

Shakespeare and citizenship education in Japan

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This paper focusses on two questions: ‘Is the content of Shakespeare teaching in Japan perceived by educators to raise public issues?’ and ‘Are the processes of Shakespeare teaching perceived by educators to mirror and illuminate forms of social and political engagement?’ Both were answered with a resounding ‘yes’, although the absence of material suggesting an association between teaching Shakespeare and advocacy and rights was noted. We used definitions of citizenship education and its objectives by Davies, Elliott, and Ikeno. These include citizenship as a subject (or content) and as a process, with its objectives including to foster political literacy, social and moral responsibility, social engagement, community involvement, democracy and justice, awareness of citizens’ rights and duties, identities and diversity.

With regards to students’ **political literacy**, articles by Kenneth Chan and James Tink foregrounded the use of plays to boost students’ knowledge of world history generally and to introduce students to medieval British politics (including early modern representations of statehood) and rulers specifically. James Tink’s article focuses on the tetralogies of Shakespeare’s history plays (in terms of historical and narrative but not authorial chronology, the first tetralogy is comprised of *Richard II*, the two parts of *Henry IV*, and *Henry V*; the second tetralogy of the three parts of *Henry VI* and *Richard III*). Tink, a professor in the Department of English Literature at Tohoku University, a large national university in Sendai, North Eastern Japan, emphasises that juxtaposing historical sources with Shakespeare’s fictional representations could be used to explore bias and the political purpose of drama, rather than (mis)reading it as a primary source. He initially describes the medieval subject matter as a factor in these plays’ relatively unknown status to undergraduate students. He identifies ‘the medieval subject matter from the original chronicle sources, and how to make it resonate with the modern reader’ as one of the difficulties he faces in his classes. However, he proceeds to argue that ‘What can be most illuminating about teaching Shakespeare’s history plays in a Japanese [English literature] seminar is thinking about how ideas of “medieval” or “early modern” culture are generated through our own contemporary readings of literature, and how Shakespeare’s sixteenth-century version of medieval England invites comparison with the Japanese past’ (12-13). His students, third and fourth year undergraduates from Japan, China and Sweden, were able to draw comparisons between different versions of the same history play by reading Shakespeare’s text in instalments as well as Elizabethan sources such as *An Homily Against Disobedience* (an official piece of Church of England ideology, intended for dissemination as a sermon, dated to 1571), watching the BBC’s 2012 film adaptation of the plays *The Hollow Crown* and a recording of Dominic Dromgoole’s *Henry IV, part one* staged at Shakespeare’s Globe in 2010. Moving beyond exploring ‘Shakespeare’s influence on ideas of an English/British national past’ with his students, Tink recalls that, to quote him at length:

A useful aspect of the course was to explore what we understood by the “medieval” or “early-modern” in both Britain and Japan. Shakespeare’s evocation of an honour-bound but fractious world of noble warriors is a fantasy that also invites associations with Japan’s own national past, both as a subject of serious historical comparison and also at the level of literary representation and popular culture. Asking students to think about what they understand by The Middle Ages (the term is also used in Japanese historiography) allowed students to propose interesting analogies with examples of Japanese culture. The canonical 13th century poem *Heike Monogatari* describes a civil war and the ruin of the Taira Clan, who are presented as corrupt but nevertheless

courtly and refined: it provided a way for thinking about the allure and tragedy of King Richard [II], and the pathos that can be attached to ideas of a defeated, distant past. Similarly, a discussion of Falstaff's question, "What is honour?" allowed the class to explore ideas of conduct and how both European chivalry and Japanese bushido are popularly understood. In fact, Falstaff has previously been adapted [by Yasunari Takahashi] into a traditional-style Japanese drama as *The Braggart Samurai*, which was also discussed. Through these topics, the class could reflect on how our general ideas of the medieval past also relate to assumptions about modernity, statehood and the transformation of culture: themes that are arguably explored by Shakespeare in both plays, but also are also relevant to wider literary histories of both Britain and Japan. There is perhaps an additional, historical irony to these discussions, and one which the students proposed, in that the city of Sendai (as every resident knows) was famously founded as a castle town by the sixteenth century warlord Date Masamune, who, rather like Shakespeare's Duke of York, switched allegiances to the emerging power of the Tokugawa Shogunate in order to preserve his domain.

Thus sometimes themes that students identified as inherent in the plays were cast by them, not as universal, but as representing a historical affinity between early modern England and old Japan. For example, **duties** such as honour and allegiance are held up by them as historically, typically Japanese *and* as mirrored in early modern English politics and society. For Tink, teaching Shakespeare's histories in this comparative way fosters the interculturalism within their degree programme and encourages students to participate in seminar discussion as they recall examples from Japanese history and literature to compare with seminal moments in English counterparts. It also enhances students' political literacy by encouraging them to think about the constructed nature of history and to be historiographers in thinking about the constructions of categories, such as 'medieval and modern', used in writing history.

Studying Shakespeare was implicitly figured by contributors to issue six, including and beyond Tink, as helping students to fulfil their **social responsibility** in respect of being a global citizen by having an awareness of other nation's histories, culture and nationally significant writers. Kenneth Chan, an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Global and Regional Studies, Doshisha Women's College of Liberal Arts, wrote that most undergraduate students know about Shakespeare as a historical figure, a literary icon, rather than through engagement with his works: 'unless Japanese students are introduced to Shakespeare in some way outside of regular school education, they would only know his name, fame, and well-known play titles'. He gives the examples of *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Macbeth*, and *King Lear* and stresses 'Japan's warm reception of and identification with the tragedy plays' (although *Merchant* is identified in Shakespeare's first folio as a comedy, the treatment of Shylock, a Jewish moneylender, in productions today almost always foregrounds its tragic aspects 4). Chan adds that his students – first and second year social studies majors, all Japanese with English as an additional language – have no further knowledge of Shakespeare's works from their school days: 'What Japanese students know of Shakespeare is from world history textbooks in which he is briefly mentioned as a famous British playwright of the 17th century' (4). Several articles demonstrated that university-level teaching of Shakespeare functions to redress students' unfamiliarity with the play-texts themselves. An awareness of British history and culture gained through teaching *Romeo and Juliet* to law school students is also described in the issue. In the words of their lecturer – Tetsuhito Motoyama, an Associate Professor in the School of Law and Associate Dean in the Centre for International Education at Waseda University – students were perceived to be 'particularly good at drawing the conflicts and issues close to themselves. Heated discussions followed questions as to whether Romeo or Paris would make a better husband, whether one's family name can or cannot be easily discarded, and whether parents should or should not have the kind of authority Capulet holds over Juliet. It was as if they were using the play to re-examine some of the traditional views and values Japanese society holds' (Motoyama 10). The play, he felt, 'suggested a way of perceiving the world that challenged the mind-frame [the students] develop either by living in Japanese society or through their law studies' (Motoyama 10).

Shakespeare was consistently cast as helping students to become global citizens by developing their knowledge of the English language. That this is considered desirable by the Japanese government in order to increase its citi-

zens' ability to interact with non-Japanese speakers, professionally and socially, is elucidated by Motoyama. He cites the final report of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's Committee to Form a Grand Design for Education and Research for the 21st Century call for 'education that makes discussion in English possible' (Shudo and Harada 1, quoted in Motoyama 10). Motoyama explains the effect of this report on the work of Waseda Law School's 'non-area-major faculty members' who offer 'language and general education courses', informed by their own humanities and social sciences disciplines, and their curriculum: 'Under the old curriculum, English classes were simply divided according to the targeted skills of reading, writing, or oral communication. With the new curriculum, students receive task-based instruction for all four skills in their first year, which prepares them for the content-based classes of their second year. The idea is to make students functional enough in English to be able to study law in English when necessary' and to take part in 'academic discussion' in English with, using student presentations followed by question and answer exchanges (Motoyama 10). Daniel Gallimore, Professor of English Literature at Kwansei Gakuin, a large private university in Western Japan, adds to this picture the widespread emphasis in Japan on acquiring confidence in English, the ability to converse with native speakers and the experience of 'cultural immersion' (5). He contrasts this late twentieth-century approach to foreign language teaching in Japan with the 'grammar-translation method' used in British schools through to the 1970s and 80s. He terms it 'the communicative method': 'the idea that languages are best learnt through the acquisition of communicative skills with little formal grammatical input and rote learning, especially not the repeated correction of errors' (5). Watching productions on DVD, and hosting visiting Shakespeareans from Anglophone countries is portrayed throughout the issue as satisfying students' need to listen to native speakers (Chan 4). In addition to Tink's use of a film from the Globe and the recent BBC *Hollow Crown*, Chan describes using the company's 1983 *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, part of its BBC Shakespeare complete works, created with an eye to its education and export markets (4). Yuto Koizumi, describes teaching Shakespeare, particularly *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Merchant of Venice*, through two 'modern films featuring Shakespearean lines, characters' and plot moments – *Dead Poets Society* (1989) and *The Man Without A Face* (1993) (14-15). Yu Umemiya, Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Letters, Arts and Sciences, Waseda University, screened Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* (1996) to his students studying the module Theatre, City and Communication at Yokohama National University (16).

Apart from acquiring or expanding their **identities** and abilities as global citizens through their contact with Shakespeare specifically and the English language more generally, students and teachers foregrounded their Japanese identities across the articles. The editorial's vox pop was undertaken with students at Takasaki University, in Gunma province. They were asked to respond to questions about their previous experiences of studying Shakespeare at any level, in any subjects, including which works, the language of instruction, resources and teaching methods used, extracurricular exposure to Shakespeare, and their ideals for studying Shakespeare in Japan. In the vox pop, some students recalled visits to Stratford-upon-Avon as part of study abroad programmes and made connections between Shakespeare and Japanese writers, such as Natsume Soseki and Ryunosuke Akutagawa (although a counterpoint is provided by one student's comment that 'there is no person instead of Shakespeare in Japan'), between Shakespeare's plays and works in popular Japanese genres such as manga and anime (3, the fit between Shakespeare's rhetoric and manga devices is espoused by Gallimore who favours the use of Self-Made Hero's manga editions in his classes 5). One student, a non-English major at Tokyo University, wrote 'we don't read much verse at English education in Japan. It may be a great way to introduce verse by introducing Shakespeare. Maybe at around 15-16 years old. Until then, we can learn much from Japanese classics'. In addition to a clear affection for local writers and artists, students invoked the Shakespearean productions of the world-renowned, Japanese theatre director Yukio Ninagawa (3). Additionally, Chan mentions the abundance of adaptations on 'Shakespeare's works in local theatrical forms such as kabuki and bunraku' in sustaining his popularity in Japan (4).

Reference was made throughout issue six to the universality of Shakespeare's themes and the metaphors through which he figures them. Umemiya, for instance, describes that 'the students noticed an astonishing compatibility between Shakespeare's play and this modern world' and that they 'had the chance to understand the compatibility of the plays, written more than 400 years ago in the far west, to Japanese culture' (16-18). The plays' concern with and figuring of 'love, friendship, loyalty, betrayal, forgiveness and reconciliation', as well as compas-

sion and violence was invoked. Gallimore writes that: ‘Shakespeare’s “universality” is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in his metaphorical comparisons of like with unlike, and...is experienced most intensely through the cognitive effort required to understand the metaphors’ (5). However, the plays’ ability to in relation to help students understand their **moral responsibility**, or to positively model moral responsibility for deployment in ‘human relations’, was seen by some lecturers and students to be in tension with a *tenei* (polite) style of teaching in a ‘conservative culture’ (Gallimore 6-8, Oki-Siekierczak 9). Ayami Oki-Siekierczak, a research fellow and lecturer at Meiji and Sacred Heart universities as well as the Tsubouchi Memorial Theatre Museum, Waseda, describes early twenty-first century editors, as well as her own lecturers as well as her students struggles with Shakespeare’s sexual and scatological humour in Japanese translations and classrooms. She suggests that ‘it is still an option for lecturers to skip parts of plays that would be considered inappropriate, such as when Mercutio and the Nurse indulge in questionable sexual eloquence in *Romeo and Juliet*’ but argues that ‘without these components, the play loses its appeal’ (9). From her personal experiences, she recalls that

In 2005, in Japan, I was taught by a male...lecturer, who seemed extremely uncomfortable discussing Shakespeare’s bawdy side with one male and six female students. The lecturer was trying to get us as close to the Bard’s meaning as possible. Word by word translations and exercises on grammar were conducted throughout the academic year. By the end of the year, we were able to render the original texts into modern English using a dictionary. However, when examining the textbook [that] this eminent scholar had given us, it was remarkable to note that certain passages were not covered. Since we had to work as quickly as possible, all the students were recording his comments on the text, and all of our notes had the same untouched part: bawdy. In the Shakespeare course I attended in 2007, in the UK, the emphasis on the play was extremely different. In front of three male and nine female students, a male professor encouraged us to discuss innuendo in Mercutio’s jokes. Regardless of gender, we pursued the sexual undertones of the play.

One of the reasons Oki-Siekierczak gives for such bowdlerisation of Shakespeare is its treatment by some editors and academics as a form of *shimo-neta*, or bawdy humour. This is widely considered more appropriate to bars than public places or classrooms and therefore as potentially impacting negatively on esteem for Shakespeare, as having the potential to ‘damage our image of the genius of Shakespeare’ (1, 11, Oki-Siekierczak). She questions the sustainability of the divorce between Shakespeare and his bawdy humour in Japanese education given, not only Westerners apparent willingness to talk Shakespeare, sex and scatology but also the contradiction she perceives within Japanese society in its engagement with such matters. She writes:

Why...is the sexual innuendo of the Elizabethan playwright too controversial to be taught in Japanese classrooms? Japan is a peculiar country in regards to its treatment of sexuality, which is different on the surface and in its depth. Exploring the shadows of its cities, it is possible to encounter sexual interests, from shooting photos of local idols and the sale of sexually explicit manga and anime, to visiting ‘soapland’, a sensual bathing service. However, these [are] almost entirely hidden in the corners of society.

Having walked through the host and hostess bars of Kabukicho with a colleague from a Tokyo university that was hosting me and – accidentally, I hope – being booked into a Shinjuku love hotel by a colleague from a regional university for accommodation during a symposium, I might suggest that, at least Tokyo’s, sex culture is hidden in plain view. However, Oki-Siekierczak found that her students continue to take a conservative stance. She recalls that

In 2014, when I brought an abridged version of *Romeo and Juliet*, without risqué expressions, to a class on [English literature]... my students felt content with their first Shakespearean experience. The romanticism of this version fulfilled their expectations. Later on, it was explained that all the problematic jokes were excluded from the text. Discussion of how students felt about this omission deepened their understanding of language in Elizabethan plays and culture, as well as my own understanding of their feelings towards the language of sexual

humour. The students were unanimous in their belief that romantic love should have been separated from sexual matters by the author, and it was difficult for them to understand the idea that sensual jokes could be so openly accepted. Thus the idea of bawdy as ill-suited to Japanese language and culture is still evident in the classroom, not least among the students.

However, this reluctance to consider Shakespeare's *shimo-neta* might depend on the gender, institution or discipline, as well as their level of study and rapport with the lecturer. Motoyama, in contrast, found at the Law School in Waseda that 'Some of the topics the students chose to discuss concerned the function of [Shakespeare's] sexual puns...Many of them wrote about the humour and wit in the plays', and the challenge they made to the world-view they had developed 'by living in Japanese society' (Motoyama 10).

Content aside, teaching Shakespeare is described in ways that resonate with processes at the heart of citizenship education. Almost all of the contributors talked about developing students' skills in **critical thinking and enquiry**. Their students are unanimously encouraged to see, discuss and perform a range of interpretations of the plays – invoking their own response as readers or viewers and those of literary critics, sometimes in comparison with historical documents, film and stage productions (Tink 12). Umemiya describes fostering students' ability to recognise and compare the plural, sometimes different, viewpoints presented in screen and theatrical realisations of Shakespeare's works by analysing the filming of the tomb scene (Act 5, Scene 3) in Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* using the camera to shoot the scene from the perspective of the heroine's line of sight (16). Adding to Motoyama's picture of students engaged in discussion of each other's presentations on Shakespeare above, Umemiya, describes students responding to each other's productions of the lovers' balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet*. This activity stems from the intention of his module to engage students in thinking critically about the role and heterogeneity of audiences, even for the same production:

The class was divided into four groups of five, and two of the students were cast as either Romeo or Juliet. The remaining members enrolled as directors and helped the acting students to read the lines or discussed how they wanted to show the scene to the audience. Since the class was held at in a lecture theatre, the students were given a lot of spatial options to play with. The first group decided to place Juliet on the left-hand side of the stage in front, leaving Romeo on the ground level, to the right. This pattern gave the impression of seeing an ordinary proscenium arch theatre. The next group also used the stage for the place where Juliet delivers her lines, but made Romeo stand in the right-hand aisle, just by the audience space. Another group placed Juliet in the left-hand aisle, and made Romeo deliver his speech on the right front of the hall, but not incorporating the stage. These two were also interesting because they made the considerable decision to give a noticeable dimensional difference between the two lovers, so as to replicate the image of a balcony. At the same time, by using the space crosswise, they succeeded in including the audience within the scene. The last group [made] probably the most inventive and challenging of all the directorial decisions. The two actors were standing within the audience space, Romeo down at the front and Juliet up the back. They made the audience surround the two characters and created an improvised thrust stage. Apart from the first example, the audience had to turn their head around every time Romeo and Juliet exchanged their lines. However, forcing the audience to plunge into the scene was an achievement ... and this experience successfully made students understand the relationship of performer and the audience, together with the idea that Shakespeare's plays inherently contain the possibility of audience participation [which he contrasts with some contemporary theatre in Japan, describing audiences as rarely laughing during performances and 'reluctant to participate in interactions with the actors'] (17-18).

Umemiya contrasts his teaching with that which he received as an undergraduate student at Waseda where, although students could share radical and divergent interpretations of the play texts, they did not have visual or multimedia stimuli and tended to draw on the notions they had of texts that pre-dated the modules. Using varied Shakespearean resources and rehearsal room techniques, Umemiya encourages students to anticipate and address the strengths and weaknesses in their own and their fellow students' readings of the play immediately and spontaneously, during class.

He describes this as in opposition to older models of teaching Shakespeare as about leading all students to a single, correct interpretation of the play as though ‘trying to find treasure on a map’ (18). Students, he states, foremost desire to ‘learn something related to their job’. Implicitly, critical thinking and enquiry skills are what the next generation needs to fully contribute to Japan’s economic and social growth. In addition to Umemiya, Gallimore alludes to the potential when studying Shakespeare to have students momentarily set aside their own beliefs, behaviours and experiences to ‘inhabit’ characters’ perspectives e.g. shifting perspective from twenty-first-century, female, Japanese student to medieval, British ruler or courtier.

However, both Japanese and foreign nationals raise fostering critical discussion and enquiry with their Japanese students as a challenge. Marie Honda has lectured at Toyo, Waseda and Meiji universities including to lifelong learning students, often retirees, on non-degree programmes. She cited the dearth of student questions during sessions and the relative scarceness (or novelty) of interactive small group teaching in Japanese colleges as particularly problematic for and typical of Japanese pedagogy, but also mentioned her own decision to ‘never address questions to a specific student’ (18). Honda describes how, after introducing the plays to be studied on the module,

I assigned the remaining weeks’ classes to group presentations of six or seven people. While one group gave a paper, the other students wrote questions and comments on worksheets. Then the representative of each group asked the questions or gave comments. However, this discussion did not work very well because Japanese students are not taught how to debate and express their opinions in schools: even though the students may have good ideas or criticisms, they do not want to voice them in public because they care about what other people think of their opinions very much. Therefore, at the end of the class, I collected some interesting questions or comments from the worksheets, put them together in a handout, and distributed them in the following class. The students whose ideas were chosen were glad to see the handout, and it motivated the other students too (18).

One of the facets of issue six that fascinated me was the way in which, as evidenced in Honda’s recollection of her teaching, challenges towards teaching Shakespeare were located not just in linguistic but cultural causes, particularly and unsurprisingly, in terms of a national, educational culture. For example, in tension with the students’ alleged effusiveness about the universality of Shakespeare’s themes is a reminder that his work is a foreign body: Chan writes that ‘it is not surprising that Shakespeare is not taught at schools in Japan. After all, he is not their national poet’ (notice Chan’s implicit self-othering from Japanese-ness here, 4). This has spurred me on to explore the phenomenon of educators the teaching Shakespeare (and its reception by students) with reference to national characteristics and circumstances in Korea, Hong Kong and Vietnam.

Conclusion

In issue six of *Teaching Shakespeare*, studying Shakespeare is frequently described in terms of **community involvement**, or redressing lack thereof. The notion of a learning collective is evident in places; so too is the idea that, by teaching Shakespeare, educators can alert their students to differences between the performer-audience relationship in Japan and the UK, with the implication of a wish to foster a more Western model of audience involvement in (at least) modern Japanese theatre (Umemiya). Additionally, the Shakespeare teaching featured here mirrors and illuminates forms of **social and political engagement**: firstly, in terms of embracing the trading of products with the West (economic and cultural) from the late 19th century onwards (Gallimore). Secondly, Chan’s work in singing songs from *Two Gentlemen of Verona* with students, ‘to liven up the atmosphere and improve the experience’ resonates with Japanese social activities, from karaoke to Western classical concert-going. Thirdly, although specifically orchestrated for this issue, teachers surveyed their students on their knowledge of and experience with Shakespeare – echoing political polls and the solicitation of consumer feedback common in democratic, capitalist societies (Chan, Gallimore, Honda). These processes model an ideal of society and politics along the lines of Antonio’s description of the world, in the *Merchant of Venice*, cited by Koizumi, as ‘a stage where every man must play a part’ (1.1.80). Students throughout the magazine are shown playing a part, considering **informed and**

responsible action in relation to the content of the history plays, the switching of allegiances, characters' weighing up the merits of accepting and resisting injustice in *The Merchant of Venice* and contemporary films, as well as in doing right by their teachers and peers in terms of their level and tone of participation while studying Shakespeare (Tink, Koizumi; Umemiya, Honda). In these articles, students suggest plays they wish to study or perform, notably well-known tragedies such as *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet* (Bergman, Chan); actively participate in theatre games (some informed by Augusto Boal's theatre of the oppressed, intended to empower Brazilian citizens to achieve social and political transformations in the 1960s); direct scenes, leading a team of actors and making decisions about how to present a scene (Umemiya) and take the initiative in small group discussion rather than relying on cues from the teacher/authority figure (Umemiya, Honda).

The articles and vox pops considered so far from educators and students in Japanese higher education institutions suggest that many perceive the content of Shakespeare as raising public issues relevant in Japan, sometimes the East Asian regional and globally. They also perceive the processes of teaching the plays to mirror and illuminate forms of social and political engagement. This is a small sample of participants – 8 teaching and 40 studying in higher education institutions – although they were drawn from diverse universities in Tokyo and other Japanese cities or towns. Additionally, the sample's representativeness – or lack of - must be taken into account. For example, these educators consider themselves, in some respect, innovators with regards to Shakespeare and or pedagogy. They are also sufficiently self-motivated enough to write about their experiences. In writing on Shakespeare and citizenship for my forthcoming book, *Shakespeare and East Asian education*, I will expand the size and scope on this research to more than double the number of participating educators, whose reflections on teaching practice I consider. This will also reach across a greater number of universities. I also want to include my analysis of Shakespeare education events at Waseda and Toyo more recently, including a seminar given at Waseda on performing Shakespeare for children in Japan by the theatre practitioner and director Seisuke Yamasaki (translated for me by Rosalind Fielding), although school children's experience of Shakespeare in Japan will be primarily covered by my co-author Kohei Uchamaru, an expert in Shakespearean translations, textbooks and curriculum in Japanese schools (Olive et al.). Finally, I would like the chapter to explore in greater detail whether the content of Shakespeare teaching in Korea, Hong Kong and Vietnam is perceived by educators to raise public issues, and/or the processes of Shakespeare teaching perceived to mirror and illuminate forms of social and political engagement; to trace similarities and differences between the nations in terms of teaching Shakespeare for citizenship education; and ways in which these are articulated with reference to perceived national characteristics and experiences, part of a global cosmopolitan experience (see Rebellato), or homogenised as East Asian or universal.

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