

The Language and Voice of the *Shite* in Sukehiro Hirakawa and Satoshi Miyagi's *Mugen-noh Othello*¹⁾

Mori NAKATANI

Graduate School of Human and Environmental Studies,
Kyoto University, Kyoto 606-8501 Japan

Summary This paper examines the text and the performance of *Mugen-noh Othello*, written by Sukehiro Hirakawa and directed by Satoshi Miyagi (the original production in 2005 was titled *Ku Na'uka de Mugen-noh na Othello*). In particular, it focuses on the language and voice used in the adaptation's attempt to challenge the modern conception of a dramatic character as an independent subject. Combining Shakespeare's *Othello* with a *fukushiki mugen-noh* play, the adaptation transforms Desdemona into the *shite* who appears as the ghost of Desdemona. At the climax, the *shite* enacts Othello's murder of Desdemona whilst she is representing both the victim and the wrongdoer. The critics have interpreted this act as the socio-political resolution of binary opposites such as men/women and black/white. Nevertheless, they have rarely discussed the mode and the effect of the language and voice enabling the final consolidation of the subject and the object. Whereas Hirakawa rewrites Desdemona as a dramatic agent of mutability, by availing himself of the linguistic nature of Japanese, Miyagi's production, by staging the complex relationship between body and language, performs the process of physically materialising such language as the *shite*'s voice on stage.

Introduction

Critics and audiences often think that the touchstone of Shakespeare's plays is the degree of their modernity, measuring it by the sense of self that is portrayed as the characters' individual interiority. However, it was the very lack of subjectivity that drew the attention of a Japanese theatre director for whom modernity was a subject to be questioned and challenged. Satoshi Miyagi, in his *Noh* adaptation of *Othello*, attempts to shed light on the relative absence of personality he found in the character of Desdemona. Miyagi writes about her that 'She seems to be a so-called "doll-like" figure, not someone subsisting subjectively'.²⁾ What had inspired Miyagi was the brief sketch of a *fukushiki mugen-noh* (a kind of *Noh* in two parts, where dream and reality meet) version of

Othello suggested by Sukehiro Hirakawa, a literary scholar who regards the tendency to seek a psychological interiority within a dramatic character as 'a modern disease'.³⁾ On an evening in November 2005, *Ku Na'uka*, a theatre company led by Miyagi, staged the first performance of *Mugen-noh Othello* on a temporary outdoor stage built in the garden of the Tokyo National Museum. Like many of Miyagi's other works that are characterised as festive, communal, and ritualistic, the production converted Shakespeare's *Othello*, which undertakes a deeply introspective exploration of male desire, into a theatre piece that evokes the shared experience of human dilemma and chagrin. The key feature of the production is the figure of Desdemona, who now appears as a *shite* along with the re-enactment of the murder she performs on her own.

My argument throughout is that the adaptation

capitalises on the distinctive nature of Japanese theatre and language to portray the *shite* as a dramatic agent different from the modern conception of a character as an individual subject. In *Mugen-noh Othello*, though the *shite* avers that she is the ghost of Desdemona, she does not represent the Shakespearean heroine alone; rather, her unique voice vacillates between and integrates the subject and the object, the subjective and the objective—simply speaking, she becomes both Desdemona and Othello, and speaks both as a character and a narrator. Critics have often focused on the socio-political reading of the production, noticing the *shite*'s force to transcend the antagonism between victim and wrongdoer. Tetsuya Motohashi and Mika Eglinton acknowledge the departure from the racial and gender status quo inherent in the original play.⁴⁾ Rather than the interpretive possibilities these critics explore, I intend to scrutinise specifically how the production attains its acclaimed agency to transcend both the subject and the object in its final moments. Emi Hamana asserts that *Mugen-noh Othello* transforms *Othello* into a 'communal tragedy', since in *mugen-noh* 'there is no strong opposition between one individual and another'. My particular focus is on the *shite*'s language and voice, especially in her very last words, which illuminate the means by which the audience gain access to the *shite* as a dramatic agent beyond individuality.⁵⁾

What follows is divided into two parts. The first part sheds light on Hirakawa's script which has rarely been studied independently. Celebrated as a scholar of comparative literature, Hirakawa richly embellishes his work with literary and dramatic sources from differing cultures and times: Shakespeare's *Othello*; Arthur Waley's vision of a *mugen-noh* combined with the Elizabethan play; Sōseki Natsume's haiku poem on the theme of *Othello*; and inevitably, the long tradition of *Noh*, especially the form of *fukushiki mugen-noh* established by Zeami. Intermingling these sources, Hirakawa transforms Desdemona into a *shite* whose subjectivity is never fully established, open to linguistic ambiguity and variation. The second part

discusses the way in which Miyagi's 2005 production physically materialises on stage Hirakawa's language as the voice whose subjectivity is also radically called into question. Miyagi's production further augments the subjective complexity established in Hirakawa's language, carefully preparing to highlight the distinctive quality of the voice the *shite* (played by Mikari, the lead actress of *Ku Na'uka*) attains in the final moment.

Throughout this discussion, the approach is to compare and contrast the varying sources of 'historicity' inherent in the production, investigating the latter's loaded intertextuality as a 'testing ground for the efficacy of the overall transtextual experiment', as Silvia Bigliuzzi suggests.⁶⁾ However, I will briefly map out the historical and cultural context in which the production is embedded, since Miyagi and Hirakawa certainly were not the first to undertake the project of reworking dramatic subjects as means of questioning modernity. Since the 1960s, the Japanese theatre scene has witnessed the rising trend of the Small Theatre Movement, that seeks a new approach as an alternative to 'modern drama'. Though the term 'modern' is a catch-all, the movement particularly counteracted the New Theatre (*shingeki*), a Westernised form of theatre unique to Japan.⁷⁾ Influenced by the directors of the movement, notably Tadashi Suzuki and Hideki Noda, Miyagi too has sought an alternative to the psychological and realist approach preferred by the directors of the New Theatre for their character portrayals. At the same time, on one hand, it would not be amiss to point out that this indigenous movement was part of a global trend of 'post-dramatic theatre', a term coined by Hans-Thies Lehmann. On the other hand, outside of the theatre, the movement is often referred to as 'postmodernism', which is characterised by 'the loss of unity [...] in terms of "fragmentation" and decentring of subjectivity', according to Hugh Grady.⁸⁾ What *Mugen-noh Othello* excels at, among the numerous theatrical experiments that had been attempted in this domestic and global context, is its sheer complexity, as illustrated in the discussion that follows. Whilst both

Hirakawa and Miyagi vow to seek a new mode of drama against and beyond modernity, neither of them resorts to the all-too-familiar binary opposition of West and East—namely, Shakespeare and Japanese theatre—whereby the former as the modern would be overcome by the latter.

I. The Language : Hirakawa's *Mugen-noh Othello*

In 2004, a year before the performance took place, Hirakawa published a short article in the literary magazine *Bungakukai*, recounting the achievement of Arthur Waley as a translator of Japanese classic literature in early twentieth-century England.⁹⁾ An anecdote struck Miyagi, who happened to be one of the readers : in explaining Waley's idea to adapt John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* into a *fukushiki mugen-noh* play, Hirakawa took up *Othello* as his own example, showing how Desdemona can be transformed into a *shite*.¹⁰⁾ Inspired by Hirakawa's brief sketch, Miyagi invited him to write the complete script to be staged by his company. Miyagi's original production in 2005, then titled *Ku Na'uka and Mugen-noh Like "Othello"*, was at variance with Hirakawa's script, which came to be published in 2007 under the title *Mugen-noh Othello*.¹¹⁾ Whilst Hirakawa in part reimposed the *Noh* phrases from Waley, and quoted a haiku poem written by Sōseki Natsume, his language elsewhere should not be mistaken for the customary *Noh* style. He composed the play by integrating hints of Western drama and the style of modern Japanese with the essence of Zeami's *fukushiki mugen-noh*, the transforming nature of the *shite*'s perspective.

Following the common structure of *fukushiki mugen-noh*, Hirakawa's *Mugen-noh Othello* reframes the Shakespearean tragedy as retold by the ghost of Desdemona in her afterlife, setting the scene in Cyprus, now lost to the Turks decades after the original tragedy. Consisting of two acts, *maeba* and *nochiba*, the plot is as follows : in the *maeba*, a Venetian priest (the *waki*) arrives at the port of Cyprus and encounters

four Venetian women. As demanded by the *waki*, the women (together with the chorus) relate the story in which the Venetian army won and then lost the island, based in part on the actual history of the Fourth Ottoman-Venetian war. As their narrative centres on the eventual Venetian defeat by the Turks, the women lament their current forlorn state, the result of the male-dominant politics that abandoned them on the island. At the end of the act, one of the women, apparently the *shite*, reveals herself to be the ghost of Desdemona and leaves. In contrast to the *maeba*, which focuses on the history presumed to entail Shakespeare's *Othello*, the *nochiba* unfolds the central plot of the original. Reappearing this time in a gown reminiscent of Desdemona's, the *shite* retells excerpts from the tragedy of the two lovers, leading up to the moment Othello enters her bedroom in his attempt to murder her. Unlike in *Othello*, the *shite* is aware of Iago's machinations and expresses her intense yearning for Othello as she recounts the story as the memory of Desdemona's ghost. In the end, as the *waki* and the chorus chant a Buddhist prayer for her, her soul finally departs from this world.

Although from a macro perspective, the adaptation reconstructs the original narrative from the seeming perspective of Desdemona, a closer look reveals that her personhood cannot be fully identified with that of Desdemona. Not only does the *shite* appear as one of the local Venetian women in the *maeba* but, even after her reappearance as the ghost of Desdemona in the *nochiba*, her language sometimes interweaves different voices from Shakespeare's play. When the *shite*, together with the chorus, begins to recount the story in which Othello won Desdemona's love, her speech integrates phrases from *Othello*. For instance, Othello's 'Rude am I in my speech | And little blest with the soft phrase of peace' (1. 3. 82-83) or else Roderigo's derogatory 'thicklips' (1. 1. 65) can be discerned :¹²⁾

Shite Unskilled in speech.

Not knowing the language of this beautiful spring.

- But outwitting the white men.
 Honesty from the thicklips.
 Honesty from the thicklips.
 Outflowed and embraced me
- Chorus* A black male mingles with the white sheep
- Shite* A black male mingles with the white sheep
 Othello and I had secret intercourse
 In that spring evening.
- Chorus* A bright sword, in the spring evening
 A bright sword, in the spring evening
 Pierced through myself and my body.
 (75–76)¹³⁾

Within a single speech, the *shite* swiftly shifts from an overt echo of Iago's 'an old black ram | Is tuppung your white ewe!' (1. 1. 87–88) to the much more personal narrative about Othello and herself as Desdemona. It is difficult to decant from these speeches of the *shite* a coherent sense of subjectivity. At the same time, in the same sequence of speeches, the chorus, who speak as 'we' to recount the Venetian history in the *maeba*, now speak in the first-person narrative voice, standing in for Desdemona. Thus, the *shite*'s voice as Desdemona does not have an independent existence; rather, it is indistinguishable from the collective voice of the chorus. Together, the *shite* and the chorus move between the subjective and objective voices, intermingling aspects of other characters in *Othello*.

To a certain extent, such is the peculiar nature of the *shite* and its language devised by Zeami, the *Noh* virtuoso in the Muromachi period. Certain critics have emphasised his distinctive usage of the grammatical person, obfuscating the perspective of his *shite*. For instance, in the first act of his play *Izutsu*, the *shite*, appearing as a local woman in the *maeba*, begins to recount the story of Ariwara no Narihira's wife, using the third-person pronoun, but shifts her voice effortlessly into the first-person narrative of the wife herself.¹⁴⁾ Another example is the second act of *Sanemori*, in which no subject pronoun is indicated at all by the *shite* (supposedly the ghost of Sanemori),

throughout his description of the scene where a soldier washes the hair of the beheaded Sanemori.¹⁵⁾ According to Kozue Kobayashi, *fukushiki mugen-noh* is made possible 'by availing the characteristics of Japanese in which sentences can be structured without clarifying their subjects'.¹⁶⁾ According to the linguistic typology proposed by Charles N. Li and Sandra Thompson, Japanese is comparatively 'topic-prominent' in contrast to English, which is more 'subject-prominent'; therefore, within the syntax of Japanese, grammatical subjects can easily be omitted and left ambiguous, unlike in English.¹⁷⁾ Whereas some may criticise Japanese as comparatively illogical in its structure, others, like Kobayashi, assert that the Japanese grammar is an important factor shaping a unique culture, as epitomised in Zeami's *fukushiki mugen-noh*.¹⁸⁾

Zeami's figuration of the *shite* as the central dramatic agent thus stands in stark contrast to the Western model of dramatic subjects, which Catherine Belsey, in examining Renaissance tragedies, defines the latter this way: 'To be a subject is to speak, to identify with the "I" of an utterance, to be the agent of the action inscribed in the verb'.¹⁹⁾ For Belsey, the full identification of the character with the subject and the predicate, as well as the pairing of the subject and the predicate, seems to go without saying. Nevertheless, in both of the above two plays by Zeami, the *shite*'s agency seems to culminate with the apparent subjectivity being obscured and complicated: the climactic scene of *Izutsu* depicts the moment in which the wife finds in her face, reflected in a well, that of her beloved husband; whilst in *Sanemori*, the spirit of Sanemori and the soldier washing his head are both represented by the *shite*, as if Sanemori were holding his own severed head. As Keiichirō Tashiro analyses that the essential identity of Zeami's *shite* is a narrator, a *shite* is a kind of dramatic agent who mutates between varying perspectives, rather than a single, independent subject.

Hirakawa's debt to Zeami's works and to the linguistic nature of Japanese becomes more evident

when compared to the idea of *mugen-noh* illustrated by Waley. It seems that Waley, as well as other early English translators of *Noh*, such as Ernest Fenollosa and Ezra Pound, took pains in discerning the grammatical subjects to suit the logic of the English language. Toyochirō Nogami complains that these translators carelessly substitute names and pronouns when they are left ambiguous in the original text.²⁰⁾ Not only Waley's translation but also his conception of *Noh* attests to his mindset. For example, he considers that the chorus's 'sole function is to sing an actor's words for him [*shite*] when his dance-movements prevent him from singing comfortably' rather than noting the different perspective they inevitably introduce.²¹⁾ At the climax of his outline of the *mugen-noh* adaptation of *The Duchess of Malfi*, the *shite* speaks the Duchess' speech as written by Webster, beginning from 'Heaven-gates are not so highly arched' until her last line, 'Go tell my brothers, when I am laid out, | They then may feed in quiet'. At the same time, the stage direction reads '*She sinks her head and folds her hands*', indicating that the *shite* enacts, as an actor would in a Western drama, the posture of the Duchess waiting to be executed.²²⁾ Not the slightest divergence between the uttered 'I', the onstage action, and what the actor represents can be perceived in the scene. Even Waley, undoubtedly a talented polyglot who managed to grasp the essential beauty of *Noh* without ever seeing it performed, shows that language often conditions the modes of character portrayal in theatre to a great degree.

Hirakawa largely employs Waley's idea in writing his script, quoting most of the lines Waley incorporated in his would-be Elizabethan *Noh* play; nonetheless, the climactic moment is distinctively different as the *shite* stands in for both Desdemona and Othello in his play. Instead of quoting Desdemona's final speech from Shakespeare's text, Hirakawa employs a haiku written by Sōseki: '*Shirakiku ni shibashi tamerau hasami kana*' [The scissors hesitating awhile for a white chrysanthemum flower] (68). The poem echoes Othello's opening monologue in Act 5, Scene 2, in

which he shows his reluctance to defile Desdemona's white skin: 'Yet I'll not shed her blood | Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow' (5. 2. 3-4). However, the subject of the poem does not simply identify itself with Othello. Grammatically, the subject is 'the scissors', which could be understood as a metaphor for Othello. Yet the use of an exclamatory ending '*kana*' suggests the presence of the author, Sōseki himself. Alternatively, some may envision Othello as the poet, striving to objectify his own action and feeling. Indeed, the crux of Japanese poetry, such as *haiku* and *tanka*, like *Noh*, lies in its power to abstract the emotion in the absence of an overt sense of subjectivity.²³⁾

Hirakawa tailors the poem to suit his play by exploiting its subjective undecidability, foregrounding the perspectival mutability:

Shite Your skin whiter than snow

Chorus A chrysanthemum flower whiter than snow

A chrysanthemum flower whiter than snow

For a while, the scissors hesitate

Shite For a while, I hesitate (79)²⁴⁾

The stage direction makes it clear that the *shite*, though she still is the ghost of Desdemona, is now vicariously representing Othello: '*Desdemona, as the shite, stands in to perform Othello's emotion when he enters the bedroom of his wife, Desdemona*'. By altering the metaphorical third-person pronouns, 'a chrysanthemum flower' and 'scissors', into the first- and the second-person pronouns of 'your' and 'I', Hirakawa subjectifies Sōseki's poem whose perspective is neither fully subjective nor objective. However, the text does not let the *shite* be a subject in Belsey's sense since the *shite*'s subjectivity identified with the 'I' is stratified into the subject of enunciation (speaking), in this case, Desdemona, and the subject of utterance (represented in speech), Othello. At the same time, the chorus does not merely serve as a convenience of the *shite* but introduces another perspective: as the ending '*kana*' is dropped, its voice objectifies the otherwise introspective rendition of the emotion. The sequence as

a whole distils the emotion of the dilemma Othello agonises over in Shakespeare's version, through the interleaving of different voices echoed by the *shite* and the chorus.

Looking closely at its language, what is notable in Hirakawa's *Mugen-noh Othello* is the almost playful indulgence in displaying the perspectival fluctuation. Notice that the manipulation of perspectives, even in the tragic moment, is invoked through wordplay: '*kimi no hada*' ('your skin') leads to '*kiku no hana*' ('a chrysanthemum flower'), and then '*hasami*' ('scissors') to '*wagami*' ('I', though literally meaning 'my body'). The initial conversation between the *waki* and the four Venetian women anticipates my point. In the first encounter of the *waki* and the four women, the *waki*, trying to find out whether they are Venetians, asks them: 'Hello, hello, people with jars atop [your] heads, I have questions to ask' (70).²⁵ The *shite*, as one of the women, replies 'Does that mean us (*konata*)?' followed by each of the women describing the contents of the jars they carry. Although the *waki* emends his question, asking again, 'No, not the jars but about you (*omaesama*)', the *shite* again veers away, this time with more apparent hint of deliberateness: 'About me (*warawa*)? Well, that is an unexpected question'. Instead of revealing her identity (were she to have any at this point), she teases the *waki* as if he is seeking an intimate relationship with her. The word *konata*, first used by the *shite*, literally means 'this way' or 'here' but signifies either 'me' or 'us' in this context since it is also commonly used as the first-person personal pronoun. In contrast to the term *warawa*, which only functions as a personal pronoun, *konata* obfuscates the location of the subject, allowing the *shite* to reorient the question towards the jars, instead of towards herself. The play, therefore, begins and ends with the *shite* playing with pronouns, obscuring her identity. These instances of wordplay present the play's self-awareness of its owing to the linguistic nature of Japanese in circumventing the *shite*'s full establishment as a subject.

II. The Voice : Miyagi's *Mugen-noh Othello*

To write the play in language that transcends individuality and to materialise such language on stage are, of course, two different things. Language, in its immateriality and especially with the advantage of Japanese grammar, could easily obscure the subject. We know from our own experience that the emotion encapsulated in haiku or *tanka*, without articulating its subject, can sometimes move us intensely. Nevertheless, when those words are spoken by an actor on stage, the question arises as to whether the audience can appreciate and sympathise with an emotion without reading the body as a subject, as the site of individual interiority. It seems that Miyagi, in his *Mugen-noh Othello*, attempts to confirm such possibility by carefully devising the way in which Hirakawa's language is conveyed to his audience.²⁶

As for the kind of challenge Miyagi undertakes, Anthony B. Dawson seems to assert that, for the Elizabethan as well as for an audience today, the answer is no. That is to say, in order for Desdemona to move them, the actor must embody her sorrow and agony as though they were interiorised within her (or indeed, his) body. According to Dawson, that was the essential condition for Henry Jackson to appreciate the performance of *Othello* in 1610. He was an Oxford scholar whose contemporaneous account of the play survives today:

Desdemona, killed in front of us by her husband, although she acted her part excellently throughout, in her death moved us especially when, as she lay in her bed, with her face alone she implored the pity of the audience.²⁷

Jackson recounts the mighty potential of the boy actor's physical and facial expression to yield the effect of empathy and catharsis. Dawson suggests, as Jackson 'is clearly responding to the person of Desdemona—it is *she* who moves the audience', that the actor's physical agency liaises with the audience's

belief to see in the actor's body the fictional 'interiorised personhood'.²⁸⁾

Nevertheless, in staging the same moment that touched Jackson, namely, the killing of Desdemona, Miyagi's production attempts to defy the premise that an actor needs to be identified with a person in order to affect the audience emotionally. Whereas Hirakawa's script only designates the *shite* to represent 'Othello's emotion' at its climax, Miyagi's production stages the act of strangulation as the focal point of the *shite*'s narrative. Miyagi's production opts for the tragic effect of theatre as she strangles herself to re-enact the murder, rather than Hirakawa's aesthetic playing with insubstantial words. The agonising hesitation and the physical and emotional pain are both brilliantly portrayed by Mikari through her facial expressions as she chokes herself, uttering, 'For a while, I hesitate'. Although there is no testimony to how the audience in general appreciated the scene, it is safe to say, at least, that the production focuses on that moment of catharsis, of 'imploring the pity of the audience'. However, as I shall discuss below, the intensity of emotion expressed here by the *shite* differs from what Jackson found in his experience, in the sense that the emotion expressed at the climax is disowned by any particular subject inherent to *Othello*.

It is noteworthy that, in *Mugen-noh Othello*, Miyagi embarks on a new experiment to represent a dramatic character on stage. Since the foundation of Ku Na'uka in 1990, Miyagi has been interested in calling into question the audience's desire for a unified subject, their predisposition to seek a fictional selfhood in an actor. As a result, Ku Na'uka has been known for the acting method called 'two actors per role' (*futari-hitoyaku*). Reminiscent of the traditional Japanese puppet theatre *ningyō-jōruri*, each character is performed physically by the actors called 'movers' while being voiced by 'speakers' who are normally visible to the audience. The method derives from Miyagi's experience as an actor. According to an interview, Miyagi once realised that the audience was eager to view the fictional character as a unified being even

though he as an actor felt disrupted inside.²⁹⁾ The 'two actors per role' method, therefore, is a way in which the inner discrepancy of a subject is made visible on stage, whereas the audience is enticed to envision the character as a unified subject in their imagination.

Nonetheless, *Mugen-noh Othello* was the first production in which Miyagi did not strictly follow this method. Although the *shite* as well as the other three women followed the rule in the first act, for most of the second act, Mikari, in the role of the *shite*, moves and speaks for herself. Maki Honda speaks all of the lines attributed to the *waki* throughout the production. As Miyagi admits that 'the *shite* is "a mover who also speaks" in my view', Hirakawa's *shite* internalises the essence of the 'two actors per role' method to bring to the foreground the discrepancies within a seemingly unified dramatic subject.³⁰⁾ By deviating from his established methodology, what Miyagi introduced in the production was a dynamic. In contrast to past productions, in which the 'two actors per role' method constantly reminded the audience of the underlying fragmentation of a dramatic subject, *Mugen-noh Othello* performs the process of constructing and eventually unravelling the *shite*'s identity. It does so by highlighting the distinctive vocal quality the *shite* attains at the very end as one that is highly noncommittal to any particular subject. The following discussion examines the three-phase process, that takes place in the *nochiba*, each of which characterize different approaches to acting.

The first phase reconstructs Shakespeare's *Othello* inside Hirakawa's *Mugen-noh Othello*, almost like a play within a play. It mainly features the new textual material Miyagi introduced in his performance, apart from Hirakawa's text: excerpts from the original text of *Othello* translated by Yūshi Odashima, whose translation of Shakespeare is one of the most commonly used by Japanese directors. All of the passages from Odashima's translation are performed as the *ai-kyōgen* part (a farcical interval which is commonly inserted between the two acts in *Noh*), except for the dialogue between Iago and Othello in

Act 3, Scene 3, performed later. The excerpts represent the conversations between the male characters, revealing Iago's machinations behind the unfolding tragedy. Speaking and moving together, some of the male members of the chorus, who wear masks during the scene, perform these scenes of Odashima's translation with deliberately comical touches. In a sense, the production somewhat parodically stages a comparatively modern portrayal of dramatic characters.

The initial part of the *nochiba* in Hirakawa's text, including the sequence where the *shite* integrates the perspectives of the other male characters, is performed between the *ai-kyōgen* part and the dialogue from Act 3, Scene 3. Nevertheless, Miyagi, by redistributing Hirakawa's text among the actors, recreates the scene less as a narrative than as a drama, in the sense of a conflict between a protagonist and antagonists. On the screen at the back of the stage, what suddenly pops up is the *shite*'s explanation of the story in which Othello won her love though he was 'rude in his speech' (13 : 15). The directorial choice seems to hint at the presence of the intangible text, both of Hirakawa and of Shakespeare, which is about to be materialised on stage. Only the chorus utters 'a black male mingles with a white sheep' (14 : 07), and conversely, the *shite* speaks 'Passed through myself and my body' (15 : 14), the line originally attributed to the chorus, which is also projected on the screen. Therefore, on one hand, the chorus no longer speaks for the *shite*, but instead vocalises the viewpoints of Desdemona's male antagonists, Othello and Iago, among others. On the other hand, the *shite* looms as the confronted heroine, Desdemona, by expropriating the lines that explicitly render the subject 'I'. Throughout the sequence, unlike in the *maeba* where a chorus member, Natsumi Sugiyama, utters as her 'speaker', Mikari moves and speaks on her own, uniting her voice with the grammatical subject.

The second phase begins as the enactment of Act 3, Scene 3, marks the fulfilment of the play-within-a-play-like representation of *Othello*, ending with

Othello's speech, 'I will withdraw | To furnish me with some swift means of death | For the fair devil' (3. 3. 479–81) (22 : 40). Letting the *shite* overhear the conversation, which Desdemona would not have known in the original play, the scene suggests that the *shite* partially attains an objective, omniscient point of view, alongside her subjectivity as Desdemona. After she silently witnesses Othello (played by Ittoku Abe) putting his palms together, suggesting the strangulation of Desdemona (22 : 45), she once again occupies the centre of the stage. The remaining performance focuses on the complication of the *shite*'s perspective, steering towards the final moment of her murder.

The second phase stages the shift of the *shite*'s voice marked by the two instances of direct speech. By omitting the first four lines in Hirakawa's text, the first speech the *shite* utters after the men's dialogue are the words of Othello : ' "[You are] hiding something, what [are you] hiding?", [I was] accused' (23 : 51).³¹⁾ In contrast to the preceding phase, in which Mikari carefully avoided uttering the words of anyone other than Desdemona, she now vocalises Othello as well as Desdemona. In Hirakawa's text, the phrase is in direct speech, as it is quoted within Japanese-style quotation marks. However, since both the first- and the second-person subjects are grammatically elided, no difference is marked between direct and indirect speech in the performance. Mikari differentiates the quote from the narrative part by almost roaring the direct quote in a conspicuously low-pitched, masculine voice. For the narrative part, she uses the high-pitched voice she has used for the earlier lines, continuing to depict the feeling of Desdemona being accused of infidelity by her husband. This is the first moment when the *shite* embodies the two different vocal qualities, representing the two lovers.

The *shite* further transforms her vocal quality, reclaiming it in between the subjective and the objective perspective. The next four verses attributed to the *shite* are uttered by Sugiyama, instead of Mikari, marking the disjunction of the subjective voice from the *shite* (25 : 04). At the end of the speech, Mikari

gasps out, 'My lord Othello!' (*Oserō-sama!*), in the high-pitched voice, intensely expressing Desdemona's yearning for her lover (25 : 40). In her speech shortly after, explaining the story of Iago's betrayal, there is another instance of direct speech quoting Othello's words : ' "Are you (*onore*) a whore?" [I was] accused. | How sad not to have proof of innocence' (27 : 56).³²⁾ However, this time, she uses a comparatively neutral voice without differentiating the quote from the narrative part. As the pronoun *onore* can be used either as a first- or a second-person pronoun, one cannot tell whether she is speaking in the voice of Othello or Desdemona, in direct or indirect speech. Note that the latter verse, as well as the entire speech except for the quote, is grammatically impersonal ; when spoken on stage, whether the sentence is in the first- or the third-person, subjective or objective, is left undetermined. Thus, the differentiation between subject and object (Desdemona and Othello) and between subjective character and objective narrator is noticeably obfuscated at this point.

Bypassing about ten verses in Hirakawa's text to the extract of Sōseki's poem, the last phase takes place where the *shite* finally proceeds to re-enact the moment of the homicide. Miyagi directs the final sequence as follows, further entangling the perspectival indeterminacy inherent in Hirakawa's text (28 : 27-32 : 49) : after a prolonged silence, accompanied by the serene sound of flute and drum played in crescendo, the *shite* slowly places her palms together in front of her as if to strangle something in the air, mimicking Othello's posture at the end of his dialogue with Iago. However, she fails, releasing her tension. Then, turning her back, she walks towards one of the jars left at the rear of the stage, jars that were used to displace the identity of the women at the beginning of the performance. When she turns around, she is wearing a red and black military glove, symbolising Othello, on her right hand. Coming back to centre stage with masculine footwork, she tries to strangle something in the air, now with the gloved hand—yet fails again. Then, Abe, seated among the chorus

members, utters the first verse, 'Your skin whiter than snow', originally attributed to the *shite*. The female members of the chorus follow and repeat the line, 'A chrysanthemum flower whiter than snow | For a while, the scissors hesitate'. Highlighting the poetic subject, the male members match their voice at 'the scissors'. Lastly, the *shite* grabs her own neck with the gloved hand, and delivers the line, 'For a while, I hesitate', strangling herself with an intense expression of pain, agony, and sorrow. Her voice sounds forced and profound, but is neither high- nor low-pitched.

Physically, with two failed attempts, the direction highlights the necessity for the *shite* to stand in for both the victim and the wrongdoer, the subject and the object, evoking the scenes of Zeami I have discussed earlier. Vocally, when the *shite* utters 'For a while, I hesitate', she speaks in a plainly subjective voice, using the first-person pronoun, for the first time since the lines replaced by Sugiyama. Having carefully prepared for this moment, the subject 'I' in her last line cannot be attributed to any particular personage, although her voice sounds intensely emotional. On one hand, Othello is speaking from the context of Shakespeare's monologue and of Sōseki's poetry, encapsulating his dilemma of love and jealousy. On the other hand, the voice of the ghost of Desdemona, too, is recognisable in the paradox of killing herself to vicariously understand Othello's love. Together, the *shite* embodies the two lovers with too strong a desire, consummated only upon their nuptial deathbed : 'No way but this ; | Killing myself, to die upon a kiss' (5. 2. 356-57). Yet the same 'I' epitomises the very quality of the *shite*'s voice in between the subjective and the objective outlook. The pronoun used here in Japanese is '*wagami*' which, as we noted earlier, literally means 'my body'. Although the archaic term *wagami* is commonly accepted as a first-person pronoun, technically it is a third-person pronoun referring to oneself. Similar to the term *konata* used by the women at the beginning of the play, the pronoun grammatically allows for the slight distance between the subject of utterance and the subject of enunciation ; however,

this time the word designates to the very presence of the *shite* as something, but not necessarily someone, serving as the dramatic agent in this highly impassioned moment.

Thus, at this moment, the production attempts to betray the premise that an actor needs to individually interiorise emotions in order to touch the audience. One may say that such is the distillation of emotion for which *Noh* is often acclaimed, as Hirakawa states that a character in *Noh* exists as ‘a personification of an emotion’, in contrast to ‘interiorized personhood’.³³⁾ Nevertheless, throughout the performance, such abstraction of emotion is not taken for granted as the tradition of *Noh*. Instead, Miyagi’s directorial choices, together with Mikari’s vocal artifice, carefully prepare for the final moment by staging the very process in which the *shite* attains at the end the uniquely poignant voice embodying both the subject and the object, as well as the subjective and the objective.

Conclusion

As I have shown above, both Hirakawa and Miyagi, in creating this intercultural adaptation of Shakespeare’s play, rewrite the mode of subjectivity (or the lack thereof), from a form familiar in modern Western theatre to a form that is deeply-rooted in Japanese language and theatre. Whilst they carefully reconstruct Desdemona into the *shite* to uncover a new possibility of theatre in lieu of the modern approach, their challenge against ‘modernity’ should not be confused as the denunciation of the English ‘I’ in general, or the Shakespearean ‘I’ in particular. After all, the subject of Shakespeare and its modernity is nothing if not a complex matter. Some critics like Joel Fineman identify in Shakespeare’s characters the same psychological subject as it is conceived today.³⁴⁾ The debate is stirred by the polemicists who argue against such a view.³⁵⁾ According to Belsey, Othello is an exemplar of ‘the precariously unified protagonist of Renaissance drama’ since ‘the occurrence of “I” in speech [i. e., a Renaissance soliloquy] is predicated on

a gap between the subject of the enunciation and the subject of the utterance’.³⁶⁾ As Junji Kinoshita suggests, Shakespeare’s plays, to a certain extent, resemble *fukushiki mugen-noh*. Whereas Kinoshita points out the hint of irrational subjectivity in Macbeth as he begins to observe himself as his other, Othello, even more famously, is a character who wishes to objectify his life as though it were a narrative.³⁷⁾ Facing his doomed fate, Othello tries to narrate himself in the third-person: ‘Where should Othello go?’ (5. 2. 269), and in thinking of his afterlife, he desires a story: ‘Then must you speak | Of one that loved not wisely but too well’ (341–42). Whilst critics sometimes prefer to psychologically subjectify Othello’s language as ‘self-dramatisation’, such interpretation perhaps is the ‘modern disease’. Therefore, by transforming Desdemona’s lack of individuality into the *shite* in its peculiar nature as a dramatic agent, *Mugen-noh Othello* demonstrates another possibility of Shakespeare in today’s theatre against and beyond modernity.

Notes

- 1) *Shite* is a role that embodies a protagonist in *Noh*, often a spirit or ghost that recounts the past to the *waki* (a supporting role) in *mugen-noh*. I shall use the pronoun “she” in order to refer to the *shite* since she is chiefly represented as female despite her gender ambiguity under discussion.
- 2) Satoshi Miyagi, ‘Shite to natta Desdemona [Desdemona Turned into a Shite]’, in *Yōkyoku no Shi to Seiyō no Shi* [The Poetry of Noh and the Poetry of the West], by Sukehiro Hirakawa (Tokyo: Bensei, 2018), pp. 255–258 (p. 256). Translated by Nakatani.
- 3) From the interview with Hirakawa published in a blog post: ‘<Sirizu : Miyagi Nō no Kiseki #2 > Naritachi / “Mamechishiki” Yōkyoku [< Series : The Trajectory of Miyagi Noh #2 > The Beginning / “Trivia” Noh Songs] ’ (19 December 2017) < <http://spac.or.jp/blog/> > [accessed 27 March 2019]. Translated by Nakatani.
- 4) Tetsuya Motohashi, “I saw Othello’s visage in his mind”, or ‘White Mask, Black Handkerchief’: Miyagi Satoshi’s “*Mugen-Noh Othello*” and Translation Theory’, *The Journal of Humanities and Natural Sciences*, 137 (2005), 25–32 (p. 30); Mika Eglinton, “Re-orienting” Shakespeare and Perfor-

- mance Studies : Futatsu no Mugen-nō "Oserō" wo Chūshin ni [Centring on the Two Productions of *Mugen-noh Othello*], in *Nihon no Sheikusupia Jōen Kenkyū no Genzai* [The Current State of the Studies of Shakespeare Performances in Japan], ed. by Kaori Kobayashi (Nagoya : Fubaisha, 2010), pp. 79-94 (p. 87).
- 5) Emi Hamana, 'Othello in the Japanese *Mugen Noh* Style with Elements of Korean Shamanism: a Creative Subversion', *Studies in language and literature. Language*, 59 (2011), 75-91 (p. 79).
- 6) Silvia Bigliuzzi, 'Performing Intertextuality in Translating Rewrites', in *Theatre Translation in Performance*, ed. by Paola Ambrosi, Silvia Bigliuzzi, and Peter Kofler (New York : Routledge, 2013), pp. 77-96 (p. 79).
- 7) Akihiko Senda, *Nihon no Gendai Engeki* [The Contemporary Theatre of Japan] (Tokyo : Iwanami, 1995 ; repr. 2004), p. 9.
- 8) Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. by Karen Jürs-Munby (Oxon : Routledge, 2006), p. 18 ; Hugh Grady, *The Modernist Shakespeare* (London : Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 207.
- 9) Sukehiro Hirakawa, 'Kinuginu no Wakare : Kijin Āsā Weirī ga Hiraita "Genji Monogatari" no Mahō no Sekai [Lovers' Farewell : The Magical World of *The Tale of Genji* Explored by Arthur Waley, the Eccentric]', *Bungakukai* [The World of Literature], 7 July 2004, pp. 190-256.
- 10) Miyagi, 'Desdemona', p. 255.
- 11) Miyagi's first production in 2005 was titled *Ku Na' uka de Mugen-nō na "Oserō"* whilst their 2018 reproduction was titled *Miyagi-Nō Oserō : Mugen no Ai* [Miyagi's *Noh Othello* : The Love of Dream and Vision]. Throughout the discussion, I refer to the adaptation, both in terms of Hirakawa's text and Miyagi's 2005 production, as *Mugen-noh Othello*.
- 12) This and further act, scene, and line references to Shakespeare's text are to : William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. by E. A. J. Honingmann, Third Arden Series (London : Bloomsbury, 1997 ; repr. 2014).
- 13) For Hirakawa's original text, I refer to : Sukehiro Hirakawa, *Mugen-nō Osero* [*Mugen-noh Othello*], *Kikan Bunka* [Humanities Quarterly], 1 January 2007, pp. 68-81. Translated by Nakatani. This and further page references to this work are given after quotations in the text. In Japanese, the passage reads :
- シテ 口は巧みにあらねども、
この春のうらの言葉は知らねども、
白人どもを出し抜きて、
誠は厚き唇に、
誠は厚き唇に、
あふれてわれを抱きしめ
地謡 黒き牡、白き羊と交はりて
シテ 黒き牡、白き羊と交はりて
オセロはわれと慇懃を
その春の夜に通じたり。
- 地謡 ざらつく剣は春の夜に
ざらつく剣は春の夜に
われとわが身に通じたり。
- 14) Mario Yokomichi and Akira Omote, 'Kaisetsu [Commentary]', in *Yōkyoku-shū* [The Collected *Noh* Songs], annotated by Mario Yokomichi and Akira Omote, 2 vols (Tokyo : Iwanami, 1960), I, 5-28 (p. 9) ; Keiichirō Tashiro, *Mugen-nō* [*Mugen-noh*] (Tokyo : Asahi Newspaper, 1994), p. 122.
- 15) Junji Kinoshita, 'Fukushiki Mugen-nō ni tsuite [On *Fukushiki Mugen-noh*]', *Nihon Bunka no Kakureta Kata* [The Hidden Style of Japanese Culture], ed. by Shūichi Kato, Junji Kinoshita, Masao Maruyama, and Kiyoko Takeda (Tokyo : Iwanami, 1984), pp. 49-86 (pp. 66-74).
- 16) Kozue Kobayashi, 'Nō wa Engeki de arunoka : Gengogaku no Tachiba karano Shiron [Is *Noh* a Drama? : An Essay from the Linguistic Point of View]', *Studies in the Humanities : Bulletin of the Graduate School of Literature and Human Sciences, Osaka City University*, 54. 7 (2003), 1-30 (p. 19). Translated by Nakatani.
- 17) Li, Charles N. and Sandra A. Thompson, 'Subject and Topic : A New Typology of Language', *Subject and Topic*, ed. by Charles N. Li. (New York : Academic Press, 1976), pp. 457-489 (p. 460).
- 18) Ken-ichi Sasaki, 'Introduction', *Asian Aesthetics*, ed. by Ken-ichi Sasaki (Singapore : Kyoto University Press in association with NUS Press, 2010), pp. 3-12 (pp. 5-7) ; Megumi Sakabe, 'Subject of the Absence and Absence of the Critique', *Asian Aesthetics*, ed. by Sasaki, pp. 13-18 (p. 13).
- 19) Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy : Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* (London : Methuen, 1985), p. 15.
- 20) Toyochirō Nogami, 'Yōkyoku no Hona-yaku [The Translations of *Noh* Songs]', *Nō towa Nanika* [What is *Noh*?], 2 vols (Tokyo : Shoshi-shinsui, 2009), I (Primer), 314-334 (pp. 328-331) (first publ. in *Hon-yaku-ron : Hon-yaku no Riron to Jissen* [Theory of Translation : Theory and Practice of Translation] (Tokyo : Iwanami, 1938)).
- 21) Arthur Waley, *The No Plays of Japan : An Anthology* (New York : Alfred. A. Knopf, 1922 ; repr. New York : Dover, 1998), pp. 18-19.
- 22) Waley, pp. 28-29.
- 23) Sakabe, pp. 14-15.
- 24) In Japanese, the passage reads :
- シテ 雪より白き君の肌
地謡 雪より白き菊の花
雪より白き菊の花
しばし鉄はためらひて
シテ しばし我が身はためらひて
- The English subtitles in A | S | I | A do not correctly represent the grammatical subjects, translating the passage into the third-person narrative with 'he'.
- 25) In Japanese, the passage reads :

ワキ 申し、申し。いかにこれなる頭に壺載
 せたる人に尋ね申すべき事の候。
 シテ こなたの事にて候ふか。この壺は葡萄
 酒にて候。
 [...]

 ワキ いな、壺にはあらでおまへ様にて候。
 シテ わらはにて候か。

Here and in the following, the words set in square brackets indicate pronouns that are not explicit in the original Japanese.

- 26) My analysis of the performance is based on the recording of the production archived on the website of Asian Shakespeare International Archive (A|S|I|A): Ku Na'uka Theatre Company, *Othello in Noh Style*, online video recording, Asian Shakespeare International Archive <<http://a-s-i-a-web.org/jp/productions.php>> [accessed 27 March 2019]. The minutes and seconds provided in parenthesis correspond to this video. Note that the video largely omits the scenes from the *maeba* and the *ai-kyōgen*.
- 27) The quote is originally written in Latin. I have quoted the English translation provided by Anthony B. Dawson in 'Performance and Participation: Desdemona, Foucault, and the Actor's Body', *Shakespeare, Theory, and Performance*, ed. by James C. Bulman (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 29-45 (p. 35).
- 28) Dawson, p. 35.
- 29) 'Miyagi Satoshi Intabyū: Kodoku to Mukiau Chikara [Interview with Satoshi Miyagi: the Power to Face Solitude]', *Miyagi Satoshi no Engeki Sekai: Kodoku to Mukiau Chikara* [The Theatre World of Satoshi Miyagi: The Power to Face Solitude], ed. by Tomoka Tsukamoto and Tetsuya Motohashi (Tokyo: Seikyusha, 2016), pp. 22-31 (p. 25).
- 30) This was a reply from Miyagi, written for by a company member, to one of the comments left on the company's blog post after the performance: 'Kangeki Nōto [Audience Note]' (1 November 2005), <<http://d.hatena.ne.jp/kunauka/20051101/>> [accessed 27 March 2019].
- 31) In Hirakawa's text, the passage reads:「隠(かく)しをろう、何を隠(きやく)しをろう」となじられて、'(78).
- 32) In Hirakawa's text, the passage reads:「おのれは淫婦」となじられぬ、|無実の証し無きぞ悲しき。'(79).
- 33) From the interview with Hirakawa (see note 2 above).
- 34) Joel Fineman, *The Subjectivity Effect in Western Literary Tradition: Essays toward the Release of Shakespeare's Will* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), p. 144.
- 35) Francis Barker, *The Tremulous Private Body: Essays in Subjection* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1984), p. 37.
- 36) Belsey, p. 48.
- 37) Kinoshita, pp. 84-86.

平川祐弘作・宮城聰演出『夢幻能オセロー』におけるシテの言葉と声

中 谷 森

京都大学大学院 人間・環境学研究科 共生人間学専攻

〒606-8501 京都市左京区吉田二本松町

要旨 本稿は、平川祐弘作・宮城聰演出の『夢幻能オセロー』（2005年初演時のタイトル『ク・ナウカで夢幻能な「オセロー」』）における、個人としての主体という近代的な人物観の超克という試みを、言語と声の観点から検討するものである。シェイクスピア作『オセロー』を複式夢幻能へと翻案する本作の最終場面では、デズデモーナの幽霊として現れるシテが、オセローによるデズデモーナ殺害の場面を、被害者と加害者の両者となって演じる。これまでこの場面は、男と女、白人と黒人といった二項対立の克服を表すものとして社会政治学的立場から解釈されてきた。しかし、ここで主体と客体の融合を可能にしている言語と声の様相とその作用という問題は看過されてきた。平川の戯曲は、主語の明示を必要としない日本語の言語的特性を利用し、主体の揺らぎを孕んだ言葉において、デズデモーナをシテへと書き換えるものであり、さらに宮城演出のプロダクションは、そのようなシテの言葉が声として舞台上に身体化されるプロセスを上演するものである。