Multicultural Shakespeare: Translation, Appropriation and Performance
vol. 21 (36), 2020; http://dx.doi.org/10.18778/2083-8530.21.05

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The Shifting Appreciation of *Hamlet* in Its Japanese Novelizations: Hideo Kobayashi's *Ophelia's Will* and Its Revisions

Abstract: Hideo Kobayashi, who is today known as one of the most prominent literary critics of the Showa era in Japan, published *Ophelia's Will* in 1931 when he was still an aspiring novelist. This novella was an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, composed as a letter written by Ophelia to Hamlet before her enigmatic death in the original play. While the novel has previously been considered as a psychological novel that sought to illustrate the inner life of the Shakespearean heroine, this paper examines the process by which Kobayashi rediscovered *Hamlet* as a drama that foregrounds the impenetrability of the characters' inwardness and highlighted in *Ophelia's Will* his diversion from the psychological rendition of Ophelia. In so doing, the paper analyses the revisions Kobayashi continued to make to the novel even until the post-war era, especially when it was republished in 1933 and 1949. Though these revisions have rarely been discussed by the researchers, they demonstrate the essential changes made to the novel, mainly to its literary style, which corroborates Kobayashi's shifting interest and his developing interpretation of Shakespeare's works and *Hamlet*.

Keywords: Shakespeare reception, adaptation, novelization, Shakespeare in Japan, *Hamlet*, Hideo Kobayashi.

Introduction

Yoshiko Kawachi's article, published in the 2016 special issue of *Multicultural Shakespeare*, extensively and richly exemplifies how *Hamlet* has continued to inspire the creativity of Japanese artists since the Meiji era (1868-1912) until the 2000s. The novelization of *Hamlet* comprises a large part of Kawachi's article, as she reflects on the works by Naoya Shiga, Hideo Kobayashi, Osamu Dazai, Tsuneari Fukuda, Shohei Ooka, and Akio Miyazawa. According to Kawachi

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(133), many of these authors employed the form of diary novel and/or the method of I-novel[1] in their adaptations of *Hamlet*. This enabled the authors to explore the characters' psychology deeper than in its original drama form. Generally, a novel can engage with a more introspective mode of expression than drama, and such difference seems to have played a significant role in the introduction of Shakespeare to Japanese modern culture. Nevertheless, these Japanese novelists also developed varying ideas of literature and were not necessarily fond of novels that overly emphasize on a character's inner life. Hideo Kobayashi is unique in the context since he is arguably better-known as a literary critic than a novelist. In fact, his literary criticisms are disapproving of I-novels and psychological novels. Although this is a relatively well-known fact in Japanese literature, it has rarely been discussed within the context of Japanese adaptations of Shakespeare.

In this paper, Kobayashi's novel, *Ophelia's Will* [*Oferia Ibun*] (1931), is assessed to underline its importance as a literary work that encapsulates two differing modes of appreciating *Hamlet*—its attraction as a source for psychological novels and the contrasting appeal it also has as a dramatic work that may transcend psychological realism. As both these qualities found in the play are historically significant to the Japanese reception of Shakespeare, *Ophelia's Will* will be examined in connection with the other works associated with Kobayashi and his novel. In so doing, this paper primarily explores the novel's own history, namely the process of revisions Kobayashi made over time, which has rarely been critiqued. This paper is divided into four sections. First, in order to establish the context, the history of the Japanese reception of Shakespeare is discussed and the distinctive importance of the novel adaptations is explained. This will provide contrast to how *Hamlet* was perceived in theatres during 1912 to 1955. The second section examines the implication of *Ophelia's Will* when it was first published in 1931. Special focus is directed at Kobayashi's unique literary style to capture Ophelia's maddening inner voice. The third section, however, reveals the process wherein Kobayashi began to place greater emphasis on the literature's ineptitude to represent her inwardness. The revisions made in 1933 and 1949, especially in view of stylistic alterations, attest to Kobayashi's changing focus. Finally, the fourth section expounds on Kobayashi's unique interpretation of *Hamlet*, as expressed in his 1955 essay, as well as its relation to the revisions made to *Ophelia's Will*. What emerges from these analyses is how Kobayashi rediscovered *Hamlet* as a drama that foregrounds the impenetrability of the characters and sought to highlight in *Ophelia's Will* his renunciation of the psychological rendition of Ophelia.

[1] I-novel is a Japanese literary genre that sought a full-fledged psychological realism in the form of confessional literature, often based on the author's real life.

The Appreciation of *Hamlet* in Drama and Novels: from 1912 to 1955

To contextually understand the significance *Hamlet* had as a source for novel adaptations in Japan, one needs to consider the opposite side of the coin—the comparative unpopularity of *Hamlet*, or Shakespeare's plays in general, on Japanese stages from around 1912 to 1955. *Ophelia's Will* is one of the novelizations created and revised during this period. When Shoyo Tsubouchi staged *Hamlet* in 1911 as the first full performance of a Shakespearean play in Japan, Shakespeare's popularity had already begun to decline (Anzai 6; Kawatake 298; Nakata 44). Kaoru Osanai, the leading director of *shingeki* (a Japanese form of modern and western theatre), was more inclined in psychological realism and favoured Ibsen, Chekov, Gorky, and Hauptmann, among others, over Shakespeare. In a book published in 1912, Osanai wrote about his fondness for "inner realism", explaining that "I enjoy reading Shakespeare, and have been reading his works, but I wouldn't dream of playing Shakespeare's heroines" because "my aim is to play an unostentatious person in a truly unostentatious way" (103).[2] Shakespeare continued to be snubbed from the mainstream of *shingeki*, and the outbreak of the Second World War added another blow (Anzai 7). Subsequently, a critical moment came in May 1955 when Tsuneari Fukuda staged *Hamlet*. Fukuda was a passionate advocate of Shakespearean works for *shingeki*. His 1955 production preceded, and to some extent provoked, what is known as "the Shakespeare Boom" in post-war Japan, whose effect seems to prevail to this day (Anzai 7-8; Kawatake 306).

In summary, Shakespeare became noticeably unpopular in theatres during the years between Shoyo and Fukuda. This period of over forty years is now considered an unfortunate time for Shakespeare in Japan, which Yoshiaki Nakata describes as "the winter of endurance" (44). However, this was also the era when Japan witnessed the flourish of translations (as closet drama), academic studies, and literary adaptations of his works (Anzai 7; Nakata 44-45). In 1912, a year after Shoyo's production of *Hamlet*, Shiga published *Claudius's Diary*, a novel adaptation of *Hamlet* written from the viewpoint of Claudius. Shiga is now known as the standard-bearer of I-novels. In his diary, Shiga's Claudius confesses his own suppressed and troubled state of mind. His moral dilemma between his love for Gertrude and his want of mutual understanding with Hamlet portrays Claudius as one with great emotional authenticity. Hideo Takahashi, a literary critic, describes *Claudius's Diary* as an epitome of Shiga's "laconic style", which exhibits "the layers of human psychology" (456) in its lucidity.

[2] He imagines of taking over a female character here likely because he begins the paragraph by mentioning Sarah Bernhardt, the French actress who was acclaimed for her cross-gendered role as Hamlet.

In the aforementioned article, Kawachi observes that the Japanese novelists "sought to fill in the gaps between drama and novel" (133) by exploring deeper into the psychology of *Hamlet*'s characters. This observation is manifest in the case of Shiga.[3] Commenting on his work, Shiga explains that after seeing Shoyo's production of *Hamlet* in 1912, he found Hamlet to be frivolous or superficial, while Claudius seemed more likable as well as innocent of his brother's murder. According to Shiga, critics at the time described his novel as one that "psychologically renders the behind the scenes at Shakespeare's *Hamlet*" and that gave Claudius "a modernized character" (*On Claudius's* 410). In response to such criticism, Shiga stresses that his further intention was to depict his own "psychological experiences" (*On Claudius's*, 410) through imagining himself in Claudius's shoes. Thus, *Claudius's Diary* shows that novelizations could provide an opportunity to modernize Shakespeare—who was considered "old fashioned" (Ashizu, "What's *Hamlet*"), and lacking "humanness" (103) as dubbed by Osanai—in psychologically realistic modes of expression. Tetsuo Kishi and Graham Bradshaw observes that "there is something unique about the appeal *Hamlet* had to Japanese intellectuals" in that many of its novel adaptations explored "the idea of self as their central theme" (98). It must be noted that, paradoxically, these novels also served as a means to appropriate *Hamlet* according to history's demand for more realistic portrayals of characters and their internality.

These circumstances have provided the context in which critics could be cognizant of Kobayashi's *Ophelia's Will* published in 1931. It also rewrote *Hamlet* from the viewpoint of one of the characters, in this case, Ophelia. In fact, the critique that *Ophelia's Will* was another psychological novel adapting *Hamlet* originates from the notion that young Kobayashi was "an ardent admirer of Shiga" (Kawachi 126). Kishi and Bradshaw opine that the work, together with Kobayashi's other short fictions, is "marked, rather like Shiga's stories, by the detailed analysis of the protagonist's psychology" (113) and that it "makes another contribution to the Japanese attempt at exploring the idea of self" (115) by using *Hamlet* as its source. From a feminist viewpoint, Kaori Ashizu ("A Document", 33-35) contends that *Ophelia's Will* empowers Ophelia, who is forced to be the suppressed object of patriarchal society in the original play, by bestowing her a new life as an independent subject who can speak for herself. As will be further discussed in the second section, Kobayashi also attempted

[3] However, while it is undeniable that Shiga was primarily concerned with the literary representation of human inwardness, the longstanding understanding of *Claudius's Diary* as a reinterpretation of *Hamlet* from the viewpoint of a unified selfhood needs a serious reconsideration. As such consideration would extend beyond the scope of my argument, suffice it to quote here from Kojin Karatani: "While many novelists who have adapted the theme of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* have interpreted it as a drama of self-consciousness, Shiga turned such interpretations inside-out" (Karatani 92).

to adapt Ophelia as a modern literary subject. Kobayashi utilized an unusual literary style to establish a "transparent" means to illustrate Ophelia's psychology.

Nevertheless, the principal aim of this paper is to elucidate on how Kobayashi also demonstrated in the same novel the inadequacy of literary fiction in representing human minds or the sense of "true" self. This can be observed through the revisions he continued to make to *Ophelia's Will* after its first publication in 1931 until the post-war period. These revisions reveal the interconnection between Kobayashi's novel and the post-war revival of Shakespeare marked by Fukuda's 1955 production of *Hamlet*. Fukuda ("Return to 81"), who was also an established literary critic, professed the need to overcome Japanese modern literature, or I-novels. In 1955, a few months after Fukuda's production of *Hamlet*, Kobayashi wrote a short essay on *Hamlet*, the only extensive piece he wrote on Shakespeare. His essay explains the inexplicable nature of Hamlet's motivations and esteems Shakespeare's play for its attention to the material aspect of expression rather than the realistic portrayals of the characters. As fully discussed in the third and fourth sections of this paper, such philosophy is evident in the revised versions of *Ophelia's Will*.

Ophelia's Will in 1931: "Transparency" of the Literary Style

Today, Hideo Kobayashi is recognized as one of the most prominent critics of the Showa era (1926-1989). It is fairly untold that Kobayashi published a few novels before and around the time he gained fame with his literary critical essays. *Ophelia's Will* was published in 1931 when Kobayashi was twenty-nine years old. It is composed as a letter written by Ophelia to Hamlet before her enigmatic death in the original play. Although Kobayashi's Ophelia states that she is to lose her life as soon as the sun rises and that she is merely dealing with the remaining time by writing the letter, it is undisclosed whether she intends to commit suicide. The novel's title is customarily translated as *Ophelia's Will* or *Ophelia's Testament*, but the original title in Japanese implies that the letter is simply a "posthumously-left writing" (*ibun*). Instead of accounting for her post-death wishes as would be in wills, her writing is solely focused on what is on her mind at that moment in a manner similar to the style of "stream of consciousness" (Ashizu, "A Document" 29).

In the novel, Kobayashi takes advantage of novelistic form in order to probe into Ophelia's psychology. Kobayashi's intent is evinced through the distinctive style of writing he employs, or rather, he invents. Throughout Ophelia's letter, the sentences are excessively segmented by the frequent use of commas. Whilst it is impossible to faithfully replicate the style and its effect in English, a passage may read like the following:

> In retrospect, I've kept seeing, only sad dreams, I also, may have had, happy dreams, of childhood, but then, what, it has to do, with me now. (1931: 39)[4]

Although the grammatical rules on punctuation are more flexible in Japanese as compared to English, Kobayashi's use of commas is disproportionate to the extent that its jarring effect permeates throughout the work. The commas dismember Ophelia's sentences into the phrasal units and at the same time, connect the sentences where periods should have been inserted instead. This style is effective in representing Ophelia's distracted psyche, portraying both the sporadic discontinuity and unceasing continuity of her wandering thoughts and feelings. At the same time, the literary style allows her writing to act as a direct representation of her consciousness. This is further conveyed by the occasional use of dashes. For instance, Ophelia writes: "The world is empty,—that doesn't change, how many times you say it", and "where, shall I, go,—if the day breaks" (1931: 44). These dashes are inserted to reflect the sudden change in topics, tones, and attitude, mimicking the rhythm and tempo of the shifting casts of her mind. Through the peculiar usage of both commas and dashes, the letter is intended not simply as a literary representation of her inner life but further as an immediate transcript of her inner voice.

Accordingly, the reader's experience of *Ophelia's Will* would be starkly different from that of the audience of *Hamlet* in theatre. In *Ophelia's Will*, the proximity of the reader to Ophelia's inner consciousness is extremely intimate. Even the most introspective monologues of Hamlet would still appear to be an outward performance of his internality in comparison to the experiences of intimacy attained in *Ophelia's Will*. Hamlet himself denounces the limitation of theatre to depict his inwardness, ironically by claiming its existence: "I have that within which passeth show; / These but the trappings and the suits of woe" (1:2:85-86). According to Francis Barker, Hamlet's display of his internality remains to be "gestural" (32) since theatrical physicality prevents him from becoming a fully-fledged modern subject with a sense of independent psychology. Barker contrasts Hamlet's situation with the new mode of writing exemplified in Samuel Pepys's diary written in 1660s. He asserts that in Jacobian theatre, including Shakespeare's *The Tempest*:

> […] we are clearly far from that occlusion of writing itself which is effected in the post-Pepysian world by the attribution to discourse of an instrumental transparency. (15)

[4] As I shall be dealing with the different editions of the same novel, I refer to its quotes by indicating the year of publication followed by the page number within parenthesis. At the same time, as the 1933 and the 1949 editions have no page numbers indicated, I refer to the frame numbers given to the facsimiles archived on National Diet Library Digital Collections.

The essential difference Barker finds between Shakespearean plays and Pepys's writings offers a valid analogy for the contrast the said play has to its novel adaptations in Japan. Much like Shiga's *Claudius's Diary*, *Ophelia's Will* offers a new version of *Hamlet* with a supposedly more authentic representation of the characters' psychology. As Barker observes, modern writers are capable of attributing written language to transparency—the quality by which the readers can imagine to be listening to the character's inner voice in *Ophelia's Will*. In fact, the piece's essential feature is the unique female perspective it offers. All other works from Kobayashi's early career were written from male perspectives wherein they rationally and intellectually dissect their innermost self, arguably similar to Shiga's Claudius. *Ophelia's Will* however, being his only fiction with a female protagonist, devises a contrasting approach. In the latter, the readers are expected to vicariously experience the conditions of her distracted mind that oscillates between sanity and insanity, rather than to inspect and understand it. Consequently, by choosing Ophelia instead of Hamlet, Kobayashi's adaptation embodies the distinctive intimacy between the writing and its subject.

Throughout the letter, Ophelia stresses that writing is the only pursuit she can undertake. Her words confirm that it is her wish and need to be fully assimilated into her writing. The letter is imagined to be written in between Act 4 Scene 5 and Scene 7 in the original. Ophelia recollects that as soon as she woke up, presumably after her madness in Act 4 Scene 5, she ran through the corridors and locked herself up in the room she found herself in: "I came into the room, locked the door, and then……and then, like this, it's night, like this, I am writing although I am clueless." (1931: 41) The tense in this sentence is left ambiguous to the extent that the passing of time between the moment she entered the room and the very moment she writes the sentence is lapsed within an ellipsis. It is as though Ophelia merely exists through her act of writing. At the same time, she is depicted as someone lacking any sense of physicality. While she writes that she wishes to keep silent, sitting in a chair, and sometimes touching her ears when stressed, she states "but how I have a power to do such things now" (1931: 39). In other words, Kobayashi's Ophelia exists solely as a textual being. Accordingly, she repeats throughout the letter that she is constantly urged by the sheer need for writing and her being is reliant on such act: "It seems, I am, reliant on writing, like this. If I am not writing, to you, then I wouldn't know, what to do." (1931: 42)

The 1933 and 1949 Revisions: The Materiality of Ophelia's Writing

Paradoxically, Kobayashi's Ophelia also discredits her writing for failing to truly represent herself; that is to say, her writing only arrives at limited transparency.

> I write, I write, but the words, they all, avoid me, and on the paper, they stay. What, on the earth, are these, these, strange, something like bugs, why, would I ever think of them as my friends. (1931: 44)

To Ophelia, the written characters appear like strange "bugs" that alienate herself. The discord between her writing and herself continues to haunt the work as the alienation of her consciousness from her letter. There is an exceptional passage around the middle of the letter, highlighting her writing as something tangible rather than transparent:

> ……
> ……
> ……well, well, what am I doing, writing all these dots? You must say, women's letters, always, have such dots. Of course, even a dot is a character, too. (1931: 41)

The exaggerated use of dots demonstrates the lack of meaning and content. In the following sentence, Ophelia points towards the absence of herself from the writing and oddly affirms the presence of writing as "characters". Consequently, by referring to these letters as a part of her manuscript, Ophelia indicates that the dots are employed at another level to commas and dashes. While the latter composes the rhythmic transcription of her inner voice, the former embodies her actual handwriting on the sheets of paper. Thus, the letter combines two contrary modes of writing: one of transparent and auditory nature and the other of visible materiality. It remains questionable whether the author intended it as part of the character's contradiction. It may be presumed that the conflicting nature of the writing corresponds to Ophelia's ambivalent claims since she manifests her reliance on the act of writing though suggesting her scepticism towards it.

Nevertheless, the revisions Kobayashi made in the later editions of the novel reveal a change of emphasis, if not his intent to resolve the confusion. For a period of over thirty years, from 1933 to 1968, Kobayashi continued to revise *Ophelia's Will*. The piece was republished in book forms, in collected works, and in complete works. A substantial amount of alterations was made at two points, in 1933 and 1949, yet critics scarcely paid attention to them. Osamu Kashihara appears to be the only scholar who noted the presence of variants and its consequent effects. However, he briefly mentions the case in an endnote observing that the revisions merely had to "adjust the rhythm" and "refine phrases" (Kashihara 75). In spite of his view, the impact is no less essential to the work since the new usage of punctuation marks highlights the letter as what obscures, rather than renders, Ophelia's inwardness.

Ophelia's Will was first published in a magazine called *Kaizo*. Two years later, in 1933, the novel was converted into book form with luxurious

binding designed by a book designer named Jiro Aoyama. In the book edition, a significant change in literary style was made, along with over twenty emendations and omissions of sentences and phrases. Notably, the overall tone of the letter changed because the use of commas was significantly reduced. Instead of the commas, double three dots "……" (ellipses) were inserted sparingly. For instance, unlike in the 1931 version, the passage quoted at the beginning of this section newly reads:

> ……every word, avoids me, and stays on the paper. ……what, on the earth, are these, ……these strange, something like bugs, why would I ever think of them as my friends. (1933: 13)

The use of commas ceases to be excessive but more or less retained within the convention of Japanese grammar. The sentences are therefore read with greater ease without interrupting commas. Furthermore, almost all of the twenty instances of dashes were replaced by double three dots.[5] The examples quoted in the above section were altered respectively:

> The world is empty,—that doesn't change, how many times you say it. (1931: 44)
> The world is empty, ……that doesn't change how many times you say it. (1933: 13)

> […] where, shall I, go,—if the day breaks, (1931: 44)
> […] where shall I go, ……if the day breaks, (1933: 13)

The replacement of dashes with ellipses offers a decisive evidence that Ophelia's letter should no longer be experienced as an immediate transcript of her inner voice, but is now presented as the copy of her handwriting. Whereas dashes are unlikely to be used by someone writing a letter, the dots are written by her hand as Ophelia noted its presence. The dots' meaninglessness symbolizes the materiality of her writing and exposes the existence of the letter as independent from the writer.

Moreover, a change was made to its title in 1933. The title, *Ophelia's Will*, is the only indication that the letter is written by Ophelia since her name is not mentioned within the work. In 1931, the name "Ophelia" in the title was written in *katakana* characters—a conventional way to write foreign names in Japanese. In 1933 however, Kobayashi rectified the name to be written in *hiragana* characters as "Oferiya", thus adapting a Danish character into

[5] There is an exception: a dash used in the phrase "I am, writing, steadily. —I am, just, too sad, to put in words" (1931, 39) was retained in the 1933 and the 1949 editions and eventually deleted in the 1950 edition. The instance seems erratic and its intention remains unclear.

Japanese. Notwithstanding the suggestion that the alteration of the title signifies Kobayashi's "renunciation" (Negishi 81) of the novel as a failure, the change was possibly made as an attempt to reinforce the impression that the letter is written originally in Japanese. Certainly, Kobayashi's revisions confirm that he continued to be interested in the work long after *The Letter to X* (1932), as his last fiction, marked the end to his career as a novelist. Thus, it is more plausible to consider the change intentional to improve the work by highlighting the new-found essence of the piece—a first-hand experience of reading a letter instead of hearing her voice.

Further changes were made in 1949, which clarify and develop the intention of the revisions. The novel was republished for the second time in 1949 together with *The Letter to X*. In this edition, Kobayashi made over thirty changes of additions, emendation, and deletions. These changes included a substantial amount of deletion including a passage which had extended over thirty-one lines in the 1933 edition. Among them is the passage where Ophelia expressed her own view on language:

> I, don't believe, in language, at all. To be bothered, by what you don't believe, is a non-sense. Things like language, you can easily, mess with them, completely, it's same with human minds, if you want to belie them, you can belie them, however you want. (1933: 14)

The deletion of such explanatory prose shows Kobayashi's confidence that the work now embodies, rather than explains, the concept of linguistic limitations. Based on the analysis of the 1931 version, Ichiro Shiba (99) observes that, in *Ophelia's Will*, Kobayashi "lived" rather than "argued" his newly found scepticism in language. While there is no denying that such intention inheres in the first edition, it was certainly made explicit over the course of the revisions. Furthermore, as less emphasis was made on Ophelia's sceptic attitude towards language, more weight was given to the formal aspect of the letter as a positive feature of the work. While Ophelia, as the imagined writer, contends that her writing hinders the faithful representation of herself, the reader can, at the same time, enjoy such lack of transparency as the essential aspect of the piece. In other words, the novel not only urges the reader to question their desire to probe into Ophelia's psychology, but instead to recognize the presence of language embodied as a letter, as nothing more or nothing less.

The most symbolic alteration made during the process is a sentence added in 1933, followed by another in 1949. As the final paragraph of the novel unfolds, it is hinted that Ophelia is now making her way to the river where she will meet her end. Whether the scene is in reality or imagined by Ophelia is untold. In the paragraph preceding this climactic passage, Ophelia suggests something reminiscent of a disintegration of herself:

> ……well, well, someone just like me is there in a room downstairs, again writing something, just like, the desk being fully lighted by the sun, or so on. (1931: 50-51)

The next paragraph begins by "Maybe I was dreaming" (1931: 51), signifying a brief lapse of her consciousness as if she was daydreaming. Nevertheless, before this sentence, at the end of the second to the last paragraph, Kobayashi added in 1933 "……hold on, wait a minute." (1933: 22) and then in 1949, "Let me go see it." (1949: 21). In the 1931 edition, the blank space created by line breaks between the two paragraphs signified Ophelia's loss of consciousness. However, in the 1949 edition, although she seems consciously awake, her consciousness goes beyond the reach of the reader's accessibility as she physically leaves her letter and possibly her room. As fitting as it is to the implication of the title as a "posthumously-left writing", the letter now performs itself as a piece of writing detached from its subject, Ophelia, suggesting the impenetrability of her mind.

Therefore, the analysis on Kobayashi's revising process uncovers that two different ideas on the relationship between literary language and its subject contend each other in *Ophelia's Will*. The contradicting state of the first edition at least confirms that by 1931, Kobayashi already had an idea to incorporate in his work the concept of linguistic limitations. It should also be noted that the contradiction was never fully resolved but continued to inhere in the novel. After the two revisions made in 1933 and 1949, Kobayashi continued to revise his work until 1968 in the republications of the complete works and the collected works, which were also republished a few times. Nonetheless, the amendments made after 1949 were relatively minor. Most of them were alterations of commas with periods, and vice versa, refining the style he started to develop since 1933. The two short phrases deleted in 1956 mark the last instances of substantial changes made to the novel.

Kobayashi on *Hamlet* in 1955: Psychological Impenetrability of Novels

On one hand, the motivation behind the reworking of *Ophelia's Will* can be traced to the fact that around the early 1930s, Kobayashi was experiencing an important transition period, shifting his ideas on language and literature. According to Ichiro Sekiya (49), Kobayashi gradually diverted his attention away from Shiga to his later favourite, Dostoevsky, during the time he was writing *Ophelia's Will*. In 1935, Kobayashi published a series of essays which critically analysed Japanese I-novels. According to Kobayashi, the I-novel writers failed to understand "the contradiction between their own lives and the social lives, and the essential friction between their sensibility and their

expression" (*An Essay* 169). Certainly, the revisions made to *Ophelia's Will* foregrounds such "friction", namely the disagreement between Ophelia's writing and her sense of inner being. It is clear that *Ophelia's Will* to a great extent represents Kobayashi's renunciation of I-novels and psychological novels despite the common understanding of Shakespearean scholars that the piece made another contribution to the genre.

On the other hand, the reworking of the novel also resonates with Kobayashi's developing interpretation of *Hamlet*. Although Kobayashi as a critic is well known for many of his works written on foreign writers and artists including Dostoevsky, Mozart, Baudelaire and Bergson among others, Shakespeare is not a name commonly associated with his criticism. Indeed, there are only two works that primarily consider Shakespearean drama: *On Hamlet* (1933) and *Hamlet and Raskolnikov* (1955). Although the former incites much interest because of its year of publication coinciding with the novel's first revision, *On Hamlet* is a short piece that does not involve an extensive discussion of the play. It was written for a collection of essays published to accompany the revised edition of Shoyo's complete translated dramatic works of Shakespeare. In the essay, Kobayashi celebrates Shakespeare's genius for creating Hamlet as a multiplex, Janus-faced character who is "a misanthropist and at the same time an optimist", "a sceptic and also a single-minded man believing in justice" (24) and so forth. This is not too far to suggest from this short piece that as of 1933, Kobayashi found in *Hamlet* something that defied the psychological interpretation of a fictional character.

Published over twenty years later, *Hamlet and Raskolnikov* provides Kobayashi's more comprehensive view of the play. Quoting Hamlet's speech "O, that this too too sallied flesh would melt / Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!" (1:2:129-130), Kobayashi explains that Hamlet's deepest desire is to "live as a pure incarnation of consciousness" (117). Nevertheless, according to Kobayashi, such desire is hindered by his own "non-transparency" (118) since his dramatic actions take place only "impulsively and automatically" (117) without disclosing any clear motivation for the final revenge. Thus, Kobayashi infers that Shakespeare never intended "inner realism" but instead sought "to restore materiality which cannot be transparent, but which can be seen and heard like actions and speeches" (120). It is worth recalling Barker's argument that Hamlet's sense of his inwardness fails to be meaningful. Just like Barker, Kobayashi also negates the understanding that Hamlet embodies a modern sense of psychology; however, Kobayashi emphasizes that such impenetrability of his mind—referred to as "non-transparency" by Kobayashi—indeed is essential to the art of any genre. By comparing Dostoevsky to Shakespeare, Kobayashi concludes that not only drama but also novels are imbued with psychological impenetrability.

What is further significant here is that *Hamlet and Raskolnikov* was written in 1955 and was published in a literary magazine, *Shincho*. In May of that year, Fukuda staged his *Hamlet*, which marked the post-war revival of Shakespeare in Japanese theatres. Fukuda ("Return to" 81), whose thoughts show Kobayashi's influence, claims the importance of Shakespeare in transcending modern literature, or I-novels. According to Kawatake (306), Fukuda brought forth the post-war revival of Shakespeare by growing apart from realism. The same month Fukuda staged *Hamlet*, Shohei Ooka began to publish his novelization of Shakespeare's play, *Hamlet's Diary*, as a series in *Shincho*. Despite their opposing political stances, Ooka shared a similar view on *Hamlet* with Fukuda. In demonstrating the limitations of psychological descriptions in literature, Ooka (*The Etiquettes* 191) refers to *Hamlet* as an example, for which the modern notion of psychology is merely imposed by the later readers. Additionally, in July of the same year and in the same magazine, Fukuda started his own series titled *Human, the Dramatic Being*. This was an extensive essay discussing the nature of drama, based on his interpretation of *Hamlet* as a masterpiece of art that challenges modern individualism. It was in the following month, *Shincho* published Kobayashi's *Hamlet and Raskolnikov*. While Kobayashi was known to be in friendly terms with these younger writers, Fukuda and Ooka, their shared view on *Hamlet* reveals a particular significance the play had at that point in time in Japanese culture. Although their ideas differed in parts, Kobayashi, Fukuda and Ooka all appreciated *Hamlet* as a quintessence of art that transcends the modern notion of literature and drama and its obsession with psychological realism.

It follows from the above argument that despite the common view which considers *Ophelia's Will* as an adaptation of *Hamlet* into a psychological novel, the reworking of the novel reveals Kobayashi's diverting concept. It correlates with Kobayashi's unique interpretation of *Hamlet* explored in the 1955 essay, which also resonates with the revival of *Hamlet*'s popularity in post-war Japan. Kobayashi did not only interpret *Hamlet* as a dramatic work that defied psychological realism, but he also deduced from such observation that novels were also subject to psychological impenetrability. Correspondingly, although *Ophelia's Will* continued to offer Ophelia's unique female perspective, its reworking also highlighted the attribute shared by Kobayashi's Ophelia and Shakespeare's Hamlet. Although she longs to inhabit in her letter as "a pure incarnation of her consciousness", the material aspect of her writing emanates from itself, eventually alienating its subject, Ophelia. Such emphasis placed on language over its content echoes the words of Shakespeare's hero: when Polonius asks him "What do you read, my lord?", Hamlet answers "Words, words, words." (2:2:188-189).

Therefore, to conclude, *Ophelia's Will* and its history of revisions trace the course by which Kobayashi first created the novel as an adaptation of *Hamlet*

into a modern, psychological novel, reminiscent of Shiga's style, and by which he later rewrote the piece as one that critically reflected on his original approach and challenged the belief in psychological realism. What is particularly noteworthy in the context of the Japanese reception of Shakespeare is that the process mainly took place between 1931 and 1949, a period leading up to the revival of Shakespearean popularity in Japan. *Ophelia's Will* offers a window into this relatively undiscussed time in the history of Shakespeare in Japan. Seen under this light, the uniqueness of the novel lies in Kobayashi's keen critical gaze directed towards both Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and his own language, which sought to urge the Japanese readers of his time—and continues to urge us—to scrutinise the sense of modernity embodied through literature and drama.

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