a seemingly unending amount of toilet paper out it, before walking through the audience in a procession of witches holding this

[180] (n.a.), *Kakushinhan Standing at the Crossroads: 'Macbeth'* (*Kironitatsu kakushinhan makubesu*) (2017) <http://madam-viola.tea-nifty.com/blog/2017/01/post-2577.html> [accessed 1 July 2017].
[181] (n.a.), *I Haven't Read Shakespeare, But as an Amateur I Saw the Power* (*Sheikusupia o yomanakattakedo, chikara o mitsuketa*) (2017) <http://muuchu.hatenablog.com/entry/2017/02/08/105259> [accessed 1 July 2017].
[182] (n.a.), *Kakushinhan* '*Macbeth'*.

paper aloft. Popular food brands also appeared, such as when Macbeth was killed by a sword made out of joined-up Pringle cans, and rubbish and leftovers accumulated throughout the performance, creating a stage that looked 'like garbage'.[183] Furthermore, following the murder of Macduff's family, bodies began to be left onstage in transparent plastic bin-bags. This could be another example of 'junk society', in which people are treated as disposable, and it also reflected badly on the people who rule or want to rule it.[184] It could also be read as a comment on waste and the environmental crisis in Japan, in an echo of Nomura's *Macbeth* (2013), in which the witches emerged from bags full of rubbish, reflecting Nomura's comments that the 'rubbish produced by humans' is destroying the environment.[185] The effect of these tactics in Kakushinhan's staging was enhanced by the minimal set, with only folding-chairs used to create location: actors holding them in a line created a castle wall or Birnam Wood, and when set out they could be the shelves in a shop.

As has been a notable trend in a number of other recent Shakespeare productions in Tokyo, *Macbeth* featured a scene set in a convenience store, also known as a *combini* in Japanese.[186] As one of the most familiar features of everyday life, accessible to all, using *combini* as a way of connecting the play to Japan has become increasingly, and perhaps surprisingly, common. This is ultimately a similar tactic of localisation to, for example, Ninagawa's *butsudan*, although it is one that is rooted in the more everyday and perceived lower culture. It might even be appropriate to coin the term '*combini* Shakespeare' to group the numerous recent productions which have adopted this trope. Another notable and relevant example of this in performance is company Frankens's 2016 production of *A Midsummer*

[183] Kitamura Sae, *Stage Like Garbage, But the Contents Aren't Trash* (*Gomimitaina butai, gomi dehanai naiyō*) (2017) <http://d.hatena.ne.jp/saebou/touch/20170131/p1> [accessed 30 June 2017].
[184] Ibid.
[185] Kawai, 'Some Japanese Shakespeare Productions', 23.
[186] The equivalent for a Shakespearean production in Britain would be setting part of a play in a Tesco or Asda.

*Night's Dream*, also at the Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre. Director Nakano Shigeki replaced the mechanicals with two characters, a student working part-time (*arubaito*) in FamilyMart, one of the largest *combini* chains in Japan, and a customer. Their 'performance' of *Pyramus and Thisbe* took place in the shop, with the two melodramatically staging it behind the cash register and in the aisles. The customer, as Thisbe, ran in and out, each entrance and exit accompanied by the shop manager's ritualistic greeting and thanks, although he became increasingly irate ('Welcome, please look around. This is a *combini*! What are you doing, a drama project? Thank you, please come again. Welcome. Are you alright? Thank you, please come again').[187] They therefore created humour by connecting the action to the audience's lives, although this similarly became a site for demonstrating the 'sickness' at the heart of contemporary consumer culture, with a nameless character (who was shown standing on the side of the stage during a number of scenes holding an advertising board, a familiar and low-paid line of work from the contemporary streets of Tokyo) entering the shop mid-scene and killing one of the characters with a knife.

In Kakushinhan's *Macbeth*, the banquet in 3.4 also took place in FamilyMart, as was made humorously obvious through the chain store's entrance jingle playing as the courtiers entered the shop. Dressed anonymously in white tracksuits, the courtiers talked mindlessly amongst themselves whilst lining up to buy packets of crisps and beer, and by the end of the scene the stage was littered with discarded food, cans and bottles. It seemed as though in Kakushinhan's depiction of contemporary Tokyo, there was no place for a formal banquet but instead a 'cheesy drinking party', familiar from daily life.[188] The setting also worked particularly well in creating humour during the appearances of Banquo, as each time the ghost entered and exited the jingle played again, and at one point during Macbeth's 'strange

[187] *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, dir. by Nakano Shigeki (Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre, June 2016).
[188] Kitamura, *Stage Like Garbage*.

infirmity' (3.4.84) a techno-remix of the jingle began playing in the background.[189] In this way, Kakushinhan both undermined the seriousness and untouchable image of Shakespeare from the *shingeki* era, and mocked the 'cheesiness' of contemporary Japan. By suggesting that in Tokyo, a 'banquet' could only take the form of a gathering at a convenience store, the company also suggested the two-dimensionality of daily life, and mocked the exported image of Cool Japan.

Responses were divided on the effectiveness of including *combini* and brands in *Macbeth*. Some seemed to find little justification in their use, particularly one commentator who said they did not understand why they were there, adding, 'I cannot connect *Macbeth* to condensed milk'.[190] Others seemed to find the *combini* scene excessive, with one reviewer writing that although they could understand the intention, they thought the audience would be able to understand and identify with the production without needing such a 'tool'.[191] Kimura explained that he wanted to approach *Macbeth* through 'things that are close to me', in order to bring the play close to the audience, and as I already suggested, this is in effect a similar tactic to Ninagawa's use of a *butsudan*, something found in most households, as a means of connecting the outside world to the play.[192] The main difference perhaps is that one is seen as traditional, high culture, while the other is everyday and low culture. In connecting the high (Shakespeare) with the low (consumerism), Kakushinhan are tying into 'junk' J-performance which blurs the boundaries between the two. This is reflected in the confusion of one reviewer,

[189] Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, p. 223.
[190] (n.a.), *Kakushinhan 'Macbeth'*.
[191] (n.a.), *Thoughts on Kakushinhan's 'Macbeth'* (*Kakushinhanban makubesu kansō*) (2017) <https://ameblo.jp/cookymam/entry-12242990968.html> [accessed 1 July 2017].
[192] (n.a.), *Kakushinhan 'Macbeth'*.

who wrote that even though the popular culture elements were used as 'a small joke', each time they saw them they wondered whether 'this was a classical play' or not.[193]

Despite the reservations voiced by some commentators, I would argue that the use of *combini* and familiar brands was a successful localisation strategy which firmly rooted the play in nearly-contemporary Tokyo, reflecting Yoshihara's comments that 'some popular, global, tacky 'shakespeares' seek to destabilise the presupposed notion that 'Shakespeare' is the dominant, central, hegemonic icon by juxtaposing 'Shakespeare' with other cultural artefacts, which are presumed to be of minimal capitalist and cultural value', and that through this they are attempting to 'localise and indigenise Shakespeare with a vengeance, to 'un-shakespeare' Shakespeare, to undo the curse of canonicity'.[194] She suggests that Shakespeare 'desperately needs an injection of B class bad taste, hilarious laughter, stupidity, cool fashion, the latest music, and risqué clothing, or in short, tackiness, in order to survive and prosper in today's Japan', although I would argue that, as Anan suggests, Kakushinhan were reconfiguring 'what is available to them in this consumerist society in order to create a subversive space'.[195] The fact that there was some resistance amongst the audience to the inclusion of these low-value cultural elements suggests that as is the case in contemporary British performances, 'even in postmodernity, the age in which the distinctions between high and low have supposedly collapsed, Shakespeare remains an important symbolic site of struggle between stratified cultural institutions'.[196] Kakushinhan's *Macbeth* was an innovative example of hybrid theatre that parodied contemporary culture whilst also being a part of it, and the negative reactions are perhaps suggestive of elements of lingering expectations of

[193](n.a.), *I Haven't Read Shakespeare*.
[194] Yoshihara, 'Tacky 'Shakespeares'', 84, 86.
[195] Ibid., 84; Anan, *Contemporary Japanese Women's Theatre*, p. 2.
[196] Lanier, p. 49.

*shingeki* style restraint and 'high culture', or perhaps of a rejection to its depiction of the two-dimensionality that society has ascribed to the younger generation.

**'A Memory of Tokyo': *Safaring the Night* (Underground Airport, Sumida Park Studio 2017)**

*Safaring the Night* by Underground Airport Company (Chika Kūkō) adapted the story of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* into an entirely new play which reflected, amongst other things, post-3.11 Japan and its contemporary relationship with technology. Written and directed by Ito Yasuro, this was the company's first Shakespeare production, although they had previously dealt with similar themes: in *Red Dragon and Soil Traveller* (2016), produced in collaboration with the National Theatre of Wales, Ito emphasised man-made and nuclear disasters. *Safaring the Night* was labelled as a 'new period theatre experience', and it ingeniously mixed science-fiction tropes and popular culture with Shakespeare.[197] The production was staged across multiple buildings in the Sumida Park Studio complex, close to the most recent symbol of Japan's modernity, Tokyo Skytree Tower (completed in 2012 and currently the tallest tower in the world) with the audience divided into small groups and taken on a promontory and interactive two-hour tour. Audience members received a different experience depending on the course their group took around the buildings, with some character encounters triggered at random, and others dependent on which 'team' the audience had chosen. Tickets for the production were divided, with attendees given the choice of entering through the Oberon or Titania 'gate' at the beginning, determining which version of events they saw.

[197] Underground Airport, *Safaring the Night* (2017) <http://uga-web.com/sb/sb.cgi?eid=219&no_redirect=true> [accessed 14 May 2017].

As with *Romeo and Juliet* and *Macbeth*, this production was also set in the future, although Ito went much further forward in time than the other two almost-contemporary Tokyos. Set in the year 2045, in this adaptation the world had been completely dominated by two Artificial Intelligence systems, Titania and Oberon. Hence, the audience choice of the 'Oberon gate' or 'Titania gate' meant that the first-scene they witnessed took place in either camp. The AIs were controlled by Theseus and Hippolyta, and the production took the audience on a tour of a Virtual Reality world called 'Old Nation: Japanese Lifestyle' which was accessed by both sides, replacing the forest in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with the 'forest' of technology.[198] Although the back-story was only glimpsed through small details, and given the interactive nature of the production not all of the audience would receive the same information, hints were given about major events in the years leading up to '2045'. It was implied that the development of new weapons had lead to large-scale destruction, including a bomb that Oberon 'users' had dropped on East Asia, and biological warfare, and the production further hinted that 'World War Three' had occurred in the not-too-distant past. The creation of the two separate AI systems resulted in countries joining 'self-defence' leagues under either Titania or Oberon, eventually leading to a large-scale war which had ended just before the events depicted in the production began. The motive for gathering was ostensibly to take the audience on a tour of the VR world to test who was the most suitable to attend a ceremony celebrating the integration of the now at peace AIs. The VR itself was described as a 'memory of Tokyo', and it was strongly implied that in the year 2045 the real Tokyo had been destroyed, and thus the Sumida Park Studios became a supposedly nostalgic reconstruction of Tokyo in the year 2017.[199]

[198] *Safaring the Night*, dir. by Yasuro Ito (Sumida Park Studio, March 2017).
[199] *Safaring the Night* (performance).

It was also explicitly stated that 'biotechnology' had been developed, leading to genetic experiments and the creation of human beings. Diseases such as cancer and Ebola had been eradicated, and characters also stated that mental illnesses had likewise been erased, but it was implied at numerous moments that this was not the case. Although characters such as Hippolyta and Theseus often spoke of the advantages of technology, implying that the past was unenlightened, a number of problems became clear as the story progressed. For example, in one possible encounter the audience met a genetically-engineered man being held in a cell-like laboratory, who was treated as though he had no awareness but who spoke directly to the audience, asking if they could hear him. The supposedly utopian society was also revealed to be a highly controlling totalitarian state, with each character given an AI-generated social rank (or, to use the production's terms, 'user' rank). Every member of the society had a microchip implanted in their heads, with their personal details stored on the AI system and accessible to anyone who had the right codes. Besides determining their social position, their rank also dictated what work they could do, and in the Oberon system marriages were decided by the AI with a suitable match picked out from other users within the database.

The audience were encouraged to come to their own conclusions about the ideas presented in the show in regards to technology, occasionally directly questioned by the actors about what they thought, but it was clear that the production questioned the extent of the control of individuals by the state and by technology, raising various debates on free will, agency and the individual versus society. However, the conclusion each audience members might come to would also have been affected by which version of the story they saw, as the various possible routes through the story differed significantly. The performance began simultaneously in two different rooms affiliated to Titania and Oberon, and despite following a roughly similar structure the scenes occasionally diverged depending on the motivations of

the different characters. For example, the Oberon scene opened with Theseus welcoming the audience to the tour of the VR world, but he was interrupted by Hermia who requested to be taken on the tour as well so that she could meet Lysander, who was a member of Titania. It was revealed that she had been matched by the AI with Demetrius, but she had rejected him. In the Titania scene, Hippolyta was more aggressive and reserved about the AI integration, and it likewise dealt with Hermia's desire to meet Demetrius. Both versions introduced the threat of cyber-terrorism, with the AI systems being hacked into and beginning to repeat a message about searching for something called the 'Indian child'.

The terrorists were later revealed to be the 'rude mechanicals' from Shakespeare's text, who were trying to find an engineered 'super-human' known as the 'Indian Child' in an attempt to shut down both AI systems to create a society that was 'focused on humans' instead of technology. [200] Throughout the production, members of the mechanicals approached the audience and tried to persuade them to help. The entire audience was brought together for the final scene, when it was revealed that the Indian Child was in fact Hermia. Having taken control of the AI, she presented the audience with a choice on the ending, asking them to vote on the future of the society: either they could choose to let her take control ('the future where AI supersedes humans'), or they could choose to live without AI.[201] The production had two different endings depending on how the audience voted, with either Hermia taking control, or, if they voted against her, Hermia dying (by 'erasing' herself) so that humanity could regain control. The audience voted anonymously through a smart-phone application which had been specially developed for the production, and which all participants were encouraged to download and use during the performance.

[200] Ibid.
[201] Ibid.

This application, which played a major role in the audience experience, was a paradoxical part of the production. *Safaring the Night* seemed to question over-dependence on technology, which has been part of the criticism about the perceived superficiality and disengagement from reality of the young, but at the same time it also replicated this dependence in the performance. Not only did the audience receive messages from the terrorists through the application during the production, but as part of the AI-integration ceremony storyline the application also became part of a game to collect points. QR-codes were placed around the site and carried by actors, and the audience were told to scan the codes with the application to gain points; points were given for 'good' places and characters, and deducted for the bad. The audience were therefore encouraged to spend part of the performance looking at their smart-phones, or searching for QR-codes in locations rather than interacting with the characters. Indeed, the game was so integrated into the production that it would have been difficult for any audience member without the right technology or the application to participate. At the time of the production, there had been an increasing amount of controversy both domestically and internationally about the use of smart-phone game *Pokémon Go* in religious and historical sites (for example, at Hiroshima Peace Park), with a corresponding debate on the perceived 'addiction' to technology regardless of location.[202] However, it was unclear whether, by replicating the effect, the production was criticising the trend or whether it was using it as a novelty factor to attract people to the theatre. Perhaps tellingly, a review in the *Asahi* newspaper labelled the production 'theatre as an attraction'.[203]

Suzuki Kensuke argues that in contemporary Tokyo 'carnivals have been built-in to the everyday', which has led to, in Iwaki's terms, an 'intuitive defence mechanism to protect

[202] See for example, BBC, *Hiroshima: Keep Pokémon Away From Atom Bomb Memorial* (2016) <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-36891787> [accessed 10 December 2017].
[203] (n.a.), 'Smart Phones are OK, Participatory Theatre' (*Sumaho OK, sanka dekiru engeki*), *Asahi*, (3 April 2017) <https://www.asahi.com/articles/photo/AS20170403000159.html> [accessed 20 April 2017].

oneself from the surfeit of stimuli' in many citizens that renders them 'oblivious to, or, precisely, insensible to, the plethora of tumultuous events'.[204] This sense of detachment was reflected in one scene where the audience were asked whether they were currently in the real world or not, which was difficult for the audience to answer definitively because of the framework of the Virtual Reality within the already-present framework of the play itself. This seemed to draw on the critique that in contemporary Japan the young (although not exclusively just the young) spend too much time on technology and are unable to differentiate between reality and fantasy worlds. Murakami expressed a similar notion when he asked that for contemporary Japanese society, 'where is our reality?'.[205] In terms of the superflat, Shigeru Sakai has described the contemporary young generation as being bad at expressing themselves because when they were children they 'had TVs, stereos and game consoles in their bedrooms, [so] it became more common for them to shut themselves in their rooms when they got home and communicate less with their families', and Tokunaga has likewise described the young as a 'generation who hardly have any reality to use to complete their own 'selves''.[206] Ito therefore drew these criticisms together, of the sense that people are living detached from reality and already functioning half as cyborgs due to their attachment to technology, and projected these anxieties onto a future where humans are completely controlled by that technology.

The production used the character's inferiority to technology to reproduce two-dimensional junk bodies, in addition to adapting the patriarchal and hierarchal society from Shakespeare's text to emphasise the characters' lack of agency, even over their own bodies and minds. For example, when Hermia refused to marry Demetrius during the opening scene,

[204] Translated and quoted by Kyoko Iwaki, 'The Politics of the Senses', p. 203; Iwaki, p. 202.
[205] Murakami, *Superflat*, p. 5.
[206] Quoted by Harney; Saitama Arts Theatre, *Richard II* (programme), (Saitama: Saitama Arts Foundation, 2015).

Egeus used the AI to control her behaviour by launching the 'parental control' code. As all the characters were linked to the computer system, there was the potential for any of them to have their actions controlled by another person, and there was even a sense of unease about the stability of the physical boundaries of the body in this technology-dominated society: in the final scene, when Hermia had successfully hacked into the AI systems, the other characters temporarily switched bodies. There are further parallels between the lack of agency among the characters and their inter-connectedness through AI with the wartime control over individuals, when the distance between the 'individual body and the national body […] collapsed during the war and pre-war years'.[207] Likewise, the emphasis characters such as Theseus and Hippolyta placed on the eradication of illness reflects both the regulatory practices of the government which 'aspired to create a healthy national body (*kokutai*)', and the postwar 'images of healthier Japanese bodies and cleaner Japanese cities' which 'metaphorically announced postwar Japan's departure from its problem-ridden past'.[208] By finishing the production with a scene in which the characters completely lost control of their bodies and became merely extensions of the malfunctioning AI, Ito implied the consequences of denying members of society autonomy, and of brushing away the problems of the individuals that make up that society. By then giving the audience the chance to vote on the ending, he also encouraged them to make up their own minds about control from the state and technology.

These superflat 'cyborg' bodies also have parallels with the 'techno-Orientalism' which depicts the Japanese as 'cyborgs and replicants', although it undermined the assumption that 'these [Japanese] mutants are now better adapted to survive in the future'.[209]

[207] Slaymaker, p. 10.
[208] Igarashi, pp. 5, 16.
[209] Morley and Robins, p. 170.

The production's questioning of the use of technology, and how far it could go in the future, is demonstrated by the production's poster [Fig. 6], which featured the main characters as a series of disconnected limbs, seemingly falling. Douglas Slaymaker has described the difference between various words in Japanese used for the body and the 'self', writing that *nikutai* ('body), combines the word for 'meat, muscle, or flesh, paired with the character for the body', while *seishin* ('spirit', or self) includes 'the sense of soul or spirit […] because the individual person is more than a lump of flesh – *nikutai* – but a complete person, a human being, comprised of both fleshly body and spirit (*seishin*)'.[210] The disconnected and powerless bodies used in the poster are telling of the anxieties present within the production, that in the future (or, in contemporary society), through social pressures bodies might be dehumanised and reduced to just the *nikutai*. This is a further demonstration of the 'rupture' in the bodies of contemporary actors, who have been 'deprived of the language through which they can express antagonism and negotiate their subjectivity'.[211] The poster is also emblematic of the superflat in contemporary Japanese theatre, of the unreal and incomplete bodies assigned to the young.

[210] Slaymaker, pp. 8-9.
[211] Anan, 'Two-Dimensional Imagination', 97.

[Image redacted]

Fig. 6 – *Safaring the Night* (2017) Poster

Despite ostensibly being set in the future in an unspecified location, *Safaring the Night* ended with a direct connection to contemporary Tokyo: both endings concluded with the characters simultaneously stating the location and date of the production, for example 'Tokyo Sumida-ku Yokokawa 1-10-10, 2017.03.11', before finishing with 'our voice'.[212] The timing of the production, being staged at the beginning of March on the sixth anniversary of the Fukushima disaster, is also worth noting, and references to manmade and natural disasters ran throughout the performance, with the suggestion that the world outside of the VR was in ruins and hence the need for the nostalgic tour around 'old' Tokyo. As with Kakushinhan and Fujita's *Romeo and Juliet*, the production therefore shared the same reference point of large-scale catastrophe, and despite the gloss of high-technology it seemed to stress society's powerlessness against disaster. The 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake which had levelled much of Tokyo and the surrounding areas, was seen as demonstrating the 'fragility of modern society:

[212] *Safaring the Night* (performance).

the greater the technological achievement, the more spectacular its destruction', tying in closely to the debates on hubris and the danger of technological developments which led to the Fukushima disaster.[213] As with the fear of radiation which has largely taken place in the imaginations of those living in post-3.11 society, the threat of cyber-terrorism and of control by the AI was likewise invisible and intangible, and seemingly pervasive. Further, the tendency of the Japanese government to brush-off the severity of the events of 3.11 under a continuing insistence that 'all is under control' prior to the Tokyo Olympics, can be seen as comparable to the safety of the VR world the characters and audience inhabit, which is only masking the reality of the damage in the outside world.[214]

Despite being an adaptation which did not use any lines from the original Shakespearean text, *Safaring the Night* has a number of similarities with the other performances described here, and was one which demonstrated the 'ultimate malleability or 'maul-ability'' of Shakespeare's texts in contemporary Japan.[215] The companies discussed here are only a small part of a wider trend that has seen Shakespeare moved out from the 'hallowed' spaces prescribed by *shingeki* and into the streets and *combini* of contemporary Tokyo. Uchino has suggested that one of the tendencies of the superflat in contemporary performance is to 'resist such aesthetic categories as beautiful and sublime, and therefore go against the marketability of the work', but I would argue that one of the elements that makes these productions worth examining lies in their ability to 'defamiliarise' intercultural Shakespeare and to release it from preconceived notions of what 'belongs' in a performance of Shakespeare.[216] They are also valuable in their ability to reveal 'what is effective and

[213] Weisenfeld, p. 21.
[214] Thouny, p. 1.
[215] Poonam Trivedi, 'Re-Playing Shakespeare in Asia: an Introduction', in *Re-Playing Shakespeare in Asia*, ed. by Trivedi and Minami, pp. 1-19 (p. 14).
[216] Huang and Ross, p. 12.

meaningful' in contemporary Japanese performance, and how, in Fukushima Yoshiko's words, 'Japanese artists criticise contemporary Japan through the western lookalike, but their work is not a simple mimicry of the west but something organic. It is a success, not a failure'.[217] Noda Manabu has written that,

> regardless of whether they are ostensibly 'post-dramatic' or not, many theatre pieces in Japan now focus on a certain type of physicality which results from the sense of unease present in Japanese society today. The sense of estrangement, distrust, apathy, helplessness, and incongruity in the supposedly democratic country comes partly from the onslaught of melodramatised political coverage by the mass media. The body is ill at ease, perceiving itself as something left behind.[218]

The companies and productions described here are clear examples of these 'ill at ease' bodies, a sense which has only been increased in the post-Fukushima period, and of the reality of Japanese society which 'increasingly live[s] in and in-between fictions and virtuality. The world consists of transparencies where nothing takes final form; it is a bewildering connected flat globe of instantaneous communication and all-pervading alienation'.[219] In the following chapter, I will consider how Ninagawa used and adapted the two-dimensional and ill at ease bodies of both the young and the old to likewise reflect on and criticise contemporary society, in addition to examining further his use of hybridity which had a significant impact on all of the companies described here.

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[217] John D. Swain, '*Crucible Bodies: Postwar Japanese Performance from Brecht to the New Millennium*. By Tadashi Uchino', *International Journal of Asian Studies*, 7.2 (2010), 235-37 (235); Fukushima Yoshiko, '*Contemporary Japanese Women's Theatre and Visual Arts: Performing Girl's Aesthetics*. By Nobuko Anan', *Asian Theatre Journal*, 34.2 (2017), 493-96 (496).
[218] Noda Manabu, 'The Body Ill at Ease in Post-War Japanese Theatre', *New Theatre Quarterly*, 23.3 (2007), 272-82 (274).
[219] Carol Martin, 'Lingering Heat and Local Global J Stuff', *Drama Review*, 50.1 (2006), 46-56 (52).

## CHAPTER THREE

### 'Now mark me how I will undo myself': the Postwar, Post-3.11 Body and Contemporary Hybrid Japanese Society

In the opening scene of Ninagawa's *Richard II* (2015), two men wearing traditional Japanese formal dress (*montsuki-haori-hakama*) stepped out of a crowd of actors and in an instant their costumes were pulled off to reveal western-style suits underneath. They did this using *hikinuki* ('quick-change'), a technique used in kabuki to instantly change a character's costume, generally in front of the audience's eyes:

> […] when some alteration in the character or atmosphere is necessary. As the actor performs, the *kurogo* or *kōken* [stage assistants] pulls basting threads from his specially constructed kimono, and at the right moment, the costume is whisked off, instantly revealing another one underneath.[1]

I opened this chapter with a line from *Richard II*, in which the king remarks 'Now mark me how I will undo myself' (4.1.203), and this instant change from Japanese to western costume is an example of the process of 'undoing' employed by Ninagawa, whereby the boundaries between here and now, then and there were increasingly blurred and deconstructed.[2] Sorgenfrei writes that when Japanese artists embrace the 'both/and' in performance they can 'make the Western 'either/or' impossible'.[3] I argue that Ninagawa effectively employed this tactic of the 'both/and' in *Richard II* to construct a hybrid space which reflected Homi K. Bhabha's concept of a 'Third Space' through which artists can 'elude the politics of polarity

[1] Samuel L. Leiter, *Historical Dictionary of Japanese Traditional Theatre*, 2nd edn (London: Rowman & Littlfield, 2014), p. 157.
[2] William Shakespeare, *Richard II*, 3rd edn, ed. by Charles R. Forker (London: Bloomsbury, Arden Shakespeare, 2002), p. 399.
[3] Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei, 'Alluring Ambiguity: Gender and Cultural Politics in Modern Japanese Performance', *NTQ*, 30.4 (2014), 341-51 (347).

and emerge as the others of our selves'.[4] Gilbert and Lo have suggested that intercultural theatre should 'draw our attention' to this 'hyphenated third space separating and connecting different people', and it was through this *hikinuki* that Ninagawa presented this hyphenated space to the audience.[5]

The actors wearing morning-suits underneath their *montsuki-haori-hakama* were evocative of what Deborah Klens has termed the 'palimpsests' of contemporary Japanese culture.[6] In *Performing Japan: Contemporary Expressions of Cultural Identity* (2008), Jaffe and Johnson expanded on her idea by describing Japan as a culture that 'so often displays contiguous identity as part of East Asia on the one hand and the West on the other,' adding that 'observers may experience a dissonance, or disruption about the performance of culture and identity […] the seeming violence with which the modern and traditional co-exist and permeate each other in sometimes perplexing and contradictory ways'.[7] Through this *hikinuki* Ninagawa found a clear way of representing this 'dissonance', but the smoothness of the transformation also undermines the assumption that the two cannot exist together, or switch back and forth, expressing the 'fluidity' which Michael Billington identified as one of the hallmarks of Ninagawa's productions.[8] The importance of Ninagawa's style of hybridity lies in the opportunities it created to 'challenge the assumption of the 'pure' and the 'authentic'', producing a hybrid theatre that did not 'try to heal over rifts or fractures but further opens these for exploration', as Richard Schechner suggests.[9]

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[4] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 56.
[5] Lo and Gilbert, 44.
[6] Deborah S. Klens, 'Theatrical Palimpsest: Tokyo 1992', *TDR*, 37.3 (1993), 166-70 (166).
[7] Johnson and Jaffe, *Performing Japan*, pp. 1-2.
[8] Michael Billington, 'Billington on Ninagawa' (2017) <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-artslaw/shakespeare/top/Michael-Billington.docx> [accessed 10 January 2018].
[9] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, 'Introduction', in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, ed. by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 7-11 (p. 9);

The previous chapters have examined some of Ninagawa's performance tactics, including his use of framing devices, methods of reflecting contemporary society and his questioning of *shingeki*'s legacy within Japanese theatre. Before developing this discussion further by considering particular case studies which are representative of his successful hybridisation technique, it is necessary to first touch on the critical responses Ninagawa's intercultural Shakespeare received during his career. Ninagawa is arguably the most famous Japanese director in the west, leading to his epithet in the Japanese media of 'the world's Ninagawa', and he has been described as the 'poster child' of intercultural Japanese Shakespeare.[10] Although his productions have received a mixed response critically, his influence in both domestic and international theatre has been undeniable, as has been the extent to which his productions have disrupted the anglo-centric and closed world of British Shakespeare. While it is worth considering the response he has received, there is already much critical discourse on the perceived merits or flaws in his intercultural work: notable examples include Sasayama Takashi, J.R. Mulryne and Margaret Shewring (1998), Minami Ryuta, Ian Carruthers and John Gillies (2001) and Brokering (2007). Furthermore, given the period of time covered by his career, there have been numerous developments and changes in his work, and as I mentioned in the introduction the productions covered here come much later than the usual period of his activity that has been studied. However, it would be difficult to discuss Ninagawa's later work without first looking at the wider background to his productions.

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Richard Schechner, *The Future of Ritual: Writings on Culture and Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 17.

[10] (n.a.), 'Director Ninagawa Yukio: Searching for the Meaning in Performing *Hamlet* Now' (*Enshutsuka Ninagawa Yukio 1 hamuretto ima yaru imi o mosaku*), *Sankei*, (30 March 2015) <http://www.sankei.com/entertainments/news/150330/ent1503300004-n1.html> [accessed 20 May 2016]; Borlik, 'A Season', 446.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, the period covering the most well-known academic studies on Ninagawa, much of the literature on Ninagawa's theatre was negative and focused on accusations of self-exoticism, Orientalism in both Ninagawa's intentions and its worldwide reception, and commercialism. Many of these accusations follow the example of Kishi Tetsuo, who writes that Ninagawa's 'passion for combining – or is it just mixing? – different cultural and theatrical traditions produces what some regard as great theatre. However, such cross-cultural combinations need to be sustainable in some dramatically meaningful way', adding that if the 'effect is merely local, visually clever or exotic' then it trivialises both 'traditions in question'.[11] These criticisms of exoticism and creating 'Japanesque' images for consumption in the west followed him for much of the early period of his contact with the western theatre world (for example, *NINAGAWA Macbeth*, 1980, *The Tempest*, 1987, *King Lear*, 1999). In interviews, both in Japan and abroad, Ninagawa often stated that his intention was never to make the productions exotic for simple visual appeal, but to find a way of drawing the texts closer to the audience's lives and experiences.[12] Despite some changes in his style, this intention remained a constant throughout his career, as will be obvious in the examples discussed in this thesis.

What has been termed Ninagawa's 'painterly' skill at interpreting the texts through visuals, metaphors and the metatheatrical has in large part been to blame for the criticisms against him. For example, Kishi attacks Ninagawa for using imagery such as the cherry blossom or *butsudan* that is 'so evocative' for a Japanese audience that it is 'likely to convey associations which are not really relevant to the play Shakespeare wrote'.[13] Kishi and Ninagawa seem to be working almost entirely at cross-purposes here, with Kishi displaying a

[11] Kishi and Bradshaw, pp. 76-77.
[12] 'Director Ninagawa Yukio: Searching for the Meaning in Performing *Hamlet* Now'.
[13] Kishi and Bradshaw, p. 80.

puritanism about keeping new or different meanings out of Shakespeare's text, whereas Ninagawa has experimented with finding a reason for performing these plays, believing that the 'starting point for producing Shakespeare for a Japanese audience' should be in finding relevance in the plays for the audience.[14] Some of the criticism is perhaps due to the popularity Ninagawa received in the west for what was labelled as 'exotic spectacle', and there have certainly been questionable elements in the western critical reaction to Ninagawa: for example, Suematsu notes that 'due to the language barrier', critics of the productions have had 'no choice but to analyse them based largely on visuals', leading to an uneven bias towards the visuals over textual interpretation which created the idea that Ninagawa only thought about imagery rather than any other meaning.[15]

The criticisms also responded to what was seen as his 'irresponsible' mixing of traditional theatre genres, such as kabuki and Noh, which he was sometimes accused of using (by Kishi, for example) only for 'cosmetic' rather than thematic purposes.[16] Borlik suggests that Ninagawa eventually 'drifted from the formula of mashing Eastern and Western traditions', perhaps as a response to the criticism, in addition to stemming from his 'conviction that Shakespeare has become […] familiar enough to Japanese audiences to require no cultural translation', and Kawai likewise suggests that he 'began to drop his Japanisation because he felt that the younger generation […] have no national inferiority complex and needed no cultural filtering'.[17] Although based on the continuing relevance of *shingeki*-era anxiety, as discussed in the previous chapter, I would disagree with Kawai's suggestion that the audience needs 'no cultural filtering', it is certainly true that elements such

[14] Ishihara Kosai, 'Shakespeare as Japanese Culture', *Journal of the Faculty of Foreign Languages*, 28 (1999), 1-20 (15).
[15] Suematsu Michiko, 'Verbal and Visual Representations in Modern Japanese Shakespeare Productions', in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Performance*, ed. by James C. Bulman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 585-98 (p. 584).
[16] Kishi and Bradshaw, p. 86.
[17] Borlik, 'A Season', 447; Kawai, 'Ninagawa Yukio', p. 278.

as kabuki and Noh might serve to alienate people further from the plays, with many people more familiar with other types of drama than traditional genres (for example, Kawatake Toshio suggests that kabuki is now 'part of an alien culture and as such might well be written in the Japanese syllabary used for foreign words').[18] However, I would also argue that there have been consistent threads running throughout Ninagawa's career, threads which are traceable up to the final productions and which allowed the development of an extremely mature, insightful and interrogating form of hybridity. Suematsu argues that Ninagawa's Shakespeare productions can be divided into three categories: the first group which 'recall traditional Japan by employing typical Japanese visuals or by borrowing from multiple traditional theatre forms', such as *NINAGAWA Macbeth*, the second which 'adheres to the framework of a single traditional theatre form', comprising only of *Kabuki Twelfth Night* (2005), and the third, where 'Japanese visuals and traditional theatre practices are basically absent', to which group she assigns the all-male productions which began in 2004.[19] She suggests that after *NINAGAWA Macbeth*, Ninagawa's productions progressed from 'a style that conspicuously exploits typical Japanese visual elements to a style without them; namely, they have shifted from the first type to the third'.[20]

While I agree with Suematsu that there have been noticeable trends within Ninagawa's productions, I strongly disagree with her that 'Japanese visuals and traditional theatre practices' are absent in his later work; instead, as I will argue in this chapter, these visuals have been deeply embedded in the work and his direction constantly played with and referenced both traditional images and contemporary society. The difference is perhaps that, rather than framing the productions in a *butsudan* or on a Noh stage, the images were

[18] Kawatake, *Kabuki*, p. 276.
[19] Suematsu, 'Verbal and Visual', p. 587.
[20] Ibid.

interwoven more into the textual interpretation, with the conceit of the rehearsal or travelling Japanese players replacing the need for such concrete signifiers of Japan as the *butsudan* or cherry blossoms. Suematsu does however suggest that following the beginning of the Sai-no-kuni Shakespeare Series, Ninagawa's style changed from 'juxtaposing Shakespeare' with 'stereotypical Japanese images', to 'those of contemporary Japan', more often incorporating abstract sets, and that his 'commitment to staging Shakespeare in a new style compelled him to switch from the work of veteran translator Odashima to Matsuoka'.[21] Hamana has suggested that it is impossible to use 'one theory or paradigm' in regards to Ninagawa's Shakespeare, and I agree with Borlik when he writes that Ninagawa's drama is 'most provocative when it deliberately conspires to expose, rather than conceal, the cultural fault lines that persist in modern Japan and in the global mise-en-scène of late capitalist society'.[22] I think that both of these critics are right in proposing that Ninagawa's productions cannot simply be divided into 'Japanesque' or 'non-Japanesque', and that accusations of commercialism also come from an uninformed viewpoint of the trajectory of his directing style.

I argue that it is in this sense of 'undoing' that it is particularly worth considering Ninagawa's productions, especially because of what it reveals about the breakdown between concepts of east/west, past/present and ours/theirs: Ninagawa consistently searched for ways of breaking down notions of how a Japanese director and performers should stage a western 'classic' (as embodied by Shakespeare), and questioned what position Shakespeare could (and should) have in contemporary Japanese theatre. It is particularly worth studying Ninagawa's plays through the concept of hybridity since, as Hazel Easthorpe writes, hybridity 'is a useful term because it starts out from the assumption that boundaries are blurred. Hence, identities,

[21] Ibid.
[22] Hamana, p. 27; Borlik, 'A Season', 446.

once they are understood to be hybrid, are no longer fixed, bounded, or discrete entities: they are necessarily dynamic and positional'.[23] Likewise, Joel Kuorrti and Jopi Nyman argue that the 'power of hybridity' lies in the opportunities it creates to question 'what appears natural and complete, to problematise naturalised boundaries', a theory which has clear echoes in Ninagawa's deconstruction of boundaries between Japan and Shakespeare, and thereby between Japan and Britain.[24]

Given Ninagawa's death in May 2016, during rehearsals for the thirty-second production in the Sai-no-kuni Shakespeare Series (*Measure for Measure*), *Richard II*, as one of his final Shakespeare productions, is a crucial site for considering these developments in his directing style. I will therefore be discussing this production in more detail in the next chapter, but before coming to that it is vital to look at other examples of his later Shakespearean productions to understand the context, what led up to it and what enabled it to happen before looking at the production itself. The two companies that staged *Richard II*, Saitama Next Theatre and Saitama Gold Theatre, have both been involved in other Shakespeare productions: Saitama Next in Ninagawa's 2012 *Hamlet*, and Saitama Gold in the first 'post-Ninagawa' Shakespeare from Saitama Arts Theatre. [25] Both these performances are revealing of the themes discussed in the previous chapters, and are also important sites for considering Ninagawa's self-positioning and influence within the Japanese theatre world. Both illustrate the ways intercultural theatre can perform for its local communities, whilst still having a wide reach, as well as forming part of Ninagawa's legacy within Japanese Shakespeare. In one of the few studies in English on Ninagawa's final years, Hamana suggests that not all of his Shakespeare productions were 'always great and successful', but

[23] Easthope, 'Fixed Identities in a Mobile World', 68.
[24] Kuortti and Nyman, *Reconstructing Hybridity*, p. 11.
[25] Tokunaga and Sasama, 37.

she describes the late period of Ninagawa's work as encompassing his ideas on the 'power of theatre and wonder', and it is certainly worth considering his productions in these terms, beginning with his work as artistic director of Sai-no-kuni Saitama Arts Theatre.[26]

**Sai-no-kuni Saitama Arts Theatre**

*The Merchant of Venice* (2013) discussed in the first chapter was part of two of the influential projects established by Ninagawa during his association with, and time as artistic director of, Saitama Arts Theatre: the Sai-no-kuni Shakespeare Series, which started in 1998 with *Romeo and Juliet* and aims to stage the complete works of Shakespeare, and the All Male Shakespeare Series, begun in 2004 with *As You Like It*, which aims to find connections between the Elizabethan boy players and the female impersonators of traditional (and contemporary) Japanese theatre. When Ninagawa died on 12 May 2016, the Sai-no-kuni Shakespeare Series had staged thirty-one plays, with the thirty-second in rehearsal (opened 25 May). Artistic direction of the series was taken over by actor and director Yoshida Kōtarō in October 2016, after Yoshida had starred in many previous Sai-no-kuni productions. Ninagawa was appointed as artistic director of the series in 1998, and of the theatre itself in 2006. If he had finished directing the Sai-no-kuni series, he would have been the third director in Japan to stage the complete works, after Deguchi Norio (1975-1981) and Endo Eizo at the Itabashi Theatre Centre (1980-2016), although Endo's work has been much less well-known than either Deguchi or Ninagawa's.[27] Two other projects which were central to his later work at Saitama were the Saitama Next and Saitama Gold companies. As will be demonstrated, these companies were closely connected to his work on experimenting with Shakespeare, and also

[26] Hamana Emi, 'Last Shakespeare Plays Directed by Yukio Ninagawa: Possessed by the Power of Theatre', *Journal of Literature and Art Studies*, 7.3 (2017), 269-77 (270-71).
[27] Ibid., 269.

to what I will be arguing represents one of the future possibilities for Japanese Shakespearean performance.

Sai-no-kuni Saitama Arts Theatre is a public theatre based in the small town of Yono-Homachi in Saitama Prefecture, thirty minutes away from central Tokyo by public transport. It is an exception to the influential Tokyo based companies, undermining Poulton's claim that 'Japanese theatre today is essentially Tokyo theatre', although as Saitama is in the Kanto region it is still part of the domination of Kanto-based theatre.[28] The theatre is managed by the Saitama Arts Foundation, a group established by Saitama Prefecture in 1993, and the theatre itself opened in 1994. The building has two theatres, of which the Main Theatre has one of the largest stages in Japan and sits 776, and the Adaptable Theatre which is smaller but allows for different stage set-ups. The complex also features a concert hall, audio-visual room used for screening films, library and archives and numerous rehearsal rooms. Ninagawa, who was himself born in Kawaguchi (Saitama Prefecture), became artistic director in 2006, and under his direction the theatre has pursued a policy of local engagement and community building, including inviting local residents into the theatre and giving them access to rehearsals, holding free events and concerts, and renting out the stage spaces to smaller companies.[29]

Although the theatre had gained a reputation for staging *avant garde* work after its 1994 opening, it struggled with low attendance numbers, particularly from its local Saitama residents. In one account of becoming artistic director of the Shakespeare series, Ninagawa writes that his biggest shock was discovering that the staff in a local *soba* shop did not know that there was even a theatre in the neighbourhood, saying 'because it's right there! I thought

[28] Poulton, 'Contemporary Theatre', p. 345.
[29] Saitama Arts Theatre, *About Us*.

it was strange that even the local people didn't know'.[30] He stated that therefore one of the 'first things' he needed to do was 'entice our neighbours to come and see for themselves what was happening at the theatre', adding that he wanted to create a place that 'could be enjoyed and loved by our local people'.[31] He arguably more than achieved this aim, with Hashida Yoshinori among others writing that Saitama Arts Theatre is now known throughout Japan as a 'unique theatre that creates' new and interesting productions, and the theatre has become a key cultural centre both locally and nationally, hosting performances from an array of genres including *kyogen* and contemporary dance, in addition to inviting companies from overseas.[32] Another one of the theatre's aims is to introduce new audiences of all generations to the theatre, to protect the art form's future, with Ninagawa stating that 'public theatres need to cultivate the next generation of theatre-goers in order to guarantee the future of our playhouses'.[33]

Saitama Arts Theatre is a rare example of a major publicly-funded theatre in Japan, as according to The Liaison Council of Theatres and Halls there are over two thousand public theatres and concert halls, but only around forty of these produce 'original performances and workshops on their own'.[34] This responsibility as a public theatre has had a significant influence on the kind of productions the theatre creates and hosts, and has played a large role in its community-based ethos. Christopher Balme has suggested that a 'theatre building is part of [the] cognitive cartography of a town or city', which cannot be an 'autonomous aesthetic realm, sealed off from the surrounding culture once the doors close and the lights go out', and

[30] Yukio Ninagawa, *The Power of Theatre*, p. 164.
[31] Saitama, *About Us*.
[32] Hashida Yoshinori, Suga Ayako and Kowase Ryoko, *Ninagawa Yukio and Saitama Gold Theatre's 500 Days: Their Challenge, Average Age Sixty-Seven* (*Ninagawa Yukio to Saitama gorudo shiata no 500 nichi – heikin nenrei 67-sai no chōsen*) (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2007), p. 13.
[33] Saitama, *About Us*.
[34] The Liaison Council of Theatres and Halls in Japan, *About Us*, (n.d.) <https://www.gekionkyo.org/English> [accessed 15 October 2017].

this idea can be tied to the dedication of the theatre to creating productions and inviting in as many members of the local community as it can.[35] The theatre has also spilled out into the neighbourhood, with the street leading up to the theatre ('Art Street') lined with quotes from Shakespeare and handprints from famous actors who have worked there. Ninagawa once wrote that rather than taking the support of the prefecture for granted, he wanted to do 'a good job' by 'embracing' the different lifestyles and lives the area encompassed: 'people on welfare benefits, […] people happily living their old age, the young people who work the midnight shift at their part-time job, [and] the youth who work at the *combini*'.[36]

The kinds of performances the theatre can host has therefore been influenced by this awareness, and this desire to include and represent as many different people on the stage as possible, and from the beginning Ninagawa expressed an awareness of a different set of responsibilities to the theatre's target audiences than a privately-run theatre would have.[37] Arguing that one of the 'responsibilities of a public theatre is to stage works that private-sector theatres or companies are unable to put on, the kinds of works that, though highly accomplished, may nonetheless find it difficult to turn a profit', which is one of the reasons why the theatre has been able to engage in such an ambitious and long-running project as the Sai-no-kuni Shakespeare Series. [38] With the exception of Endo's low-key, commercially low-cost series at the Itabashi Theatre Centre, other attempts at staging multiple or the complete works of Shakespeare have had to move between different venues and often performed to small audiences. Ninagawa therefore saw 'staging all of Shakespeare's plays, including the

[35]Balme, pp. 230-31.
[36] Ninagawa, 'Ninagawa: Director's Monologue', p. 13.
[37] Saitama Arts Theatre is funded by the local council in Saitama prefecture. According to their 2017 'Income and Expenditure Budget', the theatre received 1,044,849,000 yen from the local government (i.e. Saitama prefecture), 203,147,000 from ticket revenue, 288,994,000 from usage fee revenue, 10,000,000 from membership fees and 16,500,000 from miscellaneous fees. Saitama Arts Foundation, *About* (2017) <http://www.saf.or.jp/pdf/saf2017budget_01.pdf> [accessed 17 May 2017].
[38] Saitama, *About Us*.

lesser-known ones,' as 'one of the major roles a public theatre can play,' particularly given that many of the 'more obscure' plays are rarely performed in contemporary Japan.[39]

The success of the Sai-no-kuni series is beyond doubt, given its influence and high reputation both nationally and internationally, and Gallimore and Minami have even suggested that while there is no 'national' Shakespeare theatre in Japan, Saitama Arts Theatre 'comes quite close to fulfilling that role, at least in terms of popularity'.[40] In a revealing comment to the previous discussion on the anxiety of influence, in Kawai's (chairman, Shakespeare Committee at Saitama) assessment, the Sai-no-kuni Shakespeare Series 'has surpassed the RSC. It's a triumph over the *honba*'.[41] Another revealing comment is Peter Aspden's description of the theatre as 'one of the most important crucibles of world theatre'.[42] Ninagawa himself suggested that having been born in Kawaguchi, and in his role as 'trying to help Japanese people truly meet Shakespeare' that it was a good thing he was able to take 'productions from Saitama to the world'.[43] Another notable impact of the series is the popularisation of Matsuoka Kazuko's translations, which Ninagawa began using from the first production in the series in 1998 (*Romeo and Juliet*), whereas he had previously used Odashima's translations.[44] Furthermore, as was seen in the previous chapter on recent young companies working in Japan, Ninagawa's productions with the Sai-no-kuni series have been a large influence for many artists, often acting as a benchmark for new explorations and interpretations, in addition to attracting new audiences to Shakespeare, as one critic argued

[39] Ibid.
[40] Gallimore and Minami, pp. 494-95.
[41] Kawai Shoichiro, 'Ninagawa Yukio and the Sai-no-kuni Shakespeare Series' (*Ninagawa Yukiosan to sainokuni sheikusupia shirizu*), *Arts Theatre Press*, 64 (2016), 6-7 (7).
[42] Aspden.
[43] Ninagawa, *The Power of Theatre*, pp. 165, 193.
[44] Suematsu, 'Verbal and Visual Representations', p. 587.

when they stated that through the series Ninagawa 'made performances of Shakespeare an 'event''.[45]

Saitama Gold and Saitama Next Theatre, established in 2006 and 2009 respectively, are the two resident companies at Saitama, and their performance history frequently intersects with the Sai-no-kuni series, culminating in their joint production of *Richard II* in 2015. The companies have had to prove that they are 'contributing to the community' as validation of the money they have received, which has meant that the ways they can work for both the local and national community has been at the forefront of their work. [46] This is evident in the two case studies discussed here, as Saitama Next's production of *Hamlet* responded to the events of 3.11, and Saitama Gold's post-Ninagawa *Romeo and Juliet* focused on the ageing society in Japan and the role the arts can play. Although Ninagawa established Saitama Gold before he created Next, because Gold's first solo Shakespeare production came after Ninagawa's death, I will begin with a case study on Saitama Next.

**Saitama Next Theatre**

Ninagawa established Saitama Next Theatre in 2009 as a place to train young actors, building on his history of training and experimenting with the younger generations of artists. From 1984-2004, he ran a project under the name of GEKISHA NINAGAWA STUDIO (renamed NINAGAWA STUDIO in 2004), based in a refurbished factory called the Benisan Pit Studio in order to create 'experimental small-theatre' productions.[47] The STUDIO often focused on performing etudes, which Ninagawa described as an 'essential part of our craft', but once the

[45] (n.a.), 'Ninagawa Yukio's Great Inheritance: Sai-no-kuni Shakespeare Series' (*Ninagawa Yukio no ooinaru isan sainokuni sheikusupia shiata*), *Theatre Guide*, 1 (2018), 10.
[46] Senda Akihiko, *Artist Interview: Yukio Ninagawa's New Theatrical Venture, Confronting the Realities [sic] the Common People's History Together with the Elderly and Young People* (2009) <http://www.performingarts.jp/E/art_interview/0910/1.html> [accessed 20 May 2016].
[47] Senda Akihiko, *Artist Interview: Another Key Part of the Ninagawa World: the Stage Art of Tsukasa Nakagoshi* (2014) <http://www.performingarts.jp/E/art_interview/1411/1.html> [accessed 20 August 2017].

Benisan Pit was scheduled for demolition, the STUDIO's activities were scaled back in 2008.[48] Many of the artists who began working with Ninagawa during this period have maintained a close relationship with his activities (the 'actors and staff that came of age as professionals during this period continue to support Ninagawa's active theatre activities to this day'), including actors Yokota Eiji, Oishi Keita (*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, 2013), Shinkawa Masato (*Measure for Measure*, 2016, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Henry IV*, 2013), as well as Inoue Sonsho who frequently acted as Ninagawa's assistant director, and Tsukasa Nakagoshi, who designed over one hundred productions for Ninagawa.[49] In May 2017, nine actors from the STUDIO performed a new series of etudes in the large rehearsal room at Saitama Arts Theatre, in a production entitled *2017: Wait*, based on the *Wait* series they used to perform at the Benisan Pit. Using short plays or etudes that reflected the current moment and the idea of waiting, the company, alongside members of Saitama Next and Gold, presented different variations on the theme (including *Rehearsal Macbeth*, Fernando Arrable's *Picnic on the Battlefield* and Reginald Rose's *Twelve Angry Men*). The back of the set was covered with scenery and props from previous Ninagawa productions, including the Capitoline Wolf statue (*Titus Andronicus*, *Antony and Cleopatra* 2011, *Julius Caesar* 2014), a lotus flower (*The Greeks* 2000), vending machines (*Kafka on the Shore*, 2012) and candelabra (*Richard II*).

Next has been described as the successor to the STUDIO, with Ninagawa himself calling it a place to nurture 'the young performers who will carry Japanese theatre into the next generation'.[50] However, he was keen to stress that the two companies are separate

[48] Senda, *Artist Interview: Yukio Ninagawa*.
[49] Senda, *Artist Interview: Tsukasa Nakagoshi*.
[50] Senda, *Artist Interview: Ninagawa*.

entities, with different aims and methods.[51] Saitama Next was established to 'educate' the next generation of actors, hence the name 'Next', and since its inception it has had three further rounds of auditions.[52] When the company first started it had forty-four members, and the youngest member was nineteen and the oldest thirty. In 2014, Next had thirty-four members with an average age of twenty-six.[53] Saitama Next Theatre is closely related to the superflat and junk discourse from the previous chapter, and they have likewise been closely involved in the debate on the young's position in contemporary Japan. Ninagawa occasionally decried what he saw as a lack of knowledge among this generation: 'they read *manga* and watched films, but hardly read any books. They didn't think it was embarrassing not to know things. They hadn't read Chekhov, or Shakespeare, or Mishima Yukio'.[54] Viewing awareness of the past as one of the key elements in training a new generation of theatre-makers, he re-staged avant-garde plays from the 1960s and 1970s which had influenced him at the start of his career with Saitama Next. He wanted the company to learn the 'continuity of theatre history', suggesting that most young theatre-goers only go to see performances by their friends or members of the same generation meaning that there is 'no vertical axis, it just spreads out horizontally. I wanted to teach them that even in plays from however many years ago, they are also part of them as members of the historical community'.[55] He added that for this generation these plays are 'distant enough that it's like doing a foreign play. They don't know how to approach the text […], nor do they understand the habits of the time that appear in them', and that therefore 'gaining stage experience and knowledge about plays like this that

[51] Ibid.
[52] Ninagawa, 'Ninagawa: Director's Monologue', p. 6.
[53] Saitama, *About Us*.
[54] Ninagawa, 'Ninagawa: Director's Monologue', p. 18.
[55] Saitama Arts Theatre, *2012 Hamlet: According to the Pale Boys and Girls* (programme), (Saitama: Saitama Arts Foundation, 2012); Ninagawa, *The Power of Theatre*, p. 116.

are of a different experience will eventually be meaningful when it comes to making plays for and of their generation'.[56]

Consequently, the company's first production in 2009 was *Sanada Fuunroku* (The Tale of the Sanada Family) by Fukuda Yoshiyuki (1962). Premiering in 1962 in a production directed by influential director Senda Koreya, *Sanada Fuunroku* mixes the historical events of the Siege of Osaka (1614-15), the final major conflict opposing the ruling Tokugawa shogunate which culminated in the destruction of the Toyotomi clan, with the student protests of the 1960s.[57] Ninagawa cited Fukuda with being the first writer to 'give Japanese body and flesh to Brecht-like' theatre, and that he had chosen this play for Next's first performance because it contained elements of both realism and the alienation effect, meaning he could cover a 'large part of contemporary drama' to teach them.[58] Their second production was also a play from the 1960s: in 2010 they staged *Utsukushiki mono no densetsu* (Legend of the Beauty, 1968) by Miyamoto Ken. In comparison to Saitama Gold Theatre, whose productions have been dominated by newly-written plays, Next have mostly worked with classics, both Japanese and western. Ninagawa said that he thought it was 'good to [have] young people re-read these texts. I believe it is meaningful to have them read these texts as plays and also to read them properly as a stage in the development of our cultural history'.[59]

Arguing that Next are the 'young actors who bear the burden of the next generation of Japan's theatre', with the main concepts of the project being to 'transmit' and 'bequeath', the company have been using the classics as a 'foundation to search for a 'new way of

[56] Senda, *Artist Interview: Ninagawa*.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.

representation''.[60] They have therefore also performed translated classics including Raymond Chandler's *The Long Goodbye* (translated by Kurahashi Takeshi, 2012), Euripides's *Oedipus Rex* (adapted by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, translated by Oshio Takashi and Maeno Mitsuhiro, 2013), *The Factory 4: Nine Chapters Based on the Works of Wolfgang Borchert* (translated from Wolfgang Borchert's *The Man Outside* by Komatsu Taro, adapted by Ninagawa, 2013) and Albert Camus's *Caligula* (translated by Iwakiri Shoichiro, 2014). Ninagawa emphasised physicality and movement in every Next production, stating that there is nothing 'negative about learning to use the body to express things, so I want to tell them to do that', and arguing that because the stages at Saitama Arts Theatre are large he wanted to create a new format for them so that they could 'experience the close unity that is possible in a smaller space, and experience creating something using only the body. So we are creating a little theatre on the stage itself as an educational experience for the actors'.[61] Beginning with their first production in 2009, Ninagawa set up an acting space on top of the Main Theatre for the company which he referred to as 'inside theatre', with the audience seating surrounding the stage on three sides.

In addition to this training, Ninagawa also wanted to offer opportunities to unknown actors, regarding this as one of the responsibilities of a public theatre.[62] In the face of the idol system that arguably dominates the Japanese entertainment world, this openness to the so-called 'nameless' actors has been incredibly important, as in many cases only established actors are given opportunities in television, film and large theatre productions.[63] I have already spoken about the criticisms Ninagawa faced for opportunism, by 'incorporating emerging young and decisively unprofessional actors (teen idols, in most cases) […] into his

[60] Saitama, *Hamlet* (programme); Saitama, *Richard II* (programme).
[61] Senda, *Artist Interview: Ninagawa*.
[62] Saitama, *About Us*.
[63] Yamaguchi Hiroko, *The Work of Ninagawa* (*Ninagawa no shigoto*) (Tokyo: Shinchosha, 2015), p. 123.

productions, focusing on ticket sales and performing in huge commercial venues', and his own response to the problem of the 'popularity of *ikemen*' actors.[64] Furthermore, as I already mentioned, the existence of Saitama Next and Saitama Gold have also undermined the strength of these criticisms, with Ninagawa himself commenting that 'an important role of the public theatre is, using the anonymous as a weapon, to create new theatre'.[65] By hiring unknown actors and training them, often employing those with different images to the so-called *ikemen* stars, Saitama Next subverted the criticisms of commercialism and popularisation. In selecting actors for the company, he said that was looking for those with what he called 'lots of noise', those with 'untamed, animal-like instincts […] most of the actors you see are rather square. They have good posture. They have clear skin. Their speech is clean and proper. There is no interest in all of this. There's no noise'.[66] He added that he wanted to meet people who 'in the midst of this carefree time, can reveal their attitude. Those whose bodies seem to say 'I'm dissatisfied with the current situation', or 'the world disgusts me'' '.[67]

Although this would seem to suggest that Ninagawa was looking for those who are the opposite of the two-dimensional, commentary on Saitama Next has often closely corresponded with the superflat theory. Ninagawa himself often referred to them as 'anonymous', partly in response to their lack of fame and partly due to their perceived disposability, as well as 'pale'.[68] Since 2012 they have performed their own series under the title of *According to the Pale Boys and Girls*, a tag which clearly ties into the 'grass-eater'

[64] Uchino, p. 117; Ninagawa, 'Ninagawa: Director's Monologue', p. 18.
[65] Ninagawa, *The Power of Theatre*, p. 324.
[66] Senda, *Artist Interview: Ninagawa*.
[67] Kawazoe Fumiko, *Even if They're Anonymous, Next is a Place for Those with Aptitude* (*Nekusuto nara, sainou ga areba, mumei de attemo basho ha aru*) (2011) <http://www.theaterguide.co.jp/feature/ninagawa_next/> [accessed 25 May 2017].
[68] Ninagawa Yukio, 'Rehearsing With Ninagawa Yukio's Young Theatre Company' (*Enshutsuka Ninagawa Yukio wakasha no gekidan ni ha kotengeki o*)(interviewed by Tomoko Iizuka for *Sankei*), *Sankei*, (2 April, 2015) <http://www.sankei.com/entertainments/news/150402/ent1504020003-n1.html> [accessed 10 July 2017].

discourse due to its connotations of the shallow and disengaged. It originated from Ninagawa's concept of contemporary young Japanese actors who have 'poor figures and expressions' and who 'do not understand what they are being taught', leading him to direct them 'as they were'.[69] In this sense, the 'according to' reflects the actors' inability to follow direction and their subsequent creation of their 'own' performance, as well as implying their status as representatives of the wider younger generation.

Their first production using this tag, which was also the company's first Shakespeare, was the 2012 *Hamlet*, performed under the title of *2012 Hamlet: According to the Pale Boys and Girls*. In addition to giving them this 'pale' title, Ninagawa has often described Next in other terms reminiscent of the 'junk' debate. For example, he occasionally referred to them as '*waribashi*', or the disposable wooden chopsticks used in bars and *combini*:

> When I look at these young people, the group's consciousness, and the actors' hopes, are completely different to my generation; I call these thin people *waribashi*! Pencils! [...] since the basis of theatre is communication and you can't run away from that, express your intentions more clearly. I used to always say this, but recently my thinking has changed a little.[70]

As demonstrated by the final sentence, despite the criticisms both he and others aimed at the company, and despite the fact that they, 'with thin bodies and small voices, rarely express will or passion on the surface', gradually came to be seen as 'new actors' who were involved in creating 'groundbreaking work' with Ninagawa.[71] As Yamaguchi Hiroko suggests, 'revealing the spark in young actors is one of Ninagawa's specialities in directing', and Ninagawa

[69] Tokunaga Kyōko, 'The Place for 'Blue Youths'' (*Aoi shonen no ibasho*), in *Ninagawa Yukio: The Director Who Kept Fighting*, ed. by Kawade, pp. 182-87 (p. 186).
[70] Ninagawa, 'Ninagawa: Director's Monologue', p. 7.
[71] Yamaguchi, *The Work of Ninagawa*, p. 121; Saitama, *About Us*.

himself added that 'I was surprised too, that they had something behind their expressionless faces'.[72] Additionally, the strictness of their production process has become well known: one characteristic is the expectation that the actors will learn the lines for as many roles as they think they might be suitable for, meaning that if during rehearsals the casting is deemed unsuitable they can be reshuffled again. Having held three further auditions, the company members have also changed and developed in order to create a situation of 'constant climbing' to challenge themselves.[73]

Ninagawa acknowledged that the young generation are 'anxious because they can't see the future', and as will become clear in the following case study this sense of anxiety has been strongly present in Next's productions. Despite this, I would argue that Next are a good example of what Bennett terms 'the errant and disobedient bodies which persist in their urge to be seen' onstage, despite social pressures and criticisms.[74] Next have become a site where different worries and meanings converge, and as such they have had significant subversive power in representing and overturning popular images about their generation. Furthermore, as one of the groups who worked with Ninagawa, his ideas and 'spirit carries on' through them, and in 2018 the company began a new project to perform 'contemporary plays written in the midst of the increasingly chaotic world, plays that reverberate with the everyday pain of those living in the midst of war, terror and the refugee crisis, making their voices three-dimensional, finding the connections between us and the world'.[75] To consider their work in more detail, I will be using their production of *Hamlet* as a case study.

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[72] Yamaguchi Hiroko, 'Ninagawa Shakespeare, and the Constitution' (*Ninagawa sheikusupia soshite kenpou*), *Higeki-kigeki*, 779.3 (2016), 28-29 (29); Kawazoe.
[73] Kawazoe.
[74] Bennett, p. 2.
[75] Yamaguchi Hiroko, 'Contemporary Theatre: Overcoming Immense Losses', trans. by William Andrews, *Theatre Yearbook 2017: Theatre in Japan* (Tokyo: International Theatre Institute, 2017), pp. 67-75 (p. 67); Setoyama Misaki, 'The Forefront of World Theatre x Saitama Next Theatre: the Long-awaited Start of a New

**'What ceremony else?': *2012 Hamlet: According to the Pale Boys and Girls***

As with the shows discussed in the previous chapter, Saitama Next's 2012 production of *Hamlet* similarly dealt with the idea and fallout of disaster and change, and the place of the young generation in Japan. This was Ninagawa's seventh *Hamlet*, and it spoke clearly to many of his concerns about the way theatre could be used to represent the contemporary moment, provoking a strong reaction amongst several of the commentators. Ninagawa cast Saitama Next member Kawaguchi Satoru (born 1982) as Hamlet, and both he and the rest of the company (as 'the pale boys and girls') differed immensely from the famous stars he had previously cast as Hamlet (including Hiroyuki Sanada, a film star who also starred in Ninagawa's *King Lear* in 1999, Michael Maloney and Fujiwara Tatsuya). Kimata wrote that it was separated from Ninagawa's previous versions because it was performed by 'contemporary young people, who have pale faces with no expression, and [who] you can't tell what they're [are] thinking'.[76] Another major departure in this production was the collaboration of twin singers the Komadori Robin (*Shimai*), aged seventy-four at the time, who appeared at crucial moments and disrupted both the action and the fact that this was a *Hamlet* according 'only' to the young. As icons of the postwar period, the appearance of the singers also closely tied the production to the postwar generation and its experiences, something that was crucial to Ninagawa's vision for this performance.

Adapting the 'inside' theatre design typical for Next productions, Ninagawa cleverly depicted the court hierarchy through the addition of a clear acrylic floor with a sub-space. The King and Queen stayed on the top of the stage, with the lower members of the court mostly

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Series' (*Sekai saizensen no engeki x saitama nekusuto shiata – kibou no shinshirizu ga sutato!*), *Arts Theatre Press*, 73 (2018), 7.

[76] Kimata Fuyu, *Saitama Next Theatre '2012 Hamlet According to the Pale Boys and Girls'* (*Saitama nekusuto shiata 2012 hamuretto sōhaku no shonen shojotachi*) (2012) <http://www.wonderlands.jp/archives/20354> [accessed 5 February 2017].

using the sub-stage, looking up at the royals as they spoke [Fig. 7]. The ghost also made its first appearance in the under-stage, while the soldiers followed its movements through the glass, thereby linking the area with both the suppressed members of the society, and the supernatural world. The two spaces were also used to illustrate the divisions and interruptions present in the text, with Ophelia for example kept below the stage throughout much of 3.1, visually staging the split the events of the play had produced between her and Hamlet. Similarly, following Hamlet's duel with Laertes, Horatio was left to watch from below, delaying the familiar image of Horatio holding Hamlet during his death until the very final moment when he came to the upper-stage.

[Image redacted]

Fig. 7 – *2012 Hamlet*, Act 1 Scene 2

The divided stage also served as part of the framing device, with a black sheet covering the under-stage being pulled back to reveal actors in modern clothes at dressing tables at the start of the production. The dressing tables reappeared during the final scene, after Hamlet had been carried offstage by Fortinbras's soldiers, with the actors undressing and talking loudly, producing a jarring image with the preceding action. Not only did this act as a metatheatrical technique to address the reality of the Japanese bodies performing Shakespeare, it also served to underline the age of the actors. Wearing everyday clothes, and speaking

together casually as they dressed, they were very clearly presented as actors of the contemporary young generation. Ninagawa wrote that he wanted the three-sided layout to create a 'space where the actors' performance stands out', and this space arguably also highlighted the physical reality of the young bodies performing onstage. In addition to its links to the super-flat, herbivore generation, this image was closely linked to Ninagawa's questioning of the status of the young in post-3.11 Japan.

In the production's programme, Ninagawa explicitly linked *Hamlet* to the disaster ('as you know, one year ago we experienced the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake'), and staged in the year after the triple disaster, the production questioned where hope could be found for Japanese society, particularly for the younger generation, in response to the crisis.[77] At the time of the production, both the physical effects of the disaster were still extremely visible and the invisible and intangible threat of radiation remained, and this is a theme which Ninagawa richly brought out through the sense of terror and uncertainty present in *Hamlet*, reflecting Horatio's line that the ghost 'harrows me with fear and wonder' (1.1.43).[78] The apparition of the Ghost, in post-Fukushima Japan, has a great deal to say about the fear created by imagination (of both the supernatural and radiation) and the unseen but sensed threats against society. It is also striking in light of the stories that emerged from post-tsunami Tohoku about ghost-sightings, in many cases springing from grief over incomplete burials and missing people.

In his study on the popularity of Sophocles' *Antigone* in Tokyo in 2012, Poulton refers to reports of 'hauntings and possessions by the spirits of those who had died, whose bodies had not been recovered, whose souls had not been given the proper obsequies befitting

[77]Saitama, *Hamlet* (programme).
[78] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor (London: Bloomsbury, Arden Shakespeare, 2014), p. 152.

the dead' as one reason for the upsurge in interest in *Antigone*.[79] In Horatio's line 'if there be any good thing to be done that may to thee do ease and grace to me, speak to me' (1.1.29-31) resonates profoundly with these stories of hauntings in the Tohoku region following the difficulties in providing proper burials for all of the dead.[80] Additionally, following the court's exit after Ophelia's 'maimèd' funeral (5.1.208), Ninagawa had maids appear to sweep away the remaining bones, further reflecting a sense of unease with how victims' bodies were treated in the wake of the disaster.[81] Both Ophelia ('Larded with sweet flowers, which bewept to the ground did not go' 4.5.38-39) and Laertes's ('What ceremony else?' 5.1.212) horror of incomplete burials and ceremonies similarly resonates with this reading, and the corresponding fear that the dead were treated improperly in the difficult situation after the tsunami.[82] Based on the belief that one of the earliest forms of theatre in Japan was for 'the pacification of spirits (*chinkon*)', Poulton suggests that contemporary artists have been exploring 'the relationship between the living and the dead, fathoming the potential of theatre as a space of mourning'.[83] A deep sense of mourning ran throughout Ninagawa's *Hamlet*, with the synopsis in the programme beginning with the following: 'Hamlet, Laertes, Fortinbras. These three young men who lose their fathers, and Ophelia'. [84] Hamlet delivered his 'to be or not to be' speech curled in a foetal position alone in the middle of the stage, implying an overwhelming sense of grief. A sense of this 'pacification' could perhaps also be read into Gertrude's speech to Laertes following Ophelia's death ('Her clothes spread wide, and mermaid-like a while they bore her up; which time she chanted snatches of old tunes, as

[79] Poulton, 'Antigone in Japan', p. 129.
[80] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, p. 161.
[81] Ibid., p. 425.
[82] Ibid., pp. 376, 425.
[83] Poulton, 'Antigone', p. 141; Geilhorn and Iwata-Weickgenannt, p. 10.
[84] Saitama, *Hamlet* (programme).

one incapable of her own distress' 4.7.173-76), ameliorating the horror of the 'black wave' of the tsunami.[85]

As in other post-3.11 productions, the distance between the living and the dead was particularly thin in this performance, in addition to that between the past and the present. This slippage was depicted most clearly in the intrusions of the Komadori onto the text, reminiscent of the 'nuclear time' theory proposed by Osawa that disrupts linear time and the sense of the everyday.[86] The Komadori are folk (*enka*) singers who were popular in the 1960s, having worked their way up from poverty in the postwar era. They have been described as representatives of the postwar generation who faced numerous difficulties, and have been celebrated as exemplars of Japan's regeneration after the Occupation. Ninagawa used the strong emotional resonance the singers would have for many in the audience to connect the translated drama to the real lives and memories of the audience, a tactic which gained additional meaning in the post-Fukushima atmosphere. Ninagawa had spoken previously about his idea of using the Komadori sisters, and had mused about what effect their inclusion might have on a translated play. In an interview four years before directing Next's *Hamlet*, he had said,

> I even thought seriously about how it would be to create a play where Hamlet is giving his 'to be or not to be' lines and suddenly the Komadori sisters come out. If they suddenly appeared in the midst of a classical play in translation, and crossed the stage in their long-sleeved kimonos, playing the shamisen, *ben ben ben ben*, our play would be blown away in an instant.[87]

[85] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, pp. 407-08.
[86] Thouny, p. 6.
[87] Senda, *Artist Interview: Ninagawa*.

The Komadori sisters appeared for the first time midway through Hamlet and Ophelia's scene in 3.1, when the curtains at the rear of the stage suddenly opened to reveal the singers. Unlike the other characters, they were the only ones who appeared in explicitly Japanese-style clothing, dressed in kimonos which they had hand-sewn the decorations on. Their 1969 song *Shiawase ni naritai* ('I want to be happy one day') began playing and the two young actors immediately turned to face them; they then lay on the floor audibly crying as the twins slowly circled the stage singing [Fig. 8]. The lyrics to the song include lines such as 'I don't want to erase the light of hope, I won't erase it […] Even if it's hard to trust people, I want to believe them / happy, I want to be happy', and as such the dissonance between the action in the play and the lyrics heightened the sense of unease and tragedy. Their appearance completely halted the play, and as they sang they directly addressed the audience and ignored Hamlet and Ophelia. They left the stage at the end of the song, and the still-crying Hamlet stood up and restarted the scene at an earlier point in the characters' conversation. One reviewer questioned whether they were a vision that appeared from Hamlet's insanity, or whether 'the urgent longing in the lyrics of the Komadori's song could be the voice of Hamlet and Ophelia's souls', adding that it emphasises the tragedy of the play since 'they cannot become happy'.[88]

[88] Kimata, *Saitama Next Theatre '2012 Hamlet'*.

[Image redacted]

Fig. 8 – *Hamlet*, Act 3 Scene 1

The sisters appeared again just before the blackout marking the interval, standing in the subspace looking up at Hamlet as he delivered the ‘‘Tis now the very witching time of night’ soliloquy from 3.2, reaching out to him as he spoke. This was the only time they acknowledged Hamlet’s presence and their own role as observers of the story. They appeared a final time during the finale, again singing *Shiawase Ni naritai*. In the final scene, Fortinbras went down to the sub-stage and massacred the remaining courtiers with a machine gun, before returning to the top to also kill Horatio. While this was happening, Hamlet’s body was slowly carried offstage by soldiers to a backtrack of warfare including gunshots, crying and bombs, all overlaid with the introduction to the Komadori’s song. Kimata Fuyu notes that Fortinbras’s massacre has a parallel to the ending of Ninagawa’s 2001 *Hamlet* in which Fortinbras again killed everyone, which was itself a response to the terrorist attacks of 9.11. [89] As the Komadori sang, the lights came on in the subspace to reveal the actors laughing and talking whilst they removed their costumes, both returning the audience to and connecting the events to the outside world.

[89] Ibid.

In post-3.11 society memories of postwar Japan, here implied through the Komadori, became particularly significant due to the resemblance of the 'landscape of only debris' that the Tohoku region had become and the flattened and fire-bombed cities of Nagasaki, Hiroshima and Tokyo at the end of the war, and Ninagawa himself drew this connection in the production's programme.[90] He therefore found a way to link the destruction and trauma between the two events using the figures of the Komadori sisters. To the audience that were still living through the after-effects of 3.11, the Komadori, who have been described as 'survivors' and representatives of Japan's regeneration, had a special meaning: Ninagawa commented that 'in post-3.11 society, the Komadori give honour to life and express the importance of vitality'.[91] The similarity between the two periods and experiences allowed Ninagawa to use visual reminders of the postwar generation to also represent the current, post 3.11 society. He therefore tied the production's imagery and meanings into Japan's social history, representing the 'lived experiences' of both the postwar and now post-3.11 generations.

Thouny suggested that the present 'in postwar Japan is always defined in rupture from a traumatic past', but the events of 3.11 have 'combined both temporalities, bringing the hidden ground of postwar Japanese society to the surface and revealing its unresolved tensions and contradictions'.[92] In this sense, the Komadori's inclusion spoke powerfully to the post-3.11 atmosphere in Japan, and likewise supports Takashi Mikuriya's theory of a 'new period' in Japanese society, that of the post-catastrophe.[93] The audience response to their appearance was very strong, with Matsui Kesako for example writing that when she saw them for the first time, 'the agitation of my young days came back to life and my whole body

[90] Saitama, *Hamlet* (programme).
[91] Ibid.
[92] Thouny, p. 6.
[93] Quoted by Geilhorn and Iwata-Weickgenannt, p. 3.

became numb with an insuppressible flood of tears'.[94] Another critic wrote that since the singers 'continued to live and sing in a tough situation' they contrast with Hamlet who dies at the end of the play: 'to put it simply, I think it's a contrast between 'to be or not to be', and taking the significance of a contemporary youth playing Hamlet in mind, then 'to be' (= Komadori) and 'not to be' (= Hamlet)'.[95] These responses validated Ninagawa's belief that the singers could be used to 'return the urgency to now', and that furthermore as symbols of the postwar period they could 'hold an important meaning for modern Japan'.[96] Kimata further suggested that at the end of the play the audience is aware that just as 'a new time has arrived in the world of *Hamlet*', Japan is also entering a new period, a view which is reminiscent of Thouny's theory that following 3.11 there is 'no going back, no return to the idealised past of postwar Japan, only an ongoing state of survival in a global world defined by risk and fear'.[97]

The inclusion of the two singers was highly experimental, laying bare the mechanics of theatre and the process of a Japanese company performing a translated text. In this way, it also actively revealed the hybridity that was at work in the production. Describing the Komadori as exemplifying the 'actual history of the common people' in the postwar era, Ninagawa argued that Japan's theatre, 'based on what we have earned from European drama', would probably 'be frozen over in an instant' in the face of this reality.[98] This statement reveals Ninagawa's fear that if western drama is not sufficiently tied to the lives and experiences of the audience, and if no relevance is found within the text, the fictional world created on the stage could be instantly swept away by any reminder of the outside world.

[94] Matsui Kesako, 'Theatre which Made my Whole Body Numb' (*Gotai ga shibireta burai*), in *Ninagawa: The Director who Kept Fighting*, ed. by Kawade, pp. 137-39 (p. 138).
[95] (n.a.), *I Went to See 'Hamlet'* (*Hamuretto o mi ni itta*) (2012) <http://blog.livedoor.jp/damedame226/archives/51775760.html> [accessed 10 June 2017].
[96] Saitama, *Hamlet* (programme).
[97] Kimata, *Saitama Next*; Thouny, p. 12.
[98] Senda, *Artist Interview: Ninagawa*.

However, the inclusion of the singers arguably served to connect the play more effectively to the real lives of the audience, despite revealing the construct of this 'Japanese *Hamlet*'. As with the *hikinuki* in *Richard II*, which similarly revealed and discarded the pretence, the form of hybridity adopted by Ninagawa here helped to create a powerful, contemporary, and meaningful insight into the play.

[Image redacted]

Fig. 9 – *Hamlet* Poster (2012)

The participation of the Komadori was emphasised over that of the Next actors in the production's promotional material [Fig. 9], and this has suggestive reflections to many of the critical responses the production received, which often returned to the 'pale' and superflat discourse. This echoes with the effect created by the collaboration between the young and old in *Richard II* and the contrasting responses to them, discussed in the following chapter. For now, it is important to note that reviewers relied on a discourse of 'overcoming' or 'overwhelming', with the Komadori's experience ('their skill has been forged over long

years') compared with the nameless and pale young actors. [99] Even in the poster, the Komadori are presented more vibrantly and with more expression than the black and white, expressionless photographs of the young actors. Yamaguchi wrote that the 'audience was struck dumb' by the appearance of the Komadori, whose 'life-force' and 'lived-in feel overwhelmed the 'pale' young people'.[100] Takashi Yutaka further described the production as 'pitting young actors against the 'ordinary citizens' of Japan', and Kimata wrote that the production embodied Hamlet's saying that the purpose of playing is 'to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature' (3.3.22) with 'the pale boys and girls' as the mirror of 2012, and the Komadori sisters as the 'mirror of postwar Japan'.[101] Kimata also referred to Next as 'the little people of 2012 who stood up to this great story of *Hamlet*', but she concludes that ultimately both 'the young people and the Komadori give out a universality that exceeds generations'.[102]

Ninagawa's aim with using the older actors in Saitama Gold was to present them as their actual age ('actors that in the audience's gaze can only be 'old''), and in a similar way in *Hamlet* the young actors were undeniably presented as their real age.[103] While some actors wore ageing makeup (Polonius, the Ghost), on a whole the audience was encouraged to see the 'reality' of the actors' bodies, enhanced by the closeness of the stage and seats, grounding the production in the present moment and connecting it to the discourse of junkness by underlying their performance of older characters as just that, a pretence. For example, although in the Mousetrap scene the Player had a long grey beard and make-up, he was also shirtless and so it was impossible to ignore that his was the body of a young man. Another

[99] Sakakiba Kazuko, *Saitama Next Theatre '2012: Hamlet According to the Pale Boys and Girls' Review and Interview* (*Saitama nekusuto shiata 2012 souhaku no shonen shojotachi ni yoru Hamuretto rebu to intabu*) (2012) <http://kangekiyoho.blog.jp/archives/51774512.html> [accessed 25 October 2017]; Kimata, *Saitama*.
[100] Yamaguchi, *The Work of Ninagawa*, p. 43.
[101] Takahashi Yutaka, 'Captivating Ninagawa Shakespeare, *Richard II*' (*Miwakutekina Ninagawa Sheikusupia geki richado nisei*), *Higeki-kigeki*, 780.5 (2016), 38-42 (39); Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, p. 297; Kimata, *Saitama Next*.
[102] Kimata, *Saitama Next*.
[103] Saitama Arts Theatre, *Saitama Gold Theatre: Pro/cess 2017* (programme), (Saitama: Saitama Arts Foundation, 2017).

example of this rupture was Gertrude, who appeared to be very close in age to Hamlet. While the appearance of the Komadori sisters, who represented the physical reality of the actually-old mitigated this a little, there was a risk of creating an overall impression that this was a tragedy which impacted only the young generation. This risked dividing the effectiveness of the production by implying that the old were unaffected, a suggestion also encouraged by the synopsis that described it as the tragedy of 'Hamlet, Laertes, Fortinbras and Ophelia'.[104] An example of this emphasis in the performance was when Hamlet and Ophelia, trying to reach each other as the court exited following the play-within-the-play, were intercepted by Polonius and Horatio, thereby suggesting the repression and interference in the lives of the young by the older generation. At risk was the production's ability to speak to the wider audience, especially given that it was intended as a response to a nationwide disaster and also to represent the postwar generation's experience. By making it a 'young people's tragedy', it could be argued that the production implied that the only people who suffered in both situations were the young. However, it is undeniable that in many ways the Komadori's involvement altered this by tying the production closely to the postwar experience and further by physically representing the older generation onstage in the midst of, and as an interruption of, the young people's performance.

Despite this, and despite the connections he found with postwar society, Ninagawa used the junk bodies of the young to reflect on the contemporary young generation. Following the post-disaster debates on Japanese society which 'predicted that younger Japanese would become more public spirited', and that the events would be the 'grease beneath the skids of economic change, technological innovation and political transformation; it was a turning point, a hinge, a rebirth; Japan would have its new deal, its escape from malaise, its renewal',

[104] Saitama, *Hamlet* (programme).

Ninagawa's depiction of a tragedy of the younger generation who are destroyed by the events around them is surely revealing and subversive.[105] The faces of the young actors on the poster are interspersed with skulls, perhaps suggesting their lack of desire and hope in the post-Fukushima environment. Poulton has suggested that the keyword for the events of Fukushima is 'hubris', since the disaster stands as a 'symbol of energy source that has turned into its antithesis, an insistent reminder of the failure of political institutions and the hubris of human technology in the face of nature's terrible power', and this hubris is arguably also visible in the political coup of Claudius, and Fortinbras's mindlessly violent take-over of Elsinore.[106]

Ninagawa also used casting decisions and costumes to suggest the 'paleness' of the young, with for example the anonymity of the courtiers and perhaps the corresponding anonymity expected from the young actors, emphasised by each wearing the same outfit: long red cloaks and veils which completely obscured both their faces and gender. The average age of the company at the time was twenty-six, with seventeen men and thirteen women, leading one writer to ask, 'what kind of chemical reaction will these young people, who live in 2012, create in this, Ninagawa's seventh *Hamlet*?'.[107] As with Uchida's later performance of Fortinbras, there was a strong sense of the grass-eaters or a crisis among the young, and a lack of desire, suggested by Ninagawa's comment that 'these young people mutter quietly, particularly those who don't want to live, or have no purpose', reflected in Hamlet's 'you cannot take from me anything that I will not more willingly part withal. Except my life, except my life, except my life' (2.2.210-11).[108] Kimata suggested that Kawaguchi's Hamlet had 'a totally contemporary air', meaning that it did not 'feel like he was saying lines from a

[105] Samuels, p. xii.
[106] Poulton, 'Antigone', p. 141.
[107] Saitama, *Hamlet* (programme).
[108] Ninagawa, 'Ninagawa: Director's Monologue', p. 7; Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, p. 253.

classical play and Hamlet's agony therefore became familiar for us', and thereby also connecting his performance closely to the image of the contemporary young.[109]

One of the rare negative reviews of the production suggested that since only people over the age of fifty are familiar with the Komadori (and the author admits this was the first time they had heard of them) their inclusion was unsatisfying and left the question whether or not 'this was good theatre. Especially if it's a message for young people'.[110] They argued that although they understand Ninagawa was using this tactic to create 'contemporary meaning' since the story of *Hamlet* is 'too far from the present age', they concluded that the meaning of the production was ultimately 'not very deep'.[111] While this was the only negative response I found to the Komadori's involvement, it is very revealing that some younger audience members potentially found it alienating and it also directly contrasts with Kimata's claim that the Komadori 'perfectly speak the thoughts and spirit of the Japanese people'.[112] The nationalism inherent in Kimata's comment is reminiscent of Christine Yano's criticism of the *enka* genre, which she describes as 'one dimension of Japan's national self-image, and like all such images, it glosses over, even masks, certain parts of that national self in order to shape a homogenous whole'.[113] That not all of the audience found the Komadori 'speaking their thoughts' further reflects Yano's argument that contemporary young Japanese people 'dismiss *enka* as an anachronism whose place within present-day Japanese society is peripheral, not central. They prefer to project an image of a Japan that looks forward rather than backward'.[114] She adds that, 'these opposing viewpoints, structured in part along generational lines, form the very core of the competing and highly polarised internal debates about

[109] Kimata, *Saitama Next*.
[110] (n.a), *I Went to See 'Hamlet'*.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Kimata, *Saitama Next*.
[113] Yano, p. 4.
[114] Ibid., p. 8.

modernity, internationalisation and 'Japan' itself that are characteristic of contemporary Japan'.[115]

Yano's comments on the place and imagining of *enka* within Japanese society are revealing of the potential generational fault-lines Ninagawa created by including vivid reminders of the postwar generation in a production by 'today's' young people. There is a risk that by having the Komadori, wearing kimonos and singing *enka*, stage an intervention in *Hamlet* Ninagawa could have encouraged the kind of nationalism Kimata's quote suggests; indeed Ninagawa himself made a similar comment when he said, 'I wonder if our theatre of borrowed translation drama can compete with the [Komadori] who sing the people's souls'.[116] Yano, amongst others, has described the dangers of presenting 'Japanese' and 'western' elements as having 'fundamental oil-and-water differences, unresolved and unresolvable'.[117] However, I would argue that rather than encouraging these separations, Ninagawa found a way of undermining the 'cultural hierarchies' between the Japanese and western, thereby avoiding the 'culturalism' implied by *enka* which 'ignores Japan's present internationally embedded condition as well as its past experiences of permeable boundaries'.[118] Rather than a monoculturalism that elevated the so-called Japanese culture over that of the imported text, Ninagawa found a way of representing the hybridity of contemporary Japan where there are 'multilinear paths to coexisting, often competing, modernities'.[119]

Gennifer Weisenfeld writes that the period following a large-scale disaster is often one of introspection and re-thinking of the state of the nation.[120] *Hamlet* fulfilled this role perfectly by creating a space where both the past and the present could powerfully intersect,

[115] Ibid.
[116] Quoted by Kimata, *Saitama Next*.
[117] Yano, pp. 13-14.
[118] Ibid., pp. 13, 22.
[119] Ibid., p. 14.
[120] Weisenfeld, p. 12.

encouraging the audience to re-evaluate their own thoughts. This is in line with Bhabha's statement that 'remembering is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection. It is a painful remembering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make some sense of the trauma of the present'.[121] Using the so-called 'anonymous' bodies of the young actors alongside those of the seventy-four year old Komadori sisters, thus viscerally reminding the audience of the past, the production cleverly employed the style of hybridity that Ninagawa had spent decades building. This was not localisation for any superficial surface effect but a performance that, as Yamaguchi suggested, brought a western classical text into 'violent collision' with Japan's 'emotional layers of history', thereby allowing Ninagawa to question 'the meaning of playing *Hamlet* in Japan, and the meaning of going to the theatre'.[122] The importance of bringing in these collisions into the text, in a society 'where the events of yesterday, today and tomorrow rush at torrential speed, [where] many people only instantaneously consume or, dimly perceive, the colourful stimuli and readily dismiss its depths, details and effects', and the shock of the clash between the Komadori and *Hamlet*, and the past and present, served as a tactic to 'reawaken' the audience's 'dimmed senses mired in chaos of post-Fukushima society'.[123] It crucially also questioned the position of Shakespeare in contemporary Japan, following the disaster, and as Matsui wrote out of Ninagawa's productions in his later years, *Hamlet* gave her 'the biggest shock', because in her view it represented Ninagawa 'demolishing' his own work in front of the audiences' eyes.[124]

[121] Homi K. Bhabha, *Interrogating Identity: Frantz Fanon and the Postcolonial Prerogative* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 63.
[122] Yamaguchi, *The Work of Ninagawa*, p. 43.
[123] Iwaki, 'The Politics of the Senses', pp. 203, 218.
[124] Matsui, p. 138.

**Saitama Gold Theatre**

Saitama Gold Theatre is an old-age theatre company established by Ninagawa in 2006, the same year that he became artistic director of Saitama Arts Theatre. People over the age of fifty-five with little to no acting experience were invited to audition for the company, and out of 1200 applicants, forty-eight members were selected. When the company was first set up, the company members' ages ran from fifty-five to eighty, and in December 2016, there were thirty-eight members aged sixty-six to ninety.[125] The oldest member of Gold, Shigemoto Etsuko (ninety-one), has spoken about her shock at there being no upper age limit for the company during the auditions, and the average age of the company in 2017 was seventy-eight.[126] Saitama Gold offer a fascinating parallel with Saitama Next due to the opposing dialogues of the two-dimensional youth and the experienced, multi-layered postwar generation. Furthermore, similar to the anxieties over the young who have been viewed as responsible for many of the problems in Japanese society, the older generation are equally the focus of a sense of crisis: that of the ageing population, and thus the performances by Gold are a site for debate and investigation of the issues that come with the ageing society.[127]

The ageing population in Japan is a well-documented issue, with twenty five per cent of the population aged sixty-five or over.[128] Japan has been referred to as a 'super' or 'hyper-ageing society', with Oshita Yoshiyuki for example writing that since it is estimated that in 2060 one in every 2.5 people will be aged sixty-five or over, Japan is experiencing a 'hyper-

[125] Saitama Arts Theatre, *The 10,000 Gold Theatre 2016: Gold Symphony – My Dream, Your Dream* (programme), (Saitama: Saitama Arts Foundation, 2016).
[126] Shigemoto Etsuko, *Eighty-Six: My Theatre Life* (*Hachijyuu roku sai watashi no engeki jinsei*) (Tokyo: Ronso, 2013), p. 164.
[127] Saladin, 57.
[128] Nick Ponsillo, *Active Ageing* (2015) <http://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/magazine/285/article/active-ageing> [accessed 18 May 2016].

ageing society on a scale as yet experienced' by no other country.[129] By establishing a theatre company specifically for older actors, Saitama Arts Theatre's Executive Producer Watanabe Hiroshi described Ninagawa as staging a 'defiant endeavour in contemporary society as it plunges forward into extreme ageing'.[130] Gold have therefore acted as a focus point for experimenting with how theatre can respond to the situation, although Watanabe has also stressed that although they reflect the ageing population this was not the sole reason for their creation, and was more an accident of timing. He said that Ninagawa 'wanted to do it for the sake of art', and that he had been inspired after seeing an old age company in Poland and had come up with the idea of 'Hamlet and Ophelia as old people, like his mother and father'.[131] Ninagawa himself said that, having thought about producing a *Hamlet* that his parents would have been able to understand and relate to, he 'started to think about doing *Hamlet* with only old people'.[132] There are very few other companies active in Japan addressing the ageing society, or offering careers to older actors, with Ninagawa complaining that typically those over the age of sixty are only given supporting roles.[133]

In setting up Gold, Ninagawa was aiming to create a new kind of theatre, one based on 'the personal histories' of the older generation.[134] Announcing the creation of the company, he said that at Saitama he wanted to provide a 'place where those who have reached old age, using their personal histories as a base to express themselves, can meet a new 'self''.[135] Close to his fear that the sudden appearance of the Komadori in a translated play would 'blow away' the rest of the performance, Ninagawa expressed a similar fear about the reaction the older

[129] Oshita Yoshiyuki, 'The Potential for Arts and Culture in a Hyper-Aging Society – Japan's Case', *Arts and Older People – On the Frontline*, 1 (2017), 5-10 (7).
[130] Watanabe Hiroshi, 'A Future Where Old People Shine', *Arts and Older People – On the Frontline*, 1 (2017), 3-4 (3).
[131] Watanabe Hiroshi, World Gold Theatre Kick-Off (roundtable), (Saitama: 21 September 2017).
[132] Ibid.
[133] Hashida, Suga and Kowase, p. 215.
[134] Senda, *Artist Interview: Ninagawa*.
[135] Saitama, *The 10,000 Gold Theatre* (programme).

generations might have towards his work, stating that since his early career he had worried 'what the people of the older generation who don't express their opinions and have lived normal lives would think if they saw my plays. Would [they] be meaningful in light of the personal histories they have lived?'.[136] He later suggested that by working with older actors there was a chance their theatre 'could shoot to the heart of what I have been doing until now', thereby implying the two aims of the company: to create a place for older actors to be able to express themselves, and to test the boundaries of theatre.[137]

Ninagawa suggested that by 'harnessing the energy of people with a lot of life experience, I thought we could create experimental works that push the boundaries of what a performance could be'.[138] One of the spaces where the experimental nature of Gold emerges is in the company's acknowledgement of the age of the actors and the issues that come with it, bringing in the 'reality' of the older actors which includes 'forgetfulness, difficulties in physical movement, inability to deliver lines smoothly', which would allow a 'different kind of reality from the theatrical type I normally create' to emerge.[139] Unlike other actors who worked with Ninagawa, who were usually expected to know their lines before rehearsals began, with Gold 'one problem after another appeared when rehearsals started. They couldn't remember the lines or movements. Even if they could learn it they forgot it'.[140] Ninagawa argued that while the actors forgetting their lines mid-performance should 'bring the play to a standstill', it also 'demonstrates a new way of theatre by revealing old age', and so prompters were placed around the stage in full view of the audience, a role also fulfilled by Ninagawa

[136] Senda, *Artist Interview: Ninagawa*.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Saitama, *About Us*.
[139] Senda, *Artist Interview*.
[140] Yamaguchi Hiroko, 'The Remarkable *Richard II* from the Final Years of a Radical Career' (*Kageki ni kakemuketa shougai saibannen ni hitokiwa kagayaku richado nisei*), *Arts Theatre Press*, 65 (2016), 6-7 (6).

himself during his lifetime.[141] As a result, Ninagawa argued that with Gold the aim was not to work 'toward artistic completion', but instead to show the entire process 'as theatre, including all if these aspects of age', arranging their performances around the issues that might arise ('create our plays in a way that embraces all the qualities of the lives of the aged'), rather than denying them.[142] As a result, he suggested, 'the performers have their own remarkable acting style that differs from that of professional actors and produces many poignant moments', and this has certainly been borne out in the high critical praise and international success the company have received.[143]

As the majority of the company had little to no experience in acting, their first year was spent training with various experts at Saitama, taking classes five days a week in voice training, contemporary dance, *nihon būyo* (traditional Japanese dance) and movement, for example. They had debut 'training' performances in 2006 with *Pro-cess* and *Pro-cess2: Ravens, We Shall Load Bullets*. Their official debut was *Picnic on Board* (2007), written for the company by Iwamatsu Ryō, set on a cruise ship heading to an unknown location, which was perhaps death. The social themes, mysticism and experimentation of *Picnic* have been present in all of their subsequent performances. In contrast to Next who perform the classics, Gold perform 'the future and the unknown world', and their new plays have included *Holy Place* (2010, by Matsui Shū) and *Route 99* (2011, by Iwamatsu Ryō).[144] They also revived Shimizu Kunio's 1971 play *Ravens, We Shall Load Bullets* (*Karasuyo, oretachi ha tama o komeru*, 2006), which they have performed numerous times since (2013, 2014, 2017) and

[141] Ninagawa, *The Power of Theatre*, p. 114; Ninagawa, 'Ninagawa: Director's Monologue', p. 6.
[142] Senda, *Artist Interview*.
[143] Saitama, *About Us*.
[144] Tokunaga Kyōko, *Our Light – Saitama Gold Theatre, the Challenge for Ninagawa Yukio and Forty-One Elderly Actors* (*Warera ni hikari wo – Saitama gorudo shiata Ninagawa Yukio to koureisha haiyu yonjyuichinin no chousen*) (Tokyo: Kawade, 2013), p. 16.

which has arguably become Gold's 'representative' production.[145] Ninagawa and Shimizu had worked together during the early period of Ninagawa's career, and *Ravens* was first staged in 1971. The story of *Ravens* follows what happens when a group of old women invade a courtroom and hold the inhabitants hostage after two student activists are put on trial for throwing explosives.[146] The original performance cast young actors in the roles of the old women, but when it was revived by Gold the actually-old performed these roles, a move which Takashi Yutaka described as bringing 'tears to the eyes'.[147] It has likewise been suggested that the production acts as a 'revolt towards contemporary society which won't let the old use their potential', and Ninagawa also wrote that for him their initial 2006 production was a 'real experience of exploring these people's acting power'.[148]

Gold arguably exist in a form of 'hyphenated' space, in the intersection between the real world and performance, as Tokunaga suggests when she says that, 'neither pros nor amateurs, in the middle of the fiction, their role and their actual life pile up' and create different layers and meanings.[149] They have also been described, for example, as being 'carved with wrinkles, with unmistakable awkward movements', or as representing 'a side of the old I hadn't seen before'.[150] The physicality of Gold has been as important as that of the members of Next, and equally acts as a site where various meanings converge. Their performance style has been described as 'whole body theatre', and having incorporated the act of ageing itself as an essential part of their technique they have 'sublimated the experiences of

[145] Yamaguchi, *The Work of Ninagawa*, p. 115.
[146] William Andrews, '*Ravens, We Shall Load Bullets'* (2014) <https://tokyostages.wordpress.com/2014/11/22/ravens-we-shall-load-bullets-yukio-ninagawa/amp/> [accessed 2 August 2017].
[147] Takahashi Yutaka, 'Ninagawa Yukio: From 1960s Theatre Artist to Global Star', trans. by William Andrews, *Theatre Yearbook 2017: Theatre in Japan* (Tokyo: International Theatre Institute, 2017), pp. 160-70 (p. 169).
[148] Hashida, Suga and Kowase, p. 89; Saitama Arts Theatre, *Ravens, We Shall Load Bullets* (programme), (Saitama: Saitama Arts Foundation, 2014).
[149] Tokunaga, *Our Light*, p. 5.
[150] Ibid., p. 4.

'old age' into 'theatre'', creating a 'different form of expression'.[151] Another crucial element of their style is their 'personal history', which has been suggested incorporates their knowledge of the 'landscape before rapid economic growth' and the difficulties of the postwar period.[152] They have been taken as embodiments of the postwar experience, characterised as a period of hardship and trauma, and the social and economic reconstruction of Japan following the American Occupation (1945-1952). Igarashi Yoshikuni has argued that the postwar narrative of reconstruction led to the 'absent presence of the country's war memories', but that although 'body parts were metaphorically sutured together to regain the nation's organic unity and to overcome its trauma; yet the suture left on the discursive body's surface served as a constant reminder of the trauma'.[153] Putting these bodies, and the implied history that goes with them, on to the stage reverses the trend of forgetting, and brings the experiences of that generation back into sight.

There are revealing differences between the discussions on the physical presence of Gold and those of Next, with Yamaguchi for example writing that in contrast to the 'rough appearance and substance' of Gold, the 'young people's expressions and desires are soft'.[154] These differences perhaps correspond to what Miyazawa Akio has described as the 'various kinds of bodies of 'here and now'', with onstage the ''now-ness' of the body is inevitably deformed, but the more visceral 'now-ness' of the body, with some blood-stained scars, should be much closer to us', conveying the sense that the older generation, who have 'accumulated time', are 'closer' to the audience than the so-called two-dimensional youth.[155] Due to the importance of their physicality, Gold also overturn the sense that in 'modern realist

[151] Uchida Youichi, 'To Connect the Memories of Theatre People' (*Engekihito no kioku o tsunagutameni*), *Higeki-kigeki*, 785.3 (2017), 19-21 (19); *The 10,000 Gold Theatre* (programme).
[152] *10,000 Gold Theatre* (programme).
[153] Igarashi, pp. 3, 14.
[154] Yamaguchi, *The Work of Ninagawa*, p. 121.
[155] Miyazawa Akio (2002, n.p.), quoted by Uchino, p. 168; Saitama, *Richard II* (programme).

theatre (which is still the dominant mode of theatre production in Japan), actors' bodies are primarily expected to serve as conveyers of meanings of a written text, and therefore the body's materiality is marginalised'.[156] Uchino has likewise written about the 'rupture' between 'language and the body', which is the,

> physical reality each performer brings to the performance. The performers try to speak their lines 'naturally', not according to modern realist theatrical convention but according to their own physical realities, i.e. according to their 'lived body' sensibilities, the body sensibilities that each performer experiences in everyday life.[157]

With the intrusions of the bodies of Gold into performance, this rupture is undeniably present, but its effect is the opposite to that of junk 'flatness', which Carol Martin describes as the 'dissolution of layers of experience'.[158] However, it is worth considering Gold's performance in light of the suggestion that this rupture creates the sense that 'time folds in on itself as the characters morph and shift from one reality and even one body to another', as both the past and the present, character and autobiography, intersect in the bodies of the senior actors.[159] In a revealing comment from Ninagawa, he said that since,

> Japanese old people's expressions are unfortunately fixed like that of the Okina mask [the mask used for old men] in Noh, I think that by each one skilfully using their individual history, they make their own individual mask in their own image. Although it's the Okina mask, its expression gradually starts to move, and it becomes human-

[156] Anan, *Contemporary Japanese Women's Theatre*, p. 101.
[157] Uchino Tadashi, 'Globality's Children: The 'Child's' Body as a Strategy of Flatness in Performance', *Drama Review*, 50.1 (2006), 57-66 (64).
[158] Martin, 51.
[159]Varney, p. 119.

like. If we consider the Okina masks that have come to life in this way, can't they create theatre different to anything done in Japan before?[160]

In addition to the potential for experimentation created by the company, they are also notable in that they are a crucial site for considering the role the arts can play in an ageing society. When questioned whether he thought that, since the company are part of a public theatre, they should aim to 'create social meaning' in their work, Ninagawa answered that he did not establish the company with that idea particularly in mind, but that once the project started he realised that 'if you're going to make theatre with the old, you have to tie it directly to society', adding that 'old peoples' problems are society's problems'.[161] Oshita has called Gold 'one of the most visionary examples of the exploration of these possibilities', and Saitama Arts Theatre itself describes them as a 'globally unique troupe'.[162] Given the time and resources it has taken to grow the company into the position they are in now, it is understandable that they are one of the rare cases in Japan, and one which was possible due to the vision of Ninagawa and the stability offered by a public theatre. Ninagawa was very clear that he did not view the company as an amateur group, arguing that his aim was not to 'create a theatrical sideshow with amateurs', and this intent is perhaps borne out in the international tours the company have undertaken since their start: to Hong Kong and Paris with *Ravens* (2013), and Romania with *Richard II* in collaboration with Saitama Next.[163] Similarly, Nick Ponsillo, who visited the company at the rehearsals (2015), wrote that their 'integrity and constant search for the highest artistic standards as individuals and a company was an inspiration' which 'left many of us speechless'.[164]

[160] Ninagawa, *The Power of Theatre*, p. 136.
[161] Tokunaga, *Our Light*, p. 15.
[162] Oshita, 8; Saitama, *About Us*.
[163] Senda, *Artist Interview.*
[164] Ponsillo.

The amateur/professional discourse is particularly interesting when compared to critical studies on performance and the older generation, which in the west has been dominated by discussions of amateur and not-for-profit ventures. For example, in *The Routledge Handbook of Cultural Gerontology*, Miriam Bernard and Lucy Munro focus largely on community-based examples, although they acknowledge that the 'role that older people play in making theatre – in both profit and non-profit contexts – is poorly understood or researched'.[165] Similarly, working from Anne Basting's examination of senior theatre groups on the American database 'Senior Theatre Resource Centre', Bernard and Munro note that by 2011 there were over 800 senior theatre groups on the database, although the majority were amateur companies.[166] Notable examples of senior theatre work in Britain includes the Curtain Up Players, a company for those over the age of fifty based at the Lawrence Batley Theatre in Huddersfield, who work to support 'people to live well with serious illness and isolation', Visible Theatre (London), the Meet Me at the Albany project run by the Albany Theatre, and Entelechy Arts.[167] Although the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art has an 'Elders Company' which is open to those over sixty and annually stages a production at one of RADA's theatres, the company is self-described as being 'not for professional actors. It is a community initiative designed for people who are interested in developing drama skills in their retirement', and auditions are held annually.[168] In Japan too, there has been an 'increasing demand for community theatre', which has been attributed to Ninagawa's work with Next and Gold, leading to more public theatres across Japan creating 'significantly more

[165] Miriam Bernard and Lucy Munro, 'Theatre and Ageing', in *The Routledge Handbook of Cultural Gerontology*, ed. by Julia Twigg and Wendy Martin (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 61-68 (p. 61).
[166] Bernard and Munro, p. 63.
[167] Ron Wiener, 'Acting Against Ageing: the Theatre Group Helping Older People Stay Creative', *Guardian*, (29 July 2014) <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/jul/29/acting-ageing-theatre-group-older-people> [accessed 15 November 2017].
[168] Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, *Elders Company and Masterclasses* (n.d.) <https://www.rada.ac.uk/schools-outreach-access/elders-company-and-masterlcasses> [accessed 14 November 2017].

community productions and workshops aimed at local residents'.[169] What is clear from these examples is that Saitama Gold presents a unique opportunity for experimenting with a trained and established senior company, which has allowed them to set 'their destination as the world'.[170]

Having stated that 'the ageing society is an urgent issue throughout the world, not just in Japan', Saitama Gold have began to establish relationships with others working in the same area, leading to the 2017 *World Gold Theatre Festival Kick-Off!*, a series of seminars and discussions which invited Entelechy Arts, the Albany Theatre, Sadler's Wells and the Company of Elders to speak at Saitama Arts Theatre. This initiative comes from Saitama Art Theatre's belief in the

> necessity for a place, an outlet, where older people could shrine through artistic expression. And now that Japan has reached a state of hyper-ageing, we have come to think that our mission as a public theatre is to carry on Mr. Ninagawa's legacy and expand and develop further the fruits of our theatrical endeavour over the past ten years.[171]

It is this belief which led to the production of *The 10,000 Gold Theatre: Gold Symphony – My Dream, Your Dream* at the Saitama Super Arena in December 2016, seven months after Ninagawa's death, and which has also led to the connection of the project to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. This production was staged partly in relation to the Cultural Olympiad, as part of the Olympics, and has been posited as an example of one of the legacies the Olympics could have in Japan.

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[169] Tanaka Nobuko, 'Dramatist Brings Citizens of All Ages Together', *Japan Times*, (2 May 2015) <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2015/05/02/stage/dramatist-brings-citizens-ages-together/#.WvKqA6SFPIU> [accessed 10 June 2017].
[170] Yamaguchi, 'The Remarkable *Richard II*', 6.
[171] Watanabe, 'A Future Where', 3.

Inspired by the Cultural Olympiad at the 2012 London Olympics, Japan is intending to stage its own, but as Oshita has implied the Cultural Olympiad will need to think about the 'concept of 'legacy''; he adds that the legacy of the 2012 London Games was a change in attitudes towards 'the disabled and their artistic expression'.[172] He goes on to write that the 'legacy' from the 2020 Tokyo Games will have to be different to London's in order to be 'recognised by the world', and so,

> we should [...] pursue a legacy unique to Japan by actively pioneering a cultural programme that addresses new and different social issues. Against this background, and with Japan's position as the world's foremost hyper-ageing society in mind, I personally believe that we should welcome artistic and cultural initiatives that confront the hyper-ageing society […] we should position 'Creative Ageing' as the legacy of the cultural programme of the 2020 Olympics.[173]

If, as Oshita suggests, 'creative ageing' should be a legacy of the 2020 Olympics then Saitama Gold will have a crucial role to play both in inspiring and leading this movement, and could be seen as a key part of Ninagawa's own legacy. Gold are therefore a company that are inherently tied to the needs of both the local and national communities, and which actively respond through performance to the changing needs of contemporary society. Following Ninagawa's death, the company have continued to create new productions, performing in *The 10,000 Gold Theatre* in 2016, *Pro/cess 2017*, *Ravens, We Shall Load Bullets*, *Waiting: 2017* and *The Mass of Pale Pink* in 2017, and *Wareware no mororo* in 2018.

Ninagawa once stated that if he staged 'Shakespeare just by old people', he would be able to 'get to the truth. I have a feeling that Gold can do it, maybe it's a premonition':

[172] Oshita, 8.
[173] Ibid., 9.

although the company did not perform a solo-production of Shakespeare during Ninagawa's lifetime, they collaborated with Saitama Next on the 2015 *Richard II*, and then created the post-Ninagawa adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*, *The 10,000 Gold Theatre*.[174] The interplay between the old and the young generations have been vital in these productions, and it has also provided a space to create 'intergenerational connections' which members of Gold have felt like 'they are losing' in contemporary society.[175] Following on from the foundations Ninagawa set down, Saitama has continued to experiment and push the boundaries of performance through the company, leading to the monumental adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* it staged in 2016.

**Saitama Gold Theatre Case Study: *The 10,000 Gold Theatre 2016***

*The 10,000 Gold Theatre 2016: Gold Symphony - My Dream, Your Dream* was a one-off event held at the Saitama Super Arena, performed by a cast of over 1600 professional and amateur actors, with the collaboration of Next, NINAGAWA STUDIO, members of the production's director Nozoe Seiji's company (Haegiwa) and others. The majority of the cast were over the age of sixty and were drawn from across Japan, with the older participants aged from sixty to ninety-one, and the production itself was focused on the 'dreams of the older generation'.[176] It was performed to an audience of thousands, although it is safe to assume that such a large crowd was drawn for different reasons: Ninagawa's fame, the production itself, the scale and novelty of the event, and those who had come to see their relatives and friends perform. *The 10,000* was written and directed by Nozoe Seiji, based on Matsuoka's translation of *Romeo and Juliet*, and the initiative to stage it came from a project that was in

[174] Hasebe Hiroshi, *Ninagawa's Time* (*Enshutsuka Ninagawa Yukio no jidai*) (Tokyo: Iwanami, 2017), p. 227.
[175] Miriam Bernard, 'Arts for Ageing Society: Japan Study Tour, April 11-18th 2015', *Generations Review*, 25.3 (2015), 15-20 (18).
[176] *10,000 Gold Theatre* (programme).

planning before Ninagawa died. Arts promoter Kato Taneo first suggested the idea of a 'new Gold Theatre' to Ninagawa after seeing Saitama Next's *Hamlet* and being struck by the Komadori singing '*Shiawase ni naritai*', saying that 'out of the blue, midway through *Hamlet*, veteran *enka* singers the Komadori Sisters appeared' and that in a 'flash of inspiration', he realised that 'just as the young Hamlet wished to be happy, the elderly do, too. So I thought we should create more opportunities for seniors'.[177]

Ninagawa had taken this idea and decided on a project to stage a large-scale production with older amateur actors. The unnamed project was initially suggested for the Saitama Triennial in 2016, but it became connected to the planning for the 2020 Olympics and the programme prominently listed the '2020 Cultural Olympiad' on its first page. Nozoe was chosen to take over the project partly because he had experience of performing special productions at nursing homes with the Setagaya Public Theatre ('SePT @ Home'), although there are obvious differences in creating work to be shown in a care home and working with thousands of older actors.[178] It was Nozoe who chose to base the event on *Romeo and Juliet*, citing the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death as one reason, and also the universality of the love theme to every age group.[179] Given that Ninagawa had never stated that the event would be based on Shakespeare, Nozoe's choice perhaps implies that the easiest way to perform 'Ninagawa-izm' in the 'post-Ninagawa' era is to use Shakespeare, and it says much about the connection between Ninagawa and Shakespeare in the popular imagination. The potential Olympics link is also suggestive of the way Shakespeare is being used by contemporary Japanese artists, particularly given Ninagawa's wish that the performance

[177] Tanaka Nobuko, 'A Golden Age of Theatre for Japan's Seniors, *Japan Times*, (24 November 2016) <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2016/11/24/stage/golden-age-theater-japans-seniors> [accessed 15 December 2016].
[178] Watanabe, World Gold Theatre Kick-Off.
[179] *10,000 Gold Theatre* (programme); Nozoe Seiji, World Gold Theatre Kick-Off (roundtable) (Saitama: 21 September 2017).

would be something 'no-one has ever seen before'.[180] It has yet to be confirmed what role, if any, the project will play in the Cultural Olympiad, as the administration have cited funding and the use of the Arena and other large venues for sports events as potential obstacles.[181]

Applicants were invited to participate in 'the biggest possible theatre group, sent from Saitama to the world', with evident overtones of the Olympic connection.[182] The only conditions for participation were that applicants were over sixty and could attend at least ten rehearsals from August to November: they were not required to have any prior acting experience, and to keep the project open to as many people as possible no requirement was made about their health condition. Applicants were asked to write about their dreams in the application form, and the advertising encouraged people to apply who 'want to try acting life, who want to try shouting about the things they've felt! To those over sixty who are so full of thoughts they could burst, please perform in this show'.[183] It also emphasised that life experience, not acting experience, was essential to the production: 'you are able to express yourself, you, who are full of experience'.[184] Consequently, this show took Ninagawa's desire to use the actors' life experiences to enrich their performances to an extreme level, reflecting the experiences of people who had been through 'one thousand ways of life' and who carried with them 'one thousand dreams'.[185] It also expanded on Ninagawa's message in regards to the original Gold company that 'if you say forty-one people who have reached old age, there are forty-one problems', using the scale of the production to reflect on wider issues among the

[180] *10,000 Gold Theatre* (programme).
[181] Watanabe, World Gold Theatre Kick-Off.
[182] Saitama Arts Theatre, *The 10,000 Gold Theatre* (flyer) (Saitama: Saitama Arts Foundation, 2016).
[183] Saitama Arts Theatre, *The 10,000 Gold Theatre* (press release), (Saitama: Saitama Arts Foundation, 2016).
[184] Ibid.
[185] Ibid.

older generation in Japan, as well as perhaps paradoxically implying the individuality of each member.[186]

Particularly because of the interplay between the young actors (Saitama Next and Haegiwa) and the old actors (both the professional members of Saitama Gold and the amateur ones), the project has many links to the earlier production of *Richard II*, but in its relationship to Shakespeare it was very different. Aside from *Kabuki Twelfth Night* (2005), which was based on an adapted script written by playwright Toyoshige Imai, and occasional small interventions into the text (Siward's 'what wood is this before us?' (5.4.4), becoming 'cherry blossom wood' in *NINAGAWA Macbeth*, and the pine tree in *Cymbeline*), Ninagawa never altered the Shakespearean text.[187] In contrast, Nozoe was freer in cutting lines and characters, and although the production was largely based on *Romeo and Juliet*, it was interspersed with scenes where the actors spoke about their lives and dreams. These scenes periodically interrupted the action of the play, beginning with an actor stating their name, where they were born, introducing their family or current life, and then introducing their dream. These lines were built up during the rehearsal period, based on the real lives and hopes of the actors in the outside world, but occasionally intersecting with scripted parts. Once this format had been established, Nozoe was able to adapt it to include a huge part of the cast, with one member of Next urging the enormous group onstage to finish the line 'My dream is', and them all answering at once.

Nozoe made numerous references to Ninagawa's style and previous productions, although he sometimes adhered to and other times notably diverted from his tactics: in Ōzasa Yoshio's review of the performance, however, he noted that it 'felt like' something by

[186] Saitama, *Ravens, We Shall Load Bullets* (programme).
[187] Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, p. 284.

Ninagawa.[188] As with Iwamatsu Ryō's newly written play for Gold in September 2017 (*The Mass of Pale Pink*), which he described as a 'homage' to Ninagawa (most notable in the final scene when cherry blossoms suddenly bloomed everywhere from out of the darkness at the back of the stage), those working with Ninagawa's companies and unfinished projects are left with the question of how to use his legacy.[189] Like Ninagawa, Nozoe used a framing device for the performance, stating that it was set in a 'huge establishment for older people', where the residents were 'serenely passing their days'.[190] This has intriguing links with other productions in Japan and Britain which have either focused on the problems of the elderly, or have been performed by senior actors. The most notable other example in Japan is Suzuki Tadashi's 1984 *The Tale of Lear*, an adaptation of *King Lear*. Suzuki's production was similarly framed by either a nursing home or a hospital 'in today's Japan', and began with an old man reading *King Lear*.[191] There are two comparable examples from Britain, namely Ben Power's *A Tender Thing* (2009), which re-arranged the text of *Romeo and Juliet* to focus on an older married couple, and *Juliet and Her Romeo* (2010), adapted by Tom Morris and Sean O'Connor for the Bristol Old Vic, set in a nursing home in Verona. Similarly, other productions have likewise taken a nursing home as a starting point to adapt Shakespeare for the elderly: the Abbey Theatre set *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2015) in one, and American documentary *Still Dreaming* (2014) was filmed at the Lillian Booth Actors Home for retired Broadway artists, and recorded the rehearsals by residents of the home for a performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

[188] Ōzasa Yoshio, '2016: What we Gained and What we Lost' (*2016 eta mono to ushinatta mono*), *Higeki-kigeki*, 785.3 (2017), 10-12 (12).
[189] Iwamatsu Ryō, 'Meeting the Destruction of Your Own Theatre' (*Jibun no engeki o kowasu mono to deau*), *Arts Theatre Press*, 70 (2017), 4-5 (4).
[190] *10,000 Gold Theatre* (programme).
[191] Kishi and Bradshaw, p. 88.

While Nozoe's idea followed Ninagawa's use of entry points, the size of the cast potentially made the institution concept ludicrous. I would argue that this setting undermined the narrative, discussed in more detail in the next chapter, that Ninagawa had built around the young and old supporting each other almost like a family: as within the institution setting the young explicitly became care staff, changing the dynamics of their interaction with the older actors. However, the scale could also be a joking reference to the scale of the ageing population, with the implication that in the future Japan will need homes which can hold over one thousand residents. Furthermore, the home idea does play interestingly with Ninagawa's comments that Gold is a professional company and not a 'care centre' for the elderly, and also with the idea of what role the arts can play in providing social care for the elderly (particularly notable given Nozoe's own experience at performing at nursing homes).[192] The production opened with the oldest of the amateur actors (Izumi Noguchi, ninety-one) entering alone and making his way to a table in the middle of the stage. Although this was a striking image it failed to sufficiently replicate Ninagawa's three-minute rule as a way of immediately drawing the audience in, as the majority of the audience seemed to be unaware that the production had started. This could arguably have been Nozoe's intention, however, as the rest of the actors slowly joined him on the stage from the banks of seats closest to the stage, meaning that the separation between the audience and the actors (who were largely also members of the 'general public') was very thin.[193] This served as a good method of reminding the audience that this was a community project intended to bring the lives of people from outside the theatre onto the stage. Since the ideas of 'reality' and biography have been so crucial to Gold's work, this could have been one way of tapping into that concept.

[192] Watanabe, World Gold Theatre Kick-Off.
[193] Yamaguchi, 'Contemporary Theatre', p. 68.

[Image redacted]

Fig. 10 – *The 10,000* Opening Scene

Hundreds of cast members came onto the stage during this introduction and began to engage in various activities [Fig. 10]. For example, some watched a performance of *kami-shibai* ('picture theatre', a visual form of storytelling popular in the 1930-50s), whilst others played games or exercised. The cast all talked and reacted loudly whilst they were performing these activities, very evidently displaying happiness, which acted as a good reminder of Ninagawa's often-expressed concept of the 'noisily-living old'.[194] The younger actors and staff also came onstage, helping to guide them into their groups and taking part in the activities with them. Initially, the younger actors were marked out by hi-visibility jackets whilst they directed people into position, both for the sake of the people they were guiding and to differentiate them from the older actors for the audience. However, at the end of this scene they removed their jackets, revealing that underneath they were wearing the same clothes as the older actors. From this point on, the young and old became indistinguishable except to those closest to the stage. The only difference was that the professional actors who were playing a character (for example, Tybalt, Junpei Tsuzuki, thirty-three) were wearing microphones, while all the others all used portable microphones which the young actors brought to them.

[194] Akishima, p. 79.

These ‘daily activities’ were interrupted when Kasai Nobuko, a seventy-three year old actor from Kawaguchi, Ninagawa’s hometown, spoke into a microphone to introduce herself. One by one other actors introduced themselves, narrating ‘their lives up to now’ and their future dreams.[195] This repeated refrain of the real lives of the actors intervened in the story of *Romeo and Juliet*, binding the two together. Finally, a professional member of Gold introduced himself and started the ‘story’ of *Romeo and Juliet* by quoting the final lines of the play, ‘For never was a story of more woe, than this of Juliet and her Romeo’ (5.3.309-10).[196] The actors scattered, the younger members losing their jackets, before many partnered up in the middle and danced in a mirror of the opening scene from *Richard II* (although given the disparity in numbers of young actors, the majority of the pairings were between older actors). Nozoe also played with audience memories of that production by having a procession of older actors arrive in wheelchairs, pushed by Next, during the initial daily life scene, a gesture which the importance of will become clearer in the next chapter.

In another echo of Ninagawa, and before the story of *Romeo and Juliet* had started, the Komadori sisters (now aged seventy-eight) also made an appearance. They arrived on a float pushed by staff, and sang *Ai ni hakushu o* (Applause for Love) with the lyrics displayed on the large overhead screens as the cast onstage danced. The programme cited Ninagawa’s so-called ‘love-call’, or ‘fervent request’ to have them perform in *Hamlet*, giving this as a reason for their inclusion here.[197] Theoretically this should have been effective as they were of the same generation as most of the actors, but minus the context which had made their appearance in *Hamlet* so powerful their inclusion risked becoming sentimental. They did not intervene in the story in the same way and were therefore unable to ‘demolish’ the play or produce any

[195] *The 10,000 Gold* (programme).
[196] Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, p. 338.
[197] *The 10,000 Gold Theatre* (programme).

truly meaningful effect, apart from serving as a reminder of the experiences of the postwar generation. The stark contrast between the scene in *Hamlet*, where they had reduced the characters to tears, and here where they encouraged a group sing along also suggests that the difficult reality of the postwar period was being presented through rosy-hued nostalgia, reminiscent of Igarashi's criticism of the way postwar 'society managed to naturalise the process of forgetting – how it reached the point where the loss itself was lost'.[198]

The professional members of Gold also appeared during this scene, interrupting the Komadori as they tried to open the production. Shouting that they were the 'real Saitama Gold Theatre', they re-enacted a scene from *Ravens, We Shall Load Bullets* in which they fight in slow-motion, using the kabuki-technique of *danmari* (a slow-motion fight scene, often taking place in the dark). While this revealed the difference in training and performance levels between them and the amateurs, and provided a chance to honour theirs and Ninagawa's achievements, it further delayed the 'start' of the play proper. This and a number of other scenes imply uneasiness about what to do with Ninagawa's project and legacy, and perhaps also in tackling the text of *Romeo and Juliet*. Some scenes, including further songs and an extended dance scene could arguably be seen as 'fillers'. Nozoe spoke about the difficulty in working with such a large cast in terms of giving everyone an opportunity to be involved and seen, and scenes like these reflect that difficulty.[199]

In spite of some criticisms, the production did create a number of arresting images and raised questions about the representation of the older generations in Japan, as well as experimenting with how theatre can be used for a large community. It was particularly praiseworthy for its inclusivity and openness as an event, with actors drawn from all over

[198] Igarashi, p. 17.
[199] Nozoe, World Gold Theatre Kick-Off.

Japan, and no limitations being set on ability. At the same time, it was a production for and by the Saitama community, albeit one with its eyes intentionally fixed on the Olympics opening ceremony. It also continued Ninagawa's technique of mixing the local and global and creating intercultural theatre for a local audience. Various objects and customs familiar from everyday life appeared throughout the show, including the ubiquitous identical umbrellas bought from *combini* carried by over one hundred Juliets, the sound of cicadas played during the fight scene (instantly implying a Japanese summer) and the nostalgically familiar *kami-shibai*. In one noteworthy scene, most of the cast were directed in the 'morning exercises' (*rajio taisō*, or radio calisthenics), also followed by the other actors watching from the seats at the side and, unprompted, by some of the audience members. In addition to being extremely familiar as a reference point for the audience, Nozoe suggested that these exercises were useful because the actors could remember the actions because they had done them so many times before.[200]

Another effective scene was the production's version of 4.5, with the Capulets dressing in the standard festival (*matsuri*) wear and bringing Paris (played by Shirakawa Masaru from Saitama Next) in on a float whilst dancing to *Awaodori*, a dance-form originating in Shikoku and typically performed at summer festivals. Prior to the entrance of the *matsuri* crowd, multiple Juliets had drunk Friar Lawrence's potion and lay scattered across much of the arena floor, with one lying on a bed in the centre. The crowd interrupted the finding of Juliet's body, their singing drowning out the music of Maurice Ravel's *Bolero* which had gradually been building up in the background. When the Nurse realised that Juliet was 'dead', the *matsuri* procession started moving in slow-motion in another echo of Ninagawa's frequent use of the technique. The mixed style of costumes were also effective, with the professional actors in *hakama* (white for the Capulets and black for the Montagues),

[200] Ibid.

not only introducing further hybridity into the production but also visually coding it as part of Ninagawa/Saitama's performance history. Nozoe also cast Okada Tadashi, an actor involved in the NINGAWA STUDIO who later worked frequently in both the Sai-no-kuni series and the All-Male Shakespeare series at Saitama, as the Nurse. Okada had previously played this role in Ninagawa's 2014 all-male *Romeo and Juliet*, and there were many similarities in both his appearance and performance style across these two productions.

Nozoe also built on some of the legacy of the young/old interaction, especially in terms of the younger actors supporting the older ones, and the programme describes the 'devotion' of Next having 'a large effect on letting this plan live'.[201] They helped to direct the cast around the stage, ensuring that people knew where they had to go, and also acting as prompters if needed. They also took on some of the roles, including Romeo and Juliet, helping to produce Nozoe's desired '1600 different types of Romeos and Juliets'.[202] This division of roles allowed for some interesting parallels between them as well as humour, as for example in the balcony scene where one young Romeo (played by the youngest member of Next, Shirogane Genta) was pushed out of the way by an older Romeo to deliver his line. The difference in training was also apparent during the fight scenes, as these were all played by young actors, and many of the main characters (for example Mercutio, Tybalt and Lord Montague) were played by professionals. The younger actors and staff were also in charge of keeping the older actors safe, and particularly for those who needed support or physical help there was always a professional standing beside them. This was one of the real positives the production inherited from Ninagawa, and it was very noticeable that during the closing speech when the younger actors were named to the amateur participants each of them received an enthusiastic round of applause.

[201] *The 10,000 Gold Theatre* (programme).
[202] Tanaka, 'A Golden Age'.

The way that characters jumped from actor to actor was also a fascinating feature of the production, which was particularly emphasised by the large number of repeated lines and concepts. For example, one scene repeated Romeo and Juliet's lines in 1.5 ('Saints do not move, though grant for prayer's sake', 'Then move not, while my prayer's effect I take' 1.5.104-05), between several different couples who gathered in the middle of the arena floor, each delivering the lines slightly differently, before Nozoe led all the actors onstage in repeating the lines.[203] During the balcony scene, the lines were also split between numerous company members. Although the characters slipped easily from one person to another, the individual personalities of the actors were sharply revealed by the contrast. Nozoe stated that he always reminded them to 'be their own Romeo, or Juliet, and not to copy someone else', adding that he did not 'really care about their acting technique. I'd rather let them freely express their sixty-plus years of life history onstage'.[204] Denise Varney has suggested that due to a 'rupture' in Japanese theatre between language and the bodies of the actors, a sense that 'time folds in on itself as the characters morph and shift from one reality and even one body to another' is produced, but here Nozoe arguably used these 'shifts' to reject the tendency to 'simply dismiss these people as 'over-sixties'. Actually, they each have their precious individuality and everybody is different […] I try to keep that firmly in mind at every moment'.[205] The relationship between the actor and the role, and the question of 'who' the audience is 'looking at when they see an actor' onstage, has been described as the site of a 'corporeal battleground between different identities: the actor's body and the character it carries can never be fully severed', and the extremely ambiguous and unstable relationship

[203] Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, pp. 174-75.
[204] Tanaka, 'A Golden Age'.
[205] Varney, p. 119; Tanaka, 'A Golden Age'.

between the actors themselves and the multiple roles, the fiction and reality, offers a revealing example of this 'battleground' in performance.[206]

In the final scene, again to the *Bolero*, multiple Romeos and Juliets were positioned across the stage. As Romeo drank the poison, all of the remaining actors entered the stage in long lines and began circling towards the centre where the bed was positioned. Throughout this scene photographs of the older participants were projected onto the floor, reminiscent of the photographs lining the walls of Ninagawa's 2004 production of *Romeo and Juliet* with Fujiwara Tatsuya and Suzuki An (Ophelia, *Hamlet* 2003, directed by Ninagawa). The set in this production was covered in what looked like 'funeral photographs' of young people of all nationalities, creating an 'emotionally moving image of the young people who go to their deaths' in conflicts across the world.[207] Nozoe was able to play with this memory, undermining the sense of *Romeo and Juliet* as only a young person's tragedy, whilst also reminding the audience of the completely opposite performance context of the current production: unlike the 2004 version, which had been marked for the youth of the main actors (twenty and seventeen respectively), this served to emphasise the physical, aged, reality of the present actors. It also further emphasised the importance of the individual members to the project, revealing close-ups on the faces of the actors when the sheer size of the venue would mean they were obscured for many. The actors on the floor joined the lines as they approached the centre, until the bed was completely surrounded and the final Juliet killed herself. In the silence following this moment, which came at the end of the *Bolero*, one actor said into a microphone:

[206] Thorpe, 439.
[207] Senda, *Artist Interview: Nakagoshi*.

> My dream was to fulfil this performance. I feel drained of energy, but it's alright. I have plenty of other dreams. Also, well, it's embarrassing but, I've fallen in love. I met someone wonderful in this production. I apologise to my husband, who is in heaven, but while I'm alive […]. In this world, there's nothing as beautiful as a story of love.[208]

The production therefore ended with a reminder of the actors' real lives outside the theatre, breaking from the illusion of the play world. Nozoe had stated that 'love is a universal theme whatever age you are', and he used the conclusion to remind the audience of this, tying the Shakespearean love story to a contemporary, albeit scripted, one.[209] In the performance however these boundaries were not so clear, and it was less obvious where the fictional and real lives of the participants began and ended.

While there are some criticisms to be made about this production, particularly for what could be described as an over-dependence on recycling too many 'Ninagawa-esque' elements, taken as a whole *The 10,000 Gold Theatre* was an exciting and experimental project that tested the boundaries of what could be done with Ninagawa's legacy in the 'post-Ninagawa' age. Uchida Youichi wrote that the quality of the work produced at Saitama was 'dependent on Ninagawa. People who are capable of directing east and west, old and new […] are drying up', but I would argue that *The 10,000* is an example which proves that this is not true.[210] Nozoe himself suggested that working with such a large cast affected the quality of the production, but he concluded that the 'level wasn't too low' because the actors were able

[208] Saitama Arts Theatre, *The 10,000 Gold Theatre* DVD (Saitama: Saitama Super Arena, 7 December 2016).
[209] Nozoe, World Gold Theatre Kick-Off.
[210] Uchida, 'To Connect', 19.

to express their 'rich life experiences'.[211] He added that he found that it was 'more powerful when people didn't try to act, but spoke from their hearts and bodies'.[212]

Although the future of this project is unclear, the organisers have spoken of their desire to continue working with the community and with older actors, describing the arena performance as just 'the first step'.[213] Having vowed to continue *The 10,000* project one way or another, in September 2017 Saitama Arts Theatre launched the *World Gold Theatre Festival Kick-Off!*, a two-day symposium on the future of older age companies. The theatre invited members of Sadler's Wells' Company of Elders, a dance company dedicated to those over the age of sixty, alongside spokespeople from Sadler's Wells, David Slater (artistic director of Entelechy Arts) and Gavin Barlow, chief executive of the Albany Theatre, to introduce their work, hold workshops for local residents on dance and movement, and to participate in a roundtable held with Watanabe Hiroshi and Nozoe Seiji. In promotional material for the event, the theatre wrote that the project was an 'answer to the super ageing society by the arts', and that 'while developing the seed of Saitama Gold Theatre planted by Ninagawa into different and new shapes […] this theatre is taking a new step forward'.[214]

At the same time at the symposium, the theatre announced that it was launching the Gold Arts Club, a community project which began in early January 2018, holding workshops and then rehearsals until the end of February. The approximately 700 participants of the project were split into two groups and performed in the Large Hall at Saitama Arts Theatre on two consecutive days, staging an adaptation of Molière's *La Malade Imaginaire* (1673) entitled *The Hypochondriac: The Rabble Who Sing of Youth*. The senior actors had all been

[211] Nozoe, World Gold Theatre Kick-Off.
[212] Ibid.
[213] Watanabe, World Gold Theatre Kick-Off.
[214] (n.a.), 'Gold Arts Club Opens!' (*Gorudo atsu kurabu katsudoukaishi!*), *Arts Theatre Press*, 72 (2017), 13.

part of the earlier Arena production, and it was again directed and adapted by Nozoe, who re-used the self-introduction system established during that production, but with the addition of a final comment on the a physical or mental difficulty they were suffering from due to their age. As with *The 10,000*, this was experimented with in the rehearsals, working with the formula of 'my name is [name]. I was born in [year], and grew up in [place]. I am [number] years old', and then they were asked to give a few details of their life until now, and end with a health problem they had faced recently, with the script giving 'yesterday I coughed up blood' as an example.[215] As each participant stated their problem, the other cast members reacted audibly with sympathy and agreement. In a further similarity to *The 10,000*, the characters were divided between members of the company, leading to up to twenty Argans appearing on the stage, and at one point a large group of them demanded, 'Doctor, more medicine, give me more medicine', leading to bags of prescriptions dropping from the ceiling onto the stage.[216] Even more than the Arena production, this workshop intertwined the anxieties of the ageing society with the energy of the actors, suggesting a positive outlook on the role the arts and community can play for the older generations.

**'Super Ageing, Super Creative' Society**

These community productions, and the work of Saitama Gold more specifically, have been radical in their attempts to 'present a fresh truth about the old', and further demonstrate David Cutler's description of Japan as a 'super ageing, super creative' society.[217] In her discussion on the Arena production, Yamaguchi wrote that it reminded her of 'something Ninagawa once said: 'Pass behind you like you are playing rugby'', and Saitama Next, Saitama Gold and the

[215] Nozoe Seiji, *The Hypochondriac: The Rabble Who Sing of Youth* (*Yamai ha kikara: re wakasa o utaou raburu*) (script) (2018), 1.
[216] Ibid., 7.
[217] *The 10,000 Gold Theatre* (programme); David Cutler, 'Living National Treasure – Arts and Older People in Japan', *The Baring Foundation* (2015), 1-17 (3).

Gold Arts Club are examples of how this has been implemented.[218] They are prime examples of how community theatre in Japan can produce work of the highest artistic merit, and how Shakespeare can, in many ways, work for local communities as well as being relevant to the international theatre audience. They are also revealing of Shakespeare becoming, in Minami's terms, a 'part of Japanese cultural memory' which is 'readily available for reuse in many forms', and further demonstrate Klett's theory that in contemporary Shakespearean performance the 'audience is an active partner in creating these strange new meanings', by providing new insights and alternatives.[219] Through these companies Ninagawa turned the image of who has the 'right' to act in Shakespeare on its head, an idea that was only further enforced by their collaboration on *Richard II*.

The themes introduced in this chapter will come into play again in the following discussion of Ninagawa's production of *Richard II*. Although it was more strongly present in *Richard*, the productions described here are also examples of Ninagawa's use of theatre to bring about a 'complex embrace of wonder – vigorous, surprising, violent or grotesque', which addressed anxieties such as the ageing society and pressures on the young, but which also offered hope to the audience.[220] Ninagawa himself once said that, 'staging a play may be a small gesture, like adding a small pebble to a heap of stones. It might not have a grand meaning, but these pebbles can accumulate. It's a way of expressing hope', and I would argue that Saitama Next and Saitama Gold encapsulate this belief.[221] The productions described here are good examples of what has been called the 'shifting, chameleonic quality of Ninagawa's work, its capacity to destabilise the expectations of both Western and Eastern viewers' which

[218] Yamaguchi, 'Contemporary Theatre', p. 68.
[219] Minami, 'Re-Playing Shakespeares on the Japanese Stage', p. 123; Klett, p. 10.
[220] Hamana, 'Last Shakespeare Plays, 271.
[221] Ninagawa Yukio, 'Forks in the Road Come Suddenly. I Take the Dangerous Route'(interviewed by Yo Zushi for *The New Statesman*), *New Statesman*, (18 June 2012), p. 38.

makes it ‘so beguiling and difficult to pigeon-hole’, and examining them has laid the groundwork to consider one of Ninagawa’s final Shakespeare productions and the way it incorporated all these anxieties, hopes and the past.[222]

[222] Borlik, ‘A Season’, 446.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Deconstructing History: Ninagawa's 'Miracle' *Richard II*

Ninagawa's production of Shakespeare's 1595 history play *Richard II* (2015/2016) was described by Kitamura Kaoru as a 'miracle' in the collection of essays published after his death (*Ninagawa: The Director Who Kept Fighting*, 2016).[1] I already briefly touched on the performance's opening scene, reflecting on how in its construction of a hybrid and in-between space it embodied Richard's line, 'Now mark me how I will undo myself'; and having traced the various paths taken by contemporary artists to both 'undo' and create culture, it is fitting to return to this production and consider once more what it represents, and how it used this hybridity to beautifully illustrate the text.[2] All of the case studies I have discussed have represented modes of intercultural performance and the way artists have been responding to external pressures: *Richard II* aptly mirrors these themes, and furthermore represents what could be described as a landmark in Japanese Shakespeare performance. *NINAGAWA Macbeth* has often been referred to as a turning point for Shakespeare in Japan, marking the beginning of a period of localisation and experimentation, and over thirty years later, *Richard II* re-opened the debate on how to perform a translated play in contemporary Japan, drawing on Ninagawa's long history and experience. This was a production which demolished notions of what 'Shakespeare in Japan' could, or should, be. As director Phillip Breen, who saw it in Saitama in 2015, writes, Ninagawa 'put a bomb under this play', the reverberations of which can be traced in numerous post-*Richard* performances.[3]

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[1] Kitamura Kaoru, 'Miracle Theatre' (*Kiseki no butai*), in *Ninagawa: The Director Who Kept Fighting* (2016), ed. by Kawade, pp. 140-41 (p. 141).
[2] Shakespeare, *Richard II*, p. 399.
[3] Phillip Breen, 'Ninagawa Speech', *Ninagawa Remembered: Symposium* (speech), Embassy of Japan in the UK, 6 October 2017.

Yamaguchi suggests that the 'joint production' of *Richard II* by Saitama Next and Saitama Gold, 'without any familiar stars', was perhaps 'the grand sum of Ninagawa's endeavours in public theatre in Saitama', and Hamana has likewise described it as a representation of 'Ninagawa's theatre of wonder par excellence'.[4] In Hamana's terms, Ninagawa's 'theatre of wonders' emits 'its magical and subversive power and suggestion to give the audience vital energy to live in this world of tough conflicts', a description which has a significant correlation to the power of this production.[5] First performed in 2015, *Richard II* was revived in 2016 following Ninagawa's hospitalisation, before being staged as the opening production of the 2016 Craiova International Shakespeare Festival in Romania. In January 2016 the production won the 'Third Hayakawa Drama Award', an award given to 'honour outstanding theatre productions'.[6] The thirtieth Sai-no-kuni production, this was the first time in the series that only actors from Next and Gold appeared, and its success among critics and audiences (as Imamura Asako reports, its Romanian premiere received a sixteen minute standing ovation), illuminates Yamaguchi's 'grand sum' comment.[7] Although it was initially envisioned as a solo production by Saitama Next, three days before the rehearsals began in 2015 it was decided to make it a collaborative performance with Gold, bringing the company to over sixty actors with an age gap of nearly seventy years between the youngest and oldest.[8]

[4] Yamaguchi Hiroko, 'Contemporary Theatre: Confronting Seventy Years Since the War', trans. by William Andrews, *Theatre Yearbook 2016: Theatre in Japan* (Tokyo: International Theatre Institute, 2016), pp. 61-68 (p. 67); Hamana, 'Last Shakespeare Plays', 272.
[5] Hamana, 'Last Shakespeare Plays', 276.
[6] T-Site, *Saitama Next's 'Richard II' has Won the Third Hayakawa Tragedy Comedy Award* (*Daisankai hayakawa higekikigeki sho ha saitama nekusuto shiata richado nisei ga jushō*) (2016) <http://top.tsite.jp/news/stage/o/27339165> [accessed 01 May 2016].
[7] Imamura Asako, *Regarding Ninagawa* (*Ninagawasan no koto*) (2016) <http://spice.eplus.jp/articles/57231> [accessed 22 May 2016].
[8] Kimata, *Why Does Ninagawa*; Saitama Arts Theatre, *Yukio Ninagawa Eightieth Anniversary* (2015) <http://www.saf.or.jp/arthall/stages/detail/2040/ref=cm_sw_r_tw_dp_pzY.ub1SYEDJ6> [accessed 20 May 2016].

The collaboration between the two companies added depth and keenness to Ninagawa's reading of the text, perfectly elucidating both his political and social interpretation of the play, and his creation of 'wonder' through performance. This production could be seen as both a 'new Ninagawa', due to its departures from the rest of the series, or as the culmination of his work with Shakespeare over his career. Ninagawa often stated a desire to create the new and surprising, and a number of responses to *Richard II* gave it the tag of 'new Shakespeare': for example, in the programme the chairman of Saitama Art Foundation, Takeuchi Fuminori, wrote that with the two companies Ninagawa had created a 'new Shakespeare different to those that came before'.[9] In her review, Kouda Choko likewise wrote that one characteristic of Ninagawa's theatre was that he always showed the audience 'something new. Each time, he creates a performance that makes you think, ah, there's this way of doing it too. I hadn't seen this kind of theatre before. I hadn't seen this kind of Shakespeare before'.[10]

*Richard II* opened with the entire cast, minus only Richard, appearing from the back of the stage, laughing. I spoke previously about Ninagawa's occasional tactic of having the entire cast assemble and bow to the audience to mark the beginning of the play, but this *en masse* appearance differed from the previous examples: rather than greeting the audience, or re-creating the backstage area, *Richard II* began with this laughter, mysterious and unexplained. In the most remarkable feature of the opening, every member of Saitama Gold was in a wheelchair, pushed by the Next actors, with around sixty actors moving downstage, still laughing and accompanied by quiet piano music and chimes. Regardless of age, every actor wore formal Japanese clothes, the men in *montsuki-haori-hakama* (*hakama* with a

[9]Saitama, *Richard II* (programme).
[10] Kouda Choko, '*Richard II*: Next and Gold's Wonderful Collaboration', (*Richado nisei –nekusuto shiata to Gorudo shiata no gōkana kyoen*), *Higeki-kigeki*, 780.5 (2016), 21-25 (22).

family crest), and the women in *tomesode* (decorated black kimonos worn on formal occasions). The formality of the costumes and the inter-generational mix suggested the gathering of a large family or clan for a celebration, appearing in a 'phalanx of family' from backstage with the old leading.[11]

After moving the wheelchairs to the side, the actors gradually formed pairs in the centre as *La Cumparsita* began quietly playing in the background. Following a sound similar to *tsuke* (the clappers used in kabuki to mark, among others, the start and end of a scene), the music became louder and the actors suddenly began to dance a tango. The overall visual was of young and old men and women dancing together, although not every couple was Next/Gold or male/female. The tango ended 'as mysteriously as it started', and the dancers bowed to each other and moved to the side.[12] The two young men described previously (Tateyama Hayata, Bolingbroke, and Suzuki Akinori, Lord Marshal) emerged from the crowd and using *hikinuki* changed into western-style morning suits and danced together. The watching crowd applauded them before *tsuke* announced the arrival of King Richard, and they hurriedly dispersed, the young helping the old.

The visual impact of this opening was accentuated by the use of the 'inside theatre' layout, with the audience surrounding the stage on three sides. Built on top of the main stage at Saitama, and then on top of the stage at the National Theatre in Craiova, the set was black with no props, meaning that the entire space was filled first with the wheelchairs and sheer number of actors, and then with the dancing couples. This staging emphasised the physicality of the actors' bodies, effectively highlighting the difference between the young and the old,

[11] Barry Gaines, *Monumental Japanese Production of Shakespeare's 'Richard II' Opens Romanian Festival* (2016) <https://barryreviews.wordpress.com/2016/04/30/monumental-japanese-production-of-shakespeares-richard-ii-opens-romanian-festival> [accessed 10 June 2016].
[12] Ibid.

and reinforcing Ninagawa's idea that the three-sided space would force their 'performance to stand out'.[13] Additionally, the intimacy of the staging allowed the audience to engage closely with the production, an important factor in what was for many an unfamiliar play. Working with his 'three minute rule', the impact of this opening also helped to draw the audience into what they might have expected would be an unfamiliar world. However, *Richard II*'s opening was more than just a framing device, as it also marked a kind of 'undoing': Ninagawa simultaneously set up the drama as occurring within a large Japanese family gathering, whilst at the same time demolishing this impression before the audience's eyes in seconds through the *hikinuki* between formal costumes.

As with the intervention of the Komadori in *Hamlet*, Ninagawa interrupted the illusion that the play was set in a stable, fixed place, a gesture made all the more significant in a translated history play due to its power to undermine any preconception that the setting would have to be the historical west. Ninagawa himself said that when 'directing history plays like *Richard III*, it isn't necessary to fixate on whether the place is Britain or Japan. […] You're liberated from all these historic details'.[14] I have termed this 'undoing', not only because it was a method of undoing and rejecting the audience's prejudices or preconceptions, but also because Ninagawa shattered any notion of fixity, both in performance and audience reception. In slipping between a historical Japanese setting, an English royal court, and an unspecified, timeless space in-between, Ninagawa 'undid' the stability of each of these concepts. *Richard II* took place neither explicitly in Japan nor England, and the audience who bore witness to these slippages were forced to question their own assumptions, and the meaning of performing a four-hundred year old translated play in contemporary Japan. Ninagawa

[13] Akishima, p. 74.
[14] Ninagawa Yukio and Hasebe Hiroshi, *The Art of Directing* (*Enshutsu-jutsu*), (Tokyo: Chikumashobo, 2012), p. 329.

represented this story set in fourteenth-century England as belonging neither exclusively to its background, nor as fitting seamlessly with its performance in Japan. Instead, the production brought in different reference points without being embedded in any one of them. This freed the audience from having to find easy correspondences between the actors themselves, their costumes and the script; instead, they were able to focus on the bodies that were presented and on the text itself.

**Locating the History Plays in Japan**

*Richard II* has rarely been staged in Japan, with only six other major productions in the Kanto region since 2001. In comparison, *Richard III* was staged over twenty times during the same period, and Kawachi Yoshiko has suggested that it is performed as frequently as *Macbeth* (for example, performed fifteen times in 2014) in contemporary Japan, because it mirrors the violence of a modern society 'full of bloody violence, crime, murder, ambition, desire and stress'.[15] Ishihara and Hirokawa have also implied that the numerous productions of *Richard III* after 2001 were inspired by terrorism, leading to three major companies (the En Company, Bungaku-za and a restaging of Ninagawa's 1999 production) presenting it in 2003.[16] Despite the larger presence of *Richard III*, in general the tragedies and comedies have been more popular than the history plays in Japan. The histories entered the performance history of Japanese Shakespeare relatively late in comparison to the other genres, with many being first staged by Deguchi Norio as part of his Complete Works cycle with the Tokyo-based Shakespeare Company. For example, *Henry V*, *VI* and *VIII* were first performed by Deguchi in 1979 (*Henry V*) and 1981 (*VI* and *VIII*), and *Richard II* also had its first performance in 1979 by Deguchi. The exceptions are the *Henry IV* plays, which were first performed in 1931

[15] Kawachi Yoshiko, '*Macbeth* in Japanese Culture', *Multicultural Shakespeare: Translation, Appropriation and Performance*, 1.11 (2004), 127-38 (138).
[16] Ishihara and Hirokawa, 'A Survey of Shakespearean Performances', 10.

(directed by Choji Kato and using Tsubouchi Shoyo's 1919 translation), although Gallimore notes that the first 'complete and unadapted' history was the first staging of *Richard III* in 1964.[17] Numerous western directors have either brought productions of the history plays to Japan (for example, *Henry V* 1973 directed by John Barton for the RSC, *Richard III* 1990, directed by Richard Eyre for the Royal National Theatre and *Richard III* 1993, Sam Mendes for the RSC), or directed Japanese actors in them (*Richard III* 1993, directed by Giles Block at the Ginza Saison Theatre, and another *Richard III* 1995, directed by Edward Hall at the Tokyo Globe).[18]

Following its first performance in 1979, *Richard II* vanished from the stage until 1994, and then again until 2001, when it was staged by the Shakespeare for Children Company at the Tokyo Globe, following the same company's successful production of *Henry IV* in 1998. Besides these Japanese productions, it was also performed by the English Shakespeare Company as part of the Tokyo Globe opening season in 1988, by the Almeida with Ralph Fiennes in the title role in 2000 (Akasaka Act Theatre) and by the Berliner Ensemble at Theatre Cocoon in 2002. The low presence of *Richard II* in Japan has been attributed to unfamiliarity with the story, historical period and concepts such as the divine right of kings, in addition to the perceived difficultly of the verse. Some critics have suggested that the histories are less popular because the audience are 'not familiar with Medieval English history', but in Saitama's trimonthly magazine *Arts Press*, Matsuoka suggested that 'even in Britain', *Richard II* is 'not performed very often'.[19] Writing in 1892, Tsubouchi argued that Shakespeare's history plays would be of interest only to those with 'particular interest in

[17] Gallimore, 'Shakespeare's History Plays in Japan', p. 92.
[18] Kawachi Yoshiko, 'Shakespeare's History Plays in Japan', *Multicultural Shakespeare: Translation, Appropriation and Performance*, 3.7 (2006), 45-55 (51).
[19] Ishihara and Hirokawa, 3; Matsuoka Kazuko, '*Richard II*', *Arts Theatre Press*, 55 (2015), 6-7 (6).

English history'.[20] Gallimore has likewise written that although 'comparisons between the tragedies and Japanese culture – whether as critical studies or stage interpretations' have become 'commonplace', interpretations of the history plays have largely been 'on their own terms'. [21] He adds that their 'peripheral position' is caused as much by 'culturally specific factors as by an adherence to foreign trends'.[22]

Although it is true that there are fewer productions of the history plays on average, there has been a noticeable increase in performances in the past decade. Particularly if the history plays are grouped together, they become a more significant presence in the contemporary theatre scene: for example, in 2016 there were fourteen productions in Tokyo (*Henry IV Part I* and *II*, *Henry VI*, *Richard III*, *Richard II*, *King John*, *Henry VIII* and *Henry V*), and in 2014 there were seven (including *Edward III*).[23] Responses to the history plays have also differed greatly, ranging from Noda Hideki's 1990 play *Richard the Third* (*Richado Sandaime*), set in an *ikebana*-family, to Nomura Mansai and Kawai Shoichiro's kyogen-style adaptation of *Richard III*, *Kuninusubito* ('The Country Stealer', 2007), the all-female Nyotai Shakespeare Series production of *Richard III* in 2015, featuring only seven actors who used director Nakayashiki's extremely colloquial translation, and to Inoue Hidenori's company Gekidan Shinkansen's performances of *Richard III* (2009) and *Lord of the Lies* (2007), which mixed the plots of *Richard III* and *Macbeth* in what Poonam Trivedi has termed a 'pop-pastiche' adaptation.[24] However, as is clear from these examples, *Richard III* has been by far the most adapted of all the history plays, and has had the most wide-ranging response, including a manga adaptation entitled *Requiem of the Rose King* (2013-present).

[20] Gallimore, p. 93.
[21] Ibid., p. 97.
[22] Ibid., p. 92.
[23] However, very few were staged in 2017: I recorded only three performances, *Henry VI*, *Richard III* and *Henry VIII*, although *The Hollow Crown* series was aired in cinemas and numerous lectures on the histories were held in relation to this.
[24] Trivedi, 'Re-Playing Shakespeare in Asia', p.14.

The New National Theatre has staged a series of the history productions, beginning with the three parts of *Henry VI* in 2009, then *Richard III* (2012), the two parts of *Henry IV* (2016) and *Henry V* (2018) with the same director, Uyama Hitoshi, and cast. In comparison to the more freely-adapted productions discussed above, this series has tended to use pseudo-medieval costumes and settings, playing largely as straight *shingeki* drama. In this, it offers a revealing contrast to Ninagawa's own productions of the history plays, and to *Richard II* above all. The aesthetics of the New National Theatre *Henry IV*, despite having a 'punk' Hal (and Poins, Bardolph and Pistol), dressed the rest of the company in 'authentic'-style medieval European costumes [for example, see Fig. 11]; although Hal wore a leather jacket, headphones and had bleached hair, Falstaff was more reminiscent of Orson Welles in *The Chimes at Midnight* (1965). Following the death of Henry IV, Hal reappeared dressed in a similar style of medieval clothing, which he again wore in the following *Henry V* production, embodying his abandonment of his past in Eastcheap.

[Image redacted]

Fig. 11 - *Henry IV Part I*

Hamada Motoko described this production's Hal as a 'typical youth of today', and another called him a 'modern *Yanki* [juvenile delinquent] wearing headphones', but his relation to the contemporary young generation is questionable, particularly when compared to the other performances discussed here.[25] The only connection to the so-called 'youth of today' seemed to be his clothing, and the addition of music by Queen, played loudly over speakers between scenes and during the closing tableaux. Given that the only music added to the production was by Queen, most of it over thirty years old, it is difficult to see a direct correlation with the contemporary youth, and instead the inclusion of this music seemed to present more of a caricature of outdated ideas of youth and rebellion. The production largely failed to connect the play with contemporary issues or to reveal any links between the story of a medieval English prince and the audience watching in Tokyo in 2016, and in a number of ways it is the antithesis of Ninagawa's *Richard II*. While it tried to straddle time periods, it failed to reflect the world outside the theatre in the way it perhaps intended to, an effect amplified in the later production of *Henry V* when only Bardolph and Pistol were left almost inexplicably wearing Rolling Stones t-shirts in the midst of other actors wearing *shingeki*-style armour and 'hennin' headdresses. In the large sets, adherence to 'medieval England' aesthetics, and the celebrity cast (Hal was played by idol actor Urai Kenji), it was the exact opposite of the pared-back, hybrid and 'nameless-actor' production created by Ninagawa.[26] While not necessarily negative in and of themselves, these elements combined to create something that was removed from the audience, much in the style of twentieth-century *shingeki*, despite trying to represent the 'modern' and presumably, as one of Japan's national theatres, the reality of contemporary Japan.

[25] Nishigahiro Wataru and Hamada Motoko, 'Theatre Commentary' (*Engeki jihyo*), *Higeki-kigeki*, 785.3 (2017), 178-202 (184); (n.a.), *New National Theatre Performance: 'Henry IV', Two Parts* (*Shinkokuritsugekijo koen henri yonsei nibusaku*) (2016) <http://mineyo-tk.main.jp/kangeki/2016/2016_055.html> [accessed 10 June 2017].
[26] Yamaguchi, *The Work of Ninagawa*, p. 123.

Ninagawa himself had an ambiguous relationship with the histories, stating that he disliked historical drama ('and more than that, another country's history!') and that he consequently 'postponed doing Shakespeare's history plays'.[27] As part of the Sai-no-kuni series it was inevitable that he would have to direct them at some point, but it is also true that of the five remaining plays in the Sai-no-kuni project at the time of Ninagawa's death, three of them were histories (*Henry V*, *King John* and *Henry VIII*). The first history play in the series was *Richard III* (1999), followed by the three parts of *Henry VI* (2010), which were condensed into two plays running at approximately seven hours, and *Henry IV Part I* and *II* (2013). Although he had stated his disinterest in 'historical things', Ninagawa said that as he directed each history play he found something interesting within it which inspired him.[28] He spoke of his concern that the plays would be hard for the audience to understand, adding that since few people know 'anything about the Wars of the Roses', the plays can seem like they are hard to follow without knowing the English monarchy's 'family tree', so he stated that for *Richard III*, 'rather than doing a straight history play, I wanted to look at the charisma of evil, and why people are attracted to it'.[29] Arguing that he wanted to 'sweep away the audience's fixed image of the history plays as difficult', he opened the production with a 'poetic image': here, horse carcasses which fell from the ceiling before Richard appeared to deliver his opening soliloquy.[30] Through this image he wanted to suggest to the audience the idea of a 'putrid town', and to make it 'understandable like a children's picture book' who was a 'good guy, or a bad guy'.[31] The production ended with the same image of horses falling from the ceiling, reflecting Matsuoka's translation in which Richard's final word is '*uma*' (馬, horse), which she deliberately used to reflect the English text: due to the nature of Japanese, other

[27] Akishima, p. 68.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ninagawa and Hasebe, *The Art of Directing*, p. 394; Akishima, p. 60.
[30] Ninagawa and Hasebe, p. 390.
[31] Ibid., pp. 390, 394.

translations, such as Odashima's 1983 version, end with the word 'give' (Odashima, '馬をくれ、馬を！馬のかわりにわが王国をくれてやる！'*Uma o kure, uma o! Uma no kawari ni waga oukoku o kureteyaru!*) (Matsuoka, '馬だ！馬をよこせ！代わりに俺の王国をくれてやる、馬!' *Uma da! Uma o yokose! Kawari ni ore no oukoku o kureteyaru, uma!*).[32]

The 2010 *Henry VI* received high critical praise, with Ishihara and Hirokawa describing it as an 'outstanding production' from that year.[33] This production was a good precedent for *Richard II*, as it similarly used an empty space, surrounded by two banks of seats: Ninagawa wrote that although by using a proscenium stage it would be 'easier to explain the background', he wanted to challenge himself and the company so that the audience would 'leave saying, 'it was interesting!', because this isn't a history lesson'.[34] Adding that he 'wondered how to do [the plays] so that these unfamiliar European stories would be sympathetic' for the audience, he chose to place the acting space 'caught in-between two symmetrical banks of audience seats. After that, there's nothing else'.[35] Although the main actors wore types of armour and medieval-style costumes, they combined these with the *hakama* familiar from the rest of the Sai-no-kuni series, and the production further undermined its sense of stability by opening with a group of elderly women (four actors from Saitama Gold Theatre) entering through the audience dressed as cleaners. They began cleaning up the blood stains on the empty white stage with mops, to the sound of sirens, car engines and horns; having finished cleaning, gunshots were heard and more blood and viscera fell to the stage from the ceiling, and they started over. Gunshots were heard throughout the rest of the performance, and Ninagawa suggested that by including the Gold members the

[32] Matsuoka Kazuko, *Richard III* (Tokyo: Chikumashobo, 1999), p. 271; Odashima Yushi, *Richard III* (Tokyo: Hakusui U Books, 1983), p. 242.
[33] Ishihara and Hirokawa, 36.
[34] Saitama Arts Theatre, *Henry VI* (programme), (Saitama: Saitama Arts Foundation, 2010).
[35] Akishima, p. 68.

'framework' of the performance was enlarged (adding that it made it 'Saitama Shakespeare-esque').[36] The appearance of these contemporary women relates to Ninagawa's idea of the themes in the *Henry VI* plays as an 'exact image of contemporary society', with the 'head of state having no leadership skills, giving rise to […] fighting over power', and so despite the elements of medieval aesthetics he also successfully managed to introduce the outside world into the production.[37]

*Henry IV* was produced two years before *Richard II*, and it has a number of similarities to the later production. As with *Richard II*, it was staged on an empty stage, due to Ninagawa's desire to 'do it differently to how I'd done Shakespeare before. So, first of all the stage design is different'.[38] However, despite the visual and thematic links between *Richard II* and the rest of the series, it also departed from previous Sai-no-kuni productions in a number of crucial ways, above all in the casting of Saitama Next and Gold which was so vital to the production. As with his other history productions he refused to replicate the historical period, instead focusing on the idea of power and what the loss of power would look like, and moreover using the story to reflect on problems facing contemporary society. I argue that *Richard II* disproves Gallimore's suggestion that the cultural frameworks of the histories and Japanese history are 'fatally dissimilar', meaning that the 'two cultures' can only meet through the characters who are 'large enough to step outside their historical context and be accepted in a new one'.[39] Richard is not one of these 'large' characters cited by Gallimore, and this production proved that the histories can be staged in a liminal or hybrid state, undermining the division between the two.

[36] Saitama, *Henry VI* (programme).
[37] Akishima, p. 70.
[38] Ibid., p. 74.
[39] Gallimore, p. 98.

**Next/Gold's *Richard II***

Prior to *Richard II*, Next and Gold had made a number of joint appearances, although never to the extent of this production, which was their first fully-collaborative piece. Much of the imagery and stylistic elements they use have been shared across the companies, giving them a shared performance vocabulary which allowed the collaboration to work smoothly. These previous examples had offered numerous chances to experiment with how the interaction between the two groups could work, and particularly on how the 'postwar' bodies of Gold would contrast with the 'pale' bodies of Next. An especially notable example is Gold's *Ravens, We Shall Load Bullets*, in which two members of Next appeared as the activists whose trial the old women invade. Having taken the members of the court hostage, the women set up their own trial and kill the judge and the prosecutor, before putting the two young men on trial as well. In the final scene, after the women have been shot by riot police, members of Next appeared suddenly in their place, covered in blood. They were then also all killed: as Yamaguchi noted, the 'old women are killed, but they rise up as young people', before being shot down again.[40] In the 1971 production, the actors had used the *hikinuki* technique to change from their costumes as old women into their contemporary selves, 'throwing away the old women and returning to their original young selves', but in this production the old women vanished to be replaced by around twenty members of Next, an 'absolute transformation (*henshin*)'.[41]

This moment suggested both the past youth of the Gold company and the universality of the story of protest, although it perhaps also offered a criticism of the 'apolitical' generation of younger actors, who have been accused of failing to engage in political theatre

[40] Yamaguchi, *The Work of Ninagawa*, p. 115.
[41] Shigemoto, p. 193.

to the extent of the previous *angura* generation.[42] Supporting this idea, Gold wore individualised costumes (many in working-class Japanese clothes), whereas Next were dressed identically: jeans for the men, and a white slip for the women (although some of the men also cross-dressed as women). Indeed, William Andrews suggests that the Gold actors themselves may have joined or experienced the protests that were the inspiration for the play.[43] At the same time, Next's inclusion also helped connect the play with the contemporary audience, bringing the historical moment closer to now, and since *Ravens* was revived at a time when there were an increasing number of protests in Japan it implied a rising amount of political awareness amongst the young.[44] In terms of its impact on *Richard II*, this production set a precedent for displaying and using the bodies of both the young and the old equally, without favouring either, and on the importance of the two companies working closely together to support each other. Speaking about the 2017 *The Mass of Pale Pink*, Iwamatsu suggested that in that and other joint productions, 'Next appear not only as members of the cast, but also as 'carers' for Gold': however, as will be discussed later, the idea of family/care-givers has been described as a mutual benefit for both companies.[45] Uchida Kenshi, who would go on to play Richard, also played one of the two young men on trial in 2014. Asked in an interview about whether his quiet speaking style was relevant only to the present moment, he said that in drama from the 'previous generation (1960-70s), I interpret the sense of 'voice' differently. I think that the young man in *Ravens*, from the previous

[42] Anan, 'Two-Dimensional Imagination', 98.
[43] Andrews, '*Ravens'*.
[44] Ibid.
[45] (n.a.), *Interview with Ide Shigehiro: 'The Mass of Pale Pink'* (*Ide Shigehiro usui momoiro no katamari intabyu*) (2017) <http://dancedition.com/post-1409> [accessed 10 December 2017].

generation's theatre, would have to say his thoughts like bullets', a marked contrast to the speech style he used both as the 'contemporary' Fortinbras and Richard.[46]

I have already discussed the impact the appearance of the Komadori made on *Hamlet*, which was evidently an inspiration for *Richard* in what it revealed about a co-performance between the young and old, but there has been a marked difference between Next's solo performances and those with guest appearances by older actors. There are discernable differences, for example, between their first production of *The Tale of the Sanada Family* (2009) which featured many older actors who had worked previously with Ninagawa (including Yokota Eiji) and the Next-only *Oedipus According to the Pale Boys and Girls* (2013). After the sudden decision to include Gold was announced, some commentators voiced doubt over the compatibility of the two companies, and their ability to jointly stage a production of Shakespeare.[47] However, these fears were proved baseless by the overwhelmingly positive response once the production opened, and many of the responses noted that a crucial aspect in the production's success lay in the co-performance. As Ninagawa stated in regards to the collaboration, since he had been 'given two 'means' of theatre', he should 'make use of them' both, and by doing so he suggested he could create a 'new kind of theatre'.[48]

The co-performance was also one of the factors which made this a landmark in Japanese Shakespearean performance, helping to create a clear and focused depiction of the text based on the visible split between generations, a split which responded to the intergenerational conflicts in the play. I will discuss how this worked in the performance in

[46] Kimata, *A Life-Changing Encounter with Ninagawa*.
[47] (n.a.), *Richard II Flyer* (*Richado nisei chirashi*) (2015) <minaminosora.cocolog-nifty.com/blog/2015/03/post-ef43.html> [accessed 17 May 2016].
[48] Ninagawa, 'Rehearsing with'; Ninagawa, 'Ninagawa: Director's Monologue', p. 8.

more detail later, but before that it is important to look at how the relationship between the two companies was built on and reflected in the production. Ninagawa spoke of his 'dreamt of theatre' using Next and Gold in which the,

> young and old companies would help each other like a big family, teach each other, and co-operate with one another. An extended family where the grandparents, parents and children are there! I want to make that kind of dream-like theatre.[49]

The companies have developed a close relationship which has often been commented on by both them and observers, which gave added emotional force and realism to their collaboration. The two groups interact as a kind of 'pseudo-family', bringing each other lunch, warming up together and jokingly referring to each other as relatives.[50] Describing the rehearsals for *Richard II*, Ninagawa said that, 'this pseudo-family is looking well [...] you can see they're all helping each other', adding that, 'if you look at the world, there probably isn't another rehearsal like this one'.[51] This strong connection was evident within the performance, and offers a fascinating insight into how two companies with an average age difference of forty years can work together.

The mutual aid and support between them also reflects Ninagawa's statement that the 'young are in charge of helping the old', and that 'Next are the only young people I know who help the old in our society'.[52] Others have picked up on this idea of empathy or sensitivity within Next, with Tokunaga Kyōko for example writing that in comparison to their contemporaries, members of the company have an increased sense of awareness of others'

[49] Ninagawa, 'Ninagawa: Director's Monologue', p. 13.
[50] Saitama Gold Theatre rehearsal, September 2017, Saitama Arts Theatre.
[51] Ninagawa, 'Ninagawa: Director's Monologue', p. 23.
[52] Akishima, p. 80; Ninagawa, 'Rehearsing with'.

difficulties.[53] In the debates on the mindless and selfish super-flat youth detailed previously, one common criticism was the inability of the young to engage with society, and this is perhaps one reason why the combination of young and old companies was so well received. Ninagawa used the sense of 'pseudo-family' created between the groups to bolster the idea of the cast as a large clan or family, translating the inter-familial conflict in the play into this setting. As will become clear later, he also used the age gap to depict the differences between the young and old in today's Japan: he wrote that performances by young people who 'have not been stained by the dirt of the world' are 'bleached pure white' and so therefore to 'finish dyeing my work as a director', he 'gathered in Saitama Gold pieces of cloth stained various colours, to make one quilt'.[54]

Ninagawa said that because he did not think other directors had 'thought of doing Shakespeare with a mix of an old and young company', he would be 'glad if it is a theatrical shock, something problematic for contemporary theatre. It's a cure for the sickness of today'.[55] As already described, the first 'shock' came within the opening moments, when almost the entire cast arrived onstage, the older actors in wheelchairs pushed by the younger members. Ninagawa was known for his use of extremely large casts, which he attributed to his view of the importance of 'multitude' in Asian theatre, resulting in his preference at using 'more than fifty actors onstage. I want to show the power of life, of multitude, rooted in Asian theatre, in contrast to European theatre and its obsession with psychological realism'.[56] The sheer number of actors who entered the stage during this opening scene, with the tableaux stretching from the front to the very back of the stage [Fig. 12], well expressed this sense of multitude, an impression only amplified by the division between the young and the old,

[53] Tokunaga, 'The Place for 'Blue Youths'', p. 185.
[54] Hashida, Suga and Kowase, p. 237.
[55] Ninagawa Yukio, 'Ninagawa's Words' (*Ninagawa no kotoba*), *Higeki-kigeki*, 780.5 (2016), 45 (45).
[56] Eglinton, 'Interlude: Asian Energy', p. 535.

producing an overwhelming effect in their instant and noisy arrival. It looked as though an 'enormous wave was surging swiftly and silently downstage', an excellent example of Ninagawa's 'three-minute' policy to draw the audience in.[57]

[Image redacted]

Fig. 12 – *Richard II* Opening Scene

The formality of the *montsuki-haori-hakama* and *tomesode* initially worn by all the characters appeared 'almost like a uniform or military dress', or as if 'an old family has gathered for a grand wedding ceremony'.[58] Barbieri has written that costumes are 'recognisably codified elements of design', whose 'embodied aesthetics mediate the interface between the performer and audience', meaning that costume is also a 'material, performative object' in the process of making theatre.[59] In this sense, these formal, clan-like costumes mediate the distance between the English history play and the Japanese audience, 'lucidly revealing the composition of this history play' by recreating the effect of the Plantagenet

[57] Ninagawa Yukio, 'Ninagawa Yukio', trans. by Matsuoka Kazuko, in *Shakespeare's Creative Legacies*, ed. Holbrook and Edmondson (2016), pp. 152-54 (p. 153).
[58] Akishima, p. 79; Yamaguchi, *The Work of Ninagawa*, p. 118.
[59] Barbieri, 281.

family within a clan-like setting.[60] This was a clever tactic for adapting the play interculturally for the audience, with Kouda saying that since it is set in the 'English court, there should be formal clothes', and Takahashi Yutaka adding that 'since they're all in Japanese dress, they can enter inconspicuously', thereby removing any doubts the audience might have about the difficulty of understanding a play set in medieval England.[61] Not only did this scene suggest a family, setting up the context for the internal power fight, but for the audience who looked 'down on the stage from three sides', the court was 'full of old people', also laying the foundation for the inter-generational conflict that would follow.[62]

Ninagawa introduced several powerful images in this first scene, which served to draw the audience into the play world and also helped identify crucial aspects of the following performance, including the young versus the old, power, family, homoeroticism and sensuality. Although the stage was completely empty at the beginning, the production was defined by its rich imagery which drew 'this young and beautiful King's tragedy on a large scale'.[63] Speaking of his inspiration for the visuals, Ninagawa said,

> Thanks to Shakespeare's language, images came to my mind one after another while directing this play, making me feel free for some reason. Shakespeare always liberates me. […] It is as if he is telling me to do anything I like.[64]

Besides helping the audience access the unfamiliar story, the visuals also came from a desire to reflect the poetry of the text. The companies struggled with the dense lines during rehearsals and so Ninagawa added the imagery to help clarify the meaning, using his skill at

[60] Yamaguchi, *The Work of Ninagawa*, p. 118.
[61] Kouda, 22; Takahashi, 'Captivating Ninagawa', 40.
[62] Akishima, p. 79.
[63] Yamaguchi, *The Work of Ninagawa*, p. 118.
[64] Ninagawa, *Shakespeare's Creative Legacies*, p. 154.

conveying 'meaning through images'.[65] Ninagawa himself said that when he read Shakespeare's plays he tried to

> understand it in terms of Japanese contexts. And the language overlapped in my mind with certain Japanese realities. So I was faced with two imperatives: I wanted to understand it for myself, but I also wanted to be able to communicate it to a Japanese audience. That double image always stayed in my mind.[66]

Reflecting on the success of *Richard II*, Breen wrote that his 'eyes were opened to what can happen in a play when visual imagery works in tandem with text, when there is a profound connection to the mythic', and the wheelchairs used throughout the performance were one of the key elements in this.[67] The sudden appearance of thirty senior actors in wheelchairs, being pushed by the young, has a significant parallel with the opening of Ninagawa's *Henry IV Part I*, in which the sound of feet and murmuring preceded the abrupt entrance of the court from the back of the stage, a mass of courtiers led by the king. However, in *Henry IV*, the courtiers were all male and wore the long, ornate robes often employed for courtiers and advisers in the Sai-no-kuni series, whereas in the opening of *Richard II* the courtiers were in formal Japanese clothes, roughly half of them were female, and there was also the obvious age divide between them. From the outset, thereby, Ninagawa depicted a court seemingly dominated by the older generation. The wheelchairs served to further emphasise the difference in age between the Gold actors and those in Next who pushed them, suggesting that the following conflict would be not just between members of the same family but also between the different generations.

[65] Billington, 'Billington on Ninagawa'.
[66] Aspden.
[67] Phillip Breen, 'Ninagawa Speech'.

I will discuss the re-occurring use of wheelchairs in the rest of the performance later, but for now I should note that the vast majority of powerful courtiers were played either by Gold or Next actors in ageing make-up, remaining almost permanently in their wheelchairs, often attended by the young, and in formal Japanese clothing. In contrast, the majority of the young courtiers wore western-style suits, and very few of them seemed to have any influence or power within the court. The power dynamics of the court were clearly depicted in the young pushing the old, besides responding to the 'importance of familial connections' in the text and Ninagawa's concept of the responsibility of the young to help the old.[68] However, although the relationship between the two at first seemed harmonious, the sense of hierarchy and control was also strongly present, as well as a sense of coy-cooperativeness. It also implied the obsessive nature of power, with the older actors holding onto their positions despite their physical weakness, and the way that the 'attraction of power endures, as does the desire to grasp and clutch it'.[69]

One reviewer commented that their 'chest hurt during the opening when the young people pushed the older actors onstage wearing kimono and hakama, it's a brilliant opening […] but it reminded me of reincarnation', and another that it reflected a 'sense of fleeting time'.[70] The wheelchairs also made the production deeply personal to Ninagawa's own experience of old age as he himself was in a wheelchair when he directed the show. The impact was enhanced for those audience members aware of this, with one reviewer writing

[68] Gaines; Akishima, p. 80.
[69] Maria Shevtsova, 'The Craiova Shakespeare Festival 2016 and a Valediction for Yukio Ninagawa', *NTQ*, 32.3 (2016), 276-82 (278).
[70] (n.a.), *I Watched 'Richard II' by Saitama Next Theatre!* (*Richado nisei saitama nekusuto shiata mitekita!*) (2015) <http://ameblo.jp/ts6584/entry-12012755200.html> [accessed 23 May 2016]; (n.a.), 'Saitama Next Theatre's *Richard II*: Hope for the Future' (*Saitama nekusuto shiata richado nisei mirai he no kibou to kannou no kaori*), *Asahi*, (16 April 2015) <http://www.asahi.com/articles/DA3S11708726.html> [accessed 22 May 2016].

that they found it incredible that he 'used his own condition so frankly'.[71] When questioned whether he had been inspired by his own condition, Ninagawa affirmed that he had and said that he thought he should 'use every part of life in the theatre'.[72] He added elsewhere that he came up with the idea in hospital, because 'there's a technique to using a wheelchair, but I struggled and felt ashamed. [...] I thought I should put that feeling onstage'.[73]

With the actors abandoning the wheelchairs during the first scene for the tango, Ninagawa created an image of the disabled becoming able-bodied, 'suggesting a continuum of the one with the other'.[74] In Ninagawa's writings on the 'noisily living elderly' he often expressed a sense of refusing to give in to the physical difficulties that came with ageing, and so these wheelchairs are simultaneously a moving admittance of vulnerability and also a gesture of power and determination.[75] A number of reviewers noted finding the use of wheelchairs 'painful' as a reminder of the difficulties of old-age and the passing of time, in addition to it expressing a sense of *mono-no-aware*, or the 'pathos' created by the transience of things. The scene had a strong visual and aural impact, since the wheelchairs not only filled the stage space but they also made a distinctive sound as they moved across the floor. Therefore, before the Gold actors had even spoken they already held multiple layers of meaning; particularly in comparison with the two-dimensional bodies of the young, the Gold actors were signifiers for different meanings, above all for the absent body of the director himself.

Having reached the middle of the stage, the older actors left their wheelchairs, and began to mingle with the younger courtiers while the music of Gerardo Matos Rodríguez's

[71] Uchida Shige, '*Richard II'* (*Richado nisei*) (2015) <http://ameblo.jp/shige-uchida/entry-12011055878.html> [accessed 21 May 2016].
[72] Yamaguchi, *The Work of Ninagawa*, p. 12.
[73] Akishima, p. 79.
[74] Shevtsova, 282.
[75] Akishima, p. 79.

tango *La Cumparsita* (1916, Uruguay) began playing quietly, reaching a crescendo as the couples came together and suddenly started to dance. This tango, which 'filled the stage' was a 'masterpiece, expressing love, deception, and all the tricks of mankind', seizing 'the hearts of the audience with overwhelming force, three minutes after the opening', beginning, as it did, suddenly and unexpectedly.[76] One critic wrote that they felt 'overwhelmed' by the opening, and another wrote of their surprise at 'just how well Next and Gold worked together', adding that they were surprised at the 'originality of the direction, that there is this way of doing Shakespeare'.[77] Ninagawa was influenced by Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World* (1965), by his notion of the carnivalesque, which 'subverts and liberates the assumptions of the dominant style or atmosphere through humour and chaos', and he sought to bring out a 'carnivalesque atmosphere' in his theatre which formed part of his strategy to 'resist *shingeki* through Shakespeare', although as this was 'partly an internal struggle, Ninagawa has been compelled to continuously search for a new style of performing Shakespeare'.[78] The chaos and subversive atmosphere produced by this scene strongly reflected the carnival, and the 'young and the old, men and women, are jumbled together, creating a strange energy which overflows the stage'.[79]

Assistant director Inoue Sonsho later revealed that Ninagawa's first idea for the production was this tango, and that he also wanted actors in formal Japanese clothes to

[76] Kimata Fuyu, *Male Entanglement: Ninagawa Yukio's 'Richard II'* (*Otoko to otoko no nōmitsuna karamiai*) (2015) <http://www.excite.co.jp/News/reviewmov/20150413/E1428857510337.html> [accessed 5 May 2016]; Takahashi, 'Captivating Ninagawa', 39-40.
[77] Kouda, 21; Watanabe Tamotsu, '2016: The End and Start of a Period' (*Nisenichirokunen jidaino owari to hajimari*), *Higeki-kigeki*, 785.3 (2017), 6-9 (7).
[78] Hamana, 'Last Shakespeare', 271; Suematsu, 'Verbal and Visual Representations', p. 586.
[79] (n.a.), 'Ninagawa Yukio *Richard II*: Fusion of Young and Old Companies' (*Ninagawa Yukio richado nisei wakate to koureisha gekidan ga yuugou*), *Yomiuri*, (10 February 2016) <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/entame/ichiran/20160203-OYT8T50054.html> [accessed 26 May 2016].

'change in one instant into suits'.[80] Ninagawa had used the tango as a motif a number of times before (most obviously in *Tango at the End of Winter*, 1984), and for him it frequently seemed to stand as an image of death. In his 2010 *Doctor Faustus*, after signing the pact, Faustus and Mephistopheles danced a tango, and the production finished with a tango between the two which ended with Faustus's death (again to *La Cumparsita*).[81] Borlik notes that Ninagawa used the tango as a 'musical expression of Faustus's ecstatic pursuit of the utmost limits of sensuous experience', an effect replicated in the later tangos between Richard, Bolingbroke and Aumerle, but many critics also noted the 'sensuality' of the tango between the two companies.[82] Hamana described the joint tango as a 'dance of death', where the director, who was 'himself confronted with death' sublimated the theme to 'the highest level of aesthetics of intensity and fantastic beauty, representing the universal history of human death': crucially, however, she adds that the dance also presents 'a little hope'.[83]

This is an important point, as the tango suggested not only death and ephemerality, but also hope and intergenerational support. Due to the age difference between the two companies, there was a clear sense of help and support, with the younger members helping to guide the older actors through the dance. A previous Gold dance performance has compelling parallels with this tango: in *The Factory 3: Work in Progress* (2013), directed by Pina Bausch dancer Seyama Azusa, one of the scenes experimented with the supportive interaction between the companies. Starring three members of Saitama Next, during one particular scene women from Gold appeared one by one in obvious distress, followed by the younger actors who cradled and tried to comfort them, before running to the next. Seyama cleverly played on audience

[80] Sonsho Inoue, 'Always Looking for the New, the Appeal of Ninagawa's Directing' (*Tsuneni atarashisa wo sagashimotomeru Ninagawa enshutsu no miryoku*), *Higeki-kigeki*, 780.5 (2016), 54-57 (57).
[81] Shoichiro Kawai, 'The Meaning of *Richard II* within the SSS' (*SSS ni okeru richado nisei joen no igi*), *Higeki-kigeki*, 780.5 (2016), 62-64 (64).
[82] Borlik, 'A Season', 452; Aspden.
[83] Quoted from an NHK documentary by Hamana, 'Last Shakespeare Plays', 272.

expectations of age and old/young interaction, as well as reflecting Ninagawa's ethos that young should help support the old. Responding to this sense of mutual support, one critic wrote that 'this *Richard II*, under Ninagawa's direction, gives off a lingering scent of hope for the future and its possibilities', adding that it is hopeful because through its 'crossing of generations', it produced an 'impression of solidarity'.[84]

The final scene of the production was a mirror of the opening, with Bolingbroke's court arranged identically to Richard's, the old courtiers in wheelchairs attended by the young, and York taking the place of Gaunt sitting behind Bolingbroke. As Richard's body was carried offstage to choral music, the court wept loudly, the old women conspicuously dabbing their eyes, before chimes started playing and they suddenly began to laugh. As the laughter continued, the courtiers began to mingle with each other, the previously sombre mood completely gone, and Bolingbroke, who had spent much of the scene sitting expressionlessly on the throne (even checking his nails while others spoke), laughed loudly as the court re-enacted the scene that had opened the production. Then, following more chimes, the cast began to dance a tango again. This fusion of time and people merged 'love and death, East and West' and the present and the past, particularly enforcing the idea of the tango as death as the mourning court transformed instantly to a dance.[85]

Yong Li Lan suggests that the *butsudan* framing device in *NINAGAWA Macbeth* performed the 'inside/outside dynamic of interculturality', exposing the 'idea of the intercultural as the mutual exemplarity of Shakespeare and another cultural form, where each could be identified as simultaneously the other', instead simultaneously suggesting 'co-

[84] (n.a.), 'Saitama Next Theatre's *Richard II*: Hope for the Future'.
[85] Imamura, Asako, *International Shakespeare Festival, Craiova* (2016) <http://www.nntt.jac.go.jp/centre/library/theatre_w/45.html> [accessed 15 August 2017].

operation and estrangement' between Shakespeare and the Japanese production.[86] The tango was another, arguably more mature, example of this inside/outside framework, a masterful direction choice which brought some of the main themes of the text and bound them close together with the reality of the Japanese actors performing the play. The tango, and the opening scene more generally, was the crucial space where Ninagawa set up the hybridity that ran throughout the production, reflecting his comments that when directing Shakespeare's plays, they do not have to take place in any 'particular era' and can be somewhere 'stateless'.[87] The tango between the Next/Gold couples morphed into that between the two young actors who switched from their *montsuki-haori-hakama* into morning suits, both revealing and undermining the 'power of costuming to shape bodies and form identities', and linking to the later themes of homoeroticism and the tango as a display of and challenge to power.[88] Matsuoka has even suggested that the tempo of the actors' speech was fast and reminiscent of a tango, citing the slower and more kabuki-like tempo of *NINAGAWA Macbeth* as a comparison.[89] Peter Holland writes that the 'spectacular moments' employed by Ninagawa 'point to possible interpretation[s] without necessarily making it easy for audiences to be quite sure which 'readings' might be right and which are way off the mark', and the features described so far were crucial to the way Ninagawa destabilised the certainty of any one reading, time period or location in this production.[90]

[86] Yong Li Lan, 'Interacting With Naturalism', p. 140.
[87] Ninagawa and Hasebe, *The Art of Directing*, p. 379.
[88] Aoife Monks, *The Actor in Costume* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 1.
[89] Matsuoka Kazuko, World Shakespeare Congress (roundtable).
[90] Peter Holland, 'Introduction', in *Great Shakespeareans Volume XVIII: Hall, Brook, Ninagawa, Lepage*, ed. by Holland, pp. 1-6 (p. 5).

**The Postwar Generation and *Richard II***

Imamura suggested that the 'fusion of Next and Gold' created a 'chemical reaction, producing a never before seen version of *Richard II*'.[91] I have already described the perceived clash between Next and Gold created by the 'pale' youth and 'tough' postwar generation narrative, and *Richard II* was unique in the way it staged this conflict in numerous ways. Apart from the Duke of York and the Duke of Northumberland, who were played by Next actors, all of the older courtiers were performed by members of Gold. This very apparent division articulated and visualised the gap between the generations, and the conflict between them. When the members of Gold were all assembled on the stage together in their wheelchairs, 'like personalised mini-tanks gliding along the floor, defining personal space', they could have been interpreted as representing the 'power of primogeniture'.[92] Maria Shevtsova likewise argued that the central image in the production was 'not so much the mixture of generations as marked in Shakespeare', but the 'image of where these elders are – in wheelchairs, which they wheel in *en masse*', and Breen suggested that their highly visible presence suggested that Richard was 'crushed by reactionary forces brought to the throne by the 'grey vote''.[93] In the hyper-ageing Japanese society, this image of the stage apparently dominated by the old was extremely arresting, and allowed Ninagawa to 'find the 'poem' of the play and express it beautifully, but with an acute eye for what the play might mean in a contemporary context'.[94] The older courtiers (with the exception of the Duke and Duchess of York during 5.2) never left their wheelchairs, suggesting their retention of power and influence within the court; writing in 1995, Matsuoka suggested that *Hamlet* had found a renewed relevance in

[91] Imamura Tadazumi, 'The Power of Theatre Can Change the World' (*Geki no chikara ha, sekai wo kaeru*), *Higeki-kigeki*, 780.5 (2016), 32-37 (36).
[92] Gaines.
[93] Shevtsova, 278; Breen, 'Ninagawa Speech'.
[94] Breen, 'Ninagawa Speech'.

contemporary society due to the 'elongated average life-span of [the] Japanese people', which meant that the 'older generation stay on in their high positions in the political, industrial and business worlds and so continue to wield power', and Ninagawa brought this sense to the fore to an even stronger extent than he did in the 2015 *Hamlet*, which left Fortinbras' young soldiers surrounding the grey-haired courtiers of Elsinore.[95]

Richard's relationship with the older courtiers especially embodied the divisions between the generations, particularly when interacting with his two uncles. For example, in 2.1 he drew his sword on John of Gaunt, and later climbed onto the Duke of York's wheelchair to intimidate him. Kassai Hiromu, (Gaunt, eighty-four) was effective in his scenes opposite Richard (twenty-seven), giving their conflict an extra sense of tension and aptly reflecting the fixation with age in Shakespeare's text: 'The king is come. Deal mildly with his youth / for young hot colts being raged, do rage the more' (2.1.69-70), versus 'And let them die that age and sullens have / For both hast thou, and both become the grave' (2.1.139-40).[96] The young courtiers seemed to inhabit the repressive social structure that they had inherited, and although Richard often treated the older courtiers with a lack of respect, the structure was maintained throughout the production, leading to the final scene where York (also in a wheelchair) took the space that Gaunt had occupied in the first scene, and the young courtiers again pushed the older members out onto the stage. Another conspicuous example of the potential repression of the young by the old was having Queen Isabelle's ladies-in-waiting all played by members of Gold, raising the question of whether they were chaperones. Certainly, unlike Richard, who surrounded himself with young men, Isabelle seemed to be particularly isolated from others her own age. She was also visually separated from the rest of the cast as she wore a white dress, versus the mostly black-clothed court, again suggesting her isolation

[95] Matsuoka, 'Metamorphosis of *Hamlet* in Tokyo', p. 233.
[96] Shakespeare, *Richard II*, pp. 249, 256-57.

and powerlessness. When directing *Hamlet*, Ninagawa often dressed Ophelia in all-white to represent her innocence and vulnerability (for example, in both the 2015 *Hamlet* and 2012 Saitama Next *Hamlet*), something which surely applies here too. However, the interactions between Isabelle and her ladies-in-waiting also had a touching element to them, demonstrating a close and supportive relationship: when Isabelle cried in 3.4, the ladies surrounded her and wept with her, and during her last meeting with Richard they also watched on in horror.

The dismissive attitude towards the elderly displayed by Richard was also striking in light of the ageing population, evocative of the issue of isolation in old age, an increasing problem in Japan and one which has been regarded as a result of the young not caring for the old. In the scene between Gaunt and the Duchess of Gloucester (played by Shigemoto Etsuko, the oldest member of Gold, eighty-nine) in 1.2, the two actors remained in their wheelchairs whilst surrounded by other elderly courtiers. When the Duchess asked, 'where then, alas, may I complain myself?', and Gaunt replied, 'to God' (1.2.41-42), the casting added a real sense of poignancy to their lines.[97] The scene also held connotations of the alleged historical practice of *ubasute* ('abandoning an old woman') or *oyasute* ('abandoning a parent'), whereby elderly relatives were left by their family to die in an exposed place, often a mountain. Although this practice is folkloric, it has had an undeniable influence within popular culture and has also been linked to the current high rate of suicides among the elderly in Japan, who do not wish to be seen as 'a burden' on their families.[98] Furthermore, having an elderly actor in the role added truth to Gaunt's line, 'My oil-dried lamp and time-bewasted light / Shall be extinct with

[97] Shakespeare, *Richard II*, p. 204.
[98] BBC, *Suicide 'Epidemic' Among Japan's Elderly* (2003) <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/crossing_continents/2862051.stm> [accessed 1 November 2017].

age and endless night' (1.3.221-22).[99] For this reason the parting scene between Bolingbroke and Gaunt carried a great deal of emotional force, arguably much more than it would have if it had been between two young members of Next, and reflected Ninagawa's desire that although it is 'impossible for them to be a real family, their imaginations can be freed if they think of them as their parents'.[100] The age of the actors was further accentuated by the closeness of the audience who surrounded the stage on three sides, which encouraged the ''real' to break through'.[101] The casting also produced unexpected poignant moments, such as when Lord Willoughby (Takada Seijiro, eighty-four), as part of the plot to bring Bolingbroke back to England exited to the line, 'Hold out my horse, and I will be first there' (2.1.300).[102] He was left alone on the stage as the others exited more quickly than him, and the scene ended as he slowly navigated offstage in his wheelchair.

In line with Ninagawa's often-quoted statement that 'old people are not angels' and that working with Gold 'takes stamina', the production also allowed the individual personalities of the older actors to appear.[103] Shevtsova describes the older actors as bringing 'old-man peevishness' to the production, adding that this was blended with a sensed 'strength of character' and their obvious experience with power.[104] This occasionally produced humour, such as the scene in 3.4 with the gardeners played by five Gold members, who added warmth to the scene as they walked across the stage in a line holding hands, emphasising their age but also friendship and support. Ninagawa had stated that before he created Gold he was envious that 'overseas, people the actual age of the characters perform', but in *Richard II* it is arguable that he and his actors demonstrated Valerie Barnes Lipscomb and Leni Marhsall's contention

[99] Shakespeare, *Richard II*, p. 225.
[100] Ninagawa, 'Rehearsing with'.
[101] (n.a.), 'Saitama Next Theatre's *Richard II*: Hope for the Future'.
[102] Shakespeare, *Richard II*, p. 274.
[103] Tanaka, 'A Golden Age'.
[104] Shevtsova, 278.

that 'age as well as gender can be viewed as performative'.[105] The densely structured text and the formal, hierarchical society it presents allowed the senior actors to be at times frail with age, and at other times loud and energetic. Bolingbroke's rebellion was supported first by the older courtiers, and then later by an army of elderly commoners brandishing 'pitchforks and spades' from their wheelchairs who roared across the stage.[106] Dressed in historical working-class Japanese clothes, the army seemed to be mostly armed with household items and farming tools, and they seemed tough and eager to support Bolingbroke. Yamaguchi has suggested that the theme of '"I won't become a withered old person" has run violently through Ninagawa's life work', and this peasant army, freed from the confines of the court and of the Shakespearean text, arguably undermined this sense of frailty through the 'casting equivalent of Mercutio's *punto reverso*' which 'can be achieved by presenting the audience with the opposite of what it might have expected or imagined': Prescott goes on to cite the 'geriatric Romeo and Juliet in Power's *A Tender Thing*' as an example of this reversal, but Ninagawa's geriatric peasant army is another fitting example.[107] Despite this, it is also true that their inclusion reflects and corresponds to Scroop's lines that 'White-beards have armed their thin and hairless scalps against thy majesty' (3.2.112-13), and that 'distaff-women manage rusty bills against thy seat. Both young and old rebel' (3.2.118-19).[108]

The homemade, makeshift weapons carried by Bolingbroke's supporters were reminiscent of the old women who invade the courtroom in *Ravens, We Shall Load Bullets* with their own improvised weapons, and to a certain extent of the two old women who flank

[105] Yoshinori, Suga and Kowase, p. 14; Valerie Barnes Lipscomb and Leni Marshall, 'Introduction', in *Staging Age: The Performance of Age in Theatre, Dance and Film*, ed. by Valerie Barnes Lipscomb and Leni Marshall (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 1-7 (p. 2).
[106] Shevtsova, 282.
[107] Yamaguchi, 'The Remarkable *Richard II*', 7; Paul Prescott, 'Shakespeare and the Theatre', in *Shakespeare's Creative Legacies: Artists, Writers, Performers, Readers*, ed. by Paul Edmondson and Peter Holbrook (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), pp. 11-26 (p. 16).
[108] Shakespeare, *Richard II*, pp. 325-26.

the stage on either side during *NINAGAWA Macbeth* with bags and boxes of food. The army's appearance also marked another eruption of Japanese history into the framework of *Richard II*, with the working-class army staging an uprising against the king, who was dressed in modern western clothing. Further, Bolingbroke and the nobles wore a mixture of European-style medieval armour and *hakama*, while the villagers wore old-fashioned Japanese villager outfits. This was not a simple comparison between the 'premodern' (or postwar, as embodied by the members of Gold) and the modern (the two-dimensional youth, embodied in Richard), however, but a means of questioning the meaning of performing Shakespeare in contemporary Japan, and with these particular acting companies. The potential dissonance between the acting style of Gold and the Shakespearean text should also be addressed, as their previous performances have all had space for the actors to make mistakes, but this structure was missing in the supposedly stricter confines of Shakespeare's text, particularly given Ninagawa's usual faithfulness to the original. While there was a marked difference in the delivery styles of the two companies, and lines occasionally changed or lost their structure if the actors had trouble remembering them, these slippages combined and built up to introduce more of the 'reality' of the actors and their age into the performance. One critic claimed that their delivery made it seem as though the production was set in a 'rehabilitation facility for old people who don't know what they're saying', others commented that 'although it is obvious that there would be some problems reciting lines smoothly, it's real'.[109] The very first line of *Richard II* deals with age, beginning 'Old John of Gaunt, time-honoured Lancaster', and the theme of age and time are repeatedly returned to throughout the text, down to the final line which ends with 'untimely bier' (5.6.52).[110] Ninagawa ingeniously drew out these repetitions through the inclusion of senior actors, and used this to reflect the anxieties that

[109] (n.a.), *I Watched 'Richard II'*; (n.a.), *Watching* '*Richard II'* (*Richado nisei wo miru*) (2015) <http://minaminosora.cocolog-nifty.com/blog/2015/04/post-44e2.html> [accessed 20 May 2016].
[110] Shakespeare, *Richard II*, pp. 179, 484.

come with the ageing population. The other side of the ageing population/birth-rate crisis are the young, and throughout this production Ninagawa both used and upturned concepts of the pale and two-dimensional youth.

**The Grass-Eater Richard**

As Richard, Kenshi Uchida seemed to embody the flat, herbivore young generation, with many of his characteristics corresponding to the common stereotypes about them: extremely skinny and pale, disengaged, quietly-spoken, androgynous and full of lassitude. Through this depiction, Ninagawa not only reflected a contemporary social issue, but he also vividly illuminated the conflict in the text of *Richard II* between forms of masculinity and gender performance. Ronald Saladin writes that the 'herbivore men do not choose to live up to the qualities that are commonly ascribed to a typical man in terms of the hegemonic construction of masculinity', and thereby 'came to symbolise a generation that is publicly viewed as being responsible for problems in Japanese society in general', just as Gaunt describes Richard's 'waste' as 'no whit lesser than thy land' (2.1.103).[111] Just as the herbivores, in their rejection of the salaryman-style lifestyle, have been accused of being in 'serious decline spiritually in the view of many older Japanese males', Richard's 'wasteful' court (3.4.55) is seen by the older characters as having deteriorated from those of his predecessors; likewise, Northumberland accuses Richard of being a spendthrift and failing to live up to his father and grandfather's wars ('Wars have not wasted it, for warr'd he hath not […] More hath he spent in peace than they in wars' 2.1.252-55), which has startling similarities to the perception that the 'disciplined and hardworking types in the immediate postwar period, the supposed latter-

[111] Saladin, 57; Shakespeare, *Richard II*, p. 252.

day samurai whose selfless efforts helped Japan rise to superpower status, despair that they are being succeeded by a generation of weak and selfish wimps'.[112]

From his very first entrance, Richard was associated with the *sōshokukei-danshi*, and his style of kingship was also immediately defined. Unlike the other young characters who all entered on foot, Richard arrived in an electric wheelchair which represented the throne; appearing at the back of the stage on his own, the others rushed out of his way as he expressionlessly moved downstage, the previously noisy atmosphere replaced by the sound his wheelchair made. He moved slowly and deliberately, his movements implying that he was following an established ritual which he expected the court to obediently follow. The rest of the court waited until he had stopped, before hurrying to the back of the stage to face him, the old courtiers back in their wheelchairs following the tango, pushed by the younger ones. Uchida stated that 'thanks to Ninagawa's decision to have Richard enter in a wheelchair', he felt that he was able to portray the character, and one reviewer suggested that since Uchida 'has a delicate body, the wheelchair suits him well and conveys a feeling of him as a 'weak king''.[113] Unlike Gold, however, Uchida did leave the wheelchair regularly ('albeit unwillingly'), but he tended to make his entrances and exits using it; and from 4.1, Bolingbroke replaced him in this 'same chair-throne, a symbol of the disabling force of political power'.[114] Despite Bolingbroke's protestations about what his exact ambitions were, the moment he sat in the throne in front of the court (before Richard had arrived and resigned the crown to him) his true desires were revealed, and he re-enacted Richard's initial entrance during the final scene, with the same expressionless face and long, silent journey across the

[112] Kenneth G. Henshall, *Dimensions of Japanese Society: Gender, Margins and Mainstream* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992), p. 2; Shakespeare, *Richard II*, pp. 367, 268.
[113] Uchida Kenshi, 'A Baptism in Ninagawa Shakespeare' (*Ninagawa sheikusupia to iu senrei*), *Higeki-kigeki*, 780.5 (2016), 46-49 (46); (n.a.), *I Went to Watch Ninagawa Yukio's 'Richard II'* (*Richadonisei kantekimashita*) *Nisei* (2015) <https://www.scenarioclub.jp/blog/blog_info/3600> [accessed 15 July 2017].
[114] Shevtsova, 279.

stage in the electric wheelchair (but with 'neither real authority nor real glory', thereby exposing the 'vanity and folly of power struggles').[115]

[Image redacted]

Fig. 13 - *Richard II*, Craiova

The identical western-style suits that the younger courtiers all wore on their entrance in 2.1, with Richard at their head [Fig. 13], were reminiscent of:

> the old-fashioned morning suits (*moningu*) worn on ceremonial occasions such as weddings. While almost forgotten in their countries of origin, these symbols of the West, which were proclaimed by the government in the Meiji era, are still worn by Japanese men, who in many ways have become 'models for the West'.[116]

Uchida's performance was also given a sense of fragility by the wheelchair, an effect that was only enhanced by the thinness of his body: indeed, in the 2016 revival [Fig. 13], he was so thin as to appear almost unhealthily emaciated. Ninagawa once said about Uchida that, 'unattended, he'll just eat crisps in one day. He doesn't have interest in eating', and Ninagawa

[115] Hamana, 'Last Shakespeare Plays', 273.
[116] Ofra Goldstein-Gidoni and Michal Daliot-Bul, '"Shall we *dansu*?": Dancing with the 'West' in Contemporary Japan', *Japan Forum*, 14.1 (2002), 23-75 (67).

developed this sense of a disinterest in eating to a disinterest in moving: Richard delegated much of his movement to the wheelchair, revealing a similar sense of disconnection and disinterest in his own body.[117] Noda has suggested that in contemporary Japanese theatre the 'emaciated theatrical presence of the body' seems to stem from 'macho pressures outside', adding that this 'certain type of physicality which results from the sense of unease present in Japanese society today' re-appears repeatedly in performance, and Uchida's emaciated Richard is arguably one of the clearest representations of his theory in recent years.[118]

I described previously how Uchida's body has been referred to as both the representative of the 'grass-eating boys' and as a 'postwar' body due to its thinness. There are evident contradictions between these two descriptions, since the contemporary herbivores have been positioned as the exact opposite of the postwar generation, and so it is suggestive that traits from both have been attributed to Uchida. On numerous occasions Ninagawa referred to Uchida, 'whose body and appetites are thin, and who has the body of a postwar Japanese' as the representative of 'contemporary young people whose desires are pale, and who are becoming herbivores'.[119] This reveals the paradox inherent in the two-dimensional/pale debate, further supported by the number of critics who praised Uchida's performance for its individuality and charisma. For example, Yamaguchi wrote that despite being 'delicate and slender, he has an extremely strong core and mysterious charisma', and Hamada that, 'although he looks like today's young people, he gives off a mysterious presence onstage'.[120] In regards to this *Richard II*, Ninagawa wrote that an important feature of the production was to 'force the voice to travel even if the speaker is physically weak', a

[117] Tokunaga, 'The Place for Blue Youths', p. 187.
[118] Noda, 'The Body Ill at Ease', 273-74.
[119] Kimata, *Why Does Ninagawa*.
[120] Yamaguchi, *The Work of Ninagawa*, p. 117; Uchida Kenshi, *Interesting Things I Learnt Re-Staging Ninagawa's 'Richard II'* (*Omoshiroimono shitta Ninagawa enshutsu richado nisei ni futabi idomu*) (interviewed by Hamada Motoko for *Mainichi*), *Mainichi*, (2016) <http://mainichi.jp/articles/20160204/dde/012/200/006000c> [accessed 12 August 2016].

significant statement given that for much of the performance, as with his Fortinbras, Richard barely raised his voice above a whisper.[121] Uchida's whispering, despite being characteristic of the 'body ill at ease' in contemporary performance with 'its low intensity and self-effacing presence under pressure', also represented the king's sense of his own divine right to rule.[122] In this perceived lack of requirement to raise his voice, Richard forced the other characters to listen closely to his every word, revealing a kind of power in his quietness; and despite his quietness he was able to command the 'vast stage with his presence'.[123]

There were a number of obvious similarities between Uchida's Richard and Fortinbras, but their fates were reversed: as Fortinbras, the passive grass-eating youth took control, while as Richard he lost to the more active, noisy youth, or the 'carnivore' Bolingbroke. Ninagawa suggested that *Richard II* is about the 'confrontation between Bolingbroke's political power and Richard's theatrical power', but in his production it was also the confrontation between the herbivores and the carnivores of the contemporary youth.[124] Considering the relative failure of the New National Theatre's *Henry IV* to adequately reflect the contemporary period, it is perhaps striking that the programme for that production featured a report on the *Henry IV* plays adapted for the BBC's 2012 television series *The Hollow Crown*, which stated that as Hal, Tom Hiddleston 'looked like a present-day kid. Not just his clothes, but his expressions and feelings also seem contemporary […]. This is the contemporary British performance style. That's right, in Britain there's almost no difference between classical and contemporary theatre'.[125] Whether the New National tried to replicate this kind of 'contemporary' performance is debatable, but what is clear from the comparison between this production and

[121] Kimata, *Male Entanglement*.
[122] Noda, 'The Body Ill at Ease', 274.
[123] Bernard, 19.
[124] Matsuoka, '*Richard II*', 6.
[125] New National Theatre, *Henry IV* (programme), (Tokyo: New National Theatre, 2016).

Ninagawa's *Richard II* is that the key to successfully bringing in the contemporary world depends on more than simple visual tricks such as a leather jacket or headphones. It is worth noting, however, that when questioned whether he feels that onstage he is a representation of 'today's young people', Uchida acknowledged that he had heard the comparison but that he does not think so himself, stating that when he was acting at Theatre Cocoon in Shibuya, 'I was watching the people coming and going in the streets, and I didn't feel like I symbolised these people. It was a strange feeling'.[126]

In comparison to the 'seemingly frail' Uchida, Bolingbroke was described as 'masculine' and burning with ambition: 'There is a temperature difference between the burning hot Bolingbroke appealing to Richard with his utmost strength, and a cool, calm Uchida floating. Despite his calm, he is still desperately clinging to the position of king'.[127] The difference between the two was emphasised by their speech and movement styles, with Uchida's 'languid', and Bolingbroke's 'all energy', which Shevtsova suggests metaphorically represents the 'struggle between light and fire, between something like spiritual enlightenment and earthly force'.[128] The contrast between Richard and the others was particularly evident in the first scene, when Mowbray and Bolingbroke spoke passionately and loudly, in response to which Richard barely raised his voice above a whisper. In addition to suggesting Richard's sense of his own divine right, it connected this unfamiliar concept to the more familiar idea of the herbivores, thus allowing the audience to understand Richard's concept of himself. It is striking that despite both Ninagawa and assistant director Inoue ('during rehearsals there were times I wondered if we'd ever be able to open the show') criticising the actors' ability to recite the lines during rehearsals, they tapped into and

[126] Kimata, *A Life-Changing Encounter with Ninagawa*.
[127] Bernard, 19; (n.a.), 'Saitama Next Theatre's *Richard II*: Hope for the Future'.
[128] Shevtsova, 279.

capitalised on this image of the youth who are unable to speak or express themselves.[129] This suggests that they intended to bring in audience conceptions of the junk youth into their interpretation of the play, and demonstrates the importance of the idea within the cultural context of contemporary Japanese Shakespeare performance. It also implies the aptness of *Richard II* as a play to represent this: there is little doubt that the same effect could not have been achieved without the Gold/Next division.

Not only Richard, but all of Next were described in terms of the superflat in responses to the production, corresponding particularly to this perceived opposition between them and Saitama Gold. Yamaguchi wrote that the audience were made aware that the members of Gold have 'bodies and spirits rugged and tough like old pine trees', whereas Next 'hide smoothly within their appearances'.[130] She thereby implies a kind of flatness and inability for the actors to express themselves beyond using their looks, but she also said that in performance they are 'isolated, seeking a response from life. They shake when expressing their thoughts, and then they set loose a brilliant light. This is how the classics stand up as contemporary stories'.[131] Yamaguchi's statement that this is how classical plays can 'stand up as contemporary stories' is critical for what it implies about using familiar concepts from daily life to connect unfamiliar or translated stories to the audience. From this perspective, Ninagawa brilliantly used the 'junk' bodies of his actors and the corresponding social debate to create a contemporary and meaningful version of *Richard II*. Furthermore, by utilising the concept of the pale/postwar through the collaboration with Gold, he was able to represent the

[129] Inoue, 57.
[130] Yamaguchi, *The Work of Ninagawa*, p. 121.
[131] Ibid.

'continuity of the struggle for power, which links Richard to Bolingbroke as it links their generation to that of their fathers'.[132]

The tango, which was repeated in a series of solo dances between Richard and Bolingbroke, Richard and Aumerle, and then Bolingbroke and Aumerle, was used to suggest homosexual relationships between the three, but its inclusion also prompted some critics to use terms that reflect the superflat in their responses. For example, Kouda described the production in the following terms:

> put simply, this is a play about politics, but Ninagawa's *Richard* is more about the charm of the young male actors. Or you could say the charm of 'sexy boys' [...] I hadn't thought of it as a drama of two young men, or Boy's Drama, before.[133]

The term 'Boys Drama' is familiar from manga and anime, thereby taking Shakespeare's text and Ninagawa's production back to the realm of two-dimensional popular culture. Uchida was also explicitly linked to the character L from the popular manga series *Death Note* (2003-2006) by one reviewer.[134] Kouda also wrote that, 'they were often naked', and a number of others picked up on this idea ('*ikemen* semi-naked festival!'), with one asking 'was Richard always naked to please the *fujoshi* [fangirls]?'[135] Some critics also referred to the production in terms of 'Boys Love' (*shonen-ai*), a genre popular in manga and anime that portrays homosexual relationships, often between *bishonen* or 'beautiful boys', with one calling it 'a medieval version of Boys Love'.[136] The recurrence of words such as *ikemen*, *bishonen* and

[132] Shevtsova, 280-82.
[133] Kouda, 23.
[134] (n.a.), *Saitama Next Theatre's 'Richard II'* (*Saitama nekusuto shiata richado nisei*) (2015) <http://ameblo.jp/ayuto2/entry-12011123816.html> [accessed 18 May 2016].
[135] Kouda, '*Richard II*'; (n.a.) *Saitama Next Theatre's 'Richard II'*.
[136] (n.a.), 'Saitama Next Theatre's *Richard II*: Hope for the Future'.

Boys Love from popular culture related the production back to these 'two-dimensional' genres.

The tango established Bolingbroke and Aumerle as Richard's favourites, at the same time suggesting the differences in their personalities. For example, Bolingbroke's more ambitious nature was reflected by him taking the lead in the tango. The conflict between Richard and Bolingbroke was deeply embedded within their tango, with Ninagawa ascribing its inclusion to his desire to 'do something experimental. I decided to have the two rivals for the kingship dance a tango in the opening'. [137] The complicated reading Ninagawa presented of the relationship between two characters was also attested to through the tango motif; with, for example, Bolingbroke removing his armour to reveal the dress-pants and braces he had worn during their previous tango at the end of 3.3. Having taken Richard into custody, he suddenly tried to initiate another dance, throwing himself at Richard's feet when Richard asked 'Set on towards London, cousin: is it so?' (3.3.208).[138] Richard did not acknowledge his actions, and without looking at any of the other characters, said 'Then I must not say no', and left the stage, leaving Bolingbroke alone (3.3.210).[139] The tango also therefore implied the power that Richard had over them as subjects, and his rejection of Bolingbroke's attempt perhaps suggested that he felt that the power balance had changed too greatly since the first scene. Bolingbroke in particular reflected the 'seductive call of power and the pull of seduction as such' through his dances, particularly at the end of 5.3 when he mirrored Richard's tango with Aumerle.[140] This dance, coming after Bolingbroke had pardoned

[137] Akishima, p. 80.
[138] Shakespeare, *Richard II*, p. 360.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Shevtsova, 282.

Aumerle for his part in the treason attempt, implied both his subjugation of Aumerle and his similarities with Richard.[141]

As with many other productions of *Richard II*, then, Ninagawa used these moments to underline that Bolingbroke ends in a similarly compromised position to the one Richard started with. Most notably, Jon Barton's 1973 RSC production cast Ian Richardson and Richard Pasco as both Richard and Bolingbroke, with the roles switching between them and thus emphasising the equivalence between the two. Likewise, the end of *Richard II* in *The Hollow Crown* television series, which Ninagawa was certainly aware of (Inoue writes that he first suggested staging *Richard II* to Ninagawa after seeing it), ended with Bolingbroke (Rory Kinnear) visibly aware of his implicit role in the deaths of numerous traitors.[142] Ninagawa's theatre continually questioned contemporary society and politics, and in *Richard II* he presented a further criticism of the political system and questioned what kingship (or, leadership) is. Watanabe Tamotsu writes that he 'always criticised the system, and continued to criticise contemporary society which upholds the structure', and cites *Richard II* as the perfect text for Ninagawa because of the assumption in the play that Richard has 'the absolute obedience of the people'.[143] Watanabe added that Ninagawa used *Richard II* to reflect on what happens when 'dictators appear' and thereby criticised the contemporary political system, 'finding contemporary meanings while performing the classics, and creating meaning by confronting the present'.[144]

Ninagawa's examination of corruption and greed among those in power gained significance by having Bolingbroke mirror Richard so closely, particularly in the final scene

[141] Kawai, 64.
[142] Inoue, 57.
[143] Watanabe Tamotsu, 'Ninagawa Yukio: Persistent Defiance' (*Ninagawa Yukio: sono akunaki chousen*), *Teatro*, 905.7 (2015), 20-21 (20).
[144] Ibid., 20-21.

where the court re-enacted its opening movements. After Richard has been killed in prison, his body was carried out to choral music and in the resulting blackout the audience began to hear chimes and laughter. The court reappeared from the back, dressed in formal Japanese-wear again, and re-enacted their previous scene of greeting each other: after a fanfare, Bolingbroke appeared in the electronic wheelchair and in an exact replica of Richard's entrance, moved slowly to the end of the stage with a completely blank expression. The court rushed to the back of the stage, creating the same tableaux that had opened the production, with the only differences being York sitting in a wheelchair behind Bolingbroke instead of Gaunt, and Bolingbroke in the throne instead of Richard. While Richard's body was carried offstage the courtiers audibly wept, before they suddenly began to laugh, joined by Bolingbroke who laughed madly. In addition to suggesting the 'circular dynamics of history' and the equivalence of Richard/Bolingbroke, Ninagawa also criticised the courtiers who were able to, or at least pretend to, easily forget the past and move on to entertainment and distractions.[145]

The laughter was also reminiscent of one of the typical set endings used in kyogen. The short humorous plays that make up the repertory of kyogen often use a formulaic ending, including a chase scene (*oikomi dome*), a scolding (*shikari dome*), a sneeze (*kusame dome*), a musical postlude (*shagiri dome*), or laughter (*warai dome*): in the 'laughing close', the actors 'face the audience and laugh heartily ('ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!') at what they have been doing onstage'.[146] Some critics have noted that Bakhtin's writing on medieval parody in the west is reminiscent of this kyogen laughter, where 'everything was, without exception, comic. Laughter was as universal as serious: it was directed at the whole world, at history, at

[145] Hamana, 273.
[146] Ronald Cavaye, Paul Griffith and Senda Akihiko, *A Guide to the Japanese Stage: From the Traditional to the Cutting Edge* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2004), p. 191.

ideology'.[147] Ninagawa left it open for the audience to decide whom or what this laughter was directed at, but Breen has suggested that this production contained a 'political edge' that he had not encountered previously in Ninagawa's productions, largely down to the fact that it was performed by a 'huge company of young aspiring actors' and the older actors of Gold which gave the 'metaphor huge force, and made the achievement all the more impressive'.[148] In this last section, I will look at how these political and thematic decisions interacted with the framework of hybridity employed by Ninagawa, which formed the final part of what made this the masterpiece of Ninagawa's final years.

**Re-defining Japan/England's Richard**

I previously discussed Ninagawa's creation of a third space in *Richard II*, which denied and undid fixed notions of staging a translated play in Japan, particularly a history play. In Matsuoka's description, the opening scene of this *Richard II* was a 'high example of cultural hybridity', and Yamaguchi has similarly described the production as an 'important element in understanding Ninagawa's work', and one which was very connected to the everyday life of the audience.[149] For Ninagawa, hybridity seemed to 'emerge as a source of proliferating differences', and it is in this sense that *Richard II* was so successful and significant.[150] This production is arguably one of the best examples of Leith Morton's theory that intercultural Shakespeare in Japan is a means of 'reclaiming the exotic, namely, Shakespeare as alien, not as art so domesticated it ceases to have any sense of cultural difference or alterity altogether', by combining both the familiar and the unfamiliar and the 'spectacular and serious, traditional

[147] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. by Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1984), p. 84.
[148] Breen, 'Ninagawa Speech'.
[149] Matsuoka Kazuko, 'Shakespeare Translation' (lecture), (4 December 2016); Yamaguchi Hiroko, 'Ninagawa Remembered' (lecture), University of Birmingham (5 October 2017).
[150] Leith Morton, *The Alien Within: Representations of the Exotic in Twentieth Century Japanese Literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009), p. 12.

and trendy' into one production.[151] Borlik has suggested that Ninagawa's productions 'deserve critical attention for their self-reflexive comments on the peculiar quandaries of intercultural theatre', which, as will be revealed in this next section, reached a pinnacle in his *Richard II*.[152]

One of the most striking visuals Ninagawa employed was a *nami*, or a cloth originating in kabuki which is painted to look like waves, during 3.2 when Richard returns from Ireland [Fig. 14]. Ninagawa had used a *nami* previously, most famously during the shipwreck scene in *Kabuki Twelfth Night*, but in the three-sided space its impact was more effective than in a proscenium theatre since it completely filled the stage, reaching to the very edges of the audience seats. Ninagawa also employed *kuroko*, the black-clad and hooded stage assistants used in traditional theatre, to pull the wave on and then to move it gently to suggest ripples. The *nami* is a good example of the intersection in Japanese theatre between the realistic and the theatrical as it convincingly replicates the movement of waves whilst simultaneously revealing the method producing it. Richard appeared suddenly in the middle of the waves, asking 'Barkloughly castle call they this at hand?' (3.2.1), and he was gradually joined by the other characters who appeared on top of the waves.[153] Defying realism, only Richard stood while the others rolled through the waves,

[151] Ibid.; Brokering, 393.
[152] Borlik, 'A Season', 447.
[153] Shakespeare, *Richard II*, p. 315.

[Image redacted]

Fig. 14 – Richard, Act 3 Scene 2

representing both his loneliness and isolation, and the way the events were beginning to overtake the characters. Half-undressed, Uchida alone kept to his feet with the expanse of waves stretching out before and behind him, and as the bad news accumulated his eyes rolled back until the whites of his eyes were revealed, reminiscent of a *mie* in kabuki, or a moment of 'arrested gesture' when the actor strikes and holds a pose at moments of high emotion.[154] The scene emphasised the thinness of Uchida's body through his half-undressed state, which made Kimata describe the scene as a 'sublime cry from Ninagawa' represented through 'Uchida, with his frail shoulders, burdened with such a heavy thing. As Richard he moves as though he's walking across a thin rope', which she interpreted as representing the 'fragility of life and its uncertainty'.[155]

The wave created an image that was both spectacular and simple, and which tapped into an almost mythological theme. Just as Richard was/was not English, the beach was and was not Wales; it could also have been Kikai-ga-shima, the island where Shunkan, a historical

[154] Derek Walcott, 'The Kabuki… Something to Give to our Theatre', *Sunday Guardian* (Trinidad), (16 February 1964), p. 14.
[155] Kimata, *Male Entanglement*.

figure featuring in numerous Noh and kabuki plays, was exiled after trying to overthrow the military leader Taira no Kiyomori, and who in the kabuki version is driven back from the edge of the island by the *nami* waves. Breen tellingly suggested that in this production 'England was a far away mythic land, the mere setting' in a performance that 'called for compassion and understanding in the political realm'.[156] The way the water dwarfed Richard, even though out of all the characters onstage he was the only one to keep to his feet, clearly suggested his fall from power, reflecting Ninagawa's idea that 'there are many people who fall in Shakespeare's work, but the one who falls the farthest is Richard II'.[157]

Other elements from kabuki were incorporated, such as a sound similar to *tsuke* or *hyoshigi* (wooden clappers), which is used to mark a 'dramatic entrance' or scene change.[158] This was used when Richard made his first entrance, at the moment he interrupted the previously festive mood of the court, and at the announcement of Mowbray's death in 4.1. The technique that was most commented on by reviewers of the Craiova production was the use of *nuigurumi*, a full-body costume used to represent animals: in this production, two actors wear a suit resembling a life-sized horse. The effect is fairly realistic at first sight, creating the impression that real horses had been brought onstage when Bolingbroke and Mowbray appeared on them in their entrance to 1.3. Barry Gaines for example wrote that the horses 'appeared so real that it took a second and third look to determine that they were actually two men beneath the horses' amazing costumes. Not only did they look real, they moved their heads and snorted as horses', and the costumes, which were also used in *NINAGAWA Macbeth*, received a similar critical response when *Macbeth* was performed at

[156] Breen, 'Ninagawa Speech'.
[157] Ninagawa Yukio, '*Richard II* Interview', *Arts Theatre Press*, 56 (2015), 3-5 (4).
[158] Brokering, 390.

the Barbican.[159] However, what made the use of these costumes the most interesting was the fact that they were combined with the actors riding them wearing *hakama*, medieval European breastplates and chainmail [Fig. 15]. This is a prime example of Lo and Gilbert's theory that in 'self-reflexive' intercultural theatre, the 'hybridising of cultural fragments would be far from seamless: cultural tensions would not be hidden nor difference naturalised', but it also reveals the 'multiple languages speaking to each other' and 'pluralised authenticities' of translation.[160]

[Image redacted]

Fig. 15 – Northumberland, Bolingbroke and York

Ninagawa spoke on several occasions about the difficulties he found in using weapons in translated drama: he said, for example, that the most difficult part of directing *Hamlet* was 'how to play the fencing scene', arguing that 'if you move the play, like *Macbeth*, to Japanese history then it's fine, but if generally speaking you're doing it in western style, then a Japanese *katana* [sword] is strange'.[161] As a result, he often used western-style swords in productions (including for example the 2015 *Hamlet*), but with *hakama*: in *Richard II* these

[159] Gaines.
[160] Lo and Gilbert, 48; Curran, p. 1.
[161] Ninagawa and Hasebe, *The Art of Directing*, p. 290.

combined with elements such as the senior actors dressed in working-class clothes and courtiers in suits. There are notable comparisons to be made with Ninagawa's *Richard II* and Ariane Mnouchkine's 1981 production, which 'superimposed the stylised vocal effects and precisely patterned movements of Japanese theatre forms on the ritualised fourteenth-century English codes of behaviour', using 'Elizabethan ruffs with silk and brocade samurai-inspired billowing skirts and headdresses'.[162] However, Mnouchkine has been criticised for her Orientalism and for creating 'imaginary kabuki', a framework that was dependent on the so-called 'troubling dichotomy between referents of verbal and nonverbal signs, medieval England and feudal Japan', which was 'dissolved in the logic of the inserted fictional play, that is, a kabuki performance of *Richard II*'.[163] In contrast, Ninagawa's production represented a 'jumble of old and new, or Asian and Western – a widely different picture from the Western version of the East'.[164]

The final image that needs to be discussed was Ninagawa's equation between Richard and Christ, beginning with the deposition scene in which Richard stripped down to a loincloth, and lay on a cross projected onto the stage. Gaines writes that while many productions 'try to find a way to show Richard as a self-proclaimed Christ figure', few 'surpass the literal crucifixion of Ninagawa's unkinged Richard', but the image was also used as a method of explaining the concept of the divine right of kings.[165] Ninagawa suggested that the image of the 'suffering Christ' is connected to the 'European worldview', but that at the same time he wanted to use something that would show 'sympathy with the Japanese landscape': in fact,

[162] Leiter, *Around the Globe*, p 589.
[163] Jean Alter, *A Sociosemiotic Theory of Theatre* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), p. 137.
[164] Suematsu Michiko, 'Collaboration in Asia: Four Japanese Shakespearean Productions in the 1990s', *The Journal of Social and Information Studies*, 7 (2000), 143-53 (152).
[165] Gaines.

Takahashi argues that the 'semi-nude Richard was a homage to a *bonze* [Buddhist monk]'.[166] In this way, Ninagawa was able to openly stage the conflicts and connections between the actors and the text, creating the 'state of being neither here nor there', and 'returning' Shakespeare's play 'with a difference'.[167] Ninagawa simultaneously rejected the medieval-aesthetics that dominated anglophone productions for much of the last century, and the necessity to adapt the setting completely to a historical Japanese setting, thereby supporting Kuortti and Nyman's theory that 'hybridity is a site of transformation and change where fixed identities based on essentialisms are called into question'.[168]

In an interview prior to the opening of the production, Ninagawa said he wondered whether 'these anonymous young people can make a new Shakespeare', but through the combination of young and old companies, the engagement with Japan's demographic issues and other social problems, *Richard II* became a vivid and unique performance that utilised both anxiety and 'wonder'.[169] In fact, one critic even wrote that it was a production which made her 'feel glad to be alive', and numerous others called it a 'masterpiece' or 'a representative performance' for the two companies.[170] Besides what it revealed about Ninagawa's skill in surpassing accusations of Orientalism or *japonisme* (and thereby successfully meeting Hamana's challenge that his work needed to become 'post-japonism'), *Richard II* was also deeply political and moving in its message of inclusion and support.[171] Prescott has suggested that,

> The stage must be peopled and what those people look and sound like, where they come from, and what they represent has implications for the audience experience and

[166] Takahashi, 'Captivating Ninagawa Shakespeare', 41.
[167] Curran, p. 117; Gallimore, 'Shakespeare's History Plays', p. 98.
[168] Kuortti and Nyman, *Reconstructing Hybridity*, p. 2.
[169] Ninagawa Yukio, 'Rehearsing With'.
[170] Kitamura, p. 141; Yamaguchi, 'The Remarkable *Richard II*', 7.
[171] Hamana, *Connecting Cultures*, p. 28.

> for the reputation of Shakespeare within wider culture. In short, the question of who gets to speak Shakespeare is a political issue

and Ninagawa's production challenged both the concept of ageism and of the superficiality of the younger generation of actors.[172] Edward Burns has suggested that the history plays have been less popular internationally than the tragedies or comedies because they have been entrapped in 'an anachronistic national myth', and he adds that 'in moving on from a sense of 'this England'' the histories can become 'less foreign to us'.[173] By dismantling the certainty of 'this England', and using it to question the boundaries of 'this Japan', Ninagawa was able to stage an adaptation of *Richard II* that forcefully questioned the meaning of, and perhaps more importantly the possibilities of, performing Shakespeare in contemporary Japan.

[172] Prescott, 'Shakespeare and the Theatre', p. 15.
[173] Edward Burns, 'Shakespeare's Histories in Cycles', in *Shakespeare's History Plays*, ed. by Hoenselaars, pp. 151-58 (p. 165).

# CONCLUSION

A large number of kyogen plays begin with the line: 'I am one who comes from around here', or 'I am of this neighbourhood' (*Koreha, kono atari no mono de gozaru*).[1] During much of the twentieth-century under the pressure of 'canonical performance', artists working in Japan were expected to completely become an 'English Henry, an English-Italian Romeo or an English-Greek Pericles', to represent the 'otherness' of the characters to the audience without acknowledging their own pluralised identity.[2] Throughout this study, I have presented various examples of artists working in contemporary Japan who have taken this formula and overturned it, revealing the hybridity embedded in the performance of Shakespeare that enables the 'negotiation of those spaces that are continually, contingently, 'opening out', remaking the boundaries, exposing the limits of any claim to a singular or autonomous sign of difference'.[3] As in Ninagawa's instant switch from *montsuki-haori-hakama* to a morning suit, these performances have revealed that although an actor can put on a costume (be it Japanese, western, theirs, ours) and say 'now I am one of this neighbourhood', all it takes is a thread pulled and suddenly they are someone else entirely: but as Morton writes, out of the 'tension of resistance and affinity' created in translation, the 'strangeness' produced is 'elucidative because we come to recognise it, to 'know it again' as our own'.[4]

From the very beginning of Shakespearean reception in Japan, the image of 'Shakespeare' was closely bound up with ideas about the west, and Britain in particular, based on the fact that his plays were one of the most famous cultural exports of the 'dominant imperialist state of the day'.[5] In the emerging space for experimentation following the end of

[1] Cavaye, Griffith and Senda, *A Guide to the Japanese Stage*, p. 182.
[2] Brandon, 7.
[3] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 219.
[4] Morton, p. 18.
[5] Ibid., p. 11.

*shingeki*'s domination, contemporary artists have been questioning the legacy of the reception history of western drama and moving beyond the confines of the supposed need for 'authenticity'. The productions discussed here form part of an ongoing dialogue between Japanese theatre and British theatre, undermining the need for 'Shakespeare' to be seen in Japan as a symbol of 'English language, culture and history', and rejecting the need for faithfulness to an imagined idea of the west.[6] Catherine M. Cole defines identity as being 'simultaneously about sameness and difference', and it is through this emerging space that artists have been able to question and reveal the similarities and differences between the two interacting traditions, denying the binary categories of 'authentic and inauthentic, real and fake, original and copy'.[7]

Much remains to be written on the topic, particularly given the death of Ninagawa, the upcoming Olympics and the increasing presence of British theatre in Japan through broadcasted performances by National Theatre Live. However, this study has tried to defamiliarise 'Shakespeare in Japan' from the familiar subjects of Meiji period translation, *NINAGAWA Macbeth* and Kurosawa Akira's *Throne of Blood* (1957). In particular, it has attempted to re-consider Ninagawa's career from the viewpoint of his later productions, rejecting the outdated accusations of *japonisme*, commercialism and of providing an 'accomplished rendition of a European standard […] with an oriental dusting of confectioner's sugar'.[8] As the final quote suggests, coming from a 2015 review of Ninagawa's *Hamlet* in London, much still remains to be done to counter the antagonism stemming from a perceived need to act as 'custodians' of the Shakespearean text, and the evident Orientalism

[6] Maezawa Hiroko, *The 450th Anniversary of Shakespeare's Birth* (*Seitan 450-nen sheikusupia to meiyu-tachi*) (Tokyo: NHK, 2014), p. 189.
[7] Catherine M. Cole, 'History's Thresholds: Stories from Africa', in *Representing the Past*, ed. by Canning and Postlewait, pp. 263-81 (p. 263).
[8] Quarmby.

that non-English Shakespeare can provoke in British critics: comparing responses to the 2017 revival of *Macbeth* at the Barbican and its 1987 London performance occasionally yields startling resemblances, thirty years on from Ninagawa's 'debut' on the London theatre scene. This, however, is a discussion for another time, but it is worth acknowledging that the acceptance of Japanese language productions of Shakespeare has increased remarkably since the early period of interaction; as Shevtsova notes, the '*piece de resistance*' of the Craiova Shakespeare festival was *Richard II*, as was suggested by the strong audience reaction it received (Emil Boroghină, director of the festival, was recorded as noting that 'there has never been a surge like this' following the curtain call).[9]

Ninagawa wrote in the programme for the 2015 *Hamlet* that the opening line of the play, 'Who's there?', is 'without doubt a question about our identity. It asks us 'who are you'. How should we answer?'.[10] The productions discussed here have each taken a different approach to answering the question, but it is absolutely certain that each, in turn, used Shakespeare as a vehicle to interrogate notions of identity. Unchained from the need to replicate 'western' Shakespeare, recent performances have staged a Shakespeare that has become fragmented and broken down from the 'untouchable' translations of the Meiji period, but from this fragmentation has emerged new methods for addressing pressing issues in society, including isolation, technology, natural disasters, the population demographics and the past. Although the current generation has been described in terms of the superficial and two-dimensional, much of the recent work involving Shakespeare has been radical and political; it is perhaps telling that, in his reflection on theatre in the 1960s to the 1980s, Senda Akihiko wrote that the young generation of artists (including Ninagawa and Suzuki) were '[s]ubjected to jibes about their 'thoughtlessness', 'ignorance' and 'artistic clumsiness' and

[9] Imamura, *International Shakespeare Festival*.
[10] Saitama, *Hamlet* (programme).

about the 'nonsensical' nature of their vision'.[11] In what Minami and Gallimore have termed the 'reinvention' stage, it seems fitting that recent performance has both worked with and against the history of Shakespeare adaptation in Japan, staging the multitude of different identities drawn from the 'not harmonious or homogenous' present-day society.[12]

**Postscript: *Ninagawa-izm* in the Post-Ninagawa Age**

In October 2016, actor and director Yoshida Kōtarō was announced as the new artistic director of the Sai-no-kuni Shakespeare Series, and following the May 2016 production of *Measure for Measure* the series continued with *Timon of Athens* in December 2017. The translation was produced by Ninagawa's long-term collaborator Matsuoka Kazuko, directed by Yoshida, who also took on the role of Timon, and involved other actors (Fujiwara Tatsuya, Yokota Eiji and members of Saitama Next Theatre) and staff who had worked with Ninagawa on the series. In an echo of other Sai-no-kuni productions, the actors assembled on the stage prior to the start of the performance 'proper' to warm-up, as backstage staff brought on rails of costumes. Yoshida, who starred in many productions in the series, began many of the performances of *Timon* with the word '*tadaima*', a ritualistic greeting which can be translated as 'I'm home', or sometimes with a direct 'welcome' to the audience.

In this way, he collapsed the space between the outside world and his history with the theatre, which the majority of the audience would have been familiar with, and the beginning of *Timon*: he greeted the audience both as Yoshida himself, and as Timon, welcoming them to the party that was about to begin, and back to the theatre for the new start of the series. Following his greeting, the cast assembled to dance together in a large echo of the tango at the beginning of *Richard II*, and throughout the performance the production played with

[11] Senda, *The Voyage*, p. 1.
[12] Gallimore and Minami, pp. 485-86; Shimada Yoshiko, 'Afterword: Japanese Pop Culture and the Eradication of History', in *Consuming Bodies*, ed. by Lloyd, pp. 186-91 (p. 190).

memories of Ninagawa whilst simultaneously looking for new possibilities in the unfamiliar text. Minami has suggested that 'the act of re-playing a Shakespeare play involves remembering, reviewing and revising (the memories of) its preceding counterparts', and *Timon* was a good example of this in action.[13] Although Watanabe Tamotsu wrote that 'one period has ended' following the death of Ninagawa, he acknowledged that '2016 was not simply the end of one period, it was also the start of another'.[14] Based on the array of translations, performance styles and media available to them, the post-3.11, post-Ninagawa generation of artists have a rich database of previous productions to build on and to continue to question and perform their own versions of Shakespeare. With the closure of spaces once regarded as enshrining the 'canonical' Shakespeare, the performance of Shakespeare has moved from the sanctified to a freer, more open space for interpretation and re-invention. Harvie has suggested that theatre does 'more than demonstrate urban process', that it is 'part of urban process, producing urban experience and thereby producing the city itself', and the multifaceted, paradoxical and yet intertwined productions of Shakespeare in contemporary Japan are suggestive of the complex and ever-changing questioning of narratives occurring within the theatre and the city, of artists asking 'Who's there?' and failing to find a single neat answer.[15]

[13] Minami, 'Re-Playing Shakespeares', p. 77.
[14] Watanabe, '2016 Theatre', pp. 6-7.
[15] Harvie, *Staging the Nation*, p. 7.

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