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Toward “Reciprocal Legitimation” between Shakespeare’s Works and Manga

Abstract: In April 2014, Nihon Hoso Kyokai (NHK: Japan Broadcasting Company) aired a short animated film titled “Ophelia, not yet”. Ophelia, in this animation, survives, as she is a backstroke champion. This article will attempt to contextualize the complex negotiations, struggles and challenges between high culture and pop culture, between Western culture and Japanese culture, between authoritative cultural products and radicalized counterculture consumer products (such as animation), to argue that it would be more profitable to think of the relationships between highbrow/lowbrow, Western/non-Western, male versus female, heterosexual versus non-heterosexual, not simply in terms of dichotomies or domination/subordination, but in terms of reciprocal enrichment in a never-ending process of mutual metamorphoses.

Keywords: Pop culture, Japan, gender, cultural hierarchy, manga, animation

Introduction

In April 2014, Nihon Hoso Kyokai (NHK: Japan Broadcasting Company) aired a short animated film (1 min. 30 seconds) titled *Ophelia, not yet*. The animation visually cites John Everett Millais’s painting of *Ophelia* (1852) with cheeky twists: in this animation, Ophelia looks like the Ophelia by Millais, but she does not die because she can swim, being a national backstroke champion.¹

My garments were pulling me down deep under the water.
Suddenly I remembered,
I am a national backstroke champion, am I not?
Soaked clothes spread wide were dragging me down, but
Not yet, not yet, it is not time for a watery death . . .

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¹ NHK <<http://www.nhk.or.jp/bijutsu/bijutune/>>. Last accessed July 6 2015. All translations from Japanese are mine, unless otherwise noted.

My abusive boyfriend told me ‘Go to a nunnery’.
 Not yet, Not yet,
 I would not be such a sweet fool to forgive him by laughing him away.
 Go, go, Ophelia . . .
 Almost native to that element, you can go anywhere in backstroke.
 Ophelia, Ophelia, don’t give up, not yet.

This animation offers us one of the most up-to-date reworkings of Shakespeare’s works in pop culture. Ophelia, in this animation, does not give up, does not die beautifully as in Millais’s painting. To borrow Coppélia Kahn’s phrase, this Ophelia is “a different Ophelia—a subject more than an object” (232). In its savvy cutting-and-mixing of canonical, high arts (Shakespeare and Millais) and pop culture (animation), *Ophelia, not yet* recycles, spins off and recalibrates “Shakespearean cultural authority to fit the demands of youth culture” (Lanier 104), which would not tolerate simplistic glorification of feminine self-sacrifice for love. It thereby playfully yet radically challenges the objectification and sexualization of Ophelia’s death² by offering us “a critical . . . interrogation of [the] recurring images and tropes” of sacrificial femininity (O’Neill).

This essay will attempt to contextualize the complex negotiations, struggles and challenges between high culture and pop culture, between Western culture and Japanese culture, between authoritative cultural products and radicalized consumer products (such as animation), to argue that it would be more profitable to think of the relationships between highbrow/ lowbrow, Western/non-Western, male versus female, heterosexual versus non-heterosexual, not simply in terms of dichotomies or domination/ subordination, but in terms of reciprocal enrichment in a never-ending process of mutual metamorphoses. In an attempt to explore possible cases of what Douglas Lanier calls “reciprocal legitimation” (104) between “highbrow, middlebrow, and popular culture”, I shall try, after briefly surveying Shakespeare’s works as they are remade in comics format, to record some of the recent cases of Shakespeare remade in globalized manga and animations (including the British *Manga Shakespeare Series*). In that process, this essay will try to showcase the ways in which Shakespeare’s works and Shakespeare comics/manga/animation can compete in productive ways, with both as globalized/localized cultural capital.

² Japan, where “Ophelia is . . . central to the anxiety of modernity” (Huang 80) has had its own version of the “Ophelia cult”, starting from an illustration by Kaburaki Kiyotaka (1902) for a mega-hit melodrama, the *Golden Demon*, where a fantasy scene of the death of the heroine is drawn after Millais’s *Ophelia*.

Shakespeare in European and American Graphic Novels

The first American Shakespeare comics were *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Macbeth* in the *Stories by Famous Authors Illustrated* series, published in 1950. Shakespearean lines were modernized into 1950s American English, though the meaning remained the same. In 1952, *Hamlet* appeared in the *Classics Illustrated* series, which used the original Shakespearean English. In the “To be, or not to be” soliloquy scene, the upper right quarter of one whole page was given to a balloon for the soliloquy, and an explanatory note was added at the bottom of the page.

Richard Burt edited *Shakespeares after Shakespeare* and wrote in his introduction, titled “Shakespeare Stripped: the Bard (Un)bound in Comics,” of the “Cartoons and Comic Books” chapter³ that “Comic book adaptations tend to be among the most conservative in any medium” (10) that dares to deconstruct the authority of Shakespeare by boldly altering, modernizing or parodying his works. In comics, “characters from Shakespeare, for example, are almost always in period dress” (10).

However, though few in number, there are some cases that adapt, rather than directly translate Shakespeare to create original stories. One example is the *Sandman* series by British science fiction writer, Neil Gaiman (*A Midsummer Night’s Dream* #19, 1990; *Doll’s House, Part Four: Men of Good Fortune* #13, 1990). In *The Tempest*, the story is integrated with “the end of Shakespeare’s career and *The Tempest*” (41).

Tony Tamai, a Japanese American comics artist, employs manga style to set *Macbeth* in a space where the three weird sisters are like robots and warlords fly on flying monsters: although the graphics are in sci-fi style, the Shakespearean lines are preserved without modernization.

Shakespeare in Japanese Manga from the 1950s to the 1970s

While faithfulness to Shakespeare’s language is deemed highly important in most cases of graphic novels/comics versions of Shakespeare in English-speaking worlds, manga artists in Japan can take greater liberty with Shakespeare’s poetic language; as Shakespeare’s lines are presented in Japanese, there is little point in trying to be faithful to the original language. Conversely, if “there is something ‘Shakespearean’ other than the language”, these works given

³ The chapter entries play by play are by Michael P. Jensen. It has 297 entries, including comics for educational purposes, parodies and comics with references to Shakespeare’s works.

in non-Shakespearean language “need no longer be regarded as secondary to their anglophone counterparts” (Minami, *Shakespeare in Asia* 110), as in the case of Morikawa Kumi’s manga adaptation of *Twelfth Night* (1978), which Minami analyzes in detail (*Shakespeares* 111-120).

In some cheekily iconoclastic cases, authors of manganized Shakespeare have taken greater liberty with the stories, the contents of Shakespearean lines and the settings, to make them almost unrecognizable as Shakespearean. Tezuka Osamu’s⁴ “Robio and Robiette” (1965), an episode in *Astro Boy*, is a tragic love story between Robio, a robot, and Robiette, another robot; his *Vampire* (1966-69) combines Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* (the protagonist, Makube, is lured into pursuing his ambition by the prophesy of the three witches), and *Richard III* (the protagonist dreams of the ghosts of those he killed, just as Richard III dreamed that the ghost of his victims said to him “despair, and die”), and his *A Parrot with Seven-Colored Feathers* (1981-82) has episodes adapted from *Hamlet*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Othello*. Minamoto Taro creates a superbly slapstick parody of *Hamlet*, where Hamlet ridiculously insists on peeping under Ophelia’s skirt (1972). Aoike Yasuko’s *Sons of Eve* (1978) is outstanding in its sophisticated use of Shakespeare in outrageous parodies: in a play-within-a-manga scene, the role of Juliet is performed by a drag queen/king whose biological sex can change from time to time. Cute and effeminate Romeo swears his eternal love “by yonder blessed moon”(2:1:149) and is gently scolded by his drag king/queen, Juliet, that he should “swear not by the moon, the inconstant moon” (151). Most of these daring parodies of Shakespearean works appeared in the 1960s to the 1970s. Creative recreation of Shakespearean works in manga format resurged in the late 1990s.

Feminist Guide to Shakespeare in Manga in the 1990s to the 2000s

When Shakespeare holds supreme cultural authority as a man and a western author, how do Japanese female manga artists negotiate his works in order to address gender-related issues?

One good example of creative reuse of Shakespearean stories is Akino Maturi’s *As You Like It* (1997-98). The girl protagonist, Jacqueline, cross-dresses as a boy and joins a traveling theater troupe (Elizabeth I’s secret agents undercover) led by Shakespeare. The author is fully conscious of the convention of boy actors performing the parts of females in the age of Shakespeare.

In one episode, the young master of an aristocratic mansion where the troupe stays to perform is secretly in love with one of his male attendants. He

⁴ Japanese names are given in the order of family name, given name.

decides, with Jacqueline’s help, to cross-dress as a lady, in order to have just one dance with his loved one. The attendant as well has been in agony for his passion for his lord. It turns out that the Lord, named Celia, is actually a woman who was brought up as a man to secure her/his inheritance.

This is a good example of “reciprocal legitimation” or hybridizing of Shakespeare’s work and manga, both of which address gender issues via cross-dressing. Akino consciously cultivates the rich tradition of girls in boys’ clothing convention in Japanese manga, especially in Shojo manga. We can be certain that Sapphire in Tezuka’s *Princess Knight* (1963–66) influenced Akino’s creation of the above episode. The princess in Tezuka’s work is brought up as a prince because the kingdom would have been usurped otherwise, as the laws of the kingdom forbid a woman to inherit the throne; she double cross-dresses (as a girl dressed as a boy dressing as a girl) to have a dance with a prince from an enemy kingdom. Likewise, Celia’s mother raises her daughter as a boy in order to take revenge on a patriarchal system that oppresses her and her daughter. Akino mixes the cross-dressing in Shakespeare’s work with Shojo manga to achieve the remarkable result of problematizing gender hierarchy via cross-dressing.

Manga reworking and renovation of Shakespeare can work to problematize gender issues without gender bending, as Sanazaki Harumo does in in her manga reworkings of Shakespeare’s works. Her Shakespearean adaptations are given from the perspectives of the marginalized and the silenced, such as Lady Macbeth, Lady Capulet and Hippolyta. Sanazaki is a great admirer of Shakespeare’s works, having watched all 37 plays in the BBC Shakespeare series (aired by NHK in Japan) and having performed as Puck in a high school production. In spite of, or perhaps even more because of, her declared admiration for the Bard, her narrative technique and manga skills in her manga adaptations effectively challenge the heterosexism, gender hierarchy and patriarchy in Shakespeare’s works. Created for mature female readers, her works belong to the genre called *redikomi* (Ladies’ comics), which can have more sexually explicit material than manga intended for younger readers (Shojo manga). What is unique about her Shakespearean works is that she can focus on the power struggles between men and women in heterosexist patriarchal orders by making her works sexually explicit.

Sanazaki’s *Romeo and Juliet* is narrated from the perspective of Juliet’s mother, Lady Capulet [Figure 1], and her *Macbeth* is given from the perspective of Grouch, Lady Macbeth. Sanazaki revives Lady Macbeth’s personal name, Grouch, which Shakespeare erased in his work. Figure 2 allows us to see how manga skills and techniques are employed to highlight the divide between the public, political sphere of men and the privatized and politically disempowered space of women. In that two-page spread, Macbeth, surrounded by men, is shown



Figure 1. Lady Capulet in Sanazaki's *Romeo and Juliet*. "Romeo and Juliet, they did what they wanted to do as their desire dictates, without thinking about others. Why do we need to pity them? They were the happiest ones." © Sanazaki Harumo



Figure 2. The scene of Macbeth's coronation in Sanazaki's *Macbeth*. Above left, the lords are celebrating the new king's coronation on the Stone of Scone, saying "Hail, Macbeth, King of Scotland!" Bottom left, Grouch, Lady Macbeth, says "This is not what I wanted." © Sanazaki Harumo

shown in a wider frame at the top left, crowned on the Stone of Scone, while Grouch, in isolation, is shown in a smaller frame at the bottom left, saying “this is not what I wanted” in her inner soliloquy. Likewise, Sanazaki’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* focuses on Hippolyta, the Amazon Queen whose kingdom was defeated by Theseus’ Athens. Even though Hippolyta knows that Theseus, as a political conqueror of her kingdom, can claim to sexually “conquer” her, she would not, at first at least, succumb to Theseus’ call to think of their union as a marriage of love, and resists against a romanticization of the power relations between the conqueror and the conquered as “love”. In Sanazaki’s works, Shakespearean stories about passionate teenagers in love, ambitious military men and romantic love are adapted to reveal how the original works are youth-oriented, gendered and hetero-normative.⁵

Contextualizing the Globalization of Manga Format Shakespeare: Cool Britannia, Cool Japan, Manga and Shakespeare

It was in 2007 that SelfMadeHero (SMH), a publishing house in London, introduced its *Manga Shakespeare Series* (MSS) with *Hamlet* (text by Richard Appignanesi, illustration by Emma Viecelli) and *Romeo and Juliet* (text by Appignanesi, illustration by Sonia Leong). *Manga Shakespeare Series* hybridizes two huge cultural capitals: manga and Shakespeare.

Appignanesi, the originating editor of the successful, illustrated *For Beginners* book series (Icon Books), uses Shakespeare’s English, not a modernization, in his MSS texts, though he partially cuts and shortens the original. The general editor of MSS, Emma Hayley, is firmly determined to make MSS a pedagogical means of leading young readers to read Shakespeare’s original English in manga. By 2009, SMH had published fourteen manga versions of Shakespeare’s works (*Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *The Tempest*, *Richard III*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar*, *As You Like It*, *Othello*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *King Lear*, *Twelfth Night*, *Henry VIII* and *The Merchant of Venice*).

There is some historical background that made MSS possible in the 2000s. An American journalist, Douglas McGray argued about Japan’s growing influence on global pop culture in “Japan’s Gross National Cool” in 2002. The *Manga Shakespeare Series* was published between 2007 and 2009, when the Japanese government and Japanese businesses were seeking to promote Japanese pop culture products such as manga and anime in order to exploit cultural creative-industry merchandise globally in what is called the “Cool Japan”

⁵ William C. Carroll’s “Fiendlike Queen” analyzes contemporary adaptations of *Macbeth* that recast Lady Macbeth in a more positive light.

movement “Cool Japan” was in turn modeled on the “Cool Britannia” of the 1990s UK. According to Maezawa Hiroko, Cool Britannia had two main emphases: cultural democracy and economic values. The former is meant to signify attempts to “democratize” culture, to make every culture, whether it is high culture or popular culture, accessible to everyone, regardless of class, ethnicity or gender. This aspect of Cool Britannia, the “democratization” or disregard for the cultural hierarchy between high culture and pop culture, was clearly illustrated when the prime minister, Tony Blair, invited British rock super group, Oasis, for lunch at 10 Downing Street on one day and attended a performance of *King Lear* at the National Theatre a few days later. Culture should be evaluated according to its economic value: this was the second point of emphasis of Cool Britannia. If culture is an industry, it can create employment. It was argued, therefore, that the government, the citizens and the market need to cooperate with one another to promote the creative industry. Under such a regime, cultural values and economic values tended to be regarded as one and the same. Shakespeare’s works, commonly regarded as uncool, were made into one of the icons of Cool Britannia culture, yet they also became simply a cultural commodity to be shelved or trashed when they did not sell well. The Japanese government attempted to recycle the logistics and tactics of Cool Britannia by promoting Cool Japan on a global scale, as we can see in the fact that the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry released a proposal on the Cool Japan Strategy in 2011.⁶

The *Manga Shakespeare Series* hit the market at about this time. When MSS appeared on the scene, manga, which had been a niche market product sold at specialty stores, was becoming more mainstream in the UK and, partially owing to Cool Japan effects, it was becoming available at ordinary bookstores, occupying substantial space in the graphic novels/comics section. Even so, the MSS team, headed by the General Editor, Emma Hayley, had some anxieties about its reception: manga fans might reject MSS because it was Shakespeare, and Shakespeare admirers might look down on it because it was manga.

All MSS illustrators are manga artists living in the UK (their places of origin/ancestors’ origins are various, including Malaysia, Italy, Japan). At the outset, collaborative works by Japanese artists living in Japan and the editorial team in the UK was one of the options, but MSS decided to employ manga artists residing in the UK so that the British publisher, SelfMadeHero, could help cultivate local manga talents. In this way, the globalized/localized cultural capital of manga is combined with the cultural mega-capital of Shakespeare, which has likewise become globally shared and localized. To take one example, the illustrator of *Twelfth Night*, Nana Li, was born in China, brought up in

⁶ See Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, http://www.meti.go.jp/english/press/2011/0512_02.html. Last accessed June 27, 2015.

Sweden, and is active as an Original English-language manga⁷ Artist in the UK (see Figure 3).



Figure 3. *Twelfth Night* illustration by Nana Li. Manga Shakespeare Series.

© SelfMadeHero

⁷ Manga originally produced in English, inspired by Japanese manga style. Abbreviated as OEL manga.

Sonia Leong, the artist for *MSS Romeo and Juliet*, sets her work in today's Tokyo, where Romeo and Juliet belong to the two warring yakuza mafia families. Romeo is modeled on the J-pop star, Yoshiki (from the band, X Japan); Juliet is dressed in Wa Rori costume (Japanese Lolita), a combination of a type of Victorian doll fashion full of frills and panniered full skirts (called roriita [Lolita] fashion) originating from Japan, with some elements of traditional Japanese costumes, such as the kimono.

Emma Viecelli makes clever use of manga conventions, such as the world after the final world war, and bishōnen, a beautiful male youth in agony, in setting her *Hamlet* in a dystopian future after apocalyptic climate change and world wars, where surveillance cameras put everyone under total surveillance. She created her Hamlet as a beautiful boy filled with teenage angst, who is psychologically unstable and philosophical enough to believe that “The time is out of joint: O cursed spite, / That ever I was born to set it right!” (1.5.189f). Leong is an artist and representative of Sweatdrop Studios,⁸ the first British Original English-language manga group.

At the beginning, not all reactions to MSS were cordial. For example, Tom Daveson wrote on the TES that it is “harder to forgive the butchering of Shakespeare’s language in the interests of plot and at the expense of poetry” and points out that “80 per cent of ‘To Be Or Not To Be’ is cut”. In response to these criticisms, the MSS series team is actively enhancing pedagogical possibilities by offering various supplementary materials and information on their Internet site and workshops on manga in schools.⁹

Talking Back to Shakespeare in Manga Ways

Japan has a large variety of manganized Shakespeare, some are faithful transmedia translations, others represent outrageous pirating. Faithful manga translations include Igarashi Yumiko’s *Romeo and Juliet* (1995), and the *Romeo and Juliet* manga for elementary school children by Isakawa Megumi (2014). To list some of the recent outrageous spin-offs, in *Black Butler’s Hamlet* episode (animation: 2009), a transvestite performs the part of Ophelia, but she/he confounds the notion of pure, dedicated and self-sacrificial love by falling in love with every possible good-looking male around him/her. In *Hamlet in Osaka* (2005), the protagonist, a working-class bad boy, is enraged when his teacher compares his family situation (his mother is married to her brother-in-law [the protagonist’s uncle]) to that of Hamlet’s. As I discussed in my previous article in

⁸ Sweatdrop <<http://www.sweatdrop.com/>>. Last accessed July 6, 2015.

⁹ See SelfMadeHero <http://www.mangashakespeare.com/free_resources.html>. Last accessed July 7, 2015.

Multicultural Shakespeare (92), there is a substantial number of *Romeo and Juliet* parodies in Japan, sometimes involving cross-dressing. As more recent additions to this tradition, we have a manga about a boy who has difficulty identifying himself as a boy, performing the role of Juliet in a high school performance against a Romeo performed by a girl (*Wandering Son*).

What are the relationships between Shakespeare’s original works and their pop culture spin-offs? Manganized Shakespeare has become more audacious in its mash-ups, spin-offs, simplifications and critical challenges of Shakespeare’s works. In some cases, Shakespeare’s works function mostly as simple devices to get the manga stories going: they are far from being faithful to the originals. They pirate, rip off and abduct the originals, leaving few traces of them. The question is, are we to call these mangas Shakespeare-related cultural products? It could be argued that these mangas are sacrilegious with respect to Shakespeare’s works, or that they are simply using Shakespeare as a marketing gimmick, which is at least partially true. Yet, even when this is the case, they are paradoxically offering tributes to Shakespeare, the biggest cultural capital. Conversely, manga purists can also argue that the Shakespeare industry is trying to take over manga in order to prolong the shelf life of that old commodity, Shakespeare. However, my contention is that Shakespeare and Shakespeare-related products that are almost impossible to recognize as coming from Shakespeare can reciprocally enrich each other, offering the chance to problematize basic assumptions, such as heterosexism, gendered social relations and class structure, both in Shakespeare’s originals and in the adaptations.

Hamlet in Osaka (2005), a manga about a working-class boy whose mother began living with her brother-in-law within 50 days of her husband’s death, deconstructs the elements that make *Hamlet* a tragedy. The viewpoint of the working-class bad boy is emphasized in the manga. It starts with a scene where the protagonist is confronting his teacher for having compared him to a neighbour’s hamster, named Hamu, when the teacher was actually comparing him to Hamlet. This experience proves to help make the boy more literate, for although he comes from a social milieu where reading classic literature is believed to be for teacher’s pets and for geeks, the boy actually reads *Hamlet* in translation to fight back against his teacher, and learns that Hamlet is simply a wimpy spoiled crybaby. This reading experience teaches him not to be like Hamlet: he accepts his uncle and his mother’s baby (whose biological father is unknown) into the family that his mother financially supports by working hard day and night. This manga rip-off, at the same time as it relativizes the ethics of monogamy and female sexual fidelity in the original (for *Osaka Hamlet*, it is not a big deal that the protagonist’s mother was sexually unfaithful to her former husband/the boy’s father), it scrutinizes Japanese society where Shakespeare’s works, including *Hamlet*, are supposed to be the monopoly of highly educated elites and the ideal of a good wife/wise mother is still binding.

Romeo and Juliet has become a well-established model to be emulated, imitated and sometimes parodied in manga, as I indicated in my “Tacky Shakespeares in Japan”. Basically, manga adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet* are about love between heterosexual persons whose gender identity does not conflict with their biological bodies: girls identifying themselves as girls loving boys identifying themselves as boys. Recent developments in pop adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet*, however, problematize the hetero-normative basis of the *Romeo and Juliet* story by making persons with same-sex passions and/or with discomfort with the gender identity assigned by their biological bodies representing their Romeos and Juliets.

Aoike’s *Sons of Eve*, previously mentioned, where effeminate Romeo woos his Juliet-in-drag is one of the prototypes of lighter, slapstick gender-bender adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet*. Similarly devised recent work includes an episode in *Black Butler* where Grell Sutcliff, a grim reaper, fights with Sebastian, comparing their inevitable confrontation to the tragedy of Romeo and Juliet (Toboso, Chapter 2). Her/his modified quotation from *Romeo and Juliet*, “Sebastian Darling, Wherefore Art thou Sebastian Darling?” adds a “queer” twist to this scene, making it possible to read this scene as that of a man wooing another man. These works, on their intentionally slapstick and blasphemous approaches, prompt us to notice how heterosexist *Romeo and Juliet* can be. However, if we remember that in Shakespeare’s day the role of Juliet was performed by a boy actor, we can think of these manga queerings of Romeo and Juliet as instances of reviving, renovating and recreating not-necessarily-heterosexist possibilities of the original story.

As mentioned above, manga, particularly manga for girls (Shojo manga), has a rich tradition of girls in boys’ clothes. Some Shojo manga adaptations of Shakespearean works, such as Morikawa Kumi’s *Twelfth Night*, successfully deconstruct essentialist notions about gender and sexuality. Furthermore, some mangas provide us with some possibilities to deconstruct the heterosexist basis of Shakespeare’s works by employing cross-dressing to give voices to lesbian desire. In *Daughters of Aries* by Satonaka Machiko (1973-75), a girl named Romi plays the part of Romeo. When classmates harass Romi and Emi (Juliet), saying that the girl-to-girl intimacy they show in their cross-dressing *Romeo and Juliet* is “unnatural”, Romi confronts their heterosexist assumptions, asking “who determines girl-to-girl intimacy is ‘unnatural’?” It should be emphasized that both of the girls identify themselves as girls. It must also be pointed out that this manga ends in showing its own hetero-normativity, by dramatizing the girl-to-girl intimacy as merely an adolescent phase: both of the girls “grow up” to love men.

Tsugumo Mutsumi’s *Moonlight Flowers* (2001) is more consistent in its challenge against hetero-normativity. Two women, who performed *Romeo and Juliet* in their all-female high school performance, meet each other after several

years of separation, and discover their undying mutual same-sex passion. Sahoko, who performed the part of Juliet, tries to be a good wife to her husband, as patriarchy in the late 20th century dictates. The husband, an elite businessman who needs a trophy wife in order to be successful in the business world, accommodates himself with a mistress when he finds that his wife is less compliant than he expected. He attributes his infidelity to his wife’s sexual unresponsiveness. The abusive husband of Sahoko (Juliet) is severely criticized by Kaoru (Romeo) as a homophobic male chauvinist whose male pride depends on his assumed ability to control female sexuality, and hence, for whom lesbians are the worst imaginable enemy.

Shakespeare’s works, when adapted to manga, offer a fertile ground to test non-cisgender, non-heterosexual possibilities in recycling Shakespeare. Takako Shimura’s *Wandering Son* (2002-2013) was mentioned in “12 Awesome LGBT Anime and Manga Characters”¹⁰. In episodes of a junior high school performance of *Romeo and Juliet*, a boy who wants to be a girl performs the part of Juliet, and a girl who is not sure about her gender performs the part of Romeo.

What is new about Kanno Aya’s *Requiem for the Rose King* is that the artist chooses *Richard III* for her artistic experimentations with gender transgressions with powerful women and an intersexed Richard. Elizabeth is a fiendish dominatrix thirsting for political power, sexually insatiable, who raped Henry VI to get impregnated. Jean D’Arc is said to have been killed for her cross-dressing. She, as a ghost in boyish fashion, haunts Richard III whenever he is in crisis about his intersexed body.

This adaptation is noteworthy because the artist is known for her comic, but radical, questioning of gender stereotypes in her *Otomen* (combination of *otome*, meaning *girly*, and the English word *men*), which has frequently appeared on the *New York Times* bestseller list.¹¹ The central plot involves a romantic love comedy where gender stereotypes are exaggerated, twisted and reversed: the male protagonist, super masculine in his public life as a high school hero, master of martial arts, but in private life addicted to girly hobbies such as reading Shojo manga, sewing and baking, falls in love with a girl who, conventionally cute in appearance, is more like an action hero (she is also a master of martial arts and is desperately poor at everything girls are supposed to like, such as cooking). The artist highlights how unconventional their love is by deliberately referring to *Romeo and Juliet* (vol. 11).

While *Otomen*’s characters, rebelling against gender stereotypes, have no problems with their gender identities, the protagonist of *Requiem of the Rose*

¹⁰ GoBoiano, List by Dallas Marshall (June 17th, 2015), <http://media.goboiano.com/list/3024-12-awesome-lgbt-anime-and-manga-characters>. Last accessed June 27th, 2015.

¹¹ The Toronto Comic Art Festival 2015, <http://torontocomics.tumblr.com/post/114704420787/tcaf-announces-featured-guest-aya-kanno-the>. Last accessed July 4, 2015.

King is an intersexed person. The protagonist remains fairly firm in his gender identity as a male in spite of his intersexed body, and is strongly misogynist in his hatred of his body and the powerful women around him such as Queen Elizabeth. The series is still ongoing. In terms of gender politics in this adaptation, the contrast between Elizabeth, a willful bitch, and the super feminine Henry VI, who is attracted to Richard without knowing his identity, could be another case of innovative recycling of Shakespeare's cultural authority in today's Japan, where various experiments, challenges and questions regarding the oppressively normative gender/sexuality hierarchy are being explored, especially via pop culture.

Conclusion

This article is an attempt to explore the possibilities of “reciprocal legitimation” between Shakespeare's works and manga/anime/comic adaptations of them. After observing that in English-speaking worlds, comics versions of Shakespeare have stayed largely faithful to Shakespeare's original works, this article analyses the globalization and localization of Shakespeare's works and manga, both of which are no longer monopolies in their places of origin. Some comics/manga/animation adaptations are faithful to Shakespeare, others are in-your-face cheeky. Shakespeare's works and their comics/manga/animation adaptations are involved in complex negotiations, struggles and challenges with one another, in productive ways. Even though it is true that intermedia metamorphoses are part of the commercialization aimed at profit making, yet commercialization has the potential to make Shakespeare's works pop, in the sense that they are “democratically” open to everyone. Among the things that commercialization has made possible in comics/manga/animation adaptations, we can count analytical insertions into the politics of gender/sexuality in Shakespeare's works and in today's Japan.

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